A REVIEW OF THE OFFICIAL INVESTIGATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION IN ITALY RESULTING FROM USE OF PCB

So far no formal petition has been taken in Italy to define and control the problem related to PCB.

A report was offered in 1971 to a Scientific Journal dealing with the results of an investigation promoted by the Ministry of Public Health. Over 1100 samples of raw agricultural products and finished foods (fresh fruits and vegetables, and meat, egg and milk, animal foods and poultry) sampled in the pesticide programme were analysed for PCB. Positive response was found in only five samples and in all cases the PCB contents were far below the action levels laid down by FIA. The report concluded that, although further investigation was needed, preliminary data available seemed to imply contamination of food or environment by PCB is only occasional. However, more recent analyses on fish and crustaceans, yet under way, are showing higher levels of PCB.

Up to now no steps have ever been proposed to limit the use of PCB or to restrict it to close systems. However, we believe that most likely regulations decided by other countries that are members of CEE, will all be notified in Italy. It should be noted that the relatively safe situation in Italy may be the result of rather restricted use of PCB in applications that are subjected to broad distribution, such as paints, adhesives, duplicating paper and pesticides.

Cafferno, the sole Italian manufacturer of PCB, have been undertaking since last year a campaign to inform all customers of the potential hazard involved in the use of PCB so as to invite them to take appropriate precautions to prevent the release of the chemicals to the environment, and finally to recommend that all contaminated or waste PCB be returned for subsequent reclamation or destruction.

Quite recently, the Sub-Committee concerned with insulating liquids in the Italian Electricity Committee decided to supplement its Code of Practice for askarel-filled electrical equipment, which was written in 1969, with a special section dealing with necessary precautions in the handling, use and disposal of askarels.