~~P.G. Benjamin~~
~~D. A. Olson~~
~~W. B. Papageorge~~

It is very interesting that this article found it's way all way down to Danville, Va. whose newspaper has wide circulation in S. Boston and among surrounding Westinghouse settlements in the area.

Jean Bryant

4-B The Bee: Danville, Va., Monday, Dec. 8, 1969

Probe Death Of Birds In Irish Sea

LONDON (AP) — British scientists, alarmed by the death of at least 17,500 birds in the Irish Sea, confessed today they haven't identified the killer.

Is it oil from foundered tankers? Chemical wastes from plastic plants? Poison gas from postwar defense dumping?

"Nobody knows what is killing them," said Chief Inspector John Matthews of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

News headlines labeled the Irish Sea "the ditch of death" and clamored for a fast solution. Tied into the mystery was the death since September of about 50 seal pups on the Cornwall coast.

Prime suspect at the moment is "PCB," which stands for polychlorinated biphenyl, one toxic waste from the plastics industry. It is rated potentially dangerous to birds and marine life and concentrations of it were found in the carcasses of some dead seabirds. Matthews said the birds were not "oiled up," or poisoned by crude oil.

Some 400 birds washed up on the Lancastershire coast since September were "gasping for breath and looked as if they had no blood," he said. It was much the same story everywhere.

Ian Prestt, a member of a government investigating team, said the birds were moulting and, as a result, spent more time than usual in the water. "This meant they would absorb greater than normal quantities of any PCB present," Prestt said.

A spokesman for the Agriculture Ministry said: "We have not found any evidence of unauthorized dumping of PCB in the area, but we cannot rule it out."

Checks of Irish Sea fish did not show harmful levels of PCB, the ministry reported.

Adding to the mystery were the seal pup deaths off Cornwall. All but two of the 50 carcasses were pups. The deaths virtually wiped out the fall crop of seals. No connection between birds and seals has been found, and Arthur Bourne, chairman of the Ocean Resources conservation association, theorizes that the pups picked up toxic pollution from their mothers' milk.

The Defense Ministry denied that war gas could be a cause. Last known dumping of gas was in 1955 in deep Atlantic waters.

MONS 029029