

Mr. GONZALEZ. Would it be possible to get some kind of statistical evaluation, if feasible?

Secretary TROWBRIDGE. I would be more than happy to try to find it, but I will have to start from scratch as far as I know. I don't think we have it in the Department of Commerce at this point. We may be able to find it from the various sources in State governments, but if you will allow me, I will take a look.

Mr. GONZALEZ. I would be most grateful to you.

(The information requested follows:)

Unfortunately, a valid and meaningful statistical evaluation of the availability of consumer credit, overall, State-by-State, is not attainable at this time. The Department does not have consumer credit data tabulated State-by-State. Although the Federal Reserve Board, in its monthly *Bulletin*, publishes data on short- and intermediate-term consumer credit, these data are reported only for the nation as a whole. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, however, publishes data on bank loans, by State, for all insured banks.

Consumer credit data, reported officially by some States, are not comparable because the types of credit on which data are reported vary from State to State. Most States, we are informed, do not have composites on financing of autos and durable goods. Although no data are published by the states on retail installment credit, some do report partial data on installment credit contracts issued by finance companies.

We are informed, however, that the Associated Credit Bureaus of California a few years ago issued a report, based on its own unofficial estimates, showing that the extension of consumer credit is unrelated to garnishment laws. Their data reveal that in 1963 about \$6.6 billion of installment credit was extended in California, which has a stringent garnishment law, and about \$6.1 billion in New York, which has a moderate garnishment law. This, according to their report, amounts to 24.6 percent of total retail sales in California during 1963 and 25.5 percent of retail sales in New York. Estimates by the same source on the ratio of installment credit to retail sales in a number of other States show little variation among those States. Assuming the accuracy of these estimates, it would appear that the correlation of installment credit to retail sales does not vary in accordance with garnishment laws.

Mounting evidence in recent years clearly shows a correlation of wage garnishment to the rise in personal bankruptcies. Yet, in any analysis of the comparative availability of credit, factors in addition to the existence or non-existence of wage garnishment laws would demand consideration. Such factors as differences in local and regional economic conditions (e.g., depressed areas, pockets of unemployment, etc.), in the relative stability of employee-income, in the prospects of future employee-income, in variations of screening policies of credit extenders—all of these are variables difficult to measure. I suggest, therefore, that it would be extremely difficult, if not virtually impossible, to establish a clear correlation between the availability of credit and the existence or non-existence of a State garnishment law.

Mr. GONZALEZ. By way of a parenthesis, the Department of Commerce has tremendous reservoirs of information.

Secretary TROWBRIDGE. Sometimes we have more than we know about.

Mr. GONZALEZ. When I came here, the first big difference I found between local, State, and Federal Government was exemplified by your Department. I had a request from a constituent who wanted to know exactly how much in quantity—how many Jalapeño peppers were being imported into the United States and within 3 hours I had the exact numbers, down to the last thousand. It is a tremendous number that are being imported. So that I could pick up the phone here at this level, call somebody like the Department of Commerce and we have a ready answer which is not available at the local and State levels of government.