

THE VALUE OF INTEGRITY

In our City of Birmingham, Michigan, we have a village-type shopping community that comes close to being unique in these days of discount stores and suburban super-shopping "centers".

Everyone of you readers know this, of course. But what you might not know—or rather, what you may not always take into account in your day-to-day efforts to stretch your shopping dollars to cover your needs—is the fact that the Birmingham village-type merchandising method offers you many advantages and benefits.

While they seem obvious when you stop to think about them, these benefits frequently are underestimated or even overlooked. And such is the purpose of this message: to review these advantages and to get you as a member of this community to think about them in the firm belief that your own common sense and good judgment then will guide you to do your shopping in these facilities, to the mutual gain of both resident and merchant.

The first and immediate benefit that you get when you shop in any one of the Birmingham establishments, is a better value—a better dollar's-worth.

Birmingham is well known among distributors and manufacturers of consumer goods as the quality center of the Midwest. If you want the best quality, you can get it here, and you can get it at a competitive price. True, you can get similar articles at competitive prices in a big shopping center. But are you getting competitive quality? If you are, then where does the money come from to amortize these huge, ultra-fancy, artistic monsters? Do you really get free parking, or does the rent on the parking facility get added to the price you pay for the merchandise?

Common sense tells you the answer: If the article is priced the same then the difference is taken out of the true value, the quality.

And discount prices? Does anyone sincerely believe that you can buy an article that will meet your requirements and give you lasting worth, all at a price substantially below the real worth of the article? Regardless of how cheap his trappings or how inelegant his methods, the discount merchant can't afford to give away one thin dime. He must take the difference out of the quality. And the bigger the discount, the wider the discrepancy in the quality.

For example, it costs just as much to drive here from the warehouse regardless of whether the truck is loaded with gadgets worth \$10 or cheaper versions of the same gadget worth \$2. And so does everything else connected with selling that gadget cost the same: shelf space, advertising, bookkeeping, electric lights, and so on through the list of essential costs of distribution. The cheaper the gadget, therefore, the bigger loom the inescapable fixed costs. Or in other words, the cheaper you buy the gadget, the further down the sliding scale, in worse and worse proportion, is the quality that the merchant is able to give you.

On the other hand, when you buy the best obtainable, at a fair and realistic price, you are getting your best value!

As an incidental sidelight in the matter of value, when you get slightly away from straight merchandising and into the fields of custom craftsmanship, you have available to you in Birmingham the services of the finest creative talent. In Architecture, Decorating and Furnishing, Custom Attire, Jewelry, and other fields, you find many people of national reputation—and even some who have achieved world-wide recognition—all ready to give their personal attention to your desires. When you want the absolute individual best, the value added to the finished product as a result of the advice and creativeness of such talent is virtually priceless.

In addition to getting a better value, when you shop in Birmingham you get a guarantee that means more. Not that the wording or the legality are any different, but the man behind it is different.

These individual store owners, you see, take a great deal of pride in their reputations in the community. They stand behind their merchandise as a matter of personal integrity. If something does go wrong in spite of their precautions, most observers have noted, your local merchants would be inclined to make it right with you first, and then take up any possible argument with the manufacturer second.

Possibly this regard for personal reputation comes as a result of the fact that most of your merchants and the people they hire to serve you, are residents of the community and the bulk of their customers are friends and neighbors. But whatever the reason, the personal integrity of the merchant is a real and valuable benefit of shopping in Birmingham.

Not only do you get an initial value of better worth, and a better assurance of lasting satisfaction when you buy in Birmingham, but in addition you are storing up a bank of long-term benefit.

Although you may never have thought of it in this way, when you have a merchant who takes pride in the goods he sells, you have a mer-

chant who takes pride in the rest of his establishment and his community as well.

He maintains and constantly improves his premises. He recognizes the importance of keeping up his property value. How does this affect you? It affects you because as long as the commercial property values in a community stay up, so do the residential properties retain their desirability and value.

Any time a community starts going down it follows a fixed pattern as rigidly as night follows day. First the liquidation sale. Then the "For Rent" sign. Next the gas-pipe racks. Finally the painted paper signs stuck on the windows. Now the man next door closes down or follows suits to remain in competition and the dreary cycle is repeated. The property owners begin to suffer and soon the physical buildings start to deteriorate. Soon after that the nearest resident decides not to bother with his lawn, and step by step, inch by inch, deterioration creeps throughout the complete community.

So whether you realize it or not, by supporting your reputable local merchants, you are protecting your own property values in the long run.

And now we come to the benefit that appears to be the most remote but at the same time comprises the most enduring truth: When you buy the best obtainable goods at a fair price from a reputable merchant, you are helping to keep America strong, not only because you are keeping your own community healthy—and this is a corner of America—but also because you are fostering honest, tough competition between our enterprises. Far-fetched? No!

When you have national magazines trying to belittle and degrade our Country because one of their writers couldn't sell his second-hand ski boots in Switzerland—when you have bungling incompetents elected to high office on the theme that our economy is falling apart at the seams—when you have bureaucratic planners trying to scare us into higher taxes because they claim that our merchandise is too poorly made and too expensive to compete with the remote and nebulous European Common Market—and when you have irresponsible declaimers in every walk of life singing the blues about our feverish industries, then it's time to take a good hard look at the facts.

Sure, we make some junk in some of our factories. We also import a lot more trash. And make it or import it, we try to sell it to one another with the argument that it's a bargain. But is it really? You know it is not! Nothing could be more wasteful than to spend even one penny on a piece of useless junk.

And you don't have to buy it; the choice is entirely up to you. You can leave the junk lying on the counter and make your selection from the many excellent products offered to you. In the United States of America today we have absolutely the best of everything, and the most of it.

We have the best built homes; the best appliances; the biggest, easiest to handle, most comfortable automobiles; the finest hotels and restaurants; the best airplanes and flying services; the best ships on the seas; and no matter what you care to name, we have the best—and the most.

We have the best today, we had the best yesterday, and unless we throw it away will continue to have the best tomorrow. We shall keep on having the best as long as we demand it, and you as an individual can maintain this demand by passing up the cheap bargain substitutes by spending your money on items of real worth after shopping thoroughly for the best value!

When you buy the gadget for \$9.50 you challenge the \$10.00 man to improve his methods so he can sell for \$9.25, or else to improve his product to the point where he gives you an advantage in spending the extra 50c. This is the way we have always made progress. And this is a long-term advantage of shopping in Birmingham: you foster American progress through competition among manufacturers and distributors of quality merchandise.

In conclusion, the advantages that accrue to you when you do your shopping in the village-type community you are living in are these:—

- ★ You get a better initial value.
- ★ You get a better assurance of lasting satisfaction.
- ★ You protect your own residential values.
- ★ You help to keep America first.

The whole thing can be summed up in one simple, old-fashioned, platitude: You get what you pay for. These arguments are intended to remind you that you get plus benefits that you can't afford to overlook if you say to the man behind the counter, "Don't show me the cheapest value, show me the best value".

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