

# Transformations

## Where the Buck Stops

So now they're shredding money. It used to be classified documents; but once shredded, the secret stuff was carefully disposed of. The green stuff, as we all know, has many uses; what we didn't know is that the Treasury permits some re-use of legal tender for industrial purposes.

And until a woman who bought a new lamp reported that it came in a box with shredded bills, we thought of money in terms of purchasing, not packaging. Alarmed, the Treasury agreed and asked the packager to find another filler.

But was the complaint legal, moral or esthetic? Did the purchaser find that packing a lamp with macerated U.S. currency was faintly sacrilegious? Even the American flag is now freely used commercially. So why not wrap with the less-than-almighty dollar? That kind of devaluation is now universal.

Packaging, too, has come a long way from excelsior and shredded funny papers. Every box brings some new kind of Styrofoam beads or bubbles, often of astonishing beauty and ingenuity, and produced through the expenditure of precious energies.

Like that woman, we are bothered — but mostly by the waste involved. Wear it out and use it up, in modern

terms, means recycle. That is a valuable American tradition. We rather like the funny money.

## Murderous Thought

In 1930 the Pallas Athena of detective fiction, Dorothy Sayers, wrote a mystery in which murder was by muscarine, a lethal component of certain toadstools. The solution involved a problem in organic chemistry so dazlingly elucidated by her that "The Documents in the Case" was highly praised at a recent convention of the American Chemical Society. It is also suggested reading for students in organic chemistry at Michigan State.

Such scientific huzzahs come as no surprise to mystery buffs. Dorothy Sayers is, after all, the woman who alibied a murderer with his victim's hemophilia ("Have His Carcase"); injected a man's bloodstream with a fatal air bubble ("Unnatural Death"); killed off another with the sound of bells ("The Nine Tailors") and found a new way to convey arsenic to the digestive tract ("Strong Poison").

But how, her new readers ask, did she know so much about such arcane subjects?

Simple.

"The unscrupulous old ruffian inside one who does the actual writing," she

once said, "doesn't care tuppence where he gets his actual raw material from — fantasy, memory, observation, odds and ends of reading and sheer invention are all grist to his mill, and he mixes everything up together regardless."

## Planning for the Present

More than any agency of government, the City Planning Commission determines the future face of New York City. But it has not reflected the city's present face; until two years ago, all seven of its members were white.

Then, the Koch Administration appointed Max Bond, a highly regarded architect. And now there is a second black member. The City Council has just approved the appointment of Susan Motley, a financial and economic planner of high reputation.

Mayor Koch is not, of course, required to achieve some sort of racial balance in his appointments to city agencies. But, especially in the absence of elected minority group officials at the top of city government, it is very nearly a duty for him to reach out and find ways to involve able minority group members in municipal affairs. The way he has done so here is a credit to him, and to the commission.