

COUNTERBLAST — *From the other Side of the Counter*

TWO weeks ago, we gave one side of a story which we called "The Customer is Always Wrong," in which we printed the complaint of the wartime customer against the person on the other side of the counter: the complaint of the shopper who sees himself as the victim of endless snubs and humiliations. This week we have given the people behind the counter the opportunity to put their side of the story. Most of those we saw were women, and we invited them to give their answers to those who say that shopkeepers are rude where they used to be polite and obstructive where they used to be helpful. We asked them also whether they thought the customers themselves were ruder than they used to be. This is what they said:

TOBACCONIST

"**RUDER?** They're impossible!" said the woman behind a tobacconist's counter. "Sometimes I'd like to change places for a while and see some of the customers over on this side. It's just when you're getting towards the end that it gets bad."

"Towards the end of your day?"

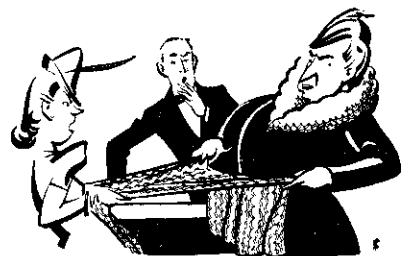
"No. The delivery. Our stocks do get low you know, and we actually do sell out, and then we get people going hostile and telling us to look under the counter. I'd like to give them five minutes on this side. It's a strain, you know, to have to be refusing people all the time, and we're the ones that lose by it in the end. . . Yes sir, something for you?"

DEPARTMENT STORE

"**ON** the whole, the customers are pretty good," said an assistant in a department store. "There are always the snags who will swear black and blue that the stockings we have brought up from under the counter are not as good as the ones on display, or who give you a 10/- note and then declare that it was £1. It's funny how people will always send a child back if they think they have been given the wrong change—you can't argue with a child."

"Do you have much bother with the coupon question?" we asked.

"Not a great deal. Some customers will say in a very surprised voice, 'Do



you need coupons for these?' and now and again a customer will appear to be getting her coupon-book out of her purse and when you have rung up the amount and turn to give her the change, she exclaims, 'Oh, I have forgotten my coupons!'

"Shoppers thoughtlessly toss about the goods on display on the counters, and sometimes indignant customers demand an article at the price marked above it, ignoring completely the fact that it obviously belongs in the next bin. Two days ago, a woman wanted a frock that had got shifted from the 27/6 rack to the 15/11 rack—and she insisted, too.

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