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STATEMENT OF GREG COLERIDGE, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM, ON EPA PROPOSED CLEANUP OF IEL

EPA Region 5's proposed revised cleanup plan of the Industrial Excess Landfill (IEL) Superfund site in Uniontown, Ohio is a do-nothing proposal. The plan's main feature, called "Phytoremediation," is an experimental remedy (planting trees and shrubs) that EPA even admits it has little experience using at a Superfund site. That makes Uniontown, Ohio and its residents little more than guinea pigs. A better description of Phytoremediation for IEL is "Fido remediation" -- it's for the dogs.

EPA has an inherent conflict of interest and crisis in credibility concerning IEL. Numerous EPA staff have inherent biases of this site and a history of sloppy practices and incomplete testing and monitoring. Region 5 in-house labs were raided by the Justice Department a few years ago over possible criminal manipulation of data in favor of polluters at Superfund sites. Decision-making regarding any next steps should not be in their hands.

Nothing should be done at IEL until the USEPA Ombudsman, Robert Martin, is able to complete his investigation. AFSC, Concerned Citizens of Lake Township (CCLT) and Project on Government Oversight (POGO) recently asked US Senators DeWine, and Voinovich and US Representative Sawyer to call on EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman to block any action at IEL by EPA Region 5 until Martin can complete his IEL investigation. Unfortunately, at the moment Whitman is trying to abolish the Ombudsman office. Martin has sued Whitman. The trial is set for Friday, April 5.

EPA's plan for IEL capitulates to wishes of corporate polluters -- to save money. One of the corporate polluters at IEL faces millions of dollars in potential claims for exploding tires while another is dealing with a \$1 billion deficit in its pension fund.

EPA has been hijacked by corporate polluters. The fox is not simply guarding the hen house, it's in it, devouring the hens and then putting feathers on and trying to look like a hen. EPA doesn't represent the interest of the community but is a shield for the companies and whatever branch or branches of the US military that dumped radiation here.

EPA has also contributed to the coverup of the investigation of Charles Kittinger, former IEL owner-operator, who claims nuclear waste is buried at the site. Even the polluters raised serious concerns about the process of the federal investigation in a letter AFSC obtained in a Freedom of Information Act request.

Claims that there is "strong local interest in a remedy that would permit more flexible land use" is not borne out from our experiences. Recently begun door-to-door surveying we are organizing has found no one saying they want to see a park or homes built on that site. This sounds like nothing more than PR coming from Township officials and the Township-sponsored group.

AFSC is committed with CCLT to pursuing a truly safe and permanent cleanup of all contaminants of concern. We believe government agencies responsible for the dumping and covering up should be held accountable.

It is hoped that information that has been withheld to date, the subject of an AFSC lawsuit in federal court against the EPA, Department of Defense and Department of Energy, will be one of the keys to resolving this issue. Citizens have a right to know what public agencies are doing. The right to self-govern, a basic tenant of a democracy, is conditioned on the right to know. Until EPA comes clean on withheld documentation, citizens must reserve their power in granting permission to EPA to allow any cleanup at IEL.

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