

ADVERTISING ALLOWANCES

THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS
OF
THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

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**ADVERTISING
ALLOWANCES**

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A Phase of the Price-Making Process

BY
LEVERETT S. LYON

WASHINGTON, D.C.
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1932

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DIRECTOR'S PREFACE

Three years ago the Institute of Economics published a book by Mr. Lyon on *Hand-to-Mouth Buying*. In the collection of materials for that volume, and in the analysis of various phases of the problem with which it dealt, the author had the cordial and helpful assistance of numerous business concerns and trade associations. The results of this collaboration between commercial organizations and an independent scientific agency proved so stimulating and helpful that proposals were made for the continuation and expansion of similar activities in an adjacent field. One of these took the form of an inquiry from the Executive Committee of the Grocery Trade Practice Conference as to whether the Institute could undertake an investigation of certain problems in trade ethics and regulation with which the Committee was then confronted.

Our first reaction was that these problems were probably too restricted in nature to fall properly within the purposes of the Institute. Preliminary investigation, however, made it clear that industries other than those in the food trade were interested in the matter suggested for investigation, and that the problems which concerned the Committee were of vital significance to the trade practice conference movement generally. It appeared further that the problems which present difficulty to one industry in establishing a code of ethics and practice in its own regulation are parts of the larger problem of competitive industry. Inquiry into them, therefore, offered the possibility of making a contribution to our general thinking on the subject of price policies, competitive methods, and economic regulation. The project seemed the more worth

while as it involved the exploring of data on pricing practices, chiefly in the scantily investigated field of branded and advertised products.

The study has progressed in a very satisfactory manner and has come to embrace a rather wide range of special topics in the general field of price policy. The present volume covers only one segment of the study. It is being published separately because it appeared that separate publication would give greatest effectiveness to the results of the investigation of the several problems which lie within the general field of this inquiry. It is our expectation that there will be several other volumes in the near future dealing with special phases of price policy, these to be followed in due time with a larger comprehensive treatment of the field in general.

The members of the staff who served on the committee which co-operated with the author in the preparation of this volume were Charles O. Hardy and Isador Lubin.

Edwin G. Nourse

Director

Institute of Economics

November 1932

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As is probably always the case at the conclusion of a study based largely on data secured directly from industry, I owe acknowledgments for a generous giving of materials and ideas to many individuals who can be named only at the risk of violating agreements of confidence. Acknowledgments to these individuals must, therefore, be limited to this general expression of appreciation and vicarious thanks to them through acknowledgments to the associations to which in most, though not in all, cases they belong. The associations which have been particularly helpful are Associated Grocery Manufacturers of America, National Wholesale Grocers' Association of the United States, National Chain Store Association, National Food Brokers Association, National Association of Retail Grocers, and the American Management Association.

The Executive Committee of the Grocery Trade Practice Conference has had an especially close association with the study. Members of this Committee, as indicated on an earlier page, first called our attention to the need for objective study of certain trade practices. The Committee has been continuously helpful both in discussing the various aspects of the problems involved and in enlisting the co-operation of the branches of the industry which it represents. The members of the Committee, moreover, met with me to give their criticisms and suggestions on the manuscript as the study was reaching final form, adding thereby to its clarity, accuracy, and balance.

During the early progress of the study I had a number of helpful conferences with H. R. Drackett and

George D. Olds, Jr. of Associated Grocery Manufacturers of America; with M. L. Toulme, secretary of National Wholesale Grocers' Association; with R. W. Lyons, executive vice-president of National Chain Store Association; with C. H. Janssen, secretary-manager of National Association of Retail Grocers; with Charles Wesley Dunn, general counsel for Associated Grocery Manufacturers; and with Dana T. Ackerly, of counsel for National Wholesale Grocers' Association. The first of this group, as chairman of the Executive Committee of the Grocery Trade Practice Conference, has been in constant touch with me as the study has gone on.

Others in the food industry to whom I am indebted for help, as officers of associations, as at one time or another members of the Executive Committee of the Grocery Trade Practice Conference, or as members of committees discussing phases of the problem and preparing inquiries for securing data, are Clarence Francis, executive vice-president of General Foods Corporation and former president of Associated Grocery Manufacturers; Paul S. Willis, vice-president of Comet Rice Company and president of Associated Grocery Manufacturers; W. T. Nardin, vice-president of Pet Milk Company; C. A. Lumb, Eastern sales director of California Packing Corporation; Carl H. Schlapp, president of National Wholesale Grocers' Association; Roy L. Davidson of M. O'Connor and Company; Arjay Davies of Davies-Strauss-Stauffer Company; Sylvan L. Stix of Seeman Brothers and vice-president of National Wholesale Grocers' Association; W. B. Mackey of H. Kellogg and Sons Company; John Coode, former president of National Association of Retail Grocers; Paul Fishback, secretary of National Food Brokers Association; and Harry C. Faulkner of the same Association.

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To W. J. Donald, formerly managing director of the American Management Association, I am grateful for aid in the preparation and circulation of questionnaires to the members of his Association, as I am to G. A. Renard of the National Association of Purchasing Agents for a similar service. For a consideration of my general conclusions concerning trade practice rules I am indebted to George McCorkle, chief trial examiner of the Federal Trade Commission, and to Nelson B. Gaskill, formerly chairman of the Federal Trade Commission.

Helen May Wheeler of our own staff has ably assisted me throughout the preparation of the book.

While the aid, suggestions, and counsel of those mentioned have been invaluable, no one but myself must be held responsible for the viewpoints taken or the conclusions stated.

Leverett S. Lyon

A STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GROCERY TRADE PRACTICE CONFERENCE

Following the adoption of the present Grocery Trade Rules by The Federal Trade Commission, the Executive Committee of the Grocery Trade Practice Conference concluded that its most helpful effort in behalf of the industry would be to determine as accurately as possible certain factual data with reference to trade practices covered by the rules and to place this information at the disposal of the industry with such suggestions as might reasonably be made.

They determined that this survey should be made by research agencies of unquestioned reputation for accuracy and unbiased conclusion.

The Brookings Institution of Washington, D.C. is such an agency. It has the confidence of economists, of business men, of the many Departments of the Federal Government and members of our legislative bodies. It is an endowed research organization conducted with the sole object of ascertaining the facts about current problems and of interpreting these facts for the people of the United States.

The Executive Committee fortunately was able to interest The Brookings Institution in making this survey, largely upon the argument that practices referred to by the rules not only had a great effect upon the industry itself, but upon the consumer in whose services the industry was engaged. The Institution carried on this survey entirely on its own endowment and without any expense whatsoever to the grocery industry.

The present study upon "advertising allowances" is the first of a series to result. We believe that the policy of the Executive Committee and its selection of The Brookings Institution are fully justified by this report. It is thorough in its factual data, conclusive in its suggestions and well worth the most serious study and consideration by members of our industry and business men generally.

In the Executive Committee's endorsement of this report is included its deep appreciation and that of the Industry to The Brookings Institution.

The Executive Committee recommends for consideration by the Grocery Trade Practice Conference or by all those engaged in the Grocery Industry the following definitions. Their adoption now in principle and eventually in practice cannot but contribute to a greater trade good-will and a more satisfactory service of the industry in the public behalf.

The Executive Committee recommends on the basis of this study:

1. The term "Advertising Allowance" is to be used accurately and ethically only when applied to any arrangement for a payment or payments, for specific performances which are possible, practicable, capable of being audited and not in excess of a reasonable consideration for the services to be rendered.

2. "Advertising Allowance" agreements should definitely specify exactly how much shall be paid in money, credit, goods or services by the giver of allowances, exactly what services shall be rendered by the recipient of the allowance and the method of auditing performance which the allowance giver will employ.

3. "Advertising Allowance" agreements should not,

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE STATEMENT xvii

under any circumstance, refer to or be a part of any purchase price agreement pertaining to the goods to be advertised or other goods which may be sold to the recipient by the allowance giver.

4. Payments for advertising having all the characteristics described on ONE, TWO and THREE above, but which are not promptly divulged to all customers who can render a like service, shall be considered "secret allowances" and condemned.

Respectfully submitted,

The Executive Committee,

The Grocery Trade Practice Conference

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