

# World Is Awed By Atomic Power, Now In Its Infancy

As everyone knows, when the first atomic bomb was exploded in New Mexico the scientists were in very serious disagreement as to just what the results would be. One physicist of standing was of the opinion that it might very well start a chain reaction which would literally destroy the earth. Later, when the bomb was used for military purposes in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, very little was known as to its possible effect on human and plant life. This ignorance was partially dissipated by studies of the results in Japan made after the war. Then came the Bikini tests, which were designed to clear up many a point which still puzzled the experts.

Little by little, facts showing just what the atomic bomb can and cannot do—in its present form—have been made available. This information is the result of the most careful and thorough research, much of which was made for the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission which is starting the colossal job of developing some kind of a plan for control and use of atomic energy in all possible forms. In a recent issue, the United States News carried an excellent summing up of the material which

has so far been made public. First of all, the theory that the bomb could totally destroy great centers of population—or that a series of strategically-placed bombs could virtually eliminate the United States as a strong and functioning nation—is not supported by the scientists. Deaths at Hiroshima mostly occurred within a radius of 1,000 yards from the center of the blast. Practically no deaths occurred outside an area of 3.1 square miles. And, within that area, about half of the people survived, and virtually all of these have completely recovered from injuries and illnesses sustained. However, the bomb did kill 80,000 people at Hiroshima—by blast, by radiation, and by fire and drowning.

Stories to the effect that the bomb caused permanent sterility, fatal radiation sickness and induced cancer have not been substantiated. In most cases radiation sickness passed in a matter of weeks, and the only result of the bomb now appearing on Japanese survivors is disfiguring but not serious scar tissue on faces and bodies. Temporary sterility was common, but disappeared shortly. Plant life in the Hiroshima blast

area shows some signs of abnormality—such as white leaves caused by radioactivity. But the profusion of growth seems about the same as before.

At Bikini, nearly 5,000 animals were exposed on target ships during the two bomb tests. The air burst killed some 20 per cent of these—ten per cent by radioactivity and ten per cent by blast. The underwater explosion was much more lethal—more than 60 per cent of the animals perished, largely by radiation. According to the U. S. News, "Many of these died from lack of prompt treatment." Surviving animals were definitely affected, and were restless and irritable for a week or two. Some developed leukemia. Studies made of sick animals, it is said, have resulted in an effective treatment for radiation sickness.

From the information thus gained, the scientists have projected what an atomic attack might do to United States cities. One Nagasaki-type bomb bursting in the air would be lethal over 3.1 miles. That amounts to 2 per cent of the area of Detroit, 4.3 per cent of Washington, D. C., and 0.9 per cent of New York. It is forecast that deaths would be proportionately less than in Japanese cities, due to superior American building construction.

An underwater burst in the harbor of New York, the forecast goes on, would cause few immediate deaths. But radiation sickness would soon kill people in the path of the spray. Streets and buildings touched by the spray might remain radioactive for years, and could be used only for very brief periods of time. The size of the area thus made unfit for ordinary use would, of course, be determined by the extent of the spray of contaminated water.

Summing up, the scientific view seems to be that the atomic bomb is the most terrible weapon yet devised by man—but that, so far, at least, there is nothing to indicate that it could wholly or even largely destroy life on this planet. However, it must be remembered that the bomb is very much in its infancy. It has an extremely low efficiency—much less than one per cent of the mass actually explodes, and all the rest is harmlessly dissipated. If means are ever found whereby the entire mass can be exploded, the effects of a single bomb may be multiplied hundreds or thousands of times. Thus, the present bombs may simply be the forerunners of infinitely more powerful instruments of destruction—precisely as the Wright's crude and toy-like airplane was the forerunner of the great aircraft of today.

There are atomic physicists—some of them at the very top of their pro-

fusion—who believe that, in time, atomic power may be developed to where it could effectively eliminate animal and perhaps plant life from whole sections of the world. But, apparently, it is far from that peak of lethal efficiency now.

## Economic Highlights

As usually happens a year or so before a presidential election, talk is making the rounds concerning the possibility of a third-party entrant into the greatest race on earth. The idea was broached to Mr. Wallace when he was abroad, and he made a statement to the effect that he sought no office but would be glad to serve in any capacity that would advance the cause of peace. Prior to that, Mr. Wallace had suggested that Senator Pepper would be a good standard bearer for a party whose main plank would be better relations with Russia. The Senator declined the honor with alacrity.

The history of third-party movements in this country is certainly not encouraging to possible aspirants. The electoral system, plus the very fact that only the established parties have local organizations that get out the vote, works against them. Even Theodore Roosevelt, running as an ex-president with an enormous personal following, could not make the grade. The elder LaFollette was one of the driving personalities of the time, but the best he could do was carry Wisconsin. The last third-party candidacy, that of Representative Lempke, collapsed like a pricked balloon. And the perennial minor-party candidates—Socialist, Prohibition, etc.—rarely carry a single U. S. county. This is definitely a two-party nation.

The next election, it seems certain, will be a fairly exact reflection of the Roosevelt-Willkie race to the extent that there will be no important difference over what our foreign policy should be. The isolationists, in either party, are now so heavily outnumbered that they hardly count. The campaign, as a consequence, will almost entirely be conducted on domestic issues—unless, of course, some great and unexpected event occurs to entirely change the outlook.

It is taken for granted now that Mr. Truman will be the Democratic candidate. At the moment, the Republicans in the strongest positions are Taft, Vandenberg and Dewey, with Stassen and Warren as the principal lesser candidates.

The issues on which the campaign will be fought are in the making now. One is labor. It has been forecast that if Congress passes a "tough" labor bill, such as that approved by the House, President Truman may veto it.

Taxation is another lively issue. Mr. Truman has consistently said that he is opposed to any tax reduction now. The Republicans believe taxes should be lowered now, without

maintaining the present high rates and attempting to repay some of the national debt while times "are good." A president whose party has lost control of both branches of Congress would normally be regarded as a hopeless standard bearer. Usually,

loss of but one branch at mid-term has been sufficient to assure defeat for the incumbent. Yet the Republicans have a very healthy respect for Mr. Truman's ability and they have lost the over-confidence that followed the last national election, due

primarily to the fact that the ruling as a whole has become thoroughly disgusted with the utter lack of accomplishments of the present Republican-dominated Congress.

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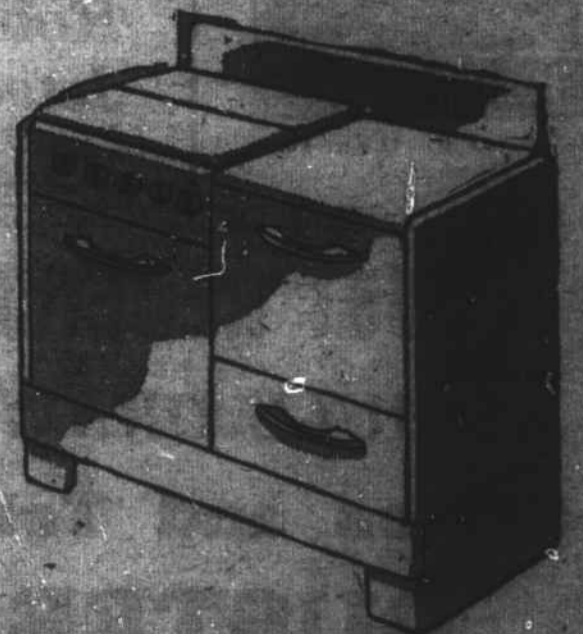
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