

November 6, 1970

Honorable Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.)
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Byrd:

Congratulations on your recent re-election. I might add that I am a resident of Hardy County, West Virginia, and had the pleasure of voting for you.

The attached clipping is self-explanatory. I have personally encountered this problem in West Virginia. Last spring I tried to plant corn seed and found that, in the Southern States Cooperative outlets in both Moorefield and in Front Royal, Virginia, I was unable to buy any seed that was not treated by dieldrin. In past times I have found myself unable to buy grass seed or clover seed that was not treated with DDT or some other insecticide. I am therefore obliged by the commercial practices of the principal outlets which service the West Virginia farmer to put seed on the ground which will inevitably kill off considerable numbers of birds before the seed has had time to germinate. I do not particularly care for killing off the birds on my property. Indeed, I would go to considerable lengths -- and have -- to find untreated seed from any source I can locate.

I do not know whether you are in a position to have direct influence in this matter, but I am sure you know people who do. I believe it is up to the Congress to take urgent action to protect the environment. For your information, last summer I wrote directly to Southern States Cooperative in Richmond explaining the problem. They replied very promptly with a courteous letter which said that they have been withdrawing certain dangerous chemicals from their purchase orders, and that they would also withdraw dieldrin when and if somebody came up with an adequate substitute. By inference, until such a substitute was developed, they would continue to purvey treated seed. Again by inference, their letter really meant that they would stop a practice which kills off birds and pollutes streams on a semi-permanent basis with hard pesticides, and would stop the issuance of dangerous substances when and if this could be done without any economic loss. I take it as unquestionable that treated seed keeps better in storage and is thus more favorable from a purely economic standpoint and from the point of view of the people in the business. I believe, however,

that increasing numbers of Americans are beginning to feel that protection of the land, the water and wildlife are more important in the long run, and nowadays even in the short run.

As a West Virginia voter and as an American citizen I would hope that you could take a lead in establishing rules which would control these practices not only in the State of West Virginia with which I am primarily concerned, but also nationally. I would appreciate your forwarding this letter to any officials whom you think could be of help in this regard.

Respectfully,

Ogden Williams

Enclosure

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or

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