

Headlines of History Seem to Stutter

HISTORY repeats so often that sometimes it seems like the old boy may be stuttering. Few listen and learn.

In connection with Oklahoma's Diamond Jubilee I recently had occasion to review 80 years of headlines in *The Daily Oklahoman*. My conclusion is we have made a lot of progress but haven't changed much. Headlines of history are repetitive, with different names to show who is doing what to whom.

Oklahoma developed from the raw frontier into an up-to-date state with considerable culture and refinement during the period when automobiles, airplanes, radio, television, computers and thousands of other wonders were changing people's styles of living.

Yet, most issues of today are those that were not settled to everyone's satisfaction in the past. Wet's and dry's, church people and those who may be headed in a different direction, capital and labor, people of different races and economic levels, the cultured and the crude, rich and poor were battling it out in 1907 in Oklahoma and the conflicts haven't

been laid to rest to this day.

Population has almost tripled in our state and our nation, but fewer people grow food. Eighty years ago farmers made only a few hundred dollars a year, and often nothing. Factory workers did better, making 20 or perhaps 30 cents an hour.

The personal income tax was adopted in 1913. Three years later about half a million people had incomes large enough to file returns, paying average taxes of \$200 each. This has gone up some.

Wars and threats of wars have been continual, with the United States now meddling in affairs of countries around the world as England did when "the sun never set on the British Empire."

Reading history in the headlines makes it clear that crime isn't a new invention. Murders, robberies and other forms of violence and dishonesty have been prevalent down through the years. So have adultery, divorce and family troubles, but all have increased.

Because human nature hasn't changed, business and politics go on

as usual. People hunger for power and wealth and some will stoop to any level to acquire them. This makes success difficult for the honest and the industrious.

Communications have been expanded vastly but voters don't seem to have learned much from history in electing leaders. Eighty years ago they voted for politicians who could make rousing speeches and promise a lot. They still do, if they look good on TV.

Thus, capable individuals often fail to win elections while many incompetents and crooks get votes, and editorial writers tilt at the windmills. An editorial in *The Daily Oklahoman* for Sept. 4, 1907, summed up the situation of that day thusly:

"Thomas A. Edison predicts the near perfection of the cinematograph (movies) and the phonograph so that scenes and players can be dispensed with and the eye and ear be unable to detect the illusion. If someone will just perfect a campaign without politicians now the twentieth century would have something to make it notable."