

MESSAGE BY THE HON. EMMA HIPPOLYTE
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CONSUMER AFFAIRS
ON THE OBSERVANCE OF
WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY
MARCH 15, 2013

Saint Lucia is once again happy to join the rest of the world in celebrating World Consumer Rights Day on March 15, 2013. This year's theme: **"Consumer Justice Now!"** focuses on "The right to redress"; that is, the right to receive a fair settlement of just claims, including compensation for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services.

On March 15, 1962 President Kennedy addressed Congress and called for everyone to recognize four basic consumer rights. These four rights which form the foundation of what is now known as the Consumer Bill of Rights in the United States are:

1. The right to safety - To be protected against products, production processes and services that are hazardous to health or life.

2. The right to be informed – that is to be given the facts needed to make an informed choice, and to be protected against dishonest or misleading advertising and labeling.
3. 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.
4. The right to be heard - To have consumer interests represented in the making and execution of government policy, and in the development of products and services.

The declaration of those four consumer rights was a momentous occasion in the history of the Consumer Movement. It gave momentum to the cries of consumer advocates all over the world and inspired Consumers International, a non-profit organization representing 220 consumer groups in 115 countries worldwide, to observe March 15 every year as WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY. World Consumer rights day was established in 1983 to promote the basic rights of consumers everywhere, at which time four additional consumer rights were developed. These are:

1. The right to satisfaction of basic needs – that is to have access to basic, essential goods and services: adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, public utilities, water and sanitation.
2. The right to redress – that is to receive a fair settlement of just claims, including compensation for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services.
3. The right to Consumer Education – that is 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. And ;
4. The right to a healthy environment – that is to live and work in an environment that is non-threatening to the well-being of present and future generations.

Today, as we celebrate World Consumer Rights Day, I commend the National Consumers Association on their efforts at consumer advocacy and encourage consumers to join the NCA to ensure that their voices are heard.

According to the late President Kennedy, “Consumers are the largest economic group, affecting and affected by almost every public and private economic

decision. Yet they are the only important group whose views are often not heard”.

However, while we have rights, all rights come with responsibilities. In the 1980's, the President of Consumers International then president Anwar Fazal, led the call to introduce the following responsibilities to compliment the consumer rights. These remain crucial principles for many consumer rights organizations today:

1. Critical awareness – This places the responsibility on consumers to be awakened and to be more questioning about the provision of the quality of goods and services.
2. Involvement or action – the responsibility of consumers to assert themselves and act to ensure that they get a fair deal.
3. Social responsibility – it is the responsibility of consumers to act with social responsibility, with concern and sensitivity to the impact of their actions on other citizens, in particular, in relation to disadvantaged groups in the community and in relation to the economic and social realities prevailing.
4. Ecological responsibility - there must be a heightened sensitivity to the impact of consumer decisions on the physical environment, which must be

developed in a harmonious way, promoting conservation as the most critical factor in improving the real quality of life for the present and the future. And;

5. Solidarity - the best and most effective action is through cooperative efforts through the formation of consumer/citizen groups who together can have strength and influence to ensure that adequate attention is given to consumer issues.

On this observance of World Consumer Rights Day I pledge Government's continued committed to the growth and development of every Saint Lucian citizen and will ensure that legislation, when enacted will facilitate fair treatment of all Saint Lucians.

I THANK YOU