

Ford Opposes Consumer Protection Agency

Washington

President Ford told 3000 cheering members of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce yesterday that he opposes a congressional proposal for a consumer protection agency.

A consumer protection agency, he said, would be a waste of money.

"I do not believe that we need yet another federal bureaucracy in Washington with its attendant cost — about \$16 million over the next three years — and hundreds of additional feder-

al employees," Mr. Ford said.

The 3000 persons at the 63rd annual meeting of the Chamber of Commerce interrupted Mr. Ford's half-hour speech 15 times with applause and gave him two standing ovations.

In the Senate, a consumer protection agency bill has already been reported out by the Government Operations Committee. Several bills are pending in the House but none has yet moved through committee.

Advocates of the agency, which would represent consumers' interests before other federal agencies, are optimistic that the proposals will fare better in the new, more liberal Congress than they have in legislative battles over the past several years.

But Mr. Ford went on record yesterday as being adamant in his opposition.

"I have ordered action by the executive departments and agencies to make major

improvements in the quality of service to the consumer, and I have asked the Congress to postpone action on legislation which would create a new federal agency for consumer advocacy," Mr. Ford said.

Mr. Ford also said Congress should turn to ending fair trade laws that allow manufacturers to set minimum prices for items they sell.

Discount stores have been trying for years to overturn these state laws so they

could sell at lower prices.

He said he wants repeal of the fair trade laws because Americans would spend less money for their goods under a competitive system.

"Federal law now permits states to allow manufacturers to dictate the price of their products, and drives up the cost of such items as books, cosmetics, shoes and hardware," Mr. Ford said.

"These depression-era laws — which cost consumers an estimated \$2 billion a

year — should be laid to rest alongside the NRA blue eagle of the same period."

Mr. Ford also proposed to eliminate many of the 5146 different government forms that the public must fill out and called for a general streamlining of the federal bureaucracy.

"While we are all accustomed to the open debate on the government's budget, far too little attention has been focused on the ways in which government regulations levy a hidden tax on

the American people," Mr. Ford said.

"In the nearly 90 years since we created the first federal regulatory commission, we have built a system of regulation which abounds with contradictions and excesses — all to the detriment of the public. There are sound estimates that government regulations have added billions of unnecessary dollars to business and consumer costs every year," he said.

United Press