

Penn State Hosts Waste Water Meet

Participants in a Penn State conference on waste water renovation were urged this morning by Maurice K. Goddard, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, to become evangelists for "the ultimate recycling idea."

"You should be able, after this conference, to go home and convince politicians, environmentalists, ecologically minded citizens, and everyone else, that land disposal of waste water is worthy of their support," he said.

The Secretary opened a four-day symposium on Tuesday celebrating the tenth anniversary of a Penn State experiment demonstrating that waste water, scientifically sprayed over crop and forest land, can be made fit to drink.

Registraton at the conference surprised even its organizers. Three hundred were expected; almost four hundred turned up. Conference co-director, Dr. William Sopper, reported that "we were literally inundated with last-minute requests for registration, most of which had to be refused."

Those attending, said Sopper, included not only university researchers but local government officials, water authority members, public health and regulatory agency personnel, and representatives of private consulting firms.

"The heavy turnout," he said, "only confirms what Federal officials have been telling us: there is an unprecedented upswelling of interest in land disposal of effluent. Were space

available, we could easily have doubled the attendance at this symposium."

The ultimate recycling idea, known in its Penn State version as "The Living Filter," involves allowing effluent to percolate through the soil; microorganisms there ingest some of the impurities and crops and trees take up the rest as nutrients. Thus, total biodegradability is achieved.

A spin-off project, now in its third year, has shown that the same technique can provide, in one growing season, what one project scientist describes as "lush ground cover" on the worst soil in the world: strip mine soil.

And spray irrigation, Secretary Goddard said in his talk, "has a potential for dramatically improving the quality of our nation's waterways . . . Treating waste products so they are

somewhat improved and then discharging them into our waterways does not meet the goals of ecological science . . .

"Hence the interest of many ecologists in using waste water to reclaim and fertilize land and, using land as a filter . . . a living filter, if you like . . . to purify the water."

Daily tours of the project site are included in the conference agenda, as is the premiere of a documentary film on the subject.

Inquiries about the project, operated under the Institute for Research on Land and Water Resources, have come from all fifty states, all the provinces of Canada, and dozens of foreign countries, some as far away as Thailand.

At the current symposium 45 states were represented, as well as Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and five provinces in Canada.

In addition, there was one registrant from New Zealand.

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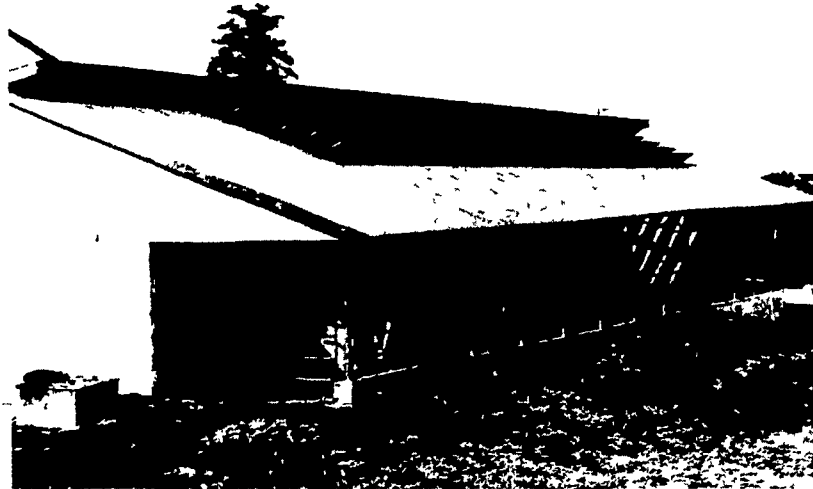
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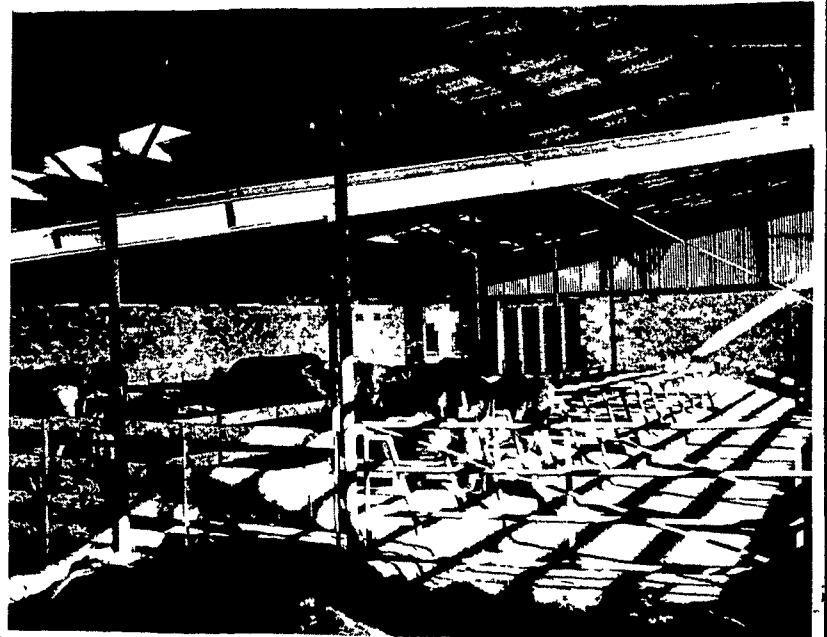


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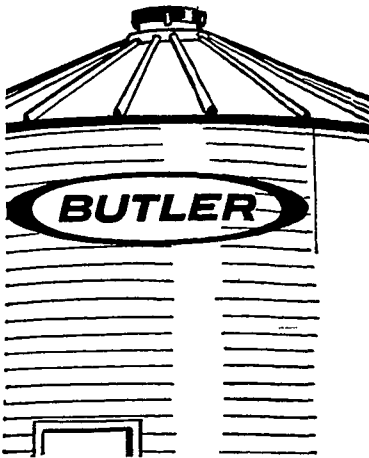
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