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Nader Blasts 'Trade Secret' Labels

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Ralph Nader charged yesterday that corporations use the label of "trade secrets" to hide information about damaging, illegal or anti-competitive practices and products.

The consumer advocate made his charge as the opening witness before what he called "one of the most important inquiries ever initiated by any committee of Congress," a hearing by Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-Wis.), chairman of the Senate

Monopoly Subcommittee, into "trade secrecy."

Trade secrets are considered to be information about products, profits and other facets of a corporation which, if made public, could aid its competitors.

Among other things, Nader charged:

— That the Allied Chemical Co. hid from its employees at its chlorine gas plant in Mountsville, W. Va., the fact that they were absorbing dangerous amounts of toxic mercury.

— That the Monsanto Corp. refused to disclose precautions it had established in distributing PCBs, a chemical which causes cancer in animals. Despite its precautions, he said, PCBs leaked into fish meal fed to dogs and turkeys, leading to the destruction of 8,000 chickens in North Carolina this summer and of 50,000 Swift Co. turkeys last week.

— That the natural gas and oil industry refuses to disclose to the Federal Power Commission the data on which it warns of a national energy crisis. He said the industry's trade groups hide data which "will form the basis for pricing decisions which will cost industrial and individual gas consumers hundreds of millions of dollars."

— That consumers need "the aggressiveness of a Washington lawyer" to learn the contents of processed foods or to find out which dyes are safe and effective.

— That the Food and Drug Administration, to protect manufacturers, failed to identify by brand names infant "walker-jumpers" and "baby bouncers" which had been found to amputate the fingers of babies.

— That General Motors evaded a law requiring car firms to notify federal officials of all written warnings to dealers about safety defects. He said GM told dealers verbally to get around the law.

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Researchers Report PCBs Affect Egg Hatchability

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Cornell University researchers said this week that the industrial chemicals called PCB's (polychlorinated biphenyls) at "high concentrations have a major effect on hatchability of chicken eggs."

They found that the PCB known as "Arochlor 1248" at the level of 20 ppm, in the poultry diet almost completely eliminated hatchability of the eggs produced by hens fed with experimental PCB-contaminated diets. The 20 ppm level is far above that found even in contaminated poultry rations.

"The effect upon the egg's ability to hatch is quite dramatic," said Dr. Milton L. Scott, animal nutritionist in the department of poultry science at the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell.

Scott, who studied the effects of the chemical on the performance of laying hens, discussed the findings at the Cornell Nutrition Conference for Feed Manufacturers in Buffalo.

Other researchers involved in the year-long study are Prof. Dharam V. Vaidya and Paul A. Mullenhoff, technician, both in the department of poultry science; Gary L. Rumsey, director of Agway, Inc. research laboratories in Ithaca, N.Y.; and Richard W. Rice, chemist, also of Agway, Inc.

Scott also reported that PCB causes decrease in egg production by about 10-12% when the content in the diet is fixed at 10 to 20 ppm.

He said that an increase of toxic

ity appeared in any of the hens during the experiments, and there was no mortality.

The Cornell study, which also probed into PCB accumulation in eggs and in various parts of the body, showed that the buildup was more or less uniformly distributed in the body fats.

PCBs are hard-to-destroy chemical compounds used widely as heat transfer fluid and in industrial cooling systems. They also are used in electric transformers, paints, certain printing inks, and other products.

The chemical became a problem for the poultry and feed industries recently when two isolated cases of PCB contamination in poultry feed ingredients were brought to public attention. Contamination occurred when the chemical accidentally spilled into fish meal during the course of pasteurization.

Scott said that government officials as well as feed manufacturers and suppliers have instituted tight precautionary steps to prevent contamination. Poultry and eggs found to be contaminated have been removed and destroyed, thus preventing them from getting into consumer food channels.

Elaborating on his findings on the effect on hatchability, the Cornell scientist said that PCBs may be more important than DDT in causing reproductive problems in certain species of wild birds, although much work is yet to be done to confirm this suspicion.

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