

### Age Law Revision Endorsed

In the last few weeks the question of whether the reduction of age for smoking and drinking was discussed at a PTA Council meeting has caused more controversy than the question of lowering the age limits themselves.

Whether or not the PTA discussed the issue, which apparently it did, or whether it took a position on the issue, which it apparently didn't, doesn't really matter.

The important question is, would lowering the age be in the best interests of the state of Michigan?

Our local judge seems to think it would be, while the chief of police thinks it would only lead to more problems.

WE CAN'T REALLY cite the appropriate statute because liquor, tobacco and minors are treated in many statutes. It is unlawful for minors to buy, possess, or drink intoxicants, or to buy tobacco products. It is also illegal for adults to furnish tobacco products or intoxicants under several statutes.

Why were these statutes passed? Obviously, our forefathers felt that young people were not mature enough to handle themselves after drinking, and that smoking was not good for them.

Did they pick the age 21 to allow the use of these products because at that age they will cause no harm? Obviously not. Misuse of alcohol and tobacco at any age will hurt you, and by the opposite token tobacco or alcohol will not affect you any differently at the age of 19 than it will at the age of 21.

WE SUBMIT that the reason present-day laws select the artificial and arbitrary age of 21 for smoking and drinking is that adults never want their children to use these products and hope that by legally

postponing their use, the child "will never get the habit."

The proper age for the use of tobacco and intoxicants if there is one is when the child is mature enough to use them moderately. This is a different age for practically every individual. It has no relationship to age 21.

THE FACT that a state statute is difficult to enforce does not lead us to favor its modification, but the fact that it is arbitrary makes us feel that it should be changed.

We know that not everyone in the community will agree with our position; some because they are against the use of tobacco and/or alcoholic beverages altogether under any circumstance; others because they might feel the "kids can't handle the stuff."

But we must face the reality that if teen-agers want cigarettes or whiskey, it is not too difficult for them to obtain them in our community.

And the use of these products after they have been secretly obtained will lead to trouble a lot quicker than if young adults were permitted to purchase these products and use them in full view of the community.

AGAIN, WE don't care if the subject was discussed or not by the PTA Council, but we do feel it is about time that we stopped kidding ourselves into thinking that because the law says no drinking or smoking 'til one is 21, it will be obeyed and we will have no trouble.

We submit that the time has come to recognize that the use of tobacco and liquor by people over 18 is not only not immoral, but a more realistic approach to a problem that continually plagues our community because we have failed to understand that times have changed.

### A Central Office Would Help

It was a good idea.

There was a lot of noise made several weeks ago when the Atlantis Society proposed to lease one of the controversial homes on Townsend St. and use it as a central office place for non-profit, community service organizations.

The home is on property which the City of Birmingham is seeking to obtain—through condemnation procedure—for Municipal Parking Lot No. 7.

Two questions were raised which created all of the noise: What was the Atlantis Society? Could the City lease the house for such a purpose?

THE SOCIETY, it developed, was an organization that had just been formed with the purpose of improving communication between community service-cultural groups, helping to schedule events to avoid conflicts in dates and providing central office space.

As for the second question, the city's legal counsel ruled that Birmingham could not condemn property for one purpose and then use it for another. The City could, perhaps, condemn it for the specific purpose of leasing it to the Society; but this action would have little chance of standing up in court.

In the confusion over the identity and purpose of the Atlantis Society and the parking lot-house controversy, the idea of a central office headquarters was lost temporarily.

HOWEVER, IN recent weeks representatives of five organizations have explored this possibility a little further. Meeting at The Community House, they discussed the individual groups' needs.

These organizations are the American Association of University Women, Birmingham League of Women Voters, Junior League, Oakland Citizens League and Birmingham Junior Chamber of Commerce.

No definite plans have been formulated as yet, but further planning sessions are in the offing.

WE HOPE they will be successful. We

recognize that there is a need for such a facility. And we think, with eventual expansion, The Community House is the best place for it. What other organization better represents the community, its traditions and its spirit?

Residents of Birmingham and the area can well be proud of the accomplishments of the various community service organizations. But they can be even more efficient and effective with a streamlining of their operations.

Certainly, the costs would be much less with a pooling and sharing of such services as telephones, mailing, secretarial assistance and office space.

THE ORGANIZATIONS would benefit and this would be in a position to improve and increase their community activities. And in the long run the community would gain from the greater efficiency and the increased services.

Yes, it was a good idea. Let's help it materialize.

### From The Eccentric's Point of View . . .

The National Gallery of Art in Washington has acquired one of the world's great paintings, Nicholas Poussin's "Assumption of the Virgin." Americans can rejoice that they will now have a chance to view this notable work in the nation's capital. The attitude of British art connoisseurs is something else again. The fact that the resounding price of \$201,000 goes to Britain has no soothing effect, but is salt in their wounds; they see this as one more instance of American dollars robbing Britain of her treasures. Britain's National Gallery had voiced this view by urging that an export license be refused on grounds the painting was a work of national importance. Happily for us, the British government turned down the request. The painting will soon be a part of the brilliant accumulation of art treasures in Washington.

Sen. Maurice Neuberger thinks Sen. Margaret Chase Smith would attract women from both parties if she were the GOP vice presidential nominee. Goldwater's also strong with the ladies. The trouble is that men vote, too.

### PEOPLE'S COLUMN

## Why Parenteen Committee Was Started in Birmingham

To the Editor:  
The last two editions of The Eccentric have carried many protests against the reported proposal of the Parenteen Committee of the PTA Council to start a study which might have the result of lowering the legal smoking and drinking age. The letters to the editor represent, I am sure, the feeling of the majority of the people in the area. For the first four years of its existence I was closely associated with the Parenteen Committee, and I believe it might be informative to the community to re-print the letter (from a university student) which was the motivating force behind this committee's efforts:

"TO THE Editor:  
"A while back I was involved in an automobile accident. It was very serious even though no one but myself was involved. The purpose of this letter is to hope that through your paper some other young man like myself doesn't have to go through the same experiences that I have gone through.

"The experience that I talk of were all brought about by a

drinking habit acquired at an early age. I wish that I didn't know. That is something for the psychologists to work on. All I know is that it could have been avoided and I hope that maybe this letter and your paper may be able to stop some other person from starting a habit like this.

"I am now a sophomore at an Ohio university. I did very well my freshman year, but this year my fast-living caught up with me. Just since the accident do I realize here on campus who were shocked at some of the stories of Birmingham parties I told them—none were exaggerated.

"I feel that something must be done in the Birmingham area to remedy the problems that most people know to exist. I have met people here on campus who were

NOW I WOULD like to pose some questions:  
1. Where were all of you parents who now are protesting the lowering of legal drinking age when this letter was published? Notice that this young man began the change should begin in the home—not through legislation.

2. Where were all the people who now think the law should control this community problem?  
THROUGH THE support of the PTA Council, the Parenteen Committee evolved, and its members worked hard at preparing junior high and senior high social guides, based on the results of city-wide questionnaires given to teens and their parents. In addition, the committee has made a sincere effort to publicize and follow through on its aims: (See COMMITTEE, 8-B)

### PEOPLE'S COLUMN

## Disagrees With Lyman On Teacher Tenure

To the Editor:  
Your unfavorable editorial of Nov. 7 regarding statewide tenure for teachers was not unexpected. Although I do not agree with the editorial, it did not evoke this letter. Rather, it was the letter to the editor from Mr. William Lyman in the Nov. 14 issue that prompted this response.

In his letter, Mr. Lyman not only agreed with The Eccentric's position but ventured a few steps farther. He stated, "The long-range effect would be to drive good teachers out and freeze mediocre and incompetent teachers in, thereby removing all justification for viewing teaching as a profession."

THAT'S QUITE a mouthful, Mr. Lyman. I only hope you devoted as much thought and research to your proposal that tenure would promote mediocrity and incompetency as the Michigan Education Association has in asserting that, to the contrary, it will promote better initial selection of teachers and consequently better teachers.

In denouncing tenure you neglected many important aspects that deserve mentioning. For example, before a teacher can become eligible for tenure, he must serve a two-year probationary period. Mr. Lyman, if I were an administrator I would think long and hard before granting tenure to a teacher I considered "medi-

ocre" or "incompetent."

AS FOR maintaining a highly qualified staff, it seems to me that quality school systems need not worry about quality teachers. They complement each other. Here in Birmingham, for example, we have something approaching the best in teacher quality because we have something approaching the best in a school system. By strengthening the initial selection process, we necessarily strengthen teaching and ultimately the education of our children.

LASTLY, YOUR obviously thoughtless comment that "Any teacher worth his salt should have nothing to do with the petition now being circulated by the Michigan Education Association" disturbs me. I am a teacher. I resent being labeled "not worth my salt" because your view on tenure disagrees with mine.

Somehow I cannot convince myself that you condemn my abilities, intelligence, or both, because I support protection of some kind for all teachers in all systems from unfair or arbitrary dismissal. Unfortunately, all Michigan is not Birmingham, Mr. Lyman. DON CAMERON, 1958 Kirkshire Birmingham (MORE PEOPLE'S COLUMN LETTERS ON 8-B)

## Yesteryear Happenings

50 YEARS AGO  
Nov. 28, 1913

A disastrous fire occurred Monday noon of this week in which Mr. Harvey Hedding and family lost their home and a great deal of their furniture. Everything upstairs was consumed. The fire is supposed to have caught from the stove pipe passing through the floor and the entire upstairs was all in a blaze before the family knew of it at all. The fire department turned out in a prompt manner and did all in their power to save what was saved. Mr. Hedding could not afford this great loss and his many friends rallied to his help by subscribing a generous amount of money to a paper passed around by George A. Cray.

David Devine, in the toils for bigamy, is said to have had anywhere from two to seven wives. It is said that he will plead guilty and throw himself upon the court. Seven wives? My! My! Seems as if he'd suffered enough. But, far be it from us to try and influence the Court.

It is estimated that a good, healthy, ambitious rat will destroy \$37.82 worth of property every year. Well, then, what should we do for Frank Standard who killed seventeen rats under one corn shock one day last week. At this rate Birmingham Heights will soon become celebrated. (See HAPPENINGS, 8-B)

## Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

Once upon a time there was an elephant that wasn't too sure he wanted to be identified as an elephant, but then again he didn't want to be identified as a donkey, either.

He felt that there was a job to do in clearing up the jungle, but didn't feel that either the elephants or the donkeys could do it because they were always fighting with each other.

The elephants naturally blamed the donkeys for not getting the job done; and, of course, the donkeys blamed the elephants. Meanwhile, the jungle got messier.

OUR FRIEND THE elephant decided that he would start an independent group called the citizens for the jungle and he invited all of the animals to join. This new group did a lot of studying and suggesting but unfortunately, not having any political power, they were unable to accomplish anything.

Finally the elephant thought that if he were going to get the jungle cleared up, he would have to get all of the elephants together, root the donkeys and have no excuses for not getting the work done.

BECAUSE THIS elephant had personal magnetism and a great flair for salesmanship (having previously taken on a battle with a flock of gas-eating dinosaurs and come out quite victorious), he was able to marshal many of the elephants together and take over the administration of the jungle.

At first, he was successful in keeping the elephants in line and accomplished great things. When he took over the jungle, it was 85 million bananas in debt. At the end of a year and a half he had washed out the debt and the jungle had a surplus of 25 million bananas.

KNOWING THAT the manner of collection of bananas was unfair and in fact was hurting the progressive development of the jungle, the head elephant proposed a banana reform.

There were great cries of joy from the animals in the jungle because this looked like the answer to solve the woes which had been plaguing the jungle for many years. Unfortunately, after the original cries of joy, the animals went home to their caves and hollow tree stumps and apparently forgot about pushing the reform.

WHEN THE administrative council got together to consider the banana reform, disagreements arose. Some elephants had been fighting a particular way of taxing bananas for many years and said they weren't going to change now.

Some donkeys attacked the program because it didn't raise enough bananas to take care of some of their favorite projects, and they thought that this would be a great way to make the head elephant look weak, giving them a chance to get rid of him.

In the end the banana reform was defeated because not all of the elephants were willing to go along and not enough donkeys were in favor of it to get the necessary number of uplifted hooves.

BECAUSE OF THE narrow-mindedness of some of the elephants and the political chicanery of some of the donkeys in the jungle again began to have troubles.

And these troubles won't be solved until the elephants and donkeys understand that if they keep putting self before jungle, pretty soon there will be no jungle. Moral: If you are successful in beating down gas-eating dinosaurs, think twice about putting yourself in the position where you can be trampled by elephants or kicked by donkeys.

## City Beat

By KEN WEAVER



Service clubs place great emphasis on calling members by their first names.

It's "Bill," and not Mr. Burgum. It's "George," and not Dr. Raynale.

This practice helps to create the desired feelings of friendship and fellowship. And it keeps alive a high sense of humor.

The Birmingham Rotary Club recently had occasion to hear Charles (Charlie) M. Dyer, a charter member of Rotary and, since 1951, under-secretary for service to district governors and Rotary clubs world-wide.

In his role for Rotary International, Charlie has visited clubs in 49 states and 22 other countries.

A few months ago, he attended a club's meeting in Belgium. Seated next to Charlie at the speaker's table was a man wearing a badge that identified him as "Albert." Frequently during the luncheon Charlie had occasion to address this individual by his first name.

Finally, he asked what his profession was.

"Oh, Your Majesty, I'm a king."

Whereupon Charlie quickly admonished Charlie: "Sh, don't let the sergeant of arms hear you say that. He'll fine us both."

So it is with service clubs.

PICKETS WERE marching up and down the sidewalk in front of one local mortuary last week.

Which fact caused one quipster to pun: "Guess you'd call that a dead organization."

And another one commented: "You can't die without a union label today."

DO YOU KNOW what your post office zip code number is? That's that long number that you are supposed to put in front of the state when addressing a letter. It tells the postman at a glance the section of the country, the state and the community where the epistle is to be delivered.

It seems that some people are confusing this code with telephone numbers. They are dialing zip codes and getting all kinds of strange connections.

Wonder what 48008 would get?—No, no; don't try it!

### Incentive Plan



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