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Wednesday, December 28, 1949

Sesqui Contracts

There is now an imperative need for a meeting of the full Sesquicentennial Commission to examine all the arrangements and agreements that have been made in connection with the forthcoming Freedom Fair. It is apparent that some serious irregularities have been projected in the commission's name. They threaten to taint the whole undertaking-which would be an immeasurable misfortune for the Capital. A careful review by the commission of all that has been done to date is the best corrective. And a policy of operating henceforth entirely in the open will provide the best possible protection against any future errors of this kind.

It has now been disclosed that a New York advertising firm whose vice president resigned last week as director of designs and exhibits for the Sesquicentennial had been given a "letter of intent" for the over-all design supervision of Federal exhibits at the fair. And a member of the corporation which has been given exclusive authority to lease the 12 million dollars of commercial exhibit space at the fair tried to arrange a "kickback" deal with a contractor for building construction contracts. His participation in the enterprise should also be ended forthwith. It is high time, in addition, may have been made respecting various aspects of Sesquicentennial business.

This scrutiny can best be conducted, we think, by the Sesquicentennial Commission itself, rather than, as has been suggested. by a congressional committee or by the Department of Justice. The commission is composed of outstanding and completely trustworthy persons, including President Truman, eight members of Congress and six distinguished citizens of the District. The haste with which preparations for the great exhibition had to be begun has undoubtedly been the principal cause of the carelessness disclosed. The commission can be confidently counted on to do its own thorough cleaning and sweep out the phonies and shysters inevitably drawn to mammoth

shows of this kind. But it is essential that the commission get about this job without delay, fix responsibility for past lapses and give the public assurance that it will remain on guard against any more skulduggery. Membership on the commission has been until now largely honorific; and it is quite understandable that the members did not feel called upon to examine minutely every operating detail of the project. The existing situation makes it plain, however, that for the sake of their own reputations as well as for the sake of the Sesquicentennial itself they can no longer remain aloof. The public looks to them to keep the Freedom Fair free from grifters and grafters.

Trujillo's Threat

Dominican Dictator Trujillo does pretty much what he pleases, and it is no surprise that his Congress has "granted" him power to declare war on any nation harboring plotters against the Dominican Republic. Probably this is a bluff intended to impress Cuba, Guatemala and Costa Rica; but the not-so-gloved fist sets a bad precedent for peace in the Americas. Certainly it is a flagrant violation of the hemisphere treaties to which the Dominican Republic is pledged.

Several times in the past Trujillo has had legitimate grievances. In 1947 an unsuccessful invasionary expedition against Trujillo was organized in Cuba with the benevolent acquiescence of the Cuban government. Earlier this year the so-called Caribbean Legion launched a farcical aerial coup from Guatemala in which the Guatemalan government apparently was involved. Although the significance of these gestures was exaggerated, they warranted condemnation. Trujillo himself, of course, is no lily; the Foreign Policy Association notes that in 1946 a conspiracy of exiles against the Betancourt government in Venezuela was "openly supported by the hostile Trujillo regime."

Now Trujillo charges that another campaign is being readied with the aid of the Cuban Red Cross. Indications are that so far this is principally a propaganda effort. The fact is that many exiles and other persons in the Caribbean have a deep ideological hatred for Trujillo and his methods. This antipathy is understandable and harmless so long as it does not lead to actual to do with legality. It is simply that if even

violence. In any event Trujillo will not silence it by intimidation.

Where Trujillo does have a genuine complaint is in the Cuban failure to carry out fully the recommendation of the Inter-American Peace Commission for complete bilateral discussions on the recent conflict. But, as Secretary Acheson pointed out several weeks ago in reference to Trujillo's threat, adequate machinery exists for dealing with such differences. The important thing is to preserve the principle of peaceful settlement. Both the Cuban negligence and Trujillo's bluster demand some frank speaking by the Organization of American

Strengthening Congress
The great experiment in congressional reform that was launched about four years ago stopped at the halfway mark. Congress passed the Reorganization Act of 1946 and brought about some striking improvements in its committee structure, accentuated the practice of holding joint hearings, compelled lobbyists to register, expanded the legislative reference and bill-drafting services, and threw greater emphasis on the congressional function of overseeing the operations of the Government. More recently the House adopted a new "21-day rule" by which blockades in the Rules Committee can be broken. But Congress is still far from being the efficient policy-making body that the United States ought to have in these days of staggering national and international problems.

As a means of finishing the job, Robert Heller, chairman of the National Committee for Strengthening Congress, suggests the creation of a joint standing committee on congressional organization. The notable improvements made during the last few years are a direct result of the work done by the La Follette-Monroney Committee. Piecemeal reforms may be expected because of the unavoidable pressure of events. The Congress simply does not have time to work in the easygoing, inefficient manner of the past. But if its machinery is to be systematically improved, the task will have to be assigned to a special body with an expert staff which can give the subject careful attention over a long period.

The need for further reforms may be readily seen in the record of congressional performance over the last two years. Last summer the Senate got into the worst log jam in history. Congress has failed to develop anything useful out of the legislative budget provision that was included in the reforms of 1946. The heavy work load remains in spite of some improvements, as indicated by the fact that 44 percent of all the bills passed by the first session of the Eighty-first Congress were private bills. One of the most fruitful means of reducing the work to scrutinize very carefully all the other load—a reform given special emphasis by franchise and agency arrangements that the La Follette-Monroney Committee—is yet to be approved. Congress continues, as the Heller Committee points out, to act as a city council for the District of Columbia, wasting a vast amount of valuable time that ought to be given to its function as a national legislature. This is inexcusably shortsighted.

The committee finds that special attention should be given to the Senate. Its shabby performance this year is attributed to the three-week filibuster last March, to much irrelevant debate, to extensive absenteeism, and a "deliberate 'slowdown' of the legislative process in that body."

While plugging up one loophole in the cloture rule, the Senate stubbornly refused to make that rule a workable means of cutting off debate. It is still living in the past. The Heller Committee appropriately suggests that the standing rules of the Senate as a whole, which have not been revised since 1884, are in need of overhauling. In our opinion that body must be made to realize, through the force of public opinion, that its task is very different from what it was in the nineteenth century and that its machinery and procedures must be geared to its current responsibilities.

The Heller Committee lists five main improvements that should be sought in the congressional session that will begin in January. Creation of machinery for continuing improvement; better control of expenditures; modernized procedure in the Senate: increased party responsibility, and reduction of the work load. The importance of these reforms seems fully to justify the creation of a joint committee on organization, and certainly the committee should be permitted to operate long enough to do a thor-

Freedom Of The Ear

Any idea that streetcar and bus riders would quietly submit to transit radio should be dispelled by the formation of the new National Citizens' Committee Against Forced Reading and Forced Listening. The committee has gained support in New York, where commercial broadcasts at Grand Central Terminal have aroused spirited opposition. Despite the overgenerous approval of transit radio by the Public Utilities Commission here, the PUC and Capital Transit would make a mistake to conclude that the continuing opposition is merely the

fulminations of crackpots. Without indorsing the contentions of the citizens' committee, we think it encouraging that there apparently is to be a court test of transit radio. Nowhere does the Constitution spell out in so many words the right not to listen as a concomitant of freedom of speech. Nevertheless, privacy is an implicit right recognized by virtually all respectable legal opinion. Certainly if the right not to listen is supportable in this connection, it is violated by a commercial scheme which makes transit riders

a captive audience of guinea pigs. There are, of course, other grounds for objecting to transit radio, one of which is that this sort of exploitation was not envisioned in the Capital Transit franchise. But the best argument, we think, has nothing

objecticable, then the programs constitute bad public policy. If Capital Transit cannot avoid compelling patrons to listen against their will, the scheme ought to be abandoned

Tito Looks Westward

Marshal Tito seems determined to prove that his country can live and prosper without the slightest dependence on its former Communist allies. The signing of a five-year trade agreement with Britain is impressive evidence of the switch in the Yugoslav economy. The Soviet-dominated countries, under Cominform orders, thought they could crack a whip over Tito by virtually cutting off trade relations with him. His response has been to substitute trade relations with the West. The trade agreement with Britain covers an estimated 616 million dollars' worth of two-way trade over five years; it means that Yugoslavia can sell timber, metal and food products in exchange for British manufactures. But the British have driven a hard bargain, knowing how badly Tito needed the agreement. They have allowed Tito a banking credit of only eight million pounds, which is far less than he wanted or needed.

The United States can hardly make : comparable trade agreement, since Yugoslavia can sell little to us except strategic materials. But the United States can do a great deal more than heretofore to insure Yugoslavia's economic survival. We should use our undoubted power in Western Germany to enlarge the wholly inadequate agreement between Yugoslavia and the West German republic; for Germany used to be one of Yugoslavia's greatest markets and sources of supply, and can be again. We should do everything we properly can to persuade the World Bank to grant the Yugoslav loan which a bank mission has recommended. If the World Bank hesitates much longer, the Yugoslavs might well make another application to the Export-Import Bank, which is an agency of the United States Government and an arm of American policy.

In many ways Tito is showing his willingness to restore old ties with the West which were snapped at the end of the war. The recent civil aviation agreement with the United States, giving our aircraft landing rights on Yugoslav soil, lets another chink of light into what had been Communist darkness. But in doing what is necessary to keep Tito independent of Moscow, we should be careful not to overplay our hand. If we are too eager in our overtures we shall only embarrass him in the eyes of his supporters. If we sentimentalize him because he has stood up to the Kremlin, we run the risk of deluding ourselves. For Tito is a Communist who certainly does not sentimentalize us. Our policy should be to widen the breach between Tito and the Kremlin without ever forgetting that he is a Communist, taught and trained to despise us and all we stand for.

Federal Grants-In-Aid

The Council of State Governments reports that Federal grants-in-aid to the States nearly doubled between 1946 and 1948, rising from 770 million dollars in the former year to nearly 1.5 billion. "If this upward trend of Federal aid continues," the council says, "there is little likelihood that any considerable tax reduction will occur in fields suitable for State and local taxation."

Federal preemption of tax sources on which States and municipalities depend for income, and Federal levies that result in duplicate or multiple taxation, have undoubtedly aggravated the fiscal problems of local governments, and made them increasingly dependent on Federal handouts. However, in fairness, it has to be admitted that these grants-in-aid have also reduced the pressure to find new sources of State and local revenue. If Congress were to withdraw such assistance, the local governments would either have to increase taxes by 1.5 billion dollars or reduce payments for relief of the needy, get along with fewer and poorer highways, and less money for agricultural colleges, extension work and so

In some of the poorer States, where public assistance payments are grossly inadequate, Federal grants-in-aid have been a lifesaver for the poor and destitute aged. They have reduced the great disparities in relief standards by supplementing local sources of revenue. If these grants were withdrawn, some States would find it impossible, and others would plead incapacity, to devise substitute sources of revenue. States with limited population in relation to land areas also require outside assistance to build roads and keep them in good condition. Outlays of this kind benefit not only the aided States but all the people in a society dependent on swift and easy means of transportation.

We conclude that the benefits of the system to date outweigh its disadvantages. For, as the Hoover Commission says, grants-in-aid have enabled local governments to raise standards of public service and provide services "necessary or desirable in the national interest" that could not have been financed without outside as-

SONG FOR NOEL

She did not hear the door's worn hinges A'creak, nor see, with coats so soft. The cattle munching from the fringes Of hay that brimmed the dusky loft.

Nor note the harness and the halter Hard by upon a peg, nor hark, Like voices chanting from the psalter, The winds, low on the outer dark.

She only saw, light-limbed, frail-jointed The Babe who slumbered in her shawl, And thought with fear the Lord's anointed Was perilously small.

AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL.

a minority of riders finds transit radio "Everybody Hold Still And Look At The Eagle, Now"



Letters To The Editor

Communications must be ad-

"Back On Our Feet"

Your December 26 editorial, 'Back on Our Feet," struck such a responsive chord that I can't refrain from commending youand hastening to support your editorial advocacy of returning the "forgotten man" (the pedestrian) to his rightful place in

Since my return to Washington, after six long years in a VA hospital an important item in my rehabilitation has been spending as much time as possible outside in the fresh air and sunshine. Golf and other outdoor sports, commensurate with my age and financial limitations, have proved both beneficial and enjoyable. But I honestly believe that I have obtained more substantial rehabilitation aid by the simple (and economical) expedient of "pounding the sidewalks" of Washington-in plain English, just plain walk-

Yes, truly walking is becoming a lost art in these United States. Verily, we are rapidly acquiring calluses on the wrong part of our anatomy! But, what else is to be expected, what with "drive in" theaters, restaurants

EDWARD R. EGGER.

Racial Mixtures.

Apparently taking you to task for your remark about segregaion, Milton Dineen asks in your issue of December 17, ". . . are we to understand the Negro race wishes to deny itself that there is nothing of itself that it wishes to retain apart from the influence and beliefs of other races? This is hard to believe if the Negro race does not wish to become ex-

By becoming "extinct" it is presumed the writer means to lose its identity through admixture with other races-particularly the Caucasian race. Since there are already many, many

reached between the Greek gov-

Since I assumed direction of

American affairs in Greece in

June 1948, nearly 200 such

agreements have been put into

effect. Many other projects were

completed by the American

Mission for Aid to Greece which

material progress, however, for

Greece have been lifted from a

condition of despair to one of

hope and confidence. This is

significant, for Greece, which

nations on the periphery of the

Soviet world, has proved that

where there is even a promise

of economic security the seeds

of communism die in the ground.

all this material progress in

Greece was made during a pe-

riod of war against the guerillas

who were receiving continuous

help from across the borders of

Russian satellite nations. It was

made in the face of extreme

internal economic disruption

which, among other things, in-

cluded nearly a sixth of the

arable land out of cultivation,

and more than 700,000 refugees,

or one tenth of the population.

It is not difficult to picture what

difficulties would be experienced.

even in the United States, should

a sixth of our cultivable land

he taken out of production, and

15 million persons, without any

means of sustenance and with

only the clothes on their backs,

It must be remembered that

one of the most important

This represents more than

means that the people of

preceded Marshall Plan aid.

the Economic

Administration.

ernment and

Cooperation

dressed to the editor and must carry the complete name and street address of the writer. though pen names will be permitted at the editor's discretion. Letters of less than 200 words will be given preference, and all letters are subject to condensation. No communication can be returned.

millions of persons of mixed Negro-Caucasian blood in this country it would be interesting to hear what plan the writer would devise to keep the Negro race from becoming extinct. He doubtless fails to realize

that there are hundreds of thousands of so-called Negroes in this country so white they can not be distinguished, by even the self-appointed "experts" on such matters. This fact, once an unmentionable subject, is now so well known that it is freely discussed in books and even pictured on the screen.

PRESLY HOLLIDAY.

Surplus Food Gift

Constantly we read about the huge stocks of food which the United States Government has acquired, and the difficulty it is having in even finding storage space for then. This is done in order to keep prices stable, we

are told. To the lay mind, there something basically wrong in having huge piles of unused food in one place and hordes of starving people in other parts of the world. I understand that to sell this surplus would be disturbing to that sacred thing called a "balanced economy' but so level-headed an economist as former Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, jr., suggests that we give it away. Why don't we, the taxpayers, whose money paid for that surplus. rise up and demand that this be done? HELOISE BRAINERD.

"Slum Condemnation" Your December 21 editorial,

'Condemnation of Slums," calls attention to the fact our local tax system not only breeds slums but makes it much more difficult and expensive to condemn them or otherwise end them. Germany and other European

countries had a land increment tax, and Britain assessed costs of municipal improvements upon the land benefited thereby, as New York City does now. That is not enough to end old slums and discourage new ones, nor did exempted several thousand dollars per unit of new dwelling construction for several years.

Taxes on buildings mean less taxes on land values, and hence more speculation in land and higher selling prices, under condemnation, or in the open market, and also put a penalty on constructing new buildings. The District sales tax is a bonus to slum owners, while a surtax of 11/2 to 2 percent on land values in the District, would have raised about as much revenue, but ended the profit in slum land wnership

BENJAMIN C. MARSH, Executive Secretary, People's Lobby, Inc.

Earmuffs For Buses

So the Public Utilities Commission has permitted the Capital Transit Co. to bedevil the helpless riders of streetcars and buses with so-called music and other radio atrocities. I resent this invasion of my privacy. Happy those local travelers whose hearing is enough blurred so that they at least are immune from such afflictions.

As a protective measure I hope that some clever genius will invent sound proof ear-muffs or sockets and will offer them to defenseless riders at reasonable prices. I predict a wide sale for such mitigative devices.

GEORGE F. BOWERMAN.

Reconstruction Progress In Greece

Early this month, through the be thrown upon the mercy of the United States Information Serv-During this less than two-year ice here, there was released a period, the Corinth Canal, which list of more than 165 reconproject agreements

had been completly demolished. was reopened to traffic: the three principal ports, which had been put almost entirely out of commission, were rebuilt and are again operating normally: more than 850 kilometers of surfaced roads were built: thousands of homes and schools and other buildings were constructed or repaired: several hospitals and a number of airfields were built, and others were improved or enlarged; the automotive, railway, airline and coastal shipping transportation systems have been rehabilitated and modernized; water supply systems, both for personal use and for irrigation, have been constructed; new agricultural methods have been introduced and much farm machinery, fertilizer and seeds have been brought into Greece; distribution of commodities has been made efficient at a saving of many millions of dollars annually: sanitation methods have been adapted which already have cut many disease statistics to a low figure.

The Greek army is being reduced in size but improved in efficiency, equipment and training, which means that no small part of the huge sums spent for the military will now be converted to reconstruction.

The Greek economy has taken devaluation of the drachma, from 10.000 to the dollar, to 15.000, in stride, with price rises spotty and not great. In fact, the over-all index of commodities is down. There have been budget difficulties under the past two years of abnormal expenditures, but a balance in the fore-

seeable future now seems possible, provided military expenditures can be further reduced, the refugee problem liquidated, subsidies for exports and imports repealed or at least greatly reduced, and there is continued revenue improvement. Unless there should be a definite worsening of the world situation, or there is a revival of the guerilla warfare, it is reasonable

to expect further cuts in military expenditures. Of the more than 700,000 refugees, nearly 500,000 have now been returned to their homes, and while many of these remain unproductive because of the lateness of their return, they will be producers in the spring when the remainder also will be repatriated to their respective areas. As the over-all economy improves, the subsidies, mentioned above, will be removed or reduced. Revenues are increasing as the economy expands, and more teeth in taxation laws will bring in large sums. All of this will be rein a better-balanced budget. National elections have been set for April, which is proof that Greece remains solidly dem-

Recently I made a tour of six Greek cities, where I told many thousands about the ending of the Marshall Plan aid in 1952. stressed that American aid should be considered as a tool with which to work and not as a crutch upon which to lean, a fact which very evidently was received both by the people and by the press with complete understanding.

There have been delays, of course, in some phases of reconstruction and rehabilitation, but they have been due, in the main, to legitimate causes in a coun-

Cleavage On Noise Front

By Malvina Lindsay

The Worms Turn

A NEW CLASS struggle is developing in this country occasioned by what Mr. Jitters Mc-Dervish Clack, organizer and advance agent for the National Non-Thinkers League, calls the 'revolt of the grinds.'

"The 15 percenters—the readers, thinkers, window brooders. are getting out of hand," said Mr. Clack, who rushed here yesterday from the New York battlefront after hearing that a National Citizens' Committee Against Forced Reading and Forced Listening had

Brisk and cocky as usual, Mr. Clack stepped from his private helicopter, from which a radio was booming out jive and commercials, and conducted a press conference, simultaneously watching a wrestling match on his pocket video and talking with Hollywood over his walkietalkie. He admitted the Non-Thinkers League was perturbed over the vocal show of strength made by the "grinds" at the recent New York hearings on whether radio broadcasting should be continued in the Grand Central Terminal. The broadcasts were strongly opposed by Harold Ross, editor of The New

Yorker, and other commuters. "We'll hold our beachhead in the Terminal all right," predicted Mr. Clack. "We'll keep the racket—I mean the soft, melodious music interspersed with genteel commercials-but this sudden, highbrow flare-up. I don't like it. First it breaks out in Washington, then in New York. First thing you know this country won't be run by polls any

"DIDN'T WE quit running it by poll last November?" asked political reporter.

"Who cares about politics!" exclaimed Mr. Clack. "I'm talking about the fields where John Q. Digit, the public taste czar, really counts—say in deciding what we read in our newspapers see in the movies or on television screens, hear on the radio, what shoes and chairs we buy, what menus we get in restaurants what kind of girls we marry——

"Just a minute!" authoritatively interrupted a reporter with a front-page manner. "What do you see back of this? Could someone be using these fuzzyminded highbrows-say to give away the bomb secret?

Mr. Clack looked carefully around, then lowered his voice. 'This is off the record," he said, "but I'm seeing a couple of Congressmen tomorrow-in Lafayette Park."

is it true, as was charged in the New York hearings," Mr. Clack was asked, "that you intend to get broadcasting on every

train and airplane?" "That's just a beginning. We expect to move into art galleries, museums, churches, tele phone booths. Turkish baths psychiatrists' consulting rooms maternity wards, undertaking parlors—everywhere. We'll soon be broadcasting constantly in all stores—and say—what a boost to business that will be! The more confused people get, the more they buy.

"ANOTHER project of ours is to tear down partitions everywhere: do away with private offices, private rooms, herd people together in the bull-pen sys-

"Would that include bathrooms?" asked a picture editor. "Certainly. Too many people "What about the rights of the

minority?" "You mean the 15 percenters?" "How do you get that figure?

"Our polls in the Grand Central Terminal showed only 15 percent opposed to the racket-I mean the soft melodious music interspersed with refined commercials."

"How were the polls taken?" "I haven't time to go into that. I just want to warn people we've got a rebellion on our hands. These 15 percenters have gone along all these years with their noses stuck in their books. or newspapers, or their personal business. Now all of a sudden they stick 'em into our business. What's got into 'em? Where's the thing going to end?

"Say, do you know," continued Mr. Clack, "that there are about as many college graduates as there are illiterates! And they can make a lot more noise-I mean the wrong kind of noise. After all, there are more people in this country who haven't gone to high school than have gone. Shouldn't they have the say? Oh, I admit we have some highbrows on our side, but they're the right kind of highbrows, who appreciate low, melodious music interspersed with clever commercials. But I'm telling you, this other bunch has got to be put in its place-and quick, if the Digits to keep their hold on

try torn by internal war and whose economy was chaotic and where the people, because of long suffering and bitter experience had become discouraged and, to a degree, defeatist. Now. however, since all Greece has seen these tangible evidences of progress, there has developed in general a unity of purpose on the part of the government, industrial, commercial and agricultural agencies and the people.

I have not the slightest doubt that Greece, victorious in her war against Communist banditry, and with an already rehabilitated economy that makes communism more and more unpopular, will be able to resume her rightful place in world economy when our aid is finally terminated.

HENRY F. GRADY, American Ambassador to Greece