

THE GIMMICK AGE

Though we call our era "the Atomic Age", it may be more aptly labelled "the Gimmick Age". The age of the trading stamps, bonuses and bargains. Surely, the bargains or "special offer" plays a bigger part in our lives today than nuclear fission. If the contents of our press and radio-television programme are to be an indication, bargain hunting is our obsession. These mass media devote so much effort to the publicizing of sales, "Specials" and "slashed prices", as to rival any Russian technique of brainwashing in its efficiency.

The creation of these sales "gimmicks" has become a booming business. Its forerunner, the advertising industry, undeniably contributed greatly to business and enterprise. Now, the cork has been pulled out! the genie is at large. We have unwittingly unleashed a monster which has overstepped all bounds, and ignored all restrictions of common sense. The day is fast approaching when we will be paying as much for the attractive package and publicity as the product itself is actually worth. Sales promotion has, to say the least, developed beyond all proportion. For instance, today, many actors and professional athletes must certainly be earning as much by beating the drum for various products as to equal their actual salary. Everything from razor blades to prefabricated swimming pools, from breakfast cereals to sports cars is acclaimed and lauded by some "big name" of the sports arena or Hollywood screen. As an indication of the trend, we notice that such "celebrities" in ever increasing numbers are being presented, singing the praises of some product or other. Every day sees the introduction of a new "secret formula" containing product. Each one, of course, is "revolutionary", completely new. Every day, from every quarter, we are barraged by a never-ending volume of "gimmickery". Apparently then, it hasn't reached its zenith yet. Where and when is it going to end?

A prime characteristic of the sales promotion "gimmick" and a good illustration of the degree to which it has become a part of our every day life, is the rapid succession of facsimiles which follow in the wake of a profitable product. Consequently, the original becomes the "often imitated but never excelled", and the rival products become yet more spectacular in achievement. Today, we can buy tooth paste or axle grease in push-button containers. We can buy "instant" fruit juice or "instant" auto paint. On and on the list goes.

Today, everyone is a bargain hunter, not by choice maybe, but because one cannot avoid them anymore. "Bargainism" has pervaded almost every field of enterprise. The real estate business, which involves a man's biggest single investment, his home, presents him with a bewildering assortment of bargains, deals and "gimmicks". So it goes all down the line, even to such a trifle as a pocket comb. "Gimmickery" has become so widespread in our times, as to become inescapable.

Perhaps the most unfortunate outcropping of this, our "gimmick" age, is the fact that we expect a bargain, a bonus, a "special offer". It is the modern standard of merit.

"What! Nothing free? No saving? Well then, why buy it?"

As a result, a product, to gain any recognition has to be "Nationally advertised", "unconditionally guaranteed" and, of course, acclaimed the most significant development since one or another of the greatest discoveries of mankind. Simple everyday items such as tooth paste and soap are accredited phenomenal, even magical, powers. They contain numerous "secret ingredients" each bearing a scientific, awe-inspiring name which is always "exclusive" to the particular company placing it on the market.

Let's take a long, evaluating look at this "gimmickery", this sensationalism, this institution of our day. Has it not become ridiculous? It has become so much a part of our everyday life, so widespread, that it is accepted. But, stop and look at it. Surely we aren't gullible enough to be taken in by all this nonsense! Why then, should sales promotion "gimmickery" and double talk be such an established feature of our day? Advertising is necessary, yes, and a great asset to our economy. Wouldn't it be refreshing to be relieved of this high pressure, inescapable brainwashing and to see advertising in it's proper place once again?

FRANK FOWLER, '63—

JUDAS

From the village to the far horizon the land was bare, burnt by the sun, smoldering with the violent passions of an unconquerable people. It was a country where men hated or loved savagely, where they had only three things in common: they venerated God and the saints, they respected their dead, they lived oppressed by the leaden heat of the sun beating down on their heads. Between the two factions of the population there was mutual dislike. But they did agree in their antipathy towards two people, Agustin and Maria.

Agustin was the town's blacksmith, a surly creature if there ever was one. He had a thick crop of black hair, eyebrows set in a straight bushy line across his face, a face eroded by decades of hardship and black eyes from which life had been washed away. The townspeople came to him only for his professional skill, or whenever they needed money. Today, under the appearance of poverty, Agustin concealed a small fortune, for he asked exorbitant interest rates and felt no qualms in bleeding his countrymen to the last penny.

When it came to Maria opinions were somewhat divided.