



Washington Hot Line

by Congressman Ron Wyden

Q. The issue of how to dispose of nuclear waste has been debated for years. Why is the debate taking so long, and what can be done to move us closer to a resolution?

A. The major reason the nuclear waste debate has dragged on for so many years is because no one has been willing to make the tough decisions necessary to resolve the issue.

Hearing after hearing has been held to look at the pros and cons of this alternative or that alternative. Expert after expert has offered his or her opinion on the issue. But despite all this advice and consultation, Congress has continued to drag its feet on development of a rational solution—or a reasonable timetable for arriving at such a solution.

And in the meantime, large vol-

umes of nuclear waste have been sitting in temporary storage bins, threatening the health and safety of Oregonians and other Americans.

I'm certainly not advocating that we rush to embrace just any waste disposal plan. Nuclear waste lasts forever—and the result of improper storage could be serious health hazards, or even death.

But I am suggesting that we could move forward more expeditiously than we have, particularly with regards to establishing a timetable for identification of the proper site.

That is why I'm backing a bill being considered by the Energy, Conservation, and Power Subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce Committee. This bill, introduced by Rep. Dick Ottinger of New York, establishes a reasonable timetable

for selection of a site. At the same time, it provides strict guidelines for protection of human beings, wildlife and the environment in selection of the site.

And to ensure that the site selected is the single best site, I am also backing an amendment to that bill that would set up an independent commission to study all possible sites.

I believe this commission, or something like it, is critical if we are to preclude the very real possibility that the Department of Energy will simply nominate certain, predetermined areas as disposal sites, without really investigating all of the possibilities and considering all the facts.

This issue is of particular importance to Oregonians and other resi-

dents of the Pacific Northwest because one of the sites the Department of Energy has its eye on is Hanford in southeastern Washington.

Establishment of this commission will not ensure that Hanford—or any other site in Oregon, Washington or adjacent states—will not be chosen as a permanent waste disposal site.

But it should ensure that whatever site is chosen is the best possible site, not just a favorite of Washington bureaucrats.

And by ensuring fairness and credibility in the selection of the sites, it will minimize the risk of lawsuits or state vetoes that only will delay farther identification of a permanent—and safe—disposal site.

Drug impact on blacks greater

by Dr. Beny J. Primm

(Editor's note: Dr. Primm, a leading expert on drug abuse, is the founder-director of the Brooklyn, New York-based Addiction Research and Treatment Corporation that has six satellite centers in New York City. An advisor on drug abuse and treatment to the Administrations of Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter, Dr. Primm was a contributor to the recently published report on drug abuse and alcoholism prepared by former HEW Secretary, Joseph Califano, for Governor Hugh Carey of New York.)

Several days ago, Joseph A. Califano, Jr., former Secretary of HEW, delivered to Gov. Hugh Carey of New York the results of an 18-month study on drug abuse and alcoholism. Originally intending to focus on New York, Mr. Califano extended the report to include limited data and observations outside New York.

The Report makes a good case for more resources and enlightened public policy regarding prevention, treatment and enforcement. Yet, it is somewhat flawed by the limited and narrow manner in which certain data are treated, particularly data related to black Americans.

The beginning of the report consists of a graphic narrative of Mr. Califano's experiences with the Street Enforcement Unit of the New York City Police Department's Narcotic Division. After accompanying the police on several drug busts, shooting gallery and smoke shop raids in Harlem, Mr. Califano asks himself, "How in the name of God

did the richest nation in the history of the world let any of its people get here?" The answer to Mr. Califano's question is simple: Those individuals reached the pinnacle of despair as a result of the lack of awareness and outright insensitivity to the social problems of minority individuals. There is, in fact, a disregard for the sanctity of the lives of a significant portion of our population.

In his report Mr. Califano disclosed that the number of heroin addicts in New York City has increased by 50 per cent since 1978. There is now one addict for every 40 to 43 residents in New York City, the nationwide rate is one for every 375 to 500 Americans. This 50 per cent increase in heroin addiction is not the tolling of the death knell for New York City. Rather, it is the tolling of the death knell for New York's black citizens.

Couched in the report, although never addressed directly, are the following facts:

- Blacks constitute the highest proportion of patients enrolled in New York City's largest drug abuse treatment programs.

- Blacks constitute the highest proportion of patients enrolled in all of the treatment programs in New York State.

- Blacks constitute the highest proportion of patients enrolled in New York State funded methadone programs.

- Blacks constitute the highest proportion of heroin/morphine emergency room episodes nationwide.

- Blacks constitute the highest proportion of overdose deaths na-

tionwide.

- The highest proportion of all overdose deaths in New York City were reported by the two major hospitals serving Harlem.

It has been suggested that inner-city life with its poverty and overcrowding, its unemployment and racial discrimination, its hopelessness and despair, predisposes individuals to the abuse of drugs and alcohol. Certainly the life stresses of inner-city residents are far greater than those experienced by the middle classes. Yet, how do we explain the significant increase in the number of middle class heroin users? The Califano Report attributes this rise to the easy availability of heroin and a change in attitudes of the middle class. Heroin for them no longer holds the terror that it once did. There is also mention of the notion of a permissive American culture where society as a whole uses both legal and illegal drugs promiscuously. These arguments are perhaps interesting but they are by no means the most compelling explanations for either the escalation of heroin use among the middle class or for the City as a whole.

The major issue neglected by the Califano Report is a consideration of the decline in the quality of life in our City and throughout our country. We have witnessed, in the past three years, increases in the rate of unemployment that our country has not known since the Great Depression. Unemployment coupled with record breaking interest rates, untamed inflation, diminished discretionary income, major cutbacks in social and medical programs, de-

teriorated transportation systems, impoverished educational institutions, a reduction in basic services—all are stressors which never before have so deeply touched all segments of our society.

Over the past five years, there have been many reports in the scientific literature citing stress as the common denominator for many of the serious illnesses that are common in our inner-city areas. Hypertensive cardiovascular (high blood pressure) and renal (kidney) diseases, mental illness, cirrhosis of the liver, stomach ulcers, alcoholism and drug addiction (opiate addiction) are only a few of those frequently mentioned. These diseases are the most frequent causes of death among inner-city blacks and Hispanics. The body's natural responses to any stress is to secrete endorphins (the body's own morphine) and adrenalin. It has been hypothesized that individuals who live under constant stress may deplete their stores of the chemicals normally secreted in response to stress. Alcohol and opiates have been the drugs of choice for millennia in these individuals whenever they were available.

It is folly to assume that prevention programs, therapeutic communities or methadone maintenance could ever be anything more than band-aid treatment for the deplorable stressful conditions under which we must live in this racist society. Until these conditions change, one must wonder whether heroin and alcohol use are not man's attempt to therapeutically self-medicate.

Insecticide contamination nationwide

(Continued from page 1 column 6)

"geographically widespread." The chemical is now found in water "nationwide," in fresh fish "in the Great Lakes and the entire South," and in shellfish in "the entire Gulf and East Coast region." Severn's memo noted that "toxaphene has been detected in water, air, and biota samples from around the globe."

Severn advised that "given the nature of our concern about its atmospheric dispersal throughout the environment, normal risk reduction methods would not be effective. . . . Environmental exposure can only be reduced effectively by reducing the amount of toxaphene used."

Severn added that "in this matter we believe our position has strong support" from EPA's scientific advisory panel—the body that reviews the agency's pesticide regulatory decision—as well as "from respected environmental scientists around the country."

According to another EPA memo, panel member Dr. John Doull, professor of pharmacology at the University of Kansas, concluded that the exposure of the general population to toxaphene in food and water should be controlled "more stringently than other chlorinated-hydrocarbon pesticides such as DDT, endrin, dieldrin, etc." EPA banned all but minor uses of DDT in 1972, and of the latter chemicals in 1974.

The memo, from William Dickinson, deputy director of EPA's special pesticides review division, quoted Doull as saying that the "main elements of my concern with toxaphene are that . . . it produces thyroid carcinoma in rats; it is widely distributed in the environment; bioaccumulates and gets into the food chain; and it has specific adverse effects on fish and other species in the environment."

The Dickinson memo recommended that toxaphene be cancelled for all uses except for control of scabies-causing mites on cattle. It also suggested that the major manufacturer of the chemical, BFC Chemical, place additional restrictions on the use of toxaphene as a cattle dip, and conduct studies to establish new tolerances for it in meat products.

This is essentially the same action recommended in 279-page draft of the agency's final scientific review of toxaphene dated Dec. 12, 1980.

The Dickinson memo of one year later urged the BFC Chemical "should be informed that after June, 1982, the agency will no longer delay the process of going forward with regulatory action on toxaphene."

A representative of BFC, Hank Pierce, stated in a telephone interview that EPA and BFC had agreed not to disclose details of the negotiations now underway. Pierce contended that no deadline had been set on the negotiations.

But Dr. John A. Todhunter, assistant administrator for pesticides and toxic substances at EPA, said that he believed the office of pesticide programs "has a fish-or-cut-bait date" for concluding negotiations with BFC. Although he would not discuss details of the negotiations, or specify the deadline, he

stated that EPA expects to resolve the issues with the company "within the next few months."

According to EPA's 1980 analysis, toxaphene is registered for use in over 300 commodities in addition to cotton and cattle. The cost to farmers of cancelling the major use of toxaphene was estimated at \$6.1 million—a cost deemed "insignificant" by the agency in 1980.

In a letter dated June 23, 1982, to EPA administrator Anne M. Gorsuch, Congressman George Brown (D-Ca) urged the agency to "move expeditiously to cancel all major uses of toxaphene." Brown is chairman of the house agriculture subcommittee with jurisdiction over pesticide matters.

EPA's Todhunter, a Reagan appointee, blamed the five-year delay in regulatory action on the numerous reviews and avenues for appeal built into EPA's intensive pesticide review process. He said he supports administration proposals to shift from the present review process to informal negotiations with manufacturers, aimed at voluntary controls. "We would have nailed [toxaphene] back in 1978," Todhunter claimed, were it not for the lengthy review. "The fact that the delay is there bothers us. There may be cases where it does make a difference whether we act today or a year from today."

But Maureen Hinkle, policy analyst for the National Audubon Society in Washington, charged that "most of the delay on toxaphene is a matter of sheer lack of guts within the agency." Hinkle noted that widespread contamination of areas

far removed from toxaphene use were reported by South Carolina researchers in 1979, and were widely publicized.

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