



THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

THE man whose like is most missed in our time, we often think, is Mr. Dooley, that great Irishman who, fifty years or so ago, surveyed the American scene daily with the calm and irreverent eye of his creator, Finley Peter Dunne. Mr. Dooley Redivivus would discard the dialect. His grandchildren probably talk like John F. Kennedy and Bishop Sheen, and Dooley would be the first to understand that readers no longer care to struggle with a forgotten *Völkssprache*. It would be a relief to him, too; it must have been a strain to maintain the way he talked after twenty-five years of residence outside Ireland. But he would retain his ability to see to the essentials. As a saloonkeeper, Mr. Dooley in his former existence would have resented a civic proposal to open a sidewalk café across the street from his own store simply because the sidewalk stood at the edge of a park. But Dooley R. (for Redivivus) would quickly see the premise for the future in the Parks Commissioner's decision to accept Mr. Hartford's generous gift of \$862,500 with



which to build a two-story restaurant in glass and concrete at the northwest corner of Fifty-ninth and Fifth, across from the Plaza. Central Park is completely surrounded by sidewalks, maybe six miles of them, and the view from them into it is wasted entirely on trees. With a café instead of a vacuum every two hundred and forty feet, which is the length contemplated for this one, it would be possible to get in twenty saloons to the mile and still leave four hundred and eighty feet for fire exits from the Park, thus giving a ring of a hundred and twenty saloons—an unparalleled adornment to the Jool of the Atlantic, as Mr. Dooley might say, dropping back

for a moment into his old speech habits.

"I read in this morning's New York *Times*," the new Dooley would say, "that Bob Moses, who welcomed the contribution to the landscape, said no further action by any other city official was necessary—the Parks Commissioner's word was law, except when it was in conflict with the chairman of the Triborough Bridge Authority or the chairman of the Mayor's Committee on Slum Clearance or the president of the World's Fair, all of which is himself. Bob is a man of great taste—you can tell it by the looks of the Coliseum—and so is Newbold Morris, that's sitting in for him while he's running the Fair, but what do you suppose would happen if we got a Commissioner from the West Side? The voters on that side of the Park might want a few saloons on Central Park West that would be handier for them than walking all the way to Sherman's statue, and then the residents on Fifth Avenue in the Sixties and Seventies might ask for some, to make the Avenue a well-lighted street until four o'clock in the morning and safe for women walking their dogs and drinks getting out of taxicabs. Then there might be a Commissioner from Harlem (Parks Commissioner, except when it's Moses, is a lower office than Borough President, which Harlem has won already), and this fellow's constituents would want cafés on the north side of the Park. All a rich man in any of those districts that wanted to make a name for himself would have to do would be present the Parks Department with the price of the premises. And in time there will be a Puerto Rican Commissioner, wanting joints for the northwest and northeast borders of the Park, and maybe a Yorkville Commissioner that will take care of the East Eighties and Nineties with *Bierstuben* elbow to elbow down as far as the Metropolitan Museum, which has a temperance restaurant inside it already. All they will have to do to man them is find concessionaires that promise not to make

any money, and that is easy—to find ones that promise, I mean. At last, if things go right, there will be no need for anybody to go into the Park at all, and maybe get mugged. Everybody will just go to the edge and sit down and have a beer, or a Daiquiri, or some tomato juice spiked with a mixture of champagne and tequila, according to the neighborhood, and the children can eat potato chips. As soon as there is no further use for the Park except for express-thruway bypasses, so people can get away from it, the City can buy it from itself at a third of its value and cut it up into Title I projects and sell them to people who want to build apartment houses at fifteen hundred dollars a room, counting breakfast nooks."

Dooley's straight man, Mr. Hennessy, also R., might then ask, "Is it true, do you think, Dooley, that a Parks Commissioner can accept in the name of the city a gift to put on park land anything he has a liking to?"

"It is," Dooley would have to reply. "Moses is the one who said it. A pool hall, or a shooting gallery, or a museum full of porcelain pickles."

"Or a brewery?" Hennessy might ask.

"Or a brewery," Dooley would say. "As long as the concessionaire promised not to make any money out of it."

Gourmet

JUST the other day, we were telling you about a process that the National Cash Register people have developed, by means of which liquids can be turned



into powder form, and cocktails (to cite one of the more lighthearted applications of the principle) can thus be eaten, not drunk; now we'd like to tell you about a process that the protean Henry



"Our cup runneth over."

Sell has developed, by means of which food in powder form can be turned into liquids, and complete meals can thus be drunk, not eaten. The newly septuagenarian Mr. Sell, who is the editor of *Town & Country*, an authority on Buffalo Bill and vitamins, and the successful packer of tinned guinea hen, liver pâté, and ham hash, was reported in this magazine some twelve years ago to be hard at work on "Project X... a superfood... high in all nutritive elements except calories." We're glad to say that the intervening years have not been wasted, and that Mr. Sell has just had us up to his food laboratory, in the Heckscher Building, for a delicious and sustaining meal that consisted entirely of solutions of Project X. The third member of our luncheon party was a Sell vice-president, Dr. Janet Leckie, who looks a good twenty years younger than her boasted fifty-two and is therefore an ideal advertisement for Sell products. So, for that matter, is Sell, who is trim of figure and quick of movement, and who, pedometer clipped in place, often makes his way to lunch at Le Pavillon by way of a brisk five-mile hike through Central Park.

The pro-tem Sell dining room was furnished with a couch, easy chairs, a

desk, a sink, a cupboard, and a sideboard. When we inquired about Project X, Mr. Sell extracted from a drawer of the desk a little, multicolored envelope whose label bore the not very enticing legend "Sell's Low Calorie Diet—An Instant Formula—Net Weight 2 Ounces." "Formula feeding for adults was bound to come along sooner or later, just as it came for infants," he said, to our dismay. "Americans spend far too much of their time eating far too much, and when they finally go on a diet, they have far too much difficulty counting calories—wondering, for example, if an 'average serving' of steak means two ounces or ten ounces, and usually deciding hopefully on the latter. We'd been waiting for the ideal moment to announce our answer to the problem, and when the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company presented its new weight tables last year, indicating that desirable weights for Americans are something like twenty pounds lower than national average weights, we decided the hour was approaching. Then the pharmaceutical people started putting out various soluble-powder formulas for doctors to prescribe in cases of obesity, and it seemed obvious that enough people were becoming concerned

with saving time and preserving their figures and their health to provide a regular food market, as distinct from a pharmaceutical market, for our formula. It went on sale June 1st, at Bloomingdale's, Gimbel's, and Abraham & Straus—a two-hundred-and-twenty-five-calorie powdered lunch, at forty cents an envelope. Jennie, may we try some?"

Dr. Leckie proceeded to the sideboard and tore open five envelopes similar to the one Mr. Sell had shown us. With the help of a blender, she mixed the powdery white contents of the envelopes with, severally, plain ice water, ice water and tomato juice, ice water and instant coffee, ice water and instant cocoa, and iced carbonated water and fresh strawberries. "Any one of these combinations makes an easy lunch for someone who is just vaguely watching his weight or his time and dreads the extra calories of a big expense-account lunch or a gooey sent-up sandwich," Dr. Leckie said.

"As for people who are really anxious to lose weight, an envelope of this instead of each meal, and another at bedtime, plus a leafy-vegetable salad and some low-calorie bread sticks, will keep them under a thousand calories a day and still give them the minimum nutrient requirements set by the National Research Council of the United States Food and Drug Administration. Try a sip from each mix and tell me which you'd prefer for lunch."

Dr. Leckie poured samples of the five brews into jigger glasses, and we dutifully sipped from each; they all had a bland, creamy, rather maltheike flavor, and we concluded that we liked the tomato-juice version best. Dr. Leckie gave us a tall glass of the stuff, and we downed it with a will. Afterward, we studied one of the envelopes, noting that the formula contained non-fat dry milk, defatted wheat germ, milk protein, corn oil, sugar, primary-grown dry yeast, dry diastatic malt, extract of Irish moss, lecithin, vanillin, vanilla, sodium iron pyrophosphate, irradiated dry yeast, niacinamide, and Vitamin-A palmitate. Again we felt a twinge of dismay, and we hinted, as politely as possible, that the Sell formula sounded like the work of a health-food nut, and might, if suc-

cessful, spell the doom of *gourmandise*. Mr. Sell looked shocked, and Dr. Leckie rushed to his defense. "Certainly not!" she said. "A health-food nut unbalances his diet, while Henry balances his. He feasts on octopus in Venice, on eel in—well, in eel country, and on formula in the office. This is the true gourmet point of view. Everything in proportion."

"The secret of a full life," said Sell, "is selectivity."

Farewell

OUTSIDE a Lexington Avenue supermarket the other morning, a friend of ours listened in on the conversation of a couple of eight-year-olds who were waiting around while their mothers finished their shopping.

"Can you keep a secret?" said one.

"You bet," said the other.

"A very important secret?"

"Cross my heart."

"The most important secret in the world?"

"I promise."

"Well, on Wednesday I'm going to run away to Alaska with my dog."

Music

THERE'S a firehouse just down the street from this office, and over the years we've grown more or less accustomed to the din of siren and bell as the big red truck went roaring in and out. Now something new and horrendous has been added to the din—a horn that sounds very much as if the Queen Elizabeth were bearing down on West Forty-third Street in a heavy fog. This horn comes as close to being truly carsplitting as any sound we know of, and, heard at close quarters, can make an unwary pedestrian leap three feet straight up in the air. Exactly what is the unnerving device, and why has the Fire Department adopted it, in a city already dizzy with decibels? For answers to these rather petulant questions, we've gone straight to the fire horse's mouth—Fire Commissioner Edward F. Cavanagh, Jr., who told us that the dreadful object bears the boyish name of the Grover T Air Horn, is sounded by releasing compressed air through a vibrating diaphragm, costs the Department twenty dollars and twenty-five cents per horn, has been gradually added to fire-fighting apparatus throughout the city for the past three years and is at present installed on about a hundred pieces of apparatus, and will someday be standard equipment on all pieces except chiefs' cars.

Mr. Cavanagh explained that the Department has adopted the Grover T not in spite of how noisy the city is but because of it. "The trouble with the old-fashioned siren in New York is that its whining sound becomes diffused among all the other sounds, so it's hard to make out what direction it's coming from," he said. "If you're driving in traffic, especially in winter, with your windows closed, you can't judge whether the fire trucks are ahead of you or behind you. With the air horn, there's never a moment's doubt. Boop, boop! The same goes for pedestrians. One boop and they're on their toes. In open country, the Grover T can be heard for a distance of four miles. In the city, the distance is considerably less, but what we're after is intensity, not range."

Another objection to siren and bell sounds, the Commissioner said, is that people have become too used to them, from hearing them constantly on ambulances and police cars as well as on fire trucks. "I hope people *never* get used to the Grover T," he said. "We've had a

certain number of complaints, of course. People have asked why we can't be quieter at night, when they want to sleep, and when there's obviously much less traffic to get through. Well, the interesting thing is that for us the danger of traffic accidents is much greater at night than it is in the daytime. Someone approaching an intersection at three o'clock in the morning, say, is unlikely to slow down, even if he hears a siren somewhere and reacts to it more alertly than most people do. Our equipment has been in some bad night accidents in recent years, which I blame on sirens. Once, two of our engines, responding to separate fires very late at night, arrived simultaneously at a certain intersection. Each engine had its siren going, but owing to that continuous, diffused whining sound they just didn't hear each other. The trucks whammed into each other and overturned, and several of our men were injured. To make matters worse, the trucks then caught fire, and the sparks set an adjoining building ablaze. That part of the accident was most embarrassing. If the



"I'll tell you why I'm a Republican! I'm a Republican because I want to keep alive the two-party system."