

56-54 ENVIRONMENT

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AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT in August that dangerous quantities of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a chemical used in electrical equipment manufacturing, were being released into the Hudson River (see Environment, October 1975), top federal health official Theodore Cooper, assistant secretary of the Department of Health Education and Welfare, called on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to prohibit the dumping; a similar protest was registered by the Natural Resources Defense Council, which identified the General Electric Company as a major source of the PCBs in the Hudson River. The New York state government ordered General Electric to halt the dumping, but the company refused to do so (New York Times, September 8), and litigation is likely after hearings scheduled for October. The EPA has so far announced no action. State health officials in New York have since identified PCB contaminants in five other bodies of water in the state and are considering a ban on sales of salmon taken from Lake Ontario. PCBs, which have caused deaths and injuries in Japan and are known to cause cancer in experimental animals, were found in concentrations up to seven times that permitted by the EPA in fish.

--Sheldon Novick