

## ‘Enlightened Buying’

### FROM CONSUMER SERVICE TO THE CONSUMERS’ INSTITUTE, 1959–1964



THE NEW ZEALAND SUBURBAN FAMILY LIFESTYLE of the 1950s and early 1960s has become synonymous in the popular imagination with conspicuous consumption: cars, household electrical goods, holiday homes, boats, labour-saving equipment and sporting goods.<sup>1</sup> Hire-purchase consumer debt more than trebled in the years from 1956 to 1965 as more ‘big ticket’ items became available and credit controls were loosened.<sup>2</sup> Day-to-day shopping was changing too. During the so-called ‘golden weather’ of the prosperous post-war years, New Zealand consumers were, according to informed opinion, increasingly buying packaged, branded goods off the shelf, diminishing the personal contact between shoppers and grocers.<sup>3</sup> Large American-style supermarkets designed for the mobile consumer also arrived in the late 1950s, with the first ‘Foodtown’ store opening for business in the Auckland suburb of Otahuhu in mid-1958 and, early the following year, Pakuranga businessman and local body politician Lloyd Elsmore opened the ‘Ezy-Park’ IGA supermarket on an 11-acre green-field site. Downtown department stores planned to relocate to the new suburban shopping centres.<sup>4</sup> As other historians have noted, the popular *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly* household management advice column changed its title during the 1950s from ‘Economy Hints’ to ‘Surer Shopping’, reflecting a shift in outlook from domestic thriftiness to purchased affluence.<sup>5</sup>

While austerity was giving way to a prosperous consumer society during the 1950s, the local business press was heralding United States marketing innovations such as market research, consumer surveys, advertising campaign planning, new forms of product packaging and the possibilities that television advertising presented.<sup>6</sup> There was great interest in the new American-derived formulation of the consumer within the ‘marketing concept’.<sup>7</sup> This new thinking was more than a reworking of the old adage that the ‘customer was always right’. As S.K. Bennett succinctly put it to readers of *New Zealand Manufacturer* in early 1959: ‘The marketing concept begins and ends with the customer.’ The future of marketing, Bennett added, depended on businesses fully understanding ‘consumer needs, motives and habits’ to ‘determine what products to make, how to design and package them, where, when and by what means to distribute them’.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, the New Zealand consumer was often portrayed as the innocent abroad, dazzled by the enticements of modern marketing campaigns. W.J. Young, merchandizing manager for the Four Square grocery chain, described 1961’s ‘Mrs Consumer’ as ‘receptive to suggestions that will improve her reputation as a hostess. She is, therefore, a willing subject for the persuasive influence of a display that offers new recipes, out-of-the-ordinary dishes with

everyday ingredients, menus for parties, barbeques, and afternoon teas.' Young's modern housewife was someone who was not a sensible shopper: 'The lady of the house has many attributes, but a good memory and a reliable recording system for shopping needs, are not amongst them. She needs reminding, and the store that takes the trouble to fill in the forgotten items with reminders is one that will get the extra business.'<sup>9</sup>

The business fraternity in the late 1950s was lauding the modern consumer as the focal point of business enterprise. In Labour Party ranks, however, there was apprehension about the consequences of unbridled prosperity. Although Labour wanted to deliver material well-being to the people (nicely captured at the time by Bill Oliver's notion of the country's collective desire for 'a modest affluence for all'<sup>10</sup>), there were fears that consumer sovereignty led to crass materialism and selfishness. Prime Minister Walter Nash enunciated this long-standing unease with conspicuous consumption when he addressed the Industrial Development Conference in June 1960: 'I hope that this Conference will not conclude that when the way has been opened for more houses and carpets, more cars and television sets, the work has been done. A standard of living based on these things can be a low one. It can be accompanied by a social disposition of surfeit and boredom; a feeling that all has been achieved and that satisfactions lie in competitive consumption and a quest for shallow stimulants.'<sup>11</sup> Prosperity did not solve society's problems; rather it created new ones.<sup>12</sup>

It was at this historical juncture, when memories of scarcity experienced during the 1930s and 1940s were receding, that New Zealand established its first dedicated national organization for consumers. This article chronicles the first five years of the Consumer Service, from its inception as a Labour government-initiated 'quango' in July 1959 until it was re-launched in 1964 under the name that survives to this day, the Consumers' Institute.<sup>13</sup> Run by a Consumer Council of government-appointed nominees and staffed by civil servants within the Department of Industries and Commerce, the Consumer Service fulfilled aspirations dating back to at least 1925 for an organization charged with looking after the welfare of the country's consumers.<sup>14</sup> With a mandate to protect what was known at the time as 'the consumer interest', the Consumer Service provided a rallying point for citizens concerned with the plight of New Zealand's long-ignored consumers.<sup>15</sup> But this new consumer entity, which was intended to challenge conspicuous consumption (via a network of grassroots consumer associations), rapidly emerged in the early 1960s as a successful, centralized organization extolling the virtues of enlightened buying through the pages of its subscription-only journal *Consumer*.<sup>16</sup> The Consumer Service alerted shoppers to the sounds of the advertiser's sizzle but it did not lessen New Zealand consumers' appetite for the steak.<sup>17</sup>

Consumer advocacy organizations were established in many Western democracies in the 1950s, following the lead taken by the American pioneers (Consumers' Union and Consumers' Research) in the inter-war years. Some were voluntary associations, while others, like the New Zealand Consumer Service, were partly state-funded.<sup>18</sup> These consumer groups were a symptom of consumer society and — for some optimists — a cure for its latent excesses.

Shoppers had more consumer goods available to them on the grocery shelves and on display in the windows of electrical stores. So, on the one hand, conditions were improving for consumers, while on the other, there were concerns that rising levels of affluence and more sophisticated forms of marketing were making consumers less discerning in their purchasing decisions.<sup>19</sup> Reformed or enlightened consumers could improve their personal buying habits while at the same time policing the marketplace for the greater good.<sup>20</sup> An informed consumer could better withstand the siren calls of the advertisers and marketing men. Within the local context, there was also the hope that objective product testing of New Zealand-made goods would place domestic producers under scrutiny and reduce the attractiveness of imported goods, thus alleviating the country's periodic balance of payment crises.<sup>21</sup> Consumers were given the unenviable task of keeping the 'fortress' New Zealand economy afloat.<sup>22</sup>

Thus the Consumer Service was established when New Zealand was becoming more affluent but was still influenced by a critique — articulated by Nash — that questioned prosperity as an end in itself. The caricature of Mrs Consumer, the well-to-do housewife with more money than sense, was a symbol of the sort of consumer who required educating. But who exactly was the Consumer Service going to speak for and what was it going to speak about? Housewives' groups were worried about the cost of living, while other consumer advocates were more interested in the quality of locally manufactured products and structural economic problems, such as the frequently alleged practice of price fixing. These questions were debated internally as the Consumer Service was constituted and subsequently launched in mid-1959. From these initial forays, it then carved out its own work programme in the pursuit of the consumer interest, developing as it did relationships with trade and business associations, building up from scratch a membership base of subscribers to its publication *Consumer*, and establishing local voluntary consumer associations affiliated to the national Consumer Service.

George Wood, the retired former government statistician who enthusiastically took up the mantle as the service's first chairman, oversaw all of these developments. In 1961, reflecting on the first two years of the service's work, he noted in a confidential report to the Consumer Council that, in his opinion, the cautious approach to furthering the consumer interest was yielding results: the membership numbers exceeded expectations, and manufacturers and retailers were paying attention to the findings published in *Consumer* magazine. Nonetheless, Wood was conscious that for some consumer activists the Consumer Service had 'gone over to the enemy' and was not militant enough. Wood urged the council to stick to its moderate stance: 'It would be quite easy for us, and involve less work, if we suddenly appeared as ardent advocates of the consumer cause, mouthed the appropriate generalities, and got popular with some of the dissenting folk'.<sup>23</sup> According to Wood, the credibility of the Consumer Service depended on careful and considered examination of every consumer problem that was brought to its attention.

Wood's perceptive analysis reveals that tensions existed within the Consumer Service even at this early stage. The new body needed to be popular to sustain itself but there were dangers for the service if it became a vehicle for

populist consumer resentment. In fact, the ambiguity about the organization's role was inherent from its inception; the Consumer Service, according to its key architects, Bill Sutch and Philip Holloway, was to be both a centralized lobby group based in Wellington and a decentralized grassroots organization for and of consumers.

Bill Sutch's appointment as head of the Department of Industries and Commerce in mid-1958 was crucial in the formation of the Consumer Service. In his first annual report to Parliament he explained the need for a Consumer Service. According to Sutch, despite the efforts made by the Standards Council during the 1940s to develop quality standards that allowed for 'intelligent comparison of prices' for some consumer items, such as furniture, footwear and meat grades, not much progress had been made in recent years to develop facilities for consumers. Moreover, representations to the new government from 'women's organisations and other groups representing consumers' interests' had made it clear that the time was right to establish 'an organisation of their own in which to discuss their problems and equip themselves to buy more effectively'.<sup>24</sup>

Sutch's departmental officials had studied the consumer organizations set up in North America, Britain and Scandinavia. While countries with large populations, such as the United States and Britain, were able to sustain private consumer organizations, the Scandinavian bodies received government support. Sutch thought the Nordic model should be adopted in New Zealand. The new consumer organization's National Council would have administrative and financial support but would 'consist of citizens chosen for their personal qualities and their ability to speak for consumers generally'. The council itself would determine its own work programme, but initial research by the department indicated that the key areas were 'prices, shortages, quality, standards, safety, health, labelling, advertising, services, and contractual relationships between buyers and sellers'.<sup>25</sup> The final paragraph of Sutch's summary of the planned organization's brief is worth quoting in its entirety as it sums up the idealistic mixture of individual and collective consumer aspirations: 'A consumer service programme could equip the ordinary buyer to judge goods and services in a way that will enable him to exercise a substantial measure of discrimination and thus improve his living standards by getting the fullest value for his expenditure. From the wider point of view, enlightened buying by consumers will make for more competitive distribution and the production of goods and services in New Zealand based on consumers' needs.'<sup>26</sup>

Philip Holloway, Minister of Industries and Commerce, presented Cabinet with the shape and form of the planned consumer organization in April 1959. The aim of the Consumer Service was 'to eliminate or reduce handicaps or disadvantages suffered by consumers' and to suggest remedies based on 'investigations and deliberations'. There was to be a 'popular, district under-structure feeding a national body'.<sup>27</sup> By May 1959, the search for the right citizens to represent consumers was well underway. Although drawn from existing organizations, the nominated citizens were to represent consumers not their regular institutional affiliations. Sutch drew up his list of nominees for the national Consumer Council, recommending George Wood as chairman.

The other eight nominees were the Federation of Labour's secretary, a senior Department of Health civil servant, the president of the Auckland branch of the National Council of Women, the former director of the Standards' Institute and its current women's representative, a lecturer from Otago University's School of Home Science, the public relations officer from the New Zealand Manufacturers' Federation and a 'housewife, author and mother of seven children'. The nominated district committee members for the four main centres were variously described to Holloway as 'level headed and public spirited', 'highly respected', 'energetic, just and efficient', 'a consistent advocate of progressive measures', 'an astute housewife with a life-time interest in quality, price and better buying', 'a housewife with a keen sense of values', 'sound judgement and possessing practical commonsense', 'quiet, level-headed and sound in her judgement', and 'an intelligent and capable housewife'.<sup>28</sup> The nominees were mostly drawn from the public service, trade unions and the education sector, along with various women's organizations.

The National Consumer Council met for the first time on Thursday, 30 July 1959. The press was invited to hear Holloway's opening address. Consumers now had a voice that, he hoped, would be heard by traders, manufacturers and the government too. Consumers themselves needed to be more discriminating in their purchasing habits, although he acknowledged that 'it was difficult for even the most intelligent shopper to determine whether the goods he bought were of the quality they were claimed to be'. And with this he and the press left and the council got down to business.<sup>29</sup>

The first meeting of the governing body revealed the possible alternative avenues that the new organization could go down in protecting the consumer interest; New Zealand consumers themselves were not backward in coming forward with suggestions. All told, 50 letters from the public had reached the Consumer Service before it was officially open. Executive officer D.N. Hull told members that the most frequent topics raised in correspondence were: the need for a published consumer bulletin; complaints about unsatisfactory clothing and footwear sizes; poor product quality in a range of household goods including clothing, coffee, fruit, sausages, cocoa, tobacco and electric stoves; the desirability of informative labelling and sensible packaging; concerns about high prices for meat, aspirin, second-hand cars, medicines, shoe repairs, soap, biscuits, electricity, frozen foods, corn flour, breakfast cereals and kerosene; the need for accurate consumer information about insurance policies; and concerns about 'quack' slimming cures and hair restorers.<sup>30</sup> Local women's groups called for investigations of funeral charges and the quality of pre-packaged fruit. The secretary of the Whangarei and District Housewives' Association wrote that it 'seemed very wrong' that in a fruit-growing country the price of fresh fruit was too expensive for the 'average housewife'.<sup>31</sup> Faced with this plethora of helpful suggestions, the governing Consumer Council agreed in early September 1959 that the Consumer Service's primary task was to deal with general concerns with a legitimate consumer aspect rather than get itself embroiled in specific complaints or parochial issues; these were best left to the planned district and local consumer associations.<sup>32</sup>

On 23 September 1959, the Prime Minister launched the Consumer Service

at Parliament; New Zealand now joined the ranks of other Western nations in having its own consumer advocacy organization. Walter Nash not only gave the new body his government's blessing, but also promised ongoing financial and administrative support. Although located within the Department of Industries and Commerce, the Consumer Service would be at arm's length from the government and be 'run for consumers by consumers'.<sup>33</sup>

Nash's opening address to the 130 invited delegates at Parliament succinctly presented the rationale for not only the New Zealand Consumer Service, but the worldwide movement too. Modern consumers were facing the perils of prosperity thanks to the increasing variety of goods and services on offer. This was making it harder for the average citizen to determine which products were of the best quality or value for money. The Consumer Service was on hand to provide sound advice for New Zealand shoppers who lacked either the time or experience to make wise purchasing decisions. Not only would the Consumer Service benefit individuals, it would provide a collective voice for New Zealand consumers. This consumer 'opinion' would encourage New Zealand businesses to improve the quality, distribution and marketing of their products. The government's aim was to make New Zealand consumers more discerning and selective in their buying habits, which in turn would benefit the business community.

Holloway followed Nash on the podium. His speech claimed that the Consumer Service would provide a more effective stabilizing effect on prices than regulations or controls, which should only be used as a last resort.<sup>34</sup> Holloway also told delegates that the new organization would be independent of his department and he expected it to work from its own initiative. He also reminded its government-appointed council members that it 'should not lose sight of its purpose, which was to aid consumers, not to build an organization for its own sake'.<sup>35</sup>

After the official opening speeches from Nash and Holloway, the invited conference delegates got down to work. Representatives had come from a wide section of New Zealand society, with the notable (and deliberate) exception of the business community. Housewives' and women's groups had a clear sense of what they expected from the new body. Mrs Betty Holt, president of the Auckland Branch of the National Council of Women and a member of the Consumer Council, told the gathering that her organization, the largest of its kind in New Zealand, had long petitioned manufacturers and trading interests concerning prices, supplies of goods and retail practices. Her group had received little satisfaction to date and she knew of similar experiences from her colleagues across the country. Mrs May Furey, of the Canterbury Housewives' Union, wanted the Consumer Service to focus exclusively on the 'problems of the housewife on modest means'. Furey expressed doubts about the composition of the governing council to achieve this goal as they — with one exception, Mrs Holt — did not understand the housewife's point of view.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the conference, in her view, was 'too technical: theoretical and not practical'.<sup>37</sup> Mrs Pearl Baker of the New Zealand Federation of Housewives argued that controlling prices should be a 'main consideration' of the service. In addition, she also claimed that housewives wanted a greater choice of goods

in the shops. Mrs T.J. Cotter, speaking on behalf of the Dominion Federation of Country Women's Institutes, reminded delegates that country women faced more consumer hardships than urban housewives.<sup>38</sup>

Emily Carpenter, from the School of Education at Otago University (and a future chair of the Consumer Council), called for more consumer education so that the housewife could help herself, not only in terms of buying, but also in using household goods effectively. These comments, however, prompted a sharp rebuke from Mrs Furey, 'who took exception to the suggestion that the experienced housewife, whom she regarded as a specialist, needed education in home economics'. Dr Helen Thompson from Otago University's School of Home Science reminded delegates that the school had been active for many years in helping New Zealand housewives with the 'problems of household management'.<sup>39</sup> A fault line between the battle-weary front-line shoppers and domestic science experts was exposed in these exchanges.<sup>40</sup>

Trade union interests were well represented along with the educators and housewives. Ken Baxter of the powerful Federation of Labour, with 234,000 members, fully supported the establishment of the Consumer Service. Baxter acknowledged that many of his members 'did not realise the need for discriminatory buying, and this was sometimes unfortunately true of those who could least afford to be indiscriminate in their buying'. J. Herhily from the Federated Cooks and Stewards' Union did not endear himself to the housewives' representatives when he insisted that women needed education on careful buying. Herhily told the conference: 'Nobody knew better than his members that often she [the housewife] was not buying what she thought'.<sup>41</sup> Mr D. Long from the Public Services' Association urged the Consumer Service not only to test consumer items but also to keep consumers informed about their legal rights. He demonstrated his members' support for the new organization by handing over a donation of £100.

The final comments at the Consumer Service opening function came from Sutch. His address focussed on the practical issue of actually financing the new consumer organization. If the body was to publish a regular magazine for its members, it would need to recruit at least 25,000 subscribers to make it viable, a figure he thought would take a very great effort considering the percentage of Americans and Britons who had joined their respective consumer organizations. With a membership fee fixed at only 10s, the New Zealand Consumer Service would have to supplement its income not only from the public purse but, more importantly, from local associations and donations from well wishers. The message was clear: government support was mostly in kind. The Consumer Service would have to stand on its own two feet by recruiting paying members, either through local associations or centrally through subscriptions to the planned consumer journal.<sup>42</sup>

There was a clear division between the 'bread and butter' cost-of-living problems facing housewives and the more technical, legal and educational 'consumer interest' issues. On the one hand, there was a desire for the Consumer Service to focus on informing the buying public so that they could make rational purchasing decisions, but on the other hand, there was the reality that a letter from the secretary of the Hastings Housewives' Union would land

on the service's desk requesting that something be done about the prohibitive price of fish.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, despite the clear differences in expectations and motivations, there was a general consensus that the new organization was a good thing and was being set up at the right time.

Chairman Wood had made a policy decision before the launch that representatives of manufacturing and trading organizations would not be invited to the official opening. Wood promised the executive of the Consumer Council that these bodies 'could be fully brought into the picture through addresses made by members of the Council or the staff'.<sup>44</sup> So when Nash gave the New Zealand government's blessing to its new offspring, there was a representative at Parliament from the Communist Party but no one from the business community. Opposition National MPs claimed that if the new organization worked 'for the consumer and against industry it will not get very far', although it was acknowledged that its chairman was a 'first-class man' and this eventuality was unlikely to occur under his stewardship.<sup>45</sup>

Wood, true to his word, entered the lion's den in late 1959 when he addressed the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce. He acknowledged that members of his audience probably saw themselves as 'rugged individualists' and were sceptical of a government-sponsored consumer organization. But Wood pointed to successful, state-funded consumer organizations operating in Sweden, Norway and Denmark that drew popular support from a wide cross-section of their communities, in contrast to the more elitist American and British consumer associations; there could be a harmony of interests between ordinary consumers, the government and business community. He did his best to put their minds at ease: 'You may well ask why have a consumers' organisation in New Zealand? Wasn't this country described very recently by a visiting *New York Times* journalist as a Utopia — a bit myopic perhaps — a bit static — more than a little unenterprising compared with its continental neighbour Australia? Surely in this peaceful environment the Consumer needs no more protection than that provided by a paternalistic Government?' Wood went on to give the Chamber of Commerce five good reasons for its existence: the need for impartial consumer information as a counterbalance to commercial advertising; the complexity of modern consumer household goods; the perils of hire-purchase agreements; out-dated consumer protection legislation; and New Zealand's propensity to form societies and clubs to promote special interests. All the current government had done was to 'make the first move' in setting up the service, an idea that both major political parties had supported in the past and which many groups had wanted. Consumer groups were not a threat to business, rather they were a means of bringing together those with a vested interest in promoting the 'possibilities of a marriage between vigorous salesmanship and large-scale production' as a 'great driving force' of economic progress.<sup>46</sup>

The business press initially reported favourably on the Consumer Service. *New Zealand Manufacturer* printed a speech by Allen R. Dellow, secretary of the Manufacturers' Federation, in which he cautiously welcomed the new organization. Dellow stated that his organization would co-operate with the new body as it had done in the past with other consumer-oriented organizations.

He was somewhat apprehensive that the Consumer Service was government-financed and that the initial impression was that the organization would focus on the 'negative side' of consumer affairs. Dellow expected the Consumer Service to be 'constructive in its approach and will give credit where credit is due by commending to consumers instances of good quality and good service'.<sup>47</sup> R.J. Harrison, writing in *Management* magazine, believed that the new organization would protect New Zealand manufacturers as well as consumers. Harrison claimed there was little for the business community to fear from the Consumer Service and that the government's initiative in establishing the body was 'something which most people welcome wholeheartedly'. The need for such a body was 'surely one about which there can be very little disagreement'. There was a pragmatic side to Harrison's argument; comparative testing of New Zealand manufactured goods would most likely indicate that they were as good as, or even superior to, more expensive imported goods. New Zealand consumers, in Harrison's opinion, aided by the impartial advice of *Consumer* magazine, would gradually lose their 'reverence' for imported goods sold at inflated prices.<sup>48</sup>

These cordial relations did not last long. The first issue of *Consumer*, published in late 1959, alleged that many New Zealand businesses, notably hairdressers and grocers, were engaged in collusive price-fixing agreements to the detriment of consumers who were being routinely over-charged.<sup>49</sup> In early 1960, Philip Holloway received written complaints from both the Manufacturers' Federation and Master Grocers' Federation about the Consumer Service's claim that New Zealand was 'riddled' with price fixing. The Consumer Council's executive committee was informed that the minister had replied to the effect that he would not interfere with the work of the organization and that it was not his responsibility to censor what was published in *Consumer*.<sup>50</sup> Later that year Holloway addressed the Consumer Council for the last time. He told the meeting that 'many people and sections had attempted and wanted him to interfere with the policy of Consumer Service. To all these people he had said that the Government wanted independence of the Service and he therefore refused to interfere in any way.'<sup>51</sup> In this respect, the Consumer Service made it clear that one of its central tasks was to raise controversial issues on behalf of consumers and had received political backing when it mattered.

The focus on collusive pricing in the first editorial of *Consumer* was not an accident. Sutch had previously suggested that price manipulation, rather than price movements, was of particular concern to the Labour government; he cited hairdressing, grocery items and phonographic records as examples of what his department saw as the most obvious examples of price fixing.<sup>52</sup> Ken Baxter supported Sutch's comments while reminding the meeting that many of his union members were more focussed on visible government price controls rather than unseen industry 'agreements'.<sup>53</sup>

The new Consumer Service's first foray on the consumer's behalf was a submission to the Trade Practices and Prices Commission in early November 1959. The service's statement, drafted by Wood, stated that price levels were a 'focal issue in the exercise of its stewardship of consumer interests' and that 'collusive price fixing arrangements' by trade groups or associations

were adversely affecting prices to the detriment of consumers. Wood also put forward the view that if there had to be a 'trade off' between increasing service standards and convenience with a resulting increase in prices, the consumer interest was best served by keeping prices down.<sup>54</sup>

Paradoxically, at the next Consumer Council meeting, Wood argued that although prices were 'rightly' an important element of the service's work, he was concerned that the public might be forming the impression that it was 'preoccupied with prices to the exclusion of quality and other consumer problems'.<sup>55</sup> Members of the council agreed with the observation from council member G.H. Sumpter, the Manufacturers' Federation 'representative', that the public was beginning to view the organization as another government agency and 'for that reason it should concentrate on projects more closely concerned with the quality of goods and services'.<sup>56</sup>

From the outset the service was grappling with the complexities of serving the consumer interest. With no past history to work from, the service relied on the guidance of Wood and Sutch to set the initial agenda for the new organization, with pricing — rather than prices — being its first venture. But as Wood and his colleagues realized, the Consumer Service had many other fish to fry. By the end of 1959 the governing council had agreed to Wood's initial 'shopping list' of activities. He proposed six areas of consumer activity: hire-purchase charges and instalment selling; deceptive advertisements; dating of perishables; effect on prices of wage rises; household services and repairs; and legal aid.<sup>57</sup>

While these consumer priorities were being agreed to there was the urgent need to decide what copy was going to go into the flagship magazine for the service, *The Consumer*, planned for publication in December 1959. There was an expectation from the public that a publication of some sort would and should be produced. The executive committee decided that the magazine should be the same size as the British consumer journal *Which?* that had commenced publication in 1957, and printing quotes were evaluated.<sup>58</sup> There were also discussions as to whether or not *The Consumer* should be sold at news stands to recover the costs or made available only to members. With only a few paid-up members to the service, it was decided that the first issue would be circulated widely, for free, as an 'advertising issue' to stimulate membership. Prior to publication Sutch suggested that the title be changed from *The Consumer* to simply *Consumer*.<sup>59</sup>

The format, distribution plan and promotion of *Consumer* were readily agreed to, but there was uncertainty as to what the content should be. Comparative tests of consumer goods were the staple ingredient of overseas consumer magazines and the Consumer Service had made it clear from the outset that this would be one of its basic functions, especially for the benefit of subscribing members. This is where they would get value for money for their 10s. yearly subscription. The Wellington Housewives' Association was already giving its own 'seal of approval' to a range of footwear even though it did not employ 'scientific' testing methods.<sup>60</sup> The Dunedin District Consumer Committee was worried that these rival product tests could 'undermine the work of Consumer Service'.<sup>61</sup> *Consumer* needed to become the authoritative consumers' guide to product quality and value for money.

But there were two basic questions the new service had to deal with before publication: what goods or services to test and how to test them? There were practical constraints too. The Consumer Service did not have the financial resources to purchase, nor the testing facilities to adequately assess and evaluate, expensive and sophisticated consumer durables. The third full council meeting in October 1959 discussed these testing issues as the deadline for the first issue of *Consumer* loomed. Should the magazine follow the American *Consumer Reports*' model and have a 'best buy' recommendation? Wood argued that there was a danger of making judgements that were too decisive. A critical report could leave the organization open to libel action. Also, different consumers had different needs; the 'best' model might be prohibitively expensive, thus there needed to be a 'value for money' consideration too.<sup>62</sup> Slowly but surely the Consumer Service's testing committee developed its own procedures and practices. Strict guidelines were drawn up to ensure scientific sampling techniques were adopted, allowing for the possibility of rogue samples being purchased.<sup>63</sup>

The 'how to test' question was settled through a process of trial and error. The question of what to test was harder to resolve. Individual council members had their own sense of what was in the public's best interests. For instance, in September 1959 there was a disagreement between Wood and council member Duncan McColl over the merits of testing radios. McColl believed that transistor radios were 'not fundamental to consumer needs'. Wood disagreed. He thought that they were now widely sold to people of modest means and, further, sets retailing for £30 cost only £6 to make.<sup>64</sup> Wood got his way.

The first comparative tests *Consumer* published in late 1959 incurred budget costs of 6s.6d. to purchase aspirin samples and £1 10s.7d. for cans of fruit, befitting a new organization with no independent income to call its own.<sup>65</sup> *Consumer* completed further tests during 1960 on babies' nappies, radios, wall can-openers and, the most successful and expensive survey to date, bed sheets. Surveys were also completed on the accuracy of parking meters and the reliability of postage stamp vending machines. The second year of testing featured a more ambitious and varied range of goods: baby wool, electric frying pans, motor mowers, steam irons, sunglasses, tanning lotions, toothpaste and vacuum cleaners. Expenditure for testing was increased and the financial accounts proved that testing apparently simple items could be more expensive than electrical goods; the extensive bed sheet survey cost £281 19s.1d. to complete compared with £177 7s.7d. for the vacuum cleaner tests.<sup>66</sup>

Growing membership allowed for these more extensive tests. In March 1960 Consumer Service membership stood at 3203 and was increasing at a rate of 600 new members per month. Membership passed the 10,000 mark by August 1960, much of the increase attributed to the review of bedding in the winter issue of *Consumer*.<sup>67</sup> The accumulating war chest from members' subscriptions, although inadequate to finance all the service's activities, was giving it more purchasing and testing power. Holloway directly encouraged the executive to reinvest the membership income towards producing *Consumer* and the testing programme.<sup>68</sup> Some council members still felt that too much emphasis was being placed on testing electrical goods at the expense of basic items. For instance, council member Mrs P. Jenkins felt the test programme should

focus more on items such as men's shirts and garden seeds. In response, Mr Monaghan, the council's executive officer, suspected members wanted tests on major items where they could ensure that they were getting the best value for money. Wood supported Monaghan, claiming that tests in *Consumer* needed to be for items of 'some consequence' to give the organization credibility with its members.<sup>69</sup>

The question of what to test was, therefore, put before the members in an extensive reader survey in 1961. Over 1600 *Consumer* subscribers completed the questionnaire, yielding over 5000 test suggestions. The results revealed that Consumer Service members were primarily concerned with 'personal cleanliness, personal titivation, and home cleaning to an inordinate degree', as over one-fifth of suggestions were for *Consumer* tests of cleaning materials. The author of the questionnaire report informed council members that 'if we are to please our clients, we cannot afford to ignore the body beautiful and the home beautiful'. The second most requested category for tests was for electrical goods, with strong demand for reviews of washing machines, electric shavers, refrigerators, electric toasters, electric heaters, electric floor polishers and clothes dryers. *Consumer* readers also wanted tests on shoes, house paints and items related to motoring (tyres and petrol), although only a few were rash enough to suggest testing motorcars. Consumer Service members were also after a good night's sleep: 'In the furniture and furnishings group it was surprising to note the intense interest shown in testing mattresses, for which 92 requests were received'. There was not a great deal of interest shown from members in testing food, drink or tobacco products with the exception of tea, and only one request was received for a test on ground coffee 'despite the very great increase in coffee drinking which has taken place in recent years'.<sup>70</sup>

Clearly, the focus of *Consumer* readers' interests as gleaned from the survey was the home, especially for goods that were for 'everyday' rather than luxury consumption where there were confusing and conflicting advertising claims.<sup>71</sup> In late 1961 Wood could rightly claim in his review of the first two years of *Consumer* that the selection of test reports between consumer durables and commonplace items was 'well balanced' after the initial 'growing pains'. In its first year, the organization had, by its own admission, 'followed a number of false trails', but by 1961 it had a clearer sense of what it was about. George Wood told council members in October 1961 that New Zealand's small population, 'equalitarianism' and isolation offered certain benefits for product testing. For a start, import restrictions meant that the choice of consumer durable items available to test was manageable (in theory). The 'large village' atmosphere pervading New Zealand society meant that the 'ripples' created by the Consumer Service were hard for the business community to ignore as they could in a much bigger country like the United States. New Zealand was a 'small pond', to continue George Wood's metaphor. This smallness meant that retailers and local manufacturers had to take heed of the service's findings. Some business people might not like the Consumer Service but they could not afford to be left in the dark. Wood also noted that the service should not lose sight of the need to appeal to 'the ordinary folk who comprise the bulk of our subscribers' when deciding what to test in the magazine.<sup>72</sup>

Wood's belief that the Consumer Service was finding its feet was confirmed by its rapid membership growth in the early 1960s. Sutch's seemingly optimistic target of 25,000 members was reached within two years. By the end of 1963 the service's membership stood at 43,000.<sup>73</sup> This was a significant achievement, especially considering that the New Zealand organization had to both recruit new members and retain existing ones each year; it was 'losing' about one-fifth of its members each year, subscribers who failed to renew. Nonetheless, this rate of attrition compared well with consumer organizations overseas.<sup>74</sup>

The Consumer Service effectively marketed itself to the public in the early 1960s.<sup>75</sup> As a result, it was assumed by Wood that most *Consumer* readers did not necessarily belong to the 'intelligentsia' or 'upper middle' income groups that dominated the American and British consumer organizations.<sup>76</sup> But many of the growing number of new subscribers were likely to be 'one timers' who joined on impulse and 'to whom', in Wood's view, 'a serious publication like "Consumer" has no permanent appeal'. This put the service in a difficult position. Did it invest time and energy at a local level to maintain enthusiasm for the service and counteract the natural tendency for interest in its activities to wane as its novelty value wore off, or should it focus its recruitment efforts on would-be members, such as school teachers or engineers, who were more likely to be 'stickers' than factory workers?<sup>77</sup>

Nonetheless, it quickly became apparent that membership of the New Zealand consumer body was far higher, in relation to its population, than its British and American counterparts. The liaison officer, Jim Davidson, was credited with signing up hundreds of new members as he travelled around the country speaking to groups of workers, trade associations, union meetings, church groups, parent-teacher associations, Rotary and Lions' clubs, women's and housewives' organizations and students. The Consumer Service was also fortunate that from April 1960 it had its own radio broadcasts every Tuesday morning, provided by the New Zealand Broadcasting Service, to raise its profile.<sup>78</sup> This was, in effect, free advertising for the new organization. Finally, *Consumer* magazine was, as it was envisaged from the very first issue, an excellent way of recruiting new members. For example, a Christmas gift-subscription promotion to existing readers in late 1963 generated over 1600 new *Consumer* subscribers.<sup>79</sup>

In early 1964, with the Consumer Service's membership fast approaching 50,000, it was obvious that it was a popular organization with grassroots support. But to what extent was it a decentralized, democratic consumer organization as its founders had envisaged? There was certainly the hope that the planned local consumer associations would not only recruit members, but also contribute financially to the running of the Consumer Service. Alongside the need to get *Consumer* off the ground, developing the local associations was an early priority. Seven local consumer associations had formed by early 1960 (Wellington, Greymouth, Hamilton, Tauranga, Mangakino, Rotorua and Auckland), with ones in Christchurch and Wanganui reportedly in the pipeline.<sup>80</sup> The service assumed that local associations would need at least 20 members to make them viable. The April 1961 council meeting heard a detailed report on these local groups from Jim Davidson. Membership of

the 11 local associations that were up and running looked, on paper at least, healthy. Virtually all the associations had memberships well in excess of 20. Dunedin had 90 members, Auckland 245, Christchurch 91 and Rotorua 129. The small, central North Island town of Mangakino boasted over 150 members of its consumer association.<sup>81</sup>

Despite this promising start, signs of declining interest in the local associations were apparent by the middle of 1961. Eight local associations had recently held their annual general meetings, and in most cases there was a significant difference between the number of members on the books and those actually attending the AGM. For instance, only 21 attended the Mangakino meeting on 28 February, and New Zealand's largest city, Auckland, could only muster 40 enthusiasts to its 21 March gathering.<sup>82</sup> Worse was to follow. The Auckland association held its first suburban meeting in Mount Albert in the spring of 1961. Despite extensive advertising and publicity, only eight people attended, of whom seven were already members of the association committee.<sup>83</sup>

During 1963, most of the local associations were wound up and any remaining funds returned to the Consumer Service coffers. The Rotorua association disbanded after two attempts to hold an AGM failed to obtain a quorum. The Rotorua secretary's final message to headquarters contained more than a grain of truth in terms of local consumer participation. In his view Rotorua 'members appeared to be quite satisfied to receive the magazine and broadcast scripts and had no wish to take an active part in local associations'.<sup>84</sup>

Wood acknowledged in early 1964 that the experiment in local participation had not worked. They had done little to promote the service and despite the 'meritorious' efforts of a few local consumer activists, it appeared that in New Zealand 'there is no spontaneous local enthusiasm for local consumer work as is so evident in many other countries'.<sup>85</sup> In mid-1964, upon his return from a consumer organization conference held in Norway, Wood informed council members that compared with the grassroots interest in consumer affairs found in Scandinavia, 'for the general run of New Zealanders apathy characterized their response to most problems, with the notable exceptions of the TAB and rugby union football'.<sup>86</sup> In 1968, with the benefit of several years' hindsight, Wood attributed the demise of the local associations to his own haste in trying to set them up in tandem with the national body, personality clashes and the inexperience of the national body in giving the local groups direction and purpose. Wood also thought that some of the local activists were more interested in playing 'consumer movement politics' than helping consumers and that many local associations lost interest when they realized that a voluntary association's survival depended on the voluntary efforts of its members.<sup>87</sup>

The demise of the local associations revealed the limitations of a grassroots consumer movement. The national organization had wide support in its early years despite, not because of, the local groups. It had succeeded in establishing itself as a professional consumer advocacy organization with a recognizable and popular 'product', namely *Consumer* magazine. Seen in this light, it was fitting that the Consumer Service was renamed with the more authoritative and centralized brand: the Consumers' Institute. In late 1963, the need for a logo and a name that could be legally protected converged when the

executive committee recommended that the Consumer Service be renamed the Consumer Institute. The council instructed the departmental industrial design officer to create a logo with either a magnifying glass motif or the human eye and the initials 'CI'.<sup>88</sup> At the very last moment, council member Mrs Bullock suggested that a plural version of the name be adopted: Consumers' Institute.<sup>89</sup> The change of name gave the organization the opportunity to re-launch itself to the New Zealand public. The new name and adoption of the magnifying glass 'CI' logo was a significant moment for the organization. 'Institute' created in the public mind a tangible entity, whereas 'service' was a vaguer concept to understand. The humble apostrophe reinforced the idea that the organization belonged to New Zealand consumers: it was their consumer advocate. The logo symbolized the work of the new institute, investigating consumer issues rather than being concerned solely with the price of fish.

The new logo and name were unveiled to *Consumer* readers in March 1964 with the magnifying glass adorning the front cover and Wood explaining the reasoning behind the change of name. The new 'CI' seal was henceforth going to identify all Consumers' Institute publications, leaflets, stationery, labels and announcements to ensure there was no confusion in the public's mind about who was speaking on behalf of the consumer.<sup>90</sup> A *Consumer* editorial informed readers that the new name was chosen because 'Council members were of the opinion that the original name was not general enough to suggest the nature and variety of the work done by the organisation throughout New Zealand. Nor did it indicate that much of the work concerned the general public as much as it concerns members and supporters.'<sup>91</sup>

The Consumer Service found a receptive audience amongst the New Zealand public, tapping into consumers' desires and apprehensions about the increasing variety of goods and services available to them. Although a creation of the second Labour government, the new National administration congratulated Wood and his colleagues on their achievements to date and continued to fund the organization.<sup>92</sup> Where the Consumer Service had failed was in developing groups of local consumer advocates to build a genuine consumer movement from below. The readership survey of 1961 made it clear that *Consumer* subscribers enjoyed living in a well-appointed and tidy home, rather than being active social reformers in their leisure time. To a large extent the Consumer Service — despite its behind-the-scenes lobbying — was *Consumer* magazine. Although the Consumer Service talked of 'members' of the organization, they were in reality annual *Consumer* subscribers and readers.

The growing band of *Consumer* readers were most likely neither the spendthrift 'Mrs Consumer' nor the high-minded consumer-citizen envisaged by the Consumer Service's founders. Rather than getting fixated with gender and social class as determinants of who signed up for membership, it is better to think in terms of demographic life cycles. The 'consumer' was not male or female, housewife or wage-earner, manual or white-collar worker, but instead the nuclear family. Contemporary consumerism celebrates individuality, diversity and difference; however, the more homogeneous New Zealand social structure of the early 1960s meant that *Consumer* was appealing to a large and growing constituency of new and aspiring home occupiers who needed practical

and objective advice on getting the best value for money in both setting up and maintaining the quarter-acre paradise through sensible, considered shopping.

*Consumer* readers had a publication that exposed questionable business practices aimed at tempting consumers into profligate spending while, at the same time, reinforcing the pleasures of consumerism in the home. The Consumer Service did valuable work in counteracting the persuasive powers of the 'hidden persuaders', but it did little to diminish New Zealand consumers' 'quest for shallow stimulants'. Further research on how this first generation of *Consumer* readers used the magazine's test reports and advice on enlightened buying to furnish, decorate and maintain their homes may well challenge Nash's belief that the pursuit of material goods led to a New Zealand consumer society characterized by a 'social disposition of surfeit and boredom'.

IAN BRAILSFORD

*The University of Auckland*

## NOTES

1 Examples of suburban consumer goods paraphrased from C.K. Stead, cit. Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, revised ed., Auckland, 1980, p.283. According to official statistics, New Zealanders owned houses with fridges, electric stoves, washing machines, sewing machines, radios, record players and, from the early 1960s onwards, television sets, at levels that were the envy of many other Western nations. For example, in 1961 81% of New Zealand's households had a refrigerator while 78% boasted a washing machine. Car ownership in the mid-1960s was one of the highest in the world, with the number of registered cars more than doubling between 1954 and 1965: Brian Easton, *Consumption in New Zealand 1954–5 to 1964–5*, Wellington, 1967.

2 Bronwyn Dalley, 'The Golden Weather, 1949–1965' in Bronwyn Dalley and Gavin McLean, eds, *Frontier of Dreams: The Story of New Zealand*, Auckland, 2005, pp.312–13 states that the debt on hire-purchase agreements stood at £30 million in 1965 compared to £8 million in 1956. The nostalgic view of the family-centred, single-income suburban 'golden weather' has, of course, been challenged. The rediscovery of pockets of urban poverty in the 1950s is detailed in Margaret McClure, *A Civilised Community: A History of Social Security in New Zealand 1898–1998*, Auckland, 1998, pp.151–2. Members of Parliament in the mid-1950s claimed that increasing living standards and rising prices meant that households were on the treadmill of consumption; more consumer goods required two salaries to generate ever-increasing levels of disposable income: *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* (NZPD), 1953, 300, p.1305; 1955, 304, pp.1050–1; 1957, 311, p.367. The role of married women in the post-war workforce is detailed in Melanie Nolan, *Breadwinning: New Zealand Women and the State*, Christchurch, 2000, pp.192–229. For a discussion of the weakening of the gendered notions of bread-winning in the 1930s see Tim Frank, 'Bread Queues and Breadwinners: Gender in the 1930s', in Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie, eds, *The Gendered Kiwi*, Auckland, 1999, pp.113–40. Recent works that challenge the notion of the repressed and conformist New Zealand in post-war years include: Redmer Yska, *All Shook Up: The Flash Bodgie and the Rise of the New Zealand Teenager in the Fifties*, Auckland, 1993; Fiona McKergow, 'Opening the Wardrobe of History: Dress, Artefacts and Material Life of the 1940s and 1950s', in Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum, eds, *Fragments: New Zealand Social & Cultural History*, Auckland, 2000, pp.163–87; Bronwyn Labrum, 'Persistent Needs and Expanding Desires: Pakeha Families and State Welfare in the Years of Prosperity', in Dalley and Labrum, pp.188–210; Caroline Daley, *Leisure & Pleasure: Reshaping & Revealing the New Zealand Body 1900–1960*, Auckland, 2003; Courtney Evans, "'Not Aunt Daisy": Ambivalence in the Representation of Women in Postwar New Zealand', MA thesis, The University of Auckland, 2005.

3 'Should Retailers Give Discounts to Organised Consumers?', *New Zealand Economist and Taxpayer*, December 1957–January 1958, p.205.

4 'Lloyd Elsmore — Self Service Pioneer — Opens Revolutionary Supermarket at Pakaranga', *Crest Merchandiser*, March 1959, pp.2–3; John Ruck, 'Suburbs In Race For Customer's Pound', *Management*, March 1959, p.49; Helen B. Laurenson, *Going Up, Going Down: The Rise and Fall of the Department Store*, Auckland, 2005, p.12.

5 Helen May, *Minding Children, Managing Men: Conflict and Compromise in the Lives of Postwar Pakeha Women*, Wellington, 1992, p.111; Labrum, 'Persistent Needs and Expanding Desires', p.201.

6 R.E. Ash, 'Modern Marketing', *New Zealand Manufacturer*, October 1959, p.82; C. Spring, 'The Planning of Market Research', *Management*, July 1957, p.26; S.K. Bennett, 'Prosperity Factors in the New Marketing Concept', *New Zealand Manufacturer*, February 1959, p.60.

7 L.M. Beck, 'The Advertising Agency and the Marketing Concept', *New Zealand Manufacturer*, March 1959, p.57.

8 Bennett, p.60.

9 W.J. Young, 'Increasing Your Retail Sales', *Rydge's (NZ)*, July 1961, pp.437–9.

10 W.H. Oliver, *The Story of New Zealand*, London, 1960.

11 Walter Nash, *Building The Future: Industrial Development Conference June 1960*, Wellington, 1960, p. 12. See also Chris Brickell, 'The Politics of Post-War Consumer Culture', *New Zealand Journal of History* (NZJH), 40, 2 (2006), pp.133–55 for a thorough account of the Labour Party's unease with consumer society during the final term of the first Labour government. The anxieties within the British Labour Party about rising levels of consumer affluence are detailed in Steven Fielding, 'Activists Against "Affluence": Labour Party Culture during the "Golden Age," circa 1950–1970', *Journal of British Studies*, 40, 2 (2001), pp.241–67.

12 'The problems of prosperity' was a term used in the early 1960s to describe the post-war era: see Oliver, pp.209–23 and W.B. Sutch, *Problems of Prosperity*, Wellington, 1962.

13 As a result of the Consumer Council Act 1988 the Consumers' Institute of New Zealand Incorporated has been completely independent of the government since January 1989.

14 *The Cost of Living: A Remedy — A National Consumers' Association*, Napier, 1925; S.J.E. Closey, *The Consumers' League: Its Organisation, Objective and Appeal*, Palmerston North, 1939; Emily Carpenter, *In the Consumer Interest*, Wellington, 1980, p.5.

15 Housewives' unions and groups had raised consumer issues during the first decades of the twentieth century. For instance, during World War II, the Dunedin Housewives' Association complained to the Price Tribunal about local butchers overcharging for meat, alleged that rationed knitting wool was being sold 'under the counter' and wanted something done about the price of fish. In 1944, the association demanded an open market for fruit and vegetable sales in the city, but the government minister responsible for internal marketing, James Barclay, rebuffed their proposal, saying the Dunedin 'women had little to complain about as prices were much higher in the north', 'Extracts from Minutes', pp.4–5, Notes on the History of the Association (1930–1970), Dunedin Housewives' Association Records, AG-002-13, Hocken Collection, Dunedin. In the mid-1950s Auckland housewives who beat the tea importers at their own game by purchasing their own bulk supplies from overseas and selling it at cost amongst themselves were praised by Petone MP Michael Moohan: NZPD, 1955, 306, p.1509; Raewyn Dalziel, 'Federation of New Zealand Housewives 1957–1978', in Anne Else, ed., *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1993, p.95.

16 The notion of consumer advocates being heretics is taken from Matthew Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement*, Cambridge, 2003, p.22.

17 Peter Gibbons, 'The Far Side of the Search for Identity: Reconsidering New Zealand History', *NZJH*, 37, 1 (2003), pp.38–49 encouraged New Zealand historians to think about the domestic consumption — instead of the traditional focus on production — of goods as a topic in its own right.

18 See short histories of worldwide consumer organizations in Stephen Brobeck, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Consumer Movement*, Santa Barbara, 1997. Recent work on the consumer movement include: Robert Bocoock, *Consumption*, London, 1993; Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919–1929*, Cambridge, 1994; James S. Turner, 'The Consumer Interest in the 1990s and Beyond', *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 29, 2 (1995), pp.310–27; Don Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity*, Oxford, 1997; Felicia Kornbluh, 'To Fulfill their "Rightly Needs": Consumerism and the National Welfare Rights Movement', *Radical History Review*, 69 (1997), pp.76–113; Simon Gunn, 'The Public Sphere, Modernity and Consumption: New Perspectives on the History of the English Middle-Class', in A. Kidd and D. Nicholls, eds, *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800–1940*, Manchester, 1999; Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years*, Toronto, 1999; Martin Daunt and Matthew Hilton, eds, *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America*, Oxford, 2001; Lawrence B. Glickman, 'The Strike in the Temple of Consumption: Consumer Activism and Twentieth-Century American Political Culture', *Journal of American History*, 88, 1 (2001), pp.99–128; Peter N. Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire*, London, 2001; Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain*; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, New York, 2003. For a discussion of consumerism's different usages and the history of the term, see Roger Swagler, 'Evolution and Applications of the Term Consumerism: Theme and Variations', *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 28, 2 (1994), pp.347–60.

19 Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders*, New York, 1957, was the best-known contemporary work that exposed the alleged underhand tactics of the marketing men.

20 Robert N. Mayer's *The Consumer Movement: Guardians of the Marketplace*, Boston, 1989, provides an excellent account of the different (and at times conflicting) approaches to consumer advocacy.

21 W.B. Sutch, *The Role of Consumer Industries*, Wellington, 1960, pp.33–49. Post-war New Zealand consumer society was one of clothes, shoes, crockery, sporting goods, toys, radios, record players, televisions, electric jugs, toasters, radiators, furniture, stoves, refrigerators, dish washers, clothes dryers, lawn mowers and most grocery items that were all made in New Zealand. Douglas Lloyd Jenkins, *At Home: A Century of New Zealand Design*, Auckland, 2004, shows many of these locally made goods on display in their proper place, the home.

22 'The Consumer and Export Markets', *Consumer*, 16, September 1963, pp.4–5. The notion of the 'fortress economy', shielded in the post-war years behind import restrictions and tariffs, is taken from Marcia Russell, *Revolution: New Zealand from Fortress to Free Market*, Auckland, 1996.

23 George Wood, 'Annual Report to Consumer Council', p.9, Consumer Council meeting #18, 18 October 1961, Consumer Council Minutes (CCM), Archives New Zealand (ANZ), Wellington.

24 *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (AJHR), 1959, H-44, p.67.

25 *ibid.*

26 *ibid.*, p.68.

27 Philip Holloway, Memo to Cabinet, 6 April 1959, Cabinet Papers, Economic Affairs, Consumer Protection, General 1959–1960, ANZ.

28 'Prime Minister's Department Offices of the Cabinet: Recommendations For Appointment to Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin District Consumer Committees', 22 September 1959, Cabinet Papers, Economic Affairs, Consumer Protection, General 1959–1960, ANZ.

29 Consumer Council meeting #1, 30 July 1959, CCM, ANZ.

30 Consumer Council executive committee meeting #1, 20 August 1959, CCM, ANZ.

31 Consumer Council executive committee meeting #2, 17 September 1959 and #4, 8 October 1959, CCM, ANZ.

32 Consumer Council meeting #2, 1 September 1959, CCM, ANZ.

33 'Consumer Conference: Report of Proceedings of Consumer Conference Held at Parliament Building, Wellington, on Wednesday 23 September 1959 at 10.30a.m.', CCM, ANZ.

34 'Consumers At First Conference: Better Than Control', *New Zealand Herald*, 24 September 1959, p.13.

35 *ibid.*

36 'Consumer Conference: Report of Proceedings of Consumer Conference Held at Parliament Building, Wellington, on Wednesday 23 September 1959 at 10.30a.m.', CCM, ANZ.

37 'Approval For Consumer Council Plan', *Dominion*, 24 September 1959, p.11.

38 'Consumer Conference: Report of Proceedings of Consumer Conference Held at Parliament Building, Wellington, on Wednesday 23 September 1959 at 10.30a.m.', CCM, ANZ.

39 *ibid.*

40 The influence of the housewives' groups declined and they were generally overlooked when appointments were made to the main Consumer Council and district consumer committees: Dalziel, p.95.

41 'Approval For Consumer Council Plan', *Dominion*, 24 September 1959, p.11

42 *ibid.*

43 Consumer Council executive committee meeting #9, 17 May 1960, CCM, ANZ.

44 Consumer Council executive committee meeting #2, 17 September 1959, CCM, ANZ.

45 NZPD, 1959, 312, p.2507.

46 Consumer Council meeting #5, 8 December 1959, CCM, ANZ.

47 Allen R. Dellow, 'National Consumers' Council', *New Zealand Manufacturer*, June 1959, p.47.

48 R.J. Harrison, 'Consumer Council will protect Manufacturers, too. . .', *Management*, December 1959, pp.33–35.

49 'Consumer Service', *Consumer*, 1, 1 (1959), p.3.

50 Consumer Council executive committee meeting #7, 15 March 1960, CCM, ANZ.

51 Consumer Council meeting #11, 19 October 1960, CCM, ANZ.

52 Consumer Council meeting #3, 14 October 1959, CCM, ANZ.

53 *ibid.*

54 George Wood to Secretary, Trade Practices and Prices Commission, 4 November 1959, Consumer Council meeting #4, 18 November 1959, CCM, ANZ.

55 Consumer Council meeting #4, 18 November 1959, CCM, ANZ.

56 Consumer Council meeting #5, 8 December 1959, CCM, ANZ.

57 Consumer Council meeting #3, 14 October 1959, CCM, ANZ.

58 Consumer Council executive committee meeting #2, 17 September 1959, CCM, ANZ.

59 Consumer Council meeting #3, 14 October 1959, CCM, ANZ.

60 Consumer Council meeting #9, 17 August 1960, CCM, ANZ.

61 Consumer Council executive committee meeting #10, 5 August 1960, CCM, ANZ.

62 Consumer Council meeting #3, 14 October 1959, CCM, ANZ.

- 63 Consumer Council meeting #15, 5 April 1961, CCM, ANZ; 'Editorial', *Consumer*, 1, 4 (1960), p.3.
- 64 Consumer Council executive committee meeting #2, 17 September 1959, CCM, ANZ.
- 65 Consumer Council meeting #15, 5 April 1961, CCM, ANZ.
- 66 Consumer Council meeting #9, 17 August 1960; Consumer Council meeting #15, 5 April 1961, CCM, ANZ.
- 67 Consumer Council meeting #15, 5 April 1961, CCM, ANZ.
- 68 Consumer Council meeting #8, 7 June 1960, CCM, ANZ.
- 69 Consumer Council meeting #16, 14 June 1961, CCM, ANZ.
- 70 Consumer Council meeting #19, 6 December 1961, CCM, ANZ.
- 71 Consumer Council meeting #15, 5 April 1961, CCM, ANZ.
- 72 George Wood, 'Annual report', Consumer Council meeting #15, 18 October 1961, CCM, ANZ.
- 73 AJHR, 1966, H-43, p.43.
- 74 Consumer Council executive committee meeting #25, 19 April 1966, CCM, ANZ.
- 75 Despite the Consumer Service's ambivalent attitude towards advertising as a profession in 1963 it contracted the advertising agency J. Inglis Wright to organize a national advertising campaign to recruit members. Consumer Service advertisements were placed in the *New Zealand Herald*, *New Zealand Truth*, *New Zealand Listener* and *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, Consumer Council meeting #28, 17 April 1963, CCM, ANZ. The campaign yielded new subscriptions, with the *New Zealand Herald* being the most successful medium (1431 replies), followed by the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* (972), *New Zealand Truth* (724) and *New Zealand Listener* (577), Consumer Council meeting #31, 9 October 1963, CCM, ANZ. The selection of these publications by J. Inglis Wright and the council's acceptance of the plan gives credence to Wood's view that the Consumer Service's membership was not dominated by the intelligentsia.
- 76 The first members' readership survey was approved in October 1966 to uncover 'what age he is, what he does, where he lives, what his income is, and the general standard of living he enjoys', Consumer Council meeting #49, 26 October 1966, CCM, ANZ.
- 77 Consumer Council executive committee meeting #25, 19 April 1966, CCM, ANZ.
- 78 'Annual Report', *Consumer*, 2, 1 (1960), p.30.
- 79 Consumer Council meeting #33, 19 February 1964, CCM, ANZ.
- 80 Consumer Council meeting #7, 5 April 1960, CCM, ANZ.
- 81 Consumer Council meeting #15, 5 April 1961, CCM, ANZ.
- 82 Consumer Council meeting #17, 16 August 1961, CCM, ANZ.
- 83 Consumer Council meeting #18, 18 October 1961, CCM, ANZ.
- 84 Consumer Council meeting #30, 21 August 1963, CCM, ANZ.
- 85 Consumer Council meeting #36, 12 August 1964, CCM, ANZ.
- 86 'I.O.C.U. Conference, Oslo', Consumer Council meeting #36, 12 August 1964, CCM, ANZ.
- 87 Consumer Council meeting #62, 4 December 1968, CCM, ANZ. It should be noted that there was one exception: The Dunedin Consumer Association continued well into the 1980s, the lone flag bearer for local consumer associations.
- 88 Consumer Council executive committee meeting #20, 11 December 1963, CCM, ANZ.
- 89 Consumer Council meeting #31, 9 October 1963, CCM, ANZ.
- 90 'Symbol for Consumers' Institute', *Consumer*, 18 (1964), p.3.
- 91 'Change of name', *ibid*.
- 92 Message from Minister J.R. Marshall to Consumer Council, Consumer Council meeting #17, 16 August 1961, CCM, ANZ.