

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Our Fortieth

YOUR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE [SR, Aug. 29] was outstanding. The selection of significant books published during the past forty years was interesting; Alice P. Hackett's list, nostalgic. The regular writers all seemed to be at peak, and the guests were indeed noteworthy. After reading Toynbee on the future of humanity and Lear on the prospects for God, where can one go?

ALMA G. REINECKE.

Sioux Falls, S.D.

ALFRED A. KNOPF's unbelievable statement that "the importance of the Middle West in American literature has been greatly exaggerated" is one that certainly demands an answer. Writers from the Middle West have kept most of the New York publishing houses in business for years. Without the Heartland (the least parochial section of the country), there would be no American literature. Where does Mr. Knopf think Hemingway came from? And Dos Passos? And Fitzgerald and Lewis? MacLeish and Van Doren are from Illinois, not Long Island. Dreiser came out of Terre Haute, not Westchester County. Where does he think Sandburg came from? And Hart Crane? And William Dean Howells and Mark Twain? From the Midlands, that's where. Even T. S. Eliot blew his first soap bubble out here in St. Louis, and Tennessee Williams grew up in the same city. And on and on. The names keep coming: Cather, James Jones, Langston Hughes, James Purdy. And they will keep coming out of the Middle West, out of this vast cradle, endlessly rocking (with talent).

D. P. ETTER.

Geneva, Ill.

## Manners of Misspeaking

I CAN'T SAY whether John Ciardi's professor in his August 22 MANNER OF SPEAKING syllabused or syllabized his course, but I am sure Mr. Ciardi took the *roll* instead of the *role*.

B. E. TABARLET,  
School of Education,  
Louisiana Polytechnic Institute.

Ruston, La.

PARDON ME FOR PROTRUDING, but in R.L.T.'s editorial "The Presidents as Readers" [SR, Aug. 22], should it not have been said John F. Kennedy was a prodigious reader instead of a prolific one?

SILVANUS KINGSLEY.

Portland, Ore.

## Whole Cloth?

CONGRESSMAN TAFT, judging from his remarks in "The Middle Ground of a Midwest Republican" [SR, Aug. 22], couldn't be further from an understanding of what he calls "the new cotton purchase subsidy program."

Item: Congressman Taft refers to "this money, paid to encourage the purchase and use of higher-priced American-produced cotton. . ."



"Where can I get in touch with you when I change my mind?"

Fact: Money was paid to the textile mills between the effective date of the Wheat-Cotton Bill—April 11—and July 31 to equalize the amounts paid for American cotton by American and foreign mills. Until then, an export subsidy permitted a cotton mill in Japan (for example) to buy Alabama cotton at 8½ cents a pound less than an American mill across the road from the cotton field. Since August 1, the equalizing payments have gone to a handler of the cotton in the merchandising channels ahead of the mill—in other words, the American mill and its Japanese competitor are now starting from scratch, at least in the cost of raw materials. As for encouraging the purchase of American-grown cotton by American mills, they already have the best encouragement in the world—imports of foreign raw cotton into the U.S. are restricted to an annual amount equal to about one day's consumption by American mills.

Item: According to Congressman Taft, "This money . . . can be used nevertheless for any company purpose, including the payment of dividends." The mill, we infer, can divert money from the purchase of cotton to the payment of dividends.

Fact: From April 11 to July 31 the mill didn't get a cent until it had actually bought a pound of cotton; then it got a "payment-in-kind" certificate that was convertible to cash. Since August 1 the textile industry has received no government money at all, but it is no longer paying all the cost of making cut-price cotton available to its foreign competitors.

GEORGE H. DOCKRAY,  
Editor, *Textile Industries*.

Atlanta, Ga.

## Talking with Red China

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF Felix Greene, but in my humble estimation, his book *A Curtain of Ignorance* illuminates his ignorance. I very much agree with the review by John M. Allison that appeared in the August 22 issue of SR.

I was privileged to live and travel in China from 1921 to 1938, and I feel a close kinship with the Chinese people. While one cannot know all the facts of what goes on behind the bamboo curtain, Robert Low's book *My Escape from Red China* presents some information about the atrocities committed on millions of Chinese by the Communists. . . .

While the Nationalist and Chiang governments were not perfect, they were making progress, and their task was difficult in bridging the gap between the warlords of the Twenties and the gradual changes and improvements they were bringing about until the interference of the Japanese. I traveled up, down, and across China in those years and saw the changes taking place.

My concern is how and when we are going to be able to communicate with the mass of Chinese people; have our own journalists and others been able to present the facts of what is going on in the world's largest country? Chinese Communism is hateful not only to its own people, but to the United States, which never had a concession in China and helped its people with education and other progress more than possibly any other country.

FREDERICK H. JEWELL.

Eastham, Mass.



## Beatles, Anyone?

IF THIS column is a bit late in getting around to filing its report on *A Hard Day's Night*, a new British comedy starring the Beatles, put it down to misguided indifference. The Beatles are, of course, England's most controversial export since tea, and in the normal course of events such phenomena are generally "packaged" in a sleazy, indifferently made exploitation picture that goes into hundreds of theaters simultaneously, on what is known as a saturation booking, so that the producers can get their money out of it before the public learns that it is being robbed. Since everything about *A Hard Day's Night*—posters, advertising, mass bookings—suggested just such a picture, I skipped the press screening. I was wrong. On the advice of friends and breaking the critics' protocol, I went to a local theater, bought a ticket, and thoroughly enjoyed every minute of my first exposure to John, Paul, George, and Ringo.

I am, I confess, still mystified at the intensity of the furore these four amiable young men have stirred in the breasts of teen-agers everywhere and suspect that some adroit press-agentry lies at the bottom of much of it. But far from being the guitar-strumming, cymbal-thwacking oafs who have walked the golden path explored by Elvis Presley, the Beatles—at least on the evidence of their first film—have a neat sense of knockabout comedy timing that places them somewhere between the three Marx Brothers and the Three Stooges. Their singing style may not be for all ears, but their fun at doing it is infectious. (Obviously, the kids who yell and shriek as they perform are not responding to the music, of which you can hear at most the first three bars, but to the sight of the Beatles knocking themselves out in happy unison.)

John, Paul, George, and Ringo, however, have small need of any belated approbation from me. Instead, it is their film I want to commend, and the quick-witted people who, putting it together on what was obviously a low budget, resisted the lure of the cheap (or Sam Katzman) technique. They have made a film, not an illustrated juke box. And the chances are that if it had starred anyone but the Beatles, and if it had come from France instead of England, it would have been hailed as a fascinating extension of the New Wave (which it is) and would have proceeded directly to long, albeit less profitable, runs in all the art houses.

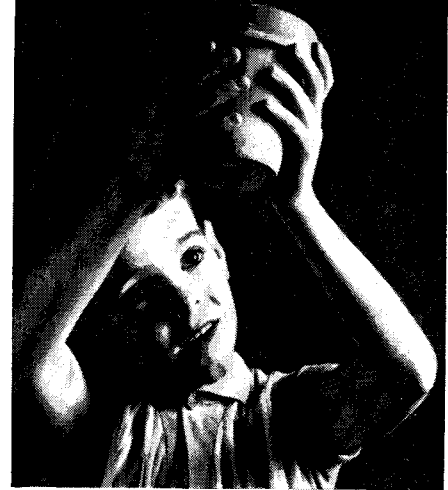
Indeed, director Richard Lester has combined in a curious but effective fashion the swift, elliptical, intimate style of Godard's *Breathless* with the wild, free-ranging, almost free-association approach of Phillippe de Broca. The camera, nearly always hand-held, pokes in on seemingly random conversations; then, as the talk continues, wanders about the room (or train compartment, or TV studio), looking for objects of interest, glancing back at the boys occasionally just to see what they're up to. A studio session, with everything photographed under dazzling white lights, comes to look like an abstract movie. And there is one lovely sequence, after the boys have finished a performance, in which they rush out of the theater and, to the accompaniment of one of their recordings, run and prank and rough-house in an open field; it is as fresh and untrammelled as the frisking of young colts. The story, concocted by Alun Owen for the occasion, sustains this sense of improvisation, merely stringing together events that may have, or might have, happened to the Beatles in a two-day framework, throwing in a crotchety grandfather to move the plot along and seeing to it that each Beatle has his fair share of personal footage. By the time it is over, one feels he knows the boys—or at least hopes that they really are as unpretentious, fun-loving, and direct as their picture makes them out to be.

IF contrast is needed, Ross Hunter provides it in his showcasing of the talents of two American singing stars, Andy Williams and Robert Goulet. Like most of Hunter's productions, *I'd Rather Be Rich* is glossy on the outside, hollow on the inside, but this time with custard instead of whipped cream for the filling. For reasons best known to himself, Uncle Maurice Chevalier feigns a prolonged illness until Niece Sandra Dee can decide whom she wants to marry, the tenor or the baritone. The main difference seems to be that Goulet makes her toes curl when he kisses her, which Chevalier takes as a good sign. As this interminable nonsense progressed, my toes began to curl, too, but I found myself equally indifferent to Messrs. Williams, Goulet, and Chevalier—and Miss Dee as well, for that matter.

—ARTHUR KNIGHT.



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a flower pot has a hole  
in the bottom? (Do you?)



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