

JAN 1 1976

Environmental Damage Noted By Roger Martin

By Rep. Roger Martin

A number of years ago Rachel Carson's book, "Silent Spring" blew the whistle on a potential damage to the environment. Because of her efforts, DDT was banned in this country. DDT had a detrimental effect on wildlife, especially fish and water fowl feeding on fish.

Recent national publicity indicates that the chemical PCB may be far more dangerous to the environment than DDT. On December 4, 1975, I requested that Legislative Counsel draft a measure to ban the use of PCBs in Oregon. It is my intention to introduce this legislation either in the 1977 regular session, or at a special session, if one should be called in 1976. I will, also, forward copies of my proposed legislation to our congressional delegation in Washington, D.C., for possible introduction at the national level.

The initials PCB stand for Polychlorinated biphenyls, a chemical which has been produced in the United States since 1929. At one time PCBs were widely used in the electrical industry as a coolant for transformers and capacitors; in a wide range of lubricants, waterproofing chemicals, and carbonless duplicating paper; and also as a carrier for pesticides.

Evidence has developed in the last several years to indicate that PCBs may be

more damaging to the environment than the wide spread contamination of DDT.

PCBs do not break down in the environment and therefore, are a persistent pollutant. Traces are now appearing in the Columbia River. The level of PCBs in the Great Lakes and rivers in the east, such as the Hudson, are far greater than the Columbia, and present an immediate threat to wildlife.

Research indicates that concentrations of PCBs effect fish life and wildlife, especially ocean feeding birds. The build-up in the systems of this wildlife is very similar to that of DDT. Reproduction of water fowl exposed to this chemical is seriously threatened. Either the shells of their eggs are too thin to survive, or the onset of the breeding time is delayed so that the young cannot survive the seasonal change.

In addition, there is a medical indication that concentrations of PCBs in humans may lead to a wide range of harmful effects. In 1968 in Japan, over a thousand people suffered an epidemic of disfiguring skin disease, which was traced to a build-up of PCBs which had contaminated rice oil they were using. Their symptoms included abdominal pains, disturbances in the function of the liver, eye inflammation, headaches and general discomfort. Three years later, none of those af-

fected had completely recovered.

It is my intention to introduce this measure at the request of the Oregon Electric Club, a statewide organization made up of suppliers, contractors, utility employees, and others involved with the electrical industry. This industry recognizes the

danger to the environment and to our fellow citizens presented by PCBs.

This legislation will ban immediately the use of PCBs in the State of Oregon, except for extending their use by one year in electrical capacitors. Dow Chemical Company has developed a possible substitute for the PCBs used in these capacitors, which should be on the market within a short period of time. This measure will also require that capacitors with PCBs may be used only if they are properly disposed of in a manner which will be

prescribed by law. A disposal site presently exists in the State of Idaho, which utilizes an abandoned missile silo site.

Objections will undoubtedly be voiced to the banning of PCBs. Admittedly, they have certain characteristics which have been beneficial. However, it is obvious that their detrimental effects far outweigh the benefits and a substitute must be found. Just as Oregon was a pioneer with the "Bottle Bill" legislation - let us again lead the nation in eliminating this pollution of our environment.