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• Science News Letter, 79:60 January 28, 1961

ARCHAEOLOGY

Dead Sea Scrolls Found To Be 60 Years Older

➤ **DUE TO** a more accurately determined half-life for carbon-14, the famed Dead Sea Scrolls have been found to be 60 years older than previously believed. They are now dated to about 20 B.C. instead of 40 A.D. W. B. Mann and W. F. Marlow of the National Bureau of Standards redetermined the half-life of carbon-14. Using improved technique and better gas counters, they found that the half-life of this element is 5,760 years instead of the previously accepted value of 5,568 years. Carbon-14 is the "atomic clock" used for dating objects of geological and archaeological significance.

• Science News Letter, 79:60 January 28, 1961

PUBLIC HEALTH

British Avoid Atomic Contamination

➤ "IMMENSE TROUBLE" is being taken in Great Britain to avoid radioactive contamination from atomic development, Sir George Thomson, Nobel Prize winning British physicist, told **SCIENCE SERVICE**.

The limit of man-made radioactive contamination allowed in the Thames River from radioactive waste disposal is less than that naturally present in New York water sources, Sir George said. This estimate, he said, was given him by Sir John Cockcroft, the British Nobelist who received the 1961 Atoms for Peace Award.

However, except from an atomic war, the greatest danger of radioactive contamination is from a nuclear reactor accident and from

disposal of radioactive wastes. Although there are bound to be accidents, the British physicist said, working in an atomic plant is not a hazardous occupation, based on the record so far.

"Compared with the general level of industrial accidents, particularly in the chemical industry, the accident level in atomic plants in Great Britain has been very low, even if one includes the accident at Windscale," he said. (The accident resulted from the overheating of a radioactive pile and caused contamination of milk and dairy supplies in surrounding areas. However, not one of the 3,000 workers nor any of the nearby residents were visibly affected.)

Sir George also believes that fear of genetic damage from fallout also may be greatly exaggerated. He said that if genetic damage is serious, miscarriage rather than abnormal birth would be most likely to be the result.

• Science News Letter, 79:60 January 28, 1961

GEOPHYSICS

International Scientific Programs Planned

➤ **FUTURE INTERNATIONAL** scientific programs for studying the sun's activities, the earth's magnetic field and its interior are being planned by the **Comite International de Geophysique**, Paris, France. The committee is the successor to the **Special Committee for the International Geophysical Year**. Future studies include charting the earth's magnetic field in 1965 (World Magnetic Survey) and observing the cosmic rays and "northern lights" resulting from eruptions on the sun (Solar Activity Minimum Programme). Another future program will be a study of the mantle of rock directly beneath the earth's crust. Drilling will probe into the deep layers to determine the mantle's role in developing the earth's crust.

• Science News Letter, 79:60 January 28, 1961

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