

"GREEN" ISSUES AND THEIR IMPACT ON BATCO: UPDATE JANUARY 1991

There have been no major developments since the previous paper on environmental issues. It is, however worth noting the following:

1. UK Issues

The 1991 edition of Social Trends, produced by the Central Statistical Office, confirms that the percentage of people concerned about green issues continues to rise. Concern is expressed mainly about chemical and sewage contamination of water. However, almost 80% of adults claimed to be quite/very worried about litter and rubbish; the same percentage were quite/very worried about the destruction of tropical forest. A growing percentage of the population is prepared to adapt its behaviour because of these concerns. Two thirds of adults now use 'ozone friendly' aerosols, four in ten take used bottles to a bottle bank and a further five in ten said they would consider doing so. Sales of unleaded petrol rose from 28% to 38% of the UK market between January and October last year.

2. European Issues

Officials in the Department of Trade and Industry have been told that the European Commission will produce a first official draft of the EEC Packaging Directive in Spring 1991. According to the DTI, "the aim will certainly be to cause industry to acknowledge and act upon its responsibility for waste which derives from its production and distribution processes, even where the waste arises post-consumer".

The new draft Directive will incorporate specific legislation on plastics waste, with tough recycling targets for individual sectors, eg construction industry, vehicles, agriculture, household wastes etc. The strongest opposition to the introduction of targets has come from the packaging sector. Manufacturers of polyethylene film argue that their products would be better diverted to incineration with heat recovery or production of waste-derived fuel, rather than being "upgraded" by chemical means as has been suggested. There is no real expectation however that these concerns will be taken into consideration.

Meanwhile, individual Member States continue to introduce conflicting national laws on packaging leaving the Commission with little option but to produce a strict package of its own. In addition to the German legislation, the more dramatic legislation passed or proposed includes:

- Italy: 50% of metal and glass, 40% of plastics to be recycled. Operating costs for recycling systems to be met by industry and paid according to market shares. From 1993, taxes to be introduced for materials which have not met recycling targets.
- Denmark: Metal cans banned for beer and soft drinks. A tax on all packaging for liquids. Glass bottles for domestically produced drinks must be refillable; a deposit, return and recycling system has to be set up for imports. Retailers being encouraged to delist PVC containers; additional rules for other plastics.
- Ireland: Mandatory deposits and taxes being considered by government unless industry proposes "realistic" recycling plans.

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3. International Issues

Canada

The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment has produced a "National Packaging Protocol" recommending six packaging policies for Canada:

- (i) All packaging shall have minimal effects on the environment.
(Industry to prepare "environmental profiles" of its own packaging, followed by product re-design to minimise environmental impact).
- (ii) Priority will be given to the management of packaging through source reduction, reuse and recycling.
(Government, in consultation with industry and "a multi-stakeholder group" will prepare a code of Preferred Canadian Packaging Practices, the ideal scenario being no packaging at all where possible).
- (iii) A continuing campaign of information and education will be undertaken to make all Canadians aware of the function and environmental impact of packaging.
- (iv) These policies will apply to all packaging used in Canada, including imports.
- (v) Regulations will be implemented as necessary to achieve compliance with these targets.
- (vi) All government policies and practices affecting packaging will be consistent with these national policies.

Targets:

By December 31, 1992: Packaging sent for disposal to be no more than 80% of the amount sent in 1988.

By December 31, 2000: Packaging sent for disposal to be no more than 50% of the amount sent in 1988.

50% of these diversions to be achieved through source reduction and reuse;
50% to be achieved through recycling.

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