

WASTE MANAGEMENT IS DIRTY BUSINESS IN ARUBA

In March 2002 the Government of Aruba introduced the Emergency Action Plan for Parkietenbos to allegedly start tackling the problems of the landfill and waste management in Aruba.

The Emergency Action Plan was denounced by all environmental organizations in Aruba, but given the green light by misled PAHO officials in Venezuela, because PAHO did *not* comment on fact that all NGOs were against the project in its reporting. It cost an exorbitant amount of money, destroyed a patch of mangrove forest, enhanced the problem of pollution (leachate seeping into the sea), and did not alleviate the waste problems in Aruba or provide any structural change or improvement to waste management in Aruba.

As a token of appreciation the Minister of Public Health and the Environment received a US 5,000 dollar electronic baseball scoreboard from the operator of the landfill.

Transparency International, the global corruption watchdog organization, based in Berlin, considers this corruption. Local judicial authorities however decided it wasn't.

In 2004 the Government of Aruba initiated the "Invitation for Expression of Interest (EOI)" procedure, which is a clear departure from the commonly accepted public bidding procedures, as stipulated by law. According to Transparency International, this departure in it self constitutes administrative corruption.

Companies were requested to submit plans to design and build a modern waste management facility and upgraded landfill. The financing of the new facility would be provided by funding through Fondo Desaroyo Aruba (partially Aruban Government money and partially Dutch "programmatic" development aid).

In the same year, 2004, the process was started to privatize SERLIMAR, the government waste collection and transport agency in Aruba.

In both the privatization process and the bidding process no stakeholders were involved and this is particularly poignant, if we consider that the Government of Aruba created several commissions and task forces to deal with issues related to waste management and environmental pollution i.e.

- A seawater quality monitoring committee;
- An air quality monitoring

committee;

- Commissie Gevaarlijke stoffen (Hazardous materials commission- instituted by ministerial decree 12 November 2002);
- Commissie Protocol Afvalverwerking (Protocol Waste Processing Commission- instituted by ministerial decree of 8 November 2002).

In none of these commissions any stakeholders participate, which contradicts the very essence of the *only* environmental policy document ever to come out of the Ministry of Public Health and the Environment, being "*Aruba: Op weg naar een duurzame ontwikkeling middels een op Agenda 21 gebaseerd milieubeleid*" (English: *Aruba: Towards a policy of sustainable development, based on Agenda 21*) where on page 7 of said document is stated that "a regular dialogue and information exchange with NGOs and competent government agencies will be held on all matters and the vision of the government regarding sustainable development".

It thus comes as no surprise that the final process of privatization of SERLIMAR was conducted in Parliament, without any prior dialogue with any of the stakeholders, on issues such as tipping fees for waste collection, and ignoring a lot of correspondence from entities such as the Council of State (Raad van Advies), which had indicated numerous flaws in the proposed structure and financial management of the proposed SERLIMAR N.V.

In the Invitation for Expression of Interest (EOI) procedure, irregularities were also frequent, and the most disturbing was the one where one of the bidding companies, being Bouldin and Lawson/WastAway in an article in the Tullahoma News, dated June 08, 2004, published on the internet declared: "*The WastAway company, which will make compost, has contracts for business with a military base in Europe, the island nation of Aruba and the States of Washington and Maryland*"

So apparently this bidding company was a shoo-in and the ensuing eight months of the EOI procedure were just for public display and local consumption in Aruba. The Government had already made up its mind. And indeed, the Bouldin and Lawson/WastAway company was chosen mid 2005 as the first candidate for evaluation to award the contract..

BouldinCorp of McMinnville,

Tennessee, includes subsidiaries Bouldin and Lawson (a horticulture industry company), WastAway Services (a resource recycling industry company) and Composite Products of America (which build products from the recycled material called "Fluff" produced by the WastAway process). The BouldinCorp group of companies is represented in Aruba by the law offices of Croes, Wever and Tchong.

As was the case with the privatization of SERLIMAR, in the EOI procedure the flaws, irregularities and legal errors were numerous, and both the letter from the Department of Public Works (November 12, 2004) and the particularly scathing letter from the Department of Legislative and Legal Affairs (February 21, 2005, signed by Mr. J.J.P.de Vries) left nothing to the imagination as to the unsuitability of the WastAway technology for Aruba.

So what does this WastAway technology entail? We quote literally from the WastAway web site:

Household garbage is no longer a liability to the community, but rather an asset. It is recycled into a raw material with many uses. At a WastAway recycling center, tons of household garbage are transformed into a stable product called "Fluff." Garbage is brought to our facility by the usual collector where it is dumped on the tipping floor for an initial pre-shred process. *It is important to realize that there is no sorting or preprocessing at the tipping floor. All household garbage is recycled.*

Now according to the report from Directorate Housing, Physical Development and Environment (VROM), titled "Ondernemend afvalverwerken: het eerste integraal afvalstoffenplan" (Aruba, November 1996), wastes which arrive at the landfill consist of several streams, of residential, industrial and other origin. In Aruba household wastes contain household hazardous wastes. Quite often household wastes will contain a small amount of industrial wastes.

The use therefore of the WastAway technology to process ALL unsorted

household wastes into the "Fluff" product is not only unrealistic, but will constitute a danger to public health and the environment. Since the purpose of Fluff is to be reused into products like those made by Composite Products of America, and because international treaties prohibit Aruba from exporting locally produced Fluff, the latter must be stored or recycled.

Imagine benches made from recycled Fluff in Aruba, placed in parks and alongside beaches for tourists to sit on and the lawsuits filed against Aruba, once tourists find out the benches are made from household hazardous wastes!!!

Currently the only large WastAway plant is in McMinnville, where the waste is already sorted in some manner before it reaches the landfill. The US Army Engineer Research and Development Center has tested the WastAway process and its studies indicate its possible use for waste streams, which have undergone some sorting and separation of hazardous materials. It has *not* been tested for unsorted municipal, industrial, commercial and institutional waste.

And to make matters worse, the scale of use in Aruba has never been tested in the USA, since Aruba produces 200,000 tons/year versus McMinnville 9,000/year.

What the Government of Aruba proposes to do is to use unproven technology, which will create large scale problems of storage and dangers to public health and the environment and *not* improve waste management in Aruba.

When looking at the costs involved we cannot but conclude that the only ones who stand to gain are the manufacturer and its representatives.

The WastAway project poses a threat to public health, the environment and to tourism, and should therefore be stopped before the contract is awarded!!

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