



In a dark time the eye begins to see.

- Theodore Roethke

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BORN AGAIN BIRD REVIVES FROM COMA

JUST AFTER CELEBRATING ITS FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OUT OF THE CRYPT THE NORTH COAST TIMES EAGLE FELL INTO A FINANCIAL COMA FOR ALMOST EIGHT MONTHS. ITS HEALTH IS NOT ALL THAT IMPROVED BUT AT LEAST THE REINCARNATED BIRD HAS REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS AND BELIEVES IT MIGHT FLY FOR ANOTHER FIVE YEARS BEFORE GOING BROKE AGAIN.

THERE HAVE BEEN SOME CHANGES. THE NEWSPAPER HAS RELOCATED TO ASTORIA. IT SHALL BECOME A MONTHLY PUBLICATION AND ATTEMPT TO DOUBLE ITS PAGES AND CONTENT. ALSO THERE WILL BE REGULAR FEATURES SUCH AS ART AND POETRY INSTEAD OF SPORADIC OFFERINGS. LOCAL COVERAGE WILL BE A PRIORITY — LOCAL MEANING THE OREGON AND WASHINGTON COASTS IN PARTICULAR AND THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST IN GENERAL.

— Michael Paul McCusker
 Editor & Publisher

Hanford: NO!

by Barbara McLaughlin

The nuclear industry has created complicated and pressing problems for us — not the least of which is what to do with all the waste. In a movement toward a solution to the waste problem, the federal government has narrowed a field for selection as a national high-level radioactive waste dump site to three: Hanford in Washington, Yucca Mountain in Nevada, and Deaf Smith County in Texas. However, none of the states involved is particularly enamored by the prospect of housing seventy-seven thousand tons, or one hundred seventy-three thousand, two hundred truckloads of waste per year. At Hanford, serious questions have arisen as to its suitability as a waste repository.

One of the main problems with the Hanford site concerns possible contamination of the ground water in the Pasco Basin, in which the site is located, and eventual contamination of the Columbia River. Two factors that contribute to this possibility are the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of manufacturing containers that will remain leak-proof for the tens of thousands of years these waste substances will remain radioactive and the geologic makeup of the Columbia River region, which is basalt, a strong but easily permeated rock formation. In fact, these particular basalts are considered valuable aquifers, which by definition are permeable and water-bearing.

It seems the debate is not "if" but "when" contamination of the Columbia would occur and estimates as to how long it would take contaminating radionuclides to reach the river vary from twenty thousand years, as claimed by Rockwell, a major contractor at Hanford, to as few as twenty years, according

to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the United States Geologic Survey. Apparently it is only a matter of time; and whoever is alive when it finally occurs — whether it is us, our children or distant descendants — will have to confront the fact that the Columbia River, one of our most valuable resources, may not be useable for irrigation, drinking water, fishing, recreation or transportation, and that the whole region, including coastal areas — an entire ecosystem — may be severely and perhaps irreparably affected.



THE IDES OF MARCH

In fact, current data about inactive waste sites at Hanford that were used in the 1950s and 1960s for the discharge of uranium-bearing liquid show the groundwater concentration show that groundwater concentrations have increased dramatically. In 1967 the levels were five hundred picocuries/liter, while samples taken this month contained sixty to eighty thousand picocuries/liter. Rockwell acknowledges that "potential exists for migration (of the contaminated water) to the Columbia," but its preliminary estimates indicate that it would take hundreds or thousands of years, and the company is not worried about the uranium escaping the reservation boundaries.

Another recent study shows that the drinking water at the Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford has been contaminated for the last five years with tritium levels that are one and one-half to two times the federal health standards. Tritium, a by-product of PUREX, has been linked to cancer and genetic defects, and its bonding with oxygen contained in the water molecule assures that a whole body dose is received by a person drinking such contaminated water. Officials have been aware of this situation for some time but have calculated that the eight hundred employees at the facility do not drink enough of the water to receive a yearly dose exceeding federal limits, thus considering the contamination "insignificant." "It's only one shift a day; they don't cook or bathe in it," says William Whiting, Public Relations Manager for Westinghouse, which controls the facility. To Hanford officials, estimated dose takes precedence over measured contamination and they will not consider changing the water source unless the tritium levels reach two hundred thousand pico-

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