

ment. Finally I cut in and asked, "What are you doing about it? What are you trying to do to correct the situation?"

"Well," he answered, "there isn't much I can do, I guess, but hope for the best."

To this comment I asked, "Honestly, now, is hope enough?" Pausing, but not giving him a chance to answer, I put another question to him: "Why not take action to support your hope?"

"Go on," he said.

"Well, there are two kinds of action that seem to fit your case. First, start this afternoon to move those sales figures upward. We've got to face it. There's a reason your sales are slipping. Find it. Maybe you need a special sale to clear out your slow-moving merchandise, so you'll be in a position to buy some fresh stock. Perhaps you can rearrange your display counters. Maybe your salespeople need more enthusiasm. I can't pinpoint what will turn your sales volume upward, but something will. And it would probably be wise to talk privately with your merchandise manager. He may be on the verge of putting you out, but when you talk it over with him and ask his advice, he'll certainly give you more time to work things out. It's too expensive for the store to replace you as long as top management feels there's a chance you'll find a solution."

I went on, "Then get your assistant buyers on the ball. Quit acting like a drowning man. Let people around you know that you're still alive."

Courage was again in his eyes. Then he asked, "You said there are two kinds of action I should take. What's the second?"

"The second type of action, which you might say is an insurance policy, is to let two or three of your closest business friends in the trade know you might consider an offer from