PCB - Congressman Ryan

# Spectrum

UNDER PRESSURE from Congressman William Ryan (Dem., N.Y.) the Monsanto Company has somewhat curtailed sales of its polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). It will not discontinue manufacturing any of the products, however, contrary to its earlier statements.

In Environment, January-February 1970, the hazards of PCBs were described. PCBs resemble DDT chemically, are at least as persistent in the environment, are nearly as widespread, and pose similar hazards to wildlife. Congressman Ryan, after reading the article, issued a statement in which he called for "immediate action to prevent what may well be a major ecological disaster."

On April 10, the day of Ryan's announcement, Monsanto issued a statement in which they said, "Steps have been taken to...replace those grades of PCB which linger in nature." Monsanto claimed this action had been planned well before the Environment article appeared. In response to questions, Monsanto wrote to Environment, "(Substitutes) are being developed to replace those grades (of PCBs) which have been appearing in the environment..." but refused to give details on what the new products would be and which PCBs would be discontinued.

In response to continued pressure from Congressman Ryan, Monsanto issued a new statement July 16 in which they said the use of PCBs, of which they are the sole U.S. manufacturer, would be restricted after August 30, 1970. In a telephone interview a Monsanto spokesman acknowledged that, despite the earlier announcement, the company planned to continue manufacturing all grades of PCBs, but that these would not be sold to customers who might use them in ways which would, in Monsanto's opinion, allow their release into the environment. The spokesmen refused to estimate how much PCB sales might be reduced by such action.

IN GLASGOW, a scientist announced that pollution of Loch Ness had killed its monster. "We have lost our greatest asset," said Douglas Drysdale, according to a Reuters dispatch August 1. The report was hotly disputed by defenders of the monster, who claimed it had been seen by nine people the week before.

CONTROLLED FUSION power may be only five years away, according to Keeve M. Siegel, president of KMS Industries, Inc., Ann Arbor. In June, KMS's annual report announced an advance in controlling the nuclear reactions that provide the explosive force of the hydrogen bomb, and called it potentially the most important discovery of modern times. Nine patents have been filed. The nature of the discovery has not been disclosed, and the patent applications have been classified "secret" by the Atomic Energy Commission. Under an agreement with the AEC, the Ann Arbor firm will develop a prototype fusion power plant at its own expense under AEC security restrictions; the government would have the right to military applications of the development program free of charge.

In a telephone interview, Siegel told Environment he expects permission from the AEC "momentarily" to proceed with development of a laboratory-scale pilot plant, which he estimates could be completed in five years. Other scientists in the field commonly estimate that twenty to thirty years will elapse before there is successful demonstration of controlled fusion power. According to Siegel, the discovery which makes fusion power now possible was made by Dr. Keith Brueckner, head of KMS's Technology Center in San Diego.

Fusion power could operate on cheap fuel derived from sea water, and produce electricity without creating pollution. Successful development of this power source would make the present nuclear power program obsolete just as it is beginning, and would remove the need for development of a new reactor type, the "fast breeder," to which AEC plans to commit $2 billion.

DDT CAUSES MUTATIONS in rats, according to research conducted by Dr. Marvin Legator, head of the federal Food and Drug Administration's Cell Biology Division. Massive single doses of DDT to rats were



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