

THE POLITICS OF PESTICIDES¹

by David Dietz

Those of you that work with pesticides probably understand what I'm about to tell you. We have lost the **benefit** perspective when it comes to pesticides. Today, in this country, and in other nations around the world, our perspective is entirely **risk** oriented. We no longer have a balance in the media, nor in the public as a whole, when it comes to talking about pesticides.

We talk, instead, about the risk to man, the risk to the environment and the risk to wildlife that is wrought by the very use of the modern tools that have brought us production and health protection miracles. And, until that risk perspective is re-asserted in a balance, we're going to lose the very tools that we depend on today to produce quality food, economical fiber and the good health of this nation.

It's absolutely amazing to me that we can ban the use of an EDB and restrict its contamination in ready-to-eat products to 30 ppb, when at the same time we allow aflatoxin, which is a mold in peanut butter, to be present to the tune of 15 ppb knowing full well that aflatoxin has about 1,000 times the carcinogenic potential of EDB.

That is the consistency and logic of our federal government. That is the consistency and logic of the states in this nation and until that consistency and logic are changed from a perception of truth to fact, we will continue to lose the very tools that have brought us the finest standard of living that the world has ever known.

If you listen to the chemagogues (those who are radically anti-pesticide), you will be led to believe that people are dying left and right, from pesticide exposure, of cancers, because of birth defects, because our population's health is immediately threatened. We are told that pesticide uses are creating spontaneous abortions and dooming our future generations from mutations. That is what you will be led to believe if you are a member of

the public reading the newspaper articles or watching the TV shows.

The truth is something else. The truth is that life expectancy in the United States continues to increase. The truth is there is no cancer epidemic (all cancer rates, except for lung cancer, are in decline or stable in the United States of America) and that's based on 50 years of data. But the fact is that we have to deal with public perception, because perception is truth. It is what the public perceives that we must come to grips with. And, what the public perceives is that you and I are poisoning America today. We know that's not true, we know that's not fact. But the poor public doesn't have a chance to know otherwise.

Two and a half years ago, I made a presentation in Washington D.C. before the Second Annual Symposium on Dioxin. It was a symposium composed of the world's foremost experts with that particular chemical. In my speech I said, "Folks, if you don't get off your rear ends and start telling people the truth, you're going to condemn the public to an emotional, fear-wrought paranoia and hysteria about their exposure to various chemicals in the United States of America and around the world.

I nearly got skewered by some of the audience because those scientists said, "That is not our task." So now we watch moon-suited EPA'ers in Times Beach, Missouri and the impression left with the public is not what's justified: that what we deal with is so very dangerous that you have to be dressed up like you're going into outer space if, in fact, you want to expose yourself to the chemicals we use.

The public doesn't remember what you people do for us. They've forgotten the diseases you control. They've forgotten that you bring us food that is safe to eat. They've forgotten that you're the people that allow restaurants to meet sanitary

1. Presented at the annual conference of the International Society of Arboriculture in Quebec City, Canada in August 1984.

codes. They've forgotten that we can walk into a doctor's office or a hospital and not be fearful of walking out with a secondary infection because hospitals and doctors have learned to use pesticides wisely to prevent disease.

Those are the things we need to talk to people about. We need to remind the homeowner that the headlice breakout in their school is prevented by pesticides. We need to remind folks that the reason they enjoy their environment, in their home and in their yard, is because they have pesticides available to control the very things that we rebel against. And, until we do that, our tools are going to be taken away.

If you don't think that's happening, please give it another thought. Congress is considering HB 3818. It will so radically change the registration and re-registration of pesticides that no manufacturer would be able to meet the new registration requirements. Not one! The language of that bill says that to register a pesticide, we have to do behavioral testing.

I debated the author of that bill in Texas a few months ago. I said, "Tom, what in the world is behavioral testing? Does that mean if we've got mental impairments or education impairments or a mental slowness or a speaking disability, that these are the behavioral effects we've got to test?" He said something to the effect that, "that sounds good to me!"

The point is they've written language into a bill that is so vague that no one knows what it means. But we do know it can and will be used to tie-up the system forever. That will be the end of pesticides.

There are 80,000 municipalities in the United States. Local government wants to get into the act of registering and controlling the use of pesticides. Name one manufacturer of our chemical tools that will try to meet 80,000 different registration dictates. But, it's happening in Montgomery, Maryland; Surfside, Florida; Wauconda, Illinois; Clatsop County, Oregon; Mendocino County, California (they're before the Supreme Court right now trying to decide the question of who has regulatory authority).

The courts of this country are also being faced with the question, "What can we do with pesticides?"

I regard this as a lawyer's Full Employment Act of 1984, because you can sue and sue and sue on pesticides and never exhaust the legal possibilities. Last Thursday in a federal district court in the state of Oregon, all herbicides were banned from further use by the United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management in the states of Oregon and Washington. Every use was banned from roadside vegetation management to progeny sites to test sites. Noxious weed control, specifically, said the court, will be prohibited until a worst case analysis is done by the federal government under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Do you know what the worst case analysis has to be? The chemical 2,4-D, not a proven carcinogen, must be assumed to be a carcinogen and then you extrapolate the number of cancers that will be created in the United States by the use of 2,4-D before we can go ahead and use that chemical.

That's illogical in the extreme, but that's what the courts of this country have now told us we must do. That's why you are an endangered species. The politics of pesticides is coming at us like a ton of bricks and unless we figure out how to put mortar to the bricks to build our own wall, or figure out a way to get out of the way, we're going to lose the tools that we have to have to maintain this country's liveability.

Pesticides are not endangering this nation. They are the environmental promotion, health protection and food and fiber production tools that are absolutely essential to the health and well-being of this country and to the people of this country, and that's the story we've got to start telling.

I am tired of politicians using the pesticide issue to fearfully make their constituents react so they can buy votes through fear. It's got to end.

The way to end the illogic is to turn it around and talk in terms that are as vigorous and as emotional and as vibrant as the terms that are now being used against us. Because the fact is, we will lose our ability to use pesticides unless we go forward, hard, with our message. That's part of what we try to do with Oregonians for Food & Shelter. It is what we have started to do with the Pesticide Public Policy Foundation, because 3PF was created by the tree, lawn care and landscape

industries.

The reason they wanted a national network amongst all of them is simple. They are the urban environmentalists, they are the people that keep the acres of trees available to convert five to six tons of carbon dioxide a year to four tons of oxygen. They are the people that add 20% to the value of homes. They are the people that give us an esthetic balance that you and I demand and must have if we are to be productive and work in a healthy environment. Those folks know that they're threatened.

We've got to align perception with fact, because unless we do and, until we do, the politics of pesticides are going to win, and the politics of environmentalists are: Take these dangerous tools away, don't let people have access to them.

Politically it's wiser to err on the side of zero risk than it is to try to explain risk relationships. Politicians find it easier to say, "You can have a riskless society." But, you can't have it. I can't walk across the street today and guarantee you I won't be hit by a car. A politician will sell the idea of zero risk before he will take the time to explain risk relationships.

Why? One reason is that he or she might not know any better. A second is that it is tough to do and it takes time. That's what you folks, as profes-

sionals, are able to do. That's what people like me try to do. Because we are the ones that must do it, now! If we pull together and all walk down the same path, I think we *can* make the difference.

That difference will be having the chemical tools still there when we need them. Not only to produce the food and fiber that this society demands, but to protect the health and the environment of the American public. I remain convinced that if we work together and talk in concert, with strength and unity, we can succeed. But it will take all of us.

I urge you to listen carefully to what's being told to you and relate what you hear to how you can talk to your friend or neighbor in terms of how you benefit their health, how you protect the environment, how you assure their children of a better world in which to live. Because those are the messages that are going to make sense. I think if we all do that we will get common sense back into the question of the politics of pesticides.

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COMMUNICATIONS IN THE 1980s¹

by George T. Fisher

It is often interesting for us to reflect upon the several different societies and cultures of our modern world, each showing a prominence and type of living that particularly describes certain trends. The southern European with the easy-going personality, the Spanish and French with their abilities in growing fruit, olives and grapes.

The Italian interested in the arts, singing and music contrasted with the northern European who is much more business oriented, much more oriented toward trade and science and the development of Science, Chemistry, Physics and Biology. And then we have the polyglot of the combined cultures of both north and southern

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