

September 18 - 19, 1978 Labeling Hearings, Little Rock, Arkansas

COMMISSIONER KENNEDY AND MEMBERS OF THIS FOOD LABELING COMMITTEE

I am Mildred VanNahmen of Kinsley, Kansas, a member of that farming community. With me today is Peggy Arnesman and we are both becoming more and more concerned about food labeling. We thank you for this opportunity to testify to this committee. We are grateful that you are considering what the consumer has to say ^{about} food labeling and how labeling can be made more effective.

In gathering material for this testimony, I ask many consumers for their comments, merchants, salespeople, distributors, whoever would answer my questions, and found many concerned about this question. The comments I heard most frequently were- labels are confusing, I do not understand them, they are hard to see, they are misleading, vague, how much is in the can, additives concern many, and more and more I heard that consumers are concerned about WHERE their food is grown.

Consumers are concerned, and expressed their appreciation of a chance to be heard and to the fact that the committee is going TO THE CONSUMER FOR ANSWERS!

We acknowledge the advancements made in food labeling the past few years, but on analysis there are areas of concern that we are noting with you today.

A. It is commendable that we finally have ingredients listed on labels but NO WHERE can we find HOW MUCH of each ingredient. We have been bombarded with articles about our consumption of sugar, corn sweeteners, honey, syrups, every kind and type of sweeteners. The March 1978 issue of CONSUMER REPORTS gives many interesting facts concerning the alarming amounts in many of our foods, for instance- Heinz Tomato Ketchup 29%; Coffeemate 65 %, a Ritz cracker 12%; Cremora 56.9 %; Shake N' Bake Barbecue Style 51 % and on and on. It is no wonder that we each consume 128 pounds of sugar/sweeteners a year ! This is a health hazard! Now I am sure if we consumers were to see ON THE LABEL a percentage amount of sugar/sweeteners in a product, we could be wiser, more knowledgeable consumers and buyers !. Manufacturers know how much of any ingredient goes into their product, it would only take one short step to add the percentage amounts of the prominent ingredients. I have labels here, I

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know there is room for this information. I want corn in my corn flakes and Domestic sugar in my sugar bowl!!!

B. The quantity and quality of food in each can or container. In this day when we are very concerned with waste disposal, saving natural resources, conserving energy, why is it necessary for consumers to drag home 2 cans of green beans to serve a family of 4 when one can FILLED with green beans would do???? I took a can, measured the beans and found the can just half filled with green beans, the rest water. That is a fancy price to pay for boiled water! When I buy canned foods I want a full can of food, not water, sugar, or other additives! I want ham, not water; meat, not water, by-products, bone meal, whatever. When I serve weiners to my family I want to know what is in them. My husband likes chicken loaf. The other day he purchased what he thought was just that. When I read him the label, pork stomach, pork snouts, pork, etc., the label is included in your packet, we threw it out to the cats! I want truthful labeling!! I want the choice of paying more for meat not fillers rather than paying less for something less than meat! I want to know where the foods we eat come from and where it is processed! When I buy meats, I want the RIGHT of free choice - either Domestic born raised and slaughtered in the United States or Imported with the labels CLEARLY stating what country!!!

C. As I looked over the supply of foods in my own cupboard, I found, oranges from Japan, oysters from Korea, mushrooms from Taiwan the Republic of China, meat from Australia, and others. I want to know HOW and when these foods were grown and processed. These foods processed outside these United States and sold in my grocery store must meet the same stringent requirements that I know our own processors and produce must meet. I want you to assure ^{me} that these requirements are being met and that these foods are as safe for consumption as our own! If you will look at those labels I have provided to you, one other fact, Please have the country of origin large enough to see, predominately labeled, so I do not have to search to find it !!! I want to KNOW when the food I am buying is imported and from where.

D. The dates on labeling are very important and I am so glad we finally have them on many of our foods but here again, problems. WHERE are they, find them, another sample for your inspection, shows one very

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clear, the other is most difficult to find and see. Dates on all foods, perishable as well as boxed, canned or however processed. I would like to see the "TO BE USED BY " date since this date would give the consumer a little time left on the spoilage time. I want to know how long it has taken the food I have purchased to get from the processor to my table. I want to know WHERE the foods we eat comes from . I want an IMPORT label on food from other countries to stay with that food until I have the choice of buying it or not in my grocery store! I am not saying I will not buy Imported foods, I am saying I HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW AND CHOOSE between Domestic or imported foods. If the food is not grown and processed within the United States, I have a RIGHT to know and decide myself, if I want to buy and eat it. Consumers also have the RIGHT to expect their government to assure them ,that the foods they are eating are safe.Safe from insecticides, pesticides, herbicides and in some cases fertilizers. They have a RIGHT to know that foods are not adulterated, contaminated; that our Domestic foods are not mixed with imports and sold as Domestic foods.

Thank you for hearing my testimony.