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# News Letter

Vol. 5, No. 6 - March 4, 1952

## CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE HEARS MORE EVIDENCE IN FAVOR OF FLUORIDATION

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Owing to mechanical difficulties, the printing and mailing of the March 1 issue of the A.D.A. News Letter was delayed. This delay has made it possible to include with the current News Letter the following up-to-the-minute report of the March 4 hearing on fluoridation conducted by the House Select Committee Investigating Use of Chemicals in Foods.

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WASHINGTON, D.C., MARCH 4. -- (Special) Further support of water supply fluoridation was presented to a Congressional investigating committee today (March 4) by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers and the American Medical Association. The former's position was stated personally by Dr. John D. Porterfield, Ohio State health officer.

The American Medical Association reaffirmed its indorsement of fluoridation in a statement prepared by Dr. George F. Lull, secretary-manager, and filed in the record of the House Select Committee to Investigate Use of Chemicals in Foods.

Dr. Porterfield was challenged on many of his statements by Rep. Miller (R., Neb.), the committee's most outspoken opponent of this form of caries-prevention. However, Dr. Porterfield made a highly effective presentation, testifying with restraint but conviction in rebutting such remarks by Rep. Miller as the following:

"You jump in and indorse mass medication for everybody."...."You can prove anything you want to with statistics."...."One expert told us it is possible to have perfect teeth without drinking fluoridated water. So why do it?"

Tactfully and tellingly, Dr. Porterfield explained that his Association's indorsement of fluoridation came only after it had been scientifically demonstrated that the method was both effective and -- when properly controlled -- nontoxic; and that Ohio studies have failed to uncover any deleterious effects.

"We have observed from time to time the comparison of death rates from all causes and from selected causes between those areas with up to three parts per million of fluorides in the drinking water, Ohio's strongest concentration, and those areas with none and have found no significant differences," Dr. Porterfield declared.

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The fact that mild mottling occurs in some individuals, frequently so mild it can be detected only on skilled clinical examination, should constitute no valid objection to fluoridation, the witness declared.

"If I had to choose between the ten per cent of the community's children having mild mottling and 88 per cent of them having extensive caries, I would unhesitatingly choose the mottling. And I have no doubt that I speak for all the state health officers in making that choice. For that matter, as a father of two appearance-conscious teenagers, I have no hesitation in making the same choice. Nor, they assure me, would they."

The Ohio health officer, mentioning no names, implied that the investigating group has attached too little significance to testimony in support of fluoridation which has been presented by dental and medical experts during the past few weeks, and too much significance to that given by certain biochemists and a few dentists and physicians who have expressed fears that ingestion of fluorides -- even at one part per million level -- may aggravate renal conditions and even be conducive to cancer.

In the latter connection, Dr. Porterfield informed Rep. Miller that he sees no justification for giving high priority to costly research in this field -- during which period water fluoridation would be suspended -- when experience and findings over the past several years have focused no suspicion on the procedure.

Dr. Lull's statement reviewed the American Medical Association's stand on fluoridation, citing favorable action taken last November by the Councils on Pharmacy and Chemistry, and Foods and Nutrition, followed by the further step one month later when the House of Delegates indorsed the principle of fluoridation. Summing up, the Lull statement said:

"Fluoridation of public water supplies in a concentration not exceeding one part per million is nontoxic and its principle is indorsed."

The investigating committee's final session on this subject is scheduled for Thursday, March 6. The American Public Health Association and the Ad Hoc Committee on Fluoridation of the National Research Council have been invited to send representatives to testify.

The testimony of Dr. Porterfield and the statement from Dr. Lull provided additional evidence for the committee in support of the position of the American Dental Association. Last Thursday, Dr. J. Roy Doty, secretary of the Council on Dental Therapeutics, described (see A.D.A. News Letter, March 1, 1952) in detail the basis of A.D.A. recommendations that fluoridation of water supplies be adopted throughout the nation. In his appearance before the committee, Dr. Doty was accompanied by Mr. Bernard J. Conway, assistant secretary of the Council on Legislation, and Miss Claire Danziger, assistant director of the Bureau of Public Information.