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Price 7 Cents

Price Control Panel Wants Two Women to Investigate Local Retail Ceiling Prices

Board Member Says Work is not Snooping if Properly Done -- Many Say it is, and Refuse the Job

The Reading Ration and Price Control Board this week is looking for two women who will serve voluntarily as investigators in the matter of price ceiling observance in Reading stores. "It is not 'snooping'", says Irving F. Jewett, chairman of the price control panel.

The board has for some time been trying to find helpers for this work and Mr. Jewett points out that it merely means checking up on all the stores—particularly food stores—to see if the managers understand the requirements of the price ceilings code. It in no way means that the local board is seeking to prosecute local storekeepers.

It has been carefully pointed out to several who have been offered the job that the investigator would, upon entering the store, seek out the manager and inform him of the purpose of the visit. If there were any cases where the price ceilings were not being observed these would be called to his attention and he would be asked by the local board to make changes.

It would be only in the event of

open defiance of board rulings that prosecution might take place.

In some instances local stores are not in accord on the matter of point values and there are stores where fewer points are asked for commodities that rate higher on the official scale. This is not allowable. Where prices are under the ceiling, the board does not attempt to bring prices up to a standard level but it is presumed by some that one result of the proposed plan would be to influence merchants to get higher prices if they found there was a chance. It may be generally supposed, however, that not many local merchants are selling much if any below ceiling prices.

In spite of the explanations by members of the board those who have been asked to take the job of

price investigation have refused. Most of them felt that it was "snooping" and some would apparently have taken on the work if they could have been paid for it. It is required, however, that the service be voluntary, the only paid employees of the board being the office administrator and clerical staff.

Right now, the board wants two women who will undertake the task of consulting with merchants on ceiling prices. Mr. Jewett states that it will be a service to the buying public and in many cases to the merchants. If approached properly, the job need have no flavor of "snooping" and should require only the most friendly relations between the storekeeper and the investigator, the board declares.

Price panels in other towns are issuing public statements advising purchasers, with complaints against merchants over matters of price, to take steps to bring about legal prosecution and redress. Mr. Jewett declares that such should not be necessary if the suggested plan of using investigators can be put into operation.

The difficulty, however, is to find two women who will take on the duties.