

## BUSINESS

There are Problems on the Other Side of the Counter

By ROGER BUDROW

AN EXECUTIVE IN A LARGE LOCAL STORE admits he guessed wrong on one thing lately. He had underestimated the public's patience with war inconveniences. "I think the public is far ahead of us in understanding why we can't make deliveries as in the old days, why we make mistakes, why there are unavoidable delays," he said.

And then he added that he hoped he is wrong on another guess. The prediction is that the stores themselves are going to face a serious situation from now on. Here is the way he explains it.

The store's income is limited in two ways. First, there are price ceilings. Second, the amount of merchandise obtainable is dwindling. Against these "immovable objects" there are the "irresistible forces" of increasing taxes, increasing expenses (wages, etc.) and an irreducible amount of overhead just to keep the store open.

"Even a baby could have made money retailing in the past 18 months," he said, "but from now on, it's going to take a mighty efficient store to hold out for the duration."

The third reason is fatigue from working on an "upset public." There is nothing to do about this except hope that the public will get over its "ration-jitters." The store constantly impresses the clerks not to indulge in "scare selling," reminding them that such buying merely reduces many lines of goods unneeded.

Gasoline rationing apparently had no effect on sales. One reason, he said, was the excellent local transportation system.

ONE OF THE most difficult problems is in personnel. Specialists are next to impossible to hire, experienced pressers, furniture refinishers, fur workers, etc. Some work must be left undone and it takes more time to accomplish other jobs.

Women are being substituted. In normal times his store employed 70 per cent women, 30 per cent men. It is now 80 per cent and 20 per cent and the "prognosis" is for 90 per cent and 10 per cent. "We will probably have women driving delivery vans and acting as clerks in men's clothing departments."

A year and a half ago the store hired no girls under 18. Now it's 18. The Indiana legislature's action in permitting girls to work until 10 at night was a big help. Applications for jobs, used to be run from 25 to 100 a day, now total one or two, some days up to 15 or 20.

THE TURNOVER of help is interesting. About six months ago almost all of the "regulars" had left. The shoe is on the other foot. The buyers take the salesmen out to dinner.

## GRAIN FUTURES CHANGE LITTLE

Prices Steady at Closing; Traders Wait for Action At Washington.

CHICAGO, April 3 (U. P.)—Grain futures moved within a narrow range on the board of trade today. Prices steadied after recovering from early weakness.

Wheat finished the day unchanged to off  $\frac{1}{4}$ ; corn unchanged at OPA levels; oats off  $\frac{1}{4}$  to up  $\frac{1}{4}$ ; and rye unchanged to up  $\frac{1}{4}$ .

Traders continued to stand on the sidelines waiting for legislative developments in Washington.

GRAIN

Open High Low Close Prev. Close

Wheat \$4.155 \$4.155 \$4.144 \$4.155 \$4.155

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