

specialist in one type of trade lost its appeal to the young men. Wage levels had started their upward curve which was to make a one to one sales-customer relationship an impossible cost factor. Increased product advertising took the place of part of the sales clerk's services. The broader base of persons shopping in the store for packaged items that came complete with instructions, when information was necessary, signalled the introduction of self-service to North America. In the late thirties, Walker's Hardware replaced its individual department cash registers with what we now know as a check-out counter.

Individual service did not suffer. The store concentrated its advisory sales staff on the rapidly growing paint department and in the section that worked with specialized builder's hardware.

BELLEVILLE GROWS

There were other economic changes in Belleville, as there were in other cities, that were being mirrored in the hardware business. Increased leisure time and the sharply increased labour costs had combined to create an active market in power tools and other aids to the hobbyist who wanted to do it for himself. Many of these were amateur specialists who knew what they were seeking and could serve themselves.

There was another significant change in the last three decades. Women became increasingly economically independent and they became consumers in their own right. Walker's introduced an entire section of goods designed to appeal to women users. Women also invaded the male preserves of household maintenance and suppliers recognized this fact of life in their own designs of hardware staples. Even window displays took on a general appeal to every section of the community.

A recent statement by D. W. Campbell, the president of the Canadian Hardware and Housewares Manufacturers Association to the Report on Business of the Toronto Globe and Mail sounds very much like the words of Wilbur Fox and Doug Duminie talking in downtown Belleville.

"We do well during a downturn in the economy", he said to the reporter, "People tend to take a closer look at the dollars they spend. Many conclude that do-it-yourself repairs and decorating are the best way to save money.

"On the other hand, if the country senses an upswing in the economy, there is usually an increase in construction activity and the professional end of our business improves."

He forecasts a continuation of the present upward curve of hardware business growth for "at least another 18 months to two years."

And, speaking of the customers themselves, Mr. Campbell almost quotes the Walker's Hardware slogan verbatim. He said "they (the customers) demand *better value for a fair price.*"

Main Street Walk

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