

## Family Council

Editors note: The Family Council consists of a judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, three editors and a women's editor. Each article is a summary of a family disagreement presented to the Council. The Council deals with problems, major and minor, encountered by guidance counselors and social workers. Edited by Mrs. Alma Denny. (Copyright by General Features Corp.)

**Mrs. I. N.** — Her attitude changed like day to night after she wed my son.  
**Corinne N.** — I found out what they were hiding. She should have told me.

**Mrs. I. N.** When Sidney introduced Corky to me four years ago, we hit it off just great. I thought she was most attractive. I welcomed her sincerely each time he brought her to our home and when he told me she had accepted his proposal, I was delighted.

During their engagement period, she was devoted to me. I experienced a severe fall which made walking difficult, and she helped me with the marketing and cooking. That's why her behavior after the wedding mystified and shocked me. She stopped visiting and acted coldly. Now that their baby, my first grandson, is on the scene she tries to stop Sid from bringing him to see me more than once a week. And she only calls three or four times a year herself.

It's obvious now that all her attention to me was insincere. How can a girl be so false?

**Corinne N.** — I can't forgive my mother-in-law for deliberately lying to me. She led me to believe that Sid was making more than he really was, and that he also had some inherited money. Shortly after the wedding I learned the truth. Sid's salary is tiny. He works for a cousin who is strapped for capital. The slack in our income is made up by Mrs. N. who owns a few houses in Connecticut. It was she, not Sid, who paid for my engagement ring.

I resent our dependence upon Mrs. N. I resent not having been told about it. Most of all I resent her throwing up to us how much she's doing for us. I stay away as far as not to have to listen to her. My poor husband is trapped. She uses her money as a weapon to keep him close. And she's trying to use it to win my child's love, too.

My only hope is that Sid will find a way to be independent.

**The Council:** The ancient sage Maimonides knew what he was talking about when he outlined the various stages of alms-giving. The lowest form was just plain handing down to another. The highest, he explained, was giving the other just enough to raise himself up. In other words, the finest help one human can offer another is to bring him to the point where he needs no help. When a mother like Mrs. N. keeps doling out funds to a married son, as a substitute for his setting up a financial program that will enable him to pay his own way, her motives may very well be questioned. Corinne's impression that her mother-in-law uses money as a whip appears well founded.

But it takes two to close a deal. Corinne's inclined to place the full onus on her mother-in-law, whereas she exonerates her easygoing, complacent husband. Certainly Sidney could take a firmer stand, both as to how long he'll "sweat out" the token job with his cousin which requires subsidization by his mother, and how much reminding about his obligation he'll endure from her.

We agree with Corinne that she was shortchanged. The true situation was concealed from her. So her turncoat behavior is really no mystery to Mrs. N. The real mystery is: When will she stop sulking? Maybe tomorrow if she can pick up these leads: Have a serious budget talk with Sid. Draw up a two-year plan for living on what he can make, whether it means moving, changing jobs or austerity.

But there may still be hope of a kiss-and-make-up compromise with Mrs. N., regardless of Sid's income. Corinne must acknowledge that it was kind of her mother-in-law to help her son start his marriage on a comfortable scale of living, even though — perhaps from embarrassment — Corinne was not let in on the secret of wherewithal. But Mrs. N. must concede that her aid gives her no right to browbeat the beneficiaries! Any future contributions must be free and clear, with no strings attached, no humiliating.

You'll win the love of that new little family, Mrs. N., with your honey sooner than your money.

# EOM

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