

Monsanto

FROM (NAME & LOCATION): E. V. John - St. Louis

DATE: December 29, 1969

cc Mr. J. J. Spano - JSPAN

SUBJECT:

REFERENCE:

TO : Mr. E. P. Wheeler - EWHEE
Mr. H. S. Bergen - HBERG
Mr. J. E. Springgate - JSPRI
Mr. P. B. Hodges - PHODG
Mr. W. R. Richard - WRICH
Mr. P. S. Park - PPARK

The attached clippings and television interviews come from our PR office in London. The Irish Sea bird kill and the seal deaths on the Cornish coast have precipitated an unusual number of news media reports. Many of these reports are inaccurate and inflammatory. Fortunately, our U.S. position statement has taken some of the heat out of the situation, for the moment.

Environment magazine, St. Louis, is planning their article for January, 1970, which could generate other PCB stories in this country.


E. V. John

EVJ/stw

Attachment

MONS 099504

Press Monitoring Service

JOURNAL "Northern Daily Mail" (Hartlepool)

DATE Dec. 8, 1969

Chemicals probed after seal deaths

SCIENTIFIC teams investigating the deaths of West Coast seals, sea birds, and fish have started research on chemicals dumped in the Irish Sea. One that is under close scrutiny is P.C.B. (polychlorinated biphenyls), a synthetic lubricant used in the paint and plastics industry.

There are several chemical dumping grounds in the Irish Sea, a Ministry of Agriculture spokesman said today. There are a number of these dumping grounds where vessels can dump industrial and chemical waste without consultation.

Chemicals known to be toxic have to be dumped in deep water—more than 3,000 fathoms—but others can be dumped at will.

SEA BIRDS

These include P.C.B. because until recently it was not thought to have any toxic effect on wildlife.

Research by the Nature Conservancy's Huntingdonshire experimental station has shown that thousands of sea birds found dead on the West Coast six weeks ago contained large quantities of P.C.B.

But the conservancy, which has been examining the effects of P.C.B. for three months, says that until it can get adult healthy birds during next year's breeding season and measure their level of toxicity it cannot say whether the birds died of P.C.B. poisoning.

A Ministry of Agriculture spokesman said that two months ago all known dumpers of chemical and industrial waste were asked if they had been dumping in the Irish Sea. They all said they had not.

MONS 099521

THE ACCIDENT:

Officials at the Monsanto Chemicals Plant at Newport the only place in Britain making the chemicals PCB's, today denied that they were in any way responsible for the leakage of chemicals into the sea that are being blamed for the massive poisoning of sea birds and fish around Britain's coast line.

THE PCB'S:

The chemicals are known as PCB short for poly-chlorinated Biphenyls. The only manufacturers of this in this country are Monsanto Chemical Company who have a large plant on the coast of Newport. The PCB's made there are supplied to a wide variety of industries all over the country, including firms making plastics and paints. Now the chemical got into the bodies of the birds is a mystery. The Monsanto Company say the PCB's certainly weren't discharged into the sea by them. So far there's been no clue at all as to how the substance got anywhere near the Irish Sea. Monsanto says it's far from certain that it was in fact PCB that killed the birds. The company's scientists in America fed heavy quantities of the chemical to rats in a 90 day experiment. At the end of it the rats were as healthy as ever. Monsanto claims that cases of PCB as having toxic effects are very rare. And the company say they take the greatest care in the manufacture, storage and shipping of the chemicals.

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5.47

MONS 099507

Report No. MONA 29

Transmitted on Westward Television -
"Westward Diary"

Length 5 mins

Date 8th December, 1969

Time 6 P.M.

Short Title P.C.B.

Del Cooper: "New warning to Britain on wild life sea deaths". "Riddle of the ditch of death". "This stinking sea". They're three headlines that point to the grim possibility that the seas around the South-West could be polluted by a poisonous chemical. The chemical is known as P.C.B. It's a poisonous waste substance that the plastics industry dumps at sea, the sea in question being the Irish Sea. There is a possibility that it drifts down the Irish Sea towards the coast of the South-West. Well, just how poisonous is it? Well, this autumn, about ten thousand guillemots, a common sea bird, died in the Irish Sea, the big concentrations of P.C.B. were found in the carcasses of the dead birds, but it could be that the poison substance has found new victims. Over the last few weeks, dead and dying baby seals have been washed up along the coast all around the South-West. Well, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries seal experts have said that the seals have died from pneumonia and that their deaths aren't abnormal, but Mr. Arthur Bourne, who is the Chairman of the Ocean Resources Conservation Association, an independent body of marine scientists, isn't so sure. He feels there have been far too many deaths. During the last few weeks, fifty dead and dying seals have fetched up around our coast, including one reported in the Scillies today, and the connection with the poisonous P.C.B.? Well, the Ministry admit that this substance has been found in commercial fish around the coast, particularly in the Irish Sea and

MONS 099508

Fishermen in the South West have reported pollack, cod, sickly, underweight and in some cases with ulcers on their bodies. Well, could there be P.C.B. in these fish? Well, this is a question I'd like to put to Mr. ARthur Bourne, who's in our London studio.

Mr. Bourne, is it possible that the poisonous fish had been eaten by these seals who have subsequently died?

Mr. Bourne: I suppose it's possible, yes, we have no evidence of this though and I hope the Ministry's scientists are, in fact, investigating this very point.

D. Cooper: Now we've had fifty seal deaths around our coasts, do you regard this as being abnormal?

Mr. Bourne: I do for the Cornish colonies, yes. Where you get a large colony, such as in the Orkneys and so on, you might get quite a large number of deaths at this time of the year, but no, not in Cornwall. Furthermore, people who know the area well, would have spotted this kind of thing going on years past, but they haven't. They've come across up to about seven, perhaps ten dead seals in the time we've had recently where we've got fifty ... this is - what - ninety per cent more.

D. Cooper: Of course one thing that would worry, I think, a lot of people is that if this P.C.B. can get into fish, can it also get into people?

Mr. Bourne: Well, if it gets into fish and we eat the fish, obviously it can get into us, yes.

D. Cooper: How worried are you that this might happen?

Mr. Bourne: Well, I think we're all worried about this kind of pollution, I don't think it's just me ... any one individual ... any group of individuals, we are all concerned. What we want to see done is the Natural Environment Research Council, the Ministry of Ag and Fish, to look into this for

our benefit, not just for the wild life, this is our environment too.

D. Cooper: There is some suggestion, in fact, that the Government isn't telling us the whole truth about P.C.B.

Mr. Bourne: No, I don't know about that because, let's be honest, when we had the guillemot disaster, which you mentioned, the N.E.R.C. did, in fact, call a Council of their experts and bodies involved in this and they did put out a press statement. I think what is lacking is a more co-ordination and a speedier investigation of such happenings in the future. We should have somebody there ... and still should have somebody in the area now, looking into this.

D. Cooper: What practical steps do you think ought to be taken at this moment?

Mr. Bourne: Well, one of them I've just hinted at is that we should have a group of scientists on the spot, looking at the seals who are still coming in, taking blood samples for virus studies and so on, taking tissue out for chemical analysis, so that they can get right to the laboratories without any delay, and also have the authority to call in other specialists who they think they require at any one time.

D. Cooper: For many years a lot of scientists suspected that D.D.T. was a poisonous substance which could eventually harm human beings, do you think this P.C.B. is in the same class?

Mr. Bourne: Well, it's not far off it, yes, I think it could build up and build up in the fat tissue just like D.D.E. which is a breakdown substance from D.D.T. Already it has been reported from the Baltic and from the Dutch coast, from fish, wild fowl and other animals in their environment. It's increasing, obviously.

D. Cooper: Should people be worried at this stage anyway, about eating fish?

Mr. Bourne: No, I don't think so, I shouldn't think so at all. There's a lot of scare about at the moment but I hope that the Minister of Ag. and Fish will allay this one by saying: "Well, we're looking into the fish and the seals for these chemicals", and tell us exactly what is happening and what they've found.

D. Cooper: Mr. Bourne, thank you very much indeed.

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Report No. MON. 28.

Transmitted on BBC Television

"24 hours"

Length 5'20" Date Sat. December, 1969 Time 10.30 p.m.

Short Title Wild Life and Chemicals

James Burke: Over the past ten years there's been growing concern over one of the less pleasant side effects of this country's growing industrialisation, the pollution of our countryside and the waters around Britain by industrial waste and the chemicals used by farmers to make everything grow bigger and better and faster. So when large scale wildlife disasters occur the demands for a solution to the problem gets so loud and so heated that the cool scientific facts often get lost in a welter of emotion.

Take the three most recent incidents. 50 seals found dead on the North Cornish coast were reported to be poisoned by chemicals, but when "24 hours" talked to the biologists who actually examined their bodies, their verdict was that death was probably due, not to chemicals but to malnutrition. The codfish taken off the Kent coast recently were found to be scarred and covered in ulcers. Again, chemicals have been blamed, but, again, the marine biologists disagree. They say it's much more likely that rough seas had smashed the fish against underwater rocks, cut them up and then the cuts went septic. They don't suspect chemicals. Last of all nearly 10,000 seabirds were found dead or dying on the shores of the Irish Sea. This time chemicals were found in the dead birds, compounds called P.C.B. Polychlorinate Bifinol which plastics and paint companies do use and do dump in the sea.

Now, Ian Press, you were the man involved in, so to speak, the autopsy, on some of these birds, what did you discover?

Mr. Ian Press: Well I should point out that in addition to an examination of these birds being carried out at our

MUNS 099512

laboratory at Monkswood, they have been examined by other establishments, veterinary establishments, medical laboratories, and laboratories specialising in the analysis of heavy metals, such as lead, arsenic and mercury.

J. Burke: But it was you who found the P.C.B.?

Mr. Press: Yes. No disease has been found and no heavy metals were found to be present that could explain the circumstances. Our laboratory has specialised in the organa chlrorine compound, that is the D.D.T. type compound used as pesticides and this P.C.B. is chemically very similar to D.D.T. and during the course of our analyses we discovered the P.C.B. was present.

J. Burke: Did you discover it at a level at which you could be certain was lethal in the birds?

Mr. Press: No we didn't. Very little is known about P.C.B. at the moment, ... the analytical side is still in its infancy and one can't be very accurate in the results one obtains, one can only give an approximate figure of the level of residues present in the body. Nor do we have very much information on the toxicity, so it's extremely difficult to draw any definite conclusions from the results that have been obtained.

J. Burke: Yes, but I mean you have done the investigation you are qualified to talk. There are others presumably who consider themselves qualified and there have been reports specifically saying that these birds died from the effects of P.C.B.'s. one by ... there was an article by Arthur Bourne just after it happened.

Mr. Press: Yes. Well this we feel unfortunate. We can say categorically on the evidence that is available at the moment it would be quite wrong to assume that P.C.B.'s. were the cause of deaths of these birds. The evidence just is not

available.

J. Burke: So you'd say that the reports we got from the Press today were exaggerated?

Mr. Press: Yes. We feel that it's rather unfortunate in many ways that this exaggeration has occurred. It leads, I think, to the impression that until this incident we were unaware that P.C.B.'s. were present in wild birds. Now this is not the case. From the time that P.C.B. was first discovered by Swedish scientists in 1966, we have, in fact, been examining British wild birds for residues of this compound. We've examined well over 500 British birds now, mainly predatory birds from all parts of the country.

J. Burke: So you can say that there is definite pollution going on?

Mr. Press: Oh yes,

J. Burke: In the birds and in the sea, in their environment?

Mr. Press: Yes, we were already aware that this compound was present as a background residue in most wild birds in Britain, and we'd also carried out a preliminary toxicological study using one of these compounds, this is a point one has to bear in mind, it's not just a chemical, it's a series of compounds all rather similar but possibly having slightly different toxicity.

J. Burke: Is it difficult to analyse this particular compound, do you have to know what you're looking for when you do an analysis?

Mr. Press: Oh yes, you do indeed, and this is one of the difficulties. There are so many of these different polychlorinated biphenols that could be in the environment and one isn't quite sure which particular one you should be looking for, and this is partly why one can't get an accurate figure.

J. Burke: It seems to me that there are now literally hundreds of these chemical compounds in our environment and have been for some years, is there an increasing danger that we will not be ... we no longer will be able to assimilate them and cope with them?

Mr. Press: A great number of chemicals, although they go into the environment, break down fairly rapidly. The ones that have caused concern in recent years, and quite rightly, are the ones that are persistent, and this is why the D.D.T. group and closely allied pesticides, have come in for scrutiny lately.

J. Burke: But if what you say about the difficulty of analysing for them, I mean that you have to know what you're looking for in order to find it in the first place.....

Mr. Press: Yes.

J. Burke: What's your reaction then to the calls on the part of the non-scientists for a sort of total all inclusive and final investigation and discovery of the things that are going to be found?

Mr. Press: Well unfortunately it's not as simple as this. As you yourself said, there are a whole range of compounds in our own particular field, the possible effects of chemicals on wild life. Now wild life is subjected to a whole range of chemicals. It's quite impossible with the resources available to investigate every one. So you have to pick out the most likely subject and one is often led to this by a particular incident.

J. Burke: By accident, in fact? If it kills you know?

Mr. Press: Yes. If an unexpected incident occurs you investigate and find out the cause and this may well lead to an unsuspected side effect from the chemicals

J. Burke: Yes, but what you're saying is, it seems to me,

sums up in a sense that we've got to live with what we know, the area that we don't know we just have to wait until something occurs, we've got to live with the situation?

Mr. Press: Well I think partly so. We get a lot of benefits from modern technology, there is always the danger of these side effects and we must constantly be on the alert to deal with them.

J. Burke: Thank you Mr. Press.

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Extract from
Economist, London

13 DEC 1969

Pollution

Within the law

Lethal levels of chemical pollution have caused the death of 10,000 sea birds washed up in the Irish Sea over the past two months. The chemicals, derived from chlorine and known as PCBs, are used in plastics, paints and cosmetics and turn up in many industrial effluents. The normal concentration of PCBs in most animal life is around ten parts in a million but concentrations twenty times as high are being found in the dead birds. Sadly, it is not possible to point to any accidental or illegal dumping of the chemical that could explain the deaths like it explained the death of fish in the Rhine. It seems that the pollution has built up entirely within the framework of the law.

The royal commission to look into the pollution of the environment, which the Prime Minister announced on Thursday, will concern itself with how far the law should be changed, and like all royal commissions, is likely to take its time. The more immediate issue is whether the existing law is being enforced as well as it might. The answer is almost certainly that it is not. Twelve different departments at present dabble in the subject; the most important of them, coming under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, being the river authorities. Almost all the 4,500 million gallons of water that are daily polluted by domestic or industrial use pour into rivers and tidal waters. And the law leaves it to each

authority to decide what levels of pollution it will allow. There are 39 river authorities; they all act independently, are all subject to local pressures, and so far have been slow to use anything like the full powers given to them under the Clean Rivers Act of 1961. Some even complain that the equipment needed to measure the chemicals in their water is too expensive to buy. So the situation could be even worse than we suspect. This is where some action is going to be expected of Mr Anthony Crosland's new ministry; he is already setting up two advisory panels, one for farm chemicals in the post-DDT era and another for noise.

11 DEC 1969

Newport-made PCB in dead sea birds

MONSANTO CHEMICALS whose Newport works is Europe's sole producer of the chemical PCB — traces of which have been found in hundreds of dead sea birds washed up on the north-west coast — claimed today that their own tests had shown the substance was "not highly toxic."

A company spokesman said the information had been obtained during a research programme to determine the biological effects of deliberate doses on various forms of wildlife including fish.

"Very early results confirmed that PCB was not highly dangerous," he said. "In a ninety-day study of rats there were no adverse effects where feedings of up to 150 parts per million were administered."

"And in the case of the sea birds which have been found there is nothing to prove that the chemical caused their deaths."

Responsible

He said the company were nevertheless concerned at the findings, although it would have been quite impossible for any of the chemical to have entered the sea at Newport.

The section of the plant at Newport concerned with manufacturing PCB is completely dry and there is no effluent of any sort.

PCB, or polychlorinated biphenyl to give it its full name, is used extensively in the manufacture of plastics, paints, adhesives and as an insulating fluid for electrical equipment.

Drum

All stocks are transported from Newport in sealed drums.

A spokesman of the Nature Conservancy Experimental Station near Peterborough said they had been studying the effects of PCB for some three years.

"Although we have found these traces in dead birds there is nothing to suggest from the evidence we have that it was responsible for their death," he said. "Unfortunately there is no real information available yet about the exact level at which PCB becomes toxic to sea birds."

MUNS 099518

Press Monitoring Service

JOURNAL THE TIMES

DATE 10th December, 1969

PAGE: 3

Malnutrition 'killed grey seal pups'

By Our Science
Correspondent

Investigations into the death of grey seal pups off the Cornish coast had failed to show any abnormal causes, Mr. Nigel Bonner, head of the seal research unit of the Natural Environment Research Council, said in London yesterday. He said these animals were dying of malnutrition.

Mr. Bonner had come to London to discuss progress with other scientists at the council and to attend a meeting at the House of Commons.

Livers from three seals are to be examined by the Scottish Fisheries Laboratory at Pitlochry, Perthshire, for traces of DDT and polychlorinated biphenyls (P.C.B.s). Polychlorinated biphenyls is one of the laboratories involved in routine studies of the unintended occurrence of pesticides in the environment.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries said yesterday that no fish or shellfish had been affected. The levels of P.C.B.s, the industrial chemicals implicated in the deaths of sea birds in the Irish sea in October, had shown no increase in fish stocks, which are being continually monitored.

The Ministry denied any attempt to cover up.

MONS 099519

Press Monitoring Service

JOURNAL

GUARDIAN

DATE

10th December, 1969

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Seal deaths 'normal'

By our Science Correspondent

No unusually large kill of seal pups has taken place along the Cornish coast: this year's abnormally lay in the high number of reports of dead seals—probably and indicator of increasing public awareness of wild life problems. Mr Nigel Bonner, director of the Natural Environment Research Council's seal research unit, Lowestoft, said in London yesterday.

There was an area of overlap

between the number of reports of dead or dying pups and the number of seals actually killed, for some seal pups might appear more than once in the reports. It was now thought that between 37 and 50 had died.

Although no accurate population figures existed for the Cornish seal colony it was thought to be between 200 and 300. In that case, since 30 per cent of seal pups normally died of starvation during the first weeks of life the number of pup deaths was normal. In a stable colony roughly 60 per cent of all pups died during the first six months of life.

Liver tests

Since the seal pups had started to die there was no number to analyse for toxic residues, but three livers—the next best material for examination—were being tested. Although the Cornish coast had been searched, no adult seals with unusual injuries had been found.

But Mr Ken Jones, at the St Agnes seal sanctuary, whose reports of a tenfold increase over the normal number of pups washed up started the whole affair, remains sceptical.

With the total population of seals unknown, as is the proportion of lost pups normally finding their way out to sea, there are unfortunate gaps in the argument suggesting a normal kill. Mr Bonner, however, is an acknowledged expert and NERC is satisfied.

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MONS 099520

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JOURNAL "Northern Daily Mail" (Bartlepool)

DATE Dec. 6, 1969

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A Ministry of Agriculture spokesman said that two months ago all known dumpers of chemical and industrial waste were asked if they had been dumping in the Irish Sea. They all said they had not.

MONS 099521