

---

You have heard the proposal of Mr. Voorhis for the marriage of Miss Consumer and Mr. Cooperative. Now we shall have our discussion.

*Mrs. Angela Little:* I am here this afternoon as Miss Consumer. One of the impressions I received from Mr. Voorhis' speech was that perhaps in the minds of some of us

consumer and cooperative movements are somewhat separate, but both as a member of the Berkeley consumers' cooperative and as a consumer I feel very much involved in the total aspect.

I am involved in this both through partial ownership of the consumers' cooperative, by shopping in the supermarket complex, and as a participant in the program, as a member of a committee that I feel is a very important one in our cooperative, the Consumer Information and Protection Committee. I have been a member of this committee for quite some time and recently I was appointed chairman of it.

The committee disseminates information for the use of our members as an educational program, and we actually participate very actively in consumer affairs. We are exceedingly interested in the legislation that is being proposed that affects consumers and cooperatives. We urge our members to write to the legislatures. We often participate in hearings and at times propose to our congressmen legislation that we feel is of importance to the consumer.

We are exceedingly involved in the safety and protection aspect, such as quality control, and explicit information on the quality of products, and have become very interested in legislation to regulate cosmetics and beauty aids that are not involved in interstate commerce and therefore are not under the Federal Food & Drug Administration. Thus, I feel that we are very much part of the consumer movement as well as the cooperative movement.

*Mr. Neptune:* My comments relate from the standpoint of the consumers' goods co-operatives looking at the consumer movement in order to understand it. I am not sure that I completely understand all that the consumer movement represents. I feel a consumer movement is concerned with persuasion, with seeking legislation, with pressuring, with education, with picketing, with whatever techniques are available to accomplish the ends of the legislation that is sought by the Consumer Council.

The logical extension of that is the consumer cooperatives. From the standpoint of the buying with which I am associated, our buyers are instructed to try to seek consumer values as we evaluate presentations that are made by salesmen. We frequently have the comment made to us that the salesmen enjoy coming in to our office because they get the type of questions they never get anywhere else. We ask about package size, shape and consumer value.

The other thing which we do as a consumer organization is the control of the products that are under our own label. For these we can determine not only what we would like, but what we are going to have in the product. We can determine prices, shapes, quality, labeling. We do not have to ask someone else what should be put in

the package; we do not have to seek legislation to assure this; we can do it ourselves.

We do not always succeed in doing what we try to do. But what is important is that we are trying to do these things and we are trying to do them in the interest of our employers, who are the consumers. We are not subservient to pressure from others, because if we do not do the kind of a job that should be done for the owners of the business, we are not going to be doing the job very long.

*Mr. Sekerak:* I would like to say that not only is there no conflict of interest, as far as I can see, between what we do in the Berkeley cooperative and what the consumers' movement is doing in California or elsewhere, but there is a high degree of integration. When the cooperative gets to the right size and quality there can be a strong force for helping the consumer movement and for implementing it. Our cooperative is involved in the consumer movement in various ways. I like to think of the consumers associations and councils which are member organizations, largely dues paying and largely concerned with legislation. I like to think of the universities, colleges, schools and government agencies as those that do research and education and enforce legislation, and then I think of the Coops as those that are involved in what I think of as direct economic action. Until cooperatives become large enough and sufficiently widespread, they cannot accomplish all of the objectives that consumers would like to see achieved through economic action.

It takes a good deal of strength operating with a variety of thoughts and different industries to be able to do that. But we are involved in all of these. We are the main supporters of the Association of California Consumers. I suspect that we push Consumers Union and even Consumers Research as hard as anybody does. And we are also moving on another front now.

A large part of the war on poverty is going to be strictly consumer education. What we intend to do is to co-ordinate consumer education and direct consumer action in approximately the same place.

*Mr. Norton:* Having worked in a cooperative organization most of my life, I find it very difficult to distinguish between a consumer interest and a cooperative interest. I cannot conceive of a consumer organization which will not support, either in theory or practice, a cooperative economy. Nor can I conceive of a cooperative organization in any way divorcing itself from the consumer interest. They are parallel and one, and within the cooperative movement there is a very strong place for the consumer influence.

Those people who are most concerned with quality control, with advertising, with packaging, labels and products, have a voice within the cooperatives to make

our cooperatives better for the very people they serve, the consumers.

What concerns me more than anything else, however, is the fact that both the consumer interest and the cooperatives throughout this country do not have more influence in our economy. I notice that Mr. Voorhis felt that within the future of our own economy and society there would be a growing consumer orientation. I am not quite so optimistic, more in relation to time, than in the final result.

But I can only say that if this does come true in the decades to come, it will only be by efforts of such people as you, by the efforts of the consumer cooperatives throughout the country on behalf of the type of work

which the leaders of our group here today have indicated. It is far easier for us to exert some influence through our own self-ownership in cooperatives than it is to persuade other people to do what we want, in the way in which we think it should be done.

I am also concerned that we have been unable to broaden our appeal. We are still isolated within a very small area of the economy. And if we find it so difficult to pass these bills which seem to be so basic, there is a good deal of work ahead for all of us. And I suggest again, that the cooperative organization and the consumer interest must merge both in theory and in practice. But first we must broaden their base and create a much more effective force for the economy.