

## A NOTE ON PARAQUAT

In the article 'Paraquat Poisoning in Papua New Guinea' (HARVEST, Volume 9, No. 2, pp. 96) Mr. A.E. Charles stated:

'Amongst the agricultural chemicals, only a few are more dangerous than paraquat if they are drunk. However, paraquat does not poison the environment as it breaks down very quickly when it reaches the soil'.

This second sentence is not strictly correct and should be changed to read:

'However, paraquat is not dangerous to the environment as it is inactivated very quickly when it reaches the soil'.

Clay particles in the soil adsorb (attach themselves to) paraquat. Paraquat has special properties which mean that it holds on to the clay very strongly. When the clay and paraquat have joined you can get paraquat back again only by boiling the clay in 50% hydrochloric acid for several hours.

As a result paraquat in the soil is no longer poisonous to plants or animals, although it does not actually break down.

We thank Mr. S. Day, Agricultural Chemist, D.P.I. for pointing out the error.