



IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT —

*The people who supply your needs
want to keep you as a customer,
so if you have a genuine gripe,
tell them about it.*

by Joseph N. Bell
Art by John Massey

WHEN I BOUGHT a new car a few years ago, I became an unknowing and unwilling guinea pig for tubeless tires. I understand they've been improved considerably since then, but all the tires on that 1955 car quickly developed the alarming habit of throwing large patches of tread. Within several months, I had scattered tires all over the U.S.

When the first tire disintegrated at 4,000 miles, we were far from home and the dealer who had sold us the car. I drove into a large service station advertising the offending brand of tires and demanded my rights. The dealer gave me a new tire at a liberal discount—charging me only for the mileage on my old tire.

This seemed satisfactory the first time it happened. But when the second, third, and fourth tires collapsed in much the same manner, I wanted no more of that brand. But it appeared I was stuck with them. All the dealers told me glibly:

"We'll be glad to give you a discount according to the wear on your used tires. But we can't give you your money back or sell you any other brand of tires. You won't have any trouble with the new ones, anyway."

But I did have trouble. I'd gone through seven tires—all the same make—when I told this sad story to a friend. He looked at me pitifully.

"What a sucker you are," he said. "The same thing happened to me—with the same tires. I put up with it the first time, too. But the second time, I told the dealer I didn't want any more of that brand—that I wanted my money back instead. He refused. So I

called the factory from his office, got an assistant sales manager, told him what had happened, and he instructed the dealer right then and there to give me a refund on the tires."

Since that day, I've quit being a patsy for people who are selling inferior products or services. Not that I'm obnoxious about it, but when I get short-changed, I complain—loud and long. And I've found that in many instances the people responsible are honestly glad I did. Oftentimes they had been losing customers without knowing why—because the customers meekly refused to complain about a poor product or inadequate service.

Most Americans are first-class chumps when it comes to demanding their money's worth. The present generation has been pushed around so much during depression years, war years, and shortage years that they've fallen into the mental slough of a perpetual seller's market—whether one exists or not.

This is especially true where services are concerned. During periods when we had to take it that way or not at all, we became used to shrugging off poor service from hotel room clerks and bellhops, bus drivers, waiters, cabbies, mechanics, and all sorts of tradesmen—to name but a few. Now we've been beaten down for so long that we continue to take it on the chin without a murmur of legitimate protest.

Recently my daughter saved pennies from her allowance to buy new batteries for her bicycle headlamp. After only a few weeks the light expired, and when I took it apart I found that one of the batteries had leaked acid into the framework of the lamp. So I packed up the defective batteries



"When they replaced the first tire, I was satisfied. But when three more collapsed, I demanded a complete refund."