

## On the Arms Taken Against the Troubles

I should like to answer the recent comments by Ina Bradley about the American Shakespeare Theater which appeared in your Connecticut section on Feb. 17.

Contrary to the "doomsday appraisal" of the condition of the theater during the last three years, the record shows that the American Shakespeare Theater has made great strides in curing many of its past problems. The

30,000 individuals who contributed to the theater support.

4. For the first time in the 22-year history of the theater, corporate, foundation and individual support has been committed on an on-going basis for up to five years instead of on a year-to-year basis.

5. The 1976 season at Stratford was artistically successful but less effective at the box office. As at other tourist-related summer festivals, attendance dropped as we were co-opted by bicentennial celebrations.

6. The accumulated deficit of the theater, which had risen in each of the

of our English-speaking heritage with a high level of artistry.

3. To develop the full potential of our education program which has brought as many as 1,500,000 students from Connecticut and surrounding states to our theater in the last 15 years and to develop our education outreach program which has already served many students in most of the School Districts in Connecticut, at their schools.

Subsequent to this meeting of the board of directors, the chairman of the board, the president and members of the staff of the American Shakespeare Theater met with Governor Grasso of Connecticut, who indicated great concern over the future of this national resource, an outstanding asset to Connecticut cultural life. The Governor directed those state agencies concerned to seek support in conjunction with the staff of the theater from all possible Federal sources.

Over the last three years, the make-up of the board of directors of the American Shakespeare Theater has undergone almost a complete metamorphosis. Leaders in Connecticut politics, Connecticut industry and banking and individuals interested in the arts have joined together in their efforts to assure the health and continuation of this vital institution.

We are confident that the base of the American Shakespeare Theater will broaden, its horizons will expand and its importance will continue to rank equally with our sister Stratfords in Ontario and in Stratford on the Avon.

We invite all who are interested to join us in this worthwhile endeavor.

WILLIAM W. GOODMAN  
Chairman  
Stratford

## Bridgeport 'Is Nearly Dying'

While reading David F. Austin's "Bridgeport is Sinking" I found myself lulled into a wistful nostalgia for a city I have only come to know in the last few years. The feeling was short-lived after I asked myself if this classical Main Street, surrounded by lovely squares and parks to which he addresses himself, can possibly be the same street on which I work and spend considerable time.

Bridgeport is not merely sinking, it is nearly dying. Month after month we see store after store closing its doors because profit has become an unattainable goal. Other businesses in a last



## In Westport: Minibus time

gasp of possibility move to the suburbs. If by chance a failed store reopens as a new business, the tenant is not a specialty shop as envisioned by Mr. Austin, but more than likely just one more tacky variety store hawking toothpaste and galoshes. The result is a city one would more accurately characterize as a Coney Island under siege than a city filled with dignified Victorian row houses.

There is nothing inherently wrong with Mr. Austin's sense of romantic idealism with regard to community development. There are certainly many attractive buildings in Bridgeport and it would be senseless to tear them down simply for the sake of change. However, if this sense of romantic idealism lulls the community into passive complacency, then Bridgeport will become a city bent on suicide.

There are a number of downtown blocks that should be razed. If that's what it takes to bring new business,

corporate headquarters, jobs, and beauty to a dreary city, then all the more reason to begin.

Bridgeport government is in the position to reverse this passive attitude by actively working to obtain funds, and encouraging large-scale development in order to provide real growth and positive change. More business, quality shopping and an active night life in Bridgeport would not only benefit the downtown, but the entire city and surrounding towns as well.

ALAN G. VOGEL  
Stratford

## Smoking in School: Who's Fair to Whom?

Danielle Flood's "School for Smoking?" article on March 20 omitted a compelling reason for creating indoor smoking areas. I do not fault her for not having gone into the boys' rooms of the schools that allow smoking only outdoors, but had she done so she would have seen that the students there create their own indoor smoking lounge.

The gangs that gather in the restrooms can be terrifying, especially to the younger students. Teachers are afraid to go into the boys' rooms to disband the crowds or to do anything about the smoking because they are

afraid to. In my three years at a Stamford high school I was aware of several violent outbreaks precipitated by the throngs in the restrooms.

In such schools the nonsmokers have the option not to use the restrooms, but it is fairer to them to allow the smokers to smoke elsewhere.

MARTIN GOLDBERG  
Stamford

## Cost-Planning Urged For Busing Service

The upbeat Fairfield County bus story was accurate and welcome to one who believes that mass transit is necessary to decent living in the area. A sobering fact is the entry into transit by all levels of government as private industry has been singularly unsuccessful in providing this service. However, the financial burden to be borne by the taxpayer should not be overlooked as costs will increase.

Consequently, proper planning is essential. The Southwestern Regional Planning Agency of Fairfield County ("SWRPA") underwrote a study that resulted in the recommendation for independent systems for each town rather than a regional system—undoubtedly appropriate given the parochialism of the communities and probably the sources from which the ridership would derive, the population diffusion within the area and the contiguous towns.

Nonetheless, the study did not identify nor attempt to identify ridership markets for a regional or subregional system, an exercise that would not have affected the conclusion, perhaps, but that would have provided valuable planning data for each town in which transit exists or will soon exist. There is lack of such relevant information.

Any transit system in the region requires the support of the population. That support should be developed, however, in full knowledge of the cost burden and the ridership potential. SWRPA should have provided this direction toward the acquisition of market data.

SEYMOUR N. WEINSTEIN  
Stamford

Letters should be addressed to: Editor, Connecticut Weekly, The New York Times, 229 West 43d Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. The writer's address and telephone number should be included for verification. The Times reserves the right to condense and edit all letters.



## At Stratford: A time to ponder

decision made by the board of trustees to cancel the 1977 season was only one of series of steps taken to insure the continuation of the theater on a high artistic level and to assure that its future position would have a stronger and more solid fiscal base.

A review of the record of the last three years gives some indication of the erroneous conditions detailed in the former letter.

1. In 1975, the theater set four box-office records while enjoying its most successful season in recent history.

2. Corporate support of the theater in 1973 amounted to \$2,500. In 1976 the theater, through the efforts of its board and its staff, received \$160,000 in corporate contributions, thus becoming the single largest recipient of corporate giving of any artistic institution in Connecticut.

3. A campaign to raise \$300,000 in early 1976 in order to have a 1976 season was successful because of

three years preceding 1973, has been reduced.

The decision to close the theater for one year by the board of directors was taken because they felt that for too many seasons the theater had operated from year to year on tenuous financial grounds. It was felt that a one-season hiatus would result, through the efforts of the staff and the board, in placing the theater on a secure financial footing to enable it to serve the public for many years to come.

The board of trustees has established three priorities for itself:

1. To establish an on-going base of firm support with long-range commitments from corporations and individuals as well as state and Federal funds to insure our ability to carry out our program.

2. To insure a scheduled season of Shakespearean productions, fulfilling the intent of the founders of the theater to bring to Stratford the finest product