EDITORIAL

ACCEPTING RISK

In a recent release by the Fertilizer Institute of Ontario a list was provided of the ranking of the risk of injury or illness, based on actuarial estimates, from 30 hazards [see box]. All of us are afraid of surgery, and justifiably so as it ranks 8th in this particular list. But did you realize there is a greater risk from using your lawn mower to cut the grass than from the pesticides used to control the weeds, insects and disease in your grass?!

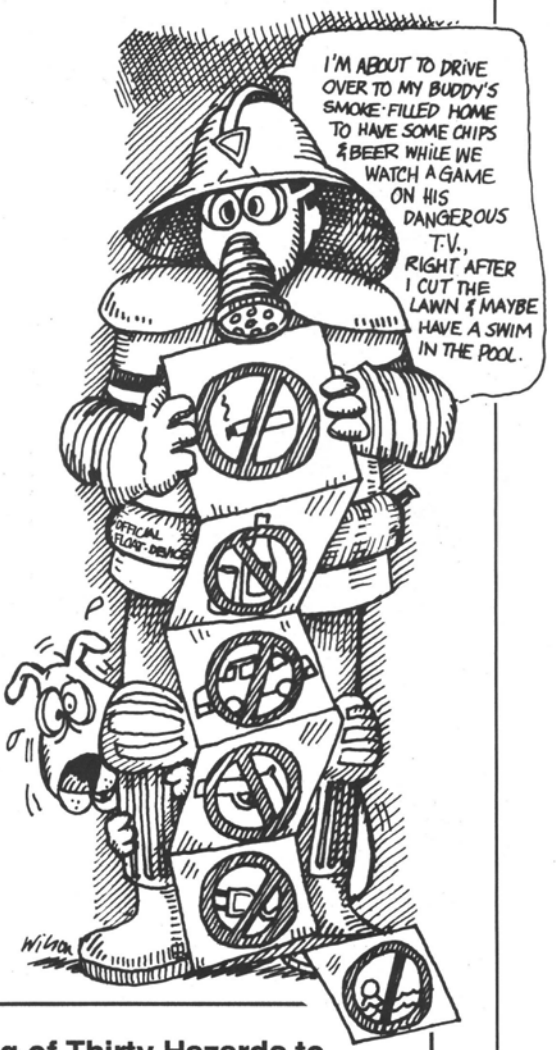
As so often happens, this study made the fundamental error of lumping all pesticides together. Surely the insecticides used for controlling European Chafer create a greater risk than 2,4-D. The old escape "More studies are needed' would be the expected response if you were to question this error.

The report goes on to state that when business and professional people were asked to independently rank the hazards they placed pesticides 15th. The alarming statement was that college students ranked them 4th. Is the future generation not been given the facts at our institutions of higher learning, our institutions of THE TRUTH? Or are they not at an age where they can differentiate THE TRUTH from the rhetoric of the environmental terrorists? The real concern is many of these college students will soon be the developers and administrators of government policy; policy which will reflect the impressions gained in their 'formative years'.

A recent editorial in the *Globe & Mail* (Aug. 12, 1992) suggests zero risk may be, in fact, a cause of risk - economic risk - the lowering of the standard of living of many to the stage where they are subject to all the risks of malnutrition, improper housing, even unsafe sports fields.

Adequate education is the best cure to all this controversy. Needless to say this education must be based on facts. The support the Sports Turf Association has given Greencare Horticultural Association in their effort to set the record straight over the proposals of the Urban Pesticide Caucus is a step in the right direction. But it is only a step. The information contained in the Greencare report "A Scientific Response to the Urban Anti-Pesticide Lobby" must be brought to the attention of all politicians at municipal educational and government levels. Then PESTICIDES will be accepted as number 28 in a group of 30, just as the actuarial estimates place them.

- R.W. Sheard, P.Ag.



The Actuarial Ranking of Thirty Hazards to Human Health and Safety

1. Smoking
2. Alcoholic Beverages
3. Motor Vehicles
4. Handguns
5. Electric Power
6. Motorcycles
7. Swimming
8. Surgery
9. X-rays
10. Railroads
11. General Aviation
12. Large Construction
13. Bicycles
14. Hunting
15. Home Appliances
16. Fire Fighting
17. Police Work
18. Contraceptives
19. Commercial Aviation
20. Nuclear Power
21. Mountain Climbing
22. Power Mowers
23. Scholastic Football
24. Skiing
25. Vaccinations
26. Food Colouring
27. Food Preservatives
28. PESTICIDES
29. Antibiotics
30. Spray Cans