

Sealer Of Weights-Measures Protects Merchant, Consumer

(Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part series)

By Norman Indahl

Weight Has To Be Right

An elderly lady thought she had purchased a 16-ounce jar with 7-9 oysters when she went to a local grocery store. Instead, she returned home with only five oysters in a 12-ounce jar.

The two-man county department of sealer of weights and measures found out about the responsible for a nationwide change in the system of marking the containers.

To prevent another easy mistake on the part of the buyer, the pure food and drugs administration followed the recommendation of the local office and had packers change to small, medium and large jars for oysters instead of using weights.

Department Head Gerald S. Anderson and Deputy Weston W. Sharpe have the seemingly insurmountable task of seeing that goods of all sizes and description are accurate as to labels, weights and cost. They also test the accuracy of service station pumps, scales and any piece of equipment you can name that plays a part in the lives of the average individual when it comes to purchase of goods.

In the past few years there has been a decided change in the attitude of merchants regarding the sealer, who must be a police officer, diplomat and investigator all rolled into one. No more does the merchant consider the "sealer" a law enforcement officer serving mainly to protect the buyer.

The sealer's office is equally beneficial to the merchant as well as the consumer.

There is no such thing as a "typical" day for the pair. One day Anderson and Sharpe may be checking milk containers on dairy farms, service station pumps and pre-packaged foods. Tomorrow a sealer may happen to stop a tea company distributor's truck and weigh the contents of a package.

Spools of thread, chickens and even the new blender-type gasoline pumps come under the watchful eye of the department. In the current pint-size gas price war, operators are putting up illegal signs. The department was kept busy preventing signs with an eye-catching 30 cents and small nine-tenths of a gallon figure alongside it from staying up.

A great deal of attention was focused on the "wrong" oyster jar" incident.

"Until we contacted the Washington, D.C. office of the bureau of weights and measures, it was not even aware that oysters were packed in 12-ounce jars," Anderson laughingly reminisced.

Since the sealer removed the oyster jars off the shelves until



Checking to see that the weight of the bread as specified on the wrapper agrees with the scales is a routine task in the life of Gerald S. Anderson, head

of the county department of sealer of weights and measures. Rarely does a scale or goods sold to the public fail to gain a test by the ever-watchful de-

partment which is dutifully protecting the buyer and merchant to an equal degree. The little-known department has an office at 2312 Mission street.

the matter could be cleared up, packers involved became worried that the controversial 12-ounce jars were being held in the sealer's office.

All the time they were safely under refrigeration.

"Everybody got excited but us," Anderson smiled.

Anderson and Sharpe also come up with many corrections that serve to the advantage of the merchant. For instance, the sealers one time found that local butchers were paying more for chickens than they actually weighed.

Since this is a two-man department, the officers concentrate their work mainly on checking basic commodities—bread, meat, other foods—and scales for accuracy in weights.

One of the big problems of the department is to keep advertising signs from blocking the scales so buyers cannot see the weight registered.

"We get a lot of complaints about this," Anderson stated.

A few years ago there was a critical problem when approximately 40 stores throughout the county were guilty of this practice, he related. After putting on a hard campaign to clear up the method, the violations subsided.

"Some of the store operators purposely blocked scales so customers would not be able to read the amount purchased," Anderson emphasized. "It happened too often to be otherwise."

It is the job of the sealer and his deputy to test and seal every

piece of weighing or measuring instrument that is used at least once a year. Anderson is responsible for enforcing the county ordinance governing weights and measures.

Soviets Take Lead In Can-You-Top-This?

By Stanley Johnson

Moscow (AP) — Top Soviet scientists are trying hard to knock down a science fiction theory that a meteorite which struck northeast Siberia 52 years ago was actually

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