



AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE *by Henrik Ibsen*

BURGOMASTER: Oh, the public has no need for new ideas. The public gets on best with the good old recognized ideas it has already. Yes, I must speak frankly to you for once. I have tried to avoid it, for I know how irritable you are; but now I must tell you the truth, Thomas. You have no conception how much you injure yourself by your officiousness. You complain of the authorities, ay, of the Government itself--you cry them down and maintain that you have been slighted, persecuted. But what else can you expect, with your impossible disposition? Yes, Thomas, you are an impossible man to work with. I know that from experience. You have no consideration for any one or any thing; you seem to quite forget that you have me to thank for your position as medical officer of the Baths--and I can see that you are again seeking an outlet for your pugnacity. You want to make an onslaught on your superiors--that is an old habit of yours. You cannot endure any authority over you; you look askance at any one who holds a higher post than your own; you regard him as a personal enemy--and then you care nothing what kind of weapon you use against him. I have shown you how much is at stake for the town, and consequently for me too. And therefore I warn you, Thomas, that I am inexorable in the demand I am about to make of you! As you have not had the sense to refrain from chattering to outsiders about this delicate business, which should have been kept an official secret, of course it cannot now be hushed up. All sorts of rumours will get abroad, and evil-disposed persons will invent all sorts of additions to them. It will therefore be necessary for you publicly to contradict these rumours. We expect that, after further investigation, you will come to the conclusion that the affair is not nearly so serious or pressing as you had at first imagined. Furthermore, we expect you to express your confidence that the Board of Directors will thoroughly and conscientiously carry out all measures for the remedying of any possible defects. The matter in question is not a purely scientific one; it is a complex affair; it has both a technical and an economic side. You may speak your mind as you please--so long as it does not concern the Baths--but I cannot allow you to interfere with the town's chief source of prosperity. As a subordinate official, you have no right to express any conviction at odds with that of your superiors. If you do so, I will be unable to prevent your dismissal from the Baths. You have had your warning now. Reflect on what is due to yourself and to your family. Goodbye.