

Why Consumer Attitude Took A Recent Upswing

ANN ARBOR Substantial improvement in consumer expectations has been recorded during the last few months, representing a significant break from the depressed attitudes of the last couple of years.

So says the latest survey of consumer attitudes conducted by the Survey Research Center (SRC) of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research.

The broadly-based survey, most pronounced among middle-income families, was recorded in reinterviews with a nationwide sample of more than 1,400 respondents in late February.

The index of consumer sentiment now stands at 87.5, which is more than five points above the fourth quarter of 1971 (82.2) and more than 12

points above the recession low of 75.4 reached in 1970 (February 1966-1967).

SRC ECONOMISTS George Katona and Jay Schmiedeknecht note that in February 1969 the index stood at 85.1, much higher than at present. More than 60 per cent of the decline in the index during 1968 and early 1970 has now been recovered, they say.

The quarterly surveys, conducted regularly since 1961, determine attitudes in three areas: general economic trends, personal financial situation and evaluation of supply conditions and prices.

The U-M economists report substantial improvement in consumer expectations about business conditions and unemployment. Many people believe that some improvement in the economy has already occurred, while many others point to the presidential election as a reason why 1972 will be a good year.

More than one-half of respondents thought in February that business conditions in the country will be good during the next 12 months, as against less than 40 per cent in November.

THE PRESENT upturn in

sentiment is attributed primarily to good news about economic trends and growing awareness of a recovery in the economy, as well as to a reduction in the frequency of bad news heard, the U-M economists note.

In the second major area of study, attitudes toward the trend of the personal financial situation, there was little change during the last three months, the economist report.

Compared to the 1965-69 period, personal financial expectations now are more depressed than general economic expectations. This is attributed to expectations about inflation and to a lesser frequency of reported income gains.

The third area, evaluation of supply conditions and prices, exhibited in 1971 a substantial improvement in the proportion saying that "this is a good time" to buy a car or other durables. During the last few months the favorable opinions were sustained, but there was little further gain.

Katona and Schmiedeknecht suggest that price and wage controls introduced in August 1971 had a temporary favorable impact on a willingness to buy cars and other large durables.

"Many consumers believed that price increases had been prevented and that good buys were therefore available. However, the controls did not have a favorable impact on attitudes and expectations concerning either the personal financial situation or the outlook for business conditions."

"Uncertainties regarding the consequences of controls and the new economic policy served to dampen the recovery in consumer optimism, so that the index of consumer sentiment improved little in the second half of 1971. Therefore, a sluggish

Youths 'Squeezed' --So They Rebel

By TIM RICHARD

A generation of young people may be rebelling because they feel "squeezed, pressured and pushed."

And parents have raised youngsters "who have had three trips around the world and you've never been out of Farmington," suggested Esther L. Middlewood.

Miss Middlewood, retired as chief of the education section of the State Dept. of Mental Health, drew on recollections of her own youth in World War I at Farmington High School when she spoke last week on "Youth Culture."

The audience was the first Thursday series of St. Gerald Catholic parish in Farmington.

The education system is geared to competition, comparative ratings, lectures, the academics, she finds, even though the competition is unfair, lectures are a poor way to teach, and many youngsters have talents other than the academic.

A SENSE of alienation - loneliness - a loss of self-worth: these are the results of parental pressure and failure. In the hippie culture, Miss Middlewood said, girls frequently have a low level of self-worth. They are neither demanding nor threatening to hippie boys.

She condemned the "preconceived ideas of female measurements" that cause girls to feel inferior if they lack big busts.

Later in life, the sense of self-worth becomes related to money. A woman becomes disturbed because she doesn't produce a paycheck.

Miss Middlewood's solution: "The measuring stick has to come from within. I know a lot of stupid who make far more money than I ever made."

After growing up in Livonia and attending Farmington High School, Miss Middlewood attended the University of Michigan and was a teacher of sociology and mental hygiene, a counselor in the Benton Harbor School District and a psychiatric social worker in Muskegon before entering state service.

SHE RECALLED students of her era burning Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm in effigy, the same way students protest Pentagon policies today; being agnostic; "talking about free love"; a "vagabond youth, riding the rails"; a generation of "discouraged youth, frightened youth."

A lot of the disenchanted youth of that era came back to society, had children and "gave them everything." They live through our youth.

Parents, she said, feel their young people are ungrateful.

She said as parents make free use of pills and cocktails, young people "get an idea there's a magic pellet in life," Miss Middlewood said. Hence, drugs.

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Regulate Drug Paraphenalia — McDonald

WASHINGTON
A bill to regulate the sale of needles and syringes to curtail narcotics problems was cosponsored by U.S. Rep. Jack McDonald (R-Farmington).

The bill would regulate sale of drug paraphenalia by registering manufacturers, importers, wholesalers and non-pharmacy dealers with the attorney general.

It also would prevent interstate transfer of needles and syringes by those who do not have a prescription.

McDonald said, but it "will stop the flow of those potential accessories of death to unauthorized persons."

Granted BA

LIVONIA
Dale Wallinger, son of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Wallinger, 2992 Cavel, Livonia, was granted a BA degree from Concordia Teachers College in Illinois at the end of the winter quarter.

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