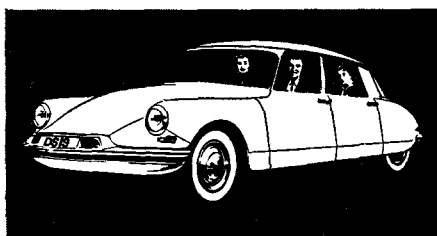
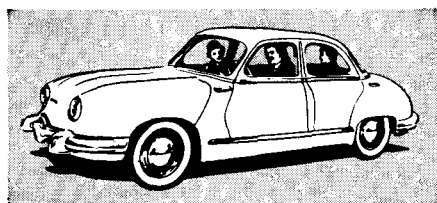


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WHO— WHAT— WHY—

"PRIVATE ROADS TO HELL," the editorial in our last issue, was written with this issue's feature story very much in mind. The more nations depend predominantly on atomic weapons for defense, the greater is the danger of ultimate disaster. The testing of atomic weapons, as we know only too well, is more than an experiment; it is a means that the three major powers employ to show how redoubtable their might is. Is this worthwhile? Don't our military and political leaders know enough by now about atomic weapons of all sorts? Can we be indifferent to the warnings that many reputable geneticists have given us of the damage these tests can afflict on the human race? No matter what the average level of radiation a human being can safely absorb, can we accept with equanimity the chance that a child in India may die of leukemia because of a bomb test conducted by one of the three great powers? In his editorial, **Max Ascoli** says the answer is "No," and joins the increasing number of those who say that the tests must be brought to an end.

The story **Paul Jacobs** has written is a sad one, but once its basic data were probed we thought it had to be published. The way we got on to the story may be of some interest. It started when a few clippings from a weekly newspaper in Tonopah, Nevada, the *Times-Bonanza*, came to our attention. Here was something, we thought, worth looking into, and we sent our Staff Writer **Paul Jacobs** to Tonopah. He talked with the editor of the paper, and then he talked with many other people in the region. He found most of them confused and dismayed. "You are the first person who has ever come to talk to us about what we have gone through," some of the people most affected by the tests told him.

In his search for all possible data, Mr. Jacobs traveled to the AEC installation at Albuquerque, to its offices in Las Vegas and New York, and to its headquarters in Washing-

ton. He went to the Argonne Laboratory outside Chicago. Invariably AEC officials were extremely co-operative. As in all *Reporter* stories, we have done our best to see to it that all details are accurate. The broad scientific aspects of Mr. Jacobs's story have been checked by independent and competent authorities.

It took Mr. Jacobs quite a while to gather his facts and write his story, particularly because he is an unusually busy man. Besides being a staff member of *The Reporter*, he is a frequent contributor to the *Economist* of London and a consultant to the Fund For The Republic. Our readers will certainly remember his recent series "The World of Jimmy Hoffa" (*The Reporter*, January 24 and February 7), a story that allowed him to use to full advantage his rich knowledge of labor problems.

IT MAY BE with some relief, or to the contrary with a heightened feeling of anguish, that our readers will turn to **Ray Bradbury's** story "Illumination." Here a small boy awakes to a poignant sense of being alive when he spends a summer day in a forest uncontaminated by anything other than sunshine and shade. Mr. Bradbury is a frequent contributor to *The Reporter*. **Roland Gelatt**, New York Editor of *High Fidelity*, discusses the quality of the endless background music that no one listens to but many pay for. **Douglass Cater**, our Washington Editor, reviews Dean Acheson's recent book on the workings of Congress. **Marya Mannes** has been reading various current best-selling autobiographies and posts her own entry—fortunately not autobiographical—in the sweepstakes for fame. **Anne Fremantle**, whose most recent book is *Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context*, is a contributing editor of the *Commonweal* and is on the faculty of Fordham University. **John Kenneth Galbraith**, a frequent contributor, visited India in 1956 at the invitation of the Indian government.

Our cover is by **Prestopino**.

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There Must Be an End to It

THIS is Nuclear Weapons Season. The Soviet Union has already at least seven tests of nuclear weapons to its credit; the United States will have a new series of tests from the middle of this month to the beginning of September; and, within the next few months, Britain will find out how powerful its H-bomb is. This is also the season when the protests against nuclear weapons have been forceful as never before. Albert Schweitzer has spoken; so have the leading German atomic scientists, and, through official and unofficial channels, the people of Japan. Atomic scientists or geneticists may disagree among themselves about the amount of man-made radiation a human being can safely absorb. But the Japanese have some valid reasons for thinking they have been exposed well beyond the tolerable limit.

The article that follows is a case study of some of the happenings in Nevada and neighboring Utah as a result of the continental tests the Atomic Energy Commission has been conducting since 1951. During some of the testing periods, particularly that of 1953, life was quite rough for several thousand citizens of those two states. It was rough on the AEC too, and particularly on the men it sent into and around the test site. These men did not know—in fact, could not know—a great deal of what they needed to know about the vagaries of winds and fallout. It was partly because adequate knowledge was not available that the Nevada tests were decided on, and competent men were stationed there to keep a check on the results. These men frequently blundered. More than once the measures they took to forewarn the people of the area about the dangers of radiation proved inadequate. Yet, for all their blunders and their inadequacies, these public servants deserve only compassion.

Of course it is not for laymen to judge whether, or to what extent, the Nevada tests brought enlarged knowledge of low-yield atomic weapons. Our ignorance and our curiosity are well protected by the government's policy of classifying what may be beyond the reach of our understanding anyway. But the case of

the Nevada tests proves that the AEC has frequently used the strictures of the security regulations to cover up its failures to give adequate protection or warning to a sizable number of people in the region. We like to assume that the intentions of the AEC and its men in Nevada have always been of the best, and that the AEC had no responsibility for the harm that some people allege they suffered. But for the many little acts of uncandor in covering up probably inevitable miscalculations, for a tendency to gloss over with public-relations blandishments the evidence of its failures—for this the AEC must be held accountable. An all-powerful government agency too frequently is tempted to use the cloak of secrecy to shield the ignorance rather than the knowledge of the men in the know.

The Atom Rush

Yet once more we should be compassionate in passing judgment on the behavior of the men working for the AEC, from the highest to the lowest. The cloak of secrecy they wear must be excruciatingly heavy, for it imposes on these unfortunate men—particularly those at the top—too great a burden both of certainty and of doubt. Perhaps no one who has had the secret of the atom entrusted to him by his own genius or by chance of official appointment, has escaped being, somehow, marked for life.

The technicalities of atomic science must be the least oppressive part of the burden. At present, knowledge of the atom, its promises and threats, is becoming only too accessible. Atomic secrecy—even of the most advanced kind—has a built-in time limit. This consideration cannot contribute to make life particularly easy for the custodians of our nation's atomic secrets. Moreover these men, whose powers within their own agency are frighteningly unchecked, can scarcely resist formidable pressure from outside.

War and peace seem equally hell-bent on going the atomic way. Our government is supposed to be producing—and of course testing—the biggest and most