

Book Review

Consumer Health and Product Hazards — Chemicals, Electronic Products, Radiation, Vol. 1 of *The Legislation of Product Safety*, edited by Samuel S. Epstein and Richard D. Grundy, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1974, \$15 or £7 50.

This volume represents half of a detailed review of the legislation of product safety, considered principally from the point of view of U.S. legislation but with a number of references to case law and experience elsewhere.

The foreword and preface by Barry Commoner and Warren Magnuson respectively stress two aspects of product safety which are often overlooked. Commoner draws attention to the possible hazard which can arise from introducing into a biological system any material which is not naturally present, and Magnuson points out that the disposal of consumer products in mass-produced quantities can lead to a higher level of pollution than industrial disposal. Many readers, whilst accepting the general truth of such statements will, however, wish to compare the benefits of, for instance, non-natural drugs and the availability of chemical thermometers in the home with the possible risks of mutagenesis and mercury poisoning which their use could lead to.

In Chapter 1, Carpenter shows how U.S. legislation has attempted to balance such risks and benefits with respect to the regulation of chemicals. Chapter 2, by Epstein, considers in greater depth the problems of testing and monitoring for adverse effects in man and identifies the gaps in legislation and the need for public access to test and related data. The third chapter, by Grundy, Weisbrod and Epstein, systematically reviews industrial products and gives detailed case histories of incidents involving their use.

The last two chapters, by Grundy, look at risks from radiation exposure due to electronic and radiological sources. Federal policy is reviewed together with criteria and standards, current practices, performance levels and risk assessment.

The book as a whole brings together considerable data of value to all who need to assess consumer risks. The sections are generally comprehensive, although it could be claimed that some of the greatest risks get scant mention: for instance, lead poisoning of children from paints and heavy metals in enamels on cooking utensils. Sometimes inferences are drawn which cannot be substantiated: on p.113 we learn that "Monsanto in the U.S. has voluntarily agreed to limit distribution of PCBs to closed systems; however, PCBs are also manufactured in Great Britain." It can be inferred that no such limitation exists other than in the U.S., which is certainly not the case.

Indexing, though adequate, could be more systematic. We find three references to "drugs" but five references under "thalidomide" alone, four of which do not appear under "drugs". The general presentation of the book, reproduced full size from a typewritten original, is rather tiring to read but presumably

keeps the cost down. The odd typing error has remained (*e g* "irridium" on p.118), but generally proof reading is adequate.

The book will be a worthwhile addition to the library of those with a direct interest in U.S. consumer legislation or case histories of consumer incidents involving biochemical hazards from domestic products. At £7.50 (\$15) the book is reasonably priced and well presented within the constraint of the method adopted for reproduction.

F S FEATES

Forthcoming Event

November 4–7, 1975

International Symposium on Industrial Toxicology

This Symposium will be held at the Industrial Toxicology Research Centre, Lucknow, India, on 4–7 November, 1975.

The aim of the Symposium will be to evaluate the present status of research in the field of industrial toxicology and to define the areas of future research. The specific problems of the developing countries like effect of malnutrition, infection and climatic factors on various occupational disease may also be discussed.

For further information please contact The Director, Industrial Toxicology Research Centre, Mahatma Gandhi Marg, Post Box No. 80, Lucknow 226001, India.