

DOUBLE COLA

By J W Henson

October 28,1995

A few days ago Al Hinkle and I were discussing the price of soda pop when he first came to Starkey Printing Company in October of 1958. Pop was in bottles in those days, maybe beer had appeared in cans, I do not remember. There was an old red cooler that sat back in the shop where the water fountain now sits. There were two lids that opened from the top of the cooler with the hinge in the middle. The cooler was filled with water, and the pop sat in the water with just the necks sticking out. The grungy hands of printers soon got a film of oil and filth on the surface, which clung to the side of the bottle as you pulled one out. The pay was an honor system, and we dropped our nickel into an old cigar box provided for the purpose. In those poor days there were many occasions that we did not have a coin so we would put in a scrap of paper with an 'I Owe You' for 5 cents. Double Cola was one of our larger, if not the largest, customers so we only had products that were sold by them. There was a wide variety of fruit drinks and of course Double Cola. I have never liked the taste of colas, thus I confined my drinking to the fruit flavors.

The Double Cola man would come once a week, rolling in cases of glass bottles in wooden crates on a two-wheeler. Mr. Starkey would go to the cigar box and take out enough money in nickels to pay for the fresh delivery. One day as the salesman stood waiting for his pay, Mr. Starkey opened the cigar box. It was bristling full of IOU's but not one solitary nickel. He separated the IOU's according to owners and brought them to each of us for redemption. The IOU system was ended, and we could only drink, as we were able to pay, or to borrow a nickel from a pal.

There was a slow inflation in those days, but it was happening, and I can remember the day when pop went to 6 cents a bottle. Audrey worked at the shop back then, and I went to her and instructed her to buy no more pop. "I have no intention of ever paying 6 cents for a bottle of pop!", I told her. So we boycotted the machine. I felt that 20% was too much to increase the price of a drink at one time. However, there was no other way. The penny was the least he could increase the price, and that was 20%. I soon became used to the new price and was buying it as did all the other employees. If the consumer would refuse to pay a new higher price for something the merchant and manufacturer would be forced to hold the price. Thus, the matter of inflation is in the hands of the consumer, but he lacks the wisdom and will to control it.