

TOXIC WASTE DUMP: To Be Or Not To Be?

by David Snyder

Throughout Laurinburg, most houses stand adorned with yellow ribbons protesting the plans of GSX to locate a hazardous waste dump near here. GSX officials two years ago promised to locate the site here only with community approval. Despite this massive protest, GSX is moving ahead with its plans to locate here.

Jim Milligan brought this conflict into the open on February 12th at Scotland County Courthouse. Dr. Nelson Mossholder, Director of Technical Services for GSX, told 500-600 area citizens that the promise was made informally "in good intent," but "just didn't turn out like we thought." Milligan emotionally disrupted this, claiming the promises "weren't made in jest and they weren't made lightly."

GSX Chemical Services, a subsidiary of a Canadian company, GenStar, came to Laurinburg in early 1984 after being tied up with three years of court battles in Charlotte. Larry Johnson, an official of GSX, which was then known as SCA Chemical Services, made the promise to the Chamber of Commerce members at a public meeting requesting approval to locate the site in this county. According to Dan Jones, GSX Community Relations Director, company officials never heard disapproval from community leaders. "(Johnson) was talking with your sincere leaders who told us one thing and led us down this path," Jones told the gathering at the courthouse. GSX proceeded and purchased the

option to buy the property for the site, located near the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport.

The next step for GSX is to receive a permit from the Solid and Hazardous Waste Management Branch of the North Carolina Department of Human Resources. Bill Meyer is chairperson of this agency which determines whether GSX is a reliable company and has chosen an acceptable location.

Dr. Jim Smithwick, President of SCAT (Serious Concerns About Toxics), opposes granting a permit to GSX for this dump. They have hired various consultants to counter GSX's claims that they are safe. Dr. K.C. Miller, a Chapel Hill hydrologist; Dr. Dan Textoris, a geologist; Dr. Jim Yoho, an attorney; Jeff Riley, an industrial chemist; and a host of others, have all joined the fight against GSX. Their claims include that the water table at the site is too high for a toxic waste dump, that the area is too productive agriculturally, that industries which need clean, fresh water will be unable to operate down-river from the dump, and that the dump will employ only 35 people while discouraging industries which will employ hundreds more. Also, they claim that GSX does not have sufficient liability insurance to cover the liability costs of a disaster.

Bill Meyer plans at least two additional hearings in Scotland County before a decision is made on the permit. The first one will be held sometime in March.

OPINION

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"We call on you again to form your group and work with us as we move forward on this. If not, GSX is going to be founded here without your cooperation," said Dan Miller, Community Relations Director for GSX (a chemical service company which hopes to locate a toxic waste dump in Scotland County). Scotland County citizens have protested vigorously en masse against GSX, yet GSX officials are going against their earlier promise and founding here even without community approval. They claim that no leaders in the beginning stages of the plan expressed disapproval.

Why not? The Laurinburg Exchange in a February 14th editorial stressed that GSX should not locate here because of community disapproval, and that it didn't matter whether the breach of trust (going back on the promise) was the fault of GSX officials' naivete concerning Scotland County's potential opposition of community leaders' lack of communication.

But it does matter. When Dan Jones stated that your sincere leaders...led us down this path," citizens from the courthouse audience at the February 11th meeting shouted from the audience, "They

weren't our leaders," and "They kept us in the dark!" Who are 'they'? Why this constant reference to 'our leaders' without identifying who they are?

How can Scotland County citizens hold their leaders responsible if they are not identified? Community newspapers need to PRINT THE NAMES of those leaders who may be responsible for bringing GSX to Laurinburg.

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Campus Shots



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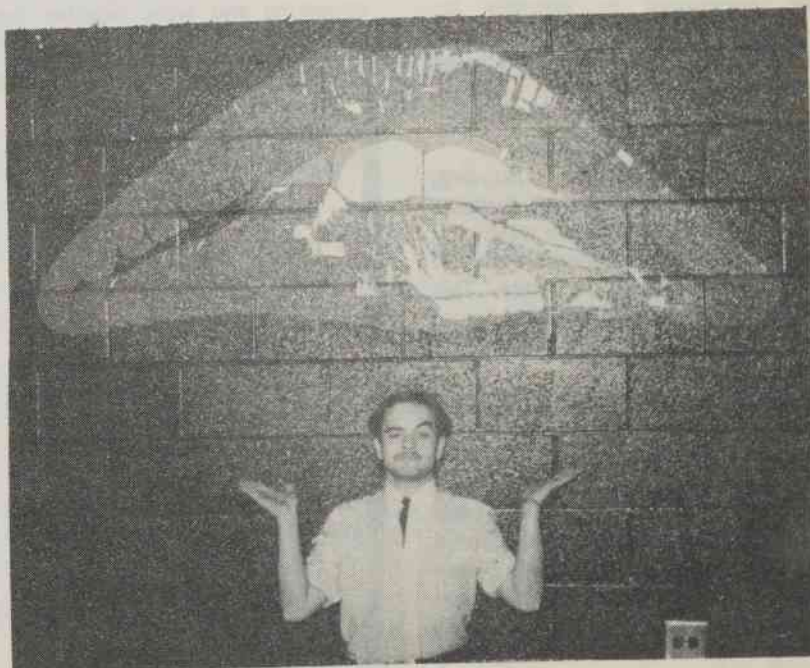


Photo by Dally Diaz

Danny Kidd poses under his "Rocky Horror" masterpiece in Suite 1-Meck.