

The Birmingham Eccentric

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School Voters Commended

In previous editorials, we commended the Birmingham Board of Education and administrative officers for their effective campaign to inform the public of the Nov. 20 special school election.

Now, we commend the electors for approving the millage and bonding proposals in that election.

The information had been made available. The people who went to the polls to vote yes or no must have been well informed. They had the facts presented to them; all they needed to do was digest those facts, then vote according to their convictions.

OBVIOUSLY, THERE were more people convinced than unconvinced that the facts indicated a strong need for the bonding authority and the millage increase.

They considered this need great enough to justify increasing school taxes. And it must be remembered that these proposals were offered only as solutions to immediate problems. They are not the final answer to the school situation.

AFTER AN extensive survey, an Ohio State University research team recommended improvements in the Birmingham School District that would mean an outlay of 20 million dollars.

School officials pared this to 10 million. That's still a tremendous sum of money, but projection of enrollment figures, building and instructional needs over the years ahead indicate it will be necessary to obtain.

This means taxpayers can expect further requests from the school board.

It is, therefore, imperative that the board make maximum use of every dollar, and thus set a pattern that would serve to encourage support as further requests arise.

YES, WE commend the voters who went to the polls Nov. 20 — and we challenge them to remain alert to future proposals to solve school problems.

Let this election be a guide to school officials and voters alike.

Helping Ourselves Is Active Prayer

The theme of dependence on God — of crying out to Him, and being answered — runs through the Bible as a warming current runs through the sea. The Scriptures are full of confident supplication for God's help. The psalmist rises to his greatest heights of eloquence in asserting that though he cry out from the farthest reaches of the earth, from the very depths of the sea, his plea will be heard.

This attitude is in the bone and blood of the religious tradition in which most Americans have been nurtured. One might suppose that, especially in time of perilous crisis, there would be among us an almost universal turning to the greater power we acknowledge.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, this is not the case. Though prayers for peace are not forgotten, though many a sermon is devoted to the crucial danger that overshadows all mankind, there is relatively little crying out to God for succor as the psalmist cried out. This may reflect a decline in faith. It may be evidence of a conclusion which is corollary to loss of faith — the conclusion that man's salvation, at a time when the most fearsome danger is posed by his own genius for destruction, depends more on himself than on God.

The truth that God helps those who help themselves is thus honored. It does not follow that the scriptural call to God from the extremity of anguish has lost the ring of truth.

Politicians Cannot Outlaw Natural Law

It is generally a mistake for politicians to try artificially to bolster up depressed areas or industries. History proves this over and over.

If an area or industry is depressed because of previously mistaken legislation, the law should be repealed. But if they become depressed for economic reasons, the politicians should keep hands off.

Take whale oil, that industry was a great and necessary one down to about 1850. Whaling ships searched every sea. There was "no climate that was not witness to their toil; no sea not vexed with their ships."

Then came coal oil, or kerosene, and New Bedford and Nantucket became depressed areas. Government, however, kept hands off and whaling men and their sons found other jobs.

WITH THE COMING of natural gas, kerosene for lighting started a long decline despite more millions of homes. The smelly lamp gave way to the gas jet, which was soon obsolete by electric light.

Suppose all these new industries had been taxed to keep the dying ones alive! Government kept hands off, and the free competition of better and cheaper products caused the most rapid technological progress in history.

Congress is now urged to legislate increased coal consumption by 100 million tons a year to relieve unemployment in the coal industry which has pushed wage scales to the highest levels in America. Congress can do that only at the cost of other industries and their employees. A nation cannot progress financially by holding back technological progress!

From The Eccentric's Point of View ...

Which is more important, saving life and escaping serious injury, or saving money?

Many motorists regard money-saving as the more important. The manufacturers have been catering to them by not providing important safety equipment in their cars because it might make these costlier and so discourage buyers.

The present conflict between these alternatives is over seat belts. If a car has them and the occupants put them on, they are not likely to be hurt out in the event of a crash. The car builders, realizing this, have been dropping mild hints to buyers that these would be useful. The hints have generally been ignored.

Now the atmosphere is changing, partly because of the threat of atomic action. Wisconsin requires new cars to have seat belts. Other states may follow.

The 1962 models will provide attachments for installing belts under the front seats. This will reduce the cost materially. Without these attachments the labor cost of installation may range from \$8 to \$20. Belts, not yet part of a car's standard equipment, run from \$11 to \$17 a pair.

Safety glass and turn signals went through the same course and now affects seat belts. Soon the manufacturers are likely, if public pressure continues, to install them on all new cars. Until they do, the wise motorist will spend a little money and get them for himself.

Khrushchev says the Russians will stop nuclear tests "when the others stop." And they'll start again when they please.

The end of Speaker Sam Rayburn's career calls attention to an office that is perhaps the most influential after the presidency. The speaker of the House, acting either directly or through his appointees, can make or break a legislative program. It was not always thus, though some eminent men have held the post.

One president, James K. Polk, had previously been speaker, but the office has otherwise not led to the higher position.

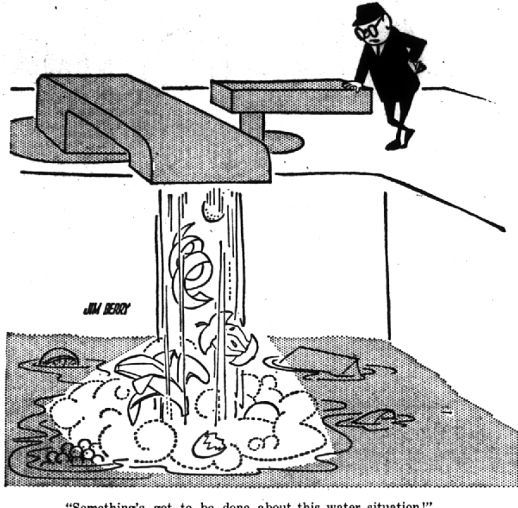
Henry Clay, whose 10 years as speaker held the record till Rayburn came along, failed in each of his three presidential races.

James G. Blaine, Thomas B. Reed, Champ Clark and John N. Garner all aspired to the presidency, though only Blaine got as far as the nomination.

The power of the office began in 1889 when Reed took over. He ended the practice of congressmen refusing to vote so that there could be no quorum, by counting all actually in the House when the vote was taken. He also used the office to jam through party measures that might otherwise have failed.

Though Rayburn and Joseph C. Cannon were both picturesque, Reed was the most memorable. He could destroy an opponent with a phrase, as in his observation about a colleague, "Every time the honorable gentleman opens his mouth, he subtracts something from the sum total of human knowledge."

If a canvass were made in the Birmingham School District, do you think that most of the kids would consider the alleged lack of teachers today a national calamity?



"Something's got to be done about this water situation!"

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Send Kids to School For Fun or Learning?

To the Editor: Can kindness and consideration and diplomacy become, if carried to the extreme, a drawback in communication?

As a parent who returned to substitute teaching last year, I sometimes worry about this. Here's why.

We have shown our great interest in this business of education by freely voting for more taxes in order to erect our beautiful schools. Our educators' desks overflow with more written material on 'how to educate' than ever before in history. There're more aids available to bring learning to the child than ever before. The teachers? Never have we had so many well-trained.

HOWEVER, in our desire to see Johnnie and Jane up in the most desirable atmosphere in order that they'll absorb what is necessary somewhere along this complicated road, we have forgotten to take our offspring aside to say: "Children, when we send you off to school each morning, we don't expect that you'll be entertained all day long."

Even though they might let out a wail of "Aw, gee, Mom! Do you mean I can't push the guy in the hall when he's trying to hang up his coat; do you mean I can't rush into my room and circulate about the school each morning, where I must get real serious, all the hours of the short day, about my books, huh?" the parent should nod her head and reply: "We mean, Johnnie and Jane, exactly that."

ALL BLAME for our children's conception that school should be a delightful, happy, relaxing spot cannot be paid to our offspring. Educators have listened too long to this theory that "education should be fun." (Those who advocated this may be delighted, happy, relaxing spot cannot be paid to our offspring. Educators have listened too long to this theory that "education should be fun.")

NO. This business is not packed full of fun. Somehow we must get across to our children that school is an extension of the lovely homes where so much recreation takes place.

We have failed to distinguish between home and school. Therefore, the students have not grasped this difference. The result, either, until it's discussed, by whom? First, by their parents. Next, and most important, by the

teacher. But she must be urged and supported by the principal to do exactly this feat.

"Don't be afraid to insist on much better work from each and everyone. Don't be afraid that Little Johnnie or Jane will decide to take their business elsewhere. We have one big job here to do each day. To train them to work. They can play after school in the long hours left. They have no chores to do at their push button homes. Let's get Johnnie and Jane into the spirit of the thing!"

THIS COULD be done. Why isn't it to a greater degree? Because our parents are too kind, considerate and too full of diplomacy. They are afraid to speak out for fear of offending.

Hence, a stupid circle is formed. The educators do talk to the individual parents; they don't really speak to each other. Too much is left unsaid. They fail to find out what the other is really thinking.

Not enough basic concerns are exchanged. This shouldn't be.

Educators want to know the parents' thoughts. Not exactly: "We were pleased with our son's improvement in his playmates. All this came after school hours."

Teachers wouldn't wilt or fade away if they were confronted with heavier questions than "How is Jane doing in reading?" Let the parent have a definite question to ask why Jane doesn't seem to recognize her words.

IF THE "runners of the schools" see that our parents wanted more work from their pupils — good work — they in turn would feel inclined to drop this "relaxed atmosphere" existing in too many of our schools and they'd be happy to embrace, once again, the theory that education means, definitely, hard, hard work. And with our children entering right into this idea.

Beautiful schools? They are nice. We need to be a little more great asset. But blanketing both of these is that a child must realize what they sent to school for. Not to be amused. Not to enjoy himself. And not to be popular with his playmates. All this came after school hours. A MOTHER

Letters from readers always are welcome. But they MUST be signed, although identities will not be divulged if the writer so requests.

Happenings of Long Ago

Bits of News Cleared From Old Files Of The Eccentric

50 YEARS AGO Dec. 1, 1911

It is practically an assured fact that Oakland county will vote next spring upon the question of local option. The only thing that would prevent it is the lack of names on petitions or the refusal of the board of supervisors to accept the petitions at their January session. But the wet forces are not likely to have much encouragement grasping at either of these straws as it is a foregone conclusion that the necessary number of names will be secured and the board will consider the petition at the January session.

On Dec. 1, the Birmingham High School football team will give a hot chicken supper in the Macabee Building in the Ford block. The football team will act as hosts and serve all patrons from 5:30 to 7:30.

People may think it strange that F. Roche is advertising mackerel for sale cheap. They are some that were over in the sale of the grocery stock of Cobb-Stanley-Harris Co. Mr. Roche has them and will sell them until all are gone at reduced price.

30 YEARS AGO Nov. 25, 1931

Special church services, the annual Royal Oak-Birmingham football game and quiet family gatherings around a hearth and dinner table will serve to keep Thanksgiving Day in Birmingham tomorrow in the tradition of similar holidays in the past. At Christ Church Cranbrook, a Thanksgiving pageant designed to be of special interest to boys and girls of the parish will be presented. The annual union service of Birmingham churches will be held in the United Presbyterian Church under the auspices of the Ministers' Association.

Approximately \$200 was netted for charity at the benefit performance of the Village Players in "Journey's End," given at the auspices of the Birmingham Lions Club. The money will be used for the Lions Club's annual Christmas Eve party for poor children of the village.

"Your Court and the World" is the title of a dramatization to be presented by members of Ruth Shain's Class in international relations Dec. 1.

15 YEARS AGO Nov. 28, 1946

The City of Birmingham for the second time within a year will be required to dim its lights in an effort to conserve natural supplies. (See HAPPENINGS, 3-B)

Suburban Sidelights

By HANK HOGAN

The vast majority of people in our state know very little about our state legislature. Very few people in Birmingham could name their state representative or state senator.

The image of the organization changes depending on what newspaper or radio program you follow. In Detroit the legislature is looked upon as a group of old farmers intent on cheating every citizen out of his constitutional rights.

In the outstate area it is looked upon as a sensitive, able body that protects the state from the demands of organized labor.

Of course neither of these tenets is true because nothing is all good or all bad.

In Michigan we have a two-house legislature. The Senate is made up of 31 men and the House of Representatives has 110 members. (There are four lady representatives.)

The Senate is apportioned according to a 1952 Constitutional Amendment voted on by the people. It is primarily apportioned by geographic area, but an element of population representation was added to sell the amendment.

The House is basically apportioned on population, and the districts are changed every 10 years. We will have redistricting here in Oakland County in 1963 based on the 1960 census.

OAKLAND COUNTY has six state representatives and one senator. Of the six, two are in the real estate business, one is a druggist, one works for the county road commission, one is a grocer and one is a lawyer. Our senator is also a lawyer by profession.

The effectiveness of a legislator depends on the committees to which he is appointed. There are 48 standing committees, but only a dozen are active.

The average legislative district in Oakland County has a population of over 100,000 people. The average legislator receives about 20 letters a week during the session. However, this area sends its legislator about 200 letters a week.

Of the 110 seats in the House, about 100 of them are considered "pure Republican or Democratic districts. Therefore, the person nominated in the primary by the majority party usually is elected in the general election.

This means if you do not vote in the primary you have little say as to your state legislator. In a non-presidential election year less than 25 per cent of the people vote in the primary. This means approximately 13 per cent of the people can elect the controlling part of the legislature.

A LEGISLATOR is elected for a two-year term and is paid a salary of \$5,000. He is also given expense money in the amount of \$1,250 per year.

The legislator has the power of life and death over the citizenry (since punishment for crimes is determined by statute.) He determines how you should be taxed and how much service you get for that taxation.

Yet the general populous does not know his name, lets an insignificant minority elect him, and criticizes him after he votes without giving him counsel before he votes.

By KEN WEAVER

City Beat

The phone rings. It's a man calling to complain about the special school elections in Birmingham.

He doesn't subscribe to The Birmingham Eccentric and for some reason he hasn't received informational literature mailed out by the school board. He didn't know the election was taking place.

So, he insists there's something underhanded. He's been on top of this election right from the beginning and we've seen nothing underhanded. In fact, we have felt the school board did an excellent job of imparting all the information it could to the public.

"Usually, there are valid reasons for any omissions or mistakes. We see this sort of thing all the time, people calling to accuse a public office or agency of some wrongdoing.

"And once they check, they usually find that nothing illegal was done; that the oversight was unintentional; that somebody was excluded inadvertently.

"We appreciate your calling us and we'll check your case with the school offices, to confirm again their mailing procedures.

"But in the meantime, why don't you call them yourself and politely—not accusingly—ask what happened?"

A FEW HOURS later, the phone rings again. Some man, singing a different tune.

"I talked to Dr. Dickey and he explained the whole thing to me. My name was left off by a mistake. I'm sorry I said this morning there was something underhanded; I was completely wrong.

"After talking to you, I asked myself where I had failed in my responsibility to make use of all the methods of communication available to me.

"I take several out-of-town papers. They don't carry much local news at all, let alone in any detail.

"I understand your paper printed several articles explaining all about the school election.

"If I want to know what's happening in my own community, I should take the local paper.

"Some of my friends in this neighborhood also didn't know about the school election. I'm going to tell them they should take your paper.

"Another thing, I'm going to ask the school offices to include my name and address on their lists for future mailings, and I'm going to suggest to my friends that they do the same thing."

MORAL: Subscribing to your community newspaper will help keep you better informed of what's happening at home.

And, investigate before you accuse. Think before you act. Judge not lest you be judged. Etc.

Talk of the Towns

By DENI SCANLON

Do you remember "The Shadow," "Captain Midnight," "Jack Armstrong the All American Boy," "The FBI in Peace and War," "The Lone Ranger," "Suspense," "The Green Hornet"?

They're gone and it's a loss.

These moments may be strictly personal (although I doubt it) but I really miss the "good old days of radio."

If you are a "non-TV'er" and spend evenings pattering around the house (ironing and house cleaning for this working girl), it's "lonely" to tell in silence.

I've turned to the phonograph—which should be worn out by now.

Or, when I turn that A.M. radio switch, what do I get? A pitch every two and half minutes and rock and roll tunes that I can't call music. I can think of one, maybe two stations worth listening to.

Granted, some of the "specials" on both radio and television are outstanding. But what happens in between?

The "good old days of radio" had much to offer even if—as sophisticates would say—it wasn't always "culturally broadening." Nevertheless, it was fun.

There isn't much left to the imagination these days. What with even the kids seeing so much television, you can't even tell a bedtime story without adding "the price of the book and where parents can buy it."

You can't really blame kids for sticking to the television screen. What is there on the radio that attracts them? Heavens! Even "Let's Pretend" is gone!

Constant "chatter and platters" take care of the over-active thyroids of teen-agers but there isn't much left for the adults and kids.

To me, radio is missing a bet. Is the demand exclusively for music, news and sports? Isn't there a growing segment of the population that for a change would like to turn off the TV, turn on the radio and listen while they sew, do dishes, build a boat, wash a car—all those jobs they "never have time to get at?"