

THE HISTORY OF FLUORIDATION IN TIMARU

by Imelda Hitchcock
2009



*Imelda Hitchcock at the time of writing, aged 82.
Imelda's battle began in 1980, successfully
ending fluoridation in 1985. But the 'pushers'
have kept at it – and so has Imelda.*

From the time the issue of fluoridation was raised in 1957 there were people showing opposition. One woman from this opposing group became a very good friend and helped me a great deal. Sadly, she passed away in 2007.

The council debated the issue again in 1964 and 1965. Eventually, in 1966, the council decided to hold a referendum. The vote went against fluoridation and the council abode by the result. By this time the plant had been ordered from Australia. The equipment was eventually sold to the Waimairi County Council (which later stopped fluoridation, having more tooth decay than the unfluoridated areas of Christchurch). However, a subsequent council in May 1972, called for submissions on fluoridation after heeding pressure from those who wanted it. At the October 1972 council meeting, following an August meeting at which opposing views were put forward, the council by an 8-5 majority decided to go ahead with fluoridation (without putting the issue back to the people) and commenced it in August, 1973.

It was in 1974 that I noticed that I had become very constipated which I had never been before. I have never needed laxatives and at the age of 82, still don't need them. We knew nothing about fluoride but my late husband (Eddie) and I had read about it's downside in the newspaper, so Eddie suggested I try unfluoridated water. I guess he was sorry thereafter that he ever mentioned the word "fluoride".

He never heard the end of it. I did try the unfluoridated water and it certainly helped considerably, but when fluoride is in the water one is not completely free from it. The garden is hosed with it and the body absorbs it when showering. We collected unfluoridated water, but by 1980 I had had enough of that. I couldn't see why we should have to use petrol and lug heavy containers when the decision to introduce fluoridation was made by a small number, the councillors, overriding all the citizens who had said "No" in the referendum.

On 9 April that year I wrote a letter to the paper and from there it was like Topsy. It just "grewed". Eventually, I found myself leading the "anti" campaign.

The community was very hostile about fluoridation from the time it began in 1973. When I came on board, some very reputable people started to quietly help me and I became very confident that I was doing the right thing. I placed a coupon in the paper, over a long weekend, for people to sign (which I paid for) asking the council to hold a referendum. It looked as if it belonged with a Building Society Advertisement directly underneath it. We had a very profluoride editor here at that time. "Anti" letters were almost prohibited, especially if they contained "unfavourable" information. For all that, over 1100 signatures were received by the Tuesday. I needed to place the coupon in again. There was no reduction for the misleading placement of the first coupon. The sub-editor was disgusted that no reduction had been made. Luckily, he eventually became the editor, and for the first time in years the "anti" side were treated more fairly. I asked this new editor if the Health Dept. had any control of what was printed in the letters or of what they published. He said they did not, and he told me he was not very happy with them at that time, so that may have been the reason for getting a bit more of our side published.

The council ignored the signatures calling for a referendum. The coupons were being copied and signatures still going in to the council. When the signature total reached 3288 the council debated the issue again. Still no joy.

In September 1980, I was persuaded to stand for council which, reluctantly, I did. It was not that I wanted to become a councillor, but it was a great way of lifting the profile of the fluoridation issue. I did not expect to be elected. All the current councillors were standing and I was effectively an unknown.

A funny little incident about that election was the then current mayor, Mrs Mclvor, wasn't intending standing again, but one day I was within sight of the council chambers and I saw a number of people who I recognised as women from groups such as, Plunket, National Council of Women, etc. filing in. The next day came the announcement that Mrs Mclvor would stand again. We must have had them worried. As expected, I wasn't elected but I did get over 3,000 votes which returned my nomination fee. With the next local body elections about to be held, I was asked by delegations from groups and many members of the public to stand again, but I would not do this as I did not want the role. At this stage I felt I could fight better from outside.

Then the local radio station ran a straw poll and we, after some time, ran an unofficial telephone poll, both of which both came out against fluoridation.

We had a TV placed in a shop window with an audio lead onto the street and kept playing an informative video. It was quite surprising the number of people who would stop to see what it was all about and of course, they were able to learn some facts about fluoridation.

By this time the public were very well hyped up and the years that followed saw many letters to the editor. The paper was full of fluoridation. I was given considerable coverage with articles as to why fluoridation should cease. There was no limit to the length of our letters, so we had a harvest. Eddie said I was getting my photo in the paper more often than the queen. I am not sure that he was overly happy about it. I did not care for the tone of his voice. One very interesting comment I received was about a taxi driver telling a councillor's wife that he had never heard an issue discussed as much while he was driving passengers around.

In 1983 I had made contact with the Late Dr John Colquhoun, the former Principal Dental Officer in Auckland, who told me he couldn't speak out until he retired. However, he could not wait and in December that year he spoke out because of his concern about the dangers of fluoride. On 21 December there were big headlines in our paper "Dental health officer calls for end to fluoridation". In the report it said that Dr Colquhoun had sent a letter to the health department saying that fluoride does not prevent tooth decay – and too much can even damage teeth. He had also said in the letter that the Health Department had withheld information about fluoride. Dr Colquhoun reported, amongst many accusations, that the percentage of children without fillings was often higher in unfluoridated areas than in fluoridated areas. In a reply letter to his letter to the Health Department (I have a copy) signed by R.A. Barker, Director-General of Health, (24/11/83) reprimanding him, he was told, "Once government policy (which is subject to continuing review) is formulated on a particular matter you, being a public servant, must comply with that policy in your dealings with your staff and the press... public servants cannot take it upon themselves the duty of deciding that the public interest is something other than the government see it to be... that a staff member who is required to carry out instructions which are abhorrent to him should seek a transfer to another position where this conflict will not exist, or he should resign".

Dr Colquhoun, after having been a very strong advocate for fluoridation, then did a big u-turn and became very antagonistic. I came across a very interesting NZ Dental Association newsletter, June 1984, in which it said: "...it remains for the Association and the Dental Health Foundation to mount a campaign throughout all local bodies in the Auckland Regional Authority area, seeking to discredit claims made by Colquhoun, and to support the continuation of fluoridation... This is a most important activity because the future of fluoridation in New Zealand we feel to be dependent on the continuation of fluoridation in Auckland".

After another debate at council level in an unsuccessful bid to cease fluoridation, a decision was made to investigate a proposal to halve the level of fluoride in the water. On 26 March 1984, the decision was made not to halve the level.

I then went to our MP, the late Sir Basil Arthur, who I knew was thoroughly against fluoridation, to see if he could help. He wrote to the then Principal Dental Officer for this district, Mr M B Henderson and asked for the statistics for the Timaru and Oamaru children for the years between 1980-1984, which were duly sent to him. I then wrote to Mr Henderson and received the official figures for a number of years.

The issue continued to rage with numerous letters being published in our paper. One day a woman, Mrs Judy Keen, a perfect stranger to me, rang and asked if fluoride could possibly cause an itch on the body as she had been suffering with a mysterious itch for over two years. Mrs Keen had been through all the possible tests and was booked into a skin specialist in Christchurch. I told her that skin itch was a well known problem with fluoride so she asked what she should do. I told her to collect unfluoridated water and use it where possible, even for washing her body. Within between two and three weeks the itch had gone. I told my dentist, so he arranged with her doctor to have capsules made up. The dentist took them to her. There was a jar of placebo and a jar of fluoride capsules and the only person who knew which were which, was the person who made them.

As luck would have it, she first took the fluoridated capsules, and within a few days she was itchy again. Mrs Keen went to her doctor and then she took no more for a few weeks. She then

tried the other (placebo) but nothing happened. She then went to Dunedin to a specialist at the public hospital, who conducted a number of tests for her, gave her a flagon with some liquid in. She had to put all the urine which she passed for a day in that flagon, to be sent to the specialist in Dunedin. I have not obtained a copy of the letter, but apparently there was one sent to her doctor from the specialist that said that it looked as though it must be the fluoridated water, as nothing else showed up as the cause. But before that could be signed off she would need to go into the Dunedin Hospital. Mrs Keen chose not to do so, as she had three young children at home and it had all been very expensive for her over the two previous years. Mrs Keen wrote to the Timaru District Council about her experience. In that letter said that if a certificate was required, her doctor would provide one. The council did not ask for one. The dentist, Mr Barry Struthers, also wrote saying that all Mrs Keen had said was true. The council did nothing about the situation and we have quoted this experience many times.

On the 13 September 1984, a local doctor, Dr van Herel, wrote a letter to our paper showing his concern that a small number of people, the councillors, had the right to force the rest of the citizens to swallow a potentially dangerous or beneficial drug with their drinking water. He said that he was worried about at "risk groups" from "the poison fluoride" such as, diabetics, bottle-fed infants and people with kidney diseases, in his 2,850 patients living in the city. (Note: these are the same groups identified by the US National Research Council as at-risk in their 2006 report). He was then given space to write a full article but, of course, the Health Department came back and "rebutted" the claims. Many more articles, such as "Local GPs back fluoridation", letters to the paper and the usual editorial, headed "Continue fluoridation", persisted.

On 22 January 1985, the council once again debated the issue after Dr van Herel called for fluoridation to cease. However, people attending that meeting were very angry because the doctor's letter was not discussed. We still had no joy. By this time the "Press" picked up the issue and ran an article about me, 24 January 1985, headed "Doctors back fluoride ban". Again the council debated the issue and on 28 January 1985, decided to halve the level of fluoride in the Timaru water. Big headlines above articles were published in *The Timaru Herald* and the Christchurch *Star* the next day.

The halving of the fluoride level caused another uproar as it was neither one way or the other. Some said it was half a victory and some said it was half a loss. Then in February 1985, we organised an unofficial door-to-door survey, over four weeks. It was done properly. The then town clerk, Mr Tucker, helped frame the questions. I went back with the numbered sheets to Mr Tucker to be checked before starting. We would not give the opponents a chance to say that some sheets were missing. Signatures were vetted. The result was four-to-one against. On 29 April 1985, the council debated the issue, but once again big headlines appeared in *The Timaru Herald* the next day saying, "Council votes for fluoride despite survey". This had caused such an interest that TV1 was there at that meeting to film it, I presume expecting that there would be a decision to cease fluoridation. However, I did get on TV.

I then invited John Colquhoun to come to Timaru, which he did in July 1985. John addressed a small but very interested audience on 14 July. The next day he was interviewed on the radio and by the local newspaper. *The Timaru Herald* gave him a great coverage (front page and more on the next page). The next day Eddie and I took John to Christchurch where there was going to be a meeting the next night. I was invited to stay and go to the meeting (which I would have loved to do) but instinct told me to go home. I was urged to stay but no, that "little man on my shoulder" kept telling me to go home. I had not long arrived in the door (that was the Friday)

when the phone rang. It was a reporter from the *The Timaru Herald* who told me to sit down. He then told me that the then mayor, Mrs McIvor, had announced that she had placed on the agenda for the Monday meeting a proposal for a fluoridation referendum to be held. That was reported in the *The Timaru Herald* next day (Saturday). Mrs McIvor said, amid many comments, "It is important for the future unity and wellbeing of the city that this highly controversial issue should be disposed of once and for all".

At the meeting, immediately the issue of fluoridation came up, a councillor who had always voted for fluoridation moved that it cease immediately. Another councillor seconded the motion. The plug was pulled the next morning (23 July 1985). The TV crew was not there that night, but the photo from the previous meeting was used for the news about Timaru ceasing fluoridation. When I arrived home from the meeting Eddie congratulated me and was very pleased for me but did say, "You have won the battle but not the war". How right he was. When I rang the pro-fluoride councillor the next morning to thank him he told me he was still in favour of fluoridation, but that a referendum would be a waste of ratepayers' money as the result was inevitable, and he never wanted to hear the word "fluoride" ever again. But that was not to be. Letters (some very nasty) and articles followed, stating that the children's teeth would deteriorate, and called for the decision to be reversed. That went on for weeks.

The Timaru fluoride decision was raised in Parliament. In a written question the then North Shore MP, George Gair, asked "In view of the Timaru City Council's decision to end the use of fluoridation, will the minister give an assurance that he and the Department of Health, will not permit the development of a wave of opposition to fluoridation to spread?"

In 1986 I went to Auckland to visit my family and while there, through Mrs Barbara Haszard (a one time very strong anti-fluoridation worker), I was interviewed by some of the free papers (including photos), 1ZB, and the *Manukau Courier* regarding Papakura, where there was going to a referendum at the next local body elections. I then spent a week with Mrs Barbara Murray at Tauranga (who was another dedicated anti-fluoridation worker) and while there was interviewed by the *Bay of Plenty Times* and *The Bay Sun Weekende*. All articles in these papers were accompanied by photos of myself. Fluoridation was voted out in both Papakura and Tauranga. Whilst I cannot take the credit I hope my contribution helped toward the victories.

Following my article in the *Manukau Courier* I had a copy of a letter (a very nasty letter of two pages) sent to me by the editor of that paper, written by the late E W Hullett, accusing Dr Colquhoun, Mrs Haszard and me of fearmongering, misleading, etc. His letter was not printed, but Mr Hullett had a small mention in a large article in the same paper headed, "Doctors, dentists adamant fluoridation must continue". It included some of his comments in the nasty letter. The final nasty comment about me being "She has no youngsters so is now free to stop fluoridation and thereby deprive others of a 29% to 42% reduction in tooth fillings". In September, shortly after all that, I received a letter, as did Dr Colquhoun and Barbara Haszard, from the editor of that paper, along with opponents, Hullett, John Bell, Barrie Pratt, J A Skegg, E G Pressley and D.J.Beck, to write our views (no more than 400 words, but guess who wrote more) with a photo of ourselves. The editor, in that letter that came to us, mentioned about having received letters that had unfortunately developed in some cases into bitter personal attacks, which in one occasion bordered on defamation. I suppose that Hullett did not know I had received a copy of his letter. After the referendum the *Auckland Star* (9/12/86) published a scathing article headed "Set back for fluoridation" about us (anti-fluoridationists). By this time I was getting pretty thick in the hide. Hullett, who had been living in Auckland, moved to Geraldine (a neighbouring town to Timaru) where his daughter lived, so he then wrote very

nasty letters to the *The Timaru Herald*. I understand that he was extremely angry with the last letter that I wrote while he was alive, but because he was so ill (he passed away within a day or so) he could not respond. Perhaps I could say I had the “last word”.

On 19 May 1993, *The Timaru Herald* published a report released by the Public Health Commission (PHC) pushing to extend water fluoridation programmes. It looked as if fluoridation may become mandatory (fortunately it didn't). Realising I couldn't fight this on my own I called for a public meeting and a group called “Fluoride Free Association” was formed. In the two years that followed the PHC published 21 papers providing advice to the Minister of Health on specific health issues. In the 1995 report, Dr Gillian Durham, Chief Executive, Public Health Commission, said she wished to thank the many individuals and organisations who commented on the draft of this paper. All the names of organisations and individuals were published in that report.

Very strong pressure on the council to reintroduce fluoridation continued repeatedly and at times with large headlines and full coverage of the issue (while all this was going on it was giving us the opportunity to keep getting the information out to the public). In 1994 the council gave way to the pressure and agreed to hold a referendum with the following local body elections. The referendum was supposed to be “a once and for all” to settle the issue. As soon as the agreement was made known the Southern Regional Health Authority (SRHA) announced that it would fund a \$42,000 local public information campaign. The then SRHA Chairman, Hugh Ross said, “In deciding to take a stand in support of fluoridation, the board has emphasised the need to provide the public with information on the pros and cons of the issue so they can make a decision based on facts. Therefore, I considered we were entitled to half the \$42,000 so applied to the SRHA for the money. Naturally, we were turned down so I then went to the Ombudsman and, of course, turned down again. All this was great because while all this was going on I was getting huge headlines in the paper: cheap publicity.

Public meetings were held at Temuka and Timaru, all arranged and paid for by our opponents. There were three debaters on each side. Deputy Director of Public Health, Dr Gillian Durham, Otago University Dental School lecturer, Dr Robin Whyman and Timaru lawyer, Adrian More took the pro side. We were very fortunate to have the late Dr John Colquhoun (Auckland), Dr Bruce Spittle (Dunedin) and Professor Mark Diesendorf from Australia supporting the anti side. According to a number of people in the audience, our side won these debates.

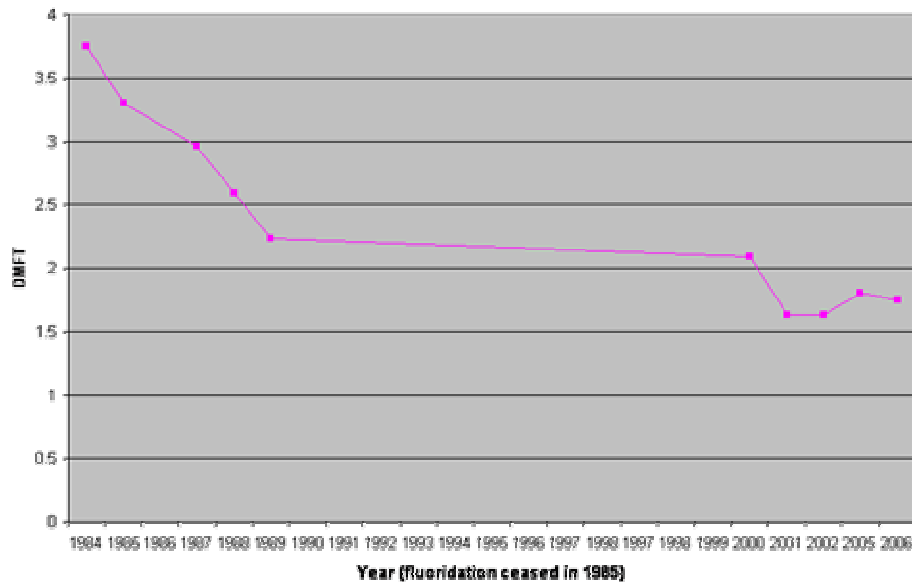
A few days before the referendum my opponent, dental specialist, Ian O'Loughlin, had a statement published in the paper to which I objected. I went to the editor to counteract it and he told me to “go home and sleep easy”. It was not hard to interpret what he meant. I did speak to him (the editor) some time later about what he had said to me. He told me that he knew what the result would be as so many people he knew, who had been pro, had changed their minds.

However, for all the money the “pros” spent on the vast amount of propaganda, the referendum vote was overwhelmingly against fluoridation. Of the 20,828 valid fluoridation votes cast 71 per cent were against fluoridation. This equated to 67% of the total population.

Even though the referendum was supposed to be a “once and for all” to settle the issue, within a year the pros were back into it again with big headlines in our paper about the teeth in South Canterbury going backwards, etc. But the truth of it was that the teeth improved after fluoridation ceased. The 12-year-olds, after having drunk fluoridated water for the whole of their life, had a decayed, filled or missing teeth (DMFT) rate of 3.75 and in 2007 the DMFT rate was

1.89, and the caries-free rate (CF) for the same age group was 15.04% and in 2007 was 40.62%.

Timaru DMFT 1984 to 2006



Despite the referendum, which was supposed to settle the issue, it did not go away. The issue was raised again in 1996/97/98 by health authorities, with, at times, numerous letters vigorously opposing the reintroduction of fluoridation. There were a few flare-ups in the early months of the Year 2000. Then in July that year the issue was seriously remounted when the then Health Minister, Annette King, wrote to all councils who did not have fluoride in their water to ask them to add it.

Then Timaru Hospital services director, Ian O'Loughlin, called for the Government to make it's (fluoridation) introduction mandatory. He said excessive dental decay in Timaru children had increased by up to 50% (we knew differently – see above) since fluoride had stopped being added to the water supply in 1985. (Imagine how that went down with the locals).

However, the Timaru Districts Council's (TDC) policy and development committee merely received Mrs King's letter indicating no further action would be taken. In fact, the then mayor, Wynne Raymond, said: "The political reality is that it is just not winnable, and some mayors throughout New Zealand had not even referred the letter to their council".

That, of course, really upset the dentists who went to the paper thus resulting in big headlines, "Fluoride out; council slammed" with a number of health authorities having their say. Mr O'Loughlin was appalled and said that it was an insult to the Minister of Health and the health sector. They (the councillors) had also been offered (but declined) the chance to hear from community dental health specialist, Martin Lee who had been involved in a fluoridation study comparing Wellington and Canterbury, and had written a paper "100 years of fluoridation". (Martin Lee must have been very disappointed about that). When asked my opinion I said I would have expected the council to have turned it (the letter) down because of the overwhelming majority of those who opposed fluoridation in the 1995 referendum. I said. "The people of Timaru have spoken out against it, and I am sure the public will be delighted".

This created another flurry of letters and ten days later, another article headed: "Debate not over, dentists warn" appeared. This was when Martin Lee stepped into the Timaru debate. He said, "If they (the council) think it's over, they've got another think coming" followed by the usual propaganda, including the comparison of the 5-year-olds in the Wellington and Canterbury study. He ended by criticising the anti-fluoridation campaigners for spreading incorrect information and said: "The anti-fluoridation people are like the George Speight of the health world. They're hijacking the democratic process". That created another uproar amongst the locals. In fact I had a phone call, before I had awakened, by a gentleman who had read the paper and was thoroughly disgusted.

Three days later, 15 August 2000, more headlines: "Fluoridation issue to be discussed again" that said, "The fluoride issue has been given another chance by the Timaru District Council". Mrs King's letter asking to put fluoride in the district's water supplies had been put to rest until the late Cr Olwyn Norton volunteered to take it up again. Cr Norton chaired the council's health issues sub-committee and said the sub-committee was probably the appropriate one to receive information on fluoridation. The sub-committee did not believe there was anything that warranted it being brought to the council's attention. I was at that meeting and as I went out Cr Norton (who hadn't received any support from her colleagues) asked me if I was happy about that. I told her that I was, and the people of Timaru would be very happy also.

Letters followed and the correspondence on the fluoridation issue closed on 26 August, 2000. Letters continued for another two weeks in a weekly free paper, the *High Country Herald*. Then we had a break for about three months until the then Health Minister, Annette King, in December 2000, announced that the Government might soon offer subsidies to help small communities fluoridate their water. She said the benefits for small communities would be huge and it was one of the best public health measures around, plus lots of other propaganda. Lengthy letters (no restriction of length) followed in the *High Country Herald* up until January, 2002.

On 17 November, 2001, headlines in *The Timaru Herald*: "Sugar not the diet baddie", saying that it is not the "baddie" it is often made out to be and is an important part of the diet, according to a new report. The report commissioned by the New Zealand Sugar Company in association with the Nutrition Foundation said that sugar did not cause behavioural problems in children, nor was it the main cause of tooth decay or obesity. This created letters going to both *The Timaru Herald* and *High Country Herald* that turned into a debate about dental decay and fluoride, until May, 2002.

On 13 February, 2002, dentist Mark Goodhew, responded with an article in the *High Country Herald* with headlines: "Sad that an argument relies on shonky science". Another flurry of letters. Then on 30 April, 2002, an article in *The Timaru Herald* headed, "Dentists urge fluoridation" with all the propaganda, urging the South Canterbury Districts Health Board (SCDHB) to push for the power to fluoridate local water supplies. But despite the board's promotion of fluoridation, the TDC said that it had no plans to place the issue on the agenda and it didn't appear as though any councillor was planning to raise the matter for discussion.

It was at that time it was announced that Professor Paul Connett, head of the Chemistry Department, St Lawrence University, New York, USA, would be on a speaking tour, through New Zealand, about the perils of water fluoridation and would be speaking at a public meeting in Timaru on 10 June, 2002.

On 24 May, 2002 another article in *The Timaru Herald* headed: "Caution urged over fluoride push" in which South Canterbury medical officer of health, Daniel Williams said, "The SCDHB should only push for the introduction of fluoride in the water supply if it believed it can be achieved". He also said: "...there was no sound evidence that the substance was dangerous, therefore, despite its introduction being beneficial and would save many taxpayers' dollars in dental care, the board should be cautious in approaching the issue and not become involved unless it could make progress". This, of course, created another round of letters to the paper.

With Paul Connett's meeting on 10 June that year, I wrote to the Ministry of Health, Director General of Health, Karen Poutassi, members of the local dental association, the South Canterbury Medical Officer of Health, Daniel Williams, the mayor and councillors and invited them to attend the meeting. All declined. In fact, printed in *The Timaru Herald*, the secretary of the South Canterbury Dental Association, Tony Page, said they had been advised by the Dental Association not to attend the meeting. My answer to that, in that article was, "If they can't come along and defend fluoridation, they should not be telling us to accept or ingest it."

A good article, on the front page of *The Timaru Herald* the next morning after the meeting headed: "Be rational, anti-fluoride campaigner urges" and displaying a photo of Paul Connett, wearing a tie dedicated to his opponents (it had big chicken on it) and saying, "Not debating the fluoride issue with him makes them chicken". Controversial letters continued through to November, in both *The Timaru Herald* and the *High Country Herald*.

On 30 December 2002, headlines in *The Timaru Herald*: "Fluoridation 'bribe' faces Timaru veto" The article said that the Timaru District Council will receive half of the setting up cost of fluoridating its water supply under a new Government public health measure. But the then mayor, Wynne Raymond, replied that while the MOH want all local bodies to fluoridate their water, he signalled such a move is unlikely here because of the strength of public opposition. I was given plenty of space to reply with my opinion and ended up by saying: "The money offered was a subsidy and there was a new way of spelling subsidy – BRIBE" - which they published.

Next day the editorial headed: "Here we go again". Of course, then there was another flurry of letters through to June 2003. Then there was a small break until 13 November 2003, when there were big headlines in *The Timaru Herald*, "Poor oral health report for SC children" with Martin Lee saying, "The oral health of SC children is poor compared to other parts of New Zealand where fluoridated water supplies are making a difference" plus all the other usual propaganda such as, "A recent New Zealand study shows children receiving fluoridated water to have 30 per cent fewer cavities than those in unfluoridated areas". On 15 November 2003, more headlines emerged, "Health Board should push for fluoridation." It was said that the SCDHB should take the lead and push for water fluoridation. A number of the board member's had a say with one of them referring to Martin Lee's report about the 30 per cent fewer cavities in fluoridated areas, "Those facts cannot be disputed. I think we have a real opportunity to make a difference to the health and well-being of our community and we should not make people wait and pass the buck to someone else". 28 November, 2003, more headlines: "Fluoride future questioned at health forum". I attended this forum. Health officials and members of the SCDHB were put under the spotlight regarding their position on fluoridation. I asked the panel if they had bothered to read both sides of the fluoridation argument and whether they had analysed the available data. I told them, if they had, they would know of the additives that went with fluoride such as lead, mercury, cadmium and selenium. I received the

replies I expected. All the usual propaganda, with one of them saying, "I have read reports from both sides of the argument and I understand if I read everything available on fluoride we'd be here all night". He continued, "I believe there comes a time when board members have to take advice from those they pay to advise them". This was all great because it gave us openings, by way of letters, to get back at them, contradict them and get facts out to the public that otherwise they would not know. 20 December 2003, more headlines: "SCDHB pushes for fluoridation debate". Another great response from the public with excellent letters through to 26 December.

On 31 January 2004, in the Mayor's Weekly Message Mr Raymond announced that the fluoridation issue was on the agenda at the year's first Council meeting. I then wrote a letter to the paper and asked why was fluoridation on the agenda when the 1995 referendum, costing the taxpayer \$42,000, had resulted in an overwhelming vote against it. I also asked, "What had changed?" "Are the citizens of Timaru now calling for fluoridation?"

A few months earlier, Mr Raymond told me of a quote by Robert Heinlein: "There is no worse tyranny than to force a man to pay for what he does not want merely because you think it would be good for him" so, at the bottom of my letter I threw the quote back at him. In the following week's 'Mayor's Weekly Message,' Mr Raymond brought up where I had asked, in a letter to the paper, why fluoridation was on the agenda. In that message he published the letter from the SCDHB, full of the usual, "safe and effective", that oral health in SC is poor, etc, that fluoridation is the most efficient and effective way to improve it, that it is an emotive issue but evidence is clearly in favour of fluoridation and urged the councillors to seriously consider it. Mr Raymond then said, "I am sorry Imelda, but when I receive a letter asking councillors to consider a proposition, I can't pretend I didn't receive the letter and that is why it's on the agenda. This was all great. More letters from people unknown to me

On 25 February, 2004, headlines: "Water to stay fluoride free". It took the TDC less than seven minutes to decide the controversial matter. Councillor Terry Kennedy, who is also on the SCDHB, moved that the letter be received and noted that no further action be taken. And that was that! The motion was passed with Mayor Wynne Raymond and another councillor abstaining. While all this was going on in Timaru there were headlines in the *Timaru Courier*, 19 February 2004, "Potential fluoridation for the Mackenzie". The Mackenzie District Council which covers Fairlie, Tekapo and Twizel, (districts close to Timaru) were sent a letter from the SCDHB with all the usual propaganda, including the poor oral health compared to other fluoridated parts of New Zealand, urging these Community Boards to introduce fluoridation. I was given plenty of space to be able to have my say. 27 February 2004, *The Timaru Herald* headlines: "No fluoride blow to SCDHB". All three community boards said "no" to fluoridation.

The Timaru Herald headlines 26 February, 2004: "TDC fluoride stand bucks WHO view". The article said, "The TDC decided not to return fluoride to the town supply on the same day as the World Health Organisation (WHO) released its report pushing for proper access to fluoride to the world's population. The report said: "The WHO is worried about rising levels of tooth decay around the world and believes proper access to fluoride is the best way to curb the trend" but the then Timaru mayor, Wynne Raymond, was adamant the fluoride issue would not be taken back to the debating table under the then current council. Letters followed.

The Timaru Herald 19 March 2004, headlines: "Fluoridation subsidy announced". The then Health Minister, Annette King said, "Cabinet had approved funding for capital works required to add fluoride to water". Ms King said that because of the public health benefits of adding fluoride to the drinking water, cabinet had approved funding to cover 100 per cent of the cost. This was

further to the earlier announcement of the 50 per cent subsidy.

Big headlines, *High Country Herald*, 21 April, 2004: "Alzheimer-aluminium link urban legend". Peter Ellis, MSc, American Medical Writers Association, Oamaru (we did not know of him) wrote a big article and amongst all sorts of clap-trap, said, "Sadly many quasi-scientific researchers today still quote this original (disproven) research. He attacked a previous writer and said she lists some impressive documents, but none of them is original research which proves a conclusive link. His article concluded with: "I hope in the future the *High Country Herald* will refuse to publish letters which lack scientific evidence, or balance them with scientific-based reasoning". In the same publication there was a very good letter by Tui McCunn, Timaru, with big headlines: "Fluoride known for dumbing down of US" (as of USA). Her first paragraph read, "About 160 million people in the United States drink artificially fluoridated water and 4.2 million of them have Alzheimers dementia". She made lots of statements referring to aluminium and fluoride and finished by saying, "So reduce the risk of Alzheimers by saying "no" to fluoridation". On 26 May 2004, the *High Country Herald* published an excellent letter by Ian Morgan of Oamaru, refuting statements made in Peter Ellis's (21 April) letter that the Alzheimer-aluminium link was an urban legend.

14 April 2004, *The Timaru Herald* headlines: "Fluoride debate in Waimate". The first paragraph read: "Like opening Pandora's box, the Waimate District Council yesterday began discussions whether to add fluoride to the district's water supply. This had stemmed from a letter from the SCDHB asking the Waimate Council to fluoridate their water supply. Waimate is a close district to Timaru. On 30 April I had a letter published in *The Waimate Advertiser* in which I was able to inform the Waimate citizens that a scientific report (thanks to Mark Atkin of Fluoride Action Network (NZ)) had been sent to the council. I was also able to inform these people that this request from the SCDHB to fluoridate the Waimate water supply, as with the Timaru and Mackenzie districts, had originated in a letter to the boards from one person: Canterbury/West Coast Principal Dental Officer, Martin Lee, saying that fluoridation was the most effective and efficient way of improving South Canterbury's oral health. My reply to that statement was that it appears as though Dr Lee had based his theory on dental studies in which he found positive effects on fluoridation and looked no further. I was able to answer that by quoting many positives about the improvement of children's teeth in Timaru after the cessation of fluoridation and the WHO data showing non-fluoridated countries having lower rates of tooth decay than the United States of America, the great champion of fluoridation. There was not another word from Waimate.

1 May 2004, *The Timaru Herald* headlines: "Fluoride not a board matter". A SCDHB member said that the board should not buy into health boards making the decision to add fluoride to local water supplies. Fluoridation had been a topic at District Health Boards New Zealand's (DHBNZ) March meeting where it was suggested that the decision should move from local bodies to DHBs. The reason given was that local bodies were taking up the option in only very small numbers and that DHBNZ agreed with Heath Minister, Annette King, that fluoride was not harmful but very beneficial. I replied by letter 7 May, 2004 saying how in 2000 Mrs King had little success when she wrote to all councils of non-fluoridated areas asking for fluoride to be added to the water supplies. Then, in December 2002, how she offered a bribe by paying for half the cost of setting up fluoridation and again in 2004, a further bribe by paying 100 per cent of the cost. She was still unsuccessful. By putting the decision-making of fluoridating water supplies in the hands of DHBs and Mrs King's appointed puppets, she would hope for greater success. It would be a sad day if there were a lot of Mr/Mrs Hitlers forcing this unapproved, industrial toxic waste muck down our throats with no respect for people with deficiencies of

calcium, magnesium, vitamin C, people with diabetes, cardiovascular and kidney problems. I wrote more.

31 July 2004, *The Timaru Herald* headlines: "Fluoridation not SC issue" A clear message had been sent to Annette King saying that fluoridation is a national issue and that District Health Boards had told the minister a clear signal on fluoridation was required from her. SCDHB chairman, Joe Butterfield, said the minister had been told that it was no longer a local issue and that all DHBs had received responses from local authorities that they were not interested in the fluoride issue. (Joe Butterfield was one of Annette King's appointed members, and chairperson of the Board). Two letters followed on the 10 August 2004. One was mine asking Joe Butterfield a number of questions to which he replied: "The anti-fluoridation groups have made their arguments known, and for each point raised there can be found countering evidence from credible scientific sources. And so the debate continues with him saying a lot more of the usual. The same day, 10 August, another letter, in answer to Joe Butterfield's statement: "...that district local authorities were not interested in the issue" the correspondent said that the majority of New Zealanders will not tolerate being told by central government that their water supplies must be fluoridated. She said, "In addition, if the minister has been informed that local authorities are not interested in the issue, then this is incorrect. Local authorities have not fluoridated water supplies because the communities they serve have emphatically informed them that they do not want their water supplies interfered with". More letters followed, getting back at Joe Butterfield.

One correspondent 21 August 2004 offered a \$1000 to any medical doctor in New Zealand who provided him (via *The Timaru Herald* and by 5 pm, 27 August) with a JP-witnessed affidavit stating that fluoride is 100 percent harmless to humans and has no medical side effects. On 31 August 2004 the correspondent, in reference to his offer, wrote: "The deadline has passed and there has been neither claimant nor sophism from any quarter". He continued, "Maybe no doctors read the offer in the paper? Maybe \$1000 is an insignificant sum compared to a doctor's salary? Maybe there is another plausible reason, such as a silent capitulation? Many mass medication advocates who desire to contaminate public drinking water with toxic industrial waste such as fluoride refuse to provide legal indemnity (or accept liability) in the event that fluoride poisoning such as allergies, sickness, disabilities or premature death may ensure. This is a worrying submission and poor salesmanship. I hereby offer a \$10,000 reward to the first duly certified medical doctor in New Zealand, who provides me, no later than 5 pm on September 3, 2004, with a JP-witnessed affidavit stating verbatim the following. "Fluoride from industrial waste is 100 per cent harmless to humans and has no medical side effects whatsoever. Subsequently, I take full responsibility for any sickness, disability or death, proven to be the result of fluoride ingestion, which was consumed by heeding my counsel, past, present or future." In a follow up letter to his letter (31 August, 2004) offering the \$10,000 reward, Neil Mackintosh wrote a long letter 15 September, 2004, stating that the deadline had elapsed with neither claimant nor sophisticated argument from any quarter, other than a silent acquiescence to my letter. Back in January 2002, Timaru dentist, Mark Goodhew, now President of the NZDA, had this to say, "I have been asked to provide a report that guarantees water fluoridation is 100 per cent safe. I can't. Science and life, just isn't that black and white". And yet he, and other fluoride pushers, continue to say it is safe. Of course, Mark Goodhew has been reminded of that statement many times since.

The Timaru Herald on 6 September, 2004, published an article under very interesting headlines, "Fluoride debate is not just about teeth", by a former Green MP, Ian Ewen-Street, saying that fluoride should not be put into South Canterbury's water supply because there were

some very serious side effects and the one that came to my mind was that it lowered men's sperm counts. Amongst other statements Mr Ewen-Street said that he did not agree with the push by the Government and district health boards to mass medicate people with fluoride. Letters to *The Timaru Herald*, from both sides, continued being published until 5 October.

30 September 2004, *The Courier*, published, front page, a photo of Timaru dentist, Mark Goodhew, with headlines: "Claims lack bite – dentist". Mark Goodhew spoke out about the call from the Fluoride Action Network (FAN) for the Government to impose an immediate moratorium on water fluoridation. In this half page article he (Mark Goodhew) made many statements against anti-fluoridationists, saying that he believed many of the arguments were misleading and as for mass medication he said, "How could something that is good for the well being of the community be classed as mass medication?" He also said that the group (FAN) uses selective information to support its arguments that need to be treated with caution. (Note: in 2005 the medical journal *Lancet*, it was stated that it is fluoridation promoters who selectively use unreliable research to support their case). Very interesting letters (one only in support of fluoridation) including one from a Pharmaceutical chemist, Ph.C.M.P.S., continued through to 21 October, with Mark Goodhew having to defend himself several times. In a reply to my letter Mark Goodhew said, "I am not going to respond to personal attacks, particularly when they are as pretentiously phrased as Neil Mackintosh's. It adds nothing to the discussion". Correspondence on this issue was then closed.

In *The Timaru Herald*, 21 October 2004, another article with big headlines: "S.C. children have poor oral health" with all the usual propaganda. (How many times have we seen these headlines?) More letters followed. *Timaru Herald*, 23 October article headed: "Long wait to get treatment for rotting teeth". More letters followed until September, 2005.

The *High Country Herald*, 6 July, 2005, ran an article headed, "S.C. Children following decay trend". It was mainly concerned about sugar consumption as a result of a study conducted by the University of Otago showing that an average NZ child guzzles almost 6 kg of sugar annually in sweetened drinks. South Canterbury School and Community Dental Services co-ordinator, Frances Milne, is not surprised at the amount of sugar consumed by NZ children. She said that 50 per cent of S.C. five-year-olds are affected by tooth decay, and said that sugar is the main reason for this because sugar decays teeth. She also said that you can talk about other things but the main reason is diet-related. In the same article Martin Lee said that the effects of drinking this amount of sugar have dire consequences on children's teeth. He said, "Timing and frequency of sugar intake are the key factors in the prevention of tooth decay. Decay causing bacteria produces acids that are capable of dissolving tooth structure". He continued: "The natural action of saliva and fluorides buffer the acids and harden and rebuild the tooth surface with the minerals calcium and phosphate. However, the more frequent the intake of sugar, the longer the acid is on the tooth, leaving no time to neutralise it, resulting in the loss of minerals from the tooth surface and when this happens extraction of the tooth is 'the end of the line'".

29 June 2005, the *High Country Herald* headlines: "State of children's teeth a concern". This was an article by Principal Dental Officer for Otago, Alan Roddick, about the oral health of NZ children. He said that he believed the introduction and maintenance of fluoride, particularly in drinking water, was a key intervention to make a difference to children's oral health. He talked about the possible reasons for the lack of improvement, including changing patterns of food and beverages (more sweet foods and soft drinks) among children and adolescents, a failure to address the underlying determinants of inequalities in oral health, no major increase in

community water fluoridation and fluoride toothpaste use, and a failure to make fundamental changes to the access and delivery of oral health services to children and adolescences. He referred to the usual propaganda about fluoridation.

4 August 2005, *The Courier* headlines: "Dentists caution" Timaru dentist, Dr Fraser Dunbar, urged caution over an advertising campaign on carbonated drinks. A brochure distributed nation-wide by Coco-Cola Amatil NZ and Coco-Cola Oceania was a guide to help people make healthy beverage choices. The brochure was in response to the claim that soft drinks were the cause of obesity, etc. Dr Dunbar said that there was no mention of dental health and that tooth decay is caused by both sugar and acids. Letters continued from both anti and pros.

The first letter to *The Timaru Herald* for 2006 was by a correspondent on the 17 May, 2006, blasting the brochure, "Smile for Life", distributed by the SCDHB. On 19 May, 2006, the same correspondent asked what was the cost of producing and delivering the brochure? Medical Officer of Health for Community and Public Health, Dr Daniel Williams, replied, "The Smile for Life campaign received one-off funding from the Ministry of Health. The cost of developing, printing and distributing the brochure in the Canterbury and the South Canterbury households was around \$50,000, and continued with a long letter of the usual. On the same day, 19 May 2006, another letter written by a retired dentist (now deceased) said: "I am surprised and disappointed that your newspaper still finds space for more of what I consider to be grossly distorted and intimidating misinformation... This deprivation of an adequate quantity of an essential dietary item could well be seen as a form of child abuse, which is already disgracefully high". Of course, I got a not very favourable mention, also.

Going back to the 17 May, 2006, another correspondent wrote, "I strongly disagree with Imelda Hitchcock regarding fluoride" and went on with the usual. It had the full appearance of having been written by a health authority. Out of curiosity I did some inquiring into this person. It turned out that people who did know her considered that she was not a person who would be capable of writing such a letter. It seemed as though she was used as a mouth-piece. For her effort she received a lot of flak by letters (including some from me). The public did not like me being attacked.

On 27 May, 2006, a letter written by Dr Martin Lee, Clinical Director School Dental Service of South Canterbury, said, "Imelda Hitchcock is quite wrong when she states that the American Dental Association (ADA) and the Centers for disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concede "the ingestion of fluoride does not prevent dental decay". (I had written that in response to a previous letter written by retired dentist John R Wilkie, 19 May 2006. Dr Lee continued: "It's a pity Mrs Hitchcock didn't look at the CDC's website, because if she had, she would have read that "fluoridation protects teeth in two ways: when delivered through the water supply to children during the tooth forming years., and through direct contact with teeth throughout their life". Martin Lee, in a long letter, said lots more but in the last paragraph he said, "Mrs Hitchcock is not an expert on matters pertaining to fluoridation or oral health, and seems to have quite a lot of trouble both getting her facts right and in making fair and reasonable comparisons on the subject. Read with caution". In reply to that, 1 June 2006, I wrote: "Readers can choose whether they believe Dr Lee or me. The following are quotes and references regarding statements from the CDC, and the ADA.

"The mechanisms of action of fluoride in reducing tooth decay are now widely accepted to be predominantly topical not systemic, i.e. acting directly on the surface of teeth, (CDC 1999,2001). (Achievements in Public Health, 1900-1999: Fluoridation of Drinking Water to Prevent Dental Caries, Mortality and Morbidity Weekly Review, 48(41),933-940 October 22,

1999). This issue can be seen on www.fluoridealert.org. under Fluoride's Topical vs Systemic Effects.”

The cover story of the ADA is entitled, “Swallowing fluoride cannot reduce dental decay”. A quote from the story stated, “fluoride, the key agent in battling caries, works primarily via topical mechanisms----the fluoride incorporated developmentally----that is, systemically into the normal tooth mineral----is insufficient to have a measurable effect on acid solubility”. (The Sciences and Practice of Caries Prevention, cover story, Journal of the American Dental Association, 131,887-899) (Featherstone, J.D.B., JULY 200). I finished my letter by saying “I would like to respond to more of Dr Lee's statements about me but space does not allow”.

Back again to 17 May, 2006 I had a letter published to which SCDHB chief executive, Craig Climo, replied: “The board supports fluoridation and takes its advice from informed, evidence based, respected organisations such as the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation”. Two more paragraphs of the usual and the last one said: “We are well aware of the views of the anti-fluoride lobby, but we don't intend to be distracted by engaging on it. We'll just have to agree to disagree”.

To this I replied: 30 May, 2006, “For the sake of the nation's health I suggest the board take a broader outlook by acting on the advice of the United States National Research Council's (NRC) report on fluoride toxicity which was released on 22 March this year.” I wrote a few more paragraphs about the report and said how it recommended research to clarify the relationship between fluoride and many chronic diseases including cancer, arthritis, dementia, diabetes and thyroid disease. This reinforces the same call by the York Review on fluoridation in 2000. I wrote a paragraph on Robert Isaacson, one of the panelists on that study, his qualifications, and printed his quote about the possible effects of fluoridation: “Something that I wouldn't want to happen to me if had my say in the matter”. I also wrote of Dr Hardy Limeback and his quote: “In my opinion, the evidence that fluoridation is more harmful than beneficial is now overwhelming and policy makers who avoid thoroughly reviewing recent data before introducing fluoridation schemes do so at risk of future litigation”. (This is all great because some people would never know anything about it). Of course, my letter (rather long) was sent off for replies that came back even longer. This must have really upset Craig Climo who said “The information from this study has been misrepresented. In fact, the study was conducted to evaluate US Environmental Protection Agency guidelines for the total amount of fluoride in drinking water. The authors of the study very clearly state: 'Addressing the question of artificial fluoridation, or risk/benefit assessment was not part of the committee's charge”.

I replied to this statement in a letter, 7 June, 2006: “It is true that the NRC was not asked to address artificial fluoridation. Despite the non-request, the report of the NRC expresses such concern about the harmful effects of fluoride in drinking water that it is rather pedantic to argue otherwise simply because it wasn't a question that they were asked to address.” I then followed that up by referring to Dr Kathy Thiessen, a former senior scientist at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and a member of the NRC panel, who stated the following in a personal letter in my possession. She has given me authorization to publish the following excerpts:

“I personally feel that the NRC report is relevant to many aspects of the water fluoridation debate, even though the committee did not directly address water fluoridation, in terms of either risks or benefit.”

“For instance, the report discussed the wide range of drinking water intake among members of the population, which means that groups with different fluoride concentrations in their drinking water may still have overlapping distributions of individual fluoride exposure.”

“We identified population subgroups who are at higher risk than usual to problems due to

fluoride exposure, due to factors such as very high water consumption rates or increased retention of fluoride in the body.”

“The report also discussed a number of health effects plausibly associated with fluoride exposure that should be considered in any future risk assessment for fluoride, besides the effects that have historically been attributed to fluoride. Several issues pertaining to the use of silicofluorides in municipal water were brought up, although it was outside the committee's scope to address them in detail.”

“The report attempted to draw together much of what is known about the effects of fluoride exposure on human health and to identify the sizable areas that are still not fully understood, for example, the molecular mechanisms by which fluoride exerts its effects.”

“We were not able to rule out a carcinogenic effect of fluoride. We reported that fluoride exposure is plausibly associated with a number of other health effects, including neurotoxicity, gastrointestinal, and endocrine problems.”

“We also did not say that the practice of fluoridation is safe or that fluoride concentrations in water of 0.7 to 1-2mg/L are safe – we did not evaluate that.”

“We parted ways with previous reviews of fluoride by saying that severe dental fluorosis is an adverse health effect.”

Getting back to my letter 30 May, 2006, Dr Daniel Williams also replied saying “This letter is another example of misquotations and quoting out of context and lots more”, however, I felt as though I had covered his comments in my letter of 7 June, 2006.

8 June, 2006, another mouth-piece (B Campbell) wrote, “Imelda Hitchcock challenges readers (1 June) whether to believe Dr Martin Lee or her. To be able to judge this it is important to look at past history. She continued, “In spite of Mrs Hitchcock saying after the fluoridation referendum in 1995, ‘I have been battling against fluoride for 15 years and it is the end of the issue as far as I am concerned’ (These were the words of a reporter, not quite the way I put it) in *The Timaru Herald*, 16 October, 1995, we have continued to hear from her ever since”. The correspondent continued to refer to a pamphlet which was ordered to be withdrawn by the ASCB and how I personally handed these pamphlets around Timaru and Temuka before they were ordered to be withdrawn. When challenged about them her comment to the paper was, “It's too late now, the pamphlet has been well and truly scattered.” (12 October 1995).

My reply was, “B Campbell's letter (8 June, 2006) is a personal attack on my integrity. I believe (the editor added the words 'I believe') she wrote a very similar letter 1 February, 1997. My reply is the same now as it was then, “The 1995 fluoridation referendum was supposed to settle the issue 'once and for all'. When the referendum, costing \$42,000 of taxpayers' money, resulted in an overwhelming vote against it, I expected that would have been the end of the issue in Timaru. But that was not to be, for the promoters of fluoridation never give up.” I was able to quote where the issue was raised again continually in 1996, 1997 and ever since. I also said, “Surely B Campbell didn't expect me to sit back and let it happen without fighting for what I believe”. Regarding the pamphlet, the Advertising Standards Authority ruled against both the wording: “Are you sure it's poisonous? Yes” and the display of the skull and cross bones because it “signified instantaneous or imminent death”. I continued: “Many readers will remember this symbol was displayed on the containers of fluoride which were then added to our water supply before fluoridation ceased in 1985. After those pamphlets were ordered to be withdrawn no more were distributed. B Campbell's statement about me saying that it was too late to withdraw the pamphlet, is taken out of context. When the paper asked me about the pamphlet, I naturally said “It is too late now, the pamphlet has been well and truly scattered”. While all this was going on there were excellent, informative and supportive, letters being

published through to 19 July, 2006. (Note: the Advertising Standards Appeal Board has since overruled the original ruling on use of the skull and cross bones).

26 August, 2006, headlines: "Doctor wants fluoride back". Dr Martin Lee went on about the state of the teeth saying, "The epidemic of tooth decay amongst children was partly due to diets high in sugar and a failure to brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. However, fluoridated water was the most important thing a community could do to improve the situation". He also referred to how the decay levels had leapt 25 percent in Ashburton since fluoride was removed from the drinking water in 2002 (contradicted by official Government figures). We had some interesting letters (for and against) published in response to Dr Lee's request. One started, "There she blows again. Imelda Hitchcock and her organised, catalogued letter factory of the anti-fluoride network of New Zealand". Another one: "Imelda Hitchcock continues her efforts to deprive our community of the benefits of a procedure described by the United States Centre for Disease Control and Prevention as one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the 20th century". A little more about me and some more of the usual propaganda. Our opponents do not seem to realise when they keep attacking me that they are becoming very unpopular, as the public do not like personal attacks, but prefer to stick to the facts. But they do give us great opportunities to argue with the latest facts. Letters went through to 20 September.

The Timaru Herald, 13 December, 2006, huge headlines: "Council cool on fluoridation". Health bodies are asking for fluoridation to be reconsidered; that fluoridated water was in the interests of good health and the Timaru District Council (TDC) should reconsider the issue, but the TDC wants none of it. Mayor, Janie Annear, said that the council did not intend to reopen the fluoride debate. She said that people voted against fluoridation in the referendum 10 years ago. Mrs Annear also said, "This is a Government-driven issue and if the DHB and the Government are so keen on it then they should do something about it. The Government should use the powers it has to implement the policy rather than pushing it on to local authorities". There were other comments but this is a classic and I wonder who he was referring to!!!! Ken Talbot, (a retired doctor and one who has always written letters against us) said, "Reports showed that 'plutey' Christchurch had the same incidence of tooth decay as those who lived in South Auckland, with its bad diets, because of the fluoride up there". (Can you understand that?!) He continued, "The way I look at it, the anti-fluoride campaigners are getting older and won't live for ever". However, Yvonne McDonald, Christchurch, in a letter, 16 September, 2006, soon put him into place by telling him that there is an increasing groundswell of people of all age groups and from all walks of life, and in this neck of the woods and throughout the country, who oppose the practice of water fluoridation.

Letters continued through to 15 January, 2007. *The Timaru Herald*, 16 January, 2007: "Govt throws cash into fluoridation debate". The Government dangled a financial carrot in the debate over fluoridation in Ashburton. Dr Daniel Williams asked the Ashburton Council to revisit its 2002 decision to remove fluoride from the water supply. The district council decided to hold a referendum on the issue. The then Minister of Health, Annette King, announced that if the residents vote in favour of fluoridation the Ministry of Health will pay up to \$574,000 towards it. This, of course, started off another succession of letters through to 17 March. Fortunately, the fluoridation referendum resulted in defeat of 55% to 45%.

On 26 January, 2007, I wrote to *The Timaru Herald* saying how pleasing it was to see so many letters written by people I did not know, expressing their opposition to the push for fluoride in the water (13 December 2006). I then wrote, "It is obvious those people had availed themselves of information on the dangers of fluoride, unlike the fluoride pushers, including

members of the SCDHB". However, the board may not receive all available information. I have just discovered a statement published in the Health Service Review and Evaluation, a few years ago, saying that the decision to notify area boards of current U.S. Health Service studies does not lie with the Department of Health". I continued, "In 2005 I attempted to inform the Plunket Society that the Burlington, Vermont, Health Board in America held serious concerns about fluoride exposure of infants, and warned that infant formula should not be made with fluoridated water. The ADA has now issued the same warning.

The reply to me from Plunket was that it currently uses the Ministry of Health background paper, "Food and nutrition guidelines for healthy infants and toddlers", as evidence for nutritional issues. The guideline clearly sets the fluoride needs of infants and children, with specific reference to infant formulas. Fluoridated water used to reconstruct infant formula is the infant's main source of fluoride".

My reply to that was, "It appears the ministry does not know that in March, 1979, the FDA deleted two paragraphs of the Federal Register which had classified fluorine as "essential or probably essential". This deletion was the immediate result of a 1978 court deliberation. It now rests in the FDA category as "not generally recognised as safe"

An article in *The Timaru Herald* (4 July, 2008) was full of the usual, bad news about teeth in South Canterbury that is largely due to the lack of water fluoridation and is not going to improve in the absence of fluoridated water. It then said "No campaigning for fluoride to be added to water supplies is planned. Promotion of fluoridation is a priority for SCDHB, however, the responsibility for decisions to fluoridate public water supplies lie with local government". It continued, "A referendum of South Canterbury territorial local authorities (TLAs) in 1995 supported the decision to not fluoridate... The three TLAs (Timaru, Mackenzie and Waimate) also made a decision in 2004/05 to reject the recommendation of the SCDHB and chose not to fluoridate public water supplies". A few letters followed, the last being 24 July, 2008 and the issue has not surfaced since.

Acknowledgement

All this could not have been achieved without the help and support of many people dedicated to the issue. From this battle there have been some everlasting genuine friendships formed. This campaign has taken me to many places, and has given me the privilege of meeting many professionals and researchers from all over the world. It has been a wonderful experience, and one from which I have enjoyed knowing that such a large number of people have been helped.

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