

Comments of Joel Hulseley of the Hudson Antiques Dealers Association and Hudson Valley Preservation Coalition, to the US Army Corps of Engineers, March 18, 2003

re: St Lawrence Cement

My name is Joel Hulseley. I'm speaking today for the Hudson Antiques Dealers Association. We are members of the Hudson Valley Preservation Coalition, who in turn are among the intervenors against SLC. The Hudson Antiques Dealers Association has 63 dealer members.

Because I have a child with asthma, I became concerned about SLC in 1999, when I also became aware of what the project entails.

Here are just a couple of the reasons I'm opposed:

We need better air quality. Now. Instead of improving air quality, SLC designed a replacement plant that would actually impair it. How can this be so? Because their primary objective has been to triple production of cement. The incentive to do that is great. The parent company, Holcim, Ltd says this would drop its costs from 45

dollars at Catskill to as little as 20 dollars for every ton of cement made at Greenport. That adds up to a stupendous amount of money when you multiply it by the projected annual output. (About three years ago SLC publicists were going up and down the valley telling newspaper editors the Greenport Project is “not your father’s Oldsmobile”? Sure it isn’t. It’s a lot more like the diesel-spewing Winnebago he traded it for.) So, because the proposed plant is expected to be, pound-for-pound, more efficient in the ratio of air emissions-to-finished product, they could tell a white lie and say the process will be “cleaner.”

And they have told this lie over and over again. But the air will not be cleaner. There will be a lot more Volatile Organic Compounds and Oxides of Nitrogen, just to name two classes of pollutants that make bad air, bad health, and shorten lives. There would also be unmitigated negative impacts from particulate emissions, and not just those which could be curtailed by improvements in bag-house technology or stack design, but those which escape from a slew of non-combustion sources in the different stages of mining, manufacturing, handling and shipping. The potential harm and aggravation from these impacts on residents of Hudson and

Greenport has been swept under the rug. It's time to roll it back and take a hard look.

How about pay day? Where are the jobs? How much would the company's operating expenditures actually benefit the county? Typically, SLC's advertising proclaims a glittering bonanza, but their applications own up to a starker reality: after the construction phase, the company's spending would show little or no change from its current level. And neither would employment. The closest most people in Columbia County will ever get to working for SLC is probably what you see before you today: a few folks in blue shirts warming seats at a public hearing.

From the first day SLC pitched this project, it fatally misunderstood the changes occurring in the city of Hudson. It aggressively sought to marginalize the city's antiques dealers and artists as unwelcome and uncomprehending outsiders or newcomers clashing with the aspirations of the area's natives and established residents. SLC must have believed there existed a benefit to creating a false impression of support for the project; support they failed to achieve, even after three years of pandering and paying to get it.

It's apparent now that what began as the revitalization of retail business along a once blighted stretch of Hudson's main street is no longer a tentative trend. Neither is the pronounced upsurge in reinvestment, owner occupancy, restoration and revitalization of the area's historic commercial and residential properties. Rather, there is a growing commitment among residents to build a quality of life and community that draws inspiration, sustenance, and support from the special beauty which is rooted in the history and uniqueness especially of Hudson, but of Athens and Claverack, too. It's madness to take that for granted, or permit its being threatened, we believe.

We wish to see land use and development—whether it is industrial or otherwise—which is intelligently scaled to the landscape as well as the built environment, that demonstrates a readiness and capacity to comply with the highest environmental quality standards—which fully offsets or mitigates its own negative impacts—and which enhances and encourages, along with prosperity, the growth of humanity and civility in our community.

The eminent American historian, Roger Kennedy, has opened his wonderful new book with relevant words that I want to share with you:

“The land is where we live and where the consequences of our lives accumulate, determining what else we can do and what we can no longer do. The land is thus the book of our lives. Each day we write upon it new pages, some splendid, some sordid, informing our progeny of the truth about us whatever we may write elsewhere.”

We hope you will come to the same conclusion we have—that St Lawrence Cement Co fails this simple set of standards—and will deny their application for permits.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today.

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