

# **DOUBT** **IS** **THEIR** **PRODUCT**

**How Industry's Assault on Science  
Threatens Your Health**



**David Michaels**

"Doubt is our product," a cigarette executive once observed, "since it is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' that exists in the minds of the general public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy."

In this eye-opening exposé, David Michaels reveals just how prevalent—and how effective—such strategies have become. Mercenary scientists, he argues, have increasingly shaped and skewed the technical literature, manufactured and magnified scientific uncertainty, and influenced government policy to the advantage of polluters and the manufacturers of dangerous products.

To keep the public confused about the hazards posed by global warming, secondhand smoke, asbestos, lead, plastics, and many other toxic materials, industry executives have hired unscrupulous scientists and lobbyists to dispute the scientific evidence that would alert the public to these dangers. Their goal is the manufacture of doubt.

Such reckless practices have long existed, but Michaels argues that the Bush administration has deepened the dysfunction by virtually handing over regulatory agencies to the very corporate powers whose products and behavior they are charged with overseeing. The agencies rely on to protect our air, water, food, and medications have become unable or, in some cases, unwilling to do their jobs.

Michaels writes from a unique vantage point—as a scientist and former government regulator, he has been a leader in the efforts to protect the public from diseases caused by artificial butter flavor ("popcorn lung"), beryllium, chromium, and a host of other hazards. In *Doubt: Their Product* he proves, beyond a doubt, that our regulatory system is broken. Michaels offers concrete proposals for how it can be restored by taking the politics out of science and ensuring that concern for public health and safety guides our regulatory policy.



**David Michaels** is an epidemiologist and the director of the Project on Scientific Knowledge and Public Policy at The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services. During the Clinton administration he served as Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environment, Safety, and Health, responsible for protecting the health and safety of workers, neighboring communities, and the environment surrounding the nation's nuclear weapons facilities. He was the architect of the historic initiative that "made peace with the past," compensating U.S. nuclear weapons workers for illnesses developed while making or testing atomic weapons. In 2006 Michaels received the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Scientific Freedom and Responsibility Award. He lives in Bethesda, Maryland.

Cover design: Eve Siegel

Jacket photo: Copyright: Loic Bernard/ISTockPhoto.com

Author photo: Dawn Garrett,

The George Washington University Medical Center

**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

[www.oup.com](http://www.oup.com)

**A shocking account of how our regulatory agencies are being undermined—  
and our public health endangered—by unethical corporations and the  
scientists who work for them**

“What a perfect title, ‘Industry’s Assault on Science.’ It’s happening. It’s real.”

—Erin Brockovich

“We live in an age of unprecedented disinformation, misinformation, and outright lying by those in power. This important book shows who profits by misleading the public—and who ultimately pays with their health.”

—Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation*

“This well-researched book by someone who truly knows the system is a must read for anyone who wants to understand the cozy relationship between industry and regulatory agencies on matters that affect the health and safety of our families and neighbors. The cited examples illustrate how, with the help of irresponsible members of Congress and other public officials, corporate greed can trump any sense of ethics, morality, and human compassion.”

—Neal Lane, former White House Science Advisor and  
former Director of the National Science Foundation

“This brave, shocking book exposes the abuse of science by government and industry in ways that endanger the workplace, the home, the water supply, the air quality—in fact, our planet as a whole. David Michaels speaks authoritatively from his firsthand experience as a champion of occupational safety and health. He tells a terrific story.”

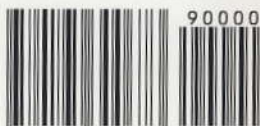
—Dava Sobel, author of *Longitude* and *Galileo’s Daughter*

“In *Doubt Is Their Product*, David Michaels gives a lively and convincing history of how clever public relations has blocked one public health protection after another. The techniques first used to reassure us about tobacco were adapted to reassure us about asbestos, lead, vinyl chloride—and risks to nuclear facilities workers, where Dr. Michaels’ experience as the relevant Assistant Secretary of Energy gave him an inside view. And if you’re worried about climate change, keep worrying, because the same program is underway there.”

—Donald Kennedy, Editor-in-Chief, *Science*

**Visit [www.DefendingScience.org](http://www.DefendingScience.org) for the unpublished documents that reveal  
decades of deception.**

ISBN 978-0-19-530067-3



9 780195 300673

U.S. \$27.95