

EDITOR

Peter VanDoren

MANAGING EDITOR

Thomas A. Firey

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

David Herbick Design

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Alan Peterson

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

CHAIRMAN

William A. Niskanen, *Chairman of the Cato Institute*

David Bradford, *Professor of Economics and Public Affairs, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University*

Philip Cole, *Professor of Epidemiology, University of Alabama*

William A. Fischel, *Professor of Economics, Dartmouth College*

H.E. Frech III, *Professor of Economics, University of California, Santa Barbara*

Richard L. Gordon, *Professor Emeritus of Mineral Economics, Pennsylvania State University*

Robert Hahn, *Director, AEI-Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies*

Scott E. Harrington, *Professor of Insurance and Finance, University of South Carolina*

James J. Heckman, *Henry Schultz Distinguished Service Professor of Economics, University of Chicago*

Joseph P. Kalt, *Ford Foundation Professor of International Political Economy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University*

Randall S. Kroszner, *Professor of Economics, University of Chicago*

John R. Lott Jr., *Research Affiliate, Yale Law School*

Michael C. Munger, *Professor of Political Science, Duke University*

Robert H. Nelson, *Professor of Public Affairs, University of Maryland*

Sam Peltzman, *Sears, Roebuck Professor of Economics and Financial Services, University of Chicago*

George L. Priest, *John M. Olin Professor of Law and Economics, Yale Law School*

Paul H. Rubin, *Professor of Economics and Law, Emory University*

Jane S. Shaw, *Senior Associate, Political Economy Research Center*

S. Fred Singer, *President, Science and Environmental Policy Project*

Fred Smith Jr., *President, Competitive Enterprise Institute*

V. Kerry Smith, *University Distinguished Professor, North Carolina State University*

Pablo T. Spiller, *Joe Shoong Professor of International Business, University of California, Berkeley*

Richard L. Stroup, *Senior Associate, Political Economy Research Center, and Professor of Economics, Montana State University*

W. Kip Viscusi, *Cogan Professor of Law and Economics, Harvard Law School*

Richard Wilson, *Mallinckrodt Professor of Physics, Harvard University*

Clifford Winston, *Senior Fellow in Economic Studies, The Brookings Institution*

Benjamin Zycher, *Senior Economist, RAND*

PUBLISHER

Edward H. Crane

REGULATION was first published in July 1977 "because the extension of regulation is piecemeal, the sources and targets diverse, the language complex and often opaque, and the volume overwhelming."

REGULATION is devoted to analyzing the implications of government regulatory policy and the effects on our public and private endeavors.

For the Record

Cancer and the Environment

Five years ago, Steve Milloy and I wrote that there had been no epidemic of cancer in this country ("The Environmental Cancer Epidemic That Never Was," *Regulation*, Vol. 19, No. 2). Professors Brad Radu and Philip Cole of the University of Alabama Medical School have now shown that, with the exception of one particular kind of cancer, cancer rates in the United States have been declining for a half-century ("The Fifty-Year Decline of Cancer in America," *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, January 2001).

When Radu and Cole separated lung cancer mortality from all cancer mortality, they found that lung cancer mortality increased from 1950 through about 1990 and that mortality from all other cancers decreased. Beginning in about 1990, lung cancer mortality also began to decrease, and, as a result, total cancer mortality, from lung cancer and all other cancers, has been decreasing for about a decade. Even more promising, the rate of decline has increased since 1996.

The last paragraph of their three-page paper says:

The focus on all-cancer mortality also led to the widespread perception of a cancer epidemic caused by environmental pollution. A typical commentary blamed "increasing cancer rates" on "exposure to industrial chemicals and run-away modern technologies whose explosive growth has clearly outpaced the ability of

society to control them" [reference omitted]. There is no denying the existence of environmental problems, but the present data show that they produced no striking increase in cancer mortality. In reality, the cancer "epidemic" consisted of one disease, cancer of the lung, and was due to one lifestyle factor, cigarette smoking.

Before environmentalists dismiss Radu and Cole's conclusions as evidence of their having been bought off by chemical manufactures, they should read the footnote about the authors' affiliations. Dr. Radu "was supported in part by an unrestricted gift from the United States Tobacco Company...."

No one can expect the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to give up expensive and unnecessary programs to control "environmental cancer." After all, reports similar to Radu and Cole's have been published since the early 1980s without effect. But, maybe, the disappearance of the cancer epidemic will strengthen the will of some members of Congress to stand in the way of the next stampede to blame "chemicals" for human health problems.

Wait a minute. Who am I kidding? Congress is too ready to indict chemicals and industry in general for any kind of health problem. Data and analysis haven't, and aren't, likely to stand in its way.

MICHAEL GOUGH
Cato Institute adjunct scholar

We welcome notes about current regulatory topics, letters that challenge or expand upon material we have published, and replies from authors. The writer's name, affiliation, address, and telephone number should be included. We cannot publish all the letters we receive, and we may reject any letter at our discretion. We may edit letters for length, clarity, and conformity to our editorial style.