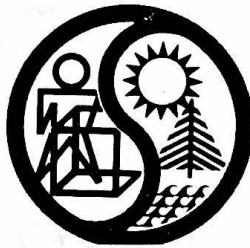


# Ecology Center of Ann Arbor

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## ANN ARBOR RETURNABLE BEVERAGE CONTAINER ORDINANCE

After five months of debating and research the Ann Arbor City Council on March 19 passed 8 votes to 3 a city ordinance banning non-returnable beverage bottles and cans effective June 1, 1973. Unbelievable opposition came from local merchants, particularly the Wrigley and Vescio food chains. One of the dramatic moments of the evening came when the "Oregon Fact Finding Organization" presented unsubstantiated evidence against the returnable cans and bottles. The Oregon Fact Finding Organization is a recently formed group of large industries with the sole purpose to defend their lack of responsibility toward cleaning our environment. They were represented on this evening by the National Can Company. Their representative stated that since the Oregon state law banning returnables has gone into effect there has been an increase in can and glass litter instead of a decrease. This he demonstrated with a detailed color film. When questioned by City Council as to where specific information was obtained, their response was that most of their statistics were obtained from the Oregon Department of Highways. This was immediately opposed by a University of Michigan student who said he had spoken by telephone that day with Mr. William Moore, Commissioner of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, who gave information to contradict the information presented by the Oregon Fact Finding Organization. One statement by the student showed that the price of beer in returnable containers in many cases is now less since a returnable container can be

used 12 to 14 times, thus saving resources, energy, and, most of all, money. The Oregon ordinance was effective October 2, 1973 throughout the entire state of Oregon.

Mayor Robert Harris praised both sides, while injecting criticism toward industry for the delay in presenting "technical objections" which had been requested by City Council to be presented the previous month.

Mike Schectman, Director of the Ecology Center of Ann Arbor stated that the Center is losing money operating the can facet of the local recycling center.

He further stated that if ecology centers had only a fraction of the money that industry has to educate the public at large to buy only returnable beverage bottles and cans, litter would be greatly reduced. He also blamed the mass media for propaganda tactics to use throw-away bottles and cans.

The new ordinance will be sure to be challenged, since it will require significant effort - even some sacrifice - on the part of local merchants and consumers in the city. Residents must now be willing to continue purchasing their beverages within the city limits and regularly return their bottles to make the ordinance effective. Merchants must be willing to sacrifice some storage space for the returned bottles.

COMPLETE COOPERATION IS NECESSARY TO MAKE THIS A MODEL ORDINANCE FOR OTHER CITIES IN MICHIGAN AND THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY TO FOLLOW.