

Would You Buy A Used War . . . ?



Arthur Hoppe

IT WAS a month ago that Herbert Hanoy walked into Honest Dick's Used Car Lot to look around and kick the tires.

He was immediately recognized by the firm's top salesman, Henry. "Well, well, back again Mr. Hanoy," said Henry, rubbing his hands, "and what can I show you today?"

"Frankly," said Mr. Hanoy, "I've been thinking about that red and white, two-door Ceasefire Eight. Of course, it doesn't have a synchronesh political settlement . . ."

"It's just the model for you, Mr. Hanoy," said Henry. "Look at that automatic withdrawal system, that tripartite power steering, those guaranteed free elections . . ."

"I bought a '54 French model once with guaranteed free elections," said Mr. Hanoy suspiciously. "It fell apart before I hardly got it home and nobody ever made good."

"You're not dealing with those tricky Frenchmen now," said Henry with dignity. "You're dealing with Honest Dick. Look, I'm going to make you an offer you can't refuse. We've got special E-Z terms on that Ceasefire Eight. This month only."

"Well, it isn't exactly what I wanted," said Mr. Hanoy reluctantly. "But if you can make me a good deal . . ."

"Just step into my office," said Henry happily. So they haggled for hours and hours and finally came up with an 18-page contract with lots of small print. On which they shook hands.

★ ★ ★

NATURALLY, Honest Dick, himself, was called in to look the deal over. "Congratulations, Mr. Hanoy," he said, after reading all the fine print. "You certainly got yourself a fine bargain there. I don't see any reason why we can't have everything signed and delivered by next Tuesday — or October 31 at the very latest."

So Mr. Hanoy went home and told everybody he'd bought himself a used Ceasefire Eight. While he was somewhat

uneasy about it, all his friends said he was doing the right thing.

Then he got a call from Henry. "Everything all right?" asked Mr. Hanoy anxiously.

"Sure, sure," said Henry. "No problems at all. Delivery's just around the corner. But first would you mind dropping by for one more little chat."

"If there's no problems," said Mr. Hanoy, "what's there to chat about?"

"Oh, just a little clarification of language. Like that part about tripartite power steering. It seems it isn't exactly power steering . . ."

"Look, we've got a contract and you promised to sign it by October 31," said Mr. Hanoy angrily.

"I think we promised to try to sign it by then," said Henry. "Confidentially, we're having a little trouble over the title. Seems there's this gentleman in Saigon who feels he's the legal owner. And to get his signature on the contract, I'm afraid we're going to have to — er — up the price just a little and . . ."

"A deal's a deal!" spluttered Mr. Hanoy. "Sign like you promised!"

"Well, seeing we're not exactly the legal owners . . ."

"You mean to tell me," shouted Mr. Hanoy, "that you've been trying to sell me a car you don't even own?"

"Now, now, Mr. Hanoy, there's no need to get excited," said Henry soothingly. "I'm sure it will all work out. After all, if you can't trust Honest Dick, who can you trust?"

But, unfortunately, Mr. Hanoy had already slammed down the receiver.

★ ★ ★

WELL, anyone who's been through a similar experience can predict the outcome. Either you tear up the contract into teensy little pieces, muttering curses, or you knuckle under and go through with the deal, feeling rooked and snookered and muttering curses.

In either case, one thing's for sure: You certainly aren't fit to live with.