

Nat-Semi health claims backed

AN American industrial safety campaigner today alleged that Inverclyde Nat-Semi staff have had their health abused "like canaries down a coalmine."

Ted Smith, who has fought for the health of electronics workers in California's Silicon Valley for more than a decade, says he's convinced local staff have suffered a host of serious illnesses because of toxic chemicals used at the plant.

The *Telegraph* revealed in February that a group of more than 60 local former and current Nat-Semi staff allege they have contracted illnesses including cancers, emphysema, asthma and reproductive problems because of exposure to dangerous chemicals.

Now Mr Smith has arrived in Inverclyde to back their campaign and challenge Nat-Semi bosses to meet him.

"The fact that there are so many people here with the same problems that we see in the States has convinced me that there is or has been a problem here," he said.

It's the old canary down the coalmine thing. That's exactly what's happening here. The company is saying these people are little canaries and we'd better learn from them.

"The companies are more concerned about the next generation of chips than the next generation of children."

The former industrial lawyer said experts had predicted for many years that exposure to industrial chemicals in the electronics industry would lead to cancer clusters around the plants.

"That is what we are seeing now."



HEALTH AT WORK

chemicals leaked into the air around their plants.

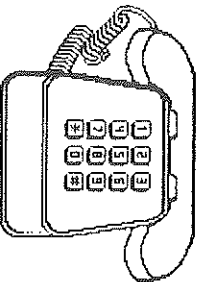
"They were using the air like a sewerage system," he said. "I'm sure that sort of thing was happening here.

"You'd think the people in this area would have the right to know what sort of commercial pollution has been put out by this plant over the years."

He praised local campaigners, who have formed a group called Phase Two, for battling on to persuade the company to allow an independent health survey.

"When you can direct enough attention on to what they are doing they have to take action," he said. "It

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seems the only way we are ever able to get some sort of response out of the companies is by organising lots of people.

"People in the rest of the world will find out about this and this is not acceptable behaviour for a global corporation."

A spokesman for Nat-Semi told the *Telegraph*: "The company's strict health and safety policy has earned its Greenock plant one of the best safety records of any manufacturing operation in the world.

BY CHARLOTTE HARDING

"As a responsible employer, neighbour and corporate citizen, National Semiconductor is fully committed to the highest standards of environmental management in all of its business activities.

"National Semiconductor will readily co-operate with organisations with the authority, expertise and competence to raise legitimate queries, based on fact, about environmental, health and safety issues.

"To date, we have received no direct approach or evidence from any individual or organisation with authority, expertise and competence to query our compliance to environmental standards."

QUOTE

The people in this area have the right to know what sort of commercial pollution has been put out by the plant over the years — TED SMITH.

FROM left, Phase Two volunteer Pat Atkey, Jim McCourt, manager of Inverclyde Employment Rights Centre, Ted Smith, and Grace Morrison and Helen Clark who both allege that working at Nat-Semi has made them ill.

"At some time we have to say there is enough evidence to take action and I think we are well beyond that point."

He also alleged that he was concerned that much of Inverclyde may have been polluted by the plant.

His organisation, the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, persuaded the US Government to pass a law in the 1980s forcing American electronic companies to admit that thousand of pounds worth of

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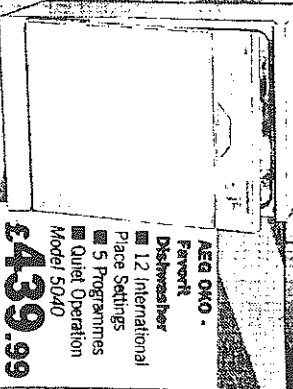
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