

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

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REVERSAL IN SWEDEN

The Swedish Parliament, by a 137 to 126 vote, recently repealed its 1962 law which allowed "fluorination for dental health purposes." The decision went against the majority report issued by Parliament's Social Insurance Committee.

The parliamentary debate that preceded the vote contained many of the often used arguments against fluoridation. Among them were (1) the comparison of water fluoridation to "putting birth-control substances in tap water, meaning that the principle was the same in both cases," (2) the suggestion of "possible harmful side effects and the ethics of compulsory medicine," (3) the suggestion that in recent years "experts had become increasingly sceptical towards fluorination," (4) the claim that other measures were at "least as effective."

The following paragraphs are excerpts from the announcement of the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden:

Parliament's decision was an unexpected victory for the anti-fluorination lobby, because apart from the experiments in Norrköping fluorination has not been practised in Sweden. A number of towns have shown interest, but none of them -- as well as Norrköping -- have been able to fulfill the conditions laid down by the Government, such as rules relating the fluorine content and the application of medical and odontological surveys.

Prof. Yngve Ericsson of Stockholm's College of Dental Surgery, one of Sweden's leading experts on fluorination, said of Parliament's decision: "This will hardly enhance our reputation." He pointed out that nearly 130 million people in all parts of the world except Africa used fluorinated tap water and there was not a single case where injurious side effects could be proved.

NOTE. -- Swedish-English translation as received uses fluorination and fluorine where U.S. uses fluoridation and fluoride.

He added that there was scientific evidence that fluorination prevented dental illness and it was possible that it guarded against bone brittleness and arteriosclerosis. The Swedish Dentists' Association also expressed misgivings about Parliament's decision.

Prof. Ericsson, who has dealt with fluorine in over 50 scientific works, said later that the ban on fluorination was unfortunate: "One asks oneself what Parliament proposes to do in order to save the half-million Swedes who have natural fluorine in their water, because natural and manufactured fluorine have precisely the same effects." He added that in his opinion comparisons between fluorine and, for example, DDT, thalidomide and birth control pills were quite misleading. "Fluorine, in contrast to these artificial (sic) phenomena, is a natural element which has been found in water and foodstuffs since time immemorial."

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