ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

FROM AWARENESS TO COLLECTIVE ACTION

MOVEMENTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

EG. AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTALISM
(HARPER P.323-324)

1. *Preservation (1830s)*

2. *Conservation (1860s)*

3. *Wildlife management (1890s)*

4. *Reform environmentalism (1870s, but really flourished in the 1960s): linked with* Human health and ecosystem conditions

5. *Environmental justice (1970s)*

6. *Deep ecology (1980s)*

7. *Ecofeminism (1980s):* conflicts between culture/nature, human/nonhuman, and male/female relationships

8. *Ecospiritualism (1990s)*

'Silent Spring' Is Now Noisy Summer

Pesticides Industry Up in Arms Over a New Book

By JOHN M. LEE

The $300,000,000 pesticides industry has been highly irritated by a quiet woman author whose previous works on science have been praised for the beauty and precision of the writing.
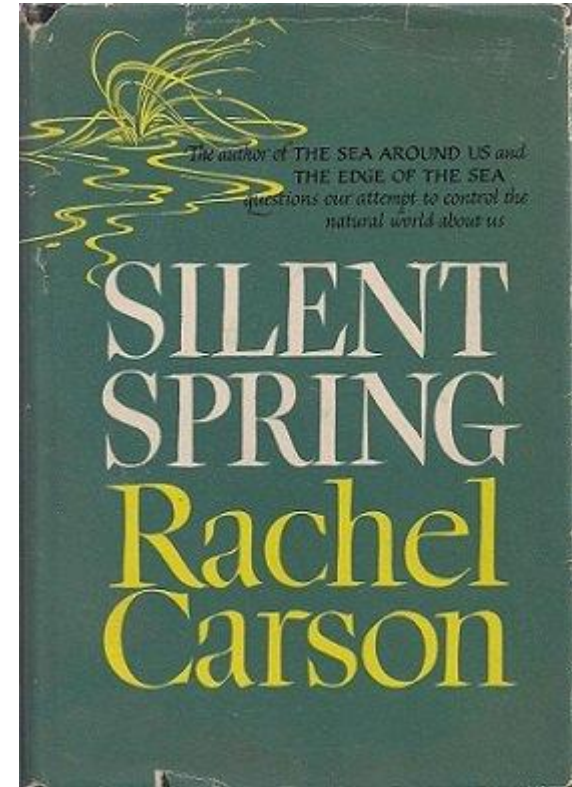
The author is Rachel Carson,

Rachel Carson Stirs Conflict—Producers Are Crying 'Foul'

fending the use of their products. Meetings have been held in Washington and New York. Statements are being drafted and counter-attacks plotted.

A drowsy midsummer has suddenly been enlivened by the greatest uproar in the pesticides industry since the cranberry

SILENT SPRING Rachel Carson

The author of THE SEA AROUND US and THE EDGE OF THE SEA questions our attempt to control the natural world about us

'SILENT SPRING' TRIGGERED AN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

POWERFUL MESSAGE IN THE BOOK

- Carson never called for an outright ban on DDT. She said in *Silent Spring* that even if ==DDT and other insecticides== had no environmental side effects, their ==indiscriminate overuse== was counterproductive because it would create insect resistance to pesticides, making them useless in eliminating the target insect populations:

- *"No responsible person contends that insect-borne disease should be ignored. The question that has now urgently presented itself is ==whether it is either wise or responsible to attack the problem by methods that are rapidly making it worse==. The world has heard much of the triumphant war against disease through the control of insect vectors of infection, but it has heard little of the other side of the story—the defeats, the short-lived triumphs that now strongly support the alarming view that ==the insect enemy has been made actually stronger by our efforts==. Even worse, we may have destroyed our very means of fighting."*

RACHEL CARSON

- How one scientist took on the chemical industry - Mark Lytle (5"22)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezVEzCmiXM4

E-WASTE IN GUIYU, CHINA

- Guiyu, China

- location of the largest electronic waste (e-waste) site on earth (sadly referred to as the "electronic graveyard")

- 88% of the children in the area suffer from lead poisoning

- High rate of miscarriages

E-WASTE IN GUIYU, CHINA

GUANGXI VILLAGERS SEEK GOVERNMENT REDRESS FOR SUSPECTED CADMIUM POISONING (SCMP 19 JAN 2015)

Government continues to dodge mounting evidence of heavy metal contamination

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

<Background>:

- Cadmium poisoning as the source of the malaise in Sanhe village (Longjing)

- The site of lead and zinc mining, is home to about 800 people → 80 % suffered from back pain and other ailments, swollen knees and elbows

- Caused by a state-run company (mined lead and zinc) → polluting water, emitting hazardous waste since mid-1990s (mining started in 1954).

<Action by community>

- Caused by contaminated ground water → about 200 villagers filed a lawsuit in 1999 seeking compensation from the state-owned mining company

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

◆ **Central government's reaction**:

(i) Ministry of Environmental Protection and other government agencies surveyed (← 16 % soil samples taken from 6.3 million square kilometres of land)

(ii) Showed contamination above state-designated limits (eg. cadmium, nickel, arsenic and mercury)

◆ **Local government reaction:**

Local authorities conducted urine tests on 530 villagers → concluded that **"there is no evidence of chronic illness from cadmium contamination".**

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

◆ **Results:**

▪ 'Later the villagers took their farming and health problems to government officials and sought remedies from the government.

▪ Local authorities have conducted health checks on villagers in Sanhe on several occasions since the 1980s, but none of the results were ever made public.'

▪ Some villagers say they have been warned 'police will come if you make too much noise" about the environmental problem'.

▪ *Heavy metal pollution has been a serious concern since the 1980s when the economy started growing at a red-hot pace. But complaints of pollution-related health problems were largely ignored as economic growth took precedence under the government's policy of reform and opening up.*

LESSONS TO LEARN

- Careful approach to chemical substances

- Individual freedoms to sue companies

- Communication bet. Gov and citizens

- International community (direct link bet international community)

- Laws on fines against environmental harms

- Ecosystem / env awareness

- Independent audit (neutral env agency)

- Stricter env policy

- Transparent information

- Alternatives / technological innovation (eg. bio-pesticides)

ENVIRONMENTALISM: THEORY AND PRACTICE

POLITICAL THEORY, PRACTICE AND POLICY

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY (CF. PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY) OR AUTHORITARIANISM?

- When considering democracy, environmental political thought has grappled with a question posed most directly by **Robert Goodin**: '*'[t]o advocate democracy is to advocate procedures, to advocate environmentalism is to advocate substantive outcomes: what guarantee can we have that the former procedures will yield the latter sorts of outcomes?"* (1992, 168).

VS

- … connecting environmental concern with a commitment to more discursive or deliberative forms of democratic participation (Smith 2003; Minteer and Pepperman Taylor 2002; Dryzek 2000; Sandilands 1999; Doherty and de Geus 1996; Mathews 1996).

AUTHORITARIANISM AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

- Once upon a time (i.e. in the 1970s), environmental thinking about politics was dominated by voices such as those of **Garrett Hardin, William Ophuls, and Robert Heilbroner**.

- These authors suggested that recognition of biophysical "limits to growth" necessitated the imposition of sociopolitical limits through coercive and authoritarian political rule.

- Yet as the years passed, this narrative suggests, environmental political theory recognized the errors of this anti-democratic perspective and came to embrace democracy as either compatible with or necessary for the project of addressing environmental problems (e.g. Eckersley 1992, 11–21; Humphrey 2004, 115).

GREEN THOUGHTS

- Ecologist's claim:

- **"Think global, act local"** : the principle of political de-centralization

- Political power would be located at the lowest appropriate level to encourage 'politics **on a human scale**' (Kirkpatrick)

GREENING POLITICAL SYSTEM

- **Rise of ecologism**

(a) re-conceptualisation of the human-nature relationship away from strong anthropocentrism

(b) acceptance of the idea of limits to growth

- Subsidiary principles for ecologism are required eg. **de-centralization, social justice, participatory democracy**

3 PILLARS OF GREEN POLITICS

- (1) green state: grassroots democracy, participatory democracy → control the economic arena

- (2) social justice: **intra-generational equity***

Distribution equity esp. between the rich North and the poor South

*Distribution within each country as a **prerequisite of sustainability***

- (3) Non-violence civil action, opposing international violence (war, armies, nuclear weapons, chemical weapons)

GREEN THOUGHTS

- Greens declare **participatory democracy (cf. liberal democracy)** as core principle

- But democratic procedures may not always generate environmentally beneficial outcomes (eg. **conflict with market over environmental standards or taxes etc.)**

ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

- **Environment and democracy:**

To advocate democracy : **procedure**-oriented

vs.

To advocate environmentalism : substantive **outcomes**

(environmental performance)

ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

Participatory democracy

- **Starts with criticisms of liberal democracy**

- Seeking a society where citizens are fully, freely, and actively involved in the decisions that shape their lives

- Power shifted away from the few, from the central party bureaucracy to the local branch

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

■ Features:

1) The greater diffusion of information

2) Enhance the speed in communication of environmental damage to decision-makers

3) Create the condition for the development of a greater individual

■ More likely to be **public-spirited citizen** keen to promote collective activities and community identity, i.e. **ecological citizenship***

STUDENT DISCUSSION (BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSION)

- *Do you think Participatory Democracy is the best political system to realise highest level of environmentalism? What are the problems with it?*

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Human nature
Political culture
Ideology
Practical issues
Preconditions
Political System vs individuals

■ **Ecological citizenship under PD:**

- capable of developing and giving expression to collective ecological concern

- from 'self-regarding' individual to 'other regarding' citizen

※ In the same context as 'extending **public concern to OTHERS** (foreigners, future generation, non human nature, isolated groups)

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Problems with PD:

1) Many environmental problems are best dealt with at the national or international

Level (not communal);

2) Problems and solution are required beyond national boundaries;

3) Coordinated action across communities and nations required (cooperation between centralized nation states)

 Eg. Climate control: tough restrictions in car use and high petrol taxes

4) **'Think global act local':** inadequate strategy for dealing with global commons

GREEN POLITICS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- Social injustice contributes to environmental degradation :

eg.

(a) Over-intensive farming practice, the cultivation of marginal land → resulting in desertification and deforestation

(b) Economic inequality bet North and South (eg. in the international trading system)

– less developed countries to produce cash crops for Northern consumption rather than developing self-sufficient economy

(c) Social conflicts over pollution burdens, access to natural resources

(d) 'poor and minority communities in affluent nations: more severe environmental harms and exposed to the highest levels of pollutants

GREEN POLITICS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- **<u>Achieving environmental justice</u>**:

Domestic-level: steady-state economy, slowing down the growth pace **(as opposed to environmental economists)**

International level: intra-generational inequality between North and South through debt relief, aid, technology transfer, reform of international trading agreements

NON-DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM AND ENVIRONMENT

- **Socialist environmentalists:**

- Capitalism as the source of environmental ills

- Capitalism seeks to protect middle class privileges (eg. access to the countryside)

- ignoring basic social issues such as poverty

ALTERNATIVES TO PD?

- **Eco-socialism:**

- Connecting socialism with ecologism (social justice, equality, democratization)

- Recognition of **ecological limits to growth** and unrestrained economic expansion is unsustainable

- Challenge the productivity ethos of industrial society interactions

SOCIALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- **Criticisms on socialist environmentalism:**

Socialists also commit to economic growth

The poor environmental record of the former Soviet bloc

both capitalism and socialism are the forms of the super-ideology of industrialism (Porritt (1984))

BEYOND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF LEFT OR RIGHT?

- Ecologism as a distinct ideology

- Greens; neither left nor right but in front

- Core elements/principles in common:

  human-nature relationship, limit to growth

State vs Market

Equality vs Hierarchy

Growth vs Distribution

BEYOND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF LEFT OR RIGHT

- More useful division;

- Instead of left-right division

- **Technocentric vs Ecocentric** dimension

- Fundamentally different approach to politics

BEYOND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF LEFT OR RIGHT

- Concept of technocentric = "A mode of thought which optimistically believes that society can solve all environmental problems, using technology and science, and achieve unlimited material growth."(p.77 Cater)   **(Q: growth or de-growth)**

- Explanation on the dimension, *see modeled on O'Riordan (1981)*