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Bottle Bill would stimulate sense of pride in R.I.

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Statements being made by Bottle Bill opponents have increasingly become more ludicrous. Most recently the head of the Rhode Island section of the United States Steelworkers of America wrote to members of the General Assembly, in whose hands the fate of the proposed legislation now rests, and offered this reasoning on the bill.

The letter was a plea to reject the Bottle Bill, partly because of the danger to children. In the words of the union chief, our young people "will be handling filthy, sharp cans and bottles that have been to the mouths of people who may have contagious diseases with possible infection to themselves and others — to say nothing of cuts from cans and broken bottles." But the real heart stopper is that the "youth of Rhode Island will be enticed to be out on the highways and byways with resulting possible injuries or (God forbid) death by cars." This argument is specious. Also, it illustrates the emotionalism to which opponents are resorting in their efforts to kill the bill.

It is understandable that some jobs might be lost with the passage of the Bottle Bill but new jobs will be generated, and experience in other states that have such legislation indicates that more are

created than are lost. This is the point that responsible union leaders should be espousing rather than siding with those special interest, business groups in the bottling and food sectors whose concerns, in this case, are at the expense of the public good.

The disgrace of rubbish and garbage strewn highways throughout the state is fast giving us the reputation of "The Litter Capital of America," a point made repeatedly by visitors to Rhode Island. And the more than \$500,000 expended annually by the state in trying to keep these roads cleared of this debris, nearly one-half of which consists of bottles and cans, is a terrible waste of funds. This money could be put to better and more productive use by the Department of Transportation.

Littering conditions us, especially our young, to the belief that waste is socially acceptable, and such activities as smashing bottles against walls and on highways is "fun." On the one hand we teach our children in the classroom to conserve energy and resources, while on the other we do nothing to encourage them to utilize these practices. Oh yes, middle class America has been active in the suburbs with recycling of aluminum cans but similar efforts in our cities have had little success. In the tried and proven capitalistic manner let us provide incentives, and

in the process reward people for saving products whose useful life can be extended and which reuse will also allow our resources to continue for a longer period of time. Let us practice in the real world what we teach our children in the captive world of the classroom.

Rather than saying that cans and bottles represent a danger to children who may venture out to seek them, the steelworkers' chief should have spoken of the danger and expense of being exposed to smashed bottles that not only line our highways but also clutter the streets, parking lots and sidewalks of our cities. The streets of Providence, for instance, are littered with broken bottles which become imbedded in automobile tires. In the summer when children are barefooted and women wear sandals, such slivers are a constant and real danger for anyone on foot. Admittedly, the city is responsible for the cleaning of this litter but it can't, won't, doesn't know how to, do the job. The result is filth, dangerous litter and a general lack of pride in one's capital city.

One of the best means to help clean Providence is to have the General Assembly pass the Bottle Bill. The results for the city would be few loose bottles and cans on the streets, no shards of glass to endanger pedestrians and flatten tires, less effort and money expended for street cleaning, few broken bottles in play-

grounds to harm children. Such a bill would help instill an attitude that cleanliness and beauty need to be part of the capital city environment and that all of us, including children, are working toward that end.

Three New England states and several others across the land already have such legislation enacted. The national movement for conservation of energy will place greater pressure on states to pass legislation for the conservation of other resources as well, and reclaiming bottles and aluminum cans is an easy way to start.

The days of the throw-aways are numbered. Whether one talks of fast-food packaging, bottles, cans or the built-in obsolescence of cars and appliances, the energy shortage is sensitizing us to a limited resource base and the need to make better use of those gifts that nature has bestowed on us.

If the Bottle Bill would have an effect on our children, it would not be increased danger from picking up bottles; rather, it would be to instill an attitude and establish a practice to save bottles and aluminum cans and, ultimately, resources for the future. And the future, after all, belongs to them.

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