

# DO NOT THROW AWAY YOUR OLD—

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"Do not throw away your old tomato cans. You can use them for a thousand things"

WHENEVER a piece in a magazine begins, "Do not throw away your old tomato cans; you can use them for a thousand things," my attention is assured.

To make something into something else it was never intended to be after it is apparently used up—is it not a triumph? Does it not show one greater than the original creator of the article, whose poor imagination saw but a limited sphere for his production? This instinct is, I have reason to believe, a national characteristic. Perhaps it is universal, even cosmic.

When the cooking fires were extinguished on a thousand hearths to be relighted in cook-stoves, a thousand—or more, the numeral is symbolic—three-legged kettles were thrown out of their jobs. Now, we may be careless of the disposition of six million men out of jobs, but we took care of our kettles. Every one who has motored through districts settled in the fireplace era knows how we met that crisis. We painted our kettles red and hung them on the lawn from tripods to hold nasturtium vines. That nasturtium flame is religiously tended every spring by generation after generation. The kettles pass a glorious and decorative old age.

Old broom handles usually form the tripod, but one genius made his out of—guess. No, you can't. Out of three old scythe handles! But I couldn't appreciate that ingeniousness, for as a family we were at that moment negotiating the purchase of a snath at the cross-roads store. The weeds were growing high all over our summer place and shrieked for cutting, but the price of snaths had gone up during the war and whenever we got together the necessary money the storekeeper would discourage our buying by telling us that they weren't worth so much and if we waited the price would surely come down. Meanwhile, the weeds went up. And all the time three good snaths were holding a red three-legged kettle only twenty miles away!

Fishermen have disposed of well loved and leaky dories in the same manner. All along the coast one sees dories drawn up on lawns and filled with earth for flower beds. Sometimes the mast is left in to form with ropes a vine trellis.

But if you had twenty-five old canal boats, what would you do with them?

Palisades Interstate Park has shown us. No longer need we throw away our old canal boats. We can use them—for a waterfront. The embankment just below Alpine is made of old canal boats filled with sand and dirt. What a glorious old age, to be the bulwark of the river bank!

The domestic economy of Palisades Park in such respects is marvelous. What would you have done with the stone out of the subway excavations? Stone piers and filling up swamp land is the best I could have suggested. The massive Dyckman ferry roadway, swinging up the mountain side in heavy curves, is the answer. The lovely stretch of green at its base is made of street sweepings—that fine dust composed of worn-out shoe soles, buildings and everything else a city's made of. The old forum in Rome was covered with ten feet of this, but White Wings sweep up our dust-of-ages daily and we make our dirt into parks.

The bathing beach above Fort Lee, lying like a white crescent against the blue water, is made of the stone screenings from a rock crusher further up the Hudson. Do not throw away your stone screenings, you can use them for a bathing beach.

The bathhouse itself and all the park buildings are made of chestnuts killed by the blight a number of years ago. The icehouses up at Bear Mountain are built low and round and squat and their tops are used for dancing pavilions. Can you beat that? Turn your ice-house roof into a dancing floor. Cool on the hottest days.

In domestic life house furnishings offer a wide range for ingenuity. When a guest says: "What a charming something or other that is!" one loves to reply casually: "What! Why, that is nothing but an old something-else



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we made into this." Then the guest says: "Aren't you clever! How did you ever think of it?"

Everybody knows, of course, that elks' horns make a hat rack. It is lucky there is something to do with them, for no one has the courage to throw them away, though I don't know why. I do know one woman who disposed of a pair by leaving them in the basement exposed to theft. I wonder how the thief's wife felt when she saw them coming

in the door! Cow horns have a different use. Do you know it? They can be used—and have been used—to form the legs of a footstool. The top is covered with plush and the horns are elegantly polished.

The house that contains a cowhorn footstool probably contains also an umbrella stand made of a section of tile piping or of stove piping. On the front piazza sits an astonishingly uncomfortable seat made of the head and feet of a wooden bed. The original bed

was always one of those knobby affairs that are not old enough to be antique nor new enough to be modern. If you have such a one make it into a settle and dismiss it from your mind. But don't ever sit on it.

Time was when every handy man about a house made a barrel chair by sawing out a section of the staves and cording in a seat. If you don't understand how, never mind—you are better off without the tempting information. When I mentioned this as a method of saving what ought to be thrown away the man who is handy about my house protested.

"Those chairs were made for the sake of the chairs," he declared. "Not to save the barrels."

Hal! He's never sat in one. No human frame could sit in a barrel chair and continue to regard it as a real chair. It is descended from the Spanish Inquisition. A millstone never wears out. It lasts after the final traces of the mill timbers and dam have gone. One New Jersey miller brought his huge stone home, cut the tiny center hole into a large circle and had—a well curb!

Baby's first shoe is gilded and stuck up on father's desk to hold pencils. A rusty flat-iron has been known to be covered with plush and used as a door-open holder. Old razor blades can be used for ripping and sharpening and scraping paint off the bureau you bought at the country auction on a chance there was mahogany under the paint. Small tobacco tin boxes can be saved to use as bait boxes, though they accumulate faster than fishes propagate. Tobacco bags—the size that just fits a sailor's blouse pocket by hanging out its tag—can be washed and used for button bags in the mending basket.

But what would you do with a whale's jaw? That is not a rhetorical question. It is the problem faced by many a New Bedford housewife. Whaling men not infrequently brought whales' jaws as souvenirs from their voyages, and they were a trifle large to keep around the house after the novelty wore off. You don't know what a whale's jaw looks like? It is about the size and shape of the wooden spout which you set under the rain conductor—if you have a house with a lawn—to keep the water from gouging the turf. And that's the answer. New Bedford house owners set their whale jaws to catching drippings from the eaves!

We have gone backward in one respect. Warriors at one period used the skulls of their enemies for drinking goblets. That economical custom has fallen into disuse.

For a number of small articles that accompany other articles into the house I have found to use, but cannot bear to discard them. Take the neat black spoons on which typewriter ribbons come wound. Every time one puts a new



"They fall on the floor; you step on them and almost break your neck"

ribbon on the machine an old spool comes off. Such lovely little wheels would surely make good cartwheels for a child's toy wagon, but no child is able to manage an axle. And father hasn't time—or is it skill? Besides, the last time I gave a bunch of the spools to the little boy up the street his older brother liked him on the supposition that he had stolen them.

Laundry collar studs! More of them come from the wash than you can possibly use. I broached the question at a dinner party one night. A man like the surge of a wave rose from the women.

"They fall on the floor. You step on them. You almost break your neck," said one woman. "What can you do with them?"

"They are no good. Throw them away," was the men's unsympathetic response.

"Why don't they throw them away themselves?" I asked. "Why don't we, any of us, chuck on the dump our three-legged kettles, our elk's horns and our tin boxes? Who has laid upon us the responsibility of turning something useless into something else we don't want, and why do we stand for it?"

"If we only could find a use for the things I wouldn't mind so much," replied one of the women. "Now, there's my husband's trench helmet! Only to-day the charwoman and I sympathized with each other on that matter. She said:

"You got one dem tin hats, too. My husband he done bring one home from France all him, and I do know what I gwine to do with it. Every time I t'rows it in de ashcan he fins it and lugs it back. I do know what us wome folkses is gwine to do bout dem tin hats!"

"IT IS the biggest joke in the world today," said an American here recently, "that while the parlor Bolsheviks of other nations are busily preaching Communism the people who invented it have scrapped it!"

As a matter of fact, Russia has not scrapped Communism, but the process of doing away with it is approaching its peak. The problem of putting Russia back on its feet again has so many sides that from whatever angle one approaches it one gets a different perspective. This makes it difficult to say what the high-water mark of the reaction to Communism will be; one's personal opinion is that it will be reached when the government stranglehold on foreign trade is released.

The actual prevalence of Communism here diminishes from day to day, as new decrees are published releasing from state control the functions taken over by the Soviets three years ago. The fundamental thing is that the right to private property has again been conceded. Although in theory the government remains the sole owner of all land, in practice it admits the claims of the peasants that their holdings actually belong to them. Concerning the legality of private ownership of other property there is no question.

Last spring saw the beginning of the capitulation of the Soviets to the inexorable forces of economic necessity. In passing, one must allow the Soviet government at least had the acumen to admit failure before utter collapse set in and to trim before the wind. It was at the congress of the All-Russian Soviet that the new policy was thrashed out and finally decided upon, and even yet there is a disposition in some governmental quarters to refer a little shamefacedly to the switch, although that tendency seems to have been lessening even in the month that I have been here.

Last spring decrees restored the right of private trading. Thick and fast during the summer came others. For instance, the government abandoned its efforts to provide state rations for the population, other than for Soviet employees and for children. The schemes of state-supplied clothing were stopped and it was left to the people to buy their own food and clothing, as they had done before the revolution. The payment of fares on the railroads was reintroduced. Electric light, which had formerly been provided free in the cities, was charged for, as were water supplies and other municipal services.

The irreducible minimum that the Soviet government plans to retain under its own control comprises the public utilities and the textile, oil, coal and metallurgical industries. Even in these concessions are to be granted to foreigners. All other industries, as well as the whole fabric of retail trade, it is planned to restore to private management.

Just at present there is a transitional stage. The majority of the large factories remains

## RUSSIA TIRES OF COMMUNISM

### Soviet Government Is Now Looking the Other Way When Capitalism Shows Its Head. "Why Shouldn't We Make Money?" Communists ask

By HAROLD E. SCARBOROUGH

of acute trading and bargaining, some of these places are clearing a million rubles (\$10) or more a day.

This can go on until the stocks which were hoarded, when wholesale confiscation began, have all been exhausted, and then will come the real demand for the dissolution of the government monopoly on foreign trade. Ivan Ivanovitch knows perfectly well that when he has sold off his snarlers and his second-hand fur, and is slightly used soft hats, the meagre trickles of smuggled supplies that come in through the Ukraine will not suffice to keep him going. And when government agents approach him and intimate that there is a willingness to consider allowing him to have the whole plate glass and gilt sign establishment which now stands hoarded up on the Tverskaya (something which happens every day) he will reply that he must be allowed to import goods for himself.

The government is preparing for this, and various officials have told me that export and import licenses will be granted in the near future. But, just as the reversion to salaries and profits means that a whole new scale of taxation must be drawn up, so does this mean that a new schedule of customs duties must come into effect. And these things are puzzling problems for men who are finding that in many ways it is a great deal harder to govern than to rebel against authority.

Then, there is the whole question of finance to be considered. In the outside world one remarks in a general way that Bolshevik money is of no value whatever. This is not quite accurate. Although nobody (and least of all the Soviet government) expects for a moment that the huge floods of paper rubles which the printing presses have been turning out these four years will ever be redeemable at a tithe of their face value, it is a fact that for 60,000 to 100,000 rubles one can buy an American

dollar in Moscow and for 285,000 to 315,000 an English pound sterling.

The Russians realize, however, that should free trade be permitted, and should any great amount of these paper rubles be offered in payment for commodities, the prospective sellers would simply laugh. So they have decided to reconstitute a banking system!

It sounds grotesque enough, as one writes, that the new Bank of Russia is to have a capitalization of three trillion paper rubles; and that it is to fulfill all the ordinary functions of a state bank. But the Bolsheviks are not going about rebuilding a civilization in quite the same spirit as that in which they tore down the old one; and they have called in former directors of the old Imperial Bank and of the Russo-Asiatic Bank (such as Ginsburg and Chrenovnev); and former Czarist Finance Ministers (such as Koutiere and Pokrowsky), to advise them.

This bank is to attempt the stupendous task of deflating the Russian currency; but its directors frankly admit that for several years they do not expect to have their monetary system on anything but a paper basis. Realizing, however, that the present nominal values of their notes are simply absurd, they plan at once to issue a new tenor of paper rubles, on the basis of one new for 10,000 of the present rubles.

"For the present, inflation will undoubtedly increase," said one official with whom I talked. "The gradual abolition of 'pyok' (payment in commodities) in government undertakings necessitates the printing of fresh rubles, so that employees may be paid in money. We hope, however, that the spur of payment according to results produced will stimulate energy on the workers' part, and so produce a larger output. With the revenue from this; with the restriction of imports and the promotion of exports; and with whatever profit accrues to the government from the

concessions granted to foreigners, it should be possible eventually to liquidate this inflation, and even in time to return our currency to a metallic basis."

Brave hopes, those; yet certainly saner than the visions of Utopia which they have replaced!

So the whole question of the rehabilitation of Russia from a commercial standpoint revolves about these numerous factors, no one of which has a clearly resolved future.

The dream of the Soviets, as of every European nation, is that foreign capital will be afforded them in the shape of credits. The Bolshevik leaders know, however, that, having dispelled that indefinable thing called "confidence," they will be a long while in restoring it again, so they make their plea in the shape of offering concessions to foreigners.

There is a good deal of mystery as to the exact status of these concessions, and reports appear frequently in the European press to the effect that huge deals have been put through. As a matter of fact, only one concession has been actually signed. It is with a Swedish telegraph company, which is to construct a line from some northern frontier point to Petrograd; thence to Moscow and thence to some point in Siberia to be decided later. The supposed concession, which is Exhibit A in the lexicon of propaganda—that with a Swedish steel company to manufacture ball bearings—has not yet been formally concluded. Soviet officials also state that the Vanderbilt "concessions" are now null and void, no action having been taken by the American under the terms of the option given him, but they will not commit themselves concerning any details of this matter.

There are in Moscow at present representatives of half a dozen nations seeking industrial or trading concessions. There are a very few Americans, hoping to anticipate formal diplomatic recognition by getting in on the ground floor; there is the British trade mission, there is an Italian trade mission and there are German, Scandinavian and French business men.

The fundamental point at issue between them and the Soviet government is that they generally wish to take advantage of the cheap labor and materials which could be obtained in Russia and to export their product, whether in the shape of manufactured goods or raw materials. The Soviet, on the other hand, is dis-

posed to insist that they dispose of their products within Russia.

The usual form of contract which the Soviets propose is one running for twenty-five years, with an option of government purchase at the end of that time. Prospective concessionaires demand longer terms, and some of them have succeeded in getting the government to agree to seventy-five-year clauses in their contracts. British interests which have asked for ninety-nine-year agreements have not yet obtained them.

The success of the policy of concessions depends on so many factors, and primarily so much on the good faith of the Soviet government, that it would be rash to venture explicit predictions concerning it. It is safe to say, however, that there are no huge stocks of exportable goods, manufactured or raw, awaiting export. The potential wealth of Russia is incalculable, and there seems every basis to predict that huge fortunes will be made there in the next decade, but those fortunes must be built from the ground up and based on the fundamental factors of labor and materials. And those factors are at present somewhat of a puzzle.

How, for instance, will the workmen be fed? How, with the railroads at a very low ebb of efficiency, will machinery and spare parts be secured; how will raw materials be assembled, and how will the product be distributed? What terms can be made with the workmen? What taxes will one have to pay, and in what currency will he be paid for his goods? What competition will one meet?

These are a few of the hundreds of problems that stare the prospective concessionaire in the face. Those who are attempting to solve them now are the pioneers, and they are playing for big stakes.

This much it is safe to say: The nominal policy of the Soviet government is, on the whole, one of friendliness toward the introduction of foreign enterprise. Not only is this manifested in the matter of concessions, but also in the efforts of the Soviet to induce technical experts (especially German ones) to come to Russia and take charge of various state undertakings.

One may believe, as some foreigners here do that the whole matter of the changed economic policy is merely a maneuver to lure foreign capital in the country against the time when there will be another wholesale confiscation. Against this view one can only set the record of a conversation which I had with a young organizer of the Communist party.

"How are the rank and file of the Communists taking this change of front?" I asked him. "Aren't they inclined to feel a little disgruntled?"

"They were at first," he replied. "But now they see people opening up shops and restaurants and making more money in a day than they themselves do as government employees in a month, and they say to themselves:

"Well, why shouldn't we Communists make some money, too?"

