JAN 28 1976

Firm to Phase Out Polluting Chemical

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Monsanto Co. says it plans to phase out production of the controversial, polluting chemical PCB within three years.

The company's Sauget, Ill., plant near St. Louis is the only domestic manufacturer of the chemical (polychlorinated biphenyls), which has been termed a significant health hazard by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Asked to comment on the decision, a federal agency spokesman said, "We love it."

Monsanto cut off sales of the chemical in 1971 except to the electrical industry. The substance is a chemically stable fluid used as an insulator in certain electrical equipment, but before then had been used in such products as paints and adhesives.

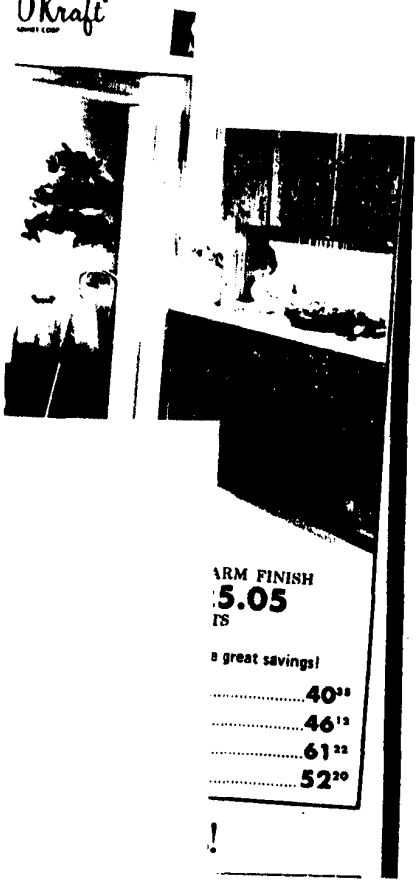
The company said it was too early to put an exact timetable on the phase-out but that it would take place in "a planned and orderly manner."

The EPA has estimated that 700 million pounds of the virtually indestructable PCBs have been produced in the United States since 1929. It said last month that about 300 million pounds were in use, with most of the remainder dumped into land fills, leached into water or allowed to sift into production sites or in lake or river bottoms.

Some fish from Lake Michigan and the Hudson River are reportedly so contaminated by the substance that they are unfit to eat. The Food and Drug Administration has found other unacceptable PCB levels in the upper Mississippi and off the southern California coast.

PCBs have been shown to cause reproductive failures, gastric disorders and skin lesions in mammals.

William B. Papageorge, Monsanto's manager of product acceptability, said the phase-out was announced because substitutes will be developed soon for use in electrical capacitators and transformers where PCBs are used.



MONS 032063