

To Protect Environment

OECD Nations to Limit Manufacture of PCBs

Member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have agreed to control the manufacture and trade of the industrial chemical, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a persistent chemical which may lead to contamination of the environment.

This is the first international agreement aimed at limiting the production and use of chemicals in order to protect the environment, according to OECD. Only a limited number of uses, specifically listed in the OECD Council decision and including particular applications where the nonflammability of PCBs is an essential factor, would be authorized.

The decision also allows for production of PCBs for use in closed systems, such as condensers and transformers in large electrical equipment, which present minimal risks for the environment.

The agreement recommends that member countries in implementing the decision give priority attention to the elimination of PCB uses in such products as heat transfer fluids for food processing, animal feed and pharmaceuticals; adhesives and sealants; hydraulic liquids, other than in mining, and lubricating oils; vacuum pump fluids and cutting oils; also pesticides.

The OECD action stems from the widespread concern of governments, following a series of accidents. The persistence in 1966 of traces in poisoned fish and wild birds. Accidents during the past four years have included the occurrence of PCBs in chickens caused by absorption from PCB-containing plastic wrappers; the discovery of PCBs in food wrappings due to recycling of copying paper in the production of paper pulp; the occurrence of PCBs in milk from cows given feed contaminated by PCBs through herbicides or sludge where it had been stored (U.S.A., 1969, 1970, and 1971). The most serious accident involved human poisoning following leakage of heat trans-

fer fluid in a rice oil pasteurization plant in Japan in 1968.

Along with the text of the agreement, a technical note was drawn up on PCBs resulting from an eight-month investigation by the OECD Environment Committee's sector group on the unintended occurrence of chemicals in the environment. The agreement stems from proposals of the group for concerted action drawn up at its meeting in November, 1972, as part of the organization's work of developing coordination between member countries to minimize distortions in international trade that could arise from lack of harmonization of national measures.

The decision, establishing coordinated environmental regulatory action among OECD countries, lays stress on the ultimate need to entirely eliminate the dispersal of PCBs; it is also in line with the resolution passed by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in June, 1972 calling on governments to minimize the release of dangerous or toxic substances, especially where they are persistent.

RCI Starts Up Oregon Plant

Journal of Commerce Special
WHITE PLAINS, N.Y., March 5 — Reichhold Chemicals, Inc., today announced that its urea-ammonia facility at St. Helens, Ore., has achieved a successful startup with most units in full commercial production.

The St. Helens plant, acquired from Shell Chemical by Reichhold in late 1972, had been shut down by Shell in August of 1972 following Shell's decision to discontinue urea and ammonia production on the West Coast.

Peter J. Fass, executive vice president of RCI, indicated that startups have proceeded smoothly and on schedule, with product quality and production rates reaching commercial levels ahead of targeted schedule.