THE CHARLOTTE NEWS

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URBAN REDEVELOPMENT

THAT picture of a massive face-lifting for the City of Charlotte described by our Mr. Pesperman in his series on Urban Redevelopment reads like visions of sugar plums inspired by the Yuletide, but a practical and realistic project.

The three-phased proposal—(1) the elimination of blighted areas, residential and business, (2) the redevelopment of the land for better use, and (3) the provision of new housing or commercial facilities for the displaced tenants—can be carried out here, just as it is going to be carried out in many other United States cities.

It can be run to a few millions, or, as in the case of Norfolk which has embarked on a $60 million redevelopment program, it can run to many millions.

Its size and form and the rapidity with which we swing into action to utilize the available Federal assistance depends entirely on local initiative and momentum.

As in other Federal projects, the money has been appropriated by the Congress—$1,500,000,000 at first—to advance temporary loans for surveys and planning, and to meet the difference between the cost of buying up the blighted areas and the resale price after redevelopment. It will be spent somewhere. Whether any of it will be spent in Charlotte is up to Charlotte.

There is a major legal obstacle. The 1951 General Assembly must pass a special enabling act authorizing North Carolina cities to participate in the program. Such an act was defeated in the 1949 General Assembly by real estate representatives who shouted "socialism" and who argued that there were defects in the measure—but who, significantly, failed to offer a substitute measure although their national organization is on record as favoring Urban Redevelopment.

An act can be pushed through the next General Assembly if the cities of North Carolina become alert to the possibilities of using Urban Redevelopment funds. But it will take co-ordinated effort.

It is not too early to start work. We already have in Charlotte a competent Planning Board which could undertake to survey the possibilities of Urban Redevelopment and recommend a course of action to the City Administration.

Then the City Administration should, unilaterally or in co-operation with the N. C. League of Municipalities, seek to reach an agreement with real estate interests as early as possible on the provisions of an enabling act which will satisfy everyone and still retain the necessary authority to carry out a comprehensive redevelopment program.

Unless we get busy without too much delay, the 1951 session of the General Assembly may find us unprepared once again.

ONE BLUE BABY

MOST Americans—and probably decent persons everywhere—have big hearts. A news story about a girl with an ailing hand will bring everything from money for treatment to jars of herbs guaranteed to make it as good as new. The story of a family facing a Christmas without Santa will turn up dozens of Santas ready and eager to make Christmas better for the family.

And in Dunn, N. C., this week, when Dr. Randolph Doffermyre told the State about Edith Joyce Chance, a blue baby who needed an operation to save her life, more than a few persons responded. The Harnett County Welfare Dept. couldn't help; its funds had been exhausted.

First to chip in was the Fayetteville Exchange Club. Their check for $50 got the ball rolling. Harnett County folks added to it and now Dr. Doffermyre says 30-month-old Edith Joyce Chance will get her chance for life.

Dr. Doffermyre and the people who provided the funds for the child's hospitalization (the operation will be performed by a doctor at Duke Hospital without compensation) are to be commended. This child may live because of their efforts; she would surely have died without them.

But what of the thousands of other children and adults who are sick, unable to pay for hospitalization in counties where Welfare Departments have used up their appropriation? What can be done for them? Only a very few receive the necessary publicity to start private contributions rolling in.

Dr. Doffermyre accused the Harnett County Welfare Dept. of "brushing-off" the youngster's case.

"It has been called to my attention," he wrote in a letter to the county commissioners, "that welfare aid to this little child has been denied. It is true that perhaps I do not know all the circumstances involved in the case, but I do know that the life of a child is at stake . . . matters of this importance should get more than a brush-off by our Welfare Department . . ."

Welfare Superintendent Wilma Williams was quick to reply:

"The child has able-bodied parents. It is their responsibility. . . ."

She followed that up with a statement that the child would already have received medical care if a system of compulsory health insurance were in operation. She pointed to the American Medical Association's million dollar war chest which is fighting the very sort of public health program which would have provided funds for the blue baby's care.

"Could this not be interpreted," she asked, "as meaning that the American Medical Association is giving 'the brush-off' to hundreds of little Edith Joyce Chances?"

It is certain that this particular youngster can never expect to receive adequate medical care through any of the various private voluntary health insurance programs yet proposed. ("It's all we can do," said her mother, "to buy groceries.")

Obviously, mere opposition to the President's compulsory health insurance program will not help the Edith Joyce Chances. The AMA will receive a great deal more public support in its campaign if it can exert its influence in a positive manner to remedy such deficiencies in our national health program as this.

FACTOPHILES

IT GIVES some people great pleasure to be able to tell you that George Clinton and Rufus King were the vice-presidential candidates in the election of 1904, that the "State Bird" of West Virginia is the tufted titmouse or that Alexander Archipenko was born in Kiev, Russia, May 30, 1887.

Factophiles, you might call them. They gather facts like a short boy picking cotton and fling them like a farmgirl scattering grain to chickens.

They sit quietly in a conversation group, awaiting a lull in the talk before inserting:

"Did you know that the real name of China was Chung-Hua Min-Kuo?"

This is not done in an attempt to appear superior. The factophiles honestly believe their information is of great value and that you have been sitting there all the time waiting to find out the real name of China.

There are different sorts of factophiles. The species concerned with Chung-Hua Min-Kuo is a geographical factophile.

There are sports factophiles: "Did you know that L. M. B. Melville won the British amateur golf championship at St. Andrews in 1895?" And unless you happen to be L. M. B. Melville, you probably didn't.

There are movie factophiles: "Do you know who won the academy award for the best woman's supporting role in 1936? Gale Sondergaard, that's who."

There are historical factophiles: "Do you know when Warren Hastings, British administrator in India, was tried? 1792."

But the most exotic of the factophiles is the statistical factophile. Withdrawn, cold—the statistical factophile carries thousands upon thousands of digits inside his cranium; and he never ceases to shuffle them about, save when he leans forward, as if to tell some flavorsome morsel of gossip and intones:

"Did you know that steam railways carried 1,269,913 passengers in 1920?"

A simple, "Yes, I did" is usually sufficient to stop the factophile cold, but this is not a very trustworthy weapon. It can lead, if you are dealing with a hardened factophile, to:

"Well, then, did you know . . ."

From The Raleigh News & Observer

PEAS AND PREFERENCES

IT TAKES all kinds, as the saying goes, so it's impossible to predict what answer the Army will get to its 380-word question, a question which boils down to this: Will soldiers eat black-eyed peas?

Down here in the grits-and-ham-gravy belt, the question borders on the ridiculous. Anyone who approaches the peas with normal taste buds and an open mind is bound to answer yes to the query, as any black-eyed pea fancier will tell you.

Of course, the test will have to be a fair one if the Army is to arrive at the gastronomic truth about this matter. The fact that commanding generals have been instructed to feed the peas to "two stations" within their commands on three different days will not assure an unbiased verdict.

To get a true appraisal of the peas, the Army is duty-bound to serve them with cornbread, for, as admirers of the vegetable know, peas without cornbread are like baths without water, or artillery barrages with blank shells. And another thing, Army cooks chosen to cook the black-eyed morsels should be carefully screened so that some ex-plumber or ex-policeman cannot mangle the dish as they were sometimes wont to do in wartime haste.

It required 380 words to put the question about the Army mess hall future of black-eyed peas. But if the generals flank the peas with cornbread, and let a sympathetic cook prepare them, the answer will be considerably shorter. Just yes, exclamation point

Souvenir From Florida

Observances Of Christmas

(Reprinted from The State Magazine)

LAST WEEK we published a brief comment in connection with a remark made by Senator Clyde R. Hoey about "riding the fantastic" at Christmas time. The Senator explained that this was a custom prevalent in Cleveland County when he was a youngster. Men and boys would dress themselves in all kinds of outlandish costumes, then get on horseback and proceed to cut up all kinds of capers around town. And with reference to his explanation we said we'd never heard of leading the fantastic and wondered whether it was carried out only in Cleveland County.

A letter came in a few days ago from Mr. A. C. Stephenson of Red Springs that had something to say about this subject. Here it is:

"About Senator Hoey's account of riding the fantastic: I was reared in Severn, a small town in Northampton County which, as you know, is quite a distance from Cleveland County. When I was a small boy it was a custom in that community to dress up in all sorts of weird costumes, put on false faces, or blacken the face, and ride around in a manner similar to that described by Senator Hoey. The only difference seems to be in the name by which this was called. We called it 'Riding Ragamuffin,' but essentially it was the same kind of sport that was enjoyed in Cleveland County."

"The little boys and girls who were too small to ride on horses dressed themselves in the same manner, but they walked around, blowing horns and raising a fuss generally. It really did start Christmas off with a bang."

Thank you, Mr. Stephenson, for that information.

* * *

AND MRS. W. M. Murray of Clinton also writes in and backs up what Mr. Stephenson has to say. She states that she used to live in Pendleton, which also is in Northampton County. Up there, when she was a little girl, they rode mules mostly, and the mules were adorned with streamers made of crepe paper and old neckties. She says it was quite a sight to see the clown costumes of the riders and to see the mules prancing all over town.

Mrs. James A. Moore of Fayetteville brings out another aspect in connection with old time observances of Christmas. She calls attention to the Christmas Eve revelers who were known as Kooner-Johns, or just plain Kooners. They'd go around in the same type of costumes that we've just described and would try to scare people. They'd sing songs and visit from house to house where they usually were given fruit, cake, candy and other good things to eat. Mrs. Moore also says: "I remember that it was the case for many years that if a person were dressed badly, in bad taste or poor style, people would say that she looked like a 'Kooner-John'."

* * *

FRIDAY afternoon we were talking about all this to Earl Johnson of Raleigh, and he told us that when he was a youngster the kids used to go around in much the same manner as Mrs. Moore tells about. Only they weren't called Kooners, or Kooner-Johns in Raleigh: they were called DQ's. Earl said that there's been a lot of argument about the origin of the expression, but he believes it originated from the peculiar sound made by some of the horns that the youngsters used to blow. The noise sounded something like "Dee-Cue-Eye". However, he's not positive about this.

While we're on the subject of old-time observance of Christmas, perhaps we'd better tell you again about the best explanation we've heard relative to the use of fireworks throughout the South during the Christmas season. This practice, incidentally, has been outlawed in recent years by the Legislature. If you shoot fireworks in town or country you'll be violating the law.

Every Yankee who came South was impressed with the way we used to shoot off fireworks down here at Christmas. Up North they are used only on the Fourth of July. As a general thing, he is interested in how the custom originated.

A couple of hundred years or so ago, houses in the eastern part of North Carolina were not as close together as they are now. In many instances farmers lived a mile or two apart. John Smith would wake up on Christmas morning and he'd think of his neighbor, Tom Brown, who lived a mile away. Smith would want Brown to know that he was thinking of him and hoped he'd have a happy Christmas. So he'd get out his old blunderbuss and shoot into the air. Brown would hear it and would recognize it as a Christmas greeting. Then he, too, would get out his gun, load it up and bang away. Probably Jim Jones, who lived further away, would hear the sound and then he'd proceed to acknowledge the greeting in the same manner.

Children didn't have guns. They saw their fathers or big brothers exchange Christmas salutations in this manner and naturally they wanted to participate. So they'd get hog bladders, blow them up good and tight and then jump on them. The result was a most satisfactory bang.

Other means of making a noise were used, and finally all these resulted in the general use of fireworks at Christmas time throughout the entire South. But when the kids started blowing themselves up, it was decided that the custom ought to be discouraged, and that's why fireworks have faded out of the picture in recent years.

People's Platform

Circumstantial Evidence Hit

ROCK HILL

Editors, The News:

THERE has been considerable public interest in the recent conviction of Nathan T. Corn. Many people are asking themselves, is it safe to live in a state which allows people to be convicted on circumstantial evidence?

There is no doubt in the minds of the public in general that the state has failed to prove the guilt of this boy. Because of this, a large number of people are contributing to a fund in order that further investigation might be made.

These people feel that the truth of this matter should be brought to light, and if Corn is innocent that he should be given his freedom. If he is guilty, then the public should know that, too.

We want the question of guilt or innocence of Nathan T. Corn cleared up in the public mind. There could be nothing worse than a man suffering the penalty of imprisonment for a crime he did not commit.

—MRS. H. L. WALDROP

The People's Platform is available to any reader who care; to mount it. Communications should be less than 300 words typewritten if possible, and on only one side of the paper. Libel and obscenity will be deleted—otherwise anything goes. Each letter must be signed.—Editors, The News.

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

Gen. Groves Has Sudden Change Of Mind

WASHINGTON

FRIENDS of Gen. Leslie Groves planted a story in Newsweek that Groves was all set "to give credence by innuendo to Fulton Lewis's charges" that Henry Wallace urged shipments of atom materials to Russia. Groves was planning, according to Newsweek, to say that he was barred from discussing the matter by a Presidential directive, and he had "actually brought the text of an FDR wartime order into the committee hearing room."

But, continued Newsweek, "what made him change his mind and completely absolve not only Wallace but Hopkins as a mystery."

Newsweek's mystery, however, is not really a mystery at all. Assistant Congressman Francis Walter of Pennsylvania heard what was afoot and called the general's bluff. Learning that Groves was planning to wave an FDR directive as a blind for his personal attack, Walter put in a phone call to the Dept. of Defense with highly interesting results.

When Groves took the stand, his first words were about the "directive," which, he said, enjoined him from discussing personnel before a Congressional committee.

"Oh, that's been rescinded," interrupted Walter. "I just talked with one of the assistant secretaries in the Defense Dept. and was assured that you could speak out freely about these alleged shipments. You're at liberty to tell us all you know, to help us clear up this matter."

Groves looked like he had been hit with a belaying pin.

"The directive is no longer applicable?" he asked, incredulously.

"No, you can testify fully regarding this case," advised Walter.

Faced with the obligation of testifying on the record regarding cold facts, the general gave Hopkins and Wallace a clean bill of health.

Winchell Gets Shaved

DOWN at Miami the other day honeymooning Vice President Barkley remarked to vacationing Senate Secretary Leslie Biffle that he needed a haircut. Biffle replied that it was mutual; so next day both men dropped in at the Roney-Plaza Hotel barbershop.

Two chairs were occupied, but a third chair was vacant, and the Vice President of the United States started to enthrone himself.

"Oh no, you can't use that," protested the barber. "That chair's reserved."

Barkley said nothing, picked up a paper and waited until another chair was vacant, then proceeded to get his haircut. Biffle also waited until the next barber was free. Meanwhile, the third chair still remained vacant. The man for whom it was reserved did not show up.

Finally Biffle remarked in an undertone to his barber: "Do you know who that is in the next chair? That's the vice president of the United States."

Biffle's barber went over and whispered to the other barber who stood, still idle, beside the empty chair. There was a buzz of consternation. Then suddenly the customer who outranked the Vice President bounced into the barbershop.

It was Walter Winchell.

Coffee Price Finagling

SEN. Guy Gillette of Iowa, who has been doing a good job of probing the soaring coffee prices, is also checking on some shenanigans of the New York coffee exchange, apparently aimed at keeping prices pegged high.

Normally, Brazilian producers and exporters, which supply about half our coffee needs, are sellers on the exchange. However, Gillette has information that certain Brazilians also have been buying up all the coffee futures they can get their hands on so they can be in a controlling position to maintain inflated prices

Some American brokers don't like the smell of the foreign intrusion in the coffee exchange and have refused to handle the accounts of Brazilian traders, numbering 40 or 50 in all. However, others, including Ruffner, Burch & Co., Leon Israel & Brothers and Schwabach & Co.—all of New York—haven't balked at accepting the foreign accounts.

This partly explains why trading on the coffee exchange has doubled since speculators started rumors about the "coffee shortage" scare—rumors that have been proved groundless. It is one reason, also, why coffee continues to sell from 25 to 30 cents a pound more than it should. For the more coffee futures are bought in by the speculators, the more they are able to control prices.

Another factor in the price rise, of course, has been hoarding by jittery housewives, which has reduced stocks on retail stores. Commerce Dept. records show that 229,000,000 pounds of green coffee were roasted for sale in October and 238,000,000 pounds in November, compared with a monthly average of 182,000,000 pounds in July, August and September.

Most of this excess is on the pantry shelf.

New Year Not To Be So Very Happy For 81st Congress

By MARQUIS CHILDS

WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S first meeting with the members of his Cabinet following his Florida vacation will hardly be held in the joyous mood of the holiday season. Too much that is harsh and forbidding lies just ahead.

The five-billion-dollar deficit and a budget trimmed like an underfed Christmas turkey to fit that deficit inevitably dominate the thinking of the Administration at this stage. The importance of the cuts that must be made have been impressed on all of the President's official family.

In two closely related spheres the concern is felt most deeply. One is national defense and the other is foreign aid.

Secretary of State Dean Acheson is facing the realities like a good soldier. Clearly if domestic programs must be trimmed, as it is expected they will be trimmed in the President's budget, then any new foreign programs are clearly out of the question. While this can hardly make the Secretary happy, he is not complaining.

The danger — and it is a very real danger — is that the whole momentum of America's positive post-war foreign policy will be lost. It is not so much that the tempo must be sustained by ever more and more spending on foreign programs. But it is not enough merely to coast on what may be left intact after Congress has finished slashing present programs.

That, of course, raises the big question — the Far East and the struggle against Communism in Asia. The need for a constructive new program that would be tied in to the problem of European recovery and, above all, to the British debt in the Far East and the Middle East is glaringly obvious.

It has been considered likely that Point IV programs for India and Pakistan, and perhaps also for Iran, would be forthcoming shortly after Jan. 1. These would be large-scale loans to start new irrigation, hydro-electric and industrial projects.

But, as of today at any rate, the decision is against any such program. The World Bank is being looked to as the source of construction loans. Likewise, the bank and the international Monetary Fund will, it is hoped, step in and help to work out some adjustment of the vast World War II debts that British owes to India, Pakistan, Egypt, Iran and almost every other country in that part of the world.

After all, our foreign policy planners point out, the World Bank is a very rich and flourishing institution. Its bonds sell readily to the financial community in New York. The bank already has granted two loans to India, one for $34,000,000 for railroad construction, and a second for $15,000,000 for land reclamation. A third application for $25,000,000 for steam-generating equipment for India's power system is under active discussion.

From the point of view of understanding and good will Prime Minister Nehru's visit to America was considered a great success. But it did not, as Nehru told some of his close friends in London on his return journey, happen quite as he had expected. He had thought that the United States would ask commitments from him, particularly on China and Communism, and that in turn he would ask for commitments from this country. Instead, nothing was asked and nothing specific was offered.

In response to an invitation from President Truman the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, will visit America. Planned for next May, his visit is expected to follow the pattern of Nehru's journey.

On the foreign side the greatest concern is felt over possible cuts by an economy-minded Congress in the appropriation for administering the German occupation. At best, the plans and hopes centering around the West German government of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer are based on shaky premises. If the prop of financial support is pulled out, the whole structure can come crashing down.

Especial concern is felt for Berlin where unemployment remains at a critically high level.

That is the foreign picture as it looks to the men who carry the heavy burden of responsibility. A Washington column still discuss the cuts in the defense program and their effect on national policy.

Ex-GI, With Mama Along, Returns To South Pacific

By ROBERT C. RUARK

SAN FRANCISCO

I WILL NOT pretend that I am not excited, for Daddy-off to the seven seas again and may very well have candied kangaroo for his New Year's dinner. Last year it was sheep's eyes and couscous with the Arabs in Tangier, and any man who can cope with a limpid, boiled sheep's eye certainly can handle a hunk of Australian marsupial. It can't be any harder to swallow.

I always get excited when I leave San Francisco (probably a throwback to the war, when you never knew where you'd wind up). This time I've got a better idea, since Pan-American, not NATS, is handling my trade and no naval orders inhabit my coat pocket.

It looks very much as if the Hawaiian interlude need a short inspection from your correspondent.

I am a little curious to see whether Harry Bridges left anything in his wake, in the way of fun. The final report I ha from the islands told of starvation and strife as a result of Harry's longshore strike. The islands were full of starvation and strife the last time I passed out that way, too, but for a different reason.

MAYBE IT'S CHANGED

This reason was called war, and was embodied by the GI. The heaven, isles were as crowded as a subway, and twice as jampacked with frustration. Everybody was mad at everybody else. You couldn't buy a drink, or rent a hotel room, or find a seat, or get your clothes back from the laundry within a normal life expectancy. Gals were as scarce as courtesy, and almost every military man I knew hated the joint.

After I have given Hawaii another chance, it seems foolish to come home to Winter, so I figure to rustle over to Australia and New Zealand. I haven't been since they bounced the Socialists out of the government. At least, that is what I am telling the office. Actually I am going back to see if the horses still run counter-clockwise at Randwick racetrack in Sydney, and to learn whether Melbourne beer has lost its flavor.

My strong right arm, otherwise referred to as mama, is in tow for New Year's dinner. Last year I allowed to return to the scene of past crimes without firm supervision, and like a few hundred thousand other mamas, has heard violently colored anecdotes about Australia. I can't do that for a year, would not permit me to mention the word in the parlor.

SEE, MAMA?

I intend to perform a service for a great many people who are still having trouble as the result of a short stay at Sydney or Brisbane or Melbourne, and that is going to turn mama loose on the terrain, and convince her that all military men are not nothing but bored and saintly during their sojourn down under.

This would seem to me to be a public service, for I know of no American spouse who does not compress her lips into a thin, stern line the moment the subject of Australia slides into a conversation. By some horrid miscarriage of publicity, all wives are convinced that life in Australia was an interminable orgy, with dancing girls, wine and carousal running a 24-hour shift. I intend to convince mama that our love of the antipodes was founded entirely on a fondness for stylus and pipe, the benevolent climate and the kookaburra, or laughing-jackass bird.

Australia is nothing like the Mount outlaw. I thought it might be a nice idea to tarry for a moment in Noumea, New Caledonia. The GI left a mighty mess of cultural footprints in those parts, and I think it my bounden duty to give the old town at least a routine check.

There is only one possible hitch in the plan. In case mama is not convinced that our interest in Australia was purely academic, I may send her in mail to Tahiti. The guy in charge and full beard who meets the boat will be me.

Capital News Capsules

UNBOSSED BOARD—Averell Harriman, top ECA representative in Europe, has been offered the chairmanship of the long-unbossed National Security Resources Board. He declined. This board, one of the most important in Washington, has been without a director for more than a year—part of the time because of the row over the appointment of Truman's friend, ex-Governor Mon Wallgren of Washington.

BRITISH LABOR JITTERY—Ambassador Douglas Reports from London that the Labor Government's communists in Australia and New Zealand has given the British Government a bad case of the jitters. This affects their entire foreign policy and will make British action an unpredictable ally until elections are held next Spring.

MORE MONEY TO BRITAIN?—Treasury Secretary Snyder has warned President Truman that Britain is heading for another disastrous financial crisis. Snyder has submitted a secret report on Britain's outlook, which warns that the British pound is now selling for less than two dollars on the black market and that a new loan of two billion dollars may be necessary to keep the British from going under. In brief, devaluation urged on the British by Snyder just didn't work.

ARTIFICIAL MICA—Scientists at the National Bureau of Standards, working with the Navy, have just discovered a method for producing artificial mica—one of the most strategic materials in the world. The United States used 10,000 tons of mica last year—and all but 135 tons of it came from abroad. It's absolutely essential in the production of all radio and radar devices. The Bureau of Standards has now made this important contribution to national defense.