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Playing Ball With The Press

By William E. Doole

(EDITOR'S NOTE: We believe | or blocked roads are beyond counthat the following article, reprinted cil's control." from "Civic Administration," Maclean Hunter publication, will be of interest to the large number of our readers who are unable to attend council meetings and who look rumors and lack of information. to the press for full reports of what their elected representatives are do-

ing on their behalf. Incidentally, it seems like a good time for the Liberal to express appreciation of the situation which exists in this area and to say "thanks" to those municipal councils and appointed officers whose co-operation has been, at all times, of outstanding quality. That co-operation has played a great part in enabling this paper to present to its readers a full and complete picture of municipal

affairs.) One of the most important an sometimes misunderstood men your community is the fellow who sits at the local press table. His i one of the box seats of democracy He gets a closer look at the roots of democratic government than his colleagues in the parliamentary press

gallery at Ottawa. And yet sometimes, through failure of town fathers to recognize properly his privileges and responsibilities, the local editor is handi- I write a story about a water shortcapped or prevented from doing his best job of community service.

Fortunately, most Canadian communities have been favored by top- inence might set off a typhoid notch teamwork between press and administration. Emporia, Kansas, a small U.S. city, became interna- Facts Promote Understanding tionally famous through the writings of weekly Editor William Allen White. Hundreds of Canadian villinto the national limelight by their hometown papers.

Names like George James and his Canadian Statesman immediately knowledge of facts." ring up Bowmanville, Ont.; Lang Sands and his Abbotsford, B. C., News; Bob Giles and his Lachute, Que., Watchman; the late J. D. Mc-Kenna and his Kings County Record in Sussex, N.B.; Frank Burns and his Kentville, N.S., Advertiser; Albert Bergeron and his Western Star in Corner Brook, Nfld.; Alfred Wallot and his Valleyfield, Que., Le Progres; Werden Leavens and his Bolton, Ont., Enterprise. And so on. The list is almost limitless.

this: If you're a new member of growing municipality which has just seen the establishment of its first local paper, how should you treat the press table? What does the local editor expect from you?

To get firsthand information, we put it up to Ray Silver, energetic that's a good fault." young publisher of the Etobicoke (Ont.) Press. Silver has been doing ton, longtime MOH for Etobicoke, such a job of publicizing the township of Etobicoke, that even the neighboring metropolitan dailies in Toronto have been sitting up and taking notice.

Boosts Community

Through the efforts of Silver and Model For Ontario his newspaper there are few Torontonians who haven't heard that Eto- lished a public health nursing service bicoke is one of Ontario's three which for two years has been a mofastest-growing municipalities; that del in Ontario. Provincial Govern-1,300 families moved into new homes ment officials at Queen's Park send there last year; that \$17 millions other municipalities out to study worth of building permits were is- Etobicoke's setup. Dr. Fenton sucsued during 1948.

operation accorded by the municipal and accident prevention. administration.

tions to any municipality that wants sanitary restaurant conditions. Every to help its newspaper do the best restaurant operator in Etobicoke has possible job in the interests of the been given expert instruction on sanwhole community:

contact with all the local population. ies and pictures, and bacteriological Realize that your local press is lis- experiments conducted in the restautening on behalf of all the ratepay. rants. At a special "Food Handlers' ers. You need neither shout nor Night" conducted by Dr. Fenton, the whisper. Plain talk - with facts, "difference between hash-slinging not generalities - is the best way and proper serving of food" was to get ahead.

ment and kniwledge of the local edi- standing work in the interpretation tor. Chances are he's probably been of the township's master plan, a in close touch with municipal affairs complicated legal instrument for longer than you have. His files have dividing the township into zones, a longer and more accurate mem- green belts, etc. The paper has help-

"The local editor may be a nuisance who calls your home at odd Must Be Re-sold

Information Needed

Silver claims the things that cause most ill feeling among ratepayers ar

"Newspapers can explain complicated community facts in black and white in a way that people can understand them," he says.

No council chamber could hold al the constituents - even if they all wanted to attend meetings - and that's where the press table comes in, the Etobicoke editor points out. "But the man at the press table doesn't classify himself as a person with special privileges; he's there as an SATURDAY, JULY 23, 1949 - Aucobserver for the ratepayers."

"off-the-record" statements. "Councillors shouldn't embarrass the local press by asking them to delete auctioneers. things. On the other hand, councillors should remember that local editors are ratepayers themselves and are reasonably well informed on Farm Stock, Implements, Standing civic affairs.

the site proposed for a municipal Otherwise, it would jeopardize & Clarke Prentice, Auctioneers. chances of the municipality buying it at a reasonable figure. Nor would age, unless the facts were sufficient to provoke fear. One isolated case of typhoid fever given undue prom-

"A candid attitude with the local press will give people sufficient facts to promote understanding and pave ages and towns have been brought the way for co-operation, and at the same time prevent rumors and wild distortions. Honest municipal officials have no reason to fear public

Most newsmen who've gone beyond the cub stage won't offend or embarrass contacts. They have enough sense not to quote civic employees on matters of policy.

Editor Silver, in the main, regards Etobicoke's administration as being quite co-operative.

"I've covered municipal affairs in Windsor, London, Leamington, Kingsville, Sudbury and Toronto," says Silver, whose idea for a paper of his own came to him while he was The point of our story, though, is an RCAF prisoner-of-war in Germany, "and I can honestly say that council, or if you're in a new and I've found Etobicoke councilors more consciously concerned and better informed than anywhere else I've been. They are inclined to be a little too fussy with little details and to putter around with them until the small hours of the morning - but maybe

Silver considers Dr. W. K. Fenone of the township's most publicitywise men . . . publicity-wise in the sense that he makes full use of newspaper co-operation in promoting various health schemes, and accident prevention campaigns.

He has among other things estabcessfully campaigned for the ap-Covering the 36 square miles of pointment of sanitary engineers and Etobicoke is a big job. It's a town- gets good attendance at his prenatal ship that ranges from a sparsely and well-baby clinics through adesettled agricultural north to a heav- quate publicity. Throughout the ily populated industrial south. Ray year, the Etobicoke Press, in co-opsays he couldn't do the job he's do- eration with the MOH, carries weeking if it weren't for the close co- ly stories on health and conservation

Considerable longterm publicity Here's Publisher Silver's sugges- was given to the MOH's drive for itation control through a campaign "Don't cut off your only effective which has included newspaper stordramatized in everyday language.

"You can usually rely on the judg- | The Etobicoke Press has done outed to sell the plan to the ratepayers.

hours, but he's a close friend when "What council and the township it's necessary to explain to thous- planning board have succeeded in ands of homes why a water shortage selling residents, must be continually

Silver points out. "That's where the file or morgue of a local newspaper with its long and accurate memory can perform a real service."

Silver, of course, doesn't pretend that he's licked every angle involved in the relations between municipal corporations and the press. Nor does he lay claim to be the shining example of perfection for all to

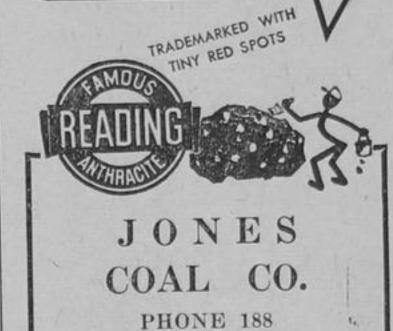
But he does claim, and with some justification, that a spirit of co-operation and understanding among members of the local press and the municipal administration pays off for both sides - and for the citizens of the community.

SALE REGISTERS

tion Sale of large building lot, Club Silver is emphatcally opposed to House and lawn equipment, known as the Unionville Bowling Green, on Maple Ave., Unionville, Ont. Sale at 1.30 p.m. Ken & Clarke Prentice,

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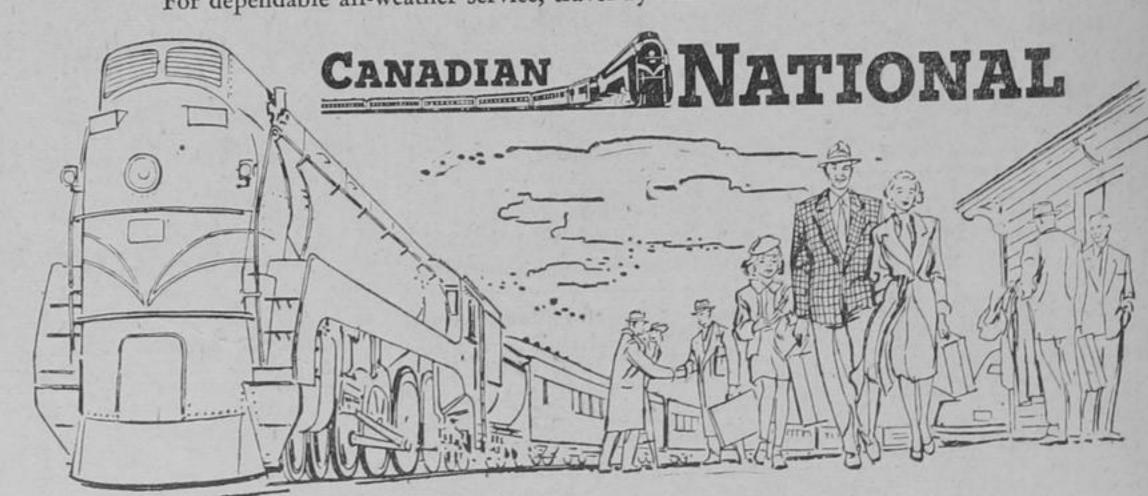
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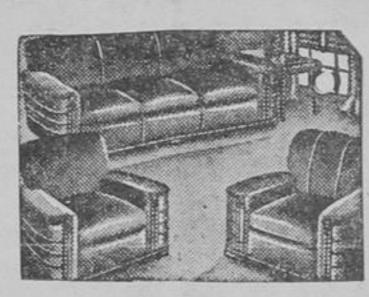
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