

SAN JOSE STATE COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF NATURAL SCIENCES AND MATHEMATICS
Department of Biological Sciences

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TO ALL CONCERNED PERSONS:

Enclosed is a copy of my recent editorial published in the Portland Oregonian, which I believe will be of some interest to everyone who is seriously concerned with environmental pollution, general ecological considerations, and the potential starvation of mankind throughout the world.

Although the editorial is self-explanatory, space limitations prevented the inclusion of the hundreds of published references upon which my statements were based. Most of those reports appeared in highly respected journals (Science, Nature, Condor, Clinical Toxicology, Archives of Environmental Health, U. S. Public Health publications, and various medical journals). If every concerned biologist and "ecologist" would actually read those articles, fewer of them would be making misstatements and taking untenable positions concerning DDT.

I am deeply disturbed and sadly disillusioned by the actions of numerous educators. For years they have almost made a fetish of the "scientific method" of investigation, and have stressed that method of analysis in their classes and their writings. I had presumed that they also followed their own advice, but it is now obvious that often they do not. Despite dozens of scientific studies proving that DDT is broken down rather quickly by the environment, many so-called "ecologists" are heard telling the public that exactly the opposite is true! Why do they do this, when it is certain that they will later be exposed as being either ignorant of the facts or being deliberately untruthful? Perhaps the reason is simply that they are either ignorant of the facts or untruthful! I submit that professional biologists do not have the right to be deliberately untruthful when speaking to classes or through public communications media, and I very strongly resent their misstatements because I am sure the public will ultimately paint us all with the same brush. Perhaps equally reprehensible are the biologists who make erroneous public statements because they have not even bothered to read the scientific literature about DDT, but have relied only on newspaper articles and strongly biased non-scientific publications to shape their views. I dread the time, not too far in the future, when an informed public reacts against these teachers and scientists. They may well deride our future statements, withhold financial support, and condemn us heartily. The present public concern with ecology is marvelous, and it should be strongly encouraged. When our younger citizens realize that this highly-publicized controversy about DDT and its alleged ill-effects has been such a phony issue, what might be their reaction? We could hardly blame them if they then question the truth of statements about air pollution, water pollution, public health, malnutrition and overpopulation... and I feel that such loss of faith would be disastrous.

Perhaps there is still time to remedy the situation with regard to the deceit concerning DDT. If the emphasis in our classrooms and in the public media can be shifted toward more concern for the truth, no matter whose sacred cows get

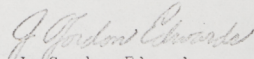
gored, then we'll be on the way back to the proper role of scientists in the American scene. To begin with, we must discount the erroneous beliefs that have been perpetuated by certain scientists and conservationists concerning DDT, and attempt to inform the public as to the TRUTH about those topics. DDT is not terribly persistent (under environmental conditions). People in U. S. only ingest about .0005 parts per million of DDT daily (and excrete all excess DDT from their body). A diet containing thousands of times the amount we ingest daily does not produce cancer, sterility, mutations, or other undesirable effects, even in experimental mice, birds and fish. So-called "substitutes for DDT" are more toxic than DDT to most organisms, and are much more costly. Substitutes for DDT are exterminating honey bees and we will not have them around to pollenate the crops and orchards and "set" the crops. DDT is not widespread in the environment... not even in United States or in the states that have used it most heavily. DDT has increased the numbers of birds in U.S., rather than causing declines, and the recent British government report stated that DDT has not been responsible for any decline of bird populations in that country, either. DDT probably causes wild birds and animals to be healthier if they are exposed to moderate doses of it, because it reduces tumors, inhibits cancer (at least in humans), eliminates insect-transmitted diseases, and induces the production of enzymes that destroy harmful substances in the body. The World Health Organization relies almost entirely on DDT for the control of malaria (the hope of millions of human lives rests solely upon DDT). In addition to malaria, many other deadly or debilitating diseases are controlled by using DDT to kill the insect vectors of the disease organisms (river blindness, sleeping sickness, elephantiasis, Oroya fever, and many others). The chemical and insecticide industries will make at least ten times as much profit by selling "substitutes" for DDT as they have been making on DDT itself.

If you desire further documentation of any statement in this letter or in the enclosed editorial I hope you will allow me to provide it for you. We stand at the cross-road, now, and it is only with support such as yours that we can provide the facts to the public.... and they certainly deserve those facts!

There are many hundreds of scientists and many thousands of professional people who share my concern and are striving to publicize the truth about DDT and all other insecticides. My allies include most toxicologists, cancer specialists, medical physiologists, agriculturists, entomologists, pest-control specialists and public health authorities, as well as world-wide health and welfare organizations (W.H.O., A.I.D., U.N.E.S.C.O., etc.). In view of the massive and well financed propaganda campaign against DDT in 1969 it would be surprising if YOU have not been at least partially convinced that DDT constitutes some threat to man and the environment. Persons in your profession retain a high degree of objectivity, however, and because of that fact I dare hope that you remain receptive to reasonable analyses as opposed to unreasonable emotionalism.

If you would publicize (even very briefly) any of the facts presented here or in the Oregonian editorial, you will be impressed by the strong favorable reactions generated. I earnestly hope you will respond to this urgent appeal for unbiased publicity, and I thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,


Dr. J. Gordon Edwards
Professor of Entomology