

BETTER THAN HEARSAY

# The Trash Spies Keep Digging

**By Michael Ryan PRATTSVILLE** - It remains to be seen if this does or doesn't amount to a hill of decaying beans but uncertainties surrounding Hughes Energy and their industry track record are raising tough questions.

Hughes Energy is trying to bring what they say is an environmentally evolved, steam-based, waste treatment plant to the communities of Prattsville and Grand Gorge, the latter in the town of Roxbury.

From the beginning of what is now a nearly 2-year permitting process involving the Department of Environmental Conservation and other oversight agencies, Hughes Energy has stated it has a history of successful operations in Europe and the United Kingdom.

At no point, however, have they shared phone numbers or emails of those operations so this newspaper could follow up on their claims.

It is very relevant. Hearing first-hand from those overseas operations might allay worries being expressed by many folks in Prattsville, Grand Gorge and beyond about the impact the huge plant will have on everyday life.

Earlier this month a story was written here, questioning the unwillingness of Hughes Energy to let us go straight to the source. It also introduced some people who had contacted me, looking into this on their own.

I cleverly (or not) referred to them as the Trash Spies, noting they have reached out to people in Ireland, getting information they say is oddly unsettling, at best, and, at worst, worthy of raising serious red flags.

One official in Limerick, Ireland, answering inquiries from the Trash Spies, had this to say about an operation that Hughes Energy was supposedly touting as proof their system is world-altering and trustworthy.

"I can confirm that the demonstration project that Hughes Energy worked on in Limerick was operational for approximately 5/6 months and has not been operational since," the official stated.

While there are no other details, that is a far cry from what Hughes Energy has apparently been leading people on this side of the Atlantic to think.

My question is "why

the confusion and disparity?" Rather than speculate, I sent an email to Hughes Energy chief executive officer Dane McSpedon, eager to have the situation clarified.

My email stated, "I am putting together a story about the claimed Hughes Energy [plant] in Limerick, Ireland, that you and [company owner Brendan] Hughes have said, from the outset, [was] successfully operational."

Sharing the quote from Limerick, I asked, "can you please explain the apparent contrast between your description and the [official's] description?"

"Also, the claimed operations in York appear to be nothing more than experimental and paid for by Hughes...is that accurate?"

"Can you please provide detailed descriptions and verification of the claimed European plants you say are successfully operational, and therefore serving as a basis for expanding to the United States and Roxbury/Prattsville specifically?"

"Also, can you provide contact numbers so these successful operations can be verified by our newspaper," I asked McSpedon.

Mr. McSpedon responded in an email, stating, "our team put together the feedback to your questions:

"Wilson Biochemical is the inventor of the [autoclave] Wilson System and has deployed the technology commercially 5 times since 1998.

"Every system which has been deployed has been sold to third party private customers.

"The plant in Limerick was owned and operated by a private company with no affiliation to Hughes Energy.

"The plant in Limerick operated much longer than is stated [by the official]. I cannot speak for others as to why there is a discrepancy.

"One thing to keep in mind is that the plant started operation circa 2007, which is quite some time ago. Also, keep in mind that the business was run by a private company, not the local government.

"The Wilson Biochemical plant in York is a unit which is used to conduct projects for customers of various organic waste inputs and to create fiber for customer-led projects," McSpedon wrote.

"Wilson Biochemical has run projects for the EU Government, UK Government, Indian Government and many private companies.

"Currently, Wilson is part of a team of companies, including Rolls Royce, contracted to create high value Aviation Fuel as part of the Sustainable Aviation Fuel project.

"There are also projects ongoing to produce next-generation battery technology using citric acid and recycling banknotes for Central Banks.

"Hughes and Wilson Biochemical is operating under strict NDAs [non-disclosure agreements] from our customers which does not allow for release of information related to their proprietary operation."

McSpedon further wrote, "I strongly recommend researching auto-

claves in industrial processes, including the conversion of organic material into sanitized, sterilized, organic biomass fiber".....listing examples.

"We look forward to questions and stories which highlight the following facts of life," McSpedon wrote, citing data related to methane emission levels of rotting organic waste and the effects of climate change.

McSpedon also cited numbers and costs connected to Greene County's transport of waste material, the dubious future of landfills and solutions Hughes Energy claims they can offer to all those issues.

"We believe that the people of Greene and Delaware Counties want to join the global transition to renewable technologies with us," McSpedon wrote. "We of-

fer jobs, training, growth for local workers and investment into the local towns and communities."

Our emails were exchanged on Tuesday. On Wednesday, McSpedon sent me a text, stating, "Hughes Energy was not connected nor involved in any way with the Limerick facility. Any statement otherwise is factually incorrect."

We also had an informal phone conversation on Wednesday where my takeaway was he and I agree what matters most is getting to the truth.

Unfortunately, two years into this thing, the truth is inexplicably floaty in terms of what Hughes Energy does and how many of these autoclave businesses, if any, are actively revolutionizing the garbage industry.

So what the Trash Spies want to know is, if

And what the Trash Spies want to know is, will Prattsville and Grand Gorge and Planet Earth be better places to live with 150,000 tons of garbage being steadily trucked into the Schoharie Valley every year?

And maybe it doesn't amount to a hill of decaying beans but what the Hughes Energy really want to know is, how and why did Prattsville and Grand Gorge get so lucky and what in heaven's name could be so threateningly non-disclosable in all those NDAs?

MESSAGE OF HOPE BY SISTER CHIRYA

## Moral Values and Virtues Are Caught, Not Taught

over time and are false. How do we free ourselves from falsehood? When we connect to God who is Truth, we draw that energy down into us. We then recognize falsehood, waste and negativity do not belong to us. The awareness of our original goodness and truth gives hope and happiness to us and others.

We now understand every action has its seed in a thought and every thought is a creation of myself, the soul, the thinker. I choose my

thoughts and as is my thinking, so are my actions and experience in life. "No man is born great by birth but to achieve greatness one must do great actions. A person is identified by his actions, so let by-gones be by-gones. Instead we must vow to do great actions and aim at transforming our lives. Consider this not a jail but a reform home." BK Sisters addressing inmates in Madhya Pradesh, India.

Going within, I touch the stillness and pure love at the center of my being, and every thought I create from this space benefits myself and humanity. "When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace." - Jimmy Hendrix.

Have a peaceful, loving and happy holiday!

Contact: Yvonne Chirya Risely bkchirya@gmail.com chirya.risely@peacevil-lageretreat.org

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