



IN THE MAIL

Vol. 10, Nos. 2-3
Theme Issue on Environmental Policy
and
Vol. 11, No. 1
Environmental Index and State Parks

North Carolina Insight has performed a great service by spotlighting the environment this [past] year. But it has also, I'm afraid, helped to perpetuate the historic trend of minimizing or ignoring the effects of the widespread use of pesticides on our environment. Some want to continue the tradition of exempting pesticides from environmental consideration, but I hope the Center for Public Policy Research is not among them.

In 1986, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency called pesticides the number one environmental problem based on the toxicity of the products, widespread exposure, and the limited efforts being made to regulate and control them. But twice in 1988, in your major "Resources at Risk" issue (March) and again in the "Environmental Index" issue (October), *Insight* has almost totally ignored pesticides. It is a great shame and a lost opportunity to help your readers begin to understand the problem. Unintentionally, I'm sure, the effect is to play into the hands of pesticide polluters who like the low-profile status quo just fine.

It is not easy to get a handle on the pesticide problem in North Carolina. A Legislative Study Committee on Pest Control has been engaged in fact-finding on the subject for the past year and has only just barely scratched the surface. It has, however, shown how far we have to go to understand the full scope of the problem and to find common ground in solving it. The committee has seen that pesticides are not just an agricultural problem. Pesticides are also used routinely in schools, homes, and businesses, on lawns, parks, and rights of way, and constitute a major threat to

our groundwater.

No one knows how much pesticides are used in the state. Estimates range up to 50 million pounds of active ingredients each year, not including the often toxic "inert" ingredients in pesticide formulations. North Carolina is one of only nine states with *no* pesticide reporting requirements. How can one measure the impact over time or design an effective regulatory program without knowing what is sold and used? Might not such figures be appropriate for the proposed Environmental Index? *Insight* doesn't say.

The Center may not agree [that] pesticides are our number one problem, but surely it can find at least a little space to consider them alongside other major threats to "this goodliest land." They do, after all, have enormous impact on the air, the land, and the water. We hope the Center and *Insight* will soon discover pesticides, too.

Readers also wouldn't know it from your list of resources, but the Agricultural Resources Center, with offices in Carrboro and Raleigh, is the only statewide organization which concentrates on pesticide reform. We have been active for several years and stand ready to help on any aspect of pesticides, including their impact on the environment and public health.

Thanks again for providing an invaluable service and, in advance, for your continuing efforts.

—Allen Spalt, Director
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