==========Electronic Edition==========

RACHEL'S HAZARDOUS WASTE NEWS #143
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News and resources for environmental justice.

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NEW INCINERATION VIDEO STARS WOMEN OF THE GRASS ROOTS JUSTICE MOVEMENT.

Greenpeace has just released a remarkable new 30 minute video called "The Rush to Burn," focused on the hazards of hazardous waste incinerators. It is a powerful piece of work, valuable to anyone trying to fight an incinerator. But what's most interesting about this video is that the political message and the technical message of the film are both conveyed mainly by women, and often by women from the South. Pat Costner, the Greenpeace Toxics Research Director, from Arkansas, and Wilma Subra, a chemical consultant from New Iberia, Louisiana, provide technical criticisms of incineration, while grass roots activists like Mardell Smith from El Dorado, Arkansas, Kaye Kiker from Emelle, Alabama, Navie Epps and JoAnn Bickley from Talbot County, GA, Margo Blackwell from Bloomington, IN, Hazel Johnson, Marian Burns, and Violet Czachorski from South Chicago, IL, Madelyn Hoffman from Bloomfield, NJ, Miriam Price and Helen Solar from Morgan City, Louisiana, and Carol Wolf from Winona, Mississippi, tell the political story of grass roots action.

The video was put together by Foongy Kyu Lee and Chris Bedford from the Organizing Media Project in Washington, DC (see RHWN #101) and it is up to their usual high standards. The visual images are compelling and the sound track is excellent.

Pat Costner sets the background by telling us that in 1987 the U.S. chemical industry had sales of $240 billion; they spent one half of one percent of that (0.5%) on pollution control. U.S. industry produces one million pounds of hazardous waste every minute, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, or roughly 525 billion pounds of waste each year. U.S. EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) isn't forcing industry or encouraging industry to make less waste; instead, EPA is trying to force states to license and live with 90 hazardous waste incinerators to accommodate industry's wasteful habits. (See RHWN #142.)

"This is the story of how communities across the country have discovered the dangers of hazardous

waste incinerators and are fighting to stop the rush to burn," says the narrator. Then the video asks and answers three questions about hazardous waste incineration: (1) Is incineration safe?; (2) Will (or can) the government protect us from the hazards?; (3) Does incineration promote the local economy?

The answers to these questions come from the technical experts (Costner and Subra) and from the mouths of activists who have fought to protect their communities from an incinerator.

Is incineration safe? Toxic heavy metals entering an incinerator are not destroyed; depending on the temperature in the furnace, more or less of these metals will be emitted into the atmosphere and thus become available for the community to breathe: arsenic, lead, cadmium, mercury, beryllium, thallium, chromium, zinc. What doesn't go out the stack goes into the ash, which them gets buried in the ground, thus creating tomorrow's Superfund sites, to be cleaned up by our children. In the process of incineration, new chemicals are created inside the furnace, called PICs or products of incomplete combustion. EPA and the incineration industry admit these chemicals are created but they don't measure them at any point during an incinerator's lifetime. What they don't know won't hurt you, right? If the EPA doesn't study the problem, they can say with complete confidence, "We are not aware of any problems with this technology." Typically, dioxins and furans are among the PICs created in a large incinerator.

In actual fact, none of the toxic air emissions from an operating hazardous waste incinerator are measured. When an incinerator is brand new, selected chemicals are burned in its furnace under laboratory conditions. If 99.99% destruction of those selected chemicals is achieved, the incinerator is put into service on the assumption that it will continue working at that level of efficiency for at least the next five years. No measurements of toxics are considered necessary after that because everyone has complete confidence that no problems (like PICs) can occur. Does this sound farfetched to you? Far-fetched or not, that's how the government "regulates" hazardous waste incinerators today.

Is a waste facility good for the local economy? Kaye Kiker from Emelle, AL, explains that, in 1978 before Waste Management, Inc., came to town, the county's unemployment was 5.8%; in 1986, unemployment had climbed to 21.1%. "Our water is polluted here," she explains "and it's just not the kind of place where you want to raise your family. We'll never site industry here again. I believe we've lost it. This is a dying county," she says.

The video ends by scrolling across the screen the names of 36 incinerators that citizens have prevented or shut down: Arvin, CA (Arvin Environmental Services); Ione, CA (Ogden Environmental Services); Vernon, CA (Thermal Treatment Service); Middletown, CT (BFI); Waterbury, CT (Environmental Waste Removal); Bloomington, IN (Westinghouse); Sedgewick City, KS (Chemical Waste Management); Wichita, KS (Vulcan); Lawrence City, KS (Pyrochem); Louisville, KY (BFI); Benton, KY (LWD Units 3, 4, 5); Ascension Parish, LA (IT Corp); St. Helena, LA (Zytech); Hope, ME (Union Carbide); Flint, MI (Berlin & Farro); Utica, MI (Liquid Disposal); Lenawee City, MI (Augusta Development); Shakopee, MN (ENSCO); Staples, MN (Industrial Waste Conversion); Winona, MS (ITD); Columbia, MS (State Incinerator); Oswego, NY (Pollution Abatement Service); Rockport, MO

(Waste Tech); Castleton, NV (Disposal Control Services); East Liverpool, OH (Chemical Waste Management); Cincinnati, OH (City Incinerator); Reading, OH (Pristine, Inc.); Boise City, OK (Orlandis Corp.); Hughes County, OK (Royster Waste Recovery); Yukon, PA (Mill Services, Inc.); Apollo, PA (Babcock & Wilcox); Rockhill, SD (Thermal Chem); Laporte, TX (Houston Chemical Services); Iron County, UT (Rollins Environmental Services); Cisco, UT (Co-West Incinerator); Ritzville, WA (ECOS); Nitro, WV (Pegasus, Inc.).

Get: "Rush to Burn" for $19.95 from Greenpeace U.S.A., Video Department, 1436 U Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009; phone Karen Hirsch at (202) 462-1177.

Rachel search terms: hazardous waste incineration; waste treatment technologies; air pollution; pics; regulation.

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