

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Aid for American Films

WILLIAM FADIMAN is to be commended for not allowing his position as an active member of the film industry to inhibit his assessment of its artistic values in his article, "Should American Films Be Subsidized?" [SR, Aug. 5].

Mr. Fadiman lists a number of "differences which effectually prevent the American film from achieving the deserved supremacy of the foreign films we admire." Cost seems to be the principal factor.

Censorship in various forms, Fadiman says, hampers Hollywood in many ways. . . . But doesn't the success of foreign films in the United States suggest that "the candor that other nations sanction" is sanctioned by American theatergoers, too? Once again, isn't it the high costs of Hollywood film production, more than anything else, that increase the penalties for taking a stand and risking offending someone?

Fadiman mentions several sources from which the subsidies could come: theater-owners, the newly-formed American Film Institute, the American film industry itself, and the government—though he wisely doubts the efficacy of government grants. But there is no reason to assume that the theater-owners and the film industry would allow film arts to assert themselves any more freely than the government would.

The American Film Institute is our last hope, but it promises to be a good one. Why not, therefore, entrust the Institute with subsidies from theater-owners and the industry itself, with neither strings attached nor accounts to render?

ROBERT EMMETT DOLAN.

New York, N.Y.

DOES MR. FADIMAN really think that subsidization would improve the quality of motion pictures? In more than one instance, Hollywood has turned out films of exciting, penetrating, and provoking content—some of them on comparatively miserly budgets, one has read. The people responsible for them relied on their heads and their hearts, not on their bankrolls.

Mr. Fadiman gives the best solution near the end of his article—to wit: Let the film industry subsidize itself.

JACK HUGHES.

Kalamazoo, Mich.

NBC Dissents

IN HIS REVIEW of the TV special, *Khrushchev in Exile—His Opinions and Revelations* [TV AND RADIO, Aug. 5], Robert Lewis Shayon questioned the integrity of NBC News. Apparently, he failed to notice the credits following the program which documented in great detail most of the sources for the visual material—not all, but most.

One major source was withheld at his [Mr. Khrushchev's] request. Perhaps that was the source Mr. Shayon was questioning when he said: "NBC News has been less than candid in explaining how it came by the film and sound tapes showing the former Soviet Premier in retirement."

SR/September 2, 1967



"I've worked my way from poverty to being \$63,000 in debt."

With that sentence he has set a precedent. Does a reliable, established news organization have to reveal all its sources? If so, he missed the lead for his column.

Further, NBC News had no way of knowing if the Russians knew what was being filmed, and positively had no way of knowing if the Russians knew it was being done for NBC. NBC News made no "inference" about any of these elements. Mr. Shayon did. In fairness, he might have stated these two points: 1) NBC News did not ask permission of anybody to film or sound-tape Khrushchev; 2) nor did it ask anybody's permission in Russia to take out its material.

NBC News resents deeply the implication of deception and collusion.

JOSEPH DERBY,

Director, News Publicity,

National Broadcasting Company.

New York, N.Y.

Dolci's Silent Search

I THANK DANILO DOLCI for this expression of his credo as put forth in his article, "Tools for a New World" [SR, July 29]: "Every morning, before daylight has effaced the stars, I continue to search in silence, before plunging into active occupations: I know that to accept being lost in the complexity of this world . . . means to die a little." May more of us use the power of thought which is latent in us to "search in silence" to try to avoid "being lost in the complexity of this world" and thus not "to die a little" every day.

(MRS.) MILDRED CLAPP,

Meeker, Colo.

Re: Re-sensitization

REGARDING N.C.'s EDITORIAL, "Research and Re-sensitization" [SR, Aug. 5], the ultimate

immorality of war and violence cannot be questioned by civilized men. The horrors of biological and germ warfare, napalm, and nuclear explosions should force mankind to forego so suicidal a way of "settling" disputes.

These weapons are an inseparable part of war itself, which sires them. Experience teaches us that as long as wars endure, all nations will try to outdo each other in potential destructiveness—each in the interest of its own security. Obviously, then, the substitution by general agreement of rule by international law, backed by sanctions against the legally determined offender, must be our goal. It is inevitable—if mankind can but survive our current insanities.

L. D. GALLOWAY,

Yucaipa, Calif.

N.C.'s EDITORIAL might well have been titled "Research and Religion." For, in our eagerness to get on with research, religion and ethics have been scrapped.

The people of the United States like to think we are a Christian nation. But when we kill and burn innocent women and children with napalm bombs, we are telling the world that we are a nation of barbarians.

J. ERNEST BRYANT.

Searsport, Me.

N.C. CLEARLY points up the age-old, unanswerable conflict between the realist and the idealist. They are both correct and they are both wrong. Had the democratic nations listened to the idealists in the late 1930s, we would all be dead or in slave labor camps. At the same time, to follow the practical policy of outdoing the other side in weapons research can lead to suicide for both sides. There is no honest answer.

CHAPIN F. WARNER.

Whately, Mass.



House Divided

THE HOUSE version of *The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967* (H. R. 6736) has come out of committee and is headed, through the Rules Committee, to floor debate, with dangerous amendments that can cut the heart out of the whole concept of a vigorous, imaginative noncommercial radio-television alternative to the advertiser-supported network systems.

"In all very numerous assemblies," James Madison wrote in *The Federalist Papers* (No. 55), "passion never fails to wrest the scepter from reason." The Senate version of the bill (S. 1160) was well-considered and constructive, designed to sketch in the broad outlines of a viable, independent system, provide it with funds for launching, and give it a chance to show what it could do before more permanent policy and fiscal decisions were made. The House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce (thirty-one members) mangled the Senate version in two weeks of badly managed hearings. The five-minute rule for questions prevented the development in depth of ideas: Congressmen wouldn't wait for their turn and left, and some Representatives still could not grasp the essential vision of public broadcasting as something more than classroom-instruction television and radio.

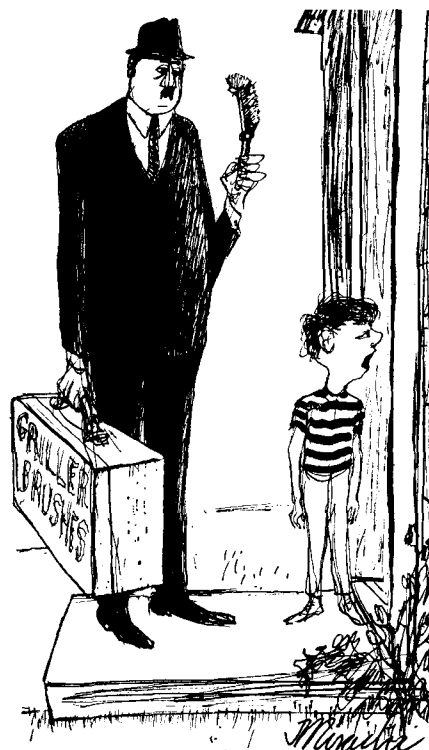
The whole House now has an opportunity to prove James Madison wrong. If it doesn't, the populous chamber will have rendered the nation a historic disservice, robbing it of a chance for a great leap forward in political and cultural enrichment which may never come again in quite the same form and at such a promising moment.

The most serious challenge was thwarted in the Committee's executive session; but Representative Albert Watson of South Carolina, who offered it and lost, has threatened to bring it up again on the House floor. Congressman Watson moved to strike out Title II of the Act, which would eliminate a Public Broadcasting Corporation that would make policy, insulate noncommercial broadcasters from federal political pressures, allocate funds to educational networks and stations, and generally encourage and lead the educational broadcasters into a new and grander role in the nation's communication experience. The vote was 18-13: it went generally along party lines, with Republicans in the negative.

Watson still fears the bogey of "thought control," doesn't trust the Act's

words of insulation, and thinks that an administration can get around it in actual practice. He would rather see federal funds fed directly to the stations. If the House buys this argument, it will be condemning the stations to the small, splendid isolation of petty sovereignties—a trifle richer perhaps, but without a powerful, central heating system to keep them mutually interconnected and working as a cohesive force to make a maximum impact on the American mind. The whole House can further demonstrate Madisonian reason by striking out an absurd amendment adopted by the Committee at the behest of Representative J. J. Pickle of Texas, whose contribution to the Act was a definition of "educational television and radio programs." These are, the Act informs us, "programs which are primarily designed for educational or cultural purposes and not primarily for amusement or entertainment purposes."

This, of course, has been the position of many commercial broadcasters, who see no difficulty, apparently, in wrestling with the angels that dwell upon the pins of the overlapping ambiguities of education, culture, amusement, and entertainment, and who do not attempt to walk on the waters of the word "primarily."



"Mom, there's a live commercial at the door!"

Was Falstaff designed for the groundlings or for the philosophers? The Philharmonic, presumably, by this definition, could not be "entertainment."

Other amendments added to the Senate version of the bill by the House Committee proscribe editorializing by noncommercial stations and endorsement of political candidates, and call for "strict adherence to objectivity in all programs of a controversial nature." Such a passion for neutrality misreads the spirit of the American experiment in representative democracy. Our elected officials cannot "filter" the opinions on public questions of vast numbers of their constituents. By the adversary system in open debate, they must confront the citizens with zealous views so that wise choices may emerge from the clash of vigorous minds. Objectivity is a shibboleth. The only nonpartisans wear tombstones for hats.

The proper measure of a station's performance in the area of controversy is "the fairness doctrine." Educators are presumed to be the transmitters of community wisdom. Shall they be prohibited from presenting and advocating positions fairly, while the commercial broadcasters (who make slight claim to be more than escape purveyors) are encouraged by the FCC to editorialize, provided they take pains to present all sides of an issue themselves or make offers of time to partisans?

The House Committee, jealous of its fiscal prerogatives, cut the life of the Act from five to three years and provided funds for a public corporation for one year only, with a new ball game at the end of that year. This misses the point that any federal funds would be only "seed money" to help attract support from private sectors of the nation. If the government doesn't care, why should the foundations or the big corporations—or the public?

The House Committee authorized another \$38,000,000 for Title I, the "facilities" section of the Act, for the construction and development of transmitters and studios. Congress has already invested a total of about \$70,000,000 in brick and mortar for noncommercial broadcasting. How incongruous that some House members still have doubts about spending some money for programs, without which the structures are, in Whitehead's felicitous phrase, merely temples to the spirit of "misplaced concreteness." The entire intellectual community of the nation, the presidents of three commercial networks, and the National Association of Broadcasters support the reasonable Senate version. Let the House prove false the sad comment of Madison: "Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob."

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.