

WAR AND PEACE and THE RIGHT TO KNOW

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has been an invaluable tool in obtaining information about our government's actions in our country and around the world, in times of war and times of peace. The files of the U.S. government contain a wealth of information on the decisions, policies, and actions of every government agency. This information has enabled the public to respond to the government's preparation for and engagement in war, and to organize for peace.

Yet today the spectre of nuclear holocaust hangs over the world. Hardly a day goes by without mention of the potential for nuclear war. The government officials and agencies

who are supposed to protect us instead try to convince us that "limited nuclear war" is a possibility, that we have nothing to fear.

Through the FOIA, we have the right to the information that will enable us to make up our own minds about the dangers of nuclear weapons. This Act, passed in 1966 and strengthened in 1974, is the legislative guardian of our right to participate actively in our society.

Without information, the government can act in secret and against the wishes--and safety--of the people. Armed with information, we can work to ensure our survival and the survival of our children.

LIES OF THE PAST - VICTIMS OF THE PRESENT

During the 1950s, above-ground nuclear bombs were detonated in Nevada. Ralph Hunsaker, an attorney representing victims who are suing the government for damages suffered from the tests, states:

"These atomic shots kept coming and coming. They detonated the shots when the winds were drifting toward southern Utah. And the people weren't warned of the dangers. They even woke their children up in the early mornings to watch the flash in the sky and then see the cloud come overhead. Many of these children are dead now."

One of the victims of the tests said:

"The government kept telling us there was no danger, there was nothing to worry about. We thought the government...

wouldn't do anything wrong. They wouldn't lie to us."

Even the judge who presided over suits against the government by sheepbreeders shortly after the tests was shocked when he learned recently of the government's attempts to keep the truth a secret. He has now overturned his own 1956 decision and granted a new trial to the ranchers.

Because citizens had no FOIA to give them access to the truth, the government was able to commit and cover-up these atrocities for 30 years.

Today however, the residents in southern Utah who had been exposed to radiation and atomic fallout in the 1950s are using the FOIA to help substantiate their claims in a civil damage lawsuit against the federal government.