

That we were stymied for so long was due primarily to the unrelenting opposition of most of the private lending and selling agencies. From the very beginning, we were fought by the personal finance companies, the dealers in durable consumer goods sold on credit, mail-order houses, the department stores and retailers of soft goods, the chamber of commerce, the banks and the American Banking Association, the American Bar Association, and virtually all of the so-called financial and mercantile establishments. This was powerful opposition and it is no wonder that despite increasing popular interest and support we were never able to get a favorable vote.

It is being said by some of the former opponents of the bill that if I had been willing to compromise, the bill could have passed long ago and that only my stubbornness prevented the opponents from joining the happy throng of supporters.

I have reached that point, Madam Chairman, where I am no longer worried about praise or blame. We have passed the point of no return, so to speak, and really what I care about is whether we enact a good bill into law.

While I do not care about either praise or blame as long as a good bill is enacted into law, I must object to this remark. I was perfectly willing to compromise on less important features if I could only establish the essential point; namely, to have the financial charges stated to buyers and borrowers as an annual rate on the amounts actually owed. But it was precisely this feature that my opponents were never willing to concede until now. They tried to argue that no one could compute the annual rate; that 3 percent a month was not 36 percent a year; and that 1½ percent a month did not equal 18 percent a year. They wanted to retain the growing practice of concealing both the price and interest rate on many durable goods such as automobiles, television sets, furniture, and washing machines by the device of only quoting so much down and so much a month—only that and nothing more—and not always so much a month. They were reluctant to abandon the practice in the case of personal loans of the banks charging interest on the original amount borrowed rather than on the declining balance of the amounts actually owed. By this method they concealed the fact that the real rate of interest was approximately twice that which they actually quoted, and they were not averse to adding special charges such as finders' fees, filing fees, credit life insurance at high rates, et cetera, et cetera.

During those 6 years of struggle, I was never once able to get our opponents to agree on the basic principle of the annual rate on the amounts actually owed.

It is a tribute to the merits of the democratic process, however, that gradually the public became convinced of the essential soundness of this simple principle. The abuses were becoming more important as the amount of consumer debt rose from \$56 billion in 1960 to \$93 billion in the spring of this year—since I wrote these lines it has gone up to \$94 billion—while mortgage debt on single family homes and those of less than five family units increased from \$141 billion to \$227 billion. With the total personal debt rising to \$321 billion—only \$10 billion or 4 percent less than the national public debt of \$331 billion—people slowly concluded that it was time to stop, look, and listen. Support