



Hydrocarbon Hucksters: Lessons from Louisiana on Oil, Politics, and Environmental Justice

Ernest Zebrowski, Mariah Zebrowski Leach

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Hydrocarbon Hucksters is the saga of the oil industry's takeover of Louisiana--its leaders, its laws, its environment, and, by rechanneling the flow of public information, its voters. It is a chronicle of mindboggling scientific and technical triumphs sharing the same public stew with myths about the "goodness" of oil and bald-faced public lies by politicians and the captains of industry. It is a story of money and power, greed and corruption, jingoism and exploitation, pollution and disease, and the bewilderment and resignation of too many of the powerless. Most importantly, *Hydrocarbon Hucksters* is a case study of what happens when a state uncritically hands the oil and petrochemical industries everything they desire. Today, Louisiana ranks at or near the bottom of the fifty states on virtually every measure related to the quality of life--income, health, education, environment, public services, public safety, physical infrastructure, and vulnerability to disasters (both natural and man-made). Nor, contrary to the claims of the hydrocarbon sector, has there been much in the way of job creation to offset all of this social grief.

The authors (one a scientist, the other an environmental lawyer) have woven together the science, legal history, economic issues, and national and global contexts of what has happened. Their objective is to raise enough national awareness to prevent other parts of the United States from repeating Louisiana's historical follies. The authors are uncle and niece, a generation apart, who have melded their conclusions from two separate tracks.

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