

Letters to The Times

Attack on Shelters Upheld

Critics of Program See Dangers in Illusion of Effectiveness

The writers of the following letter are respectively Professor of Biology, Professor of Microbiology and Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:
We hope you will permit us, as signers of the open letter to President Kennedy on civil defense, to reply to the letter of Ward B. Chamberlin Jr., published on Jan. 1.

The open letter, which originally appeared as an advertisement in The New York Times on Nov. 10, has been adhered to by about 4,000 members of college and university faculties. Mr. Chamberlin has accused these signatories of failing to think the matter through, but has given no evidence of this except for calling most of the arguments in the open letter "specious" or "eyewash." In particular, he does not question our argument as to the ineffectiveness of most conceivably feasible shelter programs.

The only argument that Mr. Chamberlin attempts to discuss on its merits is our belief that a shelter program tends to increase the likelihood of nuclear war, because, to quote from the open letter, "we may be more willing to go to the brink if we think survival is possible and because we are less likely to take any of the constructive steps which may ease tension and secure the peace."

Cardboard Armor

Mr. Chamberlin's rejoinder is significant because it illustrates the false premises on which the shelter program is based. He likens rejection of such program to "stripping ourselves of our armor." But is the shelter program anything but a cardboard armor? The writers of the open letter did not suggest that we shed any useful form of armor—merely that we be realistic and candid about the effectiveness of civil defense programs and that we face the dangers inherent in placing our trust in an armor that does not protect.

The President himself has explicitly stated that civil defense is not a deterrent. But to consider it as an "armor" is an attempt to make it part of a deterrent posture; the most dangerous part, in fact, because it has little or no substance.

Unfortunately, many of the President's advisers, as is evident from the Holifield committee hearing, August, 1961, base their advocacy of a civil defense program on its "armor" function—that is, on its usefulness in lending credibility to our deterrent. In other words, unless we convince the Russians that we think our people are protected, they will think that we shall never use our bombs.

Exposed Population

This "shelter rattling," in fact, makes the civilian population a dangerously exposed pawn in the strategic game of deterrence if the shelter program is as ineffective as we and many others believe.

Thus, the advocacy of the shelter program is largely based on arguments independent of its real effectiveness and ignores the dangers created by the illusion of its effectiveness. It is significant that the Holifield committee, in its August, 1961, hearings, refused to hear anyone opposed to civil defense.

Finally, we question Mr. Chamberlin's concluding statement that a positive program for peace with freedom is being pursued and pursued "quite effectively." No doubt the President wishes to do so; but most of our governmental machinery and of our national thinking is so geared to the arms race that our search for constructive steps toward peace is at best half-hearted.

CYRUS LEVINTHAL,
S. E. LURIA,
WILLIAM F. SCHREIBER.

Lexington, Mass., Jan. 3, 1962.

This letter is one of a number received on this subject.

Mandatory Relocation Law Urged

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

The argument over whether city or state will manage rent control has obscured the vital need to change the present law so that the rent-controlled tenant must be relocated before a landlord can obtain a certificate of eviction which will make demolition possible. Such a change in the law can be readily made; it can be drawn to be clear, explicit, enforceable and fair.

Failure to provide mandatory relocation is lending apparent weight to a demand, heard in some quarters, for a law to stop all demolition of so-called habitable buildings. Such a "moratorium," as its proponents describe it, would be of doubtful constitutionality and would surely be challenged on this ground.

It would present serious enforcement problems, especially where demolition or new construction is already under contract. Eliminating occupied sites from consideration for new issues would, it seems, increase competition for vacant land, making new low or middle income housing construction more difficult. It would be hard indeed to draw a measure which would permit some demolition (for government purposes) and forbid all other demolition absolutely; in any case, the moratorium would solve no housing problems but merely guarantee that everything will be older and shabbier when it ends.

The answer to the hardships of demolition is mandatory relocation before the issuance of an eviction certificate. Delay in accomplishing this law change means greater hardship, confusion and agitation for other, illusory solutions.

ROGER STARR,

Executive Director, Citizens Housing and Planning Council of New York, Inc.
New York, Jan. 9, 1962.

To Defend New Guinea

Importance of Island as Bastion of Free World Stressed

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

As an American citizen and as a former medical officer of the United States Army who served in the Southwest Pacific during World War II from 1942 to 1946, I wish to register my plea that the President and the Congress of the United States will inform Mr. Sukarno of Indonesia, immediately and in no uncertain terms, that we will oppose any attempt on his part to take over by force any part of the island of New Guinea; further, that we will oppose it by our military strength if necessary, by coming to the aid of the New Guinea natives, who are unable to defend themselves.

I spent the best part of two years in New Guinea, taking part in the many military actions. Under Gen. Douglas MacArthur the military forces of the United States and Australia drove out the Japanese invaders.

Our dead lie in the large cemetery at Port Moresby and in countless graves, marked and unmarked, all through New Guinea. To these precious dead we owe a pledge that we will not permit them to have died in vain, as we will do if we allow Sukarno to take over the island for his Malayan East Indians without a struggle.

Need for Tutelage

The natives of Indonesia have no racial connection with the natives of New Guinea. The New Guinea natives are, for the most part, a wild lot, little removed from the Stone Age; but the native constabulary under the tutelage of the Australians and Dutch have demonstrated that education can make them self-reliant, intelligent people.

Some day they can and should take over and rule their own country, but for several years they need the guidance of the Australians and the Dutch and, perhaps, the United Nations. They should not be thrown on the mercies of the voracious government now in power in Indonesia, supplied, alas, by arms and munitions from the United States and by Russia, and by encouragement to attack from Communist China.

From our own selfish point of view, the island of New Guinea, which is the second largest in the world, and vastly rich and fertile, should remain as a bastion of the free world. This island forms one of the strongest bulwarks of the littoral of islands extending from the continent of Asia down to Australia and New Zealand.

Wild though the country is, the establishment here of airplane and missile bases by unfriendly forces would be disastrous to Australia and the free world in general.

I. RIDGEWAY TRIMBLE, M. D.
Baltimore, Jan. 15, 1962.

Schinnerer Report Praised

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

As a teacher of social studies in a New York City junior high school I note with acclaim the recent report on our schools prepared by Dr. Mark C. Schinnerer. He speaks with the accuracy and objectivity of one who understands the acute state of affairs in our declining municipal school system.

How correct he is in stating that many of our teachers are so burdened with nonteaching chores that they have almost lost sight of the real purposes of their profession. The conditions with reference to supplies, textbooks, overcrowding and "spotty" administration and teacher personnel are things that every citizen should be shown.

It is the hope of every dedicated teacher that some action will be taken now, before further deterioration sets in. RONALD M. WINER.
New York, Jan. 3, 1962.