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.

Building That Mackinac Bridge

Until some type of causeway-bridge highway structure is constructed to connect Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsulas, at the Straits of Mackinac, this subject is going to be discussed with little interruption. In the discussion, you may rest assured, various methods of completing the job will be presented; to supplant the present ferries, suggestions of a tunnel, a series of connecting bridges, and a causeway-bridge have been made; estimates of the costs have run from $30,000,000 to $100,000,000.

Personally, this newspaper believes that eventually the ferries must give way to a causeway-bridge type of connecting link. Our only difference of thought with so many others is that the cost should be kept as low as possible, in keeping with making the structure a self-liquidating one. That is to say, the amount of traffic that will go over it should be sufficient to maintain the upkeep, together with retirement of the bonds issued by government to build it.

When you get up into the higher cost figures, it is silly to assume that the traffic over it will pay the total costs.

Several years ago we suggested a method of construction that will, we believe do two things: first, it will keep the cost low enough so that traffic will be able to maintain and pay for it; second, the type of employment used in goodly part will solve a tremendous social problem that confronts the citizens of Michigan.

Our plan includes the use of all of the unemployed prison labor available in Michigan's three prisons, at Ionia, Jackson, and Marquette. We have suggested that a courageous Governor, aided by an equally courageous and farseeing Legislature, construct suitable barracks at Mackinac City and St. Ignace, from which points this prison labor can be used to construct a permanent rock causeway, extending far enough over the seven miles of water between these cities to allow for one or more bridge spans; these spans are merely to allow the regular steamer traffic on the Great Lakes to pursue their legitimate ways.

Such a project would relieve the problem of prison unemployment which, today, involves several thousands of Michigan's prison inmates. It would not only make available to the State free labor in a field of non-competition (and we say this only because the private construction of such a bridge, with its attendant costs, is not a current legitimate expense to be saddled upon the taxpayers), but it would improve the morale of our prison inmates.

In brief, we suggest a project which may require from 20 to 30 years to complete, but nevertheless a type of construction that, unlike a long series of humanly-made bridge spans, will require far less in dollars for annual upkeep; a type of construction that will withstand the problem of shifting ice floes in the Straits of Mackinac; a type of construction that will assure for the taxpayers the greatest return from their investment.

For centuries nations have used slave or prison labor to complete costly public projects; the Pyramids were thus constructed; even today, in the South, prison labor is used on the roads.

So far as we know, the Commission in charge of the proposed Mackinac Bridge has not given any consideration to the use of prison labor for this project. We humbly suggest that they do so.

People in Michigan's Lower Peninsula who have travelled above the Straits love these upper reaches of lovely area in their State; tourists from other States can also be attracted to the recreational attractions in the Upper Peninsula. Those who prefer the "inland sea" attractions of a trip across the Straits by ferry may be able to take such a trip even after the proposed causeway-bridge is constructed, by keeping a ferry available for this purpose.

Fine! Let's have more consideration of plans for completing this project. But let's not overlook a foolish high cost; let's not overlook a practical plan to improve prison morale. Let's not be so inconsistent by attacking the grandiose expenditures of the New Deal, yet patterning our desires for a Straits' bridge after the New Deal's many, many costly and impractical projects.

OUR STATE SENATOR, William P. McCallum, of Ann Arbor, is making quite a few statements of late about "saving the dear people from the ravenous tax collector." Michigan will never forget that it was Mr. McCallum, to a great extent, who made the Scavenger Tax Sale the iniquitous thing it is, taking from people who paid their taxes the right to collect the delinquent taxes against real estate, so much of which was in the speculative field. Personally, this newspaper figures the Senator to be more friendly to land speculators than to "the dear people."

The $80,000 Mess in Tax Sale Funds at Lansing

Law-making demands knowledge of the subject affected by the law as well as intelligent application of the law after it is on the statute books. Over at Lansing in the past few days we have heard much about the misappropriation of $80,000 by former state officials. This is the outgrowth of some stupid legislation. It so happens that weekly newspapers have been held up to scorn by their larger and richer cousins, the daily newspapers. This scorn is as stupid as the law covering this subject.

There is one good reason—and only one—why daily newspapers generally have not been chosen to publish the advertisements of the annual tax sale . . . because the rate established for payment is so low the daily newspapers would not take it.

Several years ago this writer was called in by Vern J. Brown, then a member of the legislature, to help draft an intelligent rate for payment of the advertisements of delinquent taxes. We proposed one rate, a low rate, for the Wayne-Oakland-Macomb district where the descriptions are 90 per cent of subdivided lots (short descriptions) and another and higher rate per description for those counties where most of the delinquent taxes were on farm land, described by "meets and bounds" (long descriptions). The legislature fussed and fuddled around and finally left the old rate in effect. On other occasions there has been an honest effort to get these rates equitably revised downward without success.

Because that effort failed, the state continued to pay thousands of dollars in the southeastern part of the state for the advertisements. Because there was so much "soft money" in this section, some crooked politicians apparently saw a chance to swell the treasury of their party and to line their own pockets.

One Detroit newspaper editorially inferred that the whole weekly newspaper fraternity was subject to contempt. We resent that. Other upstate publishers resent it. In the same issue this Detroit newspaper published a "legal notice" to locate the owners of twenty-three bonds. If they got their regular advertising rate, it must have cost at least $1.00 for each of the bonds.

It was editorially suggested that a postcard or a mimeographed notice be sent to the owner of each piece of delinquent property. That sounds fine. The smart big city-editorial writer evidently didn't know that property is not recorded in the owner's name for tax-delinquent purposes—that the land, not the owner—is the security for the delinquencies. Ownerships can, and do, change frequently. Moreover, it is as important that the holder of a mortgage interest be notified. His name is not on the tax rolls.

There may be a better way of letting the owners of tax-delinquent property know that they are about to lose their lands by tax sale than publishing in a newspaper. So far, it has not been discovered. The exorbitant rates paid in certain sections of the state are directly and solely the responsibility of the legislature. The current mess at Lansing involves only those who may have been crooked enough to manipulate state funds appropriated for a lawful purpose.

There is no substitute for common honesty or common sense.—Clinton County Republican-News of St. Johns.

Zane Grey

The death of Zane Grey reminds us that he wrote more than fifty novels and sold more than 17,000,000 copies of them. Mr. Grey's stories were not up to accepted literary standards, but the people bought them. One sold a million and a half copies, which anybody will admit is a pretty good sale.

While the author spent the latter years of his life enjoying the fortune that came to him, the early days of his writing often found him hungry. His first book was written in a dingy flat, under the flickering gas lamp of a tiny kitchen. It was rejected by publishers and finally published by the author on borrowed money. This was in 1904 and the book, unlike his other novels, sold poorly.

In a few years, he used up all his savings and those of his wife, who, however, would not let him abandon his writing. Again, he faced discouragement when publishers rejected the "The Last of the Plainsmen." Later, he wrote his first Western romance, "The Heritage of the Desert," which was a success from the sales point of view. Then came, "Riders of the Purple Sage" which started his great popularity and rewarded him with financial success.

The life story of this writer is filled with disappointments which would have discouraged most men. However, he retained faith in himself and lived to enjoy the fame and wealth that was rightly his.

Free Speech—Limited

Americans boast of free speech but, very often, it only means that they advocate freedom of speech for those who agree with them.

This is illustrated, it seems, by the recent occurrence in San Antonio, Texas, where a mob of some 5,000 citizens broke up a small meeting of Communists in the city hall. The presence of 200 policemen was insufficient to permit a little free speech.

It might as well be understood that Communism, however wrong it may be, is not strong enough in the United States to injure the people of this nation nearly as much as the suppression of their liberties. When mobs or officials can break up a meeting, authorized by law, the law is useless. So is the freedom that it guarantees.

MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE students are going to have official hitch-hiking stations in East Lansing; painted yellow, they will inform a passing motorist of the fact that "thumbers" wanting to go home over the weekend are really students, and not robbers.

MAYBE IT WAS A GOOD THING for the University of Michigan to take that trouncing from Illinois last Saturday. "Sweet are the uses of adversity" is taught in the classroom, and sometimes the athletic field provides the opportunity to apply the adage.

WE HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN

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.

To the Editor:

The Detroit Free Press once said that clothes did not make the man but clothes did have the first crack at making impressions of the man. But not with me; this opinion ceased to be a fact. I can talk with a man or woman for half an hour, he or she will let fall some words that will give me a fairly good idea as to their mental capacity and caliber—for mind is the master force. Many people now are educated beyond their intelligence. In the following sentences there are some words used in the wrong place and some words mispronounced. I have underlined the words and spelled them right directly afterward.

A county school commissioner speaking at a Christmas entertainment two years ago in our school congratulated the scholars on not having marred the new desks, adding that no doubt the teachers had **pled** (pleaded) with them not to use their knives on them. The next person I will arraign was a pastor's wife who occupied the pulpit when he was absent. She told us once that when they kept a store she **suspicioned** (suspected) certain people of stealing from them. Some years ago a neighbor woman told me that she was American born but her father came from the **Providence** (Province) of New Brunswick. In a conversation quite recently with a young man who holds a clerical job in a Detroit plant, he told me that we had a right to **confisticate** (confiscate) the billion dollars worth of gold that France shipped to this country for safe keeping and apply it on her war debt to us.

We cannot expect that the children will speak properly if their teachers and elders do not.

CHARLES MARTIN,
Route 3, Birmingham.

To the Editor:

To The Citizens of Birmingham

I wish to take this opportunity in behalf of the Birmingham Fire Department to express my sincere appreciation for the cooperation received by the citizens of Birmingham during Fire Prevention Week.

Because there were no fires which resulted with losses in Birmingham during Fire Prevention Week convinces me of the interest shown by the local people in our community in doing their part in this campaign against FIRE.

I wish also to thank Howard D. Crull, superintendent of schools and the Rev. Father James W. Cotter, of the Holy Name School, for their cooperation with the student fire prevention questionaires. Also Howard Holah, of the Birmingham Theater, who again this year ran a fire prevention reel before his audience. Last but not least I wish to thank The Birmingham Eccentric which willingly provided adequate space for our campaign.

GEORGE S. SCOTT, clerk,
Fire Prevention Bureau,
Birmingham Fire Dept.

TOAST

Give me a cup of tea
With crispy buttered toast.
The deuce to fricasse.
Give me a cup of tea.
Though a la modes were free
And caviaf and roast,
I'd take a cup of tea
With crispy buttered toast.
—Beatrice McDonald

I'll Leave It to You

By JOHN DENLER

Osgood Kish, American, took his first ride in an airplane the other day. This would hardly be worth mentioning were it not for the fact that Mr. Kish had previously, time and time again, declared in no uncertain tones that "they'll never get me up in one of those things."

Denler

So, the fact that they did actually get Osgood Kish off the ground is news enough in itself. But the big scoop lies in the fact that Osgood enjoyed his first airplane ride, got a big kick out of it. In fact, he's already taken his second trip through the ozone and can't wait 'til he gets the chance to go again.

He's impressed with the great saving in time which air travel chalks up over land travel, with the fact that one can cover great distances by air without becoming tired, and all the rest of the advantages played up in literature circulated by the various airlines. The thing that's made the greatest hit of all with him, however, is the "marvelous service these airlines give you."

"From the moment you call up for information on flying schedules," says Mr. Kish, with enthusiasm, "you're conscious of an atmosphere of courtesy and respect—of a sincere desire to serve—sadly lacking in many business institutions today. And when you go to pick up your ticket, it's 'Here you are, Mr. Kish. Thank you, sir.' And when you get on the plane the first thing the hostess does is smile and ask you if you're perfectly comfortable. Is it warm enough for you, sir? Would you like a pillow for your head? Can I get you anything? Here's an evening paper for you" Boy, oh, boy, these airlines people really make you feel like you amount to something! And they smile at you! I like it."

Mr. Kish doesn't pretend to be an authority on the railroads' problems, but he offers this suggestion, for what it may be worth: "The trouble with the railroads is that they're more interested in how many engineers and conductors they have who have been on the job for 50 years than they are in the comfort of their passengers. Ever hear of a conductor asking anyone on his train if he was perfectly comfortable? Ever hear of a conductor who didn't just about bite your head off if you were even so much as to ask him what time it was? Ever see one of these '50-years-with-the-road' boys whose face didn't look as though it would crack wide open if he were to try to smile? The railroads need to modernize their equipment, yes. But what they need more than this, event is to fire all of their surlypuss conductors and start to rate their employees on their cheerfulness, their courtesy to passengers, the extent to which they SERVE, instead of on how many years they've been riding the rails.

"Meanwhile," says Osgood, "more power to the airlines. They're doing a bang-up job of interpreting the word SERVICE!"

Clinched

Two Peruvian statesmen fought a duel in which shots were exchanged without harm to either—which just about clinches the opinion that it would be wise to let the statesmen fight the wars.—Portland, Oregonian.

Congressional Comment by Representative George A. Dondero 17th Michigan District

Neutrality Act of 1939: On Friday, Oct. 27, the U. S. Senate approved H. J. Res. 306, known as the Neutrality Act of 1939, by a vote of 63 to 30. H. J. Res. 306, as passed by the Senate, however, amended the bill originally proposed by striking out all after the enacting clause and substituting a substantially new measure. On the following Thursday, Nov. 2, the U. S. House of Representatives refused, by a vote of 243 to 181, to instruct House conferees to insist upon the retention of the arms embargo.

A comparison of the various features of the four measures dealing with the subject of neutrality is now in order and this brief analysis follows:

Munitions Control: Government control over the munitions industry was placed on a permanent basis in the Neutrality Act of 1935; the Acts of 1936 and 1937 continued this control; this control remains in effect under the Act of 1939.

Arms Embargo: Exports of munitions and implements of war to or for belligerent countries was forbidden by the Acts of 1935, 1936, and 1937; the Act of 1939 permits such exports on a cash-and-carry basis.

Munitions exports in U. S. ships: Exports of munitions in U. S. ships was forbidden in the Acts of 1935, 1936, and 1937; the same restriction is continued in the Act of 1939.

Cash-and-carry: The cash-and-Carry provision included in the Act of 1937 expired on May 1, 1939; this provision is made mandatory except for specified areas outside of Europe under the Act of 1939.

Loans and credits: Loans and credits to belligerents were forbidden in the Acts of 1935, 1936, and 1937; this prohibition is continued in the Act of 1939; the Johnson Act of 1934 forbids loans to any defaulting war debtor.

Travel on belligerent ships: In the Acts of 1935 and 1936 the ban on travel of U. S. citizens on belligerent ships was left to the President; in the Act of 1937 this ban was made mandatory with certain exceptions; in the Act of 1939 the ban continues to be mandatory.

Ban on entering combat areas: The Act of 1939 contains bans, left to the President, on U. S. ships and U. S. citizens entering combat areas.

Arming of U. S. merchant ships: The arming of U. S. merchant ships was forbidden in the Act of 1937 and the prohibition is continued in the Act of 1939.

Travel or shipping to belligerent destinations: The Act of 1939 forbids travel of U. S. passengers or transportation of U. S. goods in U. S. ships to a belligerent destination except for certain specified areas; this is an added provision.

Entry and departure of submarines and armed ships: The restrictions as to the entry and departure of submarines are substantially the same in all four Acts; restrictions as to the entry and departure of armed merchant ships are similar in the Acts of 1937 and 1939.

Restrictions on use of U. S. ports: Restrictive measures, left to the President, as to the use of U. S. ports as supply bases for belligerent ships also are similar in all four Acts.

Knocking on Wood!

with JOHN H. HARWOOD

INFORMALLY SPEAKING

"Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of joy you must have somebody to divide it with."—Mark Twain.

—o—

"Two sisters were reunited in Los Angeles recently after 27 years. It is said that one sister left the other over a quarter of a century ago in search of a parking place."

—o—

"A household hint column advises young women that to keep moths out of their bathing suits they should put them in a jelly glass and seal the lid down tight."

—o—

PROFITABLE JOB

Oakland County's dog warden received $4,507.60 in fees during 1938, which is a handsome salary for a dog catcher, even if he and the dogs lead a dog's life. The Board of Supervisors have limited his income to $2,580 a year from fees, henceforth.

—o—

"It is being said that this is a phony war. But we shall understand the war better if we remember that it was preceded by eight years of phony peace."—Walter Lippmann.

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LOCAL ACTION NEEDED

This scrivener would humbly suggest a moratorium for the time being on debates, discussions and general worry by people about the foreign situation. The time has come for some missionary work in our own back yard, and Oakland County has plenty of problems much more important, relatively speaking, than the price of tea in China and this 'umpteenth inning of the war in Europe.

To be sure, Asia and Europe have important issues at stake, but how in the name of common sense can we act intelligently in those questions if we don't even **know** about the problems on our own doorstep, let alone not having solved them? How can you or I be a good citizen of the United States, salute the flag, sing "God Bless America" and all of that, if our own Oakland County, for example has hundreds of families who face starvation this winter because no provision has been made for their care? Don't forget, Communism and discontent thrive on an empty stomach.

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OAKLAND'S RELIEF SET-UP

Few people understand what the Oakland County Board of Supervisors is trying to do, or how the State, for that matter, can solve the problem of relief for the unemployed. And no where in the state do things appear more uncertain than in Oakland County, making the outlook dark and the problem really serious.

In the last fiscal year, Oakland contributed only $60,878 for relief, while the State contributed $1,007,000. Further, it has been charged by the State that local units held back $40,000 they should have paid in to the county relief administration—a further example of the haphazard way the problem has been handled, for relief is on the unit plan in this county, meaning that ostensibly each city and township must take care of its own indigents. In practice, however, relief has been turned over to the county ERA, with each unit obligated to contribute the necessary money.

Birmingham's supervisors think the unit plan is fine, for our local relief problem is negligible compared to some of the other units. In all, 18 supervisors defended the unit plan in a recent vote, blocking a return to the county-wide plan. (A two-thirds vote or 39 were necessary to make the change; only 38 votes could be mustered.)

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The unit plan is fine for Birmingham, but it may entail starvation for hundreds of families living in poorer communities. That is one thing to think about.

A second factor to cogitate upon, is that these families may starve anyway unless more state aid is forthcoming, for even if relief were handled on a county-wide basis—that is, through funds secured from a county-wide tax levy—there still would not be enough money to feed the hungry. State aid on a large scale will be a dire necessity before the winter is over—and don't forget, either, that "state aid" is based on the money that you and I pay to the State and Federal governments. It isn't manna from heaven.

The catch comes in the fact that the last legislature cut in half its apropriation for direct relief, and the State will soon be out of money for this purpose. Economy, you know—a laudable thing when it reduces waste but not when it condemns people to starvation.

—o—

DOMESTIC ILLS

The problem is far too complex to be covered in a few brief paragraphs such as the foregoing. The problem simply can not be dismissed with the thought that "if these men would get out and find a job, or if they would do something to support themselves, they wouldn't be on the welfare." Legend says that Marie Antoinette had the same idea when she said: "The people want bread? Let them eat cake!" As everyone knows, it was this disdain for the common people which ended in the French Revolution.

It is often been said that the dictators depend on foreign turmoil to divert the people's attention from domestic ills. Your observer thinks a good many of us have unconsciously been doing this very thing.

Happenings of Long Ago

Fifty Years Ago
Nov. 14, 1889

There is great complaint of fences being broken and trees injured by the carelessness of people who drive stock to and from pastures. Cattle are not allowed on the street in this town and persons finding them should not be slow to make complaint.

The defeated post office candidates talk of buying the old gravel pit and making a permanent home. Good idea.

Alex McBride of Pontiac, son of James McBride of this place, with his wife, has gone to Durango, Colo., for his health. We hope the change will be beneficial to him.

Bub Burns' horses came running down Maple avenue one day last week, connected only by a neck-yoke. They came up behind a carriage, in which were seated Miss Sibley and Sly, and wrecked the whole turnout. Fortunately the girls were uninjured, but were scared nearly to death.

Twenty-five Years Ago
Nov. 13, 1914

What is described as a continued and irresistible offensive of the Russian army, resulting in the evacuation of Poland by the Germans is reported today as successfully establishing itself in German territory at Plescheen, 16 miles west of the Russo-German frontier.

The German cruiser Emdon, whose sensational raids on British shipping and even on allied warships have been a constant source of humiliation to the British admiralty is no more. Finally forced into battle by the Austrian cruiser Sydney, the Emden was sent ashore on fire from stem to stern.

Five Years Ago
Nov. 15, 1934

Thad D. Seeley, receiver for the closed First National Bank of Birmingham, announced Wednesday that he has filed a formal application with the Comptroller of the Currency at Washington for a new loan on the bank's assets from the Reconstruction Finance company.

A resolution instructing Harry S. Starr, city assessor of Bloomfield Hills, not to spread the 1934 State and county taxes in that city on the county's equalized valuations was adopted by the Bloomfield Hills commission Tuesday night.

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