

IMMEDIATELY  
May 15, 1968

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## OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

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REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY  
SWEARING-IN CEREMONY  
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON PRODUCT SAFETY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
MAY 15, 1968

Chairman Elkind, and Members of the President's National  
Commission on Product Safety:

I speak first the President's thanks . . .and the Nation's  
. . .for what you are undertaking to do for your country.

More and more our Government is turning to private citizens  
for the exercise of public responsibility.

This is in democracy's oldest tradition . . .developed to  
meet the facts of a vastly increased membership in the society and  
a significant enlargement in the role of private organizations.

The setting up of this Commission reflects our constructive  
response to another fact about the changing order of things:

We are significantly organized now in this country in our  
capacity as producers . . .but not in our capacity as consumers.

The results of this imbalance must be corrected.

The promise in setting up the Commission was that the  
Nation's good intentions about consumer protection be translated into  
effective action.

That promise is given its full validity now by the appoint-  
ment to the Commission of a chairman and a membership thoroughly  
committed to both the ideal and the working idea of consumer protection  
and human safety.

This action is clear notice that we mean business about  
holding producers accountable for product safety.

The old slogan was Let the Buyer Beware. We add now: Let  
the Maker be Careful.

This is another important step . . .away from a defensive posi-  
tion . . .and on to the offensive in consumer affairs.

This is one of a number of steps being taken now in this  
direction.

Automobile safety legislation has been passed.  
So has the Wholesome Meat Act.

At the President's instruction, his Special Assistant for  
Consumer Affairs, Betty Furness, has convened a Cabinet level task  
force to find ways to meet the problems of misleading product  
warranties and hopelessly inadequate appliance servicing.

The Department of Transportation is undertaking, at Congress' direction, an investigation of the practices relating to the obtaining of automobile insurance.

Congress has before it...in conference now between the two houses...the vitally significant Truth-in-Lending proposal. It is of utmost importance that this bill be passed.

There is much more to be done.

You on this Commission on Product Safety are charged with making a comprehensive analysis and investigation of present and potential household product hazards.

The Commission's job will be to identify those categories of products which bear an unreasonable risk for the consuming public.

It will analyze the effectiveness of voluntary standards and industry self-regulation, gauge the impact on manufacturing practices of court-imposed liability for product-caused injuries, and examine the effectiveness of existing systems of local, state, and federal safety regulation.

We will look forward with great anticipation to your report to the President and the Congress...with your recommendations for any remedial legislation you consider necessary.

It is important...and significant...that the establishment of this Product Safety Commission has the support of the industries which are to be subject to its attention.

There is full recognition of the common interest in seeing to it that the responsible practices which are so characteristic of American business enterprise in general are not cheapened or weakened by the negligence of a small minority.

America is proud of its abundance...of its ability to produce ever more material wealth.

But our larger interest is in quality--the quality of things...but much more in the quality of life itself.

So you will find...in your concern about product safety a relevance to the fundamental purpose that makes what we do most worthwhile: the purpose to protect the human experience and to make it meaningful.

Your work, Mr. Elkind and Members of the Commission, is freighted with our hopes.

We thank you...and wish you the greatest success.

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REMARKS

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SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

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↳ The setting up of this Commission reflects our constructive response to another fact about the changing order of things:

↳ We are significantly organized now in this country in our capacity as producers ... but not in our capacity as consumers.

↳ The results of this imbalance must be corrected.

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That promise is given its full validity now by the appointment to the Commission of a chairman and a membership thoroughly committed to both the ideal and the working idea of consumer protection and human safety.

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Your work, Mr. Elkind and Members of the Commission, is freighted with our hopes.

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VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY GREETES MEMBERS OF  
THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON PRODUCT SAFETY

The following is the text of remarks by Vice  
President Humphrey at the swearing-in ceremony  
of the Commissioners of the National Commission  
on Product Safety, Executive Office Building,  
Washington, D. C., May 15, 1968.

Our presence here this morning signals the growing maturation of this nation's commitment to meaningful consumer democracy.

For, in the passage of laws to rid the country of hazardous autos and tires, of flammable clothes, blankets and drapes, of poisonous and explosive household chemicals, and impure and unwholesome meat, we have done more these past few years to assure a secure marketplace for the American consumer than in all the previous half century.

But we have not stopped there.

Until now it has taken the shock of massive tragedy before Congress has been reused to forge new links in the brittle chain of national safety legislation -- from the revelations of rat-infested meat packing plants at the turn of the century, to the deformed infant victims of the drug thalidomide and the grim, escalating highway death toll of the sixties.

Now, in responding to the President's call for the creation of the National Commission on Product Safety, Congress has decreed that we need no longer wait on tragedy.

We have reached the point at which we will no longer insist that lives be wasted and bodies scarred in such numbers as to create a national scandal, before we root out and banish products which shock, burn, explode and maim.

Today we are the beneficiaries of space-age technology, which showers us with a profusion of new products to serve and delight us. Once routine household functions vanish before these new chemical, mechanical and electronic marvels. But a sobering byproduct of this technology has been the inexorable rise of new categories and dimensions of consumer injuries.

There are on the market today hundreds, if not thousands of products which pose a substantial threat to life or limb: radio and television sets which leak current in lethal doses; eye-glass frames which burst into flame; synthetic fibers which deposit millions of invisible splinters to irritate the skin; kitchen ranges, broilers, clothes dryers and portable heaters with dangerously exposed electric terminals; power mowers which hurl rocks at blazing speeds and power tools lacking elementary safety guards; blenders and mixers which spring to action without being turned on; food waste disposals which spew out foreign objects; exploding garden sprayers, travel irons without thermostats; even children's toys with sharp, exposed cutting edges and spikes.

51,000 Americans are killed; 50,000,000 are injured in non-vehicular accidents each year. 28,000 are killed; 20,000,000 injured in and around their homes. Hazardous heating and cooking equipment claims an estimated 375,000 injuries annually; home machinery, 125,000; shattering and splintering glass doors and panels, 40,000. Power mowers alone maim 100,000 Americans a year.

We have traditionally relied upon the fires of competition to drive out impurities in the free market. But we have learned to our sorrow that competition does not necessarily reward the safer car, the flame resistant blanket, the shockless appliance.

Yet the safe design and construction of the vast majority of the products sold to the American family today is dependent upon a frail patchwork of voluntary standards and self-regulation, common law product liability, and municipal, state and federal laws. And, all too commonly, such safeguards as there are remain vague, lacking in uniformity, without effective sanction, and unenforced.

To reweave this patchwork into a tough cloak of protective fabric, the National Commission on Product Safety will launch a comprehensive analysis and investigation of present and potential household product hazards. The Commission will seek out and identify these categories of products which bear an unreasonable

risk for the consuming public. The Commission will analyze the effectiveness of voluntary standards and industry self-regulation in eliminating product hazards. It will gauge the impact of court-imposed liability for product-caused injuries on manufacturing practices. And it will examine the effectiveness of existing schemes of local, state and Federal safety regulation. When it has concluded, the President and Congress will receive its report, including recommendations for such remedial legislation as it deems warranted.

Freedom from needless hazard is a passionate pursuit of modern American democracy. But we are equally outraged by the assaults of unethical and unjust practices upon the economic weal of the American consumer.

An unstinting and comprehensive Truth-in-Lending law -- one which will arrest the exploitation of the low income consumer, is no less crucial than a food and drug law. For the prevalence of predatory practices poisons the spirit of our people.

Equally, bold congressional mandates are needed to help us shed the unethical fringe which persists in the pursuit of home improvement and interstate land frauds, in high pressure door-to-door tactics, and the unconscionable excesses of mutual fund promotions.

Congress has responded to rising public resentment at the high costs and arbitrary practices which bedevil the consumer in search of adequate automobile insurance, by authorizing a root and branch investigation by the Department of Transportation of the automobile insurance industry. And the President has summoned his Special Assistant for Consumer Affairs, Betty Furness, to convene a cabinet level task force to help end growing public frustration with misleading product warranties and hopelessly inadequate product servicing.

Those of us who accept the premise that we must concern ourselves with the fate of the individual consumer cannot rest until these and related flaws in our great productive and distributive machinery have disappeared.

This is no task for a hostile Federal government, indifferent to the rights and needs of American Business. Nor need it be.

Let me remind you that the creation of the Product Safety Commission which we honor today found active and spirited support among the very industries which are to be subject to its scrutiny -- and many of them are represented here today.

This is as it should be, for the company which does not subordinate ethical responsibility to a quick profit has nothing to fear from reasoned government concern for the consumer.

We have a shared goal: that the currency of good and honorable practice which has characterized the American business enterprise not be debased by the flawed morality or negligence of a small minority.



I have a  
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Notes  
Vice President Hubert Humphrey  
Swearing-In Ceremony  
National Commission on Product Safety  
Washington, D. C.  
10 a. m.  
May 15, 1968

The opportunity to swear in Chairman Arnold

Elkind and the members of the President's National Commission

on Product Safety is more than a pleasure for me.

It is a sign of America's increasing maturity  
in the whole area of consumer protection.

In the old days, when the buyer usually knew the  
seller personally, the venerable injunction "Buyer Beware",  
plus competition in the market place, was enough to assure a  
certain amount of consumer protection.

Today the marketplace is large and impersonal.

And we have found that competition does not  
necessarily reward the safer car, the flame resistant blanket,

the shockless appliance.

Moreover, there are new hazards in the chemical, mechanical and electronic household marvels of our space age.---radio and television sets that may leak lethal doses of current... power mowers that can hurl rocks... / inflammable eye-glasses frames... blenders and mixers which spring into action without being turned on.

Most manufacturers act responsibly.

Most appliances are safe.

Most consumers still try to watch out for their own interests.

But the fact is that 51 thousand Americans are killed and 50 million are injured in non-vehicular accidents each year. Twenty-eight thousand are killed and 20 million injured in and around their homes.

Hazardous heating and cooking equipment

causes about 375 thousand injuries each year; home machinery...

125 thousand; shattering and splintering glass doors and panels...

40 thousand. Power mowers alone maim 100,000 Americans  
a year.

I am proud to say that within the last four

years, we have made significant progress in consumer protection.

With the help of Congress, we now have laws to rid the country  
of hazardous autos and tires, of flammable clothes, blankets and  
drapes, of poisonous and explosive household chemicals. We  
have an historic Wholesome Meat Act.

But safe design and construction of the vast  
majority of products sold to the American family today is still  
dependent upon a frail patchwork of voluntary standards and  
self-regulation, common law product liability, and municipal,

*The President is asking myself  
in assistant to the Attorney General  
Consumer Council - protect Dept.  
to ensure better protection - Dept of Commerce*



state, and federal laws. Too commonly, these safeguards remain vague...not uniform...without effective sanction...and unenforced.

But today, we take another step away from a defensive position...and onto the offensive in consumer affairs. Now, in responding to the President's call for the creation of the National Commission on Product Safety, Congress has decreed that we must anticipate tragedy...not wait for it.

The National Commission on Product Safety will launch a comprehensive analysis and investigation of present and potential household product hazards.

The commission's job will be to identify those categories of products which bear an unreasonable risk for the consuming public. It will analyze the effectiveness of voluntary standards and industry self-regulation, gauge the impact of

manufacturing practices of court-imposed liability for product-caused injuries, and examine the effectiveness of existing schemes of local, state, and federal safety regulation.

The Commission will send a report to the President and Congress with any remedial legislation it considers necessary.

At a time when our society is more concerned with individual human rights than ever before, it is probably natural that we are so deeply concerned with our rights as consumers, and there is still a good deal of unfinished business.

Congress has responded to rising public resentment at the high costs and arbitrary practices which bedevil the consumer in search of adequate automobile insurance, by authorizing a root and branch investigation by the Department of Transportation of the automobile insurance industry.

And the President has asked his Special Assistant,  
for Consumer Affairs, Betty Furness, to convene a cabinet  
level task force to combat misleading product warranties and  
hopelessly inadequate product servicing.

President Johnson's unstinting and comprehensive  
Truth-in-Lending Law---one which will arrest the exploitation  
of the low income consumer--is no less crucial than a food  
and drug law, for the prevalence of predatory practices  
poisons the spirit of our people. It must pass.

*Now in  
conference*



Bold congressional mandates are needed to help us shed the unethical fringe responsible for home improvement and interstate land frauds, high pressure door-to-door tactics, and the unconscionable excesses in mutual fund promotions.

Who benefits most from consumer legislation? Every American.

And let me remind you that the creation of the Product Safety Commission which we honor today found active and spirited support among the very industries which are to be subject to its scrutiny. Business recognizes that we have a shared goal: that the currency of good and honorable practices which has been so characteristic of American business enterprise must not be debased by the negligence of a small minority.

America is proud of its abundance. of many

We are confident of our ability to produce ever more material wealth.

The issue now is our ability to achieve quality in our lives as well as quantity.

Quality of life is the issue before this commission--  
and it is one of the great issues before the American people--  
our 200 million consumers--in 1968.

Mr. Elkind and commissioner members, I wish you the  
greatest success.

*Individuals*



Quality of life is the issue before this commission--

and it is one of the great issues before the American people--

our 200 million communit--in 1963.

Mr. Ekins and congressional members, I wish you the

pleasant evening.

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cases, ~~per~~ ~~cases~~.



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