

Prof. Van Genderen speaks in favour of the provisional prohibition of the use of Polychlorbiphenyls.-

During the congress in Hilversum of the Royal Dutch Chemical Association, Prof. Dr. H. van Gelderen said that the Polychlorbiphenyls (PCB) which pollute the environment, should not be used, as long as so little is known about these products.

These chemicals are so persistent, that even after a complete prohibition, they will remain in the environment for years. In birds which only live of fish and in seaorganisms - high concentrations are found - until now they were not yet mortal. One expects that in the near future, the Dutch Government will take action to restrict the use of PCB's.

Prof. van Genderen doesn't consider it as impossible that in the coming days, one will have to face unpleasant surprises, since the research to avoid PCB's has only been made for some sorts of animals. We know for instance nothing about the poisonous effects of PCB's on smaller organisms. When such researches will be made in the future, we might well find out that they are already completely destroyed. This was said by the prof. from Utrecht who is specialised in animal medical pharmaceutical and biological toxicology. A recent research showed that the most important sources of contamination were the big rivers. Hence the pollution of the coastal area (including the Frisian-sea).

In 1929 the polychlorbiphenyls were introduced for the use of transformers because of their isolating qualities. There wasn't such an objection because this material didn't come in contact with the air or the water. But afterwards, with the use in applications such as paint-, glue- and cardboard-production, this wasn't true any more. In 1966, PCB's have been found in animal organisms in Sweden but it has been confused with products similar to DDT. It has been proved that on animals, PCB's cause acne, liver-damages and a bigger susceptibility for infections.

Until now, only the American manufacturer, Monsanto, have realised the damage of PCB's. This company decided only to deliver this material when it is used in a closed electrical system (one of the applications). Monsanto herewith loses \$ 25 M peryear. But as long as the European and Japanese manufacturers continue, the threat of PCB's will last.

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Hence the decision of the Swedish Government. Yesterday during the meeting in Hilversum, a spokesman of Progil said that they were awaiting the results of the French Governmental research. These results are expected for the end of 1972.

He thought it was worth a consideration, to ask his off-takers to especially use PCB's with a lower chlor-content, which are absorbed in a less important quantity by all sorts of living organisms. The application of high-chlorinated PCB's will probably have to cease.

In the meantime, PCB-contents of hundreds of milligrams per Kilo are found in cormorants and herons in Holland. These values are close to the ones measured in dead testbirds, which got PCB's in their food in order to analyse the poisonous qualities. The PCB's are mainly brought into the country by the water of big rivers and from there they are spread in the coastal area and the Frision-sea.

During the meeting in Hilversum, fundamental reflections on the pollution of the environment were given by the toxicologist, Prof. Dr. H. van Genderen of Utrecht and the Director of Unilever, Dr. Ig. W.J. Beek.

- (Trouw, Saturday, August 28, 1971)