

CONSUMER PROBLEMS WITH SERVICE INDUSTRIES

By THOMAS SNYDER

*Vice President of the Advisory Board of the Bureau of
Electronic Repair Dealers Registration*

The two problems in any repair industry, and particularly in the television repair industry, are incompetence and fraud and dishonesty. Our approach in this law has been to run the crooks out of business and to let the incompetents go out of business on their own.

This is a very basic distinction between our type of law and the usual licensing law which takes the position that the way you get incompetents out is by testing them and by raising standards for admission to the industry. What it results in is sooner or later the industry has a monopoly on people that get in and the industry is potentially closed; then it can start price fixing and various other things.

There is sufficient fraud to keep us occupied. Fraud can take many forms. Now the law is set up so that we are supposed to have field investigators who go out spot-checking television repair dealers. They are supposed to run sets that have been previously checked through a

shop and see whether the itemization on the bill corresponds with the work that was actually done.

The problem is that we do not have enough of these investigators, we do not have enough independent laboratories, so that in the year that we have been in business we have had to restrict ourselves to our follow-up complaints. We have not yet gone through to an on-the-spot check basis, as the law calls for, and have restricted ourselves to checking those dealers against whom there have been complaints.

The basic outline of the law is that everybody who does TV repair has to register, and in order to make the law work this has to be almost 100% effective. By registering, all you get is the name and business address and \$35. But this list then enables you to conduct your spot-checks and to make sure that you know whom you are dealing with. And the public is starting to know that we exist. Very frequently, just the existence of the bureau will make the TV service dealer responsive to complaints.