

THE NATIONAL TRADE PRESS LTD

TLB/YC

29th October, 1958.

Mrs E. Welthorpe,
1a Regent Lodge,
161 West End Lane,
London N.W.6.

Dear Madam,

We have received your request for 78 admission tickets for the International Trade Fashion Fair, but as this Exhibition is intended for Trade Buyers only we would appreciate it if you will kindly let us know your connection in this request. We will then give your request our further consideration.

Yours faithfully,

S.W. BUNCE.
Circulation Manager.

3rd November, 1958.

Dear Mr Bunce,

I am at a loss to understand your communication of the 29th October, ref: TLB./YC. I did not request 78 admission tickets for the International Trade Fashion Fair, the idea is absurd! I merely asked for seven or eight. I am well aware that the Exhibition is intended for Trade Buyers only, and I consider your request to know what my connection is in this respect both rude and uncalled for.

It is a matter of supreme indifference to myself or to the firm I represent whether or not I come to the International Trade Fashion Fair. But since I was sent your postcard I assumed that my custom would be desired. If the contrary is the case then I certainly do not wish to attend.

Will you kindly let me know in due course what your opinion is upon the subject.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

(Edna Welthorpe - Mrs)

THE NATIONAL TRADE PRESS LTD

SWB/YC

4th November, 1958.

Mrs E. Welthorpe,
1a Regent Lodge,
161 West End Lane,
London N.W.6.

Dear Madam,

We thank you for your letter of the 3rd instant, in reference to your request for tickets for the International Trade Fashion Fair, and regret that there has been some misunderstanding in regard to this. We of course, will be delighted to welcome you to this Fair and the only reason we raised the question of the number of tickets required is that we interpreted your request as a requirement of 78 tickets, which was a rather unusual request to receive from what appears to be a private address, bearing in mind that the Fair is intended for Trade Buyers.

We trust that this explanation explains our intention in the previous letter, and have pleasure in enclosing 8 tickets with this letter.

Yours faithfully,

S.W. BUNCE.

Circulation Manager.

2nd November, 1958.

Dear Sir,

Your name has kindly been given to me in connection with the availability of the Heath Street Baptist Church Hall. If it is at all possible, I should like to begin rehearsals there during the next few weeks, and later to present for three performances, 'The Pansy', a play which pleads for greater tolerance on the subject of homosexuality.

It is with the utmost hesitance that I approach a minister upon so controversial a topic; but the attitude of enlightened Churchmen seems to have undergone a favourable revolution during the past decade. It is with this thought in mind that I decided to contact you.

I am told that you forbid dancing in your hall. This is a difficulty, as there is a certain amount of dancing in several scenes. However, if you too strongly object I could cut these as, at the request of certain members of the cast, I have already expurgated the scenes which were to have taken place in the Kilburn Branch Library in Cotleigh Road.

Trusting to have your reply in due course, I am,

Yours faithfully,

Edna Welthorpe, (Mrs)

~~night later she tried again.~~

15th November 1958.

Dear Sir,

Re: Hiring of Heath Street Baptist Hall.

I wrote to you a fortnight ago with regard to the above matter. I have received no reply. I would have thought that to answer such an urgent communication would have been only common courtesy. All I requested was permission to stage a play in your hall. If this was not possible or desirable a simple Yes or No would have been all the acknowledgement I require.

I and my company are anxious to secure somewhere to present an extremely interesting play. I stated in my last letter to you the reasons why I preferred a Church Hall. If you feel that it is too controversial a subject please let me know. But I would like a straight Yes or No.

Awaiting your reply,

Yours sincerely,

Edna Welthorpe (Mrs)

17 November 1958

Dear Mrs Welthorpe,

Thank you for your two letters, In your first you ended: 'Trusting to have your reply in due course'. Now it so happens that we meet for business monthly and tomorrow, Tuesday 18th November is the time for the November meeting, and it will be at that meeting that your request will be considered, together with any others there may be - there is one other at least - and then you will hear, as you requested, 'in due course'. My Church officers are busy people and have all sorts of other things to do so that special meetings are not much in favour.

I would assure you that your request has scarcely been out of mind since you sent it. If it were left to me personally I should not be able to agree to it, but in so responsible a matter I feel that only the fullest consideration by all concerned would be just.

I hope these considerations will help you to feel ashamed of your strictures. I might add that it is the custom among us, when we write desiring replies, to enclose a stamped and addressed envelope, which you did not do. However, you may count on a reply as soon as I know the answer of my Church Officers.

Yours sincerely,
Rev. G. W. Sterry

~~wrote to Rev. Sterry declaring Edna Welthorpe dead. He got the fol~~

8 December 1958

Dear Madam,

Thank you for your very kind letter. I am sorry you have not received my other letter. I wrote the next day after our meeting, so that your niece might know our decision as soon as possible. I am afraid that we felt that we had to say No. Because I thought she might feel we had been merely obscurantist and awkward I explained to her that our Lecture Hall is not suitable as it has no stage or means of entrance or exit to or from where a stage would be. Our only other hall is so dilapidated as not to be fit for use.

I was shocked to learn that your niece had died, and I wish to say how sorry I am and would offer you my sincerest condolences on this unfortunate event. It is very sad to think that one's last contacts with anyone had been on the level that mine were with her, but you, if I may say so, have lifted the whole business on to an entirely different level, and I am grateful.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

Rev. G. W. Sterry

15th November 1958.

Dear Sirs,

I am puzzled by several letters I have received from you. Apparently you are under the impression that I am organising something for you, or at least that someone in this flat is. I assure you that there is no one called Mr Orton living here. I am a widow and dwell alone.

You state that catalogues are expensive. I have no doubt that they are, but what, may I ask, has that to do with me. You surely cannot imagine that I have stolen your catalogue. And as for *selling* anything which your firm makes . . . Please believe me if I arrived at the New Acol Bridge Club with a catalogue under my arm and explained to my friends that all goods were at cash prices, yet payable by small weekly instalments, why I think they would laugh at me.

Will you please stop sending letters to me, or I shall seriously have to consider putting the affair into the hands of my solicitor.

Yours faithfully,

Edna Welthorpe. (Mrs)

MMC/AI/505.

21st November 1958.

Mrs E. Welthorpe,
Flat 3,

Regent Lodge,
161 West End Lane,
London N.W.6.

Dear Mrs Welthorpe,

Thank you for your letter.

We are so sorry to learn that you are being troubled with correspondence regarding a 'Home-Shopping' service, and do apologise for any annoyance caused. You may rest assured however, that an application was received by us and naturally we took it to be authentic.

To avoid further correspondence being sent, could you possibly let us have any letter or pamphlet received recently, or let us have the organiser's number which will begin with c. 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. All our records are compiled numerically and your co-operation will be much appreciated.

Please use the back of this letter for your reply, also the accompanying prepaid envelope.

With best wishes.

Yours faithfully,
LITTLEWOODS MAIL ORDER STORES LTD.

ENC.P.P.E.

~~replied, adopting a new identity.~~

7th December, 1958.

Dear Sirs,

Regarding your letter of 21st November, reference: MMC/A/505.

The above letter was written to a Mrs Edna Welthorpe. It appears to be about a correspondence regarding a Home-Shopping service. I have just taken over this flat from a disgusting black woman who left the place in utter confusion. In the cupboard under the stairs was an enormous amount of literature from various firms. All the letters were addressed to different people.

I do not know what you required from her but as I have burnt the whole lot with a lot of rubbish, I should think that it is extremely unlikely that you will receive the information. However, if you will tell me what it is that you wanted so urgently I will endeavour to do my best.

Yours faithfully,

Donald H. Hartley

Flat 4,
25, Noel Road,
London, N.1.

30th April 1965.

Dear Sir,

I recently purchased a tin of Morton's blackcurrant pie filling. It was delicious. Choc-full of rich fruit. Then, wishing to try another variety, I came upon Smedley's raspberry pie filling. And I tried that. And really! How can you call such stuff pie filling? There wasn't a raspberry in it. I was very disappointed after trying Morton's blackcurrant.

Please try to do better in future. And what on earth is 'EDIBLE STARCH' and 'LOCUST BEAN GUM'? If that is what you put into your pie fillings I'm not surprised at the result.

I shan't try any more of your pie fillings until the fruit content is considerably higher. My stomach really turned at what I saw when I opened the tin.

Yours sincerely,

Edna Welthorpe (Mrs)

SMEDLEY'S LIMITED

HG/RH

3rd May, 1965.

Mrs E. Welthorpe,
Flat 4,
25, Noel Road,
London N.1.

Dear Madam,

We acknowledge with thanks your letter and are concerned to receive your report of Smedley's canned raspberry pie filling.

The most modern methods of production are employed in Smedley factories and at every state the strictest supervision is exercised to ensure that quality is maintained at the very highest level. Your helpful co-operation in writing to us is greatly appreciated and you have our assurance that the matter will be referred to our Technical Department for investigation.

In accordance with our guarantee, we have pleasure in enclosing postal order value 2/- to refund the purchase price and postage, with our sincere apologies for the inconvenience which you have been caused.

Yours faithfully,
SMEDLEY'S LIMITED.

Customer Service Dept.

3 April 1966

Dear Mr Williams,

I must take up cudgels with you over your recent appearance on *Juke Box Jury*. I regretted many of your remarks which, in my opinion, were quite uncalled-for and tasteless in the extreme.

Especially offensive to me as a nursing mother was your attack on infants and their ways. My own baby, born recently, cried throughout the programme. Which, I feel, more than proves my point.

More serious was your veiled threat to wear plastic earrings. This greatly disturbed me and my whole family. We were not alone in our fright. The usually irrepressible 'Millie' Martin seemed quite put out by your vile decision to flout convention. For the rest of the evening – long after you had left our screen – the idea was discussed among my family circle.

I cannot condemn too strongly the whole sorry business, made especially more deplorable for me as I thoroughly enjoyed many of the records which found no favour with you.

These 'kinky' comments and 'lurid', 'off-colour' 'gags' must be ejected from our TV screen. Saturday night viewers must be protected from people like you.

Yours faithfully,

Edna Welthorpe (Mrs)

Flat 4
25, Noel Road,
London, N.1.

Tuesday 14th February 1967.

The Manager
The Ritz Hotel,
Piccadilly,
London, W.1.

Dear Sir,

I'm writing to ask a question which, as a hotelier, I'm sure you'll be eager to answer. A month ago I visited the Ritz in company with Mrs Sally Warren – a tall grey-haired lady. During our brief stay at your hotel I lost a brown Morocco handbag with the initials E.W. stamped on the flap. The contents of the bag weren't valuable – they consisted of a purse containing a few loose coins, a Boots folder with snapshots of members of my family and a pair of gloves made of some hairy material.

I wonder if you, or any of your staff, have come across my handbag? If you can give me any assistance, in its recovery I'd be most grateful.

There is no value attached to the bag or the contents. If it has been thrown away you needn't be afraid to tell me. I shan't be angry. It would be a relief in many ways to know what has happened to my purse.

And may I take this opportunity of saying that, in my opinion, the Ritz is unbeatable? I was staggered by the

splendour of it all.

Yours faithfully,

(E. Welthorpe - Mrs)

Ritz Hotel,
London, W.1.

15th February, 1967.

Mrs Edna Welthorpe,
Flat 4,
25, Noel Road,
London, N.1.

Dear Madam,

We are in receipt of your letter of the 14th February, the contents of which we have noted, and for which we thank you.

We very much regret to inform you, however, that no handbag, as described in your letter, has been found and none of our staff remember seeing it.

Trusting that you will ultimately recover your handbag, and assuring you of our best attention,

We remain,

Yours faithfully,
FOR THE RITZ HOTEL

E. Schwenter
General Manager

ES/SS

'MR SLOANE'

Sir - In finding so much to praise in 'Entertaining Mr Sloane', which seems to be nothing more than a highly sensationalised, lurid, crude and over-dramatised picture of life at its lowest, surely your dramatic critic has taken leave of his senses.

The effect this nauseating work had on me was to make me want to fill my lungs with some fresh, wholesome Leicester Square air. A distinguished critic, if I quote him correctly, felt the sensation of snakes swarming around his ankles while watching it.

Yours truly,

Peter Pinnell

Yours truly, Edna Welthorpe (Mrs.) is how the lovely lady going by the name of Edna Welthorpe used to sign her daily correspondence. Edna, very active and zealous throughout the time she spent among us, is best known today for her stabbing theatre criticism vocalised through the pages of local newspapers, but also personal correspondence with playhouses and playwrights from the 1940s to the 1960s in London. Mrs. Welthorpe took on the role of the guardian of public morals, protesting against, in her own words, 'outrageous contemporary creations and the production of indecent thought' that she believed should be banned from 'the sight of not only our children but also the common public.' She was soon joined by other 'critics', regular theatregoers like her, that stood by her side in the war against filthy, immoral theatre. One of her most severe 'victims' was the notorious playwright Joe Orton. Her sharp critiques of his plays *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* (1964) and *Loot* (1965) are believed to be the main reason we know of Edna today.

Joe Orton (1933–1967) and Kenneth Halliwell (1926–1967) liked to keep themselves busy with all kinds of mischief. Edna Welthorpe, who was seemingly born out of boredom due to little success and recognition, did a lot more than complain about pie filling and forgotten handbags (though probably that would've been more than enough).

Once the duo was released from prison, where they spent six months for their well-known library prank (Joe and Kenneth were caught 'repairing' the book covers of more than one hundred books in their local libraries in Islington), Joe Orton was soon to become the rising star of the British drama scene (Ortonesque – who wouldn't want to have an adjective named after them?). For his hit comedies *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* and *Loot*, Orton summoned his old creation Edna to be his most skeptical and demanding critic in the pages of various newspapers, using her letters to skillfully draw attention to his own work. Yet Edna alone didn't

quite seem to cut it. What good is a one-sided correspondence? And so Edna was soon joined by other critics: Joe Orton's new creations, Mr. Pinnell and Mr. Hartley, kept the discussion constant and lively.

No doubt Orton enjoyed every single moment he spent as Edna and the other characters (though Edna seemed to always remain the dearest and most well-developed), composing each of the letters with the same precision and mastery as the rest of his writing. But then again why wouldn't he: how often does one get the opportunity to use phrases like 'felt the sensation of snakes swarming around his ankles', 'pip-squeak circus pony' or 'endless parade of mental and physical perversion' in day-to-day life?

Orton managed to create the perfect communication-channel-meets-pastime to fall in line with the rest of his work. Edna, who started out as just an elderly snobbish whine-about-everything type of persona blossomed into an elderly snobbish whine-about-everything, too-witty-to-be-true, fierce-as-a-hyena, self-appointed theatre critic whose letters were just as clever as they were hilarious (and not at all helpful, really – though I doubt Edna would agree). The letters were a tool, as well as a platform, albeit an anonymous one.

After taking up an interest in theatre, Edna didn't neglect her habits driving the production of random complaints and odd requests – her personal correspondence and means for daily interaction. Needless to say, Edna was first and foremost a creation born out of Orton's own desire to entertain himself, as well as a tool for mockery and sarcasm. But even so, Edna served her purpose to create an alternative stage for Orton's writing without needing to acquire approval for it beforehand.

NAUSEATED

Sir – As a playgoer of forty years standing, may I say that I heartily agree with Peter Pinnell in his condemnation of 'Entertaining Mr Sloane'.

I myself was nauseated by this endless parade of mental and physical perversion. And to be told that such a disgusting piece of filth now passes for humour!

Today's young playwrights take it upon themselves to flaunt their contempt for ordinary decent people. I hope that the ordinary decent people of this country will shortly strike back!

~~Let 'John Carlsen' answer Edna's criticism of life and art~~

ARISING FROM 'MR SLOANE'

Sir – Two points arise from Mrs Edna Welthorpe's letter regarding 'Entertaining Mr Sloane'.

One is that everyone is perfectly entitled to like or dislike a play – on any subject – according to personal taste, which is why there is such a wide range of theatrical fare available in London at the moment – everything from opera to 'One for the Pot'. Some people are, however, more fortunate than others in their ability to enjoy a wider field of subjects, and is surely not for the more 'blinkered' citizens to censure them for that.

Secondly, I cannot recall a successful play – from, say, 'Othello' to 'St. Joan' from 'Tamburlaine' to 'Look Back in Anger' which concerned itself with 'ordinary decent people'! One agrees that ordinary, decent people are the salt of the earth and the backbone of the country – but they do not make subjects for exciting, stimulating, controversial drama.

Yours faithfully,

John. A. Carlsen

~~kept his pseudonyms alive with yet another letter about Entertaining disagreeing with all of them.~~

OTHELLO, JOAN and MR SLOANE

Sir – I feel I must take up cudgels with Mr Carlsen on behalf of Mrs Welthorpe and Mr Pinnell. I myself was neither nauseated by 'Entertaining Mr Sloane' nor did I feel as if snakes had been crawling around my ankles and I hope I am not blinkered, but Mr Carlsen's suggestion that Othello (the noble Moor!) and St Joan (belatedly canonised) are not decent people or the 'salt of the earth', I find more than controversial.

I find it completely unacceptable!

These fine plays, together with 'Mrs Warren's Profession' and 'Ghosts' were not, I repeat NOT, intended at their original productions to be funny, as I gather 'Entertaining Mr Sloane' is.

canonised) are not decent people or the 'salt of the earth', I find more than controversial.

I find it completely unacceptable!

These fine plays, together with 'Mrs Warren's Profession' and 'Ghosts' were not, I repeat NOT, intended at their original productions to be funny, as I gather 'Entertaining Mr Sloane' is.

Yours in fair play.

Jay Chakiris

~~Entertaining Mr Sloane transferred to the West End, Orton had 'E' saw about the play in its old and new venue~~

SEEING IT AGAIN

Sir - I saw 'Entertaining Mr Sloane' twice at the New Arts. I shall see it again at Wyndham's.

God knows the theatre is dreary enough at the present time. Any oasis in the wasteland is welcome. And 'Entertaining Mr Sloane' is not a mirage which disappears when the thirsty traveller approaches. The water is there, the exotic landscape is real. And if we find the customs of the country differ from our own - what else is foreign travel for?

Donald H. Hartley

~~Entertaining Mr Sloane correspondence ends with a hymn to its author invented Orton character~~

Sir - What, not one word in *favour* of poor 'Mr Sloane'? Well, here goes: I myself consider - a) the dialogue brilliant; b) the comedy breath-taking; c) the drama satisfying; d) the play as a whole well-written if not profound; e) let us, however, exhort Mr Orton to turn his gaze higher. As Oscar Wilde said in another context, 'Some of us are walking in the gutter, but we can look at the stars!'

Yours faithfully,

Alan Crosby

February 17th 1967.

Dear Sir,

I take great exception to the Green Room piece in *Plays*

and Players (March issue). Mr David Benedictus, in my opinion, shows a lamentable want of tact in suggesting that Joe Orton's *Loot* was not the best play of 1967. I'm sure that the London Critics who gave Mr Orton the awards (both the *Evening Standard* and the *Plays and Players* accolade) were perfectly sincere in their nomination.

It was perfectly foolish of Mr Benedictus to give as his award a television play. And it is really no come-back to say that *Loot* was seen publicly in a previous year. *Loot* was first presented to the London critics in 1966. And they judged it the best play of that year. We should accept their judgement without carping.

Really, if every pip-squeak circus pony were to give awards for the horse of the year goodness knows where we should be!

Yrs.

Donald H. Hartley

19 February 1967

May I add my thoughts to those of David Benedictus on the subject of those 'much-talked-of' awards?

I agree that no one should seriously nominate as the play of the year a piece of indecent tomfoolery like *Loot*. Drama should be uplifting. The plays of Joe Orton have a most unpleasant effect on me. I was plunged into the dumps for weeks after seeing his *Entertaining Mr Sloane*. I saw *Loot* with my young niece; we both fled from the theatre in horror and amazement well before the end. I could see no humour in it. Yet it is widely advertised as a rib-tickler. Surely this is wrong?

These plays do nothing but harm to our image abroad, presenting us as the slaves of sensation and unnatural practice. Mr Benedictus does well to point out the inadequacies of our present honours system!

Edna Welthorpe

25 February 1967

Dear Mr Williams

Bravo for your splendid performance in the panel game *Watch My Bluff* (Friday).

I was enthralled at your masterful control of what could, and I'm sure on many occasions was, a tense and difficult situation.

The way you held your team was brilliant. I'm sure Miss Maxine Audrey and Mr Joe Horton must've taken

some handling. But you showed you were a past master of the art of diplomacy.

Let us see more of you on television in the future! And here's power to your elbow.

Yours sincerely,

Edna Welthorpe (Mrs)

9 April 1967

Dear Sir,

On Saturday I went with my family to see *Loot* at your theatre, and feel compelled to express to you our disgust at the contents of the play. As Christians, we were naturally dismayed to see the Roman Catholic Church abused, but even were I not a Christian I should have been ashamed to take my mother and sister to hear the accompanying filth. I am in consequence writing to the Lord Chamberlain, suggesting that the play should be reviewed yet again, and at the least severely edited.

May I suggest that your advertisements should indicate to the public the immoral tone of the play. This would have spared us the annoyance and embarrassment of buying tickets for a play we felt forced to leave at the interval.

Yours faithfully,

J. P. H. Joy

Flat 4,
25, Noel Road
London, N.1.

14th April 1967.

Dear J. P. H. Joy,

Please let me say at once that I am conscious of a great feeling of uneasiness at writing to you. I must write, however, to tell you that you are not alone in disliking the play *Loot*. I myself consider it to be the most loathsome play on in London at the present moment. 'Bestial' is how I described it to an acquaintance the other day. When I tell you that in the second act (which you had the good fortune to miss) there was a discussion upon the raping of children with Mars bars with other filthy details of a sexual and psychopathic nature I'm sure you'll pardon my writing.

Please, please, as a fellow Christian, let me applaud your design in writing to the Lord Chamberlain. I myself have written several letters to the papers (none alas published) and am trying to contact my MP at the moment.

I took an elderly aunt of mine to see the play and really I had to go round to the manager afterwards and demand an apology. This truly horrible play shouldn't contaminate our streets.

It was most wrong of me to write to you, I'm sure. Your letter was passed to me for filing. I do hope you will respect my confidence in this. It has received the most respectful attention here. Naturally I cannot express any but my own opinion. And that you have fully.

I am trying, in a solo capacity, to arrange a meeting with the Lord Chamberlain to protest against plays in general and this travesty of the free-society *Loot* in particular. I wonder if you'd like to be included in our mission?

Yours, in great sympathy,

Edna Welthorpe (Mrs).

7th December, 1958.

Dear Sirs,

Regarding your letter of 21st November, reference: MMC/A/505.

The above letter was written to a Mrs Edna Welthorpe. It appears to be about a correspondence regarding a Home-Shopping service. I have just taken over this flat from a disgusting black woman who left the place in utter confusion. In the cupboard under the stairs was an enormous amount of literature from various firms. All the letters were addressed to different people.

I do not know what you required from her but as I have burnt the whole lot with a lot of rubbish, I should think that it is extremely unlikely that you will receive the information. However, if you will tell me what it is that you wanted so urgently I will endeavour to do my best.

Yours faithfully,

Donald H. Hartley

#1

Yours truly,
Edna Welthorpe (Mrs.)