

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 1952

AN ANOMALY IN OUR MIDST

ON LAST SUNDAY a man who had been employed the day before by the Merchant Patrol shot and killed his mother-in-law. He was still wearing the Patrol uniform. He used a gun given him by his employer. Elsewhere on this page today, our Mr. Secret gives the background of this incident and describes the operation of the Merchant Patrol. We invite you to read his report, because it points to a strange anomaly: the presence in the community of a large band of armed and uniformed men who carry out quasi-police duties for private employers without any regulation whatsoever by public authorities.

Mr. Stroupe, who runs the Merchant Patrol, has a valid point when he contends that the Patrol should not be judged by this one incident. We would not so judge it. But the incident plainly shows that some people are no business carrying guns, and Lester Pearson is one of those people.

Why should the community need a Merchant Patrol in the first place? Are the regular police departments not adequate for routine checking and inspection of business establishments? Do they not have enough manpower or equipment? Is there any evi-

dence that they have been lax in their duties?

The merchants who pay Mr. Stroupe for his extra protection are taxpayers. They have a right to expect full protection from the regular law enforcement agencies. They should not have to fork over an additional amount.

Perhaps they want to do so anyway. Perhaps the additional security, or rather the feeling of additional security, is worth the cost. In that case, does not the community have a right to expect Merchant Patrolmen to be adequately screened and cleared by public authorities before they are given a uniform, a gun, and a fast automobile and sent out on the roads?

We ask these questions not in an effort to impugn what may be a perfectly legitimate business but out of a concern for the superficial, once-over-lightly check given Lester Pearson. A loaded gun in the hands of a carefully-trained, cautious policeman is dangerous enough. In the hands of a trigger-happy, untrained man who apparently is in such straits that he needs a one-night job as night watchman, a gun can be fatal—as it was on last Sunday.

COMEDY OF ERRORS—WITH A NEW CAST

THE continuing furor over the extension of one runway at Douglas Municipal Airport has its amusing side-effects—even though the humor may be slightly grim.

First, the County Commission permitted themselves to be maneuvered into a most uncomfortable political hotpot. They could have, and should have, approved the routine petition to the State Highway Commission for the relocation of a short segment of Dixie Road. They had no responsibility in the matter whatsoever, as it now turns out, for the road in question is not on the State Highway system maps in Raleigh. Yet they let the thing grow into a burning public issue, and finally refused by a 3-2 vote to approve the petition, thinking that would block the runway extension. It didn't.

Next, Clerk of Court J. Lester Wolfe, one of the astutest politicians we have seen in these parts, has let himself be maneuvered into precisely the same spot. A deadline for the awarding of the contracts is fast approaching. There is not much time. Last week, attorneys for the landowners claimed that the State Highway Commission should be made a party to the condemnation proceedings. Mr. Wolfe should have ruled fairly one way or the other right then and there. In-

stead, he waited until this week. And just when it appeared that all details were taken care of, he belatedly held that the State Highway Commission should, after all, become a party to the case. This means further delay. It may mean that the Federal financial help for extending the runway will be lost altogether, unless Mr. Wolfe manages to speed things along in the next few days.

This has been a strange chapter in Mecklenburg's history. At the very beginning of the runway extension argued that the Dixie Road should not be relocated. Then it developed that they were not concerned about the road after all. They just didn't want any more airport and any more airplanes. And now they're back to the road again, having realized that the City is going right ahead with its condemnation proceedings. The hard truth of the matter is that the Douglas Municipal Airport is probably the most valuable single public asset in the whole Mecklenburg metropolitan area. Aviation is the transportation of tomorrow, and without adequate airport facilities, this community's development will come to a grinding halt. How so simple an issue could become so involved in politics and legal technicalities is a mystery we have not yet fathomed.

THE C OF C GETS OFF BASE

THE U. S. Chamber of Commerce deserves a praise for its never-ending fight for a sound economy. We don't agree with them altogether on what are and aren't "economy" measures, but it's their privilege and ours to disagree. However, we're getting a bit annoyed with distortion of fact by the Chamber of Commerce. Here's the latest instance.

The Chamber wants to cut \$5.8 billion from the proposed \$7.9 billion military security program. Statute the C of C, as Russell C. Harrison, arguing for the reason, is charged that "billions" of U. S. dollars are being poured into a Franco-Swiss security and power project which the French people refused to finance. This project, he said, is carried on through the use of "dollars" which might be described as U. S. dollars, which have been converted into French citizenship, while "our own St. Lawrence security and power project goes begging."

That's the way the Chamber has used those phrases which arrived in Washington about the time ECA started. We'll try to explain it with a minimum of gobbledygook, and in so doing, maybe add some needed light to Mr. Harrington's confusion.

Most of the billions appropriated by Congress for the Marshall Plan (ECA) started here in the U. S., to pay for equipment which went to Europe. Take, for example, tractors. The U. S. Government paid the U. S. manufacturers for them. They were sent overseas, with France, Dutchmen paid for them, in gold, their currency, and so on. In each recipient country all of these payments

went into each country's "counterpart funds". These funds, by U. S. law and in practice, were used for reconstruction and development of each country's war-damaged economies, which, well, let us remember, the purpose of the Marshall Plan. The U. S. got five per cent of the counterpart funds for administrative purposes, and had considerable money in the hands of where these counterpart funds were spent.

Counterpart funds, then, are a long way from being "U. S. dollars which have been forced into French citizenship". Furthermore, no money is now going into counterpart funds—that ended when ECA closed shop and was replaced by the Mutual Security Administration, with its emphasis on military, rather than economic, aid. This particular "U. S. dollars" phrase is a distortion of the fact that the project was planned before World War II, started several years ago by the French. Counterpart funds are being used for its construction. ECA long ago granted its okay for the use of "billions" of U. S. dollars are pouring into it. And we hardly see why the French, as Mr. Harrington intimates, should hold up development of needed navigational and power facilities until the St. Lawrence project is developed.

Thus the Chamber spokesman (1) got his facts wrong, and (2) based his argument against the Mutual Security Program on a distortion of the facts of preceding program. Such tactics are hardly worthy of his organization. In effect he criticized the Marshall Plan, which is surprising, because it was a shot-in-the-arm for many members of his organization, as well as Europeans.

TIMES HAVE REALLY CHANGED

COMING to our attention at income tax time in this age of \$85 billion budgets, quarter million dollar bomb sights and sundry other multiple billions of dollars in following budget was really small potatoes. Capt. Meriwether Lewis, head of the famed Lewis and Clark expedition to the Northwest, compiled for President Jefferson the following itemized expenses:

Mathematical instruments—\$17; arms and accoutrements extraordinary—\$81; camp equipment, \$225; medicine and packing—\$55; means and transportation—\$430; Indian presents—\$960; provisions, extraordinary—\$324; practice for making up the various articles into portable packs—\$584; purchase of new books, guides and interpreters—\$400; in silver coin to defray the expenses of the party from Nashville to the last white settlement on the Missouri—\$100; contingencies—\$87. The total—only \$2,050.

We don't know if Capt. Lewis exhausted or exceeded his modest budget. Perhaps, like some of his brother Army officers of a more recent era, and most budget makers for that matter, he underestimated his expenses then,

after authorization of the expenditure, bled his figures.

Captain Lewis deserved belated recognition for his economy. But, also, times have changed. Backs, say, 2,000 bucks wouldn't buy his \$145,000 expedition outside the city limits of St. Louis.

FISH STORY

WE'VE HEARD many a fisherman tell of about the one that got away. But nothing so good ever happened to Harry Truman.

He was an oil well. A whole field of oil wells, in fact, he was a new oil well. Mr. President, he got "all patriotic" and went off to war. His partners in an oil well venture got in a fuss, and some other folks took over the lease. They drilled, hit oil, and what Mr. Truman did was to have a share in the famous Teeter Pool. It was all patriotic—but not for H. S. Truman.

History turns on small decisions. Mr. Truman went to war and became President. He also got to know Harry Vaughan.

'Confess! The Americans Sent You'



Reporter On Assignment

The Assignment:

The slaying of an elderly woman last Sunday by a man wearing the uniform and using a gun of the Merchant Patrol raises some questions. Why was a man with a criminal record hired in the first place? Under what authorization does the Merchant Patrol carry out its police-type duty? Does the City of Charlotte or Mecklenburg County exercise any regulatory powers over the Patrol?

And The Report:

By A. M. SECREST
Charlotte News Staff Writer
LESTER C. Pearson, once famous in boxing circles as Lester O'Brien, has been bound over to Superior Court on a charge of killing his mother-in-law, Mrs. Ella Hope, last Sunday afternoon. At the preliminary hearing in City Police Court, Detective William A. McCall testified that Pearson was wearing the uniform of the Merchant Patrol at the time of the fatal shooting and that he used a Merchant Patrol pistol in the killing.

Investigation reveals that Pearson was a seven-time offender with a record at City Police Department of assault with deadly weapon, assault on a female, drunkenness, reckless driving, abandonment and non-support, and attempted suicide. The last incident resulted in his being held for mental observation. His lawyer said he was "purchased" and that he doctored records sometime ago that he be placed under the care of a psychiatrist.

W. R. Stroupe, owner and operator of the Merchant Patrol, says Pearson was not hired by the Merchant Patrol at the time of the killing. Pearson was not on the premises for which he was hired to guard at the time he shot Mrs. Hope. He was not authorized to guard it, premises in our uniform nor to take the gun home with him.

"Pearson was not a regular employee of the Merchant Patrol," he was hired by "an individual" in the name of H. G. Cleveland, taxidermist, to substitute for Charles Furr, a regular employee, for Saturday night. "A GOOD FELLOW" Mr. Stroupe quoted Mr. Cleveland as telling him that Pearson was "a good fellow who had been in the church and stopped drinking," and that he would like for him to find him some people to photograph. "All of our men are approved by the City Council and are fingerprinted and cleared by the City Police Department," he is hired by Mr. Stroupe.

As all employees at Merchant Patrol are cleared by the City Police, Chief Frank N. Littlejohn replied: "Frankly, I don't know Mr. Stroupe on several occasions has sent men down here to be cleared with us to any criminal record, but whether he employs others, I can't say, don't have an up-to-date roster of his men. I know that this fellow Pearson was not cleared by us."

Littlejohn and City Manager Henry Yancy both disagreed with Mr. Stroupe's statement that Merchant Patrolmen are cleared by the City Council. A letter from Littlejohn to a Mr. Wincoff, Lincoln and Valentine Co. dated Jan. 30, 1950, reads in part: "The Merchant Patrol is not remotely connected with the Police Dept. W. R. Stroupe, owner and operator of the service, at one time held a commission from the N. C. Utilities Commission as corporation police officer, but that commission has expired and he is operating now with no legal authority whatever for making arrests or exercising any police power whatever."

Neither Mr. Stroupe nor Littlejohn have specified the officer permits which under the City Charter the City Manager, on order of the Council, may grant special police powers to private premises.

Mr. Yancy explained the granting of special officer permits this way: "It can't be given to a man as special officer at the request of a private company. In such instances we clear the man himself. He must have a good record, certain he has no police record. If not, we can grant the request. If he has some of the men we have granted this special police power may also be employed by the Merchant Patrol. But we do not give special permits to members of the Merchant Patrol."

Apparently there is no state law or city ordinance which would regulate his behavior by regulations like the Merchant Patrol. Mr. Stroupe says that an attempt was made to limit his organization by the State Legislature two years ago. "It was a purely personal attack—based on animus against me—but my attorneys squashed that in Raleigh right quick," he declared.

Mr. Stroupe, in the letter quoted earlier, said: "There is no state law or city ordinance which would regulate his behavior by regulations like the Merchant Patrol. Mr. Stroupe says that an attempt was made to limit his organization by the State Legislature two years ago. 'It was a purely personal attack—based on animus against me—but my attorneys squashed that in Raleigh right quick,' he declared."

This question has been hanging in the air for a number of years. It came up under the administration of Walter P. Anderson, when he was Police Chief. Mr. Stroupe in 1944 applied for a special officer permit to employ his employees. R. W. Flack, then City Manager, took this position in a letter to Mr. Anderson: "I believe that it is in the interest of the city and permit him to become an employee of the Merchant Patrol with the sanction of the City Government would be a very dangerous undertaking for our city. It would place a special officer under the control of an individual who is not subject to the same standards as a fee basis. There is no telling how large this patrol will become and could with this practice grow into a larger unit than that of our own Police Dept. Mr. Stroupe now employs 46 men."

Mr. Stroupe feels that the Merchant Patrol should not be condemned for the actions of one man. "Even if Pearson were a permanent member of mine, you can't judge our service, which has enjoyed an enviable reputation for 21 years, by the behavior of any one man who can't condemn the entire Police Dept. for the recent misconduct of one of its officers."

Mr. Stroupe said that he tried to work with the City Police and City Government. He maintained that Pearson was not a violation of the N. C. Constitution for the City Council to attempt to regulate his behavior by prescribing conditions of employment.

'Science' Of Politics Is Still Hit-Or-Miss Guessing Game

By MARQUIS CULLEN

THOSE OF US who consult on politics have a tendency to write as though this or that move were some master plan carefully calculated. We write about tactics, strategy, campaign techniques, major and minor speeches, the impression of master minds weighing each word and counting the flicker of each eyelash.

But it is a hit-or-miss business run on hunch, guess, intuition and accident. Nothing could be so well as to consult on democratic primary in New Hampshire and its aftermath.

The democratic field general (you see how confirmed this tendency can be) is Frank McKinney, chairman of the Democratic National Committee. After President Truman called the Presidential primaries eyewash, General McKinney got him to change his mind and enter his name in New Hampshire.

Having decided to throw in his big gun, what did General McKinney do? At the height of the campaign he called on Senator Estes Kefauver, another piece of blindfold politics, may have a permit to carry a gun and none which forbids his carrying one if it's concealed.

LACK OF CO-ORDINATION
At any event, the battle was lost. What is more, the victory of Sen. Estes Kefauver, plus another piece of blindfold politics, may have a permit to carry a gun and none which forbids his carrying one if it's concealed.

Mr. Stroupe hires and fires and pays his own men. He furnishes uniforms and guns. All the firearms are duly registered as prescribed by law. There is no law which requires a man to have a permit to carry a gun and none which forbids his carrying one if it's concealed.

AN OLD QUESTION
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Without Power To Subpoena, Morris Can't Do Much Good
By JAMES MARLOW
NEWBOLD MORRIS, the New York lawyer who came down here at the President's request to look for corruption in the governing, is like a pigeon with a wing clipped. He can't fly.

He can still hop around but from now on he's a bird with a handicap. He made some angry noises at the President's request. They refused to approve subpoenas for him. But he's had two subpoenas on him from the State of New York law firm was interested.

As soon as it was announced early in February that Truman had persuaded this big balding politician to dig around there were hoots from the Capitol, where a Senate committee was investigating a ship-buying deal in which Morris's New York law firm was interested.

While he was still scurrying around, trying to pull an investigating staff together, he was called before the committee to testify. Some of the senators nuzzled him. He must have been one of the most sensational talking-back performances seen here in years. Among other things, he said they had "disseminated minds."

Whatever chance he had to get subpoena power from Congress ended at the witness stand. While senators sometimes criticize one another, and often take a witness to task, they can't subpoena a witness who does the same to them.

Ah, the emotional type, said some of the senators after Morris had had his say. Evidently not the kind of a man to be entrusted with subpoena power, they said.

No one, except a grand jury or congressional committee, can compel a primary contractor or outside the government, to testify by subpoena. Not even the President can do that.

Yesterday Morris got his compromise. The Senate Judiciary Committee has agreed that Morris could appear before any government official to appear before him and testify and produce records. And if an outsider was involved in some suspected shady deal with the official, he'd have to appear, too.

In that way Morris could make an investigation, first hand. Lack of subpoena power, however, was doing hell have to get a U. S. district attorney to take the case forward. He can't subpoena. He can decide by itself to subpoena witnesses.

Mr. Morris told a news conference yesterday how he felt without the subpoena power: like a man trying to kill with one hand behind his back. He can still kill, Morris said, but it puts him off balance.

As he's greater handicap in Florida, however, will be the gambling money sure to oppose Kefauver. Gamblers all over the state are betting on their bet that the Tennessee Senator would enter the Florida primary. And they are laying it to get him, no matter how much it costs.

Also laying it is Democratic Governor Warren, who accepted more than a quarter of a million dollars of gambler contributions and was promptly put on the spot by the Tennessee Senator's youth, and popularity.

Accepted the Kefauver invitation to testify.

see. Much better known and with the background of his New Hampshire success, the Tennessee "cocktail" can easily be seen in Oregon. For two or three weeks and be confident of blanketing his Illinois Governor, who would be

With the convention only two months away, a flicker of disaster about Stevenson. With this threat clearly visible, a long distance call to Governor Stevenson, Democratic National Committee man in Oregon. Stevenson was told that Stevenson's name should be withdrawn. The reply was something of a shock to Washington. Under Oregon law it is impossible to withdraw, and Stevenson's name must stay on the ballot.

As has been proved repeatedly in the past, this is a risky move. It is that is the word, is given to John D. M. Hamilton for personal use of the New Hampshire primary. Hamilton is Eastern manager of the Democratic primary in Oregon. Landon carried Maine and Vermont. Hamilton's stock is said to be dropping on the Tilt Source just at present.

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