

# The livin' is high but it's far from easy

This newspaper pays me a decent and fair wage. My house payment is less than \$150 a month. I have no car payment. Neither of my two children is old enough for school.

Moreover, I live rather modestly. I don't own an apartment on Fifth Avenue, a condominium in Florida nor a chalet in Switzerland. I don't wear Pierre Cardin suits, belong to a country club or drive a limousine. My wife has a conservative cloth coat. We don't go on skiing trips to Europe, safaris in Africa or fishing junkets in the Caribbean.

Why this orgy of candor, to borrow a phrase from Todd Hollenbach?

Well, like thousands of other Americans, I'm a victim of The Great Paycheck Squeeze. By all that is sane and sensible, the livin' ought to be easy at my house. Instead, I'm life and death to make it between paychecks. At the end of the American Dream, there is a bill collector.

The reason, of course, is inflation. I wish I could explain to you what's going on, but I can't. My only knowledge of economics derives from a course at Transylvania College that I almost flunked. All I know is that I have nightmares about the price of gasoline, that I can't even look at a grocery store without it costing me \$30, that the price of eating out is enough to make me a Euell Gibbons freak.

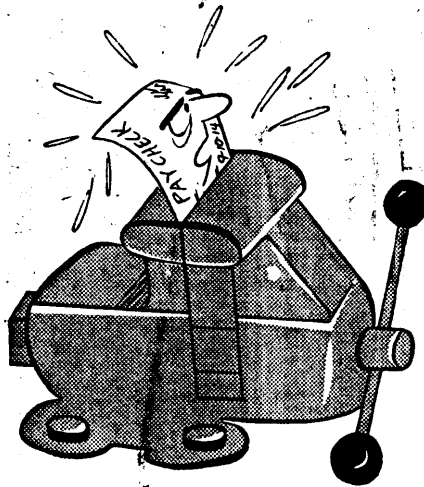
How much have prices risen in the last five years? The last 10?

To find out, I went to the files of The Courier-Journal & Times to check but some of the advertisements for late September of 1964 and 1969. What I found was enough to bring tears to my wallet. Talk about nostalgia!

To put this into a historical context for you, September of 1964 was when the Beatles were the rage, when Barry Goldwater was getting ready to commit hari-kari against LBJ, when young girls wore skirts to school. And in September, 1969, "Easy Rider" was a hot movie, Richard Nixon was riding high and the New York Mets were en route to winning the World Series.

Following are some random samples of my research. The prices aren't necessarily the highest or the lowest, just a reasonably fair representation of the time. I didn't particularly look for bargains. I tried to concentrate on quality goods at respectable stores in the Louisville-Southern Indiana area. Read on and weep.

Item	1964	1969	1974
Men's suits	\$ 69.50	\$ 90.00	\$200.00
Console color TV	347.00	388.00	570.00
Girdles (ladies)	4.95	8.95	13.00
Men's shoes	17.95	19.95	32.00



Staff drawing

This column by Billy Reed runs on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in The Courier-Journal and on Sundays in The Courier-Journal & Times. Reed is a Transylvania graduate and a native of Mount Sterling, Ky.

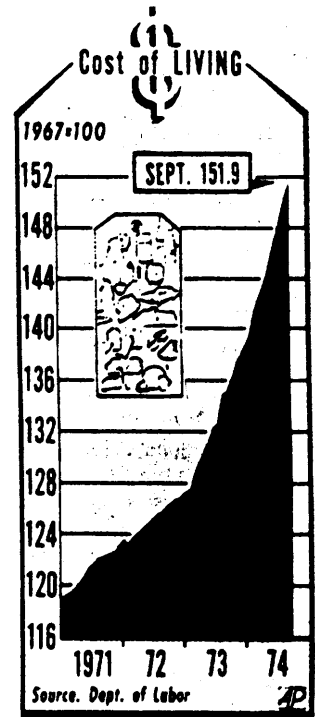
Bread (per loaf)	.22	.25	.33
Potatoes (10 lb. bag)	.49	.89	1.09
Sirloin steak (per pound)	.79	1.29	2.19
Toaster	14.97	19.97	37.95
Chicken (per pound)	.25	.29	.59
Ice cream (half-gallon)	.69	.69	.99
Bourbon (4/5 quart)	4.85	4.85	6.52
Automobile (used)	2595.00	2895.00	3666.00
Washer-dryer	299.90	319.00	489.00

I'm sure everyone has similar horror stories. Just the other day, a friend told me that he paid \$14 for a pair of denim jeans. Not long ago, the same pair sold for \$5 or so.

Also, my list didn't take into consideration the rising cost of such things as entertainment and recreation. For example, a ticket to a first-rate movie cost around \$1.50 in 1964. Today it's \$3 or more.

If there are any conclusions to be drawn from all this, besides the fact that we are all paying through the nose for everything, it's that a fellow must have doubled or tripled his salary in the last 10 years to live as well today as he did in 1964.

Oh, yes, one last thing. In 1964, the price of a newspaper was seven cents. In 1969, it was a dime. The newspaper you are now reading cost 15 cents.



Grocery prices, which usually decline in September, were up 1.5 per cent last month with everything but fruits and vegetables increasing in cost. Dairy products, which had been declining, posted their first increase in four months.

Automobile prices, which usually decline at the end of the model year, increased slightly last month. Clothing prices were up sharply as were prices for houses, furnishings, household supplies and alcoholic beverages.

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