

## Press reacts to 'Silent Spring' debut



Jones, special assistant to the Secretary of Health, Education & Welfare, may find that it lacks the scientific background to decide the basic questions and may have to turn to another group. The National Academy of Sciences has been suggested as a forum where scientists from various fields can gather and thrash out the questions of how much danger exists and what controls are needed.

Observers say industry men would like to consult with the same scientists that would do the job for NAS but that industry men fear this might cast suspicion on conclusions reached.

**Defending Controls:** The Dept. of Agriculture, target of several of Miss Carson's blasts, has defended its use of pesticides. A spokesman concedes that Miss Carson presents a clear picture of the real and potential dangers of misusing chemical pesticides. However, he points out, USDA's Pest Control Review Board, established last year, has been checking closely on each proposed use of a chemical in a pest-control program by any government agency.

The Agriculture Dept. regulates pesticides through labeling requirements and adjudicates their safety and efficacy, requiring that labels give accurate information for safe use. The Food & Drug Administration inspects interstate shipments of food to see that residues of pesticides do not exceed specified tolerances. Plans call for examination of both procedures.

FDA is planning to increase its inspections of food products, and USDA is stepping up its research into alternatives to chemical controls—one of Miss Carson's suggestions.

**Danger at Home:** Government officials believe one of the greatest benefits to come from Miss Carson's book may be to warn home gardeners how dangerous pesticides can be if misused. Carelessness by nonprofessionals has been responsible for the greatest number of mishaps, they argue. Opinion is that "Silent Spring" plays up every example of misuse since chemical pesticides became common, does not tell of improvements gained through experience.

Most industry men say it is too soon to gauge the possible effects of "Silent Spring" on pesticide sales or on future regulations. But there's no doubt the book is making a stir its first week out.

## Bracing for Broadside

Manufacturers of pesticides this week are bracing for the full impact of public opinion following publication of Rachel Carson's controversial "Silent Spring," a deftly written, 368-page polemic against large-scale use of chemical pest killers.

So far, industry people feel that most reviewers of this book—with some exceptions—have come out pretty squarely on Miss Carson's side and that public reaction is bound to be intense. But the thinking is that with Congress nearing adjournment, the industry will have a chance to present its side of the story before it's confronted with hastily prepared new laws and regulations. Nevertheless, investigations next year seem certain.

Industry generally is lining up behind the Manufacturing Chemists' Assn. and the National Agricultural Chemicals Assn. in preparing its counterattack. Strategy will be to avoid direct attack on "Silent Spring" and

concentrate on the important role played by chemical insecticides and herbicides in providing adequate amounts of high-quality foods and in controlling disease-causing insects.

At least one company has taken independent action on Miss Carson's charges. Monsanto Chemical (St. Louis) has prepared a parody titled "The Desolate Year," which borrows Miss Carson's poetic style to examine what might happen if all pesticides were unavailable for one year. It is appearing in *Monsanto Magazine*.

**Difference of Opinion:** The Federal Council for Science and Technology has set up a special interagency panel of government personnel to study two aspects of the pesticide situation discussed by Miss Carson: the adequacy of government controls and regulations, and the state of government research on the uses and dangers of these chemicals.

The panel, headed by Boisfuiet