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President W. Allen Wallis announced on May 12 that almost all buildings on the River Campus, in the Medical Center, and at the Eastman School of Music will be designated as shelter areas under the Federal Fallout Shelter Program. According to Civil Defense authorities, this action will provide shelter for about 17,000 people and will bring to about 500 the total number of buildings available for public shelter in Monroe County.

Speaking for the Rochester Committee for Radiation Information, we remind the community that Rochester is an attractive target for enemy attack in a nuclear war. If the city suffers a direct hit, or even a near miss, the chance for survival of people in shelters is very slim. Fallout from bombardment of distant targets is the principal hazard only if the city is spared. The chance of survival then depends on the intensity of fallout, the protection factor of the shelter, the length of time spent under cover, the speed with which hot areas can be evacuated when shelters are abandoned, and the availability of food and water in the subsequent period.

In July 1962, our Committee published a report on fallout shelters in Monroe County, emphasizing the inadequacy of Civil Defense planning. According to estimates given by New York State civil defense officials, a typical initial radiation level from distant explosions was then 3000 roentgens per hour, with a specified rate of decay. Civil Defense policy called for a minimum protection factor of 100 and an undercover period of two weeks. We pointed out that under these circumstances a person attempting to live in the hot area without further protection would accumulate a lethal radiation dose in less than six weeks. We also warned that estimates of typical fallout radiation levels would have to change as nuclear weapons increased in size, number, and efficiency.

Stockpiles of weapons have indeed continued to grow. President Johnson announced on January 21 that "this country and the Soviet Union already have produced enough explosive force to equal 10 tons of TNT for every man, woman, and child on the face of the earth."

We are not opposed to building shelters which protect people from danger. A well-planned program of civil defense may control the difference between life and death for millions of people who happen to be outside the direct line of fire in a nuclear war. But the program fails as a deterrent, and perhaps also as a means of survival if it is obsolete and unrealistic. We hope that the University has agreed to cooperate with the current plan only after careful assessment of protection factors for the buildings involved. Our committee intends to continue its interest in the question, and to report its findings to the community.

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