

Street Markets

This newspaper article is divided into two parts. Each part is followed by some questions about the content of the text. Finally there are some questions about the meaning of some words in the article. Find the best answer among the alternatives given to each question and mark it in the boxes on pages 2-3.

1 The autumn wasps are lounging around
Mr Foster's bunches of grapes and piles
of lychee plums as he says, "I wouldn't
like any of my children to go into this
5 line of business." He is 62 and has a fruit
and vegetables stall at one end of the
market. His brother is helping out at the
flower stall at the other end. Their family
has been busy at Tachbrook Street, five
10 minutes from Victoria Station in
London, ever since a market was set up
there in the middle of the 19th century.
"They treat us like second-class citi-
zens," he says, referring to Westminster
15 Council. "You're immediately in the
wrong."

This is a common complaint among
the market men and women. Market
barrows left in the street overnight have
20 been put onto low-loaders and taken
away, and the council demands £200 for
their return. Apparently they are a fire-
risk, or something, although the street is
a cul-de-sac. Health and Safety officers
25 have been inspecting stalls. "If you're
one inch over the size of your pitch, you
get a letter from the council saying your
licence will be revoked," says another
trader. It is a picture of persecution from
30 the market-folks' point of view.

It is all very puzzling. Fruit and veg
and meat and fish are often cheaper and
better in the market than in the super-
market. Why should the council be so
35 unhelpful? Surely everyone prefers a
colourful market to an empty, dead-end
street.

Yes, there does seem to be an ideolo-
gical prejudice against Tachbrook Street
and the other markets, such as Berwick 40
Street in Soho, where stalls are now
permitted only along one side of the
road. "Political motivations come into it
a lot," said one source at Westminster
Council. "Basically there are too many 45
already. They cause a nuisance. There is
a firm policy of not granting new
pitches, and the council now has the
power to reduce the number of them."

This seems to be true. There are six 50
designated street markets in West-
minster, and, in a helpful hand-out for
hopeful traders, the council says that it is
"now pursuing a policy which prevents 55
any growth in the present number of
licensed street trading pitches". What
this seems to mean is that if you trade
without a licence you will be prosecuted;
if you apply for a licence, you will be
60 refused.

There never was a golden era of
street trade. Why, for example, did the
picturesque flower girls of Piccadilly
and the City die out? Lack of interest?
Not at all. In 1930, when the Corporation 65
of the City of London exercised a policy
to grant no new licences for five years,
Mary Anne was said to be the last
flower-girl in the City. At the time the
demand for flowers was growing. Two 70
years later Miss Lydia Jordan, another
old flower girl, was fined half a crown
for obstruction (a favourite charge) out-
side the Stock Exchange.



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- 1 How long has John Foster's family been street traders?
- A about 25 years
 - B about 50 years
 - C about 150 years
 - D about 200 years
- 2 How is the policy of Westminster Council described?
- A It is very helpful
 - B It creates problems for traders
 - C It makes people feel secure
 - D It is generous with licences
- 3 What is said about the advantage of street markets?
- A They have high standards of hygiene
 - B They are within easy reach
 - C They attract lots of tourists
 - D They have low prices
- 4 What does the Council regard as a problem with street markets?
- A They cause irritation
 - B They are open on Sundays
 - C They cost too much
 - D They might be unhealthy
- 5 What was Miss Lydia Jordan accused of?
- A She hindered traffic
 - B Her shouting disturbed neighbours
 - C She was overcharging
 - D She had no valid permit

Answers

1 2 3 4 5



75 The Fosters are a respectable Catholic family. The clergy from Westminster Cathedral shop here, as does *The Spectator* cook, Jennifer Paterson, and *Country Life* editor, Clive Aslet. 80 The talk in Victoria is of the elderly, who come along for their chat each day. “Go to a supermarket and there are no friendly faces, and no one to ask about the produce. They have young kids stacking 85 the shelves who don’t know an avocado pear from a conference pear.” That is what Fred Ray, secretary of the market committee, thinks.

But Fred, like Bryn and his wife at 90 the greetings card stall on the other side of the street, are glum about the market’s future. Among the reasons the market traders give are: Sunday trading, lack of parking for customers and deliveries, 95 rain, shopping malls and plastic. Go to Tesco’s and you can pay with a card—“and then you can ask for £20 or £30

cash at the checkout”. What else? “Shoppers haven’t got much time, they like to find everything under one roof.” 100

All this is true. There is also the problem of the barrows. The council says they have to stow them away at night. That might be no trouble in Church Street or Chapel Street, but in 105 upwardly-mobile Victoria it has become a headache. “I can see if you’ve paid money for a nice mews house you don’t want barrows rumbling out early in the morning,” says John Foster, philosophi- 110 cally. “There’s a car park here owned by the council where we could put barrows at night, but they lock it up,” says another stallholder. “The council’s just a pain in the backside.” 115

Now Sainsbury’s wants to build a big supermarket on the site of the old bus garage around the corner. “I think we’ll fizzle out,” says a dejected Mr Foster. Perhaps they will. 120

6 What does Fred Ray say about supermarkets?

- A Strangely enough many people prefer them
- B The atmosphere is stressful
- C The staff is often young and inexperienced
- D It’s difficult to find what you want

7 What is implied about house owners?

- A They want their street to be quiet
- B They don’t mind the street traders
- C They think street shopping is a great service
- D They are strongly against the car park

8 What does John Foster think about the future?

- A He is looking forward to quitting
- B His trade will disappear
- C He is going to start a new stall
- D He plans for a new range of goods

Answers

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