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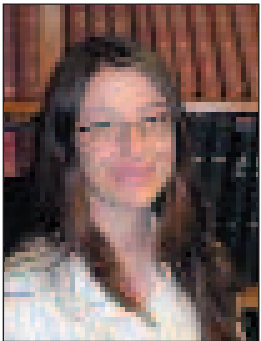
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Contemplate This



In the midst of our June issue production, the ABC-TV program “20/20” featured a commentary by John Stossel entitled “Is bottled Water Better Than Tap.” The commentary stirred my interest and raised some questions I thought I should share with you.

The program ran a test, offering people to taste New York City tap water and five brands of bottled water. The purpose of the study was to find out whether people would be able to tell the difference if they didn’t know what they were drinking. Many of the people who participated in the experiment told “20/20” they were bottled water drinkers, and some of the participants were even

loyal to a particular bottled water brand.

The results were certainly interesting. New York City tap water received high taste marks from a large number of participants. The five brands of bottle water also tested well, with some brands not as high as anticipated by some consumers.

Several days after the program aired, the International Bottled Water Association (IBWA) released a statement that the research was inadequate, adding that the “IBWA stands up for consumer bottled water choice.”

According to IBWA, the program lacked balance because although the laboratory tests performed by “20/20” on bottled water demonstrated the consistent safety and quality of bottled water, “this crucial fact was only glossed over in the program.”

This five-minute segment on bottled water versus municipal water generated quite a buzz.

What I found particularly interesting was the fact that some people actually refused to participate in the test altogether because they didn’t want to drink tap water. While there are some arguments whether bottlers of water gain from the consumers concerns and mistrust in municipal water, I think the main point is the fact that consumers in general are concerned with the quality and safety of the water they drink.

A poll on the ABC website showed that 56.7% of 1,837 participants think bottled water tastes better than what comes out of the tap; 35.7% thought it didn’t; and 7.5% were unsure.

Again, my argument here is not about bottled water alone but the POU/POE industry as well. Consumers are becoming more educated about water, and with that their concern about tap water increases. Some consumers choose bottled water simply because of its aesthetic qualities, but others focus on health and safety concerns.

IBWA made several very good points in their statement, one of which noted that there are thousands of tap system across the U.S., and most are delivering quality drinking water; however, the program didn’t offer “apples-to-apples comparison in which tap water samples from other municipalities were tasted and compared to New York City tap water.”

I think this report underlines that it is our responsibility to educate the public and the government about the nation’s water status, contamination issues, infrastructure issues and water treatment technologies.

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coming up next month

The July issue of *Water Quality Products* will feature a technical update on software designed specifically for the workflow of water companies, focus on activated carbon, treatment systems, sales and business columns and a Q&A session with the International Ozone Association. Make sure to visit our website at www.wqp-mag.com and update your Buyer’s Guide listings in time for our August Annual Buyer’s Guide issue.