The NEW YORK TIMES

**Japan**

The NEW YORK TIMES reported April 27, 1997 (pg. 10) that dioxins from trash incinerators have become an important public issue in Japan, which has 1850 operating incinerators.

The TIMES says that, in neighborhoods downwind from incinerators, independent scientists have reported infant deaths 40% to 70% higher than average. These claims have not been verified.

Even the U.S. Navy is complaining publicly that the U.S. base at Atsugi is being dangerously contaminated by a nearby garbage incinerator. More than 6600 Americans live within a kilometer (0.6 miles) of the incinerator. Rear Admiral Michael Haskins, the Navy's top commander in Japan, recently wrote Japanese officials saying, "People who reside or work at... Atsugi are breathing the poorest and the worst dioxin-polluted air in Japan" and "suffer damage to their health every day." Admiral Haskins told the INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE "The incinerator is my number one priority in Japan." (Japan: Massive unrest over dioxin contamination from trash incinerators," WASTE NOT #424, March 1998; And: "Japan --Part 2 of 2," WASTE NOT #425, March 1998.)

Japan burns 76% of its municipal solid waste. During the 1980s, proponents of incineration in the U.S. often pointed to Japanese incinerators as clean and safe. For example, in 1987, Allen Herskowitz wrote, "Japanese [incineration] workers spend 6 to 18 months learning how toxic chemicals are stabilized in the furnace and captured in the stack, and they must have an engineering degree and undergo on-site training.... Americans have much to learn from their overseas counterparts about handling solid waste without undue risk to human health." (Allen Herskowitz, "Burning Trash: How It Could Work," TECHNOLOGY REVIEW, July 1987, pgs. 26-34.)

At the time Herskowitz worked for Inform, Inc., a mainstream environmental organization that took the position that incineration could be made tolerably safe. This viewpoint did not prevail. Instead, the grass-roots environmental movement engaged in hand-to- hand combat with hundreds of proposed incinerators, killing 248 of them, thus crippling the U.S. incineration industry.

-- Lighthouse (lighthouse1999@yahoo.com), November 10, 1998.