

Good Hand!
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Ed John

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BUSINESS NEWSLETTER

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A \$25-million methanol plant will be built by First Mississippi's new subsidiary, Methchem Corp. The unit, which should be marketing commercial quantities by first-quarter '73, will have about 200-million-gal./year capacity. Site was not disclosed. First Mississippi President John Babbitt, Jr., says consumption of methanol is growing at more than 10%/year, and that by the time the company gets its new installation in operation, demand will be up to 900 million gal./year. It's now about 660 million gal./year, with about half of it going into production of formaldehyde. First Mississippi is also a partner in construction of a 70-million-lbs./year melamine plant and a recently completed \$35-million urea and ammonia complex, both at Donaldsonville, La.

Scratch another chemical because of pollution charges. Monsanto will further limit sales of its polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) plasticizer, no longer market it as a water-resistant plasticizer or as a hydraulic fluid. PCB was scored by Representative William Ryan (D., N.Y.) because of evidence that, somewhat like DDT, it persisted in the environment and accumulated in fish and birds. Monsanto has had a program since '68 to keep PCB from fouling the environment (CW, Apr. 22, p. 17). The company will continue selling the material for use as a coolant for transformers, since there is no danger of contamination when it's used in a closed system.

Tenneco will expand its pipeline system to increase long-term natural gas deliveries to its distributors. The company has awarded a construction contract to Joyce Western Corp. to add 125 miles of 36-in. pipeline in western Pennsylvania parallel to the existing Texas-to-New England system. It will also add a total of 32,000 horsepower to five compressor stations. Increased gas deliveries are expected to begin with the '70-'71 heating season. Completion of the new units will raise the system's total design gas transmission capacity to 3.56 billion cu.ft./day.

Meanwhile, Collins Pipelines, a joint venture of Tenneco Oil and Murphy Oil, started construction of a 124-mile, 16-in. common carrier pipeline to carry petroleum products from the New Orleans area to Collins, Miss. It will connect with the Colonial and Plantation Pipeline systems there. Initial capacity of the new line, 65,000 bbls./day, will be increased to 100,000 bbls.

Ethyl Corp. is poised for a plunge into the detergent business. Company officials won't confirm it, but the company likely will become the third U.S. producer of nitrilotriacetic acid (NTA), the suddenly booming replacement for the phosphate builders. Ethyl has a patented process that evolved from development work it did as early as the mid-'60s. Its move into the business, though, hinges on a market survey it's doing and on getting a good contract from a major NTA consumer such as Procter & Gamble, which says it is ready to spend about \$167 million for NTA supplies (CW, July 15, p. 23).

The only commercial producers of NTA now are Hampshire Chemical (a divi-

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