

Ferdie J. Deering

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But Who Will Protect Us From Our Protectors?

THE pain of inflation is being made worse by some of the efforts to combat it. Self-appointed organizations and bureaucrats, abetted by Congress and acting in the name of consumers, are forcing costs and prices upward by having the government help us with our shopping.

No, the government doesn't actually go out and buy for us, but its agencies, bureaus and commissions are becoming increasingly nosy and bossy about what we ought to have, ought to want, or should have taken away from us.

The Food and Drug Administration is responsible for seeing that products offered for sale are wholesome and safe. That would seem to be enough, but Congress didn't seem to think so and created the Consumer Product Safety Commission, which can ban almost anything it considers unsafe or not in the public interest.

A recent example is the CPSC ban on fireworks, outlawed by national edict, but earlier millions of butane lighters, gas ovens, space heaters, toys, color TV sets, lawn mowers and ski boots have been declared substantial hazards. The commission is asking courts to send guilty manufacturers to jail for a year or fine them \$50,000. Southern Methodist University has scheduled a series of seminars (at \$235 per person) to teach businessmen how to comply with CPSC rules.

The CPSC is not to be confused with the proposed Consumer Protection Agency, provided for in a bill now in Congress. Ostensible purpose of the CPA is to represent the "interest of consumers before other federal agencies," intervening in and possibly reversing rulings of existing agencies which currently have jurisdiction over business activities.

There are scores of bureaus in this category.

Federal agencies seem to be able to issue a sufficient number of contradictory and confusing regulations through normal procedures without setting up a special agency to do it on purpose!

In addition to a corps of bookkeepers to maintain records required by the government, many businesses have hired lawyers to interpret EEOC rules on hiring, OSHA rules on safety, IRS rules on profits and taxes, and EPA regulations on the environment.

One of the newest agencies is the Federal Energy Office, with nearly 1,000 employees housed in seven buildings in Washington, presumably trying to find out how much fuel we have and what to do about it.

When federal bureaus die, the bureaucrats just transfer and keep on

regulating. The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) is to go out of existence July 1, but sections of the poverty program will be transferred to other departments.

If that doesn't take care of everybody, the OEO director has proposed a program called TRIP (Transportation Remuneration and Incentive Program) to issue stamps to the poor to buy gasoline and heating oil at reduced prices and to keep bureaucrats employed.

The Senate last week passed, then recalled, a bill to set up a board to administer amateur athletics, which presumably could settle Little League arguments by political arbitration and regulate interstate commerce in outstanding football players.

This is to protect us from ourselves and those who would defraud us, but who is going to protect us from the bureaucrats?