

December 4th, 1970

Dear Diary,

I feel so ready to go! J. Clarence Davies and Charles L. Lettow told the President's Council for Environmental Quality that they're ready to send me off! Not to Congress yet, but to other departments of the government for review and comment. But I'm definitely confident! After all, what could they have against an act like me, whose purpose is to protect the American people against dangerous chemicals? "Toxic Substances Control Act." YES! Who doesn't want to control toxic substances? The everyday ones, I mean, not the ones in food or pesticides or medicine or anything – all those are covered by other laws already. Besides, if they had any doubts, my older sister, Toxic Substances Report, will certainly take care of that. She is feisty report, really pushing the idea that the government needs to have more control over production of chemicals. Right now, the government has no power to regulate chemical production! But when I get passed – and I'm sure I will – the EPA will be able to ban and restrict chemicals, and to force companies to test before manufacture. I can't wait until all the other government agencies see me. They're going to be proud of the CEQ, I bet! I don't know why J. Clarence Davies and Charles L. Lettow don't seem to be as sure as I am. They think that there will be people against me. I would ask them more about it, but I know what they'd say: "Oh, TSCA, you're such a young little act, not even a bill yet. You'll understand some day."

February 11, 1971

Dear Diary,

Today is a big day. William Ruckelshaus, an important administrator in the EPA, is going to send me to Congress. I can't say I'm as naïvely optimistic as I was a few months ago, when I thought that no one would ever oppose me. When the Department of Commerce and the Office of Management and Budget saw me, they didn't think about the health of the people. They have their own worry: the health of the economy. I personally don't understand how jobs are more important than preventing illness, but I guess to each their own. Point is, I certainly feel weaker now. They took issue with one of the powers I would grant to the EPA, the one that could mandate companies to test chemicals before manufacture. And so they brought me right up to President Nixon a few days ago, and had that provision removed.

Whether or not I'm feeling my best, it's definitely awesome that I am about to be a proper Federal BILL, introduced to Congress and everything. And then, maybe, I can even be a law. I really am hopeful! After all, in this political climate, with a Democratic majority in both the House and the Senate, I do have a chance!

October 8th, 1972

Dear Diary,

I have had a frustrating half-year since I last wrote. I'm in conference right now... and feeling dead tired. Not to mention really split up. My Senate version is strong, with tough procedures for controlling chemicals before manufacture. But in the House... I am weak. And the worst part is that the House version has all the support from the chemical industry. They really don't like me, the manufacturers... and I guess I understand why. They can't make as much money selling dangerous chemicals if I'm regulating things. But don't they understand that I'm for the health of the people of the United States? Must they oppose me so strongly? This session is going to be over in 10 days... so I don't think there is much hope for me. "Dead tired" is going to turn into "died in committee", I'm afraid. Right now, President Ford is supporting my stronger Senate version, but I don't know if that will last. Things are looking grim. I just hope that the CEQ and EPA keep fighting for me, and that they reintroduce me soon. Until then... there really isn't much I can do but wait.

February 20, 1975

Dear Diary,

Here I am again... like always. I've just been referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, right after John V. Tunney introduced me to Congress. Good of him, and of Philip A. Hart and Warren G. Magnuson, for cosponsoring me. It does make me feel better that there are people on my side. Actually, I feel stressed out but a bit more hopeful than before.

Honestly, right now, I'm just exhausted. And I was referred immediately to the Senate Committee on Commerce, which doesn't help anything. They're not going to let me through, no way. They don't care about anything but their precious jobs – even if those jobs cause people to get sick from chemicals! But if there's one thing I've learned through these past four years, it's that you can't expect anyone to be rational. These congressmen are like children. Let's just see where this attempt gets me. The EPA administrators say that, if we keep pushing, the chemical industry will eventually cave in... and I really hope it's true. Meanwhile, all sorts of people keep hammering away at my text, revising and rewriting. I guess if it means I get passed it's OK, but I'm afraid that I'll be so weakened that I won't be able to do anything!

February 2, 1976

Dear Diary,

There is hope for me, although it comes in the form of a tragedy. Today, Time published an article about a horrible incident in Hopewell, Virginia. Some company was producing a chemical called Kepone... and doing so in a terribly unsafe way. The workers were exposed to the toxic substance, as were their families. The article discusses how such a disaster could have been averted: "Virginia's Governor Mills E. Godwin Jr., the General Assembly, and the city of Hopewell are looking into legislation that will strengthen the safeguards against contamination of the environment by toxic chemicals. That kind of legislation is badly needed on a national level."⁶ Yes! Exactly! That is who I am, and why I am here! To control toxic substances!

Of course, I'm frustrated that such a tragedy was necessary for anyone to see my importance... but now that they do, I can prevent anything like this from happening in the future. Because if all the voters know about this dangerous lack of legislation, they'll put pressure on their representatives to let me PASS!

I suppose we'll see how everything turns out. For the first time in years, I really feel like I'm going to get through Congress and make my way to the President's desk!

October 12, 1976

Dear Diary,

I've never been more excited and more nervous in my life! I've been passed by the House and Senate committee, and I'm waiting for President Ford's signature. Now, I'm not going to be too full of myself and say that I was passed on my own merit. I know full well that with the election coming up everyone wants to look their best... I guess what I can say is that I'm a bill that looks good on paper. Like I remember saying once, who doesn't want to control toxic substances? I'm happy, it's true, but I'm also terrified. What if I don't make it past this stage, can't leap this final hurdle? The president isn't going to veto me explicitly... but if he doesn't sign me within the next few hours, there's going to be a pocket veto. And that's definitely a huge, looming possibility. After all, Ford's administration has definitely been against me in the past few months. But now that the Senate and the House have compromised and let me get out of that deadly committee, I really do think he'll have to pass me.

OH! Here I go now, to the desk of the President!!!

I'M A LAW! I feel amazing, powerful, fantastic... and signed! It took so long, and I'm so tired. And I'm certainly not as naïve or strong as I was just under six years ago, when I was first written up. But here I am, world, ready to regulate!

May 12, 1993

Dear Diary,

I've been far too busy to write, but not in any kind of productive way. I just re-read the end of last entry... I can hardly remember feeling that hopeful and full of energy. I thought I'd won against the chemical industries that day, but they had hardly begun the fight. The government took forever setting up the Office of Toxic Substances, and we had to work out all sorts of technicalities. And even now that it's all set up, I can hardly do anything. Changing the lives of the American people is about more than getting passed, that's for sure.

A little while ago, I got into a big fight with the asbestos industry. The EPA tried to use me to ban the dangerous substance, but the manufacturers took us to court. And they made fun of us, saying that the amount of money we were spending per life saved was ridiculous. But it's about more than lives! It's about the environment! Not that they care. If they can't put a dollar sign on it, it doesn't matter to them.

Now, I've been doing nothing but negotiating with companies and asking them to please give info – regulate themselves, voluntarily. Yeah, right! Like that'll work! They need to restore my power to me. And if my sections are too confusing... well, it's their own damn faults they rattled me around in congress for so long!

There have been a few people fighting for reform, to make me stronger. I hope that it'll happen. But for now, all I can do is keep gently asking those greedy, selfish manufacturers for information about their chemicals and production.

April 18, 2010

Dear Diary,

They want to replace me! They've already taken all my strength away from me, and now they want to wipe me right off the legislature! I'm caught between the chemical companies, who want me to stay in my weakened state but not to do any regulating, and the environmental activists, who once supported me but now want to leave me behind. Senator Lautenberg just introduced the Clean Chemicals Act of 2010... and I suppose I can't really be angry at the new act himself. She reminds me of how I was, when I was just a young bill: optimistic, energetic, and ready to change the lives of the American people. I know I should be mentoring and supporting her, but all I want to do is knock her down. Stupid little act, usurping my position as a law! I fought hard for this, and I don't want to give it up!

But I'll help out little Clean Chemicals Act. After all, I don't want to turn into a bitter old bill, opposing change even if it's for the better. I might even be able to get back at the chemical industry that's been so against me for so long. And I can console myself with the idea that, even if I am erased from the legislature, I'll live on forever and always in History's pages.

Sources:

1. <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/newchemicals/pubs/chem-pmn/appendix.pdf> (EPA's summary of bill's journey through Congress)
2. <http://www.chemheritage.org/research/policy-center/projects/tsca-oral-history.aspx> (Chemical Heritage Museum's summary of bill's journey through Congress)
3. <http://gcmonitor.org/article.php?id=782> (TIME article: Kepone disaster)
4. <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2512&dat=19761013&id=qO5cAAAAIBAJ&sjid=51kNAAAAIBAJ&pg=1285,1815375> (Morning Record article: Ford signed act)
5. <http://www.invispress.com/law/environmental/corrosion.html> (Brief of case: Corrosion Proof Fittings vs. EPA)
- 6 http://healthychild.org/blog/comments/senator_lautenberg_introduces_safe_chemicals_act/ (Healthy Child article: Clean Chemicals Act of 2010)