

the good stuff
store

Milliken is top supporter

State commission cans bottle ban

By TIM RICHARD

By a 54 vote, the Michigan Resource Recovery Commission opposed a bill favored by Gov. William Milliken to ban non-returnable beverage bottles.

The resolution was strongly opposed in an April 21 public hearing in Lansing by representatives of the Michigan State Chamber of Commerce, the Michigan Council for Convenience Packaging, American Can Co. and the U.S. Brewers Association.

There were no supporting speakers—not even from the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC), which has Milliken's signature on a petition asking for a law banning nonreturnables.

RAY BAKER, former state representa-

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—RRC Chairman Baker

tive from Farmington and now chairman of the resource recovery commission, opposed the resolution, offered by member Thomas J. Blessing Jr. of the Ann Arbor Ecology Center.

"If I were still a member of the legislature," said Baker, "I'd probably vote for it. But members of the legislature get irritated when an appointed board tries to tell them what to do. The legislators feel they're the hard-core representing the people."

The resource recovery commission will need major legislative appropriations in the years ahead, said Baker. Ecology issues are anathema to development-minded legislators from the Upper Peninsula such as State Sen. Joe Mack and State Reps. Dominic Jacobetti and Russell Helman—all of whom are members of appropriations committees.

ALSO OPPOSING the ban on non-returnables were members William Claffio, executive assistant to Detroit's Mayor Coleman Young; James Anderton IV, president of Summit Steel Processing Corp. of Lansing; Stuart Padnos, an executive of a Holland iron and metal company; and Debi Township Supervisor Michael Washington of Goshen County.

Absent was John W. Layman of Livonia, president of Lion Development Co. of Westland and vice-president of Browning Ferris Industries of Detroit.

Favoring the ban were Blessing, Pamela Frucci, city member from Grosse Ile; Ernest Kent, a Chippewa County commissioner and head of the earth science department of Lake Superior State College; South St. Marie; and Henry Webster, chief of the forestry division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

MUCH OF THE ARGUMENT ranged over whether a state agency concerned with recovering resources should be getting involved with a bill that would require a deposit on beverage bottles.

Blessing said it should because eliminating waste at the source is as important as picking it up and recycling it.

Mrs. Frucci said strict enforcement of litter laws is no answer because they can't be enforced against juveniles, who are responsible for much litter.

Kemp said that's now that snow is melting in the U.P., "litter is monumental. It's almost entirely cans and nonreturnable bottles."

Webster called the bottle ban bill "one small step, but long journeys start with a small step."

CLIFFORD, HOWEVER, said he wasn't concerned with litter on rural streets. He was concerned with Detroit's plan to build a resource recovery plant. Without waste products, he said, "this plant may never be built."

Comments by commissioners that the bill would not guarantee less litter were branded later as "unadulterated nonsense" by Thomas J. Washington, executive director of Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

"If there is one thing that this bill is guaranteed to do by requiring deposits on bottles and cans, it is to cut down on litter," Washington said in a telegram to

Baker. "Given the revolting volume of bottles and cans littering our state today, any member of your commission could augment his income handsomely by collecting the containers at the 10 cents apiece deposit charge."

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES argued vehemently against it.

William A. Wickham of the state chamber of commerce said the commission should meet "the real solid waste problem. Well down on your list of duties was to examine source reduction."

George Graff, manager of environmental programs for the chamber, said that if a mandatory 10-cent deposit were required by Michigan law, 2,000 of the 5,800 workers in bottling plants would lose their jobs, and payrolls would be cut by 40 percent, or \$20 million.

To environmentalist arguments that 8,000 jobs would be created in handling and sorting returned bottles, Graff said those jobs would be at the minimum wage or up to \$2.50 an hour while the bottling industry jobs are unskilled and pay \$7.25 to \$11.50 an hour to skilled wage earners.

ROBERT HEALY, president of the Michigan Council for Convenience Packaging, said it wasn't really true that soft drink prices fell in Oregon when deposit bottles were required there. Actually, he said, Shasta—which sells cans only—abandoned the market and other firms engaged in temporary cut-rate pricing to pick up Shasta's share of the market.

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One supporter of the resolution argued reusable containers would help Michigan beverages regain the share of the market they had been losing, but this was denied by David Erlanson, of the U.S. Brewers Association.

Michigan brewers' share of the market has declined little, he said. What happened was that small brewers were forced out of business because they lacked efficiency, had old plants, and couldn't implement the kinds of marketing programs on television that the big, national brewers used following World War II.

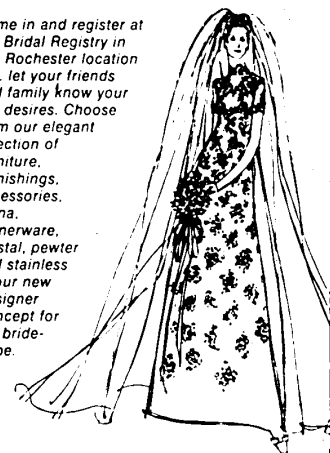
H. James Starr, former state representative and now a lobbyist for the Glass Containers Manufacturers Institute, said "there never was a day when there wasn't a litter problem. But the big problem is in core cities, not on freeways. And it's everywhere—newspapers and everything else. The problem is the collection and disposal of solid waste."

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Thursday, April 29, 7 p.m.

City-County Building
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or

Thursday, May 13, 7 p.m.

Oak Park Community Center
14300 Oak Park Boulevard, Oak Park

At this meeting—the first in a series—you will learn about the work that is being performed on transit alternatives and you will learn how you can influence that work which will take place through 1976.

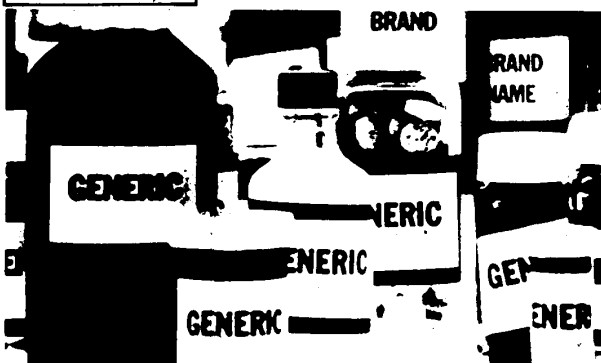
The meeting also will be an opportunity for you to express your concerns about public transit alternatives as officials of SEMTA move toward a set of final choices for a regional transit system.

For more information on this meeting contact SEMTA, 962-9800.

SEMTA is an operating authority providing public transportation throughout the seven counties of Southeastern Michigan.

Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority

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