

# History of Recycling (cont.)

Years of rationing meant the public was more than willing to participate in this boom. The new technology, attitudes and habits that came out of the post-war decade, set in motion the waste trouble that we face today.

Legislation and other actions to correct our present waste problem are just beginning. Organized recycling is part of the solution. Across the world, people separate and clean the recyclable portion of their waste. Recycling may be third in rank according to the waste management hierarchy, but it is the most tangible. People can see the results of their efforts. A sense of accomplishment is felt and as a result a person is more likely to participate in other waste reduction methods. Although it is not perfect, recycling is a catalyst for diminishing our environmentally harmful lifestyles and habits.

## **Modern Recycling**

In Ontario modern recycling is synonymous with the Blue Box. As of December 1992, three million homes were served using a Blue Box collection system. Although the blue plastic container is a household fixture, few people know its history. Although there is no clear definition of how the Blue Box started, the following events occurred at the time when most people believe this type of recycling system first appeared. The two gentlemen credited with starting the Blue Box program in this province are Nyle Ludolph and Derek Stephenson. Mr. Stephenson was a recent university graduate when, in 1974, he and some colleagues formed a charitable organization called Is-Five. The group started using a pick-up truck to collect recyclable goods from residents in The Beaches area of Toronto. They conducted a similar trial project in East York. Eventually Is-Five transformed into Resource Integration Systems (RIS) Limited; a profit generating descendant of the original organization.



In 1981, RIS approached Laidlaw Waste Systems Limited to participate in a six month recycling pilot project in the City of Kitchener. Laidlaw's representative was Mr. Ludolph known as "the father of Blue Box recycling". Together Ludolph and Stephenson devised a program for approximately 1000 homes. The households were divided into four groups. A different method to promote recycling was tried in each: promotional materials were used in one area, different pick-up days in another, working through community associations in yet another. One group received something Mr. Stephenson had seen during the 1970's in British Columbia; a plastic container. Newspaper, steel food cans, glass and other paper were all collected in the box. Pop cans at this time had an aluminium top mated to a steel bottom so they were not sought. The plastic container out performed all other methods. In September of the same year, it was decided that containers should be used city wide.

In order to serve Kitchener 35,000 containers were needed. Despite its success the original container was not entirely suitable. After some fine tuning the container we all recognize today appeared. Why the colour blue was chosen is still something of a mystery. One rumour says the colour was chosen because the provincial government in power at the time of the Kitchener trial was the Progressive Conservative party.