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Minutes of a Meeting held at A.W.R.E.
on 15th July, 1958 to discuss
Radiological Safety Precautions at
Christmas IslandPresent

[REDACTED] (Chairman)

Task Force Grapple
A.W.R.E.
Task Force Grapple
R.A.F. Hospital Halton
Air Ministry
A.W.R.E.
A.W.R.E.
Headquarters Bomber Command
Admiralty
War Office
Task Force Grapple

1. The Chairman opened the meeting by outlining the matter for discussion. This was whether or not Service personnel at Christmas Island should be subjected to blood examinations. This matter had been under consideration both by the Task Force and A.W.R.E. for some time past but it was now a more pressing problem than heretofore because the tests of balloon supported nuclear devices would necessitate a number of people entering and rehabilitating the contaminated area after the first burst. He continued by saying that there were two points of view, the purely medical and the medico-legal. He had been advised that from a purely medical aspect there was little or nothing to be gained by subjecting Service personnel at Christmas Island to blood counts. A.W.R.E. on the other hand considered that from the medico-legal aspect blood counts were necessary. He concluded by saying that as A.W.R.E. insisted on blood counts for their own personnel a compromise might be acceptable. This was to arrange blood counts for those who would be working in the forward area during Grapple "Z" and for all future replacements for Christmas Island. It was clearly impossible at this stage to arrange for all Service personnel at Christmas Island during Grapple "Z", a total of over 4,500, to be given blood counts.
2. [REDACTED] considered that no compromise was necessary as he thought that the proposal to give blood examinations was unsound.
3. [REDACTED] then asked A.W.R.E. to give their reasons for advising the Task Force Commander that a blood count should be taken.
4. [REDACTED] replied that he would not argue the case for single blood counts on purely medical grounds but he felt that the matter must be regarded from the medico-legal angle. He said that people with counts habitually above or below normal or those with any blood abnormality must be excluded from the possibility of radiation. For this reason it was an integral part of the medical examination given to all A.W.R.E. personnel. Furthermore, a statutory requirement under the Factories Act was shortly to become law which stated that blood counts were to be given to all civilians working under conditions in which they were exposed to radiation in the normal course of their duties. Finally, he stated that A.W.R.E. were concerned about the political repercussions which might ensue if charges of negligence, however unfounded, could be proved. He agreed that it would not be a feasible proposition to carry out blood counts on Service personnel already at Christmas Island, however, he felt that personnel working in the forward area and future replacements for Christmas Island should receive blood counts.

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5. [REDACTED] then stated that his objection was based on the grounds that he was not convinced that a blood count was of any use whatever and he suggested that if a person was examined and found to be normal before posting to Christmas Island and who later developed leukaemia, it might be difficult to refute the allegation that this was due to radiation received at Christmas Island.

6. [REDACTED] was convinced on the other hand that a blood count was of value by not exposing to radiation people of poor health. He considered that it would prejudice the case if no blood count was taken and a person became ill later.

6. Task Force Commander then stated that the compromise he had proposed and, which was supported by [REDACTED], seemed the logical one and after considerable discussion the following decisions were reached:-

(a) All personnel likely to be employed during Grapple "Z" in the forward area where they might be subject to radiation hazards should be given blood counts before the commencement of the tests.

(b) The question of whether all Service replacement personnel posted to Christmas Island should be given blood counts, regardless of their duties or place of work, was to be referred to the Air Ministry for decision in consultation with the other two Services.

H.Q. Task Force Grapple
17 July 1958

[REDACTED]
Sqn Ldr.,

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