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Count Your Change

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Although tradition has it that the City Slicker looks to the farmer for his pickings, he has not been completely unknown to the college man either. Relatively new to the matters of budgeting and shopping, Freshmen and their immediate elders are often less likely than more experienced men-of-the-world to spot an exorbitant price, with the result that prices frequently vary inversely as the distance to the nearest college community. It is in defense against this situation that the Student Council has organized a "Consumers' Aid Bureau," with representatives in each House and dormitory, to keep an eye on local retailers.

It has been suggested that the enormous task of comparing prices and tracking down the radio men who charge five dollars for the tubes they didn't replace will prove too much for the Council committee, unless they wish to make a professional job of it and engage in legal tangles. On the other hand, a lot can be done without calling in a lawyer. The Council hopes to succeed in most cases by merely consulting with the firm in question. Clear cut cases of dishonesty, if they arise, will be informed that they aren't going unnoticed, and even subjected to publicity if necessary. Nor should the Bureau's activities hurt Harvard-Cambridge relations; only those retailers engaging in unfair prices or practices will be hit, and the Harvard Square Business Men's Association has even offered to serve in an advisory capacity.

The Coop, which was intended to force local dealers to moderate prices by offering low rates itself, hasn't been wholly successful in this respect, except in the case of textbooks. But the more direct methods of the Council's Bureau many make a dent where the Coop did not. However, the final success of the scheme depends on the extent to which undergraduates actually care where their money goes. If it is found easier to pay more than to carry a complaint to a Bureau representative, the plan will languish. On the other hand, if it catches on, it can do a great deal towards keeping the Rising Cost of Living out of Harvard Square.