

Readers' letters are always welcome. The Editor does not necessarily agree with views expressed

A dealer's suggestions

To the Editor of the TRADER

JUST as Mr. Watts cannot accept some of the statements in my letter, neither can I accept his corrections.

He tries to make out that I stated that exports were of little interest to this country—which is utter nonsense. I still stand by my statement that home cycle-retailers would be much better off if there were no such things as exports. Manufacturers would then be compelled to give concentrated attention to the home market, and people would realise the advantages that the bicycle has to offer. The big barrier today to cycle sales is the snob angle: It is simply not done to ride a bicycle, and the sooner the manufacturers make a determined effort to end this attitude, the better.

As regards Mr. Watts' other corrections to my letter: I stated that home sales were 45 per cent of the pre-war figure; this figure I obtained from an article in the *Trader* some months ago. If it was false, it was Mr. Watts' duty to correct it at the time.

As regards advertising, I would say that as past schemes have proved quite useless, it is time a fresh approach was made. The statement that individual manufacturers have devoted considerable space to advertising cycling is quite untrue. A week before Whitsun, a large and expensive advertisement on the front page of the Midlands' biggest evening newspaper appeared at first glance to be an attempt to sell Whitsun; on second glance, it was an advertisement for a Birmingham furnisher with the same name as the cycle manufacturer; and, then, on reading down to the smallest print, the word bicycle was actually mentioned, and the truth was out, it was an attempt to sell bicycles. The advertisement was simply lettering, no picture at all. I sent one copy of this effort to you, Mr. Editor, and another to the managing director concerned. The latter's secretary acknowledged receipt of my letter by telephone, and promised a letter later, but this has not arrived yet. However, as subsequent advertisements from this source have depicted a very nice young

lady cyclist, I can consider my effort was not in vain.

I note that now the TV publicity campaign has almost finished, the experts are to decide whether there have been sufficient extra sales to have made it worth while. It would be interesting to know how these experts intend to decide this. The weather, for one instance, has been in favour of cycle selling—so how are they going to decide which new sales are due to weather and which to advertising? Bluntly, my guess is as good as theirs—this publicity cannot help but be beneficial, and no one can estimate its effect.

As regards the health angle, millions are spent on patent medicines, etc., many of them useless. The average person cannot help but benefit from the fresh air and exercise of cycling: Raleigh started because the late Frank Bowden was advised by his doctor to ride a bicycle.

Mr. Watts does not consider that the use of bicycles has dropped much, although thinking back a few years, remember, whenever a new road was made a cycle-path at the side was considered necessary. Now they are never mentioned. The problem has solved itself. There are not sufficient cyclists to warrant the paths.

My statement that cycle sales in America had doubled, again came from the *Trader*, and was mentioned in British arguments against increased tariffs, the statement being that British sales had so stimulated the American market, that American home production had vastly increased. Again, Mr. Watts, it was your duty to correct this statement if false.

The superior tone of the reply of Mr. Watts was once often adopted by manufacturers towards retailers. I, for one, do not feel inferior. I note that the NA claims good relations with the manufacturers was one achievement. I am an NA member, but I think that if it were changed to bad relations, with retailers continually badgering the manufacturers, we might get better individual results!

The passing of the BSA Cycles as an individual group is a thing to be regretted

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by us retailers. We, however, were largely to blame for this. Individually, we moaned at the travellers about any troubles we experienced. If there had been a means in the trade where we could have all got together and vented our complaints, no doubt notice would have been taken, but as it was, individually, we were powerless. I suggest that there is still something to be desired in the products of many firms and, as we retailers are the only ones who know of these weaknesses, we get together and ask you Mr. Editor, for a fortnightly page in the *Trader* under the heading of Constructive Complaints, where we could tell of our difficulties.

Designing in the cycle trade, except for the biggest firms, has always been done by executives as part of their job. This used to work quite well in the past, but today (as few will lower their dignity sufficiently to ride a bicycle) we get some poor designs being marketed; big improvements could often be made. The main moral of this for manufacturers is that when looking for executive staff they should insist on people with cycle-trade experience. The retail trade cannot afford to waste time teaching executives their jobs!

For the past 18 months or so, I have been working on a design for a moped, using a 49 c.c. Trojan engine. I now have several of these models completed and running very satisfactorily. I am now looking for a manufacturer to make them. His qualifications must be that he is capable of sufficient independent thought to realise that there is a vast market for a moped at £40, and be sufficiently strong-willed to break away from copying the Continentals. No big capital is required, as most of the parts are already made. Just a small factory would do. These engines cost £9 complete in dozens, so the £40 price is readily attainable. The job is fitted with a three-speed gear to the motor, is two-thirds normal weight, and has scooter weather-protection, fan cooling, semi-closed engine and belt primary and final drives.

When the hoots of derision which this last revelation has brought have died down, I would state that no one who has not had experience with the belt-drive Cyclaid motor is entitled to criticise. I sold over 50 of these motors, and found the drive 100 per cent satisfactory. It did not slip, even in wet weather.

It is no use comparing the belt of the 1920's, with its troublesome fastener, with

the modern endless V-belt, or lose sight of the fact that the engine is 49 c.c., and not 490 c.c. Nothing has been allowed to interfere with easy servicing, the back wheel can be removed in 30 seconds, and the complete engine in five minutes. Other points are: Decarbonisation every 5,000 miles, and no dirt-in-carburettor trouble. Servicing would be so easy that retailers would be able to offer to do all engine servicing and replacement of parts for 1s. per week and make a good profit on the deal. Any offers?

If you, Mr. Editor, are able to agree to my suggestion regarding space for suggested improvements to designs, I should like to offer the following:

Two speed-gear items have always puzzled me. The first is the fact that on hub brakes and Dyno hubs, the ball-cover washer on the brake, or Dyno side, is part of the cone, and not of the hub shell. Consequently, no oil whatsoever is retained in this bearing. It will always seep down the inside of the shell and cause poor braking and a dry bearing. This seems doubly peculiar to me, in view of the fact that on the opposite sides of these hubs an interlocking seal is used which traps lubricant at its base, and it is undoubtedly the best device of its kind in the trade. The makers' explanation will be that they always pack this bearing with grease on assembly and the hub-brake has an oil-catching device. To this I would say that they also put an outside oilhole to this hub, with a big invitation to over-oil and the oil-trapping device only works when the wheel is stationary, and whatever oil finds its way to this bearing will find its way out again by gravity in no time.

Occasionally, we have to replace hub-shells in these hubs owing to the case-hardening of the ball cups having been worn through, and I notice that the trouble is always on the drum-side only. I consider that if the double-cone washers were fitted to both sides of this hub, the bearings could be packed on assembly with soft hmp grease, and the oil-hole dispensed with. This system was used on the old Cyclo hub-brakes, and I never came across a dry bearing nor an oily brake lining.

The second criticism is that the slot for anchoring the spring in caliper brakes should be on the bush through the arches, and not on the shaped washer. Fitted as it is, it is impossible to centre the brake unless both sides of the spring are of equal tension. If it were fitted in the bush it would be possible to bolt up the bush slightly off

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centre to compensate for the unevenness. Many brakes are so designed; others need revision.

We repairers would find life much easier if Cyclo Gears was to standardise free-wheel pawls and springs and make the hole for the spring pin a thou bigger, to allow for the easy removal of the pin. It often takes longer to remove these pins than it does to dismantle, clean and reassemble a freewheel.

Spring-type luggage carriers are popular, but some will not fit 90 per cent of the cycles used today, as the front fixing continually slips down and rests on the caliper brake. The cure is simple, just a couple of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. slots in the front fixing-plate and two clips round the back stays to replace the present plate and wing-nut. Fitted thus, you could stand on it without any movement.

H. V. POWELL,

96-98, Birchfield Road,
Birmingham, 19.

Organisation suggested for sub-agents

I AM a motor-cycle and scooter dealer in Birmingham, where a considerable number of local people find employment in the manufacture of these products; three motor-cycle factories are within two miles of my premises, and several others but a little farther away. I am an appointed agent for several of these widely known brands, which implies the right to sell them, and yet my showroom is filled with machines of foreign origin, from the manufacture of which the workers of France, Italy and Belgium have derived their bread and butter; and my sales efforts are directed towards persuading the workers of Birmingham to buy these. The prices do not vary greatly; for similar types the specifications and finish are largely a matter of individual taste, and, as with anything else the quality is largely dependent on what the customer is prepared to pay for.

Why, then, do I, and my staff, prefer to earn our living by peddling the products of factories so remote from this veritable hub of the motor-cycle industry? Simply because they are easier to get, and stock, than the machines made a couple of miles away.

If I want a model XXX machine, made by the people who live around me, I must first apply to the main distributing agent for this make, whose premises are much farther away than the factory. He will take my

order, possibly with no great enthusiasm at this time of the year particularly, since he also displays model XXX's in his showroom, and perhaps if the delay is too long, my prospective customer may get tired of waiting, and seeing that he has the machines for immediate delivery I may lose the order.

In due course, however, my order will reach the factory, and after the ceremonial of checking, wrapping and despatching, the model will be delivered, not to me, but to the main agent, who will then prepare his invoice to me, adding his legitimate profit, and let me know that I may collect it; taking the cash and tax with me.

If I want this machine for display, to attract customers, therefore, not only am I deprived of the normal trading credit of 30 days, but I am holding the purchase-tax baby, having paid it on collecting the machine, and now hoping to get it back, if and when I sell it, providing no alteration in tax rates is made in the meantime.

For the privilege of displaying each model, therefore, I can expect to pay the main agent perhaps £100, and lend the government upwards of £50 tax, until such time that I can collect it back from the hypothetical customer.

In contrast, the distributors of the foreign machines are fully alive to the mutual benefits derived from adequate showroom display, and encourage this by supply of machines direct and delivered, with sale or return facilities, whereby the tax is paid on final sale only. In fairness, two local British manufacturers also follow this policy, and I am only too pleased to include their products in my showrooms.

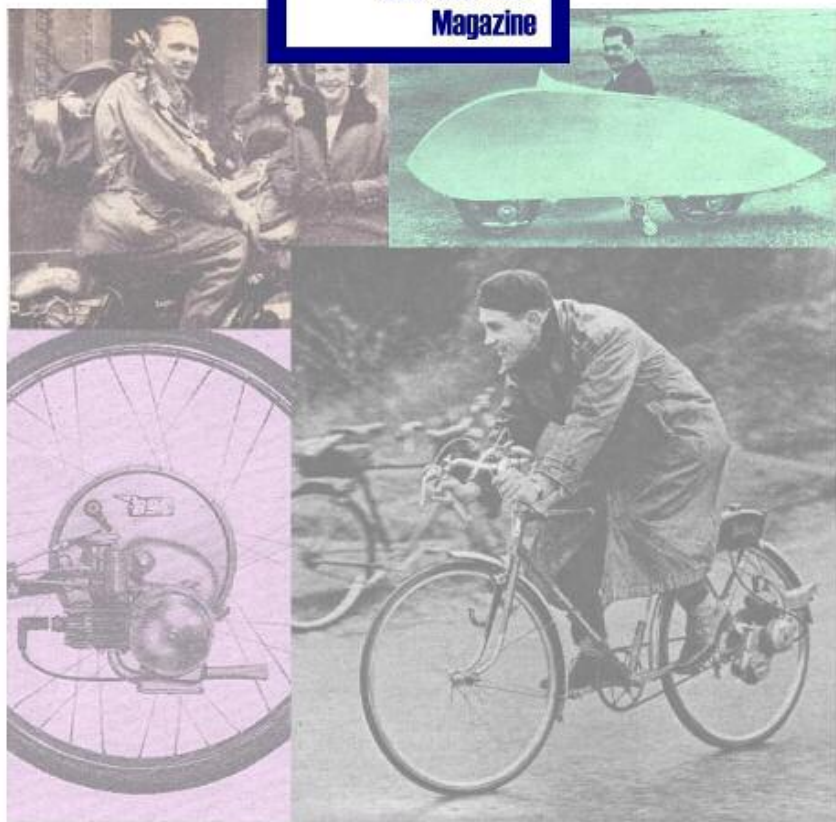
Considering the recent increase in HP deposits, the strikes and restrictive practices abounding in the car and motor-cycle industries, and the attitude of many sub-agent retailers whom I know are forced to the same brand pushing tactics as myself, it will come as no great surprise to see the workers of this city travelling to collect their unemployment pay on the exotic machines now being sold in their thousands.

Perhaps any like-minded sub-agents would care to contact me with a view to forming yet another association, to protect our interests against all the others we are already in.

L. W. WALKER, Proprietor
Walkers, Walkers Cycle Depot,
Walkers Radio and Television,
Walkers Service Depot,
The Green Lane Cycle Co.

Green Lane, and Witton Road,
Birmingham.

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