

Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner. **Deceit and Denial: The Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution.** University of California Press & The Milbank Memorial Fund Berkeley, 2002. 408 pages; Clothbound: \$45.00; Paperback: \$19.95.

In just over 300 pages of lucid and rapidly moving history—100 pages of useful but unobtrusive endnotes follow—Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner chronicle two extended epics of industrial poisoning. The first story describes how the lead industry and the principal users of its output, paint and gasoline producers, defended lead against mounting scientific evidence of deadly consequences for human health. The tale begins with observations by Alice Hamilton early in the 20th century and continues to this day. (The Bush Administration has recently packed the advisory committee on lead at the National Center for Environmental Health with scientists in the pay of the lead industry.) The storyline is illuminated by attention to the scientists who served the industry, including Robert Kehoe at Kettering in Cincinnati, and Manfred Bowditch from Massachusetts' Division of Industrial Hygiene.

The second half of the book concerns the chemical industry, specifically its efforts to fight government actions to regulate exposure to vinyl chloride, once it was shown to cause a deadly rare cancer—angiosarcoma of the liver. Like lead, vinyl chloride monomer, that is polymerized into polyvinylchloride, is a major industrial product, in this case, a critical raw material for the plastics industry.

The authors are not new to worker health and environmental pollution. In 1994, they published a history of silicosis: *Deadly Dust: Silicosis and the Politics of Occupational Disease in Twentieth-Century America*. As they approached the stories of lead and vinyl chloride, they clearly knew the right questions to ask and how to dig in the archives. The particular documents, from plaintiffs' attorneys suing lead and plastics companies, that were at their disposal for this book have made all the difference. "We were extremely fortunate to have been asked by a number of law firms to evaluate an enormous store of primary documents about lead and vinyl that had been collected over the course of many years through extensive discovery proceedings in conjunction with a number of lawsuits. While providing these firms with our expert opinion, we were given unfettered access to a range of materials never before viewed by historians unaffiliated with indus-

try and with no restrictions about what we would be able to publish about these materials.” More than a file here or there, the lawyers offered up troves of records, described as stores or “virtual warehouses” of documents. Because these documents were surrendered to the plaintiffs in preparation for trials, the authors had access to the private communications of the industry, often revealing who knew what and when.

During my years at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, I engaged infrequently on lead issues, partly because my deputy, John Froines, had developed the new lead exposure rules for OSHA and knew the subject forwards and backwards. Vinyl chloride was different. Partly because of industry resistance to a tough vinyl chloride standard, OSHA was working on a generic approach to regulating carcinogens. I needed to be on top of the vinyl chloride issues. Until I read *Deceit and Denial*, I certainly believed that I had been an insider, had been well informed about what had happened in the struggle to regulate vinyl chloride. How little I knew! How little I understood about industry efforts to manipulate the debate and influence the regulatory outcomes. For these classic cases, lead and vinyl chloride, this book tells much more than I knew, and perhaps close to the whole story.

In government, or more generally in public health, we try to treat all parties as if they are acting in good faith. Partly, it does not become a public official if he or she starts out acting as if industry, or for that matter labor, is not to be trusted. Shouldn't one hear the arguments before suspecting that they have been concocted simply to delay or prevail? I have never acted otherwise, but perhaps I have been wrong. In reading Markowitz and Rosner, it seems we might be more often correct, if we in government start with the assumption that we are being manipulated and lied to. At least for lead and vinyl chloride, the advice to the industry from its lawyers and public relations counsel seemed fairly consistent and it always amounted to deceit and denial.

The late Tony Mazzocchi was my friend and neighbor in Denver. He was delighted when Joe Califano selected me to run NIOSH. Tony, with his long years in the labor movement, may have found me naïve. He, who had been in countless labor-management battles over worker health tried to prepare me for dealing with industry in Washington. Whenever I seemed pleased that an industrial firm had done the right thing and I appeared ready to conclude that the particular firm might really be on the side of public health, Tony brought me up

short. “Don’t ever believe that one of those companies is better than the others. At any moment they stand where they stand because of where they sit.”

Since I finished reading *Deceit and Denial*, I have recommended it to dozens of friends and public health colleagues. In the United States, the Bush administration has hijacked some public health programs to scare Americans about terrorism and destroyed others to protect commercial interests. Globally, trade and commerce routinely trump concerns about human health and the needs of people in developing countries. On completing *Deceit and Denial*, readers will have no doubt that we must ratchet up our suspicion of the means and motives of commerce and industry if we are to defend public health.

ANTHONY ROBBINS



Alan Petersen and Robin Bunton. **The New Genetics and The Public’s Health**. London: Routledge, 2002. viii+256 pp. \$27.95 paper.

The Human Genome Project (HGP) has spawned innumerable books discussing the many and complicated societal issues arising in the application of new scientific knowledge and technologies. Sociologists, anthropologists, ethicists, health and public policy researchers have provided varying perspectives on the many shared concerns. Among those are appropriate collection, storage and ultimate use of genetic information, potential for genetic discrimination, the importance of safeguarding genetic privacy, and the need for a genetically literate public capable of actively participating in policy making about the appropriate use of genetic technologies. Two concerns are nearly universal. One is the potential for intended and unintended adverse consequences to individuals and groups of any sort—e.g., family groups, at risk groups, diagnosed groups, ethnic/cultural groups, geographical groups, and so on. The second common major concern is how to address disparities in access to genetic technologies and the associated potential benefits that will almost inevitably come to affect groups differently.