

ED/OP

Greening garbage in pretty blue bags

Yesterday I walked along my usual route to school, under the crooked towering Larch trees of Larch St., turning up to walk beneath the dark bent branches of Lilac St., then to Coburg Rd. to find an entrance to Dalhousie campus.

It was a splendid day. A warm west coast day—wet mind you, but if it means I don't have to shiver and chatter my way to school then I'll take a little rain any day. I prefer to walk with a thoughtful pace, a leisurely gait which permits a smidgen of contemplation and a wide range of observation.

It's difficult to be at all reflective when the biting arctic winds freeze dry the nerves in your nose and you are constantly checking to see if your olfactory organ is in place and has not fallen to the permafrost to be carried away by weasels crazed with hunger.

So this day allowed a pleasant pace, time to stroll along, time to stop and smell...the...well...the pretty blue bags of recyclable bottles and cans...

There were dozens of these tidy sacs along my usual route to school put out with the regular refuse—usually at a conservative ratio of one blue to three of either green, black, orange, or brown. It is quite easy to tell the difference between the recyclable stuff and the stuff destined to be converted into ski hills or curiosities for young beachcombers.

This is because the recyclable stuff is tucked proudly within a transparent bag for all to see while the...ahem...not so recyclable stuff is hidden behind solid colours from all except our most intimate who hold the bags open while we fill them beyond the manufacturer's recommendation.

Obviously, my neighborhood is one of the many which has decided to care about its environment.

And who can blame them? With all the horrible accounts of toxic precipitation, atmospheric destruction, and assault on the world's biodiversity its not that much of an exaggeration to think we will soon be bagging the earth's industrialists with the aluminium cans and the discarded wine bottles. Just one more news story about dolphins strangled to death in synthetic fish nets and I'll... yes... I mean it this time...I'll really...

Well I'm not sure what I will do, or what I can do really. Does buying "dolphin friendly" tuna count? And what does this mean? How does it help dolphins if you eat their friends?

Even if it can be argued that it helps to eat "dolphin friendly" tuna how can we be certain the manufacturer's claim is true? I used to believe the Body Shop's noble words "This product is not tested on animals" until I found out that, sure the "product" wasn't tested on animals but all of its main ingredients were.

This is why they changed the line to "against animal testing." It's easy to picture the company's directors sitting around a spectacularly splendid board table hewn of devilishly dark wood (probably of some endangered variety) saying, "why yes, indeed, of course we are against animal testing. We collectively vow to protect all creatures from the lowly Kretchmarr Cave mold beetle, to cuddly pandas with big bellies, unless, for some reason beyond our control, we won't make any money with this policy."

Money is the key factor in this environmental issue. We can't seem to get away from it.

Those on the right chat leisurely about how the biosphere's problems will be solved, in time, as the marketplace evolves to a level of enlightened self-interest where only "environment friendly" goods are bought and sold, while those on the left scream for donations with which to combat the nasty industrialists (buying oven cleaner, particularly the kind which can be injected into candy bars, does not come cheaply, you know ...)

Yes, its all about money. From the wealthy industrialist to the gainfully unemployed Greenpeace volunteer, it is difficult to deny this common interest. And even for the large part of the population (like the people of my neighborhood) who sit in the bulging middle of this attitudinal distribution, the ones who are not inclined to hang anti-nuclear banners from the highest transverse of a bridge nor decide over drinks at lunch to clear-cut five hundred thousand hectares of forest, this environmental thing still comes down to money.

Sure it helps to recycle, and sure

biodegradable detergents are sensible things to buy, but I question our commitment to the biosphere when we do these things while continuing to: drive combustion engine powered cars, eat food packed in metal and plastic, buy factory built home-entertainment equipment, rely on sprawling telecommunications and power distribution systems, photocopy reserve readings...the list goes on.

Life today is not how those four generations ago knew it. And, I'm afraid to say, I think it is impossible for the majority of people to do without many of the time-saving and pleasure-offering developments of the last century.

For the world to get on track, to get into a more harmonious mode of existence, we need to reduce largely the scale of human activity. Can this be done? Without a series of earth-shattering disasters, probably not.

As Kermit so aptly sang "It isn't easy being green." He would know. He was made of polyester and plastic.

Troy Myers

TRAVEL CUTS



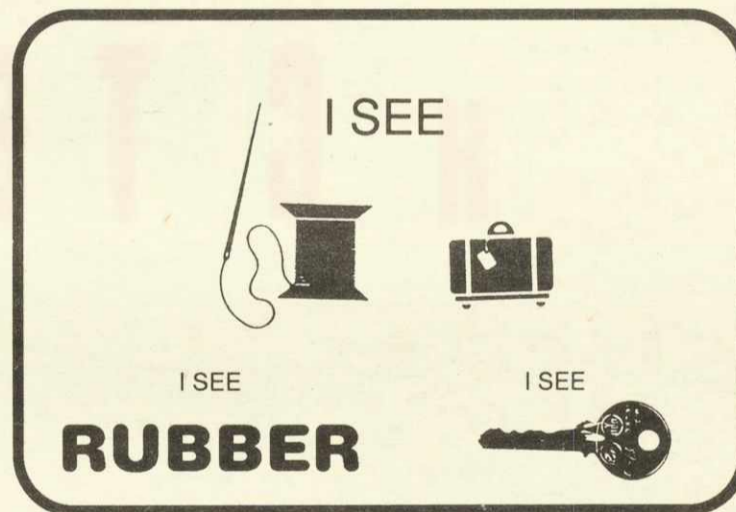
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