

Family Council

Bernice R.—I don't want to live close to my in-laws.
Leonard R.—We have no in-law problem.

Bernice R.—I am at a loss as to how to handle my in-law problem.

We have been married nine years and have three children. During all of those years I rarely have my husband home more than two or three nights a week. He goes over to his parents nearly every evening. The children want to wait until he comes back, but it is usually so late they can't. I sit watching TV all by myself.

Len says that if we took an apartment in his parent's house, he would just stop in to say hello and then come back down again. This might be a better arrangement, but I don't like the idea of living so close to my in-laws. They have never been particularly nice to me although I have tried my best to be nice to them.

Leonard R.—I can't see that we have any in-law problem at all. The whole thing is in Bernice's mind. My parents have been very nice to her, but she has never warmed up to them. My mother often asks why she is so cold and standoffish.

I feel that my parents are old and God knows how much longer I'll have them. While they are alive I can't leave them to just rot away. They look forward to my visits. I am the closest to them because I am the oldest of three sons.

Bernice always points out that she doesn't see her parents more than about twice a month, but her parents live quite far from us and it takes a day's trip to get there. Besides it's different for a woman. The parents realize that she's got enough responsibility taking care of her own children.

The Council: We agree with Leonard that this isn't exactly an in-law problem. It is really more of a husband problem.

Yes, it is natural for parents to want to see a lot of their children. Sometimes, when the children are adults, they may want to see more of them than is good for everyone concerned. But "children" like Leonard who believe that their parents can't get along without them and who feel that their parents would "just rot away" without them have placed themselves in emotional chains.

Essentially, Leonard refuses to face the fact that he is grown up. The fact that he says his parents need him rather than that he needs them is just a thin disguise. If he were in the habit of being sensitive to the needs of others he would recognize that his wife and children need him far more than his parents do. He does not appear to recognize that he is as responsible for his children as his wife is.

Sure these parents would now be disappointed if Leonard were to cut down on his visits. But if they were unselfish parents they would rejoice that their son has at last shown the maturity to know where he belongs.

We certainly don't think Bernice would improve things for herself by moving to an apartment in her in-law's house. The only thing that will improve her situation is her husband's recognition that he is robbing her and his children of years that can't be replaced. If he feels unable to free himself from this excessive attachment to his parents, he should seek professional help through a family service organization.

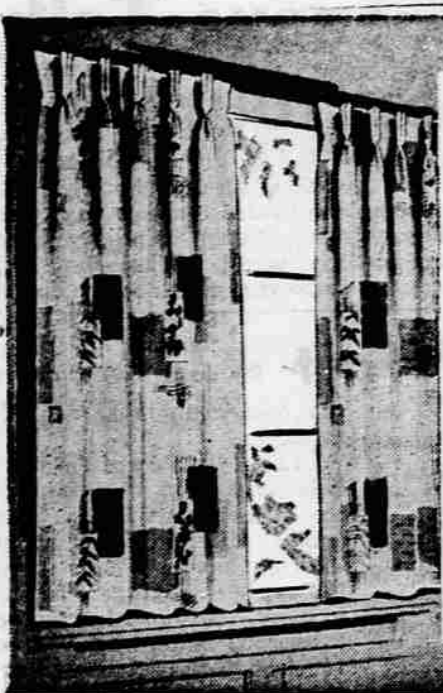
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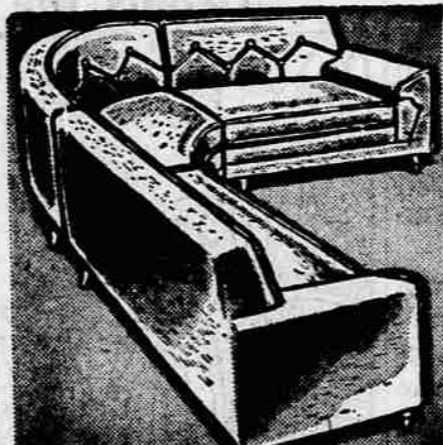
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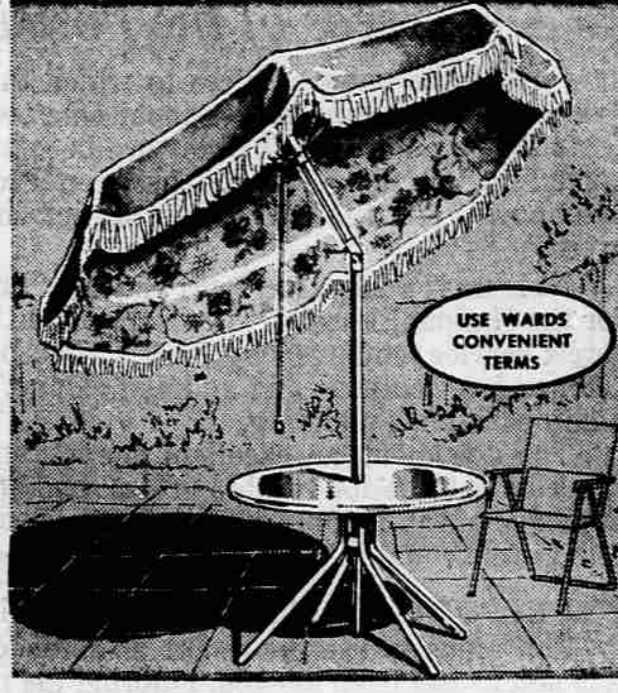
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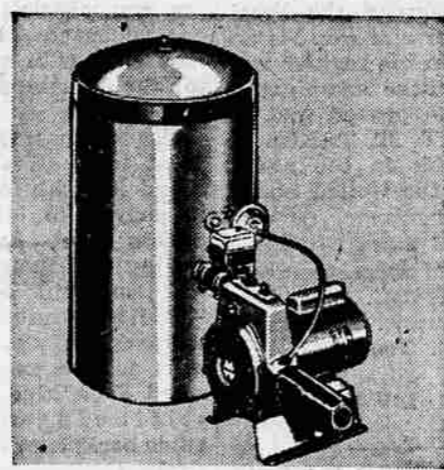
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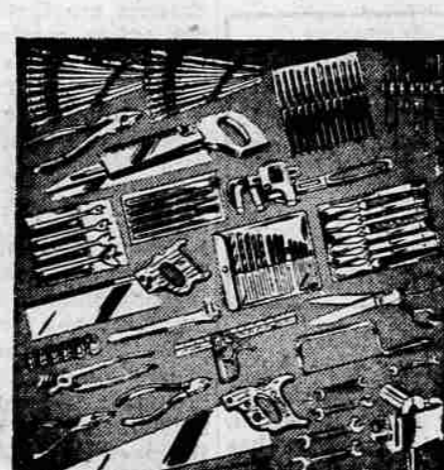
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