

IN THE MATTER OF
PASTIME INDUSTRIES, INC., ET AL.

CONSENT ORDER, ETC., IN REGARD TO ALLEGED VIOLATION OF THE
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION ACT

Docket 8923. Complaint, Apr. 13, 1973—Order, Aug. 16, 1974

Consent order requiring a New York City seller and distributor of toy, gift and hobby products to jobbers and retailers, among other things to cease deceptively packaging its merchandise.

Appearances

For the Commission: *Herbert S. Forsmith, Alan Rubinstein and Armando Labrada.*

For the respondents: *Martin Greene, Aberman, Greene & Locker, New York, N. Y.*

COMPLAINT

Pursuant to the provisions of the Federal Trade Commission Act, and by virtue of the authority vested in it by said Act, the Federal Trade Commission, having reason to believe that Pastime Industries, Inc., a corporation, and Frank Gebbia, individually, and as an officer of said corporation, hereinafter referred to as respondents, have violated the provisions of said Act, and it appearing to the Commission that a proceeding by it in respect thereof would be in the public interest, hereby issues its complaint stating its charges in that respect as follows:

PARAGRAPH 1. Respondent Pastime Industries, Inc., is a corporation organized, existing and doing business under and by virtue of the laws of the State of New York, with its principal office and place of business located at 200 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

PAR. 2. Respondent Frank Gebbia is an individual and is president of the corporate respondent, and formulates, directs and controls its acts and practices, including the acts and practices hereinafter set forth. His address is the same as that of the corporate respondent.

PAR. 3. Respondents are now, and for some time last past have been, engaged in the advertising, offering for sale, sale and distribution of toy, gift and hobby products to jobbers and retailers for resale to the public.

PAR. 4. In the course and conduct of their business, respondents now cause, and for some time last past have caused, said products, when sold, to be shipped from their place of business in the State of New York to purchasers thereof located in various other States of the United States, and maintain, and at all times mentioned herein have maintained, a substantial course of trade in said products in commerce, as "commerce" is defined in the Federal Trade Commission Act.

PAR. 5. Among the products which are offered for sale and sold by the respondents are a number of toy, gift and hobby products. Through the use of certain methods of packaging, respondents have represented, and have placed in the hands of others the means and instrumentalities through which they might represent, directly or indirectly, that certain of the above products, as depicted or otherwise described on the exteriors of packages, corresponded, in their lengths and widths, or their lengths, widths and thicknesses, with the boxes in which they were contained, and that others of such products were offered in quantities reasonably related to the size of the containers in which they were presented for sale.

PAR. 6. In truth and in fact, such products often have not corresponded with their container or package dimensions and are often not offered in quantities reasonably related to the size of the containers or packages in which they are presented for sale. Purchasers of such a product are thereby given the mistaken impression that they are receiving a larger product or a product of greater volume than is actually the fact.

Therefore the methods of packaging referred to in Paragraph Five hereof were and are unfair and false, misleading and deceptive.

PAR. 7. In the conduct of their business, at all times mentioned herein, respondents have been in substantial competition, in commerce, with corporations, firms and individuals in the sale of products of the same general kind and nature as the products sold by the respondents.

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PAR. 8. The use by respondents of the aforesaid unfair, false, misleading and deceptive methods of packaging has had, and now has, the capacity and tendency to mislead members of the purchasing public into the erroneous and mistaken belief that the quantum or amount of the product being sold was and is greater than the true such quantum or amount, and into the purchase of substantial quantities of respondent's product by reason of said erroneous and mistaken belief.

PAR. 9. The aforesaid acts and practices of the respondents, as herein alleged, were and are all to the prejudice and injury of the public and of respondents' competitors and constituted, and now constitute, unfair methods of competition and unfair and deceptive acts and practices in commerce, in violation of Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Commission having issued its complaint on Apr. 13, 1973, charging the respondents named in the caption hereof with violation of the Federal Trade Commission Act, and the respondents having been served with a copy of that complaint, together with a proposed form of order; and

The Commission having duly determined upon motion certified to the Commission, that, in the circumstances presented, the public interest would be served by waiver of the provisions of Section 2.34(d) of its rules which provides that the consent order procedure shall not be available after issuance of complaint; and

The respondents and counsel for the Commission having thereafter executed an agreement containing a consent order, an admission by respondents of all the jurisdictional facts set forth in the complaint, a statement that the signing of said agreement is for settlement purposes only and does not constitute an admission by respondents that the law has been violated as alleged in the complaint, and waivers and other provisions as required by the Commission's rules; and

The Commission having considered the agreement and having accepted same, and the agreement containing consent order having been placed on the public record for a period of sixty (60) days, now in further conformity with the procedure prescribed in Section 2.34(b) of its rules, the Commission hereby makes the following jurisdictional findings, and enters the following order:

1. Respondent Pastime Industries, Inc., is a corporation organized, existing and doing business under and by virtue of the laws of the State of New York, with its offices and principal place of business located at 200 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y.

Respondent Frank Gebbia is an individual and an officer of said corporation. He formulates, directs and controls the policies, acts and practices of said corporation, and his address is the same as that of said corporation.

2. The Federal Trade Commission has jurisdiction of the subject matter of this proceeding and of the respondents, and the proceeding is in the public interest.

ORDER

It is ordered, That respondent Pastime Industries, Inc., a corporation, and its officers, and Frank Gebbia, individually and as an officer of said corporation, and respondents' agents, representatives, employees, successors and assigns, directly or through any corporation, subsidiary, division or other device, in connection with the offering for sale, sale or distribution of toy, gift and hobby merchandise or any other products, in commerce, as "commerce" is defined in the Federal Trade Commission Act, do forthwith cease and desist from:

1. Packaging said products in oversized boxes or other containers so as to create the appearance or impression that the width or thickness or other dimensions or quantity of products contained in a box or container is appreciably greater than is the fact; but nothing in this order shall be construed as forbidding respondents to use oversized containers if respondents justify the use of such containers as necessary for the efficient packaging of the products contained therein and establish that respondents have made all reasonable efforts to prevent any misleading appearance or impression from being created by such container;

2. Providing wholesalers, retailers or other distributors of said products with any means or instrumentality with which to deceive the purchasing public in the manner described in Paragraph (1) above.

It is further ordered, That respondents or their successors or assigns notify the Commission at least 30 days prior to any proposed change in the corporate respondent such as dissolution, assignment or sale resulting in the emergence of a successor corporation, the creation or dissolution of subsidiaries or any other change in the corporate respondent which may affect compliance obligations arising out of this order.

It is further ordered, That the individual respondent named herein promptly notify the Commission of the discontinuance of his present business or employment and of his affiliation with a new business or employment. Such notice shall include respondent's current business

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address and a statement as to the nature of the business or employment in which he is engaged as well as a description of his duties and responsibilities.

It is further ordered, That the respondents distribute a copy of this order to all operating divisions and subsidiaries of said corporation, and also distribute a copy of this order to all firms and individuals involved in the formulation or implementation of respondents' business policies, and all firms and individuals engaged in the advertising, marketing, or sale of respondents' products.

It is further ordered, That the respondents herein shall, within sixty (60) days after service upon them of this order file with the Commission a report in writing setting forth in detail the manner and form in which they have complied with this order.

IN THE MATTER OF

SAM NAGLER