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Book Reviews

Hanford Site Historic District: History of the Plutonium Production Facilities, 1943–1990. Columbus, OH: Battelle Press, 2003. 624 pp. \$47.50.

Roy E. Gephart. *Hanford: A Conversation about Nuclear Waste and Cleanup.* Columbus, OH: Battelle Press, 2003. 388 pp. \$34.95.

Reviewed by Robert S. Norris, Natural Resources Defense Council

The two books under review are unusual in several ways. Weighing in at almost six pounds, they are not for the faint of heart, and they deal with a subject that will not put them on the bestseller lists. Nevertheless they deserve our attention, for they help document a central activity of the Cold War arms race—plutonium production—and the troubling legacy it has left. The nine reactors at Hanford, Washington, produced 55 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium, sixty percent of the U.S. total. This plutonium went into tens of thousands of nuclear weapons of every conceivable variety from the first bomb tested at Trinity in July 1945, to the one that was dropped on Nagasaki three weeks later, to the modern MX and Trident missiles of recent years. The books graphically demonstrate that producing plutonium is a messy business. Approximately 245 million gallons of high-level waste was generated after 1945, and some 55 million gallons remains in Hanford's 177 storage tanks. Although a few of the newer tanks are less than twenty years old, some date to the Manhattan Project, and sixty-seven of the older ones are known or suspected to have leaked. Thus the question of what to do with this high-level waste (an amount that would cover a football field to a depth of 150 feet) is a controversial one with no easy solutions.

Hanford Site Historic District covers all aspects of plutonium production, not just the waste that resulted. The book provides informative chapters on how the reactors and the massive chemical separation plants were constructed and how the reactor fuel was manufactured, and it then follows in great detail the operating histories of the reactors and reprocessing plants. Other chapters are devoted to site security, military operations, worker health and safety, and waste management. Each chapter traces its topic chronologically from the Manhattan Project to the mid-1990s and concludes with suggested areas for further research.

The project to document Hanford's plutonium production was a collaborative effort by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the Washington State Historic Preservation Agency, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. It took five years and involved eleven authors. The impressive list of references and bibliography is fifty pages long and cites an extensive array of official and contractor documents. The handsome, oversize book has a large number of maps, photographs, graphics, and tables that help tell the story. The Hanford authors have done a superlative job, providing a wealth of information that will be used by historians, physicists, chemists, engineers, and environmental policy analysts as well as the interested public. Earlier drafts were put on the Hanford website with opportunities for experts and the public to comment and criticize. The final version is available for download at: (<http://www.hanford.gov/does/history/does/tl-77-1047/index.pdf>). It would be commend-

able if Oak Ridge were to undertake a similar effort to document, in a like manner, its equally important history of uranium enrichment.

Roy Gephart's *Hanford: A Conversation about Nuclear Waste and Cleanup* is quite a different book because it is one man's observations about what to do with Hanford's terrible legacy. Gephart calls the cleanup of Hanford's nuclear waste perhaps the largest environmental restoration project ever undertaken, and he is aware of the highly charged emotions that surround discussions about it. Can Hanford be cleaned up? Given the toxicity of the accumulated waste, Gephart cautions that the word *cleanup* should be qualified and that "stabilize" and "contain" are conceptually more accurate. A great deal of uncertainty exists about how much it will cost and how long it will take. A decade has passed since the effort began, and billions of dollars have been spent, with very little to show for it thus far.

Not only has progress been slow, but recently it appears that the DOE may be trying to walk away from its obligations under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act to clean up the high-level radioactive waste at Hanford and elsewhere. In a bureaucratic sleight-of-hand, the DOE attempted to have the high-level waste redesignated as "incidental waste." Redesignation would mean that large amounts of the waste could be abandoned in place rather than cleaned up. The maneuver was challenged legally, and in July 2003 a federal judge ruled that the proposed redesignation violated the law. With the ink hardly dry on the opinion, the DOE, further shirking its responsibilities, rushed to Capitol Hill to see whether it could get the law changed. The weakening political commitment by the current U.S. administration in dealing with this major environmental problem is most troubling but not surprising given its actions to reverse or relax other environmental laws.



Helen Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women's Organizations*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002. 220 pp. \$64.95.

Reviewed by Harriet Hyman Alonso, City College of New York, CUNY

Helen Laville's monograph emphasizes the relationship between some U.S. women's voluntary organizations and U.S. government policy during the early years of the Cold War. Focusing primarily on the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the League of Women Voters (LWV), the National Council of Women (NCW), and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (NFBPWC), Laville paints a portrait of middle- and upper-class, educated white women who appear to have had two agendas during the late 1940s and 1950s. First, they desired to help bring U.S.-style democracy and progress to the postwar world. Second, once the Cold War accelerated and anti-Communism became a central focus of U.S. political life, they started their programs to support governmental anti-Soviet propaganda. In both cases, the women openly embraced and even cooperated with the government in its international outreach.