

Atrazine and The Forever War on Science makes for scary yet incisive reading

By ACSH Staff — May 8, 2014



In a brilliantly-written perspective piece on his *Science 2.0*

blog, Hank Campbell skewers a lot of folks who really need skewering. His scythe and rapier draw blood from his targets, and his insights accrue to the reader: the rampant chemophobia pervasive in America, where chemicals are feared when they are recognized at all; the pandering of [pseudo-journalists giving a soapbox to the nonsense attacks](#) [1] on an important herbicide, atrazine; the researcher whose outrageous reports and even worse allegations of persecution seem to have outweighed all the science, to one hero-worshipping (or merely publicity-seeking) writer in the estimable weekly, *The New Yorker*.

[Atrazine and the Forever War on Science](#) [2] covers all this, and much more. We here at ACSH are very familiar with the themes: chemicals are bad, big corporations are evil, pesticides are toxic, etc, etc. The typical American (in common with most other residents of the developed world) has little conception of the vast benefits modern science and technology have yielded to our society. More importantly, the harvest of our agricultural heartlands prevents us from personal experience with hunger, much less the malnutrition and even starvation which stalks the under-developed world. Thus, environmentalists have the option to question and defame important, safe and effective pesticides for their own ulterior motives (publicity and donations) while predatory lawyers seek patients to go with allegedly toxic chemical inputs to create a windfall class-action lawsuit, as Syngenta, the maker of atrazine, fell victim to a few years ago another typical anti-business tactic.

ACSH's Dr. Gil Ross had this comment: Everyone with an interest in science writing and how journalism can be corrupted to suit short-term goals should read this excellent work. But be prepared to be both frightened, and saddened, by the manner in which one deranged paranoid who happens to hold a professorship at a respected university can hold an entire company, one might say an industry, hostage to his surreptitious research and bizarre agenda. And be prepared to be equally disturbed to read how one pseudo-journalist can propagate such scurrilous rantings as though they were based on anything vaguely scientific."

For further information on pesticides in general and atrazine in particular, see [ACSH's publication here](#). [3]

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Links

[1] http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2014/02/10/140210fa_fact_aviv?currentPage=all

[2] http://www.science20.com/science_20/atrazine_and_the_forever_war_on_science-135693

[3] <http://acsh.org/2011/11/pesticides-and-health/>