

Why the Hullabaloo?

Ten students were suspended last week by the Birmingham Board of Education for alleged affiliation with secret societies.

The action has raised howls of protest from children and parents. Why, we are not sure.

Even ignoring the old cliché that everyone is presumed to know the law, it is pretty difficult for any Birmingham resident to say he is unaware that under state statute it is illegal for a public school student to be a member of a secret society.

WE HAVE IN the past included the vital parts of that statute here on this editorial page; our news pages have on many occasions described the struggle of the school board with this problem and the school board itself has notified parents.

We have to date taken the position that we are not sure whether the state statute is good or bad; but since no member of this community has taken any steps to see that the law is changed, we must presume that the community as a whole is satisfied with it.

SINCE THERE IS no effort to repeal the law, it is the duty of the board of education

to enforce it. And we compliment the board for having the fortitude to do something about it.

And the board members deserve the compliment because some citizens have been trying their patience by publicly flaunting participation by their children in these sororities and fraternities.

The school board has tried to solve the problem without hurting the children's education.

BUT A FEW PARENTS apparently feel that proving a legal principle is more important than seeing that their children are properly educated.

What these parents may have done is instill in their children during their formative years the feeling that laws are only for a few, that people of influence need not obey them. What effect this will have on later life, we can only speculate.

We are sorry that the only way the problem could be brought to a head is by excluding some students from classes, but the silly season has lasted long enough.

But we submit that it is the parents who are actually responsible for this interruption in their children's education, not the school board.

Where Responsibility Begins

At what point in their lives are young people capable of assuming some responsibility for their conduct?

When do they attain a level of maturity that involves participation in decisions concerning their behavior and activities?

Do they have any obligation toward each other, to cope with problems common to them as a group?

Responsibility begins with a recognition of right and wrong and grows as youth becomes increasingly aware of the differences between adult and child behavior.

AND, YES, teen-agers do have some obligation to solve their own problems. The process not only proves beneficial to them as a group, as well as to society, but also assists the individual in reaching the desired level of maturity.

With these thoughts in mind, The Birmingham Eccentric has engaged the services of David Zimmer, president of the Seaholm Student Congress, as a teen consultant.

It will be his responsibility to plan and carry out youth projects that offer an opportunity for growth and development for teens in general.

THIS YOUNG MAN has recognized his responsibility to himself and to his fellow teen-agers, as attested to in his letter to the editor published on this page in our Jan. 30 issue.

Initially, he will arrange for selection of a Teen of the Week, a Teen Driver of the Month and a periodic symposium on subjects of interest and importance to teen-agers.

The purpose is to give a positive reporting of youth activities and promote the projects, habits, characteristics and thinking of the teens that may help improve their lot.

THE ECCENTRIC welcomes the challenge to take a more positive approach in the coverage of teen news; the teens, too, are urged to cooperate in taking steps to improve their image among adults.

We hope this becomes a successful demonstration of cooperation between community journalism and the youth in our area.

From The Eccentric's Point of View...

Most discussion of the proposed American supersonic airliner has been for revolved about two questions. One is whether this country need rush into competition with Britain and France in this area. The other concerns the extent to which the federal government should subsidize airline companies in designing and building this craft expensive to cruise at "unacceptable" speeds of sound. There is another pertinent question: What is going to be done about such a plane's tremendous sonic boom? In this connection an aeronautical engineer writes that the wake from such a plane flying at 70,000 feet would produce sound ranging from "unacceptable to catastrophic" in a corridor 15 miles wide at ground level. Present sonic booms are bad enough. This would be much worse. Let us hope that the problem of minimizing the giant supersonic's boom is getting some attention.

A Florida woman has objected to President Johnson's changing of the name of Cape Canaveral to "Cape John F. Kennedy." The lady was informed that the changed name means more now, since "Cape Canaveral" the super name that the name was derived from, no longer grows there. So she then suggests that Chicago (which means skunks or smelly marshes that no longer infest the Windy City) should get a new name; also New York ought to be Rockefeller... etc., etc. These changes, she admits, probably would comply with the modern New Frontier trend to change a lotta things.

President Johnson, if he continues to demand a considerable cut in the federal budget, is going to win a lot of citizen support. Yet this fact must be kept in mind: it is the total budget that should be looked at annually by the people. It is one thing to cut funds down in separate categories of federal spending, and another thing when added sums are made to other existing items, or when new items are added. When the annual expenditure figures show a decline, that is the time to praise both the President and those Congressmen who support such budget cuts.

Smokers who don't quit break down into those who think they can smoke awhile longer without getting cancer, and those who figure it's already too late.

Goldwater says Rockefeller echoes President Johnson on a surprising number of points. Maybe what Barry should do is echo someone besides Goldwater.

Median family income rose from \$3,091 in 1949 to \$5,609 in 1959. The increase in father's pay almost kept him from going further into debt.

President Johnson likes music, but before the campaign gets much older he's apt to get sick of it.

The Washington-Moscow "hot line" was cold for four hours after someone cut the cable. It would not be so hot to have this happen in a time of crisis.

Forty per cent of cars made in Russia are exported, leaving too few to meet domestic demand. Khrushchev's demand for foreign exchange comes first.

Willie Mays is a man to be envied. He loves to play baseball and will get \$105,000 for doing it next season.

"Panama Could Be Issue in Campaign," says a headline. If not, it won't be because GOP hopefuls didn't try.

Stassen jumps into the GOP race. It makes us feel old to realize that the one-time boy wonder has seniority among those who aspire to the nomination.

A commentator says DeGaulle's move to recognize Red China is no surprise. That's right—but this doesn't make us like it any better.

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

If Draft at 18, Then Vote and Drink, Too

Much comment and concern has recently developed (or appeared in print) in regard to teen-age "drinking." Much comment has also developed in regard to 18-year-old boys of draft age who do not have voting rights or "drinking" rights, but they do have military, war and dying rights.

I have three convictions regarding these quandaries.

NO. 1: NONE of us, regardless of age, should drink alcoholic beverages in the first place (but unfortunately, some of us do). If done in moderation probably no harm is done.

NO. 2: EIGHTEEN-year-old boys are not of age to be drafted to the first place, unless in a national emergency.

NO. 3: THERE must be something amiss in our government's handling of current affairs or else we would not have the aforementioned problems. There must also be

plenty amiss in the "home." If we were "morally straight, etc." as the Boy Scouts repeat at each meeting, there might not be so much regression to violence in our society.

Perhaps we parents, and single persons, too, should re-evaluate our own moral standards and see what we come up with. What standards are we setting for the younger generation and for future generations?

It's about time we citizens of the U.S.A. "got on the ball."

A SUBSCRIBER

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Teen Center Site: How About the Y?

To the Editor:

The letter from David Zimmer, president of the Student Congress of Seaholm High School, contains many good ideas which could be handled by a group of interested adults and young people; i.e., selection of the good driver of the month, the well-groomed girl or boy, and the outstanding youth.

With respect to that portion detailing the need for a place for high school youth to drop in on week ends and after school—the Birmingham YMCA has space available that could be used by high school youth for week-end programs. In fact, there are three rooms available: one suitable for ping pong and pool, one for dancing, and one for card playing.

Says Observe Own Caution

To the Editor:

I noticed the "warning" in the paper (classified advertisement) from a local vacuum cleaning establishment to only deal with authorized personnel.

But at the same time they service cleaning equipment in cars where they have no authorized connections whatsoever.

All in all, they should practice what they preach.

"GOLDEN RULER"

Tells Newspaper Wait for Facts

To the Editor:

"Get the Facts First," your editorial of Jan. 30, is valuable in calling attention to the establishment of a citizens committee to study Bloomfield Township and the future.

You ably point out what that is (See FACTS, 7-B)

youth did something about getting a Teen Center, by raising \$5,000 from youth in their area and encouraging their parents to give to that YMCA for a Teen Center.

I ask the high school youth who want a Teen Center, "Why not make it part of the YMCA?" If the answer is "Yes" to the "Y," then ask yourselves how much you can give to this, and ask your parents if they have given to the YMCA Capital Funds Campaign. There is still time to plan a Teen Center at the Birmingham YMCA. All we need is your support.

WILLIAM H. BECK
Executive Secretary
Birmingham YMCA

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Yesteryear Happenings

50 YEARS AGO

Feb. 13, 1914

The Knights of Pythias will celebrate their golden jubilee Feb. 19. Red, yellow and blue fires will flash in the streets while the guests gather at the First Presbyterian church which will be converted into a lodge. After the program of music and speeches are over, the guests will be conducted to the new lodge and club rooms for a reception, music and dancing. This will be Birmingham's big night and the 120 Pythians and their friends will enjoy it hugely.

Noble Edith Phillips opens her school with prayer showing her heart in the right place and believing little by little all things grow as she sows good seeds, trusting them to fall upon good soil where they will bring forth one hundred fold. It elevates her in the eyes of noble womanhood and particularly in the eyes of the truly noble manhood by this noble example of her faith in God. Let more teachers follow this good act and open their schools with prayer.

A Southside young man brought his girl to town last Wednesday evening and was inquiring as to the whereabouts of "this here show thing they called 'The Deacon's Wagon' and a good natured citizen showed him over to the Family Theatre to see the "Bishop's Carriage" and never cracked a smile. That's true Christian charity.

30 YEARS AGO

Feb. 13, 1934

A definite move to eliminate house-to-house peddlers in Birmingham and thus to stamp out one of the most serious menaces to the legitimate, tax-paying business of local merchants was made by the Retail Merchants Association at a meeting Tuesday night in the Community House. A volunteer committee was named to draft

(See HAPPENINGS, 8-B)

Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

BITS AND PIECES

A lot of little things pile up on my desk and every once in a while I try to clean them up. One special pile I have contains editorials and news stories that have been returned to us by an unknown reader with a big red hammer and sickle stamped across the items.

Apparently this reader feels that these items are communistic in nature, or maybe his mother gave him a stamp and ink pad for Christmas and he likes to use it.

He certainly can't be very sure of his cause because he never includes his name or what he finds critical with the items.

Some of the best improvements that we have made to our paper come from readers' comments and we always welcome them, but this reader's approach will help neither us nor him.

ROMNEY

I was talking recently with a Washington correspondent for a major chain of newspapers about the governor of our fair state.

His principal criticism of the governor was that he couldn't control his legislature during the tax reform session.

I have heard this comment so often. Romney has failed because he can't control his own party. Yet, if you look at the Washington scene, nobody criticized the late JFK for not controlling his Congress.

In that case, the fault for not getting anything accomplished was placed (and rightfully so) on the legislators.

I still can't figure it out. No tax program, Romney's a failure; no civil rights, tax cut legislation or other major legislation, for that matter, and our President is a hero.

THE NEW "ME"

Quite a few of my readers have commented on the new picture adorning this corner. Its origin is quite simple.

At a Christmas party last December, Birmingham's outstanding and maybe only criminal attorney, Walt Denison, snapped this shot while I was engrossed in some deep thinking.

He passed the photo on to our society editor and the news staff felt it was better than the high school graduation picture I had been using.

It was almost as big a surprise to me as it was to the readers of this humble corner.

MATCHES

This corner and the entire news staff would like to thank our many readers who so thoughtfully sent us matches to keep our pipes burning. With our new supply even our society editor is considering joining us in chewing on the old briar.

But we have had to request expanded facilities from the publisher to store our treasures.

City Beat

By KEN WEAVER

Everything is rosy red. Our teen-agers are little darlings. Perfect angels, that's what they are; always doing something good and hardly ever doing anything bad.

They seek to be positive, to be constructive about their lives. So many worthwhile projects, designed for self-improvement and the betterment of mankind in general, claim so much of their time.

Desirous of a broad education, they attend school regularly; applying themselves religiously to their studies. There's no loafing or horseplay at school or at home when there's homework to do.

Absentminded? No, no, not among our teen-agers.

PROUDLY, THE teachers and administrators observe them before, during and after school as they conduct themselves as ladies and gentlemen.

Smoke? No, not our boys and girls. Carry knives? Never! Indulge in vulgar language? Absolutely not; neither vocally nor in carving on school desks. Engage in immoral or illegal activities? No, no, no.

Remember that dance the other night? Was anyone out in a car necking and petting? Did anyone bring a bottle? Were any "cancer sticks" ignited?

OH, YES, we're proud, too, of the driving habits of our teen-agers. See how safely and sanely they drive down our broad avenues?

"Woodwarding"? Speeding? Here? Why, of course not. Not our well-behaved, well-adjusted teen-agers.

What about those kids that knocked over some mailboxes last fall, you ask. And didn't somebody report some destruction in that school building? Hasn't there been some shoplifting, too?

Oh, but these were only a few kids; just a few isolated incidents. These weren't our typical teen-agers.

ON THE whole, our youngsters lead useful, meaningful lives; engaging only in wholesome, enriching activities. Oh, there are a few young people who get into trouble; but this is only a part of growing up. They don't pose a very big problem. Let's forget about them. No need to emphasize what they are doing; they're such a small minority.

Forget them and concentrate on the good kids and what they are doing.

After all, these are such brilliant young people we have today. They're doing so many wonderful things.

Let's remember, they're not all bad; they're all good. And this column smells. (I would use a stronger word but it might prove offensive to some of us in this rosy-red world.)

A psychiatrist urges women not to go to the altar at too early an age. Many divorcees agree—but that any age is too early.

Women admirers of Senator Goldwater are undertaking "bakes for Barry." This may be good politics, but some observers think the idea is half-baked.

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