
By

LEE ANN POWELL

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of History

December 2013

© Copyright by LEE ANN POWELL, 2013
All Rights Reserved
To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of LEE ANN POWELL find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

___________________________________
Jeffrey Sanders, Ph.D., Chair

___________________________________
Robert Bauman, Ph.D.

___________________________________
Laurie Mercier, Ph.D.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have completed this project without the help and support of numerous individuals and institutions. I would like to thank the staffs of the National Archives II, the Hoover Institution Archives, University of Washington Special Collections, and the Richland Library. I extend a special thanks to Terrance Fehner at the Department of Energy; Connie Estep, René Legler, and the entire staff of the Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science, and Technology Museum; and Cheryl Gunselman, Trevor James Bond, and Pat Mueller at Washington State University Manuscripts Archives, and Special Collections. I also wish to acknowledge the many Tri-Citians who discussed their experiences at length with me, in particular Cliff Groth and Ronald Kathren. I also owe a debt to the many friends and colleagues who read drafts of this project including Jennifer Brown, Katy Fry, Lesley Moerschel, and Mary Kovel. I also wish to express my deep appreciation for the academic guidance and financial support of the Department of History at Washington State University especially the Pettyjohn Research Fellowship for the study of the Pacific Northwest and my patient and encouraging committee Jeffrey Craig Sanders, Robert Bauman, and Laurie Mercier. Finally, I would like to thank my oldest and dearest friend, Leslie Miller; my parents, Bill and Mary Williams; and above all my partner Joel Tishken. Completing a graduate degree takes more time and energy than most of us initially anticipate and it is those closest to us that sacrifice the most.
This study explores the atomic identity and nuclear politics of Richlanders and Tri-Citians through an analysis of the collision points between local atomic culture, federal nuclear policy, and the antinuclear environmental movement. Between 1943 and 1989, nuclear supporters in the Tri-Cities and in the nation moved from the center to the outskirts of American politics and values. Pronuclear Tri-Citians in the early post-war period influenced the course of federal nuclear policy in their efforts to maintain and grow the local economy. By the 1980s, however, the political and cultural power of pronuclear Tri-Citians decreased as the nation moved away from nuclear power and limited the production of atomic bomb-making materials. This national realignment pushed pronuclear Tri-Citians toward the conservative antienvironmental camp. Deeply rooted in the community’s Manhattan Project heritage and World War II victory narrative, pronuclear Tri-Citians’ environmental politics developed in relation to their
work at Hanford, the geopolitical division in Washington state, and the modern
environmental movement. Using the experiences of pronuclear Richlanders and Tri-
Citians, I show how divisions over nuclear technology contributed to the state’s and the
nation’s growing political and cultural divide.

While Richland and the Tri-Cities were not unique in their allegiance to nuclear
power or dependence on federal money, the community’s relative isolation, the profound
effects of the Manhattan Project on the area, and the ongoing economic and
psychological dependence of the community on Hanford, render these cities an excellent
case study of the long-term political and cultural effects of atomic production. The
antinuclear environmental movement’s message characterized Hanford as a source of
danger and cast Hanford’s managers, scientists, and engineers as sinister atomic secret
keepers. This image stood in stark contrast to the community’s vision of themselves as
World War II heroes and Cold War patriots, and investigating the points of conflict
between these two narratives brings to the fore nuclear technology’s role in the culture
wars and growing division between conservative and liberal Americans.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Chapter 1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Chapter 2</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chapter 3</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Chapter 4</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Chapter 5</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

In June of 1988 a delegation of hibakusha—Japanese atomic bomb survivors—visited Richland, Washington. The delegation came to the United States in May to attend a United Nations’ special session on disarmament. Richland, home to the Hanford nuclear site, located in eastern Washington state comprises one-third of the metropolitan complex known as the Tri-Cities, along with Pasco and Kennewick. Following the United Nations’ special session, the Japanese delegates embarked on a tour of nuclear facilities around the country. World Citizens for Peace, a small antinuclear organization, sponsored the visitors while in the Tri-Cities.¹ Tour organizers arranged a meeting between the delegation and Richland School District representatives. The Japanese peace advocates arrived eager to speak with district officials about the Richland High School mascot. Shortly after World War II, the high school students adopted “Bombers” as the school mascot to honor their parents’ work at Hanford as part of the Manhattan Project’s top secret mission to develop an atomic bomb. Richland High School typically symbolized the mascot as a capital “R” superimposed over a mushroom cloud. During the meeting, the hibakusha described the mushroom cloud as a symbol of destruction, worked to convince the school district to adopt a more peaceful alternative, and suggested the school use rainbows or pigeons as a mascot. Despite the delegation’s intention to promote

¹ World Citizens for Peace promotes their group as “the only peace and nuclear disarmament organization at the Hanford Site since 1982.” This is an important declaration since antinuclear sentiments and organizations otherwise originated outside the community. The group formed in 1982 as part of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign. They view nuclear weapons as the “greatest threat to all life on earth.” Jim Stoffles, “Message from the Chairman,” World Citizens for Peace, last modified May 2013, http://wcpeace.org/home.htm#who.
peace and mutual understanding, the meeting quickly turned into a tension-filled confrontation.²

In response to the proposition that district officials change the school’s mascot to rainbows or pigeons, Richland High School principal, John G. Nash, explained that customarily sports teams in the United States adopted more ferocious nicknames. Nash further indicated that while the community favored nuclear disarmament and did not want any more wars, the students remained overwhelmingly in favor of the Bomber mascot. Nash argued that the symbol represented “the power of nuclear energy and science, and the region’s history,” not “war and destruction.” The tension rose when one visitor, 77 year old atomic bomb survivor Sakae Ito, lectured Nash at length about the mushroom cloud’s military symbolism. Ito found Nash’s explanation unconvincing and simply could not fathom why the school proudly sported a symbol of shame. She pleaded with Nash and the school district to consider a change. Frustrated by the encounter, Nash exclaimed that “it was not his country that started the war” and that he “would not change the mascot.” Nash then stormed from the meeting to the cheers of local residents attending the gathering.³

Nash’s and the community’s interpretation of the Richland High School Bomber mascot proved incompatible with the hibakusha’s understanding of the mushroom

³ Geranios, “ ‘We Did Not Start War’ ”; “Richland Principal Walks Out”; and D’Antonio, Atomic Harvest, 6-31.
cloud’s meaning. While the atomic bomb survivors pictured death and destruction, Nash and Richland High School students envisioned community heritage and pride. By the late 1980s, Richland and the largely pronuclear Tri-Cities found itself at odds not only with the hibakusha, but with prevailing national sentiments about the safety of nuclear technology, the renewal of the Cold War under president Ronald Reagan, and historical interpretation of their community. Increasingly the pronuclear community’s political and cultural voice waned along with Hanford’s production mission and nuclear power’s reputation. In 1989 the Department of Energy reoriented Hanford’s mission from nuclear production to environmental remediation. With the economic future uncertain and community heritage threatened, pronuclear Tri-Citians, the primary subjects of this work, rebuffed the Japanese visitors’ suggestion, staunchly defended work at Hanford and nuclear power, and clung tenaciously to symbols like the Richland High School mushroom cloud.

This work focuses on the experiences of pronuclear Tri-Citians, the formation of their atomic identity, and the development of their views about nuclear technology and the environment. Three central questions drive this study. What were the cultural and political origins of postwar anti-environmentalism? What role did nuclear politics play in growing regional and national partisan divisions? How can a community almost completely economically dependent on federal spending scorn their federal patrons? To answer these questions, this work highlights the world-view of pronuclear Tri-Citians
through an analysis of the collision points between local atomic culture, federal nuclear policy, and the antinuclear environmental movement.

Largely absent from the two primary threads of Hanford scholarship, this study of the formation, growth, and atomic identity of pronuclear Tri-Citians offers an explanation of the systematic development of an environmental opposition group.⁴ The bulk of academic attention on post-war environmental political discourse centers on the roots, course, character, and actions of the modern environmental movement that coalesced in the 1960s.⁵ Unlike the conservation and preservation movements of the late nineteenth century, modern environmentalists broadened their concerns from conserving natural resources and preserving wilderness areas, to include pollution control, preservation of a wide range of landscapes, concern for environmental equality, and promoting sustainable human interaction with the natural world. Scholars, however, pay only cursory attention to the environmental opposition, groups or individuals who oppose these efforts and their

origins and motivations. In one recent work on Hanford history the authors lamented that “at times is seemed as if the environmental movement, which exerted so pervasive an influence on the country after 1970 had somehow bypassed the Tri-Cities.” I argue that the environmental movement did not “bypass” the Tri-Cities and by focusing on the experience of pronuclear Tri-Citians this work shows that the movement exerted considerable influence on the area. Pronuclear Tri-Citians’ environmental opposition, deeply rooted in the community’s Manhattan Project heritage, developed concurrently with the embattled nuclear industry and as a reaction to modern environmentalism.

Interpreting and remembering America’s nuclear weapons program and places like Hanford proves problematic for historians. The World War II victory narrative and national pride in atomic scientific achievements sits uncomfortably along side Hiroshima’s death toll. While pronuclear Tri-Citians Cold War patriotism abides uneasily with the festering legacy of nuclear waste, diseased down-winders, and cancer-ridden atomic workers. The dissonance between these competing and seemingly irreconcilable atomic histories famously clashed during the Enola Gay controversy at the height of the 1980s culture wars. In 1988 the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum (NASM) began work on an exhibit featuring the B-29 bomber, Enola Gay, which

---

8 The term culture war is used to describe the conflict between the traditional/conservative (belief in returning to or maintain the values and traditions of the past) and progressive/liberal (belief in embracing new values and questioning the traditions of the past) elements in American society. For some analysis and history on the culture wars in the United States see James Davison Hunter, Culture Wars; The Struggle to Define America (New York: Basic Books, 1992); Richard Jensen, “The Culture Wars, 1965-1993: A Historians Map,” Journal of Social History 29, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 17-37; and Irene Travis Thomson, Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010).
dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Entitled “The Last Act: the Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II,” curators planned the exhibit as part of NASM’s World War II fiftieth-anniversary commemoration. World War II veterans opposed NASM’s exhibit script and argued the narrative sympathized too much with the Japanese and did not honor World War II veterans. Historians, journalists, veterans groups, and museum curators jumped into the controversy’s fray debating the meaning, interpretation, and memory of the aircraft and atomic weapons. Unable to find a mutually acceptable middle-ground interpretation, the NASM exhibit opened in 1995 and featured the plane’s fuselage without accompanying analysis of the atomic bomb’s significance.  

Like the Enola Gay, deeply opposing meanings plague the interpretation of Hanford history and the overwhelming focus on the two polarized visions of Hanford obscures the experiences of pronuclear Tri-Citians.  

Prior to the 1980s, scholars and journalist recounted Hanford history within the triumphal World War II Manhattan Project narrative. Largely national in scale, these accounts provided little detail about the largely industrial plutonium production facilities at Hanford. These histories centered on the Manhattan Project’s physicists, scientific

---


10 Findlay and Hevly, Atomic Frontier Days, 4-5.
achievements, and celebrated the atomic bomb’s contribution to ending World War II.\textsuperscript{11} Although Manhattan Project scholars often provided little information on Hanford, local historians, journalists, boosters, and residents crafted and celebrated Hanford, Richland, and Tri-Cities history within this rubric of victory, progress, and scientific achievement.\textsuperscript{12}

Beginning in the 1980s, Manhattan Project scholarship shifted and recast Hanford and the nuclear weapons production narrative. More critical inquiries of World War II, the rise of the environmental movement, and the opening of federal Manhattan Project and Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) archives initiated a new generation of scholarship. Historians and journalists turned their focus to the human and environmental health consequences of nuclear weapons development.\textsuperscript{13} The new accounts paid more


attention to Hanford. This scholarship featured local down-winders, contaminated workers, and characterized the nuclear site with its large radioactive waste cache as a historic and ongoing threat to the region. Pronuclear Tri-Citians, when they surface in these histories, appear as misguided, co-conspirators of the federal government and nuclear weapons complex with little consideration of the development of their worldview. This revisionist literature called the Manhattan Project victory narrative into question, brought attention to the environmental problems at federal nuclear sites, and unwittingly affronted Tri-City community identity and heritage which remained unrevised and tightly entwined with the Manhattan Project victory narrative.

Some scholars, however, have attempted to present Hanford and Tri-Cities history outside the two dominant narratives. In his 1997 offering, Atomic Spaces: Living on the Manhattan Project, Peter Bacon Hales deconstructed the Manhattan Project’s victory narrative with an exploration of the project’s cultural geography. Hales effectively refocused the story from project physicists, scientific achievements, and World War II success with an analysis of how the Manhattan Project transformed the people, landscapes, and built environment at its three secret sites: Hanford, Oak Ridge, and Los Alamos. Hales’ project, in a sense, provided an origin story of American atomic culture.
in the Manhattan Project and an analysis of how this atomic culture took shape at each of the principal Manhattan Project sites. *Atomic Spaces*, however, ends with the close of World War II. While Hales suggested that the Manhattan Project’s newly formed atomic culture, values, and beliefs dispersed “into the many streams of American life,” how it did so is not clear.\(^{16}\) For some scholars tracing the ephemeral threads of atomic culture dispersed into post-war American life results in an attempt to analyze popular culture for public reaction to nuclear weapons and Cold War politics. This project, however, examines how the Manhattan Project’s atomic cultural legacy continued to shape Hanford’s people and landscapes in a more concrete way.\(^{17}\) While atomic culture influenced the nation as a whole, the Tri-Cities’ atomic cultural geography remained largely undiluted and so provides a tangible example of how nuclear weapons production affected politics, landscapes, and values after 1945.

In *Atomic Frontier Days: Hanford and the American West*, John M. Findlay and Bruce Hevly moved further from the two dominant narratives in their search for a middle-ground of Hanford and nuclear weapons history. Working within the regional rubric of the United States’ West as a region specially influenced by federal presence and nuclear programs, Findlay and Hevly’s account placed Hanford in a regional perspective

\(^{16}\) Peter Bacon Hales, *Atomic Spaces: Living on the Manhattan Project* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 1-5.

and consciously avoided the national Manhattan Project victory narrative and revisionist story of environmental decline.\(^{18}\) Their work constituted both a geographic and philosophical middle-ground between the two dominant interpretations. Findlay and Hevly successfully demonstrated the regional importance of Hanford, but did so by largely excluding the two traditional narratives. I argue that the Manhattan Project victory narrative and Hanford’s environmental legacy profoundly shaped regional and national nuclear environmental politics and can not be set aside. This project, thus, explores a different middle ground; the meeting places between the two dominant narratives and in doing so demonstrates the growth and development of anti-environmental sentiments and how nuclear politics contributed to the late twentieth-century culture wars, and the schism between the urban and rural West and the Republican and Democratic parties.

In 1943, Manhattan Engineering District leaders chose eastern Washington’s Priest Rapids and Lower Yakima Valleys as the location for the top secret project’s

plutonium production facility. During World War II the federal government utilized the West as a massive staging area for the war effort and laid the foundations for the region’s dependence on the Cold War military industrial complex and attracted millions of Americans to the region. The MED and the Manhattan Project, I argue, are the origins of the Tri-Cities’ atomic identity and anti-environmental pronuclear world-view. Chapter One, “Forging the Atomic Frontier,” describes life-ways on the Mid-Columbia in the pre-atomic era prior to 1943 and examines the MED’s conversion of the Lower Yakima and Priest Rapids valleys (location of Richland, Hanford, and White Bluffs) from hubs of small independent farmers to a federal nuclear complex hinterland. While the World War II Manhattan Project victory narrative became the framework of local history following 1945, the Mid-Columbia was not an empty region awaiting its atomic destiny. The MED’s vision of the landscapes clashed with those of the local Wanapum tribe and the area’s Euroamerican farming community. The two dominate narratives of Hanford history largely push Hanford’s pre-atomic era to the margins and Tri-City history remains bifurcated between the area’s evolution following the arrival of the MED and the pre-atomic era.19 While not a seamless fusion, this exploration of the meeting places between

19 Pre-atomic history, primarily the domain of authors with personal connections to the eradicated towns of Hanford and Whitebluffs or Wanapum tribe scholars evolved separately from Hanford’s story. For histories and memories of the Lower Yakima and Priest Rapids Valley settlers before the MEDs arrival see Margaret Thompson, Historical Background of Benton and Franklin Counties (Richland, WA: Columbia High School, 1945); Mary Powell Harris, Goodbye, White Bluffs (Yakima, WA: Franklin Press, 1972); Ted Van Arsdol, Desert Boom and Bust: the Story of Irrigation Efforts and Town Building in Benton County, Washington, 1888-1904 (Vancouver, WA: , 1972); Martha Berry Parker, Tales of Richland, White Bluffs & Hanford, 1805-1943: Before the Atomic Reserve (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1979); and Nancy Mendenhall, Orchards of Eden: White Bluffs on the Columbia, 1907-1943 (Seattle: Far Eastern Press, 2006). For overviews of Wanapum Indians see Click Relander, Drummers and Dreamers: the Story of Snowhala the Prophet and His Nephew Puck Hyah Toot, the Last Prophet of the Nearly Extinct River
the MED’s and pre-atomic residents vision of Mid-Columbia landscapes helps to knit together the area’s histories and more importantly provides a more nuanced exploration of the MED’s role in the origins of pronuclear Tri-Citians world view and anti-environmental sentiments.

Chapter Two, “‘The Long Road to Self-Government,’” argues that despite Richland’s MED origins and continued federal management, Richland’s “citizen-workers” shaped post-war Richland and exerted significant influence over AEC policy. With the onset of the Cold War on the heels of World War II, federal military investment in the West continued deepening the region’s involvement in the military industrial complex and, in places like Richland, deepening community dependence on federal defense dollars. The chapter outlines Richland and Hanford expansion in the post-war era, details life in the federal post-war company town, and features the clash between Richland’s citizen-workers and the AEC over privatization of the federally owned community. In 1947 the AEC assumed control of the Hanford Engineering Works and the responsibility to ensure worker morale, high plutonium output, and nuclear secrecy. In the 1950s, AEC officials moved to rid the agency of community management in the nation’s atomic cities (Richland, Oak Ridge, TN and Los Alamos, NM). Richland’s citizen-workers, however, remained reluctant to purchase Richland houses and assume


20 Only Hanford employees and their families could reside in government owned and controlled post-war Richland. These citizen-workers—often well-educated engineers, chemists, and technicians—traded freedom of speech, property ownership, and the right to publish their research findings for patriotism and exciting well-paid work at Hanford.
full responsibility of a regular community. The AEC, unable to force Richland’s citizen-workers to purchase homes and invest in their city, needed to maintain a contented Hanford workforce and plutonium output and acceded to most of the community’s demands during privatization. Richland’s citizen-workers embellished, used, and reinforced their atomic identity and Manhattan Project victory narrative to win concessions from the AEC. Their critical role within the nuclear weapons complex provided Richland’s citizen-workers with considerable political leverage. Far from powerless wards of the federal government, Richland’s citizen-workers successfully pressured the AEC into providing continued city subsidies and low housing prices during the transfer to community self-government.

In 1964, following the privatization of Richland, the federal government moved to reduce the nation’s plutonium production and the AEC targeted Hanford’s reactors for decommissioning. By the early 1960s the nation’s nuclear stockpiles reached critical mass. Improved intelligence suggested that the United States outpaced the Soviet Union in atomic weapons and the two countries looked increasingly to détente to ease geopolitical tension, particularly in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis. While most western industry successfully managed to shift war time initiated industry to civilian production, Hanford could not simply retool to produce a civilian product. Local business leaders, however, stalled the AEC’s efforts, influenced federal nuclear policy, and kept Hanford dependent on the nuclear industry. Chapter Three, “The Tri-City Nuclear Industrial Council” demonstrates the expansion of Richland-Hanford atomic culture to
the Tri-Cities at large in the post-war years and analyzes the clash between this identity and changing federal atomic policy in the 1960s. I argue that following the privatization of Richland, local business leaders, primarily through the *Tri-City Herald* newspaper and the Tri-City Nuclear Industrial Council (TCNIC), took on greater responsibility for maintaining community growth, promoting atomic culture, and retaining Hanford’s well-paid workforce. Following the AEC’s plan to reduce weapons-grade plutonium production, Tri-Cities business leaders with the help of influential state politicians successfully lobbied the federal government to maintain Hanford operations for the good of the community. These business leaders acted as the representatives of Tri-Citians and the public interest to the AEC, the state, and federal government in Hanford and community development matters. These business leaders largely operated without opposition from other community representatives and in their efforts to secure the growth and development of the Tri-Cities, significantly influenced federal nuclear policy at Hanford. Tri-Cities business leaders, despite their rhetoric of economic diversification, actively worked to maintain plutonium production at Hanford, develop nuclear power at the site, and attract new federal research and development projects to the Mid-Columbia.

21 Sarah S. Elkind, *How Local Politics Shape Federal Policy: Business, Power, and the Environment in Twentieth Century Los Angeles* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 4-7. In this book Elkind examines at the results of the business community’s increasing influence local public policy and politics in the post-World War II era. Using the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce as a case study, she shows how Los Angeles business leaders, acting as representatives of the public good, defined the terms of environmental debates in the city and significantly influenced state and federal policy with their efforts. Tri-Cities business leaders acted in much the same way. Thus, Elkind’s and this study suggest that local post-war business leaders and organizations and their role in shaping post-war America deserve greater attention.
In much the same way that the Richland-Hanford creation narrative suggested that the Manhattan Project found the perfect location for plutonium production on the Mid-Columbia in 1943, TCNIC envisioned Hanford and its workers as destined for a future in nuclear power. During the early Cold War, the Tri-Cities benefited as the United States stockpiled bomb making materials and enhanced the nuclear weapons complex’s infrastructure. As Hanford’s plutonium production mission declined through the 1960s, concerns about the ability of the nation and region to meet increasing energy needs rose. Growing concerns over fossil fuel depletion and the nation’s ability to meet its future energy needs motivated the federal government and the AEC to pursue nuclear power development. TCNIC, in an effort to capitalize on local atomic expertise and develop new ventures at Hanford, promoted the site as a nuclear power complex to regional power planners. As part of a plan to increase thermal generated energy in the state, power planners authorized the Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS) to construct power generating reactors at Hanford and in Satsop, Washington. In Chapter Four, “WPPSS and the Antinuclear Backlash,” I argue that WPPSS’s catastrophic economic failure in its effort to construct nuclear power plants catalyzed the state’s antinuclear movement and hardened the resolve of pronuclear activists in the Tri-Cities. The antinuclear WPPSS movement in the state was primarily economic not environmental. Pronuclear Tri-Citians, however, viewed WPPSS critics (largely based in western Washington), as anti-Hanford and an effort by western Washington to control the course of eastern Washington development. As a result, the WPPSS fiasco reinforced the
growing cultural and political division between more urban Western and more rural Eastern Washington.

As the culture wars escalated nationally and the Reagan administration worked to reverse environmental legislation in the 1980s, Washingtonians envisioned their state as divided along an east-west axis with liberal Democrats dominating the western portion of the state and conservative Republicans populating eastern Washington. Increasingly, some state residents began to question Washington’s long dependence on federal defense dollars to promote economic growth and the safety of Hanford. Pronuclear Tri-Citians viewed attempts by environmental and anti-nuclear groups to influence Hanford developments as a liberal western Washington plot to dictate policy to eastern Washington. In Chapter Five, “Proud of Hanford,” using pronuclear Tri-Citians reaction to the statewide controversy over the DOE’s consideration of Hanford as a long-term high-level nuclear waste storage site as a case study and Tri-Cities reaction to DOE’s decision to close the Fast Flux Test Facility, I show how divisions over nuclear technology contributed to the state’s and nation’s growing political and cultural divide. Critics questioned Tri-City support of the new DOE facility and the community’s atomic culture and values. The antinuclear movement’s message characterized Hanford as a source of danger and cast Hanford’s managers, scientists, and engineers as sinister atomic secret keepers. This image stood in stark contrast to the community’s vision of
themselves as World War II heroes and Cold War patriots, and of Hanford as an atomic frontier citadel providing protection and security to the region and nation.\textsuperscript{22}

Pronuclear Tri-Citians influenced the course of federal nuclear policy and their chronicle illuminates a larger national trend toward deeply partisan environmental politics, but their story remains largely unexplored. Between 1943 and 1989, nuclear supporters in the Tri-Cities and in the nation moved from the center to the outskirts of American politics and values. The overwhelming academic focus on either the grand heroic histories of the Manhattan Project or the declensionist environmental narratives of Cold War atomic production overshadowed the identity, culture, and experiences of pronuclear Tri-Citians and their significant influence on the federal government and nuclear politics. This work instead finds a middle ground of Hanford history by investigating the points of conflict between these two narratives and brings to the fore nuclear technology’s role in the culture wars, environmental politics, and the growing division between the urban and rural West and the Republican and Democratic parties.

\textsuperscript{22} Brian Freer, “Atomic pioneers and environmental legacy at the Hanford Site,” \textit{The Canadian Review of Sociology} 31, no. 3 (August 1994): 305-324. As environmental sociologist Brian Freer argued, and this chapter demonstrates, “the problem of nuclear waste is not only a “scientific problem awaiting solutions in laboratories and in the field, it also represents a struggle over interpretations of the past and strategies of the future.” Nuclear waste in Freer’s analysis becomes a historical artifact of sorts. Nuclear waste, to its Hanford’s cold war patriots, became a battle ground for Tri-City heritage and identity. When western Washington activists, environmentalist, and Downwinders opposed the nuclear waste repository and characterized Hanford as toxic and dangerous, they unwittingly recast the Hanford narrative in a way that threatened the community’s identity.
Chapter One

Forging the Atomic Frontier

On December 22, 1942 Colonel Franklin T. Matthias, Manhattan Engineering District (MED) engineer and later Hanford Engineering Works (HEW) construction manager, flew over the Mid-Columbia region of south eastern Washington state and the towns of Hanford, White Bluffs, and Richland. Matthias along with two DuPont engineers evaluated the area as a potential location for the MED’s top secret Manhattan Project plutonium production facility. After investigating sites in Montana, Oregon, and California, Matthias quickly decided on the Mid-Columbia site. “I thought the Hanford site was perfect the first time I saw it,” remembered Matthias. “We were sure we had it. I called General Grooves from Portland, and told him I thought we had found the only place in the country that could match the requirements for a desirable site.”¹ No one paid much attention to Matthias’ plane when it took flight at the Yakima Air Base and carried the colonel and his team on their reconnaissance mission. Mid-Columbia farmers and orchardists enjoyed the war-time boost to agricultural prices and prepared for the Christmas holiday unaware that Matthias and the MED judged their home the perfect location for the enormous project. Matthias’ decision, however, soon swept Mid-

Columbia landscapes and people into America’s massive industrial war machine. On February 8, 1943 the Secretary of War issued a directive allowing the MED to reacquisition 670 square mile of the Mid-Columbia’s Priest Rapids and Lower Yakima Valleys and on March 6 residents received evacuation orders.

The MED altered the history, ecology, built environment, and culture of the Mid-Columbia and ushered the United States and the world into the Atomic Age. Matthias’ selection irrevocably transformed the Mid-Columbia into a military industrial complex hinterland under the power of the federal government which continued to influence the culture and politics of its inhabitants and Mid-Columbia landscapes far beyond World War II. This chapter briefly describes the formation of the MED and explains why MED officials picked southeastern Washington for plutonium production. Second, it details the encounter between the MED and Mid-Colombia farmers, orchardists, and Native Americans. Third, the chapter shows how the MED exerted its dominance over the social structure, history, built environment, and landscapes of the Mid-Columbia. The exaggerated nature of the influence of the federal war effort on the Mid-Columbia makes the area a useful case-study for understanding the community level effects of World War II in the West. The discussion in this chapter highlights the fundamental transformation the federal war wrought on the area and shows how the MED laid the foundation for Tri-Cities atomic identity and anti-environmental world-view.

---

COMPETING VISIONS OF THE LANDSCAPE

The MED’s culture ultimately dominated in the area, but in 1943 the agency’s vision clashed with the Mid-Columbia’s pre-atomic inhabitants’ vision of the landscape. The twenty-five members of the small indigenous Wanapum tribe viewed the Mid-Columbia as the embodiment of the creator’s bountiful provision for the people. While the roughly 1,500 Priest Rapids and Lower Yakima Valleys farmers and orchardists, lured to the area during the early twentieth-century irrigation boom, pictured the Mid-Columbia as an “irrigated Eden,” whose dry fertile soil required only the application of river water to bloom. In contrast to these two images of natural bounty, war-time urgency combined with long held Euroamerican ideas about the nature of desert landscapes caused MED officials to picture the Mid-Columbia as an arid waste-land, barren, and well-suited for potentially dangerous new atomic production.

Wanapum visions of the landscape reflected the tribes deeply rooted religious traditions of the creator’s generous abundance and valley orchardists’ view of the region embodied American notions of the virtue inherent in the independent small farmer and power of irrigation to transform the arid West. MED officials, however, driven by the events of World War II evaluated the landscape differently. They judged the Mid-Columbia terrain’s ability to meet the scientific and industrial qualification of plutonium production and pictured the Columbia

---


River not as abundant provider of fish and crops, but as reactor coolant. The Manhattan Project’s top-secret scientific focus and urgency to produce an atomic bomb before Germany shaped the MED’s vision of Mid-Columbia landscapes.

The federal government’s involvement in nuclear research that led to the MED and their top-secret mission to produce an atomic bomb during World War II started in part among the German scientists who fled to America to escape Nazi dominion in the late 1930s. These physicists immigrated with first hand knowledge of Nazi progress in atomic research. Following the September 1, 1939 German invasion of Poland, a number of German immigrant scientists worked to convince their American colleagues that a German atomic bomb appeared imminent. Together, and with the support of Albert Einstein, the scientists drafted a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which, as MED leader General Leslie R. Groves recalled, “emphasized the seriousness of the problem.” 6 Within ten days of receiving the letter, Roosevelt established the first predecessor of the MED, the Advisory Committee on Uranium. This committee, however, focused primarily on uranium research, not military application of the atom. 7 As Hitler’s troops continued to advance, however, the need to beat Nazi scientist to an atomic weapon increased the urgency in the United States.

In the spring of 1940, the German army swept quickly across Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and France and atomic scientists feared that Germany’s atomic

---

6 Groves, Now It Can Be Told, 5-7.
program likely advanced at the same blitzkrieg pace as Hitler’s frontline soldiers. In response, the Roosevelt administration replaced the Advisory Committee on Uranium with the National Defense Research Committee and brought American atomic research closer to the military’s sphere. The National Defense Research Committee’s charter allowed scientists greater influence within Roosevelt’s administration and introduced new security measures into the burgeoning atomic program. In June 1941, Roosevelt replaced the committee with an executive order and created the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD). The executive order moved the nation’s atomic research effort considerably closer to the center of power and mandated that the OSRD’s director report to the president. As the war in Europe rapidly expanded, Roosevelt authorized intensive research toward an atomic weapon, a decision that steered atomic production on a path toward southeastern Washington.

In December 1941, the OSRD launched a concentrated effort to research plutonium’s potential military applications that later birthed the MED and its Manhattan Project. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and America’s entrance into the war, the OSRD recommended plans for the Army Corps of Engineers to construct production facilities for fissionable materials (Uranium-235 and Plutonium-239) suitable for an atomic bomb. In June 1942 Roosevelt implemented the OSRD’s recommendation

8 Hanford Cultural and Historic Resources Program, *Hanford Site Historic District*, 1.7.
and created the MED to develop atomic bombs.\textsuperscript{11} In September, Corps of Engineers commanders appointed General Leslie Groves, successful Pentagon construction manager, to head the new district.\textsuperscript{12} Working with project scientists and engineers Groves quickly moved to locate sites suited to the MED’s needs.

In a risky effort to accelerate the development and production process and hopefully ensure the program would produce an atomic weapon before the Germans, the MED’s scientists and engineers proceeded straight to full scale production facilities and pursued the possibility of both a refined uranium bomb and a plutonium fueled bomb. Finding sites to house and isolate the massive productions operations challenged Groves and his team. Ultimately, Groves approved three MED sites, all picked because their landscapes met MED scientific and engineering specifications. The MED commandeered Oak Ridge, TN in October 1942 and there constructed electromagnetic and gaseous diffusions facilities to separate fissile Uranium -235 from natural Uraniaum-239. About 125 miles west of Knoxville, sparsely populated Oak Ridge offered the MED relatively easy to condemn property, a protected valley, access to railways and highways, and an abundant supply of water and electricity thanks to the Tennessee Valley Authority’s newly completed Norris Dam on the Clinch River. Groves also established a central laboratory facility to bring MED scientists together in one location in Los Alamos, NM in early 1943. Los Alamos’ arid and thinly populated southwestern location offered the

MED the extreme isolation and security needed for project scientists to conduct their highly secretive work. Groves and DuPont executives (MED contractor in charge of plutonium production) originally considered placing the reactors required to transform uranium into weapons grade plutonium at Oak Ridge along with the uranium separation facilities, but ultimately decided the site could not accommodate the process safely. MED scientists and engineers determined that the unproven plutonium production method required a wide birth to ensure public safety. The plant operators, however, needed a community for their families close enough for a reasonable commute to the site. Also, the facility required large amounts of electricity and fresh water, a climate conducive to almost year-round construction, and a geologically stable site.\textsuperscript{13}

The demands and requirements for the plutonium facility necessitated that Groves seek a site in “the mostly arid, sparsely populated regions of the great hydroelectric dams” in the far West.\textsuperscript{14} While the West long benefited from and chaffed under disproportional federal involvement in the region, World War II escalated federal influence in the region to new heights as war preparation fast-tracked industrial development and sent people and money streaming into the region. The region’s close proximity to the Pacific theater, abundance of natural resources, as well as aircraft manufacturing and shipbuilding industries rendered the West an attractive staging area for the federal war-time build-up. Western landscapes, unlike those in the East, appeared to federal developers like Groves and Matthias an empty slate ready for rapid and

\textsuperscript{13} David Harvey, \textit{A History of the Hanford Site 1943-1990} (Richland, WA: Pacific Northwest Laboratory, 2000), 3.

\textsuperscript{14} Sanger, \textit{Working on the Bomb}, 2.
innovative industrial development. Following his review of the Mid-Columbia in December 1942, Colonel Matthias convinced Groves that the southeastern Washington location fulfilled the MED’s requirements almost to perfection. Matthias and Groves planned to evacuate the area and use Hanford and White Bluffs for the production facility and retain Richland as the workers village. The adjacent Columbia River offered the 5,000 gallons of fresh water per minute needed to cool the reactors and the power lines extending from the Bureau of Reclamations newly completed Grand Coulee Dam supplied 100,000 kilowatts of required electricity. Richland’s location just beyond the proposed site provided a nascent village for workers and their families, far enough away for safety and close enough for an easy commute. Groves, Matthias and other project leaders viewed the arid lands of the Mid-Columbia as a desert wasteland easily sacrificed for government use. In their view, the land held little intrinsic value and thus well-suited for the untested, unproven, potentially dangerous production facility. In his MED memoir General Groves noted, “Most of the area was sagebrush suitable only for driving sheep to and from summer

16 Harvey, History of the Hanford Site, 3 and 4.
pastured in the mountains and even for that purpose could not be used oftener than once in several years.’’ Groves expressed pleasure that the population was small and farms “did not appear to be of any great value.”

Thus, Groves and his team in part picked the area because they imagined it as an empty and valueless landscape. This characterization of Mid-Columbia landscapes as ideally suited for nuclear processes remained among Hanford workers, community leaders, and boosters in the post-war years. Post-war atomic workers in the Tri-Cities tended see the landscape as empty and viewed themselves and their specialized skills as the area’s greatest natural resource.

While the MED became the dominant framework of local history following 1943 as I discussed in the introduction, the Mid-Columbia was not an empty landscape awaiting its atomic destiny. The MED’s vision of the area as an ideal location for plutonium production pushed the area’s Wanapum tribe and small irrigated farming communities out of the Priest Rapids and Lower Yakima Valleys and replaced them with an MED workforce. To make room for the plutonium production facility, the MED excluded the Wanapum from a large portion of their remaining traditional homeland in

---


1943 and evicted Richland, Hanford, and White Bluffs residents from their homes, farms, and orchards. Thus, much like nineteenth-century western pioneers, Hanford’s atomic workers easily imagined the Mid-Columbia as empty, because the federal government worked to clear the landscape of its former inhabitants before their arrival. The new emerging atomic frontier, and the revised history of area it inspired, evolved practically devoid of even the ubiquitous stereotypical western Native American and small independent farmer.

The small Wanapum Tribe resided in the Mid-Columbia’s Priest Rapid Valley and posed a particular challenge to Matthias’ acquisition of valley lands. Some times referred to as “the Priest Rapids Indians,” this indigenous group did not sign a federal treaty in the late nineteenth century and did not technically own any Mid-Columbia property, so MED officials could not simply condemn their homes. For the Wanapum, eviction from the atomic frontier continued a long chain of Euroamerican encroachment, state and federal policy, and reshaping of Mid-Columbia landscapes that restricted the tribe from using their traditional homeland.

Wanapum tribal history recalls no time when the Wanapum or “River People” did not occupy the landscapes of the Mid-Columbia in their home on the Sacred Island in the Chiawana (Columbia River). The Wanapum lived, hunted, fished, and forged with their cultural, political, and linguistic cousins on the Columbia Plateau including the Yakama,

---

19 Hales noted that in 1943 there were about twenty-five members of the tribe and Sanger reported that there were only two “full-blood” Wanapum in 1984. Hales, *Atomic Spaces*, 203; and Sanger, *Working on the Bomb*, 26.

Nez Perce, and Palouse. For roughly nine months of the year, the Wanapum traveled around the region fishing, hunting, gathering, and intermingling with their neighbors. The Wanapum, despite the arid and seemingly barren nature of their home territory, procured an abundance of duck, geese, rabbits, beaver, otter, pheasants, grouse, deer, berries, sunflowers, wild roses, and camas. While the Wanapum took advantage of this wide variety of foodstuffs, fishing constituted their most essential and prominent activity. The Wanapum fished from the Chiawana up to nine months of the year and harvested several types of salmon, trout, sturgeon, white fish, eels, freshwater clams, crawfish, and mussels. The Wanapum’s homeland spanned an eighty-mile stretch of the Chiawana from a point just above Priest Rapids (modern Beverly Gap) to the confluences of the Snake and Columbia Rivers (just south of modern Richland).\textsuperscript{21} Thus, unlike MED officials, the Wanapum viewed Mid-Columbia landscapes as teeming with natural abundance.

Wanapum practiced Washani, a traditional religion among Columbia Plateau tribes. Washani beliefs emphasized “that a holy covenant existed between God and man” and required the Wanapum and other practitioners to maintain this relationship with God by not disturbing the earth through farming or parceling and selling portions of the land. In the mid-1800s Wanapum spiritual leader Smowhala emerged as the most important spiritual leader in the inland Northwest. “His ascendancy coincided with an era characterized by white expansionism, armed conflict, and forced removal to reservations.” Smowhala added greater structure to the ill-defined Washani faith with rituals, dances, songs, and ceremony’s under the direction the prophet received from God.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., 7-12, 14-19, 21-22.
In addition to more formalized worship, and like other Indian prophets, Smowhala preached “a rejection of white culture and a return to Indian social, economic, political, and religious traditions.” Despite considerable contact with both Catholic and Protestant Christian missionaries through the first half of the nineteenth-century, Washani remained strong among the Wanapums and other Plateau tribal groups. Mid-Columbia Wanapums still practiced Washani values in 1943.

Wanapums held no property in 1943 because they did not remove to reservations like many other Plateau Indians in the late nineteenth century. The Wanapum, under Smowhala’s leadership, successfully resisted treaties and removal. The Washani belief that the earth should not be disturbed from its natural state and should never “be marked off or divided, but that the people should enjoy the fruits that God planted in the land and the animals that lived upon it, and the fishes in the water” conflicted with the Euroamerican values and the agrarian life that awaited reservation Indians. Along with Wanapum dedication to Washani under Smowhala, the arid and isolated nature of the Wanapum homelands assisted their efforts to avoid removal. Wanapum winter villages, located on the arid center of the Columbia Plateau, held little value for agricultural minded white settlers. Without treaty rights to defend, the advent of dams and the boom in irrigating farming on the Mid-Columbia in the early twentieth century steadily reduced Wanapum territory and by 1937 bared the tribe from traditional fishing sites on the Columbia near White Bluffs. In 1939, with help of local supporters, the Wanapum won

---

22 Clifford E. Trafzer and Margery Ann Beach, “Smohalla, the Washani, and Religion as Factor in Northwestern Indian History,” *American Indian Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (Summer 1985), 310 and 311.
23 Sharkey, “Revitalization and Change,” 26-44.
concessions from the state allowing them to again access historical fishing sites. While the arid and isolated nature of the Mid-Columbia helped stall agricultural encroachment on Wanapum territory, these factors attracted the MED to the heart of the tribe’s ancestral homeland.

The Wanapum managed to hang on to some ancestral fishing grounds and villages, but the MED’s arrival again threatened to cut-off the tribe’s access to Columbia River fishing sites. In 1943 Puch Hyah Toot (known as Johnny Buck), Smowhala’s nephew, spoke for the Wanapum as chief and religious leader. Washani continued to influence Wanapum concepts of land use and fishing remained a key aspect of their culture and religion. While the MED, through the War Powers Act, possessed the right to condemn private property on the Mid-Columbia, in 1943 the Wanapum owned no property to confiscate. Indian removal from the atomic frontier, thus, required more creativity on the part of MED officials.

Eager to begin construction of the Hanford Engineering Works (HEW) unfettered, Groves and Matthias sought to quickly remove Wanapums from the site. Matthias first looked to the U.S. Department of Interior, responsible for relations with Native American groups, to restrict Wanapum access to HEW. When the agency’s efforts failed, the HEW construction manager employed direct diplomacy and negotiation. Land use proved a simple matter, Matthias allowed the tribe to retain its winter camp on the opposite river shore form the new federal reservation and in exchange Wanapum leaders pledged to

---

respect HEW boundaries and relinquish access to other traditional sites now behind the government barricades. Fishing rights, however, proved a more complex matter.

Fishing remained a significant activity in Wanapum culture and religion. MED officials first offered the tribe a cash settlement for the value of the fish they normally caught or, alternatively, promised to deliver to the tribe comparable amounts of fish. Johnny Buck, however, refused both offers, neither satisfied the tribe’s desire to fish. Ultimately, MED officials agreed to provide the tribe with an escort and transportation to and from the fishing grounds behind the barricades during the season. Apparently, Matthias and the MED failed to meet the terms of this agreement to the tribe’s satisfaction and Buck pressed the MED into compliance.25 Under pressure to appease the Wanapum and concentrate on construction, Matthias issued special passes to Buck and his two assistants and enabled them access to the site to escort other tribal members to the fishing grounds. The MED, however, later tightened security and revoked these passes barring the tribe from the secret facility altogether.26 The MED successfully ejected the tribe from HEW property and moved closer to creating the empty landscape they imagined. Richland, Hanford, and White Bluffs farmers, however, held legal title to their property and proved more costly for the MED to evacuate.

From 1905 to 1943, the lower Yakima and Priest Rapids Valleys supported the small, but developing agricultural communities of Richland, Hanford, and White Bluffs. Their shared experiences homesteading and farming on the hard-scramble arid center of

---

25 Hales, Atomic Spaces, 202-205.
26 Hanford Cultural and Historic Resources Program, Hanford Site Historic District, 1.13 and 1.15.
the Columbia Plateau bonded valley inhabitants. Together, the residents battled the dust, rabbits, irrigation companies, and struggled to bring water to the rich but dry soil to create profitable small farms and orchards. Richland, Hanford, and White Bluffs survived particularly difficult times in the early twentieth-century, combating drought, low agricultural prices, and the Great Depression. The New Deal brought some relief to the community in the form of aid, jobs, and the construction of Grand Coulee Dam. The onset of World War II and the accompanying boom in farm income, however, finally boosted the economic outlook in the valley. Finally, it seemed to valley farmers the dry soil and river water promised profits for the area’s small independent farms. Instead, World War II and Grand Coulee Dam brought the MED to the Mid-Columbia. Rather than enhancing the area’s agrarian way of life, Grand Coulee Dam and the MED brought a swift end to Richland, Hanford, and White Bluffs and turned the areas longstanding environmental barriers to growth into regional assets.

The Priest Rapids and Lower Yakima Valleys’ arid landscapes benefited the Wanapum and limited Euroamerican encroachment and agricultural development in the region. Despite the area’s fertile soil, some 225 days a year of clear skies, and blessing of three rivers, early nineteenth-century homesteaders flocked to the Pacific Northwest’s green and lush landscapes, like Oregon’s Willamette valley. With inadequate annual rainfall like many other placed in the far West, even dry farming on a 160 acre homestead on the Mid-Columbia proved challenging at best. Mid-Columbia land speculation, irrigation, and settlement boomed following the National Reclamation Act and renewed
interests in desert lands. Passed in 1902, the act channeled funds from the sale of arid public western lands to reclamation efforts and encouraged the interests of private land companies and settlers in the lower Yakima and Priest Raid Valleys.\textsuperscript{27}

Much like the MED in 1943, the Columbia River attracted turn-of-the-century homesteaders. Land companies promoted the Mid-Columbia and touted the area’s proximity to the Columbia River to potential settlers. Valley boosters, like the Richland Land Company and the Columbia River Land Company, promised purchasers “not only plenty of water for irrigation, but the purest and most healthful in the world for drinking, coming as it does from the Columbia River, fed by mountain snows and streams.”\textsuperscript{28} Land company brochures assured potential farmers that the Hanford Irrigation and Power Company’s system “one of the finest and most modern in the Northwest” would deliver an “inexhaustible” supply of Columbia River water. Where later the MED envisioned the dry sandy soil next to the Columbia River as a barren landscape perfectly suited for plutonium production, valley boosters and settlers imagined an agricultural bounty overflowing with fruit trees, grapevines, strawberry plants, and hops. This fruitful landscape required only “the magic elixir of Columbia water poured onto volcanic soil” to bloom.\textsuperscript{29}

The spirited independent valley farmers and orchardists, enjoying the war-time boost to agricultural prices, reacted with shock, bewilderment, and anger to the MED’s

\textsuperscript{27} Mendenhall, \textit{Orchards of Eden}, 21.
\textsuperscript{28} From a Columbia River Land Company pamphlet, n.d., in Parker, \textit{Tales of Richland, White Bluffs, & Hanford}, 126.
\textsuperscript{29} Mendenhall, \textit{Orchards of Eden}, 23.
acquisition of their farms and homes. On March 6, 1943, local residents received notices instructing them to vacate their property, now part of a secure federal installation. Addressed from the U.S. Department of Defense, the letters advised residents that the U.S. government, under the 1942 War Powers Act, retained the right to take immediate possession of properties “for military, naval or other war purposes.”

“We received a letter from the government saying that we would have to move in 30 days,” remembered valley resident Annette Heriford. “It was a terrible shock,” she said, “I can’t describe it.” Heriford felt that knowing the government chose her town for the war effort made the decision more palatable. Patriotism, however, failed to ease the shock for some residents and Heriford described one neighbor who “stood there with a shotgun and said they would have to move him.”

Kathleen Hitchcock, whose parents ran the White Bluffs newspaper, *The White Bluffs Spokesman*, argued that her parents never recovered from the shock of condemnation. “It was pretty hard when the Army engineers came on and told them to, you know, get out,” she remembered. Her parents received only about a week to vacate and she said “my mother never really adjusted to it.” Patriotism and a contribution to the war effort did not off-set the sacrifice for Hitchcock’s parents. “They resented the whole thing, even knowing that it was for the war effort,” she said. “They felt it was too great a sacrifice.”

Ironically, the federal government, through Indian removal, homesteading acts, and irrigation legislation, had made the property Mid-Columbia farmers called home available to them. But, in one of the hallmarks of the

---

30 Ibid., 403-404 and 406-406.
relationship between Westerners and the federal government, valley residents resisted federal efforts to control use of the land; individual property rights outweighed the call of patriotism.

Property valuations emerged as the key manifestation of the clash between the MED and the valley’s farmers and orchardists. MED assessors, unfamiliar with area and the state of irrigated farming in eastern Washington, figured the property values. Residents felt this seriously undermined the assessment of their farms and homes. Furthermore, the MED conducted appraisals during the winter months when fields, trees, houses, and the overall landscape looked their most bleak. MED officials fixed a value on what they saw only as desert wilderness and shabby farms, rather than the supportive community, life long investments, years of toil, and summer’s flourishing irrigated crops that influenced the worth residents placed on their homes and farms.33 Valley residents believed that the initial offerings of compensation were far too low. MED assessors initially offered Heriford’s father $1,700 for his 30 acre orchard and another 25 cents an acre for 40 acres he owned on Rattlesnake Mountain as an oil investment. Heriford called these prices, “Ridiculous!” This gap in perceived land value, along with pressures from MED managers to keep expenses to a minimum, resulted in what residents characterized as low evaluations of property the MED planned to absorb. MED officials, under extreme pressure to complete HEW facilities as quickly as possible moved forward with construction despite farmer protests.

33 Ibid., 23, and 61-63.
Evicted residents, however, fought with the MED over more that just property worth. The federal government quickly moved to police HEW security and ordered area residents not to talk about the eviction in an effort to maintain the new facility’s secrecy and specifically advised them not to mention the action in letters to any family members serving in the military. The farmers and orchardists also asked the MED to allow them to harvest crops before vacating. MED officials denied these requests and shut off irrigation ditches to encourage residents to vacate. Some valley residents working jobs on western Washington never received condemnation notices and returned to find they had no homes. While others waited for the appraisers to evaluate their property as the evacuation deadline loomed. Even those who quickly agreed with the MED on payment found themselves in a financial bind. By June 18, 1943, with less than fourteen days before the MED required all residents to evacuate, the federal government had failed to send the majority of residents payment for their property. With little in the way of liquid assets, Richland, Hanford, and White Bluff’s small farmers could not afford to relocate without the promised funds. Thus some local farmers chose to stay on their property until they received payment. Much to Matthias’ and Groves’ consternation and vision of an empty Mid-Columbia, residents continued to move about the now restricted federal reservation, some still lived in their homesteads and others attempted to harvest crops. The interference frustrated Matthias and he ordered patrols to remove the dissenters. The site’s considerable size, however, made removal difficult and complicated. Matthias’ armed guards failed to intimidate some residents, who still refused to evacuate. The

MED, nevertheless, moved forward with work on these contested properties and dealt with holdouts as best it could, while many residents took their fight to court.\textsuperscript{35}

Valley residents decided to sue the federal appraisers in hope of winning a better price for their property. Lloyd Wiehl, a Yakima attorney whose father homesteaded in White Bluffs, and Charles Powell, later a federal judge in Kennewick, represented affected valley landowners. The attorneys initially took three test cases to court. The first plaintiff won an increase in property evaluation from $6,500 to $30,000 and the other two landowners won double the MED’s original offering. Following these successful cases, the federal government settled the remaining cases out of court. On average, most valley landowners received double the MED’s initial appraisal and some growers later successfully sued for compensation for their lost crops and irrigation shares. While the MED characterized the actions of valley residents as unpatriotic, Mid-Columbia farmers and orchardists forced the federal government, desperate to build an atomic bomb before Germany, to provide greater compensation. Much like Richland’s Cold War citizen-workers during the fight over housing prices in the 1950s, valley residents supported the national war effort, but also believed that the federal government had the funds to compensate them fairly for their extraordinary sacrifice. The MED bulldozed much of the homes in the valleys to make way for construction, finally creating the empty landscape MED officials imagined, and “very soon the desert reclaimed the abandoned farms.”\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{35} Sanger, \textit{Working on the Bomb}, 67.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 25; and Mendenhall, \textit{Orchards of Eden}, 409-414.
The MED’s alterations of the Mid-Columbia proved swift and calamitous. In 1942 Richland, Hanford, and White Bluffs contained about 1,500 people, while the nearby towns of Pasco and Kennewick boasted 3,900 and 1,800 people respectively.\footnote{Gerber, \textit{Legend and Legacy: Fifty Years of Defense Production at the Hanford Site} (Richland, WA: Westinghouse Hanford Company, 1992), 3.} Between 1943, when the MED first acquired Richland, Hanford and White Bluffs, and 1944, Richland’s population exploded from about 240 to 11,000.\footnote{Paul P. Beardsley, “The Long Road to Self-Government”: \textit{The History of Richland, Washington 1943-1968} (Richland, WA: City of Richland, 1968), 5.} The urgency to develop an atomic weapon before Germany and the specific requirements for a plutonium production facility shaped the MED’s vision of land use on the Mid-Columbia. The agency values clashed with the Wanapum tribe’s religious beliefs and the region’s farmers’ idealized vision of a Mid-Columbia irrigated Eden. MED officials barred the Wanapum from the site and evicted area farmers to make the valley’s fit into their vision as an unpopulated desert waste-land perfect for plutonium production.

MED DOMINANCE

Federal war time investment in the U.S. West and the industry it spurred drew millions of Americans to the region. The once sparse Mid-Columbia population exploded with HEW workers and their families. The MED replaced Priest Rapids and Lower Yakima Valleys’ farmers, orchardists and natives with a well-paid patriotic construction and operations crews. MED officials leveled the remains of Hanford and White Bluffs and redesigned Richland as HEW’s worker village. Thus MED policy and philosophies not only left a
legacy about the nature of Mid-Columbia landscapes, but also dictated the social structure and built environments in the area.

MED officials replaced valley residents with HEW workers, quickly refashioned the built environment, and swelled the populations of near by Pasco and Kennewick. The district launched a massive recruitment campaign in collaboration with the U.S. Employment Service and the Manpower Commission to bring workers to the project. The federal government’s massive investment in war industries in the West created a westward shift in America’s population and war jobs attracted workers to all areas of the West, including the Tri-Cities. The War Manpower Office operated out of the Cunningham Hotel near the train station in Pasco and processed as many as one thousands HEW employees each day. HEW, like other booming western war industrial centers, attracted workers from rural areas of the West and from just about everywhere around the nation. While the prewar population in the Priest Rapids Valley hovered at 1,500, just a few years later at peak construction in June 1944, some 51,000 workers, wives, and children resided at the massive HEW construction camp, know as Camp Hanford.\(^\text{39}\) The camp, the temporary living quarters for the construction force that built the production facilities and overhauled Richland, contained over a thousand quickly constructed buildings, including eight mess halls, 131 men’s barracks, sixty-four women’s barracks, and several hundred hutments.\(^\text{40}\) Despite the accommodations, thousands of HEW workers lived off-site during the war. These workers swelled the


\(^{40}\) Hales, *Atomic Spaces*, 203.
populations of Pasco and Kennewick, strained the cities’ housing accommodations and resources, and brought the cities and Benton and Franklin counties under federal and atomic culture influence.  

HEW workers descriptions of Camp Hanford portray it as both wild western boom town and modern scientific marvel fusing the atom and frontier narratives; however, the MED tightly regulated the demographics and social structure of the camp despite its legendary rowdiness. Single men constituted the bulk of the camp’s population, however, some men arrived for work with their families, and female workers also resided in camp. Camp residents worked long hours and engaged in infamous free-time exploits. Accounts of camp life described thefts, drinking, fighting, gambling, and prostitution. Reportedly, camp residents drank more beer each day than those in Seattle. The poem “Hanford Pageant,” composed during the war years, demonstrates the camp’s legendary rough, frontier quality.

You’ve heard of the streets of Harlem  
And Chicago’s Pell Mell  
But never before of Hanford  
And its dirty paths of Hell  
Where men are tough and women rough  
And weaklings have to die,  
And even dogs are afraid to bite,  
And babies are too strong to cry.

Sandy, adrift, in a desert lot,  
The barracks room with its tiny cot,  
Where fights were frequent and prayers few—  
Ye Gods! “New Gotham” was askew.

---

41 Van Arsdol, The Big Secret, 32-33.  
42 Ibid., 32.
I’ve traveled all over this mighty land,
Aye, on foreign shores too—
But I’ve seen things in Hanford
That had the Devil in a stew…
If you could tell of a trip to Hell,
Or even spend there a day,
I’m sure you’d fine written over the door—
“Hanford Screwballs, right this way!”

The MED and DuPont, however, exerted considerable effort to control and monitor HEW workers. While Camp Hanford security dealt with a significant share of vice, “the dirty paths of Hell” description proffered in the above excerpt from “Hanford Pageant” suggests exaggeration. Likely some workers capitalizing on the well-worn tropes of the frontier American West and told tall tales to add a bit more drama to their own more mundane war-time experiences.

Despite worker embellishment and strict MED regulations, some workers’ memories supported claims of rowdy camp life. Jerry Saucier traveled to Camp Hanford in November 1943 and worked as a maintenance inspector at HEW. He recalled a lot of trouble in camp, particularly on the weekends with gambling and drunken escapes common. Sam Campbell also arrived at the camp in 1943 and worked as a security officer for DuPont. He confirmed the reports of not only rowdy, but sometimes criminal behavior. Campbell also remembered that gambling as common in the barrack activity and recalled that at times the security detail used tear gas to clear workers from the beer hall at closing time. He also substantiated claims that prostitution took place in the camp saying, “some of the women were prostitutes, or making a little side money. There was

43 Ibid., 30-31.
44 Sanger, Working on the Bomb, 122.
quite a bit of that. I have heard of cases of intercourse done through the fences around the women’s barracks.”

Not all workers, however, pursued vice in their free time and job classification, gender, and status with DuPont all played a role in camp behavior and the level that MED monitored an employee. Jess Brinkerhoff, a DuPont transplant, worked as a fireman at Hanford. He reported enjoying camp life and although heard a lot about drinking and carousing, claimed no participation in rowdy behavior. Of course, the fact that Brinkerhoff identified himself as “sort of naïve” and “a good church member” may explain his distance from the debauchery. His status as a “DuPonter,” however, likely played a role in his experience of camp life. DuPont employees enjoyed a bit more social status at Camp Hanford and later in the operators’ village of Richland and in return the company expected a higher level of decorum from these employees. As upstanding company men, “DuPonters” set themselves apart from the rough and tumble trouble making temporary construction workers.

While the MED, let slide some rowdy camp behavior among the mostly white male construction force, the agency tightly controlled women and African Americans at HEW. Gender and race dictated the type of work available to an individual, determined their living quarters, and imposed standards of behavior. The MED’s policies on race and gender reflected both the project leaders desires for a controlled, cost-effective work environment and the cultural norms of the era. As a result, however, the standard Hanford

46 Ibid., 129-30.
narratives largely obscured the contributions and experiences of women and African-Americans at Camp Hanford, as well as the MED’s efforts to tightly regulate the “dirty paths of hell.”

Work at HEW attracted about 15,000 African Americans to the Tri-Cities between 1943 and 1954. During the 1940s some 2 million African Americans fled the rural South for industrial work. The explosion of war related jobs and worker shortages created new employment opportunities for black workers in the West. Prior to the MED’s arrival, the black population on the Mid-Columbia remained small and racial tension were not much of an issue in the Tri-Cities. The MED’s presence significantly increased the black population and imported the attitudes of the Jim Crow system with the many white workers who migrated from the South. 47 Despite Roosevelt’s Executive Order 8802 that established fair employment for African Americans in defense industries, the MED operated under racially restrictive policies. MED officials at Camp Hanford and at other MED sites cared more about efficient and expedient atomic production than social uplift. MED officials hired as few black workers as possible. At HEW, even at peak construction, MED officials aimed to keep black employees at no more than 20 percent. While nationally African Americans moved into previously barred positions, at HEW the MED hired black workers for only the lowest skilled and paid positions. MED officials also sought to maintain local race relations status quo and the racial expectations of its primarily white workforce. Thus, the MED segregated Camp Hanford. Black workers

resided in separate barracks and ate only in designated mess halls. Later, MED officials kept black workers out of the Operations Division, which assured their exclusion after the construction phase ended and prevented them from living in Richland Village. Essentially, MED officials shaped policies to insure that there would be no permanent black community in the Tri-Cities as a result of the Manhattan Project.\(^{48}\) In this pursuit, the MED failed. While MED policies restricted black workers from Richland and Kennewick barred African American residents, black workers and their families did not entirely disappear after the construction phase, but took up permanent residence in the Tri-Cities.\(^{49}\) While a vibrant African American community remained after the war, federal policies that upheld segregation at Hanford also continued in the post-war years.

Along with race, MED officials also highly regulated female HEW employees. While a clear minority at Camp Hanford, about 4,000 women worked at the camp at peak construction in 1944. Like African Americans, the massive industrial war effort and worker shortage during World War II provided opportunities for women in jobs previously restricted to male workers. Like men, women workers traveled to HEW to take advantage of lucrative war-time employment. Unlike the iconic images of Rosie the Riveter, women at Camp Hanford primary performed traditional “women’s work” and the MED highly regulated female HEW employees.\(^{50}\) The nature of the work at HEW, the MED’s policies, and the women themselves largely maintained traditional gender

\(^{49}\) Bauman, “Jim Crow,” 126-130.
roles on the emerging atomic frontier. This gender segregation continued more informally
after the war, resulting in a predominately male Hanford work force that rendered
Richland a town populated by children and homemakers during the work day.

In part, the nature of the work at the site dictated the jobs available to women at
HEW. Until January 1945, HEW was first and foremost a construction site and the
majority of jobs were in building the facilities. The MED required skilled plumbers,
steamfitters, electricians, leadburners, and bricklayers for construction and women by and
large did not possess the necessary skills and training. The MED also did not view
women as suitable candidates for unskilled labor positions. 51 While the MED hired
notable numbers of women for technical positions in its laboratories, the MED primarily
conducted the scientific research supporting HEW at other sites. Also, HEW managers
were better able to muster a stable male workforce since MED overseers could pull
strings to keep men out of the war and on the site working. About 75 percent of
Hanford’s male workers between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six were classified 4F,
ineligible for military service. Thus, the vast majority, over 99 percent, of women
employed at HEW labored as secretaries, barracks staff, nurses, cooks, waitresses, and
clerks. 52

The MED employed the Dean of Women at Oregon State College, Buena Maris,
as Supervisor of Women’s Activities to watch over female employees, she held one of
only two management positions reserved for women at Camp Hanford. In addition to

51 Sanger, Working in the Bomb, 68.
52 Howes and Herzenberg, Their Day in the Sun, 82; and Hales, Atomic Spaces, 219.
supervising Hanford’s female workforce, Maris worked closely with the camp’s recreation staff, largely composed of women, to create activities for workers and their families. Maris conducted induction sessions with new female employees to impress them with the importance of their work at Camp Hanford to the war effort, capitalizing on their sense of patriotism or duty to a loved one fighting overseas to help keep them at the site. Also, Maris arranged many accommodations for the women designed to buoy their morale. Maris persuaded the MED to pave the walkways surrounding the women’s barracks to preserve the heels of their rationed shoes and arranged for Camp Hanford women to access to an upscale beauty salon and women’s clothing store in Pasco. For the families at the camp, Maris organized a community center, a Red Cross chapter, a Girl Scout troupe, and a slate of entertainment and recreation opportunities.\textsuperscript{53} Even though Maris held a high ranking position at Camp Hanford, her work still centered on a traditional women’s sphere.  

Female employees resided in the women’s barracks at Camp Hanford and the MED and Maris closely monitored their activities. While the MED tolerated carousing among its mostly white male work force, Maris and the MED held women to a higher standard of behavior. The MED fenced and gated the women’s barracks at HEW and chaperoned their contact with men. Maris hired a housemother for each of the women’s barracks to look after the needs of the ladies and to keep an eye on their behavior. Camp regulations required all male visitors to the women’s barracks to sign-in and wait in the entry hall for their female companion. When gentlemen callers left the barracks, the

\textsuperscript{53} Howes and Herzenberg, \textit{Their Day in the Sun}, 162-164.
housemother crossed their names off the sign-in sheet and if any names remained unmarked at curfew, the staff searched the building for the errant male companion. MED officials and Maris patriarchal monitored female workers activities, contact with men, and worked to maintain traditional gender roles at Camp Hanford.

Like black men, the MED managers segregated black female workers and further limited their job opportunity. Black women lived in separate barracks from white women and reports indicated that the black women’s barracks at Camp Hanford were generally equal to that of the whites. Job opportunities, however, were not. MED officials hired black women for only the lowest-status jobs and only allowed them into the professional ranks, such as nurses, when needed to attend to the black population. In keeping with over all camp demographics, there were more black men then women at Hanford. Although after completion of construction in 1945, HEW laid-off many black male laborers, while more black women came into the area to work as domestic help in post-war Richland.

MED officials also drew clear class boundaries at Camp Hanford that later extended into Richland Village. In addition to female HEW employees, the wives of male workers often accompanied them to the site, whether or not the MED welcomed a worker’s family largely depended on his status on the project. The MED greeted the wives of high-level military staff, DuPont managers, and the production staff with more tolerance. The MED viewed these workers as permanent employees and provided their

---

families with housing in Richland as soon as it became available. The MED, however, frowned on construction workers, considered temporary employees, bringing their wives and children. The MED officials believed that family responsibilities would distract these men would from their jobs. The presence of families at HEW also required the MED to provide housing accommodations and forfeit the direct control over workers living outside the barracks. Additionally, families required more services than did single men and women. The MED needed to provide hospitals, schools, nurseries, and playgrounds for families, hence raising the cost of the project.\textsuperscript{56} The MED’s distinction between operations and construction workers influenced ongoing Richland attitudes and company policy long after the war. During the ongoing expansion of Richland and HEW in the post-war, construction workers continued to live in temporary housing, separate from Richland, and the social divisions between construction tradesmen and the engineers, scientists, and technicians of plant operations continued.

While Camp Hanford’s reputation suggested a rough and wild atmosphere, reminiscent of a nineteenth-century gold rush camp, MED managers highly regulated the camp. MED policies shaped and controlled the social and physical geography of HEW. MED officials at Camp Hanford separated permanent workers from construction workers, men from women, and whites from blacks. In 1945 the MED closed Camp Hanford following the completion of construction and assigned all operations employees housing in the newly remodeled Richland. While Richland appeared an ideal suburban environment in contrast to the camps rowdy reputation, it did so because the MED and

\textsuperscript{56} Hales, \textit{Atomic Spaces}, 107.
DuPont extended the rules that regulated racial, class, and gender interaction, as well as atomic secrecy to Richland Village.

REMAKING RICHLAND

The MED began its transformation of the Richland in 1943, fashioning the city into its vision of a middle-class workers village. The MED chose Richland for this purpose largely because of its proximity to the production facilities. Situated about twenty-five miles from HEW, Richland met the distance MED scientists recommended for safety between worker housing and the plutonium facility, yet still offered an easy commute to HEW and contained some useful preexisting infrastructure. While the MED started remaking Richland in 1943, Richland residents received more time to evacuate (November 1943) than White Bluffs and Hanford residents since the production facilities took precedence over the workers village. MED officials maintained 150 houses, some commercial buildings, and the irrigation system, but razed the rest of old Richland. War-time Richland was part middle-class suburb, part company town, and part military instillation. MED and DuPont policies dictated the layout and design of the city and its housing, who could live in the city, and tightly monitored security. These policies continued to influence the community far into the future.

The MED constructed the bulk of the city’s housing supply during the war. These houses and the MED’s overall design for Richland shaped the city’s aesthetic character.

58 Hanford Cultural and Historic Resources Program, Hanford Site Historic District, 1.20.
and influenced social interactions. The MED and DuPont hired Gustav Albin Pehrson, a Swedish-born Spokane architect to design the workers village. In March 1943, Pehrson and company assumed responsibility for planning Richland’s housing, commercial spaces, sewer and utilities services, streets, and sidewalks. The MED required Pehrson to work swiftly in order to meet contract deadlines. He opened an office in Pasco and his small staff quickly grew to over 350 employees. Richland construction began in late April after just a few week of planning and design work. Construction crews completed the first houses in late July 1943 and finished the Village in June 1945.\(^{59}\)

The war-time urgency and uncertainty that motivated the Manhattan Project influenced Pehrson designs. Pehrson’s crew worked at rapid speed, under tight security, and construction commenced after only a few weeks of planning and design work. Crews completed the first houses in late July 1943 and finished the Village in June 1945. Pehrson and his crew coped with the fact that Richland’s population estimates and community needs fluctuated all throughout the design and construction process. In 1943 the MED anticipated village population at 6,500, this number increased to about 16,000 by project completion. Lastly, the quality housing DuPont requested and the cost saving measures the MED demanded frustrated Pehrson’s design concepts.\(^{60}\)

Despite wartime urgency and the MED’s tight budget, Pehrson’s plan considered how Village residents would live in the space, accommodated existing land features and

---


\(^{60}\) Harvey and Kraft, “Hanford Engineering Works Village.”
trees, and provided for green belts and common spaces. The design team factored commuting to Hanford, space for car parking, and pedestrian walk ways in the street layout. The overall concept afforded separated industrial, residential, and commercial spaces with open areas within the city. Pehrson designed eight house types to create 2500 permanent homes on the village. While many were single family homes, duplex units constituted a significant percentage of dwellings. The plan called for single family homes of various sizes and duplexes mingled in the residential areas with the intent of mixing income levels within each neighborhood. The MED’s stipulations and DuPont’s requests, however, ultimately resulted in higher cost single family homes concentrated on the east side of town close to the river and more duplexes on the west side. This arrangement greatly reduced the socio-economic mixing Pehrson envisioned for the city.\textsuperscript{61} While the quality of Richland structures was notably better than those at Los Alamos due to Du Pont’s requirements, the Village had a distinct military look.\textsuperscript{62}

Pehrson’s plan identified housing unit types with a letter. This designation led to Richland dwellings’ moniker, “the alphabet houses.” Pehrson and his team designed the alphabet houses in the modern Twentieth Century Minimal Traditional style. This architectural style, popular between 1935 and 1950, “favored efficiency and the unornamented wall surface.” Richland homes shared some standard elements despite unit type or location including: stained hardwood floors, kitchens and bathrooms floors covered in linoleum, painted drywall walls and ceilings, and soft wood trims. Houses

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} Abbott, "Building the Atomic Cities," 95.
generally utilized the same types of construction material, included the same spatial features, and largely differed only in number of bedrooms and bathrooms. Pherson utilized various schemes of house placement on lots and exterior sidings and shingles to vary the look of homes and neighborhoods. The MED and DuPont called for far fewer four bedroom homes, as they imagined these would house executives. Pherson constructed only 184 four bedroom units out of total 2,467 single family houses. Three bedroom unit designs constituted the majority of single family units. Duplexes numbered almost half of all permanent homes built in Richland at about 2,036. The uniformity of construction materials in part promoted the egalitarian veneer in the Village, despite the fact that MED and DuPont requests created clear class divisions in the neighborhoods.

In addition to altering the distribution patterns of the permanent homes Pehrson designed, the MED created an even bigger class division in housing with its installation of prefabricated houses. The MED required low cost and quickly available housing for the growing Village population and DuPont selected these one, two, and three bedroom prefabricated types originally designed for the Tennessee Valley Authority to fill the housing gap. The 1,342 prefabricated units differed significantly in character, quality, and style from the Pehrson designs and the MED concentrated them in one distinct neighborhood. The MED never intended the “prefabs” as permanent structures and

---

63 Harvey and Kraft, “Hanford Engineering Works Village.”
64 Richland housing data, n.d., box 5, folder 15, the Fred Claggett Papers (hereafter FCP), University of Washington Libraries Special Collections (hereafter UW).
65 Harvey and Kraft, “Hanford Engineering Works Village”; and Housing and Home Finance Agency press release May 11, 1956, box 2, folder 24, FCP, UW.
Richlanders who lived in them often noted their design flaws and structural inefficiencies.

Du Pont and the MED policies not only controlled the Village’s design, but imposed community rules that separated and distinguished operations workers from the construction camp employees, excluded African-Americans, and imposed HEW security in the Village. The MED strictly adhered to a policy not to allow more than 20 percent of the work force to be black and ultimately only about 10 percent of HEW workers were African-American. Management always viewed black employees as temporary, hired only for construction jobs and not as operations workers in the finished plants at the site and therefore the MED did not allow them residency in the Village.\footnote{Bauman, “Jim Crow,” 124-126.} While no fence surrounded the residential community Richland, unlike in the MED’s other two secret cities were (Los Alamos and Oak Ridge), the MED maintained tight control over Richland. MED and DuPont policies shaped the demographics, social relationships, and built environment of Richland. Only permanent project employees could reside in the village and the MED owned all residences, which the agency leased to workers at a low cost. The MED completed HEW construction in early 1945, shifted to operations mode, and closed Camp Hanford.\footnote{Sanger, Working on the Bomb, 143.} While local historians likened Camp Hanford to wild-west mining camp, early Richland boosters and the MED envisioned the workers village as a sedate middle-class suburban enclave. Descriptions of the new atomic town emphasized
its youthful well-educated population, progressive egalitarian design, ideal family life, and low crime rate.

In early 1945 HEW transitioned from construction to operation as the MED readied the completed facilities for plutonium manufacture. HEW shipped its first batch of plutonium to the MED’s laboratory at Los Alamos on February 3, 1945, while the MED closed and dismantled Camp Hanford, issued pink-slips to construction workers, and assigned permanent operations workers to the newly renovated workers village. Despite the lack of fence around the village, the MED imposed tight restrictions on the behavior of Richland’s citizen workers and clearly defined who could gain residency in the city.

The MED significantly influenced Richland demographics. In advance of the high-tech workers that populated the military industrial complex centers in the post-war West, Richland residents tended to be on average young, well-educated, and white.\textsuperscript{68} However, class and status difference emerged in the Village. Meta Newson, wife to MED physicist Henery W. Newson, lived in the Village from August 1944 to February 1945. Du Pont assigned the Newson’s a three bedroom home and they paid $50 a month inclusive. Newson remembered DuPont families as snobby. “The Du Ponters were a little snooty,” she said. “If someone wasn’t a Du Ponter, you were the lowest of the low.” She also recalled excellent shopping in the Village noting the “you could get everything there you couldn’t get in other parts of the country” Coke, meat, and cigarettes were plentiful.

\textsuperscript{68} Gerber, \textit{On the Homefront}, 58.
and rationed good easy to come by in the Village.\textsuperscript{69} David Hall and his wife Jane Hamilton, both project physicists also spent part of 1944 and 1945 at HEW. Hall remembered that he and his wife enjoyed a good social life in the Village during the war, but that they primarily socialized with other scientists and academics. “I think it must have been kind of cliquey,” he said, “with not much intermingling with Du Pont.”\textsuperscript{70}

Despite the lack of a fence around the Village, the MED security perimeter extended into Richland and shaped the lives of residents. The MED restricted workers from telling their families about their work and nobody in the Village could talk about work at HEW. Betsy Stuart, married to a Du Pont man and herself a secretary at HEW, recalled a noisy neighbor disappearing after questioning Stuart and other neighbors about their husband’s jobs. “Believe me, when we got together we didn’t talk about what we were doing, said Stuart.”\textsuperscript{71}

Louise Cease, wife to Bill Cease who first worked canning uranium and later as a low level reactor operator, came to Richland in June 1944. The company assigned Cease a one-bedroom prefab at $27.50 a month inclusive, reflecting her husbands status on the project. She remembered battling the constant intrusion of sand into the house, the bathrooms lack of a tub. She also remembered a considerable amount of socializing with her neighbors and the ease with which this group of people from all over the country got acquainted with each other. Unlike Du Ponter Betsy Stuart who bemoaned the lack of available domestic help in war-time Richland, Cease recalled that one fiend “made a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{69} Meta Newson in Sanger, \textit{Working on the Bomb}, 165-166.
\textsuperscript{70} David Hall in Ibid., 163-164.
\textsuperscript{71} Betsy Stuart in Ibid.,168-170.
\end{flushright}
fortune doing laundry” since she had a “second-hand Maytag.” Vera Jo MacCready arrived in Richland in June 1944, her husband worked as a liaison between construction and operation personal. While MacCready did not mention what type of house Du Pont assigned her in the Village, she describe it as a laughable three-bedroom one story “little red square thing in the middle of piles of dirt that were much higher than it was.” She recalled waiting in line to make purchased, battling the sand, and that people often got confused among the new streets and with all the houses looking alike. “Several times I would be in the kitchen,” she remembered, “and a man would come in the back door, and usually I would know him and knew he just got in the wrong house.”

HEW and the MED also influenced Pasco, Kennewick, and Benton County. MED employment swelled populations in Kennewick and Pasco rendering housing in short supply and overcrowded city schools. The MED, however, provided no assistance to the two cities since they were not federal property. Federally owned HEW and Richland Village limited Benton County’s available tax base and increase the county’s economic burden. Additionally, around the Mid-Columbia farms and businesses unable to compete with HEWs high wages found it difficult to attract and keep employees. MED policy also helped shape the demographics of the Tri-Cities as a whole. The rules which kept construction workers, temporary employees, and black workers out of the operators’ Villager, forced these HEW workers to live in Pasco. Kennewick employed racial restrictive housing covenants that bared blacks from living in the city. While Pasco

---

72 Louise Cease in Ibid., 171-174.
73 Vera Jo MacCready in Ibid., 181-182.
74 Gerber, On the Homefront, 56-57.
allowed blacks residency, the city restricted African-Americans to only one area. Additionally, Pasco failed to provide water and garbage services to black neighborhoods.  

CONCLUSION

Colonel Franklin T. Matthias’ reconnaissance mission over the Mid-Columbia in December 1942 initiated a chain reaction that transformed the area from small irrigated farm communities to a military industrial complex hinterland. MED officials’ vision of the Priest Rapids and Lower Yakima Valleys as an ideal location for plutonium production branded the landscape as devoted to atomic production and waste. The MED condemned Hanford and White Bluffs, constructed HEW, and with the help of DuPont remade Richland to fit the agency’s vision of an atomic workers village. Motivated by war-time urgency, MED policies and procedures shaped the Mid-Columbia’s demographics, built environments, and social geography, and birthed the area’s resident’s vision of the landscape and atomic culture. The next chapter looks more closely at how Richlanders used their newly formed atomic identity, visions of Mid-Columbia landscapes, and political power with the nation’s nuclear complex to leverage an advantage in a clash with the Atomic Energy Commissions over privatize of the city in 1958.

---

75 Bauman, “Jim Crow,” 126.
Well after sundown on Friday December 12, 1958, Richland began its incorporation celebration with a bang. The Richland Rotary Club kicked-off the three-day “commencement” exercises by detonating a simulated atomic bomb at the Uptown shopping center. After Paul Beardsley, master of ceremonies and city councilman, counted down to zero, the night sky lit up as the “tremendous orange-red fireball” shot high into the air. E.J Block, the Atomic Energy Commission’s (AEC) Division of Productions manager, discharged the “bomb.” The thousands gathered cheered for the blast, their spirits not dampened by the chill night. Army personnel constructed the celebratory ordinance from dynamite, a bit of napalm, and white phosphorus to provide the mushroom cloud-like affect. In keeping with the commencement theme, Block pushed the button to ignite the bomb while sporting a mortar board and gown. The bomb’s blast wave shook houses, rattled windows, and elicited about a dozen calls to the police station. For most residents, however, the blast did not come as a surprise since a large portion of Richlanders attended the ceremony forming one of the largest crowds ever assembled in the city. Following the explosion, Olla Rae Elmore, Miss Richland, passed “a magic wand” containing uranium over a Geiger counter tube, completing an electrical circuit that ignited charges under a huge wood pile and lit the symbolic
“homecoming” bonfire. The fire “glittered and glared” for about an hour before the assemble crowd left the festivities.¹

The commencement celebration followed a decade of planning by the federal government and the AEC to rid the agency of community management responsibilities. The simulated atomic bomb blast paid homage to the city’s plutonium roots and the ceremony’s commencement theme symbolized the Richlanders’ feeling of graduating to a new independence.² While Manhattan Engineering District (MED) officials remade Richland during World War II to serve the needs of the Manhattan Project and only allowed Hanford workers residency in Richland, very quickly in the post-war years Richland’s citizen-workers took ownership of the new community and exerted control over their new federal patrons the AEC. Richland’s citizen-workers mingled the West’s frontier traditions with the novelty of atomic science and, in a few short years, developed a useful community creation narrative and new identity built on the foundations of the MED’s atomic culture crafted during the war. Both Richland and the AEC moved cautiously toward incorporation (of the city) and disposal (privatization of Richland homes and real-estate) in the post-war years. The AEC, while eager to concentrate solely on its primary mission to produce plutonium at the Hanford, feared upsetting Richland’s

citizen-workers, compromising security, and disrupting plant production. Paul Beardsley, Richland councilman, dubbed the period between 1947 and the 1958 ceremony as the “Long Road to Self-Government,” succinctly encapsulating the cautious and contentious movement of the AEC and Richland’s citizen-workers toward incorporation and disposal.

In 1947 the AEC assumed control of the nation’s nuclear weapons program, Hanford, and the responsibility to ensure worker morale, high plutonium output, and maintain atomic secrecy. While Richland existed until 1958 as a company town under the control of the federal government, the AEC’s desire to sustain a contented and productive work force at Hanford ultimately gave Richland’s citizen-workers considerable say in AEC community policy. This chapter analyzes the clash between Richland’s citizen-workers and the AEC over disposal and privatization of the federally owned community. This case study demonstrates how Richland’s citizen-workers embellished, used, and reinforced their atomic identity, the Manhattan Project victory narrative, and their important role within the nuclear weapons complex to negotiate community subsidies and low housing prices from the AEC during disposal and privatization. Despite their economic dependence on plutonium production, Richland’s citizen-workers exerted considerable power over their federal patrons.

---

3 In 1947 the Hanford Engineering Works was renamed the Hanford Works. The site remained under this designation until 1974. From 1974-1977 the site was designated the Hanford Reservation and from 1977-2013 the Hanford Site. In the post war era and beyond, however, the site is simply referred to as Hanford and that is the designation I use in the remainder of the document.
POST-WAR RICHLAND AND EARLY ATOMIC CULTURE

Despite the uncertainty of the post-war lull in production, by 1946 Richland’s citizen-workers increasingly viewed Richland as a permanent home and while always under the watchful eye of the federal government, began to impose their identity over the MED constructed town. The *Richland Villager* newspaper, the Richland Jr. Chamber of Commerce, and Columbia High School students played significant roles in this early fashioning of community atomic identity.

Richland’s citizen-workers experienced a period of celebration, transition, and uncertainty in the immediate post-war era. Nationally, from 1945 to 1949, the bulk of Americans rejoiced over the end of World War II and the atomic bombing of Japan. Americans learned about atomic power and its potential applications in medicine and energy production. Nuclear physics seemed to promise the American public a new era free of war and disease with unlimited energy supplies. America’s atomic euphoria penetrated national popular culture and manifested in atomic themed cocktails, songs, and comic books. Much of America’s initial celebration of the atomic bomb, however, stemmed from the jubilation over World War II’s end and the fact that the United States enjoyed a nuclear monopoly. After the Cold War began in earnest and the Soviet Union detonated its first atomic bomb in 1949, the American public responded more soberly to the bomb.\(^4\)

While the nation celebrated the war’s end, Richland’s citizen-workers rested

---

uneasy, uncertain if the federal government planned to continue plutonium production at Hanford. While Richlanders anxiously awaited their fate as U.S. atomic policy and the new world order coalesced, much of the community’s identity and atomic culture formed during the giddy early post-war years before the Soviet Union detonated its first bomb.

On Victory in Europe Day, when Germany surrendered, Richland’s citizen-workers reacted with ambivalence. Although they expressed joy and relief at the end of war in Europe, the war in the Pacific continued and so did work at HEW. One project manager reminded Hanford staff that they were “still playing for keeps—Japan must be brought to her knees too.”

When Japan surrendered a few months later, awestruck Richlanders celebrated. On August 6, 1945 the headline of the *Richland Villager* proclaimed, “It’s Atomic Bombs.” Hanford workers discovered, most for the first time, the nature of their war time labor. Richlanders, also, quickly began to question the fate of their community. What would happen to Richland and Hanford after the war? Richland resident Audrey Dixson expressed amazement at the area’s role in the ending of the war but concluded sadly, “now we might as well move. There’s no more excitement to Richland.”

An MED wide post-war production lull fueled Hanford workers fears that the new atomic frontier might soon become another western ghost town. With the future of atomic production uncertain, the MED moved to cut costs and production. The MED temporarily shut-down one Hanford reactor and operated the site’s other two at reduced capacity.

---

5 “Work as Usual Here on Tuesday,” *Richland Villager*, May 10, 1945.
addition to the MED’s cost saving measures many Hanford employees left to find more stable employment, “the number of contract personnel at Hanford fell from ten thousand in September 1945 to about five thousand in December 1946. On January 24, 1946, DuPont reassured uneasy Richlanders with an announcement that the MED planned to extend the company’s contract beyond June. The extension allowed Hanford to maintain operational status while the government organized its atomic policies.

Despite the uncertainty among Hanford workers, almost immediately after America dropped the atomic bombs on Japan, the national spotlight focused on Hanford, its workers, and the MED’s secret wartime mission. The government and the media recognized Hanford workers as war heroes and this status became an important part of community identity. On August 16, C.C. Anderson Stores, a retail supplier in the village, sponsored a large advertisement in the Richland Villager honoring Richland’s citizen-workers, DuPont, and the federal government for ending the war:

It was with unfailing patience, faith, and confidence of true Americans in what their democratic government set out to do was fully able to perform. Truly, American ingenuity combined with faith, has once again brought “Peace on Earth” in a troubled world. The efforts employed by each of you in helping to establish this peace, is worthy of citations as a hero of the home front.

This advertisement proclaimed Richland’s citizen-workers home front heroes. Hanford workers assisted in manufacturing the atomic bomb and so played a crucial role in winning the peace. The advertisement also paradoxically noted that the war victory

---

9 “This Is It the Peace You Have Been Working For,” *Richland Villager*, August 16, 1945.
resulted from the efforts of a “democratic government,” when in reality war-time
Richland-Hanford operated under strict security and federal control that limited many of
the freedoms associated with American democracy.

In October 1945, General Groves reinforced the connection between Hanford
worker and war hero when he visited Richland. Groves formally thanked Hanford
workers for their service and presented them with the Army-Navy “E” award, the highest
civilian production commendation of World War II. Hanford workers received
certificates of award that read:

This is to Certify that [name of HEW Worker] has participated in work essential to
the production of the Atomic Bomb, thereby contributing to the successful
conclusion of World War II. This certificate is awarded in appreciation of effective
service.

The certificates language again reinforced the notion that Hanford workers helped the
United States successfully win the war with plutonium production. Hanford personnel
also received War Department commissioned “A-Bomb” lapel pins emblazoned with a
mushroom cloud that the department gifted to all MED workers to commemorate their
service.\textsuperscript{10} The media and government officials repeatedly emphasized to Hanford workers
their status as home-front heroes. Richland’s citizen-workers embraced this identity and
believed that they contributed to a quick end to the war with Japan, celebrated the
powerful mushroom cloud image stamped on their A-bomb pins, and reflected little on
the devastation wrought on the enemy at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

\textsuperscript{10} Gerber, \textit{Legend and Legacy: Fifty Years of Defense Production at the Hanford Site} (Richland, WA:
Like many other Americans at the time, Hanford workers accepted President Harry S. Truman’s and Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson’s explanation that the atomic bombs were necessary to force Japanese surrender and that their use saved lives of American soldiers spared from an invasion of mainland Japan.\(^{11}\) Oswald H. Greager, Hanford worker and Richland resident, expressed these sentiments saying, “I never had any misgivings about working on the bomb. I had a brother who would have been in the first wave landing in Japan. …I don’t recall any of the people I worked with at the time saying anything except it was something we had to do, that’s all there was to it.” \(^{12}\) Jack Miller, who worked both in reactor construction and operations at Hanford recalled, “the general opinion was that ending the war was worthwhile. How you kill people, that is immaterial. It’s just a matter of efficiency. That sounds very brutal. But if this saved a number of deaths and casualties, that of course relieves me of guilt.”\(^{13}\) The distance Hanford workers felt from the responsibility of the atom bomb also emerged as a key facet of atomic community identity. Again and again, the stories workers told about Hanford during the war, as well as in the secondary literature about Hanford, stressed the secret nature of the work and the necessity of ending the war. Ultimately, MED policy and secrecy at Hanford effectively protected Richland’s citizen-workers from the weighty responsibility that Manhattan Project scientists, who knowingly created the bomb, felt so acutely. Relieved of responsibility for atomic destruction, Hanford’s workers fashioned

\(^{11}\) For an explanation of this “classic” or “orthodox” view on the atomic bombing of Japan see Henry L. Stimson, “The Decision to Use the Bomb,” Harper’s 194 (February 1947): 98-101.
\(^{12}\) Oswald H. Greager in S.L. Sanger, Working on the Bomb, 193.
\(^{13}\) Jack Miller in Ibid., 177.
an innocent and heroic identity carved from the overall Manhattan Project victory narrative that flourished in the immediate post-war years.

Despite uncertainty about continued Hanford production Richland’s citizen-workers celebrated their town. In early September 1945, the Richland Jr. Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees) planned a community-wide festival, dubbed “Richland Day.” Some community members worried that a town-wide celebration in the midst of the ongoing atomic media frenzy might be overwhelming. The commotion, however, did not detour the Jaycees and the organization went ahead with the event. The Jaycees intended to not only promote the city, but celebrate Richland’s newfound place in the burgeoning atomic age. The festival preceded as planned and featured a carnival, exhibits, and sporting events. Richlanders celebrated their role in ending the war and as the Richland Villager proclaimed: “Our Bomb Did It!” this accomplishment became a rallying point not only for personal pride, but also for community spirit.

In the years to come, the Richland Jaycees took a leading role in shaping community identity. The United States Junior Chamber of Commerce formed as a national organization in 1920. The organization provided opportunities for young men between the ages of eighteen and forty to develop personal and leadership skills, primarily through business development and community service. The Richland Jaycees formed in 1944 and accepted members between the ages of twenty-one and forty. The organization quickly grew from just about a dozen members to nearly 200 by fall of 1945. The Richland Jaycees conducted war bond drives, raised money for the National

---

14 "Richland Day Program to Go on as Scheduled," Richland Villager, August 14, 1945.
Cancer Society, sponsored a lecture series, and funded a softball team.\footnote{“This is How the Jaycee’s Were Born,” \textit{Richland Villager}, September 3, 1945.} During the post war, the Jaycees tirelessly promoted Richland and helped to shape Richland’s citizen-worker identity. The Jaycees turned “Richland Day” into an annual event that later grew into the multi-day celebration, “Atomic Frontier Days,” held every August/September from 1948 to 1959. As the name suggests, Atomic Frontier Day’s celebrated both the atom and the mythic West in Richland’s atomic identity.\footnote{John M. Findlay, "Atomic Frontier Days: Richland, Washington, and the Modern American West," \textit{Journal of the West} 34, no. 3 (1995), 33.}

In 1946 Columbia High School (later Richland High School) birthed the Bomber mascot that became one of the most visible symbols of Richland’s atomic identity. With this mascot, the high school students both claimed the town as their own and fashioned an important community symbol to reflect their pride in HEW workers contribution to ending World War II. The 1946 Columbia High School yearbook featured an all-atomic theme with the borders of pages decorated with the nucleonic symbol. Editor Dora Lee Simpson’s foreword explained the decision to use this theme, “for memories sake, and because of its greatness, we have carried the ‘Atomic Bomb’ theme through the annual in an effort to symbolize the world history, which has been in progress here in Richland, in which we and our parents had a part.”\footnote{From the forward of the \textit{Columbian}, 1946, Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science, and Technology Museum, Richland, WA (here after CREHST).} This yearbook and its student editor’s commentary provided a crucial clue as to why the school mascot and nickname changed in the post-war years. After a student vote of approval in 1946 the high school mascot
changed from “Beavers” to “Bombers.” While it took some time for the “Bombers” to adopt the notorious Mushroom Cloud logo to accompany the Bomber name, the switch from Beavers to Bombers shows how Richland’s citizen-workers started to stake a claim on the city.

While Hanford workers laid cultural claim to the city, plutonium production’s future remained uncertain. Across the nation and in the West, war-industry shifted to domestic production to meet the growing post-war consumer demand. While most western industry successfully managed this shift, Hanford could not simply retool to produce a civilian product. The quick onset of the Cold War, however, brought further growth of the military industrial complex in the region. Federal military expenditures in the West increased beyond World War II levels. California and Washington state benefited most from this new round of defense spending. While Richland’s citizen-workers labored to win the peace during World War II, they depended on the onset of the Cold War to ensure continued plutonium production and maintain the Richland and Tri-City economy. As a result, along with World War II home front hero, Hanford works added cold warrior to their identity.

In September 1946, General Electric (GE) assumed the post of Hanford’s primary contractor and Richland’s caretaker from DuPont. While the shift to a new contractor worried some Hanford workers, GE’s contract provided further evidence that plutonium


production would continue at the site. The Richland Jaycees held the second annual “Richland Day” on September 2. The celebration’s theme captured this important transition to post-war life. The event’s theme, “Goodbye DuPont, Welcome GE,” recognized the change in the site’s contractor and celebrated the city’s new landlord. Events included a parade, beauty contest, air show, bowling tournament, model airplane meet, softball game, and dance. Along with the listing of events, the souvenir program featured the evolving Richland creation narrative, as well as pictures and stories of life at Hanford during the war. The program clearly linked city origins with the Manhattan Project and World War II victory.  

By narrating the atomic city’s origins for residents and visitors, the program shaped Richland’s creation story, perpetuated the discourse of the city’s uniqueness, and reinforced atomic community identity.

In 1947 Congress created the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and further insured Hanford’s future in plutonium production and eased Richland’s citizen-worker fears. In September, Richland residents, under the Jaycees guidance, expressed their relief and new feeling of permanence with the “We’re Here to Stay” theme of the third annual Richland Day celebration. The Jaycees boasted, “Just as GE and the AEC have given the Hanford Engineer Works a permanent look, we have come to regard Richland no longer as a stopping point between trains, but as our home town.” The Jaycees event program featured the “Atom Bustin Village of the West” logo which emphasized Richland’s connection to the frontier American West culture and coalescing atomic

---

20 Souvenir Program from Richland Day, September 2, 1946. CREHST.
pioneer identity. The program not only listed the celebration’s events but featured all the local and regional activities that Richlanders enjoyed everything from adopting the city of Tiel, Holland as part of the win-the-peace- program, to recreation at nearby Columbia Gorge and Lake Chelan, to whooping it up western style at the Pendleton Roundup.

“Where we can go from here is unlimited,” the program asserted, “everything we want to see is nearby; but we’ll always come home to Richland, because We’re here to Stay!” 22

The program’s pages featured photographs and captions that celebrated the city’s modernity and youthfulness. The program included aerial photographs of Richland’s new and growing suburbs and explained that on a tour around the village a visitor would see “attractive homes, their well-kept lawns bordered by flower gardens and shrubs. Suntanned mothers putter over lawns while watching the playful antics of lively youngsters.” The program also promoted Richland as a child’s paradise and noted that children enjoyed the company of abundant playmates, a plethora of activities, and provided great opportunities for teens to earn money babysitting. “Yes, there’s a little bit of heaven,” proclaimed the program, “and for the kids, it’s Richland.” The Jaycees also called Richland a “City of Young” and attributed the town’s enthusiasm, spirit, and growth, to the community’s average age of thirty-five. The Jaycees clearly portrayed Richland as a growing, young, model suburban environment.

The *Richland Villager* newspaper also helped shape community identity in the early post-war era, despite the fact that the AEC funded and exerted considerable

---

22 Souvenir Program Richland Day, September 1, 1947, CREHST.
influence over the paper’s content. Villagers Inc., a non-profit community organization, published the weekly newspaper under the leadership of editor Paul Nissan. Villager Inc. operated almost as an employee association, although all Richlanders could join. The AEC and GE provided the newspaper with rent free office space, operating supplies, and encouraged Richland business to advertise in the paper. These advertising dollars, in part procured through pressure on Richland businesses from the community landlords, funded Villagers Inc. and the group’s community activities. In exchange for these benefits, the AEC and GE controlled the weekly’s content. News that the AEC did not want printed, did not grace the pages of the *Richland Villager*. Nissan, a former Army censor, ensured that the paper focused on community events, social happenings, and sports.23 In effect, the newspaper acted as the company newsletter for Richland’s citizen-workers. What was “visible in the pages of the *Villager* is a town without trouble, a town without poverty, a town without crime, and a town without history.” In the absence of objective hard hitting journalism or even a simple police blotter, the newspaper, like the Richland Jaycees, projected an idyllic middle-class post-war image of the community to Richlanders.24 Despite class division, living under constant security, and traversing the daily challenges of company town life, Richland’s citizen-workers readily absorbed and incorporated the utopic suburban image into their identity.


The *Richland Villager*, however, did offer its citizen-worker constituency one outlet to criticize the company and express the frustrations of company town life, the paper’s iconic *Dupus Boomer* cartoons. The Dupus cartoon character personified the average Richlander as a white male Hanford worker who lived with his family in government sponsored prefabricated housing. Dick Donnell, who began working at Hanford for DuPont in 1944, created the cartoon. Dupus’s life and adventures appeared in the *Richland Villager* from November 1945 to 1948.\(^{25}\) Donnell derived Dupus Boomer’s first name from DuPont, U.S.A. and borrowed his last name from the “Boomers” moniker for war workers who traveled from one government project to another.\(^{26}\) This well-loved fictional character has graced the pages of almost everything written about Richland. Dupus lore suggested that he, like many other Richlanders, came to work at Hanford in 1943 and after transferring to plant operations at the end of construction moved to Richland. DuPont assigned Dupus and his family a government-sponsored prefabricated home in Richland. Donnell had no previous experience in cartooning but his simple line drawings captured the trials and tribulations of his fellow Hanford workers, enabling them to laugh at the hardships of life on the atomic frontier and subtly rebel against its indignities.\(^{27}\) Donnell’s frequent depiction of Dupus wearing overalls and the fact that he assigned him residence in a prefab house (a less than


desirable housing assignment) established Dupus as a humble working-class everyman type of character. The humor in most Dupus Boomer cartoons centered on the challenges of company town life, housing difficulties in the growing town, the constant fight against the dust and wind of the Mid-Columbia, and the ever-present campaign to maintain secrets and security at Hanford. Richlanders could relate to these themes and Dupus allowed residents to harmlessly and collectively resist the power the AEC and GE exerted over their daily lives.

While Dupus offered Richland’s citizen-workers a way to poke fun at the hardships of life on the federal controlled atomic frontier, the Richland Jaycees worked to further cement Richland’s atomic community identity with iconic western mythology. In 1948 the Jaycees renamed its annual community celebration “Atomic Frontier Days” adopting a much more explicit atomic and western theme than the old “Richland Day.” The event program outlined community development in a manner that reinforced the emerging creation narrative and community identity. The program included only a brief discussion of Richland’s pre-atomic past and focused on the MED’s transformation of the area stating, “the old farming center of Richland was evacuated and transformed into a modern community designed to eventually house thousands of production workers and their families.” The program reinforced the critical point that Hanford workers did not know they helped make bombs during the war noting that, “only a handful knew ‘What,’ [they were producing] and they were not talking.” The program also praised Richland’s citizen-workers for their valiant effort in the battle with the arid Mid-Columbia stating,
“with few trees and grass sparse, the desert fought a savage fight against the invasion of highways, water-power, industry and man.” Finally before going on to detail the past years accomplishments in the village and list the celebrations calendar of events, the program offered thanks and praise to Richland’s atomic war hero pioneers, “Because of them and what they stand for-what they have built upon these sands-the theme ‘We’re Here to Stay’ is a reality, not only for the present but henceforth.” The program, thus, firmly rested the existence of the community on Hanford workers contributions to the atomic bomb and valiant efforts to subdue the dusty arid Mid-Columbia landscapes.

When World War II ended, Richland’s citizen-workers increasingly viewed Richland as a permanent home despite the uncertainty of the post-war lull in production. Although always under the watchful eye of the federal government, Richlanders began to overlay their identity and community vision on the MED constructed town. The Richland Villager newspaper, the Richland Jr. Chamber of Commerce, and Columbia High School students played significant roles in this early fashioning of community atomic identity. As the Cold War coalesced and the AEC ramped up plutonium production, Richland’s citizen-workers felt assured that the war-born community would continue.

POST-WAR EXPANSION

National and international events lifted post-war uncertainty in Richland and spurred expansion at Hanford and in the village. American policy regarding the use, proliferation, and sharing of nuclear technology coalesced and Congress established the AEC on
January 1, 1947 with the Atomic Energy Act to oversee the nation’s atomic production, research, and development. The AEC replaced the MED as the federal agency responsible for operating America’s atomic facilities and their supporting communities. More importantly, the Cold War’s onset insured the need for more bomb-making materials and trigged expansion of Hanford’s production facilities. While the international events and federal atomic policy that caused the AEC to expand Hanford Works remained beyond the control of Richland’s citizen-workers. The need to keep Hanford Works workers happy and on the job producing plutonium compelled the AEC to consider the needs of Hanford workers as the agency expanded nuclear production and reinforced the important role of Richland’s citizen-workers in nuclear weapons complex.

Between 1950 and 1955 the AEC oversaw two major Cold War expansions at Hanford Works cementing the relationship between the Richland, the Tri-Cities, and plutonium production. The expansions brought increased federal dollars, growth, people, and an even greater sense of permanence to the community. As a result of this expansion, the federal government invested an additional $67 million in plutonium production above the $175 million already earmarked for Hanford in the 1950 fiscal year. Between 1950 and 1952, GE completed C Reactor, Hanford Work’s sixth. The company also constructed several new research and development facilities and a new plutonium extraction facility.

---

The 1950 expansion reflected the course of international events in the Cold War. In August 1949, the Soviet Union detonated its first atomic bomb. This development shocked the nation and United State’s scientists who had not expected the Soviets to acquire a bomb so quickly. The United States abruptly lost the atomic monopoly it enjoyed since 1945. The global nuclear power balance shifted, brought into sharp relief the very real danger of a Soviet atomic strike on the United States, and ignited the arms race between the two super powers. While news of Soviet Russia’s success in the development of atomic weapons frightened the nation and upped the Cold War ante, the news filtered through Richland with an upbeat message. Soviet nuclear power meant expanded facilities, increased national importance, and the continued flow of federal funds into Richland-Hanford and the Tri-Cities. News of site expansion triggered extended work schedules at Hanford, new housing starts in Richland, and reinforced residents’ visions that Hanford held a permanent place in atomic production. On September 29, 1949, Richland Villager editor Ted Best declared that the news of Soviet atomic power the “knockout punch” to any remaining skeptics who predicted the end of Hanford. He recognized that the Soviet nuclear program posed a great threat to the nation, but described the Hanford Works as a bulwark against Soviet nuclear power and an arsenal of peace. By “strengthening our defenses,” he wrote, “we are furthering the development of atomic energy toward that golden dawn when wars join with the dodo

bird in extinction.”32 Thus the arms race onset transformed Hanford workers into cold warriors and strengthened Richland’s citizen-workers’ identity as protectors of the peace initiated during World War II.

The AEC and the federal government also increased nuclear production in response to the “loss” of China to communism and North Korea’s mid-1950s invasion of South Korea. In October 1949 Mao Tse-tung declared the formation of the People’s Republic of China. Mao’s communist forces defeated the U.S. backed army of Chiang Kai-shek, despite continuing massive economic and military aid. Following his victory, Mao spent about two months in the Soviet Union negotiating the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship. America and Western Europe envisioned Eurasia as a monolithic block of communism posing a major threat to their security. To counter what the Truman administration saw as an increasing communist menace, the State Department, under the direction of Dean Acheson, drafted NSC-68. This document emerged as the blueprint for American armament and conduct during the Cold War. NSC-68 stressed America’s role as leader of the free world and advocated a massive increase in defense spending from $13.5 billion to $50 billion per year. NSC-68, however, did not win Truman’s immediate approval, despite the plan’s support from most of his administration. The price tag seemed too extravagant and Truman still hoped for a reversal in the escalating Cold War tensions.33 North Korea’s invasion of South Korea and America’s involvement in the conflict, however, served as a justification for the military buildup NSC-68 proposed and

facilitated increased expenditures for America’s nuclear arsenal and Richland-Hanford growth.  

The second Cold War expansion at Hanford began in 1953 as part of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s retaliation policy and in response to the first Soviet hydrogen bomb. In an effort to cut overall defense spending, Eisenhower reduced the nation’s conventional weapons forces and increased its nuclear armaments and capabilities. This strategy permitted him to cut defense spending to $40 billion by 1954. While this plan allowed Eisenhower to maintain United States security on a smaller budget, it shifted a larger portion of federal defense dollars towards atomic weapons, sending even more federal funds to Richland-Hanford. The Soviet Hydrogen bomb detonation on August 12, 1953 served as another significant reminder of the danger inherit in failing to win the arms race and helped to further justify the governments stockpiling of atomic weapons.

While the AEC expanded plutonium production at the Hanford Works in response to the nation’s growing demands for atomic weapons, expanded production at Hanford proved temporary. In the early 1950s the AEC made crucial decision about how to manage the nuclear weapons complex that had far reaching affects on the future of Richland-Hanford and the Tri-Cities. AEC officials divided production and research missions among the agency’s facilities and designated Hanford for production. The AEC relied on Hanford as the complex’s plutonium manufacturing work horse to provide for

36 Gerber, On the Home Front, 41.
the nation’s immediate nuclear needs. The new reactors the AEC built at Hanford during the expansion period were essentially of the same design as the Manhattan Project era reactors, an increasingly antiquated but proven technology. The AEC designated sites in South Carolina, Idaho, and New York for experimental reactor designs and new technology development. While the Cold War expansion conveyed a sense of permanence to Richland’s citizen-workers, the AEC management scheme entrenched Hanford as a manufacturing operation outside the loop of research and development and saddled Hanford with reactors doomed to obsolescence.37

With the expansion of Hanford production facilities, the AEC also revamped Richland to accommodate the growing workforce and to create an attractive environment for post-war workers. Following World War II personal income, education opportunities, and home ownership rapidly expanded for many middle and working class Americans. The lean years of the depression and rationing of the war gave way to increased spending on consumer goods like cars, televisions, and household appliance. Americans sought to enhance their living standards through consumer goods and single-family suburban homes. The MED planned wartime Richland as a temporary military post/DuPont company town on a low budget primarily suited to MED’s requirements. The original design of Richland did take citizen-workers’ lifestyles into consideration, but the AEC competing with other industries for workers planned community expansion with an eye toward accommodating the expectations and needs of post-war middle-class Americans.

Increasingly, the worker’s desires exerted influence over the community’s physical and cultural landscapes.

The AEC and GE attempted to provide a comfortable, affordable, and engaging living environment to attract the educated, well-trained employees they needed to work at Hanford and attempted to maintain competitiveness with other industrial employers and growing defense cities. Often described by residents in terms such as egalitarian, classless, and utopian, the AEC tried to consider how residents would use the space and anticipate their needs. New city plans included schools, automobile use, shopping centers, and the ubiquitous post-war ranch house.\(^\text{38}\) The AEC and GE also developed and supported social activities and educational opportunities for Richland’s citizen-workers. One post-war resident recalled the courses and activities offered in the evenings at the schools for adults. She took a tailoring course and her husband participated in woodworking class when they first arrived.\(^\text{39}\) GE also operated the General Electric School of Nuclear Engineering in conjunction with the AEC beginning in 1948. Lightheartedly referred to as “The GE College for Nuclear Knowledge,” the school provided opportunities for Hanford workers to continue their education and obtain graduate degrees. The AEC worried that Richland’s isolation and lack of a nearby university might discourage workers from coming to Hanford. AEC and GE officials


believed that providing an opportunity for Hanford workers to advance their education locally would attract more young talented scientists and engineers to Richland.

Despite AEC efforts to comfortably house and entertain Richland’s citizen-workers, the post-war expansions drew more new workers than available housing in the city. In 1948 1,300 workers waited on the list for a house.\textsuperscript{40} Patricia Tolley, homemaker, first arrived in Richland in 1951. Her husband, Lewis Tolley, recently completed his Master’s degree in Chemistry at the University of Arizona and procured a position at Hanford. The Tolleys heard about work at Hanford from a recruiting team conducting interviews in Tucson. With no houses available when they arrived, the Tolleys rented a room from a widow that worked at the plant. They waited about four months before GE assigned them their own ranch house in Richland.\textsuperscript{41} The narratives of many Richlanders arriving during this era support the conclusion that waiting for a housing assignment was a common experience as the AEC struggled to keep pace with the growing workforce.

The growing workforce at Hanford sometimes brought Richland and GE into conflict with its neighbors on the atomic frontier. The entire Tri-Cities benefited from Hanford development, but the expansion caused a severe housing shortage that not only caused Richland to burst at the seams, but Pasco and Kennewick as well. While the housing shortage signaled prosperity and growth, it strained relationships between Richland and the other cities. Hanford employed the majority of the area’s workforce and these workers occupied almost all the available living space, making it difficult for other

\textsuperscript{40} Beardsley, \textit{The Long Road}, 11.
\textsuperscript{41} “Patricia Tolley.”
employers to find personnel. The Bureau of Reclamation, for example, delayed work on the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, because laborers, housing in Pasco, and construction materials were all in short supply due to Hanford expansion.42

During the early Cold War expansion, the AEC paid a great deal more attention to the needs of workers and their families in planning the expanding post-war community. As the American economy boomed following the war and American sought to raise their standards of living through education, consumer goods, and single family suburban homes, the AEC and GE provided greater amenities and attention to community life in order to attract the skilled technical workers needed to produce plutonium at Hanford. AEC and GE efforts reinforced the notion to Richland’s citizen-workers that Richland was a special place and trained Richlanders to expect concessions and compensation in exchange for their willingness to live and work on the isolated atomic frontier. While the AEC seemingly created an ideal post-war suburban community, Richland’s citizen-workers still lived under the influence of the company and the federal government and atomic secrecy also became part of community identity.

LIFE IN THE COMPANY TOWN

Richland in the post-war era typified many images often associated with the 1950s, prosperity, growth, the baby boom, and racial segregation. The AEC and strict federal control of the city, however, created Richland’s veneer of democratic suburban bliss. Despite post-war expansion and attention to workers needs, Richland existed as a

heterogeneous conglomerate of military installation, corporate company town, and 1950s suburb. While the federal defense industry controlled the purse strings and influenced the character of many western communities, the AEC directly controlled Richland. Ironically, it appeared rather socialistic in an era that celebrated capitalism, democracy, and preached the evils of the Soviet Union. Although residents elected a Community Council and mayor, they served only as advisors to the AEC and GE. The AEC and the company planned the city budget, controlled operations, and answered primarily to Congress for approval and final appropriation. Richland's citizen-workers were not completely without a voice, as the AEC understood their contentment with city life as a key factor in timely plutonium production at Hanford, however, atomic security also shaped post-war life in the Village.

The AEC through GE managed and maintained all vital and typical city services, along with other atypical municipal services like healthcare and property management. Like most city governments, the AEC and GE provided police and fire protection for Richlanders, but they also operated the hospital, the telephone system, electrical service, and owned all residences. They managed the schools as a normal district under Washington State law, but the government owned the buildings and the AEC, in lieu of the levies of a normal community, provided funds for the district. Additionally, the government regulated who could reside in the city. GE granted residence to only

---

43 In the case of Richland, I have used the term “socialist” to describe the fact that there was no private property, all residents worked for the government and essential services such as housing, healthcare, fire and police protection, and utilities services were all provided to residents by the federal government through the Atomic Energy Commission with Congressional appropriation.
permanent Hanford employees and the company required residents to vacate Richland upon retirement or loss of job. Richland’s citizen-workers, thus, enjoyed a level of city services beyond what a town of that size could afford. The AEC and GE provided Hanford workers with amenities like inexpensive all-inclusive rents and healthcare that elevated their lifestyle to align with the democratic post-war middle-class image, ironically managed and subsidized by the federal government.

Furthermore, AEC and GE policies divided the city along subtle class lines and excluded African-Americans. As DuPont did during the war, GE assigned Richland housing according to a worker’s seniority within the company and thus tended to concentrate managers and upper level military personal in the city’s nicer neighborhoods and larger houses, while lower level employees received smaller houses further away from the city’s more attractive features like the riverfront. Nonetheless, workers, concentrated in neighborhoods with their socioeconomic peers, tended to remember Richland as egalitarian. The AEC and GE continued the tradition started during the war and prevented black workers from gaining residency in Richland. GE tended to only hire African-Americans as temporary employees exploding the rule that only permanent workers could live in the village.

Richland’s citizen workers operated under a constant order to maintain secrecy in the company town. The Cold War’s onset transformed Hanford workers from World War heroes to frontline Cold Warriors. The AEC and GE continued to demand that workers

44 Abbott, “Building the Atomic Cities,” 97-98; and Hales, Atomic Spaces, 150-152.
not discuss their jobs with family and friends and discouraged employees from asking questions about plant operations outside their work domain. One Richland homemaker recalled that her husband could not share much about his work, but that the urine samples GE required him to leave for pickup on the front porch of their home hinted at the nature of his job. The company continually cautioned employees to “Engage brain before starting mouth,” even when talking with a spouse or family member. The security program protected government properties, control nuclear materials, prevented sabotage, halted classified information leaks, and discouraged public knowledge of plant operations and procedures. The AEC required employees to present identification badges to enter the site, submit to searches of their personal belongings, and face a constant barrage of security slogans that reminded them “Espionage is Always a Threat” and “Know-How Lives With You, Security Is A Full Time Obligation.” Richlanders integrated security into their lives and looked for the humor in its constant intrusion, often poking fun at this daily irritation of life on the atomic frontier. While Dick Donnell’s lovable Dupus Boomer more often suffered the trials and tribulations of living in government housing, he also found himself subject to the relentless site security measures. In one cartoon, Donnell showed Dupus dressed in his typical overalls and carrying his lunch box leaving work after his shift. While passing through security, the guard gives Dupus a thorough once over with an upright GE vacuum cleaner. The accompanying caption read, “All I

46 “Patricia Tolley.”
know sir, is that an atom appears to be missing.” Hanford workers took security in stride and exchanged some personal freedoms for interesting high-paying jobs and to keep atomic secrets safe.

The security perimeter did not stop at the site’s boundary, but extended into the city’s residential and commercial spaces. Richland looked like a normal city, no fence surrounded the community. Hanford Patrol officers, however, policed the village, kept a key to all homes, tracked residents’ comings, goings, mail, and telephone conversations. The AEC even considered the Richland phone book a classified document. Security awareness campaigns extended to the community, and the company posted security slogans around town just as it did at the site. The emphasis on safety and security imbued Richland residents with a strong sense that the community was a Cold War target. While the threat of nuclear destruction permeated American culture throughout the era and school children across the nation practiced “duck and cover” drills, Richlanders viewed themselves and Hanford Works as particularly vulnerable to potential Soviet aggression. In Richland, school children participated in evacuation drills, called “bus drills.” School officials practiced taking the students several miles out into the surrounding desert where they would supposedly be safe in the event of a nuclear attack or accident. Richland’s citizen-workers, thus experienced an intensified version of the

nuclear fear during the early Cold War, but this also contributed to the community’s sense of uniqueness’ and cold warrior identity.

The city’s federal control also shaped the community demographics which contributed to the notion of unique atomic identity. While Hanford cranked out plutonium, baby production became Richland’s primary industry. America in the post-war years experienced a baby boom, but the village produced a veritable baby explosion. In 1948, Richland had the highest birth rate in the nation, at about 68 percent above the national average, and also reported low death rates, about one-seventh the national average. Since only Hanford employees and their families lived in the city, Richland residents were typically well educated and relatively young, both contributing factors to Richland’s exceptional demographics. Along with its plethora of babies, Richland’s federal management resulted in a community virtually without crime or juvenile delinquency and with no vagrancy or unemployment, adding to residents’ perception of Richland as an atomic utopia.

During the early Cold War era Richland’s citizen-workers influenced federal atomic policy in that the AEC needed to maintain a skilled and contented work force at Hanford to ensure a steady output of plutonium. The AEC, thus, worked to create an attractive community for its workers. At the same AEC and GE policies rendered Richland a white, affluent, family-oriented, suburban community, a model of what post-

---

51 Michele Gerber, Legend and Legacy, 22; and Richland Junior Chamber of Commerce, Souvenir Program of Atomic Frontier Days, 1948, CREHST.
52 Gerber, On the Home Front, 58.
53 Beardsley, The Long Road, 12.
war suburban America should look like; except of course for the highly subsidized socialistic nature of the community, the GE enforced Jim Crow system, and Richland’s utter dependence on federal plutonium production. The AEC catered to the needs of Richland’s citizen-workers, exerted control over worker and residential life, and maintained tight security in the village. The AEC policies designed to ensure efficient plutonium production and maintain atomic secrets, nonetheless, contributed to Richland’s citizen-workers belief in the uniqueness of their city and entitlement to special consideration. AEC officials, however, hoped to rid the agency of direct community management in the 1950s, but needed to move cautiously as not to upset Richland’s citizen-workers’ carefully crafted atomic identity and jeopardize Hanford production.

THE CLASH OVER INCORPORATION AND DISPOSAL

Almost since the agency’s inception, AEC officials looked to rid the agency of community management in its MED era atomic cities. In early 1947 Carroll Wilson, the AEC’s first general manager, recommended creating an advisory panel to study community management. In February 1947, the AEC hired Lyman S. Moore, a municipal management expert, as a consultant to help the AEC assess city administration and the feasibility of privatizing Richland. Moore completed his analysis and issued a report to the AEC in February 1948. He recommended the AEC begin to move toward a policy of less direct control over community operation. Moore’s plan called for greater separation

---

between community and production operations. Carleton Shugg, first civilian operations manager at Hanford Works, easily implemented the AEC’s initial efforts to separate plant and city management operations in Richland. The community had no gate, a single contractor, and separate residential areas and production facilities. AEC officials, while eager to divest the agency of municipal responsibilities, moved slowly and cautiously toward self-government and homeownership in Richland fearful of disrupting plutonium production and Richland’s citizen-workers.

In June 1950 the AEC took another calculated step and organized the Advisory Panel on Community Operations (most often referred to as the Scurry Panel). The AEC charged the panel with recommending a course for the AEC to pursue in regards to community operations in Richland, Oak Ridge, and Los Alamos. The AEC appointed Richard G. Scurry (senior member of the law firm Scurry, Scurry, and Pace) as panel chairman. Other panel members included George E. Bean (Grand Rapids, Michigan city manager), Fredrick M. Babcock (housing construction and financing consultant), and George Grove (Vice President of Real Estate for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company). Panel members visited and analyzed the three atomic communities. Ultimately the panel considered Los Alamos separately, but issued their report (known as the Scurry Report) on Oak Ridge and Richland in August 1951.

---


55 Mr. Carleton Shugg became the first civilian manager of the Hanford in September 1947.

56 Report of the Panel on Community Operations Concerning Disposal of Oak Ridge and Richland, reports by the Director of Production, August 5, 1951., record group 326, entry 67B, box 6, folder 10, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD (hereafter NARACP).
The AEC asked the Scurry Panel to study and make recommendations on three questions. First, what course should the AEC take regarding its three atomic cities so that they could most effectively contribute to the success of AEC programs? Second, what steps should the AEC take toward granting greater local autonomy in these communities and reducing city operating costs? Lastly, how would the AEC carry out the panel’s recommendations? The Scurry Report emphasized the importance of maintaining an attractive community in Richland in order to retain and recruit Hanford workers. The panel recommended the AEC continue efforts to provide a quality and adequate housing supply, sufficient city services, schooling, and shopping. The panel noted that the AEC amenities and services remain available to residents at reasonable prices to insure worker morale. “The places [Richland and Oak Ridge] must be attractive ones in which to live so new personnel and replacements can be readily recruited and so that order turnover is reduced to a low level and worker retention is encouraged by creating contentment and acceptance of the communities as home towns,” the report noted. The panel recommended that the AEC encourage Richlanders, as American citizens, toward responsibility of their own affairs. “Because it is fundamental that responsible American citizens desire control over their own affairs and because the contentment of workers is at least partially dependent upon the degree to which they have such control over local affairs…” The report indicated that private homeownership and self-government would reduce federal appropriations and allow contractors to devote more attention to the AEC’s primary mission at Hanford. The Scurry Report also indicated that ending the
paternalistic relationship and company town atmosphere in Richland would foster better and healthier worker-employee relationships.  

The Scurry Report also noted some potential challenges to private ownership and self-government in Richland stating, “the obstacles to incorporation and disposal are sufficiently serious to give pause to any recommendation to undertake them.” The report identified two primary impediments. The first was insufficient city revenues. The panel believed Richland unable to fund city services at their historic level, an important component for a contented workforce. Second, the panel anticipated difficulties in the sale of Richland houses to the citizen-workers. The AEC could not force Hanford workers to purchase houses and thus disposal in part rested upon Richlanders initiative and willingness to act. The panel further observed that “the mere suggestions to change, regardless of the merits of the case, may invite considerable opposition, especially after there have been long years of Federal subsidization of the people and community.”

The Scurry Report clearly indicated that the AEC continue forward with incorporation and disposal cautiously, as not to upset worker moral and plutonium production.

In order to better gauge worker opinion on privatization, in early 1952 the AEC engaged the Census Bureau to survey Richland residents about community disposal as outlined in the Scurry Report. In conjunction with the survey, the AEC Hanford Operations Office hired professional appraisers to conduct preliminary property valuations of Richland houses to aid residents in responding to the survey. While

---

57 Report and Recommendations of the Panel on Community Operations on Oak Ridge and Richland to the Atomic Energy Commission, August 11, 1951, record group 326, entry 67B, box 6, folder 10, NARACP.
58 Report and Recommendations.
Richlanders referred to these initial appraisals during disposal, the AEC never considered this survey the last word on property values in the city and anticipated calculation of actual prices at the time of sale.\textsuperscript{59} The Census Bureau reported in July 1952 that the majority of responding residents favored home ownership and self-government in Richland.\textsuperscript{60} Clearly, Richlanders seemed comfortable with the potential home prices suggested by the survey and mounted no widespread objection to privatization in the summer of 1952.

Disposal, however, proved challenging for the AEC and Richland residents. Increasingly, the potential pitfalls outlined in the Scurry Report came to pass. The closer the AEC moved toward privatization, the more back-lash the agency received from its citizen-workers in Richland. The Community Council, which first started to meet in June 1948, worked to mediate between the AEC and Richlanders, while at the same planning for new city government.\textsuperscript{61} Despite the national Cold War rhetoric that stressed capitalism, free enterprise, and democracy in defense of America against the Soviet Union, the citizen-workers in one of the nation’s key defense cities throughout the early 1950s communicated their happiness with the status quo Richland. Although, as the 1952 Census survey suggested, they remained open to self-government and home ownership. In 1953, seven out of ten residents described Richland as a model community.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{59} Gordon Dean (Chairman AEC) to Senator McMahon (Chairman Joint JCAE), January 31, 1952, record group 326, entry 67B, box 6, folder 10, NARACP.
\textsuperscript{60} H.D. Campbell, “Community Council Talks,” \textit{General Electric News}, May 22, 1953, box 4, folder 36, FCP, UW.
\textsuperscript{61} Beardsley, \textit{The Long Road}, 16.
February 1953 the Richland Community Council in conjunction with the American Legion organized a series of town meetings to provide Richlanders a chance to discuss and express concerns about privatization.\(^{63}\)

In 1954 the AEC introduced legislation to Congress, known as the Disposal Bill, which sketched the course of privatization in Richland and Oak Ridge. In April 1954, Richland’s Community Council spearheaded the local disposal effort. The council distributed the AEC proposed legislation to city residents, conducted public opinion surveys, and studied multiple contingencies for future incorporation. In May the council sent a copy of the Disposal Bill to all Richland homes and, throughout the rest of the year, held town meetings to discuss the legislation’s various aspects, the city’s operational needs, the City Council’s future structure, and possible augmentation of the AEC’s bill.\(^{64}\)

On March 8, 1955, after almost a year of the Community Council’s concentrated effort to educate Richlanders on the issues relating to disposal, the Chamber of Commerce sent cards soliciting support of incorporation and disposal from residents in the upcoming city elections. However, just a few weeks later, the citizen-workers returned a disappointing vote. When asked if they favored the Richland property disposal program, 3,315 said “no” and only 1,213 replied “yes.” When asked if they favored self-government for Richland, 2,412 said “no” and 1,914 replied “yes.” The vote suggested Richlanders unease with either the proposed legislation or the idea of disposal. The

---


\(^{64}\) Beardsley, *The Long Road*, 28.
council, eager to resolve the challenges and turn around public opinion, charged the League of Women Voters and two lay committees, one representing the pro-disposal faction and one representing the anti-disposal party, with determining why the proposition failed three-to-one in the election. In April 1955, reflecting in part the committees’ findings and the earlier hearings in Richland, the AEC formulated for Congress a revised disposal bill.\(^{65}\) As the Scurry Report foretold, the AEC could not force the frontline Cold Warriors in Richland to embrace self-government or home ownership and the revision of their legislation demonstrates they took the earlier bill’s critique seriously.

Richland’s citizen-workers, however, remained unsatisfied with the revised legislation or in some cases disposal in any form. In May, members of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (JCAE), the congressional oversight committee for the AEC, held a public hearing in Richland to discuss the disposal legislation before Congress. In July, Senator Henry Jackson and Congressman Hal Homes conducted another hearing in Richland to gather local testimony.\(^{66}\) These investigations revealed that Richland residents harbored multiple concerns about privatization. The biggest disagreement between locals and the federal government stemmed from the issue of what constituted fair market value of Richland houses. Richland’s citizen-workers sought to secure the lowest possible purchase price. In addition to how the AEC valued property, potential homebuyers worried about sales terms, contracts, financing, and what might

---

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 29.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 29.
happen to their investment if the AEC discontinued Hanford operations. The Community Council, GE, the school district, and Benton County all expressed the other primary concern, terms and amount of continued AEC financial support for local government and city services.

Most citizen-workers’ pleas for price reduction at the meeting centered on the condition and perceived undesirability of Richland houses. The MED built the city’s houses in haste during the war and many needed repair. Additionally, the AEC offered residents the chance to purchase the houses in which they currently resided—houses the company assigned them, not necessarily ones they might choose for themselves. The considerable number of duplex dwellings in the city also raised concerns.

When residents argued for fair home prices, they often based their pleas on the community’s atomic hero identity and cold warrior status. During his testimony on behalf of the Community Council, Mayor Harold Monson argued that “many people worked this community up from sage and sand,” turning Richland into “a place of beauty.” Now the government should “reward their hard work and faith in the community” and offer them the lowest possible price for their homes. Monson also argued that any improvements which occupants made to the homes should not influence calculated sale value. Monson’s plea suggested that the AEC compensate Richlanders for their pioneering efforts. J.M Clark, a GE engineer, echoed Monson’s sentiments, saying that assessors should consider that:

By planting lawns, landscaping, and modifying, they [residents] have transformed these houses from wooden structures in the sand to homes in this oasis, which we love. Many of these tenants are the same ones who were awarded little “A” pins for their contributions during the war. They left their homes in far-off places to suffer the pioneer pains of the atomic frontier. The price should be made right for them.\textsuperscript{68}

Clark’s testimony not only invoked the hard work and pioneering efforts to make Richland an attractive community, but cited their war hero status as a consideration in figuring house prices.

In addition to their efforts at turning the arid Mid-Columbia into an oasis, residents asked that the JCAE consider the city’s remoteness. Richlanders argued that the city’s distance from major urban and recreation areas constituted a hardship that the AEC evaluate when fixing home prices.\textsuperscript{69} Residents contended that the city was not ideal and, perhaps under normal circumstances, not somewhere they might live without the lure of Hanford jobs. This argument contradicted the Jaycees promotion that Richland sat in proximity to everything the Northwest offered. In 1947 the Jaycees proclaimed about living in Richland: “Where we can go from here is unlimited; everything we want to see is nearby.”\textsuperscript{70} Apparently amenities close enough for residents renting government subsidized houses were too far away for potential home owners investing their own dollars.

Prospective homebuyers also sought guaranteed financing and insurance for their investments from the AEC. Various groups and individuals suggested different forms of

\textsuperscript{68} Joint Commission on Atomic Energy, \textit{Public Hearing of Disposal}.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} Souvenir Program Richland Day, September 1, 1947, CREHST.
protection even that the AEC exempt buyers with absolute faith in the future of Richland and instead dispense a 20 percent price reduction in lieu of indemnity. Essentially, workers willing to purchase their homes wanted the AEC to provide them with a safety net in case the plant closed or they lost their jobs. Richlanders feared they might be left owning a home in an atomic ghost town.\textsuperscript{71} Additionally, buyers in Richland asked the AEC to guarantee financing. Residents proposed that in the event a worker could not secure private financing, the AEC offer them a mortgage without a down payment. Petitioners justified this request by arguing that typically individuals buy homes after a period of planning and saving. Richland’s citizen-workers, in contrast, lacked this opportunity to financially prepare for home ownership.\textsuperscript{72} Even when willing to purchase their homes, they expressed a sense of entitlement and demanded the AEC subsidize and protect their investments.

The Community Council focused its testimony on the development of a tax base for the city and how the AEC might subsidize city services in the interim. Since Richland was a closed, federally owned, one-industry town, it possessed no tax base to fund city operations. The council feared the repercussion of levying high taxes on residents or future businesses in order to maintain city services at the current GE level. The council members made two recommendations at the hearing to mitigate this challenge. First, they suggested the AEC sell the property surrounding Richland to promote commercial and industrial development. The council worried that Richland might become a private island

\begin{footnotes}
\item Joint Commission on Atomic Energy, \textit{Public Hearing of Disposal}.
\item Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
amidst government lands unable to attract other industries to the community; limiting tax money possibilities. The council also suggested extending the proposed length of federal subsidy for city operations from five to fifteen years in order to give Richland more time to gain financial independence. The council also wanted to define more specifically the level of assistance they could expect. Residents, they contended, should not bear the burdens for decisions beyond their control.\textsuperscript{73} Again, like Richland’s citizen-workers, the Community Council worked to embrace self-government in the city, but only when subsidized by the AEC. The Community Council and Richland’s citizen-workers repeatedly asked for compensation from the AEC for what they viewed as the city’s short-comings. They celebrated their place on the atomic frontier, but expected the federal government to compensate them for its perceived hardships.

Richland’s citizen-workers asked for the establishment of third party arbitration for disposal disputes. Some Richlanders worried that they would have no recourse against unfair treatment in any disagreements with the AEC during disposal and the subsidization period. These savvy Richlanders understood that their continued dependence on the AEC for money and jobs left them in a vulnerable position and they sought the protection of a neutral party.\textsuperscript{74}

GE’s disposal and incorporation concerns reflected the company’s position between the AEC and Richland’s citizen-workers. In 1955 approximately three-quarters of GE’s Hanford work force lived in Richland and company managers feared production

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
might suffer if the transition to self-government and private ownership unduly disrupted community life. W.E. Johnson, GE’s Hanford General Manager, articulated the company’s hearty endorsement of disposal, believing it better for the AEC to cease municipal management in Richland over the long term. However, he also expressed concern that the AEC keep residents satisfied during the process and offered some suggestions on how the AEC might best go about establishing fair market value for Richland properties. Johnson also explained the company’s concern that the AEC grant the new city sufficient and ongoing support while building a tax base. Finally, GE asked the AEC to help them ensure available housing for incoming employees during the transition. Johnson suggested a change in the legislation’s language to ensure that the AEC offered new employees the opportunity to purchase homes even though not “occupants” at the time of disposal. GE effectively lobbied for a good deal on Richland houses for its employees, while echoing AEC’s concerns about worker morale and maintaining plutonium production.

Some Richland residents, however, worried about more than potential home prices. Mike McCormack, a Hanford chemist, testified for the Richland Citizens League, the primary anti-disposal organization. McCormack argued that the AEC should consider slowing down the disposal process. While McCormack suggested disposal moved too fast, others in the group questioned whether incorporation and disposal should happen at

---

76 Joint Commission on Atomic Energy, Public Hearing of Disposal.
all. Weston B. Farrand, a Hanford physicist, also spoke for the Richland Citizens League. He doubted that the AEC could make Richland a normal city and believed the agency unwise to even try. Farrand argued the possibility that the military, Hanford’s only customer, might soon possess more than enough nuclear weapons and put Richland out of business. He also predicted that Hanford’s reactors might become obsolete and the AEC would shut them down, again destroying the town’s only industry. Additionally, he raised the prospect that President Eisenhower could facilitate a relaxation in Cold War tensions or that the United Nations might impose a nuclear weapons production freeze.

While Farrand favored an end to the Cold War and nuclear proliferation, he acknowledged that peace would likely hit Richland hard. He characterized Richland as hopelessly dependent on the federal government and intimately tied to Cold War foreign policy and believed independence impractical.

Other disposal critics agreed with Farrand and argued that no plan could promise freedom from federal control in Richland. Don Davenport’s testimony identified the AEC as the only beneficiary of incorporation and disposal. In placing Richland homes in private hands, the legislation freed the AEC from community operations. Davenport argued that that since the AEC would continue to hold the community’s purse strings; city government served the AEC and not the community. But did continued dependence on plutonium production and the unpredictable course of the Cold War really prohibit self-government and home ownership in the city?

77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
The pro-disposal citizens group, represented by John Bradley, suggested self-government as the antidote to the issues Farrand posed. Bradley emphasized the many positive aspects that incorporation and home ownership offered the community. He argued that in order to grow, diversify, and end federal dependence, Richland needed to privatize. Bradley’s argument aligned with national post-war culture’s emphasis on single-family home ownership as a symbol of economic success and democratic participation. He predicted that home ownership would create a greater sense of community involvement and pride. He favored the proposed system for home appraisals, judged the scheme fair and reasonable. Bradley contended that disposal offered the only way for Richland to develop a viable tax base and guard against AEC control of local affairs. Additionally, he argued that in purchasing their homes and taking city control, Richland residents faced no more risk than any other American citizen. In his view, residents’ seeming lack of self-determination was the only thing abnormal about Richland.  

A Benton County representative also testified on incorporation and disposal. In 1955, the county’s population stood at about 63,800, half residing in Richland. The county did not receive property tax monies from the federally owned community, but acquired about $243,000 annually from admissions taxes, the state liquor appointment, gas taxes, and personal property taxes. The county expected to lose about $35,000 of these funds with Richland’s incorporation. The proposed legislation provided for “just and reasonable” payments to the county to adjust for the income loss until the county

80 Ibid.
gained a tax base from the new homeowners after disposal. The county, however, wanted the AEC to insure it received support during disposal. The county projected that it would take about two years to receive any real money from new property owners. In the meantime, the county estimated an $18,000 price tag for just the administration costs for overseeing the transfer of Richland property into private hands. The county also pointed out that the massive increase in population due to Richland-Hanford growth at the AEC’s hands cost the county $50,000 for a new jail, $100,000 for a juvenile detention home, and considerable increases in the upkeep and construction of new roads to serve Hanford workers. Benton County wanted AEC assurances that disposal legislation would explicitly guarantee funds for the county during the two-year period while the county put Richland property on the tax rolls.  

Richland’s citizen workers, the Community Council, and Benton County representatives all sought subsidies from the AEC in exchange for privatization and disposal. Civic, political, and business leaders in other western cities, like Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego exhibited a long history of competing for federal military dollars by offering free land, tax breaks, and other amenities in order to attract federal installations to their communities. Richland’s atomic pioneers, steeped in the atomic cultural legacy of the MED, demanded AEC protection and compensation in

---

81 Ibid.
exchange for fully embracing democracy and capitalism in Richland. While Richland’s citizen-workers did not receive everything they hoped from the disposal legislation, they successfully pressured the AEC for continued community support based on their status as World War II home front heroes and plutonium producing cold warriors.

The final draft of the AEC disposal bill took seriously Richland’s citizen-workers concerns. Congress passed the bill and, on August 5, 1955, President Eisenhower signed Public Law 221, the “Atomic Energy Community Act of 1955.” The law provided Richland five years, until August 1960, to complete incorporation and transfer all residential property to private ownership. Although the act listed no specific dollar amounts, it guaranteed the city of Richland ten years of financial assistance in order to build a community tax base. The AEC appointed the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) to conduct home appraisals and determine fair market value and the act decreed the sale prices of Richland houses at 15 percent below the FHA determined value. Additionally, the law allowed individual buyers to petition for further price reductions based on property improvements at the time they applied for purchase. The act also required the AEC to offer financing to those unable to secure a private mortgage and provided a fifteen-year indemnity term covering only the amount a resident still owed on his mortgage. The law outlined the specific circumstances under which the AEC would allow indemnity claims based on numbers of employees at Hanford and community population. The law addressed many of the basic economic fears Richland’s citizen-

---

workers expressed and disposal moved forward until the FHA disclosed property evaluations.

In October 1955, the FHA began property evaluation in Richland. They released the assessments on May 10, 1956, creating an immediate commotion and vigorous citizen protest. Richland home prices ranged from $2,850 for a two bedroom prefabricated home to $18,350 for a duplex C house. Richland’s citizen-workers expressed shock and anger at the prices. James E. Minor, a city councilman, called them “completely unreasonable.” Mrs. R.W. Blalock, a ranch house resident, called them “ridiculous.” The home evaluations motivated Mr. And Mrs. John to exclaim they might not even stay in Richland. 84 Less than twenty-four hours after the announcement, more than 250 outraged Richlanders descended on a routine Community Council meeting to express their indignation. 85

On May 12 another angry group, several hundred strong, gathered in Richland to protest the home prices. The protesters adopted a resolution condemning the evaluation and planned a meeting for the next day at the high school stadium. 86 About 2,000 citizens attended the mass demonstration at the Bomber Bowl. 87 Pat Merrill, future city mayor, conducted the meeting and council mayor R. W. McKee urged the protesters to write their congressional delegates about the prices. Mike McCormack, anti-disposal group

85 Hearings Before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy Congress of the United States, Community Disposal Richland and Oak Ridge, Washington, D.C. (June 19, 1956) (statement of Mike McCormack), box 3, folder 23, FCP, UW.
87 Hearings Before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (statement of Mike McCormack).
spokesman, encouraged the crowd to “all hang together” and proclaimed that if Richlanders acted as one, they could force the government to change. No one at the meeting spoke in favor of the FHA evaluation. Those in attendance circulated and signed a petition that stated residents refused to purchase their homes until the AEC reduced prices to “fair and acceptable values.” Attendees also later circulated the petition around Richland to gather more signatures. The petition stated the issue simply and directly, “We, the undersigned residents of Richland vigorously protest the prices of Richland residential property as released May 10, 1956. These prices are unacceptably high, and as a body we do not intend to purchase our homes unless the sales prices are reduced to fair and acceptable values.” Over the next five days, approximately 7,900 Richlanders signed the petition representing, about 80 percent of registered Richland voters. Richland citizen-workers, just as McCormack stated, could force the government to change and AEC officials worried as the unrest they worked to avoid during negotiations over the disposal legislation now swept through the village.

Spurred by the upheaval, the Community Council appointed a citizens committee to review the appraisal and create an alternative. On June 19 and 20, a delegation from Richland traveled to Washington D.C. to protest the FHA valuation and presented the committee’s alternative program at a hearing before the JCAE Subcommittee on Communities. Washington State Congressional Representatives Hal Holmes and Don Magnuson, along with state Senator Warren G. Magnuson attended the meeting. The

89 Petition, box 4, folder 14, FGP, UW.
90 Hearings Before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (statement of Mike McCormack).
Richland delegation included Harold O. Monson (Delegation Chairman), Mike McCormack, Pat Merrill, and others. The citizens’ committee complained to the JCAE that the FHA evaluations were too high. Richland’s citizen-workers expected the FHA to fix home values closer to the 1952 appraisal figures. The FHA assessments came in a full 25 percent above the 1952 values. Additionally, the committee argued that the FHA did not fully consider the unique risks inherent in buying a home in Hanford dependent Richland or the undesirability of the considerable number of duplex homes in the city. In general, the citizens’ committee argued that the FHA did a poor job conducting the appraisals and demanded the values revised.

The Richland delegation did not argue against the validity of Congress’ disposal plans outlined in Public Law 221, but placed blame on the FHA’s methods. In particular, the delegation cited the legislation’s mandate that disposal proceedings consider that “the continued morale of project-connected persons is essential to the common defense and security of the United Stated” and that “the maintenance of conditions which will not impede the recruitment and retention of personnel essential to the atomic energy program.” The delegation contended the FHA had not considered these unique aspects of Richland when figuring home values. Public Law 221 required the AEC to conduct termination “in an expeditious manner, which is consistent with and will not impede the accomplishment of the purpose and programs established by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954.”

Harold Monson, delegation chairman, asserted that “the question of a fair price

---

91 Hearings Before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy.
92 Ibid.
has always been an element which has been publicly acknowledged as being a necessity for an orderly disposal program.”

In the minds of Richland’s citizen-workers, the AEC’s and residents’ inability to agree on home prices and the evaluation system rendered disposals disorderly and seriously threaten worker morale and AEC operations at Hanford. The delegation arrived in Washington D.C. armed with a clear vision of the community’s importance to the AEC and leveraged their atomic worker clout for a better purchases price on Richland homes. Mike McCormack’s statement before the committee threatened that without offering Richlanders a price the citizen-workers considered fair, the AEC risked a mass exodus of workers from the city. Unlikely to find adequate housing in the surrounding towns, a flight from Richland might mean “that they will leave their jobs and the Hanford project, if necessary, and move hundreds or thousands of miles to a new job and a new home, rather than buy their house at the FHA prices.” If the AEC wanted disposal to proceed, the agency had to offer Richland’s citizen-workers a “fair” price or risk compromising critical Cold War plutonium production at Hanford Works.

The Richland delegation characterized price, condition of the houses, and dependence on Hanford Works as crucial factors to determining a fair price, but what constituted a fair price? During the course of the hearing, the Richland delegation outlined an alternative to the FHA rubric for determining the fair price of Richland homes. Washington state congressional representatives and GE statements and testimony

---

93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
at the hearing endorsed the citizen’s plan. The legislators and GE urged the committee to seriously consider the citizen’s scheme, since Richland residents already agreed on the plan’s general merits. Just as the Scurry Reported predicted, the AEC could not force Richlanders to buy and the AEC needed to solicit their willing participation in disposal. Ultimately, Richland’s citizen-workers dictated to the AEC what constituted fair market value for Richland houses.

ACE officials agreed to Richland’s citizen-workers demands and in October, the FHA reappraised Richland and incorporation and disposal finally moved forward. Following the agency’s new survey, in January 1957 the FHA cut all previous property appraisals in half. Richlanders declared these new values fair and proceeded with plans to purchase homes. On June 20, 1957, the first Richland houses passed into private hands.95 With housing prices settled, the Community Council transitioned to a City Council and advanced plans for incorporation at a steady although sometimes bumpy pace. On December 10, 1958, Washington state officially recognized Richland’s incorporation as a first-class city. Richlanders acknowledged the city’s new status with a three-day celebration. The festivals focal point, “Commencement Day,” took place on Saturday, December 13. Festooned in mortar boards and gowns, Freeholders, City Council members, AEC representatives, and several county and state officials recognized Richland’s transformation with full pomp and circumstance.96 Of course, Richland also celebrated the event in characteristic atomic style and detonated a simulated atomic bomb

95 Beardsley, The Long Road, 29-31.
96 Richlanders used the term “Freeholders” to describe those who had purchased their home.
during the festivities Friday evening December 12 at the Uptown Shopping center. The more formal “graduation” ceremonies followed the next afternoon at the Bomber Bowl. Local high school and junior high school bands provided the musical backdrop as Richland officially graduated from federal government ward to first class city. A retinue of civic leaders, politicians, AEC and GE officials attended the event. Washington Governor Albert D. Rossellini presented the new city with its charter and the AEC’s E.J. Block ceremonially turned Richland over to its citizens. U.S. Senator Warren G. Magnuson spoke at the occasion along with representatives from DuPont and GE. Richlanders purchased special motor board graduation caps for twenty-five cents a piece to wear to the celebration that heralded the end of the long road to self-government.

CONCLUSION

In 1943 the MED remade Richland to fit the needs of the top-secret the Manhattan Project, however, in the post-war years Richland’s citizen-workers formed a distinctive atomic identity and persuasive political voice that reflected their status as World War II heroes, atomic pioneers, and cold warriors. The AEC, while eager to concentrate solely on its primary mission to produce plutonium at the Hanford, feared upsetting Richland’s citizen-workers, compromising security, and disrupting plant production. The town’s relationship to plutonium production at Hanford imbued Richland’s citizen-workers with an understanding that they and their community were special, unique, and deserving of special consideration from the AEC. Richland’s citizen-workers, I argue, used this

---

97 Beardsley, The Long Road, 32-33.
identity and their role within the federal nuclear production complex to exert control over
the AEC during incorporation and disposal. Richland’s citizen-workers success
established a precedent of Richlanders and Tri-Citians to utilize their new conservative
cold warrior identity, a political block evolving in other Cold War defense communities,
to influence federal nuclear policy for the benefit of the community.

This case study demonstrates how Richland’s citizen-workers embellished, used,
and reinforced their atomic identity, the Manhattan Project victory narrative, and
important role within the nuclear weapons complex to negotiate community subsidies and
low housing prices from the AEC during disposal and privatization. AEC officials well
aware that mass discontent in the village might bring plutonium production to a halt
indulged Richland’s citizen-workers’ request for advantageous home prices, insurance,
and financing as well as subsidies for the new city. By the early 1960s, however, the
nation’s nuclear stockpile rapidly approached maximum capacity, Hanford’s work-horse
reactor fleet reached obsolescence, and the importance of Hanford workers slipped within
the nuclear weapons complex. Richland and Tri-Cities residents soon grappled with the
worst fear voiced during disposal, what if the AEC decides to shut Hanford down?
Chapter Three

The Tri-City Nuclear Industrial Council

In January 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson announced a 25 percent cut in the nation’s plutonium production. AEC officials targeted Hanford’s aging and increasingly obsolete reactors for decommissioning in order to reduce the agency’s overall production.¹ After twenty years of almost complete federal dependence on the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), Tri-Cities’ residents and Hanford workers faced their worst fear, an end to plutonium production at Hanford. The AEC planned to immediately close three Hanford reactors and by 1972 cease all plutonium production at the site. Tri-Cities’ civic and business leaders braced for the 2,000 job losses expected with the first round of reactor closures. They, however, did not sit idle and accept Hanford’s fate. In July 1965 *U.S. News & World Report* looked back at the events following Johnson’s announcement and asked, “What happens to a community when it is threatened with a sharp cutback in a defense industry that provides a livelihood for 80 percent of its residents? Is economic disaster inevitable?” For Hanford and the Tri-Cities, as *U.S. News & World Report* detailed, the answer was no. “Just when it seemed that Richland and its sister cities of Pasco and Kennewick might be doomed to industrial decay,” noted the article, “an encouraging rebirth has taken place.”² This rebirth, celebrated by those who initiated it as

miraculous, represented not only a new era of local control over Hanford and Tri-Cities development, but also considerable local influence over federal atomic policy.

Following early Cold War-driven expansion at Hanford and the privatization of Richland in 1958, as detailed in the previous chapter, Tri-Cities business leaders assumed a greater stake in Hanford development and in maintaining the area’s well-paid atomic workforce. Working primarily through the Tri-Cities Nuclear Industrial Council (TCNIC), business leaders quickly learned to lobby for Hanford at the state and federal level in order to protect their investments and prevent the Tri-Cities from becoming atomic ghost towns. Despite their clear self-interests, lack of atomic expertise, and self-appointed status, I argue that the state and federal government sanctioned TCNIC as the voice of the Tri-Cities. Additionally, these unelected businessmen effectively maintained public support for their diversification and development program, and deftly utilized Richland-Hanford’s atomic identity and culture to influence regional power policy and federal atomic policy.3

While certainly not the only western community dependant on the military-industrial complex for its livelihood, the post-war Tri-Cities emerged as especially economically and psychologically dependent on the AEC. Community leaders in cities like Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego long culled federal dense dollars and

3 Sara S. Elkind, How Local Politics Shape Federal Policy: Business, Power, and the Environment in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001, 1-6. In this book Elkind, using the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce as a case study, shows how business organizations in the twentieth century gained political legitimacy as representative of their community’s and pictured their organizations as active defenders of the public good. She argues that this arrangement recast the Progressive narrative of the federal government as the public’s protector against private enterprise to business organization as the defenders of democracy. TCNIC, like Elkind demonstrates with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, influenced federal policy in their efforts to shape local events and politics.
played key roles in winning military contracts and bases for their communities.\textsuperscript{4} Hanford, however, existed purely as a World War II by product. Early Cold War federal expansion at Hanford assured community growth, while Hanford’s security perimeter and the AEC’s use of a single site contractor kept local civic and business leaders out of Hanford development. The Tri-Cities, not just Richland, grew economically dependant on Hanford and the AEC. Hanford provided most Tri-Cities’ jobs and produced one product with a single customer. Unlike Seattle’s Boeing Corporation which could lure multiple types of military and civilian contracts, plutonium had limited applications. The AEC built low-tech but reliable reactors at Hanford to maximize production and did not provide General Electric (GE) with a research and development component to their Hanford contract. Thus, when the AEC decided to abandon plutonium production at Hanford in the early 1960s, the Tri-Cities remained relatively isolated, hosted no research university, and contained few attractive community amenities, all conditions that rendered luring new high-tech industry to the area more difficult. As a result, despite TCNIC’s constant rhetoric of economic diversification, the Tri-Cities business community lobbied to prolong plutonium production at the site and lure new federal contracts to Hanford.

THE PADRONES

By the 1960s, the Tri-Cities’ most prominent civic leaders and Hanford boosters largely came from among the area’s business community. Hanford’s Cold War expansions lured more than just scientists, engineers, and technical workers to the Mid-Columbia. The growing population and booming economy also attracted entrepreneurs looking for promising business ventures, who hoped to profit from servicing the area’s atomic workers. The post-war business community, much like Richland’s worker-citizens, quickly found their investments inexorably linked to Hanford’s fate. AEC plutonium production fueled the Tri-City economy. The business community thus possessed a large stake in local development and community identity maintenance. While Hanford’s technical workers might more easily relocate to other western defense projects and Richland home owners enjoyed some protection against a loss on their homes with the indemnity the Atomic Energy Community Act provided, businessmen remained more economically tied to the Tri-Cities. “Just about everything I own is sunk in the Tri-Cities and I want to look after it,” said one local businessman. The absence of AEC civic patronage following independence in Richland and the threat of Hanford shut-downs forced Tri-Cities business leaders to quickly learn to lobby for Hanford. Much like the boosters in other western cities, the work of maintaining the Mid-Columbia’s well paid atomic workforce and community identity fell to the business owners who relied on Hanford workers for economic support. From among these Tri-Cities’ transplants ultimately formed a small cadre of civic leaders and boosters who utilized their political

5 Sam Volpentest to Albert D. Rosellini, January 31, 1964, box 38, folder 517, GLP, MASC.
connections, entrepreneurial talents, and the area’s atomic community identity to promote and grow Hanford and the Tri-Cities’ economy.

From the Tri-Cities business community emerged three key leaders and the driving forces behind Hanford development, economic diversification, and the Tri-Cities’ primary lobbying and booster organizations TCNIC and the *Tri-City Herald* newspaper. Glenn Lee, Robert Philip, and Sam Volpentest expended considerable personal effort in forging the post-war Tri-Cities. In March 1970 *Science* magazine astutely described Volpentest as “a man of small physical stature but large enthusiasm,” Philip as a man who speaks with “sweet reason,” and Lee as a “more aggressive” man who “knows how to apply the kick in the pants with his editorials.” Lee, Philip, and Volpentest won praise for salvaging the local economy from almost certain destruction at the hands of AEC in the early 1960s. Maintaining the Tri-Cities economy, however, required more than the personal charm and charisma of three businessmen. Lee, Philip, and Volpentest exploited their political connections and Tri-Cities community atomic identity to leverage continued AEC support of Hanford and, in doing so, exerted disproportional influence over federal atomic policy.

Glenn C. Lee, born September 1910 near Eau Claire, Wisconsin, published the *Tri-City Herald*. Lee graduate from high school in 1928 and enrolled at the University of North Dakota becoming the first in his family to attend college. Lee worked in a hotel to help fund his expenses while a student. After graduation and marriage in 1933, Lee continued hotel work until he enlisted in the Navy in 1944. Lee’s military service brought

---

him to the Seattle area. The Navy assigned him to manage the Bachelor Officer Quarters at the Sand Point Naval Station. In Seattle, Lee learned about lucrative opportunities to export goods to the South Pacific and Asia. Once released from the Navy, Lee joined with a Seattle attorney and formed the Pacific American Trading Company.\textsuperscript{7}

Robert Philip, a native Washingtonian born in Tacoma, in 1940 graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in Foreign Trade. After commencement, he went to work for a Montana freight company. The Navy called Philip, a member of the reserve, into active service in 1941. Philip spent the first part of the war stateside in Seattle and Arizona and married in 1943. Shortly after his marriage, the Navy sent him to the Aleutians and later to the South Pacific. Discharged in 1945, Phillip’s degree in foreign trade and South Pacific experience landed him at position at the Pacific Trading Company in Seattle and he met Lee. Eventually, Lee sold his half of the Pacific Trading Company and partnered with Philip to form a new export firm, Philip and Lee, Inc.\textsuperscript{8}

Lee and Philip purchased the weekly \textit{Pasco Herald} newspaper in 1947 just as the post-war boom hit the Tri-Cities. Lee, in Pasco looking to purchase a flour mill to supply his export business, learned about the newspaper from Hill Williams, Pasco Chamber of Commerce manager and former \textit{Pasco Herald} owner. Williams convinced Lee, already on the hunt for a good business venture, that the paper offered an excellent investment opportunity. With no more newspaper experience than delivering papers as a boy, Lee purchased the \textit{Pasco Herald} and returned to Seattle to plot the paper’s future with his

\textsuperscript{7} Frances Taylor Pugnetti, \textit{“Tiger by the Tail”: Twenty-Five Years with the Stormy Tri-City Herald} (Tacoma, WA: Mercury Press, 1975), 25-29.

\textsuperscript{8} Pugnetti, \textit{“Tiger by the Tail”}, 27-29.
partner. Lee and Philip quickly re-launched the paper as a daily under the new *Tri-City Herald* masthead. The pair hired experienced newspaperman Don Pugnetti as managing editor and quit their export business and Seattle for permanent residence in the growing Tri-Cities.

“Most newspapers would have been satisfied to record history as it passed by,” noted Pugnetti’s wife, “but the *Tri-City Herald* is unique in the fact it actually was responsible for making history.”9 While the *Tri-City Herald* and its publishers were not exceptional in their involvement in local affairs, Lee, Philip, and the *Tri-City Herald* figured prominently in community development in the post-war era. Lee and Phillip envisioned the paper as representing Richland, Pasco, and Kennewick and worked to procure subscribers and advertisement dollars Tri-Cities wide. This marked the first time a local business or newspaper treated the three towns as a unified market. In 1947 Richland, Pasco, and Kennewick possessed no sense of a greater Tri-Cities identity. Richland remained under AEC control, while Kennewick and Pasco each maintained separate identities and heritages dating back to the nineteenth century. Additionally, the Columbia River and location in two counties separated the three cities. Since 1943, however, Hanford increasingly linked the economy, people, and fate of the three towns. As newcomers without allegiance to one particular city or to the AEC, Philip and Lee easily envisioned this connection and sought to capitalize on the emerging metropolitan market. In addition to offering a greater sense of unity, Lee and Philip initially positioned the *Tri-City Herald* in opposition to the AEC controlled and funded *Richland Villager*

---

9 Ibid., xiii and 25.
newspaper. In contrast to the *Richland Villager*, Lee and Philip freely critiqued the AEC’s actions in the Tri-Cities and presented the hard-hitting journalism not allowed in the *Richland Villager*. Lee and Philip established the *Tri-City Herald* as the Mid-Columbia dominant print media and when the business partners involved themselves in Hanford development, they utilized the newspaper to promote their efforts.\(^{10}\)

The third force behind TCNIC, Sam Volpentest, moved to Richland in 1949 to take advantage of opportunities in the booming post-war era. Volpentest, born to Italian immigrants in 1904, grew up in Seattle and graduated from Broadway High school in 1922. He came to the Tri-Cities with over twenty years experience in the grocery and food service industry. He initially planned to open a super-market. When the scheme fell through, Volpentest instead established a tavern and ultimately operated seven taverns in the Tri-Cities. He later started several restaurants, a radio station, and two independent banks. He eventually served as the Bank of Richland’s president. Volpentest also acted as Richland’s Chamber of Commerce president. Volpentest’s keen business sense, ceaseless lobbying efforts, and long friendship with Washington state Senator Warren G. Magnuson made him a natural partner for Philip and Lee.\(^{11}\)

The state’s congressional delegation, particularly influential Senators Warren G. Magnuson and Henry M. Jackson, greatly aided Tri-Cities business leaders in their quest for federal dollars and Hanford development. Magnuson and Jackson advised TCNIC

\(^{10}\) Findlay and Hevly, *Atomic Frontier Days*, 170-171.

leaders and supported Hanford development in Washington D.C. Magnuson rose to chairman of the powerful Senate Appropriation Committee and enjoyed close relationships with presidents Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson. Known for amassing more than the state’s fair share of federal dollars, Magnuson worked often on behalf of Hanford. Jackson’s assistance proved invaluable to Tri-Cities business leaders and Hanford boosters. Jackson, a quintessential Cold War liberal, supported strong defense spending and critics often described him as the “Senator from Boeing.”  

Jackson, however, proved equally instrumental in securing Hanford’s and Tri-Cities’ influence in Washington D.C.  

Lee, Philip, and Volpentest all came to the Tri-Cities in the post-war era to capitalize on the booming business opportunities in the growing cities fueled by the AEC’s post-war expansion of Hanford. As newcomers to the area free from long-standing conceptions of the cities as separate, the three men viewed Richland, Kennewick, and Pasco as a unified market. Since the Manhattan Project’s arrival on the Mid-Columbia in 1943, Hanford steadily drew the three towns politically and economically closer together. Lee and Philip, in particular, conceived of an integrated Tri-Cities identity, shrewdly promoted in the *Tri-City Herald*. Beginning in the early 1960s, these business and civic leaders continually spared with the AEC over production

---


13 Findlay and Hevly argue that Jackson could just as well be called the “Senator from Hanford,” Findlay and Hevly, *Atomic Frontier Days*, 154.
cuts and shutdown of Hanford facilities in order to maintain their own investment in the community and in the process influenced the course of federal nuclear policy. The discourse Tri-City business leaders and state representatives used to promote Hanford mimicked and reinforced Richland-Hanford atomic identity grounded in the area’s MED legacy. TCNIC’s efforts helped shape a more politically unified and nuclear dependent Tri-Cities. The organization’s success demonstrates the influence TCNIC wielded on the community’s behalf within state and federal government and the development of a new brand of western boosterism by small town business interests with big federal connections.

N REACTOR AND THE HANFORD GENERATING PLANT

Lee, Volpentest, and Philip embarked on their careers as Hanford lobbyist and community boosters well before Johnson’s 1964 announcement. Lee and his editor Pugnetti worked with state Senator Jackson to site a new production reactor at Hanford in the late 1950s in an effort to involve Hanford in the development of new reactor technology. In 1950, the AEC contracted DuPont to design and construct new plutonium production reactors at the Savannah River Site nuclear reservation in South Carolina. In 1955, Hanford’s final Cold War expansion, which included only World War II-style reactors, ended just as Savannah River delivered its first plutonium shipment to the AEC. Washington state’s congressional delegation and Tri-Cities businessmen developed an increasing awareness that under the AEC’s management scheme for the nation’s nuclear
weapons complex, Hanford production capabilities grew increasingly outdated and vulnerable to AEC cutbacks. From the MED’s arrival through the late 1950s, the federal government and the AEC controlled development and production at Hanford. The last two reactors the AEC and General Electric (GE) planned for Hanford, designated KW and KE started production in December 1954 and February 1955. These two behemoth single-pass, water-cooled, graphite-moderated plutonium work horses, virtually obsolete at the time they went critical, represent the last time the AEC made decisions about Hanford without considerable local influence.\(^{14}\)

On June 21, 1956 in the midst of helping Richland’s citizen-workers negotiate home prices with the AEC during disposal, Senator Jackson introduced legislation for the AEC to build a demonstration reactor at Hanford. The proposed New Production Reactor (NPR and eventually shortened to N) design employed advanced technology and its design allowed for both plutonium production and power generation. Jackson and other state politicians hoped to capitalize on Hanford’s potential to produce nuclear power for the region and revitalize Hanford’s federal mission. In his effort to bring the N reactor to Hanford, Jackson convinced the AEC and congress to produce greater amounts of plutonium, assume a larger than intended role in nuclear power development, and expand a facility the AEC’s plans destined for decommissioning.\(^{15}\)


\[^{15}\text{Findlay and Hevly, } Atomic Frontier Days, 154-157 and 162-163.\]
Jackson successfully secured N for Hanford and the AEC started construction on the last plutonium production reactor built at the site in 1958, the same year Richland formally privatized. The AEC designed N, the nation’s first dual purpose reactor, to produce both plutonium and electricity. Additionally, N represented a leap forward in environmental protection at Hanford and employed a closed loop cooling system. This design greatly reduced the flow of contaminated cooling water into the Columbia River. All earlier Hanford reactors used a single pass cooling design that pumped river water directly through production reactors and back into the Columbia. N promoters touted its innovative design and its “atoms for peace” symbolism. N, both sword and plowshare, promised a new era of power production at Hanford. Convincing Congress to allow the AEC to generate electricity, however, proved more difficult than convincing them to produce more plutonium.

Despite N’s dual capacity design and Jackson’s force of will, Congress refused to approve AEC construction and operation of the electricity generating plant needed to harness N’s power production capabilities. Critics objected not to nuclear power, but to the AEC venturing directly into the nuclear power business. The issue came before the House of Representatives three times in 1961 and each time failed. In 1962 Lee, Philip, Volpentest, and other Tri-City businessmen jumped into the fray and worked with the state’s congressional delegation to revive the bid for a generating plant at N. Together they devised and promoted a scheme to allowed the Washington Public Power Supply

---

System (WPPSS), a consortium of Northwest Public Utility Districts, to construct and operate the generating plant rather than the AEC. While their proposal kept the AEC out of direct power production, it too initially failed to pass Congress.\textsuperscript{17}

While Tri-Cities businessmen counted on Senators Magnuson and Jackson to push pro-Hanford matters easily through the Senate, in 1961-62 the generating plant bill stalled in the House. Private power utilities in the Pacific Northwest, supported at the national level by the private power lobbying arm, the Edison Electric Institute, worked to keep WPPSS and the federal government out of nuclear power generation in the region. The legislation also faced opposition from coal states, particularly Pennsylvania and West Virginia. At this time the coal industry struggled and sought to protect itself by limiting nuclear fuel and power development encroachment into coal’s traditional markets. The congressional power balance worked against lobbying efforts for the Hanford Generating Plant (HGP). Washington, Oregon, and Idaho possessed a combine total of thirteen congressmen, while Pennsylvania (a key coal state) alone held thirty, twenty-eight of whom opposed the bill. Lee and \textit{Tri-City Herald} editor Pugnetti made five trips to Washington D.C. and lobbied House Republicans to support HGP construction. The two newspaper men met with forty Republican Congressmen on these trips and ultimately won thirty-eight of them over to their side. Lee’s and Pugnetti’s intensive lobbying efforts resulted in a stunning overturn. Congress finally approved the WPPSS generating plant scheme on September 14, 1962.\textsuperscript{18} While WPPSS owned and operated the steam

\textsuperscript{17} Pugnetti, \textit{Tiger by the Tail}, 256.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 257-258.
plant, HGP remained dependant on an AEC reactor for its power source. Lee and the Tri-Cities business community’s efforts to push for the steam plant forced Congress to allow the AEC into a closer relationship with civilian nuclear power generation than representatives initially thought prudent. Nevertheless, Tri-Cities’ residents celebrated the HGP with an atom-themed ground breaking ceremony reminiscent of Richland’s commencement following privatization in 1958.

On September 26, 1963, President John F. Kennedy visited Hanford and presided over the ground breaking ceremony for the HGP. The president briefly addressed the crowd and then, using an atomic “magic wand” (a walnut handled baton with a Lucite encased piece of uranium from Hanford’s first operating reactor), completed a circuit that activated a 60-foot clam shell that broke ground for the generating plant. In his speech, Kennedy praised the work done at Hanford during World War II and noted the necessity of energy development both for economic growth and to keep pace with Soviet Union. Kennedy’s speech symbolically linked nuclear power development with Tri-Cities-Hanford atomic identity and equated nuclear power production with Hanford’s World War II and Cold War missions. The AEC for the first time opened Hanford’s barricades and allowed public attendance at the ground breaking ceremony. With their cameras readied, an estimated 40,000 attended the event drawn not only by the opportunity to see President Kennedy, but also the secret government facility. The public presence at the ceremony and the fact that the AEC allowed WPPSS to operate at the site indicated a

---

19 Program for the Hanford Generating Plant ground breaking ceremony, box 37, folder 508, GLP, MASC; and Pugnetti, “Tiger by the Tail”, 282-283.
loosening of AEC’s tight control over Hanford. While disposal and incorporation in Richland relieved the AEC of community management, community privatization also invited greater local and regional interest in the federal nuclear reservation. Local businessman and Washington’s congressional delegation not only saw the formerly federal enclave as their domain, but influenced the course of federal atomic policy in their efforts to develop Hanford and maintain a happy high-paid atomic work force in the Tri-Cities.

While winning the fight for the HGP represented a great success for the Tri-Cities, Lee’s and Pugnetti’s forays to the nation’s capital and many meetings with Congressman and the AEC alerted the men to the growing need to steer the Tri-Cities’ economy away from plutonium production. In meetings and conversations with congressmen and AEC officials Lee and his cohort learned that the national stockpile of fissile materials edged toward critical mass and that cut backs in Hanford production loomed unavoidably in the Tri-Cities’ future. While most Tri-Citians reveled in the glow of President Kennedy’s Hanford visit, Lee, Philip, Volpentest and the state’s representatives planned Hanford’s future.

THE TRI-CITY NUCLEAR INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL

Thus, in January 1964 when President Lyndon B. Johnson announced a national reduction in plutonium production the news did not surprise the AEC, state

\footnote{Hanford Cultural and Historic Resources Program, \textit{Hanford Site Historic District}, 1.62.}
representatives, or Tri-Cities business leaders. In fact, the AEC and local businessmen worked throughout the early 1960s to study possible avenues for economic and industrial diversification at Hanford and in the Tri-Cities. In 1963, these efforts led Lee, Philip, and Volpentest to form TCNIC (pronounced tric-nic) in order to pursue, as Philip stated, “an active role in economic diversification of the Tri-City region.” TCNIC, sanctioned by the AEC, became the most prominent local force in Hanford development and, with the help of Magnuson and Jackson, not only presented its diversification program as the will of the people and for the public good, but effectively swayed federal atomic policy in their favor.

Despite the fact that cutbacks loomed on the horizon, AEC officials recognized the agency’s responsibility for Hanford and the Tri-Cities and investigated ways to help the community navigate Hanford closures and diversification. In fall 1962, the AEC issued a study commonly called the Slaton Report. The study outlined avenues for the agency to assist the Tri-Cities in efforts to broaden the local economic base. The study demonstrated the AEC’s commitment to help, but clearly mandated active local involvement and insisted that the initiative for change and growth come from within the community.

In 1963, the AEC furthered its efforts to assist Tri-Cities diversification and organized the Task Force for Economic Development in Richland. The task force, divided into three study groups, investigated potential for private and federal investment.

---

21 Robert F. Philip to Glenn T. Seaborg (AEC Chairman), March 11, 1963, box 27, folder 380, GLP, MASC.
at Hanford. The Department of Defense (DOD) and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) groups looked at possible uses of Hanford facilities for these agencies, while the Atomic Energy Commission-General Electric (AEC-GE) study group investigated alternate sources of employment for Hanford workers in the surrounding area. While the AEC charged the study groups with researching Hanford and Richland, study group reports indicated the close relationship between Richland, Pasco, and Kennewick and generally considered the Tri-Cities as a whole reinforcing Hanford’s unifying influence on the Tri-Cities. The AEC-GE group concluded that while they believed the Tri-Cities possessed excellent long-range economic possibilities, the region could not create enough new employment in the next few years to offset upcoming plant closures. The AEC-GE report recommended the AEC continue to operate reactors scheduled for closure in some capacity other than plutonium production in order to buoy local employment for the short-term and give the community time to develop its employment base. \(^{22}\) The AEC remained obligated to the community and proved willing to slow reduction plans in order to facilitate the community’s transition.

The Department of Defense (DOD) team reached similar conclusion about Hanford and the Tri-Cities during its investigation. The study group included nuclear energy, defense production, and economic experts. Robert F. Steadman, Office Economic Adjustment, reported on the visit to the Secretary of Defense. Steadman’s report

---

demonstrated that AEC and the federal government actively attempted to research how best to manage the nation’s abundant plutonium stockpiles and minimize the Tri-Cities’ economic and psychological reliance on plutonium production. Steadman found the Tri-Cities exceptionally dependent on federal dollars and noted that “the local community is more completely dependent on Government payrolls than any other with which the Office of Economic Adjustment has had contact and is, therefore, more sensitive to change of any kind.” Steadman estimated that about 60,000 of Benton and Franklin counties’ 95,000 residents derived their livelihoods from Hanford operations. He warned that any abrupt closer of Hanford likely spelled economic disaster for the Tri-Cities. Along with economic dependence, Stedman cautioned the DOD to consider what he characterized as the community’s total psychological dependence on Hanford. He predicted that until faced head on with plutonium production slowdown the Tri-Cities would not seek diversification. Steadman recommended that the DOD announce plans to reduce production as early as possible in order to move the community to action. He suggested that DOD embark on a program of modest production reductions over a three to five year period. His plan allowed for completion of N Reactor and recommended the AEC begin decommissioning Hanford’s other less efficient reactors. Steadman also suggested the government partner cutbacks with DOD efforts to cultivate potential research and development opportunities at Hanford to help offset employment loss.23 Again, the DOD suggested that the federal government alter or slow its plans to reduce plutonium production for the benefit of the exceptionally dependent Tri-Cities.

Lee, Philip, and Volpentest seized on the AEC requirement that the local community demonstrate initiative and work to foster economic diversification efforts. The group, however, initially lacked direct experience with Hanford. While they lived in the Tri-Cities and made a living from a Hanford funded community, the federal security perimeter kept them at bay. Lack of access prevented the three from physically inspecting the site’s facilities and they possessed only limited knowledge of Hanford operations and atomic processes. To overcome this challenge, Lee and Philip looked to recruit scientific and engineering experts to help evaluate Hanford facilities and potential diversification avenues. Senator Jackson recommended William W. Lowe, a former nuclear section chief at Hanford (1949-1954) and a partner in Pickard, Warren, and Lowe nuclear consulting firm, for the job. Phillip, Lee, and Volpentest moved to hire Lowe’s firm to conduct a Hanford study on their behalf. The study’s $20,000 price tag, however, convinced the three that they needed more money and greater participation to tackle diversification. The men recruited investment from other Tri-Cities business owners and brought them together to create TCNIC. The executive board and membership of TCNIC represented a cross-section of local businessmen and over the years included representatives from Hanford contractors, local ports, some labor groups, and WPPSS. TCNIC and the organization’s policies enjoyed considerable and wide-spread support in the Tri-Cities. Philip acted as president with Lee the group’s secretary, and Volpentest served as vice president. Volpentest, in particular, worked diligently to gather support for

---

24 Pugnetti, “Tiger by the Tail”, 292-293.
the new organization. In TCNIC’s first year, Volpentest signed up eighty-five members and raised $40,000.25

Fully funded, TCNIC moved forward with the Hanford diversification study previously out of reach for Lee, Philip, and Volpentest. TCNIC contracted William Lowe’s firm to conduct the assessment. As a former chief of the Nuclear Energy Section at Hanford, Lowe possessed a good understanding of the government facility and presented TCNIC with detailed and useful information. The expensive consulting report proved well worth its cost when Senator Jackson leveraged the reports findings to entice AEC members to visit Hanford and meet with TCNIC leaders in March 1963. The AEC delegation, which included the AEC’s Nobel Prize winning chemist and former Manhattan Project contributor Glenn Seaborg, established parameters and procedures for TCNIC to work with the AEC on diversification. The AEC visit established a formal framework for TCNIC to interface with the AEC and recognized TCNIC as a substantial stakeholder in Hanford development. Critically important to TCNIC efforts, the AEC also agreed to allow TCNIC to meet with any groups considering establishing operations at Hanford. This enabled TCNIC members to personally lobby for corporate interest at Hanford. 26

25 Ibid., 293-294.
26 Ibid., 292-294.
Volpentest ensured that TCNIC represented the Tri-Cities to the AEC and potential Hanford investors. The AEC, obligated to buoy the isolated Cold War atomic community the federal government created with Manhattan Project, embarked on a program of staggered reactor closures and developed programs to help diversify Hanford and ease federal dependence in the area. Thus, the AEC, pressured by TCNIC, kept obsolete and environmentally hazardous reactors manufacturing superfluous plutonium at Hanford for the benefit of the local community demonstrating the important role pronuclear Tri-Citians played in Hanford development.

DIVERSIFICATION AND SEGMENTATION

In 1963 Lee, Phillip, and Volpentest founded TCNIC in an effort to better organize and fund local diversification efforts. Twenty years of dependence on federal atomic production did not foster the growth of high-tech industry in the area as it had in other regions of the West, solve the Mid-Columbia’s age old issue of isolation, and to some degree limited growth of the area’s traditional irrigated agriculture base. TCNIC, thus, centered its efforts to grow and diversify the Tri-City economy on mitigating these liabilities. In particular, Tri-City boosters supported by the state’s powerful congressional delegation lobbied for a stronger AEC research and development presence at Hanford to replace the now fading production mission. TCNIC sought to attract high-tech industry, lobbied for new AEC projects, supported expanded irrigation, enhanced regional transportation, and worked to repackage Hanford as a research and development site and
nuclear power center. With these efforts TCNIC exerted considerable influence over state and federal policy for the benefit of the Tri-Cities.

While the AEC moved slowly on reactor closures for the benefit of the Tri-Cities, Volpentest, Lee, Philip, and Senator Jackson moved quickly on a plan to push GE out of Hanford. At a meeting in February 1963, the four men discussed the need to not only pursue economic diversification at the site, but to stimulate the interests of other companies at Hanford.\(^{27}\) TCNIC’s Hanford agenda included cultivating a significant research and development component at the site and GE did not fit this vision. While the company conducted nuclear research, it did not do so at Hanford. GE’s AEC contract excluded nuclear research at Hanford. TCNIC’s leaders charged that GE promoted and transferred Hanford’s best and brightest employees to other GE research facilities causing a “brain-drain” at Hanford. They also argued that a single AEC contractor at Hanford discouraged the interest of other high-tech companies from setting-up operations at the site or in the Tri-Cities. TCNIC leaders concluded that GE needed to relinquish its Hanford contract and that the AEC should eliminate its single contractor model. On January 21, 1964, on the heels of Johnson’s plutonium cutbacks, GE announced that the company would not continue as Hanford’s primary contractor. In the wake of GE’s resignation, the AEC complied with Jackson’s and TCNIC’s wishes and broke apart the Hanford contract and awarded separate pieces to different companies (segmentation). The AEC further mandated new contractors provide funding for economic diversification projects in the

Thus, TCNIC leaders influenced AEC policy on contractors at the nuclear site and the federal government required private corporations to provide funds for local development in exchange for federal contracts.

While TCNIC leaders could not always bend the AEC to their will, even their failures demonstrated their lobbying power and influence in Washington D.C. In 1965, TCNIC submitted a proposal to locate the AEC’s 200 Billion Electron-Volt Proton Accelerator Project (200 BEV) at Hanford. Capturing the 200 BEV promised to fulfill one of TCNIC’s primary goals to foster a research and development mission at Hanford. The 200 BEV would ensure a continued AEC presence at Hanford as well as maintain and expand the well-paid atomic work force. TCNIC led a “big push” for the accelerator project. TCNIC leaders leaned on their federal connections to bring the accelerator project to Hanford. In a letter to Senator Magnuson, Volpentest indicated the he believed that Hanford would be on the final site selection list, but that, of course, would not be good enough, “we want to be the winner and whatever we have to do to win we will do, even at a sacrifice.” Volpentest argued that a decision this big would likely come from the top and since Magnuson had the ear of President Johnson he could no doubt put in a good word for Hanford. Volpentest’s believed that the 200 BEV would catapult Hanford into a high-tech center and that the Tri-Cities deserved the project, after all he argued “Boston got the electronics center, Houston the space center, Florida the cape, and California nearly everything else, why not the A-smasher for Washington?”

---

29 Sam Volpentest to Warren G. Magnuson May 25, 1965, box 37, folder 525, GLP, MASC.
leaders seemed confident that their Washington D.C. connections coupled with Hanford’s ample space, access to cheap electricity, and trained atomic work force would lure the project to Hanford.

TCNIC and Hanford, however, faced considerable competition for the project. By 1965, communities and universities across the nation understood that a piece of the AEC’s nuclear industrial complex promised tremendous economic rewards. The AEC received 110 proposals from among forty-five states for the accelerator laboratory. The AEC project set off an “atomic stampede” as universities and communities around the nation bid for the $340 million laboratory. Expected to generate $60 million a year and employ a permanent staff of 2,000 scientists and technicians, bidders hoped winning the project might turn their region into the next big high-tech boom area like San Francisco’s Bay area or Boston’s Route 128.

TCNIC leaders attempted to sell the 200 BEV site review team on the same qualities that originally attracted the MED to Hanford, but unlike in 1943, Tri-Cities isolation proved a liability. Hanford’s wide-open spaces provided more than the need acreage with easy access to large quantities of inexpensive electricity, but ease of transportation, the size of the community, and distance from any four year universities nixed TCNIC’s bid for the 200 BEV. In December 1966 the AEC decided to construct the 200 BEV accelerator project near Weston, Illinois. The National Academy of

---

31 The 200 BEV facility operated as the National Acceleratory Laboratory until 1974 when the facility was renamed Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab) for Manhattan Project physicist Enrico Fermi.
Science’s opinion, more than the White House, influenced the AEC’s decision. While the Hanford site possessed both the acreage and electricity supply, Tri-Cities’ isolated location proved unattractive. Weston, however, sat less than an hour from O’Hare airport and the Mid-west location provided central easy to reach destination for researchers as well as proximity to a number of large universities. TCNIC failed to site the project at Hanford, but their efforts suggest their confidence in bending the AEC to their will. The AEC’s decision also spurred TCNIC to greater efforts to develop transportation infrastructure and lobbying for locating a four-year university in the Tri-Cities. Most significantly, the failure to win 200 BEV prompted TCNIC to push the AEC even harder to locate a piece of the nation’s Liquid Fast Metal Breeder Reactor program (LMFBR) at Hanford.  

TCNIC’s board of directors focused their efforts on procuring the Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF). While the AEC located the LMFBR center piece demonstration breeder reactor at Clinch River near Oak Ridge, Tennessee, TCNIC lobbied the agency to cite the supporting FFTF reactor at Hanford. In 1965, as part of Hanford segmentation, the AEC awarded the contract to run the Hanford Laboratory to the Battelle Memorial Institute. This a non-profit research and development organization renamed the labs Battelle Pacific Northwest Laboratory (Battelle-Northwest) and initiated a ten-year $20 million expansion of the facility. Battelle-Northwest procured both federal and private research

32 The LMFBR was an AEC program that worked to developed breeder reactor technology. A breeder reactor uses plutonium as fuel and in the process produces more plutonium, thus ensuring a virtually unlimited supply of nuclear reactor fuel.
contracts including the design contract for FFTF. As a promising avenue for an expanded research and development mission at Hanford, TCNIC’s board of directors funneled funds and lobbying efforts to help build Battelle-Northwest’s portfolio. In the 1966 TCNIC annual report, President Philip boasted that TCNIC made procuring greater funding for FFTF research, underway at Battelle-Northwest a top priority over the previous year. In 1966 TCNIC lobbied for $7.5 million in congressional appropriation to fund Battelle-Northwest’s design work. President Philip promised TCNIC’s members that the organization planned to apply “maximum effort” to see the FFTF facility located at Hanford.” TCNIC’s board planned seven primary objectives for 1967 and the goal to see FFTF located at Hanford topped the to-do list.

In 1969 TCNIC’s efforts paid-off and the AEC designated Hanford as the site for the $188 million FFTF project. The AEC’s decision to site the project at Hanford with Westinghouse as the prime contractor surprised many in the nuclear industrial complex. Most within the industry expected the AEC to build FFTF at the Argonne National Laboratory (near Chicago, Illinois) or the National Reactor Test Station (Idaho Falls, Idaho) with their traditional focus on research and development. TCNIC’s president credited the exposure Hanford facilities gained during the 200 BEV campaign for the designation and suggested that this “consolation prize might turn out more valuable than

33 “The Town That Wouldn’t Stay Down”
35 Hanford Cultural and Historic Resources Program, Hanford Site Historic District, 1.71; and Annette Cary, “FFTF Gets Historic Landmark Designation,” Tri-City Herald, April 18, 2006. Argonne National Laboratory was a research and development site for the Manhattan Project and named the nation’s first national laboratory in 1946. The AEC founded the National Reactor Test Station in 1949 and the Department of Energy renamed the facility the Idaho National Laboratory in 1975.
the accelerator, as it puts the Tri-Cities in the forefront of the technology being developed for the fast breeder reactor.”36 Clearly, the FFTF project award indicated that TCNIC’s “maximum effort” to see the facility sited at Hanford paid-off and suggests that that TCNIC and its representatives in the nation’s capital swayed the AEC’s decision.

In capturing FFTF, TCNIC leaders hoped to ensure an important and ongoing AEC research and development mission for Hanford. The AEC began construction in 1970 and planned that FFTF would test fuels, components, and materials for the Clinch River demonstration plutonium reactor, the center-piece of the nation’s breeder program, under construction in Oak Ridge, TN. Development of breeder technology first gained attention due to the fact that a breeder reactor actually produces more fuel than it consumes and promised to reduced the amount of raw uranium ore required to operate nuclear power plants. Later, pronuclear advocates touted the reduction in waste as the reactor’s primary advantage. The breeder process diminishes the amount of unusable radioactive spent fuel. Breeders, thus, promised to reduce the nation’s growing stockpile of nuclear waste. The breeder program, however, faced considerable criticism because the program threaten to increase the nation’s supply of volatile weapons-grade plutonium. Congress and the AEC expected to spend $88 million on FFTF and estimated completion in 1972. While in the short-term FFTF helped buoy the Tri-Cities economy and atomic culture, the ill-fated reactor project quickly suffered from cost over runs and construction delays. Still incomplete in 1975 the price tag for FFTF escalated to $500 million and

ultimately the federal government spent $647 million on the facility. FFTF’s mission and future prospects grew increasingly uncertain over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, as discussed in chapter five, but in 1969, TCNIC’s leaders celebrated the FFTF contract especially in light of the fact that the FFTF announcement came the same year the AEC announced the agency expected to decommission two more Hanford reactors KE and C. Despite TCNIC’s ongoing diversification efforts, lobbying for new federal nuclear contracts and extending plutonium production at Hanford remained a primary focus of the organization.

RESISTING SHUT DOWNS
Despite TCNIC successes with FFTF and the segmentation and diversification plan, and TCNIC leaders continually worried, and justifiably so, that further AEC reactor shutdowns would trigger significant job loss and an economic downturn in the Tri-Cities. In order to aid TCNIC efforts to diversify the local economy the AEC embarked on a gradual plan to phase out Hanford’s aging low-tech reactors and required new federal contractors to fund local diversification projects. Despite TCNIC’s contestant proclamation about the successes of diversification and segmentation, the organization mounted resistance each time the AEC announced a reactor closure.  

37 TNIC Annual Report 1966, GLP. 24.309. In the TCNIC annual report 1966, President Philip boasted that “diversification took on a new look and a new meaning in 1966.” TCNIC efforts finally seemed to spread significantly beyond the Hanford site. Federal Electric Corporation opened a new plant in Pasco. Federal Electric employed about 300 people and possessed $8.7 million in contract assembling portable diesel generators for the Air Force. Sandvik Special Metals Corporation planned a $3.5 million plant in Kennewick, expected to employ about 100 workers. In addition to the greater Tri-Cities projects,
leaders argued that the shut-down would cause significant economic loss in the Tri-Cities
and threatened to ruin progress toward diversification.

In 1970 Glenn Lee reported on the state of Hanford diversification efforts and the
outlook in the Tri-Cities. Despite over five years of diversification programs, he
characterized the recent closing of Hanford’s KW Reactor and loss of 500 associated jobs
as “a severe blow to the Tri-Cities area.” The AEC decommissioned seven of nine
Hanford production reactors since 1964 and KE Reactor shutdown loomed on the horizon
as well. Lee expected total job losses (direct and indirect) to climb to over 6,000 if the
AEC also closed KE. “Unless plans are made in the very near future to utilize the
Hanford Project area,” Lee warned, “the brain-power and the people, the diversification
program of which AEC and the government is so justifiably proud, will be destroyed and
dissipated.” While the AEC and TCNIC required new Hanford contractors to pony up for
community investment, their projects did not necessarily result in advancing TCNIC’s
desire for high-tech industry. Atlantic Richfield Corporation won the chemical separation
contract at Hanford and in return the company built a new $4 million hotel in Richland,
funded a 60,000 head cattle feed lot in Pasco, and established a meat packing facility. All
sound investments in the community, none of which created coveted high-tech jobs and
lucrative contracts.

Battelle broke ground on a ten-year expansion of its Hanford laboratories and boasted $2 million in non
AEC work in 1965 and $5.7 million in 1966.
309, GLP, MASC.
39 The AEC constructed KE and KW between 1953 and 1954 as part of its cold war expansion efforts. KW
closed in 1970 and KE followed in 1971. Hanford Cultural and Historic Resources Program, Hanford Site
historic District, 2-1.10.
In his report Lee praised these investments, but stressed greater Hanford utilization, noting the site ideal for “a clustering of new power reactors.” He also pitched Hanford’s scientists and engineers as well qualified and trained for environmental research saying, “the nation is currently concerned with the protection of the total environment. Hanford could take a very leading part and be an advantageous site for the conduct of such research and could save the nation money by utilizing existing facilities.”

Lee also suggested corporate farm development in the area to help off-set Hanford shut-downs. However, in order for this to be a viable option he noted that the current 160 acre irrigation limit must be lifted for farms to be economically viable. The Bureau of Reclamation’s controlled the water stored behind dams as government property and Lee insisted the bureau lift restrictions to facilitate regional agricultural growth. Lee noted that diversification efforts created considerable optimism in the Tri-Cities and led to the recent opening of the Columbia Shopping Center, “but if an additional cutback of reactors takes place at Hanford the Tri-Cities will be very seriously damaged from and economic standpoint.” He concluded noting the Tri-Citians were not seeking handouts or charity, “but merely for a way to call attention to the fine facilities at Hanford that could be utilized both by private industry and the government for future uses to benefit the state, region, and nation to create new payrolls to sustain the loss of remaining AEC reactor and facilities.”

40 Glenn Lee, “Hanford Diversification Effort and Current Out Look.”
41 Ibid.

40 Glenn Lee, “Hanford Diversification Effort and Current Out Look.”
41 Ibid.
successfully temporarily stalled KE’s closure, but they and the state fought their biggest battle over a Hanford reactor when the federal government attempted to shut-down N Reactor.

On January 28, 1971, President Richard Nixon sent his proposed FY1972 budget to Congress for approval. The budget’s parameters stunned Hanford supporters and Tri-Cities’ residents. Nixon’s $229.2 billion budget included $11.6 billion in deficit spending and a $1.1 billion increase over FY1971 in national defense spending. With this budget, Nixon hoped to revive the sluggish U.S. economy and avoid runaway inflation. Nixon’s budget sent millions of dollars to defense dependent Washington state and provided $332.3 million in funds for the Boeing produced nuclear armed Short Range Attack Missile (SRAM) and another $12 million in Seattle based SRAM research and development. The budget also allocated $145.1 million for Boeing development of the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) and as integration contractor for the Air Force Minuteman ballistic-missile program, Boeing expected a share of the $1.047 billion allocated for this program. Nixon’s budget, however, sent shock-waves across the Pacific Northwest when it failed to provide funds for Hanford’s last two plutonium production reactors, KE and N. “In one stroke of the pen,” argued Senator Jackson, “White House budget managers are succeeding in turning thousands of additional people out of their jobs while laying the groundwork for a Northwest energy catastrophe.”

---

swift response to Nixon’s impending budget, the AEC powered down KE and N the night before the president submitted his budget to Congress. Despite the administration’s continued support of Boeing, Pacific Northwest political and business leaders quickly mounted a protest against the reactor shut downs, demonstrating the political influence of TCNIC in the state, strong regional support for Hanford, and the rewards of boosterism.

Initially, Tri-Citians rallied to save both KE and N from the federal chopping block. KE, however, only produced plutonium and while its closure meant job losses in the Tri-Cities, the dual-production N’s shut down affected Northwest power levels and threatened jobs around the region. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) relied on N and the Hanford Generating Plant for a year round average of 535 megawatts of power. BPA hydro-power relied heavily on river stream flows and power from N provided an important backup source during periods of low flow. BPA officials worried that the loss of N’s contribution might limit power for industrial users even under median water flow conditions. A power deficit would force BPA on to the open market to purchase power from other utilities and on going oil shortages limited the excess power available from other western producers. State leaders worried about more that just power flow, Senator Jackson suggested that the power deficit N’s shutdown created placed some 7,500 manufacturing jobs across the Northwest in jeopardy. TCNIC leaders predicted 5,000 direct and indirect job losses in the Tri-Cities following the closures.45 The broad Northwest support for nuclear power at Hanford disappeared in the 1980s, but in 1971

45 Prochnau, “Power Crisis Seen.”
the region backed N. TCNIC and Tri-Citians quickly abandoned their fight for KE and aligned local efforts with the rest of the state to rescue N and its power production.

Throughout the 1960s Hanford workers and Tri-Cities residents largely left their economic and development worries in TCNIC’s and the state’s congressional delegation’s capable hands. After all, this cadre of business leaders working with state politicians continued to deliver the community jobs and economic growth despite the AEC’s closure of Hanford’s production reactors. In the fight for N in 1971, however, civic and business leaders called for direct community action and the usually staid pronuclear community responded and mounted a massive letter writing campaign to Nixon and organized some small public demonstrations. Calling themselves The Silent Majority Speaks, campaign organizers captured the support of middle-America minded Tri-Citians drawn to the average American and so-called “Silent Majority” identity popularized by President Nixon’s November 1969 “Silent Majority Speech” and Time magazine’s editors choice of “The Middle Americans” as the periodical’s 1969 Man and Woman of the year. The Silent Majority rhetoric of Time and Nixon celebrated the average American’s ability to fight back against the counter-cultures’ attacks on traditional values, and in response “began to shape the course of the nation and the nation’s course in the world.”46 The fight to save N not only shows Tri-Cities allegiance to the silent majority’s values, but demonstrates the state wide support of Hanford.

Although the Silent Majority Speaks letter writing campaign targeted President Nixon, and was not a counter-culture attack on nuclear power, the group’s rhetoric and its

46 “A Letter From the Publisher,” Time Vol. 95, Issue 1 (January 5, 1970), 13.
supporters articulated identification with middle-American values and the traditional values associated with the silent-majority. The Silent Majority Speaks letters did not personally attack President Nixon, but appealed to his apparent sympathy to the viewpoint of the average, patriotic, hard-working, middle-class American. The Silent Majority Speaks and the community’s response to N reactor closing demonstrate a clear connection between the pronuclear Tri-Cities identity and growing national neoconservatism.

The February 7, 1971 *Tri-City Herald* featured editorials and reprints of letters to President Nixon from the Tri-Cities and around the Northwest. Most expression from around the region, whether from Walla Walla, Spokane, or Seattle, centered on the loss of N produced power. Tri-Cities writers, however, typically expressed concerns over local jobs or strongly identified themselves with the silent majority. In his letter, Tri-Cities resident Clinton P. Doriss, told the president, “you have frequently said that what we need in this country is some action and reaction from the ‘great silent majority.’ Well, I think you are getting some reaction from the residents of this area.”

Another letter writer, Fredrick L. Latendresse of Olympia, made a plea to save N based on Tri-Cities atomic heritage and community well-fare. While Latendresse conceded the logic of closing KE, he called the abrupt closure of the two reactors “cruel and unusual punishment for those directly affected.” Above and beyond his concern for the regional economy and power supplies, he pleaded with Nixon to appreciate the “worked carried out at Hanford during the Second World War and well into the Cold War.”

---

also reminded Nixon of the federal government commitment “to craftsmen, technicians, and scientists that were brought into this rather isolated location” and that Hanford’s isolation, while critical to early atomic development, “is now the curse of those who must seek other employment.”

48 Mr. and Mrs. Roy F Purkey of Kennewick asked the president why it was always the “average man who must make sacrifices “to keep the economy and country in trim?” The Pukeys suggested that budget cuts should come off the top and eliminate wasteful spending on “Senators’ junkets and operating expenses” or by cutting funds for unnecessary research like “the habits and mating instincts of groundhogs.”

49 While Tri-Citians and others around the state pleaded to save N Reactor with their letter writing campaign, state politicians busied themselves trying to work out a solution with the Nixon administration.

On April 2, 1971 Washington state Governor Dan Evan’s task force reached a deal with the federal government that kept N Reactor running to produce energy for the Hanford Generating Plant. Evans, an engineer by trade and Republican technocrat, strongly favored nuclear power and enjoyed the support of Hanford and Boeing engineers and technical workers.

50 The AEC, with no production mission for N Reactor, could not justify operating the reactor only to supply the WPPSS owned generator. By April the AEC, BPA, WPPSS, and Washington state agreed that WPPSS would pay the AEC $60 million over three years to keep N Reactor operating. WPPSS and the AEC signed formal agreements in May and in August laid-off WPPSS personal went back to work and the

50 Finlay and Hevly, Atomic Frontier Days, 153 and 178.
generating plant operated again on N’s power. The agreements, however, were temporary and the three year term outlined in the contract motivated WPPSS, the Tri-Cities, and Northwest power interest to more aggressive pursue nuclear power development in the region independent from the AEC.\textsuperscript{51}

While Tri-Citians remember the battle for N as another victory for the local community and highlight the SMS letter writing campaign’s 40,000 protest letters sent to President Nixon, the coordinated lobbying and negotiation efforts of BPA, WPPSS, Governor Evans, and Northwest power planners ultimately saved N Reactor. The coalition conjured the funding for a $60 million plan to keep the reactor operational. The Northwest wide support for the power generated at Hanford and their deep concern over potential and economically devastating power losses in the region motivated efforts to save the reactor from the federal chopping block. The consortium generally supported the AEC’s need to reduce plutonium production and only marginally concerned themselves with Tri-City employment and diversification, keeping the power flowing to industry and the greater health of the regional economy motivated their efforts for N reactor. While Tri-Citians echoed these same sentiments, the fight to save N manifested there as a much more personal, as their letters and protest attests. Tri-Citians initially hoped to save plutonium production at both reactors and worried about the effect on local jobs loss and the economy. While TCNIC, the state governor, and a coalition of interest in the state again forced action on the federal government and kept the reactor operational, the

difference in sentiments expressed by Tri-Citians and state-wide N Reactor supporters clearly show a difference in opinion about the importance of Hanford within the state.

CONCLUSION

In 1943 Richland, Hanford, and the Tri-Cities came under the direct control of the federal war machine and the atomic culture of Manhattan Engineering District. While sensitive to the needs of its citizen-workers in Richland during the post-war and early Cold War expansion of plutonium production at the site, the AEC maintained federal dominance over the city and Hanford operations. Following the 1958 privatizations of Richland and the AEC decision to begin reducing plutonium production at the site, the local business community assumed a great deal of control over growth, development, and the economy in the Tri-Cities. Lee, Volpentest, Philip, and the organization they created, TCNIC, sanctioned by AEC recognition became the unelected representatives of Hanford and the Tri-Cities to the state and federal government. With the help of Magnuson, Jackson, Evans, and state-wide support for the federal spending that funded both Hanford and Boeing, TCNIC leaders successfully maintained employment at Hanford and worked to diversify the Tri-Cities economy. TCNIC’s board not only kept Hanford’s high-paid atomic workers on the job, but influenced AEC nuclear policy forcing the federal agency deeper into power generation and influencing the AEC to continue to operate aging environmentally hazardous reactors for the benefit of the local economy and the community’s psychological dependence on atomic industry.
The *Tri-City Herald* staff declared the battle for N Reactor the biggest story of 1971, President Nixon’s visit ranked a very close second. On September 26, 1971 shortly after N Reactor finally resumed operations President Nixon briefly visited Hanford to promote FFTF and the nation’s breeder program. The president met with Hanford officials and gave a speech at the Battelle-Northwest Research Complex. Workers at Hanford FFTF project greeted President Nixon with a sign saying “FFTF-Welcome, Mr. President.” After his officials meetings the president gave a brief speech to the 15,000 people gathered at the research complex and indicated he intended to authorize a second fast breeder reactor demonstration plant. The president noted that “Nuclear power will be the energy of the future,” and proclaimed the Tri-Cities lucky to have a team of people trained in the nuclear field. He also congratulated TCNIC and the AEC for championing diversification and helping to reduce the community’s dependence of federal dollars.  

TCNIC’s diversification efforts failed to attract significant high-tech industry to the Tri-Cities and an economic base for the Tri-Cities independent of the AEC. N reactor operated on a limited three-year contract, the FFTF project would soon face considerable criticism, and the AEC’s slow closure of Hanford reactors maintained economic dependence on federal production.  

TCNIC’s board looked to capitalize on the nuclear site and create more long-term gains by promoting Hanford as a regional nuclear power center. As detailed in the next chapter, however, this seemingly natural fit for the Tri-

---

53 Findlay and Hevly, *Atomic Frontier Days*, 186-188.
Cities’ atomic landscapes and workforces brought TCNIC and Tri-Citians into growing conflict within the state as consensus over the support of nuclear dissolved by the early 1980s.
Chapter Four

WPPSS and Antinuclear Back-Lash

On Sunday April 17, 1982 the Coalition for POWER (Preserve Our Washington Energy Resources) hosted a rally in Richland to protest Washington Public Power Supply System’s (WPPSS) expected work stoppage on their WNPI nuclear power plant under construction at Hanford. About 2,000 Tri-Citians, including some WPPSS employees, attended. The event’s primary message, “It's time for nuclear power advocates to use the tactics of the obstructionist,” indicated that the Tri-Cities’ pronuclear community viewed a work stoppage on WNPI as antinuclear and that POWER hoped to spur grass-roots action. Jim Worthington, of the Southeastern Washington Building and Construction Trades Council, urged attendees to “write letters, make calls, and attend decision-making meetings to demonstrate their displeasure.” In his address to the crowd, Representative Ray Isaacson (R-Richland) described a WNPI work moratorium as an Eastern versus Western Washington issue. “People in Eastern Washington know how to do the job, he said, “people in Western Washington know how to shut them down.” By and large the crowd listened quietly to the speakers at the rally. Don Tuttle, Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 598, earned the most applause with his critique of President Reagan’s appointment of Peter Johnson to head the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). The crowd blamed BPA for recommending WPPSS slow progress on WNPI. Representative Shirley Hankins (R-Richland) also blamed President Ronald Reagan for paying more attention to
nuclear weapons than nuclear power. While attendees remained reserved in their response to POWER’s presentations, pronuclear Tri-Citians became increasingly vocal as their displeasure with BPA and Western Washington grew.

As detailed in the previous chapter, throughout the 1960s and 1970s Hanford workers and Tri-City residents relied on the Tri-City Nuclear Industrial Council’s (TCNIC) federal lobbying power and state-wide nuclear support to sustain and develop the Hanford nuclear site. By the 1980s, however, as this chapter shows, the state-wide consensus over nuclear power that worked to save Hanford’s N Reactor in 1971 dissipated, in part due to the growing national and regional antinuclear environmental movement and in large measure due to WPPSS’s expensive failed attempt to construct five nuclear power reactors in the state. Plagued by massive cost overruns, antinuclear protests, construction delays, poor management, and ultimately the largest public bond default in United States history, WPPSS came to symbolize everything that was wrong with nuclear power development. This chapter does not chronicle the Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS) and its myriad problems in great detail (a mattered previously tackled by other scholars), but focuses on how Pronuclear Tri-Citians staunchly defended nuclear power amid WPPP’s economic collapse.2

---

1 Dennis Godfrey, “Demonstrate Displeasure, 2,000 Told at Rally, Tri-City Herald April 19, 1982.
While WPPSS critics primarily condemned the agency on economic terms, pronuclear activists in the Tri-Cities framed their discourse in not only pronuclear versus antinuclear terms, but within an Eastern versus Western Washington rubric, and sharpened the political and cultural east-west divide in the state. The clash between pronuclear Tri-Citians and the growing antinuclear factions in the Northwest spurred by WPPSS and development of nuclear energy in the state demonstrates that pronuclear lobbyist like the TCNIC were losing influence within the state’s power structures. Also, this chapter shows that faced with this loss of power, pronuclear leaders and constituents engaged in public protest and borrowed strategies more commonly associated with antinuclear social movements in order to exert influence over nuclear politics in the state.

THE AEC AND NUCLEAR POWER

During the early Cold War, the Tri-Cities benefited as the United States stockpiled bomb making materials and enhanced the nuclear weapons complex’s infrastructure. As Hanford’s and the Atomic Energy Commission’s (AEC) production mission declined, concerns about the ability of the nation and region to meet increasing energy needs rose. Since the end of World War II and the onset of the Cold War, the threat of atomic Armageddon and radiation dangers cast a constant shadow over the nation’s nuclear strength and the federal government hoped to offset the negative image of atomic bombs by developing peaceful uses of the atom. Nuclear technology, as demonstrated in the General Electric sponsored promotional documentary *A is for Atom*, promised utopian
social uplift through nearly limitless energy and advances in agriculture and medicine. While atomic scientists like Edward Teller dreamed of using atomic bombs to create new shipping canals and harbors, remaking landscapes on a global scale for the benefit of humans, the AEC more practically devoted research and development dollars toward exploring the viability of nuclear powered electricity generation. Nuclear power development, thus, became a seemingly natural choice for Hanford and its cache of atomic workers following the decline of weapons grade plutonium production.

Soon after the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 established the AEC and its Congressional oversight committee the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (JCAE), the agency explored the atom’s potential for power generation, although this goal remained secondary to the AEC’s primary military mission. Growing concerns over fossil fuel depletion and the nation’s ability to meet its future energy needs motivated the federal government and the AEC to pursue nuclear power. Additionally, the United States wished to maintain nuclear technology superiority against its Cold War rival, the Soviet Union.³ On March 1, 1949, as part of a demonstration program to prove the viability of nuclear-generated electricity, the AEC announced plans to build the National Reactor Test Station in Idaho. On December 20, 1951 the experimental breeder reactor built in Arco, Idaho produced the first electricity from nuclear power.⁴ While this initial success produced only enough energy to light four light bulbs, it confirmed nuclear power’s

⁴ A breeder reactor produces fissionable material as part of its chain reaction, thus ultimately producing more fuel material than it uses.
feasibility. In March 1953, the Navy launched its first nuclear submarine, the *Nautilus*. The pressurized-light-water reactor employed by the *Nautilus* not only initiated the new nuclear navy, but greatly contributed to the first large-scale civilian reactor’s design.\(^5\)

In 1954, in order to further nuclear power development, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed into law the first major amendment to the Atomic Energy Act. This revision came on the heels of his “Atoms for Peace” speech before the United Nations in December 1953. Eisenhower’s message to the United Nations called attention to the terrible danger posed by atomic bombs and the escalating arms race with the Soviet Union and suggested greater international cooperation in the research and development of the peaceful atom to mitigate the danger. “It is not enough just to take this weapon out of the hands of the soldiers,” he said, “It must be put into the hands of those who will know how to strip its military casing and adapt it to the arts of peace.” In his speech Eisenhower argued that “this greatest of destructive forces” could be “developed into a great boon, for the benefit of mankind.”\(^6\) The 1954 modified Atomic Energy Act helped make Eisenhower’s vision possible. The act allowed for greater atomic information exchange with other nations and granted non-governmental entities access to previously restricted technical information and fissile materials permitting private nuclear power development in the United States. The act also placed commercial nuclear power safety

---


monitoring under AEC control and problematically made the AEC both civilian nuclear power promoter and regulator.

Nuclear power generation development thus began in earnest in the mid-1950s with the decision to open atomic technology to private companies and rapidly grew during the 1960s. Nuclear power, however, as an emerging technology presented challenges to private companies hoping to get into the atom smashing business. The AEC offered technical demonstrations and subsides to help overcome the scientific hurdles and off-set the massive start up cost for the new industry. The AEC also created a regulatory staff, designed safety standards, and fashioned licensing procedures for nuclear plants. With AEC support, the first commercial electricity generating nuclear plant opened in 1957 near Shippingport, Pennsylvania.

By 1960, much to the AEC’s and JCAE’s dismay federal dollars for atomic development waned. The AEC and JCAE hoped newly elected President John F. Kennedy and his administration would reinvigorate federal spending for atomic power development. The Kennedy administration’s budget, though, provided little money for nuclear power and allocated a larger share of federal research and development dollars towards technical innovation in space exploration. Atoms for peace initiatives and nuclear power development fell victim to the Cold War’s new emphasis on the space race.

Glenn Seaborg (AEC Chairman) and Chet Holifield (JCAE Chairman) pressured the administration to expand funding for atomic power development. As part of their

---

7 Walker, Containing the Atom, 10-11.
efforts, in 1962 the AEC issued a missive to the president on nuclear power titled “Civilian Nuclear Power—A Report to the President.” The report predicted domestic fossil fuel exhaustion within seventy-five to hundred years and a complete collapse of global supplies within 150 to 200 years. The report, unsurprisingly, suggested that the nation use nuclear power to conserve fossil fuel supplies in the short term and as their replacement for the long-term. While dire predictions about the exhaustion of global fossils fuel supplies and the recommendation that nuclear power offered an effective alternative were nothing new in 1962, the AEC report significantly argued that nuclear power teetered on the cusp of economic competitiveness with other power production technologies. The report contended that with a breeder program to ensure virtually endless fissionable material supply and modest assistance from the AEC, the civilian nuclear power industry might cheaply produce one half of the nation’s energy needs by the year 2000. While critics remained skeptical of the AEC’s claims and the report itself acknowledged the need for continued safety improvements, licensing and regulation reform, and waste disposal management plans, cheap unlimited power seemed to move quickly from the realm of science fiction to reality.  

While the Kennedy administration concentrated on manned space-flight, TCNIC leaders and Washington state power planners bought into the AEC’s dream of nuclear power. In the 1960s the Washington state economy and population boomed and power 

---

demand grew 6 to 7 percent per year with no end in sight. The Hanford Generating Plant, which drew energy from the AEC’s N-Reactor at Hanford, provided TCNIC, state power planners, WPPSS, and the BPA a positive image of nuclear’s potential for the state. TCNIC’s efforts to develop Hanford as a nuclear energy park and WPPSS’s construction of five nuclear power plants coincided with the onset of nuclear power’s golden age in the United States. Federal regulators issued the bulk of new power reactor construction permits between 1960 and 1979. While the apostles of nuclear power generation touted it as cheap, clean, and safe, as the Hanford experience with WPPSS demonstrated, the AEC’s 1962 report to the president proved overly optimistic about the cost of nuclear power and failed to consider the significant opposition which would soon develop against the new technology.

WPPSS, SATSOP, AND EARLY ANTINUCLEAR OPPOSITION

As the AEC slowly phased out Hanford’s plutonium production’s mission, TCNIC and Tri-Cities boosters increasingly looked to develop the site as a center for nuclear power. Throughout the 1960s, Tri-Cities business leaders in partnership TCNIC promoted Hanford as the ideal location for regional nuclear power production. Community developers welcomed WPPSS’s nuclear power plants at Hanford. Nuclear power offered Hanford developers a way to recoup losses stemming from Hanford’s declining defense

---

production, utilize Hanford facilities, and maintain the area’s high-paid atomic work force. In the tradition started by the Manhattan Engineering District during World War II, TCNIC, Hanford workers, and Tri-Cities boosters viewed Mid-Columbia landscapes as ideally suited for nuclear facilities. Antinuclear groups in Western Washington and the nation began to see nuclear power as a serious threat to the environment and human quality of life, while pronuclear Tri-Citians viewed nuclear development as enhancing life on the Mid-Columbia, in the region, and the nation and mobilized their atomic community identity to defend WPPSS and nuclear power.

Initially small and comprised of those concerned with the nuclear power’s environmental impact, the WPPSS financial crisis broadened the antinuclear power movement to include those concerned with the economic consequences, particularly at the grass-roots ratepayer level. The pronuclear Tri-Citians remained firmly in the WPPSS corner through the growing debacle and backed nuclear power development in the state. As the state consensus over the future of nuclear power dissipated, pronuclear advocates characterized antinuclear forces as a case of liberal western Washington running rough-shod over conservative eastern Washington and glossed over the WPPSS’s fiscal problems. WPPSS troubles threatened Hanford’s future as regional energy center. The agency’s fiscal crisis also motivated many in the Northwest to question the viability of nuclear power in the state, and, in turn, motivated the pronuclear community to more radical action.
In the late 1960s Northwest power planners realized that they could no longer expect hydroelectric power to supply the region’s increasing needs and predicted the region faced a future of energy shortages, which seriously threatened the Northwest’s supply of low cost energy and economic growth. In 1968, the state’s Joint Power Planning Council in conjunction with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) drafted the Hydro-Thermal Power Plan to develop new sources for meeting the region’s growing power needs.\(^\text{11}\) This plan called for the addition of twenty new thermal power plants (mostly nuclear) to the region by 1990. WPPSS, with its successful construction and operation of the Hanford Generating Plant seemed the obvious choice for building new reactors in the state.

In the 1960s, Eastern Washington supplied the bulk of Washington’s power generation and power planners felt it prudent to center some of the new production in the more populated and growing west side of the state. Locating new plants west of the Cascade Mountains reduced the risk that forest fires might cripple the transmission lines that spanned the mountains and bring the source closer to population centers. With this in mind, WPPSS originally planned to build its first reactor at Roosevelt Beach on the Washington coast in Grays Harbor County. Rather than utilizing cooling towers, the proposed reactor’s design sent hot water directly into the Pacific Ocean. Washington State Fisheries, however, helped environmentalists put a quick stop to the plan when the agency requested WPPSS fund a six-year $2 million study of the plant’s affect on clam

populations near the proposed site.\textsuperscript{12} Russ Richmond (BPA administrator) and Owen Hurd (WPPSS managing director) scrapped the Roosevelt Beach location in favor of Hanford stating that the Northwest could not afford to delay construction of new thermal power generation facilities. Hanford offered BPA and WPPSS a supportive local community, no backlash from environmentalist, a knowledgeable nuclear work force, and completed engineering and environmental studies.\textsuperscript{13}

WPPSS substantially increased its importance to the Tri-Cities’ nuclear park dream, when it entered into an agreement with the BPA to build and operate five power generating reactors in the state. In 1971 WPPSS started with a plan for two reactors at Hanford and one in Western Washington’s Grey’s Harbor County at Satsop.\textsuperscript{14} In 1974 the agency added two more to its agenda one each at Hanford and Satsop. Nuclear power generating plants required a considerable investment, more than WPPSS and its member PUDs could afford. The BPA helped cushion WPPSS’s costs by financing the first three reactors through a “net billing” contract. In effect, net billing spread the plants’ costs among all BPA customers, subsidized the higher costs of nuclear generated power by mixing it with low cost hydro generated power, and gave federal backing to WPPSS bonds. WPPSS financed the last two plants through agreements with its eighty-eight participating regional PUDs, since the BPA could no longer offer the net billing scheme

\textsuperscript{12} Beckwith, “Pronounced ‘Whoops’," 156.
\textsuperscript{13} Miller, \textit{Energy Northwest}, 177.
\textsuperscript{14} Satsop sits near the town of Elam, WA. It is in the Chehallis River Valley about thirty miles west of Olympia and forty miles east of the Pacific Coast.
at that time.\textsuperscript{15} Both financing methods, however, later plagued WPPSS as cost overruns and construction delays spiraled out of control. Almost as soon WPPPS began construction, the agency started to slip behind schedule and lurched massively over budget on all five plants. In 1971 WPPSS began work on the first reactors, designated WNP2 at Hanford and WNP3 at Satsop. These were followed in 1974 by WNP1 and WNP4 at Hanford and WNP5 at Satsop.\textsuperscript{16} WPPSS expected WNP2 operational by fall 1977 at a construction cost of less than $400 million. By 1981, however, WPPSS pushed the WNP2 completion date back to 1984 and the cost rose to $3.2 billion.

WPPSS established its home offices in the Tri-Cities and placed three plants at Hanford. The pronuclear Tri-Cities offered the agency a supportive community and kept the headquarters and three plants a safe distance away from Seattle area protesters. Initially WPPSS’s mounting problems remained insulated from public scrutiny and the agency faced only limited environmental opposition due to its organization and careful site selection. WPPSS drew its board of directors from well established local PUDs’ leaders in a region where support for public power remained high and, until 1981, there existed no governmental or public oversight of WPPSS policy. Additionally, WPPSS

\textsuperscript{15} As Daniel Pope described in “Environmental Constraints and Organizational Failures: the Washington Public Power Supply System,” Business & Economic History 19, (January 1990): 74-82, “net billing pledged BPA’s revenues toward repayment of WPPS borrowings. It made the energy the plants were expected to produce into a regional resource and likewise spread the risks of cost overruns or uncompleted projects among all of BPA’s customers. Net billing also served to price expensive new nuclear power below its marginal cost and this discouraged efforts to conserve it.” The last two plants, however, did not have the economic safety net provided by net billing. Instead participating utilities agreed to become shareholders of WPPSS No. 4 and No. 5. These participant agreements were highly problematic and as Pope explains, “These so-called ‘take or pay’ or ‘hell or high water’ agreements appeared to commit them [participating PUDs] to pay for their shared whether or not the plants ever generated a watt of electricity.”

\textsuperscript{16} WPPSS designated its nuclear plants with WNP, which stands for WPPSS Nuclear Plant, and a number. WPPSS began construction on WNP2 before WNP1 at Hanford with WNP3 coming later. WNP4 and WNP5 were the Satsop, Washington reactors.
chose its Satsop location in part because the community’s depressed economy likely meant little local opposition to a lucrative construction project.17

While WPPSS’s construction plans and finance schemes initially progressed without significant opposition, in 1976 the tide began to turn against WPPSS at Satsop, as national and local resistance to nuclear power surged. Nationally, opposition to nuclear power grew significantly by the early 1970s, bolstered by both the peace and environmental movements. While antinuclear activists initially focused most of their attention on nuclear weapons production, as the nuclear power industry expanded in the 1960s, so did conflict over nuclear power. In 1958 the Pacific Power and Light planned the first commercial nuclear plant in California just north of San Francisco at Bodega Bay. The proposed plant, close to the infamous San Andres fault, elicited a strong reaction from local residents who launched the first notable grass-roots antinuclear power movement.18 Opposition to nuclear power gradually expanded in conjunction with the industry’s development.

Early activists, including labor union members, private citizens, lawyers, and researchers primarily worked behind the scenes in Washington D.C. or at local proposed sites of power plants to protest nuclear power expansion, but in the mid-1970s the movement gained more national and media attention. The growing nuclear issue caused a schism within the Sierra Club, the nation’s oldest environmental group. Sierra Club

President David Bower left the organization in the early 1960s and formed Friends of the Earth after the club failed to stand firm against nuclear power. In 1974, outspoken consumers advocate Ralph Nader and his student-driven Public Interest Research Groups moved to the fore of the antinuclear movement and sponsored “Critical Mass ’74,” the first antinuclear conference. Then, in April 1977, the antinuclear power movement gained considerable national press and notoriety when an antinuclear group called the Clamshell Alliance organized a large scale and ongoing protests opposing construction of the Seabrook Station Nuclear Power Plant in Seabrook, New Hampshire.\(^{19}\) The Clamshell Alliance’s actions inspired Grays Harbor antinuclear environmental activists to demonstrate in opposition to the WPPSS plants at Satsop.

Satsop residents initially seemed to favor the WPPSS plant in Grays Harbor County. On April 10, 1973 about 300 residents attended a WPPSS public meeting with local officials and listened as a mechanical engineer explained how WNP3 would be built and operated. WPPSS officials indicated that when the plant opened in 1981 it would provide about 1,000 jobs. Grays Harbor residents at the meeting appeared enthusiastic about the jobs and new infrastructure the project promised the community. Residents at the meeting expressed virtually no concerns about nuclear power’s safety or potential to harm humans and the environment. Less than one year later, however, the attitude of Grays Harbor citizens began to shift.\(^{20}\) On February 11, 1974 at a public meeting to determine if the Satsop plant met with county zoning and land use ordinances, the


\(^{20}\) Beckwith, “Pronounced ‘Whoops',” 156.
citizens at the hearing were far from amicable. The meeting lasted for eight hours as locals expressed their fears, concerns, and reservations about the project and sported signs that read “Stop the nuke before it stops you” and “Satsop: zero benefits—all the risks.” 21

In the 1970s antinuclear opposition and WPPSS’s critics in the state remained largely in Grays Harbor and among a small group opposed to nuclear power for environmental reasons. Antinuclear supporters, however, attempted to bring their agenda to a larger audience in November 1976. A group calling itself the Coalition for Safe Energy supported antinuclear Initiative 325 (I-325) in the Washington fall general election. The initiative asked voters, “Shall future nuclear power facilities which do not meet certain conditions and receive two-thirds approval by the legislature be prohibited?”

In 1976, the governor and the state’s Energy Facility Siting Council held the power to approve nuclear power plant location in the state. The council included representatives from several state agencies and delegates from the counties and port districts of proposed reactors. Thus, initiative supporters meant the new law to “take nuclear decisions away from bureaucrats and utility officials and place that responsibility in the hands of our representatives—where it belongs.” Opposition to I-325 charged that the initiative would establish “conditions which cannot be met for new nuclear plants, cancels four plants under development and jeopardizes the steam plant at Hanford” and effectively halt nuclear power in the state. I-325 critics also argued that the initiative would not make nuclear power safer, conserve resources, and in fact risked national security by making

21 As quoted in Ibid., 158.
the state and nation more dependent on foreign oil.\textsuperscript{22} Washington voters unconvinced by
the Coalition for Safe Power’s argument, defeated I-325 in the fall election 66.62 percent
to 33.38 percent. In Grays Harbor County, the epicenter of WPPSS’s opposition, the
initiative failed with a much smaller margin (13,441 no to 10, 391 yes) and in pronuclear
Benton County I-325 votes soundly opposed I-325 (30,675 no to 3,466 yes)
demonstrating the power of local concerns in western politics. The voting results showed
strong support for nuclear power in the Tri-Cities, continued general support state-wide,
and the growing opposition near Satsop.\textsuperscript{23}

Following I-325’s defeat and inspired by the Clamshell Alliance’s efforts in New
Hampshire, some western Washington residents decided to take a more direct action
approach. While groups demanding nuclear disarmament emerged after World War II
and worked throughout the Cold War to ban nuclear weapons and testing, the anti-nuclear
power movement emerged later. The Clamshell Alliance formed in 1976 to protest
nuclear power development in New England gained significant media exposure with their
occupation of the Seabrook Station Nuclear Power Plant construction site in May 1977.
Inspired by the Clamshell Alliance’s non-violent and direct action protests, anti-nuclear
critics from Seattle and Olympia formed the Crabshell Alliance to protest the nuclear

\textsuperscript{22} Washington Secretary of State, “Official Voters Pamphlet 1976,” n.d., Washington Secretary of State,
accessed May 3, 2013
55.pdf.
\textsuperscript{23} Washington Secretary of State, “November 1976 General Election,” n.d., Washington Secretary of
power plants under construction at Satsop. The group formed in May 1977 and in July sent 700 demonstrators on a march through Elma, WA (located less than 10 miles from the Satsop site) against the WPPSS nuclear plants. In June 1978 the Crabshell Alliance organized the Woodstock style “Satsop Reclamation.” The event, held on a ten-acre farm field just outside Elma, attracted 1,500 people. The two-day event included “workshops on non-violent protest, sign-painting, canvassing, and alternative energy sources.” The folk-rock artist Jesse Colin Young, former singer with the Youngblood’s, performed at the event which culminated in “157 demonstrators trespassing on the plant site as part of a massive act of civil disobedience.” The Crabshell Alliance also mustered a crowd of 200 in November in Aberdeen, WA (about 20 miles from Satsop) to protest nuclear power development. While the alliance pressured WPPSS to cease its efforts at Satsop, the group’s environmental message failed to capture a wide base of support and construction continued. Tri-Cities supporters watched as WPPSS’s mounting political and financial problems became a much greater burden to the organization than protesters at the Satsop construction site.

ECONOMIC OPPOSITION

The antinuclear movement came later to the Northwest than the nation at large. Historian Daniel Pope argues that despite Seattle’s strong environmental reputation, antinuclear mobilization not only came slower to Washington, but manifested differently. Pope

24 Gyorgy, No Nukes, 450.
contended that opposition to WPPSS “generally lagged behind” the agency problems and demonstrated that when substantial state wide opposition appeared by the early 1980s, WPPSS critics primarily framed their grievances in economic not environmental terms. The anti-WPPSS sentiments and environmental attitudes as they continued to develop in Grays Harbor County supported the idea that the widespread antinuclear opposition in the early 1980s stemmed from largely economic concerns. While the Crabshell Alliance faded into relative obscurity, the Irate Ratepayers that emerged in Grays Harbor County in response to the growing WPPSS financial crisis and rising power rates generated a much broader support base. The nature of nuclear opposition, however, mattered little to Hanford supporters. Presented as a fiscal or environmental critique, the pronuclear Tri-Citians viewed WPPSS-generated antinuclear opposition as a threat to Hanford, community identity, and the Tri-Cities’ future.

27 The Northern Spotted Owl controversy that moved Grays Harbor area residents to protest against environmentalist efforts to protect old growth forests in the early 1990s reinforces the notion that even at the epicenter of WPPSS protest; locals were more concerned with budgets than environmental protection. Grays Harbor lay in the heart of Northwest timber country and residents came down firmly in support of the timber industry when environmentalists moved to enforce protection of the Northern Spotted Owl and its old growth forest habit under the Endangered Species Act. Protecting the owl threaten to lock up vast acres of federal forest lands and threaten area lumber jobs. With slogans such as “People 1st Not Owls” and engaging in acts of civil disobedience, Harbor timber supporters bitterly opposed Northern Spotted Owl protection. “The environmentalism have no sense of what they are doing. They say they are about these jobs and the people of Grays Harbor; that’s a bunch of B.S. They don’t give a damn if anybody works down here. The dirty bastards from Seattle are destroying this community,” charged Hoquiam lumberman Kirk Dahlstrom. While Grays Harbor lumber workers tended to frame their argument in terms of rural vs. urban, rather than the Eastern vs. Western Washington, their protest against Seattle environmentalists telling them how to manage the timber industry was similar to the way pronuclear Tri-Citians earlier framed their support WPPSS, nuclear power, and Hanford. Kirk Dahlstrom as quoted in Doug Barker, “The Spotted Owl” in On the Harbor: From Black Friday to Nirvana, 2ed, eds. John Charles Haughes and Ryan Tegue Beckwith (Las Vegas: Stephens Press, 2005), 173. For an overview of the Northwest Spotted Owl controversy see William Dietrich, The Final Forest: Big Trees, Forks, and the Pacific Northwest (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).
While WPPSS enjoyed a relative safe haven in the pronuclear Tri-Cities, community leaders and boosters, nonetheless, kept a sharp eye on the agency’s progress. At a June 1975 TCNIC Board of Directors meeting Guy Adams, a leader in the Silent Majority Speaks detailed in the previous chapter, pointed out that WPPSS’s management seemed rather unconcerned about construction slippage at its Hanford reactors. Adams stressed that TCNIC “had worked long and successfully to bring about development of this region, and it was our [TCNIC’s] job to continue to look out for the best interests of this community and area.” Adams noted that construction delays rested with WPPSS management not labor and argued “that something should be done to correct this situation before it got worse.” The TCNIC board resolved to contact WPPSS to express their concerns about construction delays. Clearly, TCNIC monitored WPPSS’s activities closely and worked to prevent WPPSS problems from marring their efforts to promote and develop Hanford as a nuclear energy park. Later, as WPPSS’s financial and construction problems grew worse, Glenn Lee, TCNIC president, admitted to the press that the council noticed WPPSS’s problems early on and repeatedly told WPPSS in private and between friends it needed to clean up its act. While TCNIC paid close attention to WPPSS mounting difficulties, Lee’s comments suggest that TCNIC hesitated to critique WPPSS too harshly in public and place Hanford nuclear power development at risk.

28. “Minuets Board of Directors Meeting Tri-City Nuclear Industrial Council, June 2, 1975, box 27, folder, 380, GLP, MASC.
Despite friendly warnings from Tri-Cities supporters, WPPSS troubles continued to mount and so did regional opposition to nuclear power, particularly in the wake of the 1979 Three-Mile Island incident. In 1980, environmental and economic anti-WPPSS and antinuclear activists banded together to bring Initiative 383 (I-383) to Washington’s fall ballot. I-383 asked voters, “Shall Washington ban the importation of non-medical radioactive wastes generated outside Washington, unless otherwise permitted by interstate compact?” The coalition campaigned on the slogan “Don’t Waste Washington.” Washingtonians overwhelmingly approved I-383 (75.49 percent). However, I-383 faced little real opposition, even from pronuclear supporters in the state, and a Federal District Court judge overturned the initiative. The “Don’t Waste Washington” campaign, framed as an environmental argument, provided only a hollow victory for the state’s antinuclear movement. While I-383 encountered little state-wide opposition, Benton County, home to Hanford, returned the only no vote on I-383 (no—23,901 and yes—18,933). I-383 gained no real ground for the antinuclear movement, but the election results suggested growing differences over nuclear issues between Hanford supporters and the rest of Washington.\(^{30}\)

The state’s antinuclear supporters and WPPSS’s critics enjoyed much greater success the following year with an economic-based initiative and accompanying “Don’t Bankrupt Washington” campaigned. Supported by the Don’t Bankrupt Washington Committee, Steve Zemeke, group chairman and state political activist, introduced the

imitative in fall 1981. Initiative 394 (I-394) asked voters “Shall public agencies obtain voter approval prior to issuing bonds for the construction or acquisition of major public energy projects?” 31 I-394 sponsors and supporters hoped to halt the state’s move toward nuclear power by “identifying the nuclear threat as primarily pecuniary.” 32 WPPSS’s officials worried, and rightly so, that if I-394 passed the agency’s ability to procure bond money might evaporate. WPPSS, sunk in a quagmire of construction delays and escalating costs, needed to continue issuing bonds to protect the considerable outlay already invested in its projects and keep construction moving forward. I-394 marked a new era in the Northwest’s nuclear politics. Previously the region’s major newspapers supported WPPSS and nuclear power in general. The WPPSS financial crisis, however, caused regional newspapers to reconsider their position. The Seattle Post-Intelligencer and others recommended a “yes” vote on I-394. 33 Clearly, WPPSS’s deepening financial problems caused Washington residents to question the cost of nuclear power and contributed to the erosion of the statewide consensus over nuclear power in a way environmental considerations alone could not.

The Citizen’s Against Taxes (the No on 394 Committee), based in Seattle, and organized the statewide campaign against I-394 and in support of nuclear power development. The No on 394 Committee attacked Don’t Bankrupt Washington’s economic critique of WPPSS with a counter fiduciary argument. The committee

33 Miller, Energy Northwest, 365-366.
contended that if passed the proposition would cost Washington ratepayers billions of
dollars to replace lost power generation and to fund the required elections to obtain voter
approval for new power plants. They also charged the initiative would waste ratepayer
money by shutting down plants already funded. While the *Tri-City Herald* largely
agreed with the Citizen’s Against Taxes’ message, the editorial staff criticized the images
in the group’s advertising campaign. An October 7 editorial charged that the Citizen’s
Against Taxes’ television spots focused on the wrong audience. Instead of targeting the
business community, *Tri-City Herald* editors argued that the working class voters in
Western Washington should be the campaign’s target. The editorial contended that while
I-394 was certainly a “pocket book issue,” the real expense to Washingtonians would be
lost jobs both those directly involved in building new power plants and those forfeited by
the downturn in economic development the region could expect from the lack of energy
to power new industry.

While average Tri-Citians seemed more concerned with a local coliseum bond
issue in the days before the election and despite all of the economic arguments,
pronuclear Tri-Citians characterized the initiative as antinuclear. *Tri-City Herald*
editorials repeatedly called the initiative antinuclear and argued it as a misguided effort to
slap the wrists of WPPSS. Additionally, a group of Tri-Citians with at least some
connections to the National Democratic Policy Committee and the Fusion Energy
Foundation (both associated with Lyndon La Rouche, controversial political activist and

34 Full page advertisement sponsored by the Citizens Against Unfair Taxes—No on 394 Committee, *Tri-
City Herald*, November 2, 1981.
founder of the La Rouche movement) looked to recruit supporters in Richland in the days before the election. The group argued that high federal interest rates were the source of WPPSS problems and called for pronuclear forces to pressure the Federal Reserve to lower rates and rescue nuclear power. While group spokesman, Mark Calney denied affiliation with La Rouche’s National Democratic Policy Committee, the Fusion Energy Foundations had about 1,000 subscribers to its magazine in the Tri-City area.36

Former state governor and pronuclear advocate Dixy Lee Ray also visited the Tri-Cities in the weeks before the November vote and contributed to the discourse on I-394. Ray spoke at a gathering of the Washington Voice of Energy, a group that included many Hanford scientists. Ray was clearly popular with the audience that “paid the governor dozens of compliments, asked for autographs and urged her to get back into politics.” In comments after her speech, Ray argued that I-394 “was written by a small number of persons who believe in ‘living like the birds and the bees,’” and charged that “many of them came out of Western Washington University and the initiative was developed especially to stop nuclear.” In her speech, which received two standing ovations, Ray emphasized the need for the nation to develop lasting energy sources and “argued against people who contend that the world is running out of natural sources.” She charged that they were “wallowing in their own mortality.” She argued for greater technical developments in the area of nuclear and coal to create lasting energy supplies for the nation.37 Together Ray’s speech and comments to the press indicated her support of

nuclear power development and condemned I-394 supporters as antinuclear and anti-economic growth environmentalists. The strong show of support for Ray at the Washington Voice of Energy presentation demonstrated pronuclear Tri-Citians agreement with her views.

The Citizen’s Against Taxes concentrated most of its efforts and money on influencing Western Washington voters were support was strongest for the initiative. While the major regional newspapers supported I-394, the *Tri-City Herald* repeatedly denounced the initiative in the weeks before the election, but Tri-Citians actually saw little of either side’s campaign message leading up to the November vote. In a series of editorials the paper urged a strong voter turn out in Eastern Washington, labeled initiative supporters as antinuclear, and made a counter economic argument. “It can’t be beaten,” warned an October 23 editorial, “unless Eastern Washington and Mid Columbia voters turn out in force and vote ‘No!’ overwhelmingly.” The Don’t Bankrupt Washington campaign also devoted little time and money to the Mid-Columbia. The large state map, displayed in their campaign headquarters, showed Benton County labeled with a sad face and the word hopeless. Don’t Bankrupt Washington fully expected the initiative to fail in Benton County and instead spent its Eastern Washington dollars to influence voters in Yakima and Spokane counties in the days before the election.

The decision by both campaigns to expend little effort in the Tri-Cities and Benton County proved a wise choice. Benton County residents voted strongly against the

---

initiative and *Tri-City Herald* election coverage suggested that local residents debated the issues very little. Only a few letters to the editor addressed I-394. On October 29, David Marchant wrote on behalf of the Tri-Cities Technical Council (a group representing eighteen scientific, technical, and engineering societies) urging a “no” vote on I-394. “Knowing the technical challenges involved, the council contends it is extremely unwise to risk unnecessary delays in construction schedules,” he argued adding, “I-394 would create red-tape, not benefits for power users large or small.”

The day before the vote, Kennewick resident Tom Anderson wrote in support of the initiative and argued, “Approving 394 on Tuesday is one way of protecting us from catastrophes like WPPSS in future. It’s my money and yours we are talking about wasting—do you know a better way?”

Benton County voters, however, without debate automatically tendered a no vote on I-394.

The state’s voters readily passed I-394 (58.06 percent to 41.94 percent). Benton and Franklin counties, home to the Tri-Cities, emerged in 1981 as the only counties in the state to fully support WPPSS and nuclear power development. The two counties returned a hearty no vote on I-394 (Benton—25,752 to 5,255 and Franklin—5,179 to 1,792) and clearly demonstrated their difference of opinion with the rest of the state.

A U.S. District Court judge ultimately overturned I-394 in 1982 and the U.S. Supreme Court turned down “Don’t Bankrupt Washington’s” appeal request. WPPSS, the BPA, and Wall

---

Street, however, understood I-394’s passage as a vote of no confidence in WPPSS which affected the agency’s ability to procure funds.

Environmental opposition to WPPSS alone failed to divide the state on nuclear power. However, WPPSS deepening financial crisis spurred economic opposition to nuclear in the state. The largely pronuclear Tri-Cities proved to be a solid base of support for WPPSS even as the agencies financial problems deepened. Tri-Citians, steeped in atomic culture, continued to envision Hanford as the perfect location for nuclear power. Pronuclear Tri-Citians supported WPPSS without much debate in the I-394 fight, however, when the agency’s problems threatened to halt work at Hanford, pronuclear Tri-Citians caused a community uproar.

MORATORIUM
Despite the agency’s best efforts to gain control of construction schedules and finances, WPPSS downward financial spiral continued. Workers at the Hanford and Satsop sites faced first work slow downs and then terminations of WPPSS reactors. Initially, the pronuclear Tri-Cities and Hanford workers took the work slow downs in stride, well accustomed to the ups and downs of federal nuclear funding. However, once threatened with termination of one reactor all together, especially in favor of continuing a WPPSS project at Satsop, pronuclear Tri-Citians and Hanford workers grew more vocal and vigorously protested the decision. The protesters, however, targeted their anger not at WPPSS, but at the BPA and western Washington. Pronuclear Tri-Citians blamed BPA for
recommending the moratorium at Hanford to WPPSS and envisioned antinuclear groups in Western Washington as dictating nuclear policy in the state and at Hanford, deepening the growing division between western and eastern Washington over nuclear politics.

In May 1981 WPPSS considered a construction moratorium on WNP4 (Hanford) and WNP5 (Satsop), the two plants not under the BPA net-billing scheme. WPPSS management, however, moved cautiously knowing that a construction freeze meant laying off workers, most in its Tri-City Hanford home base. In July WPPSS slowed work on WNP4 and WNP5 and reduced WNP4’s construction crew by 1,200. Rather than hand out pink slips, WPPSS management shifted some WNP4 workers to the WNP2 (Hanford) project in hopes of speeding the plant, already 85.8 percent finished, toward completion. WPPSS tried to put a positive spin on the WNP4 and WNP5 slowdowns and emphasized to employees that the agency intended to concentrate efforts on the BPA backed plants.44

Then on January 22, 1982, despite continued negotiations with the share holding PUDs and the I-394 court battle, WPPSS’s Board of Directors decided to terminate WNP4 and WNP5.45 While the decision angered many PUDs, threatened to increase power rates, and meant that WPPSS needed to procure financing to pay for termination, the Tri-Cites and Hanford workers took the news rather calmly. Potential job loss at Hanford matter more than rising power rates mattered in the Tri-Cities. Tri-City Herald coverage in the days following WPPSS’s announcement primarily focused on the details of termination financing and the affects on PUDs and power rates, rather than Hanford job losses or

44 Miller, Energy Northwest, 318-365.
45 Miller, Energy Northwest, 370.
antinuclear sentiments. The staid reaction likely resulted from the fact that Tri-Citians largely did not view the announcement as either an imminent threat to nuclear power or Hanford jobs. While the Northwest as a whole faced an economic slump, in January 1982 the *Tri-City Herald* reported that the Tri-Cities looked forward to continued economic growth. The *Tri-City Herald* indicated that the Mid-Columbia expected 21,000 new jobs over the next year. While WPPSS contributed significantly to new job creation in the past, Tri-Cities leaders already anticipated less growth from WPPSS during 1982. WPPSS laid-off and reassigned workers following the 1981 construction slowdown at WNP4 and the community, accustomed to riding the crest and fall of federal contracts, took WNP4 termination relatively in stride. Tri-Cities workers still anticipated job growth from other area employers. Bechtel, a WPPSS contractor, expected to add more workers at WNP1 and WNP2. Community leaders anticipated construction of a large retail outlet in Kennewick, expansion at the Port of Pasco and Port of Kennewick, and the instillation of new generators at Priest Rapid and Wanapum Dams to put thousands of Mid-Columbians on local payrolls. In addition, Puget Power reportedly considered siting two power reactors at Hanford at a price tag of $8 billion with the possibility of 500-600 new jobs by 1983 and a peak work force predicted at about 4,000 in 1988.\(^{46}\) It seems the continued work on WPPSS’s two other Hanford reactors and Puget Power’s potential new reactor construction kept the Tri-Cities pro-nuclear community in good spirits, maintained their nuclear park dreams, buoyed the local economy, and insulated WPPSS from local criticism.

Grays Harbor county residents and others across the state, however, did not take the news about WNP4 and WNP5 so calmly and gave birth to the short lived but influential Irate Ratepayers movement. In 1980 Presidents Ronald Reagan swept into the white house along with a cadre of neoconservatives that promoted personal tax-cuts and smaller government as the cure for the American economy and budget strapped households. Electricity ratepayers across Washington, whose household budgets strained under the weight of the recession and significant rise in electricity rates, faced even greater increases as WPPSS’s participating PUDs “now faced the distasteful task of repaying the $2.25 billion which had been borrowed before the bond market balked.” The Irate Ratepayers believed they should not bare the brunt of WPPSS mistakes. WNP4 and WNP5 financing was not protected by BPA net billing and the responsibility for construction bonds rested on the member PUDs. The Irate Ratepayers formed after hundreds of angry rate payers attended a weekly meeting of the Grays Harbor PUD in January 1982 to complain about rising electricity rates. PUD members long enjoyed the low electricity rates made possible by public utility districts and federal dams in the state, but when threatened with rate increases they invoked populist rhetoric and demanded protection from the poor decisions of bankers, large contractors, the nuclear industry, and WPPSS executives.

---

While the Crabshell Alliance with its environmental message failed to win widespread grass-roots support in its campaign against WPPSS, like Don’t Bankrupt Washington, Irate Ratepayers and their populist message briefly (in the winter and spring of 1982) garnered support across the state with group chapters forming in Grays Harbor, Cowlitz, Lewis, Clallam, Clark, Snohomish, Mason, and Kittitas counties. While WPPSS downfall remained primarily of its own making, the Irate Ratepayers mounted several popular protests against the agency. In February the group initiated a black out protest asking consumers to turn off their lights between 7 and 8 pm every evening Monday through Friday. On February 14, 1982 Irate Ratepayers mustered 3,000 to a town-hall meeting held at Hoquiam High school. Dorothy Lindsey, a 51 year old Grays Harbor housewife who unexpectedly became the head of the group after being misidentified by the press as leader of the January PUD meeting protesters, outlined the group’s message as the town hall meeting. Lindsey identified their opponents as “the greedy contractors, the greedy bankers, the nuclear industry, and the entrenched WPPSS management with their $125,000 salaries.” Former Washington governor Dan Evan, then chairman of the Northwest Region Planning Council, called the town hall meeting the “Valentines Day Massacre. The town hall meeting, however, proved to be the group’s high point. On April 2 Irate Ratepayers sponsored “Draw Day” and asked Sea-First bank members (one of WPPSS backers) to withdraw deposits from the institution and about $640,000 was withdrawn in protest of WPPSS. A rally planned in Olympia on the following day, however, drew only a crowd of 400. Almost a quickly as the Irate Ratepayers formed it
lost state-wide cohesion as chapters focused more on local concerns and the bid to replaced PUD officials in the fall elections with their own candidates than a concentrated statewide protest against WPPSS.  

Meanwhile WPPSS continued its tailspin and as the Irate Ratepayers lost steam, pronuclear Tri-Citians and Hanford workers geared up to protest. Following the termination of WNP4 and WNP5, rumors circulated that the WPPSS Board of Directors might soon mothball Hanford’s WNP1. The news outraged Hanford’s pronuclear community and moved them to action. On Thursday April 15, 1982, the Seattle Times front page announced that “the Bonneville Power Administration appears ready to recommend mothballing Washington Public Power Supply Systems Nuclear Project 1 at Hanford.”  

Both the BPA and WPPSS denied this report, but anxious Tri-Citians, expecting an announcement on the reactor’s fate from the WPPSS executive board at its meeting in Seattle on Monday April 19, rapidly mobilized. On Saturday April 17, Tri-City civic, business, and labor leaders, along with some WPPSS’s employees hastily prepared to protest any WPPSS decision to declare a moratorium on WNP1. John Poynor, Richland City Councilman, chaired the new group organized as the Coalition for POWER (Preserve Our Washington Energy Resources). POWER planned a rally for Sunday April 18 in Richland.

About 2,000 Tri-Citians, mostly laborers, attended Sunday’s rally. The event’s primary message, “Its time for nuclear power advocates to use the tactics of the

obstructionist,” indicated that the Tri-Cities’ pronuclear community viewed a work stoppage on WNP1 as antinuclear and that POWER hoped to spur grass-roots action. Most speakers at the gathering aimed their anger and frustration at BPA and Western Washington supporters of I-394 broadly rather than singling out groups such as the Irate Ratepayers. Jim Worthington, the Southeastern Washington Building and Construction Trades Council, urged attendees to “write letters make calls and attend decision-making meetings to demonstrate their displeasure.” In his address to the crowd, Representative Ray Isaacson (R-Richland) outlined a WNP1 moratorium as an Eastern versus Western Washington issue. “‘People in Eastern Washington know how to do the job,’” he said, “People in Western Washington know how to shut them down.”51 The crowd listened quietly to the speakers. Don Tuttel, Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 598, earned the most applause with his critic of President Reagan’s appointment of Peter Johnson to head the BPA. Representative Shirley Hankins (R-Richland) also blamed Reagan for paying more attention to weapons than nuclear power. While attendees remained modest in their response to POWER’s presentations, displeasure grew among Tri-Citians over the next week and they heeded the rally’s call to action.

As expected, on Monday April 19 Johnson and the BPA recommended that WPPSS mothball WNP1 for up to five years and the Tri-Cities pronuclear community quickly attacked BPA’s reasoning. Worried about WPPSS’s ability to procure bond sales in I-394’s wake, the agency’s continued economic spiral, and predicted reduced power generation needs, BPA strongly suggested WPPSS halt construction at either WNP1 or

51 Dennis Godfrey, “Demonstrate Displeasure, 2,000 Told at Rally, Tri-City Herald, April 19, 1982.
WNP3 at Satsop. BPA reasoned that a WNP1 moratorium made the most sense. Pronuclear Tri-Citians and their supporters vehemently disagreed. BPA critics heaped blame on the BPA draft report that undergirded the agency’s recommendation. Jay Maidment, independent consultant and former WPPSS project manager at WNP2, called the report “shoddy” and difficult to analyze because of its poor information. Maidment placed Tri-Cities troubles squarely on the BPA’s shoulders claiming the report decimated the community. He and other critics charged that BPA developed power estimates without external input and that BPA’s forecast of 1.7 percent growth fell below estimates of 2+ percent forecasted by Northwest Power Planners and National Economic Research Associates. Maidment contended BPA failed to consider hydroelectric power losses due to fish releases and irrigation and that these consideration alone necessitated immediate completion of WNP1. BPA, however, argued that the agency had sought public opinion on the report and that it based its recommendation on economics. BPA also contended that stopping work at Hanford made more sense than a slowdown in Satsop. Hanford nuclear workers, BPA suggested, constituted a more stable and permanent work force, while in the event of a slowdown WPPSS stood to lose temporary Satsop workers to other projects. Neither Maidment nor Hanford workers accepted BPA’s rationale. Maidment encouraged Tri-Citians to attend the upcoming BPA rate hearing and the WPPSS board meeting to express their discontent. Maidment, like POWER, hoped to move the community to take action and warned that they must act quickly.52

Tri-Cities pronuclear supporters expressed their discontent and argued that if WPPSS must delay a reactor, its choice should be WNP3 in Satsop. They noted that WNP1 stood closer to completion and contended that BPA unfairly targeted a permanent over a temporary workforce. Some pronuclear supporters also suggested that nuclear reactors rightly belonged at Hanford, not in Grays Harbor County. Influential Tri-City boosters Glenn Lee and Sam Volpentest agreed that BPA made the wrong recommendation. Lee, not one to mince words, argued that in part the problem lay in WPPSS’s plan to build reactors in Western Washington in the first place. Lee contended that plant siting in Satsop only served to “stir-up” the public, the media, and the legislators. Nuclear power plants, in Lee’s view, belonged at Hanford and if WPPSS stopped construction in Satsop WPPSS’s problems and critics would “cool down.” Volpentest heartily agreed with this assessment. An announcement that WPPSS intended to close WNP3, Volpentest said, would likely prompt Hoquiam and Aberdeen residents to “dance in the streets.” 53 Lee and Volpentest, thus, both articulate WPPSS’s problems in Eastern versus Western Washington terms and demonstrated a vision of Hanford as the right place for nuclear power.

By Tuesday April 20, the day following BPA’s announcement, yellow ribbons appeared all around the Tri-Cities as a symbol of community solidarity and commitment to fight for WNP1. Yellow ribbons, traditionally worn or displayed to honor an absent loved one recently festooned the nation during the Iranian hostage crisis. BPA policy, Tri-Citians charged, held their community and WNP1 captive. Yellow ribbons decorated

light poles, streamed from car antennae, and adorned local children’s hair. While he tied a yellow ribbon around the sycamore tree in his front yard, Richard Cloud, WPPSS employee, lamented the current state of affairs to a *Tri-City Herald* reporter. Cloud blamed “‘no-growthers’ west of the Cascade Mountains for threatening his livelihood.” Cloud worked for WPPSS for three years, but noted that “his father works for Exxon Nuclear,” and that, “Nuclear has been a part of his life for as long as he can remember.” Cloud, like others in the Tri-Cities, viewed the WNP1 closure as an attack on their community and way of life by Western Washington environmentalists and I-394 supporters.54

On Wednesday April 21 outraged Tri-Citians, heeding POWER’s call to action, flooded BPA’s Richland rate hearing. Between 600 and 1,000 Tri-Citians sporting yellow ribbons crowded into the 280 seat auditorium reserved for the meeting. Most of the throng remained in the lobby and chanted their support for WNP1, while a continual stream of protesters inside the hearing stressed to BPA their displeasure at the recommendation to mothball the plant. John Poynor, Richland city councilman and POWER organizer, called the decision a criminal act of cruelty. Neil Shulman, Richland city manager, charged BPA with artificial price control, contending the agency attempted to keep power rates low by failing to invest in future power needs. Sandy Dodd, local union member, informed BPA that Hanford workers would seek jobs elsewhere during a two-five year moratorium. Business and labor leaders agreed with Dodd and stressed to BPA that some 6,500 workers faced unemployment with a work stoppage WPN1.

Representative Shirley Hankins (R-Richland) argued that this decision not only affected the Tri-Cities, but placing that number of workers on the unemployment roles might overtax the already struggling state into bankruptcy. BPA, unable to accommodate all the protesters, scheduled a second meeting for the next evening. While WPPSS leadership and policies initiated the problem and clearly BPA tried to rescue the state and ratepayers from further damage with its recommendation, angry pronuclear Tri-Citians targeted their discontent at BPA.\(^{55}\)

After the angry outpouring at the BPA hearing, on Thursday April 22 regional and national news media descended on the Tri-Cities in anticipation of the WPPSS board meeting scheduled for Friday. On April 23 between 10,000 and 12,000 Tri-Citians gathered at the WPPSS board meeting in a show of support for continued construction at WNP1. The board listened to three hours of testimony, while the massive crowd gathered in the WPPSS parking lot. The protesters, again, levied the bulk of criticism at BPA and its head Peter Johnson. Signs at the event read “Peter, Peter, Power Beater,” “BPA Kiss My Reactor,” and “Backstabbing Political Anarchists (BPA)” and testified to crowds overwhelmingly anti-BPA sentiments. One protester affixed a sign to the WPPSS building that read “For Sale By Owner, Contact Peter Johnson.” The assembled crowd, comprised of both white and blue collar workers, enjoyed the rather patriotic tones of the event. A mobile home parked at the location bore a billboard that proclaimed “Save America, Save #1” and the crowd enthusiastically clapped along to a portable stereo blaring John Philip Sousa’s “Stars and Stripes Forever.” Some speakers asked Tri-Citians

to not just fight for WNP1, but also for America. While anti-BPA sentiments dominated the event, protesters also linked nuclear power with traditional American values and heaped blame on Western Washingtonians and I-394 supporters.\textsuperscript{56} Much like other antienvironmental groups and elements of the New Right, pronuclear supporters in the Tri-Cities linked their cause with traditional American values, symbolizing their desire to return to an imagined better past, before environmentalists and government regulation.

While POWER effectively rallied Tri-Citians to demonstrate their support for WNP1 and nuclear power, Dixy Lee Ray attempted to motivate nuclear scientists and engineers to also take a stand for nuclear power. The same week Tri-Citians battled BPA to save WNP1, the American Nuclear Society (ANS) convened in Richland. About 400 nuclear scientists from the United States, Australia, Western Europe, and Japan, met to compare notes on the latest methods for handling and disposing nuclear waste.\textsuperscript{57} Ray, former AEC chairman, Washington State Governor, and nuclear power advocate, spoke at the ANS meeting and rebuked those present for not taking action on the nuclear industry’s behalf. While POWER publically demonstrated its support for nuclear power, Ray scolded the nuclear scientists “for endlessly, seeking perfect solutions to radioactive waste problems, while ignoring public debate that could scuttle the entire nuclear industry despite technological breakthrough.” Ray suggested that antinuclear activists were “winning” and challenged the nuclear scientists and engineers at the conference to organize a grass-roots effort to fight back. She argued that nuclear scientists and

engineers paid too little attention to public opinion and failed to understand the intentions of the antinuclear movement. Led nationally by Ralph Nader, Barry Commoner, and Jane Fonda, Ray charged that antinuclear activists opposed capitalism and hoped to radically change society by redirecting the nation toward limited energy use and “a new economic social system of public planning and control.” Ray’s implication that antinuclear activists worked toward socialists goals sits uneasily along side the fact that the nuclear industry originated, grew, and remained largely insulated from public scrutiny by big federal government. Ray also addressed the problems at WPPSS and the debate over mothballing WNP1. She suggested that antinuclear activists in Washington State worked not just to close WNP1, but WPPSS’s other plants as well. She hoped to move her audience to action and argued that the Tri-Cities was the best place to begin a grass-roots pronuclear movement calling the area “the most knowledgeable, experienced, and understanding community on nuclear power in the world.” Ray, thus, promoted Tri-Cities atomic community identity and a technocratic vision in an attempt to pry nuclear scientists and engineers from their labs and drafting boards and into the arena of public debate.

Despite their yellow ribbons, protests, and alliance with traditional American values, Tri-Cities pronuclear activists failed to rescue WNP1, WPPSS, or spark a wide spread grass-roots action in favor of nuclear power. In 1983 WPPSS, unable to gain financial solvency and mired in litigation, defaulted on its WNP4 and WNP5 bonds, the largest such default in the nation’s history. Ultimately, WPPSS abandoned all its reactors, except Hanford’s WNP2 (now know as the Columbia Generating Station). The Tri-Cities
workforce peaked at 76,000 in 1981 and fell to about 60,000 in 1984 mostly attributable to the WNP1 and WNP3 termination.\textsuperscript{58} In August 1982, DOE briefly considered salvaging WNP-4 and modifying the reactor to produce plutonium and steam for electricity generation similar to the N-Reactor/Hanford Generating Plant arrangement. This scheme, however, quickly faced criticism from nuclear freeze activists opposed to plutonium production and the prospect of a civilian reactor seized for military purposes. The pronuclear Tri-Cities, however, avidly supported the proposal.\textsuperscript{59}

WPPSS failed, largely due to the agency’s spectacular mismanagement and overwhelming challenge of simultaneously building five nuclear power plants, not the economic and environmental protesters that rose to challenge nuclear power in the state. While an outstanding example of the nuclear industry’s problems, WPPSS did not stand alone and power reactor construction in the nation throughout the 1970s proved to be problematic for other utilities and much more costly the AECs report to the president in 1962 predicted. WPPSS’s high profile failure further compromised an already ailing nuclear industry, soured the Washington rate payers on nuclear power, and deepened the political divide between Tri-Cities and Western Washington. Even the agency’s acronym, WPPSS, became synonymous with mistakes and failure—morphed by the media to “Whoops.” The crisis, however, did not lesson the devotion of pronuclear Tri-Citians to nuclear power, their atomic identity, or pursuit of federally funded nuclear project at Hanford.

\textsuperscript{58} Nicholas K. Geranios, “Tri-Cities economy distressed,” \textit{Oregonian} April 4, 1989, CF.
\textsuperscript{59} Miller, \textit{Energy Northwest}, 380-381.
CONCLUSION

Plagued by massive cost overruns, antinuclear protests, construction delays, poor management, and ultimately the largest public bond default in United States history, WPPSS came to symbolize everything that was wrong with nuclear power development. The pronuclear Tri-Cities, however, fiercely defended WPPSS, nuclear power, and the community’s atomic culture against critics using means more often associated with the antinuclear movement.

As the previous chapter demonstrated, throughout the 1960s, Tri-Cities business leaders in partnership with the Tri-City Nuclear Industrial Council (TCNIC) promoted Hanford as the ideal location for regional nuclear power production. Nuclear power offered Hanford developers a way to recoup losses stemming from Hanford’s declining defense mission, utilize Hanford facilities, and maintain the area’s high-paid atomic work force. In the tradition started by the Manhattan Engineering District during World War II, TCNIC, Hanford workers, and Tri-City boosters viewed Mid-Columbia landscapes as ideally suited for nuclear facilities. While antinuclear groups in Western Washington and the nation began to see nuclear power as a serious threat to the environment and human quality of life, pronuclear Tri-Citians viewed nuclear development at Hanford as enhancing life on the Mid-Columbia, maintain both their atomic identity and community economic health.

For TCNIC and Hanford workers the reorientation of the site toward a future in nuclear power seemed a natural fit following the decline of weapons grade-plutonium
production. The AEC long supported and promoted the nation’s move toward nuclear power in an effort to highlight the peaceful atom and address the need to replace dwindling petroleum supplies. Positioned, as TCNIC argued, to supply the region’s energy needs pronuclear Tri-Citians, much like the MED and the AEC before, envisioned Mid-Columbia landscapes as the ideal location for nuclear production. The 1970s recession and energy crisis prompted Americans and Washington rate payers toward greater energy conservation and Northwest power needs turned out to be much lower than predicted. This coupled with growing grass-roots and national opposition to nuclear power, left the industry at a virtual standstill by 1980. In 1979 the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued only two reactor construction permits and issued none between 1980 and 2006.  

In 1986, as the next chapter argues, antinuclear politics in the state again motivated pronuclear Tri-Citians to action in defense of their nuclear way of life. While President Reagan called for renewed focus on nuclear power development, reheated old Cold War fears, and increases plutonium production, presidential support could not divert the changes already in motion for Hanford and the Tri-Cities. As the next chapter demonstrates, 1986 brought the climax of increasingly difficult times for the pronuclear community and ultimately helped usher in a new era of environmental remediation at Hanford.

---

Chapter Five

Proud of Hanford

On a cold and cloudy October afternoon in 1986 close to 1,000 demonstrators from both banks of the Columbia River gathered and held hands across the Interstate Bridge between Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, Washington. These protesters formed a human chain over the river to protest the Reagan administration’s designation of Hanford and its Basalt Waste Isolation Project (BWIP) as a finalist for a national high-level nuclear waste repository. Washington State Governor Booth Gardner (D) not only participated in the demonstration, but spoke to the crowd gathered on the Washington side before proceeding to the bridge. Gardner argued that the Department of Energy (DOE) chose Hanford as a waste repository site based on politics not sound science. He rallied the crowd saying that Washington and Oregon residents needed to stand together “to send a message to the Department of Energy and to the White House that the site-selection process is out of control, period.”

Meanwhile on the east side of the state, fed up with what they perceived as “Hanford-bashing” by liberal antinuclear western Washington, the newly formed pronuclear group, the Hanford Family, organized another human chain across the Columbia. Marilyn Borsik, group chairman, invited Hanford supporters to join the rally saying, “Ever wonder what happened to loyalty, motherhood, apple pie, baseball, hotdogs and patriotism? Well, all is not dead. We here at Hanford are

---

1 “Protesters link hands above Columbia River,” Seattle Times, October 27, 1986.
on a campaign to get these old values back. Join us at the cable bridge on Sunday.”

Over 2,000 Hanford supporters heeded Borski’s call and attended the counter protest on the cable bridge between Pasco and Kennewick, Washington.

Pronuclear Tri-Citians saw the increasing public voice and political power of antinuclear activists as a threat to their values and way of life. Once and important political and cultural voice, the community lost influence in the state and moved increasingly outside a shifting American polity on nuclear power. While motherhood, apple pie, baseball and nuclear waste seem an odd grouping, pronuclear activists in the Tri-Cities in 1986 understood a clear connection between “old fashioned” American values, nuclear power, and their work at Hanford. Using pronuclear Tri-Citians reaction to the statewide controversy over the DOE’s consideration of Hanford as a long-term high-level nuclear waste storage site as a case study and Tri-Cities reaction to DOE’s decision to close the Fast Flux test facility, this chapter shows how divisions over nuclear technology contributed to the state’s and nation’s growing political and cultural divide. This investigation of the community’s response to the waste repository provides a case study of the evolution of environmental opposition, and the role of nuclear experts in environmental politics and the growing division between Democrats and Republicans over nuclear technology. While the community’s reaction to the DOE’s decision to close

---

FFTF shows how Tri-Citians, who so strongly identified with federal nuclear
development power, grew disenchanted with the DOE despite their federally backed pay
checks.

SHIFTING NUCLEAR POLITICS

Shifting policy and attitude about nuclear technology in the state and in the nation
threatened the influence of the nuclear power industry and pronuclear Tri-Citians in the
late 1970s and early 1980s. As the antinuclear movement’s critique of nuclear technology
gained greater media attention and political power in the United States, nuclear
supporters found themselves and the nuclear industry increasingly marginalized.\(^5\) Over
the second half of the twentieth-century nationally, and in Washington state, nuclear
power polarized Americans. Like religion, abortion, and private property rights, nuclear
issues deepened the growing chasms between Republicans and Democrats, and, in the
case of Washington, between the western and eastern halves of the state.

By the late 1970s the U.S. antinuclear movement gained strength and a greater
public voice. The movement’s new strength stemmed in part from an alliance between
the antinuclear power environmental movement and antinuclear weapons activists.
Increasingly these two groups saw their goals as linked and worked together to prevent
nuclear proliferation more broadly characterizing nuclear power not just as an
environmental threat, but also as an energy source, more so than others, linked to the

\(^5\) Bert Useem and Mayer N. Zald, “From Pressure Group to Social Movement: Organizational Dilemmas of
the Effort to Promote Nuclear Power,” *Social Problems* 30, no. 2 (December 1982): 146.
possibility of catastrophic accidents and more susceptible to theft, sabotage, or blackmail. While both groups waged campaigns throughout the 1970s, the Three-Mile Island accident lent credibility to their arguments, raised the media profile of protesters, and attracted more Americans to the cause. Congressional and environmental groups’ investigation into the fate of military and civilian personnel exposed to radioactive fallout as part of nuclear testing in Nevada also generated greater public interest in nuclear issues. Some 80,000 servicemen and civilians testified to a 1978 House Subcommittee about their exposure to radiation in Nevada from 1951 to 1962. Following the investigation the Veterans Administration agreed to provide additional benefits to these servicemen estimating they risked a 7 percent higher than average cancer rate. Revelations that operators at a nuclear reprocessing facility in West Valley, New York dumped high-level waste into unlined trenches and contamination resulting from uranium mining and milling surfaced. Together these factors helped fuse consumer advocates dismayed with the high costs of nuclear power with the concerns of antinuclear environmentalists and peace activists. This broader base of support lent weight to lobbying efforts and public protests. By 1979 more than fifty city, county, and state governments passed regulations to restrict or ban the transport of nuclear material through their jurisdictions.  

Antinuclear sentiment across the nation and in the state steadily increased in the 1970s as more nuclear power plants broke ground. While the bulk of WPPSS’s problems

---

stemmed from poor management and economic problems, throughout the 1970s antinuclear protests, the rising costs of plant construction, increasingly strict state and federal safety and environmental regulations “seriously undercut the industry’s economic viability.” Increasingly, to industry supporters it seemed the antinuclear movement gained traction, especially in the court of public opinion and led nuclear power supporters across the nation to mount pronuclear campaigns.

In the mid-1970s, a pronuclear movement emerged at both the industry level and within local communities as a response to the antinuclear movement which seriously challenged the nuclear industry’s lobby’s influence over nuclear energy policy. The pronuclear movement emerged at both the community and corporate level. While not a grass-roots social movement, pronuclear advocates defended and promoted nuclear technology utilizing tactics outside legislative and administrative arenas, used civil disobedience, and garnered media attention in much the same way as a social movement. Groups formed within the nuclear industry tended to concentrate their efforts on educating the public about nuclear power and countered negative portrayals of nuclear power in the media, while community groups mounted demonstrations, attended hearings, and mobilized support through friendship, kinship, and labor union networks. The general public largely absorbs information about environmental issues from the media, which tends to concentrate on dramatic events, like nuclear accidents and

---

7 Useem and Zald, “From Pressure Group to Social Movement,” 146.
8 Ibid., 144-145.
demonstrations. Thus, nuclear supporters began to understand that to win a greater voice in public policy they needed effective public relations programs and demonstrations to attract media attention to their cause.

Utility companies, atomic trade associations, and nuclear design and construction firms funded and sponsored the industry’s pronuclear efforts. In 1975 the Westinghouse Corporation established a “Nuclear Information Program” to promote nuclear power. Westinghouse’ “Campus America” speakers featured prominently in the curriculum. Campus America speakers, comprised of Westinghouse nuclear engineers, worked a regular work load for the company and volunteered for two or three two-week debating tours a year. While the company did not pay the engineers for the speaking tours, the speakers received the typical company travel allowance while on the road. Westinghouse recruited young engineers who looked liked college students to the program. Thus, speakers tended to be in their twenties and thirties and appeared at debates in casual and relatable dress. In 1980 the well-spoken and beautiful Ann Pauley, sister of television journalist Jane Pauley, toured with Campus America and epitomized the type of engineers Westinghouse preferred for the program. Campus America volunteers, despite facing sometimes hostile audiences and the verbal attacks of antinuclear protesters, fared well in their debates, even those against heavy hitting nuclear critics like the Union of Concerned Scientists and Ralph Nader.11

---

9 Hays, Environmental Politics, 3.
10 Useem and Zald, “From Pressure Group to Social Movement,” 148.
Armed with their experiences as nuclear engineers, youthful charm, and company sponsored debate training, Campus America speakers traveled the nation starting in the mid-1970s. Even after the Three Mile Island accident, Campus America Speakers targeted what they believed the weak link in the antinuclear power argument, the lack of cost effective and risk–free energy sources. These speakers typically noted that critics unfairly scrutinized nuclear power while accepting the risks of other energy source. For example, Campus America speakers pointed out that the Office of Technology Assessment attributed an estimated 48,000 deaths in 1975 to coal-fired plants, but noted that the accident at Three Mile Island would likely over time only add about 10 additional cancer deaths in the effected area. Speakers also argued that in its twenty-five years of development, nuclear power had not caused a single radiation fatality, while numbers of coal miners suffered from black lung disease. Campus America debaters did acknowledge the risks of radiation exposure, they emphasized, however, that no energy source came without costs and tried to place the nuclear risk in perspective.\textsuperscript{12} Campus America speakers promoted nuclear power and noted the environmental and human heath risk, economic and economic costs of other energy sources and worked to show college students that the antinuclear movement unfairly targeted nuclear power, holding the industry to a higher standard of scrutiny than traditional energy sources such as coal.

Immediately following the accident at Three-Mile Island the nuclear power industry’s two major trade associations, the Atomic Industrial Forum and the Edison Electric Institute organized the Committee for Energy Awareness (CEA) to promote

\textsuperscript{12} Herman Nickel, “Talking Back to the Anti-Nukes,” 108-110.
nuclear power. CEA activities included a national news letter, an advertising campaign, and organizing meetings with news media editors to discuss nuclear issues. The CEA also sponsored the “Truth Squad” which sent two nuclear engineers to follow Jane Fonda and her husband Tom Hayden during their 1979 fifty-two city antinuclear tour. The Truth Squad attempted to engage Fonda and Hayden in debate. The two Hollywood antinuclear moguls refused to speak with them directly. The Truth Squad often gained press attention and equal air time to present their message with their attempt. Created by the same two public relations consultants, Jay Smith and Mark Harroff, the Truth Squad used similar arguments to Campus America speakers. The partners cut their public relations teeth after college working for the G.O.P. National Committee in 1971 and 1972 charged with mobilizing the college vote for Richard Nixon.

In the mid-1970s some community based efforts to promote nuclear power emerged to oppose grass-roots antinuclear groups. In 1975, a group of working-class women in Manchester, New Hampshire formed the New Hampshire Voice of Energy (NHVOE). The organization supported the construction of the highly contested Seabrook Nuclear Station. NHVOE founders worried about rising utility rates and believed the new nuclear plant would help stabilize energy costs in the region. The antinuclear Clamshell Alliance mounted a high-profile campaign against the Seabrook plant. On March 17, 1977, NHVOE countered with a pronuclear demonstration and captured national attention with a march through Manchester.

13 Useem and Zald, “From Pressure Group to Social Movement,” 147.
While the NHVOE sponsored the rally, the Manchester Local 131 Plumbers and Pipefitters union organized the event and construction trades and utility workers constituted the bulk of demonstrators. In 1977 NHVOE claimed 1,200 supporting members (mostly blue-collar) who supplied the group’s operating budget, although they also received some funding from the Public Service Company, the utility building the Seabrook plant. Between 3,000 and 4,000 pronuclear demonstrators attended the March rally. Speakers at the rally equated nuclear power with economic growth and freedom from foreign oil. Demonstrators at the rally carried signs that read “Working People Want Seabrook” and “Nuclear Power—Safer than Sex.” The demonstrators marched along Manchester’s main street and through the old mill town’s working class neighborhoods. A spokesman for the Public Service Company at the rally clarified to reporters that the utility company had not paid for the rally, but offered support saying, “It is good to see the silent majority being heard.” New Hampshire’s governor also attended that rally and spoke in support of the nuclear plant. Speakers at the rally generally critiqued the media attention garnered by antinuclear activist and labeled environmentalist wanting to halt nuclear power as “irrational” and “illogical.” Peter J. Brennan, United States Secretary of Labor 1973-1975, attended the protest and noted, “this country is being manipulated by a relatively small gang of environmental no-growth muggers.”15 Thus, antinuclear activists like Jane Fonda and the Clamshell alliance captured considerable media attention and catalyzed pronuclear advocacy at both the corporate and community level, as pronuclear

advocates identifying with the silent majority and corporate America saw antinuclear protesters as a New Left faction irrationally thwarting energy expansion and threatening their jobs.

In the mid-1970s nuclear power emerged as an increasingly divisive national political issue not just in the media, but also in national party politics. As antinuclear advocates moved into the Democratic Party mainstream and gained influence, nuclear power emerged as a growing partisan issue. In the post-war period through the mid-1970s, the Democratic Party platform championed nuclear power. Democratic support, however, shifted in 1976 as the party developed a new nuclear position to meet the demands of environmentalists within the party.\textsuperscript{16} Between 1960 and 1968 in matters of natural resources and energy the Democratic platform emphasized managed use and development. The 1960 the platform stated that Democrats “favor the best use of our natural resources, which generally means adoption of multi-purpose principles to achieve full development for all the many function they serve.” Not only did the party support further funding and support for atomic energy, but charged that Republicans had “stalled atomic energy development.”\textsuperscript{17} While the 1960 Republican Party platform did not specifically address atomic energy, party views on natural resources called for wise

\textsuperscript{16} Savage and Soron, “Organized Labor, Nuclear Power, and Environmental Justice,” 43.
conservation and development of national resources and, thus, differed little from the Democratic Party philosophy.  

In the mid-1960s, however, differences in environmental approach and nuclear energy emerged between the two parties. In 1964 and 1968 the Republican Party platforms gave little attention to energy, environment, or nuclear power. The 1964 and 1968 Democratic Party platform included significant discussion on the topics. Party policy continued to promote managed development of natural resources and boasted about Democratic support of atomic energy. The party platform noted that “the number of civilian nuclear power plants had increased from 3 to 14 since January 1961” and took credit for funding “the world’s largest atomic electric plant (at Hanford Washington).” The party also called for increased development in the nation’s river basins for electricity production, flood control, and wildlife management.  

In 1968 the Democratic Party’s position on natural resource use remained unchanged, although concerns about air and water pollution emerged. The party platform argued for finding balance between competing uses for the nation’s natural resources. The platform also expressed concerns about the nation’s energy supplies and continued to advocate for the development of nuclear technology. While the Republican platforms remained silent in 1964 and 1968

---

on energy and the environment, the Democratic platforms demonstrated an increasing importance of pollution, resource use, and the nation’s energy needs.

Over the course of the 1960s environmental concerns increasingly influenced national culture and public policy. Congress passed the Clean Air Act in 1963, the Endangered Species Act in 1966, and Stewart Brand published the first *Whole Earth Catalog* in 1968. In April 1970 the environmental movement thoroughly penetrated American culture with the First Earth Day, heralded as the birth of the modern environmental movement, 20 million Americans nation-wide participated in “teach-in” style protest designed to educate American about environmental issues. Just a few months later in July 1970 Congress established the Environmental Protection Agency to oversee national environmental policy.

Unsurprisingly, in the 1970s the Democratic Party platforms expressed greater concerns over energy and the environment. The 1972 Democratic platform argued that “the earth’s natural resources, once in abundant and seemingly unlimited supply, can no longer be taken for granted.” The platform noted that, “in particular, the United States is facing major change in the pattern of energy supply that will force us to reassess traditional policies.” While the party advocated for reconciling “the demand for energy with the demand to protect the environment,” they still favored nuclear power as part of the nations future and promoted “greater research and development, by both government and private industry, of unconventional energy sources, such as solar power, geothermal power, energy from water and a variety of nuclear possibilities to design breeder fission
and fusion techniques.” By 1976, however, the Democrat Party advocated strongly for energy conservation and characterized nuclear energy as a temporary necessity arguing that national reliance on nuclear power should be “kept to the minimum necessary to meet our needs.” The platform also called for stronger nuclear safety standards, greater openness with the public about nuclear’s “problems and dangers as well as its benefits” and indicated that “an increasing share of the nuclear research dollar must be invested in finding better solutions to the problems of nuclear waste disposal, reactor safety and nuclear safeguards.” In 1964 the Democratic Party boasted about its role in helping to fund the Hanford Generating plant, but by 1976 the party platform argued that nuclear power’s risks should eliminate it as a long term solution to the nation’s energy needs.

In the 1970s, however, the Republican Party philosophies shifted little. The 1972 Republican Party platform continued to support nuclear power. The platform, while advocating for conservation and recycling, generally continued to argue for efficient and managed use of natural resources. Additionally, the platform expressed deep concern over domestic economic growth and national security. Thus, the platform argued for continued development of energy sources, including nuclear, to buoy domestic growth and prevent national dependency on foreign oil. The 1976 Republican Party platform indicated strong support for nuclear power’s usefulness and safety saying, “uranium

---

offers the best intermediate solution to America’s energy crisis. We support accelerated use of nuclear energy through processes that have been proven safe.” The Republican Party also demonstrated faith in the future of the technology saying, “government research on the use of nuclear energy will be expanded to include perfecting a long-term solution to the problems of nuclear waste. 24 Thus by the end of the 1970s, the Republican and Democratic parties grew further apart on nuclear energy.

In the wake of the Three-Mile Island accident in 1979 and the height of the energy crisis, the Democratic Party platform expressed an ever deepening concern for energy conservation and questioned nuclear power’s safety. In 1980, the party touted the benefits of energy conservation and advocated for further measures saying “we must make energy conservation out highest priority.” In 1980 the party again suggested that as the nation secured new energy sources for the future and continued to cut demand through conservation efforts that they would “retire nuclear power plants in an orderly manner” and mandated that dealing with nuclear waste become a top priority. The Democrats also argued that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) should not license any new plants until the nuclear industry fully implemented all the recommendations of the 1979 Kemeny Report. The report, created by the President’s Commission on the Accident at Three Mile Island, suggested an overhaul of organization and procedures at the nation’s nuclear plants. The platform also argued that the NRC should not allow existing plants to operate if unable to meet the reports standards. The

1980 Republican Party platform, however, in accordance with its presidential nominee Ronald Reagan, called for a rejuvenation of America and an end to the doctrine of energy shortages. Instead of further tightening the belt of national energy consumption, the Republicans called for energy expansion arguing “this disappointing cycle of shrinking energy prospects and expanding government regulation and meddling is wholly unnecessary. …This optimism stands in stark contrast to the grim predictions of the Democrats who have controlled Congress for the last 25 years.” The platform criticized many of the environmental regulations of the previous two decades and argued that “coal, gas, and nuclear fission offer the best intermediate solutions to America's energy needs. We support accelerated use of nuclear energy through technologies that have been proven efficient and safe.”

In 1960 nuclear power enjoyed bipartisan support, but by 1980 it emerged as a key partisan issue in the hardening divide between Democrats and Republicans.

Regional Republican and Democratic difference in support for environmental measures and nuclear power developed through the 1980s and 1990s as well. Regional difference broke down in clear economic terms with strong environmental support in regions supported by service and technology economies with “older, producer-based attitudes and values” and low environmental support in regions dependent on older extractive economies with “newer, consumer based values.”

In the West, this difference manifested as a generally Democratic leaning urban West Coast versus a Republican

---


26 Hays, Environmental Politics, 187.
leaning rural interior West. In Washington state environmental politics followed this urban versus rural pattern and tended to bisect the state east to west. This pattern also suggests that despite their eastern Washington location, the more urban, educated, technology workers in the Tri-Cities would likely lean the left. In the West, however, political support tends to hinge on local issues and Tri-Citians pronuclear world-view placed them squarely in the Republican antienvironmental camp along with farmers and ranchers in rural eastern Washington. As the previous chapter shows, these divisions manifested in the Tri-Cities early in the 1980s surrounding the Washington Public Power Supply System crisis and western Washington based opposition to nuclear power. Long before the 2000 presidential election popularized a vision of America separated culturally and politically by red and blue states, Washington’s residents by the 1980s perceived their state as divided along an east-west axis, most popularly termed the “Cascade Curtain.” Symbolized by the Cascade Mountains which geographically bisect the state, the Cascade Curtain encapsulates the east-west, conservative-liberal divide Washingtonians imagined in their state. A divide sardonically described by journalist Dominic Black as “a coastal side and an inland side, a wet side and a dry side, a blue side and red side, a tree hugging, Prius driving, salmon loving, granola eating side; and a gun toting, deer hunting, Jesus loving, red-neck side.”

---

Contrary to this ingrained cultural and political division represented by the Cascade Curtain, throughout much of the Cold War, Tri-Citians shared a great deal in common with their fellow Washingtonians on the west side in Puget Sound. Both areas, like many others in the modern U.S. West, relied heavily on the nation’s defense budget to fuel local and regional economic growth. By the 1980s, however, the friendly military-civilian relationship began to shift in some parts of western Washington. This change, for example, affected Seattle’s long standing relationship with the U.S. Navy. As Seattle’s economy diversified hosting new naval facilities seemed more burden than boom for the city. Additionally, residents all over the Puget Sound region experienced the angst of urban growth. Many residents sought to reserve some landscapes from the development, while others grew leery of the nuclear Navy’s potential radiations hazards. Some Seattleites and other Puget Sound resident’s lobbied for managed undeveloped landscapes over new Navy facilities and defense money to secure regional quality of life rather than unlimited growth.

Development from federal military dollars and support for nuclear power traditionally enjoyed state-wide bi-partisan support. Like within the national Democratic

---

30 Roger W. Lotchin, *Fortress California 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002) looks at the development of this civilian-military relationship as it evolved in California. Lotchin demonstrated that far from having military installation imposed on or located by chance in California cities, local politicians and boosters actively pursued military spending and installations in their cities. In what he terms the “metropolitan-military” complex, Lotchin describes how California’s competed for these dollars, used them to fuel growth, and shaped urban landscapes to satisfy the needs of their federal benefactors.

31 Brian Casserly, “Securing the Sound: The Evolution of Civilian-Military Relations in the Puget Sound Area, 1891-1984,” University of Washington Dissertation, 2007 traces this changing relationship in Puget Sound. While some of the anti-military sentiments that evolved during this time were antinuclear specific, Casserly demonstrated that most opposition to new Navel facilities were less anti-military than the “not in my backyard” type. He does, however, track an increasing antinuclear sentiment through the 1980s.
and Republican parties, however, as some voters in Washington allied to a greater degree with the philosophies of the modern environmental movement, Democratic state officials and politicians sought to gain office, keep voters happy, and align with evolving environmental sensibilities of Washington voters. This phenomenon particularly manifested in the urban, service based, more populous Puget Sound region giving the environmental movement a greater influence over state policy and within the state’s congressional delegation. The Tri-Cities, however, remained culturally and economically dependent on federal dollars in the 1980s and did not feel the pressures of overextended urban growth or manifest allegiance to the ideas of the modern environmental movement. The largely pronuclear Tri-Cities did not view nuclear power or industrial development as a threat to their local environment or quality of life, quite the opposite in fact. Growth in nuclear power, the continued flow of inexpensive Northwest energy, and nuclear related jobs maintained and boosted the quality of life for Tri-Citians in the view of Hanford supporters. “In other areas progress, unfortunately, has meant deterioration in quality of life. That hasn’t happened here,” argued Glenn Lee, Tri-City Herald publisher. “The Tri-Cities has found that the atom is, indeed, ‘clean’,” he extolled. “Land that supported only jack rabbits and sagebrush now abounds with seepage ponds and reservoirs and irrigated farms and ducks, pheasants, geese, trout and bass.” Pronuclear Tri-Citians and their agricultural neighbors continued to see the Mid-Columbia, much like the Priest Rapid Valley orchardists and Manhattan Engineering District before them as a desert, barren but always potentially fruitful with human intervention. Development
in the Tri-Cities in this view enhanced the areas natural qualities rather than detracting from them. The shift in American politics moved voters to identify with the environmental and nuclear policies of the new right. Thus, the Republican Party drew in pronuclear Tri-Citians with its emphasis on economic growth, strong national defense, and support of nuclear power.

Not only did the general shift in national environmental politics cause pronuclear Tri-Citians to lean right, eastern Washington Democrats felt that Westside environmentalist excluded them from the state’s Democratic Party. In the 1980 election, nuclear friendly Governor Dixy Lee Ray, a Democrat more by circumstance than ideology, failed to capture her party’s nomination to run for reelection. Ray viewed herself as a technical expert above all else, including party politics. Tri-Citians and Hanford workers embraced her technocratic identity, but it caused her considerable political problems. Ray promoted nuclear development in the state, ignored partisan politics, and tangled with the state’s most senior and respected hawkish Democrat, Warren G. Magnuson, who successfully blocked her nomination. While the issues between Ray and Magnuson were not grounded in nuclear power, when Washington Democrats shunned Ray, Tri-Citians interpreted the move as antinuclear. The Tri-Cities pronuclear community, as a result, felt unwelcome in the state’s Democratic Party that seemed more aligned with environmentalism and opposed to nuclear power.  

---

In 1986, antinuclear forces reached a critical mass. The Chernobyl Disaster, N Reactor investigations, DOE release of historic Hanford documents, and a statewide referendum to stop DOE’s nuclear waste facility siting process all brought intense scrutiny of Hanford, nuclear power, and the Tri-Cities’ atomic culture. The pronuclear community felt under siege by national nuclear critics and western Washington environmentalist. The Tri-Cities pronuclear community personalized Hanford and nuclear criticism. Ralph Wahlen, who worked at Hanford between 1943-1983, expressed this sentiment saying, “that’s what hurts me when these guys [Hanford critics] talk about it being a garbage dump. We put a lot of sweat into that place.” Wahlen and fellow workers, to his knowledge, followed all the nuclear regulations and safety procedures and thus felt personally offended by Hanford’s critics. The antinuclear movement’s message characterized Hanford as an ominous threat to the region and cast Hanford’s pronuclear managers, scientists, and engineers as sinister atomic secret keepers. This image stood in stark contrast to the community’s vision of themselves as World War II heroes and Cold War patriots, and of Hanford as an atomic frontier citadel providing protection and security to the region and nation. This intimate connection with their work at Hanford, perhaps even more than economics, provided the motivation for the Tri-Cities’

34 Hanford oral History Collection, “Ralph Wahlen: January 10, 1990, CREHST.
35 Brian Freer, “Atomic pioneers and environmental legacy at the Hanford Site,” The Canadian Review of Sociology 31.3 (August 1994) As environmental sociologist Brian Freer argued, and this chapter demonstrates, “the problem of nuclear waste is not only a scientific problem awaiting solutions in laboratories and in the field, it also represents a struggle over interpretations of the past and strategies of the future.” Nuclear waste in Freer’s analysis becomes a historical artifact of sorts. Nuclear waste, to its Hanford’s cold war patriots, became a battleground for Tri-City heritage and identity. When western Washington activists, environmentalist, and Downwinders opposed the nuclear waste repository and characterized Hanford as toxic and dangerous, they unwittingly recast the Hanford narrative in a way that threatened the community’s identity.
pronuclear community’s antienvironmental leanings, sometimes mystifying defense of nuclear waste, and the wellspring of their conservative politics.36

Over the 1970s, as public outcry over nuclear and other environmental issues increase, corporate and community pronuclear groups emerged to counter growing antinuclear protests and federal regulation. Nuclear power policy increasingly became a partisan issue. Democrats emerged as champions of environmental policy and critics of nuclear power, while Republicans sponsored continued nuclear reliance and criticized the economic effects of environmental regulation. As the antinuclear movement’s critique of nuclear technology gained greater media attention and political power in the United States, nuclear supporters found themselves and the nuclear industry increasingly marginalized.37 Over the second half of the twentieth-century nationally, regionally, and in Washington state nuclear power like religion, abortion, and property rights polarized Americans deepening the Republican-Democrat divide.

36 Hays, Environmental Politics, 109-121. Hays describes two primary sources of environmental opposition one that is rooted in contemporary economic issues and another that “involves the defense of older economic, social, and political cultures that are deeply rooted in the American past and for whom new environmental values represent a threat to the old.” The second source he describes is largely associated with farming and extractive industries like mining, lumbering, and raw material processing such as iron or steel. Environmental historians linked these roots to the environmental opposition expressed by the “wise use” movement firmly based in the U.S. West. While the environmental opposition exerted by the chemical industry represents a contemporary economic concern. This opposition, largely confined within the chemical industry, possessed little popular support. Toxic chemical manufactures battled environmentalists’ charges and government regulation by marshalling scientific support of their position and thus protecting the industry. The pronuclear community surrounding Hanford blends elements of both the chemical industry opposition and the attempted maintenance of old values similar to extractive industries.

37 Useem and Zald, “From Pressure Group to Social Movement,”146.
NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE

Despite their disappointments over WPPSS’ failures, shifting party politics, and the divisive Cascade Curtain, pronuclear Tri-Citians remained hopeful that the Department of Energy (DOE) might award Hanford a new important long-term federal mission, hosting a national repository for high-level nuclear waste. By the 1980s, the nuclear industry viewed high-level nuclear waste disposal as one of its most critical problems and a handicap to initiatives for new nuclear power plants.  

In addition to existing waste, President Ronald Reagan’s renewed emphasis on nuclear energy growth and weapons production promised to expand the waste problem brewing since World War II.

In the urgency to produce an atomic weapon for the war effort, Manhattan Project leaders adopted temporary measures for dealing with nuclear waste. Manhattan Project sites operated under the assumption that atomic industrial by-products would be treated more efficiently later. The temporary waste storage measures continued into the early Cold War period. When the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) assumed control of the nation’s nuclear programs in 1947, the agency initiated waste disposal and radiation exposure standards based on available scientific inquiries about the dangers of human radiation exposure and environmental safety. Critics, however, charged that the AEC and its scientists and engineers, always more concerned with defense production than safety,

38 Max S. Powers, America’s Nuclear Wastelands: Politics, Accountability, and Cleanup (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2008), 41-44. Powers provides a clear and concise definition of nuclear waste designation. Powers explains that high level waste is defined by source not origin, not as the name implies, by concentration of radionuclides. This is waste resulting from the dissolution of spent nuclear fuel to extract plutonium or uranium, spent nuclear fuel from commercial reactors is also included in this category.

calculatingly overexposed the people and landscapes adjacent to AEC facilities and failed to deal properly with waste materials. At early Cold War Hanford, AEC scientist and engineers pioneered and developed waste management strategies and radiation standards. While state of the art, AEC researchers and managers based radiation exposure and waste management policies on existing industrial safety standards and within the light of its auxiliary mission to promote peaceful uses of the atom and manage public fear of nuclear technologies. Thus AEC procedures centered on worker protection and offered little defense for people and landscapes beyond Hanford’s barricades.40

While the AEC clearly attempted to develop waste management protocols and safety standards, the agency functioned under a conflicted mandate that rendered its efforts problematic.41 In 1975, in part seeking to address this problem and admits the environmental reform policies of the era, Congress disbanded the AEC and created the Energy Research and Development Agency (ERDA, DOE predecessor) and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), splitting the AEC’s development and regulatory functions between the two agencies. In 1947 Congress charged the AEC with both atomic development and self-regulation and the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 further complicated the agency’s already bipolar mission. With this legislation, Congress made the AEC responsible for encouraging private nuclear power development and regulating the fledging industry. Balancing development, weapons production, and regulation motivated the AEC to present information to the public in a non-threatening way and downplay

potential hazards. At Hanford, the AEC’s quest for security and good public relations resulted in the nation’s most contaminated nuclear site and myriad of human and environmental health problems. AEC secrecy and security also penetrated Tri-Cities atomic culture rendering it very difficult for Hanford’s engineers and scientist and pronuclear Tri-Citians to acknowledge the nuclear industry’s mistakes. The AEC’s all encompassing mission allowed the agency to operate with almost no outside oversight for close to thirty years. In dividing the AEC into the ERDA and NRC congress introduced formal federal oversight over nuclear development for the first time.

The ERDA and later DOE, even with NRC oversight, made little head way on the nuclear waste problem which Reagan’s renewed emphasis on nuclear defense and atomic power threatened to expand.  

In 1982 Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act in order to force action on permanent waste disposal. The Hanford boosters and pronuclear Tri-Citians viewed this as a boon knowing DOE already considered Hanford a potential repository site. The Nuclear Waste Policy Act outlined a timetable and plan for the location of two deep geological repositories to contain the nation’s high level waste for at least 10,000 years. The act initially called for two repository sites, one in the eastern and one in the western United States. With this plan, Congress attempted to more equally divide the toxic burden of America’s nuclear programs that traditionally fell heavier on the West. However, while DOE studied several sites in the eastern part of the country,

---

42 Promoters of nuclear-fuel recycling technology suggest that this technology created a virtually closed cycle for nuclear fuel and thus greatly reduced the amount of high-level waste.
eastern states under consideration mounted an intense opposition and successfully deterred repository siting. Congress and DOE turned their attention to finding a single western location.

Like the Manhattan Engineering District in 1943, DOE envisioned the Hanford landscapes as isolated, empty wastelands perfect for the long-term storage of volatile nuclear waste. The DOE, with its Basalt Waste Isolation Project (BWIP), identified the Mid-Columbia, with its dry climate, vast basalt rock formations, experience handling nuclear waste, and atomic friendly community as a promising location for a high-level waste storage. Ultimately, much to pronuclear Tri-Citians’ delight, in 1984 the DOE approved Hanford as one of three finalists for the deep-geologic waste storage facility.\(^{44}\)

The repository siting, however, escalated tensions between the Tri-Cities and western Washington intensifying the Cascade Curtain divide. The increasing political and cultural chasm between the Tri-Cities’ pronuclear community and western Washington antinuclear environmentalists split wide open in 1986. While the WPPSS criticism earlier in the decade stemmed largely from the agency’s economic failures rather than an environmental critique of nuclear power, environmentalism emerged as the force behind the antirepository movement. Pronuclear Tri-Citians, however, interpreted repository opposition in the state as anti-Hanford and fiercely defended repository siting, Hanford operations, and their atomic heritage. While the WPPSS crisis in the early 1980 signaled the death of TCNIC’s nuclear park dreams and much of the Tri-Cities generated

\(^{44}\)Powers, America’s Nuclear Wastelands, 55.
pronuclear response came from among Hanford’s blue collar workers, the events of 1986 heralded fundamental changes to Hanford and DOE operations that seriously threatened atomic community identity in the Tri-Cities and counter protests came to a greater degree from Hanford’s scientists and engineers.

By the Mid-1980s Hanford officials faced mounting criticism from environmental groups in the state and a growing group of Hanford Downwinders. In February 1986, Mike Lawrence, DOE Hanford manager, decided to release some 19,000 declassified Hanford documents to the public. Lawrence hoped to initiate a new openness between DOE Hanford and the public. Lawrence believed that DOE and the nuclear industry could renew public acceptance of nuclear technology through frank education about nuclear’s risks and rewards and by lifting the veil of secrecy that long shrouded Hanford operations. Lawrence assumed the documents would boost Hanford’s reputation and demonstrate that facility posed no significant threat to human and environmental health. The documents, however, failed to clear Hanford’s reputation and ultimately revealed the full extent of historic radiation releases at the site. Instead of creating greater public trust, the documents provided Hanford critics with more reasons not to take DOE at its word and doubt the agency’s ability to honestly assess Hanford as a repository site.

With Hanford criticism mounting, in April 1986 the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant near Pripyat, Ukraine (Ukrainian Soviet Social Republic) suffered a cataclysmic failure resulting in one of the industry’s worst accidents.45 Quickly following the disaster,

---

45 The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) classifies nuclear events by a seven level scale. IAEA calls events classified at levels 1-3 “incidents” and considers events at levels 4–7 as “accidents.”
allegations surfaced that Hanford’s N Reactor, because of some design similarities to Chernobyl’s reactors, might cause a similar type of catastrophe. Chernobyl catapulted Hanford and the N Reactor into the national spotlight and initiated intense scrutiny by the media, public, and within the DOE. Mike Lawrence remembered the Chernobyl disaster as “probably the single most riveting event,” during his time at Hanford.

Chernobyl raised serious global-wide concerns as experts and the public watched the incident play out from afar and speculated about the accident’s potential to irreversibly damage human and environmental health. Unable to freely travel to Soviet Russia, in the days following Chernobyl the media descended like a swarm of bees on the Tri-Cities eager for a look at N Reactor and to assess the safety of American nuclear power.

Lawrence astutely realized that the media frenzy occurred at Hanford in part because, “the only thing that they could get to was Hanford and the N Reactor. We had people here in droves,” he said. Initially DOE ordered Lawrence to not talk to the press.

Lawrence, however, convinced his superiors in Washington D.C. that cooperating with the media would yield a more positive outcome. Lawrence arranged for a bus and transported the assembled reporters out to Hanford and into N Reactor. Lawrence believed this resulted in much more positive stories, since the press could see the reactor’s containment and security systems for themselves. Unlike the document release, Lawrence’s openness immediately benefited DOE and Hanford. Not only did N

---


Hanford Oral History Collection, “Mike Lawrence,” March 28, 1996, CRHEST.
Reactor survive the media onslaught, the reactor also, thanks to the early Reagan era upgrades, stood up under the scientific scrutiny and reviews following Chernobyl. The ageing reactor, however, needed further expensive upgrades to continue operating safely and this, along with a greatly diminished need for plutonium by 1987, kept the plant closed.

The fiasco surrounding the document release and Chernobyl related frenzy at Hanford led Lawrence to remember 1986 as “a God-awful year.” In May 1986, however, the “God awful year” finally brought some good news. DOE announced Hanford’s Basalt Waste Isolation Project (BWIP) as one of three final candidates for the deep-geologic high-level nuclear waste storage facility that Congress mandated with the 1982 Nuclear Waste Policy Act. BWIP and DOE site selection, however, became a major point of contention between the Tri-Cities’ pronuclear community and Washington state’s antinuclear environmentalists. The battle over the waste repository furthered pronuclear Tri-Citians beliefs that liberal western Washington attempted to dictate policy and regulate the development of Hanford and eastern Washington. The fight over the repository strengthened pronuclear Tri-Citians belief in the Cascade Curtain divide and colored the last half of 1986 in the Tri-Cities. Contention and controversy manifested at all three western finalist repository sites. Residents worried about the potential risks,

---

47 N-Reactor was the last of nine plutonium production reactors built at Hanford. N-Reactor was a dual purpose reactor producing both plutonium and electricity. It was the only reactor of its kind in the nation. More information can be found about N-Reactor and other Hanford facilities at the Department of Energy Hanford website www.hanford.gov/page.cfm/NReactor.

48 Hanford Cultural and Historic Resources Program, Hanford Site Historic District, 1.74-1.75.

49 Hanford Oral History Collection, “Mike Lawrence.”
questioned the evolving scientific data about the sites, analyzed the politics of the site selection process, and weighed the economic benefits and potential risks of hosting the nation’s high level waste. The Nuclear Waste Act and growing public demand for openness forced DOE to allow a wide array of stakeholders a voice in the site selection process. While in previous decades the Atomic Energy Commission and local businessmen could simply agree to site a nuclear facility at Hanford, DOE now answered to the American public and voters across Washington state. DOE and pronuclear Tri-Citians encountered great difficulty convincing the state to consider hosting the repository in the wake of the declassified documents’ revelations. Outside the Tri-Cities, anti-repository factions grew increasingly vocal throughout the year and the public often viewed DOE officials as untrustworthy.

In fall 1986, the waste repository issue reached critical mass in the state. In October Hanford critics moved to stop DOE’s BWIP site study with Referendum 40. The referendum pitted western Washington environmentalists against Tri-Cities’ nuclear advocates in a political and public opinion battle over nuclear technology, Hanford’s future, and Tri-Cities atomic heritage. Pronuclear Tri-Citians characterized repository opposition as “Hanford-bashing” and yet another attack on the nuclear industry, their atomic identity, and evidence of western Washington liberals trying to control eastern Washington’s business. Appearing on Washington’s 1986 fall ballot, the referendum asked voters, “Should state officials continue challenges to the federal selection process for a high level nuclear waste repository and shall a means be provided for voter

---

disapproval of any Washington site?” A yes vote for the referendum equated a no vote on the repository, and as Hanford supporters argued, a no vote for Hanford and the future of nuclear energy.51

Referendum 40 backers characterized their position as against DOE’s site selection process not Hanford. The repository conflict primarily played out between pronuclear advocates in the Tri-Cities and Heart of America Northwest and Washington Public Interest Research Group (WashPIRG). Heart of America Northwest founder and WashPIRG attorney, Gerald Pollett, authored the referendum. Repository critics charged that the DOE’s selection of Hanford as a finalist for the repository was scientifically unsound and politically motivated. Further, Referendum 40 supporters characterized their displeasure over site selection as an eastern versus western United States matter, not an eastern versus western Washington issue. Referendum 40 supporters charged that DOE and Congress acted unfairly in discontinuing the search for an eastern site. Pronuclear Tri-Citians, however, viewed the anti-repository campaign as decidedly anti-Hanford and a case of western Washington dictating policy to eastern Washington.

In fall 1986, proposition 40 advocates and adversaries also carefully watched the campaign for Initiative 14 in Oregon in the fall 1986. If passed, Oregon’s Initiative 14 threatened to halt all nuclear power plant operation in the state until the Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensed a permanent waste repository. The initiative endangered the Trojan Nuclear plant’s operations and power Trojan supplied to the Northwest

electrical grid. Washington voters and energy officials tracked the Oregon debate closely speculating that if Oregonians passed the measure it might spark a similar initiative in Washington. Additionally, a shut-down of Trojan might pressure Northwest energy producers to push for completion of mothballed Washington Public Power Supply System’s nuclear plants in Washington.\textsuperscript{52}

The Hanford Family, along with the Tri-City Development Council (TRIDEC, formerly TCNIC), emerged as the primary voices in opposition to Referendum 40 and Hanford critics in the Tri-Cities. The Hanford Family formed in October 1986. This pronuclear group spontaneously organized around a group of Hanford professionals who wanted to combat what they saw as misinformation disseminated by the media and groups like the Hanford Education Action League and Heart of American Northwest about Hanford and the nuclear industry. The small group photocopied flyers and distributed them at local shopping centers. The Hanford Family attracted about fifty supporters to the first meeting with their call for Tri-Citians to be “Proud of Hanford.”\textsuperscript{53} Hanford family coordinators identified the media, antinuclear groups, and anti-repository politicians as Hanford’s enemies and threats to Tri-Cities atomic identity. The Hanford Family provided pronuclear Tri-Citians an outlet for their anger over recent events, a way to organize, and a way to defend their atomic identity.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{53} D’Antonio, \textit{Atomic Harvest}, 198-201; and Cliff Groff (Hanford Family member), interview by author, May 20, 2011.
\textsuperscript{54} Gale Metcalf, “Hanford Family Ready to Present Case Statewide,” \textit{Tri-City Herald}, October 26, 1986; and D’ Antonio, \textit{Atomic Harvest}, 200-201.
Mike Fox, Hanford Family cofounder and president, provided much of the driving force for this organization. As a chemist with decades of nuclear experience, he personified the expert atomic professional on which the Tri-Cities built its heritage and identity. In 1986 Fox worked for Rockwell-Hanford’s waste management office. Fox grew up in Olympia, WA and received a B.S. in Mathematics and Chemistry from St. Martins College in Lacey, WA. In 1965, he earned a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from the University of Washington. Following his doctoral work, Fox served as a Professor of Chemistry at Idaho State University and worked at the Idaho National Lab near Idaho Falls, ID. Fox moved to Richland in the early 1970s to work at Hanford.55

In the years prior to 1986 Fox developed a passion for educating the public about nuclear technology. Fox undertook this cause after witnessing the national press’ response to the 1976 explosion in a plutonium finishing plant at Hanford. The incident seriously contaminated nuclear operator Harold McCluskey but posed no widespread human or environmental danger.56 The media coverage surrounding the event, however, frustrated Fox. The press and the general public seemed to think the accident equated to a nuclear bomb detonating over Richland. The McCluskey incident highlighted to Fox that the general public, influenced by the media, understood little about nuclear technology and atomic processes. Similarly to Lawrence, Fox believed the public needed knowledge

55 Mike Fox CV, undated, The Hanford Family Papers, CREHST Museum, Richland, Washington; the program from Mike Fox’s memorial services November 18, 2011 (donated to the author by Ron Kathren).
56 On August 30, 1976 Harold McCluskey, a 64 year old chemical operator for Atlantic Richfield Hanford, was showered with nitric acid, shards of contaminated glass, and the largest dose of americium-241 ever recorded. The accident happened as McCluskey was working with materials in a glove box at Hanford’s Z Plant. This was the worst case of accidental contamination in Hanford’s history.
in order to conquer their nuclear fears and thus understand and accept nuclear power. After the McCluskey incident, Fox, with slide show and Geiger counter at the ready, spoke in classrooms and to professional and civic organizations educating the public about nuclear safety and radiation in everyday life.\textsuperscript{57}

The media and antinuclear response to Mike Lawrence’s document release, the Chernobyl disaster, and the waste repository controversy, like the McCluskey incident spurred Fox to again take action in defense of Hanford and nuclear power. Fox and his Hanford Family cohorts’ message was no only ardently pronuclear, but highly critical of the press and environmental organizations, as well as in favor of strong national security particularly in regards to energy policy and remaining ever watchful of the Soviet Union. Fox and the Hanford Family argued for an energy policy deeply rooted in national security. Reliance on nuclear power production, Fox contended, freed the nation from the subjugation of foreign oil producers. Additionally, Hanford Family members often cited statistics demonstrating the oil industry’s dangerous working conditions and record of environmental contamination. Along with energy security, the Hanford Family supported strong national defense. Fox argued that as long as the Soviets remained fully armed, the United States must maintain nuclear weapon stockpiles and production capabilities. In his Op-ed essays, correspondence, and speeches Fox warned that continued reliance on foreign oil placed the nation’s economy and security in grave peril. He called for nuclear power development to help shore up the nation and argued for easing of the regulations he blamed for strangling the industry saying, “not one nuclear power plant has been

\textsuperscript{57} Michael D’Antonio, \textit{Atomic Harvest}, 198-201.
ordered since 1978, primarily because an arcane licensing system and ballooning regulations that make it impossible for nuclear to compete in utility markets. 

…Streamlining nuclear licensing and standard plant designs could cut billions in construction costs and help restore nuclear’s competitiveness.” 58 Thus, Fox contended the nuclear industry’s economic problems stemmed not from the inherent high cost of construction, but from the expensive maze of government imposed industry regulations, demonstrating growing frustration with nuclear’s federal patrons. Fox also levied considerable criticism at antinuclear groups and the media charging that vocal antinuclear groups disseminated self-serving “preliminary, incomplete, and sometimes incorrect information” to the public and news media. Fox expressed particular ire over reporting on Chernobyl charging “the antinuclear groups used every tactic and every aspect that they could turn to their advantage to create fear, to create mistrust, to create misunderstanding, and to renew their assaults upon Nuclear Energy Programs in the United States.” 59 At the core of Fox’s philosophies resided the belief that antinuclear groups and the news media had created a poor image of nuclear power through a constant steam of misinformation. As nuclear experts, Fox and the Hanford Family continually worked to convey that the benefits of nuclear outweighed its hazards, that all energy sources harbored risks, and to redeem the reputation of nuclear energy that they believed the media unfairly damaged.

58 Mike Fox, “We Are Headed For Another Energy Debacle Without Political Changes,” April 29, 1987, Hanford Family Papers (hereafter HFP), CREHST.
Fox seemed to heed the call by Dixy Lee Ray earlier in the decade for scientists to get involved politically in order to save the industry.

Much like the founders of POWER who led the WPPPSS protests detailed in the previous chapter, the Hanford Family adopted the civil disobedience tactics of antinuclear protesters and provide pronuclear Tri-Citians directions on how to be activists. At the Hanford Family’s first meeting, Fox encouraged attendees to read Saul Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* and adopt the proven methods outlined in the book. Alinsky, often described as the founder of modern community organization, constructed *Rules for Radicals* based in his experiences as an activist and communist fellow traveler who devoted himself to helping poor, working class, and African-American communities. *Rules for Radicals* provided a blueprint for grass-roots activism for ordinary people to gain a public voice and political power. The Hanford Family’s adoption and endorsement of *Rules for Radicals* not only suggest the group’s intentions to adopt the tactics of their enemies, but also that organizers viewed themselves as a powerless minority seeking a public voice and political power.

Hanford Family leaders made countering the media’s and antinuclear groups’ inaccurate portrayals of Hanford and the nuclear industry, characterized as “Hanford-bashing,” their primary activity. Utilizing their nuclear technical expertise, Hanford Family members labored to track and evaluate Hanford media depictions and provide rebuttals or positive press for Hanford and the nuclear industry. The group’s mission to

---

distribute the facts and counter what they characterized as the half-truths and propaganda of the media and antinuclear activists primarily manifested in their letter writing campaign to civic groups, the DOE, local and regional newspapers, antinuclear groups, and politically important individuals. “If these people are going to be dispersing information about Hanford, it would be helpful if they had some factual information,” one Hanford Family member complained to DOE about antinuclear advocates, they should be invited to tour Hanford and be provided with information and “with facts about Hanford and the possible repository.”

“Our organization is designed to inform and educate the public concerning the safe production of nuclear power and safe storage of nuclear waste.” Hanford family members believed the press in part responsible for public fears of nuclear power arguing that the uneducated public easily swayed by sensational media stories and therefore less receptive to their own more complicated but factual message. “Nuclear technology is not simple, its very complexity makes education of the public on this subject very difficult indeed,” wrote group member Marshal W. Cook in response to a request for information about the safety of nuclear reactors. He went on to note that part of the problem stemmed from the fact that “people just don’t want to be bothered with complicated ideas,” but assured his reader his twenty-five years in the nuclear field provided him with a clear understanding of nuclear processes, he saw

---

62 S.H. Leroy (member of the Hanford Family) to the DOE Richland Operations Office, November 12, 1986, HFP, CREHST.
63 Hanford Family to Henry N. Wagner (John Hopkins Medical Institute Division of Nuclear Medicine and Radiation Health Sciences), April 15, 1987, HFP, CREHST.
“no reason to be concerned about nuclear accidents at Hanford.” As this letter shows, Hanford Family members worked to use their expertise and experience to reassure the public that the nuclear industry was safe and counter the media’s and antinuclear activists’ claims to the contrary.

While the “Hanford-bashing” label applied to a broad range of actions and beliefs of the opposition, the terms use and the Hanford Family’s “Proud of Hanford” slogan reflects the deeply personal way pro-nuclear Tri-Citians responded to anti-repository efforts. Hanford supporters believed the anti-repository factions threatened not only the future of nuclear power but Tri-Cities’ economy, identity, history, and way of life. Like other Tri-Citians and Hanford workers, the Hanford Family viewed the Referendum 40 campaign and opposition to the high-level nuclear waste repository not as a siting issue or a fight against the eastern United States, but as antinuclear, anti-Hanford, and a battle with western Washington.

The Hanford Family remained active from fall 1986 to spring 1989. They maintained and operated the Hanford Family Center, located in a storefront on Richland’s main thoroughfare, and supported group activities primarily through membership dues and selling “Proud of Hanford” baseball caps, bumper stickers, and buttons, as well as donations. Along with their support for BWIP, the Hanford Family also campaigned to prevent the shut down of N Reactor, to save the Fast Flux Test

---

64 Marshal W. Cook (Hanford Family member) to Ronald Roylance, May 4, 1987, HFP, CREHST.
Facility, and supported the conversion of the uncompleted WPPSS WPN1 to defense production.

The first highly visible pronuclear protest the Hanford Family organized was the Cable Bridge rally in response to the Portland-Vancouver human chain over the Columbia to protest the repository. On a Sunday afternoon just days before the Referendum 40 vote and with portable televisions in tow so no one would miss the Seahawks game, Hanford Family members and other Hanford supporters gathered in force. The pronuclear crowd carried placards that reinforced the Hanford Family’s philosophies and mission. Demonstrators’ signs included slogans such as: “If you don’t work at Hanford you’re a safety risk,” “The Tri-Cities is a safe place to live,” “Nuclear industry safer than farming or logging,” and “Nuclear power is the future.” Even one canine protester got into the action wearing a sign that read, “Nuclear power is man’s best friend.” While DOE Hanford manager Mike Lawrence attended the rally only to show support for the cause, other local dignitaries addressed the enthusiastic crowd. Jim Watts, leader in the Oil Chemical and Atomic Worker’s Richland local, represented the voice of labor at the rally and encouraged the crowd to vote no on Referendum 40. He received the most fervent response from the crowd, however, when he expressed, “We are tired of being dictated to by the knee-jerk reactionaries from the west side who wouldn’t know a fact if they were sitting next to it.” The crowd’s ovation demonstrated their belief that Westside media and environmentalists attempted to unfairly dictate Hanford and nuclear policy. Neal Shulman, Richland City Manager, also received cheers from the crowd when
he said, “Our voices are going to be louder. …We speak with knowledge. We speak with pride. We are the voice of energy. We are progress. We are the future, and we are proud of Hanford.” Shulman’s speech appealed to the demonstrators’ notions that their nuclear knowledge and experience, as well as direct interest in Hanford placed them in the superior position to make decisions about nuclear waste and energy, and Hanford development.

While Referendum 40 supporters denied pronuclear Tri-Citians’ allegations of Hanford bashing, some of their advertising suggested otherwise. WashPIRG distributed yard signs in western Washington with the slogan “Please Fight Hanford, Vote Yes on Referendum 40.” Pronuclear Tri-Citians found the signs offensive and proof that Referendum 40 supporters not only opposed DOE site selection but Hanford more broadly. Even some Referendum 40 supporters, like Governor Booth Gardner and state senator Ted Bottiger (D-Tacoma), contended WashPIRG’s signs lacked tact. The “Yes on Referendum 40 Committee” director, Mike Todd characterized the signs as “very disappointing” and noted that WashPIRG and the committee did not collaborate on the signs. Gerry Pollet and Teri Van Loon, WashPIRG University of Washington campus coordinator, both defended the signs. Pollet explained that WasPIRG choose the sign’s design and slogan, created by a six-year-old girl, for their simplicity. Loon argued that WashPIRG created the signs for “Seattle people” with little regard for Tri-City approval. Loon explained that “repository” was too long for yard signs and not catchy enough.

Pollet, however, noted that WashPIRG did consider Tri-Citians reaction to the sign and first considered using the word “dump” but felt the language likely to offend Tri-Citians. He also maintained that WashPIRG, unlike organizations such as Greenpeace, remained neutral on other Hanford issues. Despite Pollet’s attempts to explain and defend WashPIRG and the sign’s meaning, pronuclear supporters in the Tri-Cities viewed signs that declared “Please Fight Hanford,” understandably, as anti-Hanford.

Referendum 40 also garnered support from nationally recognized antinuclear advocates. While this helped referendum promoters, it also demonstrated to pronuclear Tri-Citians that the issue went deeper than repository siting. On a trip to Seattle for a speaking engagement in late October 1986, Ralph Nader endorsed Referendum 40 at a press conference. Although Nader noted that the scientific studies failed to support Hanford as a good choice the repository and that the courts would likely halt DOE attempts to site the repository in eastern Washington.

Along with the Hanford Family, long time Tri-Cities and Hanford boosters TRIDEC (formerly Tri-Cities Nuclear Development Council detailed in Chapter three) joined in the fight to counter “Hanford Bashing” and support site research for the waste repository. The council penned and ushered Proposition 1 on to the Benton and Franklin counties’ fall ballots to counter Referendum 40. It asked voters, “Should the Hanford site be the subject of further scientific study to determine whether it is safe and technically suitable as a high-level nuclear waste repository?” The measure’s authors believed that

---

Tri-Cities residents, as the most affected by the decision, should have biggest voice in repository siting and hoped the vote would demonstrate local support. Sam Volpentest, one of TRIDEC’s founders and long time Hanford and Tri-Cities lobbyist, described the situation saying, “The two counties more than everybody else should have the right to say if it ought to be studied. We don’t see why the people on the west side of the mountains should tell us what to do.” Volpentest reiterated the belief that Westside environmentalist tried to dictate eastern Washington issues and should stay out of Hanford business. The Richland City Council endorsed Proposition 1, while the Kennewick City Council membership split on the issue, and Pasco’s council rejected the measure in a 4-3 vote. The Southeastern Washington Building Trades Council, the Hanford Family, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 370, the local rotary, and several influential local businessmen all approved the measure.\(^69\)

While the Tri-Cities did not universally endorse Proposition 1 and BWIP, no local campaigning in favor of Proposition 40 emerged in the days before the election demonstrating general support for the waste repository at Hanford. The November 2, 1986 edition of the *Tri-City Herald* featured many letters to the editor on the repository issue and revealed that, at least among the more outspoken community members, Hanford support ran high. As the election drew near, these letters disclosed some of the ways area voters defined the battle over Referendum 40 and agreed with the Hanford

Family. At least one Richlander viewed the upcoming elections as not just a battle with the west side of the state over Hanford, but a battle with liberals and the Democratic Party more broadly. “Therefore, anyone from this area who votes for any Democratic candidate for state or national office in this election,” he warned, “is performing the economic equivalent of shooting oneself in the foot.”\(^{70}\) Charles Lindenmeir, another area resident, like the Hanford Family viewed the repository issue not as a disagreement over site selection, but as a Hanford-bashing “skirmish in the conflict between those who believe in nuclear power and the national security importance of Hanford and those who would shut it all down.” He characterized a no vote on Referendum 40 as a vote for nuclear power and national security.\(^{71}\) R.E. Gouge’s letter defined the vote as a matter of survival for the way of life Benton and Franklin county residents enjoyed. He used his editorial space to issue a stern warning to voters saying, “There are people controlling your lives who plan to take steps which will in effect wipe our area off the map. …Let’s show the rest of our state that we will fight to keep our jobs, our homes and communities. It’s only your life that’s on the line.”\(^{72}\) Despite the gravity of this issue to area residents, The Tri-City Herald published no letters that day in favor of Proposition 40. It seems likely that their absence represented community sentiment at large in the days before the vote.

Despite the Hanford Family’s efforts and the outpouring of Hanford support in the Tri-Cities Referendum 40 passed with an overwhelming statewide majority. Washington

---


State voters indicated their unease with the site selection process and turning their state into a national nuclear dump with an 82 percent favorable vote. Washington Governor Booth Gardner proclaimed the result a victory for the state and said “it sends a clear signal to the USDOE and people east of the Mississippi” that Washington residents demand “fairness, safety and scientific evidence in the nuclear-waste-siting decision.”

Benton County, home to Hanford, returned the only majority no vote—56.5 percent—on the measure. Proposition 1 faired even better, 79 percent of Benton County voters and 66.6 percent of Franklin County, location of Pasco, voters approved the measure and supported further study at Hanford to determine its suitability for high-level waste storage. While the elections results did not immediately affect Hanford operations, they did demonstrate the significant difference between local and state feeling on the repository and nuclear technology.

About a week after the election, Dixy Lee Ray, the irrepressible former Washington State governor and chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, visited Richland and gave a pep talk to members of the Hanford Family and Hanford managers. Sporting a “Proud of Hanford” baseball cap and an atomic energy symbol lapel pin, Ray urged the 600 diners gathered at the Rockwell National Management Association dinner to fight on for Hanford. In her speech that night, Ray praised the

---

73 As quoted by Elouise Schumacher, “What’s Next For the Foes of N-Dump at Hanford?,” *Seattle Times* November 5, 1986.
Hanford Family calling their cable bridge demonstration “a heart warming level headed response to a hysterical situation,” a comment that no doubt reaffirmed the groups’ conservative sensibilities in the wake of their recent “radical” action. Ray’s presentation that night demonstrated not only her philosophy about nuclear energy, but showed a clear alignment with the goals and discourse of the Hanford activists. Ray single out west side media as an enemy of nuclear power. She specifically mentioned The Seattle Times and the Seattle-Post Intelligencer as key sources of Hanford-bashing and called for a boycott against the newspapers.76

In her speech Ray encouraged Hanford’s nuclear activists to continue to fight back despite their Referendum 40 failure. The Hanford Family and the Tri-Cities pronuclear community continued the struggle to maintain DOE operations at Hanford, defend their atomic identity, and combat their shrinking voice in state and national nuclear politics. In 1987 the DOE named Yucca Mountain, NV as the site for the nation’s high-level waste repository and stopped all work on Hanford’s BWIP. Denied a long-term future as the national nuclear waste dump pronuclear Tri-Citians and Hanford boosters actively worked to keep the Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF) and N Reactor operational. During the last years of the decade, however, the community’s ability to influence federal nuclear policy in their favor diminished causing bitter feelings toward the DOE and the federal government.

THE FIGHT FOR FFTF: OR HOW TRI-CITIANS LEARNED TO HATE DOE

In May 1989, DOE, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) signed the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order, better known as the Tri-Party Agreement. This agreement officially made Hanford’s mission environmental remediation and outlined a thirty year timetable at a cost of $57 billion for Hanford cleanup. The agreement ended Hanford’s federal production mission and the DOE’s and TRIDEC’s monopoly on Hanford development. The Tri-Party agreement not only involved the EPA and Ecology in Hanford decision making but created the Hanford Advisory Board. The board included a wide range of Hanford stakeholders including Native American tribal groups, business interests, the general public, and environmental groups. Organizations like Heart of America Northwest that pro-nuclear Tri-Citians fought in the Referendum 40 campaign gained a federally recognized voice in Hanford decision making. As environmental remediation began at the site, the fate of Hanford’s FFTF hung in the balance. With federal funds flowing for cleanup, the Hanford Advisory board reached consensus on most recommendation for the site. The future of FFTF, however, split the board along the Cascade Curtain divide. Hanford supporters and Tri-Citians accepted the inevitability of the remediation mission, but rebelled against all attempts to decommission FFTF. Despite Hanford’s new well funded mission, FFTF’s potential for nuclear production remained the community’s last active link to its atomic heritage. DOE’s attempts to decommission

---

77 Hanford Cultural and Historic Resources Program, Hanford Site Historic District, 1.76.
the facility supported by some members of the Hanford Advisory board left Tri-Citians feeling bitter and betrayed by their long time federal patrons.

In 1988 Tri-City residents, still recovering from the layoffs related to the Washington Public Power Supply System failure and the battle over Referendum 40, like in 1964, feared that Hanford might become an atomic ghost town.\(^{78}\) In 1987 DOE announced Yucca Mountain, NV as the site for the nation’s high-level nuclear waste and closed Hanford’s Basalt Waste Isolation Project (BWIP). Additionally, unwilling to fund costly improvements, DOE refused to restart N Reactor in 1987 and decommissioned the facility in 1989.\(^{79}\) Community leaders and Hanford workers panicked as local and regional media predicted the dire social and economic consequences as the Tri-Cities’ long and lucrative relationship with the nuclear industrial complex ended. Workers, like Kay Hulstrom of Kennewick, speculated about the future of their families, the community, and the nuclear site. Hulstrom, an eastern Washington native and mother of two, after failing to sell her home looked to secure a renter so she and her boys, Jason and Joshua, could join her husband in Salt Lake City. Larry Hulstrom, a mining engineer, took a position in Salt Lake after the layoffs at BWIP. The project’s closure caused about 1,200 job losses and Tri-Citians anticipated another 6,300 layoffs with N’s closure, and the cessation of all defense production by the mid-1990s. “It’s unfortunate they weren’t

---

\(^{78}\) Hanford closures and the accompanying rise in unemployment hit the Tri-Cities hard in the 1980s. The Tri-Cities workforce peaked at 76,000 in 1981 but fell to about 60,000 in 1984. This downturn followed the Washington Public Power Supply System default and the subsequent work stoppage on its two commercial reactors under construction at Hanford. The Tri-Cities recovered about 4,000 of these jobs by 1987. Nicholas K. Geranios, “Tri-Cities economy distressed,” *Oregonian* April 4, 1989, CF.

\(^{79}\) Hanford Cultural and Historic Resources Program, *Hanford Site Historic District*, 1.75
better prepared for the end of plutonium production; the ax has been hanging over that area for 20 years. This is not a community that has trouble with literacy, and if anyone could read the handwriting on the wall, it should have been them,” noted State Representative Dick Nelson (D-Seattle).80 “The Tri-Cities have more economic options than commonly recognized. But first the town has got to stop waiting for the nuclear gravy train to come back to the desert.”81 Tri-Citians weathered so many booms and busts at Hanford, and ups and down of the nuclear industry that the prospect that the production mission might really be over, stunned the still Hanford dependant community.

Tri-Cities’ civic and business leaders scrambled for a recovery plan and sought ways to maintain the area’s high-tech workforce. Community leaders particularly feared the possibility of a “brain drain.” They expected all defense production to end by the mid-1990s and with it “the Tri-Cities’ claim to having the Northwest’s highest concentration of Ph.D.s and scientists,” an assertion very important to community identity and the high-paid jobs that supported the Tri-Cities economy. Jerry White, Hanford’s Office of Special Projects director, predicted that the area’s engineers and would leave to pursue better work opportunities and called the potential brain drain “the scariest aspect” of the layoffs.82

---

On January 27, 1990 the *Tri-City Herald* reported that DOE planned to “pull the plug” on FFTF. While overall the 1990 DOE budget planned for a $600 million spending increase at Hanford and for steady employment levels, Tri-Cities business and civic leaders, as well as pronuclear activist expressed deep disappointment over DOE’s decision to close FFTF. Despite the economic boom brought by the new environmental remediation mission, DOE’s decision to phase out FFTF caused the pronuclear community’s outcry for primarily psychological reason. FFTF, as the last operational federal reactor at Hanford, became the pronuclear community’s line in the sand.

Business leaders and developers claimed that the DOE previously strongly suggested that the agency would utilize FFTF to produce Plutonium 238 for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and Department of Defense programs. Instead, the proposed budget allocated this production mission to the Savannah River Site, Hanford’s chief production rival in the nuclear complex. DOE argued cost effectiveness as the deciding factor in favor of Savannah River, despite the fact that DOE stood down all Savannah River reactors in 1988. Steeped in their atomic identity, pronuclear Tri-Citians found decommissioning FFTF unacceptable. Washington State legislators, the Hanford Family, TRIDEC, and the *Tri-City Herald* publisher all spoke out against DOE’s decision.

---

83 The proposed DOE budget provided significant funding for other Hanford projects, including increased funding for the Molecular Research Center and the Environmental Center For Excellence (from $23 million in the current fiscal year to $103 million by 1995). DOE also continued funding the waste vitrification plant expected to reach peak funding in 1993 at $221 million and then fall to $221 million by 1995. Les Blumenthal, “DOE Budget Sees No Future for FFTF,” *Tri-City Herald*, January 27, 1990.

84 Ibid.
Sid Morrison (R-Fourth District) expressed outrage over the decision and vowed to “fight it every step of the way.” Morrison strongly disagreed with DOE’s conclusion. He questioned how Savannah River’s aging reactors might more cost-effectively produce plutonium than FFTF, DOE’s most modern reactor. Morrison said little about the overall budget distribution, which provided considerable funds for Hanford. Although in his statement, Morrison reminded DOE that the agency owed the community cleanup money and that the FFTF closure suggested DOE officials were prone to ignore the agency’s obligations and promises. Morrison vowed to continue to press for FFTF’s use noting that DOE promised Hanford a continuing mission in the wake of N’s closure and now believed DOE reneged on that promise. “I am beyond disappointed,” said Morrison, “I’m fighting mad.” Norm Dicks (D-Sixth District) also expressed disappointment at DOE’s decision, but unlike Morrison stressed the positives for Hanford in the budget. While other critics believed DOE turned their backs on Hanford with the FFTF shutdown, Dicks argued that the budget showed a strong commitment to Hanford cleanup and developing Hanford as a research and development center for waste remediation. Tom Foley (D-Fifth District) supported Washington’s congressional delegations efforts to keep FFTF operational. The state’s senators also expressed their support for FFTF. Brock Adams

---

85 Norm Dicks, a “defense Democratic,” earlier in his career he served as a legislative and administrative assistant to Senator Warren G. Magnuson. The Sixth District is historically working class relying economically on timber, tourism, and the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

86 Tom Foley held the Fifth District Congressional seat from 1965-1995 and served as Speaker of the House 1989-1995. The Fifth District encompassed most of eastern Washington (including Spokane) and was more fluid in party support.
(D-Washington) called the FFTF decision a “serious mistake,” although DOE support of cleanup pleased Adams.  

The Hanford Family also expressed shock at DOE’s decision. The group planned a rally for January 27 to protest the DOE decision. Evoking atomic frontier imagery, the rally, dubbed “Operation High Noon,” took place at noon in Richland’s Howard Amon Park. Mustering the western analogy, Hanford Family vice president Cliff Groth called the meeting a “showdown” and told the *Tri-City Herald*, “It’s time for us to stand up and defend these facilities out here, especially FFTF.” The Hanford Family also organized a trip to Olympia to show their thanks for the state’s support of FFTF and capture the attention of western Washington media. “We want the entire Tri-Cities—not just Hanford workers, but everyone—to realize the significance of this. I think the Tri-Cities have taken more than its fair share of the losses,” Groth told the *Tri-City Herald.*  

Despite the cold winds, about 150 Hanford supporters attend the Hanford Family’s rally on Saturday. The nine speakers at the gathering condemned DOE’s announcement and extolled the facility. Mike Fox, Hanford Family president, noted that FFTF’s production of medical isotopes helped Americans fight cancer and heart disease. Denny Newland, Hanford nuclear engineer, argued for FFTF as the most modern and powerful test reactor in the world. Cliff Groth rallied the crowd asking “if they thought the Tri-Cities should stand idle while opponents such as Se. Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., and Sen. Strom Thurman, R-S.C., get their way,” to which the crowd gave an enthusiastic “No.” State Senator Max

---

87 Blumenthal, “DOE Budget Sees No Future for FFTF.”
Benitz (R-Prosser, chairman state Senate Energy Committee) attended the rally telling the crowd he stood “ready, willing, and able” to help. State Representative Shirley Hankins (R-Richland) also spoke urging Tri-Citians to put pressure on their congressional delegates through letters, phone calls, and telegrams. State Representative Jim Jessernig (D-Kennewick) expressed local bi-partisan support for FFTF and assured the crowd that both parties supported FFTF. “We’re going to send a message and continue to send a message,” said Jessernig, “We’re sick and tired of being jacked around by DOE.” Benton County Commissioner Sandi Strawn argued that the effort to save FFTF was not a selfish local one, but an effort to salvage a valuable nuclear research asset for the nation. The rally also drew support from the Pasco and Kennewick mayors, and the entire Richland City Council left their meeting to come to the park in a show of support.\(^{89}\) While western Washington and the media absorbed the bulk of pronuclear Tri-Citians’ ire in the waste repository dispute, this time Hanford supporters placed the blame for their troubles on the DOE.

The *Tri-City Herald* also came out strongly against DOE. Kelso Gillenwater, *Tri-City Herald* publisher (1981-1991), harshly criticized James Watkins, Secretary of Energy (1989-1993) and the DOE decision. Gillenwater called the agency “slovenly” and called the FFTF decision “cynical” and fundamentally political. Gillenwater expressed his skepticism that the Tri-Cities and Hanford should rest easy in DOE assurance for continued support for clean-up, since DOE’s recent history suggested that DOE dollars went toward “paying off your political friends and punishing your enemies that it is in

serving the nation’s interest.” Gillenwater argued that the FFTF decision represented part of a pattern that DOE subjected Hanford and the Tri-Cities to since the start of the Reagan era, first making promises to the community, soliciting their support, and culminating in pulling the rug out from underneath them. “As political demagogues labeled our community a ‘bomb factory’ and ridiculed our traditions and patriotism, Tri-Citians hung tough, doing their duty.” As a result, the Tri-Cities “paid a huge price” argued Gillenwater in loss of economic diversification from business locating in communities “with more wholesome images” and when the promised defense jobs quickly evaporated. First tritium production and now PU-238 contracts awarded to South Carolina. DOE, Gillenwater charged, “helped to create the “bomb factory’ image with their mishandling of plutonium production,” and to the Tri-Cities “image as a ‘waste dump’ by their repeated mishandling of national nuclear waste policy,” particularly DOE’s botched efforts to site a facility that resulted in “laying ruin to our community’s reputation.” Gillenwater argued that community, rightfully angry, should commit to ending “this cynical manipulation by political opportunists 3,000 miles away.”

Gillenwater placed the blame for the Tri-Cities last decade of woes squarely on the shoulders of DOE. He argued the agency’s policies degraded by politics rather than supported by sound science and economics. The Tri-Cities had “hung-tough,” performed their patriotic duty in the face a criticism for their beliefs, way of life, heritage, and support of nuclear technology, only to be abandoned by DOE. In the wake of the Tri-

Party agreement and DOE’s move toward environmental remediation, Hanford workers and Tri-Cities business leaders lost much of their former influence over Hanford Development. The Tri-Cities long benefited from DOE’s (and the AEC’s) practice of insuring the agency’s political friends received lucrative federal projects, but as Gillenwater harsh critique of the DOE clearly indicated, those days were over.

Despite the harsh words and accusation of betrayal, DOE did not immediately terminate FFTF. The battle between Hanford supports and the DOE over FFTF stretch into an ongoing war with a long series of altercations that science and technology writer John Abbott called “the long, slow death of the Fast Flux Reactor.” Pronuclear Tri-Citians, in fact, clung to an ill-fated project. Originally designed and constructed to support the nation’s demonstration breeder reactor in Clinch River, TN and scheduled for completion in 1972, Westinghouse Hanford finally completed the reactor in 1978 and it went critical in 1980. By the late 1970s, however, the breeder reactor program faced considerable challenges, including cost overruns and construction delays at Clinch River and Hanford. More importantly, critics of the program argued that shipping plutonium around the nation for use as reactor fuel posed potential environmental and national security dangers. President Carter closed the Clinch River project in 1977 and effectively placed breed reactor development on hold. President Reagan encouraged Congress to restart and fund these projects; however, in 1983 Congress ended the project. When FFTF went critical in 1980, the project DOE built it to support no longer existed. FFTF produced Plutonium 238 for NASA and tritium for nuclear research until 1993, when the
Energy Secretary ordered the reactor shut down. As detailed above, pronuclear Tri-Citians and Hanford supporters desperately lobbied to keep FFTF operating and, reminiscent of TCNIC in the 1960s, asked DOE to maintain the facility while they continued to diversify the economy and offset Hanford job losses. In 1995 Energy Secretary Hazel O’Leary placed the reactor on standby. Hanford supporters continued to lobby and boost for the facility suggesting the Tri-Cities as a cancer treatment center utilizing medical isotopes produced at FFTF and for tritium production.91

Neither DOE nor pronuclear Tri-Citians found a new mission for FFTF. Environmental representatives to the Hanford Advisory Board continued to recommend against using the facility for production believing it would detract from efforts to complete environmental remediation at the site. The combative reaction of Hanford supporters to the DOE decision to close FFTF in 1990, however, demonstrates a distinct shift in the Tri-Cities atomic identity and the significant decline in Hanford workers and the Tri-Cities’ business community’s nuclear political clout.

CONCLUSION

Pronuclear Tri-Citians reactions to the statewide controversy over DOE’s consideration of Hanford as a long-term high-level nuclear waste storage site and response to DOE’s decision to close the Fast Flux Test Facility show how divisions over nuclear technology contributed to the state’s and nation’s growing political and cultural divide. During the 1980s, in the U.S. West environmental division typically arose between urban, service

and technology based economies and more rural regions dependent on older extractive economies like agriculture and lumbering. Pronuclear Tri-Citians, however, despite the community’s well-educated population, more urbanized Tri-Cities, and constant quest to build high-tech industry, moved to the political right. Pronuclear Tri-Cities atomic identity and campaign to support an industry in decline, instead, aligned them to a greater degree with eastern Washington farmers, than Microsoft workers in Seattle.

Consequently, local level nuclear environmental politics played a role in deepening the divide between Republican and Democrats in the 1980s. While the community’s reaction to the DOE’s decision to close FFTF, I argue, explains how Tri-Citians, who so strongly supported federal nuclear programs, began to critique DOE policy despite their continued economic reliance on federally funded environmental remediation at the site.

The atom’s golden age, so dramatically begun at Hanford in 1943, came to an end and no pronuclear rallies or slogans by Hanford workers or Tri-City boosters could prevent its demise. Tri-Citians always feared that the end of nuclear production at the site would bring an end to their way of life. Hanford’s end threatened to turn the Tri-Cities into a ghost town, drive away its high-paid atomic work force, and render it a shadow of its former self. However, what the community so feared ultimately propelled Hanford to the forefront of a new era and continued strong economic growth. Cleaning-up Hanford, the nation’s most contaminated nuclear site, proved to be the kind of intellectual, scientific, and engineering challenge that Hanford’s World War II atomic pioneers and
Cold War patriots built their reputations on. Additionally, the federal funding for Hanford remediation continued to ensure the community’s healthy bottom line.
Conclusion

On June 2, 2013, Shannon Dininny, Associated Press, reported on a leaking waste tank at Hanford. The stainless steel tank in use since World War II contained enough radioactive waste to fill an Olympic-size swimming pool. The federal government, Dininny noted, failed “for nearly a quarter-century now, to rid Hanford once and for all of its worst hazard: 56 million gallons of toxic waste cached in aging underground tanks.” Dininny argued that “today Hanford’s legacy is less about what was made here than the environmental mess left behind.” The Manhattan Engineering District (MED) spent $400 million at Hanford to produce plutonium during World War II and by 2013 the federal government spent $36 billion on Hanford clean-up and estimated it would take another $115 billion to complete environmental remediation at the site.\(^1\) Dininny characterized Hanford’s environmental condition as the site’s primary legacy, restating the narrative of environmental decline that has dominated Hanford scholarship since the 1980s. Meanwhile, a group of Tri-Citians worked to memorialize the role Colonel Franklin T. Matthias played in building Hanford and in creating the modern Tri-Cities.

Karen Miles, force behind the Richland Historic Streets Project, and the American Veterans Post 397 commissioned Richland artists Michael B. Salazar to create a bust of Matthias. The group planed to manufacture two bronze busts, one for display at the Richland Library and the other at the historic B Reactor. Miles stated that Matthias “was the only one who never got any notoriety” and that the group wanted to give credit where

credit was due. Salazar said he hoped “the busts will educate younger generations about the colonel’s importance in Mid-Columbia history. Miles indicated that honoring Matthias was “something the whole Tri-Cities can take pride in.”\footnote{Sara Schilling, “Richland Group to Honor Man Who Built Hanford,” \textit{Tri-City Herald}, May 3, 2013.} In contrast to Dinning, Miles and her group perpetuated local atomic culture and the Manhattan Project victory narrative defining the project’s arrival on the Mid-Columbia as the pivotal event in creating the modern Tri-Cities.

Hanford’s two dominate historical narratives, the Manhattan Project victory narrative and the environmental story of decline, continue to compete for status as Hanford’s primary legacy. Hanford’s lessons and meanings, however, prove more complex than either narrative allows. This study, through an investigation of the collision points between these two historical interpretations, demonstrates some of Hanford’s other legacies. While the federal government’s effect on the U.S. West receives considerable academic attention, I argue that until the 1980s Hanford workers and pronuclear Tri-Citians, because of their important role in the nation’s nuclear weapons complex, significantly influenced the course of federal nuclear policy. Also, investigating the meeting places between Hanford’s two orthodox interpretation reveals the development of Tri-Citians atomic community identity, environmental opposition, and particular political leanings. Their chronicle reflects a larger trend toward a deeply partisan nuclear and environmental politics in the West and in the nation.

Between 1943 and 1989, nuclear supporters in the Tri-Cities and in the nation moved from the center to the outskirts of American politics and values. In 1943 the
MED’s arrival on the Mid-Columbia transformed the Lower Yakima and Priest Rapids valleys into a nuclear weapons complex hinterland intricately tied to national defense and nuclear science development policy. The MED altered the history, landscapes, built environment, and culture of the Mid-Columbia and ushered the United States and the world into the Atomic Age. Matthias’ selection of the Mid-Columbia for the MED’s plutonium production irrevocably transformed the Tri-Cities and continued to influence the culture and politics of its inhabitants far beyond World War II.

Despite modern Tri-Cities’ World War II MED origins, Richland’s citizen-workers and Tri-Cities business leaders shaped the postwar community and exerted significant influence over Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) policy. In 1947 AEC assumed control of the nation’s nuclear weapons program, Hanford, and the responsibility to ensure worker morale, high plutonium output, and maintain atomic secrecy. The AEC’s desire to sustain a contented and productive work force at Hanford ultimately gave Richland’s citizen-workers considerable say in AEC community policy. In the 1950s, AEC officials moved to rid the agency of community management and privatize the nation’s atomic cities (Richland, Oak Ridge, and Los Alamos). The AEC, unable to force Richland’s citizen-workers to purchase homes and invest in their city, needed to maintain a contented Hanford workforce and plutonium output and acceded to most of the community’s demands during privatization. Richland’s citizen-workers embellished, used, and reinforced their atomic identity, the Manhattan Project victory
narrative, and important role within the nuclear weapons complex to negotiate community subsidies and low housing prices from the AEC.

Following early Cold War driven expansion at Hanford and the privatization of Richland, Tri-Cities business leaders assumed a greater stake in Hanford development and maintaining the area’s well-paid atomic workforce. In the 1964 the federal government reduced weapons-grade plutonium production and the AEC moved to decommission the bulk of Hanford’s aging and increasingly obsolete reactors. Working primarily through the Tri-Cities Nuclear Industrial Council (TCNIC), business leaders lobbied for Hanford at the state and federal level in order to protect their investments and prevent the Tri-Cities from becoming atomic ghost towns. Despite their clear self-interests, lack of atomic expertise, and self-appointed status, the state and federal government sanctioned TCNIC as the voice of the Tri-Cities. Acting as the representatives of Tri-Citians and the public interest to the AEC, the state, and federal government Tri-Cities business leaders with the help of influential state politicians successfully lobbied the federal government to maintain Hanford operations and slow the pace of reactor closures at the site.

In much the same way that the Richland-Hanford creation narrative suggested that the Manhattan Project found the perfect location for plutonium production on the Columbia Basin in 1942, TCNIC envisioned Hanford and its workers as destined for a future in nuclear power. With Hanford’s federal military mission fading, TCNIC promoted Hanford as a nuclear power complex to regional power planners. As part of a
plan to increase thermal generated energy in the state, power planners authorized the Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS) to construct power generating reactors at Hanford and in Satsop, Washington. WPPSS’s efforts, however, resulted in catastrophic economic failure and catalyzed the state’s antinuclear movement and as a result, reinforced the growing divisions between liberal western and conservative eastern Washington.

In 1986 the Tri-Cities’ pronuclear community clashed with antinuclear groups over the location of a high-level nuclear waste storage facility at Hanford. While most WPPSS criticism encompassed economics, in 1986 critique stemmed from environmental issues and not only questioned the DOE’s consideration of Hanford for the waste repository but also Tri-Cities support of DOE and the community’s atomic culture and values. Support for the Department of Energy (DOE), defense of nuclear technology, and allegiance to their Manhattan Project community identity launched Tri-Citians into the thick of the culture wars. Pronuclear Tri-Citians saw the increasing public voice and political power of antinuclear activists as a threat to their values and way of life. Once an important political force, Hanford and the community lost influence and found themselves increasingly outside a shifting American polity on nuclear power. State-wide opponents successfully thwarted Hanford’s designation as a waste repository. In the early 1990s DOE shifted Hanford’s primary mission to environmental remediation and moved to decommission all Hanford production facilities.
In the 1950s AEC advisors suggested that the Tri-Cities would not diversify away from federal funding unless forced. Hanford workers and business leaders, while working on diversification, until the late 1980s managed to keep Hanford’s federal production mission limping along. The switch to environmental remediation finally brought Hanford’s production mission to an end, but not Hanford’s reliance on federal money. In 2002 much of Washington state’s economy languished in recession, while the Tri-Cities boomed thanks to the federal environmental remediation budget at the site and the business community’s work toward greater economic diversification. Community leaders looked to advance Hanford and the Tri-Cities as “a hub for information-technology employment, tapping the progeny of Hanford’s impressive brain trust in a very nonnuclear way” and as “America’s home base for homeland security—a counterterrorism and terrorism-response headquarters that would train thousands of workers annually from around the world.” Sam Volpentest the 97 year-old co-founder of TRIDEC continued to lobby for the Tri-Cities and endorsed developing the Homeland Security mission. Other community leaders, however, believed that turning Hanford into Homeland Security hub would only continue federal dependence and looked instead to develop other high-tech business. The success enjoyed by Lockheed Martin Information Technology located in Richland generated considerable economic excitement. While 80 percent of the company’s businesses remained Hanford related in 2002 the company’s client list expanded beyond the Tri-Cities. Although company officials noted that IT work could be performed anywhere and that attracting workers to the Tri-Cities
continued to be a challenge “as some may be turned off by the slow pace and the desert
dust.” Company officials, thus, recruited heavily among the Tri-Cities well-educated
younger generation hoping to capture workers adjusted to the local landscape. In the early
1960s some 80 percent of local jobs depended on Hanford and in 2002 only 20 percent of
Tri-Cities jobs and one-third the area’s total payroll came directly from the site. In 2008,
Hanford’s prime contractors accounted for less than 8 percent of Benton and Franklin
county jobs, between 1970 and 1994 this average hovered at 16 percent. Also, despite
Hanford’s downsizing in the late 1990s, personal income in the area’s increased by 50
percent between 1999 and 2008. Employment and personal income in the Tri-Cities, long
tied to Hanford’s federal booms and busts, finally shifted and demonstrated that the Tri-
City’s economy final showed signs of “significant decoupling from Hanford.”

Tri-Cities’ atomic identity and legacy of hazardous waste, however, continued to
interact and play an active role in Hanford decisions making. In discussing the slow pace
of Hanford clean-up in 2013, Washington Governor Jay Inslee noted that, “one corner of
our country and my state acted as a stalwart during World War II and the Cold War and
did the right thing,” argued Inslee, “we want the federal government to fulfill its
obligation to our state.” Inslee, representative to the district where Hanford resides
before his stint as governor, clearly employed the Tri-Cities atomic identity that rests on
their World War II hero and Cold Warrior status, as justification for expecting the federal

4 Francis While, “Tri-Cities Economy Growing Beyond Hanford,” last modified July 2011, Pacific
5 Jay Inslee as quoted in Shannon Dininny, “Nuclear History Burdens Hanford.”
government to ensure clean-up. While state representatives and Tri-Citians repeatedly deployed their atomic community identity since 1943 to extract concession from the federal government and keep federal funds flowing to Hanford, the 2013 incarnation of this message expressed by Inslee expands atomic identity to also serve the goals of environmental groups in the state seeking to ensure site remediation. Inslee’s message reminded DOE and the federal government of their ongoing responsibility to the nuclear site, the Tri-Cities, and the state stemming from MED’s selection of the Mid-Columbia for World War II plutonium production. The 56 million gallons of volatile nuclear waste slowly leaking toward the Columbia River has not ensured steady and prompt progress on all aspects of the clean-up. Scientists and engineers working on remediation have faced considerable technical difficulties in designing and building facilities to manage Hanford’s waste. Additionally, the federal government terminated funding for Yucca Mountain in 2011 and the nation still struggles to decide the fate of long-term high-level waste storage. Throughout 2013 federal budget wrangling continually threatened remediation funds. While reconciling the two orthodox Hanford histories remains difficult, the two seemingly incompatible narratives have moved much closer together. Tri-Citians still celebrate the community’s Manhattan Project origins, but Hanford officials, local residents, and state politicians now use atomic community identity to secure funding for environmental remediation at Hanford.
Bibliography

Abbreviations

CREHST Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science and Technology Museum, Richland Washington
HIA Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University
MASC Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University
NARACP Nation Archives and Record Administration II, College Park, Maryland
USDOE United States Department of Energy Archives, Germantown, Maryland
UW Special Collection, University of Washington

Primary Sources

Manuscript Collections

Atomic Energy Commission Secretariat, Record Group 326, U.S. Department of Energy Archives Germantown, MD.

Atomic Energy Commission, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence, 1951-1968, Record Group 326, National Archives and Record Administration II, College Park, MD.

Dixy Lee Ray Papers, 1937-1982, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

Fred Clagett Papers, 1942-1982, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, WA.


Hanford Family Collection, Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science and Technology Museum, Richland, WA.

Hanford Oral History Collection, Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science and Technology Museum, Richland, WA.

Richland Collection, Richland Public Library, Richland, WA.
Newspapers and Periodicals

Hanford Project News  
Oregonian  
New York Times  
Richland Villager  
Science  
Seattle Post-Intelligencer  
Seattle Times  
Spokesman Review  
Tri-City Herald  
Times

Books, Interviews, and Memoirs


Web Sources


Secondary Sources


Relander, Click. *Drummers and Dreamers: the Story of Smowhala the Prophet and His Nephew Puck Hyah Toot, the Last Prophet of the Nearly Extinct River People, the last Wanapums*. Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1956.


265


Trafzer, Clifford E. and Margery Ann Beach, “Smohalla, the Washani, and Religion as Factor in Northwestern Indian History,” *American Indian Quarterly* 9, no.3 (Summer 1985): 309-324.


———. “This Current Weirdness in the West.” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 4-16.

