

similar position with the Better Business Bureau of Akron, Ohio, for 13 years and was a staff member of the Cleveland, Ohio, Better Business Bureau for 7 years prior to that.

The Better Business Bureau in St. Louis is one of 130 autonomous, nonprofit private corporations in the United States and Canada. Our bureau here is a Missouri nonprofit corporation founded in 1917, supported entirely by membership subscription from private business firms. We presently have membership support from approximately 2,400 business firms in the metropolitan area for a total annual income of \$245,000. Of this number, 33 are retail food stores or food distributors, supplying a total of \$2,487, of approximately 1 percent of the bureau's total annual support. Membership in the bureau does not exempt any member for many action the bureau might take, nor may the fact of membership be exploited or advertised in any way. The corporate purpose clause of the Better Business Bureau reads as follows:

"This Association is formed for educational purposes including the following: To promote truthfulness in advertising, buying, selling, and soliciting, to protect the public through public edification against the impositions of those engaged in unfair and untruthful advertising, soliciting, and merchandising, to maintain fair competition and dependability in advertising, soliciting, and merchandising, to increase public confidence in advertising and in merchandise, securities, and service offered for sale, to educate the public to a knowledge of how to detect and avoid deceptive advertising and questionable practices in selling and soliciting, and to cooperate and affiliate with other Better Business Bureaus to promote such other educational purposes as tend to the well-being of the people in the areas served, or to the public advantage in relation to any of the purposes and objects above enumerated, and to do any and all acts incident to such purposes and objects that are not contrary to the provisions of the constitution or laws of this State."

In carrying out these purposes, we have a staff of 25 and presently handle some 130,000 inquiries, complaints, and instances of service to the general public each year. We classify these services by some 42 different types of business and industry and keep records accordingly. Against this total, requests for information and assistance with reference to matters involving food from the general public are very minor, having in no case in the last 5 years exceeded 1.5 percent of the bureau's total traffic. A 5-year table is attached for further detail. (Reference A.)

Specifically, in the first 6 months of 1967 we recorded a total of 596 instances involving food matters, of which 317 were inquiries concerning business firms or their conduct, 264 were what we term "customer relations," which involve matters of question or concern from the public that were not formerly jacketed as complaints and 15 were complaints which followed no set pattern but were at random against various types of retail food businesses.

We have from time to time read newspaper reports and magazine articles alleging the discrimination in price and quality by various types of food stores in the poverty areas, but up to now have made no formal investigation of the matter.

With the reports of the recent hearings and concern expressed in the District of Columbia, the subsequent news articles appearing in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch concerning their own reporters' examination of the problem, supplemented by certain examinations by representatives of the Human Development Corporation, we were formally requested by representatives of the food distribution industry to make an examination in depth of the problem and report our findings to the industry and the general public. We have accepted this request as of November 3, 1967. We have defined the problem and commenced the preliminary steps of the investigation, assisted by the volunteer Women's Advisory Council of the Better Business Bureau, a group of 13 ladies representing various segments and economic strata of the community. The list of these ladies is attached hereto for reference. (Reference B.)

We have defined the purpose of our investigation as follows:

"To examine the policies, practices, and procedures of major food chains and food distributors in distributing and pricing food in the various areas of the metropolitan area, to determine the relative consistency of price and quality between various areas of differing income level."

We have agreed upon 15 steps to accomplish this purpose, and have proceeded at this point only through the preliminary evaluation areas. A copy of our 15 steps, as reference C, is attached for examination.

Briefly, our procedures are as follows: