

March Ground Water Testing

To the Editor,

The recently announced results of March ground water testing at the Industrial Excess Landfill (IEL) in Uniontown is a wonderful example of a once public process being highjacked by private corporate interests.

What once were distinctly public responsibilities of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a tax-payer funded public institution, have become privatized, or more accurately, corporatized.

Drawing water samples of selected wells at IEL was done by representatives of the very same private corporations (Goodyear, Firestone, GenCorp and BF Goodrich) that were responsible for dumping thousands of gallons of toxic waste at the site. Furthermore, analysis of those water samples was done at labs chosen by these same polluting corporations.

All this is, sad to say, not new. What was different about the March testing was that the results were released to the media and Lake Township representatives by the polluting corporations with their sugar-coated PR spin before the results were ever presented to EPA officials in Chicago .

Consequently, the polluting corporations' high-paid PR staff had free reign to downplay the radioactive tritium and high benzene levels found in their own testing results before citizens or the public agency responsible for environmental protection could even read the report.

So what we have are private corporations, with the support of the local township, which have a conflict of interest unilaterally drawing water samples, testing those samples, reporting on those samples and commenting on those samples. This on top of companies not even testing key wells which showed a past presence of radiation. This is a corporatization of science and media coverage that completely ignores the right of the public to know and comment in a timely manner..

The media and public must see through this conflict of interest and so-called collection of evidence and question the fundamental validity of such test results. Business corporations exist to maximize shareholder returns. They are incapable of acting and should not, in fact, be expected to act in the public interest. Permitting polluting corporations to have any role in cleaning up the IEL makes as much sense as allowing a criminal any role in cleaning up the site of their crime.

Sincerely,

Greg Coleridge
Director
Economic Justice & Empowerment Program
Northeast Ohio American Friends Service Committee
513 W. Exchange St.
Akron, OH 44302
330-253-7151