

EA

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

SUMMER 1993 ■ \$4.00



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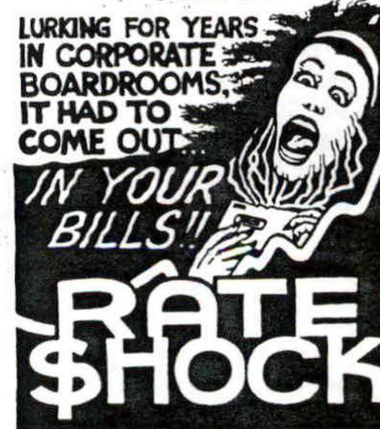
1974

23 YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

1993



1984



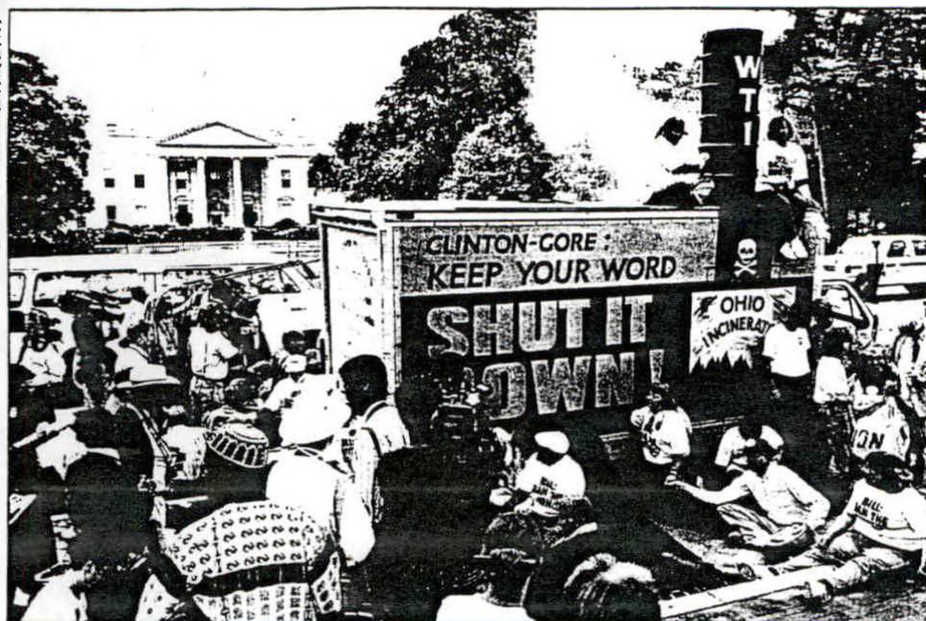
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ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Clinton's first six months.

The recycled paper chase.

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In May, activists chained themselves to a mock incinerator in front of the White House to call attention to the administration's promise to shut down WTI.

administration did not step in even after Labor Secretary Robert Reich recommended that the case be appealed. Either Clinton overruled his labor secretary or the Justice Department simply failed to file the appeal for its own reasons. A Labor Department spokesperson speculated that perhaps the case simply "fell through the cracks."

The administration flunked another early test of its environmental mettle following EPA's announcement that ash from cement kilns burning hazardous waste routinely fails to meet federal health and safety standards established last August. Instead of stepping up the pressure for reluctant industry officials to raise their standards, EPA proposed to resolve the problem by simply suspending the kiln dust regulations. Since cement kilns burn roughly 70 percent of all hazardous waste incinerated in the country today, this proposal could have far-reaching meaning for the impact of toxics on communities.

And EPA's May announcement of an 18-month moratorium on building new hazardous waste incinerators can't make up for the agency's position in an ongoing battle over an incinerator in Clinton's home state. At the Vertac site, a Superfund dump in Jacksonville, Arkansas awash in dioxin-contaminated herbicides left over from the Vietnam War, a hazardous waste incinerator has continually failed to meet EPA regulations.

EPA and the Justice Department went to court several times during the winter and spring to defend the incinerator oper-

ator against citizens demanding the facility be shut down. During the time Clinton was governor of Arkansas, a majority of Jacksonville citizens voted at least twice to not incinerate Vertac wastes, but Clinton overruled them.

Despite assurances from EPA officials that the incinerator would comply with all federal laws, it does not. Under law, an incinerator burning dioxin must destroy 99.9999 percent of the highly toxic substance. During an official test burn, the incinerator achieved only 99.96 percent efficiency, allowing dioxin releases into the community 400 times larger than allowed by law.

Nevertheless, EPA and Arkansas state officials gave the incinerator the go-ahead, and this year citizens went to court to require EPA to enforce its own regulations. EPA technical staff and Justice Department lawyers argued in court that EPA's regulations didn't require them to actually measure the incinerator's ability to destroy dioxin. The judge did not buy EPA's argument and shut the incinerator down. The decision was appealed, and the matter is still pending in federal court.

Sharon Golgan, the leader of the Jacksonville Mothers and Children Defense Fund, and a plaintiff against the Vertac incinerator, was leaving court one day this spring when she was asked if she noticed any difference between the Bush EPA and the Clinton EPA. She smiled with a glint of steel in her eye and said, "So far, I can't see any difference at all. Really none at all."

Failing the East Liverpool Litmus Test

By Barbara Ruben

The Waste Technologies Inc. (WTI) hazardous waste incinerator rises off the banks of the Ohio River, its bulky profile dominating the gray Ohio Valley skyline. The incinerator, built just 400 feet from houses and a quarter mile from an elementary school, has in some ways come to symbolize the administration's tangled grappling with balancing environmental protection and economic recovery. Despite a string of campaign trail promises to stop the \$160 million incinerator in East Liverpool, Ohio from even conducting a test burn, the administration has done nothing to stop its operation, which began in March.

"We view this issue as a litmus test for the administration, a test that goes beyond environmental policy to the way it sets priorities for the nation itself," says Terri Swearingen, who lives across the river from the incinerator and has helped lead a grassroots effort against it. "Clinton ran a campaign based on putting people first, on making change. Well, all I know is residents of the Ohio Valley certainly haven't been put first."

The incinerator can legally emit 9,400 pounds of lead and 2,400 pounds of mercury a year, substances that can wreak havoc with children's developing nervous systems. But the incinerator failed its March test burn, emitting four times more mercury than allowed. Still, EPA issued a permit for commercial operation. In addition, an EPA memo leaked to Greenpeace in February revealed EPA suppressed research showing that dioxin contamination in local beef and milk would be 1,000 times higher than inhaling air near the facility. This means that dioxin concentrated in the food chain could cause 1,300 cancers per million people, a figure 130 times higher than EPA's risk assessment standard of 10 excess cancers per million.

"If I were to write a novel or a horror movie or some fictional account of the worst place to put an incinerator, it would be in a valley surrounded by hills, on a flood plain, next to an elementary school. But in this case, it's all real," says Herbert Needleman, M.D., whose pioneering work in lead poisoning spurred the tightening of exposure limits.

Still, the lure of jobs for economically

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The word "chlorine" reminds most people of swimming pools, drinking water and laundry bleach. But far from America's washrooms and kitchens, this insidious chemical contributes to some of our worst industrial pollution problems. The Great Lakes, long a sink for factory wastes, are now the site of an ambitious campaign to ban chlorine altogether.

By David Moberg



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There are alternatives for 99 percent of the uses of chlorine. Here are some suggestions for de-chlorinating your life.

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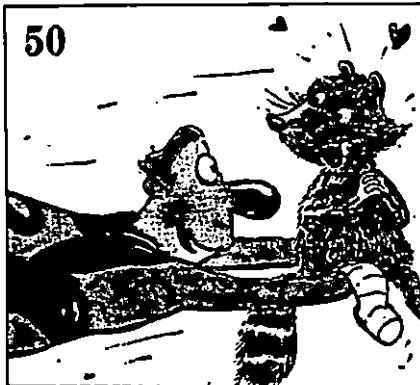
People who live in tropical rainforests use hundreds of plants that Westerners have never seen, tasted or smelled...until now. Rainforest products are the hot new entry in the buy-and-do-good market. From cereals to buttons to sweet-smelling shampoos, they are also the result

COVER: Illustration by Dennis Irwin

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of a new—and not yet completely proven—concept in tropical rainforest conservation.

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