

CRW
from Sir Harold Himsworth.

13, HAMILTON TERRACE, LONDON, N.W.8
01-286 6996

8th December, 1969.

Dr. Matthew S. Meselson,
Biological Laboratories,
Harvard University,
Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Dear Dr. Meselson,

I understand that the American Academy of Arts and Sciences has sent on to you a copy of my letter to the President on a point that had arisen in connection with the Conference on Chemical and Biological Warfare held in July under the joint auspices of the Academy and the Salk Institute. In replying, the Academy indicates that you might be able to supply me with information on the point in question. I hope, therefore, that you will not mind my writing to you directly.

May I first, however, explain my position in the matter?

Following the use of CS by the police in Londonderry in August of this year, there was great public concern. In consequence, as I appeared to be persona grata to all parties, I was asked by the Home Secretary to head up an enquiry into the ill-effects, if any, of its use. Having been given an assurance that the enquiry would be independent, its report published and any information we received would be regarded as within the bonds of professional discretion, I agreed. The report of this investigation (which has now become the first part of our enquiry) has been published and I enclose a copy herewith.

It had become evident, however, to the investigating Committee of three that, if the civil authorities were to be armed with CS, then the point of view from which its effects should be looked at should be more akin to that from which we regard a drug than that from which we regard a weapon. Accordingly we made a recommendation to this effect and it was accepted by the Home Secretary. As a result a suitably expanded Committee is now embarked on a full scale study of the toxicology of CS.

As you will know, the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science has been interested in this problem. They have offered to give evidence to my Committee, and this offer we have welcomed. Over the last few months they and we have been in touch over several points. In this connection, the International Secretary of the BSSRS, Steven Rose, wrote to me recently saying that the Proceedings of the Conference on Chemical and Biological Warfare of the Academy and the Salk Institute, held in July this year, 'confirms unequivocally that CS as used in Vietnam has resulted in deaths.' Hence my approach

to the Academy and now my approach to you.

Naturally my Committee is very much concerned to satisfy themselves if the generally held view that CS is singularly harmless is justified or not. In this connection the question of its lethality is obviously of key importance. So far, however, we have been unable to learn of any evidence that CS itself could kill. Certainly, of course, we knew of claims, in countries other than the U.K., that CS can exacerbate pre-existing illness and that death may follow as a result of this. In all the cases we know of, however, there has been something in addition to CS that, in itself, could have progressed to a fatal outcome. You can well imagine, therefore, the interest with which I read the Proceedings of the above Conference when I received these from the Academy.

Of course, I appreciate that these proceedings were not intended to be a fully documented scientific report but rather an account intended to give people an idea of the points that were made in the discussions. Further I see that, as regards CS, the main concern of the Conference was with its use in war as an adjunct to conventional weapons, and the danger that its success in this respect might encourage the use of more harmful chemical agents. But I have only been able to find two passing references to CS itself being lethal. One is on page 4, the other on page 73 and neither is documented in any way. As the matter is obviously one of such importance to my Committee, and both references are attributed to you, I hope that you will not mind my coming to you for assistance.

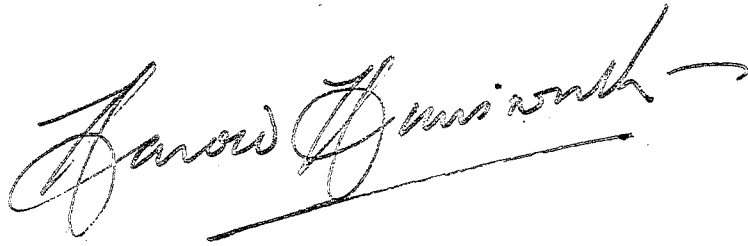
Being concerned with the use of CS in civil disturbances, our thinking, to date, has been limited to CS cartridges and CS hand grenades. I note that you say on page 4 that CS is not lethal when used in the open in police type operations and I presume that this means that CS cartridges and grenades in the open are not lethal. You then, however, go on to say 'Massive exposure, as in confined spaces or after massive application, can kill.' The first question I would like to ask is, therefore, can you put me on to the evidence that CS, in the form in which it is distributed by cartridges or grenades, has killed persons in closed spaces; and, if so, what was the intensity and duration of the exposure?

My second point arises out of your use of the word 'application' in the above sentence and your reference to the Mighty Mike blower on page 73. As I understand it (though I might well be wrong) this machine can be used to distribute CS either in its particulate or aerosol form. So can I put the points that bother me in the form of a couple of questions. Did the fatalities attributed to CS directly occur only when the blower method of distribution was used? Did such occur irrespective of

whether the CS was in the particulate or the aerosol form?

I do apologise for appearing to catechise you in this way but my Committee is determined that, if at all possible, its further report shall give the findings without fear or favour. I infer from the report of the Conference that you are motivated by the same desire. Obviously, we shall have to take into account the Conference Proceedings. If, therefore, you can put the facts at our disposal and give us any further information, we should be very grateful indeed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Harold Himsworth", with a horizontal line underneath it.

(Harold Himsworth.)