

The

"LET YOUR HAIR DOWN"

Column

We had a discussion in the office the other day about the applicability of the Cost of Living Index prepared by the Bureau of the Census and Statistics and published from month to month in this *Journal*. Sometimes we have to omit the table for lack of space, and when this happens there are usually telephone calls protesting about the omission.

It is quite widely held that the figures in this table under the "Purchasing power of the Peso" column, are of general applicability, but this is not the case. According to the caption, the Index is based on the cost of living of a "wage-earner's family in Manila" and the peso-purchasing-power figures are reciprocal. Inquiry at the Bureau revealed that the wage on which the figures are based is taken to be ₱200 a month or less.

Persons with a larger income and therefore able to maintain a higher standard of living, spend not only absolutely, but relatively, more for almost everything they buy, — especially, in Manila, for food and housing. Consuming, as they do, the more expensive and generally imported foods, and living in the better types of houses, which are still scarce and the rents for which are extraordinarily high, the purchasing power of the peso is lower for them than is indicated in the table. It is true that a poor man's peso buys as many oranges or as much beefsteak as a rich man's, but the poor man, unfortunately enough, must generally forego such provender. Persons who have the prestige of an office, or profession, or business to maintain are virtually compelled to keep up a "front" not required from those of lesser position.

For the ₱200 wage-earner, the purchasing power of the peso, according to the Index, has risen since January, 1946, from .1657 to .2825 in June, 1948, on the basis of 1.00 in 1941. In other words, a peso is still worth only a little over a fourth of what it used to be for him.

For a person earning ₱500 a month, or ₱750, or ₱1000, or more, the peso, for the sort of goods he must buy to maintain his standard of living, is worth even less.

Just what the peso is worth for persons in the higher categories, no one knows. Dr. Leon Ma. Gonzalez, when asked, said that to determine this would require a special survey.

We realized, too late, that this is a *h* — of a way to open a column supposedly devoted to the lighter side of life.

Mr. Kenneth F. Noble, Canadian Government Trade Commissioner in Hong Kong, wrote the *Journal* in part as follows:

"The incoming mail has brought me the January to April issues of the American Chamber of Commerce *Journal*. I have read these journals with interest and appreciation and I am now writing to enquire if it is possible to continue the name of this office on your complimentary mailing list . . .

"It is evident from the Trade Returns of the Philippines that products of Canadian origin are in demand in the Philippines. I have in mind, therefore, that the copy of the publication, 'Canada Trade Index, 1947', which is going forward to you under separate cover by registered mail, will be an addition to your library records which may be of use to your members.

"In connection with this Index I would suggest that although the book will serve as a ready reference as to products manufactured in Canada and as to the companies manufacturing such products, that no indication is given as to—(a) whether the com-

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panies are already represented, (b) whether by international allocation of markets the manufacturer is precluded from quoting for shipment to the Philippines.

"In general, I have this information available here in more detailed records and will be very happy indeed to advise any of your members that may be interested in Canadian products in rather more detail than is possible in a printed directory.

"Again expressing my appreciation of the copies of your *Journal* which have been supplied, and with compliments, I am, yours faithfully," etc.

The Canada Trade Index referred to by Mr. Noble may be consulted at the Chamber offices.

One wouldn't think that the *Journal* would be read "from cover to cover" anywhere except, possibly, by some readers in the Philippines, but the following reached us from the Director of the Foreign Trade Bureau of the St. Louis (Missouri) Chamber of Commerce:

"I have just received a complimentary copy of your journal, and have read it through from cover to cover. It certainly gives a very good picture of conditions in the Philippines at the present time.

"I want to congratulate you on the fine editorial work evidenced in this journal.

"Sincerely yours,

"H. LYMAN SMITH."

A letter from the manager of the Atlas Powder Company in San Francisco was also flattering. It read:

"We understand from various sources that the *Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce* is an excellent source of information dealing with industry in its various phases as applied to the Philippine Republic.

"We would very much appreciate receiving a copy of your publication and also information relative to the cost of a subscription as we believe it is quite possible we shall be interested in some of the news published, particularly that which concerns the mining industry from time to time.

"Yours very truly

"ATLAS POWDER COMPANY
"W. T. MAHOOD
"Manager"

"Dear Editor:

"What piffle,—that about your goodbyes to your grandchildren, which you closed your 'Hair-Down' column with last month. Whom do you think you are interesting in your grandchildren and your grand self? Damme, how you rile me! And do you think those hard-nut business men you work for give a damn about you and your grandchildren? It is to laugh. Why don't you get wise to yourself? I'll give you a tip,—read Dale Carnegie's 'How to Win Friends and Influence People'. If that is what you want, that is. He'll tell you the truth, that people are not interested in you, but in themselves, and that you must be interested in them and talk about what interests them,

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to make a favorable impression. I know you work hard to do that. As for me, I don't care about making a favorable impression. I get a kick out of making an unfavorable one on both the wolves and the sheep of this world. But you wouldn't understand. You only think I am 'confused'. I see things the way they are. And they are not nice for anybody's grandchildren. I am glad I'll never have any.—*Constant Admirer.*"

"Wow", said the editor, wiping his forehead with a moist handkerchief. "The guy has something this month . . . But has he got me down? No, by gum. He may be right about that personal stuff in this column, but there's an inconsistency in that Dale Carnegie business. But I'll have to read the book first,—something I have been avoiding ever since I first heard of it ten or twelve years ago. More about that later. As for things not being 'nice' for anybody's grandchildren, that's true enough if you think of many millions of children and if you think of a possible future atom-bomb war. Yet, for many millions of other people and their children, this, on the whole, is still a better world today than it ever was in the past. It is for us to make it better for all. We must not fall into cynicism, hatred, and despair. What good is 'Admirer' either to himself or others? To 'get a kick' out of making an



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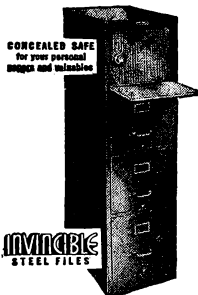
unfavorable impression on everybody is indeed an insane perversion of the normal human character.

"Maybe that goodbye anecdote and that grammar stuff was not so hot", worried the editor, "but I have my reasons for putting that sort of thing in once in a while. I used to tell an occasional funny story about my children in the 'Four o'Clock' column of the old *Philippine Magazine* (now its the grandchildren), and readers seemed to like them. Some thought they were not real children, but 'dream children', like Charles Lamb's, which I made up. Now this *Journal* is so heavy with weighty argument and statistics and other dry data, that I think some effort should be made to lighten things a little, introduce some human interest. So I try to make a little fun and I usually make it at myself, not because I consciously want to obtrude myself (I hope), but because I don't feel any too free about making fun at the expense of the Chamber and other business and governmental dignitaries I come in contact with.

"And then, if I am not awfully wrong, there's a kind of public interest in the editor tribe, as there is in writers generally, artists, actors. A glamor, you know! All of us interesting persons are, by force and virtue of our professions, personality exploiters, exhibitionists in a mild way. The public seems to put up with us generally, if not always truly appreciative. Only rarely does a fellow like 'Admirer' emit a growl, yelp, or cat-call. That does take us,—we who commonly meet with such adulation, aback somewhat, I can tell you. And it's really not right. Imagine a poor clown, capering, gibing, grinning, and earnestly sweating, and, on the part of the on-lookers, not even a pretense at cooperation; dead pans, all around him. It's hell, that is.

So I am never going to mention little Helen, and Emily, Eric, and Siebe (just born), again, nor will I ever tell anybody about little Penny, Jacky, Pammy, Jessie, and Lily, other grandchildren of mine, who live in Davao. I will only squeeze this in: For a representative of what *Commerce* (organ of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce) calls the "adventitious" interests here, I have not done so badly for the population of the country. And I still think I have done them all a favor in helping them into this world, even that part of it known as the Philippines. Greater faith hath no man.

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