

# Poisoned Profits by Philip Shabecoff and Alice Shabecoff

## Costs Fact Sheet

### **Costs of care**

The cost to our nation of caring for sick children is at least \$54.9 billion a year, just for four illnesses—lead poisoning, cancer, asthma, and learning-behavioral disorders. That includes emergency rooms, prescription drugs, therapies, special education, home care, parents' forgone earnings from lost work, the children's lost lifetime productivity from death or disability. (It does not include pain and suffering.)

The cost of caring for preemies is \$26.2 billion a year.

The lifetime costs for children born in the U.S. with one or more of the 18 most significant birth defects is about \$12 billion.

California's smog costs \$521 million a year -- in hundreds of deaths, thousands of hospital admissions, millions of missed school days.

Massachusetts loses \$1.1 billion to \$1.6 billion yearly from toxic-linked childhood illnesses. This figure includes medical treatment, special ed, and lost income.

Montana's yearly cost is \$400 million, from asthma, neurodevelopment disorders, birth defects, cancer and lead poisoning (from the tailings from mining).

### **Economic costs in lost productivity**

Over half of the most heavily used industrial chemicals are known to harm the brain and nervous system.

If America's collective IQ drops by just one IQ point, the economic loss to the nation in reduced productivity is \$50 billion a year and trillions over a generation's lifetime. Mercury alone costs \$8.7 billion in reduced output a year. Mercury causes brain damage in children. Emissions just from power plants harm 500,000 children a year.

Since lead exposure has been reduced over the past generation (from 15 down to 2 ug/dl – microgram per deciliter), today's generation of newborns has a \$100 billion to \$318 billion GREATER earning capacity as a result.

In today's information age, the wealth of a nation is directly related to the mental health and intellectual capacities of its citizens.

If we lose 5 IQ points collectively, our nation loses three-quarters of its gifted citizens and triples the numbers of people who will need assistance throughout their lives.

As a nation of 260 million, we now have six million gifted citizens and two million mentally retarded. A downward shift of 5 points in the average would mean the loss of more than half of the gift citizens, down to 2.4 million people, and a 57 percent increase in the mentally retarded, to 9.4 million.

Nearly 40 percent of adults with learning problems have significant difficulties with employment or social adjustment. Sixty-two percent of students with learning disabilities are unemployed one year after graduating high school.

Crime is strongly correlated lead, mercury, and other heavy metals as well as other toxins that enter the fetal or young child's body and destroy his brain.

### **Externalizing these costs**

The companies that generate environmental toxins do not shoulder these costs. They 'externalize' them – we as citizens pay for them.

If these costs were included in the price of the products, the market would quickly find less toxic alternatives.