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Sen. Spong Calls For Pre-Market Clearance

U. S. Senator William B. Spong, Jr., (D-Va.) backed for the development of legislative mechanisms to determine the environmental effects of technological advances and consumer products before they become a built-in part of the American economy.

"If we have learned anything from the past, it is the realization that once technology is turned on and incorporated into the nation's commercial fabric, turning it off involves substantial economic disruption," the Senator said recently in Northern Virginia.

"No one can foresee the extend to which our technological advances will become an integral part of the economy," he said, "Hundreds of millions of dollars, and huge numbers of jobs, are involved in our existing patterns of industry and systems of transportation."

He said the potential difficulty--both economically and environmentally of additional uncontrolled technological gains can only be imagined."

Senator Spong's remarks were delivered by a member of his staff at an air pollution workshop sponsored by the Potomac Tuberculosis and Respiratory Disease Association and the Northern Virginia Federation of Junior Women's Clubs. A conflict in his schedule prevented him from attending the meeting.

He pointed out that Congress has enacted legislation requiring consideration of the environmental impact of most government-related activities, but said greater attention should be given to the possible adverse effect of consumer products before they reach the market place.

The current regulatory framework for the control of industrial and consumer substances leaves much to be desired, Senator Spong said. "One need only browse the newspapers to be confronted with the dangers of mercury and other trace metals, PCB's, and detergent additives to name a few.

He has introduced legislation to establish a pre-market clearance requirement for all new chemical substances which are of environmental or public health significance. The bill also would provide for the systematic testing of existing chemical substances when there is reason to believe they may pose an unreasonable threat to man or the environment.

"Premarket clearance is a logical extension of the movement not only to protect the environment and public health," Senator Spong said, "but to avoid the stresses caused by limitations or prohibitions on activities which become a built-in part of the economy and subsequently prove to be undesirable."

Chemical Detected in Md. Clams

GUDE, From C1

PCBs were discovered in soft-shell clams taken off Love Point, Tilney Point and Eastern Neck Island on the Chester River, the mouth of the Corsica River, and off Kent Point and Hollieutsnock in the eastern bay, according to Gude.

Little is known about the chemical's effect on plant and animal life, said Lyons. PCBs have been discovered in chickens, eggs and fish and in the atmosphere, he said.

Lyons said no one has been able to pinpoint the source of PCB in Chesapeake Bay.

Contaminated Eggs

Last August, the Food and Drug Administration announced it had seized 75,000 eggs that were contaminated with PCB. The Agriculture Department traced the contamination to chicken feed made with fish meal at a Wilmington, N.C., plant where sterilizing equipment leaked the chemical into heating vats. Later it was learned that 60,000 of the eggs reached the Washington area and were sold.

Monsanto Chemical Co., the nation's only producer of PCB, later agreed to stop selling the chemical to food and feed processing plants.

According to FDA guidelines, any PCB level of 0.5 parts per million in eggs is potentially hazardous. However, the level of contamination considered dangerous varies depending on what kind of food is contaminated. The FDA considers 5.0 parts per million hazardous in chickens.

Lyons said the 0.2 parts per million contamination found in the clams was not considered alarming, but should be sufficient to warrant a study of Chesapeake Bay.

Chemical Is Found In Clams

Study Asked Of Effect on Environment

By Edward Walsh
Washington Post Staff Writer

An industrial chemical similar to DDT has been found in small amounts in softshell clams in Chesapeake Bay, according to Rep. Gilbert Gude (R-Md.), who has asked the federal government to study the situation.

Gude, in a letter to the Council on Environmental Quality, asked that a task force of the council conduct a study to determine how the chemical is affecting the bay and its plant and animal life.

The chemical is polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a substance used in industrial processes, generally to cool machinery.

John F. Lyons, an aide to Gude, said yesterday that PCB was discovered in Chesapeake Bay softshell clams in tests conducted earlier this year by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The highest concentration of the chemical detected was 0.2 parts per million, compared to concentration of 150 to 400 parts per million found in some ocean fish, he said.

In his letter to the council, Gude said that although the levels of the chemical discovered in the bay thus far have been low, so little is known about PCB that the federal government should expand its efforts to find out how the chemical affects the environment.

The softshell clams were also contaminated with other chemicals, most insecticides --and virtually nothing is known about what reactions is caused when insecticides are combined with PCB, Gude said.

"The importance of estuaries in our nation's ecosystem indicates that special attention should be paid to the effect of PCBs in estuarine environments," Gude said in his letter. "I feel that the Chesapeake Bay, being the largest and most productive estuary in the nation, should be the subject of special attention."

See GUDE, C2, Col. 4

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