



## HURTING OURSELVES

By Monroe S. Miller

Last week wasn't a good one in the news arena for the green industry. At least in our town.

There was a story about some rural wells contaminated with atrazine. These stories have been seen too frequently in the past two years or so.

A headline screamed across the Metro page drawing every readers' attention to a dog supposedly sprayed with an herbicide by a lawn care company. The company likely was innocent, but after the incident they didn't answer the phone. Many assumed, therefore, guilt.

In the May 21st editions of our city papers were articles about a "pesticide goof" by (are you ready for this?) the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture. DATCP has done a lot of good public relations in selling the public on the value and correctness of the program to get the gypsy moth under control.

Much of the PR was lost when DATCP had to apologize for spraying

the pesticide for moth control over parts of Manitowoc while kids were walking to school in the morning.

"There's no excuse for making this kind of error," a spokesman said.

Amen. But the damage was done.

Finally, a personal incident brought home how far the manufacturing industry and distributors have to go before they can expect any public acceptance and trust.

Our club was owed a small amount of fungicide by a manufacturer. It doesn't matter that, as a matter of principle, I'd been harassing them for nine months to square our account.

Last week, the material—remember, it was a pesticide—was shipped.

To my house! By UPS! When nobody was home! Nobody signed for it! The delivery was left on the sidewalk all day!

Good God—what if neighborhood kids had gotten into it? What if it had leaked?

What if it was stolen or vandalized? You wouldn't have believed how poorly the containers were packed, either. UPS is not known, in my experience, for its TLC for packages, either.

I resented greatly that it took so long to resolve our account. I also resented being forced to call the company representative and offering up a king-sized major league tail chewing. Professional people shouldn't have to do such things.

I only hope it did some good. That is also the purpose in sharing the incident with *GRASS ROOTS* readers. We simply cannot afford such a slack attitude from the industries we buy from.

Unfortunately, these sorts of incidents happen all too often. It is no wonder we are having difficulty capturing public confidence.

When I was a kid, the Pogo comic strip was my favorite from the funny pages. It was there I saw my first cartoon with an environmental message.

Pogo and his swamp friends were surveying the mess in the swamp. They saw garbage and appliances and beer cans littering their home grounds.

The last frame of that strip showed a distraught Pogo offering this: "We have met the enemy, and it is us."

Twenty-five years later, that line still rings true. Even in our industry.

Things have got to change.

# Wilbur-Ellis

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