Everyone's Backyard

CITIZEN'S CLEARINGHOUSE FOR HAZARDOUS WASTE, INC. Vol. 5 No. 2 — Summer 1987

# Angry, Organized, and One Step Ahead

December 4, 1985. Fifteen property owners in Ephrata Township, Pennsylvania — 60 miles northeast of Philadelphia — are invited to a zoning meeting to discuss long-range plans for a 49-acre property near their homes. The adjacent Borough of Ephrata (population 15,000) had recently purchased the land. There was talk of a park.

Acting on a tip that more was here than met the eye, two citizens persuaded the Township Supervisors to table any zoning change until the next meeting. Afterwards, the property owners learned the real story.

At a cost of $150 million, the Borough of Ephrata was planning a 1,250-ton-per-day mass burn incinerator, purportedly to generate electricity for its residents. With it would come a daily stream of trucks carrying garbage of unknown origin and content (later proven by citizens to be Philadephia trash). The proposed facility would require 1,000,000 gallons of water per day. And worst of all, the resulting smoke could potentially expose Township residents to toxic chemicals.

The property owners knew they had to act fast, particularly since the trash was rumored to come from a major city. "In the next two days,"

*See* ANGRY, *on page 2*


(photo by Linda Meade)

Lois Gibbs at Kentucky's first Leadership Conference on Toxics.

# Tuscaloosa's Turkey

Your city is actively considering buying an incinerator. Should you have one? Tuscaloosa thought it should, but it now knows better. We are a citizen's group from Tuscaloosa and we don't want you to make the same mistakes we did. Here's our story, as told by the newspapers.

First, you will be told how wonderful incinerators are:

*Unlike the landfill it replaced, the facility is not just a place to dump garbage and trash, but is a place that produces revenue and has the power to operate three times what it is doing now. I've seen a great number of recovery plants across the country, and I, for one, am glad to know we had the foresight to invest in such a project.*

John T. Lancaster, Director, Tuscaloosa County Solid Waste, The Tuscaloosa News

You will be told that *your* incinerator is new, state-of-the-art, not like other incinerators in other cities

*See* TURKEY, *page 3*

ANGRY, *from page 1*

says volunteer Kris Fortna, "we contacted the Citizens Clearinghouse and a local attorney involved in another grassroots movement. With the help of these two resources, we drew our battle plans."

This battle would be fought on three fronts:

***Political*** — we would inform and then mobilize large numbers of irate citizens to put pressure on their local elected officials.

***Media*** — although the press initially sought us out, we would devise ways to make "news" and maintain reporter interest.

***Legal*** — legal help would be essential, but only as one part of the overall strategy. We were warned against the temptation to think the lawyers can do it all.

Within a week, the voluntteers had organized. Borrowing from *MacBeth's* "Out, damned spot!", they called themselves OUT: Outraged Unhappy Taxpayers. Soon other people and groups joined the fight. Evergreen from Berks County. Trash Limited of Montgomery County. And many more. OUT would become Outraged *United* Taxpayers.

At the group's first meeting, Dawn Rapchinski set the tone with what would become OUT's simple, on-target philosophy. "This incinerator is not going to exist." From that point on, OUT's terminology reflected this attitude...and challenged the "misleading" words used by those backing the incinerator.

"We always called it the *proposed* incinerator," explains Rapchinski. "We said *if* the plant is built, never *when* the plant is built. *Resource recovery* was always *mass burn incineration.* And *municipal waste* was always *garbage or trash.* It was a simple technique, but it communicated our message in terms everyone could understand."

OUT quickly prepared. CCHW's Program Developer, Will Collette had advised the members that the longer they waited, the more time and expense would be required to solve the problem. Working days, nights, and weekends, OUT members read technical materials, watched videotapes, and made phone calls. Each became an authority on one phase of mass burn incineration: traffic, water, dioxin, heavy metals, ash, finance, liability, and the advantages of a throw-away society.

Their intention was to know as much as the experts presenting the proposal. Then, in public meetings, in interviews, and in letters to the editor, OUT addressed every area of concern. Someone could field any question comfortably and credibly. No one had to know everything.

"Credibility was critical," says Fortna. "We made sure all our statements were accurate. And when we did make an error, we weren't afraid to set the record straight with the elected officials, the press, or the public. They soon learned they could depend on us for the truth."

OUT members also learned to work smart. To be flexible and respond quickly when needed, they took turns being the leader in public. They had people available around the clock for meetings and phone calls. And they tried to stay one step ahead of the opposition.

For example, if their opponents were interviewed for television or radio, they asked to be heard too. And at one public meeting, when the Borough delayed the presentation of its plan to the Township, OUT used the time to present its own view.

OUT's strategy was to stall the project until Township residents could be educated about the dangers of mass burn incineration and then influence their leaders to stop it. The group knew that informed citizens of Ephrata would not accept garbage from outsiders — even if it would reduce electric rates. OUT's job was to discover where the trash would come from and inform the public.

Members searched files in Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Resources, county offices, and (using Right-to-Know legistlation) Ephrata Borough files. They found their answer in all three places: the City of Philadelphia.

A preliminary study naming Philadelphia as the source of the trash had been filed at the state and county levels with no public knowledge. Even more damning, the Borough files revealed letters of contact and negotiation dating back to December 1984. After a lot of organizing and hard work, the tide was turning in OUT's favor.

Over the next few weeks, more meetings would take place. More media coverage. And more work.

Then, on April 14, the Ephrata Borough Council announced that "the economic feasibility of implementing a refuse-fueled electric generation facility has been impaired to the point of impracticability." Says Rapchinski, "When you cut through the bureaucratese, that meant the citizens of Ephrata had considered the proposed incinerator...and rejected it."

Asked the reason for OUT's success, Forna replies, "We were a group of ordinary but dedicated people, whose diversity was probably its strength. We had a homemaker, teacher, chemist, beautician, veterinarian, biologist, tool maker, pharmacist, and an engine shop owner. In an area where religion is important, we represented seven major denominations. There were three women and six men. These things gave us the broad base we needed to reach all parts of the community. And to stay one step ahead of the politicans."

After the Township incinerator project was abandoned, OUT went on to help fight a county mass burn incinerator. Dawn Rapchinski now spearheads a statewide movement against mass burn. Several members, including Kris Fortna, have formed a new group to promote recycling and wise material use. And Dan Swaigart, OUT's chemist, is running for position on the same Borough Council he had opposed. That's what democracy is all about. •

# Why I Became Involved

by Elizabeth Avants

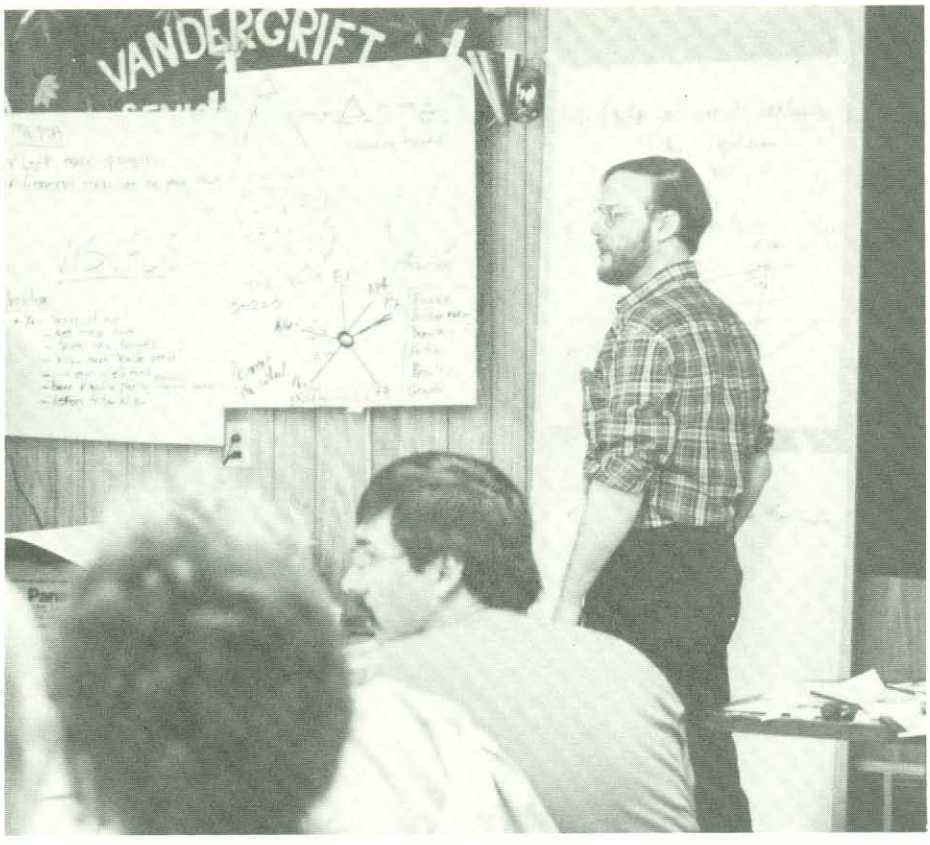
These are the reasons I became involved:

- Because I have been blessed with five beautiful, healthy children;
- Because I have decided to stop compromising their health and well-being;
- Because I am responsible and answerable to God for the things that are within my power to change even if only by the way I live or by opening my mouth when I see a wrong;
- Because there are so many other children and adults, for that matter, who are affected and who have no one to speak up for them;
- Because it is more important to have fresh air to breath, clean water to drink and unpolluted land to live on, instead of the luxuries a plant job can offer;
- Because there are alternatives to the problems of this dispose-all society;

. . .I'd like to tell you that there is hope and there are positive, constructive solutions to this problem, but it takes a lot of work, a lot of patience and a lot of time. We can start with ourselves and begin to pass on to our children the practices of reusing and recycling whatever can be salvaged. We can teach them to quit compromising what really counts in life, or at least to go down fighting if they can achieve the ideal results. . .I'm here to tell you that good can come out of the ugly, oppressing circumstances if people are determined enough to really want to straighten things out, but it's got to start with us.

Iberville Parrish, Louisiana

***EDITOR'S NOTE: *Liz is a leader within a citizens' group that is just over a year old called AWARE. Within AWARE's first 60 days of existence, they forced Dow Chemical to back down for the first time in Louisiana on its proposal to build a commercial hazardous waste incinerator.*




(photo by Linda Meade)

Will Collette and Linda Meade from CCHW conduct Western PA's first Leadership Development training.

TURKEY, *from page 1*

or made by other companies. This is not true. All incinerators are basically the same and they all have problems. At first, the problems are kept quiet. Some stories never appeared in our local paper, but only in a paper published in Birmingham, 60 miles away:

*The Alabama Department of Environmental Management is investigating complaints that Tuscaloosa's new $9 million trash burning steam plant is creating strong odors and pollutants that are making some residents ill.*
October 19, 1984
The Birmingham News

*Officials from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management met with concerned residents of Tuscaloosa County here in a tense, three-hour meeting Tuesday night over Tuscaloosa's often-malfunctioning garbage incinerator.*
November 21, 1984
The Birmingham News

Finally, in 1985, the local newspapers started to cover the story and the local citizens became aware of some of the problems. The plant was well beyond its "shake-down" period and was still breaking down. We knew, of course, that *other* incinerators broke down alot, but we had been told new state-of-the-art incinerators would not:

*A coolant system breakdown at the Tuscaloosa gabage incinerator forced the plant to close for three days while repairs were made, a state official said Friday.*
The Tuscaloosa News

And then, at last, a front page article about the "bottom line":

*The city of Tuscaloosa has given full backing to a $256,000 bank loan to prevent the Tuscaloosa Solid Waste Disposal Authority from techncially defaulting on a bond payment of almost $800,000....*

*The governments are under contract to help meet any deficits in operating expenses of the authority....*

*Though the authority needed $406,000 to make bond payments due Thursday, the government were asked only to back $256,000 of the shortfall because the authority received the remaining $150,000 through another loan from First Alabama Bank backed by a stockholder of Consumat Systems, Inc.*
The Tuscaloosa News

This "revenue-producing" incinerator was, in fact, eating up more money than this small community can afford. A very clear contract meant that local taxpayers' pockets were being emptied to keep the expensive incinerator running.

*Continued on page 6*

# Organizing Toolbox: How To Deal With Proposed Facilities

by Will Collette

*"We had 400 people at our meeting and great experts to talk about health threats, but all those damned people wanted to talk about was property values!"*

—Beth B., at a community rally that led to victory over Waste Management, Inc. in Eastern Pennsylvania

(photo by Will Collette)

Spencerville (OH) "Dumpbusters" jam the hall with over 2000 people opposing Waste Management's proposed solid waste dump.

When I talk to new leaders looking for CCHW's help to block some nasty new facility, I get excited. I know this sometimes seems odd, but I have a good reason for it. After 5 years with CCHW, I'm convinced it's easier to *prevent* something bad from happening than to clean it up later. Nearly every group that's used our formula* has won. Groups can lose though, if they ignore, deviate from or stop using the formula.

Just about every fight is 90% politics and 10% science. *You* may be motivated by health or environmental concerns and were *shocked* when you learned the possible effect of the facility. But not everybody feels that way. You may discover, as Beth did, your neighbors are more worried about property values than dioxins. Instead of being annoyed that they're on the right side for what you see as the wrong reasons GO WITH IT! Listen to what's bothering people and respond to it, rather than ramming through your own agenda.

When Dr. Paul Connett (National Coalition Against Mass Burn Incineration) and I met with the Sugarloaf Citizens Association in rural Maryland (who are fighting a $500 million solid waste mass burn plan), folks emphasized health and environmental threats. But what Paul and I told them was that this is *exactly* why the county wants to build the incinerator out in rural areas! Stressing health and environment would only *reinforce* the county's decision!

So how else do you fight a proposed facility? How do you build *People Power* by expanding beyond just people who are in the impact zone? I believe the best way is through financial arguments.

In Sugarloaf, for example, the county wants to spend *half a billion dollars* on a plan destined to, at best, create more problems, when an investment of only 1% of that amount in recycling could solve the waste problem AND save money in the long-run.

One economic problem is what to do with the ash. Incinerators don't eliminate landfills—they *aggravate* landfill problems! At best, 40% of what's fed into an incinerator comes out as ash. Where do you put it? Time's up—in a landfill! But any old landfill? Probably not for much longer. According to the Environmental Defense Fund, the ash failed EPA's toxicity tests and ought to be classified as hazardous waste. Since EPA currently lacks the guts to do this, ash goes to "sanitary landfills" where it becomes a ticking economic (environmental) timebomb. Sooner or later, EPA will have to classify ash as hazardous waste and ash piles will start becoming candidates for Superfund. Local governments who've bitten the apple offered by Ogden Martin, Allied Signal (RESCO), BFI REFUEL, and Consumat will have huge cleanup liabilities: real tax burden. Already, for example, Philadelphia can't find places to dump its ash in the U.S. and barges it to Panama. Negotiating dumping contracts with Third World countries is a serious moral issue as well as a cost question.

The taxpayer gets stuck in other ways. For example, Ogden Martin demands and gets taxpayer-guaranteed "Industrial Revenue Bonds" (IRBs) to finance construction of incinerators. IRBs were what got Tuscaloosa in trouble over the Turkey." As income dropped, the "Turkey" started running in the red, Tuscaloosa found itself in technical default on IRBs it had issued to give Consumat construction money. To avoid bankruptcy, Tuscaloosa had to subsidize the "Turkey" with taxpayer general revenue. Similarly, Lassen Community College in Susanville, CA funded its incinerator with IRBs but went bankrupt when its incinerator kept losing money.

Talking taxes can be as complex as discussing the toxicity of cadmium, but it's important to ask who's going to be left holding the bag when things go wrong. Commercial companies that build or operate solid waste sites make sure they get the profits and you get the liability. The burden of liability is even more clearly on your shoulders when your local government is the owner and operator of the facility. Reducing liability risks through insurance has become nearly impossible, since underwriters don't want to issue pollution liability insurance anymore.

It can be hard to get your community united on the much-debated issue of "acceptable risk" to health and the environment. But, where I come from, money talks. And we, as organizers, ought to listen. •

**How to Deal With A Proposed Facility*, $5.95, CCHW.

***Additional Reading***

Dr. Paul Connett has a 9-page rundown on problems at 63 operating mass burn plants in the U.S. (Write him at 82 Judson Street, Canton, NY 13617; send him something to cover copying and postage.)

# LEGAL CORNER

By Ron Simon

*Q. The state health department came around our neighborhood and told us we could not use our well water because it was contaminated with some solvents from a local plant. The county has hooked us up to a public water supply.*

*After the state came around to tell us not to use the water, we did some research and found out that the chemicals can cause various diseases. We're thinking about filing a lawsuit and the medical questions concern us. We're worried about our health but don't know whether our symptoms and illnesses are caused by the chemicals. We are particularly concerned about what the future might hold. Should we sue now even if we don't know for certain whether our diseases are caused by chemical exposure? If we sue now, can we collect for the risk of future injury? Can we collect for* ***medical monitoring*** *to keep track of our health because of these toxic exposures? If we sue, can we go back to court in the future if we get sick later?*

A. People around the country share your concerns. The answers to your questions depend on the facts of your situation and the law of your state.

If you do not file a lawsuit for personal injuries, you can only prevail if there is a doctor who will say that your injuries or illness were caused by your exposure to the chemicals. At this point, you are in a difficult spot because you may not know the full extent of your injuries, and you may not have consulted a medical expert who has looked at your health and given you both a medical diagnosis and a professional opinion about the cause of whatever illness you might have.

You probably have found that most medical doctors know very little about the effects of toxic chemicals. This is a result of two different problems. The first is that most doctors receive virtually no training in occupational or environmental medicine. A second problem is that the knowledge of the effects of chemicals is only in the beginning stages, and even the best informed experts will acknowledge that much too little is known. A third problem is that occupational/environmental medicine is not a simple unbiased science based on indisputable scientific data. We encounter very different approaches and conclusions from doctors who have worked primarily with community groups, workers, and trade unions, than we find in doctors who have worked primarily with and for industry.

In many instances, people have hired a lawyer, initiated a lawsuit and then worked with the lawyer in developing the medical evidence. My suggestion is that you begin your work on your medical concerns early — perhaps even before you go to a lawyer (although a lawyer who has been active in these cases may be useful in helping you connect with doctors who are knowledgeable about your concerns). Seeing a doctor early can be useful to document immediate effects and markers of the chemical exposure which can be harder to trace after the exposure is long past.

You should decide about a lawsuit after you have reviewed you situation with a qualified attorney. You may have some claims for property damage, economic loss, nuisance and inconvenience due to loss of water. These claims have a statute of limitations which varies from state to state, but starts running from the time that you have suffered the damages.

Filing a lawsuit for future injuries raises legal problems. Exposure to the chemicals without any injury is not a basis to file a lawsuit. Suits based on increased risk are also a problem. If a doctor could testify that your risk of getting a disease is greater than 50%, then you probably could get compensation — but risks are rarely this high. When risks are less than 50%, getting compensation for risks alone is difficult. Some courts have refused to compensate for risk but have allowed compensation for medical screening or monitoring. Often cases get settled so that funds are set aside for these purposes even though there is no specific legal decision either allowing it or prohibiting it.

If you sue now and get sick after the conclusion of the litigation, whether you can seek additional compensation depends both on the law of your state and the way in which your litigation was resolved. Most states allow you to sue beginning when you knew or should have known of your illness. Many states are now saying that if you get a new illness after the lawsuit, you have a new *cause of action* and can sue again. On the other hand, a few states still say that you must initiate your suit in a time frame running from the time of last exposure to the chemical or sale of a product.

If the case is settled, you will sign papers that say what you are giving up for settlement. You should review carefully the settlement proposals and documents to make sure that your right to sue in the future is preserved if the settlement does not address these concerns.

* * *

*Ron Simon represents community groups, unions, communities and citizens exposed to chemicals and hazardous substances in the enviroment and in the workplace. In addition to being counsel to CCHW, he represents the American Legion, White Lung Association and the Association of Occupational and Enviromental Clinics.*



(photo by Tommy Wolfe)

Linda Avants models "clothing of the future" ...before joining march on Louisiana Capitol.

TURKEY, *from page 3*

By the summer of 1986, when the waste authority finally figured out that they had been bamboozled, they sued:

*The Tuscaloosa Solid Waste Disposal Authority was expected to file a $20 million federal lawsuit today against Consumat Systems, Inc. charging the company with fraud, breach of contract, and negligence in the design, construction, and operation of the Tuscaloose garbage incinerator."*
The Tuscaloosa News
May 16, 1986

A couple of months later, the waste authority board decided they didn't want to take the heat, the responsibility, or the counter-suit and the headlines read:

*"Tuscaloosa's Solid Waste Authority Resigns." The resignations followed months of disagreement among the governing bodies of the city, Tuscaloosa County and Northport concerning the proportionate share each should pay to cover operating shortfalls at the deficit-ridden garbage incinerator.*
*The Tuscaloosa News*
*August 8, 1986*

These were not the first resignations, nor would they be the last.

But by spring 1987, everyone was trying to pretend that the problems were solved and everybody was happy:

*"Better days may be ahead for the incinerator...."*
*Local government officials said Friday they hoped a new agreement this week will lead to a fresh start for the city's financially troubled solid waste incinerator.*
The Tuscaloosa News

Of course, there was *one* little detail:

*"Incinerator tipping fees will double..." new rate for the incinerator's commercial users will be increased from $9 per ton to $18 per ton... The new rate will not affect INDEC, a private, for-profit garbage pickup service, or the local governing bodies of Northport, Tuscaloosa, or Tuscaloosa County...whether the tipping fees for INDEC and the three governing bodies would be lower, higher or even with the $18 per ton tipping fee.... "I'm not prepared to say what [the negotiated fees] will be," said Rutherford Executive Director of TSWDA.*

The Tuscaloosa News
February 22, 1987

What's this "negotiated settlement"? For now, it means much higher fees. And, as soon as *more* problems crop up, it means more fees and more lawsuits.

Finally, after three years, the state admitted what we had known all along:

*Jack Honeycutt, chief of the solid waste section of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, said earlier this week that preliminary tests of incinerator fly ash conducted in mid-February showed the presence of high levels of cadmium and lead, created when garbage is burned at the incinerator...fly ash was found to have contained dangerous levels of cadmium and lead.*

*The Tuscaloosa incinerator produces...approximately 100 tons of fly ash collected daily....*
The Tuscaloosa News
March 19, 1987

But you will be told that you're running out of landfill space and that an incinerator will reduce 90% of the garbage, and that it's the only solution.

That 90% figure is nonsense. The best plants can do is about 70%. Ours does about 50%. The rest of the garbage still needs to get dumped.

Consider that 50% of garbage is *paper.* All you have to do is *recycle* the paper and you've got a 50% reduction of garbage — the same as our expensive "Turkey". You're still healthy, and you can sell the recycled paper. You can also recycle aluminum, steel, glass....

But you will be told that recycling isn't practical. Oh? How come *all* Japanese cities and towns separate out their paper, aluminum, etc., and recycle? How come the state of New Jersey has mandated at least minimal recycling for all 500+ of its municipalities?

Why the big push for incinerators? Because combustion-chamber manufacturers have run out of markets — one is building new power plants, heating plants, or large ships — so they want to build incinerators. One of the biggest names in the game is Babcock & Wilcox, the firm that gave us Three Mile Island.

If you would like to know more about the "Tuscaloosa Turkey," write us: United Citizens Against Toxic Chemicals (U.S.A.T.C.), Box 7953, University, AL 35486. Our saga continues. If you're smart, you won't let yours start. •

**CCHW's OFFICES**
***Call or Write if you need our help.***

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  (504) 340-2321

NO SENSE, *from page 8*

higher than the daily dose of breathing the same air. Drinking one liter of milk gave you the same dose of TCDD as breathing the air near the incinerator for 8 months. Such concentration of dioxins and furans in the food chain greatly increases risks to both people living near incinerators to people hundreds of miles away who drink contaminated milk.

## Ash

Incinerators generate one ton of ash for every four tons of waste burned. There are two types of ash: ***bottom ash***, the residual material left after burning; and ***fly ash***, small particles that escape the furnace with the hot emission gases. Fly ash comprises about 10% of the total. Ash contains heavy metals (which cannot be destroyed by burning), dioxins, furans and other toxic chemicals present in the original waste. In a recent study 9 of 11 samples of fly ash and 2 of 16 samples of bottom ash failed EPA's toxicity test, and are thus considered hazardous waste which must be disposed of in a chemical landfill.

## Wastewater

Incinerators generate huge amounts of contaminated wastewater. Large quantities of water are needed to cool the bottom ash before it can be removed and, in many incinerators, to remove acid gases. This water needs to be properly disposed of.

Other risks associated with incinerators include:

- Incoming waste can't be screened for hazardous materials;
- Potential traffic accidents during transport of in-coming waste or outgoing ash; and
- Dispersion of contaminated dusts from ash piles stored on-site.

Incineration is the most expensive way of disposing of garbage. Those who claim otherwise are not using the best available control technology or properly disposing of ash. Because incinerators are so expensive, alternative disposal methods (like recycling) are discouraged and in some cases prohibited. Incinerators compete for the same materials (particularly plastics and paper which have high heat value) as safer alternatives like recycling and composting. So some incinerator operators ***require***, in their contract with the municipality, a guarantee of enough waste to efficiently operate the incinerator. So much money is invested that the incinerator must be used to the fullest to be cost-effective.

Incineration is not a solution to the solid waste crisis—not in the short-run (building an incinerator takes 3-5 years or longer, depending on community opposition) and not in the long-run because it wastes resources instead of recovering them. It's inflexible and expensive. It poses many environmental problems that can neither be predicted or controlled, since we don't know what's going in, what's coming out nor what to do with what's left.

Given all of these factors, it makes no sense whatsoever to continue to build incinerators. What we need instead is a waste management plan that recovers and reuses materials to the fullest extent possible. Next issue we'll discuss recycling approaches that achieve waste reduction levels of 60-70% (by weight) the same as incinerators, but at a lower cost and without producing toxic ash. Which makes more sense? •

## For More Information

Dr. Barry Commoner/Karen Shapiro, Center for the Biology of Natural Systems, Queens College, Flushing, NY 11367, (718) 670-4180.

Dr. Paul Connett, St. Lawrence University, Department of Chemistry, National Coalition Against Mass-Burn Incineration/For Safe Alternatives, Canton, NY 13617, (315) 379-9200.

*Recycling: The Answer to Our Garbage Problem*, May, 1987. Available from CCHW.

Environmental Defense Fund, Ash Analysis, March 1987. Available from EDF, 1616 P Street, N.W. Washington, D.C., 20036 (202) 387-3500.

## What Is Mass-Burn Incineration?

Mass burn incinerators accept waste as collected from the curb and burn it. Proponents of garbage incinerators like to call them *resource recovery, waste to energy or trash to steam* plants. Resource recovery is an exceptionally poor choice of terms: these plants do not recover or recycle ***any*** resources. Instead, they *recover* energy from steam (and some don't even do this). Because such plants don't separate out any materials, their air emissions and ash include many toxics, making these plants the worst possible incinerator design.

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Lois Marie Gibbs, Executive Director

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*Post Office Box 926, Arlington, Virginia 22216*

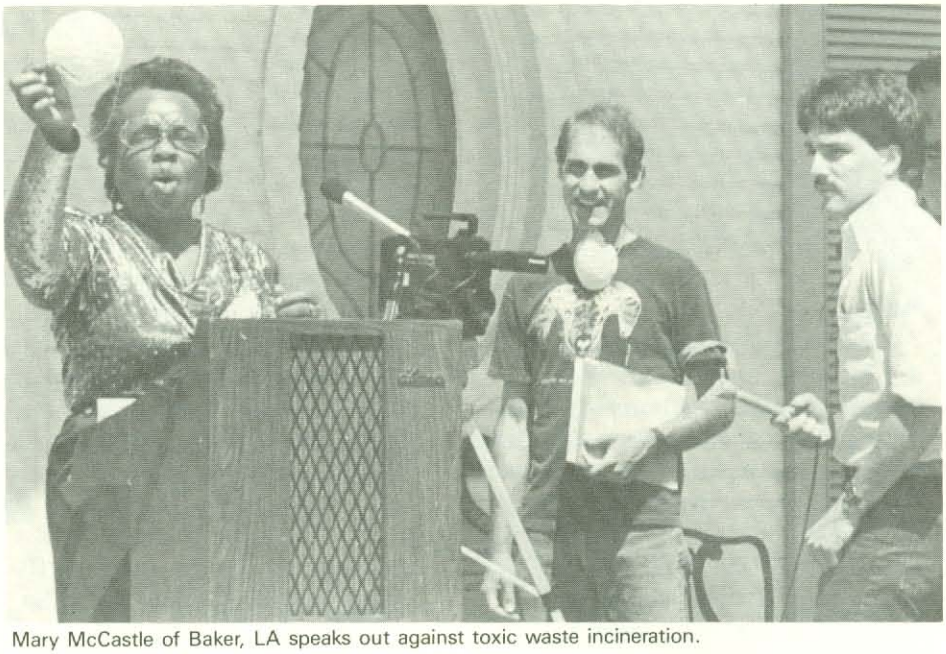
# Garbage Incineration Makes No Sense At All

By Stephen Lester

Hundreds of communities across the country, in both rural and urban areas, are worried—worried about where to put their garbage. Landfill space is running out. Siting new facilities or expanding old ones faces stiff local opposition. As a result, many city managers fearing a ***waste crisis*** are turning to incineration as a quick-fix solution.

There are currently 65 garbage incinerators operating around the country, with 34 more under construction and another 250 (at least) proposed. Many of these are mass burn incinerators, (see insert) the worst possible design: they burn waste without any separation or recovery of materials.

Incinerators won't solve the solid waste crisis. Instead of a leaking landfill polluting groundwater, you have an incinerator polluting the air with dioxins, furans, heavy metals and acid gases. And you still have to have the landfill, because the incinerator only burns between 65-75% (by weight) of the wastes.



(photo by Tommy Wolfe)

Mary McCastle of Baker, LA speaks out against toxic waste incineration.

## Air Emissions

Incinerators generate toxic air emissions, including: dioxins, one of the most toxic chemicals known; furans, heavy metals such as mercury, cadmium, chromium and lead; acid gases that contribute to acid rain; and particulates.

The dioxins are an important argument against incinerators because they produce their toxic effect at extremely low levels, and because they may form ***after*** incineration is complete. Work done by Dr. Barry Commoner's research group on Long Island, New York found that dioxins and furans form on particulate fly ash in the cooler parts of the incinerator as the particles leave the furnace and pass out of the stack.

The dioxin problem is further complicated by the fact that they concentrate in the food chain. Dr. Paul Connett of St. Lawrence University found that TCDD (the most toxic dioxin) levels in milk from cows grazing near incinerators were 200 times

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