

Veteran bottle battler gives advice, tells of victory

By CARL STOODARD

Legislation banning throwaway bottles and cans in Oregon was "the most ferociously lobbied bill in the history of statehood," former Oregon Gov. Tom McCall told reporters in Southfield Tuesday.

The stage seems set for an equally fierce battle in Michigan. As McCall spoke at Stouffer's Northland Inn, a dozen protesters marched outside the hotel with picket signs calling for McCall to go packing to the Beaver State.

McCall was in Southfield at the request of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs. The organization is urging adoption of Proposal A, a November ballot item that asks voters to approve a ban on throwaway beverage containers.

The former Oregon governor was instrumental in passing the nation's first "bottle bill" in his state in 1971. Vermont

and South Dakota have since passed similar legislation. Laws requiring deposits on beverage containers are on state referendums in Massachusetts, Maine and Colorado.

The Michigan law, if approved, would require consumers to pay five to 10 cents deposit on each beverage container purchased. The money would be refunded when the bottles and cans are returned.

PROponents of the bill say its passage would reduce litter, conserve energy and resources, create more jobs in the state and benefit consumers.

Protestors outside the hotel, however, questioned the actual benefits of the bill and predicted its eventual defeat by voters.

A bottle maker who works for Owens-Illinois said his \$1-an-hour job could be

eliminated with passage of the bill. An Owens-Illinois factory in Oregon went from 14 bottling machines to four with the introduction of the bottle bill, he said.

Truckers and bottling workers were also on the picket line and complained that their jobs in Michigan might easily be casualties of the bottle bill is enacted. The "net increase" in jobs promised by the bill's backers, they said, could be for low-paying work involving bottles or collecting a whole which maintains the industry.

The picketers reflect the industry as a whole which maintains the bottle bills are discriminatory, focusing on only a fraction of the total litter problem. They also argue the bill would reduce the number of jobs in the state and increase the retail cost of bottled and canned beverages.

DESPITE ORGANIZED and well-financed opposition, McCall maintains that the bottle bill can be a boon to the residents of the state.

"This is a bridge between a wasteful society and a husbanding society," McCall said.

According to a study conducted in one Oregon county, litter was reduced 39 percent. Bottle litter was cut 81 per cent, he said.

"I'll travel 150 miles and not see a bottle or a can on the side of the road, or on the beaches or streams either," McCall told reporters.

"It has to prevail in Michigan and I hope it will prevail nationally as well," he said. McCall, however, said he doubted the sincerity of some lobbyists who want the issue decided on a national level.

"They will do anything they can to stall it. They've got Congress by the neck. They'll never let a bill through Congress until state after state gets this through."

"There's no reason it can't work across the nation. But the moment say 'let's not do this, let's do it nationally.' The hell they will."

Michigan's law, if approved in November, would take effect in two years. According to the Michigan Public Service Commission, a net increase of more than 4,000 jobs can be expected with implementation of the law.

A NATIONAL SURVEY FOUND that 73 per cent of all Americans favor some sort of returnable bottle legislation. In Oregon two years after the bottle bill was passed, a public-opinion survey found 91 per cent

of the citizens favoring the law. A July 1973 survey of Market Opinion Research found that 73 per cent of Michigan voters preferred a ban on throwaway beverage containers.

In Oregon state officials found that overall roadside litter was reduced 47 per cent. McCall said the Oregon ban has created long lines and confusion where bottles and cans are returned.

"You just simply go to the market as you usually do," he said. "When we go into our store, we just turn them the bottles in and get a slip. When we're done shopping, we turn the slip in and get that amount back. It's very simple."

Some bottle manufacturers and those in related industries, however, do not see the issue as nearly that simple and voters can expect to see the battle of the bottle continue at least until Nov. 2.

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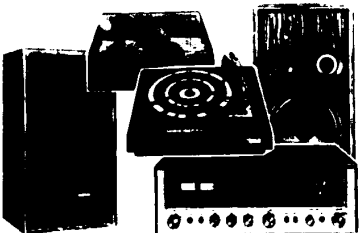
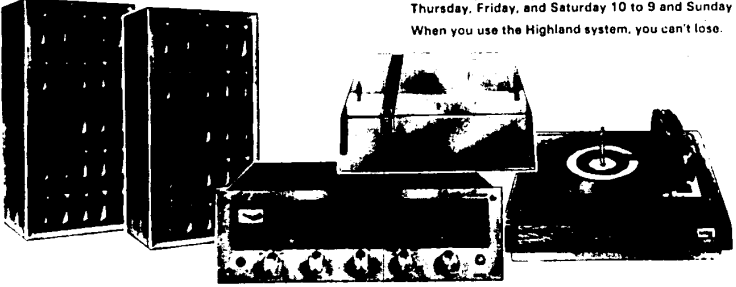
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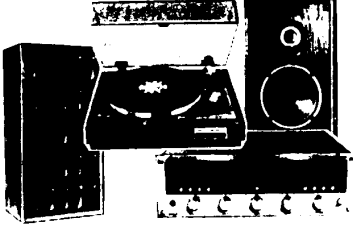
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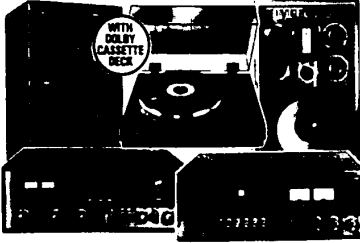
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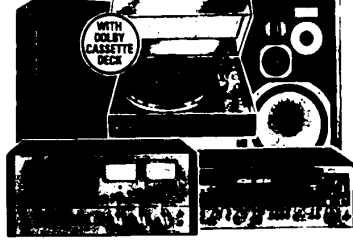
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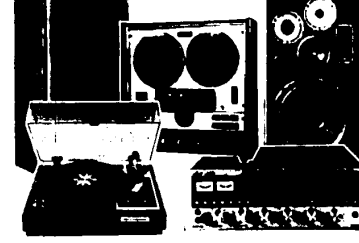
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