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**Masses**

JANUARY 1, 1935

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# new Masses

JANUARY 1, 1935

**C**APITALIST America's swing to the right is clearly indicated in the latest report of the International Labor Defense. Whatever they may be doing or planning in the national capital, the municipal and state governments already have a definite policy. It consists of deportations, criminal syndicalist cases, kidnapings by vigilantes, official and unofficial terrorism. At Sacramento, Cal., 18 workers rounded up by police and "Citizens' Committees" go into the fourth week of their trial. The prosecution is packing the jury, bribing, coercing witnesses, handing out cock-and-bull stories to the newspapers, which are obligingly keeping the front pages open for scare headlines. They announce, for example, that the I. L. D. has threatened prospective jurors "with death" if they came out with "the truth." Attorney Leo Gallagher (who received more than 200,000 votes for state supreme court judge in the recent elections) charges Prosecuting Attorney McAllister with maintaining close connections with all members of the regular and special jury panels. What are the charges against the defendants? Membership in the Communist Party. On a similar charge, Kyle Pugh was sentenced to five years by the Medford, Ore., authorities. He was thrown in jail for distributing "seditious literature." His comrade, Dirk DeJonge, Young Communist League organizer, was sent up for seven years in Portland on the same count. This dangerous literature included such pamphlets as that written by Corliss Lamont: *Understanding the Soviet Union*.

**A**T Racine, Wis., the Communist organizer, Sam Herman, was taken for a ride by vigilantes who threatened to throw him in the river after they had beaten him with an automobile crank. He charged the chief of the Racine police with collusion in this kidnaping. Six of the striking F.E.R.A. workers of Denver were given sentences of from four to six months; two of their comrades had been shot and killed by police last October for demanding ten cents more an hour for their labor. A. W. Mills, district organizer of the Communist Party in Philadelphia, has been or-



"TO OUR GOOD HEALTH!"

Mackey

dered to Ellis Island, Jan. 2, for deportation. Oscar Mannuisto, of Oregon, and Paul Kettunen, of Minnesota, are in custody of immigration officials. The complaint against Mannuisto is not even that he belongs to the Communist Party today; he is charged with having been a member of the Workers' Party some years ago. Five Scottsboro street meetings were broken up in one evening by police in Los Angeles. This is an incomplete list. If the Committee on un-American activities puts through its national gag laws, it will be legalizing federally what is already happening locally. Those debating the question "Will Fascism Come to America?" had better take a good look at America today—and get busy.

**I**N a recent issue we commented on the statistical survey of the Bureau of Internal Revenue for the income year 1933. The survey disclosed the fact that

corporation profits were swelled by high percentages and the number of million-dollar incomes more than doubled in that year, while the total incomes of the middle and lower brackets fell off. Now comes the report of the Methodist Federation for Social Service for the first half of 1934, sponsored by Dr. Harry F. Ward, professor at Union Theological Seminary. According to the figures in the report, the New Deal in 1934 continued the 1933 trend of mass impoverishment and increased profits. The "average man," says the report, received less than 10 percent of total governmental expenditures during the period. The net profits of 402 industrial concerns rose from \$47,380,000 in the first six months of 1933, to \$335,870,000 in the corresponding months of 1934, an increase of 600 percent. At the same time the standards of living of the masses "continually fell." "Some 9,000,000 families live in homes that conserva-

tive investigators call substandard," the report states, "substandard" being a euphemism for comfortless shanties and firetrap tenements. Dr. Ward adds other relevant material: "The people's cultural standards lag. Hundreds of rural schools have been closed; tens of thousands have been reduced to only two and three months in a year." In addition to the industrial workers, American salaried people, farmers, professionals, tradesmen, teachers, small investors have been taking it on the chin and are destined under capitalism to continue to take it. They are beginning to wonder why, and as the Committee on un-American activities states, they are beginning to do "un-American" things about it.

FROM every part of the American hemisphere Saarlanders are flocking home to vote in the plebiscite Jan. 13. A dispatch from Rio de Janeiro, Dec. 20, states that "a number of ships bound for Germany carrying full passenger lists of former inhabitants of the Saar" has recently touched that port. The Hitler government is known to have spent \$250,000 to take one thousand German-Americans back to the Saar. It is pouring out millions to ensure its rule over the coveted territory, but Saarlanders are not asleep. The powerful Freiheitsfront, united front of Socialists and Communists (which fights Hitler, and favors the present status of League rule as the best immediate tactic toward ultimate freedom of the Saar) has been joined by a new group, the Saar Christian Front. Though it is composed of many Catholics, its organizer, Dr. Hoffmann, says: "We are not a Catholic Front. We are a Christian Front . . . against National Socialism. Many protestants are also members of our organization. . . . Our supporters are laborers, farmers and craftsmen. We also have office workers, some teachers and, this is most noteworthy, we have more than seventy priests." Dr. Hoffman, who is editor of the Neuen Saarpost, summed up the program of the Saar Christian Front as follows: "We are Germans and cling to our Fatherland, but not to Hitler Germany. . . . No one can confuse this issue for us. A vote for the 'status quo' is not a vote against Germany, but is a vote against Hitler . . . who has persecuted our faith, thrown our priests into concentration camps and had our leader shot." The Christian Front is only one of many indications that the Saar middle classes are rallying against the danger of Nazi oppres-

sion. The Franco-German pact at Rome caused violent discussion among the middle classes. Most of these are ostensibly members of the "German Front," yet the question uppermost in their discussions is: "What will become of us economically if Hitler comes?"

THE Nazis claim that the German Front is 100-percent loyal to Hitler. Facts indicate that it is not in the bag. Bleisranbach, a village of farmers and workers owning small properties, recently elected a burgomaster. The German Front claimed 92 percent of the population, but the United Front candidate Follmer got 451 votes out of the 504 on the list of eligibles. Of these 192 were Communist votes, 210 Catholic. In two weeks the Freiheitsfront organized more than 300 meetings, which were attended by 301,000 (out of a total population of 850,000). The meetings were addressed by the Socialist Max Braun, the Communist Fritz Pfordt, and the priests, Father Samann and Father Doerr. They spoke on a common platform opposed to both the French and Nazi robbers. Many German-American organizations of all classes are giving effective support to the Saar status quo. In New York many social groups, the liberal Wendekreis and nearly all workers' clubs have held meetings and sent funds. The American Commission for Status Quo in Saar is active in rallying mass support. As we write thousands of foreign soldiers, Italian, English, Swedish, Dutch, are marching into Saar territory, ordered by the League of Nations, as a "guarantee of safety." We have not much faith that the League's International Police will seriously challenge Nazi terror. We have only to remember another "international police"—in Shanghai. The Saar United Front will find its best "guarantee of safety" in its solidarity, and the support of the world proletariat led by the peace policy of the Soviet Union.

THE festooned fronts of department stores today are masks for some of the worst phases of exploitation and degradation of workers. Long hours, insolence and fear of the loss of jobs are the lot of worn-out clerks whose pay is at the lowest level. But department-store clerks have learned the weapon of organization, and in a number of large stores, notably the Boston Store in Milwaukee, Klein's, and Ohrbach's in New York City, they have taken militant ac-

tion. Klein's had promised the N.R.A. Regional Labor Board to rehire sixty-four workers, discharged because they were members of the Office Workers' Union. On Dec. 17 the sixty-four waited all day for their jobs. When the promise was not kept, protest picketing was resumed. The strike of the Ohrbach Company was called by the Office Workers' Union, representing a majority of the Ohrbach workers. When strikers and sympathizers in Union Square massed to picket the curbs in front of Klein's and Ohrbach's, they were driven off by the police, and fifty were arrested. Arrests continued all last week and as we go to press one hundred and twenty strikers have already been thrown in jail. The injunction obtained by the Ohrbach Company against picketing by more than four workers at a time has been appealed, but the courts postpone a decision. Department store strikes are not isolated actions against particular companies, but represent a resistance to prevailing retail-store exploitation throughout the country. All big stores are ripe for unionization, and though terror and espionage may prevail throughout the business, this has not kept retail clerks from fighting desperately for their rights.

THE transparency of President Roosevelt's slogan about taking the profit out of war was further emphasized last week when the War Department, breathing fire and defiance, strode into the Senate munitions hearings and read a statement defending war profits and the private manufacture of arms. There is of course no doubt that it had received an official sanction from the President, who naturally would not permit one of his Cabinet members to issue so important a public statement without conferring with him. Besides defending the private manufacture of arms and the export trade in munitions (capitalist nations, the argument ran, must sell each other weapons of destruction to keep their own arms factories solvent), the statement makes it clear that the President is worried about war profits only when he is afraid the munitions boys won't be getting enough and might refuse to play ball with the government. "Attempts of the War and Navy Departments," the statement read, "to prevent profiteering will no doubt be supplemented by government regulatory measures and excess profit taxes. However, any control measures that may be adopted should not be so binding as to





# Keeping the Banks Solvent

ON DEC. 15 federal obligations in the form of certificates to the amount of slightly less than one billion dollars and bearing  $2\frac{1}{4}$  percent interest were to fall due. To meet those maturities, the government, on Dec. 2, offered new securities totaling twice that amount, half to refund the maturing debt, the other half to refill the government till. Within two days this new offer was oversubscribed several times. This, in spite of the fact that the re-funding obligations bear  $\frac{1}{8}$  percent lower interest and that the governmental debt is now the largest on record; besides, nearly five billions of this debt are falling due within the eight months following. This over-subscription has been hailed by the capitalist press as one more demonstration of the belief of the investing public in the soundness of the government credit structure.

The truth of the matter, however, is that rather than a cause for rejoicing, this particular instance of government financing reveals the very insecure position in which the whole credit structure of the country, both private and governmental, really finds itself. The actual facts, of course, are that this was not, nor could it be, a case of a "public" subscription to a government loan. Rather it was a case largely of one more government loan forced upon the banks, insurance companies, and other fiduciary institutions. Or, to put it mildly, taken up by these institutions whose coffers are bursting with funds seeking investments. Private financing, both investment and commercial, has become a trickle of its former self—the commercial banks are reported to be staggering under a superabundance of reserves of nearly two billion dollars, and some insurance companies and other fiduciary their annuity contracts and short term endowments, because they can find no market for the profitable investment of these sums entrusted to them. There remain loans to the government. The Dec. 2 financing is a case in point.

Added to this plethora of capital funds, and of course, chiefly because of this fact, is the low interest rate that has prevailed since early in the depression throughout the entire money market. Ruling money rates are, indeed, the lowest on record, and it is the current market rate of interest that more than any other factor, assuming the aver-

age risks, determines the market values of the principal of fixed interest-bearing securities. Thus, a \$1,000 5-percent bond will nominally be worth \$1,200 if prevailing interest rates are but 4 percent. In this, then, lies the danger in this display of "strength" of the government bond market over which capitalist financial commentators are so jubilant. Just as soon as the employment of the funds which the government is now borrowing succeeds in stimulating private industry into activity, if that ever happens, and private borrowing begins, interest rates will rise and the price of the government securities will drop. Aggravating that sequential effect of a rising interest rate will be the need for unloading some of these securities on a declining market as a means of raising funds to meet the presumed rise of private demand. Government "money"—government bonds, certificates—would become cheaper, more of them, or "greenbacks," would be issued to meet government expenses, among them, heavy interest on the accumulated debt, and inflation would be on in earnest.

It is in the light of these existing conditions affecting the credit structure of the country and in the light of the consequences that must inevitably follow, that one must interpret the government announcement on Dec. 16, placing in effect lower interest rates on time and savings deposits. The official justification for this step, as given to the press, namely, that it was taken in

harmony with the prevailing downward trend in interest rates and is expected to support that trend, particularly in regard to rates on long-time money, which are an important factor in business recovery.

tells only a small part of the story. True, the lowering of interest rates on time and savings deposits may force some private funds into long-term private investment. It may also serve to divert some private funds from savings banks and time deposits into buying government bonds—to take some of them off the hands of the banks. It may also have the effect of discouraging the rush of capital to these shores from gold-bloc countries, which influx since Nov. 1 has run up to nearly 200 million dollars. America does not want these countries to go off the gold standard. Yet, true as this may be, the real rea-

son for this widespread lowering of the interest rate to be paid to depositors undoubtedly is the very practical fact that the banks of the country cannot continue to pay their depositors interest rates which are higher than those which they themselves earn on what is becoming the major source of income, namely, investments in "governments." Not only that, but the stake which the federal government has in the solvency of the banks, through the commitments of the R. F. C. (among other ties its holdings of the preferred stocks of many banks) and of the Deposit Insurance Corporations, makes it imperative that the banks remain solvent. Now as never before insolvency of private banks would mean the insolvency of the government. The interest which the banks pay on deposits is their largest expense item. That must be cut if the banks are to remain open. That has been cut—another steal from the small depositors—and the solvency of the banks has been secured for a little while longer.

## Americanism

God Flag Constitution  
holy trinity of exploitation  
signifying American Legion  
D. A. R.  
ku klux klan  
with declarations of independence  
in one hand  
and tar and rope in the other.

Americanism  
on a tree limb  
swinging swinging  
Georgia Alabama

Written in sadistic letters of lead and oil  
written on the black body of a black worker  
with genitals ripped out  
Florida Texas

written in blood for all to read

## TUSCALOOSA

Americanism

at a roll-topped desk  
ordering out strike-breakers  
for fat-bellied greed  
in charley schwab office  
and john d. mansions.

## AMERICANISM

HENRY GEORGE WEISS.







# The Fight for Social Insurance

**I**N THE present issue we publish a debate between Mary van Kleeck and I. M. Rubinow on the subject of social insurance, particularly H. R. 7598, known also in the last Congress as the Lundeen Bill. This bill, which has been supported by such organizations as the United Textile Workers of the A. F. of L., by thousands of individual A. F. of L. locals, a number of city councils, as well as the hundreds of thousands who back the Unemployed Councils, would insure the workers against unemployment, sickness, and old age hazards. As Miss van Kleeck points out, this bill is a statement of principles for a program of adequate social insurance.

H. R. 7598 was not a bill of legislative particulars and was not intended as such. As Miss van Kleeck says at the outset of the debate: "The case for H. R. 7598 . . . rests simply upon the desperate needs of the whole working class under mass unemployment, and the obligation of government and industry to meet them without lowering the workers' minimum standards of living."

Before the decline of capitalism the exigencies of unemployment were of a temporary nature, "good" years canceled out "bad" years, the mass of workers still were induced by their leaders to believe that better times were ahead, while the victims of the system were inarticulate and did not realize their own needs or the power to make them felt.

Today the problem rises to an entirely new level. "Better times ahead" may no longer be counted on. Millions of workers will never again enjoy the privileges of working on a steady job for the power and the glory of the private capitalist. The mass of those still fortunate enough to hold a steady job face the certainty of a continuous lowering of the standard of living through decreasing real wages and through imposition of taxes, as the ruling class, by inflation or direct taxation, tries to bribe its way out of the crisis at the expense of the workers. It is with ill grace, therefore, that a former Socialist like Dr. Rubinow thinks that he has refuted H. R. 7598 when he declares that its defenders may be "creating confusion as to what is possible in this world of ours, in which we live today, and in which we will continue to live for some time to

come" (our italics). "What is possible in this world of ours" is what the workers can force from their exploiters. And precisely because under reactionary labor leadership there is danger that we may be compelled to continue longer in this "world of ours" under a system based on increasing mass poverty. The class-conscious workers, both manual and professional, are supporting this social insurance bill which aims not at saving capitalism, as Miss van Kleeck reminds us, but at safeguarding even the minimum standards of living while they strengthen their ranks in the struggle to abolish an economic system which will not give them bread if the owner of the tools of production can reap no profit.

But, says Dr. Rubinow, "for the broad social motives behind the defence of the Lundeen Bill, and for its defenders I have the highest respect." It is not "the philosophy, theory and practice of social insurance" that he is debating with Miss van Kleeck, but the "Lundeen Bill." This, he says, is a very "impractical" bill. It does not define its terms, it proposes a utopia, it is devoid of "legislative craftsmanship." Dr. Rubinow would reject the Communist Manifesto because it does not specify the number of commissars the Dictatorship of the Proletariat would appoint.

The bill asks for "insurance in amounts equal to average local wages," quotes Dr. Rubinow, and asks, "whose local wages are to be the yard-stick?" "As far as the language of the bill is concerned, it would seem that a ditch-digger would be entitled to average local wages if he refused to work at less than the union rate for a bricklayer, say \$8 or \$10 a day. That is not merely bad craftsmanship, that is plain absurdity." Only corporation lawyers would fail to understand by the clause "average local wages" for the specific trade, craft or occupation. But that would hardly satisfy Dr. Rubinow. Were we to pay everybody who was deprived of his income for no fault of his own the full average local wage, Dr. Rubinow calculates, the sum would run up to some twelve to twenty billion dollars a year. This would mean "total confiscation of profits"! "The justice of assigning from one-fourth to one-half of the national income to one-sixth of the population which is not working, may be questioned

even by the most generous." As to the justice of it, we prefer to leave it to the fifteen million unemployed and to the twenty million now keeping their body and soul together by the generosity of Harry L. Hopkins, to decide. But as to Dr. Rubinow's statistics, we may be permitted to make comment. The bill, says Dr. Rubinow, would cost between twelve billion and twenty billion dollars: some fifteen million people would be entitled to the proposed benefits. Our national income has dropped from about ninety billions in 1929 to forty-fifty billions by 1934. Hence, Dr. Rubinow deduces that the bill would assign from one-fourth to one-half of the national income to one-sixth of the population.

It is evident that Dr. Rubinow ignores certain obvious and important factors in his attempt to build up a picture of H. R. 7598 that is unreasonable and terrifying. He has deliberately chosen not to take into account the fact that once the insurance benefits began, purchasing power would be greatly increased. That would create a market for goods that would necessitate the re-employment of millions. Thus the number of workers on the insurance lists would be substantially cut down, undoubtedly by between a quarter and a half. Therefore the total sum of 12-20 billions (granting that Dr. Rubinow's estimate is correct) would be cut by somewhere between a quarter and a half. But at the same time the millions of unemployed workers returning to productive industry would produce more wealth and more income. Thus the total would again rise from the 1934 level toward the 1929 level and the fraction that would be paid out in insurance would be lowered still. Finally, the fifteen million unemployed are not one-sixth of the "population," but are one-third of the employable workers. However, these are probably only details to a statistician, even of Dr. Rubinow's reputation, when one attempts to defend the capitalist system against "total confiscation of profits" for the benefit of starving millions.

Those starving millions will in the long run have the final say. On Jan. 5-6-7, in Washington, they will be represented, and their demands for some measure of protection voiced, in the National Congress for Social Insurance.

# A Year of the Weekly New Masses

## A Statement To Our Readers, And An Appeal

**T**HE NEW MASSES, as a weekly, is one year old.

When we published our first issue, dated Jan. 2, 1934, we had \$1,500 in the bank. We had tried to raise a fund of \$10,000 and had actually obtained \$3,500. Of this \$2,000 had gone into pre-publication expenses. We had no distributive apparatus to speak of outside of New York; in the city we had five volunteers and three cars to reach as many as they could of the 12,000 newsstands in Greater New York. We had no credit—credit was of course difficult for anyone to obtain; for a revolutionary magazine, it was absolutely impossible. The weekly expenses were \$1,100. After the first issue was off the press we had a bank balance of \$400—with a second issue, costing a second \$1,100, to be produced immediately.

It was not exactly a cautious proceeding, starting a weekly magazine under these circumstances. But neither was it so reckless as the mere financial totals seem to indicate. We knew that the time for turning THE NEW MASSES into a weekly was exactly right; we knew we had available and eager to help, all the revolutionary writers, artists and editorial workers that we needed; we believed we could attract and hold a body of readers large enough to support the undertaking. And the results of the first year have justified this belief in the soundness of the venture. THE NEW MASSES has won its first battle, the battle for existence; it has grown and, we believe, firmly established itself. At every point during this year we have had one main source of strength to draw on, and we have turned to that source time and again: our readers. We have asked them for advice and support, support both moral and material. They have not failed us. We started with a bank balance of \$1,500, and a net sale of 9,500 copies on the first issue. Fifty-two issues have been put out—this is the fifty-third. The bank balance has not grown, but the circulation has. The net sale of this current issue will be at least 25,000 copies. To those 25,000 readers, at the end of the first year of the weekly NEW MASSES, we now address this statement, accounting and appeal:

First, to indicate the expansion involved in turning a monthly magazine into a weekly, compare these two sets of figures, the first set based on the final issue of the monthly NEW MASSES, dated September, 1933,<sup>1</sup> the second based on the present situation:

Monthly NEW MASSES, September, 1933:  
 Net circulation, 6,000  
 Operating cost, per issue, \$800  
 Number of paid workers, two  
 Number of unpaid workers, three  
 Operating deficit per issue, \$400

Weekly NEW MASSES, January 1, 1935  
 Net circulation, 25,000  
 Operating cost per issue, \$1,500  
 Number of paid workers, 18  
 Number of full-time volunteers, 3  
 Number of part time volunteers, 10  
 Operating deficit per issue, none

“Operating deficit—None.” We are happy to announce to our readers that for some weeks past THE NEW MASSES has been making both ends meet. This is how it is being done:

The operating expenses are divided as follows:

Mechanical cost, (printing, paper, mailing, postage, delivery, etc.)	\$830
Wages .....	325
Contributors .....	100
Overhead .....	145
Promotion .....	100
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$1,500</b>

The operating income totals \$1,500 a week, from the following sources:

Circulation .....	\$1,400
Advertising.....	100
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$1,500</b>

<sup>1</sup>To these figures can be added one important footnote: The final issue of the monthly New Masses, though dated September, 1933, was not issued until October 1, five weeks late—a delay due entirely to lack of funds; and in the two years preceding the magazine had, for the same reason, been forced to skip no less than three issues. The weekly New Masses has never been an hour late in making its appearance on the stands.

## Facts and Figures

We call our readers' particular attention to the items “Wages” and “Contributions” in the tabulation of expenses. The wages total \$325 and the number of paid workers, eighteen. This means precisely what it seems to mean: no salary on THE NEW MASSES, editorial or business office, is higher than \$20 a week. As a matter of fact, this figure of \$20 has only been set within the past month; before that the prevailing wage was \$15 a week (and in the arid days of last summer, most of THE NEW MASSES employes got \$7.50 a week). As to contributors: The budget on which the weekly NEW MASSES was projected allowed \$100 a week for contributions, including text and drawings. Roughly this works out to \$5 a page. It was not so much an attempt to pay for material as an assurance to our contributors of our desire to pay—just as the salaries paid to full time workers, business and editorial, were admittedly nominal and not the “market value” of such services. We believe that in the magazine field THE NEW MASSES is unique in being

able to command the services of a stable group of competent workers, on such a basis. Without them, of course, the paper would have been impossible.

We started with a net sale of 9,500. The average weekly circulation, by months, has run as follows:

January, 10,500	August, 14,300
February, 11,000	September, 15,100
March, 13,200	October, 20,000
April, 13,300	November, 23,000
May, 14,500	December (estimated)
June, 13,800	22,500
July, 14,300	January 1, 1935, 25,000

One point to note in this tabulation is the relatively insignificant drop in circulation during the summer. In June we lost less than 5 percent, in July we made up most of the loss, August held steady, and in September we began to go ahead again. Almost every bourgeois magazine we know about expects—and experiences—a drop of anything from 10 to 20 percent during the summer months.

We do not want to burden our read-



ers with too many figures, but we believe they are interested in getting a full picture of the financial structure of the magazine—the contents of course they have spread before them every week. One of the indispensable items in the budget of a magazine, as important as the printer's bill—more important for the magazine's growth—is the appropriation for promotion work. And here is where the absence of that \$10,000 starting fund proved most hampering. Writers, artists, editors, office workers, everybody concerned in getting out the magazine, could scrape along on less than a minimum, and the magazine still come out on time; but for carrying on systematic promotion work the one essential was ready cash. After the first two months there simply was no money for even the most routine matters, such as circularization of expiring subscriptions, the mailing of sample copies, etc., or rather for buying the necessary postage stamps. Consequently subscriptions began to fall off, renewals were not so active. By the end of March the situation was critical, and we called on our readers for help. We addressed only our subscribers, judging that those who had invested in a subscription were presumably the most solid supporters of the magazine—and not wishing to sound an unnecessary note of alarm in the magazine itself. At several meetings of our subscribers, in New York and elsewhere, and as the result of letters sent to them, the sum of \$1,776 was raised, in donations and loans, within a few days. This permitted the promotion work to be continued in April, and subscriptions received that month rose to a total of 1,480, against 900 in March.

The next crisis came at the end of the summer. We addressed another appeal to our subscribers. A one-page mimeographed letter was sent out, to 5,000 subscribers; the bottom of the cash drawer was scraped to pay for the postage. This time we did not ask for loans; we asked every subscriber for \$2. We received \$1,800 in cash, an average of 36 cents for every subscriber on our list.

Now about newsstand sales. THE NEW MASSES cannot be distributed by any of the big agencies. In the first place, their requirements are impracticable for us—we would have to give them at least three times as many copies as they expected to sell, and we cannot afford to buy and throw away so much good paper. Secondly, and more important, these distributing agencies, being large capitalist enterprises themselves,

are extremely sensitive to political opinions. Once in the hands of an agency like the American News Company, for instance, we would be continually faced with the danger that on any issue which we raised they would "crack down," either by sabotage or by refusing overnight to handle us at all. Whereupon we would have to start from the beginning to build up our own distributive apparatus.

At present we have our own distributive apparatus in five cities, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago and Detroit. The goal in 1935 is to establish similar apparatus in ten more cities: Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Rochester, N. Y., and Washington. We have a bureau in Chicago, covering the Middle West, and need one on the Pacific Coast.

What does establishing a distributing apparatus in a city mean? It means a car—\$100 will buy one—and it means maintaining our own volunteer distributor for the three months of organizing work necessary before the additional expense. In all, it means an outlay of \$300 per city—ten cities, \$3,000. Past experience shows that the minimum additional newsstand sale to be obtained in each of these ten cities where it is contemplated setting up our own apparatus,

is 500 copies a week at the end of the three month period; after that, the sky is the limit. Thus we have the realistic prospect of adding 5,000 newsstand sales to the circulation, in ten large cities, by an outlay of \$3,000. Unfortunately we haven't the \$3,000.

This statement is running too long. We have not touched on editorial matters. In general, we know our readers like the magazine. We know it should be better, and we believe we can make it better. At present we are behind in our payments to writers and artists; we owe them about one-third of the amount we should have paid and had pledged ourselves to pay. From now on this debt will not increase—full payment for every contribution will be made immediately. But these payments are so small, and the budget for editorial projects so limited, that the whole future of the magazine is circumscribed.

Therefore, we are now finally making an appeal to all our readers—not only to our subscribers by mail—for funds, for these purposes:

Establishing distributing apparatus for THE NEW MASSES in ten cities, and a bureau on the Pacific Coast.

Raising the scale of pay for contributors.

Financing important editorial projects (such as the first Spivak series—the second is in preparation).

## *An Appeal To Our Readers*

We are asking our readers to give us a fund of \$10,000.

One thing must be made quite clear, if it is not clear already. This is not an appeal to keep THE NEW MASSES going. THE NEW MASSES is going, and will continue to go. We are on a self-sustaining basis. If not one cent were to come in as a result of this appeal, THE NEW MASSES would continue to come out, continue (we believe) to improve and continue to grow. What we want to do is to improve faster, and grow faster.

There is no need to expatiate to our readers, at this point, on the menace of Fascism in this country. The enemy has a thousand voices, in the press, radio, films—and in the churches and school rooms—to our few. The more reason to increase the power of the revolutionary press immediately. We believe that if at the end of this year, 1935, we can show a circulation of 100,000 (which means, in the case of THE NEW MASSES, 200,000 or 300,000 readers) that a strong weapon will have been forged, to

help fight off the forces making for Fascism and war.

We do not guarantee any such figure—nor are we sure that we will not exceed it. This we do know: if we had had the \$10,000 fund that we started out to get we would now have, not 25,000 circulation, but perhaps 50,000. It is a year later. We have demonstrated that with practically no financial resources we can produce a revolutionary weekly magazine that people will read, workers, professionals, members of the middle-class. We want to reach more and more of such readers. The problem actually is *reaching* them, physically putting the paper before their eyes. That is why we are now asking our readers to send us in as much money as they wish to contribute toward a fund of \$10,000, an expansion fund for THE NEW MASSES. Names of contributors to this fund will be published or not, as requested.

We are eager to see the response of our readers, and we are confident what it will be.

# Father Coughlin's Army

A. B. MAGIL

DETROIT.

**J**UST eleven miles from Detroit's City Hall is the town of Royal Oak. Another mile, and 150 feet of stone shoot into the sky, cross-shaped, with a huge granite Jesus impaled against the side, and you are at the beautiful Shrine of the Little Flower whose golden radio hour shines in the homes of America's millions every Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock.

Through the court, down the stone steps into the basement office. Sputter of typewriters as you open the door. At the window a girl with too much make-up on tells you to wait. Through it you can glimpse brisk young women working at long tables, folding material into envelopes, typing, operating adding machines.

Father Coughlin is having a press conference and several newspapermen are already waiting. Soon we are asked to step into the inner room. "Good morning," Father Coughlin, 185 pounds of sleek vigor, smiles a crisp blue-eyed smile. "I guess we'll have to hold it right here. There isn't an inch of space in the entire building."

One of the long tables has been partly cleared off and we pull up chairs. Father Coughlin sits on the edge of the table and lights a cigarette.

"Well, boys, I suppose you want to know how close we are to that five-million mark. That's something I can't tell you because we're so far behind with opening our mail that . . ." his hand sweeps through the air and he points at several mail sacks. "There they are, sacks of them, from every part of

the country. All I can say is that we're not worried about that five million. They're coming in at the rate of a hundred and twenty to a hundred and forty thousand a week, and we've got a hundred girls employed on the mail alone."

A few routine questions. Father Coughlin answers expansively. At his elbow stands a seedy gentleman with an egg-shaped head, named Mr. Hart, who seems to be a sort of stooge; he primes the radio priest with questions that bring out a gush of the well-known Coughlin jazz sonorities. I begin to give battle to the stooge, and soon a workers' press representative has hogged the conference.

Father Coughlin, ex-football player at the University of Toronto, is pretty good at running through a broken field. He can dodge and squirm and straight-arm, retrace his steps and come up smiling. Two or three times he fumbles, but it's a game in which he not only calls the signals and runs all the plays, but makes his own rules too. His blue eyes gaze blandly from behind his glasses and his hand sweeps the air and there's the answer—the irrefutable mail sacks, sputter of typewriters, girls filing, folding. The reporters take it all in.

"I'm not opposed to the bankers," says the radio voice that each Sunday blisters the ether with attacks on the banking gentry. "They're working under the wrong system; that's the trouble. I think Mr. Morgan is a lovely gentleman."

"I'm not in favor of nationalizing everything. I'm against nationalizing communications such as A.T. & T. We'd be in a

fine pickle having the government tell us what we could say over the phone and censoring our newspapers. You know, in London they have a fine institution, Hyde Park. You can get up there and expound any idea you please; it acts as a safety valve. In our country the press serves the same function."

"Would you be in favor of Grand Circus Park serving as such a safety valve?" I ask. (Grand Circus Park was for years the center of workers' demonstrations in Detroit. Last May Day 2,000 police were mobilized to keep the workers out and all meetings there have since been banned.)

"I'm speaking of a national institution," Coughlin said. "Grand Circus Park can't be considered that at all."

"But what about Grand Circus Park as a safety valve for Detroit?"

The priest looked away. "No, I wouldn't favor that."

Unemployment insurance? No. A living annual wage is the Coughlin—and Roosevelt—creed. Old age pensions? No. Socialized medicine? No. C.C.C. Camps? Yes.

"What is your attitude toward the cuts in relief that have gone into effect in Detroit?"

The blue eyes hesitated. "I'm not entirely in accord with the cuts," he began, and then the football player found an opening: "But you must remember that here in Detroit we've really been better off than in other cities. Our relief has been higher and there have been more opportunities for employment."

"Do you favor inflation?"

"No," replied the country's leading inflation advocate. "I favor normalization, issu-

## CAPITALISM ON PARADE

William Sanderson



# CAPITALISM ON PARADE

William Sanderson



ing more currency, doing what the Federal Reserve Act of 1913 gives Congress the power to do."

"That act," chimed in the stooge a bit obtusely, "was the most inflationary measure ever passed, wasn't it, Father?"

"Yes," the blue eyes agreed, forgetting the "no" of a half minute before.

"What is Henry Ford's attitude toward your movement?"

"I don't know." (Only two weeks before the press had reported Coughlin in conference with Ford.)

"In your conference with Senator Thomas did you discuss monetary matters?"

"No, I haven't discussed monetary matters thoroughly with Thomas."

"What did you discuss?"

"I can't say now."

"Is the Committee for the Nation backing your movement?"

"No, the National Union for Social Justice has no connection with any other organization."

"Wasn't there any agreement on monetary policy?" I persisted. "The Detroit News carried a report that your organization and five others, including the Committee for the Nation, had come to such an agreement."

"No. Whoever gave that report to the press was mistaken."

"Are you establishing a lobby in Washington?"

"Yes, we're opening an office there and establishing a lobby."

"Have any Congressmen approached you?"

The blue eyes gazed vaguely at the opposite wall. "Oh, I can't tell what comes through the mail. My secretaries are sagacious enough to keep some of it away from me." He smiled amiably.

"What was the meaning of the conference you had with Mr. LeBlanc, Mr. Cromwell and Mr. Harriss?"

"Oh, these are just personal friends of mine. I was seeking their advice and suggestions."

"They are connected with the Committee

for the Nation, aren't they?"

"I don't know. Our organization has no connection with any other group. Everybody who joins the National Union joins as an individual; there isn't any joining as a group."

It was during this press conference that, in reply to a question of mine, Coughlin revealed that he had known about the offer made to Gen. Smedley Butler by Wall Street interests to organize a fascist army six months before it broke in the press. He said he knew a great deal more about it that had not been told, but refused to say any more. No, he himself had not been approached by the Wall Street Big Shots.

The subject drifted back to monopolies and nationalization.

"Chain stores have accomplished a lot of good," said Coughlin in words that sounded ominously Aryan, "but I'm for the small individual merchant." A little later: "The little corner bankers must be preserved."

"Our whole idea"—his voice grew orotund—"is to preserve private ownership. I would like to see private ownership multiplied many times. The trouble is that property and wealth have been concentrated in the hands of a few."

A reporter asked him what he was in favor of nationalizing, and the priest referred him to the Preamble and Principles of the National Union for Social Justice. Point 3 of these Principles is as follows:

I believe in nationalizing those public necessities which by their very nature are too important to be held in the control of private individuals. By these I mean banking, credit, currency, power, light, oil, and natural gas and our God-given natural resources.

Quite innocently another reporter mentioned coal mines. Father Coughlin, swathed in elastic phrases about "nationalization," began bouncing neatly past the subject. I caught him on the rebound:

"Yes, what about coal mines? They're part of our natural resources. Do you want them nationalized?"

For a moment the football player hesitated; then he straight-armed:

"You will have to wait until I talk about that in about two weeks from now on the air."

Strikes? "The government should step in and straighten things out. The laboring man should be assured a proper share in the profits through government intervention."

That day the press carried the news that the United States Supreme Court had upheld the right of land-grant colleges to compel students to undergo military training. Father Coughlin never tires of denouncing the war-makers—his National Union for Social Justice was launched on Armistice Day in a speech devoted to excoriating the "international bankers" responsible for the last war.

I referred to the news story. "Are you in favor of military training in the colleges?"

The blue eyes fell, the unctuous voice turned dry: "I won't discuss that."

But only a week or so later, at another press conference, he did discuss it, or, at any rate, matters related to it. After declaring himself against war and "absolutely" opposed to big war appropriations, he said:

"Russia's got it on us like a tent. They're not spending any money on a navy; they're building an air fleet. That's what I'm in favor of. Ample defense is what we need. The Constitution is a wonderful document, you know. We never use the word 'offense' in the Constitution; all it talks about is national defense. *I think we should have one plane for every mile of coast-line.*"

Look in the World Almanac and you'll find that the United States has 4,883 miles of coastline. Secretary of War Dern has demanded the building of 2,320 planes within three years. Father Coughlin, the man of peace, wants over twice as many military planes as the U.S. War Department!

Father Coughlin launched his National Union for Social Justice in a radio broadcast on Nov. 11. The press announced that the next day's mail brought him 40,000 letters in reply. In a press conference on Nov. 27 he





THE DAILY LIE

HEARST

MUSTA

SOUTHERN LYNCHER

MERRIAM

DON LEVINE

SOVIET HORRORS

HEIL

RUSSIAN WHITE

SMASH THE REDS

FASCIST FILMS

HEIL

HATE THE JEW

PROTOCOLS OF ZION

PROTOCOLS OF ZION

JEWS

"I DON'T WANT WAR, BUT LET US BE REALISTIC..."

COUGHLIN

Ye Olde Vigilantes doing their bit

SINCLAIR

EPIC PLAN

AND HOW I GOT LICKED

CUPTON







NO UNITED FRONT

AMERICAN WORKERS PARTY

DOWN WITH STALINISTS

UTOPIAN SOCIETY

WE ARE MORE REVOLUTIONARY THAN COMMUNIST

FOURTH INTERNAT.

SOC. LABOR PARTY

CARL MARY

REVISED PARTY

NEW REP

WE MUST SEE BOTH SIDES OF THE QUESTION

EDUCATION IN AMERICA

TEACHERS DEMAND BALK PAY

R.O.T.C.

U.S. ARMY

ROBINSON

I AM A BUTTERSNIP FIGHT FASCISM NO WAR

Ford would be averse to using him in their struggle against Morgan.

The Coughlin organization needs, however, to be understood not simply as a movement fostered by this or the other prominent capitalist, but in relation to the entire program of American finance-capital as a whole.

There is no doubt that in the ruling circles of the bourgeoisie the idea of the necessity sooner or later of introducing a fascist dictatorship has ceased to be a question of academic discussion, but of practical politics. The New Deal was itself a step in this direction; but the New Deal while it has considerably increased corporation profits and strengthened the grip of the monopolies, has failed signally to solve two problems that are threatening the foundations of the existing system: the problems of mass unemployment and of class relations. On the contrary, unemployment, after a temporary decline, is now greater than it was a year ago, while under the New Deal, despite the utmost strike-breaking efforts on the part of Roosevelt and the various labor boards, class relations have become strained to the breaking point, and we have witnessed the greatest strike wave since 1919.

In this situation and with war looming nearer, the ruling class realizes the necessity of acting quickly. There are, however, differences of opinion among the moguls of banking and steel and munitions as to the best course to follow to attain the desired goal. There is the section that believes that the New Deal demagogy has gone too far in arousing illusions among the workers and that it is now necessary to make a direct onslaught on the living standards of the masses. This is the section grouped around the American Liberty League, which tried to get Gen. Butler to lead a fascist army.

Another section of the ruling class, while agreeing in principle with this program, believes that more and not less demagogy is necessary, and that certain concessions to the rich farmers and smaller capitalists in the

form of inflation are advisable. Both sections, it goes without saying, and this is indicated in the most recent statements of such divergent organizations as the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Union for Social Justice and the Hearst press, are agreed on the necessity for a drive against Communists and all militant labor organizations as a prerequisite to the introduction of the fascist dictatorship.

The more far-sighted members of both groups of finance-capital also understand that without a mass base all their fascist plans will get nowhere; the abortive Butler incident proved that. For the present there is free competition among the various fascist and potentially fascist groups, and none has as yet made the grade. Let us remember that Hitler had to peddle his National Socialist Party among the bankers and industrialists for some years, and not until he was able to develop a mass movement did he receive their full financial and political support. In the scramble now taking place in this country for the role of *Der Fuehrer* Father Coughlin has a number of advantages over his rivals.

In the first place, he has an established following. Fortune magazine, Big Business' swankiest organ, estimated in February of last year that Coughlin's radio audience is at least 10,000,000. Since then it has undoubtedly increased. Coughlin has the largest independent radio network in the country (twenty-eight stations) and his potential audience is said to be 60,000,000. What the priest has lacked has been organizational crystallization of his mass influence. The launching of the National Union for Social Justice is intended to do the job. Discounting his bombastic membership claims, there is, nevertheless, no doubt that he has a mass movement well under way. There are grocery stores and small business places all over Detroit, and perhaps in other cities too, that are recruiting for the Coughlin movement. Significant too is the fact that he was among those nominated in the elections for Works Council rep-

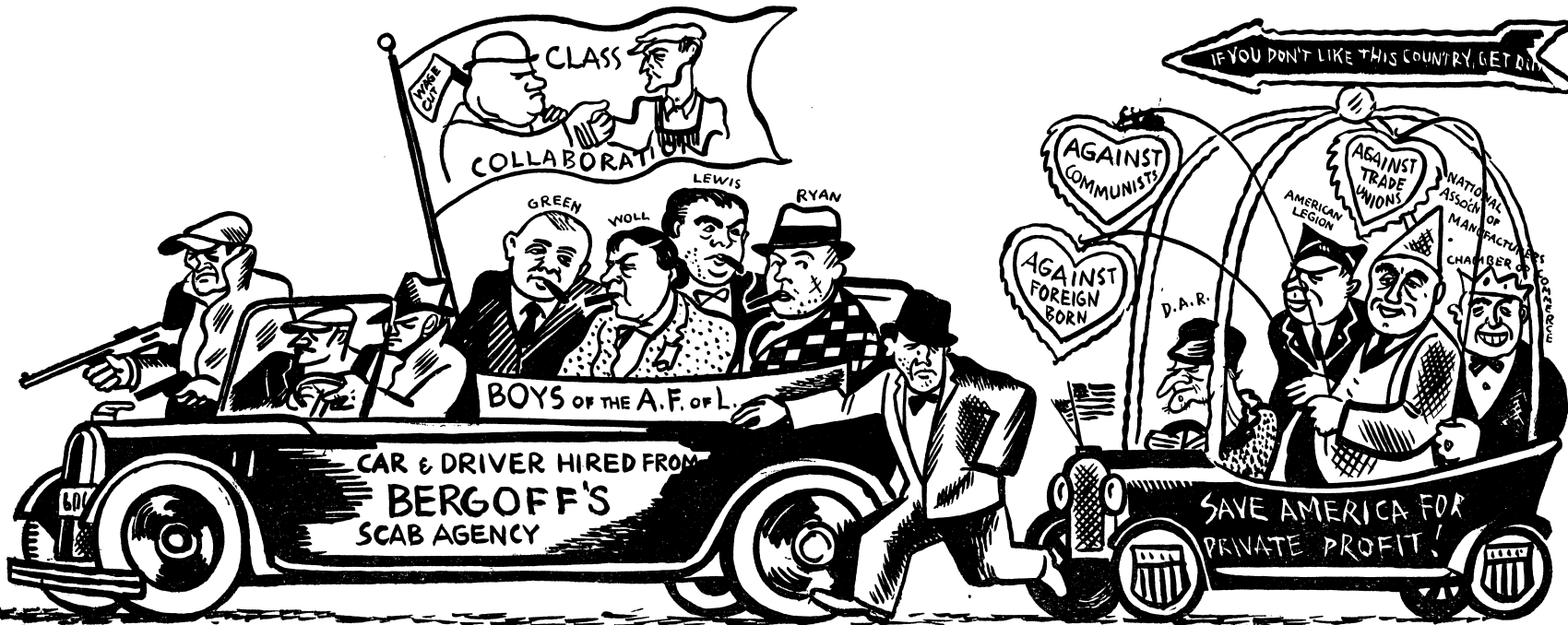
resentatives, held at the Cadillac Motor Car Co., General Motors subsidiary, on Dec. 19; if he wins in the finals, it will give him a base directly in the factories.

Another asset Coughlin has is his agitational skill. Those who have merely heard him over the radio may not appreciate the full range of his powers in this direction. I have been present at four of his Tuesday night lectures. These are not written out in advance like his radio speeches; they are much more informal and Coughlin is inclined to be less cautious and even more demagogic than in his radio talks. The man is undoubtedly a spellbinder of a superior order, a master at expounding his ideas in popular form. And he knows how to play to a crowd by sprinkling his talk with vivid colloquialisms and using such expressions as "damn," "hot," "lousy," "swell," etc., which acquires added zest from the fact that they come from the lips of a priest.

Above all, he has the supreme virtue of being extremely flexible; he can be all things at all times to all people, in short, an accomplished mountebank, a master demagogue, thoroughly devoid of principle. A list of the contradictory statements he has made would itself be enough to fill a lengthy article.

Another virtue: budding, if for the moment cautious, anti-semitism. THE NEW MASSES, in its issue of May 8, 1934, has already quoted Coughlin's statement of April 28, 1934, when it was revealed that he had bought 500,000 ounces of silver in the name of his secretary, expecting to cash in on the Roosevelt inflation program. In that statement he denounced Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., as being in league with the "international bankers," spoke of him as an enemy of "Gentile silver" and frothed at the "internationalists—the European Warburgs and Rothschilds," while saying nothing about his usual *bêtes noires*, Morgan, Mellon and the du Ponts. That didn't prevent this political chameleon from declaring in his opening radio talk of the sea-





WISE CUT

CLASS

COLLABORATION

GREEN

WOLL

LEWIS

RYAN

BOYS OF THE A.F. OF L.

CAR & DRIVER HIRED FROM BERGOFF'S SCAB AGENCY

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THIS COUNTRY, GET OUT

AGAINST COMMUNISTS

AGAINST FOREIGN BORN

AGAINST TRADE UNIONS

AMERICAN LEGION

D.A.R.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SAVE AMERICA FOR PRIVATE PROFIT!

# Gagging the Guild

WILLIAM MANGOLD

son on Oct. 28 that he had faith "in the courage of our President and in the stalwart uprightness and integrity of his Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., faith in these men to nurse the financial infants into maturity and to keep the international bankers and Wall Street profiteers at a healthy distance from the Treasury building."

Coughlin expressed this anti-semitism in a cruder form in one of his Tuesday night talks on Dec. 11. He was explaining the difference between interest and usury:

"If I lend you a hundred bushels of wheat and ask you to repay me, besides the hundred bushels, an additional three or four, now isn't that fair? But if I ask you to repay me ten thousand bushels, that's usury—*mein Gott*"—and here he began to mimic Jewish accent—"I vant mein ten tausend bushels. . . ." The rest was drowned in squeals of laughter from the audience.

A week later, when I questioned Coughlin about this cheap anti-semitic stunt, he did what one might expect him to do: he denied it flatly. *But I heard it with my own ears and a prominent Detroit attorney sitting next to me heard it too.*

Anti-semitism is thus another tie between Coughlin and Ford.

Coughlin is now busy lining up his Congressmen. In June, 1933, no less than eighty-five of them suggested to President Roosevelt that he send the priest as an adviser to the London Economic Conference.

Will Father Coughlin be the American Hitler? The answer to this question depends not alone on Father Coughlin or on the American capitalist class. To a great extent it depends on how quickly and effectively the militant labor movement succeeds in exposing this budding fascist and winning away the deluded thousands who are now streaming into his organization. One thing is clear: the National Union for Social Justice is a national union for the preparation of fascism; its real headquarters are not in Royal Oak, but in Wall Street.

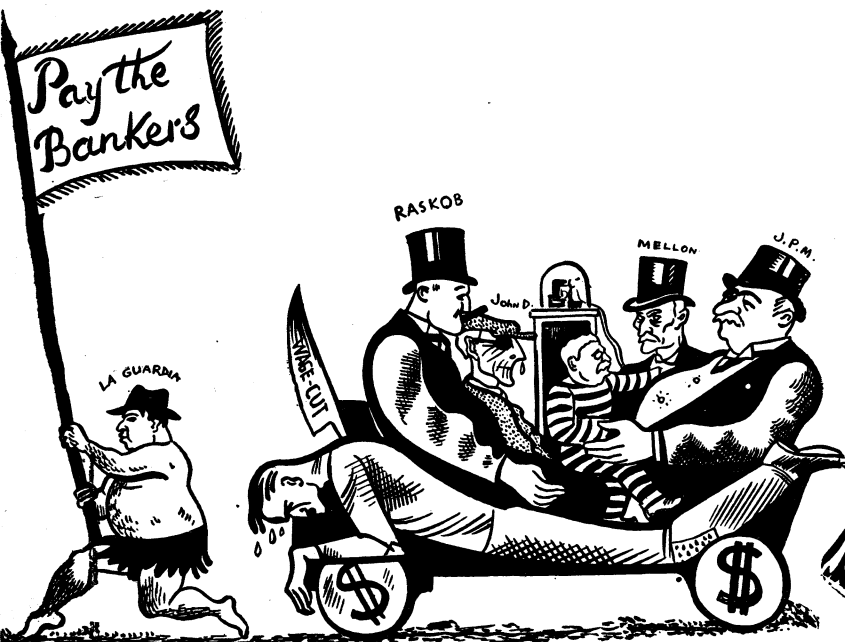
THE case of Alphonse Tonietti came before the Newspaper Industrial Board last week. Mr. Tonietti—until last September—had been on the staff of the *Il Progresso*, Italian language newspaper of New York City, and he had been repeatedly complimented by the publisher, Mr. Generose Pope, for his "splendid work" as editor of the *Il Progresso's* American page. But last September Mr. Tonietti was unceremoniously discharged because of his activities as chairman of the *Il Progresso* unit of the New York Newspaper Guild. Tonietti's grievance is similar to that of at least two score of newspaper workers who have been fired in recent months for Guild activity. Thus the hearing of this case, the first to be brought before the N.R.L.B. by any chapter of the Newspaper Guild, is of wide interest to newspaper workers who are being terrorized by publishers in every part of the country. The proceedings in the Tonietti case throws a revealing light on how much "justice" they may expect from this labor board of the publishers.

It is my intent to make this as nearly as possible a factual report of the Tonietti hearing. It is my contention that the Newspaper Industrial Board is the most masterful and most subtle device for abrogating labor's rights that any industry has yet devised. The

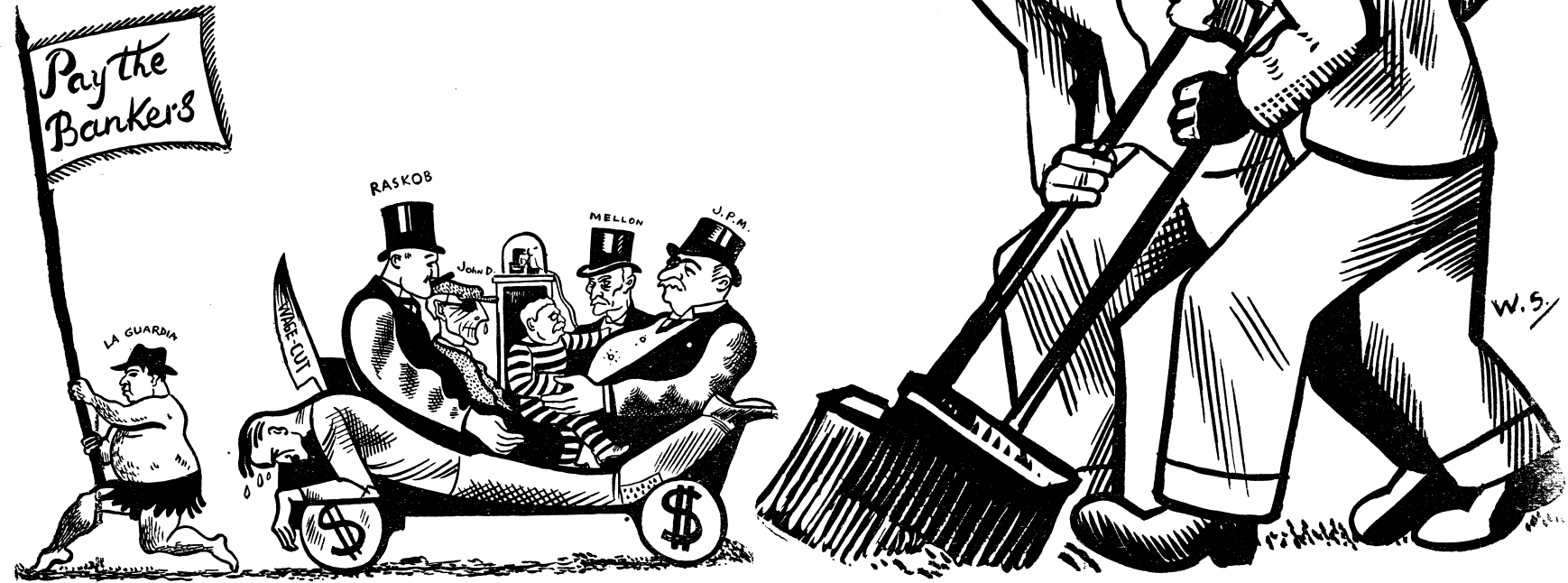
proof of this I shall adduce from the rulings and procedure at the Tonietti hearing.

First, however, a few words on the board and its procedure are in point. It is even numbered, composed of four publishers and four labor representatives. Outwardly, this has the appearance of "giving labor an even break." This seems especially so since it is a matter of record that the board almost invariably deadlocks on any vital issue, the publishers voting one way, the union officials the other. This is intended to give the impression that both sides are on an equal footing. For ordinarily you do not think of a tie vote as a losing one.

But the newspaper publishers have rules of their own, and the most important one is that a tie vote is a losing vote for labor. Thus, in hearing a labor dispute, the board can bar any testimony if the four publishers vote against listening to it. Labor can present its evidence only if a majority of the board elects to hear it. However, if one or more board members are absent from the hearing, the rule is conveniently modified: it is then necessary to have the *unanimous* approval of all board members sitting in order to introduce evidence. Thus, if one publisher representative happens to be absent, any *one* of the remaining publishers can bar any evidence by voting against it.



American capitalist class. To a great extent it depends on how quickly and effectively the militant labor movement succeeds in exposing this budding fascist and winning away the deluded thousands who are now streaming into his organization. One thing is clear: the National Union for Social Justice is a national union for the preparation of fascism; its real headquarters are not in Royal Oak, but in Wall Street.



Now, in theory, these rules might also be used to exclude evidence presented by publishers (the four labor representatives could vote to bar it). But as one reviews the case of Alphonse Tonietti it develops that, in practice, the rules work mainly to the disadvantage of the complaining newspaperman. For he has the task of trying to show that he was fired for union activity. Naturally, the burden of proof is on him. It is he, not the publisher, who must make his story convincing. And naturally, the publisher's attorney is there to keep it from being convincing. Repeatedly he objects to evidence presented by Mr. Tonietti or by the Newspaper Guild or by witnesses for Mr. Tonietti. And frequently the board bars the evidence—not by a majority vote, however, but by a tie vote or by a minority vote of the publishers during those periods when one of their members is absent from the hearings. The net result of all this was that Mr. Tonietti is not permitted to tell his full story.

When Tonietti, for example, was fired as feature editor of the *Il Progresso*, he was not told that his discharge was due to his activities as chairman of the *Il Progresso* unit of the Guild. He was told that they were letting him go because of economy and because he did not know how to write Italian. These were the "official" reasons. Obviously no employer would be so careless as to tell an employe he was being discharged for union activity. It can be done more subtly, as in every other case of a Guild member's discharge.

Accordingly, in order to prove that the *real* reason for his discharge was union activity, it was important for Tonietti to show:

1. That the publisher, Generoso Pope, had repeatedly expressed his antagonism toward the Guild unit at *Il Progresso*.

2. That Pope had so intimidated the Guild unit at the *Corriere d' America*, another of his papers, that they were afraid to hold a meeting.

3. That Pope's anti-labor attitude was further revealed in his unsatisfactory treatment of the union employes in the mechanical department of *Il Progresso*.

4. That Pope had threatened to fire him and Anthony Noto, chairman of the *Corriere* unit of the Guild, and then had changed his mind. This threat occurred in July, two months before Tonietti was actually fired; it was a warning of what would happen if Tonietti continued his loyalty to the Guild.

5. That the "official reasons were subterfuges. This was relatively simple since (1) Tonietti, in five years on the staff, had never been asked to write Italian. His job was editing the American page; (2) salary raises were made shortly after Tonietti's discharge.

But the publishers' representatives on the board were singularly and significantly not interested in this background. Tonietti produced a statement signed by all the members of the *Il Progresso* unit of the Guild. It declared that they believed that Tonietti's discharge was due "solely to his activities as chairman of the *Il Progresso* unit."

Mr. Emmanuel Levi, publisher member of the board, grabbed the statement from counsel.

"Why, this is merely an expression of opinion," he declared. "This board isn't sitting to hear opinions."

It was pointed out that when every employe in the city room had the same opinion that there might be something in that opinion. It was also pointed out by the Guild that since the board had no power to subpoena, the persons signing the statement could not be summoned to testify. After lengthy argument, it was finally decided to admit the statement with the derogatory qualification that it was merely "an expression of opinion."

The next piece of evidence did not fare so well. It was a statement signed by Anthony Noto, who had been threatened with dismissal for Guild activity. Following this threat, Mr. Pope had transferred Mr. Noto to the Colonial Sand and Stone Company, another of his enterprises. This in itself was an important point in Tonietti's behalf, as revealing Pope's attitude toward the Guild. Mr. Noto's statement declared that he had every reason to believe that his transfer, as well as Tonietti's discharge, were actions taken by Mr. Pope "as a reprisal against the membership of editorial employes of *Il Progresso* and *Corriere d' America* in the Newspaper Guild of New York."

Chairman Kelley (publisher member of the

board) quickly came to the aid of Mr. Pope. "This is even more an expression of opinion than the other," he declared. By a vote of 5 to 2 (one of the publishers being absent) it was decided to exclude this significant document.

Jonathan Eddy, Guild representative on the Board, suggested that the unanimous approval rule might be reversed. "Why not require a unanimous vote to keep it off the record?" he asked.

"If we take a vote," replied Chairman Kelley, "and it doesn't get in, it doesn't get in, that's all."

A further attempt by the Guild was made to reveal Mr. Pope's anti-labor attitude: the president of the International Typographical union had written a letter complaining of the improper treatment given by *Il Progresso* to its union employes in the mechanical department.

But Chairman Kelley ruled that the Guild's effort in this direction was out of order. "It appears to me," he said, "that it might lead us far afield." Mr. Kelley, incidentally, is the executive of the American Newspaper Publishers' Association who sent a letter to all publishers a few months ago, warning them that it would be "dangerous" to sign a contract with the Guild.

## Life of the Mind, 1935

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD

*The words in the books are not true  
If they do not act in you.*

Fret fools the days away,  
Best-sellers for their food,  
And bad philosophy,  
Fret fools.

But we,

We dare not read for long.  
We snatch our thought, our song,  
As soldiers do their meat.  
Necessity to eat,  
Necessity to act,  
And act aright, renews  
The mind's link with the arm.  
Imperative to choose,  
Imperative to do,  
Our time's dynamic form.

Once we were students—then  
Grave faces hours poured  
Over the activity stored—  
The energy of great men.

That time must come again.  
If not for us, for those  
We will to endow once more  
With the tested word-in-deed.  
Poetry and the great prose

Born in a like uproar  
Where someone had to bleed.

The battle of the mind,  
Tranquillity, too, the kind  
Quick teacher's face, the jest,  
Keen argument with a friend,  
That sport and the sweet zest,—  
All fall, must fall, behind.  
That time is at an end.

Now action like a sword.  
Now to redeem the word.  
Now blood for stubborn proof  
No one may cut apart  
Word from the living deed,  
Or live this life aloof.  
Fear is a flimsy creed.  
"I believe with all my heart."  
In the one way to believe:  
"This thing is good—I give  
My living to see it live."

Bleak thought and a bastard art,  
How easy to relinquish both!  
So to be wise, so learned  
If never more returned  
To temporary peace.  
So not to die of sloth  
Or live best-sellers' ease.  
But to stand upon our oath.



# Will the Farmer Go Red?

## 5. The Dark Cloud

JOHN LATHAM

M ILO RENO, questioned in his office in Des Moines, Iowa, about the Frazier-Lemke Refinancing bill, the favorite panacea of the Farmers' Union, looked up wisely and slapped out, "It would do the trick and save the farm situation, but it won't pass. *They won't let it.*" Earlier E. H. Everson at the Farmers' Union convention at Rapid City, South Dakota, had described the bill's failure to pass in the last Congress to orders from the house of Morgan. Reno, continuing his diagnosis, laid the blame on the "International Bankers." This is a term heard suspiciously often in the Middle West, mostly by innocents looking for a scapegoat for their misery. Reno plays on the words and continuing his talk prophesied that pitchfork riots would be brewed in the farm belt this winter by the International Bankers. The government will be the tool of these gentlemen using as a weapon Bang's disease. Bang's disease or contagious abortion among cows is an authentic and serious malady. According to Reno, the government will attempt to use it this winter as a means further to reduce herds for the benefit of the International Bankers whose cattle investments in the Argentine must be protected at the sacrifice of home industry. Conceding that we actually buy canned beef from Argentina, the dangerous element in this reasoning is its focusing on the International Bankers as the source of all evil. It is a typical fascist trick to divert attention from the maladjusted system itself.

I only ran across "The Protocols of Zion" once in the Middle West and that once in a farm home where it was treated more or less as a curio. Yet the preoccupation with money and schemes revolving around a purely illusory financial cure are fairly common.

There is no doubt that certain leaders will attempt to cash in on the farmers' bitterness against International Bankers, Wall Street and insurance companies. Rich and poor farmers alike bellyache against high interest and the huge farm debt. Farmers who have never read the Daily Worker complain loudly against "the system." State Senator Fine of North Dakota in a speech at Watford, said: "Hard times are just beginning. Hard times will last until this system is busted." What does he mean and what does he visualize will take the place of the busted system?

It is not possible to give a cut and dried answer to this question. It is possible to indicate certain tendencies and the inevitability that must follow on attempts to work them out. To begin with farmers are accepting the idea of a busted system because they see all around them the refusal of that system to

work for their improvement. The New Deal has emphasized in dramatic form the strain of contradictions in terms so telling that the simplest farmer can understand. Brought down to the case of the actual farmer, the New Deal has stepped in to save, not the farmer but the banker or insurance company who holds the mortgage. To the extent that the farmer's property belongs to the banker and no longer to himself, to that extent and that extent *only* is he helped. He is helped by fresh loans, fresh interest, new burdens. He knows beyond the shadow of a doubt that the rich farmer in the community is being helped at the poor farmer's expense. The rich grow richer; the poor can step from their present poverty to subsistence farm peasantry or to become the cheap labor on big units that may take the place of the small confiscated farm.

At a crucial moment, when farmers want a higher standard of living, fresh slogans to pioneer are stuck in their faces. Farmers are quoting figures by Dr. R. R. Doane to prove that even in the palmy days of 1929 there was a shortage of food and wearing apparel for the masses of people of this land of plenty. They feel that they are paying through the nose by not producing in a society already geared to scarcity. The system has failed because it cannot provide nor allow farmers to produce for a hungry world.

It can offer nothing but new ways and means for fresh debts and new interest, for further depletion of the base on which a farm must operate or perish. It has succeeded in eliminating from commercial production masses of poor and many middle farmers. If the drought should again occur in the Middle West this coming summer—a not impossible eventuality—many more middle farmers still maintaining a small hold on commercial production will be wiped out. Even if the farmers do get a crop, the problem remains. The debts remain. Many good years passed over the heads of many farmers without raising the mortgage debt. Farmers need new tools, new equipment of all kinds; they can only obtain this by fresh credit. Credit has tricked them and will trick them again, no doubt, but further credit cannot bolster the farm problem that sags like a broken arm on the body of the profit system.

So wasteful has the business of farming been forced to be through competitive methods, through handicaps imposed on settlers from the start that nothing except a planned economy of farming can even keep the business of providing food a going concern. The planned economy of the New Deal has been exposed as unable to function. It cannot pro-

vide food for the starving millions except through the pittance of relief doles. It cannot really get the machinery to work again. Farmers who do not realize this fact, and they are the majority, sense it. They are as nervous as horses on a battlefield with the smell of gunpowder in the air.

It was all right for H. L. Mencken in a jocose article in the American Mercury in 1931 to write, "We will be better off when the mortgage shark gets the farmer and he goes to work for his betters." The farmer's answer was to stop evictions by mass demonstrations that brought legislatures to enact measures for his protection. If the Holiday is at a standstill in the Middle West it is partly because it was organized as a fighting group around the foreclosure idea and it must build a new program to retain its militant following. The battle against evictions was temporarily won. Evictions have gone on, it is true, but where farmers backed up the moratorium with mass pressure, they held the fort. Probably nothing else that Mencken ever wrote has had so wide a social significance. Farmers quote from that article with a venom that bodes no good for Mencken-thinkers. The last time I heard the speech quoted, the speaker followed it by vigorously denying that we wanted a culture predicated on the mass slavery of farmers. Farmers were never "brothers to the ox."

They may often be muddled thinkers but give them a concrete problem and they are quick as the best. If they are reiterating over and over that the debt must be wiped out and that they want to keep their homes and that they demand food and schools, they will find a way to get these things. Others may come in to confuse them, to mislead them, but in the long run the mass need of the farmers will steer them to act for their own benefit. That a number of eventualities may happen in the meantime, is only too obvious. Somehow the farmer must wake up to the possibilities of his present predicament.

He must grapple with the idea back of that phrase, "the system is busted." If he tries to substitute some notion of a corporate commonwealth that means the same old control, he will find himself tricked. The line of development that must take place in the farm belt within the next six months if the farmer is to save his skin is awareness of this situation.

If we look at the picture from the top down, it is pretty gloomy. The Middle West is full of demagogues, all spouting panaceas to save the farmer. Olsen and Reno have large followings. Neither of these leaders has ever



FARMERS STUDYING IN A TRAVELING SCHOOL

Photograph by Margaret Bourke-White

indicated a way out of the mess except through various modifications of the legislative apparatus. The "system" may be "busted" but it is not the intention of either Olsen or Reno to substitute for capitalism a farmers' and workers' control. When they talk about the farmer doing things for himself, what they mean is that the farmer will have to force through legislation and not depend on politicians. The Farmer-Labor Party of Iowa cannot tell what they would do if given power in that state except to call a conference of midwest governors and use the embargo on farm products.

Most of the panaceas offered do not bear directly upon the problem of the mass burden. You do not hear of any legislation offered that will "wipe out the debt." The Communist Party is the only party that has recognized this gradually growing demand. You hear instead of "cost of production" but the various methods to gain this end are confused and probably unworkable. Moreover, as an official in the Farmers' Union himself pointed out, cost of production as it is being considered merely takes up the old burdens, assumes all the ancient debts, hoary interest, inflated land values and all. Nothing is lifted from the farmers' back. "Cost of production" merely guarantees to the creditor that the old

faithful farmer will deliver the goods in the long run.

Farm leaders are split amongst themselves as to the efficacy of many proposals. Unity comes from below, not above. Unity is in mass needs that become with each passing month more pressing and more articulate. Farmers may nibble at the cooperative idea and it is a fact that the Farmers' Union reports an increase in national membership of over 73 percent this last year. But cooperatives represent some distant future. Again, an official pointed out that his personal opinion, to which he did not care to attach his name, was that cooperatives were of no real service to the farmer other than as educative means. If they became powerful the same interests now crushing the farmer would crush the cooperatives. I was told that the accepted set-up for the future as understood by heads of various organizations was first, strikes leading to Fascism, which in turn would bring a revolt led by Communists which would eventually become a more modified Communism.

It is important to realize what leaders are concluding and to note that among the leaders there is contradiction just as there is within the leadership of the Triple A. The lit-

erature of many organizations is charged with contradictions that must be eliminated if the organization expects to get anywhere. The Farmer-Labor candidate for governor in Iowa was Wallace Short, whose chief plea is for "men who can stand up." In spite of the evidence around him he concludes that the character of a political leader is the important factor. Regardless of the illusions of many people who believe their interest in the farmer and worker authentic and sincere, the fact remains that the test comes when they are willing to go along with a movement that sees clearly that only a government controlled by farmers and workers can possibly get anywhere. They gag at this crucial point and it is this that gives to their literature the curious mongrel quality of being neither fish nor fowl.

In an interesting booklet entitled *Depressions, their Cause and Cure* by Gordon Stout, State Secretary of South Dakota Farm Labor Progressive Association, we find this statement, "It is the theory of this organization (Farmers' Union) that with an effective administration of these three vital essentials, social insurance, public works, and limited incomes, lies our only hope of continuing under a *capitalistic system of economics.*" (Italics mine.) This statement clarifies a good deal



FARMERS STUDYING IN A TRAVELING SCHOOL

Photograph by *Margaret Bourke-White*



of the jumble of panaceas offered throughout the booklet. It begins to dawn on the reader that the important element in the broth they are brewing is to retain the system. In the same booklet, is another statement, "Progressives and so-called radicals, even though appearing to get nowhere, are well justified in carrying on because the crash is bound to come sooner or later; and only from them will we be able to get leadership to direct us from chaos back into co-operative democracy planned and intended by the authors of our constitution." That what we actually have today, chaos, is the direct result of our constitution, escapes the writer of this booklet. He proposes on one page remedies that could not possibly take place within our present system and on the next page he exposes his position as an upholder of the system.

This weakness is both a danger and an asset to the masses of farmers. It is a danger because it will attract farmers disgusted with things as they are and yet not offer them a logical way out nor a program for immediate relief aims that might be won even under the present regime. Most of the proposals bolster the debts of the farmer while appearing to help him.

Lemke's own sales talk for the Frazier-Lemke bankruptcy act made at the Farmers' Union convention at Rapid City is an eye opener. He asks why the farmers do not use the act more. Are they ashamed to admit they are busted? Everybody is insolvent. If they haven't money to pay the full debt then they should go to the Conciliatory Commission. Of course that costs \$10. The question is how to get such a sum. Well, first the farmer should go to his wife, she may have something in her stocking. After that, try your neighbor or the banker. Or go home and prepare a Farmers' Union luncheon and put on a dance and sell business men tickets at \$1 each and you'll have \$10 to go before the Commission. Then take your wife along. Don't sign for more than you can do. Nine out of ten creditors are reasonable but put the tenth through the wringer. Then you must pay \$20 or make an affidavit you haven't got it. Then say to the referee, appraise the property. He will be fair (says Lemke). Your \$10,000 mortgage may be worth only \$5,000. You'll have to scale down. Then reckon cows, steers, pigs. If you have an old cow, give it to Wallace. If you have some machinery you don't need, let International Harvester have it. Select only what you want. Then the first year you pay 1 percent interest. Second year, 2½ percent principal and 1 percent interest; third, 5 percent principal and 1 percent interest; fourth 6 percent principal and 1 percent interest and sixth year you pay all but long before that time, says Bill Lemke jocularly, there will be the Frazier-Lemke refinancing bill to take care of your troubles.

This is a typical demagogic solution to the troubles of the farmer. On the surface it appears to offer something but actually it only guarantees that the creditors will not lose out

completely. Considering what we have already learned about the refusal of creditors to make any appreciable scaledown, the notion that the debt will be materially decreased is absurd. Creditors will wait and hope rather than scale down. Appraisers are using 1910-1914 levels which are way above anything that could be realized today on a sale. The fifth and sixth year propositions rest on expectations that history proves are unjustified. Farmers have mortgage debts dragging back many years, that were not able to be cleared, crops or no crops.

This confusion among leaders also plays into the hands of the rank and file. Although members of the Holiday often belong to the more conservative Farmers' Union, when something is to be done, the Holiday, not the Farmers' Union, does it. The United Farmers' League has consistently stuck to a program of help for poor farmers and middle farmers who want the same results. The Grange is now proposing organization among farmers, but along old conservative lines. Farmers appear to go along with this kind of thing until real trouble, then they mass together and do something about it.

The real threat to the farmers is not so much from openly fascist organizations as from groups that appear to want something different. The threat comes from above where economic cleavages are apt to be intensified during winter months. The line between rich and poor farmer will be drawn more sharply. Attempts may even be made to antagonize the small farmer and the agricultural worker. Small farmers are now competing in the Dakota beet fields with farmhands who once held the field to themselves. The middle farmer may find that he is being fed just enough to make a bulwark against the growing militancy of the poor farmer. He will have to face the issues of his position and ask himself if he can ever hope to retain a hold under this system comparable to the stake he would have in a farm economy operated for and by workers and farmers.

Leaders are muddling around with panaceas that are only sops to farmers to keep their mouths shut so that the work of capitalism may go on. But farmers are beginning to talk a different language. They have discovered mass action. It is true that many farmers' notions of a radical program do not as yet embrace more than a fight for the little piece of land. But sooner or later they will find out that even that fight is futile under this system. The little piece of land will vanish.

I have been listening and talking to middle-western farmers all my life. They didn't used to mind so much doing without things. They are naturally sturdy people of simple tastes. There was always a future. There is now for the first time in the history of this country no unopened country "further west." There are only hordes of city unemployed who cannot buy what the farmer produces, who hungry and driven, are being pushed out to the land in one direction while hordes of hungry farmers are being pushed off the land in another

direction. The important thing to remember in sizing up the farm situation is the pressing nature of the farmers' needs. Maybe masses of them imagine that the fight is around keeping the farm. But in the same breath they are looking at rotogravure sections of Sunday papers, they know from the columns of the daily paper that one million more people went on relief in 1934 than in 1933, that 26 new million dollar incomes sprouted in 1933 over and above the million dollar incomes reported in 1932, that the New Deal so loud in its protests for the "forgotten man" has remembered the farmer only to bring him down, to bring him lower and lower.

What the farmer talks or thinks at this stage of the game is not as important as what he needs. Some people say his radicalism is the same old Populist and Non-partisan League stuff. But I saw an old photo of farmers in the Non-Partisan League heyday. They sat up in good suits of clothes with neckties and they held good hats on their knees. Today farmers at meetings are lucky if they have a whole pair of overalls to climb into.

Just remember that the fellows talking about Fascism as the inevitability following on strikes are not from the rank and file. They are buffaloed by their own hokum. The farmer is stubborn when it comes to fighting for what he wants. He has proved a tough proposition in relief and foreclosure fights. At this juncture, farmers are asking for a few simple fundamental things. They have not used to any great extent those pieces of legislation offered them, such as the Frazier-Lemke bankruptcy act, because such a measure does not touch the basic needs. It is possible that some Huey Long or Reno may get farmers off on a wild goose chase with the International Bankers as scapegoat and inflation as bait. But they won't solve those basic needs by such tricks and if you know the middle-west farmer you know he will hang on like grim death until they do.

*John Latham's sixth article in this series, to be published next week, is "The Way Out."*—THE EDITORS.

## TAKE THIS HOPE

That it will be only with seamed flesh and  
a broken mouth,  
That it will be with a load of death and  
lost comrades,  
That there will be lives buried under the  
slump of buildings beaten with gunfire  
And the loosed wind swing flame in the faces  
of men, scorching rust from the frame  
of the world,  
And the sky clear on charred cities ready at  
last for the work of free hands;  
That only so shall the hands be free:  
Press this bitterness into your bread, comrade:  
Take this hope upon your tongue.

RICHARD GILES.

# IN THE NAZIS' TORTURE HOUSE

## *A Document from Germany*

KARL BILLINGER

[This narrative is a chapter from a forthcoming book, *Fatherland*, to be published by Farrar and Rinehart and Editions du Carrefour (Paris) early in the Spring. The author (who uses a pseudonym) obtained his release from a Nazi concentration camp last Spring. —THE EDITORS.]

**M**Y POSITION was growing precarious. For a week now I had been noting various signs which convinced me that the street was under police surveillance. A stocky individual, recognizable twenty yards off as a plainclothes bull, kept bobbing up. One morning I caught sight of him as he was leaving the superintendent's apartment; another time as he stood deep in conversation with the house porter next door.

I made up my mind to quit the place as soon as I could supply the section contact man with a new address. Meantime I redoubled my precautions.

On ——— 17th, at 5:30 in the morning, the doorbell rang. I rose noiselessly and set fire to the letters lying ready in the bedroom stove.

A knock sounded at the door. "Open up!" I stood motionless. The knocking grew louder.

"Open up! It's the police!"

I waited till the flames had died down and the glow was extinguished. Then I opened my bedroom door and called sleepily: "What's wrong?"

"Open the door! Secret police!"

I cast another glance about the apartment. Everything in order. Then I went to the outer door and unlocked it. There stood a solitary detective.

"Herr Billinger?"

"Yes."

"May I speak to you for a moment?"

"Certainly."

He stepped into the entry and faced about. From the shadows of the staircase, where he had been lying in wait, a second man emerged.

I had pictured the scene of my arrest a

hundred times over, wondering how I should come through it. Now everything was simple.

"You used to live in ——— Street?"

"Yes."

"You were last employed by the firm of ———?"

"Yes."

"That's right then. Kindly hand over to us all material connected with your illegal party work."

I feigned blank astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"Better not make any trouble. We know all about you. You've continued to do underground work for the Communist Party, and you're in possession of certain forbidden material."

"I know nothing of any underground work and I have no forbidden material. You can look for yourselves."

For two hours they ransacked the apartment: nosed through my books, unscrewed the toilet seat, sifted the ashes of the kitchen stove, emptied the garbage can, poured a bag of salt into a pot. One of them actually ferreted out of the kitchen closet a list of names—coded as a milk bill—of people enrolled for a course on Communism. I watched the proceedings indifferently, as though they could be no possible concern of mine.

The fruitless search ended, they invited me to accompany them—where they didn't say. One on either side of me, each with a hand in his coat pocket, they steered me to the subway.

The car was packed—petty tradespeople, workers, uniformed storm troopers. No one noticed that I was a prisoner between two detectives. I considered the possibility of flight. The crowded train would have been in my favor, prevented my captors from shooting. But there were too many volunteer helpers about, ready to rush to their aid. And I knew too well what lay in store for me, once I should be recaptured.

We left the train at Potsdamer Platz. That meant the *Gestapo*<sup>1</sup> then in Prinz Al-

brechtstrasse. The neighborhood of the building was alive with detectives, S.S.-men<sup>2</sup> and police. The plainclothesmen were careful to betray their calling by no outward sign. They didn't even wear swastikas on their coat lapels and, when they met on the street, greeted each other by lifting the hands at their sides in a barely perceptible salute.

A double guard was stationed outside the building, and an S.S.-sentry posted on every floor within. My escort led me up the broad staircase, higher and higher, till we were directly under the roof. There they put me in a corner and ordered me to wait.

I took advantage of the time to drill myself once more in the details of a plan of tactics. I went over in my mind the questions I might be asked, the answers I should make, what I might say without implicating comrades or harming the party. I still had in my watch the address of a sympathizer, with whom I had been talking the evening before. Tearing it up, I swallowed the pieces. So far, so good. Only the thought of a still uncoded list of 180 *Kampfbund*<sup>3</sup> comrades lay heavy on my heart.

Half an hour later one of the detectives returned, made several fruitless telephone calls for a typist, and finally sat down at the machine himself.

"Once more I warn you to tell the whole truth. We've been watching you for four months. Here are the documents in your case."

He pointed to a thick portfolio lying in front of him.

"You're a Communist?"

<sup>1</sup> Abbreviation for *Geheime Staatspolizei Amt*—Government Secret Police Headquarters.

<sup>2</sup> *Schutz Staffel*: elsewhere referred to as guard troops or Black Shirts. The *Schutz Staffel* is an organization composed of picked and trusted men from among the storm troopers or *Sturmabteilung*. Its members wear black shirts instead of the *Sturmabteilung* brown.

<sup>3</sup> An organization of anti-fascists who may or may not be Communists.

"I was a member of the Communist Party of Germany."

"How long?"

"Since 1923."

His forefinger picked out the letters laboriously, one by one.

"You deny, then, that you belong to the underground Communist Party?"

"I do."

"What were your functions in the Party?"

"No special functions. I wasn't fitted for practical work and confined myself to matters of theory."

"Did you speak at meetings?"

I remembered two meetings at which the police had taken my name. "Twice, from the floor."

"You've been in Russia?"

"Yes." (My passport had a Soviet visa.)

"What were you doing there?"

"Working in the Leningrad electric plant."

"You worked for the Russian munitions industry too."

"I did not."

"You took part in the collectivization of the German peasants on the Volga."

"I did not."

"You're on friendly terms with a Bulgarian student whose connection with the three Bulgarian Reichstag incendiaries has been clearly established."

"I don't know any Bulgarian students."

The forefinger typed on.

"Empty your pockets."

I obeyed. He rummaged through my letter-case, and read my mother's letters which I carried with me.

"Aha — so you're planning to return to Russia."

"No."

"I beg your pardon." Triumphant he handed over a letter in which my mother begged me to come and see her before I went to Russia. The letter had been written in 1931 and, luckily for me, was dated.

"What unit did you work with?"

"Former Unit No. 2026."

"Who was the unit organizer?"

"A man named Rudolf."

"You refuse to give us his last name?"

"I don't know it. The functionaries of our unit were changed in January, and the Party's instructions were that comrades should be called by their first names only."

"Where is he now?"

"I saw him last in January, 1933. I don't know where he lives."

He eyed me derisively. "Your memory's going to be considerably improved while you're here with us. Come with me."

He led me down stairs and along corridors till we reached a door marked: "S.S.-Guard."

"You're to wait in there," he ordered, and pushed me inside.

I found myself standing in a room large enough to be a meeting hall. Some guard troopers were seated about a table opposite the door, playing cards and drinking beer. They paid no attention to me. Revolvers and blackjacks lay strewn over the table. Straw-

palletted cots stood ranged along the wall at the left.

As I glanced to the right, my heart began pounding in my throat. Their backs to the room, a line of about thirty prisoners stood facing the wall. A guard trooper, under twenty, paced back and forth behind them.

"Can't you stand still, you ———, when you're told to stand still?" he bellowed at an old man, kicking him with all his might in the back. The old man's head crashed against

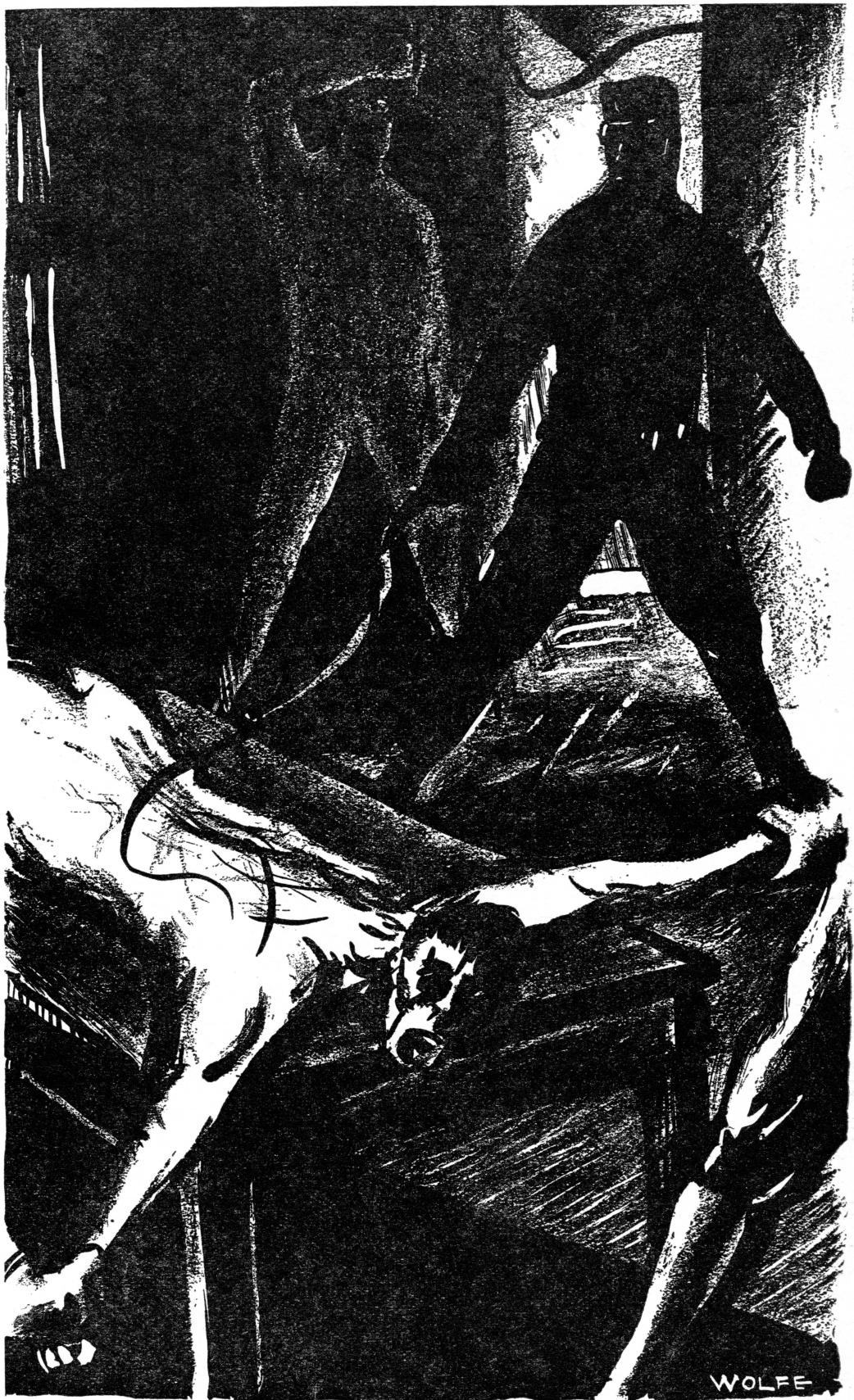
the wall and he dropped to the floor. The trooper promptly seized him by the back of the neck, pulled him up and punched him in the face. "You weren't too old for Communism, were you, you dirty dog?"

The old man made no answer. The others stood like stone images.

"What are you standing there for, you blockhead?" he shouted suddenly at me. "Come over here and don't budge from the spot."

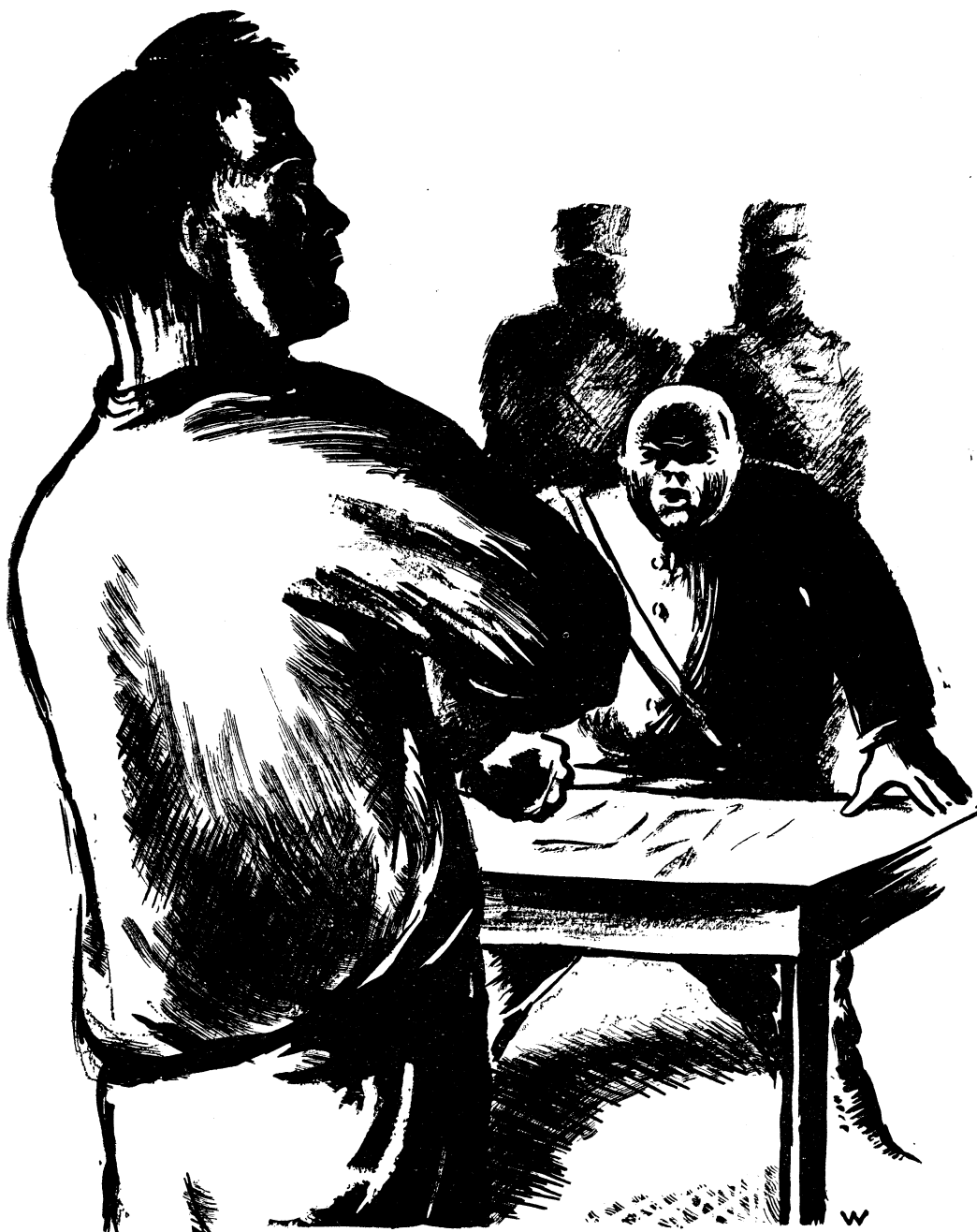






WOLFE

PAUL WOLFE



Behind us we could hear the card-playing troopers thumping on the table. Messengers came and went. Guards were relieved and flung themselves down on the cots. The telephone rang incessantly. Fresh prisoners kept arriving in a never-ending stream. Most of them entered silently; a few clicked their heels, flung up their arms and tried their luck with a "Heil Hitler!" No one answered.

The second man to my right began gasping softly. I tried to get a glimpse of him without moving my head. He was a sturdy fellow of twenty-five or so—a worker, to judge by his clothing—and his face was a livid green. A few minutes later he started swaying, and suddenly collapsed. The guard, who happened to be talking to the cardplayers, remained unaware of the incident till another trooper, entering just then, caught sight of the man lying on the floor.

"Think you can get a good day's rest here, do you, you——?"

He rushed at his victim, pulled him to his knees and struck him a terrific blow in the face, which brought the blood spurting from

his mouth and nose. The first trooper joined him.

"Drunk, are you, you bastard?"

Together they kicked the groaning man in the stomach, in the back, in the face, wherever a point of vantage presented itself. Dragging himself to his feet, he made an effort to stand upright. His head drooped, his legs refused to support him. To keep himself from collapsing again, he dug his fingernails into the plaster wall. I could hear the nails crunch and break off as, like a sack, he dropped for the second time to the floor.

Toward noon we heard a commotion in the corridor outside—loud talking, shouting, running back and forth. Finally the door burst open to admit a number of Black Shirts.

"Here's the bastard who rode with the driver."

From the confusion of questions and answers, it was possible to glean the information that a truckload of illegal literature had been seized by the secret police.

"Damn it all, I know that fellow! You've been here before, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir," came the reply in a clear, boyish voice.

"What were you arrested for the first time?"

"I was accused of distributing pamphlets."

"And this time?"

"I was standing at the corner of Müller- and Seestrasse, and a chauffeur offered me five marks to help him drive his load."

"Never mind the fairy tales. You knew perfectly well what was in those boxes."

"No, he didn't tell me a thing. And I didn't ask any questions either. I was glad enough to earn the money."

"What did you do it for?" It was the voice of an older trooper speaking. "Now they won't believe what you told them before either. You're done for now."

"I've been unemployed since I left school. They wouldn't accept me for the labor camps because I'm a Communist. What am I supposed to do?"

One of the troopers in the group surrounding him replied with a blow that knocked him to the floor. "Leave him alone, Max," said the older trooper quietly, apparently unable to suppress his pity for the boy.

The pamphlets were being passed from hand to hand. A trooper started reading aloud from one of them:

Enemy Planes Over Berlin  
An Important Message to All Germans  
by  
Dr. Joseph Goebbels.

"What a bunch of bastards!" another cried. "Just turn the page." The first man gasped as he went on reading:

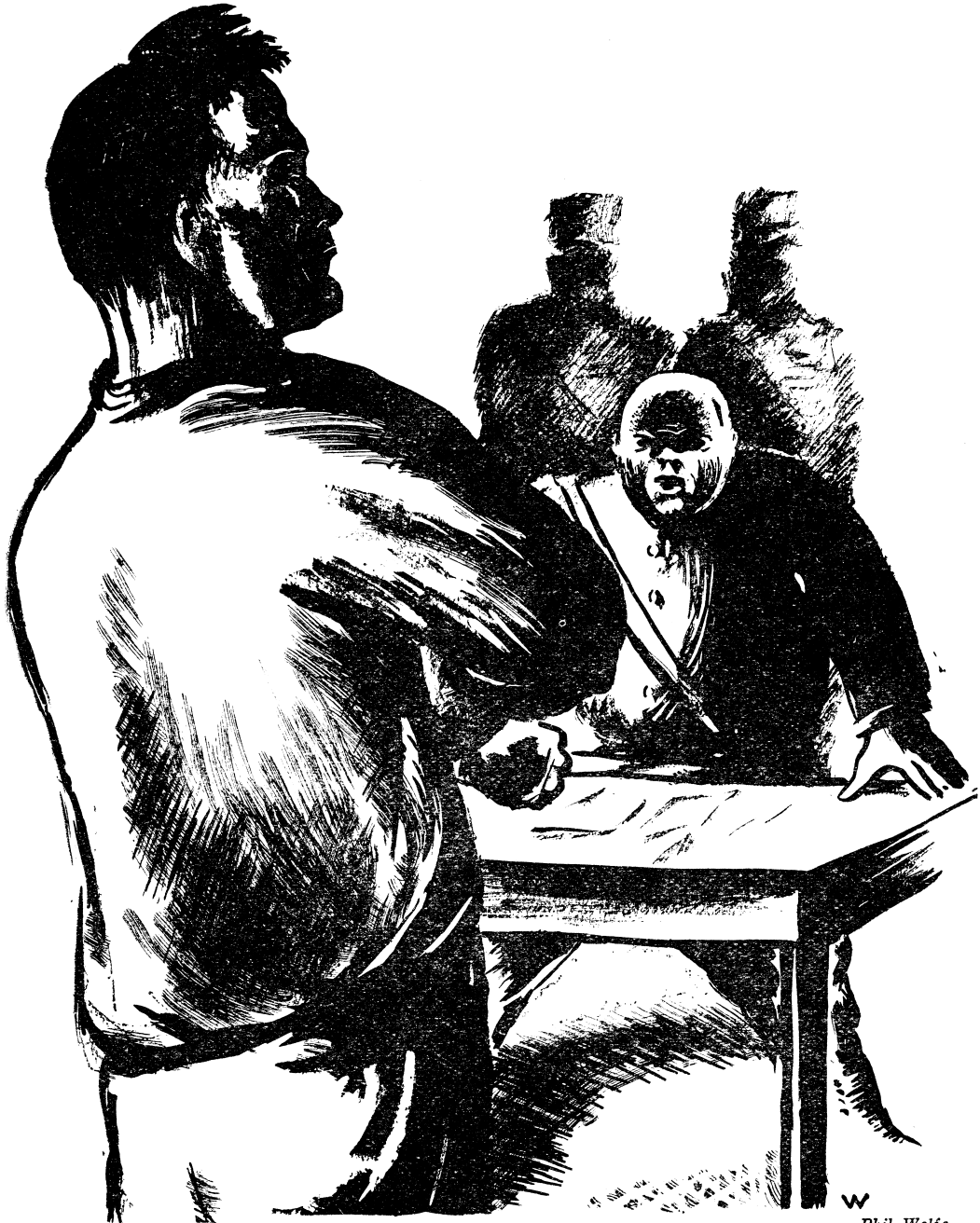
The Brutal Slaughter of Reichsbanner and  
Red Front League Comrades in Nowawes  
by Hitler's Brown Murder-Hordes.  
A Documentary Report Issued by the Berlin-  
Brandenburg Section of the Communist  
Party of Germany.

In a fresh access of rage they hurled themselves on the boy, from whose lips not a sound broke.

**W**E continued to stand at rigid attention till seven that evening, chins in, heels together, eyes fixed on the white-plastered wall. To prevent dizziness, I picked out a small black speck in front of me on which I focussed my attention. Standing thus, unable to see what went on behind us, we were nevertheless being familiarized with the first educational measures practised by the Third Reich on our unfortunate comrades.

At 7 one of our torturers snarled: "Company, about—face! Right—face! Forward—march!"

We were led through a long corridor into an inner court, and marched at double quick time into a number of police trucks that stood waiting for us. We were piled in and the trucks rumbled off. A small barred window at one side admitted a narrow ray of light, and I watched the hurrying street signs in an effort to discover our destination. It wasn't until we were halted by traffic for a moment that I was able to get my bearings, and then I found



that we were at the Halle Gate, headed south—which meant that they were taking us either to General-Pape-Strasse or to the Columbia House. After a drive of half an hour or so, the column halted. A sign right outside our little window bore the name: Columbia-strasse.

We were at the Tempelhof Flying Field, in front of the building which had once been a notorious military prison but had since been taken over by the Black Shirts as one of their various torture chambers. The door of our truck was flung open.

"Get out!"

Encouraged by kicks and blows, we were herded into the corridor of the first floor and ordered to fall into line. One by one the prisoners were led into a room whose door promptly closed behind them. While we waited outside, the S.S. men entertained each other with vivid descriptions of what lay in store for us.

"Next!" Two men pushed me into the room.

A guard trooper was seated at a table. Others were grouped about him and me. After taking my name, age and so on, he ordered me to remove hat, coat, watch, handkerchiefs, fountain-pen, pocket knife, belt and shoelaces—which articles were checked off on a printed form and stuffed into a paper bag. I was beginning to nurse the silent hope that I had cleared my first hurdle, when I saw the man at the desk leafing through some papers.

"So you can't remember the name of your unit organizer," he remarked pleasantly. Next moment he was bellowing like a bull: "Trying to put something over on us, are you, you ———? Who was he?"

I could feel all my physical fear melting away. I was conscious only of the working of my brain as it registered the blows that hailed down on me. Finally they lifted me up from the floor.

"We'll have another talk tomorrow," continued the man at the table genially. "You'll tell us everything yet, my friend." Then, bursting into another bellow: "Get out! You bastard!"

I flew out.

"Next!"

We were kept waiting in another corridor till all that day's prisoners had been dispatched. Meantime the guards on patrol duty conversed in loud voices.

"Is that son of a bitch in 62 alive yet?"

"They just took him to the State Hospital."

One of the guards came to a halt in front of a prisoner.

"What are you here for?"

"I don't know."

"Jew?"

"Yes."

"And you don't know what you're here for, you Assyrian son of the desert? Wait—I'll pay you a special call tonight."

It was late at night before we were led to our cells. The guards took advantage of the opportunity to pummel us again. Those in the rear kicked at us with their heavy boots so that we surged forward. Those in front beat

us back with their fists and their leather whips.

In a long bare wing of the building, the jailer opened door after door.

"No. 876."

"Here." The door slammed shut.

"No. 877."

"Here."

"No. 878."

"No. 879."

"No. 880."

Locked in my cell, I heard the numbers being called,—to 900 and beyond. The tread of the sentry sounded at irregular intervals in the corridor outside.

**I** GROPED my way about in the darkness. Four steps from the door to the back wall, two and a half steps across. A wooden stool—the only object I could discover—stood in the right-hand corner. The barred window, high in the wall, framed a small pale square of the night sky. Though I had eaten nothing all day, I was conscious of neither hunger nor fatigue. All the energy of my body seemed concentrated in my head, and my thoughts ran riot.

How would Käthe hear of my arrest? How would she take the news? Would she be calm and courageous or would her impulsiveness betray her into follies and blunders? If only they didn't find that list! No one knew where it was. How could I get in touch with the outside world? Had Michael wired promptly? He might wait too long and then they'd catch Otto at Halle. How would the comrades discover my whereabouts? How inexcusable not to have coded the list the moment I'd received it! A hundred and eighty comrades—many of them married. It was well hidden—but suppose they tore the furniture apart and found it. They were sure to go back to the apartment and turn everything upside down again. I couldn't stand it—I'd kill myself—

Yes, that was a comfort—I'd kill myself. I clung to the notion—as though my death could atone for my carelessness.

I heard footsteps in the corridor.

"Where is he?"

"Cell 128."

They passed my door. Farther down a cell door was opened and closed again. The jailer had apparently admitted some S.S. men into a cell.

From the lower end of the corridor a fearful cry rang out, followed by a long-drawn gurgling—again and again and again—

They were throttling a comrade to keep him from screaming. Presently the jailer opened the door, and I heard them say: "Down to the cellar."

A stumbling on the stairs—then silence again, till the moans of the tortured man rose from below. I stuck my fingers into my ears to keep out the sound.

**T**HE guard roused us at 6 next morning. Naked to the waist, we were ordered to line up in the corridor outside.

"Right face—forward march!"

At the head of the staircase we were joined by prisoners from other wings.

"Mark time—march!"

Through the noise of the tramping feet I heard my neighbor whisper: "How long have you been here?"

"Since yesterday."

"How are things outside?"

"Quiet."

"Party?"

"Yes—and you?"

"Of course."

"How long have you been here?"

"Ninth week."

Going down the narrow staircase, we were separated. The man on my left, who had been brought in with me the day before, was on the point of leaning over to whisper something to me when a trooper on the stairs above us, who had been watching us unobserved, let fly a long artillery whip.

"Let me see you jabbering together again, you ———, and you'll be ripe for the cellar."

The lash had cut straight across my companion's face.

In a corner of the small square that formed the prison courtyard a ditch had been dug and a board laid across it—our latrine—where, ten at a time, crowded close together, we took care of ourselves. The others stood lined up in front of us, facing the latrine.

I took advantage of the precious opportunity to look for acquaintances. There in the front row stood Ernst, pale as death, a ragged stubble disfiguring his sensitive face. Not an eyelash twitched as we greeted each other.

For three weeks his people had been hunting for him, ignorant of his fate or his whereabouts, not knowing whether he was alive or dead. He had had a job as assistant in a research laboratory, and I knew he had been arrested mimeographing a Party newspaper. A Jew, an intellectual, a Communist caught redhanded at his underground work! His face seemed to be all eyes—the grave and sorrowful eyes of a sage.



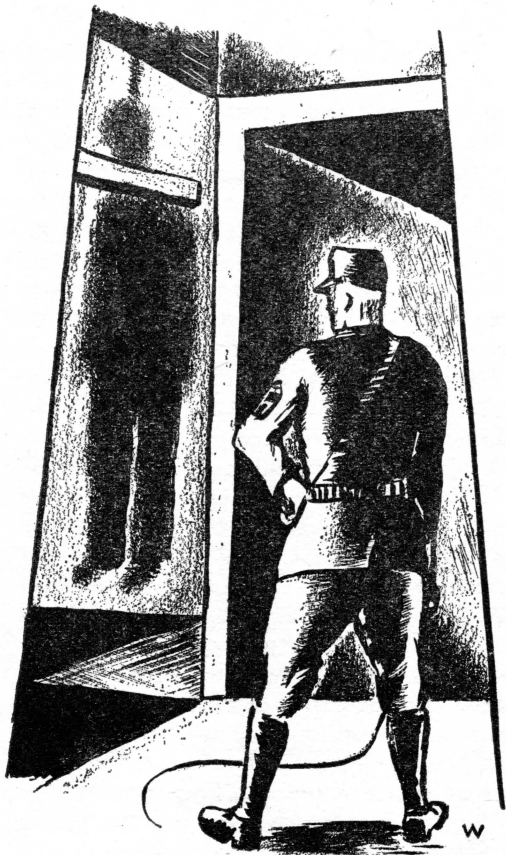
Phil Wolfe



*Phil Wolfe* <sup>W</sup>







*Phil Wolfe*



seventeen times. Then it was my turn.

"Billinger—No. 880—Communist."

"What are you here for?"

"I was a member of the C.P.G."

"How long?"

"Till the national government was formed."

"Like us to swallow that, wouldn't you? You did underground work."

"I did not."

Fists beat about my head. Their effect was such that no prisoner could stand up under more than two or three blows. They would then kick him back into consciousness and start afresh. All of which was designed to cow him and break his morale by brute force from the very outset, for, under that regime of terror, open revolt was unthinkable.

That night I committed the folly of asking the guard, a youth of not more than 22, for a blanket or pallet.

"Want me to ————, you goddam sow?" he burst forth in a frenzy; and as punishment for my arrogance in having addressed him, I was deprived of the privilege of keeping my trousers on at night.

When we were marched to the field kitchen in the yard at noon for our meal of thin potato gruel, I noticed various signs chalked on the doors of those cells which remained closed. Some of them bore the word: "Attention!" Others were adorned with the Red Cross, supplemented by an explanatory: "Gonorrhoea." On the corner cell in our corridor I read the following:

NOT ALLOWED TO LIE DOWN  
TO BE VISITED EVERY TEN MINUTES  
LIGHT TO BURN ALL NIGHT

A week later that cell was opened with the rest. Its occupant was the boy who had been caught with the truckload of revolutionary literature. His face was white, his ears transparent as those of a corpse. The notorious courtplaster of the Columbia Barracks decorated his left temple.

Columbia boasted highly qualified specialists. Its Black Shirts belonged to the *Polizeiabteilung Wecke, z.b.V.*<sup>7</sup> (for special service)—picked men who, through both inclination and training, regarded all Jews, Communists, Socialists and pacifists as so much offal, on whom it was a pity to waste a crust of bread. The fact that they were obliged to feed us instead of exterminating us like the plague struck them as a piece of insufferable charity. Wherefore they bridged as best they could the deplorable gap between the discretion imposed by foreign political considerations and the imperious internal demands of the Third Reich.

They killed without incriminating themselves, they left it to the prisoners to commit suicide, they adopted a consummate technique of torturing without leaving a trace of evidence behind them.

The numerous cases of "gonorrhoea" reported on the cell doors were actually cases

<sup>7</sup> A picked corps of tried and trusted Black Shirts. z. b. V.—the initial letters of *zur besonderen Verwendung*—for special service.

of injury to the loins and sexual organs sustained in the course of the cellar floggings. "Attention" meant that the prisoner was mortally ill as the result of abuse and in need of first-aid treatment.

The courtplaster on the left temple was another story.

The German tends to be systematic and logical in all he undertakes. In the younger generation the sporting instinct is highly developed. With these picked and well-fed troopers, therefore, it was inevitable that their activity among the prisoners should take some such direction.

Thus it came to be the height of good form to knock out every prisoner—even the very strongest—with a single blow to the temple. But this blow, dealt a hundred times over, left one disagreeable after-effect. It split the victim's face to the bone, blackening the temple. That difficulty was met by a jovial first-aid man with his ever-ready court plaster.

"There," he would encourage his patient. "Now three dabs of iodine on the back and you'll be fit for service again." The "three dabs of iodine" were administered with the heavy leather whips used by the German artillery to spur on their horses. Here too a certain set of rules was observed—rules emanating from long practice, overflowing vitality and the craftsman's joy in his handiwork. The most enviable reputation was enjoyed by those who could apply the greatest number of lashes with the greatest force to a prisoner's naked body, without breaking the skin. The black-jack, which produced the desired effect far more readily than the whip, was considered unsportsmanlike at Columbia.

Then there was the choral society, which deserves mention at this point.

At noon of the second day I heard the sentry in our corridor boom: "Singers—flags out!" I didn't understand the order at the time, but its significance was soon made clear.

A number of the cell-doors were opened, and a few minutes later a many-voiced chorus rose from the courtyard below in the strains of *Aennchen von Tharau, Es ritten drei Reiter zum Tore hinaus* and *Wenn du noch eine Mutter hast*.

The *Abteilung Wecke* was fostering the cult of the German folksong. To this cultural undertaking, however, a practical objective was joined. Until the cellar could be made sound-proof, the choral society was ordered into action whenever their voices were needed to drown out the moans and shrieks of their comrades under torture. When the choral society was mobilized at 8 in the evening, it was generally for the sake of pure art—to soothe the breasts of the Black Shirts. In the daytime, however, you might safely assume that, under cover of the swelling voices, tortured prisoners were being made ripe for their hearings.

THE examining magistrate, an S.S. officer who in civilian life was a butcher, a traveling salesman or a petty official, presided in a room on the third floor. His authority was

absolute. Methodically, scorning the employment of any "Jewish subtleties," he directed the hearings of the newly admitted victims.

"Jew?"

"No."

"Communist?"

"Yes."

"R.F.L."<sup>8</sup>

"No."

"R.F.L. I said?"

"No."

"Fifty," he said calmly, settling himself back in his armchair. The two Black Shirts standing behind me grabbed me and rushed me downstairs to the cellar, where the "preparatory squad" was already on hand. From a tub they lifted the wet horsewhips, which drew better after having been soaked in water for a while.

"Pants down!"

I stood motionless. Next moment I was lying stripped across a table. Four men were holding me, three men were flogging me. At the first lash, I thought I should leap to the ceiling. My whole body contracted convulsively. Against my will, I screamed like an animal. Then came the second stroke, the third, the fourth—fifth—not quickly, but at measured intervals, spaced so as to keep me from losing consciousness and to make certain that my nerves would register each blow in all its agonizing pain. I was aware of but one racking desire—to be dead, to be dead, to be dead, and have this over, finished, done. After ten or twelve lashes, I felt the blows only as dull detonations in my head. My body felt as though it no longer belonged to me. I no longer had the strength to cry out. The twenty-fifth stroke was followed by a brief pause, during which the men changed places. One of them poured a pitcher of cold water over my head to render me fit for further treatment. Then they started afresh. When it was over, they flung me into my cell, not without having informed me that they would be back shortly to return me to the examining-room.

What kept me from suicide during those hours was neither courage nor cowardice, the thought neither of my wife nor of my mother. It was the realization that within those four walls five hundred prisoners were sharing my fate. It was my sense of unity with the staunch Party workers, with the proletarians delivered defenseless into the hands of these beasts. It was the thought of Ernst, of all the pallid faces, of that boy.

I was unable to report for the "bear dance" at 6 that evening. When they opened my cell, I remained lying motionless in my corner, heedless of what they might do to me.

"Get up!"

I didn't stir.

"Get up!" yelled the guard, kicking me in the stomach.

Resistance was out of the question. I dragged myself on to the stool.

<sup>8</sup> Red Front Fighters League.

"Why don't you report, you son of a bitch?"

"Billinger—No. 880—Communist."

"What are you wallowing around here for?"

"I can't stand up."

"Why not?"

"I've just been examined."

"What do you mean by that?"

I didn't answer.

"You mean you fell down the stairs, don't you?"

I didn't answer.

"Answer me, you bastard! You fell down the stairs!"

"Yes sir."

"All right, then."

At 7 supper arrived—the same coffee, and the slice of bread and lard. A prisoner poured the coffee into my bowl, which was still dirty from the noon meal. He nudged me in passing. Looking up, I saw that it was Hans. His face, a typical Berlin worker's face, clouded at sight of my condition, but he winked his eye comfortingly.

Late that night—the lights had long been extinguished—we received a visit of inspection. A short, full-fed Storm Troop leader, named Otto, known far and wide as a noto-

rious drunkard, had the cell doors opened, one after another. Closer and closer came the roar of the butcher, the slamming of doors. At length they reached me.

"Billinger—No. 880—Communist."

Stinking of bad liquor, he approached and regarded me out of vacant, protruding eyes.

"What are you here for?"

"Member of the C.P.G."

"How long?"

"Till the national government was established."

"Why not longer?"

I hesitated.

"You realized," he said impressively, stressing each word, "—you realized that our Leader—who is our Leader—?"

"Adolf Hitler."

"Right. You realized that our leader, Adolf Hitler, was working day and night to make the German people happy again."

"Yes, sir."

"Where were you born?"

"In the Rhineland."

Alcohol, the Leader, the German Rhine—German wine, blonde girls—his sentimentality won the upper hand.

"The Rhine remains German," he declared.

"Yes, sir."

"And when you return to the Rhine, will you be a loyal German citizen?"

"Yes, sir."

A little more, and he would have embraced me. His escort steered him out.

**T**HE night was a torment. I could neither sit nor lie nor stand. My coat and shirt were soaked through. My body was racked with chills and fever. Tomorrow they would take me out and examine me again. No escape, no help. The comrades dead or imprisoned. Käthe penniless in a foreign land. What would she do? The list at home. Anton had hanged himself. Why had he hanged himself? In a fit of despair? Had they murdered him? We were all lost.

The next evening we were lined up in the

yard in square formation. An S.S. officer called the names of two Jewish prisoners. They stepped out, their faces bearing evidence of recent mistreatment. One was a man of fifty, the other thirty or thereabouts.

"Well, sheeny," sneered the Stormleader—"what's your profession?"

"Writer."

"Where did your writings appear, Cohn?"

"In various newspapers."

"Well, come in—don't be bashful—what newspapers?"

"The Berliner Tageblatt and the trade union papers."

"Aha—what did you write about?"

"Cultural matters."

Yells of laughter from the S.S.-men standing about.

"Ikey writes about German culture!"

"Did you write about peace and the League of Nations too?"

"Yes."

"Are you a pacifist?"

"Yes."

"All right, Yiddle, now you're going to be a fighter. Here—take the broom."

The guards grinned in anticipation of the forthcoming spectacle.

"And you, you Egyptian son of the desert, what's your profession?"

"Physician."

"Party?"

"C.P.G."

"Did abortions for the Communist whores, I suppose."

The man didn't answer.

"Come on, kike, take your sword." He forced a board into the prisoner's hand. "When I count three, you begin. The loser goes to the cellar. One, two—three."

Neither of the men stirred.

"Well," bawled the officer, "how long do I have to wait?"

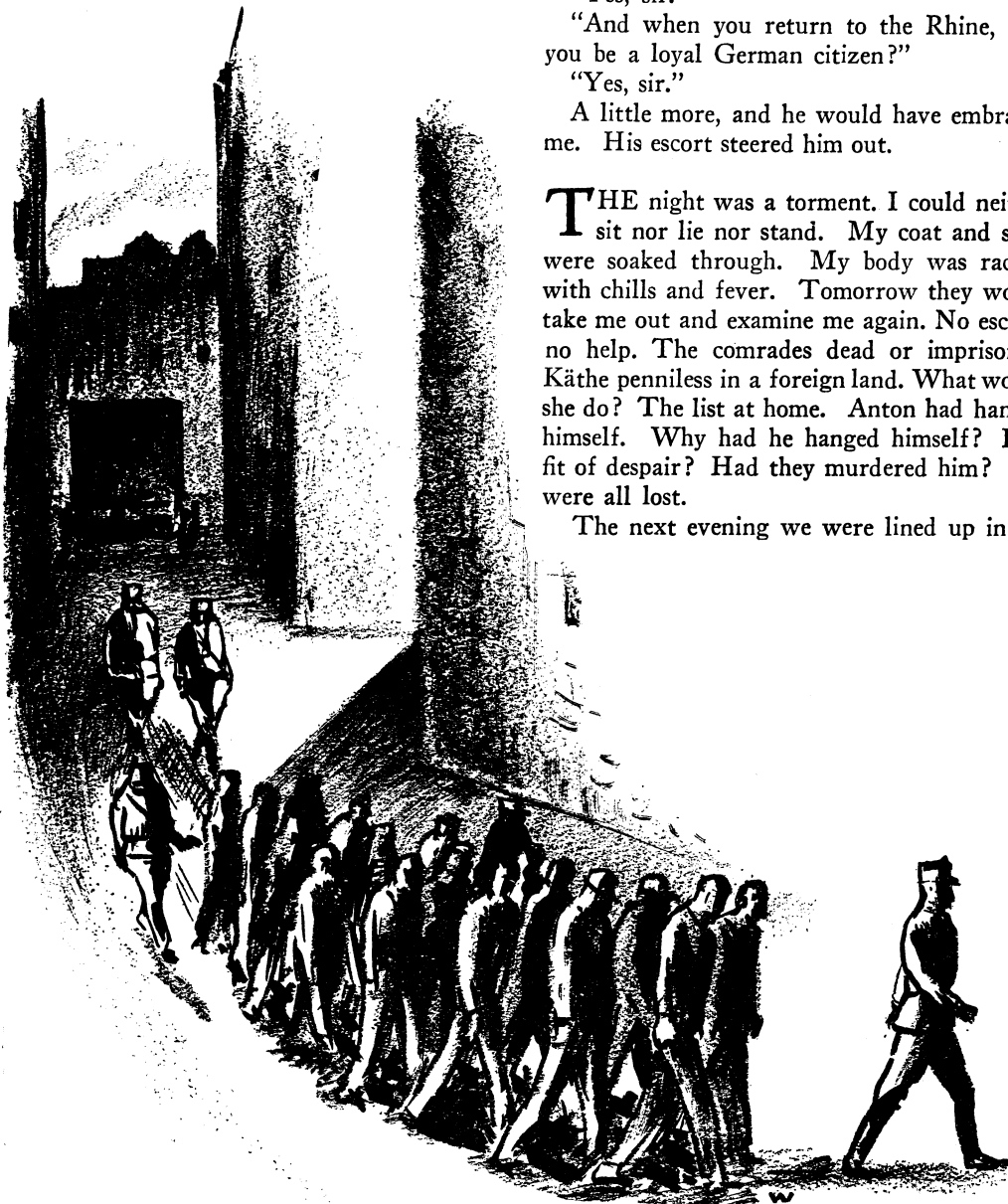
The older of the two raised his broom—and lowered it again. The younger stood motionless. The guards, armed with their whips, stationed themselves behind the pair.

"For the last time—go!"

When, even then, they made no move toward each other, the blows began falling thick and fast over their hands and necks and backs while, like a maniac, the officer kept yelling: "Forward! Forward!"

Then the older of the Jews struck a blow—and another. Hesitantly at first—appalled by what he was doing—then more rapidly, to escape the onslaught of the guards, till at length he was laying about him in a frenzy, his face racked with agony, his eyes glaring with madness. The younger man never so much as lifted his arm to ward off the blows about his head. Neither did he stir under the whistling horsewhips. Erect and silent he stood till he collapsed. The faces of the watching prisoners were gray and sunken.

**S**TILL harder to endure than the mistreatment itself were the advance announcements of bestialities to come. A genial Bavarian among the Black Shirts had brought the



Phil Wolfe

Yes, sir.

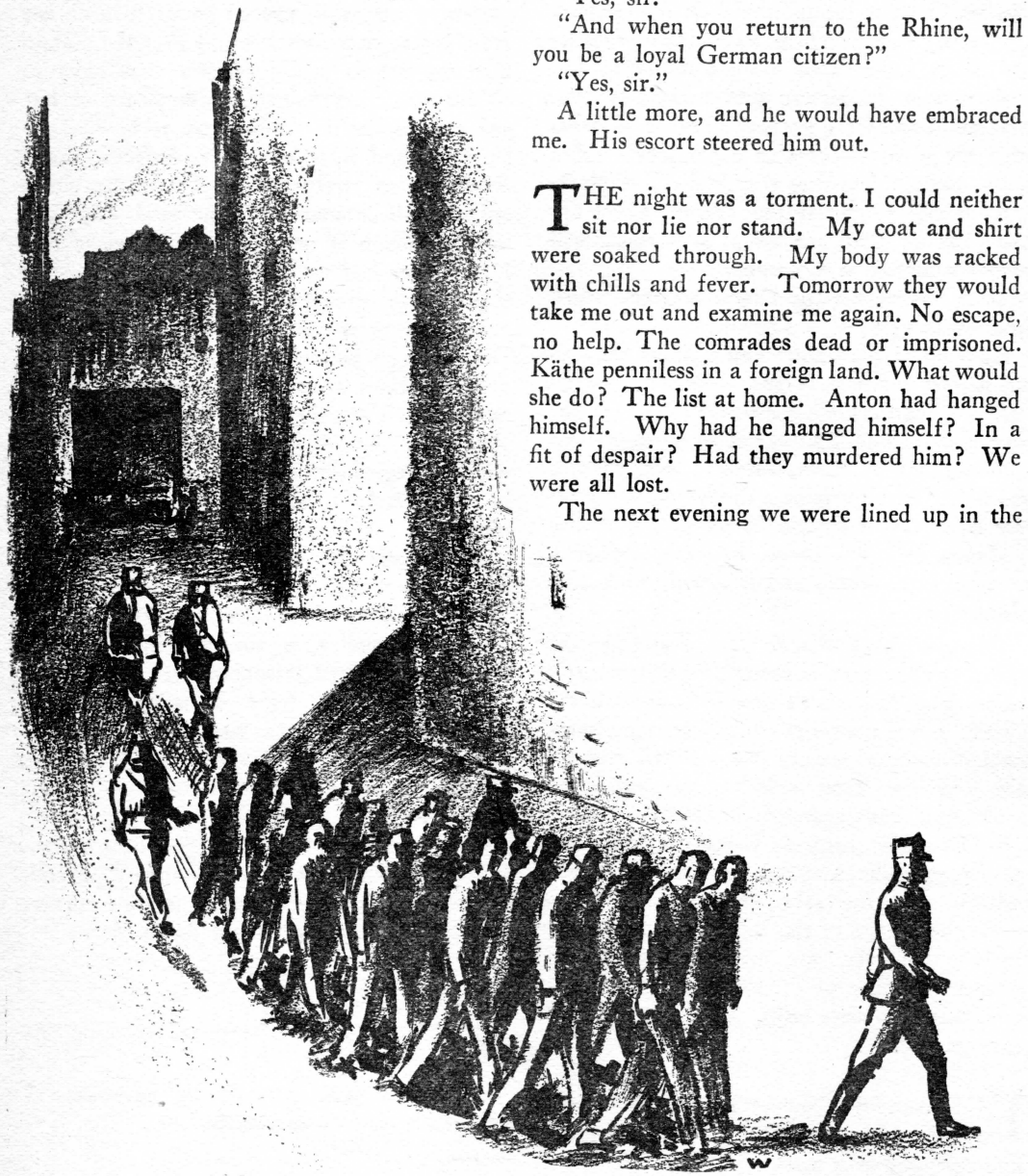
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Phil Wolfe

thing down to a system. He would order certain comrades—against whom for some reason or other he nursed a private grudge—to fall out, would eye them appraisingly as a butcher eyes a head of cattle to determine its readiness for slaughter, and proceed to make notes in his notebook:

"No. 524—day after tomorrow."

"No. 578—next Tuesday."

"No. 619—tonight. Fall in!"

Whereupon the prisoner, secure in the knowledge that the Bavarian would make good his threat, would wait day after day, hour after hour, for the appearance of the execution squad. Stout-hearted workers, courageous intellectuals broke under the strain. Captain ———, a former SA-leader in Berlin, who had revolted against Hitler in 1931, opened his veins. The guard found him before he had succeeded in bleeding to death and had the wounds bandaged. When the captain tried to tear the bandages off, they gave him a cellmate whose duty it was to watch him constantly.

Never would I have believed in the possibility of such inhumanity, such torment, such anguish and pain and despair.

**I**T seemed as though the end would never come. . . .

Nobody was permitted to write or to receive letters. Nobody knew what he was charged with nor what lay in store for him. The most elementary rights of the common criminal were denied us.

Outside, the new Germany celebrated one fête-day after another. The officers were constantly ordering the prisoners out into the courtyard to beat and brush their uniforms,

polish their boots and wash their stolen ("requisitioned") motor cars, till everything sparkled. Off duty and on, they were in great demand.

Every day new prisoners were being brought in, co-ordinated, trained to be good Germans and murdered.

It seemed as though the end would never come. . . .

There were twenty-eight strokes on my calendar when, late one afternoon, the guard shouted: "No. 880—flag out!"

I pushed the rod. The door was opened.

"Into the corridor!" I didn't even have time to nod to my cellmates.

Ten prisoners were already lined up outside. The burly St., one of the most popular figures in the workers' revolutionary movement in Berlin—of whose presence at Columbia I had been unaware up to that moment—was just pulling off his prison shirt.

"Where does the tour take us now?" he inquired coolly of an S.S. man. The guard shrugged.

After an endless wait our belongings were returned to us. We were all convinced that release was at hand. My neighbor was rummaging through his bag and muttering.

"Anything missing?" asked the guard.

"I can't find my plug," the old man grumbled.

"Where you're going," the guard replied, "you won't need any plugs." But none of us took the implied threat seriously. We were getting out of this hell—that was the principal thing. Nothing worse could happen.

It was dark by the time we found ourselves clambering into a truck in the courtyard. No one knew where we were going. We were

still hoping to be released.

Seven Black Shirts, armed with pistols and rifles, distributed themselves about the truck. At the last moment some whips were handed in. It was then that our hopes died, and the same thought must have flashed through all our minds: they're going to shoot us "while attempting to escape."

Before the truck started, the troop leader, having taken his place in front beside the driver, delivered a brief address.

"Anyone who makes a single suspicious movement as we drive through the city will be shot. There won't be enough left of the bastard to put into a coffin. That much I guarantee you."

It was easy to sense their nervousness, their fear lest the outraged populace stage an assault upon the transport and free us by force.

The truck drove through the city at a furious pace, avoiding as far as possible the livelier streets, and delivered us at the gates of the Plötzensee Prison—a gloom place which nevertheless seemed to me a haven of peace after Columbia.

Plötzensee was the jail normally used for the detention of prisoners against whom an action was pending or about to be preferred. I racked my brain in an effort to determine what evidence the Secret Police might have gathered, upon which to base suit against me. The protocol I had signed at the Gestapo would certainly not suffice.

Three days later the mystery was solved. A large group was assembled for transport to a concentration camp. On ———, together with a hundred and twenty-seven other prisoners, I was transferred to the concentration camp at ———.

## The Man at the Factory Gate

CHARLES HENRY NEWMAN

A man is tortured in a cell in Germany.  
He is an innocent man. He committed no crime.  
There are men like that in the prisons of America.  
Men like that walk the streets of America.  
Millions of men in the streets await death.

Do you know this man? He is the son of poor workers.  
He was a dock worker in the port of Hamburg,  
He was a soldier in the war. He committed no crime  
And he is tortured in a cell in Germany.

They gouge his eyes. They tear at his genitals.  
They beat him with steel rods.  
They burn matches under the soles of his feet.  
Sit down. Stand up. Confess. Who was it?  
Who was it burned the Reichstag?  
Who?

Do you remember the man at the factory gate in the early morning?

Do you recall the leaflets he gave you and your comrades?

Do you recall the slogans:

"Strike Against Wage-cuts! Fight Against Hunger!

Fight Against War and Fascism! Our cause is your cause!"?  
Do you remember this man?

A man in a top-hat hacked his head on a block in Berlin  
His head was stuck on a pike in the streets of Shanghai.  
His limbs were found in a shark in the Bay of Havana.  
His body was burned under a tree in Alabama.  
For good-luck charms, the citizens kept his fingers.

Do you remember the man at the factory gate in the early morning?

Do you recall?

He was a good shoemaker. He was a poor fish peddler.  
He was an organizer in a labor union in San Francisco.  
He committed no crime, he is an innocent man.  
He is a Communist. He is the leader of an oppressed people.

They gouge his eyes.

They burn matches under the soles of his feet.

They beat him with steel rods.

Sit down. Stand up. Confess. Who was it?

Who burned the Reichstag?

Who played with fire and lit an unquenchable flame?

# H. R. 7598—A DEBATE

## *The Case for H. R. 7598*

MARY VAN KLEECK

**T**HE CASE for H. R. 7598, which was the number designating the Workers' Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill in the 73rd Congress, rests simply upon the desperate needs of the whole working-class under mass unemployment, and the obligation of government and industry to meet them without lowering the workers' minimum standards of living. Social insurance, transformed to meet present needs, is put forward as the most acceptable and certain method of discharging the obligations of government and industry to all workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own. On these grounds this transformed social insurance challenges all other proposals which trace their origin to the ideas of Bismarck or Lloyd George. It challenges also the whole relief program of present-day governmental administration and particularly the programs for evading relief through so-called "production for use," through "subsistence farming" and other devices which substitute in essence forced labor by the unemployed under conditions which lower the standards of living because they perpetuate waste and inefficiency in production and substitute minimum payment in kind for the proper purchasing power of a dynamic productive system. It is the challenge of the Workers' Bill to the other programs of social insurance which is the subject of this debate.

"The Workers' Unemployment and Social Insurance Act" is the title of the bill numbered H. R. 7598, which was introduced in the House of Representatives in the 73rd Congress on February 2, 1934 by Congressman Lundeen of Minnesota. It was referred to the Committee on Labor, but never reported to the House for a vote. The petition which, if signed by a sufficient number of Congressmen, would have discharged the committee from further consideration and brought the bill to a vote, failed to secure enough support to prevent the bill from lapsing in committee, with no test of the attitude of Congress toward it. Its introduction, however, served to stimulate its promotion through endorsement by a substantial number of trade unions, including bodies affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, with fraternal societies and other workers' organizations. This kind of public discussion and endorsement is a necessary stage in legislation particularly involving new concepts of the obligation of government; and regardless of admitted defects in the drawing of the bill, it stands in its very simplicity and brevity as the first expression of a movement which is growing daily more

articulate with the continuance of the depression, the exhaustion of workers' resources and the inadequacy of the measures proposed for relief and "security" by the Roosevelt Administration.

The Workers' Bill calls for "the immediate establishment of a system of unemployment and social insurance" in order to provide insurance "for all workers and farmers unemployed through no fault of their own in amounts equal to average local wages." A minimum was set of \$10 per week, plus \$3 for each dependent. A new form of administration was set up, through "unemployment insurance commissions composed of the rank and file members of workers' and farmers' organizations." Funds would be provided "at the expense of the Government and of employers." And it was declared to be "the sense of Congress that funds to be raised by the Government shall be secured by taxing inheritance and gifts, and by taxing individual and corporation incomes of \$5,000 per year and over." It was further declared that "no tax or contribution in any form shall be levied on workers for the purposes of this Act." Benefits would be extended to workers and farmers without any discrimination and would cover all occupations for the total period of unemployment. There would be no exclusion from benefits on the ground of refusal to work in place of strikers or at less than normal or trade-union rates or under other specified unsatisfactory conditions. Finally, the bill directed the Secretary of Labor to establish a like system of social insurance to cover loss of wages because of "part-time work, sickness, accident, old age, or maternity."

When one contrasts this bill, 42 lines long, with the vast elaborations of previous legislation on unemployment insurance alone and the many words used in other bills in the United States, and when one further realizes that all these forms of social insurance and old-age pensions are included with unemployment insurance in four paragraphs in the Workers' Bill, it is easy to see why "experts" who have studied these questions for many years should have been shocked by the apparent naïveté of H. R. 7598. No effort is made to state in the bill a national policy which would justify this extension of federal legislation into fields which the Constitution is commonly supposed to exclude from national action. An effort to provide full wages covering all workers for the total period of unemployment is unknown in past systems of social insurance. The bill makes no appropriation,

but merely specifies sources of funds. It suggests in a single sentence an entirely new departure in governmental administration without giving any details of the procedure for establishing it, and it demands the extension of this system to the other branches of social insurance, in which there is an equally long history of complicated and elaborate provisions defining rights and obligations and setting up administrative bodies.

Nevertheless the fact remains that this bill, in its brief two pages, set forth a new concept of social insurance which had the support of workers themselves before its introduction and which now is gaining daily in momentum as, along with other proposals, it is submitted by the workers themselves to the test of whether it meets the needs of the unemployed. A movement with this kind of vitality demands respectful consideration.

Despite its defects as a bill, H. R. 7598 nevertheless set up by implication principles which, if differently stated, are seen to be new legal concepts developing out of social and economic changes. As such, they deserve attention.

The Interprofessional Association for Social Insurance endorsed the bill soon after its introduction. The spokesman for the organizing committee of the Association made the following statement on its behalf at a hearing before the Committee on Labor of the House of Representatives in Washington on February 21:

The professional workers' group believes this bill worthy of passage:

First, because in principle it meets the expressed wishes of large numbers of industrial workers who in their trade unions have expressed themselves in favor of unemployment insurance;

Second, because it includes all workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own;

Third, because it makes unemployment insurance a general charge upon industry and government and would utilize for that purpose funds raised by taxing individual and corporation incomes and inheritance and gifts, thus serving to bring about the much-needed new distribution of consumer's purchasing power by diversion from investment to current purchases;

Fourth, because it is non-contributory, laying no burden upon the earnings of workers;

Fifth, because it sets no time limit upon receipt of compensation for unemployment;

Sixth, because it would be possible to make the bill operative for the present emergency, instead of waiting for the building up of future reserves, thus meeting the urgent need of the nation to relieve unemployment and to get purchasing power into the hands of the unemployed.

Seventh, because it introduces a new and promising method of administration by workers and farmers under rules and regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor in conformity with the purposes and provisions of the act.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hearings before the Committee on Labor, House of Representatives, Seventy-third Congress, Second Session, pursuant to H. R. 7598, February 21, 1934. Statement of Mary van Kleeck.



# ON SOCIAL INSURANCE

By way of elaboration of these grounds for support of the bill, statistics from government sources were offered, showing trends in employment and wages. The necessity for federal action was stressed, and the three vital points of this bill in comparison with others were defined, namely: complete coverage of all unemployed in all occupations; taxation of incomes, inheritance and gifts instead of industrial reserves as the source of funds; and democratic administration by the workers themselves.

These remain the chief points in the present case for H. R. 7598, though it should be pointed out that this particular bill, with its well-known designation by number, lapsed with the 73rd Congress and that changes are to be expected in the new Workers' Bill in the next Congress.

Now, as at the time of its introduction, the reason for promoting it is that mass unemployment continues and that government statistics, limited as they are, show nevertheless that the level of employment is still far below that of 1929 and that payrolls are still lower, and these lower payrolls must nevertheless be shared by a somewhat larger number of employes, all of whom, however, are sharing also in the support of their fellow workers who continue to be unemployed. Expressed in index numbers for manufacturing, as given by the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment, compared with the level of 100 in 1923-1925, hovers around 70, and wages around 60. The latest figures, for September, show an index of 75.8 in employment and 57.9 in payrolls. These were affected by the textile strike, but the corresponding figures for August (79.5 for employment and 62.1 for payrolls) show the same discrepancy as between employment and total wages. Moreover, analysis of possible trends in the future indicates that still further introduction of machinery may still further increase unemployment, while at the same time failure to distribute new purchasing power or to raise total wages in proportion to employment still further prevents the revival of the demand for goods on a scale sufficiently large to stimulate the basic industries.

The necessity for a system of unemployment insurance does not rest, however, only upon the extent of unemployment nor even the predictions regarding unemployment in any given time, but upon what may be called "the world's experience" in recurrent industrial depressions over a hundred years. It is not irrelevant, by the way, to point out that "the world's experience" is acceptable to the United States Supreme Court as a defense of constitutionality, this being the ground of approval of the Oregon ten-hour law in 1908 as set forth in a brief prepared by Louis D. Brandeis, who has since become a Justice of

the Court. The world's experience in the effects of unemployment upon workers and their individual and collective welfare affords ample grounds for defense of a method of compensation which will provide income for the necessities of life when wages fail through involuntary unemployment.

If, however, these grounds be acceptable, then there is no reason for limiting the benefits of unemployment insurance to a specified group in a particular occupation and for a limited period of unemployment. Human needs due to unemployment are not limited to the manufacturing industries, but extend to agriculture and the professions; and if it be necessary to compensate for unemployment for ten weeks in the year, it is also necessary to compensate for unemployment which lasts longer than ten weeks. The only reason for setting these limitations is the political and fiscal difficulty involved in so wide a coverage. This brings us to the whole issue of the sources of funds.

Some day it will become clear that in challenging the traditional sources of funds for unemployment insurance the Workers' Bill strikes deep into the whole problem of the economics of unemployment. Insurance has been thought of as the building up of reserves covering a specified group of beneficiaries who join in establishing these reserves. The limitations have grown out of the nature of this source of funds. When reserves are exhausted naturally insurance ends. If it be based upon contributions from workers, employers and the government, set aside in advance in the form of reserves, rules and regulations are made in advance which exclude all those not involved in the contributions. Even if these reserves are made up only of contributions from employers and the government, nevertheless each such contributing unit is circumscribed, and even the aggregate established in a fairly comprehensive system of governmental insurance always leaves out occupations which do not readily lend themselves to this type of reserve funds. They exclude, for example, the smaller establishments, and ordinarily they make no provision for the self-employed, including the farmer. However, the inconsistencies and limitations of reserve funds, whether for the individual establishment, for the industry as a whole, or for all industries in a given state, or even for all the industries of a nation, become evident when long-continued and widespread industrial depression exhausts the reserves while unemployment still continues. Government then has to step in with relief funds. The fact that this has been necessary in England or in Germany indicates the need for a new concept of social insurance.

There are advocates of social insurance who urge that its limitations be accepted and that

if even a limited number of workers can be covered for a limited time through insurance, it is all to the good. Beyond that time, continued unemployment will have to be relieved in other ways. On the other hand, the workers themselves are unwilling to see this limitation to so sound a term as "social insurance." It implies the obligation of society to insure security; and in the face of the human need for security, the limitations of fine definitions become academic and, moreover, must be re-examined by those who believe that the law must be shaped by social conditions rather than letting legislative precedents hold in a straitjacket the progressive developments demanded by an evolving society.

There is, however, a further objection to reserve funds, and a further defense of the Workers' Bill in its provision for funds through income taxes. Reserve funds must be taken care of and kept intact as far as possible for the emergency of the depression. This means that they must be invested. To the extent that they are drawn out of wages by direct contributions of workers or by the down drag on wages created by employers' contributions, they still further deflect current income from purchasing power to investments. Most people today agree that lack of proper balance between purchasing power of consumers' goods and investments in further production is a major cause of the depression, and the continued lack of balance prevents "recovery." Would not, then, the building up of reserves on an extensive enough basis to make any impression at all on the problem of unemployment greatly complicate the credit structure of American industry?

Moreover, these reserves, taken directly out of industry as an immediate charge upon costs of production, are easily shifted to consumers in higher prices, thus depressing further the workers' purchasing power and again accentuating one of the causes of unemployment.

Although taxation in any form rests in the last analysis upon production, nevertheless the income tax is the one which is the least easy to transfer to the consumer or to rest upon the worker. It is an accepted source of revenue, and the right of Congress to impose it is provided in the Constitution. By making this the source of funds, the Workers' Bill would appear to be beyond question as to its constitutionality. What would remain to be confirmed as constitutional would be the right to spend this money through insurance.

There is, however, a further point involved in sources of funds. Once the obligation of government to establish a system of social insurance be recognized, there is no reason to differentiate this charge from those involved in maintaining other departments of government. It would not be usual to tell the Navy Department that it must build up reserves be-

fore an appropriation could be made to build a battleship. The expenses of government are not met by reserves. On the contrary, they are likely to be postponed for future payment. The burden of proof rests upon those who believe that a comprehensive system of social insurance can be developed on the basis of these reserve funds which can then be invested and which may disturb the balance of production and purchasing power both at the moment of collection of the funds and in the process of conserving them through investment in further production.

On the side of administration, the simple, democratic principle is put forward by the Workers' Bill that representatives of the workers themselves should administer. This is startling to those who argue that if industry and government "pay the bill" they should at least be represented in the administration. Yet there is ample experience here also to demonstrate that decentralized administration by workers who know each other results in a minimum risk of false claims and unfair discrimination and a maximum of fulfilment of the purposes of an insurance system which is to meet needs during unemployment. New as is the idea, it nevertheless has precedents in the field of sickness insurance, where, for example, fraternal societies in England have been deputized by government to administer insurance. Moreover, it offers no insuperable obstacle in legislative procedure, since Con-

gress can give power to some executive of the government, presumably the Secretary of Labor, to deputize local commissions of administration, and there is no reason why these commissions should not be named by election in local occupational units, these local units forming in turn the basis for election of those responsible over a wider area, thus building up a national administration. These details, however, are not specified in the Workers' Bill. They are inserted here by way of indication of possible forms consistent with the principle put forward in the bill.

At all these important points, it is evident that the chief significance of the Workers' Bill lies in its implications for a new concept of social insurance to be embodied in a new national policy. The bill would have been more in line with legislative standards if it had begun with a statement of such a policy. It is easy, however, to build up such a statement out of its present provisions. This might read as follows:

It shall be the national policy, in the interest of the general welfare, to prevent the disastrous results to family life and individual health and well being due to involuntary unemployment and consequent loss of income by workers, in whatever industry or occupation they are employed; and to prevent the obstructions to interstate commerce which arise out of the inability to maintain a proper balance between consumption and productive capacity during periods of mass unemployment. To the end of preventing the lowering

of standards of living and the disturbance to industry due to lack of purchasing power, a nation-wide system of social insurance shall be established which shall draw its funds from higher incomes and divert them into purchasing power for the necessities of life of those who derive their livelihood primarily from wages, salaries, or self-employment.

This is put forward merely for purposes of discussion. But upon the feasibility of and the necessity for this kind of national policy rests the defense of H. R. 7598. Of course the question is asked, Can government and industry pay the bill? The answer is that upon the ability to pay the bill rests the ability of the present economic system to give a minimum compensation for economic insecurity. It is not claimed that any system of social insurance can establish economic security. It is probable that security is unattainable except in a planned economy. But the workers of America, conscious of the enormous productive capacity of the country, cannot be convinced that American industry has not the capacity to pay. The working-class now pays the bill of losses through unemployment. H. R. 7598 proposed to shift this burden to government and the owners of industry.

H. R. 7598 has opened discussion on this issue. The discussion will not be ended until legislation is set up which measures up to the only legitimate test, namely, whether it meets human needs arising out of mass unemployment.

# The Case Against H. R. 7598

I. M. RUBINOW

**I**N A BRILLIANT statement, Miss Mary van Kleeck touches upon a number of problems dealing with the philosophy, theory and practice of social insurance as well as with "the state of union as a whole." And yet it is worthwhile remembering that the specific subject under consideration is the Lundeen Bill, and all the other issues, however important, which may be touched upon incidentally, are not of the substance of this debate.

The writer is in the habit of formulating as clearly as possible the subject of a discussion. It is his belief that only with such formulation may the discussion be of any use. A brief statement, therefore, as to the conditions which have brought about this "debate" is a preliminary to which both the audience and the debaters are entitled.

At a meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Social Service in Atlantic City last June a group of younger workers made a very energetic effort to press the Lundeen Bill for indorsement by the Conference. In view of the writer's fairly well-known preoccupation with problems of social insurance the bill was

referred to him for an opinion and this resulted in his undertaking to resist the motion for indorsement. After a rather heated struggle he was fairly successful in the effort. There is no official record of the proceedings but probably Mr. Ramsey is substantially accurate in reporting that "He (myself) called the Bill the worst drawn up and the most impractical that he had ever read. It would be an act of professional stupidity he (myself) asserted to indorse H. R. 5798."

Hence the debate. It deals with the Lundeen Bill and not with the whole field of theories, views and philosophies of social insurance.

The case for the Lundeen Bill is extremely simple. It will be agreed that we want and need economic security against all the mishaps of modern life. We want compensation for or insurance against all possible losses, to which a human being is subject in this economic environment. It is not difficult to agree that such insurance or compensation should be ample. Ergo, full compensation is the complete ideal. Naturally we should like to get

everything we need at as low a cost as possible. Ergo no price at all is the ideal. From that point of view, the Lundeen Bill is the ideal bill. It promises all the security we need at no price at all. And since, notwithstanding the severe chastisement I may receive at the hands of some of my very radical opponents, I am in sympathy with the worker's aspirations, why then should I oppose the Lundeen Bill, with its high social ideal?

But the trouble is that the Lundeen Bill is not a sophomore's essay. It has been introduced by a representative of the people in the highest legislative body in this country. And while it is quite true that among 30,000 bills, more or less, introduced each year in the U. S. House of Representatives, there is a very large number of impossible or absurd proposals, we are asked to take H. R. 7598 seriously. A body of trained experts, such as social workers, has been asked to indorse it. The very competent representative of the Inter-professional Association for Social Insurance, at a hearing before the Committee on Labor, definitely characterized this bill as "worthy of passage." We have, therefore, a right and a duty to subject



the bill to searching scrutiny with the view of determining how far it comes up at least to the minimum standards by which any legislative proposal must be judged; and these are standards of clarity, of practicability or feasibility, and, of course, standards of desirability.

I do not mean to say that this or any other bill is to be judged entirely by standards of legislative draftsmanship. Often this may not be perfect. But there is a minimum below which a bill may not sink. I am glad to find that the defects in the draftsmanship are now admitted by Miss van Kleeck. And yet she does speak of "its very simplicity and brevity" as something of a virtue because in 42 lines (by actual count in less than 400 words) it covers all forms of social insurance with the single omission, altogether unexplained, of insurance of widows and orphans against death of the breadwinner. The contrast between some 400 words and perhaps as many pages, which a set of carefully drafted bills would require, is quite striking. What are the results of this "simplicity and brevity"?

There is to be a system of "unemployment and social insurance" for workers and farmers. No word is lost in defining any of the terms. Broad as the formula is, Miss van Kleeck further broadens it by insisting that it provides "complete coverage of all unemployed in all occupations," that it must "extend to agriculture and the professions." In other words, apparently "workers" does not necessarily mean wage workers, but may include all those engaged in gainful occupations who would apply for compensation, in case of sickness, accident, maternity and old age, as well as unemployment. Anyone who would try to administer the act would have quite a problem of determining when a professional person, a self employed person and particularly a farmer (mind you, not an agricultural laborer but a farmer) is suffering from unemployment and especially from part-time work. Is a doctor "unemployed" because for a day not a single patient rang his doorbell? Is a farmer unemployed any day when, because of a rain, or for any other reason, he can't work on his farm?

When suffering from any one of these afflictions every insured person (and presumably it means every person without any limitations, in the United States who wants to claim a benefit) is entitled to—what? To "insurance in amounts equal to average local wages." But what about the farmer who has never received any wages? Whose local wages are to be the yard stick? The wages of the particular trade or the average wages of all trades taken together? But that is not enough; "no worker shall be disqualified . . . because of refusal to work . . . at less than normal or trade-union wages." As far as the language of the bill is concerned, it would seem that a ditch-digger would be entitled to full average normal local wages if he refused to work at less than the union rate for a brick-layer, say \$8.00 or \$10.00 a day. That is not merely bad draftsmanship. That is plain absurdity.

The bill does not mince matters at all. "An immediate establishment of a system of unem-

ployment and social insurance" is demanded. There is no statement as to when the law is to go into effect, and "immediate" means "immediate." But curiously enough no budgetary appropriation is made and what would happen if the law passed without any arrangement as to the financial side of the measure must remain a question without answer.

One could go on with this analysis, but after all there are strict limitations of space provided by the conditions of this discussion. What about the practicability? How much is the bill going to cost? As far as the writer is aware, no effort has been made either by Mr. Lundeen or by any of the defenders of the bill to obtain even an approximate estimate.

The insurance (the benefits) are to be paid without any time limit, presumably until about 65 or so when old age pensions will automatically replace the unemployment benefit. Let us take the lowest possible estimates, say ten million unemployed, and the three million persons who are ill any day of the year in this country, and the 6,500,000 over 65 years of age of whom the majority would qualify as workers or farmers, and perhaps the million or so who are suffering from industrial accidents, to say nothing of the two million cases of maternity each year. Eliminating possible duplications, a total estimate of some 15 million people receiving the benefit would apparently be a conservative one. They are to receive at least \$10.00 a week with \$3.00 for each dependent, and allowing only two dependents, the minimum weekly cost would be some 240 million dollars, but since average wages must be paid, the bill might easily rise to 375 million dollars or more, an annual cost then of anywhere between 12 and 20 billion dollars. But apparently these figures give no concern to the advocates of this bill that is "worthy of passage." Little thought has been given to the fact that while the total national income in 1929 at the height of prosperity may have reached 90 billion dollars, it has dropped by 1934 to some 40 to 50 billion. The justice of assigning from one-fourth to one-half of the total national income to one-sixth of the population, which is not working, may be questioned even by the most generous.

But supposing we admitted the curious justice of this proposal. How is it going to be worked? The bill plainly says, with the faith worthy of a high-school girl, "it is the sense of Congress that funds to be raised by the Government shall be secured by taxing inheritance and gifts and by taxing individual and corporation incomes of \$5,000 per year and over." But whatever the sense of Congress may be declared to be, surely a member of the highest legislative body in the nation might be expected to know that that is not a revenue act. But in the same paragraph the bill also states that "such insurance shall be provided at the expense of the Government and of the employers." How the two are to share in the cost is also left open. Now let us forget about the employer for a moment and see what the government would have to do. In the year 1929, with the national income of 90 billion dollars,

there were only 4 million income tax returns, with the gross income of some 30 billion dollars which means that the remaining 60 billion dollars represented the income of 26 million families which did not come up to the income tax level.

But of these 4 million families reporting income, only a little over 1 million had incomes of \$5,000 an over, and their total income was only 20 billion dollars. Allowing them this generous exemption of \$5,000 would take some 5 billion off, leaving only some 15 billion dollars for taxing purposes.

Then, of course, there are the corporation profits—in 1929 some 12 billion dollars. But that was in the good old days of 1929. By this time this profit margin has probably been reduced to half. Thus there might be a taxable income of about 15 billion dollars altogether. In other words, one confiscates the entire income over \$5,000, forgetting that in the meantime there are national, state, municipal and county budgets that have to be provided for through taxation.

Now one may very well say—why not? But then the purpose of the Lundeen Bill apparently becomes quite clear—total confiscation of profits. But surely you cannot have a profit system if you are going to confiscate all profits. Where will the incentive come to make profits if they are to be confiscated? Perhaps that conclusion will not shock the reader, but, seriously, does even the most enthusiastic and loyal supporter of the Russian economic system expect that some such system can be introduced in the United States merely by presenting a bill for passage in the House of Representatives?

That is not bad draftsmanship. That is against common sense. Miss van Kleeck may well speak of the fundamental principle "the obligation of government and industry to meet the desperate needs of the whole working class under mass unemployment without lowering the workers' minimum standards of living." But is it common sense to use the mechanism or the word "insurance" for providing the non-producers with higher standards than they have ever succeeded in gaining as producers? One need not be an expert insurance man, one need only apply the standard of common sense, to realize that you cannot get people to work, whether they be unemployed or had been sick, by guaranteeing them a larger income when out of work. With a family of four or five children the minimum benefit would be some \$28.00 per family, and what proportion of the American wage working class, even in 1929, to say nothing of 1934, have reached that minimum? Is this demand for creation of an aristocracy of the unemployed in accordance with common sense?

The administrative provisions of the bill are equally impractical. It is to be administered exclusively by the rank and file members of workers' and farmers' organizations. We shall not stress the particular difficulty of defining the rank-and-file worker or farmer from any other kind of worker or farmer. What about the millions of workers and farmers who

are not members of organizations and what is an organization, and what about competing organizations? Surely something might be said about this important matter of organization.

Miss van Kleeck's reference to fraternal societies in England being entrusted by the government with the administration of certain forms of insurance is somewhat far fetched, for to begin with, those systems are contributing, the members of the fraternal societies pay a substantial part of the cost, and moreover they are organizations built up during decades for this specific purpose of insurance.

Frankly it is a little difficult to remain quite serious in viewing these questions. Among the eloquent defenders of H. R. 7598 there are some very serious and competent people. Why have they persisted in defending the bill as is and violently attacking anyone who questioned its wisdom? Is it really because they thought it "worthy of passage"? Is it because they thought it could pass? Is it because they thought that the bill would help the social insurance movement in the country? Or may it not be for no such reason at all but merely as a form of criticism of such bills as are being carefully drafted and discussed and proposed and have a slight chance of success? The practical question is whether one is satisfied merely to "create new concepts" of social insurance or whether one wants really to get some modicum of security through for this generation of American wage workers. The "statement of policy" which Miss van Kleeck suggests as an amendment to the future Lundeen Bill is not enough. To say that "upon the ability to pay the bill rests the ability of the present economic system to give a minimum compensation for economic insecurity" is not enough. No phrase is enough unless one is satisfied with phrases.

Not for a moment do I mean to imply that those particular standards which I or any other student of social insurance technique has advanced or those which have been embodied in various bills are infallible or are the best that must be achieved, or are the most that should be asked for. On all those matters honest difference of opinion is possible, and discussion may proceed with profit. I happen to believe in contributions from wage workers, not as a matter of theoretical justice, but because of my conviction that with such contributions a much more ample and generous scheme can be provided for. But there are others who take the opposite point of view. There may be innumerable combinations as to the distribution of the cost between the industry and the public treasury. But no one seriously would argue that the resources either of the government or of industry are unlimited, that wealth can be created out of nothing by a dictum or that perhaps the printing press may be resorted to as the final creator of wealth. There are millions of working men in America unemployed, and sick, and aged who are in need. The maximum that can be done to provide them as well as the coming generation with security is none too good, but

they want "bread," they want a practical solution. They do not want a stone, but neither do they want a dream, a poem, a utopia. Surely one had a right to expect that a professional group of social workers would realize the difference between a solution of a problem and a dream of a solution. A solution of a social problem is not achieved when an ideal is pictured. It is achieved when a practical program of action is presented and carried through.

When one is forced to reject this proposal, if it can be termed a proposal, on such general principles, further discussion of minor details may be out of place.

It would be idle to take up Miss van Kleeck's challenge on the questions of constitutionality. There is no mental effort involved in rejecting the constitutional limitations as unjust, anti-social, etc. There would be no quarrel between Miss van Kleeck and myself on merely theoretical grounds. But I am very much afraid that even if Miss van Kleeck and myself agree thoroughly on this subject, that might not necessarily influence the Supreme Court of the United States. So we, the "practical" men, we, the "conservative" men with whom the very radical may have no patience at all, are bound to consider what ought to be done if the constitutional difficulty does loom up, and I am very much afraid that even pointing at world experience may not prove to be a sufficiently powerful argument. But surely the "world's experience," including even that of Russia, offers no example of such broad generosity as the Lundeen Bill.

World's experience has made definite limitations of benefits under all social insurance necessary. If Soviet Russia began with full wages in health insurance, as far back as 1929, it was forced to reduce the benefits to three-fourths because of "abuses arising in connection with excessive benefits." It never paid more than 50 percent as an unemployment benefit. It paid it only for nine months out of a year and in 1927 it suspended it altogether, not because there was no unemployment left (for in that case there would have been no reason for suspending it) but obviously because it was afraid that the persistence

of an unemployment benefit would withdraw a certain amount of labor from industry which needed it.

This reference to U.S.S.R. is made in good faith and without malice, merely to show that whatever the case may have been 15 years ago, the sober executives of the cooperative commonwealth have long abandoned the romanticism which often characterizes the "radical" in our midst.

For they have realized that mere expressions of pious wishes are no substitute for practical social action. We in this country are still being repeatedly seduced by romantic plans, the Utopia Plan of California (\$50 a month to everybody over 60 years of age), the Townsend Plan, which goes the Utopia Plan four times better, the immediate payment of a bonus as a solution for the depression—how easy it is to suggest panaceas which, in some way or other, offer a short cut to happiness, usually with the help of a government printing press as a source of wealth.

Is this the new concept of social insurance "which challenges all other proposals"? Wherein is there a concept of "social insurance" anyway?

It is a little pathetic to see how anxiously the defenders of the Lundeen Bill are clinging to the term "social insurance" while definitely discarding most, if not all, of the lessons, theories and standards of the social insurance movement. You want a complete guarantee of maintenance by the government? Well and good, but why usurp the term "social insurance" which, by fifty years of usage, has acquired a certain definite meaning?

May I repeat that, for the broad social motives behind the defense of the Lundeen Bill, and for its defenders, I have the highest respect. I can only register my sincere regret that their praiseworthy zeal for a social ideal has induced them to divert the growing interest in favor of a program of social insurance into purely visionary channels so that they will contribute nothing to the movement, but on the contrary may make it more difficult, by creating confusion as to what is possible in this world of ours, in which we live today, and in which we will continue to live for some time to come.

## Comment in Rebuttal

MARY VAN KLEECK

**D**R. RUBINOW finds the Lundeen Bill unclear in its provisions for administration, impractical in its effort to compensate for insecurity in all occupations at full wages, contrary to common sense, and naive "with a faith worthy of a high school girl" in its expectation that taxes on income and on inheritance and gifts could yield sufficient revenue to pay the bill. In fact, it would amount to "total confiscation of profits," and thereby the Lundeen Bill stands convicted not only of "bad draftsmanship," but is "against

common sense." Moreover, by proposing it, its supporters are diverting "the growing interest in favor of a program of social insurance into purely visionary channels, so that they will contribute nothing to the movement, but on the contrary may make it more difficult."

In the statement of "The Case for H. R. 7598" all these points are discussed or implied. But it may be worth while to comment further upon the effect of H. R. 7598 upon the movement for social insurance.

Thus far the advocates of social insurance,

including unemployment insurance, who, like Dr. Rubinow, have been discussing this subject for a quarter of a century or more, have no result whatever to show except the enactment of the admittedly inadequate law in Wisconsin. It would appear that something more is needed to establish social insurance in the United States. It is by no means improbable that the inadequacy of bills hitherto proposed has been a reason for lack of sufficient support to win their enactment into law. Certainly it should be clear to any observer of political movements that the setting up of larger demands for social insurance is much more likely to result in securing the lesser demands. It is, in fact, true that the agitation for so comprehensive a measure as H. R. 7598 is reviving interest in the conservative bills which asked for so little as not to disturb the status quo.

It must, however, be said, that the movement for adequate unemployment insurance, such as many believe is embodied in the support of H. R. 7598, is menaced by the inadequate, incomplete proposals which would not attempt to provide funds for the present unemployed and which would rule out all those who, though their livelihood is cut off by industrial depression, would receive no compensation from these traditional forms of insurance. Those who advocate these forms, refusing to change them to meet the needs of mass unemployment, are the ones who are at present blocking the movement for social insurance.

Dr. Rubinow asks that the terms of the debate be defined in the light of what he believes to be the origin of this discussion. For him, the origin is in the incident which occurred in the National Conference of Jewish Social Service in Atlantic City last June, when he successfully blocked the efforts of members of that Conference to secure endorsement of the Lundeen Bill. The incident is not really the origin of this debate; but since Dr. Rubinow puts it forward, the answer is clear. He asks that we look upon H. R. 7598 as it should be studied by a group of social workers who are asked to support it, and that we follow his lead in speaking against that support on the ground that "a professional group of social workers would realize the difference between a solution of a problem and a dream of a solution."

It may be pertinent, therefore, to quote a statement of principles drawn up for a committee of the American Association of Social Workers preliminary to their consideration of the principles embodied in the Workers' Bill. This statement is as follows:

A program put forward by social workers assumes that the objective must be to meet the needs of the people as they are observed in the work of social agencies, with special attention given to those whose need is greatest. Such a point of view excludes from primary consideration questions of immediate political expediency or of the "capacity of industry to pay"; though both the political machinery of legislation and administration and the possible sources of funds come within the scope of a program put for-

ward by social workers. They are problems approached, however, as secondary considerations to be solved in a program which meets needs adequately rather than belittling the needs to make the political and financial solution easier.

In short, if Dr. Rubinow wishes the debate to be narrowed to the action which social workers should take today on social insurance, the answer is that social workers can endorse no program which falls short of meeting the mass needs of the unemployed, and that this, as the statement of "The Case for H. R. 7598" points out, is the only legitimate test of any proposal for social insurance today.

Since this statement was written, supporters of social insurance have been shocked by President Roosevelt's address to the National Conference on Economic Security in Washington, November 14, indicating that the Administration would recommend no form of social insurance involving taxation by the federal government, but would pass the problem back to the states, holding, however, the right to have all unemployment insurance reserve funds held and invested by the federal government. He pointed out that "because of their magnitude the investment and liquidation of reserve funds must be within control of the government itself," to the end that "the use of these

funds as a means of stabilization may be maintained in central management and employed on a national basis."

Here is an indication that the President and his advisers see the dangers of further maladjustment between investments and producing power which will arise out of reserve funds on a large scale for unemployment insurance. The trouble is that the President and his advisers are unwilling to draw the natural conclusion that the income tax is by far the more sound method of protecting purchasing power against the undermining effects of mass unemployment.

But most of all the President's address indicates the need for renewed activity for the promotion of H. R. 7598 and for a longer and more practical view on the part of those who continue to propose the inadequate measures of two or three decades ago. Dr. Rubinow's statement shows the unwillingness of this group to face the implications of the present economic crisis and to propose a measure grounded in economic realities. The reality, in a word, is that a productive system which produces "too much" for sale at a profit can and must "pay the bill" when paying the bill means simply creating the purchasing power for its own productivity.

## Concluding Remarks

I. M. RUBINOW

I WOULD not want to take undue advantage of my right to have the last word under the terms of this debate. Moreover, there seems to be little of importance that I am called upon by Miss Van Kleeck's reply to add to my first statement. The case has been definitely presented by both sides: it is, as I see it, a fundamental difference between what might be desirable without any consideration of the economic realities of the situation, and the total available resources (and therefore properly describable as Utopia) on one side, and a practical program within the maximum limits of such reality which is what the workers of today and tomorrow are entitled to—on the other.

There are a few issues of minor importance, perhaps due to misunderstandings, and this may be the proper opportunity to correct them. I did not ask that the *terms* of the debate be defined in the light of the Atlantic City incident. This was merely referred to in explaining the *origin* but not the *substance* of the debate. The incident was forcefully referred to in Mr. Ramsey's review of my book. The latter called for my rejoinder and my offer to defend my opinion of H.R. 7598. The editors took me up on that. Thus the Atlantic City incident—a trivial incident to be sure—is the origin of *this particular debate*. But, of course, it is irrelevant to the general difference of opinion between Miss Van Kleeck and myself, and that is more than enough for this issue.

But when Miss Van Kleeck, in answer to my insistence that a trained professional group "must realize the difference between the solution of a problem and the dream of a solution," quotes her own statement drawn up for the Committee of the American Association of Social Workers but, as far as I know, not accepted by the Committee, I must insist that it is no answer at all. She quotes from her statement that "a program put forward by social workers . . . excludes from primary consideration questions of immediate political expediency or of the capacity of industry to pay," and yet immediately follows it up by the contradictory statement that "the possible sources of funds come within the scope of a program." Now which is it, yes or no? Can a program be put forth without any consideration to possible sources?

I have tried to show, as only one of the many visionary characteristics of H.R. 7598, that neither industry nor society could possibly pay for the bill, and my worthy opponent has not produced one bit of evidence in reply. And if society as a whole cannot pay, does not that conclusively prove that there are no "possible sources of funds," which even the most theoretical social worker must take into consideration if, from the writing of articles, he or she turns to the writing of bills?

"Thus far," says Miss Van Kleeck, "the advocates of social insurance, including un-

employment insurance, who have been discussing this subject for a quarter of a century or more, have no results whatever to show except the enactment of the admittedly inadequate law of Wisconsin."

That there is some force to this argument I am ready to admit, even though the statements be not altogether accurate. Whoever has read my book will agree that I am not any too proud of the record, and yet unless Miss van Kleeck, in this particular instance, would insist upon narrowing down the term "social insurance" which in every other case she has expanded beyond any limits of insurance methods, I may point to forty-four compensation laws, forty-five mothers' assistance acts, twenty-nine old age assistance acts, all of which cannot be so lightly swept away.

But why this comparative failure? Is it, as Miss van Kleeck insists, because the older legislative proposals were too "reasonable." Or is it because American labor,—as Miss van Kleeck must know only too well—(with the exception of the normally weak Socialist minority) did not ask for *anything*, and, in fact, for years violently opposed unemployment or any other form of social insurance until three years of depression brought about a change of heart at the Cincinnati Convention of the American Fed-

eration of Labor in November, 1932.

Just because the Lundeen Bill, with its preposterous display of lack of familiarity with the theory or techniques of the subject, has come in at the tailend of twenty-five years of educational effort, when social insurance, partly as a result of this effort and partly under the pressure of economic conditions, has become the paramount issue before the American public, will its author and its followers now claim all the credit if a social insurance program be finally adopted this year or next? Perhaps. Isn't there somewhere an Aesopian Fable of the fly who sat on the ox's horn and glouted "We are tilling the field" though her entire contribution to the task may have been an occasional bite in the ox's hide?

"The setting up of larger demands for social insurance," says Miss van Kleeck, "is much more likely to result in securing the lesser demands." Except for the overemphasis of the two words "much more" I am inclined to agree. Sometimes "larger demands" help. Sometimes they do not. The decisive factor is not the *size* of the demand but the political, economic, social and also intellectual and even ethical forces that back them up. But always provided these larger demands are kept within rational limits, so that they may not be disposed of with an impatient shrug of the shoulders. I wonder

whether the Townsend plan of \$200 a month to every one of the ten million persons over sixty years of age in the United States, at a total cost of two billion dollars a month or twenty-four billion a year, is really going to help to establish a sane system of old age insurance in this country.

As I have repeatedly explained, the standards which I am willing to agree to in negotiations, do not always come up to my own ideal standards. Nor have I any quarrel with any student or advocate who presents a higher set of standards, but always provided we do not altogether abandon the level of reality. Throughout my life I tried to draw a line of distinction between legislative work and day dreaming.

Finally, the question as to who is helping and who is blocking the movement for social insurance in this country. Only opinions and little evidence can be produced at this time. I am not unmindful of the fact that several of the enthusiastic supporters of the Lundeen Bill (I am *not* referring to Miss van Kleeck in this instance) have characterized me as "one of the most dangerous enemies of the social insurance movement in this country." If it did not sound a bit too egotistic, I might be tempted to reply that history and posterity will give the only answer to this charge which may have some value of certainty.

## C o r r e s p o n d e n c e

### Haitian Poet in Prison

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Jacques Romain, poet and novelist of color, and the finest living Haitian writer, has been sentenced at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to two years in jail for circulating there a French magazine of Negro liberation called the *Cri des Negres*. Jacques Romain is a young man of excellent European education, formerly occupying a high post in the Haitian government, and greatly respected by intellectuals as an outstanding man of letters. He is one of the very few literary Haitians who understands and sympathizes with the plight of the oppressed peasants of his island home, and who has attempted to write about and to remedy the pitiful conditions of 90 percent of the Haitian people exploited by the big coffee monopolies, and the manipulations of foreign finance in the hands of the National City Bank of New York.

As a fellow writer of color, I call upon all writers and artists of whatever race who believe in the freedom of words and of the human spirit, to immediately protest to the President of Haiti and to the nearest Haitian Consulate the uncalled for and unmerited sentence to prison of Jacques Romain, one of the few, and by far the most talented of the literary men of Haiti.

Carmel, Cal.

LANGSTON HUGHES.

### Freethinkers' Labor Policy

TO THE NEW MASSES:

It must be of interest to all persons of liberal sympathies to learn that Mr. Joseph Lewis, president of the Freethinkers of America—an association formed to combat organized religion—is also hostile to organized labor.

Mr. Lewis recently dismissed his secretary on

charges of inefficiency that were of extremely dubious validity of the following reasons: a) she had held her post of varied duties and considerable trust for nineteen months and at the sub-N.R.A. salary of \$14 per week; b) she had just begun the attempt to organize Mr. Lewis' other employes of the Eugenics Publishing Co., into the Literary Trades Section of the Office Workers' Union, of which she is a member.

Mr. Lewis very soon reinforced the impression that he does not like unions.

First, he gave no answer to a letter from the Office Workers' Union asking for an explanation of his sudden action.

Second, on being asked by telephone whether he would receive a delegation to be composed of union representatives and Mr. Corliss Lamont, a vice-president of the Freethinkers of America, he replied that he would receive such a delegation *only* if Mr. Lamont were a member of it.

Third, during the visit of the delegation his case against his secretary's inefficiency shrank into four instances of natural misunderstandings some of them over a year old.

Fourth, at this same conference Mr. Lewis' assistants were called in and made further vague charges of agitation but, at the same time, admitted to a prior knowledge of her interest in a union.

Fifth, at a subsequent meeting between Mr. Lamont and Mr. Lewis, the latter warned that he would use injunctions against the Union and criminal libel suits against its friends.

The Union is not to be deterred from exercising its legal right to organize office workers by anti-labor injunctions and it hopes that its friends will likewise not be deterred from insisting that professed liberals do nothing to injure that right.

We also hope that members of the Freethinkers

of America, who may happen to read this, will express their protest to Mr. Joseph Lewis.

GERTRUDE LANE, Secretary,

Literary Trades Section, Office Workers Union.

### Jim-Crowing An Artist

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Professor Eugene Brown of Langston University, who applied for membership in the Association of Oklahoma Artists, has been rejected by this organization because he is a Negro. This has been immediately followed by the passing of an amendment to the state artists' constitution openly barring all Negro artists from membership. The Artists Association of Oklahoma is affiliated with the American Federation of Arts.

The militant artists in the state are few in number but they have started a campaign against this attempt to bar the Negro people from artistic activity. They appeal to all honest and sincere artists and intellectuals to voice their protest against this discrimination and against the amendment. In order that all protest statements may reach the membership of the Association of Oklahoma Artists, copies should be sent not only to the executive committee of the organization but also to Marshall Lakey (919 N. W. 10th Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), a local sculptor who is leading the struggle within the Association.

ALAN CALMER.

### A Job for the N.S.L.

TO THE NEW MASSES:

President Shantz and Professor Wedel of the University of Arizona were both guests of the Hitler government last summer. The local press did not hide the fact that all their expenses were paid by the Nazis. A couple of weeks ago Dr. Hans Luther,



the German Ambassador, stopped off here. He was entertained at luncheon by Dr. Wedel and at a dinner presided over by Dr. Shantz. Dr. Wedel has also been giving lectures about the wonders Hitler has worked, lectures full of evasion and downright misstatement. I want to say that not all of us here have felt particularly honored by the Ambassador's visit and many of us would have demonstrated against it, had we been called upon. Certainly the National Student League could find plenty to do at this University of Arizona campus.

Tucson, Ariz.

EMMA PHILLIPS.

**Why We Accepted the Macaulay Ad**

TO THE NEW MASSES:

In your issue of Dec. 18, in an article on the Boston Store strike in Milwaukee, your contributor mentions the fact that The Milwaukee Leader, a Socialist paper, accepted advertisements from the owners of the Boston Store while that concern was still being picketed. I would like to know why THE NEW MASSES accepted the advertisement for Edward Newhouse's novel *You Can't Sleep Here* from the Macaulay Company. You know, of course, that a strike is still on at the Macaulay Company. You certainly must know too that the owners of that company refused to meet the strikers at the National Labor Relations Board in Washington and that they have gone to extreme lengths in trying to break up the Office Workers' Union which led the strike in their house. It seems to me some explanation should be offered by THE NEW MASSES.

BETTY SAUNDERS.

**Reply by the Editors**

[On Dec. 12, we sent the Office Workers' Union a letter informing them that the money we receive from the Macaulay Company for the advertisement of Newhouse's novel would be turned over to the Macaulay strike committee as soon as payment is received. We accepted the advertisement because we wanted to bring this novel to the attention of our readers as it was written by Edward Newhouse, a young proletarian writer who had been active in the Macaulay strike.—THE EDITORS.]

**Hitler's Who's Who**

TO THE NEW MASSES:

We are releasing for publication Dr. Slochower's letter to the editors of the *Who's Who of German scholars*, in the hope that other American scholars will take the same step.

**COMMITTEE INVESTIGATING FASCIST ACTIVITIES**

To the Editors of the "Gelehrten-Kalender"  
De Gruyter Verlag  
Genthiner Strasse  
Berlin, Germany  
Gentlemen:

Thank you for the proofs of the Fifth Edition of the *Gelehrten-Kalender*, in which you again mention my name and work.

The present edition of your "Who's Who" of German Scholars is unfortunately published under the aegis of Nazi-ism. As Hitlerism spells the death of the spirit of scientific scholarship I must request that my name be removed from this list.

The time will come when freedom of intellectual research, conducted for the common good, will be possible in Germany. I should then be happy and honored to be included once again in the *Gelehrten-Kalender*.

Sincerely yours,  
(signed) HARRY SLOCHOWER.

**A Cooked-up Conference**

TO THE NEW MASSES:

The work of the Crime Conference itself had all the appearance of being cooked up in advance. The discussion of lynching had been ruled out on the ground that no "specific crimes" would be considered. In his opening speech, however, Roosevelt referred to lynching in words that seem to condone it where it rages most. "Lynching, unfortunately," he said, "is no longer confined to one section of the

country." The conference was primarily a springboard for launching the administration's proposal to militarize and centralize the police, by means of a police "West Point" and a Federal "crime institute." This is in line with the whole super-war structure lately turned over to experts Baruch and Johnson to perfect. The government moves closer to open Fascism with every Roosevelt pronouncement. . . .

Washington, D. C.

WALTER F. CROSS.

**C. C. N. Y. Faculty Divided**

TO THE NEW MASSES:

City College teachers are sharply divided on the disciplinary actions visited upon 37 anti-Fascist students. The younger men of the staff, the fellows, tutors, and instructors, who have no voice in disciplinary acts but who compose about 60% of the staff, have voted sympathy with the students; the faculty, consisting of all with professorial titles, still stands against the students. Vitalized by the mass pressure exerted by the student body, the Instructional Staff Association, into which the younger men are organized, met more than a week ago to consider the Faculty's action.

Instead of bowing to the administration, the younger men stood courageously on their own feet. After a long discussion, they voted a motion in which they expressed disagreement with the faculty's suppressive action. Thereupon, an administration tool proposed a motion condemning the anti-Fascist students for their action. The motion was defeated by an overwhelming majority. Student mass pressure against the faculty had given the younger men courage; the campaign of petitions, mass meetings, and the strike compelled the faculty to meet again last Thursday to re-examine their action.

The grounds upon which they had voted the ousting of the 21 students and the disciplining of the rest had been destroyed. Both the metropolitan and student press had, by quotation from Mussolini's newspaper *La Stampa*, demonstrated that the Italian students had come to C. C. N. Y. to spread Fascist

propaganda. Despite this, the faculty reaffirmed its disciplinary acts. No reasoned body of men, they claimed, could yield to opposition, no matter how justified, expressed through mass pressure. If the students would petition quietly, instead of protesting vigorously, the faculty might be moved. The C. C. N. Y. faculty, in short, occupies the absurd position that the mass opposition excited by their violent disciplinary actions, not student guilt, is the cause of their actions. Clearly, the pro-Fascist tendencies of that protege of Hearst and MacFadden, President Robinson the Umbrella Wielder, lurk beneath this.

New York City.

L. A. MARTIN.

**A Collective Love Story**

TO THE NEW MASSES:

We thought that you and the readers of your magazine would be interested to know that the *Working Woman* is going to publish what we believe is the first American proletarian love story written collectively by a group of workers. It will appear in the January issue of our magazine. It is written by a group of workers in the Chicago stockyards who base the story on their own experiences.

A young woman writer of the magazine first got these workers together, and arranged that they meet at least once a week. They came together, in one of the houses in "Packingtown," sometimes five, sometimes ten of them. Some simply listened to the goings on, and others were very emphatic about what they thought must go into the story, the writer helping them out and urging them on.

The story is now completed, and we think it a good one, full of the stockyards and "Packingtown." It will run serially in three issues. We have just received a letter from one of the workers which says, "Oh boy, the *Working Woman* has us all pepped up. We are so excited about the story and the letter (a letter of greeting sent to the Soviet workers) and one minute ago we were tired!"

It is the first collective writing of its kind ever done in this country.

ANN BARTON.

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# REVIEW AND COMMENT

## Revolutionary Literature of 1934

IT HAS been a good year, an exceptionally good year, a year to put the Menckens, Hazlitts and Soskins on the defensive. Before 1934 it required some understanding of literary and social processes to recognize the promise of revolutionary literature, but now even a daily book reviewer has to blindfold his eyes to ignore its achievements and its potentialities.

The drama has made the most startling advance. The amorphous rebelliousness of the New Playwrights has yielded to the strong, clear-cut, revolutionary intelligence and discipline of the Theatre Union, depending for its support not on the whims of dilettantes but on the eager enthusiasm of workers and their organizations. Founded in 1933, the Theatre Union not merely achieved popular backing in 1934, but demonstrated maturity in authorship, directing, and acting. The eloquent but confused *Peace on Earth* was followed by *Stevedore*, rich in its conception of character, firmly integrated in construction and method, and revolutionary in its understanding of social forces. Melodrama the bourgeois critics called it, unable to deny the effectiveness of Peters' and Sklar's writing and Blankfort's directing, but they could point to no distortion of character or event for the sake of sensation. The term was their unconscious tribute to an alive and exciting play.

Aside from the Theatre Union plays, we have John Wexley's *They Shall Not Die*, a kind of experiment in dramatic journalism, most effective when it follows most closely the actual events of the Scottsboro case, least effective in its invented scenes. It might have been a better play if it had been written for the Theatre Union rather than the Theatre Guild. A dramatist cannot rise very far above the intellectual level of his audience, and the Guild audience is, in matters such as the Scottsboro case, singularly ignorant. Yet Wexley made it a moving play, and the enlightened spectators knew that he understood the true issues.

Nineteen thirty-four has also brought the publication of books of plays by John Dos Passos and John Howard Lawson. Neither author has wholly escaped from the mannerisms of the New Playwrights era, but the former's *Fortune Heights* and the latter's *Gentlewoman* show not only talent but growing clarity. Melvin Levy's *Gold Eagle Guy*, which I have not seen, has divided critical opinion. Samuel Ornitz's *In New Kentucky*, soon to be produced, is, if one can judge from the first act published in THE NEW MASSES last spring, a forceful and authentic portrayal

of working-class life. Finally, we must note the activity of the workers' theatres and the progress of dramatic criticism in the thriving magazine, *New Theatre*.

The poets, I think, are getting away from the kind of obscurity that marred the work of so many of them. Robert Gessner's *Up-surge* is direct enough, and taken as a whole it gives a sense of the urgency and irresistibility of the revolutionary movement, though taken line by line it is disappointingly diffuse. Isidor Schneider's poems in *Comrade-Mister*, on the other hand, are firm and strong, and a second reading finds them more impressive than a first. He has sacrificed none of the originality and profundity that distinguished his earlier work, and he has added to them strength and clarity.

It is impossible, of course, to mention all the poetry, even all the good poetry, that has appeared in the periodicals. I remember particularly Alfred Hayes' *Van der Lubbe's Head* and his *May Day Poem*, Alfred Kreymsborg's *America, America*, Stanley Burnshaw's parody of T. S. Eliot, and Kenneth Patchen's poem on Joe Hill.

Two revolutionary poets that seem to me to have developed materially in 1934 are Kenneth Fearing and Edwin Rolfe. The latter's *Unit Assignment* in *The New Republic*, is an excellent example of clarity achieved not by oversimplification but by the extension and integration of the poet's experience. It is richly personal and full of sharp poetic perception and at the same time broad in appeal and free from literary echoes.

A definitive list of good short stories is as impossible as a definitive list of good poems. The work of Meridel Le Sueur, Louis Mamet, Erskine Caldwell, Alfred Morang, Fred Miller, and William Carlos Williams is particularly memorable, but there are many others whose stories deserve examination. My general criticism of proletarian short story writers is that they limit themselves too persistently to incidents of suffering or frustration. These are well adapted, of course, to the short story form, and there is every reason for portraying the cruelty and barrenness of life under capitalism, but there are other subjects as worthy of attention, and the danger of monotony could easily be avoided.

Two collections of short stories deserve at least a word. James Farrell's *Calico Shoes and Other Stories* is open to the same general criticism as his *Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan*, of which I shall speak later. No one, however, can deny the gruesome horror of such stories as *The Scarecrow* and *Just Boys* or the pathos of *Honey, We'll Be Brave*.

Langston Hughes' *Not Without Laughter* was more disappointing than *Calico Shoes* because I had expected more. After the militant clarity of some of Hughes' poems, the confusion of most of his stories—his emphasis on situations and events that the revolutionary must regard as of only secondary importance—was something of a shock.

Criticism has to be discussed in terms of the revolutionary journals. Week after week THE NEW MASSES has reviewed books in all fields written from all points of view. Often the reviews have not been so good as they should be, but on the whole they have cogently and intelligently applied Marxist principles. The reviews here and in other revolutionary periodicals have made Marxist criticism a force in the literary world. It is worth observing also that the best reviews that have appeared in any non-revolutionary publication in 1934 have been written by a fellow-traveler, Malcolm Cowley.

The revolutionary novels deserve detailed consideration, because they have attracted so much attention, and they lend themselves to it. Here are the novels published in 1934 by avowed revolutionaries or close sympathizers: *Parched Earth*, by Arnold B. Armstrong; *The Shadow Before*, by William Rollins, Jr. *The Last Pioneers*, by Melvin Levy; *The Land of Plenty*, by Robert Cantwell; *The Great One*, by Henry Hart; *The Death Ship*, by B. Traven; *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan*, by James Farrell; *Slow Vision*, by Maxwell Bodenheim; *A House on a Street*, by Dale Curran; *The Foundry*, by Albert Halper; *Those Who Perish*, by Edward Dahlberg; *The Death and Birth of David Markand*, by Waldo Frank; *Babouk*, by Guy Endore; *The Executioner Waits*, by Josephine Herbst; and *You Can't Sleep Here*, by Edward Newhouse.

Some of the novels are revolutionary only in a rather broad sense of the word. Tess Slesinger recognizes the sterility of bourgeois culture, apparently sympathizes with the revolutionary movement, and has sense enough to prefer real revolutionaries, or doesn't know any well enough to put them in her book, *The Unpossessed*. She is herself rather too close to the futile chattering about revolution she satirizes, and her New Yorkerish wise-cracking becomes tiresome. Like Albert Halper, when he wrote *Union Square*, she tries to satirize the neurotic fringe before she has acquired the knowledge of the essential revolutionary movement that would make it possible to see the fringe in true perspective. Yet her talent is unmistakable, and even though her novel is as much a symptom as it is a portrayal of the fringe psychosis, sincerity manifests itself above the wise-cracking. One can hope she will follow the path of Halper.

James Farrell's position cannot be questioned as Tess Slesinger's can; everyone knows where he stands. But *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan* pretty much disregards the insight Marxism can give into the psychology of the petty bourgeois. Lonigan, a potential gangster, is interpreted chiefly in terms of sex urges and religious influences, which are not to be ignored but, taken by themselves, offer inadequate explanations. Farrell's novel comes to seem a mere transcript of observations, almost without proportion or emphasis. Despite the fact that he has written three novels and a book of short stories, I have a curious sense that Farrell is still in a preparatory stage. He has extraordinary powers of observation and a remarkable memory, but his sense of human values is distorted. That he will develop into a clear and powerful writer I do not doubt, but I sometimes wish he would hurry up.

Guy Endore's *Babouk* is an historical novel, and the very idea of an historical novel written from a Marxist point of view is exciting. Many scenes in *Babouk* are memorable, and it is a magnificent indictment of one of the cruellest phases of human exploitation. As in many historical novels, however, the documentation is so profuse in some portions that the story stands still. Moreover, as Eugene Gordon pointed out in his review, Endore, especially in his eloquent and challenging last chapter, treats the race issue as if it were a simple conflict between black and white.

All three of these novels are important to the revolutionary movement because of their author's varied abilities. Tess Slesinger's wit, James Farrell's precision, Guy Endore's gift for research and for imaginative re-creation of the past—these are qualities that ought to enrich revolutionary literature. At present, however, these writers seem to stand a little apart from the struggle. It is not merely that they deal with marginal themes; they deal with them in a marginal fashion. Greater unity in their work, better proportioning, and a sharper, truer emphasis can come only through deeper understanding, and that is something Communism can give them.

I have said many times that the Marxist critic should not attempt to prescribe the subject-matter of revolutionary novels. It is the author's attitude that counts, not his theme. But I believe that there can be no greater test of an author's powers than an attempt to face the central issues of his time where they are most sharply raised. I want to turn, therefore, from the three marginal novels I have just considered to *The Shadow Before*, *The Land of Plenty*, and *The Foundry*. Merely writing about a factory does not make a good book, but any author who attempts to depict the class struggle in its most acute form deserves respectful consideration.

Both *The Shadow Before* and *The Land of Plenty* have been so widely—and so deservedly—praised that I shall take their virtues for granted and speak chiefly of their faults.

It was pointed out to me by a labor organizer that *The Shadow Before*, by transferring details of the Gastonia strike to a New England setting, portrayed a situation that is true to neither section. This, I am afraid, indicates the great weakness of the book: it is to a certain extent synthetic. I feel, for example, that the neuroticism of Mrs. Thayer and her daughter, though possible enough, is not representative. The book does not give an accurate cross-section of the various classes in a mill town. Rollins did not know enough to do what he so ambitiously attempted. He had to fit together fragments of knowledge. Even the method, which owes a good deal to Dos Passos, does not always have an organic relationship to the material. One can say all this and still grant the effectiveness of the book, which, through the author's accurate insight into certain fundamental issues and his warm sympathy, transcends in general its particular weaknesses, and rises to a stirring and altogether convincing climax.

The first part of Cantwell's *Land of Plenty* has none of the faults of *The Shadow Before*, and I rank it as the finest piece of imaginative writing the revolutionary movement in America has produced. The second half, however, is less satisfying, and for reasons akin to those that explain the imperfections of Rollins' novel. Cantwell gave a frank account of his difficulties in a letter to *THE NEW MASSES* last summer: he simply did not know how such a situation as he had portrayed would work itself out in real life, and he deliberately blurred and confused the ending to conceal his ignorance.

This is clearly a case in which half a loaf

is a great deal better than none, and Cantwell deserves to be praised for what he accomplished, rather than censured for what he failed to do. But both *The Land of Plenty* and *The Shadow Before* make it plain that a revolutionary novelist has to have very exact knowledge. Lafcadio Hearn pointed out many years ago that a magnificent novel might be written about Wall Street, but that no novelist ever got a chance to know enough to write it. The labor movement is quite as complicated as Wall Street, and when a first-rate novel, first-rate from start to finish, is written about it, its author will have to be more than an observer of the class struggle.

For that reason Halper may have been very wise in limiting himself as he did in *The Foundry*. *The Foundry* is less good than the first half of *The Land of Plenty*; it depends on the rather heavy-handed amassing of details instead of such shrewd and sound selection as Cantwell practises. Yet Halper—like Dreiser, whom he so strikingly resembles—gets his effects. Even a good deal of bad writing, and the choice of details that are merely picturesque, rather than revealing, cannot do more than slightly blur Halper's picture. We see the men and the bosses, and we feel the struggle that goes on between them even in this relatively peaceful shop. It is probably true that a less cautious writer would not have stopped where Halper did, just at the point at which Heitman's predictions of an intensified struggle are coming true, but it was better for Halper to stop there, to recognize his limitations, than to plunge into depths from which he could not extricate himself.

## *The Novel and the Middle Class*

As I have said, no Marxist insists that revolutionary novels must deal with the working class, and yet it is rather striking that the three novels I have been discussing are relatively successful, whereas two novels that deal with the upper middle class are generally unsatisfactory. Melvin Levy's *The Last Pioneers* somehow bogs down in the picturesque details of the careers of the enterprising rascals he portrays. Henry Hart's *The Great One* is, page by page, a better book, but it is limited in much the same way. His theme is that the life of his hero, Bayard Stuart, a powerful politician modeled after Boise Penrose, is tragic in Stuart's own terms. To maintain this, he must convince us that Stuart really wanted to be a reformer, and he does not succeed in doing so. Stuart, as Edwin Seaver pointed out in his review, is a success according to his own standards, and to show him as anything else one must apply other standards and demonstrate their relevance. Hart does see that Stuart is the victim of forces that are greater than he, but he does not make us believe either that his hero would be conscious of this or that it would seem to him so hearteningly tragic. The portrayal of a member of the ruling class in such

a way as both to make him a human being and to show his social role is a problem still to be solved.

More of our novelists have written about the lower middle class than have written of any other group in society. This is natural because it is the class to which most of them belong. Dale Curran's *A House on a Street* has been unduly neglected. It is an intelligent example of the "conversion" novel, and I am sure that Curran has correctly described the steps by which so many declassed bourgeois have been led to ally themselves with the militant working class. The novel is a model of precision and restraint. Unfortunately, however, it has the voice that often goes with those virtues: it is rather thin and over-intellectualized. The reader rationally accepts the development Curran portrays; he is not swept along by it.

Edward Dahlberg has come much closer to making us feel the upheavals that shake the lower middle class in times of crisis. Indeed, my principal criticism of *Those Who Perish* is that it exaggerates the neuroticism of the petty bourgeoisie. A secondary criticism is that Dahlberg is still guilty, though less often, of the mannerisms that spoiled his earlier

novels for me. I agree with James Farrell that one of the principal duties of the revolutionary writer is to break through bourgeois clichés, the persistence of which inhibit the functioning of a new kind of sensibility, and perhaps it is inevitable that a pioneer in this task should give an impression of artificiality and strain. But I believe that Dahlberg, even now, occasionally makes the mistake of measuring the effectiveness of metaphors by their difference from conventional figures of speech, not by their precision in terms of his sensibility.

Important as the point is, I do not want to dwell on it too much, lest I give a false impression of *Those Who Perish*. As a matter of fact, the reader is only rarely bothered by inept figures of speech and most of the time is held fast by the devastating accuracy of Dahlberg's revelation.

But both Dahlberg's book and Curran's seem limited in comparison with Josephine Herbst's *The Executioner Waits*, the best, I think, of all revolutionary novels dealing with the middle class. The flaws I found in its predecessor, *Pity Is Not Enough*, do not exist in this book. Those of us who come from the middle class can see ourselves and our fathers and mothers in Miss Herbst's novel. The people in *The Executioner Waits* are representative of millions of Americans, and yet they are sharply and unmistakably individuals. They are living human beings, eagerly pursuing their own ends, and yet they are the instruments of great impersonal forces. The reader never thinks of Miss Herbst as imposing Marxist conceptions on the material of the novel; these conceptions inevitably emerge from the substance of her story. She has almost perfectly integrated her intimate knowledge of the kind of person with whom her life has been spent with the broader insight given by the study of economic change and by familiarity with other classes. Her style, though growing naturally out of the careful commonplaceness of the prose of her early work, has become beautifully flexible. When we are asked what we mean by talking about Marxist novels of the middle class, we can now point to *The Executioner Waits*.

What Josephine Herbst has succeeded in doing is what Arnold B. Armstrong failed to achieve in *Parched Earth*. There is a certain disparity between Armstrong's knowledge of social tendencies and his understanding of human beings, and as a result his novel is at times schematic. This effect is heightened, I am now inclined to think, by his attempt to make his characters symbolic. Fortunately, the symbolism, though it provided hostile critics with a point of attack, is less important than the straightforward portrayal of life in a representative American town, with its workers, its business men, and the boss. Only at the end is the symbolism prominent, and there it is justified by the dramatic impressiveness of the idea of revolution that is portrayed. Aside from the symbolism, however, the novel is marred by the author's reliance on superficial details for the charac-



Crockett Johnson

"Was it Marx, Lenin, or Gen. Johnson who said: 'The general strike is quite another matter'?"

terization of minor persons in the story. This weakness is made particularly palpable when Armstrong's methods are contrasted with Miss Herbst's complete and unflinching insight into even the least of her characters.

Maxwell Bodenheim's *Slow Vision* also suffers from superficiality. There is a mass of details here, but many of these details do not serve to bring us any closer to the hero and heroine. Moreover, the novel is weakened—and this is strange in view of Bodenheim's long experience as a writer—by a great deal of direct exposition. To some extent these defects are offset by the author's intimate knowledge of the kind of lives he is describing, and there are many authentic episodes, but on the whole the book is disappointing.

Both Bodenheim and Edward Newhouse have written about the direct effects of the depression, and it seems to me that the younger author has done much the better job. *You Can't Sleep Here* is a slighter book than *The Executioner Waits*, but it has the same firmness of touch. The hard-boiled journalistic style falters now and then and becomes a mere mannerism, but for the most part it is admirably sustained. And it does what Newhouse wants it to do. He knows how to use understatement, and the last scene, when the dwellers in Hooverville are defending their homes, is, for all its simplicity, shot through with revolutionary implications. Newhouse is completely free from the kind of self-consciousness that so often enters into revolutionary writing. His heroine, as several critics have pointed out, is an idea rather than a person, but his hero is entirely real, and the hero's development from passive sympathy with the revolutionary cause to active Communism is flawlessly natural.

I have left to the next-to-the-last the most difficult book on the list to talk about, Waldo

Frank's *Death and Birth of David Markand*. The emphasis Frank places in this book on personal salvation seems to me both historically and psychologically false. That is, I do not believe that such experiences as Markand's are in any sense representative, nor can I believe that they are necessary either for the individual's development or for the growth of the revolutionary movement. Yet I regard *The Death and Birth of David Markand* as an important book, and I think it has been given singularly shoddy treatment by the reviewers in the capitalist press. For one thing, even if what goes on inside Markand's mind seems unreal, what goes on in the world about him is real enough. I am not impressed by the scenes in which Markand alternately finds and loses his soul, but I am impressed by such scenes as those in the Kansas speakeasy, the offices of the Farmers' Guild paper, and the Kentucky mining town. And even at its worst, the novel is significant as the expression of Frank's mind. Wrong-headed as he seems to me to be, I honor him for his persistence and his honesty. *The Death and Birth of David Markand* is a novel into which a man has, with infinite pains, poured the whole of himself. Novels of that sort are too rare to be ignored.

Frank dedicates the book to "the American worker who will understand." My pedagogical training makes me wonder if the absence of a comma after "worker" is intentional. I doubt if many American workers will understand the book—or read it, for that matter. If Frank is interested in the kind of novel workers do understand and read, I recommend B. Traven's *The Death Ship* to him. For a good many reasons American workers have never heard of Traven, but hundreds of thousands of European workers read his novels. For all that he is better known abroad than in this country, he is an American, and I think we should hasten to claim his work as an important addition to our proletarian literature. Traven is unspoiled; he is a worker first of all and only incidentally a writer. His book does not hew to the Party line, but he knows what the class struggle is because he has fought in it. I hope we are going to have more of his books in this country.

It has been a year of enormous gains. New writers have appeared. Sympathizers have drawn closer to the movement. Accepted revolutionary writers have surpassed themselves. Despite the dread terrors of the American RAPP (which can be discovered only in certain Times Square imaginations), there is variety here, in theme and method, as well as vitality. Such vitality can be found nowhere else in American literature in 1934. It has not been a good year for the enemies of the revolutionary movement. If the works I have discussed were left out of account, it would prove a singularly empty year for American letters. And novels by Thomas Boyd, Myra Page, James Steele, and Tillie Lerner are already announced for 1935!

GRANVILLE HICKS.



*Crockett Johnson*

**"Was it Marx, Lenin, or Gen. Johnson who said:  
'The general strike is quite another matter'?"**

# A Prospect for Edna Millay

STANLEY BURNSHAW

FETED by Ladies' clubs, academics, magazines, and the radio, most widely read of American poets, Edna St. Vincent Millay would hardly be suspected of producing a book of positive interest to revolutionary criticism. And yet *Wine from These Grapes*, published in her forty-second year, (Harpers, 1934, \$2) contains statements and implications unusual enough to justify serious reevaluation of her career. Indeed, her latest book may prove to be the beginning for which her previous ten volumes paved the way.

Twenty-two years ago *The Lyric Year* published "Renaissance" which at once established Miss Millay as a poet capable of wringing powerful feeling out of simple words. Her subject was natural landscape, her message mystical ecstasy. Today, of course, it is impossible to take seriously her philosophy of beauty-adoration when man is in a condition of slavery. But fifteen years ago "Renaissance" caught fire with an audience not yet disenchanted of the Great Hope; and Miss Millay's influence doubled or trebled when her love poems appeared. Rebelling against bourgeois conventions, they trumpeted woman's right to sexual equality with man and made capital out of inconstancy and other female foibles about which sonneteers of the 1590's had dripped some 300,000 crocodile tears. Miss Millay became the rage. But her verses which had engrossed adults fifteen years ago can delight chiefly adolescents today. Unfortunately she had indulged her alarming technical facility too often, had written a number of self-conscious and cute poems which dealt an almost fatal blow to her standing as a serious writer. Of her ten volumes only a handful of brilliant minor poems survive.

Adept of naive ecstasy, Miss Millay revealed in her 1924 volume the beginnings of frustration. Life, it turned out, was considerably more than love. Aware that her verses of sexual emancipation were by now outmoded, she faced the pitiful and ludicrous predicament of a rebel whose enemy was dead, buried, and apparently beyond recall. For page after page she recapitulates her other, common themes, obviously driving toward nowhere. And although both *The Harp Weaver* volume and *The King's Henchman* fairly oozed contentment both books were streaked with tentativeness and restiveness—they were interval productions between periods. *The Buck in the Snow* showed clearly her difficulty: an accomplished artist in need of a theme, a rebel deprived of an enemy unless she would recognize the real source of her hate and accept the need for decision.

One cannot understand her new vol-

ume without direct reference to its forerunner, *The Buck in the Snow* (1928). It is true that *Fatal Interview* appeared in 1931, but it was another interval work in which Miss Millay paralleled, probably undeliberately, the love-and-death poems by Elinor Wylie (*Angels and Earthly Creatures*). Where the latter borrowed heavily from Seventeenth century metaphysical-mystics, Miss Millay to a much slighter degree improvised on the accents of Elizabethan lyrists. But neither poet illuminated her subject to any degree commensurate with the space they required. Their contributions constitute fragments of common knowledge brilliantly restated; but of significant, new perception there is nearly nothing. Mrs. Wylie tied up the ends of a fabric of verse cut short by death; Miss Millay sounded a prolonged coda to a theme from which she was soon to emerge in order to take up a note sounded in *The Buck in the Snow*.

Wine from these grapes I shall be treading surely  
Morning and noon and night until I die.  
Stained with these grapes I shall lie down to die.

she writes on page 35 of the 1928 volume. Anyone familiar with her method of judicious grouping will immediately understand the reference of this poem from its physical placing. Following "Hangman's Oak," it was preceded by a lament on Sacco and Vanzetti. Its final lines make paraphrase superfluous:

Stained with these grapes I shall lie down to die.  
Three women come to wash me clean  
Shall not erase this stain.  
Nor leave me lying purely,  
Awaiting the black lover.  
Death, fumbling to uncover  
My body in his bed,  
Shall know  
There has been one  
Before him.

But this death must not be confused with the experience Emily Dickinson referred to when she wrote: "My life closed twice before it died; it yet remains to see if immortality unveil a third event to me." Unfulfilled love is not Miss Millay's frustration, nor does she ever consider the possibility of the third event. Her mood is closer to that of Shelley when, halting for an instant on his desperate way to salvage mankind, he threw up his hands and cried to the rough wind, storm, bare woods, caves and main: "Wail for the world's wrong!"

It is dangerous to define by such analogy because it may lead the reader to search for unintended and non-existent identities. Shelley was far more developed in his worldview when he wrote these lines (1822) than is Miss Millay a hundred and twelve years

later. He was shrieking his panacea of sympathy and intellectual beauty into the ears of a world he was burning to save. Miss Millay is febrilely wavering on the threshold of a decision: to do something to save this world which she has avowed she "cannot hold close enough," or to forsake it for some precinct of retreat alive or dead.

## II

**W**INE from *These Grapes* contains thirty-one poems of which half may be dismissed at once as repetitious of themes handled more successfully in her other books or plainly worthless. The remaining poems, however, pack such intensity and confusion of feeling that analysis is difficult. A current of pain throbs under the surface words of every poem, varying from despair and renunciation to grief and a bloodless scorn, but the source is apparently unknown to her. Advisedly she is tentative when naming as cause for "the heart's grief" the inexorableness of death, for her final sonnets are a summary contradiction. And her one panacea—"Have eyes for beauty only"—sounds frantic and false when juxtaposed against her references to beauty in art, nature and man as ultimately unsatisfying.

"Epitaph for the Race of Man," a sequence of eighteen sonnets, is the weightiest section of the book, and it is clear from Miss Millay's recent utterances that she wants it to be regarded as such. In terms of geological time this ambitious, elegiac poem strives not only to trace man's "hopeless" course but to arrive at the central reason.

Alas for Man, so stealthily betrayed,  
Bearing the bad cell in him from the start,  
Pumping and feeding from his healthy heart  
That wild disorder never to be stayed  
When once established, destined to invade  
With angry hordes the true and proper part,  
Till Reason joggles in the headsman's cart,  
And Mania spits from every balustrade.  
Would he had searched his closet for his bane,  
Where lurked the trusted ancient of his soul,  
Obsequious Greed, and seen that visage plain;  
Would he had whittled treason from his side  
In his stout youth and bled his body whole,  
Then had he died a king, or never died.

It is needless to point out the conventional use of "king" and other unfortunate archaisms in her frame of reference. Indeed, a formal analysis of Miss Millay's poetry, revealing the kind of images she uses to reflect her judgments and values, would tell us nothing that we do not already know. One expects accents from her impossible in revolutionary verse and illusory references (as in the "original sin" parallel of the first few lines). What is important, perhaps, is the recognition of mankind as now "in his in-



fancy" and "before his prime." Then it becomes a simple matter to recognize her elegiac approach as a technical device, and her poem as an exhortation whose central message, when washed of its confusion and fully developed, implies revolution.

Very likely she is unaware of this fact and might even deny it. But the unavoidable direction in this book now compels her to come face to face with reality. It is true that she has inveighed against war in previous poems, and with corrosive brilliance in her play *Aria da Capo*. It is also true that her poems on Sacco and Vanzetti and her personal activity have been evidence of some working-class sympathy. But the present "Conscientious Objector" condones pacifism and is fundamentally as absurd as her recent statement to the press that "abolition of international tariff barriers and legalization of birth control would aid in abolishing war." Her "Apostrophe to Man" is valuable neither for its art nor its conclusion: "Detestable race, continue to expunge yourself, die out," etc. And the two sonnets in memory of Sacco and Vanzetti follow the liberal's illusion that "justice" is above classes. Despite her desperation at the thought of society continuing in its present channels, "If Still Your Orchards Bear," and her own awareness of her wavering, "Above These Cares," she fears that it is "too lonely to be free." She is desperate when she thinks of "The man who ventures forth alone." And yet stasis is unthinkable. To her mind she says:

Degraded bird, I give you back your eyes forever,  
ascend now whither you are tossed;  
Forsake this wrist, forsake this rhyme;

Soar, eat ether, see what has never been seen,  
depart, be lost,  
But climb.

### III

THE author of *Wine from These Grapes* is in a predicament common to many of our romantic poets in this period of transition. In her forty-second year she is driven by factors—personal pain, *Weltschmerz*, the craving for "an answer"—which are usually satisfied by the romantic imagination: the desire projecting images of its fulfillment. But Miss Millay cannot follow this romantic pattern now: she was a romantic when she began to write. Besides, two of the chief precincts of romanticism—love and nature—are self-closed to her: she has explored them through scores of poems to emerge at last unsatisfied. What is left to her? Off hand one might say "God," reminded not only by T. S. Eliot's pathetic example but by the demonstrations of Frederick Prescott and his disciple Henri Brémond that romanticism and religious mysticism frequently fuse. Miss Millay's only religion, if one may call her affirmation of natural beauty a genuine pantheism, she now finds wanting:

Earth does not understand her child

begins her first poem, "The Return," and returning to earth is finally unsatisfying because it brings "comfort that does not comprehend." Furthermore, her contempt for supernatural power concerned with man's welfare is implicit through her whole book and explicit in the final eighteen sonnets.

Two chief possibilities attend her: con-

tinuation of her present position or progression into the only possible work which can feed her hunger and dissolve her confusion and pain. If she chooses the first, we may expect a stasis in her development; Edna Millay who rebelled against stupidities of bourgeois conventions twenty years later will be rebelling in the same unilluminated way against another facet of the same unrecognized enemy.

She will issue more pathetic statements to the press, such as her latest which reveals a prodigiously muddled notion of a socialist society—"Communism is repugnant to me . . . I am intensely an individualist"—unaware that socialism alone can bring genuine freedom for the individual. She will write more desperate outcries against "mankind's stupidities," unaware that she accuses the race for the crimes of a corrupt, controlling stratum. She will write more poems from the threshold of decision until she fully disintegrates as a poet. . . . Or she will make the decision which can bring her fulfillment and creative renaissance: accept her position as an intellectual whose rejection of the social order in theory must become objectified by practice. If she does this her course will repeat that of two other important poets of her generation—Alfred Kreyborg and Orrick Johns, whose acceptance of revolution is already growing into poetry. And like these writers, she will only be beginning her career as a significant poet, having spent the first half of their lives fixing flashes of truth in brilliant minor poems to devote their matured powers to the greatest theme in the history of man.

## *New Documents on the Bolshevik Revolution*

**THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION—1917-1918**, by James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher. Stanford University Press, Stanford University, California—Hoover War Library Publications. 735 page, \$6.00.

THIS is without doubt one of the important books published in the United States on the Russian Revolution. Excepting the authorized and official publication of original documents, especially Lenin's *Works*, by the International Publishers, there has been, up till now, no attempt at a documentary history of the Russian Revolution published in the United States.

Such an attempt is made here. It is a serious, and in some ways, a thorough work. Albert Rhys Williams, one of the active participants in the Russian Revolution, told this writer that in reading Professor Fisher's book he had, at various times, a feeling that he was again in the midst of the events with all the atmosphere of their drama, cross-currents, controversy and struggle.

Unfortunately for the value of their history, however, the authors are clearly not

Marxists. Also, unfortunately, they show a strong bias in favor of bourgeois and more specifically, Kerensky rule.

The book is a collection of official speeches and documents, arranged in chronological order, with narration by the authors in between, so that it presents a running and connected story. The strong bourgeois prejudices of the authors are most evident in their own comment and description of events. But it is also evident in their choice of documents and in their manner of abridging them.

The outstanding illustration is the presentation of the facts surrounding the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly.

Students of the Russian Revolution will remember that from February till November, there were really two ruling bodies in Russia. There was the Provisional Government in control, which had been elected in the typical bourgeois manner, with all sorts of limiting rules and laws as to who had the right to vote, the division of constituencies on the basis of territory and the resultant larger representation to bourgeois

residential districts as against working-class residential districts. Also, there were the Soviets, which were democratically elected bodies without limitation, but based upon places of work so that the weight of strength in the elections rested with the useful members of society, the wage-earners, small farmers, etc.

These two bodies were in constant conflict with one another. The Councils of Soviets gained strength constantly, to the measure that the Duma was at no time able to carry through such acts as would satisfy the needs of the masses of people, particularly the ending of the war, the seizure of the land, and the supplying of food to the masses. The whole course of the history of the Russian Revolution was such that by November, the struggle of those elements who particularly benefited by the continued existence and functioning of the Duma, was in reality a struggle to continue a body in power which showed itself to be both incapable and unwilling to end the war and carry through the other measures so necessary for the interests of the people. And

against this, the struggle to give *all power to the Soviets*, was a struggle to carry through these measures. The seizure of power by the workers and peasants under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, was nothing more nor less than the form in which the masses insured that these desperate needs that they had would be satisfied.

Professors Bunyan and Fisher, however, although supplying much valuable material surrounding this basic struggle, miss its essential character. They argue like bourgeois attorneys against the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. They say

The opponents of the Bolsheviks, possessing a majority of the elected representatives to the assembly, strove to rally public opinion to uphold the expressed will of the nation, against the Bolshevik dictatorship.

Did the Constituent Assembly represent the "expressed will of the nation" as the enemies of the Bolsheviks claimed?

The total vote cast in the elections to the Constituent Assembly was 36,262,566. This was out of a total of about 170,000,000 people. How undemocratic such an election is, which includes a comparatively few number of voters, can be seen from the fact that in the Soviet elections this year, for example, 90,000,000 people will cast their votes. Thus, the numbers voting in the elections to the Constituent Assembly represented a little better than twenty percent of the population. A majority for the controlling group amounts to about eleven percent.

The numbers voting for the Soviets today represents almost sixty percent. And if at all, because of the issues at stake, and the great conflict in the elections, there would be more reason for a bigger vote in the elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1917 than there would be today, where the will of the people is very clear to the whole world even before the elections.

But to emphasize the fact that this Constituent Assembly did not represent "the expressed will of the nation" we can point to the following facts:

Events and the state of mind of the nation travelled at a tremendously increased pace in those crucial months prior to the November 7th Revolution. The choosing of candidates, and the voting to the Constituent Assembly took place *weeks before* the seizure of power on November 7th by the Bolsheviks and their followers.

In the time elapsing between the elections to the Constituent Assembly and the seizure of power, the state of mind of the entire nation underwent a profound change in their attitude towards various political programs and parties. This is very clearly shown in the fact that where the Bolsheviks were a minority, in the municipal elections in the main cities in September, they won a majority in November. Let us give the figures of elections in Petrograd, contrasting these two months, showing that this is so.

Parties	Sept. 2	Nov. 25
Social-Revolutionaries . . . .	205,665	149,644
Bolsheviks . . . . .	183,694	415,587
Constitutional Democrats..	114,485	245,628
All Others.....	45,534	117,495

Clearly the desires of the masses in December, when the Constituent Assembly was to meet, were not the same as in September and October, when they were elected.

Therefore, when Professors Bunyan and Fisher try to present the facts to give the impression that the Bolsheviks had immorally violated the will of the nation, they do so either out of a desire to have continued Kerensky's bourgeois distatorship under a pseudo-democratic mask, or because they do not understand the essential class nature of government.

The pro-Kerensky bias of the authors shows itself in many other instances. For example, when they reported the assassination of General Dukhonin, Commander-in-Chief of the Army (who refused to carry out the instructions to begin negotiations for the end of the war) by his own soldiers, the book says that "he was murdered" and goes to considerable pains to prove Bolshevik complicity.

But the attacks on the Bolsheviks are reported in quite a different tone. For example: "Colonel Drozdovsky . . . arrived in time to take part in the expulsion of Red Forces." How this expulsion was carried through, one can see by reading the diary of Colonel Drozdovsky . . . who says "The mounted platoon entered the village, met the Bolshevik Committee, and put the members to death."

In reporting the introduction of Lenin's famous Thesis of April 4, 1917, where he proposed certain measures to give the Soviet government a breathing spell to consolidate its strength before moving forward further, Professor Fisher explains the reason for this breathing spell as follows:

The extension and stabilization of Soviet power did not contribute much to bringing order out of the chaos induced in economic life by the revolutionary upheaval; it did not produce jobs for the hungry unemployed workers, whose numbers rapidly grew.

Mr. Fisher left out (was it by accident?) that the Soviet government was being attacked by the very allies with whom the Czar had made alliances, and was not allowed an opportunity to establish its economic organism on a functioning basis. But what kind of an historian is Professor Fisher when he says that the "chaos" that existed was induced (not by the Czar's policies, not by the imperialist war, not by the decay and degeneration of the capitalist system but) by "the revolutionary upheaval." This is distortion for purposes of capitalist propaganda, not objective history.

Despite all the short comings of the book, however, students of the Russian Revolution and of all revolutions, will read it with great interest. Many speeches and documents, hitherto unpublished in the United States, are contained. The speeches of Lenin, including some of the greatest of his revolutionary career, are included here. Their simplicity and profound understanding, and their devastating effect upon bourgeois logic, impresses itself forever upon the readers. In his speech on the world-famous April Thesis, for example, he discusses bourgeois and proletarian competition.

Among the absurdities which the bourgeoisie is eagerly spreading about Socialism is the statement that the socialists deny the importance of competition. In reality, however, socialism alone, in so far as it annihilates classes and consequently the enslavement of the masses, is able, for the first time, to pave the way to competition on a mass scale. . . .

Such simple and clear statements of some of the profoundest issues which have been the subject of polemics throughout the world, are numerous in the documents and speeches here re-printed. For this, students of history owe a debt of gratitude to the authors. We would urge that everyone who wishes to more thoroughly understand the Russian Revolution, should, while keeping in mind the limitations of the book imposed by the bourgeois bias of the authors, obtain and read it immediately.

SAM DARCY

## The Unheard Voice

MODERN PROSE STYLE, by Bonamy Dobree. Oxford University Press. \$2.75.

MR. DOBREE does not answer the question of what is modern prose style, but his book is well worth reading for some other questions it raises and for some ideas that he presents, in somewhat unfinished form, so that they invite thinking about and discussion.

His definition of style is, to me, unsatisfactory, as is his estimate of its importance. Style to him is the "voice" of the writer, and the details of the definition are adjusted to this metaphor. He does not, however, follow the implications of the metaphor in assigning style

its place in literature, for, whereas an unpleasing voice may be a negligible disadvantage in a man, an unpleasing style, according to Mr. Dobree, is disastrous in a writer. Mr. Dobree in fact, assumes that all good writers have good styles, which would be like saying, in his own terms, that all good men have good voices.

Not only individual writers have their own voices, but each literary period has its own voice. The further we are from the voice of our own time, the less intelligible is the voice we hear. For Chaucer we need an apparatus of glossaries and notes which make reading burdensome, but we deceive ourselves



# Music

**T**HOSE who are in close touch with the American musical situation can observe a two-fold change of vast import. The old bourgeois musical system is collapsing while a new musical life is springing into existence, its basis firmly rooted in the lives of the masses.

Both the Metropolitan Opera (the sole American operatic organization to survive the crisis) and the Philharmonic Symphony Society have been faced with grave difficulties, indeed their very survival has been threatened. They were compelled to call upon the general public to help make up the deficit formerly guaranteed by their wealthy patrons—said patrons being so busy trying to preserve their crumbling financial edifice that they could easily dispense with their musical activity. To be sure, their interest in music was at best a pretension serving to feed their vanity, hence their default during the musical crisis carries no surprise. Far more surprising was the action of the embarrassed musical organizations (primarily supported by the upper and middle classes) in appealing for help to the "general public" whom they had consistently chosen to ignore.

The present system of the Philharmonic Society provides for several performances of each program, with occasional slight changes. For the first (Thursday evening) concert society turns out in force. The boxes are well filled. It is quite the thing to be present at this promenade of the season's fashions in gowns and coiffures. The attention is, in the main, polite and bored; the applause none too vociferous.

We witness the spectacle of dozens upon dozens of unoccupied seats. At the same time large numbers of would-be auditors are turned away from the box office because "only \$1.50 seats remain." The very people to whom the Philharmonic Society appealed through the radio and press to insure the life of the Symphony are unable to attend. Under the circumstances why not set aside certain concerts for the elite, and other evenings of regular programs with all seats available at a nominal fee and all seats occupied?

As for the Metropolitan Opera, although its performances have just begun, Mr. Gatticasazza assures us it will be an unusually brilliant season, for haven't the rights of the weekly broadcast been sold to a manufacturer of mouth-wash (or is it chewing gum?) for the sum of \$375,000?

The chaotic condition of these two leading organizations is further revealed by the proposal under consideration for next season: to combine the Metropolitan Opera and Philharmonic Society. This may be recognized as a desperate temporary expedient, whereby over one hundred of our best orchestral players will be deprived of their jobs, the control of both organizations remaining in the hands of those whose mismanagement is hav-

ing serious consequences for music and musicians.

A further example of the collapse of the present false musical system is the decrease in concerts (and in attendance) of the great virtuosi. But the most conclusive evidence is the disbanding of such an organization as the London String Quartet. Chamber music, which requires many years of training of the artist, has in the past existed exclusively through the patronage of the wealthy. In their effort to keep it apart in a highly rarified atmosphere and as their exclusive property, they have carefully built up the false tradition that it was caviar to the general—too good for hoi polloi! Yet how easily the bourgeoisie dispense with this form of music, which, through pretension and vanity, they have arrogated exclusively unto themselves. At the final appearances of the splendid London String Quartet the social elite were conspicuously absent.

**B**UT a new order in music is arising to take the place of this old music world which is collapsing as surely as is the economic system which has nurtured it.

These new developments are numerous and widespread. We are flooded with reports of new revolutionary organizations building a new musical life. Philadelphia reports a strong and active Pierre Degeyter Club. These class conscious musicians are building a musical structure whose solid foundations will never be affected by the quick-sand vacillations of society patronage. They have already given concerts important artistically in the quality of performance and in the presentation of new works, including Soviet compositions. Even the bourgeois press was moved to favorable comment.

A new book, *Songs of the American Worker* by the Anvilles, has been issued by the John Reed Club of Cleveland. A second book of mass songs is soon to be issued by the Composers' Collective of the Workers' Music League of New York.

But the most significant example of a vital working class musical culture was the recent concert of the Freiheit Gezang Farein (Brooklyn Academy of Music) in celebration of twenty years of distinguished musical service by Jacob Shaefer, director of this organization.

One cannot convey in writing the beauty and significance of the Farein's performances. Here are worker singers and players (in the chorus and mandolin orchestra), conducted

by a worker-musician, performing music, largely traditional in character, although some revolutionary songs are included. That the preservation of this traditional music is vitally important to large numbers is proved both by the magnificent and spirited singing season after season and by the tremendous enthusiastic audiences who on the present occasion filled the Brooklyn Academy of Music to overflowing. Yet, although the preservation of traditional culture is essential, there must be no static quality to the music so preserved. That traditional cultures may be preserved, yet so utilized as to vitalize them and correct them with the spirit of reality and the immediate present, is evidenced by the recent work of the Soviet composer Mossolov. Preserving ancient Turkmenia folk tunes, he so utilizes them that they are true and vital musical creations of today. I refer specifically to his three "Turkmenische Naechte" issued by the State Publishing Society of Moscow.

The incontestable need for music reflecting our changing world is having its influence upon many of our leading musical minds in America. The most recent example is a composition by Roy Harris, written by commission of the League of Composers in New York City to meet the repertorial needs of the Westminster Chorus. It was completed May, 1934.

Harris chose Walt Whitman's poem, "A Song of Occupations," as the text for his work. Both by background and kinship of spirit, Harris feels profoundly the truth of Whitman's realistic portrayal of work and workers. This is no detached, romanticizing of the all-embracing significance of the worker, but a vigorous, direct presentation. In the words of the composer: "It is an expression of my belief that the workers are the most important part of any civilization. By 'worker' I mean the producers of food, clothing, shelter, transportation, communication, as well as those thinkers who conceive and formulate our scientific, educational, artistic, legal and medical developments."

Harris is unconventional, never stoops to banality or sentimentality, and has unquestionably clothed the text in a musical investiture of great ruggedness and strength.

The Westminster Chorus, made up of students from the school of the same name, at Princeton, N.J., has just returned from a triumphal tour of Europe, including Soviet Russia. Their really fine *a capella* singing, seemed, at least in the Harris composition, much in the nature of casting pearls, for the extremely fashionable audience in Carnegie Hall seemed nonplussed. Evidently Whitman's and Harris' ideas were too new for them to grasp all of a sudden.

ASHLEY PETTIS.

## ASSOCIATION OF WORKERS IN SOCIAL AGENCIES

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# The Theatre

## The Innocent Propaganda of Maxwell Anderson

**I**GNORANCE of the class struggle is no defence. It is simply a state of mind wherein a man hides his head in the sand and gets his tail kicked. But while I am convinced that Mr. Anderson knows that there is such a war going on, a war more terrible even than the one he so graphically described in *What Price Glory*, I am willing to give him the benefit of the doubt and call him a militant liberal who is militantly opposed to the corruption of the Right and militantly opposed to taking sides with the Left. That this sort of "militancy" leads its bearer (innocent) into all sorts of nasty predicaments will be obvious as you read on. For the time being, however, let us assume that Mr. Anderson never had a fascist thought in his life, and if such a thought appeared would crush it as quickly as you could say National Socialism.

It appears that most of us have read history books the sources of which had been written by some colonial Ivy Lee. If this were not so how come that all our "leading" journalists praise Anderson for re-interpreting the American Revolution No. 1. For in most part, Mr. Anderson only told the truth, and like a startled Keats looking into Beard's *American History*, he spreads before us merely the rich and sad truth of our country's infamy.

In *Valley Forge*, Mr. Anderson retails the facts about the passion for profits which actuated the respectable gentlemen of the Continental Congress. True, he doesn't come right out and call John Hancock a bootlegger, a smuggler, a high variety of crook. But he does suggest in rather strong language that those who talked revolution, those who ran it, and those who made our laws were as bad as their descendants in Congress and Wall Street. This may be old stuff to you, but it's pretty powerful invective to some audiences.

Mr. Anderson exposes the chicanery and corruption which moved the high minds of '76. He recounts in ripe and moving language the hardships and glorious visions of the farmers

and mechanics who fought the war. For this, Mr. Anderson deserves great praise. To my knowledge, there has been, as yet, no dramatic document which so effectively unmasks the "founding fathers"; nor has there been a more moving picture of the rank and file, of these same farmer-soldiers who tried to make a second revolution under the heroic Daniel Shays, and of whom it was reported to the Congress: "Their creed is that the property of the United States has been protected from the confiscation of Britain by the joint exertions of all, and therefore ought to be the common property of all!"

But *Valley Forge* is trenchant, moving and revealing only as long as Mr. Anderson knows clearly what he is doing. As long as he keeps to the general facts, his play has an air of profound statement about it. It is populated with flesh and blood people. It has a sense of humor, a sense of conflict, and a sense of timeliness. But when the author turns from bedeviling the profit-seeking cohorts, and attempts to offer a substitute way out despite his personal intentions, despite the innocence of his heart, something very dangerous emerges. It is the danger of the man on a white horse. It is the danger of the march on Rome. It is the danger of a call for a strong man who will lead the common people against predatory law-makers and disloyal governors.

Just as clearly as Mr. Anderson inveighs against the Continental Congress, he proposes that Washington take things in his own hands, run the war personally and lead his minions to the promised land of freedom. In 1789 Washington became President. In 1935 he

would become Dictator. Now, Mr. Anderson would be the last to deny that historical plays are valuable chiefly when they throw light on contemporary situations, so all this must have been as obvious to him as it was to the audience who vociferously applauded Washington's decision to fight unhampered by the creaking mechanics of a young bourgeois democracy.

Either Mr. Anderson is an incipient fascist or he is a liberal who is being misunderstood. Again giving him the benefit of the doubt, let us call him a liberal. Obviously he is opposed to thievery in high places, to politicians, to a corrupt Congress. But like other liberals he finds it difficult to solve an irritating dilemma. Industrial autocracy and rich man's law must go! But what will take their place? A worker's government? Liberals believe that they do not believe in the dictatorship of any class. Mr. Anderson has suggested only one other choice, a consistently liberal choice . . . a strong man. Not a Hitler, not a Mussolini, but an honest, upright, solicitous wolf who loves sheep and will lead them away from corruption into the vales of peace and freedom.

Maxwell Anderson may indeed believe himself to be an anti-fascist, but by God he's written a play the effects of which is profascist.

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The final proof of a play is its ultimate audience. I am willing to stake this typewriter against a used stick of Wrigley's that *Valley Forge* will, sooner or later, find its way into the hands of the Shirt people who will take it to their bosom and use it to propagate a hellish reactionism. I warn Mr. Anderson that if they have the money to pay royalties they'll use his "innocent liberalism" against him, and what is far more important, against the very workers and farmers whose ancestors suffered so bitterly and bravely at Valley Forge.

I think NEW MASSES readers ought to see *Valley Forge* because of its frequent beauty of passage, its fine acting (Philip Merivale, Stanley Ridges and Victor Kilian), its treatment of the Continental Congress, and foremost, because they will observe the pitiful and tragic maneuverings of a highly talented playwright whose liberalism has led him to an incipient fascist propaganda despite himself.

MICHAEL BLANKFORT.

### Other Current Shows

*Sailors of Cattaro*, by Friedrich Wolf (translated by Keene Wallis and adapted by Michael Blankfort). Civic Repertory. The story of the February 1, 1918 rebellion in the Austrian fleet, following the historical facts closely. Full of provocative problems for the revolutionary theatre; not quite clear in its treatment of individual as opposed to collective leadership. But far and away the most important play in New York. Filled with brilliant passages, memorably acted. And Mordecai Gorelik's set is nothing less than magnificent. Your attendance required, of course. Cheapest seat 30 cents (tax free).

*Recruits*. Artef Theatre (247 W. 48th St.). If you understand Yiddish, be certain to see this exquisite production—this brilliant analysis of social forces in the Ghetto during the 1800-1850 period.

*Gold Eagle Guy*. Group Theatre (at Morosco Theatre). The career of Robert Dollar, merchant-marine prince, provides (author) Melvin Levy with the chance to strip the capitalist type of its "business ethics" and other shams, and J. Edward Bromberg with a vehicle for a confidently masterful performance. Somewhat thin as a play, and "Gold Eagle Guy" Button altogether too fascinating a scoundrel. But important as a picture of capitalist corruption and genuinely enjoyable as theatre.

*Stevodore*, by Paul Peters and George Sklar. The Theatre Union's successful working-class drama now in Chicago for a month's stay at the Selwyn Theatre. The most significant play in New York for two seasons: therefore, attendance required of all Chicago readers.

*Tobacco Road*, dramatized by James Kirkland from Erskine Caldwell's novel. Forrest Theatre. One of the finest plays in New York, now in its second year and with a new Jeeter Lester: James Bell. Startling insights into the lives of the poor white farmers of Georgia.

*Personal Appearance*. Henry Miller Theatre. Friendly debunking of a Hollywood artist all in good clean fun and with just enough daring to make the audience feel oh so iconoclastic and oh so superior. Actually two hours of tosh made bearable by a dozen funny wisecracks. S. B.

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## Disintegration of a Director

WHEN we saw the Warner Brothers' *A Modern Hero*, directed by G. W. Pabst, last year we wondered. Was this the Pabst of *Westfront 1918*, *Die Dreigrochenoper*, and *Kamaradschaft*?

Was it possible that this artist had disintegrated so quietly in Hollywood? It is now evident that the disintegration of Pabst began when he fled to Paris. There Pabst produced some trash called *L'Atlantide*, after the novel by Pierre Benoit. Then he was given a chance to make *Don Quixote*. In an article on Pabst,\* Harry Potamkin wrote: "He has directed Chaliapin, George Robey and Sidney Fox—what a combination!—in *Don Quixote*. Cervantes or the opera?" Regrettably one must answer: the opera—and Massenet at that.

It was no longer possible for any honest artist to work in Germany. Hitler had not yet come into power, but Hugenberg and his UFA company were already nationalizing even the smaller independent companies. What was there to do? One either went to the Soviet Union—as did Pabst's scenarist Bela Belasz—or to Paris or Hollywood. Pabst chose Paris. But there even a director of Pabst's standing had to make only those films

\* "Pabst and the Social Film" in *Hound and Horn*, vol. 6 (1933).

he was offered. As scenarist for *Don Quixote* the producer selected Paul Morand, sophisticate. Nevertheless, one hoped that Pabst would inject enough of his solid craft and his social outlook into the production. At least he would preserve the significance of the Cervantes masterpiece.

That was not to be. Like Massenet, Pabst and Morand had to build the film around Chaliapin. He is the film. The director merely supplied the picturesque Riviera background. There were wonderful cinematic opportunities in the Cervantes novel.

The result as seen on the screen is a vulgarized Cervantes, directed without imagination or much purpose. There is no form or structure. The dialogue is banal and Chaliapin's singing doesn't contribute. It is pleasant enough but it stops whatever action there is at the moment. *Don Quixote* is a romantic old man who is the victim of an hallucination, as in the 1910 opera. He romps around killing sheep, thinking they are giants, freeing prisoners (the only touch of irony in the film), and attacking windmills. He is a gallant (and pathetic) knight as well as an ardent lover of his lady Dulcinea. Sancho Panza has been reduced to a theatrical stooge by the English comedian, George Robey. He puts some humor into the film, but it is conscious music hall comedy with no relation to the story. Nicholas Farkas, an excellent camera technician, does a series of close-ups apparently for the sheer sake of portraiture,

After seeing *Don Quixote* (made in 1933) we can understand that something has happened to G. W. Pabst. For a time he was perhaps the only director working in the bourgeois commercial cinema with a social conscience—though very limited and undeveloped. He fled the rapidly nationalizing German studios to Paris where he hoped to be free to do "social films." In Paris he was asked about the future of film production in capitalist countries. Was collaboration with the state the solution?

"No! Hitler today and Stalin tomorrow. Under an obligation to direct oneself according to the wish of each government? Never! There must be freedom to follow a determined line once and for all."

The sentence about Hitler and Stalin betrays his political naiveté. In Paris he made *Don Quixote* and *L'Atlantide*; in Hollywood he produced *A Modern Hero*. And he made all three under no obligation to any government—under no "Stalinist" regimentation.

PETER ELLIS.

<p>Monday, Dec. 31 Continuous Showing of <b>Soviet Films</b> V. I. PUDOVKIN'S "Deserter"</p> <p>•</p> <p>"Soviets on Parade"</p> <p>10 a. m. to 7 p. m. Tickets: 15c — 25c</p>	<p>New Year's Eve REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC HALL VARIETIES ALL STAR PROGRAM</p> <p>Soviet Films—Dance Music — Drama Curtain 8:30 P. M. FIFTH AVENUE THEATRE 28th St. &amp; Broadway Tickets: 30c — 99c</p>
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## Between Ourselves

LYA EHRENBURG has cabled us that he is mailing his first article on the Saar. Barring transatlantic accidents we will present this article in our issue of Jan. 15.

A. B. Magil, whose article on Father Coughlin in this issue strikes us as by far the best thing that has been done on the radio priest, is engaged in organizational work in Detroit. In 1932 he was one of the American delegates to the writers' congress in Khar-kov.

Our announcement of a mass recitation by Ernst Toller, commemorating the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, has brought us requests from two revolutionary organizations for advance proofs. We may be able next week to announce performances of Toller's work, in connection with its publication in THE NEW MASSES Jan. 15, the Liebknecht-Luxemburg anniversary.

The business office informs us that no less than 700 copies of Agnes Smedley's book, *China Red Army Marches*, have been sold in the combination subscription offer that has been advertised several times.

### New Masses Lectures

William Browder, business manager of THE NEW MASSES, is going on a lecture tour in January. Browder will speak on "The Middle Class Must Choose." His tentative itinerary is listed below, and organizations wishing to arrange meetings for him in these cities are asked to communicate with THE NEW MASSES Lecture Bureau.

Jan. 11—Milwaukee	Jan. 24—Phoenix
" 13—Minneapolis	" 26—Denver
" 15—Butte	" 27—Wichita
" 17—Spokane	" 28—Kansas City
" 18—Seattle	" 29—Omaha
" 19—Portland	" 30—St. Louis
" 21—San Francisco	" 31—Indianapolis
" 23—Los Angeles	Feb. 1—Pittsburgh

Browder will speak in Providence Sunday, Dec. 30, at 7:45 p.m. at the British Club, 254 Weybosset Street.

Michael Gold will speak on "Crisis in Modern Literature," Friday evening, Dec. 28, at the Prospect Workers Club, 1157 So. Boulevard, the Bronx.

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