

Atmospheric Testing Dangers

Short-lived radioactive debris from the Marshall Island thermonuclear tests of 11 years ago caused thyroid gland damage in a significant number of islanders, according to the indisputable findings of a responsible medical survey team. This disclosure is infinitely more disturbing and convincing than the findings of thyroid damage in Utah and Arizona children by tactile examination, for the islanders have undergone surgery and treatment that leaves no room for errors in diagnosis. And the isolated circumstances of the islanders has diminished the possibility of other causal factors. Eighteen out of 82 natives involved have now shown thyroid gland abnormalities. Continuing tests may disclose more.

Many have feared such consequences of testing from the beginning. But their anxieties were often dismissed notwithstanding much competent medical conjecture on the results of exposure to the short-lived debris of the bombs. The new findings have raised all the pre-existing fears and doubts to a new level. Hitherto no one could prove that such results would ensue. Now the tragic proof has been provided.

The countries which first tested these weapons could at least plead the absence of demonstrated damage to mankind. Many felt they should have been required to demonstrate the safety of testing. Be that as it may, the nations of the world are on notice now. The country that proceeds with atmospheric testing in the face of the Marshall Islands evidence will exhibit an indifference to the fate of mankind that ought to indict it before the civilized world. Hitherto, the testers might say they did not know. Now they will have to admit they know but do not care if debris from tests maims hapless people within fall-out range. One can only presume that France, in the face of this new and frightful knowledge, will not go ahead with its atmospheric testing of H-bombs near its Pacific possessions.