

# ORGANIC LIVING

By

Robert Rodale

## BE SURE — BE ORGANIC

One of the most disappointing pieces of news I've read in a long time hit the headlines recently when Dr. Frank J. Rauscher Jr., director of the National Cancer Institute, warned pregnant women to avoid beef liver during the first three months of pregnancy.

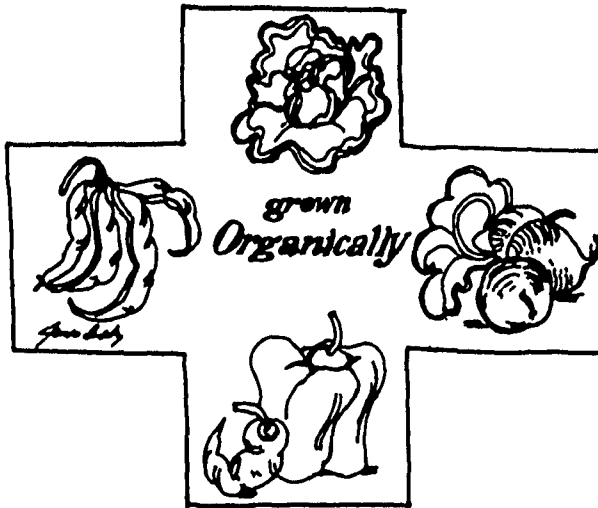
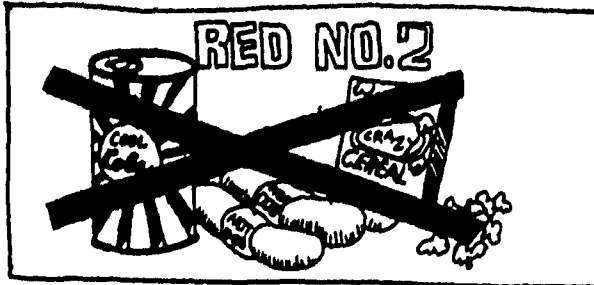
Dr. Rauscher's pronouncement was prompted by the likelihood that small traces of diethylstilbestrol (DES), a growth hormone, may be found in liver. And DES is believed to cause a rare form of cervical or vaginal cancer after the onset of puberty in the daughters of some women who ingest it early in pregnancy.

I wasn't disappointed by Dr. Rauscher's announcement. I was disappointed by the fact that women, for the safety of the unborn child, are being asked to avoid one of the most nutritionally sound foods on today's overprocessed-food market.

Beef liver is loaded with protein, calcium, iron, vitamin A and many other nutrients which the mother — and the developing fetus — need to insure future good health. Instead of being able to freely eat that food, however, they must now avoid it.

The government has been attempting to get DES removed from accepted use as a growth stimulant for cattle ever since 1972. The most recent effort was overturned by the courts, which ruled that DES users didn't get proper hearings before the 1973 ban went into effect.

So cattle growers are now using DES once more, possibly threatening unborn female children. Besides that, the Food and Drug Administration has approved a "Morning-after" birth control pill to be used for



"emergency" post-coital contraception by rape or incest victims and women in whom pregnancy would be life-threatening.

Unfortunately, the DES controversy doesn't represent an isolated incident. On the contrary, the question of additives and adulterations arises continuously even though Americans are told time and again that their food supply is pure and wholesome.

As another example, consider food colorings that make

processed products look more attractive and appetizing. Some scientists believe that Red No. 2, a coal tar dye found in a vast variety of foods, can cause birth defects. Dr. Sidney M. Wolfe, a member of Ralph Nader's Health Research Group, recently accused the Food and Drug Administration of "whitewashing" previous reports showing that the dye caused fetal deaths. The FDA, you'll remember, is supposed to be protecting us from dangerous products.

Knowing what we do about Red No. 2, it seems like a simple thing to avoid foods containing it. But, unless you are extremely careful, dodging these potentially harmful foods is almost impossible. Why? The only labeling requirement placed on food packers and processors is a relatively innocuous statement saying that "artificial coloring" has been added.

Statistics for 1973 — and the figures are probably much higher now — show that Red No. 2 was used in an estimated \$10 billion worth of food products. It's found in such things as some ice cream, processed cheeses, cakes and jams, frankfurters and luncheon meats, canned fruits, soft drinks, cereals, salad dressings and gelatin desserts.

Why is it put there? For no other reason than to make the products more appealing to the eye.

Another batch of additives that make food look pretty are the nitrites and nitrates food processors use on meats. In some measure they do protect the consumer from the possible effects of spoilage. But frankfurters and luncheon meats have an extra dose just to look pinker and prettier.

There has been a concentrated attempt to get cyclamates back into our food supply. The artificial sweeteners were banned in 1969 after studies showed that they caused cancer when consumed in large doses.

The FDA says there has been some doubt about the cancer studies. But FDA Commissioner Dr. Alexander M. Schmidt says that the use of cyclamates might have been restricted anyway since there is some evidence that it shrinks the testicles of male rats.

Another artificial sweetener, saccharin, has yet to be formally approved as completely safe, even though it is used throughout the United States. The prestigious National Academy of Science, with all the technology at its fingertips, still can't decide whether or not it is hazardous.

I think that if there were any one reason for adopting an organic way of life it would have to center around the food supply. Common sense tells me so.

After all, how else are you going to avoid the possible side effects of additives? Even the scientists don't know for sure. One group says one thing; another says something else.

The only way to be sure is to be organic.

(Editor's Note: The opinions appearing in "Organic Living" are those of its author, Robert Rodale, an independent columnist. Rodale's comments do not necessarily reflect the thinking of the Lancaster Farming editor or anyone else on the Lancaster Farming staff.)

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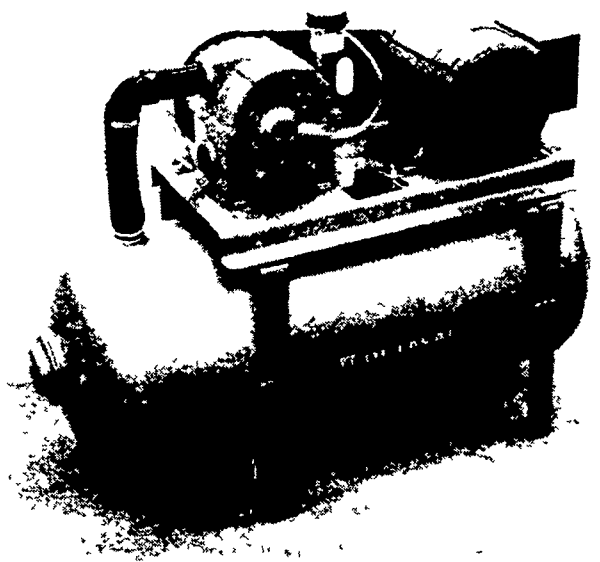
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