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Speakers favor ban of PCB compound

HARTFORD — Polychlorinated Biphenyls, better known as PCB's, are "unnatural" man-made substances which should be banned from the state, the environment committee was told yesterday.

The committee is considering a bill to ban the sale of any product involving PCB's in the state after Jan. 1, 1980.

PCB's recently have drawn attention as a result of possible links to cancer and their highly concentrated presence in riverbeds and fish. They have been linked to such medical problems as miscarriages and still-births and federal regulations now ban their use except for closed electric systems.

Rep. Thom Serrani, D-Stamford, told the committee that PCB levels already discovered in Connecticut rivers are "a threat that will be with us for many years." He described them as "totally unnatural compounds" which the environment has not evolved ways to break down, resulting in an increasing concentration of the substances.

The only other speaker to address the problem, Rebecca Bormann of the Connecticut Citizens Action Group, supported the ban. She noted that the man-made substance was introduced in the 1930's, but cannot be destroyed except by incineration at 2,700 degrees Fahrenheit. The substance came into general use, she said, when "the earth and its capacity to absorb pollution seemed limitless and cancer was yet a rarity."

Since PCB's are not biodegradable, she noted, they accumulate in affected riverbeds and fish, pointing out that higher than allowable concentrations already have been discovered in state rivers including the Housatonic and Still. She charged that the problems of PCB pollution is serious and will worsen until a ban is in force.

The committee also heard representatives of the Golden Hill tribe of Indians appeal for restoration of a fund to provide emergency relief benefits on a temporary basis for Indians living on reservations in the state.

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