

## **THE JOB SEARCH**

### **I. An Only Opportunity**

Gerald Wahr was not prepared for such a sudden turn of events. He was scheduled to complete his degree in chemical engineering in June. He planned to return to help his parents run the family farm right after graduation. However, in early May his father, Hans Wahr, became seriously ill, and it was evident he would be hospitalized for an extended period of time. Gerald's mother and his older brother could continue to run the farm. But the medical bills would quickly mount. Without an additional source of income, the family would soon begin defaulting on its mortgage payments. The best hope for saving the farm would be for Gerald to find employment as an engineer.

Since Gerald had expected to return to the farm, he already missed many opportunities for job interviews. He would have to work quickly. After an intensive search, only one solid opportunity surfaced. Pro-Growth Pesticides, Inc. would be on campus next week to interview candidates for a supervisory job requiring a degree in chemical engineering.

Gerald certainly seems well qualified for the job. However, there is a hitch. The Wahr farm uses strictly organic methods. Gerald's father had always opposed the use of pesticides on their farm. In fact, he was rather outspoken about this among the farmers in the area. Gerald admired this in his father. As a young child he often proudly announced that he wanted to grow up to be just like his father. Hans Wahr, however, had different ideas about this. A high school dropout, Hans advised young Gerald to further his education. "Without a college degree," he told Gerald, "you'll be as ineffective as I am. You have to fight fire with fire. If you really want to show those pesticide folks a thing or two, you've got to be able to talk their language." So, Gerald decided he would go to college and study chemical engineering.

Gerald's study of chemical engineering did nothing to shake his conviction that organic farming is best. Quite the contrary. He is now more convinced than ever that the pesticide industry is not only harming the environment generally, but farm products in particular.

Should Gerald go for the interview? Discuss.

### **II. Conversations With Friends**

At first Gerald rejects the idea of going for the interview. He thinks of it as a matter of integrity. How could he work for a company that researches, produces, and markets the very products he and his family have so long opposed? However, his friends counsel him otherwise. Here are some of their arguments. How might Gerald respond to them?

Allen: Look, if you don't go for the job, someone else will. The job won't go away just because you stay away. So, the work's going to be done anyway. Your refusing the job won't change a thing.

Bob: Right! Furthermore, you need to look at this from a utilitarian point of view--the greatest good for the greatest number. If you don't go for the job, someone else who really believes in pesticides will--and that's going to make things even worse! If you take the job and aren't gung ho, that might just slow things down a little.

Don: Besides, you might be able to introduce a few reforms from the inside. That won't kill the pesticide industry,

but it might make it a little bit better--certainly better than if some zealous pesticide nut takes the job.

Allen: So, it's pretty clear what to do. All things considered, you **ought** to go for the job. It's your only real chance to save the farm; and if someone else gets the job, Pro-Growth will cause even more harm. You can't be a purist about these things. It's not a perfect world, you know.

### **III. The Interview**

Gerald Wahr is uncomfortable during the interview, but it seems to be going rather well. However, the interviewer then asks: "There are a lot of people who disapprove of the use of pesticides in farming. Of course, Pro-Growth disagrees. What are your thoughts about the use of pesticides?"

How should Gerald answer this question?

### **IV. Jobs**

Gerald Wahr's situation may seem extreme. However, it does raise important questions about job choices. To what extent should one be concerned about whether there is a good match between one's basic ethical commitments and job selection? What kinds of engineering related jobs, if any, would you decline because of ethical concerns?

## **COMMENTARIES**

### **John B. Dilworth**

This is a useful case because it focuses on a deep, recurring nexus of moral problems. These concern the clash between personal ideals or life-plans and the realities of the social and business world. In its most general form the problem appears as a near-omnipresent threat of moral prostitution. Any work which is done at least partly for money is morally suspect, because in those respects it does not advance one's moral ideals, and in some cases it could significantly compromise one's ideals.

It is important to emphasise the general problem of the clash of personal ideals versus social realities, because it is easy to think that it is only the overt moral conflict cases which are morally problematic, such as that presented in the current case. However, there could be any number of jobs which were consistent with Gerald Wahr's general moral convictions, and which yet are also morally problematic. For example, any benign but unchallenging long-term job of no social importance could lead Gerald's friends to accuse him with some justice of having led a morally wasted, pointless life. The sins of complacency may rival those of 'selling out'.

How then can we overcome this central moral problem of the working world? A useful clue is to be found in the slogan 'If you're not working on the solution, then you're part of the problem'. Intuitively, morality requires us to be actively engaged in bringing about solutions to the moral problems of our jobs, whatever the jobs and problems may be. Even in difficult, overtly problematic cases, it may be possible to preserve one's moral integrity by appropriate remedial planning and action. What follows are some reasons and strategies which could preserve the integrity of someone like Gerald in the pesticide business, if he were to enter it.

First, prior to his first interview, Gerald needs to get a good overview of the many aspects of organic versus non-organic farming. He needs to clearly define for himself the actual and ideal contributions of each to the world of agriculture, both present and as projected into the indefinite future. Questions such as exactly what factors make

organic farming good, and chemically-assisted farming morally unacceptable, have to be asked, and any exceptions or unclarity in the questions or responses need to be carefully noted by him. He should then use the results to outline a plan for how he himself, working (at least initially) inside the pesticide industry, could do as much to accentuate the benefits and to minimize the potential harms of pesticide use as possible. If the plan intuitively offers enough of these kinds of 'moral profit' overall, he can go to the interview and accept the job with a clear conscience. Otherwise, he should turn it down.

It is useful to compare this strategy with those suggested by two of Gerald's friends. Both Allen ("the work's going to be done anyway..") and Bob (better Gerald than a pesticide 'nut') offer utilitarian solutions. These ignore the pressing personal dimensions of moral commitment which are addressed here. They also totally ignore everything specific about the issue of pesticides versus 'natural' farming. Gerald needs to know that his efforts are morally worthwhile in this specific case, and that he is on the right side -- as part of the solution rather than the problem in this area of agriculture. Here are some specifics he could use in his plan.

First, exactly what are pesticides? The stereotype of a pesticide is of a chemical which kills pests. But more generally in agriculture they are chemical or biochemical factors which promote resistance or immunity -- to diseases, parasites, or to other factors which would prevent optimal growth of a desired crop or species. Understood in this wider context, the agricultural pesticide business is one in which profitable solutions to problems of harmful growth are developed.

Given this wider understanding of what a pesticide business is or should be doing, Gerald can look for morally worthy things to do with some confidence. For example, he doubtless knows that recombinant DNA ('gene splicing') techniques have shown great promise in producing strains of wheat (and other crops) which are naturally pest-resistant. In these cases, the immunity-promoting factors are actually part of the genetic constitution of the crop. Gerald could work within his pesticide company to ensure that it makes strategic alliances with appropriate bio-technology firms, so that it can share in the patents and profits to be made from selling disease-resistant crops (whose use will widely benefit farmers and the public they serve).

Even if Gerald's pesticide company is narrow-minded and reluctant to change, he could prove to them that it was definitely in their own interest to make such alliances and adopt such broader views. The bad image of pesticide companies as merely selling harmful chemicals, whatever the damage to the land, is after all a powerful reason not to buy pesticides from companies having such attitudes.

If a company wants to maintain or enlarge their list of customers, they must be willing to provide whatever will satisfy the real long-term needs of those customers. Most likely this will involve a broad range of customized solutions in each case, involving more disease-resistant animals and crops, more long-term environmental management of land (for example, selling customers more fertilizer and other 'support' items rather than just disease-prevention items), with 'straight' chemical pesticides being supplied only when nothing else will work. Gerald can become part of the solution to pesticide problems by actively working within his company for such longer-term self-interested thinking on the part of his employers.

To finish, note again that the 'threat of moral prostitution' mentioned at the beginning has no general solution; we must carefully analyse each specific case, including the apparently easy ones as well as more questionable cases, to see whether or not a commitment to a role in the business world is morally acceptable. Personal integrity demands no less.

**Joseph Ellin**

## I

Due to an unforeseen family emergency, Gerald Wahr needs a job fast, and one is available--with a company whose business Gerald opposes. Should he try for the job at the pesticide company, given that both he and his farmer father think that pesticides harm the environment and are bad for farming--a belief which Gerald's chemical engineering training has only reinforced? If not, as the case puts it, his family may lose its farm.

Unfortunately, there is no real solution for the person who needs a job but has moral objections to the job he's able to get. If Gerald is sufficiently dismayed by the pesticide industry, it will obviously be impossible for him to work in it. So he has to think out his options. There is no reason stated in the case why he couldn't get a job at McDonald's in order to tide the family over the crisis caused by his father's illness. Maybe the money isn't good enough, but the point is that there doesn't seem to be any absolute reason why Gerald has to work as a chemical engineer, rather than something else altogether, in order to pay the medical bills until the crisis is over.

Gerald's position is a bit strange. His fondness for his father has led him to adopt his father's dedication to the cause of anti-pesticides. He intends to follow his father into farming, and has apparently studied engineering specifically to learn enough to prove his point against pesticides: "to fight fire with fire," as his father puts it. He seems to have no other interest in chemical engineering, and does not intend to practice the profession but use his knowledge as a propaganda tool. Given all this, it is difficult to understand how he could even consider taking the job in question.

## II

His friends make three arguments. Allen says that if Gerald doesn't take the job, someone else will, which is obviously true; but evidently Gerald's immediate problem is not how to stop the pesticide industry from making pesticides, but only to avoid helping them do it. (When it is time to stop the industry, he will join an environmental group, become active in farm politics, etc). From a strictly utilitarian point of view, however, there is something to be said for Allen's advice. For given that the pesticides will be made anyway, and given that eventually Gerald intends to challenge the industry, it might be the case that his position as critic would be strengthened if he first works in the industry and gets to know it 'from the inside.' So in view of his long-term goals, Gerald might consider swallowing his distaste and taking the job. Bob suggests that Gerald might be able to subvert the company from within, by 'slowing things down a little,' and Don raises the possibility of introducing reforms. Assuming that these are legitimate options, and that their success can't be entirely ruled out, Gerald would have to balance the (no doubt high) unlikelihood of either strategy succeeding, against the certainty that he will be helping the industry do something he opposes, namely, produce pesticides.

However both Bob's and Don's suggestions are dishonest, and would involve deceiving the employer Pro-Growth. So there is a question whether Gerald can follow this advice. In addition Bob is advising Gerald to do a poor job at Pro-Growth, which will not help Gerald's future employment, if he should seek any, as an engineer. Don at least is advocating that Gerald act openly, through internal reforms; but Bob is advising Gerald to accept the job even though Gerald not only knows he does not share the goals and objectives of Pro-Growth, but actually has the deliberate intention to subvert these goals. Few companies would hire a person with such an intention, claiming the right to hire only employees who are dedicated to the company's success as the company defines it. While it is true that Gerald could take the position that his opinions, even regarding his company's products and policies, are his own business, so long as he performs his job diligently, Bob's advice is that he not perform his job diligently, but the reverse. Were Gerald to accept the job with the intention to subvert Pro-Growth's goals, he could be accused of a kind of employee fraud. (There might be an analogy with a person who

took a job in order to spy out trade secrets and reveal them to a competitor).

### III

Therefore, it is important for Gerald to consider his situation before he puts his qualms aside and goes for the interview. Should he anticipate that the interviewer will not ask him about his opinions, and should he then volunteer what they are? Or if he is asked, how will he reply? He might say that his opinions are not the company's business, and see what happens. Or he might say that he does have reservations about pesticides, but that he intends to perform the work required to the best of his ability nonetheless (if this is true). If Gerald were truly honest, he'd explain his opinions, since he wouldn't want the company to hire him under false assumptions. On the other hand, Gerald may well be fearful that any indication of a reservation on his part would kill his chances for job. He needs the money, and to this point he's apparently willing to put his objections to pesticides aside, in the interests of family finances. In that case, he might as well put aside honesty also and lie to the interviewer. At a pesticide company, you make pesticides. If you're willing to work at a pesticide company even though you don't like to make pesticides, you're contradicting yourself if you're not prepared to tell them you want to make pesticides: he who wills the end, wills the means. If Gerald gets the job he'll probably have to lie sooner or later, (suppose they find out about his farm background and ask him to pitch the product to farmers?) unless he thinks he can successfully stay in the closet all his life. So why not get used to it?

### IV

To what extent should there be a match between one's ethics and one's job selection? This general question can't be answered other than in terms of cliché. You shouldn't accept jobs which grate on your conscience. Some people don't have consciences, and will take any job, including executioner. They are lucky. Other people have to work things out as best they can, including being willing to compromise sometimes if necessary, but hopefully not too much. Many people have jobs they don't like, or even detest, but they manage to perform at standards nonetheless. The employer is interested in the employee's job performance; the employee must consider his/her duty to him/her own conscience. It's not easy to find a job these days which might not worry our conscience at some point. Dow Chemical used to make napalm; Westinghouse ran a polluting nuclear bomb factory; electric companies cause acid rain; AT&T admitted discriminating against women; Upjohn makes a medication that, according to 60 Minutes and the British government, turns people into murderers; even Kellogg's has been accused of anti-trust violations and of putting too many raisins in the Raisin Bran! Must one seek a morally pure company? If not, it's a question of how bad you take the company to be. No doubt some people have no problems with pesticides but would never work for a company which tolerates sexual harassment in the workplace. In that sense, ethics is the art of knowing what you want to fight and where you are willing to compromise.

### C.E. Harris

Gerald's dilemma is not a problem in professional ethics. Rather, it is a problem in personal ethics which is generated by his professional training and his professional aspirations. Like all dilemmas, Gerald's problem involves a conflict between two competing obligations. On the one hand, he wants to be true to his own moral ideals, which include his belief in the superiority of organic farming. This belief is probably related to a general commitment to environmental causes about which he and his father care very deeply. On the other hand, he feels morally bound to do what he can to save the family farm. No doubt this sense of moral obligation is also related to strong emotional ties to his family and to the land where he was raised. Probably his family has lived on the farm for several generations.

Gerald's predicament has all of the earmarks of a classic moral dilemma. He feels himself pulled in opposite directions by powerful emotional forces and by persuasive moral considerations. Yet he apparently cannot satisfy both of the demands. He feels that he would do something wrong no matter what he does. Yet he cannot do nothing. "Doing nothing" would presumably be to continue in school, but the decision to stay in school might well involve sacrificing the family farm. So he is forced to decide, and yet both decisions seem wrong. A classic moral dilemma!

Such dilemmas can produce a sense of panic which often results in paralysis of thought as well as of action. We are inclined to either freeze up or to decide irrationally. "Just put two numbers on two pieces of paper and place them in a basket, "1" for staying in school and "2" for getting the job with Pro-Growth. Then pick one of the numbers and act accordingly." We all know that neither of these methods of deciding is appropriate, so we need to think more carefully and critically.

One way of escaping from the dilemma is to argue that one of the options really is better than the other. All of Gerald's friends appear to adopt this tactic. They argue that taking the job with Pro-Growth really is better than abandoning the family farm to its fate. Furthermore, the arguments of Gerald's friends are all of a certain type: they are all **utilitarian** arguments. That is, they reason in terms of the **consequences** of the two courses of action. The consequences are evaluated in terms of human happiness or well-being.

Allen, Bob, and Don argue that, with respect to the environmentalist perspective, the consequences of Gerald's taking the job will be no worse than the consequences of someone else's taking the job, and they may even be more desirable. If Gerald does not take the job, someone who is less sympathetic with environmental considerations might take it. Thus, by not taking the job, Gerald may both harm the environment and fail to do what he can to save the family farm. From a strictly utilitarian standpoint, this is a powerful argument.

There are two problems with this argument. The first problem is a difficulty even from the utilitarian standpoint. We have to ask whether Gerald's three friends have correctly assessed all of the consequences of the course of action that they recommend. If Gerald makes his reservations about pesticides known to the interviewer, it is possible he/she might reply, "You know, we have a small unit that is attempting to develop products for use on organic farms, so we will be in a position to take advantage of this market when it develops. We could put you in this unit." Or, perhaps Gerald's criticism of pesticides might prompt the company to set up such a unit. Again, if Gerald goes to work, there is the chance that he might never finish his degree. Finally, Gerald's friends might have underestimated the chances of saving the family farm by other methods.

A second problem with the recommendation of Gerald's three friends is that it fails to take into account the effects that following their recommendation might have on Gerald himself. This is perhaps a type of consequence, but it is a consequence of a different order. It is an effect on Gerald's sense of integrity, on Gerald's status as a free moral agent who lives in terms of his own moral convictions. In terms of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, their recommendation requires that he treat himself as a "mere means" to some higher good, namely the salvaging of the family farm, and that he do this by violating his own conscience. Should one ever violate his conscience in order to achieve some supposedly "higher" end? This is not always an easy question to answer. Sometimes people do feel justified in doing this. For example, a legislator may agree to support a piece of legislation which he thinks is wrong in order to gain passage of another piece of legislation which he thinks is vastly more important. Is this justified? If so, is this analogous to Gerald's situation?

Before attempting to answer these difficult questions, it might be well to investigate in a more careful way whether there is any way to satisfy both of the moral demands that created the dilemma in the first place. If we can satisfy

both of these demands--even in a modified form--we might come out better, from a moral standpoint, than trying to satisfy one and reject the other. Here is where one's imagination comes into play.

These two demands--saving the family farm and not violating one's conscience--might be satisfied in various ways. Could Gerald get a loan on the basis of his good job prospects? If he could do this, he could save the family farm without violating his conscience. Could he take a short-term job with Pro-Growth? This would require his violating his conscience to some extent, but it would also allow him to save the family farm. Could he encourage his family to sell off part of the family farm in order to pay the debts on the remaining part? This would require at least a partial fulfillment of his obligation to his family without violating his conscience. Or perhaps he could both get a short-term job with Pro-Growth and encourage his family to sell part of the farm. This would require a partial violation of both of the original moral demands, but also allow him to respect those demands in a modified form.

If we knew more about the specifics of the situation, we might be able to think of additional compromises. But of course there are those who say that such moral compromises are wrong. Moral demands are absolute and unqualified. If this is true, then we must go back to our earlier considerations in order to determine which demand should receive priority. However it is important to keep in mind that most moral demands are not really unqualified. We might be inclined to say, "Never lie." But we all know we cannot hold to this absolute, unqualified norm in all situations. When someone with a knife in his hand who is obviously deranged asks for the whereabouts of our friend, we would be justified in lying. Similarly, we may not be able to hold to a moral requirement such as, "Never in any way violate your conscience." On the other hand, actions that violate our conscience should not be undertaken lightly.

### **Neil R. Luebke**

At the most general level the problem in this case is the possible conflict between moral values and job selection. In this particular instance a conscientious chemical engineer is faced with the problem of working for a pesticide company, an area of commercial activity that his family and he have long opposed. The general problem confronts people in many areas of possible employment. Should a person opposed to gambling work in a casino? What about working as a janitor in a casino rather than operating one of the tables? Should a person opposed to drinking liquor work serving beverages to customers in a bar? What about working in a restaurant that has a bar attached to it? In a military context, of course, the problem arises in the case of conscientious objection to military service, or at least military service that involves the possibility of killing other persons. Should an engineer who is a pacifist work in a defense-related industry? Some job situations may involve political commitments. Suppose you are a civil engineer who is Jewish, a strong supporter of Israel, and work for a multinational firm. What should you do if you are assigned to head one of the firm's construction projects for a government that is an enemy of Israel?

It is one thing to be opposed ethically to the product or service provided by a potential employer; it is another thing to decide not to use that product or service personally. A person who does not smoke, for example, might have no difficulty working for a cigarette manufacturer. There are a number of bartenders who are teetotalers. The problem that confronts Gerald in the case is not one of being forced to use pesticides in his own farming; it is rather the compromise of his own convictions as well as the tacit approval of pesticide production and use which his working for Pro-Growth Pesticides might convey. This approval of pesticides would not only be in opposition to his own ethical views but would oppose his family's strong convictions. Indeed, his father's opposition to pesticides seems to have been one of the major motivating factors in leading Gerald to a college career in

chemical engineering.

There are at least four ethical considerations that confront Gerald: first, his own ethical opposition to pesticide use; second, his obligation to uphold his family's commitments; third, his obligation to use and develop his own skills in the best ways possible; and fourth, his obligation to help support his family in time of hardship. Let us consider this latter obligation a little more thoroughly. We certainly cannot assume that, if Gerald does not get a job with Pro-Growth Pesticides, he will have no opportunity within the coming months to get another engineering position. There may be other possibilities looming in the future that he does not yet know. Moreover, we know that engineering is a demanding curriculum, requiring skills in mathematics, design, general scientific knowledge, knowledge of specific applications in equipment and processes, familiarity with timetables and organization of work, experience in working in groups and with group projects, and possibly training in business and management skills. In short, there may be other job opportunities available to Gerald outside of engineering, opportunities to use many of the skills he has picked up in his chemical engineering program.

We should also look at this situation from the points of view of the potential employer, Gerald's engineering college, and Gerald's classmates. At least two considerations are relevant here. First, the pesticide company, in granting an interview to Gerald, is assuming that he is a legitimate candidate for a position; otherwise, they wouldn't waste their time and effort in discussing the matter with him. If he is not interested in the position, he should let them know up front. To fail to do so would not only waste the company's resources but also possibly undermine the chances of another student interviewing with the company. In many cases such company officials can meet only a limited number of students, usually preselected. Second, it is possibly wrong for Gerald to assume that the pesticide company is interested only in pesticides. The company may be planning to expand into other areas of farm chemicals, perhaps into areas to which he has no conscientious objection. In short, Gerald should be up front with the company about his own feelings, and if the company representative still wants to go through with the interview, Gerald may find out that some of his objections are not valid. However, if Gerald goes to the interview without initially telling the company about his objections, his actions may harm other potential candidates and reflect poorly on his school. The decision is not merely a matter of going or not going to an interview; it is rather a decision of how to address the question of an interview in such a way that his college is not harmed, the job prospects of Gerald's fellow students are not harmed, the company is not harmed by wasting its resources, and possibly Gerald himself is not harmed by getting a bad reputation among interviewers.

Let us suppose that Gerald follows the advice of his friends and goes ahead with the interview without alerting the company about his conscientious feelings regarding pesticides. Let us suppose that what happens as a result is described in section III of the case study. Both the interviewer and Gerald are now in a very unhappy situation. Here Gerald seems to have only two alternatives, neither of which is acceptable: either he lies about his views on pesticides or he tells the interviewer his true views on pesticides, thus exposing him to the legitimate charge of proceeding through the interview under false pretenses.

The advice of Gerald's friends does not seem to be worth much. Everything that Allen says in his first statement may be true: somebody else may take the job; it won't go away because he stays away from it; the job's going to be done anyway. But none of these claims is directly relevant to the question of whether Gerald should compromise his ethical values. Both Bob's and Don's suggestions seem to call on Gerald to compromise his professional standards. One of them suggests that he become a subversive within the organization; the other one suggests that he become a reformer inside the organization. In both cases, Gerald is being asked to compromise his professional obligation to serve his client or his employer as faithfully as he is able.



The civil engineer and writer Samuel Florman (*The Existential Pleasures of Engineering*) has emphasized that engineering is and ought to be a creative, satisfying, socially valuable, and respected career choice. Much of a professional's self-identity and self-respect is essentially bound up with his or her career. On the other hand, we all have the experience of doing jobs we don't like. They may be jobs that seem demeaning; some may involve boring work that doesn't use our talents; some may require doing unpleasant tasks, such as an auto mechanic telling a car owner that her car isn't worth repairing, or a retailer telling a customer that he can no longer extend him credit, or a supervisor telling an employee that she is going to be demoted because her work is substandard. The type of job situation confronting us in this case, however, is potentially more serious. We may be wrong in some of our convictions, and certainly our moral viewpoints do undergo change. But change in this sense usually leads to greater personal integration, not disintegration. If an individual such as Gerald takes a position that daily requires him to split his personality--to compromise his ideals, to consider himself a person with whom he would not want to associate--there is a likelihood of self-inflicted psychological damage in addition to the damage he might bring to his employer.

### **Michael Rabins**

Before commenting on Gerald Wahr's circumstances, it appears that a logical inconsistency in the presentation of the facts of the case need some attention. It is not convincing that Gerald must interview Pro-Growth Pesticides, Inc. in order to save the farm. In the second paragraph it is stated, "Since Gerald had expected to return to the farm, he already missed many opportunities for job interviews". Well, since Gerald had planned on returning to the farm anyway it is reasonable to suppose that the Wahr family anticipated additional income from his presence. With his father in the hospital the extra income would not materialize, but bills would. If the hospital stay will be for an "extended period of time," it is not clear why Gerald couldn't work on the farm, for at least a while, and wait for additional engineering employment opportunities to present themselves. There would have to be a breathing room period during which the medical bills and mortgage payments would not yet be overdue. Gerald's presence on the farm would maintain farm income at previous levels, and other engineering employment opportunities could possibly materialize.

To make the urgency of the Pro-Growth Pesticides interview more compelling and convincing, it might be advisable to restate some of the circumstances of the case. For example, Gerald might be in the middle of the first semester of his chemical engineering M.S. degree program when his father unexpectedly passes away after an expensive hospital stay during which the bills quickly mounted. Further, the economic times might be so bad that Gerald is lucky to have even just the one interview with Pro-Growth Pesticides. Grim circumstances, but realistic--and perhaps more convincing for the questions that follow.

Having said all of the above, let us now presume that Gerald is faced with the real quandary of whether or not to interview Pro-Growth Pesticides. It would almost appear that this situation raises questions of common sense as much as ethics, although there are ethical dimensions to the situation that need to be discussed as well. Let us turn to Shakespeare for some guidance on the common sense issues. In "Hamlet", Polonius gives the following sage advice (in addition to quite a bit more) to his son Laertes who is about to travel abroad: "To thine own self be true, for it then follows as the night the day, that thou canst not then be false to any man." If Gerald interviews and subsequently accepts a job with Pro-Growth Pesticides, he clearly will not be true to his own or his father's views on pesticides. If he is truly convinced that pesticides are not only harming the environment generally, but farm products in particular, then there is no way that he will be able to honestly act as a faithful agent or trustee for his employer (NSPE Fundamental Canon #4). It does not take much imagination to envision situations in which, as a Pro-Growth Pesticide employee, he will have to act in violation of his own conscience (while being

false to others) and probably of one or more strictures of the NSPE Code of Ethics.

Turning to Gerald's conversations with his friends (part II), several ethical issues do immediately arise. Allen's view that the work will be done even if Gerald refuses the interview ("Your refusing the job won't change a thing") is an age-old rationalization for doing something we know may be or is wrong. If enough people turn their backs on such a rationalization, maybe things will change. Change for the better, whether evolutionary or revolutionary, comes about because a critical mass of people do opt for the morally right path.

Bob's utilitarian argument is based on the premise that Gerald will slow things down a little by not being gung ho after he takes the pesticide job. This raises serious issues involving the means-end principle. Does the good end (organic farming eventually prevailing) justify the dubious means of Gerald dissembling on the job by being less than gung ho?

Don's advice to take the job and try to introduce a few reforms from the inside only makes sense if Gerald is upfront about that in his interview. If Pro-Growth Pesticides is willing to hire someone with Gerald's entrenched views on pesticide use, then maybe he could make a difference. But then Gerald better make sure there are mechanisms within the company to raise differing professional opinions. A number of companies have such mechanisms as company ombudsmen, ethical hotlines or reword procedures for productive disagreements with company policy. If it is Gerald's intent to change the company from within, he better make sure that the opportunities are there to do so.

However, from part III of the case (The Interview), it is made pretty clear that Pro-Growth Pesticides, Inc. does not agree that change is needed. Once Gerald is asked his views on pesticides, he pretty much has to have made a decision, in advance, to either have changed his mind or to prevaricate on the issue. If his family's welfare, and the farm are that important to him, Gerald must recognize that he must forego the luxury of his previous strong feelings about pesticides. Only if he can make that conscious decision is he justified in continuing the interview, once into it.

In part IV of the case (Jobs) the question is raised about what kinds of engineering related jobs might be declined because of ethical concerns. Many graduating engineers carefully limit the kinds of companies they interview to rule out (or in) companies involved in Defense Department weaponry contracts or environmentally impact-prone companies. Whatever the case, and whichever the concerns, it is wise for interviewee to think through these issues before even signing up for an interview.

## **Henry West**

### **I**

Some people might think that if Gerald Wahr goes for the interview, he is committed to taking the job if offered, but that isn't so. He may find out more about what kind of work he would be doing with Pro-Growth Pesticides and whether he could do it in good conscience. Even if he thinks that it is highly unlikely that he will take the job if offered, his having an interview is not an act of bad faith.

But should he take the job if offered? He probably wouldn't even consider it if it weren't that the family is in dire need of the income, and the income that he would get from an engineering job would be significantly greater than from any alternative. With no other engineering job in prospect, this is his best chance of enabling the family to meet the mortgage payments and his father's medical bills.

Another argument in favor of taking the job is that he would learn about the pesticide industry from the inside. His father had said, "If you really want to show those pesticide folks a thing or two, you've got to be able to talk their language." After working in the pesticide industry, he would really be able to talk their language. And the job need not be forever. While there he can be keeping his eyes open for other positions in chemical engineering which do not compromise his ideals, and he would get valuable experience. Or his father's medical expenses might be paid for, and he could then return to work on the family farm, as planned.

Would an explanation that he is doing it to save the farm be a consolation to his father, or cause his father even greater distress? Would his father accept his own words ("...you've got to be able to talk their language") as a good reason for working for a pesticide company, or would his father feel that Gerald was using his talents and education in destructive ways? Should Gerald even worry about what his father will think? Maybe he should take that into consideration, the way that one takes into consideration the effect of one's action on anyone who is affected, but Gerald should not let his father's attitude make his decision for him. Gerald might have good reasons for taking the job which his father would not accept or that he would not want to state to his father.

## II

Allen's first argument looks like an excuse that could be used to justify being co-opted into doing almost anything. But there is some force to it. If a bad result is going to happen anyway, your participation or non-participation isn't going to make any difference. If pesticides are going to be produced and used, it won't help any if you "keep your hands clean." If everyone were to refuse to work in the pesticide industry, then they wouldn't be produced and used, but since everyone isn't going to refuse, what difference does one person's refusal make? This argument has many applications elsewhere. If animals are going to be grown on factory farms and eaten for food by others, what difference does it make that one vegetarian refuses to eat meat? If everyone were to refuse to serve in the military, there would be no more wars; but, if most people are willing to serve, what difference does one pacifist make? Gerald could reply that he is setting a bad example by working in the pesticide industry, and setting a good example by refusing. Others might follow his lead. But it would be naive to think that his example is going to make much difference.

Bob has an intriguing argument. If Gerald takes the job and does ineffective work, that might have better consequences than if someone else takes the job and works effectively, for example discovering ways of making more deadly and environmentally more hazardous pesticides, or how to make them more cheaply so that they are used in even greater quantities. If Gerald were to accept this argument, he would be compromising his integrity in two ways, not only by working to produce a product that he does not believe should be used, but also by working half-heartedly instead of in good faith for his employer. But this is not a completely absurd argument. Sometimes subversion is more effective in hurting an enemy than outright attack.

Don's argument is different. It is not that Gerald could slow down the production of pesticides by poor work, but that he might be able to redirect it into production of less harmful products.

One danger which his friends don't mention is that if Gerald takes the job, he may become corrupted by the environment in which he works. Those around him will be believers in what they are doing. Gerald may have difficulty finding another job and be with the company for years. He may begin to talk himself into believing that what the company is doing has to be done. A nuclear scientist who was assigned to work on the Clinch River breeder reactor in 1966 thought that the danger of an accident with such radioactive materials was such a risk that the plant should never be built. Ten years later, when the project was cancelled, after he had spent the best ten years of his career in producing an effective design, he was terribly disappointed. He had come to believe

that the world fuel shortage justified the use of dangerous nuclear power.

### **III**

Even if Gerald has decided that he wants the job, a lie would probably not help him get it. A perceptive interviewer could see through it. Trying to avoid any answer at all would also probably not work. Gerald could honestly express his concerns about the environment. Most likely the interviewer would then begin to try to sell Gerald on the belief that the company shares his concerns.

### **IV**

As indicated above, it is possible to be corrupted once one's self-interest is involved. If one's work and one's ethical commitments don't match, one is likely to solve the discomfort by compromising one's ethical ideals. Furthermore, people are likely to do better work if they believe enthusiastically in what they are doing. If they are working merely for a paycheck, without any belief that the work they are doing is serving any good purpose, they will feel alienated from the work, feel that they are simply putting in time on the job in order to receive a salary to spend on what they consider their real life. But work ideally can be an expression of one's self, of one's productive powers, of one's contribution to the world.