

Try and Stop Me

By BENNETT CERF

A GROUP OF Montreal nature lovers once invited the great Canadian humorist, Stephen Leacock, to accompany them on a predawn bird-watching expedition. "Ladies," Mr. Leacock told them candidly, "I freely admit that I am the kind of man who would have absolutely no interest in an oriole building a nest unless it built it in my hat in the check room at my club."



How dry can it become in the Western stretches of Texas? Well, one old oot from those parts—member of his local chamber of commerce, too—admits, "We once went so long without even a smidgen of rain, and water got so scarce that when one of the kids absolutely had to have a drink, I had to pull up the well and run it through the wringer."

"Cyril," said a teacher one bright morning, "do you feel that there is one thing you can do better than anybody else in the world?" "There is," said Cyril firmly after the briefest hesitation. "Read my own handwriting."

In the Day's News

By FRANK JENKINS

The other day this writer had lunch with a couple of fellow conservatives, and in the course of the meal the conversation came around to the subject of democracy—both democracy as a political system and democracy as a way of life.

We batted it back and forth for quite some time, discussing wisely upon democracy's merits and its pitfalls, and finally one of the crew was reminded of this rather cynical quotation:

"Democracy can survive only until the public discovers that it can VOTE THINGS FOR ITSELF OUT OF THE PUBLIC TREASURY."

WE AGREED that it was a good smart crack, and this question then arose:

Who said it?
None of us knew.
We became so interested that after lunch we hunted up a copy of Bartlett's indispensable Familiar Quotations. We discovered that Bartlett is silent on the subject.

IN THE course of our researches, however, we learned quite a lot about what the great thinkers of the world have thought and said about democracy.

There is Plato, for example, who lived and taught more than 2,000 years ago. In his *The Republic*, in which he describes the workings of an imaginary ideal state, he says: "Democracy is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequals alike."

One can't help wondering if Plato had his tongue in his cheek when he said that.

THEN there is Aristotle, who was a pupil of Plato, and who became the teacher of Alexander the Great, the character who conquered the known world and then, it is alleged, sighed disconsolately because there were no more worlds to conquer. Of democracy, Aristotle said in his *Politics*:

"If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when ALL PERSONS ALIKE share in the government to the utmost."

He then went on to say:

"The best political community is formed by citizens of the middle class. Those states are like to be best governed in which the middle class is large, and LARGER, if possible, than both the other classes, or at any rate larger than either singly; for the addition of the middle class turns the scale and prevents either of the extremes from becoming dominant."



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