

Press release 25 November 2003

Contaminated Without Consent:

New findings – pesticide poisoning of people

Rachel Carson Memorial Lecture – 3 December

A leading cancer expert claims that pesticides are the top environmental suspect for increases in the disease. Speaking at last week's PAN conference, Prof Belpomme said that 'while previously tobacco was thought to account for a third of malignancies we have concluded it causes no more than 15 per cent: Other environmental factors are at work.'

At next Wednesday's Rachel Carson Memorial Lecture, Sandra Steingraber, an international expert on the environmental links to cancer and reproductive health, will say: 'When our environment is contaminated with toxic chemicals, so too are we. The simple biological truth of toxic trespass raises human rights questions of the most fundamental sort.'

Everyone now has a cocktail of poisonous chemicals in their bodies. A test has revealed 20 pesticides and other contaminants in the body tissue of six volunteers from PAN UK. The laboratory described residue levels in five of the six of those tested as 'significant', 'well above background' or 'above background'.

There is also new alarm about a very commonly used herbicide, Roundup (glyphosate). Speaking last week at the PAN conference, expert endocrinologist, Professor Gilles-Eric Seralini presented a new study showing that the product Roundup (in formulation) is more toxic than glyphosate alone. He says: 'Roundup has some hormonal perturbing (disrupting) effects. These ... could account for sperm decline, increase in sexual malformations, and an increase in cancers.'

In her lecture, Sandra Steingraber will raise the questions: "Who benefits from the ongoing dependencies of our industrial and agricultural systems on chemicals with suspected links to cancer, birth defects, and brain damage? Who pays the price? What are the responsibilities of governments to prevent harm and compel the transformation toward a non-toxic economy? And what are our responsibilities as individual citizens."

PAN UK is running a right to know campaign to ensure people know what pesticides are being used and when. They want the government to make it mandatory for pesticide users to give the public advance warning, and put up signs in fields near houses and where there are rights of way. They also want food labelling to show which pesticides were used in its production.

PAN international has declared 3 December a 'Day of No Pesticide Use'. This is the anniversary of the Bhopal pesticide plant disaster

Interviews / CONTACTS

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Sandra Steingraber will be in London and available for interviews on from 1pm Tuesday 2 December to 4 December

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Professor Dominique Belpomme is President of the Association for Research on Treatment Against Cancer (ARTAC). In the most recent World Cancer Report, 2003, IARC estimated that tobacco accounts for as much as 30 per cent of all malignant tumours, and that environmental pollution accounts for 1-4 per cent of cancers.

2. PAN UK is holding the first annual Rachel Carson Memorial Lecture, to be given by Dr Sandra Steingraber, recognised expert on the environmental links to cancer and reproductive health. Contaminated without Consent: why our exposure to chemicals in air food and water violates human rights, will take place at 6.30 on 3 December 2003 at The Prince's Foundation, 19-22 Charlotte Road (near Old Street Underground), London EC2A 3SG (entry by ticket only) See our website www.pan-uk.org (<http://www.pan-uk.org/briefing/RCML.pdf>)

3. Results from the tests (blood serum and fat biopsy) of the PAN UK volunteers are available from PAN UK. They were performed by the Biolab Medical Unit, www.biolab.co.uk All six volunteers lead healthy lives and eat organic food when possible.

4. Professor Gilles-Eric Seralini is a molecular endocrinologist at the University of Caen, and president a group of independent scientists advising on genetic engineering.

5. Roundup is the world's most widely used pesticide (herbicide), accounting for six per cent of global sales, and used widely in genetically modified crops.

6. In 1962 Rachel Carson's ground-breaking book Silent Spring warned of the dangers of indiscriminate pesticide use. Its profound influence is credited with the foundation of the modern environmental movement. Many of the pesticides she particularly identified (notably those that are persistent and bioaccumulative such as DDT) are now being eliminated from global production and use

7. Pesticide Action Network UK promotes healthy food, agriculture and an environment which will provide food and meet public health needs without dependence on toxic chemicals, and without harm to food producers and agricultural workers. PAN UK is a non-profit organisation that works nationally and internationally with like-minded groups and individuals concerned with health, environment and development to eliminate the hazards of pesticides, reduce dependence on pesticides, and to increase sustainable and ecological alternatives.

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