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September 15, 2015

# When Corporate Greed is a Crime

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**Sept. 22, 2015 Yesterday, the ceo of Peanut Corp. of America was sentenced to 29 years in prison, not for murder or even manslaughter in the deaths of nine (so far), but rather for defrauding Kellogg corporation with a tainted product.**

### **When Corporate Greed is a Crime**

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*Friday Feb 20th, 2009 6:30 PM*

America has been transmogrified into a nation rotting with greed at its industrial and financial core. The Wall Street meltdown is only the latest and most spectacular manifestation of this bitter reality. Corporate crime is the corrosive rot at the core of America's financial meltdown, and the crime bosses eagerly accept federal bailouts of one trillion dollars from their handmaidens-the U.S. Congress.

When Corporate Greed is a Crime

By Gil Villagrán, MSW

Once known the world over as a land of milk and honey, where honest work provided a livelihood to raise a family, America has been transmogrified into a nation rotting with greed at its industrial and financial core. The Wall Street meltdown is only the latest and most spectacular manifestation of this bitter reality. The January outbreak of salmonella poisoning of peanut products from a Georgia processing plant that killed eight and poisoned 529 (so far) is due to the perfect storm of: 1. Decreased government regulation and inspection, 2. Industries determined to maximize profits at any cost--including the safety of its product. The Peanut Corporation of America on at least 12 occasions knowingly shipped its processed peanut products after detecting deadly salmonella contamination. The 3rd condition for this killer storm is a business model seeking immediate and ever higher profits out of every manufacturing plant, higher output by every worker, and reducing expendable worker or product safety measures.

This business model of short-term profits may be good for the shareholders and CEOs avaricious for profit on stocks, payouts and bonuses; however, poisoning your customers is not a sustainable business plan. Similarly, a federal government that closed seven of its thirteen food inspection laboratories is courting public health disasters with toxic food, medicines, cosmetics, and other home products. The Georgia peanut-processing plant had not been inspected since 2001, when Canadian officials alerted U.S. inspectors, who found metal fragments in the product. No further oversight took place afterward. If the public cannot trust government inspectors to do their job, then low paid employees are not likely to be more vigilant when the boss says, "We must get this product shipped as it is costing our bottom line!" Every employee knows "bottom line equals job." So the salmonella peanuts were shipped to school lunch programs, senior centers, to 53 companies making 430 food products. Our new dictum: Eat at your own risk!

Thousands of preventable illness and deaths are not the result of accidental contamination, but are in fact intentional corporate crimes to maximize profits by manufacturing and selling known tainted products. Certainly other nations suffer even more outrageous corporate crimes. Last year a Chinese dairy watered down milk with the banned chemical, melamine, used to make plastics and fertilizer, to increase its volume and appear to have higher protein content. At least six babies died and 300,000 are expected to suffer life-long kidney disease.

The tainted milk was sold to 21 dairy producers, including exporters of baby formula, chocolate and yogurt. Also last year a Chinese pharmaceutical exported cough syrup mixed with an industrial solvent used in anti-freeze that killed 94 people in Panama alone.

Most corporate criminals are never caught, if caught blame lowly subordinates whose "sloppy work" led to the contamination, or lawyer their way to plea-bargains of home detention in mansions. However, for some high profile cases, at least in China, show trials have resulted in several executions of both the corporate heads and the government officials bribed to look the other way. So far, in the latest U.S. financial meltdown, not one Wall Street or banking CEO has been prosecuted, has been finger-printed, or seen the inside of a jail cell.

Bernard Madoff, the formerly highly respected investment strategist and political donor, now revealed as a master swindler in a \$50 billion Ponzi scheme is under house arrest in his Central Park penthouse. While thousands of his naïve investors including charities, university endowments, retirement funds, local government agencies, tuition trust accounts, and celebrity investors have diminished or evaporated accounts. Will Madoff ever be prosecuted, sentenced and actually serve in prison? With the best lawyers that one can buy with other people's money: highly unlikely. If you dress a swindler in a tuxedo, he will likely be addressed as: Sir, Mayor, CEO or Senator. Corporate crime is the corrosive rot at the core of America's financial meltdown, and the crime bosses eagerly accept federal bailouts of one trillion dollars from their handmaidens-the U.S. Congress. Δ