

The Detroit Free Press
DETROIT, MICH.
D. 818,096 SUN. 714,631

FEB 29 1976

Progress on PCB Controls

THE PROGRESS of the PCB regulation bill from the Senate Conservation Committee to the Senate floor is an encouraging development in the effort to control these toxic chemical compounds in Michigan waters.

The committee, headed by Sen. Joe Mack, D-Ironwood, deserves praise for refusing to adopt suggested changes in the bill that would have seriously diluted its impact. Affected industrial interests wanted a 10-year minimum period for replacing PCBs after a substitute becomes available, and to allow all existing uses of PCBs to continue indefinitely.

Instead, the Department of Natural Resources director will decide when a substitute exists and how long industries have to convert to other products.

The day that substitutes are available for PCBs may be nearer than many people think. Dow Chemical Co. already has announced plans to market a new insulating fluid that

could replace PCBs in high-voltage power capacitors—one of the chemicals' chief uses.

The PCB bill is especially important to Michigan because of the direct danger these ubiquitous chemicals pose to the state's fishing industry. Lake Michigan salmon and lake trout tested in 1974 were found to be contaminated with PCBs and unfit for human consumption. Other Great Lakes fish also are tainted above acceptable levels.

Now, according to DNR Director Howard Tanner, "public attention is being directed at the real problem, that PCBs are more than a contaminant in fish, they are finding their way through a multitude of small sources into biological systems."

A near-unanimous vote in the Michigan House, and the unanimous vote in the Senate Conservation Committee, have been the Legislature's response so far to this grim threat. It must be hoped the full Senate now will follow suit, and reject any shortighted pleadings to delay or weaken this urgent legislation.