THE CHARLOTTE NEWS

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An Epitaph For Eugene Talmadge

THERE will be those, in Georgia and elsewhere, who will celebrate the passing of Gene Talmadge with unashamed pleasure, looking upon it as a welcome act of God. But along the clay roads, in the pine barrens and the red hills and the beautiful, lost country on the edge of the great swamps, there will be thousands to mourn him.

These were, in his own phrase, Gene's people—small farmers and cotton-mill hands and tenants and cross-roads merchants mostly, all those who work hard and live miserably and were entitled to a place in a great fraternity that permitted them to wear proudly the identifying badge of a white skin. There are others, of course, who will also find passing cause for regret in Talmadge's death—rich, well-placed Georgians who found the hot-eyed little man an excellent safeguard for a profitable *status quo*. But theirs was a cynical relationship; and they know, with the wisdom of their kind, that there will always be another, touched with the same perverse genius, when they need him.

The politicians will gather at Gene Talmadge's grave today to pass the conventional, empty phrases reserved for the dead, and to measure each other for the coming struggle for political power. This is comedy, but it serves only as a counterpoint for the silent, sincere grief in the back country.

Old Gene, the faithful will remember, gave them a lot. He made them laugh, snapping his red galluses, planting cotton on the lawn of the Governor's mansion, ridiculing the city folks everywhere he went and getting the best of them every time. He gave them a race to hate, somebody to feel superior to when they were troubled by intimations of their own degradation. He gave them an enemy, an alien, half-understood threat against a way of life that, whatever else it is, is peculiarly theirs. He gave them an excuse for their own failures. And above all he gave them hope—cotton and tobacco prices would go up, there'd be a shorter working day in the turpentine camps, pavement would replace the clay on the roads. There was always a great day coming as soon as Ole Gene could run them damn' politicians out of Atlanta.

They believed in Gene Talmadge, and no evidence of betrayal, of personal corruption, of national contempt could shake their faith. And they have lost something, those Georgians, something as real in their fancy as it was false in fact.

A Cheap And Childish Trick

AFTERTHOUGHTS are usually of doubtful value, but we have in the past few days been troubled by a set, and we present them here for what they are worth.

We have been pondering a column written by Drew Pearson and published on this page on Friday. It seems to us, upon reflection, that in it Mr. Pearson violated every ethical principle of our trade. We published it, of course, and therefore our guilt is equal to his, lessened only theoretically by the fact that our defection resulted from an involuntary lapse of judgment while his was deliberate.

We refer to the column in which he reported in some detail the speeches made by political leaders at the annual Gridiron Club banquet in Washington, and quoted verbatim passages from an address delivered by President Truman. These speeches were off the record, placed there not by the politicians who delivered them but by the practicing newspapermen who make up the Gridiron Club. By long tradition, the Club guarantees, not only on behalf of its membership but on behalf of the press as a whole, that its guests may let down their hair without fear of finding their remarks later quoted, directly or indirectly, in any newspaper. It's a privilege, in its way, conferred in return for the Gridiron's own license to lampoon the nation's great in its traditional skits.

We assume that Mr. Pearson is not a member of the club and was not present at the banquet, and that he therefore considers himself not bound by the restrictions accepted by the membership. But this, it seems to us, is an entirely false assumption.

Mr. Pearson performs a valuable function when he ferrets out what can properly be classified as public information which public officials, for purposes of their own, seek to conceal. He displays a rare skill in this art, and has had more than his share of authentic scoops. But this column could not, by any stretch of imagination, be classified as a triumph of fearless reporting. Mr. Pearson simply conveyed information in the possession of every newspaperman in Washington, and its exclusive only because the others refused to violate an accepted ethical code. He penetrated no screen of official secrecy; he only took advantage of the good nature of one of his friends, probably a member of his own profession.

All in all, this seems to us a cheap and childish trick, and we herewith apologize to all concerned for our part in it. Even professional gossips, we believe, should have some standards.

A Visitor A Giftie Gies Us

AS part of our editorial effort to keep on the side of the angels it is our custom to measure our lives against Utopia. This naturally leads us frequently into invidious comparisons, and we occasionally wonder if we are not finally succumbing to the virus of cynicism, an occupational disease of our craft usually accompanied by stomach ulcers.

It is with a feeling of relief, therefore, that we are currently presenting elsewhere in THE NEWS an antidote for our gloomy observations—a series of articles by Katherine Lawrence, a talented and perceptive Englishwoman. Miss Lawrence comes bearing that gift another subject of the crown, Robert Burns, sighed after; but she also exercises the full measure of tact expected of a visitor.

Charlotte, to Miss Lawrence, is a place of endless wonders. While we meditate bitterly in these columns upon the traffic that clutters our antiquated streets, Miss Lawrence notes the "long avenues, radiating as straight as wheel-spokes from the shopping center, opening up clear, wide vistas that are as refreshing as they are informative." We bemoan the lack of point and purpose in our growth, and Miss Lawrence sees Charlotte as "an architect's dream of garden-city planning." We peer through the smog trying to take a bearing on the Mayor's smoke-belching chimney, and Miss Lawrence sets out for a brisk walk "on a crisp November morning with a patina of sunshine lying over (the) white-painted houses."

Even after making broad allowances for differences in point of view and taking into account our own memories of an England spent and shattered after the war, we were left with the suspicion that Miss Lawrence had some other city in mind, Xanadu possibly. Then, as she continued her explorations, we came upon this:

> What a fine court of justice you have here. I wandered into its rooms yesterday in search of another facet of American character and was astonished to find how much business is done there.
>
> That's our town, ma'am, that's the Charlotte we know. After all these years, we too are astonished at the amount of business conducted at the courthouse. Astonished and appalled.

Another Voice

Of Alley Cats And Yawls

ALL sorts of ruses have been resorted to by desperate persons in search of shelter these last few years, but not many have shown the originality of the father who inserted the following in a Trenton, N. J., paper:

"My 2-year-old daughter cannot tolerate her in-laws. Require two-bedroom apartment or house for the child, wife and me, plus three white mice, Arizona chameleon, four dogs, refined alley cat and an uncaged canary. Noisy and inveterate drinkers. We entertain constantly and have no regard for neighbors."

In reverse order, there was the recent advertisement in the remarkable "Personals" column of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, where someone was offering a house for sale. The ad ran as follows:

"Words wanted to describe more poetically my cottage of 3 rooms and bathroom on 3 acres of hillside, with flowers and fruit trees, also the stone studio building and the workshop. For lack of words I shall probably have to sell the place for $7,000. Wrapped in the language of romance, it would probably bring much more."

And in the same publication there was another effort to dispose of real estate, worded thus:

"Somebody wants worse than I do, a beautiful building plot on Fire Island, with white sand up to here. 80x85 feet. Ocean front. Far enough from the town to be private, close enough to avoid isolation from supplies. $3,500, because that's how much the yawl costs that I'd rather have."

All of which indicates that a lot of ingenuity is being expended nowadays in efforts both to secure and to sell real estate. When everything from refined alley cats to much-desired yawls is being brought into the picture, you are at liberty to conclude that the going is tough.—*Richmond Times-Dispatch.*

"You ought to see the fiction we don't print," says a well-known publisher, in apology. Some, we hear, is so bad it is entirely rewritten before it is rejected.

The British action in censoring ads for "The Outlaw" which reveal Jane Russell toting a gun will dumfound many on this side. They don't remember noticing a gun.

Proposals to chop taxes right and left are deplored by sundry economists. However, in the first flush of victory, the G.O.P. chiefs feel that Heaven can't wait.

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'One At A Time, Kiddies—One At A Time, Dammit!'

People's Platform

From The Dry Side

MONROE

Editors, THE NEWS:

REPRESENTATIVE J. B. VOGLER of Mecklenburg County is to be commended for his loyalty to his constituents in the entire county in opposing a proposed legislative act in the next North Carolina Assembly which would give the citizens of Charlotte, or Charlotte township, the exclusive right to vote for liquor stores for Charlotte, prohibiting the rest of the Mecklenburg citizens from having a voice in the election which would affect the whole county. Is this democracy—or demagoguery—to give special privileges?

Would ABC stores in Charlotte eliminate bootlegging? In Kinston's ABC area in Lenoir County, this month, following intensive undercover activity for weeks, arrests of 50 bootleggers were made.

Another proposed statewide bill in the next Assembly, to be introduced by a Buncombe County Representative, would give North Carolina cities of 50,000 population or more the special privilege of voting for liquor stores in those cities, barring the remaining citizens in those counties from any voice in the election affecting the entire county. Is Government for the people, by the people, and of the people, or for privileged city dwellers? Is this democracy or demagoguery?

Will the majority of the people of North Carolina, who once voted against returning liquor to the state, be betrayed again by another Legislature by giving part of the people instead of all the people the right to vote in liquor store elections?

Senator Clyde R. Hoey has said: "You will never build either a great state or a great county upon profits derived from the sale of liquor."

—INEZ FLOW.

CHARLOTTE

Editors, THE NEWS:

CONGRATULATIONS to Miss Flow from Monroe. From time to time I have read the writings of Miss Inez Flow. If we only had millions of women like her who will stand up for the good of humanity. One who will stand against things she knows to be against humanity.

Christmas is nearly here and I hate to think of the thousands who think they have to have liquor so they can celebrate our blessed Lord's birthday. When I think what this kind of celebration means to the people, how they are to be called on to give up their freedom, have to lie in a hospital for months and maybe until death, it makes me quake. The thing about it is it is not our very own it will be someone's loved ones. How anyone can advocate anything that causes as many deaths, wrecks, orphan children, divorces, and the downfall of our young people, I can't see.

Burke Davis told us through your paper if we would vote ABC stores in they would fly planes and stop the bootleggers. Wish I had a dollar for every don't try to stop the bootleggers, I begin to think that most of the stuff they use comes from wet S. C. Guess they don't have to get under cover to make much of it. When liquor was voted in S. C. oh! they were going to do away with the bootleggers but they surely haven't.

Congress keeps on harping about liquor laws. The good people don't want liquor or liquor laws. They want local option and a chance to get rid of liquor and beer.

Listen, wets, how would you like to be in Tom Brown's place this Christmas, or his poor heart-broken wife's either? Do you think that poor woman had rather have her boy back and a sober husband or all the revenue S. C. gets. This thing is going to happen in many of our homes or something similar. Then, Mr. Wet, you will know how it feels.

I like your paper all but the writeups holding up for strong drink.

—SIGNATURE WITHHELD.

CHARLOTTE

Editors, THE NEWS:

AFTER reading the letter of Peggy Wallace (Miss or Mrs.) in your Wednesday's issue. I feel impelled to reason a bit with Peggy.

Peggy, I did not see Mr. Huff's letter therefore I have no comments on the goody-good people to whom you refer. You may be right or you may be wrong.

Now you say, quote, I think that if a person were going to drink he would rather purchase it legally and drink it as he desired and let the city reap the revenues and improve the schools, etc., instead of buying it from a bootlegger—gulping it down all at once—thus getting drunk and also helping the bootlegger get rich—but quick. End quote.

Since the revenues are interesting, especially if they come out of the other fellow's pocket, why not be logical and get all out of it we can for school improvements, etc.? Why not let's have the state or city operate the legal sales places. We could make a profit on the sale and have the tax besides. That would be fine. Why let a private party operate the sales place when the state and city needs every cent it can get. And since gulping it down all at once. (This is, boiling stuff) is what makes people drunk. I infer that drinkers of legal liquor are practically all moderate therefore there is very little drunkenness in states that sell it legally. But they do have a liquor problem, whatever it is. Witness our neighbor, South Carolina.

Now about human nature wanting that which is hard to get. That is a old stock in trade argument. Liquor drinking has been a problem for hundreds of years. Wonder someone hasn't solved this simple problem by ridding it of all the restraint—just sell it in grocery stores or anywhere, like beer. The consumption of beer has just about dwindled down to nothing, or has it? Maybe if we had a barrel on each corner, just free, all drunkenness would disappear and our officers would not have to arrest drunks as there would be none. Therefore drunken drivers would disappear and there would be no whisky cases in the courts. That would be quite a saving. And the Keely cures would close up, Alcoholics Anonymous would be a thing of the past, and peace would reign. We would not be bothered again with what Raskob called "That D— affliction of prohibition."

Well Peggy, let's see what happens when we get good old legal stuff in Charlotte. Maybe Mr. Davis could help us on this.

—R. C. BOLEN.

Vampires?

GAFFNEY, S. C.

Editors, THE NEWS:

NOW, when the Bond & Share vampires are being broken up, it seems to me a good time to break up the Commonwealth & Southern. The Carolina Power & Light, Georgia Power, Alabama Power, and Mississippi Power should be independent companies and forced to sell power and lights at the same rate as the TVA, which we all know is a profitable rate.

—J. J. LITTLEJOHN.

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round: Vets' Mail Tells Pitiful Housing Story

WASHINGTON

THE hundreds of letters sent every day to the White House do not, of course, reach the President. Except for letters from actual friends or very important people, he never sees his mail. Letters from others are sorted out and sent to appropriate branches of the Government for routine replies.

If, however, President Truman should take time to read some of the letters that pour in to him from veterans on their terrible housing plight, he probably would think twice about his pollyanna statement that all was going to be well in regard to housing.

In fact, if the President read some of the veterans' mail received by this writer, he might come to the conclusion that the White House surrender on housing would be chalked up as his major humanitarian, if not political, mistake.

Whether a political mistake or not, however, the human emotions expressed in some of the housing letters received at this Christmas season are such that I am publishing excerpts from two of them. One is from the chief housing manager of Louisville, Ky., Marshall F. Dumeyer, who writes:

"Unashamed tears come from war heroes. Fear of divorce is routine during interviews. 'Where can I go?' 'What can I do?'

"Serious? Yes. Urgent? Yes. Pitiful? Yes. Yet we could not help most of them because of more serious, more urgent and more pitiful situations. I refer above only to families with children or where a child is expected within a short time. We have placed no childless families or nonexpectant families with the exception of a completely paralyzed veteran and his wife.

"We did reach the vet with two children and an immediately expectant wife who were living in an abandoned contractor's shack, the family of three in a garage, the family who wore overshoes at all times since they could not keep water off the concrete floor of the basement in which they lived, and the vet, wife and infant existing in a one-room planetarium with walls and roof formed entirely by 27 loose-fitting glass windows.

"'I wish I'd stopped a Jap slug on Iwo.' The ex-Marine wasn't kidding. His mouth spoke but his heart underlined each word.

"'What can we do?' 'What can we do?' 'Where can we go?' 'Where can we go?' 'What can we do?' These are the questions we are asked over and over again, and we cannot give the answers."

Chronic State Dept. Denial

Chronological events involving a chronic State Department habit:

Sunday, Dec. 15—This commentator stated that U. S. Ambassador George Messersmith had been ordered to Washington from Argentina for "consultations" which meant a showdown over future U. S. policy toward Dictator Peron.

Monday, Dec. 16—State Department career boys poohpoohed this. Ambassador Messersmith, they admitted, was coming back, but only to see his doctor. His trip had absolutely nothing to do with any discussion of Argentine-U. S. policy.

Wednesday, Dec. 18—Forthright Secretary of State Byrnes, back from New York, confirmed the fact that Messersmith had been ordered home for a full-dress review of U. S. policy. His trip, said Byrnes, had nothing to do with his doctor.

Note—When a newspaperman makes a mistake, it's called a chronic lie. When a U. S. diplomat issues a diplomatic denial, it's only a chronic habit.

South American Hitler?

ACTUALLY, the showdown with Ambassador Messersmith is much more important than any squabble over State Department veracity, or over the personalities of Messersmith and his superior, Assistant Secretary of State Braden. It goes to the root of whether the United States is to co-operate with the only Fascist-minded nation in the Western Hemisphere which has consistently failed to carry out its pledges regarding Axis agents.

Messersmith, who had an excellent record in Europe as the first U. S. diplomat to raise the red flag against Hitler, now has become an embodiment of Peron. His confidential cables to the State Department surround the Argentine dictator with angelic halos.

Recently, N. Y. Times Reporter Frank Kluckhohn was picked up by the Buenos Aires police, who took away his foreign correspondent credentials and put him through the usual Peron system of intimidation. Ambassador Messersmith, whose job it is to protect American citizens, even when they happen to be critical newsmen, reported the incident to the State Department with this comment:

"This action was not important and of no significance."

Meanwhile the State Department has learned that the Argentine Government is withholding meat and wheat from Bolivia and Uruguay in order to crack the anti-Peron regimes in those two countries.

When Ambassador Messersmith returns, therefore, the State Department faces a major showdown as to whether it will play ball with the new dictator of Argentina, or whether it will nip the embryo menace which Messersmith saw so correctly reported was springing up in Germany and Austria.

Marquis Childs

Pollyannaish Report

NEW YORK

THERE is something very Pollyannaish in the report of the President's Council of Economic Advisers; it foresees only a slight, temporary dip next year. To be sure, there is plenty of hedging; for the report says in places that things will be very good unless they are very bad, and that we will certainly go forward unless we go backward, but the net is joy and hope abounding.

In this the report is at variance with the thinking of many private business economists, and with dozens of front-page stories in such papers as the Wall Street Journal and the New York Journal of Commerce, which have warned of retail cutbacks ahead, bothersome farm surpluses, etc. Most of this material is by-passed in the Council's report, and from it one gets the feeling that the Council thinks our problems are not economic, but psychological, and that if only everybody will be reasonable, we can have a hell of a year.

BE REASONABLE

Of course, the Council thinks that everybody ought to be reasonable, business ought to be reasonable, labor ought to be reasonable, farmers ought to be reasonable, and bankers, too.

Poor Mr. Truman, however, trying to give the press, in conference assembled, a gloss of the report, dropped most of this out, and put it all on the solitary ground that labor ought to be reasonable. And here we wind up with the most oversimplified of all possible analyses of our problems; for the Council's report, sifted through the President's comments, then compacted into a newspaper headline, winds up as the bare statement that next year will be a wonderful year if there are no strikes.

This comes very close to making labor a kind of national scapegoat, in advance, for anything bad that may happen to us during the coming year; and there is, in the way the White House is handling this material, that certain air of the avoidance of reality which usually goes with the scapegoat approach. When one realizes how vigorously, and in what a blatantly unqualified form, the line is being pounded this country and only this, no other difficulties, stand between us and prosperity, the effect is almost shocking, as it always is when one group in the community is singled out as the source and fountain head of evil. And I ask to be believed that I am not writing this as a routine pro-labor piece, but as a warning against a national drift into fantasy, a national movement away from facing reality, that goddess with the bright embarrassing eyes.

OTHER PROBLEMS

For while strikes could certainly spoil our prosperity, as rain can always spoil a fine day, and while there have been some stupid ones, we do face top-level problems with which strikes have very little to do. Department stores, worried about a dip, have been conducting sales, and cutting prices, in a way that is unprecedented before Christmas; they have put brakes on buying; they are concerned about overproduction and overstocking, not about underproduction, and the strike problem cannot be linked with this situation. A downward drift has set in for farm prices; farm economists are warning that a 25 per cent decline will catch many a farmer broke and naked with his mortgages, and, again, strikes and labor have nothing at all to do with this.

These are but samples; the list could be made a yard long; and to focus attention on strikes alone is to split our community, and, in a dose of unreality, to stir and mobilize resentments against objects to which they do not properly apply.

DANGEROUS GAME

It is a dangerous game; and the most horrifying aspect is the implied confession on the part of him who plays it that he has given up trying to maintain a grip on total reality.

He sinks into the glib formulation with the kind of surrendering sigh with which one settles into the downy bed, or the warm, consoling tub.

Harold Ickes

Mr. Dewey's Tactics

WASHINGTON

IN HIS immoderate craving for the Presidency of these United States, Thomas E. Dewey is fishing in the troubled waters of the House of Representatives. Some Republican Congressmen who have just been elected are fearful of being "purged" if they do not yield to the demands of this extremely ambitious man. They are too well acquainted with Mr. Dewey's political methods in New York not to see some implications in the solicitations to which they are being subjected to vote for Mr. Dewey's candidate for majority leader. Threats, some veiled and some not so veiled, are being brought about with the same recklessness that marked the Pendergast or Vare machines.

FIGHT WAXES HOT

The Dewey candidate for the Republican floor leadership of the House is Congressman Halleck of Indiana—a typical flower of Indiana Republicanism—for whom big money and big business have shown an attraction that they had for the late Harry L. Hopkins. The fight is already hot one. By some foul tactics by the Dewey forces, Mr. Halleck was seeded in the Republican Congressional Committee as chairman of the Finance Committee. In the ordinary course of events, Congressmen apply to this committee for campaign funds and usually they get whatever may be available with no strings attached. In the past, they have felt that they owed their allegiance to the party and not to any particular man.

However, when Mr. Halleck was in command of the Finance Committee things were different. Regardless of the source of the Republican money, whether it came from avowed Deweyites or from those opposed to the spic-and-span candidate, Mr. Halleck and his friends made a point of letting each Congressional candidate who got any substantial amount of money from this committee know that he was personally indebted to Mr. Halleck who, so eagerly, wants to atone to Mr. Dewey for his temporary aberration when he was a supporter of the late Wendell Willkie.

Now, Mr. Halleck and the Dewey cohorts are already demanding payment from those Congressmen who received funds from the committee. These men are being told that, in gratitude, they should vote for Mr. Halleck for the House floor leadership when the Republican Representatives meet on Jan. 2. Certainly a great many of those who contributed to the Republican Congressional Committee had no desire to further the interests either of Mr. Halleck or of Mr. Dewey.

UNDER PRESSURE

Furthermore, the pressures that are being brought to bear have given many a Congressman the fear that, unless he votes "right" on the floor leadership, he will be stripped of committee assignments or at least stricken from the list of those to be favored with good committee assignments or with funds in the next campaign.

Mr. Halleck, of course, denies that he is fronting for the Dewey machine. The fact that he has the votes of the New York Republican delegation in his pocket, he attempts to explain as a mere "coincidence". One could hardly expect a bigger or better "coincidence" to occur.

Among those who are assisting in Mr. Dewey's political tour de force in addition to Mr. Halleck, is John Joseph N. Pew, the Pennsylvania Republican leader who hops about on one foot, while keeping the other in his mouth. Mr. Pew has instructed the 23 Republican Congressmen from his state that they are to cast their ballots for Mr. Halleck. This has occasioned some eyebrow lifting among the Mellon-Grundy forces headed by Governor and now Senator-elect Martin, who were unaware that Mr. Pew included the Republican Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation among his many vassals.

The importance of a Dewey floor leader in the House cannot be minimized. Mr. Dewey needs to gain public acclaim in order to secure the nomination for President. This is clear. Accordingly, he must build himself up in the eyes of the people, and, what is just as important, he must depreciate the campaigns of other Republican possibilities, actual or potential.

KNIFING TACTICS

Since most of these other Republican aspirants—Taft, Vandenberg, Bricker, Saltonstall, Brewster—are members of the Senate, and, therefore, untouchable, about all that can be done is to sabotage any program that any one of them may happen to wangle through the Senate. And what better place to stick a knife in such a program than a House whose floor leadership is in the hands of a Dewey front?

The people expect the 80th Congress to legislate for the nation. They did not elect it for the purpose of nominating a President.