

Controversy Over Discharge of PCB's In Hudson Leads to 2 State Aides' Split

By RICHARD SEVERO

The controversy over the discharge into the environment of the toxic chemicals known as PCB's grew into an open split yesterday between two New York State Commissioners—John S. Dyson, who promotes commerce, and Ogden R. Reid, who protects the environment.

Mr. Dyson, Commissioner of Commerce, urged the end of a hearing called to determine whether General Electric violated state water-quality standards by discharging polychlorinated biphenyls into the Hudson River from two capacitor plants north of Albany. Efforts should be made for a negotiated settlement, rather than waiting for a formal decision, he said.

Mr. Reid, Commissioner of Environmental Conservation, who called the hearing after high levels of the chemicals had been found in Hudson River fish, has asked the company to halt the discharges by next Sept. 30. G.E. says it does not have the technical competence to accomplish that.

The hearing ended last month and a decision is expected by the end of this month.

Comment Declined

The company has indicated that it can reduce its discharges, now between two and three pounds a day, to about three ounces by June 1, 1977. Mr. Reid has said this is not acceptable, because he feels the discharges may be doing irreparable damage to the river.

"It would be highly inappropriate for me to comment authoritatively on the G.E. case presently before the hearing examiner, Prof. Abraham Sofaer," Mr. Reid said. "Indeed, it seems to me it would be inappropriate for any intervenor in the case to comment on it." The Department of Commerce is an intervenor.

"That is just hokey," retorted Mr. Dyson. "His agency is the plaintiff, the judge and the ju-



Associated Press
John S. Dyson



The New York Times
Ogden R. Reid

ry. If zero discharge means zero jobs and three ounces means 1,200 jobs, I say we go for the three ounces."

Mr. Dyson said he had not read anything indicating that PCB's had "killed specific fish or caused any demonstrable change in the environment."

Employees Complain

However, he indicated that he had not read all the hearing testimony and scientific literature and that "all these things are a little vague" to him.

PCB's are known to cause cancer and reproductive failures in laboratory animals and some employees of G.E. have complained of skin diseases, nausea, eye and nasal irritation, asthmatic bronchitis and dizziness.

Mr. Dyson said he had petitions bearing the names of 1,068 of the more than 1,200 General Electric workers at the two plants, addressed to Governor Carey, saying in part: "New York has enough problems now without creating more unemployment. Because of overly ambitious politicians, are we to suffer needlessly?"

Governor Carey is on vacation in the Bahamas. One of

his aides said the Governor would have no comment on either Mr. Dyson's statement or the petition until Professor Sofaer issued his findings.

Employee sources at the two plants, at Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, said yesterday that the petitions had been circulated because of an unfounded rumor that started two weeks ago, to the effect that Mr. Reid planned to close down the two plants.

Mr. Reid has said he had no intention of ordering a closing, only to determine the nature and extent of the damage caused by the PCB's and to determine a suitable remedy.

A spokesman for General Electric said weeks ago that the company would consider closing if it could not operate under standards established by the state.

The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, which represents G.E. employees at the two capacitor plants, has taken the position that it should not be a question of health or jobs and expressed confidence that the problem could be resolved without closing.