

Our priority programmes during the first phase of operation are:

(1) A complete review and assessment of all aspects of consumer work undertaken in Federal Government - with a view to centralizing some activities, strengthening the useful ones, eliminating the wasteful ones. We have struck a major inter-departmental committee to co-ordinate this, and have hired a management consultant firm to use modern cost-evaluation techniques.

(2) The establishment of a Consumer Advisory Council, composed of 15 Canadians reflective of the full spectrum of the community - to provide advice, opinions and ideas on consumer problems. We hope to have an announcement on the Council very soon.

(3) Creation of a Consumer Service Bureau where inquiries and complaints from consumers across the country will be received, processed and given immediate action. This will be done in close communication with the provinces so that there can be an exchange of referrals when items fall into their separate jurisdiction.

(4) The setting-up of a Consumer Information Service to reach all areas of the public through all the media with views, facts and recommendations on consumer matters.

(5) We are concentrating on the question of misleading advertising and the economic role of advertising. This is done in correspondence with moves to place Criminal Code provision relating to advertising under our Combines Administration.

(6) We are also investigating several areas of marketing where there has been serious consumer complaint, e.g., hearing aids, tagging and labelling of household products and appliances.

(7) We are examining the feasibility of extending bilingual language labelling across Canada.

(8) As a major piece of legislation - we have first reading on a bill to amend patents and trademarks designed to reduce the high cost of drugs at the manufacturing level and, momentarily, we expect to bring this item to full debate on Second Reading in the House of Commons.

FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

This is just a beginning. It is just the first entry into the involved and complicated world of consumers. There are many other options to exercise - far more to do.

To begin with, we will have to deal seriously with the protection of consumers against the by-products of our new technology - but it also brings new hazards and questions for the consumer. There is the safety factor in new synthetic materials, there is the health problem in the proliferation of insecticides, and industrial waste, there is the information gap of knowing the quality and performance of new home appliances and household goods, there are enormous questions of high costs of repair and maintenance to keep our machinery intact and in order.

We must begin preparing for the chequeless, cashless society. Forecasts predict the total credit card society, totally centralized by computer within

the next decade. This raises the problem of maintaining a control on credit transaction, availability of interest rate information. The enormous rise in personal bankruptcy is testimony to the need to revise governmental and legal procedures in what David Bazelan calls *The Paper Economy*.

With the rising affluence and leisure of our society, there is a parallel rise in the supply of services. From professional sport to car repair, and diaper supply, the modern society is becoming a great consumer of personal services. The Combines Division, along with the Economic Council, is now examining services to see if they should be included under anti-combines, and monopoly legislation, pointing to the needs for a general revamping of protection and review of the growing service industry.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

But even with the rise of national wealth, we cannot forget the needs of those who do not share in rising standards. There are many Canadians who are troubled consumers - the poor, the elderly, the handicapped, the regionally depressed. They have special consumer needs, special problems. One of the great questions of the next decade will be to expand the dimension of equal participation to all our citizens. A programme for troubled consumers aimed at better protection against unscrupulous practices, which prey on the poor and handicapped, the development of better consumer skills, the provision of special goods and services for those who have particular needs, such as the elderly and the provision of legal aid, and consumer counselling to assist those with problems, can play a major part in opening the door - for many dispossessed Canadians.

As we enter a new era where life will become even more involved, interwoven and complex - it becomes important that all consumers have the ability to still exercise individual choices to gain the best possible advantage for the money spent.

CONSUMER RIGHTS

Consumers must also have a statement of rights to insure their position in a modern society: an opportunity of choice; a full protection against unsafe, hazardous products, and damaging business practices; an open availability to information; and a forceful representation of their views and opinions.

This is a succinct formula for the kind of activity that Canadian consumers have a right to expect and will receive from the new Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs....

AID TO SICILY

Mr. Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, announced recently that the Canadian Government would provide \$100,000 to help victims of the recent earthquakes in Sicily. The use to which this aid (which is to be added to contributions from private sources) will be put, will be decided in consultation with the Government of Italy and the Red Cross Society.