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Incinerator 'Sale' Would Reduce Its

By JAMES BANDLER

Two years after its purchase by a group of local investors, the troubled Rutland incinerator is again available for sale, but owners say they don't expect anyone to buy it.

An official at the waste-to-energy facility said Thursday that a public offering of sale on June 2 would allow owners to shed millions of dollars in debts to the Industrial Bank of Japan.

"This is an exciting opportunity for us and the towns we plan to serve," said John Vihinen, the project manager for Vermont Integrated Waste Solutions, the company that plans to operate the incinerator. "It gets rid of our liabilities and future

debt. We win, and our customers win when we pass along the savings in terms of lower tipping fees."

Incinerator opponents, however, described the plan — which VIWS officials have called a "debt restructuring opportunity" — as a financial default.

"It's incredible doublespeak calling it debt-restructuring," said Joan Mulhern of the Vermont Public Interest Research Group. "It's as if someone looked out of the window, saw their car being repossessed and said, 'Look honey, a debt restructuring opportunity.'"

The Industrial Bank of Japan was the largest creditor of the former Vicon Energy Systems trash incinerator. The bank guaranteed more than \$37

million in bonds before the incinerator filed for bankruptcy in August 1988. The current owners, the Meridian Group, purchased the incinerator for \$2.9 million in 1990.

"They took a bath on this," Vihinen said of IBJ. "Now I think their preference is to close the book on it."

IBJ officials in New York would not comment on any aspect of the auction.

Under the terms of sale, Meridian agreed to pay IBJ \$3 million upon receipt of state permits and another \$3 million within 10 years of the plant's opening.

The purchase agreement also states that IBJ has

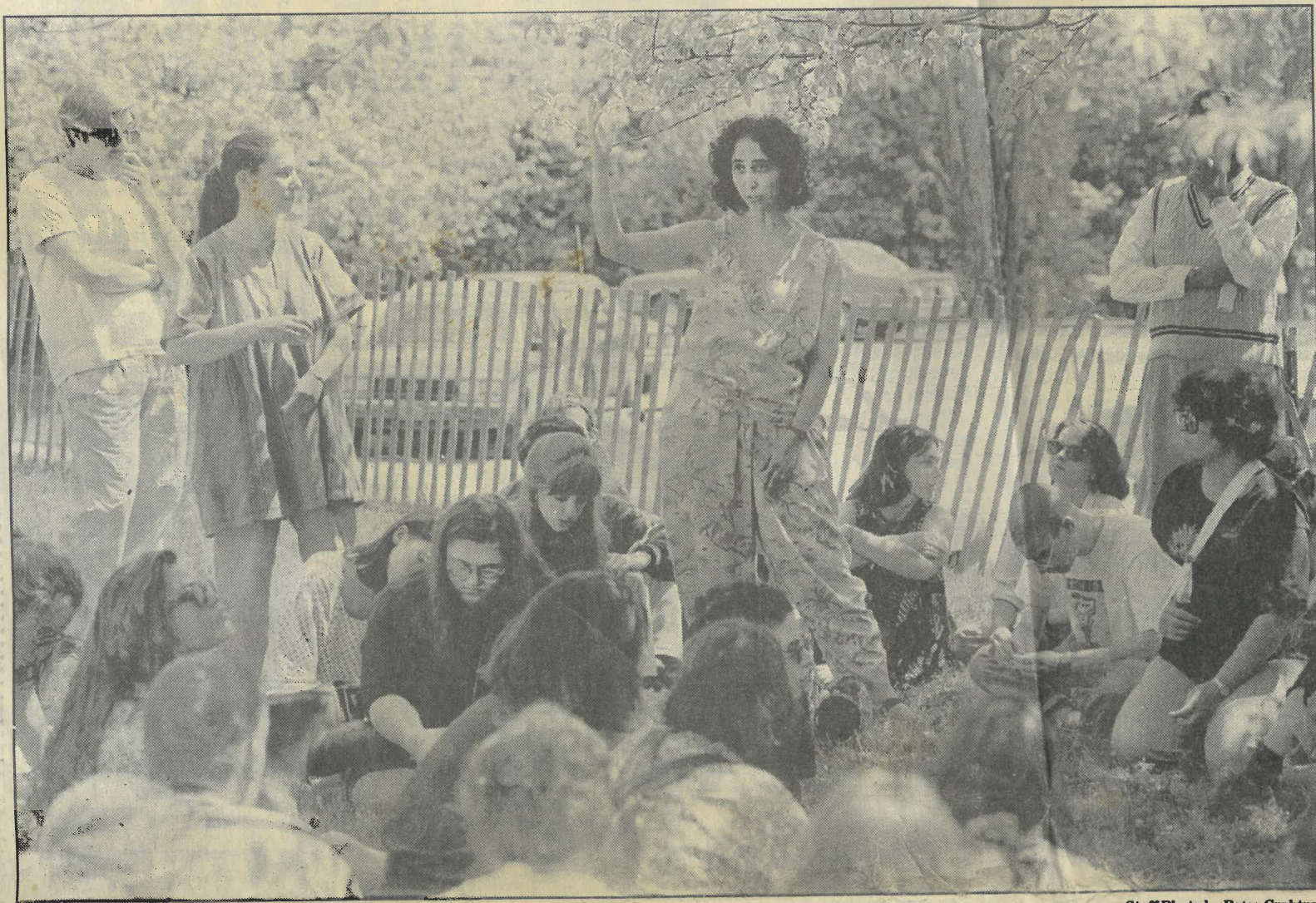
the right to require Meridian to assume its obligation to operate the incinerator "if Meridian fails to do so."

If VIWS is the buyer, the money owed to the bank could be "reduced or eliminated."

He said the decision to sell the incinerator was reached "months ago."

"They asked us to agree to it," he said.

Vihinen would not say whether the incinerator would be sold to the bank. (See Page 16)



Staff Photo by Peter Crabtree

Bennington College students and faculty discuss the takeover of the school's administration building Thursday.

Bennington Students Occupy Office

By PETER CRABTREE

BENNINGTON — Bennington College students occupied President Elizabeth Coleman's office for the second day Thursday, demanding the creation of a committee to air campus grievances.

Coleman met briefly with representatives of the estimated 60 strikers and refused to negotiate with them, according to a protester.

During a two-hour meeting attended by about 125 students and teachers, Dean of Faculty Susan Sgorbati warned that the occupation of the administration building threatened the future of the

liberal arts college, which has seen its enrollment plunge.

"I think potentially everybody at this college could lose their job," said Sgorbati. "We are still 50 students down for enrollment next year."

There are 485 students at Bennington. The Board of Trustees wants that to increase to 550 within four years.

The student protest stems in part from the trustees' decision to cut the equivalent of eight full-time faculty by 1993-94. That is necessary to help offset a projected \$1.5 million deficit, according to trustees.

Members of a faculty committee told students that they hoped to recommend Thursday that the cuts be achieved through attrition. While the task of finding jobs to cut was "a horrible, grueling thing ... we have come up with the most benign solution," Sgorbati said.

About 80 students took over offices in the administration building shortly after noon Wednesday. Students and security guards described the protest as peaceful. Faculty members, however, said a secretary had been forcibly removed from her office.

The college's phone lines were disrupted and computers shut down. Yet staff members in some offices continued to work Thursday while protesters read or chatted beside them.

Student spokesman Jason Kingsley said the protest went beyond anger at faculty cuts, which he charged were the result of "mismanagement by administrators."

Kingsley said the school's existing committee system had failed to represent all factions on campus and keep them informed.

(See Page 16: Bennington)

Violent Crime
Statistics
Tell WolkBy JACK HOFFMAN
Vermont Press Bureau

MONTPELIER — David S. Wolk, Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, warned last week that Vermont had been dangerously underfunding the state police and called for more support for law enforcement.

"Federal and state crime reports only corroborate what we already know in our daily encounters, and that is that we are enduring an exponential increase in crime, particularly violent crime in Vermont and across the country."

However, the statistics Wolk cited don't bear out his assertion.

Figures compiled by state and federal agencies show that both the number and the rate of violent crime in Vermont have remained relatively stable over the last decade.

Between 1984 and 1990, which is the period Wolk said he was addressing, the statistics show that violent crimes declined 10 percent.

There were 717 violent crimes reported in 1990. That was down from the peak of 914 reported in 1980. Included in that category were homicides, rapes, robberies and aggravated assaults.

According to the uniform crime reports compiled by the FBI, there were 179 violent crimes per 100,000 Vermonters in 1978 and 1979. In 1990, the rate had dropped to 129 per 100,000.

During the same period, the U.S. violent crime rate rose from 581 per 100,000 to 672 per 100,000.

Wolk acknowledged this week that there had not been an exponential increase in violent crime. However, he said he was disturbed by the increase in serious