

Silent Spring? Where's It Happened?

THIS IS a review of a review. Ken McFall, executive secretary of Oklahoma Farm Bureau, has reviewed literature, laws, regulations and dire predictions of environmentalists concerning use of chemicals.

His findings have been published as a pamphlet entitled "Silent Spring? Silent Where?" The following are excerpts from it.

"Our planet has some 700,000 different species of insects. Some are very beneficial. Some are very destructive . . . Man has never succeeded in wiping out one single species of insects. He has tried.

"There are thousands of species of furbearing animals, some good, some bad . . . Some scientists estimate 90 percent of all animals and plants that have existed on earth are now extinct. And 99 percent of them went extinct before 1900, 45 years before the chemical age.

"Our average life span continues to grow. As a result of these life-saving developments, world population is growing. So we are healthier than ever. We live longer. We have better

homes, cars, more leisure time, more entertainment.

"Rachel Carson wrote 'Silent Spring,' a best seller in 1962, which zeroed in on DDT. Her book and the hysteria that followed finally resulted in a virtual ban of the sale in 1972. It had been banned for thin eggshells in birds, contamination of mother's milk and lack of female fertility. Some theorized it would destroy the world's food chain.

"As late as 1941, malaria was a problem in 36 states. DDT wiped it out. DDT, by killing the mosquito that carries malaria, can control and eradicate the disease.

"The World Health Organization has tested more than 1,000 substitutes for DDT, but has found only three . . . all very dangerous and expensive. If DDT is so good and so safe, why was it condemned?

"DDT was a symbol. There were dozens of other chemicals which could have been the target. But it was easy to say and remember.

"News reporters, always eager for a yarn, sought out these people, wrote stories about fishkills, thin

eggshells of the peregrine falcon, contaminated mother's milk, decreased fertility. DDT was usually blamed or at least 'suspected.'

"Does DDT cause sterility? The nations which have been the heaviest users of DDT have rising birth rates . . . not dropping birth rates.

"A test of a mother's milk will show traces of drugs, including aspirin, penicillin, vitamins . . . almost anything the mother ingests, including DDT — but apparently with no ill effects from the DDT.

"DDT was not the only chemical that was crucified on the cross of public safety . . . Similar confusion and near-paranoia exist about nuclear power plants and their safety.

"Rachel Carson fantasized about a mythical town where DDT some day would kill all the animals and birds and make the people ill.

"Has it happened? Silent spring? Silent . . . where?"

Maybe the public would do well to review other best sellers and popular speeches, and also regulations that may result from them.

Logic in DDT Column Defies Reader

TO THE EDITOR:

This is a review of a review of a review. Ferdie Deering has written an uncharacteristically unscientific column in your Aug. 28 issue about DDT and its banning.

I want to keep this short: DDT was responsible for thin eggshells in the peregrine falcon, now on the list of endangered species. DDT was responsible for the virtual extermination of lake trout in New York's Lake George, once known as the queen of American lakes. It was sprayed there for gypsy moths. That lake has not recovered, by the way. New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC) brochures strongly recommend eating no more than half a pound per week of fish from the waters of New York and, specifically, no lake trout from Lake George.

But what bugs me the most is the fallacious reasoning in one short paragraph about sterility. Of course the nations who have used DDT the most have rising birth rates. They always have, before, during and after use of the chemical. They are in the tropics, are poor, and implement no birth control voluntarily; their only population restraints are famine, disease and war. Any effect DDT has gets lost in the shuffle.

Ferdie Deering is generally an interesting scientific contributor. But this time, in his rush to make a conservative point about regulation, he went too far. Silent Spring? Where? I've only scratched the surface.

Bill Homans, Snow

and a probing naturalist who died a decade or more ago, way before she should have. In "Silent Spring", which Deering jumps on with all the vigor of his attacks on sane people who want sane laws and recreation, Miss Carson warned us of the overuse of DDT and other chemical pesticides.

Her "silent spring" meant a time when, due to the injudicious use of pesticides, there would be no birds. Deering might like to know that the populations of the brown pelican and peregrine falcon are in bad shape, due to the failure of eggshell strength and maturity because of pesticides.

Mark Herra, City

Opinion Raises Hackles

TO THE EDITOR:

I didn't mind Ferdie Deering's attack on gambling and liquor in the state, even though his thoughts and his writing, I feel, are antiquated, parochial and downright stupid . . . just as are the state's liquor laws that are broken every day in the year.

But when, a few days later, he attacked Rachel Carson, author of "Silent Spring", "The Sea Around Us" and "Under the Sea Wind", my hackles arose. Miss Carson was a beautiful person, a meticulous writer

Editorials Don't Belong on Front Page

NOV 1 1980

TO THE EDITOR:

The Sunday Oklahoman would be a much improved newspaper if editorial cartoons and editorials written under the guise of news were taken off the front page.

I refer to recent issues of The Sunday Oklahoman which carry front-page editorial cartoons promoting certain political candidates. It is your First Amendment right to publish whatever viewpoint you care to, but I feel editorials and editorial cartoons should be left to the editorial page where they belong.

Most major metropolitan newspapers do not so openly promote political candidates on the front page. The practice does not change anyone's mind and only succeeds in angering those readers who were looking for some objectivity.

Marianne Price, Norman

DDT Isn't Dastardly

TO THE EDITOR: NOV 1 1980

I have just seen Bill Homans' letter of Sept. 14 claiming that "DDT was responsible for thin eggshells in the peregrine falcon. . . ." He didn't cite any evidence to support that claim (not surprising, for none exists).

The British government's Wilson Report (1969) concluded that there was "no close correlation between the declines in predatory birds, particularly the peregrine falcon and the sparrow hawk, and the use of DDT. Therefore DDT does not appear to have been the principal cause."

Enderson and Berger (1968) discovered that Alaska peregrines were "reproducing normally" even though containing 30 times more DDT, DDD and DDE than did the peregrines in the central U.S. (where they were alleged to be declining because of DDT.) They also reported that the peregrine with the highest DDT level ever found in that species was busy feeding its three young!

Mr. Homans also claimed that Lake George (N.Y.) had a "virtual extermination of lake trout" because of DDT.

A detailed study of Lake George after by the New York Department Environmental Conservation (EC) discussed pollutants but

made no mention of pesticide hazards or fish mortality (American Institute of Chemical Engineers, Symposium Series, vol. 69, 1973). They found Lake George received 21,328 kilograms of nitrogen per year and 15,570 kilograms of phosphorus per year, as well as 236 million gallons of unchlorinated sewage! Small wonder that Mr. Homans says NYDEC brochures "strongly recommend eating . . . no lake trout from Lake George." It does seem irresponsible, however, for him to imply that DDT was the reason for that recommendation, and equally misleading for him to tell your readers that "DDT was responsible for the virtual extermination of lake trout from Lake George," and that the lake "has not recovered, by the way."

If Mr. Homans dislikes Mr. Deering so much, he should simply send him nasty letters, rather than filling your "People Speak" column with false propaganda about poor, old, much-maligned DDT . . . a chemical that the National Academy of Sciences pointed out had saved more than 500 million human lives during the first few years of its use for malaria control, and one which still saves millions of human lives every year despite attacks such as Mr. Homans recently made.

J. Gordon Edwards, San Jose, Calif.

A Gay Responds

TO THE EDITOR:

As a human being concerned with civil rights, an educator and a gay man, I would like to respond to a recent editorial in The Daily Oklahoman, as well as a letter to the editor from C.E.M. of the city.

The basic issue of the recently filed challenge to the Helms bill is not, as some are arguing, whether Stan Easter has been denied employment because he is gay. The more fundamental issue is whether gay men and women are entitled to equal protection under the laws of this republic, or whether they will continue to be the objects of massive discrimination in employment, housing and other normal routines of life.

For reasons which are neither clear nor documented, it is widely assumed that gay men and women

"pervert" the children they teach. Data for this allegation is simply lacking. I know of no gay man or woman teacher who forces his sexual preference on his students, nor who, for that matter, makes any issue whatever of his sexual preferences.

Another assumption is that gay teachers will "recruit" children to their own affectional preference, presumably by providing desirable role models for children to emulate. If this were true, the "normal" heterosexual drive would seem fragile, indeed. All gay men and women were born into "straight" families (a proposition which is fairly obvious), and were provided with "straight" role models. But through some complex set of experiences and circumstances in their lives, they are gay. It would follow that students who are exposed to an openly gay school teacher would no more necessarily "become gay" to emulate that particular role model than have those of us whose lives have been peopled by "straight" role models "become straight."

Perhaps the most outrageous of the benefits alleged to spring from the implementation of the Helms bill is that which suggests that it prevents gay men and women from teaching in the public schools. This is simply not true. Gays have traditionally been attracted to public service fields, and a significant number of gay men and women teach in the school systems of this country. What the Helms bill does is to condemn these teachers to lives of fear that their affectional preference may become public knowledge, and their livelihood taken from them. It does not change their sexuality, nor their behavior. It simply condemns them to living painful and hypocritical double lives, constantly haunted by fear of exposure.

Our most valued professionals, politicians, technicians, factory workers and laborers are gay. We are not asking for approval of our sexuality. Everyone is certainly free to judge individuals and classes of individuals on whatever basis he sees fit. What we are asking is equal treatment under the laws which protect all citizens of the country. What we are asking is that we not be singled out for political

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October 14, 1980

SUNDAY OKLAHOMAN
4th & Broadway
Oklahoma City, OK

Attn: "The People Speak"

To the Editor:

Your correspondents, Bill Homans and Mark Herra, are uninformed about DDT, and they seek to pass on their misinformation to your readers.

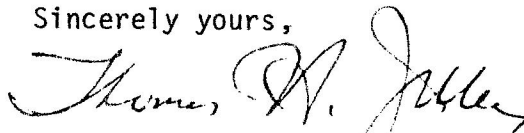
DDT was never shown to be responsible for thin egg shells in the peregrine falcon. However, PCB's were detected in the eggs of this species. Peregrines almost disappeared from the eastern U.S.A. prior to the introduction of organic pesticides because of persecution, including shooting and destruction of nesting sites, so that the total number of peregrines in the eastern U.S.A. in 1940 was estimated by Professor Hickey as only 170 pairs. Peregrine eggs were taken from nests where reproduction was normal, in the Yukon, and the eggs averaged about 27 parts per million (ppm) of total organo-chlorine residues.

The tropical nations which have used DDT the most have rising birth rates, as noted by Homans. Homans also says that *"Any effect DDT has gets lost in the shuffle."* This is nonsense. It was estimated in 1953 that 5 million lives had been saved and 100 million illnesses had been prevented through the use of DDT, mostly in the tropical countries. For example, the population of Madagascar doubled between 1947 and 1959, although it had been practically stationary for years previously. A DDT antimalarial campaign was started there in 1949, and is largely credited with the population increase. Homans says that the only population restraints in the tropics

are "*famine, disease and war.*" Unfortunately, such heartless statements are characteristic of "*conservation imperialists.*"

Herra attacks Deering because he dared to criticize Rachel Carson, whose book did not mention the use of DDT in malaria control, which brought health to hundreds of millions of people who were formerly either sick or living under threat of sickness. Herra also says that populations of the brown pelican "*are in bad shape*" because of pesticides. This is another myth. We were told 10 years ago that the brown pelican in California was doomed to extinction, no matter what we did, because DDT was "*working its way up through the food chain*" in the ocean. This summer, tourists in Monterey, California, were complaining because their cars were being fouled by brown pelican droppings.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Thomas H. Jukes', written in dark ink.

THOMAS H. JUKES, Ph.D., D.Sc.
University of California, Berkeley

THJ:ao

The total value of DDT to mankind is inestimable, and is comprised of health, economic, and social benefits. Health benefits are both direct and indirect and fall into three principal categories: (1) direct control of vector-borne diseases such as malaria, typhus, etc., and of insect pests, by the use of DDT for destroying the insects concerned; (2) use of DDT in agriculture for crop pest control, resulting in an increased food supply, often where malnutrition is the principal health problem; and (3) an increase in resistance to non-vector-borne diseases through better health as a result of freedom from malaria and other vector-borne diseases and malnutrition. As Sir MALCOLM WATSON has stated, when malaria was cleared out of the Malay States, dysentery wards were closed (SOPER [538]). If data were available, it is predicted that they would show a decrease in tuberculosis and some other diseases in areas where malaria and malnutrition, particularly, have been largely conquered by the use of DDT.

Raising the health standards of the people has resulted in better agricultural and industrial production. Much land has been reclaimed, new factories have been built, and more goods have been made available for sale as well as home consumption. There has been a significant decrease in absentee workers in countries where malaria has been controlled, and this has enabled higher earnings, with an increase in economic status for both individuals and the community.

The sociological changes brought about by DDT are only beginning to be apparent. In some countries, Madagascar for example, the population has doubled since 1947, although it had been practically stationary for years previously. A DDT malaria campaign was initiated in Madagascar in 1949, and is largely credited with the population increase. This is no isolated phenomenon, and the full sociological significance of this trend will be much greater than is at present anticipated.

It was estimated in 1953 that no less than 5 million lives had been saved and no less than 100 million illnesses prevented through the use of DDT for controlling malaria, typhus, dysentery, and other arthropod-borne diseases, since it became available about 1942 (KNIPLING [312]). These figures have now increased, the latter one especially. In a complete treatise on the value of DDT to the public health, it would be necessary to consider the entire group of chlorinated hydrocarbon insecticides in order to give full credit to this parent compound. The extent of the information on all chlorinated hydrocarbon insecticides is such, however, that it would not be feasible to include in a work of this nature. It should not be forgotten, nevertheless, that insecticides such as chlordane, dieldrin, aldrin, and toxaphene were developed as a result of the development of DDT, and no doubt other effective materials will be forthcoming.

Except for the antibiotics, it is doubtful that any material has been found which protects more people against more diseases over a larger area than does DDT. Most of the peoples of the globe have received some measure of benefit from this compound, either directly by protection from infectious diseases and pestiferous insects, or indirectly by better nutrition, cleaner food, and increased disease resistance. Irrespective of future developments, the discovery of DDT will always remain an historic event in the fields of public health and agriculture.

in "DDT. The Insecticide Dichlorodiphenyl trichloroethane and its Significance." Vol. II. Human and Veterinary Medicine, edited by Paul Müller. Basel, Birkhauser Verlag, 1959.