

Pressure forces DDT plant to close

Some determined environmentalists gained an important victory last week when the Olin Corporation announced that it would stop manufacturing DDT. The company's only DDT plant, located in Huntsville, Ala., will shut down on June 30. Olin produces 20 per cent of the DDT made in the United States.

Olin made the announcement only three days after the National Wildlife Federation, the Environmental Defense Fund and the National Audubon Society filed a suit to enjoin the Olin Corporation from discharging DDT into streams entering Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge near Huntsville.

Because Olin's DDT plant operates in public facilities leased from the U.S. Army at the Redstone Arsenal, also named as defendants in the conservationists' suit were the Department of the Army, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor and Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. F.J. Clarke.

The suit alleged that Olin with the express permission of the other defendants illegally dumps its DDT-laden effluent into a stream which eventually finds its way into the Tennessee River and the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge.

Temporary standards set for the plant in 1965 allowed 10 parts per billion DDT in the stream receiving the plant's effluent. Subsequent samplings revealed concentrations greater than the permitted 10 parts per billion. In 1969 the Federal Water Quality Administration tightened the standards to permit the discharge of only 20 parts per trillion DDT in the effluent. This attempt by the FWQA to set a high standard would have resulted in the near-elimination of all DDT discharges at the arsenal. That attempt received strong support from the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife which administers the wildlife refuge, the State of Alabama, and reportedly, even from the Commanding Officer at the Redstone Arsenal.

The standards, however, were rejected by high-level Washington Department of the Army officials or Corps of Engineers top brass, or both.

The situation at the Redstone Arsenal was condemned in April by the National Wildlife Federation in a letter to Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water Quality Research Carl L. Klein. The letter pointed out that as long ago as 1964 the BSWF had found wildlife on the Wheeler Refuge to contain 119 parts per million DDT in muscle tissue and 1,603 parts per million in fat.

In mid-May when they had received no reply from Klein and after the Army had overruled the FWQA, the Wildlife Federation sent a second letter to Russell E. Train, chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, questioning "the rationale behind using public facilities to subsidize the production of DDT through bargain basement leasing rates when the Agriculture and Health, Education and Welfare Departments are supposedly taking steps to eliminate the use of this uncontrollable environmental contaminant."

When the government again failed to respond, the three conservation groups decided to file the suit to enjoin Olin, the Army and the Corps of Engineers.

In another case regarding DDT, the Environmental Defense Fund, Sierra Club, West Michigan Environmental Action Council, National Audubon Society and Izaak Walton League of America made what could be a more important breakthrough. On May 28 the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ordered Agriculture Secretary Hardin to suspend the registration of DDT within

30 days and implement cancellation proceedings to bar it from interstate commerce or come to the Court with a convincing argument why he should not do so.

This order has essentially placed the Agriculture Department and the administration in the position of being able to decide either to act in the public interest by banning DDT or to bow to the pressures of the agriculture chemical lobby by opting for further study, which means further delay.

The importance of the decision cannot be minimized. Because of its mobility and tendency to concentrate in fatty tissue, DDT does not stay put. It is found today throughout the biosphere, in rain water, in birds hundreds of miles at sea, in animals from the Antarctic to the Arctic, in the foods we eat, the water we drink, and in each of us. If the Secretary of Agriculture does not stand up against an industry whose totally unnecessary product jeopardizes our environment, DDT will continue to be an increasing daily threat to our lives and the world in which we live.

Conservationists to ask AEC to stop Calvert Cliffs plant

In a move to protect the Chesapeake Bay from being used as an experimental laboratory, a coalition of conservation groups will petition the Atomic Energy Commission next week to suspend the construction permit for the Calvert Cliffs nuclear power plant in Maryland until studies are made which prove that the plant will not adversely affect the environment.

The State of Maryland issued a water use permit for the plant on May 28 which allows the plant to discharge heated water into the Chesapeake. Though certain restrictions are placed on the discharge—water may not be more than 10 degrees above its average 80 degree temperature—critics are concerned because thorough studies of the effect of the 3.5 billion gallons of the heated water daily on the ecology of the Chesapeake have not been made.

Section 102 of the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act requires all federal agencies to consider the impact of their actions on the environment. On these grounds the Washington Law firm of Berlin, Roisman and Kessler, representing the Maryland Quad C organization,

the Sierra Club, and the National Wildlife Federation, will file a petition with the Atomic Energy Commission requesting that it:

1. Suspend the present construction permit for Calvert Cliffs until the AEC has met its burden of proving that there will not be adverse environmental effects from this plant at this location.

2. Include in the AEC's present regulations a specific requirement that technological advances which make greater environmental safeguards possible must be incorporated into operating nuclear facilities as these advances become available.

3. Require the AEC to recognize that the National Environmental Policy Act now requires that for any permit, whether for construction or operation of a nuclear power plant, full consideration must be given to all environmental factors and alternatives to the proposed facility. These considerations must be made before large financial commitments by power companies effectively block consideration of reasonable alternatives.