

WHITEWASH by Carey Gillam, a Book Report and Comments,
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So, what's new? Don't we know already that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and members of Congress are and have been in the pockets of the agribusiness, petrochemical, and food industries? Aren't we aware that they fail miserably to protect us from dangerous chemicals, ubiquitous in our environment, in food, water, and air?

Well, it's one thing if we know these chemicals are dangerous, but it's another when a product like Roundup is proclaimed to be safe, and increasing amounts are doused onto our food, and the EPA doesn't even bother to monitor how much is being used because it is assumed to be safe.

This book blows that whole concept apart. Glyphosate and POEA (polyoxyethene tallow amine), the main ingredients in Roundup, are each individually toxic and together more toxic than either one by itself. Much attention is given to greenhouse gases (for good reason), but the dangers of toxic chemical pollutants, both known and unknown, has not been given it's due. Sure, since Rachel Carson's time, DDT and some other pesticides were banned, and a lot of smog has cleared, but the steady increase in the releasing of tons of chemicals and genetically modified organisms into the environment without being properly tested, is a silent killer that should be unconscionable.

The obscenity of this scandal is the deliberate lying to the public when untold numbers of people are being killed and injured by glyphosate. The degree of corruption of science, concealment of evidence, fraud, legalized bribery, and legal money laundering by Monsanto, and the betrayal of trust by the EPA, is, in my opinion, one of the most enormous, yet overlooked, scandals of our time. The EPA, scientists, and almost any major organization or spokesperson that dares question the safety of Roundup has been harassed, sued, and otherwise attacked or undermined by Monsanto. This is about a single product on which almost all of agribusiness depends, produced mainly by one mega corporation that has invested enormous resources into it, and it is not about to cede any more financial territory than it has to for the sake of public safety, thus the enormous pressure to make people believe that this chemical and the related GMO's that depend on glyphosate are safe.

Carey Gillam, a veteran journalist for 25 years, had not worried about toxic chemicals, and had a favorable opinion of agribusiness and was well connected with people in the industry. Her employer, Reuters, asked her to report on agriculture. Then over the years, her research began to uncover questions about the benefits and safety of genetically modified crops and the chemicals used on them. Her former friends in the industry began to turn on her, bullying, cajoling, and trying to change her reporting to suit them. When she didn't, they tried getting Reuters to knock her off the beat. To our great benefit, she persisted in her investigations, often through access to many secret documents and emails. Her book is a great gift to us who care about consumers, farmers, the soils, and

the safety and health of the whole population. I remember seeing a website that purported glyphosate's safety and said Ms. Gillam was biased. Of course she became "biased" based on facts, not on personal ideology or money. She would not make "balanced" reporting by balancing facts and falsehoods. The website revealed no connection with Monsanto, but I would guess that Monsanto was supporting it through a third unnamed agency, which is customary for it to do.

There is a growing international body of evidence dispelling the claims that glyphosate is safe: Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, blood and pancreatic problems, liver and kidney disease, fetal malformations, reproductive problems, and endocrine disruption in laboratory animals. Human studies show DNA damage to cells and endocrine disruption at levels well below those used by farmers.

In October, 2016 the Pesticide Action Network warned that exposure to glyphosate even a very low doses may result in miscarriages, low birth weight, pre-term deliveries, and birth defects, and lab studies show that low levels of glyphosate and its metabolite, AMPA, and Roundup, all kill human umbilical, embryonic, and placental cells, reduce sperm counts, and increase abnormal sperms. One study in an Indiana obstetric practice found glyphosate in 90% of the women tested, and the ones with higher levels of it had shorter pregnancies, and lower birth weights.

The global incidence of Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma (NHL) has increased over the last 30 years, now the 7th most common cancer in the U.S. Farmers are at increased risk for it, and numerous cases of farmers with it who used enormous amounts of Roundup are in litigation against Monsanto. The National Cancer Institute did 3 case-controlled studies in top U.S. farming states, looking at 47 chemicals. It found that glyphosate and 8 other potentially carcinogenic chemicals used by farmers showed links to NHL.

When even Monsanto's own study that had concerns about genotoxicity from glyphosate, the scientists' suggestion that more studies were needed went unheeded by the company. Monsanto paid other scientists to come up with published research to squelch that idea. The many other studies that Monsanto says prove glyphosate's safety are considered "trade secrets" and are not available for public scrutiny. Some previous research by Monsanto years ago presented to the FDA showing tumors and other irregularities in test animals exposed to glyphosate were considered by those researchers to be unrelated to the exposure.

Then, in March 2015, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) ignited an unforeseen enormous firestorm of attacks against it when it proclaimed glyphosate to be a probable carcinogen. The IARC is not a group of amateurs. These were roundly recognized as elite independent experts, from top institutions around the world. They are experts with vast experience in epidemiology and occupational and environmental toxicology, many having received numerous awards. The chairman of the team, Aaron Blair, with a doctorate in genetics and a long career of accolades, served on many national and international scientific review groups, including

for the EPA. He authored more than 450 publications on occupational and environmental causes of cancer.

The IARC has evaluated 1000 agents since 1971, pulling together scientists from all over the world to look at various chemicals, drugs, occupational exposures, and personal habits, as potential causes of cancer. It was charged not with doing new research but with reviewing research already conducted on glyphosate. This was a tedious process of evaluating the methods used, consistency of results, and adherence to research standards.

Most of these studies were on animals, showing “sufficient evidence” of causing cancer. The few human studies showed a distinct association of NHL with glyphosate, and weaker evidence for multiple myeloma. There was strong evidence of genotoxicity, chromosomal damage, and oxidative stress. The conclusion of “sufficient evidence” would have been made for the human studies also, had it not been for the Agricultural Health Study done by the U.S. government that did not show definitive connections between human cancer and glyphosate. “Sufficient evidence” in humans would have given glyphosate the highest hazard level, so it was placed just below the most worrisome category, demoted to “probably carcinogenic.”

Blair and the other scientists were more than comfortable with the validity of their work and the thoroughness of this very complex undertaking. They knew this work was important because of the widespread residues in food, soil, air surface water, groundwater, and in human urine.

From other evaluations of the Agricultural Health Study from the Natural Resources Defense Council, the results for glyphosate and acute myelogenous leukemia did not reach statistical significance at the 95% confidence level, but if the 90% confidence level had been used, the findings would have been significant. That is, they could have concluded with 90% probability, that glyphosate causes increased risk for this type of cancer. (Since there is only a 90% probability that it raises risk for cancer, does that reassure you of its safety, because there is a 10% chance that it does not contribute to cancer??). For most studies where both benefits and risks are considered, as for new drugs, a two-tailed study is needed, one tail for the risks, and one tail for the benefits. Thus, it is customary to use a 95% confidence limit instead of 90%. This was only a one-tailed study, and the 90% level should have been used.

So, not long ago the PBS News Hour reported this long term study that proved that Roundup was not related to cancer, thus giving the impression that this one study was the final word, negating all the previous decades of research showing the contrary conclusion, when, in fact, this study had been already considered in the IARC report, which was the cause for bringing the level of hazard down to only, a “probable carcinogen,” instead of a carcinogen. If the News Hour had questioned this study or showed balanced reporting, it likely would have been sued, attacked, undermined, or otherwise harassed, by Monsanto, as many others have been.

Before the IARC issued its report, the EPA tipped off Monsanto so it could prepare its counter assault. Monsanto made a vicious attack with unfounded allegations of “junk science,” political motivation, and it angrily demanded a retraction from the IARC, and within 3 days of the announcement, Monsanto urged the EPA to correct the “mistakes or absence of fact.” The IARC stood firm with confidence in the “comprehensive review of the latest available scientific evidence.” The IARC could not be bullied, as the EPA and the FDA had been.

Then California declared glyphosate to be a carcinogen. Monsanto sued, and a judge ruled against Monsanto.

The EPA’s own cancer experts made a report that supposedly evaluated the issue, and concluded that glyphosate was not likely to cause cancer. The scientific research arm of the EPA found the EPA’s analysis to be flawed in many ways and said the EPA had not followed its own guidelines in making its conclusion. The EPA did not budge. It stuck to its defense of glyphosate’s safety. Later it was revealed that Monsanto had an ally in the agency itself, Jess Rowland, who told Monsanto that he would try to kill any additional review of toxicity. Documentary evidence, later acquired through Freedom Of Information request, revealed that Rowland’s primary goal was to serve the interests of Monsanto.

My perspective on the EPA’s behavior is that although it has part of its responsibilities to consider the effect of its regulation on industry and the economy, it is not part of its duties to corrupt the science and to spread misinformation. In the previous Administration, the corruption was bad enough, and now the current Administration is actually replacing scientists with industry friends, and not replacing the staff who are resigning because of demoralization in the agency, due to the President’s attacks on their work and responsibilities. The career staff members who are committed to honesty and integrity are unwilling to continue in that environment. This means continued deterioration of the EPA’s function and evidence of a deliberate attempt to destroy it.

Monsanto has used many shells or front groups with impressive sounding names, all purporting to be independent scientific organizations not connected with Monsanto, to spread more disinformation that glyphosate is safe.

Monsanto would try to sabotage free public events featuring speakers critical of glyphosate, by jamming the reservation with multitudes of fake reservations.

People from several countries brought charges of crimes against humanity to the International Court of Justice in Hague, Netherlands, and hearings were held Oct 15th and 16th, 2016. (The “Monsanto Tribunal”). A panel of judges delivered a legal opinion on 04/18/2017 that Monsanto’s activities have a negative impact on human rights and that better regulations are needed to protect victims of multinational corporations.

A petition to ban glyphosate was signed by 1.3 million Europeans.

Parts of the book describe the havoc done to agriculture and to health in Argentina and Hawaii, and how the chemical industry influences the regulatory agencies there and in Europe.

A chapter is devoted to the damage done to soil by Roundup, for example, the weakening of the immune systems of the agricultural plants. It may be the cause of the “citrus greening” problem devastating the orange groves. Farmers spray Roundup on the ground between the trees. Then there is the problem with “Superweeds,” weeds that can grow 3 inches per day and are totally immune to all usable herbicides. So the problem with Roundup is not just a health problem for the public, but also destruction of soil ecology. The chemical was purported to quickly degrade, but it is persistent in soil and water. We do not know what the effect on the soil is with glyphosate’s breakdown product, AMPA, amino ethyl phosphonic acid.

Monsanto wants to add more herbicides, since Roundup is failing. Now dicamba, much more toxic, drifts from the farms where it is applied, to other farms that don’t have the genetically modified crops to resist it. Now other farmers are going to use Monsanto’s genetically modified plants just to protect against drift. What a perverse incentive, rewarding Monsanto for its harms!

The epidemic of cancer in this country is not due to changing genetics, but is largely an environmental disease. By environment, I include lifestyle and food choices, along with the persistent pollution of food, water, and air. Read Sandra Steingraber’s book, [Living Downstream](#), about how cancer rates cluster around agricultural areas, industries, and toxic waste facilities. Not only Roundup, but thousands of other unregulated chemicals have spread all over the world in water and air.

So what are we to do? If we can’t count on the EPA to protect our environment or the FDA to protect our food, no matter which party is in power, what can consumers do? My advice is to eat only food that is raised by yourself or by some reliable farmer you know that uses no chemical herbicides or pesticides, or buy only USDA certified organic foods. Food stamps need to give premium reimbursements for organic foods. Detoxifying foods and supplements can support the body’s natural detoxifying processes. See my article in the archives on “Detoxification, a Vital Imperative.” Also on food choices, see my article on [Food Rules](#), by Michael Pollan. The Great Plains Laboratory has a urine toxins profile and tests for glyphosate specifically. There may be increasingly more labs that are soon making this test available. Most of glyphosate is eliminated from the body through the urine, but a small % is stored in the bone marrow.

The larger socio-political causes of this situation are more challenging. As long as we allow big money to corrupt democracy and regulatory agencies, the problem will only worsen. As long as profit is the only goal for industries that supply such vital necessities for life such as food and health care, the inherent conflict of interest endangers our lives. That should be a no-brainer. As long as one company can thoroughly corrupt a whole agency such as the EPA, as long as banks are too big to fail, and pharmaceutical giants are “too big to fail,” (the destructive effect on the economy if one of these behemoths

should go bankrupt from criminal prosecutions), we are being held hostage by large corporations. We should consider that producers and suppliers of such necessities as food and health care should be broken up into smaller competing companies, or should be transitioned to worker-owned or consumer-owned cooperatives or other non-profits (with strict limits on CEO compensation), or to certified social businesses, and small family owned farms. See my article on [A World With Three Zeroes](#).

The author has suggestions for agricultural reforms. If not transitioning to totally organic farming, which could take years for each farm, “agro-ecology” could be a viable option. Crop rotation, cover crops, animal waste as fertilizer, buffer zones around fields to attract beneficial insects and natural predators, smaller farms with more crop diversity, using natural pesticides, and avoidance of all chemical insecticides and herbicides, all would make enormous improvement in food, water, and air quality. The Institute for Food and Development Policy reports that small-scale agro-ecology is now gradually producing an increasingly larger proportion of the total food grown.

Also note my comments for reforms in the article on [Diet For a Dead Planet](#), including the requirement that the owner and manager of a farm should live on the farm.

Meanwhile, personally, we can take care of ourselves and of our families as best we can, by prioritizing healthful food and by supporting our natural detoxifying systems.