

PANEL: CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROFESSIONAL

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THE CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROFESSIONAL IN GOVERNMENT

Meredith M. Fernstrom**

I am delighted to be a part of this exploration of career opportunities for consumer affairs professionals in government, business, and education. This topic has been of special interest to me as I have seen the growing number of students in consumer programs and the difficulties many of them have in finding job opportunities.

One fundamental difficulty is the relative "newness" of the consumer affairs profession. Only in the last ten to fifteen years, for the most part, have we seen the establishment of government and corporate consumer affairs programs, the development of consumer education courses in public schools, and the emergence of consumer journalists and professional consumer advocates.

As with any "emerging" field, there is a great deal of sorting out, of "trial and error" process, which must occur before consumer affairs is given full identity and recognition as a profession. Fortunately, through the efforts of organizations such as the American Council on Consumer Interests (ACCI) and the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals (SOCAP), we are seeing an emphasis on the development of skills, competencies, and standards of professionalism in consumer affairs which all of us vitally need, regardless of how long we have been in the "consumer business."

I was asked to talk with you about career opportunities for the consumer affairs professional in government. Let me begin by offering my definition of a consumer affairs professional:

The consumer affairs professional is one who has the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes to understand consumers' needs, and to convey those concerns to policy makers in a way that the organization's decisions, products, or services will address their needs in a positive way.

Applying this definition to a government setting means that the consumer affairs professional is helping to shape public policy, whether it be in the direct delivery of government programs or services or in the indirect influence of government regulation on the marketplace. These policies have a pervasive influence on almost every aspect of our lives. Because of this influence, a position in government will be one of the most interesting and challenging careers that a consumer affairs professional can

choose.

There is a lot of interest in working for "Uncle Sam," even though most public opinion polls show a general lack of confidence in government officials and institutions. There has been no let up in the number of applicants for federal positions.

Recently, there were an average of two hundred applications for every vacancy in the federal government. You should be fully aware of the intensity of the competition you face, but it is not insurmountable.

Federal Job Application Process

First, you need to know how to apply. Let me discuss very briefly some of the mechanics of seeking a federal job. These steps may seem tedious, but you will save a lot of time and energy if you follow them from the beginning, and more importantly, you may increase your chances of landing the job you are interested in.

1. First, there is a new federal acronym you need to know: OPM, which stands for the Office of Personnel Management. This new agency replaced the Civil Service Commission following the recent civil service reform legislation. Its headquarters is in Washington, but it has regional offices in the ten federal cities (with the exception of St. Louis, rather than Kansas City.)

2. In addition to the OPM, you should be aware of the FJIC's; these are the 68 Federal Job Information Centers located throughout the country. You can find a listing for them in major metropolitan telephone directories under "U.S. Government." Both the Office of Personnel Management and the Federal Job Information Centers can give you full details on current job opportunities and application procedures. I urge you to seek out one of these offices before you begin your application process.

3. Next, there is a number you should memorize: 171. This stands for the "Personal Qualifications Statement," or Standard Form 171, which you must use to apply for any federal civil service position. Take the time to read the directions and fill it out neatly, accurately and thoroughly. Type the original, if possible, especially if your handwriting is poor. It is permissible to photocopy the 171, so you do not have to send an original for each job application.

Remember that yours may be one of dozens of 171 forms that a personnel officer or consumer affairs director is reviewing, so make sure the information it contains and the way the information is presented give the most favorable impression possible.

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Some people attach resumes to their 171's; this is not required, and in some cases the reviewer will not have the time to read the extra material. You should not send a resume by itself. The 171 does allow you to attach supplemental sheets, but follow the instructions carefully, and do not "overload" your application. If you are well qualified for the job, the 171 will speak for itself, and the prospective employer will seek additional details as needed. The 171 form should be sent to the Office of Personnel Management to determine if you are qualified for federal employment.

4. Depending on the particular job you are applying for, and the level of your previous work and educational experience, you may have to take a written examination as part of the application procedure. For most entry level professional jobs, the PACE test is required (Professional and Administrative Career Examination). This usually applies to candidates for jobs at the GS-5 or 7 levels. These "GS" numbers refer to the "General Schedule" for salary levels, and are determined by the complexity of the job, the qualifications required, and so on.

In general, a college graduate with a minimal or no work experience is eligible for a GS-7, for which the starting salary is now \$13,014. With a masters' degree and no work experience, you may be eligible for a GS-9 (currently starting at \$15,920), although these grades are not automatic. Your grade eligibility is determined by the Office of Personnel Management, and that is why you must contact that agency first to file your 171 and take any required tests. This is a long process; it should be initiated even before you graduate or are actively in the job market. You must weigh the costs and tradeoffs of going into a masters' program immediately upon graduation versus seeking employment.

5. Once you have taken these steps, you can respond to individual vacancy announcements for particular jobs in which you might be interested. These announcements are available from the personnel offices of the separate federal agencies, such as the Department of Commerce, or from the Office of Personnel Management or the Federal Job Information Centers. There is at least one commercial service selling a newsletter which highlights current federal vacancies. Pay close attention to the qualifications or other requirements spelled out in the vacancy announcement, and to the closing date for applying, so that you are not automatically eliminated from consideration.

I have covered very briefly a few of the basic procedures for applying for a federal position. Because they are so unique relative to almost any other job application process, and because they must be followed explicitly, I went into them in some detail. However, it is probably of greater interest for you to know what types of consumer affairs jobs there are in the federal government, and what qualifications are important for those positions.

Functional Categories

There are several basic functions which federal consumer affairs offices perform, regardless of whether they are in the Executive Branch or in the independent regulatory agencies. Staff positions generally fall into the following functional categories (quite often some of these overlap in a single position):

1. answering public inquiries about the agency, its responsibilities and authority, and its services to consumers (through letters, by telephone, or public speaking appearances);
2. responding to consumer complaints through mediation, referral, or enforcement action, depending on the specific powers of the agency;
3. developing and conducting consumer information and educational activities;
4. maintaining liaison with consumer interest groups and obtaining their views on the agency's policies;
5. participating in the legislative process, through research or testimony on pending legislation or implementation actions associated with existing laws;
6. analyzing policies and programs, and recommending improvements to better serve the consumer interest; and
7. developing new programs, services, or regulations in response to consumers' needs.

Entry-level positions for undergraduates would tend to be in the areas of research, consumer information and education, or response to inquiries and complaints. With experience in these areas, there is considerable room for advancement into the program and policy level positions at higher grade levels.

Qualifications

When I presented my definition of a consumer affairs professional, I said that the person must have certain knowledge, skills, and personal attributes. I will suggest a few of those which I feel are vitally important to the consumer specialist in government, although most of them apply to any consumer affairs career.

As far as basic knowledge is concerned, the consumer specialist should have a good grasp of economics, government organization and political systems, the workings of business, the consumer movement, consumer behavior, fundamentals of consumer and business law, and how the legal system operates.

These are broad and somewhat distinct categories, and may not "fit" well into a particular university curriculum. However, it should be possible to mesh these various disciplines into a consumer affairs program through proper planning and the careful use of electives.

With regard to skills required for the consumer professional in government, I would suggest this list:

1. communications, verbal and written: this will always be at the top of the list. Without proficiency in these skills, the others really do not mean much;
2. analytical skills: the ability to get to the heart of a matter, to synthesize a variety of facts and opinions, and to develop constructive solutions to problems;
3. research techniques: both in terms of traditional secondary research and some understanding of statistical analysis, as well as in the art of pursuing a question or problem through the often complicated "maze" of bureaucracy;
4. mediation skills: the ability to bring together individuals or organizations whose interests or viewpoints are at odds; and
5. basic working skills: efficient use of resources (time, energy, materials), the ability to organize and carry out assignments, and a sense of priorities of duties.

Many of these skills overlap with some of the personal attributes that I would suggest are essential for the consumer affairs professional. These are all so important that I will not attempt to rank them. In my view, the consumer affairs professional should be objective, sensitive, responsible, "accountable," flexible, persuasive, self-confident, and creative.

Add to these characteristics an enormous amount of patience, blend with a good sense of humor, and you have quite a professional, no matter what field they are in. Fortunately, I believe that the consumer affairs profession, as it matures, is attracting more and more individuals of this type of balanced, well-rounded personality and viewpoint.

I have not discussed career possibilities for consumer specialists in state and local government, but there are numerous opportunities there as well, and they provide excellent training for federal positions. In fact, I believe that your chances for getting a federal job are much better if you have other work experience behind you, either in state or local government, business, education, or private organizations. I would caution you to keep in mind that building a successful career is a slow process, no matter which field you choose. Very few individuals take off their cap and gown one day and take over a government agency or a corporation the next day. If we are realists, we know it is not that simple. Be willing to accept what may at first seem like the "menial" consumer affairs job, prove yourself to them and then move up to something better. At the same time, do not sell yourself short; if you are a professional, expect to be treated like one. Try to avoid getting sidetracked into unrelated jobs; it may be difficult to get on the right track again. Keep your eyes on your career goals at all times.

A consumer affairs career in government is always challenging, often frustrating, but on the whole,

very rewarding. I hope many of you will choose to make it at least a part of your total career in consumer affairs. The government needs you, and so does the American consumer.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROFESSIONAL IN BUSINESS**

David Schoenfeld*

By definition, I believe that a Consumer Affairs Professional (CAP) is a person who is biased on behalf of the consumer. The CAP is pro-consumer; s/he cannot try to balance all of the various interests involved in an issue.

One way of identifying the number of CAP's in business is to look at the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals (SOCAP). It is an organization of over 1,000 members from about 850 companies. About 90 percent of those members come to their positions as CAP's from the public relations department or the marketing department of their companies. Of those remaining, a large number are simply complaint handlers; their duties are only mechanical.

At the present time, there is less emphasis on consumer input in business. I am pessimistic about the outlook for CAP jobs in business; job opportunities will be difficult to find. The position I have held at Penney's for the past four and a half years--that of an internal consumer advocate--is unique.

To be a CAP in business requires credibility and commitment. As you look for a job as a CAP, do study the company: Where is the consumer affairs department located within the company? And how does it operate? Do this, if you can, before you start working for the company.

SOCAP is trying to improve the professional standards of the CAP in business. It is preparing a description of the function and structure, and the knowledge and skills required, as well as the impediments to the profession. This description will be made available, probably after the SOCAP meeting in August 1979.

As a CAP, you will be dealing with consumer issues, and the list of consumer issues is long. At Penney's the functions of CAP's include research, information, education, and advocacy. My job as a consumer advocate includes examining consumer issues. As one prepares to examine an issue, a list of questions needs to be developed. Do not expect that you can personally know about all the issues. Even so, dealing with the substance of the issues is relatively easy; the most difficult part is dealing with those issues within the mechanics of the organization.

In conclusion, the outlook for jobs as CAPs in business is not good at present. The number of positions is not expanding. Considering recent

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**Summary of the speaker's remarks

events, including the defeat of the bill to create a federal consumer advocacy agency, I feel that the consumer movement is in jeopardy. The movement is either in a state of flux or in a struggle for survival. It should revive in the current period of inflation; if it does not, I don't know when it can.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CONSUMER AFFAIRS
PROFESSIONAL IN EDUCATION**

Robert Alexander*

First, I will list and comment on some of the sources of job opportunities for consumer affairs professionals in the area of consumer education. These include:

- Universities and colleges: there are jobs in teaching and in curriculum development. These will, in most cases, require a doctoral degree.
- The Cooperative Extension Service: there are both county and state jobs. Some states require only a bachelor's degree for county positions, while other states require a master's degree. More advanced level positions at the state level sometimes require a doctoral degree.
- State departments of education: these do include consumer education people on their staffs.
- Other government jobs in consumer education: both state and federal agencies employ people in jobs of the consumer education type.

Next, a few comments on how to look for a job in consumer education. Often it is not what you know, but who you know. You need to find out who to contact about job opportunities. If you are looking for a consumer education position in a secondary school system, contact the home economics director at your state's education agency. You might write to that person and send a resume. Another person to contact is Dr. Dustin Wilson, head of the Consumer Education grants program at the U.S. Office of Education. Ask Dr. Wilson for a list of the new consumer education grants which are funded about October 1st. Also, as you start looking for a job in consumer education, do write a resume and have it ready to use when you need it.

*Consumer Education Consultant
**Summary of the speaker's remarks

ETHICS AND THE CONSUMER INTEREST

Mark Green, J.D.*

Unethical behavior can be divided into activities declared illegal, which reflect a social consensus, and activities considered unethical but which are not unlawful. Illegality in the business community is far more widespread than the proverbial few rotten apples. It includes improper payoffs abroad, price fixing, and chemical crimes. Beyond pure illegality are the troubling areas of media manipulation and political contributions with strings attached.

The law must intervene when business loses sight of moral and ethical values. The law provides a moral minimum; from it can flow ethical behavior.

I am very pleased to be here, especially to talk on the subject of ethics, business, and consumers. It is a subject which, in the context of today, reminds me of a remark a wealthy savvy business man, Bernard Baruch, once made when he was asked how he got so rich. He said it was because when others were buying he was selling, and when others were selling he was buying.

There is a purpose in swimming upstream against the flow and the topic today certainly does that. In Washington and elsewhere editorial pages are filled with controversy over the government: its level of corruption, its level of efficiency, and its size. Many attribute all evils, from inflation to psoriasis, to the size of the government in Washington and elsewhere. But what of big business? It is a large institution; surely, it is as important as big government. Washington controls \$530 billion of our money; corporations control \$4 trillion worth of wealth in this country. It is appropriate that we should consider the influence that business has on us, and the ethics of business.

Certainly it is easy to acknowledge the influence of business. Like it or not, two hundred manufacturing companies do control sixty percent of all manufacturing wealth in this country. One company, AT&T, has revenues larger than the budgets of every country on this earth other than 19 countries. Companies as large as General Motors, which has up to 1,800,000 employees, are really like private government in terms of how they affect their employees. Some companies are patenting forms of life today. In the recent past some companies manufactured products which arguably depleted the only ozone layer this one planet has. Clearly their influence is instrumental, even if editorial writers today seem fixated on other areas. Let us turn our attention to the ethics of commercial interests, of large corporate interests, regarding consumers today.

The subject is somewhat difficult to grasp because the word ethics is like morality. "Morality" said Hemmingway, "is whatever we feel good after." It is obviously a very subjective thing. One part of

morality, though, is less subjective. Basically there is a congruence between what is illegal and what is immoral. There are many things that are immoral which society has not yet said are illegal. If something is illegal, that reflects a consensual social moral judgment that the activity is bad or immoral. If you look at the level of illegal behavior by the largest corporations in this country, one can come to the conclusion, as the speaker has, that one of the problems in this country is not only crime in the streets but crime in the suites. I don't want to overstate the point; most business people are conscientious, dedicated to making a profit, earning a fair return, servicing consumers by pricing at a rate that would get volume and with quality products.

But if you look at the numbers, it is hard to blink at the level of illegality in the business community. It is not merely the proverbial few rotten apples; it is unfortunately far more widespread. For example, four hundred American corporations in the last few years have admitted to illegal or improper payoffs abroad. Payoffs which violated laws of the host countries, not to mention FTC disclosure laws in this country. There are those who argue that they had to do it because everyone did it, which is rather an amazing concession. If I see someone robbing a bank, that doesn't give me a mandate to go in and get my share; there are still personal standards despite what you think others are doing. It is an argument which is very self-wounding. I don't believe the business community would want to acknowledge that the reason some firms did it is because everyone did it. I don't believe everyone does it. For example, RCA and IBM say they don't do it and they don't have to do it. I believe them. They don't have to kick back monies in order to make a sale because, they argue, they have a quality product that foreigners will buy if they can fairly do so.

Second, there are more grand juries today impaneled, inquiring into criminal antitrust violations (price fixing) than ever before. There are a hundred such juries. A recent official of the Justice Department's Anti-Trust Division said that, in his judgment, price fixing is prevalent in American society today. I sent a survey to the Presidents' of the Fortune top 1000 manufacturers several years ago. A respectable 110 replied. Among other questions I stated "as an electric machinery executive was being taken to jail a decade and a half ago for a price fixing charge, he said 'This is unfair, many price fix.'" Do you agree with the conclusion that there are many companies that price fix?" Obviously, they weren't about to tell a Nader associate that they price fixed. But when asked generally about the community in total, sixty percent acknowledged that price fixing was that widespread.

Third, is what you can call chemical crime; certainly unethical by anyone's judgment. Hooker Chemical, in the grossly misnamed Love Canal in upstate New York, has corrupted that community in a way that bombs in the street could not have done so. But there are reports to the Environmental Protection Agency of

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more than six hundred sites around the country where chemical firms, instead of assuming as a cost of production the proper disposal of their waste, have just used the environment as a free form garbage disposal and there are hazardous toxic dumps and wastes in at least that many, that is, six hundred sites around the country.

Those who bellyache about the costs of good government should think about the James River in Virginia, where a small subsidiary of Allied Chemical, called Life Sciences, dumped an insecticide called Kepone. As a result, it will now cost seven billion dollars to clean up the James River. Now, society does not have the kind of money to clean up the James River. Talk about pennywise and pound foolish, what would have been the minimal cost to properly disposing of Kepone rather than corrupting that river? The point, I think, was most tellingly made by a fisherman in New York in an article I read. For years his family and he had fished for recreation and employment at the Housatonic River, a beautiful river that starts up in Connecticut and winds its way down to New York, until the river was effectively killed because of PCB poisoning due to wastes disposed by General Electric. The fisherman asked, "Who gave them the right to kill a river?" Here is a natural resource which existed for milleniums, and it effectively has lost its beauty and its functional purpose because of commercial wastes.

There are also local studies which show the level of unethical behavior by local commercial interests. There is a survey of several Tennessee supermarkets I saw five years ago where local consumer law enforcers surveyed what percentage of supermarket meat sales were short weighed. They charged you for a pound and only sold you less than a pound. Short weighing occurred seventy percent of the time. Most supermarkets in that survey cheated their consumers.

The Federal National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has estimated that of the \$50 billion auto repair bill in this country, twenty billion dollars (forty percent) buys nothing of value. Next time you go in, if the bill is \$100, you can be assured that on the average you are paying \$60 worth of value and \$40 worth of unnecessary, shoddy, or fraudulent work--that is, you didn't need a new muffler but suddenly you got a new muffler.

These and other areas, especially the price fixing area, destroy the value of a dollar even before you get to these big macroeconomic issues like the balance of payments, budget, federal spending, the M1, the M2, and the monetary rate. Those are the things that economists like to talk about among themselves when they talk about inflation. But a lot of these areas of unethical business practice just as easily disparage the value of the consumer's dollar and hurt the consumer just as much.

Let me move beyond the issue of pure illegality, which I would argue is unethical per se, to three areas of business conduct which are troubling. I would argue that they are unethical, but I'm mired because of Hemmingway's axiom; others would argue that they are not unethical but are just part of the game.

First, is the business of media. Companies now

spend between five hundred million and a billion dollars a year, according to a House of Representative subcommittee, on advocacy advertising. Under the First Amendment they are certainly free to do so. But what of the content of advocacy advertising? There is a hysterical propoganda campaign, in my judgment, attacking the kind of consumer regulation and environmental regulation for which so many of us have worked. By way of example, a company called Gould Ink has run full page ads in major national media with a picture of Statue of Liberty hung by a noose, strung up by Washington, saying that over-regulation is killing the Statue of Liberty. I didn't realize that the First Amendment was not only my freedom to speak but also the freedom to pollute. Ironically, after I saw the ad, I found out that Gould Ink was a company which previously had to pay the largest fine in American judicial history because of threats to endangered species. One can see whose ox is gored and why they would be unhappy with laws which make them respect endangered species.

There are many examples of how I think that business acts wrongly in dealing with or manipulating the media. I worked on legislation in Washington which failed to create an office of consumer representation. During the battle, businesses lobbying against it wrote and typeset an editorial attacking the concept under the title of "Photoready Copy Advocate". The editorial was sent to thousands of daily and weekly newspapers around the country, complete with a cute cartoon about big government. Of the dailies and weeklies which received the editorial, hundreds of them reprinted it entirely and without attribution. So their readers understandably thought "Oh, I'm reading an independent view by my local media. Isn't that influential?" But, in fact, they were reading something contrived by an interested special interest group out of Washington. I think that's deceptive.

In the mid-1970's, the vinyl chloride industry was threatened by federal regulations because of the dangers of that product. They said that if they were regulated, it would throw thousands of people out of work and would cost sixty-five to ninety billion dollars. They were regulated. The results several years later are that no one was thrown out of work, and the cost to those companies was 1/200th of their original estimate. The point is repeated frequently. Companies constantly exaggerate the cost of regulation to them as a way of avoiding consumer and environmental regulations which I think are necessary. They exaggerate the costs and understate the benefits.

Finally, with regard to the media, there is the issue of how the media, which is a business, can be directly or subtly pushed around by their sponsors. General Electric recently withdrew their sponsorship of the Barbara Walters program because the program was going to have on it, among others, Jane Fonda of China Syndrome fame. It is rational, we can argue, why General Electric did that; they don't want to promote their critics. But look at the implication. The next time that and other programs are considering who to put on the public airways for public consumption, they are going to have to think twice about putting on a critic of business; they won't have to think twice about putting on a proponent of nuclear power. I think that is a troubling situation when a huge percentage of the public gets most of its news from television. If he who pays the piper calls the tune, we should ask what is the direct or indirect influence of sponsors on the programs that we are

seeing.

Secondly, other than media, is politics. Commercial interests obviously have an important role to play in the political system and they do. But what is troubling to me, it is ethically troubling, is the role that business money plays in the political process. Corporate political action committees which have a right to raise money from employees and shareholders have increased; they have increased a thousand percent in five years, from 80 to 800 between 1974 and 1979. The cost of running for Congress increased thirty-eight percent between 1976 and 1978. It makes the consumer price index look tame by comparison. The problem is that this money has a string attached. It may not be an obvious string; but it is an implicit one and it is pulled. So when I, to use again a personal example, lobbied on behalf of the consumer protection agency, one honest moderate Democrat in California said "Listen, I can't go along with you. If you promised me the \$100,000 fund raiser I'm going to lose by voting for your bill, a bill that business has made its litmus test of loyalty to them, maybe I'd do it. He said it half jokingly, but only half jokingly. It's obvious that if you vote against the interests of business who make it a litmus test issue, that in the future contributions will be withdrawn or affected as a result.

The conclusion is a form of a Golden Rule of Politics, he who has the gold rules. I think business interests have to consider the ethics of implicitly trying to influence elections and legislation by massive money investment.

Third, and very briefly, is the area of charitable contributions. It is not unethical not to give if you are wealthy. I think, though, people would say it is a good thing and it is ethical to give money if you are wealthy, to boost a lacker. The Internal Revenue Code allows business firms to deduct up to five percent of their profit in the form of charitable contributions. And the business community in this country contributes less than one percent.

If what I am saying adds up to an indictment of some of the business community as being periodically engaged in unethical behavior, what's the reason? I can't pretend to know in a keynote address of twenty-five minutes, but just let me throw out one point. The profit motive is the engine of competitive and effective capitalism. It leads to innovation; it leads to people working hard rather than sluffing off. But the ethos of profits is one of the reasons for the ethical problems of business. When you are eager to seek a profit, you sometimes can do it at any cost and you lose sight of the moral and legal values which say "This far out no further". So the electrical machinery people in the early 1960's, who were caught in the largest price fix in American history, lost their sense of discrimination when they were pressured to earn a certain return for their subsidiary. They decided to do it by dickering rather than by product quality. What do you do with this dilemma, when you have a motivational system that is efficient but can lead to unethical behavior? The law intervenes and the law makes quite clear certain things that are do's and don'ts. Consumer and environmental regulations make quite clear the things that are do's and don'ts.

There is now a campaign not so much to reform regulation as to abolish it, by companies who feel its sting. So we can go back to a time when there were massive stock frauds, perhaps in the early 1930's, to a time when thalidomide was marketed without pre-market testing in the early 1960's. In 1975 the Cuyahoga River in Ohio caught fire before there were environmental standards to prevent it. The campaign to allow the profit motive to go unchecked by health safety regulation, a campaign where the Gould ad was one of thousands of efforts by the business community, really depends on a collective amnesia by all of us forgetting why the regulation was there in the first place. There were serious health and safety violations and swindles which led to the kind of regulation that now exists. Less in Texas than in other states, I have to say, but certainly all through the Federal level in Washington, and the need was there and is there despite the propaganda against it. And despite the often inane regulations by a lot of these agencies which managed to confuse Mickey Mouse rules with those that are fundamental. The issue, I would say, is not the stupid Occupational Safety Health Administration rule about how high fire extinguishers should be off the ground. The issue is a thousand deaths a day from cancer that the Federal government could help prevent.

In conclusion, I consider it somewhat uncomfortable for anyone to sermonize any audience or any business community about what one should do to be ethical. Again, it's been the Hemmingway problem of who can define it. I feel more comfortable looking to the law as a reflection of social judgment about what to do and what is wrong to do, and from that can flow ethical behavior. The law is a moral minimum. The law, however, has often failed to adequately deter unethical business behavior because the sanctions are so mild. A survey by a House subcommittee several weeks ago found that the Justice Department, while saying that white collar law enforcement was a very important issue because of the millions of dollars that white collar illegality costs consumers, was spending less than five percent of its gross resources on white collar law enforcement. It's under-enforced and the sanctions are terribly mild. There will be legislation introduced in Washington, and I hope duplicated in various state capitals around the country, to try to stiffen the penalties and make illegality more costly and hence, less frequent. By way of example, you could require a firm found guilty of an illegal consumer practice to first, give notification to the bilked community, take out an ad in the local media, have a local sign at the store to acknowledge what happened previously, and notify the community that they should seek redress. Otherwise, how would they know? Secondly, require restitution. So if there is a price fix of 10¢ a loaf, it's small per loaf, but it's large if multiplied by millions of consumers. They should be able to be indemnified for the profits made by the wrongly acting company.

Third, I think when companies or high executives are corporate recidivists, that is, repeat offenders, just as labor officials cannot serve in high labor posts if they have been guilty of embezzling community funds, and just as a teller is not reappointed as a teller after he has been found guilty of embezzling funds; high corporate officials should for a period of time be barred from corporate hierarchies if they are found to have repeatedly violated their judiciary obligations and the law.

Finally, you may want to consider legislation to do something about the problems raised by Hooker Chemical and Love Canal, or Firestone Corporation, which we know have a memorandum in their file telling them the Radial 500's were far more dangerous than the rest of their products, but they kept on marketing them. The public now has a memorandum from the Ford Motor Company files showing that they knew for a long time that the Pinto, when rear-ended, would explode in flame because it did not have a \$12 shield between the gas tank and the exterior. It didn't have a \$12 shield because they thought it was too expensive to put on the car. And the result is too ghastly to mention. What do you do when companies know, or should know, that a product they are selling is or will be dangerous? I know there are people who are trying to think about ways to deter that activity by law.

In conclusion, short of compulsory church attendance to instill a sense of ethics in business firms (a form of moral toilet training), I think that in a subjective area like ethics and business one has to constantly exhort people to do better. But that looks to voluntary virtue, which occasionally happens. Companies give to local symphonies, companies try to be sensitive to consumer needs, but occasionally it doesn't happen. I would urge you to look to legislation at the federal and state levels to try to forceably instill a greater sense of ethics in the commercial firms that affect us all so very much.

CONSUMER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Dr. Alan Gartner, Ms. Sandra Willett
Ms. Rosella Bannister*

The Consumer Education Development Program is a national study funded in 1979 by the Office of Consumer's Education of the U.S. Office of Education. Its purpose is to analyze current consumer education activities, and to develop programs and materials appropriate for consumer concerns. An overview of the Program and a report of the first convening, which addressed the first of four major questions, is presented here.

THE PROGRAM

Purpose and Major Questions

The purpose of the program is to analyze current consumer education activities in the classroom and the community, and to develop programs and materials appropriate for current and future consumer concerns. The four major questions to be addressed are:

1. What are the major factors which contribute to an effective consumer education program in both state and local education agencies and what are essential modifications for improvement of such programs?
2. What are the underlying purposes and objectives for consumer education today and how should they be modified to meet current and future demands?
3. What are the concepts and principles undergirding consumer education curricula and what modifications should be made to address current and emerging issues?
4. What demonstration and diffusion procedures could be developed for an effective implementation of curriculum and training materials in community organizations, local education agencies, state education agencies and other consumer educational institutions?

Results

The results of the program will be a state of the art assessment of consumer education, the mobilization of key leadership to recommend strategies for change, a revitalized classification of concepts, and the development of alternative approaches and materials leading to improved consumer education programs in a variety of educational settings.

The Challenge

In recent years the marketplace, through technological developments and global pressures,

has become complex. New issues which confront consumers include limited resources, health and legal service systems, inflation, and employment in a changing economy. These issues require a high level of consumer competence, understanding, and action.

The challenge to consumer educators is to prepare consumers to become active and effective consumer citizens who can influence market forces, not merely react to whatever products and services are available. Individuals and groups should develop a consumer perspective on current and emerging social and economic issues so that the marketplace of the future will operate with efficiency and equity.

Staff and Institutions

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National Convenings

A major source of information regarding the four major questions of the study will be a series of discussions with leaders in consumer education. In structured small group settings, key leadership throughout the nation will share ideas and opinions, give direction and provide input into staff decisions. To date, two national convenings have been held and the preliminary outcomes are reported below.

Report of Convening I, Question I

Principle Question: What are the major factors which contribute to an effective consumer program in both state and local education agencies and what are essential modifications for improvement of such programs?

Framework: Successful programs in the short term tend to be a fortuitous blend of institutional support, teacher skills, and student need and interest. The outcomes of such programs are frequently measured by an increase in discrete knowledge noted on standardized tests, but seldom in behavioral terms. Effective program development for the longer term, however, must consider the strengths, weaknesses, and difficulties of institutionalizing an educational effort. This is particularly the case with consumer education and

*Gartner: City University of New York; Willett: National Consumers League; and Bannister: Michigan Consumer Education Center.

its limitless constituency and the equally broad potential for concern by non-educational organizations and other vested interests.

Issues Related to Question I: The following topics were selected from a broader list of issues identified through a literature review as well as through the use of an opinionnaire which was circulated among participants prior to the convening.

Teacher Commitment and Training
 Student Motivation
 State and Local Support
 Multidisciplinarity of Consumer Education
 Groups with Special Needs
 Information Systems
 Inservice Training
 Political and Economic Environment
 Content and Scope: Active and Reactive Consumers

Procedure

Participants for Convening I represented a broad range of backgrounds, training and experience, including representatives of education, business, government and community groups from a variety of disciplines and geographic areas.

Convening I was designed to be a question asking, idea sharing, solution proposing session, rather than an attempt to deal with these issues in a definitive way. Through structured small group discussions, participants were asked to share ideas regarding issues related to Question I. What follows should be viewed not as a final report but as a summary of many of the main points which were emphasized during wide ranging discussions of effective consumer education programs.

Preliminary Outcomes of Convening I Discussions

- Consumer education needs to identify core concepts within its body of knowledge. Building on the core concepts, strengthened teacher preparation programs should be developed. A better understanding of consumer education, its principles and concepts, will increase teacher and student motivation and interest, especially, as related to the quality of life. Teachers should go beyond the limits of published curriculum and include activities that give students experience in the marketplace and political system.
- The instructional program should not be limited to short-term coping skills, but should include such topics as shortages, pollution controls, inflation and a new value system that would enhance the quality of life.
- A fully operational consumer education clearing-house network is needed to provide research, materials, information exchange, curriculum development and methodology to all who seek assistance. There is currently a lack of established criteria for evaluation of materials and programs which should be included in a broad information system.
- Consumer education today is often too generalized to be of value to specific groups such as senior citizens, low income consumers, and women in transition. Materials and programs must be

tailored to meet the needs of special groups.

- Consumer education content must be relevant to the student's real life in the marketplace. Student motivation is encouraged by participation. Students should be taught to analyze and judge. They should learn how to evaluate the social and economic impact of consumer decisions. Discussions should go beyond "safe subjects" into the controversial issues in consumer and economic affairs.
- A broad base of support for consumer education is needed from administration, school boards, teachers, the business community, consumer affairs groups and labor unions. Consumer educators have not used collective action and cooperative efforts to solicit support.
- It may be accurate to see consumer education as an applied field of study with a self-conscious identity, separate from other disciplines and able to define, preserve, and replicate itself. At the same time it must infuse its insights into other disciplines and not isolate itself from their influence. While remaining a separate entity, it must draw from other fields and professions and contribute a consumer perspective to them.
- Educators at all levels fail to see consumer education as the vehicle that interrelates many of our economic, social and governmental problems. Consumer education should draw from such areas as psychology, sociology, public policy, economics, mathematics, and the applied areas such as home economics, business, and citizenship education.
- Links must be forged between consumer education and consumer advocacy in both traditional and non-traditional settings. Consumers must leave their present passive state and become active in shaping the array of goods and services available. Consumer education must also recognize new political and economic realities such as the depletion of resources, pollution of the environment, greater service needs such as health and legal services, and competition for scarce goods.
- Consumer education must teach consumers how to think and analyze, how to cope and plan, how to react and how to make changes. It should address a hierarchy of consumer skills from coping to questioning to action for change.

Preliminary Report of Convening II on Question II

Principle Question: What are the underlying purposes and objectives of consumer education today and how should they be modified to meet current and future demands?

Framework: As stated in the HEW proposal request, the reasons behind the inclusion of any subject in a school curriculum are the result of a combination of many possible conditions. Tradition, society's indication of need, government intervention, and advancing technology are but a few of the most obvious reasons. There are more subtle reasons which emanate from organizational theory and behavior, and from current local, regional, and national politics. In the analysis, information should be generated which responds to this topic in broad socio-economic dimensions, often outside

of the usual educational institutions.

Subquestions

1. What are the economic-social-political factors determining the nature of the world of the future, and the environment in which consumer education will take place?
2. What basic assumptions underlie consumer education in terms of audience? content? providers? overlap with other educational fields?
3. What topics, concepts, and expectations are outside the scope of consumer education?
4. What are the anticipated results for individuals and society of effective consumer education?
5. What should consumers know in order to function competently and to interact effectively in the marketplace?
6. What should consumers be able to do if they are functioning competently in the marketplace and interacting effectively with the public and private sectors?
7. What are the practical first steps toward modifications that will enable consumer education to meet these goals?

Three additional questions were asked to capture each participant's personal feelings on: 1) what an individual consumer needs to know to operate effectively; 2) their working definition of consumer education; and 3) their reactions to often mentioned assumptions about consumer education.

The Participants

The 25 participants included representatives of: undergraduate, graduate, and teacher training institutions; elementary and secondary schools; state legislatures and educational agencies; business; national and community consumer advocate organizations; federal and local public consumer offices; the media; labor; and minority and senior citizen consumer groups.

Participants worked for one and a half days in small discussion groups, plenary sessions and alone. A special evening session on inflation was organized to share ideas about the causes and cures, and about ways to teach inflation/recession to students and the public.

Some Preliminary Outcomes

- Consumer education cannot be all things to all people, nor can it cover all topics. However, it must equip people to think, analyze, and question the marketplace; to participate in government and economic decision-making; and to understand the options of not buying, of acting collectively, and of using dollar power.
- Consumer education is most needed when faced with purchasing decisions. Frequently, it is useful to start with a specific problem that requires coping skills. However, teaching should include topics relevant to the larger sphere in which

individuals live (e.g. not "how to buy your dream house," but mortgages, interest rates and the banking system). Consumer education must also go beyond the specifics of immediate purchases to a broader range of issues related to the future (e.g., from buying a car, to the price of gasoline, to the necessity of conservation, to limited future energy supplies).

- Education and information are necessary but not sufficient. Consumer education, in general, has failed to equip people to apply basic skills to consumer problem solving, and has not attempted to address structural issues of the economy, such as inflation. Consumer information is limited to the extent that it places the burden solely on the consumer and assumes more information will correct abuses. Action and behavioral change must be taught as partners to information.
- Another objective should be to encourage individual self-esteem and self confidence, particularly for consumers not in the mainstream of the economy. The necessary corollary, however, is to teach people to consider and accept the impact of individual actions on the community and society as a whole. This is especially important where related to waste and non-renewable resources.
- The individual is important in economic theory and reality; but given increasing concentration of power, dehumanization of society, and gaps between "haves and "have not's," individuals must organize as a cooperative force to turn the economy around so that it meets human needs, particularly those related to reasonable prices, quality and safety.
- Consumer education has limitations and parameters. Its purpose is not to teach technical details, but to convey relevant understanding (e.g. not to teach how a car is built, but to teach cost, maintenance, auto insurance coverage, and General Motors' financial position relative to the U.S. and the GNP, and where to get redress for a "lemon").
- Consumer education can combine behavioral, action-oriented education with factual learning by using different building blocks, or a hierarchy of learning, starting with coping skills and moving through questioning and influencing to changing the economy. This will require additional resources, lobbying capabilities, a national research effort, a national teacher training effort, willingness to make uncomfortable decisions, and cooperation between the classroom and the community.