

TIME OUT OF JOINT

Reformers Press for Calendar Revision

FOR years now groups of people in various parts of the world have been agitating for calendar reform, and last year the subject received greater prominence than ever when it was brought up before the United Nations. What is wrong with our present calendar? It is irregular, unstable, and unbalanced, reformers say. Every year statutory holidays fall on different days of the week, quarters are unequal in length, months all begin on different week-days and each year begins on a different day too. This irregularity causes continued and never-ceasing change in matters which should logically be routine. For one thing, every December hundreds of millions of new calendars have to be printed, using up tons of valuable paper and much valuable time.

Reformers propose one or two simple, practical changes which, they say, would prevent all this uncertainty. They point out that down through the ages, as mankind developed and civilisations improved, the calendar was frequently altered. In the past, calendar reformers met with opposition, but to-day we regard the old calendars as crude makeshift arrangements. Yet our present calendar is a makeshift too; it was borrowed from the Romans.

The first Roman calendar was based on the moon's cycle of 29½ days, giving a year of about 355 days. This meant that every now and then an extra

month had to be inserted to even things up, and by 54 B.C. matters had become so confused that Julius Caesar, acting on the advice of his astronomer Sosigenes, decided to adopt a calendar based on the solar year of 365¼ days. This arrangement lasted for 1,600 years, but by that time men had begun to notice that according to the calendar spring was getting earlier and earlier every year. Dante worked it out that in a few more centuries winter would be over before January 1 appeared on the calendar. He recorded his observation in his *Paradiso*, where he says in Canto 27, "But ere that January be all unwintered by that hundredth part neglected upon earth, so shall these upper circles roar."

A Slight Miscalculation

What was this "hundredth part neglected?" Astronomers had worked out that the interval between one spring and the next (the seasonal year) was 365.2422 days long, not 365¼ as Julius Caesar had been told. So in 1582 Pope Gregory XIII introduced more reforms. The Julian calendar was based on a 365-day year with a leap year in every four, but Pope Gregory found that the slight miscalculation of a hundredth part of a day could be corrected if century years (i.e., 1600, 1700 and so on) were made leap years only when they were divisible by 400. Thus 1600 and 2000 would be leap years, but 1700, 1800 and 1900 would not. To correct the accumulated error of the past he decreed that the day following October 4, 1582, should be called October 15.

Things were now pretty well straightened out, but some countries were slow in adopting the new calendar. The Germans and Dutch didn't adopt it until 1700, China followed suit only in 1912, Russia in 1918, and Turkey in 1927. In British countries the Gregorian calendar was adopted in 1752, when 11 extra days were dropped by calling the day after September 2, September 14. But a lot of people rebelled at this arbitrary decision, and riots broke out in London and other towns. The wage-earners thought that the Government was trying to cheat them out of their hard-earned pay, since at the end of September professional workers received their usual month's salary, while those working on a daily basis got only 19 days pay. But the new calendar became law, and we have been living and working by it ever since.

The 365th Day

The main trouble with the Gregorian calendar, present-day reformers say, is that 365 won't divide evenly by seven, so that each year has 52 weeks and one day over. This extra day is the reason why new calendars have to be printed every year, because it throws all our dates out. Thus January 1 in 1946

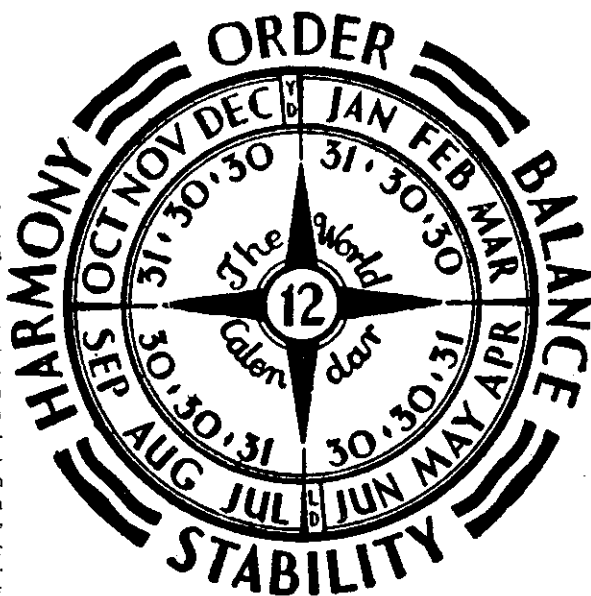
was a Tuesday, in 1947 it was a Wednesday, and in 1948 a Thursday. Leap year is an added complication, since, because 1948 is a leap year, January 1 in 1949 will be a Saturday instead of a Friday. For this reason most calendar reforms are based on a 364-day year.

There are three main schemes for reform. That which has been most widely accepted is sponsored by the World Calendar Association. It proposes a calendar of 12 months with four quarters of 91 days, an international holiday (Year End Day) between December 30 and January 1, and another international holiday (Leap Year Day) falling once every four years, between June 30 and July 1. Christmas would always be on a Monday, January 1 always a Sunday, and so on. The International Fixed Calendar League propose 13 months of 28 days each, with the new month, called Sol, coming between June and July. This scheme, however, has not a great deal of support. The third scheme, the Edwards Perpetual Calendar, proposes 12 months and two international holidays like the World Calendar, but every week starts on a Monday instead of Sunday.

The idea of a 364-day year is not new. It was first thought of by an Italian priest named Mastrofini in 1834. The World Calendar scheme, which is regarded by astronomers as the most accurate and most logical method of reform, is sponsored by an American woman, Elisabeth Achelis, who has taken over Mastrofini's ideas. She maintains that with the World Calendar in operation there would be no need for a visual calendar at all. Instead of children at school memorising the old rhyme, "Thirty days hath September," etc., they would only need to learn a few salient points of the World Calendar to be able to know what date any day of the week would fall on for ever after.

Apart from the convenience of having a calendar which is good for every year of our existence, reformers claim other advantages for the 364-day year. For one thing, they say, the business of banks, mortgagors and mortgagees, retail and wholesale merchants, and all others who operate on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis would be greatly

(continued on next page)



THE "TRADEMARK," or symbol, of the World Calendar Association

FIRST QUARTER																				
JANUARY							FEBRUARY							MARCH						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
29	30	31					26	27	28					26	27	28	29	30	31	
SECOND QUARTER																				
APRIL							MAY							JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	
30														25	26	27	28	29	30	
THIRD QUARTER																				
JULY							AUGUST							SEPTEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
30	31																			
FOURTH QUARTER																				
OCTOBER							NOVEMBER							DECEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30			31						

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JANUARY							FEBRUARY							MARCH						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
SECOND QUARTER																				
APRIL							MAY							JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4							1
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
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JULY							AUGUST							SEPTEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	27	28	29	30				24	25	26	27	28	29	30
29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
FOURTH QUARTER																				
OCTOBER							NOVEMBER							DECEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30

TWO CALENDARS for 1950—on the left the Gregorian calendar, with which everyone is familiar, on the right the revised calendar proposed by the World Calendar Association, showing the two "days apart" (at the end of June and December) marked by asterisks. The June 31 holiday would, of course, not be observed in 1950, since that is not a Leap Year