

The Principles of Consumer Rights

The modern consumer movement is largely a product of the 1960s with the foundation of the Consumers' Association in Britain. Ralph Nadir was well known for his consumer campaigning in the United States of America and US President John F Kennedy declared to the US Congress that consumers have four basic rights. These were:

- the right to safety
- the right to be informed
- the right to choose
- the right to be heard.

To these 'Consumers International' added four more rights:

- the right to satisfaction of basic needs
- the right to redress
- the right to education
- the right to a healthy environment.

Consumer rights were finally elevated to a position of international recognition and legitimacy, acknowledged by developed and developing countries alike. This single most important document for consumer protection serves as a vital lobbying tool for those campaigning for change. They provide both a framework and benchmark for government, particularly in developing countries, and for establishing their legal basis for consumer protection.

The basic consumer rights are:

The right to satisfaction of basic needs - Access to basic, essential goods and services: adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, education and sanitation.

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

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 labelling

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

The right to be heard - To have consumer interests presented in the making and execution of government policy, and in the development of products and services

The right to redress - To receive a fair settlement of just claims, including compensation for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services

The right to consumer education - To acquire knowledge and skill 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

The right to a healthy environment - To live and work in an environment that is non-threatening to the well - being of present and future generations.

Think about the word "**law**". What does it mean to you? A set of boring rules thought up by adults to stop you from doing what you want to do and make you do something that you don't? Or do you prefer not to think about it at all because you don't believe that it has anything to do with you?

The law affects everything you do each day. You have to stay in full-time education until you're sixteen because the law says you must.

Your teachers are there because the local Education Authority has a duty to employ them to teach you. (Whether you have to wear a uniform or not is up to the school; it may be one of their rules but it isn't the law).

If you leave school and get a job, the law will affect your employment rights, your tax and insurance contributions, your holidays and pension rights. If unemployed it will determine your right to welfare benefits and if you go to college it affects your grant aid.

As a consumer, the law is there to help you to get a fair deal by trying to strike a reasonable balance between you and the supplier.