

Doris Mendiola - Irradiator at Hon. Int. Airport

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Subject: Irradiator at Hon. Int. Airport

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I consider myself an environmentalist, concerned with global warming, population explosion, loss of bio-diversity, pollution, and other problems of our interdependent world. I recycle whatever can be recycled. I have had a solar water heater on my roof since 1976. When I was still teaching, I commuted to the University by bicycle. On our morning walks, my wife and I pick up litter from the streets and the beach. I write letters of protest to our Congressional delegation when they are considering environmental issues. But I have learned not to be panicked by the tyranny of words.

The Bush administration has pushed the "terrorism" button until many people see terrorists "under the bed." The aim of terrorists is to so scare us that we will not go about life in a normal manner, that we will not make intelligent choices in bettering our lives. A good example was Jan TenBruggentate's article in the Honolulu Advertiser of Jan. 9, 2007, which included the argument of those opposed to the placing at the airport of an irradiator to treat agricultural products for shipment to the mainland because it might be a target of terrorists. Playing the "here-come-the-terrorists" game when such chances are virtually nil is letting the terrorists win.

If Hawai'i is to diversity its economy, we need to take advantage of every opportunity to use modern science to broaden our opportunities. Having a SAFE process which will enable our farmers to ship their products to the mainland is one way to free ourselves from the constraints of an economy based on tourism.

Irradiation is a commonplace activity in our modern world. I have a family history of heart problems, and as a preventative action, I have twice undergone a thallium perfusion test of my heart. As a part of that test I was injected with a radioactive isotope of thallium, Th-201. I survived. When my mother had thyroid cancer, I watched my brother, a nuclear medicine specialist, give our mother a "cocktail" of radioactive iodine, I-123. She was cured. I have learned not to be frightened by words like "irradiation" and "terrorism." It is important that we take reasonable precautions, but that we do not allow irrational fears to block us from advancing our way of life.

Robert E. Potter, Professor Emeritus
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