

# village view

by Andrea Leonard

"Americans are apathetic."

People just don't seem to care, anymore."

Statements like these are heard frequently today, especially at all levels of government among elected officials. It's a lament that, although based on truth, overlooks legitimate reasons for public apathy.

After several years of digging around amidst facts, figures, and people's feelings, I've concluded Americans do care, and deeply. They can't determine, however, what most needs caring about. Their leaders and legislators aren't much better informed. Confusion reigns supreme.

Consider: At the political conventions, the Democratic presentational candidate chose a running mate because he's a liberal and "balances the ticket."

The Republic challenger's choice was for a similar reason. Then the incumbent picked a man to "do the dirty work" and respond in kind to the anticipated mud-slinging in the up-coming campaign.

Comment: Not a single one was chosen for his suitability for the job of the Vice Presidency or because he would be particularly capable of assuming the Presidency in an emergency.

That's politics. Yeah. I know.

Consider: News Item — (Environmental News, August, 1976) EPA issued final regulations to limit radioactivity in the nation's drinking water supplies. . . radioactivity has a variety of sources, many of them man-made, including fall-out from nuclear weapons tests, medical and industrial uses, and effluents from nuclear power plants. Regulations to limit radioactivity in community water supplies were published in the July 9, 1976 Federal Register, to become effective June 24, 1977.

News Item: (Wall Street Journal, 8-23-76). About 170 demonstrators opposing construction of a nuclear power plant by Public Service Company of New Hampshire were arrested for trespassing on the plant site in Seabrook, New Hampshire.

Comment: The 170 demonstrators arrested may have been trespassing; but, only after the nuclear power plant is built, and only after its effluent affects water supplies, and only after the pollution is detected, do the EPA regulations apply.

Consider: The August 1976 Massachusetts Farm Bulletin bemoans there are less than one-quarter as many farms in the state as there were in 1875, and 80% of human food and 100% of feed grains consumed in Massachusetts are imported from other states.

"While 'cottage industries' have a limited future, basic industries to provide necessities of food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care could satisfy the desire of many people to get 'back to the land'," it urges.

While again, Environment News, August 1976, reports: EPA is requiring Plymouth Rubber Company, Canton, Massachusetts, to install a monitoring and recording system on its vinyl curing ovens by August 1, 1976.

The company is also required to perform stack testing on its three oil-fired boilers by August 1 to determine whether they are in compliance with particulate emission standards.

The company produces vinyl-coated fabrics for use in the automobile industry, rubber-coated fabrics, shoe linings, and tape products.

Comment: Isn't EPA justified in requiring these tests? Certainly. Isn't it costly for Plymouth Rubber to conduct these tests? Sure. Do the requirements, and others like them, induce development of basic industry? Hardly.

Furthermore, who pays these costs, ultimately. We do. We pay, either way. We pay doctors' bills and in pain and sickness if EPA doesn't insist on regulation and control of air pollution. We pay in dollars for expensive cars, shoes, clothing, if it does.

Medical care, for lung cancer for instance, is very expensive, too. Insurance? Okay. Who pays the premiums? Insurance companies don't go broke.

Consider: Early in August, 1976, the United States Senate passed a tax reform bill, but before doing so and at the behest of the U.S. Treasury Department (concerned about tax receipts), eliminated the tax incentive proposal to expand recycling.

Cutting this provision could doom the program to build scores of multi-million dollar resource-recovery facilities around the country with the several hundred million dollars of federal grants and loans **recently approved by the Senate** for the construction of these solid waste management facilities!

Comment: I'm incapable of coherent comment.

Consider: The Department of Commerce, unlike the Treasury Department, takes a positive view of developing environmental systems and programs.

That branch of government recently published a report entitled, "Global Market Survey: Air and Water Purification and Pollution Control Equipment," a study projecting an eleven billion-dollar future for manufacturers of air and water pollution control equipment by 1978.

"American manufacturers of the needed equipment are expected to find their best sales prospects of Japan, Brazil, Germany, Australia, Iran and Sweden," the Department said.

"Increasing public attention to environmental quality and the growing pressures of population and industry on limited environmental resources have led to environmental protection programs in most countries," the study concluded.

Illustrating one of the ways American industry is turning