

A Year of Expectations

In a surprising move last week, Birmingham city commissioners elected Charles W. Renfrew as mayor for the 1964-65 year.

It was a surprise in that Commissioner Robert Page was, generally, expected to become mayor inasmuch as he had served as mayor pro tem in the past year. The assumption was that Page automatically would be elected mayor by his fellow commissioners.

No explanation was given for the action. Nor is there one actually needed. In fact, it gives us renewed confidence in this august body to find that these things are not done automatically, that there is some thought and planning behind the selection of our mayor.

Furthermore, we agree wholeheartedly with the choice of Commissioner Renfrew as mayor. He brings to office with him the valuable experience of two previous terms as mayor during his 13 years of service on the commission.

For one thing, the people of Birmingham have benefitted immeasurably from his knowledge in fiscal affairs. Mr. Renfrew has saved the City thousands of dollars in helping to plan the financing of such major projects as municipal parking lots and the City's share in the multimillion-dollar Twelve Town Drain.



CHAS. W. RENFREW

struction of Municipal Parking Lot No. 7 and planning of the peripheral roads to bypass the central business area.

Furthermore, Mr. Renfrew has earned the respect of his colleagues and others involved in city government for his masterful, forceful handling of controversial matters. He is quite capable of keeping discussions under control.

And while we look to great things from Mr. Renfrew, we look back with pride and gratitude on the service of Commissioner William H. Burghum in his capacity as mayor in the previous year.

WITH HIS guidance, the City acquired land for the new municipal parking lot, purchased land at the corner of Woodward and Forest for improvement of that intersection, constructed sewer projects at a cost of \$250,000 and began construction of the new municipal golf course near Cranbrook and Lincoln.

We salute Mr. Burghum for his part in these accomplishments. The community is forever indebted to him.

As for Mr. Page—though we believe he could fulfill mayoral duties capably now, we recognize that another year as mayor pro tem will help prepare him that much more. We are sure he will appreciate the value of added experience.

AND WE extend our best wishes to Charles F. Clippert on his election to the city commission. We urge him to always keep in mind his responsibility to the entire electorate and to accept the cooperation of his fellow commissioners and other city officials in planning the future of our city.

And while we are on the subject of elections, let us point out that the day of the unopposed candidate in Birmingham is at an end. No longer can incumbents expect to be re-elected automatically. Rather, they can look to intensified campaigning in future elections.

Where Does 'Intent' Come In?

The Bloomfield Hills city election reached a new high in confusion when the board of canvassers last week certified the write-in candidates as winners of two of the seats up for election.

There were three of the five commission seats up for election this year. Robert Frye won one of them. The second two-year term ended in a tie between incumbent James Beresford and write-in candidate George Webb.

The third seat, which is only a one-year position, went to candidate John Blanchard who is presently serving on the commission by appointment.

The tie would have been enough confusion, but when the board of canvassers met it found that many people wrote candidate names in on the voting machines in the wrong place.

FOR INSTANCE, one of the candidates for city commission received two votes for constable and 29 votes for one of the two-year terms, when he was only a candidate for the one-year term.

The misplaced votes were not counted in the original totals.

The board of canvassers then decided

From The Eccentric's Point of View . . .

The great dream of the paleontologist is to find a living fossil. This is not impossible. It occurred a few years ago when a coalcanthar, a fish thought to have been extinct for millions of years, was hauled from the sea. A far more exciting possibility is being more or less soberly discussed these days. This is the remote but not wholly ridiculous chance that Neanderthal man, known only through fossil remains, may have survived in remote mountainous areas of Asia. The theory is that the so-called Aborigine Snowman, reportedly sighted in the Himalayas from time to time in recent years, is none other than Homo Neanderthalensis. Supposedly this hairy, stooping fellow became extinct about 50,000 years ago. But what if, as some scientists suspect, he still lurks in the Himalayas? A Mongolian expedition is going to try to find him this summer. We can hardly wait.

that it was the voters' "intent" that the two write-in candidates be elected; so they certified their election.

Legally, "intent" may be very important when one is construing the criminal statutes or determining provisions of a will, but it has no place in the certification of an election.

If the view of the majority of the board of canvassers were correct, it would be their duty to determine the intent of the electors who never got to the polls and include this in their findings.

AN ELECTION is an absolute thing. Either a person votes correctly or his vote is not counted.

The board of canvassers does not have the right to decide whom they would like to be elected.

We feel it is about time that the participants in this fiasco started to act like adults and get down to work.

There are sewers to be built and paid for, roads to be paved and many other things which the city could be doing.

The issue of two-story or three-story dwellings should be settled once and for all and should not be allowed to delay the handling of other important city business.

They say it will take residents of some underdeveloped nations 540 years to attain a standard of living now enjoyed by the average American. Still, one thing they enjoy that we don't is low taxes.

Some experts advise Socrates to get into the race soon if he wants to get anywhere. They forget that he may already be where he wants to be—Harrisburg, Pa.

Most Americans will agree with the President that policy must be guided by "the quest for peace." The problem is, how do you best pursue the quest?

Now they're making shoes out of synthetic leather. This is considered to be quite a feat for feet.

Call to Arms



PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Column on 'Slum' Homes In B'ham Termed Biased

To the Editor: I have just finished reading Ken Weaver's column that was published in The Eccentric on April 2. I found it extremely interesting, especially the part concerning the "storm."

I would like to inform you that you won't have to look into the skies, as you put it, to see it. I think that your article was rather biased, to say the least. After counting the number of noticeably run-down houses in this so-called "slum area," I could only find about six. Perhaps what I would consider a slum is different from your definition.

NO, MY neighbors do not live in \$30,000 ranch homes, but neither are their homes ready for the city demolition crews. Most of my neighbors take pride in what they have, and are not ready to buy expensive ranch homes because they are

people who know their economic position and do not try to live above it.

I have lived in this neighborhood for my entire 18 years of existence, and I have never felt it necessary whatsoever to apologize to my friends (many of whom come from wealthy homes) for the condition of my neighborhood.

I CONSIDER most of my neighbors upstanding members of our community, even though they do not have two or three cars sitting in circular driveways. I think that you have judged our neighborhood quite unfairly with your rash statements about it being "run-down." In fact, many families on my street alone spent the whole of last summer redecorating the interiors and exteriors of their homes.

Furthermore, many of these people have lived in our com-

munity since the village of Birmingham still boasted dirt roads. They are people who are trying to raise their families in an atmosphere of love, truth and integrity, even though many of them do not have the material means to do any better.

IN CASE you might be taking one of those Sunday drives that you suggested, please pay attention to the condition of the roads in your perusal of our "slum-area" situation.

I earnestly request that you reconsider your nicely complimentary statements about the majority of homes in this area of our community. I, too, firmly believe that there is always room for improvement; however, you do not seem to leave any encouraging basis for such a project.

MRS. FRANCES THURBER
1139 Emmons
Birmingham

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Links Slum Problems To 'Commercial' Drive

To the Editor: Perhaps there is a storm brewing. The President has started a campaign against poverty and it is surprising and encouraging to find your columnist supporting him. (Ken Weaver, April 2, 1964.)

As a resident of Birmingham I, too, am concerned about the slums of the community of Birmingham. As a resident of Michigan, I am just as concerned about the slums of our other cities and towns. As a resident of the United States, I am also concerned with the plight of the share cropper and itinerant worker.

I AM prompted to write this because, either directly or by implication, the problem of slums is linked with the allocation of the land for residential, commercial and industrial use.

At this time there seems to be a "commercial area" drive afoot. A slum clearance is also in the wind. It is left to the reader to come to the obvious conclusion that all would be well if we superimposed the "commercial area" over the slums.

However, the raising of homes in a given area in order to establish parking lots and business districts does not solve the slum problem. It merely redistributes it.

IT DOES, however, produce a more lucrative commercial tax revenue for that area, thus giving a substantially higher return per capita. It does relieve the crowded schools of the district and make more room in the libraries and parks. In short it makes it much nicer for those still housed.

The danger comes in the evaluation of who shall stay and who shall go, who will draw the lines and according to what criteria? I

appeal to those in power to solve our problems in a manner fitting the rights and dignity of all men.

Let us not merely inscribe a new dedication to liberty, an appeal to the inner city. Let us say, "Take our tired, our poor, our huddled masses yearning to be free leaders, the wretched refuse of our teeming slums. Take those, the homeless, tempest-tost from me. I lift my lamp beside the exit door."

WILLIAM W. PHILLIPS
968 Floyd
Birmingham

Yesteryear Happenings

50 YEARS AGO
April 24, 1914

The school in Birmingham presents, very near by being a thing of the past. At the Council meeting Tuesday night last, on a vote to reject Jas. F. Woodruff's application for license to sell, three were wet, and three, dry. Lucky Jim! T. B. Smith, President, voting wet. The application of Seeley Peck was rejected for lack of proper form. Very interesting news, read all the Council proceedings—with more to follow.

At the Family Theater Wednesday, April 22, Daniel Frohman presents the distinguished dramatic favorite John Barrymore in the celebrated comedy-romance, "An American Citizen." A trans-continental romance of comedy and intrigue. A made-to-order marriage, a sudden change of nationality and a million complications beginning with a laugh and ending with another. First show opens at 6:45, second at 8:15.

Vick James and his wife while returning last Saturday, early in the evening, two miles east of Birmingham, had only two lights lit on his machine. When he reached the Anderson corner he turned out to let Art Robinson by with his motorcycle, but Art was going so fast that he hit Vick James' car in the center of the radiator and smashed it. No bones broken, but had shattering up and it will cost Vick James about \$30.00 to get his car fixed up.

50 YEARS AGO
April 23, 1914

Taxpayers of Birmingham and surrounding communities will help decide at the polls Monday whether (See HAPPENINGS, 7-B)

Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

No matter what society does in the way of laws, rules or tradition, there will always be a latecomer. And ironic as it may seem this same society encourages people to not arrive at gatherings on time even while it condemns those who are late.

I've studied the lateness problem and find that it is a disease. Most latecomers are not aware of the inconvenience they cause. It is not usually an overt act. By the same token the same people are always the ones that run into the accidents or other excuses which justify to them their untimely arrival.

BECAUSE IT is a disease, we should treat these people kindly. Maybe we ought to set up a fund to find out the real reason they are late-prone.

This will give society an opportunity to tell us that it is really to some experience in early childhood.

To implement the fund, we might be able to send out little seals to the contributors to put on the back of letters directed to habitual latecomers. Instead of Christmas or Easter seals, we could call them New Orleans seals in honor of that famous battle that took place in the South a couple of days after the end of the Civil War, because the message that the war was over was late in coming.



MR. HOGAN

WE COULD SET UP an L.A. This group could comfort the habitual latecomer when he got the urge to be "just a little late." It would stand for, of course, Latecomers Anonymous.

We could get the watch industry to make watches that were always 10 minutes fast so that the latecomers would be fooled into arriving on time.

The field and the research is unlimited. Have you ever noticed that the latecomer is usually very busy or not busy at all? He or she is late because there were either too many other things to do or not enough.

IT IS HIGH TIME that we devoted our energies to efforts that really counted. If we by science and industry could cut down every latecomer by 5 minutes, we would be able to accomplish in a 7-hour day that which now takes 8 hours.

This would give us more time for the things that really count, like coffee breaks.

To show that my heart is in this movement, I offer myself as a guinea pig. For some reason I never can be on time. I wonder what happened to me in my youth?

City Beat

By KEN WEAVER

The battle of the teen-agers rages on. Each week new letters arrive expressing views on the subject.

Here are some remarks from "a very angry teen-ager": ". . . First of all, I don't think you adults understand what we are up against."

"And second of all, if you did understand you would try to help us. I know there are some teen-agers that are beyond help. But because of these few you adults say all teen-agers are at fault."

"We are not bad in the least; most of us are good kids underneath. And most of the time we try to help ourselves. I'm in a crowd where the kids are always getting into trouble. But if we had some place to go we probably wouldn't be walking the streets looking for trouble."

"AND I'D like to give a comment on Mrs. A. Hook's letter (Page 8, April 2 issue of The Eccentric). "She commented on the fact that her son was shot and at, of course, she blames it on teen-agers. Did she ever stop and think that it might not always be the teen-agers at fault?"

"It's most likely the parents' fault. If some of the parents would take their children and instead of having the 'I-don't-care-what-you-do-or-It's your life-not-mine-attitude,' we would be better off."

"I'm not blaming it all on the parents; it's partly the child's fault. Maybe if they tried to set better examples for their children we could try to follow them. "And last of all, I'd like to say I know that all of you weren't angels when you were our age."

"So, don't blame it all on us; try to help us."

AND HERE'S another from "a teen-ager in Birmingham":

"I just read the article by Mrs. A. Hook and I disagree with her. Did she ever wonder why the Birmingham teen-agers run around the streets the way they do?"

"Did it ever occur to anyone that it's because we have no place to go? We would like a place just for us kids. A place where we can go and meet with our friends. "Sure, we expect this to be adult supervised, but we don't care; we just need somewhere to go and have fun. I know quite a few of the kids who are in trouble with the police and the reason why they go out and ruin property and just be destructive."

"THE REASON is usually 'for kicks and besides there's nothing else to do.' I know because I am one of the girls who are in the so-called 'hoods of Birmingham.'"

"We are not really bad kids; it's just that Birmingham doesn't provide a place for us to go and stay out of trouble. I'm not blaming the delinquency all on Birmingham but it has a lot to do with it."

"These crimes would hurt; they would hurt Birmingham if publicized. Our town would get a bad name. But I think the crime rate would go down if we teen-agers had a place to go and stay out of trouble."

When driving, remember that right of way is never something to be claimed. State law and common sense tell us when to stop, when to yield, and how fast to go. Drive safely.

The first robin is an early sign of spring and so are children playing in the street. But children can't fly. Protect them in their play by driving carefully.

Have you ever seen the twisted steel of an automobile mangled in an accident? If you pause to realize how much more fragile you are than steel, you will wear seat belts every time you enter a car.

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