

Off the Editor's Chest

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may be a good idea to make an extra carbon of your first letter, for "follow up" purposes, to be used just in case the manufacturer does fail to acknowledge or respond to your complaint.

There are undoubtedly cases in which consumers, no matter how well founded their complaints or how well presented, will be given the run-around or have their letters ignored entirely. On the whole, however, CR has been impressed with the trouble that responsible officials have gone to in cases that have been brought to their attention during the past few years to make reasonable adjustments of well-founded, clearly-presented complaints. This attitude will undoubtedly begin to permeate the lower hierarchies of business and manufacturing concerns and sales organizations as it becomes increasingly desirable to cultivate consumers' good will to secure sales on a competitive basis. However,

the practice of writing the head of a company, store, or manufacturing concern when a consumer finds it impossible to secure a satisfactory adjustment of his complaint at a lower level, is one that more consumers should adopt as a matter of policy.

It is not the mere letter of complaint or protest that is important. The statement of the case should be carefully and clearly worded, so that a busy executive can find out what is wrong, if possible, without the necessity of entering into further correspondence to obtain essential details needed to help him reach a preliminary decision. (Too often consumers consider vehemence in expressing their dissatisfaction a substitute for facts and information useful to the firm whose product is complained about, and they write letters that they think are forceful, but which nevertheless fail to state just what the trouble is or just what sort of adjustment is wanted or expected.) It is important to be clear, reasonable, and fair, and to make no statement which cannot be completely substantiated. (It

will serve no useful purpose to insult the executive or his sales organization or research department.)

Don't be too ready to blame the local dealer. He may not be even as well situated as you are to get adjustments, either because he's not good at letter-writing (many well-intentioned merchants have difficulty in finding either the time, clerical help, or inspiration for preparing such correspondence) or because the factory in many cases will, as a matter of policy, make the dealer absorb as many of the costs due to defective products as it can. (This has often been true of big concerns which have national reputations and which sell a product that is so much in demand that dealers vie with one another to obtain the local agency for it.)

The manufacturer may not care a great deal about your troubles, but if he is wise, he will be decidedly concerned about troubles you are having with his product which are likely to be representative of difficulties experienced by many other purchasers of his goods.

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†Indicates that listings of names or brands are included.