

Musings and observations from a lifetime in philately

Legals versus Illegals Part 1.

For the last twenty years, the stamp world has been ‘flooded’ by thousands of illegal or privately produced issues. They have appeared carrying the names of Soviet breakaway states but mainly bearing the names of third-world countries. There have been many arguments against them but to date, no one has been able to prevent their release. We know not to use them in competition so their popularity is pretty well confined to the general thematic collector who is happy to do his or her own thing. But to my way of thinking, its not simply a case of legal or illegal, black and white, right of wrong or however you might describe it . There is also a very large grey area that’s frequently overlooked. I’m referring to controversial issues that were approved by the UPU, have received catalogue status but to some people, should never have been issued.



Canada 1897 Jubilee issue. This set of 16 with values to \$5 would have cost the stamp collector \$16.78 at face value. By today’s rate, that would be about \$2,047



Four years earlier in 1893, the USA issued their 17 value Columbus Exposition set which would have cost \$16.31 at face value and that relates to just over \$1,989 in today’s money.



1948/9 Royal Silver Wedding Omnibus series. 69 Territories took part most issuing a low value and a high value stamp. In the case of Great Britain, the low value was 2½d (the normal letter rate) and the high value was £1 for which there was no real postal usage. Other high values were 5s and 10s (or the dollar equivalent) and this encouraged many dealers and collector to boycott the issue. Interestingly, the previous Omnibus issue was for the 1946 Victory where you could have bought the entire 164 values for less than the price of two GB Silver Wedding sets.

Tristan da Cunha is famously the remotest island in the world. Prior to the volcanic eruption in 1961 only two Islanders had ever left the island. Despite an almost complete lack of contact with the outside world, in 1952 it was decided that Tristan should have its own postage stamps. The current population of Tristan is 250 - enough to only half-fill a Boeing 747





Pitcairn Island has issued stamps since 1950 and like Tristan, it has a tiny population - the entire 50 inhabitants could all fit into one double-decker bus.

Roger West (Avion Stamps) to be continued.