

Adapted from
“RURAL NEWSPAPERS URGE REVISION”

By Eva Beard, Kingston, New York

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RURAL Americans are conservative by nature. They don't much like any tampering with time. They are still skeptical and resistant to Daylight Saving. My own great-great-great-great-Grandmother thought the change from the Julian calendar to the present Gregorian system, back in 1752, was just a lot of nonsense, and she went right along counting the family holidays by Old Style.

Yes, we have our own ideas about time. But we are reasonable. The editor of our weekly newspaper, the *News-Leader* (whose family has lived in these parts since the middle eighteenth century), says we will not be against such proposed improvement as The World Calendar, or any other real improvement, especially if it is going to save us money. As he puts it, we just have to be shown.

The editor, Ira V. D. Warren, is a pretty reliable judge of farm folks. “They will accept the change to The World Calendar very quickly,” he says, “because they will see how it helps them in their business affairs and in their everyday life.”

He has done a lot of thinking about how it will affect the workings of a country newspaper. “In this business of ours,” he says, “the present irregular calendar results in endless wasted effort because of the lack of standardized days and dates, the unequal number of days in a month, and the fact that years, according to the calendar, are total strangers to each other. It would take painful research to trace days from dates, so readers are treated to a lot of sketchy reporting.

“Holidays falling in the middle of the week really upset newspaper mechanical departments, and they mess up the circulation department which depends largely on post offices, trains and buses, also topsy-turvy because of a split work-week. Meshed with retailing, the newspaper advertising department is thrown out of gear by a holiday-split week, and this is but a reflection of the confusion caused by the calendar in stores and industries.

“The scheduling of newspaper advertising under the present calendar is much like putting together a jigsaw puzzle which was never intended to be a profitable operation. Arranging staff vacations and pay for vacations in a newspaper plant is complexed by the calendar. It is obvious that every other business suffers the same calendar affliction, which spreads like poison ivy.”

For the past forty years, Mr. Warren has watched the shift from steam power for presses to electric motors; from gas lighting to fluorescent tubes; from flat sheets of paper to rolls, from press speeds of 1,000 per hour to 60,000 per hour. Color

cylinders were added ten years ago. Teletypes replaced Morse code. Machine-set type replaced hand-set. All these and many more innovations came because of the need for accomplishing more, with less effort and greater convenience.

“Meanwhile,” he says, “the greatest bargain in time and money saving goes a-begging. The World Calendar—standardized, accurate, regular—is free. The cost of the change-over would be infinitesimal—and no toll charge for its use.”

A farm paper published in an adjoining county recently had an editorial calling the attention of its readers to the importance of calendar reform. “Since the turn of the century,” it noted, “time has become a much more vital part of our daily living. Our homesteads are electrified and motorized, our barns and equipment are mechanized, our farms are operated by agricultural scientists whose schedules are no less exact than those of city factories. We have streamlined nearly everything except for the calendar.”

Now that most of the saw-timber in the United States is gone, we are taking thought to the calendar of the trees. We are growing more and more of our own pulpwood, making more and more newsprint. We are all too slowly getting an all too small part of our woodlands on a “sustained yield” basis, with cutting in proportion to growth rate. We are breeding faster growing hybrids of poplar and pine. But we still must import 80 per cent of our newsprint. For we go on producing more and more of our major product—people and newspaper readers. The human calendar remains unchanged.

Recorders of change, knowing all about all the wars, what the vast majority of newspapers want is peace; and The World Calendar proposed, many of them feel, is a factor in the making of world peace. It would at the same time make peace for them and their foreign correspondents with all their foreign correspondents with all the varying calendars still in use. India has 30 different calendars. An American correspondent stationed at Istanbul, crossroads of many cultures, must reckon not only with the peculiarities of his own calendar but with those of Mohammedans, Armenians, Jews and the Eastern Orthodox Church. An English correspondent in Kashmir, who knew intimately the calendars of the Far East, had to wire home to learn the date of Easter.

Up our way more of us read the small local newspapers than large ones. But we have become in essence willy-nilly a suburb of one of the world’s largest cities. We have lost our precious isolation and with it a good deal of our independence.

Like it or not, we have been turned into world citizens, in tune with the atomic age, if the atomic age can be said to carry a tune. When we and the newspapers, which are our voices, say the word, we shall have a new calendar—The World Calendar—accurate, regular, time saving. We grew up in a simpler world. We

know, more surely than our grandchildren, perhaps that newspapers and calendars, war and peace, begin and end with US.

[Editor's note -- The past fifty years have additionally improved printing methods. With The World Calendar indefinitely tabled in 1956, the United States has since legislated that most holidays shall fall on Monday. This added convenience, however, shrouds confusion with illusion of fix: All Monday holiday dates continue to shift within the month and non-Monday holidays have yet to stop floating within the week.]

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