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Now I need not tell you that so far as voluntary associations like our own are concerned, the whole subject of consumer problems has come back toward the center of the stage this last year. Organizations are publishing articles on the Food and Drug Administration amendment of 1958, on fictitious pricing, bait-advertising, and misrepresentation in general. They have been sending letters to their Legislative Program chairmen on the grading of lamb. And by June their national staff members will have attended conferences called by the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Communications Commission, the Food and Drug Administration jointly with the Food Law Institute, and the Bureau of Standards. When the Attorney General got around to the consumer we were missing, but only because he limited the invitees to State Attorneys General. In Washington, there is talk of forming again a consumer clearing house; and at least half a dozen organizations are interested.

Whether this renaissance is due primarily to cranberries or to this being a political year and the electorate being full of consumers, it is hard to say; but from my experience you have to go back to the last days of OPA for any comparable public concern over the consumer.

As to plans for the coming year's program in AAUW, our Mass Media and Social and Economic Issues Chairmen are being urged to get together on the general subject of protection of the public against deceptive practices. As our SEI contribution we are making a kit out of the material presented at the conferences I mentioned; and we have obtained for enclosure information from those states whose governments are actively promoting consumer protection, or have established a consumer agency. We have also sent our members a Calendar of Consumer Legislation before Congress; and our Legislative Program Associate will provide supplementary information from time to time.

All this will be reflected, I expect, in greater activity in AAUW branches and state divisions next year.

It would seem, then, that history was repeating itself; and AAUW branches were going to re-live the experience of the '30's, when our consumer program flourished. It is a little early to make predictions. There are some very important differences between the two periods and between the consumer interest expressed on each occasion. I would like to go into those differences later on after we have reviewed the history of the AAUW consumer program.

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First of all, I should explain that ours is a multi-purpose organization. This is a top-heavy word, but it is necessary, in order to know what we may be able to do on consumer problems, to realize that AAUW copes with a

very wide range of problems that go beyond "consumer representation." We have more than 1400 local branches and more than 140,000 members; and officially we apply ourselves to seven areas of study action

Higher Education
Elementary and Secondary Education
International Relations
Status of Women
The Arts
Mass Media

and my own field of Social and Economic Issues.

Now in Social and Economic Issues alone our current Legislative Program is concerned with

- three different aspects of government housing
- two different aspects of social security
- support for standards of quality, protection against injurious products, misrepresentation and resale price maintenance
- we also maintain a continuing interest in the public health service, the National Institutes for Health, the enforcement of the law on narcotics, extension of the Fair Labor Standards Act, and appropriations for a variety of agencies including the Federal Trade Commission and the Food and Drug Administration
- we are in favor of the child labor amendment.

This is what I mean by a multi-purpose organization!

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Yet amidst this welter of issues the American Association of University Women has had a reputation for being particularly responsive to the consumer's needs, and reflects a long and continuous history of interest and activity in the field of consumer education. When in March 1882, the Board of Directors of the Boston branch convened, the secretary noted that

...Departments may be formed devoted to the study of subjects which are frequently neglected in the ordinary college curriculum, such as sanitary science and political economy.

Thus, as early as 1882 the consumer program was foreshadowed; and you will not be surprised to hear that Ellen Richards was one of the seventeen founding mothers of the AAUW.

The AAUW study-action program has always reflected the contemporary issue, whether it was sanitary science in Boston in the 1880's or the cause and cure of the depression in the 1930's. During the '30's AAUW members were asking, what has happened? Why? Exactly whom does it affect, and how does it affect them? What does one do, in the face of all this to improve things? We could document an answer to each of these questions with an AAUW publication or with an article in the AAUW Journal.

Now as an AAUW member explored these issues, there inevitably arose in her mind the further question, What kind of help can I look for as a housewife on a limited budget (or as a teacher) in order to make the most of my present situation? Out of this specific question was born the AAUW consumer program. The first article geared to the consumer's needs appeared in 1932; and it was called, "How Shall We Buy?"

In the same year the Syllabus on Scientific Consumer Purchasing, a title Ellen Richards might have found appropriate, was published. In 1934 the Board of Directors appointed a Committee on Consumer Interests. And in 1936 this was made a full-fledged Association Committee under the name of the Committee on Social Studies.

Parallel to this, the growth of the consumer interest is reflected in our Legislative Program. In 1933 AAUW was concerned only with appropriations for such agencies as the Children's Bureau, the Women's Bureau and of the Bureau of Home Economics. By 1939 the consumer interest had grown to include

Strengthening of the Food and Drug Act and its administration; Coordination of consumer activities in the Federal Government; Development of standards of quality and performance for consumer goods; Opposition to laws authorizing price-fixing contracts between manufacturer and retailer affecting consumer goods; and the protection of the consumer against unfair trade practices.

The early articles and other publications of the Association on consumer interests seem to have been directed to the individual member, sitting at home and reflecting on how to stretch a dollar. There was no apparent branch activity--by which we mean, study or action taken in the local group--and little activity by the national Association. Then, in 1934, the situation changed.

In December 1933 the consumer had been the subject of a conference at the White House between "representatives of the Consumers' Advisory Board of the N. R. A. and the Consumers' Counsel of the A.A.A., and the national organizations which may be said to have a consumer's viewpoint." AAUW was represented by its General Director, Dr. Kathryn McHale; and the occasion for the conference was the lack of consumer representation on the code authorities. Serious doubts were also expressed about the relaxation of the Sherman-Anti-Trust Act under NIRA. "At the close of the conference, Recovery Administrator Hugh S. Johnson announced the appointment of (two) special assistants to the Administrator to work on consumer's problems."

As early as January, 1932, the Association had issued a kit called Standardization of Articles for Home Use. A glance at the list of items in that first-of-many kits indicates that the Association expected its consumer members to dig in. Here were no summaries of pending legislation but the original bill, unexpurgated. The kit included the original text of technical articles on a whole range of subjects, such as The Consumer and the Standardization of Farm Products.

In line with the "sound purchasing" theme of this first kit we find a series of items promoted through the AAUW Journal on activities and publications of federal agencies concerned with consumer affairs.

But "sound purchasing" did not mean simply instruction in sound purchasing. The Committee on Consumer Interests persistently opposed clauses "in codes which permit direct or indirect price-fixing." And the committee urged, that "...in the adjustment of codes the utmost consideration be given to grades, standards and informative labeling so that the ultimate consumer may have some means of judging whether his money is securing for him an adequate return in quantity and quality of goods and services." This was the beginning of the standards program which was to become such an important part of the AAUW consumer interest.

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In 1935 the horizon grows wider still. An article by Dr. Caroline Ware, later to be Chairman of AAUW's Social Studies Committee, in its most active consumer period, takes up the possibility of a significant role for consumers before Congress and government agencies in representing the public interest on economic questions. This was in effect an appeal to create the concept of the consumer as a fourth party, balancing the commonly recognized elements--business, labor, and the farmer.

Dr. Ware notes that indeed habit makes it difficult for people to think of themselves, consistently, as consumers, but this very difficulty is something which consumer education might overcome. She concludes: "The next step on the AAUW's study program might well be to develop a course which would go beyond the consumer's concern with quality, and would equip AAUW members to approach fundamental economic problems from the consumer point of view."

And this was the next step.

Activity in the AAUW Social Studies program increased notably after 1935-1936; and it soon became one of the key areas in the whole Association program. It had steam behind it.

We can "look back" from the vantage point of 1940 when the Association published "The Consumer Movement in America, in 1940," by Esther Cole Franklin, then Social Studies Associate. Dr. Franklin writes: "The consumer movement represents a change of emphasis in our economic way of life. It emphasizes the intelligent spending of income rather than the getting of income...even the 'educated' consumer finds herself thwarted in her attempt

to buy wisely. Economic activities have for so long been motivated by the importance of earning money that the art of spending money has been almost completely neglected..."

Dr. Franklin goes on to review the steps consumers had been taking to strengthen their position--setting up consumers' cooperatives, forming and patronizing testing and rating agencies, seeking government aid and protection, promoting informative labeling-and-advertising, helping establish permanent committees to develop commodity standards and grades.

Again we can document some of consumer history with publications and activities carried out by the Social Studies Committee:

In 1936 AAUW was a very active participant in the formation of the Advisory Committee on Ultimate Consumer Goods of the American Standards Association which brought together representatives of retailer organizations and of voluntary associations that fostered the consumer point of view. Representatives of the AAUW, the American Home Economics Association, the General Federation of Women's Clubs and the League of Women Voters of the U. S. were members of the original committee. In 1937 the National Consumer-Retailer Council came into existence with a consumer membership similar to that of the ASA consumer committee. The Council announced a seven-point program designed to improve retailer practices with respect to consumers as well as consumer practices with reference to retailers.

The AAUW Social Studies Committee was particularly interested in the second point of that program: To promote the use of informative labeling.

In its first year the Council produced an Informative Labeling Manual and AAUW branches were urged to follow it in promoting informative labeling in local stores. The pattern of activity characteristically involved an AAUW consumer group and an AHEA member in meeting with local retailers affiliated with, say, the National Retail Dry Goods Association, also a member of the Council. Communities had to be chosen where all three groups were actively interested and informed about the national project. Recently, Dr. Franklin said that this program seemed promising, if only sporadically successful. It had probably been prematurely launched, she thought. It required of the consumer representatives greater technical knowledge and more consumer education than most of them had yet had time to absorb. The retail representatives were apt to be hazy about the project or uninterested. If there had been time for the whole idea to grow familiar to more of the local consumers and retailers through the slow process of publicity and conferences, it might have had a chance of success. But before any of this could happen, the war disrupted the possibility, at least for the time being.

By this time the idea of consumer representation before government agencies was at last gaining ground on the governmental side as well as the consumer side. AAUW worked closely with the Consumers Counsel of the Department of Agriculture and the Consumers Counsel auxiliary of the National Bituminous Coal Commission. By 1939 the Association had gone on record in favor of some coordination of consumer services in the federal government. This was variously expressed as support for a federal consumer agency or for "a joint committee representing all the agencies working in the field."

In the field of legislation the first issue on which members of the Association found themselves called upon to translate their consumer study into action was the food and drug law. AAUW was one of 13 organizations which not only testified before Congress for the new legislation but also vigilantly resisted, step by step, all attempts to encumber the bill with crippling devices. After the bill was passed, the Association was represented at hearings for setting standards under the Act.

The breadth of our legislative program at this period permitted action on a variety of issues. To mention only the most significant items of action we should add to support of the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act support for a Consumer agency, opposition to resale price maintenance and, a little later on, opposition to the special tax on and coloring requirements for margarine.

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Having provided a sort of panorama of the consumer program of the '30's, perhaps I can best help you visualize the sort of work AAUW branches did in this period by briefly reporting on proceedings of our 1939 convention: This was the last full year of the consumer program of the thirties; for wartime activity, even in the consumer field, called for a different focus and that shift began to be reflected in 1940-1941.

At the opening of the 1939 convention, the chairman of the Social Studies Committee, Dr. Faith Williams, noted in her biennial report that AAUW had gone beyond purchasing information. "We have had groups studying the price structure, interstate trade barriers, monopolies, and the effect of income distribution on consumer purchasing."

Later in convention week, twenty-five delegates met together to discuss consumer problems. They "asked for more materials on cooperatives... (They talked of) demonstration exhibits, the establishment of consumer centers for constant community education, the formation of local consumer councils for the promotion of consumer information, and so forth."

Next, the Social Studies Associate reviewed the procedures of the Food and Drug Administration in setting standards of identity.

Finally on the last day of the convention, at the Social Studies Sectional meeting, we find a report of one branch consumer program which probably offers a picture characteristic of other branches too: This Michigan branch had both a beginners' and an advanced study group in consumer education. "Each group," said the delegate, "was made up of young married women who wanted to study specific commodities which would be of immediate use in their homes..." In succession, they took up the grading of meats, then canned fruits and vegetables. Next, equipped with a government rating sheet they tested peas, beans, and tomatoes. They discussed and tested specific textiles. They tested the wearing qualities of shirts, hose, sheets and slips. They discussed drugs and cosmetics. They made cold cream and, said the delegate, "The group found it cheap and easy to make."

Meanwhile, the advanced group studies consumer cooperatives, considering England, Sweden, and the United States. And next they studied installment buying.

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This is not the whole story of consumer activity at the 1939 convention. We could mention Boulder, Colorado, branch which presented a skit, "First Aid to Consumers," as an example of one technique by which a study group could translate their work to the entire branch or to other groups in the community.

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Of course, the level of consumer education and performance was uneven in AAUW branches. But the fact that there was at this time a wide interest in consumer education and consumer problems is confirmed by even a summary glance at Social Studies activities for the year 1939-1940:

The Chairman mailed to consumer leaders in and out of the Association copies of "AAUW Policy on Developing Standards for Consumer Goods." This was also sent to every state Social Studies chairman and represents the crystallization of a viewpoint based on long study and interest in this phase of the consumer movement. The AAUW policy stated: "One of the major objectives of the consumer movement is the development of standard specifications for consumer goods to enable the ultimate purchaser to make comparisons of price and quality...Consumers are determined to secure standards scientifically established based on the greatest possible number of significant product characteristics." This interest in standards pertained both to those developed by private organizations and public agencies. The Association was interested in promoting and extending their availability and use wherever possible.

The Associate sent to State Social Studies Chairmen during that year:

A statement in favor of a proposed Federal Consumer Agency

A sizeable pamphlet entitled "The Consumer Movement in the United States"

An announcement of the Stephens College Conference on Consumer Education

An analysis of the new Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act

A report of a Consumer Relations Study Group carried out by our Charleston, West Virginia branch

Three bulletins on consumer matters from the Household Finance Corporation

A "Study of Informative Labeling"

An account of AAUW participation in Food Standard hearings

All Branch Social Studies Chairmen received that year a questionnaire asking about such consumer activity as they had initiated. The Associate also sent her Association Committee and consumer leaders a write-up of "AAUW Consumer Experiences."

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With the war, two significant developments influenced the course of the consumer program in AAUW. For one thing, an important strand of activity in social studies was increasingly concerned with storing up welfare services.

In 1941, we find the national Social Studies Chairman reporting to the national convention that the Social Studies Committee "has...no choice but to make the social aspects of defense the center of its activity at this time." Emphasis was placed upon maintaining community health, welfare and recreational programs, and there developed a very active program of volunteering and recruitment of volunteers to assure the maintenance of these services. Though this did not necessarily cut into the consumer program, it meant that its further expansion in AAUW branches was inevitably limited by the new development.

The second development in the consumer program simply reflects war-time needs as distinct from depression problems. Consumer education turns to: How to maintain nutrition on wartime diet, and How less popular though more plentiful foods can be substituted for scarce items. Locally, AAUW members manned war price and rationing boards.

Thus both at the local and national level as well, the Association began its vigorous and continuous support of price control and of OPA which continued unabated until the end in 1946.

It was the consumer education program of the '30's which made such a firm stand possible. When representatives of the AAUW appealed to officials of the OPA in the earliest days, and urged them to relate pricing orders to standards, where standards already existed, they could do so with the support of an informed membership. Later on, when these representatives continued to press for maintenance of quality, and resisted changes in OPA regulations which they believed would be weakening, or when annually they supported extension of price control "without crippling amendments," they could point to the support and experience of AAUW members working on price panels and rationing boards.

Price control was the most important AAUW legislative concern in Social Studies during the war. AAUW was represented on the OPA Consumer Advisory Committee, whose staff member, Dr. Esther Cole Franklin, had been the Social Studies Associate at AAUW. But price control was not the only legislative concern. There was considerable interest in the Association

in developing a consumer role in reconversion. As early as 1941, the Association had supported establishment of a post-emergency economic advisory committee; and in 1944, AAUW was asking for the establishment of consumer representation on reconversion committees where the consumer could be said to claim an interest.

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After the war AAUW branch activity gradually moved from economic to social issues. This did not happen all at once. We continued to be active in the consumer interest. AAUW had a representative on the Consumer Advisory Committee of the Council of Economic Advisors, and on the Consumer Advisory Committee of the Office of Price Stabilization. Still, quite soon after the war, our branches became increasingly interested in social problems. I have a theory about this shift; and though it is not a very original theory, it is homemade to the extent that it derives from my experience of the AAUW program.

If you look back on AAUW's consumer history, it was to a considerable extent conditioned by the depression. When the AAUW Journal was publicizing government bulletins of interest to the consumer we find, for example, a note about "Diets at Four Levels of Nutritive Content and Cost," issued by the Bureau of Home Economics, which says:

To the consumer this bulletin gives valuable information on how to get the best returns for what he can afford to spend for food...Such data emphasizes once more the important role which the housewife plays when she allots the family income...

I might remind you also of a quotation I cited a few minutes ago about the art of spending money as over against the importance of earning money. And I might recall the Michigan delegate at the '39 convention whose study group members were concerned with "specific commodities which would be of immediate use in their homes."

In short, the appeal to which membership responded was concerned with the income-spending or dollar-stretching point of view, and not that of income-earning.

Now I believe that our wartime consumer experience concealed a change-over, a reversal of that point of view, after the economy had achieved full employment in the 1941-1942 period. Or, to put the matter another way, after the worst depression problems had disappeared, and the standard of living was rising again, members of voluntary associations with broadly gauged programs became concerned with social problems, the area of human relationships, such as mental health, and more recently, with the problems of aging.

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Today we live not in the world of the Great Depression but of the Affluent Society. For special reasons, today, general public interest in consumer problems seems to be welling up once more. What form will it take, one might ask, in organizations like AAUW, whose memberships are not based on professional interest or occupation or some specific interest, like consumer education itself?

Frankly, I do not know. If I had to guess, I would expect that our members are pondering some of the same questions raised at the FDA-Food Law Institute meetings last November by representatives of the consumer interest. There, Dr. Elizabeth Neige Todhunter, University of Alabama, and Dr. Faith Fenton, Cornell University, described, the one about foods and the other about information and labeling in general, the confusion that reigns in a world where new products increase every day and, increasingly incorporate "unknown" synthetic elements. We expect to include excerpts from their talks in our current issues kit--just because we believe they posed at the Conference the issue our members recognize also.

I would expect our members to be interested in consumer protection and consumer protection agencies developing in the several states. That is why we have already collected information from Mrs. Nelson and Mr. Frassinelli, among others. As a staff member of a large organization, I think these state programs, with their trials and their errors, appeal to voluntary associations because they deal with visible problems "near to home."

In short, I would predict for the broadly based membership organization, in the period just ahead, a vigorous interest in consumer protection. But I do not see this revitalized consumer interest as embracing such a wide range of subject matter, or taking up, in the language of an AAUW consumer of the 'thirties, "fundamental economic problems from the consumer point of view."

With regard to education about consumer problems, it is our belief that the environment of the '50's and '60's requires a notable difference in approach--a difference which in fact has guided our development of this current issues kit which we are about to circulate as a trial balloon. We will send the kit to our 48 state chairmen, suggesting that they draw it to the attention of their branches and that they send us an evaluation of it--telling us where to add material, and where to subtract. Some of them will "push" the kit with their branches right now. Others are fully committed to a program of work for the White House Conference on Aging in January 1961. They will almost certainly not push a program on consumer education until that work has been completed.

In short, members of multi-purpose organizations want to be protected, as consumers, against injury and deceptive practices. But they are not today as sharply concerned with budgeting, as the central aspect of consumer education, as they were 20 years ago. In addition, their attention is divided; for local groups now deal with a range of problems, which of necessity had to be neglected in the thirties.

One might say that the broadening scene of citizen activity, like the somewhat less intensive concern over budgeting, is an aspect of the Affluent Society.