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of this century  
for the human race"  
JUSTICE WILLIAM O. DOUGLAS

# Rachel Carson's SILENT SPRING

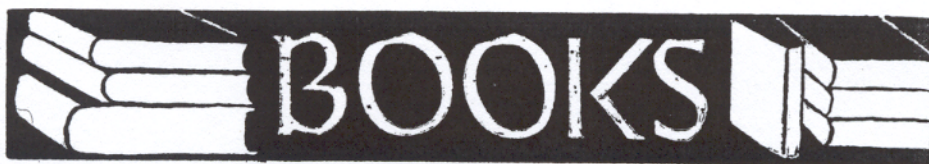
"A smashing indictment that faces up to the disastrous consequences, for both nature and man, of the chemical mass-warfare that is being waged today indiscriminately against noxious insects, weeds and fungi... It is urgently necessary for the case against the continuance of these practises in their present indiscriminate form to be understood as promptly and by as wide a public as possible.

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Herman J. Muller  
— *New York Herald  
Tribune Book Review*

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## Three Reviews by Roland C. Clement

Staff Biologist, National Audubon Society

### SILENT SPRING

By Rachel Carson. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, Massachusetts, 1962. 6 x 8 1/4 in., 368 pp. Illustrated. \$5.00.

This disarmingly eloquent book by one of America's favorite science writers is a two-fisted indictment of our modern devotion to the technological solution of man's problems in pushing nature to yield him more and more and more.

When some 55,000 words of the book appeared as articles in *The New Yorker* magazine, an editorial in *The New York Times* suggested that if *SILENT SPRING* "helps arouse enough public concern to immunize Government agencies against the blandishments of the hucksters and enforce adequate controls, the author will be as deserving of the Nobel Prize as was the inventor of DDT."

Though it was safely predicted that *SILENT SPRING* would lead to a noisy autumn, it seems obvious by now that there will be no frontal attack on its thesis. Even those who do not like the book tell us that, though they are satisfied to let most of the facts stand, it is "the total impression" they object to. This is the moot point.

In today's technology it has become an act of faith for almost everyone to insist that if we would only use chemicals safely, according to regulations, most of our problems would vanish. But would they?

For Miss Carson's book is more than a compilation of the facts and figures, the blunders and the near-misses involved in the use of pesticides these past 15 years and more. It is a thoughtful questioning of the impact of these poisonous materials on the fabric—that web of life—which has to this day made our earth productive. We must learn eventually not only what these chemicals do to our environment, but what they are doing to us, since we, too, are of nature. Miss Carson does not shirk this troubling question.

In 17 tightly organized chapters, *SILENT SPRING* summarizes both the effects of the use of pesticides (insecticides, rodenticides, fungicides and herbicides) on wildlife, and the dangers to human health. These are all warnings that have been given before, many of them by the National Audubon Society in annual conventions and in Congressional hearings, but never before has the case been

put so eloquently, or before so vast an audience.

The *New Yorker* articles caused a noticeable stir. The chemical industry's own house organs helped spread the word by their violent reactions. The Book of the Month Club has undertaken to distribute *SILENT SPRING* to its readers, Consumer's Union will do the same and the Columbia Broadcasting System will feature Miss Carson in a televised news broadcast soon.

Perhaps the stage will be set to force a reassessment of at least this one aspect of our reckless way of life. Perhaps the time has even come to recognize that our technology has given us tools of such power that they are beyond the capacity of mankind to use intelligently. We need reminding that mankind is not a handful of thoughtful, academically oriented policy makers, but all the rest of us, too: the rose grower, so ignorant of the miraculous complexity of living stuff; the truck driver turned sprayer to whom biology connotes sex; the local health officer who learned his public health principles before ecology grew out of short pants, and you and I who think we know better but are still leaning on instinct for most of our conclusions.

Obviously, I think you should read this book, and get your friends, and their friends, to read it too. It is part of the advanced course in survival.

As a postscript, since the illustrations in such a book would normally seem of negligible importance, I would express my pleasure at how such perceptive artist-naturalists as Lois and Louis Darling have been able to enhance the impact of this text with their attractive line drawings.

### PEST CONTROL AND WILDLIFE RELATIONSHIPS

Part I: *Evaluation of Pesticide-Wildlife Problems*; Part II: *Policy and Procedures for Pest Control*. Anonymous. Publ. 920-A and 920-B, National Academy of Sciences—National Research Council, Washington, D. C., 1962. 6 x 9 in., 28 and 53 pp., respectively. Paper.

These two booklets are the first in a three-part series of reports purporting to present "the consensus of experts with

Turn to page 358