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## Lifting the Lid

The generally existing concern over the lack of detailed information on the biological and other effects of radiation led the AAAS Council last December to instruct the Association's president to name a committee to study and report on that problem. Shortly thereafter the National Academy of Sciences announced the initiation of a similar, and much better financed, study. After some debate on the probability of duplication of effort, the Directors recommended, and the Council agreed, that the AAAS should keep watch over developments, but should not institute a study of its own at the present time.

There has been a good deal to watch, for 1955 has seen the publication of much more information than was made available in 1954. AEC commissioner Libby's speech in Chicago on 3 June has been widely noted and quoted. As a closer-to-home example, *Science* so far this year has published half a dozen articles on the effects—chiefly biological effects—of radiation, and will publish more on this topic. In contrast, there were practically no such articles in 1954.

Some of the information is puzzling and requires careful interpretation. Official statements have sometimes been criticized as unveiling only enough to start people guessing. A recent *Science* article on fallout was difficult to compare with a 1953 article on the same topic because the units and descriptive categories differed from those of the earlier article.

It is likely, however, that more precise information will become available. An AEC press conference called to inform reporters about the International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy included an interesting colloquy between several of the reporters and the AEC representatives. Was there, the reporters wanted to know, any information that had been declassified so that it could be used in papers to be given at the Geneva meeting? No, the AEC officers replied. Was there, the reporters persisted, information in some of those papers that had not been made public before? Yes. The AEC, its officers explained, was constantly declassifying information; some would be released for the first time at Geneva; but it had not been declassified for the express purpose of using it at Geneva. That was probably the only answer that could or should have been given. Reports coming from Geneva indicate that a considerable amount of information has been released.

Interest in radiation effects is so widespread that an international study now appears probable. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge announced at the U.N. commemorative meeting in San Francisco that the United States would propose to the U.N. the collection and distribution of information on the effects of radiation on human health and safety. Luther Evans, director general of UNESCO, announced that UNESCO was ready to start such a survey as soon as the U.N. asked for it.

Information on the effects of radiation on plant, animal, and human life is of immense and proper concern to a society that must contemplate its future.—D.W.