

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SAINTS OR SPORTSMEN

THE SPORTSMAN VS. PREDATOR debate (SR Aug. 17) is useless so long as it is confined to the guilt or innocence of sportsmen. We are *all* murderers. No living thing can practise reverence for life without getting tangled up in all sorts of embarrassing contradictions. Every living thing exists by devouring some other living thing. To draw the line at reverence for some particular forms of life is arbitrary—reverence for matter is every bit as logical. If vegetables could think, perhaps they would develop a sort of reverence for vegetables.

The point of this debate is not the sportsman's pleasure in killing. The point is, simply, Death itself. When any society becomes squeamish about Death, it is in danger. And Americans in the Faint-hearted Fifties are squeamish about Death. Why, in this decade of peace and prosperity, do our intellectual leaders concern themselves with the brutality of sportsmen, the paganism of capital punishment, the nobility of every human life no matter how alcoholic, dope-addicted, or success-worshiping? Sportsmen, not saints, will kill the wolves which still prowl the forests of the night of society. When the wolves attack, shall we be gobbled up, gloriously sacrificing ourselves to a Reverence for Life, or shall we join the Sportsman and live?

ROBERT GUY BARROWS.

New York, N. Y.

IN PURSUIT

WHEN A CERTAIN man came to our home and bragged about shooting a deer my wife said later: "He killed something far more beautiful to look at than himself." Oscar Wilde, writing of the fox-hunters of England, described the "sport" as, "The unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable."

ELLIS JONES HOUGH.

Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

TIRED MEN

I AM SURROUNDED by a family of hunters who spend all their leisure time in the field, or I wouldn't risk this definition: "Hunting: One of the recreations of a man tired of himself, who seeks to kill time by killing inoffensive animals." Yes, it's Ambrose Bierce, 1822.

LOUISE K. PERSONS.

Forsyth, Ga.

LET OTHERS BEWARE

FROM EXPERIENCE one might say that nature expects—nay requires—that untold numbers of every living species must be used for food or be otherwise destroyed. This is Man's everyday experience. Animals and plants unable to survive under adverse conditions must die: dinosaurs, passenger pigeons, hairy mammoths, etc. The deaths or lives of entire races are



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"It's intolerable, General Washington. The farmers of Valley Forge deserve more consideration. Drilling at all hours, drums scaring the livestock, and several chickens stolen. We have friends in the Continental Congress, you know."

only incidents. Such is our world. Each form of life is concerned with its own continuance; let all others beware. And if one species be destroyed will not others arise or be found to replace them?

I. WINDUL.

Newton, Mass.

WHY NOT CONEY ISLAND?

I AGREE WHOLEHEARTEDLY with Krutch's position, for this reason: while Anthony states that urban sportsmen desert to the forests to escape urbanity, he does not seem to realize that this escape is needed because the escaping individual is unable to maintain the inter-human competitive game, and must resort to the pursuit of animals which cannot compete on the same intellectual level. Anthony's claim that hunting is for the sportsman something more than the pleasure of killing is, I believe, wishful thinking. If killing were not the point, then the sportsmen would be just as well-pleased with the clay discs of Coney Island.

NORMAN C. DAVIS, JR.

Port Chester, N. Y.

THE DECADENT GENERAL

THE SHORT STORY which Krutch cites in his article is "The Most Dangerous Game," by Richard Connell. Since it concerns the fatal defeat on his own ground of a Cossack general by a sports-loving American who plunges from a yacht passing the general's reef-guarded island, the story distinguishes an idealistic sportsman willing to follow the rules of the game from a corrupt, decadent aristocrat whose useless existence and evil passions lead only to perversions. The general's uselessness and his degeneracy,

rather than his love of hunting, result in his choice of men for quarry.

JOHN FRANCIS RUSSELL.

Baltimore, Md.

LET IT ALONE

DISMAYING NEWS has come to me by way of Boston that there is a project already under way to "improve" Thoreau's Walden Pond. Bulldozers are to make that rare bit of natural New England suitable for civilized inhabitants by digging out swimming holes, hot-dog stands, pop dispensaries, and diving boards.

If there is any more inappropriate way in which to memorialize Walden Pond than this I would like to hear it. I have no objection to making Walden Pond more habitable to the young of the race, although generations have already learned to swim there in its old incarnation. But if there is one piece of water in the world that has earned the right to be left mainly to God it is Walden Pond.

It is questionable whether enough damage has been done so far to make it impossible for the pond to grow again into its own self. But, if it is possible, let the water resume its original limpidity. If there are to be swimming holes and hot-dogs, let them be put at a reasonable distance from the pond itself. Let Nature take care of Walden. Give it at the most a few caretakers to restrain the inevitable desire to pluck and pull and twist and turn, but don't defile it. Read Thoreau's "Walden" again, which is full of messages never more timely than now. But write to the Concord, Massachusetts, Chamber of Commerce and beg them to let Walden Pond alone.

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY.

Deep River, Conn.



SR GOES TO THE MOVIES

Comic Renaissance

FOR the longest time now we have been harboring the suspicion that Hollywood had forgotten how to make comedies, suspicions that were dankly confirmed by the outpourings of such professional funny men as Jerry Lewis, Bob Hope, and Abbott-Costello. Oh, they were still making with the gags—right in there pitching, in fact. But the gags lacked any cutting edge. Indeed, apart from a handful of Judy Holliday films, it is difficult to recall any truly topical comedies in recent years—nothing to compare with, say, George Stevens's hilarious spoof on Washington's wartime housing shortage, "The More the Merrier."

Well, if two new films can be taken as straws in the wind we are due for a change. The boldness that has recently penetrated other areas of film making seems to be liberating the comedy writers as well. And no mistake about it, it does take a certain amount of boldness to be impudent about Things That Matter—even if the Things are no more basic than labor relations in a musical-comedy pajama factory or the high-powered lunacies of Madison Avenue. Of course, "The Pajama Game" (Warner Bros.) was imported virtually intact from a long and successful run on Broadway. But the chances are that as little as three years ago there would have been serious head-shakings about taking on a property whose heroine was chairlady of a union's grievance committee and whose climax was a labor rally celebrating a 7½¢ pay raise wrung from a reluctant employer. "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" (Twentieth Century-Fox) is also an importee, but so thoroughly revised by Frank Tashlin, who adapted, directed, and produced this screen version of George Axelrod's play, that it stands as virtually an original. Both are guaranteed to produce a more satisfying form of laughter than any film you have seen this year.

"The Pajama Game" gains its humor from such unlikely sources as pitting its union chairlady against the handsome plant supervisor both romantically and economically, from an irascible time-study expert who used to throw knives in vaudeville, from factory speed-ups photographed in fast motion and union slow-downs taken in slow motion. In short, it begins with a reasonably exact facsimile of an ordinary factory and builds

from there. Of course, the girls behind the sewing machines are a good deal prettier—and sing and dance better—than would probably be the case in any ordinary factory; but this is a musical, and those girls are needed. They are needed for some of Bob Fosse's best choreography to date.

Although the stars of the film, Doris Day and John Raitt, are primarily singers, Fosse has resourcefully come up with routines that make their normal, healthy athleticism seem like dancing—particularly in their energetic rendition of "I Love You More." Add to this the lovely old vaudeville patina of Eddie Foy, Jr.'s every movement and Carol Haney's pixie clowning and you have all the ingredients you could wish for in a lively, first-rate musical. Unfortunately, "The Pajama Game" is at its best only in musical moments. Co-directors George Abbott and Stanley Donen have held the intermediate action so close to the stage original that one can almost feel the curtains opening and closing. But once the music starts the cameras roll free, the cast limbers up, and everything is just fine.

THE fun in "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" gets under way the moment the familiar Fox trade-mark appears on the screen. Tony Randall is mounted on the big block letters blowing the trumpets, playing the viol, beating the drum to supply the accompanying musical flourishes. "A contract player has to be able to do everything these days," he explains. Then, alongside the credits, comes a wonderfully screwy series of take-offs on TV commercials. And later in the picture there is a special intermission, a complete break in the story, "for all those who are accustomed to seeing their movies on television." This pleasantly irreverent attitude toward both the movies and TV pervades the story as well, a travesty on Hollywood's publicity-hungry glamour queens and Madison Avenue's gilt-ridden ad factories. Frank Tashlin's knowing script is filled with bright, risqué lines and situations, all handled with surprising effectiveness by Jayne Mansfield (who, one might say, really lives her role). But the lad to keep your eye on is Tony Randall. As a harassed copywriter turned international "lover boy," he shapes up as the most promising young comic of the decade.

—ARTHUR KNIGHT.

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL

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Rockefeller Center
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"THE PAJAMA GAME"

Starring

DORIS DAY

**JOHN RAITT • CAROL HANEY
EDDIE FOY, JR.**

With

RETA SHAW • BARBARA NICHOLS

Produced and Directed by

GEORGE ABBOTT • STANLEY DONEN

**A Warner Bros. Picture
in WarnerColor**

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GREAT STAGE**

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and MUSIC"**

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Symphony Orchestra, under
the direction of Raymond Paige.

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