

Ecology CENTER of ANN ARBOR

417 Detroit Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104
313-761-3186
April 15, 1974



Members of Council:

My name is Rick Gans and I live at 952 Fountain in Ann Arbor. I am representing the Ecology Center of Ann Arbor.

Recently, Ann Arbor's returnable beverage ordinance was ruled against by Judge Deake in a suit brought against the city by a group of merchants. I am here to urge you to continue support of this important legislation by appealing Judge Deake's decision.

Ann Arbor's law was closely modeled after an extremely successful Oregon law that has been in effect for a year and a half now. A before and after highway litter survey conducted in Oregon by the Oregon Department of Highways showed a 90% drop in beverage containers littered between the summer of 1972 and 1973. To understand the possible impact of such a law in Ann Arbor, next time you take a walk, notice the litter around you. I think you'll be surprised to see just how visible non-returnable bottles and cans are. Then think about how many returnable bottles you see. (Parenthetically, Judge Deake felt the observations from a passing car of a quote "litter expert" hired by large bottling concerns was more valid *testimony* than a systematic piece counting survey done by the Ecology Center.)

Another largely overlooked aspect of returnable bottles is their large energy savings. On a per use basis, throwaway containers consume from 2.4 to 3.3 times the amount of energy a returnable container consumes. This calculation, done by Dr. Bruce Hannon at the University of Illinois, includes all energy for forming the containers, transportation, filling, ^{disposal} etc. Most significantly, the energy per use of a container is even higher if the throwaway container is recycled instead of thrown away.

Certainly merchants and distributors would be slightly inconvenienced by a returnable bottle system, but it isn't as if returnable bottles are a new innovation. Before 1955, that was pretty much all any merchant or distributor handled.

The Ecology Center of Ann Arbor has nothing to gain personally by pursuing this law. Last year, our net income from glass recycling was over \$7500.00. Implementation of the returnable ordinance would cut this income at least in half. We are advocating this law because of the general benefits that all members of the Ann Arbor community would receive.

It is important that the City of Ann Arbor appeal this unfortunate decision. Ypsilanti and the surrounding townships have all indicated they would follow suit with similar legislation if Ann Arbor's law was upheld. Ann Arbor's law is one of the first of its kind in the country. Its passage was significant nationally and many communities are looking towards Ann Arbor as a model. Ann Arbor can make a strong case for its returnable ordinance at an appeal hearing. About a month ago, Bowie, Maryland had a similar law to Ann Arbor's upheld instead of overturned. It is important that City Council pursue a course that is in the best interests of the entire community rather than give in to the pressures from a minority segment of the community with vested interests.