

Nuke waste site report infuriates Lewiston



Joan Gipp

"I believe the residents of the Town of Lewiston should take up arms if that's what it takes to stop the government."

— Lewiston Supervisor
James J. Lombardi

By DON DEPERRO
Gazette Staff Writer

LEWISTON — Reaction was swift and critical Wednesday of a report recommendation by a federal consultant that the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works be turned into a radioactive waste repository.

Town officials and residents living near the LOOW site on Pletcher Road were infuriated and charged the government and Bechtel National Inc. with lying to them during a Sept. 14

meeting.

The Niagara Gazette reported in a copyright story that a Bechtel report completed in May concluded the LOOW site "would provide a solution to waste management needs in New York."

Said Councilman Joan Gipp: "It's against the law for a public official to incite residents to break the law, but I'm going to encourage the people to stand on Pletcher Road and stop them."

Gipp hurriedly visited the site within an hour of reading the Niagara Gazette story Wednesday afternoon to tell workers there how she felt about the Bechtel report.

"They lied to us about the site from day one. And this is just the last of the

lies," she said. "It's so disgusting."

Gipp and other Town Board members fired off telegrams of protest to U.S. Sens. Alfonse D'Amato, R-NY, and Daniel P. Moynihan, D-NY; and Rep. John J. LaFalce, D-Tonawanda.

An aide to LaFalce said the congressman registered strong objections with Edward Delaney, acting deputy director of the federal Department of Energy's waste management program.

LaFalce, the aide said, objected to Bechtel's drawing conclusions in a preliminary draft.

"Our goal is to decontaminate and decommission the site," the aide said.

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Equally angry were other Town Board members.

"Well I'll be damned," said Councilman Alvin Ogg, "when told of the report. Bechtel told us at that meeting they did not know what was going to happen at that site. Now they say they're going to turn it into a repository."

"This is like a cancer. This will probably become the repository for the nation," Ogg said. "We may as well just write off that part of the county."

A hazardous waste disposal site operated by SCA Chemical Services Inc. of Porter adjoins the LOOW site. Modern Landfill Inc. has proposed constructing an industrial landfill on another portion of the site.

Newco Waste Systems Inc., which operates a sanitary landfill in the Town of Niagara, has an option to purchase property near the LOOW land and has already informed the Town Board of its plans to build a sanitary landfill there.

"Who is going to compensate us for the decreased property values?" said Sam Jowdy of 4245 Porter-Center Road. "This is where the law defeats the public."

Jowdy said he was told previously by officials

that the LOOW site was a preferential location as a repository because few people live nearby.

"But they lose sight of the fact that air currents have no boundaries," he said. "I was under the impression that there was no way they would do that here."

Said Councilman Richard Kolke, "To me it was a real con job that they (Bechtel) did to us. You get to the point where you don't know who to believe anymore."

Mrs. Charles Oliphant of 1744 Swann Road uttered some strong words about the federal government's role at the ordnance works, but requested they not be printed.

And Supervisor Lombardi, in Mount St. Mary's Hospital recuperating from a heart attack, said, "If we have to, we'll go to the White House to fight this. I was feeling good but a week's worth of recovery went out the window when I read this. The government has no right to force this down our throats."

GOP Robert E. Lee said the promises made to the town by Bechtel don't "give you much confidence in the operation of the federal government. It surprises me and disappoints me."