

# Golden Age of Advertising Forecast

A FEW short years ago the premium was a pint-sized pygmy tugging at the hem of radio, seeking a lift. And then, with the startling suddenness characteristic of radio trends, that "lift" matured into an amorous embrace, after which the premium settled comfortably on the shoulders of radio like some benevolent gremlin, gurgling "Happy Days Are Here Again" to the tuneful accompaniment of pyramiding box-tops and tinkling cash registers.

But then came the war. And under the current impact of priorities, shipping shortage and such, the box-top once again threatens to become merely the top of a box rather than the open sesame to fabulous advertising gains.

## Terrific Sales Stimulant

Yes, men, there's a war on, and premium merchandising seems to be one of the first casualties. Not a fatality but nonetheless a badly wounded soldier of radio fortune. Too bad, too; a hot premium was such a swell way of getting everybody excited or re-excited, all along the line. The copywriter got a kick out of it, because a premium deal gave him a chance to see some actual, traceable, honest-to-God results.

The client sales force had something to go out and wow the trade with. The distributor and jobber salesman got a shot-in-the-arm that sent them out on the street with something to talk about besides what happened in the sixth.

The agency got a little more solid (temporarily at any rate) with the client. Was everybody happy? You said it. Well, now that the war, priorities and such things have (in the sentiment of Ring Lardner) knocked premium merchandising for a double row of early June peas, let's hold a little tenth inning bull session for future reference.

## Form of Showmanship

There isn't much doubt that premium merchandising, properly conducted, was and still can be a terrific sales stimulant. It has been frowned on, viewed with alarm, and belabored by many an advertising conservative; yet advertisers and agencies who have taken the trouble to discover and use its technique often have been swept to enormous success.

They have found that premium merchandising, especially when put

## Premiums Out but War Develops Hard-Selling Copy Technique

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on a self-liquidating basis, has been not (as so many have claimed) a form of bribery; actually, it has been a form of showmanship which offers extra, added value and buying-inducement to the customer, plus an operating profit to the advertiser as well.

Used with the average five-a-week daytime serial, premium merchandising has been a smash. Yet—just as soap opera itself falls within very strict limitations which, when violated, penalizes the advertiser severely—premium merchandising forces the advertiser to conform to very strict rules and these rules simply cannot be tampered with.

Time and again, an advertiser who deluded himself into believing that "something different" meant something better, found he was operating at a loss, and had to go back to the ABC's of premium merchandising to get on safe ground again. Here are two actual case examples within my own experience:

### Ten-Cent Items Best

Advertiser A, operating an across-the-board quarter-hour daytime serial offered a pair of good quality silk stockings for 25c and a box top, and got rid of more than a million pairs of stockings with a million consequent product sales, at an advertising cost of 2c per return.

Advertiser B (another client, incidentally, of the same agency) overruled the agency and offered a pair of stockings, of far better quality than the 25c pair, for 50c and a box-top. He got rid of only about 200,000 pairs of stockings, at an advertising cost of something like 67c per return.

This seems to be Rule 1 of premium merchandising. This one agency alone, from an experience with over 150 million box-top returns, found that a 10c self-liquidating premium box-top offer has the best chances of huge returns; a 25c offer has the next best. An odd-amount offer like 15c, or a

higher-priced offer like 50c, just didn't get by at all.

The war and its strictures will have many beneficial long-range effects on industry, advertising and business in general. The transportation situation is already making itself felt in the trend to space-saving dehydrated and frozen foods, capsule soups and the like. Plastics, already well on their way before Pearl Harbor, promise to be a basic material in millions of premiums of the future. Automotive designing is in for almost shocking changes which will obsolesce every car now on the road. Synthetic rubber will probably be a better product than the original article.

I'll even go out on a limb and predict tidal changes in advertising agency functions, operations and basis of compensation. And not the least of all these benefits will be better skill on the part of copywriters in writing advertisements and radio commercials that stand on their own hind legs and sell all by themselves, without benefit of showmanship, premiums or any other enticement than sheer selling-power. The "premium" will be just good copy—nothing else.

What has made premium merchandising tick? Those who from their ivory towers frown down on the practice, claim that the self-liquidating box-top offer is simply a method of buying back your own customers. Without going into the highways and byways of this argument (even if it were sound, which it just ain't) the fact remains that buying back your own customers is certainly preferable to leaving them for your competitor to buy away from you. As a matter of fact, self-liquidating premium merchandising is a way to sample and re-sample new and old customers at the customers' expense.

### Both Types Sell

Having written some millions of dollars worth of copy for the agency that I believe invented the self-liquidating premium offer, and also for the agency that I believe pretty much invented the straight-sell commercial, I ought to be able to assay the two methods for what my own experience is worth. One of these agencies has the largest radio billing in the world. The other is the world's largest user of one-minute spots.

Let's take a look at one commercial of each type, just to get off on the right foot. Here is a successful

self-liquidating premium commercial used in one of the most successful five-a-week soap operas on the air, *David Harum*, Feb. 10, 1939:

Tens of thousands of women are now sending to David Harum for one of the most amazing bracelets ever offered—a bracelet bearing a fragment of actual stone from the original grounds of Blarney Castle, Ireland. Yes, fantastic as it sounds, it's true. Stone from the original Blarney Castle estate, Ireland, has been brought across the ocean to make this bracelet for you. It's the first time this stone has ever been offered in America. And you get it only through David Harum.

You've heard of kissing the Blarney Stone. Perhaps you are one of the thousands who've journeyed to Blarney Castle. You know the stories of good luck and the "gift o' gab" associated with kissing the Blarney Stone.

And now you can actually have a bit of Ireland—a piece of stone from Blarney Castle grounds—to wear. And not only that. It comes as one of four charms of a lovely golden colored bracelet. The four charms are a shamrock, a four-leaf clover, an authentic miniature of Blarney Castle and the stone from Blarney Castle grounds itself. And so no one can possibly doubt that this stone is real; the shamrock bears the true inscription—"Guaranteed genuine stone from the original Blarney Castle grounds, Ireland". Sworn records trace the journey of this stone to the bracelet we send you.

It's like the bracelets David is having made for June Saunders in our story. But it's real.

Now here's why you should send immediately. The legislature of Ireland is considering passing a law to prohibit the export of any more of this stone. Hence once our limited supply is gone you may never be able to get this stone. That's why—in years to come—it may become a more and more valuable keepsake.

We make this offer because we want every housewife in America to try Bab-O, the amazing cleaner that saves needless scouring by dissolving grease. We believe that if you try Bab-O just once—you'll keep on using Bab-O.

So—to get your Blarney Bracelet, just write to David Harum, 3-S-S Fourth Avenue, New York City—sending a Bab-O label and only 25c.

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COMMANDING OFFICER of the Coast Guard in the Sixth Naval District, Capt. Michael J. Ryan described Coast Guard fighting on every war front, in the first of a Friday half-hour series, *Men of the Coast Guard*, on WTMA, Charleston, S. C. Also at the mike are: Stanley Raymond, announcer (center), and Robert E. Bradham, WTMA general manager.

IS PREMIUM merchandising passe? Like many other so-called "institutions" premiums have been almost totally eclipsed by the war. Here Weston Hill, copy director of Sherman & Marquette, Chicago, analyzes radio commercial copy. At the close of the war he foresees a golden age of American business and industry, and with it a golden age of good, hard-selling advertising technique born of wartime ingenuity.