The year was...  

It should have been a year of celebration—at least, that’s what a romantic outlook would have us see. The most destructive war in the most violent century in human history had ended at last; American heroes were returning home. 

And, in many ways, 1946 was a time of renewal—quite literally, as the birth rate in the United States jumped some 20% to commence the Baby Boom. 

Yet even as the nation rejoiced, shadows remained, and they threatened to grow. The exuberance and relief expressed in that year’s popular song, “Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah,” were tempered by the anxieties of readjustment to peacetime, as portrayed in the Oscar-winning film, “The Best Years of Our Lives.” The hopes for a peaceful future implicit in the first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly were countered by Sir Winston Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech, warning of the threat of Soviet expansion. 

And even as the synthesizing of penicillin and the publication of Benjamin Spock’s Common Sense Book of Baby and Childcare promised a gentler, healthier future for the first postwar generation of children, mass starvation threatened those already living amidst the ruins of Europe and Japan. The worst work stoppages since 1919 hit industries throughout the United States; Nazi leaders hanged in Nuremberg; women put down acetylene torches and returned to homemaking. 

In 1946, war was over; life went on. 

—Lisa Ferraro Parmelee

A Helping Hand for Friend... And Foe

**Question:** Would you be willing to have meat and butter rationed again so that we could send more food to needy countries that fought on our side in the war, or would you rather not have such rationing?

| Willing | 68% |
| Not willing | 29% |

*Source:* Survey by the National Opinion Research Center, March 1946.

**Question:** Do you think we should send any food to the German people during the coming winter?

| Yes | 57% |
| No | 28% |
| Depends (vol.) | 12% |

*Source:* Survey by the National Opinion Research Center, March 1946.

Supplies Still Short at Home

**Question:** There are still some shortages even though the war is over. Which one or two shortages are you noticing most now?

| Clothing | 29% |
| Butter | 25% |
| Sugar | 23% |
| Hosiery | 16% |
| Meat | 9% |
| Housing | 9% |

*Note:* Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses. Selected responses shown. 


Seeds of Suburbia

**Question:** Would you say there is a serious shortage of housing around here, that there is some shortage but it is not serious, or that there is no real shortage at all?

| No real shortage | 5% |
| Serious shortage | 65% |
| Some shortage | 28% |

**Sleeping Bear Stirs**

**Question:** In general, do you approve or disapprove of the policy Russia is following in world affairs?

Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, March 15-20, 1946.

**FDR a Hero...**

**Question:** Which of these four US presidents do you think was the greatest—George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, or Franklin Delano Roosevelt?

Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, January 5-10, 1946.

**But No More Four-Term Presidents**

**Question:** Would you favor adding a law to the Constitution to prevent any President of the United States in the future from serving more than two terms in a row?

Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, November 29-December 4, 1946.

**Lesson of Oppression Not Fully Learned**

**Question:** Do you think negroes should have as good a chance as white people to get any kind of job, or do you think white people should have the first chance at any kind of job?

Source: Survey by the National Opinion Research Center, May 1946.

**Love After War**

**Question:** Assuming that all three girls are equally good looking, do you think most men would prefer to marry...?

Source: Survey by the Roper Organization for Fortune magazine, April 12-30, 1946.