60-13 CANADIAN PACKAGING
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A nation-wide survey of food packaging materials for 15 types of food products has been launched by the federal health protection branch in Ottawa because of possible contamination by a group of plastic chemicals known as polychlorinated biphenyls, according to Toronto Globe and Mail. PCBs are related structurally to hydrochlorinated pesticides such as DDT. They are long-lived chemicals often used as heat exchangers and plasticizers.

Dr. A. B. Morrison, assistant deputy minister of health, says that his department is concerned that PCBs, which are known to exist in some packaging materials — especially those made of recycled newsprint — might be transferred to the foods. If detectable levels of PCBs — above 0.01 parts per million — are found in the packaging materials, tests will be made on the foods to determine the levels of contamination there.

The study is being carried out by Ontario Research Foundation at Sheridan Park, near Toronto. Researchers are analyzing the following food products and their wrapping materials: crackers, cookies, macaroni, breakfast cereals, prepared mixes, dried milk, desserts, infant cereals, cheese products, chocolate products, frozen fruit juices and "specialty items."

There are no guidelines at present to the amounts of PCBs allowed in foods or packaging materials in Canada. Dr. Morrison says that not enough is known about PCBs to establish guidelines.

Preliminary tests in Ottawa revealed that two of nine samples of food packaging material for breakfast cereals had 0.01 ppm of PCBs and one sample had 1 ppm. The food itself did not show detectable amounts of PCBs.

Dr. Morrison said a few parts per million of PCBs have been found in isolated food samples in Canada, including some imported apples, imported cheese, domestic fish and cod liver oil.

As a result of the concern about PCBs, the major manufacturer of PCB products in Canada, Monsanto Canada Ltd. has agreed to eliminate PCB products for almost all uses this year.