Editorial Page of The Birmingham Eccentric

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

Michigan Mirror

INTERPRETING THE NEWS

By GENE ALLEMAN

As we intimated in this column two weeks ago ("state needs are due to get the right-of-way in 1945"), Governor Harry F. Kelly has turned thumbs down on the plea of large cities for a slice of the state's anticipated 1945 surplus from the state sales tax, estimated to be between $20,000,000 and $25,000,000.

The governor's zeal for a post-war program which would meet the growing needs of the State of Michigan has become almost a passion with him. A disabled veteran of World War I, Kelly knows what Michigan's new veterans will be up against. In a "progress report" which was distributed among state representatives and senators simultaneously with his message rejecting a division of the state sales tax for municipalities, Kelly placed needs of war veterans first on the state's postwar list.

Other state needs, as recognized by this printed report, were adult education, youth guidance, health, mental hospitals, planning for public work construction, conservation and tourist and resort. Each one of those particular programs has become, to the governor, a personal dream. In his mind they outweighed by far the needs of municipalities. The result was a courageous and possibly adversely political decision by Governor Kelly: State needs must have the right-of-way.

Economic factors in the governor's decision included the following:

1. Wartime inflation threatens to increase the cost of running the state government by $27,000,000 to $30,000,000 for the coming year, starting July 1. Hence, the state must economize now if it is to avert a deficit. (This fact was mentioned in this column also two weeks ago.)

2. The postwar building program of the State of Michigan totals $59,000,000 by estimates made one year ago. Twelve months later, due to inflated wartime costs, state planners declare that these projects will require $90,000,000 instead of $59,000,000. Every dollar of either sum—59 or 90 millions—must come out of the anticipated surplus of the state sales tax or out of a bond issue with its long-time additional expense of interest payments.

3. The state's present $50,000,000 postwar reserve fund has been tagged for veterans' needs and unforseen contingencies. Among the latter might be actual bread-and-butter needs of the unemployed, such as occurred during Governor Murphy's administration leading to a treasury deficit. If so, certainly a lot of folks in large cities would be recipients of state-aid.

Governor Kelly's solution for the financial problems of municipalities, announced in his special message last week, consists of the following:

1. Issue of $50,000,000 in state bonds, to be liquidated from proceeds of a 4 per cent state gasoline tax (one-third higher than it is today). Proceeds would be apportioned among governments—40 per cent to the state for trunk line highways, 35 per cent to county and township for primary roads, and 25 per cent to city and village for streets.

2. Increase the state's markup on packaged liquor from 46 to 55 per cent. "The retail per bottle cost in these four states (Illinois, New York, Indiana and Wisconsin) is $4.54. In Michigan it is $3.87 or 67 cents below the four states' average.") Kelly said the state of Pennsylvania had added a wartime tax of 10 per cent on liquor, netting $11,000,000 of additional revenue. Even with a high-er markup in Michigan, consumers would still pay less than the consumer in Pennsylvania, he said.

3. Increase the state beer tax from $1.25 to $1.50 per barrel.

4. Impose a state tax on the sale and distribution of cigarettes. Twenty-one states now tax this commodity, including Illinois, Massachusetts, New York and Ohio. Kelly estimates such a levy would raise $8,000,000 annually in Michigan.

It is the governor's belief that wartime levies on so-called luxuries—liquor, beer and cigarettes—would net "a possible $16,000,000 of additional revenue" and that cities would realize about $11,400,000 through an apportionment to governments made according to population.

* * *

Another avenue for financial relief would be for the voters of municipalities to repeal the 15-mill tax limitation which they placed upon themselves. The legislature has acted to permit these cities to place a repeal ballot before voters at the April election.

The governor also approved the tax study commission's recommendation for revision of the state intangibles tax, an admittedly difficult job.

Whether the legislature will favor imposition of new and additional taxes upon all citizens, in order to afford financial relief for municipalities, is a matter of sonie speculation at Lansing. Such prospects are not any too bright,we might say. And yet there is considerable logic to the principle of increasing taxes when taxes are most easily paid—years when wages are inflated and everyone is flush with prosperity. An ideal government would do just that—raise taxes in boom years to create a reserve fund; lower taxes in depression years when the reserve fund would be used. One resistance to higher taxes lurks in the suspicion that once taxes are up, they will never come down. The Governor's experience prompts this belief, for government never catches up with the parade of social needs, each fervently and sincerely sponsored by a pressure group. There is always another pressing social problem around the corner to be solved through state money.

The legislature must make the decision. It is not an easy one.

What Your City Commission Is Doing . . .

February 26, 1945

Bills approved totalling $739.60.

Annual Report received from Police Department.

Irene E. Hanley
City Clerk

(Get Results With Want Ads)

Getting Democracy Out of the Parlor

If our democracy is to make itself effective among the nations of the world, the individual American citizen, the citizen who is a unit of the group known as "The People of the United States of America" must speak out. We are too likely to avoid our responsibilities by leaving affairs of our country's policy to "the experts" when in our hearts we know that we ourselves are the real policy makers and it is our duty to say what we want.

The Dumbarton Oaks agreement was a trial balloon—a pretty good one. It has certain faults, though, which can and will be corrected if we, the people, say that we want them corrected. If we accept the benefits of living in a democracy we are bound to inform ourselves on problems of public interest to form opinions, and to express them.

The People of the United States have at this moment much more power than they realize. Their navy is the greatest in the world, their army a tremendous force. The weight of our opinion is well-nigh irresistible if we act to make it felt. If we wish a world-at-peace after this world-at-war it is up to us to speak plainly for sensible world-organization. It is necessary that both our enemies and our friends know where we stand.

What Do We Want?

Do we want justice? Or ersatz?

In 1939 the largest manufacturer of radio receiving sets in Europe was a factory in Eindhoven, Holland. Not any more. When the Germans saw the Allied armies coming they stripped the factory clean and took the whole works, down to the last wheel, to Germany. So let's have a little justice. When we occupy Germany, say we move that machinery, or its equivalent, back to Holland. Say we do the same thing in all similar cases—restore to the other countries of Europe their factory equipment which the Germans have stolen or destroyed. Of course we couldn't do a complete job of it, because there wouldn't be enough to go around. When every lathe and dynamo and drill press had been taken out of Germany there would still be empty factories in Belgium and France and Norway and Russia. . . .

At this point, from certain quarters in America, a howl of protest is heard. Strip Germany of machinery? Intolerable! Leave the skillful and industrious Germans with no tools? Insane! Good heavens, are we barbarians? Why, it would reduce their standard of living!

A recent estimate is that the armed forces of the United Nations have suffered, so far, over 16 million casualties—killed, wounded and captured. Who reduced the standard of living of that 16 million?

Do we want justice? Or do we want ersatz?

MICHIGAN'S DEPT. OF CONSERVATION WANTS to spend some millions of dollars, after the war, to expand and improve the State's park and recreational system. Since these projects are enjoyed by our own people, plus many tourists, one ought to approve the Department's plans—the tourist business being Michigan's second largest industry.

To Save Now Is Wise

Roger W. Babson points out that the people of this country are today spending seventy per cent more than they did in 1939, although the cost of essential living has gone up only twenty per cent.

The statistician says that since 1939, the increase in spending nearly corresponds with the increase of the average weekly earnings of our domestic population and questions whether this "reflects shrewd family planning."

It ought to be recognized by every American that we are living in abnormal years, with a super-abundance of money, due entirely to the wartime spending of the Government. If history repeats, there is ahead, inevitably and unavoidably, a period of recession, even if it is caused by nothing more than the cessation of unlimited Government spending.

Under such circumstances, it would be the part of wisdom for individuals, now enjoying incomes larger than usual, to make a desperate effort to save some of the easy money in order to be prepared for the tighter times that will arrive.

Not only will the individual be able to buy more with the money when the recession comes, but, by postponing expenditures, he will assist the Government in preventing inflation. There is a scarcity of certain goods and, despite price control, considerable commerce on the black market, which flourishes only because Americans are willing to pay extra-legal prices for immediate possession of what they want.

Mr. Babson suggests that the cost of essential wartime living has gone up only twenty per cent. This means that the buyer must pay today $1.20 for what $1.00 used to buy. If the expected recession arrives, and prices go down twenty per cent from what they were in normal years, the man who saves $1.20 today will be able to buy goods to the normal value of $1.50 in normal times.

Mathematically, the expert can figure this out. The increased buying power amounts to twenty-five per cent on the money saved. This is not a small gain for those who act wisely and patriotically today.

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GEORGE R. AVERILL — Editor and Publisher
PAUL NEAL AVERILL — Business Manager
H. LEE NORTH — Managing Editor
HAROLD P. BUERGE — Advertising Manager
CLAUDE R. WALKER — Production Manager

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NOTE: The Eccentric is pleased to publish brief contributed material providing it has news value; and suggestions are welcomed. Contributions are usually edited superficially so that they conform to general newspaper style. 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.

Men In The Service

HOME FROM OVERSEAS

MIAMI BEACH—S/Sgt. Charles C. Fletcher, 26, of Birmingham, Mich., has arrived at Army Air Forces Redistribution Station No. 2 in Miami Beach for reassignment processing after completing a tour of duty outside the continental United States. Sergeant Fletcher was overseas 32 months in the China-Burma-India theatre of operations, where he was a photographer. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph L. Fletcher, of Birmingham. His wife, Margaret, lives at 240 Park St., Birmingham.

* * *

Pfc. John W. Swain, Jr., 364 Baldwin, was recently promoted from the grade of private at Westover Field, Mass., where he is presently on duty.

* * *

S/Sgt. Bruce L. Pettypiece, 28, has arrived at Army Air Forces Redistribution Station No. 2 in Miami Beach for reassignment processing after completing a tour of duty outside the continental United States. S/Sgt. Pettypiece was an aircraft engine mechanic during three years in the southwest Pacific. Son of Mrs. May Pettypiece, of 171 E. Frank street, he entered the Army in March, 1941.

* * *

Pvt. Frank D. Mott, son of Mr. and Mrs. F. H. Mott, 788 Pilgrim, is now being examined by the AAF Training Command station medical and psychological unit to determine his qualifications as a pre-aviation cadet. Flying officer training as a pilot, bombardier or navigator will be given those who, upon successful completion of the processing he is undergoing at Keesler Field, Biloxi, Miss.

* * *

Pvt. Harry Lee, Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Lee, of Henrietta street, and Pvt. William Lemke, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Lemke, of Stanley street, graduates of Baldwin high school, have completed their basic training at Keesler Field, Miss. and taken all tests necessary, qualifying them for further training as cadets in the Army Air Force.

* * *

HE'S BUSY IN FRANCE

6TH ARMY GROUP, France—Playing a leading role in the organization of a vast network of defenses in the French Alps along the Franco-Italian frontier, an Engineer Combat Battalion of the 44th Anti-aircraft Artillery Brigade, part of Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers' 6th Army Group—is gaining a reputation as "the doughboys' right hand." One member of the organization is Pfc. Henry P. Borgman, R. D. 1, Birmingham, Mich.

* * *

WITH THE DIXIE DIVISION on Morotai (Special Release)—For excellent maintehance work in his year overseas the 31st Division ordnance unit, of which Corporal Vincent Gerow is a member, has been awarded the Meritorious Service Unit Plaque. Gerow's wife, Mary Louise, lives in Birmingham, Mich. His mother, Mrs. Bertha Gerow, lives at 3703 Arlington, Tampa, Fla.

* * *

AWARDED BRONZE STAR

Sgt. Thursby Pierce, son of Mr. and Mrs. Stewart J. Pierce, 1409 Starr Road, has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal, for battle honors in an official citation for photo reconnaissance in the South Pacific area. He is with the 36th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron A.A.F. Sgt. Pierce entered the army in 1942, having received his training at Fairchild Aviation School, Lowry Field, Denver, Colo. New York City, and Boca Raton Field, Florida, and left for overseas in Nov. 1944.

* * *

Robert L. Jessup and Robert Hawkins will leave for New York, March 9 to enter Midshipman School at Columbia University.

* * *

READY FOR WAR DUTY

SANTA ANA, Calif.—Technician, Fifth Grade, Roy T. Lewis, 23, son of Mr. and Mrs. Roydén K. Lewis, 1220 Cedar, Birmingham, is currently assigned to the AAF Redistribution Station No. 4 at Santa Ana Army Air Base, Lewis, who served overseas as a draftsman for the 11th Air Force, entered the service on July, 1942 and went overseas in January, 1943. He is entitled to wear one battle star for service in the Asiatic-Pacific theatre.

* * *

T/Sgt. Millard Plumstead, son of Mrs. Charles Plumstead, West Frank street, has returned to the country after having spent 21 months in the Aleutian Islands. After spending a furlough with his wife in California, he has been sent to Ft. Bliss, El Paso, Texas.

* * *

Pvt. Paul T. Benister, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Benister, 2280 Yorkshire road, and Pvt. Robert E. Old, son of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Old, 182345 Devonshire road, are at Keesler Field, Biloxi, Miss., taking Army Air Forces training processing.

* * *

GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL

Private Homer A. Ford, whose wife resides on route two, Birmingham, has just been awarded the Good Conduct medal. Pvt. Ford has been on duty in a general hospital in Northern France.

* * *

Pvt. Frank D. Mott, son of Mr. and Mrs. F. H. Mott, 788 Pilgrim, is now being examined by the AAF Training Command station medical and psychological unit to determine his qualifications as a pre-aviation cadet. Flying officer training as a pilot, bombardier or navigator will be given those who, upon successful completion of the processing he is undergoing at Keesler Field, Biloxi, Miss.

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* * *

HE'S BUSY IN FRANCE

6TH ARMY GROUP, France—Playing a leading role in the organization of a vast network of

Reclassified

Fredrick W. Cadwell, 1-A; Maurice S. Germain, 1-A*; Paul J. Mochel, 1-A; Fred M. Pierce, 1-A; Henry O. Biroth, 1-A; Alonzo Haimbaugh, 1-A; Elwyn E. Riechen, 1-A; Frank Patrello, 1-A; George F. Byzewski, 1-A.

Howard A. Ruperd, 1-A; Thomas H. Wilson, 1-A; Nelson R. Kitson, 1-A; William R. Kreger, 1-A; Harold L. Worthington, 1-A; Chester B. Bulak, 1-A; Richard A. Mixer, 1-A; Thomas A. Ritter, 1-A; James A. Brandt, 1-A; Milford J. Walk, 1-A; Robert R. Williams, 1-C Ind.

Harold E. Mitchell, 1-C Ind.; Eugene Everingham, 1-C Ind.; Ward E. Hardy, 1-C Ind.; Norman K. Schwallie, 1-C Ind.; George W. Campus, 2-A; Arthur G. Rippey, Jr., 2-A; Aksel Kristensen, 2-B.

Elliott Dean, 2-B; Johnnie Braggs, 2-BF; John O. McKimmy, 2-C; Gaylor W. Forman, 2-C; Leo Golinski, 4-A; Donald E. Belden, 4-A; Richard R. Muttersbaugh, 4-E.

"SS Reg. 622-22-2.

Happenings of Long Ago

50 YEARS AGO
Feb. 28, 1895

"Correspondenee goes over this week."

"An interesting lot of educational news crowded out this week."

"If detectives would find fewer clews and catch more criminals they would stand better with the police."

"Mr. Mort Leggett and son Will H. Leggett, accompanied by Miss Kate, were guests of J. A. Bigelow and family over Sunday."

"Mr. J. A. O'Riley, of Pontiac, has secured the contract for building the St. James Protestant Episcopal church of this village."

"Comedian Gentry, who killed his sweetheart the other day, must have had a longing to play the leading part in a tragedy."

"Hon. Mark Walter for years connected with the Pontiac Gazette Co., fell one day last week on the walk and was severely injured but is all o.k. now. Good."

"Printers are always giving gentle hints. Those employed on a western paper bought and presented to the editor a year's tuition at a writing school."

"The ladies of the Parker Sunday school will give a Parlor entertainment at the residence of Mrs A. B. Parker Wednesday evening, March 6. Refreshments 10 cents."

20 YEARS AGO
Feb. 27, 1925

"Up to Wednesday night of this week John Hanna, appointed by the village to secure releases on 17 feet of property fronting the west side of Woodward avenue between Lincoln avenue and a point where the Christian Science church stands, had made favorable progress."

"Birmingham fared better during 1924 than in any other year in its history; the net financial gain during the year up to and including January 1, 1925, including the sinking funds, amounts to the sum of $10,045.84. In other words the taxpayers of the village through their village commission lived economically during 1924."

"Condemnation proceedings to acquire the property embraced in the block bounded by Martin, Merrill, Chester and Bates streets will be started this week, according to directions which the village commission gave Frank I. Doty, attorney, Wednesday night. Mr. Doty will start the action in the local justice court within the next two weeks, he said."

"The William T. Barbours, originally of "Briarbank," Bloomfield Hills, and their son, Thomas, left their winter apartment in Detroit last week for about a month in the West Indies. Shortly after their return they will open their Hills home for the summer."

5 YEARS AGO
Feb. 29, 1940

"The rector and vestry of Christ Church Cranbrook, Bloomfield Hills, announce the call of the Rev. William Conrad Hamm to the position of assistant minister. Mr. Hamm will fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of the Rev. Robert W. Woodroofe, Jr., who resigned on Jan. 23 to assume his duties as assistant minister in St. Bartholomew's Church, New York City."

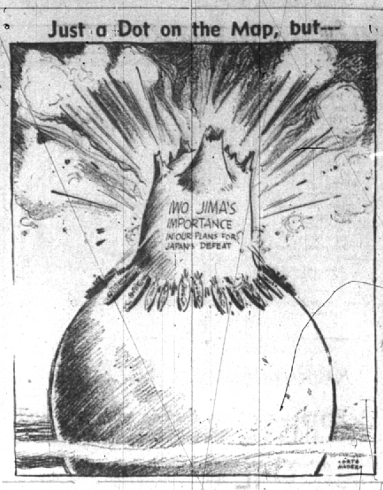
"Plans for the 1940 campaign for the Community House Fund got under way Monday night with the announcement that H. Ross Mack, of 1160 Lake Park drive, had accepted the chairmanship of the general committee."

"An appeal to dog-owners of Birmingham to restrain their pets from roaming at large throughout the City was made Wednesday by Police Chief John P. Hackett."

"Ways and means of trimming still further a reduced budget for Birmingham schools were sought by the Board of Education Tuesday night, when it was shown that a saving of $13,458.54 would be necessary if the budget is to remain in the black for the school year."

"The public school organization code, which has been before the Board of Education for many months, was finally passed Tuesday night by unanimous vote. The code puts into writing the duties of the Board,, the superintendent, the business manager, the administrative assistants, the principals and the custodians."

Just a Dot on the Map, but—



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