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TOWER FOR DETERRING SHOPLIFTING

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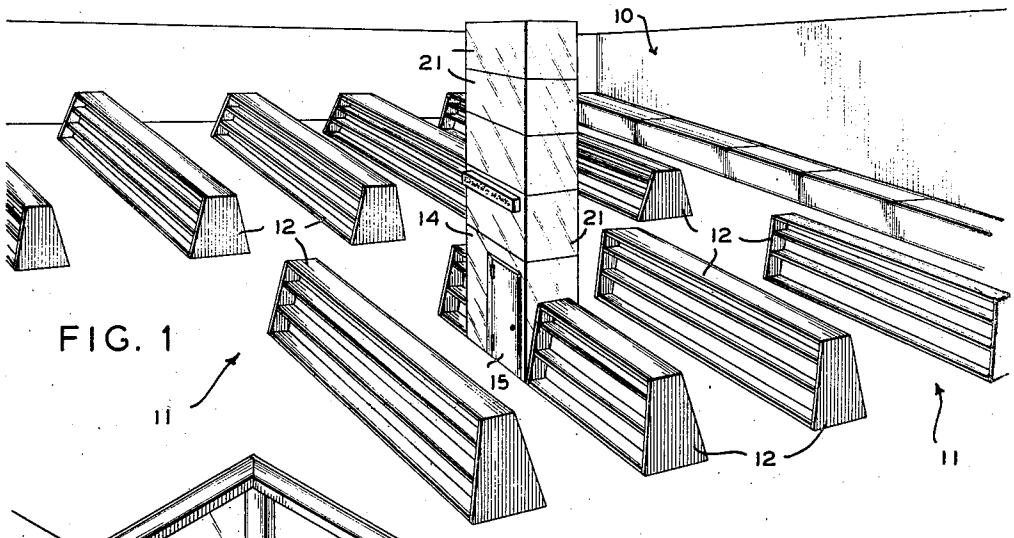


FIG. 1

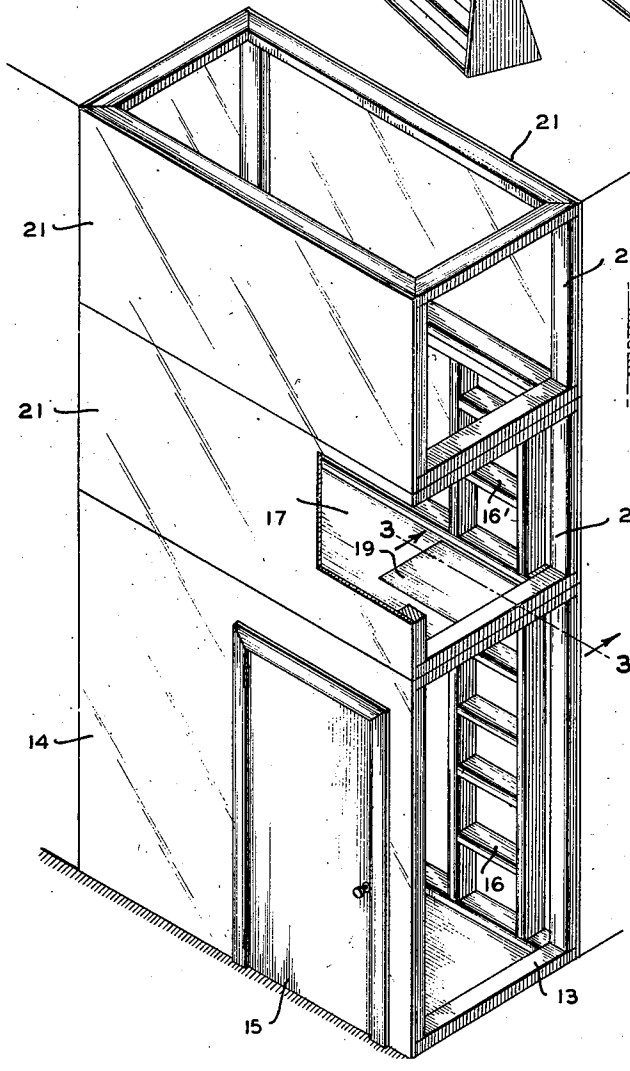


FIG. 2

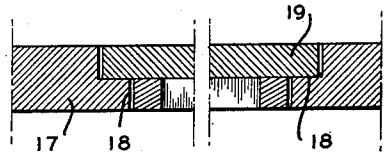


FIG. 3

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TOWER FOR DETERRING SHOPLIFTING

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2 Claims. (Cl. 20—.5)

This invention relates to the display and sale of merchandise and to the maintenance of a check on such merchandise in order to prevent the unauthorized disposition or removal of the same which would result in a depletion of stock and reduction in financial return from the business operation.

The invention relates specifically to merchandise on display in relatively large stores, supermarkets or the like, displayed under a single roof over a large area, where crowds frequently are present examining and making purchases and where both clerks and self-service is practiced.

It is well known that in large stores where merchandise is spread over relatively large areas and the store personnel is limited that the unauthorized appropriation of articles of merchandise is a serious problem reducing the income to such an extent that the success of the operation is materially affected and sometimes it is sabotaged.

In order to reduce loss sustained by the unauthorized appropriation of merchandise, commonly referred to as "shoplifting", numerous steps have been taken to combat and overcome the same, including directing the attention of store personnel to the problem, stationing plainclothes detectives and the like throughout the store, giving more attention to the checking of articles and personnel passing the checking counter and from the store.

These monitoring and checking efforts have been directed primarily to the management and personnel of the operation with little or no attempt to anticipate obviously improper motivation on the part of the public in order to prevent at inception illegal actions such as removal of merchandise and before any preconceived dishonest theft of merchandise can be effected by wrongly motivated persons.

Although increased detention for surveillance has alleviated the problem to some degree it is still of major import requiring constant consideration in order to prevent it from destroying legitimate business.

It is an object of the invention to overcome the problems enumerated or at least to reduce susbtantially the unauthorized removal of merchandise without compensating the owner to thereby reduce to a minimum the depleting effect on the inventory and financial return from the store operation.

Another object of the invention is to reduce shoplifting by direct operation upon the mind of the perspective customer in a manner to restrain any tendency to undertake removal of merchandise or other property illegally and without paying therefor.

Another object is to provide, in a relatively large area where sales or the like are made, a prominent, readily recognizable structure plainly and prominently designated and in plain view by the public for the observation and apprehension of shoplifters and other improper and unlawful conduct and marked to unmistakably let it be known to observers and particularly to weak-minded likely thieves that they are under surveillance at all times.

A further object is to provide, in a particular area such as a store or a supermarket, a watch tower strategically located to permit observation of the entire area without the observer being seen and with such tower prominently designated to direct attention to it and to its purpose in order that the psychological effect will restrain and reduce the commission of shoplifting and other illegal acts and proportionately reduce the loss resulting therefrom.

A still further object of the invention is to provide, at little expense of production, installation and operation, a "scarecrow" watch tower the very principle of which being salutary in reducing the commission of crime with minimum operating costs and upkeep.

Fig. 1 is a fragmentary perspective of a store illustrating one application of the invention;

Fig. 2, an enlarged fragmentary perspective of the watchtower with parts broken away for clarity, and

Fig. 3, a detailed section on the line 3—3 of Fig. 2.

Briefly stated, the invention is a "scarecrow" watchtower for strategic and prominent location and display in a particular area such as a store or supermarket so that it will be visible to the public at all times and will produce in the weak minds of likely shoplifters and law violators the conviction of being observed and the fear of apprehension to such an overpowering extent that self-restraint will be exerted, and with such watchtower being so constructed that a watchman can see therefrom but cannot be observed.

With continued reference to the drawing, within a building **10** is located a display and sales area **11** including racks **12** for the display of merchandise to the public in a manner to provide eye appeal and to promote sales thereof.

Shortage of personnel has resulted more and more in self-service type of stores with minimum clerks and attendants and in which close supervision is impossible and persons go unobserved to a great degree. This has promoted shoplifting. Consequently, instead of the usual approach undertaking to overcome the problem by adding personnel with consequent increase in cost of operation, the present invention provides a different approach employing a "scarecrow" watchtower composed of independent cooperating hollow sections located one upon the other or in stacked relation.

The largest of these sections preferably is the base which comprises a frame **13** and wall covering **14** with a mirror-like exterior surface and through which vision can be had from the inside of the structure to the exterior. This section forms in effect the base of the watchtower and may have a door **15** for the ingress and egress of a watchman and such section also is provided with a ladder **16** by means of which ascent and descent may be had to the top of such base section.

An independent top or floor **17** may be provided with a rabbeted opening **18** in which is received a complementary trap door **19** affording access to the next higher section of the tower.

Above the base section may be mounted a series of upper sections of substantially half the height of the base section each of such upper sections comprising frames **20** and a covering **21** of material similar to that of the base section although if desired one or more of the sections may be provided with opaque covering when it is not necessary or desired to look through them but only through a higher seciton. Each of these sections may have additional ladder rungs **16**. The top or floor **17** may be placed upon any of the sections to provide a platform for a watchman.

Upon the tower is adapted to be placed attention-attracting indicia indicative of the nature of the structure including a name, a pointer or indicator or other attention attracting means.

The tower preferably extends upwardly to a height to provide the best vision for a watchman inside and may

reach the ceiling and be steadied thereby. Also the sections preferably are of such size that a lower section readily affords stability to a next higher section.

It will be apparent from the foregoing that a watch-tower is provided which serves somewhat the same purpose as the old scarecrow in the cornfield, being strategically located and prominently displayed in a particular area such as a store or supermarket, so that it will be visible to the public at all times in such area and regardless of whether it contains a watchman or not it will have a psychological effect in the minds of likely shoplifters and other law violators, so that they will have an uneasy feeling and conviction of being observed and apprehended with such feeling so overpowering that they will exercise self-restraint and vacate the premises without committing any illegal act, all of which will be reflected in the final analysis of the operation.

It will be obvious to those skilled in the art that various changes may be made in the invention without departing from the spirit and scope thereof and therefore the invention is not limited by that which is illustrated in the drawing and described in the specification, but only as indicated in the accompanying claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A device for deterring unauthorized removal of commodities, comprising a tower for disposition in an area where articles of value are located, said tower comprising a plurality of hollow sections disposed in stacked relation one above the other, ingress and egress means to and from said tower, continuous upright step means along the inner wall of each of such stacked sections and leading to said ingress and egress means, whereby a person may ascend and descend the tower, a floor in an upper section of the tower having an opening accessible to said step means so that a person ascending or descending the tower by said step means may pass through said opening, and closure means for said opening providing a portion of said floor, the walls of said sections being of one-way transparency affording visibility outwardly from within said tower of the surrounding area in which the articles of value are located and the exterior of each of said walls presenting a substantially plane continuous mirror reflective surface on any side of said tower but preventing visibility into said tower from the exterior thereof.

2. A device for deterring unauthorized removal of commodities, said device comprising vertically disposed wall surfaces providing a tower of substantially uniform cross-sectional area, ingress and egress means from said tower, step means along an inner wall surface whereby a person may ascend and descend the tower, and a floor located substantially midway of said tower and having an opening accessible to said step means so that a person ascending or descending said tower by said step means may pass through said opening, the walls of said tower being of one-way transparency affording visibility outwardly from within said tower of the surrounding area wherein commodities are located and the exterior of said walls presenting a substantially plane continuous mirror reflective surface on any side of said tower but preventing visibility into said tower from the exterior thereof.

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