NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

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Standing Up to Anthrax

The final anthrax tests on Gov. Pataki's Midtown offices came back negative yesterday, and what a relief that is. Now the gov has *somewhere* to hang his hat when he's reminding New York how important it is that everything get back to normal as soon as possible.

In Washington, congressional leaders spent the weekend agonizing about going back to business as usual after an anthrax scare in the House of Representatives.

Both Pataki and the House leadership headed for the hills on learning of evidence that anthrax spores had been discovered in their places of business — the difference being that the House had *cause for real concern.*

As did we here at The Post.

A colleague is one of several Americans who have contracted the disease — apparently as the result of a concerted effort to sow fear and confusion in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks.

The plot apparently wasn't meant to harm large numbers of people: If it had been, anthrax wouldn't have been the infectious agent of choice.

For the most part, anthrax is a very difficult disease to spread. It is even harder to catch — and is is *extraordinarily* easy to cure.

(Indeed, our colleague was cured before anyone even knew she *had* it.)

Anthrax is not smallpox, in other words. Nor is it the plague.

So when The Post received hard evidence that it had been targeted with anthrax spores, the decision to sit tight and let the experts do their tests wasn't at all difficult.

Yes, simple precautions were taken to minimize public-health hazards.

And then it became a matter of waiting for test results.

In the interim, we did what we do best: Publish a newspaper.

And we most emphatically chose *not* to contribute to the low-grade, but then-steadily growing, public hysteria by shutting down our offices and shooing our employees out into the streets.

Wrong call? We don't think so.

Those who reacted differently no doubt had their reasons, as hard to discern as they seem to be.

These are difficult times. Sept. 11 did indeed change things — for all Americans, probably forever.

Certainly no American can reasonably feel exempt by virtue of geography from the worldwide struggle for peace and freedom.

The risks need no elaboration here.

Suffice it to say that if the anthrax scare has taught America a lesson in the value of — and the need for — leadership, it probably will have served a useful purpose after all.

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