Editorial Page of The Birmingham Eccentric

A free, responsible and aggressive Press is democracy's first line of defense

Knocking on Wood!

with JOHN H. HARWOOD

ENDING THE STRIKE MENACE

THE strikes in American industry continue, particularly in the production of war material, and the people get more disgusted. The drafted men must feel particularly happy about the whole mess, for they can imagine what would happen to them if they staged a sitdown strike over the quality of the morning coffee, or picketed the Colonel regarding the inadequacy of the $25 per month stipend! But it seems to me that there is one vital fact about the whole situation which has been totally ignored by all concerned.

That is, whose money is it which the strikers and organized labor everywhere is going after so avidly, and in many cases, so unpatriotically? And whose money is it that the munitions makers are so intent on keeping? The point is very important; it is the key to the whole situation.

A War Boom

No one will deny that the present rush in the business world is the result of a war boom, pure and simple. Congress is pouring so huge a quantity of money into war orders that a boom and rise in prices has been the inevitable result, and everybody knows it. This is a Martian bubble.

It is the taxpayers' money, upon the faith and credit of the people of the United States—which is responsible for this newly-arrived prosperity. Labor did not do it; neither are the profiteers and planning of business responsible. As a matter of fact, no planning, no brains, no ingenuity of a benevolent sort was used to initiate this boom. It is blood money. It comes from the sword, and the more the people of this nation grab at it, inflate our price levels, and upset our economic system generally, the greater will be the penalty when the bubble breaks, as it always has been and always will be.

I believe the case as I have stated it is true. The only conclusion I can draw is that no minority or minorities are entitled to the riches which are resulting from this war inflation. There is no excuse for the thousands of new millionaires which resulted from the last great conflict.

Needed: A Formula

Once that fact is recognized, we can arrive at a formula for handling the economic problem which now confronts us on every side. There will then be no further use for the endless collective bargaining and strikes which are doing so much harm to the nation's output and to the nation's morale.

Such a formula for distributing war profits should recognize the interests of four groups: First, the **government**. Taxes will and should take a big slice of excess profits; remember, that agency is pouring money and credit into the channels of business to make excess profits possible. Second, the **consumer**. The consumer is entitled to his share, either through price or quality. Too often, prices are jumped for the sake of profiteering, as now seems the case in the gasoline industry; or prices are maintained but quality is cut, or the size of the package is reduced to fool the public. Third and fourth, are **ownership** and **labor**. Their rights and interest are obvious.

I can not see why a formula couldn't be worked out in the war industries and others which benefit from the war boom to **share** the war profit and to take account for, in a scientific manner, the true rise in the cost of living. Once a percentage formula is adopted, there will be no further need of strikes and lockouts and the constant bickering which is now demoralizing the nation.

(Note that I am referring to businesses which are swollen with war orders; or those which are endeavoring to profiteer from the war boom. These are affected with the public interest and are the legitimate objects of discussion here; although, if prices continue to spiral upward, just about every business may be concerned).

Need Is Obvious

The need for a Defense Industries Profit Formula is certainly obvious enough. I believe such a plan is the only feasible method of making unnecessary the constant recourse to mediation and strikes, and to perpetual bargaining. If workers get a 10 cent wage boost this month, they are certain to clamor for another in six months if an industry's profits continue to swell. And, why shouldn't they? But, meanwhile, what should the consumer take it on the chin, and why should the taxpayers as a whole permit a minority to get fabulous, undeserved profits?

If something is not done, and done quickly to halt the rising spiral of wages, costs, profits and prices, the result will be a depression far more ravaging than anything which Hitler now seems able to do.

That School Election

One of the amusing phases of the recent school election was the "Disloyal Plot of the School Board Meeting," with yours truly playing a leading role! The plot must have been conjured by somebody who wasn't over there, for it was a pretty flimsy plot, as plots go. It seems that Mrs. H. H. Corson attended the meeting, and asked that the School Board make plain to the people just how the board planned to spend that two mill-tax revenue; for in her house-to-house canvassing on the issue, many people had asked her about it, she said. She also turned to me, the only reporter present at that particular moment, and asked that I refrain from mentioning her brief message.

I said nothing, for I did deem it polite to go into The Eccentric's policy of withholding nothing when it is of sufficient importance to merit the appellation "news." I presumed at the time that she made the request because of reasons of modesty, for being a public-spirited woman with strong convictions, Mrs. Corson takes part in many civic matters.

If you had followed me around that evening, Tuesday, May 27, you would understand more about this incident, and also why the newspapermen turn gray at an early age, and are a problem to their families, causing their children to sometimes ask when the Old Man arrived home early: "Mama, who is that strange fellow?"

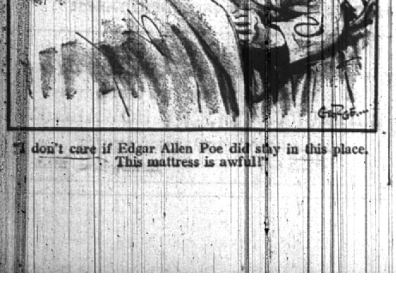
A Long Evening

That particular meeting was especially long. When the Board adjourned for 45 minutes to hear Mr. Roosevelt speak on the radio, I had so much work to do that I made a trip back to the office to do some of it. So when most people were thinking about going to bed, the school board was just getting into high gear. The meeting finally broke up a little after midnight, and I concluded the day's activities at 2 a.m., or thereabouts.

Even my typewriter, equipped with special ventilation to prevent overheating, can go only so fast, and the result, next day, was that several vastly important things did not get written for The Eccentric. For example, going over my notes, I discover that Miss Belcher, of Hill Center, was paid $32 for driving expenses; that Ernest Luth was paid $38.25 for hauling coal; that T. E. Ashton got $2.50 for tuning a piano; that there were 36 fire drills in the schools last month; that there were three cases of scabies; two

(Continued on Page 5)

THE AMERICAN FAMILY . . . By George



"I don't care if Edgar Allen Poe did stay in this place. This mattress is awful!"

Birmingham Penalized

The Eccentric discovered with some surprise this week that despite the fact that the State Tax Commission has penalized the Birmingham school district severely in the matter of tax equalization, costing the district many thousands of dollars in state income, the Board of Education and its administrative officers have done little or nothing about it. Although no definite figures are available, it has possibly cost the district here $23,000 a year—perhaps much more.

Perhaps the school board might have failed to get justice, but the effort would have been worth while.

The facts are these: Birmingham school district lying mostly in the City, but partially in Bloomfield, Troy and Southfield Townships, has been valued at approximately $16,000,000 by the four assessors who value the property for purposes of local taxation. Of that total, 85 per cent lies within the City of Birmingham.

So much for that. The State, in figuring the amount of State aid each district is entitled to, takes this valuation total into consideration. Arbitrarily, the state officials have declared, in effect, that the Birmingham district's property is assessed too low, and that local taxpayers have not been shouldering enough of the burden. The figures should be $19,000,000, the officials determined, and they "equalized" Birmingham at the higher figure. Then, in figuring the state aid formula, a gross deduction of $53,000 was made because of the difference in valuation.

Is the "equalization" just? The Eccentric thinks there is important evidence to the contrary. While it may be true that property is under-assessed in Bloomfield Township, for example, as it has been charged, the fact that the great bulk of the district's property lies within Birmingham should offset that consideration. In comparison with the rest of Oakland County, Birmingham property is assessed at a slightly *higher* level than the general county average. The Oakland County Board of Supervisors has recognized that fact in granting Birmingham a county tax rate slightly lower than the county average in order to equalize our higher valuations.

That official recognition by Supervisors, most of whom are assessors and know just about all there is to know about Oakland Valuations, certainly should carry weight with the State Tax Commission. The Birmingham Board of Education should waste no time in seeking relief, especially after defeat of the proposed 2-mill increase in the tax rate.

Life on Venus

Well, we see by the newspapers that the astronomers are still wondering whether life exists on other planets and that Spencer Jones, astronomer royal of Great Britain, believes that life may be just starting on the planet Venus.

Studies of the atmosphere around the planets lead to the conclusion which is not based upon imagination. Upon Mars, says the professor, conditions represent what the earth will be in its old age and if life exists, it is of a low order.

While there may be much doubt about the existence of life on the various planets in the exact counterpart of human beings, we see no reason why anyone should deny the possibility of some form of life on the various celestial bodies. The planets are not the only places where forms of life may exist.

When we consider that the estimated number of stars exceeds 1,500,000, with larger telescopes revealing new ones every year, and visualize the possibility that bodies akin to planets, may revolve around these suns of the far distant spaces, there is little reason to support the belief that no life exists anywhere except on this sphere.

The form of life that exists in the outer universe may be greatly different from that which is found on our globe, but it requires tremendous conceit to imagine that, of all creation, only man lives.

A NEW COMET was discovered last week by a Dutch astronomer. No, it wasn't a Nazi or British aerial night flare—for the Dutchman was gazing through a telescope in the Harvard Observatory, at Cambridge, Massachusetts.

SO ADOLF HITLER has asked the German people to substitute daisies for butter! Maybe he has something there, at that. New won't some American scientist prove to us that the yellow dandelion can take the place of something that costs more? When he does, we'll expect our community to have greener lawns ever afterwards.

Armchair Philosopher

COMPROMISE

Granting that compromise is necessary to some degree in order to keep the social machinery greased, it does remain that a line must be drawn somewhere or else there will be no conviction worthy of the name and without conviction, character and progress are impossible. To find a functional basis which will enable us to hold our convictions and yet permit us to make reasonable compromises necessary to living in a society, is no easy task.

At least three simple rules may serve as guides in our dilemma:

1. We must guard against compromising too easily. A little effort on our part might result in changing the conditions that seem at first to make a compromise necessary.

2. When there is no escaping a compromise, we should accompany it with a protest. This tends to keep the conviction alive within us and serves to educate others to our way of thinking.

3. There are some areas of experience and situations where we do not have to make any compromise, although sacrifices may have to be made to hold the convictions. This is especially true in our personal conduct. A man doesn't have to drink intoxicants, for example. He may have to give up the company he has been keeping, he may even lose his job but he need not lose his conviction or weaken it.

—JOHN E. MARVIN.

No Time To Talk Of Peace

The talk about a negotiated peace is foolish for the simple reason that there is no possibility of negotiation until the Nazis forego their confident dream of world supremacy.

Until the time arrives that the German people are satisfied that their effort to loot the world is vain, efforts to secure any settlement are futile.

Just now, the latest word from Germany is that the people there are conscious of the hate that the rest of the world has for Nazis, that they fear the results of losing the war and being penalized and that, as a result, they are practically united behind the war effort.

This unity will continue to prevail as long as the Nazis can make the people of Germany believe that victory is just around the corner, and that there are spoils galore for the Germans if victory is attained.

The time to talk of negotiated peace will arrive when Hitler's army has been severely defeated and the Nazi pretense of superiority has been shattered upon the battlefield. It is a bloody requirement, but it is a requirement.

At the psychological moment the British may be able to weaken the German morale by disclosing their intention to be generous in making peace, but that time has not yet arrived.

Government Cash For Business

Somebody said the other day that they did not know that the government of the United States was paying out any money for the benefit of business.

Well, a small item comes from the Maritime Commission, which plans to subsidize the need of American shipping lines for subsidies from the government.

The Commission points out that the nation is now paying $13,000,000 a year to American-flag ships owned by foreign different companies.

Here we have individual initiative and rugged individualism at its best—getting the swag from the government in order to demonstrate that private capitalism is profiting.

It's just like a subsidy to the farmers, or a protective tariff to some industry, isn't it?

MANY PEOPLE these last few days have been congratulating Rev. W. Glen Maxey, of the Birmingham First Presbyterian church, for his success in achieving high intellectual status for you will recall that this 35-year-old former Texan has been awarded a Doctor of Philosophy degree by the University of Pennsylvania. Glen Harry is a mighty fine man; his influence for good already has been great; that it will become more influential as the years go on no one who knows this local merchandiser and interpreter of Christianity will doubt for a single moment.

OUR NATION LAUNCHES 5 big battleship last week, the total cost of which will be 30 millions of dollars. Nobody, of course, is going against having this large ship, especially in present times. The more of them we build, the safer we'll all be against European madmen. But, Folks, did you ever figure out what 30 millions will buy in the way of food, clothing and shelter? So cheer up, as you contemplate the time when the world won't have to support the cost of armaments, and realize that some day there will be two chickens in every pot and every family will have two cars.

WHAT THE MASSES of people really need are capable and fair leaders. The New Deal has attempted to set in motion laws that make it possible for labor to wage an equitable fight against predatory leaders, and now we witness the ranks of labor, in many places, being led by selfish, predatory leaders—and even the New Deal, in their behalf, is the wheels of production going ahead in our defense program, now finds it necessary to crack down on some labor leaders.

BIRMINGHAM'S BUILDING permit values for May were $101,303, bringing the 1941 total to $495,280. This continuing residential construction program certainly proves that this area still serves as a home-magnet for many families who wish to escape the more congested environment of big cities.

GOVERNOR VAN WAGONER's decision to spend the summer on Mackinac Island is a good stroke of business for this area of Michigan. Money spent merely for things which contact the Governor, for selfish purposes, guarantees profits to those who sell food, refreshments, gasoline, etc., etc., to tourists.

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GEORGE R. AVERILL ..... Editor and Publisher
PAUL NEAL AVERILL ..... Business Manager
JOHN H. HARWOOD ..... Managing Editor
BERT L. JOHNSTON ..... Advertising Manager
CLAUDE F. WALKER ..... Production Manager

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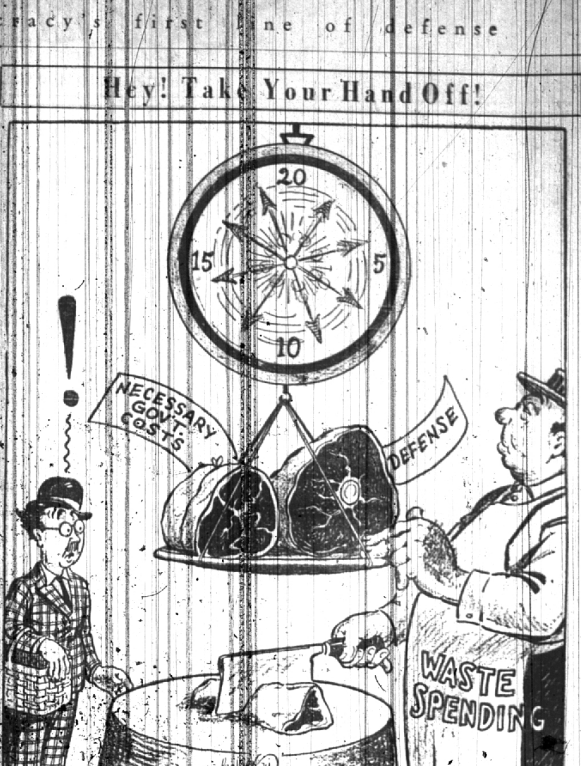
NOTE: The Eccentric is pleased to publish stories of events which have real value to the community, but persons not connected with the editorial staff of the paper. All copy must be presented before noon on Wednesday. The staff reserves the right to make such editorial changes in the wording and/or style as are necessary in the interest of the paper and as are required by laws of the state. Because of the mechanical condition in the composing room, headlines written by persons 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.

Hey! Take Your Hand Off!



Michigan to Be Test State in Promotion Of Sales for Defense Bonds, Stamps

BY GENE ALLEMAN
Michigan Press Association

LANSING—Michigan has been chosen by the treasury department in Washington as one of six states where organized volunteer saving of U. S. national defense bonds will be tested on a big scale.

Upon the outcome of a high pressure campaign led by the executive, Frank Isbey, Detroit appointee of Gov. Frank Murphy as state War manager in 1917 and 1918, may rest the federal administration's decision whether to expand its plan nationwide on the recommend congressional enactment of compulsory payroll deductions.

"Any many leading Detroit business men see it," confided Isbey. "The country has the choice of either assuring the adequate financing of our national defense program through purchase of government bonds as well as taxes or opening the door wide for dangerous inflation, signs of which are already at hand.

"If the bonds are not bought voluntarily, the government may be forced to require compulsory saving through payroll deduction."

Cities, Schools

An educational program is being launched through the public schools, local governments and civic concerns to acquaint the public with the merit of the new bonds.

Whereas the World War Liberty bonds were bought at par and often sold at a loss, the 1941 securities are redeemable at any federal reserve bank at not less than par, plus any interest accrued.

School children are being asked to buy saving stamps in denominations of 10 cents and upward, available at local postoffices. Stamp booklets, when filled, have a cash value of $18.75 good for the purchase of a $25 bond. The bond is redeemable in ten years at the latter amount, a 3 per cent increase on the original investment.

All bonds constitute a direct obligation of the United States government itself.

Crawford's Warning

Rep. Fred L. Crawford, Michigan, testified before the house banking committee at Washington that the treasury's figures of a million-a-month sales of defense bonds was lagging badly.

Declaring that a plan of compulsory payroll buying had been adopted in both Germany and Britain, Crawford said that such a program had been made here by Isador Lubin, commissioner of labor statistics. National defense contracts would carry a provision whereby a certain percentage would be automatically deducted from each worker's pay and invested in government bonds, redeemable in full at the end of the emergency.

C. J. Leland, A. F. L. workers in Detroit, were warned by Isbey (state chairman of the savings bond campaign) to "get ready."

The partial success of the pressure drive indicates that Michigan may actually lead the way not only in mass production of defense armaments but in mass purchase of government bonds. If it succeeds, it will be democracy in action.

Middle of the Road

The civil service commission, assisted by the constitutional amendment advocates, has proposed related zealous reformers when it asks Thomas E. Wilson as director.

Friends of civil service have sponsored candidates who were known to be professionally trained and correct men, and hence, the social welfare workers, apt to be tickled to death, red tape.

Instead of imposing drastic rules that would not work, the commission has proceeded slowly with its authority. Under consideration for the commission's June session are regulations proposed by Commissioner Wilson. Grouped under the general heading of improvements in civil service, as indicated in a letter by the Murphy administration, was due chiefly to military, impractical rulings of the administrator and the commission.

This present commission seems determined not to make the same mistake. Aside its slowness in introducing "bait-out" merit protection for state employees.

How It Happened

"For many years men turned iron into steel by the troublesome process of heating the raw iron together with charcoal," according to a statement in the Job information column of BOYS' LIFE. "However, this method used up so much charcoal that it made the production of steel enormously expensive.

"One day, about 100 years ago, a young Kentucky ironworker named William Kelly made a startling discovery. He had been using a blast of air to whip up the fire that melted his iron. By accident, the blast shot past the fire and reached the edge of the molten iron. A piercing, white-hot blast shot forth from the metal. And when it cooled, Kelly was amazed to find, it wasn't iron but steel. And that's how man discovered that a simple blast of air could purify molten metal and take the place of expensive charcoal in turning iron into steel."

Odd Jobs

Three fellows run a Recreation Club for tiny tots; they take the children on trips and hikes, teach them sports, and save the mothers a lot of work.

A few mechanically inclined youths build models of ships and airplanes, then rent them to stores for business displays. Charge: $3 per week per store per plane.

One young man thought up the idea that tombstones need cleaning. Result? He calls on people and makes a profit out of cleaning the family monuments in the graveyard.—Boys' Life.

While the process is more painful, at least we're wearing out popular songs a lot quicker.—Arkansas Gazette.

"WORDS—AS I SEE THEM"
By Herbert Stalker

ICONIC—A person who has never done any good, so cannot see any good being done.

GRUDGE—A form of internal prickly heat, common among very small people.

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