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Betty Furness holds "truth-in" at UM

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BETTY FURNESS HOLDS
"TRUTH-IN" AT UM

MISSOULA--

Purchasing power, the consumers' most powerful weapon, can be used to fight distribution of shoddy merchandise by manufacturers, Betty Furness, consumer rights advocate, said Thursday night at the University of Montana.

The consumer must complain any time he buys faulty goods, Miss Furness said. "If we don't tell the fellow on the other side of the counter that we don't like what he's doing, he'll go right on doing it."

Beyond complaining, Miss Furness added, the consumer must write to the manufacturer, write to legislators and boycott unsatisfactory products.

The housewife buying food constantly lives "the consumer experience" in America where she is pressured by fancy packages and luring displays. She credited the truth-in-packaging law with helping to protect consumers because it requires manufacturers to tell contents of the package on the label, but said it had not been effective in telling the consumer how to make the best buy.

She supports unit pricing whereby the price per unit of the good is listed on the shelf next to the item. Companies producing food are not anxious to have us know what food costs, she said. In Westchester County, New York, Coca Cola prices range from 26 cents per quart to 48 cents, according to Miss Furness.

Miss Furness wants industry to tell the consumer how long an item will last. She also urges manufacturers to tell whether an added feature of an appliance, for example, will take more electricity to run than another model of the same item.

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"No manufacturing company in this country has the right to run up your electricity bill without asking you," she said.

The battle between industry and the consumer, or what she called "the consumer game" is not hopeless for the consumer, Miss Furness said, because he is becoming aware of his problems. Four states have consumer protection agencies and consumers have staunch supporters in Miss Furness and Ralph Nader.

She noted that recent press articles had exposed cereal companies for allegedly making non-nourishing cereals, and reported that certain mouthwashes were ineffective.

The lecture was sponsored by the University Summer Session office.

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