

Dedicated to a Calendar

Willard E. Edwards stands before the world a man dedicated. His banner has carried him before officials of 24 nations, to Congress, and on a trip around the world.

For 20 years he has been campaigning to give the world something he feels it needs badly, a new calendar.

Ha!, you may say, a crackpot! No, as a matter of fact, he isn't. Willard Edwards may be a campaigner in a day when campaigners are shied away from, but he is anything but nuts. Everywhere he has gone on his crusades, the right people have agreed his ideas are sound, are what they need, but they have been afraid to be the first one to see if the water is cold. They have not wanted to be first to jump.

Perhaps in July, when his plan for a calendar comes before the United Nations, the wall of social inertia will crumble. Meanwhile, he waits, watching, with a patience several times called the equal to that of Job.

Thirty-five years ago, before he had developed his ability to wait, Edwards met the challenge that started his devotion to a world cause. In a Latin class, he learned about two Roman Caesars, Julius and Augustus, who arbitrarily had snatched a day from February to add to the months named after themselves, July and August.

Amazed at this high-handed manipulation, the young Edwards asked his teacher if she didn't think they had left us an extremely irregular calendar. "Do you think you can make a better one," she replied.

As an answer, Edwards went home and worked out what he now calls the Perpetual Calendar. "I showed it to one of my favorite teachers," Edwards said, "and he commented approvingly, suggesting that I keep it and that some day I might be able to do something with it.

"Then," he continued, "I put it away in a notebook. It was several years later that I chanced upon it. After telling friends about it, stories appeared in several newspapers and in the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation plant magazine. From there it was picked up by other publications in this country and abroad.

The Perpetual Calendar has a number of advantages, including the fact that it could be used year after year, and when one is familiar with it, need not be used at all, but can be carried in the head with less trouble than "Thirty days hath September . . ."

These, Edwards explained, are the main disadvantages of the present Gregorian calendar:

Inequality exists in the lengths of months, quarters and half years. Our months contain from 28 to 31 days, and quarters run 90, 91, 92 and 92 days respectively.

The present calendar changes every year, so that each year begins and ends on a different day of the week from the preceding one; holidays wander over all the days of the week, and periodic events cannot be fixed with precision; positions of the weeks in the quarters vary each year, overlapping the divisions of the years and quarters in a different way each time, complicating comparisons and statistics; leap year comes in at an odd time and fouls up computations even further.

Since, from year, to year, neither months nor the years contain the same number of individual week days—work days—, statistics are jumbled further.

The first and fifteenth of each month are important dates for rent-paying and paydays, and fall frequently on weekends.

Also, under the Gregorian Calendar, Easter varies between March 22 and April 25, a range of 35 days for the celebration of one holiday.

Edwards' Perpetual Calendar would operate in this way. The months of January, April, July and October would have 30 days and would begin on Monday, the first day of his week. February, May, August and November would begin on Wednesday and have 30 days, while March, June, September, and December would begin on Friday and would have 31 days. The pattern for months would go 30, 30, 31, 30, 30, and 31, from January through June and on through the rest of the year.

The advantages as explained patiently by Edwards are these:

1. New Year's Day would continue as the first day of each year, but it would not be a Monday or a Sunday or even a Sadie Hawkins Day. It would be New Year's Day, following Sunday, December 31, and the day before January 1. It would be, as it is now, a roaring holiday, but a day set apart.

2. Leap years, a second day apart called Leap Year Day would be observed between Sunday, June 31, and Monday, July 1, to compensate for the loss of our annual Leap Year.

3. Looking at business, Edwards explained that the last day of each quarter, the 90th day, would fall on a Saturday, convenient for figuring taxes, government reports, bookkeeping and stock taking.

4. The first and the 15th of each month fall always on weekdays.

5. Easter Sunday, on April 14, is close to the historic date. Other holidays, such as Christmas (Monday) would fall on the same days each year.

6. The day of the week for any day in this or any other year could be figured in a few seconds by remembering the formula, "30, 30, 31; Monday, Wednesday, Friday." This follows, because for example, July, August and September have respectively 30, 30 and 31 days and begin on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; the same holds true for the months in each quarter.

7. Monday is the first day of each week in agreement with the common practice.

8. There would be 26 weekdays plus Sundays in each month, 91 days in each three-month period, and 65 school days in each quarter, except for holidays and vacations.

9. The Calendar would provide a number of three day holidays, and there would be no Friday the 13th to plague superstitions, an important consideration for folk who don't walk under ladders or step on cracks in the pavement.

And so Edwards, after more than 20 years, sits under his rainbow, not quite able to get to the end and his perpetual pot of gold.