

Frances Moore Lappé/Joe Collins

Corporate profit motive needs pest control

Would protecting the environment from pesticides mean hunger for millions whose food could have been protected by them?

Vast quantities of pesticides are used in the U.S.—about 1.2 billion pounds annually—six pounds for every American, more than 30 percent of the world's total consumption. These chemicals are not applied mainly to American farmland. In fact, nearly half the pesticides used in the U.S. are applied to golf courses, parks and lawns.

Even more of an eye-opener is the fact that only about 5 percent of this nation's crop and pasture land is treated with insecticides, 15 percent with weedkillers, and 0.5 percent with fungicides. Of insecticides, which account for the major portion of all pesticides, more than half are used on nonfood crops such as cotton.

Are pesticides in Third World countries helping to feed the hungry? According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the U.N., over 800 million pounds of pesticides are used annually in underdeveloped countries. The great majority, however, are applied to nonfood crops, principally cotton, and to "fruits and vegetables grown under plantation conditions for exports."

But what about the poisons that are used in food agriculture? Have the chemicals worked? Are they effective? Are they necessary? The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 30 years ago farmers used 50 million pounds of pesticides and lost 7 percent of their crop before harvest. Farmers today use 12 times more pesticides and lose twice as much of their crops before harvest. Furthermore, the USDA estimates that even if all pesticides were eliminated, all crop loss due to pests (insects, pathogens, weeds, mammals and birds) would only increase by seven percentage points. How can this be explained?

A field is not just a battlefield of pest versus plant. A closer look reveals a highly complex, interacting system of hundreds

of different species of insects and other organisms occupying diverse ecological niches. A dead bug is not the only good bug. Some insects eat only part of the crop plant, some are parasites or flesh-eating predators that eat other insects. The plant-eating species certainly do eat the crop plants. But studies show that the vast majority of species do not cause sufficient damage to justify the cost of insecticides. Their numbers are kept below economic injury levels by the action of parasites and predators. But when these natural controls are destroyed by insecticides that do not distinguish friend from foe, many ordinarily insignificant insects are able to multiply faster than their predators.

Basic environmental security, not to mention truly effective pest control, clearly requires pesticides that are *target-specific*. The effects of each new pesticide on nontarget insects, other wildlife, and people should be carefully studied; chemical corporation's interests go in exactly the opposite direction. In order to maximize profit margins and expand sales, a chemical company seeks to minimize research and marketing costs and to come up with pesticides that kill the *broadest* spectrum of pests.

Pesticide sales are further expanded by promoting "100 percent" pest elimination. Aiming for 100 percent eradication, however, is extremely expensive, unnecessary, often fails, is likely to be dangerous and can result in costly "overkills."

To maximize profits, the companies promote *scheduled* spraying, instead of spraying in response to a need. Scheduled spraying means greater and more predictable sales. It is much easier for a Dow Chemical manager to judge how much pesticide to produce and distribute to different outlets if he can simply multiply the number of acres his customers own by a given quantity per acre. That way he does not have to take into account predictions about how bad a particular pest really is going to be in a given year.

Some American farmers have begun to realize the serious environmental and health damage involved in these techniques. In addition, they are spending more and getting fewer and fewer results. Graham County Arizona cotton growers, working with scientists from the University of Arizona, sent trained scouts into the fields to measure pest levels to see if and when spraying was necessary. Pesticide expenditures dropped tenfold, as did the pest damage. Including fees paid to "pest scouts," total pest control costs were less than one fifth of the scheduled approach. (At this point chemical companies put enormous, and successful pressure on the highest levels of the University administration to force termination of the program.) Similar experiments on 42 cotton and 39 citrus farms in California reduced pesticide expenditures by more than 60 percent.

In some cases, pesticides are used not to improve yield or quality, but only appearance. Take the lowly "thrips." Thrips are minute pests that do not reduce yields, harm trees, or lower the nutritional value of citrus fruits. Its singular offense is causing a light scar on the citrus skin. In California citrus groves, tons of pesticides are applied several times each year in the war against the humble thrips. The thrips develop resistance, but the growers dump on more and more deadly pesticide, raising costs in the process. Other, once innocuous insects, such as red mites, become real pests in the absence of their natural enemies. Farmworkers contract chronic and acute illnesses due to exposure to Parathion and other organophosphates used in place of DDT for thrips control. No one yet knows the effects on consumers.

Are there any alternatives? Indeed so. Now that tampering with complex natural systems is seen to be possibly more dangerous than the pests being controlled, such alternatives are being viewed in a new light.

For decades, pests that attacked corn

were controlled by annually alternating corn with a crop like soybean in the same field. Corn rootworm, for example, will not eat the soybean plant and cannot survive a year without corn. Ironically, certain weedkillers, now commonly used in corn cultivation in the United States, prevent this kind of rotation by remaining in the soil and killing noncorn plants the next season. Farmers relying on herbicides must then plant corn year after year on the same land, a practice that in itself tends to increase insects, disease and weeds, while depleting the soil. Worse still, the corn rootworm has now developed nearly total resistance to major pesticides.

Introducing controlled populations of natural predators and parasites into the fields is another non-chemical method with potential. After a pesticide disaster in Peru's Canete Valley, growers sought to restore natural controls. They imported numerous insects including thirty million wasps and twenty gallons of ladybugs to control leaf rollers, bollworms and aphids.

In Egyptian cotton fields the tradition was to collect by hand the egg masses of the cotton leafworm. After growers put their faith (and money) into insecticides, yields declined dramatically; only a return to hand collection of egg masses shows hope for yield increases.

Tragically, pest control technology is dominated by a small number of large chemical corporations that will turn profits only if they continue to make farmers and concerned people everywhere believe that human survival depends on the increased use of their products.

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Jews and Arabs: toward a two-state solution

By Myron Perlman and Robbie Skeist
(for Chutzpah, a Chicago socialist Jewish collective)

Israel! Palestine! These words arouse much passion, confusion, and anger, particularly among American socialists. The sharpness of the debate stems largely from the belief on each side that to justify one people's right to self-determination is to deny the right of others.

Discussion within this context is destructive. It encourages the slinging back and forth of simplistic slogans rather than the thoughtful development of a position. It undercuts Israeli and Palestinian peace forces and guarantees that most of the American left will make no contribution to peace or socialism in the Middle East.

There are two legitimate and conflicting claims to self-determination in the portion of historic Palestine lying west of the Jordan River (the part east of the Jordan, once part of Mandate Palestine, is fought over by Jordan and the PLO). Many leftists in this country have accepted the most rigid PLO position and deny Israel's right to exist. This is wrong, unworkable and racist.

Israel is the result of the Jewish people's struggle for self-determination and freedom in Europe and the Middle East. Westerners are acquainted with the Nazi Holocaust and the fate of Jews throughout Europe. What one doesn't usually hear about is the oppression of the Jews in Arab countries. Religious discrimination and economic harassment along with fears of rape and murder hastened the emigration to Israel after 1948.

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home for many Jews, a multi-party political system and democratic rights with input from a spectrum of socialist forces, the kibbutz movement, and agricultural progress. Israel's problems include the "social gap" (i.e., a class society), sexism, poor treatment of Jews from Arab and African lands, discrimination against Israeli Arabs, and the continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (captured in the 1967 War). Many groups in Israel are working to correct these injustices.

Palestinian Arabs are a people with a long history of oppression—by Israel and the Arab states. In spite of past dispersal, discrimination in many Arab countries, and extreme hardships in refugee camps, the Palestinian people affirm that they are a people with the right to self-determination and a state. We agree.

Key problems with the PLO are revealed by examining their National Cov-

enant, the basis for unity of the coalition of groups in the PLO. The Covenant denies that Jews are a people with a right to self-determination or a state. It calls for the end of the "Nazi, racist," Israel. It states clearly that the "secular, democratic state" that some American leftists (naively or maliciously) support would only allow Palestinian self-determination as part of an Arab fatherland. Jews present in Palestine before 1917 would be allowed to live as a "religious" minority (many Jews are atheists, but still part of the Jewish people). It is racist for the PLO to deny Jewish peoplehood. It is insulting and ridiculous to expect Israeli Jews to give up their state and self-determination.

Some leftists support the Covenant with their simplistic slogans. This encourages an all-out war on the Jews of Israel and anyone so callous to any people does not merit the label socialist.

Socialists should give critical support

to both movements for national self-determination.

What about the role of the big powers? Israel was supported in its creation by the Soviet Union; now it is overly dependent on the U.S. Both the U.S. and the USSR are trying to manipulate the Palestinian movement. When both Israel and the Palestinians have achieved self-determination and security, American and Soviet influence in the region will be weakened. To leave either party unsatisfied guarantees upheaval and constant big power intervention.

There are some Israelis and Palestinians actively working for a two-state solution. An Israeli coalition of leftists and "realists" has formed the Israel-Palestine Peace Council. The Council affirms Israel's existence and urges the creation of an independent Palestine on the West Bank and Gaza. At Paris meetings arranged by leftist French Jews the Council met with representatives of the PLO. General Matti Peled, spokesman for the Council, reported that some forces within the PLO are considering recognizing Israel.

The official positions of the Israeli government and the PLO remain non-recognition of the other's right to a state. This makes it all the more crucial for socialists to work for self-determination and peace for both Israel and Palestine.

This is a bare skeleton of our position. Our special *Chutzpah* supplement, "Israel and the Palestinians" is available for 25¢, or as part of a full copy of the journal for 50¢ from *Chutzpah*, P.O.B. 60142, Chicago, Ill., 60660.

DIALOG

LIFE IN THE U.S.

Rooting against the home team

By Louis Kampf

Boston. The baseball season opened the other day. I thought you might have missed the news. After all, Jimmy Carter, the nation's number one fan (think of all the peanuts sold during a ballgame) made no public statement about it. Nixon or Ford would have done better, comparing the baseball diamond to the infield of life, exhorting all Americans to win, yet play fair, just as they did on the playing fields of Vietnam.

I was hoping Carter might at least tell us something about baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn's plan to send an all-star team to Cuba. Did the National Security Council really get into a big fight about it? Is it true that Secretary of State Vance is a Red Sox fan, and therefore pressured Kuhn into ordering the Yankees to decline Fidel's invitation to play in Cuba? Or is it, as Carl Ogelsby and other who support a northeastern "Yankee" versus a sunbelt "Cowboy" interpretation of contemporary history might suggest, that Carter is not about to let a team named the Yankees get the jump on the Texas Rangers?

Carter did not speak. Instead, here in Boston, we got the usual opening day extravaganza. A United States Marine color guard marched all the way to the outfield to protect the flag: after all, last year's near disaster in Chicago, where Rick Monday, a patriotic Cub outfielder, prevented a crazed freak from stomping on old glory, might be repeated. A soprano, quaveringly out of tune, whined the Star Spangled Banner while the players, right hand over heart, scratched their asses with the left. Some dignitary threw out the first ball, nearly decapitating Pudge Fisk, the Red Sox's clean-living, hard-fighting catcher. Then the ump cried "play ball" and another exciting (gripping? thrilling? heart-thumping?) season started.

Fans, I confess. Most of that opening day stuff I made up. I wasn't anywhere near Fenway Park. I haven't been to a live major league baseball game since 1962, when a student of mine who happened to be the sister of a Baltimore Oriole relief pitcher gave me a free ticket for a box seat right behind the dugout. Nor did I watch the game on television, which makes me feel guilty, since channel 38 paid the Red Sox \$2 million to allow me to cheer for Freddy Lynn in my living room. But I'm sure I got the proceeding pretty straight, though it

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might have been a baritone doing the Star Spangled Banner.

I confess yet more. Though baseball stadiums revolt me, I am gripped by baseball. I care. Waking up during the night I watch Pete Reiser stealing home on an embarrassed Oscar Judd's triple-pump. It was 1946 at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn and I was playing hookey. Yes, I was really there.

So why does baseball still grab me, turning me into a child? I don't worry the matter too much: few fans do. But it's worth some thought. Let me get at it from left field or rather, the cliffs stretching behind the Polo Grounds, the New York Giants' homefield. Neither the team nor the ballpark still exist, of course. The Giants have moved, long ago, to San Francisco, and the Polo Grounds has been replaced by a typically brutal housing project.

During the 1940's some of us would sit on top of those cliffs in upper Harlem and watch the game inside the stadium. You could see second and third base, and pretty well make out what was going on.

We kids were usually joined by a group of old-timers, former semi-pros who, like us, could not cough up the twenty-five cents that would allow them entrance to the bleachers.

One trivial encounter has stuck in my memory for more than thirty years. Old Tim, grumpy and in his sixties, was arguing with me about the comparative merits of Gus Mancuso and Ernie (the Shnozz) Lombardi, both catchers. Suddenly he spread out his hands an inch from my nose. The fingers and knuckles were gnarled like the trunk of an ancient oak. "These," he said grimly,

"are from forty years of foul-tips." So much for my expertise.

Those hands. I promised myself never to be a catcher. Yet I admired the old bastard. He loved, really loved, the game. He was an ignorant bigot, hissing about that Hebe left-fielder (Goody Rosen), the damn Dago shortstop (Frank Crosetti), or the big Jig catcher (Josh Gibson). But during the baseball season his life had meaning, and his knowledge of the sport's art was exquisite and encyclopedic. He rooted for the Giants, though he belittled their skills: things were better in John McGraw's days.

I loved listening to him in spite of myself. I was a 15-year-old who had just read the *Communist Manifesto*, and felt contempt for this old man's childish concerns. Yet I knew that I shared his passions (what would Marx think?). And, to a degree, I still do—though by now I've read *Capital*. Occasionally I wonder what happened to Tim when the Giants moved to San Francisco for bigger bucks.

I found a sneaky way out of being a Marxist who yet shared Tim's passion: rooting *against* the home team. I still do. Since moving to Massachusetts in 1958 I have steadily rooted against the Red Sox. Except for 1967 and 1975, when they've won pennants, I've met with a good deal of success.

On opening day this year many fans joined me in my perversity: the Sox got booed noisily. The faithful bleacher rats had their own reasons. Yet their passionate anger is in league with my snooty cynicism.

SELL CAMPBELL. BRING BACK \$1.50 BLEACHERS. So read the legend on a sign carried by the faithful. Bill Campbell is a relief pitcher signed by the Sox for more than a million dollars.

That's how much his skills brought on the open market.

Free enterprise was belatedly (by 150 years or so) imposed on baseball last year by the courts. Players, the judge said, were no longer the absolute property of the teams they played for. The market rules: those who have skills can sell; those with capital can buy. Each day the sports pages are full of the latest news from the player exchange.

So one reason Campbell got booed is that he's a millionaire. The fans will continue to boo the other wealthy commodities in baseball uniforms—especially if they don't win.

"These people want production," says Captain Carl Yastrzemski, "and they want it now." Captain Carl, a management favorite during the players' strike, understands the nature of the market place.

Don't these all-American fans like free enterprise? Probably they do. But there are other things to life, as old Tim's knuckles showed me—forty years of catching for little more than esthetic reward; the wisdom of three score expended atop a cliff; the lack of 25 cents keeping first base and the outfield out of sight.

The bleacher rats might understand that. So they show up on opening day to express their resentment at passion and loyalty being demystified by a million dollars. When Shoeless Joe Jackson turned out to be involved in the betting scandal of 1919, a small boy approached him. "Say it ain't so Joe," he cried. Say it ain't so say the Red Sox boobbirds to Bill Campbell and anyone else who'll listen.

One day, perhaps, those fanatics in the bleachers — occasionally ignorant, often racist, prone to violence, yet sentimentalists over beauty—will absorb the lesson Tim taught me. Their anger is my anger; their obsession I share. They too might learn to stay away from the ballpark. Or better yet, take it over.

Louis Kampf lives in Boston and teaches at MIT.

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