

However, in all evaluations of 'agribusiness' it must be remembered that these 20th century farming aids have to be seen in the context of the nutritional status of the population needing to be fed. We all know about the dead fish in the Baltic and Lake Michigan, but what would happen if DDT were not used in Ceylon? We have the answer to this question. We know that in the 1950s some 2 million cases of malaria were treated there annually. With the introduction of DDT spraying the number fell to 31 cases in 1962 and was only 17 a year later. Discontinuation of DDT spraying because of financial stringency occurred soon after and by 1969 the number of malarial victims had returned to the 2 million mark.

Once again, the point is the same as in the matter of 'positive health': what benefits do we demand and what risks are we prepared to run for them? Scandinavia or parts of the United States may ban the use of DDT though Ceylon may not, but it remains far more difficult to assess permissible risk where the relative tenderness of sirloin steak for the world's overfed minority is concerned.

Up to the present, few people have understood that the comfortable life-style of the industrialized world entails its own risks, and that those risks may not be generally known. A man getting into his car to drive to work accepts – albeit subconsciously – that there is a definite statistical chance of his becoming one of the 8 million injured or 250,000 killed annually on the roads of the industrialized world. Yet the same man sitting down to dinner does not even consider that his precooked TV dinner, bought at the local supermarket, could entail any risk.

It is wrong that he should continue in this state of uninformedness. He is entitled to know so that he himself can decide whether a particular risk is worth taking, and this knowledge must be separated from the claims a manufacturer makes for his product. It is a fact that the value of many goods is overstressed by advertising. The public is conditioned just as effectively as any Pavlovian

dog by the sheer weight of repetitiousness of the advertising copy thrust upon it. Over promotion and over advertising are our second pair of culprits; while the first pair – tester and prescriber – can be educated, this second pair cannot, since its only objective is to make money. The legislators' attention needs to be turned to this aspect of risk in our Chemical Age. Control in the advertising sector will of its own accord effect a considerable amelioration of behaviour in the zone of tester and prescriber.

At present the consumer is exploited through his technical ignorance. An urgent need exists for clearer understanding of the medical, social, and economic benefits and risks that accrue from the application of science and technology and the use of chemicals in today's world, and better guide lines for decision-making. Decision-making is a complex process involving assessment of an array of factors concerning benefits, risks, and costs, many of which may be unavailable or imperfectly understood. In the circumstances, it is clearly of limited value to single out particular chemicals for special control, yet that is precisely what is being done presently.

Our aim as scientists should be twofold: firstly, to keep pollution at a minimum level while we examine our continuing progress in the Chemical Age; and secondly, to inform and instruct the citizen about the causes of internal pollution and what is required from him and us in trying to remedy them. In a free society, at the end of the day it is the citizen who finally decides what kind of life he wants. It is the responsibility of scientists to see that he has the necessary knowledge to make the right decision.

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CONGRESSUS

Italy

Satellite Symposium on Function and Metabolism of Phospholipids in CNS and PNS

in Perugia, 29–31 August 1975

At the same time an International Table Discussion on Biochemical and Pharmacological Implications of Ganglioside Functions will be held. The Symposium and the Round Table is officially part of the 5th International Meeting of the International Society of Neurochemistry in Barcelona (Spain) of 2–6 September 1975.

Further Information by: Prof. G. Porcellati, Istituto di Chimica Biologica dell'Università, Policlinico Monteluce, C. P. 3, Succ. 3, I-06100 Perugia, Italy.

Italy

International Symposium on Thrombosis and Urokinase

in Roma, 30 October–1 November 1975

The Symposium is organized by the Istituto Superiore de Sanità and the chairmen are: Prof. Sol Sherry of Philadelphia, USA, and Prof. R. Paoletti of Milano, Italy. Main topics: Physiopathology of thrombosis. Chemical, biochemical and pharmacological aspects of urokinase. Effects of urokinase on thrombosis. Clinical applications of urokinase.

Registration fee will be US Dollars 30.00. Information and registration by Prof. Rodolfo Paoletti, Via A. Del Sarto 21, I-20129 Milano, Italy.