

Edward Asner

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Frances Beinecke, Executive Director
Natural Resources Defense Council
40 W. 20th St.
New York, NY 10011

1 page via fax: 212-727-1773

Dear Frances Beinecke:

As an admirer and supporter of much of NRDC's work to protect the Earth, I am most disturbed to learn of your support for the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed Endocrine Disruptor Screening Program. Given the NRDC's mission, this appears to be a misuse of time and funds. I understand that the stated purpose of the endocrine program is to test chemicals for their effects on the human body's hormone-regulation (endocrine) system, a worthy-sounding goal. But I have also learned that there are overwhelming scientific considerations that render the benefits of this program negligible at best, foremost among them the fact that researchers are not even in agreement on how to define what an "endocrine disruptor" is or does.

The limitations of animal tests, which have never been scientifically validated to establish their relevance to human beings, call into question the whole premise of the program. Dr. John Giesy, a professor of environmental toxicology and a member of the National Academy of Sciences, states: "Legislating endocrine testing at this time is unbelievably stupid and a waste of resources that will lead not only to false positives in screening, but, more importantly, to false negatives." I share Dr. Giesy's concern that misleading data from animal tests will keep dangerous chemicals on the market, putting animals and people at risk. Given these facts, I don't believe that the loss of life—which will no doubt be tens of millions of animals and perhaps millions of people exposed to toxic chemicals—can be justified.

I also understand that even as the NRDC was pressuring Congress to establish the endocrine program, it was actively opposing legislation to ensure that animal tests would be subjected to the same level of scrutiny as non-animal methods. Shouldn't we hold all chemical tests to the same rigid scientific standards? How can the NRDC lobby against legislation that would make test data more relevant and useful to us?

It is my belief that banning known toxins and implementing effective non-animal tests will do more to save lives and delicate ecosystems by far than the endocrine program. I urge the NRDC to withdraw its support of the animal-testing portion of the endocrine program and to support the immediate use and development of non-animal tests that are and will be relevant to people and wildlife. May I have not a form letter, please, but, rather, your assurance that the NRDC will reconsider its present course and put its energies and funds into more meaningful programs?

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Ed Asner