

debtor lost by dealing with a debt adjuster, genuine counseling and some frankness with creditors would have given the story a different ending. But their fear and desperation made the debtors tongue-tied and wary of their creditors.

Sometimes, a fellow worker will convince someone a debt pooler will solve all their money problems just as his own problems have been solved. That's how a Rockville couple with a new baby got involved.

The young mother said a man at her husband's place of work told him how much help he was getting from a debt consolidator. She didn't know then that the debt firm would deduct from \$5 up to \$100 from a debtor's bill as a reward for referring other customers.

She and her husband signed a contract to pay \$43 a week until all their bills were paid. Within a month, they were being dunned by their creditors. The debt consolidator told her the creditors were just trying to get more money out of her and she wasn't to pay any attention to them.

Trailer Repossessed

"Then, on May 6, 1966," the wife said, "our trailer was repossessed. The man gave us 15 minutes to get our furniture and baby out of our home. A few weeks later, our car was taken from us. I called all our creditors and found that none of them had gotten any of the money we paid to the debt adjuster.

"We lost everything we had. Our credit was ruined. We didn't even have money for food. It's been over a year now and we're just getting back on our feet. I'm glad of just one thing. I think I would kill myself if I had taken even \$5 to refer anyone else to these people."

Another young couple also learned the hard way. In seven years of marriage, they had never been in a financial bind until moving expenses ate up their reserves and a debt pooler promised to bring their bills up to date.

"This man sounded on the up-and-up but after I started paying out \$65 every two weeks, the bills I received were the same or larger than the ones I had before I started," the husband said.

Bank Sends Letter

"These people gave me the impression that all my creditors would be satisfied immediately but none of them were," he went on. "I figure the \$260 I have given him was just paying his commission."

He was shaken when the bank he owed money back home sent him a copy of a letter the bank had written to notify the debt adjuster the bank refused to enter into an arrangement with him and "payments will be expected as contracted for by the borrower."

Finally, one of his creditors, a one-stop shopping center, warned him on debt consolidators.

"Why should you pay them?" the center's credit manager asked him. "Pay us directly and if you can't, just call and tell us. We'll work something out."

The wife picked up the story there.

"If it hadn't been for the way that credit manager helped us," she said, "we might still be hooked up with that so-called debt pooler. You know, you don't think of a creditor as a friend. You avoid him.

"Now I feel that if we have a problem, we are going to level with our creditors. They'll do more for us than any debt adjuster. At least, that's what happened to us."