Business Week

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Louis H. Young
Editor-in-Chief

NOV 3 1976

November 1, 1976

Mr. E. H. Harbison, Jr.
General Manager
Specialty Chemicals Division
Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co.
800 N. Lindbergh Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri 63166

Dear Mr. Harbison:

I am sorry that travel commitments have kept me from following up earlier my September 20 acknowledgement of your letter criticizing our story on PCBs. I have in the meantime talked more fully with the editors--and through them, the reporter(s)--responsible for the story.

I see some justification for your dismay. A fundamental problem with our story was that it was cut to its published length--under deadline pressure--from a considerably greater length. We are supposed to be expert in doing such things, but in this case it is pretty clear we did not do a good job of preserving necessary qualifying words and sentences, as well as additional statements that would have maintained a better perspective.

However, the main problem in this case is that the officials --at Mobil and NIOSH--to whom our reporter talked to were much blunter in saying that PCBs were the culprits in these deaths than the scientists apparently felt they could be in their official reports. Our reporter, probably correctly, chose to believe that the private statements made to him were of greater significance than the characteristic caution of the scientists. But our story should have indicated the nature of our sources. It should certainly not have attributed to Mobil officially a position that Mobil clearly did not wish to take officially.

As for omitting your negative finding on the types of cancers reported in the Mobil study, our reporter's position is that the types of exposure to PCBs at Monsanto and Mobil are probably quite different. If the finding had been positive, he believes, it would have been significant in the context of the

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story. A negative finding, on the other hand, could simply reflect the lesser likelihood of ingestion, as opposed to inhalation, in a producer's plant as opposed to a converter's or a user's plant. Again, I don't know whether this is true, and I wish in any case that we had been more clever in handling that thinking within our space limitations. But I am satisfied that the reporter's intentions were honorable.

In summary, I understand your concern and I concede that our story fell short in some important respects. But unless our reporter was badly misled by sources he trusted, I feel that the main thrust of the story cannot be far off the mark.

Nonetheless, if you feel that it is important for Monsanto to be on record in Business Week as differing from the point made by our story or from our statement as to Monsanto's findings, we would be happy to work with you in framing a suitable brief statement for our Readers Report column. In that event, may I suggest that you contact John Campbell (212-997-3887), the senior editor who oversees our industrial staff and who is familiar with the story and your letter.

Sincerely yours,

Lewis H. Young
Editor-in-Chief

cc: George Roush, M.D.
Director, Medical and
Environmental Health Department
Monsanto Company

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