

# Protests greet Solid Waste Committee

This is the first of three articles reporting on local protests to the proposed Oakland County solid waste management plan. The writer is a well-known Farmington Hills environmentalist and member of the Solid Waste Planning Committee.



**Nancy Kourtjian**

To meet standards set in state Act 641, the Oakland County Solid Waste Planning Committee (SWPC) must find new places for trash.

But when we made a bus tour of several sites proposed for landfills, we were met by angry protesters at almost every stop.

"Dumps Stink!"  
"Don't Waste Our Land."  
"No Landfills Here."

"Would Dan Murphy Allow This in HIS Backyard?"

Outraged by the county's choices, homeowners braved chill March winds to carry signs or plant them along the committee's bus route through northern Oakland.

Why such a hue and cry in one of the most prosperous counties of the nation? After all, the intent of the law is to safely dispose of the growing heap of solid waste that affluence and technology created.

Public Act 641 of 1978, known as "The Solid Waste Management Act," is "an act to protect the public health and the environment; to provide for the regulation and management of solid

wastes; to prescribe the powers and duties of certain state and local agencies and officials; to prescribe penalties; to make an appropriation; and to repeal certain acts and parts of acts."

**RESIDENTS FEAR** property values will drop. They fear pollution of their water.

Most of all, they fear that decisions on what happens in their own community, to their very land, will be made by "big government." Home rule is a right dear to the hearts of Michiganders. It is the task of the committee and county staff to address most of these questions. Solid waste facilities should minimize odor, traffic problems, and preserve air and water quality. Property owners should be able to sell at a fair price or be assured their new neighbors will be "good ones."

There is no doubt, however, that the county plan (or one written by the state in case of local default) is "final," once approved by at least 67 percent of its communities. Local ordinances will no longer be valid (Secs. 26, 28 and 30).

On the other hand, this law, so essen-

tial to public health and welfare, also directs the county to "solicit the advice and consult periodically during preparation of the plan with the municipalities, appropriate organizations and the private sector. . . which may be significantly affected. . ." (Sec. 27).

Thus, George Schutte, director of the County Solid Waste Division, patiently explained to each group of protesters that no final decision would be made for several months.

"You are welcome to our meetings," Schutte said. He also suggested they contact a committee member with their questions or objections.

**THIS STATEMENT** raised more ire in Lyon Township, where 15 or 20 people stood on South Hill Road.

"No one from Lyon is on your committee," a woman bundled in a parka shouted. "We have no representation," yelled another sign bearer.

Schutte replied that Act 641 required only that the 13-member committee include representatives from the solid waste industry, environmental interest groups, county government, cities,

townships, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) and the general public.

No area designation was specified. Moreover, there are 900 square miles and 61 townships and villages in Oakland. "We can't represent everyone," Schutte added.

**THE OAKLAND** plan calls for two sanitary landfills in Lyon Township as well as a modular combustion unit at the Ford Motor Co. plant at Wixom. The latter will sell steam to the auto company.

Wixom city officials and residents predict that garbage trucks will jam Pontiac Trail from these three operations. Area citizens feel that putting all three sites in Lyon is unfair.

During the bus tour, however, committee member Earl Borden, supervisor of Avon Township, said that Avon has had as many as 11 landfills in operation. All are now closed.

Even if Ford rejects the incinerator project, there are two other promising possibilities, Schutte said.

A Farmington Hills industrialist hopes to develop an "Energy Park" which would need large quantities of waste. Moreover, a gasoline manufacturer is considering locating in the Lyon-Wixom area — a ready-made customer since this industry uses much process steam, Schutte added.

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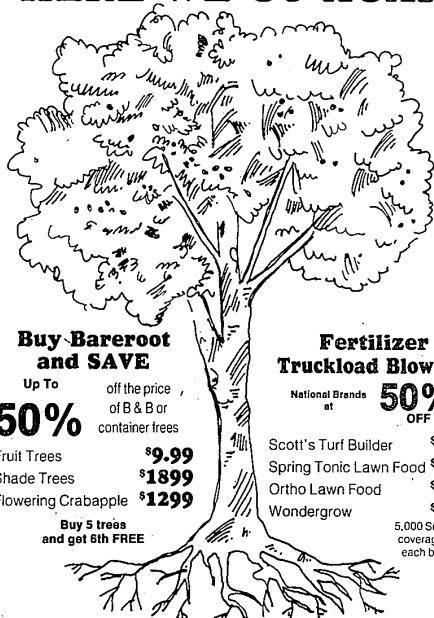
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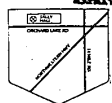
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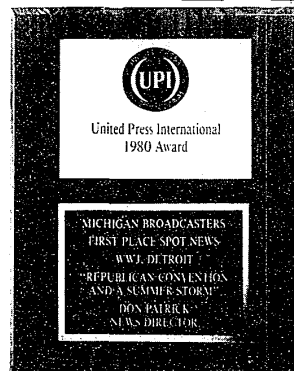
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