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SPECIAL ASST. TO CMD

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STATEMENT BY NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER MARY T. COON AT THE
NEW YORK STATE COMMISSION ON DIOXIN - SEPTEMBER 26, 1981

WHEN SECRETARY RICHARD SCHWEIKER ANNOUNCED THIS PAST WEEK THAT THE GOVERNMENT AD ERRED AND NOE ADMITTED THAT AMERICAN INFANTRYMAN HAD BEEN EXPOSED TO AGENT ORANGE, IT WAS NO SHOCK TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE STRUGGLE TO EXPOSE THE DANGERS OF DIOXIN. IN FACT, THE REVELATION WAS KIND OF COMICAL. UP UNTIL NOW, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN LIKE THE YOUNG CHILD WHO VEHEMENTLY DENIES EATING A PIECE OF CAKE, YET HAS CHOCOLATE ICING ALL OVER HIS FACE.

I AM NOT A DOCTOR, NOR AM I A RESEARCH SCIENTIST, BUT ONE THING I CAN DO IS READ; AND I HAVE READ A VOLUMINOUS AMOUNT OF MATERIAL CONCERNING THE EFFECTS OF DIOXIN. ONE OF THE BEST REPORTS IS BY DR. LUKE TEDESCHI WHICH APPEARED IN THE JUNE '80 EDITION OF THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF FORENSIC MEDICINE AND PATHOLOGY.

IT CITES STUDIES BY THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE AND BY THE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE THAT CLEARLY SHOWS THAT DIOXIN EXPOSURE IN ANIMALS RESULTS IN OFFSPRING THAT EXPERIENCE A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF BIRTH DEFECTS AND STILL BIRTHS.

DR. TEDESCHI'S REPORT ALSO CITES AN APRIL '79 INCIDENT WHERE THE ST. REGIS PAPER COMPANY SPRAYED DIOXIN ON THE RURAL TOWN OF DENNYSVILLE, MAINE. LATER BIRTH RECORDS SHOW THAT THE RATE OF BIRTH DEFECTS ROSE, AS 31 NEWBORN INFANTS WERE STRICKEN WITH ABNORMALITIES.

ANOTHER ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED IN THE JANUARY '80 JOURNAL OF OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE ENTITLED "THE MORTALITY EXPERIENCE OF WORKERS EXPOSED TO TETRACHLORODIBENZODIOXIN IN A TRICHLOROPHENAL ACCIDENT" CONCLUSIVELY SHOWS THE LINK BETWEEN HUMAN BIRTH DEFECTS AND DIOXIN THAT THE GOVERNMENT STILL REFUSE TO RECOGNIZE. THE REPORT CITES THE CASE OF THE MONSANTO CHEMICAL PLANT IN NITRO, WEST VIRGINIA. IN 1949 THE PLANT SUFFERED AN EXPLOSION AND AS A RESULT 32 WORKERS DIED. THIS, COMBINED WITH THE 1976 INCIDENT IN NEVESO, ITALY, CLEARLY ESTABLISH, IN MY MIND, A LINK BETWEEN DIOXIN AND SEVERE HUMAN INJURY.

(MORE)

MARY T. CODD PAGE TWO

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LEDGER, THE DOW CHEMICAL COMPANY, WHO ARE DEFENDENTS IN MANY CIVIL SUITS BROUGHT BY VICTIMS OF AGENT ORANGE, DID A STUDY WHICH SHOWED NO LINK. SUCH A PAPER IS CLEARLY SELF-SERVING.

OVER THE PAST YEARS I HAVE COME IN CONTACT WITH MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE DEDICATED IN TRYING TO AMED THE EFFECTS OF AGENT ORANGE. MY APPEAL TO YOU TODAY IS ON BEHALF OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS. THEY ARE SUFFERING AND THEY ARE SCARED. THE VIETNAM WAR WAS OVER SEVERAL YEARS AGO, BUT THE CONFLICT FOR MANY CONTINUES ON. BECAUSE OF AGENT ORANGE, THE CASUALTIES HAVE OCCURRED IN GENERATIONS THAT HAVE NEVER EVEN SEEN SOUTH EAST ASIA.

AND SO THE SAGA CONTINUES. WASHINGTON SPENDS BILLIONS ON BOMBS THAT DAMAGE ONLY HUMANS AND THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION RECOGNIZES ONLY PIMPLES AS A DISABILITY OF AGENT ORANGE. THIS COMMISSION CAN HELP CHANGE THAT INJUSTICE. IT CAN SHOW THAT DIOXIN IS THE KILLER WE ALL KNOW IT TO BE. A REPORT WITH THAT CONCLUSION, DUMPED ON REAGAN'S DESK, WILL FORCE WASHINGTON TO MOVE. THESE VETERANS NEED IT. HELP ALLAY THEIR FEARS AND ANXIETIES, ONCE AND FOR ALL.

FOR THE SERVICE THEY'VE GIVEN OUR COUNTRY, THEY DESERVE NOTHING LESS.

Director of dioxin panel ousted in policy dispute

The Associated Press

Disagreement between Vietnam veterans has apparently led to a change at the top of a special state commission to study the effects of Agent Orange on U.S. soldiers who served in Southeast Asia.

Joseph Brett, who has served as executive director of the Temporary State Commission on Dioxin Exposure since its creation last year, said Tuesday he had been forced out of his position by more activist members of the commission.

Brett, a 35-year-old Vietnam vet, said he decided to resign as executive director "about three weeks ago" because of continuing disputes "with about three members" of the nine-member commission.

"I think the majority of the commission members were behind me," he said. "But rather than split the commission, I decided to resign."

Brett charged some commission members wanted to condemn everything about dioxin and the use of the related defoliant Agent Orange in Vietnam before all the evidence was in. The substances have been linked to

cancer and birth defects in laboratory animal tests.

"I find it interesting that the most bitching comes from those people who don't want to do the reading," Brett said.

He said his major differences were with Robert Santos, the commission chairman. Santos, like Brett a Vietnam vet, could not be reached for comment.

Brett, who helped found the Albany chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America and who has been an unofficial adviser to Gov. Hugh Carey on veterans affairs, said he is satisfied with his work.

And he said he doesn't feel the commission's final report, due by March, will be less thorough than he would have wished.

"She is a scientist," he said of Ruth Leverett, a research biochemist with the state Health Department, who has replaced him as executive director.

Mrs. Leverett, who is also a commission member, would not discuss the events leading up to Brett's decision to leave. She said, however, she was "satisfied with Mr. Brett's performance."

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