

# EPA, Greenpeace Plan Chlorine Ban

by Rogelio A. Maduro



Chlorine free? Greenpeace officials, flanked by a banner proclaiming "Chlorine-free Great Lakes," at a debate in Windsor, Ontario, in October 1993. At the podium is Brad Lienhart, manager of the Chlorine Chemistry Council. Above are headlines from Science News and Greenpeace.

The latest scare story about to become law is about chlorine compounds as "hormonal toxicants." The move to ban all uses of chlorine centers around the theory that some chlorinated compounds act as hormones when ingested, falsifying the chemical signals sent by the body to the sexual organs. These so-called hormonal toxicants are alleged to cause severe sexual problems including malformed sexual organs, shriveled penises, and effeminate men and animals.

One would think that such propaganda, based on non-peer-reviewed studies, would be dismissed outright. However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is using such arguments to push for a ban on chlorine in all its uses, a demand made by Greenpeace, which

launched its chlorine campaign in the wake of its antifreon propaganda.

EPA Administrator Carol M. Browner announced on Jan. 31, 1993, that EPA was developing a plan to "prohibit, substitute, or reduce" the use of chlorine in all its uses. The ban on chlorine would be implemented through the Clean Water Act Reauthorization. In order to fulfill this agenda, EPA is preparing the "Dioxin Reassessment Study," to be released sometime in June 1994. This report will claim that organochlorides pose a significantly greater risk of cancer than previously estimated and that they are hormonal toxicants.

How do we know what the report will say before it is released? We know because EPA has been secretly briefing en-

vironmental groups on the contents of the report so it can use the information to scare the public and prepare fundraising and legislative campaigns. And this is just what the environmental groups have been doing.

One of the EPA study's authors, Linda Birnbaum, has been revealing selected results from the study at scientific conferences, for example. Yet, none of the EPA's findings has been peer reviewed or published in the scientific literature. No independent scientist has been able to review the accuracy of the study. Instead, EPA is engaging in science by press release both directly and indirectly through its collaboration with environmental groups.

Before Browner gave her press confer-

ence last January to announce the EPA's proposal, environmental groups had received copies of the proposal and had distributed press releases telling news organizations the details of what Browner intended to announce and stating that a U.S. ban on chlorine was imminent.

Fred Webber, president of the Chemical Manufacturers Association, lambasted this collusion during a heated press conference Feb. 8. "Curiously, or perhaps it wasn't so curious," Webber said, "Greenpeace was spreading word around the United States and in Europe and Asia that the EPA intended to ban chlorine here even before the administrator had her news conference. . . . Greenpeace even had time to organize a demonstration outside a plant in Australia, at which it spread the news that the United States planned to ban chlorine."

Furthermore, Webber noted, "A number of other organizations including the U.S. Public Interest Research Group also had advance word of the agency's plans and had statements and news releases supporting the EPA's proposal ready in time to hand out at the administrator's news conference."

The campaign against chlorine has been well orchestrated in Congress, led by Bill Richardson (D-N.M.) and Dan Hamburg (D-Calif.). This effort was aided by the premature release of the International Joint Commission's annual report on the health of the Great Lakes. (The Joint Commission is a U.S.-Canada body appointed by both governments to oversee the Great Lakes system.)

Rep. Richardson held a briefing in Congress Feb. 8, jointly sponsored by Greenpeace and other environmental groups, to announce the kickoff of a personal campaign to ban all uses of chlorine through the Clean Water Act. As clearly outlined during the briefing by representatives of Greenpeace and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the objective of the campaign is the total elimination of chlorine from industrial processes, and eventually the elimination of water chlorination.

#### **The Collapse of Public Health**

The impact of a ban on chlorine will be extraordinary. There will be severe economic penalties, but most important, more than 100 years of advances in public health will be overturned if this ban is implemented, setting the stage for a full-

scale return of some of the most deadly infectious diseases known.

Chlorine is used to kill bacteria that cause cholera, typhoid fever, dysentery, giardia, and other waterborne diseases. Contaminated water supplies were the most serious public health problem around the world until the chlorination of water was widely implemented. It is still a serious problem worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, contaminated water supplies still kill 25,000 children every day in Third World countries.

The ban on water chlorination has been proposed as an amendment to the reauthorization of the Clean Water Act by Congressmen Richardson and Hamburg. Millions of people will die if this amendment passes.

One does not need to go far to see the result of a ban on water chlorination. In 1991, Peru stopped chlorinating its water supply, citing advice by the EPA on the dangers of chlorine compounds. The consequences have been disastrous. Shortly after chlorination ended, a cholera epidemic erupted. This epidemic quickly became a pandemic which has struck 14 countries in Latin America, infecting more than 1 million people and killing more than 8,500.

It was quite clear that the congressional briefing called by Rep. Richardson was being orchestrated by Mark Fogel from Greenpeace. He and other greens were at the podium, including representatives from the World Wildlife Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

At the end of the question and answer period, Fogel went so far as to brief the audience on Rep. Bill Richardson's strategy behind the implementation of the "Chlorine Zero Discharge Act," the amendment to the Clean Water Act that will ban the chlorination of water. After his detailed briefing, a flustered aide to Richardson quickly thanked Fogel for his promotion of Richardson's bill and then tried to explain to the audience that Greenpeace was not telling Richardson what to do. The aide stammered "Let me say it is my boss's bill, not Greenpeace's bill."

In order to pass these draconian policies, environmental extremist groups are orchestrating a series of scares around chlorine. The objective is to create the same of type debacle as was

used against apples in the Alar scare. This scare, however, is expected to be at least 100 times greater. Greenpeace has already released several frightening reports about chlorine and assaulted chlorine production facilities all over the world.

#### **'Feminine Touch'?**

The lack of published scientific evidence backing the hormonal toxicant theory has not deterred the environmentalists. *Science News* promoted the theory in feature articles Jan. 8 and Jan. 22. Author Janet Raloff states: "Increasingly, scientists are finding, we have been seeding our environment with chemicals that can inadvertently alter or mimic the activity of feminizing hormones. These agents are everywhere. Many—such as pesticides—contaminate our drinking water and foods. We unsuspectingly breathe others in urban air."

According to Raloff, organochlorides cause men to have testicular cancer, poor semen quality, and undescended testicles. The only item of proof cited for these allegations is an article in which all these things were "reported in the male offspring of women who during pregnancy received treatment with diethylstilbestrol (DES), a potent synthetic estrogen." The article does not mention that many of those women and their offspring died because of DES and that such a comparison cannot be made with the minuscule levels of organochlorides found in nature.

The crux of the article is laid out at the end, when Raloff quotes two green scientists, Ana Soto, an endocrinologist, and Theo Colborn, a zoologist on the payroll of the World Wildlife Fund. Raloff states: "no rules yet require a . . . test of a new or existing chemical's ability to mimic or affect reproductive hormones. The result of that omission, Soto charges, is that the economic cost-benefit analyses that today play an important role in determining which toxic chemicals remain on the market—and for how long—fail to capture the cost of exposing wildlife and its stewards to hormone mimicking toxic chemicals."

"We have just begun to open the door of discovery concerning the non-cancer health effects of the synthetic chemicals that in the last 50 years have become an integral part of our life," says Colborn. The take-home message from these new studies, [Soto] believes, is that

'we need to take these effects as seriously as, if not more seriously, than cancer.' Indeed argues Soto: 'What is the economic cost of having a generation that cannot reproduce?'

Despite such a dramatic ending, Raloff fails to mention that environmental groups are staunch advocates of abortion and sterilization as population control policies. Clearly they are not concerned about the reproduction of the human species.

Furthermore, Raloff makes Greenpeace the hero of the chlorine war. In a box accompanying the article on "That Feminine Touch," Raloff praises Greenpeace for saving humanity from those nasty chemicals: "In a 67-page report—'Chlorine, Human Health, and the Environment'—released last October, Greenpeace USA argued that 'no further organochloride pollution should be permitted.' Said Joe Thornton, the author, this 'means phasing out the substance that is their root—chlorine, since whenever chlorine is used, organochlorines result.'"

Raloff ends the commentary by reporting that "toxicologist Devra Lee Davis with the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C., [states] 'We're not well served by blanket solutions to complicated problems.' However, she asserts, 'I'm glad I live in a democratic country where discussions, like those that Greenpeace has been leading on this chlorine issue, can be aired before the public.'"

#### Where's the Evidence?

The main shortcoming to the "hormonal toxicant" theory is that there is no scientific evidence to back it. Not one paper has appeared in the scientific literature on the subject. That shortcoming, however, is an advantage to the greens. Because no medical or scientific journal has published papers on the subject, no scientist is supposed to criticize the theory. Therefore the greens can make all the claims they want and argue that there is a "consensus" on the subject in the scientific community, because no papers have been published criticizing the theory.

Greenpeace's fraudulent approach was criticized by CMA's Fred Webber during his Feb. 8th press conference: "Greenpeace and its allies have determined wrongly that chlorine and all chlorine chemistry are inherently evil

### USE OF CHLORINE CHEMISTRY IN THE MANUFACTURE OF PHARMACEUTICALS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE PRODUCTS

Therapeutic group	Number of products surveyed	Percentage of sales in the group with			
		Hydrochloride in product	Chlorine in molecule	Chlorine in manufacture	No chlorine
Nutritionals	8	0	0	92.2	7.8
Blood modifiers	7	0	0	46.1	53.9
Hormones	20	0	11.9	70.7	17.4
Cardiovasculars	43	2.4	28.6	46.6	22.4
Respiratory drugs	16	4.7	24.5	49.6	21.2
Central nervous system drugs	39	16	31.7	44	8.3
Gastrointestinals	9	0	0	97.9	2.1
Anti-infectives	36	8.4	14.5	69.9	7.2
Biologicals	4	0	0	0	100
Topical preparations	12	15.7	26.8	52.2	5.3
Antineoplastics	6	0	27.8	34.5	37.7
Miscellaneous	6	0	0	80.3	19.7
<b>Total all groups</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>15.5</b>

Source: Charles River Associates, 1993

*Chlorine chemistry is central in the manufacture of medicines.*

and must be banned. All they're trying to do now is figure out how to do it legally, of course. But they are not interested in an honest, thorough scientific examination of chlorine chemistry, a let-the-chips-fall-where-they-may approach to answering the questions that have been posed about chlorine and some of its compounds."

Webber emphasized, "rather, they're prepared to pervert science and the policy-making process to cook the books if they can so that the answers come out to support the actions they propose to take. You see, there is one really big weakness in the campaign to ban chlorine: the science does not support a blanket ban."

#### Greens Target Red Meat

One of the most important elements for a successful scare is the issue of personal exposure. One could call this the "in my backyard syndrome," or, in this case, "in my stomach." The Alar scare, the model for the chlorine scare, was based on claiming that eating apples with Alar could cause cancer. Never mentioned was that one would have to eat 20,000 apples a day for 70 years to increase the cancer risk by 1 in a million!

The chlorine scare will be based on

meat consumption. Environmentalists are tailoring the scare to present meat as the major source of organochloride contamination. This and other baseless claims will be promoted by the EPA when it finally releases its study.

Imagine this picture: Just as Americans sit down for dinner, they will hear the news that "the steak (hamburger, chicken, lamb chop, ham, pork chop, hot dog, turkey) you are about to eat may be loaded with toxic dioxin. . . ." These hapless people will also hear that they can eliminate toxic substances from their meat if they send money to environmental activists who just happen to have 900 lines ready "to take your call and credit card number."

The public will be fed the standard green line that dioxin is "the most toxic compound known to man," and that dioxin and all other organochlorides are man-made and do not occur in nature. What the public will never be told by the newscasters or the EPA is that scientists have identified more than 2,000 naturally occurring organochlorides.

Dioxin is also produced in nature. It is the by-product of high heat and chlorine compounds, which can be as simple as salt, sodium chloride (NaCl). Dioxin is



created by volcanoes, forest and prairie fires, lightning, slash-and-burn agriculture; household fireplaces, woodstoves, and soil and ocean bacteria. As a matter of fact, EPA considered a ban on fireplaces some years back because of the high concentrations of dioxin produced by the burning of firewood.

#### **An Economic and Human Debacle**

What is not a fantasy, however, is the effect on human life and the economy of a ban on chlorine. This point was underscored by Webber in his press conference. He noted that chlorine chemistry "contributes enormously to the health of Americans: 98 percent of our nation's drinking water is purified with chlorine; 85 percent of all medicines are made through chlorine chemistry—medicines used to treat everything from Hodgkin's disease to pneumonia to heart disease."

The economic consequences of a ban, Webber added, would be staggering. "Chlorine chemistry accounts for nearly \$100 billion of our national economy. A ban on chlorine [would] not only put people's health at considerable risk," Webber said, "it would weaken our overall national economy." A ban, he said, would "impoverish the economies

and the people of a number of individual states."

In terms of U.S. industry, the greens seek to ban any industrial process that releases dioxin or other organochlorides. The Greens argue that dioxin is produced by all municipal solid waste incinerators and all hazardous waste incinerators, cement kilns, and boilers and industrial furnaces that burn wastes to produce heat. Dioxin is also produced by metal smelters, paper mills, and many other common industrial processes. The pulp and paper industry estimates that 19,000 workers will lose their jobs in less than a year after a ban is enacted, not to mention the rise in the price of paper and books.

The greens are confident that they can get away with this gross deception, as they have with all the others. This time, however, there is an aggressive backlash from grass-roots groups, scientists, and municipal governments across the country. The chlorine scare may be the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back.

*Rogelio Maduro, an associate editor of 21st Century, is a coauthor of The Holes in the Ozone Scare.*

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