THE CHARLOTTE NEWS

THOMAS L. ROBINSON ..... Publisher
J. E. DOWD ..... General Manager
B. S. GRIFFITH ..... Executive Editor
C. A. McKNIGHT ..... Editor

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1949

CONSOLIDATION OF TAX SYSTEM

THE Institute of Government analysts looked at the dual Charlotte-Mecklenburg tax collecting systems from every angle before preparing the report made public yesterday. They found minor differences of performance and efficiency, most of which could be explained by differences in the particular task at hand. But in general, both offices are doing a first-rate job.

The report emphasized, however, that tax collection in times of prosperity is always easier than it is in time of adversity. It posed this question: Would two offices perform more efficiently than one in time of depression?

Seeking to answer that question, the report did not promise that consolidation would bring increase in tax collections or any great economy in the cost of collections. It did cite the preference of other North Carolina cities and counties for merged tax collection offices because (1) the time and money of the taxpayers are saved, (2) tax collection records are better over a long period, (3) tax collection is removed one step further from politics, and (4) equal collection for all areas is assured.

Said the report:

"A more pertinent inquiry is whether the two governments, collecting separately, would be able to save money and maintain dependable collection records in an economic recession. It may well be that a joint office already functioning when such a time arrives would be good insurance. The value of preparing for such a time has already been illustrated locally by the patriotic efforts to cut costs in 1931-33 after the depression was an accomplished fact."

* * *

IN CONSIDERING consolidation, the report said, more than the mere collection of taxes should be studied. True consolidation should encompass the whole tax structure of the two governments—listing, assessing, billing, collecting, and foreclosing. They are separate processes but they are all one business.

This possible alternative to the present system was offered:

A three-man tax board, selected by the County Commissioners and the City Council, would distribute the work, select heads for each division, allocate personnel for each process, and set salaries. It would also eliminate conflicting policies and duplicating practices, and would be able to transfer personnel from tax office to tax office according to need.

The board could also supervise changes in the assessment process, and could even serve as the board of equalization and review, thus relieving the County Commissioners of that detail.

Three divisions would be established, listing and assessment collection, and legal assistance. Since tax listing is already handled by one office for both governments, this would mean the substitution of one tax collector and one tax attorney for the two collectors and two attorneys we now have.

The Institute report suggested a system of joint financing for the consolidated tax office, with each government paying in proportion to the amount of work done for it.

* * *

IT IS improbable that consolidation of the City and County tax systems will become a *cause celebre* with the people. The average person is usually interested only in his own taxes, and doesn't even like to think about the subject once he has paid his bill.

Furthermore, the report does not reveal any inequities which penalize the rural dweller in favor of the urban dweller or vice versa. Apparently the existing system is a fair one in that respect.

Lacking popular appeal, then, the consolidation of the tax systems is largely a matter for the City Councilmen and the County Commissioners to work out among themselves. The burden of collecting taxes is theirs, and it is to their interest to find the simplest and best way of doing the job.

The public's interest in the matter is limited to the general desire that our government should be as orderly and efficient as possible. Barring new revelations, it would appear from a careful perusal of the Institute's report that consolidation of the tax systems is less urgent than other departments, but that it should certainly receive favorable consideration in the future.

CENSUS COMING UP

NO ONE will ever know precisely how much Charlotte was helped by that final burst of energy and enterprise back in 1940 which pushed the census tabulation to 100,899.

Many of you will remember the situation. The census report was shy of the coveted 100,000 total, and time was running out. Then The News, the Chamber of Commerce, and interested individuals started beating the drums to flush other Charlotteans out of the homes and apartments where they'd been overlooked. The figure began to rise, and presto, passed the magic mark.

That put the Queen City in the select 100,000-and-over classification which is used generally in population and business statistics, and was a distinct factor in the City's continued rapid expansion.

We mention it merely to remind our people that another head counting is coming up next year, and it will be equally as important that no one be missed in Mecklenburg and the other counties of the 10th Congressional district.

We're off to a good start. Congressman Hamilton C. Jones' appointment of Rufus Johnson as district census supervisor, and of Chester Whelchel and W. C. Hollar as assistants, will find favor throughout the area. They will direct the activities of some 300 enumerators as the exhaustive campaign reaches out into every nook and cranny of the district.

Who knows. Maybe we'll hit 150,000 in Charlotte next year. H-mmmm.

THANKSGIVING REMEMBERED

THE holiday air is tangible in late November, cold and dry; it vibrates and snaps against a tender face. The gray-brown haze hangs low from the sky; tall buildings rise up from the quiet streets like icy fingers.

Bundled housewives lead husbands from store window to store window in the still afternoon.

Through home-lined lanes the holiday odors slip from kitchens and spread warm tentacles, perfumed with dressing-spices and the rich sweetness of mince-meat, through the crisp calmness.

Beyond the town, the Piedmont hills are drab and brown with harvest death.

Fragile, broken cornstalks tremble in the wind and cotton fields are plains of curling leaves. Elms and poplars and oaks are deserted homes, black and chilled; the leaves have gone.

A flock of birds, shivering in flight, wheels down the flyway to Summer.

And in the solemn evening a moon rides the horizon. The chill wind among the evergreens whispers a warning of Winter.

As the cold blue stars pin-point the black sky, a congregation in a country church sings a strong Gothic hymn, a hymn of thanksgiving. And from the window falls a warm, pumpkin-colored light.

From The Columbia Record

TRAFFIC COURT JUSTICE

AN INTERESTING question is raised in an article in the November issue of *The Readers' Digest*, condensed from Kiwanis magazine. The author, Albert Q. Maisel, asks the rhetorical question, "Is traffic court justice blind?"

The author points out that many revenue-hungry cities are so busy grabbing parking violators that they necessarily are letting more serious offenders go free. He says that in city after city the municipality has "ganged up" on the least dangerous of traffic law breakers—the harassed salesman and the busy housewife who violate parking ordinances though they are guilty of little more than trying to go about their business. Police are taken off more serious duties to spend their time ticketing parked cars.

He points out that New York's police, conducting a "savage drive" against parkers in the last eighteen months, ticketed 83,800 more parking violators than the year before but caught 8,270 fewer speeders, 5,807 fewer red light rushers, while deaths and injuries increased, throwing the city into last place in street safety among large cities.

On the other hand Chicago in a "selective enforcement" drive in which serious traffic offenses are given police priority, reduced its traffic death total 20 per cent.

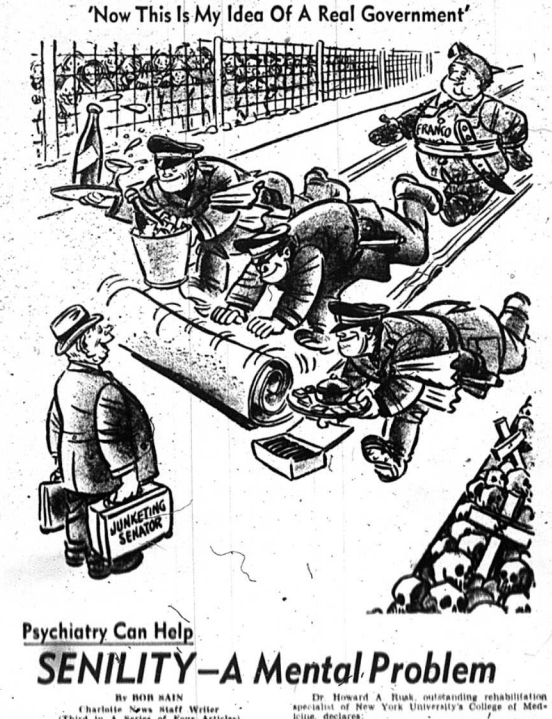
Over-emphasis on petty parking infractions has also driven shoppers to other towns. Some cities have recognized this evil and taken remedies. White Plains, New York, rather than chase its parkers away from its shopping district with fines, used the revenue from its parking meters to purchase parking lots.

The wide expansion of parking meter areas in Columbia raises the question of whether Columbia might not be over-emphasizing this phase of municipal regulation. The more parking meters the more officer-hours will have to be put in checking them.

News item says Opera Star Zinka Milanov drives a blue car when wearing a blue dress and a red one when clad in red. And in a strapless cloth-of-gold evening gown, we suppose, a yellow convertible with the top down.—*Little Rock Arkansas Gazette.*

A backward area is one that didn't make enough money out of the Summer tourists to tide it over the Winter.—*Nashville (Tenn.) Banner.*

'Now This Is My Idea Of A Real Government'



Marquis Childs

The Roots Are Deep

PARIS, FRANCE

THE one-day strike called for all of France is like a warning symptom of a deep-seated disease. It is not serious in itself. But if the warning is ignored, then the disease can take a threatening form.

There are skilled observers who believe the one-day demonstration presages major labor upheavals during the coming Winter. Large-scale strikes could slow the tempo of recovery, and that is particularly true of coal mining, where the unions and nationalized industry are largely dominated by Communists. But, significantly, the one-day general strike called for Friday, Nov. 25, was not initiated by the Communists.

The general strike call was issued by the Workers' Force, which is made up of anti-Communist unions that left the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) because it was run by Communists. The CGT has merely followed the lead of the "third force" unions.

This means that the one-day demonstration of paralyzing all of France, was not political in its initiation. The fact is that its roots are deep in the real grievances of the mass of French workers.

The postwar governments of France have done little or nothing for the workers. Wage levels have remained frozen, and while they have been moved upward under the stabilization agreement they never have kept pace with rising prices. The result is a severe pitch on the working-class families.

At the same time, industrial profits have been relatively high. Wealthy industrialists and financiers have been manifesting all the signs of postwar prosperity, including the export of capital to such "safe" countries as Switzerland, America, Spain and Argentina.

Likewise, the peasant farmer has enjoyed considerable prosperity. This has, in part, been due to Government subsidies. These subsidies have enriched the few large farmers as well as maintaining an adequate price level for the typical French peasant with an average holding of twenty acres.

These contrasts have caused much acute discontent. The resentment of workers has been directed as much against the union leaders as against anyone.

In leaderless France the trade unions are failing to hold their membership. Many goes for the Communists as well as the Workers' Force unions. A considerable proportion of the membership of all unions simply is not paying its dues or accepting any discipline from the old and discredited leaders. Communist support has been dropping steadily. The circulation of the chief Communist newspaper, L'Humanite, has fallen from about a half-million to perhaps as low as 200,000. This reflects the indifference to the leadership of the French Communists, who go on parroting the Moscow line.

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN

It may also reflect the doubts stirred by the Communist schism over Marshal Tito. At the same time, of course, fanatical or naive French intellectuals "make fools" for Moscow by contributing some incredible bilge to the "Golden Book" of Marshal Stalin's 70th birthday. But, since the leadership over the "third force" unions has also deteriorated, there is little reason to celebrate the Communist defection. In such a leadless, anarchic situation almost anything could happen.

What it comes down to as much as anything else in France is the virtually impotent government. The previous government of Premier Henri Queuille had offered to pay a bonus to the low-paid workers, but the unions insisted that all workers should get it.

The present regime has proposed to increase the minimum wage from $8 a month a $13. In addition, of course, the wage scale would get free state benefits that make this total seem somewhat less small when put alongside of American wage standards.

The unions also want a return to collective bargaining, and here, also, the government is making concessions. The danger, however, is that this may be one more case of too little and too late. Major strikes in France this Winter could work havoc with European recovery and the present effort to integrate the European economy.

Psychiatry Can Help

SENILITY—A Mental Problem

By BOB SAIN
Charlotte News Staff Writer
(Third in a Series of Four Articles)

THE problem of our aging society is one of mental health. Medicine created the old age crisis by prolonging life, but medicine alone cannot solve the problem of making life happier for the 7.7 per cent of this nation's population which is over 65. Their problems are not only physical, but mental.

Indeed, it is in the realm of the mind that society can be of the greatest aid to old folks, for while it is not now possible to cure many of the chronic diseases which beset the aged, it is possible, through psychiatry, to make old folks more able to live with such conditions, of the declining years as cancer, heart and kidney disorders and diseases of the arteries.

A few months ago, Riley H. Guthrie, special mental hospital consultant to the U. S. Health Service, viewed with alarm the rapidly increasing percentage of old people in state mental hospitals.

In the State Hospital at Morganton, which serves as mental institution for the Western part of North Carolina, 16.1 per cent of the patients are over 65. And this does not show the true increase over the 15.1 per cent of old folks counted in 1938, for many of Morganton's older patients have been transferred to facilities at Camp Butner since 1939.

Dr. John B. McKee, superintendent of the State Hospital at Morganton, provided these figures this week to prove that psychiatry's part in the problem of old folks is an increasing one.

In 1939, he said, from Jan. 1 through Oct. 10, applications from persons over 65 constituted 13.28 per cent of total applications. In 1948, from Jan. 1 through Oct. 10, applications from persons over 65 constituted 20.67 per cent of total applications, almost twice as many.

He pointed out, too, that of 667 applications from Jan. 1 through Oct. 10, 1949, 140 were persons over 65.

Many Can Be Aided

HOW many of these unfortunate old persons would not have been committed if psychiatric care had been available before their break-down? How many could be returned to their families now—sound in mind—if this state's mental institutions launched a program for their care and rehabilitation?

The former question would be difficult to answer, but it is well known that many persons over 65 develop mental illnesses which are only "functional" reactions to old age and do not involve brain pathology. These persons can be helped by psychiatry.

While it is true that many aged persons suffer from organic psychoses, rising out of cerebral arteriosclerosis, drug addiction, syphilis or alcoholism, some authorities feel that "functional" reactions such as involutional depression and paranoid states cause the majority of cases of mental illness among old people.

If psychiatric treatment had been sought before such "functional" reactions became acute, if psychiatric techniques had been utilized to combat worry over such misfortunes as forced retirement and financial distress, these cases of mental illness might never have required hospitalization.

And what of those now living out the last, short years of their lives in mental hospitals?

Dr. Howard A. Rusk, outstanding rehabilitation specialist of New York University's College of Medicine, declares:

"One of the most neglected of the groups of patients in the chronic degenerative category has been the senile psychotics. They have been placed in public homes or have been sent to state mental institutions for the insane, where, often, because of crowded conditions, they have been placed with disturbed psychotic patients."

This is equally true of old persons suffering from mental illnesses other than senile psychoses.

Making Life Interesting

WHAT can be done within the mental hospital to make life more comfortable for the senile psychotic and more hopeful for the emotionally disturbed old person?

Dr. Randall R. MacLean of Edmonton, Alberta, reports in the American Journal of Psychiatry, that elderly psychotics are being moved out of the mental hospitals in Alberta and established in a special unit.

"This segregation of old persons from more disturbed psychotics is paying off, he adds. . . . Many are much better mentally, less confused, less anxious and more contented. The environment is much safer for them. A few rooms are provided for segregation of the more difficult types."

In Alberta, the elderly patients receive a special diet (food easy of mastication and assimilation), receive treatment from a staff especially chosen for its interest in old people, and engage in social activities which would have been impossible in the main hospital (musical programs, tea parties, etc.).

Such a program of segregation, if instituted in North Carolina's mental hospitals, would not only help the patients but would aid in solving the problem of over-crowding which keeps many more disturbed psychotics from being admitted promptly.

Within the past year, the State Hospitals Board of Control offered facilities at Camp Butner to the North Carolina Board of Public Welfare for the care of elderly patients deemed not to be in need of rigid hospital care.

The Welfare Board apparently did not feel that it was prepared to maintain an institution and turned down the proposal. Thus it appears that any program of segregation of elderly patients must be carried out by the State Hospitals Board of Control, with state hospital facilities and state hospital personnel.

One answer to the growing crisis has been found in Vancouver, B. C. There, a number of small, standardized, economically-built 100-bed units have been established for old persons who need constant physical and psychiatric treatment. The units are located in population centers and the patients are thus allowed to maintain contact with their former environment and to enjoy frequent visits from old friends and members of their families.

Properly administered, such a program might well be the answer to the question of care for old persons who are chronically diseased or emotionally disturbed.

Supporting the Vancouver plan is Charlotte's Dr. Vernon Kinross-Wright, director of the Mental Hygiene Clinic, who asserts that: "Contact with their environment, whenever possible, is essential to the mental health of old persons."

(Tomorrow: Old Folks and Society.)

Joseph And Stewart Alsop

A Magic Word

WASHINGTON

SINCE Secretary of State Dean Acheson and ECA Chief Paul Hoffman returned from their respective trips to Europe, it has become increasingly clear that American policy in Europe revolves about one magic word. This word is "integration". And it is about time to inquire what this word really means to Acheson, Hoffman, and the other American policy-makers.

A proper through the fog which more and more obscures American foreign policy soon discovers that "integration" is the wrong word. To integrate, according to the dictionary, means "to unite or become united so as to form a more complete or perfect whole." What would suggest that this country is trying to create a United States of Europe overnight.

In fact, what Acheson and Hoffman are trying to promote is nothing of the sort. The real objective, as one of the authors of the integration project put it, is "to get back to 1910 by 1952." What the United States wants is a Europe whose internal trading relationships are as close as possible to those which existed before the first World War.

This apparently rather modest but in fact enormously difficult plan for turning the clock back to happier days is envisaged as taking place in a series of stages. In the first stage, there would be three separate groups of "integrated" states—France and Italy, Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg, and the three Scandinavian countries. The first five countries would then be joined, to form "Pritalux". The Scandinavian would then probably be brought into Pritalux. And finally, Western Germany would be added, to make one big, relatively free trading area in Western Europe.

Since this project now clearly has first priority in American foreign Policy, it is deeply important to ask not only what it is expected to accomplish, but also what it is not expected to accomplish. Its authors believe that in the long run—the very long run—"integration" will strengthen the economies of Western Europe, and make the continent less dependent on the United States. A more immediately important political objective is to tie the rapidly revive Western Germany economy firmly into that of the continent, and thus prevent Germany from turning again against the West.

THREAT OF COLLAPSE

These are highly commendable aims. But it is necessary to examine the other side of the coin. In Europe, two facts stand out like large, sore, aching thumbs. The first is the imminent threat of British financial collapse, which has by means been removed by devaluation of the pound, and which would surely be followed by a general economic collapse all over the continent.

The authors of the integration project agree that even if the scheme were whole-heartedly accepted and put into operation immediately, no appreciable economic benefits would accrue for a number of years. Thus, the project will NOT deal with a situation which threatens to knock the underpinnings right out from under American foreign policy.

The second fact which stands out in Europe is that Western Europe is still virtually defenseless in the face of the Soviet Union's massive rearmament effort. Again, the integration project will NOT affect the real balance of military power, which is rapidly swinging in favor of the Soviet Union.

In one of Chekov's minor short stories there appears the character of a Russian landowner who planned vast improvements on his property, while the roof of his house was falling about his head. Free trade on the continent, leading ultimately to a real continental economic and political union, would certainly be a vast improvement, and a thoroughly worthy ultimate aim of American policy. But there is a perfectly obvious danger that "integration" will be accepted as a magical and marvelously inexpensive substitute for a real policy, capable of preventing the none-Communist world from caving in, like the Russian landowner's roof.

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

New Senator May Make Truman Unhappy

WASHINGTON

IT LOOKS as if President Truman would soon have one of his former assistants whom he didn't particularly like, back in Washington—this time in the Senate. He is William Benton, former assistant Secretary of State, who will probably be the new Senator from Connecticut following the retirement of GOP Sen. Raymond Baldwin on Jan. 1.

Gov. Chester Bowles has virtually decided to appoint Benton, a Democrat, to Baldwin's seat.

Benton, who had the difficult job of setting up the State Dept.'s new propaganda office, pioneered the Voice of America radio program. He also went in for an art exhibit, which was sent to various foreign countries, and it was this which got him in the hair of his chief in the White House.

Truman didn't like modernistic art, and didn't hesitate to say so. In fact, he took the trouble to write Benton a confidential letter describing modern art "as merely the vagaries of half-baked law people. There is no art, at all in connection with the modernists, in my opinion," Truman told his subordinate.

Benton's Final Triumph

BENTON also had a tough time with certain Congressmen, especially penny-pinching John Taber of New York, who cut the heart out of his appropriations. It is interesting to note, however, that Congress later came around to the realization that Benton's propaganda program was one of the most important things the State Dept. was doing. In fact, most of the things Benton crusaded for have now received full recognition.

Despite this, General Marshall, on becoming Secretary of State, asked for Benton's resignation, and the tough-talking former advertising executive retired to Connecticut where he kept busy with the Encyclopedia Britannica, which he owns, and Muzak, the company which pipes music into hotels and restaurants all over the United States.

If Governor Bowles carries through his present intention of appointing his close friend to the Senate, Benton will now vote on the appropriations of State Dept. officials who once conspired to fire him. However, Benton bears no grudges, and when the Democratic Party was having a tough time raising money in 1948, he came through with a generous contribution for the President who once eased him out of Washington.

Thanksgiving Idea

THE MORMON CHURCH has adopted a Thanksgiving Day idea which larger church groups, or even those affiliated with no church, might want to adopt.

The Mormons are doing without one full meal at this time of the year and donating the amount they would spend for that meal to someone who cannot afford a Thanksgiving dinner. In many cases they are giving the money to the Community Chest.

Behind this Mormon gesture is not only the idea of helping one's fellow man, but also the idea that the hunger pangs of one who goes without a meal makes him think a little more about the sufferings of others.

Perhaps in Washington, D. C., where the people of the capital of the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world have not been able to fill their Community Chest quota, it might be a good idea to take a leaf from the Mormons' book. If everyone gave up one meal during the week and contributed the equivalent to the Community Chest, the barometer of community generosity would shoot up to near the boiling point.

Amateur Diplomats

MOST people have the idea that diplomacy is something to be left to those trained in foreign languages, international problems, and the niceties of the social salons. But 24 Negroes from Howard University have just done a great thing for their country by touring Scandinavia to counteract Paul Robeson's propaganda.

The 24 colored students had been studying dramatics at Howard, and after a clerk from the Norwegian embassy saw their performance, he suggested that they visit Norway. With a little help they made the trip, and capped off by presenting Henrik Ibsen's "Wild Duck" right in Ibsen's Norwegian homeland.

Robeson, traveling through Scandinavia a few months before, had told how American Negroes were downtrodden, lynched, and undernourished. Many believed him. Therefore, when the Howard University students arrived, they played to full houses, many in Russian audiences to see just what kind of culture could come from the American Negro.

The result was enthusiastic acclaim from Cold dramatic critics. According to "Morgenbladet": "The acting was honest and straightforward with an air of sincerity." "Verdens Gang" added: "The visit proved that the 'colored' Howard University has a literarily and culturally cultured student milieu on a plane which any European or other university has reason to envy."

From there on, the Negro students played before sellout crowds. They attracted so much attention, in fact, that they were invited to tour Denmark and Sweden—where they met the same enthusiastic reception. Now they are winding up performances in the American zone of Germany, have been asked to fill engagements in France and Holland.

Though unknown and unappreciated in their own country, these young Negroes have scored a triumph abroad—not merely for their acting but, more important, for their people-to-people diplomacy.

Wall Street Brushoff

WALL STREET bankers are in for a big brushoff when Cameron S. Cobbold, president of the Bank of England, visits the USA early next month for a discussion of world trade and monetary problems.

In the past, Montagu Norman, Lord Cato and other Bank of England tycoons always dealt directly with Wall Street when they had business in the United States. They ignored Washington except for social teas.

However, the British Government has instructed Cobbold to give Wall Street bankers the go-by on this trip and do his talking with the Federal Reserve Board in Washington. He will make only a token, courtesy call in New York after his business in Washington is finished.

Federal Reserve insiders report that the British banking official is not coming here for another handout for his government, but to exchange ideas on how to stimulate trade by a freer exchange of currency and of private investment capital between the U. S. and Great Britain.