THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL
MEMPHIS, TENN.
D. 205,452 SUN. 282,622

SEP 16 1980

CC ; Dmm 12/12

Pounds' PCB Level Called Minimal

By MICHAEL LOLLAR

The children of James and Evonda Pounds of Frayser have PCBs and chlorinated pesticides in their blood, but at levels lower than in the general U.S. population, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has concluded.

Results of blood tests on the Pounds' daughter, two adopted sons and their German shepherd dog indicate low-level exposure to the remains of DDT — banned before the children were born — and to other chemicals "so pervasive they are now found in the glacial snows of Antarctica," EPA chemist Dr. Robert G. Lewis said yesterday.

"This is it, the final test," said Lewis, head of the analytical chemistry branch at EPA's Health Effects Research Laboratory in Research Triangle Park, N.C. The chemist said testing by his staff since April has cost $10,077, only confirming the presence of chemicals he had expected. The tests found none of the plasticizer tri-2-butoxyethyl phosphate, except as a contaminant from rubber test tube stoppers used to hold blood samples.

The plasticizer, a chemical used to preserve pliancy in plastics and rubber, was first discovered in the Pounds' blood samples analyzed last summer at EPA's Starkville, Miss., laboratory. There, too, it was attributed to contamination inside the test tube, but Mrs. Pounds is still delaying a tonsilectomy for her 4-year-old daughter, Sabrina, for fear of a fatal reaction between the plasticizer and any anesthetic.

EPA's testing followed months of complaints by the Pounds family about unexplained ailments, from rashes to swelling in the limbs. Tests of air, soil and water in their Frayser neighborhood have also proven inconclusive.

The family of 3594 Steele received a copy of the EPA test results by certified mail yesterday, and Mrs. Pounds said she is awaiting completion of other testing by an independent laboratory that "disputes the EPA findings."

"Their testing doesn't match up to the testing we're having done. The chemicals they found are about the same, but the amounts are different . . . I won't give those results out yet, because I'm waiting on more results and want to let it all be known at one time," she said, declining to name those conducting the tests.

"But, I don't buy the fact that PCBs should be in my children's blood," she said.

Lewis said the carcinogenic PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) were manufactured by Monsanto Chemical Co. until 1972 and, when new, look "like a thick, colorless syrup. They are still used as insulating material in electrical transformers because of their resistance to heat and their longevity — forever. If lightning strikes a transformer . . . you get more PCBs in the environment, and if you sit under fluorescent lighting you're probably exposed, because they are used in there, too. There is nothing on Earth that is not contaminated with PCBs."

EPA's 24-page report did not quantify PCBs found in the Pounds children, listing only "trace" amounts — close to the minimally measurable level of 13 parts per billion. Parts-per-billion levels of chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides found in some or all of the children, the dog and two control subjects include: DDE (a breakdown product of DDT), hexachlorobenzene, lindane, cyclohexane, chlordane, heptachlor epoxide, oxychlordane, transnonachlor and dieldrin. Traces of the semivolatile organochlorine 1,4-dichlorobenzene (used in mothballs and room deodorizers) was found in the blood of two of the children, the dog and one control subject.

Lewis said Mrs. Pounds declined to have her own blood tested and that chemical levels in her family's blood were "all below or comparable with those found in the two control blood samples analyzed. More importantly, they are well below the levels ordinarily found in the blood of the general population."

PCB-ARCH-EXT0378591