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April 25, 1985

Memorandum

TO: Metropolitan Council Organized Collection Task Force

FROM: Citizens League

SUBJ: Citizens League Position on Organized Collection of Solid Waste

The 1984 Legislature instructed the Metropolitan Council to study the need for a system of organized collection of solid waste. Subsequently, the Metropolitan Council created an organized collection task force, comprised of haulers, a county commissioner, a MACI representative, the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities and a Met Council member. The task force plans to complete its study by May 21 in order to report its findings to the Legislative Commission on Waste Management by June 1, 1985.

The Citizens League has a long standing position in support of the organized collection of waste. One of the major elements of an efficient collection system is organized collection routes. However, monopoly collection of solid waste destroys the incentives for efficient collection and should therefore be avoided.

In its 1975 and 1981 studies of solid waste collection and disposal, the Citizens League concluded that cost savings can be obtained through organizing solid waste collection routes, when the organized system builds upon the existing system in which a variety of buyers purchase collection services based on the price and service from a large and diverse group of haulers. The League recommended several key elements to an organized system of collection that encourages an efficient, responsive collection of refuse:

- 1) Collection agreements should be left to the individual municipalities to maintain a diversity of collection arrangements in the region; this diversity will keep incentives for efficiency high through competition. County-wide or regional systems would destroy this diversity and its incentives for efficiency.
- 2) The system should include meaningful competition among the private and/or public haulers so that the efficiency gained through organizing collection routes is transferred into cost savings.
- 3) In a competitive bid system, individual bidding should be done on a small enough basis to allow the very small operator to compete. For instance, individual neighborhood communities could arrange their own collection, much like the Tangletown neighborhood in St. Paul does.
- 4) Organized collection should be differentiated from government-controlled disposal of waste. Once haulers start collecting along organized routes, they should have the right to dispose of their waste at whatever environmentally-sound disposal facility provides the best service and price to the haulers.

In its deliberations over the organization of solid waste collection routes, the task force should closely define what problem it is attempting to solve by organizing waste collection.

*Collection is generally available now at a moderate price throughout the metropolitan area. The garbage is being picked up; the area is generally considered clean by most people's standards.

*Organizing collection routes is not inherently necessary for successful recycling projects; Recycling Unlimited in Saint Paul (and now throughout Ramsey County) is evidence that recycling can be accomplished efficiently and thoroughly even in a city with a large population and very few organized routes.