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TO E.P.

FOR MONSANTO

PROGRAM NEWS STATION WINS

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DISCUSSION DDT

ALAN SHAW: Good news, Roger Field fans; our Science Specialist at WINS has learned the alphabet.

ROGER FIELD: When DDT was first introduced it was widely hailed as the answer to malaria. Dychlorodiphenaltrychloroethine(?) was the chemical that killed mosquitos as we built the Panama Canal, and little did anyone realize then that farmers would start spraying DDT all over their crop as a general insecticide. But they did, and DDT started turning up in all kinds of food, and in lakes and in streams; and eventually the result of its ubiquitousness was infamy. DDT was banned before it contaminated the entire food chain.

Well, a few years ago, refinements in chemical analysis permitted scientists to have a closer look at DDT in the environment, and, surprisingly, they discovered that much of what they thought was DDT was actually PCB, polychlorinated biphenal(?). They're highly toxic, they interfere with the normal reproductive cycle, and some countries are considering an out and out ban on PCB. Sweden has done so already. But last week, some new facts came to light. At a meeting of the American Chemical Society, two scientists from the University of California showed how vaporized DDT, with the help of lots of sunlight, can turn gradually into DDE, than DCB, and eventually to some very simple forms of PCB. This recent work should give added impetus for maintaining a strict ban on the use of DDT; and it may start to explain why some things that shouldn't have contained any PCB, like newspapers, for example, have recently been discovered to actually contain significant amounts.

This is Roger Field.

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SHAW: Thank you, "RF."