ATOMIC UTILITIES CALLED A HAZARD

Rockefeller Health Expert Says They Exceed H-Tests in Radiation Peril

Special to The New York Times.

ATLANTIC CITY, Nov. 14—A warning was issued today that a nuclear power program, even of modest dimensions, might produce "vastly greater" radiation hazards than those in development tests of hydrogen weapons.

Dr. John C. Bugher, director of medical education and public health for the Rockefeller Foundation, told the eighty-fourth annual meeting of the American Public Health Association that the testing of nuclear weapons at the present rate was a minor health hazard. By contrast, he emphasized, an increased nuclear power program could introduce elements of real danger to society.

Particular concern has been voiced over the possibility that one of the radioactive fall-out materials—the artificially radioactive Strontium 90—might be a hazard for people living today. However, Dr. Bugher said that thus far the amount of Strontium 90 found in the bones of living individuals was one-thousandth of the amount now considered to be "the permissible body burden for industrial purposes."

"It seems obvious that the basis for concern for the public health is tenuous as far as the present rate of testing nuclear weapons is concerned," Dr. Bugher commented. "The same cannot be said for the prospective enormous and rapid expansion of nuclear power. Even a modest nuclear power program will bring into existence vastly greater quantities of radioactive materials than are produced in the development of nuclear weapons."

Dr. Bugher, a former director of the division of biology and medicine of the Atomic Energy Commission, made his remarks in an address at a session of the National Citizens Committee for the World Health Organization.

Nuclear power must be developed in the future, he said, because supplies of conventional fossil fuels will become depleted. The new power installations to be built in the next few decades probably will be nuclear, he noted, and fusion of light elements may be used for power sometime in the future.

Study of the nature of biological effects of radiation and the means of controlling exposure to the radiation will "become of primary concern to the public health official for the decades that lie ahead," Dr. Bugher declared.

Health Hazards Compared

"Technical ingenuity of the highest order will be required to control these operations so that at no time are dangerous quantities released to the environment," he said. "Good techniques are already available but continued development will be necessary."

Dr. Bugher observed that it was difficult to define a health hazard and to assess what extent of hazard would be acceptable in modern society.

Automobiles kill about 40,000 persons in the United States each year, one third of them young people, he noted. The loss of an average of forty years of lifetime as a result of each young death, he said, means that the equivalent of 1,600,000 man-years of adult life will be lost each year. This amounts to an average of one one-hundredth of a year for each person in the nation, he calculated.

Compared with this toll, Dr. Bugher estimated, the world-wide spread of radioactive contamination from nuclear detonations exposes the population to only 1 per cent of the amount of radiation that is an inescapable factor in life on earth—from natural radioactivity in soil, water and air.

"We have no method sufficiently sensitive to detect the effect of this small amount of radiation upon present or future generations," he said.

Long experience in the United States and abroad, he went on, suggests that exposure to one hundred roentgens of Gamma radiation (X-rays) over the whole body would shorten an individual's life span by half a year to two years.

There is "appreciable disagreement" concerning the ultimate genetic effects of radiation upon children and grandchildren of those affected, he said, but agreement was general that it should be kept to "the lowest possible amount."

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