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Legislation Proposed To Cure PCB Crisis

Three legislators have jointly introduced legislation which will mandate that the chemical product PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls) be eliminated from manufacturing or home use by Jan. 1, 1977.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency approximately 18 months ago had indicated that the presence of PCB in plant and fish life in Lake Michigan had grown to such alarming proportions they recommended that no one eat the fish coming out of Lake Michigan.

The product PCB is used primarily in electronic components as a form of liquid insulator. It is a product of Monsanto Corp. with the southern Illinois Monsanto plant being the prime supplier of PCB for all uses throughout the United States.

State Reps. Ronald Griesheimer (R-Waukegan), Michael Getty (D-Chicago) and Dan Pierce (D-Highland Park) jointly proposed the legislation to completely eliminate the use of this material over the next two years.

In explaining the purpose of the bill Griesheimer pointed out that the federal EPA had concluded that high dosages of PCB were known to be a cancer producing agent. The three legislators, all of whom are members of the House Environmental Committee in Springfield, proposed phase out legislation so that the product could not enter the environment because of future production.

"Although I'm advised that the levels of PCB in Lake Michigan at the present are sufficiently low so that we can again eat the many coho salmon which we catch in our lake, I am concerned that it could rise to those proportions at some future date to again present a health problem," Griesheimer explained.

"We all felt that this approach was mandatory and, therefore, introduced emergency legislation in the Illinois House. I anticipate that it will easily pass our Environment Committee and certainly carry the House floor as soon as it is presented to the entire House for consideration. Quite frankly, I feel that our new and growing salmon industry in Lake County is of such great importance that it was mandatory that we take this action."

At the present time the states of Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan have similar legislation in the process. The federal EPA is monitoring the levels of PCB in the Great Lakes on a monthly basis.