

# Waste Not

The Weekly Reporter  
for rational  
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# 11

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WALL STREET JOURNAL, JUNE 16, 1988, REPORTS ON THE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUAGMIRE OF INCINERATION. In a lengthy article, beginning on the front page, staff reporter Bill Richards reported: (full article available from WASTE NOT, please send SASE)

- \* Broward County, Florida, "plans to spend nearly \$700 million on a pair of resource recovery plants (WHEELABRATOR & WASTE MANAGEMENT INC)...The 131,000 residents of Pompano Beach and two other Broward communities will take no part in the big project. They're building a recycling and composting plant instead. 'Mass incineration is astronomically expensive and environmentally hazardous,' says Pompano Beach City Commissioner Michael N. Gomes."
- \* "The garbage crisis has promoted the construction of 73 waste-to-energy plants around the country, with hundreds more planned at a combined costs of more than \$18 billion ...More than \$3 billion in projects have been scrapped in the past 18 months, and new orders have slowed to a trickle."
- \* "Robert A. Epler, the head of resource recovery for San Diego, says public officials today are repeating the utilities' mistake (what the nuclear plant building binge was to electric utilities in the 1970s) in moving toward bigger and costlier projects instead of alternatives, mainly recycling...'Wast-to-energy is no longer one of the options available to San Diego,' says Mr. Epler, the recovery official."
- \* "...new incinerators are proving far more expensive than many communities dreamed. Some have spent millions of dollars to cover debt costs after revenues from electricity sales failed to meet expectations...Pinellas County, Fla, engineers were startled when the boiler on their new incinerator (WHEELABRATOR), which was supposed to last 20 years, began disintegrating in less than a year. The retrofit cost: \$5 million."
- \* "Perhaps more worrisome, the incinerators are burdening communities with thousands of tons of ash so laden with toxic heavy metals that it can be legally dumped in only a few places. Environmentalists are pressing for tough enforcement of federal dumping laws, which so far have been ignored, but industry officials warn that could be economically ruinous."
- \* "In Collier County, Fla, officials dropped plans for an incinerator (WESTINGHOUSE-SHAWMUT) last year after issuing \$88 million in bonds for it. 'We took another look at the risks and decided to pull out and protect ourselves,' says Arnold Lee Glass, the head of the board of commissioners."
- \* "Incineration problems go beyond Nimbys. Power sales have been disappointing, but many places are counting heavily on the sales to help pay the plants' big bond debts. In Tampa, Deputy Auditor Alan Nicks dismisses promoters' revenue projections as 'just guesses' after his city was forced to make up a two-year, \$7 million revenue shortfall at its new incinerator." (OGDEN MARTIN, 1,200 tpd)
- \* "Tuscaloosa, Ala, critics nicknamed their incinerator the 'Tuscaloosa Turkey' and local officials sued the manufacturer, CONSUMAT SYSTEMS INC., for \$20 million after the plant lost money during its first 34 months of operation."
- \* "Tests last November by the US EPA found that a quarter of the ash collected from energy incinerators in Tennessee, Ohio and Pennsylvania was polluted by toxic metal."

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- \* "Broward County's (FL) two plants alone will churn out 14,000 tons of polluted fly ash a year." (WHEELABRATOR & WASTE MANAGEMENT INC.)
- \* "The Environmental Defense Fund is suing for stricter enforcement of federal ash-dumping laws at WHEELABRATOR's Peekskill, N.Y. incinerator and another operated by the city of Chicago (METCALF & EDDY). Industry officials say such enforcement could raise the operating costs at some incinerators as much as a hundredfold."
- \* "As resource recovery's problems have multiplied, recycling has enjoyed a renaissance. Boston's and N.Y.'s ports now export more recycled paper and scrap metal than any other commodity."
- \* "Los Angeles, which dropped plans for three large incinerators after Mayor Tom Bradley withdrew his support last year, plans to recycle and compost as much as half of its trash. 'We made a mistake,' says Michael M. Miller, the manager of L.A.'s solid waste task force. 'Reducing the waste stream first makes a lot more sense.'"

**ENGINEERING & ECONOMIC FAILURE: 400 TPD PENNSYLVANIA ENGINEERING CORP (PEC) MASS BURN.**  
 The N.Y. Dutchess County Resource Recovery Agency (DCRRA) contracted with PEC (Pittsburg) to construct a 400 tpd mass-burn in Poughkeepsie with a WESTINGHOUSE-O'CONNOR combustor. Start up was June 1, 1987, and test burning "revealed mechanical failures in virtually all of the plants component systems and the plant is now completely shut down pending major repairs," (Newsday, L.I. section, 6-13-88). The costs were \$53 million, of which \$40 million was obtained through municipal bonds and \$13 million from the N.Y. State 1972 Environmental Quality Bond Act, which has helped subsidize most of N.Y.'s incinerators. The plant shut down in March 1988 and while it was operating the tip fee was \$59 a ton, but that didn't cover the costs of transporting and landfilling the ash to MODERN LANDFILL, Model City, NY, over 300 miles away. The DCRRA is a public benefit corporation initiated by the Dutchess County legislature in 1982. According to Newsday (6-13, L.I. section) PEC is building a mass-burn incinerator in Islip, L.I., "from virtually identical design. The stakes for resource recovery industry are even higher in Islip because the \$38.4 million plant at L.I. Mac Arthur airport is the first of at least 8 new facilities planned for L.I...Within the tight circle of people who build resource recovery plants and arrange their financing the mechanical failures in Dutchess are increasingly viewed as an embarrassment and another threat to the industry's credibility...Financial records of PEC, which is controlled by embattled corporate raider, Victor Posner, shows Posner has increased the indebtedness of the cash-starved company so he could finance the acquisition of other firms...A recent company report detailed its precarious financial position and concluded 'there can be no assurance' Penn. Engineering can raise enough money to avoid Chapter 11 bankruptcy or to complete the Islip or Dutchess facility...Unless burning begins soon Dutchess officials acknowledge that they do not have adequate contingency funds to keep paying off the debt service on their facility..."

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