length of time they have been in the bin or meat case. Although prices in this study were compared only if the quotations related to the same size and grade of the commodity (e.g., U.S. grade No. 1 lettuce, size 48) the condition of two groups of lettuce meeting these criteria could be quite different if one were wilted and the other crisp and fresh. Although no monetary evaluations of such differences could be made, the BLS agents were requested to describe the conditions of seven commodities priced. These commodities were: Ground beef, beef steak, pork chops, chickens, grapefruit, lettuce, and potatoes. These conditions were to be described by four gradations: top, good, average, or inferior.

This assignment proved to be very difficult for several reasons. In those stores where meat was cut to order, the agent frequently did not see the merchandise for which the price was quoted. In other cases the evaluation of the condition necessarily had to be made by a rather quick inspection; coöperation by management in reporting prices and supplying supplementary data would likely have been endangered in many instances if agents had taken the time to sort through the merchandise in order to inspect it more closely. Nevertheless, an analysis of these reports indicates that there may be some basis to the allegation that the condition of goods available in stores in low income areas is inferior to that in stores in higher income areas. In this study there was no way of determining whether these differences were occasioned by the shipment of poorer quality of goods to the stores in low income areas, or whether the somewhat poorer qualities observed in the lower income areas were due to slower turnover in the stores or less careful handling of displayed merchandise by customers.

One indication that the usual condition of these seven commodities was somewhat less desirable in the outlets located in low-income areas is the relative proportion of times that these commodities were judged to be "top" or "inferior" in the two areas. For example, in one city the following conditions were reported for the lettuce priced:

Grade	Low income area		Higher income area	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Top	3	27.28	7	50.00
Good	2	18.18	6	42.86
Average	3	27.27	1	7.14
Inferior	3	27.27	----------	----------

In this city, there was some top-quality lettuce reported in both income areas, but a larger percent in the higher income areas than in the low. There was some inferior quality reported in the low, but none in the higher. Combining the reports from all cities and for all items, it was found that more "top" quality assignments were made than "inferior," but that the "top" quality was more likely to relate to merchandise in stores in the higher income area and the inferior to that in stores in the low-income area.

	"Top" condition		"Inferior" condition	
	CPI quality	Volume selling quality	CPI quality	Volume selling quality
Some in both income areas:				
Larger percentage in higher area	22	27	----------	3
Larger percentage in lower area	6	6	----------	3
Same percentage in both areas	3	0	1	0
Some in higher, none in lower area	5	2	2	2
Some in lower, none in higher area	1	2	7	11

Codes assigned commodities priced in stores of the same chain in the two types of areas of the city were examined to see if these revealed any differences. The codes assigned the seven commodities in chainstores ranged from "top" to "inferior," but in no case did the codes assigned the two stores of the same chain in any city differ by more than one grade (i.e., top versus good, good versus average, or average versus inferior). Combining the codes for chains in the six cities for the qualities of the seven commodities defined by the CPI specification, the same code was assigned the merchandise available in the two stores of the chain in 88 percent of the cases; in 8 percent of the cases, the goods were in better