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 Tuesdays. 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.

Success Story, New Style

Reporting a question-and-answer session between Wage-Hour Administrator Elmer F. Andrews and Denver business men, the Rocky Mountain News quotes the following:

Businessman—"Can an employer permit a worker to work overtime, or must he lock him out?"

Mr. Andrews—"In my opinion, such a worker should be dealt with the same as one who persisted in quitting early. He should be fired."

Well, we can see Mr. Andrews' point, if an employer is unwilling to pay the legal time-and-a-half for hours in excess of forty-four a week, the only way he can obey the Wage-Hour act is to prohibit overtime work and enforce the prohibition. It would undermine the law if employees vied with each other in "voluntary" overtime work without pay.

But the American success story formula certainly is going to have to be revised to something like this:

Boss—"Young man, I notice that you never watch the clock."

Employee—"No sir."

"And I often find you here at your desk, after closing hours, or even in the evening."

"Yes sir. You see, I want to learn the business."

"You know, of course, that I can't afford to pay you overtime for it?"

"Oh, that's all right. I figure that, eventually, I'll earn a raise."

"Well, that's fine, young man. Just fine. You don't often see such ambition, these days. I admire you for it."

"Thank you, sir."

"Well, good-bye, young man. I won't see you again. You're fired."

Armaments Are For War

The nations of the world spent about $16,000,000,000 for military purposes in 1938, according to the estimate given by the League of Nations Armament Yearbook.

In 1937, military expenditures of the nations were estimated at $13,500,000,000.

Most of this money is being expended by seven powers, the United States, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union.

It requires very little imagination to reach the conclusion that these vast expenditures are being made in the belief that war is imminent.

The only reason why governments assume the burden of such expenses is because they believe war is probable.

Church Membership Grows

The total membership of the 348,410 churches in the United States is estimated at 64,156,895 by the Rev. Dr. Herman C. Weber, editor of the Yearbook of American Churches, who is considered an outstanding authority in the United States on religious statistics.

Figures for the year 1937 show that the membership of the churches increased twice as fast as the population of this country. While there are two hundred different religious bodies, 97.3 per cent of the total membership is in fifty larger bodies—all with memberships of 50,000 or more.

These statistics should be interesting to citizens who contend that the churches are losing their influence upon American life. While the growth of religion is not to be measured entirely by the number of members of church organizations, the intention and desire of people to lead better lives is reflected by the increasing growth of church memberships.

Foolish Comedians

George Burns, the radio comedian, did plenty of shivering when recently fined $18,000 for smuggling jewels into the U. S. A. He was given a suspended sentence of a year and a day in prison. Mr. Burns has probably learned his lesson. It is too bad that a chap who can amuse millions gets into such a mess—especially when he doesn't have to, for mere financial reasons. The same may be said for Jack Benny and the others who are on the federal judicial carpet. If only many other federal departments were as impartial, as swift and sure in correcting violations of law, as the U. S. Customs Dept.!

DETROIT'S POLICE Commissioner, Heinrich A. Pickert, told local Exchange Club members here last week that "small games of chance, such as bingo, keno, and the awarding of door prizes, is a bad moral situation for the country; it leads to larger and more evil stakes." Literally, he speaks the truth, doesn't he?

War Too Ghastly For Nations To Risk, Avers Shaw

There is not the least chance of a world war happening in the near future. That is the firm belief of George Bernard Shaw, distinguished dramatist and author, revealed in an interview with his friend W. R. Titterton for the current Rotarian Magazine. If there were, it would have happened in September, 1938, when there was more inflammatory talk and even feeling than there ever was from the Agadir incident to the bombardment of Liege.

"What would happen first in a world war?" asks Shaw. "The airplanes of A, B, C, and D would bomb the cities of E, F, G, and H so effectively that the white flag would be hoisted at approximately the same time in the several capitals, and abject pleas for peace would cross each other in the air."

The tragic nastiness of this latest development of warfare is that the attack of the civilian population is absurdly easy, he points out. Because adequate defense is impossible, the danger to civilians of wholesale extinction is greater than ever before. Governments of the civilized countries—those well equipped with the latest means of destruction—are well aware of this fact.

"I think that man is on trial," declares Shaw. "If we are proved definitely to be a mistake, we shall be scrapped, and God will use some other creatures a trifle less stupid to carry on His purpose. Our opportunities have been great, our stupidities have been monstrous. And, no doubt, war is one of the greatest of these.

"But don't delude yourself with the notion that when nations are at peace with each other, they are at peace with themselves, or that slums and unemployment and inhuman working conditions and sweating wages are far more admirable than the miserable squalor of war," he continues. "As long as pugnacity is considered to be a virtue you will have international war, and you will have all the blessings of peace I have enumerated. I see no signs that, however great a mistake man may be, he is likely to be superseded in the firmames of our present national leaders. God works on a big canvas, and we are only an inch or so away from the image of Troy.

"In a war everybody loses, but formerly it was possible for one side to think—for a hour or two—that it had won," concludes Shaw. "The single redeeming feature of the next world war, when it happens, is that this will not be possible. In reflecting upon that, perhaps you may find some particle of hope."

Just Plain Decency Needed

Luther Heacock, Birmingham City Commissioner, and one of this community's representatives on the Oakland County Board of Supervisors, has publicly stated that, "a six room house that is assessed for $2,000 on our own tax roll is assessed at $1,000 on Pontiac's roll. That is possible because Pontiac exerts more control among the Supervisors, and thus escapes its just share of County taxation." Mr. Heacock's statement can be duplicated in a thousand places in this nation. It is the old story of "the strong controlling the weak." It works in politics as well as in business. You don't have to look to Europe for unfairness between political groups. Only plain decency and honesty in individuals will ever correct such tax discrepancies.

The Newspaper As A Community Builder

Says Edward Davenport, expert counsellor, sage advisor, and creator of sound, money-making programs:

"Before merchants can build a big business they must either select or help to build a big and strong community. While it is true that individual merchants do contribute taxes and employment to a certain number of people in their respective communities, the merchants' business must, of necessity, live off the community. Leaving aside civic pride, every department store owner and every merchant should guarzealously the weakening of any link in the chain that makes for a strong community, and no link in this chain, in my opinion, can begin to compare in size and importance with the part played by your local newspaper.

"As merchants, we can contribute certain amounts of cash, we can contribute our time on committees, but in the end it falls upon the shoulder of the newspaper of your city to get you new aqueducts when you need them for progress, new Union Terminal Stations, better school conditions, promotion of beneficial traffic changes, new Golden Gate Bridges, and the promotion of an endless number of links that make up the whole chain of community health progress and financial security.

"Only advertising support makes possible the contribution of hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of space by newspapers in communities year in and year out, for those projects that will make a better city, not to mention the ever-watchful vigilance they must display in state, county and national affairs.

"Not only do merchants today owe every financial support economically within their power to give, to newspapers for the furtherance of progress in their respective communities, but in a nation whose foundations are being attacked by radical forces and other termites of destruction, it is not only the duty, but a matter of wisdom for every merchant, every manufacturer, every advertising agent, to protect the only free voice of power we have left in America namely the newspaper."

INDICATIONS POINT to the belief that Secretary of Commerce Harry L. Hopkins is really going to attempt a practical solution for the strained relations between business and government. If he does assume such a role, he can do much for his Big Boss—not to overlook millions of people.

ONE REACTION we have to these new-fangled women's hats: since women can balance them so easily upon their heads, perhaps they ought (the women) to be given jobs as government budget directors.

DANCE OF THE PENSIONEERS

In These High Moments of Change

By EDEN PHILLPOTTS

FOR WE WRITERS . . . stand at a significant point in time. The dawn of a new age of thought is flushing the sky; the old order fades; the old faith, weariness of much glorious work, now dies the natural death of all faiths that have strengthened the feet and lifted the hearts of men through their appointed centuries. Reason is crowned, and the trumpets of her ministers, Science and Justice, proclaim her. In these high moments of change, let the lamplearers cling close to their sacred torches; cherish the flame against storm and tempest, and keep clear their ancient altar-fires, even though they cannot keep them bright. Then the great unborn—those who shall follow to expand their genius in conditions of culture, tolerance, and knowledge we know not—may say, even of this, our time, that despite false teaching, false triumphs and false taste, there were yet those who strove for the immemorial grandeur of their calling; who pandered to no temptation from without or from within; who followed none of the great world-voices, were dazzled by none of the great world-lights, used their gift as a stepping-stone to no meaner life; but clear-eyed and patient, neither elated nor cast down, still lifted the lamp as high as their powers allowed, still pursued art singly for her own immortal sake.

Congressional Comment

by Representative George A. Dondero, 17th Michigan District

To the Editor:

Since this district is the center of the automobile industry of the United States, results of the survey which the Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture conducted will be of particular interest to local residents.

In 46 villages in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa 69 per cent of the families were reported as owning cars. In this group it was found that 692 families out of each thousand owned cars and that during the year 98 families, or 9.8 per cent, will buy new cars of an average value of $743, and 113 families, or 11.3 per cent, will buy used cars of an average value of $247.

It was also found, through the survey, that families travel each year in proportion to the family income. For instance, families having an income of $1,000 travel an average of 4,500 miles each year, while families having an income of $5,000 a year or more, travel an average of 10,680 miles.

Ownership of cars also varies with the family income. About 62 per cent of families earning $1,000 annually have cars; 80 per cent of families earning $1,500 annually have cars; and almost 99 per cent of families earning $5,000 or more annually have cars.

Maintenance and operation expenses vary from $10 to $221 annually, also in proportion to income.

In conducting this survey the Bureau of Home Economics selected 46 villages in this area (North Central and Middle Atlantic) as representative of American community life. It may be said that the American way of living definitely includes the automobile.

Sincerely yours,
George A. Dondero, M. C.

WASHINGTON LETTER

BY SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Power Machinery Increase Means Decrease in Need for Farm Land

WASHINGTON.—With the development of power machinery, farmers lost an important market. Before the World War, they sold power to the cities in the form of work animals worth several hundred million dollars annually.

Officials of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics estimate that the decline in horses and mules has reduced land requirements by approximately 20,000,000 acres of crops and 35,000,000 acres of pasture.

Previously about 96,000,000 acres of crops, or 27 per cent of total crop acreage, were necessary to feed horses and mules on farms and in cities. Since the use of automobiles and tractors has increased to such an extent, need for agricultural land has taken a severe drop.

* * *

AN increasing use of storage lockers in local refrigeration plants is reported in the 1939 Outlook, published by the Department of Agriculture. These lockers are being used to conserve home-produced food for farm families.

Principal duty of the lockers is to preserve meats. But many farmers are beginning to include fruits and vegetables in their storage quotas.

The report cites estimates by trade publications that there are now about 2,500 such plants in the United States for the total capacity of 850,000 lockers.

This capacity is being increased at a rate of about 50 per month.

* * *

THE major function of federal reclamation in the national land use program is to provide new farm opportunities for many thousands of families driven from their farms by drouth.

The Farm Security Administration recently estimated that 98,400 families had migrated into seven far-western states from dry areas. The demand somewhat exceeds the supply of land, however, and the department has warned that future inflow must wait establishment of new programs.

The only new land brought under irrigation by federal projects during the past five years has been on programs authorized and started prior to 1933. Only 1,000,000 acres of additional land are expected to be irrigated by 1948. The vast Grand Coulee Dam-Columbia Basin project will not be entirely completed until 1964.

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.

Will you please print the following article I found in The American City magazine? It is entitled: "There is Plenty for All of Us." I am a regular reader of your newspaper and will appreciate this favor. Thanks.

"If goods were produced freely and distributed widely, there would be plenty for all, and the fear of poverty would disappear, all misery and crime that is due to poverty would vanish eventually, and with them, most of our violence and war.

"The first condition for free production is easy access to the resources of nature: fields, mines, water power, building sites, oil fields—all those sources from which raw material and goods are obtained and made. Henry George proposed a plan whereby all those sources of wealth can be opened to every one who can work. Various peoples of the world have been working toward the application of that plan. Let us see how far we have progressed in this direction.

"Outside the United States, the principal countries and states in which a measure of land-value taxation is applied are: British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba; Argentina and Brazil; Denmark; New Zealand; Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, West Australia; Spain; The Transvaal, Cape Province, Natal, Rhodesia and South Kenya, which is west of Abyssinia.

"Nowhere has land-value yet absorbed the whole economic rent of land, which is the aim of George's plan. Some have begun, others have made fair progress, but the important thing is that the principle, whether to small or large extent, has been put in operation, and prolonged experience has been gained to provide a decisive answer to the question: Can it work? How does it work in practice so far as tried?

"The principle involved is payment in proportion to the value of the land. The landholder has to contribute to the value of the land. The landholder has to contribute to the public revenue only what the land (alone) would rent for apart from buildings or other improvements that are in or on the land. The assessment of land value is separately made, and the tax imposed abolishes or reduces taxation that would otherwise fall upon buildings and other improvements; or upon wages, trade and industry.

"The separate valuation of the land by the tax assessors, apart from improvements in or on the land, is the first step towards taking what the land would rent for, in lieu of taxes. This is more general in the United States than in any other country. The separate valuation was always the practice of intelligent 'real estate' appraisers, but it was popularized for tax assessment purposes by Lawson Purdy, as President of the Board of Taxes and Assessments in New York City, and then followed by many progressive communities.

"In all the score of countries named, the assessment upon which the land-value taxation is imposed is the capital value—the amount for which land could be sold apart from the buildings or other improvements on that piece of land.

"In all cases these taxes on land values have broken up or tended to break up the great estates held for speculation and have helped to open land for the use of the people. Of course, they stimulate building and real estate transactions."

Happenings of Long Ago

Bits Of News Gleaned From Old Files Of The Eccentric—The Items That Make Up The Historical Background Of The Birmingham Of Today.

Fifty Years Ago
Feb. 14, 1889

The 4th of March is almost here and there are only 10 candidates in the field for the post office, besides one lady nominee. Oh well, once upon a time we ran for the post office and got left and the ones left this time will know how it feels to run the race—behind. Tears—boo hoo boo hoo!

On Friday evening last, Mrs Bayley entertained her Sunday school class and other invited guests at her residence in Troy. About 60 young people were there and all had a most enjoyable time. Supper was served about 11 o'clock, after which music and games were in order until the small hours of the morning, when the guests took their leave, not soon to forget the hospitality of Mrs. Bayley.

The person or persons who trespassed my premises through the back way like a thief or a robber and entered my unoccupied house and disposed of Mrs. Johnston's property without legal permission, are hereby requested to return them where they got them and save trouble. I would have at least left the old lady her Bible, hymn book and specks. Hugh McBride, Royal Oak.

Notice—Our new residence being completed, we will give a party and house warming on Wed., Feb. 27 and extend a cordial and general invitation to all our relatives and friends to meet with us that night. As it would be impossible to invite all our friends personally, we tender you this invitation through the columns of The Eccentric. Mr. and Mrs. Albert Todd.

One day last week, Edgar C. Peppleton quietly and without any flourish of trumpets, placed several thousand young Mackinaw trout in the placid waters of Walnut lake. Such moves on the part of one who has been partially boycotted on this lake speaks volumes for him.

F. B. Raynale was in town over Sunday, the guest of his uncle Dr. J. M. Raynale. Bert's interesting letters published by us prove that he is a close observer and enjoys all the interesting things he comes in contact with.

Twenty-Five Years Ago
Feb. 13, 1914

Standart and Jones are quarreling over respective claims to good looks. Land sakes! Their mothers might have kissed them and called 'em beautiful when they were very small babies but that was a long time ago and they sure have changed quite considerable.

A Southfield young man brought his girl to town last evening and was inquiring as to the whereabouts of "this here show thing they call 'The Deacon's Warm'." A kind-hearted citizen showed him over to the Family Theater where they are showing "The Bishop's Carriage" and never cracked a smile. There's true Christian charity for you.

George Dawson last week sold him farm to Detroit parties and they are going to plat it in five and 10 acre lots this spring. George will stay on to see the work of laying of the roads through the farm. Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Dawson have reserved two acres on the north and east corner for themselves and will build later on.

Dad Watkins tells of a find he made, a weird and uncanny sight disclosed by him while working on a new and large brick dwelling on West Maple. Fred Nixon's hair will not lay down at all yet, over the sight. Dad unearthed a ball of snakes while at work. 18 in all, wound together like a ball of yarn and so twisted and tangled it was almost impossible to unsnarl them. In the center of them all was a toad. No doubt the snakes had him in cold storage for a lunch in the spring.

The Knights of Pythias will celebrate their golden jubilee Feb. 19. Red, yellow and blue fires will flash in the streets while guests gather at the Presbyterian church, which will be converted into a lodge. After the program of music and speeches is over, the guests will be conducted to the lodge and club rooms for a reception and supper.

Five Years Ago
Feb. 15, 1934

Record crowd attends G. O. P. club banquet. 800 persons hear Illinois congressman at annual Lincoln Republican dinner. Former Governor Wilbur M. Brucker presides as toastmaster.

Capacity audience hears Orario Society's debut. Chorus, under the direction of Frederick A. Protheroe, shares honors with soloists in fine rendition of "Elijah."

Campaigns for spring votes are on in township. Bloomfield returns to caucus system; Garner Miller runs for supervisor again in Troy. Primaries will be held March 5.

Prominent social worker, Chas. Brandon Booth, national extension secretary for the Volunteers of America, will address fathers and sons. Community banquet next Thursday will be limited to 400 guests.

First National bank leads toward new dividend. Contract with Birmingham National will not bar R. F. C. loan. Audit is nearly completed.

Dr. William O. Stevens will address National Defense Meeting. Cranbrook headmaster to speak at Oakland County Reserve Officers' rally.

F. E. R. A. orchestra may be formed here, says Mrs. William McCallum, head of local work. First meeting of prospective players is called for Feb. 22. Manley Tyson volunteers services as director.

Why The American Way Is Best

By RAYMOND PITCAIRN

Persistently the clamor of the totalitarian nations and their propagandists troubles the peace of Europe.

Increasingly the admirers of such forms of government — whether Dictatorship or Communism — seek to convince the American people that various of their theories should be tried out here.

But the American people are not deceived by such propaganda — whether it emanates from abroad or at home. They realize that however these two foreign forms of government may oppose each other in theory, in one essential, at least, they are twins.

Both are enemies of the American idea of democracy.

And both are foes, as well, of the freedom of thought, of action and of enterprise which has made the standards of pay and of living for the average American citizen the highest on earth. In such advantages, no subject of any totalitarian government can approach him.

And despite the efforts of admirers of the totalitarian idea, the American people have learned that its theories offer no help in the solution of our own problems — even as experiments.

They have seen that efforts to promote class hatred, to enforce a planned economy, to brush aside constitutional safeguards, to undermine private enterprise, and to justify staggering public debts hinder, rather than aid, re-employment and recovery.

They have shown at the polls and in the legislatures a renewed confidence in the American principle of government by the people, rather than by edict and bureaucracy.

And so long as the American people remember these facts — so long as they guard jealously the self-government and individual liberty which the Constitution assures — so long will America continue to advance, despite the subtle propaganda of those who would have us relinquish our power, our rights and our future to the theorist and the politician.

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