

A Buck in the Basket?  
Maybe it's time for a raise

Take me out to the ball game, but I won't expect me buy me a hot dog, too. Those who participate in the highway robbery of buying refreshments at sports events pay something like \$6.00 for the beer and \$5.00 or more for the hot dog. (I can remember when one got a whole case of beer at that price.) It's a harsh fact that inflation has us by the throat and is choking us to death. Those of us who are no longer kids feel pinched and distressed by the soaring prices.

So how does this affect Grapevine readers? In order to keep operating, businesses like the Grapevine must raise their rates to keep this battle against the roaring tiger under control. Gasoline hovers around \$2.50 to \$3.00 a gallon. Movies cost in the neighborhood of \$8.00. We are all aware of these facts. Let's look at AA meetings, something dear and essential in our lives, which are treated shabbily by far too many members.

When I first came into AA in 1963, the accepted contribution was \$1.00, which seemed to pretty well cover expenses. That dollar from 1963, the average "dues" paid by most members, when adjusted for inflation is equal to just 16 cents today!

How - and why - should this be? you might ask. The cost of food and other essentials, like coffee, has tripled in forty years. The cost of rent for those meeting places has shot up, too. Literature, directories, coffee, cream and sugar, paper cups, it all adds up.

We have not really paid serious attention to inflation in AA, even though we'd have to be blind not to recognize its serious nature. Churches, which so generously make their facilities available, deserve a larger rental fee. The bit of inflation affects them, too. If we aren't paying a fair rental fee, we have to ask ourselves if we are in violation of Tradition Seven: "Every AA group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions."

Likewise, there have been continuously increasing expenses to maintain our vital intergroup offices, area assemblies, and the General Service Office in New York City. They cannot carry our message of recovery effectively without adequate funding, and there are millions of alcoholics around the world awaiting a message they may never hear.

Obviously, if the average contribution is only one dollar, a group of fifteen or twenty members will have little, if any, money left over to make badly needed contributions to these AA service units after paying for coffee, rent, and literature. Does this help explain why only about half of all groups in Canada and the United States contributed to the GSO last year? That lamentable figure - only about 50% of the membership - is about the same for my local groups' contributions to our intergroup office.

Is this responsibility: Is one dollar - less than the price of a bag of popcorn at the local cinema - the value that we place on AA?

Let's wake up to the dangers lurking out there. We must not deny our precious life-savings heritage to other alcoholics standing in the wings for lack of a few

dollars more from each of us, not if we truly believe our Declaration of Responsibility: "I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."  
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Comparative Costs:	1963	2005
A loaf of bread	.21	2.89
A gallon of milk	.49	4.50
6-pack beer	.86	3.76
Carton of cigarettes	1.99	45.00
Postage stamp	.04	.37
The Grapevine	.35	1.50
Donation	1.00	1.00

There are no dues or fees in AA. AA is here for anyone who reaches out for help. The program is given freely to anyone who wants to stop drinking, even at times when he or she may not be able to contribute financially.