

Municipal Government - Administration

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Administration

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1975

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cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League.

I D E A S
F O R A B E T T E R
C I T Y / 1975

Selected by the Staff of the
Municipal Technical Advisory Service

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MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE
INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE, THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
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TENNESSEE MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
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FOREWORD

MTAS receives virtually all periodicals in the area of municipal government and also obtains many other publications in this field. These contain a "mass of information" (when trying to sift, classify and assimilate, we sometimes wish it were much less!). Materials are routed to staff members for their examination; they mark items that appear noteworthy; and the editor writes the summaries for this publication.

These are not necessarily "new" ideas; the term has a relative meaning. There is little, if anything, in the field that is really unique. What is new to one city may be old to another. Nevertheless, we hope that this "catalog of municipal ideas" will be useful to the officials of cities in Tennessee and elsewhere.

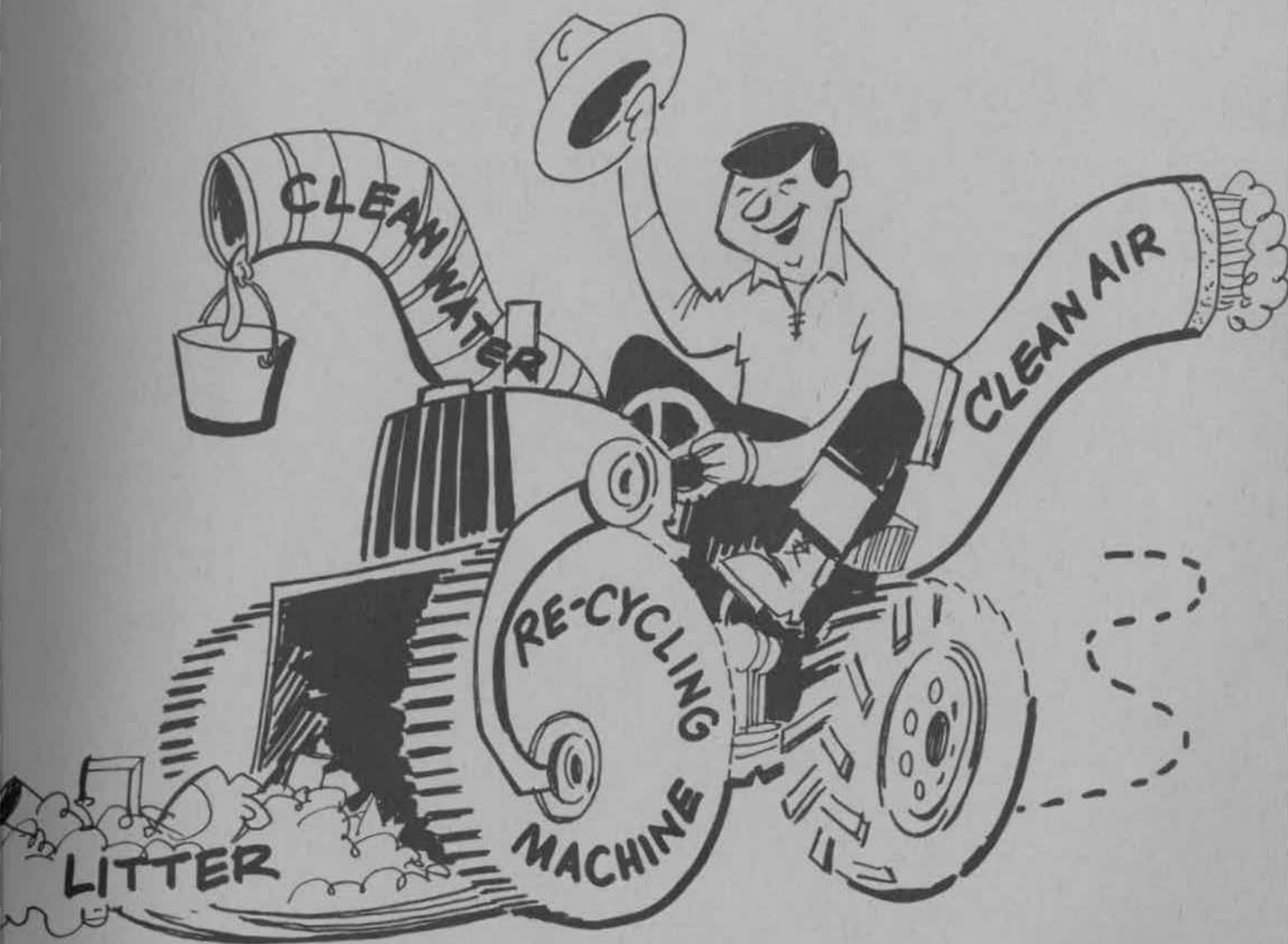
Additional copies are available, free upon request, to Tennessee municipal officials and at \$4.00 each to others.

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Improved Environment



.... WOULDN'T THIS BE NICE ?

A SMOKING BAN . . . at council meetings in Duluth, MN, is a boon to those who hate smoke-filled rooms. The city also included in its ordinance prohibitions against smoking at meetings of other governmental units; in elevators, classrooms, nursing homes and hospitals; and in most places used for athletic events, plays, movies and concerts. (Municipal Maryland, March 1975)

A FLAG OF FLOWERS . . . is part of the Rockville, MD, observance of the nation's bicentennial. Coordinated by a local garden club, the project will involve individuals and business firms in the city. The red, white and blue flower theme is being used for garden areas, flower boxes, planters, etc. (Municipal Maryland, March 1975)

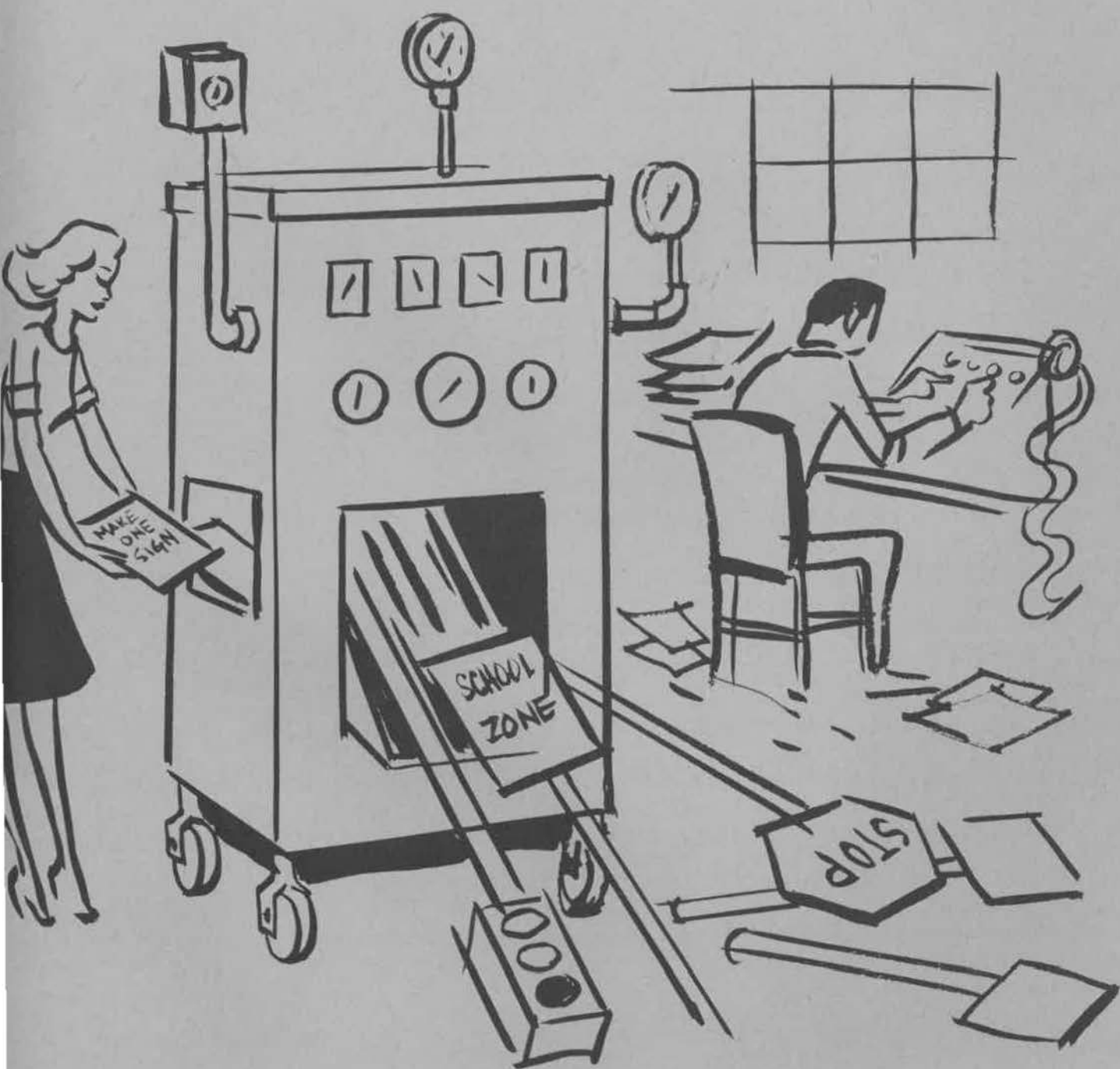
CLEANING DOWNTOWN . . . is the responsibility of tenants and property owners in St. Louis. The city's anti-litter law requires downtowners to maintain the cleanliness of their premises, including sidewalks, gutters and alleys. Specifically prohibited is distributing handbills on private property unless they are handed directly to occupants or placed where they can't be blown onto surrounding property. (Downtown Idea Exchange, Jan. 15, 1975)

HARVEST SICK TREES . . . instead of burying or burning them, a marketing specialist has urged cities. The diseased or dead wood can be turned into useful by-products, such as chips. (The American City, May 1975)

A SOLAR UTILITY . . . owned by a city? It may soon be a reality in Santa Clara, CA. The municipality already has completed a new recreation building that draws 80 per cent of its heating and cooling energy from solar collectors on the roof. Now the city is studying the feasibility of financing and installing solar

heating and cooling systems in new buildings with customers paying a monthly fee to cover amortization and maintenance of the units. (The New Republic, Feb. 1, 1975)

Finance and Taxation



A MAINTENANCE IMPACT STATEMENT . . . helps Walnut Creek, CA, anticipate maintenance costs for proposed new programs or projects. The procedure for evaluating upkeep expense allows the council to consider the total cost before making a decision. (ICMA Nuts & Bolts, November 1974)

CITY HALL HELPS . . . any public group wishing to submit a proposal for use of revenue sharing funds in Oak Ridge, TN. A member of the city manager's staff is available to assist in filling out budget forms, figuring costs, and explaining requirements for the Revenue Sharing Act. (Revenue Sharing Clearinghouse, July-August 1974)

A COMMUNITY IMPACT ORDINANCE . . . requires developers to submit data which aids city officials in assessing the total cost to government of a new project. Included in the "community impact statement" is not only information on environmental effects but the impact the development will have on key public services. The statement is required for all projects exceeding \$500,000. (ICMA Nuts & Bolts, February 1975)

UNIFORM AUDIT GUIDELINES . . . for all agencies of the city have been developed by Newark, N.J. Tailored to fit federal standards and procedures, the guidelines prevent problems when auditors come up with unanticipated requirements for different federal programs. The standardization assures that when any program is audited, all needed information will have been documented. (ICMA Nuts & Bolts, March 1975)

CITIES CAN MAKE MONEY . . . by paying employees on Fridays, Newington, CT, has found. This provides two additional days of payroll float for investment

because the checks usually won't clear until Monday. (Public Management, January 1975)

A SIX-QUARTER BUDGET . . . for capital improvements makes reallocation of unspent funds easier and helps keep projects on schedule in Englewood, CO. As each calendar quarter ends, a new quarter is added to the budget. If projects face a delay, they can be dropped back and others ready to go immediately are moved forward. As a result, priorities can be changed on a quarterly basis. (ICMA Nuts & Bolts, April 1975)

IT PAYS TO CONSERVE . . . in Westminster, CO. The city's utility billing process encourages water conservation by charging a higher unit rate as consumption increases. The same principle applies to sewer rates. Officials felt the flat minimum charge placed a disproportionately heavy burden on elderly and retired citizens who used relatively small amounts of water. (Colorado Municipalities, July 1975)

AUCTIONING OFF USED VEHICLES . . . can result in the recovery of up to 50 per cent of the original purchase price Long Beach, CA, reports. The secret is in organizing not only the sale but whole fleet operation, however. New vehicles are purchased with their resale value in mind. Colors popular with consumers are selected. The fleet is well maintained. And when the semi-annual sale time comes, the date is carefully chosen to avoid conflicts with holidays or special events, advertising is heavy and city employees are specially trained as auctioneers. (The American City, February 1975)

Health, Safety and Welfare



A MEDICAL EVACUATION UNIT . . . for use in disaster situations has been made from a bus donated to the Mobile, AL, Fire Department. It has two patient treatment rooms and is stocked with supplies and equipment to allow it to function independently. The unit also can be used as a mobile emergency medical aid station to back up a paramedic team. The conversion work was done by volunteers from the fire department and the community. (Alabama Municipal Journal, March 1975)

A RED TAG . . . special campaign aimed at free-running dogs resulted in a "tremendous increase" in dog licensing in Bowling Green, KY. Bright red cards, carrying a warning that licensing is required by law, were attached to the dogs. Persons reading the tag were instructed to remove it only if they were the dog's owners. That way, unowned dogs could be easily spotted and picked up. (Shoptalk, May 1975)

Parks and Recreation



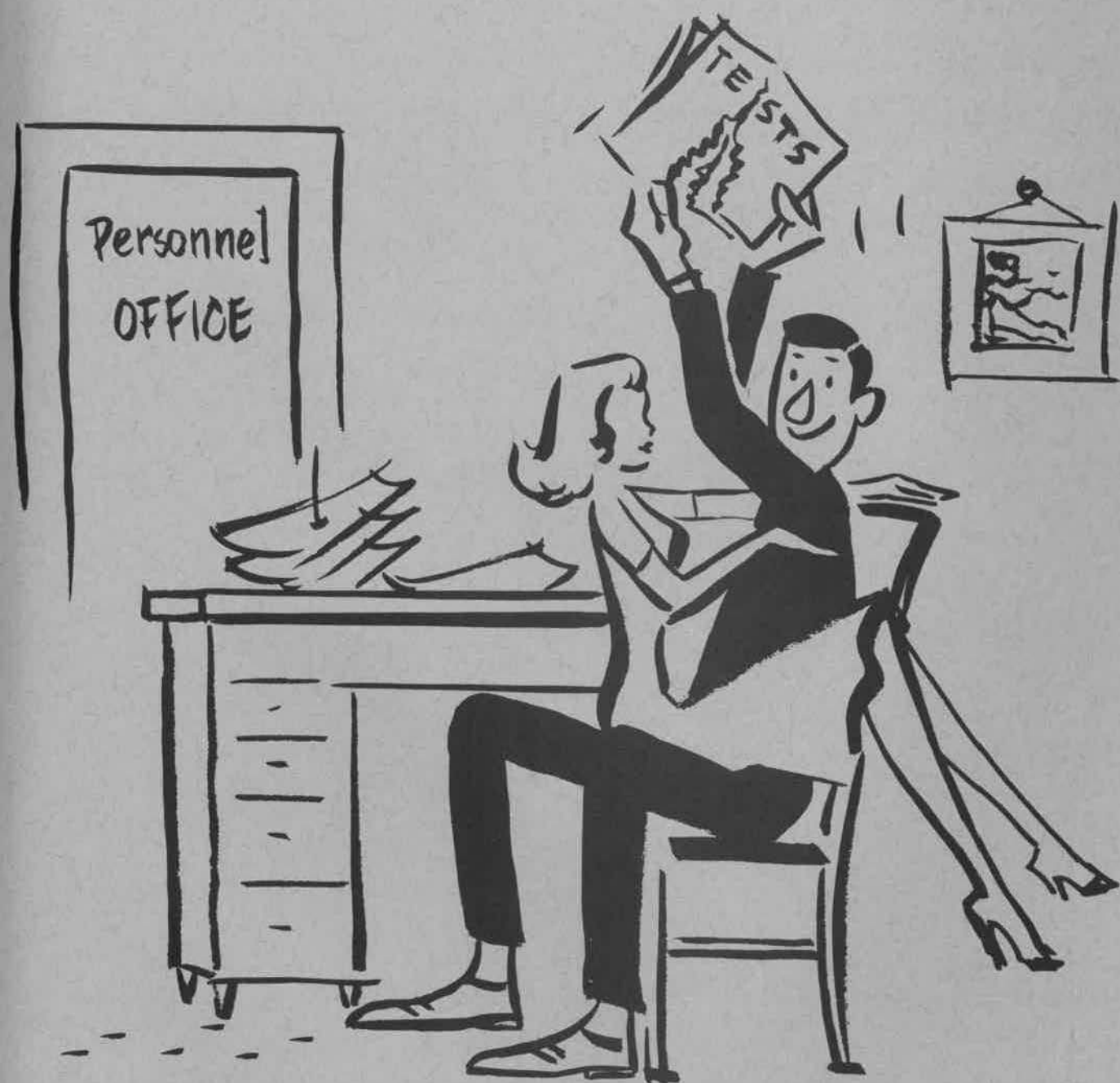
SMALLER NEIGHBORHOOD POOLS . . . are replacing the bigger conventional ones in Philadelphia and have proved very popular with residents. They are 75 feet by 45 feet in size and 3 to 5 feet deep with no diving wells. The pools are built within existing parks and do not require bath houses. (North Dakota League of Cities, December 1974)

IF YOU HAVE AN ISLAND . . . you have a natural park, Quincy, IL, believes. And getting there can be half the fun. The city has constructed an island park that boasts a log-cabin village, Indian museum, 120-boat marina and a mile of sandy beach. It can be reached by a leisurely cruise on an excursion boat, a journey by rail on an authentic narrow-gauge steam-puffing locomotive or an exciting ride aboard a monocable aerial tramway. (The American City, October 1974)

BIKES AND SEWER LINES . . . are using the same easements in Barrington, RI. Construction of a new town-wide sanitary sewerage system offered an opportunity for a complete network of bicycle paths, too. Easements acquired for the sewer lines also will be used for bikeways. Contractors installing the pipe back-fill to town specifications, providing a properly graded and compacted base for an easy-to-apply asphalt topping. Main streets are being widened for the bikeways while the sewer project is underway. (ICMA Nuts and Bolts, March 1975)

GRAPHIC ZOO SIGNS . . . make visits fun and instructive for parents and children in Knoxville, TN. The unique system utilizes line drawings and symbols to explain the difference between animals and facts about their food and native habitat. Ranging in price from \$250 to \$7,500, the signs are being paid for by sponsors. Designers were an architect and a children's illustrator. (The Knoxville Journal, Sept. 8, 1975)

Personnel



P E R S O N N E L

INFORMATION FOR RETIREES . . . is enclosed with pension checks by General Motors, Detroit. Using newsletter style, a mass of information is packed on the single page, printed on both sides. Topics covered include legislation affecting the company, fuel conservation, ongoing research projects, etc. The aim: to keep a channel of communication open. (Public Relations News, Dec. 16, 1974)

RECRUITING IN SUPERMARKETS . . . is helping San Dimas, CA, reach people who are seeking entry-level positions but who don't regularly check newspapers for job openings. The "throw-away" sheets of job listings are distributed free through food markets and occasionally to doorsteps. The cost is low and the response has been very high. (ICMA Nuts & Bolts, Jan. 1, 1975)

A PAT ON THE BACK . . . for a job well done is put in written form for all employees to see in a "Good For Us" mini-newsletter by Raleigh, N. C. It includes such items as a commendation to the fire department for its assistance in a train derailment; a letter of thanks to a patrolman from the Salvation Army for presenting a program on personal safety; and praise for a public works employee who found and returned a lost billfold to a citizen. (MTAS)

STAYING WELL . . . results in days off for workers in Plainville, CT. To reduce time lost from sick days, policemen receive an extra day off for every 90 days of perfect job attendance. In the two years the program has been in effect, days lost from illness have been cut to an average of five per person per year. (ICMA Nuts and Bolts, March 1975)

FRINGE BENEFIT REPORTS . . . annually remind employees that their paychecks aren't all they get from the city. Several municipalities issue each employee an

annual statement showing not only all wages paid but the amount each worker received in various fringe benefits such as paid vacation and sick leave, Social Security, retirement, insurance, etc. (Kansas Government Journal, March 1975)

SHARING CONFERENCE IDEAS . . . with co-workers via special forms makes the travel dollars go further in Brown Deer, WI. When a city employee attends a conference, seminar or training course, he fills out a report evaluating the content and summarizing what he learned. The form also helps the city estimate the cost of future trips. (Municipal Maryland, March 1975)

A SLIDE SHOW . . . can effectively orient new employees to their job and the overall organization, the Colorado Springs, CO, Humane Society has found. The 35-minute program, containing 94 slides with a recorded tape narration, gives new people a quick introduction to the society's programs and policies plus answers to the most frequently asked questions. (Animal Shelter Shoptalk, July 1975)

Police and Fire



TRAINING VIA VIDEO TAPE . . . is a good way to show police and firefighters the rights and wrongs of basic procedures. For example, officers can be taped in the process of handling a breaking and entering complaint. The tape is replayed later for training classes. The same thing can be done on fire calls. (MTAS)

A "CITIZEN RIDE ALONG" . . . program in St. Louis is part of an effort to develop citizen participation in crime prevention. Public service announcements via radio and TV invite residents to fill out forms requesting permission to ride with an on-duty patrolman for a four-hour period. When the request is approved and an appointment made, the citizen is given a briefing at the station before going out and answers an evaluation questionnaire afterward. (MTAS)

ENERGY SAVING FEATURES . . . are built into a new fire station in Dallas. Included are windows which take advantage of available natural light and that open for ventilation; four-foot overhangs and vertical fins to protect glass from direct sunlight, etc. (Municipal South, September 1974)

REDUCING FALSE ALARMS . . . is the goal of a joint police and firefighters program in Portland, ME. A key portion: youngsters get instruction in actually operating a demonstration alarm box, taking away any novelty. This has been a real deterrent. During the summer the program is given in parks, housing projects and neighborhoods most prone to false alarms. (FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, December 1974)

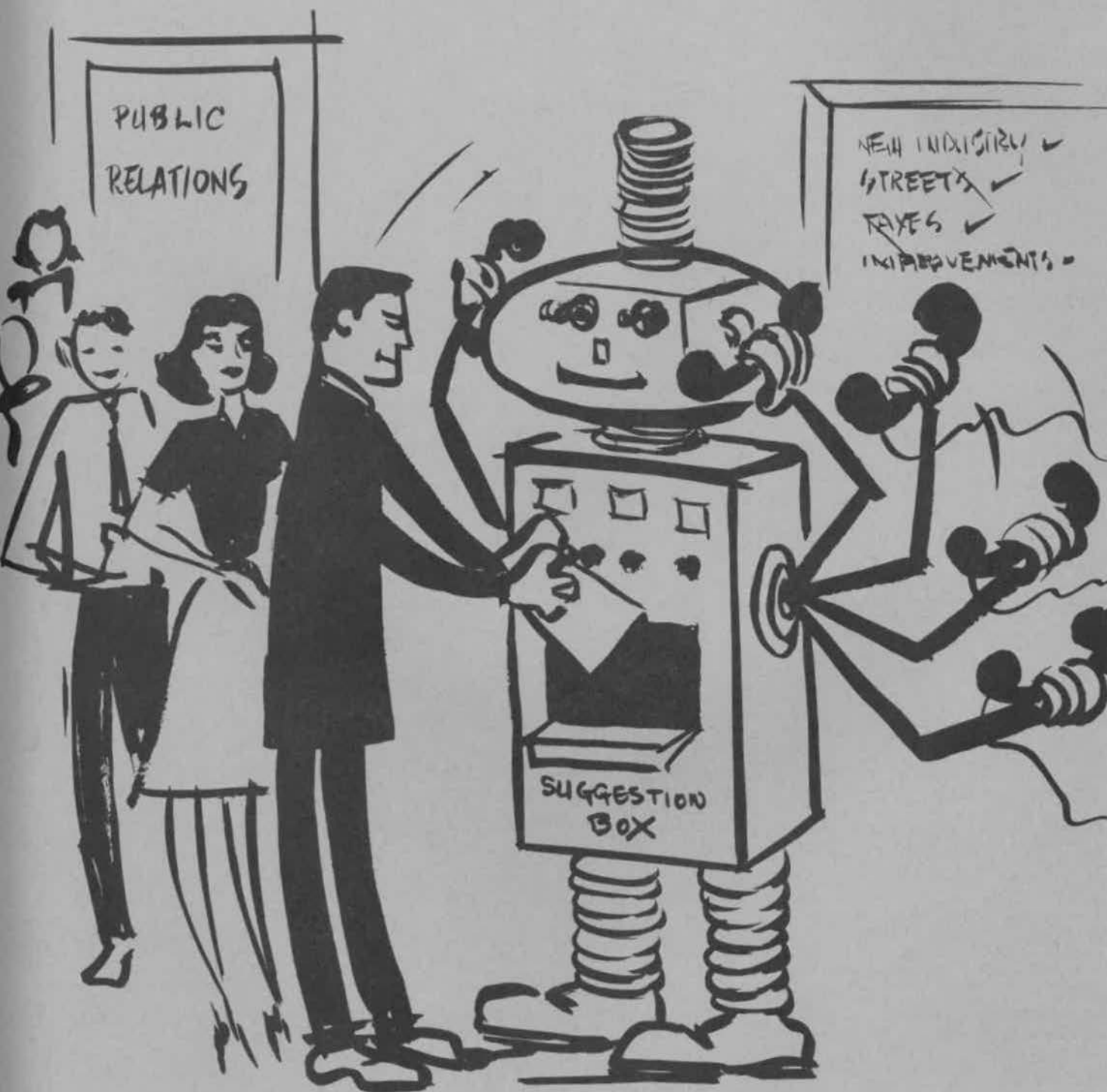
OUTSIDE HAZARD IDENTIFICATION SIGNS . . . are placed on buildings in Grand Island, NB, to aid firefighters in quickly spotting problem areas. The diamond-

shaped signs, usually mounted inside buildings, indicate hazards without giving information that might be helpful to thieves. Police also have been trained to recognize them so they can take precautions during a rescue operation. (ICMA Nuts & Bolts, December 1974)

SATURDAY AFTERNOON MATINEES . . . for youngsters of shopping parents win friends for the police in one small town without much cost. At game time, which follows the movies, the young people get better acquainted with officers. Parents and local business people are pleased, too. (Public Management, January 1975)

BUILDING A FIRE TRUCK . . . themselves cost the Omega, GA, firemen \$1,000 and a year's work but may have saved the city \$18,000-\$20,000. The 18-man volunteer force put the tank truck together from surplus supplies and equipment. Most of the work involved welding. (Urban Georgia, November 1974)

Public Relations



HOW WELL THE JOB'S BEING DONE . . . is the subject of regular opinion questionnaires sent out to patrons of the Roseville, MI, schools. The plan, which will work for cities, too, centers around a simple three-fold form which lists services the district provides and asks citizens to rate them as good, fair or poor. There's space for comments, too. Forms are placed in colorful placards in prominent locations where residents can pick them up. (NSPRA Trends, September 1974)

A CHARTER COMMISSION NEWSLETTER . . . kept residents of Broward County, FL, abreast of proposals being considered by the charter commission. It also let them know, well in advance, about scheduled hearings and meetings of the commission. Included were reports of various committees working on sections of the charter revision. As a result, residents had sufficient information to participate fully in the hearings. (County News, Aug. 5, 1974)

"FEED BACK" CARDS . . . enclosed with utility bills gave Columbia, MO, officials a great deal of citizen input in the pre-budget-preparation process. The cards were analyzed carefully at a staff retreat before work began on a proposed budget. (Missouri Municipal Review, September 1974)

AT-THE-PLANT CONTACT . . . between workers and city government officials is an important part of a Rockford, IL, program to establish communication with residents. Officials visit local factories to talk with workers, during the noon hour, about city operations and provide them with information about basic programs. (NSPRA Paragraphs, May 1972)

A STUDENT VERSION . . . of a new city charter was prepared by more than 350 young people from 20 schools in Detroit. In the process they learned a great deal

about city government. (The Mayor, May 1, 1972)

A BUSINESSMAN'S NEWSLETTER . . . keeps the business community up-to-date on new and pending ordinances, planned street improvements, changes in traffic and parking controls, etc., in Ferguson, MO. Called Business Briefs, the mimeographed publication is sent to all licensed business enterprises in the city. (Missouri Municipal Review, April 1973)

A FOUR-SECTION PROGRESS REPORT . . . is issued in Anoka, MN. Sent over a 12- month period, one section is statistical, another covers the budget, and the other two are program-oriented. (NSPRA Trends, November 1971)

Public Works



A WORKSHOP ON WHEELS . . . helps keep water meters in good operating order in New Carlisle, OH. The service van is equipped with all the necessary tools and parts to repair a meter, plus a work bench and 10 gallons of water for testing. Faulty meters can be repaired on the spot without having to pull them out and take them back to the shop. (ICMA Nuts & Bolts, Aug. 15, 1974)

PARKING IS BANNED . . . from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. in Saginaw, MI, while city streets are cleaned. Tickets for violations are issued by the night foreman. The plan definitely has speeded up the street work even though the ban is in force for less than half the shift. (The American City, October 1974)

FROM FARM TO CITY . . . has come a new procedure in Willingboro, N.J., for curb maintenance. A bolt-on device (actually a disc harrow blade) is attached to the front-end bucket of a backhoe. By combining the hydraulic pressure of the backhoe with the cutting power of the disc, it's possible to cut away weeds, grass and debris from curb sides in far less time than the usual hand method. And the cost is much less. (New Jersey Municipalities, May 1975)

A LINEMAN RESCUE TOOL . . . is saving lives in Burbank, CA. Previously only a harness could be used to lower a man, injured by an electric shock, to the ground. Workmen developed a safety line small enough to be carried on men's belts. On each end of the two-foot rope is a hook that can be quickly snapped into rings on a safety belt. Then rope already on a pole can be tied to the line and ground crewmen can quickly get the injured man down. (PTI News, April 1974)

STONEWALLING WORKS . . . in an unusual form of "sidewalk recycling" in West Hartford, CT. Faced with where to dump old sidewalk slabs removed by contractors during

repair work, the city came up with the idea of using them for retaining walls for streams and brooks. The slabs are taken to a central point, broken up into two by four foot blocks and set in place, where needed, by a backhoe equipped with two special hooks. The result: an attractive, maintenance-free retaining wall for much less cost than other methods. (ICMA Nuts & Bolts, November 1974)

READY-WHEN-YOU-ARE CONCRETE . . . is possible in Philadelphia through use of concrete mobiles. The vehicle, in continuous use all day, is moved from one job site to another as concrete is needed. The patching material can be mixed in whatever quantity is required; there's no waste of supplies or manhours. (Pennsylvanian, May 1975)

PROGRAMMED STREET CLEANING . . . does the job in Riverside, CA, cutting complaints about dirty thoroughfares to a minimum. Sweepers are matched to a carefully programmed daily, weekly and "special attention" cleaning schedule. A large map in the street maintenance office keeps an at-a-glance record of daily activities on each color-coded sweeping route. Because they're radio-equipped, the machines can be diverted quickly when needed for emergencies. (The American City, December 1974)

PAINTED LINES ARE OUT . . . in Philadelphia, at least for crosswalks and stopbars. Instead, thermoplastic lines are being used. The material is more durable, outlasting paint by 10 to 15 times. It also has high reflective quality. (Pennsylvanian, May 1975)

REJECT ASPHALT MIXES . . . when any of these signs show up: blue or yellow smoke rising from the mix; mix appears stiff and poorly coated; mix slumps; color is dull and brownish; mix has patchy areas of brown; steam rises from mix; material in mix is segregated. (The American City, January 1975)

Refuse



SPECIALLY DESIGNED CONTAINERS . . . encourage residents of University City, MO, to separate newspapers from other refuse for recycling. The heavy-duty plastic bins have one side longer than the other so that when they are laid horizontally the newsprint is protected from rain or snow. They hold 20 to 22 pounds of newsprint each and eliminate time-consuming tying and bundling. Their attractive appearance permits them to be left in the open where the sight of them will encourage people to join the community effort. Before use of the "TreeSavers," cooperation in a voluntary program had dropped from 60 to 20 per cent a month. After containers were delivered to 800 pilot locations, participation increased to 80 per cent! Cost of the containers is about \$4 each but the average life is estimated at 15 years. (Public Works, December 1974)

METERED BAGS . . . have been one answer to rising refuse collection costs in Estherville, IA. Two types of authorized refuse bags, color-coded so they can't be counterfeited, are sold by stores and at City Hall. When residents buy the bags they pay their collection bill as well. One type of bag is for curb pickup service and the other for custom (at the house) service. The former costs \$4.50 plus tax for 10 bags, the latter \$5.50 plus tax. Officials feel the system is not only simpler but more equitable: if a resident has only a small amount of refuse, he uses fewer bags per month and so pays less for service. (Public Works, August 1974)

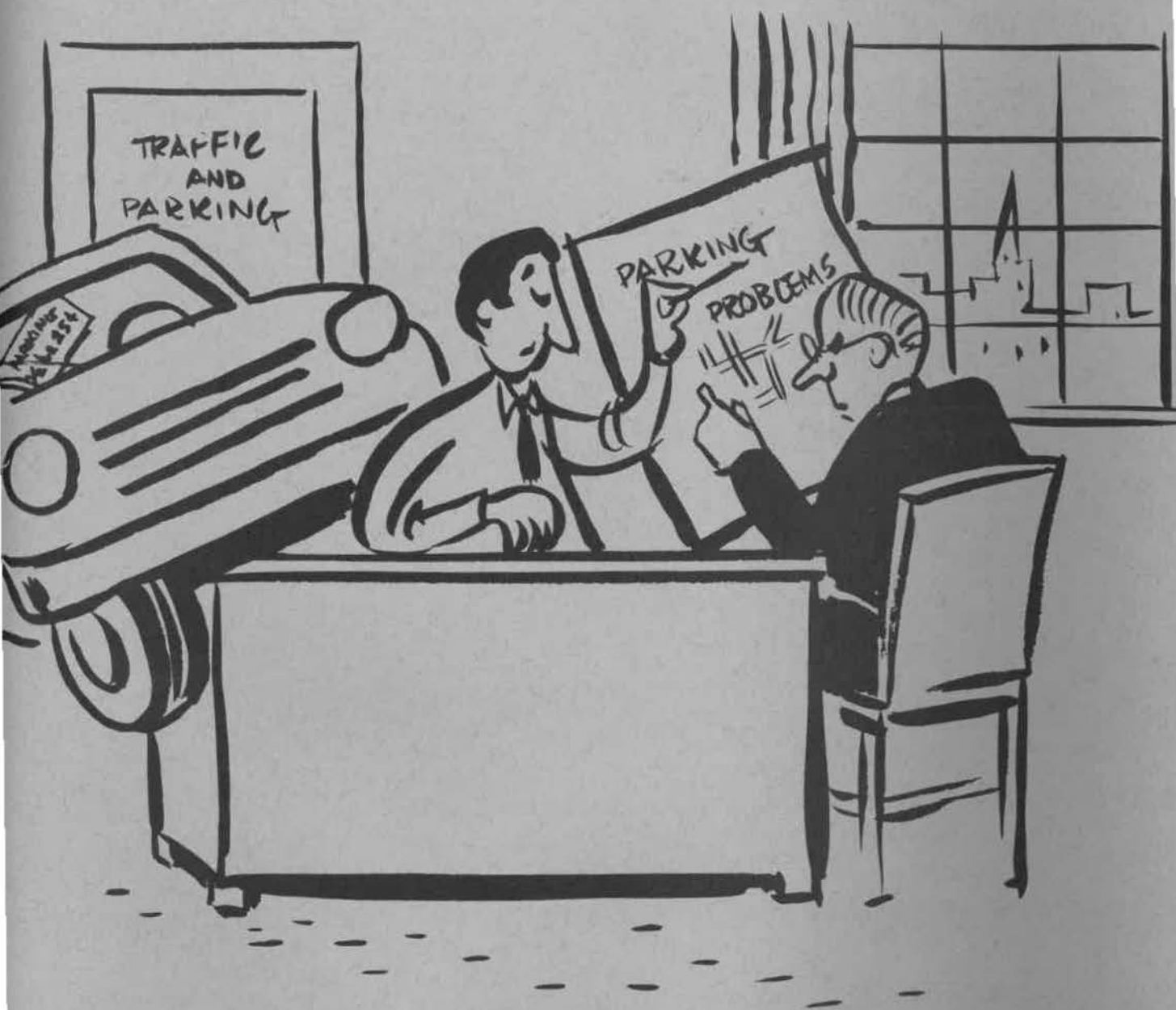
A CITY-WIDE LEAF MULCHING . . . program benefits the city and residents in Kettering, OH. Two 10-acre sites are designated for dumping of untreated, raw leaves. There they're arranged in neat windrows, "inoculated" with a commercial compost culture and decompose until the following spring. Then the leaf mulch is distributed to several central points for pick up, free of charge, by gardeners. A leaf shredder has improved the operation. (Ohio Cities and Villages, Nov. 1974)

IT'S ALL IN THE BAG . . . in Reston, VA, thanks to a unique service charge system for refuse. Residents are required to use plastic bags which may be purchased for 40 cents each at local shopping centers. This covers the cost of the bag, of collecting and disposing of it and all equipment and personnel. The bags have a 30-gallon capacity and are two mil thick. (Public Management, August 1974)

THE HIGH TURNOVER RATE . . . in sanitation department personnel in Inglewood, CA, is something the city wants. The department is regarded as the place to start for city employees. In-service training and tuition reimbursement is provided to help them develop new skills. As a result, only aggressive, ambitious young men carry refuse. They work faster and better, their morale is high, and accidents are few. Equipment is well cared for and the image they project is one of efficiency and pride. (Refuse Report, May/June 1975)

LANDFILLS ARE PLANT-DIG . . . sites in Birmingham, AL. For the second year, citizens were invited to come out on a specified day and dig up various types of vegetation for landscaping their homes. The program serves a threefold purpose: people are introduced to a landfill; families have a chance to get plants free; and a landfill is used for something more than originally intended. (APWA Reporter, April 1975)

Traffic and Parking



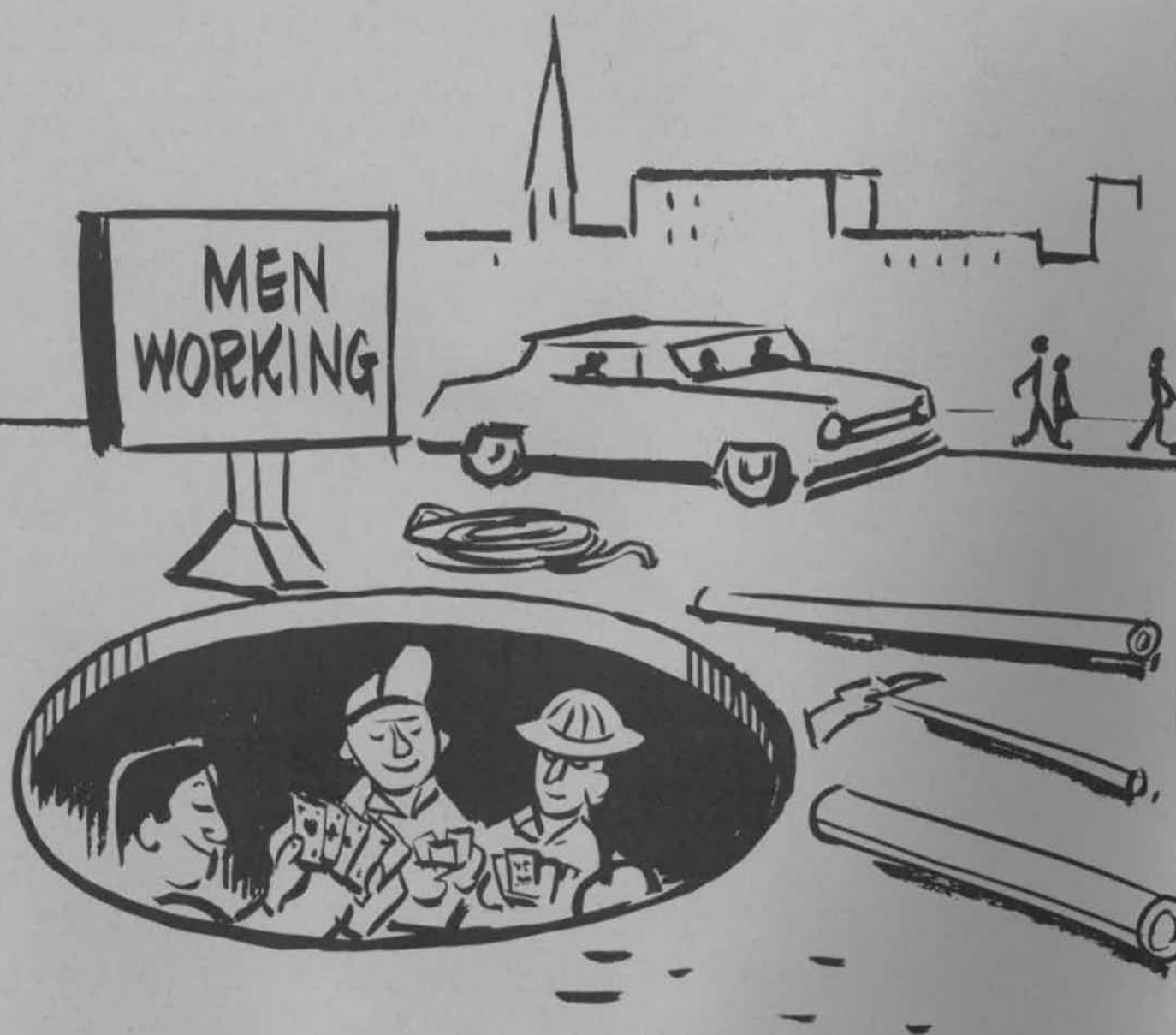
STANDARDIZED STREET SIGNS . . . help motorists keep their sense of direction in Shoreview, MN. All east-west signs have white lettering on a brown background and north-south ones have white on green. (Minnesota Municipalities, November 1974)

WHY ONE-WAY STREETS? . . . A reputable Canadian traffic study revealed that a system of properly selected and controlled one-way streets can increase traffic capacity by as much as 25 per cent. Travel time can be reduced by up to 70 per cent due to better signalization and turning movement. A valuable side effect is traffic accident reduction: up to 17 per cent. The study notes that "a good public relations program is essential to sell the one-way street systems to the community." (Public Works, November 1974)

DOWNTOWN EMPLOYEE PARKERS . . . and available parking areas are matched through a cooperative service in Lincoln, NB. A central office brings together businesses and property owners with monthly parking stall available for lease and downtown employers who need long-term parking for their employees. The plan has an added advantage: it frees regular spaces for shoppers. (Downtown Idea Exchange, June 1, 1975)

PEDESTRIANS DON'T GET CAUGHT . . . in the middle of streets in Phoenix, AZ, thanks to a new type of light. The "Walk/Don't Walk" signs, instead of changing abruptly, stay on "Walk" for those already in the street, but people on the curb see "Don't Walk." (Downtown Idea Exchange, March 1, 1975)

Water and Sewage

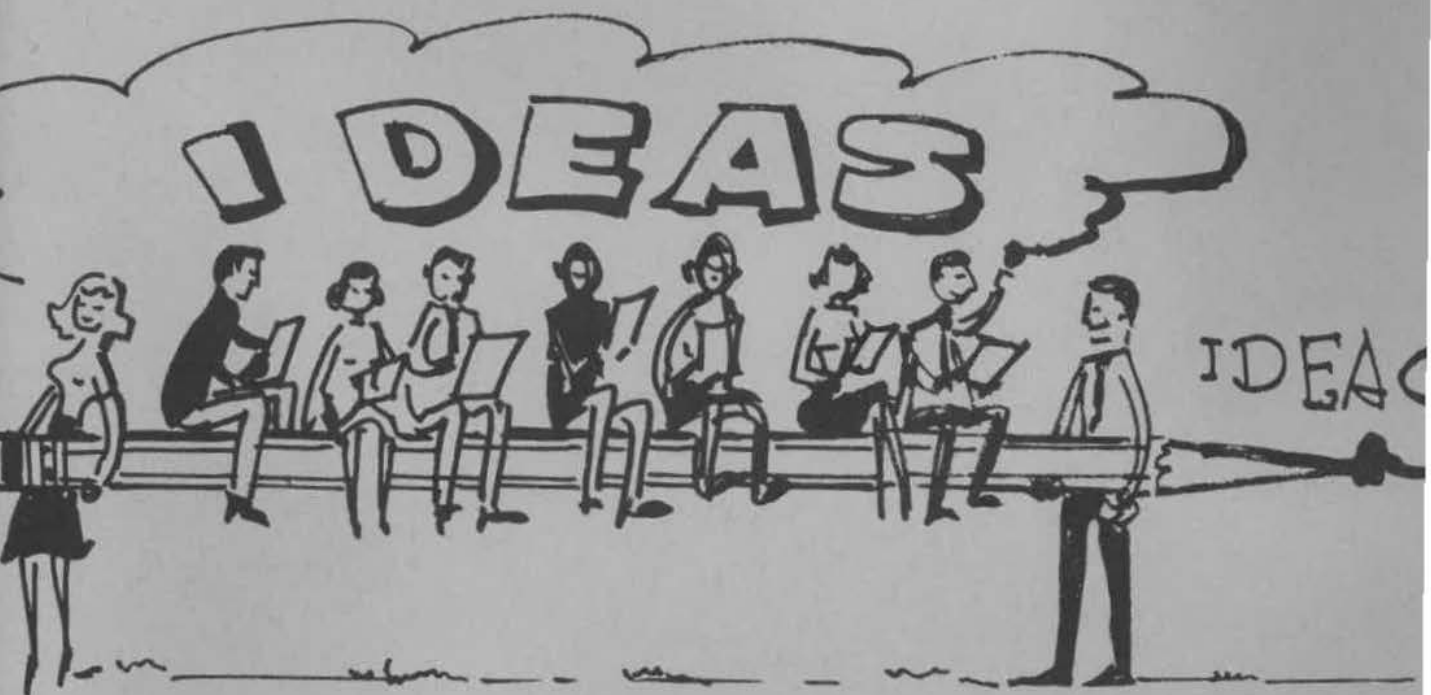


A DOUBLE-DUTY AIRPORT . . . combining regular services and garden plots for residents is possible in Mankato, MN, because of the use of high-nutrient sludge from the city's sewage treatment plant. The sludge is spread on a large portion of the 450 acres at the airport and the land rented to farmers. Next year Mankato plans to contract with farmers to plant a city-owned hay crop with profits going into the general fund. (Minnesota Municipalities, December 1974)

SENIOR CITIZENS . . . get free use of 18,000 gallons of water per quarter in Spring Lake Park, MN, if they are heads of households. The special rate structure applies to all residents over 65 years of age who can meet the other qualifications. (Minnesota Municipalities, April 1975)

UNDERGROUND SEWAGE PLANTS . . . aren't science fiction. In England, a deep-shaft effluent treatment process has been developed to treat sewage aerobically in an excavated shaft up to 32 feet in diameter and 500 feet deep. The amount of land required is half that needed for conventional plants. And New Jersey is testing the world's first underground pumped storage hydroelectric plant. (Engineering News-Record, May 22, 1975)

Miscellaneous



M I S C E L L A N E O U S

A TRUCK FOR ALL TRADES . . . has been developed in Scottsdale, AZ. Bodies, cabs, running gear and other components are designed to fit any vehicle. This allows one chassis to do any typical job, from fighting fires to hauling refuse.

(Municipal Maryland, May-June 1974)

BEING HELPFUL TO TOURISTS . . . earned Gatlinburg, TN, high marks and dollars this year, but it didn't happen by accident. A special training program was set up in the spring for all summer employees with the emphasis on how to be courteous and helpful to out-of-town visitors. The course was sponsored by the city in cooperation with local businesses. (MTAS)

GARDENS ARE FOR RENT . . . on vacant municipal land in St. Petersburg, FL. To help residents meet rising food prices, the city is renting 20 by 30 foot garden plots for an eight-month period for \$5 each. Shallow wells with pitcher pumps have been installed on the plots. (Municipal South, February 1975)

A BICENTENNIAL ARCHIVES . . . project is involving school children in Kettering, OH, in a search for their cultural roots. Included is the compiling and publication of a community history book and establishment of a Kettering Archives. (Ohio Cities and Villages, April 1975)

RIVERFRONT BEAUTIFICATION . . . is a bicentennial project with a future in San Marcos, TX. Included in the project is a lighted trail in a naturally landscaped parkland stretching a mile and quarter along the river. (Texas Town & City, April 1975)

A BICENTENNIAL CHORUS . . . is being organized in Van Buren County, IA. Composed of

15 to 18 citizens, the group will specialize in historic music of the area.

(Iowa Cities, April 1975)

A GOLDEN AGERS HOTEL . . . is providing living and activity space for elderly citizens and income for a downtown hotel in Tulsa. The hotel is in charge of living and dining areas. Golden Agers, Inc., plans the programs. (Downtown Idea Exchange, Nov. 1, 1974)