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Plan for world code to curb pollution of seas

By Our Science Correspondent

An organization to regulate dumping of oil and chemical wastes on the high seas was proposed to the Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO) at a council meeting in London yesterday.

The plan has been put forward by Mr R. E. Train, chairman of the Advisory Council of Environmental Pollution, to the President of the United States. It would give flag states and coastal states powers to act against ships polluting the seas or damaging inshore waters.

The proposal is to go to a full meeting of IMCO later this year for preparation of an international convention against deliberate disposal of oil and chemical effluents at sea. Mr Train said about a million tons of oil was deliberately discharged a year and the pollution might get worse with increase of fleets of large tankers. Bulk chemical carriers and other substances carried by ship would be included in the pollutants to be regulated.

The object was to create a new organization that could be called the Marine Environment Protection Committee which would establish an international system for policing and controlling discharges. That organization would be responsible for issuing scientific, technical and economic information concerning ocean pollution and control. It would study the effects of marine pollution on the general biological health of the seas, develop methods for preventing such pollution; and devise emergency schemes for detection, containment and clearing of incidents.

About a thousand potentially dangerous substances will be on the list of pollutants to be considered before this or any similar proposal is accepted as an international convention. Proposals that would affect the design of tankers and large vessels on environmental grounds are included in the draft recommendation.

Offshore drilling operations and the disposal of waste from rigs are not covered in the draft proposal. Mr Train said some of those issues were related to other studies by other organizations with whom the international maritime organization collaborates closely. A forthcoming meeting on the issues of international law and the use of the sea bed would embrace many of the topics of the safety of oil well-heads of the ocean floor.

Mr Train said there was still the big difficulty of the massive oil pollution that entered coastal waters from rivers. The run-off from drains and sewers still presented one of the biggest sources of contamination of coastal waters.

Tighter controls on dumping of waste promised

By Our Science Correspondent

Tighter government controls on the dumping of poisonous industrial waste were yesterday promised by Mr Griffiths, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. Opening an international pollution control congress and exhibition in London, he said polluted rivers in Britain were being cleaned at a rate of about two miles a week. The number of smoke control orders under the Clean Air Act showed continuing progress.

Mr Griffiths said the Government intended to use powers to ensure that toxic wastes were subject to further stringent controls. The Poisonous Waste Act, introduced last year, had done much to concentrate the minds of industry and local authorities on the matter.

"We cannot go on tolerating more incidents which demonstrate that the risks of disposal of the more hazardous waste from industry are not fully appreciated, either by those producing them or those disposing of them", Mr Griffiths said.

The Government believe that certain wastes should not be disposed of without special care in the right places and under the right conditions.

Thirteen countries, including China, are represented at the Congress.

CHEMICAL CHECK AT QUARRY TO CONTINUE

The Maendy quarry at Glamorgan would be continuously checked for "undesirable chemical substances," a Welsh Office spokesman said yesterday. Farmers have complained that dumped chemicals including PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls) have polluted land and a stream.

Findings of an investigation are likely to be co-ordinated in a report on chemical pollution surveys throughout Wales, the spokesman said. The Environmental Pollution Unit and local government and health divisions of the Welsh Office were involved.

Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Nationalist party, yesterday urged the Welsh Office to seal off the entire area surrounding Maendy Quarry because of a "hazardous level of contamination." The party complained of a "reckless disregard for public health."

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