

VILLAGE VIEW

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silver, and even though gold and silver prices have risen to undreamed-of heights, we still use coins and bills to purchase necessities no longer produced in our back yards.

In fact, a recent University of Massachusetts study of the possibilities of our state's becoming agriculturally self-sufficient revealed that while only a fourth of the potential cropland in the commonwealth presently grows a food crop, even if all available or convertible land was planted, the state would fall far short of food self-sufficiency.

Part of the reason is that livestock operations—swine, cattle and poultry—rely on grain feeds best grown outside New England. Massachusetts farmers presently grow only 12% of the food we consume; 88% is imported. To produce as little as half as much food as is needed in the state, we'd have to put the entire area under cultivation and still ship in grain from other parts of the country to feed livestock.

The principle reason for the imbalance is our increased population. As the numbers of people swell, the demand for space rises. Unless people opt to live underground and till the soil above their heads, agriculture will continue to decline and food prices, to rise.

And, unless people throughout the world limit population growth, food supplies will continue to decline. Housing, one of life's basic necessities, occupies space that could otherwise yield food, another of life's basic necessities.

In October, 1977, there were an estimated 4,336,395,293 humans in the world; by November, 1979, the figure had risen to 4,471,610,049, an increase of over 135 million. Each minute the world population increases by 172 persons.

Farmers move in where forests are cut down, even though the land is only marginally fertile and much of it unsuitable for sustained agriculture. Food is being produced today at the cost of food for tomorrow as topsoil washes away and aquifers are drained by irrigation techniques.

Humanity, once more, is demonstrating its propensity to look only at today's needs, to meet those fully rather than plan for the future. To plan, to sacrifice in this decade, in order that future decades may offer posterity a liveable environment, asks too much of us. We think only of our immediate wants, shrugging our shoulders when asked to consider generations to follow. "Let them work out their own solutions; I feel I must have this, here and now."

Through it all, the basic medium of exchange, gold and silver, continues to reign. Make no mistake about that. As long as your store of precious metal lasts, you'll survive. When it's gone, you're done for.

In the meantime, what do you do with your valuables? The greatest threat of loss is theft. Nationwide records show one household in five is plundered, prime targets being family silverware and jewelry. Stereo sets, TVs, even furs are passed by; but silverware and gold jewelry are scooped into a pillow slip, whisked away, melted down, and sold.

What are your options? You can sell it all now and invest the proceeds in the money market. You can rent a big safe-

deposit box and deposit your valuables therein. You can acquire a vicious dog. You can arm yourself. You can hide your treasure and hope it's not found if someone breaks into your house. You can insure it, at considerable expense, against theft. You can bury it in the garden and hope you'll be able to unearth it when you try digging it up.

Selling it could be heartbreaking. There's the service for twelve inherited from your grandmother; it has sentimental as well as monetary value. Here, the candlesticks, a wedding present; the tea set your mother left you; the fruit bowl, traditional symbol of Thanksgiving in your family.

Storing it, hiding it, burying it deprives you of pleasure; you can neither display nor use it conveniently. A dog can be a liability as well as a joy. Guns can be as dangerous to their owners as to potential thieves.

And jewelry? Your wedding ring, the earrings your great-grandmother wore the day she was married, your great uncle's gold watch, the bracelet or brooch or chain that's a memento of a special occasion; what do you do to keep them safe?

These are questions with no easy answers, but everyone who owns objects of silver and gold should face them squarely. Locks on doors and windows keep honest people from entering; good ones will slow down or discourage a thief, but a determined burglar, given time, will gain entrance.

To protect yourself and your valuables, store them securely, even if it means foregoing using them or having them daily at hand. You can always take them out for special occasions and later return them to that place not even the most enterprising thief can get his hands on.

As the price of gold soared to new all-time highs recently and the world seemed gripped with "gold fever", silver prices climbed, as well.

Since people first put a value on these metals and began to use coins to replace the cumbersome barter system, silver and gold have been the basis for exchange, worldwide. Times may have changed, but precious metals have an intrinsic value unparalleled by other goods or commodities.

You can swap a day's work for another person's day's work instead of a day's pay; you can trade duplicates in your stamp collection for those in someone else's hoard; you can barter an antique table for a second-hand car; if you have a too-large garden, you can make a deal with a neighbor to grow more vegetables than he needs, and to give you part of his crop in return for use of your land.

The exchange system has many advantages: nobody keeps any records, everyone involved goes his way satisfied, and gains are taxable to neither party. There's much to be said for it.

But not everything we need is available by barter. The grocery store isn't interested in participating; neither is the man who runs the corner gas station, nor the shoe store proprietor, nor the druggist. Within the memory-span of some of us, the family doctor was grateful to accept a bushel of quahogs in payment for an office visit, but that's rare today.

Time was when every proper Cape Codder raised a pig each summer; at fall butchering time, neighbors shared portions with one another, timing days they killed their pigs to provide everyone a meat-supply well into the winter. Parts of the porker were smoked, cured and preserved in small quantities that would keep without refrigeration.

People kept flocks of hens, gathering enough eggs daily for family consumption; when the biddies stopped laying, they ended up in the stew kettle.

Here on the Cape and on the Islands as well, there were once many sheep. In every neighborhood someone kept enough cows to supply everyone with milk. Land now occupied by houses, businesses or golf courses was then pasture or hay fields or spots to grow vegetables.

Today we need money to acquire necessities. Even though our coins and bills are no longer backed by gold and