The research staff of the solid wastes program has a section devoted to the development of new uses for solid wastes. One internal project is attempting to transform cellulose from solid waste into sugars. Another project stresses the possibility of chemical transformation of solid wastes into protein. Still another is attempting to transform waste rubber into useful new rubber materials by improvement of separation techniques and changing technology to allow a greater proportion of used rubber in new products. Other internal research studies are studying the recovery of useful inorganic and organic compounds from incineration residue, animal, and vegetable wastes.

One method of solid waste disposal resulting in a useful end product is composting. This method has received much publicity during recent years—some good and some bad. Some plants were built to receive the municipal wastes of a municipality and closed their doors within a year while some have operated for years. We, too, wonder what the true story of composting as a solid waste disposal process in this country is.

What are its technological requirements? What are its economic considerations? What is its likely future as a major method of disposal of solid waste?

To answer these and other questions an in-depth study of composting was undertaken jointly with the Tennessee Valley Authority. This joint PHS–TVA composting project at Johnson City, Tenn., will evaluate composting of municipal solid waste and sewage sludge. The plant has been completed and is now operating. Studies will be made to determine:

(1) Potential agricultural use of the product;

(2) The marketing potential of the compost, including geographic limits of the marketing area; and

(3) Public health hazards involved in the use of this product.

Operating guidelines will be developed to assure maximum efficiency and plant environmental conditions will be evaluated. At the conclusion of this project the data gathered should permit a thorough and unbiased evaluation of this practice. The evaluation will include net cost figures and likely estimates of the market one might expect. There seem to be few neutral parties concerned with learning the whole story about this controversial method of solid waste disposal. We hope to shed much insight into this important matter.

Mr. DADDARIO. What is your time schedule in sharing this insight?

Mr. VAUGHN. July 1, 1969, is the target date for our first report. Actually, the project is in operation now. One final processing grinder is the only thing that keeps it from being complete and the evaluation beginning.

Mr. DADDARIO. Taking your previous sentence into consideration, when you have this information do you intend to be one of the few neutral parties?

Mr. VAUGHAN. Not at that time. We will take a stand as we see the picture.

Mr. DADDARIO. You seem to indicate we need more neutral parties.

Mr. VAUGHAN. What I meant by the statement, Congressman, is right now it seems to me people are for it 100 percent or against it 100 percent. Maybe middle ground is the better position. We want to know more about it before we decide in our opinion what role it has in the solid waste practices of the Nation.