

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Subsidize Films?

WILLIAM FADIMAN's article, "Should American Films Be Subsidized?" [SR, Aug. 5] is deserving of thoughtful study by the American motion picture industry.

The big questions about subsidies remain unanswered: Should government interpose itself in private industry, or will theater patrons stand still for additional ticket taxes at the box office? As Mr. Fadiman wisely comments, "One may well question the broaching of the question of subsidization for an industry which is far from ailing financially."

Fadiman, who is a highly respected and able practitioner in the Hollywood field of film-makers, has struck some telling blows.

LOU GREENSPAN,
Editor, *Journal of the Producers*
Guild of America.

Beverly Hills, Calif.

THE TIME WAS when a suggestion such as William Fadiman's would have been dismissed as hopelessly visionary; not so today, as we witness what might fairly be deemed a sound precedent for nongovernmental subsidy.

Sizable sums have recently been contributed by the television networks to raise the standards of the medium they dominate. Extending the same procedure to the motion picture could prove equally fruitful.

THOMAS G. MORGANSEN.

Jackson Heights, N.Y.

WILLIAM FADIMAN's article was quite fine in depicting the differences in quality between foreign and domestic films, and I accept the notion that subsidies by European and Asian governments are major ingredients in the superiority of their films. But, as Mr. Fadiman says, foreign films are much cheaper than ours.

Art films—the Underground movies—are achieving increasing notoriety and wider audiences. Those who appreciate them will seek them. Let the mass moviegoer enjoy the Western, the light comedy, the melodrama.

There are too many other vital uses for our government's money.

HOLLY SEMILOFF.

Chicago, Ill.

WE ARE a pluralistic society, and any attempt to set up a special standard of culture by giving it money is repugnant.

Mr. Fadiman could well have found possibilities for support within the industry. For instance, how about charging each film which applies for a production code seal a levy to go into an appropriate fund?

CARL OLSON.

Los Angeles, Calif.

Firearms Policy

WE GREATLY appreciated Alfred Balk's excellent editorial, "The Firearms Theater of the Absurd" [SR, July 22]. This ridiculous drama becomes increasingly bizarre as, in the wake of urban riots, firearms sales soar.



"Cool it, Daddy, I'm just baby-sitting for the Collinses."

But still no laws restricting interstate shipment of guns.

Readers may wish to know that we recently opened the organization to general membership and would be happy to respond to inquiries directed to our headquarters, 100 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, D.C. 20002.

J. ELLIOTT CORBETT,
Secretary, National Council for a
Responsible Firearms Policy.

Washington, D.C.

Dynamite from the Sky

RICHARD L. TOBIN's article on the bombing of London, "When Dynamite Rains from the Sky" [SR, Aug. 5], was the most devastating thing that has been said about the war in the East. It made me cold.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for printing it.

JOHN R. TUNIS.

Essex, Conn.

RICHARD L. TOBIN refers to Harold Nicholson's "premise that civilian bombing . . . has little or no military value." A passage in *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (Third Edition), in an article entitled "Strategy and Tactics," suggests that this premise has become an accepted conclusion, our actions in Vietnam notwithstanding:

The theory of strategic bombardment called for aerial attacks on the enemy's centers of population and industrial production to destroy . . . the

enemy's economic means and will to continue the war. In the Second World War this strategy was carried out in massive form by the British and American air forces in attacks on Germany and Japan. [But] in order to win the Second World War the Allies had to conduct a number of campaigns with ground forces and *occupy the enemy's homeland.* [Italics added.]

Reflecting upon our military policy in Vietnam, I am led to ask, "When's D-Day?"

DOUGLAS T. BEEBE.

West Lafayette, Ind.

THANK YOU FOR Richard L. Tobin's article. It is easily the most effective indictment of our "sainted" policy of destroying Vietnam I have read yet.

MICHAEL HATHAWAY,
Wayne State University.

Detroit, Mich.

The "Queens" and "Hope"

THE SHIP S.S. *Hope* deserves the praise Richard L. Tobin has given it in his editorial, "Seven Years of Hope" [SR, July 15].

I was reminded of *Hope* when I read of the impending retirement of the Cunard Line's *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth*. May I suggest a *Queen* as part of Mr. Tobin's "thousand ships of Hope"? I can imagine no better use.

R. BEN DAWSON, JR., M.D.
Newton Centre, Mass.

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Bard at Balboa

SAN DIEGO, CALIF.

SAN DIEGO is most fortunate to have a theater that each summer presents the most intimate and relaxed professional productions of Shakespeare in North America. The prime ingredient of the San Diego National Shakespeare Festival, now in its eighteenth season, is the Old Globe Theatre in Balboa Park, which, with its relatively small capacity of some 440 seats, permits actors to perform subtly. Although this limited capacity prevents the festival from paying high salaries, good directors and actors prefer working here because of the working conditions.

This year both the directors and the acting company are superior. The most popular of the three offerings is *Twelfth Night*, staged by Edward Payson Call. In it, Mr. Call emphasizes the comedy but happily refrains from letting it quite

cross the border into unreal silliness. The play begins with Feste reluctantly accepting his job of playing the fool, and Donald West makes each quip a genuinely thought-through response. Josef Sommer's Malvolio successfully stretches for comic effect as he gets maximum mileage out of being a completely gullible square, and yet he is always so precise and careful in his actions and speeches that we see him ironically doing most of the work in his self-delusion. This has the beneficial result of making his persecutors appear less reprehensible.

Similarly, Joseph Maher's Aguecheek is a study in spoiled petulance, a supreme innocent capable of momentary astonishment but invulnerable to deep or lasting insult. James B. Douglas's humorously patient Sir Toby Belch, and Jacqueline Brookes's earthy, and slightly

Irish, Maria complete this very mortal assortment of comics, all of whom work well together to create scenes of true hilarity. The best of these is the duel in which Sir Toby, fighting for his life with an unexpected opponent, suddenly looks amazedly at the ridiculous spectacle of the two intended opponents clasped together in fright.

The romantic plot takes care of itself, with George Backman a handsome and well spoken Orsino, Katherine Henryk a pretty Viola, and Dixie Marquis a slightly predatory Olivia. But this is a *Twelfth Night* in which the humor is so well played that who marries whom seems relatively unimportant.

Director Malcolm Black's production of Shakespeare's dark comedy, *All's Well That Ends Well*, is, as one might expect, only spottily effective. He has chosen to play the strange romance between the unfemininely aggressive Helena and the snobbish Bertram with underlined emotion. Thus Miss Brookes finds herself constantly proclaiming her love and purity with such hysterical fervor that she seems unfit for daily romance, and, as Bertram, Mr. Maher seems more terrified by her virtue than concerned about her pedigree. However, some of the comedy is achieved. Douglas Watson gets great fun out of the ridiculous braggart army officer, Parolles, who replaces his sword with so much flourish that he nearly emasculates himself. Anthony Zerbe does some effective clowning as a professional cynic working for an unresponsive employer. And Mr. Black gets laughter with amusing parody of the military.

The third play, *Othello*, is most notable for Mr. Zerbe's portrayal of Iago. Under Milton Katselas's direction, Mr. Watson gives us a polite and noble Othello who never quite understands either that he is being discriminated against or that what seems to him like a perfectly normal marriage should run into the least difficulty. Indeed, his most powerful moment comes when he is roused from his nuptial bed angrily to settle a soldiers' brawl.

On the other hand, Iago seems completely in control of the situation. Thus he can afford to take his time and stretch his villainy to a point far beyond that which any of us could expect to get away with in real life. The outstanding scenes are those in which we see Iago mockingly deceiving Roderigo. Maher plays the latter with appropriate innocence. As for the ladies, Miss Brookes's Emilia is surprisingly more emotional than Miss Marquis's Desdemona. Thus we have a production in which the tragic victims seem to be baffled unfortunates in the hands of more passionate pragmatists. Miss Henryk, as Bianca, contributes a pleasantly wanton belly dance which reminds us that the play is laid in Cyprus.

—HENRY HEWES.



"Do you have an appointment?"