

## New shopper convenience is in the bag

The days of those irritatingly long line-ups at supermarket checkout counters may be numbered.

A Canadian company has produced the first checkout system that automatically makes its own grocery bags and eliminates the need for cashiers to handle them.

The system, called Bag-O-Mat, speeds up ringing in and packing operations by 20 per cent and also provides customers with stronger bags for their purchases. It was developed over a period of five years by H.J. Langen and Sons Limited of Toronto. Several previous attempts by other companies to develop a similar system have failed.

Each Bag-O-Mat checkout station makes its own sacks out of pre-applied adhesive rolls of kraft paper which are stored under the cash register. Activated by a cashier stepping on a foot pedal, the Bag-O-Mat presents a bag on the counter in two seconds in an open position angled toward the cashier for easy loading. Three bags are always ready for positioning ahead of time.

Loaded bags are automatically conveyed to the end of the counter where the shopper picks them up. The Bag-O-Mat holds approximately 1 800 bags at a time which is enough to last a full day without interruption of service but paper rolls can be replaced, if necessary, in less than 30 seconds.



*Refilling the Bag-O-Mat's paper supply mechanism, which is hidden under the attractive cabinetry, takes only a few seconds. The Bag-O-Mat is available with or without the computerized scanner for ringing in prices.*

In addition to improving service to shoppers, the new checkout counter reduces fatigue for cashiers. Previously they had to open bags, position them and lift them off the counter for shoppers, now they do not even have to look at the bags to fill them. Cashiers can constantly face



*The Bag-O-Mat supermarket counter spells an end to cut hands and pulled muscles which are hazards cashiers encounter while opening ordinary grocery bags and lifting them when they are loaded. Bag-O-Mat's inventor H.J. Langen and Sons of Toronto, holds more than 50 patents for the device.*

the cash register while filling bags, using only the angle of the counter to guide them, and they can even sit down on the job if they desire.

Ron Langen, president of the company that invented Bag-O-Mat, said that while it saves 20 per cent in checkout time over conventional paper bags, time saved over plastic bags is 40 to 50 per cent.

The new bags are easier to carry because they are 25 per cent stronger than ordinary bags and have a square, seamless bottom — the seams are on the sides which are subjected to less pressure. Another improvement in supermarket service is on the way. The Bag-O-Mat soon will be turning out bags equipped with handles.

## Special telephone for disabled

Bell-Northern Research has developed a telephone allowing the physically disabled to have easier access to the telephone network.

The Directel phone, produced after two-and-a-half years' research at Bell-Northern Research in Ottawa, is being offered to Bell Canada customers through the company's Telecommunications Centres for Special Needs in Toronto and Montreal.

The units are designed for anyone who might be unable to pick up and hold a regular handset or dial a call. The final design of the Directel is the result of a series of field trials and input from handicapped individuals and organizations.

Callers blow into a plastic tube or activate special switches on the unit to contact a Bell operator, who completes the call. The customer speaks through a boom-mounted microphone and hears incoming calls on a speaker built into the unit. The tube or switches are also used to answer incoming calls and to end calls. The units can be equipped with a variety of accessory microphones, headphones and pillow speakers to suit the particular needs of a disabled person.

The units are manufactured for Bell by Positron Industries Incorporated of Montreal and sold by the telephone company at cost — \$385.

Mr. Gauthier said the company estimates it will sell 100 to 150 Directel sets this year. If demand exceeds expectations and larger numbers can be manufactured, the price could come down, according to company officials.