



WASTE NOT

Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation

Fall 2003

Prison Labor and Computer Recycling

In July 2003, Dell announced that it would terminate its contract with UNICOR, a branch of the Federal Prison Industries (FPI) that uses prison labor to recycle computers.

Dell will now contract with two recyclers, Resource Concepts, which has signed the "Electronics Recycler's Pledge of True Stewardship," and Image Microsystems, which is in the process of qualifying for the Pledge. Two of the nine tenets of the Pledge include agreement not to send e-waste to prisons for recycling, and not to export hazardous e-waste to developing countries. (See the full Pledge at Basel Action Network's website: www.ban.org/pledge1.html.)

Advocates of producer responsibility applaud Dell's decision. To date, reliance on subsidized prison labor has mainly served as a way to externalize the real cost of e-waste recycling, and as an obstacle to the creation of a profitable private sector e-waste recycling network in the U.S.

Moreover, no system of accountability regarding the sale and transport of e-waste has been established. FPI sells their product to anyone via internet brokers, middlemen, and others—transactions that cannot be audited with any reliability. Although UNICOR will not disclose who buys their material, UNICOR spokesman Larry Novicky confirmed that UNICOR does sell the waste to companies which more than likely export it. "It's absolutely possible the stuff ends up in other countries," he said. "But we don't really see the problem with that" (Citizens' Environmental Coalition Newsletter, June 2003).

UNICOR also states they meet all safety and environmental standards, but it has been contended that neither EPA nor OSHA "has yet developed guidelines for electronic waste recycling." (See Houston Independent Media Center, May 2003 at <http://houston.indymedia.org/news/2003/05/12014.php>.)

States and counties, faced with budget deficits, may be tempted to use seemingly cheap, subsidized prison programs for e-waste recycling. Yet if manufacturers developed a network of electronic take-back programs, governments would not have to make the impossible choice between unsafe e-waste recycling by prisoners and overburdening the taxpayer.

Now that Dell is 'out of prisons', it can play an active role in the 'free' market and devise a systematic approach to recycling the goods they manufacture.

GOOFY DESIGN: Disposable DVDs

Who: Flexplay and Buena Vista Home Entertainment, a division of Walt Disney.

What: The EZ-D—disposable DVDs of popular movies that allow the consumer to view a film as often as they like. For two days that is. Then, after 48 hours, a bonding resin on the DVD reacts to the air around it, making the disc unreadable.

When: Announced in May 2003, the EZ-D was test marketed in August.

Where: According to Flexplay "...at any point of sale your imagination can think of."

Why: Money. Flexplay says the EZ-D is "...intended to address people who find renting inconvenient."



The Problems: Multiple.

- Turns a durable product into a disposable one. Instead of creating one DVD that could be used by up to 100 people, 100 people will buy 100 EZ-Ds, each of which will likely end up in a landfill wasting resources and energy at every step.

- The recycling message that has been taught to the youth of today will be undermined.

- Flexplay says that the EZ-D can be mailed back to the recycler. This makes no sense at all! Why would a consumer who doesn't want to make a return trip to the rental store go to the post office to mail back the EZ-D?

The Solution: Don't buy the EZ-D! And go to GrassRoots Recycling Network's action center website (<http://action.grrn.org/action/>) to learn more about the "Who Put Goofy in Charge of Product Design?" campaign and to send a letter to Disney CEO Michael Eisner.

The character 'Goofy' is a copyrighted property of Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Excerpts from

“Beyond Recycling: The Future of Waste”

by Helen Spiegelman, Society Promoting
Environmental Conservation in Vancouver, BC.

Producers
of consumer
products never
thought twice
about designing
their products to be
thrown away. It started
with the convenient “no
deposit no return” pop
can and it continues today
with a new generation of
throwaways: consumer
electronics.

**The personal computer is
the pop can of the cyber
age**, a disposable container
for quickly obsolescing
information technology.

A new waste policy known as
Extended Producer
Responsibility (EPR) calls
on any company that sells a
consumer product to provide
“cradle-to-cradle” take-back
service to consumers.

As long as communities
continue to pick up after
producers of
disposable products,
producers will
never learn how
to pick up after
themselves.

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and edited with permission of the author.

Remember DDT and PCBs? Get ready for PBDEs.

The last time scientists who specialize in toxic contaminants saw such an alarmingly high and rapid accumulation of persistent toxic chemicals as is currently being seen with PBDEs was with DDT and PCBs (*Seattle Times*, April 20, 2003).

PBDEs (Polybrominated diphenyl ethers) are brominated flame retardants. Brominated flame retardants are commonly used in computers and other electronic equipment, as well as in furniture and upholstery.

A growing body of research in laboratory animals has linked PBDE exposure to an array of adverse health effects including thyroid hormone disruption, learning impairment, behavioral changes, and fetal malformations.

Two families of PBDEs (penta and octa-BDEs) have been recently banned in Europe, and the California legislature recently voted to prohibit these same two compounds by 2008. Deca-BDE will be banned in Europe as of July 2004, but its prohibition was taken out of the California bill due to the controversial contention that deca-BDEs may be too large to efficiently accumulate in organisms.

Scientists first detected PBDEs in 1981. By 2000, deca-BDEs were found in everything from household dust and sewage sludge to seals in San Francisco Bay and Inuits in northern Canada.

And now two new studies have found PBDEs in mothers' breast milk in American women. A study by the *Environmental Working Group* (www.ewg.org/reports/mothersmilk/) found that the average level of brominated flame retardants in the milk of 20 mothers was 75 times the average found in recent European studies. Another study in *Environmental Health Perspectives* (November 2003) reports levels of PBDEs in breast milk from 47 mothers in Texas that are from 10 to 100 times higher than recent measurements of PBDEs in European breast milk.

Go to: www.wastenotwashington.org 'News' page for links to the studies and for more information on PBDEs to help you advocate to ban ALL PBDEs in the U.S.



RE Store's 2nd Recycled Art Show — Think Trash: Buy Recycled Art

Over 100 works of recycled art by 40 artists were submitted to the RE Store's 2nd Recycled Art Show in September. Forty works were selected for display at the RE Store.

Winners included Bill Fleming (both People's Choice and juried selection), Chris Griffin, Josh Brooke Cote, Carl Peterson, and Elinor Paulus (youth award),



Marc Wenet's scrap metal "Street Mask."
(Courtesy of the artist & Francine Seders Gallery)

with special mention to Linnea Granryd, Marc Wenet and Trevor Miles. Robin Worley's crowd-pleasing Haute Trash Fashion show capped the successful art exhibition.

WCRC and Total Reclaim were two of the show's co-sponsors. The RE Store (in Ballard) keeps reusable building materials out of the landfill by re-selling a wide range of used materials including doors, windows, and more.

GIVE TO THE ENVIRONMENT AT WORK



Earth Share
OF WASHINGTON

Fall is the season for many workplace giving campaigns. Workplace giving is a means by which employees donate to charitable organizations of their choice, primarily through payroll pledges. Such donations enable WCRC to spend less time fundraising and more time working for waste reduction and producer responsibility.

To find out how to give through your workplace campaign or set up a campaign at your workplace visit www.esw.org or call 206-622-9840.

WCRC is a member of Earth Share of Washington, an alliance of 65 leading conservation and environmental organizations.

Producer Responsibility in Washington State

"Few of us know what's inside computers, monitors, cell phones and other products. In this case, what we don't know may hurt us."

"Last year I proposed legislation to tackle e-waste by using a commonly accepted policy known as "extended producer responsibility."

Representative Mike Cooper, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Sept. 24, 2003

In February 2003, Representative Cooper (D-Edmonds) introduced a bill that calls for manufacturers to finance and arrange for the collection, recycling and disposal of computers, TVs and cell phones. Although the bill did not move out of the Fisheries, Ecology and Parks Committee, it is a priority for their interim workplan. Representative Cooper recently held a stakeholder meeting on the issue, and is planning at least one more such meeting later in autumn 2003.

Meanwhile, there is new e-waste recycling legislation in California . . .

The good: The California legislation phases out the use of certain toxic substances in computer monitors and TVs. Kudos for this move, which parallels a European Union directive.

The bad: Manufacturers are let off the hook for recycling programs. Instead, consumers will pay a fee at the point of purchase that will go into a government fund to finance and manage the programs. There will be no producer responsibility to take back obsolete equipment, and no financial incentives for manufacturers to design greener products.

The ugly: Although the legislation includes language to restrict the export of hazardous electronic waste to developing countries, there are big loopholes.

WCRC thinks that Washington State can do better!

And on the national front . . .

Negotiations to develop a national solution to the electronic waste problem are continuing, but have a long way to go to meet their end-of-the-year deadline. Since there is no guarantee that details of an agreement will be worked out or that national legislation to implement the agreement would pass, states continue to consider their own solutions.

"Exporting Harm — The High-Tech Trashing of Asia" by Basel Action Network

Reviewed by Lam Ho, high school volunteer for WCRC



Hammering a Monitor
Photo: Basel Action Network

"The movie made me think twice about dumping my old computers. If I decided to send my old computer into the wrong hands, then my problem will become China's problem, or maybe my hometown in Vietnam! Something has to be done. I'm just one person, but from now on I will be less careless."

Exporting Harm is a groundbreaking investigation about the export of hazardous electronic waste to China. It reveals that the "recycling" of computer waste from developed countries is done by men, women and children in some parts of China in ways that are very harmful to human health and the environment. To purchase or make arrangements to show or view the 23-minute video, contact BAN at 206-652-5555.

Thanks Volunteers!

WCRC would like to give special thanks to Lam Ho, Arie Kim and Judy Dari for terrific volunteer assistance.



Photo: WCRC

Hard Drive to Make a Point

WCRC and Basel Action Network participated in the first leg of the "Hard Drive Across the West." Obsolete Dell computers were picked up in Washington and other states and delivered to Dell during its July 2003 stockholder meeting in Austin, Texas, along with the message that Dell should accept cradle-to-cradle responsibility for the products they sell. Point made?

Your input is invited!

"Beyond Waste". The Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) continues to develop the draft "Beyond Waste" plans that will serve as statewide blueprints for transitioning from managing wastes to eliminating and reusing as many residual materials as possible. WCRC is participating in this process. If you wish to be involved, email Cheryl Smith (cstr461@ecy.wa.gov), call 360-407-6654 or go to www.ecy.wa.gov/beyondwaste.

"Seattle 60%". Seattle businesses threw out an estimated 39,000 tons of paper in 2001. Seattle Mayor Nickels' plan to attain Seattle's 60% recycling goal includes a proposal to prohibit businesses from disposing of paper and cardboard in the garbage. WCRC supports this proposal. For information about public hearings in late 2003/early 2004, call 206-684-8807 (Chair of Seattle City Council's Water and Health Committee).

WCRC Receives Award

The 2003 Northwest Hazardous Waste Conference awarded WCRC a 'Leader in Product Stewardship Award' in recognition of WCRC's active role in the promotion of product stewardship.



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Part of the 136 tons of Snohomish County's "cleanout" of obsolete computers from local school districts. Taxpayer bill: \$63,000.



How You Can Help

- ◆ **U**se the enclosed remittance form to renew your membership, to join, or to make a special contribution. Thank you in advance for your support. WCRC cannot do its work without you.
- ◆ **J**oin WCRC's Board of Directors. Email info@wastenotwashington or call **206-441-1790** if you are interested.
- ◆ **S**end photos of illegal dumping of e-waste and WCRC will post them on its website: www.wastenotwashington.org.
- ◆ **ecoencore** **Do you have used media — Books, CDs, DVDs, or Videos — to Donate?** Contact Eco Encore (206-547-1517 or www.ecoencore.org) to learn how to turn your used media into a financial contribution that supports a range of local environmental nonprofits, including WCRC.

WCRC's MISSION



Close up of "Yesterday's Garbage" by Kathy Ross

Founded in 1980, WCRC is a non-profit, citizen-based advocacy group working to keep Washington a leader in waste reduction, recycling, use of recycled products and producer responsibility.

WCRC's ANNUAL MEETING & HOLIDAY PARTY

You are invited to celebrate the season with WCRC's staff and board. Come learn about WCRC's work in 2003 and plans for the future. New board members will be elected; candidate and ballot info can be found at www.wastenotwashington.org. Light refreshments will be available. RSVP to 206-441-1790 is requested but not necessary.

December 3, 2003 from 5 – 6:30 p.m.

2021 Third Avenue, Seattle
(Between Lenora & Virginia; parking on the street)



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