

Consumerism rise deflated by limited focus of agencies

Analysis by STEVE DODGE
Of the Emerald

Consumerism is on the rise in the United States, so much so that even the largest of the multinational corporations pay it respect.

The one-time public relations person is now more often than not a "consumer affairs" officer.

In recent years the reading public has been deluged with consumer handbooks on various subjects and at least two national publications cater to the more concerned consumer.

But the "movement," — if it can be termed that — has a number of problems, the least of which is the broad spectrum of products and services that may cause problems.

As a result, consumer protection and service agencies, whether governmental or private, are fragmented and often hard to find. The state's Consumer Services Division, for instance, where consumers are referred after dialing the statewide toll-free number, has 15 pages of various state and industry agencies that handle consumer problems.

The state Consumer Protection Division perhaps is the consumer's best friend in gov-

ernment, but its jurisdiction is limited to the Unlawful Trade Practices Act which deals basically with false advertising or sales claims. It does not handle such things as warranty or faulty product problems.

Locally, the Better Business Service has been a long-time mediator between consumer and business. But one wonders how effective a consumer protection job the bureau can do with two part-time staffers and only two office hours a day open for complaints.

On campus, students are extremely fortunate to have the likes of Off Campus Housing, the Office of Student Advocacy and OSPIRG, but with the possible exception of the latter, they are limited by funding and staffing in their abilities to really defend, in court if necessary, the rights of the student or local consumer.

Realistically though, one cannot expect super-human efforts from any of these agencies.

But one word that kept cropping up in this consumer series was "referral". Everybody has referral services and inevitably, if no amiable solution can be found the consumer is "referred" to court — usually small claims — with the burden of proof on his or her

shoulders.

Fortunately, in Lane County we are blessed with a full-time Consumer Fraud Division of the district attorney's office, which exercises the long arm of the law much like the Consumer Protection Division in cases of violation of the Unlawful Practices Act.

However, when it comes to faulty merchandise and workmanship, even the Fraud Division recommends a trip to small claims or hiring of a private lawyer. In that context, the rise in consumerism seems a little more than a ripple.

It seems then, that what is needed is to consolidate and adequately fund the state consumer agencies into one powerful — admittedly big — agency, with more and broader consumer protection laws. Hopefully, the Legislature will work in this direction, but it's not too likely in the wake of the "tax revolt."

Locally, student government could increase OSPIRG's funding in hopes it will take a more active role in student consumerism.

The key, inevitably, is funding, and even a million grass roots and government agencies are going to be only mildly successful in monitoring the broad consumer spectrum at their present levels.

Rights activist to speak

Dr. Harry Edwards, the controversial political activist who created a sensation 10 years ago by organizing a Black boycott of the 1968 Olympic Games, will speak on "Race, Power and Sport in American Society" at 8 tonight in Room 167 of the EMU.

Edwards, a sociology professor at the University of California at Berkeley since 1970, has been active in the Black rights movement since the mid-1960s, when he taught at San Jose State.

While teaching, he plunged the campus into turmoil by presenting a list of Black grievances to the university administration and threatening violence at the school's first football game of the season.

Edwards' idea succeeded — it was the first time a college football game had ever been canceled because of racial unrest. Two months later, he announced a boycott of the Olympic Games, scheduled to be held the following October in Mexico City.

"For years we have participated in the Olympic Games," Edwards said in 1967. "We have been carrying the United States on our backs with our victories, and race relations are now worse than ever. Now they are even shooting people

in the streets. We're not trying to lose the Olympics for the Americans. What happens to them is immaterial. But it's time for Black people to stand up as men and women and refuse to be utilized as performing animals for a little extra food."

Edwards' effort succeeded in keeping more than 50 Black athletes out of the 1968 Olympics, including UCLA basketball star Lew Alcindor, now Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, but the culmination of his effort came at the Games themselves.

At the awards ceremony for the men's 200 meter run, gold medalist Tommie Smith and bronze winner John Carlos gave a clenched-fist, black-gloved salute during the playing of the National Anthem. Both were subsequently kicked off the team by the Olympic Committee, but the incident drew nationwide attention to the boycott.

Since then, Edwards has earned a doctorate and taken a professorship at Berkeley. Edwards is also on the advisory board of Alert: The Institute for Sport and Social Analysis and has contributed to several television documentaries about sport and society.

The EMU Cultural Forum has sponsored the event.

FRI, OCT 27 8 PM

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11:1

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04032:10-27

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04024:10-24

CINDY WEST — YOU ARE TERRIFIC!! Thanks
for EVERYTHING!! LOVE, MADONNA 10:24

GOSSIPING PI PHIS — Daquiri's at midnight,
Dunkin's at one, Thanks alot for all that fun-KE
EXEC. 10:24

VALERIE, Good luck this week... You'll soon be a
true SIGMA K. LOVE, MARY ELLEN 10:24

HEY NANCY COUGHLIN!!! There thewstie ya got
one!!! hee! hee! HAVE A HAPPY DAY!! Love,
YOUR ROOMIES 10:24

SIG EPS:
CLUB SIGMA was great
Can't wait for the stomp —
See you then!! DIXON 10:24

BRENT & RODY
GOOD FRIENDS
GOOD FOOD
GOOD ???
Let's do it again SOON!
We luv ya, J & J 10:24

THANKS TO THE KAPPA SIGS — The roller skating
was great! Who would have thought we would
last so late! The beer and the bruises were part of
the fun, but better yet was the midnight run!! LOVE,
THE PI PHIS 10:24

TO MA'S EUGENE CONNECTION,

Max and Earl:
Nice guys DO
finish last!

10:24

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whomever wants to know who in heaven I am. 10:24

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