

Washington, Lincoln, and Firearms

An Editorial

February marks the birth anniversaries of two of America's greatest Presidents, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

Both of these titanic leaders reached their zenith of greatness while guiding our country through wars which could have killed off the nation at birth or before maturity. Both knew firearms, for military and for sporting purposes.

George Washington spent nearly a quarter of his life under arms. When he died at 67, he had soldiered for 15½ years. When peace and leisure permitted, he hunted constantly. Hunting was perhaps the favorite and foremost recreation of the Father of His Country.

Abraham Lincoln's numerous biographies note that he "hunted", that he "shot wild turkey," and that he served in the militia in the Black Hawk War. His interest in firearms, especially in military weapons efficient enough to shorten the Civil War, led him personally to test-fire and approve the Spencer repeater, the first magazine cartridge arm extensively used by U. S. Forces.

Lincoln as commander-in-chief directed probably the biggest rifleman's war in the Western hemisphere, in which by far the highest percentage of casualties were caused by infantry bullets. Like Washington, he fully recognized the role of firearms. For one man, they created a new nation. For the other, they held it together.

So America was fortunate that both of these heroic wartime leaders of classic stature had a thorough grasp and understanding of firearms.

But the wars themselves, in 1775 and 1861, what did they start over?

In 1775, was it the Stamp Tax, the quartering of British regulars in the homes of American colonials "taxation without representation", or what?

In 1861, was it the Fugitive Slave Act, "Bleeding Kansas", the tariff issue between industrial North and agricultural South, or what?

What actually turned each clash of words into a "shooting war"?

The answer in both instances is very nearly the same.

In 1775 the shooting began when the British, after methodically disarming every individual American who left Boston, marched a column of redcoats from Boston to Concord, Mass., to seize the arms of American militia stored there.

In 1861, the first shots were fired over whether a fort in the harbor of Charleston, S. C., should be evacuated and in effect disarmed.

Both wars, then, sprang in their full blown form from efforts to disarm Americans who would not be disarmed.

Whenever anyone stops to ask himself what will make Americans fighting mad, he might do well to consider 1775 and 1861.

Perhaps, on the anniversaries of Washington and Lincoln, that is as timely a thought as any.

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However, what really frightens us, is the apathy of the American Public and the way they are letting the Politicians gradually take our freedoms away from us and invest the power in a strong central government that "they" control.

This enables a handful of powerful men to gradually lead us along the "primrose path" to that rosily painted "Island in the Sky" — called Socialism.

And, when that point is reached, all of the sacrifices of our great Patriots will have been in vain — for this once great country of ours will more than likely be in the final throes of bankruptcy and despondency with the Citizens back in Bondage!

FROM OUR FILES

50 YEARS AGO

Feb. 23, 1917

J. H. Backus, Publisher

Mrs. L. P. (Jennie) Crandall, 42, died Saturday, February 17. Her husband, a daughter, her mother, three brothers, three sisters and a half-brother survive. Burial was in Hillside Cemetery.

Miss Ellen Hall of Andover and William Furgeson of Hornell were united in marriage Wednesday February 21st by Rev. Charles Collins.

The second fire of the year came to Andover Monday evening while the members of the Andover Hook and Ladder Company and their guests were enjoying the Seventh Annual Dance. Firemen were called to the O'Donnell Foundry building, and due to the handicap of water, they were able to save only the upright of the building.

Mary Delilah Cochrane, 58, died Thursday, February 9th at her home on First St. Her husband, John Cochrane and a sister, Mrs. DeEtta Bullard survive. Interment was in Hillside Cemetery.

Mr. and Mrs. Earl Leon of Call Hill are the parents of a son, Arthur Clair, born last week. Mr. and Mrs. Laverne Kenyon are the parents of a daughter, born Wednesday.

Mr. and Mrs. A. Lowry of Independence are the parents of a daughter, born Tuesday.

Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Green and daughter, Fern of Independence are guests of their parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Thompson at Coudersport, Pa.

Mr. and Mrs. L. P. VanWoert of Corning were guests of Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Frisbey, Sunday.

Mrs. William Reed of Canisteo has been visiting at the home of her father, Calvin Slocum this week.

Mrs. Nellie Spencer of Alfred station was the guest of her mother, Alonzo Slocum Tuesday.

Miss Hazel Hulbert of Westville is spending the week guest of her aunt, Mrs. William Rogers. Mr. and Mrs. Alonzo Davis and sons of Perry were Andover visitors over the week end.

40 YEARS AGO

Feb. 25, 1927

J. H. Backus & Son, Publisher

Mr. and Mrs. F. Mead, 31, of Hornell, formerly of Andover, was caught between two railroad cars Wednesday night and died shortly after in the St. James Mercy Hospital. His widow, three children, his father, three sisters and three brothers survive.

Hilared S. Rogers, 29, died Thursday, February 24th. His widow, a daughter and his father survive. Interment was in Hillside Cemetery.

The early Robins seen and heard in the South Hill locality last week were short lived in the bad weather of Sunday.

Mrs. Fred Brewster and daughter, Ida Annette, of West Green wood, have been spending a few days this week with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Miller of Hornell.

Mrs. Mary Greene returned to Andover from Tip Top where she has been spending the past week with her son, Edward and family.

Jim Wallace is spending a few days with his brother, Ephraim Wallace.

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Perry are moving from the J. M. Hartrum Farm to a farm between Greenwood and Canisteo. Edward Pad den will work the Hartrum farm the coming year.

Cashier and Mrs. John E. Cannon have returned home after passing a week guest of Mr. Cannon's sister, Mrs. Jesse Phillips and family of New York City.

District Deputy A. D. Fuller made his Official Visit to Friendship F. & A. M. Lodge Monday evening. B. S. Brundage, A. R. Baker and W. S. Calhoun accompanied him.

Miss Felma DeRemer was a guest at the home of her sister Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Crossett of

Albany Insight

by Johannes Laurson

TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC

The first bill of the session, introduced as Senate No. 1, proposed an innovation in State government, the establishment of the office of "Ombudsman" in New York State. While new in America, such an office of Parliamentary Commissioner or Public Protector has long existed abroad. Sweden was the pioneer, having had an Ombudsman for civilian affairs since 1809 and for the military since 1915. Finland followed suit in 1919, and Denmark in 1952. Norway, New Zealand and, in part, Great Britain have adopted similar systems.

In the United States there is only one "Ombudsman", this Swedish name meaning "one who represents someone", adopted without translation. He functions in Nassau County under a temporary appointment made by Democratic County Executive Eugene Nickerson, who thus has the honor of having sparked the current discussion on other governmental levels. Mr. Nickerson, perhaps wisely, chose a Republican, retired Judge Samuel Greason, to be the first Ombudsman. The interest in the office is by no means confined to one party. Senate No. 1 was introduced by Republican Senator John Dunne, also of Nassau. As-

sembly Minority leader Perry Dur-

yea established a committee of five Republican Assemblymen to study the proposal and make recommendations. On the Democratic side, besides Mr. Nickerson's initiative on the County level, a bill was prefiled by Assemblyman Edward Stevenson, of the Bronx.

OMBUDSMAN'S FUNCTIONS

The function of the Ombudsman is to represent the individual citizen in the examination of possible abuses of authority in governmental agencies. As government and, unhappily, bureaucracy keep growing year after year, so do the possibilities of misuse of power, of harm to the interests of individual citizens. True, they can always resort to the courts, but that becomes expensive and time-consuming. Most aggrieved people therefore are inclined to shrug off an injustice with a "you cannot fight City Hall", but that is not a healthy situation in a democracy.

The Ombudsman system has worked successfully abroad. Experience has shown that usually a majority of the complaints coming before the Ombudsman will, upon investigation, be termed unjustified, but even this is a valuable service and a reassurance to all concerned.

The office does not duplicate the work of any existing official. It differs sharply from the District Attorney's office which concerns itself only with cases where a crime is suspected. If the Ombudsman comes across such cases, he turns them over to the District Attorney for investigation and possible prosecution. The Ombudsman will only have the power created by the prestige of his office and his right to make his findings public. If he finds in favor of a complainant, it is up to the affected branch of government to rectify whatever wrong has been done to the individual. Public pressure will help to assure this.

Good government will have nothing to fear and should be expected to welcome this new reassurance, rather than scramble to get exempted from the Ombudsman's sphere. He is not set up to harass officials or create suspicion.

MAJOR QUESTIONS

There appears to be broad public support for the new institution, and Legislators are interested. However, there are many practical questions. Denmark has 4.7 million, Sweden 7.7 million, but New York 18 million inhabitants. Should there be one Ombudsman's office for the whole State or a separate one for New York City, as well as for major counties? Should the Governor or the Legislature select the Ombudsman? Senate No. 1 said the Governor, but that seemed incongruous to many, since the executive branch would be the one the Ombudsman should keep an eye on. Senator Dunne amended his stand to appoint by two-thirds of each house of the Legislature.

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decision, and it could well be that the Constitutional Convention would have something to say about the matter. When Denmark got a new Constitution in 1953, a brief paragraph provided the basic authorization for an Ombudsman, and a new law the following year spelled out the particulars.

Most important for the success of the new office would be finding the right man for it. He would almost certainly have to be a lawyer, perhaps with bench experience. He must be recognized as being as impartial as possible. Political aspirations would be detrimental. If the right man is found, and he is given reasonable cooperation and working conditions, the Ombudsman office could become a major factor in securing better relations between the public and the evergrowing governmental setup.

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