

CONSUMER INFORMATION RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 1967

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SPECIAL STUDIES SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met at 10 a.m. in room 2203, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Benjamin S. Rosenthal presiding.

Present: Representatives Benjamin S. Rosenthal, John W. Wydler, and John T. Myers.

Staff present: James A. Lanigan, general counsel, full committee; Peter Barash, legal assistant; I. Warren Harrison, legal assistant; and William H. Copenhaver, minority counsel.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. The subcommittee will come to order. This marks the first hearing during the 90th Congress of the Special Inquiry on Consumer Representation in the Federal Government of the House Committee on Government Operations. We are particularly indebted to Chairman Dawson for constituting this subcommittee and taking a lead in the area of consumer responsibility and consumer needs.

The consumer inquiry, which is functioning through the Special Studies subcommittee, is charged with examining the extent to which Federal departments and agencies are carrying out their responsibilities to protect the American consumer.

It is difficult to conceive of a more vital aspect of this responsibility than the dissemination of product information in the Government's possession which is of potential use to consumers. In a recent report to the President entitled "Consumer Issues '66" the Consumer Advisory Council concluded that the consumer needs much more information about products if he is to buy wisely in today's complex marketplace. It is difficult to challenge the validity of that conclusion. Moreover, this need was recognized by President Johnson in 1964 when he directed his Committee on Consumer Interests to develop as promptly as possible effective ways of reaching more homes and more families—particularly low income families—with information to help them get the most for their money. The President's committee found after extensive study that certain Federal agencies possess vast amounts of information on the performance characteristics and price stability of consumer-type products which could be of enormous benefit to the consumer, if systematically and properly disseminated.

The Federal Government, because of its considerable experience in procuring consumer-type items for Federal use and its position of leadership in the field of scientific and technological research, may