



Early on a recent morning, as is often the case, we spied dozens of pigeons and sparrows in the middle of Pollock street, near the Elks Temple corner. Some kind soul had scattered small pieces of bread on the thoroughfare, and they were having a joyous feast.

As we approached, they grew alarmed with one accord and made a wholesale flight to the roof tops of neighboring buildings. That is, they all flew away except one small sparrow. He continued eating, and didn't even bother to look up as we passed by on the sidewalk. Meanwhile, the rest of the feathered diners saw fit to stay at what they considered a safe distance.

Why, we wondered, did this one sparrow elect to remain where he was? Could it be that he was hard of hearing, overly greedy, or simply saturated with an abundance of faith in mankind? Whatever the reason, he at least dared to be different, and for that he was deserving of the unlimited admiration we felt for him.

Admittedly, this little sparrow may be very foolish. Had we been a cat instead of a man, the story would have ended quite differently. Even so, there is something tremendously commendable about any creature with enough gumption to think for himself. It's nice to know that a sparrow can be a rugged individualist in a world where following the leader and aping others is the order of the day.

This may have been a lady sparrow. In that case, we wouldn't be at all surprised to learn that her nest is built in a decidedly unorthodox manner. And possibly, if she had her way, she would lay eggs of strange shape, size and color. She might even teach her offspring to fly backwards, just for the heck of it.

Of course, being different simply for the sake of being different isn't a commendable quality. All of us get pretty fed up with those who insist on disagreeing with others on any and all subjects. Usually, this sort of an individual is a phony who does little or no thinking. He is too busy taking the opposite point of view to reason things out and reach an honest conclusion based on his own firm convictions.

Such critters, be they birds, beasts or humans, are far removed in thought and deed from our little friend, the sparrow. He didn't stay in the street, nonchalantly eating bread crumbs, to give rise to an argument, to be an exhibitionist, or to be consistently obnoxious. Instead, he relied on his own judgement, arrived at a decision in the twinkling of an eye, and governed his actions accordingly.

Under different circumstances, he might have given the matter greater consideration. In this instance, the situation offered no opportunity for prolonged deliberation. To each of us, in the course of a busy and unpredictable life, there likewise come moments when we have to choose one course or another very quickly.

We can never be quite sure, in advance, just how we will react to this or that situation. However, it's a safe bet that those who blindly follow the leader in normal walks of life, and fail to have the courage of their own convictions, are the folks who are inevitably stampeded in an hour of crisis.

America's greatness, admittedly enhanced far beyond what we deserve by the blessings of God, is founded on unity for the common welfare; but unity in no sense of the word should ever be construed as regimentation of thought. Democracy has been a lasting thing, not because it was accepted with-

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PLEASED OFFICIALS—New Bern's telephone conversation with our mother city of Berne, via the Telstar satellite, is responsible for the smiles displayed by this group. Shown in foreground are City Attorney Al Ward, Mayor Dale

Millns, and Alderman Kathleen Stallings. Others, left to right, are Aldermen Paul Cox, George Ballard, Ethridge Ricks and City Manager Ed Welch.—Photo by Wray Studio.



SOLVE THE MYSTERY—Do you recognize anyone in this ancient picture? The uniformed young man who is second from the right on the back row is John I. Smith. Maybe you

can identify someone else and set us straight on the military organization that these New Bernians belonged to in days of yore.