

# Poison is Treatment: The Campaign to Fluoridate America

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*The wide scale US acceptance of fluoride-related compounds in drinking water and a wide variety of consumer products over the past half century is a textbook case of social engineering orchestrated by Sigmund Freud's nephew and the "father of public relations" Edward L. Bernays. The episode is instructive, for it suggests the tremendous capacity of powerful interests to reshape the social environment, thereby prompting individuals to unwarily think and act in ways that are often harmful to themselves and their loved ones. The example is especially pertinent today as Western governments withhold data and utilize propaganda techniques to suppress knowledge of new technologies and life-threatening disasters such as the still-unfolding nuclear breakdown in Fukushima.*

Today the battle over water fluoridation remains obscured in caricature and falsification often perpetuated by the mainstream press itself. The potential for popular myth to eclipse historical fact is greatly accelerated when the political and informational pillars of civilization actively support such distortions. For example, a recent *New York Times* editorial points to "that cold war paranoia about fluoridation in drinking water [*sic*]." Citing the Center for Disease Control's claim that fluoridation is one of the top accomplishments in public health over the past century, the *Times* evokes fluoride's difficult struggle with purportedly uninformed segments of the public. "Critics no longer contend that fluoridation is a Communist plot. Instead, they express concerns about the costs involved, improper government control over a personal decision, and potential health dangers." [1]

The refrain is familiar throughout a corporate-controlled media that unquestioningly amplifies the pronouncements of government agencies concerning fluoride's alleged safety and value for dental health. Having been seemingly vetted and upheld by the newspaper of record and its counterparts, such sweeping declarations are seldom interrogated further by readers, much less the broader public.

In fact, sodium fluoride is a dangerous poison and has been a primary active ingredient in a wide variety of insecticides and fungicides.[2] The substance bioaccumulates in mammals, has been linked to dulled intellect in children [3] and is a cause of increased bone fractures and osteosarcoma. Further, recent studies indicate that fluoride's role in preventing cavities through ingestion [4] or even topically [5] is close to non-existent.

## Metal Industry's Pollution Liability

Historical evidence indicates how the many concerns over water fluoridation were wholly warranted. Indeed, fluoridating the nation's water supply one locality at a time appears to have been a carefully coordinated plan that sought to shield major aluminum and steel producers from the countless liabilities caused by the substantial fluorine pollution their

plants generated. This pollution increased alongside stepped-up military aircraft and armaments manufacture during World War Two. The steel factories in California and Utah, and aluminum producing plants in Washington and Oregon, generated fluorine-saturated air that inevitably poisoned livestock, crops, and farming families.

In the postwar era \$30 million in damage suits were filed in Provo, Utah alone, with metal manufacturers paying \$4.5 million to settle out of court. Thus American industrial interests were the chief forces behind water fluoridation, not because of greed or altruism, but rather through fear of continued and potentially increased pollution liability as the Second World War drew to a close and the Cold War began. This was the conclusion of Dr. F. B. Exner, a steadfast public health advocate and opponent of water fluoridation, who observed that at the turn of the century

“the very existence of the smelter industry, both in Germany and Great Britain, was threatened by successful suits for fluorine damage and by burdensome laws and regulations. Today that same threat hangs over the bulk of American big-industry; and fluoridation offers both camouflage and scapegoat. Hence the relentless and uncompromising drive for universal fluoridation.”[6]

In a discerning 1955 essay Exner points to the unusual absence of research on fluorine in US medical literature beginning in the late 1930s, whereas “the foreign medical literature has contained hundreds of articles on a wide variety of troubles that can be caused by fluorine. The same was true of the veterinary literature in this country. “

Exner further points to the apparent strategy behind fluoridation—one that may be occurring along similar lines in the Japanese government’s efforts to distribute and incinerate radioactive waste from the March 2011 nuclear disaster throughout the archipelago.[7] “There has been constant danger,” Dr. Exner observed, “that someone would analyze tissues in both high and low fluoride areas and find that fluorine poisoning is common [in those residing in high areas]. But if every community can be fluoridated there will be no fluorine-free areas for comparison.”[8]

#### The PR Campaign to Sell Fluoridation

In the 1930s Edward Bernays was public relations adviser to the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa). Alcoa’s principal attorney, Oscar Ewing, went on to serve in the Truman administration from 1947 to 1952 as head of the Federal Security Agency, of which the Public Health Service was a part. In that capacity Ewing authorized water fluoridation for the entire country in 1950 and enlisted Bernays’ services to promote water fluoridation to the public.[9]

Still, the campaign to fluoridate the nation’s water supplies took place mainly in individual cities and townships, necessitating a sophisticated propaganda campaign to persuade local officials to proactively support fluoridation. Bernays recognized New York City as the foremost battleground and a particularly valuable tactical prize given the prevalence of liberal media outlets. Once the New York press was abuzz about the city’s prospective fluoridation other municipalities would be more easily persuaded to form ranks.[10]

Bernays recalled the fluoridation campaign in which he was involved as merely another assignment. “The PR wizard specialized in promoting new ideas and products to the public by stressing a claimed health benefit,” explains journalist Christopher Bryson, who

interviewed Bernays on the fluoride campaign in 1993.

“‘You can get practically any ideas accepted,’ Bernays told me, chuckling. ‘If doctors are in favor, the public is willing to accept it, because a doctor is an authority to most people, regardless of how much he knows, or doesn’t know ... By the law of averages, you can usually find an individual in any field who will be willing to accept new ideas, and the new ideas then infiltrate the others who haven’t accepted it.’”[11]

Yet in the early 1950s, just as Bernays’ was brought on board, public sentiment toward fluoridation was clearly on the side of the anti-fluoridationist camp that included leading doctors and researchers. Arrayed against those opposing fluoridation were the New York City Health Department Commissioner, New York State’s Health Commissioner, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Public Health Service. “All of this intrigues me to no end,” Bernays elatedly remarked to the City Health Commissioner, “because it presents challenging situations deeply related to the public’s interest which may be solved by the engineering of consent.”

One such approach to prompting public opinion involved correspondence from the city’s Health Department to the presidents of the NBC and CBS television networks, informing them “that debating fluoridation is like presenting two sides for anti-Catholicism or anti-Semitism and therefore not in the public interest.” Another method involved laying the groundwork for making fluoridation a household term with a scientific patina. He advised his clients to send letters to the editors of leading publications discussing what the specific aspects of fluoridation required. “We would put out the definition first to the editors of important newspapers,” Bernays recalled. “Then we would send a letter to publishers of dictionaries and encyclopedias. After six or eight months we would find the word *fluoridation* was published and defined in dictionaries and encyclopedias.”[12]

In 1957 the Committee to Protect Our Children’s Teeth suddenly emerged to tout fluoridation with several celebrity figures on its roster, including Dr. Benjamin Spock, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jackie Robinson, and A. Phillip Randolph. Funded by grants from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (\$23,350) and the Rockefeller Foundation (\$2,500), the Committee’s makeup also included major figures from atomic weapons research and manufacturing concerns.

A sleek booklet, *Our Children’s Teeth*, was ostensibly produced by the Committee and circulated throughout the US. Yet it was first utilized by attorneys defending the Reynolds Aluminum Company in federal appeals court in Oregon against charges for fluoride injury brought by a farming family. The court was reminded by Reynolds’ lawyers how *Our Children’s Teeth* was packed with testimonies of “one medical and scientific expert after another, all to the effect that fluorides in low concentration (such as are present around aluminum and other industrial plants) present no harm to man.”[13]

The *American Journal of Public Health* noted how the pamphlet contained no new information on water fluoridation, but was rather “designed for presentation to the New York City Board of Estimate as a distillate of expert opinion” from scientists and officials involved in promoting fluoride. “The statements are concise but extremely quotable,” the review read. “This volume is, therefore, especially commended to those interested in or engaged in the promotion of water fluoridation in their own communities.”[14]

*Our Children's Teeth* referenced 300 members comprising the Committee to Protect Our Children's Teeth. This list appeared alongside two additional lists of 229 "leading American Authorities on Nutrition" and 121 of "The Nation's Foremost Chemists." In light of the flurry of names and titles "[t]he real question," Dr. Exner remarked, "is why anyone with any self respect would permit his name on either list. The names are appended to two statements," Exner continued, "neither of which could be honestly signed by any intelligent layman, much less by any scientist who values his scientific reputation."

Curious of how the lists were compiled Exner personally wrote each of the chemists listed in the publication to inquire "whether he had signed or whether he believed the statement true. Some denied signing. Some had signed without reading. Some had signed knowing the statement to be false but because they thought fluoridation so desirable that any means were justified." [15]

Exner further found that of the 360 "chemists" and "authorities on nutrition" listed in the brochure, 201 worked for 87 institutions including universities that received over \$151 million in grants. In the late 1950s a majority of such grants originated from the foremost proponent of water fluoridation—the Public Health Service. Another major recipient of PHS funding was the American Dental Association (ADA). Exner's research and data proved to be especially valuable in lawsuits brought against the industry and fluoridation proponents. In 1978, shortly after his death, all of his files were lost in an unusual fire. [16]

As the pro-fluoridation propaganda campaign grew to a crescendo in the late 1950s a collaborative surveillance campaign targeting anti-fluoridationists was undertaken by the PHS, the ADA, and the American Water Works Association. The National Fluoridation Information Service of the Division of Dental Health of the US Public Health Service, an intelligence-gathering setup operating out of the PHS-controlled National Institutes of Health, was formally established to monitor and create databases on fluoridation critics in the medical professions. Fluoride heretics were subject to flailing in the press or outright expulsion from their professional organizations. [17]

Fluoridation was finally launched in New York City in 1965 apart from popular referendum and in the face of continued opposition by handing the choice to the municipality's five-member Board of Estimate. Behind the final effort to fluoridate were Mary and Albert Lasker. The former was involved in the Committee to Protect Our Children's Teeth and the latter an advertising executive and associate of Bernays who helped American Tobacco Company make Lucky Strikes America's best-selling cigarettes. The Laskers held an exclusive cocktail party to celebrate the victory, with guests including New York Mayor Robert Wagner and members of the Board of Estimate and City Council.

The anti-fluoride Association for the Protection of Our Water Supply condemned the undemocratic process as "government by cocktails." "Here is a private one-sided hearing on the most controversial subject," the organization's press release read, "in a meeting by officials in an ex cathedra session. Where does it leave the masses of citizens opposed to fluoridation?" [18]

When the Committee to Protect Our Children's Teeth was formed in 1957 only 5% of US water supplies were fluoridated. Following the massive public relations campaign that paved the way for fluoridating New York City's water over 60% of water across the US was eventually fluoridated. At present over two-thirds of the US population drinks fluoridated water [19] with close to the entire population consuming fluoride through foods and

beverages processed using such water. [20]

### Maintaining the Fluoride Status Quo

When new scientific studies emerged suggesting fluoride's dangers to human health the PHS hastily appointed a commission of veteran pro-fluoride figures that proceed to shelve any new conclusions and reinforce the status quo. In 1983 when an unusual PHS-assembled panel consisting of less induced scientists discovered that the government's own research upholding fluoride's safety was almost non-existent, a recommendation of caution was handed down emphasizing particular attention to children's exposure.

Surgeon General C. Everett Koop's office issued its official report a month later omitting the committee's most significant opinions and recommendations. The panel members "expressed surprise at their report's conclusions: They never received copies of the final—altered—version." Countering the committee's advice that drinking water should contain no more than 1.4-2.4 parts per million (ppm) for children under 10, the government inserted a statement asserting: "There exists no directly applicable scientific documentation of adverse medical effects of fluoride below 8 ppm." Based on Koop's final doctored report the Environmental Protection Agency raised the amount of allowable fluoride in drinking water from 2 to 4 ppm for children and adults.[21]

Today sodium fluoride per se is used in less than 10% of fluoridated water systems. In its place are the fluoride variants sodium silica fluoride or fluorisilic acid, more commonly known as silicofluorides (SIFs). In 2001 researchers found that SIFs may cause a higher absorption of lead in children and decrease cholinesterase, an enzyme necessary for the regulation of neurotransmitters. Neither the Environmental Protection Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, or any other regulatory agency to date has researched the long term internal effects of consuming fluorisilic acid, a by product of the phosphate fertilizer industry that is now the predominant stand-in for sodium fluoride given its relative low-cost.[22]

What is known, however, is that undiluted fluorisilic acid is an extremely dangerous and corrosive substance. In 1994, for instance, 4,500 gallons of the element were released in Volusia County Florida when a tanker truck carrying the load lost a set of wheels on Interstate 4. The spill sent 47 people to hospital, prompted the evacuation of 2,300 more, and closed the highway for two days. Onlookers experienced "breathing trouble or a burning sensation on their skin." Motorists that drove through the spill were advised that their cars must be professionally decontaminated because "the chemical will dissolve in water, evaporate and cause respiratory problems to anyone nearby." [23]

### Conclusion

In a world made increasingly uncertain by government and corporate engineers of reality and consent, the bureaucratic and scientific class' responsiveness to the public welfare is illusory. The case of water fluoridation provides a compelling example of a plan to deceive and propagandize the masses. A full decade before President Eisenhower's warning of "a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions," the fluoridation of America's water supplies was already in full play with the hidden foreknowledge among those in high places that such a campaign would almost certainly lead to the endangerment of public health for many generations to come.

Water fluoridation is banned in many Scandinavian and European nations.[24] Yet it persists in the US, Canada, Australia, and numerous other countries throughout the world. The practice is sustained to a significant degree by the widely held myth Bernays designed and



brought forth, by affirmative medical and regulatory authorities, and perhaps above all by a routinely unskeptical and compliant press. Not unlike the contradictory premises upon which psycho-social existence was predicated in Orwell's 1984—ignorance is strength, war is peace, freedom is slavery—in the case of the West's 60-plus year experiment with fluoridation, poison is treatment.

## Notes

[1] *New York Times*, "Fluoridation Debate Redux," 18 March, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/opinion/sunday/fluoridation-debate-redux.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/opinion/sunday/fluoridation-debate-redux.html?_r=1). See also Jane E. Brody, "Dental Exam Went Well? Thank Fluoride," *New York Times*, January 23, 2012, <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/23/dental-exam-went-well-thank-fluoride/>

[2] Scorecard: The Pollution Information Website, Chemical Profiles: Sodium Fluoride, n.d., GoodGuide, [http://scorecard.goodguide.com/chemical-profiles/pesticides.tcl?edf\\_substance\\_id=7681-49-4](http://scorecard.goodguide.com/chemical-profiles/pesticides.tcl?edf_substance_id=7681-49-4)

[3] Ethan A. Huff, "Study: Fluoridated Water Causes Brain Damage in Children," NaturalNews.com, December 23, 2010, [http://www.naturalnews.com/030819\\_fluoride\\_brain\\_damage.html](http://www.naturalnews.com/030819_fluoride_brain_damage.html)

[4] Fluoride Action Network, "Fluoride & Tooth Decay: Topical Vs. Systemic Effects," n.d., <http://www.fluoridealert.org/health/teeth/caries/topical-systemic.html>

[5] Ethan A. Huff, "Does Topical Fluoride Really Protect Tooth Enamel? Study Suggests NO," NaturalNews.com, March 6, 2011, [http://www.naturalnews.com/031602\\_fluoride\\_tooth\\_enamel.html](http://www.naturalnews.com/031602_fluoride_tooth_enamel.html)

[6] F. B. Exner, "Economic Motives Behind Water Fluoridation—Fluoride is a Protected Pollutant," in F. B. Exner, G. L. Waldbott and James Rorty, *The American Fluoridation Experiment* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1955), pp. 119-121. Available at <http://www.fluoridation.com/exner.htm>

[7] Asia-Pacific Journal Feature, "Eco-Model City Kitakyushu and Japan's Disposal of Radioactive Tsunami Debris," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol 10, Issue 24, No 6, June 11, 2012. Available at [http://www.japanfocus.org/-Asia\\_Pacific\\_Journal-Feature/3770](http://www.japanfocus.org/-Asia_Pacific_Journal-Feature/3770); Michael McAteer, "Japan's Latest Nuclear Crisis: Getting Rid of Radioactive Debris," *The Atlantic*, June 4, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/06/japans-latest-nuclear-crisis-getting-rid-of-the-radioactive-debris/257963/>

[8] Exner, "Economic Motives Behind Water Fluoridation."

[9] J. Y. Smith, "Oscar Ewing Dies; Leading Architect of 'Fair Deal' Program for Truman," *Washington Post*, January 9, 1980, C6; Christopher Bryson, *The Fluoride Deception* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004). Bryson's description of his encounters with Bernays suggests how the spin doctor recognized the impropriety of the former Alcoa attorney's influential endorsement of water fluoridation.

[10] Bryson, *The Fluoride Deception*, 159-160.

[11] Bryson, *The Fluoride Deception*, 159.

[12] Bryson, *The Fluoride Deception*, 161.

[13] Bryson, *The Fluoride Deception*, 161-162, 324f.

- [14] Review of *Our Children's Teeth—A Digest of Expert Opinion Based on Studies of the Use of Fluorides in Public Water Supplies*, by Herman E. Hilleboe, et al., *American Journal of Public Health* 48 (1958): 821.
- [15] Exner, "Economic Motives Behind Water Fluoridation."
- [16] Joel Griffiths, "Fluoride: Commie Plot or Capitalist Ploy," *Covert Action Quarterly* 42 (1992), <http://sonic.net/kryptox/history/covert.htm>
- [17] Bryson, *The Fluoride Deception*, 165.
- [18] Bryson, *The Fluoride Deception*, 164.
- [19] Center for Disease Control 2010 Water Fluoridation Statistics, n.d., <http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/statistics/2010stats.htm>
- [20] Brody, "Dental Exam Went Well? Thank Fluoride."
- [21] Griffiths, "Fluoride: Commie Plot or Capitalist Ploy."
- [22] Washington's Blog, "Untested Type of Fluoride Used in the Overwhelming Majority of U.S. Water Supplies," Centre for Research on Globalization, January 10, 2011, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=22707>
- [23] *St. Petersburg Times*, "Acid Spill Closes I-4," September 7, 1994, 1B.
- [24] "Fluoridation Status of Some Countries," Fluoridation.com, n.d., <http://www.fluoridation.com/c-country.htm>
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