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## The Mushroom Cloud

UNTIL a few weeks ago the testing of atomic weapons was a news item received without much disturbance of public opinion. Even when it became known that a hydrogen bomb had been detonated in the Marshall Islands, interest did not appear to be widespread outside scientific and military circles. Then a few cable messages began to change the public mood. It was reported that a Japanese fishing boat, operating outside the safety limits, had been showered with radioactive ash. On their return to Japan the fishermen were sent to hospital for treatment and observation. Signs of radioactivity were also detected in fish caught a long way from the scene of the explosion. The Americans then made two announcements: (1) that the force of the explosion had been much greater than was expected; and (2) that the danger zone would be extended to an area of 315,000 square miles.

These events were not at first given much prominence; but it was not necessary to be unduly sensitive to feel the shudder of apprehension that was passing around the world. Not since Hiroshima have the implications of atomic warfare appeared so plainly. No city has been destroyed: a hydrogen bomb has merely been tested. But we know that fishermen 70 miles away were injured by floating ash, and that ash was seen on the water as far as 600 miles from the point of detonation. It is easy for the facts to be misinterpreted, though lay opinion has so far not received much help from experts. Indeed, a Sydney scientist was reported to have said that he was afraid "all life on earth would perish within the next 20 years." This exercise in pessimism was promptly described as "nonsense" by the head of the School of Physics at Sydney University. And about the same time the German inventor of the V2 rocket, Professor Herman Oberth, was saying that "atomic re-

search will make war impossible within 12 months."

The truth, no doubt, must be sought between these extremes. Hydrogen bombs are being made, probably on both sides of the Iron Curtain; and we have had evidence of their destructive power. It is hard to believe that governments could use these weapons, knowing that the same forces could be released upon their own cities. But the danger is there, and will not disappear until atomic energy is under international control. Political and moral attitudes have changed very little, if at all; and the weapons which can now be used are too dangerous to be in the wrong hands. This is an old dilemma, made sharper today by the work of physicists. Its consequences can be seen already. McCarthyism in the United States is partly the result of personal ambition; but it could scarcely exist in a democracy if there were not among the people a deep and pervasive fear.

The first step towards safety must surely be a return to political stability. This may well come in the near future; and thereafter it should be easier to carry further the improvements that have been made in East-West relations. There is no other way of organising security. Bigger bombs may give one nation the edge in attack; but margins of power do not matter when the whole world is the battlefield. It may be true also that defensive measures will give people an increasing protection. Yet the solution can never be found among the weapons or in deep shelters. Only in the minds which control the detonations can there be hope of safety. Men have always been in danger. There has always been something to fear, a cloud upon the horizon no bigger than a man's hand. But today its mushroom shape is a warning that the cloud cannot be allowed to grow and spread. Internal stability for the great nations, and a new approach to atomic control, should be related aims, followed vigorously and never abandoned.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 9, 1954.



Last year there was a flare-up of SCARLET FEVER in the middle districts of New Zealand. We don't want it to be repeated on a more extensive scale this coming autumn. Parents and teachers, with a knowledge of the FACTS, can do much to restrict the spread of an outbreak. These are the FACTS...

## SCARLET FEVER

normally starts with a sore throat, shivering, feeling of nausea and frequently vomiting. Swallowing becomes painful, and there is sometimes earache. The rash appears on the second day, first on the face as a flush and then on the neck and chest. From there it spreads over the body. (Frequently there is no rash apparent so always be suspicious of a sore throat.)

- (1) The patient must be kept in a bedroom by himself. The patient, his clothes, his bedding, etc., are all highly infectious.
- (2) His attendant should wear a special gown when in the room, and must wash hands in soap and water after every service.
- (3) ISOLATION PERIOD IS TWO WEEKS, AT LEAST, FROM THE ONSET OF THE DISEASE.
- (4) When the patient is nursed at home, children in the household must stay at home for the period of isolation.

\* **TEACHERS**—Please send home without delay any child who has a sore throat or symptoms of flu.

If the above rules are observed by those responsible there will be less scarlet fever this year.

(Please cut this out for reference)