

# PC&E can't halt incineration at Vertac plant

## Vertac

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the incineration.

■ Carl Hickam of the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry said the agency would do a health study if new information was found.

■ Wicklund said he would post signs at Rocky Branch Creek warning residents of contamination.

The meeting was called by Greenpeace, the National Toxics Campaign and People Against a Chemically Contaminated Environment. Pat Costner, national research director of Greenpeace, presented research that she said showed that emissions from the Vertac incinerator would be unsafe.

The meeting, at Northside Junior High School, drew residents from Cabot and Tulsa, Okla. Officials from the state Health Department, state Rep. Mike Wilson of Jacksonville and some Jacksonville city officials also attended the meeting. Ken Smith, a representative of Gov. Bill Clinton's office, also attended.

Vertac Site Contractors, which built the incinerator and hired subcontractors with experience in hazardous waste incineration, has been stoking the burners for three

weeks in preparation for a trial burn to try to prove it can destroy the dioxin.

Wilson and government officials were jeered several times during the meeting. One woman shouted that Wilson was an Adolf Hitler. "We would buy the homes if they cannot be decontaminated or if it takes a long time to decontaminate them," Wicklund said.

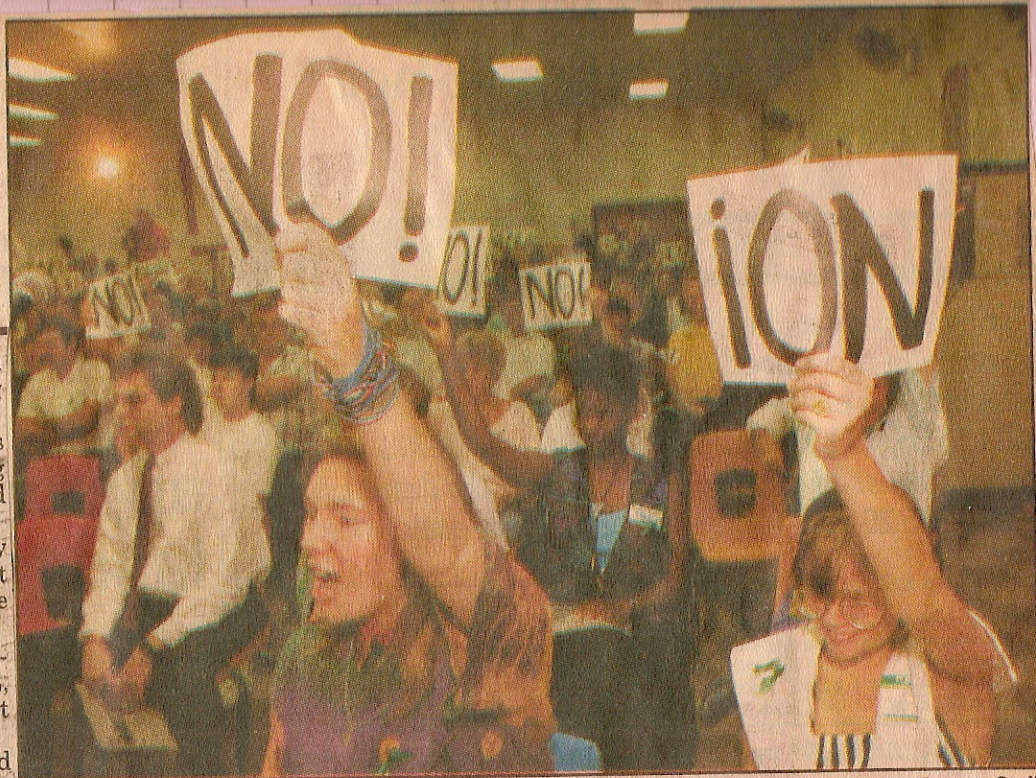
Hickam, responding to a question from Teri Bolding of PAACE, said the agency had never said that it would not do a health study.

"What I said was that we would never close the door," Hickam said. "If there is new information, that information will be evaluated by our physicians, our scientists in Atlanta, and the decision will be made," he said. "I cannot tell you that yes, we are gonna do one right away."

"Are you willing to accept that responsibility?" Bolding asked.

Cindy Westra, a member of PAACE and of an environmental group called Back to Nature, asked Wicklund if he would be willing to do an environmental impact study. Wicklund said the EPA wouldn't do an environmental impact study.

Westra brought a hawk to the meeting, which perched on the stage behind the podium. Westra said the hawk represented the animals that could not represent themselves.



Kelly Quinn/Gazette Staff

**SIGNS OF PROTESTS:** Stacy Mackey (left) and Margaret Sadler wave signs expressing their sentiment about the planned incineration of dioxin and other herbicide manufacturing waste at the Vertac plant site. They were among more than 300 people at a meeting Thursday night in Jacksonville.