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The complaining customer, no matter how irritating he or she may be, isn't the one that New Bernians in business need to worry about. Less annoying, but more harmful to the cash register, is the customer who feels resentment but leaves the store silently, never to return.

Actually, the percentage of buyers who can't be pacified isn't large. The adage that the customer is always right is false, but assuming the squawk is made sincerely, a merchant is a fool not to lean over backward in an effort to reach a meeting of minds.

Recently we heard an exceptionally gentle woman, talking with several friends, say softly but firmly that she has no intentions of returning to a certain store. As she told it, one of the owners, from whom she had made purchases of no small amount a few weeks earlier, completely ignored her when next she shopped at his place.

It wasn't a case of forgetting her face, since the two had been acquainted for years. Maybe the merchant had a lot on his mind, or didn't feel up to par that day. Whatever the reason, or the excuse, he lost a good customer, and will probably never know why.

The average merchant is too smart to lapse into this sort of behavior. Unfortunately for him, the odds are great that occasionally or often one of his clerks will be guilty of rudeness that never gets called to the store owner's attention. Most customers, angered though they are, don't report the incident.

All of us, at one time or another, are victims of shabby treatment. Our episode came at a local super market. A pound of butter we had purchased several days earlier proved to be unfit to eat, so we carried it back to the store on our next shopping trip.

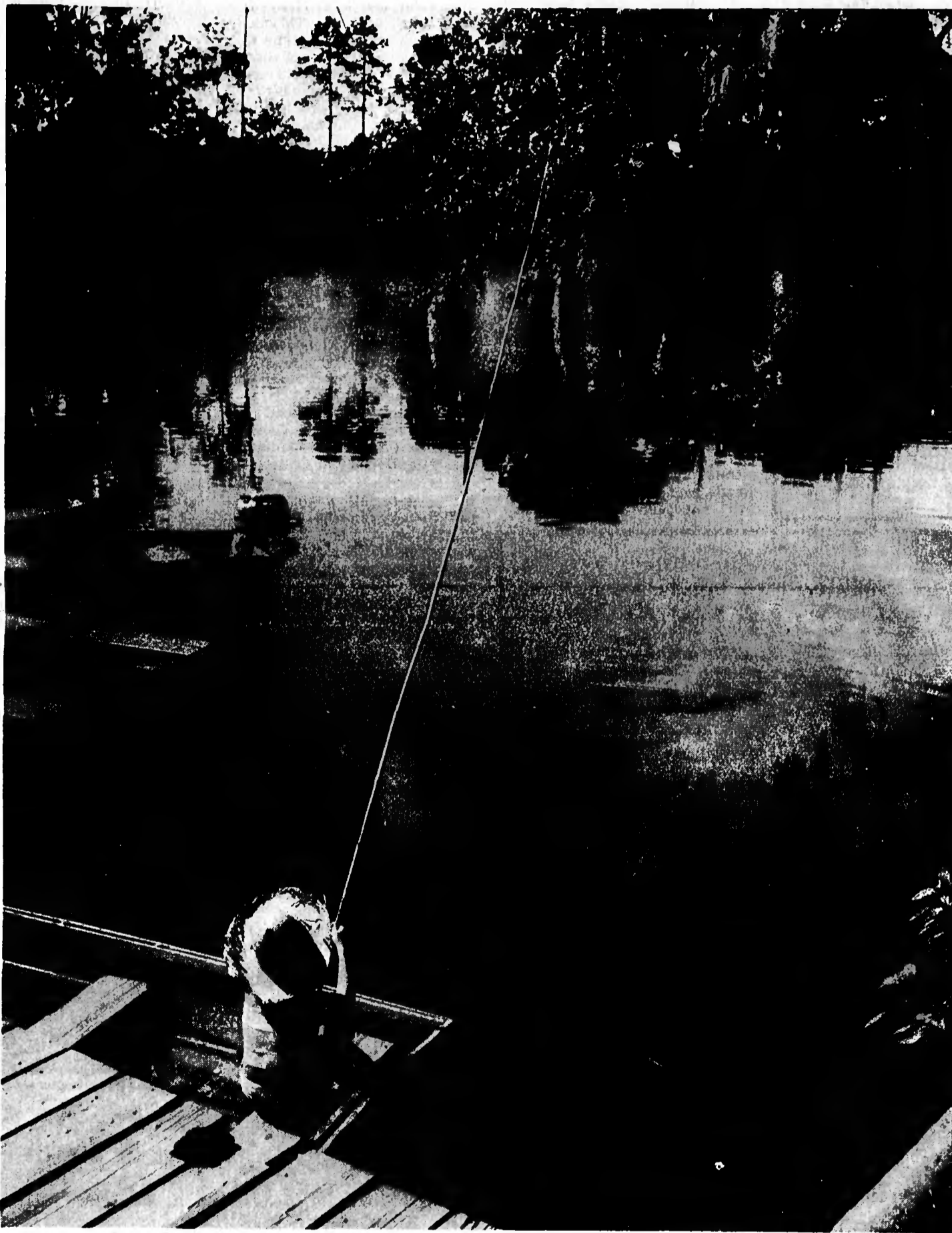
First we consulted the super-market's produce manager, and described the bitter flavor of the butter. With surprising candor, he informed us that the area where the butter had been displayed had been sprayed by a pesticide concern to get rid of bugs.

"They used too much of the stuff," he complained, "and we found it necessary to throw out a lot of merchandise. We're going to make them pay for it." Understandably, the produce manager told us to return the butter and get credit for it, when we passed through the check-out line.

The line was long when we got there, but this is what you can expect. When we finally arrived at the cash register, it was being presided over by a young man who curtly told us that he couldn't do anything about it.

He haughtily pointed to the store's other customer line, and said, "You'll have to see about it over there." So to and through the other long line we went. This time we were confronted by a young woman who had been employed by the supermarket for quite some time, and was in fact in charge of the office.

She listened to our whispered tale of woe, but quite obviously was insultingly unimpressed. She opened the carton, sniffed



Swimming holes, and fishing poles,
Ball games in the street;
Gentle rains on dusty lanes,
Calling to your feet.
Backyard shows, and tied-up toes,
Day dreams in the shade;
Shy romances, stolen glances
At some little maid.
Such is boyhood's fleeting day,
All too soon it fades away.
—Photo by Billy Benners.

