

The Birmingham Eccentric

Published every Thursday in Birmingham, Mich., in The Eccentric Building, 222 1/2 First Avenue, Telephone 11, 12 and 13

Subscription Rates: (In Oakland County) One Year \$1.50, Six Months \$1.00, Three Months \$0.50

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 1940

NOTE: The Eccentric is pleased to publish stories of events which have new value and which are written by persons connected with the editorial staff of the paper.

More than a year ago The Eccentric began a crusade against the existing terms of the Michigan Scavenger Tax Sale Law.

"Locking The Barn Door..." port from Birmingham's city and school officials, as well as officials from Royal Oak, Detroit, and a few scattered nearby school districts.

Several meetings were held before Senate and House legislative committees in Lansing. Not much help came from them, however; one reason was that Senator George P. McCallum, of Ann Arbor, a so-called "tax expert," was unopposed to any change in the law that would allow units of government to use their tax delinquency assets to bid against others when the sale is held this spring.

Under the terms of the law, you will recall, a bid for as low as 25 per cent of the last assessed valuation may be made for a piece of delinquent property, regardless of how much the delinquent taxes amount to. In the case of Birmingham, the record shows that the city stands to lose as much as a quarter of a million dollars, while the school district can lose up to \$150,000.00.

The Legislature's failure to change the law so that the people who have paid their taxes may "have their own money" will be charged, in our opinion, to the presence of tax delinquent groups, chiefly speculators, plus the sympathetic attitude of men like Senator McCallum.

It is interesting, too, to note that Senator McCallum for years has represented Upper Peninsula land interests, as a legislator.

Now we see where the Oakland County Board of Supervisors is awake to the danger and unfairness of the Scavenger Tax Sale law as it remains. They are going to institute court proceedings to "protect the public's interest" in delinquent tax assets.

We wish them success. We wonder, though, why they were not interested a year ago when the Legislature was in session. That was the time to "protect the public's interest."

Appointment of Frank Murphy to the U. S. Supreme Court is a compliment to a Michigan citizen whose public record in office has been an amazing one.

Murphy's New Job is a valiant type of crusading public official; in our opinion, his greatest weakness was his emotional endeavors to spread the abundant life, regardless of the administrative cost to the taxpayers—proof of which is evidenced in his piling up in excess of a twenty million dollar deficit while Governor of Michigan for two years. On the Supreme Court bench he will be removed from the administrative phases of government, and his varied experience in public life thus far should give him an excellent background upon which to interpret the laws of the United States.

Just what is one of the major responsibilities of a public school system in a democracy, if it does not function to make its graduates aware of and alert to the necessity of voting on public issues?

Did it EVER OCCUR to you that the words "silent" and "listen" use the same portions of the alphabet?

Two weeks ago in this column The Eccentric set forth detailed information concerning the power of the Mr. McKay's Paper Michigan Times, Calls Us 'Screw' Republican

That editorial, we believe, eloquently argued that "McKay's Paper Can Sell Liquor," which was the piece's caption. For accuracy, we still believe that caption could not be improved upon—which sets some manner of journalistic ink, we also believe.

In that connection, we stated that the amount of liquor liquor carried by The Michigan Times probably was the envy of every large daily newspaper's advertising manager; we said, and still say, that probably no newspaper in Michigan has the pulling power to aid in the sale of one or all brands of liquor that The Michigan Times has at its disposal. Such is the tremendous power of the printed, or spoken, word!

Now, Good Folks, cometh along Mr. McKay's newspaper last week in rebuttal; in an editorial entitled "An Eccentric View," one of our old editors of that political weekly journal rises via typewriter to the defense of his boss. For we can't believe that the clever and gentlemanly Mr. McKay wrote the piece himself, he is far too nice a chap to get so excited, and, besides, his choice of words is generally more diplomatic. Also, we don't believe that from his lofty domicile in sunny Florida he would know the balmy breezes of that clime better than we, with any desire to send a wintry blast upon our own editorial head.

But, Folks, you probably wish to read what Mr. McKay's editorial staff thinks about us in our increasing campaign for good government in Michigan, so we respectfully reprint The Michigan Times' comment of last week, as follows: "A contemporary (and contemptuous) publisher, George Averill, of the Birmingham (Mich.) Eccentric, takes occasion in a recent issue to cavil at the amount of a certain type of advertising carried, just before Christmas, in these columns.

We respectfully submit that such advertising customarily bulks large during the holiday season, when all is conviviality (except perhaps in the evil minds of chronic snappers.) For example, a daily paper in Grand Rapids, where this weekly is published, carried an even greater percentage of this kind of advertising just before Christmas than we did.

We have a deep-rooted conviction that George Averill gets a bit drooly at the mouth as he passes up on this type of advertising. In any event, we are not ashamed neither to publish it nor to reveal for Averill's inspection (or anyone else's) the records of our solicitation of this very desirable type of business. Who he is finished with this inspection, George may care to inquire of the attorney, and the law, their outlook on no way prejudiced by their personal opinion as to whether a law is good or bad.

But things which have come to pass convince this writer that it is not as simple as all that. In fact, such judicial procedure is impossible for several reasons.

ELASTIC CONSTITUTION In the first place, the Constitution is very brief, leaving much to the interpretation of the courts. Second, there are one or more "elastic" clauses which can be stretched just about as far as the courts see fit to go.

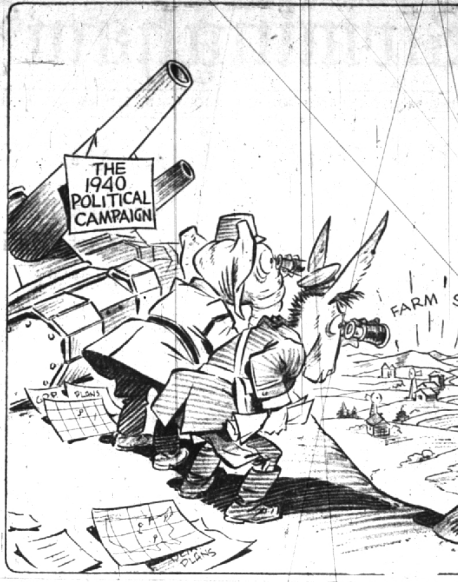
CONGRESS HAS POWER TO regulate interstate commerce, and just now that authority is being made the basis for a great deal of legislation by the federal government.

What constitutes interstate commerce? That is a very complex question, and no one can say what it is until Congress arbitrarily decides, and the courts uphold the definition.

Thus, with such great latitude present, it depends on "the personal attitude of the Supreme Court"—whether the members by extension of Federal power is basically a good thing—whether it is believed that an observer can not help but believe that the wisdom of the law governs.

Yet, according to court theory, whether a law is good or bad has no bearing on the court's decision. The very fact that members of the court can be classified as "liberal" and "conservative" proves that this theory can often be wrong.

SCOUTING A MILITARY OBJECTIVE



Knocking on Wood!

Supreme Court CHECK NOW THAT Mr. Murphy is to take his place as an associate justice of the Supreme Court, that august body will have more than ever a liberal flavor, in contrast to its conservative bent in the early days of the New Deal, or before the Court was threatened with reorganization. The court formerly was a conservative check on a liberal government. Should the Republic come here to knock, the court will be a liberal check on a conservative government. A super check and double check, it will be, inasmuch as the judiciary, the executive and the legislative branches are supposed to check on each other anyway.

NOT IMPERSONAL In high school, this observer got the notion that the Supreme Court is not an impersonal, objective and detached body of men who sat on their judicial pinnacles and interpreted the Constitution and the law, their outlook on no way prejudiced by their personal opinion as to whether a law is good or bad.

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RIISING COSTS In six years, \$10,165,775 was spent in Oakland County by the Emergency Relief Administration for work orders to make direct relief. Several millions have been spent in other parts of the State.

Germany is using potato plants here to make newsprint paper. This is evidently an attempt to make printed propaganda more digestible.

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.

Five Years Ago Jan. 16, 1890 The last number of the Scientific American gives a nice cut showing where the New Yorks held the world's fair—if Chicago doesn't make it an affair of its own, the fair will be a fine cut of the new North bridge and no end of "new things under the sun" will be moved by the electric motor.

H. H. Chaffield hands in the following and advises Wighthead to send Mitchell in after the situation. Wanted: An editor who can write and argue politics and at the same time be religious, funny, scientific and historical; who knows all the ways they floated around in the old days and live on in the ocean. Fortunately the weather was pleasant, the captain brave and the passengers patient, so they all reached port well and happy.

Twenty-five Years Ago Jan. 15, 1915 The Turks are hastening the construction of three railway lines across the Sinai peninsula, according to a dispatch from Cairo, which adds that the Turks expect to be ready to invade Egypt in February.

W. T. Holday, our country executive, writes: "I am not yet reached utopia but we have at least found a way toward it."

Barclay Acheson, associate editor, "Readers' Digest," writes: "Anyone who claims that he is 'blue' in the United States is just plain yellow."

Paul Austin Wolfe, preacher: "The moral collapse of communism and fascism is now clear that even a college professor can understand it."

Hugh Johnson, retired general, newspaper writer: "Excuse me, sending money to Finland are a step toward war."

Random Remarks

Burton K. Wheeler, U. S. Senator from Montana: "Members of Congress are sincere and determined to aid honest business."

Winston Churchill, First Lord of the British Admiralty: "We are buffeted by the waves but the ocean tides flow steady and firm in our favor."

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WABECK STATE BANK OF DETROIT. "A friendly bank" Statement of Condition at Close of Business, December 30, 1939. Includes sections for DIRECTORS, OFFICERS, RESOURCES, and LIABILITIES.

Main Banking Office in the Fisher Building Downtown Office in the Ford Building BRANCH OFFICES 141 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale • Wabec Building, Birmingham