



SNOW IN ENGLAND — With trees bowed over with the weight of snow, a bus crawls along icy Malden rd. after heavy snows hit London, England, and surrounding communities. (UPI)

Religion in America

End of Rapid Growth Era Noted For American Churches in 1962

By LOUIS CASSELS
UPI Correspondent

For America's churches, 1962 marked the end of an era.

It was an era in which "religion" achieved unprecedented popularity, and church membership rose at a spectacular rate.

Since 1948, when the post-war "religious revival" got under way, American churches have gained about 42 million new members.

For 15 consecutive years, the annual growth in church membership substantially exceeded population growth.

During this period, the proportion of Americans affiliated with religious bodies increased from less than one-half to nearly two-thirds.

To make room for the influx of new members, churches embarked on the biggest building boom in their history. Expenditures for church construction, which had totaled less than \$200 million in 1946, rose to a level of \$1 billion annually in the late 1950s.

Begins To Ebb

The Yearbook of American Churches, the most authoritative compilation of religious statistics, gave clear warning

last year that the tide was beginning to ebb. Its figures showed that church membership gains were only slightly greater than population growth.

The new Yearbook of American Churches was out last week. It reports that church membership gains, for the first time since World War II, have fallen below the rate of population growth. To be precise, church membership rose 1.4 per cent, while the national population was increasing by 1.6 per cent.

This means that the proportion of church members in the U.S. population actually has declined — only a fraction of one percentage point to be sure — but enough to mark the end of the era of rapid and easy growth.

Just Beginning

Those who saw a "religious revival" in the rosy statistics of the 1950s may mourn its passing.

But there are others who believe that American churches are only now beginning to experience a genuine revival.

"The flocking of people to the churches following World War II was a type of crisis religion, a shallow demonstration of popular piety with-

out any real depth of concern," says the Rev. Dr. Arthur Vincent, a Missouri Synod Lutheran leader.

"Today we find that religion is not quite so popular among the masses. But instead, we are discovering a tremendous growth of interest in Bible study among our people."

Clergymen of other denominations can offer similar testimony. Throughout America, there are signs — not easily measured by statistics, but unmistakable to any close observer of church life — of deepening faith and commitment.

Become More Serious

It can be seen in such things as the spontaneous development of small groups of concerned laymen who meet in private homes to wrestle seriously with the implications of Christian doctrine; in the active interest displayed by adults in religion courses which require them to do real study; in the growing acceptance of tithing as a minimum standard for stewardship of money; in the steady demand registered at church libraries and book stores for good religious books as opposed to the tripe which often hit the best-seller lists in the days when religion was being peddled to the public as an easy out for life's problems.

Teen-Agers Remain Active

It is also reflected in growing attendance at week end retreats; in the number of teen-agers who remain active in church life after they are too old to be "made" to go to Sunday School; in the searching curiosity of college students about authentic Christianity; in the readiness of young churchmen to risk imprisonment or injury to bear witness for the Christian convictions on such social issues as race relations.

These manifestations of real Christian commitment still are confined to a creative minority in the church. They do not refute the observation that a great many church members remain lukewarm, ill-informed and apathetic. But they do provide better evidence of real religious revival than could ever be found in the soaring membership statistics of the postwar era.

\$50,000 Added to Student Loan Fund

Corvallis — A \$50,000 addition to the student loan fund at Oregon State university has been made possible by a \$4,000 gift from the OSU Dads club.

Floyd Mullen of Albany, club president, said the \$4,000 gift comes from reserve money of the OSU Dads club.

The \$4,000 will be matched to \$50,000 by the United Student Aid Fund, a national non-profit corporation. For every \$1,000 a university can raise for student loans, the national USAF organization will provide backing to \$12,500.

The USAF is a private, non-profit service corporation which endorses low-cost, long-term loans made by local banks to needy college students. It serves as an intermediary between the student's hometown bank and the student's college.

The funds may be used by Oregon State university sophomores, juniors and seniors. Application may be made through the student's local bank or through the student loan office on campus.

Russian school children attend their classes regularly six days a week.

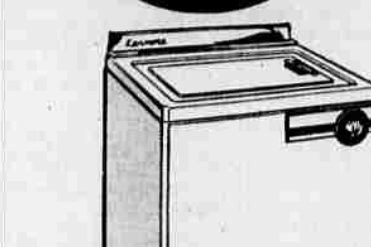
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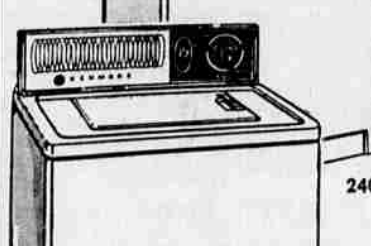


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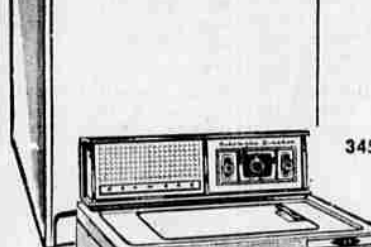
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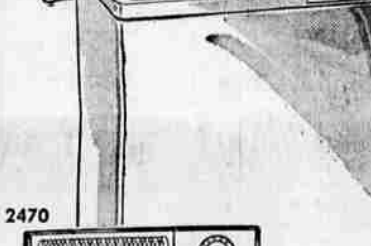
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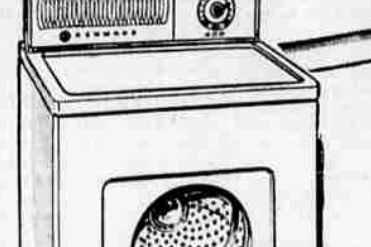
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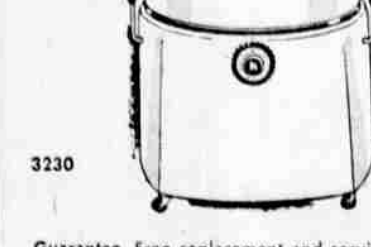
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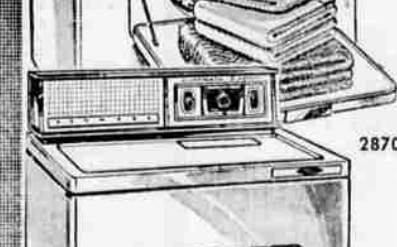
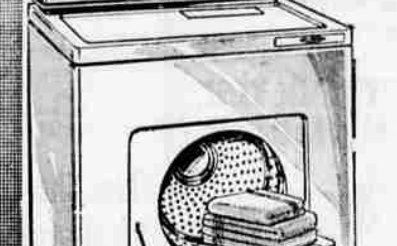
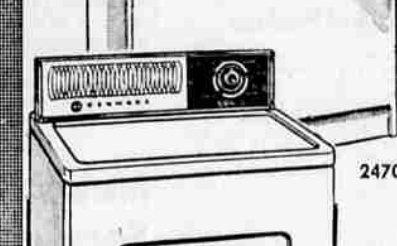
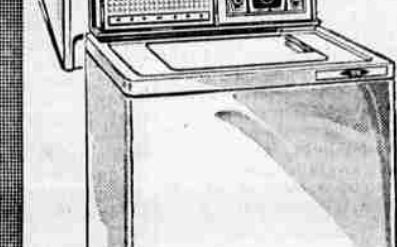
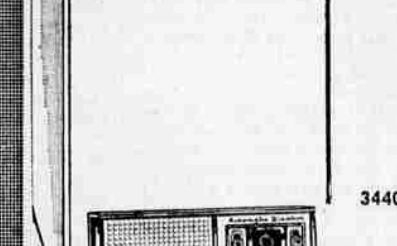
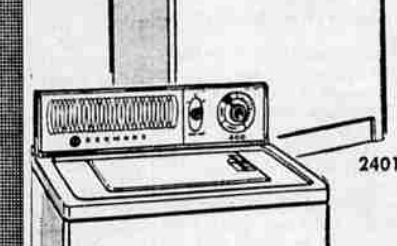
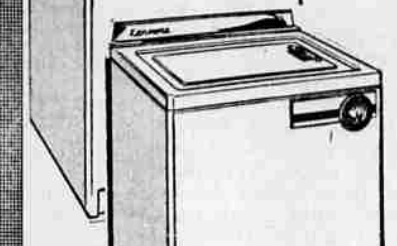
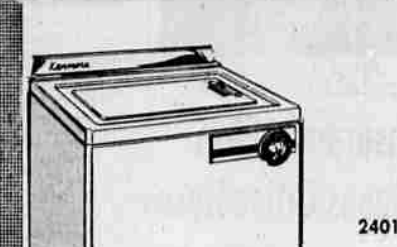


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