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editorials

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MONSANTO COMPANY, St. Louis

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From: PUBLIC RELATIONS

PCBs And Cancer

New evidence linking polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) with cancer in humans indicates that further protective steps against these compounds, already known to cause less severe human ailments, should not be postponed. A study of workers at a petrochemical plant of Mobil Corp. in Paulsboro, N.J., where a PCB product was being used, found two cases of malignant melanomas (a frequently fatal form of skin cancer) among 31 employes who had been heavily exposed to PCBs. One other worker in a group of 41 employes less intensely exposed also developed the disease. Besides the three cases of malignant melanomas, two cases of pancreatic cancer occurred.

This is believed to be the first association of PCBs with cancer in humans, although the product, made by the Monsanto Co., had already been linked to cancer in test animals and to skin disease, nervous disorders and still births in exposed humans. The Mobil study, which is being followed up by other studies, suggests the need to test other exposed workers in the field so that treatment may be undertaken if malignancy is detected.

The study also suggests the need for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to set standards to limit the exposure of workers to PCBs. This is true even though the Senate and House have each attached, as amendments to a toxic substances control bill, provisions that would ultimately ban most uses of PCBs. The toxic substances control bill may not become law, and even if it does it would not protect workers who are being exposed while the chemicals are still in use.

letters

Energy Conservation

This letter is in response to the Aug. 11 letter from W. Keller regarding "oil and plastic."

Only 5 per cent of our nation's oil and less than 3 per cent of its gas are used to make petrochemicals. In turn, these petrochemicals are the basis for all our automobile tires (synthetic rubber), 60 per cent of our clothing and 97 per cent of our carpeting (manmade fibers), 49 per cent of our paint and all of our antifreeze.

Concerning energy conservation, the U.S. chemical industry has voluntarily committed to a 15 per cent cut in its energy use by 1980 versus 1972. This conservation is requiring millions of dollars in investment. In contrast, the average speed of motorists in Missouri is now over 60 miles-per-hour and state gasoline demand in March was 17 per cent over March 1975. Nationally, gasoline consumption, which accounts for almost 40 per cent of the barrel of oil, is now back to pre-oil embargo days and is climbing rapidly.

More government regulations are not the answer to our nation's energy dilemma. Immediate conservation by all segments of the nation, further exploration for oil and gas, and development of coal, nuclear and solar energy are the answers. Given proper freedom and choice, American business and consumers will best decide the proper uses for our shrinking petroleum resources.

E. S. Robson Jr.
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