

EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

Vol. 19, No. 3 ♦ Fall 2001



SHELL GAMES IN
THE DIAMOND
COMMUNITY—
NORCO,
LOUISIANA

VIEQUES: NOT ONE
MORE BOMB,
NOT ONE MORE
BULLET

ACTION LINE:
STATE-BY-STATE
COVERAGE OF
LOCAL ORGANIZING

CHEJ STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Lois Marie Gibbs

DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS
Charlotte Brody

SCIENCE DIRECTOR
Stephen Lester

FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR
Sharon Franklin

ORGANIZER/TRAINER
Larry Yates

ORGANIZER/SPANISH RESOURCES COORDINATOR
Adrián Boutoureira

DIOXIN CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR
Monica Rohde

DIOXIN CAMPAIGN ASSOCIATE
Heather Gormly-Rack

**HEALTH CARE WITHOUT HARM
D.C. CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR**
Cecilia Deloach

HCWH MEMBERSHIP SERVICES COORDINATOR
Jolie Patterson

**CHILD PROOFING OUR COMMUNITIES CAMPAIGN
COORDINATOR**
Marlan Maralit

LIBRARIAN
Barbara Sullivan

EDITOR/RESEARCH ASSOCIATE
Ron Nicosia

GRANTS MANAGER
Maryll Kleibrink

MAJOR GIFTS MANAGER
Anita Uyehara-McCartin

BOOKKEEPER
Hae-Young Kang

MEMBERSHIP MANAGEMENT ASSISTANT
Dorothea Gross

CHEJ BOARD MEMBERS

MURRAY LEVINE, NY
Chairman

CLYDE FOSTER, AL
Concerned Citizens Of Triana

VILMA HUNT, MA

LUELLA KENNY, NY
Love Canal Medical Fund

PAME KINGFISHER, NM
Shining Waters

ESPERANZA MAYA, CA
People For Clean Air And Water

SUZI RUHL, FL
Legal Environmental Assistance Fund

ALONZO SPENCER, OH
Save Our County

A SECOND ASSAULT

To all those who lost relatives, friends, and coworkers in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we offer our deepest sympathy.

Our thoughts are also with the fire fighters, police, rescue workers, and volunteers who have worked so hard since the attacks to try to save lives.

Despite assurances from government officials that the disaster sites pose no risk to these rescue workers and to the public, we remain concerned about long-term health effects. The collapse of the World Trade Center produced a massive amount of chemically contaminated smoke, dust, and debris. Although the EPA has done some testing to measure levels of asbestos and lead, it's likely we'll never know what rescue workers and the public were and are being exposed to.

A layer of dust—in some cases more than six inches thick—covers apartments and offices near the site. No one is talking to people about the fact that this dust contains toxic chemicals that may pose significant public health risks.

The full impact of this second assault needs to be assessed and steps taken to protect rescue workers and the public:

- ◆ People need to have information written in many languages that describes precautionary steps to take when entering areas near the disaster site as well as when cleaning homes of dust and materials. The last thing people should do is to sweep up the dust since this causes potentially contaminated particles to become airborne and breathable. At a minimum, those with asthma will be at increased risk.

- ◆ A registry should be established of the brave men and women who assisted in the search and rescue mission; as well of those who live or work near the site. These people would be given medical tests to evaluate their health and to look for early signs of adverse effects. This registry would allow us to track people to see if there are any long-term health effects from exposures to the potentially toxic debris and dust.

- ◆ This registry could also provide critical information to evaluate the health of those who were exposed. If the incidence of a particular health problem is greater in people with high levels of exposure, this could provide important information for others with lower exposures. Even people with low exposure should be monitored since early detection of disease is critical to successful treatment.

- ◆ In the future, the federal government must be prepared, within a few hours, to supply large quantities of protective air breathing equipment to the disaster location. It is important to protect people from the toxic elements in buildings, including asbestos, lead, mercury, and dioxins.

We certainly hope that in the future we won't need breathing equipment, brochures describing the safest way to clean up after such an event, or a registry of people who are victims of another attack. But the tragic events of September 11 have demonstrated how ill-prepared we are for such an assault.



Lois Marie Gibbs

Executive Director
Center for Health, Environment and Justice

EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

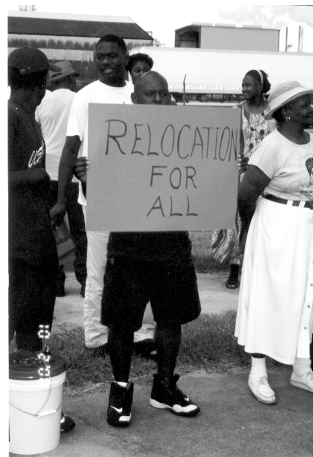
Vol. 19, No. 3 ♦ Fall 2001

The Center for Health, Environment and Justice was founded in 1981 by Lois Gibbs, who together with her neighbors won the relocation of more than 900 families from their neighborhood after it was contaminated by chemicals leaking from the Love Canal landfill in Niagara Falls, New York. The center's mission is to help people build democratic, community-based organizations to address public health and environmental threats. We believe strongly that the best way to solve local problems is from the bottom up, when the people directly affected speak for themselves and have a meaningful role, as equals, in any and all decisions that affect their lives, homes and family. Our focus and resources are devoted to helping local community based organizations form, grow, and become effective in achieving their goals. We do this by providing information, advice, training, and technical support.

CHEJ's web site (www.chej.org) has a new look! Our site explains the full range of organizing and technical assistance that CHEJ provides. Our on-line campaign pages contain news updates, the full text of recent CHEJ reports, and suggestions for getting involved in our work. Our expanded site also includes articles from past issues of EBY. Take a look and let us know what you think!



Center for Health, Environment
and Justice, Inc.
150 S. Washington Street
Suite 300 (P.O. Box 6806)
Falls Church, VA 22040
(703) 237-2249
chej@chej.org ♦ www.chej.org



Diamond residents respond to Shell's offer to relocate only half the community. Photo by Anne Rolfes at demonstration last October following release of "Shell Games."

SHELL GAMES IN THE DIAMOND COMMUNITY— NORCO, LOUISIANA

In a town heavily polluted by a Shell oil refinery, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade is assisting residents in their determined fight for relocation. 4

VIEQUES: NOT ONE MORE BOMB, NOT ONE MORE BULLET

Behind the sustained civil disobedience that is forcing the U.S. to give up its naval base on Vieques lies a long history of resistance. 7

ACTION LINE 10

CAMPAIGNS

CHILD PROOFING OUR COMMUNITIES 19

STOP DIOXIN EXPOSURE 20

HEALTH CARE WITHOUT HARM 21

RESOURCES 22

Everyone's Backyard is published quarterly by the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, Inc. The editor is Ron Nicosia. Design and Production is done by *Page Artistry*, Rochester, NY. Printed by Ecoprint of Silver Spring, Maryland. The cover and text are 100% recycled, 100% post-consumer waste paper, not bleached with chlorine. Printed using low-VOC soybean inks.

Library of Congress #ISSN 0749-3940. Copyright by CHEJ. Reproduction by permission only. Center for Health, Environment and Justice, P.O. Box 6806, Falls Church, VA 22040, (703)237-2249. Unsolicited manuscripts, news items, artwork, photographs and other submissions are welcome. All submissions become the property of CHEJ and will not be returned unless special arrangements are made in advance.

BY ANNE ROLFES

SHELL GAMES IN THE DIAMOND COMMUNITY—NORCO, LOUISIANA

A chemical release is never a good thing, but if ever one happened in the right place at the right time, it was the release that happened in December 1998 in Norco, Louisiana. One day after a bus tour by the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC), Shell Chemical called a chemical emergency due to fears that an accident—a tank overpressure—might lead to a catastrophic explosion. The NEJAC tour was in the area to highlight the relocation struggle of Norco's African American community, known as Diamond. The goal of the community's struggle was relocation for the entire neighborhood. The target of the community's actions was Shell Chemical.

Denny Larson, who helped develop the Bucket Brigade with Communities for a Better Environment in California, was in Louisiana for the NEJAC meeting. When he got word of the chemical spill, he raced to Norco with his bucket to get an air sample with the Diamond citizens. Norco's first citizen air sample was taken, and a decade-long relocation struggle—one that Shell aggressively opposed—was reinvigorated.

Photographs remain of local schoolchildren shielding their faces from chemicals that day, but Shell's repeated claims that the chemicals were "harmless" and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's (LDEQ) failure to act would have sentenced the accident to just another citizen complaint. The results of the bucket air sample changed all that. "When I talked with Norco residents, they told me the neighborhood was stinking from the chemical release and people were ill," said Denny Larson. "As I was running out the door at NEJAC with my bucket, I told EPA enforcement officials I was on my way to take an air sample in Norco because of a spill. I asked them what they were going to do. They just shrugged their shoulders."

The bucket air sample revealed thirteen chemicals in the air on that day. "LDEQ tried to ignore our fears, as usual, and Shell would admit nothing," said Margie Richard, President of Concerned Citizens of Norco. "But the bucket proved us right." After much agitation by NEJAC members and publication of the sample results, the U.S. EPA slapped a \$27,500 fine on Shell Chemical.

Since December 1998, Shell has gone from ignoring Concerned Citizens of Norco's demand for relocation to actually making an offer to relocate families on two of the four streets of the neighborhood. Since Shell is excluding half of the historic community, the campaign goes on.

A COMMUNITY WITH A LONG HISTORY

Though Norco is today a company town, the community has been in existence since the days before the Civil War. In the early 1920's, when the first refinery moved in, the town was known as Sellers. In lockstep with corporate patterns of tak-



Diamond Bucket Brigade sampler Bessie Smith in her yard; Shell Chemical in the background. Photo by Anne Rolfes.

ANNE ROLFES IS CURRENTLY THE DIRECTOR OF THE LOUISIANA BUCKET BRIGADE.

ing over cultures and communities, the town's name was changed from Sellers to Norco. This stands for New Orleans Refinery Company. Today, as citizens battle for relocation and clean air, industry defenders point to the name of the town as proof of the town's inextricable link with industry. "People around here have a memory problem," says Margie Richard. "We have a rich history that began long before any plants moved in."

As neighborhoods go, Norco's African American community of Diamond is rare. Many of the families of this neighborhood have lived here for generations, since the days before the Civil War. Consisting of four blocks and about 220 homes, Diamond is located thirty miles west of New Orleans. Nestled alongside the Mississippi River, this community is a focal point of African American history. Sadly, Shell Chemical paved over much of that history when it moved in in the 1950s.

Today, Diamond is sandwiched between Shell Chemical and the giant Motiva refinery—partially owned by Shell—on the other side of town. The entire Diamond neighborhood lives and breathes within 2,000 feet of toxic pollution releases and potentially deadly disasters. Memories of fatal disasters—in 1973 and 1988—haunt the neighborhood. The Concerned Citizens of Norco have been fighting to get away from the plants for twelve long years. In the last two years, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade has joined the battle for relocation.

A TOXIC NEIGHBOR

Throughout 1999, citizen air samples showed a noxious mix of chemicals in Norco. Many of the sulfurs detected—carbonyl sulfide and carbon disulfide—were over the Texas standards for those chemicals. (Louisiana has no standards for these chemicals). In addition, benzene, toluene, and styrene were detected. Methyl ethyl ketone, the same chemical found on that fateful day in December, continued to show up in the bucket results. Some of the results violated state standards. Even those that did not posed a chilling, familiar question: what is the effect of long term, low level exposure to a mix of chemicals, what Diamond residents call a toxic soup? Shell and LDEQ have never answered this question.

Concerned Citizens of Norco used the buckets to expose the ongoing harm in their neighborhood as evidence that the area was an unsafe place to live. In November of 1999, the results of the year's bucket samples and other toxic release information were published in, "Shell Norco, Toxic Neighbor," a collaborative report between Concerned Citizens of Norco, Communities for a Better Environment, The Sierra Club, Xavier University Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, and Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund. The release of this report had a major impact on Shell and on the campaign.

Despite the fact that Shell had released a report of its own, "Shell Norco, Toxic Neighbor" took the momentum and the

GROUPS RALLY AT SHELL PLAZA

On June 20, Lois Gibbs, executive director of the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, joined members of thirty-five groups from across the country in a rally at Shell Plaza in New Orleans to demand relocation for the entire Diamond community. At the rally, Ted Schettler of Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility spoke on the health impact of living so close to so many toxic chemicals. Lois emphasized that winning relocation was a matter of political organizing. When members of the group attempted to deliver a letter to Shell CEO Steve Miller asking for relocation for the entire Diamond community, Shell's public relations spokesperson refused to allow them to enter the building, though she accepted the letter. The rally was sponsored by Concerned Citizens of Norco, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, and the Coming Clean Coalition.

Photo by Lois Gibbs.



headlines on that day. The report's release led the evening news on every station. The bucket—always a press favorite for the citizen action it highlights—played a central role in exposing Shell Norco.

One week after the report's release, the manager of Shell-Motiva called to arrange a meeting. The meeting took place in the home of a Diamond resident. It was the first time ever that Shell came out to discuss relocation.

THE CAMPAIGN MARCHES ONWARD

Throughout 2000, Shell repeatedly attempted to stall and delay. The key to preventing this tactic from working was to write down what Shell said in meetings and in phone calls and to send Shell documentation of their promises. When Shell ignored the deadlines, the LABB and Concerned Citizens issued press releases exposing Shell's shady business dealings with the community. The groups worked the media and Shell's tactics were exposed.

During this period the media attention was crucial. The exposure embarrassed Shell and forced them to meet with the community. Also critical was following up on developments in a timely manner and maintaining the unity of the group.

One of the turning points occurred in March of 2000. After a community meeting in which Shell managers told different things to different people, divisions started to appear in the group. Concerned Citizen members were angry—imagining that some were privy to information while others were excluded. This was quickly identified as a divisive tactic purposely used by Shell. The group's response was to collect all of the promises made by Shell at the meeting, and to take the best promise made and assume that to be Shell's stance. Since one of the managers had mentioned a relocation program, the die was cast. The group turned from being angry about not hearing certain words to excitement and a sense of victory at the possibility of an offer.

SHELL GAMES—DIVIDE AND CONQUER

When the relocation offer finally came in September of 2000, it was a victory with a cruel blow: half of the community was excluded. In addition, the offer included prices that would force Diamond residents into debt. The LABB and Concerned Citizens of Norco released "Shell Games" in October of 2000, exposing Shell's attempts to buy property on the cheap. Two days after the release of the report, Shell sent letters to Diamond residents assuring them that the minimum property offer would be \$50,000 (the report had exposed Shell's past average buy outs in the neighborhood at little more than \$25,000). Another victory for Diamond community.

MORE WORK TO DO

The victory, though, is incomplete. Shell has thus far refused to expand the offer to all four streets of the neighborhood. A community that survived slavery and segregation is now being threatened by Shell.

On June 5, 2001, the roar of the refinery flare was so loud that Audrey Eugene—who is currently excluded from the program—could hear it in her living room. She smelled a bad odor, too. She took her bucket outside and took a sample. The results showed carbon disulfide—a chemical that attacks the cardiovascular system—at dangerous levels. The strategy now is to continue to prove that residents living on the two streets Shell is excluding are being exposed to dangerous chemicals. The community will continue to take bucket samples until it wins a full and just relocation for the entire Diamond neighborhood. ■

Editor's note: At the end of August, Diamond residents were outraged to find out that Shell had purchased an eleven-acre wooded area along the eastern side of Diamond. The Diamond Community is now surrounded by Shell-owned property. At a rally at the end of August to protest Shell's purchase of the property, Gaynel Johnson, a member of Concerned Citizens of Norco, said, "You mean to tell me that Shell cares more about trees and grass than human beings? That hurts."

THE BUCKET BRIGADE

The purpose of the Bucket Brigade is to give citizens who live next to oil refineries and chemical plants the tools they need to document the chemical assault that they endure every day of their lives. Communities for a Better Environment set up the first Bucket Brigade in 1994 in Contra Costa County, California to assist the Regional Accident Prevention Coalition in their struggle against polluting oil refineries and chemical facilities. The bucket itself is a relatively simple device that utilizes a "grab sampling" technique: the bucket traps a few liters of air in a Teflon-type bag that is then sent to a laboratory for analysis. Bucket air sampling can provide an accurate measurement of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and sulfur compounds in the air.

Louisiana's high concentration of petrochemical facilities makes it an ideal place for the Bucket Brigade. In January 2000, with the support of Communities for a Better Environment, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade (LABB) was established. LABB works with community groups around Louisiana to assist them in strategizing to best use their air samples, photographs, and video cameras in their local campaigns. In the case of Norco, LABB is assisting Diamond residents in their campaign for relocation.

To find out more information about the campaign in Diamond, the Concerned Citizens of Norco, and the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, please see www.labucketbrigade.org.

BY LARRY YATES

VIEQUES: NOT ONE MORE BOMB, NOT ONE MORE BULLET

The struggle that has put the tiny Puerto Rican island of Vieques in today's headlines began sixty years ago. In the 1940s, the U.S. Navy acquired most of the island's land as a site for military practice, buying homes at low prices and bulldozing them. The Navy rapidly transformed the island into one of the world's busiest bombing ranges. Vieques residents lost their land and their peace of mind and gained few jobs or economic benefits. Into the 1960s, the Navy pressed to take more land, proposing that the entire island be evacuated, even its cemeteries.

Viequesenses held their first demonstration against the Navy in 1943. In 1964, a militant movement of residents beat back an attempt by the Navy to claim the entire south coast of Vieques. In February of 1978, fishermen from Vieques sailed into waters forbidden to them by the Navy, forcing the Navy to cancel its military exercises there. Later that year, La Cruzada pro Rescate de Vieques—the Crusade to Rescue Vieques—was formed, joining the Fishermen's Association in their fight. In May of 1979, twenty-one people were arrested by the Navy as they prayed on a beach in a restricted area. Some of those arrested were sentenced to prison terms; one of these, Angel Rodríguez Cristóbal, died in his cell in Tallahassee, Florida, in circumstances that Viequesenses still consider suspicious.

THE MOVEMENT TO FREE AND DEVELOP VIEQUES

The organization that now leads the movement to end the Navy's abuse of Vieques and restore the island's health and prosperity was launched in the spring of 1993. With the cold war over, military bases were being closed all over the U.S. At the same time, local residents in Vieques were outraged by several incidents of Navy recklessness, including the

dropping of live bombs near civilian areas. Meeting in an elementary school, one hundred and fifty Viequesenses, many of them longtime veterans of the struggle, created the Comité Pro Rescate y Desarrollo de Vieques—the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques. According to Robert Rabin, a founder of the group still active today, "We decided to get as many people related to the struggle as possible together to discuss the need to form a formal body."

The Comité's vision went beyond ending the bombing of Vieques. Its ultimate goal was the long-term development of the island as a healthy place to work and live. Rabin explains, "Its name included both 'Rescue'—getting the Navy out—and the 'Development' which would come afterwards—in other words, a community vision of a future Vieques without the Navy."

After more than half a century of Navy abuse, just ending the bombing won't solve Vieques' problems. The population of the island has dropped from 30,000 in 1940 to just over 9,000. The remaining residents of Vieques face poverty, high unemployment, and serious environmental health problems. The toxic



Fisherman heads out to sea to confront the Navy. Photo courtesy of Vieques Libre (www.viequeslibre.org).

products of the bombings, including depleted uranium, have contaminated the drinking water, sea, air, and soil of Vieques. Unexploded bombs on the island are a serious threat.

Since 1995, Viequesenses have worked with economists and other experts to develop a vision of a free and re-developed Vieques. Two ideas are central: 1) a community land trust to ensure community control of land restored to Viequesenses, and 2) community education to ensure that Viequesenses have the skills and information to participate fully in their own future. In *Development of a Free Vieques*, Rabin points out that another critical component is environmental decontamination, which should not only be paid for by the Navy but should also provide local residents with "training and technology transfer so we are not dependent

forever on specialized knowledge related to making Vieques safe.”

The Comité also understood from the beginning that the fight for Vieques should be international. They reached out to communities with similar issues in Korea, Okinawa, Hawaii, Ecuador, Guam, and elsewhere. Since 1996, Viequenses have participated in international meetings in the Philippines, Okinawa and Washington DC, have hosted delegations on the island from around the world, and have presented their grievances to the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization. Activists around the world have turned to Vieques as a model, requesting, for example, training materials on civil disobedience used by Viequenses.

The movement to free Vieques has focused, of course, on applying pressure on the decision-makers at the Pentagon and the White House. The Comité’s strategy has been to build support in a variety of sectors. The first step, in 1993, was to establish solid support from the municipal government of Vieques and from the Congress of Puerto Rico. Then Vieques began to make its case to the U.S. Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House.

Along the way, the Comité has gained support from a number of other religious bodies, including National Council of Churches, and more recently from labor unions and Operation PUSH and other civil rights groups. Anti-militarist groups like the Proyecto Caribeño de Justicia y Paz in Puerto Rico and the Fellowship of Reconciliation in the mainland U.S. have been longtime and reliable supporters. In addition, there have been groups in

cities with large Puerto Rican populations like Chicago and New York City organizing in solidarity with Vieques since at least the 1970s, and these groups have continued to work with the Comité. Today they include National Boricua Human Rights Network in Chicago, Todo New York Con Vieques, and other groups from Los Angeles to Camden, New Jersey.

But none of these alliances, strategies, and visions would have any meaning without continuing resistance on the island itself. “In the final resort,” says Wanda Colon, Director of the Proyecto Caribeño de Justicia y Paz, “the action of the community, the people, are what matters—we are the ones who are going to win.”

SOLIDARITY AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

With the formation of the Comité, the struggle on the island intensified. Soon afterwards, the U.S. government added insult to injury by proposing the deployment of a massive system known as the Relocatable-Over-The-Horizon-Radar, partly in Vieques and partly on the main island of Puerto Rico. In October of 1995, 60,000 people marched against this project in San Juan. On International Women’s Day, March 8, 1998, hundreds of Viequenses blocked the entrance to a naval facility for several hours.

Then, on April 19th, 1999, David Sanes Rodríguez, a civilian employee of the Navy, was killed by Navy bombs that missed their target. U.S. Congressman José Serrano, who was born in Puerto Rico, called that day “a day that forever changed the relationship between the Navy and the island.” Emotion—and resistance—overflowed in Vieques and in the communities—in Puerto Rico and elsewhere—that support Vieques’s struggle.

In this moment of crisis, Puerto Rico’s three sharply divided political parties, as well as its diverse churches, came

together on common ground. The governor of Puerto Rico, though politically close to then President Clinton, yielded to pressure and authorized a commission to study the Vieques situation. That commission, according to Colon, was “representative of the civil society in Puerto Rico—not just the politicians, but churches, civic communities on Vieques, fishermen, different kinds of people....” The Special Commission’s



Camp in the military zone during 1999-2000 civil disobedience that stopped the Navy bombing. The banner means “We’ll walk from one end of the island to the other in a Vieques without the Navy.” (Punta Arenas is on the western shore of the island, Salinas the eastern.) Photo courtesy of Vieques Libre (www.viequeslibre.org).

report was sharply critical of the Navy, finding that “the activities of the Navy in Vieques have had a damaging and unrelenting effect on the environment, ecology, unique archaeological sites, natural resources and surrounding waters” of Vieques, and that the Navy bore major responsibility for the fact that 73.3% of Viequenses live below the poverty level.

At this time, the Comité appointed Flavio Cumpiano, a politically active attorney from Puerto Rico, as its spokesperson in Washington, giving Vieques its own voice not only before Congress and at the White House but at national conventions, rallies, and marches in Washington, and in front of the global media.

The Comité, working closely with groups like Colon's Proyecto, had already gained considerable experience in nonviolent political action. During the next year, activists established fourteen camps on the island, mostly in restricted areas, preventing further bombing. In May 2000, after a year, the Navy moved in and arrested more than 200 of these resisters in the restricted areas and at the gate to the area. As bombing resumed using nonexplosive ammunition, activists clandestinely entered or re-entered the bombing range, though this did not stop the Navy. In June and again in August, women's delegations entered the bombing range and faced arrest, citing the risk to children from the environmental damage done to Vieques. In October,

as another round of maneuvers began, activists again penetrated and occupied the range while bombing took place. Rabin, arrested for entering the range, received an unusually high fine of \$5000 and a demand from the judge that he stop encouraging civil disobedience. "I'm a leader of a community organization struggling against the Navy bombing," Rabin told the judge. "I have a responsibility to support those in disobedience." The judge dropped the demand.

Viequesenses continued to raise environmental health issues. Viequesenses sat in the office of Puerto Rico's Secretary of Health, demanding updated information about the high cancer rates in Vieques. In San Juan, a student from Vieques cited evidence of his own radiation sickness to lead the challenge to a Nuclear Regulatory Commission representative who was denying radioactivity on Vieques. In March of 2001, a group of officials from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) came to gather evidence about claims of environmental damage on Vieques. Not one single Viequesense met with the ATSDR officials during the five hours they waited. Instead, a disciplined group of demonstrators, including cancer victims and relatives of cancer victims, entered the room and left sixty crosses, one for each year of Navy presence on the island. This action was planned in two large community meetings, involving youth, seniors, fishermen, veterans, students, parents and others. The action reflected what Viequesenses had learned about ATSDR's role from the Comité's environmental advisers, including one from another contaminated Puerto Rican community where the ATSDR had declared poisoned drinking water safe.

There have been more than a thousand arrests on Vieques, and the arrests continue. "Men and women, old folk and young people, Puerto Ricans, Canadians and people from the United States have been arrested and many jailed,"

says Robert Rabin. "They have not succeeded in scaring the people of Vieques-Puerto Rico, not with arrests, not with the Federal Courts." Well-known figures from other communities arrested on Vieques include the Reverend Al Sharpton, Congressman Luis Gutierrez of Chicago, labor leader Dennis Rivera, environmental attorney Robert Kennedy Jr., and civil rights activist Jacqueline Jackson, wife of Reverend Jesse Jackson. Publicity for Vieques' fight has also come from the support of celebrities

like Ricky Martin, and from bold actions at a New York Yankees baseball game and at the Statue of Liberty.

2003 IS NOT SOON ENOUGH

This unrelenting action had consequences in the world of politics. In November of 2000, Puerto Rico elected a Governor more supportive of Vieques and more willing to confront the Navy, for example by filing suit to stop the bombing because of its health effects on the people of Vieques. (Support for a clean and free Vieques throughout Puerto Rico reflects not only a sense of history and solidarity but an awareness that prevailing winds blow from the smaller island towards Puerto Rico, itself already a site of major industrial contamination.) Vieques itself elected a mayor who showed his commitment by himself entering the bombing range for a week in the spring of 2001.

Before he left office, President Clinton scheduled a referendum this fall offering Viequesenses a choice between the Navy leaving in 2003 or resuming full training and receiving \$90 million in economic assistance. The continued protests on the island, however, have compelled President Bush to announce that the U.S. will not wait for the results of the referendum: the Navy will pull out in 2003. In his June announcement, the president acknowledged that "there has been some harm done to people" in Vieques.

Puerto Rico Governor Sila Calderon had already scheduled a referendum in Vieques offering residents the option that the U.S. has refused to give them: an immediate end to U.S. military training on the island. On July 29, that referen-



Supporters of the movement to rid Vieques of the Navy marched on July 19 in Washington, D.C. from the Department of Justice to the White House. Photo by Ron Nicosia.

continued on page 23

Action Line

ALABAMA

◆ An investigation by the *Anniston Star* disclosed in July that Monsanto's chemical plant in western Anniston had discharged up to fifty tons of liquid mercury into local streams and ditches during the 1950s and 60s. Monsanto used both lead and mercury to produce PCBs. Officials at Solutia, a spin-off of Monsanto, had previously told the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) that while Monsanto had used mercury, it had not released any to the environment. The Monsanto plant closed in 1969 and was never investigated for mercury discharges even though mercury-contaminated fish were found in local creeks in the 1970s and groundwater violations at Solutia going back to the late 1980s included high levels of both lead and mercury. The U.S. EPA is currently investigating Monsanto's responsibility for lead pollution in Anniston, and the ADEM will now expand its investigation into Monsanto's disposal practices to include mercury and lead, as well as PCBs.

◆ Community members of the MOWA band of the Choctaw Indian tribe continue to organize in opposition to the siting of a medical waste microwave treatment facility on their reservation. **MOWA Against Environmental Hazards** requested and have been granted a hearing by the Alabama Environmental Management Commission concerning the permit granted to Environment Medical Systems (EMS). The group's primary claim is that the Alabama Department of Environmental Management was negligent in granting the permit because it failed to verify whether the MOWA tribal council had abided by state requirements to do a proper evaluation of the public health and socio-economic impacts of the proposed facility. Under the lease agreement signed by the tribal council and EMS, the tribe will receive \$5,000 a year plus a very small percentage—one to two percent—of EMS's gross billings. At current prices, EMS would have to treat more than thirty-five million tons of medical waste annually for the tribe to

receive a mere \$125,000 a year. The reservation already has a contaminated soil incineration facility that treats soil from a Ceiba-Geigy plant that is a Superfund site; the plant produces industrial organic chemicals, pesticides, agricultural chemicals, and synthetic resins. The tribe gets to keep treated soil that Ceiba-Geigy doesn't remove—and the tribal council is using this to pave a new road for the new medical waste facility.

CALIFORNIA

◆ In Oakland, years of organizing, outreach, and protests—capped by a summer of intense action—have forced Integrated Environmental Systems (IES) to announce that it will reduce its incineration of medical waste by seventy percent within one year—a major victory for the **Coalition for Healthy Communities and Environmental**



Youth from Asian and Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health tell I.E.S.: "Stop Environmental Racism!" at June 28 demonstration in Oakland. Photo courtesy of Greenaction.

ARKANSAS

◆ **Citizens Advocating a Safe Environment (CASE)** is fighting the expansion of a Waste Management-run landfill near Fayetteville. The landfill has been a dumpsite for at least three decades, and vinyl chloride has been detected in monitoring wells at the edge of the site. At a standing room only meeting of over 150 people, the county judge told CASE he had changed his mind and joined other local officials in opposing the expansion. Waste Management is expected to appeal the decision by local officials to the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), so CASE has been busy working with its state legislators, who have already contacted the ADEQ and the governor and asked them to oppose the appeal.

Justice, a coalition of local residents and health, labor, religious, and environmental justice organizations that have led the fight against the plant. Coalition members are planning to maintain pressure on IES until the company commits to phasing out all incineration at the facility. The mid-August announcement by IES came one week after seventy protesters blocked the front gate of the incinerator, preventing trucks from entering or leaving the facility. In response to large demonstrations earlier this spring and summer at the incinerator, IES had agreed to talks with the coalition, but the coalition escalated its action when the talks broke down over the company's refusal to end all incineration. IES, the only one of California's eleven commercial medical waste treatment facilities that

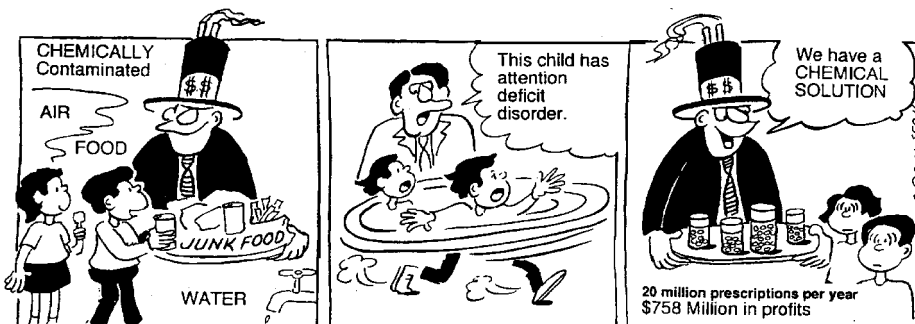
Action Line

Action Line

uses incineration, currently burns twelve million pounds of waste. The plant is a major source of dioxin and mercury pollution and has been cited by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District for over a hundred air quality violations. In mid-June, the State Department of Health Services suspended IES's permit for thirty days because the company had allowed waste to accumulate. Currently, the California Office of Safety and Health is investigating the company for possible worker safety violations at the plant. At the end of August, talks between the coalition and IES resumed but broke down again quickly over IES's insistence on continuing to incinerate some medical waste. The coalition plans more protests.

◆ In a major victory that will help protect the health of two million students in California, manufacturers and distributors of portable classrooms have agreed to use less toxic materials in their products. After studies showed that the wood, carpets, and glues used in the portable classrooms emitted dangerous levels of toxic chemicals, **As You Sow**, a San Francisco-based group, sued to require the manufacturers to include cancer warnings. To avoid the warnings, the companies have agreed to use a less-toxic formulation of formaldehyde in particle board and plywood, use only formaldehyde-free carpet glues and other building adhesives, and inform schools of less-toxic alternatives for cabinets and desks.

◆ Organizing and research by the **Coalition for a Healthy Oakland School Environment (CHOSE)** helped convince the Oakland Unified School District to adopt an integrated pest management program this June that will eliminate the use of the most dangerous pesticides. The Women's Cancer Resource Center, a member of CHOSE, found that products such as Dursban (chlorpyrifos), a dangerous neuro-toxin which the EPA recently banned, and Round-Up (glyphosate), which has been linked to reproductive, kidney, and liver damage, were being used on Oakland school playgrounds and other areas. CHEJ's "Poisoned Schools" report helped CHOSE make its case.



◆ Oil companies are starting to pay for their use of the gasoline additive MTBE (methyl tertiary-butyl ether) in California. In a case that affects MTBE-contaminated sites throughout the entire state, Chevron, Shell, Texaco, and Unocal agreed to clean up about 700 sites at the cost of millions of dollars, settling a suit brought against them by **Communities for a Better Environment**. Under the terms of the settlement, state environmental agencies will be able to ask courts to impose penalties of up to \$6,000 a day for cleanup delays, significantly enhancing their authority to enforce the agreement. The lawsuit may still go to trial, however, since Exxon, ARCO, Mobil, and Tosco refused to be part of the settlement.

In another case, Exxon will pay water providers in South Tahoe \$12 million dollars to settle a lawsuit charging several oil companies with polluting Tahoe's groundwater with the gasoline additive. After oil refineries doubled the amount of MTBE in gasoline in 1996, the South Lake Tahoe area lost twenty percent of its water supply because of MTBE leaking from gasoline tanks.

◆ Congratulations to parents and teachers at the Tamalpais Valley Elementary School for stopping the installation of a wireless project in the Mill Valley School District this spring! The district's superintendent halted the project after forty parents and teachers met with her expressing concern about the impact of the new technology on children. **Council on Wireless Technology Impacts** supported the parents and teachers with a follow-up presentation summarizing the possible long-term health impact of low-level radio emissions and the special vulnerability of children. Despite the higher cost of hardwiring the schools, this summer the superintendent authorized all six schools in the district to install fiber-optic cables.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

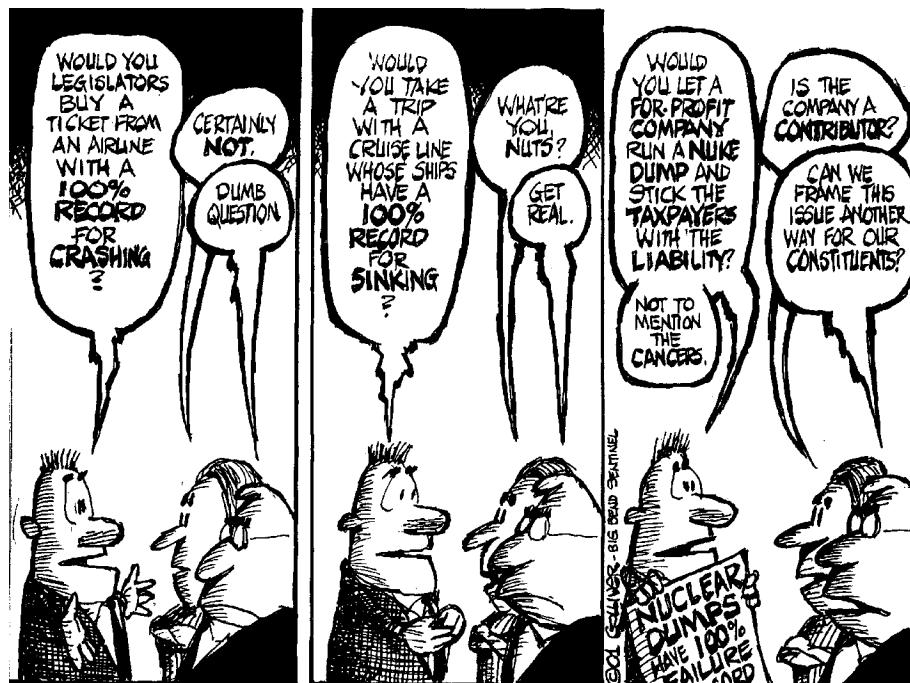
◆ In Southeast Washington, community leader Robin Ijames has called on several environmental justice and environmental health organizations to join her and other community members to develop an environmental task force for the ward. This task force would aim at devising a working strategy to address various environmental health threats to the 14,000 residents of this predominantly African-American community. The Blue Plains Sewage Treatment Facility, the National Airport, and the Naval Research Laboratory are sources of major pollution. And for twenty years, condominiums in the community have lacked appropriate connections to the city's sewage system. The almost permanent sewage backup in basements, kitchens, and bathrooms has not only caused costly property damage but is responsible for serious respiratory and digestive problems suffered by residents. Currently, only five units still have people living in them. The city of DC has provided \$400,000 to fix the problem—an amount sufficient to repair the remaining five units only.

FLORIDA

◆ In Tarpon Springs, **Pi-Pa-Tag** and the **Acote Community Advisory Group** are keeping their eyes on government agencies assessing the health impact of the former Stauffer Chemical plant. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) announced in mid-June that it would undertake a new study of the impact that the Stauffer Chemical plant had on the community and conduct a public education program about possible health risks posed by the site.

Action Line

The decision to take another look at the Superfund site follows a scathing report by the agency's ombudsman, who concluded that the agency's previous public health assessment had downplayed the risks posed by Stauffer. Pi-Pa-Tag is currently reviewing work plans developed by the U.S. EPA and Stauffer for geophysical and hydrogeological studies that will support ATSDR's work. Aclote Community Advisory Group is ensuring that state agencies play a strong role in reviewing the work plans. ATSDR's new health assessment will consider possible radiation exposure from slag, a by-product of the phosphorous production process that was used in the construction of local roads and foundations; the impact of Stauffer's sinkholes on drinking water; and the possibility that the site was used for munitions manufacturing or uranium processing.



INDIANA

◆ In East Chicago, **Northwest Indiana Residents for Clean Air, Citizens Against the Toxic Waste Dump**, and **Taxpayers for Better Government** have formed the **Committee for a Clean Environment** to coordinate their opposition to the siting of a consolidated disposal facility only 500 feet from a high school and junior high school in a Latino and African-American community. The proposed facility would hold 4.6 million cubic yards of sediment contaminated with PCBs and heavy metals that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to dredge from the Indiana Harbor and Ship Canal and the Grand Calumet River. The EPA's original risk assessment was criticized even by the EPA Region II office. Using EPA methodology, university students at the University of Indiana at Bloomington did a more thorough risk assessment showing that the health threat to children was much greater than acknowledged by the EPA. The embarrassed EPA won't complete its revised risk assessment until next spring. In April, over five hundred opponents of the proposed disposal facility protested at city hall. The coalition has the support of the local Catholic organizations and has

done excellent outreach in the parishes. The Calumet Project, a grassroots labor organization, is supporting efforts to stop the facility by contributing window signs, leaflets, and other supplies.

MAINE

◆ Maine's hospitals lead the nation in taking steps to reduce toxic pollution. All thirty-nine of Maine's hospitals have now signed a pollution prevention agreement to phase out the use of mercury by 2005; develop pollution prevention plans that steadily reduce the use of materials that produce other persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic pollutants (PBTs), including PVC; and cut in half the amount of medical and municipal waste they produce by 2010. The Maine Hospital Association, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and the **Natural Resources Council of Maine** negotiated the agreement this winter.

◆ **Concerned Citizens for a Safe School Site** was recently awarded a grant from the New England Grassroots Environment Fund for their work in Cumberland. The group successfully opposed their school board's proposal to build a middle school next to the Drowne Road dumpsite. The group is now pressuring the school board to close an existing elementary school immediately adjacent to the dump. The building has

been used for the school on an interim basis since the late 1990s and is now being considered for the permanent site of the school.

MASSACHUSETTS

◆ Following the resignation of two hostile school board members under pressure in the spring of 2000, **Stoneham Parents for a Safe School Site** succeeded in getting a new school site cleaned up. A railroad right of way, which runs through the school grounds, is being prepared for an eventual bike path. The railroad bed, which was contaminated with arsenic and PAHs (polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons) at imminent hazard levels, is being constantly monitored. Environmental Franklin, the company hired to clean up the area, is fencing off the hazardous areas and constructing a geotextile barrier.

Stoneham Parents for a Safe School Site was alerted to a serious problem at another school when a teacher contacted them about the elevated incidence of breast cancer there as well as other cancers and chronic illnesses. This middle school is located near a contaminated site. A preliminary list of teachers and students that have or had some type of cancer is being developed and will be

Action Line

sent to a toxicologist for an initial evaluation.

◆ Members of **Quincy Citizens for Safe Schools**, which successfully defeated the city's plan to build a new high school on two different contaminated sites, are organizing to oppose a plan to use paper mill and waste water sludge mixed with sand as landfill cover. Officials in the neighboring town of Milton agreed to accept the waste sludge mixture, which will be used as cover for their town's landfill, but public outcry has given them second thoughts. The overall plan is to convert the landscaped tops of three landfills into a golf course and recreational playing fields that would span both communities and total 476 acres. Contaminated dirt from the nearby "Big Dig," the largest public works project in New England history, is being used to fill in and sculpt the grounds of the golf course, which will then be covered with a layer of sludge. The sludge will be stored and mixed on-site. The group's goal is to have clean topsoil for cover in the landfill closures.

MICHIGAN

◆ Worried **Parents for Healthy Schools in Detroit** now have new evidence to support their fears about the extent of the contamination at Beard Elementary School. The latest round of testing at the school found four new "hot spots" of PCBs near the school baseball field, which will now have to be cleaned up. Five other locations also were found to be contaminated with PCBs, though the levels were not high enough to require cleanup under the standards used by the Detroit public school system. The discovery of this additional contamination follows the filing of a lawsuit on behalf of twelve parents requesting a preliminary injunction to keep the Beard school closed until more testing has been done. At the end of August, the injunction was refused. The school is built on an old industrial site that is contaminated with arsenic, lead, PCBs, PAHs, and many other substances.

◆ There's another **Families Against Incineration Risk** (FAIR). An Ypsilanti group fighting a proposed sludge incinerator there found the long-time Utah

group on the web, liked their name, and "borrowed" it. FAIR of Michigan recently put together a hard-hitting flyer naming local officials who loudly opposed incineration in 1996 and now support it. FAIR got its message out at the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival, attended by over 100,000 people. The local officials named were outraged that they were being held accountable for changing their position. Recognizing that community opposition to the project is growing, incinerator supporters are moving on a faster track to get bonds approved for the project. FAIR challenged the Ypsilanti Township to put the issue to a vote but was turned down. With active support from the **Huron Valley Greens** and **Students for Environmental Justice**, FAIR is gathering petition signatures for a referendum vote to stop approval of the bonds.

MISSOURI

◆ The U.S. EPA has completed the burning of the contaminated soil at Times Beach and has proposed removing one of the most notorious waste sites in U.S. history from the federal Superfund list. Unpaved roads in Times Beach and twenty-six other sites in eastern Missouri were sprayed in the early 1970s with waste oil contaminated with dioxin to suppress dust. When the Meramec River flooded Times Beach in February 1983, spreading dioxin-contaminated soil everywhere, the entire town—more than 2,000 families—had to be evacuated. During 1996 and 1997, over 260,000 tons of dioxin-contaminated soil from the twenty-seven sites were burned in a mobile incinerator as part of a Superfund cleanup effort. According to the EPA, all soil with dioxin levels exceeding 10 parts per billion (ppb) was removed and burned and a one-foot vegetative clean soil cover was placed over all areas with residual concentrations exceeding 1 ppb.

While EPA is hailing this effort as a major milestone in the Superfund program, former residents see things differently. Lori Weber, an activist who opposed the soil burning called EPA's action "totally unethical" and said that the agency has not cleaned up the area as they claim. According to Weber, the toxic ash from the incinerator (the burned soil) was buried at what was once the town of Times Beach, which is now Route 66 Park. "Every truckload of dirt brought to the site is still present and was covered with four to six inches of soil. Scattered throughout the site is dust that

left the stack and floated down. This ash contains dioxin, PCBs, and heavy metals such as mercury." Efforts to stop the soil burning by **Citizens Against Dioxin Incineration, Dioxin Incineration Response Group**, the **Times Beach Action Group**, and other community groups are documented in the 1997 "Citizens Report on the Times Beach Superfund Site." This report called the EPA's cleanup effort a "public relations campaign to mislead the public."

As tourists pass through the visitors center at Route 66 Park, they learn nothing about the dioxin contamination that made this one of the worst toxic sites in the U.S. Just as it did at Love Canal, the government is going to great lengths to convince the public that one of the worst toxic waste sites in America can be cleaned up. In fact, both Times Beach and Love Canal are far from being completely cleaned up, with areas at both sites still contaminated with dioxin and other chemicals.

NEW MEXICO

◆ Residents of Hagerman are organizing to prevent the siting of a toxics landfill in their community by the Gandy-Marley corporation. They have begun to collect information both about the potential health hazards of a toxics landfill and about the experience of the Gandy-Marley corporation in handling toxic waste.

NEW YORK

◆ On August 1, to the surprise of some observers, General Electric suffered a major setback at the hands of the Bush Administration. Leaning towards grassroots activists and public opinion rather than bowing to the world's most profitable corporation, Administrator Whitman announced that the U.S. EPA was going ahead with a plan requiring General Electric to pay for dredging PCBs from the Hudson River. Under the plan, G.E. will bear the cost of dredging 2.6 billion cubic yards of contaminated sediment along a forty-mile stretch of the river where the company had dumped PCBs for more than thirty-five years.

G. E. had fought the plan, projected to cost the company about \$500 mil-

Action Line

Action Line

lion, with a massive public relations campaign claiming that the Hudson was cleaning itself and that dredging would disrupt communities along the river. Local environmental groups, using creative organizing efforts (detailed in prior *EBYs*), countered with evidence that PCBs in the river were a continuing danger to Hudson communities and beyond, and also that safer and less disruptive dredging technologies existed. As the August decision approached, **Friends of a Clean Hudson**, a coalition of many organizations pressing for the PCB cleanup, organized press conferences and events, including a toxic tour of the Hudson in late June with journalists, business owners, and residents to help mobilize public support for the dredging. Surveys showed the region's residents overwhelmingly supporting the dredging of the river, one of the largest Superfund sites in the country.

Environmentalists had been concerned about press reports during the summer indicating that Administrator Whitman was considering a pilot project that would be followed by more studies before proceeding further, delaying the cleanup still further, if not indefinitely. The plan the EPA announced in August does call for the cleanup to take place in stages, leaving the door open for further challenges from G.E. But Hudson Valley environmentalists, and other activists at similar sites around the country, will continue to press for a real cleanup of the Hudson.

◆ Since last fall, parents of children who attend schools in the Royalton Hartland Central School District in Niagara County have been challenging the local school board to recognize the environmental health hazards in their schools. Following the opening of Gasport Elementary School during the final stages of a total renovation project, children began to suffer from asthma attacks, headaches, and other neurological and respiratory illnesses. When construction debris containing asbestos was found in and around the school, the state ordered the asbestos cleaned up and fined both the contractor and the school. However, many students and staff continue to develop respiratory illnesses, and at least two

children have already left the school because of health problems. An informal group of parents has begun to organize around this issue and as a first step are seeking to get recognition from the school board that a serious problem exists.

◆ **The Cheektowaga Citizens Coalition** held its first public meeting in May and affirmed its slogan "Close 'em up! Clean 'em up!" Cheektowaga is the site of both a number of severely polluting indus-



Cheektowaga Citizens Coalition on picket line in front of entrance to the Buffalo Crushed Stone quarry. Courtesy of Cheektowaga Citizens Coalition.

trial facilities and of several waste sites, including one where demolished homes from Love Canal were dumped. Because many of its members are longtime activists, CCC didn't waste any time holding its first action. Their June Traffic Protest and Picket started when ten drivers backed up trucks on roads near the Buffalo Crushed Stone quarry; then CCC members walked a picket line in front of the quarry entrance. CCC's activism is partly a response to inaction by their town board, which set up a "task force" to address recent local environmental problems (a "closed" landfill that continues to operate, debris dumped near a creek, allegations of radioactive dumping)—a task force, however, that never meets. CCC will be present at town board meetings from now on and will also take over the task of educating Cheektowaga residents about the dangers they face, beginning with an event on groundwater contamination of the area.

◆ **Kandid Coalition** and **Citizen's Environmental Coalition** (CEC) have been actively organizing to keep the pressure

on Eastman Kodak Company. The Rochester-based company will pay \$175,000 in fines to the U.S. EPA for failing to test equipment and monitor emissions of volatile organic compounds at its Lake Avenue facility. EPA inspections in 1999 had revealed that for years Kodak had not been monitoring its handling of certain hazardous wastes as required under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). Kodak will report releasing

about five grams of dioxin (the weight of a nickel) and 30 pounds of mercury for the year 2000. According to CEC, five grams of dioxin is equivalent to 544 million adult doses of dioxin a year.

NORTH CAROLINA

◆ **Friends of the Green Swamp** in Columbus County reports that the landfill proposal they are fighting, which moved quickly through their county government despite strong opposition, is now at a standstill, needing approval from the Army Corps of Engineers and others. Friends of the Green Swamp will be using this time to contact their elected officials and to press for public hearings and face-to-face meetings with key officials. They will also continue fundraising, following up on the successful raffle of a handmade quilt that raised \$800.

◆ This spring a coalition of environmental organizations coordinated by **Clean Water Fund of NC** collaborated

Action Line

Action Line

with Blue Ridge Paper, an employee-owned company, on a study of the potential water-quality advantages of chlorine-free bleaching technologies. For most of the last century, color from pulping and bleaching has symbolized damage to life in the tiny Pigeon River and threats to human use, provoking intense opposition to the mill from downstream Tennessee communities and environmentalists. Despite major technology investments by Champion International, the previous owner—after decades of outraged downstream activism—the mill has never met the NC standard, which calls for “no objectionable color” to be discharged. With Blue Ridge Paper promising strong environmental stewardship, the hope has been that this standard could be reached.

NC Water Quality regulators, however, have drafted a renewal permit for the Canton mill calling for only trivial color reductions over the next five years. The Division of Water Quality has a long and sordid history on this permit, having intervened repeatedly over the past century for Champion (and many other polluters). In 1996, **American Canoe Association** and **Tennessee Environmental Council** and Tennessee officials appealed the permit, bringing the EPA into the process. The result was a settlement agreement requiring all parties to make progress on improving the river's water quality as rapidly as possible. Over the last four years, color in the river has been reduced by more than fifty percent. The current draft permit violates the 1997 agreement, ignoring both the EPA's recommendations and the study done by the environmental coalition with Blue Ridge Paper. At the end of August, the coalition announced that they had “no choice but to oppose the ‘low expectations’ permit.” The coalition includes the American Canoe Association, **Appalachian Voices**, **Dead Pigeon River Council** (TN), **Dogwood Alliance**, **National Forest Protection Alliance**, **Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project**, Tennessee Environmental Council, and **Western NC Alliance**. *Contributed by Clean Water Fund of North Carolina*

◆ Concerned about the black smoke coming from the Stericycle medical

waste incinerator in Haw River, members of the **Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL)** looked at recent stack test data. They were surprised to find that test results for dioxins and furans were listed as *non-detect*. One state official also expressed dismay at these results. After digging around further and still not coming up with a credible explanation, BREDL is petitioning the NC Division of Air Quality for retesting.

OHIO

◆ **People for Alternatives to Chemical Trespasses (PACT)** has formed in the Athens area to oppose herbicide spraying along utility right of ways by American Electric Power (AEP). AEP sprayed pesticides near an organic farm belonging to one of PACT's members. AEP officials have been meeting with PACT members, but have made no commitments. PACT is in contact with other activists in the nearby town of Cheshire, who pressured AEP to drop plans for using explosive anhydrous ammonia at a Cheshire power plant.

PENNSYLVANIA

◆ **Group Against Gas (GAG)** continues its fight for relocation from their homes on top of a massive gasoline spill in Hazleton (EBY, Summer 2001). GAG members have been pushing for a decision support-

ing relocation by Governor Tom Ridge. After the second time GAG members showed up at a Ridge event, the governor agreed to a meeting with people from Hazleton. Then he put conditions on the meeting, including exclusion of their state representative, who has been a strong GAG supporter. Ridge also refused to come to Hazleton. GAG members voted not to attend the meeting under those conditions, and notified the governor and the press that any meeting must 1) be in Hazleton, 2) not have restrictions on who can participate, 3) include presentation of constructive alternatives by the state, and 4) be the beginning of an ongoing dialogue.

GAG held a spirited rally with Lois Gibbs and local political leaders at the local contaminated ball field. One highlight of the day was the announcement that residents had won total relief from local real estate taxes for 453 homes for two years. Other GAG events have included a pajama party held to protest noisy late night operations by EPA crews, and a highly successful yard sale.

Late in August, GAG members got the attention of President Bush, who was at the Little League World Series in Williamsport. (The slogan on their sign: “Strike one, Strike two, Strike



Group Against Gas in Hazelton, Pennsylvania greets Governor Tom Ridge. Photo by Lois Gibbs.

Action Line

Action Line

three: GET US OUT!! Laurel Gardens, Hazleton PA") Two days later, and one day before a health study of Laurel Gardens residents was due for release, Ridge finally came to Hazleton. Though he brought a delegation of key state officials with him, a sign that the visit was planned well in advance, Ridge gave no prior notice to GAG leaders or to the media. Once in Hazleton, Ridge met with a few carefully selected Laurel Gardens residents. Though most Hazleton residents were at work or in school, word of Ridge's presence spread quickly, and a small but dedicated group of GAG members gathered with signs and tough questions, which the governor mostly ignored. Ridge, however, did indicate some openness to declaring the area a disaster area, the first step towards relocation and a step he had previously ruled out.

◆ In Tioga County, owners of a proposed dumpsite have been very quiet in the face of opposition from **Tioga County Concerned Citizens**. County supervisors have called for a hearing to resolve the matter, and Concerned Citizens is mobilizing the community to come out to the hearing. The same core group now leading Concerned Citizens won a tough fight against a dump at the same site in 1984. They report, "Maybe we learned a few things

the first time or maybe the times have changed," but this time around they have support "one hundred times greater than the last time we fought this same dump."

SOUTH CAROLINA

◆ Earlier this year, a construction and demolition landfill was proposed for Barnwell County, a majority African-American county. The landfill was proposed for the site of a prior landfill that had not been capped, monitored, or made safe in any way. **Citizens Opposed to Proposed Landfill** organized, got 900 names on a petition, and showed the county enough serious opposition to kill the project.

TEXAS

◆ Merco's 81,000 acre industrial dump in Sierra Blanca—the largest sewage dump in the world—will no longer be receiving toxic sludge from New York City. At the end of June, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection cancelled its contract with Merco, citing the expense of shipping the sludge to Texas. For nine years, the landfill has been receiving between 250 and 400 tons a day of the sewage, which contains PCBs, dioxin, pesticides, and other pollutants and cannot be spread or even landfilled in New York because of its lead and copper levels. The sludge was spread out over the immense application area as fertilizer for the desert. Activist Bill Addington of **Save Sierra Blanca**, who has spent years fighting Merco, said, "We're left with many thousands of tons [of sludge] over a large acreage. It's going to be running into the wind, running into the river and into our aquifers."

◆ After thousands of conservationists, fishermen, and area business owners challenged the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) for lowering water quality standards for Lake Sam Rayburn, the EPA stepped in and overturned the TNRCC's decision. Lake Sam Rayburn is a major reservoir and nationally recognized bass fishery in East Texas. Last summer, at the request of the Canadian company Donohue Industries Inc./Abitibi Consolidated Inc., the TNRCC approved a water quality "downgrade" that would have allowed the company's paper mill to continue discharging high levels of pollutants into a tributary of the Angelina

River, just above Lake Sam Rayburn. Abitibi has been discharging almost five times the amount of oxygen-depleting pollutants and over three times the volume of aluminum normally permitted. In its ruling, the EPA ordered Abitibi to establish a time frame for complying with the applicable high water quality protections. Abitibi has agreed to fund various Supplemental Environmental Projects totaling over \$1 million, which include an environmental education center for the City of Lufkin, toxic substance studies, and water quality studies with citizen oversight. Groups challenging the TNRCC included **Concerned Citizens for Clean Water**, **National Wildlife Federation**, the **Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club**, **Texas Clean Water Action**, **Texas Committee on Natural Resources**, **Texas Association of Bass Clubs**, and **Texas Black Bass Unlimited**. *Contributed by Concerned Citizens for Clean Water Fund*

UTAH

◆ A new alliance has been formed to oppose the disposing of nuclear and toxic waste in the West Desert. Launched April 26 during events at the Rio Grande train station to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Chernobyl meltdown, **Healthy Environment Alliance of Utah** (HEAL Utah) is currently mobilizing to thwart plans by Envirocare to dump hotter radioactive waste from decommissioned power plants at its Skull Valley landfill. This spring, Utah radio stations started running public service announcements, partially paid for by Envirocare, touting the medical benefits of radiation and reminding Utahans of their civic responsibility to help dispose of radioactive wastes safely—until protests from HEAL Utah forced broadcasters to pull the ads and agree to run radio spots produced by the alliance. Groups participating in the alliance include **Citizens Against Radioactive Waste in Utah**, **Families Against Incinerator Risk**, **Sierra Club**, and **Utah Progressive Net**.

VERMONT

◆ **Vermonters for a Clean Environment** (VCE) continues to fight inappro-

CHICAGO LOSES FIGHTER

Gale Cincotta, founder of National Peoples Action and the National Training and Information Center, passed away on August 15. Gale helped hundreds of low and moderate income communities—like the one where she lived in Chicago—to organize for their rights. Every year she brought busloads of community people right into the headquarters of Washington agencies like EPA and HUD, winning commitments from unnerved officials. We will miss her very much.

Action Line

Action Line

appropriate industrial development projects in Vermont. After stopping a billion dollar power plant and pipeline project, VCE is opposing OMYA's proposal to open a new calcium carbonate mine in Danby. OMYA, a subsidiary of Pluess-Stauffer Industries, has become the world's largest producer of calcium carbonate, which is used to make glossy paper and a variety of building materials. OMYA's proposed quarry in Danby would grind up a scenic Vermont mountain and disrupt the valley's springs. VCE's research has revealed that OMYA is the largest user of pesticides in Vermont as a result of its massive use of chemicals to kill bacteria in the production process.

VIRGINIA

◆ In Richmond, **Parents for Life** is fighting to have the city school system close two elementary schools constructed in the early 1950's near a now-closed city landfill. The largely African-American student populations at A.V. Norrell and Whitcomb Court elementary schools have been exposed to methane gas coming from the landfill. The schools were closed in 1995 but were reopened in 1997 when monitors were installed. An adjacent courthouse was closed recently due to strong methane odors. The group is petitioning the city for a site assessment they hope will result in the closing of the school. Parents for Life has enlisted the help of civil rights groups, including the Richmond Chapter of the NAACP, and local tenant rights groups in raising awareness in the community about what they believe boils down to environmental racism. At the same time, the group has linked up with other social justice groups to challenge the City of Richmond to address police brutality and racial profiling.

◆ About 160 people at a May meeting of the **Blue Ridge Coalition** strategized ways to oppose the gas pipeline plans by Duke Energy and Dominion Transmission. The discussion mentioned scenic river status for the Smith River, the endangered status of some local wildlife, and the fact that the pipelines would cross the federal Blue Ridge Parkway. A local official noted that the group included "greenies and timber people, rock

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS RECEIVE LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Among the community leaders receiving awards from Leadership for a Changing World this year are four environmental activists who CHEJ has worked with. **Dianne Bady**, **Laura Forman**, and **Jane Fout** were recognized for their work with the **Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition** (OVEC), which they started in 1987. During the past three years, OVEC has worked with communities in Kentucky and West Virginia to raise awareness of the pollution from Ashland Oil Inc.'s petrochemical refinery in Catlettsburg, Kentucky. OVEC's organizing and media work have resulted in the installation of new pollution control equipment at the refinery and greater EPA oversight of the plant. **Barbara Miller**, director of the **Silver Valley People's Action Coalition**, received an award for her work on social welfare and environmental justice issues in the mining areas of Idaho. Miller has led efforts to expand the cleanup of the Bunker Hill Superfund Site because of persistent lead contamination and to improve health care for impoverished residents poisoned by decades of heavy metal pollution.

Leadership for a Changing World was established last year by the Ford Foundation to support outstanding community leaders not widely recognized for their work. Awardees will receive \$100,000 over two years to support their organizations and an additional \$30,000 for learning activities that support their work.

throwers and independents... every group you can imagine working on the same side." Since May, the coalition has held meetings to organize opposition at the county level.

◆ Though community people began fighting the Mid-Atlantic Industrial and Tech Center in the fall of 2000, this spring it still appeared that the local politicians, the local newspaper, and other powerful players were totally behind the project. Still, people kept coming out to oppose the project, 700 or 800 showing up at meetings of the Planning Commission and the Frederick County Board of Supervisors. And, as Supervisor Harrington Smith said after voting against the project in August, "When you have 700 people against something, that gets your attention." The opposition to the project, led by the group **Save Stephenson Depot**, was based partly on concern over industries contaminating wells, increasing traffic, and otherwise threatening nearby homes and schools, and partly on the historic Civil War character of the site. But as more county residents got involved, their concerns grew to be about more than just blocking one project.

Two groups came out of the fight that plan to continue to have an impact on the

development of Frederick County, a fast growing formerly rural area west of Washington DC. One of the groups, **Frederick County Voters with Common Concerns**, will work to change the way political decisions are made in the county, which many feel has been run by a small group that does not represent the majority of citizens. The other group, **VISION**, will be an educational group to keep the public informed and involved. Save Stephenson Depot will also continue to be active in the western county area where the industrial park was proposed.

At an August 8 supervisors meeting, the Tech Center project was denied its rezoning request in a tie vote. After the project failed, the developer told the local newspaper he planned to take a week off and go sailing. Frederick County's citizen activists, on the other hand, had different plans. They were already planning their next campaigns.

WASHINGTON

◆ Against strong opposition from the agriculture, pulp and paper, and chemical industries, Governor Locke signed into law this June a new state budget

Action Line

Action Line

that includes \$800,000 over two years for the Department of Ecology's plan to eliminate persistent bioaccumulative toxics (PBTs). Washington is currently the only state that has this kind of plan. The money will allow the Department of Ecology to develop chemical action plans for identifying the major sources of at least two PBTs and phasing them out. The **Washington Toxics Coalition** is pushing for the Department of Ecology to select dioxin and mercury as the priority PBTs and has sponsored a sign-on letter and arranged a meeting between the Department of Ecology and a dozen environmental groups to help make its case.

◆ **Concerned Citizens of Rock Island** are celebrating because—despite the plans of county and utility officials—there will *not* be twenty diesel generators running near a local elementary school, near their town drinking water, and close to the salmon in the Columbia river. Rock Island residents were told that the generators were needed because of this spring's "energy crisis" scare and that the generators were approved under a special order from the governor. The threat to their children, their drinking water, and the river was not mentioned. But all these issues came up on appeal, thanks to Concerned Citizens of Rock Island—and they won! But though they are celebrating, they are keeping their group in business, in case this dangerous proposal, or another one, threatens their community again.

WISCONSIN

◆ Congratulations to **Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger** (CSWAB) in Merrimac who have succeeded in getting the U.S. Army to provide free well testing to private residents near the northeast boundary of Badger Army Ammunition facility! The Army agreed to the tests following pressure from CSWAB after numerous explosive chemicals, including dinitrotoluene (DNT), a probable carcinogen, were found in the boundary wells of the northeast corner of the facility. This area was used for the open burning of explosive chemicals and other waste. Since the Army has agreed only to test for DNT, CSWAB continues to press for expanding the testing to include all the

contaminants found in the on-site wells. CSWAB says the current plan also falls short of achieving the Army's publicly stated goal for testing: to protect (human) health and ensure peace of mind. Laura Olah, Executive Director of CSWAB commented that "Private drinking water wells must never be used in lieu of monitoring wells. By law, monitoring wells serve as sentinels, intended to pick up contamination before it ever reaches a private well. In this case, there are no clean wells between the source and private wells."

◆ As community opposition to an unneeded expansion of State Highway 164 grows, a number of local governments have passed resolutions opposing it. A major reason for opposition (see *EBY*, Summer 2001) has been the fact that the highway route intersects an area contaminated by the Ackerville landfill. However, two local government entities in the Ackerville area have refused to join their neighbors in passing resolutions. So members of **Stop Unnecessary Road Expansion** (SURE), using a law on the books since the early days of Wisconsin statehood, gathered enough petition signatures to force one of these local entities, the Slinger School Board, to hold a special meeting, at which ordinary citizens would have the right to speak—and to vote! The school board said they had never heard of the law and have not called the special meeting. Concerned Slinger residents have asked the local district attorney to enforce the law and get them the meeting they're entitled to.

MEXICO

◆ In mid-July an appeals court in Guerrero ruled that campesino activists Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera must serve out their sentences on weapons and drug charges—despite evidence that they confessed to the crimes under torture. Lawyers from the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center, who have been representing the activists, will now take their case to the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights.

Montiel and Cabrera founded the Organization of Campesino Environmentalists of the Petatlan and Coyuca de Catalan Mountains in 1998 to protest the deforestation of El Mameyal in Guerrero. Excessive logging in the impoverished region had caused massive soil erosion, choking the rivers essential to local agri-

culture. Taking on corporate loggers and the local land-owning elite, the group set up roadblocks to prevent lumber from leaving and demanded the government act to stop illegal logging practices. Boise Cascade withdrew from Guerrero in 1998, but Mexican companies with close ties to the military remained. During 1998, several organizers were killed. In May of 1999, the 40th Battalion, a counter-insurgency and anti-narcotics unit of the military, illegally arrested and beat Montiel and Cabrera, then tortured the men over five days to extract the confessions used to convict them. Montiel must serve nearly seven years, Cabrera ten years. While in prison, Montiel has won the 2000 Goldman Environmental Prize for North America. Amnesty International considers the men prisoners of conscience and has initiated a campaign for their release.

The campesino movement has had an impact even as the men who helped start it remain in prison. Last November, the federal forestry ministry ordered the "immediate and total suspension" of all logging in El Mameyal and surrounding areas because of the unauthorized destruction of the forest. ■

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Our readers want to know what *your* group is doing—and we'd like to tell your story. Please let us know what or who you're fighting and what you've done recently—whether it's a demonstration, march, fundraiser, workshop, meeting with a politician or government agency, publication, lawsuit, policy or legislative proposal. *Action Line* is a way for us to stay informed about what we're up against and to share actions and strategies that are working. Contact *EBY's* editor Ron Nicosia at 703-237-2249 or rn@chej.org.

Action Line

CHILD PROOFING OUR COMMUNITIES

C A M P A I G N P A G E

Child Proofing Our Communities is a locally-based, nationally connected campaign aimed at protecting children from environmental health hazards in schools and child care settings by raising awareness, empowering community members, and encouraging concerned adults to take action at the local levels. The campaign is currently working on improving indoor air quality; reducing the toxicity of building materials; reducing the use of pesticides; preventing the location of school buildings on or near chemically contaminated areas; and cleaning up schools located on or near contaminated land.

NEW INITIATIVES

The coalition met in June to develop detailed strategies for the coming eighteen months to two years that build on the initial public launching of the campaign last March. The gathering produced several initiatives that we're excited about:

- ◆ The Air Quality Committee put forward a plan that would reward five schools or childcare centers around the country that have completed the Breath of Fresh Air pilot project. The Breath of Fresh Air project seeks to improve the overall air quality in schools and childcare centers, with short and long-term goals such as identifying an indoor air quality checklist, identifying potential sites as pilot schools, and producing an annual report that highlights the environmental achievements of schools or centers.
- ◆ The Healthy Building Committee is producing a guide "How to Build a Green School" and has compiled a fact-sheet on environmental risks associated with portable classrooms.
- ◆ The Siting Committee is developing a database that maps existing and proposed schools on or near contaminated sites in certain key states.

The campaign plans to form a network of toxicologists, technical experts, and community activists that will serve as a rapid response team. The team will link resource persons, experts, and allies with local and regional groups for technical or organizing assistance on school siting issues nationwide.

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ARSENIC IN WOOD

The **Healthy Building Network**, which includes **Clean Water Action**, **Washington Toxics Coalition**, **Generation Green**, and **Clean Water Fund of North Carolina**, has launched a retail sampling campaign to raise awareness of



arsenic in wood. Although arsenic is classified as a "known human carcinogen" by the U.S. EPA, chromated copper arsenate, which is twenty-two percent pure arsenic, continues to be the most commonly used wood preservative in the U.S. The campaign is targeting Home Depot and Lowes because they represent close to eighty percent of the "do-it-yourself" market, and other hardware chains and stores would be likely to follow their lead. Lumber products have been tested in stores in more than a dozen cities across the country. In some cases, the results are 100 times more toxic than what is considered hazardous in ground water. The final results of the tests will be released in late September.

Across the country, activists and parents have been sending postcards,

making phone calls, and e-mailings the retail giants to let them know they want their wood without the arsenic. Call your local Home Depot or Lowe's today and tell them you want arsenic-free pressure-treated wood. Write or call: Bob Nardelli, CEO Home Depot, 2455 Paces Ferry Rd., Atlanta, GA 30339, phone: 770-433-8211; and Robert Tillman, CEO Lowes's Home Centers, PO Box 111 North Wilkesboro, NC 28656, phone: 336-658-4000.

PASSING THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION ACT

Beyond Pesticides, a campaign member, has been leading the fight to get the School Environment Protection Act (SEPA) passed at the federal level. SEPA would require public schools to implement a school pest management plan (SPMP) that utilizes integrated methods, significantly reducing the chemicals used in school buildings and on school grounds. SEPA mandates that parents be notified three times a year concerning the SPMP and that parents and staff who request it be notified prior to every pesticide application. The law also prohibits the use of conventional pesticides while an area is occupied and requires that signs be posted for twenty-four hours before and twenty-four hours after any pesticide use. The Senate passed the bill in June as part of the Better Education for Students and Teachers Act. However, Republicans in the House opposed to the bill are pushing to have it dropped from the House version of the education act. Beyond Pesticides is urging organizations involved in environmental health issues to put pressure on House Republicans to support the bill. For background information, visit the Beyond Pesticides website at www.beyondpesticides.org or contact Beyond Pesticides at 202-543-5450.

For more information on the Child Proofing Our Communities campaign, call us at (703) 237-2249 or visit our web site at www.childproofing.org. ■

STOP DIOXIN EXPOSURE

C A M P A I G N P A G E

The Stop Dioxin Exposure Campaign is a national grassroots effort to eliminate dioxin and initiate a public debate on the role of government in protecting the health of the American people. Dioxin is the highly toxic by-product of industrial processes involving chlorine. The campaign works with hundreds of community organizations to pressure corporations, hospitals and government agencies to modify or shut down dioxin-emitting facilities, such as waste incinerators, paper mills and chemical manufacturing plants.

“RELEASE THE DIOXIN REASSESSMENT—NOW!” MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TELL BUSH

The EPA's Dioxin Reassessment, which describes the sources and health effects of dioxin, is finished, but the chemical industry is putting enormous pressure on the EPA to prevent the report from being released for fear it will implicate them in a major public health crisis. Communities across the country need this report to set strong policies that will reduce and eventually eliminate dioxin.

On August 3, forty-one members of Congress led by Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) sent a letter to EPA Administrator Christine Whitman urging her to release the Reassessment. In a press statement, Representative Pelosi said, “Dioxin has become so widespread in the environment that almost all living creatures, including people, are exposed to it. The EPA has been studying the health effects of dioxin for almost 20 years. It is high time for this report to be released, so that we can move quickly to address the dangers of dioxin.” For a copy of the letter and a list of signers, visit our web site.

STUDY FINDS CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ON EPA'S SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD PANELS

On July 16, Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA) released a study by the Government Accounting Office entitled “EPA's Science Advisory Board Panels: Improved Policies and Procedures Needed to Ensure Independence and

Balance.” While the GAO report doesn't specifically address the SAB's review of the Dioxin Reassessment, it lends strong credibility to all that the campaign has been saying over the past year about the influence the chemical industry has had on the review process



and gives us powerful ammunition for exposing the industry.

The role of the SAB is to provide peer review of agency documents. The GAO report found, however, that SAB's policies and procedures for preventing conflicts of interests on its panels were inadequate. The GAO found that the SAB has done a poor job of

- ◆ collecting financial and other forms of information necessary to ensure that panelists are independent and that viewpoints on panels are balanced
- ◆ informing the public about the backgrounds and points of view of panelists.

For a copy of the report, see our web site.

A NEW FACE FOR THE CAMPAIGN

Over the last few months we have been considering ways to better coordinate and streamline our work and more effectively move the campaign forward.

What follows is our proposal for the campaign. Developed by an interim steering committee, the plan incorporates ideas that came out of strategy sessions at the People's Dioxin Action Summit in August 2000 in Berkeley. We distributed the plan to the folks who have actively participated in the campaign, and after a great deal of back-and-forth, we came up with a proposal to have several working groups, each with two leaders and a diverse steering committee made up of a representative from each working group, key constituencies within the campaign, and representatives of U.S. geographic regions.

1. Dioxin Reassessment/Cross Media Dioxin Strategy Monitoring Group

Monitors the release of the EPA's Dioxin Reassessment and the Cross Media Dioxin Strategy, the agency's plan for managing dioxin source release problems. Informs the rest of the campaign about key strategic opportunities to apply the necessary pressure.

2. EPA Policy Hearings Organizing Group

Organizes around the EPA hearings that follow the release of the Reassessment and Cross Media Strategy to ensure they are conducive to public participation and diversity.

3. Policy Work Group

Introduces policy initiatives in key states before the EPA policy hearings to lay the groundwork for what can be done on a federal level. Tracks and supports existing statewide initiatives.

4. Alternatives Work Group

Explores possibilities for a clean production/toxics use reduction campaign against an easily recognizable target. As a first step, looks at alternatives to hazardous waste incineration.

5. Chemical Industry Work Group

Pressures the chemical industry by exposing its behind the scene attempts to influence the Dioxin Reassessment and policy initiatives.

continued on page 23

HEALTH CARE WITHOUT HARM

C A M P A I G N P A G E

The mission of the Health Care Without Harm Campaign is to eliminate pollution in health care practices without compromising safety or care. We promote comprehensive pollution prevention practices; support the development and use of environmentally safe materials, technology, and products; and educate health care institutions, providers, workers, consumers, and all affected constituencies about the environmental and public health impacts of the health care industry and solutions to its problems.

EXCITING NEW RESOURCE FROM HCWH

Non-Incineration Medical Waste Treatment Technologies: A Resource for Hospital Administrators, Facility Managers, Health Care Professionals, Environmental Advocates and Community Members. Approx. 100 pages. Free.

This report provides valuable information on alternatives to incineration that are available to treat medical waste. The report has three primary goals:

- ◆ to encourage health care staff and the public to view the management of health care-generated waste as a process or system of materials management instead of a single step;
- ◆ to supply the reader with information to aid her/him in evaluating non-incineration technologies for regulated medical waste; and
- ◆ to raise questions about the public health and environmental impacts of *all* methods and technologies used to treat regulated medical waste.

The report provides a basic understanding of the medical waste stream and helps the reader understand different ways of managing this waste and how different methods impact public health, workers, and the environment. The bulk of the report describes how different nonincineration technologies work, types of waste treated, emissions and waste residues, their advantages and disadvantages, and other considerations. The report discusses technologies that use thermal (autoclave), chemical (alkaline hydrolysis), biological (bio-conversion), and irradiative

(microwave) processes. Vendors for each technology, as well as economic considerations, are included. There is also an excellent chapter describing the key factors that need to be considered in selecting the best nonincineration



technology or combination of technologies for a particular facility.

Although the report offers the sobering conclusion that no one technology offers a panacea to the problem of medical waste disposal, the information in this unique resource provides medical facilities with much of the information they need to decide which technology or combination of technologies best meets their needs.

P2 WORK GROUP

The Pollution Prevention (P2) work group was developed to help facilitate getting information, technical assistance, and resources to organizers who are working to organize within hospital systems across the country. The P2 work group, which is comprised of organizing leaders from eleven major metropolitan areas across the country, helps provide a structure for hospital

organizing and allows leaders to share their experiences, successes, and failures with others looking to achieve similar goals.

The work group has developed a number of resources for the campaign, including "Going Green: A Resource Guide for Pollution Prevention in Healthcare." This guide provides concise fact sheets for organizers just beginning to communicate with a hospital in their community, as well as for those farther along in their pollution prevention work. Organizers who are interested in targeting a local hospital system are encouraged to join the free monthly conference calls, held the second Tuesday of each month.

CHICAGO MERCURY THERMOMETER BAN

On July 25, 2001 the Public Health Committee of the Chicago City Council approved an ordinance banning the sale or free distribution of mercury thermometers in Chicago. Chicago thus joins other major U.S. cities such as Boston and San Francisco in banning mercury thermometers. States that have passed mercury thermometer bans include Minnesota, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Maine.

The Chicago Recycling Coalition, a grassroots organization working toward creating a more just environment, and HCWH are working together to organize community-wide mercury thermometer exchanges throughout the city.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency estimates that for the year 2000, seventeen tons of elemental mercury from thermometers will be disposed of as municipal solid waste. Supporters of the ordinance say that the ban will have a significant impact on the mercury pollution problem in Chicago and along Lake Michigan.

For more information about the campaign and work groups, or to request a publication from HCWH, please call (202) 234-0091 or contact us by e-mail at hcwh@hcwh.org. Visit our web site at www.noharm.org. ■

RESOURCES

◆ The essays in *Barry Commoner's Contribution to the Environmental Movement: Science and Social Action* provide an excellent introduction to some of Commoner's major accomplishments, including the crucial role of the Committee for Nuclear Information in alerting the public to the dangers of nuclear testing, as well as some lesser-known aspects of his work, such as his influence on the Italian left. Among the contributors are Peter Montague, who reviews the major themes of Commoner's work, and Ralph Nader, whose subject is the corruption of science by corporate money. Barry Commoner's own contribution to this volume addresses the inadequacy of regulatory efforts intended to control pollution and argues that real protection of our environment requires a wholesale transformation of our production technologies. Edited by David Kriebel. (Baywood Publishing Company, 2001, 92 pp., \$24.95)

◆ The entire July/August issue of *Multinational Monitor* is devoted to General Electric's environmental and labor practices. The fact-filled articles in "The Case Against GE" look at GE's attempts to avoid cleaning up the PCBs it dumped into the Hudson and elsewhere, the company's use of "management by stress" and "union avoidance" techniques, and the way GE exploits its overfunded pension for its own benefit while fighting reforms that would help retirees. Includes twenty pages of interviews with union leaders and other critics of GE. (Essential Information, \$3.00. Phone: 202-387-8030. On-line: www.essential.org/monitor/monitor.html)

◆ Groups fighting to clean up contaminated military sites across the country launched the Healthy Communities Campaign this June by releasing "Defend Our Health: A People's Report to Congress," a powerful indictment of the military's polluting practices. A joint publication of the Military Toxics Coalition and the Environmental Health Coalition, the report describes how the military is able to avoid complying with most important environmental laws through exemptions and lax enforcement. Case studies illustrate the disproportionate impact of the military's toxic practices on low-income communities and communities of color. (June 2001, 28 pp. Contact MTP at 207-783-5091, EHC at 619-235-0281. On-line: www.miltoxproj.org)

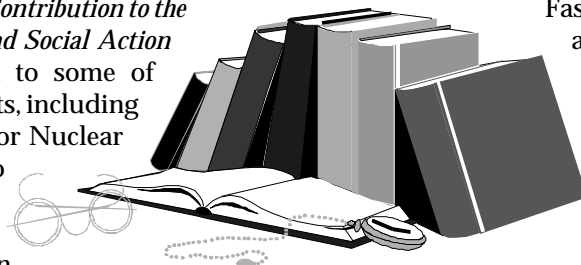
◆ "Out of Fashion: Moving Beyond Toxic Cleaners in the Fabric Care Industry" updates Greenpeace's previous work on the hazards of perchloroethylene (perc). The report summarizes recent research on the health impact of perc on dry cleaning workers and on perc releases into the environment. The report is sharply critical of the EPA for the long delay, due in part to industry pressure, in making public its own assessment of the health risks posed by perc and for its inadequate regulation of the dry-cleaning industry. "Out of

Fashion" also looks at the effectiveness and feasibility of substituting other methods of cleaning for perc-based dry cleaning and at the factors within the dry-cleaning industry that stand in the way of change. (July 2001; 32 pp. Phone: 800-326-0959. On-line: www.greenpeaceusa.org)

◆ "Poison PCs and Toxic TVs," produced by the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, provides a much-needed overview of the rapidly growing waste problem posed by personal computers and other electronic devices. The report examines the toxic materials in computers and televisions, such as lead, mercury, and cadmium, and reviews the problems with current methods of disposal, including the limitations and hazards of current systems of recycling. "Poison PCs and Toxic TVs" contains a detailed proposal for dealing with this waste based on the extended producer responsibility system currently being implemented in the European Union. (June 2001, 28 pp. Phone: 408-287-6707. On-line: www.svtc.org)

◆ Finding good resources on public participation is not easy, but "Public Participation in Contaminated Communities" is one. Nick Ashford and Kathleen Rest at MIT scrutinize the interaction between government agencies and the community in seven contaminated locales in order to identify the factors essential for successful community involvement. The report examines criteria for evaluating public participation mechanisms and discusses what worked and what didn't in the case communities. The elements identified by the authors as crucial for successful community participation include building trust and mutual respect, providing for governmental accountability, being inclusive and diverse, involving agency decision-makers, and utilizing interactive communications. The authors also include a rare review of published work on public participation. Although academic in style, the report is a valuable resource for anyone trying to develop a public participation plan that will truly involve the community. (Center for Technology, Policy, and Industrial Development at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, March 1999. On-line: web.mit.edu/ctpid/www/)

◆ "Poisoned Playgrounds: Arsenic in 'Pressure-Treated' Wood," a joint publication of the Healthy Building Network and the Environmental Working Group, documents the threat to children from arsenic-based preservatives in wood intended for outdoor use, which includes decks, picnic tables, and fences, as well as playgrounds. The report reveals that the wood industry has been able to keep its products on the market, despite their toxicity, through intensive lobbying of the EPA. (May, 2001; 19 pp, \$25.00. Contact EWG at 202-667-6982. On-line: www.ewg.org) ■



WITH SPECIAL THANKS

The Center for Health, Environment and Justice remains an advocate, educator, organizer and leader in the movement for health and environmental justice through the generous support of our members, Partners, Guardians and key foundations and institutions. CHEJ would like to acknowledge the following individuals and institutions who made critically important donations to support our work between June 1, 2001 and August 31, 2001. Our members number in the hundreds, and are therefore too many to name. However, each gift, no matter what the size, is very much appreciated.

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

GUARDIAN'S CIRCLE

(gifts of \$1,000 or more)

...bringing the leadership, vision and support needed to the crucial work of empowering communities to protect themselves from exposure to toxic chemicals in their water, food, air and soils.

Movement Builders

Moira Smullen

Community Protectors

David Bergh

PARTNERS' CIRCLE

(gifts of \$100-999)

...partners in a movement of people and communities committed to protecting public health and the environment.

Neighborhood Advocates

Barbara Puller Smith

Family Protectors

Barbara Cahill

Chen Yu Hu

Irene Schneiderman

Health Defenders

Anonymous Donors

Betty Balanoff

Charles & Rosemary Bersch

Tom Blandy

Mary Canales

Denise Carlini

Allen Feryok

Joan Green

Celeste Jirles

Marc & Kara Klempner

Edward & Marjorie Lee

Richard Lee & Harriet

Rosenberg

Peter Sessa

Art & Cynthia Strauss

Brad & Ann Wallace

In Memorium

Patricia Conn

Joseph DelMedico

COMMUNITY GROUP DONORS

Peace (PA)

Citizens Environmental

Coalition (NY)

North Carolina Waste

Awareness (NC)

INSTITUTIONAL DONORS

United Methodist Church

VIEQUES

continued from page 9

dum drew more than eighty percent of the island's eligible voters—and nearly seventy percent voted that the Navy should get out now, sending an unmistakable message that 2003 is not soon enough.

Bush's retreat from Clinton's position, and the continued resolve of the Viequenses to press on reflects the effectiveness of the pro-Vieques movement, a movement consciously built, at great cost, over many decades and which is now on the verge of achieving its goals—a free, healthy and prosperous Vieques controlled by its own residents. ■

STOP DIOXIN CAMPAIGN

continued from page 20

6. Media Work Group

Works with other work groups to develop media strategies around key events and to help shape the campaign's message. Also tracks media coverage.

For more information on the Stop Dioxin Exposure Campaign, reports, and news updates, visit our web site at www.chej.org. Or call us at (703) 237-2249. ■

CEC OF NEW YORK SEEKS COMMUNITY OUTREACH DIRECTOR

Citizens' Environmental Coalition (CEC) seeks an energetic, dedicated individual with canvass or field managing experience to direct a Community Outreach Program in the Greater Buffalo – Niagara Falls region. Duties include hiring and maintaining the performance of a canvass crew, implementing a training strategy to develop the staff's skills and knowledge, ensuring the program meets community organizing goals and fundraising goals, preparing budgets of income and expenses and financial reports for the program, participating in CEC events and campaigns, and contributing to the CEC newsletter. The salary is based on qualifications and experience; the position has excellent benefits, including paid vacation, health/dental, and paid holidays. To apply, submit a resume to Community Outreach Director, Citizens' Environmental Coalition, 425 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222, or fax resume to 716-885-6845. For more information, call the CEC Buffalo office at 716-885-6848 or email cecwny@buffnet.net.

SUPPORT THE CENTER FOR HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND JUSTICE

For twenty years CHEJ has helped train and assist local people to fight for justice,
become empowered to protect their communities from environmental threats,
and build strong locally controlled organizations.

This is an extraordinary time for CHEJ. Our work with community-based groups
extends far beyond the local neighborhood as we collectively work for strong local,
state, and national pollution prevention policies and practices.

Winning these struggles is not easy.

The day-to-day resources, staffing, and energy required continue to grow.

Please consider a gift this fall as you make your charitable contribution
through the employee giving program at your workplace.

◆ **Our number in the Combined Federal Campaign is #0929**

◆ **We are also listed in over 200 corporate and municipal workplaces nationwide**

Or...make a year-end contribution towards one of our programs or campaigns.

Your year-end gift can take many forms:

◆ **Give directly on line at www.chej.org.**

◆ **Join the Advocates Circle with an automatic, monthly gift.**

Call our office at 703-237-2249 for more information.

◆ **Make a gift of Appreciated Securities. Call our office for more information**



Earth Share

THANK YOU!

CHEJ
P.O.Box 6806
Falls Church, VA 22040
(703) 237-2249

Non-Profit Org.
U.S.Postage Paid
Merrifield, VA
Permit No. 6484

A note on our mailing labels:
Expires: [date]=Date subscription expires
Last or final issue=Time to renew your subscription

