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Layden Decries Company's Plight

HUDSON FALLS — "I think it would be well if Mr. Reid (Ogden R. Reid, commissioner of Environmental Conservation) were to visit the unemployment offices in our area, as well as review the cost of our social services programs, in order to understand the plight of the working man in our commununity as well as that of the striped bass in the Hudson River."

This was a part of a statement made at Tuesday evening's Kingsbury Town Board meeting by Supervisor Leon Layden about the recent announcement of Commissioner Reid to halt all release of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) into the Hudson River from the two General Electric plants at Hudson Falls and Fort Edward by Sept. 30, 1976.

Layden stated that he had spoken to GE officials, who had reported that they know of no equipment that they can buy that will enable them to guarantee the complete elimination of PCBs. "If this is true," he continued," then GE is being ordered to follow standards which cannot be reached."

If the company is ordered to comply with something it cannot comply with, Layden said, it could very well force the closing of the Hudson Falls and Fort Edward plants.

Layden pointed out that at the present time GE is the largest employer in Washington County with approximately 1,300 people on the payroll. Last August the two plants had a payroll of approximately 1,900 people. This, he said, represents approximately 25 per cent of the non-farm work force in Washington County. The two plants also have payrolls annually of approximately $15 million, he noted.

The state health department announced Monday, Layden said, that samples of drinking water in communities along the Hudson River showed that PCBs were present in minuscule amounts, well below one part per billion.

"If the tax dollars of the upstate workers are to continue to flow down the Hudson River to help hale out our largest city from financial disaster, I think it is imperative that the small amount of PCBs, which apparently are harmless to drinking water, must also flow with our tax dollars," Layden said. "It would seem a far better solution to post 'No Fishing' signs to face the financial disaster to our county which would result from a closing of these two plants."

Board members seemed to agree with Layden's views on the matter, with Councilman Mansir Edwards adding that Environmental Conservation is creating more problems than it is solving.

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