

REPORT FROM CONNECTICUT

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Last year when I spoke to the CCI Conference in Minneapolis, the Department of Consumer Protection in Connecticut had been in existence for only six months. Since then, we have developed greatly and have come to be well recognized and supported by the people of Connecticut. We have had to sell our Department to the consumers of our state. Not only am I the law enforcement officer of the Department of Consumer Protection and its administrator, but I have to see that it is accepted and recognized by consumer in the State.

We achieve this status by our continuing program of public information. When we became a department, we invited the press to be present at all hearings of suspected violations picked up by my inspectors in the field. This policy proved to be successful in that the people of the state became aware of the work that we were doing. Our work was not new because we gathered into one department many established divisions and agencies. But the coordinated emphasis on working in behalf of the consumers of the State was new. The press did a wonderful job for us; they paved the way for the success, I believe, and the ultimate position which we hold in the hearts of the consumers of our State. Unsolicited, we got much free publicity through magazine articles, and through writers of different papers that came in, to write of the functions of the Department of Consumer Protection. At the present time one of the press associations is writing a series of stories on each of the Divisions in the Department of Consumer Protection. I appeared on television and radio on every possible occasion. I appeared before many women's groups of all sizes. It didn't make any difference to me whether there were 3 or 300. I sold to them this Department of Consumer Protection. When I get back, I am to appear before the Connecticut Federated Women's Clubs, where there'll be some 480 women present. I'm just waiting for the chance to talk to them.

The political leaders suddenly woke up to the fact that we offered a program of considerable public interest. Consumers are people. People are people that vote, they're voters, and the political leaders look to voters at times and they should look at those same people as consumers, and have an interest in their welfare and they have. And for that reason I was happy to see that both political parties of our State saw fit to write into their platforms a paragraph which was, I felt, very well done and which recognized the functions of the consumer department of Connecticut. Consolidated in the Department of Consumer Protection are a large number of inspection and regulatory activities, formerly carried on, but now with a minimum duplication. The new streamlined setup provides even better protection for the public against mis-branding, short weight, misrepresentation, unsanitary practices,

and hazardous substances. In the six years of the present administration notable examples of productive achievement in the interest of the consuming public have been recorded. We have continuous inspection of food products marketed in Connecticut to determine compliance with state standards and labels. We have ruled out of the market many attempts of fraud on the public, including adulterated fruit juices, meatless sausages and many other items. Manufacturers and producers have been made aware that in Connecticut they must live up to their representation.

One party's platform stated, "We wholeheartedly support the programs of our State agencies in the establishment and enforcement of quality standards for Connecticut consumers. We propose a Citizens' Advisory Council to further assist the Department of Consumer Protection in setting high standards for consumer goods in the interest of the buying public."

In his message of January 24, 1961, Governor Dempsey proposed that the Citizens Advisory Council advise the Commissioner of Consumer Protection in all matters affecting the interests of the people as consumers. The Commissioner is charged with recommending to the Governor and to the legislature the enactment of such legislation as he deems necessary to protect and promote the interest of the people as consumers. Also he is to make studies deemed necessary and render reports thereupon to the people, and to appear before commissions, department and agencies to represent and to be heard in behalf of consumer interest.

The confidence of the people of my state in our Department has been shown many times during the recent session of our legislature. We did, of course, support certain bills that had to do with regulatory powers, particularly to clarify enforcement of the laws, but we did not present too many bills that were controversial in nature. I was happy to see that people who wanted further protection in the interest of consumers are asking that certain laws now on our books be transferred to the Department of Consumer Protection for proper enforcement. That makes me feel very proud of the position which I hold in our State. I was amused to find that I am not even being consulted any more in some of these problems. They just take it for granted that we'd be happy to perform the duties as the Department of Consumer Protection. Riding in on the plane yesterday, I saw an article in a copy of the Hartford Courant reporting an action of the legislative finance committee. The committee approved a measure exempting from the state sales tax certain preparations such as Metracal. It went on to say the measure give the State Commissioner of Consumer Protection the authority to specify these preparations. To go on from there, several statutes have been proposed by other interests, other agencies, which would set up under our unfair sales practices division a small FTC department for the State of Connecticut.

Another proposal would transfer to our Department the licensing and regulation of vending machines. Now vending machines are a big business in our State, and I presume they are in your states also. This was tried two years ago and defeated, but this year the big vending machine combine of Chicago attended the meetings and approved of this legislation with some modifications.

Another bill would give us the job of registering sanitariums, particularly important for the problem of sanitation.

We too have had TV repair frauds. After some tedious work, our State Police picked up 8 TV service men and took them to court. This led to introduction of a bill to license TV repairmen. Much to our surprise, organized TV repairmen want this legislation; they want to be licensed and regulated. These functions will also come under the Department of Consumer Protection. So we're going to be quite a Department.

Meetings of the Council on Consumer Information provide opportunities for and lead to interchange of information among such people as Mrs. Nelson, Father McEwen, Dr. Campbell and me. We can call on our friends for advice and guidance as I did when we were working on the bill to set up the Citizens Advisory Council for Consumers' Protection. There was no opposition to that bill.

As in all other such endeavors, education and preplanning are very important.

The Federal Trade Commission is setting up a workshop in Hartford, Connecticut on April 11, which is sponsored by the Department of Consumer Protection, the Better Business Bureau, the Advertising Club of Hartford, and the Retail Trade Business Bureau of Connecticut. We have people coming up from the Federal Trade Commission to do this work for us. I'm also happy to see that we have participation by organized labor. I see that Ann Draper is here. I have had the opportunity of reading some of the literature and about some of the work that she has been doing in the research department of the AFL-CIO. She recently appeared before the Food and Drug Commission about orange juice standards. We're all concerned about this. You may recall that a few weeks ago Sec. Ribicoff announced that the Federal Food and Drug Administration had discovered "100% orange juice" made in Texas was being adulterated with 50% water. In 1958 Connecticut was one of the first states which found this very same condition. I appeared before the Florida Citrus Commission at that time to tell them about their Florida orange juice produced by a company which no longer exists.

The AFL-CIO in Connecticut has asked my assistance in setting up a workshop which they are conducting on May 18. One subject is buying on credit, borrowing and the legal assistance and protection needed by the consumer. I took the liberty, Mr. Morse, of sending them a copy of your

program here so that they could see what you people are doing on a national level. I think it will be very helpful, and we'd like to see more of it. Of course, the work of Mrs. Williams of the Food and Drug Administration is very important. She's doing a wonderful job throughout the States, and your Newsletter with consumer information is one that I look forward to from time to time.

Now in the area of weights and measures which Mrs. Nelson mentioned, I'd like to report to you that Connecticut has just recently added to its staff 17 new inspectors in the field of weights and measures. We think it's important. We are constantly worried about conditions such as short weight, deceptive packaging, short fill, short measure. It's a continuous enforcement program. Now while we're extremely concerned about this, I get awfully upset when I read such things as what happened recently when the Secretary of Agriculture allowed the meat industry to add another 10% water to ham. Where do we end with these things? We are here concerned about short weight and all of a sudden, at the federal level, packers are allowed to add as much as 20% water. Shouldn't we become concerned about overweight when it becomes water that you're buying instead of a commodity which is meat? I should think we would and I'm very happy to see that Secretary Freeman is going to call a series of public hearings and possibly rescind this regulation which has passed in the last few weeks of the last administration. I'm not trying to be critical, believe me. I'm trying to give you some of the things I think we should be taking an interest in.

Now it goes further than that. It doesn't stop with the hams. We had a call from a man from North Carolina the other day who wanted to speak with me. They're interested in adding a little water to poultry. Now just how far are we going to go with this addition of water? He said it is to make poultry more palatable. Well, I've had a lot of chicken in my day and I don't care about it being loaded with water. We told them we would not accept any poultry in Connecticut that had any injection of water or anything else except pure meat. That's our stand in Connecticut.

Of course, we were pleased to see the recent decision by the lower courts, after much work by the Federal Food and Drug Administration on deceptive packages that had to do with chocolate mints. It was found that the chocolate mint package was not what it purported to be, that about 40% of it was paper. Certainly this was not conducive to good presentation of the commodity on the market. But that's only one instance. I know they've fought that for a good many years and I hope the upper courts will sustain the lower court's ruling in this area.

In summary, I have tried to cover these things as quickly as I could. There's much to talk about and I could talk for hours on it. I'd like to feel that we in Connecticut have made a substantial contribution to the National Scene. We didn't like to see our great Governor, Governor Ribicoff, leave the Connecticut scene because he had done so

much for our people. I worked very closely with him for the past six years. I was honored to be chosen by him to be Commissioner of Consumer Protection. We allowed him to go reluctantly when President Kennedy chose him to be Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. Being the dedicated man that he is, I know that he'll do much in the interest of the consumers in our nation. I'm looking forward to big things and I know you are too and I know that's what he intends to do. I know it's going to be the nation's gain and our loss. But we have another young, vigorous, able governor in Governor Dempsey who is carrying on the same program. I'm also very pleased to hear the report and to read about President Kennedy's thinking and I do hope that his choice will be Dr. Persia Campbell for the Office of Consumer Counsel in the White House. Those are all very pleasant things. Now the future of Consumer Protection looks awfully bright, it looks bright in Connecticut and I hope it's bright in every other state. But it's up to each and every one of us to educate, promote and put into positive action the strongest possible protection we all can provide in the area of consumer protection and information. It's been my pleasure to be with you, thank you very much.