



183

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Personal

Morton Miltz, Washington Post

Your overview article on cyclamates a few weeks ago was superb!

Have you followed the atrocious way that NATURE handled this business in the last few weeks. (C&EN at least printed a raft of letters in reply, and also invited me to do a guest editorial which quite contradicted their own production -- But see how they subtitled it in the table of contents for that issue!)

To the point: the response in Nature is merely symptomatic of the way that Finch & Co. managed the announcement and the ban. They did their best to make it appear as a piece of arbitrary bureaucracy, and as far as I can tell made no effort to explain or justify the scientific reasoning that would lead any knowledgeable person to take very seriously "cancer in six rats at high doses". You and I and very few others have tried to disseminate this reasoning. But it is coming home to me that it was a malfeasance of office for the HEW not to do so itself. And of course when Finch comes out later and suggests dropping the Delaney amendment, you can see what's behind it.

Many of my professional colleagues are still upset with some residual confusion. Barring M&N, which they rarely read or trust, few of the medical journals have had anything to say on the subject. So this is another segment of the communication system that has flunked.

I do urge you to keep this up --e.g. you might interview J.H. Weisburger at Nat. Cancer Inst. who is one of the most knowledgeable people around on the subject of carcinogenicity testing. It takes more than I can put into the kind of column I can do to get the main ideas across -- for example extrapolating the dose-response curves from experimental to population exposure levels needs some graphics. But I would not forget about hammering home the political point: whose responsibility it should have been in the first place.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg