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Industrialists Claim Dangers Of PCB Have Been Exaggerated

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The state's two-day hearing this week on proposals to restrict discharge of the industrial chemical polychlorinated biphenyls, of PCBs, found environmentalists and industrialists in a classic struggle.

Environmentalists, including Lt. Gov. Martin Schreiber, contend that PCB levels have reached alarming proportions and threaten human life.

They want severe controls on PCB use and disposal, if not an outright ban.

Industrialists, especially paper recycling companies, claim the dangers of PCBs have been exaggerated and that restrictions on the discharge of the chemical could cripple vital production.

Commercial production of PCBs began in 1929 in electrical transformers. Over the years, increased uses were found for the chemical and it made its way into such products as plastics, paints, insulating and hydraulic fluids, caulking compounds, inks, adhesives and carbonless carbon paper.

"There's not anything imaginable that at one time or another someone hasn't

tried to use PCBs in," remarked W.B. Papageorge of Monsanto Chemical Co., sole producer of PCBs in the U.S.

Environmentalists were alerted to the hazards of the chemical when an outbreak of PCB poisoning hit Yusho, Japan, in the late 1960s.

The culprit was a batch of rice oil, a popular cooking ingredient.

A leaking heat exchanger, it was later discovered, had laced the oil with PCB during the manufacturing process.

Since then, federal agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency have urged stricter policies on the use of PCBs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture set tolerance levels for human consumption in various foods.

Studies by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources show that PCB contamination has become ubiquitous. Fish are the most frequent carriers of the chemical.

DNR surveillance section chief Stanton Kleinert said PCBs in fish from Green Bay, Lake Michigan, the upper Mississippi River and the Fox River near

Portage exceed safe levels set by the FDA.

The agency also found shipments of carp from Lake Pepin with excessive PCB levels, resulting in orders to halt commercial carp fishing in the lake.

The state Health Department has warned anglers in certain areas not to eat more than one fish a week because of possible danger.

Unsafe PCB levels have also been found in various sewage treatment plants and in industrial discharges, particularly from paper recycling factories.

As a result, the DNR considered proposals to limit PCB discharge rates and to curtail the sale and use of the chemical.

The paper industry, pointing proudly to its record of efforts in the environmental cause, feels caught in a squeeze.

"If we were banned from discharging any PCBs at all, with our present technology, we would have to back away from the use of waste paper," said Groff Collett of Consolidated Papers, Inc., Wisconsin Rapids.

His remark was echoed by other paper recyclers.

Limits suggested by the DNR are unreasonable, too, they said, and would force companies to use economically unfeasible alternatives.

Pulp Mills

Oppose
PCB Ban

Journal Madison Bureau

Madison, Wis. — A state proposal to limit discharges of the chemical polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) to near zero would raise economic havoc with the paper recycling industry, a paper company spokesman said Thursday.

The statement was made by Richard W. Wand, vice president of the Bergstrom Paper Co., at the first of a two day hearing on Department of Natural Resources proposals to limit discharges of the chemical to no more than 5 parts per million in a 24 hour composite sample.

It was noted at the hearing that 19 of Wisconsin's pulp and paper mills recycle waste paper.

State investigators have reported significant amounts of PCB in discharges from the Bergstrom and Fort Howard Paper Companies, which recycle waste paper, and a National Portage. The Bergstrom firm is in Neenah and Fort Howard is in Green Bay.

In Carbonless Carbon

The investigators trace the PCB to carbonless carbon paper in which PCB has been used.

Wand said that Bergstrom had no control over the PCB because it had never bought any of it and that it would be impossible to test all the waste it accepted in order to identify its presence. In addition, he said, there was no evidence that the type of PCB found in its plant was the same type found in the fatty tissue of fish that was causing concern for regulatory agencies.

Not Primary Cause

Howard Ness of New York, representing the National Association of Recycling Industries, Inc., said it would be unfair to blame the recyclers when they were not the primary cause of PCBs being there.

Zero discharge rules for such paper plants would be un-

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PCBs

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necessary and disastrous, Ness said.

Lt. Gov. Martin Schreiber, in a statement read for him, said he hoped the hearing would draw attention to the fact that while Monsanto Chemical Corp. the only maker of PCB in this country, had restricted its sale to closed uses, it was being imported from other countries without adequate monitoring.

Aspin Favors Ban

A representative for Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wis.) said Aspin favored an outright ban on discharges of the chemicals into state surface waters.

"What recent research has offered to us is a further strengthening of the opinion of many federal, Wisconsin and other Great Lakes states agencies that PCBs pose a potential long term hazard to humans," Aspin said in prepared testimony.

He said he would support federal action in the matter.

Albert K. Forster of Madison, secretary of the Wisconsin Isaac Walton League, said the organization opposed the use of any chemicals until they were proven safe.

The Food and Drug Administration has set a 25 part per million tolerance for PCB in milk and 5 for fish, and recently dramatized its concern over the industrial chemical by seizing carp from Green Bay and Lake Pepin that exceeded that amount.

This tolerance was based on the no effect level determined from studies of Japanese families who suffered skin discoloration, loss of hair and liver trouble when PCB accidentally got into their cooking oil in 1968.

IRONWOOD, MICH.
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AUG 30 1975

'Classic Struggle' Develops at PCB Hearings

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Limits suggested by the DNR are unreasonable, too, they said and would force companies to use economically unfeasible alternatives.

Besides, they point out, not enough is known about the sources and extent of PCBs to take hasty action.

The question now goes to the DNR board, which will wrestle with testimony presented during the hearing and attempt to find a solution.

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