

trial in Federal court in Jacksonville, on charges of mail fraud. During the trial, government witnesses described how they had been sweet-talked into mortgaging their homes and cashing in their savings to follow Turner to the end of the rainbow. Few, if any, ever got there. But last week, Turner got time to catch his breath. After hearing more than 200 witnesses and deliberating for three days, the jury couldn't reach a verdict on any of the charges against Turner, and the judge declared a mistrial. The promoter is not yet in the clear, however. The judge immediately scheduled a new trial to begin Aug. 5.

PLASTICS:

The PVC Scare

To most Americans, polyvinyl chloride is just another confusing chemical term. But to American industry, the versatile plastic is the key material in literally thousands of products ranging from phonograph records, floor tile and toys to auto upholstery, pipe, and food packaging. Until recently, the pervasiveness of PVC had little significance except to those in the \$12 billion industry who make the material or who convert it into various products. But that situation has changed radically, and PVC producers and users are profoundly worried.

The chemical industry has documented thirteen cases in the U.S. in which workers exposed to vinyl chloride, the gas used to make PVC, have contracted angiosarcoma, a rare and fatal form of liver cancer. This, in turn, has caused concern that workers who fabricate PVC

into end products and perhaps even consumers may be exposed to the gas under certain conditions. Although there is still little if any evidence to substantiate the fears, several government agencies are studying the situation, and Federal health officials are proposing strict new standards governing exposure to vinyl chloride. The safety move threatens to produce a confrontation with plastics manufacturers, many of whom claim the new rules will force them to close their plants.

As the reports of deaths from angiosarcoma mounted, the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration ordered that those working with vinyl chloride should not be exposed to more than 50 parts of the gas per million parts of air—one-tenth of the previous permissible level—and also proposed that the permissible exposure level be reduced to zero by Oct. 5. In addition, more than 100 aerosol products—such as deodorants, hair sprays and pesticides—that used the gas as a propellant have been banned or voluntarily withdrawn from the market. Liquor bottles made from PVC have also been banned, and the Food and Drug Administration is formulating a new rule that will cover PVC used to package foods.

While many plastics companies had already imposed more stringent standards on their own, they are nonetheless annoyed by the zero-exposure proposal and by the added requirement that it apply to workers fabricating products from PVC. These rules, they say, would require an unprecedented amount of monitoring and control. "Do you know the effect of that OSHA rule?" an excited plastic industry lobbyist asks. "If

it is enforced without changes, the half of U.S. industry would have to shut down." That is an extreme view, of course, but it does seem likely that some marginal companies might abandon the PVC business rather than take on the extra costs of meeting tough standards. A spokesman for Olin Corp., for instance, notes that PVC accounts for just 3.5 per cent of the company's chemical sales. "If we can't meet the standards," he says, "we'll just go out of the business." B.F. Goodrich, the major PVC producer, says that it can't meet the standards with current technology, but that it has embarked on a crash research program to find a solution. In some cases, fabricating companies can use other materials in place of PVC, but the cost of the substitutes is likely to be higher.

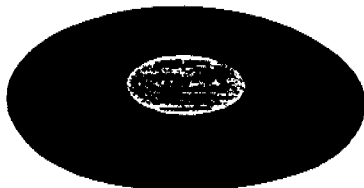
Speed: Federal officials may be cool to the industry's arguments, however, because they believe there were delays in bringing the news of the dangers of vinyl chloride to the public's attention. The Manufacturing Chemists Association, for example, began a study of the problem with European scientists in 1971, but said nothing about it to the government until last July. Now that they have some evidence, Federal agencies want to move as quickly as possible to determine the full extent of the potential dangers to workers and to the public. Last week, the Environmental Protection Agency invoked a section of the Clean Air Act to order 27 companies to produce data on vinyl chloride emissions in 49 plants. Uppermost in EPA's mind is the question of how much of the gas has been leaking into the environment. As chairman Russell Peterson of the Council on Environmental Quality warns, the cancer incidents may represent "only a small fraction" of the problem.

TRADE:

A Blow to Détente?

Ever since the United States and the Soviet Union began their détente, a key to the success of the effort has been a series of ambitious plans for trade and economic development involving the two countries. Occidental Petroleum Corp., El Paso Natural Gas, the Bechtel Corp. and other firms have signed deals to build everything from a world trade center in Moscow to factories and pipelines in Siberia in return for Russian raw materials and liquid natural gas (LNG).

East-West economic cooperation last week seemed to be moving apace. Leonid Kostandov, Soviet minister in charge of the chemical industry, said his ministry was negotiating with a number of U.S. firms on projects worth some \$500 million. Konstantin Galanshin, minister of the Soviet Union's pulp-and-paper industry, was in New York to sign an agreement with the International Paper Co. providing for a joint study of Russia's pulp-and-paper industry. And the Intercontinental Hotels Corp. signed a con-



Pervasive plastic: Records . . .



... containers ...



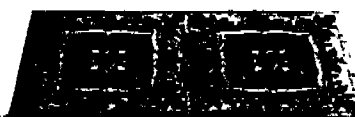
... toys ...



... pipe ...



... auto roofs ...



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