# The Birmingham Eccentric

Published every Thursday, at Birmingham, Mich., in The Eccentric Building, 226-228 North Woodward Avenue
Telephones 11, 12 and 13

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Entered as Second Class Matter in the U. S. Postoffice at Birmingham, Michigan

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

| (In Oakland County) | | (Outside Oakland County) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| One Year | $1.50 | One Year | $2.00 |
| Six Months | .85 | Six Months | 1.25 |
| Three Months | .50 | Three Months | .75 |

All newspaper and advertising copy must be in the Eccentric office by Wednesday noon to obtain insertion for that week.

*The Eccentric is a member of:*
*National Editorial Association, Michigan Press Association, University Press Club, and Oakland County Weekly Press Association*

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 1940


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.

## Michigan Fourth Estate Group

As you have probably read in the daily newspapers (and this edition of The Eccentric carries a story on it), a group of Michigan publishers have banded together in an organization known as the Michigan Fourth Estate Group, "for better government"; a Board of Directors consisting of 16 men (from every section of Michigan have been selected, and have done the publisher of this newspaper the honor to become its first president.

While we recognize the honor, we certainly have no illusions about the amount of work involved, either: in fact, it is one of those assignments that easily could require all of one's time. But we'll give it every hour that we can, for we are fully aware of the possibilities for doing good in Michigan that our new organization has.

Within this Michigan Fourth Estate Group are some of Michigan's outstanding newspaper men and women. Practically all of them are weary of mounting taxes and increased number of employees in our State government; of the increased power that has been taken over by "political bosses"; of the chasm between the public official and the voter that has been growing wider each year. We in the newspaper business know that our professional activities are, after all, dependent upon the public support, and we intend to function in such a manner as to gain the active interest of the voters in good government—for certainly newspapers by their very nature have the tools with which to keep people posted on the good and evil things in government.

Our organization does not intend to support or endorse any candidate, although our constitution and by-laws definitely set forth the belief that, as individuals, each member may go as far in this direction as he or she sees fit. Perhaps the best summary of our Michigan Fourth Estate Group's policy is contained in our constitution, which reads:

"The purpose of this organization shall be to consolidate an independent group of Michigan newspaper publishers banded together to discourage invisible government and subterranean political-boss rule in each and all political parties, by means of full and frank publicity; to encourage, as each member desires in his own case, the candidacies of those Michigan citizens (by means of full publicity) who are free from and independent of boss alliances; and finally, to exercise greater diligence in interpreting the significance of the acts of public officials throughout their terms of office, thus better to enable the public to judge and discriminate between the unworthy official and the one who regards public office as a public trust."

So, Folks, please give our group your benediction and your support for, after all is said and done, whatever we may accomplish is for the taxpayers-at-large; and that means every one in Michigan.

## The Dog, Man's Best Friend

In many homes today there is a distinct vacant spot because a long loved pet is gone. Our home knows this special lonesomeness today. Brownie is no more.

To the rest of the world he was probably just another dog. To us, he was the special one whose big brown eyes lighted up and whose tail threatened to wag off when we returned from any appreciable absence.

There is no greeting like that of your own child yet in the welcome of the family dog is a shadow of the same feeling. It arouses a genuine sentiment in us.

We know that this wriggling dumb brute is a true friend. No doubt we are flattered by his dependence on us. At the same time there is something good that is aroused by his devotion. No elaborate theories, no long argument has developed this. You are just his family. He knows it and nothing can drive it from his consciousness.

Brownie was the kind of a dog I like best. His family tree was lost in the mists of uncertainty. All we knew was that we got him and we liked him. Our busy growing family was no place for a sissy dog with a prima donna temperament. He had to be able to give and to take, and he did.

Dogs are supposed to have a good influence on children. Their presence teaches the younger ones to develop consideration for others and helps them to take on some of the responsibility of family duties. Ours worked out that way, but he also had an influence on the rest of us.

Dogs are not supposed to have souls or characters, but they influence those of human beings.
—Floyd J. Miller in Royal Oak Daily Tribune.

IT'S PROBABLY not true that fat men laugh more than thin men; the only difference, it seems to us is that fat men have a better chance to show their mirth.

## Telling Our High School Youth

"Ignorance of the law excuses no one" is an old and tried axiom, and applies more to adults than to young people, for the latter have lived too few years to have gained sufficient worldly experience to guide them. That is why we want to remind local high school boys and girls who belong to secret sororities and fraternities that such membership is illegal in Michigan. We have often wondered why Supt. of Schools Howard D. Crull doesn't post such information in large letters upon the walls of Baldwin high school. We think it would at least let the youngsters know that their membership in secret societies is illegal, and thus inform them the law is being broken—then the youngsters will have the consciousness that "they are not putting something over on the law" unknowingly. We don't think that many boys and girls "want to put something over on the law," and such notices would serve a practical purpose in the development of the character of youth.

## Too Much Money In Politics

The use of money in political campaigns continues to be a topic of interest to the people of the entire country. The problem is not as easy of solution as one might think, although the expenditure by a candidate of hundreds of thousands of dollars cannot be endorsed.

Off hand, one would be inclined to believe that the way to limit the use of money in political campaigns would be to prohibit its use but the solution is not as easy as this. For example, political machines, existent in almost every large city and state, maintain organizations that do considerable work in elections. They are not paid directly by the candidate himself but everybody knows that the machine workers get their compensation in other ways.

Individuals living in the least populous states of the Union find it difficult to realize how much money is used to pay political workers in some states. Where powerful machines operate, the only chance for an independent, as a rule, is a well-stocked campaign fund, able to put out the cash for the workers necessary.

The problem seems to be wrapped up somewhat with the direct primary, whose opponents are quick to blame it for the plethora of money in election contests. However, the solution will have to come through some other means than the oblition of the direct primary because it has definitely won the support of the vast majority of the people of the country.

## 'Permanent Peace'

"We shall be victorious in this fight against the enemies who forced war upon us . . . it was announced just recently that their war goal was . . . the destruction of our people and the destruction of our culture . . . there is only one thing for all of us, fight until victory is attained so that one day —?—will shine as the nation which brought about permanent peace."

The above quotation comes from the lips of the commander-in-chief of an army fighting in Europe. We have omitted the name of the nation above, substituting a question mark because the words might have been spoken by any of the five military chieftains doing battle on European soil today. It is the customary words of exhortation that are addressed to a people at war.

Actually, the quotation comes from the Christmas message addressed to German soldiers by Col. Gen. Walter von Brauchitsch, commander of the German armies. It indicates that the people of Germany are being told that their present struggle has been forced upon them and that they are fighting for peace. It is the same in Great Britain, France, Finland and Russia.

With absolute control of the sources of information, aggressor nations can create almost any opinion among their peoples who have no method of securing impartial news. The average resident of interior Germany knows little or nothing about anything that Hitler and his officials do not want them to know. Thus fostered and fed with selected bits of news, they are easily misled and persuaded to fight to the end for their Germany.

We do not believe that the German people want the present war any more than the British and French desire it. Just the same, we have no doubt but they are behind their government and they will support Hitler's regime until it collapses. It would be a mistake to blame individuals Germans, or to hate them during the war and just as great a mistake to inflict unjust penalties upon them after the war.

## Average Men And Women

There are people in this country who believe that the majority of our citizens are unconcerned about how others make their money, so long as they make it.

These folks believe that the people do not appreciate honesty and service in public office and that they haven't got sense enough to support a public official of the better type.

We do not subscribe to these beliefs. We are inclined to think that the average man and woman is appreciative of honesty, in business and political life, and that the tide is running against selfishness and greed wherever they may be found.

Quite frankly, we may be wrong. There are many who will not agree. Just the same, we think so.

LOTS OF CRITICISM is coming from Washington about the methods of the National Labor Relations Board and its bias toward employers. It only goes to prove that a democracy can generally straighten out its problems if given time; the only danger, these days, is that democracy is always threatened by a form of dictatorship. But if the right to speak and print and assemble are still available to the American people, the pendulum will eventually swing back to a point where fairness and equity are possible for all.

REVENGE IS LIKE putting a jack under an automobile it puts you beneath the object you try to jolt.

## WASHINGTON SLEIGH RIDE

## Congressional Comment

by Representative George A. Dondero 17th Michigan District

**The Farm Dollar:** According to a computation based on figures from the National Industrial Conference Board, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and other government agencies, the purchasing power of the farm dollar stood at 76.3 cents as of August 1939 in contrast to 82.3 cents as of July 1933, a decline of 6 cents. In a like period of time factory wage rates went up from 80.3 points to 126.9, an increase of 46.6 points; factory prices, however, increased but 5.6 points, from 73.4 to 79. In these figures the year 1926, when factory prices and farm prices were at or near parity, is used to represent 100.

A comparative analysis of farm prices and factory production reveals that when there is a downward trend in factory prices bringing them to a parity basis with farm prices, factory production increases. Such a situation prevailed in the years 1923 to 1930. When factory prices rise beyond the level of farm prices, factory production declines. This condition was our lot in the years 1930 to 1936. The rise and fall of factory production closely parallels the rise and fall of factory prices. For instance, in 1931-1935 when factory prices were disportionately high in relation to farm prices, factory production showed its sharpest decline. In 1937 factory prices again started upward and as they did so factory production began to decline and with this recession factory payrolls naturally dropped. In this way labor and industry are adversely affected if factory wage rates and factory prices are not at or near parity with farm prices. Available statistics indicate that factory and farm prices must continue on a parity in order to stimulate factory production and employment.

**Increased Wages**

Increased wage rates have been a substantial factor in boosting factory prices upward but these wage increases have not resulted in a proportionate advantage to labor. As wage rates go up, factory prices go up, and factory production goes down with a parallel reduction in factory payrolls. For instance, a comparison between total farm income and total factory payrolls reveals that these totals, year in and year out, generally balance each other; and this has been true in prosperous years and in depression years.

In other words, despite substantial increases in factory wage rates in recent years, total factory payrolls have equalled or but slightly exceeded total farm income. When factory wage rates move upward without a proportionate increase in the total factory payroll we have a situation wherein fewer workers participate in employment.

The situation with reference to the purchasing power of the farm dollar is best illustrated on an assumed barter basis. Considering that a farmer can buy a tractor for 500 bushels of $1 wheat when farm and factory prices are at a parity, any increase in factory wage rates and the cost of production will be reflected in a factory price increase, possibly requiring 600 bushels of $1 wheat for the purchase of a tractor. This would result in a reduction in the demand for tractors and less employment in the tractor industry. Suppose that, in addition to the factory price increase, there is a decline in farm prices with wheat dropping to 50 cents. The purchase of a tractor will then take 1,200 bushels of 50 cent wheat. Under such circumstances the decline in farm demand and the reduction in factory payrolls will become more marked and economic maladjustment will become more pronounced. That this applies to all products generally is indicated by statistics covering factory and farm prices for a period of nearly 20 years.

It is interesting to note that when we had an eight-year period, 1923-1930, wherein there was no government interference with the economic structure, factory and farm prices adjusted themselves to a parity and factory production was above normal with a satisfactory ratio of employment.

## I'll Leave It to You

By JOHN DENLER

By now most New Year's resolutions are on the skids. Father is rapidly approaching his 1939 daily quota of stories, will undoubtedly soon pass it. Mother is again reaching for the chocolates with a frequency and a regularity that explain her losing battle with avoirdupois. And the kids—well, they're not going to spend all their spare time studying their lessons, no matter how great the reward. Life is again slipping back into the stereotyped, matter of fact, grind American way. Time staggers on.

Denler

Biggest event for 1940 in the minds of most people is the long-heralded, over-hyped-about motion picture version of "Gone With The Wind." It is true that the perilous state of our national debt, the possibilities of a third term for Roosevelt, the problem of how to keep America at peace in a warring world, and a number of other issues of vital significance to every United States citizen, are troubling the thoughts of a certain serious few. But the suspense over whether Clark Gable will ring the bell as Rhett Butler, and Vivien Leigh turn out to be a creditable Scarlett, indisputable tops the list.

Frankly, I haven't read "Gone With The Wind," and I imagine this places me almost in a class by myself. The main reason I haven't is because I've never been able to find the time. There are so many other things I have always felt I should read—books that have stood the test of decades, even of centuries— and I've always felt that these should come first. Not that Miss Mitchell's book is not a worthwhile contribution to American literature. It probably is, although the only fact that might seem to suggest otherwise has been its almost universal popularity. I am always suspicious of a book which everybody likes.

The second reason I haven't read it is because, during the height of its popularity, when everybody and his brother was reading it—when it was the chief topic of conversation at every bridge game, meal, and church social—I heard so much about it that it got me down. Inwardly, I rebelled. I became—for no real logical reason, I'll admit—prejudiced against the book. You can get too much of anything, no matter how good it may be. Well, I got too much of "Gone With The Wind"—without even reading it.

I realize that I am laying myself open to a barrage of rotten eggs for having revealed my disloyalty to so sacred an American institution as this two-ton tome of Miss Mitchell's. However, I have wanted to express my true sentiments on this momentous issue for some time. Now that I've gone and done it, I feel better, come what may.

Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy the movie version. Maybe I'll see you there.

**They Just Can't**

Stock market suckers appear to prove that, instead of dreading the fire, the burnt child just can't believe that he was burnt.—San Diego Union.

## Happenings of Long Ago

**Fifty Years Ago**
**Jan. 23, 1890**

In the remembrance of the oldest inhabitant this is the strangest winter of them all. Pansies that have bloomed out of doors are common, dandelions are reported in bloom throughout the State, butterflies are flopping around up in the township of Waterford, while down in Allegan County, peach trees are leafing out, and the ice crop is a total failure. The winter resorts are things of the past and the southern people are all coming north for our balmy breezes.

At 8 p. m. Jan. 24, in the M. E. church in this place, Mr. Fukudu Fukusuhumu and Lady Wakagawa Hashamaka will be made man and wife. The rites will be characteristic of a Japanese marriage. The bridge and groom, with numerous attendants and relatives, will be clad in full Japanese array. After the ceremony a reception and Japanese wedding feast will be given. To defray the expenses of the contemplated bridal tour, an admission of five cents will be charged and 15 cents for the feast, each feaster being given two pieces of Japanese ware as a souvenir.

**Twenty-five Years Ago**
**Jan. 22, 1915**

On Monday the exquisite fairy fantasy, "The Blue Bird," comes to the Garrick Theatre, Detroit, for a three days' engagement, having carried its message of beauty and happiness literally around the earth.

The Germans delivered their first but long-feared Zeppelin airship attack against England Tuesday and in doing so threatened the lives of King George, Queen Mary and other members of the royal family. A fleet of fast air cruisers swooped across the North Sea to the Norfolk County coast, bombarded Yarmouth and Cromer, then sailed inland and dropped bombs on Sheringham and Sandringham.

Detrailed reports received in Rome regarding Italy's earthquake disaster increase rather than diminish the appalling list of dead and the enormous property loss. It is announced that the number of dead and the enormous property loss. It is announced that the number of dead and injured in the Abruzzi alone is 30,000 without including the Sora district. Property loss is estimated at $60,000,000.

**Five Years Ago**
**Jan. 24, 1935**

With the specific intent of correlating their tax stimulation campaigns, which had given the appearance previously, of running separate courses, the City Commission and Board of Education will hold a joint meeting in the Municipal Building at 7:30 p. m. Saturday evening.

Beginning May 1, school bonds and notes will no longer be accepted in payment of delinquent Birmingham school district taxes, the Board of Education decided Thursday evening.

Mrs. James Lee Oliver is general chairman of the lecture recital which is to be given by Ossip Gabrilowitsch under the auspices of the Thursday Musicale.

**FIRST MONTH**

Winter
Stirs an aching
And a hungering in
The soul for summer, and brings it
Nearer.

Summer,
So divinely
Blue and gold and gentle,
Is returning to earth as wild
Winds blow.
—BEATRICE McDONALD

## Knocking on Wood!

with JOHN H. HARWOOD

**STILL AN ISSUE**

Ho, hum! The tariff is with us again.

Several years ago, this observer spent a year, off and on, looking into the subject, and following up several paragraphs culled from a report, pulled the other night from the bookshelf:

"The tariff is one of America's oldest political issues. The questions of slavery, extension of the suffrage, a national bank, control of 'trusts,' the income tax, election of senators and many other problems which have arisen since 1789 have all been either definitely settled or else adumbrated by newer, more provocative issues, but the tariff, like death and taxes, is still with us.

"Why has not this problem been settled for once and for all? One thousand economists protested adoption of the Hawley-Smoot tariff in 1930; truly informed Americans are almost unanimous in their denunciation of the United States' extreme tariff policy, yet the Hawley-Smoot bill became law, and this country has dared no downward revision by Congress since 1913. Why should this be?

**TWO REASONS**

"There seem to be two principal reasons:

"FIRST—The tariff has probably been the most thoroughly misunderstood question in American history.—The adage that 'truth shall prevail' has met with serious reverse insofar as the tariff is concerned.

"SECOND—The tariff is largely a matter of special privilege; it is an unseen tax on the entire population recurring to the benefit of organized groups or minorities, and any student of American history knows the susceptibility of our democracy to the desires of pressure groups, yet it is the inability to legislate for the welfare of all, in the face of privilege seekers, which is, perhaps, the fatal weakness of popular government."

**THE TRADITIONAL VIEW**

That is the view of this observer toward the tariff, and it is a view which coincides with genuine economic theory. In fact, there is perhaps no subject in the whole of economics on which there is more unanimity of opinion, so our view is not the property, necessarily of any political party.

Founders of the country, like Thomas Jefferson, held that popular education was to be the salvation of America, but with disdain that is typical, our politicians offer brush aside what is being taught in the schools. Civil service improvement and reform of county government, for example, are two things both up to students as objects desirable, yet politicians scoff and millions of public school graduates follow their narrow view. Economists, 1,000 strong, condemned the Hawley-Smoot tariff, yet Congress passed it, and President Hoover signed it, though it is reported that his signature came reluctantly.

**AN EASY DECISION**

Along came the New Deal and under pressure of Secretary Hull, lifelong enemy of extreme "protection," the trade-agreements act was passed, an amendment to the 1930 tariff act and taking advantage of that law's "flexible" provision. The New Deal has put across a lot of questionable legislation but here was one exception.

Michigan's senators and representatives in Congress should have an easy time with the question. The automobile men, for example, are solidly behind the reciprocal trade program and their national association has adopted more than one resolution to that effect. The automobile industry is aggressive, efficient, and doesn't care a hoot about foreign competition. The industry is a perfect answer to the fallacy that "American wages are higher because its workers are protected from cheap foreign labor." The industry wants to sell its products the world over, but knows of the retaliation of other countries which insist on the quaint notion that trade is a two-way proposition.

Michigan's agricultural college, which should be qualified to speak for the farmers, likewise believes in the trade agreements program. That should make it simple for our delegates on Capitol Hill.

But, unfortunately, such is not the case. The reciprocal trade measure was passed by the New Deal and thus has the stigma unforgivable.

Perhaps they will compromise and keep the plan, except to require full approval of the Senate for every agreement. That sounds good, but only once in the country's history—it was in 1854—has the Senate ratified such a treaty. That body is too sectional in its views to rise to the task, and such a compromise means the end.

**WHY WORRY ABOUT TAXES?**

History is full of examples of military men who went haywire. Soldiers are particularly inept as rulers, and that is why successful governments are those which always subordinate the military to the civil authority. In the United States, the President is the commander-in-chief; in time of war or peace, he gives orders to the generals and admirals, not vice-versa.

Civil leaders have to worry about taxes and what the people will think. Military men—not so. Their sole job is to plan to whip the enemy, real or imaginary. If there is no enemy nearby, they must cook up one; after all, in war science, there must be an enemy. So, as in the case of the United States, the enemy from whom we must defend our soil is one of those 1000-to-1 contingencies, but that doesn't bother the soldier or seadog. He has plenty of imagination, and can visualize Japan sailing over here, or Germany, or Russia, or Italy—in fact, that is the picture laid before a House committee last week by Admiral Harold R. Stark. Maybe he even thinks Canada or Mexico endangers us, although neither has a Navy big enough to patrol the Great Lakes.

So the admirals say we need $1,300,000,000 worth of new ships, for a navy bigger than Britain's, although in our view, Britain is a thousand times more vulnerable than we.

Lay off, Macduff! Why should there be a limit to taxes?

## Random Remarks

**Thurman Arnold,** Assistant-U. S. Attorney-General:
"Government spending without anti-trust enforcement is simply the distribution of bonuses to a favored few."

**Frank Gannett,** newspaper publisher, seeking Republican nomination:
"Ours must be government by known laws instead of government by the say-so of bureaucrats."

**Paul V. McNutt,** Federal Security Administrator:
"We have no patience with those who say the days of opportunity ar gone."

**L. J. Taber,** Master, National Grange:
"Work should be the common denominator of our national welfare."

**W. J. Cameron,** official, Ford Motor Company:
"The greatest men have been those who have joined manual labor with mental labor."

**Tom M. Girdler,** steel company official:
"There will never be any need for the regimentation of the United States to accomplish the task of providing for our national defense."

**Walter D. Fuller,** president, Curtiss Publishing Company:
"All of the sources of taxation utilized to finance the World War are now being tapped in peace time."


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