

Presidential Address

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On behalf of the Aquatic Plant Management Society, I am honored to welcome our distinguished guests, members, ladies and gentlemen, to our nineteenth annual meeting.

In searching for topics and material for this event, I took the occasion to look back through several of our past journals to read what past presidents said. I was pleasantly surprised to find a good deal of foresight of things yet to come.

For example, in 1966, the late Zeb Grant stated, and I quote, "I feel there is a great need for an adequate training program for all people engaged in the use of herbicides."

John Gorman, in 1967, emphasized these thoughts when he said, "As our aquatic weed control problems become more complex, the need for qualified and competent applicators will increase."

I'm sure that you will agree that our aquatic weed problems are much more complex today than ever before. I wonder if they had visions of FIFRA in the making with its requirements for training and certification. I wonder if they saw the herbicides that we use being subjected to the restrictions and RPAR reviews now underway.

Bob Blackburn, in 1968, reiterated and put into concise terms what we in the corps found earlier when he stated: "The problem of aquatic weeds in many of our lakes and streams has progressed to the point that we cannot discuss control but rather must discuss aquatic vegetation management."

It was this discussion which later led to changing the name of the Hyacinth Control Society to our present name.

At our last meeting our program contained a panel discussion titled "What If." John Gallagher chaired that session whose purpose was to alert you to the possibilities of what could happen here. I'm sure that you remember the exhibits which John had in the back of the room containing a number of clippings concerning the Aquatic Weed Control Program in Western Canada. To remind you. I'd like to repeat a few of the headlines.

2,4-D Opponents Prepare to Fight Dumping in Court.

Court Halts 2,4-D Program

Government Bars Public from 2,4-D Area

One clipping told of Seattle's Park and Recreation Department which discontinued the use of 2,4-D and 2,4,5 TP in their program.

The "What If" of last year is now becoming a reality; it is happening here. About a month ago, I saw a news article in the ATLANTA JOURNAL which reported that one county in California had passed legislation prohibiting the application of chemicals by airplane.

Bob Gates was somewhat reading into the future 7 years ago when he said, "We must not sweep any of our problems under the rug. On the other hand, we have the obligation to insist that regulation and control of pesticides be based on sound information and the benefit/risk equation be soberly evaluated." He also said, "Emotion is a pollutant we cannot live with."

These same thoughts were presented by the president of the Connecticut Farm Bureau last month in Arlington, Virginia, at an American Farm Bureau sponsored conference on 2,4,5-T.

Mrs. Mary Porter said, "Of course farmers have a side in this issue. But above all else, it is the people's issue. It can only be resolved by facts arrived at objectively and scientifically." She also said, "Let the facts take us wherever they will, but let them be facts! This is not the time for emotional role-playing or the familiar courses of activist causes."

The purpose of the conference which she addressed was to reach an unbiased scientific consensus on the major issues which the Environmental Protection Agency used in suspending the major uses of the herbicides 2,4,5-T and Silvex. A total of 56 active participants were divided into six working groups to discuss carcinogenicity and mutagenicity, teratogenicity, chemistry, human exposure, ecological effects, and benefits. The active conferees were a diverse group with about 35 percent from academic institutions, about 25 percent from federal, state, or foreign governments and about 20 percent from chemical manufacturers.

A similar number of observers were also invited to evaluate the discussions and give their recommendations to the program chairman. Observers from both pro and con groups including the Environmental Defense Fund as well as political activists were also present. I was informed that a number of psychiatrists were present to evaluate the emotional impact on decision-making. Lawyers were also present to evaluate the legal impacts.

Some of the conclusions reached by the groups were:

*2,4,5-T has not been shown to be either carcinogenic or mutagenic in animal tests or human epidermiological tests to date.

*They found no evidence that 2,4,5-T induces miscarriage or cancer in humans.

*Dioxin, a contaminant of 2,4,5-T has shown mutagenic action in two bacterial tests but not in animal tests conducted so far.

*2,4,5-T is not the sole source of Dioxin. There are indications that other combustion sources are implicated as well.

It was interesting to note that in addition to the Alsea

study, the human exposure working group reviewed studies of exposed populations in New Zealand, Australia, and the Italian town of Seveso, where a manufacturing accident resulted in exposure to extremely high levels of Dioxin. Representatives from New Zealand and Italy were in that group.

Dr. Fred Tscherley of Michigan State University, formerly with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, chaired the conference. The conference represented a method of resolving scientific disputes by assembling a group of qualified scientists who would attempt to arrive at a consensus through public discussion. This is in contrast with the traditional dispute resolving method by which scientific issues are resolved in a court of law by attorneys and judges who must decide between conflicting scientific opinions.

Dr. Tscherley noted that it was difficult if not impossible for those trained in law to understand the nuances and subtleties in the exercise of scientific judgment.

In contrast to Dr. Tscherley's statement, I have an article from the WASHINGTON POST dated 22 June 1979, only a few weeks later, which was headlined "Herbicide Birth Defects Linked for House Panel." A San Francisco TV documentary resulted in a flood of 42,000 letters in California according to the article, which referred to them as "A growing body of evidence against the spraying of chemical herbicides."

We in the Aquatic Plant Management Society have a responsibility in helping to resolve these issues. We must take our cue from the political activists and become activists in our own right. Whenever we find false statements,

we need to challenge them with facts! The society itself, through its publications, its meetings, and the actions of the board of directors is an attempt to resolve disputes such as I have described. In addition to talking to ourselves, we need to make an additional effort to communicate with those outside of our immediate sphere to get the facts before the public and the decision makers so as to minimize or eliminate judgments based on emotions. We must be thinking of how we, collectively and individually, can best meet today's complex challenge and yet have the foresight to meet the future.

In closing, Herb Friedman summed it all up in 1964 when he said: "I hope that at some future meeting when the activities of previous years are being outlined, that it will take a great number of words to tell of the accomplishments of this society and its membership and that from greater knowledge will come a satisfaction and confidence in a job well done."

Let me echo those words by Herb Friedman which were made 15 years ago, because it would take thousands and thousands of words to describe this society's accomplishments in the past 15 years. Great progress has been made. But we have only scratched the surface. Our problems today are more complex than they were in 1964.

With the talent which we have here today in this room, I predict that in 1994—15 years from now—we will have made even greater accomplishments and solved more problems than history has recorded since Herb's words were spoken. The talent is here. We need only harness it for greater strides in the next 15 years.