

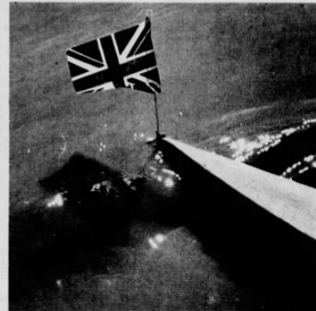
everyday

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
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This team is claiming the Missouri and the Mississippi for funding of British cancer research, by kayak. From left, Nicholas Francis, the solo paddler, and this support crew, Bill Butcher, Timothy Eley and Liam O'Neill. (Post-Dispatch Photos by Scott Dine)

Adventure For Charity



The Union Jack on the kayak takes a look at itself in the waters of the levee.



The back-up pickup carries camping gear, provisions and kayaks to spare.

By JACK RICE

Of the Post-Dispatch Staff
THE kayak representative of cancer research in the United Kingdom came ashore at the St. Louis levee in need of a handout. His cigarettes were in their usual sorry condition, unlightably wet. Nicholas Francis received neither a cigarette nor sympathy from his friend Bill Butcher, the first man to help beach the kayak. Butcher is not properly dressed for a day's work on The Cause until he pins on his button, "Kiss Me—1 Don't Smoke."

A chain smoker among those present offered Francis a dry cigarette. Francis thanked him. Butcher said no favor had been done, because "Nick smoked 90 a day of his own, wet or dry."

The pleasantly righteous Butcher is one of three men assisting Francis in everything except the support of his cigarette habit. The four are of a kind in other compatible requirements: age 20; education; university graduate; physical condition, wiry and toughened to sleeping-bag accommodations every night. On June 13 they launched Francis and one of his four kayaks at the modest beginnings of the Missouri River, in western Montana. His destination was New Orleans, 3400 river miles away, give or take some miles in the daily changings of the Missouri and the Mississippi rivers.

The men call what they are doing an Expedition, and Francis is the Leader. On the upper Missouri it was an expedition to find the leader, not follow him. Twenty times Francis missed the pre-arranged rendezvous with his friends, who travel ahead by truck and set up a riverbank camp site. Francis most often was responsible for the confusion because he persisted in staying on the river an hour or more after nightfall, a dangerous practice.

He pushed his luck because the first thousand miles of the river are not marked by navigation aids, and were more difficult, slower going than

he had reckoned. Mileage is the commodity the Expedition is producing, and the mileage is sold by the Expedition sponsors, the Edinburgh Appeals Committee of the Cancer Research Campaign. A large corporation, a shopkeeper, anyone can buy into the Expedition by making a donation — a dollar or a pound or a penny per mile — to the cancer research program, the largest in the United Kingdom. By recent count, said travelling secretary Butcher, about 1000 subscribers were in hand. Expedition members sold mileage themselves, before leaving England.

Leader Francis made an early sale to a fellow See KAYAK, Page 4

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Which way to New Orleans? Arriving here, Francis had only 1100 miles to go.

