

# Watch Out for Phony Sales Pitch

Attorney General Avrum M Gross warned consumers today that there has been increased activity in door-to-door sales, particularly those involving encyclopedia sales and magazine subscriptions. Gross said that while many of the out-of-state or local door-to-door sales persons may be legitimate, definite problems have arisen concerning others.

Gross warns consumers to be aware of sales persons using certain come-on gimmicks in order to make their sales. These sales gimmicks include, for example, a special endorsement spiel. The consumer was told that he is getting a "special lower price" for such endorsement which could be featured on a radion, TV or newspaper advertisement when such is not the case. The purpose of this type of endorsement, Gross said, was to flatter the consumer into thinking that he's really helping to sell an educational program and, of course, is getting a break on the price of sets of encyclopedias or certain magazines.

Gross said there are other false type of price reductions that a slick sale person can use to induce sales, and the best way to check is to find out what the going price is in the local area. Gross said that if someone carefully looked into the matter, they would probably find that within the door-to-door solicitation of encyclopedia sets, for example, that the sets were grossly over-priced from what one could buy in a bookstore. In addition, Gross said, a consumer should know whether or not a set is presently up to date and just how much you're going to spend to keep it up to date by supplements. In this regard, Gross said, many of the contracts being offered induce the consumer to buy them by a reasonable or nominal price for the original set, but a long, drawn out supplement subscription could run for ten years or so and cost the consumer hundreds of dollars.

Other gimmicks which are used to sale encyclopedia and magazine sales include using the sympathy approach whereby a company may employ young solicitors for

sales persons who are claiming that they are using the money which they are collecting for the subscriptions for college or nursing school or that they may be awarded special scholarships. Gross stated that one should be very wary of such approaches and should buy only on the basis of really wanting the product. Too often, he said the consumer is lured into purchasing an encyclopedia or magazine subscription or other product based upon the sympathy of the individual rather than because they want or need the product.

Gross warns the consumer to consider the following before purchasing any encyclopedia set or magazines or other products that are going to be delivered in the future and require pre-payment:

1. The consumer should ask for identification and request proof of an Alaskan business license.

2. Ask yourself if you actually want to buy the encyclopedia set or magazine or other product or whether you are basically buying because the individual is giving you a sympathy approach.

3. If there are magazine sales involved, ask or find out what the usual newsstand price is, the usual or special subscription rate by that magazine, and what the difference is by the company soliciting for your sale.

4. Get legible signatures and addresses of the company, particularly if it is out of state along with a local office or point of contact.

5. Ask how soon you may expect delivery of the magazine.

6. Be aware, Gross said, that you will have a 72-hour cancellation period in which to consider whether you truly want to purchase the magazine or other product.

7. If in doubt about the company, don't buy and ask the person to come back at a later time and report your suspicions or inquiry to the Attorney General's Office, Consumer Protection Section, in your area.

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