

**LET'S BUY
OUR OWN BUS,
DAD!**



Once upon a time some harried parent, trying hard to cover up for his offspring, muttered the immortal statement, "Boys will be Boys!" I can remember my own tolerant mother saying just that many times in the past . . . like when I spilled ink on the new wallpaper in the living room.

There are times, however, when my boy Jack goes into action, that these seem empty words indeed.

Take the other night, for instance. Kitty and I were budgeting again. Mortgage payments, plus clothes, light and heat, food and a little recreation expense, had added up to more than income. And our fingernails had become the menu of the moment.

Jack bounced into the kitchen. If you've a boy around your house, you know that a teen-aged 150 pounder carries quite a bounce. "Jeepers," he said brightly, "you sure make a gruesome twosome!"

"I think you'd better leave," his mother advised. "We've got some serious figuring to do."

"Maybe I can help," he offered generously. "Fact is, I had a good idea this afternoon. Let's buy our own bus, Dad! Then Mom can tear up the budget book and you and I can go fishin'."

"Well, genius!" I snapped, with the annoyed air of a horse trying to swish a fly off his back, "and what makes you think that owning a bus would put us on easy street?"

"I was countin' heads on the bus after school today," he answered. "It looked like a lot of dough on the road to me. So I was thinkin' if you'd quit the CTA and buy a bus, everything would be swell. Maybe you could even up my allowance!"

"Since they made you treasurer of your Scout patrol, you've got all the answers, haven't you," I retorted with more than a trace of sarcasm. "What you haven't yet learned is that there's more to a business than income. There's 'outgo', too. You counted the heads on the bus for income; now let's look at the 'outgo' and see what happens to income. The CTA report for 1952 will show you what I mean; maybe I can bring it down to your level."

"What's my level, Dad?" Jack queried.

I ignored that challenge, and continued: "It's obvious you know what a good old American buck is, the way you keep asking for them all the time. Would you like to know what happened to each and every dollar bill CTA took in last year?"

"Sure," he said.

"To begin with, 62.96 cents went to the employees—the operators, shop workers and white collar folks like me. Then, it takes materials and supplies to keep operating. Things like parts for the vehicles, rails, nuts and bolts, light bulbs, tools, upholstery for the seats, and lots of other items, big and small. Together, they took 10.54 cents out of every CTA dollar. Electric power for the streetcars, 'L'-Subway trains and trolley buses cost 5.08 cents and motor fuel—gasoline, propane and diesel—took another 2.40 cents. Each dollar had to give up 5 cents to pay for injury and damage claims.

"And the vehicles wear out in time, too, so money has to be set aside to replace them. It's called 'depreciation' and 8.05 cents of each CTA dollar went into that fund. Also, CTA had to sell bonds to raise money to start operating and to buy new equipment. It takes 3.48 cents of every dollar to pay interest to bondholders and another 1.38 cents must be put away to clear up that debt in the future. And, 1.11 cents of each dollar was required for operating reserves and city compensation.

"There's your dollar, son, but where's the fishing money?" I concluded.

"Guess it wasn't such a good idea, Dad," Jack said. "But I've just had a better one!"

"What's that?" I asked shakily.

"Mom says Uncle Fred's the successful member of your family. Let's ask him to buy a bus and we can run the business for him!"

Jack rushed for the living room as I started to rise.

Sincerely,

Bill Saver

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