

Time for Action Has Arrived

"Good! It's about time." That's our reaction to the step the Birmingham City Commission took last week in respect to the widening of Chester St.

The commission authorized the city manager to negotiate for the purchase of property needed to make three blocks of the street in downtown Birmingham a four-lane pavement.

This step is recommended in the Central Business District Development Plan, which was presented to the commission more than a year ago with the admonition to "act and act soon."

Chester St. is included in the peripheral route outlined in that plan, which was conceived by a committee of merchants cooperating with the city planning board.

The plan is designed to modernize the business section to meet the needs of the future. The peripheral route is a proposed thoroughfare to take traffic around the business area.

THE COMMISSION received a letter from the planning board last week expressing concern "over the seeming lack of progress on the first stage" of the CBDD Plan.

We think, too, that there has been a lack of progress. But there also has been a general lack of interest in the plan since it was announced and explained to the public last year.

We have heard no cry of urgency from the downtown merchants. Nor have we detected any degree of interest on the part of the public, even though the redevelopment

would mean the expenditure of thousands of dollars.

YET, WE believe it a well-conceived plan that promises much for the future of our city. We submit that there is a community-wide responsibility involved here.

The merchants have already spent many thousands of dollars in the preparation of the plan. The money and the time spent in that endeavor do not necessarily dictate that it be adopted; but certainly they do dictate that the plan be given careful consideration.

COMMISSIONERS agreed last week to set up a joint meeting with several groups in the city to discuss the CBDD Plan.

The groups to be called are the plan board, the Chamber and Junior chambers of commerce, the school board, the Community House board, the Keep Birmingham Beautiful Committee, the library board, the real estate board and the Council of Churches.

One of the prime concerns of the commissioners is just how such a project would be financed.

It is our belief that these groups can be of assistance to the city in this respect as well as in others.

The members of these organizations are interested in the welfare and the development of our community. They are forward-thinking individuals. They are idea people. Certainly a brainstorming session with them would be productive.

The date for such a meeting was not set; but we say let it be soon—and let the best suggestions be implemented post-haste.

'Now I Know How the Cubans Feel When Castro Starts Talking!'



PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Smile a While

To the Editor:

May I thank that writer who recently, via your paper, suggested that I should "pick out little bits-dibbits of happiness" as we lived through each day in these critical political times?

"She's absolutely right, a smile will be plastered on the mug and nothing will be able to wipe it off," was said after her advice was gulped.

What a wise decision that was for me to make. Ten minutes later while I was feeding Buster his oatmeal, what should Buster do but throw it right back at me. Because I had that smile all over my face, the oatmeal slid off without even disturbing my makeup.

IT HELPED, too, when the little Tyke decided to throw his plate onto the floor and when picking it up, he grabbed a fat full of my curls and pulled like a telephone repairman when putting up a pole.

Smiles are contagious as she said. Buster not only grinned; he laughed and continued to bark since he saw his Momma's smile below his highchair.

At 10, taking Baby out for some fresh air so that he'd drop-off to dead slumber at 11 (so the laundry could be tackled in peace) who should

be encountered but a Baker of Leaves down the road a bit.

"My, isn't this a lovely, bright brisk fall day?" was asked with my smile through.

The raker leaned on his tool and bluntly wondered what was so grand about the wind which made his work in vain the minute he got things raked?

AND WHEN the Baker Man arrived at noon, with more arthritic pains in his back than usual, he was offered my big, big smile plaza: "My father suffered from just such back pains and he lived to be 88."

Instead of a smile spreading over his face at this heartening news, he shook his head, scowled, handed me the bread and insisted what a horrible curse to lay on any man who endured such trouble.

THAT WRITER would be proud to know that her advice wasn't chucked; when taking the wrapping off the dinner meat only to discover that three-fourths of it consisted of pure fat. I still smiled and tried to remember that many African or Asian folks would be thankful for just fat alone.

The same philosophy held (See SMILE 6-B)

Yesteryear Happenings

From the Files of The Eccentric

50 YEARS AGO

Dec. 13, 1912

Mrs. Rhoda S. Curtis, wife of the late Charles B. Curtis was returning from Royal Oak, to her home near Windy Vale farm and in trying to avoid two approaching automobiles, stepped on the car track and was struck by a D.E.R. freight car about 5:15 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7. She did not regain consciousness and died at 10:10 the same night.

State officials, veteran legislators and many persons outside the magic realm of politics confidently predict that the coming assembly of the lawmakers will develop into the most sensational gathering in the history of Michigan. According to advance information which has drifted into the state house from various parts of Michigan, enough bills are being framed by embryo statesmen to hold the legislature in session until the middle of next July.

The Balkan war situation is practically unchanged. There is no confirmation of the Constantinople dispatches that Greece has affixed a belated signature to the Bucharest protocol for an armistice. As far as can be learned, Greece still refused to join the truce agreement.

30 YEARS AGO

Dec. 15, 1932

Possibility that the Board of Education may reach a compromise (See HAPPENINGS, 5-B)

Year-long Spirit of Giving

In the Christmas season, the Community exudes the spirit of giving. The hustle and bustle of shoppers gives an air of friendliness that is not always present.

There are organizations in our community who have this spirit not just at Christmastime. Our community is blessed with over a hundred clubs with charitable purposes.

Among these are our men's service clubs. These are groups who meet weekly either for breakfast, lunch or dinner and work together as a unit to provide the community with needed services.

EACH HAS fund-raising projects to support its charitable objective.

The Birmingham Lions put on concerts, which not only raise funds for the blind (their main charity), but also bring cultural events to our community which might not otherwise find their way here.

The Bloomfield Rotary and Lions are both conducting travelogue type of programs as well as fruit cake and candy sales. Besides furnishing the community with cultural programs, the proceeds will provide aid to crippled children and the Leader Dog for the Blind School in Rochester.

THE OPTIMIST Club calls itself the "friend of the boy" and with its funds puts on the Junior Olympics and underwrites the YMCA choir, among other projects.

The Birmingham Rotary not only helps crippled children but also stages a career day for our high schoolers and were in-

strumental in the annual Halloween program. They raise funds with an annual newspaper sale.

The Kiwanis Club sponsors a bike inspection each year. Their main purpose is to help children, and their hope is to inspect every bike in the community for safe equipment. They conduct an annual peanut sale to raise funds.

THE EXCHANGE Club also has youth as their project. They help support Camp Oakland, underwrite part of the cost of the Birmingham Teen-Age Traffic Court and establish "freedom shrines" at our local high schools. The "shrines" include the important documents in the history of our nation.

Their important fund-raising drive consists of an annual toothbrush sale.

The Birmingham High Twelve Club each year helps support Camp Oakland, YMCA, Community House and Boy's State. The club sells fruitcakes to raise the needed funds for financing these activities.

These clubs have other charitable projects, too numerous to mention. Most of these are carried on with little or no recognition.

We would like to take this occasion during the "giving" season to compliment them on their fine work all year long, and to encourage our residents to help support the various fund-raising projects to insure that these important services can continue in our community.

Leave It to the Scientists

Science may, in time, solve a problem which diplomacy at Geneva has been unable to bring to a conclusion between East and West. New techniques of underground detection of atomic explosions, when perfected, may outdate some phases of the on-site inspection program which the United States and Britain have considered essential for international disarmament.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk has cautioned that although results of nuclear testing and detection in Nevada have shown technical gains, the process needs further development. He also has warned that other controls still will be needed as international safeguards, even when the long-distance detection processes are improved.

Even so, the scientific progress indicates that, in the future, less emphasis will have to be put on the observation system which the Soviet Union has been sternly rejecting in all negotiations.

It will mean an easier method for nations to check keep on each other's blasting activities, and it will modify an issue on which the Soviets have found it so easy to express flat refusal to cooperate.

If disarmament is ever to succeed, the need for international assurances concerning the actions of each country involved must be respected. If science can provide some of the proof, in a factual, impersonal way, it may help to clear some of the confusion out of the difficult diplomatic morass.

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Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

Last year at this time I waged a very unsuccessful fight against misleading TV toy ads. It was unsuccessful to the point that these overpriced, easily broken toys were found under my own Christmas tree. I was reminded of this while cleaning out the attic the other day and uncovered the remains of a broken Robot Commando and pieces of plastic that were once part of a Mr. Machine.

It did not take long for these monsters to work their way from tree to attic.

WITH CHRISTMAS now coming on again I started shopping to see what was new and unusual. The Robot Commando and Garloo of last year have been replaced by King Zor and Tony the Pony, among others.

The construction of the toys hasn't changed appreciably, only the prices. The new toys cost more, so the retailers can discount them more, so the shoppers think they are getting a better bargain.

It was reassuring to me as I toured our town that no one pays the suggested price (which is never mentioned on TV). All stores, not just the people who call themselves discounters, were selling them below suggested prices.

AFTER MY TOUR I picked up a copy of a national magazine and there, as large as life, was the man who designed many of these robots. A man named Marvin Glass designed the Kissy Doll, Robot Commando, Mr. Machine, Old Ozg and King Zor. Needless to say, he is now a multimillionaire.

All of his monsters are big, are made of easily broken materials and are expensive. In this way he is assured that the parents will be in the market for something new each Christmas time.

Compare this to a story in the Free Press and the Irish day that the mailman who still has a wagon and the Irish day he won as a newsboy 42 years ago, which are still in workable condition.

I DON'T believe the kids of today are any more destructive than the kids of yesterday, but they are exploited into asking for these toys that aren't designed for long or hard use, and the exploitation allows the manufacturer to charge unbelievable prices for toys.

The old \$3 doll now has a tape recorder inside her to pick up your child's conversation, suggested price \$32 to \$36.

The old Monopoly type game is now up to \$7.

The plastic, battery-operated horse, Tony the Pony, is listed for over \$10, yet most of our merchants will sell it to you for \$25 or less. Think of the family who can't afford this type of gift, but whose children sing the little jingle all day long about Tony.

It bothers me tremendously in this religious season, to see our youngsters and ourselves being taken advantage of by these TV ads. Some families will be hurt because they can't afford the toys, others will be hurt because they can.

City Beat

By KEN WEAVER

It is sometimes remarked that the Christmas spirit should be in the hearts of men the year 'round.

What is Christmas spirit? Well, one definition could be "the spirit of joy and generous springing from a consciousness of God's matchless gift to mankind."

If that's the case, it doesn't seem likely, then, that people being what they are—people—will have this spirit all year.

ON THE other hand, the Christmas shopping season does grow longer each year. If the trend continues, there's sure to be Christmas-buying the year 'round.

Not only are people starting their shopping much earlier than in the past, but also they continue into the new year by taking advantage of post-holiday sales.

Every year, it seems, more and more people bewail the circumstance that the Christmas-buying pressure begins too early.

Yet, the trend continues. For my money, it has gone far enough. Seems to me we should be giving more attention to the real meaning, the real purpose of the holiday and to keep our celebration of it in the bounds of religious propriety.

BUT, REGRETFULLY, the commercializing of Christmas seems unchecked.

It has become commonplace to point this out, I realize. So many people have said it in so many different ways; yet it is true, nevertheless.

The commercial aspects of the season all too often obscure the unique position that Christmas occupies in the galaxy of religious holidays.

It seems to me that it is long past time that we restore the holiday to its rightful place; that we think of it again in the light of its true meaning.

Let the spirit of Christmas prevail always; but let the commercialism of it be diminished.

THE FIRST real snowfall of the winter is a wonder to behold.

And it probably does more to instill the spirit of the season in people than any commercial display.

The snowfall last week certainly put the Christmas spirit in many people around town. It got them to talking about decorations, Christmas trees, Christmas parties and the like.

Yes, that first grand snowfall of the winter is a wonder to behold; yet it sets a lot of people to wondering when they can expect spring.

THE GOLDEN YEARS

A retired parent is alone and ailing. There are five children. Should one of these children bring the parent in, or should the five of them pay to put her in a nursing home?

Here is the torturous road by which one good young daughter-in-law came to the nursing home decision:

"My husband's mother was 74," she says, "and was being released from the hospital after breaking her hip. She wanted to come live with my husband and me and our three small children.

"WE AGREED to try it out. If it worked we would take the money from the sale of Mother's home and add a room and bath to our house for her—provided her other four children agreed to this..."

She wrote them (all were living in other states) an eventually all agreed and in the main expressed relief that the mother was not to be their responsibility.

"So we moved her in," the young daughter-in-law continues. "We were not willing to finance the addition to our house until we saw things would work out, so we put our three children in one room, with a wall-to-wall mattress, and gave Mother a private room.

"I ENCOURAGED her to read, do handwork, and gave her mending, but her eyes didn't hold. I took her down for new glasses. They didn't help. Soon there were other ailments. We changed doctors for her. This helped a little.

"More and more Mother wanted to talk to me, always about the past and nearly always about how nice life used to be for her. I didn't have time to

listen—not with all the things that must be done for an aging woman who couldn't get to the bathroom by herself, for three small children, for washing, ironing and meals, and for a husband..."

Soon the novelty of Grandma's being in the house had worn off, and bickering and trouble were beginning in the small room where the three children were.

"Whom should I care for first? The children? Mother? My husband?"

SO ONE day they had a talk. And it was agreed that an extra room on the house wouldn't solve things. A \$40,000 house wouldn't. Even a \$100,000 house might not be big enough. So perhaps Mother would be better off in a nursing home.

The daughter-in-law explains how it was handled financially: Mother had a lifetime \$65 a month from the death of her husband. The sale of her house assured another \$60 a month for a period of 10 years.

Each child agreed to pay \$10 a month, for \$50 a month. This totaled \$178, and the room, board and care for Mother in the nursing home was \$150 a month.

"MOTHER IS much happier," the daughter-in-law says. "She gets all the attention and care she needs, and more. She has company around her all the time, and the nurses do so much for her because she is friendly and makes few demands.

"We invite Mother to our house for dinner now and then. We visit her once or twice a week. She tells us she wouldn't mind spending her life in the home..."