citizen support
for solid waste management

this community action report (SW-17c.1),
developed for the bureau of solid waste management
by the national association of counties research foundation under contract no. ph 86-67-290,
is chapter 8 in public health service publication no. 2084

actions speak louder than words

program image
handling complaints

going to the public for support

established organizations
delivering the message
sources of opposition

using the communications media

summary

appendix

selected bibliography

field reports (in order of sequence)

a professional public awareness campaign
Broome County, New York
winning support for improved collection
Tucson, Arizona
mobilizing community resources to promote public acceptance
Madison County, Alabama
using leadership and example to win support
Waukegan, Illinois
the direct attack
Baltimore County, Maryland
overcoming opposition to a sanitary landfill site
Hamilton, Ohio
stimulating involvement through humor
Kennebunkport, Maine

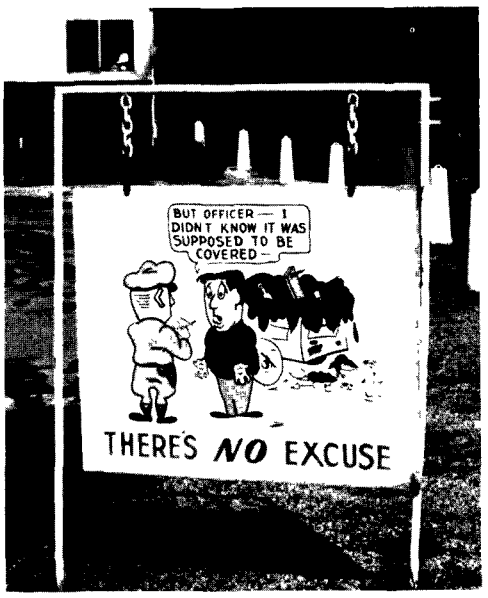
acknowledgments

The research and preparation of a working draft for this guide was completed by Patricia A. McDonough, National Association of Counties Research Foundation. Substantive and editorial contributions, reflected in the final version, were made by Alastair McArthur, deputy executive director; Mel Powell, director of contract research; Judith Finlayson, director of publications; and Aliceann Fritschler, assistant director of contract research. Special thanks are due to Stuart Finley, president of Stuart Finley, Inc. and to H. Lanier Hickman, Jr., director, Technical Operations, and T. W. Bendixen, special technical advisor, of the Bureau of Solid Waste Management, for their valuable contributions in ideas and concepts.

Environmental Protection Agency
Library, Region V
1 North Wacker Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60606

foreword

citizen support



This cartoon sign outside the entrance of a Los Angeles County sanitary landfill helps make solid wastes regulations more palatable for the ordinary howeowner.

The public creates solid wastes, discards them, and expects efficient, effective, economical, uncomplicated, and nuisance-free collection and disposal. Unfortunately, enough mismanagement of solid wastes exists in the average community to stimulate significant negative reaction. Since solid wastes disposal is a distasteful subject to many people, usually the general public does not comprehend the difficult problems involved in collection and disposal.

Public information programs are important because they can reverse the trend, changing criticism to public support. Positive images and impressions can replace negative ones. For example, most people are interested in conservation of natural resources and community improvement while they have little interest or sympathy with the mundane procedure of collecting and disposing of wastes. Many people can develop an empathy for the dilemma of the sanitation engineer when introduced to contemplated improvements in techniques and facilities.

In other words, the public information efforts of the community should stress positive factors to counteract the negative impressions caused by problems such as:

- poor household storage
- infrequent, annoying, or undependable collection
- open dumps
- air pollution from burning dumps or incinerators
- abandoned automobiles
- litter.

The best method of doing this is for the local government to adopt a posture of progressive and effective operation, and to communicate this attitude of success in every possible way. This guide provides some public information methods to gain and maintain public support and interest.

— RICHARD D. VAUGHAN, *Director*
Bureau of Solid Waste Management

actions speak louder than words

Local government must plan a public information strategy to achieve long- and short-range goals and select tactical steps to achieve them. To win citizen support local government should

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

a professional public awareness campaign

Broome County, New York

"People think disposal ends at the curb."

"The people in Broome County just equated sanitary landfill with dump."

These comments were made by Broome County, New York, supervisors after three years of trying to educate the public about needed solid wastes disposal. So the Board of Supervisors decided to secure the help of a professional public relations firm. The firm presented the county with a proposed education and information campaign which combined the use of the news media, public meetings with elected and appointed county officials, and a citizens committee.

The program has been followed with the exception of the citizens committee. County officials opposed the formation of a citizens committee at that time for two reasons: 1) several supervisors preferred to have the citizens committee chosen after landfill sites had been selected and announced; and 2) the director of environmental health services thinks citizens committees should not be countywide, as the disposal program will be, but should be organized independently in several localities.

About $16,500 was budgeted for out-of-pocket expenses. Some financial assistance was received from the Bureau of Solid Waste Management. Nearly half—$7,676—of the $16,500 budget was used to purchase time and space in two daily newspapers, three television stations, and four radio stations. Producing the materials for these media cost about $2,600.

Another $2,500 was spent for 60,000 copies of an eight-page brochure called "Cover-up," which picked up the key phrase used throughout the information campaign: "Sanitary Landfill . . . the Better Way."

Preparation of a slide show and written commentary about sanitary landfill cost about $500, with another $200 going for a projector and screen.

The public relations agency fee for its professional services was $1,500. It worked under the director of environmental health services and the planning director.

There has been some criticism of the county for using public funds to hire a public relations firm. But the chairman of the board said he is pleased with the response to the program so far, and added, "Where it affects public health or safety, we are willing to spend some money for a public education and information program." And since Broome County has no information officer of its own, the only way to obtain professional information help is by using an outside firm.

The folder and the slide show were made available to service clubs throughout the county, to schools, and to residents in the areas where the county anticipated locating landfills. In addition, members of the Board of Supervisors, the planning director, and the director of environmental health services met with residents; appeared at local public hearings to explain the countywide disposal program; and discussed the program with officials of the towns and villages to show them its advantages and to answer objections.

There has been opposition from nearby residents to some of the landfill sites selected and strenuous opposition from town officials to one site. Even the resulting controversy over that site, however, has created one plus for the county, its chairman believes: Many residents discovered that an ugly open dump already existed in their town.

begin to build a visible record of accomplishment by making improvements even while the total solid wastes management system is still in the planning stages.

program image

The image presented by solid wastes management directly influences community attitudes. In most communities, the collector is one regular contact a resident has with local government. The uniform he wears, his ability to deal with people, his conscientiousness, and his courtesy influence public attitudes.

Collection vehicles also present an opportunity to improve public attitude. In Philadelphia, each month the polished chocolate enamel compactor trucks display different posters on such

winning support for improved collection

Tucson, Arizona

Prior to 1963, Tucson, Arizona, solid wastes collection was provided by various local haulers under district contracts with the city. Under this system, city residents were not receiving adequate service and the city could not exercise any degree of control over the situation. In September, 1963, the city decided to take over solid wastes collection. To operate an effective system of solid wastes collection, the city had to upgrade the existing local ordinances for solid wastes collection. Based on a study of other local ordinances around the country, proposed legislation provided that residents must comply with certain standards for the storage of solid wastes or be guilty of a misdemeanor. This provision in the proposed ordinance caused considerable public concern and threatened to block passage of the needed regulations.

The Refuse Division of the Department of Public Works contacted the city newspaper to explain the inadequacies of the existing law. The newspaper cooperated by giving full support to the new ordinance. In addition, local television stations agreed to present a program explaining the new ordinance and its implications.

While the public works department had obtained the necessary support for the new ordinance, there still remained the task of implementing the new system. Without the full cooperation of residents, the new collection system could not succeed. Recognizing that most residents would voluntarily comply with the new regulations, the Department of Public Works developed a series of brochures to explain the need for the new system in laymen's language illustrated by cartoons. Although there was no general distribution of the brochures, they were given in quantity to groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, Welcome Wagon, and to persons who made complaints about the service.

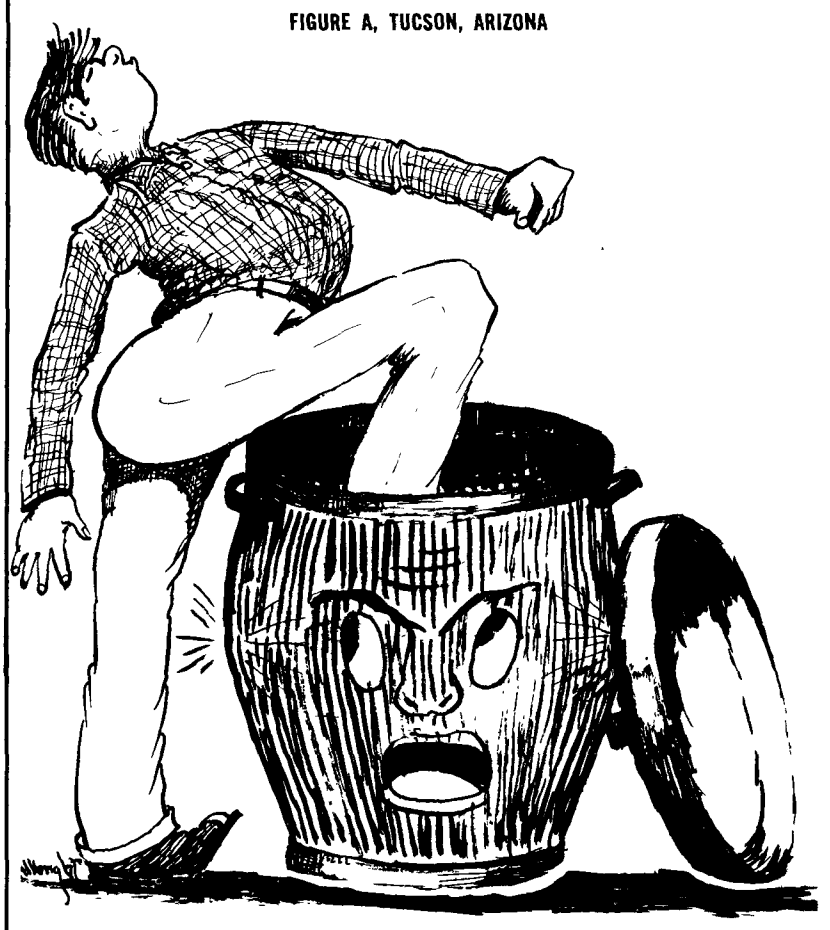
The cost of developing and printing the brochures, as well as the cost for all public relations for Tucson's Sanitation Department, was minimal. The total budget for the Sanitation Department for 1967 was approximately $1.9 million, of which $1,700 was spent on public relations. The public relations expenditure represents less than 1 per cent of the total budget, but the time it saves in dealing with complaints represents a significant cost savings.

subjects as storage standards, traffic safety, and community relations.

Every disposal or processing facility offers opportunity to improve the solid wastes management image. A fenced, landscaped, well-designed operation makes it easier to secure a location for another well-run operation when it becomes necessary. Officials should not miss the opportunity to remind residents that landfills are land reclamation projects which may result in a park, golf course, or airstrip. This idea is a strong selling point. In Riverside, California, one sanitary landfill site was developed to create a scenic parklike atmosphere along the entrance road.

Signs clearly indicating regulations and hours of operation are necessary. They should be easy to read, easy to find, and

FIGURE A, TUCSON, ARIZONA



As a member of a City Garbage crew, I have been given very careful instructions not to bang your garbage cans, but to treat them with tender loving care. But in order for me to follow these instructions and still empty your garbage cans, your cooperation is needed. If you fill the cans and then stuff in some more trash and jump on it in order to get the lid on, the garbage won't fall out when I turn over your can to empty it.

I am not allowed to reach in the can and pull garbage out with my hands. I can't tell when I will grab a broken bottle, old razor blades, jagged tin can lids or other dangerous things, and if I am hurt, you have to pay for it. Industrial accidents are expensive to taxpayers. So, please don't cram your garbage can full; get another one if you feel you often need more room.

attractive. A facility which is difficult to locate should have conspicuous direction signs en route.

Once an illicit roadside dump has been cleaned up, the appearance of the area should be improved so it will not revert to a dump. An easy way to do this is to plant grass on the clean but barren dump site.

handling complaints

An excellent opportunity to improve community relations is through the prompt, courteous, efficient handling of citizen complaints. One of the most frequent complaints is failure to provide a scheduled collection service. With contract collectors in Montgomery County, Maryland, the home missed must receive service within one day of a complaint; and the contract collector may not

have more than 25 such complaints a month without being fined or subject to contract cancellation.

National Disposal Contractors, Inc., requires collectors to make a notation of any homes which were skipped and why—no waste to be collected, aggressive dog, improper storage, item too large. When the complaint is received, the company is able to explain why service was not rendered, and tell the resident how to remedy the situation so that it will not happen again. Then a special pickup is made.

A record of the kind and frequency of complaints should be kept so that continuing improvements can be made. In New York City, with a fleet of 1,200 trucks, one repeated complaint was that trucks were too noisy. The mayor now requires all trucks to be provided with insulation to reduce the noise level.

going to the public for support

established organizations

Resources in the Community. One method of achieving citizen participation in the early stages of a program to improve solid wastes management is the formation of a small citizens advisory group. The role of this committee should be to help plan total citizen support for whatever solid wastes management system is needed.

The starting point of a public support campaign is to identify the community assets and liabilities which may affect the solid wastes program. To do this, the advisory committee should include both elected and non-elected community leaders. The committee should include the local government public information officer, representatives from other local government departments, community organizations, and private industry.

The best way to get *action* is to get people involved early. Forming a broadly based committee early is vital since people may feel they are being "used" if they are asked to go along after the plan is made. This way, comprehensive improvements will be those which the citizens themselves have helped develop.

A workshop is an efficient way to prepare a large group quickly. Citizens advisory committee members should help plan the workshop and determine what decisions and participation are required from their organization. The committee should prepare a composite list of private organizations, professional associations, private industries, and agencies of local, state, and federal governments. Working with the citizens committee, public officials should decide which interest groups need to be reached, what factors are important to each group, and what results are desired.

Since many organizations are committed to other goals as primary responsibilities, at first an official should select organizations which are most likely to participate with enthusiasm. After a record of accomplishment has been achieved, other organizations will be eager to participate and help support the solid wastes management program.

Existing organizations can effectively motivate interest since they have established channels of communications and influence with their members.

Each civic group, such as the League of Women Voters, U.S. Jaycees, parent-teacher associations, Lions Club, and Kiwanis,

PROGRAM SALESMANSHIP BY THE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. BELIEVE in the program.
2. KNOW the program thoroughly.
3. PRESENT the program attractively.
   a. Gear the presentation to the particular audience to hold its interest.
   b. Do not force a decision at the first visit, but leave the impression that the first visit was more than a "friendliness" session.
4. FOLLOW UP the initial visit.

mobilizing community resources to promote public acceptance

Madison County, Alabama

Piecemeal, sporadic efforts by Madison County, Alabama, commissioners to eliminate unsightly accumulations of trash and garbage at roadside areas, woodlands, and ditches within their individual districts proved unsuccessful. The county commissioners became convinced that a coordinated countywide program of solid wastes disposal for rural areas was the only solution.

County health officials contacted equipment manufacturers, visited systems in other cities and counties, and sought the opinions of various community leaders and organizations on the workability of plans being formulated.

Health officials proposed that residents of areas to be served contribute funds to purchase 40 8-cubic-yard metal containers to be placed at principal intersections, near rural population concentrations along county roads, near rural stores, and on county school grounds. The county would purchase a front-end loading compaction truck, employ the necessary collection crew, and assume operating expenses. The Huntsville City Council agreed to allow Madison County to use its disposal site free.

To help sell the program to rural communities and obtain public financial support, the health department enlisted rural community leaders and presidents of organizations such as home demonstration clubs, farm bureaus, and parent-teacher associations. These key leaders were invited to attend a briefing about the proposed solid wastes program where slides, maps, flip charts, a movie about collection, and other visual aids were used. A person in each community represented was asked to arrange similar meetings for citizens in his area.

At the first such local-level meeting, the chairman of the Board of Commissioners presented the proposal. A permanent fund-raising chairman was elected, who immediately appointed a committee to solicit contributions. Within three days, $1,600 for three containers was collected.

Following this initial success, the same procedure was used in each small incorporated town and unincorporated community. Within two weeks over $10,000 had been received. Considering this adequate evidence of public approval, the commissioners ordered the 20-cubic-yard packer truck.

According to the sanitarian supervisor, a key element in gaining public support was working closely with the Agricultural Extension Service:

> *It would have been impossible to have put this program across without the assistance of the local county agent and home demonstration agent. These people can tell you more than just how to raise a row of cotton or how to prepare a balanced meal; they know who the leaders are in a community and how to obtain their cooperation and support. And these agents are available in counties throughout the country to help local officials in worthwhile projects of this type.*

Local officials in Madison County feel that the most important aspect of this solicitation program was that every member of each community was contacted and encouraged to give something, however small. This created a sense of pride, possession, and ownership in the containers and the cleanliness of their neighborhood.

Within six years, 84 containers and two compactor trucks were in use.

adopts one or two major projects for the year. The citizens committee should work with each organization to encourage the adoption of solid wastes management as a project and to get the organization to participate in the overall program. Each organization should be shown how its contribution fits into the overall action program.

The citizens committee should enlist an organization's active participation, not settle for a token endorsement. The organizations should show they plan to involve all their members in the project and designate a liaison with the citizens committee. Involvement can itself generate enthusiasm.

Some projects which can be adopted by individual organizations are litter control, improving storage conditions (buy a new trash can campaign), and abandoned automobile removal. The

project should be a manageable one so that it can be accomplished within the time allotted, and challenging enough to generate enthusiasm, not boredom.

Another important group that should be approached for assistance in getting the message across is the public school system. There are local teachers' organizations virtually everywhere and through them the teachers can be reached, by getting articles printed in their newsletters and by providing speakers at their meetings. School boards should also be approached; with their permission and that of school administrators, school children themselves can be enlisted to help.

Each organization should be informed of the activities of other groups, and should be given public recognition for its participation through newspaper articles, citations, competitive awards for outstanding achievement, and other methods.

using leadership and example to win support

Waukegan, Illinois

When rats from the city dump invaded nearby prosperous residential areas, the citizens vociferously demanded that a municipal incinerator be built to replace the dump. A $350,000 incinerator bond referendum was approved, but public interest waned when two years passed with no action taken. In 1961, the newly elected mayor reviewed the problem. In the two-year span, the solid wastes production rate had increased and construction costs had skyrocketed. The bond issue was no longer adequate to pay for an incinerator large enough to meet current needs, much less accommodate future growth, and the city was already facing financial strains.

To find an alternative solution, the mayor interviewed private land disposal operators and toured their sanitary landfill sites. Waukegan was surveyed and soil tests were run on the most suitable sites. On the edge of Waukegan, a 3-acre swamp had been a community eyesore for many years. Tests indicated it to be suitable for sanitary landfill without endangering surface or ground water. Arrangements were made to have the land donated to the city in memory of the owner's deceased son. National Disposal Services, Inc., was contracted with to operate the small pilot sanitary landfill under strict standards, and also to assume the waste collection service which, under municipal operation, had been unsatisfactory.

The public, having approved a bond issue for incineration, raised strong opposition, claiming that the city was planning to "replace the dump with a dump." Court action ensued. The mayor personally waged a vigorous campaign defending the selection of the sanitary landfill method. Appearing before hostile audiences, he argued that sanitary landfill was much less expensive than incineration, that land in Waukegan was available which could benefit from reclamation, and that the homeowner would receive more service (backyard pickup) than before at less cost. At one public meeting the audience was so rude and agitated, the mayor said, "Nothing will convince you because you don't want to listen. But you elected me to do what is right and I will establish a sanitary landfill—not a dump—whether you like it or not because it is best for the city. That landfill will be so clean and so perfect that when it is finished I'll serve you tea and crumpets on it. In fact, in 18 months we will have the biggest tea party there you have ever seen."

The newspapers had a field day cartooning the promised tea party in a rat-infested dump. When the first truckload of trash was brought to the new fill, citizens lined the fenced perimeter to superintend the operation. After a week, the crowd thinned and opposition was less adamant. Court injunctions were dropped.

Within 18 months the model landfill was completed, sodded, and equipped for little league baseball. On the appointed day, 5,000 Waukegan citizens gathered for the ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the newly completed reclamation project. The party featured tea and doughnuts, a brass band, and exhibition baseball. Leading athletes from the Chicago sports world were honored guests.

For the next site, the school system and the park authority invited the city to reclaim eroded land by sanitary landfill for a school athletic field.

Resources Outside the Community. In addition to the resources within the community, technical and financial support is available from universities, the federal government, private industry, and national professional associations. (Details of these programs are presented in *Guide Number 7, Technical and Financial Assistance.)*

An official of the National Clean-Up, Paint-Up, Fix-Up Bureau, the oldest national nonprofit community improvement program, commented:

> The greatest obstacle to channeling enthusiasm for community betterment results because most communities do not know what they want to accomplish and what organizations are already available to help them once their goals are identified.

To show how to channel this community energy, the bureau offers a free kit on request and issues a monthly newsletter to keep communities abreast of projects throughout the country. It presents an annual national award to the community rated highest for the degree of improvement, beautification, youth participation, and scope of voluntary participation. For more information on this and similar programs, see the Appendix.

delivering the message

Public officials should plan a careful campaign to reach the general public. Improvements made by local government and the support and successful projects of civic organizations will pave the way for public support of a comprehensive solid wastes management program. All the tools of communication should be used to reach all citizens with the reasons why improvement is necessary.

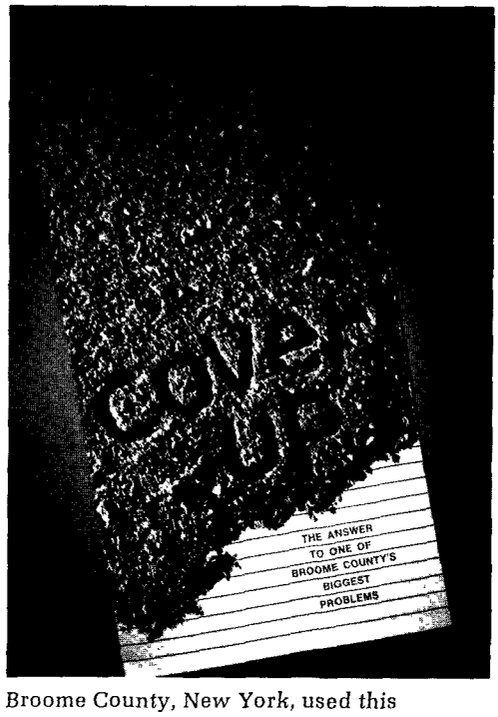
Successfully selling a complicated proposal is most effective if personal explanations can be given. Small informal meetings or "coffees" where groups of citizens have a direct opportunity to learn about and discuss the program with their neighbors are the next best means.

Personal selling is most effective if the campaigners are well-known, respected, and informed. Community and civic leaders should be able to reach those who influence others at work and in the neighborhood.

The more complicated or controversial a program, the more personal contact is required to convince people that it is good. Completely changing someone's mind is obviously easier if his first opinion was not too deeply rooted. The environment, as well as the means and tact of the presentation, is important. When public hearings are required by law or are desirable, officials should plan and organize the meeting so that all sides receive a fair hearing.

Speakers Bureau. A well organized speakers bureau with effective, well-prepared speakers is important in any education campaign which must move people to action. It is not enough to tell members of an organization that solid wastes are being improperly managed and that improvements are needed. Because of the element of personal contact, which generally makes a deeper and more permanent impression than impersonal contact (through the printed word or over electronic waves), effective speakers are a must in a campaign for support of a solid wastes management program.

Speakers can be drawn from the ranks of elected and ap-



Broome County, New York, used this *brochure explaining why countywide disposal and sanitary landfill were the answers to their solid wastes problems.*

pointed officials, doctors, scientists, engineers, and knowledgeable citizens. They shold be vitally interested in solid wastes management and knowledgeable about local conditions. Their enthusiasm alone can be infectious. Bolstered with facts and a proposed program, they may move a majority of the audience to acceptance of the program. Though the audience may not be permanently motivated by one speech, its members will be far more receptive to future discussions about solid wastes management which reach them through the mass media. This is how mass communication and the personal contact of small group meetings work hand in hand.

Opportunities must be sought to expose the issues and provide information on the solid wastes management program. The citizens advisory committee or public officials should contact every organization to let them know that speakers are available. Speaking engagements must be sought actively. All kinds of women's clubs, PTA's, fraternal organizations, and church circles can be approached. Representatives from these organizations should be working with the citizens committee throughout the campaign, and they should be able to arrange speaking dates.

the direct attack

Baltimore County, Maryland

Baltimore County, Maryland, made a broadside attack on the litterer. The county issued a "Dirty Picture of the Week" pointing a finger at any dump anywhere. For example, one caption read:

> *SEEING IS BELIEVING —This horrible scene is on Milford Mill Road just west of Reisterstown Road near the well-kept suburban community of Sudbrook Park. This photo was taken and is released by the Office for Information and Research for Baltimore County to spotlight how a nice county road can be made unattractive by roadside littering. Don't dump unwanted bulky items along the county highways, when for such a small fee, the Bureau of Sanitation will pick them up. Call 823-3000, Extension 285.*

Program support was given from every level of local government. The elected county ex ecutive instructed every count employee to know the litte laws. Litter bags were put int all county vehicles, includin police cars. Use was manda tory. An example was to b set.

Policemen had orders to war any violators seen littering higl ways and to present offende a litter bag with a polite re minder that next time an arres might be in order. Appea were made for responsible ci izens to report violation promptly, to refuse to allow few to raise tax burdens b thoughtless littering. Magi trates were asked to assig maximum penalties to all co victed violators.

Color television spots showe piles of debris along wel traveled roadways and stream Next to "No Dumping" sign they showed garbage, junk, an filth which clearly implied lack of public pride or publ responsibility. Messages we

More and more, solid wastes management agencies are making speeches at all local schools. The immediate benefit from this audience is that the children carry the talk home to their parents. The long-range benefit is that soon an entire generation of people will be familiar with solid wastes problems and more easily convinced of the need for good management.

The speaker should make sure his talk is appropriate to his audience. The local ladies' club will not be as interested in the technical aspects of industrial wastes as will, say, the local chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

After initial speaking engagements have been fulfilled, the word will begin to reach other program chairmen, who are searching continually for good program material. Soon they will begin coming to the speakers.

The Creation of Events. To use organizations effectively and at the same time create increased public awareness through news media, the public education program can focus attention on special events.

The Philadelphia More Beautiful Committee received national recognition from the National Clean-Up, Paint-Up, Fix-Up Bureau.

brief and accusing: "You're looking at a wasteland of litter.... Keep it up.... You won't have to look for a dumping ground, you'll be living in one." Each spot ended with an invitation to telephone the county for information about disposing of unwanted items. Three television and 11 radio stations in the greater Baltimore metropolitan area broadcast the spots. Preparation cost of the spots was $201.60.

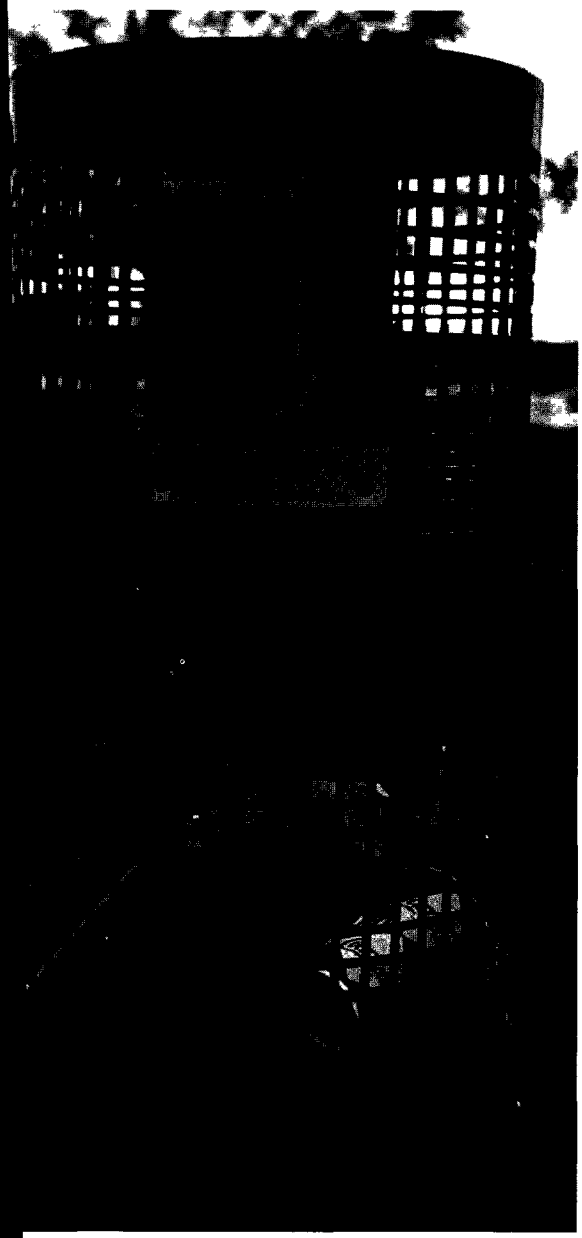
Another public information tool used was direct mail. Utilizing the July mailing of tax bills to save the substantial cost of an additional mailing, a special flyer was prepared and distributed as an insert. Titled merely "Information for Taxpayers," it summarized major expenditures of tax monies for the past year and featured basic information regarding bulky item and refuse disposal in a "specific report." It cost less than one-half cent per mailing and reached 180,000 homes.

Commenting on the educational action program, the county's sanitation bureau chief remarked:

> *After agreeing to the campaign outlined by our county Office of Information and Research, particularly my part in opening it with a two-fisted attack, I half expected to be hung in effigy, or worse, by any one or any number of the county's over 555,000 residents. But the hue and cry never began, thankfully, and aside from a few brickbats public reaction was highly favorable.*
>
> *We found... that many residents were as alarmed and upset as we were about wholesale dumping and were anxious to do something to help stop it.*

Since this reverse psychology was applied and the rest of the public information program has been in effect, record progress has been made in removing all kinds of debris from basements, backyards, vacant lots, and numerous other locations. In the first eight months, more than 3,800 bulky items were collected and hauled to landfills for proper disposal. Telephone requests for this service came in at the rate of 400 per week.

Another by-product of the campaign has been better telephone communication with people who have disposal problems. Residents are more aware that there is a solid wastes collection and disposal problem and they know it is important to them. They accept the regulations more readily and view them as necessary for convenience, health, and management. According to the Baltimore County information office, "We recommend this type of direct attack program to any local government with similar problems and an official willing to stick his chin out."



In many areas, local groups will help finance the purchase of litter baskets to be placed around the area. Such activities give them a feeling of involvement and responsibility for solid wastes control.

By organizing blocks and having them compete each week for a "Cleanest Block of the Week" award, the committee has succeeded in beautifying 2,500 blocks in the oldest part of the city. The program was closely coordinated with the Department of Streets so that bulky items and street sweepings could be picked up on Saturdays.

Keep America Beautiful, Inc., has been active in litter control. Its award program is an incentive to stimulate community action, and to tie local action into a nationwide effort. San Diego County, California, has won two Keep America Beautiful county awards for its anti-litter activities. Various county departments, particularly the Refuse Disposal Division of the Department of Public Works, city agencies, and a private group called the War Against Litter Campaign, have enlisted the support of thousands of residents in a continuing countywide campaign. To encourage the program, the county allows the Director of Public Works to waive disposal fee payment for two important instances:

1) When the garbage or refuse collected is part of an anti-litter, clean-up, or like campaign for civic beautification by youth or civic groups, such as the Boy or Girl Scouts; or
2) When the refuse is generated in the course of collection and salvage of materials donated to nonprofit charitable organizations, such as the Salvation Army and Goodwill Industries.

An important event for publicity and public education is a "go-see" trip for citizens and public officials. Groups should be taken to see a well-run incinerator, sanitary landfill in operation, and completed and converted fills.

A major source of opposition may be due to the disposal method "credibility gap." Most people have never seen a good disposal operation because good ones are inconspicuous. What they remember are sooty incinerators, rat-ridden dumps, and all the other bad aspects of improper disposal. The voters frequently will not believe that a sanitary landfill is different. Few people understand the difference between a sanitary landfill and a dump. People will argue that a dump in the neighborhood will depreciate land values. It is important to stress what the fill will be when completed—a baseball field, golf course, botanical garden.

Homeowner Information. Providing information sheets concerning solid wastes programs and services to the homeowner is also an effective tool in building a desired image. Using pictures, cartoons, and a lighthearted touch makes a better impression than hard-to-read mimeographed orders, which will probably wind up in the waste can. The appearance of the brochure, of course, is secondary to providing top-quality information and service.

Every residence in the community should be supplied with a set of instructions about the schedule for collection, preparation of garbage, trash, yard clippings, and bulky items; and a phone number to call for more information or to register a complaint. When Tucson, Arizona, changed its collection system, the Refuse Division of the Department of Public Works issued a booklet using comic figures to seek homeowner cooperation and to show common failings (see Figure A). To inform homeowners of a change in collection or disposal practice, Philadelphia collectors

deliver notices door to door along the collection route (see Figure B). To reach non-English speaking residents, Philadelphia has distributed brochures, litterbags, and signs in Spanish. Notices can also be distributed along with other government mailings such as school notices and utility bills.

Communications Media. Although most effective, personal contact can reach only a few people at a time. Therefore, other public relations tools which reach broader segments of the population should be used simultaneously. Films on good solid wastes management can be broadcast locally to be viewed by civic groups meeting at several locations as well as the general public. The film should be well publicized in the local newspapers and in civic group newsletters. Group discussions can follow the film. Questions can be phoned to a local government office which would stay open to answer them.

Some forms of public relations, particularly radio and television messages, are used most successfully to reinforce existing attitudes and to motivate people to act on their beliefs. In Baltimore, Maryland, public officials capitalized on the goodwill generated after a successful clean streets campaign. The city used one-minute radio announcements to tell residents what was necessary to continue to keep streets and alleys clean, how the municipal collection and disposal system operated, and the telephone number available to register a complaint or obtain more information.

be blunt but positive

Since it is easier to attack a program than sell one, the "anti's" often get more news media attention. To counteract this, the "pro" group can attack the existing situation in blunt terms while at the same time conducting a positive program for change.

People are already aware of what they do not like about garbage and everything associated with it, so they are likely to react emotionally to anything they believe will make it worse. The official should use to advantage those subjects which people are already against, such as rats, blight, air and water pollution, flies, and depreciation of land values.

People relate to things they believe are good. The public official must show that the new system will be better than the

FIGURE B: HOMEOWNER INFORMATION
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

NOTICE

RUBBISH and ASHES will not be collected
CHRISTMAS DAY
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25

However your trash will be collected the following day
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26

(THIS SPECIAL COLLECTION WILL BE MADE TO HANDLE THE EXCESS AMOUNT OF RUBBISH ACCUMULATED BECAUSE OF THE HOLIDAY)

SANITATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF STREETS
Room 924, City Hall Annex

overcoming opposition to a sanitary landfill site

Hamilton, Ohio

"The best solid wastes public relations is good operation of sanitary landfills in the past," said the Hamilton, Ohio, director of public works. He also believes that residents who live near proposed landfill sites are always going to complain, so he warns other public officials to be prepared for such opposition.

Acting on these principles, Hamilton's public works director and other officials were able to overcome intense opposition from residents when the city proposed opening a new landfill near the center of the city. The controversial site was an abandoned gravel pit located on a 10-acre tract which separates residential dwellings and a few commercial buildings from railroad tracks. Landfill operations were to be conducted adjacent to the tracks and within 100 feet of the residences.

As soon as the site was announced, nearby residents unleashed a storm of protest. They organized and vocally opposed the new site at city council meetings and public hearings for months. They pleaded with the governor, state health officials, and even federal health agencies for support. Though the residents received no help from these officials, they continued their campaign. Local newspapers, according to the public works director, were scrupulously fair in explaining both sides of the issue.

City officials launched an informal campaign of their own to convince the protesting residents that their fears were groundless. Their most effective tool was in arranging visits for the public to the completed landfill site. (That site is now part of the Hamilton branch campus of Miami University.) Though some visitors were frankly amazed at the sanitary conditions and lack of nuisances, they still feared that the new site would not be operated with similar care. Many recalled an old burning dump which had existed near the first site prior to its use as a landfill.

Residents living near the new site also had visions of blowing litter. The public works director promised it would be controlled. In reply, the residents promised to complain loudly every time a stray piece of paper landed in their backyards. So the public works director installed an 8-foot wire fence around the site at a cost of about $3,000. As further insurance, he added snow fencing within the site itself to catch papers.

The city council had unanimously approved the gravel pit site by this time. To quiet citizen opposition, it publicly directed that the new landfill be operated according to the same high standards as the old one.

The gravel pit area had been a problem for fire and health authorities for years because it was overgrown with brush and had been subject to indiscriminate dumping. A professional exterminator was hired to bait the site to prevent rat migration to surrounding residential areas and the clean-up of brush and refuse burial began. After this initial job, some of the original protestors complimented the public works department on the site's "amazing improvement."

The fencing controlled access and litter problems. To lessen dust, a paved, all-weather roadway was constructed the complete length of the pit. A full-time attendant directs unloading and collects scattered refuse. Burning, scavenging, and salvaging are prohibited.

Continuing engineering supervision is also provided. The new site is inspected regularly by the local health department. In addition, the federal Bureau of Solid Waste Management in nearby Cincinnati uses the site for instruction purposes. This regular outside evaluation is helpful in gaining and maintaining public acceptance.

The site is in full operation now, with an expected life of two to three years. The working face is extremely small; litter is practically non-existent. It will probably be easier to convince residents that future sites can be long-range assets to the community by reclaiming land. However, warns Hamilton's public works director, "It is impossible to gain public acceptance when the public is personally acquainted with the nuisances and health hazards resulting from a dump or a substandard or poorly operated landfill." In short, for sanitary landfill operations, public acceptance depends on performance.

current system to win support for change. For example, he can use people's desire for clean water to stop riverside dumping.

Symbols and slogans can also be used to help people identify with a program. Smokey the Bear was the identity used to make the point that careful disposal of used matches and drenching campfires are contributions a citizen can make to help prevent forest fires. Keep America Beautiful, Inc., reminds people that "Every Litter Bit Hurts" because it requires dollars to keep highways clean.

These campaigns have been successful because the message is short, simple, direct, and clear. The message states the problem in familiar terms, and the required remedy. The message is delivered by some figure easily identified as good.

A record of accomplishment and the enlistment of many sectors of the community in solid wastes management will help local government maintain widespread support when improvements touch politically sensitive issues such as site selection and raising funds through service charges, bond issues, or increased taxes.

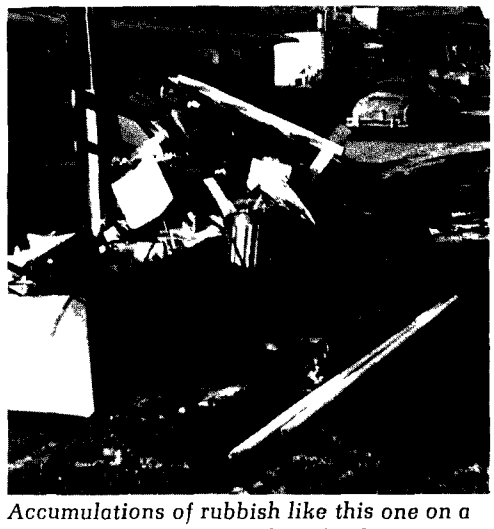
Before controversy develops, the official and the citizens committee should study the attitude and motivation of those in the community who are likely to oppose their project. Sources of opposition include the following types of citizen.

- *People who don't want sites near them.* They are motivated by the belief that living near a disposal facility threatens the value of their property and lowers their status.
- *People who don't want to spend money.* They support a bad system at the added expense of inconvenience, lessened public confidence, poor land use, and endangered public health.
- *People who believe no solution is possible.* They lack information and thus need to be informed of current technology.
- *People who resist any change.* They may be favorably influenced if the explanation of what is planned is presented as an essential community improvement.
- *People who are apathetic or unenlisted.* They can be interested and motivated into personal involvement.
- *People who have inadequate or erroneous information.* They can be influenced by complete information and thoroughly documented facts.
- *People who are politically opposed to those advocating the program.*
- *People who do not think the agency can do a good job because of past practice.*

Government laxity and bad previous experience stimulate the most forceful and persistent opposition. What a jurisdiction has done or permitted to be done has more influence than what it *says* it will do. It is especially difficult to counter arguments if a local government has tried to hide its failure. A credibility gap develops and citizens will not support any proposed system. No disposal site or system lasts forever, so it is better to do a good job from the start to avoid organized opposition when new sites and new programs must be established.

Opposition to a disposal method may spring from rumors that noxious gases exude from landfills, or that no incinerator can be operated in conformance with air pollution control standards.

sources of opposition



Accumulations of rubbish like this one on a downtown street strengthen the distaste many people feel for the whole subject of wastes control. One counteraction is to clean up the mess and use that as a starting point to gain support.

Countering these arguments with facts open to inspection makes it much more difficult for opponents to play on emotions with half-truths. Public officials should make it clear they are striving to create the best system possible by applying the most modern technology, which is designed to conserve and protect air, water, and land from pollution.

To eliminate doubt, the campaign must make clear why the solid wastes system is absolutely necessary and why it is a bargain at the price. Delay will necessitate additional costs such as cleaning up the areas where wastes have accumulated. The cost of purchasing property and building facilities also rises each year. Sooner or later comprehensive solid wastes management must be undertaken; the sooner, the more reasonable the cost.

Securing a Site. No matter which disposal method is selected, a site is required. And unless the local government has already established a good reputation for proper wastes management, there will be a vociferous site fight. The results of thorough technical evaluation should be the primary consideration in site selection, but political feasibility is also essential. Until a firm decision is made, the location under consideration should be kept confidential. Premature disclosure of possible site locations can spell disaster. One county commissioner wisely advises, "Once the site has been designated, stick to it. If you shift a quarter of a mile, you will shift sites forever."

Various groups, including conservationists, land developers, and sportsmen, will be interested in site location and its effect on the surrounding land. For example, when a sanitary landfill site would destroy wetlands or marshlands which constitute a wildlife habitat, a vigorous outcry can be expected. Conversely, working with conservation groups to dispose of solid wastes in a manner consistent with good conservation can provide a source of citizen support.

The public hearing or town meeting can be an effective vehicle to win support. Here the representatives of local government must publicly face the opposition and answer objections. In this situation, public officials must show leadership. If a meeting ends without victory, the battle is not lost. Several confrontations may be needed, but at each meeting an impression is made. Convincing a few people each time may bring success.

One effective technique is to establish an Office of Land Acquisition with responsibility to purchase land for all public facilities, such as fire stations, police stations, schools, and parks. Advance acquisition of land, which is possible under this system, permits early acquisition of undeveloped land, which can be immediately identified as landfill or incinerator sites before nearby development preempts such land uses. Subsequent zoning cases will be held in light of this knowledge and no one will be able to claim that a landfill or incinerator was rammed into his neighborhood without notice.

Generally, a land acquisition office could purchase suitable land as it becomes available, in advance of scheduling in the capital improvement program. If a county is forced to wait several years because of fund limitations, very often the most desirable site will have been acquired for other uses and/or costs will have become prohibitive. In Baltimore County, Maryland, such an office was recently established and empowered to borrow up to

FIGURE C
IDEAS FOR PUBLICITY

TOPICS FOR WRITTEN PUBLICITY

- Establishment of citizens groups
- Statements by public officials
- List of uncontrolled dumps, sources, and their pollution effects
- Comparisons with similar communities which have set up good systems
- Meeting announcements
- Hearings on establishment of a system and site location
- Setting up an agency; its organization, powers, personnel, budget, program
- Agency activities—changes effected, inspections, court appearances, successes, failures
- Visits from out-of-town experts
- Findings and recommendations in the study and investigation report
- State and federal grants received
- Periodic progress reports
- Go-see trips

TOPICS FOR VISUAL PUBLICITY

- Rats in a rubbish pile
- Open burning at dumps, demolition sites, individual homes
- Demolition activities
- Garbage collection in action
- Scenes of litter, dumps and abandoned automobiles in alleys, along highways, in streams, and in wooded areas
- Maps showing dump locations
- Abandoned automobile removal
- Operation of collection equipment
- Activities such as picketing, meetings, inspection trips by officials
- Smoke plumes from apartment building incinerators
- Comparison shots of good and bad storage conditions, disposal sites, and incinerators
- Model of landfill site with planned future use
- Compost plant or sanitary landfill in operation
- Flies on garbage
- Go-see trips

stimulating involvement through humor

Kennebunkport, Maine

A newcomer to the town of Kennebunkport would have assumed a Martian invasion. But it was more like a dump explosion. All streets were barricaded against traffic. Most of the citizens were milling excitedly at the main intersection of town. An evangelist approached lamenting, "Repent. Use Your Dump." Another bedraggled follower carried a sign reading "God Bless Our Dump."

According to the president of the Kennebunkport Dump Association:

> *Each year, we sponsor a "Miss Dumpy" contest and a giant trash parade as the climax of the National Dump Week celebration. Another feature attraction is a dump-art exhibit in which all items are made of genuine junk. Throughout the year we issue dump users "Trash Stamps," bumper stickers, and automobile tags—all of absolutely no value. The "Dump Credit Card" entitles the holder to visit any dump in the country and is now a national anti-litter instrument.*
>
> *Most of us like to go regularly to the dump to engage in the lost art of dump-viewing, even though the town utilizes private rubbish collection. By personally delivering expensive boxes and wrappings at an optimum time, that is, when the dump traffic is greatest, neighbors can subtly be made aware of your affluence without undue boastfulness on your part.*
>
> *Our dump, cluttered to maintain a homey appearance, utilizes a combination of burning and covering. It is designed to allow for infinite expansion, in the shape of a pentagon. Although we have no official connection with the town dump, now "America's Number One," we use this association to emphasize that disposal of trash is vital to our society.*
>
> *Our association is primarily an anti-litter group, and is a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of Maine for the purpose of promoting interest in dumps. Our hope should be that a society that lives by its obsolescence may not perish of its own junk.*

At the outskirts of Kennebunkport, Burma-Shave-type signs declare: NEVER, NEVER, LITTER THE ROAD: BRING OUR DUMP ANOTHER LOAD. Beneath all this tongue-in-cheek promotion, Kennebunkport and the State of Maine, which depends heavily on the tourist trade, are making serious efforts to attract and interest people in the problems of disposing of local and tourist trash.

This case study is presented not to imply that dumps are good or a proper disposal method, but rather to emphasize that it is possible to stimulate community interest and enthusiasm in solid wastes control.

$1 million to provide funds for the advance acquisition of land for government purposes.

Securing Financing. Acceptable solid wastes management is absolutely necessary and improvements must be financed. The general tendency of the public when asked to approve government expenditures, is "when in doubt, vote no." When the law requires the public to vote on capital expenditures, a well-coordinated, public-support campaign is absolutely necessary.

St. Louis County, Missouri, has had several bond referenda related to solid wastes management expenditures. In 1963 a $104,035,000 bond issue for 12 separate projects was put to referendum and defeated. Plans were begun to resubmit the three most pressing projects. A long campaign of public education was then completed and in May, 1965, three bond issues for $41,500,000 were passed with the active support of a citizens committee.

When collection or service fees must be raised, it is important to provide careful explanation. In Fresno, California, the city went from once-a-week collection to twice-a-week and doubled the fee to the homeowner. Its successful information campaign based on public health arguments used a combination of citizens committees, films, TV programs, and a brochure explaining the need.

using the communications media

Newspapers, radio, and television publicity are effective means of stimulating public interest. Officials, the citizens committee, organizations supporting the program, and the local government public information officer should send news releases as often as justified. The more publicity is coordinated the better it is (see Figure C). Weekly and daily newspapers, commercial and educational television and radio stations, and community association newsletters should be used.

In requesting newspaper or media coverage of a particular event, officials should remember that many other community projects are competing for attention and be prepared to justify why their information is important and how the project affects the majority of the audience or readers. Personal contact should be made with the local government beat reporter or city editor.

Two types of media contacts are most useful. The executive or top editorial staff person can plant editorial ideas which a reporter cannot. In particular, this type of contact can provide support in the form of editorial page commentary and "crusade" material. On the other hand, the well-informed reporter can orient stories properly. It is worthwhile trying to identify knowledgeable reporters (TV or newspaper) who will appreciate the substance of solid wastes management stories.

"It is always possible to talk to the news media, confidentially if necessary, to ask media cooperation beforehand," recommended a Genesee County, Michigan, official. They should be told the advantages and disadvantages of the choices available, costs, and sources of opposition and support; then ask their support. The editor of a large metropolitan daily advises, "You can't hide a public business; the news media will uncover it. Instead, give us advance notice and easily digestible facts and information." Without this basic data, the media may end up providing incomplete information or overcoverage of the "anti" groups.

Some of the public relations tools available to reach people are publicity, advertising, printed materials, reports, publications, films, three-dimensional models, speakers bureaus, bumper stickers, meetings, workshops, billboards, radio and television announcements, and programs.

The use of these tools is designed to reach, inform, and convince as many groups as possible at a time, so it is useful to direct some materials to a general audience, and others to more specific audiences. Since not all of the groups reached will have identical opinions or hold them with the same intensity, it is important not to antagonize those people who are inclined to support the program while trying to win the support of those who are opposed.

public service announcements

Newspapers. Public officials should know what kind of material newspapers prefer, what their deadlines are, how much advance notice they prefer, and what kind of coverage they are equipped to provide.

The use of the standard format for press releases is essential. The copy must be typed (double-spaced) or mimeographed, with generous margins and at least four inches blank space at the top of the page. The page heading should be set up:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE or, FOR RELEASE: TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 9 a.m.
TOPIC: Closing of City Dump
ISSUED BY: Citizens for Clean Air
FOR MORE INFO CALL: Mrs. Filter, IK 3-2000

The opening paragraphs should cover who, what, where, when, how, and why.

Pictures for publication should have something to say. A picture which dramatizes a problem or shows action is more interesting—and much more likely to be published—than one of citizens stiffly posed.

Radio and TV. Announcements and press releases sent to radio and television stations receive more attention if they include more information than those sent to newspapers.

For radio news releases the heading at the top of the page should be as follows:

GOOD FOR BROADCAST FROM: April 1 thru 10
TOPIC: "HELP CLOSE THE DUMP"
ISSUED BY: Citizens for Clean Air
FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: Mrs. Filter, IK 3-2000
Number of Words in the Announcement *100.*
Suggested Reading Time *30* seconds.

For television news release and public service announcements use the above, plus suggested picture, for example: TO BE READ OVER SLIDES. The page should be set up in two columns. The left indicates what is seen; the right what is said; for example:

VIDEO		*AUDIO*
Slide 1 of Dump	VOICE:	DISPOSAL OF YOUR TRASH IS A CRISIS IN DIRTY COUNTY.

For routine TV announcements (not fast-breaking news), the station probably has a general public service announcement slide. Officials should find out before having slides made, and check to see whether the station prefers color or black and white. Slides for television are the same as ordinary home 35mm slide film.

Public service announcements for both radio and TV should be supplied in triplicate. Generally, short announcements should be 10, 20, 30, or 52 seconds in length when read aloud clearly. Releases and slides for such spot announcements should be sent to the station a month ahead of time if possible. Some local solid wastes agencies may be able to prepare or have prepared TV spot announcements. A spot which costs $1,000 to produce might garner public service free time usage worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

news events

Any time an event can be turned into news, production becomes the responsibility of the media, thus avoiding the technical problems inherent in preparing public service announcements.

When inviting newspaper, radio, or television to cover an event, a data sheet of facts and figures (not opinions) should accompany the invitation. Radio and newspapers are more able than television to cover fast-breaking news.

Many stations have locally produced programs concerning community affairs. These programs may be "talk" shows, human

appendix

sources of information on solid wastes and methods of citizen support

Bureau of Solid Waste Management
Environmental Health Service
Public Health Service
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20852

National Clean-Up, Paint-Up, Fix-Up Bureau
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

League of Women Voters of the United States
1200 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

National Association of Broadcasters
1771 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Public Relations Society of America, Inc.
845 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10022

films

(numbers in parentheses are order numbers)

The following films are available from the National Audiovisual Center (Annex), Station K, Atlanta, Georgia, 30324, unless followed by another address: *The 3rd Pollution* (AM-1404); *A Day at the Dump* (M-1600-X); *The Stuff We Throw Away* (M-2048-X); *Sanitary Landfill: One Part Earth to Four Parts Refuse* (M-1740-X); *Waste Away* (M-2047-X); *Collector's Item,* International Harvester Company, 401 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611; *A Decent Burial,* Advertising Division, Caterpillar Tractor Company, Peoria, Illinois 61602.

interest spots, news reports, or documentaries. Officials should talk with the program director about the interesting aspects and importance of solid wastes management which could be incorporated into one of these programs.

Most television programs are pre-recorded. Government officials or a citizens committee may know of a good film on solid wastes management, which a local station will agree to broadcast. The citizens committee can publicize the program and encourage group discussion. It may be also possible to follow the film with a discussion on TV.

Some appropriate films are *The Third Pollution, A Day at the Dump, A Decent Burial, Collector's Item,* and *Wealth of the Wasteland.* (See the appendix for addresses.)

The Third Pollution is a documentary of the status of methods of solid wastes disposal today. International Harvester Company sponsored a film called *Collector's Item* which discusses the Los Angeles County collection system. It is slightly dated, but the message still holds. Caterpillar Tractor Company offers a 12½-minute color film called *A Decent Burial* on the proper operation of a sanitary landfill. The problems of waste and pollution in an affluent society are the subject of *Wealth of the Wasteland,* a 26½-minute color film which is available free on short-term loan. The Institute of Scrap Iron and Steel has two films, *The Eternal Harvest* and *The Endless Search,* about the iron and steel industry's work in recycling solid wastes materials.

Solid wastes management is so important and citizen understanding so inadequate, that public officials should consider obtaining professional public relations assistance to help improve community identity and especially to help on campaigns for site approval, bond issue approval, and other controversial questions. The local government public information officer can provide continuing citizen and media information, but he will sometimes need outside specialized public relations assistance.

summary

A sound public information program is an essential aspect of solid wastes management. Public support is especially necessary to implement a new solid wastes management system or to modify substantially an existing system. The strategy of a citizen support campaign should be formulated early in the planning stages.

Local government should establish a record of accomplishment in solid wastes management. In the time it takes to complete a detailed comprehensive solid wastes management plan, local government can involve organizations and private industry in solid wastes management through community improvements such as illicit dump cleanup, litter control, improved solid wastes storage, and abandoned automobile removal.

Local government and the citizens committee should use as many public information tools as possible to inform citizens. Among them are meetings at which slides and films are shown; creation of events such as "go-see" trips; personal contact by telephone and door-to-door canvass, speakers bureau, brochures, and flyers; radio, television, newspaper, and newsletter coverage and announcements; and communications media endorsement.

Local government should make full use of a public information officer, if it has one; volunteers with experience in public relations; and possibly professional public relations services.

Environmental Protection Agency
Library, Region V
1 North Wacker Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60606

selected bibliography

Anderson, Desmond L. (ed.), *Meaningful Public Relations,* International City Managers' Association, 1140 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., 1966. Price: $9.50.

Getting Something Done: Political Effectiveness and Conference Techniques, League of Women Voters of the United States, 1200 17th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 1968. Price $.30.

Meaningful Meetings: The Role of the Resource Committee, Publication Number 319, League of Women Voters of the United States, 1200 17th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 1966 Price: $.40.

Scandlyn, Sammie Lynn (ed.), *101 Winning Ways to Better Municipal Public Relations,* National League of Cities, 1612 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 1967. Price: $1.25.

Tips on Reaching the Public, Publication Number 277, League of Women Voters of the United States, 1200 17th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 1967. Price: $1.25.