

THE CORPSE AWARDS 2006

“For Southern Africa’s Dirtiest Corporations”

The Corpse Award is not one that corporations will want to claim. So groundWork invited people’s organisations to nominate the corporation that they believe has demonstrated the worst corporate practice in the last two years. Since there are rather a lot of eligible corporations not all could receive awards and difficult decisions had to be made by a panel of judges as to which were the most deserving of an award.

A selection of Southern Africa’s premier corporations are lined up for the Corpse Awards 2006. The Corpse Awards recognise worst corporate practice in producing environmental injustice. The nominations for the awards are made by the people living next door to the corporate plants and by civil society organisations concerned at the trashing of people and environments.

Here are the winners for 2006! We eagerly await nominations for the 2007!

Grim Reaper Floating Trophy Award



AngloPlatinum Ltd is one of London-based **Anglo American Plc’s** most profitable subsidiaries. For decades Anglo American helped to define the character of the apartheid state through its economic dominance of the mining and industrial sectors and its voracious hunger for cheap migrant labour on the mines. Grand apartheid, with its Bantu labour reserves, was mainly structured to serve the interests of Anglo and other mining corporations. The ideology of white racial superiority was functional to this industrial giant whose mines and mills killed and maimed black workers on an industrial scale. Anglo American continues to exercise a powerful - and often decisive - influence over government policymaking.

AngloPlatinum is nominated this year by the Mapela community near Mokopane which includes the villages of Ga Pila, Ga Puka, Ga Sekhaolelo, Ga Molekana and Sterkwater and the Maandagshoek Community near Burgersfort as well as the residents of the five small villages who were relocated to Magobading. Their nominations are for several AngloPlats achievements: removing communities from their ancestral land, stealing peoples’ resources and gagging voices of resistance.

AngloPlatinum has imposed several ‘SLAPP’ orders - Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation - against the mining communities’ legal representative, Richard Spoor. An application by AngloPlatinum for an urgent interim interdict to prevent the attorney from ‘defaming’ it as a ‘racist, thug and bully’ was dismissed in mid-2006. However, AngloPlats is proceeding against Spoor with a R3,5 million civil claim for alleged damages caused to the corporation’s trading reputation.

Baying For Your Rice Award



Bayer CropScience is nominated by the African Centre for Biosafety. At present, Bayer CropScience is bankrolling the South African Sugarcane Research Institution to test genetically modified (GM) sugar cane varieties, using Monsanto’s gene for the eventual use in the lucrative biofuels trade. Bayer has applied to the South African government for approval to import genetically modified rice into SA. Because of rejection of GMOs by consumers around the world, Bayer CropScience has been forced out of the UK, withdrew its plans to commercialise GM canola in Australia, and has abandoned its research in India.

Now, the company is busy illegally contaminating the world’s rice supply. Currently, only one variety of Bayer’s GM rice (LL62) has been granted approval for cultivation in only one country - the United States - yet, due to global consumer rejection, US rice growers refuse to plant the variety. But that move couldn’t protect growers from the insidious nature of GM contamination. In late July this year Bayer sent shockwaves through the rice industry when its experimental variety LL601, not approved in any country, was found to have massively contaminated US rice stocks. Global sales of US rice have plummeted and US rice farmers are suffering huge economic losses. More than twenty-five lawsuits have since been filed against Bayer by groups of US rice farmers. More recently, a further case of illegal contamination has been discovered in US rice found in France, involving Bayer’s GM rice variety LL62. This same variety is pending approval in South Africa,

Considering the fact that South Africa imports rice, The African Centre for Biosafety is testing South African rice for GM contamination.

This is the second time that Bayer has been nominated. Last year, Bayer received the 'Accountability and Liability Sucks Award' for its chrome pollution in south Durban

Do You Think We're Stupid? Award



South Africa's **Cement Industry** is part of the 'Cement Sustainability Initiative', promoted by the infamous greenwashers at the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. The Council annually awards their members for 'best practice' in climate protection, employee health and safety and emissions reduction. Deploying a similar abuse of the English language, our own cement firms have launched a grand frontal attack on the brains of politicians, claiming that it is good for the environment for energy-intensive

industries to incinerate hazardous waste. They call hazardous waste an 'alternative fuel' and aim to upgrade and expand their activities for the huge stadiums required for the 2010 World Cup. If we can afford the tickets, we will watch the games high up in stadiums constructed by cement made using hazardous waste.

The cement industry is responsible for 17% of all dioxin emissions in the USA. In a 1998 report on US dioxins, scientists found that kilns burning hazardous waste have 80 times higher toxic emissions from their stacks than kilns burning conventional fuels. Further investigations in the US indicated that clinker from kilns burning hazardous waste contain high levels of toxins, so high that the clinker is unsuitable for land disposal. Yet it is still incorporated into building materials.

Finally, these cement behemoths must be commended for their slyness and ingenuity for, if government continues to allow this practice, the import of hazardous waste – as in the case of Abijan, Ivory Coast – will become a common practice in South Africa, because after all it is 'merely a fuel'.

It Wasn't Me! Award



FFS Refiners, an oil refinery based in Pietermaritzburg, claims that they their '*world class facilities*' operate 'under stringent environmental management systems and are ISO 14001 accredited' – but its neighbours claim otherwise, and have decided to nominate FFS Refiners for a Corpse Award. Air samples were taken outside the facility which indicated the presence of Benzene, p-Xylene, Hydrogen Sulfide, Toluene, Ethyl Benzene, Xylene, Methyl Ethyl Ketone, Tetrachloroethane, and Styrene. These chemicals are associated with

the oil refinery industry.

The Msunduzi Municipality has had ongoing complaints for more than a decade from residents of Pietermaritzburg about the 'dirty oily petrol chemical smell', which are linked to these chemicals. But FFS Refiners claim that the pollution and smell is not theirs! In raising these issues publicly, groundWork has been threatened with legal action by FFS Refineries, when we termed them 'one of the bad boys of pollution'. The company's environmental policy claims they will 'maintain open relations on environmental matters with employees, relevant authorities, neighbouring organisations and other interested parties'.

The national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) gets a supporting actor award, for refusing to meet with residents in Pietermaritzburg to hear their concerns and for ignoring demands that the FFS Refineries operation permit be made available for scrutiny by the Msunduzi Municipality. The provincial KZN Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs also gets a supporting actor award, for granting FFS Refineries a positive Record of Decision on their development despite the concerns raised by civil society.

Smoked Out At Last Award



Chevron Oil Refinery (formerly known as Caltex) has finally won a coveted Corpse Award. The refinery has been nominated for the second time by the Table View Residents' Association, who represent communities adjacent to the refinery. Air samples there have picked up high levels of benzene and other chemicals. Members of the Table View Residents Association report that refinery management has been arrogant and in the past indicated that 'they will continue to pollute because their permit allows them to'.

For years, residents of Table View have had to endure incidents ranging from gas clouds overwhelming them to crude oil raining down on them. No one in authority adequately responded to these incidents until finally and belatedly, this year, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 'smoked out' Chevron. Further investigations are underway into incidents since June 2004, including emissions releases and fires.

But the Table View Residents Association has indicated that aside from a bit more state monitoring of air pollution over the last decade, nothing has changed. There has been 'too much talk and reporting', and this impressive record of negligence allows us to award a supporting actress prize to Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, who explicitly supported the refinery at the recent anniversary celebration despite knowing the concerns of the community.

Privatising Public Participation Award



Engen finally wins a Corpse on their third nomination. Engen oil refinery in south Durban was built in 1954 and is the oldest refinery in South Africa. Engen has been nominated this year by the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), thanks to its notorious record in the communities. Municipal air pollution monitoring instigated by SDCEA has verified the problem.

Over the last two years, Engen's pollution has exceeded the health guidelines values on more than 400 occasions. In spite of the recent eThekweni Health study, Engen has asked permission from government to relax the rules to allow them to pollute with legal authority, something they had permission to do during the apartheid era.

But how might Engen avoid the obvious contradiction and smelly publicity? In its boldest move to date, Engen and the provincial KZN Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs have 'privatised' public participation by claiming that 'public meetings are not a constructive method of public participation' in the Environmental Impact Assessment process, in which complaints arose about Engen's increasing use of the dangerous catalyst hydrofluoric acid. This was after the SDCEA and the south Durban community used the EIA process to demand Engen consider alternatives. Engen and the DAEA agreed that the firm's community liaison forum will be the forum for participation, which has the effect of isolating organisations such as SDCEA as well as the broader public.

Mangling The Workers Award



Samancor Manganese PTY Limited, is nominated for poisoning workers with manganese. The company is based in the infamous Vaal Triangle and has been nominated by the Samancor Retrenched Workers Crisis Committee. Supporting actors who deserve mention in this case are last year's winner for the Sustainable Catastrophe Award, Mittal Steel, which buys manganese from Samancor, and the National Centre for Occupational Health, which is aware of the illnesses caused by Samancor but which failed to fully recognise the problem.

Manganese is inhaled through the air and poisoning leads to a range of ailments including lethargy, sleepiness, weakness, problems with balance, shaky hands, inability to perform fast hand movements, emotional disturbance (mood swings), difficulty walking, recurring leg cramps, paralysis, hallucinations, forgetfulness, insomnia, breathing difficulties, pneumonia, impotence and children born with defects. The company is accused of retrenching workers who were ill. In 2001, 509 workers were retrenched, and since then approximately 100 workers have died. Workers have mobilised and organised and formed the Samancor Retrenched Workers Crisis Committee which is pressuring the company for compensation. But after the first few meetings, Samancor severed ties with the Committee. The company is jointly owned by mining giants Anglo American and BHP Billiton.

Picking the Public Pocket Award



Paladin Resources, an Australian uranium mining company based in Perth, is proposing to mine uranium in Malawi against the wishes of Citizens for Justice, the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation, the Foundation for Community Support Services, Karonga Development Trust and the Uraha Foundation Malawi, who have collectively nominated Paladin.

In an extreme case of naked greed, Paladin is lobbying the Malawi government for a 16-year tax holiday. Paladin shares jumped an amazing 300% over the 12 month period to March 2006. Paladin has been speculating on the open market and in Namibia two uranium sales contracts were announced by Paladin's Langer Heinrich uranium project, well before the mine was commissioned.

Given that jobs are desperately needed in Malawi, Paladin's proposed operations have divided the community into camps for and against the development, given that jobs are desperately needed in Malawi. Proponents claim Paladin can boost Gross Domestic Product by 5% with this one development. With the state's political support, Paladin has no hesitation in destroying the shrines of the local people. They have already started construction of the mine though a mining licence has yet to be granted.

Loot the Minerals & Blood Stain the Soil Award



AngloGold Ashanti, which is 42% owned by Anglo American Corporation, produces corpses at a prolific rate across the Third World, not only at Carletonville's Tautona mine near Johannesburg, which, according to the National Union of Mineworkers, suffered an 'unrelenting scenario of fatalities' - 16 in 2006.

In the DRC, according to the United Nations last year, AngloGold Ashanti 'could arguably be in violation of the arms embargo' applied to the eastern part of the country, where at least three million people have been killed in violence related to turf battles in the mineral-rich region. According to Human Rights Watch researchers in 2005, fighting between armed groups for the control of the gold mining town of Mongbwalu alone cost the lives of at least two thousand civilians between June 2002 and September 2004.

When accused of working hand-in-hand with Mongbwalu warlords, AngloGold Ashanti CEO Bobby Godsell reacted in mid-2005: 'Mistakes will be made.'

In Ghana such mistakes are killing artisanal workers. Civil society's National Coalition on Mining has assisted informal sector mineworkers who are periodically tortured, shot and killed by AngloGold Ashanti security forces. Moreover ActionAid's recent report Gold Rush shows that AngloGold Ashanti has other ecological corpses to its credit: toxic pollution of local rivers and streams in Obuasi with pollution levels up to 38 times the maximum legal limits, with high levels of arsenic, iron, manganese and other heavy metals; dozens of rivers now unusable for drinking, bathing and irrigation purposes; contaminated land affecting the livelihoods of local farmers; and no compensation for locals affected by AngloGold toxic spillages.

In Colombia, the AngloGold Ashanti subsidiary Kedahda was nominated for a Corpse Award by the Colombia Support Network six weeks ago. On September 19, the notorious Colombian Army murdered Alejandro Uribe, a well-respected leader of the Mina Gallo Community Action Board. According to the Support Network, 'the Colombian Army is engaged in uprooting peasants and small-scale miners by attacking their leaders such as Alejandro Uribe, so that the multinational mining corporation Kedahda can enter the region and undertake mining operations on peasants' and miners' lands.' The Network accuses the terrorist state of having 'improperly licensed or conveyed' land to Kedahda.

For more information about the Corpse Awards and the organisations behind them, please visit:

www.groundwork.org.za

<http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs/>

