

The San Francisco INVESTIGATOR

The newsletter for people who do not trust City Hall

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I CANNOT ACCEPT
YOUR CANON THAT
WE ARE TO JUDGE
POPE AND KING
UNLIKE OTHER MEN.
WITH A FAVORABLE
PRESUMPTION THAT
THEY DID NO WRONG.
IF THERE IS ANY
PRESUMPTION IT IS
THE OTHER WAY
AGAINST HOLDERS
OF POWER.
INCREASING AS THE
POWER INCREASES.
HISTORIC
RESPONSIBILITY HAS
TO MAKE WAY FOR
THE WANT OF LEGAL
RESPONSIBILITY.
POWER TENDS TO
CORRUPT AND
ABSOLUTE POWER
CORRUPTS
ABSOLUTELY. GREAT
MEN ARE ALMOST
ALWAYS BAD MEN.
EVEN WHEN THEY
EXERCISE INFLUENCE
AND NOT AUTHORITY.
STILL MORE WHEN
YOU SUPERADD THE
TENDENCY OR
CERTAINTY OF
CORRUPTION BY
AUTHORITY. THERE
IS NO WORSE HERESY
THAN THAT THE
OFFICE SANCTIFIES
THE HOLDER OF IT...
AND THAT THE END
JUSTIFIES THE MEANS.
HERE ARE THE
GREATER NAMES
COUPLED WITH THE
GREATER CRIMES.
YOU WOULD SPARE
THESE CRIMINALS,
FOR SOME
MYSTERIOUS REASON.
I WOULD HANG THEM
HIGH... FOR REASONS
OF OBVIOUS JUSTICE.
STILL MORE,
STILL HIGHER, FOR
THE SAKE OF
HISTORICAL SCIENCE.

Lord Acton,
The History of Liberty

Ralph, the Giant Slayer

GARBAGE COMPANY MEETS NEMESIS

Last spring, Norcal Waste Systems, Inc. was severely wounded in a major battle with neighbors from Little Hollywood, led by retired fire sprinkler installer Ralph Oroquita. San Francisco's major dailies remained deathly silent as David pounded Goliath. Little Hollywood's hard-fought victory was reported only in *The Grapevine*, a south-east San Francisco community newspaper.

The rest of the City never learned about the humiliating defeat of the giant garbage octopus at the hands of the common man. Let it now be known: Oroquita's stunning triumph saved San Franciscans \$80 million and will prolong the average life span of people who live near the Tunnel Avenue dump. Let it also be known that Norcal Waste Systems, Inc. has seriously fallen down on its job—jeopardizing the quality of our municipal waste removal system.

Norcal Waste Systems, Inc., is an "employee-owned" garbage conglomerate composed of over two dozen refuse collection and recycling companies. On June 25, 1997, Norcal formally withdrew an application to expand operations and to consolidate its scattered recycling facilities onto a single site within its 21-acre Tunnel Avenue dump, which butts up against San Francisco's border with Brisbane. This simple action constituted Norcal's surrender to the 1,400 resi-



Ralph Oroquita, with aerial reconnaissance photos of dump.

dents of Little Hollywood.

One reason Norcal applied to expand operations is a requirement of state law that San Francisco recycle fifty percent of our garbage by the year 2000. Accomplishing this goal requires change. Change must be certified as acceptable through the auspices of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Norcal was counting on the environmental review process to rubber-stamp the safety of its expansion; and to justify Norcal's intention to make ratepayers pick up the tab for its business costs.

Norcal's monopoly-sweetheart deal with City Hall means that Norcal never has to risk a dime, or suffer a financial loss. Norcal's inefficiencies are rewarded with regular rate increases. Even the \$3.8 million cost of

Norcal's withdrawn application was picked up by the ratepayers.

The research and analysis associated with the expensive application was a precursor to submitting a full-blown Environmental Impact Report. Norcal's preparations for achieving government approval of its expansion plan began in the late 1980s. An exhaustive EIR was required by the state, if Norcal was to expand the privately-owned garbage transfer station and hazardous materials collection facilities at the dump.

State law requires that San Francisco develop the capacity to sort and recycle fifty percent of our garbage by the end of year 2000; but, it is unlikely that the deadline will be met. In 1995, Norcal's newsletter, *Talking Trash*, reported that approxi-

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