

**An hon. Member:** Complete disclosure.

**Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway):** Yes, complete disclosure, as the hon. member suggests. Then we need the size, shape and weight of packages to be clearly indicated. We need truthful labelling. I have had brought to my attention cases in which drugs did not carry labels giving clear information concerning their contents. Elements to which some people have dangerous allergies were not named. This information should be given plainly.

Another thing which has become increasingly obvious is the need for truthful information about the cost of credit. The whole question of consumer credit is one which is full of trouble for consumers. In the United States Senator Paul Douglas is introducing a bill at the present time in an attempt to deal with this problem. He calls attention to the huge toll which is being taken by credit gougers. I wish I had time to quote a few examples. Here is just one. Senator Douglas has put on record the case of a woman who bought a couch for \$300 from a solicitor at the door. The buyer paid \$12 every two weeks for two years. The total finance charge was \$324 or \$24 more than the cost of the couch. The finance charge rate, amounting to 107 per cent, was, of course, never mentioned when the couch was sold.

Maybe things are not as bad as that in Canada. But who would dare tell us what the facts are in Canada? They are not available to us through any of our channels of government at the present time.

Some of the consumer associations have urged the necessity for imposing a cooling-off period during which those who have been exposed to high pressure salesmanship practices might have a chance to reflect, a provision whereby a period of time, possibly three days or more, would have to pass before any contract became valid.

Fourth, we need truthful advertising. In this connection I should like to refer to a letter received by the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond. The writer of the letter ended up paying \$1.64 for a box of detergent, the price she usually pays in Richmond where she lives, despite the fact that there was supposed to be a price mark-off of 15 cents. The store, she found, had raised the price to \$1.79 and then deducted the 15 cents. She says in her letter:

To my mind, it's as clear as black and white. The manufacturer offered me a 15¢ reduction on its product. I did not receive it. The store did. I am fed up with these mark-offs, coupons, and

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crazy, mixed-up price markings and feel something should be done about them. Reductions are not being passed on to the public, if that was the intention to begin with.

I have discussed the matter with the store and the soap company, and also written a letter to the paper here in Vancouver. This is all I feel is open to me, but I am hoping you can do something about this situation which is happening over and over again.

I am hoping the government will do something about it one of these days because these things are happening repeatedly and by and by the consumers will take measures through organization which will force the government to do under duress what it could and should do now as an enlightened act of policy.

I turn now to a need which is particularly pressing. The consumer has a right to a dollar of stable purchasing power. President Johnson used exactly this term in one of his messages to Congress. His words were:

The consumer has a right to a dollar of stable purchasing power. I pledge to defend that right with all the ability and determination at my command.

Consumers across this country know that the price index has risen 4 per cent compared with the level in April, 1965, and that the most notable increases affect food, clothing and rent, the rock bottom essentials for families across this country. The consumers want to know why these increases have occurred. Are they justifiable? If so, what can be done for those living on low incomes? If not, what can be done to stop them?

This is why the New Democratic party proposed at this session the establishment of a prices review board as an integral part of a department of consumer affairs. I think the association of consumers has done a fine job in many fields, but I believe that today the stabilization of prices is one of the most important tasks before us. Unless the government is prepared to incorporate such a review board in a department of consumer affairs, everybody will be left unprotected.

We are proposing this price review board, first, to hear and inquire into complaints of unjustifiable price increases. Second, we believe that where price rises are intended, in the case of household necessities, manufacturers and processors should be called before the board to justify these increases, failing which no increases could be made.

We claim too that consumers have the right to be heard. We want a consumer bureau established where people can get information, lay complaints, and initiate action by the government with regard to grievances.