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function get_style12008 () { return "none"; } function end12008_ () {  
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From the archives of Liberal's hometown newspaper since 1886. Researched and compiled by A.J. Coleman, L&T Reporter

1963 **Public worries lead to EPA**

Today, Americans are told that the pesticides used on the crops of the world are not fatally harmful. They help the plants to grow and keep the bugs and diseases away so that farmers can produce the amount of food the growing population needs. Although some health and nutrition experts are still suspicious of the effects of the pesticides, most agree they are necessary for bigger turnaround and less losses in crop production. However, in 1963, people were beginning to be suspicious of what they worried were new and dangerous pesticides. "Scientists say potential hazards greater than that from radioactive fallout," read the headline for the Southwest Daily Times. "We don't know about the pollution from pesticides," the article said.

The President of the United States of America was involved in the developing controversy; his top scientific advisor said that contamination from the use of pesticides and other poisonous chemicals was "potentially a much greater hazard than that of radioactive fallout." Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner declared that he was not suggesting the problem at the time required serious measures, "but in the future the problem will be extreme."

The president was considering controlling the use of pesticides under a governmental policy. Up to this time, there had been no limits about how pesticides were to be used, how often they were to be applied, and how concentrated the liquid or gas could be.

Environmental activists and many consumers now say it was a good thing for the government to regulate the usage of the chemicals because, as the article pointed out, in 1959, the number of "non-fatal" poisonings that occurred could only be estimated.

In California, the nation's biggest user of chemical pesticides at the time, 1,100 workers had been sickened by agriculture chemicals. Also, substantial wildlife deaths resulted from many different kinds of chemical insect-control pesticides.

In 1963, the deaths among birds in the areas that were treated with DDT increased by 80 percent. A whole year's worth of production of young salmon were nearly eliminated in Canada as a result of chemical treatment to fight spruce budworm.

From the year 1963 and onward, it became a popular idea that although chemicals to control insects and plant diseases and weeds were necessary, they should be treated with caution in regard to human and wildlife population.

These thoughts were what started the EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency. Today, this agency is a thorn in the side of many people because of its determination to uphold a huge number of laws and regulations.

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