

Who Do Consumers Blame?

Continued From Page 16)

dustry. Another explanation is that the activities of the transportation unions, supermarket unions, or possibly even some farm worker unions may have caused consumers to blame unions for high food prices, but this seems less plausible.

Consumers, like those who make public statements about high food prices, do not agree among themselves as to who is to blame for rising food costs. Their confusion reflects the complexity of this problem. We can say everyone comes in for some criticism, but that no one segment of the food industry is getting a majority of the blame for rising food prices. We also wanted to find out if particular groups of consumers were more inclined to blame one segment of the food industry than another. Were those living in the city more likely to blame farmers for high food prices than those living in rural areas? Were non-union members more likely to blame labor unions for food costs than union members? Answers to

questions like these will help us determine if certain types of consumers have an axe to grind with one or more of the various segments of the food industry.

For the most part, we found very few groups who appeared to single out any one portion of the food industry. Farmers were not blamed by any one group more than by any other. City residents were just as likely as those living in the country to blame farmers, and those with high incomes blamed farmers to about the same degree as those with lower incomes. In each case the number blaming farmers was small. Similarly, we found no particular groups singling out grocery stores, consumers, or even food manufacturers.

Some groups, however, seemed especially inclined to blame labor unions for high food prices. Men were more critical than women. Urban residents were more likely to criticize labor unions than rural dwellers. Those with higher education and higher incomes more frequently blamed unions than did those with less education and less income. Owners of businesses and white collar workers blamed unions to a greater degree than skilled and unskilled workers. Surprisingly, however, union members and others in the same household were just as likely as those who did not belong to unions to mention labor unions as contributing to higher food costs.

Unions appear to be singled out more frequently by those who are likely to have had the most experience with them (urban residents, the owners of businesses, and men). The more affluent (with higher incomes and higher education) also were critical of unions. Some of these groups are known union critics, so their attitudes are not unexpected. But the criticism of unions is more broadly based, since even union members were as likely as non-union members to indicate that unions were to blame for high food prices.

Perhaps the most disturbing finding involves those who said they didn't know whom to blame for rising food prices. The response patterns for this group were even clearer than those we have just discussed. Those who "didn't know" were more likely to be rural than urban, to have less education, to have lower incomes, and to feel more financial strain. They were also more likely to be older and to be women rather than men. Thus, those who "don't know" who to blame are generally the people who are hurt the most by higher food prices. We have found this same pattern in several other studies; those "who don't know" are usually those in the greatest need, but they know least about what is happening, why it is happening, or what to do about it.

The results of the survey suggest several conclusions.

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, May 19, 1973—17

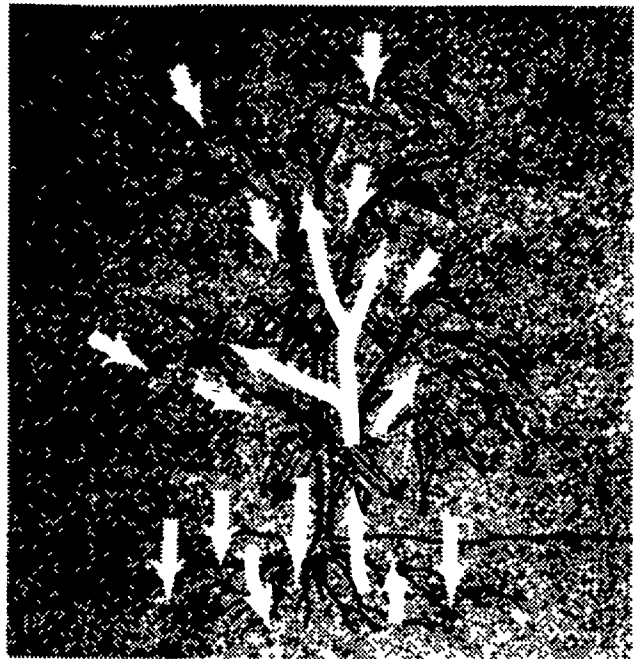
First, although consumers are upset about food prices, they are also upset about the cost of other goods and services as well. So much publicity has been focused on food costs that it is easy to overlook these other areas of consumer concern.

Those interviewed did not consider rising prices to be inevitable. When the respondents were asked if they believed that something could be done to keep the prices in the country from getting higher, nearly 60 percent answered in the affirmative. Apparently a majority of consumers believe that prices can be controlled. Perhaps this belief is based upon their perceptions of the success of President Nixon's economic program. These findings suggest that a potential exists for strong consumer demands that prices be again brought under strict control, because a majority of consumers are upset about high prices but a majority also believe that something can be done about holding prices down.

Because consumers' blame for high food prices is so dispersed, it is, however, not likely that there will be large scale attacks on any particular segment of the food industry in the near future. The

most accessible targets—farmers and grocery stores—are blamed by few consumers. As a result, widespread consumer boycotts against grocery stores or organized consumer pressure to control raw food prices are not likely on the scale that some have suggested. There is other evidence for this contention in the results of a recent inventory of Congressmen which found that they are not receiving a great deal of mail concerning food costs. While labor unions were the group blamed the most frequently they do not seem to be likely targets for action either. They are not very visible in the food industry nor are they easily reached by consumer pressures.

What we are likely to see in the months ahead, therefore, is probably a more concerted effort by consumers to see all prices controlled. But it is less likely that there will be large scale attacks by consumers on the food industry, particularly in the form of demands for punitive actions or massive boycotts. Instead we are likely to continue to hear much complaining and to see a few skirmishes as well as continued government action directed toward increasing supplies.



BANVEL® Herbicide

Post-emergence application gets to the root of your tough broadleaf weed problem

Banvel from Velsicol controls hard-to-kill broadleaves . . . smartweed, pigweed, morning glory, thistle, many others.



For one simple reason. Banvel translocates. Absorbed by leaves, stems, roots, Banvel moves with plant fluids from leaf tip to root tip. Destroys as it goes. So, no regrowth. Ask us for application details about Banvel, today.

DISTRIBUTED BY

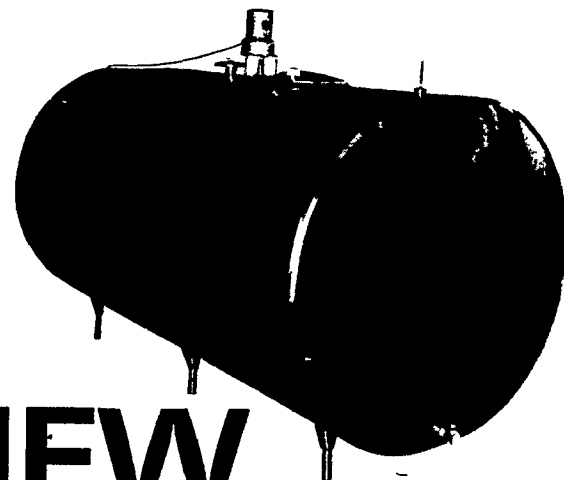
P. L. ROHRER & BRO., INC.

SMOKETOWN, PA.

PH. 717-397-3539

AGWAY

MOVE UP TO THE



NEW SUNSET "SPACE SAVER"

The Latest Development in Stainless Steel Milk Coolers for the Expanding Dairyman.

Move up in capacity without adding space. This efficient atmospheric cooler with the modern, elliptical shape gives up to 50% more capacity in the same floor space.

Move up in convenience as you add capacity. The "SPACE SAVER'S" shape, with its single positive-closing cover makes it ideal for automatic Sunset Spin-Clean washing. It's easier, more thorough, more economical, with no overspray.

Move up in versatility. "SPACE SAVERS" are "Advanced Evaporator" models which can be installed with one or two compressors, controlled from a dual refrigeration system. These "AE" designed coolers permit buying for your present production needs and allow future expansion at lowest cost.

Four "SPACE SAVER" sizes: 600, 800, 1,000 and 1,500 gallons.

10% Discount

on 1,000 & 1250 Gal. Tanks in Stock

AGWAY SUPPLY CENTER

1027 DILLERVILLE ROAD, LANCASTER

24 HOUR SERVICE DAILY

PH: 717-397-4761