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top of the news

New DES charges

Diethylstilbestrol (DES) may cause abnormalities in male as well as female children of mothers using the synthetic hormone during pregnancy, according to Ralph Nader's Health Research Group.

Last week, HRG Director Sidney Wolfe asked for stricter controls on the drug in a letter to David Mathews, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

Wolfe backed his plea by citing two recent studies on the effects of DES on male offspring. In one study the Chicago Lying-In Hospital found that 10% of male children whose mothers took the drug had cysts of the epididymis (tubes at the back of the testes). DES has already been associated with vaginal malignancies in female offspring.

The other study, by researchers at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (Research Triangle Park, N.C.), found that 60% of male offspring of mice treated with DES during pregnancy were sterile. Researchers also found abnormalities of the testicles.

Wolfe urged Mathews to impose tighter controls over DES as a "morning after" contraceptive, which the Food and Drug Administration has already restricted to emergencies, such as incest or rape. FDA notes that in 1971 and March 1975 it warned doctors against issuing prescriptions for pregnant women.

Wolfe also wants DES banned as a growth stimulant in feed animals. In September, the Senate approved a bill suspending use of DES in feed for meat intended for human consumption (*CW, Sept. 17, p. 19*). The House Commerce Subcommittee on Health and the Environment will hold a hearing on the bill this week.

GE states its case

General Electric will present a second round of testimony this week at New York hearings on discharges of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from its two capacitor plants at Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, N.Y. The New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation says GE's discharges into the Hudson River violate water pollution and fish and wildlife regulations and wants them ended entirely by next September (*CW, Sept. 17, p. 19*).

Edward L. Simons, GE manager of environmental protection, stated last week at the Albany hearings that the company is working on a plan to reduce discharges, now about 2.5 lbs./day, to 3.5 oz./day from both plants. But Simons contended the company couldn't commit itself to that level "when we don't know if the limit that may result from this hearing is achievable." Another witness, Gerald Lauer of Ecological Analysts (Middletown, N.Y.), said that fish samples taken from the river above and below the plants contained levels of PCBs far below the 5 parts per million allowed by the Food and Drug Administration. But under questioning, he conceded there were also some fish that contained PCBs above FDA limitations.

GE says it will provide more data on the fish samplings and will do some new analyses. The state has already presented its case but says it may rebut the GE testimony, then hold hearings on appropriate remedies.

Rapid wrap-up

Earnings for **Firestone Tire & Rubber** fell 12.8%, to $134.296 million, in the fiscal year and decreased 12.4%, to $58.571 million, in the fourth quarter (both ended Oct. 31). Sales rose 1.3%, to $3.724 billion, in the year, but dropped 5%, to $1.044 billion, in the quarter. . . . **Monsanto** expects its 1975 earnings to be between $288 million and $295 million (down from $323.2 million in 1974) on sales of about $3.6 billion (up from last year's $3.5 billion).

Mead Corp. will spend $85 million on its Chillicothe, O., paper complex. Projects include installation of a new chemical recovery furnace and provision for increasing pulp capacity to over 600 tons/day, from 550 tons.

Pennwalt will increase its quarterly common stock dividend to 37¢/share from 34¢, payable Feb. 1 to holders of record Jan. 9.

Dow Chemical will set up Western regional headquarters in Walnut Creek, Calif., early next year. . . . **Caribe Isoprene Corp.** has started commercial production of isoprene monomer in a $40-million plant at Penuelas, P.R. Bulk of the project is owned by two Japanese firms: **Nippon Zeon**, 50%; **Mitsubishi**, 40%. **Commonwealth Oil** owns 10%.

Union Carbide reports the proposed offering of $4.8 million in 30-year pollution control revenue bonds and $1 million in 30-year industrial development revenue bonds to be issued by Kanawha County, West Virginia. Pollution control bonds will finance water pollution control facilities; industrial bonds will finance an energy systems expansion at Carbide's Institute, W.Va., plant.

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