MONSANTO CHEMICALS LIMITED
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
RUABON

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Meeting with Natural Environment Research Council at Alhambra House, Charing Cross Road, London on 9th April, 1970

PRESENT:	Mr. R.J.H. Beverton, M.B.E.	Secretary, NERC
	Dr. D.W. Heath	NERC
	Dr. G. Howells	NERC
	Mr. R.F. Glover	Nature Conservancy, Edinburgh
	D.S. Cameron H.A. Vodden	Monsanto

1. This meeting was the result of an invitation from Mr. Beverton to discuss the P.C.B. pollution problem with N.E.R.C., following an enquiry from us about the anticipated report on the Irish-Sea incident involving sea-birds.

2. The Natural Environment Research Council is part of the Department of Education and Science with responsibility to advise on and allocate funds for research into all aspects affecting the natural environment. The Nature Conservancy Laboratories constitute the major functional part of the organisation but they also co-ordinate work in other government laboratories and organise and fund activities such as scientific expeditions to study the environment. They have no statutory authority relating to pollution as such, but clearly have an interest in its interaction with the environment.

3. Two reports pertaining to PCBs are being prepared. One of these, relating to seals off the Cornish coast, is now in draft form. The other report, concerning the Irish Sea incident involving sea-birds, is not now expected to be available, even in draft form, until mid-May. Draft copies of both reports will be made available to Monsanto for comment as soon as possible. Apparently, both reports indicate that relatively high concentrations of PCBs were found in birds and seals, but point out that many other factors were involved in producing a high mortality rate and that no clear indictment of PCBs exists.

4. The N.E.R.C. is anxious to promote research which will be useful in providing guidance on actions to deal with problems, such as pollution, which affect the environment. They recognise the need to eliminate emotional attitudes in dealing with such problems and would welcome advice from industry on any lines of research which could be of value.

5. Specifically referring to organo-chlorine residues, mainly insecticides, long term trends have been studied in various ways. For example, a study of museum samples of egg-shells revealed a sharp decline in egg-shell thickness during the early 1940's, corresponding to the introduction of organo-chlorine insecticides. Collection of plankton from the Atlantic on a routine basis over many years has revealed a progressive decrease in the quantities collected, thus indicating a progressive decline in photosynthesis activity at sea-level, presumably due to increases in atmospheric pollution. Samples of plankton have been preserved and it has been suggested that examination of these samples for organo-chlorine residues, including PCBs, may provide some indication of the accumulation of such compounds.

6. The NERC personnel involved in this discussion did not appear to be very knowledgable on polychlorinated biphenyls, but were anxious to learn. Since they will be involved to some extent in formulating NERC research projects further discussion on the toxicological work sponsored by Monsanto in the USA and on the biodegradation work at Ruabon could be useful. We have, therefore, invited Drs. Howells and Heath to a meeting at Monkswood on May 19th when Dr. Wheeler will also be present.

H.A. VODDEN

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