*Argument 15*

*The following appeared in a letter to the editor of the Walnut Grove town newspaper.*

*"Walnut Grove's town council has advocated switching from EZ Disposal (which has had the*

*contract for trash collection services in Walnut Grove for the past ten years) to ABC Waste,*

*because EZ recently raised its monthly fee from $2,000 to $2,500 a month, whereas ABC's fee*

*is still $2,000. But the town council is mistaken; we should continue using EZ. EZ collects trash*

*twice a week, while ABC collects only once. Moreover, EZ---which, like ABC, currently has a*

*fleet of 20 trucks---has ordered additional trucks. Finally, EZ provides exceptional service: 80*

*percent of respondents to last year's town survey agreed that they were 'satisfied' with EZ's*

*performance."*

This letter recommends that Walnut Grove continue to contract with EZ Disposal, which has

provided trash-collection services to Walnut Grove for ten years, rather than switching to ABC

Waste. To justify this recommendation the letter's author notes that even though ABC's weekly

fee is $500 less than EZ's, EZ collects twice per week whereas ABC would collect only once

per week. The author also points out that, although both companies have the same number of

trucks, EZ has ordered additional trucks. Finally, the author cites a recent survey in which 80%

of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with EZ's service. I find this recommendation

specious on several grounds.

First of all, the fact that EZ collects trash twice as often as ABC is significant only if the town

would benefit from an additional collection each week. Yet the author provides no evidence

that this is the case. For all we know, one collection per week suffices to dispose all of the

town's trash. If so, then on the basis of frequency of collection it would make no sense to favor

EZ's costlier service over ABC's less expensive one.

Secondly, the fact that EZ has ordered more trucks proves little in itself about which service

would be the better choice for Walnut Grove. Perhaps EZ does not plan to use its new trucks

for collecting Walnut Grove's trash. For that matter, perhaps EZ does not use its entire current

fleet for this purpose, whereas ABC would. Besides, the author does not indicate when EZ will

receive its new trucks; the later the delivery date, the less significant this factor should be in

Walnut Grove's decision.

Thirdly, the mere fact that most respondents to a recent survey considered EZ's service

satisfactory provides little support to the author's recommendation. The author fails to provide

assurances that these respondents are representative of the overall population of people

whose trash EZ collects. Moreover, even if that population is generally satisfied it is entirely

possible that they would be even more satisfied with ABC's services.

In sum, the recommendation is not well supported. To bolster it the letter's author must

provide specific evidence that Walnut Grove would benefit from an additional trash collection

each week, and that the use of additional trucks would improve service to Walnut Grove. To

better assess the strength of the recommendation I would need more information about the

demographic profile of the survey's respondents. It would also be helpful to obtain opinions

from municipalities and individuals that have some experience with both EZ and ABC.