FYI: J. A. Alley
L. A. Miller
E. T. Mollica
C. Paton
D. Wood

4/7/77

FROM: G. F. Barton

HE JOURNAL OF COMMERCE, Monday, April 4, 1977

EDF Not Satisfied

FDA Proposes Lower PCB Levels for Foods

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Food and Drug Administration Friday proposed a crackdown on the amount of a potential cancer causing substance that may be found in dairy products, poultry, eggs and fish.

Environmentalists call the move inadequate.

Subject of the action are PCBs, widely used chemical compounds found in transformers, brake linings and many other products.

Their presence in water has caused restrictions of fishing in the Hudson River, in parts of the Great Lakes and elsewhere, and the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 90 per cent of all Americans have levels of the chemicals in their body fat.

The FDA, in a notice prepared for Friday's Federal Register, proposed a reduction in the amount of PCBs that will be allowed in several types of food.

The new levels would be 1.5 parts per million in milk and dairy products (compared to 2.5 ppm at present); 3 ppm in poultry (5 ppm now); 0.3 ppm for eggs (0.5 ppm now); and 2 ppm (instead of the current 5 ppm) in fish and shellfish.

The Environmental Defense Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council last fall petitioned for reductions as an interim step toward eventually outlawing PCBs entirely from food.

Dr. Joseph Highland, head of EDF's toxic chemicals program, called the FDA proposal "disappointing and inadequate" because it does not appear to be a move toward an eventual ban.

"They're going in the right direction, clearly," he said, but added that they seem not to recognize that the PCB problem is not going to go away. He said the EPA has estimated there are 750 million pounds of PCBs currently in service and 150 million in small doses could enter the environment, and eventually food, through garbage landfills, streams and the like.

Potentially, he said, there are five times as many PCBs waiting to enter the environment as have already caused current problems.

The FDA said PCBs are an "unavoidable contaminant" and it would be impossible to eliminate them entirely.

Arkansas Gazette
LITTLE ROCK, ARK.
D. 120,452 SUN. 142,625

MAR 20 1977

Iowa Steers Clear Of a 'Catastrophe' By Spotting Toxin

DES MOINES (AP) — A solvent containing enough of a highly toxic substance to kill or cripple almost everyone in Iowa was about to be spread on the state's gravel roads, an official said Saturday.

Pete Hamlin, a state Environmental Quality Department official, said disaster may have been averted by detection of the substance.

The solvent contained PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl), a thick, colorless and odorless liquid that is almost indestructible, he said. PCB can cause cancer and birth defects if ingested and has been held responsible for deaths throughout the world, Hamlin said.

The substance was mistaken by a trucker for crankcase oil and would have been spread on dusty gravel roads, he said.

Hamlin said the Environmental Protection Agency at Kansas City informed him Thursday of the 18,000-gallon shipment containing the PCB, and he located the truck Friday.

The truck's driver had mistakenly loaded his tanker with a solvent containg six parts per thousand PCB, Hamlin said, adding that the safe level in drinking water is one part per trillion.

Potential Catastrophe

The shipment was bound for an Iowa company that sprays gravel roads to keep down dust, Hamlin said, and if the roads had been sprayed and the PCB had contaminated food or water supplies, it could have been "catastrophic."

The driver said he was unaware the liquid contained PCB when he purchased it at St. Paul, Minn., Hamlin said.

Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Company of St. Louis is the only United States manufacturer of the chemical, Hamlin said. It has announced plans to discontinue production by late this year.

Monsanto owns the only incinerator that can destroy the chemical, but it refuses to burn imported PCB, Hamlin said. The state agency will test the shipment to determine where it originated, but "it would be too good to be true if it were from Monsanto," Hamlin said.

The costly alternative would be to ship it to a chemical landfill, he said.

In 1968, about 1,000 Japanese accidentally ate rice contaminated with PCB. They suffered several ill effects, including ulcers, jaundice, swelling, loss of hair, birth defects and death.

MONS 001011