



## Landfill space: Are we really short of it?

Is America running short of landfill space, or is it again being duped by whistle blowers?

An informative article about the so-called "landfill crisis" appeared recently in a publication called *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, which suggests we're being taken for another ride, like we were during the "energy crisis" of the late '70s.

Published monthly by The Foundation for Economic Education, *The Freeman* contains logical arguments which refute the necessity of government intervention in our lives, and which emphasize the importance of privatization and free markets. It should be read by anyone who believes he is not getting all the facts from the usual news media/talk show sources.

Charles Baird, economist at Cal State in Hayward, Calif., writes that, "There is no shortage of geologically safe, potential landfill sites in the United States." According to Baird, Japan has 2400 landfill sites, compared to our 4800. Although one-half of our landfills are due to close in five years, landfills are in fact designed to last for only 10 years.

"State-of-the-art landfill technology," writes Baird, "makes it possible for all new sites to be environmentally safe and people-friendly. There are vast, empty regions in the West and Southwest that aren't used by anyone for any purpose that could be developed into environmentally safe landfills."

According to research, the supply of old newspapers exceeds the demand for recycled paper, and the bleaches used to clean paper are toxic, and might cause more environmental problems.

About 40 percent of our landfill space is taken by paper. Incineration technology could safely eliminate that paper, and produce electric power in the process. The U.S. currently burns 14 percent of its municipal solid waste, compared to Japan's 60 percent.

And now, landscapers and lawn care companies are being cornered by 1993 landfill bans on yard waste. Customers who don't want the clippings left on their lawns expect the cutters to take it away. But where are they to dump it? Bob Smart, a Cleveland landscaper, says the cost to dump yard waste has jumped more than 350 percent. And his is a small company.

A good composting landfill needs at least 10 acres of space, a luxury small companies can't afford. Unless cooler heads prevail, small, neighboring companies will have to band together to buy land as a cooperative effort. **And unless we incinerate more, the public should be charged for what it throws away. Don't charge only the businessman.**

Terry McIver, managing editor

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