THE CHARLOTTE NEWS

60th Anniversary Year

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THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

WITH all possible sympathy for the huge job of furnishing medical care for veterans which fell to the Federal Government after the close of hostilities, there is still no excuse for the bungling, inefficiency and waste just brought to light by a task force of the Hoover Commission.

After digging into the maze of stupendous waste, lack of planning and co-ordination, and outright misuse of money, personnel and facilities, the Hoover Commission preliminary report summed it up with remarkable restraint:

"... A pattern of duplication of physical facilities, waste of scarce medical personnel ... and unwarranted construction of new facilities—all resulting from the lack of a central plan for Federal medical care.

"... It is plain ... that the Federal Government lacks any means of co-ordinating the medical programs of the separate agencies."

The committee found that apparently nothing had been done right. The Government jumped into the medical business without any basic understanding of the job ahead, much less a clear plan. Under a 60-year-old statute, the Government began treating veterans and their dependents right and left until, by 1949, some 24,000,000 of our population were receiving care of varying degrees.

The Army rushed in and spent an astounding $37,000,000 for a hospital in Hawaii when the Navy already had one there which would have filled all needs. The Navy is building a $14,800,000 permanent cancer hospital at St. Albans, N. Y., complete with the largest betatron for cancer therapy ever built, although, as the Commission said, there is a "question why the care of cancer patients, except superficial cases, should be a responsibility of the armed services at all." The Veterans Administration is in the middle of a $1,100,000,000 hospital building program, at an average cost of between $20,000 to $51,000 a bed as compared with an average private hospital cost of $16,000 per bed.

In New York City the Committee found that four Army and Air Force hospitals could be closed, but "several Federal agencies are planning to build hospitals in this area to cost $100,000,000, meaning a doubling of the permanent plant."

And all of this in spite of a severe shortage of medical and nursing personnel to staff them.

The exposure of this appalling waste of tax money and conflict of purpose among the various Federal agencies is one of the most constructive jobs the Hoover Commission has yet done. A good part of the responsibility and blame lies squarely on Congress, which voted money right and left to these agencies without requiring proof of need. When the Commission's full report goes to Congress after the first of the year, there will be an opportunity to (1) define clearly the fields in which Government medicine should operate, and (2) eliminate the costly waste, inefficiency, and duplication. Both should be done at the earliest possible moment.

THE CONTINUING CONSTABLE

HAD it not been for Solicitor Basil Whitener and the Mecklenburg County Grand Jury, the case of the perennial patrolman, Constable E. J. McKnight, might never have come to light.

Our City Council was carefully picking its way through the maze of the taxicab fuss, the several rulings about the voting rights of perimeter area residents, and various and sundry other municipal matters when, suddenly, it discovered that it had a special town constable on the loose about whom it knew nothing.

The Grand Jury's exposure of the Midnight Magistrate's Court being conducted (without legal jurisdiction) by Justice of the Peace J. S. Turner turned up Constable McKnight. He was, it seems, one of four constables who were prowling the Negro residential areas at night and hauling before Magistrate Turner card players and assorted gamesters and, for their trouble, collecting the customary constable's fee of $2.50 per customer.

The Council set City Manager Yancey and City Attorney Shaw to work, and found out that Constable McKnight had been appointed by a previous Council. Since no one said anything about it, he just kept on serving. This record of the August 21, 1940, Council meeting was found:

"Mr. Smith, a magistrate of Mecklenburg County, filed with the Council a request to have R. C. McKnight appointed a special town constable, which is provided for by legislative act; this being necessary to have him serve papers. The City Attorney was consulted and advised that the General Assembly of 1939 made provision for a special officer to serve certain papers. . . ."

But Constable R. C. McKnight didn't serve very long. On June 2, 1943, he resigned with the request that the Council appoint his son, E. J. McKnight, to succeed him. The Council did so, but failed to set forth his term of office.

A new Council was elected in 1945. Another one was elected in 1947. And Constable McKnight served on. Everyone had forgotten about him until the Grand Jury report showed his name appeared on the warrants in 68 of the 71 gambling cases which Magistrate Turner breezed through in the short space of six weeks.

It may all be perfectly legal, but it does not make very good sense for the City Council to hand out such appointments without any way of keeping up with (1) the terms of office, and (2) the activities of the appointees. In the case of a statutory office, the appointee generally serves until a successor is duly appointed and qualified. But Constable McKnight's job is not a statutory one, and his term would normally be expected to end with that of the Council which appointed him.

The Council has taken no action as a result of its discovery, but will wait until it finds out whether or not Solicitor Whitener and the Grand Jury turn up anything more. In any event, the least it could do would be to set forth the duties, and the term of the constable's office, so that future Councils may be accordingly advised.

A DIFFERENT VIEWPOINT

ONE of the unfair tactics American business and the American press have used in the fight to preserve free enterprise is the loose and often unprincipled use of the word "bureaucrat" as a blanket description of all government employees. The word has been flung around so much, and with so little discretion, that scarcely a man in public service, no matter how menial his post, can avoid being tainted.

There are, of course, many bureaucrats in our government, Federal, State and local; bureaucrats in the truest sense of the word—lazy, incompetent officials who manage to snarl everything they lay their hands on. But there are also many capable, highly efficient public employees who deserve more credit than they get.

Carrol M. Shanks is president of the Prudential Insurance Company of America. He is a big business man, and you might expect him to talk like a big business man. But his words to a news conference in Atlanta are rather startling.

"There must be a change of atmosphere so that government workers will be regarded as more than chair-warmers and bureaucrats . . . Government is so big and complex today that it takes very good men to run it. I agree with Winston Churchill's remark that 'It takes more and better brains to run government than it does business'."

Mr. Shanks went further. He would build up the "prestige" of government officials by providing under-graduate and post-graduate schools for training them, and he would institute a strict merit system for all government workers below policy-making level.

Ranking heresy of all, however, was his parting shot. The talk about "protecting democracy and saving private enterprise" should be translated into action by giving workers in business steadiness of employment, something to retire on, and sick pay. Government is here to stay, he said, "whether we like it or not . . . Some cases we've got to leave entirely to business, some to government and business, and some to government alone."

Mr. Shanks probably wouldn't run a very good race for the presidency of the National Association of Manufacturers, but his words are a refreshing reminder that there are still dynamic leaders in business and industry whose economic and political views have developed beyond the laissez-faire stage.

From The Winston-Salem Journal

SNAKES AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

THE Forsyth County snake-handling case did not reach the North Carolina Supreme Court. But over in Tennessee a similar action did get to the State Supreme Court.

The high court of Tennessee, after studying the case on appeal, upheld the State law under which three members of a sect were fined $50 for handling poisonous snakes in public, ruling that constitutional guarantees of religious freedom do not mean that persons are free to handle poisonous snakes during church services.

This was a very sane, logical decision. A contrary ruling would have signified that any crank or fanatic by hoisting the banner of religious freedom could indulge in almost any dangerous or anti-social practice imaginable and claim and obtain legal immunity. If individuals are to be allowed to endanger public health, safety, by handling poisonous snakes in public, by the same token it apparently would be constitutional for them to appear nude in public, practice polygamy as the original Mormons did, engage in acts of treason, etc.

Religious freedom was intended to protect true beliefs and devoted worship. It was never designed to serve as a shield for behaviour which adversely affects the public interest, safety, or moral welfare.

Economic law finally balances things. When wages were low, we were broke every Monday. Now everything is higher and we are still broke every Monday. — *Richmond (Va.) News-Leader.*

'Now, About Predictions For Next Year—'

Sumner Welles

Unrest In The New World

(This column by Sumner Welles was written before he was stricken with a heart attack while out walking in sub-freezing weather Saturday night.

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WASHINGTON

THE political and social unrest spreading through Latin America is gathering momentum.

Inflation, commercial stagnation and arrested industrialization, all aggravated by dollar shortages, have created an increasingly serious economic crisis. In many republics labor, agriculture and the white-collar workers have been hard hit. The Communist leaders are taking full advantage of the opportunity to further hemispheric disruption.

The dangers that would arise unless this Government undertook remedial action have long since been forecast in this column.

The abandonment of the good neighbor policy evidenced by our official interference in Argentina's national elections, and by our failure either to continue financial and economic co-operation or to co-ordinate the European Recovery Program with an inter-American program designed to relieve the post-war difficulties of the other American republics, has undermined popular faith in our dependability. It has fostered the growth of ideological blocs in Latin America whose rivalries jeopardize the maintenance of even a semblance of New World unity.

Public opinion here too often confuses the cause with the effect.

A typical instance is to be found in an editorial in The New York Times of Dec. 16. Remarking on the growing number of military dictatorships, the editorial asks, "Are not the people of an American state entitled to expect from democratic neighbors some protection against such arbitary seizures of power?"

Three years ago The New York Times was a leading advocate of the policy of official interference in Argentina which stimulated ultra-nationalism and aroused anti-United States sentiment in that republic, and to which General Peron owed his majority in the Presidential elections. The present trend toward military dictatorships in the Americas is in no small part due to the precedent created by the success of the military in winning popular support in Argentina as an outgrowth of the national reaction against United States pressure.

SAME MEDICINE PRESCRIBED

Although our interventionist policies have proved disastrous, we are now asked to believe that the remedy for the evils brought about by these policies will be a larger dose of the same medicine.

Ignoring the demonstrated sterility of non-recognition as compared with the benefits arising from the friendly counsel that can be offered by other American governments if official channels remain open, the editorial inveighs against the Estrada Doctrine which was adopted by the organization of American states at Bogota last Spring. It calls it "a somewhat cynical dogma that encourages election by revolution."

What are the facts? The Estrada Doctrine was conceived as a safeguard against our own practice in former years of withholding recognition from a de facto government as a leverage to secure political or economic concessions. The doctrine eliminates the opportunity for the exercise of such pressure by providing for a continuity of relations even if a new government comes to power through force. But it also envisages the severance of diplomatic relations should the other American governments, individually or collectively, decide that the policies of that government endanger the welfare of the new hemisphere.

From the time when President Wilson sought to promote democracy in Latin America through non-recognition of revolutionary governments, our interference in the political concerns of other American peoples has invariably bred inter-American dissension and hostility against us, and has weakened, rather than strengthened, the national forces that make for democracy.

It is not surprising that a responsible Latin-American newspaper should already have asserted that The New York Times is demanding that the United States should "frankly dictate the kind of governments Latin America should have, with Washington taking charge of the classification of those that are good and of those that are bad governments."

The Times concludes with the dictum, "If we believe democracy is good for us, then we must believe that it would be good for others too."

A MISTAKEN ASSUMPTION

It is precisely this assumption of national omniscience in deciding what is best for other peoples which has led in the past to such tragic anomalies as the occupation of the Dominican Republic by United States Marines, the death at our hands of Dominican patriots, the replacement of a Dominican government composed of United States naval officers, and the loss by the Dominican people of all individual liberty. What warrant have we for assuming that a form of democracy which has been gradually evolved to meet the needs of the English-speaking peoples must therefore be equally responsive to the needs of peoples of a wholly different origin, tradition and culture?

If we now seek to restrict the right of the Latin-American peoples to support or to overthrow their own governments we will destroy the regional system of the new world.

The American republics should certainly agree upon effective measures to safeguard the essential human freedoms throughout the hemisphere.

But both the State Department and The New York Times would do far more to discourage revolutions and military dictatorships in the Americas by procuring a return to those earlier and proven policies of economic and financial co-operation which can raise living standards, increase communications and improve education, nutrition and sanitation, than by calling for the imposition on the peoples of Latin America of our own standards of constitutional government. Neither democracy nor inter-American unity will be advanced by an attempt to set up a supra-sovereign power in the Americas through which the United States would have, and would certainly be suspected of having, a determining influence in the internal political life of the other American states.

Quote, Unquote

As for how to judge a duck-calling contest, it's the same way the old farmer found his lost horse. He just imagined he was a horse and went where he'd go if he was a horse. Sure enough, there was the steed. You just imagine you're a duck and pick out the call that sounds duckiest to you.—Crowley (La.) Signal.

Politically speaking, a man should be able to change his mind as readily as he does his shirt . . . and for the same reason.—Quitman (Ga.) Free Press.

The average man has no head for figures, says a professor. But he has an eye, brother, he has an eye.—Roanoke (Va.) Times.

Joseph & Stewart Alsop

Big Easy 103

BERLIN

AT Weisbaden, a steely haze hung very low over the steel-cold ground. On the swarming airfield, the German workers clapped their chapped hands to warm them, as their truck moved away from Big Easy 103. Thirty-five minutes earlier Big Easy 103 had come in from Templehof. Now the C-54 was loaded again with another Berlin cargo—ten tons of dried apricots, canned applesauce, cement and roofing paper.

"We're ready to roll," said the pilot briskly.

Pilot, co-pilot and engineer performed the complicated ritual of starting the engines and warming them up. The big airplane lumbered down the field and took its place in the line of other waiting C-54's at the end of the runway. Takeoffs were spaced only three minutes apart, and it was not long before the pilot called the tower.

"Hello, tower. Big Easy 103 in No. 1 position."

"Roger, Big Easy 103. You are cleared for Tempelhof at 6,000 feet, standard departure. You're No. 2 to take off." Then, three minutes after the plane across the runway had roared into the air, the final word came: "Big Easy 103 cleared for rolling takeoff."

CLEARED FOR TAKEOFF

"Roger," said the pilot, and in what seemed no more than a few seconds the big plane was airborne and totally enveloped in the chill gray haze. For ten minutes the trio in the cockpit worked with concentrated precision, flying the prescribed three sides of a rectangular course that would bring Big Easy 103 into the flight path to Berlin.

Then the turn into the flight path was made. We were above the clouds now, between the pale sunny blue of the Winter sky above and the serrated, brilliantly lit expanse of white wool below. Ten miles away and a thousand feet below us, there was a speck which was another C-54 carrying another ten-ton load to Berlin. And ten miles behind and a thousand feet below us, the chatter on the radio announced the presence of still another. The co-pilot picked up a Tempelhof announcement that the ceiling there was 200 feet and visibility was half a mile.

"It's way below minimums now," said the pilot. "But it will probably get a little better before we get in. We can make it with a GCA."

Once in the flight path, the trio in the cockpit relaxed. History and the Air Force had casually assembled them—Capt. Clinton Hankins, from Humboldt, Iowa; Second Lieut. John B. Duvall, from Fennville, Mich., and Sgt. Kermit Green, from Los Angeles—for the job now in hand. On the Berlin air lift no crew assignments are permanent, but the three had flown together often enough to be friends. They smoked and talked, mostly of the lift itself, and Green paid his respects to the press by doing a cruelly funny imitation of an "extreme left-wing newspaperman" who had flown into Berlin with him last week.

"He wanted me to tell him I was oppressed," said the sergeant, with rich scorn. "'Mister,' I said, 'do I look oppressed, do I talk oppressed, do I act oppressed?' That fixed him."

Over the Fulda beacon, the first report went from Big Easy 103 to Tempelhof Airways. Fifty minutes out of Fulda, the pilot again called in. The city was utterly invisible beneath the overcast, but we were nearing Berlin. Tempelhof replied that the ceiling was now 600 feet, and visibility was "about to the end o fthe runway." A moment later we were cleared down from 6,000 to 2,500 feet.

"Roger," said Capt. Hankins, "Big Easy 103 descending."

Again the trio in the cockpit got down to serious business. The altimeter needle revolved rapidly until the 2,500 point was reached, and Capt. Hankins reported: "Hello, Tempelhof Airways. Big Easy 103 over Tempelhof range at 2,500." Tempelhof Airways replied with an order to "go over to jigsaw," which meant to begin taking orders from the ground control approach controller.

SERIOUS BUSINESS

On the radar scope in his instrument-packed trailer, the GCA controller, by some incomprehensible magic, found the little blip that was Big Easy 103. The heavy-laden C-54 was sent by the controller around three sides of a small square and at last commanded: "Big Easy 103 on No. 12 beacon—No. 12 beacon—for your final approach. Now go over to final controller." And in an instant, the wonderfully calm and soothing voice of the final controller, who guides every airplane to the ground in bad weather, began on the radio.

"Big Easy 103, steer right to a heading of 190 degrees." The pilot answered, and a staccato exchange began, Capt. Hankins announcing his position and the final controller correcting his course, until the triumphant announcement: "Two hundred seventy-five is now your heading. Your glide path will be half a mile. You're coming into the center line very nicely and you're two and a half miles from touchdown." The exchange continued until the big plane broke through the overcast and almost simultaneously touched the Tempelhof runway.

Then Capt. Hankins thanked the final controller. Big Easy 103 taxied up to its place in the long line of C-54's on the grandiose Tempelhof apron. As the plane reached a halt, a truck backed up to its side and discharged fifteen shivering Germans, who flung themselves upon the cases of apricots and sacks of cement as though their life depended upon speed—as indeed it does. And another air cargo had been delivered to the beleaguered city of Berlin.

Marquis Childs

Christmas Gift

WASHINGTON

THERE is one Christmas present that diplomatic Washington fervently prayed for. If this gift could be promised for the coming year, there would be general rejoicing among the diplomats who must cope with the ins and outs of American policy.

This gift would be a clear and unmistakable course in Europe, and, above all, in Germany, that would end the zigzags of the past year and a half. Such a policy fixed at the top would leave no one in any doubt as to what line the United States intended to follow not merely during the coming year but for the next decade.

This would mean a determination by President Truman to make sure that a consistent policy was carried out. The confusion of a Pentagon policy, a Gen. Clay policy, a State Dept. policy and, perhaps, a White House policy would be ended.

The French believe that they now have won what is, at any rate, a temporary victory. As the result of French insistence, the British and the Americans have apparently agreed to an international force that would exercise top supervision over the German management of the Ruhr.

According to current report, this has been brought about with at least the tacit support of the State Dept. It means that the General Clay-Pentagon policy of turning the Ruhr industrial complex back to German direction and control has been overruled.

Public opinion in this country undoubtedly played a part. There was a strong revulsion against restoring the discredited past to authority. A lively and positive interest has grown up in the proposal to give supervising direction in the Ruhr to the International Co-operative Alliance.

At a recent press conference President Truman declared that cartels would never be restored in German industry so long as he was President. But the capable commission sent to Germany by Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royal is discovering, according to a report to the New York Times, that in certain fields the same old cartel structure is being put together again.

The truth is that without a firm policy resolutely laid down from the top, what you get is a warfare of the specialists, each with his own favorite specialty to push. In Germany this has gone much further than is realized in this country.

Busiest of all the Germany policy-makers is Under Secretary of the Army William H. Draper Jr. Draper, who has given every evidence that he believes in restoring the old industrial structure, works at his job intensively in close liaison with Gen. Clay.

These are gloomy thoughts for this season of the year. But it must be realized that they are the thoughts of the professional diplomats who watch the involved evolution of U. S. policy.

At one time consideration was given to naming a special assistant to the President to advise him on foreign policy. That proposal has now been put aside, since it was feared it would lead to rivalry and controversy. That might have been true. But the fact remains that a new and positive approach is essential in the year to come and afterward.

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

U. S.-Mexico May Reopen Oil Negotiations

WASHINGTON

ANTONIO BERMUDEZ, President Aleman's top oil adviser, has informed the State Dept. that he will "publicly deny" any news leaks regarding secret negotiations, now in progress, for an oil agreement between the United States and Mexico.

However, it is nonetheless a fact that both the State Dept. and private American oil interests—chiefly the Texas Co. and Cities Service—have been trying for some time to persuade the Mexican Government to reopen Mexican oil lands to American operators.

The State Dept. contends that this would greatly benefit both countries, since Mexico is sorely in need of American dollars for trading on world markets, while we need all the additional oil Mexico can sell us.

So far, the negotiations have been stymied by two factors. One is the refusal of American oil companies to invest further capital in Mexico unless they are assured by Aleman of legal protection against future confiscation.

Also President Aleman has feared that Mexican Communists would incite revolt if American oil men renew operations in Mexico. Instead, Aleman wants a loan from the United States so his country can expand its oil production under Mexican management.

Christmas Junket

ALL this explains why President Aleman has sent his own private airplane to Washington to carry back Rep. Bob Crosser of Ohio, Crosser's daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren on a Christmas vacation junket to Mexico—all at Aleman's expense.

What the President of Mexico knows is that Congressman Crosser will be the new chairman of the House Interstate & Foreign Commerce Committee, which has a lot to do with foreign purchases of oil and other imports. His ideas on Mexican oil may be important.

Besides Crosser and his relatives, others included in the vacation flight to Mexico were Elton J. Layton, clerk of the Interstate & Foreign Commerce Committee, his wife, and Lieut. Col. and Mrs. John Meyer. Col. Meyer is an Air Forces liaison officer on Capitol Hill.

NOTE—Compromise on Mexican oil may be a loan to Mexico for the construction of nonspeculative refineries and pipelines, with the understanding that American companies will be permitted to drill in Mexico on a limited scale and with full legal protection against confiscation. Also, Mexican oil exports to the United States would be sold through "Pemex," the Mexican Government monopoly.

Mass Suicide In Shanghai

FIVE thousand grim and desperate White Russians—Communism's first victims—are waiting with their backs to the wall for the Chinese Communists to sweep into Shanghai. Pushed as far as they can go, these tragic refugees who fled across Siberia in 1917-18 have chosen the only escape left—mass suicide.

Intercepted letters from Shanghai's White Russians reveal that many are actually carrying poison or planning to hurl themselves off buildings in case the Communists take over. All too vividly they remember what the press had said little about—the fate of their White Russian cousins who were swallowed up by the Chinese Reds in Manchuria.

Hysterically the White Russians are trying to leave China. The International Refugee Organization has helped evacuate those of Jewish ancestry to Palestine and a few others to South American countries. But the U. S. consulate has slammed its doors in the faces of those who have besieged the United States for visas.

The story of Shanghai's White Russians is one of the most epic in modern times. Many had been noblemen and aristocrats under the czar. Others had been laborers on the czar's Siberian railroad. Fleeing across Siberia, they eventually filtered down to Shanghai, where king and commoner worked side by side—often as coolies.

After V-J Day, the Soviets granted amnesty to Shanghai's White Russians—and gave them a sales-talk about coming back to Russia. Two-thirds of the community flocked to the Soviet consulate for citizenship, and four Russian boatloads sailed for Vladivostok and disappeared behind the Iron Curtain.

By prearranged code they hinted of bitter disappointment in the few letters that trickled back. One couple escaped, and gave a first-hand account. Then the newly inducted Soviets began renouncing their citizenship simply by announcing it in the vernacular press. More than 1,000 returned to their stateless status.

Today they are "political lepers"—a lost colony in the heart of Shanghai's teeming millions. They have no country to turn to, no embassy to protect them. Their only hope—if the worst comes—is the poison they carry in their pockets.

The Dew-Drop

SENATORS who got a free ride in the Dew-Drop—the plush airplane supposedly built for "President" Dewey—have about concluded that airplane junketing doesn't pay.

Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, nephew of the Senator from Michigan and chief of the Air Force, escorted Democratic Sen. Joe O'Mahoney and Senators-Elect Clinton Anderson of New Mexico and Lyndon Johnson of Texas up to New York in the Dew-Drop to attend the Town Hall dinner in honor of Vice-President-Elect Alben Barkley. However, the Dew-Drop landed in a snowstorm at Mitchell Field, L. I., and an Air Force staff car got so bogged down in traffic that the VIP's grabbed their suitcases and waded through the snow on foot.

After a long subway ride, they finally reached the Barkley dinner four hours and fifteen minutes after they left the airport. If they had gone by train instead of sponging on the Government for a free airplane ride, they would have arrived two hours earlier.