

Pictures from Zero Waste's case files include from top: the Kaitiaa recycling station, 'making money from the waste stream'; sorting materials for recycling generates employment and income; a 'green bike' scheme in Palmerston North offers the loan of rebuilt cycles, on an 'honesty basis', as an alternative to using cars; and (bottom) a range of products made from materials recycled from a rubbish dump



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS: ZERO WASTE

At Mangere, in Auckland, another scheme employs six people in a 'resource recovery park'. Based at Te Wharewatea Marae, this recycling company sorts waste materials from industry, handling large tonnages of offcuts and packaging, then sells them back to industry as still useful materials.

Waste Not Limited is a not-for-profit consultancy, initiated by Zero Waste but now self-funding, which advises business on cleaner production and 'waste minimization'. Employing from three to four waste-reduction experts, it has also proved a useful intermediate step for young environmental scientists forging a career path.

Warren Snow demonstrates the effectiveness of Zero Waste with a diagram he calls the recycling loop. He breaks the straight-line link between Disposal and Landfill with a diversion called Recycling Opportunities.

'A landfill doesn't pay for itself — in fact it is subsidized 100 percent by ratepayers,'

he observes. 'Therefore we have to stop seeing recycling as an added cost and see it as an alternative disposal option.'

Zero Waste spreads the message that the good corporate citizen must take care not to destroy the environment on which its customers depend. The philosophy, which in many ways counters that of the Business Round Table, comes from a conscience which believes that working only for maximum profit is likely to destroy the necessary environment for business to operate successfully. Such ideas are being spread by authors like Paul Hawken (see box) whom the Tindall Foundation brought to New Zealand last year to talk to business leaders. According to Warren Snow, the ideas are catching on.

'We want to reverse the usual way of looking at rubbish disposal and look on rubbish as a resource.'



Changing Minds in Big Business

Much of the philosophy of Zero Waste is articulated in a recent book by Paul Hawken, *The Ecology of Commerce*. In it he argues 'the ultimate purpose of business is not, or should not be, simply to make money.' Business should also 'increase the general well-being of humankind through service, a creative invention and ethical philosophy.'

'Business people must either dedicate themselves to transforming commerce to a restorative undertaking, or march society to the undertaker,' he says. The book provides an intellectual counter to the philosophy of the totally free market economy, and provides a strong economic argument for going easy on the earth.

'Markets are superb at setting prices but incapable of recognizing true costs,' writes Hawken. 'The market of today is free but its freedom is partially immune to community accountability. Because markets are a price-based system, they naturally favour traders who come to market with the lowest price, which often means the highest unrecognized cost.'

Paul Hawken argues that the real cost of producing goods needs to be included in their price. Efficiency shouldn't become synonymous with destruction of the environment. Business must change to serve the needs and wants of its customers, not destroy their environment in the interests of making maximum efficiencies.

'A restorative economy will have as its hallmark a business community that evolves with the natural and human communities it serves. This necessitates a high degree of cooperation, mutual support, and collaborative problem solving.'

As part of its work, the Tindall Foundation brought Hawken to New Zealand to meet with the leaders of big business. Hawken's book, *The Ecology of Commerce*, is published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson at RRP\$69.95, but watch out for occasional copies of the paperback edition at around half the price.