Time to hop on board the P&N bandwagon

In a market as heavily regulated as the specialty pesticide industry, it's hard to blame companies for feeling a bit like Marge Schott at an NAACP convention in Portland. With all sorts of environment-al groups seeking to limit and sometimes eliminate the use of certain pesticides, researchers have naturally taken on something of a siege mentality. With regard to the growing number of states which have instituted mandatory posting and notification regulations, the industry stance against such measures has become counterproductive.

The stance of most chemical company executives is grounded in scientific research — namely, that spraying and notification is unnecessary. The exorbitant cost and considerable time spent gaining approval through the federal Environmental Protection Agency should be proof enough that approved chemicals are not harmful — thereby eliminating the need to post warnings on every boundary line. Unfortunately, this stance is illogical — running against the tide of public opinion. Twenty-three states have already adopted posting and notification statutes, and more are sure to follow suit.

Efforts to combat this trend (however malodorous and unfair it might be) will come back to haunt the industry down the road. Better to push for a federal, nationwide posting and notification statute which would preempt the state and local regulations.

Why? Well, first of all, it's consistent with the industry's stance on pre-emption with regard to banning certain chemicals. RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) has fought and won these battles, making it a natural choice to lead a federal posting and notification crusade. Second, the chemical industry is losing money in the coal stove by conforming to the myriad posting and notification statutes across the country. Different signs, different time considerations, different boundary requirements. Wouldn't it be easier, and less expensive, if companies had one standard to which they adhered?

Third and perhaps most important, chemical companies could turn this whole situation into a public relations bonanza. If the industry took the lead in asking for this type of federal "safety" standard, much wind would be taken out of the sails of environmentalists.

Consider the auto industry. Years ago when consumer groups were lobbying for seatbelts, car makers fought the initiative tooth and nail. When they finally gave in, the seatbelts were cheap and clearly an afterthought. This one episode gave Ralph Nader & Co. ammunition for decades to come.

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A few highlights and lowlights from Anaheim, 1993

So much goes unreported from such a major event as the International Golf Course Conference and Show in Anaheim, Calif. Here is just a sampling of my personal remembrances.

Best analogy: Golf course designer Robert Trent Jones Jr., speaking at the U.S. Golf Association session the final day, likened course architects to doctors and superintendents to parents.

"We are the doctors of the game. We are present at the creation, advising owners, attending government hearings, making drawings, working with contractors. Our involvement with a course extends for only a couple of years. Your folks are often here for a lifetime," Jones told superintendents.

"Like a good parent, you are often there in the midst of the night when the water line breaks. And you certainly are there for all those early-morning feedings."

"I'm sure I can speak for my fellow architects here and around the world: The game would not be the same without your love for golf, the playing conditions, and the experience of the fellowship the game provides for millions and millions of golfers through your great efforts."

Most scary statement: Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, a man who considers golf a Washington, D.C., spoke of pesticide runoff from golf courses as being equivalent to that of agriculture. Please tell me our politicians aren't so ill-informed in making legislation. Agh-h-h!

Best attempt at reconciliation: Past GCSAA President John Segui of Wayneborough CC in Berwyn, Pa., gave an invocation at the annual banquet, calling for healing and brotherly love within the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America "despite our differences."

Best quote from entertainment: Monsanto's master magician, Bob Spiwak, said a famous architect told him that when he designed a course that expects to host a televised event, he always looks back from the green toward the tee to make sure golf cart paths and other aspects of his design won't be seen by viewers. "I startled me," Pat e said. "I've always played, and looked at, a course from tee to green."

Best advice: Without the risk (unless financing is provided through the federal government), there is no such thing as a free lunch? If they can't or won't there's either a profit or a loss. Not harmful — thereby eliminating the need to post warnings on every boundary line. However, some in the auto industry have learned their lesson. With airbags now a viable feature, car makers are using them to their marketing advantage. In fact, Chrysler in particular has championed the industry stance against such measures has become counterproductive.

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