

Letters to the Editor

On 'Human Action'

TO THE EDITOR:

MR. GALBRAITH in his review of Ludwig von Mises' "Human Action" (Book Review, Oct. 30), published by the Yale University Press, objects to the publisher's statement on the jacket that "Professor von Mises' approach bears little relation to what is usually taught in classrooms or to the hopeful, revolutionary but bankrupt 'economics' that conquered the Western World in the last decades." * * * He also asks what are the "malignant consequences" of not having followed Professor von Mises' advice in the last decade.

It is an important thesis of the book, and therefore of the jacket copy * * * that government intervention in the market economy produced systems of increasing economic and political coercion that have led to totalitarianism in some countries and to near bankruptcy in others. This intervention in his opinion was supported by erroneous but popular economic theories that have swept through Europe and made great headway in the United States. * * * The jacket merely attempts to condense Mr. von Mises' views.

The economic texts used in classrooms are certainly very different from Professor von Mises' book, which is an attempt to establish a scientific and philosophical basis for the whole problem of human action. * * *

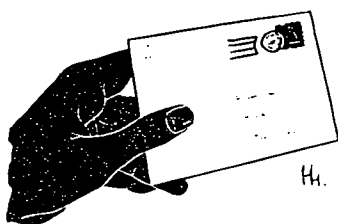
The war, the forced migrations of peoples, inflation and scarcity, the decreasing areas of individual freedom even in the West, these are the malignant consequences, Professor von Mises believes, of wrong economic decisions — to name a few. * * *

EUGENE DAVIDSON,
Editor, Yale University Press.
New Haven, Conn.

A Reply

TO THE EDITOR:

I ACCEPT Mr. Davidson's plea that the jacket sought only to condense Professor Mises' views. I must still chide him for making the reader wait for the above letter to learn of the fact and



also for the somewhat florid character of his condensations. Thus the jacket begins with the assertion: "This book is the counterweight of Marx's 'Das Kapital,' of Lord Keynes' 'General Theory,' and of countless other books recommending socialization, planning, credit expansion, and similar panaceas." Might not a reader understandably mistake this for a publisher's plug? * * *

The reference to the "revolutionary but bankrupt" state of modern economics also appears

as a bald assertion. There is no suggestion that it is a paraphrase of Professor Mises' views. To the statement of which it forms a part are appended the words "Yale University Press," which one takes to be an admission of authorship. * * *

I can understand why Mr. Davidson might wish that I had overlooked this jacket. But it was he who made it so fascinating.

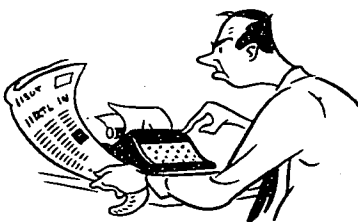
J. K. GALBRAITH,
Cambridge, Mass.

Spellbinding

TO THE EDITOR:

FOR years, as a native up-state New Yorker, I have been fighting a losing battle to get straight in people's minds the variations in spelling and the proper use of the word Allegheny or Alleghany or Allegheny.

Your review of "Empire Oil" (Book Review, Nov. 20) refers



to Alleghany County. The county is spelled Alleghany. There is also the village of Alleghany in southwestern New York. Alleghany is simply a variant of Allegheny. The latter is a river which rises in Pennsylvania but flows into and out of New York State before joining the Monongahela to form the Ohio. The Allegheny Mountains are part of the Appalachian Mountains and there is an Allegheny College at Meadville, Pa. Finally, there is the village of Port Alleghany in northwestern Pennsylvania. By this time it will not surprise you that Port Alleghany is on the Allegheny River.

I know this is complicated for New Yorkers, but up state we find it quite simple.

FON W. BOARDMAN JR.
New York City.

Skepticism?

TO THE EDITOR:

P. S. G. of Norwich, Vt., on Kaempffert's review of de Kruif's "Life Among the Doctors," defends the "skepticism" of conservative medicine by citing the "dangers" of premature reports (Book Review, Oct. 30).

What total "dangers," may I ask, can supersede the loss of one "fool" Semmelweiss, who for only fifty years couldn't get doctors to wash their dirty hands—while mothers died like flies?

It isn't a matter of "skepticism" in the true sense of that word at all, but plain laziness, snob-bishness, selfishness, greed, ad nauseum! Kaempffert and de Kruif are simply trying to remind the good doctors to wash their insides once in a while. As such, they deserve the gratitude of both layman and doctor!

CARL COLODNE,
New York City.

REMEMBER THE NEEDIEST!