

Attention! Will The Real Single Use Plastic Bag Step Forward

By Anthony van Leeuwen, 1 May 2013

Proponents of banning the plastic carry out bag have demonized it by calling it a “single-use” plastic bag as part of their propaganda campaign. The real “single-use” bag is the plastic trash bag. Once the trash bag is used for its primary purpose to hold trash, it is never reused for any other purpose. The plastic carry out bag, on the other hand, once used for its primary purpose to carry purchases home, has a large number of secondary uses. Hence, this bag is really a multi-use bag. The reusable bag is also a multiuse bag but more durable. To call the plastic carry out bag a “single-use bag” just because the retail store purchases it for a single purpose, does not make the bag “single-use” and to consider it as such is intellectually dishonest.

The plastic carryout bag is a popular bag for reuse because of its handles. When the consumer reuses the plastic carryout bag, that is beneficial to the environment because it prevents the manufacture and purchase of another plastic bag. According to a study¹ in the United Kingdom, 40.3% of plastic carryout bags are reused for bin liners, pick up pet litter, etc. So when a plastic bag ban is adopted in your area, a new market for small plastic bags is created for smaller plastic trash bags.

And all those politicians, who boast of keeping plastic carryout bags out of the landfill, they just substituted one plastic bag for another. But don’t tell them, if you want to stay on their good side.

¹ UK Environment Agency, “Lifecycle assessment of supermarket carrier bags available in 2006”, Report SC030148. Page 61. Available at: <https://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/skeleton/publications/SearchResults.aspx?name=SCH00711BUAN-E-E>