

11/11/06

**“A Communist Plot”  
by  
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Does anyone out there remember a substance that's use was recommended by our government and sparked one of the greatest Urban Myths ever to sweep through these United States? In case you don't remember I'll give you a few clues and see if it comes to mind. It took place in the late 40s and mid 50's? The substance in question was a major step to help make our children, and parents, healthier and prettier. The substance is still in use today and everyone ingests portions of it every day. The rumor that it was a “Communist plot” kept a lot of children from sharing in the benefits of this particular substance until much later in their lives. Give up? Okay, but first, one more question.

Did you know that this item is found in every medicine cabinet and has a warning label on it that reads ... *“WARNING – Keep out of reach of children under 6 years of age. "If more than used for brushing is accidentally swallowed, get medical help or contact a poison-control center right away.”*?

Of course, the guilty item in question is fluoride and the “Communist plot” was putting fluoride in America's drinking water supplies. I can vividly recall the residents of our little town of Belle hollering back and forth by “them that were fer it and them that were agin it.” Some our neighbors truly thought it was a plot of the Communists to eradicate our children, of which at the time I was one. Water fluoridation took place prior to fluoride being put in every tube of tooth paste that passes through our hands these days. (Before you write, I realize there are probably non-fluoride tooth pastes out there as well.) It was reported that soon after the addition of fluoride to our municipal water supplies dental cavities in our children were reduced by approximately 60%.

If Fluoride was and is so good at fighting tooth decay why then haven't all the country's communities subscribed to adding it to their water supplies? According to numbers from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) only 68% have, leaving roughly 32% still unprotected. I understand that one of Greenbrier County's finest little towns itself didn't get on the fluoride bandwagon until a few short years ago. Why would such a large number still resist and still argue that it shouldn't be done? Well, one good reason could be that fluoride is also an active ingredient in rat poison and, if too high a concentration is ingested by humans it could prove toxic to us as well. In fact the WARNING I mentioned above wasn't put on the toothpaste tubes until 1997, only 9 years ago, after the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) determined the public should be made more aware of its toxicity.

Currently in Bellingham, WA, a 70 year old retired dentist, Dr. Curtis Smith, is fighting for an initiative on the ballot to have fluoride added to Bellingham's water supply. Feelings are so

intense against the idea that Dr. Smith recently opened his mailbox and found a dead rat which had been placed there by a member of one of the anti-fluoride organizations in Bellingham. In the past three years, legislation to encourage fluoridation has been defeated or tabled in Oregon, Arkansas, Nebraska and Hawaii. New battles are brewing in New Jersey, Massachusetts and across the Canadian border in Montreal.

I'm sure the majority of you out there are more on the ball and up to date on this information than I, but I can honestly say that I was blissfully ignorant of the fact that my 4 and 5 year old grandkids should not be left alone with a tube of toothpaste until just recently. Kind of scary when you think about it.

The CDC has stated, "A community can save about \$38 in dental-treatment costs for every \$1 invested in fluoridation. How many other investments yield that kind of return?" Even with this endorsement the CDC has also announced that studies show 32% of American children now have some form of dental fluorosis, a white or brown mottling of the teeth. U.S. health officials have said it is a cosmetic issue, largely caused by ill-advised swallowing of toothpaste, while those against fluoridation are saying it proves that children overall are ingesting too much of the chemical.

I raise this issue only to bring up to date those who have been as ignorant as I these many years. It seems the potential victims of over-fluoridation are the kids so you and I don't have to worry that much about the consequences unless you're in the habit of swallowing the stuff rather than spitting it out. Besides, most that are my age probably clean their teeth the old fashion way... placing them in a glass beside the bed at night.

Speaking of my age people... I'm sure most of you have experienced De` Ja vu but I think I experienced De` Ja vu/Amnesia the other day... I thought I had forgotten the same thing before. By the way, I've mentioned to most of you I'm writing a book... well, you'll be glad to know I'm coming along great with it... I've got all the chapter numbers done, which is no easy feat, and now all I have to do is fill in all the blank spaces between.

Time to close for this week so let me leave you with this wonderful idea for those of you who have difficulty going to sleep at night. It's a tried and true method my mom taught me when I was but a little tot. I would tell her I couldn't go to sleep and she would say, "That's okay Tommy... just go down to the end of tired and turn left." Works everytime.

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