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Egregious Corporate Pollution – *DuPont: Decades of Shocking Malpractice*
Billy Martin
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Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas echoed the sentiment “Corporations were now armed with constitutional prerogatives” following the ruling of *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Co.* setting the precedent that under 14th Amendment, corporations are legal entities akin to that of a human being. Incapable of bleeding, breathing, or dying, the ruling of the case should not have granted corporations such rights. The big problem now, I’d say, is how the corporation’s concentration of power has exceeded the granted rights given to humans. We now ask our self: is it ‘just’ that companies are human? Plato described ‘justice’ as a sense of social consciousness that internally leads to a harmonious society. Unfortunately, such notion is a farce when looking at the current state of private firms in America.

So, what does the current market situation look like? Holistically, American markets are thriving, due to large tax cuts and vibrant capital flow. But there are no positives for such success as we continue to see corporation’s overstepping legal boundaries. This negligence towards the American legal system is best illustrated through DuPont chemical company. Since 1991, the privately held firm has been linked to roughly 489 cancer cases. As more cancer cases rose, investigators found a common trend amongst each individual – exposure to DuPont’s C8 chemical. Now, I will not confuse you, but C8 is a commercially modified acid that is a key component when creating non-stick coatings commonly used in household goods and tires. Like any acid, when exposed to high levels of toxicity, your immune system will break down, ultimately increasing your vulnerability to cancer and other diseases.

DuPont’s negligence is highlighted in a recent class-action lawsuit. Surrounded by the deep Appalachian forest, Parkersburg, West Virginia is home to DuPont's largest factory. Thirty-five times the size of the Pentagon, DuPont employs half the town while providing a salary double the average in Appalachia. Now, from a benign perspective, DuPont is providing better economic wellbeing to the town. However, that is far from the truth. In a recent case study of DuPont's negligence, investigators highlighted the abrupt deaths of cows belonging to Parkersburg farmer Wilbur Tennant. From a closer glance, Tennant found liver patches along the cows while also observing blue lips and black teeth. Confused and worried, Tennant found himself walking the outskirts of his farm. As he made his way to the corner, he saw a buildup of white froth in a small stream that his cows often drink from. Taking note of his farm’s proximity to the Dry Run Landfill creek that runs into that ‘said’ stream, Tennant believed the groundwater was tainted. Tennant soon realized that years earlier, DuPont bought the landfill. Months passed and environmental agencies soon found that DuPont was dumping large quantities of C8 into the river that ran through Tennant’s farm. Due to the high exposure of C8, Tennants cows were dying. Likewise, the C8 soon contaminated groundwater of Parkersburg which displaced 100,000 people.

Here are the facts about DuPont's C8 chemical. For the past decades, DuPont's chemicals are estimated to negatively impact roughly 50,000 lives each year. Each year the chemical union files for a federal investigation where DuPont curbs any substantive investigations. Arguably the most sobering fact was that in 1955, DuPont knew that C8 caused cancer but did not disclose such information. Instead, it took them 22 years in 1977 to finally release the information. Yet, they continue to produce C8.

Using the ruling from *Santa Clara v. Pacific* it is only fair to treat DuPont like a human; so, tax them heavily. Realizing there are other chemical firms, I propose a weighted adjustment tax that is valued on each firm's produced environmental damage. For example, in DuPont's case, this tax would match that of their harmful emissions. Whereas a firm like Sherwin-Williams will be taxed based on how much damage they are producing. Paired with the proposed tax policy, there will be a hypothetical optimal line of produced damage running parallel to current production. If each firm lowers its production to this line, then their tax will be lowered due to 'good' environmental procedures. Through this adjustment tax, we will properly address and abate the current problem of corporations like DuPont overstepping their legal boundary.

So, what is the future of DuPont? Roger Waters of Pink Floyd sung "another brick in the wall" which is similar to my sentiment - DuPont is another "brick in the wall" of corporations profiting off private interest. However, through imposed oversight and weighted taxation, the wall, benefiting from the ruling from *Santa Clara v. Pacific* will soon collapse eventually bringing a sense of 'justice' that Plato adamantly fought for centuries ago.

Work Cited

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