

Nestlé Complying with WHO Code for Infant Formulas

During past years Nestlé has been widely criticized for encouraging mothers to give their children formula instead of breast milk, and the outcry led the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1981 to adopt a code for marketing infant formulas. The Nestlé Infant Formula Audit Commission, an independent group headquartered in Washington, D.C., and chaired by former Democratic Senator Edmund S. Muskie of Maine, reported in mid-October that the Swiss-based company is largely complying with the new code. In some instances, "Nestlé has gone further than its own self-interest could justify," Muskie declared during a press conference.

The commission received 97 complaints about Nestlé's practices from 28 countries during the past year. After reviewing these complaints and negotiating with the company, the commission now reports that several former Nestlé practices have been eliminated or changed substantially.

For example, the company has agreed to stop supplying institutions with free samples of infant formula other than for the purpose of professional evaluation. Also, the supply of free or reduced cost supplies of infant formula to institutions will be limited to infants who "have to be fed on breast-milk substitutes," and the company no longer will provide free infant formula to breast-feeding mothers as part of its standard marketing practice. Moreover, the company is changing the health hazard statement on product labels "to eliminate pictures of babies and words that may idealize the use of infant formula." These changes, which the company says will be completed worldwide by early 1984, also include admonishments to users to maintain careful hygiene and to heed closely the label instructions on the amount of powdered formula to prepare.

Both Muskie and Nestlé executive vice president Carl L. Angst, who also spoke at the press conference, voiced frustration with the WHO code, saying that it is an imperfect compromise for guiding the company in its dealings with the complexities of the Third World. The central problem is poverty

and its consequences for providing mothers with an adequate diet. Changing Nestlé's product labeling and marketing practices will do little to address that issue, Muskie points out.

—JEFFREY L. FOX

EPA, OSHA Act to Curb Pesticide EDB

Two federal regulatory agencies in recent weeks have moved to impose tighter restrictions on the pesticide uses of ethylene dibromide (EDB); concern about the health risks posed by EDB date back to the mid-1970's.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has ordered the immediate suspension of the use and sale of EDB for preplanting soil fumigation, the application that accounts for 90 percent of EDB's use as a pesticide. The action follows discovery in four states of ground-water contamination by EDB, which has been identified as a potent carcinogen and mutagen in animals. EPA began its review of the safety of EDB in 1977.

The suspension of preplanting use of the pesticide was ordered by EPA Administrator William D. Ruckelshaus under a provision of pesticide law that permits an immediate ban on use if agency officials determine that an "imminent hazard" to humans exists. A phaseout of several other uses of EDB was also directed in the same 30 September agency order, but the cancellations are cast in a form which enables objectors to delay implementation of the order by asking for hearings which can consume 2 years or more.

Hearings may also be requested in response to a 7 October proposal by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for a stringent revision of the present standard regulating employee exposure to EDB. The notice calls for a reduction of the present limit of 20 parts per million parts of air to 0.1 parts per million, and for a tightening of requirements on such things as exposure monitoring, protective equipment, and employee education. The OSHA action results from deliberations begun in 1981 when the Teamsters union petitioned the agency for an emergency temporary standard for EDB and was turned

down. The new OSHA notice said that the present standard did not "provide protection against cancer and other adverse health effects."

EPA ordered cancellation of EDB's use as a fumigant for stored grain, milling machinery, and felled logs. Quarantine fumigation of citrus and tropical fruits and of vegetables was also canceled effective 1 September 1984. These cancellations can all be delayed for hearings. Hearings may also be requested on the suspension for soil fumigation but the suspension remains in effect during the appeal proceedings.

The emergency suspension on EDB use for soil fumigation was precipitated when EDB contamination of ground water was detected first in Georgia and subsequently in California, Hawaii, and Florida in areas where EDB has been heavily used as a soil fumigant.

EDB is a halogenated hydrocarbon of the same chemical family as DDT, chlordane, and dieldrin, all of which were placed under regulatory restraints in the 1970's. EDB became controversial in 1975 when a National Cancer Institute study indicated that the pesticide induced cancer in laboratory animals. Later evidence also pointed to carcinogenic and mutagenic effects.

About 300 million pounds of EDB are produced annually in the United States. Only about 20 million pounds are devoted to pesticide use; the balance is used as an antiknock additive in gasoline.—JOHN WALSH

A New Plan for Space Physics

Following up on pledges made last summer (*Science*, 22 July, p. 345), space scientists from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the European Space Agency (ESA), and Japan's Institute of Space and Astronautical Science (ISAS) have drawn up a series of joint spacecraft experiments for the late 1980's and early 1990's to be called, tentatively, the International Solar-Terrestrial Physics program.

At a meeting in Washington, D.C., on 26–27 September, they examined the eight missions already planned by