

Wisconsin Agricultural Users Hits Proposed Legislation That Calls For Banning DDT

Wisconsin's agricultural users of pesticides hit proposed legislation that calls for the banning of DDT within the state.

Appearing in opposition to the proposed measure before Assembly Agricultural Committee hearings were spokesmen of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, the State Grange, Wisconsin Nurserymen's Association, the Wisconsin Canners and Freezers Association, Wisconsin Fertilizer Association, and representatives of various farm commodity organizations.

Lead-off witness against Assembly Bill 163 was newly-appointed Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Arthur R. Kurtz

who warned that "it would be a mistake to completely ban a specific pesticide." He emphasized that pesticides are one of farming's essential tools, used by Wisconsin farmers who are conservation-minded and recognize the importance of preserving environmental quality.

William KasaKaitas (cq), speaking for the Wisconsin Farm Bureau and other agricultural growers associations, scored the fear that a statutory ban on DDT or any other chemical pesticide would place it beyond reach for emergency situations. He called passage "a brutal blow to state farmers whose income necessarily depends on the quality and the yield of their crops and food

products." Pointing out that pesticides are used to help control a \$4 billion annual loss to farming in the US by insect pests, he said, "We are not wed to DDT or to any other chemical pesticide. We use them not by choice, but by necessity to assure mankind a bountiful supply of quality food. We constantly search for substitutes to minimize the hazards and peril of use."

Also opposing the bill was Charles M. Creuziger, president of the Vegetable Growers Association of America and a Wisconsin farmer. He advised that a ban on DDT would impose distinct hardship on Wisconsin growers of carrots, lettuce, celery, and some fruits. "In the case of carrots," Creuziger advised, "DDT is considered a 'must.'" He held a recent Federal deletion of the pesticide toxaphene, used for control of cabbage worms, and a reinstatement of parathion-DDT combination to fight the crop pest.

"If there had been a ban on DDT, no satisfactory recommendation would have been available for a very serious economic pest problem," he said. He warned that vegetable growers anticipate a disastrous attack of caterpillars on potato crops within a

year and that DDT use will be necessary to prevent crop damage.

Marvin P. Verhulst, executive secretary of the Wisconsin Canners and Freezers Association said the State Department of Agriculture already has registration and labeling authority over pesticides sold in the State. He said there were about 750 pesticides registered for use in the State, "some others more hazardous than DDT." Passage of the bill would put the legislature in a position of having 749 additional pesticides to indicate registration procedures, he advised.

As a farmer, agribusinessman, and secretary-treasurer of the Wisconsin Fertilizer Association, Lewis White testified to the need of continued vigilance in pesticide control, but said farmers could not compete economically or produce quality food without pesticide use.

Appearing on behalf of the National Agricultural Chemicals Association was Robert L. Ackerly. He testified that the issue transcended DDT and questioned whether the legislature wanted to usurp authority it has given its state regulatory

agencies. Pointing out that the safety-conscious pesticides industry wants judicious regulation, he said it takes from three to five years for a single pesticide to be developed to the point of acceptance and registration by Federal and State agencies.

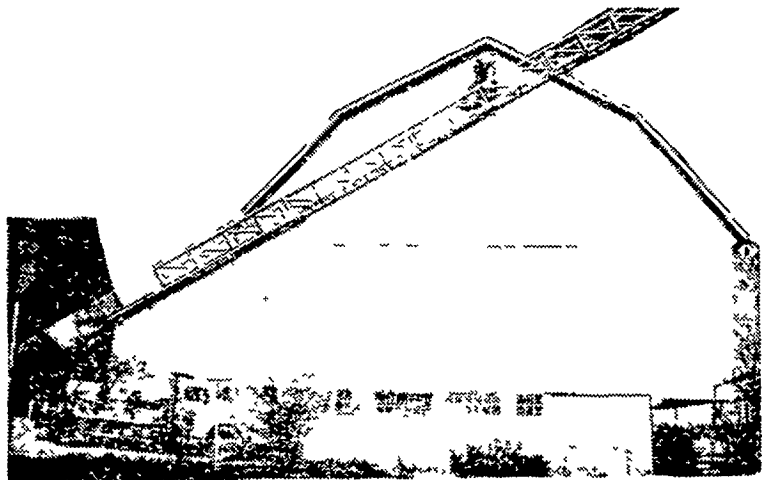
Among other witnesses opposing the banning was Dr. Ellisworth H. Fisher, Coordinator of Pesticide Use Education for the University of Wisconsin. He advised that new research indicates distorted analyses of pesticide residues in the environment. "DDT residues," he said, "are suspected of masking residue levels. He suggested deferring action on the bill pending the outcome of current Wisconsin Natural Resources Department hearings."

Sheep Producers

At this time of the year when sheep producers are shearing their sheep it is a good time to inspect each animal for foot rot and for skin disease. The threat of sheep scabies continues to be present in this part of the country and all shepherds are urged to be on the alert for this skin infection, this disease is caused by tiny mites active during the winter months, and burrow into the skin of the sheep causing intense itching. Sheep will tear out patches of their wool and bite the denuded areas, scabby lesions form on these bare spots. Producers with animals showing this infection should contact their local veterinarian and have them treated, prompt detection and treatment will help eradicate this serious sheep disease.

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