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Blackwell Journal-Tribune

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Phelps Dodge should relocate town

Dear Editor:

So all of a sudden, Phelps Dodge wants to be a good neighbor, and act like they have our best interests at heart! How much contamination was present in the entire city of Blackwell 20 years ago, or even as late as five years ago? It has spread throughout the whole city because nothing was done except transport this contamination from one place to another within the city, and on private property.

The reason this mess is here contaminating the entire town is because they waited until they were forced to do something, but now they want us to believe they are concerned, and they really care. The courts have made them liable for this catastrophe. DEQ has to bird dog Phelps Dodge to make sure they do something.

If as they say, they want to start an outreach program in 2007, (Sounds good doesn't it?), after they had to be taken to court just to be forced to admit that they were responsible for this deadly mess, how much credibility do they have now? Do you want to trust or believe someone, not to mention a company that has spent years and millions trying to duck and dodge their responsibility for this mess, and waited until now to want to impress us with their intent to be concerned or responsible?

They made a big show of their tests and the contaminated area at a Commissioner's meeting, outlining the contaminated area based on their tests, and now we are going to test again? How deep are they going to test this time? Is this going to change the contaminated area? It can only be larger as time passes.

Will you believe when they tell you your property is not contaminated, that it won't be years later? You will be expected to sign your life away if you let them test and tear up your property. You will be expected to sign a release that states Phelps Dodge will be relieved of any and all liability in the future, and they have stated that this contamination will be with us for 100 years or more. They have stated it isn't to worry about, it can be cured, we're safe, and other vague statements they can't prove or back up.

The ground is contaminated, which contaminates the water underground and on the surface. They are going to pump the contaminated water out and purify it. What's the ground going to do to the water that flows in to replace the water they pump out? That is why they say it will be with us for 100 years or more. This city refused the Super Fund, which would have done what these people now say they are going to do. How deep is this contamination? Will more contaminates move in as the water flows into the ground from surrounding areas, floods, and heavy rains? If you believe this is a quick fix, you might spend some time thinking about this some more, before you commit yourself to a future you can't possibly predict.

Everyone likes to espouse how much they are concerned about our children's future. Do you call what's been going on in Blackwell for the past 30 years, concern for our children, and what's being done now as safe for our children, and their children, for the next 100 years? That's right, put the school on uncontaminated ground, while they live and play on this contaminated ground every day at home in the city of Blackwell. How long before the school will be on contaminated ground even if it's built on what they claim is uncontaminated?

The only reason that Phelps Dodge is now trying to pacify the people of Blackwell, is because they can't get out of it. The people have to protect them selves and their rights, and we're not going to be bought off Phelps Dodge sees the law suits coming because they didn't care until it was too late, now they are trying to cover their tracks. If you want to help them, that's your right, but don't expect everyone to agree or follow your thinking. One of the things you might consider is; what other expense and trouble, not to mention the total disruption to your family, lives, and future, when they are digging up your property to replace the ground with new ground. What about what's under your house, garage, driveway, vegetation that is and has been sucking up this contamination below ground; you rake, mow, bag, and handle this contaminated material. Even the dust in your attics, garages, who knows where else, is also contaminated. Phelps Dodge should pay for all this and more. This is a life threatening contamination of heavy metals, and will be here in Blackwell for the next 100 year plus. The pollution from that smelter blew in every direction, settled on your roofs, rain washes it down onto the ground and contaminated your property for years and years. Heavy metals do not make for a healthy environment.

I hear they want to remove 18 inches of the surface soil. Does that include the 18 inches of contaminated soil under your house and garage? What happens when it rains and the ground water rises to or near the surface? Does this re-contaminate that 18 inches they replaces with good soil? What about the water that drains down slope onto and into your property, bringing contamination from next door, that hasn't been removed? Just how deep does this contamination penetrate if they are going to pump contaminated water from below levels of the sewer lines in Blackwell? If your neighbor doesn't buy this Mickey Mouse plan, and their topsoil isn't removed, does this make your property safe even if you do have your property removed? This is like a plague, so don't take it lightly. But that's your choice and your right, to decide what and how you will protect your family and children.

Where and who's property are they going to contaminate where they dump the contaminated soil they remove from Blackwell?

Summation: Relocate the City of Blackwell at Phelps Dodge expense, to a safe place to live, for our children and grandchildren, including schools, hospitals, and all utility providers.

If your children get sick or handicapped because of this contamination, will you sue Phelps Dodge for several million, have your topsoil removed, or just forget it?

Once they remove the top 18 inches, will they ever remove it again if it becomes contaminated again, in another 10, 20, or 30 years?

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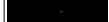
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That politician's name sure does make me feel a lot more comfortable knowing that he's in cahoots with Phelps Dodge. He lives in Tonkawa, whoopee! It makes me wonder, what would his response be if his family lived in Blackwell.

Leonard Sabin

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