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THE

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Produced by the London branches of the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd



**THE FULLER FLAVOUR · DROPS IN A
DESERT · THREATENED HISTORIC
PUB · PUBLIC MONEY STOPS CHOICE**

What we CAN do

WHEN A brewery complains that its beers are too expensive, then we should take notice. Young's are concerned that the profit made by some tenants has increased although the volume of beer sold at their pubs (i.e. Young's profit) has fallen.

With the remaining big brewers falling into line with those who had put up their prices before Xmas, 1980 has started where 1979 left off. A few pundits are also calling for a swingeing levy on alcohol in exchange for a cut in direct taxation. This may well become a parrot-cry as we near the Budget.

Last year, 'London Drinker' launched various price-check exercises. We found that the theory was welcomed by our readers but that they had difficulty in identifying with it in practice: rip-off pubs seemed to thrive on publicity, while many bargain hunters probably kept quiet about their favourite haunt in case too much praise turned the landlord's head!

A campaign which proved to Young's that drinkers were also concerned about the cost of Young's beer should, however, provide the brewery with the best possible incentive to act, perhaps by threatening to reduce supplies to the offending pubs. So write, please, to us or to Young's about any of their pubs which charge significantly above the norm - 'norm' being around 40p for a pint of Ordinary Bitter in a saloon bar.

With this issue, the 'Drinker' reverts to monthly publication. Sales were given a timely boost over the holidays and, starting with the next issue, we shall print regular lists of outlets where you can buy the magazine.

LONDON DRINKER

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Public money used to stifle choice

The tale of three of the Big Six stopping a pub from selling the beers of its choice throws a disturbing light on the practices of licensing authorities.

DRINKERS IN the Forest Hill area are being deprived of a chance to sample a wider range of ales by local publicans and Big Six Brewers who are afraid of competition. But the man who is trying to offer more choice is not giving up without a fight.

Barcave Ltd., a Wine Bar, Luncheon Club and Free House group, have been fighting for the right to offer a selection of Real Ales at the new pub/restaurant which they are opening in Dartmouth Road, S.E. 23. Over a year ago, when they first applied for a licence, they met considerable opposition from three brewers with pubs in the vicinity - Charrington, Courage and Watney's. In an effort to reach a compromise, Barcave Managing Director, Ivor Andrews, offered to restrict his draught beer sales to one brewer - Charles Wells. Although the opposition from the brewers - the only people to object - was not withdrawn, Mr. Andrews got his licence.

Experience at other Barcave houses, such as the TANNERS HALL and the SIR JOHN FALSTAFF, both in EC3, showed that customers appreciated a choice of real ales. Ivor Andrews is serious about giving his customers what they want, so in November he applied to the local Licensing Planning Sub-Committee to have the "Wells only" restriction lifted.

Barcave were able to show plenty of good reasons for getting freedom to offer choice. There has been an increase in population of over 50% in the area since the last pub licence was granted, and the new pub would offer full restaurant facili-

ties both morning and evening. The rather motley collection of pubs owned by the objecting brewers offers little by way of excitement to the drinker's palate, and bar snacks of the most limited kind are about all that is available in the evening. Despite this, the LPSC refused to lift the restriction.

The application can, and will, be put before the Licensing Planning Main Committee in a few weeks. But if this fails then there is no right of appeal. Ivor Andrews has written to the three brewers concerned asking if they will discuss their objections. Apart from acknowledgements, no response has been elicited. The whole affair smacks of backstairs deals, secrecy and anti-competitive behaviour.

The Licensing Planning Main Committee will consider the application in March, by which time the Barcave will probably be open. Unless there is a change of attitude, customers at the Barcave will be wasting their time if they suggest to the manager that the pub sells some additional beers. Watney's, Courage and Charrington will have seen to that.

The ultimate irony, however, is that Charles Wells, who would obviously gain if their beers were the only ones on tap, have no objection whatsoever to seeing Sam Smiths, Brakspears or Ruddles competing alongside them. It seems as if some brewers at least have faith in the quality of their product and we should point out that neither Young's nor Shepherd Neame, who each have a pub in the Forest Hill area, (albeit a little further away) has raised objections to the Barcave.

