

Chemical Company Says 'No' To Review

After the May 20 chlorine gas release at Rhone-Poulenc, ACT joined a coalition of community, church, government, education and environmental leaders of the Kanawha Valley in calling for an independent investigation.

The coalition also requested the formation of a "Good Neighbor Agreement" between the company and the citizens of the Kanawha Valley.

Wendy Radcliff, a representative of Communities Concerned About Corporations, sent a letter dated June 7 to Van Long, manager of the Institute plant, making the requests.

Long's June 24 response was an unbending "no" to both requests.

In his letter Long said:

"After consideration of your request, it remains my belief that Rhone-Poulenc handled all aspects of the May 20th incident properly and that an independent investigation is not needed.

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Joined By Citizen Advocates

Brown & Root Campaign Handbills Texas Workers

The Brown & Root organizing campaign is moving across the country thanks to the efforts of Steve Midkiff, organizer for the Charleston Building Trades.

Midkiff and Wendy Radcliff, a member of Communities Concerned About Corporations (CCC), made a trip to Texas in mid-June to attend a CCC convention.

Discussed were programs involving communities, workers and environmentalist in organizing and safety issues.

There also were representatives from local environmental and labor groups across the country, Radcliff said, including Texas, Michigan, Kentucky, Indiana, Arizona, New Jersey, Massachusetts, New York and Louisiana, all of which discussed embarking on a national Brown & Root organizing campaign.

While there, the group, together with local building trades members, handbilled an Amoco facility in Texas City,

Texas, telling Brown & Root workers about the organizing campaign in West Virginia and asking if they get transferred,

to support the unionizing effort.

Brown & Root's president, Tom E. Knight, also got the

message through a group "fax-in". Various representatives at the CCC meeting called on Knight to stop delaying the Brown & Root organizing vote, to end the media charade, and to get down to business in West Virginia or get out.

Handbills also went to 1500 Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers Union members at the Shell oil refinery in Pasadena, Texas and at Marathon Oil's refinery in Texas City. Brown & Root is at both sites, the Marathon Oil plant is the site of a Brown & Root mis-hap that forced the 3,000 residents of Texas City to evacuate in 1987.

Midkiff also got a chance to talk with Building Trades representatives at Union Carbide's Texas City plant. Union Carbide is signed to a Metal Trades agreement there, directly employing over 900 construction

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HANDBILLING TEXAS Brown & Root workers at a Marathon Oil facility in Texas City, Texas, recently were West Virginians Wendy Radcliff (left) and Steve Midkiff.

LU 565 Members Awarded Degrees

Eighteen Plumbers & Pipefitters from Parkersburg Local Union 565 added an associate's

degree to their resumes in late May with help from the Bureau of Apprentice Training.

The bureau had granted them 57 college credit hours for their apprenticeship work.

The building trades' Construction Trades Training & Advancement Program paid for a portion of 14 of the students' tuition. The local's apprentice program paid for a portion of the other four. All of the students paid for the remainder of their tuition.

The group only needed an *(Continued On Page 3)*

Evading Contractors Subject Of Talks

ACT Officials, Wise Meet

ACT officials met with Congressman Bob Wise in early July to discuss contractors skirting the law on public works projects.

Those meeting with Wise were ACT President Bruce Tarpley, Bill Thomas, industrial sector representative, and Ronny Burdette, business agent for Operating En-

gineers Local Union 132 headquartered in Charleston.

"We wanted to supply Congressman Wise with a working man's point of view," Thomas said. "The information we supplied him will be helpful when he deals with these

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Carpenters & Joiners Local 302

Carpenters' Adkins Anticipates Local Will Be Stronger After Worst Decade

Local 302 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America in Huntington has been through one of the worst decades in its history, according to Freddy Adkins, business manager and financial secretary.

"But for those who stuck with it, I think we'll be even stronger," he said.

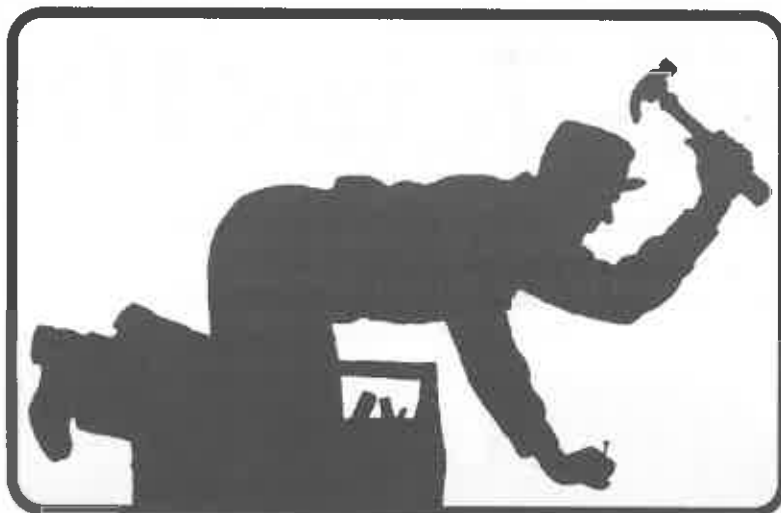
The local has 300 members--225 active and 25 percent unemployed.

Currently the local has 20 apprentices.

The apprenticeship program takes four years to complete and includes at least 144 training hours per year.

The members do commercial and industrial new renova-

tions, concrete formwork, dry-wall, carpet, ceilings, floors, and new construction among other things.



A big concern for the members is the non-union element taking over the small commercial workload, particularly fast

food restaurants, doctor's offices and gas stations, Adkins said.

"We lose a lot of small com-

mercial jobs to non-union, and occasionally a large one," he said.

"We need to fight for our

commercial work. It's our bread and butter."

Adkins said his members feel very positive about ACT.

"We're well pleased--we think they're doing a tremendous job," he added.

"Personally, I think we gain political stature by being informed about the situation.

"We can do more in the front running if we're alerted on things from the political realm. We agents don't have the time to get politically involved."

Adkins believes if ACT takes care of the big things, his members can take care of handbills, pickets and the rest.

"ACT and the Building Trades are really helping members locally," he said.

Hearings Continue On B&R

The National Labor Relations Board ordered Brown & Root to continue with hearings from July 7-23, although the company might prefer a delay.

"We don't think it will take that long," said Business Manager Bubby Casto of the Charleston Building Trades. "They're arguing over nine people."

It has already been decided that Brown & Root's technical staff, foremen and above cannot vote. Clerical staff will be decided during July hearings.

"It took three months to argue their side when it should have taken a week," Casto said. "It will take us less than a week."

"If the vote goes as well as the hearings have, we have nothing to worry about," he said.

Parkersburg DuPont Contract Studied

Since last summer the Marietta-Parkersburg Building Trade Council has had discussions with M-K Ferguson and DuPont about the contract at the Washington Works plant.

DuPont officials have been pushing for reductions in their overall construction costs.

DuPont's Claims

DuPont claimed that the Washington Works site had the highest rate of all their plants when fringe benefits and wages were added together.

Figures presented for June of 1992 showed that workers at Washington Works made an average wage plus fringes of \$21.72 compared to Louisville, Kentucky at \$18.81; and New Johnsonville, Tennessee, \$18.51; at the top of the scale. Belle, West Virginia was at \$12.31, next to the bottom of the scale. Brown & Root is the contractor at the Belle plant.

DuPont claimed they needed

a 20-25 percent reduction in costs and pushed for pre-apprentices, more apprentices, multi-craft crews, no premiums for weekend or shift work and more unskilled workers.

M-K Ferguson works under the "General Presidents" agreement issued by a committee of building trades International Presidents to DuPont.

A General Presidents agreement is requested by the owner, DuPont, and is used by any contractor the owner chooses.

The owner agrees to keep at least one person working under the agreement for one year.

This agreement grants the contractor a 90 percent wage rate, standard contract language for all crafts, and the ability to request specific people from the union halls.

Meetings between the local building trades, M-K Ferguson and DuPont proceeded through the Fall and Winter of

1992 with continuing discussion of the issues.

Some items, like working four 10s, where available to contractors under the current agreement but were not being used.

The trades made efforts to use more apprentices, lower the number of non-foremen getting foremen's rate, and eliminate jurisdictional disputes.

Local Input

Because the agreement covering the construction work in the plant is between the General Presidents Committee and DuPont, the purpose of the local meetings was to provide local input to the agreement.

At one point members from the local contractors association and representatives from companies in the area attended a meeting to express their interest in the agreement.

The decision on whether M-K Ferguson would stay in the plant as the preferred contractor is up to DuPont.

DuPont's message was clear, either reduce wage costs or another contractor would be brought in. Brown & Root and BE&K currently perform work for Dupont in other parts of the country.

Through these discussions a proposal was finally offered to the trades in early April.

That offer included a provision for up to 40 percent of the work force to be apprentices, half of those must be first year apprentices who can't make any more than 40 percent of the journeyman's 90 percent rate.

Other provisions called for a Friday makeup day, time-and-one-half for Fridays that are not makeup days and also Saturdays, and double time for Sunday.

Each local agreed to consider the proposal, most brought it to vote before to their membership. The electricians and the laborers voted to accept the agreement, the other crafts turned it down.

Presidents Okay

On June 2, the General President's Committee reviewed the agreement for the Washington Works site and by majority vote accepted the proposal that had been discussed with the local building trades.

Even though the majority of local unions rejected the pact, the contract is between the General Presidents Committee and DuPont. It is now the agreement being worked under at the plant.

Some of the local unions are upset by the action taken by the General Presidents Committee.

They are reviewing what options they now have.

Contractors Targeted

ACT Receiving Job Complaints At Postal Project

The Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation's prevailing wage program has received numerous complaints about contractors working at the new U.S. Postal Service building construction site on Corridor G near Charleston.

The job is an example of problems in the construction industry, and how the ACT program works.

Tim Millne, ACT's fair contracting representative, began monitoring the project last November.

Millne visited the site to see posted wage rates. He also talked with the contractor and the Postal Service representative about hiring illegal aliens.

A letter was sent to Russ Greenwood, project manager for the prime contractor, Haskell Construction Co. of Jacksonville Florida, explaining ACT's program.

"We told him we'd be back to monitor and request certified payrolls on other contractors," Millne said.

Although no documentation was found on illegal aliens, Millne checked the payrolls and found plenty of evidence that suggested wage violations.

The payrolls showed employees labeled independent contractors. Others were classified as journeymen early in the project and later changed to apprentices.

Even more troublesome was the large amount of money being put into "pension" funds, as much as \$5 per hour for some workers.

"If a contractor signs payroll documents saying things are fine, and they're not, he's in

trouble," said Millne.

Millne took this information to the U.S. Department of Labor's compliance officer to see what could be done.

Unfortunately, like many government agencies, the compliance officer was unwilling to investigate without a complaint from an employee.

Not to be denied, Millne mailed a survey to as many employees on the job as he could find. The survey asked how the worker was paid, the hours of work, classifications and more. Eight workers have answered the survey with legitimate complaints.

Complaints have been made against Haskell Construction Co., Glenco, Inc., Woodward Painting, and Stanley Jones Co.

Millne said everyone who lodged a complaint was willing to sign a affidavit stating that they were cheated out of wages or benefits.

"Now we're pursuing the
(Continued On Page 4)

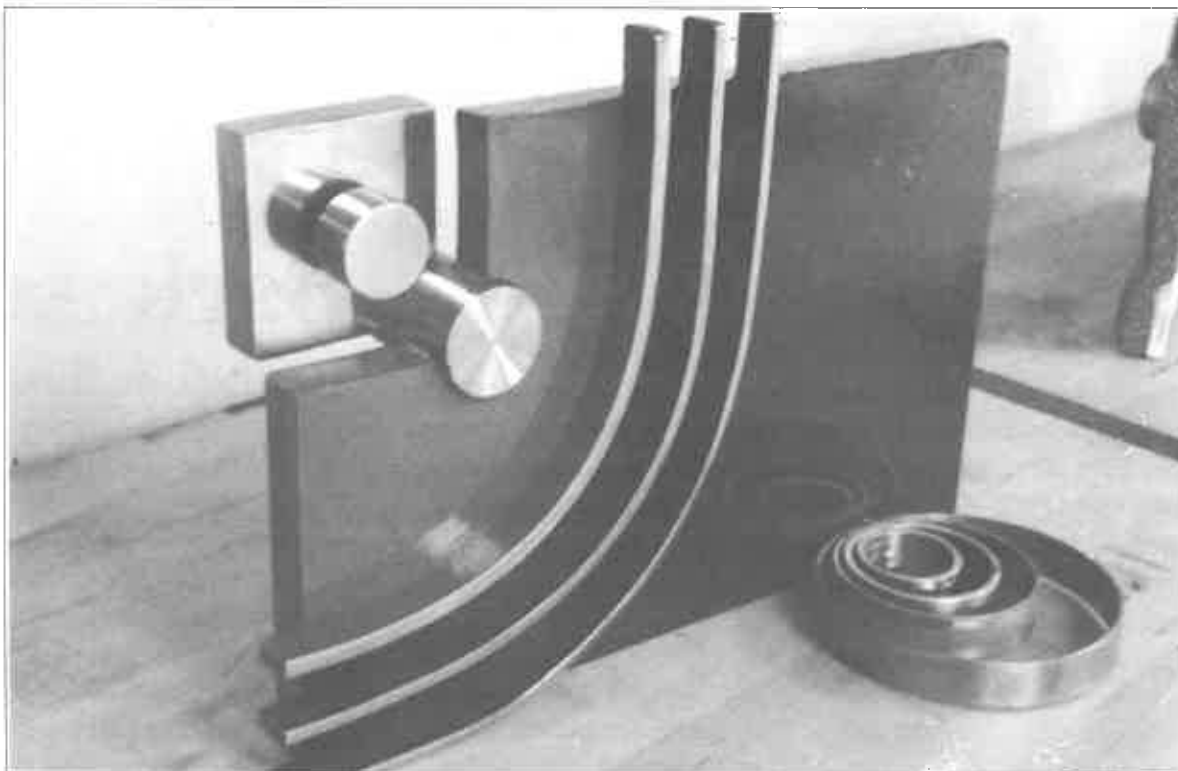
Rhone-Poulenc Nixes Signing 'Good Neighbor Agreement'

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"... OSHA has been on site to review this incident; however the results are yet to be delivered."

He goes on to explain why Rhone-Poulenc will not sign the "Good Neighbor Agreement" here as they did in Texas.

"The Houston, Texas facility had a unique situation. First, at the time of the proposal there were no community group or committees in place to discuss



WELDED MODERN ART like the piece above was produced by apprentices of Plumbers & Pipefitters Local Union 565 in Parkersburg recently. The art was part of a course that led to associate degrees for 18 members.

Local 565 Apprentices Earn Associate Degrees

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additional five classes in subjects such as English, art, and interpersonal communication for them to graduate.

They received a two-year degree in applied science and educational development from the Parkersburg branch of West Virginia University.

Gary Yarnell, training coordinator for the local, said this program gives credence to the

565's apprentice training.

"In this age of continuing education it shows that apprentice training is a very important step between the high school education and getting a job."

Yarnell was also one of the 18 to graduate. He said he felt the experience was a positive one for the group.

"I thought all of us know how to do our job, and do it well," he said. "But the inter-

personal communication class made us aware how important communication is--even in an everyday on the job.

Yarnell said not only did they learn a lot from the classes, but the instructors learned from their training them, too.

"The art instructor had always wanted to do a metal sculpture class, but had never been given the opportunity," he explained.

"Since all of us had experience with welding, we did the sculptures and the instructor really enjoyed it.

"It was actually the most time-consuming of the classes, but it added a dimension to our schooling."

issues.

"Secondly, the agreement was established specifically as part of the permitting process for the hazardous waste facility.

"Our situation in Institute is obviously different."

ACT Director Steve White said:

"In other words, Rhone Poulenc wants to choose who it meets with, and it won't sign a Good Neighbor agreement here

because it doesn't have a permit problem.

"We don't understand how Rhone Poulenc can sign on the Chemical Manufacturers Responsible Care program who's motto is 'Don't Trust Us - Track Us', and then turn their back on our request?

"By remaining inflexible in their attitude, Rhone-Poulenc fails to prove it is willing to answer our community's concerns."

The ACT Report

A monthly publication of the Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation, an association of West Virginia building and construction trades local unions, with offices in Charleston.

Officers: Bruce Tarpley, President; Earl Johnson, Vice President; Samuel Saul, Financial Secretary; Allen Fisher, Executive Director; Steve White, Director.

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Millwrights' Award Ceremony, Contest For Apprenticeship

Parkersburg-based Millwrights Local 1755 held a graduation/award ceremony June 5 for seven apprentices.

All students eligible for graduation were also entered into a statewide apprenticeship contest, which is a preliminary to the international apprenticeship competition.

Robert Kerby of Walker was top scorer. He won \$200 and an expense paid trip to the International Millwrights Apprenticeship Contest in Minnesota in September.

The two day contest consisted of a written exam, welding test, and full day hands-on test covering all facets of training, including coupling alignment and blueprint reading.

Independent judges included a company representative, an out-of-state business agent.

Dick Ullum, business manager of LU 1755, said the apprentices usually do well.

"Two years ago we placed second in the nationals," Ullum

said. "This year we hope to repeat that or do even better."

Local 1755 covers the entire state of West Virginia except for the Eastern Panhandle.

Postal Project

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different avenues we can use to take these complaints to the Department of Labor," he said.

Alleged violations included not paying the prevailing wage rate, bogus apprenticeship programs, and the improper use of benefit funds. There also were allegations about shoddy work.

"What's great and unique about our program is it only takes one letter to start an investigation," Millne said.

"The problem with these contractors is they don't just cheat by accident, they plan to cheat from day one because they think nobody is watching.

"Well, now someone is watching them and we blow a loud whistle."

Local Union 625

Plumbers & Pipefitters Back ACT's B&R Fight

"Our big reason for joining ACT is the Brown & Root situation," said Sammy Saul, business manager for Charleston-based Plumbers & Pipefitters Local Union 625.

When asked if he thought ACT is making progress with Brown & Root, Saul said:

"Oh yeah, we're moving in the right direction, but it takes time. I'd like to tell everyone to be patient, we're getting there."

"Hopefully, we can get Brown & Root to live by the standards we've set in West Virginia. That's our main objective. Workers deserve to have decent living standards."

Saul estimates that 80 percent of the 300 active members are working. The local has 500 members and 200 retirees.

"We do pneumatic temperature control in commercial buildings, pipefitting, plumbing, and welding, among other things," Saul said.

"The local's 25 apprentices

must complete five years of training in order to reach journeyman status."

for his members. He said perhaps ACT could help with this, too.

Howard Thomas is president of Local 625 and Jim Leach is financial secretary/treasurer.

The local covers 13 southern West Virginia Counties.

ACT/Wise

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issues in the future."

The three also expressed their concern that West Virginia has become a "gold mine" for contractors who cheat workers for higher profit.

"Contractors come in from out-of-state and are able to exploit our people because of the high unemployment here," added Tarpley.

"Without a union to fight for the workers they become victims of these thieves. We see it every day."

Congressman Wise has been very active in bringing jobs to West Virginia.



Saul said that securing federally funded work is a concern

Trades, Citizens Handbill Texas B&R

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and production workers doing maintenance and plant operations.

After hearing about the work ACT is doing here in West Virginia, the Texas City Labor Council voiced an interest in forming an organization similar to ACT.

"It felt good letting the people of Texas City know what good things ACT has been doing, and encouraging them to embark on the same thing," Radcliff said.

Added Midkiff:

"We got some solidarity with other unions and between the environmental groups, who realize they can't shut these plants down, but the next best thing is

union workers who do care if they spill chemicals. They realize it's going to affect them, as well as their families.

"There were community groups, lawyers, college professors and environmental

Parkersburg Meet To Get Follow-Up

As a follow up to the recent Parkersburg meetings, ACT will be sending letters to the members who attended.

ACT's industrial sector representative, Bill Thomas, said he is going to target certain projects in the area. The letters will be to inform members what will happen with the targeted projects, which were chosen and why.

groups, all agreeing that we need to organize these plants."

"We also had a chance to contact folks who got Rhone Poulenc to sign a 'Good Neighbor Agreement' at its Manchester plant near Houston."

Radcliff said she and Midkiff got a copy of the agreement -- ". . . and it is very similar to what we asked for at Institute."

CCC met with ACT and Building Trades representatives last fall in Charleston.

The feeling of national solidarity was the highlight of the trip for Midkiff.

"It's amazing that Texas is a non-union state and they're ready to organize," he said.

"The best thing for me was I realized our work is not just for

West Virginia, it's for the United States," he said.

"Our fathers and grandfathers fought hard to make this a union state, but everyone should have the same rights as we do."

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