

Pesticides and You

News from Beyond Pesticides / National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP)



Oppression and Farmworker Health in a Global Economy

A call to action for liberty, freedom and justice

- **Voices for Pesticide Reform: The Stories of Those Who Have Been Harmed by Pesticides**
- **Back to School Organizing for Safer Pest Management**

Letter from Washington

Doing the Right Thing

Persevering for change

"If you do the right thing long enough, then good things will happen – like contracts, agreements, breakthroughs."

Baldemar Velasquez, president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), told us this in the speech he gave to Beyond Pesticides' 21st National Pesticide Forum, *Toxics in the Age of Globalization*, in Austin, Texas, April 26, 2003. (Excerpts of his speech are transcribed for this issue of *Pesticides and You* (PAY).) Mr. Velasquez should know. He formed FLOC in 1967, led a historic 600-mile march of 100 farmworkers from FLOC headquarters in Toledo, Ohio to Campbell's Soup Company offices in Camden, New Jersey in 1983, and three years later negotiated the first three-way pact in labor history, one between Campbell's, Ohio tomato growers, and the farmworkers who harvest the fields. Now, the target is Mt. Olive Pickle Company, as the struggle for adequate wages, health benefits and safety continues.

Baldemar Velasquez teaches us to understand and attack specific problems within the broader picture. He says, "Certainly the environmental issues that farmworkers face are not limited to the exposure to dangerous pesticides. Generally, the working conditions of farmworkers are a national disgrace. It is not only disgraceful, but it is shameful for the richest country in the world to continue to ignore and neglect some of the hardest working people in America." Pesticides are a piece, an important piece, of the injustices and inhumane conditions that farmworkers endure. Mr. Velasquez asks us to join the boycott of Mt. Olive in an effort to change the conditions that we all believe are not acceptable.

Looking at the larger picture

The news pieces that are contained in this issue of PAY paint a vivid picture. The picture looks something like this: data on the hazards of pesticides keeps stacking up, at the same time that successful experiences with alternatives are recorded. People are harmed, endangered species are threatened, while the courts intervene to stop hazardous pesticide use. This picture captures a cycle that repeats itself over and over again.

In this issue, we cover the bad news: pesticides linked to birth defects, the death of 58 cows due to pesticide poisoning, and new documentation of continued contamination of the water supply. But then, we cover the good news: integrated pest management (the kind that eliminates toxic chemical use) works in an East Harlem study conducted by Mount Sinai Medical Center, while researchers document microscopic crustaceans that love to eat mosquito larvae, a promising alternative to pesticide use. Meanwhile, the courts are stopping the bad guys: restricting 54 pesticides that threaten endangered species, extending the right-to-sue to Vietnam War veterans exposed to Agent Orange, and stopping the indiscriminate aerial application of hazardous herbicides in the U.S.-funded Columbian drug war. Even EPA jumped in by issuing the largest fine in its history for violations of the [farm]worker protection standards.

This issue of PAY also reminds us that the marketplace is a dangerous place, with misinformation about product hazards. At the same time, we see the power of local and state governments being used to protect public health and safety, incredibly important in the absence of adequate federal protection. The wood-treating industry is still misleading the public on the safety of pressure-treated wood with arsenic and chromium VI, as it is sold in stores and by construction companies for decks and fences until supplies are exhausted. This goes on despite the wood treating industry agreements with EPA to warn consumers about product hazards. And, the state of Maine jumped in to expedite the federal phase-out of treated wood, while the City of Lyndhurst, Ohio voted 'no' on spraying for mosquitoes, given data and uncertainties about pesticide hazards and the lack of efficacy associated with spray programs.

Up against special interests

The power of change rests with our ability to keep pushing and doing the right thing in our purchasing practices, town and city policies, school policy and through increased accountability of elected officials. We must call for protection of workers and the public in a political climate that seemingly ignores our call and undermines agreements to move changes in laws that are intended to protect health and safety. As we know, special interest politics in Congress are pervasive. Here's a pesticide industry example. Despite Congressional agreements back in 1996 to increase regulatory review of pesticide impacts on children under the *Food Quality Protection Act* (FQPA), the chemical industry for the past six years has orchestrated legislative riders that deny EPA the funds to move the program ahead. That may change this year with an effort now underway in Congress. (*For more information, go to www.beyondpesticides.org.*) Any way you look at it, the chemical industry, having the upper hand in Congress, has shifted the costs of reviewing its highly profitable chemicals to taxpayers, reduced its bill by hundreds of millions of dollars, and slowed the review process.

Power of persistence

We are doing the right thing. Increasingly, practitioners of pest management, want to do the right thing, standing up with us in public forums, attaining new standards of safety, rejecting risk-assessment based claims of safety, and embracing the precautionary principle of avoiding the use of toxic chemicals whenever possible. *Best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season!*



—Jay Feldman is executive director of Beyond Pesticides.

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Dealing with Pressure-Treated Wood at School

Dear Beyond Pesticides,
For over a year I have sent several letters to my local school board in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, requesting that they consider replacement of the CCA-treated play equipment in the schoolyard. A year ago the superintendent emailed me and said they were having a meeting about this issue and would keep me informed. I wanted them to test the soil (tiny pebbles) around the play structure to be sure our children were not being contaminated, and to also educate the children about at least washing their hands before they ate their lunch – after playing on the equipment in the morning. They continue to ignore my requests. How can I help make sure our children are protected?

Lisa Robbins
Ontario, Canada

Dear Ms. Robbins,
Thank you for the work you have done thus far to protect children from the hazards of treated wood. It is important work since schools should be safe, healthy places to maximize children's growth and learning. The presence of chemicals at schools, whether they are pesticides, cleaning fluids or pressure-treated wood, are a threat to children since their developing organ systems often make them more sensitive to toxic exposure, and they take in more pesticides relative to their body weight than adults. Pressure-treated wood presents a high risk, since chromated copper arsenate (CCA) treated wood, containing arsenic, is a widely used wood for playground equipment. Although beginning in January 2004, CCA wood can no longer be manufactured for this and other residential purposes, it can still be sold and used. Scientific studies prove that the three chemicals that make up CCA, namely arsenic, hexavalent chromium (chromium VI) and copper, are leaching out of CCA-treated wood into the soil around structures and onto

the surface of the treated wood. Scientists have documented that children put their hands into everything including their mouths; but, of course, parents already know this. When you add all this together, the outcome is clear – children's health is at risk because they are ingesting arsenic and chromium (VI) leaching from CCA-treated playground equipment.

Alternatives to this toxic playground equipment are available. Companies are now manufacturing playsets using naturally pest and rot resistant wood, such as cedar and redwood. Among these are PlayNation PlaySystems (see www.playset.com or call 800-445-PLAY) and CedarWorks Playsets (see www.cedarworks.com or call 800-GO-CEDAR).

You've taken the first step and reached out to school officials to educate them about the dangers of treated wood and the alternatives that exist. When officials don't respond to your concerns, turn to your community for help.



Start with your friends, family and neighbors. Let them know about the dangers children are facing in their schoolyard each day, and that safer alternatives are out there. Many other community members are affected by the use of pressure-treated playground equipment at schools, including the local Parent-Teacher Association, local environmental and public health groups, doctors and other concerned parents. Tools such as letter-writing campaigns and petitions will assist you in putting the pressure on school officials, as well as in educating the rest of the community.

For more information about effectively organizing a campaign, please contact Beyond Pesticides. Additionally, see www.beyondpesticides.org for our Poison Playgrounds Resource Kit, a guide to protecting children from CCA-treated wood in the community.

Skeeters in the Backyard

Dear Beyond Pesticides,
I am looking for information on how to make my own remedy to rid my yard of mosquitoes. The mosquitoes are so numerous that my five-year old cannot play outside. I would prefer a natural way to get rid of the pests, if you can provide the information.

Lachelle Laks
via email

Dear Ms. Laks,
Natural mosquito management is the way to go, since synthetic chemical use against mosquitoes poses a health risk. As far as personal repellents, researchers at Duke University Medical School (led by Dr. Mohamed Abou-Donia) have published findings demonstrating in laboratory studies that frequent and prolonged application of DEET, the widely used individual repellent, causes neurons to die in regions of the brain responsible for muscle movements, learning, memory and concentration—all subtle effects. Laboratory animals exposed to average human doses of DEET perform far worse than untreated animals on neurobehavioral tasks requiring muscle coordination. Even more alarming are researchers' findings that low dose exposure to DEET in combination with some pesticides sprayed by truck or aircraft for West Nile Virus show a synergistic or severely increased neurological effect. In April, Canada banned repellents with more than 30% DEET, as well as those mixed with sunscreen.

The first step to avoid using chemicals is to practice prevention by eliminating mosquito breeding grounds in your yard. Rid your property of any standing water, including dishes that hold potted plants, overturned trashcan lids, watering cans, buckets and dripping outdoor faucets. Damp areas of leaves could also serve as a breeding ground. This will provide long-term control over mosquito populations and also control populations before they mature and have a chance to reproduce, transfer disease, and annoy. If mosquitoes do breed, larvaciding allows control measures to be used in targeted areas, while mosquito larvae are still concentrated in breeding pools and before adult mosquitoes

spread throughout the community. *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *israelensis* is one of the most popular and most effective least-toxic biological controls. It is a bacterial strain that, when sprayed into larval pools, is ingested by feeding larvae and kills them. You can buy a product called Mosquito Dunks(tm) at your local lawn and garden store, in hardware stores, and in some catalogs and online from Real Goods, www.realgoods.com, 800-762-7365 and Peaceful Valley, www.groworganic.com, 888-784-1722. The dunks are safe for birdbaths, rain barrels, ponds, ditches, tree holes, roof gutters, unused swimming pool—anywhere water collects.

If your backyard is currently infested with adult mosquitoes, there are several practices to consider employing. Remain indoors in the evenings, when most mosquito activity occurs. Use screened-in porches instead of open porches. Use herbal repellents to ward off mosquitoes, such as Skin-So-Soft or Herbal Armour. Reapply often. Herbs that repel mosquitoes include cedarwood, garlic, lemongrass, frankincense, cinnamon, geranium, eucalyptus, basil, rosemary, cloves, peppermint, lemon balm (citronella), onions, feverfew, thyme, and marigold. Essential oils of the herbs listed above are also good repellents, though most are volatile organic compounds and will bother someone who is sensitive to scents. To mix your own essential oil repellent, add ten drops of essential oil to two tablespoons of vegetable oil, stir, and dab a few drops on your skin or clothing. Pregnant women should consult their doctors before using essential oils.

An option for backyard control is the Mosquito Magnet, a machine much like a gas grill, which burns propane gas that sends out a plume of carbon dioxide. The carbon dioxide attracts mosquitoes, which are then sucked in and killed. One magnet can control adult mosquitoes over an acre of land, though different levels of success have been reported. For more information see www.mosquitomagnet.com or call American Biophysics Corp. at 877-699-8727.

Talk to your neighbors about non-toxic and least-toxic mosquito management around their homes as well for best control.



Concerns from the Family of a Pesticide Applicator

Dear Beyond Pesticides, I am trying to locate some information regarding men's health and pesticides. My husband is in the weed control business. How might the chemicals and fertilizers affect his health? He does not wear a facemask while working so I don't believe that he is properly protected. Also, does the danger extend to our entire family, especially if we try to have a baby?

Sheila Peden
Oklahoma City, OK

Dear Ms. Peden, You are right to be concerned for your husband's health, and you should certainly try to convince him to wear proper protection should he continue to work with toxic chemicals. This includes wearing a chemical mask, goggles, gloves, long sleeves and pants. However, the healthiest course of action would be to avoid contact with the chemicals altogether. Pesticide applicators are likely to face an increased risk of suffering symptoms of chemical exposure, because of their prolonged, intensive exposure. Additionally, many applicators are exposed to a number of different chemicals, which adds to their entire chemical body burden.

Many widely used herbicides pose a number of health risks. 2,4-D is associated with cancer, birth defects, reproductive effects, neurotoxicity, and kidney and liver damage. Glyphosate, commonly known as Roundup, has been linked to reproductive effects and is also a sensitizer and irritant. There are a host of other synthetic herbicides available, each with their own set of adverse health effects. For a summary of these herbicides, contact Beyond Pesticides for a copy of Health Effects of 36 Most Commonly Used Lawn Pesticides, or see www.beyondpesticides.org.

It is possible that these chemicals could be present in your own home if your hus-

band does not take the proper precautions. A recent study published in November 2001 found that 2,4-D is easily tracked indoors, contaminating the air and surfaces inside residences and exposing children at levels ten times higher than preapplication levels. (Nishioka, M., et al., "Distribution of 2,4-D in Air and on Surfaces inside Residences after Lawn Applications: Comparing Exposure Estimates from Various Media for Young Children," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 109(11) (2001). Your husband should not bring his work clothes inside the home, and should not wash his clothing with the rest of the family's laundry.

Let your husband know that viable alternatives exist to control weeds; methods and products that are much safer for him and his entire family. The number of companies providing organic lawn care is on the rise as the demand increases. Explore options for work in these areas rather than with toxic chemicals.

Beyond Pesticides provides a free listing of lawn care and structural pest control companies that offer non-toxic and least-toxic alternatives in the Safety Source for Pest Management at www.beyondpesticides.org. We urge our readers who know of any companies that offer such services to notify Beyond Pesticides.

Write Us!

Whether you love us, disagree with us or just want to speak your mind, we want to hear from you. All mail must have a day time phone and verifiable address. Space is limited so some mail may not be printed. Mail that is printed will be edited for length and clarity. Please address your mail to:

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Group Sues EPA for Failing to Protect Endangered Wildlife from Atrazine

Fighting to ban the cancer-causing pesticide atrazine, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), filed a lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on August 20, arguing that the agency, under the *Endangered Species Act* (ESA), has failed to protect endangered species in the Chesapeake Bay, Mississippi River, Missouri River, and other major midwestern and southern rivers from the herbicide. The weed killer atrazine has been banned in several European countries and has contaminated drinking water in the U.S. and abroad. More than one million Americans drink from water supplies that are contaminated with atrazine at levels higher than EPA's drinking water standard (see "Pesticides on Tap in American Cities" in the *Around the Country* section of this issue). Atrazine runoff is considered a risk to endangered species. And, over the past three years, several studies have linked atrazine amphibian deformities. Yet, EPA has left this widely used herbicide on the market. NRDC alleges that EPA is permitting the widespread use of atrazine even though the agency acknowledges the weed-killer might harm endangered species. "EPA knows that rivers and streams across the country are so contaminated with atrazine that sea turtles and other endangered species are at risk," said Aaron Colangelo, an NRDC staff attorney. "But the agency is sitting on its hands." NRDC is particularly concerned about the threat atrazine poses to endangered sea turtles in the Chesapeake Bay; salamanders in Austin, Texas; freshwater mussels in Alabama; and fish in the Midwest. The



group called on EPA to ban atrazine in June 2002 after studies showed it poses a significant threat to public health. Atrazine is one of the most widely used herbicides in the U.S. Between 60 and 70 million pounds of atrazine are applied annually to fields, golf courses and lawns. "Atrazine has been shown to cause developmental and reproductive effects in wildlife," said Dr. Katherine Squibb, toxicology program director at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. "Atrazine exposure could jeopardize the survival of a number of endangered species."

Judge Says EPA Must Protect Endangered Salmon, Restricting 54 Pesticides

On July 16, 2003, Federal District Court Judge John Coughenour in Seattle ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is out of compliance with the *Endangered Species Act* (ESA) and plans to impose restrictions on 54 pesticides whose uses contaminate water and harm endangered salmon species. According to the non-profit public interest law firm Earthjustice, which is litigating the case on behalf of the Washington Toxics Coalition, Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides and Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, Judge Coughenour ordered EPA to begin the process of bringing its pesticide authorizations into compliance with the law. The lawsuit is likely to result in hundreds of miles of no-spray buffers along streams and waterways that stretch from Washington to Southern California. Judge

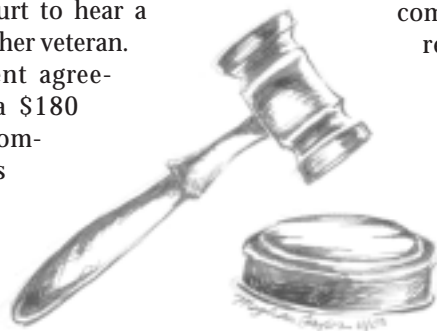


Coughenour directed EPA, environmental groups and industry representatives to try to negotiate the terms of an order that he expects to issue following the end of this year's fall crop season. The judge embraced no-spray buffers of up to 100 yards for aerial spraying and 20 yards for ground spraying as a good starting point for developing the new restrictions. "This is huge," said Patti Goldman, an attorney for Earthjustice. "Under the normal way of doing business, nothing happens until the evidence is so strong that it knocks you over." The U.S. Department of Agriculture, an advocate for chemical-intensive agricultural practices, submitted a study to the court that finds, in a worse case scenario, the judge's decision could trigger crop losses in Washington and Oregon of more than \$100 million annually. Experts on both sides agree that these

Supreme Court Says Veterans Can Sue for Agent Orange Caused Illness

On June 9, 2003, in a deadlocked 4-4 decision, *Dow Chemical Co. v. Stephenson* (No. 02-271), the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed a U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit (NY) decision to hear a case brought by Vietnam War veterans suffering the effects of Agent Orange exposure who believe they were not adequately represented by a 1985 class ac-

tion settlement. The tie-vote, which automatically upholds the lower court ruling, gives veteran and cancer victim Daniel Stephenson the right to argue against the manufacturer, Dow Chemical Company. The court also ordered the lower court to hear a case brought by another veteran. The 1985 settlement agreement established a \$180 million chemical company fund that was intended to pay veteran claims for effects that ranged from birth defects to cancer. Funds were exhausted in 1997, after the plaintiff's disease was identified. The veteran's attorney, Gerson Smoger, said, "For the past nine years, we have been working to show that the Agent Orange class action settlement cannot stand when the very victims of Agent Orange are entitled to no compensation from it." Agent Orange was a 50-50 mixture of the herbicides 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, used to defoliate the Vietnam jungle canopy. 2,4,5-T was banned for use in the U.S., but 2,4-D continues to be one of the most widely used herbicides on home lawns and in agriculture.



EPA Links Birth Defects to Common Herbicides

Over the years, many studies have found links between pesticides and birth defects. The latest study, led by Dina Schreinemachers, PhD, of EPA's National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, and published in the July 2003 issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives* (vol. 111, p. 1259-1264), suggests an association between rates of birth malformations and indirect measures of human exposure to chlorophenoxy herbicides, such as 2,4-D and MCPA, common weed killers sold commercially and used in agriculture. The study compares 43,500 birth out-

comes between 1995 and 1997, compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics in selected counties of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana. Dr. Schreinemachers finds that in high-wheat counties, combined circulatory and respiratory malformations increase by more than two-fold, and musculoskeletal malformations increase by 50% relative to low-wheat counties. Death rates from birth malformations

among male infants in high-wheat counties are more than twice the rates in low-wheat counties. In addition, the study finds an increased chance of circulatory and respiratory (excluding heart) malformations for infants conceived from April to June, a time that more than 85% of the acreage treated with chlorophenoxy herbicides is applied on durum wheat in the states studied. Chlorophenoxy herbicides are widely used in the U.S. for the control of broad-leaf weeds, not only in wheat farming, but also for maintenance of parks, home lawns, roadsides, and utilities rights of way.

According to EPA's most recent market estimates, 2,4-D is the most common pesticide used in the non-agricultural sector, with 7-9 million pounds used annually in the U.S., and is the seventh most common pesticide used in agriculture, at 28-33 million pounds. 2,4-D has been associated with elevated rates of cancer in studies of exposed farmers and dogs. It is an irritant, nerve toxin, and can damage the reproductive system.

Columbia Court Says U.S.-Backed Aerial Spray Program Must Stop

Due the lack of available data on the health and environmental safety of the herbicide used in Colombia's U.S.-funded drug crop eradication program, a Colombian Court ordered the program to be halted on June 26, 2003. According to the *Associated Press* (AP), the ruling is the result of a lawsuit filed by Claudia Sampedro, who represents environmentalists, human rights activists, and small farmers staunchly opposed to the spray program. The decision comes just over a month after Colombian's Constitutional Court ordered the government to consult on the program with indigenous communities, which is largely impacted by the program's aerial spraying of the herbicide glyphosate.

The spray program, which the U.S. finances as part of its multibillion-dollar Colombian aid package, is designed to eradicate coca and other plants used to manufacture illegal drugs. Aside from causing adverse health effects, such as skin rashes and other ailments, critics say the program indiscriminately wipes out

legitimate subsistence crops, natural plants, and kills birds, mammals and aquatic life. Fumigation is not the solution," said Ivan Gerardo Guerrero, governor of Putumayo Province, which produces 60 percent of the nation's coca. "It has a great defect. It doesn't really take into account the human being. All it cares about are satellite pictures. The aerial spray program will continue as the Colombian government appeals the ruling.





Ohio City Says No to West Nile Virus Mosquito Spraying

Putting common sense and sound science before fear and public panic, the City of Lyndhurst, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, passed a landmark ordinance prohibiting the spraying of pesticides to combat mosquitoes that may be infected with West Nile virus. The July 7, 2003 action follows a community forum organized by the Ohio Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides in which a panel of experts on mosquito management and health effects of pesticides discussed the hazards and the lack of efficacy associated with the spraying of adulticides, or pesticides used to spray adult mosquitoes. In adopting the groundbreaking ban, the City Council pointed to other mosquito management methods that are known and accepted to be more effective. The council stated, "There is substantial belief that the more effective way of controlling the mosquito population is by larvacide treatment and thorough education of the city's residents regarding methods and procedures to minimize exposure to the virus." In adopting the ordinance, the council found that, "The risk/benefit analysis conducted by experts clearly indicates that the dangers of WNV are minimal and affect a very small segment of the population and that the long-term health and

environmental risks of spraying with synthetic pesticides poses a much greater risk." Other communities, such as Ft. Worth, TX and Washington, DC, have adopted administrative programs that do not spray adulticides for West Nile virus. Beyond Pesticides believes that spraying adulticides does not appear to be an effective way to prevent death or illness associated with insect-borne West Nile virus.

Retailer of Pressure Treated Wood Distributes Misleading Information to Consumers

In June 2003, Beyond Pesticides obtained brochures containing false and misleading consumer information distributed by Home Depot to consumers of chromated copper arsenate (CCA) pressure treated wood. Along with the Consumer Information Sheets (CIS) that retailers supply as part of an agreement between the wood preserving industry and EPA, the home improvement superstore was also distributing a 'ProWood' brochure entitled 'Questions & Answers Concerning Pressure Treated Lumber,' a document apparently meant to contradict or downplay safety and precautionary information on the CIS. In a July 10, 2003

letter to EPA, Beyond Pesticides cited a number of false and misleading statements. As of publication, EPA has not responded. The statements include: *Use same care as with any wood...when sawing, wear safety glasses and a dust mask* [This statement refers to the CIS but then downplays the danger of the arsenic-laden sawdust]. *How Safe is CCA? Very Safe* [This statement suggests that CCA-treated wood could be used anywhere, also safety claims are a violation of the *Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA)*]. *Can Treated Wood be Used in Gardening? Yes... to construct raised vegetable and flower beds* [This assertion contradicts EPA's mandated warning not to use treated wood where the preservative may become a component of food]. *I've Heard That Children Shouldn't Play on Decks & Playground Equipment Made of Treated Wood? Relax. That's simply untrue. CCA treated wood is fully approved and widely used to build playground equipment* [The statement suggests that no precautions are needed, and might even induce people to build new playground equipment out of CCA]. In its letter to EPA, Beyond Pesticides calls for the agency to immediately contact ProWood and the other treated wood industry groups to advise them that this practice is unacceptable and in violation of its agreement. The letter also calls for an immediate enforcement investigation of this situation and for appropriate sanctions. In February 2002, EPA announced a voluntary agreement with the wood treatment industry that stops production of CCA-treated wood by December 31, 2003. Retailers can continue to sell off existing stocks without notifying consumers of the hazards and phaseout.

East Harlem Study Proves IPM Successful and Economical

Taming an urban cockroach infestation can be a tough job. Toxic pesticide treatments can be costly and usually knock down the population for only a few days. After all, can we really expect sprays to

wipe out colonies of the only creatures believed to be able to survive a nuclear winter? The only way we have a chance in this situation is a program that integrates prevention, source reduction, sanitation and control. A recent study by the Mount Sinai Children's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Research Center, in partnership with two East Harlem, New York City community health centers, reveals that an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program significantly decreases cockroach infestations and is cost-effective. The report, "Integrated Pest Management in an Urban Community – A Successful Partnership for Prevention," published July 2, 2003, appeared in the online edition of *Environmental Health Perspectives*. The study tracks a group of East Harlem families that received individually tailored IPM education, repairs, least-toxic pest control application and supplies, along with bi-weekly pest monitoring for four months. The results show that after six months the IPM households with cockroaches declined by 39 to 80.5 percent, while the control group's cockroach levels were unchanged. The researchers also concluded that the cost of the tailored IPM program is equal to or lower than conventional pesticide control methods, including taking into account the cost of structural repairs. *The report is available online at <http://ehpnet1.niehs.nih.gov/docs/2003/6069/abstract.html> or through *Beyond Pesticides for \$3 ppd.**

Pesticides Sprayed on Nearby Peanut Patch Blamed for 58 Cow Deaths

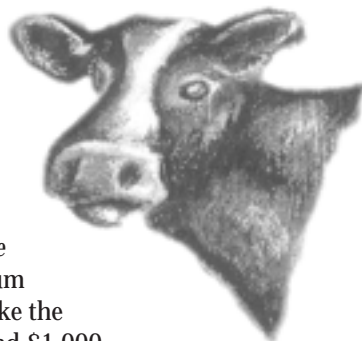
Authorities in Baldwin County, Alabama are blaming Temik, a restricted use insecticide product containing the active ingredient aldicarb, as the likely culprit in the death of 58 cows on a farm near Mobile on June 6, 2003. The case was not only the state's largest loss of livestock in several years but also unique because the cattle showed no signs of struggle. "These cattle died pretty much instantly," Dr.

Frazier told the *Mobile Register*. "Some of these animals looked like they died just where they lay." Initially state agricultural investigators suspected that an infectious disease, such as anthrax, had killed the cattle. This has been ruled out. Results of the tests reveal that the organophosphate insecticide was applied to a nearby peanut patch, also owned by the same farmer, where the dead cattle were found.

Dr. Frazier hypothesizes that the pesticides may have accumulated after recent heavy rains. "This is a horrible disaster for this farm family," Marla Faver, an agent with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System told the *Mobile Register*. "This is a large sum of money." Brood cows, like the ones that died, cost around \$1,000 each because they can produce calves. Organophosphate pesticides, one of the most acutely toxic classes of pesticides, affect the nervous system and are synergistic with other chemicals, including some pharmaceuticals. Aldicarb, identified as the cause of the poisonings, is very acutely toxic, but has only been banned in areas of the country where it has caused groundwater contamination.

Maine Legislators Vote to Ban Sale of Arsenic-Treated Wood, Expedites Federal Phase-Out

Could you imagine if the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that a certain model of car had failing breaks that contributed to thousands of car crashes, yet gave the manufacturer two years to stop selling the vehicle? Of course not! Most dangerous products, from cars to toys, are recalled immediately. Not so with pesticides. EPA typically allows "banned" pesticides to be used through a lengthy phase-out process. So when EPA announced that ar-



senic-laden pressure treated wood was being phased-out, but allowed production to continue for another two years and sales to continue indefinitely, Maine legislators took matters into their own hands. Despite the opposing force of the lumber and wood treatment industry, the Maine legislature passed a bill to expedite the federal phase-out of CCA-treated wood and set a stop sale date. The Maine law will prohibit the sale of all residential uses as outlined by EPA (such as decks and patios, picnic tables, playground equipment, walkways/boardwalks, landscaping timbers, and fencing) by April 1, 2004. Under the federal agreement, existing residential CCA-treated

wood and structures may continue to be sold and used, and could be stockpiled and sold for years to come, or even imported from overseas. In addition, the Maine law requires the Bureau of Health to develop an informational brochure for consumers on arsenic hazards from well water and treated wood, including the need to coat treated wood with a sealant on an annual basis to reduce arsenic exposure. Arsenic is a known human carcinogen with a plethora of acute effects including eye irritation, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, characteristic skin lesions, decreased production of red and white blood cells, abnormal heart function, blood vessel damage, liver and/or kidney damage, and impaired nerve function causing a "pins-and needles" feeling.

EPA Proposes Record Fines for Farmworker Protection Violations

On June 3, 2003, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced fines against David Petrocco Farms, Brighton, CO, for violations of the *Fed-*

eral Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) Worker Protection Standard (WPS), a regulation aimed at reducing the risk of pesticide poisonings and injuries among agricultural workers and pesticide handlers. EPA is proposing a civil penalty of \$231,990 for 229 violations, the largest proposed federal WPS misuse penalty in EPA history of the WPS and FIFRA. In 2001, David Petrocco Farms, which employs about 250 mostly seasonal workers, received a written warning notice from EPA documenting WPS violations that included a failure to display pesticide safety, emergency, and application information for its workers. In a follow-up inspection conducted in 2002, EPA inspectors found that the company still failed to post pesticide-specific application information about all the pesticides applied within the last 30 days in a central location, accessible to all of their workers. Specific pesticide application information is crucial in obtaining the best medical care in case of emergency. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that agricultural workers suffer from high rates of illness commonly correlated with chemical usage at a rate of tens of thousands of reported illnesses each year. Workers may be injured from direct spray, drift or residue left by pesticides, and handlers face additional risks from spills, splashes, inhalation or inadequate protective equipment. State agencies generally have primary jurisdiction for enforcing WPS misuse violations. EPA, however, has primary jurisdiction in Wyoming and partial primary jurisdiction in Colorado. EPA will also prosecute cases referred to it by the states.

Pesticides on Tap in American Cities

A debate has surfaced over whether it's better to drink bottled water or tap water. Bottled water might taste great, but the plastics might leach phthalates and bisphenol A, not to mention the pollution associated with plastic manufacture and shipping. So, is it safer to return to

your local tap water? The answer seems to depend on where you live. A new report by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), released June 2003, finds that the drinking water of many U.S. cities is contaminated with pesticides, arsenic, lead, fuels, and germs. According to the report, *What's On Tap? Grading Drinking Water in U.S. Cities*, residents of Chicago are drinking from the best municipal water supply in the country. But residents of Fresno, Phoenix, Boston, Baltimore, and Atlanta receive the lowest ratings of the 19 cities in the study. The report focuses on the effects of aging infrastructure and source water pollution, specifically attacking the Bush administration's rollbacks of water quality regulations as a major cause of urban water woes. NRDC warns legislators that if swift action to protect America's water is not taken, the situation could worsen rapidly. The report presents NRDC's assessment of three problem areas: water quality and compliance, source water protection, and right-to-know compliance. It concludes that the proposed efforts of the Bush administration to rewrite the *Clean Water Act* (CWA) would severely reduce the Act's regulatory power, threatening watersheds, streams, wetlands, and drinking water sources with unprecedented levels of contamination and toxicity. NRDC notes that certain harmful contaminants reoccur in multiple systems: lead (entering drinking water due to pipe corrosion), chlorination by-products that may cause cancer (such as haloacetic acids), and atrazine (an endocrine disruptor and cancer-causing pesticide). Other notable contaminants found in American drinking water include rocket fuel, arsenic, and *Cryptosporidium*, a disease-carrying bacterium. The full report is available at www.nrdc.org/water/drinking or by calling NRDC at 212-727-2700.

Mosquito-Hungry Crustaceans Could Serve as Alternative Mosquito Control

Researchers at the University of Florida have announced success in using microscopic crustaceans called copepods, which love to eat mosquito larvae, to manage mosquitoes without using pesticides. Jorge Rey, PhD, a professor of entomology with the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, believes that copepods may be the

most successful biological control for mosquitoes, eating up to 90% of the larvae and the ability to survive at or near freezing temperatures for extended periods of time. "We're using a

native organism to control mosquitoes when they breed in standing water, usually in ponds, tires and other open containers," said Dr. Rey. "By adding copepods to the water, we can kill mosquito larvae before they become adults that may spread West Nile and other diseases." The copepod species Dr. Rey is testing, *Macrocyclus albidus*, is very aggressive toward its prey. In fact, the copepods will kill the mosquito larvae even when they are not looking for a meal. "They will attack the larvae and maim it so it's not going to live and then drop it," he said. "We don't know why they behave this way – it might be a reflex action or they're just being mean." The copepod is native to Florida and common throughout the world and poses no danger to people, animals or plants. However, they don't exist in every body of water and therefore would have to be introduced in order to be effective on a wide scale.





Oppression and Farmworker Health in a Global Economy

A call to action for liberty, freedom and justice

By Baldemar Velasquez

Baldemar Velasquez, human rights activist and founder and president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) AFL-CIO, headquartered in Toledo, Ohio, was born in Pharr, Texas in 1947. His parents were migrant farmworkers, and he began working in the fields at age six, picking berries and tomatoes. He formed FLOC in 1967. In 1983, Mr. Velasquez led a historic 600-mile march of 100 farmworkers from FLOC headquarters in Toledo to Campbell's Soup Company headquarters in Camden, New Jersey. Three years later, the migrant workers, growers and Campbell's announced a three-way pact in which the growers agreed to give farmworkers limited medical insurance, a paid holiday and a wage increase. It was the first three-way pact in labor history.

What follows are excerpts of a talk and singing by Mr. Velasquez at Beyond Pesticides' 21st National Pesticide Forum, Toxics in the Age of Globalization, Austin, Texas, April 26, 2003.

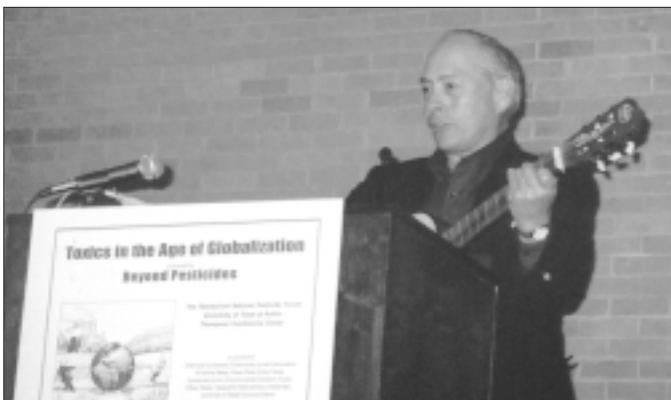
Organizers have to get the word out anyway they can. We talk, we sing, we stand on our heads – whatever it takes. I appreciate the invitation to be here today. I really respect Beyond Pesticides and all the brothers and sisters that work with this group to educate the public about this very serious issue. I want to focus this morning on the broader picture.

Certainly the environmental issues that farmworkers face are not limited to the exposure to dangerous pesticides. Generally, the working conditions of farmworkers are a national disgrace. It is not only disgraceful, but it is shameful for the richest country in the world to continue to ignore and neglect some of the hardest working people in America.

NAFTA & immigrant farmworkers

Traditional Mexican workers who have migrated from Texas, Florida and other places to the west coast, midwest and the east coast to harvest vegetables, are being joined now by a huge wave of immigrant workers from Mexico and Central America who are invading the U.S. This is no surprise considering our trade policies and our economic policies with our neighbors south of our border. We have now the flushing out of the truth that is coming to bear.

When they negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico, just about every Mexican group was in favor of it. I remember sitting in on some meetings with the various unions of the U.S. and Mexico that were arguing about NAFTA. Everybody and their mother in Mexico was for this trade agreement, because they all thought it would attract American dollars and create more businesses and more jobs. Some



Baldemar Velasquez sings farmworker labor songs at the 21st National Pesticide Forum.

(To the melody of "Crying My Heart Out Over You")

*Off somewhere the picket lines not far away
As you left me all alone the other day
I was blind I could not see, that you meant the world to me
And like a fool I stood and watched you go*

*Now I'm crying my heart out over you
As you pick tomatoes for somebody new
Ever since you went away, I die a little more each day
Yes I'm cryin' my heart out over you*

*Well each day I walk out to my lonely fields
And I swear I hear your voice around me still
I miss the sweat of your children's back, with no money in my bank
While I'm cryin' my heart out over you*

*Yes I'm cryin' my heart out over you
As you pick tomatoes for somebody new
Ever since you went away, my profits drop some more each day
While I'm cryin' my heart out over you
Yes, I'm cryin' my heart out over you*

We were singing songs like that the whole way to Camden, NJ. But we decided that all of our English-speaking friends are coming to our rallies every night, so we need to make up a song for our English-speaking friends about the cause. We thought, "Who among the Anglos needs to learn the most about our cause?" We figured it had to be the rednecks. So we turned on the country and western stations, and we picked a love song because the farmers are always talking about how much they love their workers. There happened to be this real popular hillbilly song on the radio those days by this singer named Ricky Skaggs. So we took his song and sort of changed the words around to be about a group of farmworkers who left their farmer to go on strike. So this is the farmer in misery, commiserating with the public about his plight about his workers who have left him to go on strike.

of the biggest supporters of that legislation were the Mexican peasants, the small farmers of Mexico, who thought they were going to export their products without tariffs at the border.

But now the chicken is coming home to roost, so to speak. Now the Mexican farmworkers are turning around, because the trade agreement has devastated the countryside in Mexico. It has devastated the coffee industry, the corn industry, because Mexican farmers cannot compete with subsidized agriculture. So now the Mexican peasants are calling for a repeal and a renegotiation of that trade agreement. And this is true of some of the most conservative organizations in Mexico, like the Confederacion de Nacional Campesina (CNC) that has millions of members. Even they are turning against these agreements. They are beginning to see the immediate suffering that is being imposed upon the people because of our trade policies.

What's happening to those workers? They have to go somewhere to make a living. So they're coming to the U.S., anywhere they can. They're going to the urban areas of Mexico. They inundate the cities, saturate the job market, and there's an economic shift northward to wherever they can find jobs.

The declining U.S. workforce

In America, we have a declining worker population. Even all of our statistical geniuses in Washington are indicating that in the next 15 years we are going to need an additional five million workers, which our population will not generate. In other words, we're going to need a workforce, and we don't have any people being born in the U.S. to grow up to be workers to fill the job market. So we're going to need these workers. America needs these immigrant workers.

Right now, the workers who are coming north have completely changed the demographic of the population in the deep south of the U.S. In North Carolina alone, where we are doing our Mt. Olive Campaign,¹ NC officials indicate there are at least 400,000 immigrant workers, mostly from Mexico, some from Guatemala and Central American countries, in four basic industries: agriculture, poultry, landscaping and construction. Over 100,000 of those are required just for agriculture. And they are all undocumented workers, with the exception of 10,000-11,000 authorized foreign (H2A) workers under the U.S. Department of Labor program.²

But whether you come as an illegal worker or under the H2A program, which North Carolina is the biggest user of in the country, it's a way for industry to attract a cheap exploitable workforce. Other workers, African American and white workers have left those jobs and gone onto better pastures, so to speak. There is no one in the workforce to fill this void, so this immigrant worker population is filling it. You may have heard about the slavery cases of south Florida.³ What is happening there is endemic of what's happening all over the deep south.

We organize a lot of immigrant workers in NC. We have signed up a couple thousand in three weeks. I've asked them their work history and what they've done in the last 16 months, and how they got to the U.S. Invariably, they work in a job that has high turnover in any one of the four basic industries. They fear exposure and getting caught. So when the going gets hot,



FLOC members and supporters rally in Mt. Olive, North Carolina, May 2003.

they don't leave the area, they just move over to another job. Now you are beginning to see them in housekeeping, in the hotel industry, restaurants, all over the place. In the previous 12-16 months, a worker that is currently in agriculture, may have worked in construction and poultry.

The plight of farmworkers

Agriculture is a good hiding place. It is in remote and rural areas, and they are not as exposed as they are in urban areas working construction or something like that. To get here, most of them pay a smuggler or a recruiter from the H2A program. H2A employees do not follow the law the way the program is supposed to run. The recruiter is supposed to pay the workers' visa expenses, travel expenses, food expenses and so on. They don't do any of that. They make the worker cough that money up, and sometimes an additional fee (\$600-3000 per worker, similar to the smuggler's fee) for the "privilege" of being recruited to come work under that program.

Now, you're almost better off coming as an undocumented worker, because if you come under the H2A program, the recruiters know where you are, where you live, where your family lives. If you owe them money, then you're subject to retaliation. You become an indentured servant to these recruiters. The recruiters and the smugglers shepherd them along the way and they get them in the worksite, and supervise them to make sure they are working and their money is getting paid back. So it becomes the old company store routine where you never get

out of debt. This is similar to what happened to the cases that were exposed in south Florida. Only in that situation they made an issue of two or three cases, when the same case could be made for thousands and thousands of immigrant workers throughout the deep south.

The challenge of organizing those without rights

These are the kind of workers that is our challenge to organize in North Carolina. You're talking about organizing a group of workers that have no rights, are invisible, and they fear exposure. So this is an even more difficult task than organizing traditional workers on the job site. The mobility and fluidity of the workforce

makes the effort very difficult. But nothing is impossible. If you work hard enough, and if you do the right thing long enough, good things are going to happen.

People go into these issues thinking, 'well here is our timetable for this, here is our budget for this.' You can't run movements like corporations. It's not about winning or losing. That's not what it is about. It's about doing the right thing. And you do the right thing as long as you are alive.

I ask people, "Who are you?" I mean one of the big problems in our society is the issue of identity— who we are individually, as a people and as a community. We keep redefining ourselves because things change. Certainly in this age

of globalization we need to ask ourselves who we are and who is our community. We have to redefine our community. A community of farmworkers is no longer just a group that came from far Texas to work in Michigan or Ohio or around a particular farm. Now we're being inundated with all of these workers from all of these Indian villages in Mexico. This expanded group of people is our new community, because we all work for the same rich people, the same employers in many cases.

The same companies that harvest tomatoes in Florida harvest tomatoes in Mexico. You go to Mexico's Sinaloa Valley and a lot of those packing sheds filled with onions, cucumbers and tomatoes that they bring to the U.S. have American owners. Instead of growing

tomatoes in the U.S., owners have operations in Mexico. The same goes for a lot of other products.

In the case of North Carolina, they don't have to import the pickles from Mexico. They bring the workers and exploit

**The real economic enemy
is not the farmer, but it's
the corporation that
designed the whole
economic system to take
advantage of [farmworkers
and farmers].**

I Ask People, Who Are You?

Define who you are. Are you a freedom-loving person? Do you believe in ideals? I don't care whether it's for reasons of ideology or reasons of religion that you support a particular cause. When you define yourself, you say this is who I am. This is what I represent. This is what I believe. This is what I profess. Well then, you have to be that person. You have to be that word made flesh in the world. You need to walk it and talk it. If you believe in freedom, then you're walking, talking freedom. If you say you believe in liberty, then you're walking, talking liberty, all of the time. You're not walking, talking liberty as long as you're winning or as long as you're losing. You're walking, talking liberty no matter what is happening in the world. That is the light that you shine upon the darkness wherever you work, wherever you travel, and whoever you meet with. That's who you are.

When I see you, I don't see Allen Spalt.⁴ I see liberty and freedom and justice sitting there in front of me. And he better talk it all the time, because I'm going to remind him. You see, it's not about winning or losing. It's about doing the right thing all of the time. If you do the right thing long enough, then good things will happen – like contracts, agreements, breakthroughs. Those are the fruits of your labor. Those are the consequences of your actions. You don't need to give up hope. You don't need to give up anything.

them here. Everybody and their mother knows that these workers are undocumented. You can't take Miztecos walking the streets of Clinton, NC and mistake who they are. People look the other way. All the sheriffs departments, town cops, judges, county commissioners— everybody who is anybody— knows they are breaking the law, but they look the other way because it's a convenient thing to do and it accommodates their economic system.

Mr. Tom Ridge, Secretary of Homeland Security, is clamping down on all immigrants. They came out with a ruling a few days ago that immigrants can be held without bond indefinitely. Sure it's focused on Middle Eastern people, but anyone who is doing anything, including speak up for their rights, is subject to that treatment because it's allowable under the law now. So we have additional obstacles to overcome to organize these people for one simple thing: the ability to redress their grievances. Now, isn't that an American principle? Isn't that what we say we're supposed to be fighting for over in Iraq? Freedom?

So we have to convince Mr. Ridge, and I don't know how we're going to do this, but we have to think of a way to win him over to our side. If not by pressure, then by convincing

him that there are good reasons why undocumented workers should be legalized with a legalization program set in place in our country so that people that live in our communities have rights.

The first argument that we give Mr. Ridge and President Bush for legalization of all these undocumented workers, so that they can then stand up for themselves and have some ability to redress their grievances, is for homeland security itself. If you want to govern a people, make them do some things and not do some things, first of all you need to know who they are, where they work, where they're coming and where they're going. When you have eight or nine million people in this country that are undocumented and you don't know these things, how are you going to govern them? Plus, you're supporting a whole black market economic system that maintains the whole undocumented worker population with specialists in making phony IDs and ways to smuggle people. You're helping the real criminals do what they do best. But if you legalize the workers, you put them out of business. So, we tell Mr. Ridge and President Bush that in the name of homeland security they ought to legalize all of these Mexicans, Guatemalans, and everybody else who is in our country. Plus, if our great moral President wants to get argumentative about it, let's go and be moral about it.

Walking, talking freedom

I'm also a preacher. The scriptures, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, talk about God watching over three groups of people – the orphans, the widows and the aliens. In the book of Exodus, the book of Leviticus, the book of Numbers and the prophets – we won't even go to the New Testament, Jesus sort of blows everybody out of the water – says we need to treat the aliens in our midst like one of our native born. In the book of Exodus the warning is even more severe. It says don't do any wrong to these people or I will run you through with my sword and make widows and orphans of your children.

So I tell my Christian friends, if you are a follower of Jesus, you do what Jesus said. You do it all of the time, not just some of the time. And when you get tired, are you not going to believe in freedom anymore? If Mt. Olive is too big of a corporation and they fight too hard, are you going to give up? Are you not going to believe in liberty and justice for all? If you're an American and you say these are the ideals that we hold dear in our society, then you need to be walking, talking freedom, liberty and justice for all, all of the time.

Joining with farmers against corporations

Let me address one issue to all of my friends in the family farm movement, the guys that Willie Nelson sings for all the time. From North Carolina to Ohio to Michigan to Indiana, it's those small family farmers that oppress the farmworker.



Supporters of the Mt. Olive boycott march in Mt. Olive, North Carolina, May 2003.

These are the guys whose farms I came to work on as a little kid. They would steal from us, and they would rob us. They were diversified, not only tomatoes and cucumbers, but also sugar beets, corn, wheat and soybeans. I would help many of them bail hay and feed their cows, pigs and horses. These are the small family farmers. But the small family farmer in our neck of the woods has been set into a system where corporations exploit farmers, who in turn exploit farmworkers. Everybody exploits everybody else. We found this a very difficult issue to deal with when we first started organizing, because the anger that we had was sometimes a hatred against that white guy that sat on the tractor and oversaw our work day in and day out.

So we have to reconcile this situation. After beating our heads against the wall on this issue, we would go to the farmer and say we need to improve working conditions and clean up the fields. They would say, well there's only so much we can do. Campbell's Soup Company or H.J. Heinz Company only gives a certain price for tomatoes, \$35 per ton. \$12-14 goes to the worker. Once you pay for the depreciation of the machinery, fertilizer, gasoline and all the other expenses to put that crop in the field, you're talking about a return that's marginal from that price of tomatoes. The farmers told us if we could get more from the companies, then they could do better. When we go to the company, their famous argument, the one we got from Campbell's Soup, Mt. Olive Pickle Company and all these huge corporations, is, "We're not the employer. Go argue with the employer."

Then it dawned on me. It reminded me of when my mom threw bones to the dogs and they fought over the bones. This is what they wanted us to do with the farmer. They

wanted to throw some bones and let the farmer and the farmworker fight each other for that piece of the bone. So I said to myself, this is not going to work. We need to convince the workers that the real economic enemy is not the farmer, but it's the corporation that designed the whole economic system to take advantage of both of us.

We started what many people thought was a crazy campaign that we were never going to win. I sat in the main offices of the AFL-CIO in Washington in 1984 with the number two leader of the AFL-CIO and told him what we were trying to do. I said we are going to demand that Campbell's Soup, all of their growers, suppliers and the farmworkers sit at one table and negotiate one agreement. The guy said it would never happen. Campbell's will never negotiate with a group of work-

ers that are not their employees. And they're telling us the same thing about the Mt. Olive Pickle Company. Mt. Olive is saying, we're not the employer, why are they picking on us? We're not breaking any laws.

Well they can argue all they want and hide behind the fact that they're not the employer, but they are the designers of this procurement system. I mean, you're not going to make pickles with tomatoes, tobacco or sweet potatoes. You've got to get cucumbers. So they create a system to procure these cucumbers. Like Campbell's Soup, like Heinz, like Vlassic Pickle, like all these huge corporations, they source their produce all over the world, not just in the U.S. Mt. Olive, for instance, buys their cucumbers in Mexico, Honduras, India, Sri Lanka and Spain. It's a global procurement system.

How are a group of farmworkers who have no power, no political leverage, no money, nothing supposed to respond to this? Well, is it too much to say that we can be walking, talking freedom, liberty and justice also? That is not just for some white folks to have dominion over us? No, that is for us too.

The gospel through the windows of a migrant labor shack

I was going to tell the speaker last night, don't give up on the right-wing evangelicals, there is a lot of basis for them to be on our side. We can win them over to our side. You just have to speak to them in the language that they understand. There are a lot of reasons why they should be on our side. Certainly, God's word says they should be on our side. I figured this out when I decided that Campbell's Soup is not a monolithic institution that cannot be convinced to do something that they

**If you do the right thing
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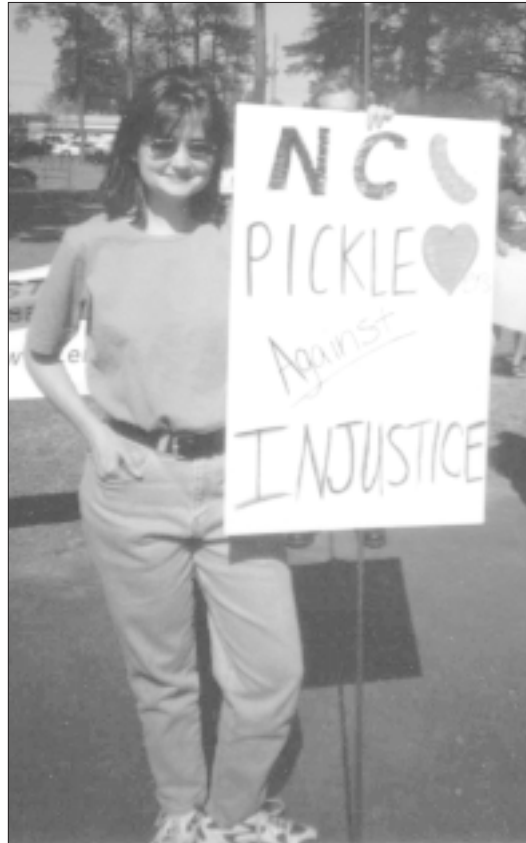
otherwise would not want to do. You just have to find out where their weakness is to tell everybody to get them to do what you want them to do. It's the same thing with the right wing, even the political right wing in this country. There are all kinds of reasons in the world why they ought to be on our side. So don't give up on them.

Some of our biggest supporters in Toledo, OH are high school students who are children of what most people would consider right wing evangelicals. I send my kids to this Christian school, because I believe that these rich, white kids from the suburbs ought to have contact with Mexicans and Blacks and other people. So I send my children to the school. Then, I wondered. This God that I hear the televangelists talking about, who does this God belong to? He doesn't just belong to them. God belongs to me too. God's got the right to speak through me. If he can speak through a donkey and a jackass in the Bible, then he can speak through me. So, I decided, I'm going to tell the world what the Gospel looks like through the windows of a migrant labor shack. And I did.

They made the decision at this school to invite me to speak at one of their first attempts at a diversity assembly for the entire high school and junior high. What a great opportunity. So I told these kids what the scripture says about the orphans, the widows and the aliens. I told them the story of Remundo Hernandez.

Remundo Hernandez was one of these H2A workers that came to work in NC. The heat and the pesticides that had recently been sprayed in a tobacco field overcame him. According to a co-worker, he became nauseous and disoriented and was vomiting blood. The farmer came to the fields after the workers stopped working. The workers had to load up Remundo into the farmer's truck because he couldn't even find the door handle to the pickup. They loaded him in the truck and the farmer drove off with him and after that they had no word from him. He disappeared.

According to one account of this from an interview with the farmer, sometime later the farmer came out of the front



door of his house to see what his dog was barking about. The dog was barking about a human skull under a pecan tree in his front yard. The cops came, gathered the remains and took them to the morgue.

The co-workers of Remundo kept looking for him, and came across a Catholic seminarian in Clinton who had been working with the workers and remembered the remains. He took them to the morgue to examine the clothing and sandals and they recognized them as Remundo's clothing and sandals. There was not enough flesh on the bones to do an autopsy, no vital organs because the field animals had eaten away most of it. That incident happened in 1995. I started telling the story in 1999. I found out who the widow was and where she lived. She lived in this little Indian village in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. I found out she was destitute. He left four children, the oldest of which was 16 at the time.

So I said to these high school kids, would you help me do something for Remundo, his widow and these children? If you do something for these people, you're doing something for the three groups of people that God watches over jealously. How many of you are willing to do that? Everybody in that auditorium raised their hands. So I'm going to ask you to do three things, I told them.

One, you're privileged to eat three meals today. Now

your parents and churches teach you about fasting and praying. I want you to fast and pray for this family for your lunch hour period. And the money you would have spent for your lunch, give to the administrator of the school for a fund for this widow. How many of you are willing to do that? Everybody raised their hand. They raised \$1,000 in one lunch hour period.

The second thing I'm going to ask you to do is go to your parents and your churches, and get air transportation, ground transportation, hotel and food money and come with me to deliver this money to the widow. Eight students answered the call. You have to remember these kids are from pretty conservative families, but when they saw the poverty that

God's got the right to speak through me.

If he can speak through a donkey and a jackass in the Bible, then he can speak

through me. So, I decided, I'm going to tell

the world what the Gospel looks like through

the windows of a migrant labor shack.



The family of deceased farmworker Rebano Ramirez, including his widow and five children.

made Remundo take these tremendous risks, they were appalled. These kids from the suburbs of Toledo, OH, who had everything handed to them since the day they were born, go to this Indian village to see this hut made of sticks, with a thatch roof, dirt floor and a rock grill for a stove. The family made tortillas and fed us some frijoles and tortillas for lunch that day. It grabbed these kids' hearts and they came back and told the story.

I asked these kids to do a third thing. I said, "Help me avoid these tragedies by helping me boycott the Mt. Olive Pickle Company, one of the systemic creators of this situation in North Carolina. If we boycott that product and convince them to negotiate an agreement so that these deaths are not happening, then you are doing the right thing and doing the right thing for these orphans, these widows and these aliens. How many of you are willing to stand up with me in front of a Kroger's store on a Thursday, a school day, after getting permission from your parents, to tell people not to buy Mt. Olive pickles?" Over 200 kids came out of that school to join me in that demonstration to initiate the Mt. Olive boycott.

The leaders of the labor movement couldn't believe it. They said, "How did you get the children of these right-wing evangelicals to do a labor demonstration?" I told them the truth and the truth set them free. They are walking, talking freedom. They are walking, talking justice. They are walking, talking liberty. To this day, those kids are some of our biggest supporters. We just had a demonstration in Toledo, March 26, 2003. We had almost 600 people and more than half of them high school students from the Christian, Catholic and public schools.

Again, just the summer before last, we had the case of Rebano Ramirez. Rebano was a worker who was smuggled to come work in the fields of North Carolina. Rebano was overcome by heatstroke. He had all the symptoms, nausea, disorientation and nosebleeds. Farmworkers are regularly denied medical help almost anytime they complain about anything. They just get accused of having a hangover and are told to sit under a tree. That's what they told Rebano, to sit under a tree

– that was his medical help.

When the boss loaded up that evening to go back to the labor camp, he wasn't under that tree, so the boss left without him. His co-workers kept walking back to the field looking for him. This is what they found two weeks later. [He shows the police photographs of a decomposing body.] This is Rebano Ramirez. It took our lawyers six months to get these photos from the cops.

Rebano left a widow and five children, the oldest of which was nine years old. I went to see her too. The school kids raised money for that widow also. We had the Department of Labor do an investigation. It turns out that they weren't even giving these workers water on that hot, humid day. They were selling them

beer. The penalty, the punishment? \$1,800 for violating the federal field sanitation standards. That's it.

We wrote a letter to the editor of the *Charlotte Observer* to expose this tragedy. The editor tells our guy in Toledo that he's not going to print the letter. They ask him why, and he

**Farmworkers are regularly denied
medical help almost anytime they
complain about anything. They just get
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are told to sit under a tree.**

says because the farmer is named and it might ruin the man's reputation. We're dealing with a seared conscience in that part of the U.S. toward a group of workers who they feel either aren't human or pretend don't exist, that they can do anything they want to.

Liberty, freedom & justice for all

So you can talk all you want to about liberty, freedom and justice. But until we make it real for the people right under our own feet, right in our own backyards, how are we going to demonstrate for the world that we are serious about liberty, freedom and justice for all? So you see, it's a burden upon all of the people of this country who have even an inkling of these principles to extend this to all of those who are in our communities, to give them respect, to give them recognition as human beings, as workers, as good living people who want to feed and cloth themselves and their families. We're not asking for much, just for the right to live.

We tell people that we're boycotting the Mt. Olive Pickle Company, and people say it's not going to happen. Mt. Olive hides behind this structure of procurement. They're not the employer of farmworkers, they're not violating any laws, and they have received rewards for how they treat their factory workers. That's fine. It's not the issue. The issue is this group of farmworkers that America is ignoring.

Not we've gone around and around about farmworkers for many years. And somewhere, sometime, America has got to wake up and say we cannot allow this to happen in our own country. You're talking a million and a half farmworkers in this country, who have not achieved that liberty, justice and freedom. I know, I am convinced, that everybody – whether you're right-wing or left-wing – should be on the right side of this issue. And if we can keep after them long enough, we can convince them to be on our side.

So I leave you with this challenge. Define yourself. If you feel that you believe in freedom, liberty and justice for all, whatever your philosophy, whether you are left or right, you've got to believe in these principles. Then be those principles. That's my message to you today. And that's why you're struggle is not going to stop after you win this particular fight with this pesticide company or with this rulemaking. It doesn't stop there, because the world certainly is going to continue to gobble everybody up, like they're doing in these trade agreements all over the world.

People are preoccupied with making more money for themselves. The accumulation of wealth without a conscience must be stopped. It is contrary to those philosophies of equality, freedom, liberty and justice for everybody. I don't care how much money you make. I'm not going to tell you that you can't be a millionaire. But I'm telling you, if you make one penny off of the Remundo Hernandez's and Reban Ramirezs of the world, then I'm going to be in your face. Because I believe in freedom. I believe in liberty. And I believe in justice. And that's why you have to be in the face of everybody that does those things, and hold their feet to the fire, and hold them accountable for those tragedies and those atrocities that they impose upon other people. Because that's who I am as an American.

The day that I was proud to be an American was the day I went to Remundo Hernandez's widow and Reban Ramirezs widow and said I am here to extend liberty and freedom and justice to you and your family. I'm going to make sure that justice is done for your family in the U.S., because I am an American and I believe that for everybody, not just somebody.



FLOC staff and members pose for a photo after a day of advocacy work in Washington, DC.

**The accumulation of wealth without
a conscience must be stopped. It is
contrary to those philosophies of
equality, freedom, liberty and
justice for everybody.**

Baldemar Velasquez, President of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), can be reached at 1221 Broadway, Toledo, OH 43609, 419-243-3456, info@floc.com, www.floc.com. To purchase a copy of Canciones Por La Causa (Songs for the Cause), a CD of farmworker labor songs by Baldemar Velasquez and the Aguila Negra Band, send \$12 to Beyond Pesticides.

Endnotes

- 1 In 1999, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) called a boycott against the Mt. Olive Pickle Company after it refused to negotiate contracts with thousands of workers who chose to be represented by FLOC. The Mt. Olive Pickle Co., headed by CEO Bill Bryan, has taken a strongly anti-union stance and refuses to recognize the voice of the farmworkers. FLOC points out it is farmworkers whose labor not only feeds people, but helps the Mt. Olive Pickle Company reap millions in profits, which come at the expense of workers who are denied the right to organize, live in overcrowded and run-down housing, and often not even provided water in the fields.
- 2 Each year, the U.S.' H2A guest worker program allows qualifying U.S. farmers and agricultural companies to recruit and hire foreign citizens to work on their farms as seasonal laborers. H2A is a provision of the *Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986*, which amends the *Immigration and Nationality Act*. H2A workers can only work for the employer that hired them under the H2A guest worker program. If H2A workers are subjected to unacceptable working conditions, they can't quit and then go to work for someone else. They can't form a union. They can be fired for any reason whatsoever. They can't vote. They can either put up with anything their boss demands of them, or be deported.
- 3 One case involved citrus farmer Michael Allen Lee, who recruited homeless people to work in his fields with promises of good wages. However, instead of the usual \$35 to \$50 a day, Lee's workers were rarely paid more than \$10 a day, despite working from dawn to dusk. Mr. Lee was convicted after prosecution officials made use of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which ended slavery. In 1999, a total of ten people were convicted for using slavery in two separate cases.
- 4 Allen Spalt is a Beyond Pesticides board member from Carrboro, NC that happened to be sitting in the front row during Mr. Velasquez's talk.

Mt. Olive Pickle Company Boycott



FLOC demonstration urges consumers to boycott Mt. Olive Pickle Company outside of a North Carolina grocery store.

The Mt. Olive Pickle Company Boycott is being organized by FLOC, 1221 Broadway, Toledo, OH 43609, 419-243-3456. For more information on the boycott, see www.floc.com.

The Mt. Olive Pickle Company is a premier packer and a powerful, persuasive force in pickle processing. Its familiar jars of pickles, relishes, and peppers look and taste good – but the label only tells you what’s inside the jar. It says nothing about the workers who harvest the pickles. It’s time you heard about the sweatshop conditions on the eastern North Carolina farms that grow Mt. Olive pickles.

As a harvester of the cucumbers that become Mt. Olive Pickles, you get roughly 65 cents per 33 pound bucket (averaging 6 buckets an hour). Your crew chief often pays in cash without a pay-stub, making it easy to cheat you. You sleep in housing packed with many more workers than humanely fit. Your workplace seldom has a toilet close or clean enough to use or soap to wash your hands. If you’re injured or sick, you rarely find a first aid kit or someone to take you to the doctor. Your crew often shares the same filthy water jug without any cups, if water is provided at all.

Though the company makes millions each year from selling its pickles, Mt. Olive refuses to give the workers who harvest its pickles a voice in contract negotiations. Only an agreement between the company, the farmers, and farmworkers will create a process by which problems can be resolved openly and workers can get their fair share without overburdening already struggling farmers.

What you can do

- 1 Get organized. Form a support committee in your area or work with one that already exists.
- 2 Get your church, union, community group, Girl Scout troop, Elks Lodge, political party, bowling league, or bridge club to endorse the Mt. Olive Pickle Co. boycott by signing a resolution form (available by calling FLOC’s NC office at 919-489-4485).
- 3 Publicize those endorsements.
- 4 Send FLOC scouting reports of where you see Mt. Olive Co. pickles sold-what states and in what stores.
- 5 Picket lines at food stores that carry Mt. Olive Co. products. These include national chains like Kroger Co. stores. In the south, the “house brand” pickles for Food Lion and Harris-Teeter stores are packed by Mt. Olive Pickle Co.
- 6 Write letters to the editor.
- 7 Publicize your activities through the press, church and union newsletters, etc.
- 8 Hand out literature at community events.
- 9 Speak to any organization that will listen; get them to endorse boycott.
- 10 Send a letter to Bill Bryan, Mt. Olive Co. CEO-today. His address is: POB 609 Mt. Olive, NC 28365. Or email him at bbryan@mtolivepickles.com. Or give him a call at 800-672-5041.

Voices for Pesticide Reform

The stories of those who have been harmed by pesticides

By Meghan Taylor

Pesticides invade practically every aspect of our lives, from chemical-dependent farms to the wooden decks in our backyards. Pesticides are applied to the foods we eat, the schools our children attend, our offices, our public parks, and in our own homes and lawns. Many of us witnessed the spraying of toxic insecticides into our own communities this summer, pluming off the back of mosquito control trucks. Other trucks amble down our streets spraying herbicides targeting weeds. Such widespread chemical use exposes a broad array of people to an equally broad array of toxics. The result is that homeowners, teachers, children, landscapers, farmers, farm workers – almost anybody – are liable to suffer the health effects from exposure to a dangerous mix of chemicals.

The toxic body burden

As more chemicals are introduced into our lives, we carry the burden in our bodies, making us more susceptible to new exposures. This “body burden” was recently reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) when it released the *Second National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals*¹ (which detected a total of 89 chemicals in the volunteers tested, including selected organophosphate pesticides, herbicides, pest repellents and disinfectants. The Environmental Working Group (EWG), in partnership with Mt. Sinai School of Community Medicine and Commonweal, released a similar study, *Body Burden: The Pollution In People*², in which subjects contained an average of 91 compounds, most of which did not exist 75 years ago. Unfortunately, testing for health effects of these chemical mixtures to which we are continually exposed is practically non-existent.

Pesticide poisoning

In today's society, there are people who cope with exposure to a massive single dose of a pesticide and the resulting health

effects, as well as those who deal with the more mysterious synergistic effects of low-level exposure to many chemicals over a long period of time. In both cases, many victims experience the health effects of toxic exposures without knowing the source of their suffering. They assume the chemicals present in their lives are safe – after all, how could the government allow to be marketed a product that is not safe? However, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registration of a pesticide does not guarantee its safety. In fact, according to the 1986

U.S. General Accounting Office report, *Nonagricultural Pesticides: Risks and Regulations*,

“EPA believes that no pesticide can be considered ‘safe.’” They are registered with a risk assessment review that defines acceptable degrees of risk with high uncertainty factors. For many chemicals, there is a serious lack of toxicity data. Furthermore, most pesticide products contain so-called “inert” ingredients that have not been adequately tested to address the public's health concerns. Despite

these alarming factors, toxic pesticides continue to be used every day. To make matters worse, as more people suffer, most health care providers receive just minimal training in environmental illness and cannot provide adequate care to pesticide exposure victims.

There are various symptoms a person may exhibit as a result of a pesticide poisoning. A common consequence

of poisoning is multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS), in which a person's body is no longer able to handle the onslaught of chemicals that exist in daily life because of impairment to their nervous and immune system. A person with MCS has to make drastic life changes to steer clear of the ubiquitous chemical nature of our society, avoiding what is commonplace for most of us. In addition to sensitivity, pesticides can trigger a number of other symptoms, including nausea, dizziness, headaches, diarrhea, aching joints, disorientation and inability to concentrate. Chronic pesticide exposure can affect fertility, development, and the onset of breast and prostate cancer, thyroid disorders, endocrine system disruption, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, neurological injury, and kidney and liver damage.



**Many victims experience
the health effects of toxic
exposures without knowing the
source of their suffering.**

Pesticide incident monitoring

Considering the serious health risks that pesticides pose, it is logical that a monitoring system should be put in place to track their effects. This would be a valuable tool not only to identify needed changes in pesticide policy, but also to educate the public on the adverse effects of pesticides. However, ever since it shut down the Pesticide Incident Monitoring System in 1981, the federal government has no such system to record incidents of exposure. Presently, EPA relies on industry reporting of adverse effects from pesticides, a system that has been criticized as inadequate.

In response to this lack of adequate monitoring, Beyond Pesticides embarked on a campaign to collect and document pesticide poisoning cases. Over the years, countless stories have been recorded from pesticide victims throughout the country. These courageous voices, speaking out against the pervasive use of toxic chemicals in our country, are a strong foundation in Beyond Pesticides' campaign for pesticide reform. In 1996, Beyond Pesticides released the stories of a multitude of these victims in the report *Voices for Pesticide Reform: The Case for Safe Practices and Sound Policy*, which reviewed pesticide poisonings collected from the 1970s to the 1990s in order to explain the human health and environmental effects of daily and common pesticide use. Since then, a whole host of pesticide poisoning victims have stepped forward and shared their story with Beyond Pesticides. Currently, Beyond Pesticides is creating a follow-up to *Voices for Pesticide Reform*, so as to expose the public health threat that continues to pervade American life. Cases of pesticide exposures in various realms – agriculture, school, home and garden, community and pressure-treated wood – will all be recounted. Following are just some of these documented reports that will be released.

Termite treatment sickens family and home

Loretta Hanes' life was changed forever after, she reports, Orkin treated her Washington, DC home for termites in 1998. To this day, she is unable to re-enter the home that she still owns, due to the high level of contamination there. Orkin treated her home with permethrin, which, like all other synthetic pyrethroids, is a central nervous system poison. Research on the chemical has shown adverse effects on the immune system, enlarged livers, decreased female fertility and endocrine disruption. Elevated levels of this poison in a home are simply unacceptable, yet that was the state of Loretta's home after the Orkin treatment she describes, and it is still in this contaminated state five years later.

Following the treatment, the Hanes family suffered numerous health problems, including neurological conditions and cardiovascular disease. They hired an occupational hygienist and environmental toxicologist to test their house for contamination, in order to document what in the house was making the family sick. The toxicologist's report, written January 4, 2001, stated, "The level of contamination indicates that the house is not currently acceptable for human habitation."

Loretta's own doctor advised her and the rest of the Hanes family to "avoid living or staying for prolonged periods in the home until such time as it is remediated."

She relocated to an apartment, a move that she thought would be a temporary until her home could be saved. Unfortunately, the home never was saved and is still uninhabitable. The family can simply not afford the extravagance of cleaning the home that Orkin sickened with pesticides. Orkin will not take responsibility for contaminating the home by paying for its remediation, despite proof of unacceptably high levels of the pesticide they applied to it years earlier. In an effort to place corporate accountability where the family feels it belongs – with Orkin – the Hanes' issued a complaint to the District of Columbia Department of Health's Pesticide Enforcement & Certification Branch (PECB), alleging that Orkin made an ineffective termite treatment and did not properly use pesticides. An investigation by the PECB revealed, "Orkin violated several sections of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations... during inspections and treatments to control the infestation." These violations included:

- "use of a pesticide inconsistent with label directions"
- "making false or fraudulent records and reports"
- "making false or misleading statements during or after an inspection"
- "applying pesticides in a manner that may cause harm"
- "faulty, careless or negligent use of a pesticide"
- "application of a pesticide by an unlicensed or unregistered person"

In a meeting with Orkin regional and branch managers and the PECB, a settlement was reached in which Orkin would pay a \$2,000 fine to the District of Columbia. Originally, the fine was set at \$3,050. However, \$1,000 was chopped off when it was agreed to dismiss charges of "faulty, careless or negligent use of a pesticide" and "application of a pesticide by an unlicensed or unregistered person." The fine was reduced an additional \$50 just because Orkin cooperated with the settlement agreement.

Although Orkin did have to pay \$2,000 to the government as a result of its misuse of pesticides, the Hanes family is still in limbo. The government fine has not allowed them to remediate their home. Selling the home is not a viable option since the contamination decreases its value considerably, besides the fact that it is a potential health threat to anyone who would choose to live there. The Hanes' health and finances have both been compromised as a result of Orkin's actions. The family is currently seeking legal action against Orkin.

Government employee put in harm's way

An illegal mixture of pesticides poisoned South Carolinian Lou Ann Pack on August 18, 2002.

Lou Ann worked for the South Carolina Department of Transportation (DoT). She enjoyed the physical labor of working for the DoT. Being too energetic for simply flagging, she was transferred to raking of the asphalt. She was eventually transferred again to herbicide spraying of wildflowers on the interstate, in June 2000 – a transfer that increased her job risk quite a bit. Here, she would be working with dangerous mixtures of toxic herbicides each day, driving the truck that sprayed wildflowers along the Interstate.

Such risky work, combined with what she explained as her employer's irresponsibility and disregard for human health, left Lou Ann with an illness she is still trying to overcome. For many weeks, Lou Ann was required to drive a truck with a broken air conditioner and spray chemicals in unbearable heat. She was forced to crack her window open, which may have contributed to a build up of chemical exposure to her body. The chemicals she sprayed at that time were only a small fraction of what her body would soon have to bear.

Lou Ann reported to Beyond Pesticides that one fateful day her boss instructed her to mix several chemicals together in a 300-gallon tank to use on the interstate. These included Transline (clopyralid), Glypro (glyphosate), Garlon 3A (triclopyr), Plateau (imazapic, ammonium salt), Ground Zero (bromacil), and Indue F. She was also told to mix Vantage (containing naphthalene) with Ground Zero and Indue F. Lou Ann mentioned that she was told not to write down in her daily work log that Transline was part of the mixture, and to make sure she did not tell anyone that she was mixing it with the other chemicals. According to Lou Ann, her boss had told her it was an experiment to see if the job could be done with one application instead of two. By trying to save resources in this way, her boss was creating an unauthorized toxic mixture with unknown effects. However, by the day's end Lou Ann would know firsthand what the dangerous chemical cocktail was capable of. Although the mixture congealed, and just didn't "look right" to Lou Ann, she felt pressure to go ahead with the work in order to maintain her good standing with her employer. At the end of the day, she decided to hand spray off the back of the truck.



However, immediately after she stepped onto the back of the truck, she smelled a strong chemical odor and began to show symptoms of exposure. She became nauseated and dizzy, a severe headache came on, and her eyes began to tear. She began feeling confused and weak, and jumped off the back of the truck. She entered the truck's cab and put her face to the air conditioner for 20 minutes in an effort to dispel the symptoms. When she returned to the shop, everyone had left for the day. It was a Friday, so Lou Ann left work and went home. She was sick the entire weekend.

Scared of her illness, she went to work Monday and talked to her supervisor, asking if there was a doctor she could see. He responded with chaffing remarks that it was all in her head, but gave her a phone book to find a doctor. The doctor, as it turned out, was very suspicious that Lou Ann's symptoms were linked to chemical exposure. In correspondence between a toxicologist and her regular practitioner, the toxicologist wrote that he thought her illness was indeed due to exposure to the pesticides she was spraying. He stated, "Of her many possible toxic exposures – even the 'inert' agents listed, including a glycol ether, ethanol, diethanolamine and ethylenediamine tetraacetic acid (EDTA), have significant toxicity – naphthalene seems a good fit [with] her initial symptoms. Its inhalation toxicity is usually measured by its low vapor pressure, but when made into an aerosol by spray nozzles, it could readily gain access to skin and the upper airway in droplet form, and thus work its toxic mischief. Alternatively, the possible exposure to the above 'inert' ingredients might be playing a role, and the toxic effects of a combination of the above agents can only be speculated."

Since her exposure, Lou Ann's supervisor was written up for the illegal mixing of chemicals, and the spray truck she was using was disassembled.

These pesticide-poisoning victims and many others will be featured in an upcoming report from Beyond Pesticides chronicling the effects of commonly used pesticides on society. If you would like to share your story, please contact Beyond Pesticides at (202) 543-5450 or write to Beyond Pesticides, 701 E Street, SE, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20003.

Endnotes

- 1 Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003. "Second National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals," Atlanta, GA. January 2003.
- 2 Environmental Working Group, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, and Commonweal. "Body Burden: The Pollution In People," 2003.

Back To School Organizing for Safer Pest Management

by Kagan Owens

As children are back in school, so should school officials prepare a safe and healthy learning environment. One way to do this is to implement a safer pest management program, such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), that uses alternatives to the prevailing chemical-intensive practices because of the health hazards such practices pose to children and school staff. IPM is a program of prevention, monitoring and control that offers the opportunity to eliminate or drastically reduce hazardous pesticide use in schools.

School IPM is not a new approach to pest management. It is a concept that has been implemented in various communities, schools and government facilities for decades. Although there are no federal laws regarding school pesticide use and pest management, there is pending federal legislation, the *School Environment Protection Act (SEPA)*, which has been introduced in Congress and passed twice by the U.S. Senate. There are also numerous state laws, local policies, resolutions and resources that focus on the adoption of school IPM programs.

Currently there are 17 state laws that recommend or require schools to adopt an IPM program. In addition, 315 school districts and five individual schools have voluntarily adopted an IPM policy where no law mandates such programs, according to the recent Beyond Pesticides report, *Are Schools Making the Grade?* EPA and an additional number of states have developed materials to facilitate schools' implementation of IPM programs.¹

Children's exposure to toxic pesticides

"Particular uncertainty exists regarding the long-term health effects of low-dose pesticide exposure," states the American Medical Association's Council on Scientific Affairs. "Consid-

ering these data gaps, it is prudent... to limit pesticides exposures ... and to use the least toxic chemical pesticide or non-chemical alternative."²

The vulnerability of infants and children to the harmful effects of pesticides has attracted national attention. EPA and the National Academy of Sciences, among others, have voiced concerns about the danger that pesticides pose to children. Children face higher risks than adults from pesticide exposure due

to their small size, tendency to place their hands close to their face, engaging in activities on or near the ground, greater intake of air and food relative to body weight, developing organ systems, and other unique characteristics.

Pesticide exposure can adversely affect a child's neurological, respiratory, immune and endocrine system.³ A recent study found organophosphate pesticides cause genetic damage linked to neurological disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and Parkinson's disease.⁴ Several pesticides, such as pyrethrins and pyrethroids, organo-

phosphates and carbamates, are also known to trigger or exacerbate asthma symptoms.⁵ Because most of the symptoms of pesticide exposure, from respiratory distress and flu-like symptoms to difficulty in concentration, are common in school children and may also have other causes, pesticide-related illnesses often go unrecognized and unreported.⁶

Studies show that children living in households where pesticides are used suffer elevated rates of leukemia, brain cancer and soft tissue sarcoma.⁷ According to EPA's *Guidelines for Carcinogen Risk Assessment*, children receive 50 percent of their lifetime cancer risks in the first two years of life.⁸

In 1999, the National School Boards Association along with the National League of Cities and Youth Crime Watch of America stated that "dangers in the environment," such as "potentially dangerous pesticides," are one of the "10 critical threats" that jeopardize "the health, safety, and future of America's children."



How-to get your school to adopt an IPM program

School community members and activists, school policy decision makers, and school pest management practitioners all play vital roles in the adoption of an effective IPM program. Use the following information to advocate for a school IPM program or to improve the existing program.

Changing a school's pest management program requires perseverance. Since pest control is not often a large part of the school's budget, many administrators do not consider it a focus and are likely to be uninformed about their school's policy and any available alternatives.

- Work with your school to stop using hazardous pesticides and adopt alternative practices that have been adopted across the country.
- While the alternatives are being put in place, ask the school to provide staff and parents with prior notice before pesticides are used.
- Beyond Pesticides and state and local organizations can provide you with the resources necessary for developing, adopting and implementing a school IPM program.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Defined

IPM is a pest management strategy that focuses on long-term prevention or suppression of pest problems through a combination of practices such as:

- regular pest population monitoring;
- site or pest inspections;
- an evaluation of the need for pest control;
- occupant education; and,
- structural, mechanical, cultural, and biological controls.

Techniques include such methods as:

- sanitation;
- pest-proofing waste disposal;
- structural maintenance;
- good soil health; and,
- other non-chemical tactics.

Least-hazardous pesticides should be selected only as a last resort, thus minimizing the toxicity of and exposure to any pesticide products that are used.

Whether you are a parent, community activist, pest manager/pest control operator, or school administrator or employee, the following outlines the steps leading to the adoption of a successful school IPM program.

- 1 **Identify the school's pest management policy.** The first step is to identify whether there are applicable state and local policies concerning school pesticide use and/or

School community members and activists, school policy decision makers, and school pest management practitioners all play vital roles in the adoption of an effective IPM program.

IPM and to find out who administers the pest control program – the school, the school system or a contractor. Contact the appropriate school personnel to find out if and how the applicable policies are being implemented by identifying what pest management controls the school is using, the pesticides used, and the notification program.

- 2 **Educate yourself and evaluate the program.** Gather information on the hazards of pesticide exposure and the increased susceptibility of children to the health effects of pesticides. Learn about IPM and what alternatives to chemical pest control methods are available. Identify additional steps that the school should be taking to protect children from pesticides and implement a successful IPM program.
- 3 **Organize the school community.** Identify and contact friends and neighbors, individuals, and organizations who care about or are affected by school pesticide use, including parents, students, teachers, school staff and board members, unions, doctors, environmentalists, local PTAs, outdoor clubs and religious institutions. Develop and present a proposed IPM policy (see Appendix C for a model policy) for adoption by the school or school district. PTA meetings are an excellent forum to arouse interest and encourage parents, teachers, and students to develop a pilot IPM project in their school (see Appendix D for the National PTAs resolution on school pesticide use and IPM). Create a district-wide workshop for pest managers, discussing IPM strategies and methods.
- 4 **Work with school decision-makers.** Contact appropriate school official(s) and ask for an endorsement and passage of the proposed IPM policy. Provide them with information on the hazards of the chemicals currently being used and on safer alternative strategies. It is important that an IPM program include a written policy adopted

by the school district's board. This will ensure the program is institutionalized and will not revert back to a conventional program after the key activists, parent or school staff person leave the district.

- 4 Become a watchdog and establish an IPM committee.** Make sure the school district is on track to improve its practices. The same individuals, organizations and staff members that were instrumental in getting the school to adopt the policy must also watchdog the school to make sure it is successfully implemented. Creating an IPM committee to oversee the program can be one way to ensure program implementation. Committee members should include parents, students (if age appropriate), teachers, school administrators, facilities, food service and landscape staff, any pest control company contracted by the school, and community environmental and public health organizations. The committee's main purpose is to assist with the development of implementation guidelines and recommend non-toxic and least hazardous strategies for pest management.

The information in this article is excerpted from Beyond Pesticides' and the School Pesticide Reform Coalition's report, Safer Schools: Achieving A Healthy Learning Environment Through Integrated Pest Management, which focuses on how schools nationwide are implementing IPM (downloadable for free at www.beyondpesticides.org/schools or \$5ppd for a hard copy through Beyond Pesticides).

State School IPM Laws

California	Recommends
Connecticut	Recommends
Florida	Requires
Illinois	Requires
Kentucky	Requires
Louisiana	Requires
Maine	Requires
Maryland	Requires
Massachusetts	Requires
Michigan	Requires
Montana	Recommends
New Jersey	Requires
New York	Recommends
Pennsylvania	Requires
Rhode Island	Requires
Texas	Requires
West Virginia	Requires

Endnotes

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To Inherit the Earth

The landless movement and the struggle for a new Brazil

By Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford, (*Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, August 2003, pp 256.*)

In Brazil, where there is fertile land, wealth, and a tropical climate, hunger is not destiny. It is the product of a totally unjust order. Those who die of hunger in Brazil are assassinated.

—Jean Zeigler, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food

In the country with the widest income gap between rich and poor and where millions of children fend for themselves on city streets, one of the world's most successful grassroots social movements has arisen. *To Inherit the Earth: The Landless Movement and the Struggle for a New Brazil*, written by Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford, is the first book published in the United States to tell the dramatic story of Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement, or Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem-Terra (MST). The MST, which includes millions of desperately poor, landless, jobless men and women, has used non-violent means to secure rights to over 20 million acres of farmland. Not only are the MST fighting for their own rights, they are transforming their society into a more just one, and their approach may offer the best solution yet to Brazil's environmental problems in the Amazon and elsewhere. *To Inherit the Earth* closely investigates the history, the accomplishments, and the aspirations of the MST, Brazil's largest and fastest growing popular movement.

To Inherit the Earth details how the MST has successfully occupied and farmed unproductive land, forcing the government to award more than 20 million acres of land to 350,000 MST families since the movement's founding in 1984. Instead of waiting for the government to meet its long-standing promises to redistribute land, members of the MST have occupied land claimed by wealthy landowners, con-



To Inherit the Earth co-author Angus Wright spoke about his upcoming book to participants at Beyond Pesticides' 21st National Pesticide Forum, April 26, 2003, in Austin, Texas.

tinuing the occupations until the government met its immediate need for land. Rather than breaking the law, the MST strategy of reclaiming the land is rooted in Brazil law requiring that land "serve its social function;" thus, forcing the government to return the land to the rural workers. Before and after receiving land, the MST continues to insist that the government go beyond land distribution to pursue a broader program of agrarian reform and social change. But all this has come at a cost. Many families who participated in land occupations not only have to face down the police and the military, but also gunmen hired by landlords. They have suffered imprisonment, beatings and murder, with several hundred MST leaders assassinated during these struggles. Nevertheless the MST strategy has been successful and is now playing a key role in redefining the debate over land reform.

On a personal level, *To Inherit the Earth* describes how in committing themselves to the long and difficult struggles that participation in the MST brings to virtually all who join, many MST members have undergone a profound personal transformation from passive and victimized people to highly energized agents of change. They

have become real citizens. They have also demonstrated that solutions can be found to some of the world's most stubborn problems of poverty and wasteful use of land. The MST has shown clearly that the landless need not be compelled to journey to the Amazon forest and other environmentally sensitive areas in order to carve out farms, as the government has tried to convince them to do. Many MST farmers are pioneering more ecologically sound means of production on land long available for agriculture. The Swedish Parliament awarded the MST the Right Livelihood Award (often called the alternative Nobel Prize), and many observers consider the MST to be the most important social movement in Latin America today.

Authors Wright and Wolford put the movement in its historical, political, and environmental context, trace its growth, and address the issues the MST faces going forward. And throughout, they share dozens of personal stories of people in the movement – stories filled with tremendous courage, personal sacrifice, faith, humor, drama, and determination. Angus Wright teaches Environmental Studies at California State University at Sacramento. His PhD in Brazilian History is from the University of Michigan. Dr. Wright is the author of *The Death of Ramon Gonzalez: The Modern Agricultural Dilemma* (University of Texas Press). Wendy Wolford teaches Geography at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She received her PhD in Geography from the University of California at Berkeley. Dr. Wolford's research interests include the political economy of development, agrarian societies, and the struggle for land in Brazil. The book is published by the think tank Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy. *To Inherit the Earth* is available at www.beyondpesticides.org/join/order.htm and most bookstores.

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The Forum will be held April 2-4, 2004 at the University of California, Berkeley, Clark Kerr Conference Center, just minutes from downtown San Francisco. Brochures and registration forms will be mailed this winter. For more information or to make suggestions, contact John Kepner, Forum Coordinator at 202-543-5450 or jkepner@beyondpesticides.org. For complete details visit www.beyondpesticides.org/forum.

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