In the nation

Monsanto decides to end PCB fluid production

St. Louis (AP)—Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Company, the only United States manufacturer of the controversial PCB insulating fluids, announced Monday that it will quit producing the fluids by late next year.

Earle H. Harbison, Jr., general manager of Monsanto's specialty chemicals division, said the firm will complete distribution of all inventories and withdraw completely from the market no later than October 31, 1977.

The target date would be even sooner, Mr. Harbison said, but electrical transformer and capacitor manufacturers have said they would be unable to convert to other materials any earlier.

PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) is a stable, fire-resistant chemical that is used widely in transformers and capacitors.

"Unfortunately," Mr. Harbison said, "the very properties that have made PCB's ideal and even mandatory for these essential uses were also found in the early 1970's to be the properties causing them to persist and accumulate in the environment."

PCB has been blamed as a major source of pollution in New York's Hudson River.

The New York Environmental Conservation Department and the General Electric Company reached agreement recently for GE to contribute some $3 million toward the cost of cleaning PCB's from the Hudson. The agreement came after a lengthy hearing over leakage of PCB's from GE plants at Fort Edwards and Hudson Falls, N.Y., into the Hudson.

The accumulation of PCB's in waterways, Mr. Harbison said, triggered the firm's decision to cease production as soon as the electrical industry could find alternate fluids and convert its equipment and components to their use.