

## NEWS IN BRIEF

● **PACKAGING POLLUTION CONTROL ACT OF 1970:** Senator Gaylord Nelson (D-Wis.) has introduced a bill that would levy a "solid waste fee" on industries for product packaging according to several criteria including the possible toxic and health effects of disposal of the package and the ease with which the package could be "recycled." The Packaging Pollution Control Act of 1970 (S. 3665) directs the HEW Secretary and the Secretary of the Treasury to make a schedule of national packaging charges that reflects the effect of each type of packaging upon the environment. The bill proposes that the national packaging charges be routed to state and local governments for the construction and expansion of solid waste facilities.

● **MARYLAND ABORTION LAW:** The Maryland legislature has passed a bill repealing all existing laws regulating abortion. Under the new law (which would be the most liberal in the nation), a woman and her physician decide when and if a pregnancy should be terminated. Any licensed doctor in the state can perform a legal abortion in any licensed hospital in the state and there is no residency requirement. The governor has not yet signed the bill.

● **INDIANS BLOCK ALASKAN PIPELINE:** A federal judge has granted a temporary restraining order prohibiting the Secretary of the Interior from issuing permits for the construction in Alaska of an oil pipeline and a road parallel to it. The judge ruled that the pipeline and road may not be run across Stevens Village without the consent of the 66 Indians who live there. The judge said he would reconsider his temporary order in 10 days. During the hearing, the director of the Geological Survey filed a memo with the court saying the design of the pipeline was not acceptable for Alaska's sensitive and shifting tundra. His points and the court order will, according to an Interior Department official, delay the issuance of permits indefinitely.

● **NUCLEAR WASTE DISPOSAL:** Four government agencies have recommended to the Atomic Energy Commission changes in the disposal of radioactive wastes. The agencies criticized the AEC for not insuring against leakage of atomic wastes into under-

ground aquifers, and suggested new techniques of burial. The Bureau of Radiological Health, the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration collaborated on the report at the instigation of Senator Frank Church (D-Idaho), in whose state is one of the waste disposal sites.

● **CLEAN AIR CAR RACE:** College groups will race 30 to 40 low-pollution vehicles from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to the California Institute of Technology this summer in the second transcontinental clean air car race. The race, which is being organized by students from these two schools, will begin 24 August and will be run in six legs, each terminating on the campus of some college or university. Scoring will be based partially on the vehicles' emission of pollutants.

● **END OF EXPLORER 1:** Explorer 1, the first American earth satellite and the oldest man-made object in space, plunged back into the atmosphere on 1 April and burned over the Pacific Ocean. Explorer 1 was launched from Cape Canaveral by a makeshift combination of 16 military rockets on 31 January 1958. It recorded peculiar bands of radiation encircling the earth which later became known as the Van Allen belts.

● **ERIE FISHING CURBED:** The Canadian government has banned the sale and export of walleyed pike, perch, and pickerel from Lake Erie because of poisonous mercury found in the fish. Initial testing of the fish showed, according to a Canadian official, that fish in Lake St. Clair (a small lake connecting lakes Huron and Erie) contained 1.3 parts per million of mercury. Fish in Lake Erie near the St. Clair end have shown the same amount, which exceeds by 0.8 part per million the legal maximum. Ontario Premier John Robarts is seeking a meeting with the governor of Michigan to determine how to end the pollution. Chemical and paper processing plants are suspected of discharging mercury into the lakes. Fishermen are being allowed to freeze their catches until more thorough testing is done. Despite Lake Erie's badly polluted condition, about 50 million pounds of fish are caught from it each year.

were still functioning. An upper-level official in HEW looked into the matter and came back with a general reply that an effort was being made to streamline SRS advisory apparatus and that some functions, such as the authority to continue some training grants, were being delegated to regional offices under the decentralization program. At the very least it appears that a communications gap exists.

Policy-level officials at HEW, including deputy undersecretary Fred V. Malek, say that efforts are being made to modernize the research advisory apparatus and to put more emphasis on staff decisions at the regional level. But they stress that the programs involved are "people-oriented" programs which provide primarily for the delivery of services. Research and training funded under these programs are expected to support the service function directly. The consensus within HEW, they say, is that basic research will not lend itself to decentralized management. Basic research, however, has not yet been given the kind of close examination that service programs have, but the subject of basic research grant administration is scheduled for early scrutiny, and one gets the impression that the prevailing HEW attitude is that nothing is sacred.

The administration effort to gain influence over the advisory apparatus and the decentralization itself should be considered in light of the special difficulties a new Republican administration faces in taking over control of the federal establishment. Republicans have occupied the White House for only 9 of the last 33 years. Most legislation expanding the federal role in domestic affairs was enacted under the Democrats, and the federal bureaucracy bears, so to speak, the Democrats' trademark. The number of appointive jobs at the policy level are limited, and many key management posts are occupied by career civil servants, so the incoming Republicans find themselves with frustratingly little leverage. Furthermore, because of the budget squeeze, this is an inopportune time to interpose a layer of new jobs for loyalists, as sometimes has been done in an effort to overcome inertia. The Administration is left with reorganization as the avenue to change, and decentralization at HEW follows this route.

HEW is a loose confederation of agencies whose programs proliferated during the New Frontier-Great Society