

QUESTION TIME In Parliament and Congress

By the CN Parliamentary Correspondent

OVER the centuries the British people have come to take the Parliamentary system for granted. It is considered typically British for Ministers to go to Westminster most days and perhaps come under heavy fire from back-bench peers or M.P.s.

That is our British way. Parliament has won the right, often through hardship and suffering, to call Governments to account.

Whatever their political views, M.P.s show an underlying fairness to Ministers. Most Ministers would admit that they get neither more nor less than their deserts in the Commons, and there is probably not one who would wish to change the system.

DIFFERENT SYSTEMS

Other countries, other ways. In the Reichstag or Parliament of the old German Kaisers the rival parties never mixed when on duty. German M.P.s even ate in separate dining-rooms reserved for the parties. But at Westminster the Members' Dining Room is communal, and few M.P.s ever leave the famous Smoking Room without some wisdom gleaned from the views of an opponent.

In the United States information flows to the public from the President and the Secretary of State (or Foreign Minister) through the Press conference, held at the White House or at the State Department.

The President does not go to the House of Representatives (the equivalent of our Commons) to answer questions, to speak in debates, or make statements, but he is questioned from time to time by reporters. There has recently been some argument in Washington about the wisdom of this system.

Politically, of course, the President is Head of State as well as Head of Government. He might be compared, though comparison is difficult, with Britain's Sovereign. The Sovereign, however, is not subjected to Press conferences or parliamentary questioning, but attends Parliament only for ceremonial purposes.

The Secretary of State, on the other hand, is in the same position as our Foreign Secretary, who regularly answers questions in the Commons.

Under the American Constitution the Ministers who form the President's "Cabinet" are not members of the Senate or House of Representatives, the two chambers which together are called Congress. They are hand-picked by the President.

It should be remembered that Congress is elected to pass laws; the Administration (or Cabinet and its branches) is elected to administer them, and the Judges to interpret those laws and settle disputes. These are separate bodies designed to hold each other in check and prevent any one of them getting too powerful.

OFTEN INTERVIEWED

Because Cabinet Ministers are appointed in this way, they are not in daily attendance in Congress, though they are frequently interviewed by committees of Congress, either in public or private.

All this arises from the conditions under which the American Republic came into being. In Britain—both in practice and in theory—Ministers have a duty to make important statements to Parliament first. Press conferences with Ministers are not an institution in the American sense.

Kenya railway station as Youth Hostel

Kenya is to have its first Youth Hostel this summer in a disused railway station.

When the railway between Nairobi and Nakuru was given a new route, the station known as Escarpment was left isolated. It is now to be made available for Kenya's hostellers. It will provide them with one of the finest views in all Africa, from one side of the wooded Rift Valley, with the extinct volcano of Longonot dominating the near distance. This summer the hostel (for boys only) will be open for three weeks to see how the idea is received in Kenya, among Africans of all races.

CHAINS ROUND THE HILLS

The dream of the youth hostel pioneers in Kenya is three chains of hostels, one round Kilimanjaro, another round Mount Kenya, and one running through the Northern Highlands towards Uganda. Those chains would cover the most beautiful walking country in East Africa consisting of rolling hills, high mountains, and sweeping plains.

It is a country for early morning tramping with a sleep through the heat of midday, and then a few more miles, perhaps, in the cool of the early evening.

TRUCK WITH NO DRIVER

A truck which can steer itself was on show in London at the Mechanical Handling Exhibition.

Guided by signals received from an electric cable laid on or under the floor, the truck can be made to follow the line of the cable or to turn off at junctions. The stopping and starting of the vehicle can be controlled from a central panel, but should anyone accidentally step in front of one, a sensitive contact switch will stop the machine immediately.

British Railways have ordered two of the vehicles for experimental use at Newton Abbot goods platform.

THEY SAY . . .

BRITISH weather is often the envy of the foreigners who spend several months under a mountain of snow or three-quarters of the year being grilled by a tropical sun.

Mr. F. J. Erroll, Parliamentary Secretary, Board of Trade

As with everything else, we could all write better with a little more effort, a little more care.

Entry in the CN Handwriting Test of 1958

MANY of the beds holidaymakers are given in hotels and boarding-houses have been slept on too long by too many people. Some are fit only for fakirs.

Mr. Hector Rawson, President, National Bedding Federation

News from Everywhere

At a jungle warfare training camp in Queensland, army blankets have been issued for the snakes used to illustrate lectures. The snakes had been suffering from cold at night.

A hearing aid powered by the rays of the sun has been developed in the U.S. On dull days power is provided by a tiny battery.

Over 10,000 Paris children have promised the police that they will stop drawing on walls and scattering litter as their contribution to keeping the city's monuments and public buildings clean.

A turtle seven feet long and weighing 70 stone was caught by a French trawler in the English Channel recently. It was estimated to be over 400 years old.



Happy Hippo

Mother Hippopotamus keeps close to her baby as it takes its first walk at the Berlin Zoo.

A shopping centre costing over £1,000,000 is to be built outside Cheltenham. The first of its kind in Britain, it will serve new residential areas of Cheltenham, Gloucester, and Tewkesbury.

Pictures by Congo, the London Zoo chimpanzee, were not allowed duty free into the United States as works of art. "We have to draw the line somewhere," said an official. The paintings are to be shown with those of Betsy, the chimp artist of the Baltimore Zoo.

ANTARCTIC CO-OPERATION

Australia and the U.S. have invited scientists from all countries to take part at any time in scientific studies at Wilkes' Base in the Antarctic. The two countries are to co-operate in maintaining this base when the I.G.Y. ends next December.

Penelope Mayon-White, 17, of Ipswich has been chosen as England's representative at an International Girl Guides' camp to be held in Canada this summer.

A New Hampshire hen has laid an egg weighing half a pound on a Johannesburg farm.

New Zealanders can expect to live longer than any other people in the world—men to 69 years, women to 72½ years.

Jazz trumpeter Louis Armstrong has been invited to take part in this year's Edinburgh Festival.

The world's longest television network is to be built across Canada, from the Pacific coast to Newfoundland, a distance of 4000 miles.

On average, everybody in Britain ate 251 eggs and 25½ lb of bacon last year.

CORRECTION

In the caption to the picture Three on the Jump in CN May 10, we referred to Ickenham, Surrey. This should, of course, have read Ickenham, Middlesex.

Out and About

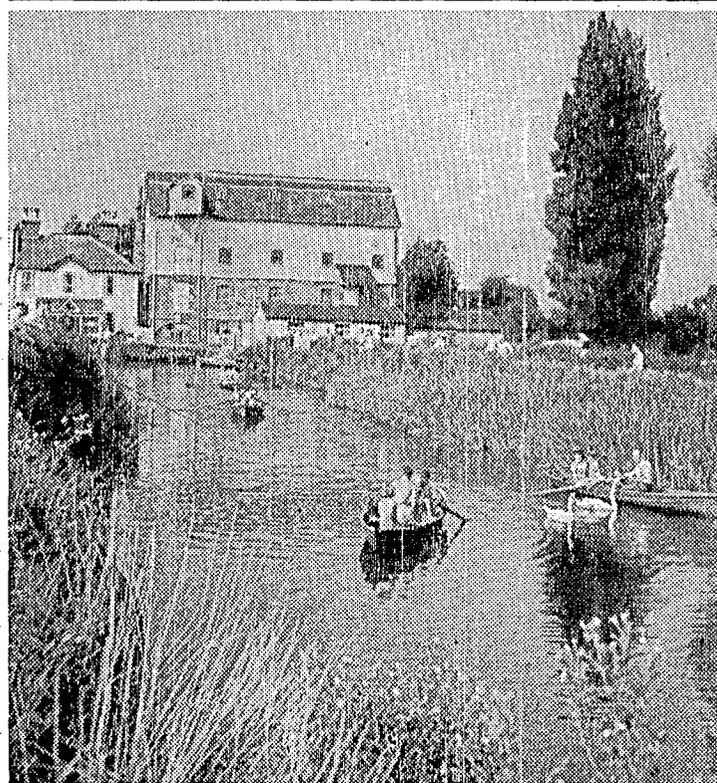
THE full summer foliage of the trees, still keeping something of the freshness of spring, everywhere shelters new broods of birds, and it seems a wonder how so many of the parents have time to sing, as they do, as well as feed the hungry mouths. Perhaps this is an illusion, as we cannot see which of the singers have an unfledged family still.

But out in the fields, too, there is the same happy mixture of spring and summer. I thought this when, after gazing into the blue sky to catch sight of some of the singing larks one morning, I saw a widespread flock of sheep on the green hillside. They all looked so white that they might have come out of a song by William Blake.

But this was not an imagined paradise to contrast, as the poet did, with grimy towns. It is a common sight at this time wherever the sheep-shearing has been finished. In some parts their brand-new appearance comes a few weeks later; but other things also are later, such as the tree leaves that were slow to open out in spring. The haymaking—finished where I saw the shorn sheep—is another of the moveable tasks of the countryside, and may not be done in the North before mid-June.

Every part of our small country thus offers differing pictures, making the scenes as variable as our weather.

C. D. D.



OUR HOMELAND

The Stort at Roydon Mill, on the Essex-Hertfordshire border