

## AKPIRG criticizes radiation report

To: President Bill Clinton

Through: Ms. Caroline Cannon, Project Chariot Coordinator, Inupiat Village of Point Hope

From: Stephen Conn, Executive Director, AkPIRG

Subject: Serious questions left unanswered or unexplored in inquiry on human radiation experiments undertaken by DOE Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments.

The report on human radiation experiments by the DOE advisory committee confirms that radioactive iodine 131 was given to Alaska Native villagers, including pregnant or lactating women and children in 1956 and 1957 by experimenters on contract with the Air Force. It confirms Alaska Native allegations that the experiment was not explained to participants and that no medical benefit was intended. It also confirms that the experiment violated then contemporaneous standards governing use of radioactive iodine on women and children, among others, established by the Atomic Energy Commission and the Air Force.

However, left entirely outside of the report (and a separate study by the Polar Research Board, a committee of the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council, commissioned by the Department of Defense) is an inquiry into the failure of the Indian Health Service within the Public Health Service to obey its Federal trust responsibilities by a. interceding to protect its charges from this experiment or by b. monitoring the health of those who participated in the experiment.

Many of these test subjects had been exposed to radiation from several other significant sources - x ray treatments to alleviate tuberculosis and radiation from Russian and Chinese fall out that proceeded through the food chain into the spring hunted caribou that form a substantial portion of the diet of many test subjects. This was known to the IHS, in fact, from evidence and testimony gathered often inadvertently by the advisory committee and the polar research board is proof that Indian Health Service personnel both encouraged and facilitated the experiment and were (at least in one documented case) on the scene when the experiment took

place.

This matter of knowledge and complicity by those Federal agencies charged by Congress with maintenance of health and well being of Alaska Natives in the time period under study represents an entirely different order of Federal responsibility not pursued by the advisory committee either in the case of Alaska Natives or in the case of Navajo uranium miners served up to work situations known to be dangerous by em-

ployment offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

2. Less adequately dealt with by the Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments is a scientific experiment conducted with Project Chariot funds that involved the 1962 introduction of radioactive materials from a Nevada test

site into the lands and waters between the villages of Point Hope and Kivalina known to be a primary hunting grounds for villagers and a windblown area where caribou consumed lichen heavily contaminated by fallout. This material was left at the site without notice to Alaska or Alaska Natives until its chance discovery in 1992 lead

to its removal in 1993. The advisory committee has not viewed this radioactive tracer experiment was a medical experiment on Alaska Natives. However, there is good reason to believe that its actual purpose was to create a model - not to predict the impact of underground nuclear

detonations on local water supplies - but to better measure how known quantities of radioactive material proceeded into the ecosystems into human consumers of caribou. That this serious purpose was the actual intent of the tracer experiment is based on several documented circumstances:

As in the case of the radioactive iodine experiments, the question of whether those Indian agencies charged with special legal re-

sponsibilities to the Alaska Native population did their job or caved into AEC pressures remains unexplored by the Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments. It is documented that measurements of radiation were taken by Hanson and other AEC researchers in Indian Health Service hospitals on patients who were not informed about the purpose of these measurements but who may have legitimately believed that they had a medical purpose. It is also documented that in late 1964 the head of the Bureau Affairs and other Indian agency officials were warned by AEC operatives that high radioactive body burdens of heavy consumers of caribou at Anaktuvuk Pass and other places were at special health risk. As stated, both researchers such as Hanson and Indian Health Service personnel knew that radiation from the food chain joined radiation from x ray treatments and American experiments on some Alaska Natives. To date no official government agency has explored whether or not Indian agency personnel reacted to this information by monitoring the health of persons deemed at risk as was their legal responsibility.

This brief account of very serious deficiencies in the studies by the DOE advisory committee on human radiation experiments (and the IOM/NRC's polar research board) should suggest to you that concern of Alaska Natives that their legal rights were violated and health put at risk in more than one experiment with radioactive materials is legitimate. Unanswered

questions in this regard have lead to suspicion about the motivation of Federal government personnel that casts a shadow on today's working relationships with Indian agency officials in matters of today's health concerns.

I can assure you, Mr. President, that the concerns voiced by Caroline Cannon

and other Alaska Natives are grounded in fact and documentation and not merely groundless paranoia as those who seek an end to this inquiry might suggest. I am prepared, to guide new research inquiries on behalf of Alaska Natives and urge you to order these new inquiries, especially those which address the role of agencies charged with Federal trust responsibilities to Alaska Natives in the era.

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