

## Independent-Enterprise

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Editor and Publisher

### Johnston Pardon

**C**OMING AS QUITE A surprise to Idaho citizens last week was the announcement of Attorney General Bert Miller to the effect that he had a change of heart and would vote for the pardon of Duncan Johnston serving a term for murder in the Idaho state prison. Miller's vote, together with that of Secretary of State George Curtis made a majority of the Idaho state pardon board. Governor C. A. Bottolfsen voted against the pardon. Johnston was convicted in Twin Falls county, the state supreme court ordered a re-trial and Johnston was convicted the second time in his home county and the second trial was upheld by the Idaho supreme court, all of which should have been sufficient evidence for pardon board members that the convicted man should have completed his term.

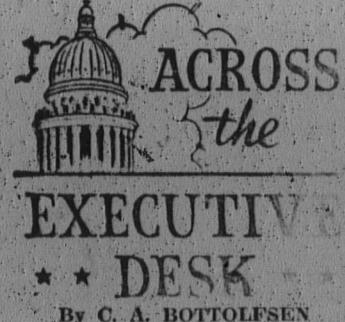
Miller, who has consistently and on many occasions voted to deny the pardon, based his stand on a lengthy statement released to some newspapers. In his release Miller justified his position by the statement of jurors to the effect that they did not believe that Johnston fired the fatal shot but were convinced that he knew who did. This would seem to be the layman's lame excuse for the state pardon board to free a man who had been convicted twice by his neighbors and the verdict upheld by the state supreme court.

The action of Attorney General Miller and Secretary of State George Curtis in granting a pardon to Duncan Johnston will have its effect on those inclined to crime and is indication that clemency will be extended them by men who place their judgment above that of the courts.

### A Natural Reaction

**O**PA OFFICIALS in New York City should be nearly convinced that housewives have no desire to play detective. In reply to four thousand personal letters in quest of price checkers, the Manhattan War Price and Rafting Board managed to secure eleven women volunteers. Eleven out of four thousand is a pretty poor batting average. According to the O.P.A., a New York housewife simply does not want to be a "police woman."

Housewives have always had their own way of dealing with merchants who seek to exploit consumers. Their methods are effective. They just quit patronizing stores that arouse their ire. As a result, this country has perhaps the most efficient retail distribution system in the world. Housewives are satisfied that it is treating them fairly, and that retailers on the whole are doing the best job they can under difficult circumstances. Therefore, why make their task harder?



Two cases before the January session of the state pardon board have come in for a great deal of publicity. One was the case of Stonewall Bellengee, 75, who escaped the state prison in 1918 while serving a term for manslaughter. He returned voluntarily Tuesday night to the prison and appeared Wednesday before the board to receive a full pardon. He had not been apprehended at any time during the 25 years which he had spent prospecting in Montana, Oregon and California.

The second case was the pardoning by a 2 to 1 vote of Duncan M. Johnston, former mayor of Twin Falls. Johnston, charged with first degree murder, was tried before district court in Twin Falls county, which found him guilty. The state supreme court ordered a new trial which again convicted him, upheld by the supreme court, and again held a rehearing upholding its previous verdict supporting the second conviction. In the light of this action, this office could not vote for a pardon. Johnston will go into war industry and attempt to rebuild his career, which rightly or wrongly, was interrupted five years ago.

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No progress can be reported on the attempts to secure for the community of Atlanta access to medical and other attention which will be cut off by the refusal of the War Production Board of funds for highway snow removal. Normally a strictly gold mining community, it was kept open for tungsten production and exploration by the same agency which now refuses its existence.

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The State Planning Board will convene Monday for the first meeting of the year to hear progress reports on post war planning. Included in the preliminary plans to be submitted will be a plan for financing such works on a strictly cash-on-the-barrel-head policy, based on present tax paying abilities of the state's citizens.

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Few reports from federal bureaus are received with much enthusiasm at this desk, but a recent report of the O.P.A. shows that the State of Idaho cut travel in 1943 by its employees by 47 percent under 1942. This is 7 percent more than was asked by the state, and puts Idaho among the eight states of the union to accomplish the 40 percent reduction asked because of war conditions. The same report shows substantial reductions in telephone and telegraph communications by the state.

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Farmers and other non-highway users may have to wait for gasoline tax refunds; the increase in the ratio of non-highway gas sold to the amount sold for highway use has used up the refunds balances. The amount set aside for refunds is a fixed percentage, and

### Dilley Writes From Somewhere

A most interesting letter has recently been received from Richard Dilley, manager of an employee of the First Security Bank of the city, and now with the U. S. Forces somewhere in the South Pacific area as follows:

"Your Christmas greeting and note arrived Christmas afternoon. You couldn't have timed it better, and as always, it was most pleasant to hear from you again.

"Christmas was as nice as could be, in spite of the strangeness of unopened degrees in the shade on a holiday designed for snow and sleigh bells. We ate wisely and well had the day off, and part of Sunday to recuperate in. Yesterday (Sunday) we listened to the radio in the afternoon. The Command Performance re-broadcast was a special 'Christmas Edition' and Dinah Shore sang 'Summertime' as a gift to the boys all over the world. We loved it.

"The movie Christmas evening was 'Watch on the Rhine' with Bette Davis. Surely was a good picture. Bette is still about my favorite among fine actresses. The picture was not a particularly good choice for the occasion, but in a way it was appropriate. Made me (for one) realize again just why this Christmas among others was being spent away from home. The picture portrayed very well the American attitude (now) toward the growth of Fascism in the U. S. and abroad."

"A week ago General Marshall stopped enroute from his conferences abroad. He gave an informal speech that was the best heard yet around here. Everyone admired him tremendously. It seemed strange to hear him mention having dinner with Stalin right before last." What a tiny world this has become.

"Perhaps this will set to the cold stings of Payette in time for me to wish you all a very happy New Year."

### National Forests Are Consolidated

In line with Forest Service policy of economy in the use of money, manpower and efficiency in operation, consolidation of the Weiser and Idaho National Forests into one unit to be known hereafter as the Payette National Forest, with J. W. Farrell as forest supervisor, and the Boise and Payette National Forests into another unit to be known as the Boise National Forest, with Thomas H. Van Meter as forest supervisor, was announced today by W. B. Rice, regional forester at Ogden, Utah.

The Idaho and Weiser National Forests will be renamed the Payette National Forest in order to eliminate state names for national forests, and because the headquarters of the new unit will be located on Payette Lakes and the headwaters of the Payette river are within its boundaries. It will be composed of 19 ranger districts.

When the Weiser National Forest was first created more than 35 years ago, it was a logical administrative unit, but subsequent changes in the methods and speed of transportation and communication and the stabilization of work which has come about since that time now make it a unit which is too small to warrant the maintenance of a separate organization.

Selection of McCall as the headquarters for the new unit was indicated as a result of the strategic central location, the high fire hazard in that vicinity and to the north, and the large investment in headquarter building.

A principal forest ranger will be located at Weiser in the Federal building to handle the Main Creek territory. Under the Forest Service decentralized system of organization there will be very little local business which cannot be satisfactorily handled by the principal ranger in charge.

The new unit will graze 11,250 cattle and 78,300 sheep owned by more than two hundred permittees.

The approximate timber cut on the new unit in 1943 was over 32,000,000 feet and the largest cut of an annual total in the Intermountain region.

The new unit will have a total gross area of 2,411,639 acres and will be made up of parts of the major drainages of the Payette, Salmon and Weiser rivers and will extend from Main Creek on the south to the Chamberlain Basin country to the northeast.

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