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Censored 1999 covers the 25 most important, under-covered news stories in the United States. These news stories are compiled by the staff at Sonoma State University in Northern California. SSU is the site for Project Censored and involves over 150 people. Story #18 involves the deception about fluoride.

Manhattan Project Covered Up Effects of Fluoride Toxicity

Source: WASTE NOT

Title: "Fluoride, Teeth and the Atomic Bomb"

Date: September 1997

Authors: Joel Griffiths and Chris Bryson

SSU Censored Researcher: Corrie Robb

SSU Faculty Evaluator: Daniel Markwyn

Recently declassified government documents have shed new light on the decades-old debate over the fluoridation of drinking water, and have added to a growing body of scientific evidence concerning the health effects of fluoride. Much of the original evidence about fluoride, which suggested it was safe for human consumption in low doses, was actually generated by "Manhattan Project" scientists in the 1940s. As it turns out, these officials were ordered by government powers to provide information that would be "useful in litigation" and that would obfuscate its improper handling and disposal. The once top-secret documents, say the authors, reveal that vast quantities of fluoride, one of the most toxic substances known, were required for the production of weapons-grade plutonium and uranium. As a result, fluoride soon became the leading health hazard to bomb program workers and surrounding communities.

Studies commissioned after chemical mishaps by the medical division of the "Manhattan Project" document highly controversial findings. For instance, toxic accidents in the vicinity of fluoride producing facilities like the one near Lower Penns Neck, New Jersey, left crops poisoned or blighted, and humans and livestock sick. Symptoms noted in the findings included extreme joint stiffness, uncontrollable vomiting and diarrhea, severe headaches, and death. These and other facts from the secret documents directly contradict the findings concurrently published in scientific journals which praised the positive effects of fluoride.

Regional environmental fluoride releases in the northeast United States also resulted in several legal suits against the government by farmers after the end of World War 11, according to Griffiths and Bryson. Military and public health officials feared legal victories would snowball, opening the door to further suits which might have kept the bomb program from continuing to use fluoride. With the Cold War underway, the New Jersey lawsuits proved to be a roadblock to America's already full-scale production of atomic weapons. Officials were subsequently ordered to protect the interests of the government.

After the war, experimentation and the dissemination of misinformation continued. Most notably, the authors state, bomb program scientists embarked on a campaign to calm the social panic about fluoride in the early 1950s, through lectures on fluoride toxicology and by promoting its usefulness in preventing tooth decay. Bomb program scientists played a leading role in the design and implementation of a fluoride study conducted in Newburgh, New York, from 1945 to 1956 in which fluoride was secretly added to public drinking water. In a classified follow-up operation referred to as "Program F," blood and tissue samples were covertly collected from Newburgh citizens with the assistance of the State Health Department. The government eagerly studied the effects of fluoride in Newburgh, as a community-level fluoride exposure experiment.

The formerly top-secret papers, including letters, memos, and health reports-raise important questions about the U.S. government's possible conflict of interest regarding fluoride use and promotion. If lower dose ranges were found hazardous by the Manhattan Project studies, these findings -might have opened the bomb program and its contractors up to lawsuits for injury to human health, as well as public outcry," say the authors. The documents also state that "clinical evidence suggests that uranium hexafluoride may have a rather marked central nervous system effect.... it seems most likely that the F [code for fluoride] component rather than the T [code for the uranium] is the causative factor."

It is feared that the Manhattan Project agenda directed researchers away from objectively evaluating the effects of fluoride well into the Cold War. "Information was buried," concludes Dr. Phyllis Mullenix, the former head of toxicology at Forsyth Dental Center in Boston who was interviewed by Griffiths and Bryson. "There is so much fluoride exposure now, and we simply, do not know what it is doing."

UPDATE by Authors Joel Griffiths and Chris Bryson

"It's an old story. fluoride. The early U.S. industrial polluters and their victims knew it best. It was just another (lay for them when the government announced fluoride would reduce children's cavities. They would have been much better at enlightening the public about fluoride than the dentists of today, but they're gone now.

"The fluoride story is a hangover from the Cold War, when the U.S. media would riot abrogate 'national security.' They publicized the official line about fluoride, and that was that. The critical role of fluoride in the production of the atomic bomb and in many of the new industrial processes (rocket propellants, fluorocarbons, plastics, etc.) that made America the world's leader after World War 11 was never mentioned. The nationwide damage wreaked by industrial fluoride pollution, and the role and motives of the bomb program and U.S. industry in establishing fluoride's safety, was not mentioned either.

"At least a dozen mainstream media outlets here and in the U.K. expressed strong interest in our story, but all later declined. The facts were never in question. The 155 pages of supporting documentation are available for the cost of mailing from Waste Not, Tel: (315) 379-9200.

For further information, contact Dr. William Hirzy, Senior vice-president, National Treasury Employees Union, EPA Headquarters chapter, Tel: (202) 260-4683; or e-mail: hirzy.john@epa.gov Also Mike Ewall, Pennsylvania Environmental Network, Tel: (215) 743-4884; or e-mail: pen@envirolink.org."