

Mr. Cowles introduced the Vice President and he spoke for about 15 minutes and then there were questions and answers from the audience for approximately one hour. Since the Vice President had just returned from his European visit, the speech and the questions and answers centered around his trip. He did very well, and, I would say, the audience was friendly and receptive. All in all, it was a very relaxed, informal dinner - the audience appeared to enjoy themselves and the comments I heard when I walked around afterward were uniformly favorable.

Tex Cook To Ask.

Mr. Vice President:

Most of us in the food processing and food distribution business are advertisers. Some of us here are in the publications business, and to survive must sell space and publish advertising. We are all deeply concerned about mounting evidence that there are some forces in and out of the government that are in favor of finding methods either to curtail, or limit, or control advertising. We believe that advertising as an information media is essential to the consumer so they can make a free choice. Would you care to make a comment?

(Vice President answering)

I wasn't always Vice President, and I certainly wasn't always a politician. I started out in a drug store in South Dakota. To sell my products I had to tell folks about them, and I made it my business to tell the truth as I knew it. I'm sure that you try to do the same in your advertising. If you don't, you won't long survive.

It seems to me it would be idiocy for any administration in this country to try to prevent or limit the use of advertising as an honest device to help move products which are so essential to our dynamic economy. It would be dangerous as well as idiotic to try to prevent dissemination of information to the consumer, about brands, about products, and about their differences. I am sure you share with me concern about some few who use deceitful and fraudulent advertising. But that is not what we are talking about. We have laws on the books to take care of that. I assure you that I would resist any attempt

to control advertising. This moves entirely too close to interference with freedom of the press. I am sure I don't need to detail this one for you. A free press, independent of government dictation, is essential to a free government. Further, this idea doesn't square with the policy of this administration as enunciated by the late President Kennedy in March of 1962 in a message to Congress. At that time President Kennedy set out four inherent rights of the consumer. These are the right to safety, the right to be informed, the right to choose, and the right to be heard. Your question strikes at the very heart of two of these rights, namely the right to be informed and the right to choose. The consumer cannot make a proper choice unless they are informed -- it is your duty to inform them and to be honest in so doing. Two, it is their right to choose but it is your responsibility to give them a choice by giving them better products, by giving them the benefit of your ingenuity, your development, your imagination and your inventiveness.

Then where is the responsibility of the government? Gentlemen -- it is to be a referee, not a Mother Hubbard. To protect the consumer in their rights is the responsibility of government. You must bear your share of this responsibility. At the same time government must keep the heavy hand of unimaginative bureaucracy from overzealous regulation which can choke aborning the imagination, the ingenuity, the development of new product and new foods, which you must exercise if we are to feed a growing and more sophisticated population.

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Government control of advertising does not serve but rather robs the right of the consumer to be informed and to choose.

Does that answer your question?



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