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Open Letter to Members of British Trade Unions, Community Activists, and Public Officials Concerning Covanta Energy

We write to bring to your attention an industrial dispute between union workers in Massachusetts and Covanta Energy – a U.S.-based multinational that is currently seeking to build trash incinerators in the U.K. – and also to request your support.

In May 2008, employees at Covanta’s incinerator in Rochester, Massachusetts voted in a government-supervised election for representation by our union. Since then, management has frustrated meaningful bargaining by proposing numerous intolerable contract demands, including:

- ✓ Work rules prohibiting any solicitation or distribution of “unauthorized” material anywhere on “company property” or on “company time” – a type of anti-union rule that has been declared illegal under U.S. labour law for over 60 years
- ✓ A demand that workers may be terminated if they “act in a manner that causes harm to . . . the Company’s interests [or] reputation”
- ✓ A rule broadly forbidding employees from providing “information” about the Company to “media representatives, governmental officials or other person,” including any “external attorney” or “investigator,” without management’s prior approval

These proposals were taken directly from Covanta’s employee handbook, which the company enforces at all of its U.S. locations – including at non-union facilities where workers have no union to defend them against unfair company conduct. Although the company withdrew these proposals from the bargaining table in late September, they still remain as official company policy in Covanta’s handbook.

We believe these policies improperly coerce workers from speaking out against any concerns they may have about their working conditions or the company’s operations, and that Covanta’s bargaining tactics are designed to discourage our members’ efforts to win the protections of a first union contract.

Union workers in the U.S. are standing up against Covanta’s corporate bullying, and they need your support. *In the U.K., Covanta is seeking approval for trash incinerator projects for Cheshire and Buckinghamshire Counties, and is also competing for an incinerator contract in Merseyside.*

We ask trade union members, community activists, and others in the U.K. to distribute this message as widely as possible. Please urge community leaders, local elected officials, and MPs in the communities Covanta hopes to do business to challenge Covanta’s hostility to workers’ rights.

Thank you for your support, and please contact us for more information about Covanta Energy.

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