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An Excellent Start

Noteworthy among the things for which we may be thankful is the magnificent highway traffic record set by the Province during the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Meanwhile in the United States the National Safety Council has had occasion to report New Year's week-end highway accidents as having reached the proportions of a national disaster.

In no spirit of complacency, let us hope that in this little Province of Canada we may continue to set an example that will spark the movement which the Safety Council has in mind.

More Useful Than Annoying

Neither the English sparrow nor the starling is accorded any great measure of affection. And there is no denying that there are times when both species make nuisances of themselves.

During the fledgling period a mother starling, assisted at times by her consort, feeds her young about 350 destructive insects daily; the sparrow's record is even better, the number being in the vicinity of 500.

Important Events

Probably no two persons would agree on any specific list of the most outstanding events in 1954 from the standpoint of the year's overall contribution to the welfare of mankind.

1. The announcement on March 31 by the chairman of the United States Atomic Energy Commission that it is quite possible to build an H-bomb capable of destroying any city on earth.

This should be of much assistance to European security which, in its turn, is vital to world peace; 5. The ending of the Indo-China war on Aug. 11. While the peace that followed is far from satisfactory, it did help, for the time being at least, in keeping a regional conflict from developing into world war; 6. Britain's pledge (Sept. 29) to maintain troops permanently on the continent of Europe in the event of France's consenting to plans for West German rearmament.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Week of Prayer.

That we are making progress educationally is indicated in the excellent review of 1954 activities appearing in yesterday's issue.

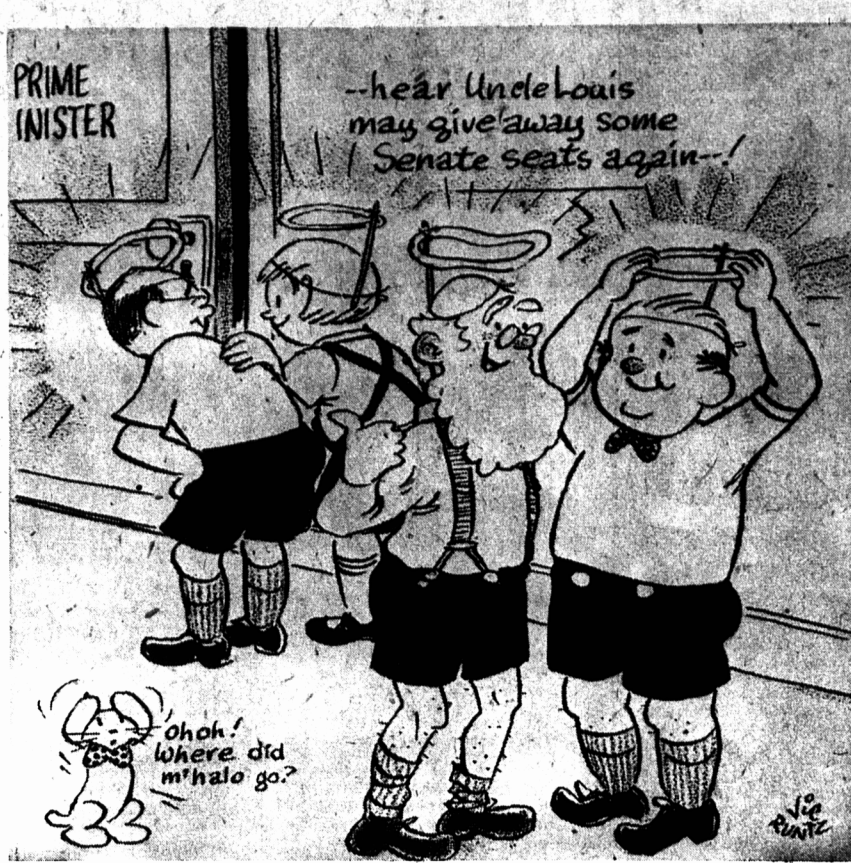
There is good reason for the satisfaction expressed by Hon. Dougald MacKinnon, Minister of Public Works and Highways, in the progress made in his department last year.

The Nuffield Foundation is to set aside £250,000 for the benefit of the new Colonial University Colleges. From this capital sum the University College, Ibadan, Nigeria, and the University College of the West Indies, Jamaica, are to receive grants of £50,000 each.

The present aggregate strength of the American Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines is 3,218,000, a figure which means, according to the Globe and Mail, that with not quite eleven times Canada's population the United States has nearly thirty times as many men under arms.

Joseph Jacques Cesaire Joffre, French soldier, was born this date 1852, died this date 1931. He joined the army during the Franco-Prussian war, served in various colonial expeditions, one of which he records in "My March to Timbuctoo."

Who would want to take chances on being elected to the House of Commons when he could look forward to sitting in the House of Lords as a peer of the realm? Anthony Wedgewood Benn, British Labour member and heir to Viscount Stansgate, for one.



It Pays To Be Good Even After Christmas

PUBLIC FORUM

This column is open to the discussion by correspondents of questions of interest. The Guardian does not necessarily endorse the opinion of correspondents.

READING TROUBLE

Sir:—Dr. Fleesch's article on reading (Maclean's, Jan. 1, 1955) corroborates the findings of his counterpart, Howard Whitman, on the American side of the border.

That objection to the phonic method was answered by an American teacher during the Whitman survey. She says: "Of the one-syllable words, the ones with which the children learn to read only thirty-eight per thousand are not absolutely phonetic."

The exaggerated importance attached to library circulation figures is laughable. Some children take books out of the library and get either their father, or mother, to read for them.

Some time ago the United Nations General Assembly passed a mild resolution urging the Netherlands to resume negotiations with the Indonesian government. It is considered unlikely that the resolution will be complied with, since the Dutch maintain that Indonesia's demand that they get out at once leaves no room for negotiation.

Progressivists are very analytic. According to them there are two types of reading: "recreatory" and "work-type". Dr. Neatby says: "Literature apparently is recreatory and children must not be bothered too much about knowing what is in it... With children there are a real danger, that literature be recreatory, will be read casually without adequate attention to content."

As to the scientific comparative test made in Nebraska between 5000 children in grades 3 to 8, taught phonetically in 1921, and the same number of children in the same grades taught by the word-method in 1947, I would say that it is not conclusive. The test does not take into consideration the changes that an interval of 26 years could produce in the elements that exercise indirect influence on a child's reading potential.

Whitman of Collier's cites a much more conclusive test: A director of curriculum in one city stated that "on the basis of standardized tests given to all students from grade one through grade twelve 72 per cent of the pupils were found to be inadequate readers. They were following the word-recognition method."

And again according to the same magazine article: An average Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky, experimented with its first graders, adopting a reading technique which put phonics first. The school's five first-grade classes finished their year with an average reading proficiency four months ahead of the national norm, and a third of the pupils were a full year ahead.

Progress may require "constant experimentation." But surely there must be limits even to experimentation. A method that has been proved so conclusively to be a monumental fiasco, a method that is bringing frustration to millions of tomorrow's citizens all across the North American continent, should be thrown out without delay.

Iran: New Trouble Spot

By Heath Macquarrie

The United Nations has been faced with many problems growing out of colonialism, and the protests of the Greek government over Cyprus and the Arab complaints about French control in North Africa are still troubling the international scene.

On the other hand the United States regards the Netherlands as a faithful ally and willing participant in the various schemes of European unity which Washington so strongly supports. To divest the Dutch of the last remnant of their former East Indian Empire is not regarded as a friendly move.

Research On Eskimos By Walter Gray Ability of the Eskimo to handle metal objects in sub-zero weather is under study by scientists of the defence research northern laboratory at this Hudson bay military base.

Research is being carried out by Mace Coffey, head of the operational research section and Charles Eagan of Tottenham, Ont., biophysicist. Information gained would be of tremendous value to the military forces in the handling of equipment by their men in Arctic weather.

Mr. Egan said in an interview that tests showed the Eskimo could hold for several seconds a metal object while the temperature hovered between 35 and 40 below, with a wind blowing from 35 to 40 miles an hour.

Ten soldiers were brought to Fort Churchill recently to act as "guinea pigs" in this and other experiments. Preliminary tests have been carried out on two Eskimos during the last two years.

Col. W. E. Bawden of Toronto, acting commander of Fort Churchill, said 10 Eskimos are employed at the military base.

"They are the best type of labor you can get," he said. They are mechanically inclined and can use tools with very little instruction. The Eskimo workers are paid the same wages as any other civilian employee, he said.

"The Eskimos to date have not learned our bad habits—like laziness," said Col. Bawden.

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NOTES BY THE WAY

Wire firms are being charged with fixing prices. In Henry's day, wire was used for fixing floors. —Chatham News.

Sir Anthony Eden says that there is no reason to consider that the Soviet threat has diminished. May be so, but there is reason to believe that the threat is more economic than military. To meet it properly, action should be taken at least as much in the economic and social field, as in the military. —Ottawa Citizen.

The 500th anniversary of Amerigo Vespucci's birth at the year-end is being marked by issuance of two commemorative stamps in Italy. This may seem like a small thing, but Amerigo's shade will have no cause to feel slighted. Through a map-maker's error the hemisphere Columbus rediscovered bears Amerigo's name. Fortune hardly could do more than that, to ensure an otherwise obscure man's immortality. At this stage the two stamps would seem to be sufficient remembrance. —Windsor Star.

According to German researchers, those who live in houses without elevators and who regularly climb flights of stairs may consider themselves as well-trained athletes. Ordinary walking burns up 2,100 calories per minute, ploughing uses twice as many, bicycling requires 6,300, and digging ditches in loamy soil about 7,500 calories per minute. But climbing stairs uses more than 15,000 calories per minute and even more if the climber carries a load. No wonder we have an automatic aversion to stairs. —Brandon Sun.

Bipartisanship is more a state of mind than a system. We have a tradition of bipartisan co-operation in foreign affairs which we should strengthen in the two years ahead. It is an honorable tradition as well as a useful one. But it can be destroyed as easily by expecting too little. While the political shot and shell fly during the next two years Democrats and Republicans should both work hard at keeping this small area of constructive neutrality intact. —Boston Herald.

A British colonel who came to Canada 2 1/2 years ago, and hoped to renew acquaintances with a Canadian "Col. Wilson" he knew in wartime, got into a familiar human predicament. He didn't know his lost friend's first name, for the reason he never asked it, having been content to address him as "Colonel." Some of us have this difficulty in reverse. We know a man for years as "Joe," or "Bill," without ever having learned his surname. Even if we get curious about it, we hesitate to ask the man himself, since there seems to be no excuse for this ignorance. But once the British colonel got his problem before the public, through the newspapers, it was solved quickly enough. The two colonels have made contact again. It's a small world after all. —Windsor Daily Star.

THE POOL'S CORNER FROM SNOW In the gloom of whiteness, In the great silence of snow, A child was sighing And bitterly saying: 'Oh, They have killed a white bird up there on her nest, The down is fluttering from her breast!' And still it fell through that dusky brightness On the child crying for the bird of the snow. —Edward Thomas.

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