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H N DAHLSTROM BRUSSELS
P J A MARCH BRUSSELS
A VODDEN RHARON
E MACDONALD NEWPORT
E V JOHN ST LOUIS

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1971 APR 1 AM 8 34

NERC REPORT ON IRISH SEA BIRDS DEATHS WAS PUBLISHED MARCH 29. MOST SIGNIFICANT PARAS ARE
/A/ THE OUTCOME AS IS REPORTED IN WHAT FOLLOWS. IS THAT NO SINGLE FACTOR NATURAL OR ARTIFICIAL CAN BE REGARDED WITH CERTAINTY AS THE MAIN CAUSE OF THE INCIDENT. THERE HAVE BEEN SIMILAR SEA-BIRD WRECKS IN THE PAST. BEFORE POLLUTION CA HAVE BEEN A POSSIBLE CAUSE. WIDESPREAD EVIDENCE OF MALNUTRITION WAS FOUND AMONG THE DEAD BIRDS IN THIS INCIDENT BUT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF SHORTAGE OF THE FISH ON WHICH THEY FEED. MUCH MORE KNOWLEDGE OF THE FEEDING HABITS OF GUILLEMOTS IS HOWEVER NEEDED BEFORE THESE APPARENTLY CONTRADICTORY FACTS CAN BE RECONCILED. THE EFFECT OF THE MALNUTRICTION OF THE BIRDS WAS PROBABLY COMPOUNDED BY NATURAL CAUSES INCLUDING MOULTING DISEASE AND GALES /THERE WERE HIGH WINDS DURING PART OF THE PERIOD/ AND MANY HAVE BEEN AGGRAVATED BY THE TOXIC EFFECTS OF THE METALLIC AND ORGANIC RESIDUES FOUND IN MANY OF THE DEAD BIRDS. BUT NO ONE OF THESE FACTORS CAN ALONE BE REGARDED AS THE DECISIVE CAUSE OF THE INCIDENT. UNQUOTE.

AND /38/ QUOTE IF PCB POISONING HAD BEEN THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF DEATH ONE WOULD EXPECT THAT THE PCB LEVELS IN THE BIRDS THAT DIEDWOULD HAVE BEEN GREATER THAN IN THE BIRDS THAT SURVIVED. IN PRACTICE THIS WOULD NOT APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN THE CASE FOR THE SAMPLE OF 5 APPARENTLY HEALTHY BIRDS SHOT AFTER THE INCIDENT CONTAINED SIMILAR AMOUNTS OF PCB AS FIVE RANDOMLY -SELECTED BIRDS THAT DIED IN THE INCIDENT. ON THAT EVIDENCE IT SEEMS THAT WHATEVER THE EFFECT PCBS MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE HAD ONE THEY WERE MOBILISED. THEY COULD SCARCELY HAVE BEEN THE INITIAL CAUSE OF THE MORTALITY. CONCENTRATION OF PCB IN THE LIVER AND KIDNEY COULD HAVE OCCURRED ONLY AFTER THE FAT RESERVES HAD BEEN MOBILISED--THAT IS AFTER THE BIRDS HAD BEEN SERIOUSLY AFFECTED BY MALNUTRITION. THE DIFFICULTY WITH THIS HYPOTHESIS IS THAT THERE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN NO SHORTAGE OF FOOD FOR THE BIRDS IN THE AFFECTED AREAS AT THE TIME OF THE INCIDENT BUT AGAIN WE ARE LACKINT THE CRITICAL INFORMATION. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BIRDS AND THEIR FOOD IS A SUBTLE ONE AND VERY LITTLE IS KNOW ABOUT IT UNQUOTE.

COPIES OF REPORT WILL BE MAILED TO YOU TODAY TOGETHER WITH VERY FAVOURABLE NEW SCIENTIST EDITORIAL BY JON TINKER ON MONSANTO PCB POSITION

STEVE CHANTRELL
LONDON
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