

EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

Vol. 20, No. 4 ♦ Winter 2002



Parents and
Teachers Shut
Down Moldy
New School
in Ohio

Lesson from
Love Canal:
Effective
Meetings Build
Strong
Organizations

The Legacy of Agent Orange:
Dioxin Contamination in Vietnam

Reflections on the National People of Color
Environmental Leadership Summit

The Journal of the Grassroots Environmental Movement
Center for Health, Environment and Justice

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ABOUT CHEJ

The Center for Health, Environment and Justice is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization that provides organizing and technical assistance to grassroots community organizations nationwide. The center 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, NY. Hundreds of people living near contaminated sites around the country contacted Lois as her efforts and those of her neighbors captured national attention and proved, for the first time, that toxic waste is not an abstract issue but one that's in everyone's backyard.

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 support. We also refer callers to other grassroots groups who are working on the same issues or fighting the same polluter.

CHEJ can help your newly formed group:

- ◆ learn how to conduct successful meetings
- ◆ raise funds
- ◆ define a strategic plan to accomplish goals,
- ◆ network with others
- ◆ hold news briefings and press conferences
- ◆ identify experts to assist with technical or scientific issues and questions

For more established groups, CHEJ can provide guidance and assistance on issues such as keeping people involved over the long haul, organizational structure and board development, one- to five-year strategic planning, building working coalitions, developing campaign and issue strategies, media training and assistance, and expanding beyond your existing geographical area.

CHEJ has staff scientists who can answer many of your questions and who can review technical documents and tests results you need help with. The center also has a unique library of books, reports, government documents, subject and corporate files, and videos that may have just the information you need.

Currently, CHEJ is coordinating two national campaigns:

- ◆ *Stop Dioxin Exposure*, which is working to educate the public about the health threat posed by dioxin and to move all levels of government to take steps to eliminate the sources of dioxin
- ◆ *Child Proofing Our Communities*, devoted to protecting children from pesticides and toxic chemicals in schools and day care facilities

We invite local groups to become part of these campaigns. Don't hesitate to contact us.

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CHEJ E-ACTION BULLETIN

Are you receiving CHEJ's monthly E-Action Bulletin? Our e-mail bulletin provides the latest news about community groups we are working with, updates from the Child Proofing and Dioxin campaigns, and suggestions for ways to get involved. If you'd like to receive the CHEJ E-Action Bulletin, please contact us at info@chej.org or sign up online at www.chej.org.

WELCOME!

CHEJ welcomes Michele Roberts as our new organizing director. Michele holds a master's degree in environmental policy from the University of Delaware in Newark and worked for 20 years on environmental issues for federal, state, and local governments. She has coauthored a report on community participation in brownfields pilot projects and written a national survey on states' environmental justice activities. Michele has already written her first article for *EBY*, an account of the Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit (p.11).



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New York's **Syracuse United Neighbors (SUN)** is fighting a proposal to put a sewage treatment plant in an African-American community. In September, the group staged a lively protest outside the home of a county official who supports the plant. For related story and photo, see *Action Line*, p. 16. Photo courtesy of SUN.

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LESSONS LEARNED FROM 25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

BUILDING A STRONG ORGANIZATION THROUGH EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

BY LOIS GIBBS

Next year, we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the victorious community struggle at Love Canal. This is the second in a series of articles on organizing lessons learned in that struggle that remain relevant today.

One of the most important lessons that we learned at Love Canal and that has been confirmed over the years is that an organized community invariably fares better than one that does not organize. This is why developing an organizing effort is so important.

In the last *EBY*, I shared my experiences on how to get people involved by going door to door. The next step in building a strong organization is to bring people together to share with each other and begin to define what they want to do about the problem. One critical component of a successful effort is holding effective meetings.

The value of planning and conducting a meeting to achieve maximum effectiveness cannot be over emphasized. Your organization's ability to attract and keep members will depend largely on the success of your meetings. The three key elements of successful meetings are planning, outreach, and active participation.

PLANNING

Planning is crucial. You need to determine why you're having the meeting. People won't come to meetings unless they believe that it benefits them. So when thinking about the reason for having the meeting, ask yourself the question: How will this meeting give people something important enough to persuade them to leave the comfort of their home? The reasons for the meeting should be spelled out in any flyers and materials you prepare. Don't call meetings just to have meetings.

Once you are clear on the goal or objectives of the meeting, you can start to plan. Again, ask yourself several questions:

- Who do we need to have at this meeting?
- How do we reach these individuals?
- What is the best time for people to attend?
- What place is most centrally located or most accessible to the majority of the people you want to attend?

You should have an agenda and use it in your flyers or pitch to get people to come to the meeting. Leave a little room in the agenda for important issues that come up just prior to the meeting.

OUTREACH

Placing flyers in everyone's door is a good way to let people know about your meeting. However, to get a larger number of people to come you need to go beyond leaving flyers. You and your volunteers should knock on doors or phone people several days before the meeting to encourage them to attend. At Love Canal, volunteers ("street representatives") were responsible for contacting a small number of households to nudge people to attend the meetings. The result was that our meetings had hundreds of people in attendance.

PARTICIPATION

The rule here is one facilitator and many voices. Instead of having one or two people present information at your meeting, ask several people to give five-minute presentations about a fact, activity, news, fundraising, and so on. Leave a designated amount of time for questions after each person, and be sure to stick to the time limits.

Create opportunities for a full floor discussion on some issue or activity. Most people cringe at the thought of people in a crowded room having an open-floor conversation. Yet, at Love Canal, where no one had formal facilitating experience, we were able to have even the most heated debates in an orderly fashion. How? We established rules of behavior and stuck to them. To help, we elected a sergeant at arms—a rather large man with a bellowing voice—who kept time and enforced the rules. We encouraged everyone to comment, but they had to stick to the issues, avoid personal attacks, and limit themselves to three minutes. People will stop coming to meetings if they are not active participants or if everyone who speaks is put on trial. Develop ground rules,

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PARENTS AND TEACHERS SHUT DOWN MOLDY NEW SCHOOL

BY PAUL RUTHER

When plans were announced in Girard, Ohio to build a new intermediate school for grades four to six, parents and teachers were ecstatic. The school it would replace had been built in 1919 and was expensive to maintain and uncomfortable to teach and learn in. The new school opened in September 2000, only ten months after groundbreaking, while construction on the building continued.

But the enthusiasm didn't last long. The new building was so rife with environmental hazards that teachers and students became sick only days after classes started. It took angry parents working from outside the school and teachers working from within the school only nine months to have the new facility shut down for repairs. Here's how the parents and teachers of Girard Intermediate School took on the city's school district, shut down the school and brought a "sick" building back to partial health.

SICK SCHOOL SYNDROME

Parents credit fifth grade science teacher Chris Notareschi with being the first to realize the link between teachers' and students' health problems and the new building. Initially, the excitement of teaching in the new school prevented Chris from focusing on her burning eyes and bad headaches, but soon she was spending time online trying to figure out what was making her and others sick. What she learned was that people in a new building are under a virtual chemical assault from gasses coming from paint, newly installed carpets and carpet pads, particleboard in furniture and building materials, solvents, and pesticides. These chemicals, she learned, can make people sick, sometimes very sick.

Moreover, mold soon became a serious problem due to a leaking HVAC system and inadequate ventilation. A distinctive "mold" odor permeated the building. Mold could even be seen beneath the carpeting. One teacher reported that there was mold in the library's new books.

Throughout the fall, teachers and students in the school complained of burning eyes and nasal passages, sore throats, headaches, nausea, and fatigue. All of these symptoms seemed to diminish significantly when individuals were away from the building. In November, after the school nurse told her about "sick school syndrome," Chris became convinced that people were getting sick from the new school. As building representative for the school, Chris felt obligated

to inform the school district of the building's problems. She informed Principal Bob Foley and Superintendent Tony D'Ambrosio of the teachers' many complaints, and in mid-November, the superintendent reluctantly ordered environmental testing.

She and the other teachers recommended that the principal send letters home to parents warning them of the building's environmental hazards. However, several months later the superintendent presented Chris and other teachers with test results indicating that formaldehyde and other airborne toxics were below detectable levels. Chris was

*MOLD BECAME A SERIOUS PROBLEM
DUE TO A LEAKING HVAC SYSTEM AND
INADEQUATE VENTILATION.*

shocked. The superintendent now dismissed the teachers' recommendations with the reply that "there was simply nothing to report." Only later did parents and teachers learn that the environmental report the superintendent received in December had indicated that there were species of mold in the school "capable of being pathogenic to humans" and that the superintendent had refused to authorize a cautionary letter to parents on the grounds that it would induce "panic."

Meanwhile, parents in the community were largely unaware of the danger. Cathy Ross remembers that in November her daughter was coming home from school with red eyes but that her symptoms were mild compared to many other children's. A friend who worked in the school library reassured her that the symptoms experienced by some teachers and students were being addressed through environmental testing and that there was nothing to worry about.

While parents and teachers complained in person or in writing to Principal Foley, their actions were not coordinated and produced no results. Then, in early spring, one frustrated community member leaked information to a local TV station, resulting in a report on a "mysterious illness" plaguing the school. The report prompted Principal Foley—acting without authorization from the superintendent or school

board—to finally send home the long-requested warning letter.

FORMING A PARENTS' GROUP

Unsatisfactory conversations with the superintendent and several school board members galvanized Cathy to form a parents' group. Tapping into widespread community anger and frustration, Cathy and several other parents drew 75 people to the group's first meeting, including the school nurse, Chris and several other teachers. The Girard Concerned Parents Group (GCPG) was born.

Prior to the meeting, Cathy and several other parents had determined that the City of Girard Board of Health could be a key ally in pressuring the superintendent and school board, and they scheduled the first meeting on the same night the board of health was meeting. After discussing their concerns and recording the symptoms affecting their children, the group marched *en masse* to the health board meeting and demanded they intervene to protect the school's children and teachers.

GCPG then created a steering committee to inform the community about the health issues. At the first community-wide meeting, microbiologists from Youngstown State University gave a presentation on the problems of mold in schools. But the group's efforts to impress upon the superintendent the seriousness of the problem were not well received. The school administration informed GCPG that since the group was not an official party they were not deserving of information or communication.

The group's frustration increased on learning that the school board was intent on ignoring a ten-step directive from the health department that would improve environmental health conditions at the school. The directive advised shutting down the school temporarily if all ten steps were not completed.

By May, Cathy had become GCPG's principal community contact, and as the warmer months arrived, she began to receive numerous calls from angry parents reporting that their children were sick. Because of the district's strict attendance policy, not many children missed full days of school. But by April the school nurse was reporting that she was receiving an average of 64 students a day and sending many of them home. This led to the rescinding of the school's absentee policy—but not to action to address the cause of the health problems.

THE TEACHOUT

The solution was for parents and teachers to work together. GCPG asked Chris, who by now had bronchial spasms and was using an inhaler, if she and other teachers would consider holding classes outside. The group assured her of GCPG's support and promised complete solidarity if any effort was made to threaten teachers' jobs. All 21 teachers supported the plan.

Not surprisingly, when the day came, the teachers were very organized and maintained class schedules perfectly. For one and a half hours all of the school's classes were taught

outdoors. But the response of the school authorities was swift and heavy-handed. The principals of all of the city's schools arrived at the intermediate school and ordered the teachers back into their classrooms, threatening that the superintendent would fire them if they disobeyed.

Once the teachers began to take the children back to their classes, the parents began to arrive. According to Cathy, by one o'clock, parents had taken home 280 of the 405 students. The media arrived around lunchtime when the teachers were

THE SOLUTION WAS FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS TO WORK TOGETHER.

back inside, but local reporters managed to interview Chris and film numerous parents removing their children from the school. That afternoon Superintendent D'Ambrosio, vacationing in Florida, called Chris, and, with ocean waves pounding in the background, demanded to know what it would take to get the teachers back in the school. Chris's reply, punctuated by the spasms of coughing, was that he should shut the school down until it could be made safe. That weekend, the school board announced that it was closing down Girard Intermediate School for repairs. The repairs continued into the next school year, forcing the two younger grades back to the old school while the sixth-graders moved to the city's junior high.

FIGHTING FOR PROPER REMEDIATION

Once the school was closed, GCPG's work really began. Their biggest challenge was to overcome the resistance of the school board and get the school properly cleaned up.

The company hired by the school board to do testing at the school found serious problems. Among them:

- The unit ventilators were found to be defective: they were producing fresh air for only 6 to 8 children per classroom when the average classroom had 24 students and a teacher.
- Analysis of carpet dust collected in April, 2001 revealed evidence of mold contamination "associated with a range of hypersensitivity diseases ... known to produce mycotoxins."
- In a July 2001 report, the company noted that the superintendent had reported witnessing ductwork/insulation being subjected to moisture during construction before being installed inside the school. The wet ductwork had provided a fertile environment for mold, which was then spread throughout the building by the HVAC system.

Despite the school's closure, school authorities continued to be untrustworthy. The school board, for example, refused to test for mycotoxins and reneged on an agreement that the GCPG would be present with its own testing company when the cafeteria ductwork—a suspected mold

source—was removed. School board meetings became struggles where the GCPG battled the board over what needed to be done at the school.

FIGHTING TO REMOVE THE SCHOOL BOARD

By the fall of 2001, GCPG had decided that it could no longer work with the school board and launched a legal effort to have the board removed from their seats. GCPC charged the board with negligence for failing to inform parents of the severe health problems at the school. In less than a month, GCPG collected 2,100 petitions calling for the board's removal and when the board succeeded in having the petition thrown out on a technicality, 20 group members went door to door, collected another 1,612 signatures in just six days, and resubmitted the petition. This time the petition was accepted and a trial date was set. The group won a big victory in August when the Ohio Supreme Court rejected the board's claim that the county court did not have jurisdiction in the case. In October, however, the County Court of Common Pleas ruled in the board's favor and allowed the three board members in question to maintain their seats.

GCPG members have doubts about how effectively the group's lawyer represented the issues, but some also have second thoughts about the legal strategy. Cathy Ross believes that preparing for the trial took too much time and energy away from other important work, such as holding community meetings and maintaining the group's website. The legal fight also helped undermine the group process. "It was like putting all your trust in a pilot," Cathy said. "You give your attorney everything you have and worked for eighteen months to get and then we just watched him crash it and there's nothing you can do about it."

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In August 2002, Girard Intermediate School reopened after 16 months of remediation work costing \$500,000.

Despite conflict with the school board, the group succeeded in having many of its health recommendations implemented. Carpeting was removed from the school and replaced with tile that was allowed to offgas before the school reopened. Armed with a statement from the board of health, GCPG was also able to have the fiberglass lining removed from the HVAC air ducts. (Fibers had become airborne and were being transported throughout the building.) The fiberglass on the exterior of the ductwork is now encased in a plastic coating.

Girard Intermediate has also implemented the EPA's respected Tools for Schools indoor air quality program, which school officials had promised to do since the building's opening. This program is a comprehensive effort to address the multiple issues that compromise indoor air quality in a school. A respected state health official coordinates Girard's Tools for School program and has successfully insisted, over the board's objections, that Cathy Ross be on the team.

The group's work has had an impact beyond the intermediate school. Several of the city's buildings are being re-

paired to diminish the presence of toxic mold. Throughout Ohio, indoor air quality issues are more quickly addressed in schools so that the schools "don't become another Girard." GCPG member Julie Tammaro reported that her husband, a teacher in a nearby town, had filled out environmental health questionnaires that were made mandatory for teachers in his school.

MORE TO BE DONE

The group's work is far from finished. The school board had promised that carbon monoxide testing would be done in every classroom with an adult present to monitor the tests, but the promised testing is yet to be done. And the group notes, with considerable frustration, that health problems among students and staff are still being reported. Julie's third-grader, who attended an elementary school connected to the intermediate school by a hallway, became so ill in August from mold that his parents had to enroll him in another school.

Despite the group's fatigue from their two years of work, they continue to push for more changes, including replacement of the entire HVAC system. The group is well positioned in the community to continue its fight. "They still thank us," says Julie. "You hear it everywhere you go." ■

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

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write them on a large piece of paper, and post them on the wall.

MAKING SURE THINGS GET DONE

People will attend meetings of a group that develops a reputation for getting things done. So as you develop your agenda, try to include items that the group can vote on at the meeting. It is also a good idea to form subgroups to take on specific tasks. Make sure that before you end the meeting it is clear who will take the action and when it will get done. Remember—when it becomes more work to prod people to complete their assignments than to do them yourself, it is tempting to just go ahead and do them. *Don't*. If you do, you'll end up doing everything.

There are a few other things to keep in mind about meetings:

- Make sure you announce when the next meeting is before the close of the meeting.
- Begin the meeting on time and end the meeting on time! This is a *golden rule*! People are more likely to attend a meeting if they know it really will start at the stated time and end on time.
- Finally, bear in mind you are not just accomplishing tasks for a specific meeting—you're working to build an organization. ■

Next issue: Group Structure

VIETNAM WAR STILL CLAIMING VICTIMS: THE LEGACY OF AGENT ORANGE

BY STEPHEN LESTER

At the first U.S.-Vietnamese conference on Agent Orange, held in Hanoi last March, CHEJ's Science Director Stephen Lester presented a paper on the health effects of dioxin contamination in U.S. communities.

The U.S.-Vietnam War caused immense and protracted suffering in both countries. Some 3.14 million Americans served in Vietnam, and more than 58,000 Americans were killed. Nineteen hundred are still listed as missing in action across Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. In the U.S., the impact of the war on the Vietnamese is much less well known. In North Vietnam and South Vietnam together, at least three million soldiers and civilians were killed; 300,000 people are still listed as missing in action.

Now, more than 25 years after American soldiers left Vietnam, the impact of the war on the Vietnamese continues. Today, this impact is caused not by bullets or bombs but by chemicals like dioxin found in soil and food and in the people of Vietnam. This impact may continue for years or even generations.

These chemicals are the legacy of Operation Ranch Hand—the spraying of herbicides in South Vietnam to deny cover to enemy troops and destroy the crops they depended on. The operation began in 1962 and expanded as U.S. forces in Vietnam increased, reaching its peak in 1967 when 1.7 million acres were sprayed (Kolko, 1986). Between 1962 and 1971, the U.S. military dumped 17 million gallons of herbicides on South Vietnam's jungles, forests, and fields, targeting an estimated 10-14 percent of the country (Hatfield).

The devastating impact of the spraying is still visible today. Where there were once large areas of thick, impenetrable jungle, there are now open fields covered mostly with wild grasses that provide no food for people or wildlife. Fifty percent of the mangrove forests have been destroyed, wiping out hundreds of natural ecosystems that may never be restored (Hatfield).

The most commonly used defoliant was Agent Orange, an equal mixture of the herbicides 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T. Other herbicide mixtures sprayed by the U.S. Army included Agents Purple, Pink, Blue, Green, and White (agents were named for the colored strips on their barrels). Some agents had higher levels of dioxin than Agent Orange, but more Agent Orange was sprayed than any other. All of these mixtures were contaminated with small amounts of 2,3,7,8-TCDD or, as it is commonly known, dioxin. Dioxin is con-

sidered to be the most toxic man-made substance ever tested. Exposure to dioxin has been linked to cancer, birth defects, damage to the immune system, and reproductive and developmental problems. More than 170 kilograms of TCDD were dumped on South Vietnam, the largest dioxin release in history.

VIETNAM: AO WAS CHEMICAL WARFARE

The long-term impact of this intensive spraying on the Vietnamese was described in papers presented last March in Hanoi at the first U.S.-Vietnamese Conference on Agent Orange, sponsored by the U.S. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). Paper after paper described studies showing a higher incidence of reproductive abnormalities among residents of sprayed regions and in families of veterans who fought in the south compared to groups from areas that were not sprayed. Reproductive abnormalities included children born with birth defects, miscarriages, stillbirths, fetal deaths, spontaneous abortions, premature births, physical deformities, mental retardation, and nervous system disorders. These researchers firmly believe that the health problems they found were caused by the spraying of Agent Orange.

Vietnamese scientists minced no words, describing the use of Agent Orange as “chemical warfare waged by the U.S. on the country of Vietnam.” This is how the people of Vietnam have felt since they saw the devastation caused by the spraying in the 1960s. Professor Le Cao Dai, one of Vietnam's premier researchers on the effects of Agent Orange on human health and former director of the Vietnam Agent Orange Victims Fund, described the use of Agent Orange during the war as a “matter of human conscious [sic] face to face with the destructive power of the kind of weapon long denounced by mankind” (Dai, 2000).

U.S. DENIAL

The U.S. government denies that there is any definitive link between these health problems in Vietnam and the spraying of Agent Orange. This denial sounds all too similar to the way U.S. governmental agencies initially responded to

claims made by American veterans that exposure to Agent Orange had caused their illnesses. It took years of pressure from American veteran organizations to expose fraudulent government studies and efforts to deny any link between Agent Orange and adverse health effects in American veterans (Gibbs, 1995 and Sutton, 2002).

Veterans succeeded in getting the U.S. Congress to request the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to review the data on the adverse health effects of Agent Orange and dioxin. The NAS completed this review and found sufficient evidence linking numerous health problems with exposure to Agent Orange and dioxin (NAS, 1994). The NAS continues to review data on the adverse health effects of dioxin every two years. The accompanying box shows what diseases and illnesses the U.S. government will compensate veterans for if they were exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

DIOXIN IN VIETNAM

Although the adverse health effects from exposure to dioxin have been the subject of considerable research, until recently little attention has been focused on the environmental effects of the U.S. use of Agent Orange in Vietnam. This changed in 1994 when the Vietnamese National Committee to Investigate the Results of Chemical Warfare in Vietnam (called the "10-80" committee because it was formed in October 1980) hired Hatfield Consultants, an independent environmental assessment firm based in Canada, to study the environmental effects of the spraying.

This study, funded primarily by Canadian government agencies, documented the impact of the spraying by collecting and analyzing hundreds of soil, water, and sediment samples. Fish and wildlife samples were also collected. The testing found that high concentrations of dioxin persist in Vietnam today.

Much of the Hatfield work focused on the Aluoi Valley in central southern Vietnam near the Laos border. This area was selected because it has remained largely rural and undeveloped since the war and any dioxin found here would likely reflect residue from the spraying and not be confused by modern sources such as industrial operations or agricultural applications. The Aluoi Valley was also an integral part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which the U.S. sprayed heavily with Agent Orange during the war (Hatfield, 2000). The report goes on to say that if the levels of dioxin found in the Aluoi Valley were found in soil in Canada or the U.S., these sites would be considered contaminated and require immediate government action.

There were also many U.S. military installations in the valley that were heavily sprayed to reduce groundcover around the bases. One former U.S. airbase contained the highest levels of dioxin found in Vietnam—898 parts per trillion (ppt) TCDD. Fish (52 ppt), duck tissue (82 ppt), and pond sediment in this area also contained high levels of dioxin. Agent Orange and other herbicide mixtures were likely spilled or dumped at these sites, posing a long-term threat as the contaminants slowly seep into the surrounding ground.

ADVERSE HEALTH EFFECTS FROM EXPOSURE TO DIOXIN IN AGENT ORANGE

Many people concerned about dioxin have asked CHEJ about the health-related problems that men and women experienced during their military service in Vietnam. Some of our brothers and sisters who fought in that war had high exposures to dioxin because of the Army's use of Agent Orange and other herbicide mixtures that were used as defoliants.

The veterans of this war fought for years to get the U.S. government to undertake health studies to answer questions about exposure-related diseases. These studies failed to find a connection between dioxin exposure and veterans' illnesses and were later found to be fraudulent. Veterans' groups succeeded in discrediting the government studies and in getting the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine (IOM) to conduct an independent assessment of the health effects associated with exposure to dioxin.

The IOM committee examined more than 230 epidemiological studies of workers, soldiers, and residents in communities with exposures of dioxin to identify any health problems present in these groups. The committee's report was published in 1994 and is updated every two years.

Many of the studies that the IOM committee evaluated identified connections between exposures to dioxins and adverse health problems. Veterans' organizations such as the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) believe that there are other health-related diseases associated with exposure to dioxins and they

continue to push for further studies.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs currently provides disability benefits to Vietnam veterans who are unable to work due to health problems for which there is a "positive association" with herbicide use in Vietnam. These illnesses are:

- non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Hodgkin's disease
- soft tissue sarcoma
- chloracne
- respiratory cancers
- prostate cancer
- multiple myeloma
- acute and subacute transient peripheral neuropathy
- porphyria cutanea tarda (PCT is a liver disorder characterized by thinning and blistering of the skin).
- type II diabetes

To find out more about the efforts of Vietnam Veterans of America to obtain disability benefits for illnesses related to herbicide exposure, contact them at their office at 8605 Cameron Street, Suite 400, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or by phone at 301-585-4000, or visit their website at www.vva.org.

water and soil. Other hotspots include sites where damaged spray planes dumped their cargo (Dai, 2000). It's likely that there are hundreds of hotspots around former U.S. military bases and at other sites in southern Vietnam (Hatfield, 2000).

The Hatfield study found high levels of dioxin in pooled human blood samples collected from men and women more than 25 years old. This is consistent with studies done by Dr. Arnold Schecter, professor of environmental sciences at the University of Texas at Dallas. In a study done in the mid-90s, Schecter found high levels of dioxin in blood samples from adults living in South Vietnam compared to the north (Schecter, 1995). In a more recent study of 43 residents from Bien Hoa City, a heavily sprayed area of South Vietnam located about 20 miles north of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), Schecter found that 95 percent of the residents had elevated dioxin blood levels (Schecter, 2001). Dioxin blood levels as high as 413 parts per trillion (ppt) TCDD were found, with a median level of 67 ppt compared to a median of 2 ppt in Hanoi, which was not sprayed during the war. Both Schecter and Hatfield found high levels of dioxin in the blood of Vietnamese born after the war, indicating that the environment remains contaminated and that dioxin is presently moving through the food chain into people.

The Hatfield report recommends that comprehensive studies be done on the link between Agent Orange and health problems (Hatfield, 2000). To address the problems caused by Agent Orange, the study recommends that the government set up a public health plan to ensure that people do not eat contaminated food and establish a program for decontaminating affected lands. The study also recommends that a reforestation program be set up and funded through international assistance.

WHAT'S NEXT

What will happen in Vietnam is uncertain. Vietnamese officials say they aren't seeking U.S. war reparations or damages from the chemical industry, but they want the U.S. to help them identify hot spots and clean them up. They also want the U.S. to provide humanitarian aid to address the many health problems connected to the spraying of Agent Orange. At the same time, the government in Hanoi is reluctant to make demands of the U.S. government at a time when the two nations have just begun normal trade relations.

In March, scientists from both countries signed an agreement to conduct joint research to assess the impact of the spraying. The U.S. is willing to fund basic research projects. The U.S. is also paying for some initial testing of hotspots and providing technical training to the Vietnamese to build their capacity to do their own testing for dioxin. But the U.S. is not willing to pay to clean up hotspots or to address the health issues raised by the Canadian and Vietnamese studies.

It is unclear how satisfied the people of Vietnam are with this agreement. They don't know where the many hot spots are, they lack the funds to pay for the cleanup, and they don't have the medical resources needed to provide health care and treatment for those who are ill. While doing more research is always valued, many feel that doing more studies comes at "great expense" as Agent Orange continues to destroy the environment and the health and the lives of many people (Dai, 2000). As Dr. Nguyen Trong Nhan, Chairman of the Viet Nam Red Cross, has said, "[A]s human beings, we cannot in good conscience forget. We must take action now, not delay any longer, for the sake of those who have been hurt by Agent Orange" (Dai, 2000). ■

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REFLECTIONS ON THE SECOND NATIONAL PEOPLE OF COLOR ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

BY MICHELE ROBERTS

Michele Roberts, CHEJ's new organizing director, was a participant at the October summit.

The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, held in Washington, D.C. in October of 1991, continues to be considered by many as perhaps the most important event in the history of the environmental justice movement. The summit produced a powerful declaration on the principles of environmental justice that provided direction to the growing movement and continues to inspire activists.

Based on the accomplishments and impact of that summit, activists felt the need to reconvene with a celebratory anniversary and next-steps agenda. The Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, held October 23-27, 2002 in Washington, D.C., attracted over a thousand participants from all over the United States, as well as from countries such as Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Panama, Guyana, Ecuador, South Africa, and India.

As the new organizing director for CHEJ, I came to the summit to learn and share. Based on the goals established by the national planning committee for this summit, I attended with a great deal of excitement and expectation. The goals included:

- assessing the progress made since 1991;
- developing strategies to build on the assets and successes of the current environmental justice movement;
- broadening the scope of the movement to include work on economic issues, immigrant-bashing, globalization, welfare, governmental accountability, and the overall health of communities;
- improving the lives of people of color over the next 10 to 50 years;
- spurring the growth of grassroots involvement at a level sufficient to achieve systemic change.

Numerous key events, plenary sessions, and workshops kept participants engaged in a constant flow of stimulating dialogues. Plenary sessions such as *Affirming Local Concerns for a National Agenda* and *Developing Community-Driven Legal and Organizing Strategies* were very empowering. Workshops such as *Finding Solutions for Corporate Pollution*, *Minimizing Impacts on Indigenous Lands* and breakout sessions on

Vieques, Incineration, Youth Organizing 101 and *Climate Justice* were extremely informative. These sessions stimulated dialogue and networking that well reflected the intended goals of the summit.

The workshop on incineration that I attended was a learning experience for all involved. Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network described the impacts

*HEARING ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED
AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE TO ORGANIZE
LEFT ME FEELING MORE EMPOWERED AND DETERMINED
TO ASSIST IN THEIR DAILY ORGANIZING STRUGGLES.*

of incineration in Alaska on the indigenous population. After community leaders in Arkansas and Michigan shared experiences from their incinerator fights, including dealing with “good old boy” politicians, a community leader from New York City responded that they shouldn’t allow these politicians to stop their efforts and shared how she won her fight. She told the group that if you can’t gain support from elected officials you should organize not only to further your environmental goals but to challenge the officials in the next election. Towards the end of the workshop, an activist from the New York City-based organization Waterfront Neighborhoods invited the entire workshop to come to New York and help counter pro-incineration propaganda at a conference in November.

The summit opened and closed each day with a celebration of various cultural experiences. One evening African drummers and dancers performed. Asian youths led the opening activity one morning with a friendship-building ceremony, handing out strings that were to be placed on the wrist of the person seated next to them; the recipients then wished for prosperity for the person giving them the strings. On the last day of the summit, I participated in a circle dance with Native Americans.

At times, however, there was a level of tension that resulted in occasional protests. Tension and frustration began

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ALABAMA

◆ Hundreds marched in Anniston on September 8 as part of the National Action for Safe Chemical Weapons Disposal and Environmental Justice sponsored by the **Chemical Weapons Working Group** (CWWG). Environmental and social justice organizations from around the country joined local activists to demand that the U.S. Army drop its plans to incinerate chemical weapons and adopt safer alternatives. Speaking to an overflow crowd at a press conference before the march and rally, Reverend Fred Lee Shuttlesworth, a founder and current vice-president of the **Southern Christian Leadership Conference** (SCLC), declared that "Anniston is the place to break the back of pollution just like we broke the back of segregation in Birmingham." Participants marched behind a banner that read "Justice=Safe Disposal, No Incineration." Rufus Kinney of **Families Concerned about Nerve Gas Incineration** led the rally in Zinn Park, where speakers called for continued actions to stop the incineration. Martin Luther King III, current president of SCLC, told the crowd, "We're going to keep coming back until justice is done." Following the rally,

CWWG circulated a sign-on letter among members of the Congressional Black Caucus. At the end of November, CWWG joined 11 other groups in a federal lawsuit to halt the Army's plans to begin live agent trial burns within the next few months. The lawsuit cites the dangers posed by incineration emissions, the existence of alternative technologies, and the disproportionate impact the incineration will have on African-Americans in the Anniston community.

◆ Anniston residents fighting to hold Monsanto accountable for contaminating the town with PCBs got more good news this fall. Last winter, in an important legal victory, a jury found that Monsanto and its corporate successors, Pharmacia Corporation and Solutia Inc., are liable for Monsanto's PCB pollution in Anniston. However, during a 60-day public comment period, residents and state officials strongly criticized the initial settlement in the case as an attempt to stall and limit the cleanup of the town. The result is a new settlement, announced this October by the Justice Department, that will allow the cleanup of PCB contamination to begin two years earlier and places the U.S. EPA—rather than the companies—in charge of a risk assessment of the health hazards posed by the PCBs. In addition to



National Action for Safe Chemical Weapons Disposal and Environmental Justice on September 8 in Anniston. Photo courtesy of the Chemical Weapons Working Group.

WHAT IS ACTION LINE?

At CHEJ, we see Action Line as the heart of *Everyone's Backyard*. This is the place where we tell the stories of the grassroots groups we're working with. We strive to call attention to the movement's creative energy and accomplishments. We also see Action Line as a way to share strategies and actions that work and to stay up-to-date on industry trends and tactics.

Although we rarely mention our role, CHEJ is providing organizing support or technical assistance to most of the community groups we report on. For other Action Line stories, we draw on a large network of friends and supporters, developed during twenty years of working with grassroots groups. We encourage contributions from organizations that, like CHEJ, support grassroots organizing and from community groups themselves.

the 70-acre Solutia facility, the study will now cover all sites throughout the Anniston area where PCBs have been found. The EPA will oversee the cleanup itself. The companies agreed to provide \$3.2 million to establish a foundation for the special education needs of children in the area, though this is considerably less than the \$10 million the community had been seeking. The community continues to push for a program to monitor residents' health, a key demand not addressed in the revised settlement.

ALASKA

◆ Kodiak Islanders have been hard at work protecting their community from a facility that is burning soil contami-

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nated by the U.S. military. This fall, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) found that the Soil Processing, Inc. incinerator on the island was operating within legal limits. On the eve of statewide elections, members of the **Women's Bay Community Council** contacted the governor and their state legislator to raise concerns about the facility. After elected officials contacted the DEC, the agency announced that "more detailed lab results" showed that the emissions of particulates were twice the legal levels. The facility then, according to the local newspaper, "voluntarily shut down" until at least next spring. A spokesperson for the DEC told the paper, "We're grateful to the community and individual residents of Kodiak who have diligently expressed concern about the air-quality conditions." The Kodiak Island Borough Assembly, the local government, also responded to community concerns, reversing a position that allowed the soil incinerator to operate as a "similar use" to an asphalt plant without having to get zoning approval.

◆ In October, **Alaska Community Action on Toxics** (ACAT) released the results of a study showing elevated levels of PCBs and the pesticide DDT among Saint Lawrence Island Yupik people. The average PCB levels among residents were several times the U.S. average. The highest PCB levels were found among residents who spent the most time at or near the military base at the Northeast Cape. The area of the former base encompasses 9 square miles and includes at least 23 sites contaminated with solvents, heavy metals, dioxins and furans, asbestos, and PCBs. High levels of DDT were found in the residents of Gambell, which is near another former military base. The study was conducted by the State University of New York Public Health and the Environmental Research Center at Oswego and Norton Sound Health Corporation and is part of a four-year project, Environmental Justice for Saint Lawrence Island, which is funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. ACAT coordinated the study, working closely with the villages of Savoonga, near the Northeast Cape, and Gambell.

ARKANSAS

◆ **Citizens Advocating Safe Environment** (CASE), with CHEJ's help, has been pressing for better oversight of Waste Management's Tontitown landfill for years. This fall, CASE suffered a setback when the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality agreed to the reopening of the landfill, even allowing a major increase in leachate. However, earlier this year, a whistleblowing former employee charged that the landfill had serious problems, including a massive hole in the liner—and these allegations have now been confirmed by the media. The *Fayetteville Morning News* reported in September that other Waste Management executives were saying that the company had covered up serious problems at the landfill. CASE, supported by the local **Sierra Club**, has intensified its calls for a criminal investigation into the issue.

CALIFORNIA

◆ In a big victory for Barrio Logan residents in San Diego, Master Plating, a metal plating plant emitting toxic fumes into the neighborhood, agreed to close down operations this fall. Under pressure to act from the community and the **Environmental Health Coalition** (EHC), state and county agencies conducted air testing last winter, finding high levels of cancer-causing chromium 6 in the neighborhood. The county filed a lawsuit to close Master Plating down and a superior court judge halted the plant's chrome-plating operations. In September, the plant's owner agreed to shut down all operations and to remove all hazardous materials. In a press release, Paula Forbis, director of EHC's Toxic-Free Neighborhood campaign, praised the action of the agencies but also called attention to the work still to be done in the community. Zoning laws in Barrio Logan, a mostly Latino community of twenty thousand near the San Diego shipyards, allow polluting industries to be located next to residences and schools. "There are dozens of facilities like Master Plating in these residential neighborhoods," Forbis said, "and the health of local residents can't wait for problems to be addressed one by one every ten years." EHC will use a \$750,000 grant it received this year from the California Endowment, a foundation that focuses on health issues, to work with residents on drafting a new community plan and revising zoning laws.

COLORADO

◆ The **Environmental Justice Project** continues to fight a cement plant in the Boulder area that is seeking permission to burn tires. The group contacted the state environmental agency and found that numerous past violations by the plant had been "plea-bargained" down to lesser violations. In addition, the plant does not have the certificate of designation from the county required for it to burn tires. Local government officials are saying this doesn't matter, but the group is prepared to fight this issue.

FLORIDA

◆ According to **Citizens Organized for Environmental Justice** (COEJ) in Jacksonville, the group is "on the brink" of getting a major city park closed down because of the presence of incinerator ash dumped there many years ago. They continue to picket the park every Saturday, as well as regularly making their presence known at city council meetings. COEJ previously was successful in getting a school on another incinerator ash site closed. COEJ is also carefully watching the EPA-ordered testing of incinerator ash sites in order to see which may need remediation.

◆ Former U.S. EPA ombudsman Robert Martin is the new president of the **Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation** (LEAF) based in Tallahassee. Martin resigned from the EPA last April in protest and disgust after EPA Administrator Whitman placed the ombudsman's office under the EPA inspector general, limiting Martin's ability to independently investigate cases, and confiscated Martin's computers and files while he was traveling. LEAF provides legal assistance to community groups in Florida, Alabama, and Georgia and monitors federal and state regulatory activities.

GEORGIA

◆ According to local word of mouth, the would-be landfill developer that **Citizens to Save Candler County** has been fighting told an opponent in a neighboring county: "You're reasonable, but that Candler County group is

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just about crazy." Members of Citizens have heard from several reliable sources that the landfill effort is being dropped. A local leader told CHEJ that Citizens' success was due to getting organized quickly, calling CHEJ early for advice, getting yard signs up after the call, and getting the message out every week through articles in the paper that the group was in this for the long haul.

ILLINOIS

◆ Two years ago, **Concerned Citizens of Ogle County (CCOC)** in the northern part of the state defeated a proposed landfill expansion. Local sentiment was expressed in a three to one vote against expansion in a non-binding referendum, and the landfill operators withdrew the proposal before county officials were scheduled to vote on it. Now the issue has been raised again, and CCOC plans to bury the proposal once and for all. The dump is strongly supported by the mayor, so CCOC is working on getting at least three city council members to oppose it. The group is actively mobilizing and is optimistic that city council will vote against it.

KANSAS

◆ **Prairie Watch** in Miami County in eastern Kansas is fighting a proposed power plant. Despite strong local opposition, the power plant has gotten the permits it needs. Clearly, though, Kansas City Power and Light is still afraid community pressure will stop the plant — so afraid that it held a secret groundbreaking ceremony for the plant. The utility not only didn't invite the public; it made public officials who came promise not to talk about the event. The local paper has dubbed the company "Kansas City Paranoia & Light," and Prairie Watch plans to give them a reason to be paranoid. The November elections brought one new member to the county commission and created two new positions on the commission, and Prairie Watch is moving to take advantage of these political changes.

LOUISIANA

◆ **Concerned Citizens of Livingston Parish (CCLP)** are not

impressed with the new secretary of Louisiana's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and his desire to improve his agency's public image. A September editorial in the Baton Rouge *Advocate* explained that "an audit of DEQ earlier this year by Legislative Auditor Dan Kyle's office found that 73 percent of solid-waste facilities in Louisiana were operating with expired permits" and that DEQ "failed to collect 75 percent of the fines it imposed between 1999 and 2001 — \$4.5 million worth out of \$6 million total." CCLP is keeping the pressure on the DEQ and on the Waste Management dump in their community; a recent flyer urged residents to call the DEQ and complain every time they detect an odor from the dump, the biggest industrial waste landfill in Louisiana.

MAINE

◆ In September, the **Natural Resources Council of Maine** reached an agreement with two companies securing safe storage of the 85 metric tons of mercury left at the HoltraChem Manufacturing Company plant in Orrington. Twenty tons of the mercury was on its way last year to India when protests by activists in both the U.S. and India stopped the shipment. The unprecedented agreement calls for Mallinckrodt, Inc., current owner of the former HoltraChem site, to pay Mercury Waste Solutions, Inc., the nation's largest recycler of mercury, to store the mercury for at least four years and would allow the federal government to purchase the mercury in order to permanently retire it. Under legislation sponsored by Maine Senator Susan Collins, the U.S. EPA would have the authority to acquire surplus mercury and have responsibility for permanently retiring surplus mercury stocks. The HoltraChem mercury has already been shipped to a secure site in Wisconsin, allowing Mallinckrodt to move forward with a full cleanup of the former chemical plant.

◆ The **Environmental Health Strategy Center**, a new nonprofit founded by Mike Belliveau, will serve as a bridge between environmental and public health groups working to eliminate mercury and dioxin and other persistent toxic chemicals. Its first campaign will aim at getting municipal agencies to phase out the use of PVC products.

MARYLAND

◆ Following up on its September march for increased enforcement of truck regulations, **Little Washington Civic Association (LWCA)** held an environmental town hall meeting in October. Two hundred residents came out to express their concerns about truck traffic, health, and undesirable land use to about a dozen elected officials, candidates, and other county and state officials. LWCA will be following up with post-election letters to key candidates. LWCA is also working with the **Coalition for Central Prince George's County** to set up an environmental team that will take on issues impacting that part of the county. An LWCA leader spoke at a rally that was part of the People of Color Environmental Summit and was interviewed on a radio program on Washington D.C.'s Pacifica station, hosted by environmental activist Damu Smith.

MASSACHUSETTS

◆ **Housatonic River Initiative** is proud to report that despite decades of resistance by General Electric the first half mile of the cleanup of PCBs in the Housatonic River has been completed and the U.S. EPA has begun work on the next mile and a half. But the impact of GE's misuse of PCBs extends far downstream and into communities throughout the Pittsfield area. A HRI community health study has identified elevated skin rash and thyroid problems in the Lakewood neighborhood, which adjoins former GE facilities. An egregious example of GE's legacy of PCBs in Pittsfield is Hill 78, an unlined PCB dump 50 feet from a neighborhood school, where PCBs have been dumped since the 1950s—and are still being dumped today. HRI, joined by **Toxics Action Center**, **Housatonic Environmental Action League**, and **Citizens for PCB Removal** awarded Hill 78 a place on Massachusetts' Dirty Dozen list in an event held at GE's "House of the Future," a 15-year-old showcase for plastic construction in Pittsfield. HRI has received TAG funding from EPA to review risk assessments and studies to be done in preparation for the 2005 EPA decision on whether the "rest of the river" downstream will be cleaned of PCBs.

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In his documentary Good Things to Life, to be released this winter, Mickey Friedman tells the story of the community fight to get GE to clean up Pittsfield. Photo courtesy of Mickey Friedman and the Housatonic River Initiative.

HRI is among the sponsors inviting community groups with health-related concerns about PCBs to join them early next year for a PCB Health Congress to be held in Fairfield, Connecticut. Other groups involved in organizing the Congress are **Hudson Riverkeeper**, **Hudson River CARE**, Brockport, New York's **Residents Environmentally Acting for Change (REACH)**, and the **Housatonic Environmental Action League**. HRI can be contacted at 413-243-3353 or timgray@berkshire.net.

◆ The **Quincy Environmental Network** has negotiated an agreement with the developers of the Quarry Hills Project, a golf course and residential project built partly on a landfill site. A breakthrough in the negotiations came when the developers agreed not to use sludge pellets from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority on the site; the pellets have been found to have high levels of dioxin. The developers, who were facing many financial pres-

ures to complete the project, made a number of other concessions in the negotiations, which were facilitated by local government officials.

MICHIGAN

◆ An agreement between the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Dow Chemical could relieve Dow of liability for massive contamination of Midland and areas downstream to Saginaw Bay, one of the largest watersheds in the Great Lakes basin. The agreement, announced in November, would allow dioxin levels in the soil to be 10 times higher than the standard that applies in the rest of the state. The agreement also would ultimately require citizens to prove health problems before any cleanup would happen.

According to documents obtained in October by members of the **Lone Tree Council**, **Environmental Health Watch**, **Ecology Center** and **Michigan Environmental Council**, Michigan's current attorney general has raised concerns about

the legality of the agreement. The DEQ ignored these concerns and pushed to get the consent order signed before Governor-elect Jennifer Granholm takes office; Granholm campaigned on a platform to eliminate dangerous persistent chemicals like dioxin.

At a public comment meeting in November, Dow tried to put its own spin on the story by holding a special media briefing that was closed to the public. Activists from the region along with **Greenpeace** protested outside holding "Wanted" posters of Dow CEO Michael Parker and signs that read "Michigan DEQ: A wholly owned subsidiary of Dow Chemical Co." As a result, word got out through the TV news that DEQ has been working hand in glove with Dow on the agreement. As part of the expedited process, the DEQ has limited the public comment period to 30 days. Activists have filed a petition under the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to intervene in the process and create a more reasonable time frame for comment.

◆ **Families Against Incinerator Risk (FAIR)** continues to fight three elected officials from Ypsilanti Township who are holding out for an incinerator plan there. Among those on FAIR's side are the American Lung Association, the **Ecology Center**, the **Michigan Environmental Council**, and the entire Ypsilanti city council. Earlier in the year, FAIR tried to recall the three officials, but the recall petition was thrown out by a local court. The Washtenaw County Democratic Party passed a resolution criticizing the three Democratic officials and the incinerator.

NEVADA

◆ African-American, Latino, and Native American activists from around the country joined together on October 12, Indigenous Peoples Day, at the Nevada Test Site and in Las Vegas, in support of the "Action for Nuclear Abolition" events underway there, at which 61 activists were arrested. Kalynda Tilges, executive director of the **Shundahai Network**, the Nevada-based group which coordinated the overall event, stated, "People of the four colors and the four directions are coming to Nevada to stand in solidarity with the

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Western Shoshone, whose homeland is the location of the world's first high-level nuclear waste dump." At the Las Vegas news briefing, Mildred McClain of **Citizens for Environmental Justice** in Savannah, Georgia said, "We are coming together from across the world to say no to nuclear energy and nuclear weapons." Another speaker, Charlotte Keys of Mississippi's **Jesus People Against Pollution** declared, "The land, air and water do not belong to President Bush." Lori Goodman of **Diné CARE (Citizens Against Ruining our Environment)**, a Navajo group, added. "At the top of our priorities is our demand that the government clean up its own mess!" The national delegation of grassroots environmental justice activists were members of the **BASE (Building Action for Sustainable Environments) Initiative of the Peace Development Fund**.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

◆ A former drum-cleaning site in Plainfield is getting public attention after the developer that bought the land found signs of contamination there. PCBs, lead, and VOCs were then identified by the Department of

Environmental Services, and eventually the U.S. EPA took responsibility for the site. In response to inquiries from nearby residents about piles of dirt on the site, the EPA responded that the agency is planning to use thermal oxidation or soil washing there, and that they don't have to issue a record of decision, don't have to hold public meetings, and if anybody wants to know anything about the site, they should file a Freedom of Information Act request. With support from CHEJ, the residents are forming a group and have contacted their member of Congress.

NEW JERSEY

◆ The **Youth Action Brigade** in Bergen County is gearing up again. Last year, the group fought a plan to develop housing in the forestlands owned by United Water in the county. The company owns large amounts of land, which provide a forest buffer protecting the reservoir that is a key local water supply, and the Brigade believes that a housing development in this area would put the water at risk. The issue was resolved when the state and locality bought the land in question and took it out of risk of development. Unsurprisingly, United Water's real estate subsidiary is back this year with another plan to develop housing on an even larger tract of

land in the forest buffer area. The Brigade will be opposing the development proposal, starting with a mass demonstration at the local planning commission, but has also contacted United Water to urge them to get out of the real estate business.

NEW YORK

◆ **Syracuse United Neighbors (SUN)**, a group that has been leading neighborhood fights in Syracuse for decades, is now fighting a proposal by Onondaga County to put a football field-size sewage treatment plant in Syracuse's mostly African-American south side. SUN and the other members of the **Partnership for Onondaga Creek** say that an underground storage facility for storm-related overflow of sewage would be a better alternative—cheaper and more effective in the long run as well as fairer to the neighborhood. While city officials support the proposal to build the underground facility, county officials remain committed to the sewage treatment plant because of its lower initial cost. In September, SUN members picketed County Executive Nicholas Pirro's house with signs, fliers and a 10-foot effigy of Pirro swirling down a toilet bowl. SUN followed this up in October with a press conference outside Pirro's office. About 15 SUN members crowded into Pirro's office demanding that he return to talks between the city, county, the Department of Environmental Conservation, and the community to resolve the issue.

◆ **Friends of Westland Hills** continues to fight against a proposal to build a middle school on a contaminated site in what is now a park. An environmental scientist living in the community has identified serious lead and asbestos contamination derived from a scrap yard that operated for decades on the site. The push for the middle school comes in part from a citywide group that advocates smaller middle schools. The school system is carefully limiting the footprint of the school site to try to avoid contaminated areas and has withdrawn all plans for playing fields, etc. Technical questions about land use and conversion of park property have delayed construction of the school.



Syracuse United Neighbors outside of County Executive Nicholas Pirro's house in September. Photo courtesy of SUN.

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◆ The **People's Environmental Network of New York** (PENNY), which plans to serve the Onondaga County area, held an environmental summit in Syracuse in October, attracting about 100 people. A wide range of environmental groups participated, and community fights on diesel emissions and sewage disposal were also represented. Keynote speaker Larry Yates of CHEJ urged environmentalists to build organized grassroots power and to include direct action in their range of tactics. PENNY hopes to marshal unified support for area environmental fights.

◆ Local and state authorities have acknowledged that the site of Shore Park in the Long Island town of Pelham Manor was used as a firing range and a dump for incinerator ash and other waste – but still insist that the site is safe for recreation, even though there apparently has been no soil sampling at the site to support their claim. Recently, **Westchester Health and Environment Action Team** (WHEAT)'s research into DEC documents indicated that as much as 50,000 tons of incinerator ash may have been dumped on the site. As we go to press, WHEAT has gotten almost 500 signatures on a petition asking for testing of the Shore Park site.

◆ Tenants in an apartment building near Ground Zero are now facing new risks, as 18 cell phone antennas have been added to their building, some of them within a few feet of homes occupied by small children and pregnant women. While the effect of electromagnetic radiation on humans is still not fully understood, some studies suggest that the impact at the cellular level could be especially serious for developing fetuses and infants. The tenants believe the landlord's decision is motivated by a desire to drive out rent-stabilized tenants who have doggedly remained in the building despite prior harassment and the events of 9/11. They have held building meetings, and their situation has been featured in a free newspaper that reaches hundreds of thousands of Manhattan residents.

◆ In October, the **Coalition of Impacted Neighborhoods** (COIN) held a "Charms and Challenges of Western New York Toxic Bus Tour" that stopped



Cheektowaga Citizens' Coalition demonstrate across the street from Buffalo Crushed Stone, one of the points of their toxic triangle, during COIN's toxic bus tour. Photo courtesy of Citizens' Environmental Coalition.

in Cheektowaga, Hickory Woods, Tonawanda, Lewiston/Porter, and the west side of Buffalo. Local, state, and federal policymakers as well as residents of affected communities were on the tour and at each site were welcomed by scores of community residents who described the challenges they face living near or on top of polluted sites. The message to policymakers was "clean up local sites and refinance the state Superfund program." The toxic bus tour united area groups, and the media coverage the tour generated helped get the word out about New York's toxic sites. *Contributed by Citizens' Environmental Coalition*

OHIO

◆ After teachers and students at a Leavittsburg school near a construction and demolition landfill and adjoining recycling plant became sick, **Our Lives Count** (OLC) applied extensive pressure to force the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to perform air tests to determine if the sites were emitting hydrogen sulfide. ATSDR's testing revealed that hydrogen sulfide levels were high enough to cause

headaches, dizziness, nausea, and eye, throat, and upper respiratory irritation. OLC members have released videotapes showing illegal, after-hours dumping at the recycling plant and recyclable items being buried by bulldozers. OLC believes that the recycling plant has practiced illegal dumping for years and is pushing for the city to revoke the facility's permit immediately.

◆ Blanchard County's **Preserve Everyone's American Rural LifeStyle** (PEARLS) has been fighting a quarry run by National Lime and Stone for more than a year. They recently made contact with opponents of a quarry proposed by the same company in the Allen-Bath area. When company representatives found out that PEARLS members were at a meeting of these opponents in the nearby Allen-Bath area, they just left, not even showing their faces in the meeting. The new group, in recognition of the help they were getting, and the fact that they are fighting the same enemy, named itself **Allen-Bath PEARLS**. Not long after the group formed, the company dropped its plans

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for the site, and now the Allen-Bath group is working to make the area a state park (and watching out for other quarry plans that may pop up.) In recognition of her work in her community and other communities, Theresa Allen, founder of Blanchard County PEARLS, received the 2002 Environmental Watchdog of the Year award from the **Ohio Environmental Council**.

OREGON

◆ **Community Against Railroad Pollution (CARP)**, with technical support from CHEJ, continues to organize for a cleanup of the railroad yard in Eugene. Media coverage of the group has increased, partly because the group has been involved in several events. At a community picnic, the group chose a logo in a contest while enjoying good food and good company. In October, CARP held a community forum jointly with the **Whitacre Community Council**, the **Oregon Toxics Alliance**, and a new legal support group, the **Northwest Environmental Justice Center**. A packed room full of community residents heard presentations about the health threat to the community from the contaminated railroad yard, and 20 people signed up to work with the group. Earlier the same day, the groups held a press conference at the railroad yard, the site of decades of carelessness with chemicals. For extra irony, they stood in front of a Union Pacific sign warning employees, "If it's not safe, don't do it." CARP got coverage on three local TV channels, and a front-page newspaper story is in the works.

◆ After decades of making ViewMaster toys in the Beaverton area, Mattel has moved the factory to Mexico, leaving behind extensive contamination from chemical solvents. Former workers and residents have formed **Victims of TCE Exposure (VOTE)**, with their first goal being adequate free medical care for people in the community. VOTE held a fundraising event in Portland that got some media attention, and now is planning a memorial rally and community meeting at the water tower of the former plant. The water tower, which provided TCE-contaminated water to

plant workers, has become a symbol of the contamination in the water there.

PENNSYLVANIA

◆ Hazleton's **Group Against Gas (GAG)** continues to receive crucial support in its fight for relocation. Congressman Paul Kanjorski, who represents their area, has introduced legislation enabling residents of gas spill areas to relocate or get equity from their homes. (Gas spills are not covered under Superfund.) In September, GAG members, supported by local and state elected officials, came to Washington to support the legislation, which has stimulated bipartisan interest. The trip brought GAG more media attention. In an editorial, the Harrisburg *Patriot-News* wrote that "those who think environmental concerns are mostly baloney and see government regulation as overly oppressive should talk to folks in Hazleton" and noted that the evidence of cancer from the gas spill, "like the fumes, is overpowering." A representative from **Concerned Citizens of Eastern Avenue**, a group from Washington D.C. that is fighting for action on an underground storage tank leak, joined GAG to support their efforts and spoke to Congressional staff and media.

EPA Administrator Whitman is yet to follow through on commitments made to the group in the presence of U.S. Senator Arlen Specter and Representative Kanjorski last spring. In late October, 85 Laurel Gardens residents at a GAG meeting signed a letter to Whitman, countering claims by Region III EPA staff that GAG's concerns were simply based on misunderstandings and failures of communication. After GAG distributed the letter to numerous politicians, the EPA responded by assigning a certified mediator from the Superfund program to work with the group, but GAG has informed the mediator they are only interested in mediation if it involves a serious discussion of relocation.

PUERTO RICO

◆ In early October, the U.S. Department of Defense acknowledged that it had used chemical and biological weapons in Vieques during military exercises during the 1960s. The same week, Puerto Rico's secretary of health released health data showing an increase of cancer cases among the Vieques population. At a press

conference in Washington D.C., the **Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques (CRDV)** renewed its demand for an immediate termination of the U.S. military activities on the island and for a comprehensive cleanup of toxic contamination caused by the military and met with members of Congress to press their case. Later in the month, CRDV members participated in a Peace for Vieques Walk-a-thon in New York and in the Environmental Justice Summit in Washington. The Bush administration announced last year that the U.S. Navy would leave Vieques by May, 2003, but military exercises are still scheduled for early in the year. The CRDV pledges to continue with civil disobedience actions until the Navy withdraws. During the last exercises, in September, protestors entered U.S. Navy bases in an effort to stop the bombing; military police arrested about 20 people and used tear gas several times against nonviolent protesters outside the bases.

SOUTH CAROLINA

◆ Organized by **Citizens Organized for Rights and Empowerment (CORE)** in the Holly Hill area, 70 people came out to a Title V hearing on one of several local facilities with serious air emissions problems. Three hundred residents signed CORE's petition supporting CORE's position, including residents of neighborhoods not previously involved with CORE. CORE got 2000 flyers out, in their county and the next one. Two local polluting plants have requested meetings and hired community mediators to talk to CORE.

TEXAS

◆ The West Memorial School of Katy recently reopened after a five-month remediation that resulted from seven months of determined organizing by the **Parent Action Group**. The remediation was primarily to remove toxic mold that caused dramatic health problems among teachers and students. Group members are questioning the remediation techniques and are alarmed by the continued presence of mold in the school. Because other schools in the district face similar, if not worse problems, the group has con-

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tacted parents throughout the district in an effort to create unified pressure on the school board. The group is demanding a more open remediation process to ensure that past mistakes are not repeated.

VIRGINIA

◆ The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approved Duke Power/Tennessee Gas' plan for a natural gas pipeline in rural southwest Virginia. Earlier, FERC had denied Duke the expedited decision the company had requested on the pipeline due to "controversy" over the proposal. The **Blue Ridge Coalition (BRC)**, which has organized much of the "controversy," vowed to seek a rehearing and to appeal the decision. The group also expressed hope that Duke's ongoing financial and legal problems would ultimately doom the project.

Working on another track, members of the BRC showed up in numbers at a state government forum on environmental issues. Virginia state officials had come to Appalachian Southwest Virginia to push a park bond issue, but BRC members from four counties dominated the evening with their opposition to the pipeline. They focused on the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, which has authority over Virginia's streams and rivers, several of

which the pipeline would cross, and called on the state to respond to citizen and environmental concerns if FERC continues to fail to do so.

WISCONSIN

◆ **Stop Unnecessary Road Expansion (SURE)** has combined grassroots organizing, pressure on local governments, media work, and a federal lawsuit in what looks to be a successful effort to block a major highway plan in Waukesha and Washington counties. SURE reports several new positive developments. First, the state has begun to cut back highway expansion plans because of the poor economy, and has put the Highway J/164 plans on hold. Second, SURE met with the mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin's largest city, and has forged an alliance to oppose the highway. Third, the federal judge in SURE's lawsuit to block the project has begun asking the Wisconsin Department of Transportation serious questions about groundwater contamination at a key bridge construction site on the highway route. SURE and the **Sierra Club** have drawn media attention to wells near the bridge that have been contaminated by an old landfill.

◆ Effective organizing and outreach by **Menomonie Area Citizens Concerned About Ethanol** seem to have put an end to plans to build an ethanol plant in the

middle of the town. The plans for the plant got underway in late 2000 when a former mayor met secretly with the city council. The council subsequently voted 10-1 for the plant. Concerned residents visited St. Paul, Minnesota, where there are major problems with odor from an ethanol plant, then formed Menomonie Area Citizens Concerned About Ethanol to educate the community. Slowly, despite continuing support from the current mayor and the local newspaper for the project, support for the project eroded. In October, the board of zoning appeals denied the Stonic Company the permits it needed to build the plant. Activists are now raising questions about the local economic development agency, which promoted the project.

CANADA

◆ Grassroots local action, backed up by international support, has resulted in a serious and probably fatal setback to plans for the PCB incinerator planned by Bennett Environmental, which would treat up to 200,000 metric tons of contaminated soil, sludge, and other debris from across North America. The Ontario Ministry of Environment issued what local activists called "a stinging condemnation" of the proposal and told Bennett that it could not move forward without significant changes. Bennett has now withdrawn the proposal in order to modify it.

Public Concern Temiskaming, which helped lead the successful fight against the Adams Mine Dump, actively fought the proposal at every step, raising issues at one public meeting until the chair of the government-appointed citizen's advisory board shut down the meeting, and confronting Ontario's environment minister with 50 protesters when she campaigned in the area. Public Concern also sponsored a visit to Kirkland Lake by opponents of a similar Bennett-run facility in Sainte Ambroise, Quebec. The Quebecois activists warned that despite promises from Bennett, dioxin levels in their area had gone from 50 parts per million (ppm) to 3040 ppm in the first two years of part-time operation of the facility.

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Public Concern Temiskaming's giant moose, decked out in a full toxic waste suit, was part of a 300 vehicle cavalcade opposing the Bennett facility on a rainy Father's Day. Photo courtesy of Public Concern Temiskaming.

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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 level. For information on the campaign, publications, and updates on our activities, visit our website at www.childproofing.org.

CAMPAIGN ADVISES SENATE ON GREEN SCHOOLS

On October 1, CHEJ Executive Director Lois Gibbs testified on behalf of the Child Proofing Our Communities campaign before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW). Gibbs spoke on a panel titled *Green Schools: Environmental Standards for Schools*.

Gibbs's testimony focused on the urgent need for school siting legislation to prevent the widespread practice of building schools on or near contaminated sites. Gibbs cited the campaign's January 2002 report, *Creating Safe Learning Zones*, which revealed that in just five states there are nearly 1,200 schools within a half-mile of a known toxic site. "Failure to act," said Gibbs, "would place tens of thousands of children at risk of being exposed to toxic chemicals at their place of learning."

To remedy this situation Gibbs called for:

- the establishment of community-based school siting committees;
- a categorical prohibition on building a school within 1,000 feet of a hazardous waste disposal site or garbage dump;
- a three-tiered evaluation/assessment/remediation process approach based on a California state law, which is the country's only statewide legislation requiring assessment and remediation of potentially contaminated property.

Moreover, Gibbs called for this process to be federally funded "to support schools that apply for the assessment, remediation and construction of healthy schools on otherwise unsafe sites."

In response to Gibbs's testimony, EPW chairman Jim Jeffords (I-VT) called for "federal guidelines that take a child's small size and developmental needs into consideration." Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY), a strong advocate for protecting children against environmental hazards, stated that "establishing uniform guidelines would provide local communities with the tools they need to locate schools in places that will allow our children to learn, grow, and develop in a safe and healthy environment."

The panel included Claire Barnett, executive director of the Healthy Schools Network, who called for the funding of the "Healthy and High Performance Schools" provisions of the "Leave No Child Behind Act of 2000," and Alex Wilson, publisher of Environmental Building News, who made recommendations concerning how the federal government could support "high-performance school design, construction, and operation."

Several grassroots groups who work with the campaign were also in the packed hearing room. Veronika Carella, chair of the Howard County (MD) PTA's Health and Environment Issues committee, submitted written testimony calling for legislation and funding for least-toxic integrated pest management policies. Joellen Lawson, a special education teacher from Newtown, Connecticut, submitted testimony describing how her exposure to mold ended her 23-year teaching career. Joellen has turned her tragedy into action and founded a group called the Canary Committee of Teachers and Parents who are addressing indoor air quality issues in Connecticut schools.

The EPW committee required examples that indicate the serious nature of the problem. Ten of the 11 situations submitted to the committee are from communities the campaign has worked with. (Complete descriptions are included in Lois Gibbs's written testimony, available at www.childproofing.org/epwtestimony.html.)

THE GREEN FLAG PROGRAM

The campaign has officially formed a new committee to develop a school-based award program for student groups in schools. The Green Flag program will award green flags to schools whose student-led, adult-coordinated groups achieve serious, positive environmental improvements in defined programs. The committee is in the process of establishing a tiered criteria system by which it will reward schools for environmental achievements in areas such as integrated pest management (IPM), recycling, and indoor air quality. The committee is meeting monthly via conference calls.

The Pesticides committee has already produced a guide for awarding schools the green flag. The four-level tiered system has both mandatory steps and suggested activities, with awards being presented to student groups and their adult coordinators for the successful completion of each level; the green flag—the final award—would be awarded to groups who successfully implement an IPM policy.

ABC'S REPORT IN HIGH DEMAND

With the beginning of the school year came numerous requests for copies of the *ABC's of Healthy Schools*, which was released in August by the Healthy Buildings committee. The list of those asking for the report includes school inspectors and facility managers in locales ranging from Denver, Colorado to Radnor Township, Pennsylvania. Exciting news came from the Ohio Department of Health: the department is interested in providing copies of the primer to all 650 of the state's school districts and is exploring the possibility of getting a grant to pay for printing costs. ■

DIOXIN

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

The Dioxin 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 modify or shut down dioxin-emitting facilities, such as waste incinerators, chemical manufacturing plants, and paper mills. For more information on the campaign, publications, and updates on our activities, please visit our website at www.chej.org.

CAMPAIGN VICTORY—CHANGES AT THE SAB!

The Science Advisory Board (SAB) of the U.S. EPA was created to provide scientific peer review of agency documents. CHEJ and others who participated in the SAB's review of the dioxin reassessment have seriously questioned the SAB's independence and objectivity. The dioxin review process was dominated by panel members, including the chair, with connections to dioxin-generating industries and who downplayed dioxin's health and environmental impacts. This obvious bias led to a highly politicized review process aimed at delaying, if not preventing, the agency from finalizing the reassessment and releasing it to the American people.

In November 2000, representatives from 19 organizational members of the Dioxin campaign, including CHEJ and the Vietnam Veterans of America, and nine scientists gave testimony explaining why the SAB committee should approve the agency's dioxin reassessment. All of those who spoke were passionate and had a unified message.

Campaign participants held silent demonstrations at this meeting, distributing a press release and holding up signs that highlighted the connections several committee members had to dioxin-generating industries. These activities seemed to inspire several committee members, who at critical moments in the debate, spoke out about the issues of conflict of interest, bias, and lack of transparency in the SAB process.

During the time it took for the SAB to review the dioxin reassessment, the campaign succeeded in getting a diverse number of people to testify at SAB meetings. Throughout this time, the campaign worked with SAB staff and participated in meetings of the SAB executive committee to raise concerns not only about the dioxin process but about the SAB process in general.

Now, two years later, there are changes at the SAB. To begin with, old staff are leaving. Don Barnes, SAB staff director for more than 20 years, and Sam Rondberg, the lead SAB staff person for the dioxin review with more than 20 years at the SAB, both retired this year, and two other SAB staff have departed as well.

In June, 2002, Vanessa Vu took over as SAB staff director and immediately announced that the SAB would hold two public meetings each year to listen to the public as part of an "ongoing effort to improve policies and procedures." At the first meeting, in September, the SAB distributed a new booklet providing information about how panels are formed—the first time this process has been written down and made available to the public.

While the booklet does not address the issues of how balance on the panel and conflicts of interest are defined, current SAB staff seem committed to addressing these issues in future meetings involving the public. The SAB also has plans to develop guidance policies to clarify the roles of panel chairs and members, SAB and agency staff, and the public in the production of SAB reports.

It's clear that the turnover in almost half the SAB staff and its new readiness to address the issues of bias, conflict of interest, and panel formation can go a long way towards taking the SAB back to where it should be—providing expert peer review for scientific documents prepared by the EPA. The activities and pressure generated by Dioxin campaign members played a major role in bringing about these changes. Congratulations!

WHITE HOUSE BLOCKS BILL ON POPs TREATY

More than 130 countries, including the U.S., have signed the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, commonly known as the POPs Treaty. The treaty would phase out the use of dioxin and 11 other extremely toxic chemicals and includes a mechanism for banning additional chemicals. As of the beginning of November, 24 countries had ratified the treaty. The U.S., however, is unlikely to join them anytime soon.

Before the Senate votes on ratification of the treaty, Congress must pass legislation to implement the treaty in the U.S. Implementing legislation introduced last spring on behalf of the White House by Senator Smith (R-NH) would require congressional action before chemicals added to the treaty could be banned in the U.S. In contrast, the bill introduced by Senator Jim Jeffords (I-VT) would give the EPA the necessary authority to regulate additional POPs without congressional approval.

Environmental and public health groups, including Physicians for Social Responsibility, World Wildlife Fund, Oceana, U.S. PIRG and the Center for International Environmental Law, worked hard with Senate staff on a compromise that would still include a streamlined process for approving new POPs. In October, however, the Bush administration imposed new conditions on adding chemicals to the treaty. Republicans then withdrew their support for the compromise bill, killing it for this year. ■

RESOURCES

◆ The Factory Farm Project of the Global Resource Action Center for the Environment (GRACE) has an outstanding web site that provides a wealth of information on the environmental and health impacts of factory farms. The project has now published an invaluable guide to fighting these farms covering both research and organizing. *How to Confront a Factory Farm* provides guidance on developing a campaign strategy, working with the media, and fundraising, and includes excellent resources to get you started, including sample letters, petitions, meeting agendas, questionnaires, and ordinances. The guide also takes you through the steps of researching and requesting information in order to challenge permit applications and pursue enforcement of environmental regulations. Available in both print and web versions; the web version, which contains links to GRACE resources and other internet sites, is extremely well-designed and convenient to use. (Grace Factory Farm Project, June 2002; 212-726-9161; available online at www.factoryfarm.org)

◆ The revised and expanded edition of *Prescriptions for a Healthy House: A Practical Guide for Architects, Builders, & Homeowners* is a comprehensive and extremely well-written guide to building a safe, nontoxic home. The sources and health effects of indoor air pollution—including VOCs, mold, radon, radiation, and pesticides—are expertly explained, and alternative materials, designs, and practices are carefully described and evaluated. The authors address virtually every aspect of exterior and interior construction, as well as furnishings, appliances, and heating/cooling and electrical systems. The many case studies, diagrams, photos, tables, and long lists of products and suppliers enhance the usefulness of the book. The Child Proofing Our Communities campaign used *Prescriptions for a Healthy House* as a resource in preparing its report, *The ABC's of Healthy Schools*. (Paula Baker-Laporte, Erica Elliot, and John Banta; New Society Publishers, 2001; 315 pp; \$26.95)

◆ *The Fatal Harvest Reader* is an exceptionally strong collection of articles devoted to exposing the social, environmental, and health consequences of our industrial and globalized system of food production and to exploring alternative models. The essays contrast traditional and industrial agricultural practices, address specific aspects of industrial agriculture—the devastating impact of pesti-



cides, the health risks posed by genetically engineered foods, the destruction of biological and cultural diversity—and identify the corporate and institutional power structures that drive the system. Edited by Andrew Kimbrell, the director of the Center for Food Safety. (Island Press, 2002; 369 pp.; \$16.95. A larger volume with photographs is available for \$45 in paperback.)

◆ Phthalates are industrial chemicals that are used as plastic softeners or solvents in many different consumer products. They are also known reproductive toxins. Following up on a government study that revealed that women of child-bearing age had potentially dangerous levels of phthalates in their bodies, Health Care Without Harm, the Environmental Working Group, and Coming Clean had 72 beauty products, including deodorants, hair products, hand and body lotions, and nail polish, tested for the chemicals. *Not Too Pretty: Phthalates, Beauty Products & the FDA* lays out the results: nearly three-quarters of products tested contained these dangerous chemicals but not one of the products lists the chemical on its ingredient label. (July, 2002; 20 pp; available online at www.nottoopretty.org) ■

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The Tsemikaming First Nation, who are indigenous to the area, also took a strong stand against the facility, as they had with the Adams Mine plan, and issued a statement asking Bennett to leave and pledging to do “what is necessary to protect our lands.”

The Ontario Farmers Association, with many members near the proposed site, also vigorously opposed the Bennett proposal out of concern that farmland and water would be harmed. Parmalat, a major dairy distributor, announced that it might not continue to purchase milk from the area, northern Ontario's largest dairy region, if the incinerator went into operation.

In the northeastern U.S., which is downwind from the proposed incinerator site, environmental groups like **Cancer Action** spoke out against the incinerator. And since a new PCB incinerator in North America would be a major setback, international networks, including the **Basel Action Network** and the **International POPs Elimination Network**, mobilized their members to oppose the facility.

Over 60,000 letters were submitted during the public comment period listing deficiencies in Bennett's environmental assessment document. ■

WITH SPECIAL THANKS

The Center for Health, Environment and Justice remains an advocate, educator, organizer and leader in the grassroots environmental movement through the generous support of our members, Partners, Guardians and key foundations and institutions. CHEJ would like to acknowledge the following individuals and institutions that made critically important donations to support our work between September 14, 2002 and December 9, 2002. 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.

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LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

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with the limited registration materials, accommodations, and food, especially for the youth and those on scholarships, problems that were due to cost overruns. The lack of language translators made it difficult for the Spanish-speaking community to effectively participate at the summit. In addition, the number of meeting rooms was inadequate and youth were not able to meet and plan their activities.

Nonetheless, I found the summit a very rewarding experience. For me the highlight was being able to meet and talk with Hazel Johnson, who I consider to be the "mother of environmental justice." Her organization, People for Community Recovery, has led the fight for environmental justice in an area of Chicago's South Side called the "toxic doughnut" because it is completely surrounded with toxic industries and dumps.

I first had the pleasure of hearing Hazel Johnson at the First African American Women in the Law Conference held in 1995 in Washington D.C. Hearing her story and her commitment to fight for justice for her family and community strengthened my own commitment to the movement. I was

thrilled to be able to share my feelings with Mrs. Johnson and thank her for all that she has done for the movement. Apparently I wasn't the only one who felt this way, for Mrs. Johnson was one of several women at the summit honored for their accomplishments at a dinner on the summit's final night.

Others who I was meeting for the first time also left a deep impression—for example, activists from Youth from the Bronx whose goal is to "green the ghetto" and Virginia Townsend, a community activist from Holly Hill, South Carolina who is seeking organizing assistance in her fight for relocation against Giant Cement. Hearing about what people have accomplished and their willingness to continue to organize left me feeling more empowered and determined to assist in their daily organizing struggles.

Leaving the summit, I believed that those who attended will indeed help fulfill the ambitious goals set by the summit's planning committee. True, it will be a challenge, especially given the current administration in Washington. But the participants of the first summit have made tremendous strides in advancing the goals of the movement. The people I met at the second summit are committed and ready to do the same. ■



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