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SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, P. O. BOX 5757, COLUMBIA, S. C. 29250 1-800-922-1594

Volume 4, Number 5

September/October 1979

NEW COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED

Four new commissioners have been added to the S.C. Commission on Consumer Affairs, three of whom were appointed by the governor and one elected by the Gen. Assembly. Appointed by Gov. Richard W. Riley were Hugh K. Leatherman, Sr. of Florence, Thomas N. McLean of Columbia, and Mrs. Nell W. Stewart of Greenville. Mr. Leatherman is a native of Lincoln County, N.C., and a graduate of N.C. State University at Raleigh. A multi-corporation executive, Mr. Leatherman is Pres. of Florence Concrete Products, Sumter Stress-Crete, and Pee Dee Block in Marion and Midlands Broadcasting Corp.; Sec.-Treasurer of Hugh-Stan Corp. which owns and operates the Howard Johnson Motor Lodge in Charleston plus involvement in various companies involved in motel ownership and operation and land and resort development. Mr. Leatherman was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Comm. W. Earl Douglas who died on June 5, 1979. Mr. McLean is a native of Blythewood and majored in journalism at USC while working as a sports writer on the Gamecock and later on The State. After graduation from USC and a stint in the Air Force, Mr. McLean returned to Columbia where he worked as a reporter before becoming city editor of The State in 1966, assistant managing editor in 1972 and then editor of The Record in 1973. Mr. McLean is a Lt. Col. in the S.C. Air National Guard. Mrs. Nell Stewart is a native of Dacusville and attended Easley public schools and Southern Business University in Atlanta. Mrs. Stewart is director of Consumer Relations for Texize Chemicals in Greenville and is married to James H. Stewart, Jr. Mrs. Stewart was a member of the initially appointed S.C. Commission on Aging. Elected to serve on the commission by the Gen. Assembly, the first to be elected under a new law which became effective July 1978, is Dr. Lonnie Randolph of Columbia. Dr. Randolph attended Dreher High School, Benedict College and the South-

ern College of Optometry. He received his B.S. degree in 1972 and his Doctor of Optometry in 1977.

EXTRA, EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT

Before you go to the grocery store, take a few minutes to look in your newspaper to check for sales at neighborhood stores. Don't forget about watching for advertised specials on TV and listening for them on radio. Remember though, not everything in an ad is on sale. You can save money by stocking up on sale items. It may be worthwhile to change your shopping habits. A recent study has shown that generally there are fewer specials at the beginning of the month. Buy enough staples, canned and frozen products during the last three weeks of the month and shop light for essentials during the first week of the month. Also, the prices of many farm products move up and down rapidly. If you watch for these changes, you may be able to shift your purchases and save money. For example, all meat prices do not rise and fall together. Sometimes chicken may be the best meat bargain around, at other times it may be beef.

MAKE A LIST AND CHECK IT TWICE

It's important to shop as infrequently as possible. It helps with your food organization and planning. Keep a continuous shopping list at home which will save you emergency trips for forgotten items. Consult family members before you go to the store and during menu planning to get their ideas. Before you go to the store, go through your cupboards, refrigerator, and freezer and write down the items you need. But keep in mind that you should be flexible enough in your menu planning to take advantage of unadvertised store specials and other bargains.

Clipping coupons can save you money, but only if you use them wisely. The adage "you don't get something for nothing" certainly applies to coupons. Companies often give coupons to promote a new product, and our consumers pay for the privilege of trying something new. Never use a coupon unless it is for something you were going to buy anyway. And remember, while coupons may lower prices for well-known brands, these brands may still cost more than other brands you would find satisfactory.

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR YOU?

Every shopper knows how tempting it is to buy more than is really needed. When you shop, be aware of supermarket tactics that encourage impulse buying. Don't go shopping on an empty stomach. Buy essential foods first (meat, eggs, milk, vegetables, bread and cereal products). Any surplus money in your food budget can then be spent on stock items, staples, luxuries and snacks. Price-wise, larger sizes are usually better buys. Comparing brands is a good way to cut expenses without sacrificing quality. More expensive brands are often displayed at waist-to-eye levels on shelves with less expensive brands above and below. Use information the food market provides such as ingredient and nutrition labeling. This will tell you the ingredients and their proportion. For example, beef with gravy is at least 50% meat; but gravy with beef needn't contain more than 35% beef. Labels containing nutrition information make it possible to compare nutrient values. Try to resist impulse buying and if you have made a shopping list, stick to it except for bargain specials.

USE UNIT PRICING

Unit pricing is one of the most useful tools available to consumers to compare prices and determine the most economical buy. Food markets with unit pricing will have their products labeled showing an item price and a unit price. In short, the store has done the multiplication and division for you. They have broken down the cost into a basic unit to show the price of the product per pound, quart, 100 count, square foot or other units of measure. All the shopper has to do is compare the unit price of varieties of the same product to determine the most economical brand and size.

Most large food market chains sell "private label" foods and household products. These private label or "housebrands" are usually less expensive and equal in quality to national brands. In many cases, food markets purchase their house brand goods from the same companies that manufacture nationally advertised brands. The cost of advertising and sales promotion are included in the price you pay for brand name goods. House brands, which are less heavily advertised, can be sold for less. For example, you may like a private label vegetable at \$.35 just as much as a national brand competitor which sells for \$.49. Not all private label merchandise is the same as its name brand competitors nor is it always significantly less expensive. Personal preferences will ultimately determine which brand you buy. But, do check them out.

NO FRILLS, LOWER BILLS

In the past year, many food markets have begun to offer generic, plain wrap or no-label foods. Packaged generally in plain white with black letters, these foods are most often of lesser quality than either national or house brands, but are perfectly safe and nutritionally equivalent. The difference is that fruits and vegetables are Standard, rather than Fancy grade. They may not be uniform in size and color, or may contain an occasional stem or seed. No-label paper goods are generally lighter in weight, unperfumed and not as soft as the more expensive brands. Soap products are weaker. But, savings can be as high as 40% on certain items. Only about 1% of the savings are from lack of advertising and plain packaging. The biggest savings are due to quality difference. Try a few and decide for yourself.

WHAT COST CONVENIENCE?

Modern technology has provided us with many convenience products that can save us time, but consumers should consider the trade-offs. Many convenience foods cost more because the manufacturer has simply collected the ingredients for you and put them together in one box. By taking a few extra minutes of your time, you can eliminate the need for this service. In some cases, preparing foods from scratch can actually cost you more. For example, when food companies prepare vegetables in cream sauce, they may substitute less expensive additives and flavorings for

ingredients you would use yourself. As a result the processed product may cost you less. In general, however, you will save money on whatever you add or do yourself, and you usually get better quality. If you have the time and storage space for ingredients, consider the advantages.

COOPERATIVES

Food cooperatives (co-ops) and buying clubs offer lower food prices and better food quality. Co-ops differ greatly in size and method of operation, ranging from loosely organized buying clubs, using only volunteer labor, to complex operations with paid management and help. Buying clubs generally offer the greatest savings because of the use of volunteer labor and because they have low, or no, overhead. Members usually take turns purchasing from wholesalers and farmers. Buying clubs are relatively easy to start but require good organizers.

FARMERS' MARKETS AND ROADSIDE STANDS

Take advantage of farmers' markets or roadside stands for purchasing fresh fruits, vegetables, and other seasonal products, usually at lower prices. When you buy direct from farmers, you do not have to pay merchandizing, transportation and other marketing costs.

THRIFT STORES

Patronize thrift stores which carry specialty items or day-old items at reduced prices. Sometimes the merchandise is slightly damaged--labels may be ripped or smudged--but the savings can be substantial.

TAKE CARE AT HOME

The money you save through careful shopping can be lost if foods are not properly stored once they leave the food market. When finished shopping, hurry home with your food purchases and store them properly. Proper storage can help extend the period of time they will be good. Foods that need refrigeration should always be put away quickly. Store milk and dairy products in tightly covered containers and keep well-chilled. Vegetables should be kept unwrapped in the crisper drawer or in a plastic bag on the lower shelf. Meat should be kept in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Make sure

your refrigerator is cold enough to keep foods at their best. Most canned goods can be stored for a year. Exceptions are high acid foods such as tomatoes and pineapple, which should be used within six months for best quality.

RECYCLING IN THE KITCHEN

Leftover meat and vegetables can make excellent additions to homemade soups and stews. Try keeping containers in your freezer for leftovers, then you can use them at your convenience without fear of spoilage. Meat bones from roasts make excellent bases for soups and stews. Save and refrigerate all trimmings from vegetables and greens in plastic bags. This can be the basis for a great vegetable soup. If your favorite vegetables have gotten too expensive, buy less and combine with inexpensive vegetables. Don't throw celery leaves away. Save and use in salads and soups later on. Use the outer leaves of iceberg lettuce because they have more vitamins than the inner bleached leaves. Save juice from canned fruits to use in punch or gelatin salads. Save liquid from canned vegetables and add to soup stock.

HOME ON THE RANGE

One out of three meals eaten in our country is in a restaurant although those statistics are changing due to inflation and the cost of eating out. Restaurants are enjoyable, but eating at home or bringing your own food to an outing is substantially less expensive since food bought in restaurants is about 33% more expensive than the same amount bought at a supermarket. If you do go to a restaurant, try not to over-order. Some restaurants have begun to offer customers a choice of portion size. If small portions or half portions are not listed on the menu, ask the waitress if they will provide a half or small portion. And, don't be embarrassed to ask for a "people bag" so you can carry home the leftovers for a midnight snack or maybe another meal. Also, read your menu carefully. If it says fresh fish, and isn't, make your dissatisfaction known. At today's prices, you should get what you think you are paying for.

EATING TOO MUCH

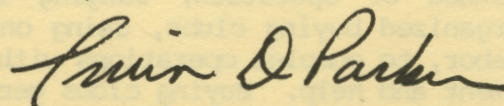
Forty years ago, the biggest dietary problems facing Americans were nutritional deficiencies and diseases like scurvy, beriberi, and

rickets because they didn't get enough of the right kind of nutrients. Today our biggest problem is over-consumption. We eat too much and we eat too much of the wrong kinds of food - those loaded with calories, fats, sugar, and salt. Six of the leading causes of death in our nation are directly related to our diets--heart disease, cancer, arterio-sclerosis, cirrhosis of the liver, cerebro-vascular disease, and diabetes. Cut down on total food consumption. When serving your family, put the food on the plate before putting it on the table. Give them generous portions but don't put the serving dishes on the table. Chances are they will be just as satisfied with one serving.

ADDENDA

Inflation is the number one domestic problem facing us as a nation and as individual consumers. It requires each of us to make extra efforts, just to stay even--just to keep us where we are. It would be extremely naive to think that inflation will be easy to beat or that it can be stopped by implementing one or two measures. Inflation will only be controlled by cooperation and equal sacrifices by all segments of our society: business, labor and consumers. In recent years, prices for the four basic necessities of life--food, housing, energy, and health care--have led the inflationary trend. These four items account for about seventy percent of the family budget for most Americans. The suggestions presented in these four pages concern what consumers can do to cope with inflation in one of these areas--food. They offer some new examples and suggestions as

well as some which may already be familiar to you, on how to assess your food spending priorities and stretch your food dollars. We do not pretend that these ideas will solve inflation. We do, however, hope that some of them will help you to minimize the impact of inflation on your lives. Which ones you use will depend on your personal situation and your needs and preferences. We plan to devote future issues of the newsletter to in-depth coverage of the areas of housing, energy and health care in the belief that the best inflation watchdog is an active, well-informed citizenry.



Irvin D. Parker
Administrator

S. C. Consumer Affairs Report

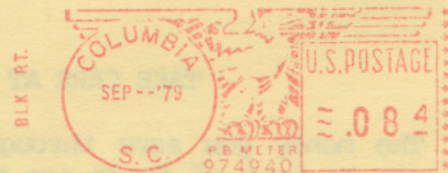
Volume 4, Number 5

September/October 1979

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S. C. Consumer Affairs Report is published bimonthly by the S. C. Department of Consumer Affairs.

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