

# OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY: CONSUMER ACTION AND THE WAR ON POVERTY

MONDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1966<sup>1</sup>

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE  
REORGANIZATION SUBCOMMITTEE  
OF THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,  
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in room 2203, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Benjamin S. Rosenthal (chairman) presiding.

Present: Representatives Rosenthal, Reuss, and Erlenborn.

Also present: Peter S. Barash and Jerome Sollins, majority professional staff members, and J. Phillip Carlson, minority professional staff member.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. The special inquiry will be in order.

This marks the first hearing of the recently established special inquiry on consumer representation in the Federal Government. The responsibility of the special inquiry is to examine the extent to which the various Federal agencies are carrying out their responsibility to protect and promote the interests of the American consumer.

The conflict within our governmental system and free enterprise economy between consumer interests on the one hand and producer influence on the other, is not new to the country, the Congress, or this committee. And yet, while the interests of producers, farmers, laborers, or small businessmen are easily grasped and effectively represented, the consumer interest is complex and often subordinated.

We intend to approach this important subject deliberately and impartially. And yet, we cannot help but view with concern a Federal consumer protection apparatus which is proliferated among 33 departments and agencies. We hope to work together with the executive branch and to develop ways in which consumer representation in the Federal Government can be strengthened and made more meaningful.

We think it particularly fitting and proper that the Office of Economic Opportunity be the first to testify before the special inquiry. While rich and poor, educated and uneducated alike are victims of sharp practices and general uncertainty and confusion in the marketplace, the poor are most frequently and tragically victimized. Moreover, unwise consumer habits and sharp consumer practices not only contribute to the plight of the poor but also help to perpetuate poverty itself.

<sup>1</sup> This hearing, conducted in October 1966, relates to the efforts of the Office of Economic Opportunity in behalf of the low-income consumer.