



Graduate School of Management

Brigham Young University

February 14, 1979

RECEIVED

FEB 15 1979

Governor Scott M. Matheson
Utah State Capitol
Salt Lake City, UT

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
STATE OF UTAH

RE: RADIOACTIVE FALLOUT AND SHEEP DEATH IN IRON COUNTY, 1953.

Dear Governor Matheson:

The release of the information on the above subject yesterday brought a flood of old frustrations back to me. I was the Iron County Agriculture Agent from 1950 to 1954, and participated in collecting of data incident to the loss of sheep on the West deseret in the spring of 1953. Your aide who made the announcement indicated the "AEC ignored data on sheep deaths." What I experienced was that the AEC carried out a policy to not allow the date to be revealed.

The head of the biological medicine division of AEC at that time, a former Utahn, the name as I recall was Dr. Pearson, told me, at the time the first team of investigators arrived from Los Alamos, that the AEC could under no circumstance allow the precedent to be established in court that the AEC was liable for radiation damages, either to animals or humans. This was revealed to me by Dr. Pearson in an "off the record," informal discussion in my office. As I recall he was torn between his loyalty to his native state and the requirements of his job which obligated him to carry out the official policy. He indicated that one strategy would be to try to placate the livestockmen who had lost sheep by offering to fund a deseret range nutrition research project through Utah State Experiment Station. This the AEC later did. He made it clear that we could not possibly succeed in getting AEC to pay directly for the losses.

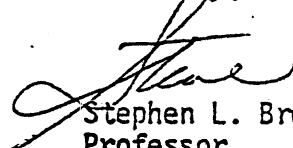
The details of the AEC strategy for accomplishing the central goal included some of the following.

1. Classify any data that appeared damaging to the AEC case. I was with one of the veterinary team from Los Alamos who collected the first field data on the sheep that had just come in from the winter range. We both got extremely high readings with our radiation meters off the thyroids of those sheep indicating a high accumulation of radioactive iodine 131 in the thyroid. The lesions on the head and mouth of the sheep and over the back were immediately identified and specified as radiation burns by this veterinarian who had worked with radiation experiments at Los Alamos on animals. He reported to me that after he had made his report on these findings that not only was it classified but he was ordered not to discuss or reveal the contents and to rewrite the report and delete statements about the sheep having evidence of radiation sickness and lesions.

2. I went with a U.S. Public Health Service doctor to collect case data from a family that had been with sheep in Hamblin Valley during the tests. They told of one atomic cloud that had moved in at low ground over the valley on a day of high humidity. The wife, a young woman in her late 20's, had lost all of her hair, had developed some serious emotional problems from nervousness and had experienced lesions on her ears and nose that were extremely slow in healing. The official explanation that was reported to me on this case afterwards was that she had undergone hysterectomy and this explained the symptoms.
3. The persistence of this policy of cover-up is also illustrated in the case of Mr. Douglas Clark, Chairman of the Iron County Commission, who suffered some of the heavier sheep losses from the winter range that spring. In a meeting with some of the sheepmen and a team of veterinarians headed by an army colonel, Doug asked for some information on the similarity of the conditions of their sheep and behavior of research animals. Somehow he had gotten some confidential data on this matter from other veterinarians. The colonel attacked him verbally about him being a dumb sheepman and not being smart enough to understand it if he did give him the data, etc. For ten or fifteen minutes the colonel harangued, belittled, and discredited Doug's intellectual ability to understand anything. In less than two hours after this incident Mr. Clark was dead of a heart attack.
4. When we finally did get this case into court, none of the technical data from experts was allowed to be used and of course the Iron County sheepmen could not make a case that would stand up in court without this data. The original, preplanned strategy of the AEC worked because they had the indiscriminate power to intimidate, to withhold, screen, change, and classify any and all information, reports and data.

I commend you for this important service to the people of Utah, particularly to Southern Utah for finally after these many years surfacing this data. If I can be of assistance in this effort please let me know.

Sincerely,



Stephen L. Brower
Professor

SLB:vf