

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SIR—A PROGRESS REPORT

N.C.'s RECOMMENDATION for forming Societies for Individual Responsibility has stuck with me, and I would like to know how it has been going, what kind of response you have had, and what information I might be able to get concerning progress to date.

TOM MCCOLLOUGH.

Columbus, O.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The response of readers, since the publication of the SIR editorial on December 2, has been most encouraging. To date, nearly 1,000 readers have responded, many of them to inform us that they have started units of the Society for Individual Responsibility in their own communities. The aim of SR's editorial was to help crystallize the creative ideas and actions generated all over the country by responsible individuals who did not know where best to take hold in order to have a significant personal connection with what is happening in the nation and the world; at the same time, SR offered to act as a clearinghouse or exchange post to promote a flow of information among the various SIR units. The following excerpts from readers' letters suggest something of the wide interest and excitement the idea has generated during SIR's first three months.*

A GROUP OF US have had our first meeting, and are planning to meet again every other Monday. . . . We would appreciate additional reprints of the editorial on SIR very much; could we possibly have one hundred of them? . . . In the meantime, we are anxious to have you know that in the Mt. Airy-Chestnut Hill section of Philadelphia, one eager SIR group is definitely on its way.

HARRIET E. RICHMAN.

Philadelphia, Pa.

I HAVE DISCUSSED the organization of a SIR group with individuals in our community and they are anxious to proceed with a program.

Our group is planning to meet later this month.

L. B. ROSENSTEIN, O.D.

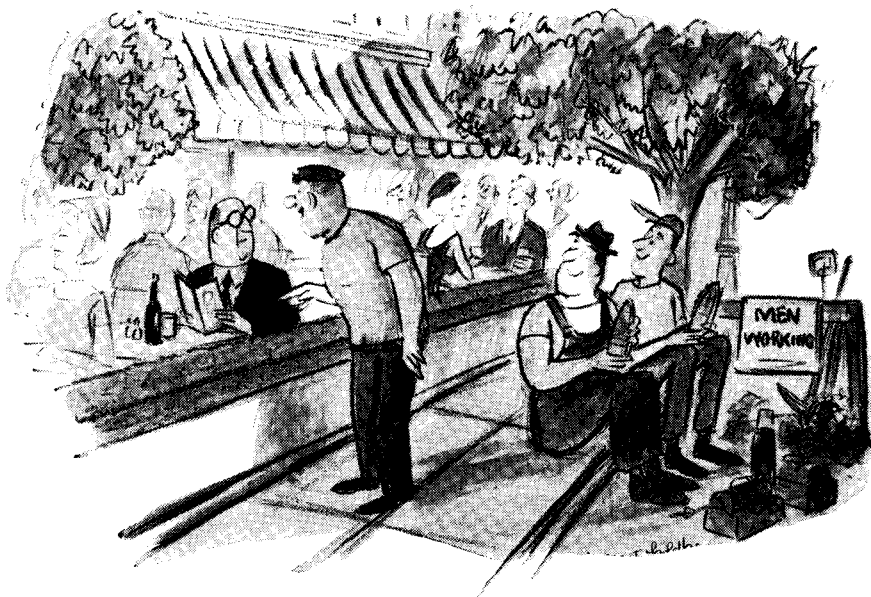
Vineland, N. J.

WE HAVE A GROUP all ready to go. Your editorial was poignant and we are ready to assume our responsibility. Thank you for your guidance—and for a great magazine.

MRS. CHARLES WALDMAN.

North Hollywood, Calif.

" . . . Enthusiastic SIR members from the Washington-Bethesda area met for their first meeting. . . . We all felt that something should definitely be done to awaken and make use of individual responsibility. . . . The idea of a bulletin seems extremely valuable, since much impetus will be gain-



"Would you mind lending us the ketchup?"

ed by an exchange of ideas between various SIR units.

MRS. HELENE Z. LEE.

Washington, D.C.

IN THE CITY in which I live, there is not one of my friends who sees any cause for alarm at the international situation. Therefore I would find a SIR bulletin helpful in overcoming my feeling of isolation and discouragement, and in giving my efforts positive direction.

MRS. EFFIE RICHARD.

Sherbrooke, Quebec

SINCE RECEIVING your reply to my questions concerning SIR, I have given some thought to organizing a group here in Huntsville, and I am now ready to act. I would certainly appreciate fifty reprints of the editorial on SIR. . . .

ALAN L. BREITLER,

First Lieutenant, U.S. Army.

Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Interested groups may obtain reprints of the editorial by writing to SIR, c/o Saturday Review. A suggested bibliography for SIR groups, as well as a list of prospective members in various areas of the country, are also available.*

AT THE MOMENT we have twelve members, all parents, representing eight families. . . . Our objectives are to stimulate thought, education, and action in any and all areas of citizen responsibility in a democracy. . . .

LAWRENCE ATKIN.

Tuckahoe, N.Y.

IN THE SPIRIT of your SIR project, I propose an exchange of Peace Hostages with Russia and other potential nuclear powers as a major step toward peace. The ex-

change should be on a massive basis involving millions—not mere token trades as heretofore among our cultural organizations.

The first exchange should be made at the very top level. Let President Kennedy exchange the family of one of his close relatives for a Khrushchev counterpart. Likewise, include families of other government officials and civil servants, as well as individuals and/or their families from industry, business, science, education, and labor.

I believe a Peace Hostage program should be given official recognition by the governments involved. Those who volunteer should be assured by law that their jobs will be secure upon return. Each Hostage should be placed in a job abroad which is similar to the one he does at home. He will be better understood abroad and at home by those in the same occupation.

Side benefits of this program are broader than its mere deterrent effects. Correspondence between those at home and abroad, and regular press coverage, will further extend understanding. Perhaps a genuine compromise society could evolve out of a continuous interchange of peace-seeking people. Differences which cannot be resolved without communication, short of insane nuclear destruction, might be resolved by time and reason.

While I believe the first Peace Hostages should be from top-level government officials, a list of volunteers from other citizens should be compiled first. It will show our government that there is a widespread desire to make a concrete effort for peace by this method. I ask that any of your readers willing to join me as a volunteer Peace Hostage (subject to

acceptance by American and Communist governments) for a period of from six months to two years or longer—with or without families—write to Peace Hostages, Box 2737, Grand Central Station, New York 17, N.Y.

STEPHEN D. JAMES.

New York, N.Y.

STOCKS . . .

CONGRATULATIONS ON the excellent articles on the United Nations [SR, Feb. 24]. I was happy to read that Arthur Larson feels there is no realistic alternative to the United Nations as a bulwark for peace. If this be the case, we must support the United Nations in every way we can—as individuals and as a nation.

With this feeling in mind, a positive project on behalf of the United Nations was initiated here in Boulder last December with the incorporation of a nonprofit organization called Shares in the Future, Inc. Shareholders receive a certificate stating that the dividend is payable in strengthened hope for a peaceful world. Shares are available in denominations from \$1 to \$500 and the money goes to the United Nations for the support of peace and disarmament. Our first check for \$500 was turned over to Ralph Bunche of the United Nations on February 15 for the Freedom from Hunger Campaign of the Food and Agriculture Organization.

MRS. THOMAS MALONEY,
Shares in the Future, Inc.

Boulder, Colo.

. . . AND BONDS

THANK YOU FOR the editorial on the United Nations and the need for U.S. support of the U.N. bond issue [SR, Feb. 10]. President Kennedy's message to Congress requesting authorization for the U.S. to purchase \$100,000,000 worth of U.N. bonds went to Congress on January 29, and the question will be coming up soon. That such a vital investment on behalf of national security and world peace should be in danger of not passing Congress because of lack of public endorsement is unimaginable. Yet the danger, seemingly, is real enough. I am sure that if SR readers respond as well, *right now*, with letters to their Senators and Congressmen, as they did when the Disarmament Agency bill was in similar jeopardy, they will contribute as substantially as they did then to the passage of an exceedingly important piece of legislation. The time to write is now.

GABRIELLE FACHER.

Waban, Mass.

ROUND AND ROUND

MARSHALL FISHWICK's article on the Twist [SR, Mar. 3] strikes this reader as the most pretentious piece of pseudo-intellectualism to appear in your periodical in some time.

To suggest that a current vulgar banality concocted by the con men of public taste somehow came out of the land and

was good is callow and unsophisticated indeed. After invoking Plato, Dante, Einstein, Descartes, Camus, Emerson, Fitzgerald, Wolfe, and Hemingway, Mr. Fishwick wraps up his treatise with frozen limbs at Valley Forge and the graves of Shiloh. I don't know when I've felt so humble.

But this stuff is not social scrutiny; it is arrogance. Does the author truly think that "soldiers died in the Spanish-American War quoting the Founding Fathers" or that "the G.I. Joes of World War II went out quoting Ernest Hemingway"? Now really, gentlemen. I never heard Hemingway even mentioned aboard my ship, let alone quoted.

Let us not confuse the real with the unreal. The trouble with the Twist and kindred dalliances lies in the fact that they are utterly synthetic. For pride in indigenous and pioneering Americana let readers turn their attention to modern dance, where artists exercise daily with meaningful rhythm, grace, and muscular discipline. And let us not Twist our creative imagination.

WILLIAM E. HAWKES.

North Hollywood, Calif.

ALTHOUGH MARSHALL FISHWICK's article "The Twist: Brave New Whirl" is filled with some very intelligent observations and reaches some sound conclusions, I feel that he has put the cart before the horse when it comes to dance as a means of expression. The "wild outbursts" of our dancers are not confined to our century nor to our society. From man's earliest beginnings some deep emotional quickening has resulted in a kinetic response that we label as dance. . . .

Technological advances and the accompanying frustrations have not produced man's need to dance the Twist. That need has been with him from the start. . . . His desire to dance, uninhibited, is certainly not created by the times. This has been a desire of all times. So, Vive la Danse!

WILLIAM A. RAWLS, JR.

Rocky Mount, N.C.

MARSHALL FISHWICK's article on the Twist is indeed interesting to this member of the "younger generation." His overall point is well enough taken, if our age be truly one of anxiety, anguish, et al. These are specific and important emotions; why must Dr. Fishwick (and others) demote the validity of them by twisting them up with a dance which is a passing fancy if there ever was one?

His theme would have had much more impact had he left the inconsequential Twist out of the picture altogether. I say "vive le Twist" today, and "vive" some other craze tomorrow (indicating the "uncertainty" of my age, obviously), but let's not build such a strong case for humanity on the triteness of a fad.

BEVERLY SHELL,
Hollins College.

Hollins College, Va.

WHILE I HEARTILY agree with Mr. Fishwick that jazz is an honest expression of the American spirit in the twentieth century, I question his conclusions about the

Twist. In his article, it was assumed that the Twist is part of the continuing development of jazz. But in fact, the Twist is a product of rock 'n' roll, which is itself quite divorced from the mainstream of jazz. Although the most successful, the Twist is only one of the many dances recently spawned by rock 'n' roll. Rather than "the image of twentieth century man—in search of his humanity," the Twist seems close to the unfortunate, but ever-accompanying, commercial exhibitionism. Although it may not be worth prosecuting, I feel that the Twist cannot be defended on the basis of its virtues as a jazz expression of the modern American "willingness of the heart."

DAVID LANDAU,
Massachusetts Institute
of Technology.

Cambridge, Mass.

DOES THE POPULARITY of the Twist really require such a profound, erudite explication by a university professor? Any modern ballroom dance that has become extremely popular has induced a sense of completion in the participants. The swaying from one side to the other accomplishes this in the twist. On top of that it's easy to do (I'm forty-three), despite all those stories.

ROLAND C. GALLMAN.

Hollywood, Calif.

CARTOONIST'S CRYSTAL BALL

REGARDING THE CURRENT removal of Stalin's name from Soviet cities, streets, etc., do you recall your "Through History with J. Wesley Smith" cartoon of November 25, 1950?

W. F. STEVENSON.

Bennettsville, S.C.

EDITOR'S NOTE: SR thanks Mr. Stevenson for his long memory, and is glad to give readers a second look at a prophetic cartoon.



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"Let's just order 100 plain letterheads this time. We still have thousands of Franz Joseph Platz, Wilson Platz, Hitler Platz, and Roosevelt Platz, and you never can tell . . ."

(Reprinted from SR, Nov. 25, 1950)

Manner of Speaking

TO THE DAMNATION OF DEANS (A PREJUDICE): I leaned on my first lecture in January of 1940 as a new-minted instructor at the University of Kansas City. After a shade under four years with the Army Air Corps, beginning in 1942, I taught for seven years at Harvard as an instructor and then for eight years more at Rutgers, ending up as a full-chicken professor of English, a post and tenure I resigned last June.

These are not notes for a *curriculum vitae* but credentials in faith, as testimony that I have served a fair stint of campus time, and that if I cannot assemble facts and figures to do my lying for me, I have at least invested a lot of years in the prejudices I take away from the ivy.

Nothing has fueled my prejudices as richly as has the discovery that the college at which I dreamed of teaching does not, to my knowledge, exist. Harvard is the one possible exception I know of, and if it shines both by comparison and its own merit, its splendor is yet marked to some extent by the fungi of that administrative blight that has marked the face of all American colleges, a blight whose simple disaster is the fact that college policy has passed almost entirely from the hands of the faculty into those of the administration.

I make no effort to be impartial on this point. Education is too important a business to be left to deans. The deanly condition is the condition of ignorance camouflaged by secretaries, charts, IBM cards, and statistics, but ignorance none the less. That ignorance is occupational. Let a good man be trapped into a dean's swivel chair and his inhumane ignorance grows upon him as a condition of his employment. The only real difference between the arrogant and the apologetic deans is that the apologetic ones know to what extent their work drains them of mentality. How can one leave educational decision to men who lack the time to read a book?

My nostalgic notion of the true college was of an absolute and self-determining body of scholar-teachers. They are the faculty. They are appointed for their distinction and responsibility. And they, by discussion and vote, set the college policy, which is then passed on as formulated to a variety of clerk known as a dean. The duty of such clerks is to count the paper clips and add up the totals as instructed, leaving the faculty free for the important business of gathering information, of

thinking about it, and of transmitting the information, the thought, and the method of thinking to students.

But if that is the ideal college, the ideal world is a cloud. Far from being clerks, those deans, sub-deans, over-deans (and the janitors) have become executives who outrank the faculty in pay, power, and persuasion. I have known distinguished professors to go into a reasonable approximation of a tizzy when a dean raised his voice. I have known a dean to walk into a departmental meeting called to elect a new chairman, and to announce to the department that no matter how they voted, only so-and-so would be acceptable to the administration. I have known presidents to convene the full faculty for a discussion of academic policy, receive the clear vote of the faculty, and within a few days announce a policy exactly opposite that voted by the faculty.

Now and then a professor has rebelled, but professors are poor rebels. They have, in fact, largely abdicated their responsibilities as members of the ideal faculty, probably for the same shabbily genteel reasons that have made them shv away from anything so sordid as the discussion of pay and working conditions. They have shown less professional character in making themselves respected than have plumbers and steamfitters.

THERE are times, in fact, when my then profession made me ashamed for it. As a former president of the National College English Association, I attended a number of meetings between teachers of liberal arts and corporation executives. I happen to believe, let me say more than parenthetically, that most academics begin by making a central decision about money and the competitive life. I myself made such a decision until I found that planned poverty among sheep bored me. It can be a good decision. In essence, a faculty member decides to live on about one-third the life income (if that much) that he might have earned in business. He is buying time for the life of the mind. His decision is both honorable and self-dignifying. Or so I thought, with occasional lapses into doubt, until that meeting.

The meeting took place at Corning and a number of high-ticketed executives took the floor to say the liberal arts colleges were important to them, that they sought liberal arts graduates

for employment, and that they would continue to support the colleges as a sound investment so long as the colleges turned out men they could use. In fact they loved us.

The last gold-plated executive was hardly seated when my colleagues were up all over the floor begging to know what they could do to turn out a better-suited product. The sheep! Had they elected the life of the mind only to nibble at the feet of the first golden tower they came upon? It was a pleasure to tell them they had disgraced themselves and to remind them that they had no duty to provide raw material for Republic Steel or Standard of New Jersey; that their one function was to lead students to the disciplined life of the mind for its own sake; that if corporations could then make use of men so humanized, let that fact be to the credit of the corporations; but that the faculty destroyed all it stood for when it thought of mechanizing students for readier passage through the employment office.

THAT abdication of responsibility, whether to corporate lures or to front office directive, has gone too far, and it has done so needlessly. An unreasonable dean can always be put in his place by a responsible faculty member.

Some years ago I received a reasonably standard nasty letter from a dean. "You will explain at once," it began. And it then went on to say that "to not keep adequate records is a grave matter."

I sent the letter back with a note saying its tone was unacceptable, that his request for information would have to be rewritten in a form acceptable to the consensus of a full faculty meeting, and that while he was rewriting, I should prefer that he not split infinitives.

The point was not bravado. I have had to write several such letters in my time and they were always written conscientiously. The point is that the dean always becomes a dear good fellow when he writes again. He is always sure that I must have misunderstood his intention, that certainly there is no need to burden the agenda of the faculty meeting, and that he is, of course, delighted to extend all due apologies.

And the point behind the point is the fact that our faculties, in all but the most depraved institutions, still have the power—if they will demand it and exercise it. Our colleges will be measurably better the day deans become the clerical servants of the faculty. A faculty incapable of self-determination is incapable of governing a classroom dedicated to the discipline of mind in good order. —JOHN CIARDI.