ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
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FDA Bungle

The forced destruction of thousands of fish in five St. Louis park lakes because chemically-contaminated carp were unwittingly introduced into the waters raises a fundamental question which someone in the Food and Drug Administration ought to be required to answer: Why were authorities here not warned in time to prevent the carp from being put into the lakes?

FDA inspectors, who were suspicious that the carp might contain unacceptably high levels of a toxic industrial chemical called polychlorinated biphenyl or PCB, took several of the fish for examination out of the shipment being sent from a Green Bay, Wis., fishery to St. Louis. The carp subsequently were found to contain 10 times the permissible level of PCB. The shipment was not halted apparently because the FDA lacks the authority to impound fish that are later to be released.

The agency, however, scarcely lacks the authority to place a single telephone call in which officials here could have been informed that the carp might pose a significant health hazard. In the inexplicable absence of this act of simple common sense, the city is now compelled to destroy all the fish in five lakes, which beyond the shameful waste involved will force the closure to fishing in the lakes until they can be restocked.

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