Resist Newsletter, Jan. 1998

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Toxic Waste Threatens Communities

Citizens Awareness Network Mobilizes For Environmental Justice

DEBBY KATZ

Toxic contamination of the planet threatens human survival. In our time, we will determine whether there is clean air to breathe, water to drink and places to live for our children and theirs. Industrial technology—with its shadow of pollution—overwhelms us and threatens the democratic structures on which we depend. The scientific community and the nuclear industry undermine citizens’ confidence in their ability to understand nuclear power and its effects. Many people have withdrawn from the process, potentially allowing vital decisions to be dictated outside of democratic safeguards. This “meltdown of democracy” is exemplified in the atomic power industry.

The questions of nuclear reactor operations and the corporate disposal of waste are central to the issues of democracy, site remediation, pollution prevention and pollution reduction. Communities chosen to suffer contamination are routinely poor, rural and of color—communities hard pressed to value health and safety over short-term financial relief. It is unethical to force people to choose between economic survival and sacrifice of future generations. It is unacceptable for corporations to control and contaminate the natural resources of a community. It is unacceptable to contaminate one community to clean another community up.

Nuclear power contaminates everything it contacts. Before a reactor goes on line, waste is created with the mining of uranium. Once operational, waste is either stored on site for shipment to contaminate another community or released to the adjacent environment. The dangers of radiation exposure are usually hidden. The nuclear industry tries to manipulate public anxiety concerning nuclear power toward the ability to create effective safeguards in case of an accident. However, standard “safe” operation is an unrelenting assault on surrounding communities.

Fallout In New England

For example, according to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) the Vermont Yankee reactor dumped 121,479 curies into the Connecticut River Valley in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts during its 25 years of operation. One curie equals the quantity of radioactive material in which the number of disintegrations is 37 billion...
Activists Demand Accountability

The Citizens Awareness Network (CAN) organized in 1991 during a struggle to prevent the continued operation and relicensing of the Yankee Rowe reactor in Western Massachusetts. CAN succeeded in drawing the attention of the public and the NRC to the dangerously embrittled reactor vessel and forced the reactor to cease operation in 1992. The shut down of Yankee Rowe began our work to create a pollution prevention and reduction process for the decommissioning of atomic power stations in New England and the country.

Our community was chosen for nuclear defilement because we were poor and rural. The Deerfield River is a waste dump for effluent from the reactors and chemical industries. We are a sacrificed community who lost our river to corporations, suffered an epidemic of disease, and awakened from a 30-year period of denial, intimidation, ignorance, and fear. Our experiences formed us into nuke-busters. This perspective informs our work and commitment to helping other communities in a similar predicament suffering in another community knowing what had happened in the Deerfield River Valley? Being a small rural community with a relatively small sample size (only 20,000 people including nearby towns), it was thought impossible to find statistical significance in any disease. However, we have statistical significance in non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, breast cancer, a ten fold increase in Downs syndrome, and serious increases in rare cancers.

Knowledge is Power

Electricity generation from nuclear fission was always an adjunct of military weapons production. Methodical propaganda, secrecy, and deliberate obfuscation resulted in the imposition of martial law on the civilian population on nuclear matters. This integration threatens our freedom. The corporations use federally subsidized economic power to influence local government and the media to stifle citizen concern and public participation. Organizing involves a constant struggle to overcome government and industry attempts to hide the facts about the nuclear fuel cycle and prevent continued on page three
citizens from participating in decision-making. People can deal competently and directly with radioactive pollution and its prevention.

Organizing through awareness creates positive social change. It is CAN's aim and method. CAN demystifies nuclear technology and its jargon that intimidates, isolates and obstructs citizens from effective democratic participation. This participation is essential for communities to adequately protect themselves from victimization through industrial contamination. It requires communities to educate and protect themselves from the effects of radioactive exposure and join with other communities facing nuclear contamination to stop the cycle of radioactive sacrifice.

The nuclear industry and the nuclear regulators depend on an uneducated citizenry to sustain nuclear power production. The novelty of the idea that citizens have a right and a responsibility to negotiate pollution prevention and reduction with the corporations that contaminate, demonstrates the progress that nuclear technology has made in demoralizing citizens and eroding constitutional safeguards and due process. Meaningful participation by citizens is unacceptable to the industry and its regulators. The democratic process requires the vigilance of citizens in effectively demanding corporate accountability for contamination and accountability for regulation by oversight commissions.

Caravan of Conscience

CAN works with groups around radioactive dumps to unify the cycle of contamination and undercut barriers created by the industry to isolate reactor communities from dump site communities. Utilities promote opportunism and fear to manipulate sacrificed communities. Even "good" politicians such as Bernie Sanders, socialist Representative from Vermont, supported the creation of a rad-waste dump in Sierra Blanca, Texas—a low-income Mexican-American community—to take rad-waste from Vermont and Maine (see page 4). Utility propaganda creates a false schism between reactor and waste communities. Reactors, clean and non-polluting when operational, become dangerous waste sites after closure—so dangerous that immediate dismantlement is required.

When Yankee Atomic stripped its reactor and shipped its most irradiated components to Barnwell, CAN organized Caravan of Conscience Tours. The tour travelled the transportation route from Yankee Atomic reactor in western Massachusetts to its burial site in Barnwell. The caravans educated our community, transport route communities, and the waste site community of the dangers of these shipments.

Activists from New England make the link with dump sites in South Carolina. Photo by Sal Mangalia

CAN, with Greenpeace and MASS ALERT, organized local organizers to warn citizens of the impending shipments of radioactive waste. A Funeral Procession marched ahead of the steam generator in our local community. Residents carried coffins six miles to acknowledge those citizens in our valley who had given their lives for "safe, clean nuclear power." We expressed our sorrow for the contamination of Barnwell with our waste.

The caravan consisted of a school bus and three vans. Activists held press conferences in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington, DC, North Carolina and South Carolina. An East Coast network of grassroots groups organized to facilitate press conferences, publicity, and lodging. Food and other supplies were donated by citizens along the transport route. The Caravan engaged in street theater which included music, skits, and speeches.

Media coverage raised awareness about nuclear transportation, safety, and health issues. The public response was outrage, indignation, and action. The Caravan preceded the shipments; transport communities then monitored the shipments and held press conferences when waste passed through their neighborhoods.

The caravan brought national attention to this critical issue. Reporters investigated Chem Nuclear, the owner and operator of the dump. (A radioactive leak on the property contaminates the ground water and continues to migrate off-site into the community’s aquifer.) Citizens turned to their local governments to stop the shipments. To their amazement few local governmental authorities, including police and firefighters, had been notified. Local governments responded with angry protests.

Rad-Waste Cask Tour

CAN, along with a nationwide coalition of groups, also created a Rad-Waste Tour with a mock high-level waste cask—22 feet long and 9 feet high—shaped like a giant silver dumbbell. This cask was built by Citizens Alert in Nevada and loaned to us for our tours. CAN took it along the transport routes in New England and the East Coast to draw attention to the transportation of rad-waste through ill-prepared communities. We also sought to highlight federal legislation to site a temporary storage facility for high-level waste at the Nevada Test Site. The movement of high-level radioactive waste will endanger thousands of communities in 43 states to create "a temporary solution" for commercial high-level waste. Over 70% of Nevada's people are against the proposed legislation. It is sacred land to Native American peoples.

CAN is organizing a third Caravan Tour using elements from the bus and the cask tours to publicize the shipments of radioactive waste from Connecticut Yankee and Maine Yankee; the utilities intend to dump the waste from both reactors in Barnwell, SC. We will work in coalition with groups along the transport route including...
Sierra Blancans Oppose Dump Site

ERIN ROGERS

The state of Texas is pushing to host a new low-level radioactive waste dump in the community of Sierra Blanca, located in West Texas near the Mexican border. The proposed dump would house radionuclide waste from Vermont and Maine, and potentially other states. For five years, members of the Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund have waged a grassroots campaign to deny licensing for the dump and to educate residents about the root causes and health affects of the proposal. In 1997, Resist funded SBLDF to hold a capacity-building session to organize residents of Sierra Blanca against the construction of the toxic dump.

On December 6, 1997, Texas governor and unadmitted presidential candidate George W. Bush strode into the courtyard at the El Paso Community College for the first stop on a re-election announcement tour. As officials, schoolchildren and reporters waited to greet him, a shout rang out in the morning air, “No nuclear waste dump in Sierra Blanca!” Protesters quickly unfurled a banner, donned huge foam “blockheads” with Bush masks, and rolled nuclear waste barrels into his path. A chorus of voices chanted loudly for him to stop sacrificing the border, stop environmental racism, and stop the proposed nuclear waste dump 16 miles from the Rio Grande. Dump opponents from West Texas had struck the “untouchable” governor’s Achilles’ Heel.

The nuclear industry and Texas politicians set their sites on Sierra Blanca, Hudspeth County—an unincorporated town of 800—five years ago. Sierra Blanca sits in the delicate Chihuahuan desert ecosystem in Texas’ most active earthquake zone over an aquifer stretching beneath four counties and 16 miles from the Rio Grande. Hudspeth County is the size of Connecticut but has only 1200 registered voters. After three other sites chased out potential dumpers, the Texas legislature selected Sierra Blanca as the state’s nuclear waste dump, before completing any technical studies of the site. Sierra Blanca already receives nearly 125 tons of sewage sludge daily from New York City. The Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund was formed shortly after the legislature “selected” the town as a nuclear waste dump as well.

The Texas legislature then invited Maine and Vermont—with whom Texas shares a compact—and any other state to use Sierra Blanca as a dumping grounds for their dismantled nuclear power plants. Maine voters decided in a referendum to send their nuclear waste to Texas, but Texans never had a say in the deal. Instead the negotiation with done by legislators.

Every compact has to be ratified by Congress. Because of strong protest from dump opponents in Texas, the US Congress voted against the Texas-Maine-Vermont compact in 1995—the first of nine existing compacts to ever be debated. The nuclear industry sank hundreds of thousands of dollars into lobbying for the bill. They were not able to pass the compact in 1996, but did get it through the House in October 1997. With incredible, sustained support from the Nuclear Information and Resource Service in Washington, DC, many West Texans were able to visit Congress and eventually make inroads with the White House’s Council on Environmental Quality. Sen. Paul Wellstone (MN) continues to threaten to filibuster the bill unless three amendments are attached—two of which address environmental racism.

Environmental Racism

Over two thirds of Sierra Blancans are Mexican American; many have ranched or farmed in the area for generations. Forty percent live in poverty. Towns like Sierra Blanca are targeted for toxic and radioactive waste not only for their lack of access to and influence within the political and legal systems, but because they are more vulnerable to economic blackmail. In Sierra Blanca, those who speak out against the proposed dump are passed over for scarce jobs or intimidated into not speaking out in order to get loans, services, or to help relatives get jobs. One man had his truck repossessed from the pro-nuclear bank after his children were photographed at a children’s rally against the dump. Sierra Blancans are not under the illusion that the nuclear dump will bring jobs. Any jobs created will be low-paying, high-risk construction and janitorial positions, and most residents are not interested.

The nuclear industry’s drive to find continued on page five
cheap dump sites for it’s daily waste and for its dismembered power plants continues to be a campaign against Native Americans and other people of color, the poor, and the rural. The anti-power plant and weapons movements of the 1970s and 1980s have shifted into movements organizing against nuclear dumping—movements organizing against environmental racism. Whole new sectors have been mobilized. In Texas, for example, the process of fighting the state government on environmental issues has radicalized West Texas ranchers, small-time property rights activists, school teachers, construction workers, and church women—and linked these sectors with African American urban neighborhood groups and university students. It also spawned a close working relationship between Mexican and US citizens and officials, despite the artificial river barrier.

Taking Action

Last March the Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund held a mock trial on the steps of the Capitol building to put Texas on Trial. The event was a platform for communities of color from across the state who are under toxic assault to recount their experiences fighting the state for legitimate regulation and fighting corporations for control of their neighborhoods and environments. Bus loads of residents from San Antonio, West Texas, Houston, and Dallas united at the Capitol to demand that Texas’ environmental regulatory agency protect people from corporate pollution or get out of the way.

The residents of Sierra Blanca are now mired at the state level in administrative struggles to legally stop the dump’s licence. The licensing decision will be made by three commissioners appointed by Governor Bush. They are already on record as in favor of the dump. The residents of Sierra Blanca are using the process to mobilize political opposition to the dump, and are raising money for a lawyer while simultaneously lobbying and organizing demonstrations and letter-writing campaigns.

We are preparing for the final portion of the licensing hearing, which will begin in Sierra Blanca on January 21, 1998 and continue for eight weeks. Local churches plan to make an outdoor altar near the hearing room for people to bring signs of protest. Activists will hold a vigil outside the hearing room on January 20.

Darcie McVay, the director of the Van Horn tourist center down the road from Sierra Blanca, speaks out at the first public hearing concerning the dump in August 1996. Photo by Alan Pogue

Texas could meet its electricity needs more than ten times over with renewable energy sources alone. West Texas is rich in solar and wind resources and ripe for green energy job creation. According to estimates by the Texas Renewable Energy Industries Association, wind farms can yield $2,100 per acre compared to $35 for ranching and $1,600 for oil. Those of us in the fight against the nuclear industry are realizing that the only way to shut down the plants that are producing the waste and stop the dumping is to agitate for sane and fair management of nuclear waste while at the same time offering people a way to create independent, non-corporate sources of income and energy.

Erin Rogers is the co-chair of the Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund Board of Directors and a staff person with Feminists for a Compassionate Society. For information, contact the Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund, PO Box 18087, Austin, TX 78790.

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Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, South Carolina Environmental Watch, Citizens Environmental Coalition, Grow, Environmental Inc., and others. Community organizers from other proposed dump sites have offered to travel with us in fellowship with all sacrifice communities. We will travel through the eastern states, including New York, Pennsylvania, Washington, DC, North Carolina, South Carolina.

Despite efforts by government and the nuclear industry to thwart and undermine public understanding and participation, citizens must participate in vital decisions that affect their lives and health. Too often residents have accepted a passive role. They are intimidated, believing that they are unable to understand the technological and scientific issues in nuclear power. Instead, citizens must create a substantive role for themselves in order to clarify, negotiate and protect their community’s interests and to ensure democratic safeguards. Responsible power comes from knowledge. Citizens must have power for democracy to endure.

With the closure and decommissioning of reactors, we can alter the future of energy production in the region and the country. The Department of Energy recently developed a future energy production profile for America which includes a second generation of commercial nuclear power stations and plans to dispose of weapons-grade plutonium as fuel in commercial power stations. This “recycling” of bomb grade materials in fact creates more plutonium, emits more waste, and makes it harder to insure safe operation of reactors. These stations would in all likelihood be constructed on previously used sites. This dangerous initiative must be stopped. We must see the world as our neighbor to stop the cycle of contamination and sacrifice. Our toxic legacy can end in this generation. The work required to clean up this monstrous experiment will employ nuclear workers for centuries. The experiment is over.

Debby Katz is the director of the Citizens Awareness Network, a mother of two, and a resident of one of the “sacrificed” communities. CAN most recently received a grant from Resist in 1996. For more information, contact CAN, PO Box 83, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370.
The Struggle to Save Ward Valley

TORI WOODARD

As part of a national attempt to site new nuclear waste facilities around the country, the California Department of Health Services (DHS) proposed a "low level" radioactive waste (LLRW) dump Ward Valley, California. Like all of these proposed projects across the country, the site in Ward Valley is being resisted by coalitions of citizens groups. In Ward Valley the coalition consists of environmental organizations and Native American Tribes.

Native American tribes and their allies in the Ward Valley Coalition are preparing a mass nonviolent action to prevent further destruction of Ward Valley this winter. This article will discuss steps the Coalition is taking in their struggle to save the sacred lands of Ward Valley.

Endangering Sacred Land

The proposed site of the Ward Valley dump would be situated 18 miles from the Colorado River in southeastern California near the Nevada border. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared Ward Valley as the best habitat for the desert tortoise, which is protected by the Endangered Species Act. The tortoise is the state reptile of California and is considered a brother by the Mojave Indians.

DHS chose Ward Valley as the site for the proposed dump because 600 feet of dry soil overlie the groundwater there. The dumpers think the dry soil will keep the waste from reaching the groundwater and the nearby Colorado River. The dump would consist of shallow, unlined trenches—a disposal method that is guaranteed to leak. Other dumps operated by US Ecology—the proposed operator of the site at Ward Valley—have already leaked, including sites in Sheffield, Illinois; Maxey Flats, Kentucky; Richland, Washington; and Beatty, Nevada. The twin dump in Beatty, Nevada—which is already leaking—has already leaked down to groundwater, which is at 350 feet.

Geologists with the U.S. Geological Service (USGS) have found several ways that radionuclides from the Ward Valley dump could reach the Colorado River, including through cracks and via flooding. The river is a source of drinking water for 22 million people in California, Arizona, and Mexico. River water also irrigates crops on Indian Reservations and in California's Imperial Valley.

The dump is proposed to be built on public land, which is administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The USGS, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the BLM, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) are all agencies within the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The land must be transferred to the State of California before the dump can be built. Legislation has been proposed in Congress to force the transfer of the land and exempt the project from all environmental laws. Principle supporters of the legislation are from Alaska and Louisiana, areas that will not be affected by the dump and which receive significant money from the waste industry. In addition, a lawsuit brought by dump proponents in 1997 seeks a judicial order to immediately transfer the land for dump construction.

As a result of public pressure and lawsuits brought by dump opponents under the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Protection Act, the proposed dump is stalled while the BLM prepares a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) on the proposed facility. The SEIS should be finished in 1998.

The Fort Mojave, Chemehuevi, Quechan, Cocom, and Colorado River Indian Tribes have formed an alliance to fight the proposed dump. Ward Valley, the desert tortoise, and the Colorado River are sacred to the Tribes. The area along the Colorado River from Needles, California, to the Mexican border contains the most giant intaglios (figures etched on the land) in North America. Needles, the closest town to the proposed dump site, is the home of the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe.

Tribal spokespersons have repeatedly tried to meet with President Clinton on a nation-to-nation basis to discuss their total opposition to any kind of radioactive waste facility in Ward Valley. They have not yet received an audience with Clinton. Instead, bureaucrats from Interior, the BLM, and exempt the project from all environmental laws. Principle supporters of the legislation are from Alaska and Louisiana, areas that will not be affected by the dump and which receive significant money from the waste industry. In addition, a lawsuit brought by dump proponents in 1997 seeks a judicial order to immediately transfer the land for dump construction.

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Tritium Testing at the Proposed Ward Valley Dump

On November 6, 1997, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a draft Environmental Assessment of government plans to test for tritium at Ward Valley, California, the site of a proposed radioactive waste dump.

US Ecology, the proposed operator of the dump site, found tritium 100 feet below the surface in Ward Valley. Tritium (radioactive hydrogen) was dispersed around the world by above-ground testing of hydrogen bombs in the 1950s and early 1960s. Its presence underground indicates water travels faster and farther than expected in dry soil, and confirms that a radioactive waste dump in this desert region would leak just as every other radioactive waste dump in the United States has leaked. A dump run by US Ecology in a similar dry climate 160 miles away near Beatty, Nevada, has leaked tritium down to groundwater.

The upcoming tritium testing was proposed to confirm the original finding of tritium. Instead of canceling the dump project as the public insists, the government seems intent on "un-finding" the evidence that the dump will leak. Dump opponents believe a conclusive test has already been conducted, in real time, at the Beatty dump.

The Ward Valley Coalition is opposed to any radioactive waste facility in Ward Valley, whether it leaks or not. Therefore the tritium testing and destruction of sacred land and critical habitat are unnecessary.

Opponents of the dump believe BLM will issue a final Environmental Assessment by mid-December 1997, allowing tests to proceed. Testing can be expected to begin in January or February 1998.

Members of the Colorado River Native Nations Alliance and the Ward Valley Coalition intend to use nonviolent actions to oppose any further destruction of Ward Valley. By taking this stand, they affirm the sacredness of Ward Valley to the five Tribes in the Colorado River Native Nations Alliance.

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the BIA, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have met with the Tribes, but have not taken any steps to cancel the dump project as requested.

Direct Resistance

In October 1995 dump opponents turned up the heat in the battle to save Ward Valley by establishing a resistance camp on the proposed dump site. Founded by Native Americans, veterans and anti-nuclear activists, the camp has been a thorn in the side of dump proponents ever since. The camp takes advantage of the fact that the proposed dump would be on public land. Anyone can camp on public land for two weeks; then they are supposed to move at least 26 miles. Rather than move our camp, we changed it every two weeks. We took down our large community tent, put up another tent, and rotated personnel.

After a year of that exhausting procedure, BLM proposed that our camp apply for a permit, based on a court ruling that the public can occupy public land in order to exercise the right to free speech. (That ruling was won by the resistance camp at the Nevada Test Site a few years ago.) The Fort Mojave Indian Tribe applied for the permit, and our camp is now legal.

In addition to the camp, the Ward Valley Coalition has held several large gatherings and protests on the proposed dump site. Supporters from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Phoenix and many other cities joined local residents to call DHS to cancel plans to build dump.

Showdown Coming Up

BLM intends to ask the camp to move in January 1998, to make way for tritium testing at the site (see page 6). The Tribes will stage nonviolent direct actions to defend the camp and try to prevent the destruction of the land that would be caused by the tritium testing. Other groups in the Ward Valley Coalition have agreed to support the Tribes, and we are now mobilizing for the action.

Nonviolence trainings were held this fall on two of the Indian Reservations. Trainings are also planned in cities such as San Francisco and Los Angeles where activists are involved in the struggle.

There will probably be a series of nonviolent direct actions in Ward Valley over the next year, each larger than the last. First we will defend the camp. If it is evicted, we will try to prevent Interior from testing for tritium. If they succeed, more people will try to prevent the State of California from testing. (California Governor Pete Wilson and the DHS are adamantly pro-dump.) Testing results will go into the SEIS. If the SEIS finds the dump will have no impact on the environment (as we fear), Interior will transfer the land to the State of California. The land could also be transferred by legislative action or by judicial order. Another direct action will occur if and when the land is transferred, if and when heavy machinery attempts to dig trenches, and if (heaven forbid) waste trucks attempt to bring in waste.

Torie Woodard is an activist, writer, lover of nature and organizer with Save Ward Valley. Save Ward Valley received a grant from Resist in 1997. For more information or to join the Emergency Response Network, contact Save Ward Valley, 105 F Street, Needles, CA 92363; swv1@ctaz.com.

CARD Organizes Protest

DAVID A. PACE

Citizens for Alternatives to Radioactive Dumping is a state-wide organization devoted to safeguarding the people and land of New Mexico from nuclear contamination. For almost two decades CARD has rallied citizens against nuclear threats and sustained a multifaceted campaign to protect New Mexico from becoming a "national sacrifice area." Resist has funded CARD several times, including a 1996 conference on civil resistance tactics.

Protesters demonstrate at an anti-WIPP rally organized by CARD in 1997. Photo by David Pace

Taking on the Polluters

In January 1996, CARD organized a civil disobedience (CD) workshop which included presentations on group consensus process and the history and legal aspects of CD. Activists also acted out CD scenarios and discussed specific CD actions.

After the CD workshop, activists formed the Albuquerque Affinity Group to focus attention on WIPP though direct action.

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To this end, the Affinity Group has preformed street theater to challenge people to think about problems ignored in the mainstream media. The group has put a hot-seat under WIPP proponent and leading nuke advocate Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM) by staging a sit-in in his office and a protest at one of his fund-raising dinners.

Over the years, CARD has contracted professional scientists to perform independent analyses of the WIPP project. Findings from these studies show that WIPP is unstable and will not contain the plutonium-contaminated waste destined for the site. Scientists report that the ground water in the area of the proposed WIPP site flows in the direction of the Pecos River, threatening to contaminate the river and lands downstream. These studies will be used in an upcoming law suit against the DOE. The current director of DOE has demonstrated no concern of environmental impact and plans to proceed with waste shipments despite the scientists' findings.

**Information as Organizing Tool**

Last spring, CARD volunteers produced "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About WIPP," a 40-page booklet providing detailed background information and criticism of WIPP's tremendous shortfalls. The booklet was distributed via mailings and published on the World Wide Web (www.unm.edu/~rekp/card.html) shortly before the DOE held hearings for public comment on WIPP. Many at the hearings who spoke against the proposed dump relied on information from the booklet to elaborate on their concerns.

While CARD's newsletter, "The Enchanted Times," provides several thousand New Mexicans with regular updates on our local anti-nuclear struggles, there are also many ongoing efforts to get accurate information to a larger audience.

During the past year, CARD volunteers have invested a great deal of energy in developing programs and audio-visual aides for presentations on WIPP that have been very successful in grade schools, middle schools, high schools, and at the University of New Mexico. Like many CARD publications, these classroom presentations critique the nuclear weapons and power industries while promoting ecologically sound alternatives.

CARD is also in the midst of organizing a national nuclear survivors conference as a follow-up to last year's regional gathering. Most of the speakers at last year's gathering told of hardships brought on by radiation-related illnesses, but one who has been investigating depleted uranium weapons testing in his community talked about the harassment—including a death threat and a possibly related assault—he has received as a result of his work.

One goal of the upcoming conference is to promote ties between people struggling for justice on this issue. It is also hoped that since the conference is being held in a community directly adjacent to the WIPP site, local residents will gain a greater appreciation of the DOE's deadly track record.

Although most of CARD's efforts have been aimed at publicizing WIPP's tremendous health and environmental hazards, CARD has also pointed out that many WIPP related jobs will be eliminated in the near future and that the dump will have a detrimental effect on tourism.

CARD is encouraged that the number of volunteers and financial supporters has grown during the past decade. Another source of optimism is CARD's improved organizational model. Several years ago, as attendance at general working meetings grew, it became more difficult to get things done. At that time, CARD adopted the Peace Development Fund's "flower model." This newly adopted organizational model gives committees autonomy to develop their specific programs while at the same time maintaining the consensus decision-making process. Action is coordinated through a steering committee that is composed of representatives from the various committees.

While CARD has been successful at preventing WIPP from opening thus far, the struggle is far from over. As the proposed May 1998 WIPP opening draws near, CARD activists are busy organizing resistance on many fronts.

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RESIST Newsletter

January 1998