

PEACE NEWS LETTER

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To Test or Not to Test?
That is the Question.

by
Gara Peabody

Beginning next month a new program will begin, a program to test a new type of machine gun. To test its effectiveness, live targets will be used. At the end of the year, if all goes well, the machine gun tests will have resulted in the death of at least fifteen thousand small children. An additional seventy-five to one hundred thousand persons will have sustained injuries which will lead to their deaths within the next twenty years. At the end of the year the machine guns will be as efficient and powerful as necessary under any circumstances, yet the tests will continue. They will continue because of man's ceaseless lust for power. They will continue until our citizens speak out against this senseless slaughter.

The preceding paragraph was fictitious. People of the United States would not allow this senseless slaughter, or would they? True, when the danger of thalidomide presented to unborn children was recognized, it was immediately removed from the market. People were shocked to learn that thousands of babies in Europe would face a lifetime of suffering because the general effects of this drug were not known or even suspected.

If a plan for testing machine guns were suggested, our citizens would protest and have the plan dropped. But these same citizens do nothing to stop the atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons. The radioactivity from these tests has effects much worse than those of thalidomide.

Radioactivity can have several effects on the human body. It can cause leukemia, bone cancer, and general aging. Worst of all, this radiation can cause basic genetic changes in unborn infants. More than 99.99 per cent of these changes are for the worse, as has been stated by Dr. J. B. S. Haldane, a scientist working in this field. He compared radioactivity to bullets and the human body to a clock. He said, "My clock is not keeping perfect time. It is conceivable that it will run better if I shoot a bullet through it; but it is much more probable it will stop altogether."

These genetic changes for the worse range in seriousness from diabetes to serious brain defects causing retardation, schizophrenia, and manic depression. These changes are much more serious and far-reaching than those of thalidomide because they can be passed on.

Many kinds of radiation are formed by a nuclear blast. Two of the worst are Strontium 90 and Carbon 14. Strontium 90 is so poisonous to our bodies that one teaspoonful distributed to every person in the world would result in everyone's death. Many teaspoonfuls are produced in one nuclear blast. Fortunately very little of this reaches people. Because it falls on the grass and is eaten by cows, however, it is present in every glass of milk. The danger to children is especially great because they drink more milk and because their bones are being formed. Each bit of radiation one is exposed to through a lifetime increases one's chance of an early death or death from cancer if one has not already suffered a deformity. Strontium 90 was definitely caused by testing because it was previously not found on earth.

Carbon 14 is another dangerous substance because it acts like regular carbon. It is present in air and all plants so none can escape it. Careful measurements of Carbon 14 in the atmosphere have been made because of the method devised for finding the age of fossils. These measurements have shown the amount of Carbon 14 in the atmosphere to have

machine gun. In test after test, the machine gun tests will have resulted in the death of at least fifteen thousand small children. An additional seventy-five to one hundred thousand persons will have sustained injuries which will lead to their deaths within the next twenty years. At the end of the year the machine guns will be as efficient and powerful as necessary under any circumstances, yet the tests will continue. They will continue because of man's ceaseless lust for power. They will continue until our citizens speak out against this senseless slaughter.

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Carbon 14 is another dangerous substance because it acts like regular carbon. It is present in air and all plants so none can escape it. Careful measurements of Carbon 14 in the atmosphere have been made because of the method devised for finding the age of fossils. These measurements have shown the amount of Carbon 14 in the atmosphere to have increased more than 10% in the past five years.

It is true that there is one advantage to additional Carbon 14 in the atmosphere. Ten or twelve thousand years from now when a scientist is digging up our bones he'll think they're six or seven thousand years younger than they really are!

But is this worth seeing a small child fumble through life because his brain has been damaged? Is it worth seeing a person always in danger of bleeding to death because he has hemophilia? Or seeing a beloved parent wither away because of cancer?

Scientists have recognized the danger of testing. In 1958, 9,235 scientists petitioned the United Nations urging immediate halt to the testing of nuclear weapons. They mentioned the damage to human genetics and health.

Many of these same scientists have estimated that fifteen thousand new born infants and small children will die or be severely deformed and seventy-five thousand other persons will be hurt by each twenty-five megaton bomb dropped.

In Alberta, Canada, government statistics indicate a threefold increase in the rate of deformed babies born since testing of nuclear bombs began.

In his book, No More War, Dr. Linus Pauling, a Nobel Laureate, has said that these weapons are already as big as can be needed. It is our ceaseless lust for power which will, as in the case of the machine guns, cause the nuclear tests to continue -- unless YOU work for a change. YOU helped get thalidomide off the market. Just because the fall-out victims do not have specific faces, can you condemn them to a life of suffering?

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The foregoing essay was prepared by a fifteen year old tenth grader, and was delivered as a sermon at a Youth Sunday church service at Zion United Church of Christ, Waco, Texas, on February 3, 1963. It has also been delivered as a declamation in regional forensic contests in Texas.

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COMING EVENT: The 23rd Annual Institute of International Relations under the auspices of the American Friends Service Committee and in cooperation with the Syracuse Peace Council, March 22-24, 1963.

The program will concentrate on Latin America. As one means of launching the discussion of Inter-American Relations, now so integrally and vitally a part of all world relations, we share with you the following uncommon point of view:

"It is time that the Cuban situation was reviewed in the light of cold common sense. The island has been denuded of the Russian missiles. Russian technicians have departed by the thousands. The Bay of Pigs prisoners have been ransomed and returned to the United States.

"It is therefore annoying to find Mr. Micael Artime, political leader of the abortive 1961 Cuban invasion, calling for the Organization of American States to take military action to overthrow the Castro regime. We trust that Mr. Artime's U. S. hosts will make it officially clear that no invasion of Cuba from U.S. shores will be permitted. The U.S. has a duty to the world to keep its unruly guests in order.

"It should do more than that. Blame for the extremely bad relations which have developed between the U.S. and Cuba, and which alone enabled Premier Khrushchev to try his Cuban venture, can be laid as much to the U.S. as to Dr. Castro. When he first came to power, Dr. Castro was not a communist. Had the U.S. then dealt with him as they have dealt with other dictators, had they recognized the need within Cuba for revolutionary reform, however painful to U.S. interests, Cuba would now be in the U.S. and not the Soviet camp.

"There is no reason why Canada should not serve as a mediator. She could be commissioned by the OAS or the UN. The goal of the initial negotiations should be the gaining of Dr. Castro's consent for a committee of Canadians to visit Cuba and study the economic situation with a view to determining what sort of help is needed. This committee could hope to succeed only if it had the unofficial blessing of a United States that has decided to try a new attitude to Cuba. But the world has a right to expect that even the great and powerful U.S. will change its attitudes, when they have been wrong. Cuba's ailment cannot be cured in isolation, but only through contact. It is time that the treatment was begun."

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-- Toronto Globe and Mail (abridged), Dec. 27

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