

COUNTERSPY

compiled by Arthur Townley

A day in the life of an unsold pie

JOE W. delivers sausages and meat pies to the shops. For this he gets a basic wage, plus commission on what he sells.

Joe has a mortgage, so lately he's been anxious to increase his commission. To do this he has to persuade shopkeepers to take a few extra pies when he goes on his rounds.

A lot of the shopkeepers don't really want more. "After all," they say, "sausages and pies go off in a few days if we don't sell them." And every pie that goes off cancels out their profit on four or five others which they sell.

But Joe tells them not to worry. "Try a few more, and if they haven't sold in a day or two I'll take them back and you won't lose a penny."

"The trouble is," explains Joe, "that if those pies aren't sold and I send them back to the makers the cost of them is taken out of

my wages — and I'm back to square one, or worse."

To stop this happening when he gets pies returned, Joe sometimes takes them along to the next shop and slips them in with fresher pies.

Joe is only one of hundreds of salesmen who do this sort of thing from time to time. And the result is that customers occasionally buy — and eat — bad pies.

About 20 people in Britain die every year from food poisoning, and about 10,000 other cases are reported by doctors to medical officers of health. But there are countless less serious cases which doctors don't bother to report — and lots of people just throw away bad pies without eating them.

Meat pies are safe to eat for only 96 hours after manufacture, and sausages for 120 hours. The pies Joe sells have a code on them which says when they were made, but

Those puzzling prices

SHOPPERS' PUZZLE No 1: Which is better value — a 6-oz packet of biscuits at 7½p, or 8-oz at 10p?

SHOPPERS' PUZZLE No 2: Which shampoo gives you more — one of 34 cc or one of 2½ oz?

If you stand in a shop with a pencil and paper you might discover that the biscuits in both packets cost the same — 1.25p an ounce. But no matter how hard you try on the shampoo, you won't be able to work it out — one tells you the volume, the other the weight.

There are two ways to stop this confusion. One is to introduce standardised packaging — for example,

all biscuits could be sold in half-pound packets, making it easier to compare prices. And the manufacturers could agree to sell their products by weight or volume, but not both.

The other way is unit pricing. This means that besides having the recommended purchase price marked on them, the packets would also have to state the price per ounce, per pint, etc.

A Unit Pricing Bill has been put before Parliament but is unlikely to become law for a long time — if at all. As Mr Nicholas Ridley of the Department of Trade and Industry put it: "We shall probably decide that the objections are insurmountable."

shopkeepers don't understand it and it's often difficult to read anyway.

In Germany, sausages and pies are clearly marked with the date they were made, and shopkeepers have to sell them within 24 hours of delivery.

A similar system in this country would probably put a stop to Joe's little game. But the real problem is that the food industry is geared to making as much money as possible, instead of feeding people properly.

Flavour of the month

IF YOU THINK bread is all cotton wool these days, take heart from the Birmingham shopper who found a loaf with that something extra...

A mouse lurking at Allied Bakeries (Midlands) found its way into the Sunblest dough mixture—

and into the oven. Out it came at the other end, all neatly sliced and wrapped.

The customer, who found parts of the mouse in 15 out of the 16 slices, complained and the firm were fined £20.

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Dingle sewage plan

(continued from page one)

miles of pipeline — all of it via the Dingle storage tanks.

The sewage will be pumped aboard ships berthed at the Dingle oil jetty, which will then dump their loads in Liverpool Bay, north of Abergele.

Excess fluid — added to make the sewage swirl along the pipeline — will be run off into the Mersey at the Dingle, after treatment.

Manchester Corporation play an interesting part in the £17 million pipeline scheme. This year they will transport in their own fleet of ships one million tons of human excrement to Liverpool Bay.

Not surprisingly, they will be by far the biggest users of the Dingle

scheme, pumping more than one million tons through the pipeline every year. The next largest user would be Wigan, with 363,000 tons. Liverpool would contribute a mere 198,000 tons.

The consultants were actively considering plans to extend existing sewage works at Manchester and Salford.

These extensions were ruled out when the Dingle site was put forward by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, who will profit considerably from providing the berth at the oil jetty, and the land for the storage tanks.

Chairman of the Sludge Disposal Consortium is, again not surprisingly, Manchester's city engineer, Mr John Hayes, who was saying private-

ly last autumn that "the quantity of sludge to be disposed of would be initially in the order of 3 million tons per annum, if all the local authorities decided to join the scheme."

An unwitting and extremely helpful spokesman for Mr Hayes' department commented to the Free Press on the smell of sewage sludge: "People tend to exaggerate about the smell of sewage sludge. Although I will admit that if the wind is blowing in the wrong direction it isn't exactly mountain fresh air."

The consortium's proposals will have to hang fire for three months — despite their talk about putting forward a private parliamentary bill by 1973 — until the publication in June of the findings of the Department of the Environment's investigation into the environmental effects of dumping vast quantities of sewage into Liverpool Bay.

Last straw

The activities of the dumpers — private firms and public authorities — in off-loading toxic substances and sewage have been reported in the Free Press, numbers 3, 4 and 5.

Last year the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution reported that there was evidence of local effects on the growth of marine plants in Liverpool Bay.

No such high-powered government working parties and royal commissions are looking into the overwhelming and deliberate pollution of people living in the Dingle.

A leaflet put out by a group of residents says the stink of other people's sewage is the last straw, and they are starting a Stop the Sludge campaign, which advocates finding alternative ways of using domestic sewage.

If you live in the Dingle the people to contact are: Mrs Joan Williams, 226 Grafton Street; or Mr Frank Hennessey, 313 Grafton St, Tel: 709 1809.

INTRODUCING:

The wit and wisdom of



George Cregeen

Mr George Cregeen recently took over as editor of the Liverpool Echo. However, Mr Cregeen's contributions to the worlds of philosophy, literature and wit are perhaps less well known. Nevertheless, we feel they deserve some attention. Here are two extracts from his writings:

A DEMONSTRATION in favour of love and family life and against pornography will be held in September. Malcolm Muggeridge, one of its backers said: "The media today—Press, television and radio—are largely in the hands of those, who for one reason or another, favour the present slide into decadence and Godlessness."

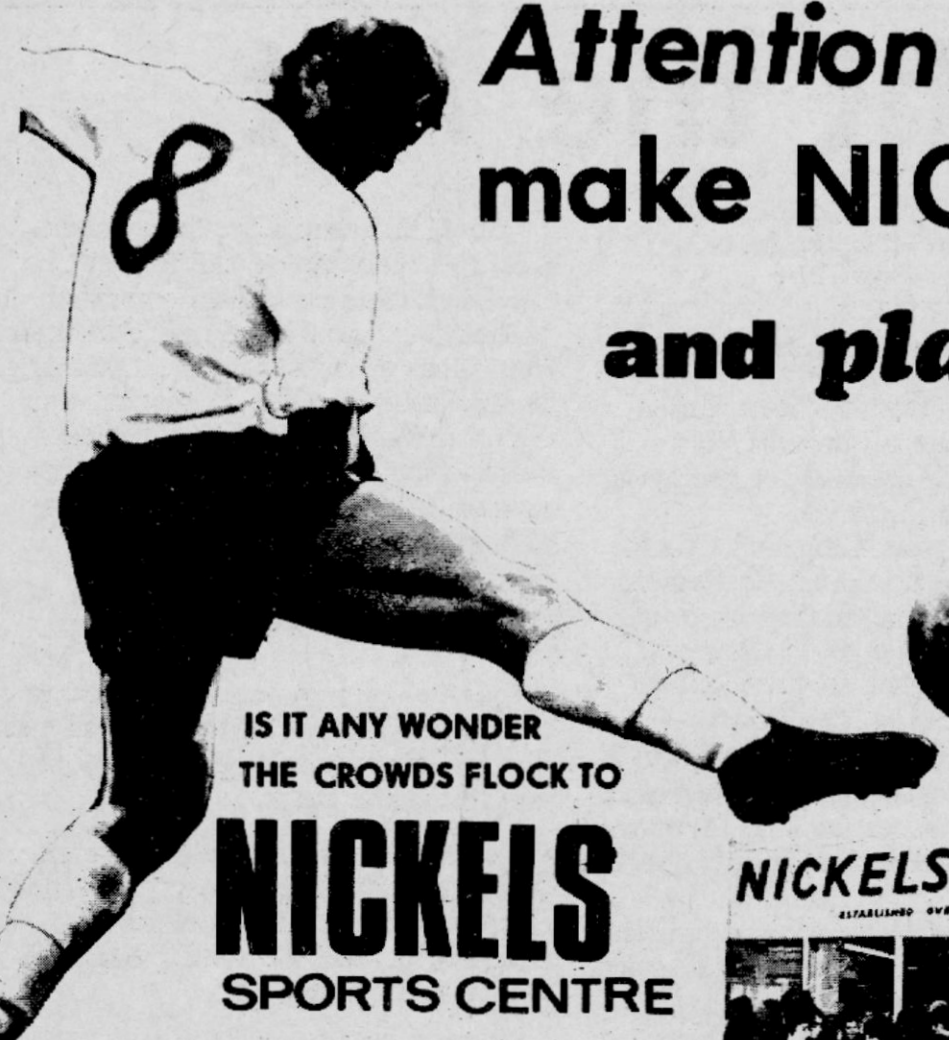
Not all of us Mr M. You can put me down on the side of the angels—and I know quite a few more. So don't lose heart.

—Daily Post, 17 July, 1971

THE PEACE movement in this country is not in a very healthy condition at the moment, according to Canon Collins of St Pauls. What a welcome piece of news.

—Daily Post, 14 June, 1969

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