

# BLACK HISTORY SPECIAL



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# PORTLAND OBSERVER

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Two Sections

## Northwest Indians oppose Hanford waste storage site

by Robert Lothian

Northwest Indians gathered last week at the Hilton Hotel in Portland to voice their concerns about damage that could occur to their way of life and to Columbia River salmon if a nuclear waste dump is built on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

The nuclear waste conference, sponsored by the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, brought together Indian leaders, radiation health experts and anti-nuclear activists.

They were responding to government plans to build the nation's first nuclear waste repository, possibly at Hanford or at four other proposed sites across the country.

The U.S. Dept. of Energy is looking for a waste site for the estimated 77,000 tons of nuclear waste that has accumulated at the nation's nuclear power plants. If Hanford is picked, the huge depository there would be built 3,000 feet underground and cost \$20 to \$25 billion. It would begin receiving the estimated 173,200 truck loads of waste in 1998.

Levi George of the Yakima nation, which is just 13 miles from the Hanford reservation at the closest point, opened the waste conference by singing a spiritual song in his native tongue. The words "atomic bomb" and "nuclear," apparently untranslatable, stood out.

Russell Jim, nuclear waste program manager for the Yakima nation, then spoke eloquently in what he described as a "borrowed language."

Jim described the material that could be deposited at Hanford for

thousands of years as "highly deadly to each and every living thing on this earth."

"We hope to address the unique status of the indigenous population regarding this material... their culture, their heritage and that which makes us look forward to tomorrow," said Jim.

The dignified Indian leader, in a red vest with traditional designs and long dark braids, outlined government treaty violations dating back to 1855, some of which led to war, and the reduction of Indian lands in the area from over 10 million acres to only about 150,000 acres.

It was agreed that the Indians could gather food, medicines and "to fish in all their usual and accustomed places" on their former and present lands, he said, but since the Hanford reservation was built and operated under secrecy since World War II, Indians have been reluctant to hunt, fish and look for herbs in the area for fear of radiation contamination.

Nuclear accidents and contamination of the Columbia River are well documented, and Indians fear further contamination of the ground water and the Columbia, and destruction of the salmon so important to their way of life, if the waste dump is built at Hanford, said Jim.

A large part of the Yakima nation and its over 4,000 people is within a 50-mile radius of the dump site, he continued. "We are saying we are non-evacuatable. We cannot pick up this land and move it somewhere else."

Jim said the waste site is near a

traditional lowland wintering ground for the area's Indians. "Most people see it as wasteland. But when the indigenous population looks at that ground, they see food coming out of it... birds, berries, certain types of useful sagebrush... and medicines that are of that great pharmacy that is the plains area, and the forest area."

Ronald Besser, speaking for the Umatilla tribe, said the Umatillas of eastern Oregon were concerned about the transportation aspects of getting the waste to the dump safely. "Our reservation is located on all the main routes from the eastern and southern parts of the nation," said Besser. Because the area contains bad stretches of highway where numerous truck accidents have occurred, a dangerous accident is possible if Hanford is picked, he said.

Allen Slickpoo, Secretary of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, said the Indians' concerns cross racial barriers. "We are talking not only about treaty rights but the rights of all people," he said.

The three tribes have achieved affected tribe status which means that they can intervene in the negotiations as separate nations, and possibly cause the site to be rejected. Congress can override their rejection, but in any case President Reagan must pick a site by 1987.

Jim hinted that the conference could be the beginning of a coalition of Indians and anti-nuclear activists working to reject the proposed site at Hanford, which he called "the pay toilet of the nation."



(L-r) Ronald Besser, nuclear waste director for the Umatilla Nation, Allen Slickpoo, secretary of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee and Russell

Jim, nuclear waste program manager for the Yakima Nation at press conference concerning Hanford. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

## Irvington school dispute:

# Prophet calls in mediator

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W.—A percolator of parental complaints boiled over February 13th at Irvington Grade School. Up to 120 parents heard collaborating testimony from a majority of Black mothers who perceived John Chadwick, principal of Irvington, as arrogant and abrasive.

Black mothers, whose children no longer attend Irvington, came back to say they removed their children because of various frustrations they experienced with the lack of rapport and actions of Chadwick.

Ronnie Herndon, an Irvington parent in attendance, summarized one main point that surfaced during the meeting. "Chadwick has not handled the concerns of Black parents well. I'm not surprised, considering the lack of Black teachers and administrators at this school. The question is, why has this been allowed to continue?" said Herndon.

Matthew Prophet, Superintendent of the Portland Public Schools, has called in John Mathis, a conciliator from the Justice Department, to mediate the situation.

"I plan to meet with staff, parents and the principal to assess things at Irvington School," Mathis said.

Chadwick said parental concerns expressed in the meeting "were noted and heard." He added that he did not know how issues reached this proportion. "We will do everything we can to resolve this issue."

Larry Ayers, Director of Instruction for Irvington, called the meeting "fiery." "I have a positive reaction to it because people are starting to communicate, but there are definitely issues that need to be dealt with."

Chadwick's ability, or lack of ability, to communicate with parents of color, especially single Black mothers, seems to be the core of the complaints.

Shelly Brown, who removed her son from Irvington last year, said she was unable to resolve her problems

with Chadwick. "My son was a victim of a child extortion ring. Chadwick kept saying he would resolve it and he did not want me to go to the school police. I finally did and it got resolved. I also had a problem with the lack of homework my son received," said Brown.

She added that Chadwick had predetermined what the problem and solution was. "I, and other Black parents, felt that he would listen and have more respect for the parents who lived on the east side of 15th Avenue than those living on the west side."

Richard Miller, a member of the Citizens' Advisory Committee, said he had not experienced any difficulties dealing with Chadwick. "He means well, but he had a problem dealing with people from a different race, class or sex," he added.

Miller listed the concerns of the committee as threefold: The development of multi-cultural education, the expenditure of desegregation funds and the lack of minority staff and teachers.

"We have not been happy with the use of desegregation money. Over a

## Portland unions phone-in to support Coke workers

Dozens of unionists in Portland called the national headquarters of the Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta, Georgia, this week to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the occupation of a Coca-Cola bottling franchise in Guatemala.

One year ago, the workers of the EGSA bottling plant in Guatemala City occupied their workplace following the news that the franchise was closing due to alleged bankruptcy.

The workers discovered that the owners kept dual books, which was evidence that it was not a case of bankruptcy, but rather an illegal lock-out and a union-busting tactic, so they refused to leave the plant!

Now, one year later, the workers still occupy the plant, after several near-settlements with the new franchise holders failed to materialize. The workers' union, STEGAC, did sign an agreement with the new holders on February 1. The agreement calls for:

- The re-opening of the plant on March 1;
- Job security for 265 of the 350 workers;

—Recognition of the union (although under a new name)

The Portland labor movement has been actively supporting the Guatemala Coke workers, having picketed the local Coke bottling plant and having promoted a Coke boycott called by several international unions last spring. Local Food and Commercial Workers, Bakers, and Clothing and Textile Workers leaders, and the local, state and national AFL-CIO labor councils have all lent support to the solidarity campaign.

The Guatemalan workers struggle with multi-national Coca-Cola is taking place in the context of a country internationally recognized for its abysmal record of human rights violations. Eight union leaders were killed at the same Coke plant embroiled in the current struggle.

The phone-in is part of multi-city effort, and is being coordinated nationally by the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA), and locally by the Portland Labor Committee on Central America and the Caribbean.



## Woman in exile:

Thandie Rankoe, a South African woman in exile now based in Botswana is visiting the U.S. on a three-week tour through a program titled "The Third World Women's Project," sponsored by the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies. Through this program, women are brought from Third World nations to share with North Americans their experiences of their respective countries with a focus on

conditions of women and children. Above, Rankoe, a journalist, health care worker and community development worker, shares her experiences with (r) Joyce Harris, director of the Black Educational Center, and Arel Cordley, POSAF, following a talk she gave at the Talking Drum Bookstore, Tuesday afternoon. She comes to Oregon through the Council for Human Rights in Latin America.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)