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Town Homestead

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Flight From The City

By Ralph Borsodi (first published 1932)

Some idea of the possibilities of weaving, even without much experience, can be gained from our first experiences with blankets—one was woven by a friend of mine who had never had any experience at all, in less than eight hours. A similar one was the first blanket woven by my son—a somewhat better piece of work—in less than six hours. A third was a somewhat more elaborate affair on which three members of the family each did a turn, and so I have no record of the time it took to weave it. The yarn used in these blankets cost about \$2.50 for each blanket—at a time when blankets of similar quality couldn't have been purchased for many times that sum. Even if the loom is used occasionally, it will earn handsome dividends on the investment at this rate.

Our experiments in the weaving of woollens for men's and women's clothing have demonstrated the practicability not only of cutting out of the budget most of the expenditures for ready-made garments, but even the expenditures for fabrics. The accompanying illustrations of garments made from fabrics woven in the Borsodi homestead suggest not only the great variety of garments for which it is possible to weave the fabrics, but the fact that they are, if anything, more attractive than those which are usually on sale in retail stores ready-made.

By way of illustration, I wove a suit for myself from yarn home-spun in the Kentucky mountains; the cloth was woven and finished in our home: the suit was made up by a tailor operating a one-man shop near our place. The yarn cost \$4.50; the tailoring \$30. I had it appraised by various so-called experts at the time, and they valued it all the way from \$60 to \$90. One friend, who could not qualify as an expert but who has his suits made by Fifth Avenue tailors, said that he had paid \$125 for suits no better than this one. Incidentally, the suiting was the first which I ever wove.

This matter of tailoring brings up one of the amusing follies of modern civilization to which we pay no attention but for which we pay, nevertheless, over and over again. The strictly tailored costumes which men now wear have nothing but custom to recommend them. They require great skill in sewing; they are therefore impractical for manufacture at home. Yet they are artistic monstrosities. They do nothing to set off the human form. They are not even utilitarian. Most of the hard work of the world is done by men who wear overalls or cotton garments which are not tailored at all. While suits are practical enough for the work which men do in offices, they are much too hot for indoor use—especially in houses which are steam heated. A foolish convention, however, makes us all wear them. If we, however, once again took the designing of our garments into our own hands, it is possible that something much more attractive and useful might develop. We might experiment with blouses, or even with costumes such as the Chinese wear. And apropos of blouses for men, it is an amusing commentary upon the industrialization of Russian life under the Soviets, that the old Russian blouses, which could be made in any household, are now being replaced by the conventional costume of Western civilization—which has to be made in factories.

With women's garments, the field for weaving and for the needlecrafts, even with prevailing styles, is much broader. The garments illustrated show coats, suits, and dresses all made from fabrics woven in our home. I presume I am rather prejudiced in the matter, but it seems to me that the garments Mrs. Borsodi has produced in our home compare favorably with those which most women buy ready to wear today.

The sewing-machine is a most important piece of domestic machinery. It is doubtful whether any other piece of machinery pays larger dividends upon investment made in it. Yet it remains a tool, to be used when needed and laid aside, perhaps for months at a time, when no sewing has to be done. In combination with the loom, the sewing-machine takes on new significance both economically and artistically. What I have here in mind can be made clear by quoting from an article by Mrs. Borsodi in *The Handicrafter*, which describes one of her suits:

The suit was made from a twill suiting. The yarn was a weaving special; the warp, tan No. 136, and the weft, a lovely green, No. 755. The weave was a simple twill made with four treadles operated 1, 2, 3, 4 and repeat. Four yards of material 27 inches wide were used. The suit was based upon a *Vogue* pattern, which was modified in many details. Since I had never before tailored homespun, it took many more hours of time to produce the suit than a second one could possibly take. Immediately upon cutting the material by the pattern, I stitched twice around the cut edges on the sewing-machine. This prevented the material from unraveling. I then proceeded much the same as in making any other coat and dress. Finally, after much pressing into shape, I have a suit which has repeatedly been called very good-looking, and which I know gave me more joy in the weaving and making than I ever had in purchasing a similar product from any store. Outside of fur, it is the warmest coat I have ever worn.

It is difficult to compare the cost with a factory product, because I could not afford to purchase this quality and character of material made up. To get this quality of material one would have to go to an expensive house indeed, and to get this particular style of material at the time I finished the suit, it would have been necessary to go to a stylish and even exclusive house because it was just coming in. Taking all these things into consideration, a valuation of \$50 would represent a most conservative price.

In judging the hours spent in weaving and sewing, please remember that this was the first time I had done either, and, even on a second garment of this type, the time of weaving and the time spent in sewing could be considerably reduced. Also, I could make an even better-looking suit the second time.

In charging fifty cents an hour for my time, I think I have given the benefit of a relatively high rate to the factory, for few factories pay this price for such operations as were performed. To be sure, the factory has its designers who are well paid, but then I paid for my share of such service in the *Vogue* pattern upon which I relied for assured fit and style. And in addition to the saving on the suit, I had the pleasure of developing a creation of my own.

One-half pound of warp at \$3.00	\$1.50
One pound of weft	3.00
Two yards of lining at \$2.50	5.00
Thread20
Pattern65
	10.35
Labor weaving, 5 hours at 50c	2.50

Labor sewing, 12 hours at 50c 6.00

Total cost 18.85

It should be borne in mind that the above costs refer to a period when prices were in general approximately as high as they are today. Both the cost above as well as the price of the garment with which to compare this suit should therefore be understood as establishing relative savings rather than actual savings today. The record, however, can stand examination no matter from what standpoint it is viewed. It would show a nice dividend upon the investment in domestic machinery even after full allowance is made for the time spent in making the suit. It is significant that the two yards of silk lining—purchased factory made—cost almost as much as all the rest of the fabric for both materials and weaving.

What the sewing-machine alone can do is shown from another record from Mrs. Borsodi's cost book. This covered an afternoon frock, appraised at the time it was made as worth \$49.50.

Three and one-half yards of silk	\$8.75
Pattern and findings90
Sundries15
	9.80
Cost exclusive of labor	9.80
Earned in 13 hours*	39.70
	49.50

*A more skillful worker could have made the frock in less time.

This study assumes a similar frock could have been purchased for \$49.50 and that the time spent in shopping for the ready-made garment and the superior fit and individual style of the specially made dress is disregarded.

Some of the value in this frock lay, I presume, in its "style," something for which women pay a great deal if they are intent on keeping on with the latest developments in Paris. The sewing-machine makes it possible to secure style without having to patronize the most expensive stores and to pay a premium for this service.

A good looking topcoat was made on the same warp as the man's suit previously referred to, but with a heavier weft. It cost about \$3.50 in yarn and about 24 hours for sewing and weaving. The fabric is a distinctive herringbone effect; it is exceedingly warm; it promises to wear almost indefinitely; the design and color express Mrs. Borsodi's personality. What more could be expected of any garment than that it should be attractive, useful, inexpensive, and that its production should furnish a creative outlet for the artistic abilities of its maker?

To me the part which our loom and sewing-machine have played in creative living is, if anything, more important than the service they have rendered in making us less dependent upon earning money.

(to be continued)

Letters, cont'd

Town Homestead

To the Editor:

We have an acre "homestead" right in a lovely residential area of town. On it we have a large garden, many fruit and nut trees, berries and chickens. We also have a walk-in freezer and a plastic greenhouse full of good things in winter. So we eat very little of today's contaminated food. My husband is to be on a panel discussing homesteading and would like to rent the School of Living film on homesteads.—Mildred Gronemeier, Bloomington, Ind. 61701

Shortcomings of Education

To the Editor:

I find many items in papers and magazines that show people are waking up to the mistakes of modern education. But there is still too much dependence on "degrees"—it's the fashion now to have two or three. And just try to get a job in business without one; you're treated like a second or third class citizen. On television we are brainwashed with the slogan, "College is your best friend; a college man will earn \$300,000 more in his lifetime than the non-college man." But all such drives we know are paid for by business and industry. And there are too many who still lean on the status quo educational system with the crutch of their degree, and with their umbilical cord still tied to their mother university. I'd like to see the School of Living grant degrees for home study courses in "Problems of Living."—William C. Lloyd, 310 N. Broad, Burlington, N. C.

Why Is Money Scarce?

In June and July 1966, credit institutions were forced to all sorts of new ways to attract new money. They were short of funds to satisfy the increased demand for credit. The cause of this dated back to the increase in the discount rate from 4 to 4½ per cent by the Federal Reserve bank in October 1965. Mr. Martin, Chm.

of F. R. B. said this tight money policy was to curb inflation. The real purpose for tight money is always to save the interest system.

Supply and Demand Determine Price

Supply and demand determines the price of every commodity. If a commodity is too plentiful in supply compared with demand, its price falls. When a commodity becomes scarce compared with demand, its price will rise. This law also applies to the price of loan money. If loan money is plentiful compared with demand, the interest rate goes down. If loan money is scarce compared with demand, the interest rate goes up.

This law of supply and demand has determined the interest rate ever since the introduction of money about 4,000 years ago. Interest is a premium of scarcity of loan money compared to demand. . . .

The people who govern our money also know that an increased production of material real capital goods (houses, factories, machines, etc.) reduces the interest rate of invested capital, the unearned income of investors.

Since the increase of the discount rate by the Federal Reserve Board, the borrowing cost of money has increased, and consequently the productive activity in several lines has been reduced. For instance, the building of houses suffered a severe setback. Home buyers, home builders, business men and governments are caught in a squeeze that gets worse by the day.

Credit Expensive

More and more would-be borrowers are finding credit costs prohibitive. For others, credit is unavailable on any terms. Spending and investing are being put off. That is what the Federal Reserve Bank had in mind when it raised the discount rate.

Savings and loan associations are including clauses that permit lenders to raise the interest rate on outstanding mortgages. Tighter money has forced people to go to their life insurance companies for loans. Insurance companies are turning to banks to obtain

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APPEAL TO THOSE OVER 30 who agree that compassion and concern is the basis for a new way of life; who will seriously consider learning how to love one another; who will give and forgive without "expecting" such response from others until we first act with love; who will find a way to put into practice this new way of life. — Write to Frances Crary, RR, Box 407, Lakeport, Calif. (7-67)

Poems for a Green Revolution—60 gems of insight and feeling by C. S. Dawson. Three groups: some depict the ugliness of our artificial world; some the beauty of the natural world; some decentralist life and living. Product of new School of Living Press. \$1. Order from Heathcote Center, Rt. 1, Box 129, Freeland, Md. (5-67)

THE OWNER-BUILT HOME is now completed. Volumes I, II, III, IV are available (\$2 for each volume) from: Ken Kern, Sierra Route, Oakhurst, Calif. (8-67)

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FOR SALE: Thriving health club and adjoining health food store. Priced right. Owner has other commitments. Write for price and complete description. — Health Center, 3302 Caseyville Ave., East St. Louis, Ill. 62204. (8-67)

LAND WANTED! School of Living will act as holder or seller of land for persons who want homesteads and homestead communities. All who have land to rent, sell or give for such purposes, please send details to: School of Living, Lane's End Homestead, Brookville, Ohio.

SUNDRIED olives, unsalted, bitterless. Also unbleached almonds. Free price list. Frank Smith, 349 San Jose Ave., Los Gatos, Calif. (9-67)

PARTNER wanted to live on 40 acre woodland farm. Good hunting and fishing. Prefer organic-minded Catholic bachelor. Write to John Killalea, Rt. 3, Box 172, Black River Falls, Wisc. (10-67)

funds for relending. Banks have increased their interest rates to as high as 5½% for long term deposits. Small business has been hurt in tight money slowing their deposits. Drying up of mortgage funds has led to a sharp drop in home building. Congress has given its approval to add 3 billions to the mortgage market.

Federal Reserve Power

A reason behind this tight money policy is to prevent an increase of real material—houses, machines, factories. An increase in these capital goods would cause a greater demand for workers. This would raise wages. After some years (15 or 20), an uninterrupted production of real capital goods would bring an end to interest. The interest rate on loan money (and the interest dividend of the real capital goods) would be zero. Such a condition would end unemployment, poverty, strikes, and other stifling effects of the present unjustifiable interest system.

The policy of the Federal Reserve Board prevents such a condition of full employment and prosperity. Instead, their policy is to save the exploiting interest system, the income of the non-producers. This interest system is a real enemy of the working people.

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