

THE NETHERLANDS: MILK AND MEAT PRODUCTS CONTAMINATED BY DIOXIN FROM SOLID WASTE INCINERATORS

A.P. "The Government has banned the sales of milk and meat products from the farms near two large waste incinerators after foodstuffs from the farms were found to be contaminated by dioxin. The decision was announced in a letter to Parliament late Friday (7-14-89) and follows tests showing that the milk contained three times the amount of dioxin considered normal, according to George Dankmeyer, a health ministry spokesman. The official described the measure as 'precautionary' and said there was no immediate danger to public health. However, Dankmeyer added that consumers drinking contaminated milk on a daily basis would ultimately take in more dioxin than is considered safe, he said. The Government also ordered the waste furnaces to take stricter anti-pollution measures and was considering suing them for damages, he said. Dioxin is a highly toxic chemical contaminant that can be released into the atmosphere as a by-product of waste combustion. It has been used in chemical warfare. At issue is the milk and meat produce of 16 dairy farms surrounding the RIJMOND WASTE DISPOSAL CENTER near ROTTERDAM, the nation's largest combustion furnace for domestic waste. The annual milk output of these farms is about 1 million gallons but there is no immediate word of how much of the tainted milk has been sold or over what period. The Government announced similar measures for farms in the area of a waste furnace near AMSTERDAM after a theoretical calculation showed the same level of dioxin pollution was likely there, Dankmeyer said. Tests on the produce of the AMSTERDAM site still need to be completed, he said, adding that 10 similar combustion furnaces elsewhere in the country were believed safe. Milk from the two sites will be taken to a specially designed dairy factory, where the milk fat, in which the dioxin accumulates, will be skimmed off and destroyed." San Gabriel Valley Tribune, July 16, 1989, page A-9.

DIOXIN UPTAKE IN DAIRY PRODUCTS: The following papers, co-authored by Tom Webster and Paul Connett, are available from *Waste Not* for \$1 each.

"An estimation of the relative human exposure to 2,3,7,8-TCDD emissions via inhalation and ingestion of cow's milk," Chemosphere, Vol. 16, Nos. 8-9, pp 2079-2084, 1987.

"Critical factors in the assessment of food chain contamination by PCDD/PCDF from incinerators," Chemosphere, Vol. 18, Nos. 1-6, pp 1123-1129, 1989.

"Cumulative impact of incineration on agriculture: a screening procedure for calculating population risk," accepted for publication in Chemosphere.

VIDEO ON AGENT ORANGE RESEARCH AVAILABLE: The American Legion has just produced a 28-minute video that details research from an Agent Orange study. The American Legion

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commissioned Drs. Jeanne & Steven Stellman to do the Agent Orange study and their research was published in the December 1988 issue of **Environmental Research** (vol. 47, # 2*). The video is called "**A Time for Action**" and is available for loan (no charge) from: American Legion, Audio-Visual Library, P.R. Division, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. The American Legion has produced a pamphlet to accompany the video. The American Legion sponsored study found a direct correlation between health problems and exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. The results of this study contradict the Agent Orange studies undertaken by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) but complement the latest U.S. Air Force study by Dr. Richard Albanese (see **Waste Not #3**).

CDC TRIED TO SQUASH PUBLICATION OF AGENT ORANGE RESEARCH. Agent Orange is a classic example of high powered politics bludgeoning science. The CDC has been roundly criticized by environmental groups for its greater allegiance to politics and industry than to science. The Agent Orange/dioxin issue portrays the CDC at its very worst. The 'Joseph McCarthy' of science at the CDC is Dr. Vernon Houk (see article below), director of the unit on the study of Agent Orange. **Waste Not** learned that in November 1988 Dr. Houk telephoned the editor-in-chief of the journal **Environmental Research** to dissuade him from publishing the results of the American Legion sponsored Agent Orange study. The editor-in-chief refused Dr. Houk's request but offered Dr. Houk space in the journal for the CDC's response to the study. To date Dr. Houk has not taken advantage of this offer. Dr. Jeanne Stellman, co-author of the study, told **Waste Not** that she believed "there is a studied effort on the part of the Government to keep research on dioxin from being carried out," and that "truth might not win out on the Agent Orange issue." Dr. Stellman said that since the results of her research have been made public she has withstood a very aggressive battering from Dr. Houk and the CDC to the point where she plans to retreat from this issue. Dioxin sleuths are currently investigating connections between Dr. Houk and former U.S. Attorney General **Edwin Meese**.

Agent Orange Study Called Botched or Rigged

THE WASHINGTON POST, JULY 12, 1989, Page A-6

By Paula Yost
Washington Post Staff Writer

The federal Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta either botched a \$43 million study of health risks posed by the chemical defoliant Agent Orange or buckled under pressure from the Reagan White House to call off its research, the chairman of a congressional subcommittee charged yesterday.

"Either it was a politically rigged operation, or it was a monumentally bungled operation," Rep. Ted Weiss (D-N.Y.), chairman of the Government Operations human resources and intergovernmental relations subcommittee, said at a hearing on the canceled Agent Orange study. "In the meantime, the American people, especially the Vietnam veterans, are left high and dry."

The CDC halted the evaluation in 1987, asserting that a lack of military records made it impossible to determine which soldiers were exposed to the herbicide that was widely used to clear jungle under-

growth during the Vietnam war. Nearly 35,000 Vietnam veterans have claimed they suffered cancers and skin diseases and fathered children with birth defects as a result of exposure to Agent Orange, which contains the deadly chemical dioxin.

However, scientists testifying before the subcommittee said military records do exist and show which Army companies were in areas sprayed by the herbicide, which was named for its orange-striped containers.

Weiss submitted a letter in which a former CDC director stated that a White House Agent Orange task force had directed CDC to cancel its study on grounds that a "scientifically valid Agent Orange Exposure Study was not possible."

Dr. Vernon N. Houk, director of the CDC's Agent Orange study as head of CDC's Center for Environmental Health and Injury, denied the charge and testified that the CDC was not politically pressured to cancel the study. He said the White House task force instructed

the CDC to stop research only after CDC administrators made the recommendation to do so.

During two hours of testimony, Houk said he preferred that Weiss believe the CDC bungled the study rather than that it was swayed by political pressure. "There was absolutely" no political influence, Houk said. "I'm sorry you think it was bungled. We think it was good science."

Another scientist, former CDC statistician Dennis M. Smith, said CDC administrators changed the design of studies so often and switched variables so frequently that the results were meaningless. Researchers sometimes made up data to fill in gaps in the records, he said, so that "at one point people lost track of what was true and what was false."

"We were doing bad science at the CDC," Smith said in an interview after testifying. "We knew we were doing bad science... a number of us were saying so."

Smith, assigned to collect data on

troop movements and location of sprays, said he used military records to develop elaborate maps showing where Agent Orange was used. Colored pushpins showed which military companies were in the direct line of distribution. Smith said the maps were hanging on his office walls when the CDC first contended that the study was hopeless because it was impossible to link soldiers to exposure.

"That was just baloney. That was completely false," he said.

The effort to evaluate the health risks of dioxin has a long history of science and politics at odds. "I think that science is being made into a whipping boy for the politicians," said Dr. Jeanne Stellman, a scientist who with her husband conducted an Agent Orange study commissioned by the American Legion.

Stellman's study found that Agent Orange exposure can be linked to diseases in Vietnam veterans, results that were harshly criticized by Houk and others at a Monday hearing.

Letters, articles and calls from the public
welcome.

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* A copy of the journal **Environmental Research**, Vol. 47, #2, December 1988, that published five papers from the American Legion sponsored Agent Orange study is available for \$35 from Academic Press, PO Box 6208, Duluth MN 55806-0208.

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