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Another possible substitute for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) has been announced. The material, a new silicone transformer liquid, is a dimethyl siloxane polymer made by Dow Corning Corp. To be marketed as Type 561 silicone transformer liquid, the product will be introduced slowly through a commercial service life data program in cooperation with transformer users and manufacturers. Data will be collected and evaluated over a 5-year period.

Late last year, Dow Chemical and McGraw Edison introduced an environmentally acceptable substitute for PCB's designed for use in high-voltage capacitors. That material—butylated monochlorodiphenyl oxide—was reported to show dielectric losses slightly lower than PCB mixtures (PE 1/8/76, p. 16). The use of PCB's has been under fire by Federal and state health and environmental specialists since 1970. Research has shown that PCB's can damage bird populations, build up to toxic levels in fish, and cause illness in man (PE 12/11/75, p. 14). Monsanto, the sole U.S. producer of PCB's, has said that it will discontinue manufacturing these chemicals when adequate replacements are found. But even if the new products prove suitable, it will be some time before a changeover can be made. In some cases, replacement of equipment or fluids would be undesirable and unfeasible. In addition, acceptable methods for disposing of present PCB fluids must be found.