

be channeled through them but more thought given to facilities, including scholarships, that are needed to turn out well-prepared prospective small business people.

SIDEWALK BUSINESSES

In the larger cities across the country, more and more sidewalk businesses challenge the pedestrian as he walks from one appointment to another. In one sense, this is nothing new. Go back several generations to the popcorn wagon, the hamburger or hot dog stand. New York City had its "snow" ice cream carts and its hot chestnut purveyors. And who can forget the flower stalls of San Francisco? You may think of others.

But today in Washington, and elsewhere, sidewalk merchants are selling a much wider assortment of items to the natives as well as to the tourists: jewelry, leather goods, small clothing items, candles, flowers, preserved and fresh fruits. While there is no question about their being small, there may be some question about their wares being cheap. One such purveyor is reported selling handmade metal jewelry for as high as \$200 an item.

Quite flexible in their operation, these merchants have little or no overhead, no taxes, no staff to train and supervise. The small merchants with stores under roof, housed from the elements, would like to get rid of these "intruders" because they crowd the sidewalk in front of their stores, often take the money away from potential customers before they can reach a designated store, and give a tone to the area which the regular merchants do not desire.

Last spring, prior to the opening of the Bicentennial, in response to complaints from these regular merchants the city government of Washington issued an order that all sidewalk businesses would have to operate from under cover or close their operations.

But the sidewalk operators had their backers also. The net result was that specific locations in certain parts of downtown along the Mall were opened to these sun and rain business people, although the number of spaces was not adequate to meet the need.

Where will all of this lead? Well, rain, wind and snow will take its toll. A few regular merchants may take over or buy out one or more of their short-lived rivals. But a large store room, warehouse space or area that is wisely located for this purpose may become a central area where such merchants can gather to sell their wares . . . if the location is a good one. This takes us back to the old farmers' markets. Space in a centrally located shopping center might do the trick. Thus we could have a "new" kind of business opening up for those who wish to start a very small business of their own.

DIRECT SELLING

Have you noted a new kind of TV sales promotion in your area? In Washington, an unusual method of TV selling has been introduced in the sale of musical records, and of household tools and small appliances such as food slicers, household wrenches, and a simplified painting system. The thirty-second or one-minute ad indicates that the product cannot be purchased in any local store, but can be obtained by calling a local telephone number, by calling a toll-free telephone number or by writing to a given address, with full payment returned if the customer is not satisfied with the product or service.

Why do I introduce the idea at this point? It is possible that this method may increase in volume and variety of products if the present advertisers find the method profitable. For products which have a broad market and can be sold for not more than \$10 or so per unit, this is a new door-to-door method of selling without facing the door as a barrier to reaching the potential customer. This method of selling, however,

eliminates the retailer, large or small. In training, is there anything which you can point out to such retailers which would improve their competitive position in such a circumstance?

SMALL BUSINESS AND THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

Will small business benefit from the recent change in administration? Probably yes, but also probably not as much as small business would hope, or its friends expect. Small business has improved its Washington position considerably over the past few years, but it still has a long way to go in terms of basic influence. True, many owners of small business firms support such organizations as the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, the Nation-

al Association of Manufacturers and the American Retail Federation, even though the official objectives of these groups are not identical with those of small business as such. Additionally, Congressional leadership, the Administration, trade associations and educational institutions are beginning to show more active support for small business. Let us hope the net results will be concrete and useful. Incidentally, have you asked yourself, what are we doing in this community that is advanced, new, and innovative? What has my own organization started within the past twelve months? What new thinking has gone into local small business training lately? What am I doing to keep up with and ahead of this progress?

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