

October 1994

Dear Ecology Center Members, Supporters, and Friends,

In the twenty-four years that the Ecology Center has been alive, we've never faced an attack quite like the one we're facing today.

One man is spending a lot of money to try and damage the Ecology Center. I'm writing to inform you more fully about the situation, and to request your help in stopping him.

Readers of our newsletter, *Ecology Reports*, have heard this story. Ever since the Ecology Center began assisting Ann Arbor residents in the Gelman Sciences groundwater clean-up controversy, we've been absorbing a steady stream of calculated attacks from Charles Gelman, the founder and chairman of the company which bears his name.

I want your help to make sure he fails!!

But first, let me give you more background. The Gelman Sciences groundwater contamination has been the subject of public debate in Washtenaw County since 1986. Some of you who live outside of the area may have heard of it, since it has become one of the most contentious environmental contamination site cleanups in Michigan. In this area, though, most people I talk to don't understand why the issue hasn't been resolved yet. Some think that it was resolved two years ago, when the company and the City of Ann Arbor reached an agreement about the clean-up. The issue is confusing, and it is not resolved.

When Gelman Sciences reached an agreement with the City of Ann Arbor two years ago, it started the clean-up of a tiny portion of the contamination site which reached beneath the City's Evergreen subdivision. The agreement has little bearing on the current controversy about the far more contaminated "core area," near the company's Wagner Road plant.

Today, the company is proposing to pump polluted water out of the ground, treat it under ultraviolet radiation, and discharge it to Honey Creek, a tributary of the Huron River. Scio Township residents who live near and alongside Honey Creek suspect that the groundwater which supplies their drinking water wells is also connected to the creek. The State of Michigan suspects that this might be true. Therefore, the residents have insisted that

Gelman Sciences only discharge their water to the creek after treating it to levels safe for drinking. The technology to do so is tested and affordable. The Scio Township Board of Trustees, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, the Gelman Site Clean-up Review Committee, and area environmental organizations have all endorsed the residents' proposal. But the company refuses to adopt it.

*And ever since the Ecology Center got involved in the Evergreen clean-up, Charles Gelman has come after us with malice. In 1992, Gelman made false accusations about our staff, impugning their integrity. Later, he issued untruthful and outrageous allegations about our subsidiary organization Recycle Ann Arbor. Later yet, he and a company employee each mailed defamatory letters to most of the Center's major financial supporters, with the expressed purpose of discouraging their continued support. Most recently, he has sought to discredit us with full-page advertisements in a local newspaper, the *Dexter Leader*.*

"...anybody who's dealt with Charles Gelman has dealt with this kind of thing. He makes ad hominem, very personal attacks on people. He gets fixed on different people at different times and makes charges about their personal lives that are just bizarre..."

- State Senator Lana Pollack

His most recent attacks say, among many other things, that the Ecology Center does not "recognize the laws of the state of Michigan" and that our Board of Directors is organized in violation of Michigan nonprofit laws. While we may not be happy about all state environmental statutes, we clearly recognize and closely adhere to the law ourselves. The Ecology Center is run "by the book." ***Absolutely none of these attacks are substantiated.*** Nevertheless, the full-page ad has been reproduced and mailed to local community leaders and to the entire mailing list of the Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce.

In addition, Gelman has multiplied his efforts by joining forces with fringe political activists in the Ann Arbor area. In 1992, a leader of the Ann Arbor Libertarian Party announced an effort to take over the Ecology Center through a membership initiative. His bid failed badly. In 1993, however, the Libertarians published a flyer which issued outrageous, untrue allegations about the Center, its finances, and supposedly "extra-legal" activities. The flyer was published under a pseudonym, and was widely distributed. They followed this up with a defamatory letter about the Ecology Center to potential riders in the Center's annual Bike-A-Thon, our largest fundraising event. Although the Libertarians

denied any link with him, campaign finance documents show that their two leading local candidates received the maximum allowable contribution from Gelman in the 1993 local elections. In 1994, the *Ann Arbor News* reported that the Libertarians were begging Gelman to run for Ann Arbor Mayor on their ticket.

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- Dave Dempsey, Director of Michigan Clean Water Action

Taken together, these various attacks have confused hundreds of people. They have provoked countless questions which take time and resources to answer. They frighten and anger the individuals who get singled out, people who don't have the resources to fully set the record straight.

The Ecology Center has been Gelman's favorite target recently, but, as the *Ann Arbor News* and *Ann Arbor Observer* have reported, we are only one member of a long and distinguished list of persons and groups which Charles Gelman has sought to demonize. Two years ago, State Senator Lana Pollack commented that, "anybody who's dealt with Charles Gelman has dealt with this kind of thing. He makes ad hominem, very personal attacks on people. He gets fixed on different people at different times and makes charges about their personal lives that are just bizarre." *For the past two years, Charles Gelman has been "fixed" on the Ecology Center.*

According to Dave Dempsey, Director of the Michigan chapter of Clean Water Action, recent Chair of the Michigan Environmental Council, and former environmental advisor to Governor Blanchard, "Mr. Gelman's smear tactics smack of 1950s McCarthyism. Over the last several years he has consistently chosen to personally attack those who harbor honest reservations about Mr. Gelman's preferred cleanup. He will discover that intimidation will not mute a public concerned about its natural resources and health."

Indeed, there are people who are now reluctant to speak up on this issue because of Gelman's tactics. But, growing numbers of citizens and groups are courageously speaking out in support of the citizens' clean-up plan. We are proud to be part of this effort.

And, we need your help to speak out loud and clear!

Last month, the Ecology Center's Board of Directors established a special fund to tell the real story about the groundwater clean-up and to defend the Ecology Center from Charles Gelman's attacks. We are planning a full-fledged campaign, if necessary, which may include targeted mailings, media advertisements, and, most of all, a rapid response to untrue allegations wherever they may appear. All that takes time and money. And we don't have the money that Charles Gelman does.

But what we do have is numbers. There are a lot of people in the Ann Arbor area, and across the state of Michigan, who are fed up with Charles Gelman's tactics. Token support from each of you could give us the resources to get out our message adequately.

We need your support now to help start up the Ecology Center's "Fight Back Fund." I would like to ask you to make a financial contribution - of any amount - to this new fund. If each of the Ecology Center's members, supporters, and friends would contribute *just five dollars* to the Fund, we would easily reach our target. If you can afford a larger contribution, we would greatly appreciate it.

The Ecology Center almost never makes a mid-year appeal for financial support. We generally limit our annual direct mail funding requests to members' annual renewal and a holiday appeal. I know that some of you support our work generously, and that you appreciate our fundraising restraint. We are making this one-time appeal because we are experiencing a unique, resource-draining assault.

Reasonable people may disagree about public policy, but intimidation and scare tactics have no place in a policy debate. Please join me today in fighting back against these disagreeable tactics.

Sincerely,

Carole McCabe
President, Board of Directors