



Friends of
the Earth

PULL-OUT

Chemical generation

Are you ready to help campaign for safer chemicals? Or does the thought turn you cold? Here Safer Chemicals Campaigner Mike Childs explains why FOE's new Safer Chemicals Campaign is going to be a winner

Fighting for a healthier environment

Everyone cares about health. Trite but true. The state of the National Health Service is constantly in the news and in the minds of politicians. Many foods are now marketed as contributing to a healthy diet. Stories about health disasters increasingly sell newspapers and magazines - especially if they focus on valiant kids fighting killer diseases.

Toxic Alert

Scented sneeze

RESEARCHERS have suggested that over 2 per cent of the population – more than a million people in the UK – are thought to be allergic to fragrances in household products.

Are we right to be so concerned, so obsessed with health, especially given that people are living longer than ever before? The answer is, of course, yes. There are more and more concerns about the health impacts of our consumer-rich western world - increased levels of cancer, falling sperm counts, genital malformations, to name a few. Changes to the ratio of male to female births and evidence that girls are entering puberty much earlier are also worrying. Many of these problems may be associated with the huge increase in the number of chemicals used today - thousands of which aren't tested properly as my colleague Safer Chemicals Campaigner Michael Warhurst explains on page 16.

Toxic Alert

Unwelcome visitors

A RECENT REPORT found that more than 300 man-made chemicals have been found in our bodies.

How you can help

So what's the response of our brave-hearted politicians? Do they attempt to tackle the root cause of this problem? Do they hell! Instead they concentrate on pumping more and more money into the National Health Service and refuse to tackle the mighty chemical industry. So, never one to shirk a challenge, Friends of the Earth is going to launch its Safer Chemicals Campaign to partner the existing Factory Watch Campaign. The Safer Chemicals Campaign will focus on chemicals in the products we buy. Factory Watch focuses on the thousands of tonnes of dodgy chemicals released by industry year in, year out.

This pull-out section outlines the strategy for this campaign, and through it suggests how your local group can devise a strategy to help us (and we need plenty of help on this health based campaign).

Toxic Alert

More girls

SOME EUROPEAN countries have found that the ratio of male to female births has declined over the past 20-40 years. After a chemical accident in Italy in 1976, many more girls were born than boys. This lends support to theories that this decline in boys born could be due to chemicals.

Growing up

RESEARCH SHOWS that girls are entering puberty earlier and that this may be due to chemicals their mothers were exposed to during pregnancy.

Need to know

OVER THE NEXT 10 years our understanding of the human body will develop rapidly and will enable us individually to see if we are more sensitive to particular chemicals than other people. Everyone has different susceptibilities. But at the moment we do not have the right to know what chemicals are in many of the products we buy.

The first question is what's the problem?

We are exposed to a huge number of chemicals in our homes through the products we buy and from factories and other pollution sources. These chemicals certainly aren't good for us and it is likely that they could be causing us harm.

So what do we want to achieve in our campaign?

A bit more tricky, we need to build some realism into this. We want to make sure that the chemicals we use are safer. We also want to reduce factory pollution. We can't say no chemicals and close down the factories. The objectives of the campaigns are therefore to introduce new laws controlling what chemicals can and can't be used, as well as reducing levels of hazardous substances released by industry by 80 per cent by 2005 (with a longer term aim of reducing it to zero).

Is this achievable?

It does sound ambitious, but the European Union is beginning a complete overhaul of chemicals policy because it recognises that the current system has totally failed. Factory pollution is also getting increasingly unpopular, especially since Friends of the Earth linked pollution releases with potential health impacts. So the timing is right.

Is this chemical campaign going to be run just by FOE?

Well we think we've got plenty of allies. Groups that might be interested will include the Consumers Association, National Childbirth Trust, WWF and parent and toddler groups.

People living near polluting factories are clearly going to be on our side, especially when we explain that we want factories to clean-up not close down. Also, increasingly there are examples out there of factories which have drastically reduced pollution levels already.

What's more, all of us use chemicals in our homes. Given that the biggest health threat is to babies and young children - because their bodies are developing - we think we can get plenty of parents and grandparents to help us in our campaign. All we need to do is explain the issue, and give them easy ways they can help us.

Remember, this is a health issue. People do give a damn and will fight for a healthier environment to live in and bring their kids up in.

Anyone else?

We think we've got a great chance of getting retailers such as Boots on board, although some companies might need a bit of persuasion. After all, retailers just want to sell products to people, they don't want any potential legal implications if problems with chemicals in their goods emerge in the future. They can use their power to demand that manufacturers use safer chemicals, like they are increasingly using their power to demand GM-free and organic foods.

Toxic Alert

So who is FOE going for?

Ultimately it is the Government – and other EU Governments – that sets the rules. It's these people we need to convince. We'll need to do this through people power. There's no doubt that the industry will fight us and we'll need to expose this. But in the end it is people that politicians are most frightened of.

So how are you going to do it?

What we're not going to do is get sucked into huge technical arguments. Instead we want as many people as possible to sign up to our key principles for the regulation of chemicals. So we need to go out and talk to the groups which include parents and grandparents. We've got to remember that FOE is strongest talking to people in the language they understand.

The technical detail can follow, and anyway the Danish Government has detailed how to make the changes necessary.

As for polluting factories, well FOE needs to do the same awareness raising, but it also need to speak to the workers and the unions and the regulators.

What resources will you need?

Leaflets, postcards, posters. But they're pretty much produced now so do contact us to get materials. You will also need some money for your local campaigning, such as street stalls. But this campaign is cheap – it's mostly about talking to people. Stunts may help however, so it will be worthwhile thinking about fundraising for the campaign as you meet and talk to people.

How long will it take?

Well it could take a while, especially if it's a factory campaign. But doing something is much better than doing nothing. We're not asking people to sign away their lives, just do what you can when you can.

Press for change

Contact Karine on **020 7566 1688** and let her know if you're group is interested in joining us in campaigning for Safer Chemicals. If you can let her know whether you're specifically interested in the Safer Chemicals Campaign or the Factory Watch Campaign that would help.

There will be a **Day of Action** on 30 September, so encourage your group to take part. Ask your co-ordinator to fill in the enclosed registration form (co-ordinators only) or contact Karine by phone or email. This will provide information to shoppers, so we will need as many local groups as possible to take part.

Dodgy mimics

EXPOSURE to chemicals which can mimic our natural hormones has been linked with birth defects of the reproductive track, affect birth height, and intelligence. It is also thought that the increases in breast cancer, prostate and testicular cancer could be due to chemicals which imitate hormones.

Lawless

THE CHEMICAL industry claims it is "extremely highly regulated". But a Swedish Government official claims that, "the majority of chemical substances is in reality not covered by the current legislation."

Still life

UNBORN BABIES, babies and children are most susceptible to chemicals because their bodies are developing rapidly.

Number crunch

IN THE EARLY 1950s around 7 million tonnes of chemicals were manufactured per year, nowadays over 250 million tonnes are made. Around 80,000 chemicals are currently in widespread use.

Duffer's guide to some dodgy chemicals



Alkylphenols and derivatives

In industrial detergents and paint.

Toxic alert: Hormone disrupter.



Alkyltin

In duvets and mattresses.

Toxic alert: Has an impact on the immune system, leaving people more susceptible to illness and disease.



Artificial musks and other perfumes:

In perfume and detergents.

Toxic alert: hormone disrupter and bioaccumulative, which means it builds up in the human body and environment causing as yet unknown health problems.



Bisphenol A

In linings of food cans and lids, plastic bottles.

Toxic alert: Hormone disrupter.



Brominated flame retardants

In sofas, carpets, computers and TVs

Toxic alert: Hormone disrupter. It accumulates in breast milk and blood, according to the Swedish and Danish governments.



Phthalates

In PVC products such as children's toys and plastic window frames,

Toxic alert: Hormone disrupter. It has an impact on the development of reproductive systems.



Summer Reading

Have you read Friends of the Earth's best sellers?

The real food book

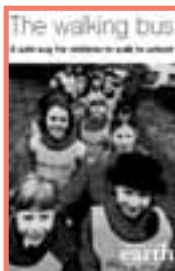


Written in a lively, accessible style, *The real food book* is a hard-hitting expose of what's wrong with modern farming and our food system. It offers a wealth of ideas about how to find locally-produced and seasonal foods, organic farming and innovative new ways to shop. And it shows consumers how to take action to make sure that they have a real choice about real food.

October 1999; L468; 100 pp
£4.99, local group price £2.50
ISBN 1 85750 328 7

The walking bus

A safe way for children to walk to school

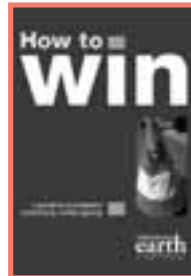


This easy and accessible guide tells the reader everything they need to know about setting up their own neighbourhood walking bus for junior school children. It also explains why such local schemes can significantly help to cut car congestion and pollution.

May 2000; T484; full colour A4; 16 pp
£3.50, local group price £2.50
ISBN 1 85750 334

How to win

A guide to successful community campaigning



There may be no right way to campaign, but there are tried and tested ways based on experience. This book draws on almost 30 years of community-based campaigning experience from Friends of the Earth, and provides anyone who wants to get started with the first steps on how to run, and win, a local campaign.

March 2000; L480; A5; 112 pp
£4.99, local group price £2.50
ISBN 1 85750 331 7

Tomorrow's World

Britain's share in a sustainable future



Tomorrow's World offers a wide-ranging analysis of what the UK needs to do to achieve an environmentally sustainable society. It argues that Britain must cut resource consumption to allow developing countries to escape from poverty and to prevent further breaches of environmental limits. It sets targets for reduced consumption, and shows how they can be met while at the same time improving our quality of life.

November 1997; T419; 240 x 170 mm; 256 pp
£12.95, local group price £10
ISBN 1 85383 511 0

To order by credit card over the phone, call 020 7490 1555