The NY Times has published a book review about Rachel Carson. Here is my favorite part of the review;

"As Carson and her publisher expected, the chemical industry pounced on "Silent Spring" — even as it climbed best-seller lists — for overstating the downside and ignoring the upsides of pesticides. (Souder quotes Carson directly defending herself only once. California, one of the few states with accurate records, she said, was reporting "as many as 1,000 accidental poisonings a year." That might be good enough for Souder, but we never learn if the victims were crickets, catbirds or campesinos.) More significant, because they linger to this day, were the attacks that cast ecology as a subversive subject and Carson as a Communist. To love nature, in this absolutist paradigm, is to abhor business, to reject capitalism and by extension America itself. One chemical company claimed that by condemning pesticides (in fact, the book argued only for limits and restraint in their use), Carson hoped to reduce our food supply to "East-curtain parity."

So, this highlights the importance of actually conducting an empirical cost/benefit analysis to determine what is "optimal" pesticides policy. Carson is likely to have over-stated the benefits of reducing pesticides while the chemical industry had a clear incentive to over-state the costs of regulating this industry.   This is where the quantitative economists enter to play the role of "Goldilocks".   This is the role I played in the Green Chemistry Regulation now playing out in California.   I do not believe that academic lawyers and academic economists work together enough.   Law firms hire economists as expert witnesses but there is a partisan edge to such cases that make me wonder if the teamwork would be more socially beneficial if the objective was knowledge maximization versus profit maximization for the law firm.