

# Federal Subsidies Lead to Addiction

WHEN federal revenue sharing came into existence, local governments were warned not to count upon subsidies as a continued source of income. Many officials ignored the warnings.

States, municipalities and schools have become just as addicted to government handouts as indigent non-working individuals. Private businesses are hooked in the same way in many cases. Like some shiftless families, some governmental units have now been on the federal gravy train for several generations of office-holders.

A few officials were disturbed because Washington bureaucrats extended their control over local affairs with every check.

Figures published last year indicated that the federal government held control over nearly 17 percent of the total budget spent by Oklahoma City officials in the preceding fiscal year.

One notable result of acceptance of federal funds to help install sewage facilities was EPA's requirement that city sewage rates be in-

creased. The resulting burden upon the local meat packing industry precipitated a decline and removal that may be irreversible.

In September, the Board of Regents for Higher Education refused a \$1 million subsidy for technical education after finding it would cost the state \$3 to administer every federal dollar.

A couple of weeks ago the Tile Council of America, Inc., returned a grant of \$225,000 to the government. The money had been handed over to finance a study on how ceramic tile manufacturers and suppliers could cope with the threat of imports.

If tile manufacturers, or other industrial recipients of such grants or subsidies, can't compete, perhaps the owners should try different lines of business.

Two instances of local addiction to federal aid came up recently. The Myriad Gardens Authority said opening may be delayed another year because it lacks \$8.5 million needed to construct the botanical gardens. The Authority had expect-

ed a check from Uncle Sam, maybe?

Another park project was called "virtually dead" when it became apparent that the Interior Department is unlikely to dish out \$250 million to build a proposed "String of Pearls" along the North Canadian river. Oh well, Oklahoma City can't control dandelions and hoodlums in parks the city already operates.

Public school officials and teachers unions are sending up great howls about expected cuts in education funds. This could have a bright side. Perhaps if local boards relied less upon federal and state financing, they might regain some control over local schools.

Regardless of possible benefits from the 55 mph speed limit laws, the threat to withhold federal highway subsidies if enforcement is lax is nothing less than economic blackmail by bureaucracy.

In government, in business and in homes the hand that writes the checks usually writes the rules. If we really want independence, we must shake the "monkey on our backs" — federal subsidy.