Pkd. 7/15/70

Firm Curbs Sale of Perilous Chemical

© New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON — The manufacturer of an industrial chemical called PCB has decided to restrict sales of the chemical because of mounting evidence that it can induce birth defects in animals.

The Monsanto Co. of St. Louis said in a letter to Rep. William F. Ryan, D-N.Y., that it would no longer sell PCB for use as a water-resistant plasticizer or as a hydraulic fluid.

Asks Pesticide Ban

In April, the company asked the Dept. of Agriculture to prohibit the use of the chemical in pesticides.

Monsanto said it would continue to manufacture the chemical for use as a coolant in electrical transformers because of its "unique properties" and because its emission into the enviornment could be controlled in a "closed system" such as a transformer.

PCB, short for polychlorinated biphenyls, is chemically similar to DDT in that it resists biological breakdown. Monsanto has been making it for 40 years under the brand name AROCLOR.

Found in Mother's Milk

There have been increasing scientific reports in recent years that PCB was being found in fish, birds, fruits and even, in miniscule quantities, in human mother's milk. There is evidence that large doses affected the enzymes, and thus sex hormones, in certain animals.

The primary use of PCB has always been as a lubricant in transformers, the purpose for which Monsanto will continue to make it. The chemical also appears in a number of paints and adhesives that require a high degree of corrsive resistance.

Several years ago, Monsanto began a campaign to market it widely for ues in such household products as floor waxes, outdoor paints and caulking compounds.

Declines to List Products

The company declined to make public a list of all products now containing PCB. A company spokesman said that publication of such a list would "serve no useful nonpolitical purpose."

The spokesman said Monsanto did not know until recently that the chemical, a liquid that it sells in giant drums, was being used as a pesticide.

According to an official of the Dept. of Agriculture, PCB is used in at least eight different brands of insecticides now on the market. He said the department had begun an "exhaustive review" of the hazards of PCB but had taken no action to prohibit its use.

Ryan, who has conducted a year-long campaign to limit, not prohibit, the use of PCB, said he was not completely satisfied with Monsanto's action and hoped that sales would be restricted even further.

DSW 338343

STLCOPCB4082176