

Drug Industry Launches Facelifting Drive

WASHINGTON -- Gaining the public's confidence is a continuing chore for the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PMA).

Few other industries have been hit with so much sustained adverse publicity as have the companies that discover and produce the nation's prescription drugs.

From Congress, organized labor and even the White House have come a succession of proposals with one ultimate goal--to lower drug prices while maintaining drug quality.

For 10 years, beginning with the Estes Kefauver hearings, the PMA has fought a holding action against its critics in government.

THE ASSOCIATION has launched a \$1.5 million advertising program aimed at restoring public confidence in drug products. Public relations consultants retained by PMA have sought to get the industry's story across by inviting news reporters on all-expense-paid trips to pharmaceutical plants.

The industry has cause for concern, for the questions on drug prices raised by the late Sen. Kefauver look larger today than they did when first posed in 1958.

Kefauver's role as industry critic has been assumed by Sen. Gaylord Nelson, D-Wis., whose senate small business monopoly subcommittee has been holding hearings for the last year.

Drug prices also have come under the scrutiny of two other subcommittees headed by Sen. Abraham Ribicoff, D-Conn., and Rep. John Dingell, D-Detroit. Ribicoff recently started hearings on an indefinite duration into the broad problem of rising medical care costs.

Dingell's committee has held hearings for more than a year on price differential practices under which manufacturers cut prices drastically when selling to government agencies.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare is in the midst of comprehensive studies

of medical costs and drug prices and task force reports are due in January.

FINALLY the drug industry was sternly "rebuked" in President Johnson's special health message that proposed publication of a drug compendium (directory) and establishment of a cost range for drugs used in federal health care programs.

"We must make certain that the American taxpayer does not pay needlessly high and exorbitant prices for prescription drugs used in federally supported programs," Johnson said.

"Recent surveys have shown, for instance, that 12 drugs of the same type range in retail price from \$1.25 to \$11, for 30 tablets," he said. "The taxpayer should not be forced to pay \$11 if the \$1.25 drug is equally effective. To do this would permit robbery of private citizens with public approval."

Are all drugs that have the same generic names or chemical compositions equally effective?

This probably is the most crucial question in the drug pricing controversy.

Congressional critics of the industry say there should be no variations in drugs produced by different companies because the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) inspects drug manufacturing facilities.

But PMA President C. Joseph Stetler argues that there aren't enough inspectors to police the entire industry. There are between 800 and 1,000 manufacturers of prescription drugs, he said. The 136 firms that belong to PMA produce 95 per cent of all drugs.

The FDA stations inspectors in plants of the large companies, but it lacks the manpower to keep a close watch on the hundreds of small firms, Stetler said.

His argument might be dismissed as being self-serving were it not for the FDA's experience with two antibiotics, chloramphenicol and tetracycline.

Last August, Parke, Davis & Co., of Detroit, the developer of chloramphenicol, submitted data indicating that chloramphenicol produced by other firms and sold under different brand names lacked the same potency as Parke, Davis' brand. After tests of its own, the FDA concurred and ordered all producers of chloramphenicol, except for Parke, Davis, to stop selling the drug.

SEN. PHILIP A. HART, D-Mich., who inherited Kefauver's anti-trust subcommittee chairmanship, but not his passion for battling the drug industry, has gradually withdrawn from the drug pricing arena.

Americans Abroad

PARIS -- Despite U.S. measures to keep American dollars at home there has been a slight increase in the number of U.S. tourists entering France, the government said in a report to parliament Thursday.

THE LADIES, Smith says, are more interested in long-lasting, easily operated mowers, not bargain basement varieties.

Here is what Smith advises a prospective mower buyer to look for:

1. The American Safety Association seal.
2. Quick repair service and availability of spare parts, paying a husband on the golf course isn't easy.
3. Decks deep enough to get rid of all grass cuttings, because clogging impairs efficiency and may cause stalling.
4. Ball-bearing wheels and "through axles" to make mowing easier and eliminate motor-damaging wobble.
5. Cutting height adjustments without need of tools.

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In one of his infrequent comments on drug prices, Hart this week urged doctors to write generic prescriptions voluntarily.

Stetler attributes the industry's problems with Congress and the public to the unique position of prescription drugs

in the retail market.

"The consumer has no real way of determining whether he's getting a good buy on a prescription drug, and this frustrates him," Stetler said. "I can't think of any product I buy where I can't make a conscious price choice."

He said he would like to see pricing information made available to both physicians and patients.

"Better informed consumers would inject price competition into prescription drugs," he said.

Stetler's proposal carries the

suggestion that the real culprit behind high prescription prices may be retail druggists.

Publicizing retail prices presumably would take the high-price bonus off drug manufacturers and place it on the corner druggist.

But it is questionable whether

this could be accomplished in view of the retail drug industry's proven political prowess, as demonstrated by the fact that 37 states forbid the advertising of prescription drug prices.

Stetler believes the pricing legislation sought by President

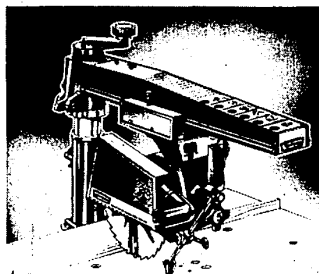
Johnson and others will not pass Congress this year.

But with Sen. Nelson apparently a shoo-in for a new six-year term in this year's elections, and with Medicare costs continually on the rise, he is resigned to a new round of battles in the 91st Congress.

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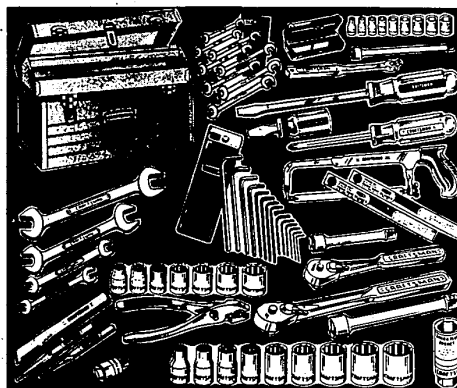
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Men Golf While Wife Cuts Lawn

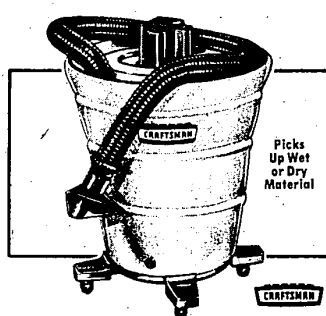
Golf widows are getting more exercise these days. Perhaps it is one way for them to let off steam because their husbands are playing more golf, but an estimated 24 per cent of all lawn mowing this year will be done by women. This is three per cent more than last year and compares with less than five per cent 10 years ago. Weekend golf for the men has increased in proportion.

William H. Smith, president of a Georgia mower company, says dealers across the country have told him that women will buy nearly 30 per cent of the mowers sold this year. Ten years ago, men bought 95 per cent of the mowers.

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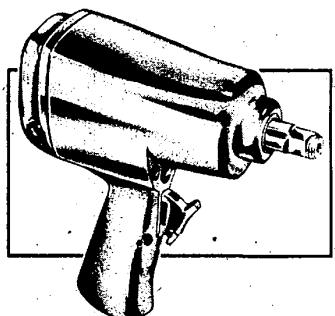
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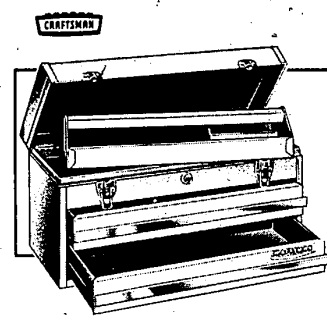
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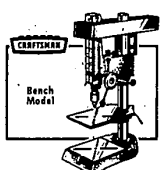


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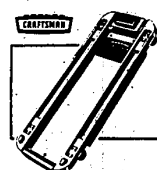


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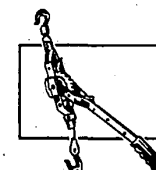


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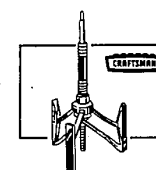


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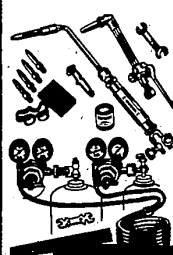
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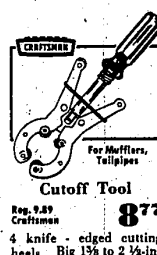
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