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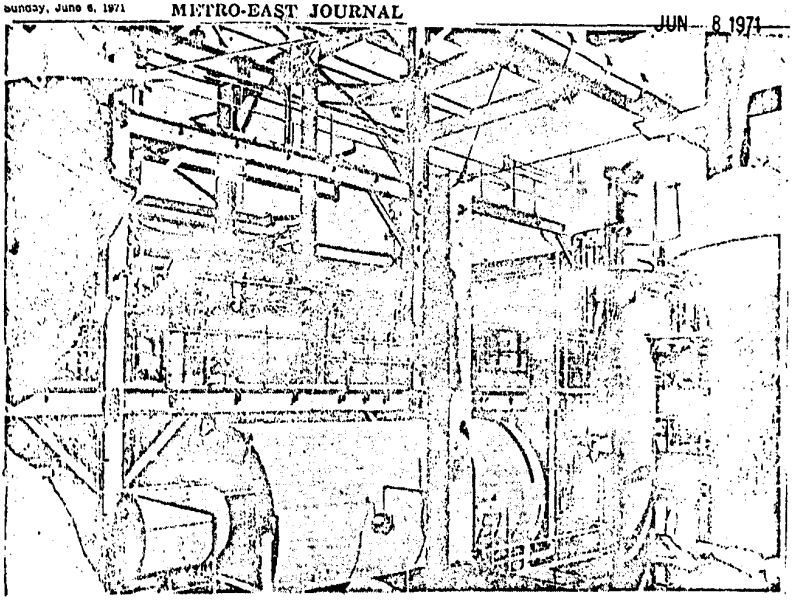

Bob Macklin, left, foreman, and Tony Rassmussen, supervisor, before incinerator installation

Incinerator

Monsanto device stops PCB pollution

A $500,000 incinerator for eliminating environmental pollution caused by polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) is to be completed this month at Monsanto Co., Saugot.

A company official said the incinerator will be used to recycle, break down and clean up PCBs, manufactured under the trade name of Aroclor.

Monsanto is the only manufacturer in the United States and United Kingdom of PCBs, a chemical more poisonous at low doses than DDT.

"Monsanto has taken many steps to control the use of the products and make sure they don't reach the environment," a company official said.

The incinerator, which will destroy waste PCB at 3,000 degrees, will permit Monsanto to reprocess the chemical for other uses or turn it into a non-polluting chemical, the official said.

However, U.S. Rep. William F. Ryan, D-N.Y., has contended that Monsanto's attempts to control PCB are helpful but not enough.

Ryan presented a bill to Congress last Thursday aimed at banning PCBs from interstate commerce unless certain uses of the chemical are declared safe and exempted from the ban by the U.S. secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

"We don't want to have to depend on the good faith of Monsanto and its customers to control PCB," an aide to Ryan said. "The bill will put into law with guidelines and safeguards what Monsanto says it is already doing."

PCB can affect the respiratory system, liver and skin, cause abdominal pain, loss of weight and vomiting, Ryan's aide said.

"We don't know of any human deaths caused by PCBs but we'd like to pass this bill before we do know of one," the aide said.

Monsanto officials say the legislation is uncalled for since the company has assumed the responsibility of keeping PCB from reaching the environment.

"We believe it's impractical to attempt to legislate into being what is already being accomplished, the official said.

"If you look back at Monsanto's program, which is nearly three years old, it is designed to contain PCBs and we're seeing a good deal of success," the official said.

The official said Monsanto did not know PCB polluted the environment until a Swedish biologist, Soren Jensen, identified the chemical in the bodies of fish in 1966.

Other scientists have identified the chemical in feathers collected in 1940.

Besides Monsanto's plants at Saugot and Anniston, Ala., PCB is manufactured by firms in Germany, France, Spain and possibly several Soviet countries.

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