

# Conspiracy Laid To Atom Facility In \$160,000 Suit

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 5—The parents and children of Karen Silkwood, an Oklahoma plutonium worker who died in an automobile crash two years ago, filed suit in a Federal District Court today charging officials of the Kerr-McGee Corporation with conspiring to prevent her from organizing a union and reporting nuclear safety hazards to the Government.

The civil action, filed in Oklahoma City and made available here, also alleged that corporation officials, three agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and a former newspaper reporter who cooperated with the bureau had conspired to suppress information about the harassment and intimidation of Miss Silkwood.

The suit further charged Kerr-McGee with willful negligence for failing to exercise proper control over the plutonium located at its facility near Crescent, Okla., in an incident on Nov. 7, 1974, when Miss Silkwood and her apartment were contaminated with the nuclear material.

The suit asks for compensation and punitive damages totaling \$160,000. Should the action survive an expected legal challenge, it will enable lawyers for Miss Silkwood's family for the first time to question under oath many of the Kerr-McGee officials involved in operating the Oklahoma plutonium facility and the F.B.I. agents who investigated her death.

Miss Silkwood died a week after the contamination incident when her car crashed as she was on her way to meet an official of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers and a reporter for The New York Times with information she said would show that Kerr-McGee was manufacturing faulty plutonium fuel rods for an experimental reactor.

A spokesman for Kerr-McGee said today that since "a legal proceeding has begun, we will have no comment to make on the subject."

### Employed as Laboratory Technician

The suit charged that "through force, violence, intimidation, surveillance, harassment, wiretapping and other forms of illegal conduct" Kerr-McGee officials had sought to block Miss Silkwood and several colleagues from organizing a union and from going to the Atomic Energy

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Commission with safety complaints. Representative John D. Dingell, Democrat of Michigan, who heads the House Small Business Subcommittee on Energy and the Environment, has announced that he will resume hearings on how responsible Federal agencies handled the Silkwood matter. Officials of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Justice Department and the F.B.I. will testify at the hearings scheduled for Dec. 2 and 3 here.

The suit was brought by Mr. and Mrs. William M. Silkwood of Nederland, Tex., and Beverly Kristian Meadows, 9 years old, Michael Earl Meadows, 6, and Dawn Elaine Meadows, 5, Miss Silkwood's children by her divorced husband, William E. Meadows.

The circumstances of Miss Silkwood's death have become searing for some opponents of nuclear power. The suit was drafted by Daniel P. Sheehan, a lawyer associated with the social justice division of the Society of Jesus, a Roman Catholic order.

Miss Silkwood was employed as a laboratory technician at the plutonium facility from Aug. 3, 1972, until her death. She was active in the organization of a local chapter of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union that was strongly opposed by Kerr-McGee.

On Sept. 26, 1974, she and two other elected local officials of the union, flew to Washington to file complaints with the Atomic Energy Commission about health and safety problems at the facility.

On Nov. 7, Miss Silkwood and her apartment were contaminated by plutonium in an incident that Government investigators have not been able to explain.

One week later, while driving to meet the union official and the newspaper reporter in Oklahoma City, Miss Silkwood died when her car crashed into a cement culvert on a straight dry stretch of highway.

Tony Mazzocchi, Washington representative for the union, called for a Justice Department investigation of her death after a private detective hired by the union found evidence suggesting her car had been hit in the rear.

The Oklahoma state police, however, said that the crash occurred after Miss Silkwood fell asleep, citing an autopsy finding that she had taken a tranquilizer shortly before she died.