

Mr. O'BRIEN. Our failure to reach people by telephone, the people we'd like to reach on this problem, this goes back to the basic problem of consumer education and the apathy of the very people—

Mr. MYERS. But that's what they have these agencies for, to try to help them.

Mr. O'BRIEN. Try to reach them with some form of consumer education and how do you do it?

Mr. ROSENTHAL. Could you explain—I guess the supervisor who told our friend here that they couldn't do anything, was that person acting under your instructions?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Every person in my office is acting under my instructions; yes, sir, and I am solely responsible for every action in that office, therefore we were wrong at that point.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. In other words, you disagree with that decision that she or he made?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes, sir; although here again we might see yours as being a mañana problem. We have others right now, with our limited staff and income, including a deficit last year, we are unable to respond affirmatively to every request.

Mr. BARASH. Mr. O'Brien, let me ask you one question relative to this special food telephone line. Is it manned by a single individual at all times?

Mr. O'BRIEN. Yes, Mrs. Beverly Brian who has been with us 7 years. She is an experienced person.

Mr. BARASH. What is her background, very quickly?

Mr. O'BRIEN. She has a degree in government and she has been our fabrics person. We have a rather substantial fabric care in our office; we work with the drycleaners and retailers trying to evaluate experiences with fabrics after they have been cleaned and if they are unsatisfactory in cleaning perhaps it should be rolled back to the manufacturer.

Mr. BARASH. The reason I ask is this, and it is relative to the statement made by Mr. Nadler that he was told that this practice wasn't illegal, therefore the Better Business Bureau couldn't help. Have you considered, and I in no way am suggesting that the woman you have assigned to this problem is not totally competent, but have you considered the idea of putting someone on this line who may be particularly, especially familiar with the problems of the poor consumer; who might be in a position to empathize with the poor consumer?

Mr. O'BRIEN. All of our people are in that position, sir. Fully 50 percent of our walk-in traffic are from the poverty area and they get service in our office immediately, and Miss Brian is a person competent, she has worked in the food field. When we have had specific food problems with freezers up or down, or bulk meat up or down, it has been with her experience.

Mr. BARASH. Thank you.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. Thank you very much.

(The full text of Mr. O'Brien's statement follows:)

STATEMENT BY JOHN L. O'BRIEN, PRESIDENT, BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU OF GREATER ST. LOUIS, INC.

My name is John L. O'Brien. I am president and general manager of the Better Business Bureau of Greater St. Louis, 901 Washington Avenue, St. Louis. I have occupied that position since September of 1959. Previous to that time I had a