Speaker advocates bottle bill

By Paul Yen

A concerted effort will be needed to overcome bottle manufacturers' opposition to the Massachusetts Bottle Bill, a consumer advocate stressed in a talk this week.

"Manufacturers from all over the country have already poured half a million dollars into Massachusetts to defeat the bill which would require every beverage container, including flip-top cans, to have a refund value of at least five cents," consumer advocate Norman Stein said.

At a meeting of the local Sierra Club, Stein urged its members to vote "yes" on question six of the November ballot.

Stein, who is associated with the Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group (PIRG), stated that the Can Manufacturers Institute, Adhees-Busch, Pepsi-Cola of New York, and the Glass Container Corporation of California have all contributed money to defeat the bill.

"In all, 39 corporations were listed as giving money to defeat the bottle question," Stein said.

"The use of throwaway containers escalated 48% from 1955 to 1972 and now amounts to some 60 billion bottles and cans per year," Stein said.

"This, besides being unnecessary waste of materials, also poses great hazards to the environment," Stein added.

"Massachusetts spends $3.5 million each year just on clean-up and these are passed on to the consumer through taxes," he said.

A study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston indicated the passage of the bill would cause a net gain of $187 to 1380 jobs in Massachusetts as well as decreasing the price of beverage slightly, according to Stein.

"It would also reverse the centralization of the beer industry, making local breweries more competitive with respect to the giants," Stein added.

Stein stated that "In Oregon and Vermont where similar proposals have been passed, total inter has declined 35% per cent.

"Energy savings are also effected," he added. "For example, in Oregon, 140 billion BTUs were saved, with a value of $2.8 million."

Stein noted that "energy equivalent to about four ounces of gasoline is needed to make each container.

"A recent nationwide survey showed 75% in favor and only 15% against the bill," Stein concluded, "meaning that the nation is ready for a change from this throwaway tradition."