

Senator Bartlett Conducts Senate Hearings on Radiation

WASHINGTON—Ralph Nader, the man who prodded the nation to do something about automobile safety, testified last Monday (May 13) at Senate Commerce Committee hearings on radiation hazards conducted by Sen. E. L. Bartlett, D-Alaska.

The hearings, which will be going into their second week, are on three bills concerned with protecting the public health from hazardous radiation. One bill is sponsored by Bartlett, another is an administration proposal and the third has passed the House of Representatives.

In his opening statement at the hearings, Bartlett said:

"We hope to explore some areas which to date have largely been neglected. We will examine the industrial uses of radiation and the special problems presented by such use."

Bartlett described the hearings as efforts "to obtain the information required to produce sound, workable legislation which will protect the public health from hazardous radiation."

Nader, in his appearance before the committee, is expected to urge passage of legislation providing strong measures against unnecessary radiation. This is the second series of hearings to be held on hazardous radiation measures. Senator Bartlett conducted three days of hearings on his hazardous radiation bill last August.

Among the witnesses to testify before Bartlett were Betty Furness, special assistant to the President

for consumer affairs; Dr. Philip R. Lee, assistant secretary for Health and Scientific Affairs; and James E. Terrill, Jr., director of the National Center for Radiological Health.

The administration spokesmen urged passage of legislation which holds manufacturers responsible for holding down the level of harmful radiation. At later hearings representatives of the medical profession, retailers, labor, manufacturers and the academic community testified.

Dr. Richard H. Chamberlain, representing the American College of Radiology, testified in favor of the creation of national radiation standards. However, he took strong issue with published views of Nader and others that medical and dental x-ray presents a major radiation threat.

"We still have little solid information about the effects of the very low levels of radiation such as those largely under consideration here" Chamberlain said.

"We do not know with assurance that their potential harm is very small and, as matter of fact, this is the reason why their study is so difficult."

A representative of the AFL-CIO gave strong testimony in favor of radiation hazard legislation. However, Andrew J. Biemiller, argued against adoption of the bill which passed the House of Representatives earlier this year.

The House bill "must be drastically overhauled and strengthened in the Senate if it is to be any more than what it is at present—a pious statement of good intentions," Biemiller said.

The hearings are expected to continue through the middle of this week, Bartlett said.

"We are continuing our efforts to obtain the background and information needed to devise a truly effective legislative remedy," Bartlett said. "Our only objective is to produce legislation which will provide for the best possible means of dealing with the present and future hazards of radiation exposure."