

Brazilian group tightens squeeze on coffee prices

United Press International
The Brazilian Coffee Institute, unruffled by the international uproar over soaring coffee prices, tightened the squeeze yesterday with another boost in export taxes, then agreed to join a producers' summit meeting to explain the move to consumers.

Across the United States, consumers mobilized to drive home an explanation of their own — summed up by one unidentified New Yorker who said if prices go any higher, "a person will need a second job to afford a second cup of coffee."

The nationwide boycott initiated by New York Consumer Affairs Commissioner Elinor Guggenheimer appeared to be gaining momentum, but two tea brokers sounded a disturbing echo to the cry of "switch to tea." They said tea

prices, spurred by increased demand, are on their way up as well.

Brazil inflamed the already fevered coffee market by raising its export tax from \$100 to \$103 per 132-pound sack. Since the tax — a major source of government revenue — is added to prices by Brazilian exporters, the move was sure to raise coffee costs for U.S. consumers beyond the present range of \$2.50 to \$3 a pound.

Brazilian officials have expressed belief that the world demand for coffee will remain stable, whatever the price, and that a consumer boycott will do little to bring prices down. However, not all coffee producers were happy with the situation.

Dow-Jones News Service quoted a Colombian coffee man as saying, "a nervous and volatile market like this isn't good for anybody."

Brazilian institute director Delauro Baumgratz said his country, with Colombia, will propose a special meeting of the 62-nation international coffee organization in London on Feb. 14. Dow-Jones said both U.S. and Brazilian officials initially were wary of the session, billed as an explanation of soaring prices.

An unnamed U.S. official was quoted as saying the meeting would be of little value "if all producers do . . . is condemn the boycott."

"But if they say, 'Yes, we deplore the situation and will do all we can to hold down prices,' then it would be useful," he said.

In New York City, a Consumer Affairs Department survey found that 52 per cent of shoppers interviewed said they either had cut coffee

consumption or switched to other beverages, but only 7 per cent expressed optimism that prices would not go higher.

In Cleveland, about 50 consumer-action volunteers passed out leaflets in front of supermarkets urging customers to keep coffee out of their market baskets, and in Cincinnati, a supermarket chain launched an ad campaign branding coffee prices "utterly ridiculous," and offered 10-cent-off coupons on purchase of cocoa, fruit juice or tea.

But in New York, Wall Street tea broker Herbert Thomas said Lipton — "the leader in the trade" — will raise prices 10 to 15 cents a pound in February.

"The rise will be peanuts compared to coffee," he said.

Silver Taps held last night

Silver Taps ceremonies were held last night in remembrance of a Texas A&M graduate student and part-time employee and two Houston students who died during the month-long semester recess.

Peter Chaplinsky, a 21-year-old junior from Houston, was killed in a car accident on his way back to spring semester classes. Twenty-year-old Larry Dean Hays, also a junior, died in a car crash as he left for the semester break. Lawrence P. Baugh, 32, was found dead in the Navasota River last Saturday.

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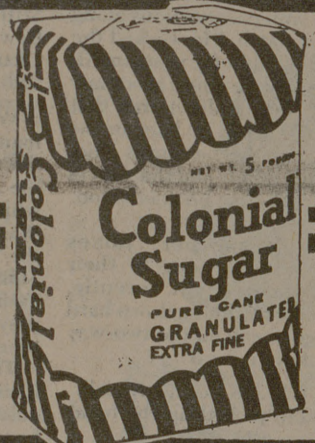
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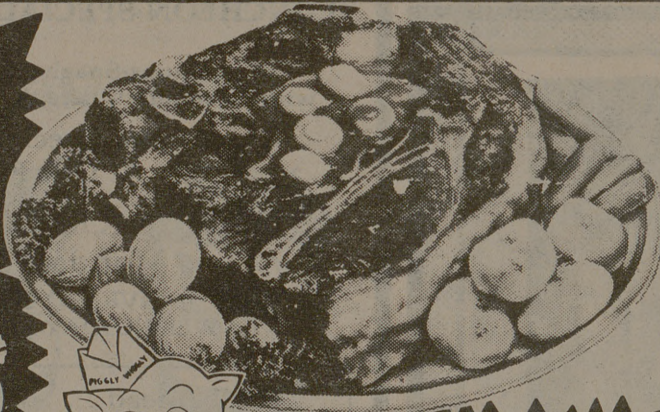
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