

February 28, 2000

40 Long Valley Health Center
P.O. Box 870
Laytonville, CA 95454
707-984-6131

Honorable Donna Shalala
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave. SW, Room 615F
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Shalala,

We are writing to you because we are concerned that you support the expansion of meat irradiation. As you may know, irradiated food is not normally radioactive. However when meat is irradiated there are many new chemicals formed, as radiolytic byproducts, in and on the food. These include benzene and formaldehyde, known carcinogens and mutagens, as well as many other untested and unidentified compounds. In addition, irradiation kills vitamins, friendly bacteria, and enzymes, effectively leaving the meat with greatly reduced nutritional value.

In the 1960's the FDA rescinded its original approval of food irradiation because of the carcinogens created in the process. It is also known that irradiation doesn't always kill all the pathogenic bacteria and besides allowing peoples to become sick might also lead to adaption of radiation-resistant bacteria.

It is also known that of the hundreds of health studies on the effects of food irradiation, the FDA threw out all but five of the studies in their push to approve irradiation, and several of those studies have since been proven flawed.

Our primary concern, as the Board of Directors of a rural health clinic, is with the present and future health of the public. We see the distinct possibility that without proper, long term testing, the public at large will become the guinea pigs for this experiment, and that children, being the most susceptible to genetic and developmental damage, will be the de-facto test animals. Unfortunately, as you know, it takes years, generally for the development of cancers and other mutagenic diseases. Twenty or so years from now, if or when the cancer or disease rates rise, it will be too late to point a finger at a specific cause.

You know that there are other ways to insure a safe meat supply, including better sanitation at the production site, steam sterilization, use of ozone as a sterilization

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agent, and others. We ask that you direct these to be used, and that you direct long term studies be done, by independent researchers, on the possible harmful effects of daily ingestion of irradiated meats and other irradiated foods.

We ask you to consider the public's lack of acceptance of irradiated food as disapproval, and not as an impediment to be overcome by "education." We ask you to take it as a vote requiring the adequate, long term testing of any and all food processes and additives before allowing them to be used on or in the nation's food supply.

The future health of the public is at stake. Please don't allow it to be compromised by the nuclear and meat packing industries and their lobbyists. Reverse your approval of this largely unproven process until adequate testing can be done.

We ask that you seriously consider our request.

Long Valley Health Center
Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Peter Steele".

Peter Steele
President

LONG VALLEY HEALTH CENTER
P.O. BOX 870 LAYTONVILLE, CA 95454



Where family health is
a community concern



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