Matthew Hilton

Past & Present Fable of the Sheep

Consumer politics of necessity developed through the Co-operative Movement’s following the divident system indroduced by the Rochdale Pioneers in 1844.

Basic provisioning was central to formulations of the living wage, and winning certain social rights, thrids stage of citizenship

Quality has also been a concern over necessities – adulteration legislation has not always foregrounded the consumer interest

Necessities are positioned opposite luxuries and semi luxuries or comforts. Comfots can include appliances that have broken down the boundary between lux and nec.

Consumers Assciation was set up in 1956

Dorothy Goodman set up a comparative testing magazine, based on those already in Sweden and US. First edition of Which? Published on 7 October 1957

End of first year there were 47 000 members, paying an annual subscription (10 shillings)

Mach 1961 quarter of a million members

Beginning of 1970, half a million

Consumer durables improve ability to make value for money decicions..

Limited political campaigning

1963= longer shop and licensing hours, intro metric system, **informative labelling**, research to find out what consumers want.

1987 membership peaked at just over one million. (See also Thirty Years of ‘Which?’ book )

Which? Membership – middle class proffesional, many men. Also read Times, Mcr Gaurdian, Obs, Spectator, Economist.

Original members of British Assocn of Conumers shared belief that industrial recovery could be aided by conusmers who would pressurize British firms into producing higher quality goods that would then improve the xport drive. See also National Council of Women – Conferenc on Consumer Protection, Evidence to Molony Committee.

1946 NCW called on British Standards Insitution to turn attention to consumer goods.

1951 Women’s Advisory Committee began to advise regularly on quality standnards and operation of the Kitemark labelling scheme

1955 WAC became Consumer Advisory Council

1957 Shopper’s Guide – tested different products, but it was backed by industry so was not independent and never praised one brand over another.

See Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska Austerity in Britain: Rationing Controls and Consumption

Organisation o f local consumers groups

Oxford Consumers Group 1961

1963 nearly 50 groups and 5000 members

1967 100 groups 18000 all affiliated to the National Federation of Consumer Groups.

1973 Office of Fair Trading set up. It sought voluntary methods of market reguation over government intervention.

Mitchell – first phase up to the 1970s aimed for more information with protection as a secondary objective. Jeremy Mitchell, ‘Management and the Consumer Movement’, Jl General Management, iii (1976), 51.

Lizabeth Cohen, ‘Citizens and Consumers in the Century of Mass Consumption’,

in Hilton and Daunton (eds.), Politics of Consumption.

outlined a general political campaigning role for consumer organizations, which she urged ‘to work for a fair deal for the public’ as a whole and to protect the interests of more vulnerable consumers, such as women and the poor, whose interests she felt could never be entirely met by better information and comparative testing

CA 27: Eirlys Roberts, ‘A Fair Deal for the Public’, Jl Roy. Soc. Arts, cxxiv (Apr. 1976)

1987 Association for Consumer Research (charitable trust) created to serve all ocnsumers as the public interest, wich CA remained as commercial enterprise focussing on comparative testive for subscribers.

Perter Goldman, fromer Conservative party candidate and Director of CA from ’64-87 reitereated individusit model of consumerism, uged conciliatory approach to business, comparative testing service but must also comapaign for general changed in the law if it beliefd action was in the interest of members. Peter Godlman Comipetition: A consumer Approach *Campaign* 7 Mar 1973

Research Insitute for Consumer Affairs RICA 1961 (set up by CA)

1969 Consumer Advice Centre set up in Kentish Town, taken over by Camden Council, local authorities followed by 1979 there were 200 cac in all parts of uk.

8 CA 27: ‘The Development of Consumer Advice Centres in the UK’ (1978), 6. ‘The Need for Consumer Advice Centres’ (1975); Smith, Consumer Interest, 14

1970 Con Gov dissolved Consumer Council

1972 appointed Minister for Consumer Affairs within DTI

1973 creation of Office of Fair Trading

Conservatives: consumer as rational individual who needed more information in order to rectify imbalances of the market

Labour: socially aware consumerism, supporting the advice centre.

1974 Labour upgraded consumer prepresentation in Gvot by establishing a Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection. Confiming conumers had an impt role to play in inflation policy

1975 creation of National Consumer Council. Govt whit paper 1974 which said consumers should have a say in state affairs, similar to TUC so should have central agency.

Unlike Consumer Council of 1963 - partisan body.

NCC, The Fourth Right of Citizenship: A Review of Local Advice Centres (London, 1977)

IOCU adopted te four rights of consumers et out by JF Kennedy in 1962: the right to safety, the right to be infomed, the right to choose and the right to be heard.

By the 1980s four more rights have been added to the OUC consitution – the right of redress, the right to consumer education, the right to a healthy environment and the right to basic needs. IOCU acitivy extended into topics including ozone layer depletion, nuclear safety, pesticudes, dru policy, international agricultural olicy.

IOCU Proceedings of the Twelfth IOCU world Congress: Consumer solidarity for a better World (London 1987)