

## 6. *Consumer Standards and Consumer Protection*

The problems of the consumer in the market place are accentuated by the changing nature of retailing itself. The rise of the supermarket has meant that for a wide range of commonly purchased items retailing has become impersonal. At one time the retailer was a source of information about the products he sold but the modern supermarket offering many thousands of products usually relies on the consumer to select her own purchases on the basis of her own knowledge.

Product information must be provided. Consumers must be informed about physical properties or products they are buying such as weight, volume, quality and number of units and this information should be immediately available at the time of purchase and should be expressed clearly and unequivocally.

Your Committee could cite many examples taken from letters received from dissatisfied consumers about merchandising and packaging techniques which annoy the consumer and make it difficult if not well nigh impossible for the consumer to compare price and quality of different products effectively and quickly.

Facts should be presented in a prominent place on the package or container in a form which is legible and free from graphic distortion. Where applicable, the ingredients should be revealed both by name and percentage of composition, and the consumer should also know about the quality of the product.

### *In particular:*

- (1) the product should be described by its generic name where this is meaningful;
- (2) where products are of a certain type, variety and quality, they should be graded;
- (3) packages should be designed in terms of size, shape or dimension in a way that will not deceive or mislead retail purchasers;
- (4) the net quantity of the contents in terms of weight or measure should be expressed as simply as possible and in terms which can be easily interpreted;
- (5) the essential information about a packaged product and its physical contents should be stated in a prominent place on the label.

It is essential for the government to take all measures within its power to foster the welfare of the consumer. In particular, the government has a responsibility for protecting the consumer against all forms of exploitation.

One aspect of this responsibility was referred by the Government in July, 1966 to the Economic Council of Canada for investigation. The terms of reference of the study to be carried out are:

“In the light of the Government’s long term economic objectives to study and advise regarding:

- (a) the interests of the consumer particularly as they relate to the functions of the Department of the Registrar General;
- (b) combines, mergers, monopolies and restraint of trade;
- (c) patents, trade marks, copyrights and registered industrial designs.”