

Easier Civic Arithmetic

On this page last week in the "People's Column" appeared a letter written by Ernest R. Baldwin, 592 Lakeside, in which Mr. Baldwin set forth the idea that Birmingham taxpayers should be given a more intelligible form of the city's annually proposed budget.

Declaring that the taxpayer is a stockholder in the community business operated under the name of the City of Birmingham, he suggested that "to enable the layman to easily understand how the tax dollars are being expended and to differentiate between the varied type of expenditures, a statement or balance sheet, such as given stockholders in business corporations, should be furnished each taxpayer."

Mr. Baldwin's suggestion is one to which we believe city officials should give considerable thought. Of course, Birmingham taxpayers can, and they are always encouraged, to attend the annual budget hearings conducted by the city commission. Yet, as has been evidenced for many years, only a few taxpayers turn up at the meetings.

It cannot be said that they have no interest in how much money the city needs and plans on spending for the next fiscal year. On the other hand, it might be reasonable to assume that the taxpayers who didn't attend felt they couldn't understand nor interpret the formal method of budget presentation.

If commissioners can make the budget more easily understood by employing some such procedure as outlined by Mr. Baldwin, we believe it should be given their endorsement.

"Confidential" "Confidential"

sources," quoted in a French newspaper, assert that the Russians exploded a small atomic bomb deep in Siberia on June 15th.

The trouble with "confidential sources" is that no one is able to determine when rumor and reports become confused with facts.

The claws of the Russian bear are being sharpened for the sole purpose of tearing democracy limb from limb. This is being clearly shown as Russia's leading diplomats continue their verbal attacks upon the United States. It behoves the American Eagle to keep its talons poised for the defense of the good old U.S.A.

People can be divided into two classes: (a) those who try to treat others justly and (b) those who wait for others to treat them justly.

A good lawyer advises his clients to stay out of lawsuits.

Never base your judgment upon what people voluntarily tell you.

Happenings of Long Ago

50 YEARS AGO
November 26, 1897

The school board recently had an expert inspect the boiler in the school house to report that it is in perfect condition. While the report was being made, the board was given valuable hints on how to save fuel, which will be put into effect at once.

The Eccentric office is now heated by hot water radiator and the whole force takes turns sitting on the coil.

J. H. Myers' toasts a challenge at local farmers, to beat him at growing corn. Manager of the big Watkins farm, he planted 35 acres last spring, and has reported a harvest of 3,737 bushels of corn.

FOR RENT—Large house, 14 rooms, on Woodward avenue. Call

Luck was with Birmingham Wednesday, when for four hours

or wood burning furnace. Plenty of closet space, bathroom, large lawn, garden and barn. Inquire Quick estate for this \$20 a month bargain.

From a friend in Ohio comes the first edition of a newspaper in Alliance. In the place one looks for the name is printed "The Ohio newspaper"—will be named later.

A mothers meeting was held at the school house last week, when mothers and teachers sat down to talk over their mutual problems, and figure out the best way to handle the many types of children which are drawn together daily for lessons.

20 YEARS AGO
November 23, 1927

Fixtures and equipment will be moved into the new library on or about Dec. 1, with the opening ceremonies set for Dec. 10. The \$175,000 building will be opened to the public for inspection, with Mrs. Nancy B. Thomas as head librarian.

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From where I sit... by Joe Marsh

Ma Hoskins
Sneezed at Cats!

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For Simple Words

Addressing 3,000 delegates to the American Dietetic Association, Mrs. Aimee G. Cowing, of the Department of Agriculture, urged them in writing about meals, to translate technical concepts as well as technical language. She suggested that information on diet and nutrition be presented to the American public in language that the layman understands.

This is good advice, not only when one is writing about diets but when one writes about anything. The first essence of good writing, in our opinion, is that the words used should be simple and without the possibility of misunderstanding on the part of readers.

When one runs across a composition, whether a letter, editorial or article, which abounds in big words and technical terms, the chances are that few readers will understand what the author says and one may be privileged to doubt whether the writer thoroughly understands the subject.

Celebrities Live Longer

The other day we happened to look at the obituary column of a metropolitan newspaper, reporting the death of eleven individuals, including those of national or international reputation.

What surprised us was the advanced age of most of those who passed on. Seven of the group, including both men and women, were 74 years of age or older, and the average age of the group was more than 72 years.

We don't know exactly what this proves. It may be that it takes years for individuals to reach national or international prominence, but the figures seem to suggest that hard work does not always kill the worker. Moreover, there is just a hint that the way to long life is to lead through exceptional accomplishment.

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Cooking on the Front Burner

HOW ABOUT TRYING THIS ONE, HUH?



People's Column

November 20, 1947

I note in the "Royal Oak Daily Tribune" of November 11, various statements blaming the State Highway Department for the delay in the installation of a new and modern progressive system of signals on Woodward Avenue.

I have also noticed, from time to time, various similar articles which appeared in the newspapers of the area.

In view of the importance of the installation of a new and modern traffic signal system on Woodward Avenue due to the great volume of traffic using that highway, I deem it advisable to recount to you the facts from the inception of this program to date.

Evidently, when items have been given to the newspapers by the facts in the case. As a result of these various articles in the papers, the public, I believe, has become misinformed, and they and you are entitled to be presented with the full facts.

In 1945 I realized the importance of a study of the traffic situation on Woodward Avenue and consequently, the Planning and Traffic Division of this Department started a study and analysis of this situation. It was realized that the most free, unimpaired and complete study of traffic on Woodward Avenue that it was possible to accomplish would be of great benefit not only to the traveling public on this route but

THE ECCENTRIC'S Camera Corner

When it comes to backgrounds for pictures of people, there's no better background to use than the city. Careful posing and a low camera angle make this picture a clear and appealing one.

Background Business

NOSE of the garden hose. I thought I had a fine picture of a boy, but I developed the negative and I notice that I'd included an old, heaped-up trash can.

All of which goes to prove it's important to study your picture as it's framed in your camera's viewfinder. Look at the subject. Look behind the subject at the background. Then try a slight, different viewpoint and study the scene again. Often by changing your angle of view you can eliminate unwanted elements or improve composition of your picture.

A glance at today's illustration will show you just how much difference this can make. For one of the things that make today's shot a good one is the way in which the boy's head is pictured against the sky. You need only take a quick look to see that if the photographer had moved to his right, had shot down on his subject instead of from the boy's shoulder, he would have lost the contrast and the picture would have suffered.

I know exactly what he means, for I've made the same mistake myself. Not long ago I snapped an small son squating in the driveway of our home, peering at the

communities the privilege to order the equipment needed for this program. They, however, asked the State Department to handle this, realizing there would be a great delay in delivery and that the necessary equipment would not be delivered until the new standard equipment was ordered in December, 1946, and to date we have not been able to secure delivery on most of the equipment. It might be said here that all of the new equipment necessary for this project has been very critical and it just as well to chase as for a new automobile—all most impossible.

Other main items, such as electric underground cable and controllers for the system were ordered. The electric cable and all of the controllers were just delivered late in October, 1947. Frequent cancellations by the contractor involved in these previous orders may have shortened the waiting for delivery, but at least could not secure early delivery of these necessary items.

It was originally intended that for maximum progress the installation would be made by our own signal crew. However, we have a great deal of work scattered throughout the State which is more than our crew can accomplish within a short period of time. Therefore, to expedite the work of improvement of this signal control, the contractor was selected to do the work that can be done at this time. The only contract that can be done prior to the final delivery of all necessary equipment is the installation of new controllers and cable and the removal of the old equipment between the Eight and Twelve Mile Roads. This will not be as satisfactory as the first plan of the entire project, but it will be a great improvement, not only on the controls but on the reliability of the system in this section of highway. When the balance of new equipment is received, this can then be installed with the minimum of interference with the traveling public.

We request the continued cooperation of your city authorities and those of the other communities along the route between the Eight and Twelve Mile Roads to participate financially in such project. This was also covered at the above meeting on January 9, 1946, and the representatives of these three communities were to return to their respective cities to present this program to their governing bodies. Reluctance to participate was encountered and it was not until December 9, 1946, that we received the certified resolutions from the Ferndale and Royal Oak City Commissions, agreeing to their participation. Similar action by the City Commission of Pleasant Ridge was received until December 10, 1946.

The project of the establishment of the modern control system between the Eight Mile Road and the Twelve Mile Road was so as to permit the use of any of the equipment which would be satisfactory and reliable in the completion of this new signal system. After the final approval of this program by the Cities of Ferndale, Pleasant Ridge and Royal Oak, we have these

This Department has been doing everything possible throughout this long period to speed up the delivery of the equipment. We realize the importance of the traveling public as well as the convenience of the motorists. The earliest possible completion of this modern control system on one of the busiest traffic routes in the country will use every effort to complete this system at the earliest possible date.

CHARLES M. ZIEGLER
State Highway Commissioner

To the Editor: Nov. 21, 1947

How long is it since you, who are fortunate enough to live in Birmingham, took time out to look at your city through the eyes of a stranger?

As someone remarked, "There's a lot more to Birmingham than meets the eye, because when you look at it through the eyes of a stranger, you see only the business district, and that's not very imposing."

True, it is not, but it makes its own impression, nevertheless. It is clean, it is modern, it is friendly and courteous.

As compared to Detroit, it is not imposing, but it meets the needs of the community adequately, and what more can one ask? Sky-scrapers and Hollywood settings cannot replace the feeling one gets of genuine interest in you and your needs.

Birmingham, from the business point of view, has all the conveniences and few of the inconveniences of a big city.

But let's get out of the business district and look at the city itself. After all, only a few hours a day are spent in business, and so many more are devoted to the home and social life of the community.

What city have you ever visited has had nothing which you could not find in Birmingham? Birmingham is a city where you can find everything you need for the first time.

Look over its accommodations, its restaurants, its shopping centers. Go through it, room by room. Stop and look into the fireplaces there. Settle yourself in one of the comfortable chairs and let the feeling of utter peace go through you.

Look at the simple beauty and its dignity as though you were seeing it all for the first time, and just see if you don't feel a sense of pride which has not been yours for some time, simply because this is your town, a part of you, that is providing all this.

Go to your library, your church, your schools and see how they have to do, and pretend they are in some other city; you are visiting for the first time. Take a new perspective on them—and on life.

Walk your quiet, shaded streets, look at the simple, comfortable homes on either side of you, or the big, palatial ones. Look at the trees, the lawns, the spreading trees. The shrubs. Everything seems to have about it a quiet, dignified life.

Take a couple of hours some evening and walk around your town. How much more you see with tightly drawn curtains, as though those who lived within tried to shut themselves in and the world out.

You look on either side of you, towards the bright light, upon families sitting together with mutual enjoyments, books and music, or games and conversation. Walk past your Community House and hear the music pouring out into the night air. Walk past your

library and see the lights shining on polished floors, books and happy faces. Walk past your churches and listen to the deep swell of the organs and catch the varied gleam of their windows.

Walk back to where we started from, the business district, and look at your stores—agile with lights, the streets from the litter of torn papers and discarded scraps typical of the city.

Yes, we humbly suggest that, some week end, you who live in Birmingham devote one day and evening to wandering around your town, trying to see it as a stranger would see it before. You'll probably feel like starting right out to buy a house, until you realize that you're already one here!

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