

# WAYNE MARTIN

POST OFFICE BOX 1133 • FAIRHOPE, ALABAMA 36532 • PHONE 205-928-3975

May 27, 1985

Mr. Perry A. Chapdelaine  
The Rheumatoid Disease Foundation  
Post Office Box 137  
Franklin, Tennessee 37064

Dear Perry:

You mention in your letter of May 10 "holes" in animal-cancer studies. I should like to suggest that the entire concept is a hole — or more likely, a diverting *cul de sac*. I have written to you about PCBs. Now about dioxin. It is taken as engraved in stone and brought down from Mt. Sinai that dioxin is the most deadly of cancer-causing chemicals. Animal studies have so decreed. In a town in Illinois someone sprays the roads with oil containing dioxin. The town now has contamination of a few parts per billion of dioxin. So what happens? Everyone gets moved out, and the EPA comes up with a great wad of money to buy all the property.

Now let's look at dioxin and human experience. In 1976 a chemical plant in Seveso, Italy, blew up, and about thirty square miles of land and over 200,000 people got doused with dioxin to an extent many times what has caused the evacuation of a town in Illinois. Italy is a poor nation, so what happens? People go on living around Seveso. Some got sick, many suffering a form of dermatitis — a few cases disfiguring — but now, nine years later, no noticeable change in the cancer rate.

There have been four notable explosions in chemical plants that have doused everyone with dioxin — the oldest event being in Holland in 1963. Twenty years later a study has been reported on the workmen in the plant that had very heavy exposure to dioxin (*Lancet*, September 12, 1983). No excess in cancer has been found among them, although many of them suffered from severe dermatitis (chloracne). The same has been true of similar explosions in West Virginia and at the Coalite Chemical, Ltd. plant in England.

In this most recent English explosion the medical experts for the union were pressing the owners for compensation for the workers — not because they have been put at risk of cancer but because after the explosion they seemed to have more low-density lipoprotein in blood. The charge was that they may be at a greater risk of having a heart attack. I have always maintained that with 499 out of 500 of us, lipoproteins have nothing to do with heart attacks. In any event, in this most recent dioxin exposure case, there was no suggestion of a cancer connection (by now it is old shoe that when a pesticide plant explodes and exposes everyone to dioxin, such an episode does not cause cancer among them), and the heart attack suggestion was quickly dismissed.

There have been several studies of men exposed to very low amounts of dioxin in the workplace. There have been among them a very few cases of soft-tissue sarcoma, but in all cases the cancer patient was also a cigarette smoker.

Clearly the animal studies on dioxin and cancer have not been related to human experience.

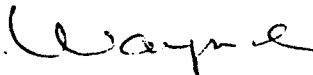
A third case is asbestos and the form of cancer called mesothelioma. Here the connection is firm; however, we have a situation as with lung cancer. The large number of asbestos-mesothelioma cases have occurred since 1940.

From 1850 until about 1950 the railways of the world used thousands of steam locomotives. They were encased with a four-inch-thick layer of asbestos. Every four years, steam locomotives came in for an overhaul, and all the asbestos would be removed by a compressed air blast. The air would be so filled with asbestos dust that one could not see ten feet in it. There is not a single case recorded of a railway worker developing mesothelioma due to asbestos. No railway has been involved in an asbestos-related law suit.

Clearly, much cigarette smoking in the 1920s was causing almost no lung cancer, and extreme asbestos exposure was causing no mesothelioma in the 1920s also.

I say that overexposure to animal cancer studies is diverting our attention away from greatly important factors in the cause of cancer.

Best,



WM/dwc

P.S. Perry, now let me see what use you make of these pearls of wisdom.