



As the days grow shorter and cooler, and as the hurricanes swipe at the Caribbean Islands and deal bodyblows to our gulf coast, and may even threaten to come our way, we begin to ready ourselves for coming winter weather.

Once again we're facing the unpleasant necessity of paying for heating our homes this winter; it may be a more unpleasant experience this year than last.

On the other hand, it may not be as bad as a lot of us have feared. The reason for this is our old friend, the Law of Supply and Demand. And each one of you who has been doing your part last winter to keep your consumption of oil products of all kinds to a minimum have -- at least in part -- yourselves to thank.

The oil producing countries of the Middle East and those in South America have discovered they are now receiving less, in total income, than when the price of oil was lower than it is now because less oil is being consumed, the world around.

The oil producing countries have more oil than they know what to do with, and customer demand has dropped off. Part of the reason for this is the world-wide recession, since production of all kinds has been cut back with a corresponding reduction in the consumption of oil. And part of it is because millions of Americans cut back on their personal consumption.

The combination has created an oil glut for the oil producing countries. They can't sell nearly as much as they have the capacity to produce, and their profits, in some instances, are as much as one-third lower than before they jacked up the price.

If that news doesn't warm the cockles of your heart and make it worth while keeping your thermostat set at a lower temperature, keeping your speed down to the 55 miles-per-hour national limit, wearing a sweater around the house when you feel chilly, I don't know what might.

This is the economic squeeze that's apparently the only kind of language the greedy can understand.

At the time of this writing, the oil producing countries are having a big meeting in Vienna to discuss what's to be done about this unexpected development, and no one can yet guess what'll come of it, but whatever the outcome, oil prices aren't as apt to soar as everyone feared. Even if they reach agreement, you can be sure that one or more of these countries will make quiet private deals to sell oil at more reasonable prices in response to this economic pressure.

It's not reasonable to expect oil prices to come down to any great extent. Just as unions resist any move to reduce wages, the oil producing countries will resist strongly any moves to lower prices. There's a good chance, however, the threats to raise them are just that,

now -- empty threats.

If it should turn out that's what happens, it's good news for all our pocketbooks, since it's not only our comfort in keeping warm that's involved. Operating our cars, paying for lights, and operating household appliances also costs more when oil prices increase.

The small adjustments in your living patterns, (along with other factors, it's true) have combined to exert economic pressure on the primary sources of foreign oil.

Those of us who did our parts to help bring this about can take satisfaction in knowing our small sacrifice did help.

If the same kind of joint effort was extended to help solve many of our problems, imagine what we could accomplish!

The joint-effort to conserve energy has had an effect on the policies of nations half-way around the globe; it is mandated by speed limits on our highways; it's been backed up by increasing costs of wasteful behavior.

We've all learned we can save money by handling our world's national resources more carefully. We all have respect for money, even if we haven't shown much for the resources themselves.

Sad to say, all too few of us have the vision to carry this lesson into other areas of our lives.

Only about 3% of the people living in the Town of Barnstable are participating in recycling glass bottles and jars, tin and aluminum materials, and newspapers.

Even with this small number taking part, however, the recycling effort is paying for itself. Just think for a moment what it would mean if 50% or 75% of us were recycling. The expenses would not increase appreciably, but the profits would rise considerably.

Not only would the recycled materials show a healthy profit to the town but space would be saved in the Town Dump -- a non-replacable natural resource not unlike the world's reserves. That would make it worth the effort, even if there were no dollar profit to be gained.

This is but one example of ways people could effect economies, if they would. We complain about rising taxes and increased costs of everything, but when provided opportunities to effect savings, only a small number of us voluntarily exert ourselves.

The economic pressures will, eventually, force us all to cooperate since buying land for a new disposal area when the present one is full will be expensive; the alternative of trucking wastes off the Cape or building a plant to dispose of them will also be expensive.

Only through the willingness of many more of us can that day be postponed; wouldn't it make sense to join those who are trying? Isn't it worth the few minutes a day involved to rinse out bottles, jars and cans, store them along with newspapers and magazines, and make a detour to the dump every six or eight weeks when you're headed in that general direction on some other errand?

Doesn't it make sense to be thrifty in every possible area rather than letting our pennies, nickels and dimes slip away in small dribbles until they mount to dollars? Once waste disposal begins to cost us more, everyone will become suddenly conscious of the need to economize, just as they have about oil and energy.

A few minutes a day on the part of citizens now could save thousands of dollars in the future.

This situation is only one of dozens of examples of ways we could save ourselves money and anguish in the years to come.

We send garbage to the dump instead of making compost of it; then we go out and buy fertilizer for our flower and vegetable gardens.

We permit water faucets to drip and toilets to trickle; then we complain when our water bills are high.

We feed sugared cereals, candy, koolade, and popsicles to our children and wonder why their teeth are full of cavities. These calories do their bodies no good, provide no nutrition, and form poor eating habits.

When will we begin to smarten up? When we're all bankrupt, I guess.

Maybe -- just maybe -- if we can see the connection between the lower demands for oil and the probable maintenance of the price of foreign oil at near the present levels, we will be able to extend this thinking to some other areas of our throw-away society.