

Monsanto

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FROM
(NAME-LOCATION-PHONE)

D. R. Bishop -- F3EE -- 4-2891

DATA : November 23, 1983

cc. M. C. Throdahl - D1D

SUBJECT :

REFERENCE :

TO : R. T. Berendt E2ND
T. M. Bistline E2ND
W. D. Carpenter G3WG
W. J. McCarville G3WG
P. S. Park G3WB
G. Roush G2WG
J. D. Wilson G3WG

F.Y.I., we have responded to last Friday's Post-Dispatch editorial on dioxin. Our letter to the editor and the editorial are attached.

DRB
D. R. Bishop

cf
attachments

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C10155

Monsanto

PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

Monsanto Company
800 N. Lindbergh Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri 63166
Phone: (314) 694-1000

November 23, 1983

Letters to the Editor
St. Louis Post Dispatch
900 N. Tucker Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63101

Dear Sir:

We must take exception to some of the statements made in your lead editorial of November 18, "Dioxin And The Evidence."

For example, Monsanto did not withhold information about "dioxin risks." As far back as 1949, long before dioxin was identified as a chemical structure, the company shared with the West Virginia State Health Department and the U.S. Public Health Service the health effects observed in our Nitro plant employees following accidental exposure to what was later identified as dioxin.

Furthermore, Monsanto is not alone (as your editorial suggests) in "minimizing the dangers of dioxin." This position is shared by the American Medical Association, the British Advisory Committee on Pesticides, the U.S. Air Force, the Veterans' Administration and a host of independent medical experts. Further, this position is based on the preponderance of documented human evidence, accumulated to date.

Monsanto agrees with your statement that "the effects... may not show up in humans until many years after their exposure." That's precisely why we attach so much significance to long-term health studies, one done on workers exposed for up to 30 years, which have found no evidence of any serious lasting health effect, other than a few cases of a skin condition called chloracne.

Sincerely,


Dan R. Bishop
Director,
Environmental Communications

CC: [illegible]
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cf

C10156

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Founded by JOSEPH PULITZER
December 12, 1878

THE POST-DISPATCH PLATFORM

I KNOW THAT MY RETIREMENT WILL MAKE NO DIFFERENCE IN ITS CARDINAL PRINCIPLES, THAT IT WILL ALWAYS FIGHT FOR PROGRESS AND REFORM, NEVER TOLERATE INJUSTICE OR CORRUPTION, ALWAYS FIGHT DEMAGOGUES OF ALL PARTIES, NEVER BELONG TO ANY PARTY, ALWAYS OPPOSE PRIVILEGED CLASSES AND PUBLIC PLUNDERERS, NEVER LACK SYMPATHY WITH THE POOR, ALWAYS REMAIN DEVOTED TO THE PUBLIC WELFARE, NEVER BE SATISFIED WITH MERELY PRINTING NEWS, ALWAYS BE DRASTICALLY INDEPENDENT, NEVER BE AFRAID TO ATTACK WRONG, WHETHER BY PREDATORY PLUTOCRACY OR PREDATORY POVERTY.

JOSEPH PULITZER

April 10, 1907

Friday, November 18, 1983

editorials

Dioxin And The Evidence

The clear lesson that emerges from the 48-page special section on dioxin, published by the *Post-Dispatch* earlier this week, is that preventive action against chemical poisoning could avoid much human misery and be far less costly than action after the fact. The dioxin report suggests that, although warnings of danger were there, government and industry were moved only by tragedy and public alarm to take strong corrective action.

In its comprehensive account of the dioxin contamination of Missouri, the special report reveals understandable errors of judgment on the part of government officials and private entrepreneurs; but it also reveals cases of government apathy and corporate deception. The federal government, for example, ignored warning signs of dioxin contamination from Agent Orange, the defoliant sprayed by U.S. forces in Vietnam. Had the government acted in response to scientists' proposals for tests, the domestic hazards of dioxin poisoning might have been realized earlier.

And, as the special report notes, manufacturers of herbicides containing dioxin — including the Monsanto Co. of St. Louis and Dow Chemical Co. — "placed competitive instincts ahead of public-health concerns." They withheld information about dioxin risks and exposed people to dioxin in medical experiments. Monsanto tends to minimize the dangers of dioxin, its spokesman saying, among other things, that there "is no acceptable evidence that dioxin has caused any type of cancer in humans." There is evidence, however, that it causes cancer in laboratory animals and, although the evidence is not conclusive, some reputable scientists believe it causes cancer in humans and

suspect it causes other disorders far more serious than chloracne, the problem on which the industry focuses.

The difficulty is that the effects of a carcinogen may not show up in humans until many years after their exposure. Therefore, ordinary prudence demands caution in the handling of a suspected carcinogen before conclusive evidence is in. Otherwise the harm may be irreparable. The instruments for a cautious approach are provided in federal and state laws passed in the last decade in response to the evident growing menace of hazardous chemicals, including such federal laws as the Toxic Substances Control Act and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, which is complemented in Missouri by a 1977 hazardous waste law.

Still other laws are being considered, such as a bill now in Congress that would extend controls to small waste generators and require better methods of waste disposal. But even the wisest and most exacting laws will not do any good if they are not enforced. Frequently both federal and state laws offer only paper protection because required reports of conditions go unprocessed — sometimes because of willful neglect but more often because federal and state agencies are understaffed. Industry often delays enforcement through extended court challenges.

The *Post-Dispatch* special section reported that estimates of the dioxin cleanup cost in Missouri range up to a billion dollars. The obvious message is that strengthened agency staffs followed by stringent law enforcement could avert astronomical cleanup costs and avoid future hazardous waste disasters such as the dioxin problem now plaguing Missouri.

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