

Waste Not

The Weekly Reporter
for rational
resource management

#94

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March 15, 1990

THE PLASTICS INDUSTRY ESTIMATES IT WILL COST \$50 MILLION A YEAR FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS TO COUNTERACT THE "TIDAL WAVE OF GROWING NEGATIVE PUBLIC PERCEPTION" ABOUT PLASTICS.

PLASTICS. *Waste Not* received a "Confidential - Not for General Distribution" letter signed by Larry Thomas of **The Society of the Plastics Industry**, dated 12-22-89. The letter read: "The image of plastics among consumers is deteriorating at an alarmingly fast pace. Opinion research experts tell us that it has plummeted so far and so fast, in fact, that we are approaching a 'point of no return.' Public opinion polls during the '80s show that an increasing percentage of the general public believes plastics are harmful to health and the environment. That percentage rose sharply from 56% in 1988 to 72 percent in 1989. At this rate we will soon reach a point from which it will be impossible to recover our credibility. (**Witness what happened to the nuclear energy industry.**) However, we still have a narrow window of opportunity. Decisions in the next 30-60 days may well determine not only the viability of the plastics industry as we know it today but also the profitability of your company in the future. I want to invite you to participate in that decision-making process at a special meeting of all resin producing companies hosted by SPI's Polymeric Materials Producers Division: January 15, 1990, 1-5pm, Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Washington, DC...Business is being lost. Product growth rates are being dampened. And, stock analysts are beginning to take notice. There is a growing consensus among plastics executives that we must immediately undertake a **major program of unprecedented proportions to reverse this fast-moving tidal wave of growing negative public perception...** The January 15th meeting will feature presentations on the scope of the problem and some innovative concepts to address it. The goal is to demonstrate the critical importance of plastic products and their contributions to environmental progress. [!-Ed.] **It is estimated that this effort will cost upwards of \$50 million a year for the next three years...**" For a full copy of this letter please send a SASE to **Waste Not**.

FLORIDA: INTERVIEW WITH LAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONER RICHARD SCHWARTZ ON THE LAKE COUNTY INCINERATOR - "WE REALLY HAVE A CHOICE, WE CAN EITHER SEND GARBAGE TO THE INCINERATOR OR WE CAN SEND DOLLAR BILLS!"

With the crescendo of citizen opposition to the **Ogden Martin** 528 tpd mass-burn incinerator under construction in Lake County rising, Paul Connett interviewed County Commissioner Richard Schwartz on March 1, 1990, on his concerns about the project. The following are comments made by Commissioner Schwartz in that interview: "Not only did I come into office after the decision [to build the incinerator] was made, but the day I was elected the [old] county commission voted to go ahead." **Paul:** "I understand that you have had some people do some economic studies and they feel, even at this point, it would be cheaper not to run the incinerator at all. Build it, pay off the bonds, but not run it?" **Schwartz:** "It's incredible. When we looked at different scenarios in terms of tonnage, I asked our staff and consultants to come back with what we called a 'zero option' -not firing off the incinerator at all, paying off the bonds, paying off **Ogden Martin**, trying to get them to go away, and the incredible thing was that the cost of doing that was about the same in the early years, and I am convinced in the later years, will actually be less expensive. That's what points out how incredibly bad our deal was - but generally speaking, how incredibly bad incineration, and incineration financially, is. Aside from the environmental aspects...**Paul:** "And if your community recycles so much of the garbage, you are still committed to pay **Ogden Martin** for the committed amount?" **Schwartz:** "Yes. I have been quoted as saying in our local press, **we really have a choice, we can either send garbage to the incinerator or we can send dollar bills!** **That's what it amounts to.**" **Paul:** "What would your advice be to another community out there considering an incinerator deal...?" **Schwartz:** "...the place where I think they have to attack the incinerator is not just environmental - I think they are

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incredibly bad environmentally, because they keep up from doing what we should be doing - where I think they can generate tremendous support from the people in their community is from the economic side. That is one of the things we have attacked here. We have looked at it from an economic standpoint. We have been able to show using their own figures -using Ogden's figures and using the consultant's figures - that we can recycle, we can compost, we can landfill, we can do all of those things for less money than it costs us to incinerate. So economically it is a disaster and particularly if you get into smaller communities, where you have a limited amount of population and limited amount of garbage to begin with, whichis what we have here in Lake County." For the full text of this interview please send a SASE to **Waste Not.**

USED OIL - AN ENVIRONMENTAL TIME BOMB. If you need information, facts and references on used oil contact **Waste Oil Action**. WAO was created to network with groups to deal with the pollution, public health problems and alternatives to discharging 1 billion gallons of toxic waste oil into our environment each year. Consider this: "The Coast Guard estimates that sewage treatment plants discharge twice as much oil into coastal waters as do tanker accidents." According to a report prepared for the U.S. Dept. of Energy: "The potential harm is greater for used oil than with unused oil because the former contains hazardous contaminants which may migrate to ground water along with the oil component...used oil typically contains a number of toxicants in concentrations well above those necessary to cause substantial harm. These constituents, including lead, trichloroethylene, tetrachloroethylene, 1,1,1-trichloroethane, napthalene, benzene, and toluene, have been measured in used oils in large quantities. In general, they are present at levels ranging from 10^2 to 10^7 higher than any health-based standard. Consequently, only a small percentage of the oil's toxicants would need to migrate from the waste oil and escape into the enviroment to pose a hazard to human health and the environment." Waste Oil: Technology, Economics, and Environmental, Health, and Safety Considerations, DOE/EV/10450--H2, January 1987. This DOE study listed the other toxics found in used oil as: arsenic, barium, beryllium, cadmium, carbon tetrachloride, chromium, cyanide, dibromochloromethane, fluoroanthene, mercury, napthalene, nickel, nitrobenzene, phenel, PCBs, PAHs, selenium, 2,3,7,8-TCDD. **Waste Oil Action** will be a great asset to any community group deciding on how to recycle or reuse waste oils. Contact Mark Adams, **WAO**, PO Box 134, Frankenmuth, MI 48734. Tel: 517-624-5536. To receive their packet of information send \$5.00 to **Waste Oil Action**.

"BURNING OLD TIRES TO PRODUCE ELECTRICITY WILL SPREAD IN THE '90s. Paper mills, cement firms and others are already mixing shredded rubber with scrap wood and other fuels to help meet their power requirements. And more cities will add tires to their garbage-to-energy incinerators." Reprinted with permission from The Kiplinger Washington Letter, March 16, 1990 (Vol. 67, #11).

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Letters, articles and calls from the public
welcome.

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CALIFORNIA: ASH FROM OGDEN MARTIN'S 800 TPD MASS-BURN INCINERATOR IN MODESTO "RULED NOT DANGEROUS" BY STATE.

"State health officials say 200 tons of ash produced each day at Stanislaus County's garbage-burning facility are not hazardous. Traces of lead and cadmium found in the ash are too small to be harmful, officials said." Merced Sun-Star, 2-14-90.