

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Applause

► HURRAY, FOR THE first act of John Mason Brown's "Circus-Drama in Two Acts," [SR July 26] which landed with all the impact of an encore right square in the middle of the second act! What a joy is literature—when the radio and television programs have already faded into the past. The "Elephant & Donkey in Chicago" is a wonderful account—but, then, look who wrote it!

LYDIA M. BIGELOW.

South Gate, Calif.

Reporter's Hearing

► AS A MATTER of reportorial accuracy, certain errors in John Mason Brown's "Elephant and Donkey in Chicago" (Act I) should be pointed out. As a spectator at the recent Republican Convention, I neither heard myself nor heard of anyone else hearing "cries demanding that the Virgin Islands delegation . . . should be polled." By speaking of them, Mr. Brown shows that he missed the humor—as well as the point—of the lone Virgin Islands delegate's statement made right after the Puerto Rican comedy that there would be no necessity for a poll of the Virgin Islands delegation.

Mr. Brown attributes to chairman Martin, by implication at least, a desire for revenge on Governor Fine as a result of the latter's snub of Martin, in that the chair recognized Minnesota in preference to Pennsylvania "to grant it the privilege of being the President-maker." This does Mr. Martin an injustice, for, I believe, Minnesota's placard was up and Minnesota recognized before the Pennsylvania placard budged. Martin had no choice.

But the essence of the convention, its basic significance, Mr. Brown well stated: the "Young Elephant," as he puts it, did "take over." All I can add is, "Amen."

JAMES L. OAKES.

Brattleboro, Vt.

Distorted Image

► ASHLEY MONTAGU's editorial "Selling America Short" [SR July 26] is an effective summary of all criticism thrown at us by those who do not know us and do not want to know us but are concerned in finding a basis for comparing us with themselves unfavorably. The whole world, at least the literate and articulate part of it, seems bent on establishing their superiority over the American barbarians. We can't really do much about it, but we certainly should not sententiously repeat their nonsense.

For some reason, whenever the talk is of Americans the image is always one of the mode or average person. On the other hand when we speak of English or French we invariably think of the top



"Do you think the fans really loathe us?"

5 per cent of their people. The American is the man on the street, the "tourist," but our not inconsiderable intellectual and cultured section is not included. The opposite seems to apply when we think of Europeans. Maybe it is so because everything here is designed for the mass and over there for the esoteric top few. This attitude is evident in literature, fashion, entertainment, sport. Our catering to the people is thrown into our faces even though there is nothing wrong with it; in fact, that is our strength and the result is that a given group of Americans contains collectively more "culture" in all its component parts than any similar cross-section of other nations.

It is true that Americans stood out as sore thumbs when "over there." In the eyes of many Europeans they were the raucous barbarians that your editorial describes. This, however, has nothing to do with their "culture" but is an expression of their relatively uninhibited individuality, which is incomprehensible to the regimented Europeans. The vulgarity is apparent because it is so freely expressed. There are similar shortcomings among Europeans, in fact I believe more, but they are hidden under the bushel of a stratified, disciplined society. The recent past has shown that the "cultured" Europeans and "gentle" Indians, for instance, are capable of committing barbarities not unworthy of an Attila.

The amazing thing is that the very people who unseeing have these in-

equities under their eyes point with glee at our lynchings and race discriminations. In the first place the incidence of them is so small and so clearly on the decline that they hardly are worthy of note. More importantly, they are again expression of a free society. To the Europeans it is incomprehensible why the Federal Government does not stop it by a simple ukaze. They don't understand the extent of our self-government and local autonomy and how our electorate can and does elect "impossible" officials and enacts crazy laws of their own free will. These things can be, and are being, corrected by the gradual process of growth. It is better to eliminate them by understanding rather than by hiding them under the cloak of discipline.

MILAN POPOVIC.

Califon, N. J.

Thin-Skinned

► I SHOULD LIKE to comment on Ashley Montagu's excellent warning against American "thin-skinness" toward criticism from abroad. Last fall in the House of Lords I had the privilege of hearing the highly esteemed former British Ambassador to our country warning his colleagues against the same characteristic Yankee response to foreign criticism.

To Lord Halifax and Mr. Montagu, a



timely reminder should be that we Americans are not used to such bitter and chronic criticism as the world now levels against us, friend and foe alike. We are used to the most heady type of praise, the praise implied in the tens of millions of people who have left their homelands around the world to make a new home with us. What higher and more convincing praise can a people give to another country than to leave their native heath, their mother tongue, the very house in which their forefathers may have lived for centuries to come to our shores. And here those same millions have abandoned their language, their customs, their costumes, their economic system, their political system in an effort to make themselves indistinguishable from the mass of old-line Americans. Europeans cannot understand how this could have been done peacefully and voluntarily. It is as incredible to them as the confessions in the Russian purge trials are to us.

During a year in Western Europe as a political observer, I was at first disturbed considerably by the criticism of my country . . . until I discovered that the principal grudge they held against us was that we would not let them come over here and become Americans, too, co-sharers in our blessed liberty and plenty.

RICHARD PILANT.

Muncie, Ind.

Long & Short of It

► THE ANALYSIS AND DIAGNOSIS of the editorial "Selling American Short" ends on an inconclusive note. In the nature of things, they must fall short of their object: to sell America long. As the editorial says, "That such views"—selling America short—"can be held by Europeans (and the rest of the world) suggests that something is somewhere wrong."

In oversimplified terms, we must sell America long, individually and collectively, ideologically and pragmatically, dialectically and conceptually, spiritually and materially, right here in America—to ourselves—first. . . .

PHILIP WEISS.

St. Louis, Mo.

Sold American

► YESTERDAY I READ IN Mr. Montagu's editorial "Selling America Short" a number of opinions which I have myself been voicing during the past seven years and which have been resented by my hearers.

The front page of the *Herald Tribune* this morning carried an item relating the highly justified indignation of Danish newspaper photographers at the clowning of Danny Kaye at the home of Hans Christian Andersen. A few months ago

I read an item telling of the indignation aroused in one of the Scandinavian countries by the brutal tactics of visiting American hockey players. A few years back a group of American sailors desecrated the statue of some national hero in one of the West Indian capitals.

When these recorded and undeniable incidents are cited in company there is always a great outcry to the effect that such happenings are isolated matters attributable to an unfortunate minority such as might be found among any national group. I must say, however, that if such goonery is the work of a minority of our fellow countrymen, the minority is a damned big one and it has succeeded in giving its tone to our people as a whole.

The tragic truth is that never in history was the world so receptive towards the high opinion of a nation as vis-à-vis ourselves when we entered the war and with a talent amounting to genius we have transformed that "reservoir of good will" into a cistern of acute distaste. What is even more tragic we just cannot understand why. If you insult a man and knock him down his resentment is not likely to be dispelled by your purchasing for him a weapon to help defend "The American Way of Life."

THOMAS DEVINE.

New York, N. Y.

USSR & UNESCO

► AMID THE CONFUSION, demagoguery, apathy, and cynicism of our time, it is refreshing to read an editorial like that of Norman Cousins's "The Climate of Freedom" [SR July 19].

It has been said that UNESCO is Communist dominated. If this were so—which it most assuredly is not—how then would the know-nothings and isolationists explain the attitude which the three Soviet nations took *against* UNESCO at the 518th meeting of the thirteenth session of the Economic and Social Council of the U.N. at Geneva? The vote on accepting the report of the educational organization, which meant approval of it, was fifteen to three. Only Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the USSR voted against UNESCO.

The representative from Czechoslovakia charged UNESCO with prejudice against the new "people's democracies" and the Soviet Union. The delegate from Poland eondemned it for its moral support to what he termed "United States aggression in Korea." The delegate from the USSR attacked UNESCO for not having supported the Stockholm Peace Appeal and the appeal of the Warsaw Congress. In view of these facts it should be clear that the American foes of UNESCO are playing, wittingly or unwittingly, the Kremlin game.

Of course, UNESCO is building world community and the spirit of world citizenship. Of course, the U.N. must be strengthened into a limited federal government for the world. Of course, the resources and productive energies of mankind, now going into war, must be channeled into world projects for development and peace. But let us not for-

get in the excitement of the struggle how little many people know about the structure and day to day activities of the U.N. and how much enlightenment may come from adequate publicizing of a few simple truths.

PALMER VAN GUNDY.

La Canada, Calif.

The Worth of Libraries

► IN HIS ARTICLE "How Much Is a Library Worth?" [SR July 5] Carl M. White has overlooked, or at least failed to emphasize, the chief value of libraries, namely that they are the sole means for documenting knowledge and placing the responsibility for the accuracy of one's information. Our culture has advanced in recent times as rapidly as it has only because the library is the repository of information which, though not necessarily true, is not dependent on the memory of human beings and word-of-mouth transmission for its accurate perpetuation.

Mr. White unwittingly provides an example of this most important worth of a library. In a portion of his discussion which apparently attempts to show the value of a library as a means of communication, there occurs this passage: "About the only clue to the structure of these compounds [the sugars] then recorded in the literature of the subject was a group of observations of an Italian chemist, Kiliani. Subsequently an investigator at Leipzig named Curtius, working in another and unrelated field, made hydrozoic [sic] acid. In the course of his experiments he recorded a more or less incidental observation which when Fischer read about it served him as a second clue." Actually Kiliani was not an Italian but a native-born German who held teaching posts at the Technische Hochschule in Munich and at the University of Freiburg. Curtius's work on hydrozoic acid had nothing to do with Fischer's work on sugars. The chemical used by Fischer was phenylhydrazine, which he himself discovered in 1875, and first used in his work on sugars in 1884. Curtius did prepare for the first time the compound hydrazine, but not until 1887 when he was at Erlangen, not Leipzig. It is highly probable that all three chemists subscribed to the *Berichte* and that, since they were contemporaries, libraries played no part in their communication with each other; but libraries are indispensable for keeping the record straight for subsequent generations.

As pointed out by Mr. White, the worth of a library is the sum of many values. Libraries are a means of communication; they are a source of pleasure; they are an adjunct to universities; they do permit young minds to seek out knowledge for themselves. But, most important of all, libraries are indispensable storehouses of information, and our culture will continue to advance rapidly only if our research libraries continue to receive adequate financial support.

CARL R. NOLLER.

Stanford, Calif.

Music to My Ears

SOME ASPECTS OF ASPEN

ASPEN, COLO.

IF THIS report suggests one third Sutton, one third Cousins, and one third Kolodin, it is merely a tribute to the tripartite nature of this otherwise singular place. Aspen has to be seen to be believed, which is Sutton's job; it has to be thought about to be appreciated, which is Cousins's function; and it has to be heard to be enjoyed, which is, I suppose, mine.

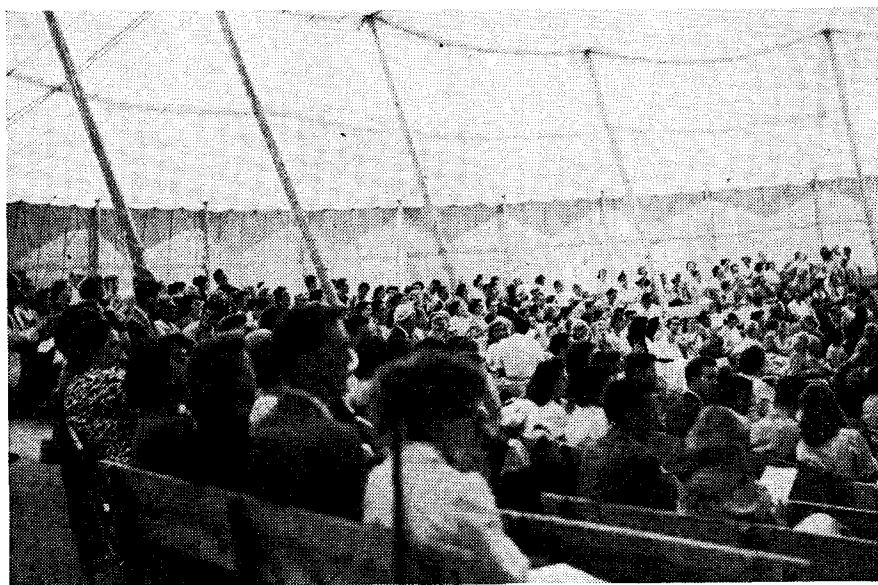
Sutton's work can be well cared for by the exercise of any lively imagination, especially if no check is put upon it. Take any vista of a hill-girt valley with yourself 7,900 feet above sea level and the steep slopes swinging up another three and four thousand feet to some snow-clad peaks in the distance intercepting any clouds lower than 14,000 feet, multiply it by two, add the instrumentality of Technicolor, square it by the product of a stimulating air whipped about by gentle breezes, and you have a fair approximation of the physical properties of this place.

In contrast to the generality of resorts, where, in Pope's applicable phrase, every prospect pleases and only man is vile, Aspen has more congenial people to the square inch than I have encountered in any comparable locality. This is in part a condition of its surroundings, which put it well out of reach of tourists and trippers. If you're here, you're here because you wanted to be in Aspen, and no other place.

It is further, of course, a condition

of the kinds of lures that have been set up to draw people here. Some may come under a misapprehension and be disappointed, but it is a fair chance that those who predominate have come to blend the stimulating physical change provided by any resort worth the name with a stimulating mental change provided, to my knowledge, only by the one worth the name of Aspen. There's music in the air, of course, at every turn of every aspen-shaded road, as master teachers teach, students study, and the work of preparing the weekly concert schedule proceeds. But there is the best of good reasons even for a non-music-lover to spend a fortnight in Aspen as the Institute for Humanistic Studies goes about its work of bringing together a cross-section of American thought at a crossroad of American geography.

This summer's embracing subject is "Human Freedom," with a weekly lecture on some aspect of that broadest of panoramas. The keynote is struck by a guest lecturer, but the theme continues to vibrate through a series of forums and discussions which often produce more engrossing chords and modulations than the original. The cross-section includes businessmen and educators, artists and lawyers, plus a goodly scattering of others fitting no nominal pigeon hole. You discover as you listen and watch that they are like-minded, perhaps, only to the extent that they have minds and are not hesitant to use them. And out of the complicated variations in the name of



—SR Photo by N. C.

Under the big tent—"... a stimulating mental change ... worth the name of Aspen."