

PUBLIC RELATIONS - EUROPE

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PRESS QUERY

SUBJECT: PCB (Wales Quarry Disposal) SOURCE OF ANSWER: J. Mason, Bxl
P.J.A. Marsh, Bxl
COMPANY: Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co. D. Shearn, Newport
Operating Unit
HANDLED BY: P.W. Whippy
E. Bracken

REPORTER & MEDIA: Peter Pringle, Sunday Times

DATE: April 26, 1973

BACKGROUND

Mr. Pringle called with a string of questions about PCBs and the Maendy Quarry. This follows the April 12 inquiry on the same subject to Ed John by the Sunday Times' Chief U.S. Correspondent Steven Aris. Pringle is a member of the Sunday Times Insight Exposé Team which has gained a reputation in the U.K. for its in-depth exposé articles. Pringle has met with British Petroleum who also dump at the Maendy Quarry and he is also contacting the waste disposal contractors, Purle, and the Department of the Environment. We don't know for certain when the article will appear, but our investigations and discussions with Pringle indicate that it is highly possible this will be an article criticising the lack of controls and cooperation between various government departments rather than an article slamming Monsanto and British Petroleum as dumpers of toxic chemicals.

Q: What materials manufactured by Monsanto contain PCBs?

A: Dielectrics (Aroclor and Pyroclor) for use in electrical equipment requiring non-flammable fluids, i.e. capacitors and transformers.

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Q: When did Monsanto stop producing PCBs?

A: Monsanto has not stopped producing PCBs. Since March 1, 1971, the company introduced a voluntary ban on all uses where PCBs were not confined to a closed system such as in electrical transformers, capacitors. Before controls were introduced, a substantial proportion was being used as additives in plastics, resins, rubbers, adhesives, paints and in heat transfer systems and hydraulic fluids.

We have, in addition, a programme of control of waste arising from our PCB complex. This means that all waste - be it paper tissues from the toilets or filter cakes - is incinerated at temperatures in excess of 1000°F. This destroys any PCBs which might be contained into harmless gases.

Q: Why did Monsanto introduce the ban?

A: Monsanto decided to limit sales when it became evident from research by us, governmental and other industrial bodies into methods of analysis, identification and measurement of PCBs, that they were widespread in the natural environment. Evidence suggested that a continued increase of PCBs in the environment could lead to undesirable long-term effects.

Q: How much chemical waste from Monsanto was dumped at Maendy Quarry between 1965-70?

A: During the period 1965-70, an average 6.000 tons per annum of solid waste was disposed of on our behalf by Industrial Waste Disposal and then Purle, who took over IWD in April, 1968. As far as we know, the bulk of this waste went to Maendy Quarry apart from a short period in 1969 (March-June) when it was dumped at Brofisken Quarry.

Q: What percentage of that total came from petroleum additives department?

A: 50%

Q: What percentage from plastics department?

A: 18%

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Q: What percentage from offices, stores, research?

A: 8%

(N.B. Remaining 20% comprises waste from other production units).

Q: What percentage by weight of the total dumped at Maendy Quarry was PCB?

A: It's difficult to give a precise figure. However, about 2% (120 tons) of the waste from the chemical complex which produces PCBs was contaminated. The bulk of this waste took the form of filter cakes and distillation residues which would be of low-PCB content and relatively small in relation to the bulk of the residues.

(Pringle persisted in trying to pin us down to a quantity. During the ensuing conversation we told him that although unable to give a precise figure it was thought that the amount would have been less than the estimated 20 tons' figure he suggested).

Q: What percentage was chlorinated hydrocarbons other than PCBs?

A: We also manufacture at Newport pentachlorophenol, which is chlorinated phenol and not PCBs. This is a chlorinated hydrocarbon and no significant quantity would have been in this waste. As far as we are aware from the analyses that we carried out there were negligible quantities in the waste tipped.

Q: What manufacturing department was the source of the PCBs?

A: Aroclor department.

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Q: When did Monsanto first hear of PCB contamination in the streams flowing out of Maendy Quarry and what did the company do?

A: We were first alerted to the problem in October, 1971. Discussions were held with the various local Welsh authorities involved, chemists of the Department of the Environment, etc. It was not until April, 1972 that our analytical work on samples indicated PCB involvement. Since then we have continued to offer every assistance to the government bodies involved - particularly the Department of the Environment, which has carried out its own investigation.

Q: What other official bodies were involved?

A: Glamorgan Water Board, Llantrisant Rural District Council, the Welsh Office, and we understand that the Department of the Environment used the Laboratory of the Government Chemist for analysis work.

Q: When did the Department of the Environment carry out its investigation?

A: Suggest you contact Ian Presst at the Department's Central Unit of Environmental Pollution on this one. I don't think we can really speak for them.

Q: Did you yourselves take samples from the Quarry?

A: Yes.

Q: How much PCB did you find?

A: Between 0.01 and 0.06 parts per million. You must appreciate that PCBs are very difficult to detect at these low levels and there are only a few laboratories in the world that are equipped to do this.