

M. W. 115
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May 12, 1971

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Stanford University School of Medicine

Dear Dr. Lederberg,

I am sure you are familiar with the name Charles J. Conrad - California Assemblyman and advocate of defoliants used in Viet Nam. Well, recently I wrote a letter to Mr. Conrad, challenging him to prove that the products he advocates are as harmless as he says they are. He answered my letter, but I wasn't satisfied because he responded evasively. Instead of coming up with some facts to support his stand, he accused Dr. Matthew Meselson of Harvard University, Dr. Victor N. Sidel of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and yourself of being "prejudiced" and of "twisting scientific facts to achieve ends detrimental to the nation". Maybe he didn't have

any facts to corroborate his statement that defoliants used in Viet Nam are harmless. However, that's what I'm after - facts.

And so, Dr. Lederberg, if you can find the time, could you please answer some questions for me?

Is 2,4,5,-T the only product used in the defoliation program?

Mr. Conrad states that it no longer contains toxic substances, but that means that it once did. How long was it being used before it was purified?

And finally, are the defoliants that are now being used in Viet Nam harmful to plant life, animal life, or human life?

I hope that you can supply me with some answers, Doctor, and I want to thank you, not only for your time,

but also for your research in this field.

Sincerely,
Mary D. Wills