

### Nuclear Fallout In Food Is Daily Fear to Eskimos

By THOMAS M. BROWN  
United Press International  
ANCHORAGE, Alaska (UPI) — Nuclear fallout is becoming a daily menace for a small group of Americans who live on the country's northern frontier.

They are Eskimos who depend for food on the herds of caribou and reindeer that roam the Alaskan tundra where fallout from Russian Arctic blasts is threatening man and animals alike with an overdose of radiation.

Despite the ban on further nuclear tests, the Eskimos' crisis remains because their food continues to be tainted by residue left in the air by previous atmospheric tests. The caribou and reindeer are becoming increasingly radioactive and increasingly dangerous to eat.

Dr. H. M. Parker, manager of the Atomic Energy commission's Hanford Laboratories in Washington state, testified before the joint - congressional that if he lived on the tundra, he "would begin to look around to see how reasonable it would be to substitute other kinds of food" for those tainted animals.

#### Alaskans Worry

He and Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, Atomic Energy commission chairman, say the situation is not serious enough to require immediate countermeasures. But the Alaskans are worried. And Parker admits that "this is not to say that in the long term it would not be dangerous."

The problem was explained this way by Parker:

Lichens, a form of moss, which grows on the tundra, act as a sort of land-grown sponge, soaking up unusually high amounts of Cesium 137, a radioactive by-product of nuclear blasts. Caribou and reindeer eat the lichens, and in turn become tainted with radioactivity.

Cesium 137 is in some ways similar to phosphorus, and when it enters the body, it lodges in the muscles. Scientists believe that in large doses it may present a genetic hazard, possibly causing sterility or mutations in future generations.

But the scientists aren't sure just how much it will take to be dangerous. An official committee of scientists, the International Committee on Radiation Protection, thinks 300 nanocuries of Cesium should be the average permissible for groups and 1,000 nanocuries should be the limit for an individual.

#### Radiation in Eskimos

Many Eskimos have already more radiation than that in their bodies.

Parker said in testimony that 700 Eskimos in seven villages were examined by Hanford scientists, who used a portable radiation counter to determine how much radiation they had absorbed.

In the little village of Anaktuvik Pass, population about 70, the average adult had absorbed 450 nanocuries of Cesium 137. One man had 700 nanocuries. And Parker told the subcommittee he thought it "very likely" that radiation in some Eskimos would rise to 1,000 to 1,200 nanocuries this year.

He said, though, that he thought there was no immediate danger since some workers in atomic plants are permitted to absorb up to 30,000 nanocuries of Cesium 137 — 30 times the acceptable maximum. A nanocurie is one-billionth of a curie, and a curie is equal to the radiation from one gram of radium. Often, Eskimos who eat caribou meat have 100 times as much Cesium 137 in their bodies as other Alaskans or persons who live in other states.

#### Eskimos Petition

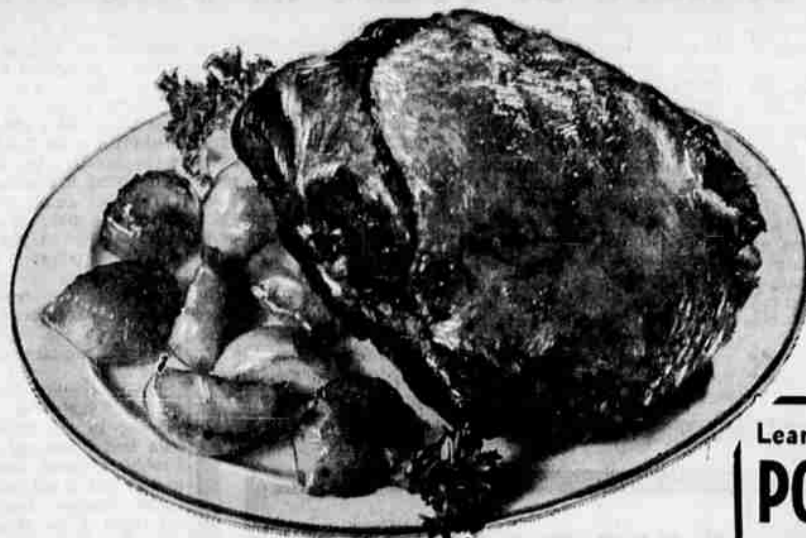
The Eskimos are worried about it. Some have petitioned the federal government to move them to a place where they can depend on something besides radioactive animals for food.

Gov. William Egan is worried too. Originally, he asked the AEC and the federal government to conduct further studies and to look into the possibilities of providing Eskimos with a substitute food. Seaborg assured Egan such a drastic step was not yet necessary, but the governor still is concerned, search facilities in Alaska to keep tabs on the problem.

Egan said the state lacks the cash and the personnel to do the job and said that as things stand now, the federal government will have to set up the research facilities if it's going to be done at all.

Scientists believe all nuclear tests in the atmosphere — but particularly Russian Arctic blasts — are responsible for the Eskimos' overdose of radiation.

If a partial nuclear test ban treaty were observed by all signers, it would assure that no more radioactive junk is dumped into the atmosphere. But much of the Eskimos' problem still would remain. Cesium 137, unlike some other nuclear by-products, is long-lived. And it will be sitting down from the upper atmosphere, contaminating lichen, caribou and Eskimo alike for many years to come.



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