

fact, if the subcommittee wishes to select a few specific items, we would be pleased to review the applicable specification case folders and provide any available data we have which we feel would be of assistance.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. My associates and I would be pleased to answer any questions you or members of the subcommittee may have.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. How many items that the Federal Government purchases and tests would you say are similar items that the private consumer purchases?

Mr. ABERSFELLER. About a thousand items.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. And considerable expense and expertise and scientific knowledge goes into the testing of these items before the Government either draws the specifications or makes the purchase?

Mr. ABERSFELLER. Well, considerable expense goes in at a point in time. It varies. We may test them as an example or provide for test methods after we develop a specification in initial draft stages.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. Wouldn't it be useful to the American consumer if some of the knowledge and expertise you have were made available to him in some form?

Mr. ABERSFELLER. We agree that the consumer needs more information. Our problem here is the form that this should take in terms of what we could provide.

As Mr. Kaplan stated, there is no question but what we could set forth for these roughly thousand items the specific requirements a consumer should look for. Unfortunately that, in my view, isn't enough. The consumer must have some assurance by way of certification, his own ability to test or his own book of knowledge of experience to be certain the product he buys does possess the characteristics. It is the form in which this information might take that is difficult to conceive.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. In other words you are sympathetic to the program of making the information available. You have trouble determining in what form it should be done.

Mr. ABERSFELLER. Yes. Simply to add on to that whether there is in fact meaningful information which might be made available.

By way of example let me point out that we do pretest, as Mr. Kaplan indicated, such things as antifreeze and other items that we place on qualified-products lists. In the first instance, these are not representative of the total products available. We simply test those which producers submit to us since they must pay a charge for this kind of test and presumably it is only for those that desire to do business with the Federal Government, which is not necessarily all the producers of a given product. These are available to the public. Unfortunately the problem we face is how does the public know they are available.

We get back again to the GPO catalog and how many people subscribe to that and really have knowledge of its availability. The qualified-product lists are available to anyone who wants a copy. Yet that is not all-encompassing. I can't say as an example of the four or five producers who qualified on antifreeze that they are the only ones with a good product. I am willing to say, of those we have tested, that they have a good product.