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## **What are cities doing with their garbage : a case study on the decision-making process of solid waste disposal of Knoxville, Tennessee**

Glenn Steve Johnson

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Robert G. Perrin, Sherry Cable

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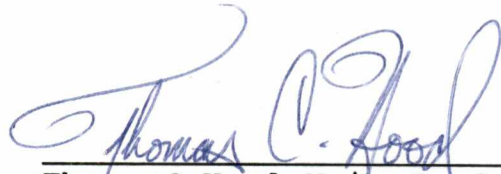
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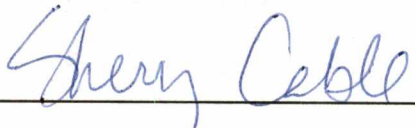
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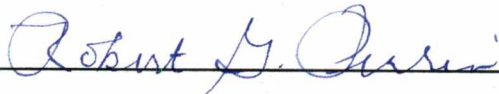
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Glenn Steve Johnson  
July 25, 1991

WHAT ARE CITIES DOING WITH THEIR GARBAGE: A CASE  
STUDY ON THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF SOLID  
WASTE DISPOSAL OF KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

A THESIS  
PRESENTED FOR THE  
MASTER OF ARTS  
DEGREE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

GLENN STEVE JOHNSON

AUGUST 1991

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Doris Johnson; my sisters, Julia Johnson and Rita Steele; my brother, La Salle Johnson; my nieces, Tomeika Johnson and Stacie Johnson; my nephews, Dewayne Johnson and Joseph Steele; my cousin, Donald Merriwether; my mentor, Dr. Thomas Hood; and to the memory of three very special humble people: my grandfather, Samuel Johnson; my uncle, Richard Johnson; and my brother, Flanoid Johnson, because they have been the crutch that I used to lean on. My family's moral character and diligence to survive as a single unit enhanced in me the real meaning of personal sacrifice and persistence. I shall always be indebted to them.

Dedicated to my mother, because  
she is the strength and  
motivation behind my future  
dreams.

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I am very thankful for the assistance of Dr. Robert Bullard who exposed me to the literature on this thesis. He convinced me that it is a social and an environmental problem.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the decision-making process of solid waste disposal from a social movement/community elite perspective. The issues of **compensations/incentives** and **perceived risks** affect the mobilization of protest groups and the mobilization of community elites. The decision-making process of solid waste disposal is presented as a case study to show there is a relationship between the following controversies: environmental, political, and technical. These controversies contribute to the emergence of grassroots organizations. The case study approach will identify the significant participants in solid waste disposal.

The Metropolitan Knox Solid Waste Authority (MKSWA) represents a group of community elites who were selected by the Mayor and County Executive to create a comprehensive solid waste disposal program. The decisions made on solid waste disposal contributed to the emergence of grassroots organizations. MKSWA strongly suggested to Knoxvilleans that incineration of their garbage is a feasible option. However, protest groups disagreed with this plan while promoting the need for conservation and recycling to reduce the city's excessive generation of garbage. The proposed synthesis of two literatures provides an analysis to allow full understanding of how decisions are made on a local social

issue and how issues of **compensations/incentives** and **perceived risks** stimulate the mobilization of grassroots organizations.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MKSWA-	Metropolitan Knox Solid Waste Authority
MPC-	Metropolitan Planning Commission
AIR-	Alliance for Incinerator Review
TVEC-	Tennessee Valley Energy Coalition
CARE-	Citizens Against Resident East
EPA-	Environmental Protection Agency
WM-	Waste Management
BFI-	Browning Ferris Industries
SWA-	Solid Waste Authority
PFM-	Public Financial Management
S.I.C.K.-	Solutions on Issues of Concerned Knoxvilleians
SOCM-	Save Our Cumberland Mountains

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the two most serious and discussed environmental problems are 1) how to dispose of the massive amounts of solid waste that is collected and 2) who should be the decision-makers on methods of solid waste disposal. The social researcher can see America's solid waste crisis and will find out that this social problem exists from New York to California, Michigan to Florida, that is from coast to coast. Tons of solid wastes are produced daily that contribute to this present problem. This solid waste includes: computer paper, newspapers, plastic jugs, spoiled food, car tires, old furniture. Typically, those items will be buried in landfills. Controversy arises when local elites decide to burn 95% of this refuse. Citizens and protest groups nationwide are disgusted with the public health adverse impact on garbage incinerators. Concerned citizens promote the recycling of used products to conserve landfill space and avoid building larger incinerators. Also, landfilling and incineration are believed by many to be responsible for polluting the land, air, surface water and ground water. Many countries such as the United States, dependent on high technology, are in the midst of an environmental meltdown,

which is the rapid spreading of toxics on the earth (Cocco, 1987).

United States citizens generate more than 120 million tons of solid waste yearly. This figure is expected to double in the early 1990s (Cocco, 1987). About 70-80% of solid waste is landfilled, 15-20% is recycled, and about 5-10% is incinerated, according to Vogel (1988: 76). Some experts believe that the landfilling of municipal solid waste is an inexpensive disposal method, while incineration of garbage is a more expensive one. Others feel the recycling of garbage is not expensive if there is a market for the recycled products. Many problems result from the garbage glut. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has decreased the amount of regulation and monitoring of landfills over the years. As a result, many landfills leach toxic substances into surface and underground water. The toxic leachate from solid waste comes from the purposeful dumping of hazardous materials along with garbage. Once solid waste decomposes, it can emit chemical vapors that contribute to air pollution.

Many United States citizens are misinformed about the shortage of landfill space. Several are surrounded by a plush and luxurious lifestyle; this small portion of the population contributes unconsciously to the environmental problem. Americans who live this kind of lifestyle accumulate a large amount of waste that goes directly to landfills. Americans demand exceptional standards of living and are



responsible for this social ill. The lack of landfill space is addressed by "throwing money" at the social problem instead of persuading Americans to curb their luxurious lifestyles. The EPA estimates that more than 25 states will exhaust their available landfill space in the next 10-15 years (Vogel, 1988: 76). This will occur for one-quarter of the nation's cities, before 1995 (Vogel, 1988: 76). The state of New York is a perfect example of the consequences stemming from lack of solid waste management and control. According to one commentator, this has led to the "garbage wars," i.e., attempts to find alternate dump sites:

We live in an era of garbage imperialism. Washington tries to barge its sludge to Haiti. Haiti declines to be dumped on, even by the capital of the free world. San Francisco tries to toss its trash over the mountains in Yolo County. The county refuses. Philadelphia dumps its incinerator ash in Ohio, but local opposition forces the city to terminate that arrangement. This summer the City of Brotherly Love expects to start sending its ash to Panama (Morris, 1987: A8).

Political, social, and economic controversy among citizens and community elites on the siting of an incinerator or a landfill has allowed the recycling issue to arrive through the back door. An alternative to landfilling, recycling of wastes to extract reusable substances reduces the need for disposal and ultimately lessens the drain on natural resources (Vogel, 1988: 76). The myth held by most citizens is that most solid waste can be recycled. Not all wastes can be recycled; the process is cumbersome and costly, and

America's consumer mentality has prevented recycling from becoming more popular (Morris, 1987: A8). As an alternative to landfills, and with recycling as a supplement, several American cities have tried to promote incineration as their major solid waste disposal method. Due to the environmental and public health risks surrounding incinerators, many cities are left with unfulfilled solutions to their garbage crisis. Some states, for example New York and New Jersey, have dealt with their garbage disposal problem by paying to ship their solid waste to other cities that have incinerators. Solid waste incineration is a process that burns garbage, creating steam that is sold to utility companies that generate electricity from the steam (Morris 1987). According to social critics, incinerators can have economic benefits for a city if managed properly and if dioxin levels are kept at a minimum. Although some critics are alarmed of the air pollutants released from this process, this alternative disposes of waste while conserving conventional fuels used in steam production.

The disposal of solid waste is not only an environmental problem but a social problem because solutions depend on social organization. The plan of solid waste disposal by landfill or incinerator is determined by the values and attitudes of community elites, protest groups, and the public residing in a specific neighborhood. There are community organizations within various cities designed to educate citizens on ways to recycle their solid waste.

My orientation in this thesis is the conflict perspective. Conflict theorists would conclude that environmental problems exist because community elites are exploiting the natural resources and the labor of local citizens. These community elites can be called rich business elites who are interested in increasing profits by the labor of local citizens. For example, in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal in Knoxville, Tennessee, local elites are perceived to use their community positions to take advantage of any economic gain from the insurer's bonds used to underwrite the construction of a proposed incinerator. These community elites and MKSWA would thereby collect a large profit from the building of an incinerator, while Baxter Avenue or East Knox County residents paid the health cost of it. This would be another example of the poor and oppressed, society's most powerless, being forced to bear the brunt of air, water, and land pollution created by the current economic system (Bullard and Wright, 1986: 77).

From this perspective, the citizens of the United States are responsible for using a disproportionate amount of the earth's natural resources and extracting those not available in the U.S. from other countries by neo-colonialism and exploitation. Low income communities in the United States experience exploitation similar to that of communities in third world countries. An article in Newsweek (1986: 72) recounts Silent Spring by Rachel Carson (1986) and explains

how the Reagan Administration tried to 1) weaken the EPA, 2) reduce pollution standards, and 3) generally ignore controls over environmental exploitation. From a conflict perspective, this is a perfect example of the political, technical, and environmental controversy that exists in the United States of America.

Most protest groups take the conflict theorist's view of preventing or solving environmental problems. Protest groups focus on the needs of the human race in general and how they can stop the excessive exploitation of local citizens by community elites. Community elites create political and social institutions such as the MKSWA to maintain existing conditions in the local community. Protest groups have played a vital role in restructuring the MKSWA by forcing them to deal with a legitimate group of concerned citizens instead of only a small section of the whole society.

The failure and/or inadequacies of municipal solid waste facilities have forced community elites, protest groups, and citizens to play a role in the decision-making process to decide if incinerators are necessary. According to MKSWA (consisting of city/county council members), the city is in great need of an incinerator; the Rutledge Pike landfill has reached its capacity and there is nowhere to put the solid waste. The protest groups consisted of an umbrella of neighborhood organizations. Protest groups disagreed with MKSWA on the solid waste disposal issue. These groups

strongly recommended that community elites consider waste reduction and recycling to reduce the excessive volume of garbage generated in this community. Lastly, local citizens patiently watched the social and political controversy between the Authority and protest groups but in, the end, supported the two protest groups (AIR and CARE) to discourage Authority members from voting on any rezoning, bills, or permits for solid waste disposal.

The purpose of this thesis is to apply the social movement and community elite perspectives to interpret the decision-making process on solid waste disposal in Knoxville, Tennessee. The case study of the decision-making on solid waste disposal supports the theoretical work presented in this research.

The second chapter of this thesis discusses the methods used to gather data for this case study.

The third chapter examines the social movement/community power literature. As a result, the two fields of literature when synthesized allow a more thorough analysis of an environmental/political controversy on garbage facility decisions.

The fourth chapter presents an historical analysis of MKSWA as the relevant community elites in the decision-making process concerning solid waste disposal. There is a brief explanation of why the MKSWA and protest groups took the political positions that they did, and there is a brief

section on the data collected from the interviews.

The final chapter addresses the central research question of the thesis: Is the decision-making process on solid waste disposal affected by issues of compensations/incentives and perceived risks as discussed in the social movement/community power literatures? A few strengths and weaknesses of the proposed theoretical framework are addressed, and suggestions for further research are discussed.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODS

#### Introduction

This chapter's goal is to explain the method of collecting and analyzing data used in this thesis. Three methods were used to collect data: 1) direct observation of public meetings, 2) document analysis of newspapers and other printed materials, and 3) survey interviews with members of local elites.

First, I took notes at about 50 public meetings. The organizations holding these meetings were MKSWA, Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), and several protest groups including [Alliance for Incinerator Review (AIR), Citizens Against Residents East (CARE), and Tennessee Valley Energy Coalition (TVEC)]. I attended the first meeting of MKSWA in October of 1987 and the last meeting of TVEC in April 1990. In these 2 1/2 years, I attended those meetings which I could fit into my schedule, but several meetings were held at times when I was in class or teaching classes.

Fifty percent of my notes were taken during the meetings and fifty percent were compiled later. Periodically, I combined the data to give an overall picture of the subject.

The organization and consolidation of notes from direct observation of public meetings allowed me to see group dynamics and the power of group leaders and their members.

I was viewed as a non-participant at all the meetings. I wanted the normal setting of the meetings to remain the same, so that a replication of this study could be done if desired. As a non-participant at the public meetings, I strove to be as unobtrusive as possible. The content and organizational structure of the public meetings remained intact also.

These public meetings partially answered some basic: 1) Who are the significant individuals in the decision-making process concerning solid waste (significant in this context is defined as the appointed person(s) making the final decisions on the disposition of Knoxville's garbage)? 2) What is the political position of individuals in the protest groups and those individuals in elected positions? 3) What policies are being presented to deal with Knoxville's garbage disposal problem? 4) Are there any alternatives available? Finally, 4) How long will it take to formulate, implement, and test these policies for efficiency? At the public meetings, many ideas about solid waste disposal were discussed. I felt that still other alternatives were needed to give a complete picture of the issue.

The local newspaper and other printed materials were used to get a media perspective on the major thesis question. I



examined The Knoxville News-Sentinel and The Knoxville Journal September 1987 to April 1990. A clipping file sorted articles according to their political, economic, technical, and environmental content. These labels or titles were derived from aspects of the decision-making process on solid waste. I used my judgment in placing the articles in the correct clipping folder. The criteria used for classifying the articles were based on 1) who the decision makers were (political), 2) what is the cost of building an incinerator (economic), 3) what possible technology is available to do a sound solid waste program (technical), and 4) what are the effects of this incinerator or landfill on the environment (environmental).

The information gathered from newspaper clippings and printed material (flyers, brochures, solid waste authority reports, and a study done by the Mayor's office on solutions to reduce or end the solid waste problems) includes: (1) the social response of some local citizens and protest groups on the solid waste management program in Knoxville; (2) the initiation and continuation of the controversies (political, environmental, and technical) that surround the decisions on solid waste; (3) the identification of those individuals who played a vital role in the decision-making process on solid waste disposal. **Key position** refers to having the ability to influence the outcome on Knoxville's solid waste management program. I viewed these individuals as having vital roles with

local elites. I placed the local elites in one of the following groups: business elites, political elites, and protest groups. Elite in this case refers to a group of individuals who will make the final decisions on the controversies surrounding solid waste disposal. The criteria used for the elites were based on 1) those individual business persons who represent such businesses as Waste Management and Browning Ferris Industries who played an important part in making decisions on the solid waste issue in Knoxville, 2) those elected officials who were responsible for voting for or against the building of an incinerator, and 3) those local citizens who were members of a citizen protest group suggesting that the incinerator should not be built. I used these criteria to assist in analyzing and explaining the political, environmental, and technical controversies of the solid waste disposal issue in Knoxville. These criteria identified the main players in this issue.

Most of the printed materials and names involved in this research were associated with the MPC, local protest groups, and the solid waste authority. The MKSWA's goal was to create a long-term solid waste disposal program. The MPC was responsible for specifying zoning for a solid waste disposal facility. The protest groups were buffers in the sense that they suggested solid waste disposal alternatives to the proposal presented by business and political elites. If printed material did not focus on these elites, the

controversies surrounding solid waste disposal, or the political dynamics of the public meetings, it was excluded from the clipping files.

Survey interviews were used to verify all the information received from direct observation or newspaper articles and other printed materials. The interviews allowed me to see the actual scope of the decisions made for disposal of solid waste. Also solid waste disposal interviews were used to derive specific or detailed information on the local elites and controversies of solid waste disposal not available in print. These interviews were generated from a list of names appearing in the local newspaper at least five times. These individuals were potential interviewees for my study. Eighty-five names of potential interviewees were assigned a number for identification and placed in a bag.

I randomly pulled names from the paper bag and arranged an interview with them. After twenty-five interviews, the answers to the interviewer's questions began to reveal little new information, therefore, the decision was made to stop. The interviewees were asked-Who do saw as the key person(s) in the decision-making process on solid waste. The same names as those placed in the bag were mentioned. After reviewing the results of these twenty-five interviews, no new names were added to the list of 85.

The data collected from the public meetings, newspaper articles, and other printed materials guided the information

of questions for the interviews. I observed participants who selectively chose to attend these meetings. At these meetings, I learned first hand how community elites think and feel about solid waste disposal. Newspapers articles generated questions for the interviews since printed information reflected the interpretation of the reporter/writer. The interviewer asked questions to compare and expand the responses taken from newspapers on local elites. The interviewer's questions are informative and behavioral in nature. The interview guide appears in the appendix.

The interviews were conducted in five weeks from June 1, 1989 to July 6, 1989. The interviewer scheduled four to five interviews per week. The interviews were arranged during the interviewees' flex-time or lunch time. The interviewees were telephoned a week before their appointment for confirmation.

The interviewer also called a day before the scheduled appointment to make sure there were no cancellations or to reschedule if necessary. Most of the interviewees were phoned at their jobs, while several allowed me to call them at home to confirm my meeting with them. A majority of the interviews were conducted at the office of the participants, while seven or eight were performed during lunch time at local businesses.

Three to five people declined an interview, because they felt that the solid waste dispute was considered a "dead issue." They stated that it would be useless to make any elaborate comments on a matter that had no "future

significance." Five people requested that I mail them the interview questions, which they returned by mail.

I used a social movement/ community power synthesis to analyze the decision making process of solid waste. This synthesis demonstrates how community elites control local social policy. This synthesis shows that a social movement occurs when a number of individuals are unhappy with the social policy created by local elites. This social movement provides concerned citizens with a support network to assist them in opposing a disagreeable social policy. This synthesis analyzes the political, technical, and environmental controversies in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal.

The data sources of this thesis provide different kinds of information. The observations show the organizational structure of the local elites. The interviews provided an overview of how the local elites work behind the scenes. The newspapers provided information on the controversies of solid waste disposal and indicated the participants and their roles in the decision-making process.

## CHAPTER III

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to show that in the social movement literature issues of **compensation/incentives** and **perceived risks** affect the mobilization of protest groups. Next, it shows that in the community power literature, issues of **compensation/incentives**, and **perceived risks** affect the mobilization of community elites. This chapter also provides an overview of how grassroots organizations contribute to the research question regarding the way that issues or incentives and perceived risks tend to affect the mobilization of protest groups. Last, a synthesis of the two literatures is done to show that they have similar issues. This synthesis can be applied to a local case and it will serve as my conclusion. The issues of **compensation/incentives** and **perceived risks** affect the mobilization of citizen groups/community elites and the roles of citizen groups/community elites in the decision-making process of social problems.

#### Social Movement

**Compensation/incentives** and **perceived risks** affect the mobilization of protest groups. Protest groups assemble

because they disagree with a decision on a social issue. They feel that some form of reward is needed to pacify their social, political, and economic needs. McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1988: 706) explain that research in this area on social movement shows that "suddenly imposed grievances" (which is a concept that is intended to describe those dramatic, highly-publicized, and often unexpected events, man-made disasters, major court decisions, official violence-that serve to dramatize and therefore increase public awareness and opposition to particular complaints) play a major part in explaining why people are involved in social movements. The grievances that some people have concerning a social issue trigger a rational choice for a decide on activism.

Protest groups use simple reasoning to calculate whether they are doing the right thing by being part of a social movement. This simple reasoning is basically rational choice based on: 1) "if the costs of participation are seen as extremely high, then many potential recruits are expected to choose another course of action;" and 2) "alternatively, if the anticipated benefits of activism are high, then participation is the likely result" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988: 707). Individuals weigh the costs of benefits versus rewards to determine if joining a protest group is cost effective.

Individuals feel that joining a protest group would enable them to receive political benefits. If the protest

group is a significant voice and a representative on a social issue, this will allow them to be viewed as part of a political force. This will ensure that this group will receive publicity and specific incentives from the political system. Overall, spectators will perceive this as a positive reinforcement that might attract new members. Most compensations and incentives are associated with rational reasons for joining a citizen group.

### Compensations/Incentives

Compensations/incentives are the rewards which encourage community actors to participate in a social movement. These rewards generate collective action on a social issue. Also, these compensations/incentives explain why some people are members of a grassroots organizations. Compensations/incentives consist of economic benefits, political influence, and media publicity. These rewards may vary between community elites and grassroots organizations. Compensations/incentives stimulate a decision to join a protest group to assist in influencing policy made on a social issue.

### Perceived Risks

Critics of a social issue conclude that risks are



associated with the issue. These perceived risks provide a clear-cut understanding of why grassroots organizations decide to protest about a social problem such as the decisions made on the disposal of garbage. Opponents of a social issue feel that the perceived risks surrounding it are serious enough to question the legitimacy of the decisions. Protest groups believe that the perceived risks of the social issue outweigh the positive factors of the social issue. These perceived risks of the social problem generate grievances which result in the emergence of grassroots organizations.

### Grievances

Grievances contribute to the mobilization of grassroots organizations. Several people in a community may react to the decision-making process on a social issue. These people are affected by the decisions made by policymakers. Protest groups have these grievances because of the quick decisions made on a social issue. These grievances will remain until the grassroots organizations become players in the decision-making process of this social issue.

### Community Elites

Another part of the social issue is the role of community elites in the decision-making process of social problems.

Business and community elites make it a point to be participants in meetings where decisions are made on issues that concern them. For example, "elected officials have their greatest impact at the official disposition stage, particularly where there is uncertainty about citizen preferences" (Friedland and Palmer 1984: 394). Elected officials try to portray a neutral role while making decisions on social issues. For example, mayors and city councilmen play key roles in creating public policy or raising concerns about social issues. These elected officials can sometimes have the one vote that will stop a public project from accelerating or developing. Social pressure from protest groups can have an impact on the role of community elites in a public issue.

Community elites are interested in policies that provide them with compensations or incentives. "Specifically, business profitability depends on the cost and availability of local economic infrastructure and land-use policy" (Friedland and Palmer 1984: 395). This profitability can only be achieved by persuading elected officials and protest groups to support and vote for specific issues. There must be a political or economic trade-off between the two parties in order for a policy to be formulated and enforced. Community politics consist of an attempt to reach consensus between elected officials, community elites, and protest groups.

Community elites attempt to find answers to social issues

by using routine procedures to reach their political goals. The central process of pluralist politics is exchange so that; you "scratch my back and I will scratch yours, and, in the end, we will all get some of what we want" (Gamson 1990: 133). This implies that pluralist politics have limits attached to them. Community elites are aware that compromising and bargaining are essential tools in the decision-making process in addressing social problems. Compromising and bargaining require personal energy to act out in community politics.

Community elites tend to act in their own interests. They are movers and shakers in the political arena, they practice the classic formation, negotiation, and compromise (Gamson 1990: 141). Community elites continue to resolve conflicts by creating a cooperative environment among the various groups involved in decisions on social issues. They use all their resources to appear as competitive players in the decision-making process of social problems. These resources include the political strategies used by community elites to gain support from their allies.

Community elites are aware that they must network with other elites (business and political) in order to maintain their political advantage over local citizens. According to Friedland and Palmer, there are two kinds of networks that exist among business elites: 1)"interorganization networks which consist of public and private organizations linked to

one another by the exchange of resources such as money, information, and personnel; and 2) intraclass networks which are composed of individuals linked together by overlapping memberships in organizations such as elite social class and corporate governing boards" (1984: 397). This networking allows the elites to create a distinct class of their own.

This distinct class consists of "individuals such as community elites with similar educational, political, and social backgrounds which tend to network among themselves" (Friedland and Palmer 1984: 395). This tight network provides political, economic, and social incentives for the members. Also, Friedland and Palmer state that 1) Domhoff's studies indicate that community elites have a unique "lifestyle and a group consciousness that make them dominant individuals in the political decision-making process in the communities; 2) community elites participate extensively in candidate selection, lobbying, and quasi-public decision making groups; 3) community elites are definitely a governing class in the United States; and finally they own a disproportionate share of the country's yearly income, contribute a disproportionate number of its members to governmental bodies and decision-making groups, and dominate the policy forming process through a variety of means" (Friedland and Palmer 1984: 398). The consistent camaraderie between community elites creates a social bond that symbolizes power.

This power is exercised by those community elites who threaten to exit the community if they do not receive certain benefits. One benefit is the use of the dominant company's ideology as a framework for operation of the community. The option to be tax-free for a few years is another incentive. The option of buying large tracts of land is another form of economic compensation. Community elites might offer these options to reduce severely the number of **perceived risks** of companies threatening to leave a specific community.

The following quote provides a picture of the amount of political clout that community elites have in certain cities:

- 1) There are some corporations who are accused of environmental pollution because they fail to obey environmental standards set by EPA;
- 2) Downtown growth and development had great impact on urban renewal policies; and
- 3) the more powerful the corporations are in a community, the more likely their decisions will be accepted by other community elites (Friedland and Palmer 1984: 407).

This strong and sound political force of some elites triggers citizen groups to mobilize to become viable participants in the decision-making process on social issues.

### Grassroots Organizations

Grassroots organizations contribute to the research question that issues of **compensation/incentives** and **perceived**

risks of social issues tend to affect the mobilization of protest groups. **Grassroots organizations** are organizations which are operated by the local community residents, controlled by the local community residents, and financed by local community residents. Local residents mobilize to plan, discuss, and evaluate the decisions made by local elected officials on local issues. **Mobilize** in this context is referred to as the ability to act or respond to a social issue. This mobilization of the locals usually emerges from suddenly imposed grievances due to decisions made on a social issue by local politicians. The grassroots organizations will suggest that opinions be heard and taken into account in the decision-making process of a particular social issue. Usually, a leader (s) will emerge from the mobilization of the locals. **Emerge** in this context is best defined as the ability to be recognized by the local community.

Grassroots organizations become a formal organization when the members can transform their **ideas** into written rules. By identifying themselves with the good of the community, these organizations gain legitimacy in the eyes of elected officials. Grassroots organizations gradually take legitimacy away from politicians and create their **own sense of legitimacy**. This new legitimacy provides a redefinition of social issues. The **consciousness** of the members are acted out in their social behaviors through protesting and challenging the existing political structure. These new perceptions and

social behaviors merge into a **collective force** with a new grassroots leader.

The leader of a grassroots organization arises from the community because he/she understands the cultural surroundings of the community. This individual is knowledgeable of the political maneuvers local politicians applied by solving social issues. This leader strongly believes that his/her grassroots organization can gain influence by participating in community politics. This participation allows them to apply pressure on the political system while gaining respect for the organization itself. Fisher (1984: 92) echoes a similar position by implying that community-based organizations (Students for Democratic Society and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) strongly encourage communities to practice "participatory democracy." The leader of these groups creates and practices specific political activities to persuade local leaders that these organizations want to be granted certain incentives also.

The grassroots organizations and their leaders focus on raising the consciousness of people in their community. They attempt to increase the public awareness on social issues of many group members and individuals in the community. Through consciousness raising, grassroots organizations can encourage large numbers of people to vote for or against certain issues or specific politicians. Often, grassroots organizations have the ability to get people in the community to protest or

picket local businesses or institutions who fail to provide adequate services for local citizens. Such tactics enable local residents to receive compensations and incentives from the political system for projects they favor.

Protest groups will seek out certain politicians and use them and their services to their advantage. The protest groups will threaten to withdraw their votes if they do not receive cooperation. They will make such remarks as "we will win at the voting booth, if we do not win at the bargaining table" (Knoxville News-Sentinel 1990). Over time, protest groups tend to build an alliance with certain politicians so that the politicians will vote the way that the protest groups want them to vote. Protest groups know that having a politician in their corner will enable them to get him/her to introduce a bill or vote on a bill in their favor.

Protest groups attempt to persuade other organizations to support their cause. They inform these organizations that they are all experiencing the same inequalities. Citizen groups try to convince other organizations that collective effort will allow them to get on the agenda of public meetings. An umbrella organization or coalition which includes the social issues of all the groups represented in the community can mobilize larger numbers of local residents and secure more money and time to support grassroots action.



## Synthesis

From the social movement literature, two points must be made. Individual involvement in a community issue depends upon perceived and/or actual compensation, incentives, and risks. Citizen groups that arise around an issue can and do influence the decision-making literature, process in communities. From the community elite/power/ decision-making literature we see that those in elected or informal positions of power in the community promote policies that provide them with **compensations/incentives**. Individual opposition or support for a position taken by the community leadership becomes effective as grassroots organizations emerge around the grievances and/or **perceived risks**.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN EXAMINATION OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a partial examination of the decision-making process of solid waste disposal in Knoxville, Tennessee. This examination will first present a brief summary on the MPC, City Council, and the MKSWA. Second, this examination will show the connection between the environmental, political, and technical controversies in relation to the decision-making process of disposing of solid waste. Last, this examination will attempt to show how the three controversies contribute to the mobilization of resources of local protest groups and policy-making of community elites.

One of the significant players in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal is the MPC. Briefly this group of elites consists of 15 people who are appointed by the Mayor, they assist in planning the growth of the city, and they are responsible for controlling current zoning ordinances and subdivisions (Metropolitan Planning Commission 1988/89: i).

The MPC has a significant role in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal which would have changed the

Baxter Avenue site from I-3 to I-4 (general industrial to heavy industrial). This would have allowed the MKSWA to site the proposed incinerator in this neighborhood. As far as Plant Cement Road in East Knox County was concerned, it was already zoned for heavy industrial operations. Protest groups were able to convince the MPC not to rezone the Baxter Avenue site for a proposed incinerator. The local protest group, AIR, could assemble a large number of interested citizens to attend the MPC meeting (July 27, 1988) on rezoning Baxter Avenue. This large crowd of about 300 to 400 people played a significant role in persuading the MPC that they were concerned about the rezoning of Baxter Avenue. Local citizens changed the perception of the MPC by using their presence at the meeting to inform their elected officials that the rezoning of this community is unacceptable. The Planning Commission consists of a chairperson, vice chairperson, and 11 other members who serve for a four year term. They may serve for more than one term.

The registered voters in Knoxville use their voting privileges to elect about nine city council members. "These council members are elected in the odd years and the last election was 1989" (Keller 1988: 19). "A candidate for city council must be a resident of the district from which elected and be at least 25 years of age" (Keller 1988: 19). "The City Council may expel a member for disorderly conduct, malfeasance, for the violation of its rules, or for any just

and reasonable cause following an opportunity to be tried by the council" (Keller 1988: 19). There are very few instances of expulsion for misbehavior.

The legislative branch of local government consists of city council members who take office January 1 following their election. One of their first orders of business is to elect from among their members a mayor" (Keller 1988: 20). City councilmen are provided with some legislative power. "The legislative power of the city is vested in the City Council except as otherwise provided by law [such that] the council ordinance or resolution, prescribes the manner in which any powers of the city are to be exercised" (Keller 1988: 20).

There are standing committees that must be formed by the mayor. "The city code provides for seven standing committees whose members are designated annually by the mayor: ways and means, public safety, public service, public welfare, education, parks, and recreation, and inter-governmental relations" (Keller 1988: 20). There are instances where the mayor is convinced or persuaded by outside forces to form another committee to deal with a specific social problem. Keller (1988: 20) agrees by concluding that "additional committees are formed as necessary, and each committee formulates its own rules and chooses its own chairperson."

The city council holds regular meetings to discuss the city's problems and progress on specific projects. "Regular city council meetings are held on alternate Tuesday evenings

at 7 p.m. in the large assembly room of the City-County Building" (Keller 1988: 20). There are certain times of the year when the mayor suggests that a special meeting be held to discuss a social issue. Keller (1988: 20) states that "special meetings, including workshops, may be called by the mayor or any four council members with notice of at least one day before the date of the meeting or upon at least twelve hours written notice to each member of council."

The city council meetings must operate according to the city charter. The city council meetings must operate as follows: "1) A majority vote of the council constitute a quorum although a smaller number can adjourn from day to day; 2) A majority vote is necessary to adopt all ordinances and resolutions; 3) The council may, upon affirmative vote of two-thirds of its membership, pass emergency measures to take effect at the time of passage, and 4) The presiding officer may not vote except in the case of a tie; 5) The vice mayor presides in the absence of the mayor" (Keller 1988: 20).

There are many resolutions and ordinances presented to the local mayor and councilmen, and they must deal with them accordingly. These ordinances and resolutions are dealt with in the following manner: 1) they must be written or printed and limited to one subject except for the annual appropriations ordinance; 2) resolutions must be read at one meeting; 3) If [resolutions are] approved, they become effective immediately or as stipulated in the resolution; 4)

ordinances must be read at two regular meetings, two weeks apart, and if approved and unless otherwise specified, take effect 17 days following passage unless another period is provided in the measure; 5) an ordinance adopted by Council may be submitted to referendum upon petition of 25% of the voters for the office of mayor in the most recent election; and 6) adopted ordinances and resolutions are published in a book, The City Code, is available to the public in the Recorder's Office, City-County Building.

Local citizens can confront the mayor or city councilmen concerning adopted ordinances and resolutions at city council meetings. The following format will take place: 1) Members of the public may address the council, providing their name (s) have been registered with the recorder; 2) remarks are limited to five minutes, and groups speaking on the same subject must limit themselves to three persons on each side of the question unless Council otherwise provides; 3) the vice-mayor presides at council meetings in the absence of the mayor and performs duties as assigned by the council; 4) during the temporary absence or disability of the mayor, the vice-mayor performs the duties of the mayor; and 5) a recorder, either a council member or a person hired for that purpose, is appointed by the council to prepare minutes of meetings and to keep all records of council action (Keller 1988: 20-21). The city council consists of three members at large, and six from various districts, and they serve a four-year term.

The following quotation serves as an adequate description of the nature and purpose of the MKSWA.

In 1986, the City of Knoxville (the "City") and the County of Knox ("County") formed The Metropolitan Knox Solid Waste Authority (the "Authority") to implement a municipal solid waste disposal program which would be focused on resource recovery (incineration with heat recovery) to serve the City, the County, and prospectively, other nearby communities. Accordingly, the Authority has developed plans for the construction of a mass burning resource recovery plant to provide a long term solution for solid waste disposal. Plans call for the facility to be designed, constructed, and operated by a private enterprise under a "full service" contract with a resource recovery vendor. One of the key policy and planning decisions the Authority has faced is whether the facility should be publicly or privately owned. The ownership decision should be based upon specific needs, risks, and policy considerations of the Authority as well as the economics of the project under public and private use. (Public Financial Management, (PFM), Advisors in Capital Finance and Investment Management. July 17, 1987).

The MKSWA consists of nine members, including a chairman, vice chairman, and seven members from city and county government. The MKSWA had the job of finding an adequate site on which to build an incinerator, but every site that they chose met with public resistance. There were many concerned citizens who felt that they should be involved in the decision-making process of garbage disposal.

There are also 19 county commissioners from nine different districts. These community elites played a

significant role in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal. They had the voting power to accept or reject any decisions made on the proposed construction of the incinerator. These community elites set the political stage for decisions on solid waste disposal. They tried to convince their constituents of the importance of having a garbage incinerator; however, some local citizens felt that the incinerator had several environmental and health risks. This is one factor that sparked the controversies surrounding the siting of an incinerator.

1988

Toward the end of 1988, there were political, environmental, and economic things taking place which set the stage for the upcoming year. Politically, the Vice President of HDR Engineering was more interested in the economics surrounding the proposed incinerator for Knoxville-Knox County than in the environmental impacts of this project. After the City Council voted 6 to 2 to deny the rezoning of Baxter Avenue, Mr. Reynolds responded in the following manner: 1) choosing another site will delay the project's time by months; 2) the delay of this proposed incinerator past April 17, 1989, would cause the Authority to lose financing; and 3) the community should realize there is no perfect site (Knoxville News-Sentinel July 27, 1988).



Environmentally, MKSWA suggested that they would adopt a quadrant policy for the proposed incinerator project so that all Knoxville-Knox County residents would be equally exposed to the pollutants from this incinerator. This quadrant policy included building an incinerator and three separate landfills in which to bury incinerator ash and waste that cannot be burned. This policy was voted against by Mayor Victor Ashe and Commissioner Jim Carroll (Knoxville News-Sentinel September 13, 1988). The factors considered for the site included: 1) the zoning impact of the development of adjacent land, 2) the impact of garbage trucks on traffic in specific areas, 3) the stability of geology (structure of the earth's surface), 4) the minimal effect on air quality, 5) the impact on recreational land, and 6) the existence of drainage or erosion problems (Knoxville News-Sentinel September 13, 1988). Some local citizens thought that it might be worthwhile to have an incinerator if all these variables held true. Attorney Beeler reported that the Authority's goal was to spread the waste facilities around to different parts of Knox County (Knoxville News-Sentinel September 13, 1988).

Economically, concerned citizens and local protest groups were afraid that an incinerator would increase the household fee for solid waste disposal. The MKSWA answered by stating that by 1992, East Knoxville and Knox County households could pay \$4.55 a month to have its garbage incinerated (Knoxville News-Sentinel November 4, 1988). Concerned citizens were more

interested in solid waste disposal that is more environmentally safe than cost effective. Some local citizens felt that although this proposed incinerator might charge cheap user fees, it would not necessarily be environmentally feasible for the community. Jim Reynolds (project director) replied that a household fee is one of several economic factors used to determine which company is chosen to build the incinerator (Knoxville News-Sentinel November 4, 1988). The household fee would be the cost of 1) incineration, 2) landfilling, and 3) disposal of waste that cannot be burned (Knoxville News-Sentinel November 4, 1988). The neighborhood housing the incinerator would pay a lower household fee neighborhoods .

Three companies (Foster Wheeler Power System Inc.; Westinghouse; and Ogden Martin Systems, Inc.) bid on the opportunity to dispose of solid waste in Knoxville-Knox County. MKSWA chose Foster Wheeler Power System Inc. for the following reasons: 1) they would charge \$4.55 a month per household to dispose of solid waste, 2) they would construct the proposed incinerator at a cost of \$82.8 million, and 3) they would have an annual operating cost of \$4.4 million (Knoxville News-Sentinel November 4, 1988).

Lastly, the household fee for solid waste disposal could either decrease or increase. Mr. Steve Neperud (project manager) stated two significant factors responsible for the lowering or raising of the household fee: 1) the cost of

recycling would increase monthly charges, and 2) the amount of electricity produced would decrease monthly charges (Knoxville News-Sentinel November 4, 1988). Mr. Neperud concluded that generating electricity and selling that power to Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) or another utility provider was one of the primary revenue sources for paying the cost of the project (Knoxville News-Sentinel November 4, 1988).

### Summary

In 1988, the political influences included various factors: 1) the Authority picked the Baxter Avenue site; 2) MPC voted 12 to 1 to reject rezoning of Baxter Avenue; 3) City Council voted 6 to 2 to deny rezoning of Baxter Avenue; and 4) Reynolds, Vice President of HDR Engineering concluded denial of the Baxter Avenue site would delay the proposed incinerator site selection process for the incinerator for months. Environmentally, AIR replied that the incinerator would be a health hazard to the residents of Baxter Avenue. The Authority wanted to adopt a quadrant policy to spread out the environmental pollution of the incinerator and landfills. Also, any site chosen for the incinerator would be exposed to excessive traffic, drainage problems, and minimal air quality.

There were some technical controversies which included local experts. HDR Engineering Consultants for MKSWA did studies to choose the Baxter Avenue site as a feasible site.

A panel of experts from the University of Tennessee reported that the HDR Engineering Consultants' studies were not thorough. A thorough study would have cited other areas beside Baxter as an adequate location (including Neyland Drive and Middlebrook Pike) on the site selection list. Local elites provided reasons to immediately delete those two sites from the list.

The events at the end of 1988 set the political framework for the upcoming year. In December 1988, it was proposed that the incinerator be sited in East Knox County. The holidays were approaching and local politicians, protest groups, and some citizens were preparing to celebrate Christmas. Toward the end of December, local citizens in East Knox County received word that the MKSWA would site a proposed incinerator in East Knox-County. Citizens in East Knox County immediately mobilized and formed a protest group called CARE. This group also received moral and social support from former members of AIR. AIR was responsible for stopping the siting of the proposed incinerator on Baxter Avenue (The 4th and Gill Neighborhood). Another group call TVEC provided political support for CARE.

1989

As soon as the new year began, there were complaints about local elites and their lack of political concern for

East Knox County residents. Angry East Knox County residents said local leaders were more concerned about saving an old, vacant house than assisting the East Knox County community in fighting the proposed incinerator (Knoxville News-Sentinel January 11, 1989). Councilman Casey Jones informed residents of East Knox County that he presented a proposal to his colleagues which suggested that additional studies should be performed before siting the incinerator in East Knox County. There was not enough political support among Jones' colleagues to keep this proposal alive.

Mrs. Felicia Felder-Hoehne, a member of CARE strongly believed that local politicians had considered the pollution that accompanies an incinerator. She thought that "human life should take precedence over noxious waste facilities" (Knoxville News-Sentinel January 11, 1989). Mrs. Felder-Hoehne argued that West Knoxvillians had more political influence than East Knoxvillians. Also, she perceived local elites as exerting more effort in trying to save a house than a community-at-large. Local elites assisted West Knoxvillians in relieving the plight of the Baker-Peters house on Kingston Pike that faced demolition to make room for a gas station and they supported efforts to preserve the pre-Civil War home (Knoxville News-Sentinel January 11, 1989).

East-side residents had planned to attend a January 11, 1989, city council meeting to voice their opinions on the siting of the proposed incinerator. At this city council

meeting, 100 incinerator opponents wore yellow armbands as a symbol of caution toward the garbage burner (Knoxville News-Sentinel January 11, 1989). At this meeting, the Authority mentioned that they had chosen the Cement Plant Road as the designated site for the proposed incinerator. Jim Reynolds, executive director of the solid waste authority, and Richard Beeler, the Authority's general counsel, pointed out that a number of permits could be needed before an incinerator could be built (Knoxville News-Sentinel January 13, 1989).

In February, the city council members had a very heated debate over the proposed incinerator for the East Knox County. At this meeting, the Knox County Commission killed the latest effort of East Knox countians to fight plans for a garbage incinerator in their end of the county (Knoxville News-Sentinel February 24, 1989). The MPC decision deemed the proposed incinerator an acceptable use for an industrially zoned 73 acre tract on Cement Plant Road (Knoxville News-Sentinel February 24, 1989). There were "verbal punches thrown" from one councilman to the next and from East Side Residents to city councilmen. "The city county assembly room was glooming like the afternoon sun and trembling as if an earthquake was approaching (Knoxville News-Sentinel February 24, 1989). After three and one-half hours of debate on the proposed incinerator site, Chairman John Mills cut off the for and against debate and ruled that the original MPC decision should stand (Knoxville News-Sentinel February 24, 1989).

There were about 200 East Side residents at this meeting and they were furious when John Mills made this statement. East Knox County organizers accused the County Commission of dodging a political bullet by refusing to vote (Knoxville News-Sentinel February 24, 1989).

The commissioners felt very uncomfortable discussing the incinerator issue at the February meeting. The Commissioners did not vote because it was a no-win situation, and the issue was volatile and potentially damaging to their career (Knoxville News-Sentinel February 24, 1989). The local elites remained neutral on the proposed incinerator issue to protect their political and social positions in the community. Their responses were as follows: 1) they voted for the residents' appeal to deny the building of an incinerator in East Knox County, and 2) the Commissioners did not want to run the risk of losing respect from their constituents (Knoxville News-Sentinel February 24, 1989).

There were other insightful comments about the February meeting. Barbara Simpson (former member of AIR), a long-time critic of the MKSWA said that there was never a question that the Commission would go along with Authority's site plan (Knoxville News-Sentinel February 24, 1989). The commission slowly began to feel the social pressure from local citizens groups to rethink siting of the proposed incinerator in East Knox County. At this meeting, Mills could not introduce any motions because he was presiding over the meeting (Knoxville

News-Sentinel February 24, 1989). The Commissioners spent some time just staring at each other. According to Mills, he did not know of any preplanning among commissioners "to stay mum" (Knoxville News-Sentinel February 24, 1989). The Commissioners who spoke raised some stimulating questions about the construction of the proposed incinerator. Several commissioners said their job was to decide a very specific technical question- whether the Authority's use on review request would result in a proper land use of the Cement Plant Road site- rather than to mull over broad policy on the pros and cons of incineration (Knoxville News-Sentinel February 24, 1989). The Commissioners tried to use psychological tactics to alienate the local citizens and protest groups in the audience.

In an effort to accelerate the proposed incinerator project, the Authority used the "April 17 bond expiration date as a hammer to speed the project past city council/county commissioners and the MPC" (Knoxville News-Sentinel March 6, 1989). Local protest groups geared up for a long, stressful year. Local protest groups knew that April 17, 1989, was the deadline for the bonds that would finance the incinerator, and they began to plan strategies to stop the financing of the proposed incinerator (Knoxville News-Sentinel March 6, 1989). Local elites should have realized that this proposed incinerator project, whether accepted or rejected, would have a great impact on the political structure of this city. The



Authority felt that they would not have difficulty refinancing the bonds for the \$200 million incinerator (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989).

The East Knox County citizen group (CARE) planned on using buses to provide transportation for dozens of garbage incinerator opponents for last-minute lobbying of the county commission (Knoxville News-Sentinel March 6, 1989). CARE realized that mobilizing about 200 people would indicate to MPC, MKSWA, and City Council that there were some individuals out there who are concerned about decisions on city planning. CARE felt that this tactic would kill the incinerator controversy (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). That opportunity arose when the Commission voted on whether to put the county's credit behind the MKSWA's incinerator, recycling, or other disposal trash programs (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). CARE members thought that it would be politically effective if they called the County Commissioners at home and discussed the denial of the proposed incinerator project with them. CARE's group leader and members spent much of the weekend handing out fliers and encouraging their neighbors to lobby against their commissioners (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989).

Politically, the MKSWA was receiving pressure from local citizens and protest groups to forget the proposed incinerator issue. Paul Hoehne (President of CARE) concluded that the Authority was falling apart internally due to the numerous

times CARE took Authority to court and CARE's continual questioning of MKSWA about the proposed incinerator project (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). CARE filed a suit against the Authority in the spring of 1989 for the remarketing of the \$175 million in bonds for the proposed incinerator. CARE made an effort to directly and indirectly force the MKSWA to rethink the economic, social, and political conditions surrounding the proposed incinerator project. CARE knew that they had to keep their side of the proposed incinerator issue in the media in order to gain public support, and they had to use the media to show the public those politicians who supported this solid waste facility project.

Economically, the MKSWA had to justify its spending for the 1990 fiscal year. Jim Reynolds (the Authority's Executive Director) reported that if the commission refused to vouch for the Authority's spending-budgeted at \$18.4 million next year-then the Authority's hands would be tied, and the financing will collapse (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). The Commission's Finance Committee recommended that the Commission back the spending, with bonds sold in 1986 (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). The Authority made a handsome amount from reinvesting the bonds were supposed to pay for the incinerator project. The financing strategy set up by the underwriters (Cumberland Securities and Prudential Bache) paid the Authority's way for 2 1/2 years with \$8 million (Knoxville

News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). The Authority had mixed feelings about Cumberland Securities; Dwight Kessel wanted Cumberland Securities to bow out of the project, and other members of the Authority agree (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989).

If the project was ongoing but not financed, Cumberland Securities' would lose their share of the financing fee (\$1.5 million to \$2 million, to be split with Prudential Bache) next year (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). A member of a local protest group asked the Authority how long Cumberland Securities had been receiving money from the Authority. Cumberland Securities was paid \$1.3 million by the Authority from August 1986-June 1989 and Prudential Bache received \$.7 million for the same period (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). Some county commissioners felt that local citizens were interested in the political relationship of the Authority and Cumberland Securities. Two county commissioners (Frank Bowden and Mary Lou Horner) were really concerned about the final outcome of the split financing fee to Cumberland Securities and Prudential Bache (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). Mr. Bowden concluded that the Authority had not been truly responsible with public funds (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989).

The Authority determine the amount of bond proceeds that they needed to spend. At least 85% of the Authority's \$175 million in bond proceeds had to be spent by 1991 to the having

to repay money made by investing bond proceeds (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). CARE waited for the next city council meeting to see how Council would vote on the bond proceeds issue. Before the Authority could draw on its bond monies, Knoxville City Council had to vote on July 11, 1989, to join the county in guaranteeing repayment of whatever was to be spent should the project's refinancing fall apart (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). With a successful vote in 1990, the Authority's financial watch dog would become the County Commission's Finance Committee, which, along with Dwight Kessel would approve advance spending along with Dwight Kessel (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989).

CARE was somewhat surprised to see the Authority receive permission to draw on its bond monies. In August, the Authority was authorized by the Knox County Commission's Finance Committee to use up to \$1.2 million to buy 53 acres off Cement Plant Road for the incinerator (Knoxville News-Sentinel August 20, 1989). CARE thought it was interesting to find out how the accompanying landfill would be paid for through the sale of electricity produced by burning trash at an incinerator and through charges to trash haulers (Knoxville News-Sentinel August 20, 1989). The Authority had expected to pay about \$86,380 for the East Knox County land for a garbage incinerator (Knoxville News-Sentinel August 20, 1989).

Toward the end of 1989, the Authority was working hard to buy land in East Knox County for the proposed incinerator.

The Authority had been negotiating with Southern Railway and Dixie Cement Company for the purchase of a tract of land in East Knox County (Knoxville News-Sentinel December 1, 1989). CARE had annoyed local elites by consistently confronting them about the proposed incinerator issue. Fortunately, the Authority chose the 41 acres off Cement Plant Road in December 1988, but that choice did not lead to a land purchase during the next 11 months due to tedious negotiations and land-use challenges by community opponents (Knoxville News-Sentinel December 1, 1989). The Authority is a 9-member city/county agency planning the construction of a \$90 million incinerator as well as a \$10 million Knox County landfill (which location has yet to be chosen) to accommodate incinerator ash (Knoxville News-Sentinel December 1, 1989).

Technically, the Authority agreed on incorporating a recycling program for Knoxville and Knox County. In November, the Authority started the first house-to-house recycling program in Knoxville, which included about 8,600 houses, and which was expected to reach 88,000 homes within 2 years (Knoxville News-Sentinel December 1, 1989). Mechanically, Southern Railway preferred to share the service road with the garbage haulers. John Evans, a spokesperson for the Authority, said that Dixie Cement would sell the land for the incinerator and Southern Railway would give up most of the service road that parallels Cement Plant Road (Knoxville News-Sentinel December 1, 1989). The railway would not lose use

of the road after it became public but would share the road with garbage trucks carting refuse to the incinerator and other trucks carrying ash away (Knoxville News-Sentinel December 1, 1989).

The Authority knew the decision to site the proposed incinerator in East Knox County would benefit Southern Railway and Dixie Cement. The Southern Railway benefitted by getting a wider, smoother road in exchange for giving up the property (Knoxville News-Sentinel December 1, 1989). The Authority would have to pay for repaving the service road, but that was cheaper than having to buy approximately 11 acres that otherwise would have been needed to provide access to the incinerator site (Knoxville News-Sentinel December 1, 1989). The land where the proposed incinerator would be sited was fairly expensive. Dixie Cement would benefit by selling property it is not using at \$21,619 per acre- a cost that John Evans conceded "a high market price" (Knoxville News-Sentinel December 1, 1989).

In the mid 1989, County officials wanted to find another place to build a landfill. County Commission told Authority officials to resolve technical details with those proposing alternatives to incineration (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). William Haynes was advocating trucking garbage to a proposed landfill just north of Oliver Springs in Anderson County (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). Haynes did not have a good relationship with most members of the

Authority. The Authority promised to give Haynes an answer to his proposal by July (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). Haynes was president of Remote Landfill Services Inc., and he commented that "hauling garbage to Anderson County and burying it there would be at least \$211 million cheaper than burying it in East Knox County over a 20 year period" (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989).

The Authority voted not to support the Haynes' proposal of trucking the garbage to a landfill in Anderson County. Jim Reynolds, Authority executive, added, "I'm really disappointed the commissioners did not see through the smoke and mirrors of Bill Haynes" (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). Bill Haynes also tried to promote a Browning Ferris Industries (BFI) recycling program to the Authority in 1989. Waste Management Industry (WM) was awarded with the contract to start the pilot recycling program for Knoxville/Knox County. There were 15 commissioners who voted to put the county's credit behind the Authority's 1989-90 spending, funded by proceeds from bonds sold in 1986 (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). Commissioner Billy Walker voted against the credit backing, and three others (Joe McMillan, Jesse Cawood, and Commission chairman, John Mills) abstained (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). The Authority felt that the land in East Knox County was more a feasible site for the incinerator and landfill than the area in Anderson County, which was feasible only for a landfill. Part of the Authority's \$18.4

million would be used to buy and develop a 41-acre tract for the incinerator, and that tract lies in Mc Millan's and Walker's district (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). There were some local citizens who did not favor Haynes proposal. For example, David Massey (Chairman of AIR), Luttrell Street resident and early opponent of the incinerator, replied that "Haynes's proposal changes the name of this game," and believed there were "more alternatives out there than Haynes' option" (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989).

Some commissioners felt there were other technologies that should be examined to see which one was acceptable to deal with the solid waste problem in Knoxville. Reynolds actually praised Commissioner Frank Leuthold for offering the compromise provision that other technologies be studied the Authority report its findings within a month (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 30, 1989). The Authority's choice of technology for handling Knoxville's solid waste would have a direct impact on public and private donations. Reynolds also stated that the commission's failure to deliver a clear cut mandate could hamper the Authority in collecting private donations for its proposed recycling program (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). Local citizens had informed the commissioners that they preferred a good recycling program over an incinerator. Some local citizens believed that basic simple recycling technologies can be taught in elementary schools.



BFI and Waste Management and other national groups that fund public education on recycling will more than likely be wary of the Authority until public officials fully support the Authority's plans for a comprehensive program that balances recycling, incineration, and landfilling (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). This balance of the solid waste disposal methods would allow local citizens to participate in the collection process. BFI and Waste Management were competing for the house-to-house pickup of recyclables (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989). Private donors would not support the incinerator proposal if the Commissioners decided to align themselves with Haynes (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 20, 1989).

Waste Management's pilot recycling program received more support from local Knoxvilleans and residents in surrounding counties. The County Commission began the test program March 1, and authorized it for 6 months (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). Waste Management received some input from the Knoxville Coalition to try this new recycling program. The director of Knoxville Coalition is David Wasserman. This coalition is a non-profit grassroots organization, and its major goal is to find practical solid waste management techniques. The coalition strongly recommended recycling as a method of reducing solid waste in this community. Wasserman cited numerous calls from residents around the county who wanted to know when a recycling center would open near them

(Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). Participation in a recycling program made local citizens feel that they were playing a vital role in this process. Wasserman's optimism was based on the center's steadily increasing amount of recyclables: 36,676 pounds were received in May (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). That amount brought the coalition more than \$601 (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). Money generated from the recycling program, was stated to be used to start new recycling programs in surrounding counties. The county contributed another \$177 as partial compensation for savings in dumping fees for county tax payers, making a total May of income \$777.30 (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989).

Local citizens knew there were many environmental and health risks surrounding the incineration and landfilling of solid waste. This was the main reason that most local citizens supported the pilot recycling program. The impact of a local recycling effort had been so great that its director said it was time to expand the 3-month program to all of Knox County (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). The individuals who supported the proposed incinerator project knew that an environmental and economically feasible recycling program would defeat an incinerator or landfill project. David Wasserman, director of the nonprofit Knoxville Recycling Coalition wanted to discuss with County Executive Dwight Kessel the possibility of enlarging the pilot program with six

additional sites (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989). The Coalition operated the county's first and only comprehensive recycling center in the Carter community in East Knox County (Knoxville News-Sentinel June 16, 1989).

### Summary

In conclusion, the political, economic, technical, and environmental aspects of 1989 set the stage for the upcoming year. Local elites spent some time on resolving the matter of the Bakers-Peters House on Kingston Pike. The Authority selected a site on Cement Plant Road in East Knox County to house the proposed incinerator. The Knox County Commission rejected the latest efforts of East Knox Countians to fight plans for a garbage incinerator in that part of the county. The MPC made a decision on February 24, 1989, to put the proposed incinerator on Cement Plant Road. At the Authority's February 24, 1989, meeting, all the County Commissioners remained neutral on the incinerator issue. The Authority used the April 17 bond deadline as a tool to rush the incinerator project quickly past the city council, MPC, and county commissioners. CARE made plans to use buses to transport the supporters of the anti-incinerator project to the city/county commissioners' meeting.

The Authority realized that the Commission Finance Committee would not provide any economic support for the 1990

budget of \$18.4 million. Cumberland Securities decided not to support the incinerator project. Prudential-Bache favored this, since it would allow them to collect about \$1.5 to 2 million in financing fees. The Authority realized that about 85% of the \$175 million on proceeds for the bonds would be used in 1991 to assist the Authority in avoiding repayment of any money from the investment of the bonds. Authority received word from the County Commission's Finance Committee to use about \$1.2 million to buy the 53 acres in East Knox County for construction of an incinerator. The Authority tried to negotiate a business deal with Southern Railway and Dixie Cement Company for land to house this proposed incinerator.

Commissioner Leuthold argued that other technologies should be examined for alternatives to the proposed incinerator project. The County Commission wanted a thorough report on these technologies in order to make a decision on whether the city should use them. A business deal was made with Southern Railway that would provide the Authority with a substantial portion of their service road for the incinerator project. In return, Southern Railway would have a well-maintained road that is well maintained. The recycling program received much support from the Knoxville community. Wasserman received correspondence from numerous citizens in surrounding communities asking when they would get a recycling center.

In 1990, the incinerator issue became highly publicized. It seemed as if there were now more people involved or concerned about the solid waste management issue in Knoxville. There were followers from the AIR protest group who supported CARE in their fight to stop the siting of a proposed incinerator in their backyard. There were many questions raised by local protest groups and concerned citizens over the relevance of the proposed incinerator project. Quite a few citizens thought there were alternatives to building an incinerator. Many East Knox County residents and their allies were eager and convinced that they would have a good chance of stopping the construction of an incinerator in their county.

State Senator Bill Owen introduced a bill at the request of the local Tennessee Valley Coalition, in opposition to the incinerator (Knoxville News-Sentinel January 23, 1990). TVEC knew that this was an election year for Mr. Owens and they applied direct social and political pressure on him to introduce this bill to kill any plans by local politicians to construct an incinerator. Mayor Ashe asked for a separate vote on which he abstained, for approval of payment of \$16,681 to the law firm of Wagner, Myers, and Sanger for legal work in negotiations with TVA for power sales from the incinerator (Knoxville News-Sentinel January 23, 1990). The electrical power from the incinerator would generate some revenues.

The MPC's approval of an East Knox County site for a proposed garbage incinerator was appealed (January 26, 1990). The president of CARE took credit for this appeal. On January 12, 1990, 300 people attended the MPC meeting, and they protested the proposed garbage incinerator (Knoxville News-Sentinel January 26, 1990). Some local citizens questioned the role of the MPC in this proposed incinerator controversy. MPC chairman Jeff Fletcher had emphasized at the meeting that MPC's role was not to decide the merits of the controversial incinerator but to objectively decide whether an incinerator met the site's zoning requirements (Knoxville News-Sentinel January 26, 1990). East side residents made it a point to tell the MPC that Cement Plant Road did not have the appropriate zoning specifications and that the present specification should not be changed.

Smith Barney had been given credit for managing and underwriting bonds for two incinerators for Foster Wheeler are located in Charleston, South Carolina, and Adirondeck, New York (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). Smith Barney tried to convince the Authority to remarket the bonds for the incinerator, but, by this time, the incinerator issue was dead. Smith Barney was reputed to complete good bond deals, get good rates for these bond deals, and be familiar with the pitfalls of the bond deals (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). Neither the city nor the county commissioners wanted to take risks on any more bonds. The Authority's bonds

collapsed after Mayor Victor Ashe concluded that he wanted to protect tax payers from new risks and objected to remarketing the bonds just two days before the remarketing's closing date (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). The Mayor did not want to put his trust in another bonding company, because he did not want them to default.

The Foster Wheeler delegation came armed with findings from Smith Barney, a finance manager of \$5 billion worth of incinerators and other solid waste facilities over the past five years (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). Their findings suggested that the local Authority's proposed \$162 million incinerator and recycling program would work financially. Foster Wheeler's attorney, Mary Karpenski, said that her clients intended to preserve this project (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). The city/county government was be more interested in finding a company offering economic security in terms of issuing bonds. Foster Wheeler offered to put up a \$90 million letter of credit and keep it in place for 20 years (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). Such an offer, if legitimate, would allow the Authority time to have second thoughts and to find another company to guarantee their proposed incinerator project.

Jonathan W. Wooten, Smith Barney's managing director, concluded that user fees were not needed to make a new financing plan work, since existing city/county waste authority agreements and authority contracts with Foster

Wheeler would guarantee bond backing (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). Wooten wrote that a law suit regarding Authority's compliance with state statutes should not threaten financing or construction of an incinerator, as long as the attorney could assure bond buyers that the legal challenge can be de-emphasized (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). Mayor Ashe took this under consideration, but he knew that restarting the incinerator project would be political suicide (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990).

There was speculation that the contract on construction and operation for the incinerator might be broken. The local government did not want to put the city in a financial bind, and the local leaders would regard the post incinerator project as a lesson about political leverage.

The April 17th bond collapse occurred after AMBAC pulled out, triggered in large part by Mayor Ashe's withdrawal of support (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). Mayor Ashe felt that this decision would save his political. Karpenski concludes that the Authority could have floated new bonds, backed by the city/county, with or without AMBAC's insurance (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). The Authority did not have the power to design the bonds for the incinerator to their advantage. The Authority had been taking advantage of the tax laws, but these laws are no longer in place to allow interest on its bond proceeds which had presently accumulated to \$12 million and which would earn an estimated \$20 million



more over the next 20 years (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). The local protest group not only did not want the incinerator because it pollutes the environment, it is also very expensive to operate.

Hoehne, chairman of CARE, informed the MPC, City Council, and MKSWA that the proposed incinerator was hazardous to the health of citizens and to the environment. Hoehne argued to the county commission that the community opposes the project, and the project should not be permitted under the present industrial zoning for the Cement Plant Road site (Knoxville News-Sentinel May 13, 1990). Some county residents felt that the proposed incinerator would destroy the ecological territory of East Knox County. East side residents argued that the 900 ton per day incinerator was too large for this city.

The mayor decided not to remarket the bonds for this proposed 900 ton a day incinerator. The city now had a task force, which had the main duty of finding out the public opinion about solid waste issues, and suggesting short- and long-term proposals for solid waste disposal (Knoxville News-Sentinel October 5, 1990). This task force provided a broad-base framework for addressing the near-capacity landfill problem for the upcoming year or two. The task force argued that a regional solution was needed, which would include Knox County and other municipalities (Knoxville News-Sentinel October 5, 1990). This new task group would attempt to have

a viable and feasible plan in one year.

This solid waste task force is a 47-member group chaired by former University of Tennessee Chancellor. The first committee has the job of discussing and evaluating the "existing conditions" of the solid waste problem in Knoxville-Knox County (Knoxville News-Sentinel October 5, 1990). This will almost guarantee that the task force will see how serious the solid waste disposal problem is. The second committee has the responsibility of examining "waste characteristics of the waste stream including volume and sources" (Knoxville News-Sentinel October 5, 1990). This might show that the volume of solid waste in this city does not require a 900-ton incinerator as was proposed by the SWA. This committee might find out that incineration, landfilling, and recycling must be available to deal with any future solid waste crisis. Working together these three solid waste methods working together should keep the city officials from depending on only one source of solid waste disposal. The third committee has the sole responsibility of finding "alternative ways of financing solid waste management" (Knoxville News-Sentinel October 5, 1990). Possibly, electrical energy generated from the incinerator could be sold to a utility company to generate revenues to pay for a solid waste disposal program. A recycling program, if well managed, can provide revenues to pay for a solid waste disposal program. The fourth committee is commissioned to "increase public knowledge about waste

management issues" (Knoxville News-Sentinel October 5, 1990). According to David Wasserman of the Knoxville Recycling Coalition, a majority of local citizens have already expressed their support for recycling. The fifth committee will examine "the pros and cons of alternatives to landfilling" (Knoxville News-Sentinel October 5, 1990). It is cheaper to landfill garbage than it is to incinerate it; however, landfilling is responsible at times for contaminating ground and surface water. The sixth and last committee has the job of "[developing] alternative organizational structures for solid waste management" (Knoxville News-Sentinel October 5, 1990). This organization might include the political chain of command for all parties involved in the solid waste disposal program." The city's Metropolitan Planning Commission will serve as staff for the task force" (Knoxville News-Sentinel October 5, 1990). Some local citizens assume that this task force will be the first step in developing an operable solid waste disposal program.

The purpose of this section is to show that a task force is not a relevant solution to the solid waste disposal issue in this community. The members of the task force take an administrative role in analyzing the solid waste issue. Instead of creating an elaborate written proposal to deal with this issue, a more cooperative effort is needed among citizens, politicians, and solid waste experts. The task force should create recycling programs throughout the

community. Also, a series of workshops, seminars, and lectures should be provided to encourage Knoxvilleians to reduce the generation of solid waste. This section critiques the Metro-Knox Solid Waste Authority failure in their mission create a comprehensive solid waste disposal management program.

A Critique of the Superficial Flawless  
MKSWA's Rejected Proposed Incinerator  
Project

Superficial- means presenting only appearance without substance or significance (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary. 1967: 882).

Flawless- means the absence of fault (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary. 1967: 318).

The SWA authority strongly believed that the proposed incinerator for East Knox County would be built. "On Tuesday, April 17, five days before Earth Day, the solid waste authority pulled the city out of the mass burn incinerator project that the SWA had been diligently pursuing for nearly four years" (The Knoxville Recycler 1990: 2). This project exerted much energy from local citizens, protest groups, and local elites. "The bond insurer abruptly announced their unwillingness to insure the bonds that would buy the incinerator, and two days after the mandatory remarketing of some 175 million dollars in bonds came and went without a

remarketing" (The Knoxville Recycler 1990: 2). Local protest groups knew that if they stopped the remarketing of the bonds, they would be given a chance to stop the entire proposed incinerator project. Fortunately, "the incinerator project was dead, the SWA, left with no monies, was in shambles" (The Knoxville Recycler 1990: 2). Local protest groups and citizens saw this as a victory.

Overall, this proposed incinerator project had a majority acceptance of most community elites, while local protest groups and some concerned citizens rejected the idea of having an incinerator. Those community elites who supported the incinerator project included "the mayor, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Knoxville Beautification Board" (The Knoxville Recycler 1990: 2). Those organizations who rejected this project included CARE, AIR, and TVEC. Those citizens who opposed the incinerator who attended city council meetings on the rezoning of Baxter Avenue, the MPC meetings on the rezoning of Baxter Avenue, and the SWA meetings to show their concern against the siting and construction of an incinerator.

David Wasserman, director of the Knoxville Recycling Coalition explains why the proposed incinerator failed: 1) elected officials knew very little about the issues of solid waste management; 2) the SWA down-played the fact that the incinerator would have raised the cost of garbage disposal in this community; 3) the cost of the incinerator was not within

city and county's budget; and 4) the SWA would take responsibility for the high cost of the incinerator leaving city and county elected officials insulated from what could have been political suicide (The Knoxville Recycler 1990: 2).

The community elites spent a great deal of effort in mapping out this political, economic, technical, and environmental strategy. This sophisticated plan could have been executed quietly and smoothly, but two supposedly minor details were overlooked: 1) the attitudes and opinions of the public were put on the back burner and 2) "the state legislature had to approve the transfer of taxing authority to the SWA" (The Knoxville Recycler 1990: 2). The community elites assumed that Senator Owen would use his political influence to get the Authority and the legislature, if needed to tax Knoxvillians to pay the incinerator bond debt. However, as mentioned earlier, TVEC used their political influence to persuade Senator Owen to introduce a bill to oppose the incinerator. Unfortunately, on April 11, the state House of Representatives refused to do that (The Knoxville Recycler 1990: 2). The SWA had no other alternatives but to fund the proposed incinerator and they will not.

Now that the proposed incinerator project is dead, the city/county government has created a task force to develop an operable solid waste management program. However, David Wasserman concludes there are two things which can be learned from the proposed incinerator disaster: 1) "We cannot let

politicians alone decide the future of our solid waste management; and 2) Citizens do make a difference" (The Knoxville Recycler 1990: 2). Local citizens support the "Not in My Backyard" philosophy which includes the siting of landfills and incinerators in neighborhoods of powerless individuals, but local Knoxvilleians proved that citizens can resolve any social issue through mobilization efforts.

### Summary

In sum, the political influences of 1990 included Senator Owen's introduction of a bill to the assembly at the request of TVEC to deny the incinerator. MPC's approval of an incinerator was appealed by CARE. On April 17, 1990, the mayor of Knoxville decided to discontinue his support for the proposed incinerator project. The Authority felt disturbed because they had about four years invested in this project. Foster Wheeler Power Systems officials tried to save the proposed incinerator project but their chances were very slim.

Environmental concerns, CARE argued that the incinerator should not be permitted under present zoning restrictions. East Knox County residents opposed building an incinerator in their neighborhood because of the health risks affiliated with such a facility. CARE also argued that the incinerator should be considered unsafe technology according to the literature

available. East side residents wanted local elites to design a comprehensive solid waste management project that is environmentally sound.

Foster Wheeler proposed revival of the incinerator project by using Smith Barney, a finance manager of \$5 billion worth of incinerators and other solid waste facilities over the last five years. Foster Wheeler offered to put up a \$90 million letter of credit for the proposed incinerator and were willing to keep it in place for 20 years. Mary Karpenski (attorney for Foster Wheeler) threatened to take the city/county to court for breach of the operation and construction contract. Foster Wheeler would try to collect about \$14 million from the city/county if the agreement on the proposed incinerator were accepted.

The city formed a solid waste task force to deal with that issue in this city. This task force has about a year to collect information from the public on their attitudes about solid waste. This task force will create short-and long-term plans on how to deal with the management of solid waste. This task force may, if it desires, include surrounding counties, cities, and towns in their research. This task force is chaired by a former University of Tennessee Official.

The task force consists of six people; the MPC serves as staff for them. This task force will be obligated to perform the following responsibilities: 1) analyze the current state of waste management in Knoxville; 2) determine the



characteristics of the waste stream, including volume and sources; 3) examine alternative ways of financing solid waste management; 4) increase public knowledge about waste management issues; 5) view the pros and cons of alternatives to landfilling; and 6) develop alternative structures (Knoxville News-Sentinel October 5, 1990). These responsibilities would allow the task force to address the political, economic, and technical controversies that surround the solid waste disposal issue. The one year of research that the task force is doing should reinforce the need for a new landfill.

A critique of the MKSWA's rejected proposed incinerator project included the following statements which summarize the failure of the project. The SWA had at least four years invested in this project. The Authority lost about \$175 million in bonds from the project because the Mayor refused to support the remarketing of these bonds on April 17, 1990. Several organizations as well as the mayor supported and approved of the incinerator project, including Chamber of Commerce and Knoxville Beautification Board. The City Council and County Commission were not knowledgeable about the solid waste management program. This lack of knowledge was observed in the public meetings held on this social issue.

There are many ecologically feasible alternatives available for solid waste management. The city/ county commissioners were perceived by the public as individuals who

did not take the economic costs to the city and taxpayers into consideration when they proposed the incinerator project. Local politicians did not seem to care if this incinerator project increased solid waste disposal cost some 500 to 600%. Local elites focused on the incinerator's finance rather than its ecological feasibility. A loophole in the tax laws allowed the SWA to sell tax exempt bonds and invest the proceeds at a higher interest rate while using the net income to pay for the development of the project.

SWA was created to sell the bonds, tax local citizens directly to pay the bond debt, and to indirectly get local citizens to pay for the operation of the incinerator. The cost of the incinerator would not appear in the budget of the city or county governments. SWA was actually designed to receive much publicity for the high cost of the proposed incinerator, thereby freeing the city/county elected officials from public criticism or fear for their political careers. The state legislature had to approve this transfer of taxing authority to the SWA. On April 11, 1990, the state legislature denied the SWA the privilege of taxing local citizens.

This opened up a new "can of worms" or controversy on whether the city/county would include the construction and operation of this incinerator in their budget; they declined. The local politicians decided to drop the initial incinerator project. Knoxvilleians declined to let politicians make their

decisions for them on solid waste management. A good solid waste management program would include reasonable economic and environmental decisions. Citizens applied pressure to their state house representatives to persuade them to vote against any bill for the proposed incinerator. The death of the proposed incinerator has put a rather large dent in the solid waste management program of this city.

### Interviews

The conversations with interviewees were very informative. The interviewees provided answers that corrected some of the information that he had on local solid waste disposal. A wide range of viewpoints provided the social researcher a comparison of views among the respondents. The interviews clarified some puzzling questions regarding specific issues of solid waste disposal in Knoxville. Finally, the interviews provided a structure for the entire decision-making process of solid waste disposal.

The interviewees gave a wide variety of answers concerning whether they had heard or read anything about the construction of a garbage incinerator or expansion of the Rutledge Pike landfill. Five respondents replied that they had "followed the incinerator issue since 1986." All of the interviewees received their information on the incinerator from the following sources Knoxville News-Sentinel, Knoxville

Journal, Solid Waste Authority Reports, news on various local television stations, and news on specific radio stations. One respondent replied that he "received [his] information about the incinerator issue from leaflets which were circulated by AIR and CARE." There was one respondent who followed the debate on the incinerator issue only by "the local evening television news."

As far as siting of an incinerator, about 15 respondents concluded that "Baxter Avenue would be the official location." There were a handful of interviewees who stated that "Palm Beach Company would move out if the incinerator was built on Baxter Avenue." Ten interviewees mentioned that "the Baxter Avenue site was denied and that Cement Plant Road in East Knox County is designated as the official site." One respondent strongly felt that the "incinerator would be built sometime in the fall of 1988." Lastly, one interviewee replied that "the city/county were planning to construct an incinerator in about 3 to 4 years." There was another respondent who strongly believed that "the \$100 million project will never be built because it is a dead issue." The issue is dead because of all the controversies that surround it.

The expansion of Rutledge Pike landfill was not familiar to most of the respondents. Ten of the interviewees concluded that "BFI wants to expand the Rutledge Pike landfill." There were five respondents who replied that this "landfill will not be expanded because it has reached its capacity." There were

two people who argued that Rutledge Pike landfill will be "expanded in a year." There was one person who stressed that this landfill "did not have sufficient space to bury the present garbage that we have, it was closed down, and there were talks that it will be several years before it is expanded." One respondent concluded that "It is conceivable BFI could seek and get a permit to expand the landfill vertically, but, if I could remember correctly, this has already happened once, and it is not likely again."

The question of whether the Governor commented on the decisions of this proposed incinerator or the expansion of the Rutledge Pike landfill. Ten people replied that "the Governor would not make any comments on a local decision"; 10 people concluded that "they did not know"; about 5 people commented that Ned McWherter "made no comments at all," and 1 person replied that the Governor only made a "few comments about a medical incinerator for the state."

The question on identification of any major risks associated with incinerators stimulated a fairly unique range of responses. There were 10 people who said that incinerators are associated with "air emissions, gases, and ashes." One individual elaborated quite extensively on this question, stating that the variables associated with the use of incinerators "exposure to heavy metals, dioxins, acid gases; ozone is harmful to plant life; and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is particularly vulnerable." Another

respondent strongly felt that this solid waste facility is "too expensive." There were five people who noted that incinerators have "toxic smells, gas, and hazardous smoke released from them." One interviewee replied that one must be familiar with the "health problems caused by incinerators, its financial risk for taxpayers, and the environmental impacts associated with them." Another unique individual felt that "there are no risks associated with incinerators because the technology has improved tremendously." There was one respondent who concluded that "if the incinerator is not [operated] at the right temperature, it will lead to air pollution, the ash that is generated from the burning of garbage is concentrated with toxics, and it must be landfilled." Finally, an interviewee responded that "an incinerator tends to waste resources that should be used again, that is paper, aluminum, metal, and glass."

Interviewees tend to have a central agreement on the risks associated with landfills. Eight respondents pointed out that "groundwater contamination, air pollution from methane gas, and surface water pollution from runoff" are important risks associated with landfills. There were four interviewees who concluded that "the 'NIMBY' philosophy, health problems, and environmental risks" are correlated with landfills. One individual emphasized that "it is difficult to regulate surface or ground water contamination and the illegal dumping of chemical or other hazardous solvents in our

drinking water." Another person felt that "the lack of space and the inability to really limit toxic materials from being landfilled are the reasons why risks are associated with landfills." Another person said that dangers of landfills are "waste, polluted air, contamination of the groundwater table, and the runoff into streams and our drinking water supplies."

What are the points of agreement between the city council members? Seven people strongly believed that the city council members agreed on "recycling over incineration, siting of an incinerator, and that another landfill will not be built in this city." What are the points of disagreement between the city council members on the incinerator? Three people believed that these local political members disagreed on "the size, cost, and siting of a garbage disposal facility." There were four interviewees who replied that the councilmen disagreed on "recycling and other alternatives have not been fully considered, and MKSWA has not adequately planned for the incinerator." Five respondents indicated that the city councilmen disagreed on the "safety, health impacts, and environmental impacts" that surround the operation of an incinerator. There were two interviewees who felt that the councilmen disagreed on the "economic risks and timing" of constructing an incinerator. All of the interviewees agreed that the incinerator would be financed by "revenue bonds and user fees."

There were two respondents who replied that "there are no

present plans to build an incinerator." Three interviewees felt that "councilmen Cox and Shouse felt that a variety of disposal methods are better than one and McNeil and Roberts felt that incineration is an easy and efficient disposal method." One interviewee felt that this question was "an irrelevant issue to discuss." One respondent replied that "[he] did not know anything about this issue."

A majority of the interviewees thought that asking where would they recommend siting an incinerator was controversial. Surprisingly, 15 of the interviewees concluded that a proposed municipal incinerator should be "sited in a location that is accessible to all parts of collection points, have geological acceptability, and have minimal impact on the environment." Six respondents recommended a location that is "economically and ecologically feasible." Three interviewees felt that "there is nowhere in this city which is considered acceptable for an incinerator." Two respondents replied that local politicians must "see how source reduction and recycling are accepted by the general population first before deciding on an incinerator." One interviewee felt that Cement Plant Road was an acceptable site because "it was outside city limits, railroad tracks were available for use, and a river was nearby for the sole use of operating a garbage disposal facility." Another person strongly recommended that the proposed incinerator be sited "in West Knoxville because it has the highest concentration of Knoxville's population." Finally,



three respondents suggest there "is no place to site the incinerator because the 'NIMBY' movement will stop its construction or operating procedures."

The interviewees chose the places mentioned in the previous paragraph due to various personal reasons. One person felt that an incinerator would not hurt the Knoxville community. Seven people thought that "an area which is fairly remote and located in an industrial area is an acceptable place to build an incinerator." Two people feel that "all the geological studies must be presented to concerned citizens so they can participate in the decisions on siting an incinerator." Three respondents highly supported the idea that "an incinerator would function adequately on the state prison's land which will definitely be far away from homeowners." Three people indicated that any site was acceptable as long as there was "adequate transportation to and from the solid waste facility and the smoke from it was properly dispersed."

The interviewees were asked if they kept themselves informed of the decision-making process of solid waste disposal. Seventeen replied that yes they did and seven said that no they did not. Two individuals stressed that they somewhat kept informed, while one person stressed that he "partially kept informed on decisions of disposing solid waste." Another person said that "[she] should do a better job at it" and finally one person replied that "technically"

he does not follow the decisions made on the disposing of solid waste.

The interviewees felt they were put on the spot when I asked them, if they would vote for or against the construction of an incinerator or the expansion of a landfill. The breakdown of the responses was very interesting. Nine interviewees approved of an incinerator, while 10 were totally against an incinerator. One individual said that he would favor an incinerator if it were "very limited in size, and properly [operated]." Another respondent strongly suggested that "recycling should take precedence over both of them."

There were four respondents who favored the expansion of a landfill, while four respondents replied they would vote against this proposition. One individual replied that he "might" favor this issue but only under strict environmental guidelines for landfill management. One person said that the Rutledge Pike landfill "cannot be expanded."

The solid waste issue has been a news item for sometime now and the interviewees were asked if anyone had discussed this issue with them in the last week. Eight interviewees replied that yes that someone had discussed this issue with them recently, and twelve respondents concluded that no this issue did not arise in any conversation they had in the last seven days. Those who talked to the interviewees about the solid waste issue in Knoxville categorized themselves as either environmental activists, co-worker, lawyer, neighbor,

political activist, garbage economist, concerned citizen, or as an editor of the newspaper.

It was interesting to see that many of the interviewees had attended a public meeting or workshop on the proposed incinerator issue. There were five people who responded that no they had not attended any meetings on the solid waste issue; 20 people who said they had attended various meetings on this issue. On the other hand, there were 8 people who had attended the MPC meeting on the rezoning of Baxter Avenue; 10 people who had attended various MKSWA meetings; 2 people who had attended a workshop of some kind on solid waste disposal issues; 2 were two people who had attended Citizen's Advisory Meetings; and there were 15 people who attended the MPC meeting addressing the inappropriate zoning specifications of Cement Plant Road. Finally, there three people who stressed that they had community workshops on solid waste management for their neighborhood.

There were a wide range of responses identifying participation in different types of recycling programs. Fifteen interviewees said that they are participants of various recycling programs, and six respondents stressed that they are not members of any recycling program. There were five interviewees who participated in the "Food Co-op on Broadway"; two interviewees replied they participated in their own "personal program"; one person replied that he drops his recyclable materials off at the "county drop-off station,";

and three respondents indicated that they participated in their own "community recycling programs."

The interviewees mentioned numerous groups that act on environmental issues and protest against the environmental conditions of landfills. A majority of the interviewees did not focus specifically on the Rutledge Pike landfill which is near its capacity, but on landfills in general. The responses were as follows: five interviewees named "CARE," four respondents mentioned "TVEC," six interviewees named "Citizens Against Pollution (CAP)," three people mentioned "AIR," one person named "Sierra Club," three people mentioned "The Greens," two people named "Solutions On Issues of Concerned Knoxvilleians (S.I.C.K.)," and one person named "Save Our Cumberland Mountains (SOCM)."

In summary, this section presents the results from respondents who were interviewed on the decision-making process of solid waste disposal. They gave a wide variety of answers, and the respondents were very explicit and detailed in answering the interviewer's questions. The interviewees presented their answers as if they had to make decisions on solid waste disposal.

#### Interviews Summary

The responses from the interviews were quite different

from what I expected them to be. As a researcher, I had preconceived notions about the responses of the interviewees. Their answers to the research questions ranged in scope from broad to extreme responses. The researcher was able to observe some interesting facts from the respondents, which allowed him to draw some conclusions. The mental picture that the researcher had of the results from the interviewees' are presented explicitly in the following paragraphs.

Relatively speaking, the interviewees did not regard the decision-making process of solid waste disposal as a priority item. A little more than half the respondents kept informed on the solid waste issue, citing "partially," "not technically," "somewhat," and "I should do a better job." The local newspapers may consider this issue a social problem, but it was taken lightly by the interviewees, who did not rank this issue highly on their agenda.

The interviewees did not regard the proposed incinerator project as a solid waste crisis. A crisis is considered a significant factor or element in the solid waste issue. An incinerator, in this case, is considered an important element in solid waste management. Many politicians are faced with deciding whether one is needed. This decision is based on whether they perceive a crisis in the solid waste disposal program. The interviewees saw the proposed incinerator project as an alternative to a near-capacity local landfill. A few respondents suggested that "recycling of solid waste

should be considered before burning it." One respondent was in favor of "reducing, reusing, and recycling" refuse to provide Knoxvilleans with a better environment.

Overall, the interviewees provided the researcher with a descriptive profile of the solid waste issue in Knoxville. This profile included only a shallow outline of the solid waste issue in Knoxville. For example they were not very detailed in specifying the risks associated with the landfills and incinerators, they did not know on who actually made decisions on this social issue, and they did not indicate specifically if any persistent protest had occurred to halt this assumed solid waste crisis. There is distinct disagreement concerning this issue's viability. For example, only a few interviews had a conversation with "a co-worker," "neighbor," or "an environmental activist" on the solid waste issue.

It seems that the interviewees would have indicated a certain group or a sole individual who make the final decisions on solid waste management, but the respondents' results showed no clear elite making decisions about solid waste disposal. Decisions would have been based on 1) construction and operation of a proposed incinerator, 2) expansion of a landfill horizontally or vertically, 3) the most serious risks associated with incinerators and landfills, 4) an incinerator or landfill, 5) and siting the identity of those responsible for holding public meetings for public

education the public on ecological and feasible solid waste management programs.

The researcher gathered from the interviewees' responses that decisions on solid waste issues, such as the proposed incinerator project, are controlled by elected officials. For example, the researcher asked the interviewees, to name a key player in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal. Their responses were as follow: "Mayor Victor Ashe, Dwight Kessel, Frank Bowden, attorneys representing the MKSWA, BFI, and Waste Management." All of these people play a small part in influencing the decisions on solid waste but their decisions are not the sole decision.

Basically, the decisions on the waste disposal issue are in the formulation stage. This issue has a long way to go before any solid decisions will be made. In the last four years, local leaders, environmental activists, political activists, and concerned citizens have been laying the groundwork or blueprint for the future solid waste management program. Each party has presented advantages and disadvantages associated with incinerators and landfills. Some of them have suggested a more conservative lifestyle for Knoxvilleians, while others have indicated that the public must promote recycling as a necessity for saving the earth.

Local politicians have created a task force to examine Knoxville's solid waste management program. Their ultimate job is to design an operable waste management program. This

program requires a great deal of citizen support. This issue must be resolved, or it will resolve itself.



## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter, a partial examination of the decision-making process of disposing solid waste was presented to show: 1) the relationship between environmental, political, and technical controversies and 2) how these controversies contribute to the mobilization of resources of local protest groups and policy-making of community elites. The participants and their political influence reveal the historical chronology of the decision-making process of solid waste disposal. In this chapter the proposed theoretical framework (social movement/community elite) is applied to analyze the decision-making process of solid waste disposal. The variables (compensations/incentives, risks, and grievances) that allow a social movement to emerge are presented next to provide an explanation and understanding of the decision-making process on solid waste disposal. Then, a summary of the analysis follows.

The decision-making process of solid waste disposal can be analyzed from the social movement/community elite perspective. The decisions process on garbage disposal included community elites, citizen groups, and elected

officials. All of the individuals interviewed played a significant role in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal. These players acted in a collective effort to either accept or reject the construction of a municipal garbage incinerator. The disagreements on whether Knoxville needed an incinerator to dispose of its garbage led to the emergence of protest groups advocating a ban on this facility, that was perceived as a toxic threat.

### Compensations/Incentives

**Compensations/Incentives** are selective rewards which explain why individuals engage in collective behavior (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1988: 711). They are quite different in the eyes of community elites and citizen groups. Community elites realized that being part of the decision-making process allowed them to gain economic compensations by being on a committee having the influence to distribute money to certain projects. For example, when a community elite was part of the MKSWA\*, they could decide whether the city needed a 200 million garbage incinerator. The privilege of being a key

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\*[The Metropolitan Knox Solid Waste Authority is a nine member committee which include city and county members. The task of this committee is to create a solid waste disposal program with emphasis on resource recovery from incineration to serve Knoxville and surrounding counties.]

player in deciding the outcome of a social issue is a source of power. Local community elites had a voice in financial decisions regarding the garbage incinerator.

On the other hand, local citizen groups feel privileged to be a force in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal. The president of AIR concluded that he "knew that MKSWA would not vote to build the incinerator on Baxter Avenue because of the large citizen turnout at the public meeting." Citizen groups felt that if they could convince MKSWA to accept recycling over incineration, there would be an environmental compensation. One interviewee replied that "you could start a recycling program in your own backyard." He suggested that a person could attend a "workshop to learn what items are recyclable or write the Recycling Coalition for literature on how to recycle." They felt that if they could stop the building of a toxic facility, the community would have a cleaner environment. A couple of members of CARE believed that "recycling could reduce the solid waste stream by 20% while producing little or no pollution." Also, they felt that creating a recycling program would be cheaper than building an incinerator. Recycling is perceived as a trade-off between reducing waste and preserving some natural resources.

Compensations can be seen as either perceived or actual payoffs. **Perceived compensations** are an awareness of payments that include an equivalent trade-off; whereas, **actual**

**compensations** are current payments that include equivalent trade-offs. **Protest groups** tend to visualize perceived compensations of a good recycling program to be a reduction in the amount of garbage that is accumulated; **reuse** of some of the garbage that is normally thrown away; and **recycling** various garbage items like aluminum, glass, steel, newspaper, and plastic. Recycling is not only healthy for the environment, it involves community cooperation, and it is less expensive than an incinerator. Several interviewees showed that they "operate their own recycling programs in their backyards by separating items in steel containers." They did this for convenience and because the Waste Management recycling program not accepting certain items.

On the other hand, local community elites managed to take advantage of actual compensations concerning the building of an incinerator. The incinerators could turn garbage into energy and this energy could be used in the operation of various businesses in the community. Some local elites and elected officials believed a properly managed incinerator would 1) reduce the amount of garbage in our waste stream, 2) allow landfills to save the space, and 3) produce less pollutants. Community elites visualized the incinerator as an instrument that would lower the household fee for garbage disposal and generate revenues for other community projects.

In both cases, citizen groups and community elites strongly felt that direct or indirect **incentives**

(encouragement) has encouraged them to support or condone the building of an incinerator. Community elites felt that a **quadrant policy\*** equalize the area affected by pollutants from incinerators and landfills. Citizen groups strongly felt that a recycling program is environmentally feasible and cost-effective. Some community elites believed a successful incinerator project would eventually enhance their political career. Citizen groups concluded that the "literature on incinerators" shows that it is an unsafe technology. Local community elites and protest groups were aware that as long as there were disagreements on this social issue, there would be a slim chance for the construction of an incinerator.

#### Perceived Risks

**Perceived risks** are defined as the presence of dangers. The possible risks associated with incinerators has been a major issue since talks began about building an incinerator or expanding the Rutledge Pike landfill. Most of the interviewees reluctantly concluded that incinerators are responsible for individuals being "exposed to heavy metals,

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\*[**Quadrant Policy** was adopted by Metropolitan Knox Solid Waste Authority on September 13, 1988, which consists of constructing a garbage incinerator and three separate landfills in which to bury incinerator ash and waste that cannot be burned.]

dioxins, toxic ashes, toxic smells, and hazardous smoke." On the other hand, several interviewees replied that the risks associated with landfills are "groundwater contamination, surface water pollution from run-off, excessive traffic in the community from trucks delivering garbage, poisonous debris falling from the truck, the aesthetics of the community is effected by the smell, smoke, and trash on the ground, and air pollution from methane gas." The risks associated with incinerators and landfills are the main catalysts which stopped the construction of toxic facilities in Knoxville, Tennessee. These risks were also responsible for generating interest in the ongoing controversies surrounding the decision-making process of solid waste disposal. Several respondents linked this proposed garbage incinerator with "public health risks, environmental risks, financial risks, and public policy risks." This connection was enough to convince local Knoxvilleians to vote against the solid waste incinerator.

### Grievances

**Grievances** are considered sufferings, pains, and painful situations. Grassroots organizations emerged around "suddenly imposed grievances," a description of those emotional and publicized protests resulting from the proposed construction of a garbage incinerator. Several elected officials were held

accountable for this proposed incinerator project. These grievances provided logical reasons for many individual decisions to join a citizen group. The benefits of joining a protest group outweighed the costs of accepting the proposed incinerator project. Some interviewees who were members of a citizen group felt that they were "supporting an environmental cause." They believed they would be part of a group that would speak out against environmental degradation.

Controversies and decisions on solid waste disposal: The controversies surrounding garbage disposal supported the thesis that issues of **compensations/incentives**, **perceived risks**, and **grievances** affect the mobilization of resources of local protest groups and policy-making of community elites. These controversies encouraged the players in the solid waste decision-making process to participate in this social issue. The dispute over garbage disposal dealt with collectively creating a sound solid waste disposal plan that would justify the needs of all Knoxvilleians. The opposing views caused the emergence of a social movement. This social movement was characterized by political, economic, environmental, and technical controversies.

The political controversy involved the decisions made by community elites on siting an incinerator. These community elites used their political influence to control zoning and regulation of an incinerator. The politics of the proposed incinerator issue consisted of the cost and health effects.

The economic controversy developed because critics of the incinerator strongly felt that it was too expensive to operate and manage. Incinerating garbage would force the tipping fees to increase. Protest groups argued that recycling should replace the proposed incinerator project. Opponents of the incinerator project concluded that the financing of the proposed incinerator would put the city in debt for 20 years or more.

The environmental controversy was promoted by grassroots organizations, arguing that incineration would pollute the environment and that incineration was responsible for toxic ash from burning garbage. Those who opposed incinerators reported that the release of carcinogenic chemicals into the atmosphere would be hazardous to the health of local citizens. Finally, the technical controversy highlighted the significance of having a substitute county-wide recycling program. Critics of the incinerator felt that Knoxvilleians should practice conservation and waste-reduction measures. Supporters of recycling felt the local citizens would adapt to a comprehensive, cooperative recycling program. Proponents of recycling argued that the technology to perform recycling operations was cheaper than building an incinerator or expanding the present landfill.

All these controversies sparked the interest of local grassroots organizations and community elites for development of a workable, comprehensive, long-term solid waste management



program. These controversies forced local protest groups to develop methods to air their grievances and motivated them to become participants in the decision-making process of solid-waste disposal. The controversies provided a mental image on the perceived risks associated with disposing technical controversies which stimulated or provided compensations/incentives for the main players in this issue.

### Conclusion

In sum, compensations/incentives are important factors in determining whether a group wants to be affiliated with an organization. These factors can also be considered as merit raises for joining a citizen group. The risks associated with toxic facilities triggered the emergence of a social movement. Finally, grievances are considered to be the underlying reasons why some individuals became interested in the decisions made on the disposal of solid waste. All of those variables offer suggestions for the reason this social issue ended as it did.

The examination of the decision-making process of solid waste disposal revealed that a majority of community elites did not perceive this as a "priority." This social issue was not discussed consistently among community elites. These decision-makers believed that this social problem was only a "minor entity" in the solid waste management program for the

city. The issue of recycling was considered an alternative to building a proposed incinerator. The elected politicians are the major decision-makers in this situation. The historical chronology provides evidence that local politicians were the key players in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal. They are the ones who decided to create a **task force\*** to resolve this issue.

The task force provided evidence that the solid waste disposal issue is a "dead one." This shows how significant this issue was.

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\*[**Task force** is chaired by former University of Tennessee Chancellor and its duties are to compile information on the attitudes of solid waste. It must create short and long term solutions to managing solid waste.]

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

This final chapter not only presents a summary of the thesis but will also address the major research question of this thesis: Is the decision-making process of solid waste disposal affected by issues of compensations/incentives and perceived risks as discussed in the social movement/community power literatures? On the basis of this study, it was affected. Also, some **strengths** and **weaknesses** in the proposed theoretical framework will be presented. It is clear in this study that the **mobilization of grassroots organizations** is significant in understanding suddenly imposed grievances due to the decisions made on a social issue by elected officials. The **analysis of the emergence of grassroots organizations** demonstrated how they became players in decisions on solid waste disposal.

Suggestions for further research of social movements/community power literatures will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

#### Thesis Summary

This thesis took a case study approach to the decision-making process of solid waste disposal with references to the social movements/community elite research literature. This

theoretical framework was important in showing that issues of compensations/incentives and perceived risks affect the mobilization of protest groups. Citizen groups believed that these rewards were necessary to encourage their political and economic endeavors. Many individuals felt that membership in a protest group would enable them to receive political benefits. Some individuals perceive that a protest group would have a voice on the decisions on solid waste disposal.

The issue of suddenly imposed grievances played a vital role in explaining why people join protest groups. The "dramatic and highly publicized event" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988: 706) in this case was the siting of a garbage incinerator. Citizen groups were mobilized by the perceived risks associated with incinerators. The protest groups' grievances about the construction of an incinerator increased the amount of media publicity given to this social issue. Protest groups' opposition to building an incinerator indirectly recruited political support from the general public. An interviewee replied that "the increase in citizens attendance at the public meetings and neighborhood meetings showed their political support" of the social issue being debated.

Community elites were influential in making decisions on whether Knox-County needed a trash incinerator. Due to lack of available information on solid waste management, local elites felt compelled to provide leadership on solid waste

disposal issues. Local elites used their political influence to show their agreement or disagreement on the proposed incinerator project. Community elites will eventually act in their own interest, and they will negotiate policies that will be advantageous. These elites will attempt to convince their constituencies that the decisions made on managing solid waste are helpful to the entire community.

Strengths and weaknesses of the literatures: The social movement literature drew attention to the informal/formal political relationships between protest groups and community elites. This analysis explains how a small local citizen group with strong leadership could collectively organize to receive legitimacy from elected officials. Solidarity among the members allowed them to challenge the political system. Grassroots organizations wanted to inform the entire community on the risks associated with the social issue at hand. They wanted to gain collective support from local citizens to show elected officials that they were competitive challengers on this social issue.

The community power literature provided a view of the solid waste disposal issue from the existing political structure. It provided an explanation of the importance of economics, networking, and political power in the policy-making on solid waste disposal. The community power literature pointed out the major players in the decision-making process on a social issue and the sources of power used

to exclude others from this decision-making process. A dimension of organization of power, discussed in this literature, indicates whether the power structure is centralized or decentralized. In the research presented in this thesis, the power structure is centralized on this issue.

Social movement framework variables explained the power relationship between organizations or individuals. An understanding of power relationships could assist the researcher in examining the key individuals in a decision-making process. If variables on power were part of the social movement analysis, it would allow the theoretical framework to be a model for analyzing similar environmental issues. Also, looking at the ways elites influence the decision-making process would build bridges by connecting the significance of emerging protest groups with the political power of community elites.

The theoretical framework of community power lacks the explanation of grassroots politics. This framework shows the political cohesiveness of local, state, and national political elites. The community power literature shows there is a strong inter-organizational political bond among local, state, and national elites. Protest groups have a powerful voice and in decisions on solid waste disposal. Decisions on local issues are determined by local elites and the collective effort of individuals with political influence.

Mobilizations/emergence of grassroots organizations: The impact of grassroots organizations mobilizing around the proposed incinerator issue is a good example of community political participation. The general consciousness of group members is to evaluate the decisions that local elites made on solid waste disposal. As local elites assembled to discuss the issues of the proposed incinerator, grassroots organizations mobilize at the meetings, too, in order to voice their opinions on this social issue. This mobilization effort of protest groups allowed them to be recognized as a legitimate citizen group in the community.

The participants of these citizen groups expressed their political, economic, and social grievances about the proposed incinerator project. These protest groups presented an alternate proposal to the solid waste issue, which was the development of a community recycling program. Citizen groups concluded that recycling is inexpensive, environmentally safe, and involves the entire community in its process; whereas incineration is expensive, involves health and environmental risks, and excludes the public from its working procedures. Protest groups believed that recycling is more beneficial on a long-term basis than incineration. They also felt that more time was needed to develop a thorough solid waste disposal program, and that the public should be allowed to be a player in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal.

The legitimacy of protest groups created a political

force and social bond between local citizens and political groups. The collective force of grassroots organizations allowed them to exert political and social pressure on the existing political system. This pressure from grassroots organizations had enough impact to convince elected officials to include citizens in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal. The tactics used by citizens groups were used consistently to extract compensation from the political system. For example, they protest any plan that supported the proposed incinerator issue, they "threatened not to vote for the elected official at the next election", and distributed flyers in the community promoting recycling as a partial solution for garbage disposal. These tactics were a significant factor in helping the protest groups receive political legitimacy from the local elites.

The emergence of grassroots organizations displayed the similarity in "values" or perspectives on a social issue among the members of the group. The group members were fortunate to obtain political support from local elites. This support allowed them to build an alliance to assist in having more voting leverage in the public meetings. In order to sustain a social movement or a grassroots organization, it is necessary to create strong political and social bonds with local elites. This allows the grassroots organization to shift from their small set of social issues to incorporate larger social issues of concern.



Critique of thesis: Social problems in general are more **subjective** in nature. Social problems are defined by people of power. What one person defines as a social problem may not be considered a social problem by someone else. By its nature subjectivity is difficult to research. It takes a different set of research methods to get access to people who are considered to be important players in the decision-making process of solid waste disposal.

Other limitations associated with this thesis exist, one is the use of case study as a research design. They are limited in scope. Case studies have **limited generalizations**, they do not provide explicit generalizations to larger social groups. Case studies do not provide **conclusive generalizations** on social problems in our society.

Second, the researcher relied too heavily on the local newspapers (Knoxville News-Sentinel and Knoxville Journal). As this secondary source was originally collected and analyzed by someone else, the researcher had to present this data in such a way to benefit the research project. Also, the newspaper articles and other secondary materials used in this thesis are only personal impressions of the writer which affect the **objectivity** (indicates that values of the researcher are present) of the research material. A great deal of the secondary materials must be modified to be incorporated into the researcher's study. The **reliability** of secondary sources is weak in providing generalizations on

social problems. This is a descriptive study, which makes it difficult to exhibit many generalizations.

Finally, the random method used to select interviewees has weaknesses. The researcher had very little information on the diverse characteristics of each possible interviewee. The limitations of random-choice interviews is the possibility of missing some important people. The extent of variation in the interviewees made it difficult to examine the potential political influence of each candidate. This method does not guarantee that all the potential interviewees had an equal chance of being chosen for an interview.

Suggestions for further research: This theoretical framework combined the following variables: compensations, incentives, and perceived risks into one central analysis. In order to assess or test its importance and degrees of understanding, the model must analyze other social movement/community power studies. I believe that such a framework will strengthen both fields, social movements and community elites.

There are other areas that surround this social issue which I suggest can be explored. Are there any close connections between community elites and grassroots organizations? Can the social behavior of community elites on social issues encourage or stimulate the emergence of grassroots organizations? Also, one can suspect that elites and grassroots activists tend to invade into each other's

social and political territory. It is definitely acceptable to explore the degree to which established community leaders play a vital role in the emergence of the mobilization of grassroots organizations.

This topic had an interesting start and a rather questionable end. This suggests a few more exploratory, issues such as: 1-Does killing an issue by inattention means that it is resolved? 2-Does putting the proposed solid waste management issue on the back burner suggest that it is a priority on the political agenda of community elites and grassroots organizations? 3-Will the appointed task force overhaul the city's solid waste management program and ever create a workable or conflict-free garbage disposal program? The solid waste issue is not totally dead, but it is not quite viable either. This issue might be resurrected in two years.

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**APPENDIX**



## KNOXVILLE SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL DECISION-MAKING SURVEY

I am conducting a survey on the decision-making process of solid waste in the Knox County area. This survey will also assess the environmental concern and awareness of the garbage crisis in the community. Included in this survey are behavioral questions that deal with your participation in the solid waste process such as:

- Attending metro-planning council meetings
- Voting for or against an incinerator
- Keeping informed of the decision-making process

There are also general questions asked with focus on your knowledge of the risks associated with landfills or incinerators, as well as the appropriate place to site a landfill incinerator, and finally what is the best method of financing a garbage disposal facility. This survey was developed by

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and is part of a larger effort to explore the concerns and desires of residents in similar communities.

The information you submit will be completely confidential and cannot be identified. Your personal response will be combined with the answers of 25 other people's opinions. **Please put your response to the questions in the self-address envelop.**

Sincerely,

Glenn Johnson

GJ:jh

## QUESTIONS

1. What if anything have you heard or read about on the building of a garbage incinerator or the expansion of the Rutledge Pike landfill?
2. Do you happen to know when the incinerator will be built and when the Rutledge Pike landfill will be expanded?
3. As best you recall, what did the Governor (Ned McWherther) say about the decision on the building of this incinerator and the expansion of the Rutledge Pike landfill?
4. What do you believe are the major risks associated with proposed incinerators?
5. What do you believe are the major risks associated with proposed landfills.
6. Do you feel that all of Knoxville's city council members agree on building this incinerator? What are points of agreement and disagreement? How will this incinerator be financed?
7. In what particular neighborhood would you recommend as far as siting an incinerator? Why?
8. Do you keep informed of the decision-making process of municipal waste of a non-hazardous form?
9. Would you vote for or against the building of an incinerator or the expansion of the Rutledge Pike landfill?
10. In the past week, has anyone asked you about your opinion about the garbage crisis in Knoxville? If yes, what kinds of people.
11. Have you attended any MPC (Metro-Planning Council) meetings or any workshops on the decision making process?
12. Do you and your household participate in the recycling program in Knoxville? Which one (s)?
13. Who and what groups are active about the landfill?
14. Sex of respondent: male\_\_\_ female\_\_\_
15. What is your job title?
16. When were you born?
17. How long have you lived in Knoxville?

18. What is your level of education?

## VITA

Glenn Steve Johnson was born in Lombard, Illinois, on March 24, 1962. After 12 years, his father moved Rosas and Johnson Construction Company to Memphis, Tennessee in 1974. He attended Porter Junior High School from 1974 to 1976. He graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in 1980. In 1986, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Academic Psychology from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In 1987, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

He entered the graduate program in Sociology at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in September 1987, where he pursued a Master of Arts degree in Sociology. He was awarded a Tennessee Higher Education Commission Black Fellowship for all three and one-half years. This degree was awarded August 1991.

The author has research interests in energy, environment, and natural resource policy and political sociology. The author is a member of the Southern Sociological Association, Society for the Study of Social Problems, American Sociological Association, and the Association of Black Sociologists. Mr. Johnson has plans to continue his education at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy with a major in sociology.