

Environmental Justice And Convent

CONTINUED FROM EDITORIAL
chloride manufacturing plant in Convent. This \$700 million plant, which will be a mile-long in size, and will receive a ten year industrial property tax exemption of some \$94.5 million and a \$35 million sales/use tax rebate, amounting to a \$800,000 tax abatement per job.

The proposed site for the plant is just a little over a mile away from the local elementary school, where many of the children already suffer from serious cases of asthma and other respiratory ailments. All roads in Convent are dead-end and empty out onto the River Road, running parallel to the Mississippi. It would be nearly impossible, then, to evacuate either the schools or the homes if an accident were to occur in that plant.

The most frightening part of the

decision to locate the Shintech plant in Convent is the danger of toxic emissions from the plant. Polyvinyl chloride manufacturing means dioxins will be released into the atmosphere and dioxins have been proven to cause cancer. In an area already besieged by high incidence of cancer in both the young and the old, it is difficult to understand how Convent could have been chosen for yet another plant.

As the Environmental Protection Agency studies whether to allow the Shintech plant to be built, the politics of Louisiana have taken over. The Governor, who backs the plant vocally, held a press conference saying that he had asked the residents of Convent if they wanted the plant and they had all indicated they did. When we visited Convent this spring, we had trouble finding people who had

been questioned by the Governor. Indeed, the governor has even threatened publicly the Tulane University Law School clinic for its legal assistance to the people of Convent who are fighting the plant. Stories of state and private contracts going to those who support the plant abound.

Meanwhile, the people of Convent are the ones suffering. Families torn apart between those who support the plant and those who do not. Children, already sick, facing even more pollution in the air they breathe and the water they drink. Women facing high miscarriage and cancer rates. Men are also sick and many are unemployed.

If ever there was a case of environmental racism, Convent, LA is it. While the legal and political arguments rage, the people endure.



The Portland Observer Company Picnic



Mike B. and Anthony Huff. (all photos by M. Washington)



(l-r) Marlin Lincoln, Devin Bass, G. Washington, and Chuck McCloud.



(l-r) Chaka Washington, Iesha Williams, Chuck Washington, and Serena Washington.



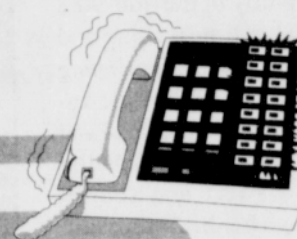
Kurt Green Band (KGB).



(l-r) Laquisha Huff, Shawntell Washington, Frieda Murray-Great Grandmother, Rachell Huff and Johntay Huff (baby).

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