The Evening Star

With Sunday Morning Edition
WASHINGTON 4, D. C.

Published by
THE EVENING STAR NEWSPAPER COMPANY

Samuel H. Kauffmann,
President
Benjamin M. McKelway,
Editor

MAIN OFFICE: 11th St. and Pennsylvania Ave. (4)
NEW YORK: 420 Lexington Ave. (17)
CHICAGO: 221 N. La Salle St. (1)
DETROIT: New Center Building (2)
SAN FRANCISCO: Russ Building (4)
LOS ANGELES: 612 S. Flower St. (14)
EUROPEAN BUREAU
PARIS, FRANCE: 21 Rue De Berri

Delivered by Carrier

Evening and Sunday		Evening		Sunday	
Monthly	1.75*	Monthly	1.30*	Monthly	65c
Weekly	40c	Weekly	30c	Weekly	15c

*10c additional for Night Final Edition

Rates by Mail—Payable in Advance
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Evening and Sunday		Evening		Sunday	
1 year	25.00	1 year	17.00	1 year	10.00
6 months	13.00	6 months	9.00	6 months	5.50
1 month	2.25	1 month	2.00	1 month	1.25

Telephone: STerling 3-5000

Entered at the Post Office Washington D. C. as second-class mail matter

Member of the Associated Press

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A—20 ** FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1955

Hold the Line

The Citizens' Advisory Council had the best interests of the city at heart when it urged the Commissioners to hold the line on the District budget for fiscal 1957. With Washington facing a serious financial crisis that will require greater tax revenues, this is the wrong time to consider any spending proposals that are not absolutely essential to the orderly functioning and development of the Capital.

The council, representing a broad cross-section of the people of Washington, had the difficult task of weighing the huge accumulation of departmental estimates against the city's capacity to pay its operating and capital-improvement bills. They found the total of $213 million requested by department heads to be $43 million above the current year's budget and far beyond the District's pocketbook resources, unless drastic new taxes are imposed.

As for new taxes, Council Chairman William E. Leahy stated the case succinctly when he said: "We think we have about reached the saturation point insofar as we can go in regard to taxation. We feel as though the individual taxpayer in the District of Columbia, as we are advised, is already paying more than the average taxpayer in cities of comparable size. We think there must come a time when firmness should be evidenced with regard to the skyrocketing requests of the various departments which must call for additional tax increases. There must come a limit. We feel that limit has come now."

Saturation point or not, additional revenues will have to be raised, even if the new operating budget is chopped down to present budget size. For Congress raised the pay of District employes and reduced the Federal contribution from $20 million to $18 million. Some $10 million additional in revenues must be collected just to continue operations on the present level, with a few necessary extras, perhaps. Therefore, the council is right in advising the Commissioners to slice deeply into the estimates in a determined effort to keep the budget close to the 1956 pattern.

Interesting Experiment

The merchandising world will watch with interest the bold attack on "downtown decay" launched in Richmond, Virginia, by a well-known department store, Thalhimers. In what the store's owner described as an "expression of faith" in downtown trade, Thalhimers has just remodeled its block-long store, the most striking improvement being a resplendent six-story aluminum facade designed to attract attention—and customers. The new face was added to a row of drab, old buildings which the century-old store has occupied in the heart of Richmond's shopping district.

William B. Thalhimer, jr., president of the store, has refused to join in the movement to branch out in the suburbs, a tendency evident in so many large cities. "Contrary to the current trend towards expansion through suburban stores," he said, "we feel that the downtown area provides the most complete shopping center, since it caters to both urban and suburban customers." If Mr. Thalhimer's theory proves sound in Richmond, face-lifting operations and other improvements in stores similarly situated, here and elsewhere, may be expected.

The Post-Office Pen

Anybody who hates to see old institutions pass away will greet with mixed feelings Postmaster General Summerfield's announcement that he intends to install ball pens in 75 more major post offices across the country. He has already done this in 20 such offices, and the experiment has worked so well—even though many of the new writing instruments have been stolen—that he wants to go forward with the idea on an ever-expanding scale.

What this almost certainly means, of course, is that the traditional American post-office pen—that terribly scratchy, ink-spattering thing that has infuriated countless numbers of citizens for generations past—is doomed to become as extinct as the dodo and dinosaur. Mr. Summerfield welcomes the prospect. As he sees it, one of the big gains promised by the ball pens is "greater legibility of writing," and their advent will naturally add to the comfort of all of us. Yet, with that said, the fact remains that lovers of the old order can hardly fail to feel a bit saddened, and they have some reason to wonder whether the change is not just another example of how the softening process is reaching out to affect every aspect of our once-rugged national life.

Anyhow, the old post-office pen—surely mightier than any sword—has been a rugged instrument well fabricated for the use of rugged individuals. When the day comes that it disappears entirely, part of old America will be gone with it, and that will be a development that the nostalgic among us must mourn over. Perhaps Mr. Summerfield ought to give some thought to that.

Eisenhower to Bulganin

President Eisenhower, in his brief letter to Soviet Premier Bulganin on the subject of disarmament, has carried on the generally conciliatory and personal tone that has marked the recent "summit" exchanges on this vital topic. By so doing, he has kept the door open for further constructive discussion of the matter and has kept alive a real hope that his dramatic proposal for lessening the threat of a major war—submitted first at the Geneva Conference in July—may yet be translated into action.

Specifically, the President advised the Soviet marshal that a "full reply" to the latter's lengthy letter of September 19 must await Mr. Eisenhower's further recovery. In the meantime, he said, his advisers are engaged in the preliminary work of framing our answers to the several alternative proposals and questions which Mr. Bulganin had raised. But, having declared himself "encouraged" by the Soviet Premier's "full consideration" of the basic Eisenhower plan, the President then offered conditional acceptance of one of the principal Bulganin suggestions—that of control points from which Russian and American military representatives might observe any unusual concentration of offensive-type forces. Addressing the President "as a military man," the Premier had pointed out that the waging of modern warfare requires such concentrations in advance of military action. To forestall them, for purposes of surprise attack, he suggested that reciprocal observation posts be set up at large ports, railroad and highway junctions and airfields.

There are, of course, many questions remaining in the path of American-Russian agreement. Mr. Eisenhower's original plan was, in brief, that as a prelude to actual disarmament the two countries should agree to mutual aerial inspections and to an exchange of blueprints of military establishments. Mr. Bulganin, also conciliatory in the tone of his reply, countered by suggesting that a reduction in armaments and prohibition against atomic weapons should be a prime step rather than a following one to the proposed inspections. In addition, he urged that aerial and other inspection rights be extended to cover military installations in countries allied with the United States and with the Soviet Union.

It is likely now that there will be no further significant disarmament developments prior to the Geneva foreign ministers' meeting later this month. In effect, the United Nations disarmament subcommission is marking time. The President has reaffirmed through his letter, however, the sincerity of his hopes in the matter and the climate, at least, is favorable.

No More Draw Spans

The decision by the Army Corps of Engineers to eliminate the requirement for draw spans on future Potomac River bridges in this area makes sense. The requirement dates back to the days when Georgetown was a thriving port and river traffic, either sail or steam propelled, was heavy. In recent years, however, few boats with stacks high enough to require opening of draw spans have used the Georgetown channel. An inquiry showed that current river commerce could accommodate itself to closed bridges if compelled to do so.

To have insisted on the outmoded requirement for draw spans would have added nearly $2 million to the cost of the proposed Constitution avenue bridge and about $1.5 million to the cost of the second highway bridge, yet to be built. In addition there would have been the maintenance and operating costs, totaling more than $70,000 a year just for the two present draw bridges. The Army Engineers found that such savings far outweigh the advantages of keeping the channel available for an occasional ship with high superstructure. However, some solution to the fireboat problem must be devised. The old fireboat now in use cannot pass beneath the closed Fourteenth street span. A new fireboat has been requested. If the item is approved in the budget, the new boat could be designed to meet the new conditions.

Of course, the decision to seal the present spans and discard the draw units on future bridges will have more than an economy aspect. Motorists who have had the frustrations of long waits at the bridges while a lone sand or oil barge slowly makes its way through a draw span will hail the Army's announcement. The bridges are bottlenecks enough without adding to the logjams of cars using them.

Many Happy Returns

"Many happy returns of the day . . ." The traditional salutation normally has somewhat perfunctory undertones. Birthday celebrants tend to take it for granted; like an acquaintance's nod, they would notice it more if it were omitted than they do when it isn't. But this time things are different. On the 65th birthday of the stricken President Eisenhower, the old phrase takes on an added, a more fervent, meaning.

The dispatches from Denver say the President's giant birthday cake will incorporate 62½ pounds of flour, 50 pounds of sugar—and so on through the recipe, down to a final pound of salt. It sounds like a lot. But it is no match for the "Happy Birthday" greeting that the whole world sends winging Denver-way today.

The Last Link

LETTERS TO THE STAR

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

Streetcars His Desire

Surely the pleas of so many organizations and individuals favoring retention of the trolleys cannot lightly be pushed aside. We have seen what has happened in other large cities, and we don't want it to happen here. We need to look at this as the man of the street sees it, for after all he is the one to please. He isn't going to like it when he sees the fares which he paid out of his hard-earned money being used to tear up tracks. This is a waste of his money. It will also be a waste of his money to let the streetcars go for almost nothing and invest in a set of new buses. Both of these operations would be costly items not now needed.

As for buses, they tear up the streets, the black top rolls up at the bus stops. Concrete has been substituted, and even this breaks up. Some streets have been widened to accommodate the buses. Somebody is paying for this, either the transit riders or the taxpayers. The life of a bus is so short, the replacement cost must be extremely large.

It appears the service would not be as good. All other public utilities (light, gas and phone companies) spare no expense in providing their customers with the finest equipment obtainable and also the best service. Changing from a streetcar to a bus is the same as changing from a limousine to a motorcycle. Replacing streetcars with buses is a step backward to the old stage coach days, only now there is the added stench of exhaust fumes which are unbearable. Twenty years ago it was a pleasure to ride around Washington on the streetcars. Anybody could tell where the streetcars went, but you need a map to find the bus routes and then they are subject to change. Those cars that went out to Congress Heights and also the ones to Chevy Chase Lake were among the finest cars. You can relax on a streetcar. You can read your newspaper. You can't on a bus. Streetcars are faster. There isn't a bus made that can take off from a stop as fast as a streetcar. There isn't a bus made that can keep up with an electric car on a straight-a-way. While the life of a bus is possibly ten years, I have never seen a wornout streetcar. Therefore, streetcars are cheaper in the long run.

Reading the papers, I see all large cities are suffering from traffic congestion and don't know what to do. More bridges, tunnels and superhighways only put additional burdens on the taxpayers. You still have congestion. I believe the buses are largely to blame, since this congestion is in cities that have been doing away with streetcars.

Buses are also detrimental to downtown business. Whereas, for years the streetcar stop required only 20 feet of curb space, buses require more and on some downtown streets whole blocks are needed for the buses. This knocks out thousands of parking spaces for autos.

There are thousands of people not physically able to ride buses. Some have back ailments, some have stomach trouble and feet ailments and cannot tolerate the jolting of buses. I would be willing to pay a straight 25-cent fare if I could ride a streetcar every time. Until that time I will have to pay the $2 per day it costs me to drive into Washington every day. Instead of discontinuing streetcar service, I would like to see it extended. We need a line up Lee highway to Falls Church, so we can have all-weather transportation. Lines should be built to Alexandria and other Virginia and Maryland points. At present, buses are hopelessly stalled in traffic approaches to the District. Streetcars on elevated lines would not be hindered. What we need is a high-speed, steel-wheeled transit system serving the whole Washington area.

Man in the Street.

Brickbat in Velvet

In the annals of newspaperdom, The Star occupies a prominent and impressive niche. It is one of America's great newspapers, generally free of bias or slant. Its reporting is excellent and generally accurate, its reportorial staff unexcelled. To me, newspapers are like people in that they have stature and character in varying degree and a few—a very few—possess the courage and integrity to withstand overwhelming pressure from people and groups inimical to the American way of life. The Star has been that kind of publication.

It grieves me, therefore, to see the relaxation of these principles in your reporting of the Arlington political campaign. I refer not to the character of the reporting but to the frequency with which one side gains access to your columns and the infrequency of the other.

Were I dependent upon The Star for guidance in my voting, I should scarcely know that the Arlington Independent Movement is in the campaign, except where it is slurringly attacked by the convention candidates, if that is the name currently used by the erstwhile nonpartisans. I would never understand that the most important single issue is that of segregation versus integration, with AIM segregationist and the conventioneers integrationist. I would not know that AIM advocates judicious spending, higher educational standards and more experienced administration, while the conventioneers stick doggedly to their peculiar concept that education is not necessarily the prime purpose of schools.

If I did not personally know the AIM candidates as high-principled, capable and Christian people, I would judge by reading The Star that they were an unprincipled aggregation of Ku Kluxers, business opportunists and scoundrels. I have yet to read an interview with any AIM candidate. On October 7, your columns carried the story of an unjustified attack upon Willis Kern, a school candidate. Good reporting, I think, should have included inquiry into whether Mr. Kern was responsible for the statement falsely construed by the convention candidates as an attack upon religion.

The statement, published by the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, was in no way whatsoever an attack upon religion. It was a quotation from a book intended to show the stupidity of integrationist arguments against segregation. Many of the statements under the convention candidates' signatures were false and libelous and lay them open to suit. The Star story fails to state that Mr. Kern denied any responsibility for the ad or the authorship of the statements made therein.

Let's have news, even that concerning the conventioneers' type of character assassination and gutter politics; but let's have both sides.

Charles W. Carter.

(Editor's note: Mr. Carter is mistaken when he says The Star failed to state that "Mr. Kern denied any responsibility" for the advertisement in question. The reporter who wrote the October 7 story, to which Mr. Carter refers, asked Mr. Kern what he knew of the advertisement and quoted Mr. Kern in the story as replying he "knew nothing" of it. Mr. Carter is also mistaken when he says that any favoritism has been shown in the news columns.)

Bonfires Burning

The wheels of the season
Are silently turning,
And now autumn sets
All her bonfires burning.

Her footsteps have hastened
Up hill and down hollow,
And where she has gone
Hearts yearningly follow.

Yet after her bonfires
Have burned to an ember,
Hearts know fulfillment
With dreams to remember.

Inez Clark Thorson

Commendation

The District of Columbia Congress of Parents and Teachers commends James G. Deane for his continuing astute analysis of the school situation in our city. In the name of all children, he prods the conscience of our community and shows us our shortsighted ways.

He strikes aside the ambiguous and places before the eyes of many the simple truths of children's needs.

We who volunteer our effort on behalf of children find great encouragement in the eloquent expression of our convictions in his words. Our wishes for his well-deserved success go with this letter of gratitude.

John B. Gilliland,
President, D. C. Congress of Parents and Teachers.

Also for the Books

The Janney School parent whose letter of October 6 is entitled "Demand Fair Play" calls for a reply by presentation of the facts in the name of fair play.

Frequently, emotions harbored over extended periods blur the sincere intentions to present facts, and, instead, exaggerations are used to win sympathy.

Specifically, the proposal to build a branch public library on the Janney School grounds is not a give-away program at the expense of Janney School. The school would not be giving anything that has been effectively used during the past 20 years. On the other hand, Janney School children will receive the special privilege of having in proximity a public library to meet their educational and recreational needs, a benefit many a school would vie for. In addition, the Janney PTA will benefit by being spared its hard-earned contributions to maintain and operate the present school library—a noble project which has proved a hardship on many a volunteer mother. It would also release schoolroom space for other purposes.

Readers can be the best judge whether the portion of the grounds to be occupied by the library would take away a "substantial portion" of the school's playground. The facts are that the Janney School occupies 3.6 acres, or approximately 158,000 square feet. The portion suggested for the library would require about .38 of an acre, or about 16,500 square feet.

To call this eastern portion of the Janney grounds Janney's east playground and to imply that it would be obliterated is also something in the class of "poetic license." The portion involved would call for only 85 feet along Albemarle street, with 150 feet remaining between that point and the school building. The area proposed for use as the library site includes a sloped terrain unsuited for use as a play area. The mere magic of the simple suggestion to fence this portion would still not make it usable for play. More likely, in addition, a high retaining wall, a fill involving several thousand cubic feet of dirt, all totaling a high and unwarranted expense of tax money to make usable this small portion of the area, would be involved.

At present this area has a luxurious growth of grass, principally because it has been protected from those who would desire to play on it by a so-called "grass patrol." The vigil of the "grass patrol" recently has been relaxed for obvious reasons.

As for the land grab, the site has been declared available for library use some 20 years ago.

T. W. Mermel,
Also a School Parent.

VISTAS IN SCIENCE

By THOMAS R. HENRY

New Theory About Deep, Blue Sea

WOODS HOLE, Mass.—It's a long call from Napoleon's retreat from Moscow and New England's year without a summer to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.

Increasing evidence is being accumulated here, however, that they are quite closely associated and that the present bottom waters of the sea sank there during this period of inexplicable cold. In other words, the water layers below about 16,000 feet sank there during this period and haven't been able to rise again.

This is indicated strongly by observations of temperature, oxygen content and salinity of the bottom waters. Cold water sinks, warm water rises. Water at the surface is continuously renewing its contents of free oxygen which is being consumed all the time by sea organisms. The process of rising and sinking goes on, of course, all the time. Every winter the surface of the sea is cooled and the water sinks to a lower level. An estimate of the age of a layer of sea water—that is the time since it came into its present position—can be obtained from the oxygen content as well as by several other methods.

Tests Support Theory

About a fifth of the entire Atlantic Ocean is deeper than 5,000 meters, or 16,404 feet. Until two years ago, only five observations of temperature, salinity and oxygen had been made below this depth in the Western North Atlantic by ships of all nations. During 1954, however, Oceanographer L. Valentine Worthington of the Woods Hole staff, made 17 observations below this depth to test his hypothesis on the age of deep Atlantic water. Now he has added 15 more such observations.

All seem to support the 140 years hypothesis. For two or three years there was about the worst weather in recorded history. Parts of New England had snow and ice in June and July. The cold weather extended over all the East—perhaps over all North America.

In Europe, Napolean's bright dreams of empire crashed as his army, caught by unpredicted and probably unpredictable cold and storms, stumbled—ragged, starving and freezing—back across the deep-drifted Russian plains over which they had advanced triumphantly in the autumn.

Mr. Worthington's oxygen observations are consistent with the theory that Atlantic's bottom water sank at this time. There has been no period since with such a notable cooling effect on the surface waters. A larger number of observations upon which may be built a valid hypothesis will be one of the objectives of research ships assigned to the Atlantic during the forthcoming international geophysical year.

Mr. Worthington's interest in the problem was aroused when sound transmission speed measurements in the neighborhood of the Brownson Deep, the deepest portion of the Caribbean, indicated a rather sharp temperature and salinity gradient between bottom water of South Atlantic origin which fills the trench and the less dense North Atlantic deep water. In comparing recent deep oxygen determinations with some secured about 30 years ago he found that below a depth of about 10,000 feet over the entire Western North Atlantic there was about three-tenths of a cubic centimeter less oxygen per liter of water.

Carbon Figure Doubted

Using this indicated rate of oxygen consumption, he then could calculate the time when the deep water was saturated with this gas. This turned out, as he suspected, to be approximately 140 years. Previous determinations had been made by measuring the radioactive carbon content of the deep layers. These had fluctuated around 1,500 years. The carbon figure must have been quite erroneous, the Woods Hole oceanographer believes, because it in no way fits into the total picture. Only during an extremely cold period does surface water become sufficiently dense to sink in large enough quantities to influence markedly conditions in ocean abysses.

His observations indicate that oxygen is being consumed largely by the decomposition of organisms sinking from higher levels, faster than it is being replaced by the sinking of surface water, at least in high latitudes. If his estimate of the rate of consumption is correct, says a Woods Hole report, it will only require about 1,000 years before all the oxygen below a depth of about 10,000 feet is used up.

Presumably it will not be replaced to any great extent before another very cold period causes a major overturn of the ocean waters.

The observations may carry other important implications, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute report points out, but the whole concept is as yet too new to warrant further speculations.

THIS AND THAT

By CHARLES E. TRACEWELL

"What's the matter, old man?" we asked. "Have you got a hangover?"

"Yes," promptly replied Templeton Jones. "I have a hangover."

"Didn't think it of you, someway—"

"Oh, this is an antihistamine hangover," said Jones, with a grin.

"I felt the first symptoms of a cold coming over me.

"Now I am as sleepy as a dog."

"What will you do now—take another one?"

"Not on your life," Jones smiled. "I am going to get me some of these tablets to keep you awake."

* * * *

It is, truly, a wonderful chemical age.

There are all sorts of new sleeping pills cropping up.

The public has been so thoroughly scared about barbiturates that something had to be done about it.

Most of the new sleep pills are still to be prescribed by doctors only, but a few are sold over the counter.

Most of the latter are antihistamines that went wrong, in a sense. That is, they have a disagreeable side effect, as the doctors say. They make you very, very sleepy.

If one takes such a capsule or tablet on going to bed, the effects are not bad, in any sense, but probably help.

The trouble is, as with Temp Jones, a few of these "sleeping pills" have a disagreeable carryover the next morning.

One wakes to find the eyelids just don't want to open.

It is nothing, one thinks, that a good cup of coffee won't put right.

Somehow, the coffee refuses to work in customary fashion.

One still feels groggy, at the bus stop, and crossing a street.

Now, one place no one should feel groggy is on a street, or crossing a street, or waiting for a bus.

* * * *

The great chemical industry, especially the branch of it related to pharmaceutics, comes to our rescue.

Tablets or tiny pieces of chewing gum, each containing 20 milligrams, more or less, of caffeine, help.

They are made primarily for night driving, and probably are a good thing.

People really ought to be on their toes, figuratively speaking, when driving.

The amount of caffeine is no more than is put in some of the formula tablets of antihistamine, once proclaimed as the great cure-all of ordinary everyday colds.

The surge of publicity in their favor has abated, but many persons still find that antihistamines do help, after all, when first catching a cold.

One antihistamine tablet or capsule, on going to bed, may clear the nose, and abate some of the symptoms of the cold. Most people neither know nor care that their "cold" is not exactly that, but what the medical men call allergic rhinitis.

The symptoms are well enough known.

There is a lack of enthusiasm, a queer feeling around the eyes, and perhaps sniffles. Some persons realize they are catching a cold when they suddenly find themselves angry at some other person. Their normal sunny disposition is clouded. Another sign of an oncoming cold, some claim, is a hankering for bread and other starchy foods. Still another is a tendency to regard any bus trip as too long, slow and draggy.

These symptoms, mental and physical, put together, mean a cold, and the wary watcher of himself can recognize them in time, perhaps. If he does, he may find that an aspirin or an antihistamine tablet, or getting and keeping very warm, will ward off other symptoms.

Perhaps the whole thing, at least in some persons, is wholly mental, and all could be obviated by thinking one's self well, in the first place. It has been done, you know.

We asked Templeton Jones how long it took for his anti-sleep tablet to wake him up after his antihistamine had made him sleepy.

"I don't know," he grinned. "The only thing I can do is wait and see." Since that is about all most of us can do, any more, we left him to his doze.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

By THE HASKIN SERVICE

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 5, D. C. Please inclose 4 cents for postage.

Q. How did the word "goof" come to mean "make a mistake"?—R. L.

A. Goof is a slang or colloquial word which has had long usage and many applications, all of them noncomplimentary. The word goes back to the early English guff or goff and Old English gofish, meaning stupid. The American Thesaurus of Slang records a dozen different usages of the word, including goof off (make a mistake). In its common meaning of "a stupid person," goof has been in use in the United States since about 1920.

Q. To what extent are the transit systems of the larger cities municipally owned?—J. N. S.

A. Only about 35 of the American Transit Association's 400-member lines are publicly owned, but the practice is almost universal in the largest cities of the United States.