**Environment,
Technology, and Health**
Human Ecology in Historical Perspective

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Human Ecology
in Historical Perspective

Merril Eisenbud

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Preface

The surge of public interest in environmental matters that developed in the 1960s was a welcome development to those who, like this writer, had already labored professionally for decades in the environmental field. It was satisfying to know that government officials, the general public, and the electronic and printed media had at last recognized the need to control pollution, rehabilitate spoiled land, and preserve wild life.

Much has since been accomplished. The National Environmental Policy Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and the Toxic Substances Control Act are only a few of the many important laws that have come into being during the past decade and which have provided the basic legal and administrative machinery by which environmental control can be achieved. Billions of dollars have been appropriated for environmental protection and rehabilitation, and public interest remains high, as evidenced by the continuing attention given the subject in the daily press and other media.

However, there is also reason for disappointment. The subject of "environment" has become highly politicized. Discussions take place in an atmosphere of advocacy in which complex issues tend to be described in terms of black and white, rather than in the required shades of gray.

This book is an appraisal of the contemporary environmental movement insofar as public health is concerned. The subject is so ramified that it is not possible to examine all of the important issues in a single volume. However, the subjects that have been selected for discussion have been chosen in order to illustrate the reasons for the inherent complexity of environmental issues.

As is true in other fields of knowledge, an understanding of the past assists one to understand the present and plan for the future. It is for this reason that so much of this book is concerned with the history of the human environment.

I am indebted to many colleagues and organizations for assistance

during preparation of this book. The broad coverage of the subject matter required efficient library support, for which I thank Mrs. Christine Singleton, Assistant Curator of the New York University Medical Center Library, and the staff of the Tuxedo Public Library.

It is also a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness for many hours of stimulating discussions with colleagues and friends who reviewed portions of the book. Among these were David Axelrod, Joseph Delibert, Leonard Goldwater, Marvin Kushner, Morton Lippmann, Jacqueline Messite, Joseph O'Connor, Lin Root, Arthur Stern, and Guenther Stotzky. I am also appreciative to Nat LaMar, who edited my manuscript with insight and helped to structure it into final form. I acknowledge the assistance of these and other colleagues and friends, but in no way do I wish to dilute the responsibility an author must assume for the material presented.

Roger Sparling prepared the illustrations, and my assistant, Eleanor Clemm, was invaluable in an editorial capacity and in coordinating the extensive library work required, as well as by typing every word of the four to six drafts from which the final manuscript of this book evolved.

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