

Washington Digest

Abolish Post Exchanges?

Oh! Perish the Thought

By BAUKHAGE
News Analyst and Commentator.

WASHINGTON.—Members of a sub-committee of the armed services committee of congress have recently completed a highly interesting tour of investigation. It was ordered because of a spirited controversy now going on in Washington.

I can't help mentioning the subject because its background is made up of some ancient vivid memories—memories of the day when, as a lonely recruit in an ill-fitting uniform and sagging wrap-leggings, I wandered into an army post-exchange for the first time, more than three decades ago.

As I looked around the dreary setting my loneliness was not alleviated. I was at that moment yearning for the corner drugstore back home.

I can hardly reconcile that mental picture with the one of Corporal Roberts, shown on this page, as he reaches for his milkshake proffered by a plump and friendly dame!

The smile she is passing out with the drink would have meant far more to me than that day than the smile on the face of the general. Now don't think I'm prejudiced against generals, as a class. (Some of my best friends are generals.) But I must say that what I missed most in the gloomy PX of my rookie experience was not the gleam of a general's stars.

Since that sad day, I have visited many army post exchanges and some ships' service stores (the navy equivalent), and I was a little startled when I heard just recently that they were being threatened with abolition.

Of course there are two sides to every story. I'll try to forget personal prejudice in favor of anything that gives the armed services a break, and present both sides.

One side is represented by private businessmen. They charge that the exchanges which sell the soldier and his family a lot of things at reduced prices is "big business" subsidized by the government, competing with "little business" run by private enterprise.

The exchanges take in about \$130 million gross annually. According to a recent analysis, quoted by the "Army Times" (a non-official but approved newspaper for servicemen) the average soldier spends \$24 a month in the PX.

Three-fourths of this \$24 goes, according to the analysis, for "tobacco, food at fountain, cafeteria and snack bar, for uniforms and insignia, and for candy and bottled drinks." The remaining one-fourth goes for all other purchases, including the "special orders" which many merchants object to, "although special orders constitute less than 3 per cent of the exchange business."

This 25 per cent of the total sales of the exchanges (or 40 million dollars) is only a tiny fraction of the billions spent by the American people every year in private stores on jewelry, watches, radios, cosmetics, toilet goods, and semi-durable house furnishings which come under the head of the "all other purchases" bought in the exchange.

The Army Times points out that the PX competition is chiefly with the stores in the immediate vicinity of army posts. But would those business people rather have no post there at all? The soldier spends plenty of post. Enough, anyway, to have the congressman very anxious and very active in trying to obtain or hold army and navy installations within his constituency.

Looking at the other side of the picture, it is true that some servicemen and ex-servicemen have taken



Sgt. Walter W. Wynhoff and Capt. C. A. Cubber built over a counter that Wynhoff built for the 34th general hospital at Seoul, Korea, during his off-duty time.

en advantage of the exchanges. They have made purchases for resale and bought for friends who had no service connections. Also retired personnel have made purchases when they no longer legally should exercise the privilege.

Restrictions have been tightened up, however, and every effort is being made to defeat the serviceman who is trying to cut off his own nose to spite his face when he violates regulations.

I think the returning congressmen will verify this.

The army and navy don't say so, but it is no pleasure to them to have to take on the burden of a business simply to offer advantages to servicemen and women and their families which make life easier and cheaper. Ask any post exchange officer how much of a headache an inventory is. He would far rather be inspecting foot-lockers or standing reveille.

The biggest gripe the retailers have against the post exchanges and ships' service stores is the fact that such stores don't have to pay (or charge for) excise taxes. In fact the retailers have demanded that the department of justice look into the legality of the situation.

How the department decides has nothing to do with the army and navy—that is, it will be a matter for the civilian branch in this respect: If the justice department says it's OK by them, the merchants probably will carry their lament to the congress. Then the congress which makes the tax laws and is elected by the people who pay those taxes and also the people whose sons and daughters are in the armed forces, will decide the matter.

And there is also this to be remembered: true, the exchange does have the excise tax-exempt privilege, but otherwise it must meet many if not most of the expenses any retailer has to meet. The ex-



New off-duty hangout for Fort Ord, Calif., soldiers was opened recently when soda fountain No. 10 was put into operation officially by Maj. Gen. Jens A. Doe (left), the commanding general. Lois Kuykendall serves first milk shake to Cpl. James B. Roberts.

change manager has help to pay and insure, has maintenance, supervision and accounting costs along with a host of other expenses faced by any merchant—costs and burdens which seldom occur to the average consumer.

The exchanges also have to make a "profit"—not a profit to them, but a 6 per cent figure which the law demands they must clear over all expenses and turn into welfare funds. Their "mark-ups" are, of course, less than those of the merchant.

The Army Times puts the argument this way:

"Out of these markups, the exchanges run themselves and pay the 6 per cent to welfare. That is, the GI buying in an exchange pays enough over costs to return to himself over 70 per cent of the expense of a multitude of off duty activities—music, service clubs, day rooms, hobby shops, soldier shows, library service, athletic facilities and equipment, and the like.

"The theaters ante under 10 per cent of the welfare requirement; the taxpayers put up just about 15 per cent of the vitally necessary welfare and recreation bill."

If the exchanges didn't turn in that 6 per cent profit, the taxpayer would have to provide the welfare items mentioned above. Or the GI of today would have even less diversion to brighten the barren surroundings of camp or post than did this lonely rookie when he walked into the decidedly limited institution which the regular army post provided where your correspondent began his none-too-brilliant but nevertheless unforgettable army career.

Much of man's cussedness stems from poor food habits which undermine mental poise and sociability, says a paper read at the American Chemical society. Maybe it's time for the bride to take those jokes about her cooking seriously.

A letter to the American Machinist says that when an executive dates an employee he should never discuss it with other employees. Maybe the less discussing she does the better, too.

Hens which drink from stagnant pools lay off-flavor eggs, says the Canadian Farm News. And even their best friends won't tell them!



IN THE opinion of George Widener, one of our ablest turfmen, foreign horses are never given a chance to win over here.

"These foreign entries are sent over from five days to three weeks before the race," Widener said. "They should be sent over from six months to a year ahead of time. Otherwise they will have no chance."

"Years ago, I recall when Meadowbrook was challenging for the cup. Harry Payne Whitney sent all the American ponies to England at least six months in advance. He said that it would take six months or longer to have them ready for their best work."

"Now we all know that most of the foreign horses we have seen run

—those from France, Belgium, Ireland, etc.—are much better horses than they proved to be. Their air voyages were badly upsetting, and they had little chance to get in anything like real shape."

"It is really a shame, and I hope that in the future, owners of all invading foreign entries give their thoroughbreds at least some sort of a chance."

There isn't the least doubt about Widener's opinion. I could tell you about any number of foreign horses to prove his point.

Argentina's Top Horse

Some years ago, Charley Howard, owner of Sea Biscuit, bought Sorteado, winner of Argentine's triple crown. He paid \$40,000 for the horse. After several weeks training, I saw his first start at Santa Anita. Sorteado reared up and was doing a jig on his two hind legs when the race started.

Weeks later he was little better. But a year later, in New York, I sat with owner Howard while Sorteado broke a world's record for a mile and a half race. He beat War Admiral's best time by one-fifth of a second.

"He is the greatest horse in the world today," Howard said at the time. "He can outrun any horse I've ever seen." Sorteado went out for a new record a few days later, stepped in a hole, broke a leg, and was destroyed.

Neil McCarthy bought an Australian horse known as Shannon II. He was an Australian champion. He was an American flop the first few months. Now Shannon II is winning big stakes and beating such horses as On Trust. He's one of the best.

Even Jimmy Jones told me he made a mistake in flying Armed to California five days in advance of his race. "I should have sent him three weeks ahead, since he traveled by plane," Jimmy said.

A race horse needs ample time to accustom himself to new surroundings, climate and environment especially after a long trip.

If we sent our horses abroad, including Citation, under the same conditions, they would be run into the ground. Foreign owners should either keep their thoroughbreds at home or give them from six months to a year to go after the rich purses they can win from Belmont to Santa Anita, from Chicago to Hialeah.

Fighting Horses

John Partridge, the veteran trainer, was telling a story about Col. E. R. Bradley, the famous Kentucky breeder.

"This was years ago," John said. "Colonel Bradley had hired a trainer to help look after his fighting chickens and also his horses. The colonel was kind of proud of those chickens."

"One night there was a private party where several of his game chickens were entered. They didn't look any too good. In fact three of his fighting chickens turned and ran. The trainer felt pretty bad about this, and naturally the colonel was angry. To have his game chickens run away was the last word."

"Next day," John continued, "the trainer started across a field. There were several horses around, including two of Bradley's stallions. The trainer rushed over and tried to separate them. He didn't do a good job. Both were badly cut up."

"When Colonel Bradley heard about it, he was furious. He sent for the trainer and gave him a terrible bawling out. Then he fired him."

"This is the best break I ever had," the trainer said to the colonel. "For this is the craziest place I ever worked. I don't want any part of it."

"What do you mean, the craziest place you ever worked?" the colonel said. "What's wrong with it?"

"I'll tell you what's wrong with it," the trainer said. "I've been three weeks at this great Bradley place in Kentucky, and all I've seen is running chickens and fighting horses."

"I don't think it is necessary for me to say," John added, "that Colonel Bradley not only didn't fire the trainer but gave him a nice raise."



Electricity Assures Water for Livestock

Economical Installation For Winter Suggested

Electricity, which has eased the farmer's chores, has come to the aid of farm animals, too.

Through the medium of electricity, Dobbins and Bossy no longer need fear that their drinking water supply will be shut off during the cold winter months.

Tests by agricultural engineers have demonstrated that electricity is economical to provide warm water for livestock during the winter. Watering devices were operated at a cost as low as 70 kilowatt hours per month, representing an outlay of \$1.40 at two cents per kilowatt.

Some farmers are finding that their installations are expensive to operate, principally because of lack



This horse can laugh at Old Man Winter as a result of this floating water heater, an electrical de-icer which assures farm animals a drink despite the cold.

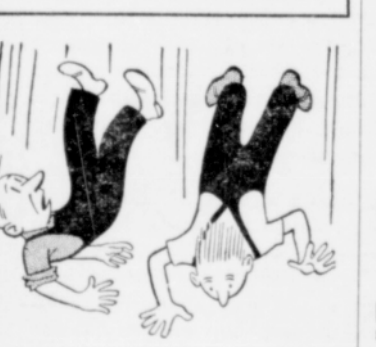
of insulation or because too much water is heated.

The following suggestion will help to make an ideal installation:

1. Use as small a tank as possible, definitely not more than 150 gallons.
2. Install a float so the size of the tank can be reduced. Commercial units now on the market use only a drinking cup.
3. Use at least three or four inches of commercial insulation and cover all sides, leaving room for only one or two animals to drink.
4. Install a baffle board to prevent air movement over the water under the insulated top.

Use of electricity makes it safe to install the tank inside the barn or in a shed, which will encourage livestock to drink more water and thus increase milk and meat production.

Farmer Falls Hardest



Life on the farm is far more hazardous for the farmer and his sons than it is for his wife and his daughters.

In fact, a survey covering 15,000 farms the country over, made by the department of agriculture, reveals that about four times as many accidents happened to men and boys between the ages of 14 and 65 as were suffered by farm women and girls. Of the youngsters under 14 injured, nearly 65 per cent were boys.

More farm people were injured by falls than any other type of accident, with the majority of mishaps involving falling on steps and stairs and from vehicles. Men and boys were victims of twice as many injuries from falls as were women and girls.

Of the total number of farm accidents, 56 per cent were connected with farm work and 8 per cent with housework. The age period from 25 to 45 was disclosed as the most dangerous.

Horses Need Attention During Stabled Period

Disease and injury that sometimes prove crippling can be prevented by giving special attention to horses' feet during the stabled period. Brittle hoofs, spongy hoofs, thrush and foot canker are the four diseases commonly caused by bad stable conditions.

Clean, dry floors are recommended as a precaution. The feet of stabled animals also should be trimmed at least once a month.

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