LETTERS

in contempt
San Antonio, Texas
I represented more conscientious objects during the war in Vietnam than any lawyer in Texas. In the process of doing so, my contempt for Harvard intellectuals was (and is) without limits. They sent the poor off to war (more than half my clients were Catholic boys from working families) while they kept their own children out of combat. They gave my father's old friend, Lyndon Johnson, an inferiority complex. The worst sons of bitches in America—that's what they are.

But I want to tell you something good about Erwin Griswold, the Harvard Law School's dean from 1946 to 1967. Around the time of "Jonathan Lubell & the Law Review" [The Nation, Mar. 18] a bill came up in the Texas House of Representatives which would have caused any state employee to be fired who invoked the Fifth Amendment. As a member of the House I wrote Griswold for help; he gave me help by return mail.

A few years ago Justice Hugo Black gave a client of mine, a Methodist preacher's son, a stay order from being flown as an unwilling soldier to Vietnam. The young man in his conscientious objector application did not define "God" in orthodox terms; the chaplains, a command-dominated bunch, recommended against approval. Mr. Griswold, by then Solicitor General, filed a pleading not opposing a stay order and may have saved the boy's life.

I wouldn't know Griswold if I saw him, but in the words of the late J. Frank Dobie he strikes me as being a pretty good man "to ride the river with." Maury Maverick Jr.

matter of taste
Long Beach, Calif.
It would indeed be a pity if any of your readers should neglect exploring the delights of Brian O'Nolan (alias Flann O'Brien and Myles na gCopaleen) because of J.D. O'Hara's snide review [The Nation, Feb. 23].

Among his pointless pejoratives, O'Hara tells us that O'Nolan was a civil service "functionary" and a "part-time writer" of satiric newspaper columns, plays, TV scripts, and novels. (One thinks of such other "functionaries" and "part-time" writers as Geoffrey Chaucer and Anthony Trollope.) He adds that O'Nolan "died, appropriately enough, on April 1." Along with this sort of gratuitous stuff, O'Hara's review contains some curious errors. He is shaky on which pseudonyms O'Nolan used for certain books. He gives us anglicize (from Gaelic into English) for translate and "Shelra" (for Stella) Gibbons as the author of Cold Comfort Farm.

O'Hara is full of highly debatable ex cathedra pronouncements. For example, his dismissal of The Third Policeman as "oddly uninteresting" is quite at variance with the verdict of Kevin Sullivan in the original Nation review of that work ten years ago [Feb. 5, 1968]. . . .

He declares that, "To be sure, Joyce is funnier than Flann O'Brien. . . ." Among others whose claim to expertise in matters of humor is rather more considerable than O'Hara's, S.J. Perelman has said that O'Brien (O'Nolan) is "the best comic writer I can think of." Perelman has also spoken of the "tremendous quality" of O'Nolan's Irish Times columns—many of them collected in a marvelous book, The Best of Myles (1968), which O'Hara does not mention. But why bother at all to make invidious comparisons between O'Nolan and Joyce? . . . D.A. Drury

Storrs, Conn.
Stella, of course—shame on me—but I thought "anglicized" an amusing version of "English." It was O'Nolan who kept connecting himself with Joyce—I just went along with (Continued on page 369)

Variations CALVIN TRILLIN

When Calvin Trillin, distinguished reporter, novelist and keeper of The New Yorker's "U.S. Journal," agreed to do a humor column for The Nation, we suggested that he borrow his title from Heywood Broun, a Nation columnist in the 1920s. For some reason, Mr. Trillin was unenthusiastic about calling his column "It Seems to Heywood Broun" by Calvin Trillin. We compromised on "Variations," which will appear every third week.

When I was approached about writing a column for The Nation, I asked for only one assurance: would I be allowed to make fun of the editor? We all have our own ideas of civil liberties.

The editor, one Victor Navasky, replied to this question with what I believe the novelists call a nervous chuckle. It was, oddly enough, precisely the same response he used to have when, many years ago, I tried to reassure him about the future of Monocle, a journal of political satire he edited, by saying that the lack of a sense of humor was probably not an insurmountable handicap for the editor of a humor magazine.

I did think at the time that hiring an advertising director who found advertising repellant was carrying Monocle's policy of personnel perversity too far. The advertising director naturally made no calls on customers—the management would hardly ask someone to commit an act he found loathsome and disgusting—and he tried to avoid talking to any potential advertisers who, despite his best efforts to keep the Monocle telephone number secret, tracked him down. "Take a message," he would hiss at the secretary, as he bolted for the door. "Tell him I'm in the bathroom. Get rid of him!"

I now realize that engaging an advertising director who hated advertising was part of Navasky's grand plan to lose money. A man of considerable foresight, he could probably predict what would happen when anti-establishment journalism became difficult to distinguish from an advertising supplement for the record industry: Writers who valued the camaraderie and left-wing politics of some struggling weekly would work alongside the founder for next to nothing for years, only to have the founder sell out one day for two or three million dollars and retire to Cap d'Antibes—still full of camaraderie, not to speak of long-term capital gains. From such incidents came the folk phrase, much repeated by writers, "There's no gonnif like a left-wing gonnif."

Navasky, not wanting to be an exploiter, saw to it that Monocle would remain financially worthless. He did not, on the other hand, take the extremist tack of paying writers. The only editor of a struggling magazine I ever knew to do that was immediately assumed to be an operative of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Navasky kept well clear of such suspicions. Once, not long after I had handed in the transcript of a panel discussion I had organized for an early issue of Monocle, I was astonished to be told by one of the college students Navasky regularly captured from some sort of slave/study program he knew about that Monocle was sending me a check. No one I knew had ever received a check from Monocle. Once, in fact, Navasky had sent me a bill for (Continued on page 358)
a piece of mine Monocle published—explaining in the accompanying note that the office expenses of processing the piece exceeded what he had planned to pay me for it. "May I ask how much the check is for?" I asked Navasky's slave.

"Three dollars," she said.

The next time I ran into one of the panelists, I apologized for having involved him in a project that had paid him only three dollars. "Whadaya mean three?" he said. "I got two." Navasky had obviously given me an extra dollar for the organizing and editing.

A few weeks later, Navasky said he wanted me to run similar discussions as a regular monthly feature of Monocle.

"Well, it's steady," I said. "A person would know that he's got his thirty-six dollars coming in every year, rain or shine, and he could build his free lance on that." Monocle folded before I could pry another three dollars from Navasky, but then, only twelve or thirteen years later, I read that he had been made the editor of The Nation. Naturally, I tried to remember what sort of editor he had been at Monocle as a way of figuring out what he might do at The Nation. I do remember him as a humane editor: When I referred to the anonymous author of Cue's capsule film reviews as "the fellow with one leg shorter than the other who's always calling movies 'uneven,'" Navasky said that Monocle would not permit ridicule of a person's affliction—even an anonymous person who did not happen to suffer from the affliction in question. He was exacting: When I suggested changing the front-page headline of a parody edition of the New York Post to "COLD SNAP HITS OUR TOWN; JEWS, NEGROES SUFFER MOST," he refused merely because there was no story inside the paper to go with it.

I thought about Navasky's career at Monocle for a while, and then sat down to write him a letter of congratulations. It said, in its entirety, "Does money owed writers from Monocle carry over?"

THE SCHLESINGER PROBLEM

SEN. JAMES ABOUREZK

President Carter, along with virtually all media commentators, has defined energy as the number-one problem facing the United States. They have declared a national energy policy to be the administration's most important legislative goal. On the surface, fears arising from the lack of a national policy on energy are well founded. We are paying $46 billion each year to import oil, giving us terrific balance of payment headaches, and depressing the value of the dollar. The price of domestic oil, coal and natural gas continues to rise, and spills over to inflate the price of housing, food and all other goods. We are more aware than ever that one day fossil fuels will be available only at the highest prices to the very few.

Given these factors, it was natural that a new President would choose to make the establishment of a policy on energy his top priority. Carter approached his work with a combination of sincerity and dedication which should have worked. His objectives were important, but somewhere along the way, the entire program went sour.

I believe the major reason for the souring of Carter's noble effort lies in his appointment of James Schlesinger as Secretary of the Department of Energy.

Early on, Mr. Schlesinger convinced the President that the only way to conserve energy was to raise prices. For political reasons, that would be done by increasing taxes on oil and gas and increasing profits to oil companies. Rationing by price, as Schlesinger's approach has been called, sounds good in theory; that is, if you, yourself, are affluent and feel that cutting consumption of oil is properly the responsibility of the lower-income working stiffs of this country.

The problem with pricing petroleum too high is that only the public is asked to sacrifice, but not the oil industry, and certainly not corporate executives or high-level bureaucrats. Since 1945, government policy has driven the country in one direction—toward the use of more oil. Housing policy has put large segments of the population in the suburbs, where at least one and sometimes two cars per family are essential. Not one word of criticism was uttered as the highway lobby and its allies virtually paved the countryside in order to sell more cars and more gasoline. Nobody yet knows how many mass-transit systems General Motors bought up and destroyed, but when they tore up the trolley lines in Los Angeles, they created the single largest local car market in the world.

The narrow economic determinism Schlesinger shares with every other successful Washington bureaucrat prevents him from considering how intentionally our dependency on individual automobiles and all-electric homes was created—and how thoroughly it was built into everything we do. The elitist in Schlesinger prevents him from considering how unfair it is to exploit that reliance by raising fuel prices.

James Schlesinger's appointment as Energy Secretary also exemplifies the concept of careerism in government. While it's usually reserved for lower-grade civil service employees, tenure in public office also has been achieved by a few upper-level people in Washington. Elliot Richardson is one of these. James Schlesinger is another.

Having sold the President on an energy program that is disappearing before his very eyes, Schlesinger's primary objective now is to preserve himself and his career.