



Poisoned for Profit

How Toxins Are Making Our Children Chronically Ill

Alice and Philip Shabecoff

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“Painstakingly researched and incontrovertible... This should become an elemental text for all of us who wish to protect ourselves, and should be required reading for those who claim to be public servants.”

—**Peter Matthiessen**, author of *The Snow Leopard*

In a landmark investigation that’s been compared to *Silent Spring*, two veteran journalists definitively show how, why, and where industrial toxins are causing rates of birth defects, asthma, cancer, and other serious illnesses to soar in children. Philip and Alice Shabecoff reveal that the children of baby boomers—the first to be raised in a truly toxified world—are the first generation to be sicker and have shorter life expectancies than their parents. The culprits, they say, are the companies that profit from producing, using, and selling toxics.

In piercing case histories, the authors bring readers to places like Dickson, Tennessee, where babies were born with cleft lips and palates after landfill chemicals seeped into the water, and Port Neches, Texas, where so many graduates of a high school near synthetic rubber and chemical plants contracted cancer that the school was nicknamed “Leukemia High.”

And they ask a razor-sharp question: Just why are we letting corporations commit these crimes against our children, sabotage investigations and regulations, hire scientists to skew data on toxic impacts, and fend off government controls with powerful lobbying groups?

Powerful, unflinching, and eminently readable, *Poisoned for Profit* is a wake-up call that is bound to inspire talk and force change.



Philip Shabecoff was the chief environmental correspondent for the New York Times for fourteen of the thirty-two years he worked there as a reporter. He founded and published *Greenwire*, an online daily digest of environmental news. He has appeared on Meet the Press, Face the Nation, Washington Week in Review, CNN News, C-Span, National Public Radio, and the BBC. Shabecoff was selected as one of the Global 500 by the United Nations Environment Programme and he received the James Madison Award from the American Library Association for leadership in expanding the public’s right to know. He is the author of *A Fierce Green Fire: A History of the American Environmental Movement*.

Alice Shabecoff is a freelance journalist focusing on family and consumer topics. Her work has appeared in the New York Times, Washington Post, Christian Science Monitor, and International Herald Tribune, among other publications. She has served as executive director of the National Consumers League, the country’s oldest consumer organization, and executive director of the national nonprofit Community Information Exchange. She is the author of *A Guide to Careers in Community Development*.

Praise for the hardcover edition:

“Into an arena filled with confusing claims and counterclaims, Philip and Alice Shabecoff have now brought their remarkable journalistic skills, providing us with a clear-headed, accurate assessment of the toxic threat to America’s children. *Poisoned Profits* is a highly readable indictment so powerful it may finally force action. We have needed this book; now at last we have it.”

—**James Gustave Speth**, author of *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*, and Dean, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

“Powerful reporting backing powerful conclusions--it will make those of us with kids shudder, but hopefully it will also make us get out of our chairs and engage in the politics necessary to protect the future.”

— **Bill McKibben**, author of *The End of Nature* and *Deep Economy*

“Brilliant. . . Every parent in America owes a debt of gratitude to Philip and Alice Shabecoff. *Poisoned for Profit* should be high on the president’s reading list.”

— **Barry Commoner**, senior scientist and emeritus director, Center for Biology of Natural Systems, Queens College

“A sober and sobering account by two deeply experienced journalists. . . This is essential reading for all who care about children, families, and America’s future.”

—**Philip J. Landrigan, MD, MS**, professor and chair, Department of Community and Preventative Medicine, professor of pediatrics, and director, Children’s Environmental Health Center, Mount Sinai School of Medicine

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Questions for the Shabecoffs:

How big a problem is environmentally caused childhood illness?

Aren't these statistics a function of better reporting and/or changed diagnoses?

Aren't many of these diseases traceable to genetic predisposition rather than environmental exposure?

Aren't potentially dangerous chemicals screened and tested to assure they do not pose a risk? Isn't government acting to protect our children?

What are the major illnesses to which toxic substances are a major contributor? How do you know this is cause and effect, not just an association?

Why do you say Americans are sicker? Isn't our mortality rate dropping? Don't we have the best health care in the world?

Are kids more at risk than adults? How come? How and where are children exposed?

Why do you call it a crime? Who is responsible for putting poisons into our kid's environment? What is the motive?

What is the cost to the nation?

Tell us some of the stories you came across while gathering material for this book.

Why isn't what is happening to the children better known?

Are you telling us to give up chemicals, to live the way people lived 60 years ago?

What steps can parents take to lower the danger to their children? Can parental action alone protect the kids? What more needs to be done? What will it take?

Isn't there as much radiation from the potassium in a banana as from a glass of water containing the nuclear energy waste product tritium? Aren't there toxic elements in nature?