

BANK

R.A. Baxter, Ruabon
P.J.A. Marsh, Brussels
V.B. Papageorge, St. Louis.
H.A. Vodden, Ruabon

Meeting at Department of the Environment
Marsham Street, London, S.W.1.
on Wednesday, 15th March 1972
with Dr. Ian Prestt

The main purpose of this visit was to deliver to Dr. Prestt a copy of the final report on the two year feeding trials carried out by Bio test.

He was grateful for the report and once again expressed satisfaction with the co-operative attitude shown by Monsanto over the P.C.B. problem.

The Central Unit on Environmental Pollution, of which Dr. Martin Holdgate is Director and Ian Prestt his deputy, is responsible for advising the Secretary of State (Mr. Peter Walker) on unusual problems of pollution. They have been concerned with the lead pollution problem at Avonmouth and with drums of isocyanates washed ashore in Cornwall, but the problems arising from illicit dumping of cyanide is regarded as a fairly straight forward legislative problem to be handled mainly by local authorities. He expected that the legislation now being passed through Parliament would restrict unauthorized dumping generally, but would enable exceptions to be made in special cases. The general effect of the legislation will be to give local authorities stronger powers to enforce control over dumping of chemical wastes and will define legal responsibilities so that evasion by firms will be more difficult. By making illicit dumping more expensive, it should have the effect of channeling all waste disposal through authorized procedures. Users of chemicals such as P.C.B.s and Pentachloro phenol will be under greater pressure to dispose of wastes responsibly, but perhaps we can expect more enquiries from Local Authorities for advice on dealing with these and other chemicals.

P.C.B.s are not at present considered to be a serious problem in the U.K. by the Environment Pollution Unit, but the international implications of Monsanto's actions are of continuing interest to the unit. We discussed the hypothetical situation arising from the possibility that European competitors might have marketing and product policies which could jeopardise the benefits to the U.K. environment arising from Monsanto's policy of restricting sales and developing environmentally compatible products. Under the rules of the E.E.C. the U.K. will not be permitted to use a pollution threat as a barrier to prevent imports from other E.E.C. countries. Until agreement is reached between the E.E.C. countries on common objectives in this field, it seems that there will be no effective bar to

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imports of P.C.B. products which undermine the Monsanto policy. The ~~OECD~~ sector meetings (Unintended Occurrence of Chemicals in the Environment) are being used by the Environment Pollution Unit to explore the international situation on P.C.Bs. The next meeting is in Paris at the end of March, and other OECD countries are expected to report on their national situations concerning P.C.Bs. The U.K. report was presented at the previous meeting in October.

H. A. VODDEN
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HAV/MEB
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