

COUNTERSPY

compiled by Arthur Townley



Creaming off in the pinta game

Because of the stopping of free school milk there's been talk of putting milk machines in some schools. What hasn't been pointed out is that the most expensive way of buying milk is from machines.

The Ministry of Agriculture has fixed the price of milk at 5½p a pint, but the price of milk from vending machines is not controlled - and it can be as much as 12p a pint. Machines have now been converted to take 4p instead of the old sixpenny piece, and for this you get half or one-third of a pint, depending on which dairy owns the machine.

Reasonable?

Because of the cost of cartons and maintenance on machines, dairies are allowed to make a 'reasonable' charge above the normal 5½p limit. But who would call an extra charge of about 110% reasonable?

Perhaps the only man who would is the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board. At the annual meeting in a London hotel a year ago he thought he'd get some good publicity by drinking milk

The hotel charged him 50p.



Ah so! you think it's tuna fish

A Brighton housewife recently bought a tin of tuna fish from Sainsbury's. She opened it and found inside a 'dry brown substance'. Her suspicions were further aroused by the words 'Pet Food' on the tin. Later Sainsbury's received three more complaints about the 'fish'.

Investigation revealed that the tuna fish came from a Japanese firm which also produces pet food. This kind of dual operation is not allowed in Britain.

A spokesman for Sainsbury's said: "I assume they can use the edible parts of the tuna and use the rest for pet food. Unfortunately the tuna fish labels have been put on the pet food by mistake."

Sainsbury's say all their shops have been asked to return tins from that particular shipment for examination.

Customers 0 Swindlers 1

Once again the Trade Descriptions Act has been used to protect a guilty trader against an innocent consumer. (For other examples see Free Press No 1).

A car dealer in Croydon cheated a customer by giving a false description of a second-hand car.

In June the magistrates fined him £250 and ordered him to pay £230 compensation.

But now an appeal court has reduced the fine by £50 - and stopped the compensation on the

grounds that the magistrates are not entitled to award it.

This means that the most the weights and measures inspectors can hope to do is get guilty traders fined - there's nothing they can do to help consumers directly when they have been swindled.

To get compensation, consumers will now have to sue the offending traders themselves, and in almost all cases, this will be prevented by the cost of taking private legal action.

It's a golden wonder they get away with it

Golden Wonder crisps stand a good chance of getting into the Guinness Book of Records on present form. In the last year they've been convicted at least 21 times (once a fortnight) for selling underweight packets of crisps - sometimes as much as 40% short.

However the weights and measures men have been quick to leap to their defence. They argue that Golden Wonder, who turn out ten million packets a week, have not been prosecuted more than any other crisp firm, taking into account the quantities they produce.

They also say that Golden Wonder are more likely to be caught. Other brands are sold mainly in pubs and cafes and eaten on the spot. Golden Wonder, on the other hand, are sold to housewives through the shops - and housewives' kitchens contain that scourge of the manufacturers - weighing scales.

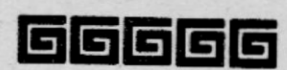
Excuses

But with the weights and measures people around to make excuses like these, it's not surprising that the crisp firms aren't particularly worried about the situation.



The way big firms sponsor sporting events to get their names mentioned has been causing concern lately. Two examples are the Gillette Cup and the Alcan golf tournament.

Now it seems to be spreading to education as well. The Green Shield Stamp firm have given Birmingham University the money to appoint a new professor. He will be known as the "Green Shield Professor of Stock Control and Materials Handling".



Price-cut of the month: A meter for testing noise levels has been produced by the Noise Abatement Society. Previously you had to pay £300 to get one, but this one costs £10. If you're bothered by noise it might be worth the expense, because it will tell you if the legal limit is being exceeded. Details from the society at 6 Old Bond Street, London W1.

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QUOTE...

"If you don't want me to answer I can go home. It's a lovely evening. I don't need to be here."

- Comment by Albert Stocks, Liverpool's highly paid deputy Town Clerk, to the M-62 "public participation" meeting.

Hard-bargaining churchman

After the controversial Horizon TV programme on planning problems in Liverpool, a letter appeared in the dismal correspondence column of the Daily Post on October 22 from Frank Harvey, Diocesan Planning Advisor.

Harvey is in fact the Rev. Harvey, the Church of England's property man in Liverpool and in that role he has driven some very hard bargains with the corporation.

Only last week the Church of England was condemned by the British Council of Churches for owning too much property and not giving more help to the areas of need.

However, beneath the unctuous headline, "Sacrifices needed for the communal good" the Rev Harvey wrote: "The perplexities which follow from life in an urban environment can only be tackled

when the private citizen is prepared to forego some of his own demands for the good of the whole. When the solutions are matters of common concern - and not merely left for them - they will begin to be found."

The reverend gentleman has obviously been too busy negotiating property deals to realise that the people who are making all these sacrifices and suffering these perplexities are a small but significant minority.

They suffer from "multiple deprivation".

While Harvey sneers at the "arm-chair sociologists" it is they who have recognised that "in some of our city centres children well into their teens have always known a life style of demolition."

Incidentally the Rev Harvey has just made his own personal sacrifice. He's left Liverpool for greener pastures in the South. He won't be missed.

Sunday morning in Hardman Street, Liverpool. A man arrives at the bus stop carrying a bundle of fishing tackle. Ten minutes pass and no bus comes. The man takes a folding stool out of his bag and sits on it. Still no bus. Second man comes to the bus stop and points to the fishing rod:

"Yer off fishin den?"
"No," comes the reply, "dat's so's I catch de bus when it comes past."

METHODIST RECORDER
AUGUST 19, 1971

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