

EDITORIAL: NO EXPORT OF WASTE

If there is one overriding principle (or ethic) that underpins the philosophy of **Work on Waste-USA** it is that waste is a man-made phenomenon and as such, there is need for each household, each business, each industry, each hospital, and each community to take responsibility for its own waste. Waste is the visible face of inefficiency. There are no magic machines and no magic places for waste to go. We have to unmake waste. That is an organizational problem not a technological one. However, as more and more communities defeat mass-burning and mass-landfilling projects, we are finding that the short-sighted reflex of too many officials is not to address the real causes of the problem but, instead, to export the problem to someone else. At the generator end, this is sometimes euphemistically called a "regional solution." What it really means is that one community is getting rid of its problems at the expense of another. The rich are dumping on the poor. The politically powerful are dumping on the politically weak. More and more of our waste is ending up in poor rural areas, in minority areas, and even in Indian reservations. At the receiver end, communities are beguiled with sales hype about "economic development" and "jobs." Frequently, the pitch is that the waste-to-energy generating facility will be the natural stepping stone to an industrial park, with even more development and even more jobs. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. Becoming a "dump" town signals the very end of development, not the beginning. If it begins anything, it begins the slippery slope to becoming a "sacrifice area" - the site of each new undesirable project as it comes along. In this issue of **Waste Not** we carry a story from the Chicago area which epitomizes this issue. It is brought to us by Robert Shannon, a member of **Suburbs United to Reclaim the Environment**. The last item in this newsletter is a list of common sense questions communities should ask when faced with a regional waste disposal facility, dressed up as "economic development."

ILLINOIS: VILLAGE OF ROBBINS, POPULATION 8,800, IS SITE OF PROPOSED 1,200 TPD READING ENERGY CO. INCINERATOR. READING OFFERS TOWN: STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS, INCINERATOR JOBS, FREE DISPOSAL SERVICE AND A PERCENTAGE OF INCINERATOR TIP FEES.

"As mayor of a town fighting bankruptcy and drugs, and with no other prospects, Irene Brodie says Robbins is staking its survival on trash...Brodie is counting on a \$200 million incinerator - scheduled to open in 1993 - to turn 1,600 tons of garbage a day into badly needed dollars for the village. Pennsylvania-based **Reading Energy Co.** wants to build the incinerator at 134th Street and Kedzie Avenue to burn 1,200 tons of trash a day. Another 400 tons of materials would be diverted for recycling...The project will be the subject of a public hearing at 7 p.m. March 7 at Kellar School, 139th and Lydia streets. But the **Illinois Environmental Protection Agency** already has said the project would comply with pollution-control rules and is expected to grant a permit. It won't come without opposition, say environmentalists who have lined up against all nine of the incinerators proposed at one time or another for the region... (Mayor) Brodie's stand at that hearing will be unmistakable. 'I am going to be tenacious about this thing,' she said of her support for the incinerator, which would bring cash, an expanded tax base and additional development to Robbins. For example, Brodie said **Robbins Resource Recovery**, a subsidiary of **Reading Energy**, was offering Robbins scholarships for its students, some of the 80 incinerator jobs, free disposal service and a percentage of the fees it receives from incinerator customers. Robbins will also profit by selling 1 million gallons of water a day to the firm along with other agreements worth a total of \$750,000 to \$1 million a year to the town of 8,800 people...One Chicago activist said Robbins' debt, drug abuse and infrastructure problems were what drew incinerator developers in the first place to places such as Ford Heights, Harvey and Robbins - among Chicago's poorest suburbs...Brodie hopes the project will bring other businesses,

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drawn by incinerator=supplied steam and electrical power - such as a hydroponics plant - to a planned business park. Now, industry is non-existent. Robbins also needs more police, neighborhood repairs and some money to patch up its **decaying water service system**. 'It has to be right now. We are having a hard time keeping Robbins open. I don't know anything else to do,' Brodie said..." Southtown Economist, IL, 1-28-90, page A-3. For more information contact Robert D. Shannon, **Suburbs United to Reclaim the Environment**, Box 822, Dolton, IL 60419. Tel: 708-849-1647.

COMMON SENSE QUESTION ON REGIONAL WASTE FACILITIES

1. Who is getting the benefits of this project?
2. Who is getting the **risks**?
3. Are the answers to #1 and 2 the same? **If not, why not?**
4. Who chose your **site**?
5. Was it chosen for: **environmental, economic, or political** reasons?
6. Is there a competition **for** this project from other communities?
7. Have other communities **rejected** this project?
8. If this project is perceived as **undesirable** by the majority of citizens, will it have a **negative** impact on **property values**?
9. Is there anyone in your community **for** this project? Why?
10. How would this impact affect the community's **tax base**?
11. If property or persons are damaged by the project, who has **liability**?
12. What is the extent of the **liability insurance**?
13. Is the technology proposed the **only** solution? The **best** solution? Should other steps be taken first?
14. Has there been any **independent** assessment of the: **economic, environmental, health risks**?
15. Is the favorable information for this project coming from anyone but the **vendor**?
16. Is the **state** in favor of this project?
17. If the project is a **regional** solution, does the state believe that your site is the most appropriate in the region. Why?
18. How will the state **monitor** and enforce regs.? What is the state's track record like in this regard?
19. What is the **track record** of the company?
 - a. Is their **technology** sound?
 - b. Is their **operational history** satisfactory?
 - c. Are they buying off-the-shelf equipment which they have never run before as a company?
 - d. Are they **trustworthy**?
20. If the answers to **most** of the above questions are **unsatisfactory**, your main battle is going to be in the **political area**. **Who are the political targets?**

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"WASTE NOT" HAS A FAX MACHINE, purchased to facilitate "hot" news items. The fax number is: **315-379-0448**.

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