

population than did the proponents, the committee took no action on the bill during the 89th Congress. Now, once again, the same groups are appearing before this committee and expressing the same views relative to the proposed legislation. Because the technical frailties of this legislation are being thoroughly covered and will be covered, I would like to address my remarks to a consideration of the end versus the means.

The end, which is desired from the passage of this legislation, as stated by the proponents, is the protection of the consumer. The means, is this particular legislation, which once passed will be carried to all the state legislatures with a demand for universal enactment.

Under the currently popular banner of "consumer protection," a small group has come before you asking not really for protection of the consumer, but for protection of their own personal interests, for the opportunity to fatten their own pocketbooks and egos, all at the sacrifice of free enterprise and the consumers' freedom of choice. Recently, a high state executive official told a group of Optometrists and their attorneys that he was not surprised that the "professional" group through their self-serving, self-perpetuating board of examiners wished to gain control of the dollars represented by their industry in their state.

He stated that he, as a government official, did not envision himself being held responsible for the resolution of this interprofessional squabble and he had no desire to act as their referee. At that time, he charged the board of examiners with the responsibility of administering the statutes, as written, for the protection of those for whom the statutes were written to protect, the public, and he stated that they should refrain from utilizing legislative and judicial branches of the government to restrict and harass economic competition.

I believe this was an excellent statement because it pierced directly and realistically into the real reasons for the persistent requests for this legislation by this small non-public minded group.

This statement placed the responsibility correctly for the resolution of the problems which had been expressed by the group. The gentleman was saying that professionalism and self-respect gained through education and personal application to principles cannot be administered like a coat of paint by the legislative or judicial hands of the government. Rather it must come about as a result of the efforts of the group itself in setting aside personal interests relegating economic factors to their proper level giving prime consideration to the education and development of their own candidates for licensure and the development of proper internal controls.

But contrary to such wise advice this group, which is again appearing before you in support of this bill and proposing themselves to be representative of the consumer has enlisted shrewd publicists and skilled organizers a well-paid staff of political experts who can outwait the legislative process and continuously cultivate legislative interests in their so-called consumer objectives. As reported by the clerk of the house and printed in the Congressional Record the American Optometric Association spent \$25,943.59 in 1966 for lobbying purposes in Washington, D.C. I am sure their expenditures during the 90th session of Congress will exceed this figure. These experts have been charged with the duty of developing an umbilical cord connecting Uncle Sam with every consumer of optical goods and services. They recognize and prey upon the reality that *every* consumer at one time or another has had an unhappy experience with a particular product or appliance or service or merchant. And they attempt to convert these frustrations and thereby establish an atmosphere of public resentment and personal damages to these experiences in the optical business. According to their arguments this atmosphere should logically lead to a consumer-complaint counter backed up by the government and enforced by laws which would be administered by selected and conditioned appointees of the self-seeking group.

What will really follow would be the severance of the business-consumer ties which are at the heart of a healthy private enterprise and the displacement of consumer choice business and professional self-discipline and local regulations with a funneling of every citizen frustration to the legislative bodies of this country there to be supposedly remedied by endless new laws and regulations.

The paid political experts hardened veterans of political wars are patient people with the long view, willing to slog along year in and year out toward a legislative goal accepting repeated reverses along the way, until at last the legislators tire of their doors being battered down and the public becomes sufficiently sloganeered so that the plan can be forced through.

The business community in the United States, including the optical industry, *does* detest malfeasance and is eager to redress justified complaint.