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GREENPEACE

GREAT LAKES PROJECT

ZERO
DISCHARGE
CAMPAIGN



April 5, 1993
Sarah, Are you going to the hearing or doing a submission?
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Dear Great Lakes Activist:

The debate between environmentalists and toxic polluters is heating up, as the International Joint Commission's (IJC) Seventh Biennial Meeting approaches (October 21-24, in Windsor, Ontario).

While environmentalists are urging governments to begin implementing the visionary recommendations of the IJC's Sixth Biennial Report, chemical industry lobbyists are actively campaigning to reverse them.

The first showdown will occur at a series of meetings sponsored by the IJC's Virtual Elimination (VE) Task Force to be held April 27, 28 and 29 in Milwaukee, Detroit and Toronto, respectively. It is crucial that the environmental community be well represented at all three meetings.

The VE Task Force was appointed by the IJC in 1990. Its mission is to advise the IJC on what steps must be taken to reach the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement goal of "virtual elimination" of persistent toxic substances in the Great Lakes Basin ecosystem. The Agreement says that "the philosophy adopted for [doing this] shall be zero discharge."

In their 1991 Interim Report, the VE Task Force concluded that "it is logical to investigate processes that produce chlorinated organic substances, and to consider sunsetting the use of chlorine." This helped pave the way for the IJC's Sixth Biennial recommendation to "sunset the use of chlorine and chlorine-containing compounds as industrial feedstocks...."

The VE Task Force is now preparing a final report to be released prior to the IJC Seventh Biennial Meeting. The first draft of that report will be mailed out on April 8th to all who are interested in reviewing it for comment.

We expect the draft to be highly controversial. Task Force members representing industry and those from environmental groups have not been able to agree on crucial sections. Industry representatives challenge the IJC recommendation to sunset chlorine and call for more studies. Environmentalists, on the other hand, want the report to outline a framework and strategy to begin implementing the IJC recommendation to sunset production and use of chlorine. Since the Task Force has been unable to reach consensus, the draft report may contain more than one version of key sections.

GREENPEACE GREAT LAKES 1017 W. Jackson Blvd. Chicago, IL 60607 (312) 666-3305
GREENPEACE TORONTO 185 Spadina Ave., #600 Toronto, Ontario M5T 2C5 (416) 345-8408

Should the governments establish a timetable to phase out chlorine-based bleaching by the paper industry (as the Canadian provinces of Ontario and British Columbia have done)?

Should plans be developed to phase out other industrial processes that contaminate the environment with dioxins and other toxic organochlorines?

Should governments work to end the generation of chlorinated waste streams that go to incinerators and cement kilns?

How many studies are needed before preventive action is taken to safeguard human health and the ecosystem on which we depend?

The VE Task Force meetings will be a forum to debate these and other related issues. After opening presentations, participants will divide into smaller groups to discuss the draft report and bring recommendations back to the whole group. Industry will certainly mobilize its forces. The pro-environment, pro-health perspective must be also be well-represented.

The Virtual Elimination Task Force hearings will take place:

April 27	Milwaukee	Marc Plaza Hotel
April 28	Detroit	Cobo Convention Center
April 29	Toronto	Harbour Castle Hotel

They will be held in the evening, although exact time and room locations have not yet been announced.

Anyone who wishes to receive a copy of the VE Task Force draft report and more details on the meetings should contact Bonnie Rice (312-666-3305) or Jay Palter (416-345-8408) of Greenpeace, or call the IJC directly (313-226-2170 or 519-256-7791).

If you can attend one of these hearings, please let us know. If you cannot attend, the Task Force will accept written comments until May 10, 1993.

Between now and the IJC Biennial in October, both industry and environmentalists will mobilize on this issue. So far, those representing human health and the environment have been winning the debate. This will continue so long as we remain unified and our voice is loud and clear.

Yours for a healthy and peaceful earth,

Greenpeace Campaigners

Jack Weinberg	Joan D'Argo
Jay Palter	Joe Thornton
Bonnie Rice	

