

**STATEMENT OF GREG COLERIDGE, DIRECTOR, ECONOMIC JUSTICE PROGRAM, NORTHEAST OHIO AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE (AFSC) ON THE STARK COUNTY WATER CRISIS**

For the past seven years, the AFSC has been working with Concerned Citizens of Lake Township (CCLT) to get to the bottom of what is in the Industrial Excess Landfill (IEL) in Uniontown, Ohio. I have sent dozens of requests to various federal agencies (EPA, Department of Army, Department of Energy, Nuclear Regulatory Commission) through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) seeking documentation of the toxins and radiation in the IEL. We have received several documents which make us believe that EPA and public officials have not been totally honest in their denial of the presence of radiation at the IEL. This makes it difficult to believe that the public is being told the entire truth about this crisis.

I find it amazing that Stark County officials are claiming that the possible extensive contamination of water in northern Stark County is due to the swift migration of poisons from the recent dumping from a few tanker trucks, yet many of these same officials deny that the dumping of at least 780,000 tons of toxins over many years at IEL could ever migrate beyond the boundaries of the dump.

Concerned residents who for good reason have chosen to test their own well water should be testing not only for volatile organic chemicals such as PCE but also for heavy metals such as arsenic, lead, chromium, mercury, barium, gross alpha, gross beta and radium. Such residents should consider sending their water samples to labs out of state and should not publicize where they are sending their samples.

The meeting held in Stark County yesterday morning behind closed doors was a mistake. This needs to be a transparent process. Public officials should have nothing to hide. Only a public process will build confidence and trust required to get to the bottom of this crisis.

Having attended the meeting yesterday in North Canton City Hall and hearing North Canton Mayor Revoldt talk about the permanent contamination of the wells on E. Maple Street, maybe he should follow the lead of those who propose to "clean up" the IEL. The EPA, Lake Township officials, the Akron-based polluting corporations, the Community Advisory Group and scientists over the last few months have asserted that the best way to clean up the poisons at IEL is to plant poplar trees and grasses. Following this same so-called scientific approach, maybe North Canton should be distributing popular trees along with water to residents in the affected area.

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The American Friends Service Committee is a Quaker social action organization which nonviolently educates, advocates and organizes on issues of peace, justice, and sustainability.

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