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The News and Observer

I advise and enjoin those who direct the paper in the tomorrows never to advocate any cause for personal profit or preferment. I would wish it always to be "the servant" and devote itself to the policies of equality and justice to the underprivileged. If the paper should at any time be the cause of self-interest or become the spokesman of privilege or selfishness it would be untrue to its history.

JOSEPHUS DANIELS — Editor and Publisher 1894-1948

This newspaper's opinion

Chemicals require vigilance

Recent chemical contamination problems in Michigan and New York have been brought closer to home by the unlawful dumping of toxic substances on North Carolina highways. Fortunately, this state's problem apparently has been detected in time to avoid widespread damage to people's health. But state and local government everywhere must be more vigilant due to a steady increase in firms turning out and using industrial chemicals, herbicides and pesticides.

In rural Michigan a mass grave was prepared for herds of sleek, healthy-looking white-faced cattle that had to be destroyed. This was the wasteful, gory ending to the careless handling of chemicals known as PBBs (polybrominated biphenyls), which had contaminated cattle feed.

PBBs are in those classes of chemicals that, like the PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) dumped in North Carolina, can find their way into human tissues and body fluids through the food chain when improperly handled or disposed of. Traces of PBB have been found in the milk of human mothers.

A residential neighborhood near Niagara Falls, N.Y., was just declared a disaster area by the federal government. The cause: chemicals "properly" disposed of 25 years ago in an excavation ironically named Love Canal. The chemicals have now leached or drained into the soil around and under houses. Noxious vapors abound in the neighborhood, which has an abnormally high rate of birth defects and illnesses.

The frightening thing about Love Canal is that the company dumping the chemicals there a quarter of a century ago complied with the law governing disposal methods at that time. Today, elsewhere around Niagara Falls with its heavy concentration of chemical industry, state law requires strict new standards for burying wastes in carefully prepared landfills. But those standards are the exception rather than the rule in much of the rest of the country.

North Carolina in recent years has added steadily to the ranks of companies that supply chemicals for its industrial and agricultural economies. For example, among the 150 foreign-owned or affiliated businesses now operating in the state, slightly more than 10 percent are engaged in the manufacture or distribution of chemicals and dyestuffs.

This state's water, air and soil are indispensable elements of the state's good life. None of the three can be risked through failure of private management and public authority to require the best known technology for handling and disposal. The planned evacuation of the Niagara Falls neighborhood is ample warning that narrow compliance with existing law can be a deadly dose of legalism for both the living and the yet unborn.

Good Morning

Bert Lance, defender of Arab investments in the U.S., has apologized for speaking of "the great Jewish ownership of the press." That's pouring oil on troubled waters.

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