with a number of balls on each tray. The whole column is electromagnetically vibrated. This allows a continuous transport of crystals through the unit—with the agitated balls grinding up large crystals to form smaller, unstable crystals, which in turn melt and thus provide the basis for recrystallization to a higher-purity solid. The action of the balls also helps forestall problems of solid flow, such as channeling or clogging.

The Institute believes that its new device is simpler and much less expensive than other systems (e.g., rotating-helix columns) being groomed for similar crystallization ability. In addition, the new Dutch design has demonstrated in the laboratory that it can run unattended for long periods.

Several companies are reportedly interested in helping the Institute commercialize the new system.

An organization that thinks up ideas and an organization that can exploit them are joining forces. Franklin Institute (Philadelphia) and Certain-teed Products Corp. (Valley Forge, Pa.) are creating a firm called Franklin Key, Inc., whose purpose will be the "commercial evaluation and exploitation of new technology." Bulk of this new technology will come from research-oriented Franklin Institute itself. Certain-teed, a building-products producer with diverse subsidiaries, will have first refusal rights to all developments that Franklin Key evaluates. In addition, Certain-teed will contribute marketing, financial, promotional and other expertise to the operation of the new company.

Another line of biodegradable plastics is ready for commercialization. Van Leer - EcoPlastics Ltd., Toronto, Ont., expects to have commercial quantities of sunlight-disintegratable polymers available around the end of this year. Initial development work has been with polystyrene.

The polymers are biodegradable because light-sensitive chemical groups are built directly into the polymer chains. This approach offers advantages over the physical mixing of light-sensitive additives with the polymers; for instance, the latter method introduces the risk of additive migration to foodstuffs or other goods being packaged in the plastic. The basis for Van Leer - EcoPlastics' technology was developed by University of Toronto chemistry professor James Guillet.

Water polluters will be federally prosecuted, and waste-cleanup measures that are in line with "best practicable control technology" will be required at industrial plants, even though new U.S. water-pollution-control legislation that would formally dictate these actions is still mired in Congress.

So indicated John Quarles, Jr., head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Enforcement Branch, at a meeting of the Manufacturing Chemists Assn. in Washington, D.C., last month. Another point he brought out: More research is needed on the interrelationships of gaseous, liquid and solid wastes, so that industry will eventually look upon all aspects of pollution control as making up a single, unified problem.

Environmentally hazardous polychlorinated biphenyls are even more widespread than federal officials had expected. A monitoring program involving the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has shown the compounds to be present at "an unexpectedly large number" of sampling points in streams, lakes and reservoirs. Notes a USGS spokesman: "We found PCBs in river water, some newly developed real-estate lakes, and at two U.S. Geological Survey 'benchmark' stations located in relatively remote areas essentially unaffected by man." And one out of every five lake- or river-bottom sediment samples collected in 18 states contained significant concentrations of the biphenyls.

Both environmentally and medically suspect, PCBs have been drawing much

Critical attention lately (Chem. Week, Jan. 16, pp 37-8)

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