

Letters to the Editor

Timeliness of Frontier Freedoms

As a Midwestern small-town dweller, I protest on two scores the assertion by C. W. Griffin, Jr., in "Frontier Freedoms and Space Age Cities" [SR, Feb. 7] that Los Angeles is a prime example of a city that suffers from "the frontier mythology" of individualism or free enterprise because the source of L.A.'s difficulties, according to the author's reasoning, is the Midwestern small town.

First, the frontier mythology, while weird and fantasy-laden, is not all that bad. The basic difficulty afflicting Los Angeles is not materially different from that experienced by many other metropolitan areas in our country, and has to do with ingestion. Our larger cities have been called upon to add great numbers of people of widely varying backgrounds to their populations before they were ready to assimilate these groups.

Second, historically speaking, individualism and free enterprise in our country have found visible expression in the development of factories and industries, nearly all of which have been located in our larger cities. On the other hand, the heart of the cooperative movement has been in the country.

It is generally true of our country's western cities—with the possible exception of San Francisco—that they are spread out over more territory, and have more individual homes, especially ranch-type houses, than cities of the Eastern Seaboard. But this is not an illusion of freedom; it represents, at least to a degree, its achievement.

AVERY D. WEAGE,
Scribner, Neb.

C. W. GRIFFIN, JR., exaggerates the extent to which Americans romanticize the freedom, independence, and adventure of the frontier. In any case, such romanticization should be regarded as a symptom rather than a disease. A happily married man does not daydream about romantic love. Similarly, a man does not romanticize frontier freedoms unless he is suffering from a lack of personal autonomy. Mr. Griffin apparently would like to change people to make them fit the restrictive structure of society. Perhaps a better solution would be to change the structure of society so that it becomes possible to allow people some of the freedom and independence that they seem to crave. A society, after all, is supposed to be designed for the benefit of the people that live in it, not the other way around.

Griffin would put the blame for our environmental problems on excessive *individual* freedoms. Actually, most of the problems are direct or indirect results of the activities of large organizations—corporations and governments. It is these organizations, after all, that control the structure and development of society. Perhaps the most unfortunate thing that has ever happened to individual liberty was its being used as an excuse for the misdeeds

of huge corporations. Now the evils perpetrated by these highly collectivist organizations are blamed on "individual liberty."

THEODORE J. KACZYNSKI,
Lombard, Ill.

Profits and Losses Statements

SENATOR WILLIAM PROXMIRE's article "The Pentagon vs. Free Enterprise" [SR, Jan. 31] is a notable contribution. Members of the Subcommittee on Economy in Government deserve much praise.

The practice by manufacturers of acquiring huge profits on weapons and associated equipment for the Department of Defense must be stopped. I wonder how the board of directors and other top management officials of large so-called defense contractors would respond if they were drafted in their present positions at subsistence levels as a supplementary program to the Selective Service. Such a program would provide a means by which these men could make their patriotic contribution during periods of war (declared or not). The 450,000 men in Vietnam are making unbearable sacrifices. Over 44,000 have made the supreme contribution. Many soldiers have discovered they gave their souls, vis-à-vis My Lai, etc.

I think we know what the response would be from the directors; they would protest in their usual and successful way, and suddenly the war would be over.

Someone said it long ago: "Take the dollar profit out of war and there would be no more war."

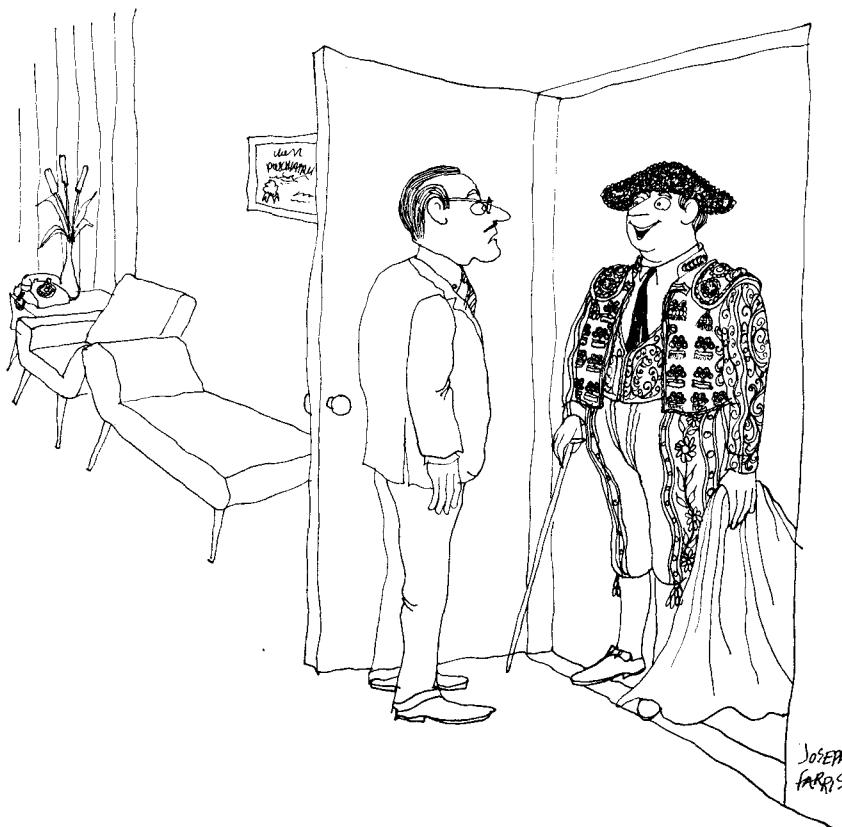
Let it be done soon!

RICHARD D. HARVEY,
Urbana, Ill.

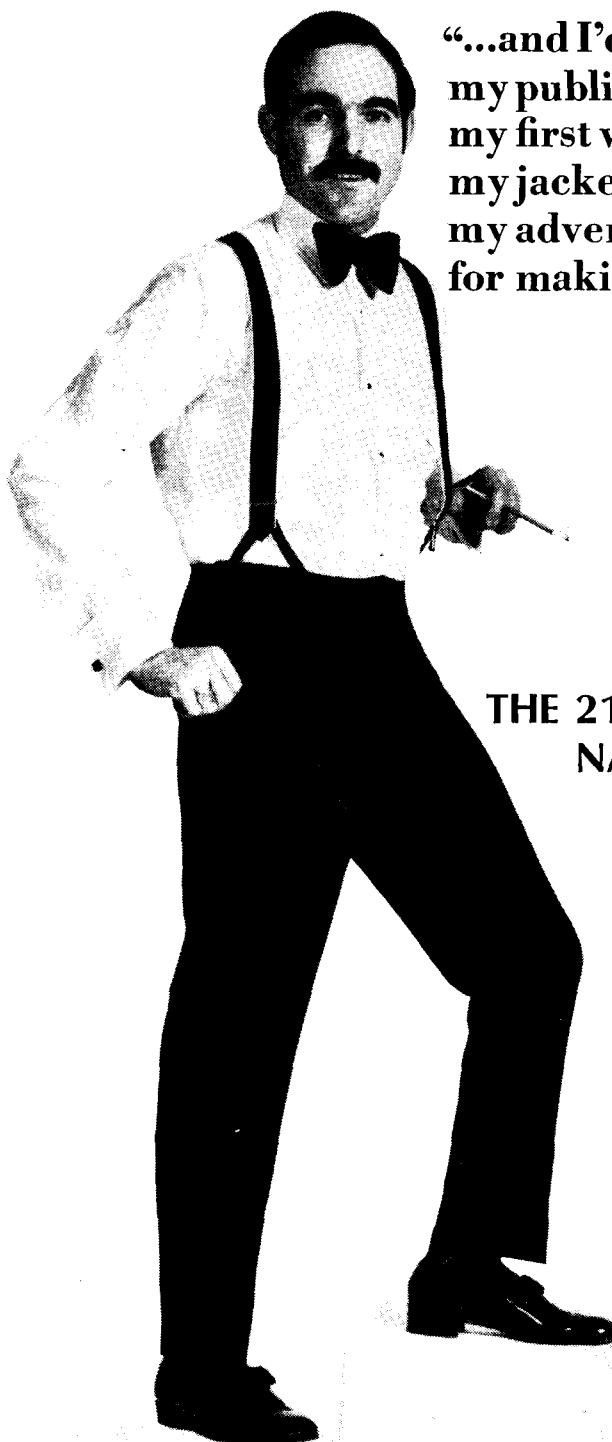
WITHIN THE SPAN of seven pages [SR, Jan. 31] one sees the shocking priorities of our society demonstrated. Senator Proxmire states that this country spent one-fourth of its total budget on military procurement alone, and that \$10-billion of the total amount spent on military matters could be pared without "diminishing national security in the least." His article ended by saying, "Our priorities as a nation need to be restructured, and the place to start is with the bloated defense budget."

Seven pages later, Miss Jeanne Gueydan [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR] tells of the lack of proper medical attention through which she must suffer, because "no Louisiana person, group, or agency . . . will grant the practical aid I need." Our President has told us that we need to fight inflation, and he has told us something else by choosing as his target the HEW appropriations bill. The immoral \$2-billion cost overrun on the C-5A cargo plane would have made the difference between what Mr. Nixon and the Congress wanted on this piece of legislation, and incidentally would have provided the resources to fulfill the human needs of the millions of Miss Gueydans across our fair land.

BILL CALTRIDER,
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Baltimore, Md.



"I'm ready for the moment of truth."



**“...and I’d like to thank
my publisher, my typist, my proofreader,
my first wife, my illustrator,
my jacket designer, my binder,
my advertising agency, and my muse,
for making all this possible.”**

THE 21ST ANNUAL NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

VERA AND BILL CLEAVER—*Where the Lilies Bloom*, (Ill. by Jim Spanfeller). Lippincott
EDNA MITCHELL PRESTON—*Pop Corn & Ma Goodness*, (Ill. by Robert Andrew Parker). Viking
ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER—*A Day of Pleasure*, Stories of a Boy Growing Up in Warsaw. Farrar, Straus & Giroux
WILLIAM STEIG—*Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*, (Illustrated by the author). Windmill Books/Simon & Schuster
EDWIN TUNIS—*The Young United States 1783 to 1830*, (Illustrated by the author). World Publishing

FICTION

LEONARD GARDNER—*Fat City*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux
LEONARD MICHAELS—*Going Places*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux
JOYCE CAROL OATES—*Them*. Vanguard Press
JEAN STAFFORD—*The Collected Stories of Jean Stafford*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux
KURT VONNEGUT, JR.—*Slaughterhouse-Five or The Children's Crusade*. A Seymour Lawrence Book/Delacorte Press

HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

DEAN ACHESON—*Present at the Creation, My Years in the State Department*. W. W. Norton
TOWNSEND HOOPES—*The Limits of Intervention*. David McKay
T. HARRY WILLIAMS—*Huey Long*. Alfred A. Knopf
JOHN WOMACK, JR.—*Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*. Alfred A. Knopf
GORDON S. WOOD—*The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*. Univ. of North Carolina Press

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

KENNETH E. BOULDING—*Beyond Economics*, Essays on Society, Religion, and Ethics. Univ. of Mich. Press
LOREN EISELEY—*The Unexpected Universe*. Harcourt, Brace & World
ERIK H. ERIKSON—*Gandhi's Truth, On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*. W. W. Norton
ROLLO MAY—*Love and Will*. W. W. Norton

THEODORE ROSZAK—*The Making of a Counter Culture, Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*. Doubleday
POETRY

DANIEL BERRIGAN—*False Gods, Real Men*. Macmillan
ELIZABETH BISHOP—*The Complete Poems*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux
LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI—*The Secret Meaning of Things*. New Directions
ROBERT LOWELL—*Notebook 1967-68*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux
PHILIP WHALEN—*On Bear's Head*. Harcourt, Brace & World/Coyote
TRANSLATION

DENISE LEVERTOV—*Selected Poems*, Eugène Guillevic. New Directions
RALPH MANHEIM—*Castle to Castle*, Louis-Ferdinand Céline. A Seymour Lawrence Book/Delacorte Press
PHILIP RADLEY—*The Italics Are Mine*, Nina Berberova. Harcourt, Brace & World
RICHARD SEAVER & HELEN R. LANE—*Manifestoes of Surrealism*, André Breton. Univ. of Michigan Press
JOHN UPTON—*Cumboto*, Ramón Díaz Sánchez. Univ. of Texas Press
The National Book Awards are administered by the National Book Committee, and consist of seven \$1,000 prizes donated by the American Book Publishers Council, the American Booksellers Association, the Association of American University Presses, the Book Manufacturers' Institute, the Children's Book Council, and the National Association of College Stores.

On Wednesday, March 4th, the seven winners of the 1970 National Book Awards will be honored in a presentation ceremony at Philharmonic Hall, Lincoln Center, in New York. Meanwhile, these are the books by American authors published in the United States in 1969 which the judges regard as among the most distinguished:

ARTS AND LETTERS

LILLIAN HELLMAN—*An Unfinished Woman*, A Memoir. Little, Brown
RICHARD HOWARD—*Alone With America, Essays on the Art of Poetry in the United States Since 1950*. Atheneum
NOEL PERRIN—*Dr. Bowdler's Legacy, A History of Expurgated Books in England and America*. Atheneum
JOHN UNTERECKER—*Voyager, A Life of Hart Crane*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux
GORE VIDAL—*Reflections Upon a Sinking Ship*. Little, Brown

An essay review of "The Lives of William Benton," by Sidney Hyman
(University of Chicago Press, 625 pp., \$10)



Success Didn't Spoil Bill Benton

by HERBERT BRUCKER

William Benton is almost as old as the century, having been born April 1, 1900, and his life parallels that of twentieth-century America in more than chronology. He has shared in some of its triumphs as well as in its chaos. His career, little enough known to his 200 million fellow-citizens, has been a fabulous success by American standards. It branched out early from advertising and radio into education and on to politics. His has been a life that sent off sparks of hope and achievement in all directions.

At the insistence of his mother, Benton, born in Minneapolis to genteel poverty, was educated at Yale, where he never really felt accepted by his Eastern Establishment classmates. There followed a swift rise from the obscurity of selling National Cash Registers for his cousin in Utica. After several years in the advertising business, Benton, not yet thirty, founded the Benton & Bowles advertising agency with an even younger Yale graduate, Chester Bowles, as partner.

This was on the eve of the 1929 stock-market disaster. Yet, characteristically, while the rest of the country sank into the red, this whiz-kid firm soared almost at once into the black, and even the gold. The two young partners seized upon radio during its beginnings and did much to shape its pattern, from box-top offers to singing commercials, thus helping set the direction of American broadcasting, including television, toward its present lowest-common-denominator sleaziness.

At thirty-six, Benton retired from business, a rich man. Though Sidney Hyman's biography does not make

much of the point, the experience of early wealth, earned through advertising that succeeded because it tapped mass-man's weakness for the raffish, seems to have inspired a sense of guilt in both partners. Certainly both retired at an age when most others are still hoping they will make it, and both thereafter devoted themselves to public service in and out of government. But, with Benton, the Midas touch continued. He turned the infant Muzak into a wellspring of dollars. He acquired ownership of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, made it into one of the world's largest publishing companies and a major source of support for the University of Chicago. He has brushed against the fringes of journalism, and though he missed out on commercial television he generated ideas from which it might benefit. He is a founding father of UNESCO, the Committee for Economic Development, and the Voice of America. He was Assistant Secretary of State and United States Senator from Connecticut. Further, he has roamed the world from India to Russia to Latin America. What more could a man ask? Yet always, behind it all, there seems to have been a hunger for something else.

The Lives of William Benton is more than 600 pages long. The reader approaches it fearing he will echo the child who wrote that one-sentence report on a book about penguins: "This tells me more about Bill Benton than I care to know." Yet there is none of it that isn't interesting, and one puts the volume down with a new respect for its subject.

The book was originally conceived as a campaign biography for the Connecticut Senate race of 1962, but Benton didn't get the nomination. When later the project was undertaken for its own sake, it turned out to be unusually well documented, thanks large-

SR: BOOKS

Book Review Editor: ROCHELLE GIRSON

- 35 "The Lives of William Benton," by Sidney Hyman
- 37 Book Forum: Letters from Readers
- 38 "Picking Up the Gun: A Report on the Black Panthers," by Earl Anthony
- 40 "Demonstration at Pushkin Square," by Pavel Litvinov; "In Quest of Justice: Protest and Dissent in the Soviet Union Today," edited by Abraham Brumberg; "The New Russian Tragedy," by Anatole Shub
- 43 "A Plot of Grass," by Lane Kauffmann
- 44 Criminal Record
- 45 Religious Books Supplement
- 46 "The New English Bible: The Old and New Testaments with the Apocrypha"
- 50 "The Encounter," by Malachi Martin
- 52 "The Jewish Mystique," by Ernest van den Haag
- 69 "Making All Things Human," by Melvin E. Schoonover; "The Church and the Black Man," by John Howard Griffin; "Fire and Blackstone," by John R. Fry; "Justice, Justice," by Rabbi Henry Cohen; "Black Manifesto: Religion, Racism, and Reparations," by Robert S. Lecky and H. Elliott Wright; "Reparations: The Black Manifesto and Its Challenge to White America," by Arnold Schuchter; "Southern Africa: A Time for Change," edited by George M. Daniels
- 71 "A Theology for Radical Politics," by Michael Novak; "Revolutionary Writings," by Camilo Torres; "Unyoung, Uncolored, Unpoor," by Colin Morris
- 74 Religion Notes, by Roger Ortmayer

HERBERT BRUCKER, for nineteen years editor of the Hartford, Conn., *Courant*, now writes a syndicated newspaper column.