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the transportation or an environmentally correct waste management. The consent of the importing country should have no influence on this decision.

- The types of waste which are to come under the auspices of the treaty are to be stated in a list.

A diplomatic conference will take place in Basle on 20th and 21st March 1989 at Switzerland's invitation. This conference is to work over the global treaty and to agree on and sign the final version. The conference will most probably be presided over by Federal Councillor Cotti. *MZ*

## New Waste Model

# End of the Head in the Sand Policy

*Reports about special wastes for which there is at present no refuse site or incineration plant, and which can hardly be exported, as well as reports of real emergency situations in many areas for the disposal of «normal» household refuse, are becoming increasingly common even in Switzerland. How is the refuse mountain to be dealt with?*

The problem lies on the one hand with the ever growing volume of waste over the past few years: The national average of household refuse annually per head is transpired to be 400 kilos - three times that at the end of the '50s; to this can be added (also annually per head) about 50 kilos of special wastes, over 600 kilos of rubble and excavated material as well as 500 kilos of sewage sludge.

Aside from the sheer amount, the increasing «chemicalisation» of the waste is also a problem. The increased usage of synthetic materials, organic lubricants and solvents, heavy metals and other «problem materials» has meant that the amount of substances which could potentially damage the environment has steadily increased in waste too.

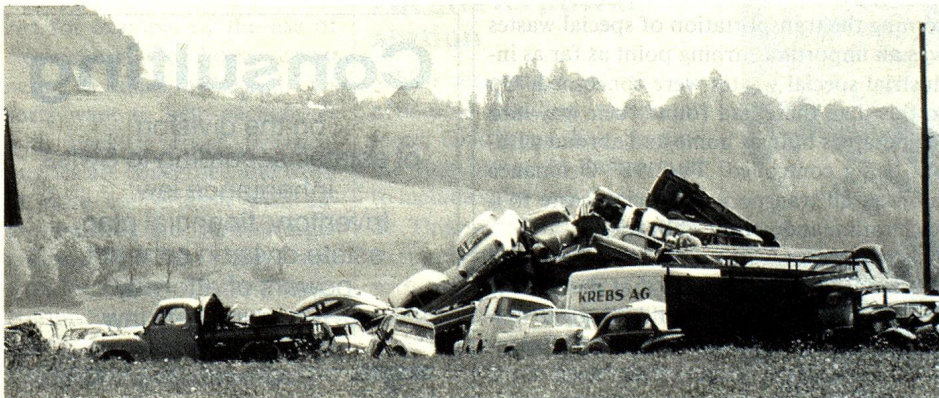
### Where do we stand?

About three dozen refuse incineration depots constitute the hardcore of Switzerland's waste management today. These were generally constructed between 1955 and 1975, under the auspices of the local authorities.

These depots have just about managed to keep the volume of the waste mountain at bay. However many problems remain unsolved on the quality side. One fact was kept concealed for a long time - namely that a considerable amount of harmful materials remained in the slag, the filter dust and the exhaust air.

Alongside the incineration depots which burn about 80 per cent of household refuse, there are only a few individual depots in Switzerland which can commercially handle or rather recycle special waste materials. We can mention the following: Compost plants which handle the «green wastes» collected separately in certain regions; the industrial plants which handle paper, glass and metal recycling; various plants which specialize in the separation of oil, fats and solvents from sewage and finally individual centres in the construction and development stages for the sorting and preconditioning of special wastes.

The depots, besides the transporters, who bundle off the masses of unwanted materials abroad, form the last link in the



*Out of sight, out of mind? The reconstruction of unsuitable waste depots takes years and costs an enormous amount. (Photo: Peter Studer)*

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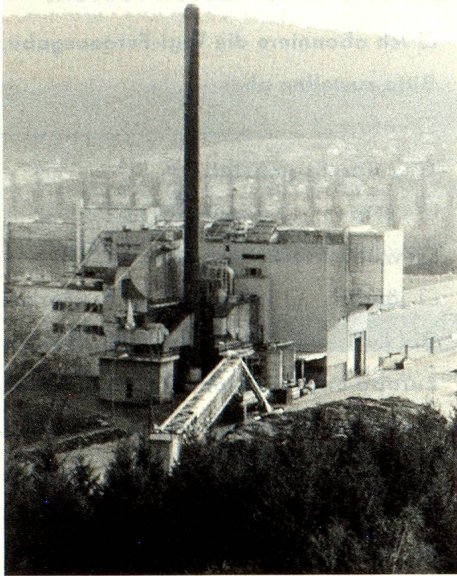
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**FERNAUSSGABE**



What shall we do with the waste mountain? (Refuse incineration plant, Biel; photo: Rolf Herzig)

chain. The Water Protection Law of 1971 and the supporting Guidelines for Depots of 1976 are responsible for the fact that most of the worst abuses have been eliminated in this area. However the experience of the past years shows that the present regulations are still too slack.

What was primarily to be established was that insufficient control, insufficient knowledge of those staff responsible and to a certain extent even illegal intrigues have had as their consequence that special wastes have been repeatedly delivered to unsuitable depots. In addition the problem of longterm inter-reactions of the many materials in the now disclosed multi-component and special waste depots was given insufficient attention. These reactions led in the long term to an intolerable build-up of gas as well as to polluted groundwater. The closure in 1985 of the special waste depot in K lliken has been the most severe consequence of this miscalculation so far. The necessary reconstruction measures will last for years and at enormous expense.

**New Waste Model**

New knowledge and the disclosure of the many abuses have meant that a comprehensive stock-take has been introduced in the waste area over the past few years. The results of this have been embodied in the various regulations of the Environmental Protection Law as well as in a «Guidelines for the Swiss Waste Management» published in 1986.

The Waste Model takes the following as its longterm goal – that as much waste as possible be handled in our own country, and this namely in a manner which does not burden future generations. The primary objective should be to avoid the production of waste wherever possible. The second principle aims at recycling or a professional waste management of as many materials as possible. This is to be achieved through a separate collection of the many kinds of wastes. The third principle envisages the burning of all organic wastes which cannot be recycled. Only those materials having no harmful elements or those which can be stabilized technically to such an extent that no harmful elements could be leaked in the long run should be placed in depots.

**Useful legislation**

There are only a few implementable pretexts for the realisation of the waste reducing principles so far. The Materials Ordinance of 1986 has nevertheless formed a basis to forbid or at least limit the use of certain «problem materials».

Various regions are already engaged in developing compost facilities for uncontaminated green waste in the target area of separate collection/recycling. This notably makes up a good quarter of all household waste. Recycling stations for old batteries and neon light tubes are also being planned. The construction of several new installations in the area of household refuse incineration is presently being projected. These will expand the existing limited capacity. All installations are further to be fitted with an additional fume purification application by 1992 to comply with the air protection regulation. The construction of three additional special incinerators is planned for the burning of organic special waste (solvents, distillation residue, oil separation slag, paints etc.).

The decree in 1987 of an Ordinance concerning the transportation of special wastes was an important turning point as far as industrial special wastes were concerned. Up to this date these had found their way into incinerators both at home and abroad without being controlled. The 1987 Ordinance subjects all transport of special waste to a declaration and permit obligation.

As to the depots – the draft for a Technical Waste Ordinance proposes that the storage of active chemical and or biological materials be fundamentally forbidden. Exceptions to the regulation remain open for a long period of transition and for small installations in remote areas. Anorganic waste residues, reconditioned under strict quality

control (filter dust from incineration plants, metallic galvanic slags etc). are to be stored in special depots.

**The fight against the waste mountain**

The most acute problems in the waste area can be overcome with a corresponding engagement. However a widespread «cover-up» mentality still has to be beaten, as well as localized opposition to the construction of the necessary waste treatment installations. At the same time the fight against a further growth of the waste mountain has to be recognised as a permanent task. This fight must continue for the protection of the environment and natural resources as well as for the reduction in the senseless production and management costs from the economical point of view.

Markus Schiesser, Editor NZZ

**Telegrams**

■ The *Swiss hotel business* has suffered a 2½ per cent loss in trade in the first half of 1988 compared to last year. The USA, where the demand has reduced by 16 per cent, catches ones eye in particular.

■ The economy forecasters have been mistaken: The condition of the *Swiss economy* is a lot healthier than had been feared following the collapse of the stock market and fall in the dollar. Now the expansion forecast for 1988 has had to be upgraded by as much as one per cent at the mid-year stage.

■ The *number of unemployed* reached its lowest point since 1982 in July 1988, the figure being 20'963. At the same time there have never been as many jobs known vacant since 1981.

**Consulting**

on the division of estates according to Swiss inheritance law:

Inventory, financial plan, estate division contract, powers of attorney, taxes, company law



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