

Press & Journal
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Thursday, October 8, 1987

CONFERENCE CONFIDENCE

WITH a third election triumph under their belts, the Tories have been exuding confidence at Blackpool, demonstrating once again that they are making the running politically.

In the traditionally stage-managed setting, initiatives on law and order and education are greeted with suitable displays of enthusiasm — some more so than others, perhaps — but no sign of a split in party ranks mars the seamless unity of a party on the crest of the wave.

The tough new measures by Home Secretary Mr Douglas Hurd in the fight against violent crime are welcome. The horrific weaponry he seeks to eradicate has no place in our streets today. It is to be hoped that those who supply such deadly weapons will be treated as severely as those who carry them illegally.

The other measures outlined by Mr Hurd, however, should provide more contentious debate... though there was not much of that to be heard. Proposals to give the Attorney-General, with the leave of the Court of Appeal, the power to appeal against sentences which appear unduly lenient are not altogether welcomed by the law profession. Offering better sentencing guidelines for judges would be a preferable option. Judges, like everyone else, even politicians, are indeed fallible, but Mr Hurd's proposals would add an unwelcome dimension to court proceedings south of the Border.

Similarly, extra prison places may be construed to be of benefit, following the recent problems in Scottish institutions, but an urgent, impartial review of the entire penal system may have yielded more clues to the root cause of the present unrest. There are many who question why there are such a large number in British prisons anyway, far less making room for more.

As to the hanging debate, it is difficult to understand what exactly will be achieved by yet another Parliamentary airing of this question.

One welcome but relatively unsung part of Mr Hurd's speech was his failure to confirm that the Government plan to end the "right of silence" of accused people in criminal cases.

Yesterday's other main speaker, Education Secretary Mr Kenneth Baker, won favour from Mrs Thatcher — unlike Mr Hurd — in a standing ovation after his promise to implement the Government's reform of the schools system without delay. He recognises that the revolutionary proposals are the most important since R.A. Butler's Education Act of 1944, itself a legislative milestone.

Butler, however, would probably have urged considerably more caution in bringing forth this revolution... however worthy the aims.

The Tories may be on the crest of the political wave, but disturbing noises from the engineering about the poll tax — and presumably education in the very near future — should give them pause for thought. Revolutions last longer when people have time fully to digest the implications.

TEXT FOR TODAY

"You... judge by false standards." (James 2:4).

Of course we do, since we still accept the WORLD'S standards. Anyone knows how changeable and fickle they are. Jesus said "I AM THE WAY" — and He IS! — W.G.H.

Happy Birthday

GREETINGS from Junior Club to:
Rachel Alexander (5), Kinnoir; Susan Anderson (12), Finzean; Robert Brooks (12), Skene; Debbie Burr (15), Monymusk; Jodie Kerr (9), Keith; Rory MacGregor (14), Inchmadamph; Keith Munro (13), Peterhead; Neil Runcle (13), Aberchirder; Donald Sutherland (3), Aines.

HOROSCOPES

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 20): Your domestic life will be affected by the recent full moon and any changes you make in the home will be worthwhile. You may consider seeking advice about the way your career is shaping.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21-Feb. 19): Communicating with your friends should be very enjoyable today. With Saturn and Uranus wonderfully aspected in your solar chart, lasting attachments can be formed.

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20): Your second house of personal belongings and material gains can benefit to some extent from your career. But joint finance could be something of a sore point. Have you gone overboard lately?

ARIES (March 21-April 20): With the full moon now in your own sign, your whole being should undergo a change. You are likely to take off on a short trip.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Try to concern yourself with aspects of your life other than partnership affairs or you could end up obsessed by these. You need to use tact to get what you want, force is not the answer.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): You should have a wonderful time at a social gathering. If you are pinning your hopes on romance, the prospects are bright.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): Make your career your priority today. Put aside domestic worries for the time being, the situation could get a lot worse before it gets better.

LEO (July 24-Aug. 23): If you travel today, you will not be alone for long, romance is definitely indicated. Close relatives may try to put a stop to your fun and laughter, but you can give as good as you get.

VIRGO (Aug. 24-Sept. 23): Communication may cause you a lot of worry. You face the prospect of being forced into a situation that stems from the past. You must keep calm.

LIBRA (Sept. 24-Oct. 23): With the full moon in your opposite sign, it is time to take stock of all partnership arrangements. You may feel you are opposed at every turn if you want to get out of agreements.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22): With the moon in your sixth house of work, you stand to benefit from past efforts. Money may be involved. Judging by the planetary set-up, you may feel inclined to give some thought to your long-term interests.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21): You will feel flirtatious, but this will not go down too well with group contacts or friends. In fact, your lighthearted mood is likely to incur their displeasure. Do not allow them to upset you.

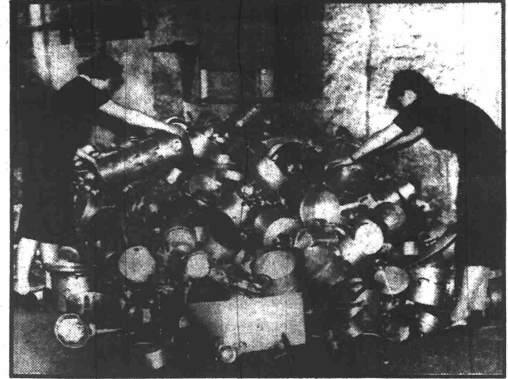
If October 8 is your birthday, your partner and close relatives should get along famously. In fact, your partner is likely to come up with some good ideas.

WHEN we asked recently for readers' wartime memories, we knew the response would be good. We did not expect quite the magnificent response we had. Here, PEARL MURRAY makes a final selection of letters. The pictures come from "Aberdeen and the North-east at War", published by Archive and available at all good bookshops, price £6.95.

THE WAY WE WERE



"YOU'RE in the Army now!" Conscripts arrive at the Gordon Barracks, Bridge of Don.



POTS and pans into Spitfires! The scene at WVS HQ in Union Street, Aberdeen, in July, 1940.

Letters: Our readers remember

Eggs that defied German bomb

I WAS very interested to see your picture of the bombed Peterhead Academy. The part destroyed was the homecraft department with science rooms below.

I was principal teacher in that department at the time, and I had a strange premonition that it would get a direct hit.

I removed many items from the front of the department before we went on holiday at the end of June. I placed them in rooms at the back of the building in the housewifery flat.

I removed much of the laundry equipment, all the cutlery from the sideboard, glass and so on — and even rolled up the carpet.

I had preserved 50 dozen eggs, too, in a store in the flat. Although



JULY 20, 1940... bomb-damaged Peterhead Academy

the solid granite wall bulged, not an egg was broken.

I am sure any of my former pupils will remember the preparations. In spite of makeshift accommodation, pupils were presented for

Highers in homecraft throughout the war and for years afterwards until a new department was built.

Ella Fletcher, Balgremmie, Torphins.

A happy group

ONE day in the early 1940s when I was home on leave at Inverurie, I was walking down Broad Street, Peterhead, when — to me — a most atrocious screeching noise suddenly filled the air.

I had been in North Wales where peace reigned and air-raids were unknown.

Then, a wife with a shawl over her head shouted: "Rin, quine, rin. 'At's the siren!"

So I ran and the nearest door led me into the Royal Hotel, where several of us huddled to-

gether while the landlord distributed hospitality. Whisky in our house was looked upon as medicinal, mainly to ease the pain of toothache.

This was different. The drum was there to enjoy.

We failed to hear the droning planes overhead and, long before the "all-clear" had sounded, we were the best of friends, linked together in happy laughter and in our common fear of the "siren!"

Winnie Brown (nee Carnegie), William Street, Torphins.

Guard duty

I WAS a medical student at Aberdeen University and, in response to Anthony Eden's broadcast, joined the Local Defence Volunteers — latterly the Home Guard — as soon as a group was formed.

We were B Company and our duty was to guard the gasworks and the city's main electricity station.

The only weapons we had at first were pikes — gift lengths of gas piping with a bayonet on the end.

Later, we were all issued with World War I Ross rifles from Canada which had been soaked in Vaseline between the wars. We thought they were good, but we discovered later that they had a reputation for losing more lives at the firing end than they saved because, from time to time, they misfired.

We once went to Portlethen to exercise with Molotov cocktails in a quarry, using a scrap car to represent a tank.

It was quite successful, but when we formed up to march back, one of the men went on fire. Some of the phosphorus from the cocktail set his trousers alight and we had to debag him at once to prevent serious burns.

I qualified as a doctor at Aberdeen in 1942 and went into the Army. After that, I went to Birmingham and I have been an orthopaedic surgeon in the West Midlands ever since.

Harold Bowie, 47 Moss Grove, Kingswinford.

Captured

I MET the two Norwegian agents, Moe and Glad, as they cycled on the Gardenstown — Macduff road early one morning. I tried to phone from Dundee Post Office, to no avail.

I hurried back towards Macduff hoping to pass them before they reached the Fraserburgh road. On my way, I met a policeman with two bicycles which I put in my lorry before giving him a lift to Macduff.

The Chief Constable had had word from a Crovie man by phone and took his car and captured them about three miles from Macduff.

William J. Maenab, 4 Elm Grove, Scone.

Hotel fire

I HAVE read with nostalgic interest the excellent book "Aberdeen and the North-east at War". But Paul Harris may have given the wrong impression about the Palace Hotel fire by including it.

A few of us were on fire duty at the Training College in John Street and there was no air-raid that night. The fire at the Palace was an internal one.

D.G. Donnachie, 38 Craig Gardens, Cults, Aberdeen.

Evacuee who returns

I WONDER if it is a record for an evacuee to return year after year for 48 years? She arrived on September 2 and said it was exactly 48 years to the date since she first came with her two brothers as evacuees to my parents' farm near New Deer.

The three of them stayed with us for almost two years and had their parents, granny and elder brothers and a sister all visiting from time to time.

I remember well the night they arrived, a very wet Saturday night about 9 p.m. and war was

declared on the Sunday. I felt very sorry for them on the Sunday morning.

We had put them all together in one bed the first night and, when I went to see them, the two oldest were crying but the little lad was singing at the pitch of his voice one of the war songs, "Run, Rabbit, Run".

My friend returned every year to see my mother as long as she had a house and she has come to me since then, every summer from Glasgow.

Mrs J. Clubb, 2 Provost Drive, Oldmeldrum.

Unforgettable day

IT WAS early summer in 1940. I was 10 and attending Ardallie School. I was very shy, but I had already developed a keen interest in World War I and I was reading a lot about it, including the weaponry.

Naturally, when troops and Bren-gun carriages passed by our school, there was great excitement among the pupils. Somehow, for me, it was more than just an adventure. I did not understand entirely but I felt a sense of crisis.

One day, as I was coming home from school to Bogengerry, a company of Gordon Highlanders were on exercise and dug into a dry ditch. During a break, my mother and aunt provided cups

of tea with scones and bannocks for at least 20 men.

A Highlander, who happened to be an Englishman, sensed my unusual interest and requested permission from his officer to let me fire a round of blanks, five bullets in all, from his Lee Enfield 303.

Permission was granted and I found myself supported by strong arms and with the encouraging words: "Come on. It's a piece of cake."

I fired the bullets, one at a time, on my own. It was a proud and unforgettable day for me, but I have often wondered, 47 years on, if my friendly Englishman survived the horrors.

James Mair, 21 Forbes Road, Sandhaven, Fraserburgh.

Glasgow tales — by Ginger and Charlie

WHILE resident at the farm of Backhill, Fintray, Dyce, the Bruce family were privileged to be hosts to two Glasgow evacuees.

The lads, Ginger and Charlie Kerr, regaled us with tales of gang fights in the Possilpark district of Glasgow.

One of our sows gave birth to a fine litter observed by the two "townies". I can still see the wonder and excitement on the freckled face of Ginger as he dashed into the farm kitchen to announce: "The pig's laid."

Their father arrived after about a year to take the two heroes home to their mother.

I was invited to attend the Army and served abroad. But I often wonder what became of those two who briefly entered, entertained and enlivened our country, family scene.

Alexander Bruce, 67 West High Street, Inverurie.

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