## Let's Don't Jump the Gun

Under the "Peoples' Column" heading elsewhere on this Editorial Page today, is a letter to the editor from Frank W. Rising, 1020 Brookwood court. In his communication, Mr. Rising criticizes The Eccentric, not for printing the current civic questionnaire, but rather for having questions he believes will encourage "narrow, 'neighborhood' thinking".

No doubt there may be others in the city who endorse Mr. Rising's views, and because of that fact, have failed to return an answered questionnaire to us. Therefore, The Eccentric welcomes Mr. Rising's letter as an opportunity not only to explain why the questionnaire was constructed as it was, but also to inject a few more ideas we have on this important matter of city planning.

Mr. Rising declares this specific questionnaire results from "lack of imagination and foresight". To the contrary, Mr. Rising, we believe this questionnaire shows considerable "imagination and foresight" when applied to Birmingham. The Eccentric, in the past, has printed other questionnaires regarding city planning. Special articles have been written on the various planning phases and problems that the city faces. Few persons had taken the trouble to reply to previous questionnaires, or evidenced any new interest because of the articles.

We believe we know the answer now —it was simply because previous questionnaires and articles WERE TOO GENERAL IN NATURE. People did not take the time, they were not interested in, matters which were too remote, which were outside their neighborhoods. Planning was new to them; they didn't understand what it was all about. How, then, could they be expected to participate in an active program undertaken by only a relatively few individuals, most of whom were themselves plan commissioners?

City Plan Commissioner Thomas R. Navin, at the most recent meeting of the group, himself suggested to fellow planners: "I believe we should take a group tour of Birmingham and carefully look it over. You know, most of us here in town really see only a very small part of the city in our daily journeying back and forth from our jobs. Seldom do we view much more."

That opinion, we believe, substantiates our own: do the people in the northeast section of Birmingham, for example, honestly know much about what the southwest section looks like, or needs? Or vice versa? But what is needed or wanted (or not wanted) in the northeast section, the northeast residents are in an excellent position to know. They live with it. The same applies to the southwest area residents, as well as other specific sections of the city.

The Eccentric is most gratified with the results of the current questionnaire. More and more are coming in every day. They're giving specific answers to problems and needs of the various neighborhoods. Mr. Rising might be interested to know that as yet no pressure groups "who like holes in the street" have made themselves evident. In fact, running through the questionnaires shows that a wide majority are in favor of concrete or blacktopped streets.

City planning is a new adventure. Few citizens honestly know what it is all about. They can understand the mechanics of city planning only if they participate in it. That is why The Eccentric believes the city plan commission could not go wrong in appointing neighborhood planning commissions, one for each neighborhood. Neighborhood committees on neighborhood recreation, neighborhood streets, neighborhood sewers and water mains, etc., should be set up. Their findings should go to over-all city plan commission sub-committees on city recreation, city streets, city sewers and water mains. On these city planning subcommittees would be neighborhood representatives.

At the top, the city plan commission itself should correlate, sift and analyze these group reports and fit them into a working program for the city.

Only by active participation in city planning can the public become educated on the "why and how" of planning. The public will also feel it has an active part in deciding what the community is to be. Once interest has been aroused, first by inspection of their neighborhoods, it is logical to assume that this interest can be expanded to city-at-large problems. And when this latter point is reached, it should be continuously maintained.

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The U. S. Army reports that it sent a balloon up 26½ miles. That is slightly farther from earth than the pollsters got when they prophesied in advance the recent election results.

## A Thanksgiving Day Challenge

Thanksgiving was constituted by a group of people who came to America in order that they might have freedom of thought and freedom of religion and spirit. They set aside a day, after many trials and tribulations, for giving thanks for the blessings which the new world had bestowed upon them, for the fruitfulness of their crops and especially for this new-found liberty which they themselves had worked for and made come true.

Today, are we really thankful for what we have or do we merely accept it as our due? Are we keeping in mind the spirit and ideal behind Thursday, Nov. 25? Have we a right to be grateful, have we done our share?

This day which has been designated for humility and meditation has become, in 1948, a challenge to us all. And as we sit around our tables tomorrow surrounded by our families, it might be a test of our heritage to ask ourselves some questions.

Are our children free from prejudice as our ancestors decreed by their very actions, their very struggle to find this country of ours and to make themselves free from dominating prejudice which was prevalent in Europe? Are we ourselves tolerant people? Are our homes embued with the spirit of cooperation, the working-together, neighborly spirit which was so inherent in those pioneers of Plymouth Rock and without which they would not have survived?

Is tomorrow merely a day of well-supplied tables or is it still a symbol to us that sincere labor centuries ago made all this possible and that sincere and honest labor centuries to come must keep it this way?

If we have not lost sight of God, of the Constitution of the United States "of the people, by the people, and for the people", if we have not lost sight of our neighbors and most of all, if we have not lost sight of our own debts and conscience, then and only then, do we know what true Thanksgiving is.

## Fooling People

You currently read that Congress may increase old age assistance to millions of our people. It is suggested that the present payroll tax of one per cent each on employer and employee be increased to two per cent.

In the federal Social Security account there now remains $10,300,000,000 of unpaid balance, invested in federal bonds; the actual money paid in, however, has been spent for other governmental purposes, so it isn't available for the purpose for which it was collected. So Congress now considers a higher tax —a fictitious device to fool the people. Why not get increased old age funds from the more than ten billion dollar balance, and then levy some other tax to carry on other government functions? The answer to such a question is easy: Why do so many politicians refuse to act like statesmen?

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An eastern expert states that "only dumb girls stake their all on beauty." Few will argue with the logic of that statement—as the divorce records prove. By the same token, "only foolish men stake their all on glibness and the air of sophistication." Successful marriage requires more than outward looks to bring it about . . . there is more than veneer to any lasting article.

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"One reason why the White House is falling down, and in urgent need of repair, is that too many human termites have inhabited or been entertained in it," stated Senard Fundaments, local philosopher, this week.

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The reason you sometimes hear more "news" on the street corner that you see in your newspaper is because the newspaper has to stand behind what it prints for all people to read.

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Even the Russians, we suppose, must be right some of the time—but they certainly go to some great lengths to keep it concealed.


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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.


## The Water Hog!

## Between $4 and $5 Million Is Spent by Washington Lobbyists So Far This Yr.

(Special Story From Our Washington Bureau)

WASHINGTON—Lobbies have spent over $4 million to influence legislation this year, according to the expenditures reports they made to Congress. With the reports of several big spenders not yet in, the total may climb over the $5 million mark.

Highest spender so far this year is the National Physicians Committee for the Extension of Medical Service, which has spent $353,990. It filed its report under protest, asserting it did not lobby.

A strong advocate of more labor restrictions and further tax reductions, The Committee for Constitutional Government, Inc., holds the second spot with total expenses of $343,140.

**Margarine Tax Battle**

The bitter and unsuccessful battle to repeal margarine taxes last session of Congress is reflected in the expenses of the National Association of Margarine Manufacturers and the National Cooperative Milk Producers Federation and Butter Associates. They spent, respectively, $141,995 and $169,996.

Another well financed lobby was the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons. It spent $316,824.

Here are some other large spenders: The National Association of Electric Companies, $228,089 against public power projects; National Association of Home Builders, $203,014, against public housing; National Small Business Men's Association, $185,862, for tax reduction and retention of the Taft-Hartley Act; the Association of American Railroads, $100,320 for the Bulwinkle Rail Bill exempting carriers from anti-trust prosecution for rate-making agreements.

At least three large spenders, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Transportation Association of America, and the Committee for the Marshall Plan to Aid European Recovery, have not yet made their nine months report. Each (excepting the NA) had expenses over the $100,000 mark at the half year.

Manufacturers, labor, farm and Chamber of Commerce groups all use a formula pro-rating their lobbying expense against total expense so they appear further down the government list. NAM uses a formula that figures lobbying expenses at 1.9% of their total.

The Pacific Coast shipping is creeping into reports: the Waterfront Employers Association of San Francisco lists expenditures of $57,504, and the National Federation of American Shipping, Inc. states that the Employers Association contributed $4,000 for legislative work on overtime basis.

**Different Interpretations**

Lobby expenditures may be much higher than $4 to $5 million. Only 170 organizations reported for the nine month period. Over 270 reported at the half year mark, but nearly four times that many have registered with the government.

Various pressure groups interpret the Lobby Act of Congress differently. Some file expenses, while others file budgets listing expenditures they think applies to legislative activities. Others file only expenses related to lobbying.

Some groups argue they need not file any report unless their principal purpose is influencing legislation. The Justice Department, however, says "principal" means all who have substantial legislative interests. The Department has cracked down on violators recently by placing its lobby section in the Criminal Division. It has secured two indictments for violations of the Act.

## THE ECCENTRIC'S Camera Corner

Focus is critical for close-ups. A good idea is to pace off distances less than 15 feet, measuring distances of 6 feet or less with a tape.

### Proper Focus

DESPITE the fact that proper focus is an essential of good pictures, many a snapshooter fails to focus carefully for each shot. As a result his pictures are fuzzy and unsuited for enlargement even though passable contact prints may be made from the negatives.

Of course, where fixed-focus cameras are used, focus presents no problem. Box cameras, for example, are made to picture any subject six feet or more from the camera. Only when working at close range does the picture-taker need to check his distance, lest he shoot too close to his subject.

Similarly, problems of focus are lessened with cameras having automatic focusing devices. Range finders, coupled with the camera lens, provide a positive focus. So does the ground glass used with press, view, or reflex cameras.

But, with thousands of cameras it is up to the picture-taker to estimate the camera-to-subject distance and focus for this distance by adjusting a focusing ring graduated in feet. Here's where trouble starts. For the untrained eye can rarely judge distance accurately.

As a result the wise picture-taker doesn't trust to judgment. This is particularly true when shooting from 15 feet or less. Because of the "depth of field" of lenses—which was explained here several months back—distances 20 feet or greater may be estimated safely. But when focusing on subjects 6 to 15 feet from the camera, it's a good stunt to pace off the distance before you set your focus, or use a small, pocket range finder calibrated in feet to provide the camera-to-subject distance for setting the focusing ring on the camera.

—John van Guilder

## Happenings of Long Ago

### FIFTY YEARS AGO
**November 25, 1898**

The Editor has received a most pleasant letter from Mr. and Mrs. Alex Peasley, former residents of this fair village now making their home in Lind, Wash. They have asked that we use these columns to extend their best wishes and the season's greetings to all their old neighbors.

* * *

The apple "dryer" at Farmington was recently evaporated by fire.

* * *

The children crowded into our primary room would like more air.

* * *

The parties that have been in the habit of violating the law by breaking into a vacant house here in town and smashing things generally on the premises, had better cease it. They are known, and will be made very unhappy if they try it again.

* * *

It has been our observation that marriages may have been made in heaven in the days of our forefathers, but nowadays they are mostly made by doting mothers and newspaper advertisements.

### TWENTY YEARS AGO
**November 28, 1928**

Thirty representatives of the Birmingham Metropolitan club will "hustle" Eccentrics Saturday, Dec. 8. The annual sale will be to raise funds for needy families. Uniformed delegates from the police and fire departments will be in the business districts, while others will canvass residential areas.

* * *

Fire of undetermined origin completely destroyed the home of Walter Grimm shortly before one o'clock this morning. The Clawson fire department was called in to assist the local department, but even two companies were unable to cope with the blaze.

* * *

Miss Evangeline Purcell, history teacher at Baldwin high school gave an unusual and interesting address before the Rotary club Monday noon, tracing the motives behind the departure of the early Pilgrims of England to America. She gave a complete verbal word picture of the events which caused their move and the conditions under which they lived, here.

* * *

Arlie Everts, Berkley and Bennie Lovall, Pontiac, are in serious condition in St. Joseph Mercy Hospital. The men were injured Saturday afternoon when the car in which they were riding skidded into the path of a bus.

* * *

The Community House committee on needy families has announced that 56 baskets of food and clothing will be presented here for Thanksgiving. Another 15 will receive food baskets from the Exchange club, while the children of the Bloomfield Hills school will furnish dinners for eight additional families, through donations collected in the various rooms.

### FIVE YEARS AGO
**November 24, 1943**

Police are meeting opposition from the owners of local homes which were wrecked here last week. Damage estimated at from $1000 to $1500 was done by six boys from Royal Oak. After police had arrested the youths, the owners refused to sign complaints, and the case was dropped.

* * *

The BIG game will start at 10:30 Thursday, and everyone is wondering if the tide will turn in favor of Birmingham after 10 years. A whole decade has passed since the Maples successfully battled the Royal Oak boys, and they are out for victory this year.

* * *

The Birmingham Rifle Club has ended its first season, and according to club officers, it has been highly successful. The 74 enrolled members have shown a deep interest in the proper handling of fire arms, and have developed some excellent marksmen.

* * *

Plans for her wedding this Saturday by Dorothy Jane Ribolin have been rudely treated by the U. S. Army, which apparently has little or no romance in its soul. Cpl. John Elder Brown, stationed at a distance camp has just wired home that all leaves at his camp have been cancelled.

* * *

Booths are being established in several local stores, under the direction of Piety Hill Chapter, DAR, to finish the fund drive here for plasma equipment. The equipment will consist of a mobile unit, to enable the handling of large groups of blood donors in remote sections.

## People's Column

To the Editor:

In my opinion, the enclosed questionnaire on neighborhood problems which The Eccentric has been running for the past two weeks displays the same lack of imagination and foresight which has for so long made civic progress in Birmingham a halting fits-and-starts affair.

You will note that the questionnaire is designed in considerable part to encourage narrow, "neighborhood" thinking. Nowhere is the respondent encouraged to take an interest in, or express an opinion on, other streets, lights, sewer, etc., than those in his immediate vicinity.

The result may very well be that you will receive from the groups who "prefer holes in the street" a strong statistical showing for the status quo. It has happened many times in the past, and it can happen again.

My own questionnaire is misleading; on reading it you will find that I have very few suggestions about improving my own neighborhood. Yet I am one of the several hundred who tried in vain for years to get a nearby trafficway paved.

I earnestly suggest that you ponder this question, and redesign your questionnaire to promote city-wide interests rather than neighborhood concepts.

FRANK W. RISING
1020 Brookwood Court

(Mr. Rising raises several well-taken points in his letter, which is discussed today in the editorial columns elsewhere on this page. —ED)

## THE POCKETBOOK OF KNOWLEDGE

By PILGRIM

### We Heard It Said By:

A Royal Oak woman, who for personal reasons, asks that her name be withheld: "I think the Birmingham bicycle safety program is wonderful. Just two years ago my grandson was killed while riding his bike in a small Ohio village. A great deal of it, we must admit, was his carelessness, but no one had shown him how dangerous these things can be. Had he known he might have been more careful and be alive today. Every parent in Birmingham should support the police and the schools in everything they do to impress the important of safety on the young sters and to enforce traffic laws."

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