

The Little Consumer

MANY MOONS AGO, THERE WAS A LADY NAMED MA SON, who lived with her two sons, John and Joe at Morne Serpent, in the quarter of Gros Islet. John and Joe's father died when they were two years old. The family was very poor and for several days the two boys went to school without any food. John and Joe had no friends, the other boys at school often laughed at the way they were dressed; always in clothes that were hand-me-downs, most times three sizes larger than their small bodies. This did not bother the boys; their mother taught them how to focus on the good and to love whatever they had no matter how small.

One evening, after their mother had lit a fire to prepare dinner, she noticed that the cupboard was bare. There was no butter, oil, flour, or rice. "John! John!" She called, "I want you and your brother to go to the supermarket to get a few things for



me to cook." They were in the habit of shopping for their mother on late notice. Without delay, John took the money from his mother and ran down the road to the supermarket. They were in a great hurry and went straight to the shelves where the items were stored for sale. John and Joe took the items to the cashier where they paid for them with the coins their mother had given to John.

After John paid for the goods, the two grabbed the bags and skipped all the way home. "Mama! Mama!" The boys shouted. "We are back, we got everything."

Ma Son greeted the boys at the door, taking the foodstuffs from them and hurriedly went on preparing dinner. When she took out the butter, the writing on the label caught her eyes. "John, Joe, come! Look, the butter expire!" "Expire!" John and Joe looked surprised, "what is expire, Mama?" "When food is too stale to use," their mother said. "How do you know, Mama?" John asked. "It is written on the tin, or on the box," Ma Son started by pointing to the label. "As a consumer you need to be responsible!" "Consumer?" Joe asked. "What is that Mama?" "I am sending you to school and you are not learning anything!" Ma Son said with a frown.

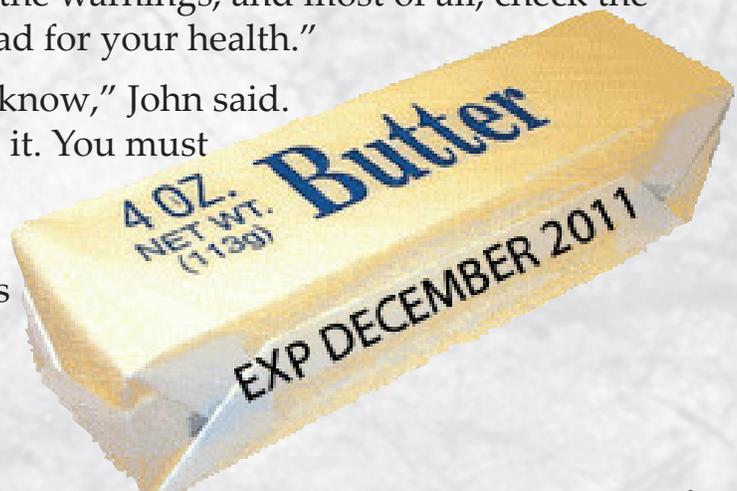
"Is not that," John pleaded. "The word is new, we never heard it before." "Yes, Yes!" Joe said in support of his brother. "Consumer?" Joe shouted. "We not students again, we are consumers?"

"You are students, and yes, you are also consumers," Ma Son said.

"Consumers are people who buy goods and other things they need and not to resell." "Wow," Joe said. "Buying the things at the supermarket for Mama, makes us consumers, John." "Yes, you are my boys, and as a consumer you must be responsible. A responsible consumer must always look carefully at the goods before buying. You must also read. Read the labels, read the expiry date, read the warnings, and most of all, check the contents to see if the product is bad for your health."

"Mama that is a lot for us to know," John said. "Yes, John, but you have to know it. You must know your rights."

By the time Ma Son was finished explaining what the boys responsibilities were, it was late.





She needed John and Joe to return the butter before the shop closed for the night.

“John, I hope you have the bill,” his mother said. “The bill, Mama? No we leave it at the shop,” said John. “Oh no, you must not do that boys. You are not responsible! It is your duty to make sure you always keep your bills or receipts until you use the goods. The bill will show you bought the goods. It shows what you bought, where you bought it, when you bought it, and the price you paid for it. After paying, you must insist you get a receipt if you are not given one.”



“Mother,
can we go
back to look

for the receipt, I know
exactly where I throw it in the
shop. Let us take back the
butter,” John said. “Go boys,
and please hurry. I can’t cook
without butter.” Ma Son
said.

The boys grabbed
the packet of butter and
was about to run back to
the shop where they hoped
to find the receipt. Before
they left, however, Ma Son
gave them a short lecture.

“Before you complain, be clear
in your mind why you are not
happy with the butter. Was it a wrong
product? Was it expired goods?
What exactly went wrong?”
Ma Son asked both her boys.

“Expired goods!” Both
boys exclaimed. “Are you sure?”
“Yes, Mama,” they said. “You sure it was

not the way you were treated or just bad service?" Ma Son asked. "Yes Mama!" The boys said.

"Be clear in your mind what you want to happen when you complain," Ma Son said. "Do you want an apology? Do you want a different product? Do you want the goods replaced? Do you want a refund?" Ma Son's face appeared old in the pale light of the room. She was very serious. "Remember, you must be business-like. Stay calm. When you speak to the people at the shop, don't raise your voice."

"Yes, Mama!" John said. "But who we must go to at the shop?" "It depends; in this case go first to the cashier, who received your money and she will guide you." Ma Son said. "Of course, it can be different depending on the situation, how serious it is, and the size of the complaint. You must always try to settle matters with the people involved. In a big company always complain to the most senior person in the business or to the manager of the customer services department, if there is one. If after that you are not satisfied, contact the Consumer Affairs Department, at the Ministry of Commerce. They will be able to help you handle your complaint if you are still not happy about it, by giving you proper advice."

"Consumer Affairs Department," a curious John said. "Who are these people? They in Saint Lucia?" "Of course," Ma Son replied. "They on the 4th floor of the Heraldine Rock Building, at the Castries Waterfront. The Consumer Affairs Department is responsible for two things. The first is to make sure consumers are protected, and number two, to make sure consumers know their rights, by providing education and information on the rights and responsibilities of consumers."

The boys scampered down to the shop. The owner was about closing when they arrived. John being the eldest spoke first. "Good night, Sir," he said. "My brother and I were here just a while ago. Our mother sent us to buy groceries. We bought this packet of butter here."

Meanwhile, Joe was busy searching around the counter until he found what he was searching for. "I find the bill!" He shouted. The nervousness drained from John's face.

"What is wrong with the butter, you did not even open it" The owner said "Its expired!" John said proudly. Joe gave the owner the bill to show where it was purchased, the cost, and to confirm that it was indeed the packet of butter, because all this was on the bill from the cash register, including the time the purchase was made.

The Consumer Affairs Department

The Waterfront 4th floor, Heraldine Rock Building, Castries

Two main responsibilities

1. To ensure consumers are protected.
2. To ensure consumers know their rights, by providing education and information on the rights and responsibilities of consumers.





Bank of Saint Lucia

The owner took one look at the label, then went to the chiller and gave the boys another packet of butter. He asked the cashier for a small plastic bag and handed the wrapped package to John. John opened the package and checked the expiry date on the packet of butter inside. "I see you are a wise boy," the shop owner said. "Is it OK?" "Yes," said John. "It will expire next year." "That is good." The shop owner said. "All's well that ends well."

Ma Son finished her cooking with the fresh packet of butter then called her sons to the kitchen table to eat. Everyone enjoyed the food. After the boys had cleaned their plates, Ma Son looked down at them and said: "Now, it is time for me to teach you some more. I will tell you about a Consumer who did not know his rights." The boys were tired from a hard day at school and the late errand, but they listened attentively as their mother began.

There once was a very wise little girl named Stephanie. Stephanie enjoyed going shopping with her mother. She knew exactly what she wanted to buy. Before going shopping she would make a shopping list. She also knew where to find the things she wanted. Before buying, Stephanie always compared prices. She also checked the radio, television and newspapers for sales. Stephanie knew the difference between her needs and her wants. She always shopped for what she needed, so when she shopped for school, she said, "mummy do not buy me a brand name bag; it is not a need, it is a want. A want is something I can do without. A need is something I cannot do without; I can do without a brand name bag."

If there was someone who liked to ask questions, it was Stephanie. She thought it was important to get information before making a purchase. She observed the goods carefully before buying. She read all instructions and made sure she was given a proper bill at all times. If she was not happy with a product or service, she spoke about it to the seller, or manufacturer, or the Consumer Affairs Department, and she did all of that in a business-like manner. Stephanie knew that these were her responsibilities as a consumer.

Stephanie and her best friend Dora went shopping one day for shoes. Stephanie tried on about five pairs of shoes that day. By the time she tried the fifth pair the store owner became upset. "Why are you trying on all the shoes in my store?" the owner asked.

“I am trying on the shoes to see which is the best one to buy,” Stephanie replied.” It is my responsibility to make sure that the shoes fit me before I buy and it is my right to choose which one to buy. I should be able to select from a wide range of shoes, it is my right.” “Rights?” shouted the store owner. “What rights, since when do consumers have rights?” “You have a shop and you don’t know about my rights, well let me tell you,” Stephanie replied.

Stephanie thought wow, this is a good time to explain to the store owner about the rights of consumers.



**This is the right size!
I know my Consumer Rights**

Long ago consumers had no rights, so the store owners took advantage of them. This went on for hundreds of years. In time, many people around the world became concerned and formed consumer groups to protect and educate other consumers. President John. F. Kennedy of the United States of America was also concerned and so he passed into law four basic rights. These rights were later referred to as The Consumer Bill of Rights. Eventually, four more consumer rights were added as a result of the world consumer movement campaign. Today, there are eight rights protecting consumers and they are:

- ⇒ 1. **THE RIGHT TO SAFETY:** To be protected against products, production processes and services which are hazardous to health or life.
- ⇒ 2. **THE RIGHT TO SATISFACTION OF BASIC NEEDS:** To have access to basic essential goods and services, adequate food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, education and sanitation.
- ⇒ 3. **THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD:** To have consumer interest represented in the development and implementation of government policy, and in the development of products and services.
- ⇒ 4. **THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE:** To be able to select from a range of products and services, offered at competitive prices with an assurance of satisfactory quality.
- ⇒ 5. **THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT:** To live and work in an environment which is non-threatening to the well-being of present and future generations.
- ⇒ 6. **THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED:** To be given facts needed to make an informed choice, and to be protected against dishonest or misleading advertising and labeling.

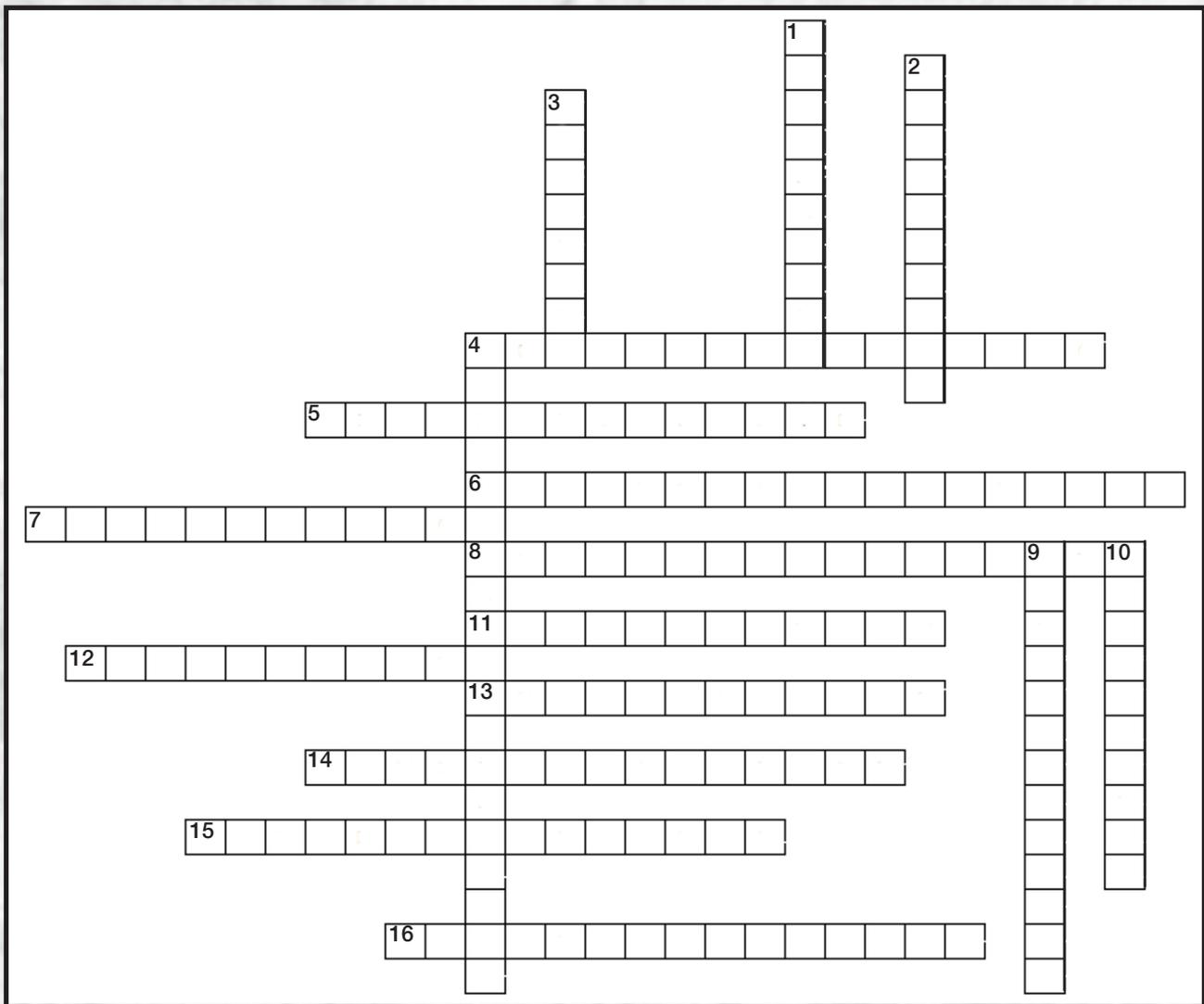
- ⇒ 7. **THE RIGHT TO REDRESS:** To receive a fair settlement of just claims, including compensation for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services.
- ⇒ 8. **THE RIGHT TO CONSUMER EDUCATION:** To acquire knowledge and skills needed to make informed, confident choices about goods and services while being aware of basic consumer rights and responsibilities and how to act on them.

By the time Stephanie was through, a crowd of customers had gathered to listen to what she was saying. They were very impressed. Someone shouted: "Wow this little girl is intelligent!" Another wanted to know where she had gathered all that information.

One little girl who was in the crowd shouted, "this girl can really take charge." Stephanie looked at her and said with a smile, "yes my girl, consumers must always take charge; it is your right, it is your responsibility."

THE END

Cross Word Puzzle - Consumer Information



Across

- 4 Medicine available only by written order from a doctor
- 5 last date a food product should be used , yeast or baby formula
- 6 Medicine available without a written order from a doctor
- 7 authority , a right to
- 8 elements in a product that make the product effective
- 11 likely to lead to addiction
- 12 Demonstrated or proven effectiveness
- 13 a product that does not have a brand name
- 14 packaged to make it clear whether the product has been opened since packaged
- 15 vitamins have been added to the product
- 16 the nation in which the apparel product was made

Down

- 1 A person licensed to sell prescription drugs with written order from a doctor
- 2 a store name used as the trade name of a product.
- 3 date a food product was processed or packaged , with can goods
- 4 a product that claims to affect the structure of function of the body
- 9 a well known nationally advertised trade name of product
- 10 Other physical conditions, usually unwanted, that result from taking a medicinal drug

Answers

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Pharmacist | 9 National brand |
| 2 Store brand | 10 Side affect |
| 3 Pack date | 11 Habit forming |
| 4 Personal hygiene drug | 12 Reliability |
| 4 Prescription drug | 13 Generic brand |
| 5 Expiration date | 14 Tamper resistant |
| 6 Over the counter drug | 15 Vitamin enriched |
| 7 Jurisdiction | 16 Country of origin |
| 8 Active ingredients | |