

# 'Silent Spring' Is Now Noisy Summer

## Pesticides Industry Up in Arms Over a New Book

By JOHN M. LEE

The \$300,000,000 pesticides industry has been highly irritated by a quiet woman author whose previous works on science have been praised for the beauty and precision of the writing.

The author is Rachel Carson, whose "The Sea Around Us" and "The Edge of the Sea" were best sellers in 1951 and 1955. Miss Carson, trained as a marine biologist, wrote gracefully of sea and shore life.

In her latest work, however, Miss Carson is not so gentle. More pointed than poetic, she argues that the widespread use of pesticides is dangerously tilting the so-called balance of nature. Pesticides poison not only pests, she says, but also humans, wildlife, the soil, food and water.

The men who make the pesticides are crying foul. "Crass commercialism or idealistic flag-waving," scoffs one industrial toxicologist. "We are aghast," says another. "Our members



Rachel Carson

Brooks

are raising hell," reports a trade association.

Some agricultural chemicals concerns have set their scientists to analyzing Miss Carson's work, line by line. Other companies are preparing briefs de-

## Rachel Carson Stirs Conflict—Producers Are Crying 'Foul'

fending the use of their products. Meetings have been held in Washington and New York. Statements are being drafted and counter-attacks plotted.

A drowsy midsummer has suddenly been enlivened by the greatest uproar in the pesticides industry since the cranberry scare of 1959.

Miss Carson's new book is entitled "Silent Spring." The title is derived from an idealized situation in which Miss Carson envisions an imaginary town where chemical pollution has silenced "the voices of spring."

The book is to be published in October by the Houghton Mifflin Company and has been chosen as an October selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club. About half the book appeared as a series of three articles in The New Yorker magazine last month.

A random sampling of opinion among trade associations and chemical companies last

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week found the Carson articles receiving prominent attention.

Many industry spokesmen preface their remarks with a tribute to Miss Carson's writing talents, and most say that they can find little error of fact.

What they do criticize, however, are the extensions and implications that she gives to isolated case histories of the detrimental effects of certain pesticides used or misused in certain instances.

The industry feels that she has presented a one-sided case and has chosen to ignore the enormous benefits in increased food production and decreased incidence of disease that have accrued from the development and use of modern pesticides.

## Miss Carson on Vacation

The pesticides industry is annoyed also at the implications that the industry itself has not been alert and concerned in its recognition of the problems that accompany pesticide use.

Last week, Miss Carson was said to be on "an extended vacation" for the summer and not available for comment on the industry's rebuttal. Her agent, Marie Rodell, said she had heard nothing directly from chemical manufacturers concerning the book.

Houghton Mifflin referred all questions to Miss Rodell. The New Yorker said it had received many letters expressing great interest in the articles and "only one or two took strong objection."

In an interview, E. M. Adams, assistant director of the biochemistry research laboratory of the Dow Chemical Company, said he would be among the first to acknowledge that there were problems in the use or misuse of pesticides.

"I think Miss Carson has indulged in hindsight," he said. "In many cases we have to learn from experience and often it is difficult to exercise the proper foresight."

## Benefits Against Ills

Emphasizing that he spoke as a private toxicologist, Mr. Adams said that in some procedures, such as large-scale spraying, the possible benefits had to be balanced against the possible ill.

He referred to the extensive testing programs and Federal regulations prevalent in the pesticides industry and said, "What we have done, we have not done carelessly or without consideration. The industry is not made up of money grubbers."

Tom K. Smith, vice president and general manager of agricultural chemicals for the Monsanto Chemical Company, said that "had the articles been written with necessary attention to the available scientific data on the subject, it could have served a valuable purpose—helping alert the public at large to the importance of proper use of pesticide chemicals."

However, he said, the articles suggested that Government officials and private and industrial scientists were either not as well informed on pesticide problems as Miss Carson, not professionally competent to evaluate possible hazards or else remiss in their obligations to society.

He said "the preponderance of evidence" indicated that chemical pesticides had not taken a significant toll of wildlife.

P. Rothberg, president of the Montrose Chemical Corporation of California, said in a statement that Miss Carson wrote

not "as a scientist but rather as a fanatic defender of the cult of the balance of nature." He said the greatest upsetters of that balance, as far as man was concerned, were modern medicines and sanitation.

Montrose, an affiliate of the Stauffer Chemical Company, is the nation's largest producer of DDT, one of the pesticides that Miss Carson discusses at length. She also discusses the effect of malathion, parathion, dieldrin, aldrin and endrin.

"It is ironic to think," Miss Carson states at one point, "that man may determine his own future by something so seemingly trivial as his choice of insect spray." She acknowledges, however, that the effects may not show up in new generations for decades or centuries.

A spokesman for the National Agricultural Chemicals Association said, "We are quite concerned over the misrepresentation of an industry which has tried to do right.

"We don't intend to answer directly. We don't want to be on the defensive. But we are expanding our public information program and making available a number of new brochures."

## Termed Disappointment

The Manufacturing Chemists' Association said Miss Carson's work was "a disappointment." Various courses of action are being considered, a spokesman said, but no decisions have been made.

Chemical Week, a trade magazine, said in an editorial, "Industry must again take up the Sisyphean task of repeating—again and again—that its research is aimed at profit through knowledge—not the sale of more and more pesticides whether they kill us or not."

The Department of Agriculture reported that it had received many letters expressing "horror and amazement" at the department's support of the use of potentially deadly pesticides.

The industry had a favorite analogy to use in rebuttal. It conceded that pesticides could be dangerous. The ideal was to use them all safely and effectively.

The public debate over pesticides is just beginning and the industry is preparing for a long seige. The book reviews and publicity attendant upon the book's publication this fall will surely fan the controversy.

"Silent Spring" presages a noisy fall.