

or against has always been allowed to speak, but I am in the unknown category of the delegate who wishes to pass, and wants to explain his vote.

I realize, Mr. President, that the legislature is going into this field, that the legislature has all inherent powers to pass such legislation and protect the consumer, and I am all for that. But on that basis, Mr. President, I would be opposed to putting this into the constitution.

On the other hand, Mr. President, in the last few months you and I have both been forced to consume an awful lot of natural gas, and possibly I feel now that I should be constitutionally protected.

I am hoping, Mr. President, that we soon get a vote, and when I pass, the rest of the delegates will tell me how I should have voted.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Are you ready for the question?

Delegate Finch, do you desire to be heard?

**DELEGATE FINCH:** I would like to speak on behalf.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** You may proceed.

**DELEGATE FINCH:** This recommendation basically states that the protection and education of the people of the State is essential against unfair trade and financial practices, and that these shall continue to be the concern of the State.

In the past few decades, retail selling of consumer goods has undergone a type of revolution. Whereas, formerly, one would go to the neighborhood store and buy products directly from the clerk; today, one goes to the supermarket and shops alone along double aisles crowded with, oftentimes, up to 8,000 items. The knowledgeable clerk is no longer there to explain and advocate the better buys, and the shopper must rely, more than ever before, on the label or package of the products.

Deception in labelling and packaging makes the task of the consumer-shopper very arduous today. What the consumer needs and wants is a reasonable degree of comparability between competing goods so that he can make informed choices between various products.

This recommendation seeks to insure that the legislature will provide consumers the opportunity to fairly and reasonably compare the various products, that the legislature will take concrete steps to actively im-

plement the principle that the consumer is entitled to a full, reasonable and clear picture of the product he is purchasing as such picture is presented by the label or package of the product itself.

Now, it is becoming increasingly evident that sharp business practices, prevalent today in many forms, will not abate in an atmosphere of virtually unrestrained, un-governed package advertising. Rather, the problem is increasingly poignant as the practiced ingenuity of retail packagers creates more elaborate, more catchy, more deceptive devices to lure the public to its product.

President Johnson, in renewing his request for legislative action in the packaging and labelling field, remarked, in 1966, that "It is not enough to hope that such practices will disappear by themselves. The government must do its share to insure the shopper against deception, to remedy confusion and to eliminate questionable practices."

A new constitution for the State of Maryland affords an excellent opportunity to insure that the state government will act to protect the consumer, and this very proposal might well represent a much needed "Consumers' Bill of Rights."

Just what sharp practices must be combated on behalf of the consumer? Initially, it should be observed that packages in the more than 30,000 supermarkets throughout the country, and, more particularly the hundreds of supermarkets in Maryland do not, on the whole, reflect simple, direct, accurate and visible information as to the nature and quantity of the package's contents, including the various ingredients therein. For instance, one finds such vital information as weight and contents tucked away everywhere on the package except one agreed upon place where a person might find it automatically. Or one finds the use of size designations that have no actual relation to quantity in order to gain competitive advantage.

Thus, one manufacturer's king size is another manufacturer's large size; a simple quart is labeled "extra large quart"; or a pint is labeled "giant half-quart." In tooth-paste packages, the smallest size is often marked "large."

Another problem which plagues the consumer is the pervasive presence, on supermarket shelves, of deceptively shaped boxes, misleading pictures, and promotional gimmicks that promise nonexistent savings. The former part of the problem, de-