

Greens' ban on chlorine will spread epidemics

by Rogelio A. Maduro

Environmental activists in the United States are campaigning to use the reauthorization of the 1972 Clean Water Act to overturn more than 100 years of advances in public health. The activists, led by the discredited Greenpeace, are trying to include amendments to the act that would ban the use of chlorine in the disinfection of water supplies and sewage. If this passes, it will set the stage for a return of the most deadly infectious diseases, threatening the lives of millions.

Chlorine is used to kill microbes that cause deadly water-borne diseases, such as cholera, typhoid fever, and *giardia lamblia*. The reauthorization of the Clean Water Act will be voted on by Congress in the next few weeks, and if the greens have their way, the ban on virtually all uses of chlorine will be phased in over the next two years. The ban on water chlorination has been proposed as an amendment by Reps. Bill Richardson (D-N.M.) and Dan Hamburg (D-Calif.).

The ban is being proposed under the guise of saving people from a host of alleged health problems, including malformation and/or dysfunctioning of the sexual organs.

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 on the advice of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Shortly after chlorination ended, a cholera epidemic erupted in Peru. It quickly struck 14 countries in Ibero-America, infecting more than 1 million people and killing more than 8,500.

Greenpeace's newest fraud

The environmentalists laid out their objectives during a briefing in the U.S. Capitol on Feb. 8, co-sponsored by Representative Richardson and several environmental

groups, including Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Natural Resources Defense Council. All speakers were environmentalists and the panel was led by Mark Flögel of Greenpeace. The speakers alternated between scary tales of the alleged toxicity of chlorinated compounds, and marketing hype for chlorine-free paper production.

At the end of the question and answer period, Greenpeace's Flögel briefed the audience on Richardson's strategy behind his "Chlorine Zero Discharge Act." This apparently embarrassed a Richardson aide, who rose to thank Flögel for his promotion of Richardson's bill, but stammered, "Let me say it is my boss's bill, not Greenpeace's bill."

The eco-fascists are working closely with the EPA, which will release its "Dioxin Reassessment Report," on April 15. But the EPA has been regularly briefing the greens on the content in advance of publication, even though none of the "scientific findings" of the report has been submitted to the customary procedure of peer review by other scientists.

Fred Webber, president of the Chemical Manufacturers Association, denounced this collusion between EPA and the eco-fascists in a press conference on Feb. 8. Webber noted that even before EPA Administrator Carol M. Browner gave her Jan. 31 press conference announcing EPA's proposal, environmental groups had received copies of it and had written press releases telling news organizations that a U.S. ban on chlorine was imminent. Browner stated during her press conference that the EPA planned to develop a strategy to "prohibit, substitute, or reduce" the use of chlorine.

Webber stated that "curiously—or perhaps it wasn't so curious—Greenpeace was spreading word around the U.S. 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 U.S. planned to ban chlorine."

Webber noted that "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 last week."

The 'hormonal toxicants' hoax

The chlorine scare will be unlike any other recent environmental scares. Since chlorine and chlorinate compounds do not pose any conceivable threat of cancer, the greens have come up with several new categories of threats, including the unproven theory of "hormonal toxicants." According to this theory, organochlorides (produced by chlorinated compounds) mimic the body's hormones, causing disruptions in sexual signals, among other things. The greens describe all types of hypothetical damage that will be caused, concentrating on lurid descriptions of deformities to sexual organs. Some of the claims are that males exposed to these "hormonal toxicants" develop small penises, undescended testicles, testicular cancer, poor semen quality, and become effeminate.

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

Greenpeace's fraudulent approach was criticized by Webber during his press conference. "Greenpeace and its allies," he said, "have determined wrongly that chlorine and all chlorine chemistry are inherently evil 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. Rather, they're prepared to pervert science and the policymaking 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."

One of the most important elements for a successful scare campaign is the issue of personal exposure. One could call this the "not in my backyard syndrome." In the case of the 1989 Alar scare, this was based on the claim that eating apples treated with Alar could cause cancer (the greens never mentioned that one would have to eat 20,000 apples a day

for 70 years to increase the cancer risk by one 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: "Your meat is loaded with the toxic dioxin!" The public will be told that dioxin is "the most toxic compound known to man," and that it and other organochlorides are the product of man's meddling with Mother Nature.

Dioxin is also produced in nature. It is the by-product of high heat plus chlorinated compounds, which could just be simple table salt, sodium chloride. Dioxin is created by volcanoes, forest and prairie fires, lightning, slash-and-burn agriculture, household fireplaces, and soil and ocean bacteria. As a matter of fact, the 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, who said that chlorine chemistry "contributes enormously to the health of Americans: Ninety-eight percent of our nation's drinking water is purified with chlorine; 85% 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; 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 an industrial process that releases dioxin and other organochlorides. They 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 by 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.

The greens are confident that they can get away with this monstrosity, as they have with other environmental hoaxes before it. This time, however, patriotic activists have risen to challenge the fraud. The Alliance for America, an umbrella group that represents more than 400 grassroots organizations, the Environmental Conservation Organization, and many other groups have mobilized to expose the lies. Scientists are denouncing the claims made by the greens, and municipalities across the country are up in arms at the consequences to human health of a ban on water chlorination. This latest green fraud may prove to be the straw that broke the camel's back.