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## Don't Let Hysteria Rule

FINDING A RESIDENT of this country who has not benefited in some way from the proper use of modern agricultural chemicals would be a difficult task. It would not be hard at all, however, to find individuals who are unaware that they have so benefited.

Thus, despite the fine public relations work of such organizations as the USDA, National Agricultural Chemicals Association, Manufacturing Chemists' Association, and others, as well as that of many industrial concerns, a rather high "ignorance quotient" with respect to pesticide usage remains characteristic of a large part of the populace.

Recent history has demonstrated that thousands—perhaps millions—of uninformed persons, as well as large numbers whose education has been such that they should know better, can be convinced that their property, their health, or even their very lives have been placed in jeopardy by the growing use of "chemicals" or "poisons." To make an undesirable situation worse, there is never a dearth of individuals or pressure groups willing to perpetuate and extend misunderstanding if it will help them to gain their own selfish ends.

This is not to say that all who object in any way to the use of pesticides are mistaken. Thoughtful, constructive criticism can be as useful in this field as in any other. It is to say that those who by innuendo or the use of half-truths seek to create issues where no real issues exist are doing their neighbors, their nation, and themselves a serious disservice.

No one, least of all the people who know them best, would deny that many chemical materials such as pesticides are capable of inflicting great damage if improperly handled. But the real danger in this, as in most situations, lies not in the materials themselves but in the attitudes and actions of those responsible for their use.

Few are the public calls for abolition of automobiles in the United States, although their use—or misuse—has been directly responsible for as many as 40,000 deaths in a year. What is heard frequently is a plea for safer and more intelligent handling.

That is as it should be. The automobile is recognized as a virtually essential adjunct to modern life; because of its economic importance, the death and destruction that attend its use are at least tolerated, if not condoned.

Perhaps if as many people as are familiar with automobiles were equally familiar with all the benefits they derive from the proper use of pesticides, pointless antipesticide campaigns would be impossible. And surely if everyone understood the magnitude of the threats which pesticides are designed to combat, full acceptance and praise would replace fear and condemnation.

In the interest of spreading understanding of pest control problems in general, and the insect menace in particular, we wish that everyone who has ever heard the word "chemical" or "pesticide" could be persuaded to read the feature article "Don't Let the Insects Rule," beginning on page 98 in this issue. We wish especially that this article could be made required reading for those who have attacked pesticide chemicals on the basis of emotion as opposed to knowledge.

Here is a thoughtful analysis of a worldwide problem—and several potential solutions. Its author is no alarmist, but a widely respected scientist who knows through many years of study and personal observation what man's enemies can do.

Dr. Decker does not have all the answers. No one does. But he effectively deflates many of the specious arguments raised against chemical pest control, and provides some insight into the possible effects of alternative courses. If Dr. Decker's observations are read as they are presented, thoughtfully and objectively, they should help to place in proper perspective the facts of life in pest control.