

Email response to Kipp CEO, Tony Koblinski, 10/19/2016

Dear Mr. Koblinski:

Yes, I agree, this is indeed a very "strange" set of exchanges!

Some responses, for the record:

You said you have been "baffled" by my motives "since the day you met me." My motives are straightforward--and not secret. This is not about my "curiosities," as you suggested. To clear up your confusion, below is an explanation of my "motives":

I am doing this work because I care deeply about the health and well-being of my good friends who live near Kipp--several of whom are very ill. I have good reasons to believe they are still exposed to toxic chemicals released from Kipp currently and/or in the past.

I am doing this work because I care about the broader health and environmental effects of the toxic chemicals released by Kipp for decades--persistent chemicals that deposit in sediments in Starkweather Creek and Lake Monona--and build up in fish that many people and their children consume. I want this pollution to stop so that some day in the future perhaps our children and grandchildren can eat fish without PCBs, halogenated compounds, metals and a stew of other toxic contaminants that could affect their health for their entire lives. If we don't monitor it--or pretend it's not there at all--we cannot stop it.

I am doing this work because I care about the health and safety of the workers in the Kipp factory--and I have abundant evidence that the health and safety record in Kipp is not good. I know several former Kipp workers, including some who worked there with temporary contracts while homeless. I have been contacted more than once by Kipp workers who became sick in the factory and wanted my assistance, since they have no union to stand up for them. They have since been fired.

The fact that Kipp's workers are not unionized is no accident. Kipp's owners have engaged in nasty union-busting tactics since after World War I--when many of their workers unionized and went on strike for better working conditions. Kipp refused their demands, and many of the company's unionized machinists left Madison. Kipp's owners, determined not to allow this to happen again, fought future unionizing attempts among their workers, lobbied against progressive policies, and supported anti-union politicians and policies throughout the 1900s and to this day.

As for the long-time Kipp worker who died earlier in the year from a heart attack--I have never claimed to be a health expert, but I have taken doctoral level courses in toxicology, epidemiology, and risk assessment, and have extensively researched and written about the health effects of toxic chemicals. I know that long term exposures to small particulates, and several of the chemicals used at Kipp (or beneath it in soils and groundwater), can lead to physiological effects that increase risks of heart attacks. Of course, any number of individual factors can contribute to risks for heart attacks, but ongoing exposures to these chemicals will add to people's individual factors and increase the risks.

As far as your last two emails to me, your strategy of smearing, threatening, and trashing me as a liar--just for daring to ask questions pertinent to the health and well being of my good friends, factory workers, and the environment, and to write about these issues--is remarkably similar to the ways your corporate predecessors

smear and threatened any citizens who raised questions about Kipp publicly in the past. Is the same law firm that advised them in how to treat citizens--Michael Best--advising you too?

Of course, most citizens' questions and concerns about Kipp in past decades turned out to be correct. If government agencies had listened to them, rather than dismissing or ignoring them, we would likely be a lot further along in cleaning up Kipp's pollution—and residential vapor intrusion would have been mitigated a lot sooner.

Your threat to "not talk directly" to me or "cooperate with me in any way" is an amusing and empty threat. Kipp has never answered my questions--and didn't this time either. I didn't expect any response from you. In fact, I sent the original email to John Hausbeck from Public Health, and asked him to help me find the answers to these questions. I copied Alina, your employee. The followup query to Alina came from Alder Rummel, not me. Alina responded to her, not me.

Nevertheless, Alina's answers did not answer my questions, and after I pointed that out and repeated the questions, the two responses I received from you didn't answer them either. They only confirmed my assumptions--that Kipp hasn't assessed vapor intrusion risks in the factory portion of the plant, is likely still using TCE, and will not share what solvents they are using.

As for my writing--I will, in fact, continue to "publish whatever the hell I want," as you suggested. Fortunately, though many aspects of our democracy are in very bad shape, largely due to corporate control over our regulators and entire economy, we still have basic rights of free speech. I will continue to back up what I write with data and other evidence when I can obtain it--and when I can't get straight (or any) answers even from government agencies who are paid by citizens to protect and serve citizens--but seem to be more interested in protecting and serving polluting corporations--I will record the unanswered questions anyway and continue to search for answers.

Relatedly, I must note how ironic it is that you accuse me of "twisting the truth" even while refusing to answer the questions I posed to you--so I have to guess at the answers. How can citizens and journalists know and publish the truth if the corporations and government will not share it with them?

Finally, I'm glad you "frankly" let me know that you're "done with me." Frankly, I didn't realize you and I had anything going on!

Thanks again for encouraging me to publish "whatever the hell I want." I will!

Maria Powell, PhD

PS: Kipp is hardly a "small business." It is a large and successful international corporation, incorporated in Delaware.