



PHOTOS BY TONER AND GRAFFAM

The Sanderlins, one of the thousands of white-collar families squeezed by rising prices. Their budget will not permit such "luxuries" as dining-room chairs.

OUCH! That White Collar Pinches

By **OWENITA SANDERLIN**

The wife of a college professor describes the painful plight of today's white-collar worker, relates her own family's struggle to live on \$2000 a year.

IN OUR garage, next to a 1935 model without any rubber, is a row of wooden chairs. We have tried glue and nails and everything else, but nothing will hold them together any more. George sits, and they split. Not that George is so hefty. He may be more than six feet tall, but he weighs only a hundred and fifty pounds. It's just that the chairs didn't cost very much, in the first place, and they have served their term. So now we sit around our maple table on an odd assortment of seats—George on a solid piano stool; Frea, our five-year-old princess, and I on the wobbly last two of the chairs; Mary, fat, funny and three, on a tall kitchen stool; and David, the baby, in the remains of the high chair.

We eat the minimum essentials with just enough silverware to go around, washing the spoons between dinner and dessert—when there is any dessert. Of course, if we have company—which I have been avoiding lately—I get out my wedding-present silver—six spoons, four knives and four forks, six salad forks and a sugar spoon. We have been borrowing the chairs, ever since the time a college president folded up in one of those little maple numbers of ours. I suppose when the last two chairs are gone, we shall eat buffet style.

Surely, you are thinking, it isn't so bad as all that. You can still buy chairs. Well, maybe you can. We can't, because we haven't any money.

I just read a report by Senator Thomas of Utah, a member of the Senate committee which recently investigated the status of white-collar workers. He says there are 20,000,000 of us, living on salaries that were low before the cost of living rose 25 per cent or more. He says we are "mighty good Americans" and just as essential as factory workers. We keep the schools open, for one thing. Well, it is comforting to know that somebody appreciates us.

I don't think we have been appreciating ourselves, and I know we haven't been complaining. But we have been leaving our white-collar jobs—some of us for more money, others because we wanted to help win

the war. A man I know—a college professor with the degree of doctor of philosophy—was rejected by the armed services, and then spent a year in an airplane factory, until he broke down under the strain of sixty-some hours a week of driving work. Now he is teaching again, and he suffers only when he sees his students going off to war. "They are such fine boys."

That's the way we all feel, so who are we to complain about our budgets? But there is some point in letting the rest of America see how we live. We put on such a good front—a necessity in white-collar positions—that very few realize what goes on behind. And there are reasons why white-collar workers should receive more respect than they do, as well as better financial consideration. I don't mean charity, although, according to the senator, some of us have even had to take relief—in these days of plentiful jobs and high wages.

Wages may be high—whether or not they are high enough, I'll leave to the unions and the War Labor Board—but salaries are certainly low, and frozen at prewar levels.

Two hundred and fifty thousand teachers in our school system have left their classrooms—either forced out because they could not support their families or enticed away by the chance to make a bit of money for the first time in their lives. All over the country, educators are plenty worried about next fall.

From way down in Arkansas comes the gloomy prediction of "collapse, complete or partial, of the public-school system." Joel A. Burkman, assistant director of education in California, believes that the shortage of teachers will result in "a loss of trained citizens for war." Here in Maine, the deputy commissioner of education states that the most serious result will be "the cultural loss to the individual." And Frank W. Hubbard, director of the research division of the National Education Association in Washington, D.C., writing in an unofficial capacity to my husband, says that "probably the result of (Continued on Page 39)



Frea (left) and Mary. Their father thinks he has pretty nice children.

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greatest consequence will be the loss to society that comes from a lack of educated and technically trained citizens."

All over the United States, emergency certificates, for the duration only, are being issued to teachers with either little training or none at all. So, even though the schools are kept open, your children may have inferior teachers.

This all makes George feel that he is of some consequence—a good teacher, with all the training a man can get, plus experience. And his salary is \$2000, whereas the average is less than \$1500. We live in a small university town in Northern Maine—a town where living is cheap. Milk is only thirteen and a half cents a quart, but, on the other hand, the long winter burns up a great deal of fuel. Then, too, we have three children, but some people have even more. Although we get along, the thing that stumps me is this: How about the people who don't live in a town like ours?

To get down to details, suppose that your budget, like ours, allowed your family less than \$2.50 per person per week for food (\$600 per year). Or twenty dollars a year per person for clothes.

Is your rent less than forty dollars? We are buying our house, and the payments are only \$38.47 a month, including taxes and insurance. We spend \$128 a year for water, electricity and a party phone.

Do you carry much insurance? We can afford only one policy on my husband's life, which would pay me and the three children \$1000. But we are all hospitalized. Insurance premiums, in our budget, come to forty-one dollars a year.

Perhaps you don't have large fuel bills. Ours was \$135 last winter, for the furnace and hot water in the morning.

How much do you contribute to the Red Cross, the War Chest, your church? And do you like to say no?

We can give only thirty-two dollars a year. If we had more money, that is where most of it would go, because we know how many millions of people are far worse off than we are.

Did you ever put up with a toothache because you couldn't afford the dentist? Or wonder what you would do if your baby were really sick enough so that you had to call the doctor? I have. All I can manage under the item Medical Care is twelve dollars a year for each of us, and it will hardly be enough, even if we are as healthy as usual. Last year, it all went for a baby.

You may very well have to pay more taxes than we do. Only \$3.80 a month is withheld from our check, some of which will be returned, and we are glad to pay some Federal taxes; we wouldn't feel very American if we didn't. Then we have an extra eleven dollars in local taxes.

Do you spend much in going places—either by bus, train or automobile? We have no item at all in our budget for Transportation. We put our car away and sold the tires. George walks to

college, and you should see David's chubby face entirely surrounded by groceries piled in the baby carriage. We wheel over to the village once a week and stock up.

I suppose you contribute 10 per cent in War Bonds? We feel like heels because we can't. We have no money to save. We have no savings because the salary was always low, and the first few years of marriage are the hardest. Furniture, babies—you know. But I do put down seventy-five dollars a year for bonds. And we keep them.

How much money do you blow in annually for birthday presents, wedding gifts, cards, Christmas, little toys for the children? We never have been able to give anyone a decent present, although we have received many beautiful things ourselves. We are limited to sixty dollars a year for gifts.

As to old debts or installments due on purchases from away back, we are lucky.

to take care of the children. Cigarettes? Luckily, we don't smoke.

Do you have a maid, a weekly laundress or a cleaning woman? In my budget there's no money for Domestic Help; so I do my own wash, without a washing machine; but try as I will, I can't iron shirts. And I don't cut George's hair with a bowl. After all, he has to face a college class. Fortunately, I can always hide by pretending that the baby has a cold—which is pure slander, because the little guy is so healthy that if you dropped him he would bounce. So I never have to get my hair fixed. Anyhow, I do it pretty well myself.

Do you ever pause beside a newsstand? I'd rather have a magazine than a new hat, but I never buy one. We take one magazine to keep us posted, and listen to the news on the radio or read the paper in the college library. And of course we can borrow from our good neighbors—the ones who still have some

themselves. But if we ever do get rich, George is going to buy—soft music, please—a book. He still belongs to one professional society, having dropped two others—organizations which work toward a better education for our children and yours. He will keep on resoling his one pair of shoes to pay dues for a while longer.

These miscellaneous items—which must include medicine, postage, stationery, lollipops and such-like—are supposed to come to no more than \$6.30 a month in our budget.

Now, if you will add up all the expenses listed above, you should get \$1956.84. Deducting this from George's salary leaves \$43.16 to cover the unforeseen. You're right. It never does.

But we are not in debt—yet. We haven't lost our home—yet. Right now, George is out in the garden assassinating potato bugs, which helps explain how we live on our small food allowance. And he is looking up at the sky to straighten out the crick in his back, certain the sky over our small white house is bluer than anywhere in the world. He thinks he has pretty nice children too. I agree. Of course, it was rather unreasonable of us to have so many. And, obviously, we can't have any more.

But we feel that we are getting along fine. We compare ourselves with the privates in the foxholes and the pilots in the sky and the many war workers who are not lining their pockets with gold. Even compared with the war profiteers, we are lucky. The biggest item in our budget costs nothing at all. It's happiness.

But I wonder about the rest of the 20,000,000 white-collar workers—most of them without gardens—with higher city rents, with transportation expenses, with more insurance, larger families, lower salaries, poorer health and old debts.

And what do they do for fun, when they can't play tennis for free and plant flowers and vegetables in their own back yards? It must be dreadful to stay in a sweltering city all summer long, without a spare cent for week-end vacations, year after year of this war. How they must worry about the future. And I can guess which question worries them most, because it's my worst nightmare, too: What if prices go up even higher?

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War Communiqué

By PVT. JAMES M. BLACK, JR.

Beloved, give me sprightly news of dances, fetes and frolics,
Of parties you've attended, dear, amusing alcoholics;
The plays you've seen, the things you've done. Include the latest scandal.

I yearn to hear of him who burns at either end his candle.
Oh, tell me what of Errol Flynn? Did Mickey Rooney marry?
Did Charley Chaplin beat the rap? And what of Joan Barrie?
Please give me news of Tracy, who, through every nook and cranny,

Pursues the breaker of the law. What's up with Orphan Annie?
Oh, spare me news of politics and sing of chocolate sodas,
Of malted milks, of cherry pie, a drugstore's fragrant odors.
Describe in full your latest dress—in fact, all your apparel.
Who gives a damn if Hershey's reached the bottom of the barrel?
For wars are ever long and hard, but so will ever wars be.
Remember where there's life there's hope, and where there's Hope there's Crosby.

No news at all from Washington, avoid congressional chatter.
No news of ranting candidates who really do not matter.
Make not the slightest reference to Lippmann, Thompson, Grafton,
And let the flow of trivia flow as gently as the Afton.
Please tell of any Benchley shorts, or cartoons drawn by Thurber,
Or verses done by Ogden Nash, or books by Edna Ferber.
Oh, dwell at length on foamy beer—the kind Milwaukee retails—

Describe Times Square, the Village, too, and bore me with the details.

What bands have you heard lately, dear? Hal James or Casa Loma?

What's playing at the Paramount? Have you seen Oklahoma?
Yes, darling, give me sprightly news that captivates and capers.
The other kind I hear about by radio and papers.
Be sure to add you love me still, although I know you do.
For, darling, all the news I want is only news of you.

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I have always struggled to keep clear—usually by not buying anything—and we have only one such payment a month to make—ten dollars on a personal loan which helped in the down payment on our house. We could get credit, all right, but that way madness lies. I was a bit amused when my kid sister, after shopping with her husband for the first layette, wrote me naively, "And we didn't have to put out any money, either, because we have a charge account." Another difficulty of ours is that my father was a doctor, and so it would never occur to me not to pay a doctor's bill. Ask any doctor who are the surest pay. Not the rich, not the poor, but the men in white collars.

How often do you go to the movies or stop in at the drugstore for a soda? Are you taking any kind of vacation this year? These things appear in our budget under the heading of Recreation, and I allow one dollar a month. This has to include the fifty cents it costs for a girl