

# Families unite to fight high prices

By MARGARET MILLER

Rising prices of everything from food to automobiles have forced even the most affluent to take a second look at family expenses. Some people who never dreamed of living on a budget have adopted a new lifestyle.

About 3,800 families in the metropolitan Detroit area have joined a purchasing co-op to help fight rising prices.

The families are members of the Detroit Consumers Association, which operates to pool the purchasing power of families all over the area.

The organization started with steaks and now involves purchasing of almost 100 items from air conditioners to wallpaper.

**NEW MEMBERS** include Michael Labriola and his wife of Beverly Hills.

"We figure we saved at least \$35 on the freezer we bought and the meat we have purchased is also quite a saving," said Mrs. Labriola. "We also bought an electric tea kettle and figure the price was about two-thirds of retail."

According to Jerry Amster, manager, families that join pay a membership fee. It covers costs of operating the office in Livonia where Amster, office manager Lynn Wilson and a part-time student assistant handle the business of buying.

Purchases are made through firms that have agreed to give a discount price. Sample reports from participants, such as Mr. and Mrs. Labriola, have indicated they have priced items sought and have found a better deal through Consumers merchants.

**MEMBERS MAKE** purchases through the association by deciding on the item that interests them and telephoning its description, complete with model number, to the association office. The member also quotes the best price he has been offered.

"Then we get the best price we can through the distributors we work with," Amster said. "Usually there's quite a difference."

Large assortments of household and transportation equipment are included in the list of items available.

In other areas of purchasing, many members participate in a freezer-and-meat plan, and children's shoes are obtained through the cooperative often.

**THE STATION WAGON** purchased by Leslie Za-

lewski, Farmington special education director who also is beginning a private marriage counseling business, bore a price tag \$350 less than the best price he had been able to obtain.

"Someone had given our name to the association just before we planned to buy a car," Mrs. Zalewski said, "so after we checked it out with the Better Business Bureau, that was our first big purchase. We definitely were impressed."

**THE MATTER** of quality is an important part of the cooperative association, Amster said.

"The main advantage is that we know we are getting our money's worth," he said. "We aren't looking for something for nothing, so we can take competitive bids to get the best deal possible for our members faced with today's high prices."

The association, Amster said, also tries to offer tips on buying not done through the cooperative.

"We recommend that people look for the loss leader items at the grocery stores and buy them in the largest quantity permitted," he added.

**AMSTER WENT BACK** into the history of the association.

It was 1965, he remembered, that he and a group of friends were doing what they did often — complaining about high prices.

"Of course we were all positive then," he said, "that the cost of living couldn't possibly get any higher than it was in 1965."

While the discussion went on, he said, "one fellow who was in the restaurant business said he could buy us steak at the Eastern Market if we would all put up a certain amount of money to buy in quantity."

The result of that conversation was that 12 families contributed \$125 each and the restaurateur purchased \$1,500 worth of prime steak at wholesale prices and everybody had a lot of good eating.

**"THE STEAK ORDER** led to other things," Amster said. "We found we could get better prices by buying in quantity."

Organization of the association has been modeled on the cooperatives that sprung up in California in the 60s.

"Our idea," Amster said, "is that for families of

middle and upper-middle income, there must be a better way of buying things than spending a great deal of time shopping and then having to pay a great many middlemen."

"We have professionals to do the shopping, and buying direct from the wholesale supplier has minimized handling enough to substantially reduce costs. And the quality is consistently higher."

**THE DETROIT CONSUMER** Association has expanded its membership from 12 to 3,800 members, largely through word-of-mouth.

"Each family that joins gives us a list of friends who might be interested," the manager said. "Then,

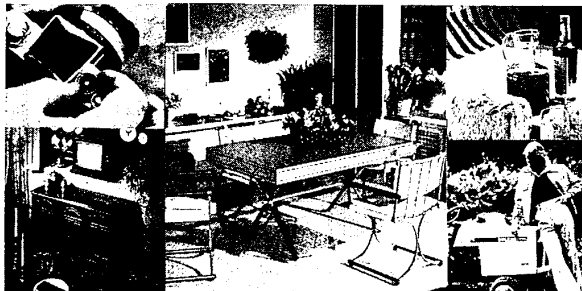
working in the different areas of the metropolitan area, we call on prospects and explain to them what we can offer and what their responsibilities would be."

"We can enroll a maximum of 10 new families each week."

Recently-enrolled members have reported that one feature in the visit was the lack of pressure.

"We're inclined to be apprehensive of come-on offers," said Mrs. Zalewski of Farmington, "but in this there was no push at all."

After a new member is signed up, Amster said, the association accepts responsibility for purchasing for him.



Items to be bought through Detroit Consumers Association range from cameras to furniture and more



Above: Mr. and Mrs. William Boutell and Mr. and Mrs. Mitch Foster arrive at Tennis and Crumpets dinner dance

Right: Mr. and Mrs. Lee Keating ascend stairs at Shiwasee Hotel setting for post-tennis party



Photographed by  
Art Emanuel

## Tennis affair nets funds for hospital

By GRETCHEN HITCH

A tanned, athletic-looking crowd attended the Tennis and Crumpets dinner dance Saturday at the Shiwasee Hotel in Southfield. Almost 250 people arrived to dine and dance, following a day of tennis to benefit Children's Hospital.

More than 800 tennis enthusiasts played Saturday and Sunday in the annual benefit tournament. Private, club and public tennis courts throughout Oakland County were in constant use during the weekend for the mixed doubles tourney, played in three categories.

The dinner dance was chaired by Mrs. Louis Starr of Birmingham with Mrs. Mitchell Foster of Southfield as tournament chairman. Mrs. George Romney of Bloomfield Hills acted as honorary chairman and Mrs. Peter McKnight of Lathrup Village was general chairman.

Mrs. Peter Trees of Birmingham recruited hostesses and Mrs. Paul Goode of West Bloomfield arranged for the finals to be held the weekend of Sept. 21 at the Court House. Mrs. Bill Boutell of Bloomfield Hills handled publicity.

Saturday the Oakland County winners will be determined at Pine Lake Country Club. Mrs. Romney will present the trophies.

**FOR THE DINNER** dance following court play, Mrs. Chris Mazure dressed mannikins in Don Thomas tennis togs to serve as assistant greeters. Tennis ball "flowers" in tennis ball cans centered the tables.

Tennis & Crumpets tournaments, which began in 1967, have contributed more than \$120,000 to Children's Hospital of Michigan. The new goal is a \$200,000 pledge over a five year period for the Cardiology Suite with 1974 for the Cardiac Catheterization Room.



Mr. and Mrs. Peter Trees of Birmingham register at the door