STUTTGART, ARK.
LEADER
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KERMIT SNEED, director of the Interior Department's Warmwater Fish Cultural Laboratories, and a Stuttgart resident, reeled off specific facts and examples designed to chill the blood of The Thinking Man.



SNEED

Example of an example: In Mississippi there lives a topwater minnow whose forebears were imported from Italy in an unsuccessful attempt at mosquito control. Minnow farmers call it the "pot belly." It's a nuisance to minnow raisers and prolifically spawns several times a year.

Specimens of the minnow, in laboratory tests, have been found to contain as many as 1,000 parts per million of the ultra-hazardous hydrocarbons.

In fact, said Sneed, a turtle or snake that eats one of the chemically-resistant minnows will die. And if one of the "polluted" minnows is placed in a fishbowl with other wild minnows of uncontaiminated origin, THEY will die within a half hour.

"Ricefield slicks" of the Stuttgart area are exhibiting the same chemical-resistant build-up, Sneed said.

A facet of the problem is that the resistant minnows and other forms of wildlife in the human food chain are not self-exterminating. The chemicals

(See SNEED—Page 2)

MONS 030457

SNEED—(From Page 1)

lodge in the muscle and visceral fats which are not metabolized until periods of near starvation or hybernation, with consequent deception as to cause of mortality.

Sneed said he did not hold the optimism earlier expressed by Hancock that the Grand Prairie at least partially has escaped the national pollution crisis. Rather, he said, "We're just behind in our analysis, so far as both the area and the state are concerned."

Sneed pointed to the Tombigbee River which has figured prominently in the news in the past few days because of mercury poisoning. Mercury poisoning of that stream and other bodies of water across the nation "is actually interfering with the sale of Arkansas minnows in those areas," Sneed commented, because of the consequent sport fishing decline.

A fisheries careerist, dedicated to the culture of freshwater fish for food use, Sneed last night warned that both farm-produced fish and sports fish are showing chemical build-ups which render them "marginal" or unfit for human consumption by Food, Drug and Health Administration standards. Some have "actionable" levels of contamination so far as the agency is concerned, he added.

Sneed said that the combination of chemicals poses an even more dire threat—for instance, dieldrin, chlordane and other pesticide and herbicides listed among the "hard" pollutants.

He referred to Ralph Nader's recent statement on the subject, quoting Nader as stating the U. S. if fish composed a major part of the diet, "would be a nation of imbeciles," due to brain damage from the transmitted chemicals.

But Sneed reserved his grimmest statement of all for the introduction of another problem on the horizon.

Sneed said he and other scientists in the field are predicting that within a year the initials "PCB" will be as indelibly engraved in the consumer's mind as DDT now is becoming a "household word."

"PLB" is the chemical abbreviation of "polychlorinated biphenyls," used as a plasticizer and for hydraulic fluid. Many chemicals now in disrepute will seem "lily white" by comparison, Sneed declared.

The PCBs according to recent news stories, allegedly can produce birth defects in animals. They have been used in insecticides, though one manufacturer, Monsanto, has denied knowing until recently that it was being so used. Monsanto has withdrawn its PCB from the market. The USDA is investigating, but has taken no action to prohibit its use.

Of considerable local interest, Sneed repeated a recent news report that monitoring stations at DeValls Bluff on White River and Pine Bluff on the Arkansas have found fish with twice the allowable human food quality concentration of DDT and other hard chemical pollutants.

"Some people in this country are going to try to burst that bubble," Sneed observed of the current hue and cry over evnironmental problems. He said chemical producers already are trying to enlist farmers in the effort to discredit those sounding the alerm.

The speaker was critical of continued use of aldrin in seed treatment because some farmers believe the treatment repels blackbirds. Actually, he said the diseases aldrin was developed to combat are now resistant to the chemical, so far as seed treatment per se is concerned.

Sneed said he feels that all human foods now bear residues of one kind or another in varying quantity, and that the decomposition of the dangerous chemicals by "half life" as in the case of radiation could range up to twenty years or more. Chlordane and toxaphene could remain toxic for up to five years, he said.

MONS 030458