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COMMITTEE REPORT: Agent Orange

Will The Government Come Clean?

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is scheduled to release its scientific review of Agent Orange health effects on July 31, 1993. There is great concern about whether the U.S. government will make honest recommendations for compensation related to this report.

The entire history of the Agent Orange problem has been fraught with fraud and coverup. Congressional reports clearly indicate that government considerations on compensation were based on liability concerns for the chemical and paper industries. The first Citizens' Conference on Dioxin, which was held in North Carolina in 1991, clearly documented this government coverup. This conference showed that the White House had a large part in the decisions to hide the truth. The evidence of fraud and coverup is now available on videotape. Tapes Four and Five deal with fraud and coverup surrounding the Agent Orange issue and can be ordered for \$25 per tape from: Video Active Productions, Rt. 2, Box 322, Canton, NY 13617; 315-386-8797.

Vietnam Veterans of America, the American Legion, and the National Veterans Legal Services Project hired scientists to eval-

uate the evidence on Agent Orange and dioxin. The expert scientists came to the conclusion that eight diseases were associated with Agent Orange at a statistically significant level. There were a large number of other diseases that the scientists considered associated with Agent Orange at a level high enough to award compensation benefits. However, the U.S. government ignored this report, and I believe the government disregard was based on concerns of industry liability.

I believe that NAS will release the report on time and the U.S. government will hold it for months. This is unacceptable and will produce immediate suspicion. If the government intends to be honest, the report should be given to Congress and the public on July 31, 1993.

The fact that industry is being sued by civilians is not sufficient reason to hide the truth on dioxin. The scientific evidence shows that Agent Orange victims should receive compensation and treatment for a lot of diseases, including birth defects, and it is time the government face the moral obligation that it has to veterans and their families.■

—George Claxton
