view from the city

A Personal Opinion...

By Jake McCarthy of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Drink and Be Merry—But Eat? . . .

OUR HAPPY THANKSGIVING message from our Government was that it was considering a plan to let Swift & Co. decontaminate 90,000 poisoned turkeys in order to save the company $300,000.

Next day—after the news had been digested—the company said it wasn't going to use them after all. It was reassuring to see that there is still some conscience left in the world.

The only way to have decontaminated the turkeys would be to cook the poison chemicals out of them, so they could have been used only in frozen dinners, soups or pot pies. The Department of Agriculture promised us that the birds would have to be proved safe if the company went ahead and that was all to the good.

The 90,000 turkeys had been lying in a company freezer since last August, when inspectors found that they were tainted with industrial chemicals called PCB, which is one of the products of Monsanto Co. here.

I'm glad Swift stopped thinking about that plan, but these PCBs keep popping up. They are DDT-like chemicals that have been found to lead to birth defects and liver damage in laboratory animals. Last summer somebody discovered that 10,000 tons of meal had been contaminated with it and millions of chickens had eaten the meal, and 100,000 or so of the birds had been destroyed to save us all. Then the Government confiscated 4000 dozen eggs, which adds up to 52,000 eggs, but millions of chickens had to lay more eggs than that.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE that the Agriculture boys are aware of what's going on. But it makes you wonder whether the food companies are getting sloppy.

Agriculture experts it found some PCB contamination in September in a batch of shredded wheat, spaghetti dinners, corn meal, mixed cereal for babies, grits, noodle dinners and pancake mix. But it didn't seize any of the products. Officials said that in some cases the levels were too low and in others, high levels were not found in enough samples to justify action.

Just last August, however, a Food and Drug Administration official said that "no amount of PCB chemicals in poultry is really acceptable. It's very important that these be kept out of all food."

Coming on top of all that talk about some soup cans containing potentially fatal botulism, it gets so you are afraid to put your hand on a supermarket shelf.

Imagine what all this does to the conscientious little woman in the kitchen who washes her spoons and dishes sparkling clean. And then wonders if the TV dinner is going to give her gastritis or a rash or send her to the hospital before the Wednesday night movie is over.

IT'S BEGINNING to worry me, too. Even worse, it is beginning to give my health food friends a superior air. I've never been able to figure out how they can sit down to a meal of brown rice and wheat germ. I have noticed they never smack their lips when they have finished. But all of a sudden they are looking healthier to me and my only hope is that somebody has sprayed their sunflower seeds with pesticides.

Last week a Nobel Prize winner defended the use of modern pesticides because they enable the world to grow more food, but it just sounds like a lot more poison to me.

You'd think the least our great chemical apparatus could do would be to [illegible] be taken before every

In the meantime, [illegible] people keep telling us not to worry, that they are finding only low levels of poisons [illegible] they're down in the [illegible] and [illegible] address [illegible] and that [illegible] the football game. Or that [illegible] the smallest party on the [illegible]

[illegible] I'd sure feel better if the Agriculture Department weren't trying so hard to [illegible] compounds a bomb or two

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