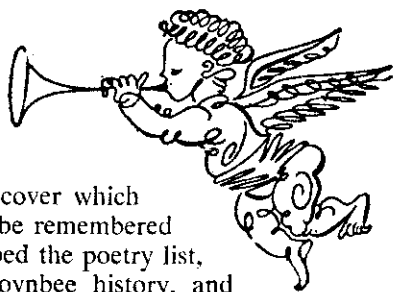


better books



In a recent contest to try and discover which eminent writers now living would be remembered in 200 years time, T. S. Eliot topped the poetry list, Christopher Fry drama, A. J. Toynbee history, and Bertrand Russell philosophy. New books by all four of these authors are appearing this year and are listed with other interesting and important books below.

new and forthcoming T. S. Eliot's new play *THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK* (13s. 3d.) is probably the most important book of the first half of the year. This play is being performed both in London and New York. Though the critics are divided in their opinions those who know his previous plays will want to read this new one. Christopher Fry is like Eliot in being a poetic dramatist and in using religious themes but there the likeness stops. Fry's new play has an enigmatic title *THE DARK IS LIGHT ENOUGH*—if you get it back to front we shall still recognise it. And a third book by a poet Dylan Thomas *UNDER MILKWOOD* (10s. 6d.) is written for broadcast voices.

biography The most interesting biography to us in N.Z. will no doubt be Antony Alper's *KATHERINE MANSFIELD* (21s.) both as a writer and as a person she is still the source of some controversy. The most controversial biography will be Richard Aldington's *T. E. LAWRENCE* (25s.). Aldington suggests that Lawrence imagined some of the incidents in *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* that he wrote about as having taken part in. Later in the year David Low the famous, N.Z. born, cartoonist will publish his *AUTOBIOGRAPHY* (about 21s.).

novels Christopher Isherwood's *THE WORLD IN THE EVENING* (12s. 6d.) has been long awaited; it is eight years since his last very short novel was published. Saul Bellow's *THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH* (15s.) is probably the best novel to come from America recently. The fact that it has been popular over there is probably less important than that it is highly ranked by Lionel Trilling, one of the best modern critics. A translation of one of France's leading novelists Francois Mauriac, is expected soon *THE RIVER OF FIRE* (12s. 6d.). C. P. Snow in his *THE NEW MEN* (12s. 6d.) deals with the discovery of atomic fission and the psychological effect it had on the lives of the scientists concerned.

p.s. A new edition of van de Velde's *IDEAL MARRIAGE* (30s.) is expected to arrive in New Zealand about the end of this month. The last three volumes of Arnold Toynbee's *THE STUDY OF HISTORY* (vols. 7-9) will be published later in the year. *Some of the above books are not yet published so the prices are approximate. If you prefer to send no money mark the titles that interest you, on the above list, add your name and address, and you'll be advised when the books are available. Any book which is unsuitable can be returned. Please add 6d. per vol. postage.*

to Roy Parsons

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"Subversion" in the Schools

AN awkward motion was handled carefully at the annual conference of the Dominion Council of the Returned Services' Association. The Nelson R.S.A. had sent forward a remit proposing that all teachers in primary and secondary schools, and members of the professional staff of the University of New Zealand, "should be required to renew their oath of allegiance every year while they are engaged in the teaching profession." An amendment drafted by a committee, and approved by the Council, changed the motion to a decision that member associations be asked to supply details of "cases where teachers or professors have given subversive teaching in schools or universities."

The R.S.A., of course, has no executive functions outside its own body. Like all other organised groups, it is free to make representations to the Government, but it has no power beyond this. Its decisions, however, carry considerable weight; and although the sting was taken from a bad remit, the suggestion of intolerance remained unpleasantly strong. The chairman of the committee which drafted the amendment was reported to have said that he and his colleagues hoped the change in the motion would mean "that there will be no question of a 'witch hunt' or extreme right-wing measures of any nature." He was probably right, for it seems unlikely that member associations will bring forward evidence of subversion in the schools. It is easy to make allegations that "something funny" is going on, or that So-and-So has peculiar ideas and is an unsound man; but examination will generally show that the charges are weakly based.

Subversion is a word with strict legal definitions, and should not be used lightly. There are no doubt

teachers with extreme left-wing opinions; and in the university colleges there may be individuals who lean in theory towards Communism. They may also be teaching subjects which have nothing to do with politics. A teacher, like any other man, is entitled to his beliefs and convictions. He becomes subversive only when he advocates the overthrow of the State, or works secretly to that end. Unfortunately, many people have looser notions: they seem to believe that opinion by itself is subversive, or that it is subversive when it becomes impartial. A man who expresses sympathy for Russia, who suggests that the Russians or the Chinese might have a case worth looking at in a particular situation, is immediately said to be a Communist. An objective examination of the news is seen as an attempt to undermine public loyalty.

We shall come to a pretty pass if the test of loyalty is our willingness to say that the western nations are infallibly right and that Russia is always wrong. In that sort of atmosphere, where all attitudes must be emotional, there can be no hope of any rational movement towards peace. It fosters the mood in which people believe that oaths of allegiance are strict guarantees of loyalty, if only because the threat of perjury can be held over those who take them. The man who really wants to be subversive will regard perjury as an occupational risk; it is the innocent, rather than the guilty, who suffer most when the hunt is on. Many school teachers are returned servicemen who have proved their allegiance in battle. They would be the first to resent any suggestion that their profession should be singled out for the sort of surveillance which opens the way for suspicion and the fear of persecution.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 2, 1954.