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A—22 FRIDAY, MAY 27, 1955

No Time to Relax

A timely warning has come from the Washington Criminal Justice. Association against any relaxation in police vigilance as a result of the declining crime rate here. The advice is timely in view of certain indications that the police budget might suffer because fewer crimes were committed last year than in any recent twelve-month period. It would be a mistake, however, to penalize the Police Department for doing a good job. Experience has shown that when police strength sags, lawlessness increases. Conversely, intensified patrols brought a sharp drop in crime in Washington last year.

The association's annual report urged an increase in police strength from the now authorized 2,278 men to 2,500. That would provide Washington with a force considered by law enforcement authorities as the proper strength for a city of this size. Police Chief Murray had asked for 2,500 men, but the Commissioners disapproved the request. Recently there had even been suggestions at the Capitol that the falling crime rate might warrant further economies in the police budget. But it should not be overlooked that the drop in felonies did not occur until Chief Murray put part of his force on voluntary overtime duty, enabling him to increase street patrols in especially troublesome areas. This overtime system, while justified in emergencies, is impracticable as a permanent policy. Only an increase in manpower can provide comparable police coverage. And budget cuts that tend to reduce the effectiveness of the police force would be false economy of a dangerous sort.

Unusual Honor

In reaching far down the list of admirals to choose a new Chief of Naval Operations, President Eisenhower has conferred an extraordinary honor on Rear Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, Pacific war hero. It is an unusual appointment not only because so many other competent admirals were passed over in the selection but because it has the effect of exonerating Admiral Burke of any wrongdoing in connection with the famous "revolt of the admirals" a few years back.

Admiral Burke, known popularly in the Navy as "Thirty-One-Knot" Burke because of his fast-moving destroyer tactics against the Japanese, had a prominent role in naval attacks on defense unification. Assigned by his superiors as head of "Operation 23," a high-level policy group, he became embroiled in the dispute between the Navy and the Air Force over the effectiveness of B-36 bombers and the future of naval air power. There were reports that when the then Captain Burke was selected for admiral, his name was removed from the promotion list by order of the White House, only to be restored at the last minute after Admiral Forrest Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations, had protested.

That Admiral Burke will be an able successor to retiring Admiral Robert B. Carney as CNO is beyond question. Admiral Carney well deserves the high praise given him by the President for his service in the topmost Navy post. The reappointment of Admiral Radford as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and of General Twining as Air Force Chief of Staff, with the recent naming of General Maxwell Taylor as Army Chief of Staff, completes the high-command reorganization. The setup is one in which the Nation can have confidence in a period of international tension.

In Memoriam

As another three-day Memorial Day week end approaches, it would be well if every motorist gave a thought, in memoriam, to the 351 persons who lost their lives during a similar holiday period one year ago. Last year's death toll was the highest ever recorded for a three-day Memorial Day observance. Some of these accident victims were on their way to decorate the graves of war dead. Many of them were en route to beaches or other recreational places—and bent on getting there in a hurry. All of them helped to bring last year's traffic-death total close to the 14,000 mark.

An analysis of the grim statistics by the National Safety Council disclosed that nearly three out of every ten drivers in fatal accidents were speeding. One out of every five of the crashes occurred between 5 and 8 p.m. Three out of four of the accidents happened in clear weather on dry roads. As a result of these studies the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators has issued some timely advice to drivers for the forthcoming week end: (1) Start your trip in the morning after a good night's rest, rather than after a hard day's work. (2) If you drive at night, stop every 100 miles for a "coffee break." (3) Stay a safe distance behind the car ahead. (4) Remember the Golden Rule when driving—better let the other fellow have the right of way. If only a small proportion of week-end motorists would take this advice seriously, some lives undoubtedly would be saved during the triple holiday coming up.

Reluctant Dragons

If the singular lack of enthusiasm in both Moscow and Washington for a "meeting at the summit" is a fair gauge of the prospects of success, one would think that the whole thing might as well be called off now. But perhaps there is more in this reluctant dragon approach than meets the eye.

In their formal note accepting the invitation to a Big Four parley, the Russians say the United States is setting up preconditions which "will doom the conference to failure." According to the Kremlin, the only explanation of this is that the United States, contrary to its own professions, "does not desire to settle acute international problems."

Our own Mr. Dulles is hardly less reluctant to forecast any good result. He confesses to "a certain sense of encouragement" over some recent Communist moves. But he is not ready to interpret this dim light in the Soviet sky as signaling the advent of a new day. Men have been lured to their doom before, according to Mr. Dulles, by mistaking a "false dawn for the real dawn," and we do not want to make that mistake.

Mr. Dulles believes that the most we can hope to get from a meeting at the summit is a "new approach" to world problems—problems which in turn must be referred to other groups for study and solution. And he even hedges on this a bit by saying that "I am under no illusions—I know full well the deep-engrained purposes of the Communist leadership."

There are two ways, perhaps, in which one can look at these doleful comments. One is that the leading men in Washington and in Moscow really expect nothing constructive to emerge from a Big Four meeting, that both sides are concerned more with the propaganda aspects than with the substance of such a meeting, and that each is engaged at this stage in a determined effort to lay a foundation for blaming the other fellow when the fact of failure becomes clear for all to see.

The other, and more hopeful, way of looking at the matter is that Mr. Dulles and his opposite numbers in Moscow are engaged in what might be called preliminary bargaining maneuvers—in trying to plant and cultivate conditions which will be most favorable to their respective points of view when the meeting actually gets under way. If this is the case, it may be that it is necessary for Mr. Dulles to discourage a surge of optimism in this country and throughout the free world, to repress any burgeoning of unwarranted hopes and expectations which might pressure the United States into making unwise concessions in exchange for an illusory peace. But if this is what Mr. Dulles is doing, it would seem that he has made his point, and made it adequately. It might be well, henceforth, to make more room for the play of the powerful forces in the world which are working for peace and against war.

Dr. Mann's Ants

There should be some public acknowledgment of the gift which Dr. William M. Mann, director of the National Zoological Park, has made to the Smithsonian Institution. The gift consists of approximately 117,000 specimens of ants, collected in many different parts of the world, and it reflects the donor's lifelong interest in an important branch of entomology. The story of Dr. Mann's boyhood curiosity about the beetles he discovered in the ant colonies of his native Montana is told in his autobiography, "Ant Hill Odyssey"—a book which well might serve as a model or pattern for any career dedicated to "the increase and diffusion of knowledge."

What the collection actually is, then, may be summed up in the words: "It illustrates Dr. Mann's specialty." But it also may serve to spark further effort by other entomologists. James Smithson had some such idea in mind when he pledged his wealth—the original contribution to the institution which bears his name—to the progress of learning. His example has been followed by hundreds of generous contributors to the establishment he fathered in his will in 1826. The gifts of the institution's friends are a principal justification of its existence. When the people of the United States accept such donations as Dr. Mann's, they naturally wish to provide for their care and use. That is why the new buildings and the trained staff asked of Congress by Dr. Leonard Carmichael as spokesman for the Smithsonian regents are matters of popular concern.

Discriminatory Bill

Chairman McMillan of the House District Committee says that his bill to exempt congressional employes from local automobile registration laws was intended to apply to only "three or four" House employes. Whatever the intent, the bill as approved by the House is not restricted to a few House workers. It is broad enough to cover all employes of Congress who claim legal residence elsewhere, although they may have lived in Washington for many years. To grant legislative personnel such unwise and unjust privileges is as absurd as it would be to extend similar exemption to all Government workers who live here but claim legal residence outside of the District. It is scarcely believable that the Senate will concur in any such discriminatory legislation.

Vertical Take-Off . . . Destroyer Assisted

LETTERS TO THE STAR

Pen names may be used if letters carry writers' correct names and addresses. All letters are subject to condensation.

Politics on Polio

I wish to congratulate The Star on Jim Berryman's wonderful cartoon on May 18, making the point that it's time to lay the political needle aside in the polio vaccine situation.

It is unthinkable that men in our Congress should use this, a healing for human misery, as a basis for politics; men who have children of their own. They know that to set up Federal control would take months and months, and then the vaccine would be too late for millions of children.

What do you suppose folks of other countries are saying and thinking of these men in Congress blaming our President, who has grandchildren of his own, and our Vice President also with a young family?

A. M. B.

Pensions—High, Low

To the merry-go-round of pay raises for Federal employes something new has been added, an annual pension for our Presidents. We should not quarrel over this unanimous decision by the Senate and concurrence by the House. However, there is something in the way of legislation that we should quarrel over, and that is the callous disregard members of Congress have for retired employes of the United States Government. Your paper in commenting editorially on the pension for former Presidents states that "it will provide a way for them to live in dignity." This is quite commendable, but don't we all want to live in dignity? But how can annuitants of the Federal Government who retire on account of age or disability live respectably on an annuity of 1½ per cent of the annual basic salary for any five consecutive years of service multiplied by the total years of service? The answer is, that an annuity predicated on the above offers nothing but a meager existence.

This inequality should be corrected at the earliest practicable date.

Old-Timer.

Simplifying Bible

The Star carried a series of Easter Bible stories for children which I enjoyed thoroughly.

The few times that I have picked up the Bible, I never was interested enough to want to read it. The way the Bible is worded doesn't make good sense to me.

If my "bird" brain can't understand the Bible as it is written, but if I learned something by reading the Easter Bible stories for children, then it seems to me it would not be a lost cause to print a daily Bible story comparable to those others.

Mildred M. Beck.

Series on Israel

On May 21, you published a letter from Rosalind B. McLeod, who, after reading the first of the excellent series of articles by Crosby S. Noyes on Israel, undertook to criticize The Star for telling but "one side of a terribly complicated and tragic problem without letting the other side be represented." May I first congratulate Mr. Noyes for a series which I felt was in the highest tradition of honest reporting? He told, I thought, the story of a new country in a colorful, interesting manner. It was my impression that he did not attempt to deal with controversy but rather to give a picture of a new democracy growing up in the Middle East.

The author of your May 21 letter takes you to task for what she interpreted as a deviation from the principle of the free press. Unfortunately, her thoughts on the subject of a free press were just as fuzzy as her statements on the Middle East problem. The latter I will not endeavor to answer for I feel that they really do not require an answer. I point out, though, that so long as a paper like The Evening Star can publish a series like that by Mr. Noyes without anyone to dictate its suppression, we have a truly free press. If Mrs. McLeod feels that The Star's publishing this series is proof of the absence of a free press, I can only conclude that she would prefer to see in the United States the type of controlled, suppressed press which is the standard in some of the Middle East countries for which she pleads.

Carl Levin.

Price of Peace

What price are East and West ready to pay to be free of staggering arms burdens and harrowing fears of world war?

Neither side is likely to agree to more than a mere token arms cut, unless convinced that the other will shun policies apt to culminate in violence.

—Jensen, Chicago Daily News
"Big Task"

Thus Moscow must curb "the international pest" of subversive communism, and the West scrupulously reappraise phases of its Crusade for Freedom that Moscow fears might incite revolutionary violence.

Beyond that, what do we want of the Soviet Union? Substantial supervised arms reduction, and investment of a sizeable fraction of resultant savings for the welfare of oppressed satellite peoples; German unity with free elections, and submission of Oder-Neisse problems to the U. N.

And what could Moscow ask of us? Arms cuts, and investment of part of the savings in development of backward buffer areas and expansion of East-West trade; suspension of German rearmament for at least a trial period.

For the Orient, the price of friendlier relations might include a reunited free Korea and submission of Formosan issues to the U. N., with China's admittance to the U. N. contingent upon her faithful observance of its decisions.

Robert S. Field.
Vineland, N. J.

Primordial Time

He had not waded in a creek till now,
Having been bred to pavement and to stone,
But his hands clutched a sweeping willow bough
And something sang within him, blood and bone.

Primordial time had caught him up at last
And set his bare brown feet into this creek
Where all his yesterdays were done and past,
Leaving him in the present —wet and sleek.

Since time began small boys have always held
Kinship to water, and though he would go
Back to the city, now his young heart swelled
With that strange knowledge only brown boys know.

Anobel Armour

Law vs. Lawmaker

Congratulations to Virginia State Trooper J. M. Jacobs for upholding the traditions of one of the country's best State police forces. Trooper Jacobs had the courage of his convictions to carry out his duties in the face of the protests of Senator Bender, Republican, of Ohio, who was in a car stopped for speeding at 66 miles an hour on Route 1. Let us remind Senator Bender that Virginia State Police set a national safety record on the highways last year. Let us also remind Senator Bender's political friends in Virginia that the life of one school child is worth more than all the special privileges that could be heaped on all the Senators and all the Representatives in Congress.

F. M. Baumgardner.

Point on West Point

In your fine editorial concerning the Air Force Academy, May 17, you indicated your belief that West Point, which you term one of the "older academies," does not place as much stress on the social sciences and the humanities as is the case in the planned curriculum for the Air Force Academy. This is a common error, and I am happy to tell you that for several years at least equal weight has been placed on the social sciences and the humanities at West Point as on what are sometimes termed technical subjects.

Without going into a detailed description of the curriculum, let me mention a few of the subjects which would fit into the bracket of social sciences and the humanities as used in your editorial. Here are the subjects which I think fit your classification: English, modern languages, physics, chemistry, mechanics of fluids, mechanics of solids, electricity, social sciences (geography, government and history), economics, international relations, military psychology and leadership.

The objective at West Point from the educational standpoint has been well expressed by Prof. Lucius H. Holt, who received his B.A. from Yale in 1902, his M.A. in 1904 and his Ph.D in 1905, served as an instructor of English at Yale 1905 to 1908, was assistant editor of Webster's International Dictionary from 1908 to 1910, and appointed professor of english and history at the Military Academy May 11, 1910, later becoming professor of the Department of Economics, Government and History. In one of his letters he wrote: "General misapprehension exists with regard to the place and emphasis which the so-called cultural subjects as distinguished from technical have in the West Point curriculum. . . .

"But the main point I wish to emphasize is that the West Point curriculum as it exists today is designed to give to its graduate not a one-sided training but a well-rounded academic education. He is being developed for the Army, certainly a technical profession today; but the authorities at the Military Academy have seen to it that alongside of the knowledge he needs to qualify him for the purely technical part of his profession, he shall also gain contact with the other academic subjects which should form a part of every trained man's educational heritage. The young graduate from West Point today is given the opportunity at the Military Academy to receive a course comparable with the best in our civilian colleges and universities."

May I add that West Pointers are awarded an A. B. degree.

I believe from the foregoing you will see that your concern with respect to the lack of stress "on the social sciences and the humanities" at the United States Military Academy is fortunately not well founded.

Benjamin F. Castle,
President, West Point Society of the District of Columbia.

VISTAS IN SCIENCE

By THOMAS R. HENRY

South America's Radar Fish

A family of "radar fish" has been reported to the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

These are the so-called knife fishes of the fresh tropical waters of Central and South America which, by means of special electricity-generating organs, send out constantly as many as 300 electrical impulses a second. They are close relatives of the notorious electric eel of the Amazon, and their electric organs are quite similar in structure to those of this larger species.

But, according to the report of Dr. C. W. Coates of the New York Zoological Society and Drs. M. Altamirano and H. Grundfest, Columbia University neurologists, the uses are quite different. The eel sends out a single impulse of high intensity, sufficient to knock down a man or a cow that happens to be in the water within range. But when it is not stimulated by some danger or desire for food, it does not use its current-producing faculty.

Electrical impulses sent out by the knife fishes are constant but not strong enough to affect, or even be noticed by, any other form of life. These impulses have a short range through water. It is possible to detect them only by delicate techniques.

Range Finder Theory

The thesis is advanced that they may serve the function of radar range finders, although the electrical impulses are quite different from radar waves. They may serve to orient the fish to solid obstacles in the water. If this is the case, however, unknown sense organs, functioning as extremely sensitive highly differential electric detectors, would be required.

Such organs have not been found, but this is by no means proof that they do not exist.

A curious complication noted was that the impulses slow down when the heads of the fishes are cooled, indicating that the electrical activity is in some way controlled by mechanisms in the brain.

The phenomenon has been found in three species of knife fishes. It is quite probable, the report says, that it exists in all the 50 known species of this family.

* * * *

Navy scientists have developed a special glass which changes color when exposed to atomic radiations.

The intensity of its fluorescence is proportional to the intensity of the radiation, which is recorded on a meter. Here, according to the Office of Naval Research, may be the answer to the search for a low-cost, simple, rugged device for measuring radiation.

Several years ago Dr. James H. Schulman, a scientist of the Naval Research Laboratory, discovered that glass containing a small amount of silver was normally colorless under ultraviolet light but turned orange under such light after it had been exposed to X-ray or gamma ray radiation. This is the basis of the new light meter which now is being used by both the Navy and the Air Force in the form of "dog tags."

How Dosimeter Works

As developed for personnel use, the dosimeter operates over a range of from 10 to 600 roentgens (the standard measure used for radiation)—or from a harmless amount to twice the amount which ordinarily would prove fatal to a human being. Very much higher intensities, however, are proposed for the sterilization of foods and drugs, and there is need for a meter which will measure this for the protection of industrial personnel.

Another type of silver-activated glass probably will be suitable for this purpose, according to the NOR announcement. The development is expected to be an important contribution to the five-year study of food preservation by radiation recently announced by the Quartermaster Corps.

Federal Civil Defense Administration is following the inquiry with much interest because in another war it may be necessary to issue dosimeters to everybody—just as gas masks were issued in Europe at the start of the Second World War.

THIS AND THAT

By CHARLES E. TRACEWELL

TAKOMA PARK, Md.

"Dear Sir:

"The recent rain made gentle sounds in the downspouts all night long. I lay awake and listened, so fond of gardening am I, so attuned to the differences in the weather.

"Sometimes I feel sorry for the official weather forecasters. We all expect too much from them, when all the time they are just people, aren't they? I recall how sports writers go overboard in predicting the outcome of prize fights, and how often they are wrong.

"Human people really ought to be content to take futurity as it comes, and not try to predict it in advance. But as long as we are human, I guess we will go on trying to know what is coming.

"One nice thing about the rain is that it comes when it pleases, and most of us can get a preview of it by no more trouble than looking out of the window. All those clouds!

"My simple method of weather prediction consists mostly of this, that sunshine means a fair day, and clouds may mean rain. In such a season as this, the latter method is often at fault.

* * * *

"This evening it really rained, not hard, but steadily, just the best kind for the garden.

"All the shrubs were bent over. Out in the corner of the garden, where I have the best bird bath, a sort of cave had been formed by the drooping branches, some of them made more heavy by pink blossoms. The bird bath, evidently filled to the brim, was completely hidden from view, as I stood at the back window in the dusk.

"A few birds were still eating at the feeding station. The delicate sound of the rain kept right on, a pleasing music in a dry spring.

"Notes of the wood thrush seemed to me the most beautiful of all, with distinct overtones of rain in themselves. I have never been able to find out just how the bird manages to get this 'wood note wild' into its song. Warbles of the robin do not have it, nor the bubble of the house wren, mischievous minx. The Wood thrush, alone of our birds, has this wildness in its song, yet mixed with a purity all its own. All bird music is pretty, even the far cry of the crow, so high in the sky, but somehow that of the thrush tops them all.

* * * *

"The kind of roof one sleeps under in a rain has a great deal to do with the sort of concert one receives. At one time in my life I slept under a tin roof, as it was called, and I believe the hollow drumming sound was the best rain music I ever heard.

"Today I am far from a tin roof, neatly ensconced where scarcely a sound of the rain comes to my ears at night, except for the steady drip, drip, drip, from the eaves, and now and then a protesting gurgle from our copper downspouts.

"All things in the world have a voice, if there is something to play upon it, to bring it out. To me the rain is this catalyst, a something that does not change to everything else. The very look of our street and block, the houses and especially the lawns, is different today and this night than in the hard, dry days of the past weeks.

"Rain is so beautiful, so helpful, surely no one of us should ever complain about it when it comes, with its message to all growing things, its urge to grow, and, I hope, be happy.

"Sincerely yours, M.M.C."

* * * *

This tribute to rain deserves a place in scrapbooks.

It is too common, as our correspondent says, to think of rain as a nuisance, especially in a city, interfering with business dates and the like, when all the time our very lives depend upon it.

It is easy to see this, in the country, where the big crops are, but not so easy in the city, where the supermarket takes the place of the field, and a milk bottle of the cow.

Rain on the roof has always been a theme for poets, and an aid to local color to novelists.

Emile Zola begins one of his lesser known stories with rain falling on the roofs of Paris. He knew the sound well, having lived for several years in an attic in that city, and kept himself alive on sparrows trapped under the eaves.

Rain is a test of happiness.

If you can see the beauty, as well as the interest and need of rain, you can be fairly happy under all the worst circumstances.

Questions and Answers

A reader can get an answer by mail to any factual question by writing The Evening Star Information Bureau, 1200 Eye St. N.W., Washington, D. C. Please inclose 3 cents for return postage.

By THE HASKIN SERVICE

Q. In the 50 years following the invention of printing from movable type by Gutenberg, were books printed in any great numbers?—G. L. L.

A. Contrary to popular belief, this half century produced a great many books. According to a standard catalogue about 38,000 different editions of books were printed before 1501, many of them Bibles. Books of this early period — the cradle days of printing— are known as incunabula. About a third of them are owned in North America.

Q. How does the United States rank with other nations in respect to shipbuilding? —F. C.

A. In Lloyd's latest report the United States was in last place among the major shipbuilding nations of the free world, ranking after Britain, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, Japan, France, Norway, Italy and Denmark.

Q. What kind of bats inhabit Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico?—F. W.

A. Most of them are Mexican free-tailed bats. About 3 million bats occupy a section of the caverns not open to the public. Asleep during the day, they fly out from the cave every evening, except in winter, to catch a meal of insects, and return at dawn.