



*Rochester Committee  
for Scientific Information  
Rochester, NY*

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Pesticide Statement to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation*

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THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE FOR SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION  
P. O. Box 5236, River Campus Station  
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Note to Members #104 (C)  
Chemical Pollution

August 1970

STATEMENT

Public Hearing at Rochester, N.Y., August 5, 1970  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

The Rochester Committee for Scientific Information is a group of scientists and laymen who provide the public and their officials with scientifically correct information stated in everyday language. Our conclusions have at times been in conflict with those of official agencies, but in recent years our advice as an independent, reliable source has been sought by local official agencies, citizens' organizations and individuals.

We feel that the Department of Environmental Conservation and the legislature of the State of New York have ample facts about the need for regulation of pesticides, as documented in part in our testimony before the Hardt committee. We stress that:

1. In respect to materials, we live in a closed system, and that therefore, no part of our environment can be used as a bottomless sump for wastes. It follows that non-degradation of air, water and land must be an important basis for law.
2. In respect to control, we live in a natural self-regulating system. When we introduce changes that disturb the system, we become responsible for their regulation. Responsibility for ecological consequences must be accepted by man.
3. In respect to consumption, we live in a technologically and scientifically advanced society. The optimum solution to a human need is always a complicated mix of many techniques, ranging from a change in eating habits to a change in crop price supports. There is no scientific merit to the claims that the use of some single pesticide is the only available means of providing food or protecting health.

DDT is the most thoroughly studied of the persistent pesticides. You know that it remains and accumulates in the environment, that in addition to killing pests it kills beneficial insects, fish larvae and unhatched birds. Neither you nor we know what it will do as its concentration rises, and rise it must because every pound made adds to the burden in the biosphere (scientifically computed by Dr. Woodwell of Brookhaven National Laboratory).

It is not true that DDT provides the only insurance against a farmer losing his livelihood. It is true that a farmer may ask for a license to use DDT or another persistent pesticide as insurance against unusual losses on some single crop. In that case we ask you to consider other solutions that will make it unnecessary to support a bad agricultural practice for economic reasons. Three possible alternatives are subsidies, insurance, and premiums for diversification of crops.

The speaker spent last January talking with groups of farmers, meeting under the sponsorship of the Agricultural Stabilization Service, and the Agway Inc. They were alert to environmental dangers, and they were receptive toward possible reductions in the use of both pesticides and fertilizers. These men were far more perceptive than the farm journals and professional agriculturalists who think that they cannot defend both the farmer and the environment.

The continued availability and advertising of persistent broad spectrum poisons, such as chlordane, acts effectively to stop people from looking for alternatives. As a result we have paid little attention to the elimination of disease-prone varieties of ornamental plants and even less to the search for assemblies of plants and insects that resist local pests. This policy makes it easy for the gardener to follow mindless trends of fashion, and misses the opportunity of encouraging the garden fancier to pioneer in gardening without poisons.

These examples show how a strict licensing policy on pesticides would serve to promote good and correct bad practices.

In conclusion:

1. We support restrictive licensing of persistent pesticides aimed at prompt withdrawal from use in New York State of the entire class of poisons which persist and accumulate in nature after release. The most urgent case is that of DDT and related organochlorines, whose concentration in lakes and the ocean has already reached the point of damage to bird and fish populations.

2. We request as a means of enforcement that the department monitor the use of pesticides in the field and make renewal of licenses contingent on proper handling. A small investment into supervision will have good results equivalent to large investment in education, and will save money in the long run.

3. We request that industrial wastes with the same actions in nature as pesticides be brought under a similarly stringent ban, and we give as examples polychlorinated biphenyls, mercuric salts and organomercurials.

4. We support control over remnants of banned poisons, through the strongest enforcement of the New York State law, which makes manufacturers and dealers responsible for totally harmless disposal of leftover poisons, and we ask the State to follow the lead of Canada in providing for high temperature disintegration of remaining persistent organic poisons and their packages.

No law is of any use unless it is enforced!

- Herman S. Forest, Ph.D., President
- Robert G. Kiefer, Ph.D., Chairman,  
Subcommittee on Chemicals
- George G. Berg, Ph.D., and  
Olga Berg, Members, Subcommittee on Chemicals