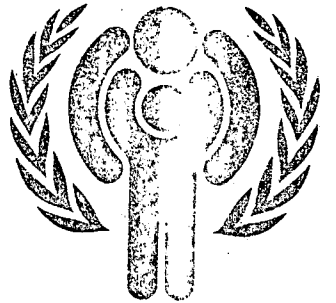


the nation's health

the official newspaper of the American Public Health Association

january 1979

APHA 107th
Annual Meeting
Child and Family Health
In America



International Year
of the Child 1979

add *Bob* *Glaser*

Pesticide Risk To Laborers Called Great

For the general public the increasing levels of pesticides, the new types of pesticides, and the lack of regulatory controls over these substances is alarming, agreed several experts at a recent Society for Occupational and Environmental Health Conference in Washington, DC.

Samuel Epstein, MD, the well-known environmentalist of the University of Illinois School of Public Health stated: "We are now at a worse stage in pesticide regulation than we have been in 10 years."

However, as Ephraim-Kahn, MD, MPH, Consultant to the California State Department of Health Services stated: "Far greater protection is afforded to the general public than to the occupationally exposed. The different degrees of protection involved indicate the existence of entirely different standards or levels of concern."

Much of the regulation of pesticides has focused on the residues that are left on food the general population eats and other public exposure. But the 1,275,000 farm workers in this country are exposed, almost daily, to all types of pesticides and, according to several conference speakers, regulatory agencies do little to control it, know very little about it, and in fact are doing little to find out.

"So far, EPA [the Environmental Protection Agency] has produced little or nothing in the way of occupational health standards and even less in terms of enforcement capability. At the state level also, very little protection is afforded," said Kahn.

See Risk... page 4



United Nations

1979 Is The Year of The Child

Seven to 14 percent of American children have no regular source of medical care, about 30 percent have never seen a dentist, and 13 percent of 17-year-olds are functionally illiterate.

A basic purpose of the "International Year of the Child-1979" will be to bring the status of children, including many of its unpleasant facts, to the public's attention.

Designated by the United Nations as a commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the year issues "a call to all nations of the world to give renewed focus to their own children's needs."

To encourage that re-evaluation in the US, President Carter has created a National Commission for the year. That group, headed by Mrs. Jean Young, wife of UN Ambassador Andrew Young, has begun its work as a catalyst and publicist inviting local action, and getting in touch with officials, organizations, and industries.

The commission hopes to promote discussion through an Issue Framework, to be dispersed across the country.

The document, which divides the issues into seven categories, spells out some of the hardest statistics about American childhood:

NUTURING

The commission notes that in 1977 in the US there were 3.6 million one-parent families. Almost 18 percent of children were born to women 15-19 and in 1974, 17.6 million children lived

in families with less than \$7,500 in income. The paper will be asking such questions as, "Should our society assure minimal economic support of the family? How can public and private employers accommodate the needs of those parents who must, or who choose to work outside the home?"

HEALTH

According to statistics gathered by the Commission, 90 percent of children who need mental health services are not receiving them.

See 1979... page 9

GAO Urges Microwave Regulation

The use of microwave radiation is increasing in this country and no one really knows what it may be doing to the populace, a recent report from the investigatory office of Congress reiterates.

There is no federal regulation of the amount of microwaves that people may be exposed to, and even the voluntary standard may be far too high, says the General Accounting Office document. The GAO recommends that federal agencies do further studies to determine an acceptable level of exposure and that they set an enforceable standard.

Almost all people in this country are exposed to microwaves by a growing number of devices such as microwave ovens, medical and dental equipment, alarm systems, and communications networks.

Damage to animal and human bodies has long been observed at the higher levels of radiation.

Federal agencies have set a voluntary standard of 10 mW/cm² but this is generally considered only advisory. There is great deal of disagreement as to whether this is a safe level. In fact, of 112 reports which the Food and Drug Administration used in setting its microwave oven emissions

See GAO... page 8

Moscow Radiation Episode Leads To Massive International Survey

Epidemiologists are called the detectives of the health sciences, but renowned researcher Abraham Lilienfeld, MD, and colleagues have just completed a massive, international study which arose from a real cloak-and-dagger situation.

In 1976 the United States State Department announced and protested the fact that the Russians had been irradiating the American embassy in Moscow--and consequently Americans--with microwaves for the last 23 years, and in the prior six months had increased the dosage.

The State Department is presumed to have known about

See Protest... page 4



THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN MOSCOW...was irradiated through the top several floors for 23 years.

the nation's health
1015 Eighteenth Street, N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20036

Second-class
postage paid at
Washington, D.C.
and at additional
mailing offices

305 755

BERG SONIA
3904 BEL AIRE RD APT 6
SILVER SPRING MD 20906

4

Protest of Radiation by Russians Brings about International Search

... from page 1

the radiation for the entire period.

Although there is no official explanation of why the Russians did it, speculation is that the waves, beamed through the windows of the top several floors, might have activated electronic "bugs" in the building or jammed the American communication system.

After the announcement, the State Department put up aluminum shields in Moscow and signed a \$895,000 contract with Lilienfeld, a Johns Hopkins University professor of epidemiology, to find out whether there had been adverse effects on the employees.

It took two years and an entire system of 150 workers tracing, calling, abstracting.

The Moscow employees were compared with other foreign service workers who had been in Eastern European embassies (Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, Belgrade, etc.) because the food, climate, diseases, and even political atmosphere is more like Moscow.

Finding 13,000 Foreign Service Employees

In all, counting employees and dependents, the tracers had to attempt to find about 13,000 people, all connected with the "notoriously mobile" foreign service.

There was no comprehensive list of people who had been at the embassies so workers began with various agency documents such as, "Who's Who in Moscow." Several researchers spent months in the State Department personnel office going through the service cards of 150,000 retired employees, to find those with tours in the selected embassies.



Dr. Lilienfeld of Johns Hopkins University.

In one aspect, the researchers were lucky. As they said, "Foreign Service employees and their dependents are no strangers to physicians' examining rooms." The State Department is rigorous in requiring regular examinations, and all the records are kept in Washington.

With names of the population coming available, about 30 trained persons were put to work in State Department offices abstracting those medical records.

Each abstract was re-checked for accuracy.

Soon the quarters became too small and the researchers set up offices several miles away. For security purposes all records had to be taken back to the State Department at night. Even during the day each file had to be logged in as to its exact location.

Researchers needed still more detail about employees' health and where they had worked or lived in the embassy, so a tracing questionnaire was sent to the last known address.

If a usable address was found, a health questionnaire was mailed. When the response rate on these was poor, workers took to the phones, calling over the United States, and using State Department communications to call many parts of the world.

As deadlines approached, the material totaled 19 file cabinets, 200,000 punch cards, and 55 computer tapes.

The simple conclusion of this effort was that up to this point--two years after the high intensity exposure--the employees seem to have suffered no ill effects. Mortality has been less than in the general population and about the same as in the comparison group.

But has there been time for effects to show up? The Johns Hopkins report stressed that the State Department should not miss this opportunity to monitor the death rates of all the employees and to follow-up every three or four years on the health of those exposed to high intensity.

Such a follow-up would not be simple. Under the Privacy Act, it was agreed that the information was to be gathered only for this study. Lilienfeld now has to get permission from the Johns Hopkins Committee on Human Subjects not to destroy the material.

However, as Lilienfeld says, a 20-year follow-up on these unwilling human subjects would tell us much about the effects of microwave radiation, whether in the end, the findings are positive or negative.

Administrator for Toxic
Agency admitted that
program of regulation
has been far from
and stated, "We suspect
any more poisonings go
especially by farmers
workers, who for a
of social and economic
are among the least likely
hospital or emergency
treatment." Jellinek pointed
EPA programs to find
ore about acute pesticide
ing and pesticide related

in
are
on

Evaluation is being offered
professionals to conduct
ompleting the three-summer
ificate in Evaluation by the
sity.

of Science degree or its
admission to the PhD in
courses into that Program.
possessing doctoral degrees
in health care evaluation.
be earned each year.

1979
Differential Statistics
Practice

Analysis
Health Status

Equal Opportunity
Employer.

P. 8

Two-thirds of Americans admitted that changes in their diet could help them be healthier, and most people were well informed about the kinds of foods they should eat more or less of.

GAO Report Calls for Microwave Regulation

... from page 1

standards, over half the studies, "state that animals and humans exposed to microwave radiation levels of 10 mW/cm² or less experience biological effects, some undesirable," says GAO.

Exposure to levels at less than the US voluntary standard was reported to have caused structural changes to the nerve cells and tissues, decreases in the electrical activity of the brain, changes in the function of the thyroid gland, genetic and fetal damage, and effects on the circulatory system and bone marrow.

Some reports, particularly those from Eastern European nations and Russia, note a microwave effect at less than one percent of the US standard.

While many of the findings of the Eastern European studies are not fully accepted by US researchers, partly because of lack of availability of data, it is accepted that those countries have done more work on the effects of microwaves at these lower levels.

The Russian standard for occupational exposure to microwaves is .01 mW/cm².

b. Publications relevant to particular achievements on which nomi

c. Other honors and awards:

**RETURN TO: APHA AWARDS COMMITTEE, AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION, 11
Eighteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Nominations re
guaranteed consideration for the 1979 Awards.**