

## Anti-Evolution in Florida

The anti-evolution bill before the Florida legislature passed the House, amended to the point of emasculation, a short time before adjournment. It immediately became the subject of hot and bitter controversy in the Senate, but finally died in the hands of the committee to which it had been assigned, when the legislature adjourned. The proponents of the measure now declare their intention of making an election issue of the matter, and since most of the newspapers are not in sympathy with them they are carrying on their campaign by means of circulars, distributed most heavily in the districts of legislators who opposed the bill. Several of these have expressed acute resentment at such tactics, and an acrimonious fight is in prospect.

The amended measure forbade the adoption of "any text book which teaches as fact any theory that denies the existence of God, that denies the divine creation of man, or which teaches atheism or infidelity, or that contains vulgar, obscene or indecent matter." This bears little resemblance to the original bill, which was patterned closely after the Tennessee law which gained notoriety in connection with the Dayton trial two years ago.

One of the last acts of the legislature was the passage of a resolution calling for a committee to investigate the text books used in the state-supported colleges. This brought forth vehement protests, and one of the protestants, the editor of the Florida State News, was denounced on the floor of the Senate and finally denied the privilege of entrance there. He returned the fire with an editorial barrage that smacked of eighteenth-century political invective. "The spectacle, and the language used, has no parallel in the history of the state. It was the language one would expect to hear on the docks and levees," he concluded. Thereafter the Senate reversed its action, and not only readmitted the editor but added his name to the list of newspaper representatives which it deemed worthy of special commendation.

Throughout the fight the independent colleges of the state, which would not be affected in any way by the passage of anti-evolution legislation, have for the most part stood stoutly by their threatened colleagues in the state institutions.

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## Flood Due To Sinking

The slow sinking of the lower Mississippi valley, closer and closer to sea level, is suggested as one of the possible causes of disastrous floods like the one now raging, in a geological essay prepared by Dr. David E. White of the National Research Council for the meeting in Washington of the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association. The Gulf coast is not known to be sinking, but that may be simply because adequate studies have not yet been made of it, Dr. White stated. He pointed out the well-known fact that the Atlantic coast is sinking at the rate of about a foot a century as of importance in this connection.

"Geologists do not know whether a portion of the lower Mississippi basin is now being depressed as the result of downward bending of the crust of the earth in this region of the continent," Dr. White continued, "but they do know that there has been downward movement of very late date, geologically speaking, in this part of the Gulf coast. Some geologists believe the movement to be still in progress. Further, the well-known occurrence of earthquakes in the stretch of the valley between Cairo, or New Madrid, and the Memphis region shows that movement, with probable warping or dislocation of the outer part of the crust, is going on in that part of the valley. The earthquakes are unmistakable signs of such changes, mostly out of sight, in the buried strata.

"Finally, it has long been known and has recently been confirmed that the region to the north embracing the Upper Great Lakes is now being tilted, the area on the north being in process of rising higher above tide level than the area to the south. Somewhere to the south there should hinge a line, if there is no bending, to the farther southward of which depression or sinking, probably with some warping or twisting of the crust, may now be going on with perhaps as much certainty as earthquakes happen between New Madrid and Memphis.

"If a part of the Gulf coast embracing the lower Mississippi reaches is now subsiding, the rate of sinking will be so slow as to be imperceptible except by scientific methods, and the effects may appear negligible at first thought; yet such a movement, however slow, would be of ultimate far-reaching significance, for it must gradually in the course of time cause

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## Indians Celebrate Solstice

By ALBERT B. REAGAN

Midsummer festivals are observed by practically all the religions of the world, and the American Indian customs show no exception to this rule. Of all the native peoples, perhaps none have more elaborate modes of observance than those of the Pueblos, who combine their own age-old observance with those of a partially absorbed Christianity, and transfer their tribal feast-days to coincide with those of the saints of the Church.

The summer solstice begins June 10, according to the Jemez reckoning, and the winter solstice about November 27. At these times the Snake Society goes into retreat in the kiva to pray for rain. After a number of days the men emerge. Then follows the Fiesta of San Juanito or St. John, on June 24.

After mass at the church on this day the image of the saint is carried to a booth in the plaza by a procession from the church. Soon a dance in honor of the saint is begun. It is a double-column *tablita* affair, in which clowns often play a conspicuous part.

Accompanying this dance is a mock torrel combat, or bull burlesque, which keeps up a general hurrah through the entire day. In this peculiar mock performance a man leads a mock bull made of a bull hide, or a black cloth, spotted all over with white rings, stretched over a wooden frame supported by two or more men inside it. He enters the plaza, followed by a dozen or more dirty, shabbily dressed, slouch-hatted boys and men, representing white and Mexican cowboys. Their faces and hands are painted white; one wears a head of red hair, another a false moustache. Some are garlanded with yellow flowers, and circles within circles and "U. S. A." are chalked on the backs of their coats.

At intervals these cowboys tease the bull with sticks till he gets enraged, belows, and charges upon them. Feigning to be overcome they fall before him in the mud and water, and are trampled under foot by the enraged "beast." The "beast" then charges upon whomever may chance to be in the street at the time, making women scream and scaring children. The keepers, after wallowing in the mud till it would be hard to

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### Indians Celebrate Solstice

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tell by their appearance that they were human beings, make chase after it, and after much cracking of whips, bellowing and hallooing they recapture it. In the intervals while the mock bull is quiet its keepers take it from house to house, and from the inmates receive offerings of bread and other eatables, to be presented as an offering to the gods whose symbols are in the kivas.

A feast is then spread in front of the quarters of this society, while the "bull" rests at the foot of the adjacent kiva ladder. The antics are then renewed, and the cowboys lasso him again and again. About the plaza he drags them, breaking away from them time after time, often charging upon and upsetting the table and scattering the eatables.

At this juncture a bugler steps out of the Eagle Watcher's house and plays: "A Hot Time in the Old Town To-night," "Wedding Bells," "Yankee Doodle," "Tipperary," and so on, as the bull baiters, now semi-clowns, dance clumsily about the plaza until darkness closes the festivities.

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### Flood Due to Sinking

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slackening of the currents; it must slowly render it more difficult for the river to keep its lower trench clear from filling by sediments, and it must carry regions subject to flood lower down and nearer sea level, except as, on the other hand, these regions may be built up at the same time by flood contributions of sediments derived primarily from the higher lands or by organic debris, accumulating especially in the swampy areas.

"It is important that the question of the slow subsidence of any part of the lower portion of the Mississippi trench system be definitely determined by scientific and engineering observation and research. If downward movement is now in progress we must know the rate of subsidence, and if this rate is sufficiently great, engineering plans, if they are to be permanently successful, should take cognizance of the fact and be adapted to counteract its effects. This is a research problem of national scope as well as importance, and should be thoroughly organized, carefully manned and carried to conclusions, possibly under Government auspices, with such collateral aid from state agencies of a kind fitting into a well-planned research program as may be forthcoming from the states concerned."

Of more local and immediate importance, Dr. White suggested, is the question of the silting up of the river channels. The levee system is based partly on the assumption that the streams confined therein will scour their own channels clean, but to date nobody has taken the trouble to find out whether this actually happens. If the rivers really drop their loads of silt and sand on their bottoms instead of carrying them out to sea and dumping them there, according to current engineering assumptions, eventually the bottoms of the rivers will be higher than their banks, and the game of levee-versus-river can go on upward indefinitely, but always with increasing peril to the lowlands. A geological study of river-bottom deposits, Dr. White stated, can be made in a few years at relatively small expense, and he recommended that steps in that direction be taken immediately.

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A method of making sugar from sawdust was recently reported by a British chemist.

Machines which cut weeds under water are being used in reclaiming swamp lands of Florida.

### Florida Anti-Evolution

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An outstanding figure has been Pres. Hamilton Holt, of Rollins College, at Winter Park. In a statement to the *New York Times*, Pres. Holt announced that he had refused a substantial gift to his college which had been offered with the proviso that the teaching of evolution be dropped from the curriculum. Pres. Holt outlined his credo on the freedom of teaching as follows:

"A college that is in any respect limited in seeking or teaching the truth, is to the extent of that limit a propaganda institution. A college that limits its own freedom is a propaganda institution by choice. A college that is required to limit its freedom is a propaganda institution by compulsion . . . I consider it the duty of those entrusted with the education of youth, in a crisis of this kind, not to take the easy and safe course of silence but to make public their convictions. I deem it an honor to be associated with a faculty whose members take these views."

Science News-Letter, June 18, 1927

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