

We were unable to ascertain just how much of the packaging material tonnage turns into litter—but we have found indication that well over half of the items in litter are packages or package components. This is on the basis of number of items rather than on pounds or tons.

In 1976, the litterbug will have considerably more ammunition at his disposal. Particularly noteworthy will be the greatly expanded use of beverage containers (enclosure 2). Disposable bottles and cans are expected to shoulder out the traditional deposit-type bottle.

BEVERAGE CONTAINER CONSUMPTION, 1966 AND 1976

[In billions of units]

	1966	1976
Total.....	30.5	62.9
Returnable glass.....	2.5	1.7
Nonreturnable glass.....	9.5	25.2
Metal cans.....	18.5	36.0
Beer containers.....	18.5	28.1
Glass.....	5.6	9.1
Metal.....	12.9	19.0
Soft drink containers.....	9.5	31.7
Glass.....	3.9	14.7
Metal.....	5.6	17.0
Liquor and wine (glass).....	2.5	3.1

Source: Midwest Research Institute.

In 1966, eight beverage containers out of every 100 were returnable. Ten years later, only three out of 100 will be returnable. In the same period, per capita consumption of beverage containers will have shot up from 155 units in 1966 to 283 units in 1976; nearly a doubling of container use.

Unless an effective national conscience can be developed before then, the litter problem will have intensified as a result of this packaging development.

THE DISPOSABILITY OF PACKAGES

Once packaging materials have been collected, they must be processed. Just how disposable a package is depends on the package and on the disposal method. It is evident that a beer can is more difficult to handle in an incinerator than a paper sack. In a sanitary landfill, cans can be processed with somewhat less difficulty than paper.

As Mr. Vaughan has pointed out, the overwhelming bulk of our wastes—more than three-quarters—end up in open dumps. Wastes are simply deposited on soil. They may be burned to reduce their bulk, and thereby create air pollution. And that is all. Open dumping is not considered an acceptable disposal process, yet it is the dominant form disposal takes in our Nation. In this technique, the disposability of packaging materials cannot be measured. No processing takes place in any strict sense of the word, and package characteristics cannot be compared to process requirements.

In the two other major processes—sanitary landfilling and incineration—packaging materials appear to present relatively few difficulties to the waste processor.