

**Sophistry** runs through the writer's work. It's a big part of the formula. Sophistry is the use of a misleading, unsound, but clever, plausible and subtle method of reasoning. For example:

"Most people don't know the difference between a chlorinated hydrocarbon, a group of the most deadly pesticides, including DDT, and water."

This is a three-pronged example of the anti-pesticide writer's formula: It contains a truth, a misstatement of fact — and the example, overall, qualifies for the definition of sophistry.

The truth? Most people probably can't identify a chlorinated hydrocarbon — perhaps even from water.

The misstatement of fact? Chlorinated hydrocarbons may have deficiencies but they **are not** a group of the most deadly pesticides.

Many of the old inorganic chemicals such as lead, zinc and arsenic are much more deadly. Most of the organo-phosphates are decidedly more deadly.

The sophistry? The whole passage. Injecting a truth prior to the punch phrase is part of the technique. Getting across the idea of deadliness establishes the reasoning that will follow from a false premise.

**Slanting reports** to the mood created is a favorite technique: One reporter covered a meeting of scientists several years ago and then wrote an article called "The Lethal Spring?" (Note how the writer called upon help from the master in using this title!)

She summed up the meeting with this quotation:

"None of the scientists at the four-day conference indicated that their findings had alarmed them to a point where they were ready to picket companies or petition Congress to ban one or more pesticides."

Note the subtle, negative conclusion used! Reading between the lines of this negatively slanted passage, I get the following:

"Scientists expressed no alarm at the use of pesticides — when properly applied."

I'll grant the writer one point, some pesticides are being banned now...but it's not due to the picketing of scientists — it's the work of the politicians.

So you see how we got to where we are today. Reams of print, most of it following the formula, has appeared during the past seven or eight years. Most of the articles and books have been well and cleverly written. While this was going on, the public has, fortunately, become aware of the fact that we do have environmental problems.

## Ignoring the Costs

Unfortunately, no one likes facing up to the costs which must be paid to correct our sewer systems, clean up our factories and automobiles, secure proper garbage disposal procedures and embrace numerous other anti-pollution practices.

Meanwhile, pesticides, which are poisons, lend themselves to horror stories that might have been written by Edgar Allen Poe. They have been swept into the ecological storm as a No. 1 whipping boy.

What has been accomplished by all this anti-pesticide literature? Plenty!

In 1969, a group of prominent scientists from Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota prepared a report titled: "Lake States Agriculture Committee Pesticide Report."

The report was compiled because many restrictions are being placed on these states right now—restrictions pushed zealously by politicians from the area.

Some of the conclusions: With chlorinated hydrocarbons eliminated, the loss in value of production will be \$160,000,000 per year and the added cost of substitute materials will be another \$23,000,000.

If all chemical pesticides are eliminated, the loss will be \$1-1/2 billion per year!

And this estimate only covers a five-state area.

These estimates don't include such an item as termite control. The committee says that: "Chemical treatment for termites have provided \$4.6 billion in savings from damage to dwellings alone during the period of their existence." Chlorinated hydrocarbons are used for termite control.

This, again, involves only a five-state area.

Do your own projecting to 50 states and you can see what is involved!

## "We Can Do Something"

Can we do anything about this onslaught of negative, vicious anti-pesticide publicity? Yes, we can do something. But it will be a long, uphill struggle.

Remember, we are all involved. Growers, packers and, most definitely, consumers are involved. So, first, read the article or book straight through. Next, and this is extremely important, reread it with a pencil in your hand. Look for the formula — it's there! Circle the speculative words — they are there in profusion. Circle the passages with a false premise. They are there too — especially in the early part of the article. Circle, too, the colorful, descriptive and fearful adjectives used. Then review this second reading and know the writing for what it is: A poison much more poisonous to our well being than pesticides ever have or ever will be.

Then interpret this article to your neighbor, your minister, your priest, your fellow club member, your child's biology teacher.

And write. Write your politician, the editor of the magazine, the author, the actor, the newspaper editor and writer involved, the college professor who wrote an article and the radio and TV star who is getting a free publicity ride.

But don't bother to write the "nature" clubs. I'll explain.

Tell the politician he's thinking of votes instead of the public good.

Tell the editor of the magazine and the author that they have a tremendous responsibility to be objective. These are troubled times and we need help, not more confusion.

Tell the college professor that he shouldn't ride on the prestige of his degree while writing science fiction. He should revert to his training as a man of science.

But leave the nature clubs alone. They do act from the heart. They are sincere. They even want green forests, clear water, wildlife and fresh air as much as we do!

They will be equally horrified if they are suddenly confronted by a world inhabited by billions of starlings, oodles of flies and mosquitoes, myriads of reptiles, worms and bugs. And they, too, appreciate a beautiful fresh apple.

So leave them alone. Their heart is in the right place.

Even if you do nothing, it will all, ultimately, turn out all right. This is because pesticides, and the need for them, are basically very sound. Of course, you may have to wait 10 or 15 years for it all to become apparent. This means it will be your children who have nothing to worry about.

Meanwhile, we only pass through here once.