Youth gets reprieve, given life

Cabinet commutes death sentence

VANCOUVER (CP)—Robert Chapman, 19, sentenced to be hanged for the murder of his brother, was given a reprieve Friday when the federal cabinet commuted his death sentence to life imprisonment.

During the three months he was under sentence of death thousands of former schoolmates, church groups, relatives, friends and residents of the Fraser Valley where he lived petitioned the government to commute the sentence.

In his death cell at Oakalla Jail, Chapman told close friends, "I am not ready to die."

His defence counsel maintained that the shotgun slaying of his 23-year-old brother John at the farm home during an argument had been an accident.

HAD FIST FIGHT

The elder brother was shot after a fist-fight with Robert last Oct. 16.

Told of the reprieve Friday by reporters, the boys' father Norman Chapman said: "Thank God. But why did they have to wait until the 11th hour. It has been an unbearable ordeal."

The youth was convicted Jan. 15 by a B.C. Supreme Court jury which added a strong recommendation for mercy. In an appeal to the B.C. court of appeal, defence counsel said the jury's five-hour deliberation indicated there had been doubt.

Anglican bishop Godfrey Gower of New Westminster made a personal appeal to Justice Minister Fulton.

Chapman told his visitors "I am not ready to die" but wrote in one of scores of letters from his death-row cell: "Waiting to be hanged could never be as bad for me as the moment I killed my brother."

PLANS EDUCATION

Relatives said the youth plans to take workshop instruction and university correspondence courses.

When he moved from death row Chapman left behind tugboatman Leo Anthony Mantha, 35, scheduled to hang Monday for the knifing death last Sept. 6 of Able Seaman Aaron H. Jenkins, 23, in a barrack room at HMCS Naden, shore establishment in Victoria.

After hearing that his son had been saved, Chapman's father asked about Mantha. He said Robert had spoken a great deal to visitors about the tugboatman, who occupied a neighboring cell.

The cabinet has yet to make a decision in Mantha's case.

The commutation of Chapman's sentence raises to 21 the number of reprieves granted by the present government since it came to office in June, 1957. Five death sentences have been carrid out during the same period.

LONDON (CP)—Plans are being made to convert a movie theatre in Catford, one of London's largest, into a supermarket.

Jurist raps wholesale commutations

KAMLOOPS (CP) — Mr. Justice A. M. Manson Friday at the conclusion of an assize court session here criticized "wholesale commutations of the death sentence" by the cabinet.

Mr. Justice Manson said:

"Within recent times there has been commutation in about 90 per cent of the cases. I have no hesitation in saying that is wrong.

"If the law is wrong, if capital punishment should no longer prevail, then Parliament should amend the statute . . . Parliament should not be overridden.

"If that can be done in one thing, it can be done in something else and democracy and parliamentary government would be held for nought."

He said that practice of commutations is "a grave situation and, I sincerely hope, one that will not be permitted to continue."

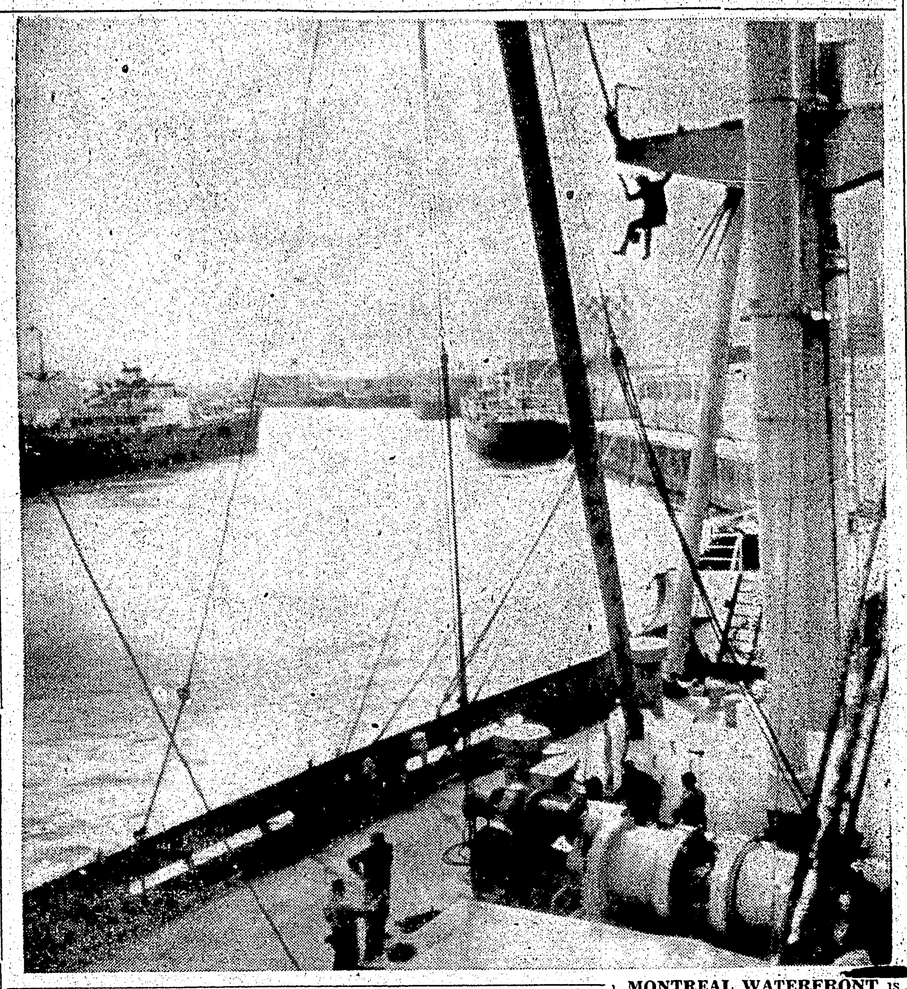
He said the practice is not fair to juries or the trial judge and claimed mass commutation is a practice that can "hardly be justified."

R. H. Richmond to pulp position

VANCOUVER (CP) — Appointment of R. H. (Buck) Richmond as manager of the cellulose division of Alaska Pine and Cellulose Ltd. was announced Friday by President William E. Breitenbach. Mr. Richmond, now assistant resident manager of the Rayonier Mill at Port Angeles, Wash., takes up his duties May 1.

Seek increase

VANCOUVER (CP)—Officials of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Workers said Friday negotiations will open in two weeks time on demands for a 20-percent wage increase for 600 employees of the Hotel Vancouver. Union officials said the increase would raise pay to the level paid by members of the B.C. Hotels Association.



MONTREAL WATERFRONT is bustling with activity as crewmen, awaiting the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, prepare ships for the voyage into the Great Lakes. —CP photo.

B.C. ROUNDUP

Fruitpicker freed in woman's death

VERNON (CP)—An assize court jury took 16 minutes Friday to acquit Olin Lee Brage, 53, Kaleden, B.C. orchardist on a charge of murder in connection with the death of Anita Budde, 28, in a lonely fruit-picker's cabin last Aug. 3.

Brage was taken from the court room under police escort and now is being held here on a deportation warrant. Police said he is wanted in the United States under the name of Gerry Holeman, Sr., on a breach of parole charge.

Brage was charged in the death of Miss Budde, a German immigrant, who partially clothed body was found in a blood-splattered fruit-picker's cabin on an orchard Brages was renting. She was found sprawled across a bed-chesterfield.

Mr. Justice J. O. Wilson, in an hour-long charge to the jury, said there was not sufficient evidence to convict Brage.

The Crown's main evidence was two hairs the dead woman was clenching. An expert from the RCMP crime detection laboratory at Regina said the samples matched those taken from the head of the accused.

WAS SCRATCHED

An examination of Brage after the murder revealed he had an abrasion on his forehead and a scratch on his shin.

The Crown suggested the injuries could have been sustained in a fight with the murdered woman.

Mr. Justice Wilson said the hairs could have been torn from the accused's head or they could have been inserted in the girl's hand after death or she could have picked them up from something she touched.

Miss Budde was killed by a severe blow to the head which shattered her skull. No murder weapon has been found.

VANCOUVER (CP)—The Civic Reform Association Friday demanded that Premier Bennett dismiss the Public Utilities Commission "and appoint a new commission which would include a representative of labor."

VANCOUVER (CP)—International Woodworkers of America officials said Friday night B.C. members have approved a monthly assessment of $1 a member to help striking Newfoundland loggers and an initial cheque of $60,000 will be sent next week.

VANCOUVER (CP) — Robert Nunn, 33, was sentenced to one year in jail Friday on a charge of keeping a bawdy house in mid-town Vancouver. Police said three children were found in the premises. He was remanded together with a second man and woman on other charges resulting from a police raid on the house.

PENTICTON (CP)—Directors of the Penticton Peach Festival have decided to re-introduce a rodeo event in this year's festival. As in early festivals, the event will include saddle bronc riding, bull riding, calf-roping and bulldogging.

VANCOUVER (CP)—Former stock salesman Albert Hugh Walter, 52, was sentenced to one year Friday after pleading guilty to eight charges of theft involving a total of $10,662. Crown counsel Bruce Harvey said Walter lived on money turned over to him by investors after the firm for which he worked went out of business.

SPRINGTIME BEAUTY—Bright-eyed Nancy Olson holds up the prettiest yellow crocus she could find on the lawn below the National War Memorial. There are some 1,000,000 of the little white, yellow, pink and mauve flowers massed in beds throughout Ottawa. Nancy is the four-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Olsen of Ottawa. —CP photo.

MOVIE COLUMN

Lloyd Bridges happy 'wet' or 'dry'

By BOB THOMAS

HOLLYWOOD (AP) — Fannie Brice once said of Esther Williams: "Wet, she's a star; dry, she ain't." The same cannot be applied to Lloyd Bridges.

He was a noted actor in his own right before going under the briny in the successful TV series, "Sea Hunt." And since strapping on his aqua-lung, his career has boomed.

"Artistic satisfaction? No, that is lacking. But fortunately, I am able to get it by doing other things when I'm not doing "Sea Hunt."

USES TALENTS

The "other things" are TV dramas, films and plays which make more use of his acting talents than the water-soaked TV show. For instance, this summer he is touring in the big musical tents as Sky Masterson in "Guys and Dolls."

Can he sing? "I don't know; I haven't really tried."

Last year, he did "The Goddess" in his hiatus from "Sea Hunt." So far, he hasn't found a satisfactory script for a 1959 movie—"the nice part about having a series is that you don't have to take just anything that comes along."

GOING STRONG

It appears that he will enjoy such independence for some time. Sea Hunt is going into the last part of its second year of films, and the producers foresee a five-or six-year run. The show has been a smashing success in syndication, yet the networks passed it up.

"I guess they were all wrapped up in westerns," Bridges observed.

The public has shown it is interested in adventure under the water as well as on the plains. Bridges reported that the show originally spent only one-fourth of the running swimming time in diving sequences. Now the average is three-quarters.

Peace project on schedule

VICTORIA (CP) — The Peace River hydro-electric development by Wenner-Gren interests will definitely go ahead despite reports to the contrary, says Premier Bennett of British Columbia.

He said Thursday a report in the Wall Street Journal was based on supposition and guesswork.

The report suggested the scheme had been promted only to strengthen B.C.'s position in negotiations with the United States over development of the Columbia River.

The premier commented as he announced a federal-provincial committee has been set up to present a united position to the United States on the Columbia.

"Everything's on schedule," he said. "Just because someone comes out and writes an article doesn't change things."

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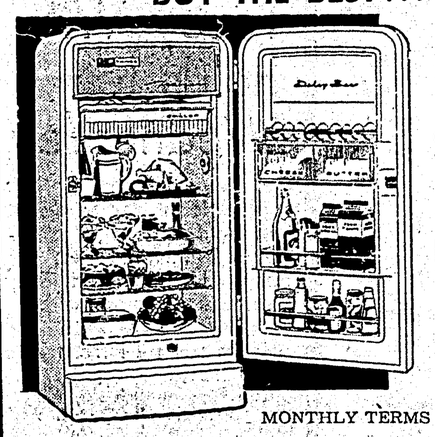

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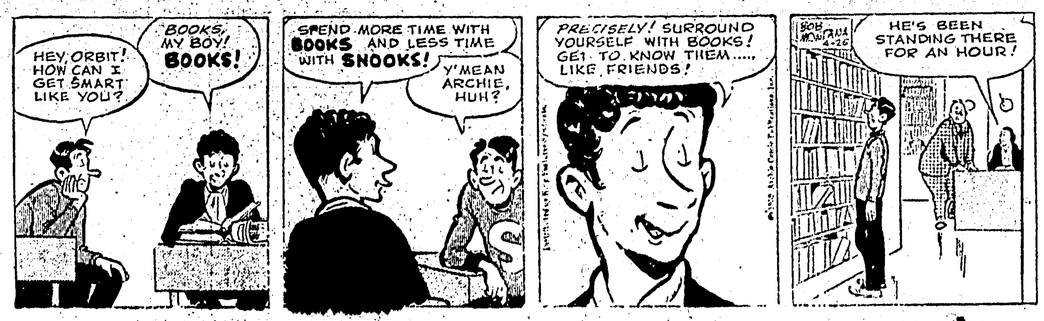

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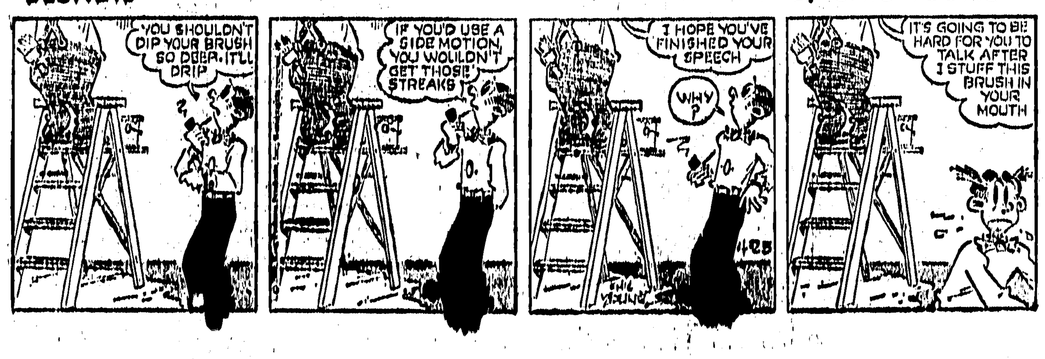
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