

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PROSPERITY AND POLITICAL PARTIES

PROFESSOR ERIC F. GOLDMAN of Princeton in "What Is Prosperity Doing to Our Political Parties" [SR Oct. 8] writes an interesting and curious paper. Liberals and conservatives, he says, have disappeared under the impact of prosperity. Ergo, our domestic problems have been solved! The implication that this prosperity was produced by the liberals is certainly not absent from Professor Goldman's paper. But what happened was that American industrialists conceived and perfected mass industry, not because they were prodded by conservatives but because it was good business. And despite a hostile political climate they and other American industrialists increased production and employment to a point where prosperity was a fact.

Having disposed of the domestic scene, Professor Goldman transfers the political adversaries abroad and, of course, the liberals, called "Reconcilables," are right again. Those opposed to the Reconcilables are supplied by Professor Goldman with foolish thoughts and are then ridiculed.

But many thoughtful Americans doubt that we or any combination of other countries can check the ferment going on all over the world. They think that for our protection we should hold intact the line from Korea to the Philippines and they doubt if our economic help to foreign countries has made us useful friends. Many, too, will disagree with Professor Goldman's slur on President Grover Cleveland when he said, "The people should support the Government but the Government should not support the people." If that doesn't make sense nothing does.

WALTER H. BUCK.

Baltimore, Md.

THE TWENTY-SECOND AMENDMENT

It's HARD to see precisely what Elmo Roper is driving at in his editorial on "The Twenty-Second Amendment" [SR Oct. 8]. While he begins with the acknowledgement of a present new era of "faith in our leaders, both Democratic and Republican" and "faith in the man next door," he at the end suggests that we reappraise the idea of a third term in the office of President to insure "party solidarity" and obviate "second-term chaos." Is it not obvious that Mr. Roper can hardly take the new "self-confidence" of the American people very seriously if he must provide for its continued existence through a Constitutional measure aimed at, to his mind, removing party instability?

Further, is it so easy to overlook the plaint of a past President and the situation of the incumbent as to the physical possibility of a third term. Surely our country need not rely on external adjustments to improve upon what Mr. Roper himself has characterized as a



"I ran away from home when I was sixteen. Luckily, they found me a couple of blocks away and brought me back."

period of "restoration of faith." And if he has "polled" his trend accurately the matter of party solidarity need not concern us much.

HENRY A. SOSLAND.

New York, N. Y.

THE INARTICULATE HUNTER

THOMAS CALDECOT CHUBB in "Hornbooks for the Hunter" [SR Oct. 8] wistfully asks why distinguished writing about duck shooting is exceedingly rare. Either he knows too few hunters or he doesn't dare tell what he knows. I have a number of these commuter duck-butchers for acquaintances, and not one among them knows why he does what he does. These Knights of the Frozen Fundament are commonly inarticulate and only able to express themselves with a Remington 12-gauge pump (full choke, chromed barrel, ventilated rib—"Ma-a-a-n, what a pattern!") Eighty per cent of hunters are too stupid even to read, let alone write. Ten per cent of the remainder are psychopathic personalities—nostalgic Nazis. And the rest are cozy asses, even if you spell it Ernest Hemingway.

From the creek bank by our pier I can see four duck blinds. I do not quarrel with the men who built them. They should not quarrel with me when they

see the giant Dutch-type windmill with red-anodized aluminum foil vanes I am building in the garage to post on the pier when the "season" opens. It seems to me that if these hunters have made a murderous thoroughfare out of our creek it is only fair to warn off the ducks.

JOSEPH WHITEHILL.

Trappe, Md.

SCHOOLS AND TAXES

IN DISCUSSING THE PROBLEM "Financing Our Schools" [SR Sept. 10] Edgar Morphet offers a hint for its solution in his statement that "on a percentage basis the four least wealthy states gained almost twice as much as did the four most wealthy states in ability to provide education between 1940 and 1953. Yet during this thirteen year period the four most wealthy states gained two-and-one-half times as much in dollars of income per child as did the four least wealthy states." In this connection I note that the rural areas frequently provide better school plants than do the cities. In other words, the small community watches the expenditure of its tax dollar much more closely than does the city-dweller.

CHRISTOPHER NOBLE.

San Rafael, Calif.



BROADWAY POSTSCRIPT

Fun and Games

JOYCE GRENFELL is the latest solo entertainer with the temerity to stretch one elastic personality over an entire evening. In this field Miss Grenfell can be ranked as more gently and reasonably funny, and less preposterously zany, than the incomparable Bea Lillie. Miss Grenfell—who writes all her own material including song lyrics—is at her best when impersonating a lean and gawky woman tirelessly seeking spiritual release. Her varieties of expression include a naturist to whom the message of the music always turns out to be “You’re a horse”; an antique-shop proprietress besotted with luminous-painted antlers and hip-baths filled with cushions; a Park Avenue torch-singer whose existence is given meaning by a doctor who stands barefoot with her completely innocent “May north so that “earth rays” will enter their subconscious minds (Is this poking fun at Dr. Reich’s orgone-boxes?); a sheltered young lady who showers a decadent third-rate novelist with adulation, but who blocks his attempt to parlay this into an affair with her completely innocent “May I bring Mummy?”; and finally—in a less comic vein—the elder sister who has spent her young years fetching and carrying for three brothers, ruining her chances for independent happiness, who as an old maid contents herself with fetching and carrying for her brothers’ children. There is also a subtle but telling sequence in which Miss Grenfell is an interfering parent quietly but maliciously destroying her daughter’s intended marriage.

The above constitutes one-third of “Joyce Grenfell Requests the Pleasure.” The other two-thirds consist of passable sketches and songs by Miss Grenfell and dance intervals by Beryl Kaye, Paddy Stone, and Irving Davies. The latter are clever and bouncy but insubstantial. However, some of Richard Addinsell’s music is catchy, and patrons may wake up to find themselves singing snatches of “Me and My Friend” and “Ordinary Morning.” Indeed, they may find themselves telling their friends that “Joyce Grenfell Requests the Pleasure” is an invitation to a gracious, amusing, and memorable party.

IN HIS second play twenty-nine-year-old George Axelrod has taken no chances. He is offering two plots,

braided together loosely under the title “Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?” The title refers to a movie-magazine interview written by a timid, unimaginative, second-string reporter named George MacCauley, who on occasion allows himself the proud boast that “it was very well received.” The best-received portions of Mr. Axelrod’s new play concern George MacCauley’s wish-fulfillments. He sells pieces of his soul in return to a Mephistophelean ten-percenter with the pseudonym of Personal Representative Sneaky LaSalle.

In George MacCauley Mr. Axelrod has come up with a more-than-satisfactory successor to wish-getting Richard Sherman of “The Seven Year Itch.” But a good part of this character he owes to actor Orson Bean, who succeeds in making dulness and mediocrity screamingly funny. From his first pencil-fumbling entrance, when he sets out to interview a nearly-nude Marilyn Monroeish movie-star, Mr. Bean exhibits a mastery that should elevate him to stardom. The smug way he discounts the danger of being attacked by a jealous professional football tackle with “I understand the small wiry chap can take the big fellow every time” is not only marvelous comedy but a sarcasm on the fool’s paradise of clichés in which the average man dwells. Later he evokes what seem like several minutes of sustained laughter with his absolutely helpless, gasping expression as the same angry footballer holds him by the neck. Most of Mr. Bean’s action is fed by Jayne Mansfield, who as the blonde bombshell throws herself into some strenuous nymphomaniac maneuvers without becoming objectionably coarse. Martin Gabel plays the head of Hell’s literary department as the smoothest con-man in the business.

Mr. Axelrod moves this neo-Faustian plot along nicely enough until he comes to the point where George MacCauley runs out of pieces of soul and must decide his fate. In “The Seven Year Itch” Richard Sherman returned slightly wiser to the routine existence he led before his fling at pleasure, and the playwright has employed the same pattern here. Yet it seems less effective in this case, perhaps because we never see much of his normal state.

Mr. Axelrod’s other plot is much less successfully realized. It concerns

the trials of a “playwrote” (a man who’s written one hit play but not a line since). This one is a composite of Tennessee Williams (he’s written a Pulitzer Prize play “about a hooker and a fag” which the movies are having a hard time adapting), and Axelrod himself (his first play’s a hit and he’s the hottest thing in town, but if his second play flops he’ll be the coldest). The experiences this man has with a Hollywood magnate do not cut as deep as Saroyan’s “Get Away Old Man,” mainly because Mr. Axelrod’s gags are showing. His line about the blonde star being “the titular head” of a film company, followed by an apology, had the bloom taken off it in “Born Yesterday,” and the build-up in which Sneaky almost talks the hardboiled film executive out of demanding to hear a non-existent screenplay is spoiled by rushing the punch-line. This stuff is out of key with the rather sincere and touching ending the playwrote comes to. “Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?” falls short of being an engrossing satire of Hollywood, and perhaps just misses being as satisfying an average man’s daydream as was “The Seven Year Itch.” Yet thanks to Orson Bean’s comic genius it does manage to be munificently mirthful much of the time.

A CAREFREE TREE” at the Phoenix attempts to give New Yorkers the flavor of Chinese theatre and at the same time maintain the conventional naturalistic satisfactions of Broadway plays. But the mistake Aldwyth Morris’s new play about peace in ancient China makes is in not substituting anything vital to compensate for the want of authentic Chinese acting. While the production has been showered with some bright ornamental beauty by designer Alvin Coit, there is not that additional quality which Brecht gave “The Caucasian Circle of Chalk,” where his production techniques expressed an attitude towards the story rather than merely dressing it up.

This is no disgrace to the remarkable Phoenix Theatre and its actors, for such work is only achieved through a continuity of productions. Edith Meiser manages to be full and moving as the peace-seeking queen, and Blanche Yurka, Farley Granger, Janice Rule, Larry Gates, Sada Thompson, and Frederic Warriner do creditable work in less rewarding roles.

—HENRY HEWES.

