EV John

Third tip poisoning castle lake

By Ann Clwyd

THIRD tip in industrial waste tip is polluting a stream which feeds the lake round Caerphilly Castle. It is certain that the tip contains poisonous chemicals similar to those which were dumped at the Maendy and Brofiskin tips, near Pontypridd—the subject of a Commons statement on Monday. The chemicals include PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls), which are highly poisonous and can build up to dangerous levels in human and animal fat, and which has been found to be leaking from both the Maendy and Brofiskin tips.

The stream—Nant y Gledyr—flows near the disused Penrhos tip, an area of 45 acres and close to the centre of Caerphilly. The tip was last used around 1966-7 by Industrial Waste Disposal Ltd.—the same firm which dumped waste at Maendy and Brofiskin. Since 1961, when the local angling club complained about pollution, the Glamorgan River Authority has been monitoring the stream and they last took samples from it in February of this year. They found phenols (organic chemical compound) present at 23 milligrams a litre and there was also analine (another organic chemical compound used in the dyeing and pharmaceutical industries) at 14 milligrams a litre. Both in high concentrations are poisonous.

But since the publicity over the other two tips the river authority and the Glamorgan County Council public analysts have both been carrying out tests for PCB. The PCB probably came from Monsanto Chemicals Ltd., which used Industrial Waste Disposal Ltd., now part of the Redland-Forte Group, to get rid of waste from its Newport factory.

The Caerphilly medical officer of health, Dr P. A. John, said yesterday that there was no health hazard at present, but the results of the PCB tests were being awaited. Six months ago, Dr John objected to plans to develop the Penrhos site for residential and industrial development, saying that thorough scientific tests should be carried out first.

Mr Terry Lynch, the chief executive of the river authority, also said that there was no cause for alarm. The stream goes into the lake round Caerphilly Castle and, Mr Lynch said, if there was something really poisonous coming from the tip its effect would be seen right away on the fish in that lake. He added, however: "There is a possibility—and I put it at no higher than that—that there could be materials in the tip contained in metal drums and all our monitoring could be quite useless if by corrosion a number of the metal drums, which have so far remained secure, became free and their contents leaked out into the stream. All I can say at the moment is that the situation does not give cause for alarm, but wherever you get an area of uncertainty, then there must be a question mark."

But back in 1963 waste from the tip did find its way into the stream and killed the fish. The river authority took Industrial Waste Disposal Ltd. to court and the company was fined £250 in May, 1964. Previously, some of the drums which had been dumped by the company rolled into the stream. In 1966-7 the company gave up tipping at Penrhos, and the site has since been covered with hardcore material and weeds and grass have grown over part of it.

● More than 400 local authorities in England and Wales had not responded to a Government call for a review of waste disposal facilities, Mr Graham Page, Minister for Housing and Local Government, told 2,000 delegates at the annual conference of the Institute of Public Cleansing at Paignton yesterday.

He also said: "Monitoring of tips is related to a specific set of circumstances, and I have no doubt that the Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food are fully aware of the relevant facts."

He agreed that some tips were not being brought to the standards of controlled tipping recommended by Government departments.

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