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Cost, isolation, foes of ice arena here

We note with amusement that the annual epidemic of arena-itis has broken out again. It usually follows a cold snap during which residents have enjoyed two or three days skating on natural ice of nearby lakes. Newcomers demand angrily why Prince Rupert hasn't an ice arena, the "string-pullers" (whoever they are), are accused of apathy and letter writers "are mystified" because there is no ice arena here.

A moment's thought and a modicum of common sense should remove any air of mystery. Practically all the smaller centres in British Columbia with ice arenas are situated in those parts of the province which have long, cold winters.

They started out with natural ice arenas, with doors and windows open to keep the ice in shape. They were built of wood and they were built a long, long time ago when construction costs were a quarter of what they are now. Eventually, after recurring mild spells when the "ice went out" in the middle of hockey series, they converted to artificial ice and in some cases built new arenas. Trail and Kimberley had old wooden ice rinks that dated back to the turn of the century. When the Trail rink was finally condemned as a fire trap about 1947, the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company of Canada Ltd., presented (over a period of time) the citzens of Trail with a hockey arena, a children's skating rink, a curling rink and a community centre valued at nearly $1,000,000. The CM&S turned it over to the City of Trail to operate. Kimberley arena was in such bad shape and so was its hockey, that it was forced for several years to shut down operations altogether.

Now it's building a new arena, with of course, help from the CM&S Company. Rossland, Cranbrook, Prince George, Smithers, Quesnel, Kamloops all started with natural ice rinks and eventually obtained their own ice plants. All of them have a tough time operating. The Okanagan centres of Kelowna, Penticton and Vernon were once homes of nothing better than intermediate hockey. With a shift in hockey calibre and the growth of the Pacific Coast League, the Okanagan clubs were included in an inferior Allan Cup league. They rode the crest for 10 years until hockey "shamateurism" and television drove them into bankruptcy and now they can hardly lure more than 500 fans to a league game.

Now we come to Prince Rupert, a city which went broke, only got "out of the red" a few years ago, whose economy has never been particularly stable until recent years and is isolated to boot. The temperature here is such that an ice-making plant is a must and the cheapest arena, with adequate spectator space would cost nothing less than $200,000. There have been, to our knowledge, at least half a dozen surveys into the cost of building an ice arena here, all of which have resulted in estimates far beyond the reach of the taxpayer. The curling club, which is privately owned, has a building valued at $88,000 and an ice-plant with a replacement value of $25,000. The Prince Rupert Curling club is kept alive by the enthusiasm of its members who wish to get their money's worth out of their contributions, their shares and their annual dues.

A livewire organization could try to sell shares up to $200,000 to build an ice rink but once built there would be no guarantee, due to the city's isolation, that it would become an asset. More than likely it would become a liability because general skating, local hockey and kid hockey, couldn't even pay for the operation. Inter-city hockey would be a major problem since the nearest town of any size with a rink is Smithers, with Vanderhoof and Prince George stretching the distance to 500 miles. The distance and time elements would make it impossible to operate on a sound financial basis.

Operation costs of an ice arena are fantastic. The curling club's power bill alone averages around $500 a month. For an ice rink there would have to be an ice-maker, maintenance staff, instructors for ice-skating, ushers and ticket sellers. The costs of operating the Civic Centre swimming pool should serve as a parallel, although naturally, until the novelty wore off, there would be more revenue from spectators. If hockey went the way of basketball league games, the "take" would hardly pay the ice-maker's salary.

City taxpayers are currently paying a 55 mill tax rate. Prince Rupert has no CM&S Co., and while Columbia Cellulose Company Ltd., gladly donated $30,000 to the indoor swimming pool, it cannot afford yet to be as generous as the CM&S has been to Trail and Kimberley even though it might like to be.

So until the tax bill drops considerably, or an "angel" appears out of somewhere, city residents will have to resign themselves to living in an isolated city with a mild climate where skating is a rare treat and not an amenity.

However, we could be wrong, and if some group wants to sell shares in a $200,000 ice arena, we'll gladly become a shareholder. Right now we think it's out of the question.

Children betrayed

Numerous Edmonton employers have expressed themselves as appalled by the low standard of education displayed by many young persons, with 10 to 16 years of training in our schools, who apply to them for jobs. As a case in point, a recent letter from a young person has been brought to our attention. It is an application for employment, and it reads in part:

"During my years at school, I have had honours in mathimatic coarses. To further my intrest in figures, I took a comtometer cbarse in which, I made ninty-six percent on the diploma exam.

"I have had one year of typing in school. My speed at the end of the year was approximatly thirty-five words per minute.

"I have had no experience in this type of work, but I am extreamly intrested and very eakar to learn all I can. I expect to work hard and hope, for the possibility of advancement. . . . My education extends only to the completion of Grade 10 . . . I hope to continue my education by correspondance as soon as I am setteled in a permanent job. I am available immediatly . . . If you feel it necessary it is possible to obtain written refferences . . ."

This is by no means an extreme example. Most employers could cite many much worse. There is every reason to believe that this letter was written by an intelligent young person, eager to learn but deprived of the opportunity because of the folly of "progressive" education with the automatic promotions, the "moulding of the whole child", the time-consuming frills, the soft, elective courses, and all the rest of the neglect of a sound basic education.

How could a normal child pass through ten years of school without learning how to spell simple words in his own language? The answer is that the school never really attempted to teach him. He was betrayed by "progressive" education.

Today, unfortunately, many teachers are themselves the victims of "progressive" education, and are incapable of teaching fundamentals. Many years will be required to repair the damage. — The Edmonton Journal

A Bible Thought for Today

Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Matt. 5:7.

We are rewarded in two lives.

A WINTER'S DAY — With a handful of pussy willow, this man takes a stroll by Lost Lagoon in Vancouver's Stanley Park on a balmy winter's day last Monday. The temperature on that day was 54 degrees, a near record for Vancouver in January. The weather office has forecast more of the same. — CP Photo

OTTAWA REPORT

By FRANK HOWARD, M.P.

Parliament's role in the field of midwifery has been completed for the present session. The "Baby Budget" was approved with the CCF and the Liberals voting against the government supporters. However, there was never any doubt that the budget would be approved. After all, with more than 200 supporters, the government was sure of winning the vote.

Now we can await the regular budget which will throw us again into the field of discussing, in a broad, general way, the economic and fiscal policies of the government. Of course, the regular budget will deal with the circumstances facing us for the coming fiscal year. It will not deal with current events to any great degree.

We can expect the regular budget to drive us even further into debt than we are now. There was some preliminary evidence of this when the estimates of the expenditures for the coming year were tabled.

These estimates show that Canada will spend a record $6 billion in the coming year. This, though, is only part of the picture. We usually find that the government revises its spending program as the year proceeds, revises it upwards, that is. As these revisions take place supplementary estimates are presented. Sometimes this takes place three and four times during the year.

If past years are any guide we can expect that supplementary estimates plus the old age security payments will bring the spending program to a near $7 billion.

So, we know generally what we are being asked to approve insofar as spending is concerned. But we don't know where the money is to be found. Certainly some of it will come from present taxation powers. The regular budget, when it is presented, will tell us whether there are to be more taxes, increased taxes, heavier borrowing, additional taxes, etc. etc.

The "Baby Budget" will have the result of cutting income by about $60 million. The regular budget will probably have to be based on making up this loss in other ways. With all of the discussion about so-called deficit financing we can expect that the additional money will come from heavier and heavier borrowings.

I suppose that going into debt is all right, — sometimes. After all, we all do it. But, the damage can come from persistent and regular increases in indebtedness. Where do we stop is the all important question.

The Packsack of Gregory Clark

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One of my cronies is what they call very slow pay. There is nothing dishonest about him. He has paid every cent he ever owed in his long life. But he takes his time about it, and often he is dunned.

He will let a fuel bill run up into hundreds of dollars; sometimes his charge account at a department store will rise to startling figures; he might owe for two suits of clothes, or for three months' groceries.

And when he sends his check at last, he always pens a little note to his creditor:

"Think," he writes, "how handy this money comes now! If I had paid it last month (or last year) it would be all gone by now."

One of his creditors was not amused. He wrote back:

"I find that the bank interest at 6 per cent on the money I had to borrow in lieu of your payment for the past year comes to $36.40. A further check from you for that amount will come in much handier."

My friend thinks some people have very little sense of humor.

With the classics

When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown;
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down;
Creep home, and take your place there,
The spent and maimed among:
God grant you find one face there,
You loved when all was young.
—Charles Kingsley.

All Aboard with G. E. Mortimore

Three youths shouted foul words at a man when their car passed his. The man got so angry that he chased them for nine and one-half miles, trapped them in a driveway and rammed their car several times.

This week he was fined $150 and costs and had his driver's licence lifted.

"Let's start a fund to pay the fine of the last angry man," said a co-worker of mine.

"I cheered for him when I read the story," I said. "But you can't encourage people to break the law," I added prigishly.

"Why not?"

"Because it undermines the principles that our society is built on."

"Bah!" said my friend. "Our society is based on turning the other cheek. Too many people are doing it. We're obsessed with being kind. This gives the scum a chance to rise to the top. And in time, the decent people will go under."

✣ ✣ ✣ ¼

"There are supposed to be enough honest men to hang the thieves," I said.

"Don't count on it."

"I'll bet that 90 per cent of the people who read the story had a secret sympathy for that man," I said. "But a car isn't intended to be used as a tank. You can't charge at people like a wounded rhinoceros to get your revenge. You might knock down any number of old ladies and toddlers along the way."

"If somebody calls me obscene names," said my friend, "I reserve the right to defend what little bit of honor I have left, no matter what the law says."

And we dropped the subject.

Quote, unquote

Lee Adler:

"You'll never go wrong if you always remember not to bait your hook with steak because you like steak. Bait it with worms, which is what fish like."

✣ ✣ ✣

John Eugene Hasty:

"Business is full of unemployed people who are on somebody's payroll."

✣ ✣ ✣

Marya Mannes, U.S. author:

"If a man has a cutting edge, he's called brilliant. If a woman has one, she's called bitter."

Canada's Indians advance

From The Toronto Telegram

Canada's record of treatment of its Indian population is scarcely a source of national pride. But Canadians who blush when the matter comes up in conversation can take some comfort from the progress made in Indian education in recent years.

Citizenship Minister Ellen Fairclough has reported that there are now 40,000 Indians in school, compared with 16,000 in 1945. There are 3,000 young Indian men and women in high school and university, compared with only 71 in 1945.

A good part of the credit for progress among Canada's original citizens goes to the present Government. Last year it spent $27,000,000 on Indian education, double what was spent in the previous three years.

Canadian Indians can now vote, whether or not they live on reservations. The scholarship program introduced in 1957 to cover practical courses in nursing, teaching and agriculture has been extended to cover the arts.

It isn't possible to legislate away the individual prejudice that slows Indian integration into white man's society. Neither is it possible to wipe out overnight the harm done Canada's Indians in a century of neglect. But present progress is heartening indeed to all who want to see the Indians take their rightful place as full citizens in Canadian society.

Unemployment questions and answers

In this column we publish questions about unemployment insurance and employment, together with answers which may be of interest to you:

Following are some questions with answers received from the Unemployment Insurance Commission. If you are uncertain about any point do not hesitate to send us your question. We will obtain an answer and publish it in this column.

Q. I should like to know whether a man of 65 who is receiving the old age pension, but who is working, may have stamps affixed in his unemployment book. I was told that a man on his pension may neither work nor have stamps in his unemployment insurance book because one cannot get two salaries.

A. There is no age limit or means test for unemployment insurance. Your informant is entirely wrong.

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