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Sub-Let Planning

It is of course, a great pleasure to the City Planning Board should adopt as its own, on the heels of being sworn into office, a project which this newspaper had put forward for community consideration. On motion of Mayor Baxter, who himself has been an advocate of better housing for low-income groups, the board approved in principle the overhauling of the City codes which have to do with housing standards.

That is fine. It is a step in the right direction, we believe, but by the same token only a tentative step. Between tightening up City codes in principle and tightening them up in detail, a whole of a lot of work intervenes. The Planning Board undoubtedly recognizes this fact, but probably with a shudder, for its members are busy persons.

Well, why not call in a consultant? Why not call in several consultants, specifically—  
The City's engineers to advise on the extension of all-way streets and sidewalks to areas not now served by those essential conveniences?  
The Duke Power Co. to advise on the extension of electric facilities?  
The Charlotte Real Estate Board to advise on general policies affecting low-cost housing and slum clearance?

The Charlotte Housing Authority, also as above?  
Associations of plumbing and building and electrical contractors, to which the Planning Board might sub-let the job of writing codes that expressed the board's ideas and were technically correct?

This planning which is, at last, to be undertaken, is going to have to be pushed and directed by a body of official standing and authority, and the Planning Board will serve those purposes. But planning is, as we see it, an effort by the whole community to face the betterment of the whole community, one in which all will share.

What could be more sensible, elicit stronger support or give greater satisfaction all around than to enlist the whole community in the various phases of the planning job as they may develop? Eh? We rather like the idea.

India's Burden

British casualties of the British Empire have soared to well over a million. The light little Isle itself has suffered more heavily than any other nation at war, in proportion to population, but those of the dominions and colonies have been astonishingly greater.

In a grim set of figures (which do not include service deaths from natural causes, civilian deaths or losses of merchant seamen) London revealed the toll of five years of war. The United Kingdom suffered more than half the losses—well over 400,000—of the war had suffered 79,000 casualties, Australia 85,000, South Africa 29,000.

But India, whose impoverished millions have been the concern of liberty-loving people the world over, sustained more than 1,500,000. That almost equals the combined total of Canada and Australia, and is a much higher figure than we prepared for. This sacrifice of India, "victim" of British rule, set us to thinking: where did they serve, suffer and die, these Indian troops, why, when and where?

Their heroic role opened early in the war, when they fought with great valor through the greueling North African campaigns. At the start they garrisoned Egypt; they carried the war against Italians in Ethiopia; they drove back and forth through Libya and Western Egypt, as the tide of war changed. They were with Montgomery at El Alamein, thousands of them. Gurkhas carried their knives up The Hill of Jesus, in the night when Rommel began to flee.

They were in the van of the final African drive, and in for the kill at Cap Bon. They went into Sicily and Italy. They were caught in Malaya, and paid a fearful price. For two long, bloody years they have been engaged in Burma, first pushing the Japs out of India, and then driving to Myittha and Akhaya, re-opening the Burma Road.

Indians have been, since the first British conquests in India, among the most distinguished troops of the Empire. Descendants of warriors who died fighting the British now serve the Crown loyally. They need no greater commendation than that of the long casualty rolls themselves.

Progress in Reason

The retirement plan for City employees adopted by the City Council Wednesday is the culmination of more than a year of debate, discussion, investigation and wrangling. It's not what good many municipal employees wanted—but it's exactly what the Council thought Charlotte could afford. The plan is a compromise between the excessive desires of some members of the Fire and Police Departments and the firmness and willingness of the City to

annually, according to present estimates, and that means, roughly, a ten-cent increase in the tax rate. It is the natural complement to our Civil Service program, and will surely make for greater efficiency in municipal government. Fully one-third of the City employees security long since provided by many business firms.

The obvious results will be: higher type personnel will seek municipal employment, attracted by a career end in retirement; weeding out of elderly employees as soon as they reach the retirement age, making places for more efficient employees.

These, of course, are the natural result of any sound system of retirement. Charlotte's new plan, though it likely does not satisfy some employees who have been advocating a retirement system paying benefits at the rate of 50 per cent of their present salaries, offers those advantages, and others as well.

Most important, the City can afford it. This plan falls back to the rather low level of the State retirement system, paying about 40 per cent of salary as benefits. It provides for an adequate reserve, and individual accounts. It provides for City payments for prior service—meaning that the 41 of the 600-odd employees who are now 60 or over will have their accounts paid up by the City, and may soon retire.

Within five years, the number of City employees aged 60 or over will have reached 85, so this provision is of importance to the older members of the municipal force. Immediate importance, we mean.

The Council has taken a forward step of which we highly approve. That it did not attempt to underwrite a program costing three or four times as much, or to embark on the program without adequate reserves (as New York City once did) is to be applauded. Its decision was typically Charlottean: it approved a progressive program of reform, but kept a careful eye on the municipal pocket-book. That was exactly as it should have been.

The Lowest Wages

When Commissioner of Labor Forrest Shuford outlined his ideas of North Carolina's needs in the way of a wage and hour law, he was in the line of convictions while looking at a great array of facts and figures. He was prompted to advance his proposed legislation for several reasons, chief of them being that North Carolina's industrial wage level is the lowest in the nation, excepting only South Carolina. He could not reconcile that with the fact that the state is eleventh in population and value of manufactures, third in payment of Federal taxes, and fifth in crop production.

Looking, as he does, upon the great numbers of industries and businesses in the state not affected by the Federal wage and hour laws, he can see that North Carolina income, 42nd in the country, can never be raised appreciably until the wages start at the bottom. For that purpose, he proposed a far-from-radical minimum wage rate of 30 cents an hour. We've reviewed the benefits to be derived by business in general, and we were curious to know just what effect such legislation would have upon wages in Charlotte and the surrounding area.

We were interested to know just how certain industries paying low wages—laundries, for instance, or similar plants—would make out if a 30-cent floor were put under wages. We found these things:  
In seven Mecklenburg establishments of a low-pay industry (as December, 1944) the average scale in the lowest-paying plant was 32.3 cents an hour, in the highest it was 44.7 cents—and the general average was 38 cents. Undoubtedly wages both higher and lower than the average are paid in these establishments, so that the effect of the law would be to raise those which were below 30 cents, and probably, by indirection, to raise all wages in some proportion. But our guess is that the total wage increase necessary to comply with the law would not be great, although it would fall harder on the low-paying business, and by so much eliminate the competition of cut-rate plants.

In 41 retail establishments in the county, and for the state as a whole, the average was 29.4 cents per hour, the highest 53.4—and the general average 44 cents. These firms would feel the impact of the law only to a slightly greater degree.

In view of these figures, Mr. Shuford's statement that he believes there will be no opposition to his proposal from most business men, seems well-founded. What his wage minimum would do for the community and for the state as a whole, would be to raise comparatively few wages—but to bring all of them up to a certain level. It is important that such a level be set soon, so that in the post-war period they will not fall back even lower.

This is Mr. Shuford's answer—or part of it—to the challenge of the International Labour Office session of last year, at which came this declaration: "Poverty anywhere constitutes a menace to prosperity everywhere." And that is just as true, of course, for Charlotte and North Carolina as it is for any other area on the globe. This proposed wage and hour law, submitted to us, can help us advance toward that expressed ideal, without working undue hardship on anyone.

WASHINGTON

As Franklin D. Roosevelt begins his fourth term as President of the United States, two great problems loom before him: the peace and the economy. 1. Winning the war as quickly as possible, and 2. Winning the peace after the war.

At that time also, Roosevelt set around among his fellowmen, despite his physical handicaps, more than any other President in history—even more than William Howard Taft. His travel record formed a restless zigzag graph across the map of the U. S. A. When he wasn't traveling, Mrs. Roosevelt was, and her reports came in almost daily by private White House wire or telephone.

Today the old Roosevelt brain trust is gone, and the new brain trust which surrounds him is composed of admirals and generals. His concentration at night is not upon economic ideas tossed up by the Columbia professors, but on the map of the Pacific and the map of Europe, where blue, red, green and yellow tabs indicate the number of divisions Stalin has thrown into the battle of Poland, the amount of armor Von Rundstedt has in reserve in the West, the exact whereabouts of the battleships, cruisers, airplane carriers and destroyers guarding the islands of the Philippines.

But aside from the change in the subject matter of his little, Roosevelt's methods of work have changed little during his long years in the White House. He is awoken every morning about 6:30 by his Negro valet, Arthur Prettyman, has breakfast in bed, brewing his own

"I've Come To Redeem Those Articles!"



We Are Wasting Our Wealth

By Marquis Childs

There are many signs that America's natural resources are being squandered at an alarming rate in the course of this conflict of all wars. Just the other day, an Oregon newspaper reported that a large lumber company which has been operating for half a century will close down within less than two years because, according to company officials, there will be no more commercial timber to cut on the lower Columbia River.

This is a cloud a lot bigger than a man's hand. The Pacific Northwest has long been regarded as the heart of America's lumber industry, yet newspapers in Oregon and Washington are pointing out that new industries based on low-cost, electric power may be needed to replace a declining timber economy.

Iron ore is being mined in America at a rate which will produce 100 million tons a year. Most of it comes from the fabulously rich Mesabi Range in Minnesota. But is the Mesabi Range as rich?

According to a gloomy estimate made some time ago, the country's high-grade iron ore deposits will be able to support this volume only three years more. In one official calculation, an average of sixteen years will see the end of all inferior iron deposits which are commercially available under present technological

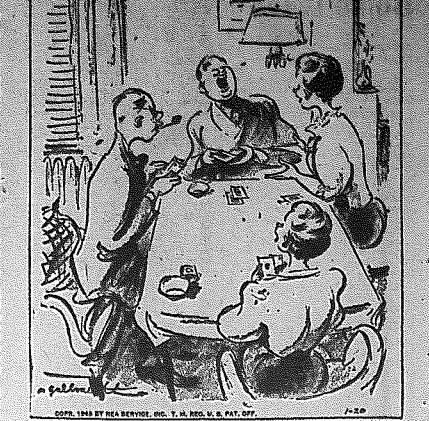
President's Health

It is no secret that the President's health has suffered somewhat from the wear and tear of the most relentless, ravaging job in the world. Many others have broken completely under the strain, and the lines on Roosevelt's face show he has not come out unscathed.

The chief facts are that after his illness last Spring, his doctors advised him to cut down his weight, and he has lost about twenty pounds. This shows in his face, already lined with the worry of watching an ever-mounting casualty list and a war which has dragged on.

Finally, the President has become more hard-belled about being seen in public in a wheelchair. During the early years in office he was super-sensitive on this point. He didn't like to have people realize he couldn't walk. But now he knows that during twelve years in the White House everyone is quite aware of this fact, so he frequently rejects against his stiff and unmovable iron and leather braces, without which it is impossible for him to stand.

The President tells how he was worried sick, until the last word of his own address was finished, for fear he would make the same mistake.



"We froze for a week but George was too patriotic to call the superintendent—finally I complained and the man came up and showed me how to turn on our radiators!"

City Hall Today

By Dick Young

Wednesday, Jan. 17, 1945, will go down as an important date in municipal history. It will be remembered by those who took part in the extended discussions on a proposal to establish a municipal retirement system but its influence will be felt long after the City Council has passed the bill.

While establishment of a retirement plan is going to cost the taxpayers of Charlotte a property owner will offer no reasonable basis for objection because the benefits as provided for municipal workers are not unreasonable. The Council did not go so far as some of the municipal workers in the matter of retirement benefits but a middle ground was sought.

Jan. 15, 1945, is an important date for another reason. It was the date on which Charlotte's

Planning Board was launched on its career. Its first meeting was held and the program, which some members of the Board will blossom into a well defined plan for the city's growth, was initiated.

On City Hall Square, Marine Pfc. Bedman H. Shropshire, formerly draughtsman in the City Engineering Department, is putting his talents to military use and is now preparing maps for the 6th Marine Division, somewhere in the Pacific. Miss Elizabeth Helms, who keeps the records in the Police Department's records office, has a vacation and plays the bass fiddle as an avocation. She has been invited to become a member of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Young  
A welcome to Mr. W. Boone, who comes to Charlotte from Mount Airy to head the Police Department's identification bureau staff.

Inside Germany

By Dorothy Thompson

Inherent reminiscence of another era in the minds of old Germans and a strong Nazi sentiment in the 20-40 age group. The longing for a non-Nazi but non-political Germany is being met by the creation of new confidence around a new idea. It will not be a product of "Fuehrerism" but of creating a new mentality, outlook, hope and faith, in a reformed and expanded Germany.

The idea that a military government by itself can bring civilian order out of such chaos is preposterous. It will be necessary first to maintain a production and distribution system, industrial and agricultural. To do this certain Nazi regulations will have to be kept in force. The continued existence of the German people depends upon the maintenance of a production and distribution system.

Second, confidence-inspiring courts must be established. General Eisenhower is planning to use the pro-Hitler press and the problem is of weeding out judges, and for that we need a judicial commission of disqualifying persons.

Third, and most important in the long run, is the re-establishment of primary, secondary and university education in harmony with civilian life objectives. For that we shall need an educational commission.

Congress A La Mode

By Samuel Grafton

THE National Planning Association's proposals for an improving Congress went through the Capitol would then resemble the higher executive offices of Life, Time and Fortune magazines. Each Congressman would be a brain entirely surrounded by facilities. He would receive \$25,000 a year, two-and-one-half-times his present pay, and there would be no interference with his private life.

The thought is that Congress and the Executive shall become partners, each doing its share of the business of Government. Congress would question the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Labor for an illustration) as unemotionally as the board of directors of a large private corporation calls in the head of the sales department, to hear his story.

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