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DECEMBER 2, 1954

Time To Draw A Line

Last week the Chinese Communists announced that 13 Americans had been convicted of espionage and sentenced to prison terms ranging from four years to life.

Two of the 13 have been held by the Communists for nearly three years, the others since 1953. The 13 are among more than five hundred Americans, missing and unaccounted for, that the U. S. government long has demanded be produced, dead or alive — has demanded in vain.

The government in Washington has filed "the strongest possible protest". Few persons expect the protest to have any effect. Because this is not the first time Americans have been imprisoned for alleged crimes against the Communists, nor the first time we have protested such imprisonments. This is, in fact, only one of a long series of incidents against which the United States has protested without result.

It follows by hardly more than a fortnight the shooting down by Russian Communists of an American plane, with the loss of one life. And that was the third such recent plane incident in the Japanese area alone. All together, something like a dozen American planes have been shot down, in "peacetime", by the Communists.

All these incidents have followed a pattern. The United States always protests. We assert our own innocence of wrongdoing. We demand an apology and, where there is damage, reparations. And always nothing happens.

Surely, by this time, we should know that nothing will happen; that protests alone are unavailing. How long are we going to be content to hurl nothing more deadly than words at the Communists?

And, when finally the American people have become sick of protests that are futile, what do we do next?

War, in this age of atomic and hydrogen bombs, is unthinkable. Yet it remains true that the man who refuses to fight under any circumstances finds at last he must. Furthermore, the surest road to war is the road of appeasement. And what is it but appeasement when we abandon our citizens — our young men who have been drafted into the armed forces — to their fate, once they are captured by the Communists — or permit them to be shot down without cause?

It is said that the United States government has drawn a geographical line, and that if and when the Communists cross that line, the decision is to fight. When are we going to draw line which we will not permit the Communists to cross in their contempt for American lives?

To draw such a line and to make it clear we will fight — whatever the consequences! — when it is crossed almost surely would create a new respect for the United States among its Communist enemies — and thus possibly lessen the danger of war. Quite as important, it would tend to peg the fast sagging respect of Americans for their own government. Because, for several years now, it has appeared that our government had little more respect for the lives and rights of American citizens than did the Communists.

The time has come when words are not enough. The time has come to draw a line. The American people should demand that it be drawn.

But first they should make another demand of their own government. For there is always the possibility that we are not blameless in these incidents. (If we were blameless, for example, in last month's plane incident, why the necessity for such tight military security around it? And who can fail to recognize the temptation the Pentagon must be under to get such things as photographs of important Communist military installations at any cost? How many times have American planes been ordered to fly over Communist territory to get such photographs?)

First of all, the American people should demand

of their government that it lean over backward to avoid even the appearance of evil — and that it keep itself in position to prove, beyond doubt, as these incidents arise, that it has engaged in neither aggression nor provocation. That is to say, our own militarists should be held in careful check.

If and when our government does that, then we can draw that line around Americans' lives and rights with comparative safety.

Playing For Time?

The hearing that had been scheduled this month by the U. S. Supreme Court on how and when to eliminate segregation in the public schools has been postponed.

The official explanation is that the court wishes to wait until a successor to the late Justice Jackson has taken his seat, so that a full court of nine justices may pass on the question. That, of course, is a good reason. But we suspect it is not the only reason, perhaps not the real reason.

Since the court decided, last May, that segregation is unconstitutional, there has been a growing feeling that the practical way to abolish segregation is at the local level, with the method varying from community to community, and with the time allowed likewise varying, according to circumstances. The idea has all the earmarks of common sense; so much so that state after state — including North Carolina — has suggested that the when and the how be left to local school authorities and district federal courts; and now Attorney General Brownell has substantially indorsed that proposal.

But if a thing is unconstitutional it is unconstitutional. And can the Supreme Court of the United States permit itself to be put in the position of winking at violation of the constitution in one area, for a period of months or years, while ordering immediate compliance in another area?

It probably would make sense to do just that. But it also would make the highest court in the land look ridiculous.

The truth probably is that the court is playing for time in an effort to find a way out of the almost impossible position in which it placed itself when it decided, last May, to go beyond its proper function of interpreting the Constitution, and to take on the further responsibility of enforcing what it has decided the Constitution means.

Letters

THE OLD HIGDONVILLE SCHOOL

Editor, The Press:

With reference to the news item in this week's (November 24) issue of The Press concerning the razing of the old school building at Higdonville, please let me make what I believe to be a correction to a portion of the reporting.

If my memory serves me correctly, the original building, known as the Carpenter School building, stood some two or three hundred yards above the present building. About 1911 the building that is now being torn down was erected as a three-room building, with library space. The auditorium was made by raising a partition separating two of the rooms. At the beginning of the school term of 1915, Professor R. L. Madison took over as principal, and soon thereafter launched a movement to build a senior high school. In connection with this movement, the school district was enlarged and a new room added to the building. Thus it became both a four-teacher school and a four-year high school.

Let me say that under the guidance and leadership of Professor Madison, Higdonville High School became one of the foremost schools of the county during his stay.

There will be some regret in the hearts of many to see this old landmark removed, but such is progress. It is good to know that in its place a church will be erected with steeple pointing toward Heaven whence comes its inspiration. May this flourish as a place where the gospel of Christ will be proclaimed to the people of a great community.

Sincerely yours,

Charlotte, N. C.

R. M. PEEK.

Others' Opinions

THE W.P.P.A.

(Greensboro Daily News)

As any one who has ever served in the United States Army will be delighted to explain at the slightest provocation, the initials at the head of this brief consideration do not stand for some governmental agency. Translated, they stand for The West Point Protective Association, a purely mythical body which, according to legend, sees to it that one West Point man never lets another West Point man down.

The association, we are led to believe, thrives. It flourishes even when the West Point men are no longer on active duty but fading, fading, fading away.

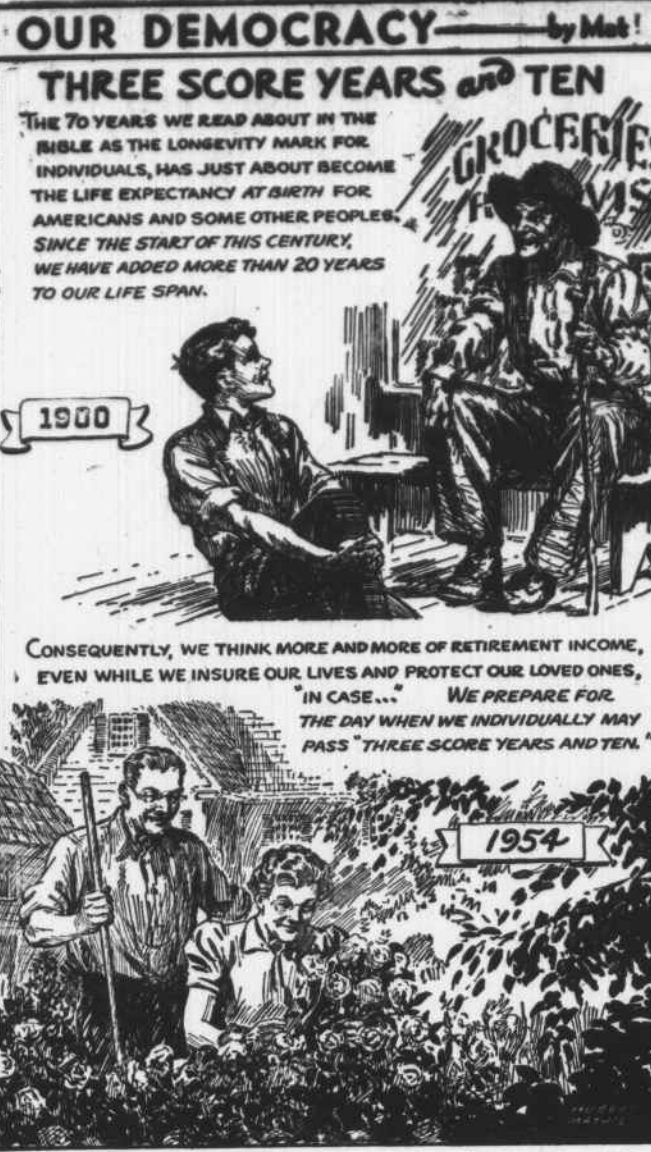
Thus the recently appointed general manager of the Atomic Energy Commission's various installations is Maj. Gen. H. K. Nichols.

The recently appointed chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority is Brig. Gen. Herbert D. Vogel, Corps of Engineers. The head of the security board which, despite the fact that

OUR DEMOCRACY — by Mat!

THREE SCORE YEARS AND TEN

THE 70 YEARS WE READ ABOUT IN THE BIBLE AS THE LONGEVITY MARK FOR INDIVIDUALS, HAS JUST ABOUT BECOME THE LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH FOR AMERICANS AND SOME OTHER PEOPLES. SINCE THE START OF THIS CENTURY, WE HAVE ADDED MORE THAN 20 YEARS TO OUR LIFE SPAN.



CONSEQUENTLY, WE THINK MORE AND MORE OF RETIREMENT INCOME, EVEN WHILE WE INSURE OUR LIVES AND PROTECT OUR LOVED ONES, IN CASE... WE PREPARE FOR THE DAY WHEN WE INDIVIDUALLY MAY PASS THREE SCORE YEARS AND TEN.

News Making As It Looks To A Maconite

By BOB SLOAN

The proposal that North Carolina borrow 153 million dollars between now and 1961 in order to bring our primary highways up to modern day standards should certainly be given the careful consideration of every North Carolina voter.

There can be little doubt that most of our highways need improving. Modern construction and design of these arteries of transportation would certainly have two results. Transportation for commercial as well as pleasure purposes could be accomplished with more ease, safer and possibly cheaper. The safety factor is one of the most demanding. Too many people are being killed on our highways. Dual lane roads where there is heavy transportation are rapidly becoming a must.

Another phase, and one which possibly won't be discussed as much, of this program, is the placing on the general fund at least part of the burden of the cost of maintaining the prison system plus the entire cost of the State Board of Paroles and the State Probation Commission.

North Carolina made a mistake when they built 80 some odd prison camps over the state and decided to keep the prisoners busy by working them on the roads. It is expensive and non-productive. It works hardships on both the prison system officials and the state highway officials.

If prisoners were kept and worked in either industrial shops or on farms they could more easily be guarded than while working on the roadsides of North Carolina. Often times it is necessary to have as many guards as it is worker for the particular job that is to be done under the present system. When men escape it is expensive to apprehend them. Under the present system not only is it more difficult to watch them but there is added temptation to make them try for freedom. As for the rehabilitation of these men, certainly a better job than this could be done either on a prison farm or in an industrial workshop where they could learn a trade.

As for the productive value to the state, many state highway officials have told me that only if they could get the money that is taken from their funds to keep up the prison system they could get two or three times the results from it. Let's face it, the state made a mistake when money was appropriated to build these camps over the state. Let's not continue to operate an inefficient and non-productive system. If the camps can be made into workshop and farm centers where the prison labor could produce school equipment and food for the various state institutions and school lunchrooms, good. But if they can't let's scrap the camps and stop handicapping the state highway system in their maintenance job.

Do You Remember?

(Looking backward through the files of The Press)

50 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

We regret to learn that Mr. Geo. H. Bidwell, his wife and child, and their nurse all have scarlet fever.

Mr. T. J. Johnston left Monday to attend the meeting of the county superintendents at Raleigh.

25 YEARS AGO

The town street forces are progressing rapidly on paving the squares adjoining the court house and parts of Iotla Street near the Baptist Church.

Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Bascom left Highlands for New York Tuesday of this week to spend the winter with their son and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. George Barrett.

Mr. Arthur Mashburn, who is teaching at the Otter Creek School, was in Franklin last Saturday for his first visit in six weeks.

10 YEARS AGO

Wilburn Reid, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Reid, who is attending Edwards Military Institute, Salemburg, N. C., spent Thanksgiving with his parents here.

Harry Corbin, S/S, son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Corbin of Cullasaja, who has been taking a four-months course in the signal corps, stationed at Great Lakes, Ill., has been spending a 9-day leave with his parents.

the subject of its investigation had been cleared by seven other boards previously, paved the way for the firing of career diplomat John Paton Davies, Jr., was Lt. Gen. Daniel Noce, inspector general of the Army.

Of course, it may be just a charming old South American custom, this government by generals, but we like to think of it as simply the W.P.P.A. in action.

THE GOVERNOR AND 'SECRECY'

(The Asheville Citizen)

Governor Hodges told his press conference the other day that "nobody could disagree in principle" with the idea of full reporting of legislative proceedings in the General Assembly.

He added, however, that there would have to be "a mutual agreement" between reporters and legislative committees, in some instances, on what should be reported.

We hope this means that Governor Hodges can be counted among those who favor repeal of the 1953 "secrecy" law. It was passed near the close of the session and it overturned 28 years of free reporting, notably on the decisions and votes of the all-powerful Joint Appropriations Committee. As The Citizen has often conceded, there was some provocation for this wrong-headed act. Yet the General Assembly, which had worked itself into a tizzy over an elementary matter of freedom of information, let go with both barrels. Bang! bang! and North Carolina's model anti-secrecy law was no more.

A principle of course is useless without a procedure in its name. Back last May 111 House candidates polled by the Associated Press favored doing away with the secrecy law and only four opposed outright repeal. In the Senate, 50 candidates advocated repeal and two were opposed. We do not know how many were elected in the ensuing primaries and the general election.

Thus the problem belongs almost exclusively to the General Assembly. We hope that its first order of business in January will be the repeal of a law which effectively closes the door on full information about the spending of the people's money. Governor Hodges is a man of high principle. This is a lofty one. If he makes known his views at the time they will have a ponderable effect upon the decision of the 1955 General Assembly.

STRICTLY

PERSONAL

By WEIMAR JONES

A couple of stories that have come my way recently interestingly illustrate a common trait of human nature — the way most of us take it for granted that, just because a field is distant, it therefore is greener.

Miss Lassie Kelly tells of the out-of-state couple who liked the grits served at Miss Kelly's tea room. At meal after meal, they found the grits delicious; no doubt they had visions of its coming from a water-operated mill back in some mountain cove.

At last, they expressed a desire to take some back home with them, and asked Miss Kelly where she found this specially good kind of grits. She told them she bought the item at a local store, and gave them the brand name.

They hurried to the store and bought a package — and found this grits they liked so much was manufactured in their own home town!

And Homer Mashburn tells of the young Franklin man who had been away working several years, and returned home for

a visit. The center of an admiring sidewalk group, he proceeded to give his opinion of Franklin: "It hasn't changed a bit; it's just the same little hick town it was when I left."

"Maybe it hasn't changed", interposed Mr. Mashburn; "but just how much did you know about Franklin when you left?"

The two incidents recall the book, popular a good many years ago, "Acres of Diamonds". It was the story of the man who, seeking his fortune, tramped the world over, looking for diamonds. At last, old and poverty-stricken, he returned to the home he had left as a youth — to find acres of diamonds in his own backyard.

All of which suggests, of course, that opportunities are everywhere; that it isn't where we are that counts so much as what we see.

And it occurs to me that perhaps no community has suffered more from the old illusion about the greenness of distant fields than our own Macon County.