bc: Mr. H. S. Bergen - HBFRG
Mr. E. P. Wheeler - EWHEE
Mr. W. R. Richard - WRICH
Mr. E. V. John

June 13, 1969

Mr. Robert A. Hoving
Booth Newspapers, Inc.
515 National Press Building
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Hoving:

Enclosed is a statement from Monsanto which should help in your consideration of whether there is a story on the alleged effect on the environment of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB). Since you work for nine newspapers in Michigan, I presume your interest arises from the mention of PCBs at the recent DDT pesticide hearings in Wisconsin.

This matter first arose in the United States when the San Francisco Chronicle ran a story late in February based on the work of a scientist in California. The deadline of that writer did not give us time to submit our side of the story. The enclosed statement contains facts which should have been presented.

It seems PCBs have come "into the picture" as a result of the controversy over DDT -- since PCB and other substances do interfere with exact analysis of DDT residues. The charge by some writers that PCB is a threatening contaminant is out of perspective.

PCB is not a pesticide and is used in highly specialized and restricted ways. We find it difficult to see how that much PCB could be showing up in the environment. It's kinda like saying that "not only does the exhaust of your car contribute to air pollution, but also the hydraulic fluid in your brake system."

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PCB is not highly toxic. It would make a lousy pesticide. One measurement of this is the lethal amount it takes to kill a rat. DDT will do the job with 120 milligrams of chemical per kilogram of the rat's weight. For PCB, it takes 5,000 to 10,000 milligrams per kilogram of weight.

The San Francisco Chronicle story also said that, "No tolerance limits (for PCB) have been set for human food supplies and their cancer-causing properties remain to be determined." This is technically correct, but highly distorted. One could also say it has yet to be determined if PCB might not prevent or fight cancer. In the food area, the fight over DDT revolves around those who say four parts-per-million, etc., of DDT in food is perfectly safe -- and those who disagree. To date nobody has even reported finding PCB in food.

Even the alleged damage to wildlife seems to be in question. At the Wisconsin hearings, the California scientist (a Dr. Risebrough) was quoted as testifying that PCB was not the cause of thin egg shells for birds -- that the amount found was too small and DDT was the cause. I do not know if he was correctly quoted, but am enclosing these newspaper reports.

We do not brush aside these initial reports on PCB. We are investigating the matter on a worldwide basis and, in fact, began work well before Dr. Risebrough's report. But the entire matter has been grossly distorted.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact us. My phone is (314) 694-2887. Although I will be on vacation through July 4, any inquiry will be handled in my absence.

Sincerely,

Tom C. Ford
Manager
Divisional Public Relations

TCF:mw
Enclosures

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