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Council, press work together for public

PRINCE RUPERT is fortunate in having a City Council which believes that the business it transacts is the public's business and with few exceptions has it ever closed its doors to the press. Vancouver's new mayor Tom Alsbury is currently engaged in a feud, of a type which we hope never occurs here, with Vancouver newspapers. It sounds, at this distance, quite silly but nevertheless there are basic freedoms at stake. City Councils are elected by the people to govern their city and carry out municipal business.

On the one hand, therefore, what business is dealt with is strictly public business. On the other hand, the people should have sufficient confidence in its elected officials not to seek a day by day account of council's action. What they do get is a comprehensive report of two City Council meetings a month when the mayor and aldermen launch or complete various projects, allot different expenditures and ensure that its policies are carried out regarding utilities, public works and finances.

On alternate Mondays (City Council meets in public on the second and fourth Monday of each month) council holds committee meetings, which though held in camera have always been and still are, open to the press for obtaining background on civic matters and keeping abreast of new city developments. Very seldom does any news emanate from committee meetings, since disposition of committee matters still depends on a full council vote on regular meeting nights. In between council meetings the mayor and city clerk-comptroller are authorized to make announcements of interest to the public where matters crop up that need not wait until council meets. Such has been the arrangement with City Council and City Hall for a good many years now and a good arrangement it is. Occasionally, where publicity of civic financial transaction might endanger the city a more favorable deal, the press has been asked to delay publication of details until transactions are complete and we have co-operated.

Similarly, when matters come up that are too personal or touchy for public discussion and council meetings have been closed, the press has been asked to stay, to keep a watching brief for the public. When completed, the results of such discussions are always published. Thus there are few opportunities of council ever "pulling a fast one" on the public and we wouldn't want to see any change in council policy. As we said earlier, Prince Rupert is fortunate in having City Council's which believe in the public being aware of what goes on. We hope that nothing will ever arise to make matters any different.

Mercy of the court

TWO men convicted of manslaughter in the setting of a fire in Ottawa that killed seven people have been sentenced to 12 and 15 years in penitentiary.

They can consider themselves fortunate that the court showed such mercy. Sentences of similar duration are not uncommon for persons convicted of robbing banks or grocery stores.

These men killed five children and two adults in the act of committing a felony. Had they killed even one man in the act of robbing a bank, they would have been convicted of murder and sentenced to hang.

Evidence presented at the trial was that one man was hired by the other to set fire to the house in order to collect $40,000 insurance.

The man who instigated the crime received the 15-year term. It works out to a little more than two years for the life of each person who died, and somewhat less if he gets time off for good behavior. The court has shown him much more consideration than he showed his victims.

—The Toronto Telegram.

Can't have it both ways

IN Canada we have come a long way under the path of security and comfort. But progress in this direction demands understanding on the part of the thousands who benefit from the vast array of social services and protection which we enjoy.

Too many people in this country have parted with their common sense. They have failed to remember that no goods, no services, no protection can ever be secured without a price of some kind.

Perfect roads, ever multiplying police protection, subsidies, old age pensions, family allowances, winter work programs—all must be paid for out of taxation, yet we complain bitterly when taxes go up. How can we have it both ways?

If you don't like the high cost, then it's time to quit howling for government help.

—Wingham (Ontario) Advance-Times.

Incomprehensible system

THE Winnipeg School Board has decided to reconsider the system of marking report cards in elementary grades. Probably most Winnipeg parents will agree that this is a welcome move.

At present, children are graded on their work by the use of A, B, C and so on. It is an intricate marking system. Educationists who support it say that it reveals a lot more about a child's progress than does the old percentage system. That may be so for teachers, but the fact remains that most parents find it almost incomprehensible. They get no clear idea of a child's ability or of his relative standing in a class.

The old-fashioned percentage system had its disadvantages. But this much is plain: a generation ago, parents felt they had a better understanding of exactly where their children stood. A marking system which does not achieve this is certainly not ideal.

—The Winnipeg Free Press

INTERPRETING THE NEWS

Soviet song of incentive has capitalistic tune

By KEN METHERAL,
Canadian Press Staff Writer

An intriguing feature of Nikita Khrushchev's marathon address this week outlining the Soviet Union's new seven-year plan is the lack of ideological content.

There are the usual exhortations to the faithful to catch up with and surpass the capitalist countries in per capita output and the oft-repeated strictures against "revisionists" inside the Communist party.

But what emerges most clearly is a song of inspiration and incentive with a surprisingly capitalistic melody based on more and more of everything being produced by less and less work with the final, climactic chorus holding out the promise of a tax-free future.

By 1970, says Khrushchev, Russia will have "the highest living standards and the shortest working week in the world."

It is easy to prick some of the Russian leader's more grandiose bubbles. Elimination of income tax, for example, will mean little in a country where state-manipulated prices and other forms of indirect taxation account for more than 90 per cent of the government's revenue. And few Western experts give Russia much chance of achieving a 70-per-cent rise in gross output of farm products.

But it would be a mistake to dismiss all the ambitious targets as so much pie in the Soviet sky.

The objective set for production of industrial and consumer goods look realistic enough, in view of recent Soviet achievements. British observers believe even the stupendous task of building 15,000,000 flats may be accomplished.

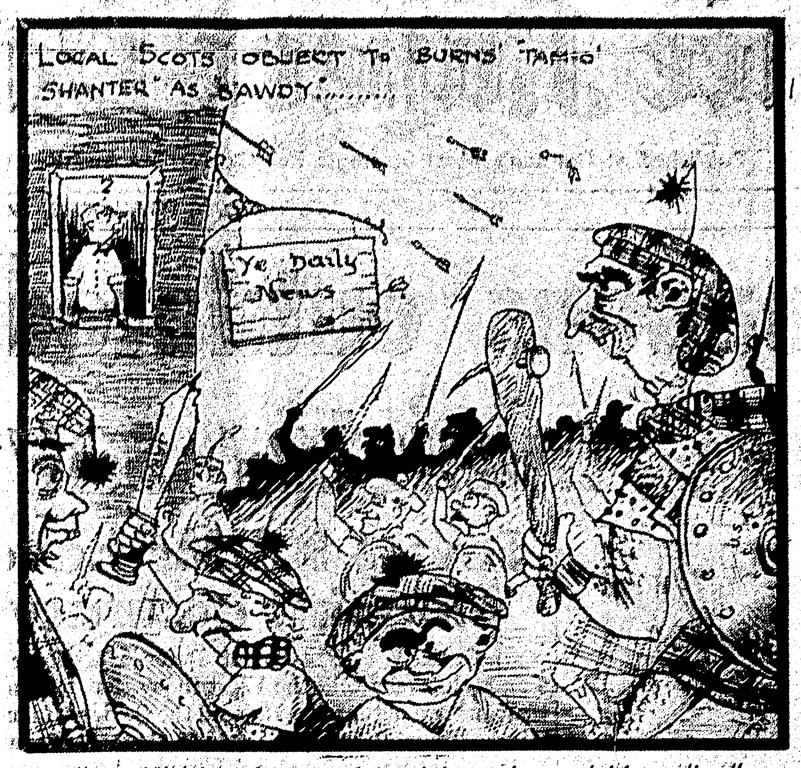
But the very success of Khrushchev's ambitious program is likely to confront him with new problems.

Russia's tremendous industrial development has led to the emergence of a new managerial and scientific class whose ranks are being swelled by the hundreds of thousands of students now receiving an advanced education.

Khrushchev owes much of his strength inside Russia to his recognition of this class and its hatred of the harsh police state policies of the Stalinist era.

His dilemma has been neatly summed up by the British weekly, The Spectator, which says he is in the equivocal position of "attempting to run an autocracy by consent."

There is always the danger that a literate society will rebel and every success of the new seven-year plan is likely to make Russians less willing to put up with Communist bureaucracy.



". . . We'el gie' him a fair trial . . . then we'el hang 'im."
—Cartoon by Tom Nicoll.

All Aboard By G.E. Mortimore

A few anti-Commonwealth fanatics have been screaming that Canada can not afford to entertain the Queen. Let the Queen pay her own way, they urge.

The Queen's visit will cost the people of Canada $1,300,000, or about eight cents each.

Twenty times this amount is spent on entertaining foreign diplomats at home and abroad. The anti-Commonwealth crew lets such expenditures go by without a squeak of protest.

Why do they pick on the Queen (who happens to be Queen of Canada) as a target for their petty, boorish and contemtible nagging?

Since these people never issue statements to the press about the money spent feting distinguished men and women who come here from Germany, the United States or Liberia, and they do not make even a whimper of complaint about the cost of cocktail parties for the staffs of foreign embassies and consulates, the observer can reach only one conclusion. The thrift campaign is a phony.

The Queen's visit makes a handy excuse for a small band of cranks to indulge their prejudice against Britain, the Commonwealth, and our system of government, of which the Queen is the living symbol.

These tirades are not touched off by any desire to save money. They are caused purely by hatred. Since the strength and shrillness of these outbursts are far out of proportion to eight cents' worth of hospitality, it is evident that the people who utter them are none too well balanced.

Frankly, I believe such people are sick in the head.

We have a free press, and all kinds of mentally unbalanced citizens do succeed in getting their views into print. Writing may help restore them to sanity.

Although such statements may have a therapeutic value for the person who makes them, the reader should be cautioned against accepting the stuff as serious argument.

Railway to Alaska

From The Victoria Colonist

If Canada and the U.S. can co-operate in building a highway to Alaska why not a railroad? Visionaries have always looked to the ultimate extension of the PGE Railway to Alaska. Since the war steel has been laid a large part of the way. If the gap could be closed with assistance from Canada and the United States, the once maligned PGE could become one of the most important railways in North America. Let no one forget, however, that it is British Columbia's railway.

The mote in the eye

From the Kitchener-Waterloo Record

Some people don't attend church, they say, only because so many who do are hypocrites. But they don't apply a similar test to every meeting they attend.

Fluid supply

From the Vancouver Sun

Even during provincial and federal elections closing down liquor outlets provides no sure protection against corruption by liquor. Anyone who hoped to pour out political persuasion could easily acquire a supply of liquor before election day.

Dry trail

From the Fredericton Gleaner

When tourists realize they are unable to buy a drink after a long day's drive they are going to shun those hotels and the province in which they operate.

Report from Parliament

By FRANK HOWARD, MP

It turns out that MP's are fair game for certain types of dishonest people. Just the other day a man came to see one of our CCF members with a sad, plightful story. This man was from British Columbia and had been to Montreal where he was robbed of all his possessions. He recounted a plausible story of his residence at home, naming streets, stores etc. He was bought a train ticket back home and loaned $20 besides.

The next day another person approached another B.C. member with a somewhat similar story. A third CCF'er from Northern Ontario was apparently also on the list to be called upon.

By this time our MP's had begun to compare notes. It turned out that the first person had cashed his train ticket in and had disappeared.

By now the RCMP and the Ottawa city police are all alerted, with a city-wide police call out for these misrepresentation artists.

Apart from the fact that three MP's have been victimized, it makes all of us a bit more cautious in helping others out who might have a legitimate reason for needing assistance.

I myself, have been victimized in the past and still have two $100 NSF cheques to remind me of it. This from someone who had been a very active job steward in the IWA and a person with whom I had worked.

* * *

However, that is all incidental to the actual workings of the House of Commons.

In that arena we are still on the Speech from the Throne, but by the time this is in print we will have dispensed with the Throne Speech and will be dealing with other matters.

A vote was taken the other night (Monday, Jan. 26) on a CCF amendment. The surprising part was that the Liberals voted with us and, in effect, supported one of the principles that we in the CCF have been proposing for quite a number of years. That is the question of overall planning by a central government agency in order that we may be in a better position to combat today's dual malady, recession and inflation.

It looks as if the indication given in the Speech from the Throne about increasing the amount of money for the Trans-Canada Highway will not have any effect upon us in northern B.C.

Indications are that the additional money will only be for the present Trans-Canada Highway. This is occasioned because the estimated expenditures are already over the maximum allowable by the Trans-Canada Highway Act.

There is a great deal more French being spoken in the House now that we have earphones and translators. Many French speaking members feel more at home with their own language and are able to express themselves more fluently than they have been able to in the past. The translation system is alright for formal and lengthy debates, but I'm sure that the translators will have quite a bit of difficulty in keeping up with the House once we get into the estimates of each department. It is then that the comments are short, the questions quickly given and the interjections more numerous.

But the translation system is a great advantage to all members who are not bi-lingual. I, for instance, am now able to follow any conversation that is given in French and do not have to wait until the next day for the written translation.

The only drawback that is apparent at the moment is that there will be less desire for those who speak French to learn to speak English, and vice versa.

Progression

From the Stratford Beacon-Herald

For his brilliant defense of Leopold and Loeb in the "thrill murder" of little Bobby Franks, Clarence Darrow was paid $33,000. For enacting the Darrow role in a film shortly to be issued, Orson Welles will receive $75,000. Some of these days, somebody may be paid $100,000 for playing the role

gems of thought

Example has more followers than reason.—Christian Nestell Bovee.

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