June 5, 1970

The Editor
Evening Star
225 Virginia Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20003

Dear Sir:

I have read Mr. John Lannan's article "PCB's May Rival DDT as Environment Threat," which appeared in the May 31 edition of the Evening Star and find that basically the article is a rather good summary of events to date. However, there are two points discussed in the article that I am sure were very confusing to Mr. Lannan and deserve further clarification.

The first statement indicates that I did not agree that PCB's can be toxic to fish although "leakage from a plant on the Escambia River in Alabama produced a major fish kill." We have actively sought cooperation and information from State, Federal, university and international laboratories regarding the toxicity of PCB's to living organisms. No one to our knowledge is aware of any fish kill anywhere in the world attributed to PCB exposure. We are aware of studies conducted at the Gulf Breeze, Florida, laboratories of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries on the effect of one type of PCB on juvenile shrimp. These studies indicated that fairly high concentrations were required to adversely affect the shrimp.

Mr. Lannan also misunderstood my comments regarding the use of PCB's in electrical equipment. The overwhelming reason for using these fluids in transformers is to prevent fires and explosions resulting from equipment failures. PCB's eliminate this hazard because of their fire resistance properties. An additional benefit is the smaller space required by transformers containing PCB's, compared with transformers using other methods of cooling.

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Monsanto Company has been very concerned about this possible threat to the environment since it first came to our attention two years ago. At that time, we began a program which includes strictly monitoring our manufacturing operations, development of alternate products and phasing out of those applications where we believe PCB might be escaping and lingering in the environment.

I realize the subject is highly complex and very difficult to summarize in one news article. It is, therefore, even more imperative that such news articles be completely factual.

Sincerely,

John Mason
Assistant General Manager
Organic Chemicals Division

jmz

AIR MAIL

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Evening Star

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