It has recently become a habit—almost a fashion to some quarters—to insist that art should "return" to realism and that no artist is worthy of the name unless he immediately adopts this slogan. When such an outcry as this is made there is usually something in it, but unfortunately this "something" isn't always as impartial a quality as the intelligence of those who are liable to be most vociferous about it. This impulse to represent misinterpretations and misunderstandings—must we have to look for them in the "realism" movement as, unless I am mistaken, they are all very much to the fore in the first number of Australian New Writing.

Now there can be no doubt that New Writing represents a very real impulse in the community, and this being so, it is all the more important that the character it achieves should not be permitted to become artificial by misguided direction or uncontrolled irresponsible enthusiasm. On the subject of guidance, it is of course inevitable that one turns to the editorial Foreword, which most admiringly states that "Writers cannot be developed without freedom to express themselves, dealing with the real problems of society, the hopes, passions, beliefs and sufferings of humanity." Who will deny this or who will not respond to the art which truly springs out of this freedom? But then why spoil the good effect of such a statement by implying praise for the contributors for not being concerned with "love, landscape or lotus bloom." The lotus bloom can probably be thrown in (or out) without much argument, but what is wrong with love as a subject for the poet? Has it suddenly ceased to be one of those "passions" of humanity which the editors have just been proclaiming? Or why should the landscape vanish as an actuality of the world.
about us? For instance, is the soldier-poet who for the first time experiences the terrible impact of Central Aus-
tria's stark reality or the equally stark but totally different
reality of New Guinea, debarred from writing a poem in-
spired by either of them? Surely the implications in what
the editors say only have to be made clear to be made at
the same time quite invalid.

But this is by no means all, as the editors appear to
adopt Noel Hutton's unfortunate article, "Art and the
Working Class." The general theme is that modern art is
no good because it is not universally understood.

One of the few valid statements Noel Hutton does make
is that "The sickness of our society is visible in the ex-
tremely low cultural level of our people," and from that
statement can be built up a complete refutation of most
of the article while at the same time putting forward some
legitimate constructive suggestions.

Now surely if the cultural level of our people is low,
that would suggest itself as a possible reason why modern
art does not "make sense" to the people? Surely that is
an idea at least worth exploring; but Noel Hutton thinks
otherwise and places the full blame on the artist for not
producing work accessible at this "low cultural level." We
are told that 100 years ago art did make "sense"; but, of
course, this statement is entirely inaccurate as the pro-
gressive artists of that time did not make "sense" at all—
as, for instance, Turner, Delacroix, Courbet, etc.—and the
same has been true throughout most periods of history,
extcept where the artist has been integrated with society,
as was apparently the case with the ancient Greek artists,
and as in the case to-day with the artist in native races.

The truth of the matter is this: that arbitrary dog-
matism about the modern artist, as Noel Hutton does,
doesn't in the least help either the artist or the people and,
to say the least of it, is an extremely naive and undialectical
approach.

Is it then possible to contribute something of greater
value than Noel Hutton has done to a problem which un-
doubtedly exists and the clarification of which is of vital
importance to both artists and people?
added very good reason, which, of course, Neil Hutton doesn't say, that virtually nothing is done about it.

And that is the whole point: instead of laying down the law for the artist, why not advocate educating the people so that they can appreciate the artist? Not only "make art to the people" but, equally if not more important, "make the people to art." Do you say one-sidedly, "The scientist must work in terms the people can understand"; or do you rather say "Educate the people so that they can fully appreciate and utilize what the scientist has to give them?"