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24. April. 2001

Betsy Cuthbertson
c/o Congressman Tom Sawyer
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Betsy,

Thank you for your communication and invitation to meet as part of "a small group of stakeholders" regarding the Industrial Excess Landfill (IEL) in Uniontown, Ohio. I must respectfully decline your invitation at this time for a number of reasons.

First, such a meeting seems to be in direct response to a specific request made in early February by Chris Borello, President of Concerned Citizens of Lake Township (CCLT) and myself for a PRIVATE meeting with Congressman Sawyer about issues related to various actions and policies concerning IEL. For two months, we received no definitive response to repeated requests to a private meeting. Only after we announced a public vigil at the Congressman's Akron office on Good Friday, April 13, was the idea (although no specifics) of a wider meeting with a number of others announced. Why doesn't the Congressman want a private meeting with CCLT and AFSC? Surely, the Congressman has held at least one private conversation and/or meeting (probably many) with representatives of the polluting corporations over the last several years. Why not with us? Why should representatives of corporations, self-proclaimed "corporate persons," be afforded greater privileges than actual human persons? We are his constituents. Why does an elected representative provide greater access to corporations than to his own constituents? I realize at least one of the polluting corporations, the Goodyear Tire & Rubber corporation, has donated tens of thousands of dollars through their Political Action Committee (PAC) over the last few years to the Congressman. By contrast, those of us requesting a private meeting have not. Are we to conclude that money does, in fact, buy political access? How else are we to interpret Congressman Sawyer's opposition to a private meeting? If the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Corporation, or the Bridgestone Tire & Rubber Corporation, or the GenCorp Corporation or the BF Goodrich Corporation requested a private meeting with Congressman Sawyer, would they be put off for two months and then only asked to be part of a larger meeting? We still want a private meeting.

Second, I am willing after a private meeting to be part of a larger meeting, but only if it is with other key human persons -- namely Chris Borello, President of CCLT, Robert Martin, USEPA Ombudsman, and Hugh Kaufman, USEPA Ombudsman Chief Investigator who has investigated IEL for the past several years. Have you invited them? As of yesterday, neither Ms. Borello nor Mr. Kaufman had received an invitation. Mr. Kaufman was not aware of an invitation being extended to Mr. Martin.

Finally, I would hope a proposed wider meeting excludes representatives of the polluting corporations. To involve corporate representatives implies they are entities that should have some kind of legitimate standing, that they are to be negotiated with. This is problematic. Corporations are our creation. The original intent of our nation's founders, including those who helped Ohio achieve statehood (as several of us across the state have documented through our examination of legal history), was that citizens defined, instructed and directed corporations. Citizens were sovereign,

corporations were subordinate. Corporations followed orders -- they had no inherent rights, only privileges bestowed on them by the public through the state legislature. The thinking was that self-governing people don't negotiate with subordinate entities. To do so would provide undeserved and unearned legitimacy, to transfer authority to undemocratic legal fictions.

To negotiate with business corporations is much like negotiating with one's own military. The military is meant to be subordinate to the citizenry in nations that are considered to be anything resembling a democracy. Nations that negotiate with their own military are hardly democratic. We consider such nations to be on the brink of becoming (if not already) a military state. The same can be said about nations which routinely negotiate with corporations -- that they have lost control, they have risk becoming (if not already) a corporate state. A fine case can be made that this has already happened in our own nation. Providing the polluting corporations the authority to "take the lead" in testing and in the so-called clean up of the IEL (which is considered standard policy within EPA -- without apparently much opposition from elected officials or the mainstream media) is a sterling example of how our entire culture has been corrupted. The question is, do we reinforce this condition or refuse to accept it. I would hope the Congressman would choose to stand up and exclude representatives of any business corporation from any such meeting. The bottom line is that in a democracy the public and their elected representatives should be instructing what the polluting corporations must do to clean up the mess they created at places like the IEL.

Respectfully,

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In a message dated 4/21/01 1:22:37 PM, Betsy Cuthbertson writes:

As part of Congressman Sawyer's continuing involvement in the IEL superfund site in Lake Township, he has directed me and his chief of staff, Dan Lucas, to meet with a small group of stakeholders on a regular basis.

In order to assure that as many invitees as possible can attend this meeting, a number of times have been listed below. Please indicate your availability and respond via email. We are likely to look for a location in Lake Township, although that has not been finalized.

We're checking availability for the following meeting dates:

Week of April 30

Tuesday afternoon

Friday morning

Friday afternoon

Week of May 6

Monday Afternoon

Tuesday Morning

Tuesday Afternoon

Friday Morning

Friday Afternoon