The Birmingham Eccentric

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NOTE: The Eccentric is pleased to publish stories of events which have news value and which are written by persons not connected with the editorial staff of the paper. All copy must be presented before noon on Wednesdays. The right is reserved, however, to make such superficial changes in the work submitted as are necessary to the style of the paper and as are required by laws of the state. Because of a mechanical situation in the composing room, headlines written by those other than members of the staff cannot be used. Any erroneous reflection upon the character, standing or reputation of any person, firm or corporation which may appear in the columns of The Eccentric will be gladly corrected upon being brought to the attention of the publisher.

"Government Of, By and For The People"

The inauguration of President Roosevelt last week and the beginning of the 75th Congress this month mark something of a turning point in the history of the United States, whether most of us realize it or not.

The purpose of the Norris amendment, which changed the inauguration from March to January and provided for the newly elected Congress to meet in January instead of in the following December, was to make government more responsive to popular will. This result would have been greatly emphasized had the people of this nation elected Governor Landon and a Republican Congress. It is none the less true, regardless of the fact that no great change of policies will result.

It is apparent, from the election results, that the people of the nation have endorsed the New Deal in the method set up by Americans to decide such issues. The voice of the people has spoken, whether wisely or foolishly, and the verdict is reasonably plain. Should it be ignored or obeyed? Believers in the American system will advocate obedience to the popular will, whether they espouse or detest the Roosevelt program. Any other course would mean the corruption of American democracy, which is not to be countenanced.

This does not mean, in our view, that those who are against the New Deal should abandon their rights as true Americans to work for what they think is the best interests of the Republic. They should, and can, serve their country by vigorous opposition, which is usually necessary to secure good government. The fight, however, should always be open, above board and directed toward the people themselves, who, in the final analysis, have the right to make ultimate decisions in regard to leaders and policies.

There is no reason for Americans to forget the virtues of their government or desert its principles. Temporary political fortunes may vary the expression of popular self-government but they do not attack the foundation faith upon which this republic must base its continued existence. Ever and anon, both in party success and party failure, loyal Americans must resolutely adhere to a government "of the people, by the people and for the people."

A World Revolutionist Next Door

Leon Trotsky now lives with an artist friend in a little blue house in Mexico.

Full of energy though past fifty he talks tranquilly of Marxism and world revolution. He intends to spend his time writing letters and issuing pamphlets.

Stalin is not enough of a world revolutionist to suit him but he would like to have an International Court free him of charges that he plotted against Stalin.

Many people will be nervous because Trotsky has moved in next door. But to us he appears as no more of a danger on this hemisphere than on the other. Ideas are not limited by geography. Neither are they greatly abetted because of the proximity of their source.

Fairness In Quotations

During the recent Presidential campaign orators on both sides quoted copiously from Thomas Jefferson and other revered leaders of the United States in years that are past.

It might not be out of place to remark, now that the dust of battle has blown away, that there is little to be gained from trying to apply ancient sayings to new conditions. What is valuable in the lives of the patriots is the spirit that dominated them and the ends which they sought.

It would be highly profitable for us to catch the ideals of the former leaders of America; to match their historic courage in facing our problems and to strive to make real the freedom that they, admired. It is not the methods but the end that counts.

Just as one would not attempt to understand the Bible by an isolated quotation but by a study of the great book, so must one understand the life of ancient leaders by study of their entire careers rather than by swallowing quotations misapplied by careless political orators.

World At Sword's Point

The world situation, as 1937 opens, presents the nations of the globe engaging in a feverish race to strengthen navies, build-up armies, increase air corps and bolster reserves of finance and economy.

There are few persons so simple as to believe that this is a development in the interest of peace. However, it would probably be a mistake to accept the idea that it spells inevitable warfare.

The past year witnessed just such activity and, in spite of it all, the peace of the world was maintained among the leading nations if not in Ethiopia and Spain. There are dangerous spots today, where a little flame might mean a world conflagration, but the hope exists, at least, that the nations will manage to muddle through and eventually reach a satisfactory settlement of their problems.

How Shall We Cut Down Death On The Highways?

The statistics will be rather gruesome but, in a few weeks, you will hear that the year 1936 set a new record in the number of lives snuffed out on the highways of America, where millions of sensible citizens pursue the great god Speed, when they sit behind a steering wheel.

If all the editorials and all the speeches, spoken and written on the subject of highway safety, were collected in one pile the summit would probably reach the height of the bodies, collected in one heap. Neither broken bodies, sorrowing hearts or warning words have been powerful enough to stop the slaughter that takes away one hundred Americans every day.

There was a time when we believed that safety could be attained by strictly limiting the speed of vehicles but we have passed on. As long as faster cars are built there will be greater speed than before and as long as individuals delight in telling of record trips in better time the laws on the books will not stop the death list from mounting.

"Law on the books" are worthless unless enforced and worse than useless if constantly ignored. The laws of the land, attempting to regulate the speed of motor vehicles, are violated so many more times than they are enforced that a speeder, caught by the law, is almost regarded as an innocent victim of circumstances. Even the driver, who kills, is given the benefit of the doubt, and dismissed, too often, with the saying, "Well, everybody violates the speed laws!"

This is no effort to solve the problem, merely to impress upon all readers that the problem exists. What are we going to do about it, if anything?

$50,000,000 To Help Boys

Charles Hayden, private banker of New York, last week left almost his entire estate of about $50,000,000 to establish a charitable foundation for the education of boys and young men and the advancement of their "moral, mental and physical well-being."

Mr. Hayden was an officer and director in fifty-eight corporations, including some of the leading industrial and utility corporations of the country. He was never married but he was firmly convinced that the "future of this nation, and of the world for that matter, depends in no small part upon the young men of the United States." He believed that if they received the proper training "we shall rear a nobler race of men, who shall make better and more enlightened citizens, to the ultimate benefit of mankind."

The gift emphasizes again that in this country it is common for men of great wealth to leave huge sums for the general good. It certainly is to their credit. Whether it would be wiser, and a source of greater joy to them, to distribute surplus wealth during their life-time, perhaps in the form of higher pay to workers, is debatable.

Your Real Security

One of the greatest—and most deceptive—passions now sweeping the world is the passion for security—safety, from the fear of want. Demand it as though it were an unalienable right. Millions of men sacrifice to insure their lives and their property; demand old-age pensions, security against unemployment, care during illness. All of these devices and mechanisms are well enough, if a man does not really put his trust in them; for there is, after all, no such thing as security in this world. No safety! The only resource for the soul of man is the cheerful acceptance of insecurity; steeling the spirit to bear whatever may happen. Nothing will take the place of inner fortitude. Here I stand; let anything happen!—David Grayson in Cosmopolitan.

Practical Paragraphs

By John Edwin Price

PLAYING FAIR WITH THE BUNCH

There is an old saying to the effect that a banana seldom gets skinned until it leaves the bunch.

Some people estrange themselves from the group with whom they are working by doing and saying things which if indulged in by all would ere long break up the organization.

Wherever two or two hundred or two thousand are working together, anyone who talks against the company is endangering the job of everyone who works for it. Such a person—if persistent enough may weaken the loyalty of someone who may cool the enthusiasm of another and so on and on. At first only a slowing up of production is noticed. Then a little less attention to detail may creep in. Quality suffers. If the aggressively and passively disloyal ones are not cured or removed, orders begin to fall off.

A wrong attitude toward the bunch can easily be detected. The essentially—if not outwardly—disloyal one begins by talking of the company as "they." Why do "they" do this and why don't "they" do that?

On the other hand, one who is not mentally estranging himself from the bunch says "we." I think "we" could do our work better this way. "We" are certainly making progress in our co-operation and quality, and so on.

Another way of spotting people who really don't care whether or not the group as a whole succeeds or whether all lose their jobs is to note his or her attitude toward company property. Are they careful of materials? Do they organize their time and methods? Or do they dawdle? Or are they careless about breaking things or tools? You may have even known snitchers. If anyone reached in their pockets and took a dime, they would be mad, but these snitchers in offices take pencils, erasers, clips, and stationery. In the shop or factory they pocket tool or parts or other things not included in their agreement for service rendered.

Such persons—if they are working with you—are not playing fair with the bunch. They are endangering the success of YOUR concern. Or at least they make it necessary for those in control to keep all wages a little lower than need be in order to cover such losses. And not knowing the exact amount of loss from dawdling, carelessness and snitching, they have to make the allowance plenty big. Of course quite often the disloyal person is caught as an individual and,—skiggh! off goes his head.

On the other hand a loyal person, one who talks of his company in terms of "we" is working for the best interest of all and is encouraging others to do the same.

Such a person is helping to make secure everyone's job and,—what is more, when promotions are in order, selections are made from the "we" people.

So for those who would be going up in life, we can do no greater kindness to help than to help think of the outfit of which they are a part in terms of "We." It is when a banana becomes estranged from the bunch that it's due for a skinning.

My Country, 'Tis of Thee

"Chickens Come Home To Roost."

It appears from John L. Lewis' statements that, in consideration for contributions to the Roosevelt campaign, (said to exceed $100,000) and to the Murphy governorship campaign, (said to be $40,000), he was promised certain favors.

T. H. MILLINGTON

Now that he has arranged matters for a grand pay-off by way of both State and Federal backing in his self-selected strike against General Motors, he is sore, because he is not getting what he expected. Of course, he got something. Governor Frank Murphy promised the National Guard would not shoot, and the sheriff and police were not allowed to protect General Motors' property against unlawful occupation—all of which amounts to suspension of law. Still Lewis is not satisfied. So he sulks, he is mad, and no doubt he will go out in the garden and eat worms.

But the greatest insult of all is this flood, which has taken Lewis' Spanish-buccaneer face off the front page. And what strikes me as funny is Lewis' gullibility in expecting that he could buy the President and the Governor for $450,000.

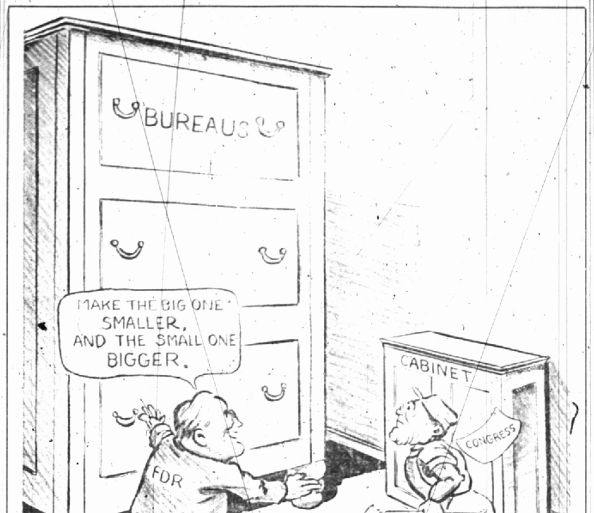
Don't forget that Candidate Roosevelt, both in Detroit and New York, in campaign speeches said to Labor, "You will have a friend in the White House." While without doubt that got a lot of votes, it was thought that could be done for $450,000 should be reasonable. Mr. Roosevelt cannot yet make his a present of the G. M. C.

By the ways: Wouldn't that be a laugh? Imagine Lewis president of the General Motors Corporation.

Well, poor Lewis! He is finding out that campaign promises may have only one purpose—votes. Is he fool enough to believe that they are to be kept? If he is, then he is not even as smart as his predecessor, the Spanish pirates. They didn't trust anybody least of all would they have trusted a political candidate who, like the luckless victim of a Spanish buccaneer, would promise anything for sparing his life.

To be sure, promises, like chickens, have a way of coming home to roost, and it must be embarrassing; but, since finance demand it as though it were an unalienable right. Millions of men sacrifice to insure their lives and their property; demand old-age pensions, security against unemployment, care during illness. All of these devices and mechanisms are well enough, if a man does not really put his trust in them; for there is, after all, no such thing as security in this world. No safety! The only resource for the soul of man is the cheerful acceptance of insecurity; steeling the spirit to bear whatever may happen. Nothing will take the place of inner fortitude. Here I stand; let anything happen!—David Grayson in Cosmopolitan.

CARPENTRY FOR CONGRESS



WASHINGTON LETTER

Neutrality Issue Proves Popular One in National Capital

BY SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON—The bill placing an embargo on shipment of arms, ammunition, and implements of war to Spain, which was jammed through in the opening week of Congress, will be followed by permanent neutrality legislation later in the session.

There has never been a more popular issue in Washington, and seldom if ever a more marked division of thought within Congress and official circles.

Senator Nye

Some members, chiefly Senators Bennett Champ Clark, Gerald P. Nye and Arthur H. Vandenberg, and Representative Maury Maverick, want a law which will make it impossible to export arms and implements of war, or to sell anything on credit or to make loans to any foreign country engaged in civil or international war.

They are willing to let Americans sell ordinary commodities to belligerents only on a-cash-and-carry basis.

Dissenting in the case of "hard and fast neutrality" are those who say that we cannot possibly foresee the endangering circumstances that will arise in other people's wars and provide against them in advance.

The existing neutrality law neglects to say what should be done in case of a foreign civil war, so it was considered necessary to supplement it with the recently passed embargo on shipments to Spain.

* * *

ANOTHER argument is that if the United States refuses to supply both combatants, whether one is the aggressor and one the victim, whether one is the established government and one the insurgent force, it will have the effect of placing the wealthier and better equipped army in a position of great advantage over the weaker army.

This, it is argued, is not neutrality, but an act of hostility to the less fortunate adversary.

Implied in any law for more distant neutrality is the compulsion that this government would not be allowed to play favorites. Broad legislation of this type would include Great Britain, and it has long been the accepted belief of one substantial school of thought that if war destroyed England's strength in Europe, this country would suffer sooner or later.

The point has been raised in this particular battle of pro and cons that only if the president had discretionary powers to take quick action could we be sure of keeping out of foreign trouble. It is argued that unexpected complications might develop when Congress is not in session.

* * *

PROBABLY the most potent argument that has been heard in Washington against mandatory legislation to keep us out of war is that if all the laws proposed, signed, and sealed with the emblem of peace lovers rampant had been passed, they wouldn't have kept this country out of the fight in 1917.

The administration, it is charged, took sides and wanted its "side" to win. Perhaps in the next major conflict, whether it is between Fascism and Communism, democracy and dictatorship, or whatever, we will take sides again.

The question is whether if America's sympathies go out to a foreign country at war, American munitions, credit, food, and soldiers can be kept at home.

The Merit System Versus Spoils

By RAYMOND PITCAIRN

National Chairman Sentinels of the Republic

Increased efficiency in all governmental activities.

Economy for the taxpayer.

Purposeful careers for public employes.

Elimination of the Spoils System.

These are a few of the peak-lights by increasing numbers of taxpaying citizens who demand that the Civil Service or Merit System, now in partial effect, replace the Spoils System in all but the topmost federal jobs.

America can achieve these benefits—if Congress does its part. The way is open.

A White House message has urged expansion of Civil Service to include all employes except Secretaries, Under-Secretaries and those in similar policy-making offices. Several members of Congress have introduced measures to hasten extension of the Merit System idea.

But will they be put into effect? That is a different question.

Heavy political barricades must first be overcome. For a complete application of the Merit System would strap politicians of their greatest asset—the **control and doling out of jobs.** Naturally many politicians will oppose it. Naturally they will fight any step which extends the policy of selecting public servants on the basis of how well they can do their work instead of the basis of how many votes they can deliver for the politicians on Election Day.

There, stands the basic issue—whether the Federal payroll, which costs the taxpayers more than a billion dollars annually, shall be for the benefit of politicians who control appointments, or of the public who foot the bill.

It's up to Congress to decide. The choice should not be a difficult one.

RANDOM REMARKS

The Supreme Court:

"The holdings of meetings for peaceable political action cannot be proscribed."

Henry Ashurst, U. S. Senator from Arizona:

"Congress will have the courage of the President's convictions."

Franklin D. Roosevelt, President:

"The judicial branch also is asked by the people to do its part in making democracy successful."

George W. Norris, U. S. Senator from Nebraska:

"The world owes more to the tillers of the soil than to any other class, and I think we are coming to the point where the farmer has a place in the sun."

Fiorello La Guardia, Mayor of New York:

"Better a grave in potter's field for a crook than a medal for a police widow."

Arthur Hopkins, WPA head:

"There was one female blacksmith on relief in January of this year."

Clinton G. Cox, minister:

"Some of the finest things in history have been done by women who never married."

Alfred North Whitehead, philosopher:

"Conventional English is the twin sister of illiterate thought."

Carter Glass, veteran U. S. Senator from Virginia:

"It is more important to prevent evil legislation than to get good laws."

Bennett Champ Clark, U. S. Senator from Missouri:

"We want something which is very real and very dear to our people—peace—and we must be willing to pay the price for it."

John P. Frey, A. F. L. head of Metal workers:

"We don't intend to allow the automobile workers to run away with our union."

Carter Glass, 79-year-old U. S. Senator from Virginia:

"All things considered, I would like to live to my next successor's birthday that I may become the oldest of the Glass tribe."

J. Raymond Britton, Brick-layers Union official:

"According to the records of our National, there are at least sixteen members of Congress who were bricklayers."

A certain gun captain was home seated by the stove, sleeping peacefully. The stove door came open and flames shot out.

"Fire!" shouted the wife.

The gun captain leaped to his feet, grabbed the cat, and tossed it in the stove, slammed the door shut, opened the draft and shouted up the stove pipe—"Ready, two!"

People's Column

The Eccentric is pleased to receive communications for this column. All communications must be signed, but signatures will be kept confidential upon request. Letters must be limited to 500 words, and must be in the office by Tuesday noon for publication the following Thursday.

The Public Letter Column,
Birmingham Eccentric.
To the Editor:

After an absence of fourteen years one naturally finds many changes in Birmingham. Mostly external changes, however. The individuality of this charming town remains the same. There is still the same love of ease and refinement, the same unobtrusive but genuine friendliness and courtesy. One meets it everywhere, on the shops, the schools, the street. It permeates the thought of child and adult alike.

I am glad the Commission is planning a zoning ordinance in its leisurely, good-natured fashion. It strikes me as one of the improvements greatly needed. There is a lot of character to some of the houses. I mean it seems there are no two alike), but unfortunately, in some sections really attractive homes of fraternize with neighboring homes that are in a very run-down state, some little more than shacks.

One judges that the town is very friendly to dogs. I am sure that every home must have a dog but I wonder if every dog has a home. At every corner one meets two or three tail-waggers. One of the members of the Commission asked Chief Haskett what had been done about the stray dogs. He replied that he had been "chasing" them. After a little bantering about the "chasing" he said they had disposed of about two hundred.

The preservation of so many fine old trees, especially the evergreens, also lends those such luxuriant growth, is another evidence of Birmingham's love of natural beauty.

However, like every other thing in this imperfect world, Birmingham has its unattractive aspects. For instance, the unsightly piles of rubbish, piled up against tree-boards west of the clean-up signal.

Since many families cannot afford the rather high rates of garbage disposal, this may be a menace to health in the summer time and a fire hazard in winter time. It seems to me it would pay the city to have the ashes, rubbish and garbage taken care of. Is one not entitled to that service in return for such high taxes? Perhaps our kindly commissioners, who each in their place every Monday night while listening impatiently to the endless wrangling of petitioners, will get around to this when the zoning ordinance is disposed of.

A New Comer
G. H. KRAMER,
730 Wallace St.,
Birmingham, Michigan.

The Birmingham Eccentric,
To the Editor:

Do my eyes deceive me? Is it possible that we righteous citizens of Birmingham are so far from the present trend of thought that we voted Republican in November? Have we now advanced to where that dreadful word "syphilis" actually can appear in print instead of the more "social disease"? Appear in our chaste Eccentric—that Palladium of Purity. During all the twelve years the Birmingham school has been a reader? A lecture on "syphilis"—. Horrors!— is announced for February 3rd—and on our Community Hi-day some one should see about this! Help, doctors! Let quacks only treat this shameful disease! To the rescue, Ministers of Christ, shall your beloved calling remain the perception of a social menace? The extinction of this plague can only be contempt of Heaven—let sinners reap their deserved penalty! Help, all brothers of bosh and sisters of stagnation—shall we lose our conventional conservatism? Have we forgotten our slogan "Beautiful Birmingham Where CHILDREN Thrive!"

WALTER CASTER

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BEAUTIFUL DAY

In winter when it snows,
And all the cares and woes
Of earth are lost—
Under the white snow buried deep
In a lethargy of sleep;
And the hazy silver frost
In crystal ribands clings
To bare brown growing things;
Then, whatever has hurt me
Almost
I bury deeply, or toss away
Lest it mar the wonder of a day.

—Beatrice McDonald

Handicaps

Tommy—I wonder why fat men are always so jolly and good natured?

Billy—That's easy. They can't run and they can't fight.