E.V. John

THE TIMES

June 16, 1973

Welsh quarry waste less dangerous than feared

By Our Science Correspondent

Preliminary results from investigations of Maendy quarry in South Wales show that tiny amounts of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and arsenic are seeping away accompanied by much organic material. This was indicated in figures given to the Commons yesterday by Mr Peter Thomas, Secretary of State for Wales, in a written answer.

Analyses from different parts of the quarry show PCB levels ranging from one part in 10 million to four parts in 100 million; arsenic between 34 and 38 parts a million; and organic waste between 530 and 860 parts in a thousand. The first two are within safety limits for international water standards; the last is comparable with inadequately treated sewage waste.

However, water from a stream below the quarry contained no arsenic, very little PCBs, and low levels of organic carbon in samples examined by the Water Pollution Research Laboratory.

Referring to reports of a more dangerous chemical, believed to have formed in the tip, Mr Thomas said tests had not shown any traces of tri-onthacnesyl-phosphate (TOCP) from milk supplies in the vicinity of the quarry, and analyses to the limits of two parts in 100 million had failed to detect any PCBs.

He said a full list of suppliers of toxic materials to the quarry was not available.

MONS 070218