

# World Waste Management (cont.)

lighting. Europe has also begun to recognize the need for alternatives to incineration. Recycling programs are springing up over the entire continent. Depots are located at strategic points within cities; curbside collection is not in widespread use due to the narrow streets and high densities of most urban areas.

Denmark has an extensive waste management program. To produce energy, seventy percent of domestic waste is incinerated. Programs to find alternatives to incineration are presently underway. Commercialized **anaerobic digestive plants** convert organic waste into a gas, called biogas, and a type of natural fertilizer. The gas is used to produce energy while the residual matter (fertilizer) is distributed back to the agricultural land (and the *ecosystems*) from which the organic waste originated. Danes also have a national industrial hazardous waste collection program. Pharmacies allow citizens to dispose of old medicines. Beer and soft drinks must be sold in returnable containers. The promise of a "super country", the united European Community, will likely lead to improved waste and environmental legislation.

Japan is synonymous with industry. A large percentage of the world's cars, TVs, VCRs, stereos and other goods come from the land of the rising sun. Like Europe, Japan has used incineration to save space and reduce its waste. Since the mid 1970's a shift towards recycling and reuse has taken place. Approximately 90% of local communities practice source separation. Waste is separated to recover combustible materials or recyclables, depending upon the local waste management practices. New legislation is being developed to change the focus of these practices from post-consumption to pre-consumption concern. Industry has been slow to reduce waste in the design and manufacturing stages, but change is occurring. It is interesting to note that recyclables are not considered waste; the Japanese call them valuables.

One of the most horrific aspects of global waste handling is foreign dumping. Organizations sell banned products and hazardous waste to middlemen. These men in turn sell the products to nations hungry for foreign business. In some cases a country has bought chemicals, thought to be useful, only to get a load of improperly packaged hazardous waste. The need for hard currency has resulted in countries knowingly and unknowingly becoming "dumps" for the First World.

Only through the careful identification of every nation's waste problems can a wide scale improvement be achieved. The first step would be to share economic and technological prosperity so waste management can be executed, more appropriately, on a global scale.