

undoubtedly very harmful. Alcohol is a most pernicious drug. The consumption of excessive food, failure to exercise properly, and many other aspects of human behavior are harmful.

A great deal of our attitude depends on whose business interests are involved. Tobacco and liquor lobbies are strong. John Z. De Lorean (quoted by Carter) is hired by Allstate Insurance to study air bags. Ralph Nader makes his living as a consumer buff, certainly not as an advocate of personal rights.

Carter is not really discussing air bags. He is discussing Big Brother. I find such advocacy in *Science* disturbing. If people wish to discuss the question of personal liberty versus Big Brother in a suitable forum, more power to the discussion. But let us not chip away at personal liberty by reference to the supposed virtues of technological gadgetry. It is too much like training animals for the circus.

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Carter's article on air bags for cars is very good, but its contents are most disturbing. I suggest that the solution to the air bag controversy is not a technical one. I have been perturbed by the prospect that air bags will be forced on the public simply because a majority of persons refuse to fasten their seat belts. It is highly inequitable that safety-conscious persons should bear the cost of accidents caused by ignorant or careless persons, either by the forcing of air bags upon everyone, or by insurance companies' charging the same rate for different classes of risk.

Presently some insurance underwriters are offering a premium discount on medical payments or no-fault coverages for cars equipped with air bags (1). I propose an extension of this practice whereby the premium would be further prorated in proportion to the loss experience record for all styles of restraint—lap belt, shoulder harness, air bag, and any other devices which may be in sufficient use to generate reliable statistical data (2).

For expediency, I suggest that the insurance premium be fixed but that the actual insurance award vary depending on the safety device in use at the time of the accident. The insurance application and the policy could have a schedule showing the rate of award per \$1000 of basic insurance for each class of safety device, based on past liability experience of the underwriters; however, the actual

payment could be based on the claims rates current at the time of the accident. Successful fraudulent claims would be practically impossible, because the extent and kind of injuries would be incontestable evidence as to the kind of safety device that was *not* employed.

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Notes

1. R. Kopke, Office of the Chairman, General Motors Corporation, personal communication.
2. R. Kopke (*ibid.*) reports that "a recent study by the Yankelovich organization, a respected opinion polling firm, showed that only 15% of motorists are aware that a lap belt is needed with an air bag to provide as complete protection as one obtains with the lap-shoulder belt."

Pesticide Use: CAST Review of EPA Report

As chairman of the CAST (Council for Agricultural Science and Technology) task force which reviewed the "draft" document "Investigation of the effects of food standards on pesticide use" [prepared for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by a Berkeley study group], I feel that John Walsh (News and Comment, 27 Aug., p. 744) perhaps inadvertently misrepresented the 17 scientists and industry representatives who contributed to the review. We did not, in the manner in which he states, criticize the report because it dwelt on "negative impacts to public health and environmental quality." That quotation is from the EPA document itself and was part of the authors' description of their intent.

We stated that the topic as represented by the title of the report "is important and deserving of a more confined, in-depth analysis." Our critique was generally based upon the fact that their treatment was not confined to the effects of food standards on use of pesticides but ranged in a somewhat naive manner over the gamut of problems encountered in the use of insecticides. We were also critical of "the multitude of inaccuracies [which] substantially limit the credibility and usefulness of the document."

My reason for noting the credentials of the authors of the report was also inaccurately reported as inferring that the authors, among whom were those with backgrounds in biophysics, chemistry, and theology, have no credibility in the subject matter as dealt with in the document reviewed. Our review actually stated that comment on the topics discussed should come from many fields, as

"the document lies in the social-political area, not in science." In fact, there is not a shred of original scientific or technological investigation in the report. We suggested that comment on the content of the report be "solicited in addition from persons in other walks of life, including environmental lawyers, consumer advocates, public health field personnel, farm workers, cultural anthropologists, and political scientists, provided they had sufficient acquaintance with the factual subject matter to make their comments relevant."

The emphasis placed by Walsh on the "draft" status of the EPA document, inferring valid objection to the publication of our review by CAST, also alludes to but a part of the relevant facts. No mention was made of the significant information that substantial material from the document had been published previously in *Environment* (1) and subsequently publicized in the *Sacramento Bee* (2) and in a Jack Anderson column (3). It should be well recognized that public debate and discussion are long and valued traditions in controversial matters pertaining to public policy.

In contrast to the implication that critics of the report find it ironical that the controversy surrounding the report will lead to its greater impact, I am confident that the members of the task force would welcome analysis of the report by any informed observer. The document as it stands is heavily value-laden and replete with errors of fact. Copies of the document (4) we reviewed may presumably be obtained from EPA, and copies of our review (5) are available from CAST.

Walsh reported a germ of fact when he included the comment that "little analytical work had been done" on the influence of food standards on pesticide use prior to issuance of the \$50,000 EPA contract for the study in that area. Indeed, based on the material in the report we reviewed, little analytical work has been done to date, and this is solidly documented by our critique.

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References

1. J. Barnes, "Poisoning farmworkers," *Environment* 17 (No. 4), 26 (1975); M. Brown, "An orange is an orange," *ibid.* (No. 5), p. 6.
2. *Sacramento Bee* (21 August 1975), p. 2-F.
3. J. Anderson, *San Francisco Chronicle* (23 January 1976), p. 39.
4. Environmental Protection Agency, "Investigation of the effects of food standards on pesticide use" (contract 68-01-2602, Washington, D.C., 1975).
5. Council for Agricultural Science and Technology, "Review of 'Investigation of the effects of food standards on pesticide use'" (Report No. 55, Iowa State Univ., Ames, 1976).