

Who Said They Can't Get Together?

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Why Voters Turned Down New Fire Hall

"Just why," asks an old Birmingham resident this week, "should the voters of this community turn down a bond issue for the building of a new fire hall, when they repeatedly have approved other public expenditures in the past? Especially when we recall that of all our city services, the fire department probably stands out as the most efficient, least extravagant."

Well, the gentleman poses a question, doesn't he? Have you, Dear Reader, figured out just why, on April 7, the \$350,000 bond issue for the proposed new east side fire hall lost by 69 votes?

It seems to us that several reasons lie behind the defeat of the bond issue. FIRST, THERE IS THE traditional resistance of human beings to extra taxes being levied against them. Normally, most people are agreeable to the support of community needs, with attendant expenses.

But, today, with the terrific demands of the state and federal governments on the public purse, people are more tax-conscious than ever, more unwilling voluntarily to assume more taxation.

So, since local government is close to them, more controllable by them, they manifest their attitudes more easily on local governmental issues. It is easy, then, to oppose local tax levies. That's what happened April 7 and helped to defeat the fire hall bond issue.

(In case you say: "Yes, but then why did the voters, just a week before, approve the 3 1/2 mill tax for the public schools?") The answer to that, of course, lies in the fact that people are more responsive to school needs than to city needs. They believe that education means more to the home than the less colorful services given by the city.)

ANOTHER, AND WE THINK very important reason why the voters did not approve the fire hall bond issue is, to put it simply and bluntly, they have lost considerable confidence in the ability of the City Hall economically and efficiently to plan some of the physical expansion needs of Birmingham. For example, there has been the West Maple bridge project mess.

First, the city asked for a bond issue of \$50,000, and most local people believed when they approved it that they were paying for the whole completed bridge and street improvement.

Time goes on, the bridge is built, and then the city asks for \$99,000 in the form of a bond issue to complete the job. This second bond issue, though it carried, ruffled plenty of local taxpayers.

ON TOP OF THIS second bond issue, the city gets itself into a lawsuit over extending a thoroughfare through the triangular city park at Southfield and West Maple . . . and that brings about further criticism of the City Hall by the voters.

Too, there are other local improvements started by city officials, such as sewer and road improvement projects where additional special assessments were levied. These additional levies, naturally, antagonized many local taxpayers who again ask: "Doesn't the City Hall know what it is doing when it starts a project?" This critical state of mind played its important part in defeating the fire hall bond issue April 7.

PERHAPS THIS DEFEAT, (one of the very few such in the history of Birmingham) will have a beneficial effect upon the officials responsible for the con-

duct of the city's affairs. It should, and we hope it does.

In the meantime, the problem of adequate fire facilities for Birmingham still exists. No doubt it will be presented again to the voters—indeed, it will have to be, if local fire insurance rates are to be kept where they now are, and if local people expect (which they do) a maximum of fire prevention services in their community.

From Our Point of View

• Again, as always at this time o' year, we join millions of Americans who say: "Hail to baseball!" From the day he can hold a little bat, or throw a ball, American kids generally become interested in this great game; and a love of it remains until the Big Empire calls the last strike. Indeed, how splendid are practically all games of sport for the spirit and body of mankind.

• We have seen Senator Kerr, the Oklahoma oil baron, on TV several times and he impresses us as the kind of Sunday school superintendent who, during the rest of the week, worships Mammon. Indeed, he spouts like a ten-thousand-barrel-per-day well . . . gas, that is. And now he wants to follow Harry S. Truman into the White House! Well, we aren't going to worry too much over his chances of making it.

• You may say what you like about the modern politician, but what does that get you? Talk without action is just talk!

• Perhaps one of the best current investments American taxpayers make these days is when Congress appropriates a sum of money with which to carry on an investigation. This is not to say that all investigations bring in adequate harvest; but enough of them do to alarm some, scare many, and now and then put some evildoers in jail. Without investigations, imagine how bad affairs might get!

• The word "billion" for many generations in this nation was used exclusively in astronomical circles. It is recalled that it took the combined efforts of New and Fair Dealers to popularize this word in commonplace usage.

So They Say . . .

Juan Peron, President of Argentina: "Empires may continue to exist only when they are capable of winning (wars) by themselves."

Dr. H. S. Maverson, chairman, Department of Physiology, Tulane University: "Man was never meant to stand on two legs."

The Birmingham Eccentric

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How to get out the vote, whether it be for a local, state or national election, has been discussed by many groups and organizations. No one has yet come up with a successful answer. It occurs to me that perhaps the real reason why people stay away from the polls is because these non-voters have nothing they consider attractive enough to lure them into casting a ballot. They are apparently have given up the idea of voting because they no longer feel it is a civic and patriotic obligation. Therefore, something else must be substituted for this civic consciousness and patriotism. And in these days and times, perhaps the lure they need is money. IT IS NOT good, honest Americans to think of having to pay money to vote and thus exercise and keep their democratic free-



Happenings of Long Ago

Bits of News Gleaned from Old Files of The Eccentric—The Items That Make Up The Mosaic of the Birmingham of Today.

50 YEARS AGO April 18, 1902 All old soldiers living in Birmingham and environs are invited to meet with the Rev. M. H. Bartram at the M. E. Church to make plans for the proper Memorial Day honors to be paid their fallen comrades and others who have died in the defense of their country.

Some careless and ungrateful customer borrowed the editor's ten-foot step ladder nearly a year ago and has not yet seen fit to bring it back. Say, Mr. Man, the editor has to clean some cave or frough and wash some windows—would you please bring it back?

Here is a chance for some talented boys and girls to take lessons in local culture in Birmingham. Mrs. Carrie Brown in Birmingham, a very nice voice, carefully cultivated and will share her knowledge and experience with our young people for a very nominal sum.

Neil Blumberg, who has had a good lot of experience in the ice cream business is going to put it to good use this summer by operating a soda fountain in Featherstone's restaurant.

Centre spring does not seem to catch on in any great hurry this year at all—at all much to the sorrow of numerous cool buns in this vicinity.

20 YEARS AGO April 21, 1932 Perry A. Vaughn, township supervisor, is issuing an appeal for vacant land to be used by area residents for garages. He said several persons had registered with the township for gardens and all available plots had been assigned.

Under the sponsorship of the Birmingham Exchange club a free dental clinic for school children was held in Dr. J. F. Hollister's office Saturday. Examinations and treatment will continue by private dentists as long as the need remains.

HORSE SENSE AND NONSENSE

Big Hearted Never having been a hobo we are unable to vouch for the authenticity of the common belief that hobo camps leave "signs on houses. Signs that are easily read by fellow-tramps, who know of whether the home harbors an undesirable dog or whether the social of the house is generous with lunches and old clothing. If there is such a system, and it extends to organizations, the City of Birmingham should have a pretty excellent marking system. Now we are not referring to organizations seeking relief for unfortunates as being in the hobo classification, but we are calling Birmingham a pretty big hearted town.

THINK BACK over the past few months. How many calls have come to this community to share what it has with those who are in need?

There were blood banks. Red Cross mobile units came into Birmingham and the response of our town won words of praise from county officials. There was a one-hour drive for the Red Cross, when Birmingham opened their hearts and purses quite generously.

At Christmas several churches gave to the needy. Some of the more fortunate than ours might also enjoy the thrill of Christmas toys, warm clothes and the Torch Drive topped it all off, gathering funds to support the activities of many welfare and recreational groups throughout the area.

CURRENTLY, Birmingham is sharing the financial support of the new hospital drive and the annual solicitation of the American Red Cross. It is giving to the crippled children of the county through the Easter seals and Easter lilies. It is supporting the

The freer the ladder the more the man. All must be signed, but signatures will be kept confidential except requests. Letters must be limited to 500 words.

To the Editor: There is an old saying—haste makes waste. It has been proved within the week with Judge Heald's permanent injunction against conversion of Baldwin Park to other use.

This park, remember, was left to us by honored pioneers for specific uses not related to expressways. Now frequently I read of growing cities as Birmingham laying out large sums for centrally located properties for parks. While here we tried so hard to wipe out one. All or nearly all, I believe, having to do with the costly series of mistakes in the Baldwin Park case of errors are no longer in the city administration left holding the sack. The propaganda given out years ago was favorable to more downtown highways, which will may be needed. But I am concerned only with the methods which stand condemned.

THOSE who suggested less haste in park destruction activities knew of so many unfavorable court decisions in similar situations. But they were shushed. Except for the property gifts were directed to the park in good faith and stood to lose if the terms of the property gifts were disregarded. And now comes disaster. The writer has lived at the head of Baldwin Park for more than three years, the period of feverish and destructive activity. When roads could possibly be run thru the park for several years at best—for no funds ever have been provided—it was difficult to reconcile the blasting out of great trees for two superhighways to be some day, maybe. And of other costly moves.

IT SEEMED that in this panic were determined to accomplish as much of their program as possible before the bridge collapsed and interrupt. And finally the boom was lowered in the form of a temporary injunction, now permanent.

Long before River Rouge was spanned by a bridge, crew after crew of surveyors were swarming into Baldwin Park, laying out roads in almost every pattern conceivable, putting down and pulling up stakes. I wondered if everyone in training to be a surveyor was not practicing in our park.

DRAINS WERE LAID to carry away stubborn springs and water seepages from the south end of the park with little success. Time and again reliable crews with trucks, tractors and large earth-moving machines rumbled confidently in the park to do a job. Once off the high ground the soft earth held them fast and considerable effort was required from firm ground to rescue.

Well, this is all water over the dam. Well, it is unless there is a bit of truth in your latest issue to the effect the city may appeal to another court. Much better to get an end to such foolishness and use any funds available for laying out further to rehabilitate a badly mangled and scarred park, so in need of helpful attention.

JOHN M. BAYNE, 810 Southfield.

To the Editor: I think I can speak for most, if not all, of the residents of Bloomfield Village when I say that we like and feel a warm friendliness for our bordering City of Birmingham and our neighbors who live in it.

Let me say, too, that we in the Village fully appreciate the fact that the Birmingham Fire Department cannot within propriety and reason be expected to furnish emergency services to us, especially when to do so would mean placing the safety of that community in jeopardy.

Commendably, Mr. Dale Miller in his "answer to Bloomfield Hills residents" would appear to share this view.

However, the apparent satisfaction with their community of a less vocal majority of the residents of the Village gives me assurance that I can speak for them in saying that we obviously live in the Village because we like it here, and most of us feel an especial loyalty to our own community.

I cannot refrain from pointing out, therefore, that Mr. Miller assumed unwarranted license in

purporting to speak for other than himself in his diatribe concerning (as best I can make out) a "class evader" who had grown tired of his misadventure and, of course, his own motives of acquisition Mr. Miller presumably has, of course, some familiarity and, of such a nature speaks responsibly.

Even if Mr. Miller's allegations were factual, and his publicity necessary to suggest (in all good humor and sincerity) that the gate into the pasture which looks so much greener is presumably open to any of us who find the preponderant wishes of his own community intolerable.

Better this I would not wish, than so unhappy a rebellion against such conceived hardships as he deplores.

C. J. BOLDT, JR. 340 Williamson Road

To the Editor: Bravo! Your two recent editorials concerning the off-street parking problem in Birmingham are much to the point and sorely needed. It is refreshing indeed to see you take the leadership in urging a solution to the traffic and parking problems which plague us.

I know you will find many others ready, willing and anxious to contribute time and effort towards an intelligent solution. Leadership is necessary and your editorials will do much to produce those with the necessary qualifications.

The patient has had a transfusion—let's get a backlog of donors to insure his recovery! FREDERIC C. FEW

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