

CHAPTER
17
SECTION 4

Section Summary

THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

In 1962, a book by **Rachel Carson** inspired the modern environmental movement. *Silent Spring* described how pesticides were killing birds and other animals. Carson argued that people were changing the environment and had a responsibility to protect it. The book sparked protests that compelled Congress to limit the use of the pesticide DDT. Other environmental concerns included **toxic waste**—poisonous byproducts of human activity such as coal smog. In 1970, in response to growing environmental concerns, the first **Earth Day** was held. Close to 20 million Americans participated, and Earth Day became an annual event.

Public concern convinced President Nixon to support environmental reforms and laws. Under his leadership, Congress created the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** in 1970. The EPA is responsible for environmental cleanup and protection. It also limits or eliminates pollutants that harm people's health. The **Clean Air Act** (1970) combated air pollution by limiting emissions from factories and automobiles. The **Clean Water Act** (1973) reduced water pollution by industry and agriculture. The **Endangered Species Act** (1973) helped protect endangered plants and animals.

In the late 1970s, several environmental problems alarmed the public. Toxic waste in the ground was blamed for high rates of birth defects and cancer in Love Canal, New York. Later, the core of a malfunctioning nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania began to melt.

These events caused some people to support environmental laws. Others opposed the government's actions. Conservatives complained that regulations took property rights away from individuals. Others argued that private property owners, rather than the government, should protect the environment. Industry leaders worried that regulation would harm business.

Review Questions

1. What environmental protection laws were passed under President Nixon?

2. What arguments did some people make against the U.S. government's role in environmental protection?

READING CHECK

What agency works to limit or eliminate pollution?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

Find the word *compelled* in the underlined sentence. What do you think it means? Circle the word that you think means the same thing as *compelled*.

- forced
- voluntary

READING SKILL

Recognize Sequence What people and events influenced President Nixon's environmental reforms?
