EIR Feature

The gaping hole in the American market basket

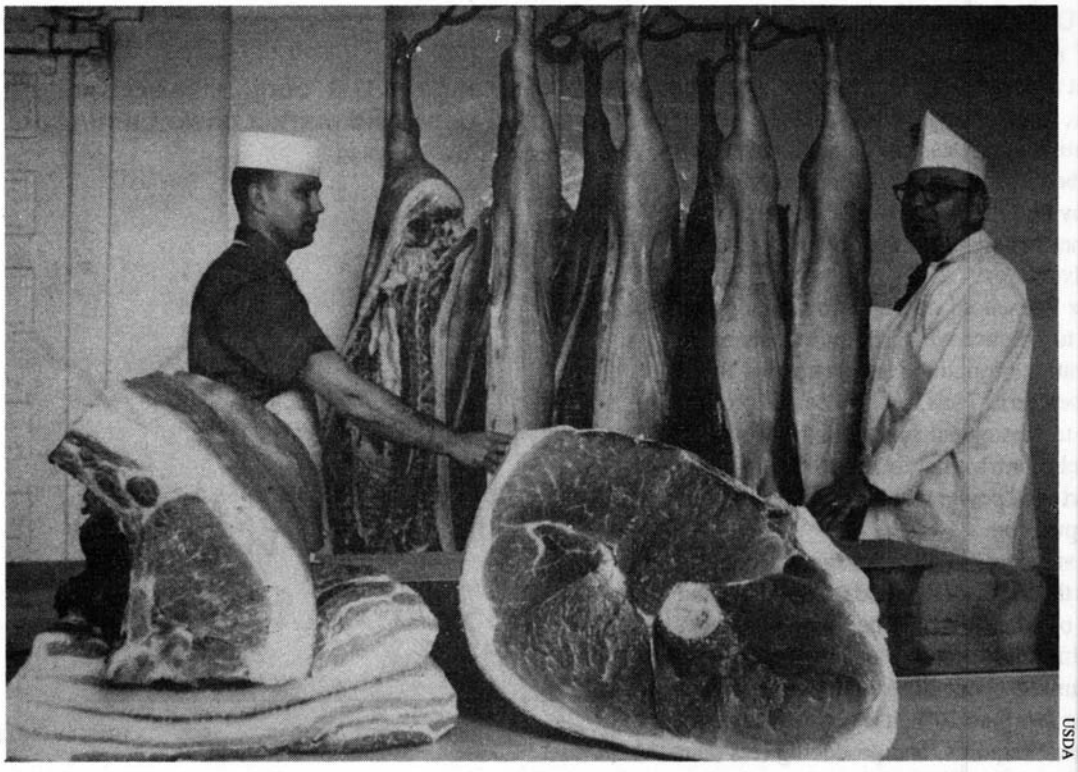
by Chris White

Using standards in part borrowed from work of U.S. government agencies during the 1940s and 1950s, *EIR* has worked up a market basket of goods required for household consumption. Such market basket standards, compared with statistical data reported by government agencies and different manufacturing associations, help point to what is being falsified, or overlooked, by those who insist that what they call the "recession," will be short in duration and not severe in its effects. Their own data show otherwise.

Comparison of *EIR*'s adopted market basket standard with present day consumption of the same categories of goods, and with the domestic production capacity for such requirements, blows right out of the water most of the falsehoods circulated by the government and its friends. Discredited too are such government indicators as the fabled "Consumer Price Index," which is still used to calculate cost-of-living increases, where they are still in effect, for social security and welfare recipients as well as trade unions.

Compared further with the degenerating demographic profile of the U.S. population—on the eve, during this decade, of an estimated 18% reduction in that part of the population between 25 and 44 years old, without considering the effects of AIDS, resurgent tuberculosis, other epidemic diseases, and drugs—the picture is one of a country in the throes of what is rapidly becoming more than an economic depression: a generalized breakdown crisis. This is the result especially of the policies which have been pursued so obsessively and blindly since the period 1963-67, in the name of the "post-industrial society" and neo-malthusianism.

Contrary to what has prevailed over the intervening 25 years, the government's 1950s studies, as with those of private agencies, were premised on a somewhat different starting point. Forty years ago, for example, the word "family" could still be used without setting off who knows what kind of racket about discrimination, oppression, and so on. Bringing up children, even for government agencies, was an activity to be encouraged, and not lumped together on an equal footing with a



USDA

Now you see it; now you don't. . . . This picture was taken in 1968, when American consumption standards were just beginning their downward plunge. Today, we are not providing a standard of living that allows for the reproduction of future generations.

polymorphous collection of alternative and competing lifestyles. Further, it was still possible, even within government, to discuss how requirements for household formation and maintenance might be produced, as well as identified, rather than issuing reports purporting to measure "consumer confidence" and the "purchasing power" of the consumer dollar, and so forth.

Of course, things have changed dramatically in the intervening 40 years. In the large, the country has been driven down the drain, as the culture has been shifted from one which was, to some extent, located in the morality of production, to the egoistic hedonism of the chronologically matured generation of postwar baby-boomers, who for a while seemed to believe that the formula "I want it," would function as the "Open Sesame" of their Americanized version of the Arabian Nights.

Consumption standards were set by *EIR* in the following areas: food, clothing, household appliances and furnishings, automobile operation and maintenance, and household fuel and utilities. Such elements, as of last year, comprised a bit less than half of total consumer expenditures of nearly $3 trillion, the bulk of the rest being accounted for by housing payments and medical expenses. Interestingly, consumers' debt service is not included as an item of consumer expenditure by the government's Department of Commerce.

The summary assertion is simply that the once vaunted American standard of living has all but disappeared, its destruction yielding to the growth of an increasingly pauperized underclass, made up of blacks, Hispanics, and poor whites, with conditions of life increasingly genocidal, the lower their ranking in the pile of the establishment's cast-offs. The reality mocks the rhetoric of Bush and company, who now assert that with their bloodbath against Iraq over, the way is cleared for a speedy recovery from what they call the present "recession."

The fact is, as the ability to produce the present genocidally curtailed basket of household consumption items shows, that the U.S. "military giant" is incapable of standing on its own two feet. Nor is it capable, as presently organized, of producing the net increases in wealth which would permit the imported goods, necessary for its present functioning, to be paid for. The atrocity against Iraq is a foretaste of what is to come, as military power is deployed to steal the resources from the rest of the world which, with the breakdown of credit and financial systems, can no longer be obtained by trickery and deceit alone.

The availability of material goods does not really provide anything other than a reflection of a standard of living, for this does not consider the quality of mind which makes man superior to and absolutely different from the lower beasts. It is shameful that much of mankind lives under conditions of brutal poverty, yet man is still able to transmit that striving for self-improvement which distinguishes him absolutely from the beasts. The absence, or shortfall, of the goods necessary for functioning today, refects the willful destruction of the material preconditions for the maintenance of life which

was unleashed in the United States a generation or so ago, and also the view of man espoused by that political and financial establishment which runs the United States. It exposes the rationalizations, whether of the supporters of the "free market" or of "alternative lifestyles," in the name of which such destruction has been effected. It is the reality of the Nazi-modeled economy the U.S. under Bush is in the process of becoming, that domestic collapse is the driver for escalating foreign military adventures.

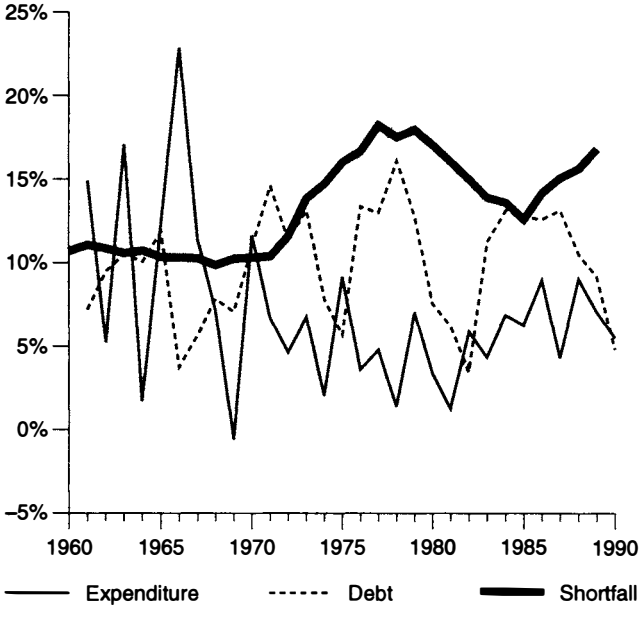
Such standards for household consumption presuppose further a commitment to produce what is required, such that each succeeding generation is qualified and capable of entering the work force in their turn. Thus, such standards presuppose, within a given technological mode, both a level of employment and a level of infrastructure development needed to produce, transport, and power what is necessary for the reproduction of the population.

By those modified standards of 40 years ago, the country is now consuming less than 90% of the food it should be, and producing about 85% of what it should be; it is consuming about 80% of the clothing it should be, and producing less than 40%; it is consuming about 80% of the footwear it requires, and producing less than 20%; it is consuming about 60% of the automobiles it requires, and producing less than 40%; and it is producing about 50% of the oil required to keep the whole functioning. Meanwhile, the monetary expenditures required to support the consumption have increased elevenfold since the 1960s, and the debt burden usuriously associated with consumption has increased twelvefold.

This is reflected in the accompanying charts. The three elements in **Figure 1** are as follows: the rate of change of the shortfall in *EIR*'s index of production of necessary household goods, developed below, the rate of change of consumer expenditures for such items, and the rate of change in consumer debt. It shows quite clearly that what Bush and company are happy to call the current "recession" didn't begin after last November's election, but is reflective of an accelerating downturn since 1985, when—lies of successive administrations to the contrary—the "longest sustained period of economic growth in U.S. history" had already come to an end without producing any economic growth at all. This is the downturn which accelerated with the stock market crash of 1987, was delayed for Bush's 1988 election, and accelerated again with the financial developments of the fall of 1989. **Figures 2** and **3** show the absolute increase and rate of change for personal expenditures and consumer debt, respectively.

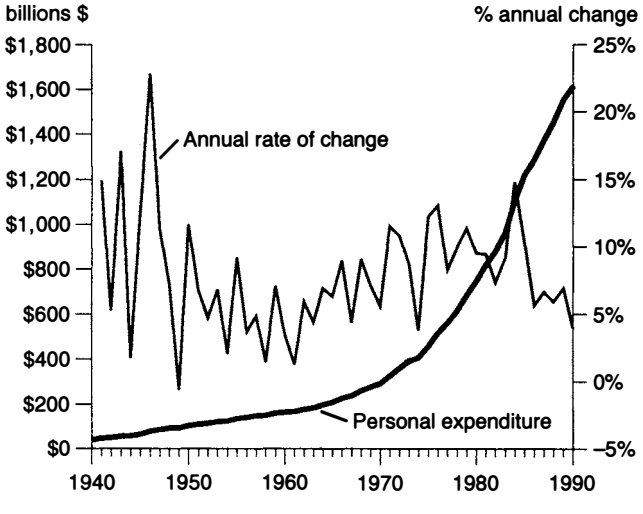
Since 1985, the *EIR*-defined shortfall has been increasing, the rate of increase of consumer expenditures, with the exception of the election year of 1988, falling, and the rate of increase of consumer indebtedness falling. This is the classic profile of a deflationary collapse, unleashed between 1978 and 1979, when Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker's murderous high interest rate policy was enforced to bank-

FIGURE 1
Rate of change in U.S. consumer expenditure, consumer debt, and market basket shortfall
(% change from previous year)



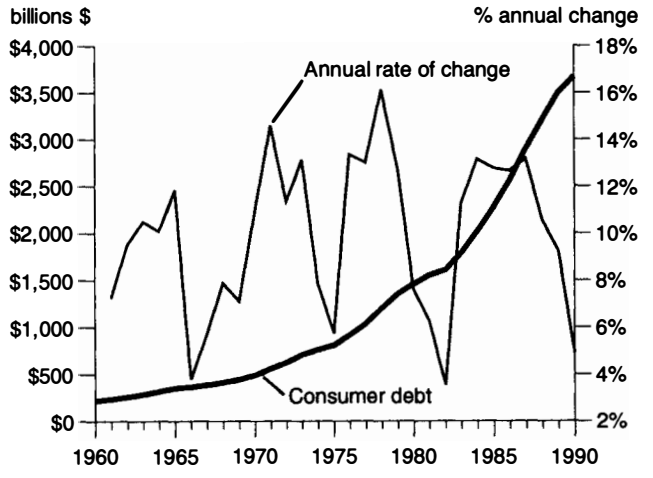
Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Affairs; Federal Reserve; EIR.

FIGURE 2
Growth and rate of change of personal expenditure, 1940–90



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Affairs.

FIGURE 3
Growth and rate of change of total U.S. consumer debt, 1960–90



Source: Federal Reserve.

rupt an economy which had been weakened by the 1971 collapse of the Bretton Woods gold-based monetary system, and by the successive, rigged oil shocks of 1973-74 and 1979-81.

Against this, it is argued that such numbers, though they come primarily from the double-talking government, really show nothing. This is the viewpoint of Bush's New League of Empire Loyalists. After all, there is a worldwide division of labor, they insist; why should we produce what can be obtained more cheaply elsewhere? Why can't we continue to borrow what we will never repay to steal from the rest of the world, as well as our own population?

This is the voice of the followers of Adam Smith, the proponents of the "magic of the market place," with their "buy cheap, sell dear" swindles and robberies. They refuse to invest in the capital improvements which would permit the maintenance of the standard of living in the U.S., preferring instead to steal food out of the mouths of Mexico's hungry, in the name of seeking the cheapest labor possible. The difference between the level of requirement adopted by *EIR*, and actual consumption, is the margin looted out of the U.S. population by such thievery. The difference between consumption levels and production is, in most cases, the margin that is looted out of the population of the rest of the world. We've been doing this in the name of "free enterprise," searching out cheap labor in the Third World to produce what we refuse to produce for ourselves, and throwing our own labor force on the scrapheap of unemployment, or into the swindle of the post-industrial service economy. It is loot, because we have not paid for the labor by putting back what we take out. The result of such practices is genocide. This is destruction through robbery; the robber, a parasite consuming its host, is also destroying himself.

Back in the 1950s, even the U.S. government worked differently. Then, the concern to provide for the population growth which became known as the postwar baby boom, while alleviating some of the horrendous poverty which remained from the depression of the 1930s—officially 32% of the population were considered to be below the poverty level in 1950, comparable to today's realities—was at least on the agenda. Government work, and that of private agencies, went into figuring out corrective remedies. Some of that is incorporated below.

Market basket standards

The 1950 food consumption standard, recommended by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in its Miscellaneous Publication No. 662, "Helping Families Plan Food Budgets," was based on standards worked up by the National Research Council. That agency was then focused on the question of how to deliver the quality of nutrients in the daily diet which would maximize the health of the population. Out of that work developed the food supplement approach, enriching foods with vitamin C, or calcium, for example, to add to their nutrient value.

It might be argued that such criteria as then adopted have been modified by subsequent scientific work. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) dietary approach certainly has been modified in the interim, and not from any scientific criteria. Rather, pseudo-science has been used to rationalize a series of degradations in the diets recommended by the USDA in its low-cost and moderate-cost food budgets. This was documented in 1985 and 1986, in *EIR*'s *Quarterly Economic Reports*, and in the newspaper *New Solidarity*, before the government shut it down (**Table 1**).

Originally, the 1950 recommended diet was compared with U.S. eating habits over the preceding 50 years. It was found that while the volume of food consumed per person per year had remained roughly constant since 1900, the composition of the diet had changed significantly, with the proportion of dairy products, fruit, and vegetables growing, while the share of potatoes and grain products was declining. Never had the U.S. diet reached the standard set in 1950, nor did it thereafter.

Indeed, since the late 1960s, a reverse shift has been taking place. Consumption has fallen for the following food types: whole fluid milk by 55%; eggs by 27%; butter by 22%; total dairy products by 18%; red meat by 11%; while consumption of poultry has increased by 47%; fats and oils by 30%; sweeteners by 19%; flour and grains by 15%; and human consumption of corn, in whatever form, by 157%. The indicated increase in consumption of meat, poultry, and fish over the standards set by the USDA in 1950 is illusory. If the National Meat and Livestock Board's criticism of USDA methods in converting from carcass weight of animals

TABLE 1
Recommended standard of food intake compared to actual consumption
(pounds per person per year)

	1950 USDA recommended diet	1988 USDA reported consumption
Total	1,745.9	1,566.6
Meat, poultry & fish	151.3	187.2
Eggs	49	30.9
Dairy products	602.5	582.4
Fats & oils	50.4	62.7
Fruits & vegetables	532.5	346.9
Flour & grains	138.7	171.8
Sugar & sweeteners	50.4	152.7
Coffee, tea, etc.	17	17

TABLE 2
Annual clothing requirements

Item	Boys	Men	Women	Girls
Overcoats	0.29	0.25	0.61	1.1
Raincoats	0.08	0.08	0.59	0.9
Suits	0.44	0.89	1.07	0.6
Jackets	0.4	0.29	0.71	1.1
Pants, slacks	2.59	1.82	2.86	5.9
Dresses			1.75	3.0
Skirts			2.11	4.75
Sweaters	0.83	0.35	1.71	2.9
Shirts & blouses	3.68	5.12	3.14	5.2
Sportswear	1.05	0.47	2.07	5.6
Underwear	5.99	7.52	11.29	13.8
Nightwear	0.67	0.92	2.14	2.8
Socks & hosiery	10.47	13.52	21.25	16.6
Shoes	2.87	2.30	3.93	4.2

slaughtered to table weight of product consumed is taken into account, then actual meat consumption is in the range of the 1950 recommendations, rather than the higher number reported by USDA as current consumption.

This is the subject of propaganda campaigns which, it often seems, are designed to turn all of us into dessicated vegetarians. The result isn't so healthy as the propaganda implies. It is a population that is underfed, and badly fed.

Nor has the debt-strapped farmer been left in shape to produce what is required. Seven percent of the red meat consumption is imported, more than 40% of the fish and shellfish, between 1.5 and 2.0% of the milk, nearly 30% of the fresh fruit, and about 15% of the vegetables. Some argue that this is offset by the production of wheat, corn, sorghum, and soy for export, but this is to mix apples and oranges, so to speak. There are two farm sectors in the United States: 1) a cash crop system that is grain and oil cartel-dominated and -controlled, akin, as in poultry raising, to share-cropping, and used as a brutal enforcement weapon in foreign policy; and 2) the husk of the earlier food-raising cultivation of the family farmer. The cartel cash-crop system has been strengthened by the deliberate bankruptcy and destruction of independent farmers, and also by the collapse of the transportation system. The primacy of line-haul trucking, at 95¢ a ton mile, puts a premium on economies of scale, in fruit and vegetable production, or dairying, for example, which the smaller independent operator, even if closer to major markets, cannot compete against.

Clothing is needed, but not in the same way as food. Here, the 1950s estimated standards were modified through surveys. The 1950s recommendations in turn were based on surveys of households in different parts of the country, in cities in each of the geographical extremities of the country, and on compilations of the Heller Committee of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which had been set up prior to World War II. The results were published in such locations as "Workers' Budgets in the United States," Bulletin No. 927, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 1948; the maintenance budget for urban families compiled by the WPA; and the Heller Committee's Wage-Earner Budgets. These different approaches were compiled in a volume produced by the Twentieth Century Fund.

The outline looks as seen in **Table 2,** the clothing requirements being represented in number of items per person per year, in a sense a replacement rate.

The clothing industry has been shattered over the past 25 years, to the point that it is only presently capable of producing about 40% of the identified requirement level, while the footwear industry has been gutted to a vestigial remainder. This, despite the fact that the U.S. had been among the world's leaders in developing and introducing the innovations in materials and techniques on which the industry is presently based. In the period when the Twentieth Century Fund did its study, clothing was still primarily attached to agricultural production, in the sense that cotton, wool, and fibers such as linen were its primary material input. Petrochemicals processing and synthesis of fibers from organic and inorganic chemicals have transformed the industry to the point that well over 70% of present clothing manufacture originates with man-made synthetic materials.

Thus, for example, there is a certain speciousness in the arguments of those who insist that given the present world-

TABLE 3
Production and consumption of selected items of clothing
(as percent of requirements)

Item	Production	Consumption
Womens' & girls' blouses Mens' & boys' shirts	42.3	101
Womens' & girls' sweaters Mens' & boys' sweaters	36.7	129
Mens' & boys' pants	235	251
Womens' & girls' skirts & slacks	39.3	60
Sportswear	66	190
Mens' & boys' suits Womens' & girls' suits	10.7	24
Mens' & boys' coats	45.2	89.3
Women's & girls' coats	13.7	45.6
Shoes (leather)	17.5	131

wide division of labor, perhaps clothing might indeed be better produced elsewhere. This, because the synthesis and production of the material and fiber inputs happens to represent one of the most advanced, still partially functioning sections of the economy, while the manufacture of the clothing itself remains among the most labor intensive. Thus, the industry has been gutted in a kind of global version of the runaway shop, while technologies, such as those developed by the Hughes Aircraft Corp., which would bring the apparel industry into the twenty-first century, have been left on the shelf. Looting of Third World labor is preferred, again, to investment in domestic capital improvement and labor upgrading (**Table 3**).

Contrasting the items which are in what could be called "surplus" and those which are not, reflects the shift that has occurred, and again, as in the case of food, it is a shift toward the lower standards dictated by depression, in which uniformity, in the form of the spread of casual wear or sportswear, and the jeans which are included under the rubric of "pants," replaces clothing for function in the name, again, of the rationalization of "alternate lifestyles." From the standpoint of the producer, it's a very different matter. Suits, for example, made of relatively fancy fabric, require dying of the yarn, and weaving, before tailoring into the form of a suit, while tee-shirts and such, are just knitted up and then dyed to order. Shirts of solid colors can have pockets attached automatically, but with a stripe in the fabric of a dress shirt, the process has to be done by hand, to match up the stripes of pocket and shirt. It is the same in the case of the production of denim jeans versus tailored pants. Levi's output of 30 million dozen pairs per year is produced in fully automated

TABLE 4
Typical life expectancies, in years, of household appliances

Appliance	Years of use: Appliance Magazine	Years of use: USDA
Refrigerators	17	15
Cooking ranges	17	14
Washers	13	11
Dryers	13	12
Dishwashers	10	10

plants all around the country, and requires next to no labor.

The 1950s standards are not so useful where household appliances and automobiles are concerned. Such items of the consumer budget, like fuel and utilities, are more closely related to household formation and household size. In this case, it is not only the change in the products produced since the 1950s which is relevant, but also the change in the household. For example, the size of the automobile, and the number of people per automobile, has decreased drastically over the past 30 years. But the decreases follow fairly closely the shrinking of the household. The number of automobiles in the national inventory has dramatically increased, more than doubling since 1960. But this is no indicator of prosperity, rather reflecting the ugly reality that smaller households require more wage-earners to bring in a smaller wage-packet, thereby also requiring more automobiles per household to ensure mobility and therefore employment.

In the case of household appliances, if one were to assume that each household possessed each of what are called the "major appliances," and that those appliances were in service for the lifespan claimed by the manufacturers, or industry representatives such as *Appliance Magazine*, or in years past, by the Family Economics Research Group of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, then, until 1989, production, except in the case of microwave ovens, which are mostly imported, did keep up with requirements (see **Table 4**).

Thus assume, for example, that production ought to be sufficient to replace one-seventeenth of the refrigerator stock every year, plus the margin provided by growth in households. Since 99% of households are reported to have refrigerators, the production level of approximately 6 million units per year, up until the renewed downward plunge of the economy in the fall of 1989, used to be, roughly, sufficient.

Household power and utility requirements are related to the appliances typically present, as well as light, space, and water heat. The USDA estimated in 1980 that it required 9,025 kilowatt-hours of electricity per household to operate lighting, water-heating, refrigeration, cooking, space heat,

air-conditioning, and other appliances which are more or less standard, such as freezers, washing and drying machines, and so on. As for non-electrical sources of home heating, the pre-Volcker depression 1980-82 level required about 2.5 tons per household of fuel, in oil equivalent tons, though natural gas makes up nearly 90% of this.

There are rather more than 140 million automobiles in the U.S. inventory. They are increasingly older, and less well made than they used to be. They are designed for a different purpose, not the basic family mobility of 30 years ago, but more for the displacement of one or two people, under conditions considerably less safe, because of the so-called downsizing of the car, and because of the fleet's increasing age. The rate of scrappage, or non-renewal of registrations, as a percent of the total inventory, shows that vehicle lifespans have increased from about 12.6 years in 1967 to 16.9 by 1987, irrespective, of course, of the number of times a vehicle's ownership changes hands. The average age of the vehicles increased from 5.9 to 7.6 years over the same period.

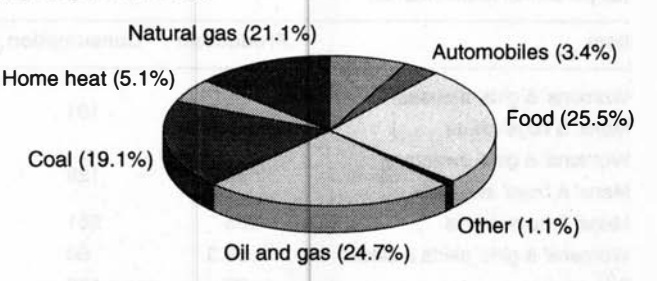
If the earlier lifespan were returned to, production ought to be running at between 11 and 12 million units, against the approximately 6 million vehicles which were produced in 1990, and the rather more than 9 million which were counted as retail sales. Operating the vehicles for the 9,300 or so miles each is driven on average every year, at claimed mileage rates of 18.3 miles per gallon, requires about 500 gallons of gasoline per car per year.

EIR converted the requirement set by the standards adopted into weight for uniformity of unit. This was done to scale the contents of the household market basket for comparison, and because the bulk of the goods are, in one way or another, ultimately delivered to point of sale or consumption by the transport system. These aspects will be dealt with in forthcoming articles, in so far as the flow of materials into the production of the market basket of consumption and the ability to transport that flow of goods through the system is concerned.

Clothing weights were obtained from mail order shipment catalogues. Appliance and furnishing weights from the publications of the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, mail order catalogues, and the Commerce Department's Census of Manufactures reports entitled "Materials Consumed." For automobiles, we adopted the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers' Association 1978 weight of 3,440 pounds. In model terms, this would represent an old-style family car, such as the Chevrolet Caprice or Pontiac Bonneville. Replacement parts, such as tires, were included in the estimate.

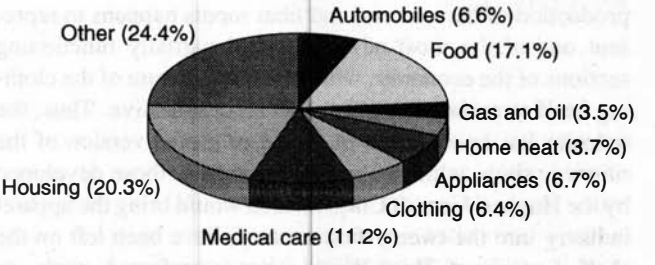
Figures 4 and **5** show the result, and also how the goods requirement compares with the 1990 consumer expenditures pattern. The breakdown of goods required, per person and per household, is shown in **Table 5.** The third column, labeled "Production," shows the per capita value, in tons, of the reported domestic production.

FIGURE 4
Required composition of U.S. domestic household consumption
(by weight of product)



Source: EIR estimates.

FIGURE 5
Composition of U.S. personal consumption expenditures in 1990
(% of total expenditures)



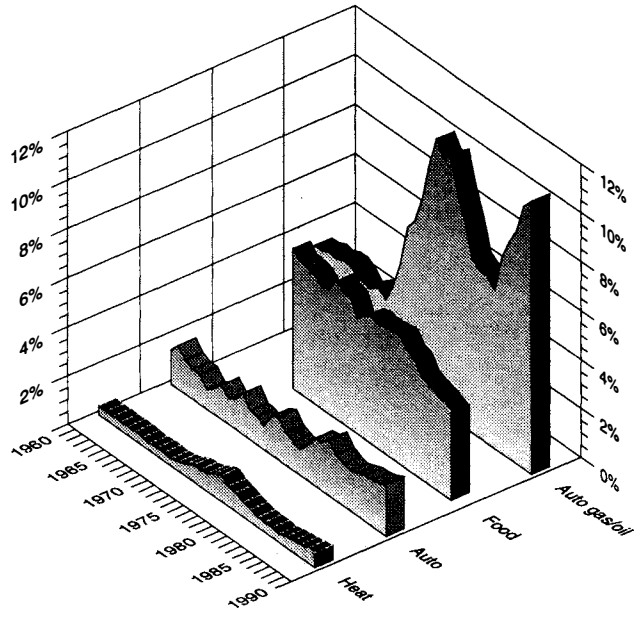
Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Affairs.

TABLE 5
EIR sets decent consumption standard
(tons per year)

Item	Per person	Per household	Production per person
Total	3.53	9.3	2.8
Food	0.87	2.3	0.74
Clothing, shoes	0.007	0.02	0.003
Appliances, furniture	0.03	0.08	0.03
Autos, parts	0.12	0.3	0.048
Gasoline, oil	0.84	2.2	0.42
Home heat, utilities*	1.7	4.4	1.61
Fuel oil	0.18	0.5	0.09

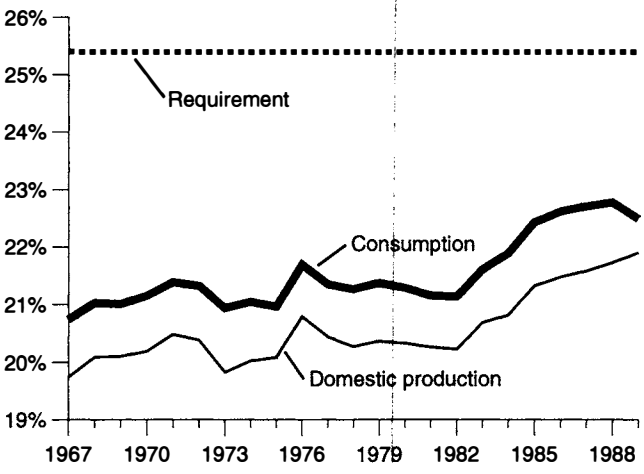
*Oil equivalent tons and coal required for electricity generation.

FIGURE 6
Estimated production shortfall, by category
(% below required level)



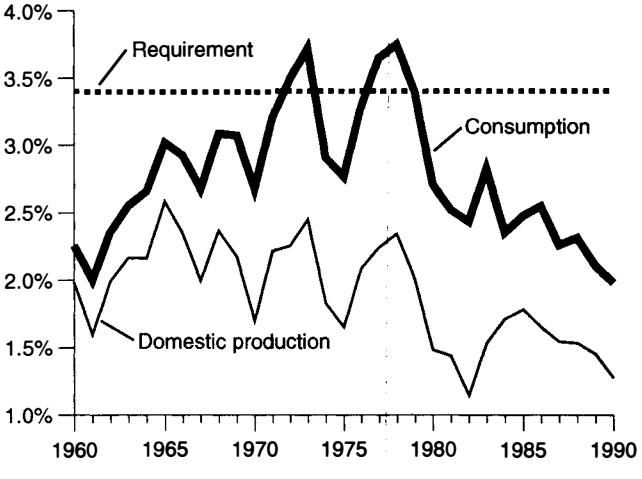
Source: EIR estimates.

FIGURE 7
U.S. food consumption and domestic production, 1967–90, versus requirement
(% of total required household consumption)



Source: USDA, *Food Consumption and Expenditure*; EIR estimates.

FIGURE 8
Automobile consumption and domestic production, 1960–90, versus requirement
(% of total required household consumption)



Source: EIR estimates.

Assuming, falsely, for purposes of approximation, that the per capita market basket remains constant, the standard adopted provides the basis for the construction of an index, which permits comparison of consumption and production of the identified items, over time, with the standard assumed to be fixed. Thus, the total per capita requirement can, for these purposes, always be set at 100, and the requirement for food, and the other products, always represent their proportional share in the index. The resulting shortfalls are shown in **Figures 6, 7,** and **8.** The left scale shows the production shortfall for the identified market basket component as a percent of the total index of 100. Two other distortions crop up: First, the automobile series is contrived from units produced, rather than weight of unit produced, and second, the oil shortfall, based simply on the difference between production and consumption, is understated. For if the same approach were also applied to other sectors of the economy, such as producers' goods, infrastructure, and agriculture, then oil requirements would be significantly higher than present consumption levels, assuming present technological composition of production.

Merely a matter of 'lifestyle'?

These days, to combine the words "requirements" and "consumption" seems something of an anachronism. Consumption, after all, has become a function of money or credit, on the one hand, and what used to be called "taste," now "lifestyle," on the other—not the result of the activity of production. The shortfalls are defined from the standpoint of maintaining those alive now. The result of the accumulated degradation of the economy since the late 1960s puts this in a different perspective.

Stuart Lewis

A homeless family in a New York City shelter. Under such circumstances, the nuclear family is becoming a thing of the past.

Over the few short years remaining between now and the turn of the century, the size of the U.S. adult population less than 45 years old, will fall by about 18%. The shrinkage represents the maturation, at least in age, of the children of the postwar baby-boom generation. It is already labeled by demographers, "the birth dearth." Without returning to an "open-door" immigration policy, based on high-wage productive jobs, the maturation of the "birth-dearth" generation signals the beginning decline of U.S. population growth, for it will be the aging of the population, existing people living longer, which will henceforth account for the major portion of population growth.

And, beyond the maturation of the "birth-dearth" generation, the situation is far worse. Consider only the scandal of the nation's abortion rate; the rate of infants born out of wedlock; the infant mortality rate, especially among the children of the rotted out inner-city neighborhoods of the East Coast and Midwest; the infants born with the AIDS virus, or addicted to crack or other drugs; the low-birth-weight baby phenomenon; the reappearance of diseases of childhood, not so long ago considered defeated; and then, the plight of those next up the age-group ladder, the children and youth, the products of the counterculture adopted by their parents, the "boomers," their drug use, their illiteracy, their high school dropout rate; their prospects and opportunities for useful, as well as gainful employment; and then, add the layer of the epidemic diseases, like the 100% fatal AIDS plague, or hepatitis, or the comeback of tuberculosis, as those diseases have affected the "boomers," and their "birth-dearth" progeny, and now the children of the latter in turn.

This could be spelled out, but everyone, whether they close their eyes and hearts to it or not, knows. This is, based on the performance of the recent past and the present, a sick and a dying culture. What ought we then to suppose? What does this say about what is called "taste," or the "lifestyles," degenerate and perverse as they happen to be, which have undermined, and all but replaced the monogamous, nuclear family-based household as the mediation for the culture which shaped our past, more or less successfully, into the yet-to-be-created future?

The rule of thumb is that a monogamous, nuclear family-based household unit, ought to be made up of two adults, one male, one female, and their children. If the population were growing overall, without considering increased life expectancy and lower mortality rates, then each such household unit ought to produce slightly more than two children. Thus, in these rule-of-thumb terms, a non-suicidal "lifestyle" could be approximated as one in which such monogamous family units were made up of a bit more than four members. Above that level, we could assume population will be growing; below it, the warning signs ought to be flagged for trouble ahead.

What has happened to U.S. household size over the past 40 years? Each 10-year interval has seen the size of the

household shrink. From 3.5 members in 1950, when the "boomers" were being conceived, to 3.4 in 1960, 3.2 in 1970, when the first wave of the "boomers" were setting up homes, to 2.8 in 1980, and 2.6 in 1990, as the "boomers" began to pass out of their child-bearing and rearing years.

Back in 1950, you could, perhaps, assume that 3.5 people per household did mean 2 adults and 1.5 children. By 1990, the smaller household could equally well be made up of any permutation of male and female, old and young, which could be designed to fit, including therein what the U.S. government calls "non-family households," which includes both perversity of so-called lifestyle, as well as homes broken apart, for whatever reason.

There were about 94 million households of Americans in 1990. Of these, 65.5 million were family households (family includes couples as well as single-parent homes), 51.5 million of these were married couple family households. Back in 1950, some 90% of the 43.6 million households were family households, 79% were married couple households. Of the 65.5 million family households of 1990, 43.7 million had wage or salary earners. The self-employed are included in the difference between the total family households, and the wage and salary earners, as well as those like the retired, living on pensions and social security. Of the wage- and salary-earning households, only 12.1 million were one wage-earner families, nearly 13% of all households, while 22 million households, 50% of those with earners, had two or more earners. Back in 1950, about 90% of households were families with wage and salary earners, and over 60% of all households were supported by 1 wage-earner.

Today there are more wage and salary earners, supporting smaller households, with fewer stable monogamous units and fewer children. The reality of "changes in lifestyle" is the victim's rationalization for brutal austerity and genocide.

It ought to be obvious, isn't it? For family life to be organized in such a way that society can reproduce itself, by producing and supporting an increase in functioning family units, the maintenance and improvement of a certain standard of living is presupposed. The standard of living ought to be made up of the quality as well as quantity of goods which would permit family life to prosper: social services, such as health and education; and affordable housing, adequate to the maintenance of family life, in terms of floor space, and quality of construction sufficient to outlast the mortgage with which such properties are invariably encumbered these days.

The society which is not prepared to make the investment in maintaining its present population, still less those who ought to follow after them, is one which is in the process of proving that it is not morally qualified to survive.