

Steve Hayes

Pesticides: vested interests



"I've won a free trip to Miami that pays for every thing except travel and room and board!"

Listen up

Bicycles called dangerous

Editor:
 I would like to draw attention to a potentially dangerous situation on our campus, BICYCLES. Never before have I seen so many bicycles condensed in such a small area as we have on our campus this term. If the Wright Brothers were alive today, they would get out of airplanes and back into the bicycle business.

Please do not misunderstand, I realize that bicycles are great to keep in shape, convenient to get to class on, leave a positive effect on the environment, and have numerous other advantages. It is the careless way the two-wheeled vehicles are operated that I object to.

For years auto operators, pedestrians, and competent bicyclists have operated on campus with little trouble with traffic flow. This term you will easily note bicyclists racing up-and-down sidewalks and streets. This new breed of cyclist will narrowly miss pedestrians, dare a car to run over them, operate in the opposite direction of correctly-flowing traffic, and numerous other violations mean nothing to them.

Someone is going to get hurt—then it will be too late!
 One other suggestion. Why not charge a nominal parking permit fee for these bicycles. They are obstructing traffic flow far more than cars or motorcycles who must pay.

Preston Izard '72

Editor:
 On page 5 of the Sept. 23 issue of The Battalion appears a most disgusting photograph of David Seymour sitting upon his mini-bike. The caption informs us that this seven year old child already has a string of seven traffic violations.

It strikes me as strange indeed that his parents were thoughtless enough to give him the bike and then let him continue to drive it despite repeated violations. Even more strange and ironic, The Battalion, spokesman for the A&M community, has chosen to publicize and thereby apparently condone this unfortunate situation.

A follow-up article is in order suggesting police action and perhaps carrying a photo of the delinquent parents. My personal feelings are that the bike should be taken away from the child until he can legally ride it. Should the parents fail to comply with this demand the bike should be confiscated and the parents fined.

Dr. James Shapiro

We don't condone the child's actions—we thought them rather funny. We apologize if we weren't in good taste when we ran it, but still we don't think that there was any particular reason not to run it.—Ed.

Editor:
 This is my first semester at Texas A&M University. I have

The backlash against environmentalists is often formed behind the cry of "mass hysteria," chiding environmentalists for overreacting. However, indiscriminate polluters often use mass hysteria and scare tactics, bolstering their views with institutions considered sacrosanct in the eyes of the public. The case of the Imported Fire Ant (IFA) exemplifies this.

The IFA arrived in Mobile, Alabama in about 1930. Although its importation was probably an accident, the IFA, like many imports, thrived in its new environment. By 1963, the IFA had infested roughly 31 million acres in nine southeastern states, including eastern Texas.

Before 1963, the United States Department of Agriculture had declared the IFA a pest and advocated its eradication through use of chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides such as heptachlor, dieldrin and chlordane. However, after conclusive evidence indicated that the result was not eradication of IFA, but, instead, massive die-offs of fish and wildlife, these hydrocarbons were discontinued for this purpose. Another chlorinated hydrocarbon—Mirex—was used instead. Although tests have shown that Mirex remains in the food chain for years, that .01 parts per million achieve 100 per cent mortality of a species of shrimp larvae living in experimental conditions, that it probab-

ly affects fertility in birds such as the Bobwhite, and that Mirex decreases the thickness of egg shells, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to support its use.

Therefore it seems reasonable to deduce that the IFA presents an imminent danger to mankind, if we must resort to such hazards as Mirex, right? You are, if you're from Occidental Chemical Company, which has published a "fact" sheet called, "Anything Alive Potential Prey of Fire Ant." According to Occidental, the IFA has a "lust for the juices" of nearly all living animals, especially living baby birds. If unchecked, the sheet states, "the tiny tormentors," or "red devils" as they are later called, (sounds like a Batman script, doesn't it), "could spread all the way to Canada," and "certainly up to the nation's capital," (makes me worry about the safety of the President and the Pentagon). Too, IFA "possesses a cobra-like sting," and Occidental goes on to describe the gruesome details of deaths of fish and birds as a result of the "red devil."

Can anything save us from certain death? Yes, it's super Mirex! And guess who makes Mirex? When Occidental was asked by letter for the sources of its information and documentation of its statements, it failed to reply. The Southern Association of In-formation Officers of State De-partments of Agriculture also

published a sheet describing the gruesome deaths of persons supposedly stung by fire ants.

Yet, studies have shown that the IFA lives principally on insects, has a less potent sting than the wasp or the bee, that ants were responsible for only four deaths in the same 10-year period in which wasps and bees were responsible for over 200 deaths, that all documented allergies to IFA stings had a previous history of stings, that IFA had no significant effect on quail populations (can that be said for pesticides?), and it seldom attacks unless provoked. The evidence continues ad infinitum.

Then why does USDA and other reputedly non-partisan institutions continue to support massive pesticide use and fail to refute such remarks as those made by Occidental? The fact is that some research within governmental agencies is financially supported by chemical companies, and some officials are also affiliated with chemical companies. Obviously, vested interests exist.

The implications are apparent. It is time to question those institutions considered sacrosanct. Public institutions serve the public best when they remain under the scrutiny and inquiries of the public.

As Rachel Carson said, "When the scientific organization speaks, whose voice do we hear—that of science? Or of the sustaining industry?"

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