

# REFUSE IN GERMANY



We live in abundance: While about six generations ago personal property consisted of just over one hundred things, today's average German owns a total of around 10,000 objects in his home, attic, cellar and garage. Many things we own get dusty unused and yet we can't stop buying new things. Our society lives from consumption, or rather from the desire for more. But all this consumerism causes environmental problems. Everything we buy has to be produced, transported and packaged. Thoughts about the required consumption of resources, CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions and tragic exploitation of workers during the production process do the rest when one critically examines one's own consumer behaviour. The same does apply to everything we want to get rid of later. It is just there, has to be disposed of, causes waste and burdens the environment. "Enough with it", say more and more contemporaries and tries to focus on minimalism. But is less really more?

But our "refuse" and "minimalism" can also destroy jobs as well as economic growth. "I am a follower of combining ethics and business," says Prof. Dr. Dominik Enste. He heads the

Competence Field "Behavioral Economics and Business Ethics" at the Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft in Cologne. Of course, one could call for a renunciation of consumption, as on events like today's "Kauf-Nix Day" (buy-nothing day) and live it. But if everyone would live in such a minimalist way, then in some countries it could be difficult with jobs and prosperity. Beyond this, not everyone wants and can do "refuse" in all areas of life; it is not about denying yourself all the pleasures. In addition, the way of refusing depends on the personal life situation as well. It is certainly different with children to change your lifestyle and reduce the amount of waste you produce than in a single household.

So far, responsibility for a lifestyle that consumes fewer resources is still too often seen as a purely personal decision. Politicians are also called upon to set the framework for sustainable lifestyles so that our vision of the future can become reality: An intact environment, the preservation of biological diversity, low resource consumption and a high quality of life for people.

