OP&D, December 20, 1971

Bayer to Stop Selling Plasticizer-Type PCBs

Under pressure from West Germany's Ministry of Health, Farbenfabriken Bayer AG, of Leverkusen, by year-end will stop marketing those polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) used as plasticizers in plastic films and paints.

Monsanto Company, the only producer in Britain and the US, stopped selling the materials in both countries earlier this year because of the possibility that these highly-chlorinated PCBs might be toxic.

The company imposed a voluntary ban in Britain in March and ended production at its plant in Newport, Mounmouthshire, UK.

Sales of the less highly chlorinated PCBs, used as transformer and hydraulic system fluids, is continuing in the UK

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and elsewhere, since these applications are controllable and there is believed to be little danger that the chemicals will escape into the outside environment.

As soon as Bayer stops selling the highly-chlorinated products in Germany, Monsanto is expected to follow suit.

The German Health Ministry's investigations have shown that what in many cases was first thought to be DDT was in fact PCBs. In Germany, DDT is banned, although its use is allowed for a few purposes, and the European Economic Community Commission is believed to be about to ask other member-states to do likewise.

No adequate toxicological data available to prove the extent of the toxicity of PCBs, but it is generally accepted that they persist in living organisms and that they accumulate in the fatty cells.

The trouble in Britain started in December 1969 when the tissues of a number of birds found dead in the Irish Sea were shown to contain accumulations of PCBs.

Bayer is trying to find a substitute for the lower-chlorinated PCBs used in closed systems, and the West German Health Ministry is pressing for rapid results.

MONS 069099