

Suits Hundreds Of Miles Away

The Federal Trade Commission filed suit March 4, in Seattle to prevent businesses from taking persons to court hundreds of miles from their homes.

The use of distant courts, "effectively deprives defendants of a reasonable opportunity to approve, answer and defend," said William Erxelben, regional trade director.

The suit was primarily aimed at three national firms — Montgomery Ward, Spiegel, Inc., and West Coast Credit Corp. and a Seattle-based collection agency called Commercial Service Co., Inc.

Montgomery Ward, Erxelben said, often files default actions in Anchorage, 500 or more miles from villages in which the defendants live. The FTC mainly deals with deceptive trade practices, but Erxelben said the use of distant and inconvenient courts was unfair.