

COMPETITION FOCUS FOR CHILDREN



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THE BIRTH OF COMPETITION

*N*ot very long ago in Jamaica the Government of the day owned and controlled all the factors of trade in most, if not all industries. That includes hotels, the national airline, sugar factories, public ground transportation services and all public utilities, to name a few.

There was little or no opportunity for private individuals or private companies to be engaged in certain businesses, and when they were allowed to, their trading activities were governed by many unnecessarily burdensome regulations.

Those regulations determined matters such as: which goods and services would be produced; where in the Island they would be produced, the quantities that would be produced, and the prices at which those goods and services would be sold.

Companies that imported goods were granted quotas e.g. motor vehicle dealers were not allowed to import over a certain number of motor vehicles per year, even though the quantities demanded could exceed the

numbers of vehicles available.

Often there were shortages; prices were high and it was becoming increasingly difficult for the Government to continue to control all the elements of trade in the country. It addressed the situation by selling to private individuals most of the businesses which it owned and operated. This process was known as divestment or privatization.

With private ownership, the Government no longer set prices or dictated which goods and services would be produced; who would produce them; how much and where they would be produced. Decisions about these matters were now left to be made by the new owners of businesses. This whole process of transferring the reins of the economy into private hands and reducing regulatory restrictions on trade was known as liberalization.



In this new liberalized trading environment private companies would naturally be competing against one another for customers. This rivalry for customers encourages business to develop superior products; but it can also tempt them to engage in unsavoury conduct, sometimes, to the detriment of healthy competition. For this reason the Government had to put some new rules in place. The rules would set out how companies should conduct themselves as they compete; the types of conduct that would be prohibited; and what penalties would follow misconduct.

These rules are contained in the ***Fair Competition Act***, which was enacted in 1993. It is enforced by the Fair Trading Commission – that's us !!

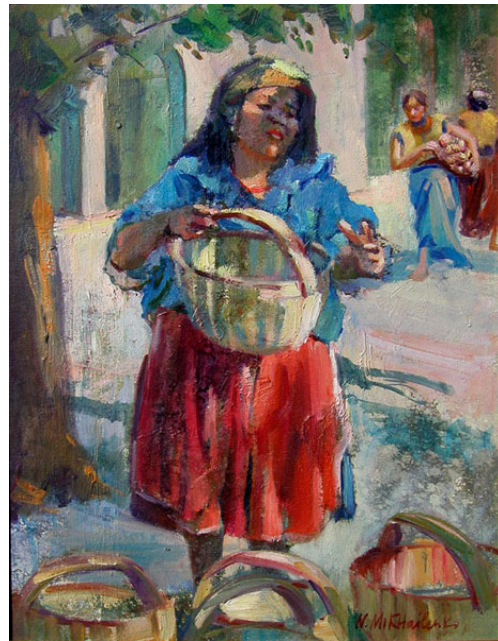


Miss Deares' Fritters

By Wendy M. Duncan

Miss Deares' would sit under the Bombay mango tree outside Gimmemibit Primary School gate. In front of her rested a huge straw basket, filled with plantain fritters and covered with a bright red and white checkered handkerchief. Bringle, the school dog, would lie nearby. For this, he would be rewarded every now and then with a juicy piece of fritter which he would swallow in one gulp.

Miss Deares' was the biggest, strongest woman I had ever seen. She reminded me of a big, red tractor – hardworking, tough and likely to mow you down by accident if you didn't get out of the way. Her eyes were brown and kind. Her thick, brown plaits sprouted like aloe vera plants from underneath her faded blue head tie. Her lips looked like ackee pods, and her cheeks resembled two of the Bombay



mangoes which hung from the tree under which she sat day after day.

Miss Deares' could not have been her real name, but nobody seemed to know or care what her real name was. She got the name because of her gift or love of prayer. There was never a Sunday service at the Gimmemibit Baptist Church at which Miss Deares' did not rise and begin a lengthy prayer with "*Deares' Jesus!*" So the name Miss Deares' stuck.

The schoolchildren flocked Miss Deares' basket at break time and lunchtime and, within minutes, devoured the fritters. They were almost as big as bammies and tasted delicious. It did not matter to us that Miss Deares' was always soaked in sweat or that dozens of flies also seemed to be avid fans of the fritters; nor did it matter that mama would warn me daily, "Bradley meck sure seh yuh nuh buy Miss Deares' fritters!! If I ever hear seh yuh buy from Miss Deares' I gwine BRUCK YU UP!!"

I am not sure what my mother had against Miss Deares' fritters, but the warning only seemed to make the fritters sweeter and irresistible.

Miss Deares' business was doing well and at five dollars per fritter, plantain fritters became the favorite food of the Gimmemibit primary students. The big straw basket multiplied to two and then three. Miss Deares' got an assistant, Chunky, a boy of about sixteen years who somehow seemed closer to my nine years. Soon it was rumoured among the students that even some teachers, who frequently frowned on fritter buying, had acquired a taste for Miss Deares' fritters. Word had it that Mr. Beckford, the Math teacher for Grade 3A had been observed, on more than one occasion, emerging from the general direction of the mango tree with a suspiciously greasy brown paper bag!

It was not long before Miss Deares' was joined by a competitor. One han' Zelly pushed a hand-cart loaded with coconuts through the district. Zelly had only one arm, the other had been cut off at the elbow a few years before when he had fallen from a coconut tree and broken his arm. The

injury would not heal and the doctors had to amputate. Christened Zellikiah Suriah Maxwell Gordon, a name of which he was very proud and which he insisted that everyone use. After the accident everyone called him ‘*One Han’ Zelly*’. He had come to accept the name.

It was amazing to watch how One Han’ Zelly skillfully manoeuvred the hand-cart with one hand and how, within seconds, he would wield a razor sharp machete to carve a tough, husky, green coconut so that it was reduced to a small bowl of coconut water and meat. Zelly’s coconut business had been previously confined to the May Pen market. One day, however, Zelly arrived at our school gate about 20 yards from where Miss Deares’ sat, and he would stay until the lunch break ended. Coconuts were popular with the students, but after about two weeks, Zelly appeared with a small basket of plantain fritters. Although Zelly’s fritters were smaller, more ‘floury’ and not quite as tasty as those Miss Deares’ made, the students were happy to have a choice and, in a short time, at the start of the lunch break Zelly’s hand-cart contained fewer coconuts and more fritters than before. Zelly soon had his own following among the students for fritters.

At first Miss Deares’ was not at all pleased with Zelly’s arrival on the scene. Miss Deares’, who was no singer, and who never sang in Zelly’s absence, would be heard singing hymns and choruses such as:

“Press along Saints; Press along, for persecution we must bear, trial and crosses in our way!”

Zelly would respond by blasting his sound system which blared out songs offensive to Miss Deares’ such as...

“Idiat, Idiat, ‘Diat.... ‘Diat... Idiat Ting Dat!”

It was a holy war. A hymn would be mercilessly fired to Zelly who returned the attack with a loud, heavy boom of the newest dancehall tune. Songs continued to be exchanged, words were bandied and then one day, Miss

Deares', in addition to the plantain fritters, produced a new basket filled with salt-fish fritters. The students descended on Miss Deares' basket and within minutes all her fritters were finished. Zelly's fritters were selling slowly. Two days later Zelly was selling salt-fish, plantain and banana fritters and all were gone within minutes. Now Miss Deares' fritters were selling slowly. Before long, on any day the students of Gimmemibit Primary School had a wide choice of fritters and both Miss Deares' and Zelly had successful businesses. There was even a ceasefire of hymns and lyrics and the two would be seen chatting and exchanging pleasantries.

Then everything changed. There was an open lot beside the school grounds. A tall zinc fence was erected around the lot. After that for months we observed what seemed like an army of construction workers and trucks loaded high with cement, sand, blocks and steel going to and from the lot. I, along with a group of my friends, tried to find a peephole in the fence, but we could not see what was happening; though we knew from the hammering and other sounds, that a building was being constructed.

Finally, the zinc fence was removed and there on the lot stood a huge red and yellow building marked 'BELLY BUS PATTY SHOP'. It was the biggest building I had ever seen in my life! All of the students crowded into the school yard – fascinated by the building. Parked in front of the building where two red and yellow delivery trucks marked 'BB PATTY SHOP'. Our awed murmurs were interrupted by a loud exclamation which erupted from the School Bully, Don Junior, "A coulda wha dat!?"

Don Junior was the first student to make his way boldly to the new building. He was followed, of course, by his 'crew' and dozens of students. That week most students bought lunch from Belly Bus Patty Shop. Poor Miss Deares'! For the first time ever, she headed home with a basket of unsold fritters. Things got worse and Miss Deares' hardly sold any fritters. Zelly at least managed to sell his coconuts for a while, but Miss Deares' was a sad figure heading home each evening that week. By the following week, Zelly joined Miss Deares' – after the lunch break he had nearly a full cart of

coconuts. Belly Bus Patty Shop sold coconut water in pretty, bright red and yellow bottles marked 'BB COCONUT WATER' and they were a hit with the children. We also loved the wide variety of flavored drinks and sodas which were sold at BB Patty Shop.

When we arrived at school a few weeks later one Monday morning, there was a gaily painted sign on the Mango tree red, green and gold which read **"Two Fritters for the Price of One!"** Miss Deares' was fighting back! She began to sell bottled juice and sodas. One Han' Zelly followed her lead. By that time, the novelty of Belly Bus Patty Shop had worn off and Miss Deares' and Zelly were back in business. Her baskets and Zelly's hand-cart were empty at the end of the day.

It was around that time that some strange events began to take place. In the district of Gimmemibit in those times, there was only one flour shop, owned by Mas' Bertie. Mas' Bertie obtained large amounts of flour in the Island's city, Kingston, and would in turn sell flour to the district shops or households. It was from Mas' Bertie that Miss Deares' and Zelly bought their supply of flour to make fritters. Suddenly, there was a flour shortage.

Word among the district people was that Mas' Bertie had done a *'wicked ting'* for which Miss Deares' predicted that he would receive *'retribution of the wors' kind'*. Miss Deares and Zelly had gone, on different occasions, to Mas' Bertie's shop to buy their usual supply of flour and were told that 'none was available'. The following day, however, Mout a' Massy Gertrude claimed that she had spied Mas' Bertie loading his delivery trucks with bags of flour. This story was supported by Guppy Samuels, the Carpenter, who had himself seen Mas' Bertie's truck that day, unloading flour at the Belly Bus Patty Shop.

There was uproar in the district. Could this be true? What a wicked and evil thing! What sort of unfair treatment is that? What was Mas' Bertie up to? The people of the district held a meeting in the town square and decided to take matters *'in hand'*. There was a confrontation and Mas' Bertie's defence

was that he had an agreement with Belly Bus Patty Shop. He was therefore bound by the law, to provide flour only to Belly Bus Patty Shop. He was not allowed to sell to anyone else in the district! He showed the district people a document – there it was in black and white for all to see! Someone exclaimed, “Oh, so it legal?! Then... nutten’ can go soh?!”

They retreated. What would happen, not only to Miss Deares’ but to all the other persons that sold flour products in the district! They would all go out of business, without a doubt. Everybody would be forced to make the long trip to Kingston for flour. There was no doubt about it, to allow Miss Deares’ business to suffer because Mas’ Bertie would not sell flour to her seemed to be a disgrace and something needed to be done – but everything seemed to be legal!

The following Sunday morning at church service, Pastor Lovinghart made a special appeal for the brothers and sisters to love and help one another. At the end of the sermon, Miss Deares’ stood up and offered one of her longest Deares’ Jesus prayers ever heard. At the end of the service, Officer Kuti-cap stepped forward. He had been shot in the knee many years before. Unfortunately, he had lost his lower leg, which was replaced with a wooden one. When he walked it sounded like “Kuti-cap! Kuti-cap!” Hence he was called the name ‘*Kuti-cap*’ by the district people. Officer Kuti-cap walked up the wooden aisle... “Kuti-cap! Kuti-cap! Kuti-cap!” He was well-respected and there was a hush as he announced in his loud, commanding, deep bass voice, “Listen, what has been happening here could be against the law. Mas’ Bertie’s agreement might not be legal. It is preventing people from doing business to earn an honest living. There is a place in the city called the Fair Trading Commission. That organization investigates matters like this and it might be able to bring some justice to the situation. You have to make a complaint and then they might be able to help you.”

Miss Deares’ complained to the **Fair Trading Commission**. I never heard the full story of what happened after that, but a few months later, a man named Mr. Swaby, seeing the situation quickly grasped the opportunity to



open another flour shop in Gimmemibit and give the people a choice. By that time Mas' Bertie had also started selling flour to other people in the district again.

It has been years since I left the Gimmemibit Primary School, but the last time I returned to visit, the Belly Bus Patty Shop was still doing good business. I didn't see Zelly, but I heard that he had opened a store in May Pen where he sells coconut water, natural juices and ital food. And guess what? Beside the Bombay Mango Tree there is a little shop with a sign in red, green and gold marked '**Miss Deares' Fritter Shop**'. From what I saw, it is still the popular lunch spot among the Gimmemibit students. From what I tasted, Miss Deares' fritters still sweet!

Wendy M. Duncan
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MR PETITION COMES TO TOWN

By Kevin K. Harriott

This story is about school children who lived in a small, isolated district located in the western part of Jamaica. The name of the town was Command Town.

The town was so isolated that it had neither electricity nor telephone services. The children did not have much fun at all and they were very bored. There was only one school in town—the Command Town Primary School.

One day, during their lunch break, they decided to play a game they called “kick the ball.” They read books which showed that children in other parts of the Island had lots of fun playing the game. They decided to pick one team made up of boys and girls in grades one through three; and the other team comprised boys and girls from grades four through six.

After a week of playing the game, they realised that very few children were having fun. Most of them were battered, bruised and frustrated at the end of each game. They all went to principal Skinner and told him that they



were very disappointed with playing “kick the ball”-- and they couldn’t understand why they weren’t having as much fun playing the game as other children in Jamaica seemed to be having.

The principal, having watched them as they played, had an idea. He told them that he had invited a special guest, an old school friend, to speak with them at the end of devotion the following morning. He said that the guest speaker would tell them how to make playing the game much more fun.

All the children were very excited; they wondered what the speaker would say to help them enjoy the game. After devotion the following morning, Principal Skinner introduced Mr. Compton Petition to the children.



“Good morning children,” he said and they replied in a chorus “Good morning Mr. Petition, welcome to the Command Town Primary School.”

“Thanks for that warm welcome,” he said “and you can call me Uncle Comp.”

“Uncle Comp, how are you going to make us have more fun playing kick the ball?” asked a short skinny child in the audience.

That’s a wonderful question; what is your name young man?

“Omi,” the boy replied excitedly.

“O.K. Omi; thanks for that question, does any body else want to know the answer to that question?”

All the children screamed “Yes Mr. Petition!” It was so loud; he had to clear his ears before he spoke again. “Tell me,” he said, “what are the rules

of your game”?

“Rules!” exclaimed all the children. “Uncle Comp, following rules is no fun,” said Bigga “we follow rules only because our parents will punish us if we don’t.”

“Well let’s discuss it some more then,” Uncle Comp suggested.

“Principal Skinner watched you play and told me that the bigger children use their strong arms to push the smaller ones off the ball. Is this true?”

“He he he. Yes that’s true Uncle Comp” Bigga giggled sheepishly. “My team mates and I are unfit and a little slow; and sometimes those skinny little third graders run too quickly for us. Pushing them out of the way is the only way we can get the ball away from them so that they don’t score a goal on us.” He went on to explain to Uncle Comp that he really didn’t want to bruise the smaller ones but that he was so much stronger than they, just the slightest push would send them crashing on the field.

“Ok Bigga,” Uncle Comp said, “I know that you only wanted to win; and you never meant to harm Omi or the other smaller children; but sometimes your actions have unintended results. Don’t you think we should have a rule that says no one is allowed to push anyone out of the way?”

“YES!!! shouted Omi and the smaller children”

“NO!!! shouted Bigga and the bigger children”

“Omi, why did you and your team mates say ‘yes?’” asked Uncle Comp.

“Well,” said a delighted Omi “it seems that these rules will make sure that we beat those Bigger children.”

“No, No, No” Uncle Comp replied. He then explained to everyone that rules are not designed to make sure that the smaller ones beat the bigger

ones. The rules are there to make sure that the game is played fairly and that only the better team wins.

At that point, he turned to the bigger children and explained that if they ran lots of laps around the field after school and did lots of jumping jacks and push-ups, they would be able to keep up with the smaller ones and take the ball away from them fairly.

“So under the rules, the bigger children could still win if they worked hard enough.” Uncle Comp said. “Do you have any more questions?”

“Well,” said a worried Bigga, “it seems that these rules will help only the smaller children. We can’t benefit from them.”

“No, No, No” Uncle Comp replied. “Principal Skinner also told me that the smaller ones would sneak up on you bigger ones from behind and untie your shoe laces; and when you trip over your laces they would get the ball.”

“Ohh!!” Bigga said “I didn’t know that. All the time I thought that my team mates and I were just clumsy.” “Wouldn’t the bigger boys benefit from a rule which says that no one should untie others’ shoe laces?” asked Uncle Comp.

“Yes we would be better off,” said Bigga. “This means that the rules will make sure that we beat the smaller children”

Again Uncle Comp explained to everyone that rules make sure that the game is played fairly so that only the better team wins. At that point, he turned to the smaller children and explained that if they learned to play more like a team, pass the ball around and do not try to ‘shiff-up’, ‘salad’ or ‘pile’ the bigger children, they would be able to get the ball around the bigger boys fairly.



“So under the rules, the smaller children could still win if they worked hard enough.” Uncle Comp said.

Uncle Comp then explained that children in the other parts of the Island play the game under a set of rules; and that someone called the “referee” makes sure that everyone plays by the rules. Teams which trained harder and worked more on their ball skills won the game most of the times.

Omi and Bigga got up simultaneously and gave Uncle Comp a big hug. Then they said,

“Thanks for sharing this information with us Uncle Comp-- we will start playing by the rules from now on. Principal Skinner could be our Referee. We like those rules because even though they don’t guarantee that our team will win, we know we have a good chance of winning if we train hard enough and practice our ball control, tackling and passing skills.”

Principal Skinner had entered the room and had been listening for the past few minutes. He liked what he heard.

“I would be happy to referee the game for you children- if nothing else I need the exercise” said Principal Skinner.

From then on, everyone retold the story of how Uncle Comp Petition came to Command Town and showed everyone a way to ensure that everyone benefit from this game that the children and parents had come to love so dearly. In honour of their beloved Uncle Comp, they erected a sign at the entrance to the playfield.

The sign reads “*Rules ensure that the game is played fairly*”; and *may the better team always win!*

Kevin K. Harriott
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FIND A WORD

Competition Puzzle

WORD LIST

U	C	R	S	N	R	I	V	A	L	R	Y	N	R	C
I	O	O	S	O	D	T	F	O	C	A	E	Q	A	A
E	S	I	M	U	L	T	A	N	E	O	U	S	T	Q
T	T	T	I	P	U	T	I	M	C	O	C	D	E	U
Y	L	D	S	A	E	M	R	T	A	O	S	B	O	A
A	Y	V	L	F	S	T	U	A	M	E	Q	U	A	L
A	C	D	E	T	P	R	I	C	E	S	E	Y	A	I
D	I	T	A	O	F	U	N	T	T	L	T	Q	L	T
O	N	L	D	S	A	L	E	Y	I	C	H	R	R	Y
M	E	C	I	R	T	E	G	L	O	O	E	W	E	O
I	W	C	N	E	O	S	I	O	N	U	N	P	W	I
N	R	I	G	R	S	T	L	E	G	R	A	E	A	E
A	T	I	E	I	R	O	S	Y	I	T	M	C	R	E
T	I	C	H	E	A	T	A	Y	M	A	E	S	D	U
E	X	P	O	R	T	I	I	Q	G	O	A	L	U	O

Act
 Buy
 Cheat
 Competition
 Costly
 Court
 Dominate
 Equal
 Export
 Fair
 Game
 Goal
 Honest
 Misleading
 Price
 Quality
 Reward
 Rivalry
 Rules
 Sale
 Simultaneous

How to play. Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The words may be hidden in any direction.

The Solution is available at www.jftc.com

SUDOKU

2				9		6		1
			2		3			
4								2
	9	2	8		6	5	1	
				1				
	6	8	5		4	2	3	
8								5
			4		5			
5		4		2				7

How to play: Fill in the grid so that every column, row and 3x3 square includes all digits from one (1) to nine (9).

Target time: 15 minutes.

The Solution is available at www.jftc.com

Notes

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