

FOREWORD

At Stanford, as at other American universities, the spring of 1970 was a time of redirected effort. In the Department of Biological Sciences, a group of students, fellows and faculty members were able to relate their own scientific training directly to the biological problems caused by the Indo-China war. This pamphlet on the ecological effects of that conflict is the result.

It has come out of the labors of a number of Stanford biologists of diverse backgrounds, working as a loosely organized committee. The group included Howard Edenberg, a graduate student in molecular biophysics; Patrice Morrow and Bruce Bartholomew, graduate students studying physiological ecology of plants; Lawrence Gilbert and Edward Merrell, graduate students in population biology and ecology; Peter Cohen, post-doctoral fellow in molecular genetics; Matthews Bradley, graduate student in developmental biology; and Patricia Caldarola and Paul Grobstein, graduate students in neurophysiology. Professor Colin Pittendrigh and I helped, also. The process of creation was at once gratifying and disturbing. We learned from one another about new things: the ecologists, three of whom have had field experience in the tropics, taught the others about the special qualities of tropical soils and ecosystems; the molecular and cellular biologists in turn looked more critically at the biochemistry of herbicides and the interpretation of the results of bio-assays.

Even in an academic setting where shared intellectual experiences are supposed to happen all the time, this one was unusual. It would have been unambiguously pleasant—were it not for the subject matter. No one can conclude, after looking carefully at the impact of our military strategy in southeast Asia, that we are fighting a war against an army. Instead, we are waging a war against a people and the land they live on. The enormity of our attack upon the Vietnamese environment has, for me, changed entirely the logic with which one evaluates the morality and even the efficacy of our operation there. After reading this report, I hope you will agree that the central question is now a simple one, "How can we claim to be acting on behalf of people when our action itself is prohibiting a future for them?"

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