

play a role in the market. Generally speaking the role is to ensure better visibility for the consumer. The doctrine of visibility is important in many areas and in the case of consumers it restores the balance in the market to some degree.

Today we look at an economy that is undergoing a series of major changes in all aspects of development. Market practices are being altered; industrial organization is being transformed significantly; there are major changes in technology and communications, and the power of advertising creates new stimulus and demand. All these major changes create new opportunities and new problems for the consumer. The consumer himself has become more sophisticated, better educated and is expecting, indeed demanding, more service and information not only from his suppliers but from governments as well.

In the program I was describing last evening I believe the house will see the first positive steps toward an effective response by the federal government to the real needs of the consumer. When the house rose I was speaking about the fact that under the Canadian constitution no single level of government has jurisdiction over all the matters in which consumers are interested. I also mentioned the fact that there are a good many areas in which federal and provincial authorities have current or separate jurisdiction in closely related fields. In the area of fraud and misleading advertising, for example, provinces frequently have regulations covering used car dealers, collection agencies, racing commissions and so on, while the federal government has certain responsibilities under the Criminal Code and the Combines Investigation Act.

In the realm of food and drugs, most provinces have regulations affecting milk, margarine, farm produce and so forth, and they have jurisdiction over retail trade in both food and drugs, while the federal government through the Department of Agriculture has many responsibilities for food products, and through the food and drug directorate it has jurisdiction in the field of manufacturing and importation of drugs. Both federal and provincial governments are concerned with consumer credit regulations, with packaging and labelling, with research, testing and the setting of standards.

● (3:30 p.m.)

I could give many more examples to illustrate the fact that each level of government undertakes a number of activities affecting

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consumers. Consequently, the degree of protection afforded any individual Canadian can and does vary significantly from one location to another within the country. The Economic Council concluded, therefore, that it was clear that a satisfactory, over-all approach to this important area of public policy could only be fully developed through effective co-ordination and co-operation among the federal and provincial authorities concerned. We are in full agreement with this conclusion. The need for co-operation is manifest. Therefore I intend to write to each provincial government to solicit their assistance. I intend to send our officials to every provincial capital across the country to find out—

Mr. Nielsen: What about the territories?

Mr. Turner: And to the territories. I will send them to find out what problems are facing the provinces and the territories, which of course fall under federal administration at the present moment.

Mr. Nielsen: It will be a jolt to the territories.

Mr. Turner: I hope as well to be able to visit the provincial capitals and examine jointly with provincial leaders the problems of the consumer and methods of solving them on a broad base. A number of provinces already have substantial consumer programs in operation. They have given leadership and have recently made important advances in the field of consumer affairs. There is a clear need, however, for the greatest possible legislative uniformity right across the country. There is, in addition, clear advantage in a reciprocal exchange of information. I hope that these visits will lead up to and prepare the ground for a federal-provincial conference on consumer affairs.

The Economic Council recommended as well that the department's information program should be supported by a program of research into consumer problems, those which exist now and are likely to arise in the future. The council emphasized that in a society where dynamic technological, economic and social change have become a way of life, new problem areas which cannot be foreseen now will inevitably emerge in the years ahead. This requires, first of all, continuing research into developments of direct, immediate concern to consumers. Second, it requires a flexibility in the development of policy and institutional arrangements as new needs arise. Accordingly, the Economic Council