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Science Sidelights

By Larry Bush

PCB Cutoff

The Monsanto Co. says it plans to withdraw as the nation's sole supplier of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) by Oct. 31, 1977.

Monsanto previously voluntarily cut production of the compound and restricted sales to electrical insulation uses in closed systems.

PCB's have had a wide variety of uses in lubricants, printer's inks, paints and other items. The chemical permiates the environment in the nation's industrial regions, particularly in the Great Lakes area and the Hudson River Valley.

The chemical is so resistant to biodegradation, that its pollution of the environment from years back remains. While other pollutants of the Great Lakes have declined when sources were shut off or curtailed, the level of PCB in fish has not gone down even though production has been sharply curtailed since the early 1970s.

Unlike the polybrominated biphenyl (PBB) contamination which was restricted to Michigan, the PCB contamination is a national problem.

Ann Arbor area and other Michigan mothers who had their milk tested for both PBB and PCB at local labs have much higher levels of PCB in their milk than PBB. The chemical has greatly reduced reproduction in certain species of Great Lakes fish, and is a known human health hazard. It is present in some food items.

Science Policy

Dr. Donald C. Pelz of the U-M Institute for Social Research and professor of psychology, is the arranger of sessions on "Utilization of Scientific Knowledge in Planning and Implementing Public Policy."

The sessions will be held at the 143rd national meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), next Feb. 20 through 25 in Denver, Colo.

More than 120 symposia and public lectures are sceduled for the meeting which annually draws more scientists from a variety of fields than any other meeting of its kind. AAAS has 114,000 scientists and persons interested in science on its membership roll.

Topics to be discussed include: Are there limits to scientific freedom? Who authorizes the right of a person to die? Are the canals of Mars real? What happens when humans manipulate the weather? Is there a relationship between organ transplantation and tumor immunity? What is the status of nuclear energy politics around the world?

AAAS is now accepting applications for its Mass Media Inter Program. Advanced students in natural and social sciences chosen to participate will spend 10 weeks during the summer of 1977 as reporters, production assistants and research assistants for newspapers, and radio and television stations.

Funded by the National Science Foundation and the Russell Sage Foundation, the program is designed to increase scientists' understanding of editorial decision making and science coverage by the mass media. Travel expenses and weekly stipends based on current rates for media interns are provided.

Information may be obtained from the Coordinator of Mass Media Intern Program, AAAS, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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