



THE NEW DEBATE OVER THE VERY RICH

The top 1% of earners did better than everyone else in the 1980s, but much of the fire they draw is off target. Here's how they got it—and why new taxes aren't the answer. • by Anne B. Fisher

FINALLY, WE come to the segment of the lucky 1% who in most Americans' eyes are unalloyed good guys—the founders and owners of new businesses. About 20% of the super rich are entrepreneurs.

Often these iconoclasts are somewhat ahead of their time, acting on an idea just before it seems truly practical ... like selling a million juice machines a year to diet-conscious consumers.

Juice machines? Absolutely. Meet the Cesari Brothers, Steve and Rick, now living in Seattle, where they started Trillium Health Products just three years ago. It markets a \$289 electric appliance called Juiceman—as well as a

smaller, \$150 version, the Juiceman Jr.—that squeezes the bejabbers out of vegetables and fruits to make a quick, healthful drink. Juicers are now about the hottest small appliance going, the Cuisinart of the 1990s, and retailers' main problem is keeping enough of them in stock. Trillium isn't the only company riding the wave, but the Cesaris say annual revenues have surged from \$950,000 in 1989 to more than \$75 million a year.

The oldest of eight children, Steve, 38, and Rick, 35, are too young to have been among the top 1% when the CBO started counting in 1977. They grew up in suburban Westchester County, New York, working after school and on weekends in their father's grocery store—until Dad died of a heart attack at age 48. Rick earned a premed degree in college before moving west to join a direct-mail marketing partnership. Steve went to Panama City, Florida, and started a chain of sporting goods stores.

"We've both been very much into nutrition and exercise for a long time," says Steve, "and we wanted to go into business together, but it wasn't until 1989 that we saw this opportunity." Once they saw it, "we e hocked everything we had to raise startup capital. We even took out a home equity loan on our mother's house." (Mom is out of debt now.)

Besides selling juicers, Trillium runs seminars on nutrition that encourage people to eat more fruits and vegetables. "Consumption of meat is not only bad for you, it's destroying the planet," declares Rick. "By changing your eating habits, you can also help save the environment." Trillium's 160 employees, he adds, "believe strongly in what we're doing." At the company's Seattle headquarters, people don't take coffee breaks. They take juice breaks, squeezing the stuff out of 4,000 pounds of organically grown vegetables per week.

Sudden success hasn't much altered the way the Cesari brothers live. Steve hauls his four kids around in a Chrysler minivan, and Rick drives a Chevy. They both spend lots of time with their families; Rick and his wife just had their first baby. The simple life is mostly a result of some distinctly post-Reaganite soul-searching. "In the 1980s I did pretty well in direct marketing, and the first thing I did was buy myself a Porsche convertible," says Rick. "Then that business went south, and I had already realized that material things weren't the answer anyway. The second time around, starting a business, you feel like you have to contribute something."



Steve and Rick Cesari, with wives Indy (far right) and Kristen, squeezed a fortune from juice machines