

VILLAGE VIEW

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The latest Consumer Price Index figures released by the government are no more encouraging than those of January and February. The question is constantly debated: "Who's to blame?"

In some ways, we're all to blame, of course, because we all have been a part of the spend-now-pay-later syndrome; we all use credit and charge accounts. None of us is willing to forego immediate gratification of our desires and save for things we want; instead, we borrow for them or charge them in anticipation of income we believe we'll receive in the near future.

It's become the American way to live today on income that won't be generated until tomorrow; we do it as individuals; towns do it; states and counties do it; the federal government does it; and industry does it. What's wrong with it? It causes inflation, for one thing.

Every time a bank loans money to one of its customers, new dollars are created, and those dollars add to inflation. Every time a government, large or small, spends dollars in anticipation of taxes, it adds to inflation. Every time a corporation borrows, every time an individual borrows, it adds to inflation.

What would happen to the economy if borrowing ceased? There would be a "correction". It wouldn't be a total collapse but the heat would be rapidly drawn off. Why don't we do it then? Because nobody, but nobody, is willing to wait until they can afford something before they buy it.

Just as you and I are unwilling to run our cars five or eight or ten years, meanwhile saving the money for the inevitable day the old crate gives up and quits entirely, everyone else is unwilling to get along with less than the very best of everything. Public and private programs and services proliferate, and every segment of our population, in one way or another, gets in on the act.

Everyone wants economies but nobody's willing to make any sacrifices himself. It's always the other guy's pet project that we think ought to be cut, eliminated, or go unfunded.

Therefore, we're all responsible, all at fault: the young, the old, and the middle-aged. And instead of calling a halt, we demand more and more government services, appliances, new this, that, and the other thing, and incur more public and personal debt. As a result, we face more and more inflation.

What can individuals do about it? They can put pressure on governments at all levels to pare costs, cut programs- even good ones- and stop spending in anticipation of taxes to be collected. That means our favorite services may have to be eliminated or decreased drastically. That means we must become more self-sufficient at all levels of society and at all ages and stages of our lives.

As individuals we can exert self-control over our spending and the amount of debt we carry. That means doing without things we want, and waiting until the cash to pay for them is in our hands.

People old enough to remember living through the Depression fear we may have to endure another; nobody wants that to happen but unless we get a grip on the situation, it is going to happen. If it comes, unemployment will make recent figures pale into insignificance. There will be hunger, poverty and suffering in our land. One way we can help to avoid it is to take steps, before another depression hits us, to put brakes on our personal spending voluntarily.

If we do it now, before we're forced to do it, we may be able to slow inflation sufficiently to avoid another depression, to take the steam out of inflation and avoid an economic disaster that will put everyone of us in dire straits.

There are some things we can do: wear our clothes longer and when we're through with them pass them along to someone less fortunate; when we're finished with books and magazines, give them to the library so someone else can read them; learn to sew and instead of buying ready-made things, make our own. Knit our sweaters and socks, mufflers and mittens. Hook our rugs or braid them. Paint our houses, change our own automobile oil and filters, keep our tires properly inflated, drive only where and when we must, and at reasonable speeds.

We can learn to cook economical and nutritious meals. It's possible to make a fine stew from a small lamb shank and have the basics left over for a hearty soup. Every roast, whether chicken, turkey, beef, lamb or pork, produces a base or soup to provide an extra meal. Every vegetable cooked in stoves that most often go down the drain instead of into the soup kettle; with it go vitamins and nutrients. Wasted.

We can entertain ourselves at home instead of in public places. In depression days families and friends grew closer than at any time before or since; activities were home-centered. No one had money to spend in public places. The country was no worse for that.

We can help one another and make government-funded programs less necessary; instead of depending on costly pro-

grams to aid the elderly or the disadvantaged, we can take a neighborly interest in the aged and the poor, and see they get the care they need when the occasion arises. We can do errands for the housebound or a person without transportation of his own.

We can compost kitchen and garden wastes so we don't need to buy chemical fertilizers that eventually pollute water supplies and incur government expenditures to purify.

We can buy popping corn, or better yet, grow it, and discontinue purchasing snacks that add nothing valuable to our diets. Imagine, if you can, life without potato chips. You'd be amazed how easy it is to get along with potato chips.

Re-using bread wrappers saves waxed paper; fruit is a good substitute for candy; rinse, dry and reuse plastic bags; use grocery bags for wrapping paper, trash bags, storing newspapers 'til you cart them to the recycling van at the dump.

Learn to play games like checkers, cards, Scrabble, Monopoly, chess or Backgammon, instead of burning electricity with a color TV set. Go to church instead of a movie.

Brush your teeth with salt and baking soda; make your own shampoo or laundry liquid by boiling up soup scraps with a little water; polish blackened pan bottoms with fine sand; turn off unused lights, close rooms not used, repair dripping faucets (a drop of water per second amounts to 200 gallons of wasted water each month); take showers instead of tub baths.

We could live without a telephone; consider removing an extension. Line-dry clothes; solar energy will do the job. Window shades conserve heat in winter and keep the house cooler in summer more efficiently than draperies. Use both for maximum savings. Insulate your attic.

Dried fruits, beans, rice, corn meal are inexpensive foods; soups enriched with dried peas, lentils and barley are delicious. Powdered milk, mixed with whole milk and water, tastes fine and can cut your milk bill by 50 percent. Learn to can and preserve in-season foods at home to avoid high-out-of-season prices. Jellies, jams, fruits, vegetables, pickles and relishes are a big item in your food budget.

Cutting corners, saving money, energy and raw materials could become fashionable; it could become a life sustaining necessity. Whether we do it voluntarily or because we must is up to us individually.

Don't look around at what your neighbors are doing. Just do your own part. If we all do, we'll all make it, yet.