

RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

ence an *increase*) and, as a result of partial melting of the polar ice caps, a rise in sea levels.

Schelling is skeptical of efforts to curb the world's CO₂ output. The level of CO₂ in the atmosphere is now growing only half as fast as scientists were predicting it would just a few years ago, but the total concentration will still double by the year 2100. Ironically, the very fact that the greenhouse effect is a global problem militates against cutbacks in fuel use simply to reduce CO₂: Individual nations would bear the costs of conservation while all would share in the benefits. And for many poorer nations, such as Bangladesh, there are a number of more pressing needs than combating the greenhouse effect.

Mankind may be only decades away from being able to engineer a kind of global countercooling, chiefly by means of releasing into the air particles that, like ordinary pollution, would partially block the sun's rays. For the present, however, Schelling believes that it makes sense to learn how to live with a warmer, drier Earth.

A drop in rainfall would hit farmers hardest, but he sees several possible responses: cloud seeding, desalinizing seawater, "mining" icebergs, and developing crop species better suited to growth in brackish water. Over the course of several centuries, the global warming trend might raise sea levels by 16 to 20 feet. Coastal residents would have plenty of time to decide whether to fall back or fight, and Schelling thinks that, at least in certain urban areas, fighting will be economical. Much of the Netherlands is below sea level today, effectively sheltered by dams, dikes, and landfill. A six-mile dike around the mouth of Boston harbor, for example, would shield that city from a higher sea level.

Two Cheers For EDB

"Give Thanks for Pesticides, Too" by Elizabeth M. Whelan, in *Across the Board* (Nov. 1984), 845 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.

For 50 years, American farmers used the pesticide ethylene dibromide (EDB) to protect fruits and stored grains from insects. But after a public uproar sparked last year by the discovery of traces of EDB in some breakfast cereals and cake mixes, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) abruptly banned the chemical.

Whelan, who heads the American Council on Science and Health, thinks that the EPA was stampeded into making a mistake. EDB, she contends, was only a moderate threat and is merely being replaced by other chemicals that are "less effective in destroying pests and offer no safety advantages to humans—at an enormous cost to the consumer."

The discovery of EDB's presence in food set off so many alarms because the chemical is a carcinogen. But the fact that laboratory rats fed massive doses of EDB developed tumors does not mean that humans will. Indeed, the EPA estimates that the average American ingests between five and 10 micrograms of EDB daily, compared with 140,000 micrograms of plain old pepper. To consume proportionately as much

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EDB as the laboratory animals did, Americans would have to increase their daily intake 250,000 times. The incidence of cancer among a group of 156 EDB factory workers who were exposed to doses 5,000 to 10,000 times larger than normal "is *not* significantly different from that expected in an unexposed population."

Another perspective: The average human diet contains 10,000 times more natural carcinogens than man-made pesticides.

Why take even a small chance on EDB? Because, Whelan argues, the alternatives are probably worse. Not using any insecticide on stored grain, for example, would guarantee massive waste and dangerous spoilage. And of the four chemicals that have been pressed into service to replace EDB, one was a known carcinogen at the time of the ban, one has since been found to cause cancer, and two have never even been tested.

Most galling of all to Whelan is the fact that EPA officials knew all along that their own frightening estimate that continued use of EDB would cause three additional cases of cancer per 1,000 Americans was grossly inflated—14 times too high. Yet under pressure from environmental lobbyists and a panicked public, they withheld the revised estimate until after the ban was imposed.

ARTS & LETTERS

Genius or Fraud?

"Was Jackson Pollock Any Good?" in *Arts and Antiques* (Oct. 1984), P.O. Box 20600, Bergenfield, N.J. 07621.

Jackson Pollock's famed "drip" paintings have hung in museums across the United States for several decades now. Yet, many viewers undoubtedly still ask themselves whether a five-year-old child armed with a few cans of paint might not have done as well as the founder of abstract expressionism. So *Arts and Antiques* put the question to 23 prominent artists and intellectuals: "Was Jackson Pollock any good?"

There is no consensus. Thomas Hoving, former director of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, writes that Pollock (1912–56) was "a tyro, the primitive of a way. The failing of his work is the lack of humanism, so the paintings will be an interesting footnote in the course of art history; a high point at a low moment." But to painter Andrew Wyeth, Pollock's primitivism, his "complete freedom with paint," was a great breakthrough that paved the way for wide-ranging experimentation by other painters after the late 1940s.

Pollock's colleague and contemporary Robert Motherwell recalls that his old friend was inarticulate and temperamental—except in the studio. There he was "wholly articulate—with his body, arm, wrist, and eye dancing over the canvas on the floor."

Commentary editor Norman Podhoretz perceives Pollock's personality in his paintings, "some force of primitive energy that was unmistak-