

The Golden Rule as Applied to the Environment

BEFORE A FINGER IS LIFTED to change the environment . . . Let us require of *all* people who wish to change it, comparable scientific evidence in support of a need for change, comparable documentation of possible effects of the change—including expected benefits—as have been required of those who have made the environment what it is today.

It's a reasonable demand, we believe. Such an "environmental Golden Rule" would force proponents of change to consider the *total* environment. It would force an evaluation of the benefit-risk equation. We believe better solutions to our problems would result.

Such a Golden Rule adaptation would prevent an outcome described by sanitary engineering consultant John E. Kinney, speaking at the National Pest Control Association meeting recently. "Under the spell of the panicmonger," he said, "the citizenry could surrender all authority in decision making on the environment to those whose regulations would not permit a use and only then learn the surrender had actually jeopardized health, food, and pleasure and had not guaranteed protection."

"Protect the environment" has become an excuse for all sorts of crusades for glory and power, Kinney says. A characteristic of the self-interest crusader that distinguishes him from the real environmentalist, he believes, is the crusader's failure to complete the sentence.

"Protect the environment from what? Or for what? Or for whom? Or from whom?"

Normal human reaction to a major problem, Kinney continues, is first that of apathy, then overreaction, then a return to apathy.

The danger concerns the type of legislation that occurs during the overreaction period. Rarely is there an admission of error on the part of those who call for action or on the part of those who pass legislation, Kinney says. Instead, the finger

of blame will be pointed in another direction and more legislation offered as the panacea.

"We have entered a new, in some respects, ominous, but perhaps necessary era in the consideration of pesticides in this country," said Bernard Lorant, a pesticide consultant and former vice-president of research and development for Velsicol Chemical Corporation. "I call it the legal era."

Explaining, as he addressed the Ohio Turfgrass Conference in December, "the new era is when scientific questions will be settled by formal, adversary proceedings in the courts of our land, or in quasi-judicial arenas.

"More frequently, questions of efficacy and safety for pesticides will be decided by lay judges. That the pendulum will swing too far on the ecology side, to the detriment of all, seems likely."

Your call to "jury duty" is clear and urgent. The National Agricultural Chemicals Association has a new pamphlet that will help prepare you for the role you must play in preserving and improving the environment in favor of man. The booklet is called "Sound Off" and describes how laws are made. It explains the procedural route bills follow on the way to becoming law. There is discussion of preparation and presentation of testimony, of witness selection, and on letter writing. (For copies, write NACA, 1155 Fifteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.)

Finally, though, it is you who use pesticides who must be the cross-examiner when "cases" arise in your area of influence. You must bring the questions in the open and must demand the answers that separate the self-interest crusaders from the real environmentalists.

You must demand answers in the same depth from those who would take away your tools as have been demanded of those who provide you the tools of your livelihood.

What wisdom there is in that rule . . . the Golden One!

Gene Ingalsbe