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Gordon County

Pesticide Clause Is Incorporated In Pollution Bill

Conservationists' efforts towards forcing a cut-back in the use of so-called "hard" pesticide chemicals by agricultural interests advanced a major step forward last week.

The Senate agreed that state water quality standards should be re-opened to establish ceilings on pesticide levels that will ensure safe water for public water supplies, propagation of fish and wildlife, recreational purposes, and other legitimate uses.

Amendment to S7

The action came on an amendment to S7, the so-called oil-spilling bill of the Muskie pollution control sub-committee, sponsored by Sen. Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin with bi-partisan support of thirty-one other Senators.

The bill, which also contains provisions dealing with the problem of the discharge of hazardous substances other than oil—primarily chemicals which present an imminent and substantial danger to public health and welfare—was later passed and sent on to the House.

The Nelson amendment, which foreshadows some major changes in the production and marketing of pesticide chemicals by the chemical industry when it becomes law, is a two-part amendment utilizing the authority given to the Secretary of the Interior in the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to deal with water pollution caused by pesticides.

Part one directs the Secretary to develop and issue to the states within two years water quality criteria for all pesticides. The criteria would list safe pesticide levels in water for public water supplies, fish propagation, recreational use and other purposes.

The Secretary is to ask the states to revise their interstate water quality standards to include pesticide limits. If the state fails to act, the Secretary will set the standards.

Part two directs the Secretary, in consultation with appropriate Federal agencies and other concerned parties, to conduct a study on methods of controlling the release of pesticides into the nation's lakes and rivers and the environment.

The study will include examination of the persistence of pesticides in the water and alternatives thereto. Within two years the Secretary is to report back to Congress, together with recommendations for any necessary legislation.

In an extensive address to the Senate, Sen. Nelson recited the dangers to the environment in the use of DDT and other persistent pesticides, recalling the many efforts begun with the publication of the best seller "Silent Spring" by the late Rachel Carson in 1962 to curtail the use of these bug-killers and the subsequent actions that have been taken by the states to this end.

Persistent Pesticides 'Not Necesary'

The point of Mr. Nelson's argument is that the use of the "hard" or persistent pesticides with long-lasting danger to fish and wildlife is not necessary because less persistent pesticides are available as substitutes.

He said the feasibility of this approach is demonstrated by the fact that for virtually all crops, Department of Agriculture lists more than one pesticide as being able to control harmful pests.

He submitted for the Congressional Record, a list of over 250 pesticides described as readily gradable, relatively non-persistent and useful as insecticides, miticides, herbicides, fungicides and nematicides.

He also reported to the Senate that a survey made at his behest by the Interior Department of the states' water quality standards shows that most of the standards contain one or more requirements by which limits on specific toxic substances may be imposed on a case-by-case basis.

Other provisions of S. 7 which will direcly affect the chemical industry relate to liability and cleanup of spills of hazardous substances other than oil.

The bill deals primarily with oil spills by vessel owners and provides that those responsible for the spills shall be liable for the cost of cleanup, up to a maximum of $14 million.

Differences in Liability

The bill recognizes that there is a difference between oil spills and those of other products of a hazardous nature and the liability and cost of cleanup should be handled differently. It provides that the President shall first designate the substances that rare hazardous and promulgate regulations for methods and means of removal of the substances.

Once a substance has been designated as hazardous, any discharge of such substance from either a vessel or an off-

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