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# 'Truth' Regulations No Guarantee

ADVERTISING pays for news and entertainment in our newspapers, on radio and on TV. Without it subscription costs might be prohibitive.

Advertising keeps us informed about what products are available, where they may be bought, and at what prices. Political and institutional advertising keeps us informed on issues. Entertainment advertising tells us where to eat or to attend movies and concerts.

Every day more than \$4 billion worth of advertising messages appear in print in American newspapers, where they may be read at the subscribers' convenience and clipped if desired. An additional \$1.4 billion worth of ads appear in magazines and periodicals.

Radio broadcasts about three-fourths of a million commercials daily and another 100,000 are added by television. The Postal Service delivers more than 51 million pieces of direct mail advertising daily.

Advertising is an essential service to both sellers and buyers. Still, it isn't uncommon to hear a consum-

er comment: "I don't believe half of what the advertisements say!" Another may add: "I don't believe any of it." But millions shop by it regularly.

About 11 years ago the government undertook to supervise advertising to see that those who published or broadcast their messages tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing else. It was called the "Truth in Advertising" regulation. A department was set up in the Federal Trade Commission to see that advertisers told the truth.

Now the new FTC chairman, James C. Miller, has called for a review of this law, to consider whether it really is worth its cost.

Miller pointed out that businesses and industries trying to comply with this law encounter additional expense, which must be passed along to their customers. He is trying to find out how much it costs business and the government to substantiate advertisers' claims.

Those who are inclined to exaggerate, lie, make false claims or unfair comparisons apparently have

found ways to continue their misleading messages in spite of the "Truth in Advertising" law. No federal bureau can stop people from lying where money is involved.

One reason that doctors, lawyers and optometrists opposed opening of advertising media to their professions was fear that unscrupulous practitioners would mislead the public.

Business firms which deliver the goods as advertised, for quality and price, build confidence for trade and in advertising. It is they who save time and money for consumers and who generate the confidence that makes advertising beneficial.

There's a centuries-old motto that warns "Let the buyer beware." Establishment of a federal agency to take over this responsibility has not changed things much, nor nullified the old motto.

Consumers still need to beware of false claims and shoddy quality when shopping. Requirements that load business and government with expensive studies to substantiate advertisers' claims only add to costs of both good and bad items.