

Government charged with covering up effects of Three Mile Island

The U.S. government is attempting to coverup the health effects of the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island, the editor of Harrowsmith magazine has charged.

Thomas Pawlick, who spoke recently in Waterloo, said the American officials have made every attempt to prevent information from reaching the public which shows a link between 430 infant deaths in Pennsylvania and the Three Mile accident.

He also said the commercial media and the nuclear industry were instrumental in the cover-up.

A similar cover-up on a smaller scale, has also occurred in Kingston, Ontario, where government officials refused to release information after a plume of radiation from a nuclear reactor in New York state drifted over the city in 1975 and 1976.

According to Dr. Ernest Sternglass, professor of radiation physics at the University of Pittsburgh, the number of infant deaths in Pennsylvania almost doubled in the four months after the accident. In the northeastern United States, over the same period, there were 430 more infant deaths than would normally be expected. The greatest increase in infant deaths occurred in areas closest to the nuclear reactor.

The fetus is most vulnerable to radiation poisoning during its fifth and sixth month of de-

velopment, according to Sternglass. Thus the babies most affected by the Three Mile Island accident would have been born three to four months later. It is a "strange coincidence" that infant deaths were also the highest three to four months after the accident, said Pawlick.

Pawlick also found a sharp increase in infant deaths in Kingston after a large release of radiation from the Nine Mile Point nuclear reactor in New York state. Winds could have carried the radiation across Lake Ontario to Kingston, only 50 miles away.

But the Ontario Environment Ministry refused to say how much radiation had reached Kingston. Both Harrowsmith Magazine and the

Kingston Week Standard newspaper "badgered the government for weeks and weeks" without success.

"I think they're afraid of what the figures would reveal, that's why they're not releasing them," said Pawlick. "That, to my mind, is a cover-up on the part of the Ontario government."

The cover-up by the American government after the accident at Three Mile Island was much more extensive, according to Pawlick. It involved the firing of Dr. MacLeod, Pennsylvania's Secretary of Health; a printing error in the U.S. Vital Statistics; contradictions of published medical journals; refusal to carry out investigations; and deliberate attempts to confuse the public with statistics.

Pawlick said the nuclear industry in the United States is so influential that it has forced both the government and the press to cover-up the health effects of the accident.

He searched through newspapers and magazines in the eastern United States and "found absolutely no reference in Time or Newsweek or the New York Times to people dying at Three Mile Island. We called a large number of environmental groups in the States, even anti-nuclear groups and none of them knew anything about anyone dying at Three Mile Island."

Dr. Gordon MacLeod, Pennsylvania's Secretary of Health

at time of the accident, urged "full public disclosure of all the facts known by the state government about the accident, particularly all details dealing with public health."

MacLeod was immediately fired. "He was replaced by a man who is closely tied to the Public Utilities in Pennsylvania. He, needless to say, has had very little to say about the public health effects of Three Mile Island," said Pawlick.

After his dismissal, MacLeod revealed that the Department of Health had found a marked upsurge in infants born with thyroid disorders in the Pennsylvania counties downwind from the reactor. Thyroid disorders can be caused by excess radiation, and may result in infant defor-

mities, mental retardation or death.

MacLeod said health department data agreed with Sternglass, showing an increase in infant mortality near the reactor.

Dr. Frank Greenburg, of the Federal Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, said the occurrence of thyroid disorders in newborns in Pennsylvania in 1979 was the lowest in North America. But statistics published in a medical journal contradicted Greenburg. In a telephone interview, when Pawlick asked Greenburg to explain the discrepancy, he was put on "hold". A secretary said Greenburg had been called away on an emergency, and that it would not be worthwhile to contact him later.

Dr. Webster, a veterinarian

who lives near the Three Mile Island reactor, noticed a sudden increase in birthing difficulties amongst farm animals after the accident. In the summer of 1979, he performed "two Caesarean deliveries a week" among goats and sheep. His usual rate was one per year. He also found a large increase in stillbirths and birth defects in domestic animals.

Webster asked the state agricultural department, the health department and the environment department to investigate. "They all refused," said Pawlick. "No examination has been conducted, and as far as the state of Pennsylvania is concerned, none ever will be."

The U.S. Bureau of the Census, who produced the Vital

Statistics Reports used by Sternglass, claimed that a printing error had occurred in a recent report. "Oddly enough, it's been 50 years since such an error appeared in the Vital Statistics, and oddly enough that error occurred in exactly the place where Sternglass' calculations needed it," said Pawlick.

"There is no absolute proof that anyone died at Three Mile Island, all there is, is a lot of evidence that looks very suspicious...The proper study has not been done, and until it is, we won't know whether anyone died at Three Mile Island, or whether anyone's dying anywhere from nuclear energy. The question is open and government authorities are derelict in their duty if they don't answer it."

Lawyer breaks tradition

by Susan Hayes

Ted McFetridge, a lawyer practising in downtown Dartmouth decided to advertise his fees in his office window a few months ago.

In doing so, he broke the tradition of legal fraternity, the tradition where lawyers build up a good practice by word of mouth. McFetridge has also spoken about the Nova Scotia Barristers Society in not a completely respectable tone and, as a result, they have ten complaints filed against him.

McFetridge says all of the complaints are not to do with fee advertising, and the Society is trying to censor his right to criticize them. McFetridge is up against a formidable opponent in the Society because he is trying to change their way of thinking.

McFetridge went public because he felt it would have been very easy to suspend him if the issue wasn't in the public eye. "This gave me protection," he said. "When you have 700-1000 lawyers who think one way, it is hard for one person to change them."

The Nova Scotia Bar Society is a self-governing body with a mandate to act in the best interests of the public. However, McFetridge says there are no members of the public in the Society and they get no input from the public. So how can they act in the public interests? They say, "We know what the public wants."

Because McFetridge went to the press, he said it will make people more willing to demand from their lawyers. He said participation is needed by the public, "For too long lawyers have been put on a pedestal".

"People are intimidated by lawyers and their plush offices", he said. They need to be educated in their civil rights, and it is fundamental

in all of our lives to know. Instead, the knowledge is stuck in the Weldon Law building. McFetridge went on to say the problem is one of public education. Lawyers have to give the information to the public.

McFetridge is not alone in his fight. There is a case going to the Supreme Court now by a Vancouver lawyer. Donald Jabour persisted in advertising his fees also. McFetridge says he is waiting for the results of the case. If the case is won, the Bar Society would not be able to prohibit fee advertising, but would only be able to set down guidelines, he says.

McFetridge says he gets more support from the older lawyers rather than the young ones. The younger lawyers want the status the senior lawyers have and therefore don't want change.

He has support from one young lawyer. Howard Epstein says he "agrees with McFetridge 100%". Epstein himself ran into opposition from the Bar Society about a year and a half ago. He said he previously advertised in the now defunct newspaper, the Barometer. He used the business card style of advertising allowed by the Society with one exception—he added on the bottom, "Reasonable fees, and evening appointments."

Epstein said at the time there was "lots of discussion, but there was no discipline and no change in the rules." In the June 28, 1979 issue of the Barometer, he included specific fees in his ad. There was a complaint filed with the Bar Society by Ian Darrach. Epstein described this as a strange complaint. Darrach was objecting to the ad because the fees were too low. After Epstein had sent a brief to Darrach explaining how he could charge such low fees, Darrach turned it over to the Ethics Committee of the Bar

Society. They decided not to discipline Epstein. As it turned out, the June 28th issue was the last issue to be published by the Barometer and therefore Epstein ceased to advertise because rates were too high in the other publications.

Epstein said that he grew tired of fighting for one and a half years and he is glad that McFetridge is continuing the fight. He said McFetridge was right in taking the fight to the public rather than to other lawyers. He said the way to change the rules was to prod the Society into changing by publically embarrassing them.

Gordon Proudfoot, chairman of the Association of Young Lawyers, said he agrees with the principle McFetridge is fighting for—that of better information to the public. "But," he said, "McFetridge wants too much, too quick." Proudfoot feels there is a glut of lawyers on today's market and "young lawyers like McFetridge and Jabour advertise to get around it. They want to get a piece of the pie, but they don't want to work hard to build up their practice." Advertising, he said, will just build up the overhead for lawyers and this will come out of the consumer's pockets. The fees are too high now, he said, and if one advertises, then they all will have to.

Proudfoot said the media haven't been giving a fair story. "All lawyers end up looking like crooks except for McFetridge." He felt the Jabour case will determine McFetridge's destiny. He said McFetridge was probably inspired by the Jabour case to fight here.

McFetridge feels he is fighting a one man fight against the Nova Scotia Bar Society. "If I get censored, then no one else will stand up."

