



*Rochester Committee
for Scientific Information
Rochester, NY*

*RCSI Bulletin 14
Statement to be Presented by Thomas A. Flink, Chairman*

*By: Thomas A. Fink
July 1966*

14(W)

THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE FOR SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION

Post Office Box 5236
River Campus Station
Rochester, New York 14627

STATEMENT TO BE PRESENTED BY THOMAS A. FINK,
CHAIRMAN OF THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE FOR SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION

The Rochester Committee for Scientific Information is composed of scientists and interested laymen dedicated to the principle that the public must know the facts surrounding the technological problems facing our community. In our highly complex society the danger to our democracy is well stated by Ambassador Arthur Goldberg:

"The real enemy of a free society is not an opposition to essential reform but rather a general inertia and general unawareness or lack of concern, a general disengagement of the individual from social responsibility."

Before there can be concern there must be understanding. The scientists who started our Committee were convinced that scientists and other experts must not attempt however to substitute their political opinions for the opinions of the public. Our effort over the last five years has been to give the public objective scientific information on technological subjects and let the public decide what must be done.

We have found tremendous interest among members of the public in obtaining information on the subject of water pollution. The public is concerned with the consequences of pollution to our waters. Unfortunately, we have not observed a similar concern by many of the public officials charged with the solution of these problems. For example, in the last two years we have found local municipal officials unwilling to do anything in this area except under order of local and state health officers. Usually these orders never come. We have recently inspected Oatka Creek which flows to the Genesee River and found it heavily contaminated below the village of Scottsville. When asked why no chlorine was added to the sewage the Mayor of Scottsville replied that he has never been so instructed by the County Health Director.

Another serious problem that has been encountered is the difficulty in obtaining information from local public health officials. On June 22, 1966 our local County Health Director issued a statement that the May and June results of coliform counts taken by the U.S. Department of Interior group at the Port of Rochester were very similar to Health Department results and that these samples substantially agreed with samples taken by the Monroe County Health Department. We requested copies of both the Federal and local County Health test results. Without any difficulty we obtained the detailed results of the Federal testing for the months of May and June. On June 28, 1966 we received a letter from the local Health Director asking us to state specifically what we intended to do with the test results, although our reports had been sent to the Health Director for almost two years showing our interest in coliform tests taken both by the Committee and by governmental bodies. However, we did reply in detail stating why we wished these reports. On July 14 we received another letter from the local Health Director. At this time we were told that there were no tests made by the local Health Office in May of 1966. We were given several averages of testing starting with June 14th. No information was supplied as to the results of individual tests or at what depths and under what circumstances the tests were taken. On July 20, 1966 we again requested from our local Health Director a detailed statement of these tests because we feel that these test results should not be kept secret but should be made available to the general public. We also understand that other citizens groups including the Monroe County Conservation Council and also our local newspapers have also been denied this information. As can be seen from our reports in evaluating these test results, we have used the standard set up by the laws of New York State and by publications issued by the New York State Department of Health and

other recognized health experts. No misstatement of fact has ever been shown to have been made by the Committee yet the Health Commissioner's letter contains inferences that this information is being kept secret to protect the public.

We cannot expect the public to authorize large expenditures for water pollution control while being denied relevant information and seeing municipal officials ignore existing state laws. We ask that in this area the Federal Government continue to do everything it can to obtain information concerning the pollution of our waters and to continue to distribute this information to the public.

July 1966