



BOB GALE

HOMEPORK

BY LARRY BARROWS

Nuclear Free Harbors urges the Oregon Division of State Lands to find the true highest and best uses for South Tongue Point. We submit that the best uses are found in the private sector and in educational activities. The Navy homeport is a bad idea for Astoria economically, politically, and from a standpoint of community safety.

We know from federal studies that localities often do not recoup the up-front and annual service costs required to support military bases. We also know that military bases deliver less jobs and less revenue per site than can be gained from private sector activities. One hundred military bases closed between 1961 and 1977. Those bases, converted to industrial parks, educational institutions and airports, now produce 130,000 jobs. That's 45,000 extra jobs.

State documents reveal that the Navy will control dock design in Astoria. The engineering report on dock construction indicates that Navy dock orientation differs radically from commercial shipping dock requirements, and that the docks "will limit flexibility for uses other than mooring military vessels."

Lower Columbia Naval Task Force and Navy lawyers are seeking special exemption, including special legislative exemption, from National Environmental Protection Act requirements for construction at South Tongue Point. That is poor citizenship.

The Navy left Astoria once. Next time they would leave us with commercially unsuitable docks which we, locally and statewide, paid to build. We may also be left holding a bag of environmental surprises.

The Pentagon has consistently overestimated job and revenue benefits, and has consistently underestimated cost impacts of its proposed homeports. We are getting the same treatment.

Locally we have heard new job figures being tossed around us as if they were based on fact. We have heard revenue figures bandied about us as if someone actually knew. However, there

is a thundering silence about our up-front and annual costs. We suspect that as per usual, the few will benefit while the many pay.

The State Land Board writes, "We do not yet know if a Navy homeport at South Tongue Point would be a good investment." And also, "We agree that rough estimates of the expected economic impact that have been provided to date do not provide sufficient detail upon which to base this important decision." Yet the Oregon Economic Development Department has hired the Lower Columbia Naval Task Force, for a payment of up to \$25,000, to force this thing through locally without involving the general public, and also nationally, including hiring a lobbyist to whisper in the Congressional ear, as if this idea has already been proven worthwhile. Why? Why did the State do that to us?

Given this premature bias on the part of the State, and given the damage already done by the spreading of inaccurate information by a State contractor, we call for a completely independent analysis of promised jobs, promised benefits, and proposed costs.

We know from the engineering report that estimates of costs to build the docks could be off by fifty percent. We have seen no figures of the total cost impact to our community. The New York homeport was supposed to deliver thousands of jobs and millions of dollars. The promises turned sour. The 9,000 jobs turned to 900, and New Yorkers found Pentagon documents showing they would at least break even financially — if they were lucky.

San Franciscans were promised thousands of jobs, millions of dollars. When the proposed homeport was dropped, they found out it only meant ninety-three jobs anyway. They also found a suppressed analysis showing financial loss. That analysis was doctored and released to show a financial gain. San Franciscans were angry. They felt someone had tried to dupe them.

Clatsop County, the City of Astoria, and the Port of Astoria are expected to put up two million dollars of our tax money to build this homeport. The State is expected to spend upwards of \$18.5 million of Common School Funds. I hope you can see why we want a totally independent analysis of costs and benefits.

We know a study of the Everett (Washington) homeport revealed that about fifty percent of the jobs there would go to moonlighting military personnel and their dependents.

We know from State Senator Frank Roberts' statements at the December E-board meeting that he expects the estimated \$2.6 million

annual ship repair work to go to Swann Island. How many of those jobs we hear about are going to be Portland jobs?

We know that enlisted sailors generally spend only about forty percent of their income in a homeport. They tend to send their savings to their home city and they usually pay little or no local taxes.

We had to go out and find these facts. Certainly none of the promoters around here are mentioning them.

We know that homeports in general are a very poor idea. The Homeport Program passed in each chamber of Congress by only one vote, in a time when it was very intimidating to vote against a military program. Senator Barry Goldwater, then Chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was against it. Les Aspin, Chair of the House Armed Services Committee, was against it. The General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, studied the program for eighteen months and found it to be without strategic or military value. Billions of dollars are to be spent to build twelve or thirteen homeports for ships which could be based at existing facilities for \$160 billion.

On the Senate floor Senator Goldwater, and on the House floor Representative Sisisky, both stated that the sole purpose of the program was to spread Navy bucks around to buy votes for the Navy budget in a time of shrinking military spending. We want no part of that. The U.S. Constitution wisely mandates civilian control of the military. This is an attempt by the military to control the people who should be controlling it.

Political conservatives and liberals alike in the House and the Senate are calling for an investigation into and a reevaluation of the homeport program and all politically motivated military programs. A lot of people locally and at the State level are putting out a lot of time, money, and other resources to promote a very bad idea — an idea which may soon collapse of its own dead weight.

Meanwhile great damage has been done. Clatsop County voted to be a Nuclear Weapons Free County by a sixty percent majority at an election with an eighty-four percent turnout. Local elected officials have paid public money to solicit nuclear weapons-bearing ships into our harbors. A local organization has taken money to solicit nuclear weapons-bearing vessels into our harbors.

We know that frigates and destroyers carry nuclear weapons. We know which weapons they carry and which weapons they are likely to carry as the Navy modernizes its nuclear weapons inventory. Retired Admiral Carroll of the Center for Defense Information states that it is the experience of retired Naval officers that ships which are described as nuclear capable do, in fact, carry nuclear weapons. "Jane's Fighting Ships," the world's foremost authority on fighting ships and their weapons, and other sources tell us which weapons they have and are likely to have according to future plans.

We hear that these larger ships are only going to be reserve ships anyway. We consider this a calculated attempt to downplay the arrival of nuclear weapons into our harbors. We have a letter by Representative AuCoin, dated this past December, stating that he is soliciting active or reserve vessels. There is no decision on the actual status of these vessels. Will the truth not bear the light of day? If not, then there is something wrong somewhere, but not with the truth, and not with the light of day.

The General Accounting Office warns us that nuclear weapons accidents in port and elsewhere can quickly spread a cloud of deadly plutonium far and wide. We know that the Navy has had hundreds of nuclear accidents, in ports and elsewhere, which it has covered up and denied, even to Congress. We consider our community safety to be at risk.

The Division of State Lands has written, last December, "The new interest in sub-leasing on the Tongue Point property during the last few months has been tremendous." We have heard that no less than four institutions of higher education are interested in the Tongue Point site. Yet the community here has only heard what a great deal the Navy homeport is going to be. Such a deal. What are those other interests? Where are the cost/benefit analyses of private sector activities, which we know will generate a greater return? Where is the State investment in soliciting a research institute to Tongue Point, an institute which could study the whole Columbia Basin — the watersheds, the rivers, the Great River, the estuary, the beaches, the continental shelf, and the sea itself — research we so desperately need in these times?

Commerce, research, world trade, industry — that's where the money is, if we could but invest in the proper infrastructure to bring it here.

Larry Barrows lives in Astoria and is Chair of Nuclear Free Harbors, a group opposed to Astoria as a Navy homeport. He gave the above presentation at a public hearing held on April 11 by the Oregon Division of State Lands. Of almost eighty individuals, officials and representatives of groups who spoke, ten more were against than for the homeport.

