

I reread Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and her biography, *Rachel Carson: A Witness for Nature* by Linda Lear, last summer after reading both an excerpt in the *Globe & Mail* from Maurice Strong's newest book "Where on Earth Are We Going?" and Patrick Luciani's harsh review of Strong's book in the *National Post*. Strong is a western Canadian who started in the oil business. He turned around some small energy companies and he became president of a major eastern holding company, the Power Corporation of Canada, at the age of 35. He was Senior Advisor to a UN Secretary; Senior Advisor to a World Bank President; Co-Chair of the Council of the World Economic Forum; member of Toyota's International Advisory Board and Chair of Ontario Hydro.

Mr. Luciani is the Executive Director of the Donner Canadian Foundation, an organization that encourages individual responsibility and private initiative to help Canadians solve their social and economic problems. Mr. Luciani attempts to prove that the environment is in fine shape and he cites Carson for beginning a tradition of writing environmental doomsday books.

Did Mr. Luciani ever read *Silent Spring*? What does he know of Carson? She could be the cover girl for the Donner Canadian Foundation. Carson was the youngest of a poor, hardworking Presbyterian family. Her family helped pay for her education at a Christian women's college and at Johns Hopkins University by selling some of the family farm and doing extra work. Carson abandoned her dream of a PhD when it became necessary to support her family. She held a salaried job until she became self-employed. She championed privatization of public resources. She took on the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Department of Agriculture. She exposed their negligence and incompetence to register pesticides properly and to conduct ill-conceived insect eradication programs. She represents the triumph of the individual over government and corporate establishments.

*Silent Spring* is a beautifully written book and a scientific treatise comprehensible to non-scientists. It exposed bad environmental practices. Its impact was massive. After *Silent Spring* life for those who despoil land, air and water has never been the same. And after *Silent Spring*, the public has learned to be skeptical when told that the environment is being treated with due regard.

Carson is meticulous in her detail. She consults with credible authorities and she presents lower-cost, environmentally benign alternatives to the spraying programs that she systematically criticized. Carson prescribed what is now called integrated pest management - an approach requiring a thorough understanding of a pest and its economic damage and ecology. Carson's work was difficult to challenge on a scientific basis so Carson's critics went after Carson, a tradition Mr. Luciani upheld. Personal attacks aside, Carson fledged the environmental movement.

Since Carson's time environmental degradation has continued: the ozone layer is thinner, groundwater levels are lower, surface water is more contaminated, smog episodes are more frequent, more coral reefs are dead, more sites are radioactive, more landfills are leaching toxic ooze and more species have become extinct. Although DDT use was banned in North America after *Silent Spring*, its manufacture for export and use abroad continued. Annual global use of DDT rose after 1962, but not without consequence. DDT is carried back and deposited in the Americas by stratospheric wind currents. Once back in North America, it enters the food-web and can be found in the body tissues of certain North Americans in alarmingly high concentrations. *Silent Spring* is among the most influential books of the twentieth century; it remains essential reading for anyone interested in the environment. Don't slag it 'til you read it!