

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Looking Over the Water Crisis

DURING the controversy aroused by John Lear's study of the fluoridation of water, I exercised the reader's privilege of directing some highly critical remarks at him and at SR. Although I still disagree on that subject I believe that fairness requires me to tell you what a superb performance I consider your special issue of October 23 on "The Crisis in Water" to be—especially Mr. Lear's contribution.

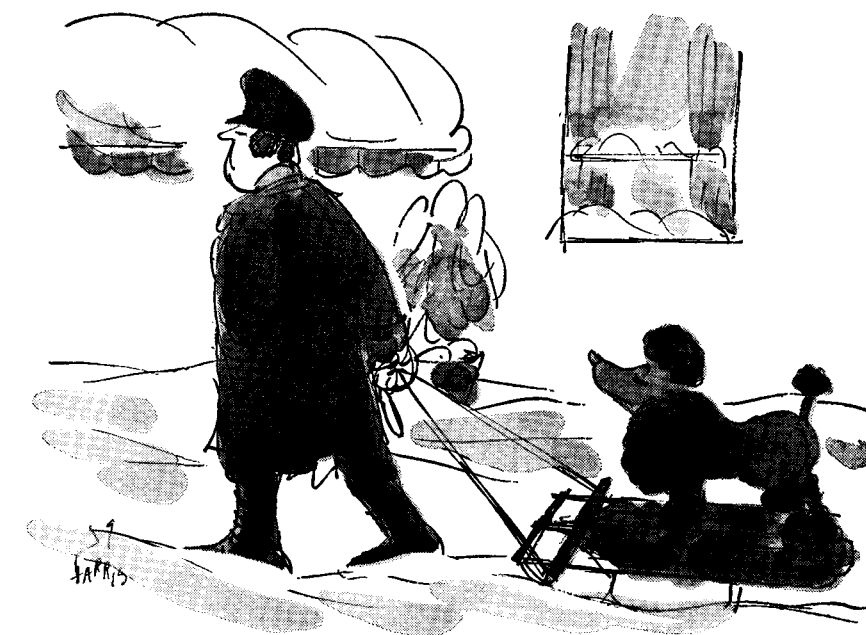
I have been a teacher, researcher, and practitioner in the field of water supply for thirty-five years, and I have not previously seen any popular discussion of the problems involved that approached SR's in excellence. It clearly shows the man-made nature of the difficulties, and tells what may be expected from the various remedies and palliatives proposed, gently deflating expectation where necessary—for instance as Mr. Lear does on the subject of desalination.

The entire section should be required reading for any member of the general public who wishes to discuss the problem intelligently. Failing that, one could not do better than recommend that at least Mr. Lear's article be as widely distributed as possible.

EDWARD W. MOORE,
Lecturer, Division of Engineering
and Applied Physics,
Harvard University.
Cambridge, Mass.

THE ARTICLE "What Brought It On?" by John Lear in the October 23 issue contains several glaring errors on the water resources activities of the federal departments. For example, economist Kenneth Boulding is quoted as stating that "no flood-control program is able to protect a flood plain against the 100-year flood." Flood protection projects for urban centers provide freeboard of at least four feet against the greatest flood of record, studies of which consider all information available since the early settlement of a region. The frequency of the "design flood" is at least 100 years and usually greater. In some instances objections to the heights of levees and walls necessary to provide adequate protection are raised by those receiving the protection.

Elsewhere in the article the implication is made that there are few qualified hydrologists in the federal service because of the small number now available on the Civil Service register. Up until recent years, all technical personnel specializing in hydrology were classified as civil or hydraulic engineers. Over a period of thirty years the hydrologists in the federal service have made major contributions to hydrologic science and practice through official work and through writings in technical journals. If water resources planning in the United States has been far from ideal, it is not from a lack of technical knowledge but because of pork-barrel legislation and indifference on the part of the public as



a whole. Few engineers and scientists with the required knowledge and experience have exerted significant influence in the United States on the ultimate expenditure of either public or private funds. The final decisions are usually made by politicians, lawyers, or bankers. Engineers, who are technically informed, are usually salaried staff members and therefore unwilling to jeopardize their positions by publicly questioning policy decisions.

GORDON R. WILLIAMS,
American Society of
Civil Engineers.
New York, N.Y.

MR. LEAR REPLIES: *Reader Williams should read my report on the water problem again.*

At the point quoted, Professor Boulding was speaking categorically rather than literally and specifically. Later in the same quotation, which was cited in full in my report, he spelled out his meaning as follows: "It may be next year or it may not be for 100 years or for 200 years, but one of these days the really big flood is going to come, the levees are going to break. . . ."

My own reference to federal registry of hydrologists was intended to show only that hydrology, like oceanography and meteorology, is just beginning to be recognized as an integrated discipline of study.

A NUMBER OF US who have read "The Crisis in Water" want to tell you what an excellent job it is, and particularly to compliment John Lear on his contribution. . . .

LAUREN B. HITCHCOCK, Director,
School of Engineering,
State University of New York.
Buffalo, N.Y.

I HAVE JUST READ the article on the water problems of the Chicago area.

In paragraph five of this article is the

sentence: "Six Great Lakes states would like to see the water Chicago now diverts from the lake returned as *unprocessed waste*." This is an incorrect statement since an examination of documents in the present proceedings will disclose that we are asking the Supreme Court to require that Chicago return its *highly processed* wastes to Lake Michigan, in the same manner as is done by every other municipality on the Great Lakes.

We would appreciate it if you would print this explanation in your next issue.

FRANK J. KELLEY,
Attorney General,
State of Michigan.

Lansing, Mich.

Independence Fund

I WOULD BE either a fool or a liar if I said that if John Ciardi stopped writing for *Saturday Review* I would no longer buy the magazine. For each issue offers other outstanding writers who may or may not possess the additional intrigue of a last name with a tricky pronunciation. However, I will say without qualification that should Mr. C. find it necessary to ask for a raise in salary because Mr. Kyker (SR, Nov. 6) accepts his offer to pay his \$50 fine—or because Mr. C. has paid any other fines he may have guaranteed in his crusade for the perpetuation of human dignity—and SR cannot meet this request without raising subscription rates, I will gladly pay a double, triple, or quadruple boost to lend my vote of confidence to the cause and also to assure the weekly delight of Mr. Ciardi's sometimes philosophical, oftentimes tongue-in-cheek, many times biting—but always, always provocative—thought and expression.

MRS. DOROTHY SHIPLEY.
Flushing, N.Y.



Illuminating Designs

IT IS A happy event when, on rare occasions, a publisher undertakes the risks of publishing a handsome but necessarily high-priced album of sketches by an important scene designer, for certainly among the most treasured volumes in any theater library are Lee Simonson's *Part of a Lifetime*, Donald Oenslager's *Scenery Then and Now*, and the more recent compilation by Ralph Pendleton of *The Theatre of Robert Edmond Jones*.

Now for the first time, the man who in an SR survey was rated by his colleagues as America's leading scene designer, Jo Mielziner, has at last furnished us with a portfolio of his sketches. Titled *Designing for the Theatre* (Atheneum, \$24.95 until December 25, \$29.95 thereafter), it contains full 8½ by 10½-inch black-and-white and color reproductions of almost 100 sketches selected from the more than 250 productions Mr. Mielziner has designed during his career. This selection has not been based on mere surface beauty, but on the interest the sketches have for a person who wants to understand more about the relationship of settings to the productions for which they were conceived.

In comments that accompany each design, Mr. Mielziner reveals why he chose to do what he did, and frequently what he would do differently if he were doing it again. While he tells us that his designs for *Camino Real* were never used, one look at his unrealistic sketch reminds

us of what he modestly does not say, namely that in retrospect the producer blamed that play's failure on its too realistic settings. However, Mr. Mielziner constantly makes apparent that that play's author, Tennessee Williams, and its director, Elia Kazan, have always been for him the most stimulating artists to work with, and he is equally proud of such settings as the one for Mr. Williams's *Summer and Smoke* (see cut), which failed, as he is of those for *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, which were hits.

What emerges most strongly from the sketches is Mr. Mielziner's supremacy as a visionary dramatic artist. Again and again he catches better than his contemporaries the subtle quality of light as it appears to the eye in a great variety of situations we have all experienced, and his use of shadow and of objects distorted by reflection is a poetic adjunct to the plays in which they are employed.

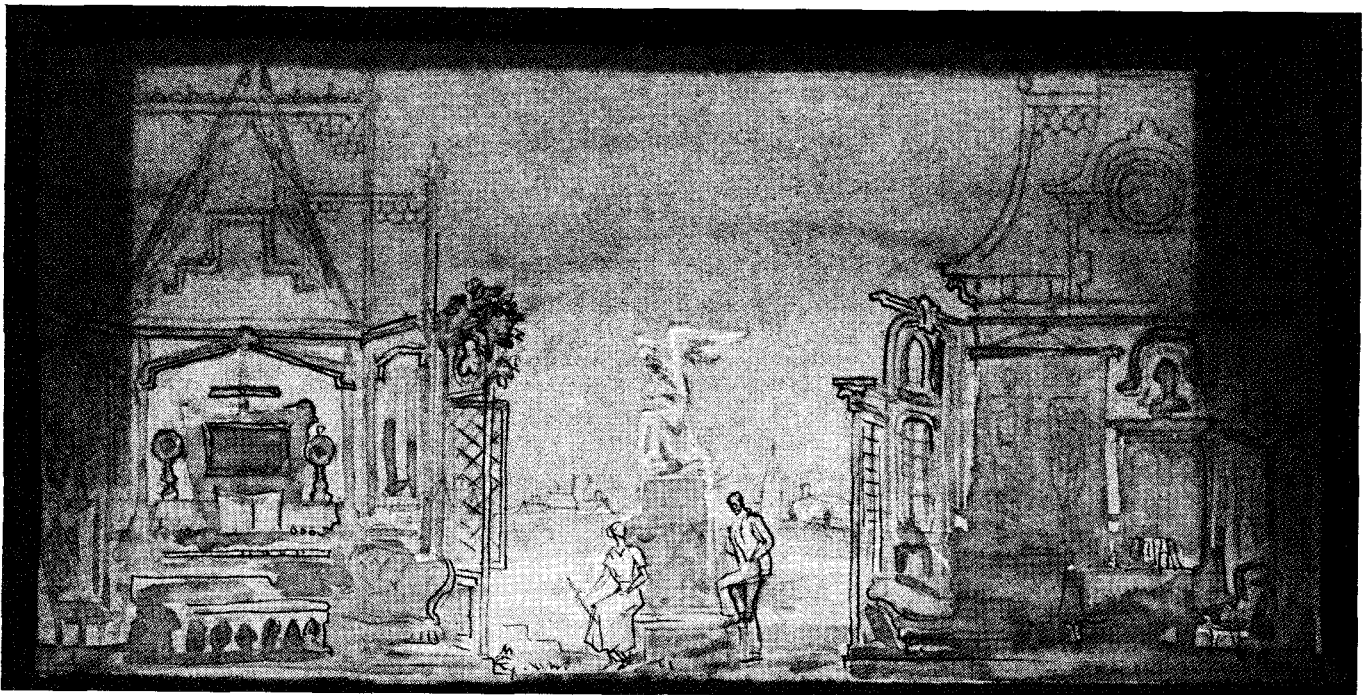
Indeed, Mr. Mielziner has been called by his distinguished colleague, Boris Aronson, the only practicing designer who knows how to design the scenery in advance with its lighting so as to achieve the artist's conception. In his introduction Mr. Mielziner tells us how, early in his career, Edward F. Kook suggested to him that he set up a room in his studio where he could see, before painting his sketches, the colors of his

paints and dyes as they would appear under the actual light transmitted through various color gels. He also tells how inexperienced producers are often shocked at the unprepossessing appearance of some of his settings before they see them in the lighting he has planned for them.

However, Mr. Mielziner has extraordinary patience with tactless people, and knows from experience that a willingness to compromise is not only essential but often leads to even better solutions of the problem at hand. He has included in the book an edited diary of his collaboration with *Death of a Salesman* that not only demonstrates this but also constitutes a valuable history of the sort of complexities and hard work that enter into preparing a production for Broadway. Indeed, it leaves the reader with the feeling that many of today's theater practices should be revised so that designers, directors, playwrights, and actors could work more joyously and relaxedly.

Regrettably, if understandably, the book suffers somewhat from what seems to be an overgenerosity of spirit by Mr. Mielziner in assessing the people with whom he has worked, and while we appreciate his desire to lighten the text with recalled anecdotes, these often interrupt the book's continuity. Nevertheless, the album of sketches is stunning, and the text reveals the creative thinking process of a great theater artist whose orderly organization and self-discipline continue to stretch his talent in the direction of ever new possibilities that are built upon forty years of life-and-death combat in our perilous theater.

Although it is lightly amusing and
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Jo Mielziner's scene design for Tennessee Williams's *Summer and Smoke* (1948) from the book *Designing for the Theatre*.