



# Behind closed doors

those companies that didn't swallow the tax and keep their prices low, soon folded. Under pressure from the microbreweries, the tax was later cut in half.

Despite the gallonage levy, microbreweries have taken away one per cent of the suds market from the big breweries in each of the last four years, says Ron.

"I think people initially come in for the price and return for the quality of the product," he says. In a health conscious society, the lack of additives is another factor in his favor.

The Powells' companies are separate entities but have a symbiotic relationship.

Under government regulations, brew-on-premises stores require customers to add the yeast to the "wort" and bottle the beer, themselves.

Microbreweries, such as Quinte Brewery at 150 Sidney St., can make their own beer and as long as their retail outlets are on the same premises as the breweries, can sell it on Sundays (as do the large companies at their breweries).

Quinte Brewery sells its beer to Grin and Brew It, which sells

it to the customer (who then adds the yeast and bottles it).

"Grin and Brew It has no physical equipment as such, because they buy the beer from Quinte Brewery."

Grin and Brew It has a small bottling area (separate from Quinte Brewery) and a cold room for storing the beer, which must be refrigerated because of the lack of additives.

It takes a minimum of 18 days for Ron to brew a 20-keg batch. His business uses one brew kettle and four fermenters. A second brew kettle would be useful in the peak season, from May to July, says Ron, but the added revenue doesn't justify the expense.

Consequently he is "operating on the hairy edge of disaster" during the summer — "disaster being running out of beer."

Ron says the majority of his business comes from Quinte Brewery, where customers can choose from five different beers,

all made without additives and priced lower than conventional brands. Several pubs in the area also purchase an average of three kegs a week and a large British pub chain soon to locate in Belleville will stock Powell's Sir John Eh brand, "which is our English ale."

Ron remains annoyed at the provincial government, which he says "changes the rules in the middle of the game." And he points out it took nearly one year to be granted a licence to open the microbrewery, after 3½ years running the brew-on-premises Grin and Brew It.

But after 5½ years in the northeast industrial park, which he considers a poor location for his company (he was locked into a lease), the business continues to flourish.

Grapenuts is the latest expansion, with the Powells being licenced agents for Milan Wineries, of Mississauga.

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Sept. 20/97 M. J. B.

Quinte Brewery