

Mark R. Lipsman
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CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

5 A Street
Belmont, Mass. 02179
February 9, 1985

John F. Magee
President and Chief Executive Officer
Arthur D. Little, Inc.
Acorn Park
Cambridge, Mass. 02140

Dear Neighbor:

Do you know what "the arrogance of power" is? It's a large corporation deciding to do something extremely dangerous to others and using its money and influence to steamroll right over local opposition. It's writing a patronizing letter to the locals afterwards to try to convince them that actually everything is fine. It's saying, essentially, "If you only knew the facts you'd understand" (the same argument Richard Nixon used to try to justify the war in Vietnam), as if we're too ignorant or misguided to realize what's really in our best interest. It's writing us a letter and saying, at the end, that if we have a reply, we should send it to someone else. Who is D. Reid Weedon, Jr., and why do I care whether he reads my reply to your letter? Did he have the ultimate responsibility for building that lab? Or do you just pay him to catch the flak?

If you're such a good neighbor, why didn't you ask us about the gas lab before you built it? The answer is that there was a lot of money to be made, and no fancy public relations campaign can obscure the unbelievable stupidity, callousness, and insensitivity of what you have done. (Spare us your regret at "having to refuse to help our home state"; at least don't compound your greed with hypocrisy.)

There is nothing you can tell me that will convince me that that lab is safe. Nothing is absolutely disaster-proof--not Three-Mile Island, not the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India, not even the "Titanic," the "unsinkable" ship. I hope that you're around to send me another fancy letter when you find this out, explaining that there was really no way anything could possibly have gone wrong, even though it did (and that you're very sorry; ever so charmingly sorry). I also hope that I'm around to read it.

If you close the lab now, it will cost you a lot of money, though you could undoubtedly convert the facility to some other use. If you wait until people are killed before you close it, it will cost you a lot more money in lawsuits and adverse publicity. Which, in the long run, is cheaper?

Probably the reason no one has written or called you to object to the laboratory is that they realize that anyone who would build a lab for testing nerve gas in one of the most heavily populated urban areas in the United States is clearly beyond the reach of rational protest. We'd rather put our efforts into more productive endeavors, such as lawsuits. But we'll shut you down, don't worry. One way or the other, we'll shut you down.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mark R. Lipsman".

Mark R. Lipsman

Comm. from Mark R. Lipsman of Belmont, transmitting a copy of a letter he sent to Arthur D. Little, Inc., in response to the firm's recent letter to area residents Re: nerve gas testing.

In City Council,

February 28, 1985

Placed on File