

I will ask Mr. Chase to say something about the scheduling of price collections.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. Take as an example, the city of New York, where you check food prices. Do you do it on the same day of each week, or month?

Mr. CHASE. On food prices, the collection is done on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. It is always on those three days of a week, before the 15th.

In other words, it may be the first or second week in different months, and all the work is done on those 3 days, but it is not done in the same store on the same day month after month. There is a variation.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. A store manager would not have any incentive to change prices to satisfy any special desire he might have in impressing your collector?

Mr. CHASE. We don't think so, because he doesn't know precisely when our agent is going to be there. The agent observes the prices posted on the shelves, so that the manager would have to sell at that price to any customers that were there that day.

Mr. Ross. In any case, the store manager has no particular motive in impressing our price collector. His prices go into an index along with many, many other sellers, and I don't think there would be enough in it for him to change it.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. I am intrigued by this fact though—some people say many large stores raise prices on a Saturday for various commercial reasons. Yet, you don't check prices on Saturday.

Mr. Ross. On the other hand, Mr. Chairman, many food stores, in particular, have their weekend specials and the food industry has often said that it wishes we would collect our prices on Friday and Saturday when they have the weekend specials, particularly on meat, because so many people buy meat for the week on Friday and Saturday, and they buy it more cheaply than the Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday prices. Now we are basically interested in the indexes.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. You collect your prices only on the days Congress is in session. [Laughter.]

Mr. Ross. Yes, sir.

Mr. CHASE. The reason we don't collect on Saturday, is that it is a very busy time in the stores. It would be very difficult to get the attention of the manager on a Saturday.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. But, you said you don't need his attention. You check prices off the shelves.

Mr. CHASE. We do both. We check the price on the shelf, but if there is any change in the price or change in the sizes of packages or anything of that sort, it is checked with the manager after we observe what the price is.

Generally, the prices in effect on Thursday are also the prices in effect on Saturday, so that we think we get in most cases the Saturday prices by doing the pricing on Thursday.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. Going back to one other thing, Commissioner, you said that you answer tens of thousands of letters to individual consumers. I would assume that it takes a fair amount of manpower to answer these letters.