

### Recreation Comment

(Continued from Page One)

into agreements which prevent certain other people from living in the community.

WE HAVE MANY churches in Birmingham, all of which, I am sure, advocate the brotherhood of man. But to the listener, it must seem, if we can judge by actions, brotherhood of men just like us. All of this in face of the fact that we now know that our own welfare is completely involved in the welfare of all men everywhere.

Birmingham is not a typical community, and probably does not have as acute a youth problem as some others. We are more favorably economically than the average. We do not have industries. More of our youth go to college than would be true of a typical community. This last fact does not prove

that we are more intelligent necessarily, although this may be the case. Stronger have been many which reveal the fact that a supply of money is a more potent factor than is a supply of brains. But, of course, I like to think we have both.

BIRMINGHAM WILL, I believe, become more typical than it has been during the next few years. The house-building which is going on will bring many people to our town, and some of these will be different from us.

Although we do not have any important industries within our city limits, plants are being erected just outside, and many of the people who work there will live in Birmingham.

The ideas which follow have to do with the youth problem in general, and I hope they will be useful to the degree that they apply. First, the circumstances under which youth must live and grow are the complete responsibility of adults. Youth has to grow up under the conditions which they find.

They do not ask to be born, and they cannot make their own conditions. So if some of them grow in directions which we deplore, we can look to the circumstances which we have provided.

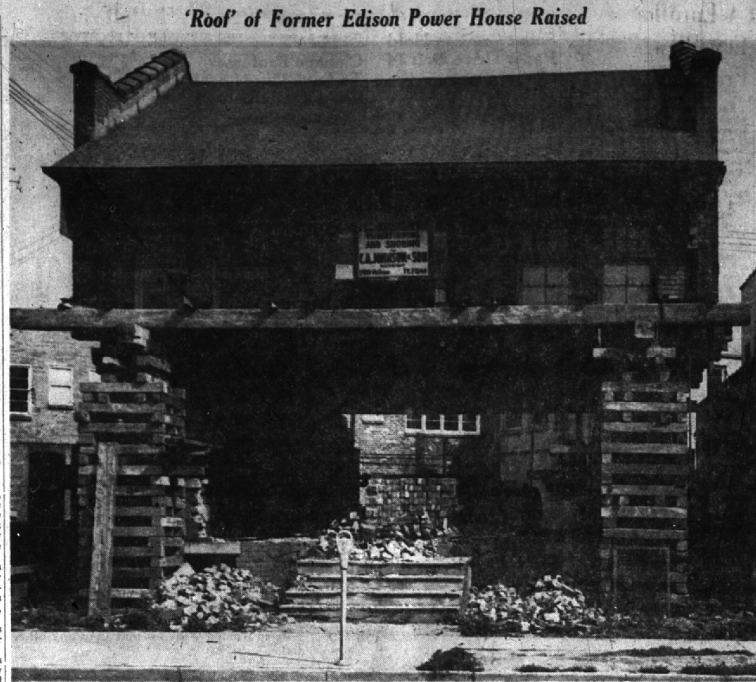
DEMOCRACY, governmentally, quite properly operates on a basis of pressure groups. The strongest and most closely knit groups are apt to get what they want. Youth is not and cannot be a pressure group.

Therefore, what good things they secure have to be gained by adults. We need a big and powerful pressure group which wants the good life for boys and girls, especially the older youth.

What are some of the things which we must seek to secure for them? The first thing we think of is good recreation. That is probably why the Youth Council failed—that one first.

Good recreation is essential to youth, to be sure, but it is not the central problem. Youth do not want to play all the time, even though some play is necessary.

THEY WANT to have an honest, bona fide place in our society, where they can carry some of the responsibility, and where they can



An unusual engineering project has been under way for the past few weeks on the former Edison Co. power house at 131 Pierce, near Maple. The brick and stone structure was cut in half laterally and the heavy upper portion raised six and one-half feet to make a two-story building. Over 1200 short, heavy

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(Dick Shirk Photo)

reasons in contradiction to all known scientific research. WE HAVE A shameful record of the exploitation of children in sweat shops, best fields and cherry orchards. We use them as means to our ends, rather than as ends in themselves. When we get into war, they have to get us out of it on the battlefield and in our factories.

For 20 years a child labor amendment has been before the American people which would stop some practices in some of our so-called "backwater" states. It has never received the approval of the required number of states. Michigan is one of the "forward" states which has never approved it.

In Michigan we have thousands of children of migrant families, brought in to the state to work in our fields and orchards, for which we provide no schooling and wretched housing. These children are often kept in quarters which, if used for our pigs and cattle would bring the law down on us.

WE ALLOW delinquents to develop in ever-increasing numbers. We do not need to have any. A delinquent is a product of the life he has been forced to live. The number of delinquents in any given state is a measure of adult neglect in that state.

Having provided the climate for the production of delinquents, we fail to provide decent places for them. Many of our detention homes and so-called correctional institutions are an abomination.

Further, little children whose only crime is being without parents who can take care of them are kept in these places. These places are often manned by cheap, ignorant help, who know no techniques above the level of the lash and the club.

These institutions turn out not to be "correctional," but schools of crime, where young people's inimical attitudes toward a heedless society are solidified, and where new and better ways of beating that society are learned.

WE HOLD the outmoded notion that any youth that is worth his salt will make his own way, and not only fail to help him but actually put stumbling blocks in his way.

Not all of these charges apply to Birmingham specifically, but when these things happen to youth anywhere, we must share the guilt. I believe we do these things because of a distorted sense of values.

We simply do not seem to spend what it would cost to give youth the opportunities implied when we bring them into life.



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have a genuine feeling of belonging. They want to feel essential to the enterprise, with the feeling that our city would not be as good as it is if they did not do their part.

They want a place in our community where they are important and which is free from all too common adult condescension. If every youth is to have a real place in our community, it will have to be in school, in a job, or in college. This will call for close school-community collaboration.

It will require a system of youth accounting and guidance, so that every young person will be known to someone, and someone will have the responsibility of seeing that the place is found.

AS IT IS NOW, nationally, thousands and probably millions of our youth are leaving school and completely dropping out of sight. Nobody knows what they are doing. We know they are not working because the labor laws usually prohibit it. They are on the loose, and many of them, feeling unwanted, indulge in antisocial activities.

The curriculums of our schools need to be revised so that they will be more meaningful to youth, to the end that more youth will voluntarily stay in school.

Some communities are experimenting with the 13th and 14th years, attempting to provide not just the first two years of college.

but activities from which all youth can profit. It would be better yet if our schools could be so organized that youth could profitably attend until they merge with the community in useful employment, or were ready for college. This would mean the elimination of our present set time when all must terminate their schooling.

FAILURE OF THE schools to modify their offerings so that all youth will want to attend is of course partly the fault of school people. But not entirely so. Most of the fault lies with the parents, who worship the educational trappings of the nineteenth century, and insist that school personnel to make their programs more functional. After all, school people work for the public, and cannot offer a program much different from the one demanded by the public.

Many Michigan communities are trying to modify their offerings and help with the youth problem by operating camps to which young people go as a regular part of school. In our immediate vicinity, Ann Arbor, Dearborn and Highland Park come to my mind, although there are many others. These camps are usually connected with the state department of conservation, and the young people work at useful tasks in conservation.

THEY LEARN more importantly, to live together democratically; to take responsibility for their own government; to associate with the opposite sex cooperatively; and to get next to the soil from which they sprang.

Some of these school districts, having seen the beneficial effects of the operation, are hoping to extend it so that any youth for which no other functional place is found could go to camp and enjoy useful work.

Most communities need a committee of business men who are potential employers who could survey the total employment situation and see to it that a place is found for every youth in the community. These men should see themselves as educators—giving a part in the total development of our youth.

They might concern themselves with extending the work-study program to include all who could profit by it.

IF A COMMITTEE got to the point where every local youth had a place in school or job, its task would be only half done. It would need then to see how it could be helpful to other communities.

None of us can live to ourselves alone. If youth in other places suffer, we are affected. It is to feel that the condition of youth everywhere is our concern, we have not fully met the problem.

Entirely apart from idealism, which should be our basic motivation, criminals spawned in other places do not stay where they start. They become our risk and our economic problems. Conditions which produce insanity anywhere cannot be considered none of our business.

freedom to teach the way they cannot be supported on any other basis than those of witchcraft and voodooism. Certain deeds are held up as uses in the past, and now to be good for purely mystical

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