56-66E TOXIC MATERIALS NEWS
E.O.W.

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1800 HEW HEALTH CHIEF VOICES STRONG CONCERN OVER DUMPING OF PCBs IN WATERWAYS

Dr. Theodore Cooper, Assistant Secretary of Health for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, has written to the head of the Environmental Protection Agency to express his concern over continued licensing to dump polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the nation's waterways, and to ask for an immediate re-evaluation of the rationale for the policy. The text of Dr. Cooper's letter to Russell Train reads:

"The recent findings in both the Hudson River and Lake Champlain of high levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in food fish are of deep concern to us. The source of the PCBs in the Hudson River, at least, seems to be at least in part the discharge of this class of chemicals by industrial plants operating under a permit by EPA for such discharge.

"It is our feeling, therefore, that the rationale for the continuing license to discharge PCBs into water where they may enter the food chain should be immediately reevaluated. Various technical references including the International Agency for Research in Cancer and studies recently completed by Kimbrough et al. confirm their carcinogenic activity in rodents. While the current state of our knowledge as to the biological activity of these substances is not complete, we feel that available evidence dictates that immediate action should be taken to terminate the discharge of PCBs. Such action would be in the best interests of protection of public health and safety by eventually terminating PCB entry into the food chain and subsequent exposure of the American people."

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