

EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

Vol. 19, No. 1 ♦ Spring 2001



POISONED SCHOOLS – A LESSON IN DEMOCRACY FROM QUINCY

COMMUNITY GROUPS HAVE BIG IMPACT ON POPS TREATY

EXPANDED "ACTION LINE" PROVIDES MORE COVERAGE OF LOCAL ORGANIZING

The Journal of the Grassroots Movement for Environmental Justice
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, and identify experts to assist with technical or scientific issues and questions. CHEJ has staff scientists who can answer many of your questions and who can review technical documents and tests results you need help with.

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 bilingual staff who can respond to requests for information and organizing assistance in Spanish.

Currently, CHEJ is coordinating three national campaigns: *Stop Dioxin Exposure Campaign*, which is working to educate the public 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; and *Health Care Without Harm*, aimed at stopping the incineration of medical waste and eliminating the use of medical devices containing toxic materials. We invite local groups to become part of these campaigns.

We have a unique library of books, reports, government documents, subject and corporate files, and videos that may have just the information you need. Don't hesitate to contact us. ◆



EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

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EVERYONE'S BACKYARD IS CHANGING

Change is never easy, but it's a necessary part of life. Based on what you, our readers and members, have told us is most helpful to you, we have decided to make some changes in *EBY*. Beginning with this issue, we are expanding Action Line—our stories of local victories and local fights against environmental abusers—and cutting some of the feature articles and columns that you seem to value less. We still plan on providing organizing tips and advice on using scientific information that we hope will support your organizing efforts. And we'll continue to report on each of the major campaigns we are part of—Stop Dioxin Exposure, Child Proofing our Communities, and Health Care Without Harm.

Let us know what you think about the new *EBY*. This magazine is a tool for you to use in your local work and in building and sustaining the grassroots environmental movement. So we always appreciate it when you tell us how you use it, when you pass it on to a colleague or friend, and even when you care enough to tell us we did something wrong. We look forward to hearing from you. ♦

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Students protest proposed Quincy high school site at city hall meeting. Courtesy, The Patriot Ledger.

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POISONED SCHOOLS – A LESSON IN DEMOCRACY FROM QUINCY

BY LOIS GIBBS

The past year has seen more and more new schools built on or next to highly contaminated land. In this article, we focus on the struggle of one community to protect its children, but we ask that you keep in mind that this case is only one of many. There are on-going battles to stop the building of new schools on contaminated land in Rhode Island, Maryland, Texas, Pennsylvania, California, Michigan, and many other states.

The reasons for the surge in building new schools include the growth of the U.S. school population and the fact that our schools are small, old and in disrepair, and unable to support the technology that today's students need in order to enter tomorrow's workplace. No one disputes the need for new, modernized school buildings. What is in dispute is whether it is safe, for children and school personnel, to build a school on property contaminated by toxic chemicals.

Twenty-three years after Love Canal, school boards, cities, and state governments are making the same tragic mistakes. The Love Canal crisis began with parents concerned about the safety of their children attending two local schools contaminated by toxic dumpsite leaks. Both schools were closed, but not before thousands of children, as well as school personnel, were exposed to hundreds of different toxic chemicals.

In cities and towns across the country, those in charge of educating our children and who mandate, by law, that children attend school, seem unconcerned about placing children in harm's way. The attempt by Quincy, Massachusetts officials to build a school on contaminated land is an example of irresponsible decision-making by people the public entrusts with the care and education of their children. But this is also a story of a successful struggle to

protect our children – of how parents, teachers and community members, stood up against great odds to stop a horrifying proposal and hold their elected representatives accountable.

"A GOOD SITE"

In Quincy, city officials planned to build a \$60 million high school on land that had been used to dispose of wastes from the Fore River Shipyard and nearby industries. The city was fully aware when it purchased the land that it was contaminated with asbestos, lead, PCBs, and other chemicals. The mayor said that he believed it could be made safe for children: "The Department of Education has come out, looked at the site, and said it's a good site if we follow the cleanup procedures."

Unconvinced, parents decided to learn about the site for themselves and began an education-drive to inform other families about the site. They wrote and circulated flyers, took petitions door-to-door and held informational meetings. Until this educational grassroots effort reached them, many families had had no idea that this contaminated site was being considered for a new high school. Parents and school-based groups reacted with both anger and disbelief. "I find it hard to believe that the single most contaminated four acres in this entire city is the spot where we should put a high school," said William Phelan, parent and school committee member. "If they build a school there, we will have to send our kids. It's putting us in an awful spot. I'm worried with immediate health issues from that site and I'm going to be worried about the future," complained Deborah Powers, a mother of two.

PARENTS FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

The original group of concerned families formed Parents for Safe Schools (PSS). As they talked about what to do to stop the proposal, they decided they needed a scientific opinion from someone outside the city and state governments. They also felt they needed a credible physician who understood children's special vulnerabilities and could help educate the public about this issue. They scheduled a physician to speak at a public meeting and found an outside scientist who could review the data and comment on the potential health risks the property might pose to children.

PSS realized, however, that stopping the proposal would require more than science. The decision to build the school was in the hands of the city council. Therefore, the group had to focus some of its energy on getting the majority of the city council members to vote no. The group made sure that some of its members were at every council meeting; they challenged council members who supported the plan and demanded public meetings to discuss the issue.

More than a hundred residents packed the meeting hall on October 30 to discuss the school plan with city council members and their environmental consultants. During the five-hour meeting, parents presented two petitions that opposed the school and voiced strong concerns. "You're building on known carcinogens. You think you can control it until something goes wrong," said resident Maura Peterson. Parents turned up the heat on council members, reminding them that voters were watching and making it clear that the issue was not going away.

At another public meeting the following week, state officials were to present information about the site. Council members were concerned about this meeting since the state had made a commitment to reimburse the city for up

to ninety percent of the building costs for the school. Without notice, the council moved the meeting from its advertised location to city hall. Local residents, some of whom were bused to the new meeting location, felt this was an intentional effort to reduce turnout at the meeting. School Superintendent Creedon wanted the meeting to focus on his agenda: "I look at it with a vision, a dream, that for once we have the space we need." However, the organized parents wanted to focus on health risks and chemical contamination. After several interruptions, Creedon told residents that he would have to run the meeting like a classroom. When one resident said, "I'm not in school anymore." Creedon replied, "You are with me." Creedon's behavior angered people, but they kept their focus on the health of their children.

Residents of Quincy used every opportunity to put pressure on city officials. They made their presence felt even during the annual Quincy Thanksgiving parade, holding up signs along the parade route and passing out flyers. A few days later, the mayor announced the city's decision—the school would not be built on the contaminated property.

Public officials had felt the sting of what happens when public concerns are ignored. City Councilor Cahill, a supporter of building the school, summarized his feelings this way: "The past month has been difficult. Not only has four years of hard and difficult work been flushed down the drain, but people who I had once thought were friends, and who trusted my judgment, now look at me with suspicion and contempt, as if I would actually support a decision that would put children's and teacher's lives at risk."

As Tip O'Neill, former Speaker of the House, once said, "All politics are local." The Quincy story not only confirms the truth of that statement but underscores that people can fight city hall and win. ♦

CORPORATE CORNER

The Magnesium Corp. of America, ranked the most polluting manufacturer in the country by the U.S. EPA year after year, has been sued by the Department of Justice for illegally generating, storing, and disposing of toxic or corrosive wastes in operations at its Utah magnesium plant. Charges include dumping the waste into several unlined ditches and into a 400-acre pond next to the Great Salt Lake. In 1998, MagCorp produced 57 million pounds of toxic air pollution, mostly chlorine gas and hydrochloric acid. This and other magnesium production facilities may be significant sources of dioxin, but they are not included in the EPA's inventory of dioxin sources because of the lack of testing.

♦ A unit of TRW Inc. agreed to plead guilty to criminal charges that it mishandled sodium azide, a toxic

and potentially volatile compound, and sent it to a local landfill. TRW will pay more than \$17 million in criminal and civil penalties and will pay for full-page ads in Arizona newspapers describing the company's illegal actions, its conviction, and planned preventative measures.

♦ In 1977, when the hazardous waste landfill at Emelle, Alabama opened, local media praised it as a job-creator and "a new facility which could give this area more advantage in attracting other businesses." But today there are no "other businesses" in Emelle—even the grocery store and the gas station have closed down. Thanks to massive layoffs in the 1990s, there aren't many jobs at the landfill either. Emelle is notable now only for the millions of tons of hazardous waste buried just outside of town. One city council member observed, "Jobs or not, we're stuck with that."

COMMUNITY GROUPS HAVE BIG IMPACT ON POPs TREATY

BY MONICA ROHDE

Last December, the United Nations Environmental Programme held its fifth and final negotiating session on the POPs Treaty in South Africa. The presence of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Johannesburg played a crucial role in determining the final language of the treaty.

Even before the negotiating process began in Montreal in June 1998, NGOs started organizing to put pressure on delegations to ensure a strong treaty. The International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) was developed to help coordinate NGOs and serve as a resource and clearinghouse for information. Out of IPEN grew Stop POPs, a coalition of U.S. community-based groups formed to pressure the U.S. delegation and ensure that the chemical industry did not dictate the U.S. position.

Before the December negotiating session, Stop POPs groups from the Great Lakes region, California, and Alaska wrote letters to the U.S. delegation and their Congressional representatives expressing their concern that the U.S. delegation would oppose a strong endorsement of the precautionary principle in the treaty. As a direct result of pressure from constituents, thirty-six members of

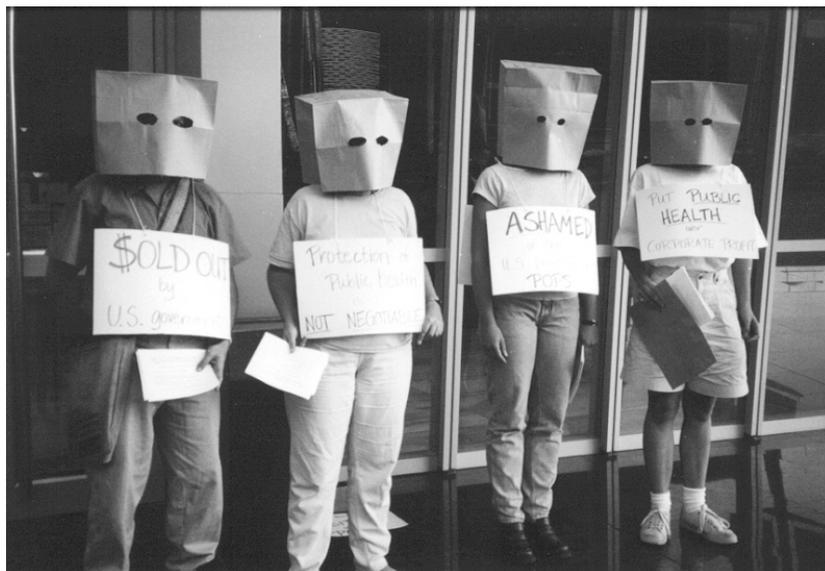
the House sent a letter to Secretary of State Madeline Albright.

Throughout the negotiating process, community groups in Alaska campaigned aggressively to get the attention of the governor of Alaska and of the departments of State and Interior. One result of the campaign was that two staffers from the governor's office were included as members of the U.S. delegation; the two staffers played a critical role in keeping issues of concern to the NGOs alive during closed-door discussions.

A week prior to the negotiating session, the Global Anti-Incineration Alliance/Global Alliance for Incineration Alternative (GAIA) officially launched a new international coalition focused on halting incineration of wastes and promoting alternatives that protect public health.

More than seventy grassroots environmental and public health activists from 23 countries participated in the new initiative, bringing more groups to Johannesburg.

Just before the negotiations opened, the Pesticide Action Network North America (PANNA) and Commonweal released *Nowhere to Hide: A Report on Toxic Chemicals in Food*. Analyzing data collected by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), PANNA and Commonweal found



GAIA members shame the U.S. delegation into meeting with them. Photo by Monica Rohde.

that virtually all food products sold here are contaminated with POPs banned in the U.S.

DECIDING ON A STRATEGY

Two days prior to the negotiating session, IPEN held its preparatory meetings. As we talked about problem governments and strategies, it became obvious that the U.S. was going to need some extra nudging. There were two crucial areas in which the U.S. was holding up the progress of the negotiations. The U.S. 1) refused to include strong language endorsing the precautionary principle; and 2) refused to endorse the goal of eliminating dioxin. It was clear that the chemical industry had the ear of the U.S. delegation and that we would need to come up with creative strategies in order to move them.

The result of our discussions was an “insider-outsider” approach to influencing the session. The “insider” strategy was to continue to lobby and negotiate with the delegations, building on relationships that had been established during previous negotiating sessions. The “outsider” strategy comprised a series of actions that would keep the key issues of precaution and dioxin elimination in the faces of the delegates and in the media.

“OUTSIDER” ACTIONS

For the opening day of the negotiations, Greenpeace organized a demonstration in front of the Convention Center. More than thirty volunteers dressed in bright yellow “Toxic Patrol” radiation suits lined up along the sidewalk and doors leading into the building. Demonstrators wore surgical masks and held black and white photos of people whose health has been affected by POPs. The demonstration was designed to set the stage for the week—to remind the delegates that this treaty was really about protecting people and to let delegates know that people from all over the world would be watching them and the decisions they made.

Later that day, a group of U.S. participants who are also part of GAIA staged a protest directed at the U.S. delegation. As delegates left the building at the end of the day’s session, protestors stood outside the building with paper bags on their heads and held up signs that read “Ashamed of the U.S. Policy on POPs” and “Bag the U.S. Policy on POPs.” The protesters were calling for the U.S. to 1) take immediate action to eliminate, not merely control POPs; 2) prioritize a precautionary approach to POPs cleanup and treatment; and 3) refuse to allow the chemical industry to shape U.S. and international environmental policy. This action was successful in embarrassing both the U.S. delegation and the industry representatives—so much so that the State Department’s Brooks Yeager, the leader of the U.S. delegation, asked for a meeting between the demonstrators and key delegation members.

WHAT IS THE POPS TREATY?

The official name of the POPs Treaty is the “International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).” Negotiations on the treaty began in 1998 under the sponsorship of the U.N. Environment Programme. Discussion focused on twelve POPs that have been linked to cancer, birth defects, and other developmental abnormalities in humans and animals.

At the final negotiating session last December in Johannesburg, 122 countries agreed on a treaty that, if ratified, would represent a significant victory for public health. The agreement bans eight pesticides, restricts the use of DDT to disease control, prohibits production and phases out the use of PCBs, and calls for actions to reduce the release of dioxins, “with the goal of their continuing minimization and, where feasible, ultimate elimination.” The treaty explicitly endorses the precautionary principle and establishes a POPs Review Committee to identify additional POPs based on a precautionary approach to protecting public health. The precautionary approach gives the public greater leverage to challenge chemicals where there is evidence, but not proof, of risk.

The treaty will be known as the Stockholm Convention after it is signed this May in Sweden. Fifty governments must ratify the treaty before it becomes legally binding. For more information about the POPs Treaty, visit the web site of the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) at www.ipen.org.

The NGO representatives used their 45-minute meeting with delegates later that week to remind them that the real stakeholders were the communities that are being disproportionately impacted by POPs, not the chemical industry. As a result of this meeting, the U.S. delegation did become more accessible to IPEN representatives during the negotiating session.

The Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) took a leading role in making sure that the delegates understood the impact that POPs have on Native peoples. On the second day of the negotiating session, they presented the U.S. delegation with a folder containing forty tribal resolutions calling for the adoption of the precautionary approach and the elimination of POPs. Throughout the week, IEN organized meetings with key delegates from around the world to ensure that the treaty would address the needs not only of people today but of the seven generations to come.

On Friday morning, the fifth day of the session, twenty-two women from all over the world held a silent

demonstration against the health effects of POPs on the developing fetus. Solemn-faced and wearing papier-maché pregnant bellies, they lined the entrance of the negotiating center and stood silently as negotiators filed in to begin the day. Their message: "It is a human right to be born toxic free." The dynamic props and the silent nature of the protest had a profound impact on the delegates as they crossed the line of women and entered the building.

Later that day, the women – still wearing their belly-props – gained access to the Convention Center and lined up outside the room where the United Nations Environment Programme was holding its first major press conference of the negotiations. This was unprecedented, as the U.N. normally doesn't allow demonstrations or props inside the center. The women waited outside the press conference until it was almost finished and then silently filed in. An NGO member then asked a pointed question about the tensions surrounding the inclusion of precautionary language in the treaty. The pregnant bellies were the perfect backdrop. The media picked up on the question and more discussion followed.

Throughout the week Stop POPs representatives communicated with folks back in the states about the key issues being debated. Folks in the U.S. launched a massive fax attack on congress highlighting the U.S. delegation's position on dioxin elimination and precaution. They also got a number of community groups to write letters to Brooks Yeager, which the Stop POPs folks in South Africa delivered in person.

WORKING TOGETHER

These "outsider" activities took place while other IPEN representatives took the "insider" approach and lobbied delegates. Both strategies needed the other to be effective; working together, we were able to have an impact on the U.S. and other problematic delegations. The outsiders needed the insiders to turn their messages into treaty language, while the insiders needed the outsiders in order to sound more reasonable at the negotiating table.

These strategies worked because the NGOs were organized. There were clear lines of communication and a high level of trust; NGOs met at least once a day to check in on strategy and tactics. Although not everyone agreed with what the other was doing, no one tried to block another's actions, and no one was blind-sided by what another group did. The outcome was a treaty with strong language on the need to adhere to the precautionary prin-



Belly Brigade lines up outside negotiating conference. Photo by Monica Rohde.

ciple and with the final goal of eliminating dioxin – a treaty that, if ratified, can be used to shape U.S. policy on POPs.

This same insider-outsider strategy can be used on the local and statewide levels when working in coalitions to establish public health policies.

- ◆ Determine which groups are better suited for the inside approach and which for the outside approach.
- ◆ Together develop a plan that will build off each other's actions.
- ◆ Set up regular meetings to both report back on progress to date and to strategize about next steps.
- ◆ Remember that communication, transparency, and trust are the key elements to achieving your common goal. ◆

ORGANIZING FACT PACKS AVAILABLE FROM CHEJ

- ◆ HOW TO RAISE AND MANAGE MONEY
 - ◆ LOCAL ORDINANCES
 - ◆ UNDERSTANDING SUPERFUND
- ◆ HOW TO PUT ON A LEADERSHIP TRAINING EVENT

CHECK OUT THE PUBLICATIONS
LIST FOR MORE MATERIALS

ACTION LINE



ALABAMA

◆ When Stericycle officials contacted Birmingham city planners about putting a medical waste facility in the Titusville neighborhood, they got a skeptical reaction. Birmingham residents will remember the long and ultimately successful battle Titusville waged to keep out a waste transfer station. Undaunted, Stericycle proceeded to convene a community meeting, sure it could make its case. Despite less than a week's warning, Titusville residents attended in mass numbers, wielding signs community seniors spent all day making. Before all 300 of the people scheduled to speak got their chance, Stericycle gave up and dropped its plans. Congratulations, Titusville!

ALASKA

◆ The **Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska** is fuming over the U.S. EPA's failure to take remedial action following the latest round of testing of fish captured from Dutch Harbor, the heart of its community. An EPA preliminary risk assessment found high levels of arsenic and PCBs in the fish and high cancer and non-cancer risk levels for people consuming the fish, the main source of food for the community. An abandoned military facility leaking PCBs, pesticides, metals, and volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) borders the harbor, but the agency is drawing no conclusions and taking no action. The community is wondering what the numbers mean and whether they should continue to eat the fish.

ARIZONA

◆ In Tucson, a Brush Wellman facility processing beryllium is located in a predominantly Latino neighborhood, near a high school, a middle school, and two elementary schools. Beryllium causes a fatal and incurable lung disease; 25 Tucson Brush Wellman workers are already ill with the disease. Brush Wellman has a documented record of exposing workers to unsafe beryllium levels and of releasing the deadly metal into surrounding communities. **Environmental Justice Action**

GROUPS RALLY TO SHUT DOWN OAKLAND INCINERATOR

The **Grayson Neighborhood Council** and other Stanislaus County residents worked with Bay Area activists to abort a proposal to import and burn medical waste in the county. The county board of supervisors unanimously opposed even studying the project. The proposal came from Integrated Environmental Systems (IES)/Norcal, a company that currently operates the state's only commercial medical waste incinerator in Oakland.

Regulators have hinted that they may shut down the Oakland facility, which is located in a community of color and is a source of dioxin and other toxic emissions. As *EBY* goes to press, more than a dozen faith, student, health, environmental, and other grassroots groups are preparing for a major rally against that incinerator—a rally they hope will be the last one before the facility is closed down.

Group (EJAG), a coalition of community groups, is working with the **Southern Arizona Alliance for Economic Justice** to press for safety measures at Brush Wellman's facility for both workers and neighbors. As a result, the local school district has agreed to place four air monitors around the plant. EJAG continues to push for zero beryllium emissions and other protections for students, residents, and workers.

EJAG is building on the experience of **Tucsonians for a Clean Environment** (TCE), which fought for many years to protect the same communities from industrial contamination of water, and still benefits from the example of Rose Augustine, leader of TCE, former **CHEJ** Board member, and nationally recognized environmental justice leader.

◆ Activists in the town of Williams blocked the construction of a cell-phone tower that landowners said would devastate the area's natural beauty and neighbors' property values. The local paper had published a computer-simulated photo of the tower provided by the company proposing the tower, but an opponent of the plan demonstrated to local officials that the actual tower would be much more intrusive than represented.

CALIFORNIA

◆ In West Contra Costa, the **West County Toxics Coalition** led residents concerned about toxins in their highly industrialized communities in a rally at the State Hazardous Materials Laboratory in Berkeley to assert their right to know how they are being contaminated. They challenged the laboratory to test the blood drawn from one resident for the presence of dioxins, PCBs, lead, and other persistent environmental pollutants. They also demanded that the state establish a program to regularly monitor the levels of persistent organic pollutants in breast milk and blood. Supporters sent e-postcards to the laboratory from the **Communities for a Better Environment** website.

◆ Community members gathered outside the U.S. Army Community Cleanup Open House at Fort Ord to oppose burning of military waste on the former training base. Brandishing banners urging "Say NO to Fort Ord Toxic Burnings," **Life 2000** celebrated all the birthdays an end to burning would bring. Balloons, cupcakes, and beautiful sunshine kept the focus on children and health. The former Fort Ord, where ordnance was used for

ACTION LINE



STEWART COUNTY, GEORGIA, SAYS "No" TO SLUDGE

Stewart County Residents Against Pollution (SCRAP), working closely with the county's local governments, forced the Water Works of nearby Columbus to abandon plans to set up a sludge application facility in their county. As one SCRAP supporter described it, "Young folks, old folks, black folks, white folks, quiet folks, loud folks – folks pulling oxygen tanks around and folks in wheelchairs" joined together from all parts of the county in a unified effort to defeat the sludge plans. SCRAP organized an overnight letter-writing campaign that flooded the Columbus Water Commissioners with letters, calls and e-mails. One sludge opponent put a toilet next to a "Don't Dump On Us" billboard. Others sold T-shirts and posted signs all over the county. SCRAP and Stewart County did more than stop the sludge plans and send a message to other potential polluters; the local newspaper, the Stewart-Webster Journal wrote, "The greatest intangible benefit [of the victory] is that our community's self image has been uplifted in a positive way."

decades, is now a highly-touted site for development close to Silicon Valley.

◆ Children and other Riverside County residents appeared before the county board of supervisors demanding an end to the dumping of sewage sludge on nearby farmland. They cited odor and health effect issues. As one five-year-old lamented, "It makes me sick."

◆ Protesters gathered at the gates of Rocketdyne's Santa Susana Field Laboratory as trucks began to haul radioactive hazardous waste to a dump in Kern County. The dump is near Buttonwillow, home to a large Chicano population already hosting over 2,000 tons of debris from the Manhattan Project that built the original nuclear weapons. The **Committee to Bridge the Gap** characterized the move as allowing "free release of radioactive waste throughout" California and warned that "deregulating radioactive waste" would prove even worse for the state than deregulating electricity. In 1996, Rocketdyne's parent company agreed to pay \$6.5 million in fines in connection with a fatal incident involving hazardous waste at the laboratory.

◆ Labor and community groups in San Diego joined together to block a marine coating business operating without meeting health requirements. Neighbors of SIPCO Services, along with the **Environmental Health Coalition** and the San Diego/Imperial Counties Labor Council, opposed SIPCO's attempt to get a variance from the Air Pollution Control District after the company failed its health risk assessment. An **Environmental Health Coalition** spokesperson welcomed the decision but said, "The fight for long-term protection for labor and the environment in the shipyards is just beginning."

◆ On the third anniversary of the start of the 113-day occupation of the Ward Valley site, the **Colorado River Native Nations Alliance** and the **Ward Valley Coalition** hosted a celebration of the successful fight to save Ward Valley, the Colorado River, sacred Indian land, and the desert tortoise from the proposed nuclear waste dump. Those present dedicated themselves to remaining vigilant against any future threats to Ward Valley. U.S. Ecology, the group seeking to run the waste dump, suffered two major court defeats late last year in attempts to revive the

dump proposal or recoup their financial losses.

◆ Community activists, groups against corporate domination, and environmental groups united to protest rate hikes and contamination of communities at Pacific Gas and Electric's (PG&E) San Francisco headquarters. Protesters blocked the doorway and picketed to demand closure of the Hunters Point power plant as a long-standing polluter of the predominantly African-American community. Residents of Midway Village, a subsidized housing community in Daly City, also joined in to protest the dumping of toxic waste from a neighboring PG&E facility. Protest sponsors included **Bayview Hunters Point Community Advocates**, **Literacy for Environmental Justice**, **Greenaction**, the Green Party, Global Exchange, and the International Action Center.

◆ Taking a time out from workshops at the Military Toxic Project's Contaminated Bases Conference, people from 25 organizations and indigenous communities all over North America, as well as from Japan, rallied on the shore of San Diego Bay, a major center of U.S. Navy facilities. They called for cleanup and community participation at base sites from Puerto Rico to Alaska. Gilbert Sanchez of the **Tribal Environmental Watch Alliance** declared that "National security should not mean that the military is secure from the laws and regulations that are meant to protect the well being of Americans."

Their hosts, the **Environmental Health Coalition** and the Peace Resource Center of San Diego, gave them a tour of the contamination due to the Navy presence, and San Diego community residents joined the conference participants at a People's Congressional Hearing hosted by local Congressman Bob Filner.

CONNECTICUT

◆ The "Filthy Five" are the state's oldest, largest, and filthiest power plants, located in urban areas of Connecticut and owned by NRG, a Midwest-based utility. The plants are "grandfathered," exempting

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them from new pollution standards. Last year, legislation pushed by the **CT Coalition for Clean Air** to clean up the Filthy Five came within one vote of passing the state senate, after supposed clean air supporters changed their positions. The coalition is back this year, focusing on legislators from less urban areas. The **Toxics Action Center**, a coalition member, points out that EPA figures show that 97% of all Connecticut residents breathe “seriously unhealthy” air. Evidently the Filthy Five are not just a problem for their immediate neighbors.

DELAWARE

◆ **Green Delaware's** newsletter editor—a registered lobbyist—attended the new governor's inauguration to do “a story about how the inauguration was totally paid for by corporate fat cats,” many of them polluters or potential polluters. After inquiring about attending an invitation-only reception, he was arrested by police for sitting in an unauthorized area. A condition of bail while he is awaiting trial bans him from Delaware's Legislative Hall, the very place where he practices his profession. The American Civil Liberties Union, which is representing him, has stated in his defense that “The right of citizens to attend and observe the legislative process is protected by ... the Constitution of the State of Delaware, in addition to the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.”

FLORIDA

◆ Local officials, environmental activists, and neighborhood residents were enraged when the state and Waste Management Inc. proposed that Broward County host the notorious Philadelphia incinerator ash once dumped in Haiti. **Bass Dillard Neighborhood Issues and Prevention** and others confronted Governor Jeb Bush, who was in Broward County for an unrelated event, demanding that the state drop its plans for the ash. One county commissioner warned, “If we have to link arms in the roadway to stop this, we are prepared to do it.” The county also consid-

ered financial and political means to pressure Waste Management. As opposition and media attention mounted, state officials delayed the dumping, and Waste Management finally withdrew its proposal. Florida joined the long list of places that have refused to accept the waste barge since it left Philadelphia in 1986.

GEORGIA

Encouraged by the **Glynn Environmental Coalition**, the Glynn County school board adopted a non-toxic pest control program for their 11,500 students. It requires prevention of pest problems through non-chemical methods and permits pesticide use only in emergencies, when buildings are vacant, and then only in minimal amounts. The cooperative effort to develop the policy also included the Cooperative Extension Service, a pest control company, and the Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation.

HAWAII

◆ After facing 500 Leeward Coast, Oahu, residents in a 10-hour meeting, the U.S. Army changed its view that it could resume live-ammunition training in the Makua Valley without any significant environmental impact. The Makua Valley contains irreplaceable cultural sites and natural resources. The Army halted live-ammunition training there in 1998.

KENTUCKY

◆ After more than 15 years of fighting U.S. Army plans to build a chemical weapons incinerator in Madison County, members of **Common Ground** still know how to “turn up the heat” on government officials. At a January 9 public hearing on chemical weapons disposal options, over 350 area residents—including farmers, veterans, ministers, teachers, students, and expectant mothers—voiced a resounding “NO!” to incineration and “YES!” to safer, cleaner non-incineration technologies.

In 1984 the only options for chemical weapons disposal were incineration and



Tracy Powell-McCoy speaking at Common Ground press conference, January 9. Photo by Sean Perry.

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“doing nothing.” Thanks to grassroots pressure on elected officials by Common Ground and other community groups in the grassroots **Chemical Weapons Working Group** coalition, that’s changed. Now, any program to dispose of chemical weapons must consider several technologies that have already been scrutinized by people from affected communities like Madison County. As the Army this year decides which technology to use to dispose of its chemical weapons, Common Ground and other community groups will be part of the process — one way or another.

◆ **Kentuckians for the Commonwealth** (KFTC) in Union County blocked a PCB-removal facility proposed by Trans Cycle Industries. (TCI won global notoriety last year when local and international organizing thwarted its plan to transport PCBs from a U.S. military base to a Canadian facility.) The KFTC members got the state to put tighter requirements on the

facility, and instead of accepting the requirements, TCI dropped its plans for the facility. Members from around the state supported the Union County residents. One traveled to a hearing to relate her personal story of living in a contaminated community. The TCI facility had already been turned down in Illinois and Indiana.

MARYLAND

◆ Under pressure from a small but dogged band of opponents and from the media for its bias towards massive projects, the Army Corps of Engineers backed down from its plans to deepen the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal for the Port of Baltimore. The local member of Congress had also turned against the project, though most Maryland politicians continue to support it. The Corps had been embarrassed by a number of errors in its early studies of the project. One error had the canal flowing in two directions at once. Another error, perhaps more seri-

ous, stated that the project had no local opposition. The Corps will not revisit the dredging proposal for at least three years.

MASSACHUSETTS

◆ “This is science just confirming the facts of every day life for communities of color and low-income communities in Massachusetts,” said a staffer for **Alternatives for Community and Environment** (ACE) at the January release of *Unequal Exposure to Ecological Hazards*. ACE, the **Environmental League of Massachusetts** and **Toxics Action Center** coordinated the release of the study with its lead author Daniel Faber, a professor at Northeastern University.

Among the many findings of the report was that nine of the fifteen most intensely overburdened towns in the state have a higher than average population of people of color. A spokesperson for the **Coalition to Protect Chinatown** also noted the importance of the report’s discussion of the cumulative effects of hazardous waste on overburdened communities, of which Boston’s Chinatown is one. The Environmental League and ACE are working with State Senator Dianne Wilkerson, who has introduced legislation requiring that environmentally questionable projects receive a higher level of scrutiny before going forward in those communities.

MICHIGAN

◆ “You can’t fight City Hall,” said a spokesperson for IKO Industries, a multi-national roofing supply manufacturer, as it shut down its roofing paper plant in Monroe, laying off its remaining 45 employees the week before Christmas. But Monroe’s City Hall wasn’t IKO’s real problem. True, the City had taken IKO to court for violating its nuisance ordinance, where a judge had found IKO in violation for the odors emanating from the plant. But in 1997, City Hall had welcomed IKO, providing it with a 12-year tax abatement package estimated to be worth \$920,000. Then, neighbors of IKO, assaulted by the plant’s odors, organized. They picketed, put up yard signs, signed petitions, filed a class



Angry Monroe MI neighbors protest IKO’s emissions. Photo by Dennis Oblander, courtesy The Monroe Guardian.

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action lawsuit, attended Council meetings, talked about recalling local officials, and in every way pressed the city and state to take action against IKO's noxious emissions. Their message? "We will not die for \$\$\$" and "Elected officials should do it for you, not to you."

The goal of the activists was not to shut down the plant. As Linda Compore wrote to the local paper, "IKO is the reason people are unemployed. We will not be made the scapegoat." They merely insisted that IKO operations no longer threaten their homes and health.

Linda told *EBY*, "Sometimes you feel like you'll never win, but persistence and prayers pay off." Despite IKO's claim, you can fight not only city hall, but also a multinational, multi-billion dollar company—and win.

MISSOURI

◆ The **Medical Waste Action Group** in St. Louis has been giving Stericycle a run for their money. Stericycle owns and operates a medical waste incinerator that has come under enormous public scrutiny for its polluting practices. Recently the facility temporarily shut down hours before the local officials began hearings on two community-driven ordinances that could ultimately force the facility to shut down permanently. The aldermen will be making a decision in April.

NEW YORK

◆ In New Rochelle, both environmental and fair-housing objections thwarted erection of an Ikea "big box" store. The city had declared the City Park blighted in order to obtain the property through eminent domain. The community affected is 40% African American. Public-hearing witnesses spoke 222 to 4 against the proposal and property seizure, prompting Ikea to drop its plans and the city to withdraw its claims. **Westchester Residents Against Ikea Now** celebrated the victory by distributing flyers throughout the neighborhood. One local business owner, who had given up on fighting the project, told local press that "The level of resistance



LOOKING FOR A HOME?

Built several years ago in the evacuated area at Love Canal, this house could not be sold and is now being auctioned. There may still be time for you to get your bid in. Photo by Lois Gibbs.

that [Ikea] found was persistent and organized beyond anything they would have imagined."

◆ The children of the Arbor Hill neighborhood in Albany had a guest recently—the governor of New York. The children took Governor Pataki on a walk across a creek and through snow to see Tivoli Preserve, which they and their predominantly African-American community believe should be a well-funded park and nature center at the edge of their community. The site, originally purchased by the city of Albany as a drinking water source and later a Negro League baseball field, became contaminated by the state-owned ANSWERS incinerator. Arbor Hill residents shut down the incinerator and won a substantial court award, which has funded the **W. Haywood Burns Environmental Education Center** in Arbor Hill as well as its sister organization, **Arbor Hill Environmental Justice Corporation**. The Center is now spearheading the efforts to make the Tivoli Preserve once

again a vital resource for the community.

◆ Seventh-grade students at H.C. Crittenden Middle School in North Castle have taken on billionaire developer Donald Trump, who plans a golf course for their community. The students tested the water at the site and identified risks to area wildlife and people, especially from pesticides. They then wrote Trump, urging him to meet the highest environmental standards. Ignored by Trump, the students showed up at a hearing before a local agency to make their case. Trump's lawyer claimed the golf course would meet the students' standards, but one student told a local paper "I'm not buying that one bit" and demanded proof from an independent source. The teacher working with the students—whose previous classes have won environmental awards—told a local environmental group, "Grassroots movements that originate with youngsters help them experience empowerment at an early age."

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◆ Community and environmental activists rallied in Manhattan immediately before an EPA hearing to insist that the Bush Administration not weaken the EPA's commitment to dredging Hudson River PCBs. In recent months, the decades-long campaign for a real cleanup of the Hudson has seen support from Governor Pataki and favorable decisions by the EPA. Cecilia Gutierrez of the Latino Business Association, one of the speakers at the rally, noted that the health impacts aren't limited to the upper Hudson, and that "lower income and minority residents are fishing the river and eating their catch without fully understanding the dangers that PCBs pose to their health and that of their children."

◆ Grassroots groups from around New York State, working with the **Citizens Environmental Coalition** (CEC), showed up at the office of the Business Council of New York State with a mop and advised the council to "clean up their act." The council—professedly "working to create an economic renaissance for New York State and its people"—opposes fees on hazardous waste generators and polluters to pay for the state's Superfund. CEC and local groups also conducted Toxic Tours in locations statewide to highlight the continuing need for cleanups.

◆ 3M officials denied that hazardous chemicals from their former chemical treatment plant had flowed into the Village of Brockport's sewer system. When the village government couldn't find the manhole where the connection was made, members of **Residents Environmentally Active for Change** (R.E.A.Ch.) went out with a metal detector and found it themselves. R.E.A.Ch. members had previously tracked down and examined old blueprints, talked to former 3M employees, and reached out to their neighbors to educate them and get them involved. Because of their efforts, 3M has already removed over 50 truckloads of contaminated soil from the area. After a generation of brightly colored, toxic water in the local stream, Brockport is on its way to being cleaned up—more than twenty years after 3M closed its operation.

WASHINGTON POLITICS: EPA PUTS OMBUDSMAN OFFICE ON HOLD

More than twenty grassroots community organizations received a letter in early January from Robert Martin, U.S. EPA national ombudsman, notifying them that the agency had suspended all national ombudsman investigations pending the release of new guidelines. The ombudsman is responsible for investigating complaints leveled against the agency. Put on hold were investigations concerning some of the most controversial hazardous waste sites in the nation, including the Bunker Hill Superfund site in Kellogg, ID, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Superfund site outside of Denver, Co and the WTI hazardous waste incinerator in East Liverpool, OH. The new guidelines are likely to eliminate the most important factor in successfully investigating complaints—*independence*. The guidelines essentially strip the ombudsman of his power to decide which cases to investigate and bar inquiry into cases where litigation is pending. Nearly all of the current cases under investigation involve some degree of litigation. The guidelines will also prevent the ombudsman from holding public meetings without EPA approval, sharing documents with public officials, or discussing the investigation with the media. Although the ombudsman's recommendations are not legally binding, the agency has almost always followed them. The recommendations have proven to be politically powerful tools for local communities, who have used them to finally get action.

◆ More than 37,000 tons of GE's PCBs and other hazardous wastes were dumped in the Dewey Loeffel Landfill in the town of Nassau, but GE has denied responsibility. Local residents have organized **UNCAGED** (United Neighbors Concerned About GE & Dewey Loeffel Landfill) and have already gotten new warning signs put around the site. Tim Gray, organizer of the Housatonic River Initiative, spoke to an UNCAGED meeting in January, making the connection between GE's dumping in his community in Pittsfield, MA and in Nassau.

NORTH CAROLINA

◆ In January, for the second time in four months, members of **NC Waste Awareness Reduction Network** (WARN) and the **Coalition Against Nuclear Imports**

to the Triangle were arrested while trying to meet with Carolina Power and Light's (CP&L) Chief Executive Officer in Raleigh. The activists were seeking a meeting to discuss CP&L's proposed unprecedented expansion of nuclear waste cooling ponds at its Shearon Harris Nuclear Plant. Just before their trial, CP&L dropped charges against the activists who were arrested last October, saying that the activists may not have known they were on CP&L property when they sat down—in the lobby of CP&L's headquarters. When the charges were dismissed, Chatham County pastor Carrie Bolton told CP&L, "We'll be back"—and before long, they were, this time with two members of the singing group, the Raging Grannies. The local government of Orange County also opposes expansion, and members of North Carolina's delegation to Congress have

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begun to express concern about CP&L's plans and support from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

◆ **Rowan Citizens Against Pollution (RCAP)**, concerned about emissions from an asphalt plant in Salisbury, got the city to commit \$3,000 for emissions tests.

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League has offered the group training in the "bucket brigade" method of gathering air samples developed by Citizens for a Better Environment in California. RCAP has also asked the city to downzone the plant site so that the plant can no longer operate.

OHIO

◆ **Concerned Citizens of Central Ohio** and **Concerned Citizens of Licking County** have been fighting for years for a cleanup of Buckeye Egg Farm, a notorious factory farm operation. Last year, after a local prosecutor considered action against Buckeye, Ohio's attorney general stepped in and prosecuted Buckeye for violating Ohio EPA regulations. Buckeye signed a consent decree in January. It must pay a \$1 million civil penalty, devote \$366,000 to chicken waste handling improvements, and invest all profits in environmental compliance. Ohio's EPA director warned, "We've signed agreements with Buckeye before.... We will be monitoring them closely." Concerned Citizens of Central Ohio, while welcoming the consent decree, agree that Buckeye must be watched carefully, and they continue to keep the pressure on Anton Pohlman, owner of Buckeye. (Pohlman was previously fined and banned from all animal-raising activities in Germany due to violations there. His plans for an egg production facility in the Czech Republic, within sight of the German border, have drawn major protests in both nations.)

◆ "Our neighbors in and around Cheshire told us they were very concerned about the impact of a serious accident involving a major release of anhydrous ammonia due to their close proximity to the plant.... We took those concerns to heart." Thus did American

Electric Power (AEP)—a multinational energy company and one of the U.S.'s largest electricity generators—explain abandoning explosive anhydrous ammonia and moving to a urea-based process in its pollution control plans. AEP neglected to mention the mass meetings, yard signs, and months of hard work by local people determined that explosive anhydrous ammonia would not be stored in their midst. Activists got valuable support from the **Buckeye Environmental Network**. AEP's statement also ignored the outhouse set up alongside Cheshire's main street with the sign "AEP Headquarters" on it. AEP did say that the urea system will cost it more to construct and to run than the anhydrous ammonia alternative but claimed that "Safety is a primary concern in everything we do." At least when a whole town insists on it.

PENNSYLVANIA

◆ Five municipal governments in Cumberland, Fulton, and Bedford Counties have adopted anti-corporate farming ordinances to protect family farms. These ordinances—which prohibit non-family owned corporations from owning farmland or engaging in farming—are modeled after laws in nine midwestern states. The Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and a state association of municipal officials are work-

ing to prevent adoption of these ordinances by more local governments, and a large corporate agribusiness has threatened to sue Belfast Township. The Legal Defense Fund and local activists are hoping to build a movement with these ordinances that could fundamentally alter the corporatization of Pennsylvania's farming industry.

◆ U.S. EPA shut down Harrisburg's municipal incinerator in December for failing to meet new air pollution standards. The move was in response to demands from over 400 individuals and groups from 39 states and 10 nations, who joined with Harrisburg's **Coalition Against the Incinerator** and the **Pennsylvania Environmental Network**. Activists said the incinerator was perhaps the dirtiest in the U.S. and that it was a significant source of dioxin as far away as the Canadian Arctic. The city of Harrisburg, however, used a loophole to redefine the incinerator as "small" and reopened it in January. The coalition and its supporters continue to press for permanent closure of the incinerator, which burns out-of-state trash in a community of color and then spews dioxin and other pollutants across North America.

◆ In the western Pennsylvania coalfields, giant longwall coal mining machines continue to undermine homes and

ACTIVISTS LOSE TWO STRONG VOICES

BoDonella H. Meadows died in February in New Hampshire. She was the lead author of the groundbreaking 1972 study *The Limits to Growth*, as well as a professor, manager of a small farm and a local activist. Her widely published newspaper column, "The Global Citizen," drew on her personal and professional experience in a warm and inspiring way.

Bob McCray of Globe, Arizona passed away in December. In 1969, he, his family and his neighbors were sprayed with pesticide. Despite a settlement with Dow, McCray kept investigating and networking nationwide on longterm pesticide and dioxin effects. Debbie McQueen has created a memorial web site for Bob at www.geocities.com/bobmccray

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highways, harm streams and private water supplies, and damage historic treasures. On January 19, these losses were mourned by members and friends of the **Tri-State Citizens Mining Network**, **Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future**, **Clean Water Action**, and Pennsylvania Public Interest Research Group. Over 80 grave stones formed a ceremonial graveyard outside of the Pennsylvania State Office Building in Pittsburgh, home of the Department of Environmental Protection's Board of Appeals. At the funeral, homeowners, residents, and concerned citizens gave testimony to the horrors they have experienced and called for much stricter controls on longwall mining.

PUERTO RICO

◆ Resistance to Navy bombing and pressure for a cleanup continues on the island of Vieques. On December 21, members of the **Peace and Justice Camp** in Vieques stopped a U.S. Navy construction project on civilian land. Residents believed the Navy planned to make a new entrance to the base to avoid the constant protests by the community and charged the Navy with lacking construction permits. Growing opposition forced the Navy to back off.

The new governor of Puerto Rico has repudiated the prior governor's agreement with President Clinton and has called for the Navy to leave Vieques. As *EBY* went to press, the U.S. Secretary of Defense announced that, following discussions with the governor, Navy bombing of the island would be suspended indefinitely.

SOUTH CAROLINA

◆ The **South Carolina — More Than a Port** (SCMTAP) coalition was created in the fall of 1999 to oppose plans for a port terminal on Daniels Island in Charleston harbor. Staffed by the **Sierra Club**, SCMTAP brought together residents of Daniels Island, recreational, environmental and natural history groups in a concerted campaign that won the support of the most affected counties, cities and towns in the Charleston area. Eighteen

hundred people came out to a hearing by the Army Corps of Engineers, most of them opposing the project. Residents of Daniels Island, including a long-time African-American community and a recently settled mostly white community, are working together to oppose the disruption the port would bring. Recognizing this winter

TEXAS

◆ **Friends of Ward County** (FWC) is celebrating Envirocare's decision to drop plans to put a radioactive waste dump in their community. Envirocare has withdrawn its application and sold the site. The proposal began with strong support

PUERTO RICO REJECTS INCINERATION

The legislature of Puerto Rico recently approved Resolution 9 rejecting incineration as a method to dispose of solid waste. Even though a new gasification process that burns waste was not included in the final resolution, Resolution 9 does represent the long standing position on incineration of Puerto Rico's civil society and its grassroots environmental leadership. Activists and community organizations have had a decade of victories, successfully stopping every incinerator proposal they've opposed. Felicitaciones to the **Misión Industrial de Puerto Rico**, the **Alianza para el Manejo Sustentable de los Residuos** and particularly to the community groups in the municipalities of Aguada and Arecibo, which have been in the front lines of the fight against the building of incinerators in their own communities.

that its original plans would have to be scaled back, the South Carolina State Port Authority is now targeting Daniels Island for a smaller-scale terminal—which SCMTAP continues to oppose.

TENNESSEE

◆ A multi-year campaign by **Recycling Advocates of Middle Tennessee** (RAM) against Nashville's trash incinerator saw success this winter. Nashville's new mayor announced that the incinerator will close by 2003 and that Nashville will triple its recycling rate. RAM's campaign had stressed economics—recycling benefits versus incineration costs—and the mayor cited the fact that Nashville-area taxpayers were subsidizing the incinerator as the reason for closure. RAM, **Bring Urban Recycling to Nashville Today** (BURNT), and other local community groups have been fighting for years to shut this incinerator down. Good work!

from local officials, who argued that it would create at least 30 local jobs. One local official claimed that yard signs against the dump were illegal. A local radio talk-show host was fired for denouncing the dump and a public official belonging to FWC was sued for anti-dump statements. (The suit was dropped.)

FWC kept pressure on officials through petitions, letters to the editor, and an organized presence at public meetings. They also organized opposition in neighboring counties, warning that "Nuclear waste is not gonna stop at the county line." They asked their neighbors whether they wanted their community to be known for its "perfect glow in the dark souvenirs at the National Nuclear Dump Museum." Envirocare had characterized the Ward County dump as a "storage" facility, but its application indicates that the waste would have been stored for the next 500 years.

While fighting the Envirocare dump in

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their community, FWC learned of plans for a nuclear dump at a radioactive waste processing and storage facility in Andrews County and got involved in state-level legislative battles over nuclear waste. FWC has been working with the **Texas Radioactive Waste Defense Coalition** and plans to stay involved in the struggle to protect west Texas from nuclear waste.

◆ The San Antonio **Sustainable Energy and Economic Development Coalition** (SEED) went to the offices of City Public Service, the city's municipal electric and gas utility, to demand that the utility shut down old, dirty power plants. The coalition cited a study that dirty power plants kill more Texans than drunk driving or homicides.

UTAH

◆ At the request of Navajo Nation members, uranium miners, and downwinders' groups, the state declared a Day of Remembrance to recognize the thousands of area residents harmed by radiation during a half-century of nuclear testing and uranium mining and processing. Among those present at the commemoration in Salt Lake City were uranium workers, Navajo, and others who lived and worked in the area, none of whom had been warned of the risks at the time. Last year, the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) was amended to better reach eligible victims. The Day of Remembrance was an occasion to recall that many who were exposed have already died, as well as to urge those living to contact the U.S. Justice Department Radiation Exposure Compensation Program.

WASHINGTON

◆ Facing rising electricity costs from its usual suppliers, Georgia-Pacific West decided to use cheaper but dirtier diesel generators at its Bellingham facility. Though state and local officials said the plan posed no risks to local residents, the **Campaign for a Healthy Community** led a march of about 100 mostly young people opposing the diesel plans. After the television news cameras left, police

arrested several marchers, including a local alternative reporter. The city council then canceled a planned public presentation on the generators, saying there were threats to disrupt the event. Instead, the presentation was broadcast from an undisclosed location before a carefully screened audience, while protesters stood outside the original site on a cold rainy night. When the Campaign for a Healthy Community and **ReSources** organized a People's Health Forum, with over 150 residents attending, the mayor would not allow it to be broadcast on Bellingham's municipal TV channel. Residents wore duct tape over their mouths to symbolize the silencing of protest at city council meetings.

When the diesel generators finally went into operation in late February, it turned out the protesters were right. Complaints poured in to local and state regulators, and after about a week the city filed suit to shut down the generators as a public nuisance. Having lost its city government allies, Georgia-Pacific decided to shut down the generators.

WEST VIRGINIA

◆ The Funeral for the Mountains brought 150 people in mourning garb to the Federal Office of Surface Mining in Charleston to denounce the agency's neglect of its responsibilities. Bearing coffins, images of mountains, and cardboard fish, marchers proceeded to the state capitol, where speakers from **Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition**, **Coal River Mountain Watch**, and other groups urged everyone to "reaffirm our resolve to defend [the mountains] that remain." They also urged defense of democracy from "big special interests, like Big Coal, that contribute huge sums to our politicians in exchange for easy access and favorable legislation."

ONTARIO, CANADA

◆ Local activism in the Kirkland Lake area recently prevented a PCB treatment facility from importing U.S. military PCBs from Japan and after a long fight killed a

proposal to dump Toronto's garbage in a local mine. Now Bennet Environmental is proposing another PCB facility in the town. Kirkland Lake's mayor, concerned that activists will stop this project too, has started his own letter-writing campaign in favor of the project. The mayor has warned local social service agencies that their budgets could be cut if the Bennett project were blocked. According to the mayor, the Bennet operation would bring in "thirty-five jobs and ... almost \$1 million annually." Thirty-five jobs represent less than 1% of Kirkland Lake's labor force. Recently, a PCB-contaminated site in Ontario cost more than \$9 million just to clean up—without considering health effects, impact on wildlife, or lost productivity.

INDIA

◆ Environmental activists and dockworkers in India, working with activists in Maine and throughout the U.S., blocked shipment of a cargo of mercury. The mercury came from the HoltraChem Manufacturing Co. plant in Orrington, Maine, which closed last fall. After Indian toxics activists protested and dockworkers resisted unloading the shipment, officials ruled that the shipment was illegal and must be returned. As a New Delhi **Toxics Link** member wrote, "What is harmful for the workers, people, and the environment of the United States is harmful for Indian workers, people and the environment." Indeed, since India is a major supplier of mercury thermometers to the U.S., acceptance of the shipment would likely have resulted in mercury contamination in both countries.

UNITED KINGDOM

◆ Britain's biggest incinerator, in Edmonton, North London, was shut down for a week when **Greenpeace** activists occupied the cranes that feed the incinerator trash and capped the chimney flues. Greenpeace opposes not only the continued operation of the trash-burner but government plans to treat incineration as "renewable energy." Activists calculated

that the shutdown prevented 15 tons of acid gasses and a kilogram of arsenic from being dumped on Londoners.

◆ Community action defeated trash incinerator plans for the town of Goole in Yorkshire. **Goole Against Refuse Burning and Gaseous Emissions** (GARBAGE) fought the incinerator—which would have received the region's trash—for three years despite strong support from local officials. GARBAGE was assisted by the national organization, **Communities Against Toxics**. ◆

CORRECTION

In last issue's Action Line, we mentioned that parents in Maryland had formed **Parents for Safe Schools** (PFSS) to close down an elementary school near a landfill. PFSS wrote to tell us that the organization "is not working to get Worthington Elem. School closed but is currently reviewing environmental studies to assess the safety of that site." *EBY* regrets the error.

BILINGUAL STAFF AT CHEJ

Adrián Boutureira is the most recent addition to CHEJ's staff and joins our organizing team. Before joining CHEJ, Adrián worked for the Environmental Research Foundation in Annapolis, Maryland, where he coordinated the organization's bilingual and community resources. Prior to that, he lived and worked in Austin, Texas, where he was involved in community activism and organizing around environmental, labor, and immigrant rights issues. In his new position at CHEJ as community organizer and bilingual resource coordinator, Adrián provides organizing assistance to Spanish and English speaking communities, and develops our Spanish language environmental health and grassroots organizing resources and contacts.

PERSONAL BILINGÜE EN CHEJ

Adrián Boutureira es la última adición al personal de CHEJ y entra a las filas del equipo organizador. Antes de incorporarse a CHEJ, Adrián trabajó en la Fundación para Investigaciones Ambientales de Annapolis, Maryland, desarrollando los recursos bilingües y comunitarios de dicha organización. Anterior a esto, trabajaba y vivía en Austin, Texas, donde se dedicó al activismo comunitario y a organizar sobre cuestiones ecológicas, de derechos laborales, y de derechos del inmigrante. En su nuevo puesto como organizador comunitario y coordinador de recursos bilingües para CHEJ, Adrián ofrece asistencia organizativa a comunidades de habla española e inglesa y desarrolla nuestros recursos y contactos en castellano tratando con los temas de la salud ambiental y de organización a nivel de base. ◆

EUROPE AGAIN AHEAD OF U.S.

On March 12, the European Commissioners reviewed a Green Paper outlining the impact of PVC waste on the environment. The Green Paper is based on three years of study and looks at the entire PVC life cycle: the industry and its products, additives, and the management, recycling, incineration, and disposal of PVC wastes. Among the findings of the paper are that PVC waste incinerated in Europe would increase more than fourfold over the next twenty years if current trends continue, that incineration of PVC creates enormous amounts of hazardous waste, and that PVC is the largest contributor of chlorine to incinerators.

This report is an important tool for all of us in the U.S. working on dioxin since the U.S. EPA has refused to draw a direct link between the production and disposal of PVC and dioxin. Not only can we use this Green Paper to pressure the current administration to address the issues of PVC and dioxin, but we can also use it as an important policy-setting tool on the state and local levels.

The most recent version of the Green Paper is available at www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/pvc/index.htm

◆ BRUSSELS - In January, the European Commission issued a list of 11 hazardous chemicals it wants industry to phase out as part of a long-term plan to clean up Europe's rivers, lakes and seas. The list includes some well-known substances like lead and cadmium, often used in thermometers and batteries, as well as some chemicals unfamiliar to the public but which are nonetheless common in products from wood preservers to insecticides. If national governments and the European Parliament approve the list, the Commission will draft measures to phase out the chemicals over a 20-year period.

HEALTH CARE WITHOUT HARM

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

TRADE SECRETS AND COMING CLEAN

On Monday night, March 26, public broadcasting stations across the country aired *TRADE SECRETS: A MOYERS REPORT*. Correspondent Bill Moyers and producer Sherry Jones reported on how the chemical revolution of the past 50 years has produced thousands of man-made chemicals that have not been tested for their effect on the public's health and safety. The program was based on previously undisclosed industry documents and on interviews with historians, scientists and physicians studying how chemicals affect the body.

To take advantage of this opportunity — a prime time television spe-

cial on the issues we care about! — the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, Women's Voices for the Earth, Environmental Health Fund, and the Environmental Working Group launched Coming Clean. The Coming Clean campaign is aimed at putting the spotlight on the chemical industry and exposing unacceptable acts of corporate irresponsibility that have left communities with polluted environments, citizens and workers with severe health problems, and our children with a legacy of polluted air, water, land and food. Coming Clean's first goal was to help groups across the country use the program to boost their ongoing work. Health Care Without Harm member organizations

were among the many groups hosting viewing events for the PBS broadcast throughout the United States and Canada. HCWH groups focused their events on phasing out the health care industry's use of mercury, and on eliminating PVC and the incineration of medical waste.

Coming Clean is also focused on doing whatever we can to ensure that after March 26, there are more people in more communities from even more diverse backgrounds working to stop the chemical contamination of our food, our bodies, and our environment.

For more information visit www.comeclean.org ♦

MAKING MEDICINE MERCURY FREE

Since its founding in 1996, Health Care Without Harm — the Campaign for Environmentally Responsible Health Care, has included a focus on eliminating mercury from health care practices. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that enters our bodies through food we eat — fish, above all — that has been contaminated by mercury pollution.

HCWH's mercury strategy comprises four major initiatives. The first includes education on the risks of mercury thermometers and encouraging thermometer exchanges. HCWH is now distributing the booklet "How to Plan and Hold a Mercury Thermometer Exchange." This booklet has been successful in assisting

mercury thermometer round-ups in Chicago, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C. We continue to reprint "Mercury Thermometers and Your Family's Health" and have distributed a total of 103,000 copies to date in English, Spanish, and Hmong.

The second initiative focuses on getting local legislation passed banning the sale of mercury thermometers. The first citywide ban was passed in Duluth, Minnesota, and was followed by bans in San Francisco and Ann Arbor. Just last fall, the Boston City Council voted unanimously to ban the sale of mercury thermometers. Subsequently, the governor of Massachusetts announced that he would propose legislation

banning the sale and distribution of mercury thermometers across the Commonwealth. At this writing, the Chicago City Council is reportedly considering a similar ban. Finally, the EPA Region 1 administrator recently wrote a letter to all the cities and towns in New England encouraging them to follow the example of Boston and ban the sale of mercury thermometers. In February, Cambridge voted for a ban, and twenty other New England cities have expressed serious interest in enacting such an ordinance.

The third initiative involves working with retailers to persuade them to voluntarily end their sale of mercury thermometers. As a result of

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STOP DIOXIN EXPOSURE

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

CHEMICAL INDUSTRY EXPOSED

On April 3—one week after Bill Moyer’s documentary *Trade Secrets* aired on PBS—dioxin communities around the country released *Behind Closed Doors*, a report outlining the chemical industry’s influence on dioxin policy. Events were held at incinerators, at city halls, and at the executive offices of dioxin polluting companies. The report documents the efforts of the American Chemistry Association, the Chlorine Chemical Council, and the Vinyl Institute to prevent the release of the EPA’s reassessment that dioxin causes cancer in humans. In addition, the report looks at the contributions the chemical industry made to the campaigns of President Bush and EPA Administrator Whitman during their last elections and gives examples of policy decisions they made that favor the chemical industry over public health.

The report is available on our web site at www.chej.org. For a print copy, call CHEJ at 703-237-2249.

COMMUNITY LEADERS PRESS BUSH TO SHOW LEADERSHIP ON DIOXIN

On February 5, the Stop Dioxin Exposure Campaign sent a letter to President Bush, EPA Administrator Christine Whitman, and the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) signed by 413 community leaders including religious leaders, health professionals, health-impacted groups, and environmental justice leaders. The letter requested that Administrator Whitman and the CEQ meet with a campaign delegation to discuss how to move forward on strong dioxin policies that protect the public’s health.

On Monday, March 12, a delegation representing the Great Lakes, Alaska, Louisiana, Native people, and health-impacted groups met with key staff from the administrator’s office and the CEQ. At the meeting, leaders stressed the importance of keeping the dioxin reassessment process moving and ensuring that the final document gets released within the next few months. The delegation also asked for strong leadership from this administration to ensure that policies on dioxin are forthcoming that truly protect the public’s health.

A copy of the February letter is available on our web site at www.chej.org.

NATIONAL TOXICOLOGY PROGRAM LISTS DIOXIN AS KNOWN HUMAN CARCINOGEN

On January 19, the National Toxicology Program (NTP) announced an addendum to its Ninth Report on Carcinogens adding dioxin to the list of substances “known to be a human carcinogen.” The NTP had planned to reclassify dioxin as a “known carcinogen” in the original report, released in May, 2000, but was prevented from doing so by a lawsuit filed by Jim Tozzi, former OMB staffer and frequent industry consultant. The publication of the addendum follows a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit dismissing the injunction that had held up the listing. The NTP’s listing of dioxin in the “known” category is based on significant scientific studies with humans, involving both epidemiological and mechanistic evidence, that indicate a causal relationship between exposure to dioxin and human cancer.

This is a huge victory for everyone working to eliminate dioxin. Industry has been fighting hard against the EPA’s key finding linking dioxin and cancer in people. State and local officials can hang their hat on this when setting policies to protect human health. ♦

Visit our website at
www.chej.org

CHILD PROOFING OUR COMMUNITIES

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

POISONED SCHOOLS: INVISIBLE THREATS, VISIBLE ACTIONS

On March 21, Child Proofing Our Communities, a locally based, nationally-linked campaign to protect children from exposure to environmental health hazards in schools, released a new report—*Poisoned Schools: Invisible Threats, Visible Actions*.

The report addresses those factors that put children at increased risk from environmental toxins. Because their organ systems are still developing, children absorb and handle toxins differently from adults. Children consume more calories, drink more water, and breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults do, increasing their exposure to environmental threats. In addition, children's curiosity and lack of awareness of dangers make them more likely to come into contact with contaminants.

Poisoned Schools contains three major findings and associated recommendations:

- ◆ Record enrollments nationwide have led to a search for the cheapest land to build new schools—which sometimes turn out to be toxic sites. In low income and minority districts, purchasing contaminated land for schools has become the norm. The report's guidelines would prohibit new school construction on abandoned landfills or contaminated sites, or next to heavily polluting industries.

- ◆ *Poisoned Schools* highlights examples of schools around the U.S. that have already been built on con-

taminated land, seriously endangering the health of children and of teachers and other school employees. Dozens of schools have been identified as being on or near a contamination source. Some of the schools have large numbers of students with cancer and other diseases. School officials say they didn't know the risks forty years ago, and health authorities today say they still don't know if you can directly connect the students' diseases with the toxic sites. The report's conclusion, however, is clear: these schools need to be cleaned up or closed.

- ◆ The report also looks at the increasing problem of pesticide use in schools. Pesticides have been linked to hyperactivity and damage to the brain and nervous system. The report recommends community participation in integrated school pest management programs and the use of preventative and alternative pest controls that block pests from school property and prevent pest infestations. Pesticides should only be used if pests present a documented health or safety hazard. Even then, only the least toxic pesticides should be used, and parents, students, teachers and other school workers should be informed in advance.

Seventy community and parents groups from thirty states co-released this report. Our goal is to raise public awareness of these urgent issues and to initiate conversations with decision-makers about implementing policies that would protect children from chemicals that poison schools.

For a copy of the report or to join the Child Proofing Our Communities Campaign, please call CHEJ at 703-237-2249 or e-mail us at childproofing@chej.org ◆

HEALTH CARE WITHOUT HARM

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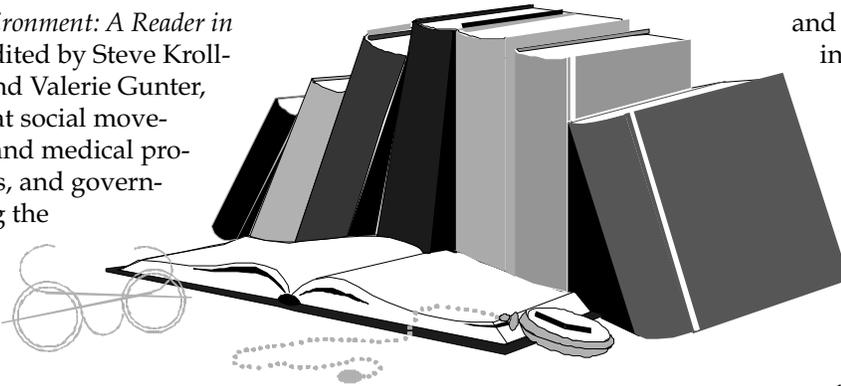
HCWH's campaign, over 20,000 drug stores—nearly two-thirds of the stores represented in the National Association of Chain Drug Stores—no longer sell mercury thermometers. Big retail chains that have agreed to phase out sales of the thermometers include Wal-Mart, KMart, Albertsons, Meijer, Rite-Aid, Walgreens, CVS, Toys R Us, Safeway, Target, and E-Drugstore.

The fourth initiative is the Mercury Free Medicine campaign, begun by HCWH in cooperation with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) to help health care providers initiate or accelerate programs to eliminate the use of mercury-containing devices and prevent mercury pollution. As of January 2001, 175 hospitals and 480 medical clinics nationwide had taken the pledge to eliminate mercury from their supplies and processes.

For more information on Health Care Without Harm, visit our web site at www.noharm.org. To order publications, contact us by e-mail at hcwh@chej.org. ◆

RESOURCES

◆ *Illness and the Environment: A Reader in Contested Medicine*, edited by Steve Kroll-Smith, Phil Brown, and Valerie Gunter, addresses the role that social movements, the scientific and medical professions, corporations, and government play in defining the relationship between disease and our "manufactured environment." A central focus is the way in which environmental activists have developed the expertise to successfully challenge traditional scientific assumptions and compel corporations and political authorities to address their concerns. Above all, this collection makes clear that the battle over what counts as valid knowledge is a critical part of the struggle for social justice. The 25 essays contain a wealth of historical information; case studies include PBB contamination in Michigan, silicosis in 19th century factory workers, childhood lead poisoning, endometriosis, Agent Orange and Vietnam War veterans. (New York University Press, 2000; 476 pp; notes, bibliographies, index)



◆ Want to know more about how grassroots groups and foundations interact? Robert Bothwell, founding Director and Senior Fellow for the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, has published a paper, "Foundation Funding of Grassroots Organizations," based on interviews with 26 grassroots groups and 22 foundations. The paper is the most recent of more than a dozen Working Papers on organizing and related topics on the Comm-Org web site at comm-org.utoledo.edu/, most of them written by experienced organizers working on environmental justice, housing, and other community issues. Comm-Org includes many other resources for community organizations and grassroots activists.

◆ In *The Dirty Truth: George W. Bush's Oil and Chemical Dependency*, Rick Abraham, director of the Texas United Education Fund, exposes George W. Bush's false claims about his environmental record, laying out in abundant detail how, as governor of Texas, Bush loosened the state's already weak environmental standards to reward the industries that were bankrolling his presidential campaign. Bush's key achievements include the "voluntary pollution abatement program," crafted by corporate representatives to allow hundreds of "grandfathered" facilities to continue to pour pollutants into the air; cutting the budget of the state environmental agency by twenty percent, gutting its ability to investigate citizen complaints; rewriting the state's hazardous waste laws to limit corporate liability

and restrict the public's right to information; and tripling the amount of New York sludge imported into Texas. Abraham extensively documents his facts and figures, making this a crucial resource. (Mainstream Publishers, 2000; 193 pp.; tables; notes)

◆ Robert Gottlieb's *Environmentalism Unbound: Exploring New Pathways for Change* examines both the promise and limitations of environmentalism. After a critical survey of the environmental justice and pollution prevention movements, Gottlieb discusses three examples of new approaches: promoting change in the clothes cleaning industry, where small businesses have been reluctant to adopt environmentally safer wet-cleaning technology; organizing janitors around the issue of chemical hazards in the workplace; and challenging the corporate-dominated food production system through organic farming, community gardens, and farmers markets. Gottlieb argues that to be at the forefront of a movement for fundamental social change, environmentalism will need to broaden its discourse and constituency, integrating issues such as workplace safety and food security into its agenda. (MIT Press, 2001; 396 pp; notes, index.) ◆

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The Center for Health, Environment and Justice remains an advocate, educator, organizer and leader in the movement for health and environmental justice through the generous support of our members, Partners, Guardians and key foundations and institutions. CHEJ would like to acknowledge the following individuals and institutions who made critically important donations to support our work between December 1, 2000 and February 28, 2001. Our members number in the hundreds, and are therefore too many to name. However, each gift, no matter what the size, is very much appreciated.

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