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### Looking Back 40 Years of Banning DDT

Looking back some 40 years to the banning of the infamous DDT--one of the biggest social errors ever!

*by Art Drysdale*

**by Art Drysdale**

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Art Drysdale, a life-long resident of Toronto and a horticulturist well known all across Canada, is now a resident of Parksville, British Columbia on Vancouver Island, just north of Nanaimo. He has renovated an old home and has a new garden there. His radio gardening vignettes are heard in south-western Ontario over two radio stations: Easy 101 FM out of Tillsonburg at 2 PM weekdays and CD98.9 FM out of Norfolk County at 11:40 AM weekdays.

Art also has his own website at <http://www.artdrysdale.com>

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**November 28, 2010**




*Above: Rachel Carson, and her Book of the Month Club edition of her book, Silent Spring. Below: two shots of the use of DDT in airplane cabins such as I remember enduring, and another gross shot of field workers being sprayed with DDT.*



Just prior to my class's graduation from The Niagara Parks Commission School of Horticulture, in April 1961, there was buzz in the industry about a book written by one Rachel Carson. The book was apparently to be a severe criticism of the chemical industry. It actually first appeared as three excerpts published in the *New York Times*, June 16 - 30, 1962 and the full book was published by Houghton-Mifflin in September that year. I am told that the book still sells at the rate of 30,000 copies per year, and a total of over ten million copies have been sold.

As one wag put it, "Not bad for a book of misinformation!"

Miss Rachel Louise Carson, 1907–1964, U.S. zoologist, marine biologist, spinster, and cancer victim with no recognized expertise, training or background in matters concerning pest control products. Rachel Carson was the first Enviro-Terrorist and The Queen of Junk Science--Almost always wrong!

The measures that were urged for the removal of DDT had little basis in fact or science. DDT had to be eliminated in order to save the environment, a move that was self-serving and under-handed by Environmental-Terror-Activists.

The fact that millions of people were hurt and killed with the removal of DDT was ignored, since, sadly, the saving of the environment appeared to be a cause that was greater than any human suffering. Some observers have described this as a form of depraved indifference, and even eco-manslaughter, by Environmental-Terror-Activists.

A classic example of depraved indifference by Enviro-Terror-Activists was displayed in 1971, [DDT was banned from use in the U.S. in 1972] during Congressional testimony before the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture. The discussion focused on the chemical alternatives to DDT.

The alternatives may have been more acceptable to Enviro-Terror-Activists, but they were truly unsafe for use by applicators, such as farm workers. The response from Enviro-Terror-Activists was truly shocking!

The following statement was attributed to an executive of the

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Flight attendant sprays DDT in an airplane cabin. Source: <http://kefr.net/spray/buzzwomainspray.htm>, accessed July 30, 2006.



Environmental Defense Fund, a U.S. Environmental-Terror-Organization: "It doesn't make a lot of difference because the organophosphate [alternative] acts locally and only kill (sic) farm workers, and most of them are Mexicans and Negroes."

Nice, eh!

In working to have DDT banned, the Environmental Defense Fund, and its compatriot organizations and individuals, a number of specific "problems" ostensibly caused by DDT were cited constantly, to the point that the media repeating and repeating these stories caused the general public to be manipulated into thinking the product should be banned.

Just one example of these "stories" was the one about the thinning of the eggshells of peregrine falcons and condors off the coast of California. Writing in the *New York Times*, John Moir reported that biologists with the Ventana Wildlife Society suspected a handful of breeding pairs in Big Sur had been eating dead sea lions contaminated by the pesticide.

There was no known source of DDT near Big Sur, but the biologists speculated the sea lions could have been contaminated from ocean deposits off the coast of Los Angeles, where Montrose Chemical Corp. released tons of DDT into the sewer system in the 1950s and 60s.

According to Dr. Gilbert Ross of the American Council on Science and Health [actually he was Executive Director and Medical Director of the ACSH., a consumer education-public health organization. He received his undergraduate degree in Chemistry from Cornell University's School of Arts and Sciences in 1968, and received his M.D. from the N.Y.U. School of Medicine in 1972], "the report is thoroughly hysterical and baseless .

"I don't even know what to call it. It's not even an article--what would you say when someone is musing in the *New York Times* science section about DDT harming condors without any evidence? And it's not just idle musing--as the end result will be that more third world children will die of malaria."

Further, according to Dr. Josh Bloom of the American Council on Science and Health, "it is a nonsensical screed. DDT is essentially non-toxic. In fact, it takes about four times as much DDT as caffeine to cause fatalities in rodents. Hardly the deadly poison that this article portrays it as.

On at least two different occasions I well remember the aircraft on which I was flying either to Australia, or South Africa, once before the banning in 1972, and once some many years after the ban, that as the plane was coming down for a landing, the stewardesses would come through the plane and spray the entire cabin from small aerosol containers. I once asked just what they were spraying, but they would not reveal the product (no doubt under orders!). On a second occasion, I noted in which overhead cupboard they stored the aerosol containers and got up to investigate and I slipped one in my pocket. Later I read the label and it was DDT!

Industry and agribusiness advocates continue to criticize *Silent Spring*. In a 2005 essay, "The Harm That Pressure Groups Can Do", British politician Dick Taverne was damning in his criticism of Carson:

"Carson didn't seem to take into account the vital role (DDT) played in controlling the transmission of malaria by killing the mosquitoes that carry the parasite (...) It is the single most effective agent ever developed for saving human life (...) Rachel Carson is a warning to us all of the dangers of neglecting the evidence-based approach and the need to weight potential risk against benefit: it can be argued that the anti-DDT campaign she inspired was responsible for almost as many deaths as some of the worst dictators of the last century."

If the Environmental-Terror-Movement was correct about DDT

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and its effect on birds, where were the thousands of dead bodies? A few people have noticed this! So did Michael Crichton. He is the famous author who wrote books like *State of Fear* and *Jurassic Park*. Michael Crichton was also a scientist and researcher.

In 2003, Michael Crichton made following remarks, "I can tell you that DDT [ ... ] did not cause birds to die, and should never have been banned. [ ... ] Banning DDT is one of the most disgraceful episodes in the Twentieth Century history of America."

Moreover, the restrictions on the use of DDT resulted in millions of unnecessary deaths!

In 2004, Michael Crichton summed up the situation with the following excerpt from his book *State of Fear*, "Arguably, the greatest tragedy of the Twentieth Century was the removal of DDT. It was the best insecticide for the control of mosquitoes. Despite views to the contrary, no other products were as efficient, or as safe. Since the removal of DDT, it has been estimated that thirty to fifty million people have died unnecessarily from the effects of malaria.

"Sadly, removing DDT has killed more people than Hitler.

"Before the removal of DDT, malaria had become almost a minor illness, with only fifty thousand deaths per year throughout the world."

Many African nations wanted to use DDT to save lives, but they were told their agricultural exports may not be accepted if spraying becomes widespread.

Some people assert that many countries have been under pressure from international health and environmental agencies to give up DDT, or face losing aid grants or trade sanctions.

Both Belize and Bolivia have gone on record to say that they gave in to such pressure from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Additionally, the European Union (EU) has threatened trade sanctions against countries like Uganda that seek to use DDT, even solely for malaria control. Fortunately, the 2004 Stockholm Convention inadvertently paved the way for the world-wide endorsement of DDT to control and repel the malaria insect vector.

DDT now plays a crucial part in the U.S. program, announced by President George W. Bush in 2005, to spend an additional 1.2 billion dollars on malaria control over the next five years. Later in 2005, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) reversed its long-time opposition to the purchase of DDT.

Moreover, in 2006, the European Union (EU) also indicated that it would no longer impose trade sanctions on those countries that use DDT for controlling a health crisis.

Evidently, the malarial affliction of more than 515 million people per year, and more than one million deaths per year due to malaria, qualified this situation as "a health crisis", as defined by the 2004 Stockholm Convention.

On September 16th, 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that DDT could be used once again as a principal tool against malaria. For 30 years, the WHO had phased out DDT from widespread indoor residual spraying.

As of 2006, WHO endorsed DDT for "indoor residual spraying" in those areas subject to epidemics, as well as in places with constant and high malaria transmission, including throughout Africa. Ironically, several environmental groups now grudgingly endorse the indoor use of DDT for malaria control, including, the Environmental Defense Fund, Sierra Club, and Endangered Wildlife Trust.

After having killed more people than Hitler, maybe the

environmental movement finally grew a conscience? Not entirely!

The World Wildlife Fund and others still lobby against DDT.

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