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Monsanto's PCB Called Major Pollution Threat

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A chemical substance manufactured near St. Louis by Monsanto was described by a U.S. Congressman Friday as a threat to the environment perhaps as great as DDT.

The substance is called PCB, and is said to be threatening the reproduction of birds. It is also suspected of being harmful to human beings and animals.

The threat of PCB was outlined by Congressman William F. Ryan (Dem.) of New York, during a press conference he held in New York City.

"I am calling for immediate action to prevent what may be a major ecological disaster," said Ryan.

HE ASKED for federal authorities to set limits on PCB in food products, and to ban it entirely from pesticides.

Monsanto officials responded in a prepared statement that they are "well aware of the concern" over PCB. They noted steps have been taken to strictly control its use and to replace harmful grades of PCB that linger in nature.

PCB stands for "polychlorinated biphenyl" which is used as a "plasticizer" in a wide variety of products. Monsanto is the only manufacturer in the United States, at plants in the St. Louis and in Anniston, Ala., according to a firm spokesman.

The plant producing it here is the Krummrich facility, at Sauget, Ill., only a few miles southeast of downtown St. Louis.

Ryan called for Monsanto to state whether any of the substance is released to the environment during manufacturing.

A MONSANTO spokesman here said the firm does not know if any PCB is released into the environment from the Krummrich Plant.

The spokesman cited strong measures being taken by the Monsanto to control pollution at its East Side facility.

Ryan said research indicates that PCB can have "a disastrous effect on human beings."

"If inhaled, PCB can cause nausea, rapid breathing, loss of weight and a lowered red blood cell count," said Ryan.

"More serious results are the deterioration of the kidneys, jaundice and atrophy of the liver. In sufficient quantities, PCB can cause death," said Ryan.

"The incredible thing about the PCB menace is that its effects on man and animal have long been documented by chemists and biologists," he said.

Ryan attributed much of the research on it to Environment Magazine, published in St. Louis by the Committee for Environmental Information.

RYAN SAID the Food and Drug Administration should require all products containing PCB to be labeled, and asked Monsanto to cooperate with federal authorities to determine the threat of PCB.

The trade name used by Mon-

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santo for its PCB product is "Arcolor."

Although Ryan said that the product is used for many household items, Monsanto said it is not a household product.

Monsanto said it is used mainly in electrical applications where the chemical performs as an insulating fluid.

"We have and will continue to cooperate fully with government agencies investigating this problem," Monsanto said in its prepared statement.

THE FIRM noted that alternate products will be introduced later this year for the grades of PCB which degrade slowly.

In a related development, Dr. Robert Risebrough, of the University of California, Berkeley, said the PCB has found its way into fish, sea birds, human fat and human mothers' milk.

He said PCBs are used in many household products such as waxes, and floor tiles, and also in brake linings, plastics and adhesives.

Other firms also produce PCBs in other parts of the world.

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