

Nothing Ruins A Household Budget Like A Session At The Beauty Shop

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MERTZON — It's still hard to believe President Johnson is going to quit his presiding job this year. If he's serious about going back to ranching and teaching part time at the University of Texas, he's going to have a hard time making ends meet. True, his daughters are married and his sons-in-law are both working. But Mrs. Johnson is bound to have developed some mighty lavish tastes, living in Washington and hobnobbing with rich women from all over the world.

It must be a terrible chore to control a wife at an international crossroads, what with princesses and princelets making a grand entrance off jet liners every day. High shahs and big shot ambassadors probably never think of the greed they cause capital-based husbands by outfitting their harems and spouses in diamond baubles and enough furs to interest the Hudson Bay Co. in reopening their trap lines.

Even married men in the Shortgrass County have enough trouble keeping watch over their wives. Without leaving their home county these ladies can develop spending ideas that would make Howard Hughes hump up and start thinking about money. Goodness knows what would take place if these prairieland matrons had a chance to spend some time in Washington.

The men work day and night at drawing up liberal household allowances. Yet the women break every fragment of economic reason, paging through mail order catalogs and scheming to pull off window shopping tours in nearby towns and cities. Such famous wife-takers as King Solomon and Brigham Young couldn't control the most timid female creature out here.

Beauty shops are mainly responsible for corrupting women in these parts. Once a wife gets to hanging around one of these hair-waving joints, she's in the clutches of "Old Ned."

The girls gather under the dryers and carefully study advertisements in slick women's magazines. At every pause in the beautifying process they influence each other to go out and buy a plastic potato peeler or some foolish trinkets such as pre-oiled dust mops or drip-dry dish cloths.

Respected economists have proved that the sale of commode brushes, handy tub and lavatory cleansers, and other related household luxuries would be practically nil if modern housewives weren't allowed to congregate and lounge around beauty salons. Don't think for a minute that brush companies and soap outfits aren't aware of this important link. They know that their business is as closely connected to the beautician's trade as surplus bacon grease is to empty coffee cans.

Married life didn't used to be like that. In the grand old days when wives used curling irons and washpots to make soap, happiness abounded in the land. Every rancher had plenty of hunting dogs and abundant running horse prospects. The women had lap churns and sad irons to occupy their minds. Annual quilting parties took care of the female instinct to socialize.

Household expenses didn't run everybody crazy. Old grandpa had ample cash to buy such necessities as gold pocket watches and gilded canes containing refreshment flasks. The women were happy. They didn't loiter around beauty shops looking for a chance to lead one of their sisters astray.

The president is a shrewd man. He probably knows how he's going to handle Mrs. Johnson. But I can tell him one thing: If economizing is going to be one of his problems, he'd better be on guard and see for sure that Lady Bird doesn't get the beauty shop habit. Not even a man smart enough to get to be president can carry that handicap.