

ing the report public. When SCIENCE NEWS contacted Bryson, he not only denied having written this report, but also said he had never received any contract from the CIA. He said that on at least one point the report had even misinterpreted his work—erroneously concluding that India was in danger of suffering a drought every four years. He said the report rated “a ‘B’ in content and a ‘C’ in style.”

SCIENCE NEWS has also learned that the report was made public accidentally through the office of Rep. Frederick W. Richmond (D-N.Y.), who had requested that the study be declassified for use by the House Agriculture Committee. A spokesman for Richmond said a reporter who had received an advance copy broke the release date, which was to have been just before a meeting the Congressman was putting together between climatologists and some of his colleagues. The original story made no mention of the fact that the report was two years old and was only an internal working paper—not an official statement of CIA position.

Such caveats aside, however, the report still gives an intriguing insight into the government’s consideration of what could yet be the crisis of the century. Even as the State Department was pushing grain deals with Russia and the Agriculture Department was minimizing the threat of climate change, the CIA was quietly warning: “Climate is now a critical factor. The politics of food will become the central issue of every government.” □

Asbestos in water

Initial results of a two-year study of the drinking water in 10 U.S. cities reveal measurable amounts of asbestos fibers in the water supplies of Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, San Francisco and Seattle. Such fibers are suspected of causing cancer, but what the potential risks may be to people drinking such contaminated water has not been determined.

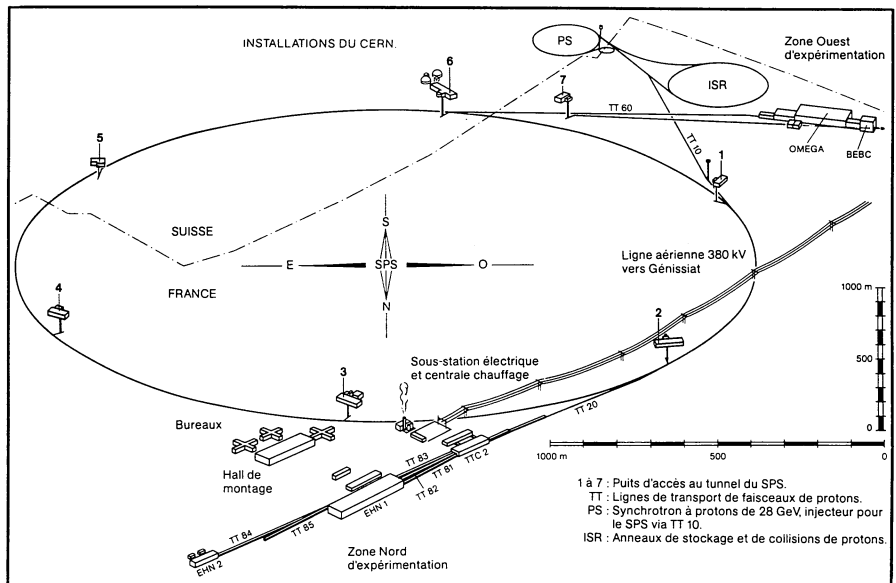
“Asbestos” is actually a broad term for a large group of fibrous silicate minerals used in textiles, building materials, brake linings and fireproofing materials. They may enter the water through natural contamination, due to runoff from suitable geologic formations, but the Environmental Protection Agency, which announced the findings, has not yet been able to determine how much of the fiber in the water tested came from natural sources or from industry.

No asbestos was detected in the water supplies of New York City, Chicago, Dallas, Kansas City or Denver. Results from measurements in 20 other cities should be available soon. The present study indicates that filtration can substantially lower asbestos content in water.

More study would be needed, EPA said, to determine potential hazards of the fibers and set standards. □

MAY 15, 1976

Protons in the Super Proton Synchrotron



The Super Proton Synchrotron at the CERN laboratory in Geneva will be Europe’s largest and most energetic proton accelerator. Like the synchrotron at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory it will reach energies up to 400 billion electron-volts. Essentially complete, the SPS is now undergoing tests and commissioning exercises. On May 3, a (low-energy) beam of protons successfully navigated its 6,900 meter circumference for the first time.

Straddling the French-Swiss border, the SPS is built entirely underground. Access

is by seven wells (numbered in the drawing). It will deliver accelerated protons to two experimental areas, called north and west. The laboratory’s older Proton Synchrotron (PS in the drawing), which was in its day Europe’s largest accelerator, will serve as a pre-accelerator for the super synchrotron. The older synchrotron, with a top energy of 30 billion electron-volts, also supplies accelerated protons to the Intersecting Storage Rings (ISR), CERN’s other major piece of equipment, which collides two proton beams with each other. □

Ford signs science adviser bill



President Gerald R. Ford signs the National Science and Technology Policy, Organization and Priorities Act, renewing the office of White House Science Adviser. Behind him, looking on, are three men instrumental in the act’s passage: Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, Sen. Frank E. Moss (D-Utah) and Rep. Olin E. Teague (D-Tex.).

Susan Strasburger

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