



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

I can remember when "mortgage" was a bad word. Now it's a pass word. As a child I somehow associated "mortgage" with "poor house." As an adult I realize I wasn't too far wrong.

I have just received my annual statement from the home mortgage company. It seems that in 1970 I reduced the principal on my house debt almost \$200 while paying the mortgage company \$1,200 for the privilege of borrowing their money. When you multiply this by 40 million home owners it paints a rather bleak picture of the national economy. It's amazing how in one generation our economic concepts have changed.

When I was 15, I walked into a 14th Avenue store and bought a pair of shoes. The clerk, who knew me and knew of my father's reputation, said she would bill us at the end of the month. I went back across the street to my dad's office and told him what I had done. He taught me a lesson that day which I should have remembered. Pulling the money from his pocket he said; "If you can't pay for them when you buy them, you should go barefoot until you can."

Now, with the help of credit cards, newlyweds can purchase during the first week what it used to take a family a lifetime to acquire. The fact that they wind up paying twice as much and are often under such tremendous pressure that their marriage breaks down before the color TV set does, doesn't seem to deter people in their mad rush to acquire things.

A friend of mine recently lost his job. Fearing he was going to face economic disaster I asked if I could lend a hand.

"Oh no," he said calmly, "we have ample money in the bank. We don't have credit cards."

Somehow I realized he was equating the two suppositions. His example has encouraged me to do something I've been wanting to do for a long time—return most of the credit cards that have been cluttering up my written to one of those octopus-personalities national firms.

"Dear former friends: Chalk up another victory for the computer— and another defeat for public relations. This is the third SNAFU in a row for your accounting department and here in Florida you always strike out after three misses.

"My wife keeps the family books and just doesn't have enough time to sit down once a month and untangle the mess your computer gets us in. Besides, there is something in me that resents the way you write her. Your last computer-typed letter insinuated she was not only dilatory but dishonest, and even after we paid the bill your monster wrote us saying, 'unless your delinquent account is paid within ten days it will be given to our attorney for immediate action.'

"So I'm taking my own immediate action. I'm returning your credit cards."

Last week I went into the store and made a cash purchase. It was a good feeling, even if the clerk did have to ask for help in making out the sales slip. It seems I was his first cash customer and he got rattled.

The Apostle Paul said, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." I find it difficult to love people I owe, especially when they keep threatening me with law suits. Therefore, I'm returning my credit cards. There's no other way.