

## Book Reviews

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*The Apocalypitics: Cancer and the Big Lie*, by Edith Efron, Simon and Schuster, New York, July 1984, 590 pages, \$ 19.95.

The author of this book, who is a research associate in the Center for Research in Government Policy and Business of the Graduate School of Management at the University of Rochester, admits in the preface she has written an “intellectual detective story”. She feels that science has been corrupted, and that much of what has been developed in reports, the print and electronic media, and public awareness regarding chemicals as a source of carcinogenic injury to humans, is either not true or incompletely understood.

The book begins by discussing the disagreement as to how much of a threat environmental substances (including industrial and domestic chemicals) have posed to our race. Figures have been quoted that prove or disprove nearly every degree of concern one might have. Starting with the Great Reptiles 200,000,000 years ago, an overview of carcinogens and their effects is given, including radiation sources, the crust of the earth, preconditions for life (oxygen has been questioned as a source or at least a role player in carcinogenic chemistry), lightning, soil, elements of the planet (several of which definitely are reported carcinogens), viruses, bacteria, fungi, plants, and trees, carcinogenic plant foods, the effect of cooking, the myth of “pure air”, and carcinogens in the ocean and drinking water, fire (a relatively unexplored territory), and carcinogenic chemicals produced by the human body. This one section (pages 135–176) is the most interesting part of the book, and is documented. From this point, much of the volume is political, and the facts, risk assessments, and remedial actions become highly questionable if judged by purely scientific criteria. However, cancer is not a rational process; it produces very serious emotional and sociological effects, and the volume tries a little too hard, in this reviewer’s opinion, to kill the messenger who brings the king bad news. Much is yet to be known; this volume will doubtless be quoted and mis-quoted for many years.

H.H. FAWCETT

*A Killing Rain: The Global Threat of Acid Precipitation*, by Thomas Pawlick, Sierra Club Books, 2034 Fillmore St., San Francisco, CA 94115, October 19, 1984, 216 pages, cloth, \$ 14.95.

This volume is an addition to the debate which continues over what exactly is the source of “acid precipitation”, and who should do what at what cost. As P.J. Wingate pointed out in the *Wall Street Journal* of October 29,