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GREENPEACE

Greenpeace • 1436 U Street NW • Washington DC 20009 • Tel (202) 462-1177
Tlx 89-2359 • Fax (202) 462-4507

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Contact: Bill Walker in San Francisco, 415/512-9025
Tamara Stark in Toronto, Canada 416/345-8408

CLOROX COMPANY'S PUBLIC RELATIONS "CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN" LEAKED TO GREENPEACE

Seattle, WA (GP) -- A public relations "Crisis Management Plan" prepared for the Clorox Corporation and leaked to Greenpeace recommends labeling environmental critics as "terrorists," threatening to sue "unalterably green" journalists, and dispatching "independent scientists" on media tours as means to counteract bad news for the chlorine industry.

The plan, prepared by the public relations division of Ketchum Communications, was apparently prompted by fears that the environmental group would target household use of chlorine bleach and call for its elimination.

Greenpeace has an international program aimed at ending the use of chlorine in the pulp and paper industry. Its slogan "Chlorine-Free by 1993" is cited in the Clorox plan, which outlines numerous "worst case scenarios" in which Greenpeace and "unalterably green" journalists figure prominently.

"They failed to anticipate the worst of worst case scenarios," said Shelley Stewart, Greenpeace toxics campaigner. "That some conscientious person would obtain the plan, and leak it to us."

Greenpeace verified that Ketchum Communications, a Pittsburgh-based firm which is one of the nation's largest advertising and public relations entities, is under contract to Clorox. One portion of the leaked document is comprised of a fax transmission between two Ketchum offices.

"Lying is a growth industry," Stewart said of such PR firms. "The truth is that chlorine is a chemical whose days are numbered. Its use has created some of the most intractable environmental problems in history." Water pollution from use of chlorine in the paper industry has contaminated waterways throughout the world. Chlorine is the base chemical in DDT, PCBs, Agent Orange, CFCs and many other persistent toxic pollutants.

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Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the Clorox plan is that while it's clear that the company knows it has a genuine environmental problem on its hands, the document suggests that Clorox feels more threatened by a public interest group like Greenpeace than they do by the federal authorities.

The Crisis Plan makes reference to studies linking chlorine use to cancer, and with remarkable candor suggests ways to discredit the findings if they ever became public. Ketchum recommends that Clorox should "cast doubts on the methodology and findings," of potentially damaging scientific reports which haven't yet been written.

The PR firm also recommends labeling Greenpeace as violent self-seeking "eco-terrorists;" attempting to sue newspaper columnists who advocate use of non-toxic bleaches and cleaners for the home; "immunizing" government officials; dispatching "independent" scientists on media tours; and recruiting "scientific ambassadors" to tout the Clorox cause and call for further study.

While "crisis" public relations specialists have been deployed to effect spin control on virtually every major environmental issue in recent years, the chlorine industry has been a prolific consumer of the type of service outlined in the Ketchum memo.

The Clorox PR strategy sounded familiar to Stewart. "We've seen the same kinds of ploys coming from the American Paper Institute and the Chlorine Institute surrounding the toxicity of dioxin," she said.

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Copies of the Ketchum/Clorox Crisis Management Plan are available from Greenpeace's offices in Washington, DC, Seattle, San Francisco, and Toronto, Canada.