

## PUBLIC HEALTH

# Fluoridation Supported

Unsubstantiated charges against fluoridation of public water supplies are still being made although its effectiveness in reducing tooth decay has been proved—By Faye Marley

► SCIENTISTS and lawyers meeting in Arlington, Va., confirmed their support of fluoridation of public water supplies to drastically reduce tooth decay.

The National Dental Health Assembly charged that the opposition to fluoridation was based on "extremist emotional positions." Such positions, it claims, are the basis of a conclave of antifluoridationists called the National Health Federation, which was meeting at the same time, across the Potomac River in the nation's capital.

Dr. Fredrick J. Stare, Harvard University School of Public Health, told SCIENCE SERVICE that he had refused an invitation to participate in the Federation's meeting because his attempts at discussion in the past had been fruitless.

Charles S. Rhyne, general counsel of the National Association of Municipal Law Officers and past president of the American Bar Association, upheld the Arlington assembly's position, saying that "there are no constitutional objections of any substance" to the fluoridation of public water supplies.

Dr. Stare outlined his reasons for not taking part in the antifluoridation meeting in a letter dated Jan. 26, 1966:

"Numerous times during the past ten or more years I have participated in discussions of fluoridation with those who oppose what I believe is one of the truly great advances in public health. These meetings have never been satisfactory or even pleasant. I am not qualified to discuss the moral, legal, religious, or engineering aspects of fluoridation. I do not care to become involved in the emotional issues that invariably arise. On the purely scientific, nutritional, dental, or medical area where I have some degree of competence I know of no reputable qualified American scientist who opposes fluoridation. Further, I know no reputable and qualified non-American scientist who opposes fluoridation in our country.

"Furthermore, with the sordid record of the National Health Federation and some of its members for misbranding and making false claims for the various products they promote to the public in the general area of health, I do not see how any self-respecting individual would knowingly participate with this organization in any activity."

In a more moderate vein, Dr. Robert H.

Felix, dean of St. Louis University's School of Medicine, and former director of the National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Md., warned against calling all anti-fluoridationists extremists.

"We can cite sincere individuals, some of them men of science, not yet able to swallow fluoridated water if they know what they are drinking," he said. Such persons do not make such immoderate statements as "fluoridation is a communist plot" even though they may have a basic prejudice against water that has been "tampered with."

He said that proposed mental health clinics have been as "embattled" as fluoridation, but that "answering the extremist critics" will gain no advance. He believes emphasis should be on building a strong community climate for health.

One of the sincere opponents of fluoridated water who reported his findings to the National Health Federation was Dr. G. L. Waldbott, a Heidelberg-educated allergist working in Detroit hospitals as a consultant on allergy.

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## Fluoridation Essential

► MORE THAN 97 million persons in the United States have decayed teeth needing treatment; more than 20 million more have had fillings and another 23 million have already lost their teeth.

Most persons accept this situation as inevitable, and because tooth decay is not fatal they do not view it with alarm as they do killer diseases such as heart failure, cancer and stroke.

Yet a solution to the problem, which would spare the nation's children and young people, is fluoridation of community water supplies. Dr. John W. Knutson, professor of preventive dentistry and public health at the University of California at Los Angeles, told the National Dental Health Assembly in Arlington, Va.

Not only can fluoridation reduce tooth decay among children by nearly two-thirds, but it has no deleterious effects, the professor said. Fluoridation will not harm any living thing or interfere with any industrial process.

Dr. Maynard K. Hine of Indianapolis, Ind., president of the American Dental Association (ADA), which, with the U.S. Public Health Service sponsored the Assembly, urged all states to follow the example of Connecticut in making fluoridation mandatory for communities with a population of 20,000 or more.

Connecticut passed such a law in 1965 after seven years of intensive public education. Dr. Hine said the ADA was committed to encourage and support similar legislation in other states.

Dr. Luther L. Terry, vice president of the University of Pennsylvania and former surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service, places fluoridation on a par with pasteurization of milk, purification of water and immunization against disease.

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**ATOMIC DIRT DETECTOR**—Impurities in particles of matter thousands of times smaller than a pinpoint are detected in this device used at a British subsidiary of International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation for building transistors. An image of the sample enlarged 500,000 times is shown on the screen at the left.