

(See attached
Isthmus June 8, 2016
"Quick Question"
column.)

138 South Marquette Street
Madison, WI 53704
March 4, 1993

Mr. Jordan Loeb
Public Intervenor's Office
139-A State Justice Building
123 West Washington Avenue
P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707-7857

Dear Mr. Loeb:

Re: Madison-Kipp Corporation (201 Waubesa Street, Madison,
WI 53704): Influence on Madison media, government

A recent incident illustrates the unseemly influence exerted by private money on media coverage and public affairs in Madison today and the thwarting of public protection measures that can result.

In mid-December 1992, I returned from the UW campus to my house on South Marquette Street at about 11:30 p.m. As I turned into the neighborhood, a tremendous, jarring roar from the Madison-Kipp Corporation foundry greeted me more than two blocks from the foundry. Heavy exhaust poured from a number of stacks, plainly visible against the overlit night sky; the lighting came from Madison-Kipp's prison-yard-style blinding lights which inundate the streets adjacent to them as well as their own property. An acrid, membrane-burning smell accompanied the roar and excessive lights.

My more than two years of trying to persuade Madison-Kipp to abate its sleep-preventing and privacy-invading noise having been largely unsuccessful, and sleep or studying being impossible under such bombardment (my house is permeated with rumbling, sometimes whining roar even with storm windows closed in winter), I called the Channel 27 television newsroom and told a reporter there about the outrageously loud noise. At about midnight, a reporter (Dave Huddleston) and a news photographer came to my house. They interviewed me in my back yard, which abuts Madison-Kipp's industrial yard/parking lot, with the foundry's noise and intense light clearly recorded and photographed in the immediate background. They further interviewed me in my house, where I demonstrated my (ineffectual) efforts to mask the noise: turning on both radio and television, which I must often leave on all night long to be able even to rest. The blinding industrial-lot light shining directly in my bedroom window was also photographed.

I gave Dave Huddleston copies of background material to the problem: correspondence with Madison-Kipp and city officials, the Isthmus article (October 2, 1992) by Jorge Carbajosa, technical articles by EPA and other noise-control specialists, information from Digisonix, a respected noise-abatement-device manufacturer in Middleton (Channel 27 had earlier aired a story about Digisonix), and other material. I asked him when the story might be aired. Mr. Huddleston told me that he would have to talk to Madison-Kipp's owner, Reed Coleman, read the background material, and contact some other people, and said that it might be a short time before the story aired.

About a week after the interview, Madison-Kipp stopped production for approximately three weeks, its usual end-of-the-year practice. After production began again in January, and the story had not yet aired, I called Channel 27 to learn why. Dave Huddleston said he had not yet been able to talk to Reed Coleman and was following some other threads.

When the story had still not aired by the end of January, I called again. Dave Huddleston was not there, but I talked to Channel 27 News Director Phil Hayes. Mr. Hayes knew about the story and was rather testy with me. He could not tell me why the story hadn't aired, he said, but would leave a message for Dave Huddleston to return my call. My call was not returned. I had called Channel 27 in the first place because they had covered similar stories very responsibly (one was the Madison Metrobus idling in front of a Madison resident's window every night--a much less intrusive environmental and health problem than that caused by Madison-Kipp), and I was thus surprised that something or someone was clearly delaying this report.

I called back and finally reached Mr. Huddleston. What he told me was disturbing.

He said that Channel 27 would not air the story, for the following reasons:

1) He had talked to Madison-Kipp president Tom Caldwell, who had told him that I was an unreliable person who had a personal "vendetta" against the corporation. (I do not personally know anyone at Madison-Kipp, and I consider that statement slanderous. My only dispute with Madison-Kipp is that they have deprived me of sleep and use of my yard and much of my house for the past three years--not a minor or petty complaint. They have also degraded the neighborhood environment and made sale of some houses here problematic--another major, but not personal, matter.) It is hard to see how Mr. Huddleston could have accepted Mr. Caldwell's statement that I was "unreliable," since Mr. Huddleston himself had heard, seen, and smelled Madison-Kipp's pollution at midnight in an interview with me! The story was not hearsay!

2) He (Mr. Huddleston) "didn't think the noise was that bad." ! Is this objective news reporting? I did not call Channel 27 to obtain an acoustic consultant; it is a news organization. It was my belief that reporters report events, not that they make personal judgments. The noise he recorded was certainly much more disruptive, long lasting, and loud than short-term Metrobus idling, on which Channel 27 had aired a story. What criteria was Mr. Huddleston (or people higher up in Channel 27's news hierarchy) applying to this specific situation?

3) He had returned to Madison-Kipp with another news reporter, and there was "hardly any noise." This was during Madison-Kipp's annual nonproduction period (mid-December until early January). It is reasonable to assume that when there is no production, there will be no noise! I understood also that they came during the day, when Madison-Kipp's noise is much lower than at night. Spot checks like this are unreliable; the disruptive noise is usually at night. It was easy for Channel 27 to learn when Madison-Kipp was not in production;

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why did reporters follow up with a visit during a nonworking period?? I had also told Mr. Huddleston that the noise was routinely far louder at night than during the day.

4) He had contacted the Police Department (Madison), which had told him that Madison-Kipp was within its "legal limits," and that there was nothing else that could be done. (I had given Mr. Huddleston the correspondence and articles relating to neighborhood problems with the Police Department's inability and unwillingness to enforce the Madison noise ordinance; thus it is odd that the only city agency he contacted was the Police Department!) I had mentioned my frustration with the Madison Police Department's refusal to act when I was interviewed in December.

5) He had talked to "neighbors," who had told him that "there was no problem: Every time the neighborhood had complained to Madison-Kipp, the problem had been resolved satisfactorily." I asked him which neighbors he had talked to, and how he had decided whom to contact. He said that Tom Caldwell (president of Madison-Kipp) had given him the name of a "neighbor" who would verify that there was "no problem." I asked the name of this neighbor. He replied, "Cynthia Carmichael." I checked the phone directory; there are a number of Carmichaels in Madison, but none on South Marquette or nearby streets. The name was unfamiliar to me. To check my suspicions, I called Madison-Kipp and asked for Cynthia Carmichael. The receptionist said, "She's just left for the day." !

Tom Caldwell, the president of Madison-Kipp, had untruthfully represented Ms. Carmichael to Mr. Huddleston, a Channel 27 reporter, as a neighborhood resident. In fact, she not only is not one, she is an employee of Madison-Kipp! According to Dave Huddleston, Ms. Carmichael had told him that Madison-Kipp's relations with the neighborhood were "excellent" and that the corporation had quickly resolved any problems the neighborhood had had with it! Dave Huddleston talked to no actual neighbors of the corporation in "corroborating" (or, as it happened, dismissing) the story. He was also unsuccessful in getting Reed Coleman, Madison-Kipp's owner, to comment. The result of my contact with Channel 27 was that my reputation was maligned by Madison-Kipp and the corporation's noise, emissions, and lights are more obtrusive than ever. The factory's officers have every reason to gloat that they have successfully suppressed an important story. I can only guess at how the corporation succeeded at this, but I suspect that the position of the Coleman family and Madison-Kipp Corporation as very large donors of money to numerous Madison cultural and civic concerns speaks forcefully. Implying that I am an unreliable and vindictive complainant is slanderous, but apparently the corporation is unconcerned it was less than truthful. What other kinds of pressure were placed upon Channel 27 I do not know, but I suspect that there were some. (I do not believe that Dave Huddleston was single-handedly responsible for the station's decision not to air the story; he is a young reporter who surely consults with more experienced ones and Channel 27's News Director--and perhaps others higher up--about stories.)

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I am extremely concerned: In fact, I am outraged. I believe that Madison's public life is riddled with corruption, which infects not only government, but also media and other institutions. I believe, too, that the health, comfort, and quality of life of all of Madison's citizens are in jeopardy as long as this is the case.

Sincerely,

Anne G. Chacon

Anne G. Chacon

CI was told that Dave Huddleston, a young Black reporter, left Madison shortly after this episode and went to work in Minnesota!)