

LOOK

The [redacted] Eagle

[redacted]

FDA Officials Found Clean Fish Troubled Waters

Forecast

Berkshire Weather Service

Cloudy, mild tonight, low in 50s. Friday, mild, cloudy, chance of showers, high in 60s. Partly cloudy, mild on Saturday.

[redacted]ges—Ten Cents

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WASHINGTON — Leading federal fish, health and environmental officials sought yesterday to calm public concern over the possible hazards of PCB, the chemical contaminant akin to DDT.

Dr. Charles C. Edwards, head of the Food and Drug Administration, said public confusion about PCB "is compounded by a few alarmists making headlines added and shotted by unbalanced reporting."

"Public confusion has created public alarm and a feeling of still another crisis in the food supply," he said. "I know the confusion is unnecessary, and I believe the alarm is greater than the facts will justify."

Ready to Fish

The FDA released data collected over the last 22 months showing that the chemicals had been found in only 101 of 15,750 food samples. More than half the contaminated samples were fish, indicating that there had been contamination of PCB in the marine food chain.

Many of the other tainted samples had been packed in Maine while from recycled cardboard — cardboard represented from waste paper. The use of this [illegible] for packaging food [illegible] months ago, FDA officials said.

In addition, Dr. Douglas Wurf of the Environmental Protection Agency reported that PCB had been found in human blood plasma, but only in minute quantities.

The officials said such data is [illegible], their stated position that the use of PCB was, as Dr. Edwards put it, "a potential but not immediate health hazard."

However, during a news conference at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare that the agencies had called to "sort out" the PCB controversy, some officials appeared to have raised more questions that they settled.

Feasibility Questioned

Edwards, for example, said that some restriction on the use of PCB might be considered but added that "an outright ban is not feasible."

Asked why a ban was not possible in the United States when one has existed in Britain since March, he said his deputies expressed amazement that it had been in effect there. The British action was taken following the deaths through PCB contamination of tens of thousands of fish and mixture birds.

Edwards insisted that PCB might even be beneficial, because it has "important flame-resistant properties and, properly used, (they) directly assist government and industry in protecting the consumer against fire." The chemical can withstand extremely high temperatures.

The officials also avoided giving an explanation of how they could maintain that a feeling of "public alarm" was unfortified when the only manufacturer of PCB in the United States has repeatedly refused to make public the amount of the chemical it has made and is making. The officials said only that they hoped that the manufacturer, the Monsanto Co. of St. Louis would provide the information to a federal study group investigating PCB that was created early this month.

(PCB, which stands for polychlorinated biphenyls, is of special interest to the Berkshire Lawrence General Electric mixer a PCB compound with other substances to come up with Pyranol, the insulating oil it uses in small and medium-sized transformers. The company says that its products are safe for the environment because the Pyranol is in hermetically sealed transformer tanks.

(GE spokesmen say that Pyranol has been in use here for more than 30 years and that they become aware of the potential hazards only in the last year or so.)

Results Ignored

The FDA made public a detailed account of the "current toxicology status of PCB's" which did not include the fact that five Japanese died three years ago in the most serious accident involving the chemical, which had contaminated cooking oil.

Another official at the news conference, Clayton Yeutter, administrator of the Department of Agriculture's Consumer and Marketing Service, said that the PCB contamination of 50,000 turkeys in Minnesota last month "was an isolated occurrence."

When it was pointed out that 140,000 PCB-contaminated chickens were destroyed in New York State last year and an additional 50,000 chickens were destroyed in July after PCB-contaminated feed was discovered in North Carolina, Yeutter said such incidents did not happen often.

Rep. William F. Ryan, D-N.Y., who has complained for two years that the federal government has not been strict enough in regulating PCB, [illegible] after the news conference [illegible] he would introduce a [illegible] to ban the chemi[illegible]

[illegible] saying that PCB is [illegible] to health." [illegible] pointed to that [illegible] to be an [illegible] now to [illegible] life, and may [illegible] to man. [illegible] we will we

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