

A Talk Given to the

Kit Kat Club  
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It is a custom - not without its charm - that a Kit Kat Club paper should have an enigmatic title. Sometimes the authors go to extreme lengths to devise such titles and I suppose this particular title is an example of extreme ingenuity in this regard. I have devised a title so enigmatic that even I don't know what it means. I have some ideas, but I am sure I have not exhausted the subject.

I know there is no one present who would not respond instantly, if I were to say 1492, with the associated idea: "Columbus discovered America". Association is not, however, always commutative and it is necessary for me to explain that when I say 2941 I expect you to respond "America discovers Columbus", since 2941 is simply 1492 backwards.

I don't know that even a mathematician would find this funny. And I add very quickly that we shall not have to wait until the year 2941 - almost a thousand years - for America to discover Columbus. Columbus has already been discovered. Furthermore, its discovery is a continuing process. Columbus becomes better known every day, thanks to some of its citizens and its institutions and its response to a changing world. This talk is an account - partly autobiographical, partly historical - partly factual, partly opinion - narrow in some spots, universal



in others - a narrative of change as I have observed it in the nearly thirty-five years I have lived in Columbus. It will from time to time mention Battelle Memorial Institute, which has been the viewing device through which I have observed the world and Columbus.

2941? Twenty-nine was an eventful year. On May 8 of that year the chaplain of San Quentin prison was quoted as saying: "Prohibition is a failure. It is crowding the jails and prisons. Attempts to regulate morality by law are always failures."

On May 12 the newspapers reviewed an exhibition at the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts that included some works by Alice Schille. It used these words: "Alice Schille takes her place in the Master Class of painters."

On the same day a series of concerts for the coming musical season in Columbus was announced: Paderewski, Galli-Curci, Heifetz, Elisabeth Rethberg, Giovanni Martinelli, Benjamin Gigli.

In May, 1929, Edward Thomas wrote in the Columbus Dispatch an article on bird nests which included this interesting bit: "The crested fly-catcher likes to use a snake skin in building its nest. The purpose of this is in some doubt. Some think that the bird uses it to frighten away predators. But we shouldn't look too hard for a purpose. We should not be too anxious to ascribe human motives for every habit of our feathered friends." Sage advice that could be generalized upon in many other circumstances.

A certain Dr. Goodman advised, "You should fight with your wife to hold her love." Back of this advice was some rather tenuous reasoning to the effect that women love to be dominated. How far out of touch with reality can you get?

On September 26 the Bank of England raised its discount rate to 6%. They were concerned with the shrinkage in the country's gold reserves.

The same date carried an interesting article on why the Prince of Wales remains unmarried. Also the Treasury Department was recommending a tax cut.

The University was getting ready for the autumn term. Three thousand Frosh were expected to enroll. There was the usual article on the football team preparing the annual alibi. The team was not in very good shape. University officials announced their intentions of taking Student Housing in their own hands in order to better living conditions at Ohio State University.

There was an article on the Mystery of Greta Garbo.

Dr. Lichliter returned from a trip to Europe and advised his many admirers: "Europe is not a place to make whoopee. You are very likely to get caught at it." He advised his listeners that the best place to stage their emancipation is at the corner of Broad and High.

An article on September 16 states that 10 persons were undaunted by the crash of the City of San Francisco a short time before and left Port Columbus for the West Coast on the T A T - the Transcontinental Air Transport. Service on this combination rail and air service was resumed after a shutdown of ten days while the remaining equipment was overhauled after the loss of the City of San

Francisco. Very reassuring!

On October 3, 1929, Charles L. Knight, publisher of the Akron Beacon Journal spoke in Columbus at a Republican banquet at the Deshler-Wallick Hotel. "Republicanism no longer (has) leaders whom any considerable body of people are willing to follow. Both parties - Democratic and Republican - are no longer functioning on behalf of any principles that have any appeal to the man on the street."

The Reverend H. H. Clark sued Mrs. Minnie Kennedy, the mother of Amy Semple McPherson, for breach of promise. He claimed that her whirlwind courtship of him had ruined his career as an evangelist.

A new research laboratory opened its doors. Battelle Memorial Institute began operations in a new and modern research building at 505 King Avenue - not far from the University.

The Buckeyes were again stated to be in poor condition.

On October 4 there was a drastic decline in the market. And on October 6 the market developed "the most drastic liquidating movement in years".

On October 14 France announced plans for the fortification of its frontiers by what came to be known as the Maginot Line.

Such was the state of Columbus and the Nation and the World in 1929, when Battelle was started. The scene was almost idyllic. Battelle was not out in the country, but there was still left some of the out-of-the-city atmosphere. The Olentangy River ran clear and fast, in a beautifully sculptured channel, which, since the last ice age, it had dug out of the fine-grained sandy shale that gave

it its white-settler's name - Whetstone Creek. A rickety overhead girder bridge spanned it at King Avenue. There was much about the countryside that reminded one of the tremendous power of Ohio agriculture. There was an air of self-sufficiency about the good earth that may have been partly responsible for the development of a sense of separation from less privileged parts of the world. Whatever the causes, Columbus had something of a reputation for being a center of isolationism. Some of the newspapers ran editorials from time to time on the futility of the League of Nations, and the persistent failure of the great powers to solve their problems.

Before I jump to 1941, I stop for a moment at May 15, 1934. Here there occurred an event, unnoticed, and important to no one but me. I arrived in Columbus to begin an association with Battelle that has lasted up to the present moment. There were no planetary events of great consequence to mark the occasion, but President Roosevelt asked Congress for \$1,322,000,000 for relief during the coming fiscal year - for general "relief" and public works. This was expected to increase the government debt to an all-time high of \$31,834,000,000.

A newspaper editorialized on the fact that since the Lindberg flight in 1927 there had been several adventurous souls who had flown across the Atlantic. It added: "Whether or not such flights have any practical work is a matter of debate."

A new bill was being considered in Congress setting up the Securities Exchange Commission.

Mrs. W. C. Graham was elected President of the Women's Music Club.

Steel production was at 61% capacity.

The Bank of France was declaiming its adherence to the Gold Standard.

And The Columbus Dispatch editorialized as follows: "It is doubtful whether a more defiant defense of the Gold Standard has ever been blazoned forth to the world, especially defiant because it is issued at a time when half the great trading nations of the world are off that standard and when one of the mightiest of these nations - the United States - has espoused a different doctrine.

. . . . . "The American point of view has been somewhat inimical to the French point of view on many occasions. It is especially so on the French debt to the United States. It strikes most Americans as somewhat irrational that France should hold in such high esteem her contract with the world while holding in such low regard her contract with the United States Treasury."

It was hot and humid - the beginning of the hottest, driest summer the State of Ohio ever experienced. My thoughts ran to the lovely cool summers of the Pacific Northwest. Battelle had 50 members on the staff.

We jump now to '41. 1941 was a memorable year. In December of that year the Japanese' attack on Pearl Harbor touched off our active participation in the war. But this was only the overt act that brought matters out in the open. Under the surface some important developments were beginning to take shape. The decisions were being made that resulted in the atomic bomb, and the changes wrought by this hidden development have transformed the world. The balance of power has passed decisively to two countries - the United States and the Soviet Union. But more important, energy - mechanical, electrical, thermal - was no longer a factor limiting the growth and development of the human species. The intellectual pene-

tration into the structure of the atom, displayed the enormous capacity of men's minds to analyze and synthesize the information they received from the inanimate world into useful results. It posed the question to some: why not a similar analysis of some other more characteristically human problems, and a synthesis of other useful results. I shall return to this question later.

2941? An enigma! 2941 appears to stand for anything we will.

It is very usual these days to include in a talk of this kind a statement to the effect that we are living in a world that is changing very rapidly. This is true, of course. But often the superficial changes are the ones we see; whereas the real changes - those that are likely to affect the destiny of all humanity - are not readily discerned.

In many ways the world has not changed. We are still struggling with the gold standard. The political bankruptcy of both political parties is still being shouted by people who do nothing about it; Ed Thomas still pours out to us his inexhaustible treasure of comment on the world of Nature, and, in spite of his words of caution, enriches us with lessons that can be generalized; the Board of Trustees of Ohio State University is still struggling with the housing problem; we still deplore the frightful inadequacies of the football team; Battelle has grown in size to a staff of 7,000, but it still pursues the objectives it had nearly 40 years ago.

Some things have changed. You will recall the hint of nostalgia when I spoke earlier of the lovely Olentangy. Look at it today! Columbus is not rich in natural environmental assets. And here is one that has been destroyed



to make way for an expressway. I am merely stating a fact. I never know whether or not to deplore the inevitable.

Perhaps it is arrogant of me to assert any superiority for my own analysis of the complex state of affairs in which we find ourselves. But I have arrived at the time in life when I can afford to be objective. Furthermore, it has been my privilege to have associated during my lifetime with a great many men and women with far greater powers of perception than I have. Furthermore, I have worked in a field that many believe has had the greatest effect on the course of events - namely, science. But even if you are not greatly impressed with the soundness of my opinions, you may find it interesting to hear how one man views the universe, from afar and close at hand. I shall try to give my opinions of underlying changes that I think of greatest importance.

The greatest change in the world in the past 30 years has been the adoption of minimum standards of economic well-being. The world has discovered America. It is difficult to overstate the importance of this fact. In its extreme example, the Soviet Union - the citadel of dialectical materialism - takes for its goal the material attainments of the United States! The standard of living the Communists seek might use as its slogan one of our discarded political rallying calls of the past: an automobile in every garage and a chicken in every pot. Russia has a long way to go to achieve this. With China, the road is endless with a population curve that is steeper than economic progress. Communism also is facing its crises.

All over the rest of the world the story is the same. Even the comparatively sophisticated nations of Western Europe set their economic sights on the United States. Eighty percent of Western European industry is dependent on American technology. The average young European looks to the enjoyment of a life that is comparable to that of the average young American, with perhaps some refinements derived from an older culture thrown in for good measure.

In South America it is the same thing, with some frustrations at the lack of progress, a lack of progress for which the most cogent reason is the elitism of certain classes who are in a position to say "no" just because they themselves have nothing to gain from the economic betterment of others.

Asia? What can be said for Asia? The cradle of man and all his hopes? One can view the squalor of Calcutta, the feverish activity of Hong Kong or Singapore and sense the hopelessness of humanity so tightly packed that it must either explode from political pressure or implode from acute and massive starvation. But then there is Korea with a national spirit and an individual elan that is far from hopeless and that carries the promise that they shall find a way.

And what of the Nation? This is no place to review the history of our country and to try to determine the factors that made it what it is today with the thought that if we can somehow preserve those factors we shall triumph over adversity. Liberty is a tender plant. It thrives in a wilderness. The frontier, for all its ferocious brutality, does not threaten the open sky and

the built-in freedom of space. There is only one enemy of liberty and that is man himself. One can be very pessimistic about the future of the American concept of personal liberty. Those who attack it most violently shout the name of Liberty in their attack. And those who would defend it often propose methods of defense that would equally destroy it.

We can view with alarm the intellectual poverty of the present presidential election campaign; but it does no good to say "A plague on both your houses". Where are the leaders who can show the way in the new world of affluence and high-speed communication?

More alarming than the absence of leadership is the indifference of the electorate. Perhaps the affluence of the American people makes them careless of the sources of that affluence. If so, the situation will be self-correcting; they will shortly lose both the affluence and the sources. Whether or not they will have the wit to understand the relation between the two is difficult to say.

But the things that worked in the past will not work in the future. The world has changed; but more significantly, people have changed. Why should anyone be politically or socially responsible when the good things of life come to one automatically?

Pessimism about the future of the nation may be offset by a view of the community. After all, a strong federal government - originally the goal of the Republican Party - has, by a curious reversal of roles, become almost a

dictatorship under the aegis of the Democrats. But the real social and political problems of the day will most likely find their solutions within the community - shall we say in typical American fashion. Because it is in the city that many of the problems of the day are found in their most ineluctable form. A riot in a ghetto cannot be ignored locally. The appalling discovery that society has no effective way to punish mass crime, whether it be the violence of a mob, the irresponsibilities of a labor union, or the gentle obstructionism of the flower people: the equally terrifying discovery that highly organized civilization is inherently vulnerable to violent attack - that actually there is no defense to a bomb in an airplane or mayhem on the subway: These are discoveries that give us pause. And it is in the community - the city - the urban environment, that solutions to these problems or amelioration of the consequences must be sought.

In spite of the enormity of these problems, there is good reason for optimism. One of the brightest signs that we in America will find some reasoned solutions to our problems is the revival of a sense of community responsibility. Sometimes this is hard to find.

But all over America the cities are awakening to the fact that the real problems are theirs and they must work at solving them - and that processing their hard-earned tax dollars through a Federal bureaucracy is not the most efficient way of attacking them. Cynics will remark that we have not made much progress, either on solving the problems or diverting the tax dollars back to where they can be used more efficiently, but recognizing the need is a start on the transfer.

Progress is in sight in one area that might seem to be hopeless: the monolithic, medieval conservatism of the educational system. Evidence of its breakdown is on every hand - not only its failure to educate the negro, but its failure to educate the general population to the needs of a life in a world of universal communication. You will note that I point the finger of blame at no one, not even Columbia Teacher's College. The taxpayer? Perhaps he should pay more, but it would be nice if he could get more for what he now pays. Building obsolete schools and paying teachers who are the captives of a system that ignores merit in performance is not likely to improve the situation; nor is a school administration that is struggling with an unworkable system.

Perhaps here is a good place for me to comment on the Columbus community. What I say is critical. But it is as though I criticize what is my own. I have spent more than half my life, and certainly the most significant half, here. It is the community where my family has grown and our emotional roots run very deep. My criticism is made with affection.

I have known communities with a greater community spirit than Columbus. I will not amplify this statement except in one very specific regard, and that only because I believe that something can be done about it. I refer to what, in my opinion, is a deplorable lack of helpful interrelations between the City of Columbus and the University. I know very well that this is only the old and well-recognized problem of town and gown; but in the present instance there is so much at stake that a concerted effort should be made to build a better working relation.

I don't need to explain the political scene in this State to this audience. The rivalry between Cleveland and Columbus is too well known to need comment. There have been instances in the past when the University has been under attack in the State. Cleveland State University would have its champion, but Ohio State has no one with any political muscle to defend her. In fact, some forces in Columbus find it easier to criticize the University than some of those that are more remote.

Why this lack of a helpful relationship? A large part of the responsibility lies with the University, just because it may be presumed to be smarter than the rest of the community. It should adopt a more dominant role in the cultural life of the city.

Since I am about to leave town, this may be a good place to interject my impressions of the Board of Trustees of Ohio State University. It is my opinion that the proper function of a Board of Trustees is to hire an administration that they are convinced knows how to run a University and to let them do it without specific instruction as to detailed ways and means. Every attempt of the Board in the past to take over the operations has been disastrous, and there is good reason to think that such attempts will be equally disastrous in the future.

But to get back to 2941, the enigma. It is in the individual that the greatest change has taken place. It is always dangerous to draw comparisons between physical science and other human concepts. Everyone knows of the theory of relativity in physics. Classical physics, which used its coordinate systems with an implicit confidence that they were somehow obviously absolute, was shocked

to discover that they were not. But as soon as physicists recovered from the shock, they went on to even more glorious discoveries. Mathematicians some years ago were shocked to have Gödel prove that mathematical systems were inherently inconsistent.

The discovery that there are no absolutes known to govern human thinking in these two fields of thought has not hampered progress. In fact, it has expanded our comprehension of what the sciences are all about. This fact is significant in view of what I am about to say.

The most profound change in the individual in the past thirty years, perhaps in even the last thousand years, has been the discovery by the average person that there are no absolutes in the field of morals. This fact has been known by metaphysicians for a long time; but it has taken the stresses of modern times to demonstrate it to the ordinary person. The most exalted evidence of this transformation has been in the ecumenical movement within the Church which, after centuries of a persistent and stubborn adherence to dogmatic absolutes - which vary amazingly from sect to sect - has suddenly abandoned these absolutes in search for a new absolute which will undoubtedly prove to be as illusory as the old.

The Church is caught up in a dilemma - a consequence of its own lack of integrity. After centuries of having preached with a thousand tongues the absolute truth of a thousand inconsistencies, it finds itself in a very weak position to assert the absolute truth of a new dogma. And as the metaphysician has always known and the scientists and mathematician more recently have learned

to live with relativity, so the Church must go through the chastening experience of abandoning its past arrogance. It must change from a position which says: Here are the answers - to one which asks: What are the questions? It is a difficult transformation to make. But it has a long way to go to close the credibility gap before it can again assert its authority to instruct.

But it is not alone in the field of religion that the average man has encountered moral relativity. The ordinary standards of behavior have been radically modified, with sometimes shocking effects on human institutions. Sexual mores, for example, have changed to an extraordinary degree with the new-found freedoms accorded by the pill.

And so we seem to have arrived at that stage in the evolution of social man when chaos reigns. All the cards are wild and there are no rules.

And what of the future?

I have reached that time in life - an enviable time - when I can afford to be objective, to view the events as they unfold with a certain personal dissociation, a sense of their inevitability, a compassion, perhaps, for the painful punishments for social wrongdoing.

I would like to read a little poem that has always had a great appeal for me:

Colloquy

"Do open your hand," he said to me.  
"Why walk with it strongly closed?"  
"I've something inside," I answered him,  
"That can't be released or exposed."  
"And what is inside?" He questioned me.  
"It's nothing," I barely replied.  
"Then why do you clench it, why hold on?"  
"It's all I have left," I cried.

Ellen Berk



It seems to me that this poem captures an idea that expresses some of the vague uneasiness that characterizes our age. But with the young, the vagueness is rapidly giving way to certainty. The preoccupation that we of an older generation have had with material values - a preoccupation amply justified by the short time that separates us from the harsh circumstances of pioneer life and our lower middle class origins - these values are not enough for youth. Youth has come to recognize that the real values in life are yet to be found and that it is no use seeking them with the older generation. The restiveness of youth is no accident.

This tremendous new driving force in the machinery of progress will be the most important factor in determining the events of the next decade. By the same token the next ten years of human history will be the most dramatic, the most significant the world has ever seen. They will make the rate of change of the past hundred years of progress seem like a snail's pace. I say the next ten years because it seems to me that in that time, the human race will be forced to take some decisive actions that will have become imperative. How fortunate we are to have a younger generation that is able to live in free space and to float in an ocean of ideas, unattached to the outworn dogmas that have served us well but that now too often hold us back.

One more item of change: I mentioned liberty earlier - perhaps an absolute; but freedom is another matter. We have discovered that freedom is a relative concept. One man can be free, but as long as there are two or more there are some constraints.

Afar off one can hear a bell tolling and there comes to mind

those lovely words:

No man is an Island, entire of itself.

.....

Therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls,  
it tolls for thee!

John Donne

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