

Waste Not

The Weekly Reporter
for rational
resource management

#67

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AUGUST 31, 1989

LOVE CANAL RALLY: IT'S NOT SAFE TO LIVE THERE!

Grassroot activists from across the country will meet in Albany on Friday, September 15, to appeal to Governor Cuomo not to allow people to move back into Love Canal. According to Greenpeace, "During the 1940's Hooker Chemical Co. (now Occidental Petroleum) and others dumped an estimated 21,000 tons of pesticide and herbicide waste into a canal. In the 1950's the trench was covered with dirt and a neighborhood was built around it. During the 1970's problems appeared - 56% of the children born there had birth defects; skin rashes, asthma, seizures and bone disease were alarmingly common. In August of 1978 state and federal officials declared health emergencies as a result of political pressure from members of the community. 700 homes in the neighborhood were evacuated, and 200 razed. Federal and state funds bought out more than 400 homeowners. These events led to passage of federal Superfund legislation. Now government and industry want people to live at Love Canal again. The contaminants have not been removed; instead, there is a clay cap over the dumping site and a trench to collect run off. A (N.Y.) Department of Health study compared the area with two similarly contaminated, but non-evacuated neighborhoods in Niagara Falls, rather than with non-contaminated neighborhoods. This flawed study was interpreted to mean that Love Canal did not pose a risk to human health. In fact, the federal EPA recently had to force evacuation of another Niagara community after five years of N.Y. Department of Environmental Conservation inaction." Dr. Peter Montague, editor of Hazardous Waste News, calls Love Canal "a land mine in the ground, waiting for its next victims." Lois Gibbs the dynamic leader of Citizens Clearing House for Hazardous Waste was a former resident of Love Canal who attracted national attention to the toxic problems at Love Canal and will address the Love Canal Rally. Lois is one of the most articulate spokesperson and effective organizer for environmental justice in the U.S. today. Details are:

FRIDAY - SEPTEMBER 15

6 PM

STATE CAPITAL PARK, STATE STREET, ALBANY, NY

The rally will culminate in a candlelight march (bring candles/flashlights) to the Governor's Mansion with a demand that he reverse the decision to resettle Love Canal. For more information re: carpooling & housing contact either Sandy Fonda at 518-725-7788 Lois Gibbs at 703-276-7070 or Pat Brown at 716-284-0026. The rally is sponsored by Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes, Greenpeace, Toxics in your Community Coalition, Ecumenical Task Force, Love Canal Homeowners Assoc., and Work on Waste-USA. There will be a major statewide environmental conference the following two days in Albany. Barry Commoner and many other national experts will be speaking and workshops are planned on: recycling, toxic use reduction, air toxics, radioactive waste, pesticides, and Earth Day 1990. Telephone 518-462-5526 for more information.

HOLLAND: "MILK POLLUTED BY DIOXIN": The following newspaper account and editorial appeared in the Amsterdam daily newspaper **de Volkskrant** and has been translated by Dr. Walter Burnstein of N.J. These reports update the A.P. report we reprinted in issue #61.

July 15, 1989- "The Hague - Dioxin has been found in milk and cheese of several tens of dairy farms under the smog of incinerators in Rozenburg and North Amsterdam. Milk products and meat of [the farms] are not allowed to be sold anymore according to a decision made by government members Nijpels (Environment), Braks (Agriculture) and Dees (Commonwealth Health). If the cause of the pollution is not soon eliminated the farmers face the chance that business will have to give up their businesses. This would be the first time that business have had to close as a result of air pollution. Dioxin concentrates in the fat of the milk which now cannot be used [sold] anymore. The non-fat part of the milk will be converted into milk powder. The pollution is

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caused by **AVR (Afvalverwerking Rijnmond)** the biggest incinerator in the Netherlands and an incinerator in North Amsterdam. The incinerators will face stricter demands such as the placing of active [activated] carbon filters. The other 10 incinerators -- will also be adjusted. In the Rijnmond area 16 farmers are involved who produce four million liters of milk annually [1.056 million gallons]. This means a loss of 3,000,000 guilders [\$1,350,000 U.S.] if they cannot sell their milk. The expectation is that in the North Amsterdam area about the same numbers are involved. Dioxin is produced by the burning of household and industrial garbage. An important source of dioxin is the synthetic material PVC. **Of the total emission of Dioxin in the Netherlands, 30% is produced by incinerators.** In addition, dioxin is also released by certain industrial processes and by traffic [automobiles]. According to State Secretary Dees (Commonwealth Health), **the danger of inhaling dioxin with dust in the air is very small compared to the indirect exposure through food.** From analysis by the State Institute of Health and Environmental Hygiene (RJVM) it becomes apparent that **continuous consuming of milk, cheese and meat that have been polluted with dioxin leads to surpassing of the norms and is thus dangerous to health.** The Environmental activist movement thinks that the emission of dioxins by incinerators has to be stopped immediately. This can happen by installing active carbon filters, according to Society for Nature and Environment and the Union for Environmental Defense. They have also asked for a quick removal of PVC from the market. This substance is used often in disposable wrappers. Dioxins belong to the most poisonous combinations [compounds] that are known. The acute poisoning [toxicity] is ten thousand times [greater than Cyanide]. Very small amounts are already hazardous to human health. Effects are weakening of the immune system, disruption of the hormonal balance, ---and damage to the liver, spleen, and thymus gland. Dioxins are also carcinogenic. According to the Union for Environmental Defense the Dutch Government has played down the emission of dioxins by incinerators for years. They think the norms for maximum allowed intake are too low. For an adult person that is 240 picograms/day. One picogram is [one trillionth] of a gram. The dioxin problems put question marks to the plans of the government to continue raising the incinerating capacity till the year 2000. The plans call for a capacity of 8 million tons of garbage. The amount of garbage being burned now is 2.8 million tons yearly."

July 17, 1989 Editorial: "For many years...even before the accident in the [Italian city of Seveso]...warnings have come, of the dangers of poisonous dioxin in food and breast milk...Dairy farmers in the immediate environment [of the incinerators] receive partial compensation for 3 months for their poisoned milk. This deals with the small scale immediate situation, but what will occur after the 3 months, and especially what is going to be done about this enormous problem? Dioxin must be controlled...The bill will run very high if risky pollution continues..."

FOOTNOTE by long-time resident of Amsterdam: "The media and the public are noting that Holland is a much more technology regulated country than the U.S.A...The Dutch population has been surprised that even considering the extensive degree of incineration regulation -plus considering that even with good technology- they are surprised that this dioxin problem could even occur at all!"

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WASTE NOT NOTE: The editors of **Waste Not** took a vacation for three weeks in August. We are sorry that we didn't give our readers notice with the last issue. **Waste Not** will be published 48 times a year. The **Index to Waste Not** is underway and it is hoped that by the end of September it will be ready. We hope that all our readers have found the time to take a holiday this summer!

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