

'Toxics Primer' Plays on Cancer Fear

SEVERAL readers have called attention to "A Toxics Primer," which apparently is being mailed from Washington by the millions.

The cover bears the imprint "League of Women Voters Education Fund." The back is marked "Postage and Fees Paid, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency." Return address is EPA.

The 3/4-by-8 inch, 16-page booklet was "Researched and written by Sam K. Sasnett, LWEVF Environmental Quality Staff Specialist." Orders are to be directed to the League of Women Voters offices.

This publication is not likely to rival OSHA'S famous "Safety with Beef Cattle," which advised farmers not to fall into manure pits, because "hazard is anything dangerous" and manure pits are dangerous. That one was amusing; this one is not.

"A Toxics Primer" plays upon fears of people to spread the "cancer-mania" that bureaucrats and social reformers have used to gain controls over health care, chemicals, industries and local governments.

The contents are a mixture of es-

tablished facts, scientific assumptions, ambiguous statements and bureaucratic propaganda.

"Toxics are poisons," it says, "but their effects may be quite different from those one would commonly associate with poisons."

The implication seems to be that if federal agencies had more control over toxics, society would be safe from cancer and other hazards.

Barbara H. Franklin, Consumer Products Safety Commissioner, is cited as "speaking of the need for developing a consistent federal cancer policy, one of several toxics regulatory issues." Federal policy always involves federal control.

"A Toxics Primer" lists nine major acts of Congress which assign various bureaus control over toxic, hazardous, pollutant or carcinogenic materials in air, water, food, soil, agricultural chemicals, drugs, cosmetics, consumer products, manufacturing or processing methods, waste materials, the workplace, and the environment.

In many cases, powers include authority to ban manufacture or use of materials, even if hazards are only

suspected.

Such questions as costs, evaluations of benefits in ratio to hazards, paperwork and trade secret exposure are pushed aside.

"In contrast to industry, public interest group representatives see federal regulatory action as being too slow and — so far — ineffectual," the publication declares. The groups are not identified.

It suggests that EPA and other agencies should adopt a "generic approach to toxics regulation", meaning "a general regulation" under which known or suspected carcinogens would be grouped together.

One must agree with the statement in the booklet that says "too many laws that are too complex are being passed too fast for even federal agencies, much less industry, to deal with."

"A Toxics Primer" concludes that "the public needs to develop what might be called a rational fear of toxics." Perhaps so.

The public also needs to develop a rational fear of pressure groups and bureaucrats teaming up to grab more power!