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# **Masses**

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# new Masses

MARCH 12, 1935

**G**ENERAL JOHNSON opened a new battle of the American fascist rivals, with heavy guns aimed at Huey Long and Father Coughlin. The occasion was his inauguration as a memoir-writer for the Red Book magazine. Diners ducked as the epithets flew thick and fast, and the general himself declared they "will say . . . that I am drunk or crazy, but nerfs to that!" The "great Louisiana demagogue and the political padre" had taken the count a dozen times when dawn broke over the Waldorf-Astoria, and the Communists also received a few bouquets. Umpires will be listening for the Shrine of the Little Flower, where "the cane-brake drawl of Huey Long" joins the "dripping tongue of the Irish-Canadian priest" over the microphone. But what interests us more than a paper war between American Hitlers, is the serious exposure of the general's own theories. "Democracy," said the former war-coordinator, "is the worst government in the world for a great war or a great crisis." "As my good friend Henry Wallace says, 'Liberty must go into eclipse in times of depression'." This is the way real capitalists talk. These statements remind us of the genuine Hugh Johnson, the man who in San Francisco denounced the general strike for union rights as civil war, and called on the vigilantes "to crush them like rats." We may agree that Judas Iscariot was "just a poor piker" compared to Coughlin, and that "Hitler can't hold a candle to Huey," in some of the arts of demagogy, but Johnson sounds like a West Point Goering. He is offering himself in this speech to lead the march of the shirts on Capitol Hill, and he openly says that the hour is at hand. "If a chaos of inflation and worse follows . . . nothing we can hope to do will keep a dictator out of Washington and in my opinion that chaos is imminently threatened."

**T**HE protests are increasing against the malodorous Mr. Hearst. In THE NEW MASSES for February 26, we reported that a number of prominent ministers and professors of California, the great journalist's own bailiwick,



"THERE HE COMES, BOYS"

joined in an uprising against his systematic slanders calling them "a ballyhoo of campaigns against Communism . . . used to crush as subversive all free expression of minority opinion." On February 24, at Atlantic City, more than a thousand educators from all over the United States passed a resolution demanding that the Nye Committee look into "any relationship which may exist between the Hearst newspaper, industrial and financial interests and the spurious anti-Red campaign now current in the Hearst press." At this sixty-fifth annual convention of the National Education Association the teachers and professors rose to their feet and cheered Professor Charles A. Beard, the well-known historian, when he declared that

"only cowards can be intimidated by Hearst." Professor Beard said:

There is not a cesspool of vice and crime which Hearst has not raked and exploited for money-making purposes. No person with intellectual honesty or moral integrity will touch him with a ten-foot pole for any purpose or to gain any end. Unless those who represent American scholarship, science and the right of a free people to discuss public questions freely stand together against his insidious influence he will assassinate them individually by every method known to yellow journalism.

The Nye committee, as anyone might have predicted, refused to touch the resolution even with "a ten-foot pole." We hope the members of the N.E.A. who



Butch Lindbach

"THERE HE COMES, BOYS"



endorsed the anti-Hearst resolution will not let it go at that, but pitch in and aid such organizations as the American League Against War and Fascism to mobilize a movement strong enough to halt any Yankee Fuehrer from gaining power.

**THE NEW YORK TIMES** is trying to get into the class of Willy Hearst, "America's Scab No. 1." On three pages of a recent issue it raised the Red alarm. Citing correspondence in Pravda, under the headline "Reds in United States Gaining," the Times excitedly calls attention to the ripening class struggles in the U. S., the support of the Communist Party by "farmers, intellectuals and small bourgeoisie," the growing unity between Negro and white workers, and the increasing demand for Communist literature. On another page it is reported that the House military sub-committee was urged by army and navy spokesmen to act against the flow of propaganda "seeking to enlist American soldiers and sailors in the ranks of Communism." Editorially, the American "Thunderer," while inciting the police against free speech and the "misdemeanants and felons" of Communism, attempts to quiet its readers by saying that the "universal uprising . . . remains hidden away in dreamland."

**THE SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER** on Feb. 28 published a story to the effect that the twenty-year old daughter of Major Albert M. Jones, of the Ninth Corps Area, had been attacked and beaten by Communists on a "dim street at the Army post," and that Captain Clear and a woman member of another officer's family had been likewise assailed. Major Jones said the story was an invention. It is like the other Hearst stories about millions per day starving in the Ukraine. Our old friends of the McCormack Committee on un-American activities listened to an underling of the American Pacific Steamship Owners' Association charge that the longshoremen's strike last summer grew from "plans laid a year earlier by agents from Moscow," and that the Communists were bent on making California "the first state in the U. S. to be industrially controlled by Russian agents." But the technique of Red-baiting takes different forms. According to a certain Congressman by the name of Maverick, the Communists are just 24,500 "crackpots" and nothing to get jittery about.

**THE** silent war being waged in the bourses of the world reached a high pitch Saturday, March 2, when the British pound lost  $4\frac{1}{8}$  cents on the dollar. This came on the heels of the announcement that for the past year Great Britain, hitherto boastful of "recovery," suffered a loss in her international balances. The pound depreciated  $8\frac{5}{8}$  cents last week. It lost even more in terms of the franc. From all appearances, it seems that England is making no effort, as it might through its equalization fund, to halt this decline. And this raises the question whether its fiscal rulers are not returning to their 1931 methods (when they went off the gold standard) to strengthen the advantages of their currency in foreign markets now that the devaluation of the dollar has been approved by the U.S. Supreme Court. The dollar is the pound's chief enemy. In this struggle between the pound and the dollar, France and the rest of the gold bloc may be forced off gold.

**BUT** such is the nature of present day international trade rivalries, that short of a redivision of the world markets through "violent means," these cruder methods of international competition must be resorted to. In the end they must fail, for currency depreciation, together with the imposition of tariffs and import quotas is a game that every nation can play, for a while. Finally it must result in war. As each country is checkmated in this battle of the currencies, it turns back on itself and intensifies its economic nationalism, or economic autarchy. And with each step of this process, it becomes more urgent to seek an outlet in the world market. Economic nationalism must mean ever-contracting domestic markets, as the advantages from a free flow of international commerce are cumulatively being lost. It must also gradually reduce the exchange of goods in the international markets, as each country attempts to "safeguard" its domestic production by import quotas and tariffs against foreign competition. At this moment the battle of the currencies is raging on a wider front than ever before, and the outcome may not be as peaceful as it has been in the past.

**THE** Senate got down to President Roosevelt's favorite business of war preparations last week when the Appropriations Committee returned an army bill for \$375,000,000 to bring up the regular forces to 165,000. Gen-

eral Douglas MacArthur, chief of staff, was so eager to see the new war-fund in the bag that he persuaded the Committee not to give any "discretionary powers" to the President in administering the money. He pleaded that they should not "burden him with . . . a duty always undertaken by Congress." War department heads are in the habit of pointing out that a regular army of 165,000 men is "ridiculously small." But no one will be fooled. As an article on another page of this issue of **THE NEW MASSES** demonstrates, the 230,000-strong National Guard was recently transferred to federal command. In addition, there are the 350,000 in the Citizens' Conservation Corps—soon to be increased to 700,000—under military discipline, and various reserve organizations and training corps are turning out 125,000 "officers only."

**THESE** organizations received as high as \$8,000,000 each, in the same appropriations measure. When Mussolini tells Europe that even while Africa swarms with Italian troops he can mobilize 7,000,000 men at home (no doubt including a couple of million of the eight and ten-year-olds now in military classes) he may be exaggerating as a matter of policy. But the method adopted by the U. S. Army staff is to under-advertise the man-power of the service by training half a dozen armies with fancy alphabetical names. While General MacArthur was wangling the shy Senators for nearly half a billion dollars, Brigadier General F. M. Andrews concentrated the main aerial fighting forces of the country in the "huge air station," at Langley Field, Virginia. It is said that 1,000 to 1,500 combat planes can be "sent into the air simultaneously from the various stations toward a single objective." The gold-braid boys are having their innings under the most openly war-like administration the United States has ever had.

**IT LIVED** to be two and one-half years old. Its health was never flourishing. It developed quite a number of ailments and finally died — of sheer weariness. We refer, of course, to the American Spectator. Meeting at an exclusive former speakeasy in the fifties in New York City, Messrs. George Jean Nathan, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Boyd, et al., held the obsequies over their deceased ward and laid it to rest. Applauded by the Fuehrer, watched approvingly by the Duce, admired by the

Alabama lynch rulers, edited by Pulitzer Prize winners, Broadway headliners and famous critics, the editors declare that the paper was nevertheless abandoned, and on the upgrade. "We told you," said the venerable body of Algonquin wits and reformed victims of Vice Crusaders, "that when and if we got tired of the job . . . we would, as we expressed it, retire to our estates." From which, we are apprized, a barrage of books is to be expected from each of them next fall. The Spectator consisted at its largest of some sixteen pages. The actual editing of the monthly, which had no departments and no advertisers, would have taken the time of one editor with one hand tied behind his back. We suspect that all was not close harmony on the staff, and that some of the esteemed colleagues found it hard to swallow the pro-Nazi, anti-Negro and anti-working class policy. We shall wait for the "ideas developing which may come to something next year," as the farewell manifesto expresses it. While we are mourning for the literary two-year-olds, let us drop a tear for that old Tory gent, the North American Review, which ceases to be a monthly and becomes a quarterly.

**C** HIANG KAI-SHEK may now look upon the result of his years of treachery to the Chinese people. In

Anwei, 3,000,000 are dying of famine. The outflow of silver, due to the American Silver Purchase Act has drained the banks and left them on the verge of collapse. Peasants face the spring planting without money to buy seed. Industries are shutting down and throwing more millions into unemployment. Interest rates, always usurious in China, have kited again and brought on an epidemic of bankruptcies. These conditions are spreading throughout the provinces robbed by the Nationalist generals. With Nanking helpless, not only Japan but the United States and Great Britain are angling for the chance to "save" her, "saving" China being always a profitable imperialist business. Akira Ariyoshi, the Japanese minister, Chiang Kai-shek, Wang Ching Wei and other Kuomintang leaders have had their heads together for some time. Tokyo was preferred as the party to buy out the Nationalists. England and the United States, uneasy about hands across the Yellow Sea, have been moving quietly to block the Japanese. On March 1, Sir Ronald Lindsay, British ambassador to Washington, and William Phillips, acting Secretary of State, had a conference to discuss the British suggestion of a four-power loan to China. Since the China consortium of 1920 forbids any power to make large loans to China without the consent of

the other powers, Japan's eagerness to be Number One in Asia helps lay the fuse to an imperialist explosion.

**W**HEN our State Department expresses gratification at the "rapid strides" a neighboring country is taking, our inevitable reaction is that those strides head toward Wall Street. Generally we are right. We certainly are in the case of Cuba, which has just been treated to a carefully formulated State Department document. Washington abhorred the thought that it even dreamed of intervention in the "political concerns of the Cuban people." Indeed not. Washington is, on the contrary, happy to hear "reports" of "economic and social rehabilitation" on the Island. In the very same column of the New York Times quoting the State Department's congratulatory remarks, we discover in a dispatch from Havana that five of President Carlos Mendieta's Cabinet "have now resigned." The correspondent also vouchsafed the notion that Cuban labor is "demoralized"—an expression often pulled out of the diplomatic Thesaurus when newspaper correspondents want to say "radicalized." Cuban labor is demoralized because of the "dismal failure" of the three general strikes last year. The Times man did not add that most of Cuba's "demoralized" workmen today endorse the militant Cuban National Confederation of Labor. What the State Department meant by "rapid strides" becomes more ambiguous when we learn that 350,000 students are on strike: that a general strike has been endorsed by the Communist Party and the Confederation and that an all inclusive anti-imperialist front is being forged. For aiding this movement, the editors of the anti-imperialist magazine, the Masses, of Havana, have been thrown into Cuba's infamous dungeons for six months. THE NEW MASSES cabled President Mendieta:

In the name of the 25,000 readers of THE NEW MASSES we demand the immediate release of the editors of the Cuban Masses who have been sentenced to six months for their anti-imperialist fight.

The brave Cuban people must be aided by all enemies of tyranny. Protests showered on President Mendieta in Havana, and his Washington representative will be effective. Though Machado is gone, imperialism is forever spawning new Machados.

# new Masses

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# Two Years of the New Deal

**I**T'S A mighty poor husband who can't get his wife to say a few words of praise about him once in a while over the back fence. Upon the occasion of our President's second anniversary in office this past week, Mrs. Roosevelt told the newspapermen what a wonderful man her husband was. Mrs. Roosevelt considered that her husband's biggest achievement was the "change in the nation's thinking to recognize the rights of the weak." Furthermore, she liked the T.V.A. and the C.C.C. and all the little homesteads out in the country. She mentioned the President's inaugural address, quoting the line, "The only thing we have to fear is fear." Those words, the "first lady" thought, "will go down in history."

We can't, we regret to say, fall in with the family enthusiasm for popper. We look at Mr. Roosevelt's two years with a somewhat less sympathetic eye, perhaps a little more objectively than the President's warmest and most loquacious admirer. Mr. Roosevelt came to office on a platform of "recovery"—and a promise for the Forgotten Man. Through N.I.R.A. he was "to drive the money-changers from the temple." Labor was to be granted its most cherished desire—the right to collective bargaining. Two swift years have passed, but the money-changers are still busily plying their trade even behind the sacred curtain, and one need not examine them closely to see they have not lost weight. Recovery? There are 17,000,000 unemployed still walking the streets minus the means to buy necessities.

During the first year of the Roosevelt administration, as pretty nearly everyone now knows, twenty-six new million-dollar incomes sprouted where twenty grew before. There was a decided drop in the total income of those "lower middle-class" men who had reported their salaries in the lower brackets of less than \$5,000 a year. There was concomitantly a rise in the total income of those reporting over \$5,000 a year—particularly those happy enough to have incomes of \$25,000 a year and over. And their numbers grow steadily fewer.

The aggregate income of the forty-six who reported incomes of one million dollars and over, increased that year to \$82,000,000 as compared with \$35,000,000 the previous year. We learn

now from the reports of the Research and Planning Division of the N.R.A. itself that payrolls in December, 1934, were only about 60 percent of what they were in 1926. On the other hand, dividends and interest payments were 50 percent larger.

The opening of the third year of the New Deal found welfare Commissioner William Hodson of New York City, reporting one person out of every five in the metropolis on relief. Secretary Wallace predicted an increase of 11 percent in food prices for the first six months of 1935 over the preceding half year. Food prices today are already 34 percent higher than when Roosevelt came in with a flourish of trumpets two years ago.

To cap it all, the decision in the Kentucky mine case and in the Weirton case was announced on the anniversary of our President's inauguration. In each case a federal judge ruled as unconstitutional any notion that N.R.A. granted labor the right to bargain collectively through representatives of its own choice. Unconstitutional, too, is the minimum wage under code agreement. American citizens have the "right to conduct their business without constitu-

tional interference or regulation by governmental authority," Judge Charles I. Dawson ruled in favor of thirty-five Kentucky mine operators and "against" the Bituminous Coal Code. And in the Weirton case, Judge P. Nield, sitting in the Federal District Court of Delaware (in the du Pont city of Wilmington) "denied" the government's power to demand that the steel company cease interfering with its employes when they choose representatives for collective bargaining under the "sanction" of 7a. Didn't we hear somebody talking about labor's Magna Charta just a little while ago, or were we only hearing bedtime stories?

The government goes through all the motions, tirelessly and with infinite patience. The patience of the bourgeoisie is endless when the boss is out to bamboozle his hired man. Of course, the government will "appeal" Judge Nield's decision. Who, in this wide country of ours can still believe in the government's concern for its "Forgotten Man" after the betrayal of the auto workers, the betrayal of the West Coast longshoremen, of the textile operatives, the newspapermen, the white-collar workers, and millions more? As wages go sliding down and taxes go soaring up, even the blind can see that governments based on exploitation and greed will only protect the interests of capitalism.

## Mellon and His Millions

**W**HEN Andrew W. Mellon was Secretary of the Treasury under Hoover he was constantly referred to by Republican and other editorial writers as the greatest Secretary of the Treasury since Alexander Hamilton. He was a master of finance, and his skill at ordering the affairs of state were regarded with the highest esteem. However, the recent discoveries in Washington of his ability to cheat the government out of income taxes certainly reveal the fact that if he knew how to "protect" the public treasury he was not totally unable to protect his private one.

Mellon, referred to by the press as the "seventy-nine year old capitalist," is one of the wealthiest men in the country. His fortune is estimated at \$200,000,000 and the present hearing before the Board of Tax Appeals is

to determine whether Mellon owes the government \$3,000,000 in income taxes or whether the government owes him a refund of \$139,000 for the disastrous money losses he has suffered during recent years.

As the hearing proceeds and Mellon's lawyers rant and rage to protect their distinguished client, it becomes more and more evident that the disastrous losses Mellon suffered were the losses which so many of our impoverished millionaires have announced on their income blanks. Mellon, however, has beaten them all in the lengths to which he would go to gyp the country out of what to him is a paltry sum of money.

In his defense Mellon has used every subterfuge to protect his hoarded millions and if testimony given early this week can be accepted his children have

helped him to cheat the government and he has forced his employes who drew up his income tax statement to take the rap. He has even utilized art (his purchase of paintings from the Soviet government) as one way of protecting his wealth.

The method he and his high paid lawyers have employed to get around paying the income tax is by no means a new one. According to the evidence brought before the Board of Tax Appeals he established two companies—the Coalesced, presumably owned by his two children, Paul and Ailsa Mellon Bruce, and Ascalot owned by Mrs. Bruce. These companies served as corporate entities to which Mellon could

sell stocks at a loss in order to reduce his income tax. Thus Mellon, according to his financial secretary, sold 123,000 shares of Pittsburgh Coal at a loss of \$5,000,000, this "shadow sale" being made to the Coalesced Company owned by his son and daughter.

The son and daughter, moreover, were able to avoid paying also, as they too sold stocks at losses to Mr. Mellon. In other words we have the whole Mellon family working together like a set of thieves, with their high paid lawyers, to get out of spending one cent for income taxes. As the hearings go on we may read testimony that the greatest Secretary of the Treasury since Hamilton uses slugs in the subway turnstiles.

dustry was still uncodified.) The New York Board, close to the scene and aware of the effective indignation of the workers, ruled in the strikers' favor, ordering immediate re-instatement. The firm ignored the ruling and reinstated no one. This refusal threw the whole question into the lap of the National Labor Relations Board.

The strikers pleaded their case before this board in December. The board had all the facts, knew what it wanted to say, but didn't quite dare to say it until the White House and Attorney General Cummings came to an agreement. By Feb. 27 all the big boys seemed to have reached a unanimous decision. The National Labor Relations Board, whose chairman is Francis Biddle, of the Philadelphia Biddles, J. P. Morgan's Pennsylvania tie-up, ruled it had no jurisdiction over any uncodified industry. It dismissed the complaint against the Macaulay Publishing Company. To do this the board was obliged to say directly that workers in uncodified industries had no rights which the employers in those industries were obliged to respect.

It is interesting to recall that this Mr. Biddle is the same who was chosen by The Nation for honorable mention as a "friend of labor."

A few days ago, in the Jennings ruling by the President himself, the National Labor Relations Board was declared to have no right to interject itself in any industry that had its own Code Authority. Now the board itself quotes a Southern judge to prove it has no rights to "investigate" an uncodified industry.

Thus the workers are driven from pillar to post. They see themselves without protection under N.R.A. in uncodified industry; they have no protection under N.R.A. in codified industry. The circle of the "run-around" is closed.

Lawyers representing employers' organizations in uncodified industries were on the scene and had their say when the Macaulay strikers appeared before the N.L.R.B. last December. The bosses' men contended the strikers had no rights in uncodified industry. That was correct then and it is correct now. Labor has no rights that it cannot guarantee for itself by strength of organization and militancy. This is the lesson to be learned from all these obnoxious maneuvers. Not pious codes, but solid, unswerving organization will win the workers anything like a decent livelihood.

## The Macaulay Ruling

ONE of the stock tricks in the routine of all legislators is to make their declarations mean all things to all men. The National Recovery Act was an admirable instance. The administration is never so effective as in its attempts to befuddle the great American electorate, to keep them wondering whether they are right side up or upside down. After the latest rulings on the N.I.R.A. out of Washington, the people are beginning to get their bearings. The Macaulay decision by the National Labor Relations Board was excellent in one respect: it helped millions to understand the gist of the N.R.A.—to understand why the workers in their crude but instinctively wise way long ago called it the National Run Around.

The Macaulay ruling adds up to this: no worker in any uncodified industry has any rights under Section 7a that the employer need respect. Not that the worker in codified industries has any greater rights. THE NEW MASSES and all Communists were never under any illusions concerning the N.R.A. They termed it, from the outset, a scheme to aid the monopolists and to counteract the rebelliousness of the people. But in this latest ruling we have a beautiful indictment against the entire administrative, legislative and judicial set-up. We want to present this indictment for those of our newest readers who perhaps have some lingering illusions as to the nature of the government.

Last June, eleven employes of the

clerical and editorial staff of the Macaulay Publishing Company, ten of them girls, organized to improve their working conditions. They did this so effectively that they won a number of demands: no discharges without notice or without pay; no docking for sick leave under ten days a year; enough electric light by which to work without eyestrain; a curb on abusive language used by one of the more cultured members of the firm. Several weeks afterward the firm fired the girl most active in the union—the newly organized Literary Trades Section of the Office Workers Union. This precipitated a strike in which all eleven participated. The strike, though it only lasted four days and a half, proved something of a seven-day wonder. It was the first strike in publishing history. It destroyed forever the notion that white-collar workers are constitutionally averse to using the tactics of the more class-conscious manual workers. The strike ended in a partial victory for the employes. The next three months the firm operated as a semi-closed shop, with a shop committee chosen by the employes.

On Sept. 14 the shop committee of four was suddenly given notice of dismissal. A second strike started.

During the second strike the firm refused to appear at a hearing called by the New York Regional Labor Board. The firm contended that the board had no jurisdiction over the uncodified industries. (At that time the publishing in-







# Thomas—Prince of Straddlers

JAMES S. ALLEN

“THIS IS not a book which is primarily concerned with the development of social philosophy or with prophecies of the future,” writes Norman Thomas in the preface to his latest work<sup>1</sup>. Yet the book is to be welcomed as an opportune revelation of the social philosophy of an outstanding leader of the Socialist Party, particularly of that section of the party which considers itself “militant.” In this book he analyzes the present situation in the United States. Although he assiduously avoids discussion of any of the organizational and tactical problems of the labor movement arising from this situation, he here supplies valuable explanatory notes to the recent refusal of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party, in which the Thomas group predominates, to enter a united front with the Communist Party.

Mr. Thomas himself makes it clear that “it is entirely too late in the day for any author, certainly for this author, to assume an impossible objectivity, or to write as if there were not in the world an impressive body of literature dealing with the interpretation of facts, and a mighty movement of the workers which seeks to alter these facts for the better.” With this, we heartily agree, but in all fairness to the author we must first clear him of any suspicion that the “impressive body of literature” to which he refers is, perchance, Marxism.

The very title of the book itself warns us in advance, if we had not already known, that Thomas is a frank non-Marxian. The emphasis is upon “human,” not “capitalist,” exploitation, as if the exploitation discussed in this book were eternal and not simply a component part of a specific, historic period. Nevertheless, to discuss capitalism, announces Thomas, is his intention, but not “in terms of its foreordained disintegration” which, he holds, “has become the fashion in certain radical or revolutionary circles,” but rather “in terms of its tyranny and waste.” The latter is a fashion more to his taste: it does not commit him to any theory which must take into account the “foreordained disintegration” of capitalism and leaves the road wide open to reformism run wild. For tyranny and waste do not necessarily demand social revolution.

With outbursts of righteous indignation, our “militant” socialist exposes the tyranny and waste inherent in real-estate speculation, inadequate housing, pilfering of farmers and consumers, private control of natural resources, corruption of government by the power interests, exploitation of the worker, unemployment, the special lot of women and

child laborers, discrimination against Negroes, robbery of the little owner, war, the courts, etc. The information is not new; it is to be found in the records of congressional investigations, reports of government commissions, N.R.A. hearings, in hundreds of books and articles by liberals and bourgeois professors. In essence, the book is a petty-bourgeois critique of capitalism—critical of its most glaring inequalities and of its obsolescence, so clearly exposed by the crisis, but hopeful of reforming it and of blocking a fundamental transformation.

We cite just a few of Mr. Thomas’ comments before discussing the principal issues:

The Ku Klux Klan is a “manifestation of the racial pride of the white share-croppers.” It is “too early to pass any final judgment” upon subsistence farming. The C.C.C. camps, “whatever one thinks of their degree of militarization,” are evidence of the support given by Roosevelt to the “country’s admirable Forest Service.” A “mismanaged coal industry” is to blame for “tragic waste in human life, human health and human happiness.” The N.R.A. has abolished “almost all remnants of child labor” in the mines. The code authorities, we are to believe, work hand in glove with the unions in controlling conditions in the factory. The unemployed “on the whole have been singularly quiescent” and this, perhaps, accounts for the fact that Mr. Thomas mentions not a word about the Unemployment Insurance Bill and the nation-wide campaign being waged by the workers for it. The mass picket line at Woonsocket which fought back so courageously the onslaught of armed forces during the general textile strike, was “a mob” which “took things into its own hands.” The banking system crashed, not as a result of the crisis but because “deposit bankers became speculators with other people’s money rather than custodians of it.”

And what has he to say about the Negro, besides his insipid criticism of the Communist program? The most amazing thing about the Negro, to Thomas, is “that the Negro has done as well as he has, and the capitalist exploitation of racial differences has not produced an even worse situation in America!”

What is Mr. Thomas’ estimate of the recent wave of strikes and of present developments in the trade-union movement? “The widest-spread, most magnificent expression of working-class solidarity that I have seen in America,” he says about the general textile strike. The strike was not desired by the union leaders and took place in spite of them, he concedes. But the calling off of the strike when it was on the upgrade, when the workers had forged their own new methods of picketing, when new contingents in related sections of the industry were ready to join the strikers, when the settlement (as Thomas admits) gained nothing for the workers—this he justifies on the grounds that “the A.

F. of L. had virtually no machinery of relief or strategy.” Is it not a part of any strike to arrange for a machinery of relief and strategy? And was it not primarily the fault of the A. F. of L. leaders who tried to prevent the strike and then to stifle it that no such machinery was made available despite the resources of the organization?

Does Thomas include the A. F. of L. top bureaucracy when he finds “much that is tremendously encouraging in the outlook of the A. F. of L.”? Remember that no reply has as yet been forthcoming from Thomas to the inquiry of Earl Browder, writing for the Central Committee of the C. P., as to whether, in his opinion, a united front in the trade union movement meant unity of the workers in the struggle for their demands or unity with the labor fakers. Here is the reply, as succinctly as one can hope for from Mr. Thomas, the prince of straddlers. He is encouraged (1) by the growing membership of the A. F. of L., which “has been pushing organization under the impetus that originally came from [not the revolt of the workers against crisis conditions, but] section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act.” (2) “Today the conservative leaders of the A. F. of L. who have instinctively preferred to work with the employers and with the government, are coming around to support measures which they once denounced as radical.” Thomas evidently is satisfied with the new “radicalness” of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy, although it should be evident to everybody that if they have made a pretense of fighting the employers it is because of the influx of new blood and the insistent demands of their rank and file.

But this fades into the shadow in comparison with Thomas’ estimate of the Pacific Coast general strike, one of the greatest events in American labor history. To the chief of the socialist “militants” it was merely “an approach to a general strike” and he draws the following principal conclusion: It “proved once more that unless a general strike or the threat of a general strike for an economic end wins almost immediately, it must in spite of itself become political.” From this profound discovery, Thomas concludes “The general strike is primarily a political weapon, a weapon to be used with discretion and careful planning.”

War is one of the greatest dangers confronting the masses. Thomas does not discuss the actual theatres of war today, he speaks about war in general: “War is in essence anti-social, and exploits the individual as does no other collective activity of man.” Pacifists need no better profession of faith. Were the great progressive wars of the past, such as the Civil War in the United States

<sup>1</sup> *Human Exploitation in the United States*, by Norman Thomas. Frederick A. Stokes Co., \$2.75.

which abolished chattel slavery, anti-social? Was the war which the young Russian Soviet Republic waged against the imperialist armies of intervention anti-social? Are all wars to be condemned on this account—the wars of oppressed peoples and colonies for independence, the war of the Asturian workers against the fascist dictatorship; of the Vienna workers? And why does Mr. Thomas say not a word about how to fight imperialist war, the horrors and wastes of which he graphically describes?

The replies to many of our questions lie in Thomas' conception of the State. The attitude towards the State is the most effective barometer of a political program. Around this point, for almost a century, has raged the struggle between Marxists and revisionists, between revolutionists and opportunists, and, now, between those who prepare the ground for fascism and those who fight against it.

First, let us listen to Thomas on the New Deal. While Thomas is critical of the New Deal, as are many who do not claim to be socialists, we search in vain for a decisive denunciation of the Roosevelt administration. He has not yet made up his mind: "Psychologically, sociologically or politically, the New Deal is likely to have profound effects for good or evil, or mingled good and evil." Is it good or evil for the working class, the only point of view from which a socialist should at least profess to estimate major political events? To Thomas, it seems there is both good and evil. The evil: "It is already clear that the New Deal has accomplished little or nothing even for recovery." The good: "Nevertheless, the New Deal, while essentially capitalist in nature, frankly accepted collectivism and made the people think in terms a little closer to the realities of the situation than the hypocrisies, conscious or unconscious, which an older school had employed. So far, Mr. Roosevelt has been able to present his state capitalism—economically not dissimilar to fascism—in the garb of social and political liberalism rather than of ruthless dictatorship."

What kind, whose collectivism did Roosevelt accept? Elsewhere in the book, Thomas quotes the Darrow Board report on how the New Deal has favored big business: is this, then, the collectivism which Mr. Thomas finds so hopeful in Mr. Roosevelt's policies—the "collectivism" of monopoly and the "collective" pauperization of the small owner? Would Mr. Thomas have one believe that if Roosevelt spoke "in terms a little closer to the reality" this was not because the crisis had produced such profound changes in the attitudes and the political waverings of the masses that he was forced to speak in such terms, as a demagogue?

From the final sentence of the passage quoted there can be only one conclusion. Although his "state capitalism" is "economically not dissimilar to fascism," Roosevelt is to be condoned and even praised for not donning the "garb of ruthless dictatorship!"

How nice of Roosevelt to have covered the essential processes of the fascization of the State with a smoke-screen of "social and political liberalism!" Thomas says not a word of how close the Roosevelt administration already is to fascism. He even leaves us with the impression that fascism is a new economic stage in the development of capitalism, and not simply a new political form of the dictatorship of finance capital. Perhaps it is too much to ask for a basic analysis from Thomas, but it is not too much to ask, bearing in mind the European experiences, the "lesser evil" theory by which social-democracy supported Hindenburg in Germany and Dollfuss in Austria: "Is the New Deal, then, the 'lesser evil', our defense against fascism?" If we are not mistaken, Thomas on a number of occasions thought German social-democracy "open to criticism" for the policy it pursued in the face of coming fascism. Mr. Thomas' attitude differs in no essentials from that of Wels, Severing and the other leaders of European social-democracy.

His understanding of the State goes even beyond this. Throughout his book, Thomas goes to great pains to point out the "good sides of government." The Tennessee Valley Authority, "a splendid job of engineering, of housing its workers, and of marketing power," has so deeply impressed Thomas that he advises those "who are skeptical of the socialism of the second Roosevelt" that they "may at least admit" that he has saved the United States from this final loss of water power! After such incidents, purely accidental one might suppose, as the Mooney-Billings, Sacco-Vanzetti and Scottsboro cases, he finds it a "relief to turn to those functions of government in which it genuinely serves the social interest." He refers to the scientific and health services, schools, roads, bridges, water systems, protecting the milk supply, the Holland Tunnel and, of course, the old standby of opportunism, that glorious post office system. Nor is one to overlook the great service of the present government in extending relief (although inadequate, admits Thomas), which "has saved us on the one hand from wholesale starvation, and on the other from universal bread riots." Thomas longs for more space in his book in which to summarize such achievements.

But whose government is this he talks about? Has this state machine of ours, which Marx so often emphasized must be smashed if capitalism is to be defeated, taken on some eternal, abstract qualities above and apart from its use as weapon of the capitalists? The even more efficient post office system and government services of Germany did not prevent fascism, although the social-democrats had a hand in that government. The plaster of opportunism proved poor protection for the workers in their fine apartment houses in Vienna; the widely popularized "achievements" of the socialist municipality of Vienna did not halt fascism in Austria. And Thomas still preaches his state capital-

ism under the cloak of "public ownership."

Now we are in a better position to understand the way out proposed by our "militant" socialist leader. Before the New Era opened by Roosevelt, Thomas used to speak a great deal about "industrial democracy." But new times, new songs. Now it is to be "collective ownership of workers through co-operatives of the government and production for use," and "social planning." Nowhere in this book does Thomas say how these things are to be obtained. In his chapter on labor struggles he states his conviction that "it is obvious that no combination of organization, effective leadership, and rank and file gallantry, can win a great deal for workers in the midst of the temporary or permanent disintegration of the profit system." This definitely rules out, in his opinion, the possibility of obtaining by struggle not only important immediate demands of the workers but their ultimate goal as well, for the opportunity to overthrow capitalism comes precisely when capitalism disintegrates.

Thomas discounts the example of the Soviet Union—the road of proletarian revolution and proletarian dictatorship. "Nowhere has the struggle yet been won," he says. The Soviet government "has been a turning point in history" but not, one gathers, in the direction to be desired by the workers internationally. Two chief things bother Mr. Thomas. First, he has been inspired by Mr. Leon Trotsky to discern "the nationalism implicit in the shrewd diplomacy of Litvinoff" and to believe that "exploitation will never be ended under national Bolshevism" which, in his opinion, rules in the Soviet Union. Secondly, he cites the white guardist Tatiana Tchernavin, to the effect that a "party dictatorship" is becoming in the Soviet Union a "dominant and exploiting class."

Then how is the final goal to be won? In his praise of the "honest functions of government" Thomas has already indicated his reply. However, he brings himself to state it more specifically: "It would be far more logical," he asserts in discussing a proposed plan for a government subsidy to industry as a measure of relieving unemployment, "to use government directly as an agency in setting up planned economy."

It is the old philistine reformism, dressed in the new fashion ("not discussed in radical or revolutionary circles") of social planning "in general," within the framework of the present system, using the present government as an agency. Is this what the new socialist "militancy" has come to in the hands of Mr. Thomas: New Deal planning such as the T.V.A., government services like the post office, Utopia via the Holland Tunnel? Not the organization of the working class in a struggle against capitalism, against the fascist-breeding New Deal, not towards the seizure of power by the working class, the only guarantee of planned economy and production for use, without exploitation, but this cellophane wrapper over putrid reformism!



# Whose National Guard?

BEN PAGE

**N**INE WORKERS were killed by National Guard bullets in labor disputes in the United States, during the nine-month period from January 1 to October 1, 1934.

When the question is posed, "Why do we need the National Guard?" the answer to it is the old army answer, "for defense." If the United States should send an expeditionary force abroad, as it did in 1917, the reason given would be the same, "for defense." But from time to time, the highest officials in the army give themselves away.

General Howard, of California, when he recommended the increase in the National Guard strength, stated explicitly, for example, that the civilian forces were for use in the event of "internal disturbances." Assistant Secretary of War Harry Woodring implied the same thing in the article in MacFadden's Liberty on the C.C.C. Guardsmen will be called out to protect the scabs, to act as strike-breakers. The best proof that the National Guard will be used for "defense" against American workers is the fact that it has been done and is still being done.

The present administration is openly concentrating the national military forces by increasing the size of the army and navy and creating "industrial mobilization" plans. As a part of this huge war-program, the National Guard has ceased to be primarily a state institution. Without much ballyhoo, quietly

and unanimously, the officers of the National Guard have taken the oath of allegiance to the President. Accompanying this significant act, the name of the Guard was changed to "The National Guard of the United States."

Thus the National Guard of the United States becomes the main auxiliary of the federal army. It might just as well have been recognized as such all the time, since all its pay and equipment is met with federal funds.

According to the annual report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau for 1934, the composition of the National Guard is as follows:

Officers .....	13,309
Warrant officers .....	198
Enlisted men .....	171,284
	184,791

Under the proposed increase this figure will be brought up to about 230,000.

An analysis of the membership of these groups brings to light some very pertinent facts. First, all the higher grades of officers are either wealthy capitalists, leading business or professional men or holders of governmental sinecures (judges, city and state employes in the higher brackets); that is, they all belong to the coupon-clipping groups and they are directly or indirectly tied up with state, city and federal politics of a dubious sort. Second, the lower grades of officers and

at least about 5 percent of the enlisted men belong in the category of bank clerks, municipal clerks, laundry-truck drivers, young lawyers, etc. They form a typical lower middle-class following for the officers by whom they are completely controlled, socially and politically. Third, as National Guard units are normally located in centers of population, the majority of the enlisted men are workers. However, the demagogy of the leaders, the subtle persuasion of obedience and fascist discipline, encouraged by War Department agitation, make these workers difficult to approach.

Loyalty to the President, Americanism in its narrowest and most reactionary form, blind discipline—these are the main characteristics desired in an enlisted guardsman. But these men are workers and so it happens that the policy of the National Guard is to use out-of-town troops against local strikers, instead of those stationed in the local armories. The authorities cannot trust the local rank-and-file of the Guard to shoot on crowds of people in whose ranks their own relatives might be fighting. They prefer to have these boys shoot other people's relatives and bring in other worker-guardsmen to shoot the local citizenry.

The fact that the workers in the ranks of the National Guard obeyed the orders of their officers to kill fellow workers on strike is due to the systematic government propaganda that forms a part of their daily mental ration.

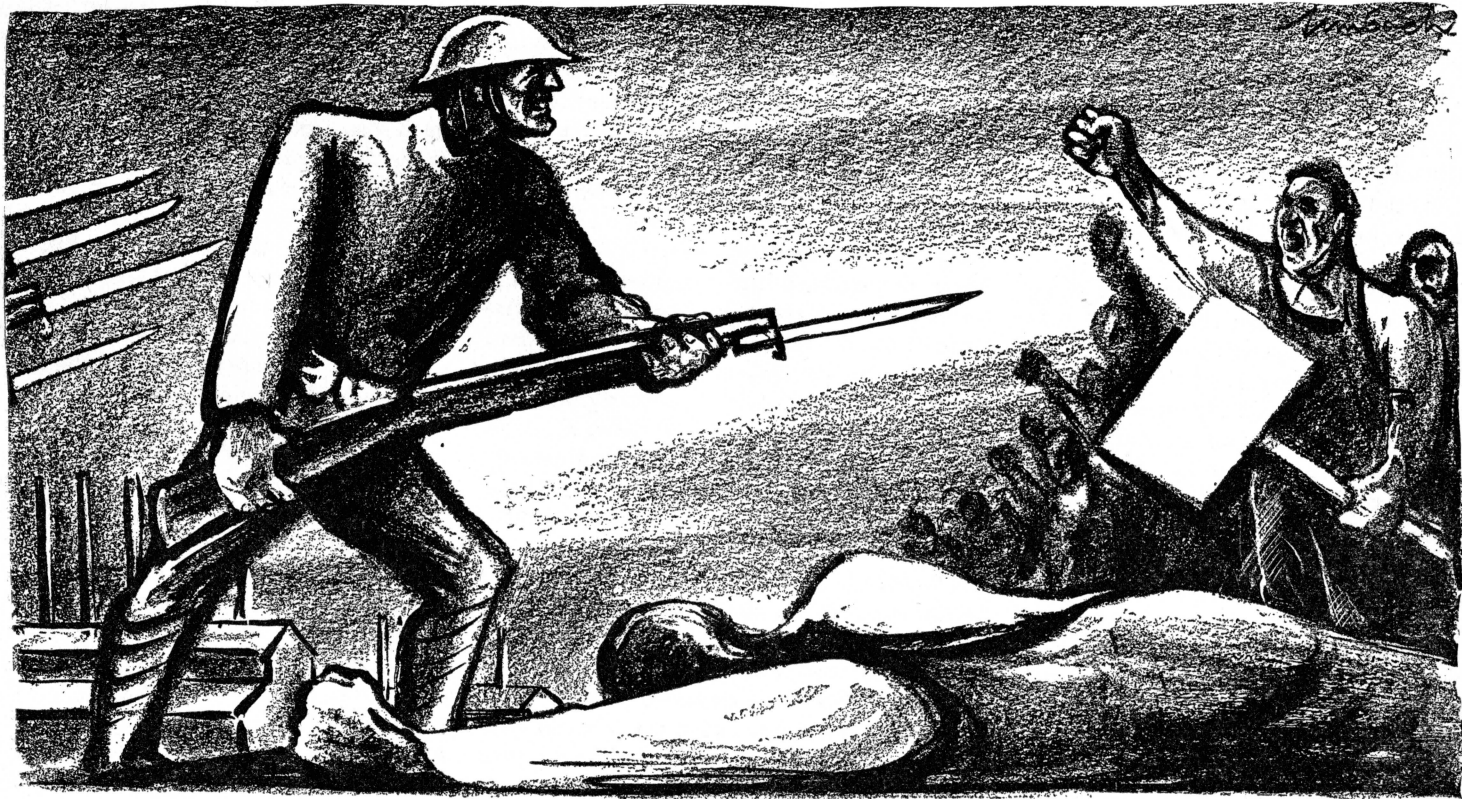


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They, as workers, have nothing to gain by obeying these orders; they merely help to fasten the halter of capitalism more securely about their own necks and split the unity of the workers. The Guard itself gives them nothing to brag about. Under the forty-eight-drill system, the guardsman private receives \$48 a year plus \$14 for his two weeks' duty in summer camp. However, in 1934 he drilled forty-eight times but was only paid for thirty-six drills, with an additional 15-10-5 percent cut (returned to him piecemeal); he was required to attend the twelve payless drills or be discharged for various unexplained reasons. The guardsman's total pay-cut for 1934 was 43 percent. Though the pay disbursements dropped, the army appropriations increased tremendously; out of these appropriations the National Guard received increasing allotments for mechanization, in addition to various slices of money from P.W.A. and C.W.A. funds.

The claim has been made that men join the National Guard as a hobby. This may have been the case with many until 1929, but the fact is that today the small quarterly drill pay-checks are eagerly looked forward to by an increasing number. Quite often it was difficult in prosperous times to keep units up to strength; today the precariousness of existence helps to give the National Guard a false prestige as a bread-ticket and accordingly encourages a pro-fascist feeling.

Very recently the chief of staff of the army, General Douglas MacArthur, yielded to the pressure of National Guard officers for an increase in its strength; his support to the National Guard has resulted in a reciprocal support of his army budget both by the National Guard Association and the Reserve Officers Association. This three-cornered alliance of the militarists and pro-fascists maintains a lobby in Washington to fight for bigger armaments. It is, of course, supported by

the great munitions firms, by Hearst and the United States Chamber of Commerce.

Opposition is growing in the ranks of the guardsmen themselves. Recently, on several occasions, guardsmen have protested against being turned into strike-breakers. In some cases they have mutinied and been withdrawn. Several guardsmen spoke at the Chicago Convention of the League Against War and Fascism; guardsmen in Chicago and New York have made combined protests against intimidating and attacking strikers, against company fund-rackets, uniform-purchasing rackets. Men in the ranks are beginning to realize their position and see through the fog of propaganda to which they are subjected. Sooner or later the guardsmen will learn that they have a common cause with the low-paid white-collar workers, trade union men and unemployed. When that time comes, strikes in the United States will have a different outcome.

# Engineers on the Scrap Heap

MARTHA ANDREWS

**A**MONG the professional classes the engineer is being discarded perhaps more rapidly by our present economic system than any other group. Professor Shoudy, chairman of the Professional Engineers' Committee on Unemployment, estimates that half of the engineers in America are unemployed. A more precise study undertaken by the Society of Civil Engineers reveals that 40.2 percent of the civil engineers are jobless. 48 percent of the municipal engineers employed in 1927, and 76.5 percent of the engineers employed by cities on temporary or part-time work had lost their jobs, and by 1933, 90 percent of the latter had been laid off. Since almost half of the engineers in the country are civil engineers, these figures may be considered representative.

These statistics, moreover, paint the situation in rosy colors because they do not take account of the throngs of young engineers who graduate every year from college, young men, who, although excellently qualified, have never worked at their profession, and for the most part never have a chance to. Mr. David Fiske estimates that the colleges could have been shut down for seven years beginning with 1930, and even then there would have been an excess of applicants for engineering positions.

The engineer as the prophet of Taylorism, mechanization and standardization is himself standardized and eliminated. The increased organization which the engineer brings into the individual factory succeeds in routinizing the engineering department and eliminating surplus technical workers. Not only is the engineer thus partially the cause of his own

unemployment, but his work also involves introducing certain qualitative changes into his economic status which operate to his own disadvantage. The extension of the division of labor means a sharper cleavage between the minority of managerial and administrative engineers at the top and the mass of routinized engineering workmen. The small-scale, all-around engineer is eliminated just as the small manufacturer before him. At the same time, the creation of surplus engineers through rationalization of technical departments operates to drive down the wages of the vast majority of technicians and substantially reduces their bargaining power on the labor market.

Consolidation and mergers likewise do their part in displacing technical staffs. The utility companies absorbed by Electric Bond and Share discontinued their engineering departments and transferred the work to the central office of the holding company. The telephone concerns are consolidating their research divisions. Du Pont, Allied Chemical and Dye, and General Chemicals are all doing the same thing. General Electric and Westinghouse built up their research departments by hiring technicians formerly employed by their subsidiaries.

The effects of the concentration of capital on the engineer are clearly shown in the field of invention. Invention is less and less an accidental factor which over short periods of time determines the direction of capitalist development, and more and more a social process whose direction is determined in advance by the big capitalist concerns. In many cases the concern not only specifies the invention required, but is able to estimate the period of

time and the monetary expenditure necessary.

Certain companies, such as the General Electric, make a practice of continually buying up patents in order to control a large enough number to prevent inventors from using their own products. Most inventions in any given field today are interlocked, and cannot be used independently. This means that a big concern, controlling a large number of patents, can buy up new inventions at whatever price it chooses to set. Naturally these companies favor their own research staffs, and in case of conflict with outside inventors, they are willing in many cases to wait until the expiration of the outside patent in order to introduce a similar invention. In addition, there is the direct sabotage of technical innovations by giant concerns with such large capital commitments in the current methods of production that they are compelled to prevent any technical change.

Thus the independent inventor is driven out of the production process and his function is absorbed by corporation research staffs.

The plight of the engineer, when the crash came and the illusion of unlimited prosperity was shattered, was doubly serious because engineering employment wanes not so much with the aggregate production as with the rate of technical change in industry and the volume of capital goods and construction activity. Thus the number of technicians dropped during the crisis more sharply than either the volume of production or the employment of skilled workers. Between 1930 and 1934 production declined 23 percent, while the number of engineers decreased from 45 to 50 percent.

Thousands of engineers were discharged,

and experienced men replaced by beginners in the interests of economy. A study of 535 unemployed professional engineers shows that the largest group is between thirty and forty years of age. More than half of the engineers were unemployed for over a year, which means that they are practically unemployable. As Dr. Harvey N. Davis, president of the Stevens Institute of Technology, explains: "There always is a demand for engineers and skilled mechanics after a depression. This is explained by the fact that the older men who were out of work lost their spirit and their skill and when business picks up and needs engineers it must take younger men."

Dean Barker of the Columbia University Engineering School excuses this practice on the ground that younger men will work for lower wages. Engineering experience, professional skill, etc., are outweighed by cash considerations, and from the social point of view the years of training and experience expended on the "unemployables" is wasted.

What happens to these unemployed engineers? The study referred to above showed that more than half were willing to work in non-engineering fields. Of these, the largest group offered to work in skilled trades, as mechanics, electricians, plumbers, etc. The most popular field in which to invest from four to six years technical training was car driving. Thus Herbert Hoover's confident belief that engineering training fits a man for anything in life is in a sense corroborated. The engineers today are demonstrating their ability to teach music, serve as janitors, and act as bouncers in night clubs.

It should be added that this survey does not indicate that an engineering training is necessarily a good preparation for other jobs. In every single line of employment, these men were underpaid. In skilled trades they earned less because they were not unionized. In clerical positions, they averaged \$70 monthly.

Of 3,511 placements on presumably full-time jobs by the P.E.C.U., 2,504 or 71.3 percent were emergency positions, and 9.2 percent engineering or semi-engineering positions.

The Society of Civil Engineers discovered that in twenty-three cities where efforts were made to assist unemployed engineers in 1933, 74 percent were totally unemployed, 9.2 percent employed in temporary engineering positions, and 7.8 percent on engineering and non-engineering made-work projects. By the end of 1933, only a tenth of those in temporary positions still retained their jobs. This is not only a serious waste of engineering training, it also means total insecurity. The engineers live from hand to mouth, drifting from one temporary job to the next.

The Society states that C.W.A. and F.E.R.A. absorbed a great many of these civil engineers at "very low salaries." The average salaries of the New York engineers placed on relief work by the P.E.C.U. amounted to \$30 a week. The engineers placed in non-relief jobs earned less on the average. The minimum relief wage thus set the standard.

A large proportion of the engineers work on civil service jobs at standard government wages. Today, there is a distinct tendency to replace the regular civil-service workers by technicians hired from the relief rolls at \$50 a month for full time. The Geodetic Survey, for instance, was formerly under civil service. Now it pays technical full-time workers \$15 a week. The Department of Sanitation laid off a large number of its employes, who were earning up to \$4,200 a year, sent them on forced furloughs, and then applied for emergency relief workers, in some cases getting the same technical men back at greatly reduced wages.

The wage-cutting drive is carried on by means of trickery and evasion. The Pennsylvania Railroad receives a \$65,000,000 grant to electrify its road. The government immediately issues a statement "protecting" the wages of the technical men employed on the project. But when the wage schedules are announced, they prove to be considerably below the minima established by the government. The P.W.A. steps into the breach and justifies the wage cuts on the grounds that the government order applies only to technical workers *on the site*, thus by implication permitting employers to cut wages "off the site" as much as they please. The federal government has made use of this subterfuge on its own projects. P.W.A. workers in the Navy Yards, who are employed only a stone's throw from the site, on warship designs, are paid considerably

less than the regularly stipulated minimum wages.

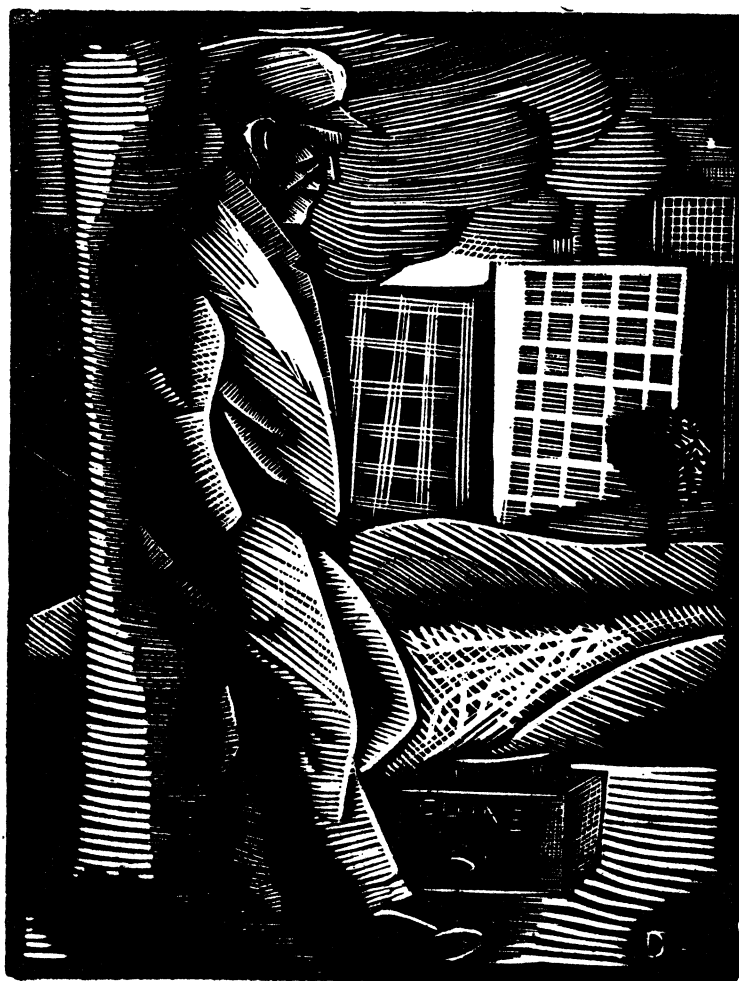
An earlier study of civil engineers showed that there is not a single state where equal salaries are paid for equal services. On what do salaries of engineers depend? A study by the Society of Mechanical Engineers sheds interesting light on this problem:

The difference in earning power between men whose work is exclusively technical and those who combine with their technical ability the capacity to handle independent business or to manage men or affairs is great—so great as to indicate the importance of most engineers seeking to develop themselves in this respect, and of engineering schools bending their curricula somewhat to this end.

Thus the most successful engineers are technicians only in training and name, and business men in practice.

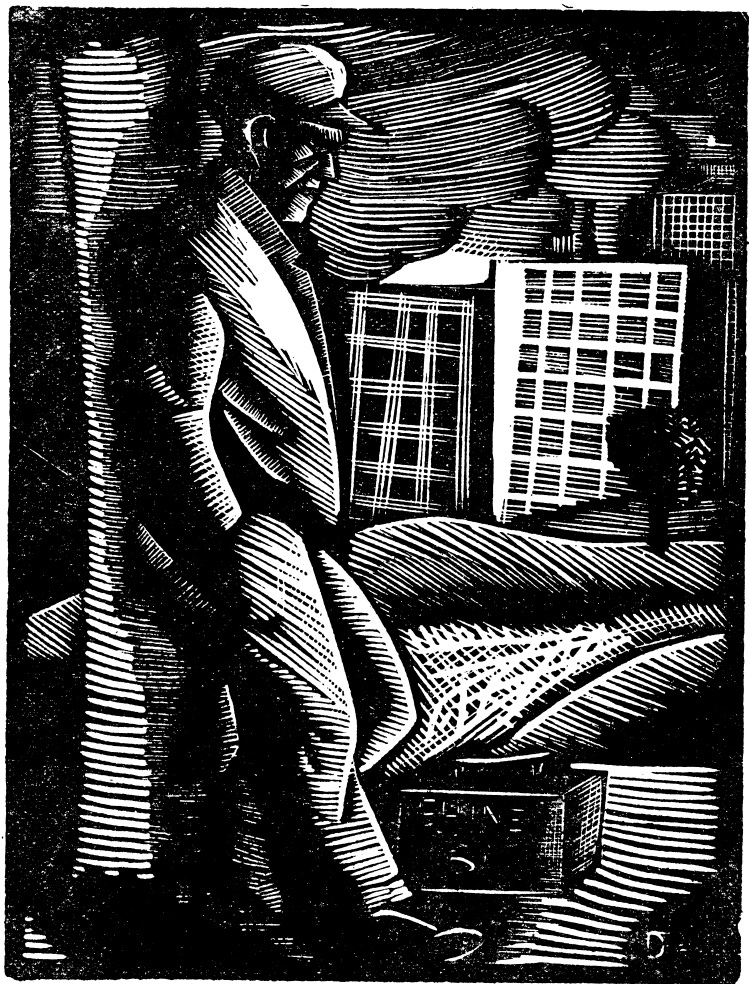
Turning to unemployment data, we find a sharp gap between the top managerial groups and the mass of engineers concentrated in the lower paid, non-managerial groups:

Approximately 8 percent only of those who were in administrative positions in the state, county and city services were unemployed as of December 31, 1933, whereas 58 percent of the inspection staff, of those engaged in surveying and of those engaged in drafting had been laid off. . . . Employes (of engineers in private practice and their organizations) were 40 percent unemployed on January 1, 1932 and 86 percent on December 31, 1932. (Confidential Report on the Effect of the Depression on Civil Engineers, October, 1934.)



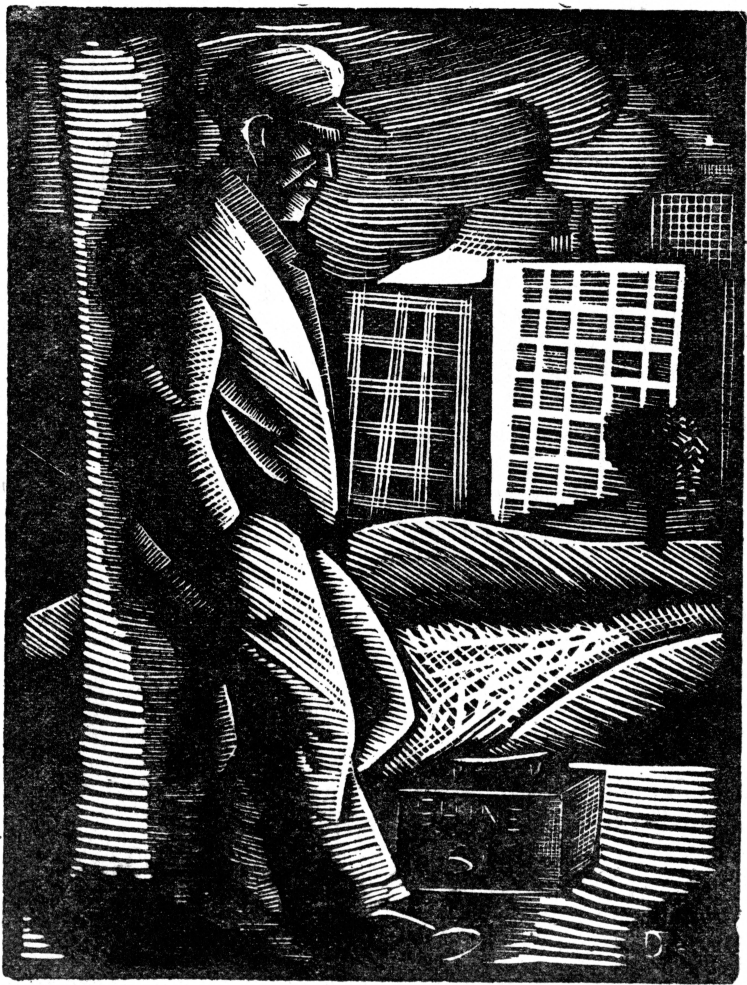
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In spite of considerably better academic training, the young engineer has much worse prospects than the generation which preceded him. The five non-managerial groups of engineers averaged from \$1,200 to \$3,500, and 70 percent of these men were earning salaries equal to or less than the average. The young engineer must thus either advance into the well-paid administrative and managerial positions or face a condition of chronic unemployment, low wages, and insecurity. Studies show that the best way to get employment is through personal connections, and in the case of young men, connections established in college. A preliminary analysis of positions held by graduates of certain engineering schools, shows that the social prestige of the college constitutes a better guarantee for advancement in the profession than its professional standing.

There are 175 engineering societies in the United States. To what extent are they conscious of the problems facing the engineering profession and what do they propose to do?

The American Society of Civil Engineers, which is the parent organization of all the others, includes in its membership not only engineers but employers, managers and business men as well. The other societies are equally catholic in this respect.

The A.S.C.E. maintained a permanent lobbyist on its payroll and agitated for the R.F.C. and later for the public-works program. It wanted Congress to earmark \$22,000,000 for the Coast and Geodetic Survey to be used for employment under the C.W.A. This project was actually used to cut engineers' wages down to \$15 a week. The Society sponsored a National Committee for Trade Recovery with a thousand members, which attempted to determine locally the amount of public works which had been deferred and which should "properly go forward as worthwhile projects suitable for assistance in the form of federal credit." Weekly memoranda were sent to the President. In January, 1933, the Society took an active part in demanding the liberalization of the credit provisions of the R.F.C. Later it lobbied for passage of the N.I.R.A.

Persistent efforts have been made to see that engineers be employed on the administrative staffs of government engineering projects. The Society emphasizes that it proposes to use engineers normally employed in private practice and "not deemed to be destitute." The A.S.C.E. succeeded in obtaining the passage of an administrative ruling to the effect that engineering administrators on C.W.A. work "need not be subject to the definitions of destitution and should be paid salaries larger than those paid on the basis of relief." Thus the Society spent a great deal of time and money in protecting the interests of the capital goods industries and the minority of managerial and administrative engineers.

In October, 1931, the big four engineering societies established a committee of forty called the Professional Engineers Committee on Unemployment which was supposed "to do

what it could to save unemployed engineers in the metropolitan area of New York." During the two years of its existence, this committee obtained contributions of \$160,000; spent \$33,000 in salaries to destitute engineers employed on its own staff; and was instrumental in obtaining \$738,000 worth of relief from the various New York agencies. Thus a great part of its activity consisted in acting as a "middleman" between the relief agencies and the unemployed engineers. As far as its actual placements are concerned, the salaries received by such engineers were lower than salaries obtained by individual bargaining. The committee could not be accused of safeguarding the wage standards of the engineer. Finally, it extended cash relief in loans not exceeding \$3 to needy individuals in addition to meal tickets, clothing, etc. Nor could the committee be accused of extravagance.

While the big societies adopt a mask of simulated indifference toward all economic matters outside of very narrowly conceived professional interests, in reality they are exceedingly anxious to prevent the engineer from organizing. Thus Mr. Jones of General Electric writes in a round-table discussion printed in *The Electric West* for June, 1934:

Engineers as a group have not been discriminated against in the exercise of some of the revolutionary things which have been done during the past year. They may, however, have been the victims of the results of interference by government agencies with private business, but organizing as a body for correcting some of the evils, I believe, will not accomplish a great deal. My opinion is that the real objectives of engineering organizations should be the promotion and maintenance of high technical standards and high standards of professional ethics.

In this round-table discussion, and in the Durable Goods and Employment Report of the A.S.M.E. of October, 1934, as well, the viewpoint is continually presented that "public works are detrimental because they compete with private industry" and that they "will undermine all possibility of sufficient returns." The engineers are urged by the A.S.M.E. and the A.E.C. to bring pressure to boost the durable goods industries, where the greatest number of jobless engineers were previously employed. The engineers are asked to select projects, bring them to the attention of the national government, and urge that these projects be turned over to private enterprise.

No substantial increase in the sales volume of the durable goods industries can be expected until public confidence is restored and private individuals begin to use their resources of capital and credit in new undertakings. The molding and directing of public opinion is an imperative requirement to the success of such an undertaking. (From the Durable Goods and Employment Report. October, 1934.)

How is this public opinion to be molded? Dr. Virgil Jordan, President of the National Industrial Conference Board, outlined the economic theory which engineers should hold in a speech before the American Institute of Electrical Engineers in October, 1934, which

was generally approved by the leadership of the big societies. The basis of the present economic crisis in the learned doctor's opinion is a mass psychosis.

The mob, or the masses—what I like to call that terrible abortion of the industrial revolution—born of the sudden mating of science and nature, abruptly projected into a world which it did not create, which it took no part in creating, and which it does not understand, that mass, that mob, is unconsciously searching today for escape from its responsibilities and the struggle for existence imposed by its relentless realities of life, trying in many ways to return to the womb of passive, effortless gestation from which it sprang.

Among the hundred-odd engineering organizations in the country, there is only one which openly advocates economic organization of the engineer. This is the Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians. Its program is briefly as follows: 1. Immediate work or cash relief for technical men. 2. An adequate public works program. 3. Unemployment insurance.

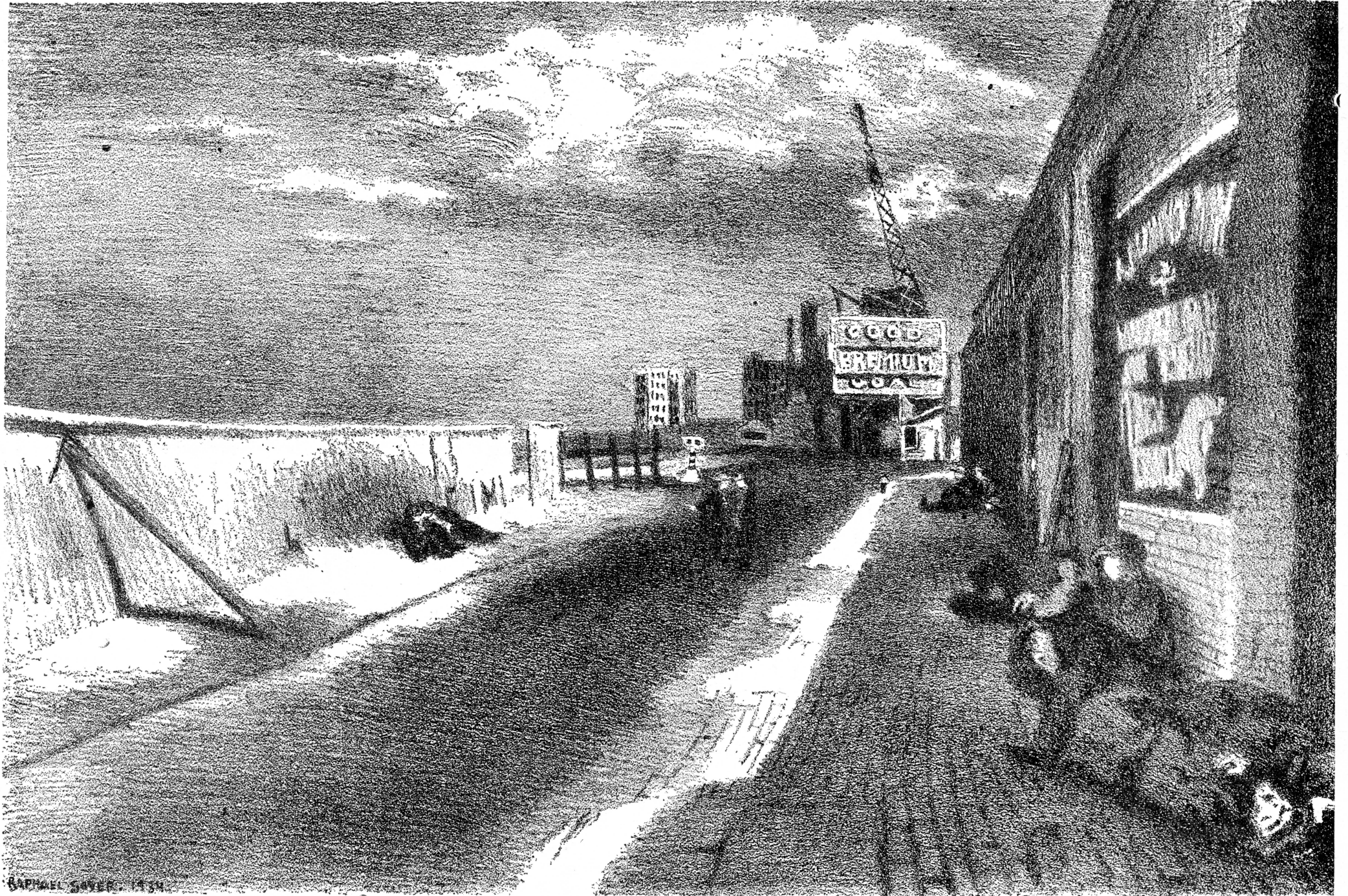
The Federation has fought against the wage cuts and unfair practices directed against engineers on relief jobs. At the hearings on the Architects and Engineers Code, the Federation fought against the proposed minimum of fifty cents an hour for architects and forty cents an hour for engineers, requesting a weekly minimum of \$30 for beginners; \$1.45 an hour for junior technicians, and \$1.65 an hour for senior technicians. As a result of the tactics of the employers and their allies, the big engineering societies, all reference to wage minima for technicians was omitted from the code.

In contrast to the other engineering societies, the Federation advocates public works. Its Bulletin of June, 1934, quotes P.W.A. Administrator Ickes' statement: "Our experience . . . indicates clearly that we may not depend upon private enterprise to initiate comprehensive low-cost housing and slum clearance projects." The Bulletin's comment is: "We know today that the administrator's statement applies equally well to fields other than housing. . . ."

At the same time, the Federation is neither deceived nor satisfied by the government's program.

From the point of view of benefit to the workers of the country, the grand schemes of the P.W.A. have failed. Huge sums of money have been spent, but much of it has gone to railroads, banks, and the greatest share for armaments. Very little has gone into socially useful public works.

The Federation has a membership which compares favorably in numbers with that of some of the national societies, but the social composition of its membership is materially different. Employers are excluded from the Federation. The bulk of the Federation consists of the underpaid, overworked, or unemployed engineers who "bear the burden of the world's work," who are able technicians rather than business men, and who are, in the opinion of the officials of the conservative national societies, "a bunch of low-class engineers."



RAPHAEL SOYER. 1934.

WATERFRONT

*A Contemporary Print Group Lithograph by Raphael Soyer*



# LETTERS FROM PRISON

## From Sacramento County (Calif.) Jail

(Donald Bigham and Martin Wilson, the authors of this letter, face possible sentences from four to fifty-six years in the penitentiary on charges of criminal syndicalism in Sacramento, Calif.)

TO THE NEW MASSES:

**NINETEEN** hundred and twenty-nine—**BANG!** The stockmarket crash! Hundreds of young men and women in their teens, with lofty ambitions, began, for the first time, to feel the grip of hard times.

Florida Metropolis: Martin Wilson was working in a drafting office. He was going to be the world's greatest architect.

Georgia peach belt: Caroline Decker was going to school; she was undecided whether to become a great doctor or the wife of a future President!

Texas cotton belt: Lorine Norman was sure she wouldn't have to pick cotton all her life.

Pennsylvania steel mill: Mike Plesh, studying to be a sculptor, during his spare time. He would be the most famous sculpter of the Twentieth Century.

Indiana: Donald Bingham was going to be America's best pastry cook.

State of Washington: Jack Warnick was going to college. He would be a great chemist.

All were very young; all had come from poor families; and all had been taught to work hard, study hard,—and then they would be the masters of their own destiny. They read the newspapers and magazines, and dreamed of the day when they would be on top of the world.

The newspapers told of the Wall Street crash, and explained that Main Street hadn't been affected by Wall Street's "gambling."

The magazines told of the golden state out West called California.

But then something happened that the newspapers didn't tell about: The little shops and the big factories began to shut down.

And then the youth answered the call they had heard all their lives: Go West, young man, go West.

Thus, in this great army of youth moving on to California were six young men and women who knew little of the world, and the world knew little of them. They all found jobs in California, not as puddlers, draughtsmen, chemists, doctors, sculptors, bakers; they found jobs as harvest hands in the great valleys of California, at cheap wages and in miserable living conditions.

But they still had ambitions; their chance would come!

Wages got lower and conditions worse; and they became bitter against the system that had destroyed all high hopes.

Nineteen hundred and thirty-two: Wages for agricultural workers, 12½ cents per hour.

"How can we stand it?"—

"We must organize!"—

"We need a union!"—

"We have a union!"—**THE CANNERY AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION! STRIKE!**

Nineteen hundred and thirty-three: **STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE!**

Wages are going up, but they're still too low; **STRIKE!**

Nineteen hundred and thirty-four—Sacramento: "Arrest them; they are Communists! They led agricultural strikes and cost us a

## From Sebastian County (Ark.) Jail

TO THE NEW MASSES:

**POLICE** and vigilante terror now rules Sebastian County, where some 3,200 F.E. R.A. workers have been on strike for the last two weeks. In eastern Arkansas landlords continue their drive against share-croppers. The Excelsior Coal Corporation fired Bert Lauder milk, rank-and-file autonomy leader of the U.M.W.A., and appointees of John L. Lewis have expelled him from the union.

A Senate investigating committee has uncovered "un-American teachings that the American people ought to know about" at Commonwealth College. With a fearful eye on the labor storm centers and Commonwealth College, vested interests are pushing a sedition bill in the state legislature. This is to be topped off with a sales tax and a sterilization law.

The answer of responsible officials of the State Federation of Labor and the Brotherhoods to this capitalist attack has been to join



Phil Wolfe

million dollars in wage increases. They are criminal syndicalists; they want a workers' government."

Those six youths from six states, no longer in their 'teens but in their twenties, meet now in jail in Sacramento. They still have ambitions; ambitions to create a new society where all will have a chance to do great things, not for individual glory, but for the whole of mankind.

Puddlers, draughtsmen, cotton-pickers, doctors, sculptors, bakers—**JAIL BIRDS!**

Nineteen hundred and thirty-five comes in: Without clothes; without food; without homes.

?

**HOLY BLUEHEADED JESUS!  
CHANGE THE WORLD!**

hands with the fascist bands in an offensive against struggling unemployed workers and croppers. These "labor leaders" have pledged themselves to voluntary arbitration. But the rank-and-file trade unionists have answered with actions. At Fort Smith two local union heads, affiliated members of the A.F. of L., were taken for a ride by thugs and beaten because they supported the relief workers' strike. U.M.W.A. locals have given aid financially and otherwise to the striking unemployed.

The Sebastian County relief workers' strike spread fear among the coal operators, landlords, and officials. For the first time in history, workers of Fort Smith area have joined in struggle with the miners and impoverished farmers in south Sebastian County. The miners are aware of the need for unity. "We'll help you now; you help us in the struggle for autonomy and a new contract." The unemployed have looked to the unions

rearrested Monday, Feb. 18, on a second charge of "barratry." Fines and jail sentences are possible on both charges of barratry and anarchism. Appeal bond on the anarchy charge is \$2,000. Bond on the barratry charge is \$1,200.

The Masonic Temple and American Legion Hut were used as recruiting stations for the fascist forces by the city and county officials. All volunteers, called "representative citizens" by the press, were deputized and armed by Sheriff Jack Pace. Official announcement that relief projects would open appeared in the papers. "Protection" was promised those who wished to return to work.

On Monday, Feb. 18, the workers were gathered on a vacant lot preparing for the second county-wide hunger march. The mayor came down to tell the workers they shouldn't strike "against the government" and that there "would be no march." The workers

answered: "We will march!" American Legionnaires rode the streets, their cars bristling with rifles and machine guns.

Just before marching, Reverend Reed, active striker, asked the workers to join him in prayer. The prayer was never finished. Police with machine-guns, drawn revolvers, tear gas, sawed-off shotguns, made their rush. "Representative citizens" stood in reserve. Seven arrests were made. Two more arrests followed during the day. At the time of this writing, all are being charged with barratry. Among those held are Reverend Claude C. Williams, who was expelled from his church at Paris, Arkansas, because of union activity; Reverend Reed, George Edwards of the L.I.D., and the writer.

The working class of Sebastian County, Arkansas, has learned a lesson in solidarity. The first relief strike in Sebastian County will not be the last. **HORACE BRYAN.**

## From Ellis Island

TO THE NEW MASSES:

**ON JULY 7, 1915,** I landed at Ellis Island. I was fifteen years old. After taking a good look at the lady representing "liberty," I was taken to Ellis Island for further questioning, because of my youth. Finally, after a board of special inquiry had taken about fifteen days to find out that I was supplied with money for one year's support, a social worker called out my name: "Christ Popoff, take your belongings. You are going to your brothers in Syracuse!"

I nearly collapsed when I heard the good news.

Three years before, the Balkan League, comprising Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro, had declared war on the sick man of Europe, presumably to free the Macedonian people from the "terrible Turk." The "Christian" robbers succeeded and our part of Macedonia was occupied by the Greeks. Our joy was boundless; long were the festivals with the Greek soldiers. "Freedom at last." But for peasants and workers freedom bestowed by the bourgeoisie is an optical illusion. Our "liberators" had been there not quite two years when we received the news that the Greek Parliament had passed a law, with royal approval, making illegal the existence of any other schools but Greek.

In March, 1914, a Nomatarch<sup>1</sup> had come to our little Macedonian village and read an order in Greek to our local village head, stating that he was there to close the school, and all children must in future attend the Greek school or nothing. About a hundred of the boys and girls (of which I was one) hurled a challenge at the Nomatarch. We

<sup>1</sup> Military constable appointed by War Council.



Phil Wolfe



Phil Wolfe



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*Phil Wolfe*

# LETTERS FROM PRISON

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*Phil Wolfe*

When I was four years old the Turks had burned the houses of all Komitadjis,<sup>2</sup> and ours was not exempted. The peasants and proletarians had flocked to our aid, but the misfortune was so widespread that I wonder how we survived. In 1908 the Turks, led by the Young Turk Party, succeeded in taking political control of the country. Amnesty was granted to all outlaws known as Komitadjis. A modicum of safety and liberty was enjoyed by the masses for a very short time, but soon the Young Turk Government began arresting our Macedonian teachers on some pretext or other. . . .

It is October, 1915. The workers at the Continental Can Co. are beaten by the police, ferociously, without discrimination as to age or sex. I run home not knowing what to do, lay my head on the table and cry. George, the eldest brother, comes from work and wants to know what has happened that I am crying. I tell him the police were beating people just as badly and perhaps a little worse (because they hit women too), than the Turkish or Greek police were doing in Macedonia. He put his arm around my shoulders, trying to comfort me, insisting that American police would not club anybody unless they were doing something immoral or outright criminal. He shook his head, looking me straight in the eyes, smiled and said, "Foolish boy, crying because the police are clubbing bums who are making trouble all the time. They want more money and eight hours a day; and my brother, who did not cry when beaten by the Greek police, cries for people he does not even know."

Later, I worked in steel mills, construction,

<sup>2</sup> The popular expression for the Committee for Liberation of Macedonia.

mines, etc. I had married, and already we had three boys and things were going just like they do in every home of the proletarians. It is constant struggle. The 1929 depression hit the United States, shattering the giant illusion entertained by many workers about U. S. exceptionalism. In 1930 I was laid off from the railroad, where I had worked for two years. Because of my knowledge of a few foreign languages, I found work as an interpreter.

It is January, 1932: The city of Syracuse lays off eighty-six ashmen and makes an attempt to force the block-men to do the work of the ashmen. It was scabbing de luxe on the part of the officials, inasmuch as the block-men were working for private households and not for the city. A meeting was called at Central High School Auditorium. Mr. H. Smith of L. C. Smith Typewriter Company, and a banker spoke, first endeavoring to explain to the assembled block-men the necessity for taking ashes out, pleading poverty for the city treasury. Mr. Norton of the Syracuse Chamber of Commerce was the next speaker. He dwelt on the subject of loyalty of employes to employer. Some misleaders spoke too, mildly condemning the action of the city administration, but failed to make a call for a strike, thereby condoning the action of the officials. It was a downright betrayal, and the block-men saw through it and asked me to make a good explanation of the unbearable conditions the city was trying to force upon workers who were not even employed by the city. I could not shirk my duty to the working class, so I took the floor and in that fifteen minutes' time that I spoke explaining to them how they were being turned into scabs by the bosses' demagoguery, the

tide turned in our favor; a strike was called and won.

Just eight months later I was arrested on August 13, 1932, at my home. Nothing was taken but my library of about a thousand books. After going through the third degree for five days, they succeeded in breaking my body, but not my proletarian will. Finally the charge was complete: aiding and encouraging an alien to become a citizen of the United States.

On such a ridiculous charge I stood trial and the twelve "good men and true" returned a verdict of guilty as charged. Hon. Judge Grover Moscowwitz, substituting for Judge Cooper, Northern District of New York at Utica, New York, spoke the words "two years." The two years passed at Lewisburg, Pa. I was punished for something I did not do; yes, for a crime which is not found on the statute books of the U. S. codes.

But I am really guilty of a crime of an entirely different character. I cannot look at workers dying of slow starvation while the bosses are piling ever higher and higher profits. No, I cannot turn traitor to my class! I live and shall die with and for the working class.

To the bosses I am a dangerous revolutionist to be deported as an incorrigible. My time was up July 10, 1934. Instead of being freed after paying my debt to capitalistic society, an immigration officer waits for me at the door. It is Ellis Island again, only this time it is not special board of inquiry to let me in, but special persecution, discrimination, oppression, segregation, all because I became a seasoned class-conscious worker.

CHRIST POPOFF.

# Peat-Bog Soldiers

HANNS EISLER

IT IS deep twilight on the peat bogs. The prisoners of the Papenburg State Concentration Camp straighten up and shoulder their shovels. Another day of back-breaking toil done with. Under the sharp commands of the S.A. guards, the prisoners, begin to move,—back to the prison, singing Nazi military songs. The reluctant low-voiced tones contrast sharply with the words that are full of high-sounding, nationalist sentiments. The Nazis shriek for more spirit, for louder singing. But the long shuffling line scarcely responds. The singing is as inaudible as before. It is not their song. They feel no lift in these words.

And then one day, new words begin to appear in place of the old. The tune is the same, but now the words begin to have meaning. The prisoners have discovered a new method of guarded communication. At first the new song spreads slowly, almost im-

perceptibly—and like all spontaneous collective movements, it seems to spring from a dozen places at once. Then it gathers momentum and soon all the Papenburg inmates are singing the new words.

But even this is not enough. The new words begin to be improved upon. Some of the more advanced prisoners begin new texts and even new music. This new music springs from the 16th and 17th-century peasant uprisings, and the Thirty Years' War, carried into the present by the young people's movement of Germany and remembered by some of the Papenburg prisoners as more fitting for their needs.

Underground, hidden from the eyes and ears of the police guards, the new song is handed about from prisoner to prisoner. In stolen, dangerous moments, small groups collect and rehearse.

Then, suddenly, seemingly from nowhere,

a new song bursts from the prisoners of Camp No. 1 (there are five camps at Papenburg) on the march. Immediately, the other camps take it up. The music is smuggled to the other barracks and before the Nazi guards can realize what has happened, all of Papenburg prison is singing the Peat-Bog Soldiers. Many storm troopers, affected by the song, take copies home with them. The police scrutinize the Peat-Bog Soldiers in order to find communist or socialist meaning in it, but on the surface the words are harmless.

Far and wide to the horizon  
Heath and bog are everywhere.  
Not a bird sings out to cheer us,  
Knotted oak-trees, bald and bare.

*We are the Peat-Bog soldiers.  
We march with our spades to the bog.*

Where the heath is bare and barren  
Stands our lonely camping ground . . .

In the morning go the squadrons  
To the bog to shovel peat—  
Longing for home we labor  
In the blinding summer heat . . .

But for us there's no complaining.  
Winter cannot last all year.  
One day we shall cry, rejoicing:

"Home again! At last we're here!"

*Then will the peat-bog soldiers cease  
To march with their spades to the bog . . .*

So splendid, so stirring is the new song,  
that even the population round about be-  
gins to collect on the sidelines in order to  
hear the new prisoners' song. Many storm  
troopers are so affected that they are finally  
replaced by the more reliable police troops.

Eventually, although nothing political can be  
found in the song, it is regarded as danger-  
ous and prohibited by the commander of the  
camp.

But this song cannot be eradicated. It has  
already struck roots in the German people  
outside the camp. Workers of many other  
countries are fast becoming familiar with it.  
It is a revolutionary song, created spontane-  
ously by the workers out of their very op-  
pression and fascist persecution.

# I, Jim Rogers

## *Mass Recitation—for Speaker and Chorus*

STANLEY BURNSHAW

I, Jim Rogers, saw her  
And I can believe my eyes  
And you had better believe me  
Instead of the sugary lies  
You read in the papers. I saw her  
Slip into our waiting-room  
Among us thin blank men  
And women waiting our turn.  
But none of us looked like her  
With her starved-in face, dazed eyes,  
And the way she clung to the thing  
Her arms pressed against her bosom.

Somebody told her at noon:  
*Come back tomorrow! Too busy!  
Too many here already!*

And she walked out, clutching the thing  
(In these days of marking time,  
While the whole tense land marks time),  
And crept in again the next morning.  
(None of us knew she had trudged  
Two times three cold miles;  
And I can't explain how she did it . . .  
But I guess her desperate question  
Made enough of fire to fuel  
The parcel of flesh and bones  
And breath that stood for her body).  
She needed to know why the thing  
Warmed by the rags in her arms  
Wouldn't answer her any more,  
Wouldn't make sound or movement.

She uncovered a pale limp baby.  
The man who looked at it gasped—  
Its arms as thin as my finger,  
The filmy blue eyes staring. . . .

"It's dead," he told her. She looked,  
Glares, and fell to the floor.  
Some gathered up her body,  
Others entered a record:  
*One infant, American, starved.*  
*Address—? They'd wait to ask.*

They waited, asked; she answered:  
"What do you mean, she's dead?  
I'll never let you thieves  
Bury my child alive.  
Show her to me!" That evening  
She escaped to god-knows-where—  
But I've been trying to learn  
In these days of marking time,  
While the whole tense land marks time;  
And I've heard enough already  
To hold some people guilty.  
All through Charles Street I trailed her,  
Where she'd lived the last half-year  
In a warm, windowless room  
Feeding the year-old baby  
Her husband had planted in her  
On a frantic anniversary:  
One year his Jersey mill  
Had closed down its lists of men . . .  
(In these days of marking time,  
While the whole tense land marks time).  
One morning he walked to South Ferry,  
Begged a nickel from someone  
And jumped aboard. The ferry  
Whistled five minutes later,  
Screamed out: *Man overboard!* . . .

But I guess it didn't surprise her:  
There's something in being twenty.  
She rolled up her things, and somehow  
Made a new home, and somehow  
Gave birth to child . . . then, of all things,  
Landed a job—as a wrapper  
Of toys, stockings, and whatnot  
In a Fourteenth-street store basement . . .  
(In these days of marking time,  
While the whole tense land marks time).

Every day: 8 till 8 . . .  
Not much time for a mother  
To bring up the young of a nation  
And make them fit for living. . . .  
But she would never complain:  
"Twas they complained about her:  
*Too weak, too slow, wastes time.*

"You'll be so much happier, Miss,  
In a job that won't drain all your strength!  
Good-day, and the firm's best wishes!"

And that's how she came to Charles Street:  
Too damned proud to go begging,  
Too womanly weak to rebel  
Alone against this fierce world  
That fell down over her head:  
And now has caved in her heart  
And maybe blacked out her mind—

Somewhere on streets of this town,  
In these days of marking time,  
Alone and maybe thinking  
To follow her man in the sea,  
But maybe to live instead,  
She's walking now. And if I  
Knew where to point my voice to  
I'd yell out: Where are you, answer!  
Don't run away!—Wait, answer!  
Whom are you hiding from?  
The miserly dog who fired you?  
Listen: you're not alone!  
You're never alone any more:  
All of your brother-millions

(Now marking time) will stand by you  
Once they have learned your tale!

—If any of you who've listened,  
See some evening walking  
A frail caved-in white figure  
That looks as if one time  
It flowed with warm woman-blood,  
See her ghosting the street  
With a film of pain on her eyes,  
Tell her that I, Jim Rogers,  
Hold out whatever I own  
A scrap of food, four walls—  
Not much to give but enough  
For rest and for arming the bones—  
And a hard swift fist for defence  
Against the dogs of the world  
Ready to tear her down. . . .  
Tell her I offer this  
In these days of marking time,  
Till our numberless scattered millions  
In mill and farm and sweatshop  
Straining with arms for rebellion,  
Tie up our forces together  
To salvage this earth from despair  
And make it fit for the living.

# Poet and Revolutionist

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

**M**OISHE NADIR, whom thousands of workers will gather to honor, and to most of whom his tall figure and strong, ruddy face is already familiar, can serve as a type of the proletarian poet. He was born in Galicia, eminently a peasant land. Even the Jews in its small towns were rustics and occupied a peculiarly exploited position in Jewry.

As a matter of fact, Moishe Nadir won a position first as a humorist, partly because he wrote in the Galician dialect, the very sound of which, like Negro dialect in the days of the minstrel shows, provoked laughter. His father was a tutor in the old country, an occupation which, when he migrated to America, reduced him to the lowest ranks of the proletariat. Moishe was fourteen when he came to this country. At eighteen he sailed back to Europe, knocking about in Belgium, Switzerland, Austria and Germany for four years as an itinerant photographer. On his return to America he earned his living as a window-cleaner and later as an embroidery worker on reefers and children's jackets. Sweatshops were universal in those days. The Jewish workers were as yet little organized, and Moishe Nadir, reacting against sweatshop misery, was one of the leaders in the organization of a union in his industry, the Reefers and Children's Jacket Makers' Union. In his organizational work, as in his writing at that time, he had little class consciousness. In the one, he reacted as an outraged human being, in the other as a satirist. He was a rebel, but

his rebellion took vague forms. He was an individualist. The philosophy of anarchism appealed to him, but he looked to the socialists for an organization of human society capable of fostering human freedom. His first mature writing appeared in an anarchist publication, *Die Frei Arbeiter Stimme*. The first political group with which he identified himself was the Voice of Labor, a socialist youth organization in which he later felt a deep disappointment—it was so prophetically full of young political careerists, some of whom are today to be found among the Old Guard of the decaying Socialist Party.

During the war years he was an anti-militarist and lost a job for his views. With the organization of *The Freiheit*, whose staff he joined, his political views crystallized. The test for him came with the Arab rebellion in Palestine against English imperialism, of which the Jews were the victims. Then, in the shock of that disaster which forced a reconsideration of the Zionist enterprise on all thinking Jews, the last shreds of Jewish nationalism were burned away and he felt himself completely and unalterably within the world revolutionary movement.

His literary development followed a parallel line. He began writing very early, and his first appearance was as a humorist. He told the bitter truths of his personal experiences and these self-revelations were so mordantly expressed, with such eccentric honesty, that combined with the quaint Galician idiom that he used, they were catalogued as humor

and gave him an almost immediate vogue. For a long time his expression was individual. His influences, unlike those of the earlier Yiddish poets, were German rather than Russian and Polish, and he considered himself and was considered a man apart. He did not belong to any of the constantly separating, shifting and recombining literary cliques of which the Yiddish bohemia was and is today full. He was, until he became a proletarian writer, an arch-individualist, honored as a poet, respected as an essayist-dramatist and feared as a critic. There was a time, when he was doing drama reviews, when he had to disguise himself to get into the theatres, the doormen having been instructed to keep him out. At one time he got into Thomashefsky's Theatre by going through the stage door disguised as the "star." He tried all literary forms and won a commanding position in each.

The transition from individualist verse to proletarian writing was severe, as it is for every writer who makes the turn, but it brought him, as it has brought others, to a new literary flowering. His fertility, to an American poet accustomed to a small output, is amazing. This is due, in part, to the special situation in which the Jewish proletarian writer finds himself. The world of Yiddish literature is still large enough for a writer to flourish in, but it is compact enough to keep the writer in touch with his audience. There is not the separation by distance, machinery, and a complicated publishing apparatus, which

is one of the tragedies of the writer elsewhere. Where the average American poet is content with a sale of two hundred and fifty copies of his book, and no contact with an audience except a few scented letters brimming over with gush, the Yiddish poet can expect a sale of several thousand. He is recognized in the street and the cafes; he is asked to read at workers' meetings. Indeed, few of the Yiddish workers' meetings are carried on without a reading of proletarian poetry.

This situation, to the envy of any American poet acquainted with it, is characteristic of the revolutionary movement everywhere. In America, even for the poet writing in English, it is providing a new audience as well as a new subject matter. Those who wish to know how the revolutionary movement honors its cultural leaders will have a good object lesson in the celebration at St. Nicholas Arena on Saturday night, March 9.

LYNCH FRUIT

(Poets, get your fiddles tuned)  
On the tree blooms the rope blossom.  
(Johann, one of your Vienna waltzes!)  
On the noose gleam dark necks.  
Strained eyeballs cry alarm.  
The plowshare stalks an earthquake.  
With the ropes dance the dead.  
The stake shakes its red comb  
And crows over the grain of death.

SPARK AND TEAR

Scorn is clean, is dry  
'Tis the powder in my horn  
But the moistly brooding "I"  
Menaces my scorn!  
Will self-pity drench it  
Or will hate's spark blast self-pity?

Here drops my tear,  
Far from my powder splashes.  
Let not shrug or twitch direct it.  
Dry must stay my powder!—  
This my necessary art,  
To keep spark and tear apart.

WORLD

"The Night Has a Thousand Eyes"

I have only two eyes.  
In a thousand I am blind.  
With friend Heraclitus, blind as I  
I watch the eternal flux.

I have only two ears.  
In a thousand I am deaf,  
though every grain of dust  
symphonically sings.

Two tired legs have I,  
On a thousand I sought fortune.  
Ten times I've circled earth  
and ten times, bare, returned.

In the translations above I have been able to do no more than paraphrase the thought, to transpose Nadir's vigorous and original images into some relative English equivalents. I have made no attempt to reproduce the rhythm and the verse arrangements and inevitably some of the nuances are lost.

# Correspondence

The N.S.L. School

TO THE NEW MASSES:

The National Students League School begins a curriculum unparalleled in contemporary American education—one designed to make the student and adult aware of social realities, of the issues facing students today, as well as the general problems of contemporary society.

The courses offered include: Modern Economic Theory (Prof. Addison T. Cutler); the Economics of Fascism (R. J. Kenton); Negro Folk Literature (Prof. M. E. Barnick); Race Evolution and Human Nature (Dr. Mark Graubard); Education and the Social Order (Prof. J. E. Mendenhall); Modern Soviet and American Music (Elie Siegmeister); Imperialism: Theory and Practice (Harry Gannes). There are also courses in psychology, poetry and philosophy.

Fees for the six weeks' session, which begins on March 4, are fifty cents per course. Information as to scholarships, extra-curricular activities, as well as the complete schedule of courses, can be obtained by writing to the N. S. L. headquarters at 257 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

EDWARD ALEXANDER, JR.

Los Angeles Library "Rules"

TO THE NEW MASSES:

I recently came across the following excerpt in regard to gifts of magazines to the branches of the Los Angeles Public Library. I quote directly from a recent bulletin issued to branch librarians:

"All magazines accepted as gifts for branches must first be approved . . . before being circulated or placed with reading room magazines.

"It is not sufficient to know that the magazine is on file at the Central Library, as sometimes a periodical is accepted for the Central Library as the *one copy* (emphasis as in text) to be in the system, and is not to be in any Branch Library.

"For example: NEW MASSES is on file in the Sociology Department and is given to patrons for reading in the room when requested, but is *not* (emphasis as in text) to be in any branch. It is very radical and there is even a question of continuing it at the Central Library."

I hardly need point out that gifts of movie magazines or Christian Science literature are not turned down.

JAMES MACCAULIFFE.

Los Angeles, Calif.

"Museum of Social Change"

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Students who come to Commonwealth College, Mena, Ark., this spring, for training in farm organization work, will be shown a rope with a hangman's knot in it. This rope was intended for members of the Commonwealth delegation sent to help organize the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union in eastern Arkansas.

The thugs to whom the rope belonged lost their nerve and contented themselves with beating up Lucien Koch, Commonwealth Director, and Bob Reed, a student. Now the rope is in the Museum of Social Change, the only workers' museum in America, located on the college campus. This rope is part of the evidence that organizing farmers, in the face of lynch terror, is a serious and exciting as well as an essential task.

CHARLOTTE MOSKOWITZ,  
Executive Secretary.

Commonwealth College, Mena, Ark.

Revolutionary Films

TO THE NEW MASSES:

NYKino, the film production unit of the Theatre of Action, is now engaged in active production. It finds itself in need of persons who have had previous film experience and can devote full time to the production of revolutionary films. Writers who are interested in doing scenarios for short films would also be welcome. Applicants may register at the Theatre of Action, 42 East 12th Street, New York City.

LEO T. HURWITZ, Sec'y.

The Captive Coal Miners

TO THE NEW MASSES:

It was an instructive pleasure to read "75,000 Captive Miners" in your issue of February 20. I have lived in Pennsylvania and I still visit in the

coal regions and I can testify to the filthy social and labor conditions under which the miners are compelled to live. One must hear miners talk about the slave conditions existing in order to appreciate fully the contents of Amy Schechter's article.

West New York, N. J.

PETER FJORDALISI.

"Caesar or Nothing"

TO THE NEW MASSES:

To the rapidly growing numbers of those who are reading and studying proletarian literature in this country, Edwin Seaver's letter, "Caesar or Nothing," holds out the promise of more light on a subject upon which most of us have been in the dark. What is "true" proletarian literature? How does the materialist dialectic become the ideological basis of such a literature? What part do form and content play in the creation of such a literature? These and many other questions must be answered before we can gain a critical insight into the creative efforts of our revolutionary writers. We are looking forward with hope to an early article by Mr. Seaver.

HARVEY KANE.

From the National Biscuit Strikers

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Permit me to appeal, through the medium of your militant magazine, to all your readers and their friends to support by every means possible the strike of the National Biscuit Company employees.

For two months the six thousand workers of the Inside Bakers Union have waged a valiant fight against the combined efforts of the company and the high-handed tactics of the police. The company, having refused every offer of conciliation, is making a determined attempt to crush the Union, and is employing every possible means of coercion, intrigue, and brutal force.

I therefore ask the readers of THE NEW MASSES to boycott all National Biscuit Company products until they have settled with the union, to avoid patronizing stores handling their goods, to do everything possible to help the workers of the Inside Bakeries Union to deserved victory.

For further information please communicate with the Inside Bakeries Federal Labor Union, at 245 West 14th Street.

SECRETARY.



# REVIEW AND COMMENT

## *The Consumer Consumed*

MY first reading, some years ago, of the dry, semi-technical little bulletins issued by Consumers' Research was a memorable experience. I felt as if the ground had fallen away under my feet. Over and above the familiar, habitual sense of insecurity which I, as a member of the lower middle class, usually carried with me, it was now borne in upon me that all the articles of daily use around me, everything I wore, ate or touched, was very likely insubstantial or fake. I saw myself a poor, driven, bedeviled beast of a consumer, with loud speakers drumming at my brain from radio sets, newspaper pages and billboards, herding me toward the counters where I might take my choice of one kind of adulterated butter or another, or one or another type of lead-poisoned preserves, or shoddy shoes and clothing. With every bite of bread, I now calculated bitterly the effects of plaster-of-paris upon my innards. I was but a poor, betrayed consumer, born to suck at a bottle of diluted or impure milk and doomed to die some day and be laid away in a coffin of a quality vastly inferior to that claimed for it.

*Partners in Plunder*, by Matthews and Shallcross,<sup>1</sup> the latest of a series of books based on knowledge being gathered day by day at Consumers' Research, is designed to deepen our discomfiture about the kind of merchandise which the most "advanced" industrial system in the world furnishes. Though not too well organized, the book is freighted with a valuable cargo of information, especially in its first half, which is a detailed, documented description of certain business practices widely used in this country. The second half, a criticism—actually a prosecuting attorney's arraignment—of our Business State in its present social and political condition, *anno* 1935, is worked out along familiar lines, and need not concern us here. It is the rich stuff in the first dozen chapters, giving a *qualitative* survey of the business system, that seems priceless. All evidence is drawn, first, from laboratory tests of the cooperative and independent C. R., and second, from the very statements or confessions of the owners of the means of production and distribution (made for their own guidance) in trade and technical journals or at businessmen's banquets. It is all this material which caused General Hugh Johnson (sensibly enough from his point of view) to ask that the book be banned from the mails. It is the dynamite in the book, so far as the advertising business of publishers may be

affected, which has called forth, as I am told, a conspiracy of silence on the part of conventional book reviewers.

The grand idea of the owning class is, of course, "getting something for nothing"—not in an absolute degree, since this would be suicidal, but in good proportion. From Matthews' and Shallcross' relations of the endless subterfuge and chicanery practised regularly, we may make several general deductions about the "qualitative character" of the business system at its ripest stage. First, the goods manufactured for general consumers' use (rather than industrial or "durable" goods) are put out at a price which bears no just relation to their value and quality. Profit, in a surprising degree, is established by way of adulteration, by the admixture of harmless, but also sometimes deadly materials or chemicals, and by a kind of progressive short-changing. Price may be set often at 100 percent above cost, sometimes at 2,000 or more percent above cost (as in the case of patent-drugs or medicines). Second, the distributive system then comes in, with its sales and advertising men, its printed and broadcast propaganda, and places a further tax, often running from 50 to 100 percent, to carry the costs of exploitation.

On the score of exploitation by advertisement, the authors are exhaustive and extremely entertaining in a quiet, bitter way. We learn that a great advertising house, for instance, may be extremely "hard-boiled" in its purchasing department which buys stationary, office-furniture, printing, according to standard tests or specifications. But up front, in the Italian Renaissance rooms occupied by the copy-writers, the atmosphere is "dreamy," and perfumed, the spirit is full of changing "whims and fancies," in accordance with the need for playing upon the emotions of a vast clientele of consumer-sheep. A little alcohol, or some mud or ground rock, is "put over" in the most romantic form, in magnificent packages, to the tune of testimonials by heroes of sports or aviation or society, who usually never touch the stuff. A "subjective value," as the professors of sales-psychology call it (*vide*, John B. Watson) is administered to a little cattle-feed by telling the public that it is "popped from guns" and the price is raised 50 percent. Such is the method upon which a thousand variations are played.

In the third place, and this is basic, our remarkable knowledge of engineering technology is turned toward debasement rather than improvement of the productive system. How often engineers are besought to invent some inferior substitute, to replace a sound mate-

rial with a weaker one. The end in view, at whatever cost, is obsolescence. Automobiles, houses, pants, everything must turn obsolete as fast as possible to keep this system going. The problem now before engineers, as Matthews and Shallcross cheerfully assure us, is to perfect automobiles which will literally, suddenly and inexplicably fall apart at a predetermined moment, some time after purchase. And why not the roofs of houses and the very chairs we sit on?

Long ago, the author of *Capital* described the advance of cheap and treacherous manufacture in nineteenth century England. But this process has certainly reached its final stages of over-rottenness in our up-to-date country. Innumerable patents are garotted silently by the masters of industry; inventions are retarded in the name of exploitation; applied science is degraded by prostitute-engineers; counterfeiting of commodities becomes universal. Such methods are naturally less prevalent in heavy industry, producing plant and machinery for industrialists themselves. Yet the contradictions and weaknesses of the situation are so pressing that I wonder how even capitalists feel that they can depend upon their own system in the emergency of war. The French and British armies had their own ideas about some of the ammunition our du Ponts and Schwabs furnished them.

A fourth and most important aspect of the evidence presented in *Partners in Plunder* bears upon the *moral* character of the going profit system. The people who are hired to put arsenic and other poisons in food, knowing that they may and often do poison consumers, the gentlemen who pass their days and nights counterfeiting and misrepresenting, the copy-writers, the knights of press-agentry, the Junior Leaguers and the tennis champions who give lying testimonials about mud-packs which never caress their skins or "coffin-nails" which never touch those Boy Scout lips—what happens to all of them? A fine lot. Hundreds of thousands of them, corrupted and cynical, they will never know what true, simple human dignity may be in

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New York Forum, Room 1911, 104 Fifth Ave.

<sup>1</sup> *Partners in Plunder*, by J. B. Matthews and R. E. Shallcross. New York. Covici-Friede. \$3.

the most threadbare Soviet student or the grimmest of coal-miners.

In the line of moral degradation (to which revolutionary thinkers should pay most serious attention) nothing seems more shameful than examples which the authors give us of business society holding goods and even cultural services to a limit of "required utility." It may interest the reader to know that our privately owned radio industry has before it proposals to "decide just what is the point of musical quality beyond which average American ears and mentalities make it unnecessary to go . . ." (page 148.) Under the present régime, economies in civilization will be more and more in order.

### Approach and Arrival

*IN A PROVINCE*, by Laurens Van der Post. Coward-McCann. \$2.50.

*LEAN MEN*, by Ralph Bates. Macmillan: \$2.50.

HERE are two novels about the working class which might have served as excellent illustrations in the recent "debate" in these columns between Horace Gregory and the present reviewer on the subject of the writer's position in the revolutionary movement. Both novels are proletarian, by reason of their subject matter, and both authors might be termed revolutionary by reason of their general approach. But Laurens Van der Post is essentially a middle-class sympathizer, *i.e.*, he has "objectivity," while Ralph Bates is a worker with ideological training and revolutionary experience, *i.e.*, he is a "joiner." The consequences are pretty much what might be expected. Van der Post, writing about the exploitation of Negro workers, ends his novel statically in a mood of defeatism and pacifist moonshine, because of a single and accidental death in a minor skirmish. Bates, writing about the participation of the Barcelona dockworkers in the Spanish revolution and the temporary defeat of the proletariat, ends his novel dynamically on a

Though devoted wholly to destructive criticism, *Partners in Plunder* points unflinchingly at the need for a social organization based upon use and led in a totally different direction by workers and farmers and their more skilled representatives in the crafts and technics. It is a priceless tract for these times. The consumer who may have a paper or silver dollar left will read it with dismay, wondering how he will ever escape the ubiquitous, plundering partners. For those who are unemployed or more or less unpaid, the chances of being fleeced are smaller; there is a partial immunity—though that, to be sure, is no consolation.

MATTHEW JOSEPHSON.

note of hope and revolutionary resolve. The Englishman's book is by far the better of the two, but this is not merely because Bates writes better; Van der Post also writes well. It is because Bates' insight into his subject is big enough to encompass it. He can write like a master, while Van der Post's vision is considerably less than the magnitude of the subject he has chosen. The Dutch writer's novel ends in defeatism because its author has been defeated by incomplete understanding of his subject.

The province of Van der Post's novel is Dutch South Africa. Like the United States, this little corner of God's world also has its Negro problem. The "problem" being how to keep the Negro workers enslaved by playing off one class of the black people against the other. Van der Post shows how the efforts of the revolutionary Union of African Workers to unite Negro and white workers are fought by the white bosses, who take the law into their own hands, organize vigilante committees in the best manner of our own sunkissed state of California, and directly provoke violence and terrorism.

His idealistic young middle-class hero is a friend of Burgess, the Communist organizer of the union, and comes to his death helping Burgess to escape the vigilantes. But to what purpose? Before he dies, our hero repudiates Burgess and the union. "On your road there is only more disorder and hate and blood," he says. "I might have believed in your principles once; I don't believe in your methods."

Burgess, by the side of his fallen friend, vows: "They shall pay for this when the revolution comes." But Van der Post has the last word: "Poor unhappy child of life," he commiserates over his dead hero. "People like Burgess still sow, out of their love for the oppressed, the seeds of a terrible hate. Life is bent low with hate. But take heart. For here, where your footsteps disappear, so near that if you stretched out your hand you could almost feel them, come the feet of the generations that trample the dim future, and there may be love at their side."

With all due respect to our author's integrity, we fail to see how the vigilante thugs who murdered his white hero and corrupted

his Negro hero are going to be redeemed by love. The ability of these babies to resist the corrosion of love is simply phenomenal. Liquidation is more in their line.

Ralph Bates' *Lean Men* is a welcome relief after the soft soap in Van der Post's novel. It shows very clearly the difference of approach of a revolutionary sympathizer like the Dutch author and a genuine revolutionary proletarian like the Englishman. However much Bates may occasionally stray from the immediate theme at hand—the struggle of the Barcelona dockworkers at the time of Alphonso's abdication and the unsuccessful general strike which followed—the reader feels that it is this theme which is of paramount importance, and not the hero's occasional and perfectly natural excursions into music, love and subjectivism. And in the end, even in defeat, the author is able to snatch a positive conviction from the ruins:

Vilanova would give his message to the others. They would build up the Party, fight again soon, perhaps be defeated, no matter, the workers would lose every battle but the last.

Bates is an English worker who seems to know the docks of Barcelona better than those of Liverpool or London. He tells us that he has taken part in most of the revolutionary strikes in Spain in recent years, and it must be said that his analysis of the revolutionary situation in that country is mighty acute. His novel may be taken, at least in part, as autobiographical, and I suppose the picture of his hero, Francis Charing, the Communist organizer, is a good deal his own.

Charing is sent to Barcelona by the Comintern to form an educational center which should serve as a nucleus in the struggle for control of the Syndicates. As the revolutionary tide rises, the center grows, until at last with the abdication of Alphonso, it is able to come out into the open. Bates shows how in its very first statement, the republican government planted the seeds of strife; how the article guaranteeing liberty of religious beliefs



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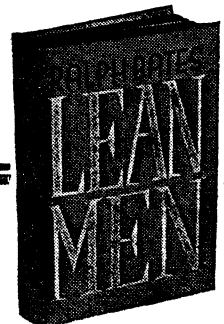
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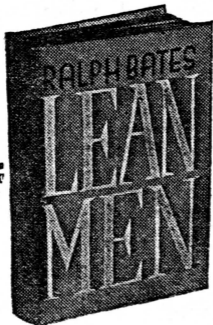


"EVERY ONE interested in the new proletarian fiction should stop and take notice. It is the most vivid and convincing of recent working-class novels."

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MACMILLAN



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**MACMILLAN**

and cults further embittered the existing ecclesiastical antagonism, and how the article guaranteeing the sanctity of private property deepened the existent divergencies between classes.

Astute assessors were already foretelling division and irresolution and, unless revolutionary action were carried to a successful conclusion, the crumbling of the republic.

In other words, the seeds of the recent civil war in Spain which resulted in the defeat of the revolutionary miners and the ascendancy of the Catholic reaction, were already planted in the government's first statement. At the same time, the "apolitical" anarchists, trained in individual feudalism but not in mass organization, were incapable of carrying on the revolution beyond the general strike, which

they called off at the request of the Civil Governor.

A strike declared in the interests of the revolution had been abandoned in order not to prejudice a republic for whose establishment they had refused their votes.

Although *Lean Men* ends in defeat, Bates remains true to the line of the genuine revolutionary novelist. He concludes his book, as we have said, on a note of high courage and resolve: the insurrection is defeated, but the revolution lives. *Lean Men* is the best novel, and the best written, that has come out of England in a long time, and after all the trash that our book clubs have imported from Great Britain, it's mighty welcome. *Lean Men* is a notable proletarian novel.

EDWIN SEAVER.

## The Communist Answer

**THE COMMUNIST ANSWER TO THE WORLD'S NEEDS**, by Julius F. Hecker. John Wiley and Sons. \$3.

IN THIS excellent volume Professor Hecker, of the University of Moscow, continues the invaluable task of making clear and understandable to the general reader the basic principles of Marxism. In his *Moscow Dialogues*, published in America last fall, Dr. Hecker discussed at length the historical background and fundamental tenets of the Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism. In *Religion and Communism*, issued at the same time, he concentrated on the Soviet attitude towards religion and produced what must be acknowledged at present as the outstanding and authoritative work in this field. Then in *Russian Sociology*, a book for the expert rather than the general reader, Professor Hecker did the very useful job of giving in detail the development and inter-relations of social theory in Russia.

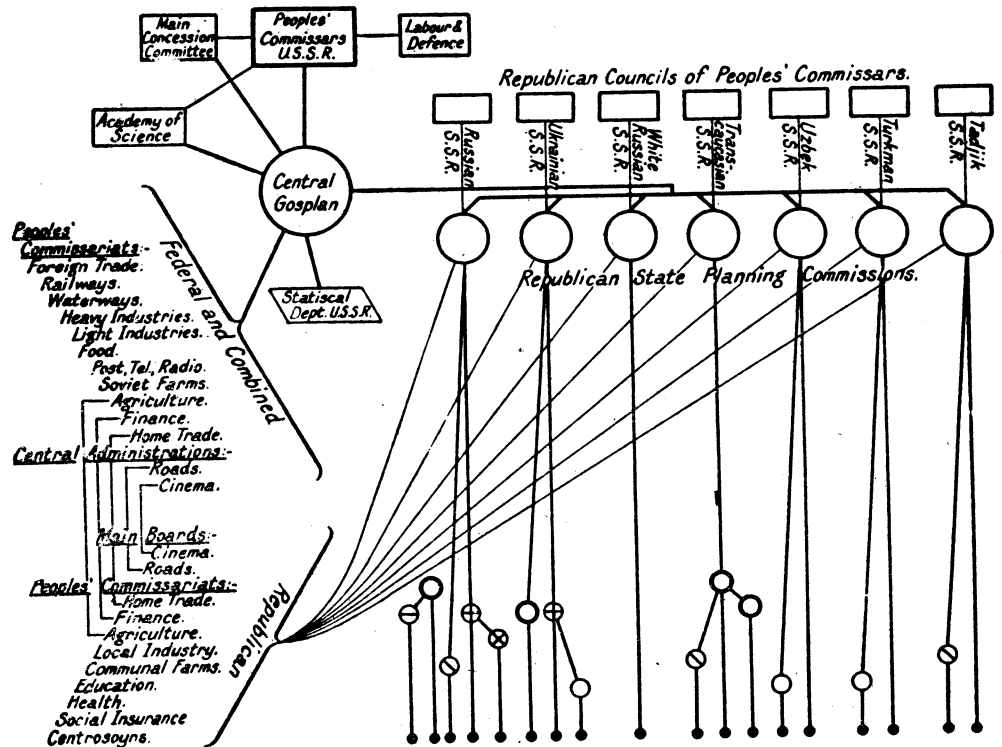
His most recent book, *The Communist Answer to the World's Needs*, uses the same dialogue form that helped to make *Moscow Dialogues* so stimulating and readable. It consists of twenty-two symposium discussions in which there participate a group of British intellectuals visiting Moscow, and Comrade Socratov, exponent of the Communist position. The English tourists include an Anglican clergyman with modernist tendencies, a liberal economist, a fascist-admiring nationalist, an expert on the Douglas social credit theory, an elderly and conservative member of the Labor Party, a so-called revolutionary socialist, and a good-natured Quaker. An American supporter of Roosevelt's New Deal also joins the conversations part of the time. While it cannot be said that the dialogues display great dramatic or artistic quality, they do serve their fundamental purpose of bringing to life what is often considered rather dull economic theory.

The discussions cover almost every angle of social and economic affairs, including special chapters on Money, Technocracy, the

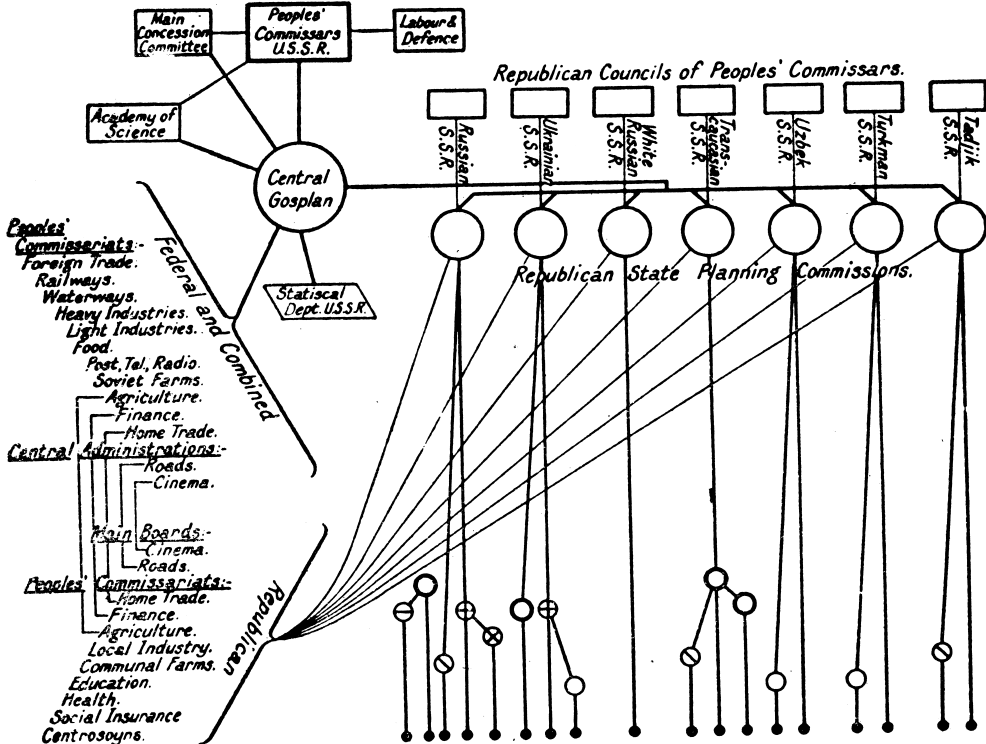
New Deal, Socialist Planning, War, Fascism, the Far East, and Communist Culture. As in the *Moscow Dialogues*, Socratov makes it abundantly clear that the great and final end of Communism, in Soviet Russia and everywhere else, is the development of a new and higher form of culture in which art, literature, and science will flourish as never before in human history. But it takes time to build such a new civilization and particularly to lay the necessary material foundations for it. "Thus," says Socratov, "during the next two decades we shall in general complete the reconstruction of our country on a socialist basis, provided that no foreign

wars interfere with our peaceful activities. . . . The great grandchildren of the proletarian revolution may be expected to be the finished product of our hopes. You English people frequently say that it takes three generations to make a gentleman. It will not take less to make a generation of integrally developed Communists." While some might feel that Comrade Socratov under-estimates the speed with which socialist construction is proceeding in the Soviet Union, his general principle that *time is necessary* cannot be too greatly emphasized. And recognition of it would not only profit capitalist critics who keep proclaiming the failure of socialism because it has not achieved all its goals in a day, but also those sincere but Utopian Communists who adopt the same line.

One of the most valuable parts of this book are the four dialogues devoted to an analysis of the successful socialist planning in the U. S. S. R. and the fake, demagogic "planning" schemes of glib fascist and capitalist politicians. Professor Hecker gives a wealth of concrete, factual information about the methods of Soviet planning which has not been published here before in popular form. And the diagram on page 119, reproduced herewith, is a decided advantage in aiding one to visualize the process. The complex, inclusive network of planning agencies, all under the central direction of the State Planning Commission, covers every phase of the country's social and economic life. These agencies exist in the Commissariats (Departments) of the Soviet Government, the constituent Federated Republics, and the sub-



- State Planning Commissions: Federal and Autonomous Republics.
- ⊗ State Planning Commissions: Republics forming part of Russia proper. (R.S.S.R.)
- ⊕ Planning Commissions: Regional.
- ⊖ Planning Commissions: Autonomous Regions - Districts.
- Planning Commissions: Single Districts.
- Planning Commissions: City and Zone.



○ State Planning Commissions:  
Federal and Autonomous Republics.

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○ Planning Commissions: Autonomous  
Regions - Districts.

○ Planning Commissions: Single Districts.

● Planning Commissions: City and Zone.



republics; in every industry, factory, and collective farm; in every region, district, and city. Thus the *geographical* planning units and the *functional* ones check up on and stimulate each other in their mutual drawing up and carrying out of the Five-Year Plans.

There is a great deal more that could be said about Dr. Hecker's book. Suffice it to conclude that while it will be especially helpful to beginners in the study of Marxism, it has much to teach old-timers as well.

CORLISS LAMONT.

### Why Wait?

*WAITING FOR NOTHING*, by Tom Kromer. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.

**I**F YOU have any doubts about this book, take it to the nearest Salvation Army post and if you can get a stiff who is not too far gone to read it, he will tell you that it is good. When Tom Kromer writes that even before a drag puffs around the bend, you can tell that it's too hot to nail by the sing in the rails, that stiff will verify it; unless, of course, he's a mission stiff. "All mission stiffs are sons of bitches," states Kromer.

The author's grandfather was crushed to death in a coal mine, and his father was a glass-blower who died of cancer at forty-four. Kromer himself hit the road at twenty-three to get harvesting work in Kansas. He never got that job or any other job, and this book is the story of several years' stemming.

It is a cruel and genuine book. It makes Jim Tully's sappy romanticism look sick. Do you remember Jim Tully? You will not forget Tom Kromer. You will remember how he spread newspapers over the three-decker flop, so that the lice should fall to the floor and break their necks. You will remember the chapter on Mrs. Carter and the other queer.

Somebody doing book reviewing chores in *The Nation* will call this novel "hardboiled as a result of certain outmoded technical and stylistic influences," meaning Hemingway.

This, because Kromer doesn't gurgle with the sort of rhetoric favored by Anthony Trollope and Scrooge's nephew; and he doesn't billow with the subordinate clauses which sometimes go under the heading of finer shadings. He knows that in certain situations, even life obliterates finer shadings. "What is a man to do? I know well enough what he can do. All he can do is to try to keep his belly full of enough slop so that he won't rattle when he breathes. All he can do is find himself a lousy flop at night."

Kromer's sentences are short and clean-cut and charged to capacity. Sometimes they are super-saturated and cannot bear their load. The fact that his prose breaks down in a few places is partly due to his use, throughout, of the present tense, a device which I think ought to be saved for passages of unusual speed or intensity. That's minor.

I hope no one starts beefing about the fact that this novel doesn't show "the way out." Kromer couldn't have shown a way out because he does not know of any. But he has described the life and the most prevalent moods of the stiff and placed them by implication into a well-defined social setting. Cops beat him up and a judge sentences him for vagrancy. That is a lot of social setting. When the word "revolution" occurs, Kromer writes, "You can stop a revolution of stiffs with a sack of toppin's. I have seen one bull kick a hundred stiffs off a drag. When a stiff's gut is empty, he hasn't got the guts to start anything. When his gut is full he just doesn't see any use in raising hell. What does a stiff want to raise hell for when his belly is full?"

That's not a hard one. Kromer fumbles pretty close to the answer when he is lying on the floor of a storehouse for pecans:

If a guy had any guts, he wouldn't put up with this. I think. Why should one guy have a million dollars, and I am down in the hole with pecans on top of me for covers? Maybe that guy has brains. Maybe he works hard. I don't know. What is that to me if he is there and I am here? Religion, they say in the missions. Religion and morals. What are religion and morals to me, if I am down in a hole with pecans on top of me? Who is there to say that this world belongs to certain guys? What right

has one guy to say: This much of the world is mine; you can't sleep here?

That's not a hard one either. Tom Kromer knows that guys aren't on top because they have brains or because they work hard. He ought to know that only a revolution can take the world away from "certain guys." Nobody expects that revolution to be carried through by stiffs. But they can help; and not all stiffs are completely licked. Tom Kromer has proved that, by writing this book. Don't listen to the chump who wrote on his jacket blurb that the book contains no propaganda.

Where is the wheat? asks one of his characters. When I come through Kansas, they was burnin' the goddam stuff in the stoves because it was cheaper than coal. Out here they stand in line for hours for a stale loaf of bread. Where is the wheat, is what I want to know.

EDWARD NEWHOUSE.

### Our Scientific Heritage

*THE WORLD in MODERN SCIENCE*, by Leopold Infeld. Putnam. \$2.

*FROM GALILEO TO COSMIC RAYS: A NEW LOOK AT PHYSICS*, by Harvey Brace Lemon. University of Chicago Press. \$5.

*THE DOCTOR IN HISTORY*, by Howard W. Haggard. Yale University Press. \$3.75.

**S**CIENCE was in the beginning one of the strongest allies of the revolutionary bourgeoisie in its attack upon the feudal aristocracy and the Catholic church. Science received rewards from the triumphant bourgeoisie, but also new tasks and new responsibilities. It had not only to provide the technical procedure for the rapidly developing capitalist industry but a new morale as well, to persuade the masses that the capitalist world was the best possible world and that under it humanity was in for an infinite joy-ride of progress.

In the capitalist decline, science suffers; the contracting bourgeois system finds it increasingly hard to provide for it, and in fact, scientific progress is now inimical to it. In its efforts to provide itself with a new base science has attempted to popularize itself.

This popularization has gone hand in hand with an attempt, at the same time, to retain the favor of the bourgeoisie. Science, in alliance now with its old enemy religion, offers the spiritual sanctions for capitalism.

While on the one hand it turns mystic, on the other hand, for the masses, it provides a circus in which jumping equations create weekly new worlds and new fantasies of well being, sun machines, atom engines, etc. A few scientists realize that the future of science is with the revolutionary proletariat, as indicated by the impressive advances of Soviet science.

Most scientists have jobs to hold on to. The masses can, however, begin to appropri-

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ate their heritage of bourgeois science, through the medium of some of the books offered as popularizations.

For the workers to obtain entrance to the world of science, simple and accurate introductions to the various fields are necessary. From this viewpoint Dr. Lemon's book is an excellent introduction to the whole field of physics. It is not loaded down with antiquated information, and does not depend upon hollow rhetoric or false charm. All the basic principles of the field are carefully expounded so that their meaning and interrelations stand out clearly for the lay reader. The one fault of the book arises from Dr. Lemon's deliberate avoidance of the philosophical problems that are an integral part of any discussion of scientific principles. But at least his naive materialism keeps him from victimizing his readers with God-building and the more lunatic diversions of idealistic physicists.

By contrast with the notable text-book by Dr. Lemon, the history of medicine by Dr. Haggard is one of those ducky affairs in which history is interpreted in terms of the Great Doctors. It is best to skip it hastily and turn to the very fine book by Dr. Infeld which

deals with the problems of the physics of matter. This last volume should be read in conjunction with Dr. Lemon's volume since it analyzes the complexities introduced by modern physics and treats the methodological problems that he side-stepped.

In discussing the details of radiation, quanta and other branches of modern physics, Dr. Infeld gives a dramatic and profound picture of the field. His treatment of the methodological problems involved is not so happy. He adopts the position of the Bohr-Heisenberg school of indeterminism, and is led into the kind of errors that have been discussed in these pages.

Because the books by Drs. Infeld and Lemon are the exceptions to the usual shoddy popular science book, they are recommended to the lay reader as probably the best of recent introductions to physics. On the basis of books such as these and the textbooks that are beginning to come from the Soviet Union, it is possible to develop the scientific education of workers. These volumes will have to be utilized until the workers' movement produces its own popular and accurate scientific literature.

DAVID RAMSEY.

## Brief Review

*SEA LANES*, by Martin D. Stevers and Captain Jonas Pendlebury. Minton, Balch and Co. \$3.75.

**S**UBTITLED "Story of Man's Conquest of the Oceans," this book is an engaging though quite realistic account of the history of the arts of navigation and shipbuilding from the days of the primitive craft employed in Phoenician shipping, from Venetian longship, Genoese carrack and Portuguese caravel, Yankee clipper of gold-rush days, to the age of steam with its rusty cargo tramps, transatlantic "greyhounds of the sea," and gyroscopic compass. War and trade, the respectable equivalent today of the buccaneering days of Drake and Captain Kidd, are adequately, though not too explicitly, appraised as fundamental to the development of the tools with which the sea, once the dread of navigators relying upon the erroneous ptolemaic conception of the earth and the Italian *portolani*, has been almost completely subjected to the control of the ingenious mind of man. Further relief to the bare account of fact is offered by the salty, often caustic observations of the authors as to the chicanery of owners who quite amiably imperil thousands of passengers on ships equipped with defective machinery, run on "bargain" oil and staffed with inadequate, ill-paid crews—to shed a little light on ship disasters of recent times.

*IN A BENGAL JUNGLE*, by John Symington. With crayon drawings by Paul Porterfield. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C. \$2.

The author is a British surgeon who served twelve years as medical officer on a tea

plantation which employed thousands of Indian workers. With the obtuseness of his kind, he neglects the interesting life under his nose for the made-to-order excitements of jungle-hunts which have become duller than diplomats' memoirs. Mr. Symington's type of mind is indicated by his statement that a coolie lives quite comfortably on twelve cents a day, but that a family with all hands at work lives even more comfortably. Beyond its revelation of the rank and file imperialist mind the book is valueless.

*FORGET IF YOU CAN*, by John Erskine. The Bobbs-Merrill Company. \$2.50.

Erskine at his flippantly serious worst. The plot's trite, prose bad and tedious for all the dialogue, and character a matter of beige stockings, Chinese pyjamas and buttocks properly proportioned to one's breasts. Life in the raw, love in the raw, boudoir bliss at Palm Beach and Gramercy Square. A novel that should sell among Macy buyers, residents at the Park Central, and the patri-cians on Morningside Heights who scorn this vulgar, tawdry world. Impossibly funny without a touch of humor, the book should show returns commensurate with the mental agony Erskine must have labored under in producing three hundred pages of shallow philosophy shabbily put, cheap and utterly unreal sentiment that cracks through its bad varnish of Erskine wit.

*THE MIGHTY BARNUM*, A Screen Play, by Gene Fowler and Bess Meredyth. Covici, Friede. \$2.

In order to be perfectly accurate this book should be reviewed as a publicity stunt. As such it deserves praise. It is pretty slick. It means that Zanuck's publicity brain-trust, in addition to the regular channels and at a relatively trifling cost, are getting into the book columns and reaching a large new potential audience. The "book," a regular Hollywood working script, is offered to the reading public as a new literary form. Somewhere perhaps, in the archives of Hollywood, a specimen of such a new form may be buried, but *The Mighty Barnum* isn't it. It isn't even entertaining reading. The technicians of the cinema still have it, as Mr. Fowler points out in his preface. It was they who converted such elementary stuff as this into a finished product.

The publication of this scenario, however, does not prove to one's satisfaction that the

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scenario is not a new literary form. One would first ask to see the abandoned script of *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* and *Zoo in Budapest*. Literature has served Hollywood ere this and, when it does so, a new literary form has been created, whether or not it is published as such.

Like the old P. T. Barnum himself, in this scenario Hollywood showmen are chiefly distinguished by their own gullibility and by their naive capacity for going off half-cocked. But their curiously aborted gestures toward the big idea may permit us to stagger lumberingly toward something new and beautiful. In the first place, it will probably be followed by the publication of important creative work that has been done for the movies. And in addition, it probably will produce much more writing in the scenario form than has been done heretofore and a greater latitude for experimentation in form. A reading public probably will be an influence to raise the artistic values of the scenario.

*EARLY AMERICAN VIEWS OF NEGRO SLAVERY*, by Matthew T. Mellon. Meador Publishing Co. \$2.

The views of Benjamin Franklin and the first four Presidents of the republic as expressed in their letters and papers are here presented with not very penetrating comment by the author. Washington, Jefferson and Madison were themselves slave-owners. Their views partook of the semi-liberal temper of a period in which the paternal slave system had not yet been entirely transformed into the commercial slave plantation, and when even in the slave states plans for emancipation were in the air. Although all the four Presidents thought slavery morally wrong, none of them favored abolition. As a salve to the conscience they proposed, in one form or another,

gradual emancipation over a long period with the consent of the slave-owners. The plantation Presidents displayed a sickening paternalism and undiluted race prejudice towards their "wards." The father of the liberalism which

bears his name confessed to a "suspicion" that the Negroes "are inferior to the whites in the endowment of both body and mind"; Madison believed that the Negroes "cannot be admitted as *persons* into the representation."

### The Eisler Concert

THE interest in the initial public American appearance of Hanns Eisler (March 2, Mecca Temple) was unique in our musical history. Thousands of eager, expectant people—workers, professionals, members of the middle class—gathered to hear the compositions of one who has probably written more battle songs of the proletariat than any other living man. They were eager to honor the composer of "Comintern," "Solidarity," "United Front," and many other popular songs beloved and sung by workers all over the world. It was a profoundly touching tribute to one who has done so much to unite, in common cause, masses the world over, and who is now a refugee from his native Germany.

We have witnessed of late a remarkable improvement in technical direction in our mass meetings and demonstrations. They have adhered closely to schedule, have successfully held a grip on audiences and have sent them away with fresh courage and determination—for example, the recent demonstration conducted by the Friends of the Soviet Union. In our cultural meetings there has been a similar advance—suddenly reversed by the concert under review.

The importance attached to the present occasion was quite justified by Eisler's achievement. Preliminary announcements broadcast impressive descriptions of the affair. Various workers' singing groups were to be combined in a "vast chorus of 1,000 voices"—although the stage of Mecca Temple can not accom-

modate more than half that number. If the singing of those who appeared had justified the advance expectations, any discussion of the detail of the numerical strength would, of course, find no place here. But they did not do justice to Eisler.

As the long-awaited evening progressed towards its finale, it grew clear that the Anti-Nazi Federation (for whose benefit the concert was undertaken) had been signally successful in attracting an overflowing attendance, but had concentrated so much on making a financial success that sufficient consideration was not given to the program itself, and to the eventual fulfillment of its promise.

The high spot of the evening came with the superb singing of Mordecai Bauman, baritone, in songs and ballads by Eisler, with the composer at the piano. Bauman is not merely a singer—he has a positive genius in the projection of the text, not only because of his splendid enunciation but because of the proper accent and the conviction with which he vitalizes and completely realizes the innermost meanings of the words. Eisler's ballads are deeply rooted in a form utilized so widely by German composers of other times, but he avoids sentimentality and his highly political texts are fully realized musically.

The works of Eisler are of sufficient vitality—both for musical and political reasons—to justify a program strictly pertaining to his achievements—and that should be the basis for his concerts in America.

ASHLEY PETTIS.

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# Art

## Raphael Soyer and Arnold Blanch

**R**APHAEL SOYER'S exhibition (Valentine Gallery, 69 East 57th St., Feb. 18-March 7), presents two groups of paintings. The larger group consists of the kind of intimate figure studies and portraits for which he has become well-known. Young girls in informal pose, at home, modern dance groups in rehearsal, etc. The second (of about five canvases) consists of what might be termed "socially conscious" subjects, and it is this group which is the more important of the two, because it marks a significant change that is going on in Soyer. He has come out of his studio and its intimate little personal world, into the bigger and more important world of the social drama, which the sixth year of deepening capitalist crisis has brought to the attention of an increasingly large number of artists. He has been strongly affected by the tragic spectacle of unemployment; of men rotting on park benches, in flophouses, and has painted them with sympathy and directness, in his usual capable, sincere manner. The low-keyed somber color logically reflects the despair and resignation written in the men's faces.

But this group of canvases cannot be said to constitute a healthy tendency in revolutionary painting. For us their value lies mainly in the fact that they represent a desirable change in direction . . . toward a more vigorous and positive statement. In his canvas "On the Public Square" Soyer has already given us an indication of coming out of his spell of the blues to join the revolutionary artists in their fight against capitalism. We look forward to the new Raphael Soyer of which this painting is a promise.

Another artist whose exhibition reveals a sharp "left turn" is Arnold Blanch (Rehn Galleries, 683 Fifth Ave., until March 9). From suave landscapes, studio-posed circus performers and similar "gallery-painting," he has turned to look at the real world in which we are living. And what he has seen has not been pretty. The farmer starving on his land; the small owner of a house or patch of land, dispossessed; in short, some of the many growing symptoms of the breakdown of a social system: decay and death.

These he has painted into the four or five significant canvases in his exhibition.

Blanch has a keen sense of satire and knows how to put it into a picture. His little canvas "New England" is a fine achievement . . . particularly successful in its carefully thought-out symbolism. It is not often that one sees such trenchant satire handled symbolically, and with such clarity of conception. I would like to see Blanch turn this fine talent to a wider and more comprehensive examination of capitalism in decay, and give us a gallery full of such canvases in his next show.

**W**HEN you hear artists greet each other with "Say, have you seen the new issue of ART FRONT?" you have a significant indication of the difference between this art magazine and the others. The immediate success that has greeted it is evidence that it fills a real need not met by any other magazine. The reason for this is simple: It is the only magazine gotten out by artists, which concern itself with the artist's prob-

lems, both artistic and economic, from the artist's point of view.

The February number, excellently designed, is alive with serious discussion of vital issues. The artists' fight for economic demands; the struggle for a Municipal Art Center, and a set of plans for such a center, designed by a group of architect-members of the Federation of Architects, Engineers, and Technicians, are featured.

Jerome Klein contributes an excellent exposé of the reactionary tendencies which are cloaked in the mystic hooey of Surrealism; and Stuart Davis makes a slashing attack on "The (Hearst) New York American" school of painting, exemplified by Benton, Grant Wood, Curry, etc. Moses Soyer has an interesting review of his own recent exhibition, done with sincerity and intelligence.

The article entitled "Surrealist Revolution Counter-Clockwise" is a news scoop, but more important, it shows up the Modern Museum crowd for the fascist intellectual snobs they are. Gropper contributes one of his cartoons (à la Dali; imagine!) which not only presents the LaGuardia boloney in its true colors (or shapes?), but is also side-splittingly funny. All in all, a fine magazine, full of vitality and fight for the betterment of the artist and of his art.

STEPHEN ALEXANDER.

## Current Theatre

*The Green Pastures*, by Marc Connelly. *Forty-fourth Street Theatre*. A lot for your money: lots of music (twenty-six Negro spirituals mercilessly interlarding the scenes); lots of sets (including enlarged easels undistinguishable from their Maxfield Parrish originals); lots of oh-so-whimsical text which is one of the major disgraces of the contemporary theatre. The Negro, according to this five-year-old hit, is a lovable idiot whose conception of the bible is so refreshingly naive! Whether Mr. Connelly knows it or not, his effective lavish exploitation of a vicious cliché has spread through forty-one states the poisonous lie that the Negro is a lovable idiot, inferior in every way and at best an entertaining crap-shooting, sinning child who would go directly to hell were it not for his big-hearted humanitarian white brother.

*Rain from Heaven*. *Golden Theatre*. The Theatre Guild's production of S. N. Behrman's play about the troubled house-guests that sponge on Lady Wingate. White Guard, German music critic exiled for being a Jew, American millionaire fascist promoter, his baby-doll wife—make a grand verbal mess with their notions of fascism, Communism and liberalism. And the playwright doesn't do much to clear the air unless it be tacit support of the very liberalism he takes pains to blast. Frequently brilliant and sometimes boring dialogue. And all but the millionaire fascist give mediocre performances.

*Moscow Art Players*. *Majestic Theatre*. Not to be confused with the Moscow Art Theatre. The principle players in this troupe did at one time belong to the Moscow Art Theatre, but they had left the Soviet Union at various times and never returned. They made their debut in this country with Gogol's famous comedy *Revisor* or, as it is more commonly known, *The Inspector General*. Some of the acting is excellent. Pavlov, who plays

the part of the Mayor, and Chekhov, who plays Chlestakov, are exceptionally good. The whole production is workmanlike, although quite traditional.

*The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. *Martin Beck*. Besier's play memorably recreates telling aspects of the British bourgeois home of the 1850's, and Katharine Cornell and Margalo Gillmore provide stunning performances. Though one may gag at certain passages in the portraits of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning, the home milieu is the real subject; and, within its limitations, the production is a genuine success.

*Awake and Sing!* (*The Group Theatre*) *Belasco Theatre*. A study of the effects of poverty on a Jewish lower-middle-class Bronx family by Clifford Odets, written two years before his brilliant *Waiting for Lefty*. The dialogue is fresh and pungent but too often self-consciously smart; and the revolutionary understanding implicit in the play falls short of depth and clarity. Nevertheless, a highly entertaining play, and well worth seeing. Boris Aronson's sets are a valuable contribution and Luther Adler's performance is the best of the season.

*The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isle*, by Bernard Shaw. *Theatre Guild*. By 1900 Shaw was so ahead of his times that a great place came to him deservedly. By 1935 he is so far behind the times that, if he is to continue play-writing, he ought to enroll in the Yale Drama School. This latest play of his is fantastic and fantastically dull allegory of the decline of the British Empire, and the attempt to fuse the East with the West. It is a fifth-rate *Everyman* with characters whose philosophies of life are neither dramatized nor made intelligible. Its only excuse for being is that it proves again the superior art of Nazimova who can read even the dictionary and make it thrilling.

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# The Well of Insanity

ROBERT FORSYTHE

**I**N THAT well of insanity known as the commercial theatre, Joseph Verner Reed bobbed about like a demented cork. Arriving from Yale with a great deal of money and practically no brains, he soon lost both. If I seem to deal with him in cavalier fashion, it is no more than Mr. Reed does with himself in his book.<sup>1</sup> He concedes not only that he was crazy, but that everybody connected with the profession was touched with madness. Everybody, that is, except the stage hands, who were scheming and calculating.

After trying vainly to get into the theatre as a worker, Reed arrived as an angel. From the moment he opened an office with Kenneth Macgowan, he was in a happy haze. Mr. Macgowan was obviously a man of varied ideas and unquenchable flame. The artistic union was formed, unfortunately enough, in the sad year of 1929, but there are no indications that things would have been better at any other time. Mr. Macgowan worked on the stagger system of producing plays, which meant that when one was as much as three weeks along in rehearsal, another would be thrown into production. They started with Mary Ellis and Basil Sidney doing *Children of Darkness*, but were immediately overwhelmed by something called *When Hell Froze*. According to Mr. Reed, Miss Ellis began as a daughter of the Muse and ended as a roaring cascade from hell.

As the date for opening arrived, rehearsals became a shambles, with the torn limbs and wrenched hearts of actors, directors and producers strewn haplessly about the stage. Amid it all was Miss Ellis in a hot state of wild fury. In the empty auditorium, huddled down between the rows, was young Mr. Reed, suffering deadly pains in his artistic conscience and pocketbook. *Children of Darkness* finally reached Broadway and was a critical success and a financial failure. *When Hell Froze* never got beyond its tryout in Atlantic City. End of first year: \$82,000 in the red.

The second year was even worse. Mary Ellis and Basil Sidney were gone, but Jane Cowl arrived with plans for a repertory season which would include everything written by man. The first was to be *Twelfth Night*, the second a revival of *When Hell Froze*. Miss Cowl had plans for dozens of others. It was all to be Art, it was all to be Beauty. Dear Joseph, Dear Kenneth, Dear Jane. Boston would have none of *Twelfth Night* and went into hysterics during the serious passages of *When Hell Froze*. This was bad, but what always annoyed Mr. Reed beyond bearance were the stage hands. They insisted on having a man hired who did nothing but ring a bell; they allowed the furniture to

stand on the sidewalk in the rain until the proper men could handle it. The theatre could never amount to anything until the stage hands became reasonable. *Twelfth Night* was a critical success in New York, but made no money. Mr. Macgowan was still staggering his productions and Mr. Reed was signing the checks. *Lean Harvest* lasted five weeks; *The Lady with a Lamp* lasted five days.

By this time the total Reed losses were in the hundreds of thousands. There was a faint chance that *Lean Harvest* could be made to go if they put more money in and hung on. "We can't," argued Kenneth. "We haven't any funds. . . . Why, your dress rehearsal bill alone was \$4,000! . . . The stagehands—all the million labor organizations who worked for us, have extracted so much money that there's nothing left to push the show with."

But evidently there was a bit of money left. *Lean Harvest* closed, but Mr. Reed went on, without Mr. Macgowan, for two years more, having an occasional small success, but ending the year invariably with a loss. In all, he did six more shows before giving up the ghost. He ended on a sweet note: he belonged in the theatre, but out front with the audience. This had been apparent to everybody but Mr. Reed, for four years. But the stage hands, the accursed labor-conscious stage hands—without them all would be Art and Beauty. He says nothing about theatre rents, which are often a subject of complaint by others. He says nothing of newspaper advertising, which is a large item. He says nothing of the fantastic expenses of the producer's office. There is a dispute with Ronald

Jeans who is the author of *Lean Harvest*. He is in London; Reed is in New York. They cable every day for months; they use the transatlantic telephone. The chair must be on the left side of the stage; the chair must be on the right side of the stage. Cables run to two and three hundred words. They sign actors right and left. They put in phone calls to Los Angeles, Albuquerque and points along the route, to find an actor who is traveling East by car. Jane Cowl—dear Jane—expresses her disapproval of a Sovey stage model by sitting on it and destroying it. The scenery is no good; get new scenery. The costumes are terrible; throw them out and get new ones. The director gets drunk and the rehearsals must be started over again with a new one. At the Boston dress rehearsal for *Twelfth Night*, Miss Cowl goes into a trance and fails to remember a single line of the play. She beats her breast, she sobs, she curses herself for a fool—and nothing comes forth. She falls on the stage and from that position begins to tell the tragic story of her life, her humble childhood, her struggle for fame and ah! its worthlessness. It is five in the morning and the stagehands, the accursed

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<sup>1</sup> *The Curtain Falls*, by Joseph Verner Reed. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.75.



stagehands, drawing their double time for overtime, sit and take in the entertainment.

The truth is that the Broadway theatre, from top to bottom, is a tragic farce. For the last five years, actors' salaries have averaged \$5 a week, on the basis of a 52-week year. Theatre rents are calculated on a maximum season of thirty-five weeks. With its production dependent upon and aimed at the unbelievable conglomerate of halfwits known as the "carriage trade," the Broadway theatre has steadily narrowed its appeal until it has no contact with life. Mr. Reed saw nothing of that; he understood nothing of the necessary interchange between the stage and its audience. Never once does he mention the obvious fact that Broadway is a preposterous land, governed by real-estate speculators and managerial gamblers. After wasting thousands of dollars by his own ineptness in failing to plan his production, he can think only of the extra man at \$55 a week, which the union insists he must use.

With it all, I have a fondness for Mr. Reed. He is an honest man. More than any one who has written about the commercial theatre, he reveals its hollowness and nonsense. The Broadway theatre has no roots in the soil of America, and nobody has made it so plain as Mr. Reed. He tried single productions, he tried repertory; and when it was over, he had no idea what it was all about. His is the bewilderment of a simpleton in a land of lunacy, but no other is going to find it much different.

### Other Current Films

*Folies Bergere* (United Artists): Darryl F. Zanuck, that impetuous young man who deserted Warner Brothers sometime ago in order to do big things on his own, presents us with this awful film version of the Broadway flop of some seasons ago, *The Red Cat*. Maurice Chevalier stars in this film but the best thing on the program is the first Mickey Mouse in technicolor.

*Rumba* (Paramount): Mr. George Raft, ex-film-dancer (ever since *Bolero*). He dances the rumba. Then he goes into the Hollywood version of Cuba and he dances the rumba. Then he comes back to New York and there (for a change) he does the RUMBARUMBA. That's all.

*Sweet Music* (Warner Bros): Another Warner musical comedy; this time with America's sweetheart, Rudy Vallee, playing (and crooning) the lead.

*Sequoia* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer): All about a beautiful friendship between a deer and a puma and some naughty humans. The scenario was probably written by the Boy Scouts of America.

*Night Life of the Gods* (Universal): It could have been very funny. If not, it could have been very spicy. But there was no imagination for a comedy and the Legion of Decency diluted the spice.

*Behold My Wife* (Paramount): He was a rich man's son. She was a big Indian chief's daughter. He wanted to get even with his damn family so he married the chief's daughter. The Indian maiden thought he loved her. He was disappointed when his family was not disgraced and she was heartbroken when she found out that he didn't marry for love. She leaves him and takes the blame for a crime his sister committed. He runs after her and takes the blame for the same crime he thought his wife had committed. They both land in jail, they both find love. Don't blame me.

P. E.

## Between Ourselves

WE are happy to announce that from August 1 on Joshua Kunitz will be our Moscow correspondent. Sailing from New York on July 5, Kunitz will take with him a small group of NEW MASSES readers who want to get a close-up on the Soviet Union. He will spend his first month in the Soviet Union with the group, introducing them to activities and personalities in the principal centers. The following route will be taken: Leningrad, Moscow, Gorki, a four-day trip down the Volga, Stalingrad, Rostov, with a trip to the State Grain Farms at Zernograd, the Georgian Military Highway, Tiflis, Batum, the Black Sea, Yalta, Sevastopol, Odessa and Kiev. This being Kunitz's fifth Soviet visit, the members of the group will enjoy rare opportunities. Registrations are open.

The Open Road, 56 West 45th Street, New York, is organizing the group. This non-commercial travel organization conducts study tours in Palestine, Europe and the Soviet Union. But it has made its reputation in Soviet tourism. Starting in 1927, The Open Road was one of the first American travel organizations to see the possibilities of Soviet travel. It is reputed to have sent more students, teachers, and members of the professions to the Soviet Union than any other American travel agency, and to be the only one which has continuously maintained a staff representative in Moscow.

John Dos Passos, Matthew Josephson, Heywood Broun, and a considerable number of other writers have added their names to the list of authors endorsing the program and call of the American Writers Congress.

Among the new signers of the call are Virgil Geddes, James Waterman Wise, Harvey O'Connor, Stanley Burnshaw, Emjo Basshe, Michael Blankfort, Slater Brown, Louis Col-

man, E. Clay, Leon Dennen, Gertrude Diamant, H. W. L. Dana, Alexander Godin, Lauren Gilfillan, Loren Miller, Jerre Mangione, Norman Macleod, A. B. Magil, Herman Michelson, Willard Maas, James Neugass, Ashley Pettis, Wallace Phelps, Samuel Putnam, Edwin Rolfe, Muriel Rukeyser, Alfred Hayes, Fred R. Miller, James Steele, Martin Russak, Philip Rahv, M. Shulimson, Walter Snow, Herman Spector, Clinton Simpson, Bernard Smith, Joseph Vogel, Keene Wallis, Jim Waters, Don West, Leane Zugsmith and others.

### New Masses Lectures

Friday, March 8th

Joshua Kunitz on "Bolsheviks in Asia," at Park Manor Club, 42nd Street and Montgomery Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

James Casey, Managing Editor Daily Worker, on "Hearst—Chief Spokesman of Fascist Forces," at Prospect Workers Club, 1157 Southern Blvd., Bronx, New York.

Milton Howard, member staff Daily Worker, on "Two Years of the New Deal," at Brownsville Youth Center, 105 Thatford Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Sunday, March 10th

Leon Dennen, author "Where the Ghetto Ends," on "Culture in the Soviet Union," at Queens Workers School, 5820 Roosevelt Ave., Woodside, L. I. Auspices: Queens Workers School.

Thursday, March 14th

Leon Dennen on "Culture Under Fascism," at Jack London Club, 901 Broad St., Newark, N. J.

Sunday, March 17th

Edward Dahlberg author of "Those Who Perish," on "The Tradition of Protest in America," at 210 Fifth Avenue. Auspices: American Union Against Reaction.

Friday, March 22nd

William E. Browder, on "The Middle Class Must Choose," at Brownsville Youth Center, 105 Thatford Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

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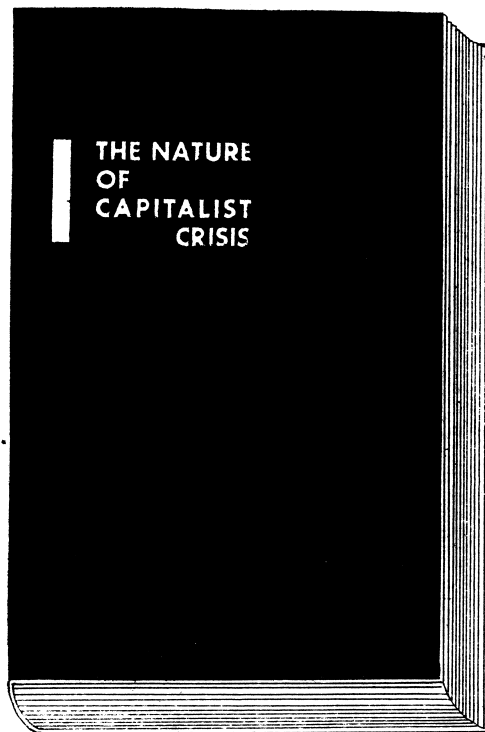
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