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It is a pleasure to be here today and to have this opportunity to make a few remarks during this joint EPA-local government seminar on the implementation of resource recovery technology. Today and tomorrow you will be discussing in considerable detail and depth, a variety of approaches to the recovery of resources from municipal solid waste. Even though I was intimately involved a few years ago in helping to bring about new approaches to resource recovery in the State of Connecticut, I will resist the temptation of attempting to compress a two-day seminar into a half-hour luncheon speech. Instead, I will attempt to relate what you are doing here to a number of other significant issues and activities which are of strong concern to EPA as we engage in the vital process of planning and implementing the new Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.

It is noteworthy that more than half of your topics for discussion involve approaches and considerations which would not be considered technology-intensive by any usual definition of the term. In this regard, this seminar is illustrative of the new and hard-won perceptions which most of us are finally beginning to hold as to how we must deal

with environmental issues. We know now that economic, social and institutional problems must also be solved. In the middle 1960's, however, when RCRA's original progenitor was created by Congress, the public's rising anxieties about freshly perceived environmental problems that our society had largely overlooked during two centuries of technologic and economic achievement, were accompanied by two related illusions that have not been easy to cast off. The first of these was that science, which in those times was always spelled with a capital S, could magically produce a quick high-technology solution to any problem and the second, that government alone could work out the means of applying the solution. In this way the environment could be enhanced and protected with no necessity for any alteration in the behavior of people or their institutions, while society went on blithely pursuing business as usual on a completely different track. Environmental progress since that time, has depended on the gradual loss of the innocence which these illusions represented and their replacement by the sometimes unwelcome but always rewarding knowledge that solving environmental and related health problems touches virtually every aspect of our lives.

After all it wasn't so long ago when it was widely believed that the total solution to air and water problems was to hang a black box somewhere near the end of the production process. We were concerned that this approach was costly but we liked its simplicity and it had the strong appeal of promising to interfere as little as possible with our traditional ways of doing things. When it became apparent that air and water pollution problems could not be solved unless solid

waste management problems were also addressed, the popularly preferred solution was for the government to install larger black boxes, presumably in or near all the standard metropolitan statistical areas, which would --through the magic of science-- receive our wastes, clean them up, and funnel them back into the production stream. Myths about the wonders of "urban ore" became so prevalent that even today well-intentioned, environmentally concerned people are shocked when it is suggested that no matter how successful we are in resource conservation and recovery, there is now and will probably always be, a significant residue that will have to be dealt with as a waste rather than as a resource. While we strive to conserve and recover, we must at the same time recognize that landfill is not inherently evil and can be carried out in a manner consistent with environmental and public health protection. As a matter of fact, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act cannot possibly achieve its laudable objectives unless we agree that proper disposal is a proper part of enlightened solid waste management.

Our environmental indignation and zeal of the past decade were well founded and should continue to motivate us. But it is time to harness our passions to our perceptions, to descend from the clouds to the solid ground of reality, so that our search for solutions will not be impeded by misplaced effort and disillusionment. Certainly we must now acknowledge that environmental and related health problems are inextricably interwoven into the social, cultural, and economic fabric of society. While

placing control devices to curb the flow of pollutants at the end of the production process is one of the mechanisms we must use, it is by no means the only one. Indeed, as we move into the future, that approach will assume less importance, provided we take our lessons from the past to heart and consider the environment in everything we do. Forethought will reduce the economic costs and enhance the public health and environmental benefits. Environmental afterthought is costly on both counts.

The realization that we cannot rely on after-the-fact solutions to solve all environmental problems is reflected in the two most recent environmental laws enacted by the Congress and to be implemented by EPA-- the Toxic Substances Control Act and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. TSCA provides our society with the long-needed opportunity to learn to look before we leap. Through it, we may one day be able to stop the toxic or carcinogenic surprise-a-month syndrome which has caused many to despair of our ability to enjoy the remarkable benefits of science and technology without paying too high a price in public health and environmental damage.

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act represents the culmination of more than a decade of tentative conclusions, uncertain actions, and running debate about the Federal role in the management of waste residuals. It mandates a variety of different approaches to a complex set of issues that touch the very frontiers of environmental progress. It acknowledges

that energy and materials conservation needs and public health and environmental protection needs are interdependent rather than conflicting. Precisely because it does not suggest a simple answer to a series of very complex questions it will be a challenging and rewarding Act to implement. It asks government at all levels, industry, and the public to recognize that solid waste practices influence and are influenced by far-reaching social and economic issues, ranging from the attitudes of the individual citizen and consumer, through how products are extracted, manufactured and marketed, to such issues as depletion allowances and international trade policies. It calls for new patterns of interaction among all levels of government, the assumption of key responsibilities by industry, and for meaningful public understanding and participation in all the major activities to be carried out under the Act. It underscores the fact that the land is a natural medium which needs to be protected just as air and water do. Moreover, it reminds us that resource conservation and recovery cannot be neglected if we are to move closer to that glittering and elusive prize known as environmental quality.

As you know, RCRA does not suggest that there is a way to properly manage solid waste, just as in your seminar, you do not suggest that there is a way to recover resources from municipal solid waste. It provides direct cradle-to-grave regulatory authorities through a State/Federal partnership over hazardous wastes. It contains less direct but nonetheless compelling provisions intended to bring about recovery or the environmentally sound disposal of all other wastes, and the eventual cessation of open

dumping. The mechanisms are different because the problems are different. It authorizes technical and financial assistance for the development of State and Regional Solid Waste Management Programs which must encourage increased resource conservation and recovery. This is vital. Increased conservation and recovery is essential to help hold down the costs of disposal which are bound to rise as dumps are closed and environmentally sound landfills replace them. It calls for studies and renewed attention to a number of other important issues, such as waste reduction, municipal sludges, and rural solid waste problems. It touches in a variety of ways, on virtually every facet of solid waste management which has come to the surface since the first federal legislation on this issue was passed in 1965.

Since I cannot possibly comment on each of these, I shall devote my remaining minutes to briefly discussing current EPA activities which bear most directly on the theme of this seminar.

Under the new Act, EPA is undertaking a widened range of activities in resource conservation and recovery. A major new responsibility is our role in carrying out the work of the interagency Resource Conservation Committee, which was established by RCRA and which, in effect, should become a new national forum on materials policy issues, following upon the work of the recent National Commission on Supplies and Shortages, the National Commission on Materials Policy, and other similar efforts. This committee will conduct a 2-year study of proposals to stimulate materials conservation and recycling and of existing public policies that affect the efficiency with which materials are used. Because of

the far-ranging nature of these proposals and policies, Congress required that the Committee include the Secretaries of Commerce, Labor, Treasury, and Interior, the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, and a representative of the Office of Management and Budget, with the EPA Administrator as Chairman. A representative of the Council of Economic Advisors is also participating at the Committee's invitation.

Among the specific topics assigned to the Resource Conservation Committee is the appropriateness and feasibility of imposing disposal charges on consumer products--charges roughly equal to the costs of collecting and disposing of the associated solid wastes, with a reduction in the charge for use of recovered materials. Actually EPA has had the disposal charge concept under study since 1970, as required by the Resource Recovery Act, and now the details and alternatives to be considered in implementing a charge system are being worked out. The results of our studies thus far indicate that a disposal charge system is administratively feasible and could be an effective incentive for increased recycling.

The Federal government is itself a prime consumer and therefore has opportunities to practice and promote conservation in its own purchasing and use of materials.

Under RCRA, Federal agencies will be required, in purchasing products to select those composed of the highest percentage of recycled materials practicable. EPA will provide guidance and information to other agencies on how they can carry out this requirement.

The Beverage Container Guidelines, under which a refundable 5-cent deposit will be placed on all containers for beer and soft drinks sold on Federal facilities, is beginning to be implemented. The Department of the Interior, for example, is instituting deposit systems in all the National Parks this summer.

The EPA guidelines on source separation--that is, the separating out of recyclables by waste generators--are mandatory for Federal agencies that generate economically recoverable paper wastes. The EPA offices here in Washington have been practicing source separation of office wastepaper with considerable success; we are pushing to rapidly institute the practice in Federal offices across the country.

Source separation is at present the primary means of recovering materials from waste. Moreover, neighborhood recycling centers, separate municipal collection of recyclables, office paper separation, and other source separation programs have tremendous unused potential. Expansion of source separation practices depends in large on improved markets for secondary materials. Successful source separation programs also depend, however, on know-how and sufficient means to establish viable systems. EPA will continue to encourage innovative source separation programs and to provide technical assistance to communities and groups interested in setting up such systems.

The EPA-supported demonstrations of separate municipal collection of cans, paper, and glass in Marblehead and Somerville, Massachusetts, have now been in operation over a year and are showing good results. The importance of public education and careful planning are being evidenced in these projects.

The "high-technology" mixed-waste processing systems undoubtedly have a major role in resource recovery, even though questions remain about the commercial viability of particular types of systems or their appropriateness in particular settings and conditions. Through public and private efforts, the state of the art of resource recovery systems has advanced considerably in the past few years. We are pleased to note, for example, that the technologies demonstrated with EPA support in St. Louis and Franklin, Ohio, are now being utilized commercially. Even the Baltimore pyrolysis project has served to provide all of us with worthwhile experience and information about technological problem-solving as well as the potentials for pitfalls in trying out new and expensive technology. It should be well noted that significant risks in such demonstration projects are inherent--that is why cities are reluctant to undertake them without Federal sharing of costs--but without risk-taking, commercial-scale prototype systems cannot be attempted.

EPA currently is giving emphasis to evaluating the systems that have been developed and to communicating such knowledge to State and local governments, industry, and others in the field through our technical assistance program.

Technical assistance is a vital tool at this stage of progress in resource recovery. The state of the art is not widely known, there have been exaggerated claims made for various systems that need to be seen in a more objective light, and communities often do not have good access to the expertise required for successful implementation. Resource recovery systems are not typical of other public works projects in their complexity and in the fact that they must be run like a business, producing and selling products.

Before enactment of RCRA, we were already heavily involved in developing guides and information on municipal implementation of resource recovery systems and in giving in-depth consultation to communities. We also provided small grants to communities to enable them to plan adequately for implementation. Our role has been to aid the development of effective, equitable partnerships between local governments and industry based on the best available knowledge about the capabilities, requirements, and risks of resource recovery systems.

Under RCRA, technical assistance will be expanded via the "Resource Conservation and Recovery Panels" --teams of Federal, State, and local personnel and consultants who will be made available through our Regional Offices to State and local governments upon request. Seminars such as this one and workshops and public meetings will further serve to spread and clarify the facts about resource recovery as well as about the other components of solid waste management.

I said at the beginning of my talk today that solving environmental and public health problems touches virtually every aspect of our lives. Consequently, the quest for rigid "either-or solutions" is obsolete and the artificial barriers that have been erected in the past between environmental and other important national goals must be removed.

The tendency to erect such barriers has been particularly strong in recent times in relation to energy and the environment. While I am not suggesting that there has not been cause for concern among those who have feared that the urgent need to fulfill energy needs might result in the dismantling of environmental gains, I do suggest that it is now time to stress the interrelatedness of energy and environmental goals.

Last Tuesday, as you know, President Carter made his unprecedented address to the Nation on the energy problem. He said "with the exception of preventing war, this is the greatest challenge our country will face during our lifetimes" and he called on all of us to put up with the inconveniences and to make sacrifices. It is very noteworthy that he said nothing to suggest that we must sacrifice environmental gains to achieve energy goals. Quite to the contrary, President Carter pointed out that one of the several important reasons why we must begin now to deal with the energy crisis is that unless we do, "we will feel mounting pressure to plunder the environment." He also outlined the ten fundamental principles of the administration's national energy plan, none of which calls for the sacrifice of environmental gains and two

of which, make clear that just the opposite is true. As you may recall, he said "the third principle is that we must protect the environment. Our energy problems have the same cause as our environmental problems--wasteful use of resources. Conservation helps us solve both at once." The sixth principle, which he called the cornerstone of the energy policy, "is to reduce demand through conservation. Our emphasis on conservation is a clear difference between this plan and others which merely encourage crash production efforts." "Conservation," he went on to say, "is the quickest, cheapest, most practical source of energy." The tenth principle is also of special interest to this audience, I am sure. It is that we must start now to develop new, unconventional sources of energy.

Therefore, we must move--for energy, environmental, natural resources and health reasons--to capture the potential recoverable energy and materials in the municipal solid waste stream, which is the subject of this seminar. The energy equivalent of 400,000 barrels of oil a day, plus significant quantities of steel, glass, paper and aluminum, must be converted from an environmental problem to an economic opportunity. But as your program suggests there is no simple add-on device that will make it come true.

Public attitudes, and practices must be changed, our historical view of what is waste and what is not must be altered. It is no accident therefore that RCRA contains an unusually complete array of provisions which

make public participation an integral part of the process of planning and implementation rather than a mere after-the-thought add-on. Genuine public awareness and participation are essential for a number of reasons, two of which are of salient importance. First, while the public has first hand experience with air and water pollution in their daily lives, the thousands of hazardous and somewhat less hazardous open dumps, pits, ponds and lagoons which exist throughout our country, leaching their wretched brew into ground water and often contributing to surface water and air pollution, are hardly popular tourist attractions and we must make a conscious effort to become aware of them. Unless the public has a reasonable opportunity to learn about them, the timely implementation of RCRA will suffer. Second, the Act is the utter opposite of an add-on. Government at all levels, industry and the citizen and consumer must embrace the true significance of its varied provisions, and alter their perceptions and practices accordingly. If as citizens of the most wasteful nation on earth, we do this in the full spirit of the Act, we may be pleasantly surprised to learn, as we move toward the future, that we can also recapture an important legacy of the past when a respect for the earth and a careful husbanding of the bounty it has so generously given our nation was a vital part of the American ethic.

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