

## Toxic waste passage urged

# Bill calls for 'right to know'

By Paul Ertelt  
Of the Emerald

SALEM — A New York toxic waste researcher urged a House committee Wednesday to take a far-sighted approach to toxic hazards by pushing through legislation that would give citizens access to information on toxic chemicals used in the state.

But the Community Right-to-Know Bill (House Bill 2255) was criticized by industry representatives and officials of Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality at hearings before the House Environment and Energy Committee.

The legislation would require the DEQ to establish an ongoing survey to compile information about toxic chemicals used in Oregon. That information would be forwarded to state officials and local health boards and be available to citizens.

The DEQ would also conduct a one-time survey of chemical waste dumps established in the state during the past 30 years.

Walter Hang, a researcher for New York Public Interest Research Group, told the panel that the bill could help Oregon avoid many of the problems facing New York. Hang, who successfully promoted similar legislation in New York in 1982, testified on behalf of the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group.

Tom Donaca, counsel for Associated Oregon Industries, argued that the bill would add an undue burden to the state and to industry, while duplicating information that, for the most part, is available elsewhere. He said it is more important to inform people of specific health hazards, rather than just distributing a list of chemicals.

"Our opposition of the measure... must not be construed as opposition to the need for information that assists in increasing public safety," Donaca said. "Rather, it is opposition to the expensive and time-consuming task of disgorging information by all subject parties."

Donaca said his main concern was that HB

2255 did not provide adequate protection of trade secrets. According to the bill, industries could claim an exemption for chemicals that they considered trade secrets.

But Donaca said the bill seemed to leave the release of that information to the discretion of the director of the DEQ. More specific criteria needs to be established for the release of that information, he said.

Pat McCormick, representing the American Electronics Association, said he did not believe it was always in the public interest for the public to know what chemicals are used in the state. That information is best left in the hands of "responsible" parties such as police and fire departments, he said.

Stan Biles of the DEQ said his agency was concerned with several parts of the bill, particularly the cost of conducting the survey. It would cause duplication of tasks the agency already performs as well, he said.

Biles estimated the cost of the program for the 1985-87 biennium at \$300,000, and criticized the bill for not making provisions for raising the needed revenue.

Though Hang said he did not want to "second guess" the DEQ's estimate, he said that instituting the program in New York state costs less than that, even though that state is more heavily industrialized.

Hang said the bill would not create a huge bureaucracy. Once the survey of past waste sites was conducted, he said, the ongoing survey could be managed with little manpower.

Hang said an Oregon right-to-know law was a first step in avoiding the toxic chemical catastrophes experienced by New York and other states.

"New York's environment may never be the same, but Oregon need not suffer the same fate," he said. "Your state is green, clean and lovely. You should do everything possible to keep it that way."

## Alsea-dioxin probe sought by county

The Lane County Board of Commissioners Wednesday requested that U.S. House Speaker "Tip" O'Neill order a congressional investigation into an alleged federal cover-up of dioxin contamination in the Five Rivers area of the Alsea River.

The commission's request, in the form of a letter, asks that O'Neill examine charges that the federal Environmental Protection Agency has withheld study results on the levels of dioxin present in the region's ground soil and water supply.

The letter further charges that the EPA suppressed information on unusually high levels of animal birth deformities in the region, as well as high levels of dioxin found in mothers' milk samples taken from the area.

Residents of the area fear that the levels of dioxin can be traced to the spraying of herbicides by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Dioxin, which has been connected with cancers and birth deformities in animals and humans, was present in herbicides regularly sprayed on the region's foliage.

The commissioners took action after Five Rivers-area residents Carol Van Strum and Paul Merrell, a University law student, brought the issue to the attention of Lane County Commissioner Jerry Rust.

Van Strum testified before the commission in support of the letter, but said she was not looking for any drastic congressional action.

"All we want are answers to questions about EPA documents," she said. "Why did the EPA cover up this information for so many years?"

Michael Axline, who is Van Strum's and Merrell's attorney and the co-director of the University's environmental law clinic, believes the results of the suppressed studies are so dramatic that the EPA does not know how to deal with them effectively.

Rust is hopeful that with the support of the Oregon congressional delegation, the issue will be investigated.

"The two questions the board wants answered by an investigation are, how was the study done and why was it suppressed," Rust said.

Open 7 days

**kinko's copies**

Quality Copies

- Binding • Thesis
- Lamination • Reduction
- Enlargement • Self-Service Copies
- Resumes • Self-Service Word Processing

860 E. 13th Ave. 344-7894

**UO Bookstore**

IN HONOR OF  
**BLACK HISTORY MONTH 1985**

The Bookstore joins the Black Students, Faculty and Staff at the University of Oregon in honoring these and the many other Black men and women who have contributed to the development of our country and the world society.

13th & Kincaid  
M-F 7:30-5:30  
SAT 10:00-3:00  
Supplies 686-4331

**UO Bookstore**

**3rd Annual Tools of the TRADE SHOW**

In the Art Supply Dept.

**Feb. 20 & 21 10-4 pm**

Representatives of our major suppliers will be in the store to talk with you about their products.

Door Prizes ★ Demonstrations  
Ongoing Presentations

**20% OFF** All Art & School Supplies during the show

**UO BOOKSTORE** 13th & Kincaid  
M-F 7:30-5:30  
SAT, 10:00-3:00  
Supplies 686-4331