

Can't We Do It Ourselves?

The Birmingham City Commission voted 5-1 last week to contact the proper Federal Agency about the possibility of bringing federal funds into our community to physically improve certain areas of the city.

The federal program, under the Urban Renewal Administration, would underwrite 75 per cent of the costs of improving streets, sewers and selective removal of houses in extremely deteriorated condition, if the city qualifies as "a major conservation area."

The federal program would also allow residents to borrow from the federal government at a low interest rate funds to improve their homes.

TWO WEEKS AGO this paper went on record as opposing any involvement of Birmingham in an urban renewal project.

We took the position that the highest per capita income community in the state had no business posing as an impoverished community, unable to solve its own problems.

Also, we felt that if we had a problem, it should be solved locally with local money. If we were to take federal funds under these circumstances, we felt that democracy and rugged individualism were a thing of the past.

BEFORE THE COMMISSION voted to have the administration go ahead, Mayor Charles Renfrew admonished them by saying, "If you vote in favor of this step, it seems to me we are leading toward a federal program."

The mayor summed up the situation in a nutshell. If we are not going to take federal funds, why have the government go to the cost of making an investigation?

Secondly, if the government makes an investigation and finds that we would qualify, haven't we incurred a moral obligation to go through with the program?

And lastly, once we know the funds are ready, willing and able to be snatched from

the government, won't it be rather difficult to turn them down? This is just creating temptation.

AFTER THE MAYOR'S admission, five members of the commission voted to go ahead. The one dissenting vote, that of Mr. Page was not entirely based on principle; he indicated that it was a matter to be taken care of by the city administration rather than by the commission. Mr. Roberts was not present at the meeting and therefore did not vote.

As human beings, we are all faced with the desire to be mothered or fathered. Every day we are fighting the ambivalence of trying to be mature and independent on one hand and desiring to return to the womb for security on the other.

DECISIONS SUCH as that facing the commission involves the same basic ingredients. Do we stand up, solve our own problems or are we immature and run to daddy to solve them for us?

If part of our community is a serious blight on the rest of our community, which we doubt, we should tackle the problem as a community. If the city lacks the power, let's either get it or do the job as citizens.

Let's find out how many of the homes in the area need improvement. Let's find out how many of the residents can't afford to pay for the improvements and for the costs of paving streets and redoing sewers.

LET'S FIND OUT once and for all if we really do have a "slum" area, and let's find out what's causing it.

Before we run to Uncle Sam, let's prove to ourselves that we are incapable of handling the problem ourselves.

And if we are willing to make the admission that we are incapable of solving our own local problems, we think we are admitting that we have increasingly less need for a local governing body.

Hurrah for Teen Panel!

When The Birmingham Eccentric set up its teen panel last year, one of the purposes was to create a structure that would provide teen-agers an opportunity to identify and help solve their own problems.

This goal has been realized, in our opinion, with such examples as represented by the report that the panel is recommending three steps to be taken to cope with the problem of shoplifting.

After conducting their own study, members of the panel discussed the information and then resolved that:

- Teens be acquainted with the shoplifting problem and the penalties under law for the offense. This program, they felt, could be carried out through the schools.

- Posters and displays in stores and schools should be utilized to bring the message to the students.
- Store owners should report all teenage shoplifters to the police, with the purpose of helping teens to realize the consequences of the crime.

The teens have been a much maligned group of our society. Their behavior has been criticized in the adult world, including articles in the pages of this newspaper.

THAT THE image of teen-agers here and throughout the nation has, to a large extent, been an unfavorable one goes without question. Yet, it has been felt that this was the fault of the teens, themselves; that they were validating this impression by their own deeds.

If this is true, then, the teens can do more than anyone else to improve their image. By their own action can they show the adults of our society that they are a responsible, disciplined group.

We believe it is characteristic of this community that our teens are accepting the challenge, the responsibility to cope with the offenses committed by members of their own group. We are heartened that

they are acting in their own behalf, with a minimum of adult involvement.

IT HAS BEEN said time and again that only a small percentage of teens were the actual trouble-makers, that they were the ones who created a bad impression of teens in general.

It stands to reason, then, that the majority can and should act to offset the distorted picture created by the few.

The recommendations of the Birmingham teen panel speaks well for the teens as a group; their image cannot help but be improved. We congratulate them for their action and look forward to further evidence of progress.

From The Eccentric's Point of View . . .

Optimism marked the closing session of the nonaligned nations' meeting. Everybody was glad to be getting out without wounds from all that in-fighting.

Strong ideas on a subject are matters of preference—except in the case of the other fellow's contrary ideas, which are referred to as prejudices.

India's Prime Minister Shastri says he once gained weight by quitting the tensions of a government job. Then how come there are so many fat politicians?

Reports are the defense budget will be held to a mere 50 billion. That's good news, all right—but were still old-fashioned enough to think 50 billion dollars is rather a lot.

McNamara goes to the LBJ ranch to discuss the budget. Humphrey wasn't so lucky. He had to spend his time riding a horse and eating barbecued ribs.

So California has brush fires in spring and mudslides in fall. So how come more and more people keep going there to live?



PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Combo Clash Chairman Praises Area Teens

To the Editor: Our attention is frequently directed to the seemingly growing problem of juvenile delinquency in our community. The "school-going" population here has been referred to as the "Lost Generation," the "Woodwarding Drivers," "Vandals and Thrill Seekers" and many other slick labels that implied and accused them of lacking good manners and taste, or a sense of responsibility or direction.

Recently the Birmingham Exchange Club sponsored its second annual high school combo clash affair at Seaholm. At least 1,000 young men and women from our local schools attended the affair. Not a single trouble-causing incident arose.

AS A MATTER of fact, the complete opposite character of teenagers prevailed. They were orderly and cooperative. They found money and returned it so that its rightful owner could claim it. They were responsible young adults having a good time.

Others emphasize the growing problem of juvenile delinquency amongst our community teen-agers. We would like to emphasize their competitive spirit, their appreciation when treated as young adults and their sense of commitment and sacrifice when a challenge is presented to them.

We are proud of the teen-agers in our community.

DR. ERNEST K. EFIMOFF
Combo Clash Chairman
Birmingham Exchange Club

STRICTLY FRESH

A great oak is said to be but a little nut that held its ground. . . .
A butcher we know said he'd rather have newswriters as customers than anyone else—they don't remember what prices used to be.



Some say that too many parents are not on spanking terms with their children. If you want to impress the boss with how busy you are, keep a messy desk.

'Welfare State' Topic for Home Discussion Here?

To the Editor: Mr. William Lyman writes thoughtful, completely sincere letters which deserve the same kind of reply. I must agree that the world is changing rapidly. What is never feeling Mr. Lyman must have to know that his salary changes rapidly also.

Perhaps the road of life that he traverses wouldn't be so narrow if, possibly, the words "welfare state" would have been discussed in his own home. The incident of never discussing the word "welfare" in a family discussion is enough to make the social studies teachers shudder.

It is not my intent to embarrass Mr. Lyman, for surely he is allowed his own opinions, but he does happen to live in an area of extremely intelligent people who are rabidly opposed to socialism.

Incidentally, in regards to the recent election, A D Y E R S T Y BUILDERS STRENGTH
DOROTHY THOMSON
5085 Middlebelt Road
Orchard Lake

Yesteryear Happenings

50 YEARS AGO
December 11, 1914

The home misrinks can always be sure of a big crowd. Their entertainment last week at the Family Theater was a fine local affair and the boys played to a S.O.R. Their jokes, songs and other entertainment pleased so many of those present that it was requested that they give a repetition of it, which they did on Tuesday night of this week, and they drew a full house. All the participants did so nicely that it would be unfair to specialize. The boys can always count on a big house whenever they decide to appear.

Two outstanding student leaders in extra-curricular activities at Baldwin High School have also excelled their classmates in their academic work and have been named valedictorian and salutatorian of the mid-year graduating class. They are Roberta Chissus, 524 Oakland Avenue, and John Parker, 916 Kennesaw. Both will speak at commencement exercises on Jan. 24.

20 MOVING-PICTURE entertainments will be given on Friday, Dec. 18, at the Birmingham Theater, under the auspices of the Bloomfield Hills Seminary, for the benefit of Belgian Relief Committee, the proceeds to be used in the purchase of supplies. It is hoped a large sum will be realized. Tickets for the afternoon performance are 25 cents and for the evening, 35 cents.

15 YEARS AGO
December 8, 1949

Birmingham wells have a close about reached the point where they cannot supply much more than 600,000,000 gallons of water per year without beginning to deplete the city's underground water source, City Manager Donald C. Egbert said Tuesday. The city must now consider two or three new wells and possibly a third water storage tank, Egbert said. He also stated that, in the long run, another auxiliary water source, possibly from Detroit, might be needed.

30 YEARS AGO
December 13, 1934

The 3,500 depositors of the First State Savings Bank of Birmingham will receive a welcome Christmas present next week in the form of a 5 per cent dividend on their deposits. It was announced yesterday by C. Henry Purdy, receiver. Payment of the dividend will begin Monday and will continue through the following Saturday.

Richard Patterson, 1822 Bates, was head of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce for 1950. He succeeds Dr. Robert J. Mason. Assisting Patterson next year in supervising chamber activities will be Ralph A. Wilson, 19370 Riverside, as vice-president; Warren Sumner, secretary; and Merrill C. Adams, treasurer. The election took place last Thursday evening.

Christmas Stamp Draws Criticism

To the Editor: The Christmas stamp this year is nothing more. The Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Christ. I feel the postage stamp commemorating the day should show a cross or a church or even a manger or something to signify Jesus' birth.

Pine cones, mistletoe and holly are fine in their place but not on our stamp—not telling the world how we feel about Christmas!

I somehow feel all this "side-stepping" is being done to avoid proving the ire of all the atheists. The Christians far outnumber them.

Let's put Christ back in Christmas.

CONCERNED

Birmingham, after all, is going to have a community Christmas tree—with 11 g's! This was assured Monday night when the City Commission accepted an offer of Mrs. William R. Yaw, daughter of Senator and Mrs. James Couzens, to contribute whatever funds are needed to purchase the lighting system and the electricity. The labor and service of installation will be furnished by the Detroit Edison Co. The cost to Mrs. Yaw will be about \$175.

Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN



I think it is about time that the pendulum swung back. I'm not clock-watching; I've been thinking about prosperity, strikes and labor unions. I am sure, well before my time, that pirates in industry took advantage of their help by working them long hours under poor working conditions.

And I am sure that if they could get away with it, there would still be a few pirates left in industry.

THE EXTREMISM of the pay and working conditions led to the banding together of workers into unions and the start of improved conditions for the working man. This was a necessity for the times. The employer wouldn't moderate, so he lost.

The pendulum has swung now to the other extreme. The worker and his union have been successful in bringing to him a living wage, good working conditions and some dignity to his work.

If the pendulum had stopped there, we would have achieved social justice.

BUT AFTER THEIR successes, the labor leaders couldn't go back to their members and say let's sit with what we have, and expect to stay on past the next election as a labor leader.

They are now asking for more, whether productivity warrants it or not.

They want the right to tell management what to do. In short, they want both wages for their labor and the fruits of profit without their own investment.

THEY ARE REACHING the opposite extremes from the pirates of industry; and, unless they moderate, like the pirates they will overplay their hand and lose some of the goals they have gained.

The recent Detroit newspaper strike is an example. The final settlement was close to what was offered before the strike.

An industry was silenced, profits were lost and, most significantly, wages were not earned for over four months. How long will it take the newspaper employes to earn back those lost wages? Balance this against their gains and you see that the strike was in vain for the ordinary employe.

It continued because a few union officials wanted to show their members how effective they are.

IF THIS practice continues, how long can an honest worker afford to be represented by a union?

Take the recent car strike. GM offered approximately the same package as the other auto makers, but the union officials turned it down because they weren't given a free ride.

Under the GM contract the union stewards had to work part of the day.

So for six weeks the employes went without wages, the state was topped off the new car buying market and the state and country suffered a short economic reversal.

How long can this continue to happen? Not much longer. The pendulum is bound to start swinging back unless labor starts to moderate.



City Beat

By KEN WEAVER

Where is our Kennedy memorial? Where is our Groves memorial?

On Nov. 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Tex. A week after his funeral, Army Capt. Michael D. Groves died of a heart attack.

He was 27 years old. His father, Donald Groves of Birmingham, says the captain went four days without sleep during the funeral period, standing guard himself besides attending to many other details.

Capt. Groves, who went to school in Birmingham, was the commanding officer of the Presidential Honor Guard which had a major role in the ceremonies in Washington. For his own efforts, he was awarded, posthumously, the Army Commendation Medal for meritorious service.

AFTER THE President's death, there was some talk of a Kennedy memorial in Birmingham, but nothing ever came of it. "Let's not be hasty about this" was the general attitude at the time.

Memorials were proposed for the captain, too, but did not materialize.

It was right and proper that no rash action was taken during that period of hysteria. But I think we can look at the matter more soberly, more objectively now.

Mr. Kennedy was, more objectively now, a Democrat—and this is a Republican community. Yet, I can't believe anyone would let his political affiliations obstruct plans for a memorial to the President.

WHETHER MR. Kennedy was a great President is not for us to decide; future historians will take care of that for us. But it is enough that he was serving as our Chief Executive when martyred.

We do know that he was a man of many attributes; a highly intelligent.

CAPT. MICHAEL GROVES (See CITY BEAT, 8-B)

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