

Federal people provide best local service,

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complaint. These being "complaint forms" rather than "posters" I would presume that they are generally obtained through contacting the bureau itself.

But if, as the notice says it contains a "Message of Importance to all Citizens of New Brunswick" it would seem a little strange that they are not distributed a little more liberally or at least put up in more conspicuous places than grade schools.

Ferguson, predictably, was confident that most New Brunswickers were aware of the services offered by his bureau. I was assured that although the bureau is not publicized in the newspapers, it has been advertised on radio and TV province-wide, as well as Mr. Ferguson's having made numerous public appearances, including regular ones at UNB and TC.

As for myself, I must be rather unobservant as I had never heard of Arnold Ferguson until the interview. (Admittedly, I do recall hearing of a case recently in which a door-to-door paving contractor was taken to court

by the Provincial Bureau.

Alan Andrew, Consumer Consultant for the Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs, in contrast to Ferguson, went into great detail in describing every facet of the responsibilities and goals of the Bureau, while also supplying great deal of information concerning not only the purposes of the Bureau but also detailing specific regulations and practices which must be followed by the manufacturers.

Andrew described the main purpose of the bureau as the informing of the consumer of his rights while also acting as an intermediary between the consumer and the retailer. He assured me that his job was not to drive companies out of business but to have them work in proper manner.

One of the booklets with which he supplied me was entitled "The Department and its Functions." According to this helpful booklet "The Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs" was created in the belief that this mass economy or mass market is not always fair or just to the consumer or investor, that it is not always organized for or operated in the general interests of the consumer." The Department, it is said, aims "to obtain for all citizens just and fair economic treatment, whether they make their impact on the demand or the supply side of the marketplace, whether they be consumers, investors, or businessmen."

The booklet also lists what it describes as Consumer Goals:

- 1) Protection against fraud and deception;
- 2) Protection against accident and health hazards;
- 3) Assurance that the market system is competitive;
- 4) Assistance to the consumer so that he can make valid choices and judge true prices;
- 5) Provision of a means

for receiving and answering consumer complaints, queries, and suggestions;

- 6) Representation of the consumer in the councils of government."

It also lists 4 freedoms which it says are in the best interests of not only consumers, but also of businessmen and investors: "1. Freedom of choice. 2. Freedom of action. 3. Freedom from fraud and deception. 4. Freedom from fear of physical injury."

For all those consumers who wish to send an inquiry or complaint directly to Ottawa so that it may be brought to the attention of a manufacturer or supplier, the address is: The Consumer, Box 99, Ottawa.

Andrew went to great lengths describing particular problems encountered by the bureau and the process by which a complaint brings results. Much, much more impressive than good old Arnold Ferguson.

With regard to faulty products, Mr. Andrew informed me that product inspectors make regular checks on the market place; however, if there is a complaint about a product, it is investigated, and if the complaint is found to be justified, the faulty product is removed from the market. He gave the example here of meat which may have been graded higher than it should have been. If this is the case the meat is taken off the market and regraded.

A similar case which came up in court recently concerned old potatoes being advertised as new. Situations like this are awkward as the store did not know the potatoes were old when they were put out for sale. The judge was hesitant to lay charges against the store for that reason.

Complaints of faulty or misleading advertising, I was told, are investigated by a Combines Investigator, and the case is taken to court where the judge may make his decision.

Andrew revealed a number of interesting facts about hazardous products. Many objects, he explained, contained hidden hazards. Among these are seemingly harmless children's toys such as teddy bears and rattles. In the past, it seems, teddy bear's eyes were rather loosely fastened in with a sharp jagged piece of metal. One of these eyes, if removed, was a dangerous object in the hands of a child.

Some rattles were made with spikes inside the cylinder which made a musical noise when struck with the ball inside. However, if the child were to take the top off the rattle, he would be in possession of a lethal weapon.

Other hazardous objects include pottery which has been finished with a glaze containing a poisonous substance such as lead, as well as devices (presumably tools and appliances) which are so noisy they endanger the hearing of the user. Andrew gave me these examples, apparently from memory while glancing through the "Hazardous Products Act."

The manufacturers, he said, do not hesitate to remove a proven hazardous product from the market. Such products he said, can be divided into two groups; banned and controlled. Those articles which are banned outright constitute



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