

## Episode 7: Good Neighbors? Pt. 2.

“Denials by a Ravena cement plant in late 2017 that it intended to burn waste from Connecticut took a hit this week, after a letter emerged that showed it was seeking to do just that.”(1). As the Board of the Town of Coeymans was weighing passage of an air pollution law to limit the massive LafargeHolcim cement plant from burning tires(2), a letter was found revealing the foreign-owned corporate giant apparently wanted to burn more than tires.

Although rebranded LafargeHolcim after the Lafarge public relations disaster of making payments to The Islamic State and Al Qaeda in Syria(3)(4), the Swiss-based international corporation, LafargeHolcim, was doubling down on toxic air pollution in Ravena, New York.

One would think that any company caught in a sewer of immorality with Islamic terrorists and fined for putting its workers at risk would want to recover from the humiliation and become a better world citizen. Unless that company is habituated to having the whip hand over its laborers.

From the superior position of dominating the economy of a small town, LafargeHolcim can command air pollution and health consequences for those who live here, far from the clean alpine air of Switzerland. How is it that a town in the First World can be treated as if it was just another town in the Third World? After all the United States is the leading First World country.

This is a FirstWorld-Third World business model: A First World country has abundant wealth (capital) but not the natural resources to make its wealth increase. In the Third World are countries which have natural resources but are poor in wealth (capital). Workers in the Third World are hired at the lowest possible wages they will accept and then labor to give their natural resources to the First World country which uses its highly developed economy, relying on those resources, to grow its wealth ever greater. If the Third World workers (labor) demand a greater share of the wealth, which can only come from their labor and natural resources, they may be threatened with loss of their low wages, unemployment and economic hard times.

This is how it is possible for an international corporation to tell workers and the town where they live that the corporation is going to pour more complex chemical toxins into the air you breathe and you, your children, families and everyone else in the vicinity will have to live with it.

Economic intimidation relies on keeping the self-esteem of workers low. For example, when the Clean Air Law was debated at a Town Supervisors meeting one man consented that burning tires will make air pollution worse, but “We’re Ravena.” Low self-esteem leads to abuse, abuse leads to low self-esteem. This underpins the circle of exploitation of those in need of work by those who have wealth and own the jobs.

### Bibliography:

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