

PREFACE

In the spring of 1953 a group of twenty consumer leaders from throughout the United States met at the University of Minnesota. The purpose of this two day informal get-to-gether was to explore the status of the consumer as well as to examine consumer organizations and their contributions to the needs of consumer leaders. This conference was financed by Consumers Union of the United States, Inc.

This first discussion session included twelve representatives from the field of economics and eight from the field of education. Together they considered possibilities for improving consumer education. Their deliberations included a variety of ideas -- conferences, publications, research. As a final outcome of this session, it was decided to form an organization to be known as the Council on Consumer Information. Temporary officers were elected and assigned the prime responsibility for setting up the framework of the permanent organization. One year later the group again convened at the University of Minnesota. At that time the new organization was formally launched following approval of the constitution proposed by the board. Also at this second meeting, it was definitely agreed that the greatest need in the consumer field was the preparation and distribution of unbiased materials. This viewpoint is reflected by the statement of purpose in the constitution:

The Council is concerned with problems of our economy, considered from the point of view of the ultimate consumer of goods and services. People as consumers need information in order to use available economic resources in such a way as to give them maximum satisfaction. In addition they need information to help them play a responsible role as citizens so that the tremendous potential of our economic system will be channeled into goods and services that maximize the welfare of all. The Council is strictly non-partisan and takes no stand on any issue of public policy.

Most of the efforts of the Council have gone into the publication of two series of pamphlets. Four of these in the Consumer Problem Series are: "Consumers Look at Farm Price Policies", "Consumers Look at Fair Trade", "Consumers Look at Burial Practices", and "The Consumer and Anti-Trust." Pamphlets in the Self-Help Series include: "What You Should Know About the Law of Estates", "How to Plan a Life Insurance Program", and "Watch Your Weights and Measures." Three pamphlets now in process are "Consumers Look at Trading Stamps", "Bringing the Consumer Point of View Into Government", and "How to Read Labels".

To those actively engaged in consumer education, one of the most helpful services of the Council is its News Letter which is published four times a year. The News Letter covers current happenings in the field with particular emphasis on new publications.

Since its inception, the Council has grown from the charter group of twenty to approximately one thousand members. An annual subsidy of about \$5,000 from Consumers Union has helped finance the work of the Council. The amount of this grant is gradually being decreased as the income from publications and memberships increases.

In order to fulfill more completely the Council's purpose, annual conferences have been held. These conferences are concerned primarily with current issues and problems facing consumers. They provide an opportunity for leaders in the field to exchange ideas and keep abreast of new developments.

The first two conferences, 1955 and 1956, were held in Dayton, Ohio. The third, in 1957, took place in St. Louis, Missouri. Because of the excellence of the papers presented at this third annual conference, the Executive Committee decided to make selected ones available to a wider audience through the publication of this summary.

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Third Annual Conference