

Sen. Warns On Threat of Radiation

Threat of Radiation
Part I

WASHINGTON—Senator E. L. (Bob) Bartlett, of Alaska, today warned the Senate that man is "only slowly and very tardily learning how to measure and to evaluate" the extent of radioactive contamination of his environment.

Senator Bartlett said that the nation must train the men, provide the laboratories and finance the research needed to ensure that the increasing use of radioactive materials will not cause "grave and permanent damage."

The Alaska Senator attacked existing federal radiation guidelines as being "drawn without adequate knowledge and without adequate consultation with representatives of life scientists."

"Until now safety standards on radiation exposure have been administered

largely by men who make radiation. They are hardly unbiased," Bartlett contended.

Bartlett, who has spoken on several occasions in the

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Senate about the increasing level of radiation in the Arctic, announced that in a series of three speeches he would discuss "particularly distressing cases of excessive radiation exposure" which have been reported in New York, Utah, Arizona, Washington and Alaska.

He said that his purpose was to call attention to a report of the National Advisory Committee on Radiation to the Surgeon General which proposed a greatly increased federal effort to develop acceptable standards of radiation exposure.

Bartlett warned that this need for acceptable standards increased as the amount of radioactive material used for military, medical and industrial purposes increased.

Bartlett explained that federal radiation protection guides set three ranges of exposure. According to federal guides, exposure in the highest range demanded evaluation and application of additional control, Bartlett said. He then described conditions in the San Miguel and Animas Rivers, which flow through the Colorado River basin.

A number of uranium ore processing mills were built near these rivers. In the late 1950s persons taking their daily supply of water from either of these rivers would have received doses of radiation falling in the highest range.

Bartlett also pointed that the radiation affected all river life. Sport fish disappeared during years of maximum pollution, and fauna taken from the bottoms of the rivers in 1961 had 30 times more radiation than normal, he said.

Today, alfalfa and hay grown along the Animas River contain about four times the natural concentration of radium-226. Bartlett pointed out.

Bartlett stated that while conditions causing the contamination may have been corrected, the damage remains because radium-226 has a half life of 1,620.

"We must have more than the present temporary measures to guard against the long-lived hazard caused by radium contamination," Senator Bartlett urged.

He warned that the Colorado River basin was "but one of many hot spots."