

Greetings:

In this bicentennial year, cornflakes may represent a greater threat to our continued existence as a nation than foreign enemies or ICBM's with MIRV's or not. No fooling, cornflakes are a real and insidious danger to our survival. Not from some contamination of its ingredients. Not from a massive binge of overeating. Nor from a latent, undiscovered cancer potential. No, only what the seemingly innocuous cornflakes are in the marketplace. Cornflakes. It doesn't matter which producer, or the brand name, or at what supermarket you purchase it.

Cornflakes usually come in two sizes - the 12 oz and 18 oz boxes. We will examine the 18 oz size. For the 12 oz, just take 2/3's of the figures. The 18 oz box costs 65¢ in our local supermarket - the one which runs big full page ads each week telling what bargains are to be had by trading there. You can ignore that. Any of the 6 or 8 supermarket chains in a city like Tucson have the same 18 oz box of cornflakes. It will cost 65¢ at all of them, within a couple of pennies.

The 18 oz of cornflakes - one lb two oz - cost about a dime for the basic ingredients. About 10¢ - probably less, as the farmer will tell you. What accounts for the additional 55¢ added to the dime to reach a selling price of 65¢? How much for the food processor? We are said to be the marvels of present day production in turning out goods at minimal cost. How much for packaging? Again, technological marvels. How much for shipping and handling? Same great efficiency and know how. How much for advertising? That might be a big one, especially for prime time, but the sales are in millions of boxes. How much for the supermarket share? That can't be too much. All the big chains tell us their profits are in pennies - as low as 1¢ on the dollar - say 2¢ or 3¢. How much would that add to a 65¢ item?

For an exact, accurate breakdown, we might encourage a university research head to run a survey on this begins from the 10¢ of basic ingredients to the 65¢ price on the shelf - done by the Home Economics Dept or the School of Marketing or by a grad student who wanted an uncluttered title for his doctoral thesis.

Whatever way it is done, you must reach the conclusion that the selling price of 65¢ bears no relation to cost. The 18 oz box of cornflakes is being priced by a gouging seller who is after all the traffic will bear. Yea, all that he can get away with as long as the mulcted buyer continues to be a ninny who does not ask questions. Who goes on paying 65¢ for this box which was selling for as little as 36¢ not long ago. Who hasn't enough sense to let the box of cornflakes remain on the shelf until it sprouts an adornment of awn on the outside of the box as well as the inside.

It isn't just the cornflakes. It is many, many products. You pick the items. How do you justify the 8 oz jar of decaffeinated coffee - Brim by General Foods - that sells for \$2.85 for that half pound. These are staples. I won't mention perishables where prices go crazy and a mother cannot bring home a bunch of grapes or bananas for the kids without paying a figurative king's ransom.

This great land of ours which can provide abundance for all her people, and help feed much of the world is becoming a travesty of scarcity. Inflationary greed prices us out of the market by the millions. Feed stamps, designed really to help buttress supermarket sales, won't stem the tide. It is sickening, friends. It makes a shambles of the value of the dollar. It seriously undermines our economy. If we are to remain a people devoted to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, we will have to focus more attention on the manipulators of the price of cornflakes, of all supermarket products, of gasoline and and and.

--- Joseph Zashin