

OPINION



A. Case for conservation

Shop smart: Recycling starts in the store

By ALENE N. CASE

Do you ever wonder what happens to your waste paper after the big green truck carries it away? Most of us are convinced that we are doing a good thing by reducing the volume of trash going into the landfill - often by as much as 40%. And, we like the idea of saving trees (each ton of recycled paper saves 17 of them!), energy (somewhere between 23% and 74% depending on the type of paper), and water (50%). We correctly assume that we are contributing to cleaner air and water and reducing hazardous wastes such as dioxin created in the initial production of paper.

But, what kind of holiday greeting cards are you planning to send this year? Did you know that beautiful cards on recycled paper are available from several non-profit organizations such as UNICEF and the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.? A wide variety of cards for all occasions are sold locally by the Tudor Book Shops and at the Interfaith Resource Center for peace and Justice (68 S. Franklin St., Wilkes-Barre). Or, if you plan to use your computer to write a yearly letter to friends and relatives, computer paper is only one of many recycled items available at the Office Warehouse near the Wyoming Valley Mall.

As with any resource of product, supply must be matched by demand in order to maintain the economic vitality of the system. Choosing our cards, stationery, and computer paper is as important in protecting the environment as putting recyclables out for collection. And we need to begin asking questions. Find out if the product you buy has been made from post-consumer waste or from trimmings from the production of envelopes and other paper products. Those pre-consumer wastes have been reworked into paper for years. What proportion of the product is actually recycled? There are rules yet that dictate the percentage of recycled fiber that must be included before a manufacturer can label a product "recycled." Most types of paper should contain 50-80% recycled fiber.

(And while you are asking questions and making choices, look for cards that have been printed with soy-based inks. These inks are easier to remove in the de-inking process prior to recycling. They also save oil and help American farmers. One of the most astonishing statistics I came across while researching this article is that we could reduce our petroleum imports by 5-6% if all professional printers switched to soy inks. That is more oil than would be gained by opening the Arctic National Wild-

life Refuge to oil production!)

There is now an oversupply of old newspaper (ONP) awaiting recycling. This glut is creating a situation in which recyclers often must pay to get rid of the ONP they have collected. That is cheaper than sending it to the landfill, but somehow it just doesn't seem right. Newspaper publishers should be encouraged to negotiate future long-term paper contracts with firms that use 40-60% recycled fiber. We can also help by supporting businesses that use products made from ONP. For example, Burger King recently began packing take-out orders in bags comprised of 65% post-consumer ONP. They give an 800 number on each bag and ask for consumer comments. Call. Some Pennsylvania farmers have found shredded ONP to be an excellent substitute for straw as bedding for animals. It is cheaper and more absorbent and doesn't contain weed seeds that could propagate in fields where bedding is spread after use.

Price and availability will improve only when we, as consumers, demand recycled paper products in the stores where we shop. This holiday season is a good time to begin.

(The technical information presented here was mainly provided by Earth Care Paper, Inc. of Madison, WI.)

The economic view

Report ranks concerns of PA residents

By HOWARD J. GROSSMAN

As a result of a survey conducted by Pennsylvania State University and subsequently published in a report titled "Citizens' View Point: Priorities for the 1990s" it is now possible to define the perception of people in the state as a whole in regard to a variety of social issues, and to analyze regional differences in citizen opinion within the state.

As a result of the 1990 survey and the comparisons to a similar effort in 1980, it is possible to see the shifts in priorities which residents believe to be important today versus those of a decade ago.

As the survey notes, "Most obvious was the increased emphasis given to environmental protection. Items directly dealing with pollution and environmental preservation represented six of the top 10 items in 1990...when comparing only the items asked in both time periods, the ranking of state road and highway repairs dropped slightly between 1980 and 1990, as did the items dealing with citizen government relations and job opportunities for youth and adults. The relative importance of programs dealing with teenage drug and alcohol abuse remained high."

The 23 page report provides insight into specific functional areas for which questions were aggregated. These areas include citizen-government relations, environmental protection, jobs, education, youth, housing, social services, medical services, senior citizens, roads and transportation, local services, nutrition and health, community planning, economic development, and equality.

The following list delineates the priorities as indicated by citizens who participated in the survey which those who prepared the report believe to be a scientifically selected sample which is representative of the general population of Pennsylvania:

- Safe disposal of industrial waste, 84.7%
- Programs that deal with teenage drug and alcohol abuse, 78.6%
- Safe drinking water, 77.5%
- Attention by government to citizen concerns, 77.1%
- Protection and conservation of the natural environment 73.6%
- Programs to reduce teenage

- pregnancy, 71.6%
 - Safe and efficient sewage disposal, 71.1%
 - Preservation of farm lands, 70.1%
 - Repair of state road and highways, 69.8%
 - Safe use of agricultural chemicals, 69.3%
 - Communications of governmental decisions and policies to citizens, 68.6%
 - Protection from abuse for children, elderly, and handicapped, 67.3%
 - Job opportunities for youth, 66.3%
 - Programs to deal with adult drug and alcohol abuse, 65.0%
- Those who would like more information pertaining to the Citizens' Viewpoint 1990 survey should contact the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania, 1151 Oak Street, Pittston, PA 18640.
- Howard Grossman is Executive Director of the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania. He lives in Dallas.

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J.W.J.

Happiness is not guaranteed

By J.W. JOHNSON

A few years ago there was a young dreamer writing for a Florida newspaper. He was investigating government-financed housing in a Florida city. He found, according to the article, some inhabitants without up-to-date or adequate apartments.

Instead of realizing that the occupants of that housing - that is, taxpayer subsidized housing - were nevertheless fortunate to have more than an adequate roof over their heads, the writer beat his moral breast about the government owing everyone a decent home.

Conversely, readers of *Esquire* magazine recently learned about the humanitarian efforts of a Northeastern Pennsylvania area woman to assist a young New York City woman who was homeless. And while the compassion should be lauded, the effort failed because the young woman abandoned her benefactor and returned to the city to sleep with the devil she knew.

Since when is every citizen, and according to HUD, owed "decent, safe and sanitary" accommodations?

Where is it written? As I read the constitution, it guarantees life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, not the guarantee.

Then again, we have an unaccountable bureaucracy, left largely to their own devices by a cowardly Congress. Bureaucrats operate outside the constitutional process, and seemingly exist to make one-size-fits-all regulations which defy logic, and which borrow against common sense in premise and application.

Congress has discovered in the bureaucracy a way to remain pure and chaste, unsoiled by the acceptance of mandated responsibilities to make tough political decisions. Congress simply sloughs off those responsibilities to a faceless, nameless mob and says: "Who, us?"

What Congress does is pass a vaguely worded statute that simultaneously creates a rule making body. In most cases the statute's goals are as worthy as motherhood and apple pie so that no reasonable person (or those wanting something for nothing) could oppose it, the political theory being that re-election is thus assured for the legislator whose name appears on the statute.

Then enter the rule making body - the bureaucracy; that petty horde of regulation loving hacks who often don't have the faintest notion of the realities of the problem addressed by the statute. The bureaucracy writes rules and the citizen and businessman are left to die on the beach, a victim of belligerent benevolence.

In the case of housing subsidy and, to a lesser degree, the homeless, most governmental attempts to address these problems have the long term effect of perpetuating the poverty class by collecting and grouping together people who have little to offer one another except the same needs.

What the young (and I use the term loosely) journalist failed to note in his alleged investigation was that another study by a Texas newspaper found that nearly all HUD subsidized projects in 47 different cities were by and large segregated.

At the same time, these millions

of subsidized Americans are no different from the rest of America where in almost every city and community (Pittsburgh in this state, for example, where there are more than 200 different ethnic groups), the different races and cultures have, generally speaking, maintained separate neighborhoods.

So what? If these people find themselves grouped into cultural and racial communities, a majority obviously want it that way.

And there is also the periodic wailing because minority housing developments are so often found in run-down condition.

This is somehow, too, often blamed on government. To suggest otherwise is to risk being called racist. To suggest, for example, that part of the reason lies in the living habits of the occupants...perish the thought!

Our founders said the pursuit of happiness, not the guarantee. But that freedom, indeed the freedom to fail, is now gone, sold at the ballot box for the perceived, but in reality, short term security of government guarantee.

In its place is the arrogant and mindless bureaucracy which makes decisions and develops programs such as subsidized housing. And it is the cowardly legislatures of this state and this land which allow those bureaucracies to remain in existence, to keep political heat from themselves when they make election promises that are incapable of being supported by the voter's wallet or conscience.

The opinions expressed are those of J.W. Johnson and do not necessarily reflect those of this newspaper. Please address your comments, questions and/or column ideas to Mr. Johnson at P.O. Box E, Honesdale, PA 18431.

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