

Defining Who We Are

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In USA Today's May 4th Money section there were some recommended business related TV listings. One program noted was "Eco Trip: The Real Cost of Living" on Tuesdays at 9 pm on the Sundance Channel. Below is the show's program note:

"Host David de Rothschild (of the famous banking family)...traces the life cycle of everyday products such as cell phones and cotton TEE-SHIRTS as a gentle nudge for viewers to consume and dispose of products in an environmentally friendly fashion."

All too often, what our industry does is not part of the public consciousness when it comes to who qualifies as a recycler. The listing for the Sundance Channel, with its mention of tee-shirts, was a pleasant exception.

Executive Director Peter Mayberry's March SmartTalk article on the EPA's decision that laundries are not recyclers led member Ed Stubin to comment, "...The US Navy which had been a huge buyer of recycled wiping rags, some years ago touted themselves as 'recyclers.' They claimed this badge as they were now 'on board' washing and reusing their wipers," (and of course polluting our oceans in the process!) Ed went on to say that perhaps this new EPA decision will allow SMART to push for a change in US Navy policy and create a significant opportunity for our members.

Ed's son Eric Stubin, a new Smart Board member, has uncovered a new program in France which mandates that all new garments in that country carry a recycling tax/fee of .02 euro cents per garment. A non-profit environmental group disperses the funds at a rate of .07 euro cents a kilo to firms that collect and recycle (there must be a grading process) located anywhere in the EU. At the time this column went to press, Eric was looking into getting an authority on the subject to address our Recycled Clothing Chapter at July's annual convention in Toronto.

As a member of SMART's Strategic Planning Committee, I am learning that an increasingly pre-eminent concern of our Association is to provide marketing and publicity strategies so that our industry will be rightfully defined by government agencies as "recyclers." This mission will allow our members to be included in the many benefits of the growing Green movement and help us to reap rewards such as tax benefits, generic marketing and sales, and set asides for recycled products.

If we achieve our goals, textile reclamation will be as mainstream in the public's perception of recycling as scrap iron and metal, paper and other recyclables. The future success of our industry may depend on this development and I am quite confident that our dynamic Association with its outstanding member involvement will be up to the task.

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