Rich Windows That Exclude The Light, And Passages That Lead To Nothing.—THOMAS GRAY.

THE CHARLOTTE NEWS

And Evening Chronicle

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MONDAY, APRIL 14, 1941

An Absurdity

Seniority Rule in Senate Works Crime Against Nation

The longer we look at it the more absolutely appalled we are that in a time like this the United States Senate is calmly preparing to elevate a man like Robert Rice Reynolds to one of the most crucially important posts in the nation — the chairmanship of the Senate Military Affairs Committee.

The sole ground on which this is being done is that of seniority. Reynolds, that is, has been on the committee longer than any other Democrat member.

The seniority rule is frequently an idiotic one. It takes no account of merit or anything save time served. And in the Senate it is now about to allow the elevation to this key post of a man whose qualifications for the job consist of: (1) having resigned a National Guard cavalry commission when danger of war arose, (2) having kissed an actress in public and, as a Senator, endorsed a cigarette for money, (3) having returned from Germany in 1938 to praise Hitler enthusiastically, (4) having consistently attacked Britain and obstructed the national defense, and (5) having organized a gang of ignoramuses on Pacific lines to preach racial hatred and division among us. A thoroughly trivial-minded man, full of absurd and dangerous anti-isms.

Seniority has done much vicious harm in the Congress before. Our present disarmed state is at least partly due to its elevation of incompetents. Even so, a rich and fat and unthreatened republic could still afford it for a while. But the time is clearly past for such dangerous luxuries.

A Hard One

Lend-Lease and Neutrality Acts Look Different Ways

It goes without saying that the President will be trounced by Wheeler & Co. for opening up the Red Sea to American ships, in order to get supplies to the Balkan and African areas under the guise of shipping them to neutrals. And it may as well be admitted at once that it does violate the spirit of the so-called Neutrality Act.

The Red Sea unquestionably is a war zone, and when our ships enter it they will run almost as much risk of being sunk as if they entered the Mediterranean or had gone directly to English ports.

But the simple fact of the matter is that the Neutrality Act is wholly incompatible with the Lend-Lease Act. The Neutrality Act is an expression of the now thoroughly exploded philosophy that (1) we had no real interest in the outcome of the war, (2) all we had to do to stay out of it was to abandon our traditional position about the freedom of the seas and keep our ships out of "war zones."

Long ago we began to realize the unreality of that and attempted to amend the Neutrality Act to allow for the realization. But with the passage of the Lend-Lease Bill we explicitly recognized that it is of the most vital importance of us to see that Britain wins the war — in diametrical opposition to the original postulate of the Neutrality Act.

The incompatibility of the two laws is so glaring that it is probable that the President could get the Neutrality Act repealed by appealing to the people and Congress in frankness. But, from what we know about the history of the Lend-Lease Bill, it seems altogether likely that such a course would result in Wheeler & Co. delaying the repeal for weeks or even months. It appears likely now that these weeks or months may well be the decisive ones in this war.

Whether to be somewhat high-handed, and try to insure that the British win, or to be strictly legal and take the chance that Wheeler & Co. will insure Hitler's victory — something like that is the dilemma the President genuinely faces. It is one of the most devilish any head of a nation ever faced.

An Award

To Which Is Added a Problem For the Song-Writers

To British General O'Connor and his fine fellow generals goes, we think, the well-lined ash-tray for something or other. Riding in from a Libyan desert station to Derna in a staff car, they came upon a belted British convoy in the desert, proceeded to try to twist their way through and past it. Appeared a lone Nazi on a motorcycle, with a tommy-gun. And just like that, the six doughty generals were prisoners. For supposedly valuable generals to go riding around in dangerous country without a bodyguard is, we suppose, good old-school-tie, but it doesn't really add up to sense.

Another thing which is heavily on our mind is that that Marine song plainly needs revision. "From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli" sounds all right but it is in fact gross understatement. What is wanted now is at least another verse beginning "From Greenland's icy mountains . . ." Literally, we suppose, you could end the line with "to India's coral strand," though that may not be as far away as you think. But you could get in something good there about the rivers or the cities of Cathay. We recommend the problem to the poets and the song-writers.

Tiny Rabbit

Indeed, It Is Probable He Is An Optical Illusion

It was a puny and microscopic Easter rabbit the Axis pulled out of the hat yesterday in the "neutrality pact" between Russia and Japan.

If there ever was a treaty that meant nearly nothing, it is this one.

Nobody in his senses has ever supposed it probable that Russia would attack Japan if she carried her operations in the Pacific so far as to get involved in war with the United States. The thing Joseph Stalin fears above all things is war, which, if it lasted long, might well set off a new Russian revolution with Joseph functioning as exhibit A on the gallows. It may be said with considerable confidence that he is not going to attack anybody bigger than Finland.

As for Japan, she long ago fastened her eyes on bigger and fatter game in the South Pacific and forgot about the lean prize of Manchuria. In any case, with her hands already pretty well full in China, she simply couldn't afford to risk taking on Britain, the United States, and Russia all at once.

The probable motives of the various participants in this pact are almost comically mixed. Japan appears wistfully to hope that it will somehow frighten the United States into acquiescing in the Japanese dream of grabbing Singapore, the Dutch East Indies, and eventually Australia. But it is not really likely that Mr. Matsuoka has the slightest idea that the game will work. The United States has already refused to be bluffed by his trump play in joining the Axis in the first place.

As for Russia, Stalin seems to be playing both ends against the middle, as usual. On the one hand he is giving proof of his great and loving "friendship" for Mr. Hitler and his gang. And on the other, he is probably trying to persuade Mr. Hitler that he (Stalin) now has his hands free for the West, and so that the Nazis had better not monkey with the Dardanelles or the Ukraine.

And as for Hitler himself, he plainly hopes to scare the United States into a decision that it is necessary to keep the vast part of its fleet in the Pacific and cannot undertake convoy to England.

But if there were still any doubt that this treaty comes to practically nothing, it would only be necessary to recall that the dominant trait of the two parties to the pact is treachery in international dealings. Does anybody suppose that, if they thought it would pay them to attack, either Stalin or Matsuoka would be restrained by this scrap of paper? If so, he is a ripe candidate for the bobby-hatch.

Things, in short, are left exactly as they were in the first place. And this piece of hocus-pocus is destined to fall as dead as the Nazi attempt to persuade the Greeks that they are being "rescued from the British" and at the same time that they had better take what terms they can get because the British are about to abandon them.

If Hitler's victories grow great enough, Mr. Matsuoka may attempt an attack in the Pacific. If not, he'll probably restrain himself. Stalin almost certainly isn't going to do anything — might not do anything even if the Ukraine is attacked.

The only real significance of this pact is that it reveals that Mr. Hitler is now nearly out of ammunition for the war of nerves.

Norfolk Sunday

By Lenoir Chambers

(Note: This is the first of a series of articles and letters which the editors of The News have secured in response to letters addressed to responsible persons in towns with open Sunday. All of them were selected with a view of their peculiar opportunities to observe and judge the working of Sunday movies, baseball, etc. Mr. Chambers is a native of Charlotte and is now Associate Editor of the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, one of the most widely-respected newspapers in the South.)

The editor of The Charlotte News wondered how Norfolk's morals are faring under a dispensation that accepts Sunday movies and Sunday baseball as a part of life.

Pondering his question, I went to a neighborhood movie on a Sunday afternoon and looked around. The theater is in a residential section, where the atmosphere is friendly and informal, and the high school boys and girls will murmur approvingly at screened love and will greet a rescue with the applause that it deserves. But on this Sabbath the husband-and-wife atmosphere was unmistakable. There was a heavy sprinkling of elderly people (three gray-haired women who might have been your Aunt Agatha sat directly in front of me), and children were everywhere. It seemed a peaceful and respectable gathering that enjoyed itself without a sense of abnormality.

Pondering the editor's question again, I went on another Sunday afternoon to one of the gilded palaces down town where the striving for taste is more obvious and uniforms dot the audience, sometimes a dozen in a row. This one, too, seemed quiet and peaceful. No one who looked at these people in their Sunday clothes would think of a word like "violators."

I thought back to last Summer. Charlotte's Calvin Griffith can tell you that Norfolk goes hard for Sunday baseball and that the crowds cheering our Tars in the Piedmont League are on that day the largest of the week. They can make noise all right. But I have never noticed more signs of evil on a Sunday than on a Saturday, and neither has the Police Department; and perhaps the family-gathering tinge that is so evident in the movie houses colors the grandstands as well.

THERE ARE PLENTY OF HAIRY BOYS IN TOWN

Ah, but Norfolk is a seaport and therefore by tradition a center of low-life? And a Navy town, and therefore full of young men? And a resort town, with beaches near-by, and therefore given to worldly amusements?

No one can deny that, as a local historian put it, Norfolk has sea-weed in her hair and salt in her veins. The combination of a high tide and a northeaster would flood low-lying streets tomorrow. The ships of a dozen nations lie in the harbor. ("There was rejoicing aboard the Yugoslavian steamer Dinara when the news that the Serbian countrymen had revolted against Nazi-dominated rule was spread about the ship," reports The Virginian-Pilot.) Admiralty lawyers get the cream of the Federal Court's business. Tattoo shops and tailors who specialize in uniforms sit cheek by jowl with restaurants and jewelry stores. I walk by the Scandinavian Seaman's Club on my way to work. The naval officers you meet may have been in Puerto Rico or Panama last week, and they certainly know San Diego and Honolulu better than they know Atlanta or Louisville.

BUT THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO THIS

Thirty-five thousand men in Norfolk and Portsmouth wear naval uniforms or are civilian employees of the Navy or construction workers on expanding establishments. If a few ships of the Atlantic Fleet come in, the number may rise by 10,000 over a week-end. Saturdays and Sundays discharge sailors and soldiers all over town. Virginia Beach expects a whopping crowd of visitors this Summer.

So perhaps with this masculine segment of the population and with these port and resort characteristics, Norfolk is a more open town than up-state sisters and North Carolina neighbors. And perhaps, being old and possessing a waterfront, Norfolk is not unacquainted with sin. But these things work both ways. The Navy YMCA is struggling with its greatest boom in twenty years and has taken over an additional building to meet a demand that has risen by 50 per cent. A Sunday School superintendent at Virginia Beach, where some Coast Artillery regiments have come in for training, told me that uniformed men have been volunteering to teach his classes. The Saturday night dances which a Norfolk recreation committee organized to furnish entertainment under the most respectable auspices draw up to 3,000 dancers.

IT ISN'T REALLY VERY DIFFERENT

For Norfolk is also a town of men and women very much like those in Charlotte or anywhere else; of homes and schools and churches; of all the human decencies and weaknesses; of good people and people not so good, who live in the personal and communal sense as other such people do. I doubt whether they are better or worse than any other comparable group of Virginians or North Carolinians.

At any rate, it is a fact—not an opinion—that even before national defense gripped us nobody was worrying publicly because any of us can go to a movie or a baseball game on Sunday. No audible protests had come from the churches. No evidence had arisen to suggest that disorders or crimes were breeding in the audiences of theaters or in the crowds of ball parks. In Norfolk, as elsewhere, these manifestations of human frailty generate better in the more secretive and less controllable byways of the town and are nurtured by the same influences that make for social imperfection everywhere.

And as for this year of 1941, when the town is jammed to the gills and the newcomers are chiefly young men, a serious effort to cut down on recreation would produce a protest that would shake our shores. The great civic problem of the times in Norfolk is not less decent entertainment on week-ends, but emphatically more and more and more.

Sign-Posting

—by Herblock

Two Views Of Prohibition

By The Editors of The News

The two following excerpts are published by the editors of The News, without prejudice, to illustrate the remarkable difference in opinion among men, and especially in different sections of the country.

Federal Judge Yates Webb:

"Liquor destroys our homes, ruins our women, debauches our children," Judge E. Yates Webb of Shelby, United States judge for the Western District of North Carolina, said in a withering attack on liquor and legalized liquor stores at the morning session of his court here (Charlotte) today.

Judge Webb took the trial of Taft Huffman of Rock Hill, S. C., on a charge of removing and concealing non-tax-paid liquor as occasion for his remarks.

The fact that Huffman was from South Carolina instigated Judge Webb's attack. "It just goes to show," he said, "that you can't stop bootlegging by having legalized liquor stores. There are more blockade stills in South Carolina today than there were during Prohibition. Liquor stores breed bootlegging. They embolden bootleggers.

"Some people say that they advocate legalized liquor stores because they will reduce taxes. They don't reduce taxes; they never have done it. I suppose if one of these people were to see a friend lying in a drunken stupor in a gutter he would urge him to get up so he could buy more liquor and thereby further reduce taxes.

"Alcoholism is killing more people in the United States than cancer. It killed 135,000 persons in this country last year. Liquor is the scourge of mankind. It is responsible for murder, suicide, patricide, and every other horrible crime. People often ask me why I am so opposed to liquor. I am opposed to liquor because I love my fellow man."

The New Yorker, April 5, 1941:

The Anti-Saloon League, we learn, is on the march again. Already resolutions have been passed demanding that Congress stop the sale of the old devil's broth to soldiers and sailors; already a bill has been introduced which would give the Secretary of War power to declare "dry areas;" already the middle-aged furies are back on their broomsticks and the low-comedy statesmen are waiting in the wings.

As a persistent and happy violator of the Constitution of the United States for over fourteen years, we look forward to the new foolishness with a good deal of enthusiasm. There was a lot to be said for life in New York under prohibition, in the dark rooms where strangers were drawn together in the communion of a universal, and imaginary, crime. Liquor had an extra flavor then, half creosote, half romance, and the men who sold it were more than bartenders.

Joe and Tony and Bob were our visible assurance that other, fiercer men were riding armed trucks in the dark, shooting it out in dusty alleys, and corrupting the law with bloody century notes. Dining these nights in restaurants where nothing is violated except privacy and the most sinister figures are columnists gathering rubbish, we sadly miss the old hocus-pocus, and we are eager to welcome it back again.

It isn't going to be hard to get the liquor business operating on the old illicit basis, not nearly as hard as it was last time, when there were no precedents and a man had to feel his way along. Right now the machinery is all there and ready. We estimate that there are at least twenty thousand places on the island that could be turned back into speakeasies simply by locking the door and hiring a man to watch it; there must be a hundred thousand potential Federal agents itching to turn a crooked buck.

As a matter of fact, most of the old cards that have been in our desk drawer for the past seven years, collecting dust and dreams, will probably soon be just as good as they ever were. The lovely, foolish past is right around the corner. We are ready for the Second Noble Experiment, just as we were ready for the Second World War. Ladies of the WCTU, we expect every holy lunatic to do her duty.

The Test

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot

The question of what is a military secret is growing more troublesome. A good rule to follow is that if a Congressman does not describe it in public, it's not very secret.

TODAY'S BIBLE THOUGHT

"Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.—Psalm 19:5.

Side Glances

"Why do they call that team the Yankees? I distinctly heard several of the players speaking with Southern accents!"

Greenland Move

By Raymond Clapper

WASHINGTON, — While Congress under the protection of the Monroe Doctrine seems to be pushing our outer line of defense far out into the Atlantic.

Modern warfare makes that necessary. It is the only sure way to keep the bombs from dropping on our own cities and on our own people. If you locate your front line at your own borders, as some of our isolationists have been advocating, then war is waged on your own soil as we see in England.

Once we had our first line of defense on the Rhine, but that went out last Summer when France fell. Now our only line of defense in Europe is England itself. Without indicating any lack of confidence in England's ability to hold her line, we do well to be preparing against the worst. Last Summer President Roosevelt negotiated for the British bases.

GREENLAND IS ALASKA OF THE ATLANTIC

Now we push out to Greenland, by making an agreement with the Danish Minister in Washington to bring it under the protection of the Monroe Doctrine.

Our Atlantic offshore defenses have been historically weak because we have always — without admitting it to ourselves — counted upon the security afforded by the British fleet, a powerful, friendly force which protected the Atlantic from menacing enemies. In the Pacific we were on our own. We have built our offshore defenses at Hawaii, and we are now building Alaska into a powerful defense flanking the main route toward our shores from Asia. Greenland occupies in the Atlantic somewhat the same strategic place that Alaska occupies in the Pacific — affording an advance position on the flank of the routes to the United States.

NAZIS HAVE BEEN BUSY IN ISLAND

Since the occupation of Denmark, the mother country of Greenland, Germany has been sending frequent missions to Greenland. Recently German planes have been sighted on observation tours over the island. Apparently the Germans hoped to use Greenland as a base for meteorological observations which would be useful in military operations.

The importance of Greenland was prophetically seen 25 years ago by Rear Admiral Robert E. Peary, the Arctic explorer. At that time the United States was considering the purchase of the Virgin Islands from Denmark for $25,000,000 and as part of the deal proposed to surrender all American rights in Greenland arising from frequent explorations, and that was later done.

PEARY SAW ITS IMPORTANCE TO U. S.

Admiral Peary protested that, emphasizing the military importance of Greenland to the United States. His article, appearing in 1916, was resurrected by his daughter, Mrs. Marie Peary Stafford, and republished in the Washington Star a year ago when Germany invaded Denmark.

Said Admiral Peary 25 years ago: "Geographically Greenland belongs to North America and the Western Hemisphere, over which we have formally declared a sphere of influence by our Monroe Doctrine. Its possession by us will be in line with the Monroe Doctrine and will eliminate one more possible source of future complications for us from European possession of territory in the Western Hemisphere. Will turning Greenland over to Denmark now mean our repurchase of it later, or will obtaining it now mean closing the incident and placing Greenland where it must ultimately belong?

"Stranger things have happened than that Greenland, in our hands, might furnish an important North Atlantic naval and aeronautical base. A North Pacific naval base for the United States in the Aleutian Archipelago is a recognized possibility. Why not a similar base in the North Atlantic? There are fjords in Southern Greenland which would hold the entire navy, with deep, narrow, impregnable entrances . . . Greenland in our hands may be a valuable piece of our defensive armor. In the hands of a hostile interest it could be a serious menace."

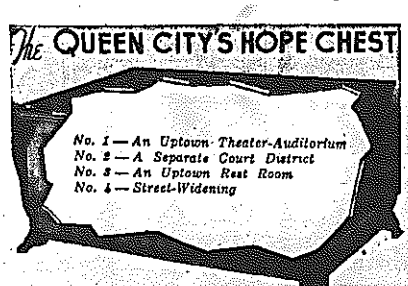
Visitin' Around

W. F. Just Won't Admit Them Centipedes Are Here To Stay

(Union Hill Item, Hendersonville Times News)

Mr. W. F. Gilliam recently purchased a horse.

And Who Are Going To Be Her Parents Next Week?

(Palmersville Item, Stanly News & Press)

Miss Virginia Coggin, who is in nurse's training at the Presbyterian hospital in Charlotte, visited her parents last week, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Coggin.