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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1938

Depends On The People

Everything is done better in a big city; it is done better, too, in proportion to the wealth of the city.

Of all the fallacies generally accepted by the public, that one, surely, is the most long-lived. It is also farthest from the truth.

Illustrating how wrong that assumption is are figures cited the other day by The New York Times; they deal with New York City's school buildings.

Better than one-fourth of New York's schools, reports The Times, are about 50 years old or older. Then it gives this revealing breakdown on the age of buildings still in use:

- 112 were built between 1901 and 1910.
- 97 between 1891 and 1900.
- 30 between 1881 and 1890.
- 16 between 1871 and 1880.
- 8 in the Civil War decade.
- 4 between 1851 and 1860.

And I was built in 1841—117 years ago.

Compare that picture, in the biggest and one of the richest cities in the world, with the situation in tiny, relatively poor Macon County, which hasn't a school building in use that's more than 25 years old!

Those figures illustrate what common sense should have dictated, even without them: Sometimes the big city does something better than the village; sometimes the village does it better than the city. Size has nothing to do with it, and wealth very little. It all depends on the people who live there.

Out Of Yesterday

We Americans are great throwers-away-ers. Especially, if a thing is old, we are quick to discard it in favor of something new—with little or no regard to whether the new really is better. And sometimes the old things have their points. Today many of us go to antique shops and pay five prices for articles that, 25 years ago, we couldn't wait to get out of the house.

Gradually, we seem to be learning better. Out at Patton Chapel, where they are building a new church, for instance, they decided to keep and use the old church benches. And lo! when they removed the many layers of paint and other finish the benches had acquired in their some 70 years, beautiful yellow poplar boards 15 to 18 inches wide were revealed—lumber that could not be bought today.

Most congregations would have insisted on buying new pews—exactly like those in every other church. At Patton (and the same thing happened at Mount Zion Church), they'll have, in the re-finished old benches, pews of a sturdiness and beauty that could not be duplicated. In addition, they'll have a tangible and inspiring link with the church's honored past.

Neat Racket

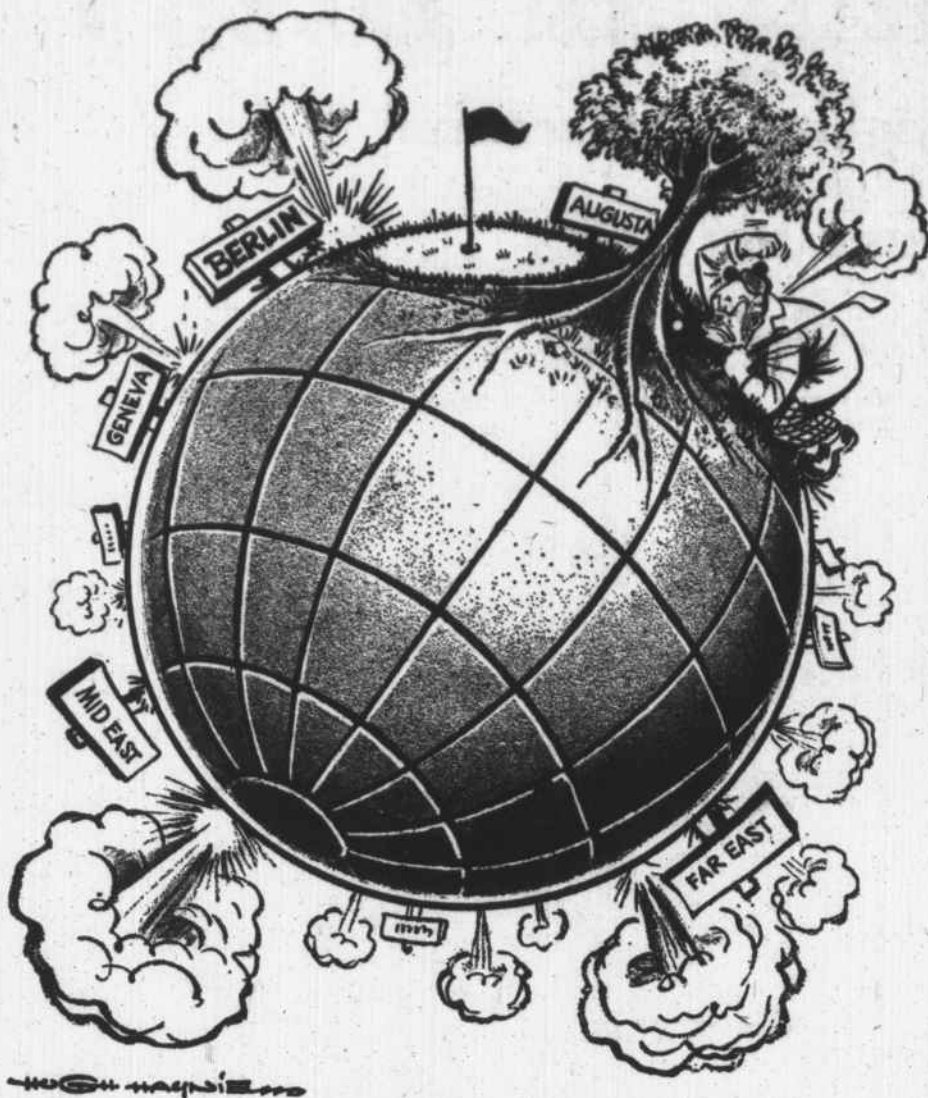
A little known abuse of unemployment compensation is brought into the open by The State magazine, which tells the story of a company that signed a contract with the union to give employees three weeks' vacation, with pay.

Here is how it was going to do it:

The employes would be "laid off" by the company, which would shut down its plant. Then the workers would apply for unemployment compensation. The company would make up the difference between the insurance payments and the regular wage.

The workers would get three weeks' paid vacation, and the taxpayers would be stuck for a good part of it.

In this particular case, The State points out, this



Most of us are a lot like everybody else. (And some of us, like the writer of this, maybe are more so.)

What I have in mind is that I, like everybody else, have some pronounced likes and dislikes. And again like everybody else, I get most outdone when it's a member of the family who does one of the things I don't like.

That's why, perhaps, some of the things I don't like the most are the things done by members of the journalistic family, things I see in newspapers.

There is that widespread practice among newspapers, for instance, of calling a man flatly by his last name, without any handle before it. They'll identify him first as "William C. Brown", but after that it's plain "Brown", "Brown said", "Brown thought", "Brown went", etc.

Now nobody has had more to say in recent years about "human dignity" than newspapers. Why, then, not show some respect for the dignity of the individual, no matter how low his estate, by calling him Mister? Why not "Mr. Brown"?

Dropping all the misters saves space, of course. But does it save enough space to be the real reason.

Could it that somebody, somewhere, started the practice, and everybody else followed suit, without stopping to ask why? (When that question pops into my mind, I get irritable. For the answer bears on the sense, or lack of it, of newspaper folk. And the answer could be, yes.)

As a matter of fact, though, everybody didn't follow suit. Not quite everybody. Because I could mention two good newspapers that still say "Mr. Brown". One

is The New York Times. The other is The Franklin Press!

Even worse, for my money, is the newspaper practice of referring to an unmarried woman as "Sarah Jones". And in those newspapers that do that, she's "Sarah Jones", whether she's 16 and obscure or 86, with a distinguished career behind her. ("Rules, you know; can't afford to set a precedent.")

Why not call her what she is, "Miss Sarah Jones"? Quite aside from the question of showing respect for the "human dignity" of the individual, that would have the newspaper virtue of helping to identify her; it would tell the reader she's the unmarried Sarah Jones.

Strangely, though, the newspapers that persist in saying "Brown" and in saying "Sarah Jones", when next they refer to her call her "Miss Jones". Why not just "Jones", as we'd do if she were a man?

Could it be (and I blush to think about it) that the folks in my profession on rare occasion aren't entirely consistent?

There's evidence of inconsistency, though, because if Sarah Jones is married we do use a handle; we call her "Mrs. Sarah Jones". The reader is presumed, we suppose, to have been born with knowledge of the newspaper rule that says if there's no handle before a woman's name, she's unmarried!

Worst of all, though, to me, is referring to a married woman by her given name; "Mrs. Mary Smith" instead of "Mrs. John H. Smith".

That is incorrect by the rules of the book; more important, it is incorrect by the rules of common sense.

For after all, she is the man's wife. And if she took his last name when she married him, didn't she take the rest of it, too? And isn't the average married woman better known as "Mrs. John H. Smith", than as "Mrs. Mary Smith"? "Mrs. Mary Smith" has another disadvantage; it suggests the woman is a widow or divorced.

Since the purpose of using names is to identify people, why not use the name that will identify them best to most people? (There are, of course, the rare exceptions to this rule, like any other; a few married women in business or the professions make a point of using their given names, and so are best known by them.)

To me, nothing sounds so much like it came from the backwoods as calling a married woman "Mrs. Mary Smith" instead of "Mrs. John H. Smith". The rule books say it's ignorant, too.

Why do so many newspapers insist on this practice?

Well, it could be that somebody, somewhere, started the practice, and everybody else followed suit, without giving the matter any real thought.

But if that is true, then newspapers, who are such advocates of non-conformity, would appear to be right smart conformist themselves . . .

See what I mean about getting worst riled about something, when it's somebody in the family who does it?

SATURDAY NIGHT IN AULD SCOTLAND

Remember Harry Lauder and his songs? (But of course none of you young folks can, you poor things.)

There was one he sang about the joys of Saturday night up there in bonnie Scotland.

In the song, Harry made quite a night of it, with one thing or another. And at a certain time he'd pause and concede. There was one sentence he'd try himself out on and if he could say it straight, all was well. Here's the way the song ended:

"If ye can say 't's a braw bricht moonlicht nicht',
Ye're a'richt, ye ken!"
—Southern Pines Pilot

UNCLE ALEX'S SAYIN'S

They's nothin' like runnin' in circles, way most of us do, to sit nowhere.

Heap of the younguns nowadays don't seem to git no pleasure out o' nothin'. Could be 'cause they ain't never wanted somethin' real hard before they got it.

White hair and wrinkles is pretty or ugly, dependin' on how you got 'em. Ain't nothin' any more beautiful than hair turned white a-battin' trials, or wrinkles that come white character was a-buildin'.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Looking Backward Through the Files of The Press

65 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK (1893)

"Zackly shore", Uncle Jeff. Hopper is married again. He married Thanksgiving day. He married Mrs. Mary Hopper, a widow. Mrs. Mary is now No. 3. Uncle Jeff. is constitutionally opposed to being a widower, "zackly shore" he is.

Cpts. Deadwyler and Boyd, of Maysville, Ga., have been in our community during most of the past week, horse trading. Lyle and Shepherd's saw mill has been kept busy during the past week sawing out timber for the new bridge near the Lotia ford. We learn that the iron for the bridge is at the depot at Dillsboro.

25 YEARS AGO (1913)

Construction of a band saw mill, which when completed will have a capacity output of 25,000 to 30,000 board feet of lumber a day, was started in Franklin last week by the Zickgraf-Warren Lumber Company.

Franklin is going to have a municipal golf course and swimming pool. The golf course and Camp Nilkwaal, comprising a tract of 90 acres, was deeded to the town last week by Miss Laura M. Jones, and 20 men employed under the Civil Works program were set to work Thanksgiving day excavating for a large swimming pool.

10 YEARS AGO

The first Macon County men to be inducted into the armed forces under the 1947 draft act left Franklin Tuesday. The three in this first group were George Richard Williamson, Bob Gray McClure, and James Wilbert Waldroop.

South To Blame

(Richmond Times-Dispatch)

No matter where interracial trouble breaks out, the South, it seems, is bound to be the goat.

Latest evidence of this is the brawl in Brooklyn on an elevated train "as a climax to two days of racial unrest" at Brooklyn's Franklin K. Lane High School. A Negro gang called "The Stompers" was involved, and members of both races were arrested.

Principal Harry Eisner of the school is quoted by the Associated Press as saying:

"I believe that the insecurity and unrest between Negroes and whites has been provoked by the situation in Arkansas and Virginia."

Fifteen years ago, when horrible race riots broke out in Detroit and Harlem, the same sort of explanation came from the NAACP and other similar sources. It was all the fault of the white South, said they—even though the white South had had no comparable riots in several decades.

So now, with fights, brawls and muggings occurring almost daily, not only in Brooklyn, but in many other parts of New York City, the blame is put on the white South—not on those who are responsible for having forced the white and colored races into unwonted and unaccustomed proximity all over New York.

No doubt the British race riots were also the fault of Arkansas and Virginia.

Invading Privacy

(Washington Post)

The reasoning by which Judge Holtzoff upheld the police in collecting evidence by driving a voice-pickup device into a wall illustrates how easily rights may be frittered away. This device, Judge Holtzoff concluded, differs only slightly from a detectaphone placed against a wall to listen in on conversations on the other side. As use of the detectaphone to gather evidence has been authorized, the judge says, the police may go a little further and drive a 12-inch spike into the wall so that they may eavesdrop more effectively. By the same reasoning they could go still a little further and tap telephone wires or plant recording devices in private quarters.

The trend of the reasoning, it seems to us, ought to run in the other direction. The Fourth Amendment guarantees to all persons the right "to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures." It is difficult to reconcile with this established right the use of a detectaphone placed against a wall. Go a little further and penetrate a wall with a listening instrument and the invasion of privacy seems clear. A line must be drawn somewhere, and it certainly ought to be kept outside the premises in which privacy is guaranteed.

REFRESHING COMMENTS

Mother Speaks Out On What School Children Aren't Taught

Greensboro Daily News

Often refreshing comments on America's education dilemma come from minds uncluttered by educational palaver and gobbledygook recited by high priests of the inner temple.

Such was the case at an Aycock Junior High School education panel where Mrs. M. B. Bennett, a wise and devoted school patron, offered a layman's point of view. Mrs. Bennett's speech put into words what countless parents have been trying to express and, failing, hoped someone else would do.

Here are her comments in the realm of curriculum—a hot subject in Greensboro and throughout the state:

"I sat in this auditorium one day and heard students ask: 'Will such and such a course be offered in high school?' and heard the answer, 'If enough of you want it, it will be offered.' I wondered then and I wonder now if that is the criterion for curriculum.

"I heard one of our prominent businessmen say one day, 'If progressive education means to pass a child whether or not he has completed a standard of work, I am against it.' A prevalent doctrine in our schools, it seems, is that a pupil must not be allowed to fail. Academic failure is not synonymous with every kind of success or failure, but is one of many human capabilities and

aptitudes. Few of us have reached maturity unhelped by failure. . . .

"Another criticism leveled at public schools is that too much time is spent on the things young people can and should learn outside the schools. I heard a mother say the other day, 'I was thrilled when I saw my son marching on the march with the band—and they marched beautifully, but I was not so thrilled when I found he had to make up two biology tests he had missed while he was out drilling for that march.'

"I stood in the gym at Senior High one day and watched a class take instruction in flycasting.

"I have had my child say, more than once, 'I had the best time in school today. I worked on the mural all day while the rest of the class had to do old arithmetic and spelling.' The mural had to be finished for the art exhibit, and he was not an artist, but a dependable child with a sense of color.

standards of performance were required in the fields of academic endeavor what the results would be.

"We want our children to have the tools with which to work, and we pay for them. Have you taken a good look at your child's textbooks recently? A seventh grade social study teacher told me she has found several mistakes in the book from which she was asked to teach; an eighth grade teacher told one of my boys an eighth grader who wanted to could read the history book in a couple of hours from which he was to teach a whole course. Another teacher I know in Greensboro finally decided she could not use the text assigned to her; it was so poor; so she had made up mimeographed sheets summarizing another, from which she taught.

"I have called spelling from the same old speller for years, a list of words. Spelling as a subject is not taught after the eighth grade but in the 10th grade English book considerable space is given to rules of spelling. Surely there is a speller which correlates the rules and the words."

Mrs. Bennett showed courage of a high order when she offered these concrete examples of deficiencies in the public school curriculum. As a mother of children in school she may find her family subject to reprisals.

Others who have spoken out have. They have found their own children penalized because parents too openly criticized school curriculum.

Yet, nothing tangible will be done unless more informed parents, teachers and citizens speak up for a sound core curriculum.

This is not an attack on the harassed, overworked teachers. They have more than they can handle.

But it is criticism of the school hierarchy—the higher-ups. They should interest themselves in this subject, and fight some of the school trends.

A state-wide school committee, sponsored by the State Board of Education and financed by the Richardson Foundation, is at work on a curriculum study. It is examining the core curriculum of North Carolina's public schools. It is trying to determine whether extracurricular activities have taken over the schools, to the detriment of sound education.

Possibly there is a local branch of this state committee in your community. (There is in Greensboro.) If you have something to contribute, seek it out, and let your voice be heard.

The only way to improve American education is to get in there and do something about it on the local level.