

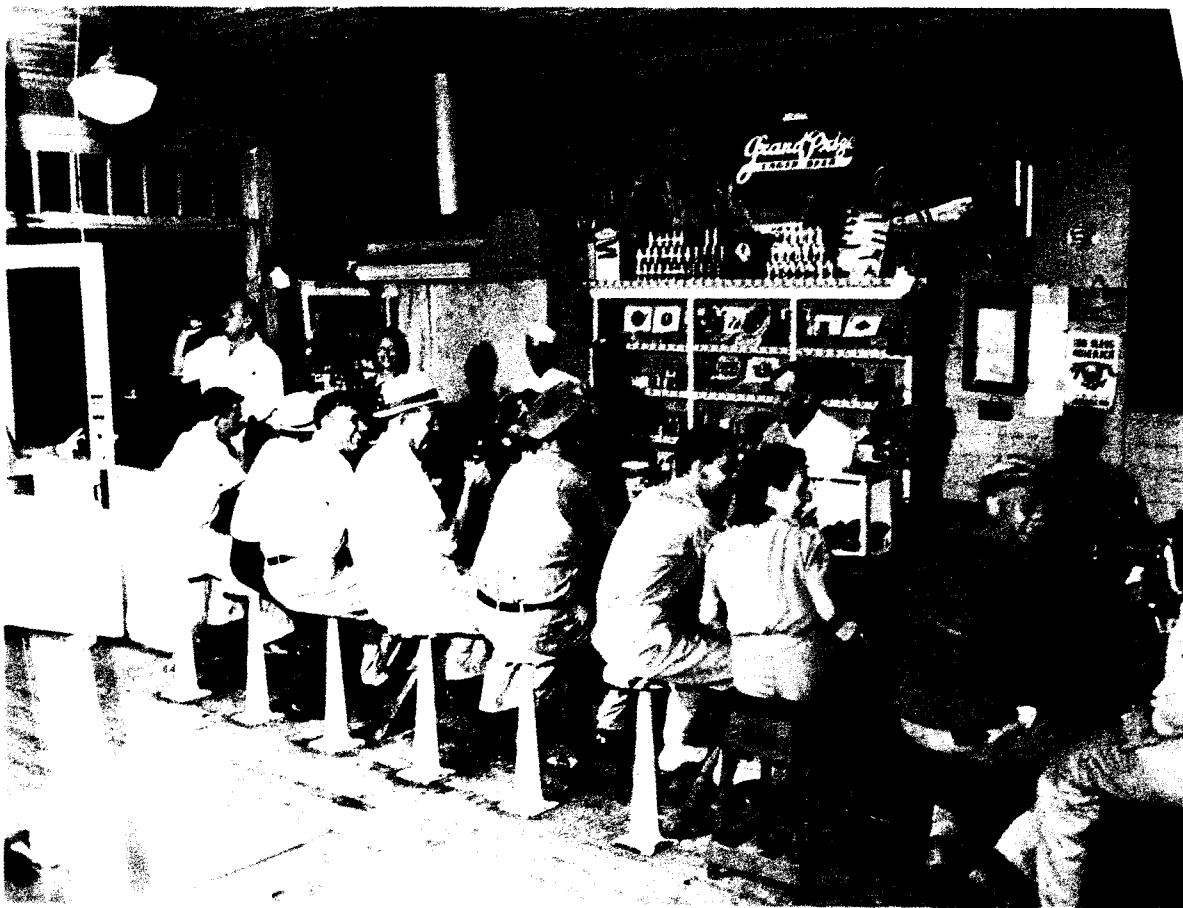
# Comes to Town

BY J. D. RATCLIFF

Fortune seekers in modern boom towns want sandwiches and malted milks at soda fountains instead of red liquor in honky-tonks

Skilled artisans instead of bad men swarm to boom-town pay rolls, bringing their own housing (right, below) and their families

Report's sudden 140 per cent increase in population created a building boom, which (below) helps along the general prosperity



The citizens of Freeport, Texas, are still blinking. And so would you if your home town more than doubled its population in three months and prosperity flew in every window

A FEW years ago Texans read something in their newspapers about a depression. But not being people to grasp idle rumors, they paid it no mind. As a thing to worry about they put it well down on the list, along with the new rash of sun spots and the outbreak of cannibalism in Fiji. Besides, everyone was too busy to worry. Having escaped this late unpleasantness, parts of Texas—chunks the size of Grade-A Balkan countries—are now in the midst of a first-class boom. Not, understand, a quiet, well-bred boomlet such as New England would produce; but a boisterous, violent, full-throated boom.

In Corpus Christi they have a nice little plum in the form of a \$25,000,000 naval air base. Houston has more building per capita than any city in the country, and on top of this Ellington Field, relic of World War I, is getting a

\$2,000,000 refurbishing. Randolph Field at San Antonio is getting a costly going over. At Freeport—fifty miles below Galveston on the Gulf Coast—old residents are still slightly dazed about what has happened there.

Let Mr. Bearhunter Funderburk, proprietor of Bearhunter's Café, give his slant. This solid, monolithic gentleman is a little less confused than most of the others.

Mr. Funderburk's place—he picked up his nickname a number of years ago when he set out on a fruitless journey to kick the wadding out of a bear that was annoying local citizens—is simple and functional to a delightful degree. There is a long counter—Texas doesn't allow bars—garnished with jars of pickled pigs' feet, wienies, hard-boiled eggs and other delicacies. Behind it stands a businesslike stockade of beer cases. A few tables, chairs and a cleared plot

for free-style dancing round out the picture.

"This place was dead, temporary," says the Bearhunter, speaking with a considered growl. "The sulphur company shut down one of its two mines and laid off 300 men. Things weren't much good. We'd get a few fishermen over from Houston and a few sailors. It was all very peaceful. Then this thing happened."

This thing is the Dow Chemical Company's vast new plant which will extract magnesium from sea water; magnesium to be used to a very large extent in the rearmament program. Magnesium metal, a third lighter than aluminum, goes to make a hundred plane parts—supercharger housings, secondary structural parts, chair frames, oil tanks, pumps, etc.

Construction started last spring and the plant is now about ready to go into operation. Freeport's population shot up from 3,100 to 7,500 in ninety days' time. People slept in parks, boxcars, hobo jungles and on the beach. Trailer parking space fetched seven dollars a month—almost as much as an acre of land was worth a month or so earlier. Alert residents found that a rented cot would enrich the family till at the rate

of five dollars a week; and one homeowner set an enviable record by sprinkling nineteen of them about the house: in the parlor, hallways, blanket closets and attic.

A rosy flush of prosperity spread over the town. People had real money to findger and there was work for all comers. The only thing that had tough sledding was the local relief project—hard-sur-facing a breakwater. It had to shut down. A main street previously devoid of entertainment sprouted a new movie house. Tent photographers began making three-minute photos, and a skeet-shooting pitch started banging away.

Used-car dealers started operation. All they needed was a vacant lot, a couple of floodlights, an oilcloth sign, and a few relics driven in from some near-by town. Help-yourself laundries—where water is free and washing machines rent at forty cents an hour—opened, and a trailer restaurant rolled into town. Reverend J. P. Rutledge, tent revivalist, started a highly profitable session of soulsaving, keeping the mourners' bench sagging most of the time. And a tent skating rink did nicely, too.

Crossroads gamblers—furtive troupes (Continued on page 52)



The young Canadians on this page may never learn to pilot a plane but they spend a lot of time in the air. They're student observers and in just 12 weeks they'll be part of a Canadian air crew

**N**EWs Item: "In 1941 we shall have command of the air. Remember what that means . . ."—Winston Churchill, October 22, 1940.

The British prime minister directed those words to the people of France. But they brought a surge of hope to all the peoples of the British empire. Most of all they were meaningful in Canada. The war may be a distant thunder to New Zealanders and Australians and to the millions in India, but not to Canada. There they know their nationhood is at stake, and to Canadians nationhood is something vitally important.

To Canadians it is important to know that the prime minister is confident there will be an England in 1941. To them it means there will always be a Canada. When they sing, up there, There'll Always be an England, there

is a look in Canadians' eyes that says There'll Always be a Canada. For those who are English first, up there, and Canadians second, are in the minority, constituting perhaps less than one third of the 11,350,000 people that populate that vast 3,700,000 square miles of country.

And these are removed from the soil of England by several score years. Among them there are many who are American rather than English, after being Canadian. What happens to England is important to them, but what happens to contiguous America is even more important. Until war in earnest began, and for Canadians this was on June 13th when France collapsed, the doubts and fears were important obstacles to unified war effort. But from June 13th onward it has been a different story.

