SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.
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SEMI-MONTHLY (U)

FEB 1976

Researchers Find New PCB Dangers

It has recently been brought to light that PCBs are an even greater danger than had previously been believed. Evidence showing that the toxicity levels of the ubiquitous family of pollutants known chemically as polychlorinated biphenyls is even lower and potentially more dangerous than had been expected. Research by both James R. Allen, a professor of pathology at the University of Wisconsin's Primate Research Center and Renate D. Kimbrough of the Center of Disease Control in Atlanta have revealed this new disquieting evidence.

PCBs are already known as an extreme hazard to the environment. Generally used because of their chemical stability, resistance to fire, and electrical insulating properties, this is much the same reason for their difficulty in breaking down in nature. In the same fashion as DDT, PCBs enter the food chain and wreak havoc.

The effect of toxic levels of PCBs in humans was demonstrated in 1968 when 1,291 Japanese persons were poisoned by contaminated rice oil. Under the name Yusho disease, it caused skin disfigurement, abdominal pains, and liver impairment.

Professor Allen placed rhesus monkeys on a diet with as little as 2.5 parts per million of PCBs. The monkeys suffered loss of hair, general metabolic disturbances, and severe stomachache. The monkeys also had a high frequency of abortions and sickly offspring. These revelations are important because so many fish in the Great Lakes, the Hudson, Milwaukee, and Ohio rivers as well as other waterways are showing dangerously high levels of PCB concentration.

Another study from the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta has shown the possibility of PCBs being a low-grade carcinogen in humans. Renate D. Kimbrough has found that rats given diets containing large amounts of PCBs developed malignant cancer tumors in the liver.

EPA's Office of Toxic Substances estimates that at least 4.5 million kilograms (or 9.9 million pounds) of PCBs are lost to the environ- during an average 12-month period.

* **What You Can Do:** Write the EPA demanding a ban on all PCBs. Remind them that there are substitutes for their use in electrical work, such as polydimethyl siloxane, which is being used successfully in Japan. Also write to your Congressional Representative urging him to support the Toxic Substances Control Act. This is a very serious problem for both humans and wildlife.

FOE Urges PCB Ban

Friends of the Earth has joined with the Environmental Defense Fund and the National Resources Defense Council to urge the Food and Drug Administration to impose more stringent controls on the amount of Polychlorinated Bipheynls (PCB) allowed in fresh water fish and eventually ban its presence in all foods. Last week Canada decreased the amount of PCB allowed in fish, and Japan has already banned its use after several serious outbreaks of PCB contamination. Since 1929 PCB has been used in a wide variety of products, everything from cardboard containers and non-carbon duplicating paper to boat paints and electrical capacitors. It is chemically related to DDT and concentrates in body fats as it goes up the food chain. In high concentration the chemical causes the breakdown of genetic and reproductive functions, attacks the liver, and is responsible for severe skin diseases.

* **What You Can Do:** Write to your Senator and to members of the Subcommittee on the Environment of the Senate Commerce Committee urging them to eliminate the use of PCB and get rid of its presence in foods. Members of the subcommittee are: Glenn J. Beall Jr. (R-Md.), James L. Buckley (R-N.Y.), Howard W. Cannon (D-Nev.), Wendell H. Ford (D-Ky.), Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.), Vance Hartke (D-Ind.), Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii), Frank E. Moss (D-Utah), John O. Pastore (D-R.I.), Adlai E. Stevenson III (D-Ill.), John V. Tunney (D-Calif.), Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.).

MONS 032997