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Eaton Laughs, Warns

By Frank Morris

After a half century of empire building and writing personal checks for as much as 18 million dollars, Cyrus Eaton could be expected to burn with anger if made an object of laughter.

At the Economic Club yesterday, 920 Detroiters laughed loudly when Eaton was reminded that his country might like to trade him to Russia for Boris Pasternak, who has been compelled to decline a Nobel prize for his book criticizing the Soviet.

For one fleeting moment, the warm sparkle left the eyes of this 75-year-old capitalist who is the most literate American defending Russia without being on the suspect list of the FBI.

HE TOOK OUT his glasses and glanced at the written question from the audience—a question that included the proposed trade.

And then Eaton laughed, too. But the courtly, gentle, white haired Eaton gave the proposition the serious attention he gives to all statements involving the future of the United States and the world. "Pasternak would not want to live anywhere but in Russia," commented Eaton, who was born in Canada and became a U. S. citizen in 1913.

"AND I COULD live nowhere than in America. Although I am an adopted son, I don't think anyone can love the United States more than I."

The largest crowd in the history of the club jammed into the ballroom of Veterans' Memorial for Eaton's address.

If they went to scoff at the industrialist's faith in the sincerity of the Soviet's offer of friendship, all left with a new awareness of the possible penalty of doubting—a penalty that could obliterate life and turn the world to dust and ashes.

As chairman of the board of the C. & O. Railroad, and the controlling figure in enterprises worth two billion dollars, Eaton has been a rough-and-tumble fighter on the Wall Street scene most of his life.

HE HAS LOST fortunes and made fortunes. His check for 18 million dollars was written in 1926 to save the Trumbull Steel Co. of Warren, O.

But he is the antithesis of the flinty capitalist with the big cigar and the cruel heart. Eaton set out in life to become a Baptist preacher.

Instead, when a young man he went to work for the late John D. Rockefeller. Before long, he was creating his first public utility empire.

But Eaton never lost the gentle grace and love of humanity that would have blessed his career had he remained in



CAPITALIST CYRUS EATON, 75, AND HIS WIFE WHO VISITED DETROIT
Refusal of U. S. to trust Russia is frustrating, he tells Economic Club audience

Detroit Times Photo

the service of his church.

HE DOESN'T smoke or drink, or swear—even at a ticker tape.

The years have been kind. The lines they have made accentuate his friendly eyes and smile and are the lines of character.

As he talked yesterday in a suite at the Statler Hilton Hotel, a crew of five secretaries and assistants bustled in nearby rooms.

It became obvious that his faith in the ancient dream of goodwill on earth is not a new plaything of a mind grown tired from the demands of commerce.

IT HAS BEEN there since his boyhood in Pugwash, Nova Scotia, on the northern coast where the wet winter winds scream down from the ice packs and summers are as glorious as the scent of arbutus.

No tired old man is this advocate of faith among men.

He is at his office in Cleveland at 8 a.m. every working day although the 160-year-old farmhouse in which he lives is halfway to Akron.

On his 75th birthday next Dec. 27, Eaton will be skiing in Quebec. Mrs. Eaton will be with him. Although confined to a wheel chair since an attack

by polio, Mrs. Eaton is his constant traveling companion and was with him during a visit to Russia in September.

EATON STILL rides regularly at his farms in Ohio and in Nova Scotia, where he raises show horses and prize Scottish shorthorn cattle.

He still skates. But he has not played hockey since 1955, when he took up skiing as a regular winter activity.

He is erect, paunchless, and there is a spring in his walk. He speaks quietly, choosing his words in the manner of a scholar—which he is.

Eaton's several "think sessions" at Pugwash attended by scholars, intellectuals, scientists and philosophers from throughout the world have given him new stature far above his high place as a capitalist.

They have been publicized widely in the last three years. Actually, Eaton started these gatherings 12 years ago. He has remained a host who is more of a bystander than a participant.

HE HOPES these gatherings of the best minds from both sides of all curtains will help the world find permanent peace and an end to the bankrupting cold war.

To Eaton, the refusal of the United States to trust Khrushchev is frustrating.

"If two major industries were on a brink of a disastrous clash that could kill both, the presidents would sit down at lunch and find a solution," he said.

"President Eisenhower and Khrushchev can follow the same procedure.

"Khrushchev is pleading for the opportunity.

"Secretary of State Dulles, who is terrorized by all things smacking of socialism, won't let Eisenhower take even one step toward the Soviet."

IN EATON'S eyes, the problem is that simple.

He said he thinks he is making progress in his attempt to get his message through to the mothers and fathers of the United States.

He is a man rich in faith. So he will keep trying as long as he is able.

"They say this planet is less than a grain of sand in the universe," he sighed.

"But it is important to us because it is the only one we shall ever visit.

"Let's not destroy it."