

Workshop on Scientific Aspects of Polybrominated Biphenyls

East Lansing, Michigan, October, 1978

This issue of ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVES represents papers presented at the October 1977 conference on the Scientific Aspects of Polybrominated Biphenyls (PBB) sponsored by the Michigan State Agricultural Experiment Station at the Kellogg Center for Continuing Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

PBBs were originally synthesized for use as a fire retardant in the manufacture of electronic parts, plastics, and other components. They have, unfortunately, made their way into the environment. A major direct contamination of the food chain occurred in Michigan in 1973 when PBBs were mistakenly substituted for a mineral supplement in the formulation of cattle feed. Because of their stability and persistence, PBBs are likely to remain as an environmental problem for a number of years.

Many questions come to mind following an environmental contamination accident of this nature.

Fortunately many questions have been or are being answered. To our astonishment, we found many scientists at many institutions working on various aspects of the problem, including animal health effects, human health effects, chemistry environmental dynamics, etc. But, as can be the case with research which must respond to emergency situations, gaps in our knowledge on the research activities undoubtedly exist. The objectives set for the conference were therefore to provide a forum for the discussion of what is known about PBBs and to delineate what is not known. Another objective was to facilitate publication of the knowledge in a reputable journal. This issue represents attainment of this objective.

STEVEN D. AUST
LEE R. SHULL
Conference Co-Chairmen