

A few tips for consumer body

A visiting Labour Member of Parliament, Mr Richard Mitchell, yesterday said any consumer council should be independent of the Government and that it should have a strong base of legislation.

After discussing various aspects of the local consumer movement with the full Consumer Council, Mr Mitchell said even if the council should be subsidised by the Government it must be an independent body and should criticise the Government if necessary.

Mr Mitchell is the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister for Prices and Consumer Protection. He said it is important for every country to develop a strong consumer movement.

Regarding the one in Hongkong, he said he hopes the Consumer Council has started on the right line.

He noted that consumer protection in Britain is much more developed than in Hongkong because there is a strong base of legislation in the UK.

The UK Government has to consult the Federation of British Industries and the Trades Union Congress on consumer matters and policies. Mr Mitchell said he hopes such consultation will be extended to the National Consumer Council, which represents various consumer councils and organisations in the country.

The Parliamentarian said the Hongkong Consumer Council should be given more statutory power to enable it to cover more consumer activities, but he stressed that the council should not become just another Government department.

He also pointed out that the responsibilities of any consumer council must cover public utilities. If these are not monitored there will be a big gap in the protection movement, he said.

In Britain, Mr Mitchell said all public utilities and nationalised industries are covered by relevant consumer councils, which are represented on the National Consumer Council.

(See Page 6)