

substitutes for credit card lending). Most saw their action as a protest against high rates and not as a simple choice among alternative ways of paying for a purchase.

Consumers really face two choices. Should they use any source of credit? If they rely on credit cards as a source of credit, what is the best card to use?

There is, unfortunately, no single answer to the question of which is the best card. The flyer "Choosing a Credit Card—Tips to Remember" put out by the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs offers some excellent advice:

Identifying the lowest cost credit card is not easy. It is not enough just to compare interest rates. How interest charges are calculated can be as important as the interest rate itself.

The following tips may save you money:

#### Compare

- Interest rates
- Number of days given to pay in full before interest is charged (grace period)
- How interest charges are calculated (from date of purchase or date of statement)
- Non-interest charges such as transaction charges or annual fees
- Other benefits such as convenience or discounts

#### Consider

- If you regularly pay your balance in full before the due date, consider all non-interest charges.
- If you regularly pay your balance within a few months, find out how the interest is calculated. A credit card that calculates interest from the statement date may cost you less than one that calculates it from the date of purchase—regardless of the interest rate.
- If you take a long time to pay your balance, use a card with a low interest rate.

#### Remember

The four major groups of cards offer different features ... Check with card issuers directly for the details respecting any particular card.

This is obviously good advice and it would be easier to take if all the costs of using a credit card were readily available.