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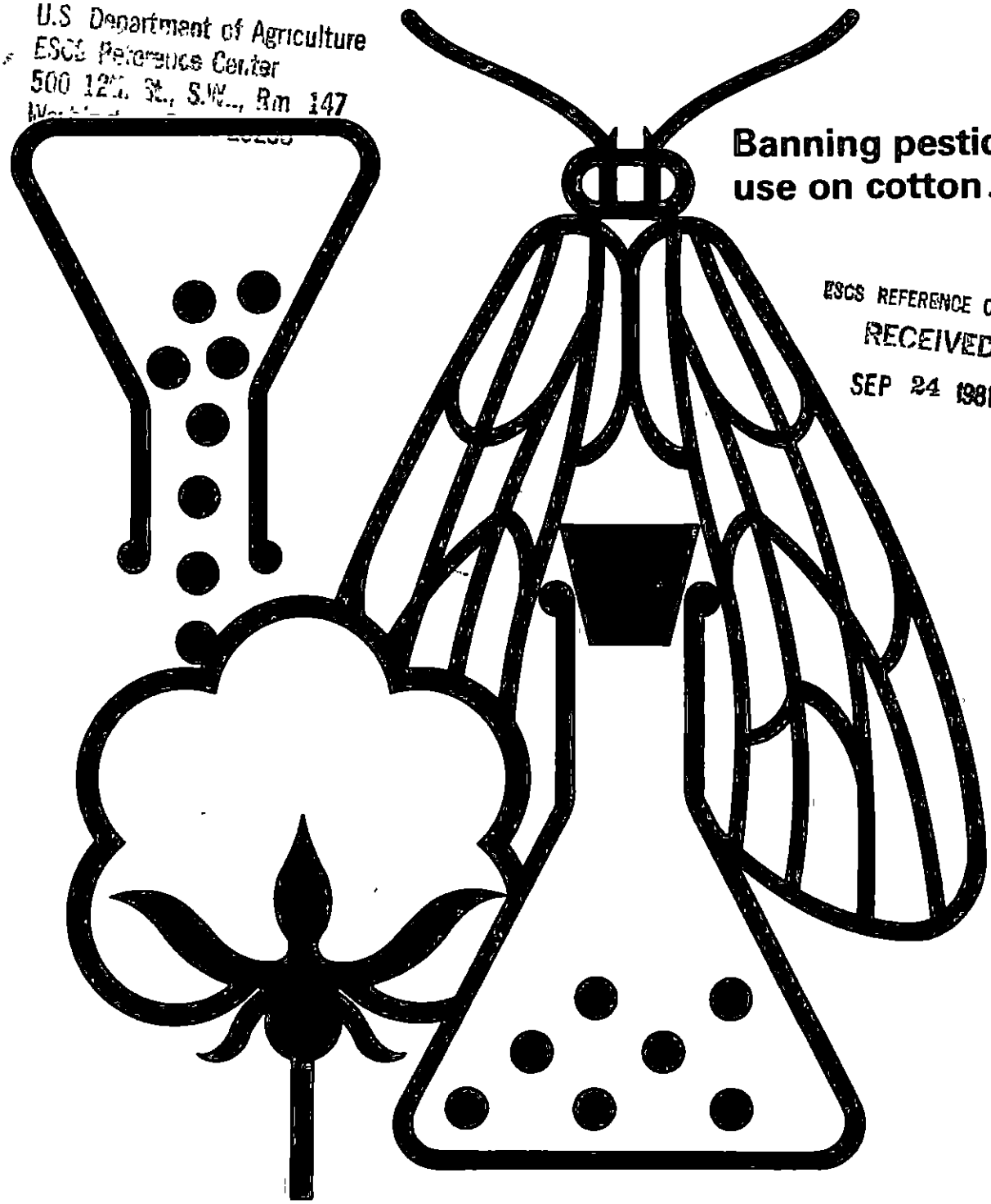

Banning pesticide use on cotton... p.3

Agricultural Economics Research

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When most people develop interest in a problem, they can usually soon articulate the problem and also an answer But they frequently fail to come to grips with the reasons which explain the problem Researchers, however, spend their working lives gaining familiarity with reasons—often at the expense of being articulate about specific issues or answers This dichotomy may seem odd, but it apparently has existed for a long time Joseph Schumpeter, in his *History of Economic Analysis*, had it in mind when he distinguished between economic analysis and economic views He recognized the contribution of the ancient Greeks to analysis, but thought that, through most of history, we have had more to say about economic issues and answers than about economic reasons

Schumpeter defined economic analysis as the development of an intellectual procedure that can clarify economic problems The analyst has a command of techniques Part of the genius of Western civilization can be attributed to the latitude given to people with analytical, research-oriented minds, even though, as Ed Bishop pointed out in the October 1976 issue of this journal, the history of academic freedom has been uneven The articles in this issue involve research methods, the use of which can be important in arriving at reasons but their importance may be lost on people who are concerned only with issues and answers Yet, if the reasons are not right, the answers may not be right either, and the issues will continue to be unresolved

Lack of access to good data often limits our search for reasons Charles Sisson explains how two incomplete data sources can be merged to form what he calls a synthetic data file Under certain conditions, the technique produces a file which contains information not in the separate sources This increases the amount of information that can be extracted from secondary data sources and does so at a reasonable cost

Budgeting allows researchers to search for reasons by weighing the consequences of alternative actions Weisz, Miller, and Quinby use a computerized form of budgeting which they call stochastic simulation to compare the trends in prices and quantities of a farm commodity with what would be likely to happen after a change in agricultural technology Here, the change is a ban on the use of the pesticide toxaphene on cotton

When a researcher divides the elements of one data series, say income, by another, say price, the process is called deflation The resulting variable, real income in this example, often is believed to be more appropriate for analysis than the original variables Bell, Roop, and Willis examine the statistical properties of deflation and find it is not a technique to be used casually Deflation can influence our discernment of reasons because it affects tests of significance, such as the correlation coefficient and *t*-ratio It can change the sign for a regression coefficient Take warning, because deflation can be used as one more means of lying with statistics

CLARK EDWARDS

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