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June 13, 1969

Mr. Phillip Yaffee
Wall Street Journal
2999 West 6th Street
Los Angeles, Calif. 90005

Dear Phillip:

Although you decided to put the "PCB contamination" story on the shelf, thought I would go ahead and answer some of the questions Dr. Risebrough raised about our March 3 statement.

First, we know his published technical paper did not say PCB was "killing birds." Our statement referred to the San Francisco Chronicle article which said PCB "threatened the welfare" of birds via harming the eggs, etc.

Our reference to unknown substances in the parts-per-billion range related to the initial DDT work done many years ago. The residues reported by Risebrough and others have been in both parts-per-billion and parts-per-million, so perhaps a general usage of the latter would be more correct.

Dr. Risebrough indicated our sentence that PCB is essentially insoluble in water was misleading. We did not intend such. We know PCB is fat soluble. We did want to point out that its insolubility in water meant it settles to the bottom and is not easily transported or dispersed.

As I mentioned over the phone, PCBs are not used in automobile tires or house paints -- nor are they in household products, epoxy resins or major vinyl plastics, as has been stated in some press reports.

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We also stick with the statement that PCBs are not "highly toxic" materials. Of course here we are getting into an area of relativity. PCBs are not classified as "highly toxic" for handling and use. They would make a lousy pesticide. One measurement of this is the lethal amount it takes to kill a rat. DDT will do the job with 120 milligrams of chemical per kilogram of the rat's weight. For PCB, it takes 5,000 to 10,000 milligrams per kilogram of weight.

We are not yet in a position to say whether the work done by several scientists correctly identified the wildlife residues as being PCB. Our own research program will clarify these findings. It also goes much further, as outlined in the slightly revised statement I am enclosing.

In retrospect, Phillip, it seems PCBs have come "into the picture" as a result of the current work on DDT -- since PCB or similar substances do interfere with exact analysis of DDT. The charge by some writers that PCB is a threatening contaminant for mankind is out of perspective.

At a recent DDT hearing in Wisconsin, Dr. Risebrough was quoted as testifying that PCB was not the cause of the thin egg shells for birds -- that the amount of PCB he found was too small and DDT was the cause. I do not know if Risebrough was correctly quoted, but I am enclosing these newspaper articles.

The San Francisco Chronicle story also mentioned that, "No tolerance limits (for PCB) have been set for human food supplies and their cancer-causing properties remain to be determined." This is correct, but distorted. One could also say it has yet to be determined if PCB might not prevent or fight cancer. In the food area, the controversy over DDT revolves around those who say four parts-per-million, etc., in food is perfectly safe -- and those who disagree. To date nobody has even reported finding PCB in food.

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We do not brush aside these initial reports on PCB. We are investigating the matter on a worldwide basis. Please let me know if you ever want to pursue this further.

Sincerely,

Tom C. Ford
Manager
Divisional Public Relations

TCF:mw
Enclosures