

Dear Mr Powell.

PET(4)WAI 09
Petitions Committee
Consultation on petition P-04-341 Waste and Incineration
Response from David John Jones

I am writing in response to your letter in the Evening Post, inviting my views on waste incineration.

Waste incineration is a source of serious toxic pollutants, - dioxins, furans, acid gasses, particulates, heavy metals and they are all dangerous to human health. Waste incineration contaminates the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe. It's by-products can be found in the tissues of animals on the highest peaks and fish in the deepest oceans. To allow a process that emits these compounds daily, even hourly, to operate for 25 years, is simply asking for health problems on a massive scale. As well as damaging the health of people living around them, incinerators are a major source of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and as such contravenes the Stockholm convention.

One of the basic laws of physics is that matter can neither be created or destroyed. Incinerators only transform matter. The waste material that enters the incinerator escapes either through the chimney, or is deposited in the ash. The more sophisticated filters designed to minimise air pollution, the more toxic the ash. How much dioxins and toxic metals are in the base and fly ash? Dr Paul Connett---If they do not test for absolute levels. It is irresponsible to give permits and then fail to protect the public or the environment in any meaningful scientific way. Their worst scientific practice is concentrated in the ash.

Dioxin is an ultra-toxic molecule that promotes the development of cancers and produces hormonal, neurological, behavioural, and reproductive problems at extremely low concentrations. Dioxins are a persistent organic pollutants, they bio-accumulate in the food chain posing a risk to this and future generations, they also bio-magnify. There is no safe level of dioxin exposure.

Dr Barry Commoner (Centre for Biology of Natural Systems New York)
Believes dioxin and dioxin-like substances, represent the most perilous chemical threat to the health and biological integrity of human beings and the environment. Which present in miniscule amounts can alter the natural bio-chemical process.

In May 2007 a group of scientists from five continents issued the (Faroes Statement)
Saying that early exposure to chemicals leaves babies more likely to develop serious disease later in life, including diabetes, attention defects, certain cancers, thyroid disorders and obesity among others. They urged Governments not to wait for more scientific certainty but to take precautionary action now to protect fetuses and children from exposure.

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27 July 2007. The World Health Organisation released its first ever report highlighting children's special susceptibility to harmful chemical exposure at different periods of their growth. This new volume of the Environmental Health Criteria series, "Principles for Evaluating Health Risks in Children Associated with Exposure to Chemicals," is the most comprehensive work yet undertaken on scientific principles to be considered in assessing health risk in children. It highlights the fact that in children, the stage of their development when exposure occurs may be just as important as the magnitude of the exposure.

Despite Ministers claiming their strategy is not based on incineration but on recycling. The Royal Society warned of serious flaws in the Enviro / DEFRA study, stating "In view of the large uncertainties associated with some of the data examined, particularly the epidemiological studies, it would have been more appropriate to adopt a cautious approach, rather than use inadequate data in a quantitative framework. The latter may give a misleading impression of the robustness of the results. Caveats associated with the uncertainties are not presented adequately, particularly in the quantification of health effects, which could mislead the reader. The reports relevance to waste management decision-making by Local Authorities is limited, as several important issues are not addressed. These include the effect of local environmental and health sensitivity to pollutants and the impact on emissions of specific waste management activities operating under non-standard conditions. Bias in the availability of good quality information means the report concentrates mainly on the effects of air pollution. Consideration of the potential effects of exposure through other pathways is not consistent throughout the report and therefore prevents adequate comparison of options.

In June 1997 the European Environment Agency published the Weybridge Report. The report establishes criteria for understanding the problem of endocrine disrupting chemicals such as dioxin and dioxin-like substances. This is a problem like no other we have ever faced. The danger of irreversible damage is real. Therefore invoking the precautionary principle to limit our exposure to such chemicals would seem to be the only rational approach to take.

Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the precautionary principle says that, "Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost effective measures to prevent environmental degradation."

The Precautionary Principle. Prevention is woven through the Stockholm Convention. Most significantly the convention speaks of preventing the formation of POPs – Persistent Organic Pollutants. Indicating that end-of-pipe technologies which seek to destroy or trap pollutants are not sufficient. Their very formation should be prevented.