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Hexachlorobutadiene Survey Results Reported at AOAC

FDA also reported on a special survey of hexachlorobutadiene in fish, eggs, milk and vegetables from 10 sites in five different states within a 25 mile radius of perchloroethylene or trichloroethylene manufacturing plants. FDA found hexachlorobutadiene in 10 of 28 fish samples at levels ranging from .01 to 1.20 p.p.m. No residues were found in 15 samples of eggs and 20 samples of a number of different vegetables. Residues were detected in one of 20 milk samples, at 1.32 p.p.m. Milk re-sampled in the same area showed no residues of hexachlorobutadiene.

The fish contamination was limited largely to fresh water areas in the lower Mississippi.

In a survey for polychlorinated biphenyls in fish in 1972, FDA reported 45.6% of all samples were positive while 3.3% would be considered violative. In Great Lakes fish, FDA found 82% samples positive for PCBs, with 17.3% considered violative, according to the agency's tolerances for unavoidable residues (See FOOD CHEMICAL NEWS, Oct. 13, Pages 9 and 21).

EPA Chief Stresses Need for Toxic Substances Act to Deal with PCB Problems

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Russell E. Train recently made a pitch for passage of the Toxic Substances Control Act (S 776), saying that the regulation of PCBs is an area in which EPA does not have adequate authority.

He told Sen. Hart (D-Mich.) his agency is hamstrung because it cannot regulate the manufacture of PCBs or imports of the products without new authority.

In a letter in which he responded to charges by Hart that the agency was not doing enough about PCBs, Train said EPA has numerous programs underway on the PCB problem, including more than a dozen newly initiated ones. However, he emphasized that the agency's "ability to address the PCB problem" would be greatly enriched by passage of the pending bill.

In the letter to Train, Hart cited increasing hazards from PCBs, noting that levels in Lake Michigan and the Hudson River have resulted in fish containing PCB above the action level of 5 p.p.m. established by FDA.

Hart also cited new research data "which would lead one to believe that the human health hazard associated with PCBs has been substantially underestimated." The Michigan Senator mentioned research conducted by Dr. Renata Kimbrough of the Center for Disease Control showing a significant increase in the incidence of carcinoma in rats at 100 p.p.m. In addition, he cited studies by Dr. J. R. Allen of the University of Wisconsin which revealed substantial impairment of reproductive capacity in rhesus monkeys.

"EPA is in a unique position to act to control the discharge of PCB to the environment," Hart maintained, noting it has authority under various statutes, including the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act and the Water Pollution Control Act.

"While it is indisputable that passage of the Toxic Substances Control Act would aid EPA in controlling use of this and related substances, I would urge your agency to redouble its efforts in laying the groundwork for a standard under this bill when it becomes law," Hart wrote.

The Senator also noted that many were hopeful that PCBs in the environment would be controlled significantly by the voluntary action taken by the Monsanto Company at the joint urging of EPA, FDA and the Council on Environmental Quality to limit the use of PCBs to closed systems.

Hart noted, however, that "we appear to have made little progress under this program in reducing the hazard posed by PCBs and some of their sister compounds, polychlorinated terphenyls and polybrominated biphenyls."