

Memo of the Month

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS BENEFITS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20420

August 21, 1970

LTR. 20-70-16

TO: Directors
All VA Regional Offices and Centers

SUBJ: Use of Full Title Instead of Abbreviations in Correspondence

1. We have been informed by the Director, Rehabilitation Commission, The American Legion, that a resolution will be considered at the 1970 American Legion National Convention requesting that steps be taken to eliminate the abbreviation of "AL" on letters sent to claimants and use instead the full title of "The American Legion."
2. In explanation of this resolution, it is contended that the average claimant does not understand the meaning of the symbol "AL." It was stated that claimants have even written to the VA expressing appreciation to "AL" for his assistance in their behalf.
3. Please discuss this matter with The American Legion representatives located at your station. If you find a problem, action should be taken to develop a mutually acceptable and meaningful abbreviation such as Am. Leg. This would include the copy notation on the flexowriter prepared award letters.
4. After you have talked to The American Legion representatives, please advise your Area Field Director (231) of your findings.

/s/ OLNEY B. OWEN
Chief Benefits Director

Ecology Denied: The Unmaking of a Majority

by William H. Rodgers, Jr.

Although the tin can has been immortalized by Andy Warhol and idolized as a sign of modernity by the less-developed countries, it has come under violent assault from environmentalists now that the latest threat to mankind has been located in the sewers and waterways and garbage cans of America. The can has been defended in this new conflict by the patrons of private enterprise, notably those specializing in its production, who point to their handiwork as a shining example of progress and scold the environmentalists for insulting their containers even after they have been laid to rest in the refuse pile.

On November 3, 1970, one such battle between the can people and the earth people ended with the can people on top of the heap. By a narrow two per cent margin, the voters of Washington state rejected Initiative 256, which would have required a deposit of at least five cents on all containers for beer and soft drinks. The idea was to eliminate throw-aways by placing a high bounty on the return of cans and bottles.

William Rodgers teaches law at the University of Washington. He was a draftsman of Initiative 256.

Initiative 256 grew out of an academic project during the spring of 1970 conducted by its sponsor and chief organizer, Dr. Robert Keller of Fairhaven College, Bellingham, Washington. Petitions began circulating in late April, and by July the proposal had garnered a record 188,102 signatures—nearly twice the number required to secure a place on the ballot. In late July, State Republican chairman Gummy Johnson advised a gathering of prospective candidates for the legislature that polls disclosed overwhelming support for the measure. A private poll taken in August for the beverage industry reportedly found that 80 per cent of the voters were backing the issue, a figure that held firm until about three weeks before the election. Professionals and amateurs alike consistently called the Initiative a winner. And it was—until the container industry went to work to save non-returnables. The remarkable assortment of tactics used by the industry groups illustrates the obstacles facing any proposal on the environment. For in defeating Initiative 256, special interests beat back a mild measure aimed at a problem of almost universal public recognition.

The pro-can corporations began to