



City of Cambridge

32.

IN CITY COUNCIL

March 16, 1998

COUNCILLOR RUSSELL
COUNCILLOR BORN
COUNCILLOR DAVIS
MAYOR DUEHAY
VICE MAYOR GALLUCCIO
COUNCILLOR REEVES
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR TOOMEY
COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

ORDERED: That the attached communication regarding a situation at "City Foods" be referred to the Consumer Commission and Inspectional Services for investigation and report.

In City Council March 16, 1998.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:- *D. Margaret Drury*
D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

12 Inman St., Camb., 02139
March 6, 1998

TO: Owners of "City Foods" (Lisa & Larry Valentine; Peter Grenon)
Central Square, Camb. MA

I'm writing to complain about the outrageous, insulting, incomprehensible treatment I received from a rude young woman whose name, I was told, is "Jen." (She's not very tall, looks about 20 years old or so, with a shortish blond "bob" hairdo.)

Yesterday, March 3, I asked her where the gourmet cracker section was. (I buy things like Melba toast, rye crisps, ak-mak, etc.) They always used to be near the ice cream. She flippantly told me that "all the crackers" were in aisle 2.

So I crossed the store to aisle 2, looked for quite a while, and couldn't find the Melba toast. Reluctantly (I hesitated to approach her, because of her nasty attitude) I went up to her - in the Customer Service booth, of all places! - and asked if the store no longer carried Melba toast. She snapped: "If it's not in aisle 2, we don't have it!" So I turned to walk away, when she virtually snarled at me: "I not finished!!"

She then said that some other crackers were over the bread section (where I had been several minutes before, asking about these crackers before she sent me to aisle 2). I mentioned that she might have told me that originally, and went back across the store and found the Melba toast.

As I was checking out, this bizarre young woman was walking around by the check-out stands. She happened to come by as the check-out people were putting aside 2 pints of cream I said I didn't want. She came over and said to them: "You should have her put them back!"

I looked behind me to see whom she was referring to, thinking that a store clerk was behind me. But she said, "I'm talking about you! You're the one who brought them up here!"

I foolishly dignified her insult and obnoxious behavior by explaining that the only reason I had brought up two pints each of two different brands of cream was because the man by the dairy case didn't know how much the Garelick Farms brand was, none were marked, and there was no sign on the case. He had suggested I'd have to find out the price up front. (I wanted to buy the least expensive, and the other brand was marked 79c.)

"Jen" then picked up the marked pints, stuck them in my face, and snarled, "Here's the price on them!"

I pointed out that I was talking about the other two without prices. She said nothing, but continued her insolent staring.

By this time I was very upset, to the point that I could hardly sign my name on the credit card form (I had bought several items). I told "Jen" that I didn't like her attitude or the way she was treating me.

"Jen's" reply: "You don't concern me!" When I reminded her that I was a customer, she was a Customer Service person, it was her job to be concerned, and I wanted to complain to a manager,

she smirked. She actually seemed to get a big kick out of this- as did the two young black people (a man and a woman) who were both checking me out. (One seemed to have to help the other with the register, for some reason.)

As "Jen" walked away, I asked the checker about the manager's whereabouts. He told me the manager was not there. I also asked the two people at the checkout what was the matter with this bizarre young woman, and one of them muttered to me: "She's crazy."

About this time, a pleasant man (Larry, an owner, I found out today) appeared, and asked me what the problem was. Yet he almost seemed frightened of this "Jen," and had me walk far enough away so that she wouldn't hear me, explaining that he'd get her "version" later.

He was very polite and apologetic. But "Jen" kept smirking at us from the Customer Service stand. I pointed this out to him once or twice, but he didn't comment.

At the end, he promised he'd "talk to her," and I left. "Jen" watched me leave, smirking insolently as I went out the door.

Folks: WHAT kind of store are you running? Never in my 49 years have I gone through such an upsetting and bizarre experience in a store of any kind. And the only time I've seen such irrational behavior is at work: I'm a psychiatric nurse in a locked ward at the Cambridge Hospital!

Not only is your store terribly uninviting, with its garish lighting, its still unpainted walls, its shelves in disarray, its staff who don't seem to know much at all (like where basic things are, how much, who can find out, etc.), but the prices are higher than they ever were at Purity. And the quality- especially of the meat and produce- is way downhill. (I used to buy tenderloin steaks at Purity often. I bought them from your store months ago, and will never buy them again!)

And now this!

Is this your idea of "city foods:" high prices; poor quality; and surly, unfriendly, rude, unhelpful staff? Is it because those of us living in the city without cars (like me) have to buy groceries from you whether we want to or not? (Harvest and Bread and Circus have limited varieties, and their prices are quite high.)

Who is this "Jen," that she can be so insolent, even while a customer is complaining about her? What kind of place are you running? Whatever the answer, it's obvious that you have no respect for the people of Cambridge- for the community.

I'd appreciate any feedback you can give me regarding my complaints- but particularly about this "Jen" character.

Sincerely,

Diana Bianco

Diana Bianco

cc: Joe Nicolo, Senior Sanitation Inspector- Camb. Health Dept.
cc: Cambridge City Council + Mayor Sheila Russell

H

Hilton

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RECEIVED BY
COUNSELLOR RUSSELL

98 MAR 11 PM 7:46

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ATTACHED COMMUNICATION

REGARDING A SITUATION

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TO THE CONSUMER COMMISSION
& INSPECTIONAL SERVICES
FOR INVESTIGATION & REPORT.

12 Inman St., Camb., 02139
March 6, 1998

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So I crossed the store to aisle 2, looked for quite a while, and couldn't find the Melba toast. Reluctantly (I hesitated to approach her, because of her nasty attitude) I went up to her - in the Customer Service booth, of all places! - and asked if the store no longer carried Melba toast. She snapped: "If it's not in aisle 2, we don't have it!" So I turned to walk away, when she virtually snarled at me: "I not finished!!"

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I looked behind me to see whom she was referring to, thinking that a store clerk was behind me. But she said, "I'm talking about you! You're the one who brought them up here!"

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By this time I was very upset, to the point that I could hardly sign my name on the credit card form (I had bought several items). I told "Jen" that I didn't like her attitude or the way she was treating me.

"Jen's" reply: "You don't concern me!" When I reminded her that I was a customer, she was a Customer Service person, it was her job to be concerned, and I wanted to complain to a manager,

she smirked. She actually seemed to get a big kick out of this- as did the two young black people (a man and a woman) who were both checking me out. (One seemed to have to help the other with the register, for some reason.)

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ORDERED: That the attached communication regarding a situation at "City Foods" be referred to the Consumer Commission and Inspectional Services for investigation and report.

Consent Order #32

CM113

Councillor Russell re: incident at
"City Foods" to be referred to the
Consumer Council and Inspectional
Services for investigation and report.

In City Council March 16, 1998

ORDER ADOPTED