

Dixon Stewart Criticizes, Brown Replies

September 8, 1971

Mr. Howard Rock, Editor
TUNDRA TIMES
Box 1287
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Dear Mr. Rock:

The AEC was delighted to have the TUNDRA TIMES represented on its recent trip by Alaskan leaders and news media to Amchitka Island. I was only sorry that you could not make the trip personally.

Unfortunately, your correspondent, Fred Brown arrived at some inaccurate conclusions.

Early in his story he reported:—"RADIATION. indications are that the Cannikin device is a "dirty bomb": that is, it is intended to test the warhead of the Spartan interceptor missile of the Safeguard ABM (the Safeguard operates by disabling incoming missiles through radiation effects, rather than direct explosives destruction)."

The fact is that Cannikin is a "clean" rather than a "dirty" bomb. The term "dirty" bomb is one which derives most of its energy from fusion. The statement about Cannikin which appeared in the Congressional Record of July 20, 1971, says:

"This system is designed for exoatmospheric intercept with x-rays as the kill mechanism. This intercept mode puts two important constraints on the warhead: (1) it must have a low fission output in order to reduce radar blackout effects, and (2) a large fraction of its output should be x-rays to increase lethality and make it more difficult for the attacker to harden his reentry vehicles."

So far as I am able to determine, no opponent of Cannikin has suggested that it might be a "dirty" bomb.

On another subject, it seemed that Mr. Brown oversimplified the tsunami question. He wrote:

"Since 1900 about 10 measurable tsunami events have been caused by earthquakes in Alaska and Siberia, and nearly half of these originated in the Aleutian Islands...

"Although they admit little understanding of earthquakes and tsunamis, AEC scientists argue that earthquakes on Amchitka and the islands to the

westward have caused fewer tsunamis than quakes in the eastern Aleutians, so they therefore expect a Cannikin-caused tsunami to be unlikely."

Mr. Brown appears to have

used the Cannikin Environmental Statement and the AEC publication "Physical and Biological Effects Milrow Event" for information about tsunamis.

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But he overlooked one important fact reported in both of those publications: the fact that although the Aleutian geological area west of the Amchitka fault (which lies between Amchitka and Adak) has had its full share of earthquakes IT NEVER HAS BEEN THE SOURCE OF A DAMAGING TSUNAMI. In contrast, earthquakes occurring in the Aleutian area east of

Amchitka pass have generated waves which caused great damage, three of them since 1946.

We appreciate that you have made every attempt to present the Cannikin arguments fairly. If there is a tour to Amchitka following the test, I hope you will be able to make the trip with them.

Cordially,
Dixon Stewart
United States Atomic Energy
Commission