

NWP 10

At the end of the 2nd World War, Lea Marie Molony of the American Specialities Unit of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce produced a report entitled:-

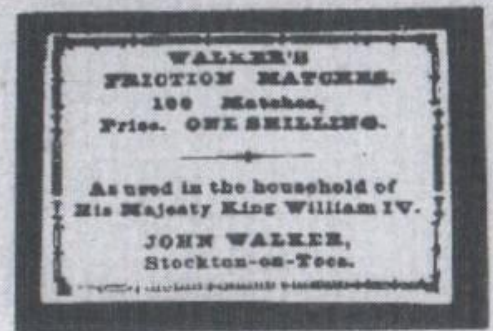
WORLD'S MATCH BUSINESS

with the byline

[THE INDIVIDUAL ARTICLE IN THIS TRADE IS SMALL - BUT IT CONSTITUTES THE BASIS FOR INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, AND FINANCE OF WORLD-WIDE SCOPE]

The aim of the report was to identify the strength of the match industry in the post War era. It identified 33 countries in which the match industry was active and gave regard to the situation in respect of the raw materials used in match production.

The introduction ascribes the invention of the match to John Walker in 1827[!] and notes that it was taken up by several countries including Sweden whose scientist A.E.Pasch subsequently invented the safety match. This was improved upon by the Lundstrom Brothers in Jonkoping whose matches were ultimately accepted as a world-wide measure of quality.



The report contains a lot of detail which I do not propose to regurgitate but will extract, which I hope will be the more salient points. Naturally, as one of the oldest and most highly developed industries, Sweden was the top of the list to receive the most detailed analysis. Prior to the War about 95% of its production was for overseas, which accounted for about a quarter of the world's production, and in 1939 about two-fifths was destined for Great Britain. Its production was principally strike-on-box type with small quantities of strike-anywhere, book and wind matches, the latter two being phased out in 1940.



Before 1939 through the International Match Corporation it had control of the match trade in 25 countries, but after the German occupation of Norway and Denmark, Swedish exports almost stopped and production was reduced principally to domestic needs. Also as a result of the War, factories throughout Europe, apart from Switzerland and Portugal, were badly damaged. It was also true of those in the Far East following Japanese occupation. However, it still retained holdings in South America, the foremost being in Argentina, Chile and Colombia; in India, and Ceylon. It also

NWP 11

had smaller plants in Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Haiti which had developed "favourably" during the War. The conclusion was that it had all the facilities and materials necessary to restart production immediately.

The countries of Central and South America were not directly effected by the War but the supply of raw materials was interrupted particularly those from the USA which supplied factories in Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Cuba, Brazil and Uruguay. Brazil was particularly effected because its chemicals were also supplied by Sweden, Germany, GB and Italy. Problems in production of matches seem to have occurred in several countries during 1943 but afterwards returned to 'normal' or improved.



Guatemala



Honduras



Costa Rica



Nicaragua

Despite the War or because of it, one country in Central America established a match industry and one scaled up its operation so that by the end of the War it had the potential to meet its home consumption. Guatemala set up the company Empresa Fosforera L.A. Carillo y Cia Ltd in 1943 with Mexican machinery to manufacture wooden safety matches for domestic consumption, with box materials and matchsticks from home sources and imported chemicals. Costa Rica had a negligible match industry in 1942 but by the end of the War had two factories; Fosforera National [wax matches] and Fabrica de Fosforos Aguila [wooden matches].

Nicaragua saw its industry expand with output doubling between 1939 and 1945. Despite the shortage of raw materials during 1943 home production increased thereafter with a corresponding decline in imported matches.

El Salvador, with its single factory, Fabrica de Fosforos de El Salvador producing a very low grade wooden match nevertheless saw the scarcity of materials giving rise to an increased home demand. However, home production proved insufficient to satisfy demand and some 13,500 cases [12,000 boxes to the case] of safety matches had to be imported along with chemicals and paper for the labels. Box material and matchsticks were of local wood.

Honduras already had substantial match production through the company "El Aguilla" of Tegucigalpa which not only satisfied home consumption but also

NWP 12

Salvador and Panama. Despite issues with sourcing raw materials after 1942, it was still able to maintain its level of activity.



Trinidad



Jamaica



Cuba



Dominican Republic

Although the Trinidad Match Ltd has been operating in excess of 130 years its presence is not acknowledged in this report, nor is Jamaica. Only Cuba and the Dominican Republic of the countries in the West Indies feature. In respect of Cuba it was noted that it was virtually self-sufficient in matches from the 10 factories which all made the same type of wax match. However, demand was so far below the total capacity that some factories were operating on a restricted basis and some not at all.

The Dominican factory, Fabrica Nacional De Fosforos of Puerto Plata was a Government monopoly which ensured that any imports were highly taxed and therefore uneconomic. Its facilities were sufficient to satisfy home consumption.

In respect of the countries of South America, 8 featured in the report and Bolivia, Peru, Guyana and Suriname were omitted. Of the countries reviewed, except for Venezuela, their industries were well established. In terms of numbers of factories Brazil with 14 and Argentina with 19 had the most. Brazil's industry was dominated by two major groups - Fiat Lux, a subsidiary of Bryant & May and Companhia Brasileira de Phosphorus. Both of these groups were indirectly associated with The Swedish Match Trust. Fiat Lux owned four factories which supplied all the country's domestic requirements which were mainly of paraffin impregnated wood in two sizes of box. Wax matches had a limited life being introduced and quickly discontinued.

The largest of Argentina's factories was Compania General de Fosforos Sud Americaa which provided several types of wooden matches as well as book and wax matches. Boxes were packed in seven different sizes containing between 45 and 90 matches. Average annual production of wax and paper matches amounted to 26,000,000,000 sticks. Unlike most other South American countries, Argentina imported practically no matches from the United States.

The Uruguayan match industry was centred on Montevideo with the Compania General de Fosforos - Montevideana being the largest, employing 218 workers.

NWP13



Argentina



Brazil



Uruguay



Ecuador

The country was self-sufficient in matches which were of wax or paper. Nearly all raw materials however, had to be imported from the USA.

The report confirmed that there were two factories operating in Paraguay of which Pena Manain y Cia accounted for 60% of the national production. The other factory was Fabrica de Fosforos "La Luna".

In Colombia about 85% of its match industry was controlled either directly or indirectly by a single company, but unusually the report did not identify it. It also confirmed that there were several independent factories. About 92% of production was of wax matches with the remainder wooden. It also imported both types of matches and had an export business in wooden matches.

The industry in Ecuador was a strict Government monopoly with production satisfying home consumption so that imports were insignificant, except for 1943 when it imported book matches from the USA.

The Compania Chilena de Fosforos had two factories at Talca and Rengo which produced sufficient matches to satisfy home consumption. Small wooden safety matches were sold for 5 to 10 centavos in boxes each containing 20 to 40 matches. Chemicals were imported but other raw materials were available locally. At the end of the War a new factory, Fabrica de Fosforos de Carton was established at Santiago to make book matches.

According to the report Venezuela did not have a match industry and reported that the Swedish Match Co was undertaking investigations to establish a factory at Valencia. The difficulty was in sourcing a suitable wood to produce the 600,000 gross of boxes to satisfy the country's normal consumption. However, John Luker's Encyclopaedia does indicate a company established in 1907 which may have ceased operation by the War.