

Pesticides and You

News from Beyond Pesticides: Protecting Health and the Environment with Science, Policy & Action

Volume 29, Number 2

Summer 2009

Putting "Progress" Back In Progressive

Holding our elected leaders' feet to the fire

By Jim Hightower

Social Justice and Food Production

Winning self-determination and justice for farmworkers

By Baldemar Velasquez

Also - A Tribute to Shelley Davis: A celebration of life, a commitment to keep fighting for farmworker justice; **Groups File Petition to FDA to Ban Uses of Triclosan:** Popular Pesticide Triclosan Found to Carry Numerous Health and Environmental Risks; A review of the film **Food Inc.**

Letter from Washington

We Are the Change

The theme of change was central to our Spring 2009 national conference –put in the context of our responsibility to push for the change that is needed. As President Obama has said, “I am not the change, you are.”

This issue of PAY brings you two extraordinary keynote talks from the 27th National Pesticide Forum, *Bridge to an Organic Future: Opportunities for health and the environment* –one by Baldemar Velasquez, president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) and the other by Jim Hightower, author and social activist. Beyond these two speakers, the meeting brought together farmers and land managers, farmworkers, consumers, scientists and activists in Carrboro, North Carolina to hear the latest on science, policy, and practice, and talk strategy. The good news is that most of the sessions are available on the Beyond Pesticides’ website at www.beyondpesticides.org/forum/video.

Setting a new direction at the top

With an eye to transparency and scientific integrity, the new EPA Administrator, Lisa Jackson, has said, “We are no longer faced with the false choice of a strong economy or a clean environment. The president’s budget shows that making critical and responsible investments in protecting the health and environment of all Americans will also lead to a more vibrant and stable economy. With these proposed resources, and the president’s strong environmental agenda, it should be overwhelmingly clear that EPA is back on the job.”

Bridge to an organic future

Is this a transformational time to create the necessary bridge to an organic future, where toxic pesticide use is the exception rather than the rule? Can we end the false assumption that hazardous chemicals are necessary for cost-effective food production, public health, quality of life, and to meet aesthetic standards? Will people no longer have to sacrifice their health and the environment with every meal, breath or drink? Will farmworkers who harvest our nation’s food enjoy safe working conditions and fair wages? These are our challenges. Hazardous chemicals are not essential to agricultural, land and building management. Current government and chemical industry-supported risk assessment standard setting, which accepts high levels of harm and big gaps in knowledge, offers inadequate health and environmental protection. At the same time, organic solutions, embodied in practices, products and local policies, are in wide use. They need to be expanded dramatically and urgently, with support for a nationwide transition at all levels of government, and public and private institutions.

Practitioners and supporters of organic methods on the farm or around the home and community: (i) ensure cleaner air and water; (ii) improve soil health and sustainability; (iii) reduce escalating global warming; (iv) protect bees and other pollinators; (v) create safer workplaces for those who grow and harvest food; and, (vi)

enable a safer diet. Our numbers grow larger each year. This year the White House announced its kitchen’s transition to organic. Next year, why not all federal land and buildings? How about all local and state owned properties?

Creative coalitions

In their talks, both Jim and Baldemar speak to the opportunities to link with the religious community, drawing on underlying principles to care for the environment and people. Departing from some in the evangelical movement who may have demonized environmentalists, in Jim’s words, new thinkers in the community are talking about global climate change and other environmental concerns. Baldemar, himself a preacher in addition to being a union leader, cites the Old and New Testament. Baldemar says that, “[D]ominion over the Earth. . .doesn’t say. . .exploit and poison the earth. . . It doesn’t say destroy it.” He continues, “It means being in concert with it. . .developing a coexistence. . .an equal respect for one another, a holding up of one another. That’s the relationship we have to have with those around us and the earth around us.”

Moving our agenda forward

In this issue, we discuss new scientific findings and policy changes, capturing both the challenges we face in protecting health and the environment and the successes taking hold across the country. A new report finds an organic diet is healthier, states continue advancing alternatives to lawn chemicals at schools, as state, local jurisdictions, utilities, and a major corporation are replacing their chemical-intensive land management practices and carbon footprint by using goats. And, the Obama family has signaled to the nation that organic is the future with the planting of an organic garden at the White House. Additionally, in embracing the organic incentives in the new Farm Bill, Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan showed up at a meeting of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) to announce \$50 million for a new initiative to meet the Obama Administration’s promise to encourage more organic agriculture production. In the spirit of continuing to push our agenda, we joined with Food and Water Watch to amend our 2005 petition to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) seeking a ban on non-medical uses of the harmful and unnecessary antimicrobial pesticide triclosan.

The change we are seeking begins in communities across the country where we hone our messages, update our facts, share our experiences and plan to expand the reach of our networks, as we become increasingly effective, convincing and powerful in rallying greater public support for the transformation to an organic future.



Jay Feldman is executive director of Beyond Pesticides.

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Crisis In Beekeeping

I was surprised and pleased by your extensive review of the crisis in beekeeping (vol. 28 no. 3). Pesticides are a major factor, as recognized by conventional as well as organic beekeepers (of which I am one).

“Colony Collapse Disorder” (CCD) is only the latest result of ingrained practices that have come to dominate the industry. Certainly, powerful chemicals put inside the hives are a serious issue. Others include:

- 1) The feeding of sugar (usually high fructose corn syrup) after most of the honey is harvested and sold;
- 2) Genetic fragility resulting from a centralized queen-rearing industry;
- 3) Trucking hundreds of thousands of hives across the country (70,000 into Maine alone) for pollination, with the resulting spread of parasites;
- 4) Using unnaturally oversized foundation which maximizes honey production but also intensifies the flourishing of mites and results in ever-increasing use of chemicals to control mites.

Organic beekeepers who avoid these practices generally report far less pressure from mites and other conditions associated with CCD.

A word of caution about #5 [Keep honeybees] in your list of things people can do

in their communities: Nearly all local beekeeping clubs and classes are predicated on the routine use of pesticides in hives. Of course, they may also help beginners with queen rearing, hive sanitation, minimizing bee-sting incidents among neighbors, etc. These clubs are a principle channel for state officials to advise people about practices. But there have been cases where state bee inspectors have ordered the destruction of organic hives for alleged Africanization.

Africanized colonies are identified in three ways:

- 1) Extreme aggressiveness – a pattern is established where passers-by are attacked for no apparent reason;
- 2) Expert analysis of body parts from a suspect hive;
- 3) Small size of bees.

Now, organic bees raised on natural sized foundations are similar in size to Africanized bees. Also, migratory beekeeping spreads some degree of Africanized genetics throughout the U.S. Some bee inspectors have little patience for organic practices in general, and regard methods #1 [Choose nonchemical solutions to insect and weed problems] and #2 [Create habitat for encouraging native bees] as too expensive or time consuming.

Arthur Harvey
Hartford, ME

Controlling Pigeons Without Poison

I live in an apartment building next to a large park managed by the National Park Service. It supports a variety of wildlife in spite of its urban surroundings, including raptors and other birds of prey. Our building has done a fairly good job of reducing its use of rodenticides as a result of my concern about secondary poisoning. Recently, however, one of my neighbors has become increasingly vocal about the pigeons that roost on the building near her apartment, and is agitating for poisons to be left out for these birds. I am again worried that this will in turn hurt the larger birds in the adjacent park, but will need to provide my building's management with a feasible alternative. Is there anything I can suggest to avoid having the pigeons poisoned?

Bobbi
Washington, DC

Hi Bobbi,

Thank you for contacting Beyond Pesticides with your question regarding pigeon control. It is a common problem, particularly in urban areas, where buildings are abundant and other roosting options are less attractive or available.

Poisoning pigeons and other “nuisance” birds can have consequences similar to poisoning rodents. The risk of secondary poisoning of predators is high and the poison itself may be ingested by a non-target animal (like a pet). Luckily, there are a number of non-toxic methods to try out on your building, which should be more effective in the long run than poison, and which offer the benefit of not causing dead pigeons to appear outside your neighbor's window.

The first step is to remove all traces of the pigeons' nests, feathers, food, and other
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debris from the building and thoroughly clean the area. Pigeons are attracted to the scent of other pigeons and like to roost together, and will return if they sense it is a popular spot.

After cleaning, pigeons must be permanently excluded from the areas on which they can land or roost. There are a number of ways to do this, including installing barrier nets, metal or plastic pigeon spikes, or angled ramps (pigeons cannot land on surfaces at an angle of 45 degree or greater). These are relatively inexpensive measures (spikes today cost under \$10/foot) and are more permanent than supplies of poison.

There are also repellents. These, however, can be messy and require reapplication. There are sticky, non-toxic glues that, when applied to places where pigeons land, can discourage them from perching. They can be messy, however, and would not permanently exclude the birds. Sound repellents have similar temporary effectiveness, but in an urban area your neighbors may not be willing to try these.

We hope one of these solutions is approved by your building. In the long run, both the larger birds and your neighbors will be happier with permanent exclusion than all the negative side effects of poison.

Speak Your Mind!

Whether you love us, disagree with us or just want to speak your mind, we want to hear from you. All mail must have a daytime phone and verifiable address. Space is limited. Mail may be edited for length and clarity.

Email to info@beyondpesticides.org or send mail to Beyond Pesticides, 701 E Street SE #200, Washington, DC 20003.

Beyond Pesticides Daily News Blog

Read and comment on stories at www.beyondpesticides.org/dailynewsblog.

Excerpt from *Beyond Pesticides* original blog post:

Pesticide Exposure Kills Woman, Three Years Later EPA Files Complaint

(Beyond Pesticides, December 22, 2008) The U.S. EPA has filed an administrative complaint, seeking a maximum penalty of only \$4,550, against a pest control company that sprayed pesticides in a couple's home, causing the wife to die shortly thereafter. It has been more than three years since the incident took place in Florence, Oregon...

Ethel Says:

Synthetic Pyrethroid mixtures along with "Inerts" are used on our children daily in schools. Kids and teachers are reacting to these products with headaches, nausea, skin burning and various stages of dizziness, drowsiness and inability to think normally, including anger and general depression and irritability. If the parents complain about the monthly spraying of the schools, they are told that the products used are 'totally safe' and do not harm anybody by the school personnel. If a person reports the problem to EPA, a representative of the local County Ag Commissioner's Office 'will investigate as to whether the pesticide was used in accordance with 'label information'...if they find that it was used according to "label specifications," nothing is done about the illness produced by the pesticide exposures.

We are routinely exposing our kids to known neurotoxic pesticides on a monthly basis in schools, restaurants and numerous other public places. How is this OK? This needs to change!!!!

Excerpt from *Beyond Pesticides* original blog post:

UK Court Overturns Landmark Ruling on Crop Spraying

(Beyond Pesticides, July 8, 2009) Pesticide campaigner Georgina Downs' high court victory last November, when a court ruled that there was "solid evidence" that rural residents had suffered harm from crop spraying with toxic chemicals, was overturned yesterday by the Court of Appeal. Three judges on the Court of Appeal concluded that the government has complied with its obligations...

Johan Says:

It is a shame and sad to hear about this latest ruling. I am a medical practitioner in South Africa, experiencing the same symptoms and see it in my patients. I have proof of the effects of organophosphate and carbamate exposure to residents living close to agricultural activities. We live in an intensive agricultural area. Another proof we have is the water in the rivers in this area are heavily polluted with agrochemicals, which means it is in the air, water, food and ends up in our bodies.

Legislation Aims to Improve Food Safety, Small Producers Object to One-Size-Fits-All Approach

U.S. Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA), chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, along with Chair Emeritus John D. Dingell (D-MI), and Reps. Frank Pallone (D-NY), Bart Stupak (D-MI), Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Betty Sutton (D-OH), introduced the *Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009* (H.R. 2749), which they say will improve food safety by making the food supply more transparent, inspections of food facilities more frequent and requiring manufacturers to take steps to prevent food-borne illnesses. Among other things, the bill will provide FDA new authority to: issue mandatory recalls of tainted foods, strengthens penalties; create a registry of all food facilities serving U.S. consumers; generate resources to support FDA oversight of food safety through an annual registration fee of \$500; require safety plans that identify and protect against food hazards; increase frequency of inspections; enhance FDA's ability to trace the origin of tainted food through electronic record-keeping; allow FDA to require imported food to be certified as meeting all U.S. food safety requirements; require

country-of-origin labeling; and more.

While supporting steps to ensure a safe food system, the public health and sustainable agriculture communities point out a handful of problems with the language. In terms of protecting public health, advocates are disappointed that the bill does not require companies to conduct microbial testing for pathogens and report positive results to FDA. Others point out that the greatest public health threats come from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), and that society could benefit most from CAFO-specific regulations. Advocates also oppose the flat fee, which will have a far greater impact on a small local processor that only distributes locally than a multinational company with millions in sales. Mark Schonbeck from the Virginia Association for Biological Farming suggests a small \$50 flat fee plus



a percentage of annual total dollar value of product above \$100,000 per year. Some farmers think the law should be voluntary for family-scale farms.

For more information on the benefits of organic agriculture, see Beyond Pesticides' organic webpage, www.beyondpesticides.org/organicfood.

USDA Commits \$50 Million to Organic Agriculture Transition and Support

On May 5, 2009 at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting, Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan announced \$50 million for a new initiative to meet the Obama Administration's promise to encourage more organic agriculture production. Funding for the initiative is being made available as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). "Assisting organic producers is a priority of the 2008 Farm Bill as well as for Secretary Vilsack and the Obama Administration," said Dr. Merrigan. "The objective of this initiative is to make organic food producers eligible to compete for EQIP financial assistance." The 2009 Organic Initiative is a nationwide special initiative to provide financial assistance to organic producers certified under the *Organic Foods Production Act*, as well as producers in the process of transitioning to organic production. Under the Organic Initiative, required minimum core conservation practices will be determined by specific resource concerns. The practices are: conservation crop rotation; cover crop; nutrient management; pest management; prescribed grazing; and forage harvest management. States must consider using any appropriate practice that meets the resource concern on a particular operation. *For more information, see Beyond Pesticides' organic agriculture webpage, www.beyondpesticides.org/organicfood.*

Stockholm Convention Expanded to Ban Lindane and More

On May 9, 2009, nine new hazardous chemicals were added to the list of 12 chemicals to be banned under the 2001 *Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants*. Lindane, a pesticide commonly used in head lice treatments in the U.S. and whose use has already been banned in many countries, is the most prominent pesticide added to the list for phase-out. The other chemicals include two lindane byproducts, three chemicals used in flame retardants, chlordecone (an agricultural pesticide), pentachlorobenzene (used in PCB products, in dye production, as a fungicide and flame retardant), and PFOS. The *Stockholm Convention*, which was adopted in 2001 and entered into force in 2004, requires parties to take measures to eliminate or reduce the release of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) into the environment. The original 12 chemicals, or “dirty dozen,” include pesticides aldrin, chlordane, dieldrin, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene, mirex, and DDT, as well as toxaphene, endrin, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and polychlorinated dibenzodioxins.

POPs are synthetic, toxic chemicals that persist in the environment, bioaccumulate in the food chain and are common contaminants in fish, dairy products and other foods. Many Americans may now carry enough POPs in their bodies to cause serious health effects, including reproductive and developmental problems, cancer, and disruption of the immune system. Some indigenous communities in the Arctic region carry particularly high levels of these contaminants. Many POPs migrate on wind and water currents to the Arctic and bioaccumulate in the marine food chain there, contaminating the traditional foods of indigenous peoples. The U.S. is not yet among the 163 countries (including the European Union) that have ratified the treaty. In order to fully implement the treaty, Congress must first amend U.S. chemicals and pesticides laws, including the *Toxic Substances Control Act* (TSCA) and the *Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act* (FIFRA), to give EPA the authority to ban or restrict domestic production, use and export of POPs.

International Groups Pledge to Block GE Wheat

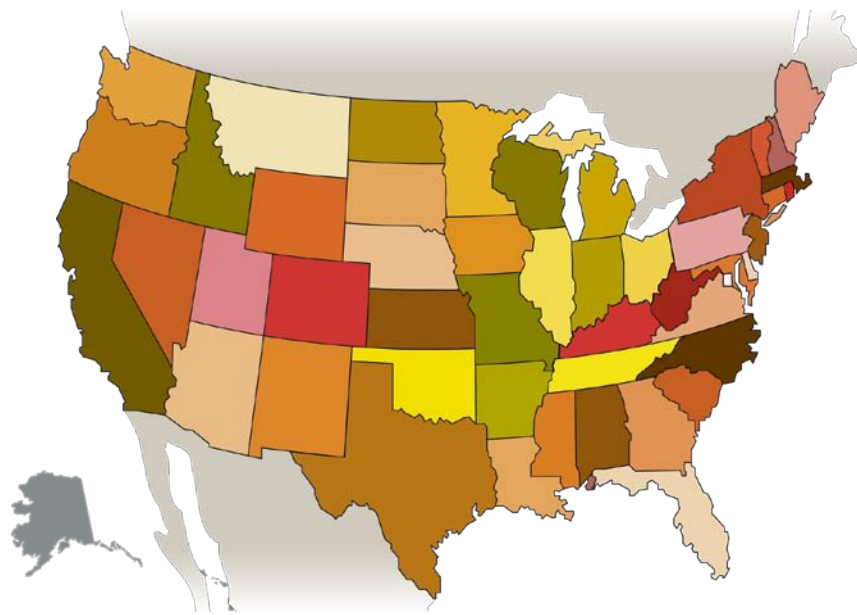
On June 1, 2009, an international coalition of farmers, consumers and civil society organizations released a joint statement confirming their collective commitment to stop commercialization of genetically engineered (GE) wheat. In 2004, global grassroots pressure prevented biotechnology company Monsanto from pushing GE wheat onto an unwilling market, but in May 2009 the agricultural biotechnology lobby began pushing the issue again. “GE wheat is a potential disaster of huge proportions,” said Terry Bohem, Vice President of the National Farmers Union in Canada, and co-author of the statement. “We refuse to allow Monsanto and industry groups to restart any campaign to commercialize GE wheat. The group statement centers on the pledge, “In light of our existing experience with genetic engineering, and recognizing the global consumer rejection of genetically engineered wheat, we restate our definitive opposition to GE wheat and our commitment to stopping the commercialization

of GE traits in our wheat crops.” GE wheat is engineered to be tolerant to Monsanto’s herbicide Roundup (glyphosate). Genetic engineering in agriculture has led to increased pesticide use, as well as insect and weed resistance. In addition, genetic drift can hurt farmers who choose not to plant GE crops. Beyond Pesticides and other groups have successfully sued to

prevent GE threats to organic and conventional farming.

Take Action: The authors ask groups to sign on at www.cban.ca/globalstopGE wheat before August 31, 2009. For more information on GE food, visit Beyond Pesticides’ genetic engineering webpage at www.beyondpesticides.org/gmos.





Review Shows Organic Diet Is Best for Pregnant Women and Children

A balanced organic diet, both before and during pregnancy, can significantly reduce a child's likelihood of being overweight, obese or developing diabetes, according to a literature review of over 150 scientific studies assembled by The Organic Center (TOC), an organic industry research institute. *That First Step: Organic Food and a Healthier Future*, documents that exposure to pesticides during pregnancy increases the risk of premature birth, low-birth weight, neurological problems and diabetes. With the time between initial conception and the early years of development being the most critical in establishing life-long health, a well-balanced diet rich in organic fruits and vegetables helps to establish healthy food-taste preferences, promotes healthy patterns of cell division and largely eliminates exposures to approximately 180 pesticides known to increase the risk of developmental abnormalities. Furthermore, this combination of reducing pesticide exposure and consuming nutrient-dense organic foods can help people manage weight and prevent diabetes. "The conscious decision to purchase organic food to improve one's health, or the health of family members, is a critical first step that millions of individuals have decided to take," said Charles Benbrook, Ph.D., co-author of the report and the chief scientist at TOC.

The report reveals that an organic diet before and during pregnancy can help the fetus develop a healthy endocrine system, which regulates metabolism and tissue function. Children and adults with healthy endocrine systems have an easier time managing their weight and blood sugar levels and are less likely to combat obesity and diabetes in life. However, exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals in life's earliest stages — including pesticides used in conventional farming methods — can upset a child's development and create health problems later on. *Download the report at www.organic-center.org and learn more about organics at www.beyond-pesticides.org/organicfood.*

Herbicide Exposure Linked to Pancreatic Cancer

Two commonly used herbicides, pendimethalin and S-Ethyl dipropylthiocarbamate (EPTC), show a statistically significant exposure-response association with pancreatic cancer. The new study, "Agricultural Pesticide Use and Pancreatic Cancer Risk In The Agricultural Health Study Cohort," published in the May 2009 issue of the *International Journal of Cancer*, is a case-control study of pesticide applicators and their spouses in Iowa and North Carolina. After controlling for age, smoking and diabetes, the study finds a three-fold increased risk for lifetime pendimethalin use and a two-and-a-half-fold increased risk for lifetime use of EPTC when compared to those who never used the chemicals. Among the 24 pesticides examined, use of one of five pesticides (trifluralin, chlorimuron-ethyl, pendimethalin, EPTC or heptachlor) is associated with at least a 40 percent excess risk of pancreatic cancer. Pancreatic cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer-related death in the U.S. The National Cancer Institute estimates that pancreatic cancer will lead to more than 35,000 deaths in 2009 and more than 42,000 new cases will be diagnosed in 2009.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) pesticide sales and usage statistics, pendimethalin is the third most commonly used home and garden (and other non-agricultural use) herbicide and the 7th most commonly used herbicide in agriculture. Pendimethalin is listed by EPA as a Group C - Possible Human Carcinogen, has demonstrated neurologic effects, and is a suspected endocrine disruptor. EPTC is also a commonly used herbicide, regularly used on feed and food crops, such as alfalfa, potato, and corn, as well as non-agricultural uses, such as rights-of-way and landscapes. EPTC, a thiocarbamate pesti-

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Herbicide Exposure Linked to Pancreatic Cancer

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cide, inhibits the production of cholinesterase, an enzyme necessary for the transmission of nerve impulses, and is linked to increasing the risk of developing asthma.

For more information on more than 80 pesticides commonly used in the U.S., visit Beyond Pesticides' Pesticide Gateway at www.beyondpesticides.org/gateway. This database tool provides access to scientific

and regulatory information on pesticides and least-toxic alternatives, drawing on information from many sources of governmental and non-governmental information.

Two States Pass Bills on Lawn Pesticide Use at Day Care Centers

The Connecticut and Illinois legislatures have passed bills that increase the protection of children at day care centers from toxic lawn chemicals. While providing different degrees of protection, both bills, which build on their existing state school pesticide laws, passed with overwhelming support. Connecticut State Representative Terrie Wood said, "We know that contact with pesticides and chemicals are not compatible with healthy living. It is time to err on the side of caution and ban these pesticides from use any place our children and grandchildren learn and play." The Connecticut bill (SSB 1020) extends the state's existing law that prohibits the application of pesticides on kindergarten through 8th grade school grounds to include day care center grounds as well. In addition, the bill allows only licensed pest control operators to apply pesticides in day care center facilities or on their grounds. There is an exemption that allows general use pesticides to be used in an emergency situation when a pest poses an immediate threat to human health. Children are required to be kept away from any pesticide application area. Prior notification, including the name of the active ingredient, target pest, location and date of application, must be provided to all parents and guardians whose children attend the day care at least 24 hours before a pesticide application. The bill delays the implementation date for banning the use of lawn chemicals on school athletic fields and playgrounds one year to July 1, 2010. Until then, schools must follow a state integrated pest management (IPM) program for the fields and playgrounds, which continues to allow some toxic chemical use.

The Illinois bill (SB 1769) prohibits the application of pesticides when children are present at licensed day care centers and the treated area must remain unoccupied for at least two hours following the application. It also requires that toys and other items are removed from the application area. Day care centers must maintain a registry of parents and guardians who want to receive four-day advance notice of a pesticide application. In addition, the bill requires public schools to provide four-day advance notice of lawn pesticide applications either by way of a registry or universal notification to parents and guardians of students attending the school. The Illinois Department of Public Health is directed to recommend a pesticide-free turf care program to all day care centers and public schools.

Although these laws are instrumental in improving protections, Beyond Pesticides notes that truly protective state and local laws establish mandatory and comprehensive IPM programs that include organic land management, ban the use of toxic pesticides for cosmetic/aesthetic purposes, and prohibit the use of hazardous pesticides, such as probable, possible or known carcinogens, endocrine disruptors, reproductive toxins, developmental toxins, neurotoxins, and toxicity category I and II pesticides. The least-toxic pesticide should only be used after non-chemical strategies have been tried.

Take Action: Encourage your school to adopt safer pest management practices. Learn about your school's pest management policy. If a policy already exists, make sure that it is being enforced. If your school does not have a policy, Beyond Pesticides can work with you and your school to ensure children are protected. School administrators will be more conscious of their pest management program if they know parents are concerned and tracking their program. For more information, visit Beyond Pesticides' Children and Schools webpage at www.beyondpesticides.org/schools.



Goats: Nature's Best Weed Control

Many believe that nature's best weed control is goats. This spring, companies and government agencies across the country are putting these hungry herbivores to work. According to the Mesa, AZ Utilities Department, which is currently running a pilot goat project, "[Goats] can clear vegetation from hard-to-reach places, and they'll eat the seeds that pesticides and mowing leave behind, preventing vegetation from coming back next year. Environmentally, goats reduce the use of motorized vehicles, which in turn reduces air pollution and usage of fossil fuels, involve no toxic chemicals or pesticides and they produce biodegradable waste material that naturally breaks down into the soil. Goats also make better economic sense than utilizing mechanical means which are more costly." Plus, they show up every day to work, never complain, and they are tireless in performing their job.

Maryland Department of Transportation (DOT): The MD DOT State Highway Administration (SHA) enlisted a herd of 40 goats to manage grass amid the meadows and bogs that protect the threatened bog turtle around a major highway bypass. **Hempstead, NY:** Five goats are being used as an environmentally responsible method of



eradicating brush, weeds and other vegetation overgrowth at the Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve, along with a flock of Guinea Hens, which have already replaced insecticides in the park. **Google:** The internet giant hired 200 goats instead of a mowing crew to manage the weeds and brush growing on their corporate campus in Mountain View, CA in order to reduce fire hazard. **Mesa, AZ:** The City of Mesa Utilities Department employed 80 goats to manage 30 acres of brush and weeds as an alternative to mechanical mowing. **Cheyenne, WY:** The city of Cheyenne hired Ecological Services, Inc., owned by Beyond

Pesticides board member Lani Malmberg, to provide weed control, flood control and stream bank restoration along two creeks that go through the city with about 700 goats.

For more information, read "Successfully Controlling Noxious Weeds with Goats" (www.beyondpesticides.org/infoservices/pesticidesandyou); watch video from "Organic Land Management" at the National Pesticide Forum (www.beyondpesticides.org/forum/video) and see Beyond Pesticides' Lawn and Landscape webpage (www.beyondpesticides.org/lawn).

Appreciation

The Beyond Pesticides family lost two members and supporters in the last several months. Both Marjorie Fisher and Eric Kindberg have taught us so much through their intellect, passion and sincerity. They leave unique legacies for our organization and its continuing work.

Marjorie Fisher, 1923 – 2009. Marjorie brought us so much enthusiastic hope for the future, her driving spirit and intellect eagerly educating people to understand and act on the serious environmental and health problems that confront us. At Beyond Pesticides, I came to know Marjorie over two decades of her work, honoring her in 2003 for her environmental leadership, perseverance and good will with Beyond Pesticides' Environmental Leadership Award. I know Marjorie didn't want honors; her reward was sharing with others and advancing the changes in food production and land management practices that she knew are so urgently needed. Her commitment to organic management was contagious. In her work, Marjorie was an enthusiastic contributor to all her communities, whether local, national or international. Marjorie helped found the Nutrition for Optimal Health Association (NOHA), edited NOHA News, founded and served as first chair of the Green Sanctuary committee of the Unitarian Church of Evanston, Illinois and was active in the League of Women Voters. We would like to thank Marjorie and her family for the generous gift in her honor.

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by Jay Feldman

Putting “Progress” Back In Progressive

The route to social justice, fair food and a sustainable environment

By Jim Hightower

Bridge to an Organic Future
The 27th National Pesticide Forum
April 2009, Carrboro, NC



Jim Hightower is a national radio commentator, writer, public speaker, and author, Swim Against The Current: Even A Dead Fish Can Go With The Flow. The following article is transcribed from Jim Hightower's keynote talk at Bridge to an Organic Future, the 27th National Pesticide Forum. The conference was sponsored by Beyond Pesticides, Toxic Free North Carolina and numerous local, state and regional organizations. To watch video footage of this talk, as well as other Forum presentations from 2006 to the present, visit www.beyondpesticides.org/forum/video.

Thank you for allowing a scruffy Texas populist to come here and be a part of your deliberations. It just makes me happier than a mosquito at a nudist colony to be looking out at all of you great Beyond Pesticides' dreamers, schemers, you innovators and educators, you earth healers and bridge builders, corporate butt kickers, and grassroots agitators; agitators for America's proud progressive values of economic fairness, social justice, and equal opportunity for all people. That is the essence of what America is all about, what we stand for in the world. What makes America at all important are those values of fairness, justice and opportunity for everybody.

I want to thank the Unitarians for letting us transform this sanctuary into the high church of revelation and redemption here tonight. And I want to thank Beyond Pesticides and Toxic Free NC for gathering us together here to celebrate our achievements which have not been small, including that little election we had last November; most importantly for gathering us together in this really crucial time to strategize, organize, and mobilize; for our next steps in this ongoing battle to take America back from the greed-heads and boneheads; and, to move America forward into a new era of good food and good stewardship, common sense and the common good.

Opportunity for change

What we have won in 2008 is not merely the White House. It is the opportunity for change. That is what we achieved, last year. Not the change itself, but the chance to make change. I know that you know that this is not easily done. The powers-that-be on Wall Street and in Washington is kind of redundant these days, isn't it? They get to think that they are the top dogs and we are a bunch of fire hydrants out here in the countryside. That is why I am so pleased to come over here to the Triangle area to be with those of you who are genuine change agents, those of you who have been on the front lines of democracy all these years, challenging the greed of tinkle-down-economics that we have been practicing, defying the corporate order and changing the conventional wisdom.

What we have won in 2008 is not merely the White House. It is the opportunity for change... Not the change itself, but the chance to make change.

Some cynics say it's not even worth the effort, don't even try; you cannot empower regular people to take charge. But as a friend of mine who has been a pioneer in the organic movement said, "Hightower, those who say that it can't be done should not interrupt those who are

doing it." And that would be you. And I thank you for that. It is not easy to do what you do. I know. Wherever you are, whether you're fighting as this great contingent of farmworkers is doing, or tobacco, cucumbers or sweet potatoes workers, you're taking them on, fighting local government, state government, national government over issues of pesticides. It's not easy. Sometimes you get to feeling like that guy that B. B. King sings about, "Nobody likes you but your mama, and she might be jiving you too." Did you ever get to feeling like that?

Not easy, but it is essential if America is ever to achieve those ideals that we put out to the world of fairness and justice and opportunity. It is essential that good folks like you stand up. So I've come here chiefly to applaud you for the gumption and gutsiness that you show day in and day out.

Unsustainable farm and food policy

Woodrow Wilson, when he first came to Washington, said, “If you want to make enemies try to change something.” All you’re trying to change is 60 odd years of ignorance and arrogance and avarice that has created a national pesticide addiction in America that is destructive, costly, unnecessary and demonstrably insane. Look at the insanity of our food and farm policy. These policies have brought us an industrialized, conglomeratized, chemicalized, globalized, subsidized agriculture system that is unsustainable. You don’t need an IQ higher than room temperature really to figure it out. To see that what the powers that be are doing might work for Dow Chemical and Monsanto. It might work for Tyson’s Food and Wal-Mart. But, it is not working for us. For the majority of the American people it is a policy that runs roughshod over family farmers, runs roughshod over farmworkers, over our soil and our water, over consumers, over food itself; policy that runs roughshod over our values of social justice and egalitarianism.

What happened to us. How did this come about? What happened is this – politics. We Americans stood by, unbeknownst to us, as our food and farm policies, our food and farm politics, were hijacked by the money-powers with their lobbyists and their lawyers being in charge of food and farm policy! These lawyers and lobbyists, these are people who could not run a watermelon stand if we gave them the melons and we had the highway patrol flag down the customers for them. But nonetheless, they are in charge of our food policy. The operating principal of these profiteers seems to be: if brute force isn’t working, it’s probably because you are not using enough of it. So we got a billion pounds of pesticides being poured on our crops every year. A billion pounds each year!

We have farm labor wages that mock the work ethic. That’s the big centerpiece of what workers are supposed to aspire to. The work ethic in America – well, if the work ethic was actually rewarded, Wall Street bankers would be toiling for pennies and farmworkers would be getting retention bonuses and golden parachutes. These are policies that centralized agricultural production so that the typical item in our supermarkets travels 1,500 miles to get there.

Food itself is tortured, literally tortured. Genetic manipulation: the tampering with the very DNA of the world’s food supply

without human health or environmental consequences being tested. Cows are vegetarians, yet we are forcing them to become carnivores or even cannibals. We put animals, from chickens to pigs, into concentration camps called CAFOs, confined animal feeding operations, and factory farms. We inject animals with antibiotics and sex hormones, not because we want them to be sexy or we want them to be healthy, but because they want them to grow faster. We zap our food with radiation to try to cover up the mess they made and then we zing it with additives, flavorings, preservatives, sugars and trans fats. They’re turning food, nature’s own gloriously diverse and delicious cornucopia, into a widget - an assembly line corporate profit center that loses all connection to the good earth and our well-being.

“Keep your mouth open”

This is where you come in. This is why your efforts are so important to the grassroots level all across our country. You know they say, “The first job of a citizen is to keep your mouth open.” Y’all are pretty good at that. But, it always helps if that mouth is attached to a brain. And that is what you do. Your grassroots outreach provides the information, the training, the connections, the visions to link the brain power to the mouth power which connects then to the political power.

Together we can do it ourselves

I think of groups like Beyond Pesticides in terms of something that Susan DeMarco, my co-conspirator, and I wrote about in this book about a hardware store right near our home in south Austin, Texas. It’s a hardware store called Harrell’s Hardware. It’s about half the size of this room right here. It’s a great place. You don’t have to buy the whole package of nails. They’ll sell you one nail. “I need a nail.” “Here.”

They’ll work with you. “What are you trying to do?” “Well, I’m going to build a bookshelf.” “Well, let’s pencil it out here and see what you need.”

They’ll loan you a tool. And you can take a tool home and bring it back. And Harrell’s Hardware slogan is: “Together we can do it yourself.” Isn’t that perfect? That has to be our slogan doesn’t it? We can’t do it ourselves, but together we can - do it ourselves.



The Election of Obama

That brings us to where we are. We have to ask the question. Barack Obama is elected, what now? We won didn't we? Well, not yet. We did win. Obama's election is a thrill. First of all, it means that George W. and his buddy buckshot Cheney are gone, gone, solid gone. It took a while but the people of America did rise up and say not only does the emperor have no clothes but he is buck-naked and butt-ugly. They voted those suckers out of there. Second of all, we got ourselves a Democrat, a progressive-minded Democrat, an African-American, progressive-minded Democrat. Let us see the show of hands of how many saw that was possible two years ago. Achievement is coming along. We deserve to wallow in the progress, but not to get stuck in it. Some change has already come our way. And that's important. You know they say that the worst job in the circus is cleaning up after the elephants.

We are making some progress. Hilda Solis is the new Secretary of Labor and she is dynamite. She is going to do some good. We have some hope with Lisa Jackson. "The EPA is back on the job," she says. We are going to push her to that. We have the first family creating an organic garden on the White House grounds and an organic kitchen.

Grassroots agitation more important now

But a big profound change has also happened and we got to acknowledge that it does not get a lot of attention, but it is a very important to everything that we are trying to do. And that is that the debate has shifted. The debate is on our terms now, not on their terms. That changes everything. That means that we can be on the offensive. Now having said all that, we can't go all goosey about Obama's election and the big change. Our grassroots agitation and our organizational aggressiveness is more essential now than ever before. We can't just crank back in the lazy boy and say, oh well, Barack's got it covered now. Do some 12 ounce elbow bends and watch him work. Well, that's not the way it's going to work. Let's be honest. Barack Obama is only going to be as good as we make him be. We have to be the force.

I got to tell you I had mixed emotions January 20th. I was there in front of my TV in Austin, Texas watching that crowd that filled back to the Capitol, to the Washington Monument and back to the Lincoln Memorial and back on across. A couple of million people were out there. Now I got the goose bumps and felt the heart palpitations and all that. But I had mixed emotions watching him



Jim Hightower told Forum participants that the election of President Obama is just the beginning and that he believes the role of the grassroots pressure is more important than ever.

taking the oath of office. You know they say, "A mixed emotion is when you see your 16-year old daughter come home from the prom with a Gideon bible under her arm."

Facing ignorance, arrogance and avarice

Well, on the one hand we got a guy here with good progressive instincts, good progressive roots. We got a guy with a commitment to change and a mandate for change. We got a guy with strong public support. But, on the other hand, we got a guy who is face-to-face with the forces of ignorance and arrogance and avarice in Washington, DC.

Let me just name three of those forces of ignorance, arrogance and avarice. First, consider this sobering statistic: 13,000. That's how many corporate lobbyists are in Washington, DC tonight and every day of the week – 13,000 corporate

lobbyists. They are already on the prowl. You can look at the Wall Street bailout, as nauseating as it is. Wall Street bankers caused a financial collapse that is crushing America with their laissez-faire-y-land ideology. We now have seven states in America that have job unemployment above 10 percent, not just Michigan, but California, North Carolina and Oregon -previous boom states with 10 percent plus unemployment. Millions of people have lost their homes. Whole industries are being wiped out - General Motors, Chrysler. A bailout that's now tallied not the \$700 billion you have heard about, but \$9.9 trillion so far has been committed by the Federal Reserve and the Treasury to back up loans and guarantees, as well as the direct subsidies and bailout. So who is getting the money? It's not the people who are losing their jobs. It's not the folks losing their homes. It's not anybody really in the

Our organizational aggressiveness is more essential now than ever before. We can't just crank back in the lazy boy and say, oh well, Barack's got it covered.



Jim Hightower told the crowd that every day, Washington, DC is flooded with 13,000 corporate lobbyists.

countryside. It's the very Wall Street bankers, the creeps and the crooks and the incompetents who knocked us down, who crashed the economy. They looked at that pile of bailout money, sent their lobbyists to Washington and the lobbyists jumped on that money like a gator on a poodle. I mean it was instantaneous. There are 3,000 lobbyists out of those 13,000 that work for Wall Street.

Second reality. Obama is faced with that cynical gaggle of rabidly reactionary Rush Limbaugh Republicans in Congress who are determined to make him fail. That's their goal. When Obama put forth his economic recovery plan just a few weeks ago, these Republicans got on their hind legs and squawked like a rooster choking on a peach pit. "Too costly," they said. "Too much waste," they screeched, "Too much, too much." They demanded concessions and cuts, which Obama gave them and then en masse they voted against the very bill they forced to come their way. This is why Lily Tomlin said, "No matter how cynical you get, it is impossible to keep up."

Third, don't forget my party. I come to you as a Democrat, elected on a Democratic ticket a few times down in Texas, much to the amusement of the people there. But I look up at Washington and I see that we still have too many weak-kneed, don't-rock-the-boat, milk-toast corporate Democrats up there. And when it comes to standing up for working people, when it comes to standing up for poor people, when it comes to standing up for what's right, they get weaker than Canadian hot sauce. Last year we saw them in action. Remember when Bush got caught spying illegally on the American people. Not on a few of us, millions of us; just scooping up our emails, our phone calls, etc. It was illegal. It was unconstitutional. So what did the Democratic Congress do? They voted to legalize his illegality and made it retroactive. I got an email from a guy who said he hoped Bush would get caught smoking pot so then Congress would legalize marijuana.

This is why we have got to step up. Grassroots progressives: Feldman, Fawn and Allen, you and you and you and me. We have to be the outside counterforce to the inside reactionaries who will try to stop and stall any change that might be possible. Otherwise, last Fall's victories will be nothing but tarnished trophies. We must back up Obama when he is right and buck up Obama when he is wrong.

"I am not the change, you are"

I endorsed Obama in the Texas primaries back last March. We vote twice in Texas. We had both a primary and a caucus - very strange. We were like goats on AstroTurf. We didn't know what we were doing wandering around out here. But, when I endorsed him, I said that the significant thing to me about the Obama phenomenon was not Obama, but the phenomenon and the

fact that there were millions of people, particularly young people, who were coming out of nowhere and organizing that campaign. He didn't organize it. They organized it. They put it together themselves, raised their own money, did their own block walking, their own organizing. It was a tremendous exercise in political democracy. And Obama acknowledged it. He said, "I am not the change, you are." And that's the truth of it. And he reiterated that just before he took the oath of office. He said, "I would not have won without our ability to organize ordinary people. We want that to continue. It is important for holding me accountable. I don't want them to wait around waiting for me to do something. I want them to be pushing their agendas."

He asked for it. That's us. We have to do that. We have to do that stronger than we are now even thinking about doing that. We got to be in his face and in his whole administration's face. This is our administration. It doesn't belong to the Republicans. It doesn't belong to the corporate interests. It belongs to us. And we have to demand that they do what they were elected to do. This is why

"No matter how cynical you get, it is impossible to keep up."
- Lily Tomlin

people voted for him. People wanted change. They didn't mean just change as a word. They wanted change in policies.

I think we are in a 1933's kind of moment, when Franklin Roosevelt came into office. You know Roosevelt didn't campaign on the New Deal. There was no New Deal. He used the phrase but there was no New Deal. There was nothing to it. Farmers were holding all across the country penny auctions. Penny auctions are when the bankers came in to try and take their farms and the family had to stand there and they would auction off their farm. But the farm neighbors would gather around and one farmer would say, "I offer a penny," and no other farmer would offer two pennies. So they had to shut the auction down. They saved the farms. That's radicalism. That's taking charge. It happened because labor in Flint, Michigan and all across the country were in brutal battles with the bosses and the goons, bleeding and dying to fight for the right to organize and stand up for ordinary people, for some semblance of a middle class possibility. It happened because there were people like Maury Maverick, the mayor down in San Antonio, because of Huey Long in Louisiana, because of Harry Hopkins up in New York, because there were people who were stronger than Franklin Roosevelt, saying here's a way we need to go. It happened because Eleanor Roosevelt was in the White House. It happened because ordinary people stood up at the Bonus March. Go right on down the line. Look at the history. Read Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States*. Get your history in order. This is what happened.

It's up to us

No progress is made except that for ordinary people take charge and demand, insist, go to the streets, bleed and die and make it possible for it to happen. That's what was happening. That is what created the New Deal. And when Sydney Hillman and a group of labor leaders went in when Roosevelt took office in 1933 and sat with him and said you got to do something about poverty in America, people have been wiped out. And Roosevelt interrupted and said, "I agree with you. I want to do it. Now make me do it. Make me do it." That's us.

We have to be the powers. Obama is not going to do it unless we make him do it. He says he wants to. We have to be the one's to make him do it.

My message to you, and I'm sure you are

wondering what it is, is this: *It is up to us*. Ultimately, democracy, progress, change always comes down to just folks, just folks. The powers-that-be never do it for us. They are the ones that are doing it to us. They're never going to do it for us.

We have to be the ones. Now we have a special responsibility and that is what I see in the materials here, the message of your gathering here. "Change is possible," Feldman wrote. This is our opportunity to create the bridge to an organic future. It doesn't create the bridge. It's our opportunity to do it. And having the opportunity, we have a special responsibility. We have not had the possibility before. Under George W. we had no possibility. We could protest, we could advocate, we could go have meetings, but there was no possibility that they would do anything we wanted them to do. And I'll be honest, even under Bill Clinton there was very little possibility that they were going to do what we wanted to be done. We know, though, we have the opportunity to make this progress and to build this bridge that you are talking about.

These opportunities don't come along very often. We have an historic responsibility to stand up and push back. One thing we must do is to reach out to each other and build those coalitions. Not only with the usual suspects, but also to the allies we might not even know we have. You know the powers-that-be are always trying to divide us. They say, "Oh, well, labor they can't get along with farmers. Farmers can't get along with environmentalists and environmentalist can't get along with poor people." Well, bovine excrement!

As Jesse Jackson said so well, "We might not have come over on the same boat, but we are in the same boat now."

New alliances

That's a powerful political reality. And we need to tie into that.

A couple of examples: I know y'all are involved in one of these and that's the blue-green alliance, labor with environmentalists. Developing a whole new economic possibility, independence from foreign oil, indeed independence from any oil, based on green jobs that hold so much more potential in terms of numbers of jobs and in terms of the pay of those jobs. Investing in retrofitting all our buildings for conservation purposes based on solar and wind power and all



According to Jim, the U.S. is in a 1933's kind of moment.



In his talk, Mr. Hightower discussed the value of new alliances, for example, environmental organizations partnering with conservative Christians who are interested in "Creation Care."

the other alternative energy possibilities. Based on taking those machinists that Boeing Aircraft said they don't need because they are going to go to China to make their airplanes. Well, let's put them to work and build a high-speed train between all of our population corridors. We have a lot of opportunities out there. And the blue-green alliance has come together, led by the Sierra Club, the largest membership environmental organization, and the Steel Workers, the largest industrial union in our country, and now is growing by leaps and bounds. Barack Obama has essentially embraced it, not as fully in the budget as needs to be done, but nonetheless embraced the concept. And, a guy named Van Jones, who is terrific, who headed an organization called Green for All, is now in the White House - another big change taking place. That is one example.

Religiosity

Another example that not a lot of people think about, something that Susan and I wrote about in the book *Swim Against the Current: Even a dead fish can go with the flow* at some length, is the evangelical environmental movement. Most progressives know nothing about this. But there is a big phenomenon, a big change is taking place among evangelicals. They have decided that they are not going to be typecast by the Karl Roves of the Republican Party. In fact, they said our party has been hijacked by the Republican Party, that they have a broader concern than just gay rights, which they have a concern about, a broader concern than just abortion, they have a concern about that, a broader concern than prayer in the schools - all those sorts of issues. But they have a deep concern about poverty, a deep concern about race, a deep concern about human rights, and a deep concern about global warming. So they have issued this evangelical call to action that says the gospel is the whole of it; not a piece of it, but

the whole of it. They are taking on this issue of global warming, particularly among the 50 and younger ministers and congregations.

By the way, I should add that the evangelical movement of James Dobson, of Pat Robertson, of Jerry Falwell, and this whole crowd has demonized environmentalists. You know it's just the evil of all. Out in places like Idaho they have been able to use people's jobs against environmentalists. So you're just trying to take our jobs away, that's all there is. So there is hatred about environmentalism.

We wrote about, for example, out in Idaho a fellow named Tri Robertson. He's a right-wing Republican, a Bush supporter in the past. But he had an awakening. His awakening was that he kept looking around him. Tri Robinson, at the Vineyard Boise Church, a church with 3,000 members, looked around him and thought, "This is a cathedral. I live in a cathedral. Look at this beautiful land and yet look at what we are doing to this." And then they go back to Genesis

and the responsibility to take care of the garden. So they have a biblical reference. And he knew that we were destroying the garden. Therefore, he needed to preach about this. But he was scared to do it in his own church, because environmentalists were demonized. So he spent six months going through the Bible and trying to find the language. Finally, he got up the courage one Sunday morning to preach to the clergy about the environment. He got a standing ovation. He never got a standing ovation before in his own church. People afterwards were saying, well, I thought the same thing, but I didn't know we could talk about that. They don't call it environmentalism. They need a new language. So they call it creation-care. What the hell do we care what they call it. Isn't it the same thing? Listen to this. This is riveting. He wrote a book in 2007, *Saving God's Green Earth*:

"Many people perceive the church as conservative and therefore intimately aligned with the Republican Party, which is more interesting to capitalistic strength than environmental stewardship when it comes to managing our beautiful country. It's interesting that conservatives are less likely to support conservation. I believe it's time Christians rediscovered the values we have lost and be on the leading edge of promoting environmental stewardship."

That's huge - 30 million people in these churches. This is a powerful political opportunity. We don't have to go to church with them, but you could be at the café when they come out, couldn't you? Have a cup of coffee and talk about what it is we have in common. This is an enormous possibility here.

Standing up

Well, I believe that we can have the kind of culture, the kind of economy, and the kind of country that we want if we dare to do

something that is essential in our country, and that is *stand up*. That is what you do. You must encourage other people to do it more boldly than we have been doing it and especially in this administration. I know some people say, "We need to give him a chance." Well, let's push him to be bigger than he thinks he can't be. We owe him that and we owe us that.

I was up in Vermont two or three years ago at a political event and a guy came up to me wearing a political button. It was the best one I ever saw. It said, "Wearing A Button Is Not Enough." We can't be a nation of button wearers, can we? Well, be a little stronger than that. Again, that's why you are so crucial to the cause. Those of you gather here studying, warming up against each other, getting to know each other and then going back out and spreading this word.

Susan and I cite Lewis Grizzard, the late great southern humorist, in the book. He said something that we in the South have always known to be true. That is, there is great big difference between being naked and being na-ked. Naked means you have no clothes on. But being na-ked means that you have no clothes on and you are up to something. And that's the way I think of Beyond Pesticides.

So we just got to keep at it. I'm here to urge you to keep on keeping on, and again, more profoundly and more ferociously, more insistently than you have been. We got to get in the face of these powers, because these powers can make the changes. And we got to keep pushing. The previous powers, they wouldn't

make the changes. You know, we don't win the first time out, often not the second or the 20th time out. But that's important to institutions like Beyond Pesticides and Toxic Free NC and your own organizations across the country. Institutions become important because they give people a context to keep the movement going. My friend Willy Nelson said to me once, "Hightower, the early bird may not get the worm, but it's the second mouse that get's the cheese."

Well, one more story from the book. We told about this tourist who was in Bangkok and he came out of the great temple and the glare of the sunlight, and over here was a monk in full regalia. He said to the monk, "May I snap your picture?" And he took the picture. Over here was a boy selling water. He went over here to buy a bottle of water for the monk. He paid for it and waited for his change, but he wasn't forthcoming, so the tourist assumed there was a language problem so he pointed to his palm and said, "Don't I get change?" The boy looked at him and over at the monk and in perfect English said, "Change, change comes from within." That's the good news.

The change is coming from within. It's coming from you. We have to produce the change. I'll leave you with this thought. There was a moving company when I first moved backed to Austin, Texas in the mid-70's. The moving company had an ad that I liked, so I stole it for political purposes. It was actually in the yellow pages and it said, "If we can get it loose, we can move it." Well, that is what you are doing. You are getting it loose at the grassroots level and then the people will move it for themselves.



Jim Hightower

Mr. Hightower is a national radio commentator and author of many books, including his latest, Swim Against The Current: Even A Dead Fish Can Go With The Flow. Mr. Hightower has spent three decades battling the powers that be on behalf of the powers that ought to be. Twice elected Texas Agriculture Commissioner, he has become a leading voice for those who no longer find themselves within shouting distance of Washington and Wall Street. He's a modern-day Johnny Appleseed, spreading the message of progressive populism all across the American grassroots. Read more about his background, books and radio show at www.jimhightower.com.



Social Justice and Food Production

Winning self-determination and justice for farmworkers

By Baldemar Velasquez



Baldemar Velasquez, President and founder of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), delivered a keynote address at the 27th National Pesticide Forum in Carrboro, North Carolina. The following is a transcription of his talk. The speech in its entirety can be viewed at www.beyondpesticides.org/forum/video.

Yesterday and the day before, we were in Vass, North Carolina, where we had over 800 guest workers come in from Mexico. The union is there at every arrival to make sure all the workers are processed appropriately. The pesticide video was shown on the big screen as part of the obligations that the growers' association has to make sure the workers have that information. What was even more gratifying to me was that not only are they getting the education, getting the information, not only are there some laws in this country, that thanks to you have been promulgated in our Congress, but what is even better in this case is that the workers have a union and a grievance procedure to enforce those laws on the job day to day that they themselves can police. When workers do not have a union agreement and do not have a grievance procedure, they have to make a choice between reporting violations and hazards and retaliation from their employer, and getting themselves in trouble, losing their job, and trying to find help, legal services, and somebody to back up their protest. It's not an easy life for the farmworkers if they don't have self-organization.

Friends, we have to take the farmworker question back to the sixties, during the civil rights movement, where the mantra of organizing oppressed and exploited communities was self-determination. It is not enough to give people a standard or a law, because if the people who are supposed to be protected by those laws are not organized to ensure their enforcement, they're just

going to be laws gathering dust on the shelf. Maybe then laws will get enforced once in a while when they catch or fine one person.

So, I want to make that distinction clear. When you talk about agriculture in North Carolina, you can't help but talk about farmworkers and migrant workers, H2A workers [workers defined as temporary under immigration law], guest workers, indentured workers, and slave labor workers; you name it. North Carolina is the pits in this country when it comes to workers' rights. We've got to do something about changing that.

We have to take the farmworker question back to the civil rights movement where the mantra of organizing oppressed and exploited communities was self-determination.

The reason the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) came to North Carolina in the first place is because FLOC had successfully unionized the entire pickle industry in the North, including Vlasick pickle, Heinz USA, Dean Foods, Aunt Janes, and Green Bay Foods. We caused a domino effect. When we won that Campbell's Soup boycott, we organized one corporation after another to establish multi-party agreements. We have

to look at the global situation when we look at the rights of these workers and the way in which they are being oppressed and exploited. It is not just pesticide poisoning. It is not just the health effects, that they are living in dilapidated housing with no sanitation and people breaking the sanitation codes. It is a barrage of matters that are imposed on these people's lives because they may be undocumented or coming into the country with an indentured status, and there is no way for them to defend themselves. My friends, it doesn't matter how many great laws we pass. We must find a way to enforce the laws by giving the workers the power to carry those laws into the fields and be able to protest without fear of retaliation and be able to protect themselves. I'm afraid, unless this happens, we're going to come up short in the long run.

When I lived in a labor camp last summer for a week, the workers shared with me the pressures on their lives. Most important to them are their families, even though they have physical ailments. One guy had high blood pressure, another guy was diabetic. We had to watch over them carefully in the fields and make sure they were hydrated and had crackers to eat during the day. Despite all of the physical pressures that they have, and the demands on them, including watching out for the hazards at the worksite, what they were most concerned about, what they had foremost on their minds, were the families that they had left in Mexico.

You know how it is to be torn away from your family for months and months at a time? It's very hard. And to know that your kids are back in Mexico, are back over there, and you don't have the ability to help them with the struggles that they're going through from day to day. The torn apart families are just so devastating to them. You can see it in their eyes. A man nicknamed Ponza was lamenting about his daughter, who he is terribly proud of, and was graduating from law school. He told me the story at the beginning of the week. At the latter part of the week he was looking at his watch during one of the water breaks. I said to him, Ponza, why are you looking at your watch? And he said, "Well, it's about right now that they're doing the Mass in the village before they take the students who are graduating to receive their diplomas." You could tell that he was mourning not being there. He was so proud of his daughter. And he said, "This is the reason why I am here. I need to have her there." Every one of those workers was saying, "I'm here because I don't want my kids to have a dead-end life in Mexico. I don't want them running all over the country. I don't want them coming up here as undocumented people. We don't want to be looking for coyotes [transporters of people across the border] to survive."

We can't talk about a lot of these issues in agriculture and farmwork without talking about the backdrop of this whole immigration debate. It is one of the biggest pressures on these families and these workers' lives. The lack of regulation, the lack of an ability of people to process some kind of legal status to be able to do what you and I, all of us desire to do, and that's the desire to feed and educate and clothe our families. Friends, I don't care what your position is on immigration, but the only law that these people are breaking is that they just happen to do this work without any papers. And nobody's going to blame anyone for going somewhere to support their families if they have to. I don't think there's anybody in this room who, if your family was needy and hungry,

would not do anything and go anywhere to do an honest day's job for some remuneration to be able to take care of your family. And I don't care how many walls people build or how high they build them, they wouldn't be high enough to keep any of you from getting on the other side, if that's what it meant for your family to survive.

Workers' rights have to be part of the language of all causes. We desire it for ourselves, because all human beings want to be treated with dignity and respect. And all human beings want to be recognized for making a valuable contribution to society. This is why you go to study. This is why people covet titles and positions and advancement and reward for doing a job well done. Everyone needs that recognition. Everyone wants it because it makes you feel like you're important, that you're making a contribution to that person next to you. And certainly, it goes down to some very scriptural principals.

Scripture provides guidance

In addition to being a union leader, I'm a preacher, so excuse me if once in a while I flip over. It goes to those basic principles that Jesus taught us all – no disrespect to people of other religions, I love them, I respect them, but I'm a Christian. So I've got to tell you from my perspective – and that is, Jesus says that all the commandments can be wrapped into the first two: *Love the Lord with all your soul, all your heart, all your strength*; and, *Love your neighbor as yourself*. Now, it doesn't say: Love your neighbor if he looks like you. It doesn't say: Love your neighbor if he talks like you. It doesn't say: Love your neighbor if he's the same political party. It doesn't say any of that stuff. Whoever that guy next to you is, that's your neighbor. Whoever you come into contact with, that's your neighbor. The scriptures are very definite, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, calling on us to live with one another.

God first said in the beginning: *Go and multiply and have dominion over the Earth*. Dominion doesn't say go and exploit and poison the earth. It doesn't say go destroy it. It says go have dominion over it. Dominion means having a relationship. It means being in concert with it. It means developing a coexistence. If you have someone that's close to you: If you have a wife, or a husband, or a girlfriend or boyfriend, you want to be in communion with that person. It's a give and take, an equity, an equal respect for one another, a holding up of one another. That's the relationship we have to have with those around us and the earth around us.



Immigration

Let me just respond to a couple of one liners that sort of appeal to the innocent public, because out of ignorance, because we don't study this, we don't live with the realities of the immigration debate like I do every day, day in and day out. It's very clear what we're supposed to do. I don't know why these talking heads on radio and TV, who are ignorant and know nothing, you can name them – Sean Hannity, Lou Dobbs, all these characters – they all give you sound bites that seem inviting. For instance, they say, "These people who are coming illegally, they should do it the way my grandparents and great-grandparents did it." Well, they're talking out of both sides of their mouths, because it's as if history only started 30 years ago for them when they make that comment. Because if we had the same laws in this country today as when their grandparents and great-grandparents came in, about 95% of the people here without papers would be on their way to legalization right now. I mean, it wasn't until the *Registry Act of 1929* that this country decided it was time to register everyone that was in this country. You know why they did that? It was a voter restrictionist measure. They wanted to restrict the Italians, Germans and Poles from coming over at the turn of the century and voting, because they wanted to have control politically.

So you could not vote unless you had that registry, right? You could register for something like \$25 or \$30. If we had that Act now, imagine all the undocumented workers in North Carolina who would be able to vote. Wouldn't that be great? Up until the early 1950s, all the Europeans who were here without record of entry could go to Canada and reenter as permanent residents. Can you believe that? That law doesn't exist anymore, they took it away.

Back to scripture

The scripture is very, very certain on all these specific issues. For instance, I did a chapel service in one of the Christian schools in Toledo, so I went to my concordance and I looked up one word: I looked up the word 'alien.' There are 119 references to the word alien. If I had looked up 'sojourner,' 'stranger,' I could find a lot more. But I looked up all the ones about the illegal person in the community, and there's 119 references. There are three themes, when you read them all. One of them is underscored in the book of Exodus, 22:21, which says: "Do not mistreat or oppress the alien." Alright, that's very clear. The second one is my favorite one. It's highlighted in the Scriptures in the Book of Numbers, chapter 15 verse 15, which says, "Govern the alien with the same laws that

you govern yourselves." Now, our laws today don't permit that. So it requires that we change the laws so that we govern the aliens with the same laws that we govern ourselves. That's my amnesty position. The third one comes from the Prophets, the book of Ezekiel. A whole chapter addresses this issue, chapter 22, a very often used verse by the televangelists. But they talk a lot about, are preoccupied with the sexual sin stuff. You know, that's in there too, but there's only one or two references to it. Most of the references in that chapter have to do with economic oppression and exploitation -usury, excessive interest. Does that ring a bell in today's bank scandals? But it sums up in verse 29: God was mad and was going to destroy the Earth. In verse 30 it says, "I'm calling for a man to stand in the gap on behalf of the land so I won't destroy it." Why was God going to destroy the earth? Verse 29 sums up the whole chapter -because of denying the poor, taking advantage of the poor, and denying the aliens their rights. The three things that God has on his mind relate to freedom. Freedom like yourselves, governed by the same laws as yourselves, and if you mess up either of those two things, I'm going to be really ticked off.

So then we come back full circle here, to workers' rights.

The reality of the fields

Five summers ago, a football player died at football practice from heat stroke. It was in the pages of every newspaper across the country, along with warnings to coaches to hydrate their players. In North Carolina, when you're working in agriculture, you don't know what you're exposed to out there. You go out in the cucumber, tomato, tobacco and sweet potato fields, and you don't know what you're getting on your hands. Last summer, when I was topping and suckering those tobacco plants, in the morning when the dew was still on them, or after a rain, you top that flower off the top and the water goes spraying all over the place. A worker said, "If you get it in your mouth, spit it out, because if not, you're just drinking all that tobacco juice and all that nicotine, and tar and who knows what else is on there." Well, you've got the residue of pesticides on there, so spit it out!

They told me their horror stories of the workers that were there two summers ago, how after the second or third day they were vomiting green stuff; even vomiting the gnats they swallowed. The gnats

are nasty at the end of the road, especially in the wooded area where there are a lot of suckers on the bottom of the plant. Because the deer come out of the trees and eat those little tender leaves on the side of the plant, there are more suckers growing out of the plant. You're trying to breathe. The humidity and the heat are just stifling, and you're sitting there trying to survive while there's no breeze because you're under that tobacco plant. You open your mouth to take a deep breath and all those gnats go into your mouth. They said, "Yeah, they were vomiting green stuff and gnats and everything like that. They thought they were going to die. They called in the growers' association; they want to go home."



The family of Raymundo Hernandez in San Luis Potosi, Mexico.

It wasn't a very good case for a man by the name of Urbano Ramirez, who came as an undocumented worker to North Carolina, a farm here in Nash County. He had symptoms of heat stroke and who knows what else. Maybe he was affected by the pesticides. Pesticide poisoning, said the doctor, is a very difficult thing to know if you're seeing it, because a lot of the effects of pesticides are chronic effects, and it builds up over a long period of time, and you don't know when it's going to hit you. You don't know how long Urbano had been working in agriculture or where he had worked, but he showed up on this farm in North Carolina. He had a brother in Raleigh working construction. There was no job for him at the time, so he said, "I've got to get a job at the farms because I need to send money to my family. They're starving." So he goes to this farm in Nash County, starts working in cucumbers and then tobacco, cucumbers in the morning, tobacco in the afternoon. In the morning he was feeling very, very sick: very nauseous, disoriented, and bleeding from the nose. Clearly, he was suffering from something, either heat stroke or some kind of effects from the pesticides around him. No different than the case in 1995 of Raymundo Hernandez, the man who was written up by one of the Free Press, the community newspaper, the only newspaper that ran his story.

You see, when a football player dies, it's on the front pages. When a Mexican dies, you hear nothing, not even an obituary section on the back page. You didn't hear about Raymundo Hernandez, but that story was as tragic as Urbano Ramirez.

The senseless death of Raymundo Hernandez

Raymundo's skull was found by a dog under a pecan tree. He was barking at the skull and the farmer came out to see what the dog was barking about, and found the skull and called the police. There was not enough flesh left on the body to do a proper autopsy. So they took those bones, and they were forgotten for months here in North Carolina, until I heard the story from workers. I pushed to reopen the investigation. I took a trip to visit his widow in San Luis Potosi. I took high school students with me to teach them about the oppression, and why people are so desperate to come

here. They saw the grueling poverty that his family suffered in that thatched-roof hut with a dirt floor and a rock grill for a stove. Even the dogs were skin and bone in that little village in the mountains of San Luis Potosi.

EPA reopened the investigation. We confronted the Department of Labor because Raymundo was an H2A "guest worker." Where was the supervision? Why was his body left to rot? Why was his body, even when they found the bones, left in a morgue, just sitting there? In his village, now an Indian village, in San Luis Potosi, they have beliefs about the body, that it has to be buried so the spirit can be at peace and not wander lost all over the place. When I met his wife, I didn't realize they hadn't sent the body back. So I asked his wife, who speaks Navajo, and we had to have a translator from Navajo to Spanish, and from Spanish to English for the students that were with me. The wife asked me for a favor. I said, "Sure, what is it?" She said, "Can you see what you can do to bring my husband's remains home?" Now, this was four years after he passed away, and his body was still here in North Carolina. So, we called the Department of Labor, the students did a letter-writing campaign, and within a month we had that body on its way home. We did a return visit to the grave to make sure the body was properly delivered home.

Urbano, when he complained about his heat stroke symptoms to a supervisor, did exactly what a doctor said: go sit under a tree. Then, they moved the crew to the tobacco field. When they loaded up the labor bus at the end of the day, they didn't think to look for Urbano. When he didn't arrive at the labor camp that night, his coworkers began to look for him. They couldn't find him, and after eight days, they decided to go back to the last place they had seen him. So they walked the seven or eight miles back from the labor camp to the field, they looked under that tree, and they found his body decomposed beyond recognition. It was unrecognizable. So here you've got a worker who was a guest worker under the H2A program and a worker who was undocumented. But both are dead just the same in the fields of North Carolina. When



FLOC members march in 2000 supporting Mt. Olive pickle workers in North Carolina.

people die periodically like that here and nobody says anything, let alone does anything about it, friends, this is not what America is supposed to be.

Truth to power

So it is time that North Carolina addresses the antiquated labor relations system of this country, to make it a beacon of hope, the most progressive labor relations state in the nation. Now, people say to me, “You’re crazy! You’re absolutely nuts!” North Carolina is completely opposite what you’re saying. It is the least-unionized state in the country, it’s the most hostile labor state in the country. But you know what, I don’t care who these people are. I feel so passionate and so right about justice for these people that even the most adamant opponent has to be convinced that this is the right and good thing to do that they need to be on our side. See, the objective of nonviolence always is to win the opposition over to your side. And if you can give me a good reason to be on your side, you let me be on your side. But not while people are dying in the fields. Not when people are being mistreated the way they are. Not when people don’t have any rights as human beings. It’s time that we turn this thing around in this state.

Take action

So, that being said, let me tell you one thing that you can do. I’m an organizer. I’ve been called a lot of names, from bad to good, but organizers always ask people to do something. So I’m here to ask you to do something. First thing I’m going to ask you to do is to help me stop these tragedies and avoid these tragedies in the future. Now, in Ohio, we won worker self-determination. We’re able to sit down with the industry, not just with the farmers, employers, because I feel that the farmers are getting a raw deal when it comes to the public debate. Yes, it’s the farmers’ property we work on. They are the people we see day-to-day. They’re our immediate employers. Yes we have employers that are bad employers, but we have many employers who are good

employers who are trying to do things the right way. I can tell you right now that the majority of those growers in the North Carolina Growers Association are trying to do things the right way. That’s why they’re using the guest worker program, because it’s the only way you can bring legal workers to work here in the United States. They’re not employing undocumented people. So I applaud them for that and they’re trying to do the right thing. But they’re struggling with all the regulatory things, too. We’ve got a big debate over the Bush regulations still intact that decimated some of the standards in the guest worker program. We’re negotiating that, coming up with a common packet of what the union and the employers can propose together, as opposed to one pulling this way and the other side pulling the other way. There’s got to be a way to take the next step together.

I’ll never forget the story that my grandfather-in-law taught me. He was a Methodist missionary during the Indian Revolution and he met with Mahatma Gandhi. He would tell me the story of Gandhi’s meeting with the anarchists. Gandhi would say to the anarchists after listening to them for a whole day, “You know what, you have an ideal of being over here, and you know what, I agree 100 percent with you. But the matter is that we’re way over here, and the first thing that we need to be concerned about, all of us together, is the next step we can take together. But until you have recognition and people at the table putting all their trash on the table and saying, “Okay, well, this is the mess, what is the first step we have to take to clean this up?” The first one is recognition of those workers as human beings, and an organization that speaks independently for them to sit down at that table of equity in order to put all the stuff on the table and see what we can start taking care of, one step at a time. We’re asking RJ Reynolds to do just that, my friends. If you want to see the vision of what FLOC is pushing, just go to our website, www.floc.com, and I spell it out there. I have a letter that I wrote to President Obama over this thing.

I say all this for the sake of those families and those children in Mexico and all those people who are part of the industry here, because they are the labor force that is doing your agriculture in North Carolina. The workers who we represent work on farms growing 27 different crops, not just tobacco, not just sweet potatoes, not just cucumbers. Fruits, vegetables, all the way to Christmas trees in the mountains. Okay, so we’ve got this broad array of people and we have a lot of human beings involved in the agriculture picture here in North Carolina that stretches all the way to the villages of Mexico. I want to just play this little song for you, a song I wrote about Urbano Ramirez. [Mr. Velasquez sings “Urbano’s Song.” Watch video of his entire talk, including his singing of this song, on the Videos for Change section of the Forum webpage at www.beyondpesticides.org/forum/video.]

The union makes us strong

When we win self-determination and justice here in North Carolina, workers will have the ability to protect themselves in the field against pesticides, against mistreatment, against dilapidated housing, and not be afraid to report those things because they will have a grievance procedure to protect them from retaliation. We're organizing a march at the RJ Reynolds shareholder meeting on May 6. I'd like to see, like we had last year, 300-400 people on the street when we first marched against RJ Reynolds in October of 2007. The other thing that I want to remind people about: when we did this with Campbell's Soup, it wasn't more than three years later when we negotiated an agreement, the elimination of the use of Maneb and Bromacil, two very toxic fungicides that they use in the preparation of tomato and cucumber crops. We're able to rotate those crops and do it differently so they don't have to use those poisons on those tomatoes, on those cucumbers, and therefore on the leaves that our people are handling with their bare hands. We'll do the same thing in North Carolina. Now, in the meantime, we carry ourselves with dignity and respect for the opposition, because there are a lot of forces that are going to be opposed to this.

They're afraid of things called unions. There's nothing to be afraid of because everybody's a member of a union. A really right-wing Republican whose kid was supporting one of my marches in Toledo, wrote a protest letter to the principal. I called him and said, "I hear you've got a problem with my ministry. And I want to sit down and talk to you about it." He invited me to his country club to have a meeting with him. So I went and met with him at his country club and he says, "Well, but unions, you're doing what Jesse Jackson does, you're just shaking down these companies," and so on. And I said, "Oh, is that so? Well, let me ask you something, Mr. Frank. You're a member of this country club. Why are you a member of this country club?" "Oh, because I do my networking here, I do business deals, I do this and that." Aha, I said, "I bet you're a member of the Rotary Club and the Kiwanis and everything like that." He said, "I'm a member of those, as well, for the same reason."

"Do you pay a fee or dues to be part of that?" "Oh, yes, I've got to pay my fees to this country club, absolutely." I said, "See, all you white guys, you've got all these unions and us Mexicans, can't we even have one?"

I said, "We're doing what you're doing. It's just the American way. If people come together to network and to help themselves, that's what a union is. And I'll tell you what, if I get a personal benefit from that, you know what, I'll sign a contract right now with you." He said, "No, you've got me convinced, I'll support you." I'm telling you, win that opponent over to your side.

Love them all

I'm sure that Susan Ivy, CEO of Reynolds America, the 43rd most powerful woman in the world, according to *Forbes Magazine*, is mighty and powerful. But you know what, I'm not after her power. I'm not after her might. I'm after her heart and her sense of justice, which I know she has. I just have to find it somewhere in there. I don't know what's clogging it up. I'm going to go and find it, and I'm going to win her over to our side.

You win that person over to our side. What a great public relations thing for them, to start dealing with those atrocities in her production chain. It's a procurement system that they design; it's by human design. It wasn't created, it wasn't creationism, it was human design that designed that system of procurement. She sits atop that procurement chain, and she's the one that can address these issues. In all regards, as we go through the struggle, come and join us and have some fun with us. As we go, we show our light to those people who have got their thinking on backwards. When you confront that person who is stingy with you, be generous to them, okay. If they discriminate against you, include them. Because when you include them, they can't discriminate against you. If they're not including you in their thing, that's their discrimination. But if you include them, you respond with inclusion to their discrimination. If they're mean to you, be kind to them. And if they curse you, bless them. If they hate you, just love them. Love them all. Thank you very much.

Baldemar Velasquez

President of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), AFL-CIO, Baldemar was raised as a migrant farmworker. After an incident when his father was cheated out of promised wages in front of the family, Baldemar began organizing workers to stand up for their rights, which led to the founding of FLOC. In 1979, FLOC workers called for a strike and boycott against Campbell Soup. They made many sacrifices for the cause, and suffered many abuses. But after eight years, FLOC, Campbell Soup, and the growers made history by signing three-way labor contracts. FLOC's organizing has also led to contracts with Heinz, Mt. Olive Pickles and others.



A Tribute to Shelley Davis

A Celebration of Life, A Commitment to Keep Fighting for Farmworker Justice

By Jay Feldman

We celebrate Shelley's life, a life that urges us on—to fight with strength of character, good will, unrelenting passion and straight talk, like Shelley did. What an amazing person. What an honor to know her. She inspired us, and she called us to action. In Shelley's view, there was not a lot of time to celebrate the past, rest on our laurels, only enough time to fight for future success.

In accepting Beyond Pesticides' Dragonfly Award for her "tireless dedication advancing knowledge and action," Shelley looked forward. "It is my great pleasure to accept this award on behalf of the farmworkers I represent, not because of any great accomplishments of the past, but as a commitment to fight this fight until we succeed." More than anything, Shelley wants us to keep up the fight and raise our voices. Shelley was a board member of Beyond Pesticides beginning in 1998. And Shelley did have great accomplishments in fighting for farmworker protection through the courts and in support of campaigns to establish standards.

Shelley, quoted in an article in *The Nation* on farmworker poisoning, reminds us of the harsh reality. She said, "Despite the fact that farmworkers do extremely hard work and conduct utterly essential tasks, they are the most ignored, exploited and vulnerable population in this country. Their health needs are entirely subordinated by the government's need to make money for big companies. When you compare the political power of industry with the power of farmworkers, there's no contest."

Shelley believed deeply in society's moral imperative to protect

and support those less fortunate, whose civil and workplace rights have been trampled, who suffer disproportionate adverse health and economic impact. So when Shelley began working as an advocate for migrant and seasonal farmworkers more than 25 years ago, she found her life's passion. As co-director and then deputy director of Farmworker Justice, Shelley was a constant voice for farmworker justice.

When Shelley arrived in Washington, DC to join the staff of Migrant Legal Action Program in the early 1990's, she became an immediate friend of Beyond Pesticides. She believed that the greatest injustice for farmworkers and their children is their poisoning and the poisoning of their families by pesticides. She pointed out, in accepting the Dragonfly Award that, "In 1989, Cesar Chavez, founder of the United Farm Workers, went on a hunger strike, not to demand better wages, although those were needed, but to demand that five pesticides be eliminated from grape orchards and the agricultural workplace in general."

Arturo Rodriguez, president of the UFW, wrote, "The Farmworker Movement is deeply saddened to learn of Shelley's failing health. Shelley has been a fighter all her life. Throughout her career, she had provided key guidance and leadership in demanding EPA and other agencies fulfill their respective missions in protecting farmworkers. She repeatedly identified ways in which we and other organizations that fight for farmworker rights around the country could get our voices heard, be it by joining conference calls with key agency personal, attending meetings, or even suing the agency and denouncing their failures in the media. She is driven by an intense desire to ensure that the people who harvest the food we eat not be forced to sacrifice their health in the process. Today we stand with Shelley in her fight. Her light will not be extinguished, but will live on in our continued struggle to ensure that one day in the near future her vision will become reality. Shelley, we love you and are with you."

In Shelley's words, "We owe it to farmworkers and their families today, and the memory of Cesar Chavez, to change the law and change the reality on the ground—that that on one has to work in an environment where they risk neurological damage, cancer, or birth defects when they go to work each day. As activists, we can make a difference!

(We would like to thank Shelley's husband and son, Tom and Nicky Smith, for their generous gift to Beyond Pesticides in Shelley's honor.)

Jay Feldman is executive director of Beyond Pesticides.



Shelley at Migrant Clinicians Summit, photo by Amy Liebman.

Groups File Petition to FDA to Ban Uses of Triclosan

Popular Pesticide Triclosan Found to Carry Numerous Health and Environmental Risks

On July 14, 2009, Beyond Pesticides and Food & Water Watch submitted an amended petition (www.beyondpesticides.org/antibacterial/triclosan.htm) to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requesting that it ban the use of triclosan for non-medical applications on the basis that those uses violate the *Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act*. Strong scientific evidence suggests that pervasive use of triclosan poses imminent threats to human health and the environment.

“Triclosan is not effective for many of its intended benefits and may actually be doing consumers more harm than good,” said Wenonah Hauter, executive director of Food & Water Watch. “Current regulations on triclosan haven’t been updated since 1994 and much of the science used by the FDA to regulate the pesticide dates back to the late 1970s and early 1980s. The agency’s inconsideration of new scientific research on triclosan represents an egregious failure to properly protect the public.”

Regulated by both FDA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), triclosan is commonly found in hand soaps, toothpastes, deodorants, laundry detergents, fabric softeners, facial tissues, antiseptics, fabrics, toys, and medical devices.

“Triclosan’s growth to a nearly \$1 billion consumer market is indicative of the failure of FDA to regulate unnecessary, ineffective products that are toxic to both people and the environment,” said Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides. “The marketing of triclosan preys on consumer fears regarding bacterial-borne illness, despite the fact that scientific findings show triclosan to be no more effective than soap and water, and may actually cause more harm than good in advancing bacterial resistance.”

Taking Action

After the petition was filed, Beyond Pesticides received a message from a parent in Arlington, VA expressing her gratitude about the petition,



and her desire to get triclosan out of her child’s school. “[The school] requests that parents provide handsoap for the classroom. As best I can tell, most parents are uneducated about anti-bacterial products or believe the marketing. With the prevalence of triclosan products in the marketplace, most of the handsoap provided by parents is anti-bacterial...This year, my goal is to educate and hopefully work for a mechanism that will eventually keep triclosan out of the entire school, to protect all of the children and staff and if I can encourage a system-wide solution that would be great too.”

Beyond Pesticides wants to help you get your school, office and community to stop using triclosan. Contact Beyond Pesticides for assistance at 202-543-5450. For more background information on triclosan and other antibacterial pesticides, visit our Antibacterial program page at www.beyondpesticides.org/antibacterial.

Major Claims of the Petition

The petition seeks to ban the non-medical uses of triclosan stating that the constantly-expanding, pervasive and diverse uses of triclosan pose imminent threat to human health and the environment.

- Studies show triclosan is present in the body (blood, urine and breast milk);
- Triclosan is likely to contribute to antibacterial resistance to antibiotic medications and antibacterial cleansers;
- Triclosan is an endocrine disruptor, affecting reproductive hormones and posing serious threats to organ functions and increasing the risk of breast cancer;
- Accumulation of the pesticide in waterways and soil has been shown to threaten ecosystems and produce hazardous residues in fish and food crops;
- In the environment, triclosan may be transformed into dioxin and chloroform (carcinogens) when exposed to sunlight under certain conditions; and,
- Numerous scientific studies and reports indicate that triclosan is not effective for many of its major intended benefits.

Food, Inc. (A film directed by Robert Kenner, 94 minutes)

How much do we know about the food we buy at our local supermarkets and serve to our families? In *Food, Inc.*, producer-director Robert Kenner and investigative authors Eric Schlosser (*Fast Food Nation*) and Michael Pollan (*The Omnivore's Dilemma*) lift the veil on the U.S. food industry – an industry that has often put profit ahead of consumer health, the livelihoods of American farmers, the safety of workers, and our own environment.

The movie reveals how a handful of corporations control our nation's food supply. Though the companies try to maintain the myth that our food still comes from farms with red barns and white picket fences, our food is actually raised on massive "factory farms" and processed in mega industrial plants. The animals grow fatter faster and are designed to fit the machines that slaughter them. Tomatoes are bred to be shipped without bruising and to stay edible for months. The system is highly productive, and Americans are spending less on food than ever before. But, the film asks, at what cost?

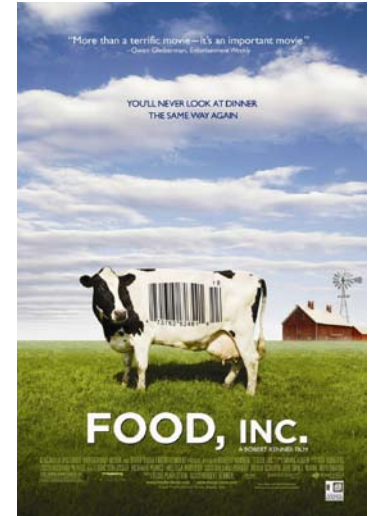
In the nation's heartland, farmers are afraid to talk about what's happening to the nation's food supply for fear of retaliation and lawsuits from giant corporations. Our laws today are such that corporations are allowed to patent seeds for crops. As a result, Monsanto, the chemical company that was one of the major manufacturers of Agent Orange and DDT – in a span of 10 years – has landed its patented gene in 90% of the nation's soybean seeds. Farmers are now forbidden to save and reuse these seeds and must instead buy new seed from Monsanto each season. ("Roundup Ready" soybeans are genetically engineered (GE) to resist Roundup's active ingredient, glyphosate, and the resulting increased pesticide use has led to weed resistance.)

Food, Inc. also introduces us to courageous people who refuse to helplessly stand by and do nothing -from people working

inside and outside of the system to farmers turned food advocates. Personal stories, both heartbreaking and heroic, serve to demonstrate the level of humanity and commitment it takes to fight the corporations that control the food industry.

The emphasis of *Food Inc.* does not center on pesticide use, but it is easy to see how pesticides fit into industrial food production and the problems this film documents. The implications created by a mass-production system seem infinite: increased reliance on glyphosate to control weeds in monocultural GE corn and soybean fields; insecticides to control insects around densely packed feedlots; exposure to farmworkers who lack legal protection; and, dietary exposure to a public that does not know the extent to which pesticides are used on much of their food.

It's important to note that the filmmakers attempted to interview representatives from Monsanto, Tyson, Perdue and Smithfield, but they all declined. *Food, Inc.* illustrates the dangers of a food system controlled by powerful corporations that don't want you to see, to think about or to criticize how our food is made. The film reveals how complicated and compromised the once simple process of growing crops and raising livestock to feed ourselves and our families has become. But, it also emphasizes that despite what appears to be at times a hopeless situation, each of us still has the ability to vote on this issue every day – at breakfast, lunch and dinner.



Appreciation, continued from page 8

Eric Kindberg, 1942-2008. Eric was an activist organic farmer who I first met when he was farming with his family in Arkansas and running the Ozark Small Farm Viability Project. He took his knowledge from the farm and his experience with organic practices and brought it to a policy forum. Eric served on the board of directors of Beyond Pesticides for several years in the late 1990s and brought his passion for and dedication to organic food production to our work. Leading up to and following that period, Eric really led the national effort to help define organic as a regulatory standard with integrity and value. It was great to watch and work with Eric as he helped to create policy and watchdog USDA, because Eric actually studied the law, knew the intricacies of the *Organic Foods Production Act*, and, more importantly, he actually knew how to farm organically. So, when someone would say, it can't be done, it's not feasible, or suggest that it was necessary to pollute our air, water, land and crops to grow food, Eric was there to speak truth to power. Everyone knew, whether it was before the National Organic Standards Board or in a USDA meeting, when Eric stood to speak he was speaking the truth.

Recognition. We would also like to recognize a long-time member of Beyond Pesticides, Ruth Boaz (Memphis, TN), who believed in the importance of our public information and assistance program to protect all people and animals from toxic chemical exposure, and in her will left Beyond Pesticides a legacy gift. A heartfelt thank you.

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Hello friends of Beyond Pesticides,

In June, Beyond Pesticides expanded its online universe with a page on **Facebook** and a **Twitter** profile. Depending how web-savvy you are, you're probably saying, "What took you so long," or "What's Twitter?"

Both are social networking websites which allow you to get the latest news on pesticide science and regulation, action alerts on breaking issues, as well as videos, podcasts and other links that we think will interest you sent directly to your computer or mobile phone. If you use Facebook or Twitter, we encourage you to become a Facebook fan and follow our Tweets!

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