

The Birmingham Eccentric

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THURSDAY, JULY 8, 1937

NOTE: The Eccentric is pleased to publish stories of events which have news value, on which no money has been connected with the editorial staff of the paper.

Editor's Note: Schuyler L. Marshall, publisher of the Clinton County Republican, St. Johns, Michigan, writes the seventh of a series of editorials which is being published weekly in the Eccentric during the absence of G. K. Averill.

Birmingham And St. Johns

We have observed that an audience is pleased, if not deceived, when a strange speaker compliments the attractiveness of the ladies and general intelligence of the men.

That is a time-worn but ever reliable approach in the itinerant speaker's bag of tricks.

We don't know how you feel about it, but we always resent that sort of approach. Perhaps we have a crippled sense of humor. At any rate, it disgusts us.

We have chosen to pass on to you some observations of your community and my community, and inject some history of the writer's family for no other reason than it may furnish a sort of excuse or justification, for what follows.

Birmingham and St. Johns have many things in common.

Yet, the two communities are vastly different. Let's start out on those premises:

Way back about eighty years ago, Grandfather and Grandmother came to their new Clinton county home—just five miles north of St. Johns.

First he stopped for a few months in Pennsylvania but there, too, he saw signs of advancing population.

He moved on to near Norwalk, Ohio.

There he married Grandmother. Some several years later when there were two very small sons, they decided to come into Michigan.

They acquired a covered wagon into which the young wife and the two little boys (one, my father, was a three-month-old infant) were loaded.

After a week of travel, they arrived, took up their abode in a clearing in the wilderness while fighting to preserve the Union.

Grandfather promised a bigger and better house when the "eighty" was paid for—but . . . Grandfather was acquisitive. He acquired a second and third eighties, and when he died in the late 70's as the result of a wound received in the Battle of the Wilderness while fighting to preserve the Union, they were still living in the one-room log house, augmented with a lean-to for the three additional children who were Michigan-born.

There has been no purpose in reciting this rather commonplace incident of pioneering, except to establish a point.

This is what we have in mind. When Grandfather and Grandmother and the two little kids got up into Michigan, they came through Oakland County. About the last place they could depend upon to get any variety of supplies was at Pontiac—just a few miles north of you people.

Even then Oakland County was populated largely by tradesmen. It was not primarily an agricultural section—that is the point we wish to emphasize.

The very contour and nature of the land—its hills, valleys, lakes, swamps and swales, the sandy soil—the endowments of Nature which made it a paradise for Chief Pontiac and his tribe of savages—predestined it to become a commercial, industrial and beautiful residential section.

Up here in Clinton county it was, and is, different. The land is relatively level, fertile and suited for agriculture. Farmers came here. Farmers stayed here. Farmers are here today.

St. Johns and the other Clinton county towns, are "farmers' towns." There is very little industry in the county—and, such as there is, it is allied with agriculture. We venture that St. Johns is about the largest simon-pure farmers' town in Michigan.

We do not regret it. We are proud of it. The agricultural industry is stable. It has no labor unrest. It cannot move away. It offers no fabulous returns. It assures a decent living three meals a day even in the depths of a depression. Our wealthiest people are not wealthy according to the standards of your metropolitan district. Our most needy people represent only a very small percentage of our 24,000 population. Clinton county had next to the smallest percentage of all counties in Michigan on relief in 1933-34.

One day while we were visiting at the home of your Editor George K. Averill, he took us for a ride about the environs of Birmingham. We saw many farms and estates. One we distinctly remember—it was a marvel of beauty and size. We forget what

George said it cost. We retain vividly that he told us his owner and builder had gone bankrupt and was soon to be forced to vacate it.

On trips into Detroit in the 20's we have marvelled at the tar-paper shacks huddled in a valley, while on the hill above, but eighty or a hundred rods away, would be the imposing castle of some millionaire.

Also, back in the 20's St. Johns used to be overrun by salesmen (that's what they called themselves). These were smooth gents. They were the agents of sub-dividers. They took many hundreds of thousands of dollars out of the modest pockets of thrifty, but gullible Clinton county people. Some of these were widows left with a few modest thousands of insurance money. Some were aged and retired farmers. Some of these same people were terribly humiliated when they were forced to join the small percentage of unfortunates and ne'er-do-wells and accept relief from government doles.

Yours has been a spectacular development. You have the extremes of wealth. You also have had the depths of squalor and poverty in Oakland County.

One day several years ago we had an invitation to speak before the Lions Club at Pontiac. We drove from Ann Arbor across to Pontiac. We observed something on the way about which we spoke that day. We said to those Lions "This morning we drove through miles and miles of cemeteries—cemeteries where the graves are 10 x 110, marked by little white stakes, graves in which were buried thousands and thousands of Clinton county people. Some of them were Clinton county people."

We have been hearing much lately about the unequal distribution of wealth. Labor unrest, strikes of the sit-down variety and otherwise, violence and an amazing attitude of public officials of prominence toward these outbreaks, has been on every tongue.

Birmingham and Oakland County are American. St. Johns and Clinton county are American.

Where do these two communities figure in this changing social and economic picture?

If there is a leveling-off process coming—and many people believe it is—then there is—which one of us still feel its effects most keenly?

If there are faults with our economic system, and individual abuses, where are these, most evident?

This writer has little patience with any share-the-wealth plan, under whatever name it may parade.

We have spent the entire laboriously crawling from a 152-a-week apprentice printer to publisher of a weekly newspaper in a small rural town.

Yet, we feel very fortunate and tremendously thankful for the Opportunity which America gave us to make that modest advance.

We have our children whom we are trying to educate to meet the increasingly complex and delicately-balanced economic problems of the present. The future looks even more confusing as one views the national and international pictures.

Out of the rural Clinton counties the country over—from the farms, the mines and the small towns and villages the country over, annually an army of the brightest, best educated and most courageous young men and women flock to great centers of population.

They are attracted by what seems to them to be unequal opportunity. For collective skill, acquired culture and courageous initiative, we would guess that such centers have a sizable majority of the so-called brains of the country. Birmingham, as a part of Michigan's great metropolitan district would so classify.

For a healthy and enduring philosophy of life for a nation, we must have a sound judgment, we will pick the collective people who inhabit such sections as are represented by St. Johns and Clinton county.

Attempting to differentiate between these two communities may be distasteful to you Eccentric readers. It may sound, and probably does, and likely will, sound silly.

Our only excuse for it is that it will become an important factor in solving some of America's current and future problems.

We feel that Birmingham and St. Johns and all the other cities, towns and rural communities need to take a moment of quiet reflection in the days that we live to retain that which we hold so dear—justice, domestic tranquility, the general welfare and the blessings of liberty—those things incorporated in and guaranteed by our Constitution.

Practical Paragraphs

KNOWING WHAT YOU WANT TO DO. If you start out on an automobile trip with no objective in mind just intending to wander around, you will take longer getting to any place you happen to hit than as though you made up your mind that you wanted to get there.

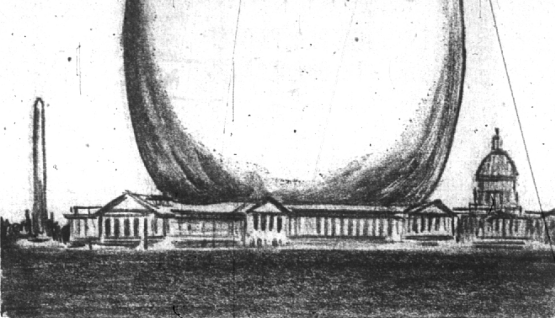
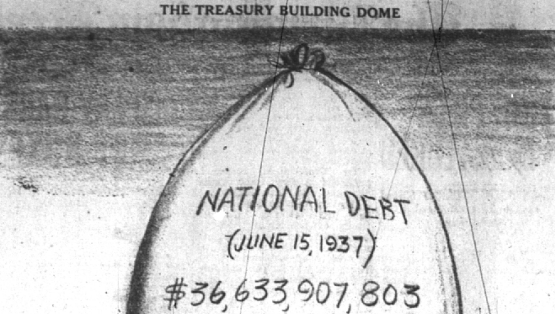
Right away someone says, "What a silly truism!" Right away someone passes them on the great highway. They have dangled up this side road, have fished to long by that pleasure stream and so forth.

Rockwell H. Pettey, preacher. "A man's religion may be good or it may be bad—but no man is without it as long as he lives."

Francisco Franco, insurgent Spanish general, to Premier Benito Mussolini privately. "I send you the most enthusiastic salute of this army which is generally to be met with the confidence placed in it by your great people and its Duce."

Thomas W. Lamont, financier. "War is a game in which both sides lose."

Joseph Stamp, British industrialist. "Labor is the most difficult hurdle you've got, more than monetary and other problems; you'd better recognize labor."



Rump Democrats Divide Party in Congress, Worry President

WASHINGTON.—The Democratic party in Congress is divided against itself. A rump group of leaders has demonstrated its ability to take over the wheel when the conservative Democratic leadership cannot steer the President's program.

These rump leaders are revolting against the efforts of the Democratic leadership cannot steer the President's program.

The most conspicuous rump leaders are Senators Hugo Black of Alabama, Alben Barkley of Kentucky, Lew Schwelb of Washington, Sherman Minton of Indiana and Bob La Follette of Wisconsin.

There is anger especially over Roosevelt's encouragement of labor organization; the Black-Connery wage and hour bill and the expenditures for relief.

This opposition, sometimes allied with the "battalion of death" group, has made an effort to fumble the President and that effort has been foisted in Congress, especially in the Senate.

Majority Leader Robinson of Arkansas has hardly said a word in revolt against presidential policy. His loyalty to Roosevelt is almost incredible. But he has not allowed his concern over federal spending and debt.

Why does he? His relief bill amendment requiring localities to contribute 25 per cent to WPA projects costs when able as a harmony move.

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RANDOM REMARKS

George W. Norris, Senator from Nebraska. "We've already been a couple of centuries in tearing down our national resources."

William Green, president, A. F. of L. "The riots, reprisals, the violence and the deaths which have occurred (in labor disturbances) can be traced to one destructive influence."

E. E. Cox, Congressman from Georgia. "The Government has surrendered to a handful of lawless people and stands before the country as a discredited thing."

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'My Country, 'Tis of Thee'...

Don't Get Fooled! As is my custom, I have this week interviewed a number of people in various walks of life.

No. I am not agreeing to be a cesspool of crimes, riots, and rebellion against our government.

In the matter of respect for law and order, I suppose one should be thankful for small favors. Yet when one considers the enormous sums of money contributed by their members to the Lewis unions of which there is no legal requirement for public accounting, one must regard the present let-down with suspicion.

The union officers spend the money as they like, and no doubt the spending of it is in the interest of the unions as they see it. Accusations have been made, and not denied, that half a million dollars was contributed by the Lewis unions to the Roosevelt campaign, and some \$200,000 to the Murphy's campaign.

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It is through strikes that unions are stirred up, causing men to join the unions because they are made to believe that if they failed to have strikes and riots somewhere all the time?

The majority of the union leaders formerly were poor men, but are now enjoying fine incomes. Does anyone think for moment that these men are going to suppress them has been made, but no sensible person will believe that such claims are sincere.

The lesson, therefore, is that we must not only guard, and be aware of the Greeks when they come bearing gifts." Many with whom I have talked consider the present calming down the other before the storm.

Legal Requirements. Until unions by law are made to incorporate and render public account of their funds; until the unions by law are required to be financially responsible for damages caused the same as any other corporation, they will continue to be a cesspool of crimes, riots, and rebellion against our government.

Why The Nation Demands Civil Service. By RAYMOND PITCAIRN, National Chairman, Sentinels of the Republic.

As our Congress has been asked to provide for the selection of job-holders in various new federal agencies now under consideration, on the basis of merit and ability, rather than of patronage.

It is a familiar request. It is a fair one, too. Since the writers and earners of America foot the bill for our constantly expanding political payroll, it is only natural that they should ask a reasonable return for their money.

In other words the American people want what an equitable Civil Service System attempts to assure—public servants who understand that the people are their employers, and whose loyalty is directed to them and to the country as a whole.

They want the public service placed by the wheels of national progress, rather than to the complex gears of various political machines.

This is hard to achieve when a public job is granted on the basis of whom one knows, instead of what he knows. It is hard to achieve when politicians and officeholders use such jobs as a means of paying off old political debts, or buying new political power—all with their people's money.

The spoils system is unfair not only to the people who pay the bills, but to any capable public servant, himself. There is little incentive to seek a career in government or to do one's best after the job is obtained, other than the prospect of political patronage continues to haunt the roads to appointment, and advancement, and permanence.

A more thorough application of the merit system would mean not only less waste in government, but greater efficiency and service to the public as well.

And the way for the public to get such service and efficiency is to continue to demand them.

Frequent Trips to Altair Irene—Does Clara go to church often? Iris—Very! Why she's married six times.

Jots 'n' Jest. CLAIRVOYANT says world coming to end in September. The President's Jefferson Island harmony meeting was practically useless after all.

WASHINGTON LETTER BY SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT. Rump Democrats Divide Party in Congress, Worry President. Dispatches hint missing Russian flyer may be on second trans-polar flight.

WABEEK STATE BANK. CONDENSED Statement of Condition at the close of business. JUNE 30, 1937. RESOURCES: Cash on hand and due from other Banks \$605,772.34. U. S. Gov't Securities, direct and fully guaranteed \$2,429,911.11.