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Fear as leverage

Gov. Carey's commendation to Ogden Reid, environmental conservation commissioner, for his decision to ban the sale of fish caught in the Hudson River because of poly-chlorinated birthenyls (PCBs) contamination was enlightening. But, I was disturbed to read that the governor backed away from Reid's position that industry — chiefly General Electric Co. — must stop all discharges of PCB in State waters this year.

Even though many Americans are aware of industrial pollution, they are unwilling to challenge the industries, especially if it comes down to the hard crunch jobs or water pollution. As a result, some industries, aware of community fear of the loss of a plant or exacerbated unemployment, undoubtedly use this fear as a leverage to gain time or avoid any cleanup action at all. Conversely, pollution control does generate jobs. In a reprint published by the National Wildlife Federation, the Environmental Protection Agency pointed out that an estimated 50,000 persons were working on construction jobs for sewage treatment plants funded by the agency. It also estimated that this number would increase to 125,000 by 1977.

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