

## Little Enough or Too Much Teaching Notes

### *What Are the Relevant Facts?*

1. X Chemical has a public policy of doing all that it can to protect the environment from harmful materials.
2. X Chemical's plant on the East River is releasing more waste than the company originally intended.
3. The plant supervisor feels meeting the government's standard, even if it is wrong, is all that the company is required to do; he refuses to do more.
4. There is a reasonable chance that the company is endangering the environment, but there is no definite proof at this time.

### *What Are the Ethical Issues?*

1. Does the company have the obligation to protect the environment even if it means going beyond government standards?
2. Is the company living up to its public promise?
3. To what extent is Bryan responsible for taking action and informing others inside the company, such as the Vice President of Operations?
4. If no one in the company will listen, should Bryan go to others outside the company (the government agency, the media, etc.) to bring this situation to their attention?

### *Who Are the Primary Stakeholders?*

- Bryan and all other employees of X Chemical
- Stockholders of the company
- The wildlife, livestock, people, etc, dependent on East River for food and/or water
- The recreational users of East River

### *What Are the Possible Alternatives?*

1. Try to gather data from the engineers and chemists involved in the initial plan to provide hard evidence for Bryan's concerns, and approach Bill Gates again.
2. Inform the VP of Operations, and let him/her follow it up.
3. Become a "whistle blower," and approach persons outside the company to see that action is taken.
4. Do nothing.

### *What Are the Ethics of the Alternatives?*

- Ask questions based on a "utilitarian" perspective. For example:
  1. What alternative results in the greatest benefits for the greatest number of people?
  2. How should the costs of potential harmful waste be measured? How does this compare with the business costs of adding the additional process?
  3. How do the benefits of being environmentally safe compare with those of following the government's standards?
  4. Do the benefits of being true to the company's public policy outweigh the profits possible by following the letter of the law?
- Ask questions based on a "rights" perspective. For example:
  1. What rights do the various stakeholders have, including Bryan and the employees of X Chemical, stockholders, the communities dependent on East River, and recreational users of East River?
  2. Does X Chemical or its employees have any duties, fiduciary or otherwise, to any of the stakeholders?
  3. Are the rights of any of the stakeholders being violated by what the company is presently doing?
  4. What does each stakeholder have a right to expect from the others?
  5. How do the stakeholders outside X Chemical expect it to act?
  6. Does X Chemical have any duty to the other stakeholders?
- Ask questions based on a "justice" perspective. For example:
  1. Which alternatives most fairly distribute the benefits and burdens among the various stakeholders?
  2. Which stakeholders carry the greatest burden in each alternative?

3. Can X Chemical ever recompense those wronged if they are indeed releasing a harmful amount of materials?

*What Are the Practical Constraints?*

1. Bryan has a job to do at the plant, and he does not have a lot of time to commit to the pursuit of his concerns.
2. Bryan will need hard evidence to make changes occur since he is new and relatively unknown in the company.

3. There could be a deliberate cover-up of sensitive information that could result in Bryan's being fired if he starts looking too hard.

*What Actions Should Be Taken?*

1. What should Bryan do?
2. What would be the "best" action(s) to take?
3. What would you do if you were in Bryan's position?
4. What ethical theories (utilitarian, rights, justice) seem most relevant to this situation? Which provides the clearest course of action? Is this necessarily the best course of action?