

OPENING REMARKS

Richard L. D. Morse, President

It is my honor and privilege to open this Seventh Annual Conference of the Council on Consumer Information.

On behalf of the Executive Committee and the Local Arrangements Committee it is gratifying to see such a large group in attendance. Although we may appear to be lacking in quantity, you certainly reflect quality of leadership in consumer interests from coast to coast, including representation from Canada.

I should like to concentrate these opening remarks on the tempo of recent events which point to a very genuine and serious concern for the consumer. This is manifested by the increasing attention being given consumer problems at both the state and federal levels of government. The program scheduled for this evening is living testimony of the interest at the state level. Balanced with interest at the state level is concern at the federal level of government, and I should like to share with you some of the expressions of interest received from the federal level: Senator Douglas sent regrets he could not be here this evening. Senator Kefauver also sent regrets, and requested that we inform him of any developments bearing on his bill to establish a Department of the Consumer. I have just received a wire from Senator Neuberger wishing us a successful conference, and advising that fourteen members of the Senate have joined in cosponsoring his S. Resolution 115 to establish a select committee on consumer interests, (complete text of wire read). In this district is one of the strongest supporters of food and drug legislation, Congresswoman Leonore Sullivan. Her omnibus bill HR 1235 which encompasses many reforms in the food and drug field is one we will all want to study. She hopes to be able to attend some of the proceedings. (Complete text of her wire appears on p.106) Secretary Freeman, who was our opening speaker last year, has sent wishes for a successful conference. Senator Philip A. Hart of Michigan has sent word via Dr. Burk that he and his counsel, Mr. Jerry Cohen, expect to be with tomorrow evening at our banquet. He has an important announcement to make concerning an investigation of consumer deception to be conducted by the Senate Anti-trust and Monopoly Subcommittee. He has selected our conference as the place to make the announcement public and wishes to have the benefit of our discussion.

And, much to my delight and surprise, I have a four-page wire just received from President Kennedy. I believe this is in response to my letter to him of March 6 in which I invited him to make whatever statement he might care to regarding further developments of his idea of giving formal recognition to consumer representation in the executive branch. I had said that we might serve as a most appropriate audience-background for expressing his concern for problems of the consumer today. As you will hear, he more than adequately fulfilled this request: " See telegram "

Obviously, this is no time to expect "John" to do it alone. Help is needed now to give a steadying influence to this wave of enthusiasm for consumer recognition. All of you will be expected to help in various capacities. As an organization your Council on Consumer Information is committed not to take stands. Yet, it is committed to education, and therefore has the responsibility to inform its members of current developments. Then, each member can and is encouraged to take appropriate action.

My plea is that we follow the proceedings of the conference, and later when we return to our usual pursuits, we re-think carefully the shape, form, figure, and function of a consumer agency and how it might be most effective.