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# What Future for the Young New Standards in Industry

## Writer?

By  
H. E. BATES

I TALKED the other day with two writers, one a short-story writer who has also written unsuccessful novels, the other a poet who has written unsuccessful plays.

The writer of short stories said to me: "Before the war I lived, and lived well, on a couple of pounds a week. I had an ancient Austin Seven. Every summer I scraped together £30 or £40 and went off to Ireland or Europe and toured about looking for material.

"I spent six or eight weeks there. Then I came back and spent the winter writing stories. There were plenty of magazines that printed short stories in those days. They didn't pay very well, but then it didn't matter. Things were cheap. I had my stories published, and I was happy."

### PAPER FAMINE

THE poet, on the other hand, was not so happy. He had not begun to resolve himself before the war. By the time the war was over he discovered that the world was afflicted with a paper shortage. Paper was also murderously expensive. Newspapers were a half, or even a quarter, of their former size. There had been a wave of deaths among magazines.

"Before the war, of course, there were plenty of magazines," he said. "They printed pages of poetry—some of them printed nothing but poetry. Now hardly anybody prints poetry.

"Still, I have managed, after great trial and difficulty, to publish a new volume of verse. It has sold 430 copies. It may reach 500. I won't bore you with what the 10 per cent. royalty on that is—but it means that the average I can expect to earn from a volume of verse is £50. It may be as little as £30. And I have a wife and two children to support."

A few days later I talked with two publishers. One is a publisher whose house is old and established. The other is a much younger publisher, but also distinguished and sound. Here, in effect, is what the older publisher had to say of the world that awaits the young writer of to-day:

"The literary world is feeling a considerable draught. There has been a sharp decline in book-buying and in library subscriptions, especially of fiction and more especially of fiction by new writers. Novels selling less than 2,000 copies are now as common as before the war. Mostly they show a considerable loss to the publisher.

"Thus," he went on, "it is inevitable that we must show—temporarily, at any rate—less and less interest in the work of unknown writers. We must stick to established names. We cannot afford the luxury of grub-staking unknown beginners and hoping that they will reward us, in time, by becoming best sellers."

### LOOKING FOR TALENT

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nothing," I said, "of those who are lost in the labyrinthine backwaters of the B.B.C."

No, he said, these things did not surprise him. They were, on the contrary, what he would have expected.

"That is undoubtedly why," he said, "my stair-carpet is being worn out by the feet of young writers coming to see me with synopses of novels or with half-finished novels in the hope that I will grub-stake them while the work is finished. They do not seem to understand that that sort of thing isn't possible any longer."

"That is possibly because," I said, "they are caught up in the ancient paradox of having to eat in order to write, and to write in order to eat."

### ADVANCE WANTED

HE picked up a book from his desk.

"Here is a novel," he said, "by a promising young colonial. It sold 800 copies. He has just come to me with the synopsis of a second book, asking me to back him with a grub-stake that could not decently be put, these days, at less than £750 a year. And always with the chance that the novel would never be finished, or would be terrible if it were."

Here, then, it seemed, we had the problem. Young writers were everywhere complaining that their work was not wanted. Yet here was a publisher also complaining that young writers, because of the sheer necessity of having to take jobs in order to eat, had no work to offer.

"Writing ought," he said, "to be a full-time job. People like Wells and Conrad and Bennett and Lawrence and Shaw all made it a full-time job. They threw up their former desolating work of teaching or clerking or sea-faring with gladness in order to dedicate themselves to writing."

### VANISHED GLORY

AT this point I felt it was time to get on my hobby-horse. I felt it time to remind him—and there was really no need, because he was intelligent enough to be fully aware of it himself—how times had changed.

I recalled that in the 'twenties and 'thirties the literary world of London was rich in magazines. It was also rich in editors of distinction to take charge of them. The Criterion, Life and Letters, The Adelphi, The London Mercury, The Bermondsey Book were only a few of the platforms on which a young writer could make trial demonstrations of his ability, watched and encouraged as he did so by men like T. S. Eliot, Desmond MacCarthy, Middleton Murry, J. C. Squire, Frederick Heath and others enthusiastic in the cause of new writers. Now all of these magazines were dead.

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which he could see, week by week or month by month, new samples of their work.

All this, however, still does not complete the picture of what forces are and have been at work in revolutionising the young writer's world. He is not simply a victim of a life that everywhere grows much more competitive. Behind all this lies an immense social revolution, aggravated by war, whose effects are not merely localised in literature.

War, curiously enough, is the friend of literature; books boom with guns. But it is clear that cinema, radio, television—especially the last—are distractions that increasingly rival the world of books.

### SEMI-LITERACY

PERHAPS it is too much to say that cinema, radio and television are direct breeders of illiteracy; they may well have, in certain cases, an opposite effect. But it is possible that they are breeders of something worse, which is semi-literacy. Clearly it needs no literate effort to sit in a chair and listen to the spoken word or stare at a screen.

Clearly, also, it is dangerous to be dogmatic about the cultural effects of new inventions. The motor-car, we were assured, would kill the countryside. Films would kill theatre; talkies would kill music; radio would kill talkies; television would kill them all. And it would be nonsense to suppose that all of them, even together, could kill books, some 18,000 of which were, in fact, published in this country alone last year.

They are all, nevertheless, part of the complicated contemporary forces that are making the way of the young writer more and more difficult, and his future less and less secure. For the publisher who asks "Where are the young writers?" is really thinking not of the world of publishing and authorship to-day, but of the world of books and authors a decade ahead.

He knows that the making of literary reputations is a slow and difficult business. He knows, also, that from the unknown coterie writers of one generation come the reputations and sellers of the next. If, under the weight of economic pressure or the sheer disappearance of his market-places, the young writer of to-day is forced to earn his living in another profession, what of the publishers' lists of tomorrow?

No writers? Impossible. Yet I left the second of my publishers more worried about the future of young writers than, I think, the young writers themselves.

### THE BEST AWARD

NOT that this will provide any comfort to my young friend the poet, whose fourth play is about to be accorded the distinction of an unpaid reading by what he calls "one of those jolly societies to help the artist, all with salaried officials, all drones." Nor to my friend the short story writer.

Not that I, or either of them, would advocate the setting up of any system of charitable awards for

## Conservative Party Aspirations

From Mr. JOHN RODGERS, M.P.

To the Editor of The Daily Telegraph  
SIR—In the 1950 Parliament, I tried to introduce a Private Member's Bill to implement part of the Conservative Workers' Charter. Unfortunately, I was not able to get a second reading for it, due to the activities of Labour Members.

Mr. William Carr is quite right that the Conservatives did put forth in "Britain Strong and Free" our views on the Workers' Charter. In this we said: "When we have discussed them with the trade unions and employers we intend to bring our general proposals before Parliament for debate and approval. Then we shall give notice that, on the analogy of the fair wages clause, public contracts will be given only to firms adopting certain standards contained in the Charter. We shall secure their adoption in Government undertakings and in the nationalised industries. Where practicable the Charter will be applied to agriculture."

What Mr. Carr does not seem to understand is that the Conservatives have by no means abandoned their desire to introduce the Workers' Charter. Let me refer, for instance, to a reply given on Dec. 2 to a Socialist question on what action the Government had taken to discuss the proposed Charter with trade unions and employers and when the proposals contained in it would be brought before Parliament.

In this reply Mr. Watkinson, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Sir Walter Monckton, stated that: "My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to put before the National Joint Advisory Council proposals for an Industrial Code, the aim of which would be to encourage the adoption of enlightened standards in industry. It is not the Government's intention to introduce legislation on this subject, though I hope that in due course Parliament may give its approval to the standards recommended in the Code."

I hope that these facts will remove any doubts Mr. Carr may have, and hearten the millions of trade unionists who support our party.

Yours faithfully,  
JOHN RODGERS.

House of Commons.

### TITO THE WARR

To the Editor of The Daily Telegraph  
Sir—Surely it is bad to attempt to sabotage the success of Mr. Eden's visit to Belgrade! I gesticulate that Marshal Tito is a religious persecutor in Jugoslavia. Do Tito's critics realise the immense part he played in the throw of Nazi Germany in 1945? Do they know that for several years his forces contained and after liquidated a greater number of German divisions than those opposed the Normandy landings? Do they appreciate how many months the war would have continued had these same divisions been available for other theatres?

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"I want young writers," he said. "My list is, and always has been, largely made up of young writers. I like young writers. They're my future. But where are they?"

I then asked him if he would be very surprised to learn that some of them were washing dishes at night in large hotels, or working night-shifts in ice-cream factories?—both dreary necessities because, somehow, the rent had to be paid. "To say

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In the 'twenties and 'thirties it was not really so very difficult for a writer of talent to get some sample of his work before the public eye. That is undoubtedly one reason, I feel, why the 'twenties and 'thirties were so prolific in distinguished names.

Nor was it then necessary for a publisher to wonder where his young writers were, or what they were doing, or what promise they showed. Magazines were the showrooms in

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Not that I, or either of them, would advocate the setting up of any system of charitable awards for young writers, either official or private, jolly or otherwise. The best possible award that any young writer can ask is a place where his work can be printed, read and paid for. And that is what he lacks, today and where, as a consequence, his disturbing problem lies, waiting for a solution to a question for which there is, I fear, no easy answer; but to which there must soon be an answer, if he is to survive.

proposals contained in it brought before Parliament. In this reply Mr. Watkin Parliamentary Secretary Minister of Labour, Sir Monckton, stated that: "hon. and learned Friend put before the National Advisory Council proposal Industrial Code; the aim would be to encourage the of enlightened standards in It is not the Government's intention to introduce legislation on this subject, though I hope the course Parliament may approval to the standard mended in the Code."

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So far from being first with discussions on relig rance, the Marshal should come to these shores as a general and a courageous n many would have had the of character to defy th might of Russia, poised very doorstep? Yours fa O. F

Newcastle-upon-Tyne. To the Editor of The Daily

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Telegraph