



Marquis Childs Post 123-69

Industry of Mass Death Seen As Threat to Great Outdoors

DENVER, Colo.—In the interesting museum of the Colorado Historical Society is the scalp of a young woman taken from a Sioux captured by the Federals after a successful raid by the Indians on a frontier outpost. A long braid of fading brown hair is attached to a withered piece of scalp.

They lived dangerously in those pioneer times a century or more ago. For all the sleek, glistening new office buildings rising in booming Denver, you can hear concerned citizens who believe the danger today is infinitely greater than the hazards of the trail and the threat of the savages who for some strange reason did not appreciate having their ancient hunting grounds taken over by the "civilizing" whites.

The case they make is that the danger is far more subtle and pervasive. It lies in the industry of mass death that between private enterprise and the military has developed several flourishing centers in this area. First and most conspicuous is the Army's Rocky Mountain Arsenal with its huge cache of nerve gas. That reservoir of death, sufficient to kill all the 1,100,000 inhabitants of this metropolis if properly administered, lies within a short distance of the Denver Airport.

WHAT WOULD happen should a plane crash on takeoff into that reservoir hardly bears thinking about. But, as more and more people began to think about it, the Army decided something had to be done. More-

over, the metal canisters carried over from World War II, each fused for activating the liquid as an aerosol bomb converts liquid into spray, had begun to corrode.

In a moment of sheer lunacy the Army decided to dispose of this hazard by transporting it across the country and dumping it into the Atlantic Ocean off the New Jersey coast. The special trains transporting this instant death would have passed through a half-dozen population centers and finally would have traversed Jersey's teeming industrial centers.

If the public had not been alerted by a few men in Congress, notably Rep. Richard D. McCarthy (D-N.Y.), the Army might have carried out this lunatic proposal. Scientists were concerned not only with the hazard to human life but what the consequences might be if this great lethal mass were dumped into the ocean. The figure of 27,000 tons has been used but how much of this is nerve gas and how much is metal canister no one seems to know or at least no one is telling.

As a result of the cries of indignation rising from the route of the proposed nerve gas caravan, the Army gave up the idea. Briefly, consideration was given to interring it somewhere in the vicinity of the Dugway Proving Ground in Utah where those 5,000 sheep were killed by a nerve-gas experiment conducted in the open. But the good people of Utah felt they were already subject to enough dangers.

EVENTUALLY a committee of scientists was named to consider the problem. Headed by Dr. George Kistiakowsky who had been President Eisenhower's science adviser, the committee concluded that the gas should be destroyed by a chemical procedure. While this will be a long and diffi-

cult process, it will involve, according to the Kistiakowsky committee, no contamination of the atmosphere.

financed with federal money, they are insisting on the public's right to know just what the dangers are. The Colorado committee is concentrating on what may or may not have happened in the serious fire that swept the Dow Chemical Company plant manufacturing plutonium at Rocky Mountain Flats two months ago. Did the fire release into the immediate environment deadly plutonium, the raw material of nuclear weapons? The company says no and so does the Atomic Energy Commission, the contractor.

BUT THE scientists are not satisfied. A subcommittee headed by Edward Martell, himself at one time part of the Pentagon weapons hierarchy, is demanding answers to a long list of questions. They are demanding, too, a survey of the soil in the environs of the plant that employs 3,000 workers. The crusading weekly, *Cerbi's Journal*, regularly cites the record of the workers pressing claims against Dow not only for accidents in the "hot" areas of the plant but for various forms of cancer and leukemia alleged to be the result of dealing with the stuff that is the prime agent of annihilation.

The commission named to study chemical and biological warfare would do well to come to Denver. Here, as the distant mountains are shrouded in haze that is part smog from the motor car and part industrial waste, is a case history of what man has done to his environment.

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An important part in arousing the public to what the perils are in these centers of mass death is the Colorado Committee on Environmental Information. Made up of scientists at the University of Colorado and specialists in research proj-