

October 7/81

Dump polluting Lake Ontario, soil and water samples confirm

By RAE TYSON

Special to The Globe and Mail

BUFFALO — The contents of a huge chemical dump are slowly leaking into the Niagara River and ultimately Lake Ontario, according to expert testimony in U. S. District Court.

Separate testimony by two witnesses yesterday confirmed that soil and water samples taken along the Niagara River gorge north of Niagara Falls, N. Y., prove that a Hooker Chemical Co. dump continues to pose a threat to the waterways in the region.

"We found indications of lindane, PCBs and chlorobenzenes in both the water and the sediment," said E. Grant Anderson, a Markham, Ont., hydrogeologist.

Mr. Anderson said the samples were collected along the gorge wall on either side of the discharge point of Bloody Run Creek, a drainage system that historically was considered the only vehicle from the Hyde Park dump which is 400 metres from the river.

Testimony of Mr. Anderson and other experts came on the seventh and last day of a hearing that was convened to review the

details of a proposed cleanup agreement that followed both New York and U. S. lawsuits against Hooker.

U. S. Judge John Curtin presided throughout the hearing and will ultimately rule on the acceptability of the tentative settlement.

In his testimony, Mr. Anderson contradicted earlier testimony by saying that the toxins appear to be slowly migrating into the ground water below the dump and are then carried west to the gorge and discharged through the porous layers of rock into the river.

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency investigator Charles Morgan told Judge Curtin on the first day of the hearing that a team of scientists visited the gorge area on several occasions over the past two years and found no evidence of contamination. "We do not believe anything other than the gorge below Bloody Run Creek is contaminated," he said.

Mr. Anderson said he reviewed the proposed settlement by contractual agreement with Environment Canada but appeared at the hearing at the request of two Canadian environmental groups, Pollution Probe

of Toronto and Operation Clean — Niagara, of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

A senior Canadian Wildlife Service researcher, Douglas Hallett, said he was testifying under similar circumstances.

Mr. Hallett was called to the stand by Canadian Environmental Law Association attorney Toby Vigod to discuss the implications of the chemical migration into the river. Mr. Hallett said, the contents of the dump would have to be removed and shipped elsewhere for disposal because the margin for error in the proposed cleanup agreement was too great.

Mr. Hallett said the samples collected under Mr. Anderson's supervision were analyzed in Environment Canada laboratories in Burlington.

A major issue that emerged in the hearing was the question of removing the estimated 80,000 tonnes of chemicals from the dump as opposed to sealing them in place as proposed in the settlement agreement.

The environmentalists — who were allowed to enter the case earlier this year — insisted the wastes would have to be exhumed and either transported elsewhere or incinerated.

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