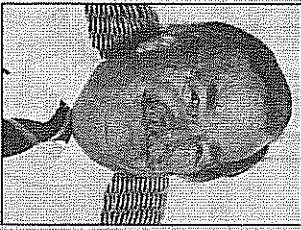


Throw bad spending habits in the dustbin

STOEP TALK

JAMES CLARKE



Researchers must remember that people lie about what they earn

STATISTICS South Africa is conducting an income and expenditure survey. The survey is to update the Consumer Price Index which is used to track inflation and to detect such things as patterns of spending and reactions to price increases. The outcome will help shape South Africa's monetary policy.

Apparently 33 000 households are co-operating by revealing their income and writing down every penny they spend for two weeks. I salute those who are conducting the survey (stands up and salutes) but I must warn them (wags pointing finger) that people lie about what they earn and how much they buy.

Some market research people will rummage through a household's refuse bags to check whether they were telling the truth.

Arizona University researchers found by rummaging through rubbish bags that people ate 20 times more chocolate than they admitted to in door-to-door surveys. And although 85 percent told re-

searchers they didn't drink beer, 75 percent of bags contained beer cans.

Rummaging through rubbish bags is surely an invasion of privacy. After all, give me a family's refuse bags and I will be able to tell you whether they are healthy, wealthy and wise in their habits; what they eat; how much they drink; how often they bath; how many children they have...

When in the 1980s Sandton introduced transparent refuse bags I protested—I stood in the garden facing in the direction of the Civic Centre and shook the fist three times.

My protest obviously had some effect because soon after that we were issued with big solid bins on wheels in British racing green which my gardener wheeled out every Monday giving the impression that we had a chauffeur-driven rubbish bin.

I believe Sandton introduced the transparent bags because it desired putting up rates and wanted to find out more about the lifestyles of its ratepayers and how much they could afford—and now all they had to

do was drive slowly past the see-through rubbish bags.

Neighbours too could discover that I bought my wine in 5-litre boxes and got through at least one a week. And the half-jack brandy bottles must have raised eyebrows. So help me, I never drank brandy. My gardener did.

And all those beer cans? By what law of physics do beer cans work their way to the outside of rubbish bags? Why don't all Bran boxes or cabbage leaves do the same? And all the broken crockery that was on show one week did not signify that my wife had thrown it at me. It was our maid. She tripped over a rug. But who would buy that?

I thought of patenting a printed plastic rubbish bag for snobs—the picture on the outside would give the appearance that the bag contains French champagne bottles, local mineral water bottles (only people with private incomes from the sterling bloc can afford mineral water) and brochures

about fabulously expensive holidays such as Kruger Park.

SEEING IT MY WAY

Two men went out for a stroll, a Doberman and the other a chi. They saw a bar and decided to have a drink. The barman said firmly: "No dogs allowed in."

The fellow with the Chihuahua put on dark glasses and offered the story. The barman said: "Since you they start using Chihuahuas as service dogs?"

The owner said: "What? Chi! They gave me a bloody chihuahua

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