

our New Brunswick bureau seems to lag behind

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an obvious danger; such as kite strings made of a substance which conducts electricity. An example of a "controlled" product would be plastic bags.

These are considered safe if they are made of plastic thick enough so that it will not immediately collapse and smother a child who puts his head into one. The bureau, he said, keeps a steady surveillance on the market for the protection of the consumer.

Quite unlike Arnold Ferguson (which by now should be expected) Andrew stated that as a Consumer Consultant about fifty percent of his time is spent with the media-speaking for interviews and discussion. He stated that the departments brochures are also widely distributed. For example, clothing stores are supplied with information concerning Canada Standard Sizes.

85PERCENT RESULTS

When Ferguson was interviewed he stated that eighty five percent of the time his bureau takes action against someone there are positive results. Andrew declined to make any impressive claims like this but he did say that the favourable results seemed to outweigh the unfavourable. Even here, was reluctant to sound boastful and added that the successful rather than the unsuccessful cases tended to remain in his memory longer.

PYRAMID SELLING

A question which neither Ferguson nor Andrew (but particularly the former) was eager to answer dealt with pyramid selling organizations such as Koscot (Kosmetics for the Citizens of Tomorrow). According to the "4th Estate" of March 4, 1971, Koscot is

"an unethical pyramid selling scheme, which has been condemned by consumer agencies in Nova Scotia, other parts of Canada, and many states."

The article goes on to state that the provincial Consumer Services Bureau of Nova Scotia has had complaints of people having lost tremendous sums of money in this scheme. The Director of Consumer Services for Nova Scotia has issued a bulletin concerning this subject.

In the bulletin, he condemns "any such pyramid or referral selling schemes as being unsound business practice... Many multilevel practices try to mislead and deceive prospective distributors into believing they will make fantastic profits for little or no effort."

Arnold Ferguson says he has received no complaints about pyramid selling practices and certainly he hasn't issued any bulletins against them. Indeed, he didn't think it was a matter of consumer affairs anyway. (Admittedly, he did express a willingness to accept complaints. Just what course of action he would take from there is unknown again.)

It seems that the Woodstock Bugle requested information on pyramid selling for an article by the publisher, David Cadogan, in the March 18, 1971 issue. The article states that "The Director of Consumer Affairs for the Province of New Brunswick, Arthur (sic) Ferguson, was the most disappointing. He didn't think the matter fell in his jurisdiction at all since it involves a business proposition" adding that "department couldn't act without receiving a consumer complaint. He suggested that, if anything, pyramid selling was probably a matter of federal jurisdiction. He refused to discuss the company by

name, suggesting that if there was anything useful to be accomplished by publicity, some of the bigger papers would have picked it up and offered us a couple of brochures on his department."

This is disturbingly similar to the reaction I received from Ferguson. When I asked Andrew about pyramids he said that the licensing of organizations such as Koscot was a PROVINCIAL authority, and suggested that Ferguson probably would know a little more on the subject than he did—all of which makes Ferguson's earlier statements a little confusing. Andrew said his bureau had received inquiries about pyramid selling practices and had advised these people to consult a lawyer.

He intimated that stiffer laws in Nova Scotia enable the government to act a little more forcefully in such situations.

While he displayed a sincere interest in this subject and appeared eager to gain more information on it as well as to have laws enacted which might be helpful, he noted that legislation however, can be brought in only when the people demand it.

STUDENT CONSUMERS

Both Ferguson and Andrew were asked just what their department were doing for students. Ferguson's reply was that "quite a few" students came to him with complaints.

He did not elaborate.

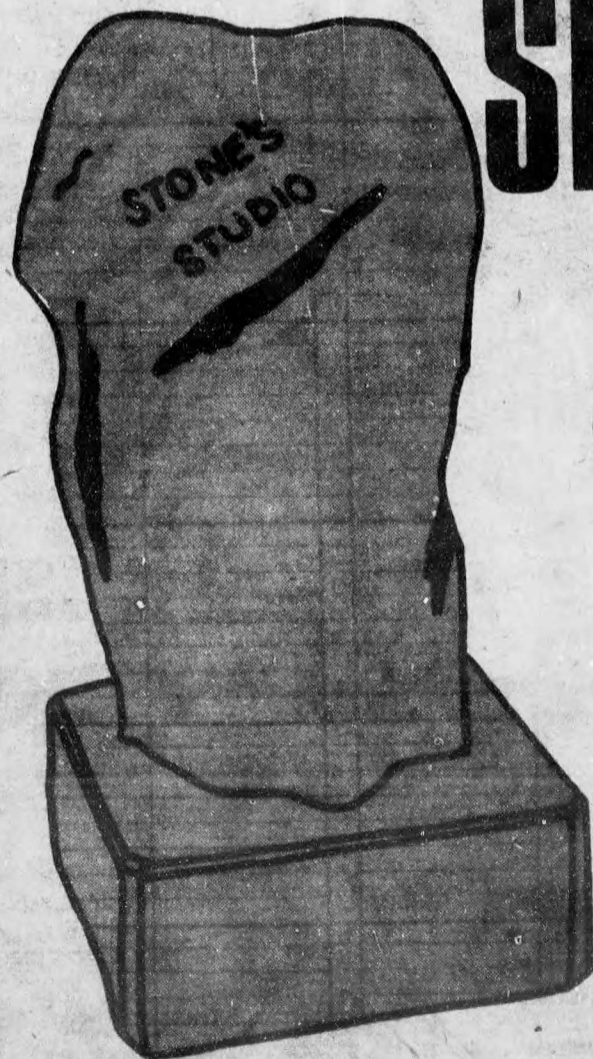
Anyone wishing additional information to that mentioned here should consult the Provincial Consumer Bureau (for what it's worth) located in the Centennial Building in Fredericton or the Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs at 51 Regent St., Fredericton.



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