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

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PRESIDENT EISENHOWER CLEARS THE AIR

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER took the right course when he asked his administration spokesmen please to quit popping off about the Russian hydrogen bomb threat until they could get together and tell the same story.

The President spoke out at his news conference following a series of statements, some calm, some highly alarming, that had us completely baffled and, we suspect, had confused a good many of you as well.

What is the threat from Russian advances in atomic energy?

Well, said the President, the Russians now have a backlog of conventional atomic bombs, and they have also tested an explosive force of the H-bomb type. Furthermore, they are now capable of carrying out an atomic attack on the United States.

What are we to do about the new threat?

The President said he didn't know whether the U. S. would have to increase its defense spending, or whether a shifting of priorities would afford a reasonable degree of protection. He added, however, that the threat was not right on the doorstep, and that there was still time to think about it.

The Administration's problem is to try and assess accurately the enemy's potential and, within the framework of our economy, to develop enough strength (1) to discourage an attack, or (2) to assure survival and victory if the enemy is not discouraged. And all the while, the Administration must keep trying patiently, through the United Nations and regular diplomatic channels, to work out some system that will ease the tension in this divided world and permit nations to spend less on arms and more on peaceful pursuits.

Armchair experts are a dime a dozen. Some of them insist that the U. S. must immediately build a string of warning and interceptor stations across the northern fringe of Canada. Others say this would be a "Maginot Line" approach, that it would not work, and argue that we need to expand our retaliatory striking power.

Mr. Eisenhower and his associates have all the information upon which such decisions must be based, and until he lets us in on the secrets, we shall not try to tell him how to run his preparedness program.

This much we can say. The American people want only to be told the truth. They won't be panicked, and they won't sink into gloom. They will rise to the occasion, as they have so often in the past, if they're told what is expected of them and if they have confidence in their leadership.

TAKE THESE VETS OFF UNCLE'S BACK

A FRIEND, who was a patient in the big, new Veterans Administration hospital, was not altogether pleased. There had been days of delay before they got around to treating him. There was the policy, reminiscent of Army days, of no passes until a man had been in the hospital eight days, even though he had only a sore arm.

But there were compensations for these irritations. His arm, which had been stiff ever since it was broken in a farm accident, was improving under the skilled treatment of a physio-therapist. And he was not unhappy over the fact that the treatment cost him nothing, even though he came through the war unscathed and could have paid for the treatment.

Most of the other patients at the hospital were also being treated for non-service-connected injuries—a system that simply does not jibe with the oft-repeated views of the national administration now responsible for the VA.

The American Medical Association has announced that its primary legislative goal next year will be the ending of free treatment of veterans with non-service-connected ills. Veterans organizations have served notice that they will oppose any changes in the present law, which permits the vet with non-service-connected disability to get treatment when facilities at VA hospitals are "available" (they usually are). So, with powerful lobby groups on both sides of the argument, a mammoth struggle looms.

In this fight we choose to stand with the AMA. That is not to say that all but disabled veterans should be thrown out on their ear. Two simple rules would do justice to both the veteran and the taxpayer.

First, if a veteran with non-service-connected disability is admitted, when space is available, to get his sore arm fixed or his appendix removed, he should be made to pay for it, at rates comparable to those charged in private practice. This rule will discourage the free-rider, but make the facilities available to those veterans who live in communities that have inadequate hospital facilities.

Secondly, the care of veterans with non-service-connected disabilities, who are destitute or chronically ill, rests with state and local governments. If these local governments have no provision for their care, then these veterans can stay at the VA hospital, but the bill for their care should be borne jointly by their state and local governments.

Such a policy is consistent with administration policy of putting greater responsibility on state and local governments. It will enable the federal government to collect money for services that ought not be charged to it. And it will enable the Veterans Administration to devote its medical program primarily to the care and trtatment of the disabled veteran.

A TIP FOR THE WEEKEND

JUST ABOUT five weeks ago, the first small splotches of riotous color began flecking the hills of North Carolina.

It happened high up, between 4.000 and 6,000 feet. And it happened early because of the long, severe drought of the summer months.

Here and there, along the edge of the Blue Ridge Parkway and on the sides of Grandfather Mountain, young gums and sourwoods turned scarlet, and color edged the leaves of the sassafras.

From that point, the annual change of costume proceeded on schedule—the flame red of the maple, the deep purple of the dogwood, the solid yellow of the black locust and chestnut oak, the gold of the yellow birch and the blue beech. Hickories, catalpas, sycamores, poplars, willow oaks, redbuds, shadbush, mulberries, wild black cherries, one after another, added their varied tints and hues to the panorama until, this week, the hills were ablaze with glory.

Our scouts tell us that the peak of color has passed on top of the very highest mountains, but down below the scenery has never been more gorgeous.

Hence, this tip for the weekend: If tomorrow dawns clear and cool, pack the family and a picnic lunch into the family auto and take a spin through the hills for a few unforgettable hours with Nature at her best.

ERROR COMPOUNDED

IT WAS BAD enough to have Judge John J. Parker passed over for the Supreme Court chief justiceship by President Eisenhower, but it was rubbing salt in our wounds for *Time* magazine, in its current issue, to say that Judge Parker was from Virginia.

For errant, unwary, careless *Time*, a back-of-the-hand.

From The Martha's Vineyard (Mass.) Gazette

ORNITHOLOGICAL TERMINOLOGY

THE names of birds are much more wonderful than those of Pullman cars, apartment houses, or the children of New England ancestors. The real trick comes in the quality of surprise. For instance, the yellow-bellied sapsucker really hasn't a yellow belly—not as lay observers understand the term. The purple finch really isn't purple.

One of our correspondents recently mentioned a "young little blue heron." One might at first wonder about the order of the modifiers: should it not be a "little young blue heron"? But no. Obviously "little blue heron" is the bird's name, and the only place for any other adjective is at the beginning. Never having seen one, we will wager that the little blue heron is a large bird, and we note that what was conspicuous about this recent visitor was "his pure white plumage shining against the sandy shore and the green marsh grasses." Probably he has little blue if any, and that is why he is named a little blue heron.

We have heard of least flycatchers but never of most flycatchers, and it may be imagined that the least flycatcher has suffered an evolutionary impediment by reason of this complete and utter disparagement.

Optimistic note. The ratio of nice, decent people to nasty, crooked people in this world is much greater than the ratio between the two classes in modern literature.—*Kingsport (Tenn.) Times.*

Here's hoping the administration's program of RIF (reduction in force) will soon bring a bit of RIT (reduction in taxes).—*Greenville (S. C.) Piedmont.*

Women, more than men, go through middle-age the easy way—they just don't mention it.—*Greenwood (Miss.) Commonwealth.*

Lexington, where a traffic cop was run over, can sympathize with Danville where the fire truck caught on fire.—*Lexington Herald.*

A News Pictorial

Yield To The Car On Your Right

(News Staff Photo by Tom Franklin)—Hunter)

With no traffic controls at an intersection, a driver must yield right-of-way to the car approaching on his right, according to law. Taking the problem of unmarked intersections from another angle, it is both safe and courteous for a driver to yield right-of-way when two cars reach cross streets at approximately the same time. However, police records for 1952 show that out of a total of 1,903 traffic accidents in the city, 546 were caused by drivers who failed to yield at unmarked intersections. The idea held by many drivers is that "If my front bumper gets out into the intersection before the other fellow's, then I've got the right-of-way; and I'm going ahead. He can look out for himself." That's the attitude that so often leads to crumpled fenders, court cases, injuries, and sometimes even death.

Population Vs. Resources

The Urgency Of Conservation

By FAIRFIELD OSBORN

(Editors' Note—the following is excerpted from Mr. Osborn's book, "The Limits Of The Earth", published Oct. 8.)

TO WHAT DEGREE may we Americans be compelled increasingly to concern ourselves with the question of the numbers of our people and their needs? Could it be that the influence of the "eternal equation" is already beginning to be felt in this great country of seemingly endless resources?

A response to these questions may be given by referring first to our population, then to our agriculture and, finally, to certain factors that have a bearing on our industrial economy as well as on our general standard of living. There is news on all three fronts—some of it, until very recently, quite unforeseen.

The fact is that we are now facing an entirely unexpected outlook in regard to our own population—one that will inevitably prove of far-reaching social and economic significance. The idea that our population was about to reach a peak and would then either level off, or even decline, became general in the 1930's. In that decade both birth rates and death rates appeared to have stabilized and immigration had virtually ceased. One of the widely accepted projections, issued in 1938, placed our peak population at 140,000,000, to be reached in the year 1960; another placed the peak, to be reached about 1980, at 154,000,000. Already we have gone considerably above the latter figure (over 160,000,000). As recently as 1947 one authority viewed with optimism the anticipated decline in our population and expressed the opinion that our economic optimum population was well below the current level and perhaps even as low as 100,000,000. Even as late as 1949, it was generally expected that our peak population would be 165,000,000, with strong indications of a decline from this figure before the end of the century. Every one of these forecasts now has to be discarded — all have been proved erroneous.

This prospect poses a host of questions, such as the physical functioning of ever-larger cities, the increased costs of various forms of social welfare, and the added load upon an educational system which, in many respects, is incapable of meeting present demands. In one way or another such problems will be solved, though how satisfactorily remains to be seen. The essential question, the one first to consider, will still remain: can our farm lands produce sufficient food for this substantial increase in our numbers?

The food-producing capacity of our country is so great that it is illogical to anticipate a food crisis, at least within the period of which we are now thinking. Further, the diet standard of the American people as a whole is relatively so high that moderate downward adjustments could be made without physical ill effect. However, it should be mentioned that the diet of a fairly considerable number of people in this country is not up to a desirable standard. Diet, like any other day-by-day matter, becomes habitual, and it is within the measure of existing levels that any appraisals as to food or other living standards need to be considered. In this light it is certainly not assured that the food requirements of this country's population 20 odd years from now will be met—to say nothing of our having surplus food for export.

ACREAGE SHORTAGE

At the present time croplands, plus land devoted to livestock used for food supplies, aggregate 464,000,000 acres. The latest computations prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture, submitted in testimony before Congress in 1952, indicate that the amount of land that will be needed to provide food at the present diet levels for our anticipated population in the year 1975, including provision for our present export surplus, adds up to the formidable figure of 577,000,000 acres. This represents 113,000,000 more acres than are now in use and, in turn, 70,000,000 acres more than are envisioned in all presently projected governmental programs for land development and reclamation. It is not easy to face facts such as these in the country of "endless resources." We have about come to land's end.

On the other hand, strong negative forces will also be at work. Principal among these is the fact that we have by no means won the fight against soil erosion. In the country as a whole the quality of our soils continues to deteriorate. Recent government studies in the large area of highly productive soils in the Midwest result in an estimate that the inherent productivity of soils in this great region is going down hill at the rate of 7-10 of 1 per cent a year, and a study made in Iowa indicates a deterioration in that state of 1 per cent a year. Such estimates represent trends, nothing more, a slow process of corrosion that eventually, in the long future, will prove an increasingly weakening factor upon our people and our country. Such trends can somehow be checked, but up to this time, with all the progress of recent years, enough has not yet been accomplished.

THE WATER PROBLEM

There is an element in our natural-resource picture that is commencing to reach the critical point. This is water supply. With the surprise that comes from any new experience, some forty million Americans, living in various regions and communities, are now face to face with problems of water — either those of real shortage, or of unsatisfactory quality, or both. During the last fifty years our per capita consumption of water has doubled, and in view of the fact that our population has also doubled during this period it is evident that our water needs have increased four times since 1900.

PROPER CARE ESSENTIAL

We can count on the great asset of our own agricultural base — our forests and soils and water resources — that is, if we take proper care of them. As it is, these renewable resources provide approximately one half of our entire national economy, measured in goods consumed, or in their transport, processing, financing and marketing. We are apt to think of ourselves as a mechanized society wherein metals and minerals play a predominant role. This is not the case. The industrial complex of our country will gradually weaken unless we not only maintain but substantially improve our agricultural processes. Although the over-all position of our forests indicates that replacement growth shows promise of catching up with annual drain, the fact still remains that in one major category, namely saw timber, we are using up that resource at a rate of 40 per cent greater than its annual growth. We have destroyed one fifth of the original area of our croplands and are continuing to injure a considerable portion of the remainder by improper agricultural methods. We are beginning to feel the pinch of water shortages in various parts of the country. All in all, we are not as yet doing the job in the conservation of these vital resources that will insure the future welfare of our nation.

Wilson's Arguments On Atomic Danger Compound Confusion

By STEWART ALSOP

WASHINGTON

A SERIOUS-minded citizen these days can hardly be blamed for feeling a little like one of those laboratory rats which, exposed to conflicting stimuli, is reduced to a condition of quivering rodential neurosis. For American citizens in recent days have been subjected to an avalanche of wildly conflicting statements about the Soviet air-atomic threat, all emanating from supposedly well-informed officials. "Operation Candor," is becoming "Operation Confusion."

The confusion has been compounded, moreover, by the nature of Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson's arguments against any really major effort to strengthen the continental defense against nuclear attack. Secretary Wilson has said that he proposes to spend no more than an additional half billion or so for air defense, as against the very much larger effort recommended in the Lincoln Project report, the Kelly Committee report, the Bull Committee report, and a host of other special expert studies.

In support of his decision, Wilson says that "it will be perhaps three years before they (the Russians) have a reasonable number of bombs and airplanes that could deliver them." This statement is subject to argument. Secretary Wilson apparently refers only to hydrogen bombs, for example, conveniently overlooking the fact that for more than four years the Soviets have been stockpiling atomic bombs. A mere half dozen or so big atomic bombs could destroy the larger cities in this country.

Again, Secretary Wilson remarked in support of his decision that "panicky" persons were giving the Russians credit for "some bombers they don't have." Presumably one of these panicky persons in Wilson's Chief of Air Staff, Gen. Nathan Twining. Twining said some months ago that the Russian "long range bomber force is now so big" that the Soviets no longer need to "increase its size" but only to improve the quality of the plane.

THREE YEARS' GRACE

But let this pass. Assume that Secretary Wilson is perfectly correct in estimating that it will be three years before the Soviet Air Force can devastate the United State. By any reasonable test, this estimate is the best possible argument for going all out immediately on a major continental defense effort. Under any circumstances, it will take a long time to build a fully mature early warning net, and above all the weapons to respond effectively to the warning. But if we do indeed have three years' grace, the job can still be done, according to the best experts in the field, if not a minute is wasted in the meantime.

Another argument is that nothing more can be done under present manpower ceilings. Actually, a study of precisely this problem, under Air Force sponsorship, known by the code name "Operation Corrode," has concluded that a deep area defense can be manned with available manpower. Even if this conclusion is over-optimistic, it is surely a little odd to argue that a nation of 160,000,000 people cannot provide the men to prevent its own destruction.

DEFEATIST PHILOSOPHY

A final argument is that it is no use making a big investment in air defense, since Soviet perfection of new devices like the intercontinental ballistic missile will render such a defense obsolete. This flies straight in the face of the reassuring estimates of Soviet capabilities cited above. What is more, it is precisely like saying that it is no use going to a doctor, since everyone must die in the end anyway.

This is a complicated subject, full of thorny technicalities. It is possible that Secretary Wilson and those who agree with him are right, and that for some undisclosed technical or other reasons the great number of experts who have studied the subject are wrong. It is possible that these reasons have nothing to do with the desire to lower taxes and balance the budget, or with the congenital affection of the military for the utterly out-dated "balanced force" or three-way-split concept. But the reasons so far advanced for a penny-wise approach to the continental defense problem, which is really the problem of national survival, are confusing, conflicting, and very far from convincing.

Air Force Termed The Villain In Moroccan Air Base Mess

By ROBERT C. RUARK

(Editor's Note: This is the second of four articles on U. S. construction of bomber bases in French Morocco.)

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CASABLANCA, French Morocco

ONE OF THE more interesting apects of our vast world program of facility-building for our armed forces was strongly brought to focus a couple months or more back in the case of the big air base at Nouasseur, near here.

They got sick of the slipshod way the vast construction project was being run, with Air Force changing plans and bickering with Army Engineers and both taking it out on Atlas Construction, the team of American civil engineers which was actually doing the work. The work was being done on a cost-plus basis, with a fixed fee for Atlas at the completion of the job—if the job ever got done, which seemed unlikely.

They finally got smart. They took it off the cost-plus basis, shoved the Air Force out of the directional picture, and awarded straight building contracts to the civilian forces.

SURPLUS EMPLOYES NOW

The day after the change in working agreement was made, they laid off 4,000 men. Northern Africa and Spain today is bulging with what is known as "surplus" employes. From 11,000 the manpower budget was cut to 7,000, which must argue something in favor of free enterprise, lack of governmental interference, and a solidly drawn plan of operation.

The Air Force seems largely to have been the major villain in the slipshod, overexpensive, slow construction of our air bases. Representative John J. Riley's (DSC) exhaustive report shows an alarming number of plan and policy changes, of interservice bickering, of lacking funds, indecision, and waste, with the civilian constructors more or less in the middle.

"It was as if," one Atlas executive told me at Nouasseur, "you had hired an expensive contractor to build a house, and then let your wife tell him how to do it."

The builder had a point. Atlas Construction was composed of the various firms of Morrison - Knudson, Nello Teer, Ralph E. Mills, Blythe Bros., and Bates and Rogers — a billion-dollar collection of professional engineers who have built most of the modern world both in the States and abroad.

The program, with the Chinese Reds across the Yalu in December of 1950, was called a "crash program," which means all hands turn to and do it fast, even if it isn't done right. They started token work, after innumerable foul-ups, in April of 1951. It is a matter of record that a minimum state of readiness to allow the landing of military planes was achieved at Sidi Slimane in 64 days and at Nouasseur in 83 days.

When the heat came the tests, some of them, were not precisely fair. They ripped a lot of holes in the more or less emergency-built strip at Nouasseur, using deliberately a 200-ton roller to probe weaknesses in the runways. They found some — the runway cracked and slumped in spots.

"But," one Atlas man says bitterly, "when I sat up one whole weekend in New York with a phone in my hand, rounding up my key men for a Monday departure to Morocco, they didn't tell me they were building this strip for a 200-ton roller. They said maybe we would be in World War III next week and could get some sort of strip down in a crash program. We got it down."

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

Dulles Hushed Talk On New Red Airfields

WASHINGTON

SECRETARY of State Dulles has clamped such a strict censorship on news from Korea that the American public doesn't realize the dangers building up in that country again.

Uncensored military dispatches report 35 Red airfields have been built in North Korea since the armistics. All are in violation of the truce agreement.

In addition 800 Red jets have been smuggled into North Korea from China since the truce.

Dulles has hushed all this up, was even responsible for the order which prohibited the Korean pilot who flew the Russian MIG to Seoul from telling what airfield he took off from. Reason the name was censored was because the airfield didn't even exist before the truce.

Dulles' private explanation for the censorship is fear of upsetting the forthcoming political conference. Dulles is desperately and understandably anxious to get the Russians to sit down at the conference table, and if the Reds are too much embarrassed by revelations of their build-up, he's afraid they will sabotage the talks before they even begin.

Bohlen's Mystery Trip

AMBASSADOR Chip Bohlen, whose appointment as envoy to Russia was so bitterly opposed by Senator McCarthy, was summoned back to Washington for conference during the McCarthy wedding.

Paul Porter, lanky ex-chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, bumped into Bohlen, asked why he was home.

"I haven't the vaguest idea," replied the ambassador. "They telegraphed me to fly back, but now that I'm here I don't know why they wanted me."

"Perhaps," remarked Porter, "they wanted you to serve as best man at Joe McCarthy's wedding."

Army Morale Suffers

A GRUFF, tough master sergeant, who has fought in two wars, called this column the other day to complain about the "raw deal" servicemen are getting. Before he could finish, his voice choked.

What he was trying to say was that he couldn't make ends meet and support his family. He was both proud and embarrassed, which was probably why he choked up. He had been in the Army for years, but couldn't figure any way out except to give up his Army career.

After he hung up, this column began investigating Army living standards, found other hard-bitten soldiers in the same boat. Another master sergeant with five kids and 20 years' service said he was already looking for a civilian job. A staff sergeant claimed his food bill would shoot up one-third, completely out of reach of his meager budget, if Secretary of Defense Wilson goes ahead with his plan to cut out commissary privileges. A chaplain admitted gravely that the morale of the noncoms—the backbone of the Army—is worse than in the 'thirties.

Here are the reasons:

1. **Food**—The chain-story lobby has put the pressure on Congress and the Pentagon to close down commissaries, which sell food to G.I.s cheaper than the local supermarkets. Through such powerful Senators as Bill Knowland of California and Willis Robertson of Virginia, the lobbyists got the Senate Appropriations Combittee to slip a "rider" into the appropriations bill ordering the Defense Department either to close the commissaries or turn them over to private management by December 31. Now the pressure is on Wilson to shut them down altogether.

Simultaneously, the ration allowance for enlisted men has been dropped from $1.20 to $1.10 per day, and the cost of meals at field messes has gone up, resulting in a monthly loss to most officers of $30 to $35.

2. **Housing**—Housing around Army posts is still below standard, yet the rent in many cases is exorbitant. Theoretically, rent control is still supposed to be in effect around 24 congested military posts, but Congress furnished only $60,000 to enforce these rent ceilings—barely enough to pay for eight offices to cover 24 areas.

3. **Pay**—Last year, the cost of living shot up over 12 per cent, while the military got an approximate 4 per cent pay raise. Meanwhile, extra pay for overseas service has been eliminated, except for a meager bonus for enlisted men.

4. **Travel**—The mileage allowance for servicemen has been cut from eight to six cents per mile. A reduction has also been made in the weight of household goods that the government will ship when a service family is transferred. Everything over the weight limit must be paid by the servicemen.

5. **Medicine**—The American Medical Association has started a campaign to cut out medical services for military dependents.

On top of all this, the Defense Department has just assigned each military post a quota to contribute to local charities. The only way the quotas can be met is to force shotgun contributions from the individual servicemen, who already have a good record for voluntary contributions. For example, the G.I.s have donated $13,000,000 from their slim wages to help rebuild devastated Korea.

These are the facts that have made morale among Army noncoms the lowest in years.