State May Liquidate Vets' Fund

The good old State of Michigan is broke. It is operating its government in the economic chaos of red ink. By the end of next June, we are told by state officials, Michigan will be a hundred million dollars in the red ink.

All of this adds up to a single fact; the state of Michigan must find ways to get more money and the only way to get this money is to reach into the pockets of Michigan citizens by way of new taxes.

Already the findings of a citizens' tax commission have been made known to the public. The chief recommendation of this report favors the enactment of legislation to impose an income tax upon Michigan citizens.

This income tax plan has not been approved by a majority of the members of the State Legislature which convened January 2nd, neither has Governor Williams placed his stamp of approval upon the idea. The particular type of an income tax suggested in this report is the graduated kind, which levies a lesser rate upon smaller incomes and an increasingly higher rate upon larger incomes. The maximum on the latter would not exceed 8% of a person's annual income.

TWICE WITHIN the past generation, Michigan citizens have been asked to vote on the proposition of changing the State's constitution to legalize the imposition of a graduated income tax. Twice the plan has been defeated by overwhelming majorities.

Most lawyers have always held that the present Michigan Constitution prohibits the imposition of a graduated income tax, holding that only a uniform tax rate can be levied. There is no doubt but what a great deal of consideration and discussion of the citizens' tax commission report will take place over in Lansing after the first of the year.

There are those who vigorously favor the suggested income tax pattern of a graduated tax; at the same time, there are many who vigorously oppose the idea. Indeed, any income tax at all wins plenty of official and citizen opposition.

POLITICS BEING what it is and politicians being what they are, history shows that when unlimited powers of taxation are given to a legislative body, eventually it will find ways to increase, increase and increase the percentage of the tax to be levied upon incomes. Just as in the case of the Federal government of this country.

It is axiomatic that no unit of government is any stronger than the amount of money it has at its disposal. Many citizens believe that a graduated income tax in the State of Michigan will be like turning over to their state officials the keys to their safety deposit boxes.

There is, of course, one available source of ready money now owned by the state of Michigan. It is the 50 million dollars which lies in a Michigan veterans' trust fund, the income from which provides a variety of aids to Michigan war veterans.

THIS 50 MILLION dollars was put in the fund at the request of former Governor Harry Kelly more than a dozen years ago, at a time when the State of Michigan really had many millions of dollars which it did not need in order to carry on its current activities of that time.

To retain this 50 million dollars of the people's money in such a fund is not in keeping with the traditional method of providing cash for the State's various programs. It seems to us that this veterans' trust fund should be liquidated and the cash put into the State's general fund. The need for cash to help our veterans should be included in the State's annual budget, the same as for other State agencies. Considerable opposition, of course, to the turning over of the 50 million dollars to the State's general fund will be made, should such a plan get into the State's legislative hopper.

SEVERAL TIMES during past years, the Legislature has discussed the liquidation of this veterans' trust fund and its proceeds put into the State's general fund, but each time the idea was abandoned. Now, however, with the State in greater financial trouble than for many years, it would not surprise many observers of the Lansing scene if the Legislature, aided by the Governor, should place this trust fund in the general fund of the State of Michigan. It certainly would provide partial relief for the State's current financial problems.

As for the future of the needs of Michigan veterans, their cause is deserving of unceasing attention, of course. The public of Michigan, we believe, would rise to the annual need to provide funds for this aid—and few Legislators may be expected to oppose sufficient funds for carrying out this program.

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ONE THING OR ANOTHER *By George Wm. Averill*

Got my December telephone bill the other day.

There was something new on it, as you also probably noticed.

There was a black line circled around the portion of the bill at the left. This circle was connected by a black line to a larger circle at the right—on the part of the bill you mailed back with your check.

These circles called to your attention the 10 per cent Federal excise tax placed on telephone customers as a war-time emergency measure.

IT ASKED THAT YOU and I write our Congressman if we believed this tax should be repealed.

Other utility bills—gas, water, electricity—have no excise tax.

Michigan Bell telephone company top brass, as evidenced by this notation on the bills, finally have invited their customers—the public—to join the fight that has been going on backstage for years to have this unfair tax removed.

Several times in the past four or five years, I've ribbed Michigan Bell public relations and advertising men to do this very thing—get the customers involved.

THE COMPANY SPENDS LARGE SUMS each month on advertising and those little information notices that arrive with our bills.

"Why couldn't some of that money be spent on a campaign to have that excise tax lifted? If it's as unfair as you guys lead me to believe, it's important to tell your customers about," was the gist of my gibes.

But big corporations are particularly sensitive about government. Especially public utilities, whose rates are set by governments.

Takes a lot of nerve and determination to start swinging at the fellow who tells you what you can charge the customers.

Lo and behold! Look what they've sent you and me this month!

It's out in the open now. I hope Michigan Bell doesn't stop its effort with this one billing. You and I don't write letters to our congressmen in Washington very often. We need a pretty good bonfire under us before we spend a four-cent stamp on a problem like this.

MY LETTER IS ON ITS WAY to Oakland county's Congressman, William S. Broomfield. After what I've said to those Michigan Bell fellows, I've got to come through.

We'd like your help, too.

Suburban Sentiment

ODE TO THE INCINERATOR

We go to the store to buy some food
We gasp at the cost and gasp we should
We prepare it for dinner and the meters soar,
To dispose of what's left, they soar some more.
Man must eat to live, but in this modern day
It takes money to buy it, and money to fry it, and money to throw it away.

—Frances Emery

Sure Sign of Spring

NATURE NOW

by Lydia King Frehse
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

'Bug' Is Actually One-Celled Plant

To the layman the word "bacteria" frequently suggests a tiny bug with an unsavory reputation; one linked to the plagues which have wiped out entire populations. To the biologist bacteria are single-celled plants, among the smallest of living things, which are more beneficial than harmful to man.

Although bacteria differ from the usual concept of their kind they, together with the blue-green algae, make up the most primitive phylum of our plant kingdom. They are named "Schizophyta," or fission plants, because they commonly reproduce by splitting in half.

If we were to place the smallest of their kind end to end it would take 250,000 to make an inch. Or if a man's height could be increased 1,000 times so that he could see over a mountain peak, an equal magnification is necessary to make bacteria visible to the naked eye.

BECAUSE OF their smallness, these important plants went unnoticed until some 300 years ago when a Dutch janitor named Leeuwenhoek who had made for himself a crude microscope first detected their presence. However, it was not until the time of Pasteur that they were proved to be living organisms.

Their important role as instruments of decay, fermentation and disease, as well as their indispensable benefits to life's economy have been largely demonstrated by the work of biologists since the year 1860.

Mrs. Frehse

Bacteria differ in many ways from that which we commonly call a plant. Their size alone makes them go unnoticed, although they fill soil, air and water with their teeming fertility. Their cell walls are frequently made of a chitin-like substance common to insect cells, rather than of cellulose typically used by plants. They resemble the single-celled Protozoan animals, in that many of their kind are capable of independent locomotion.

BACTERIA may be parasites thriving on the living tissues of plants or animals where they cause disease. Others are saprophytes acting as agents of decay. Yet others live in symbiotic partnership with insects, or with such plants as the legumes or orchids.

Bacteria may be classified into three groups, according to their shape. The simplest and smallest is a spherical body called a "coccus." Here included are the disease-producing streptococci which cause erysipelas, septicaemia and pneumonia. They are non-mobile and are frequently found in water polluted by sewage.

Much larger are the rod-shaped cells called "bacilli." They possess hair-like projections which enable them to swim about in such liquids as blood or milk. Peritonitis, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, diphtheria, tetanus and bubonic plague of humans and the pear and apple blight of plants are among the diseases produced by these bacteria.

THE THIRD group is called "spirillum," from the twisted, thread-like shape of its members. They are mobile cells occurring in liquids containing decaying organic matter. Syphilis and the tropical disease called yaws are caused by these spirochetes.

Bacteria multiply so rapidly that, unchecked, a single cell could produce a mass weighing 7,000 tons in three days. Fortunately, this rate is never maintained. Unfavorable conditions of moisture and temperature, the lack of a food supply adequate for their demanding appetites, the bulk of their own excretions; all these check the growth of the fascinating plants which we call bacteria.

(Next week — more about bacteria.)

The tremendous industry of food processing, either by pasteurizing, canning, freezing, drying or the addition of chemicals, is nothing more than killing or arresting the growth of bacteria which cause decay.

Happenings of Long Ago

Bits of News Gleaned From Old Files Of The Eccentric

50 YEARS AGO
January 15, 1909

"The January Review of Reviews tells how to light and heat your house, churn your butter, wash, etc., all with electricity, generated from the little creek or mill stream. Read it. It's at the library."

"After 18 years absence, Will Lowes, now of Shelby, Oceana County, is visiting his home. He remarks many changes in our little city, especially in the business portion."

"John Heth does not attend all the posey shows but just the same his face looks good as he freely cleans the snow from the sidewalks and chuckles as he says, "huh, my plow beats any one armed man shoveling snow."

30 YEARS AGO
January 10, 1929

"The last vestige of the old Baldwin Library in the vacated church building at Maple and Woodward avenue is to go. It is a sign proclaiming to the world that on this site is the library. However, the library moved to its new quarters more than a year ago. The village commission ordered removal of the sign, which, members said, has lost its significance as well as most of its paint."

"A cataloguing system has been installed this year in the township treasury office here, replacing the former system of recording the returns in ledgers. It is reported that the new system is most satisfactory."

15 YEARS AGO
January 13, 1944

"Natives in the Southwest Pacific handle Allied soldiers with tender care, stated Mr. Cromie. If the area happens to produce Japanese casualties and the natives carry them over the trails to medical care, the Japs are not given the tender attention that our boys are."

"Rationing has not emptied the shelves of Oakland County residents of canned food it was revealed today, a total of 1,886,456 cans being used monthly, according to A. H. Nugent, general sales manager of the American Can company."

People's Column

Class Grateful For Article

To the Editor:

Our sociology class at Birmingham high school would like to express our gratitude in the writing of the article for us.

Thanks to you our project was a great success and we have received many birds, cages, money donations, magazines, etc.

So many people today forget about the more unfortunate people in state institutions such as these, and need something to open their eyes. In this case it was a newspaper article written by you, for which we are very thankful.

BETH CALLIAS

"School days can be the happiest days of your life, if your child's old enough to attend."

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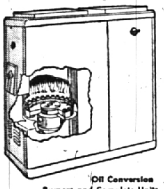

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