

# MONITOR

VOL. 2, NO. 4 • JUNE-JULY 1975

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## DOCTOR'S CORNER

### Occupational Dermatoses: Causes and Prevention PART II

Phillip L. Polakoff, M.D.

In the April-May, 1975, issue of the Monitor we discussed the extent of occupational dermatoses. That is, just how often skin diseases develop as a result of the occupational environment. We also discussed the basic composition and functions of the skin. In this second series we will address the two most practical aspects of occupational dermatitis—what causes skin diseases and how they can be prevented.

#### Causes of Occupational Dermatitis

**Chemical Agents.** These represent the largest single cause of industrial dermatosis by one of two mechanisms: as irritants or as sensitizers. Primary irritants damage the normal skin on contact, depending upon the strength of the compound and duration of contact. Examples of primary irritants are inorganic acids, anhydrides, alkalis, heavy metal salts, tanning agents, bleaches, and chlorine compounds. It is estimated that 80 percent of all occupational skin disease is caused by primary irritants. Alterations in the normal defenses of the skin, such as dryness, excessive perspiration, and most of all, uncleanliness, provokes the action of these primary irritants.

In contrast, sensitizers (allergens) cause about 20 percent of all occupational dermatoses; however, almost any chemical and many plants can produce allergic dermatitis. Poison ivy or poison oak are well known examples. A person must have been exposed to a sensitizer at least one previous time before a dermatitis will occur. This time period can range from five to seven or more days. Occasionally, months or years may pass before a worker continually exposed to a specific agent develops an allergic eruption.



Contact dermatitis caused by epoxy resin

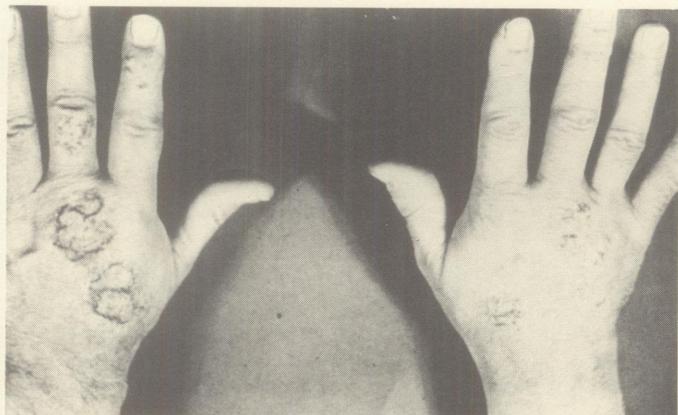


Chloracne caused by cyclic chlorinated compounds

Materials known to act as potent sensitizing compounds are found among the dyes and dye intermediates, rubber ingredients, plastics in the unfinished stage, certain poisonous plants, and metals such as nickel, chrome and mercury. Under ordinary circumstances, allergic occupational dermatoses are seen in only a few individuals in a given operation. Conversely, primary irritant chemicals generally affect substantially more people in a work area.

**Physical Factors.** Excessive heat, cold, sunlight, artificial ultraviolet and ionizing radiation produce harmful effects on the skin. Sunlight can be better tolerated by dark complexioned individuals than by those with light complexions. In addition, sunlight acting in conjunction with photo-reactive chemicals such as tars and oils can lead to phototoxic or photoallergic dermatitis. Artificial ultraviolet light produced by hot metals, welding and the plasma torch, can cause burns to the skin. Excessive exposure to x-ray and radioactive materials can produce severe injury to the skin or to the entire body.

**Biological Agents.** Bacterial, fungal and parasitic infections of the skin can sometimes result in a generalized



Effects of solvent dermatitis

disease process. Animal handlers, packing house workers, hide handlers, kitchen employees, agricultural workers, bakers, florists, nurserymen, and laboratory technicians are among those who may be affected by such agents. Likewise, wood workers, electric linemen, lumbermen, and road builders are exposed to a number of plants and woods which can irritate the skin.

**Indirect Causes.** Besides the above-mentioned causes of occupational dermatoses, there are also predisposing factors. Some individuals are more susceptible than others. Factors such as sex, age, skin type, hair coloring, allergic history, lack of cleanliness and pre-existing skin infections may indicate such susceptibility.

Women are more prone to develop occupational dermatitis than are male workers. Women's skin tends to be less oily than men's, which makes women's skin more sensitive to many irritants, especially solvents. With regard to age, young workers often develop occupational dermatoses more readily than their elders. One reason is that many younger workers are less cautious or aware of the injurious nature of chemicals to which they are exposed. In reference to skin texture, thin and dry skin is less able to withstand the action of solvents or detergents than is the thick and oily skin. The oily skin is more capable of producing natural oils for surface protection; thus, the drying action of solvents, soaps and detergents is lessened. However, workers with oily and hairy skin are more susceptible to skin problems arising from use of various cutting and lubricating oils. This is so because these oils collect within the hair follicles and produce an irritation which results in oil folliculitis. In its worse form, occupational acne is the result.

Excessive perspiration can lead to or be a contributing factor in occupational dermatitis. Prolonged and intensified perspiration in the armpits, groin, and at sites of friction, such as the line of the belt or the collar, can cause a condition called prickly heat. Workers exposed to high degrees of temperature are particularly susceptible to this type of dermatitis.

Finally, and most obvious, the lack of cleanliness is a further predisposing factor in the development of occupational skin disease. It is sufficient to say that workers who do not practice cleanliness are permitting prolonged contact between their skin and harmful substances and materials.

#### **Prevention of Occupational Dermatitis**

Occupational dermatitis is a preventable disease. It takes a concerted effort to institute control programs aimed toward protecting workers along the entire line of production. The two main approaches are environmental control methods (engineering) and personal hygiene methods.

**Engineering Controls.** The best method for achieving a low rate of skin problems is through the maintenance of a very clean work environment. A clean workplace decreases the chance for a worker to develop contact dermatitis (touching or breathing an irritant). The ideal modern factory is now constructed and equipped with automatic machinery which protects the worker from contact with potentially hazardous chemicals. When closed processes cannot be used, collection systems can be installed to control the irritant dusts, vapors, fumes and mists, thereby keeping floors, ceilings, walls and windows clean.

**Personal Cleanliness.** Washing hands, wearing clean work clothes and keeping clean on the job is every worker's responsibility. To do this, workers must be furnished with adequate washing facilities and good cleansing materials. Washing facilities should be used before and after lunch, before breaks and at the end of the workday. In certain jobs, uncleanliness may be so great that frequent cleansing or showers should be required.

Industrial hand cleansers are numerous and can be obtained in the form of soap powders, abrasive powders, abrasive cakes, liquids and the waterless cleansers. Mild industrial soaps will generally remove ordinary dirt and grime. However, when tenacious materials are encountered, many workers use solvents or powerful abrasives which are actually more harmful than the contact agent. Skin care product manufacturers (3M Company, Randustrial, American Optical, Calgon Corporation) can be of assistance in establishing protection systems for particular workplace situations.

**Protective Clothing and Ointments.** A wide selection of protective garments made from rubber, plastic, leather, cotton or other materials is available depending on the needs of a specific job. A job analysis should be done throughout the workplace to ascertain where protective clothing, sleeves, shoes or gloves are needed. Employers should provide such protective gear because more effective control over wearing and servicing would be facilitated. In addition, exposure of the family's clothing by way of the laundry can thus be avoided.

When the face cannot be covered by a shield, or gloves cannot be worn, barrier creams may be a means of preventing occupational dermatitis. However, as a general rule, this method is the least efficient way of protecting the skin. These types of creams may create a false sense of security. It should be noted that there is no one all-purpose protective cream.

#### **Key Points to Keep in Mind**

- 1) Wash frequently with mild soap and water.
- 2) Avoid harsh soaps or soaps with abrasives.
- 3) Do not use solvents to clean skin.
- 4) Keep work clothes from becoming soaked with cutting fluids.
- 5) Wash work clothes frequently.
- 6) Change wipe cloths often.
- 7) When using a barrier cream to protect the skin, use the one specified for the hazard involved.
- 8) After washing, a good skin cream or emollient should be used to replace natural skin oils.
- 9) Get immediate first aid for any abrasion or skin rash.

Dr. Polakoff will be leaving the Labor Occupational Health Program. Therefore this is the last regular series of his articles. The staff of the LOHP wishes him success in his new pursuits and looks forward to future articles in the Monitor as his schedule permits.

Published monthly by the Labor Occupational Health Program, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, 2521 Channing Way, Berkeley, California 94720.

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Annual subscription rates: Organizations and Institutions—\$10.00, Individuals—\$3.00. Quantity shipments are also available to union locals or other groups at a cost of 5¢ per copy per issue, with an annual subscription.

The opinions expressed in the MONITOR represent the views of the Authors, and not necessarily those of the Institute of Industrial Relations.

## Some Pressure Points for Safety

Ernest H. Norback  
Workers' Compensation Attorney

Getting employers to provide safe places to work need not be confined to seeking compliance with state and federal OSHA. Lack of funds, manpower, and inadequacy of standards can limit OSHA effectiveness. Thus, it is helpful to use other laws to aid OSHA objectives.

These other laws have been fought for by labor unions, with varying degrees of success. But they are now on the books, available in the promotion of safe places to work. OSHA standards primarily look forward, providing guides for future conduct by the employer. These other laws act upon past conduct, and by imposing penalties can be spurs to corrections by employers of unsafe practices. They are points for pressure because of their economic impact.

### Workers' Compensation

First is the use of the state Workers' Compensation laws: Inadequate as the benefits often are, it is also surprising how widespread is the ignorance of their availability and the consequent failure to claim them. They are, of course, available to any worker suffering job-caused injury regardless of safety conditions or fault. But where the disabilities are caused by careless management, prompt and effective claims made by the injured worker will promote adoption of safety measures by employers. Claims pursued increase cost to the employer; therefore, he will be strongly motivated to avoid future accidents by correcting unsafe practices. Claims not pursued do not increase cost; inaction simply permits continued employer carelessness.

Workers' compensation is all paid for by the employer. All medical care is provided and weekly disability indemnity may go on for the duration of the disability, sometimes with lifetime pensions. For total permanent disability, one may get up to \$119.00 per week for life. In case of death due to the injury, up to \$45,000 may be available to dependents, plus \$1,000 for burial. On the other hand, insurance for nonindustrial disabilities may be less costly to the employer and, more often, paid for partly by the worker. Medical treatment is often only partially paid for and weekly indemnity, if any, may only be paid for a maximum of six months.

Frequently there is difficulty in distinguishing whether a disability or death was caused by the work or not. This can occur in disabilities of the heart, vascular system, back, hearing, or diseases such as cancer and emphysema. The benefits are so substantially greater if the disability is caused by the work that careful consideration should be given before deciding not to pursue the claim. It is often best to let the Workers' Compensation Appeals Board act on it, for the California state constitution holds that the workers' compensation laws shall be interpreted liberally in favor of the injured worker.

In addition, where the job injury is caused by the serious and willful misconduct of the employer, there may be imposed a penalty of up to \$10,000.00 on the employer. This is over and above the normal insurance benefits. This is another pressure point for safety. The point is that in pursuing these claims, the employer is put on notice to improve safety at the work site where possible. Alerted by the potential cost, he may be moved to act constructively.

### Additional Remedies

Effective January 1, 1975, and for job injuries occurring after that date, an additional state law **requires** the furnishing of rehabilitation services by the employer if the worker

wants them. The object is to get the person back, as close as possible, to the earnings and job satisfaction of the old job. Again, this is only available to a worker with a job-incurred injury or disease. If a worker is persuaded not to go forward with proving a work-connected disability, it can be less costly to the employer. If it can be shown that the permanent disability was caused by the work environment, this new law can add to the cost of doing business. Again, this cost is a strong inducement to the employer to make his place of work safer.

Finally, in another progressive step last year, the state legislature made it unlawful for an employer of five or more persons (with certain exceptions) to discriminate against a person with a physical handicap. The employer cannot discharge, or refuse to hire, or pay lower wages or otherwise discriminate for such handicap, if the worker is able to perform duties. Again, here is another pressure point for the employer to improve safety standards. There are comparable federal laws. Indeed the federal Longshoremen's and Harbor Workers' Act provides substantially greater benefits for job-caused disabilities than the state law.

In the pursuit of making places of work safe, it is helpful to consider all of these laws. A fragmented approach—by which one is concerned with only one law or aspect—may be less effective. Not only should one seek to improve and apply state and federal OSHA standards; workers should also be aware of the need for vigorous application of these other laws. Their goals are the same. They have been fought for by organized labor and enlightened employers for decades. Ignorance of their availability and failure to use them defeats their objective.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

### Ruling Bolsters Union's Role in Health and Safety

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission recently made a ruling which will give unions a stronger voice in dealing with on-the-job hazards. The action stems from a two year old case involving the Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers and the General Electric Co. Issues in the case were raised by IUE Local 301 which represents the 4,000 members at GE's steam turbine-generator products division, Schenectady. The company employs more than 27,000 workers in that area.

More than two years ago, OSHA inspectors cited GE for being in violation of a number of federal health and safety standards and proposed \$14,800 in penalties. However, an OSHRC administrative law judge dismissed several citations and assessed penalties of only \$1,650. The IUE local and the Dept. of Labor then requested that the Commission review the ruling. The Review Commission reversed several of the citation rulings and increased the proposed penalties to more than \$6,000.

The Commission was highly critical of GE's failure to correct a long and continuing list of hazardous conditions at its giant Schenectady, N.Y. facility. It found that GE "was aware of on-going violations and applied little or no additional effort to see that they were eliminated." The Commission ordered GE to consult with the IUE on matters involved in the affirmed citations and went on to "encourage" all employers to consult with their employees and union representatives on health and safety. "In appropriate cases," the Commission stated, "such consultation will be considered in determining the good faith factors" in computing penalties for health and safety violations.

The Commission also ruled that all GE buildings and plants in the Schenectady area operations are one work-

place for the purposes of deciding if a given hazard is a "repeated" violation. Since repeated violations can draw fines 10 times greater than initial violations, the IUE pointed out that there will be more incentive for employers to correct such conditions.

—California AFL-CIO News

### **Machinists Charge Railroad Industry With OSHA Violations**

WASHINGTON—In the first industry-wide complaint ever filed under the 1970 Occupational Safety and Health Act, the International Association of Machinists plans to charge the entire railroad industry with endangering 26,000 workers.

The union filed charges with the Labor Department alleging that its 26,000 members who work for the railroads at 385 repair shops are being exposed to "excessive dusts, fumes, vapors, gases and soot." The complaint charged that such exposure "constitutes continuous and cumulative health hazards" that affect workers' lungs, hearing and skin, among other things.

Worker health and safety within the rail industry has been viewed as the province of the Federal Railroad Administration, a unit of the Transportation Department. For a while after the passage of the 1970 job safety measure, the Transportation and Labor departments cooperated on rail safety inspections. That relationship was ended, however, when Labor Department officials asserted prime jurisdiction in the area.

After the two agencies stopped working together, some railroads began trying to bar Labor Department inspectors from their property, claiming their industry was exempt from the department's authority and accountable only to the Federal Railroad Administration. At least two federal courts backed the railroads' position, and one even enjoined the Labor Department from inspecting two railroads. Thus, the department is currently shying away from rail-industry inspections and has resumed talks with the Federal Railroad Administration in hopes of restoring their old working arrangement.

Despite this problem, however, the safety director of the Machinists Union, Angelo Cefalo, declared: "We feel we're in the right in filing the complaint, and we expect the Labor Department to handle it."

—Wall Street Journal

### **Businessmen Oppose Safety Programs**

A recent survey of U.S. businessmen indicates a substantial lack of concern for the health and safety of American workers. The survey was conducted by Louis Harris and Associates and the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. 70 percent of the 1,143 businessmen interviewed felt that safety problems were either minimal or non-existent in their respective companies. This view is somewhat ironic because one-half of the sample were involved in businesses with very high accident rates.

The businessmen also had negative feelings about Federal OSHA. 65 percent of the sample indicated that the 1970 legislation was "a further indication of Federal government encroachment on private enterprise." However, 72 percent indicated they would not have established safety programs if OSHA had not "encouraged" such. Louis Harris concludes "that business simply will not assume new responsibilities such as employee safety on its own and will only put in new programs if forced to by the government."

—Newsweek

### **OSHA Backs Down on Safety Standard**

In 1973, in Michigan alone, 307 workers lost a hand in the heavy dies on large industrial power presses which stamp out metal parts. National injury figures are not avail-

able, but these presses are widely used throughout American industry to shape wood, plastics, glass, as well as metal. Despite the obvious danger to workers who operate such machinery, OSHA has decided to eliminate the strict "no-hands-in-dies" safety rule.

AFL-CIO safety official, George Taylor, says "OSHA caved in to the Chamber of Commerce." Taylor and other union representatives are currently fighting a legal battle to keep the "no-hands-in-dies" standard in effect. Manufacturing companies have opposed it and OSHA has agreed to withdraw the standard because it would require modification or replacement of many existing presses, tools, and dies. New equipment is available, however, which conforms to the "no-hands-in-dies" requirement and largely eliminates danger of amputation.

"Safety improving devices like these will cost money," the AFL-CIO admits in a brief filed in connection with a lawsuit to get the rule restored. "But Congress has made the decision that these costs do not outweigh the economic and social costs of continued injuries."

—United Mine Workers Journal

### **LOHP Welcomes New Staff Member**



**Andrea Hricko**, who has a Masters degree in Public Health from the University of North Carolina, has joined the Labor Occupational Health Program as Health Coordinator. As a former staff associate with Ralph Nader's Health Research Group in Washington, D.C., she assisted numerous workers and unions with their occupational health problems. She also conducted an extensive investigation of 25 lung cancer deaths related to work exposures at a large chemical company, resulting in compensation for many of the widows. Andrea is a member of AFT Labor Educators' Local #189 and the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

## **CLEARINGHOUSE**

### **A Fresh Perspective on the Fire Problem**

An enterprising, new journal in fire safety, called **The Fire Independent**, has been launched with the publication of its January-February 1975 issue. The announcement was made by the magazine's founder, publisher, and editor, Dr. Harvey P. Utech. Dr. Utech was a consultant in fire safety, and prior to that he was in charge of the Fire Equipment Program at the National Bureau of Standards.

According to Dr. Utech, "The magazine is designed to fill two needs not being met by existing journals. The first is to provide current awareness of all journal articles, patents, government reports, and Federal regulations, announcements, and contract awards pertaining to fire. The magazine's second aim is, through its articles, to summarize, assess, and interpret important fire protection issues and arrive at definitive conclusions.

The means of accomplishing the journal's first goal is the entirely new current awareness service, called "Fire Alert." This regular feature reviews and abstracts all recently published items pertaining to fire. The first edition of "Fire Alert" contains over 200 citations, divided among 70 categories and subcategories covering the entire spectrum of the accidental fire field. The journal is published

eight times a year. Single issues cost \$3.00. Annual subscriptions (8 issues) are available at the introductory rate of \$15.00. Orders should be sent with payment to The Fire Independent, Inc.—Suite 909A—1028 Connecticut Ave., N.W.—Washington, D.C. 20036.

### 3 of 10 Workers' Illnesses Found Job-Related

The actual extent of diseases caused by work-related hazards is not accurately known. Lung disease, heart disease, cancers and other ills can appear long after the occupational exposure which caused them. If the actual connection were better established, it would help in the efforts to reduce the amount of occupationally-caused illness. A recent medical survey of workers in Oregon and Washington gives new useful information about this problem.

This survey, made by researchers at the University of Washington, found that more than 28 percent of the workers examined had illnesses that were probably caused by their work environment. In workplaces where hazards were poorly controlled, 39 percent of the illnesses were occupationally related. Hearing loss and respiratory diseases were the most prevalent conditions, followed by skin disease, toxic and sub-toxic effects and eye conditions. Anemia and diseases of the musculoskeletal and connective tissues were also found. Only workers who were actually on the job were covered in the survey. Those not at work because of illness, injury or out of the work force because of disability were not included. Taking these workers into account would probably have given an even higher rate of work-related disease. About 900 workers in both industrial production and agriculture were included. The survey covered work-places which employed between 8 and 150 workers and is intended to be a pilot study for a nationwide survey.

OSHA requires all employers to keep an Employer's Log in which all work-related injuries and illnesses are recorded. The researchers examined the Employer's Logs to see if the medical conditions they found were actually listed. Only 8 percent of all the work-related illnesses found were actually recorded in the logs. In fact, 1/3 of the employers kept no log, claiming that no work-related injuries or illnesses had ever occurred. However, the researchers found that claims had been filed for Workers' Compensation in half of the establishments which claimed no injuries or illnesses. It is also important to note that more than 90 percent of the workers who had a work-related illness had not filed any compensation claim.

This work has been a valuable but small start toward a comprehensive examination of the prevalence of occupational disease. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health funded the research and the full report (NIOSH 75-162) is available from its Office of Technical Publications, Post Office Building, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202.

• **DANGER—SILENT KILLERS AT WORK** is an excellent 18-page pamphlet aimed at giving working people a clear and concise description of the effects of toxic chemicals widely used in industry. It includes a discussion of the usefulness of regulations in this area, and the activities that working people have found effective in dealing with these hazards. The pamphlet was written by members of the Bay Area Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (BACOSH). Copies are available for 50¢ each (up to 9 copies), 40¢ (10 to 25), or for an arranged rate for more than 25 copies. Send orders to: BACOSH, P. O. Box 24774, Oakland, California 94623, and make checks payable to Charles Hansen.

• The **Journal of Current Social Issues** has devoted its entire Spring, 1975 edition to Occupational Health and Safety. Contributors of articles include: Andrea Hricko, Dr. Donald Whorton, Jacob Clayman, Senator Harrison

Williams, Jr., Dr. Irving Selikoff, and Sheldon Samuels.

Additional single copies of the Spring, 1975 issue are available for \$1.25. A packet, which includes a study guide, bibliography and transcripts of two discussions on occupational health and safety, is also available at a cost of \$2.00. Send requests to: Mary Ellen Haines, Journal of Current Social Issues, 287 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10010.

### Free Health Tests for Shipyard Workers

By its very nature, shipyard work will never be 100% safe. But what makes us angry are the unnecessary hazards that exist only because the employers refuse to spend the time or money to do things the right way. These hazards cause accidents and, even more, they cause long-range damage to our health.

To explore how much damage is being done to the health of local shipyard workers, the San Diego Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (SD/COSH) did free health testing for Campbells workers recently. More than 30 people turned out, and were given hearing, lung function, vision, blood pressure, and other tests. The tests would cost more than \$100 at regular medical fees.

### Purposes of the Testing

One purpose of the tests was to give each worker an idea of their present health in the areas checked. If problems were found, people were offered referrals for treatment, if they wanted. If the tests showed normal results, they should be saved to compare with future tests results. This helps to detect changes very early, before serious health damage is done. It might also help in proving that a future condition is job-related and thus covered by Workers' Compensation.

The testing also gives a broad picture, and helps pinpoint those jobs that are most harmful to workers. We can use this information to fight for changes in processes and procedures to eliminate the worst hazards.

### Who Should Be Doing the Testing

Cal/OSHA says that hearing and lung tests **must** be done yearly in all industries where workers are exposed to high levels of noise and/or dusts and fumes. This is a good requirement, but it is not being enforced and will not be enforced unless we make that happen.

The local yards do not obey the law. Welders get vision tests, but only so the company can meet welding standards. Sand-blasters are given chest x-rays, but they are not told the results! We believe that if the company finds an abnormality on an x-ray it will find an excuse to fire the worker to avoid a later Compensation case. They would rather send a worker to an early death than part with a little of the money that worker earned for them.

Health testing is a responsibility of the employer, and until we take over the yards from them, we should make them do it. Such testing **must** be controlled by the workers themselves, not by the companies whose financial interests are in direct contradiction to the workers' health interests.

### Tests for NASSCO, SDMC, SOON

SD/COSH intends to do similar testing for workers at NASSCO and San Diego Marine in the near future. The tests will be done on a weekend. The yards will be leafleted beforehand, so everybody will have a chance to sign up for them.

For further information about this project, or help in planning a similar program in your workplace or with your union, contact: SD/COSH, P.O. Box 99011, San Diego, CA 92109.

—Waterfront Worker

## A Conversation With Dan Berman



*Daniel Berman is currently the Director of the MCHR Occupational Health Project located in San Francisco. He is a graduate of Yale and received his Ph.D. in political science from Washington University (St. Louis). Dan has extensive experience in conducting worker education programs in occupational health and is the author of numerous articles and pamphlets on the subject. He recently completed work on a new book entitled, "Death on the Job: The Politics of Occupational Health in the United States."*

*He recently completed work on a new book entitled, "Death on the Job: The Politics of Occupational Health in the United States."*

**MONITOR:** *How did you get involved in the occupational safety and health issue?*

**BERMAN:** In Autumn, 1969, I was writing a graduate school paper about a lead poisoning problem in a St. Louis lead smelter, about why people were being poisoned. I was shocked that this sort of thing could exist, and I got more and more involved. Then, in 1972, I was hired by the "Medical Committee for Human Rights (MCHR)" to direct its Occupational Health Project.

**MONITOR:** *What were the Occupational Health Project's goals, then?*

**BERMAN:** To bring the issue to rank and file workers and medical people. Designed by Quentin Young, MCHR chairman at the time, Don Whorton, and Phyllis Cullen, MCHR's strategy was to co-sponsor two-day occupational health conferences with local unions and some health science institution. We'd discuss actual health hazards, laws relating to the issue, what unions can do, and what they had done. We also acted as an information clearinghouse, making available about ten publications ranging from a four-page pamphlet—"MCHR Collective Bargaining Demands in Health and Safety"—to my 300-page Ph.D. dissertation to be published as a book called **Death On The Job: The Political Economy of Occupational Health in The United States**. Our not-so-hidden goal was to form permanent local organizations dedicated to grassroots health education and organization. The first conference held in Chicago in 1972 resulted in the Chicago Area Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (CACOSH), which now is about to hold its fourth conference. There are probably a dozen similar "COSH" groups around the country.

**MONITOR:** *What effect do you think the Federal OSHA law had on MCHR's activities?*

**BERMAN:** Workers attempting to exercise their Federal rights often found government inspections not too helpful. But the OSHA law publicized the issue and raised workers' expectations, creating a demand for information. Perhaps only from such a project as OHP-MCHR could workers get good information right from the horse's mouth and on-going help; we were identifying people and resources—medical, technical, and legal—right in their own backyards, demanding more enforcement and more union action. Ultimately, of course, we meant to pressure companies into cleaning up the workplace.

**MONITOR:** *How do you get labor involved in this issue?*

**BERMAN:** It's a problem. A lot of union business agents, far removed from the shop floor, regard health and safety as another paper to file, another pain in the ass; also, health and safety does not generate union revenue. Unions

are feeling pressured anyway by inflation and large companies manufacturing outside the U.S. In addition, the proportion of the labor force which is unionized has diminished, I think, since the end of World War II.

**MONITOR:** *You mentioned your book. What are its main points and how does it differ from others?*

**BERMAN:** I talk about why work is so dangerous and unhealthy, and the political and economic factors making it cheaper for companies to kill, maim, and sicken people than to remove health hazards from the workplace. Companies have been able to control industrial medicine and use the Workers' Compensation system to their own, not the workers' advantage. I'm trying to be more analytical and address a slightly different audience than the other books in the field. Frank Wallick's **The American Worker—An Endangered Species** gives workers good ideas about what they can do in their shops. Rachel Scott's **Muscle and Blood** is exciting to read; it puts the reader inside the heads of workers who have been hurt. Jeanne Stellman's **Work Is Dangerous To Your Health** is a handbook on hazards for anyone who's working and wants to find out about his/her job. My book is, in some ways, a bit like Paul Brodeur's **Expendable Americans**, but with a broader scope. I discuss the real economic incentives which keep jobs hazardous in this country.

**MONITOR:** *Why does industry control medicine and the Workers' Compensation system?*

**BERMAN:** To keep company costs down. Industrial physicians' income is too closely tied to the company for the physician to favor workers. Workers' Compensation ought to be abolished but only in the context of a national health plan removing industry control from health care.

**MONITOR:** *What do you think of President Ford's recent statement that the occupational safety and health question is a matter of whether regulation changes would make sense in terms of costs added and benefits gained?*

**BERMAN:** Companies are ruining the air, ruining people's health, and the people are paying. Theoretically, OSHA shifted occupational safety and health costs back onto producers so naturally industry screamed. Ford is talking about profits for his political supporters, not worker benefits. A correct cost/benefit analysis would show you need much stronger OSHA laws, a lot heavier enforcement.

**MONITOR:** *What then is the future of the occupational safety and health issue and the industrial medicine?*

**BERMAN:** There's some evidence that some large companies want to control the health care of workers and their families through Health Maintenance Organizations. Although the idea seems theoretically good—more preventive medicine, much more attention to cleaning up plants because companies will be paying all medical costs—the crucial problem remains—who will control the system? Where will workers find outside physicians to testify that work conditions are ruining their health if all doctors are company doctors? It seems much better to have some sort of national health plan administered locally and overseen by workers, their families, and their communities. Otherwise it's going to be a very nasty situation, and workers will have little recourse.

**MONITOR:** *Let me ask a personal question. Where is Dan Berman going now?*

**BERMAN:** I have to write this book and I want to figure out ways to keep the MCHR Occupational Health Project going, printing up new materials and making new contacts. Then,

I want to relate that work to other health care and labor issues. I think, ultimately, the occupational health problem is part of a much bigger problem of how society is supposed to make what everybody uses. Maybe there are a lot of things we shouldn't be making at all, such as rayon because to make it, you use a solvent that drives people crazy. Maybe we should get rid of asbestos, a known carcinogen. And, maybe we should be designing factories for the people, not the machines.

**MONITOR:** How can people interested in your organization or in forming their own groups contact you?

**BERMAN:** Well, write the Occupational Health Project (OHP-MCHR), 558 Capp St., San Francisco, CA 94110, or call (415) 824-5888. There's a human answering service there, so you won't be talking to a machine.

## CAL/OSHA DEVELOPMENTS

### Work Illnesses and Injuries in California's Trucking Industry

The Department of Industrial Relations recently released a report with startling statistics on "Work Injuries in Trucking in California." The trucking industry employed about 90,000 workers in California in 1973. Although this accounted for only 1% of all jobs covered by the state's Worker's Compensation Act, truckers reported more than 3% of the disabling work injuries and 7% of the state's work fatalities. In 1972, the incidence rate of recordable injuries and illnesses in the state was **25% above the rate for the nation's trucking industry as a whole.**

Results of the 1973 California Survey of Occupational Illnesses and Injuries reveal that:

- One in every five workers in the trucking industry sustained a recordable occupational injury or illness in 1973.
- One in every ten workers suffered a disabling job-connected illness or injury that caused restricted activity or days lost from work, with an average of 18 work days lost for each case.

The results show that employees in California's trucking industry are injured more often, sustain more serious injuries, and spend longer time recuperating than other workers in industry.

Although employment increased 24% over the ten year period, injuries increased 30%. A study of the fatalities from 1969 to 1973 showed that 80% of the deaths involved highway motor vehicle accidents. The remainder of the deaths were caused by heart attacks, explosions, contact with toxic substances, or being struck by objects (such as boom cranes).

Nearly one-half of the injuries were sprains, strains, dislocations and hernias. Many other work injuries were caused by falling or being struck by objects. A total of 1401

### THE TEN-YEAR TOLL: 421 JOB-RELATED DEATHS

*California Trucking Industry, 1964-1973*

| Year | Disabling Injuries | Fatalities |
|------|--------------------|------------|
| 1964 | 6534               | 33         |
| 1965 | 6810               | 36         |
| 1966 | 7189               | 38         |
| 1967 | 7086               | 41         |
| 1968 | 7529               | 43         |
| 1969 | 7841               | 45         |
| 1970 | 7578               | 45         |
| 1971 | 7238               | 44         |
| 1972 | 7690               | 42         |
| 1973 | 8508               | 54         |

truckers were hurt on the job in 1973—accounting for over 1/2 of the injuries recorded. Only a fraction of the injuries, however, occurred while workers were actually driving vehicles; over half occurred while loading or unloading the trucks.

Copies of the report can be obtained from: Division of Labor Statistics and Research, P.O. Box 603, San Francisco, CA 94101.

### New Chief Appointed to DIS

David L. Chambers, San Diego labor union head, was appointed July 3 by Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., to be chief of the Division of Industrial Safety, State Department of Industrial Relations. Chambers, 46 years of age, is a native of Virginia and has lived in the San Diego area since 1932.



Since 1973, Chambers has been president and director of business operations of District Lodge #50 of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. He first joined the District Lodge in 1959 as a business representative, and previously worked in the San Diego aerospace industry as a jig and fixtures builder.

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