

Happiness Through Health

Mental Distress On The Increase

By Otto McClarrin

It is the rule, rather than the exception, for someone you know — in all parts of country — to discuss incidents involving friends and/or relatives who have been laid off from their jobs. People, depressed and anxious about the loss of income, arguing or fighting with someone dear and important to them.

Mental health experts say inflation and the recession are pushing thousands of these people over the brink.

"The economy is the most profound stress in our society today," said M. Harvey Brenner, a Johns Hopkins University sociologist and expert in the field of money problems and mental illness. He has been quoted as saying that inflation, when added to existing pressures, can drive a person crazy.

Double-digit inflation, Brenner said, has led to "an unusual upsurge in the use of psychotherapy" across the country. "And 25 to 60 per cent of that therapy time is spent talking about economic issues," he said.

The economic discomfort manifests itself most often in depression, an overwhelming sense of frustration and anger, mental experts say. In extreme cases, it can lead to domestic violence, alcohol abuse and suicide.

Although inflation does not cause mental illness,

the experts say, it can exacerbate emotional problems that might normally be alleviated by a spending spree, a new car or a Caribbean vacation.

"It's the straw that broke the camel's back," said Dr. Alan Gruber, a psychologist from South Shore Counseling Associates in Hanover, Mass. "The economy is only exaggerating other difficulties."

In the Washington area, which has more psychiatrists per capita than any major city in the United States, the money crunch is forcing more people who need help to seek affordable alternatives such as psychologists, psychiatric social workers, community health clinics and self-help groups.

There is no hard data on how many people in the

United States are under psychiatric care, although the National Institute of Mental Health estimates that 15 per cent of the population suffers from some form of psychiatric disorder.

During one week last year, the Washington Psychiatric Society determined that more than 30,000 people in the Washington area were seeing private psychiatrists. A recent study by that society, which has over 1000 members, concluded that a larger share of mental health patients in Washington are treated by private psychiatrists than anywhere else in the country.

Dr. Marc Hertzman, of the George Washington Medical Center's psychiatric inpatient service, said recently that Washington area hospitals were ex-

periencing sustained high admission rates for inpatient psychiatric care. "I suspect that it's related to economics," he said.

Many years ago, the NIMH's Dr. Louis Kopelow said, the American outlook was "things will get better. Now, there are serious doubts about that."

For example, he said, two of his clients are moving out of the Washington area because they are afraid their children won't be able to afford to live there as adults. "You can't buy a house unless you already own one," Kopelow said. "Couples are beginning to argue more. I hear it all the time. 'How are we going to cope?'"

Besides forcing more people into therapy, inflation has also caused an increase in psychiatric fees which vary widely depending on the locality and degree of professional help. In Washington, the average psychiatrist's fee is \$50 to \$60 an hour. In New York, it's slightly higher. However, in Washington, a number of psychiatrists have been heard talking about belt-tightening measures, and as one official said, "when the psychiatrists start talking about inflation, then you know we're in trouble."

Letters to the Editor: Baha'i Anniversary

Thank you so much for your fine article on our Anniversary in *The Carolina Times*. We feel that you conveyed the spirit of the Baha'i Faith.

Durham Baha'i Assembly
Marian Dessent, Secretary

On The Hayti Issue

Since moving to Durham four years ago, I've attempted to be an active and concerned Black citizen. Consequently, I'm often unable to personally attend all meetings and simultaneously stay abreast of all pertinent and current issues that impact the Black community. Therefore, I've consistently relied upon *The Carolina Times* as one of my primary "other sources" for factual and accurate interpretation of Black issues.

Your May 1, 1982 article entitled "Black Political Leaders Seem To Have Retreated From Hayti Confrontation" was not only consistent with your progressive reporting trend, but also extremely detailed and most informative.

Your article very vividly depicts the ever-widening void that exists between our so-called "leadership" (except for those elected at the ballot box by the masses, we have no leaders) and the Black masses. One of the critical questions that has to be addressed is when did the Black masses appoint, elect or select any group or individuals to be our "official" spokesmen/women on such a critical issue as Hayti? I'm totally unaware of any Black public forum having been held which would have insured in-put from all income and educational segments of the Black community.

Therefore, I strongly recommend that the Durham Black community withhold all support for the Civic Center until a Black Public Forum is held and written legal guarantees are made that will benefit Hayti and Blacks in general financially, culturally, and politically.

Again, I commend you for continued excellence in Black journalism. We need you now — more than ever.

Leonard G. Dunston
President
N.C. State Association of
Black Social Workers

What You Can Do To Keep Your Kids Off Drugs

WASHINGTON, DC — At least 37 per cent of young people ages 12 to 17 are currently using drugs and alcohol, according to Carlton E. Turner, White House senior drug policy advisor.

Writing in the Spring 1982 issue of *Synergist*, the journal of the National Center of Service Learning, a part of ACTION, the national volunteer agency, Turner says: "Young people have been led to believe that there are 'soft' drugs, 'hard' drugs, and 'dangerous' drugs. These beliefs have created a situation in which young people associate 'soft' drugs with 'soft' drinks. There is no basis for such an association. Our young people deserve a clearer message from us."

But there is hope in the battle against drug abuse, and much of the current edition of *Synergist* is devoted to ways in which parents' groups and other have achieved success. The magazine cites examples

of the thousands of community partnerships that have developed across the country in recent years in response to the drug problem. One such partnership is Channel One, described in the *Synergist* article, "Channeling Youth Into Community Service", by Allan Stein, director of the Channel One Program in Central Falls, R.I.

A rapidly-expanding program which provides constructive alternatives to drug abuse, Channel One joins local leadership and youth in assessing local problems and determining local solutions that pivot on the involvement of youth. The article notes it is based on the assumption, borne out by evaluations, that when youth are involved in decision-making and act as partners in the community, they can achieve a significant improvement in their lifestyle and functioning that includes a drug-free existence.

The rise of another (Continued on Page 16)



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