

July 21, 1975

Mrs. Ione Timm
Box 411
Blair, Wisconsin 54616

Dear Mrs. Timm:

Your letter dated July 11 was forwarded to me for response because I have been intimately associated with Monsanto's polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) products.

I appreciate and understand your concern relating to the contamination of Lake Pepin. From my knowledge of the uses of PCBs I find it very difficult to understand how the lake can continue to be contaminated.

When questions about the effect of PCBs on the environment first surfaced, Monsanto Company reviewed its product line and the applications for these products. As more data was developed concerning the effect of PCBs, Monsanto took steps to reduce the entry of PCB into the environment. The Company stopped the sale of PCBs for use in various applications, except where no acceptable alternatives were available. Today, PCBs manufactured by Monsanto Company are sold only to the electrical industry for use in closed systems as a dielectric fluid in transformers and capacitors -- applications for which there exist no acceptable substitutes.

Thus the situation today is drastically different from conditions which existed only three years ago. Today the 40 million pounds per year of PCB, produced by Monsanto, is carefully used in the United States by less than 50 Monsanto customers in the manufacture of sealed electrical equipment. Prior to 1971, Monsanto sold approximately 80 million pounds per year which was used by thousands of customers.

Our manufacturing and sales reduction program was a unilateral action taken by Monsanto and was based on our evaluation of developing environmental data.

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Although research efforts designed to develop alternative materials for use in the electrical industry have been accelerated not only by Monsanto but others, including industry, university and government laboratories, worldwide, to this day no material has been found which offers both the electrical properties and the important fire resistance which are available with PCBs. I can assure you that these efforts will be continued.

I appreciate your understanding of the difficulties involved in the divulgence of commercially sensitive customer information. I regret that I cannot share with you specific customer information but I can assure you that Monsanto does not sell PCBs to any industry located in the Lake Pepin area or the associated water systems.

Since Monsanto began its withdrawal of PCBs in 1970 from open type systems which lead to easy entry into the environment, the source of the PCBs in Lake Pepin remains a mystery to me. I personally cannot speak from facts but I cannot help but speculate regarding importation from foreign sources or the continued presence of PCBs in applications which we no longer consider proper and their disposal into river systems, an action which we consider irresponsible.

I have enclosed a copy of a report issued by the Federal Inter-departmental Task Force on PCBs. I believe this report is an excellent summary of the PCB environmental problem.

I hope you find this information helpful. If I can be of further service please let me know.

Sincerely,

W. B. Papageorge
Manager, Product Acceptability
Specialty & Process Chemicals

WBP:pd

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