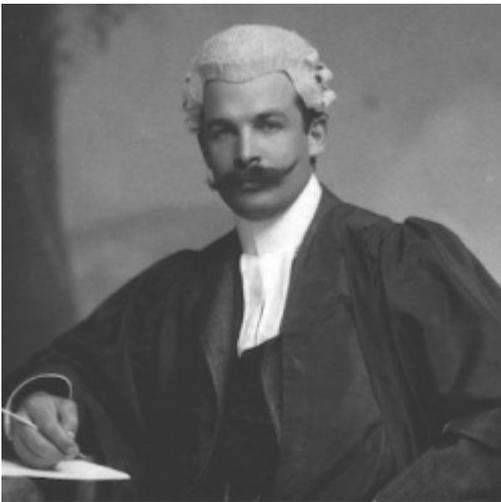


Activist-Legal Complex Will Destroy American Science and Industry



By Alex Berezow, PhD and — December 17, 2019

American science and industry are under threat by this complex, known to be an unholy alliance of activists and trial lawyers who deploy various pseudoscientific tricks to score multibillion-dollar lawsuits against large companies. No industry is safe from these deceptions.



Credit: Public Domain/Wikipedia [1]

In his Farewell Address, President Eisenhower warned of the military-industrial complex, a partnership between the military and defense industry that was financially incentivized to promote war over peace. Today, we face a different threat – the “activist-legal complex,” which is responsible for scoring multibillion-dollar verdicts against some of America’s biggest companies.

One partner in this unholy alliance are activists who falsely claim that the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the products we use are all secretly killing us. They pervert scientific uncertainty to nefarious ends by magnifying hypothetical risks and downplaying relevant facts, such as level of exposure. They exploit widespread misunderstanding of science and a general hatred of “corporations” – especially those that manufacture chemicals, drugs, or consumer products – to instill fear into the public.

The other partner is the legal industry, which relies on activist scaremongering to win jackpot verdicts. They identify sympathetic patients, often suffering from cancer or some other debilitating disease, and blame their maladies on a company with deep pockets. They buy television

commercials to recruit more “victims” for the inevitable class-action lawsuit.

This formula works nearly every time, and the result is always the same: A giant bag of money. In this way, the activist-legal complex recently won a \$4.7 billion lawsuit against Johnson & Johnson’s baby powder for causing ovarian cancer and a \$2 billion lawsuit (subsequently reduced to merely \$87 million) against Monsanto’s glyphosate for non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. There is no credible scientific evidence in support of either verdict.

But the absence of genuine scientific evidence is typically irrelevant in trials of this type. With the aid of flawed or cherry-picked toxicological and epidemiological studies – often published by activists in low-quality journals – the activist-legal complex can subvert science using well-established pseudoscientific tricks.

The first involves undermining long-held truths about toxicity. Thanks to Paracelsus, it has been known since the 16th Century that “the dose makes the poison.” Yet, the activist-legal complex promotes an alternate theory, namely that the mere *presence* of a chemical is an indicator of its potential harm. It is not.

Given advances in analytical instrumentation, it is now possible to detect almost any chemical in your body or in the environment at levels as minute as “one part per trillion,” which is roughly equivalent to a drop in an Olympic-sized swimming pool. There are very few, if any, chemicals on Earth that pose a health risk at such a low concentration.

But using the activist-legal complex’s doctrine – that we are constantly swimming in a sea of harmful chemicals – it is easy for lawyers to argue that *any* exposure to a potential carcinogen could be responsible for a cancer that develops decades later. Usually, the chemicals that are blamed have been used for decades and have been present in our bodies in tiny amounts all along without causing health concerns.

The second trick is to play on society’s belief that regulators and activists are righteous, unbiased people with no conflicts of interest. For example, jurors in the Monsanto glyphosate trial heard that the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a subsidiary of the World Health Organization, classified glyphosate as a probable human carcinogen. What they did not hear is that one of the [key members of the IARC panel received £120,000 from trial lawyers](#) [2] who stood to benefit financially from the classification.*

The third trick is to foment conspiracy theories, usually involving a few old, obscure documents or emails taken out of context. The activist-legal complex uses this tactic to convince jurors, already eager to “punish” Big Business, that the company was engaged in malfeasance.

Game, set, match. The only question left is how big the bag of money is going to be.

Where will the activist-legal complex strike next? It could be anywhere. Maybe there will be a class action lawsuit against Coca-Cola for obesity in America. Perhaps lawyers will go after Facebook for making its social media platform too addictive. Or maybe Apple’s iPhone will be blamed for causing car accidents due to distracted driving.

As long as a company has a sufficiently large bank account, quite literally anything is possible. No

industry is safe from the activist-legal complex.

**Note: This story was originally uncovered by the diligent work of [David Zaruk](#) [3].*

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawyer#/media/File:WE_Bok_CHM_VA0908.jpg

[2] <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/weedkiller-scientist-was-paid-120-000-by-cancer-lawyers-v0qggbrk6>

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