

# Everyone's Backyard

CITIZEN'S CLEARINGHOUSE FOR HAZARDOUS WASTE, INC.

Vol. 3 No. 3 — Summer, 1985

## Who is Lee Thomas?

## CCHW Newsbriefs

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was written by the members of the Old Forge (PA) Toxic Waste Removal Committee, one of the only groups to meet with Lee Thomas, now Administrator of EPA, then head of the Superfund program. Theirs is a success story because they fought hard for access to Thomas, went in well-prepared and then kept up the pressure after they won commitments from him. Thomas has since moved on to replace Bill Ruckelshaus as head of EPA. As this issue was going to press, Thomas's replacement to head Superfund was named. J.*

*Winston Porter heads the Loudoun County, Virginia, Chamber of Commerce and campaigned for Reagan in 1980 and 1984, heading the county Republican Committee. He used to work for Bechtel Corp. in its Saudi Arabia branch. Bechtel Corp. is where Defense Sec. Caspar Weinberger and Sec. of State George Schultz came from. Our members in Virginia are checking Mr. Porter out, so look for more on him in the next ACTION BULLETIN. Have things changed much since the Reagan Administration took office? Thomas, like Ruckelshaus before him, looks great in comparison to Reagan's first EPA head, Anne Gorsuch-Burford. Getting the job done is the bottom line. Will Thomas do better? In the first five years of the Reagan Administration, you could count the number of sites cleaned up on the*



The Vertac Corp. has put thousands of tons of dioxin-laden pesticides into the ground in Jacksonville, Arkansas. This man wants to know how many more of his neighbors have to suffer before Gov. Bill Clinton will order his state agencies to do the right thing.

*fingers of one hand. Will J. Winston Porter do better than former Superfund head Rita Lavelle, who entered the federal penitentiary in April for her misdeeds? We'll all be watching.*

It seems like that's a question everyone is asking us now that we've met him.

But, first, you might want to know who we are and how we got to meet Lee Thomas.

We are the Old Forge Toxic Waste Removal Committee—a long name, we know, but it says what we want.

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On May 11, less than a week after President Reagan's now famous visit to the German cemetery at Bitburg, the American Cancer Society got into the act. At their annual, national fund-raiser, the "Cancer Ball" in Washington, the Cancer Society presented Mr. Armand Hammer with their special Stanley Hayes Award for his contributions toward the prevention of cancer. Mr. Hammer, who earned \$840,800 last year, is the head of *Occidental Petroleum*, parent of *Hooker Chemical* and chief culprit at Love Canal. Both the Cancer Society and Occidental Petroleum expressed surprise that there was outrage over this award and argued that neither Mr. Hammer nor Occidental Petroleum could be held responsible for Love Canal. At best, that's a distorted response and, at worst, an outright falsehood. Occidental/ Hooker is a notorious dumper, not just at Love Canal, but at dozens of other sites, like the municipal dump at Oyster Bay, Long Island, for example. Occidental/ Hooker has repeatedly refused to acknowledge the dangers to health and safety posed by chemical dumping and failed to make anything vaguely resembling just compensation to dumpsite victims: after prolonging the lawsuits of the 1,337 Love Canal victims for five years, Occidental/ Hooker forced residents to accept an average of \$10,023 in compensation for their

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THOMAS, from page 1

We want the toxic waste removed from our community. We organized 22 months ago, just when EPA was going to start the remedial investigation of the Lackawanna Refuse Site in Old Forge, PA. The site is a group of abandoned strip mine pits which were used as a landfill until it was discovered that illegal dumping of toxic and hazardous wastes had taken place. Our major concern is known as Pit #5, which contains possibly up to 24,000 barrels of waste. Our goal: total removal of barrels and contaminated waste/soil from Pit #5 and the surrounding area.

Why did we want to meet Lee Thomas and how did we get there? We kept being told that Lee Thomas was "the" man at EPA and that he would make the ultimate decision about our community's future. So we decided that maybe we should talk to "the" man.

The important question, how do we get an appointment with this person who would be making the decision about our site? We knew we couldn't just place a phone call to the EPA and tell them we wanted to see Lee Thomas. After much committee discussion, we decided the best route was to have the arrangements made through our Congressman, Joseph McDade. Representative McDade set up the meeting. An attempt was made to cancel it but through the insistence of our committee, it took place as arranged.

In July 1984, appointed members of the OFTWR Committee traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with Lee Thomas.

Our group had developed a tentative agenda and format for this meeting. Prior to meeting with Mr. Thomas, we met with the staff of the "Clearinghouse." Lois Gibbs, Steve Lester and Will Collette discussed with us a suggested format for the meeting and helped us develop not only a formal agenda but also a written list of "demands." The time we spent with CCHW was invaluable and resulted in our meeting with Mr. Thomas being extremely productive and worthwhile.

Not having met the man before, we really had no prior opinion of him,

but we anticipated we would be given a very cool and businesslike reception. We also feared that we would be rushed through a meeting that was of great importance to us. Instead we found a very friendly, receptive person who addressed us as peers. We believe he found our committee to be organized, knowledgeable, and professional, and treated us as such.



This is Lee Thomas (an official EPA p.r. photo). Will we be able to count on "Thomas's Promises," now that J. Winston Porter is minding the Superfund store? Thomas told Congress that all EPA could handle under Superfund is about \$5 billion dollars (only a fraction of what's really needed). With Porter in charge, he may be right.

We presented ten demands dealing with timetables, negotiations, and communications. Lee Thomas reviewed each of those demands with our committee and responded to them. He clearly indicated what he felt he could and could not do. Mr. Thomas appeared knowledgeable of his role with the EPA and that of his office. Later, his responses were confirmed by letter to our committee. The meeting ended up being 15 minutes longer than the time allotted.

Were those demands met? On two occasions we had to test those commitments which had to do with cooperation from and communication with our EPA Regional Office.

Lee Thomas is now in a position of even greater responsibility and even more directly accountable to the President's office. However, based on what has happened to us to date, we cannot doubt his sincerity. He is a career government employee, but one with a sincere concern for correcting environmental problems facing citizens like ourselves.

Will his appointment cause a profound change in the federal government's approach to the maintenance and protection of our natural resources? Probably not. It seems to us that such a change can come only from a change in the framework within which EPA's responsibilities are created.

We hope Lee Thomas will steer EPA in a forward direction that will lead to tangible results. We hope that his willingness to listen and the genuine concern he displayed during our meeting will positively affect the character of the agency he now heads.

We benefited greatly from our meeting with him. It is our hope that the man we met will continue to exhibit similar characteristics in his new position as Administrator of the EPA. ■



See that dump on the next page? Here, Long Island residents plan for what turned out to be their successful May 4th "Operation Closedown" where, through direct action, they blockaded and shut down Long Island's dumps.

NEWSBRIEFS, from page 1

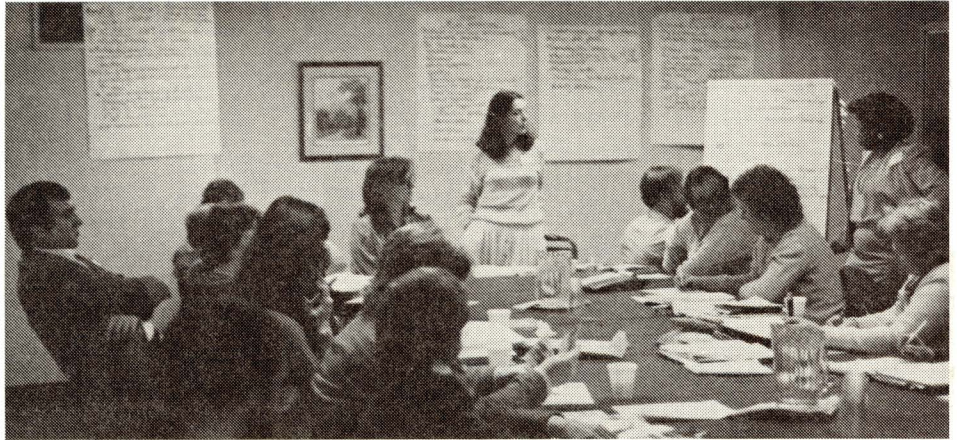
cancers, birth defects and other health damages. Mr. Hammer is famous for running his company with the personal touch and making *all* corporate decisions. In fact, investment analysts blame Hammer's personal touch for causing the planned merger between Occidental and Diamond-Shamrock to fall through when D-S got nervous over Hammer's style.

*What should you do?* Let the Cancer Society know you think this is wrong. Ask them to retract the award or issue a statement of regret. Their address is: American Cancer Society, 777 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017. Be sure to also contact your *local chapter* (they probably aren't aware of this). Reconsider contributions to the American Cancer Society.

★ The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Energy and Commerce Committee (U.S. House of Representatives) investigated the state of groundwater monitoring at 1,246 hazardous waste facilities and came up with some shocking results. Their report, which names specific sites, shows that nearly two thirds of the sites don't seem to have "nominally adequate" well systems and that figure jumps to 54% of the sites that are known to have taken Superfund waste. Two out of five sites among the total have already contaminated groundwater. The subcommittee also found that over 400 of the sites it surveyed (about 36%) are closed or plan to close and a fifth of them have no monitoring wells at all. You can get a copy of this report, free, from the Subcommittee by writing the Subcommittee directly at the U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515, or asking your Senator or Representative for a copy of "Groundwater Monitoring Survey," Committee Print #99-1, April 1985.

★ Springtime is one of CCHW's busiest times of year. We've been on the road a lot, and we're impressed at how strong and active the citizens' movement against hazardous waste has become. Some of the places we've been include:

- *Long Island, NY*, where RAGE of Old Bethpage, the Nassau Neigh-



Local leaders from 16 states met to examine "deep-well injection" systems at CCHW's second Leadership Roundtable on Disposal Options. 60% of America's waste is pumped into deepwells, often causing massive leaks, "gushers" and explosions.

borhood Network and a coalition of local groups held "Operation Close-down" on May 4. Residents blocked local dumpsites to demand their permanent closure. Long Island has some of the worst operating dumps in New York.

- *Lawrence County, Kentucky*, where Concerned Citizens of Lawrence County are fighting to keep a dumper with a bad reputation from using their beautiful Appalachian community as the site of a regional hazardous waste incinerator.
- *Vickery, Ohio*, site of one of the most notorious "deep-well injection

systems," run by Waste Management, Inc. This site had one leak where *at least* 45 million gallons of toxics leaked. The site was ordered to stop taking new waste recently after releasing a toxic cloud from one of its lagoons and members of "NOPE" (Northern Ohioans Protecting the Environment) are determined to keep the site from taking more, if they have to blockade it with their tractors.

- *Vermont*, where we helped Vermonters Organized for Clean-up hold its "founding convention," launching

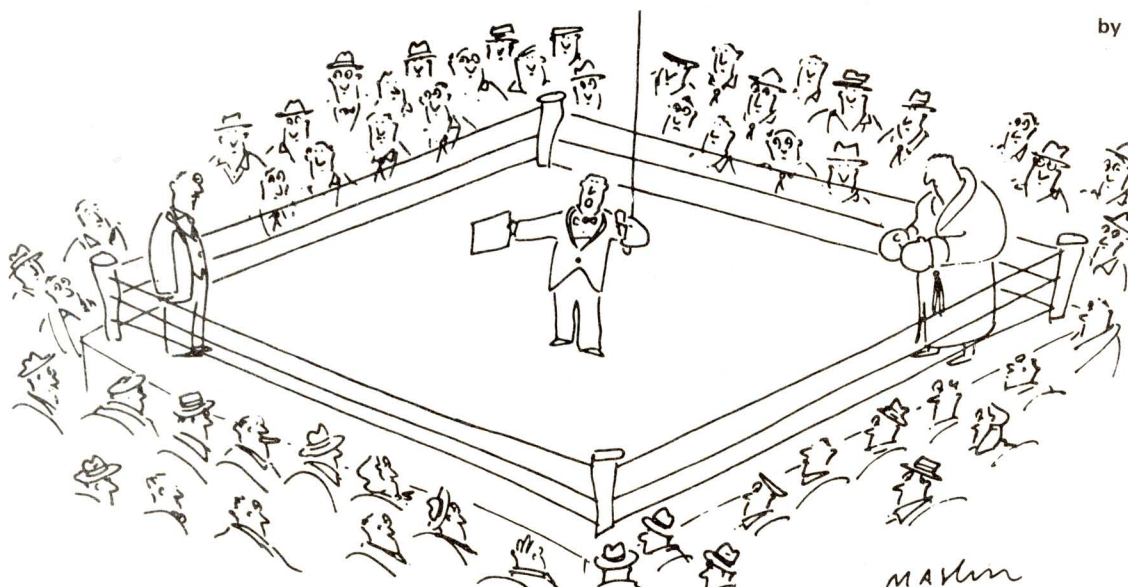
See NEWSBRIEFS, page 6



Is this the future for Rockaway Township, where CCHW is helping residents block a proposed municipal dump over a "sole source aquifer?" Residents say "NO!" and are sure to win their fight if they keep up the pressure.

# ORGANIZING TOOLBOX: GUIDE TO LAWYERS

by WILL COLLETTE



*"In this corner, a man prone to costly and lengthy litigation."*

*"When ya gotta trouble, getta lawyer. Then ya gotta more trouble, but at least ya gotta lawyer." —*

*Chico Marx*

Almost every group considers, at some point, hiring a lawyer. Some groups have had good experiences, but *far too many* "gotta themselves more trouble." Before you do, think through your reasons, the price you'll pay, if there is a better way.

## COMMON REASONS WHY GROUPS USE LAWYERS

1. *Advice.* A good reason, if you confine that advice to legal matters. Lawyers advice on organizing strategy can be conventional, legalistic and often conservative—*bad*.

2. *Research.* Not a good use of your money. Better: Do it yourself with *advice* and *back-up* from the lawyer.

3. *Representation.* In the courts, this makes sense. But *never* use a lawyer to speak for you before public hearings and agencies, to *negotiate* for you with your opponents. Let your lawyer *advise* you on what needs to be entered into an administrative record, but make the presentations yourselves.

4. *Protection.* If you're being sued or being threatened, you need a lawyer— but get one who'll give you an aggressive defense and won't interfere with your applying political pressure.

5. *Credibility.* Some groups think they score extra points by having a lawyer. If that's all you've got going for you, whatever "credibility" you've won by getting a lawyer will disappear quickly if your group doesn't *do* anything.

6. *Pressure.* Suing your opponent *can* increase your pressure on that opponent. But, remember, whatever your lawyer can do to them, their lawyer can do to you—and they're likely to have more success.

7. *Buy Time.* Your opponent surprises you by deciding to go ahead with a landfill permit without a hearing. This is happening so fast that you need to buy time to organize your community. A lawyer can get a "TRO" (Temporary Restraining Order) to block this action until you can rally your forces.

8. *Compensation.* If you've suffered loss of health or property and want compensation, you probably need a lawyer to take your claim to court. Note: most states have rules called the "statute of limitations" for how soon you must sue. Consult a lawyer for *advice* on your state's statute of limitations.

9. *Publicity.* Sure, a flashy lawsuit will get you in the paper. Just make sure this short-term publicity is worth the price you pay in time and energy.

10. *Escape.* Some groups have filed lawsuits after all else has failed.

However, it's hard to just walk away from a problem by filing a lawsuit. You leave yourselves open to counter-suit for "malicious prosecution."

## THE PRICE YOU PAY

A. A large chunk of your membership may leave, thinking, "Now we've got a lawyer to handle our problem for us?"

B. Once a suit is filed, you have a long, frustrating waiting game ahead of you. People get worn out and bored waiting for something to happen.

C. Most lawyers have opinions about group strategy. If your lawyer says, "Don't protest!", at least a few of your members are going to agree and the internal fights begin.

D. Many groups get so dependent on their lawyer that they let the legal process govern their strategy and won't make a move without consulting the lawyer.

E. You've filed a suit. Now your opponent won't talk to you anymore and won't give you any information.

F. You've got three choices for the lawyer's fee: (1) free ("pro bono") rare and can be tricky, since you have no financial control over the lawyer; (2) Contingency or (3) Fee-for-service. Under the contingency arrangement, the lawyer takes the case in return for a share of whatever you win (usually around 33%, plus expenses). If you

See TOOLBOX, page 5

# LEGAL CORNER

By RON SIMON

In this *Organizing Toolbox*, Will Collette has written a *User's Guide to Lawyers*. I have decided to use this space to comment on some of Will's observations and advice.

The article is structured into two topic areas: the reasons for hiring a lawyer and the prices that are paid. This categorization is very helpful and leads to what is clearly the most important point: **BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR GOALS**—some big problems with lawyers are not necessarily caused by the lawyers themselves, but by what people expect from lawyers and how they deal with them.

My first rule is the exact same as Collette's: *think about why you want a lawyer*. As he indicates, lawyers are generally needed to get monetary compensation. But to close a dumpsite, to prevent a facility from opening, or to get a government agency to do something, political pressure is generally more effective.

My second rule is *know your role*. Collette tells us never to let a lawyer speak for you or negotiate for you. I would start by saying that you are able to speak, negotiate and do legal and scientific research, and that doing each of these for yourself is important to your struggle.

You should not abandon these roles when you hire a lawyer. The choice about who should speak, negotiate or whatever, should be made with regard to the *specific task* at hand, and that choice is yours—not the lawyer's. You

should not abandon the decision-making to the lawyer.

My third rule is: *clarify the roles with the lawyer*. Before I am hired, I ask the client what they want and what they want *me* to do. Too often the lawyer ends up making the major strategic decisions and too often these decisions are not based on legal expertise. However, this does not happen solely because lawyers are bossy people. It happens when the client tells the lawyer about the problem and then leaves the definition of the goals and strategy to the lawyer. While I would not deny that lawyers help create this problem, clients also are responsible. Too often they want the lawyer (or any other expert) to solve their problems for them.

The best time to define the lawyer-client relationship is in the beginning. There needs to be a full and frank discussion of goals, strategy and communication, as well as fees before the work is started. A trusting relationship of lawyer and client is necessary and it can only be established in the beginning.

Collette warns that lawyers give advice about organizing, politics, and publicity that is generally too conservative or wrong. You should remember that a law license is not a diploma in politics or community organizing. Lawyers not only orient their activities to the courtroom but are bound by certain rules that do not govern clients. Lawyers cannot use publicity or demonstrations to in-

fluence a case—but non-lawyers can.

A lawyer may not speak with a person on the opposing side of a case without the permission of their lawyer. But a non-lawyer may speak to whomever they want. Political pressure and media attention often greatly influence events—including court and agency decisions. Limiting your strategy to what the lawyer can do in court is a serious mistake. Knowing the lawyer's role and your own makes it clear that many things that are helpful in winning your cause as well as your case cannot be done by lawyers.

All of this leads to my general conclusion. The most common mistake I have seen is that people believe they can hire a lawyer and stop all the work (reading, organizing, speaking, going to meetings) that has brought the cause along. Too many times, hiring the lawyer is the death knell to all other activities—a terrible mistake. Hiring a lawyer and filing a lawsuit must spur you to re-double all of your efforts. If you sit back and rely on the lawyer (or any other expert or person) to solve all your problems, your chances of success greatly diminish.

*Ron Simon is special counsel to the Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste. He is on the faculty of American University Law School and represents citizens around the country exposed to hazardous chemicals. He represents workers who are exposed to chemicals in the workplace. He is also counsel to the White Lung Association (asbestos victims).*

## TOOLBOX, from page 4

win, so does the lawyer. However, if you are represented by a small law firm versus a big corporation, the corporation's lawyers may try to stall and jack up the costs to "starve out" your lawyer. Since your lawyer doesn't see a nickel until the case is settled, s/he may pressure you to accept a less-than-fair settlement because s/he can no longer afford to handle your case. Then you're stuck.

A fee-for-service basis, pay as you go, gives you the greatest amount of control, but will involve the on-going

agony of raising money to pay the lawyer. Hiring a lawyer to try to block a landfill could cost over \$100,000. What will this do to your group?

You may have no choice but fee-for-service, especially if your "case" doesn't involve suing for damages. A lawyer will only take a case on a contingency basis if the odds of winning substantial damages are very high.

## CONCLUSIONS

Don't hire a lawyer unless you have to. Dealing with the problems of an

existing site takes a mixed approach: good organizing and *savvy* use of the legal process. Regardless of how good your reasons are for hiring a lawyer, there will always be a price to pay. You can minimize this price and maximize the benefits by keeping the lawyer's role secondary to your organizing work. Have a clear "contract" and hold your lawyer accountable to the group. Lawyers, like experts and politicians, are *tools*. You want to use that tool for your own purposes and not let that tool use you. ■

## HOW CLEAN, *from the back page*

additional standards are needed for chemicals not on these lists. Another alternative is to use risk assessments to determine "acceptable" risk levels.

Once established, this exposure level would be allowed to remain *anywhere* in the community beyond the property line. Inside the property line levels could be higher because a mathematical model is used to "predict" how much wastes could be left on site without exceeding the exposure standards at the property line. The model supposedly tells you how much wastes are moving from the center of the site to the property line. In other words, clean up only goes as far as the model predicts the exposure standard is not exceeded at the property line.

Using this approach could likely result in significant quantities of chemicals being allowed legally to remain in the environment. For example, let's assume the standard for benzene is 10 parts per billion (ppb). Benzene is known to cause cancer and other diseases in humans and evaporates very easily. Using this model, clean up would involve only removing benzene to 10 ppb. People thus could be exposed to benzene at this level 24 hours a day if their property, air or water was contaminated by this compound. In the case where we know nothing about a particular chemical's affect on people, a safe standard could not even be developed. Where communities have hundreds of chemicals with little or no information about their toxicity, clean up would only go as far as required to clean up a chemical for which there is a standard.

### ZERO LEVEL

The second clean up approach is simple: clean it up to the point where no compound can be found at all. The argument here is that it is not achievable since clays and other soils have heavy metals such as arsenic or lead naturally occurring in the environment.

### BACKGROUND LEVEL

The background approach requires reducing contaminants to levels that are comparable to a similar or "control" area that is not affected by a

toxic waste problem. This would include identifying a control area, sampling that area, and then use the levels found there to establish background levels. If the background levels are high, then either a risk assessment is done or another control area is defined.

There are advantages and disadvantages to all three approaches. CCHW has written these up in two papers which were distributed to the community groups and are available to others who are interested upon request. After reading these papers the community people surveyed expressed that they would support the background level (87%) at their site.

In the second survey, we asked where this level should be achieved:

at the center of the site, the edge of the site or the edge of the property line. 81% indicated they wanted the level achieved at the center of the site primarily because the other options would only contain the wastes and never permanently clean them up.

The Clearinghouse would be very interested in what you think. As this is an issue most people are dealing with and one we have been frequently asked our opinion on. We need your input. After all, our opinion is your opinion. We do what **you** want. ■

**Don't throw this newsletter away. When you're through with it, pass it on to a neighbor or give it to your local library.**



### NEWBRIEFS, *from page 3*

VOC as a statewide alliance of over a dozen local groups, resembling CCHW in style and approach.

- *Arkansas*, where we worked with the Arkansas Chemical Cleanup Alliance to fight for residents' rights to protection from chemical contamination by the Vertac Corp. and the area's many other toxic polluters.

- *Circleville, Ohio*, where we helped ACTION conduct their first area training and education conference.

- *New Jersey*, where we gave sup-

port to GREO (Grassroots Environmental Organization) in fighting the state's massive municipal incineration plan and foolish plan to site a new landfill over a sole source aquifer in Rockaway Township. The New Jersey government had reacted to GREO's success in organizing communities all across the state to fight these dioxin-producing "mass-burn" facilities by taking away siting decisions from local government. We went to NJ to support people's right to decision-making power in environmental policy.

See NEWSBRIEFS, page 7

• A tentative data has been set for CCHW's Third Annual Leadership Development Conference in Ohio: Sept. 13-15 at Hocking Hills State Park. Contact us for more details. Similar programs are planned or in discussion for Louisiana, Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

• CCHW's third (in a series of five) Leadership Roundtables on Disposal Options is set for June 13-14, this time on Land Disposal. We've already looked at Incineration and Deep Well Injection. At these Roundtables, we bring together local leaders, national environmentalists, experts and policy-makers to examine the pros and cons, policy issues and need for action for each disposal method. Still to come: roundtables on recycling/source reduction and the new, emerging technologies.

• CCHW's new, expanded Board of Directors has just taken office. We're pleased to announce their names as follows:

*Esther Forbes*, leader of FORGE, Fauquier County, Virginia;

*Theresa Freeman*, leader of Vermonters Organized for Cleanup;

*Dr. Vilma Hunt*, research scientist at M.I.T.;

*Laura Kaffenbarger*, leader of CF/WATER, Urbana, Ohio;

*Luella Kenny*, Love Canal resident and community leader in Buffalo, NY;

*Dorian Yates Kinder*, philanthropic advisor;

*Dr. Murray Levine*, psychologist at the State University of New York;

*Ken Miller*, Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union;

*Dr. Beverly Paigen*, health researcher at Oakland Children's Hospital. ■

# BAFFLED BY THE TERMS

So that you won't get baffled by the bull you get from government officials and industry people, here are some important terms to remember:

**"NIMBY"**—"Not in My Back Yard." An industry and government term for you. As a NIMBY, they consider you to be ignorant and selfish because you don't want them to put poisons in your community. Many NIMBYs are really NIABYs ("Not In Any Body's Back Yard") and stand for source reduction and other kinds of responsible waste management. A few, left-wing NIMBYs are really PICESPs (pronounced "pick-sesps," meaning "Put it in corporate executive's swimming pools").

**"LULUs"**—"Locally Undersireable Land Uses." This is what NIMBYs oppose.

**"Hysterical Housewife"**—A woman leader who challenges the logic of the dumpers and the government officials who support them, obviously a sign of mental instability. For some odd reason, there is no masculine gender version of this term, possibly because most policy-makers are male.

**"Cost-Benefit Analysis"**—A mathematical process carefully devised to make you bear the maximum cost while providing them with maximum benefit.

**"Radical"**(synonym: "Communist")—What you are designated when, by your actions, you make your industry and government opponents uncomfortable. Also means a person who feels that your rights as citizens to be

safe and secure in your homes are at least as important as the dumpers "rights" to dump cheaply and irresponsibly in your neighborhood.

**"No statistical significance"**—Your opponents are not impressed with the amount of death, illness and suffering in your community. You just don't have enough dead bodies in the streets yet. It also means, "let's wait until a few more people die before we do something."

**"No worse than a shotglass of vermouth in a swimming pool of gin"**—Means you probably have been exposed to very high levels of toxics which must be obscured by this ridiculous and deceptive analogy.

**"No Cause for Alarm"**—Grab the kids, the dog and everything you can carry and head for the hills.

## CORRECTION

In the last Baffled by the Terms, "Incidence" was incorrectly described. Incidence is the number of *new* cases of disease present in a population. Our definition actually describes *prevalance* or the total number of cases present in a population.

*If you have any questions or need help with a technical or scientific problem, give Stephen U. Lester, CCHW's Science Director a call at CCHW, 703/276-7070 or write him at CCHW, P.O. Box 926, Arlington, VA 22216.*

*Everyone's Backyard* is published by the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes, Inc. CCHW is a nonprofit, tax-exempt, environmental crisis center which primarily focuses its work on grassroots environmental organizations across the nation.

Lois Marie Gibbs, Executive Director  
EDITORIAL BOARD: Will Collette, Lois Gibbs, Laurie Sykes, Stephen Lester, Sybil Petersen, Iris Rothman, Ron Simon, and Sybil Pettersen.

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CCHW  
P.O. Box 926, Arlington, VA 22216  
703/276-7070.

## YES!

I want to fight the improper disposal of toxic wastes and help suffering families. Include me as a member of CCHW. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation.

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\*Individual donors of \$50 or more receive a free, autographed copy of *Love Canal: My Story* by Lois Marie Gibbs. All members receive CCHW's quarterly newsletter, *Everyone's Backyard*.

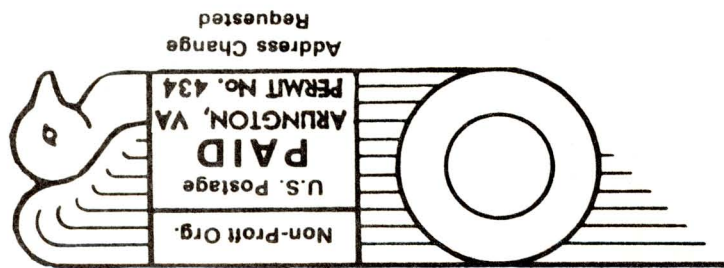
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# HOW CLEAN IS CLEAN?

by Lois Marie Gibbs

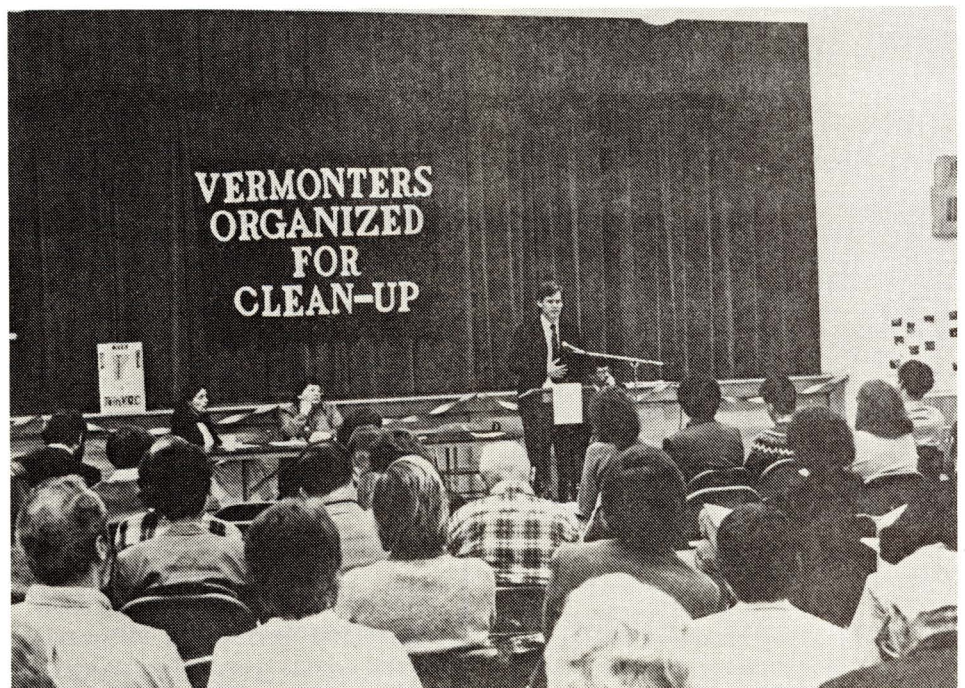
Recently, there have been many heated discussions on the issue of how clean do you clean up a hazardous waste site—what is an “acceptable” risk? And secondly, where should that level of clean-up (risk) be achieved.

CCHW as a result, surveyed over 200 community groups and asked them what would be acceptable to their group. The options that are being discussed are as follows:

**USE OF STANDARDS OR RISK ASSESSMENT TO DEVELOP A BASELINE**

The baseline approach defines the level of chemicals allowed to remain on-site in the impacted area. The first step requires establishing “acceptable” or “safe” levels of chemical exposure. Currently ambient water quality criteria and safe drinking water standards have been suggested but

See *HOW CLEAN*, page 6



One big issue for Vermonters at the founding convention (May 4th) Vermonters Organized for Cleanup is “how clean is clean?”