

new

APRIL 16, 1935

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Masses

Mail-Order Dictatorship

The Rosenwalds and the 12,000,000 Negroes

By LOREN MILLER

Down with the Novel

By ROBERT FORSYTHE

When Counter-Revolution Wins

Documents of America's Role in the Paris Commune

By HENRY COOPER

Coming: "A Damn Big Strike"

A First-Hand Report from the Men in Steel

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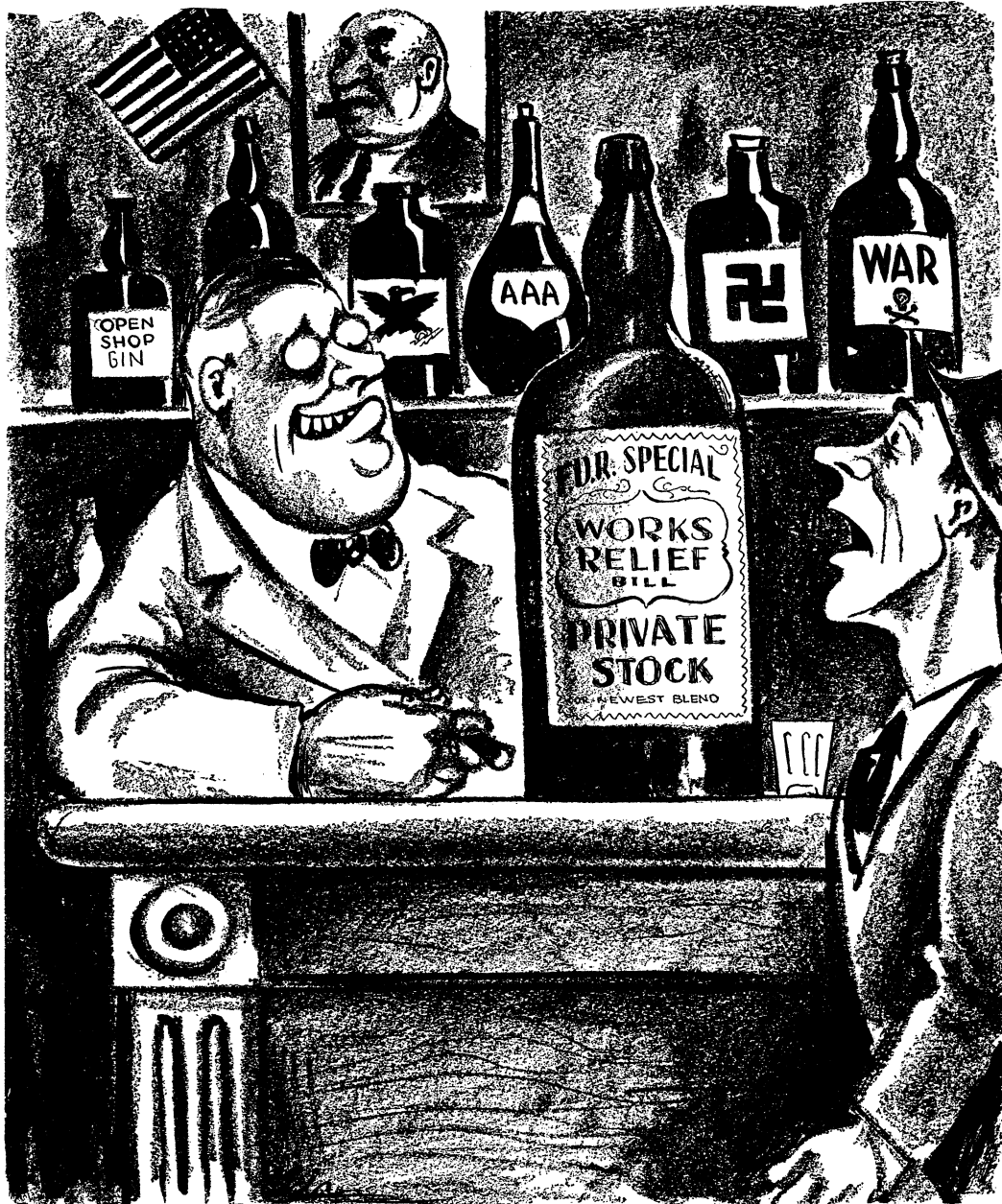


new Masses

APRIL 16, 1935

AS WAR grows closer each day the diplomatic set-up in Europe becomes more and more confused. Captain Anthony Eden has returned to Downing Street after his "exploratory" missions to Moscow, Warsaw and Prague. It is difficult to tell what he brought back in his portfolio but it is somewhat significant that upon his return he was immediately put to bed with a nervous breakdown. Whether he was put to bed on the orders of a physician or on the orders of Premier MacDonald is purely a matter of conjecture at the present time. It is interesting to note, however, that though the press of the Soviet Union reflected a strong feeling of optimism immediately following Captain Eden's visit to Moscow, the general tenor of the attitude reflected in editorial comment in the press is that little or nothing will be done at the conference in Stresa, that England intends to scuttle any attempt to arrange an Eastern Locarno which would prevent war against the Soviet Union and that it is quite evident she is playing not only for a balance of power but that she is willing to play with Hitler so long as she is able to keep the masses of British workers buffaloed into the notion that Sir John Simon and the diplomats of Downing Street are working for peace. That they will not continue to be buffaloed forever by the diplomats in the art of manufacturing war is evident from the powerful movement now afoot in England to preserve Europe's peace.

MEANWHILE the Soviet Union is the only nation working for peace in Europe on a realistic basis. Karl Radek, semi-official commentator of Izvestia, warns Paris, Rome and London that the Soviet Union can accept no substitute for the pact of mutual assistance in case of an attack by Germany. "There can be no doubt," he writes, "that the authors of the 'universal pacts' are trying to drown the Eastern Locarno project in prolonged and fruitless international discussion." When war in Europe comes the U. S. S. R. knows well that it will begin by an attempt of Germany to capture the Ukraine. The smashing repudiation of



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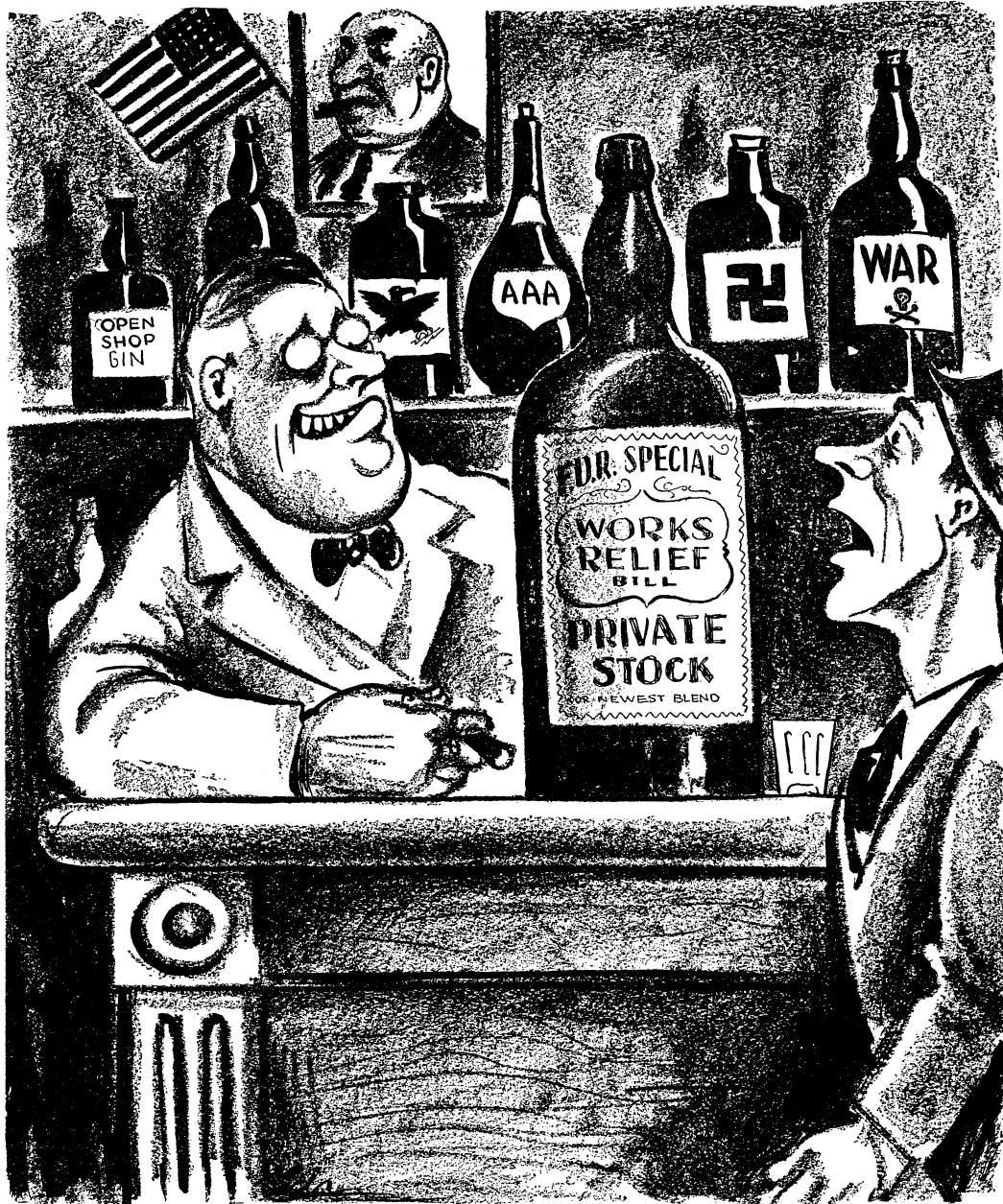
Timbach

Hitler in the recent plebiscite in Danzig makes it all the more imperative for Nazi imperialism to extend toward the East. It becomes more and more evident that the British statesmen do not look with complete disfavor on Hitler's plans for territorial expansion, and it is evident that both the French and English diplomats have given Italy carte blanche to slice off as much of Abyssinia as it can swallow. Probably never in the history of European diplomacy has there been so much collusion, so many secret agreements behind walls, so much concealment of the forces behind the agreements among nations. And while the diplomats and the industrial rulers scheme, war is inevitable unless the great masses of the people, who lose and suffer most by war, who bear all the suffering their statesmen and diplomats so shrewdly avoid must join the Soviet in a uni-

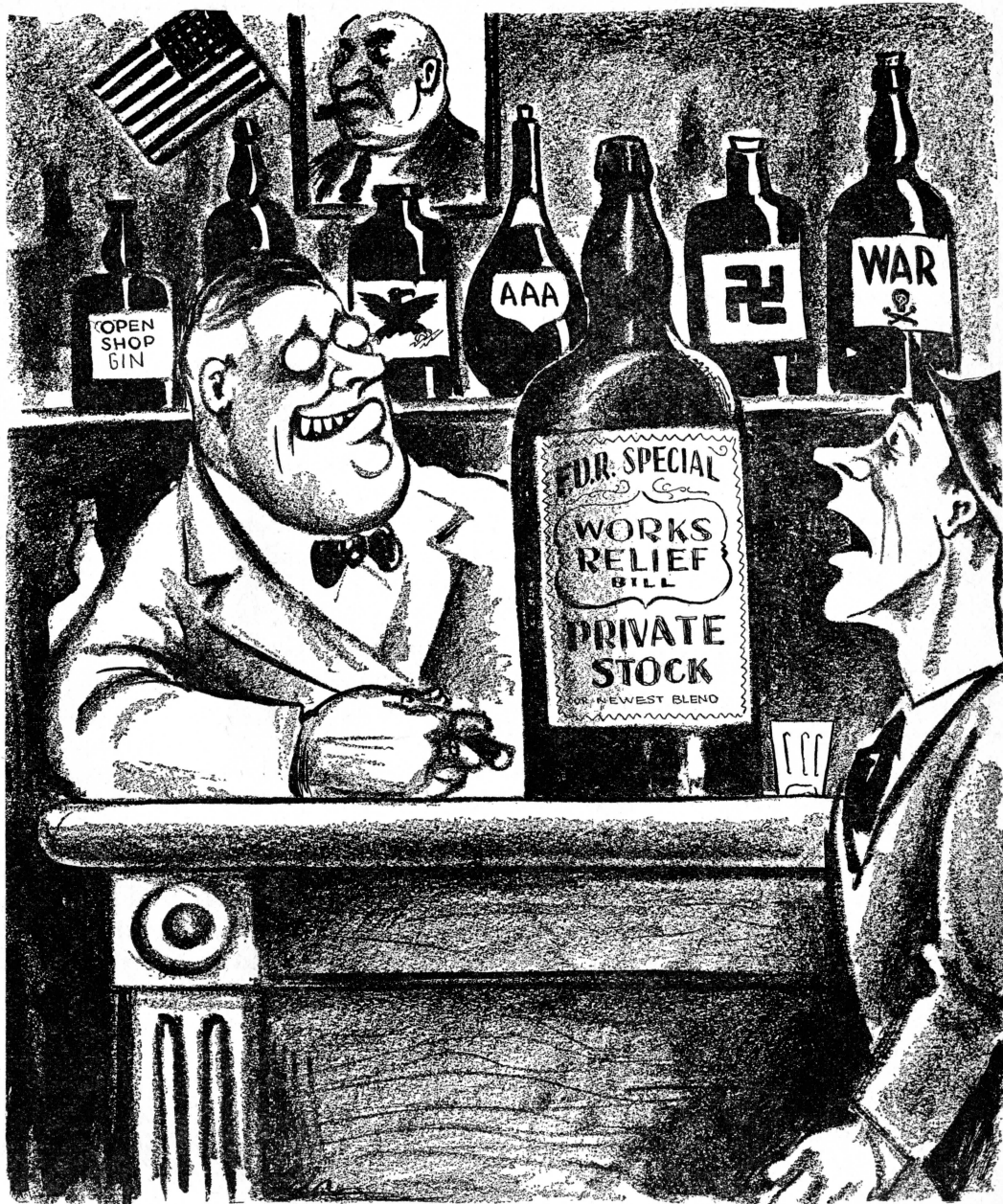
versal protest against the war that grows closer each day.

The Red Army Marches

CHIANG KAI-SHEK is trying to earn his pay from Tokyo, by a new drive in person against the Red Army of Kweichow. But a Havas dispatch from Kuomintang sources, via Hongkong, tells the world he has suffered a fresh beating. According to this report, Chiang's army of 120,000 was defeated and driven back within ten miles of Kweiyang, the provincial capital, by the forces of the Red Army Commander, Mao Tse-Ting. The heroic Communist army is less than one-half as strong in numbers as the Nationalists, yet the report declares that crack Nanking divisions, trained by General von Seeckt, Nazi military adviser, left 5,000 dead on the field. The government generals were com-



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pelled to disband and disarm 18,000 of their troops on the pretext that they were opium smokers, but in reality because of their sympathies with the peasant armies and the sovietized population. A dispatch on April 8 said that the Communists had been checked and were conducting a rearguard action. This gives the locale as Hunan Province, however, instead of Kweichow, which would indicate the usual garbled story emanating from the imperialist censors. Meanwhile Tokyo is bringing more pressure on the Nanking government for "economic" domination. While she waits for Europe to fly into war, before completing the conquest of China, her diplomats are slowly drawing the net tighter around the war lords.

Abyssinia Arms

ITALIAN fascism continues to threaten the independent Negro State of Abyssinia. To meet this threat of invasion, Emperor Haile Selassie has concentrated an army of 100,000 men along the Ethiopian borders. Unlike the guerilla fighters that smashed Italian aggression in 1896, it is trained and equipped with modern arms. Ethiopian offers of arbitration have met with an abrupt refusal by Italy. The League of Nations, to which Abyssinia appealed, hastily side-stepped the issue when Italy protested and when it became clear that France has no objection to the expansionist program of its fascist neighbor. As *THE NEW MASSES* pointed out last week, the hegemony of small, undeveloped nations, despite the capitalist powers' pretensions to support a policy of "self-determination," is of no importance when those powers must bolster their declining economy by colonial "expansion." For the moment, Mussolini's scheme of aggression is checked by Hitler's rearmament danger in Europe. Troops supposedly bound for eastern Africa have not passed through the Suez Canal, but are held in northern Africa, which is closer to home in the event of European war. The 4,000 Egyptian laborers, hired by the Italian government to build military roads in Eritrea, have been refused permission to embark from Egypt. This is the hand of England, who does not want to involve Egypt openly for fear of antagonizing Japan. In the United States, anti-fascists are organizing mass pressure to combat Mussolini's drive toward the dismemberment of Abyssinia.

Gilded "Anti-Fascists"

AMERICA today is the scene of the slickest kind of political action aimed to undermine all the traditional guarantees of civil liberties the pioneers won through decades of stiff-necked resistance to the encroachments of the Goulds, the Vanderbilts, and their present-day successors, the Mellons and the Morgans. New Jersey this week provided a sample of the legislation being jammed through the congressional halls. With a fanfare and a huzza the Jersey legislators made "Nazi activities criminal" by passage of a bill that was proclaimed in big headlines by the Scripps-Howard press. Upon closer examination we discover that the bill to check Nazi activities, which provides a jail sentence of ninety days to three years, and a fine of \$200 to \$5,000 for "dissemination of propaganda tending to incite race, color or creed hatred" does not even mention the word "Nazi." The bill applies not only to speakers, but to "owners of halls and auditoriums and to publications which may circulate the forbidden propaganda." Governor Harold G. Hoffman was so pleased with the bill he put his title to it fifteen minutes after it had been passed by the legislature. We, however, are not taken in by this sudden burst of "anti-Nazi activity" by the Governor of New Jersey. We know how they are working their game. Under cover of attacking the tenets of fascism (which they know are unpopular with the majority of the American people) they are laying down laws which will help them combat the growth of working-class and all progressive action. This was the case with the Dickstein report; it is being duplicated now in New Jersey. The American people must learn to beware of these gilded "anti-fascists" who are out to put over the reality of fascism, regardless of what name one finally chooses to call it.

Scottsboro

THE decision of the United States Supreme Court that the Scottsboro boys must be retried with Negroes on the jury panel is of course a tremendous victory for the I. L. D. and the defense. However, it brings into the field new forces to contend with and new problems to be faced. Powerful organizations throughout the country are endeavoring to take the case out of the hands of the workers and to hand it over to the various organiza-

tions which have constantly been attacking the I. L. D. for the mass demonstrations and the general tactics which they have used to force the courts to give the Scottsboro boys a fair trial. The state of Alabama is preparing to hand down new indictments against the boys. The American Scottsboro Committee, an organization backed by the Uncle Toms and Leibowitz, is vigorously collecting funds, an art which it has evidently developed to a high degree of skill. Meanwhile, the I. L. D. has been standing practically all the costs of the defense, though the Scottsboro Committee and Leibowitz through their connections with liberal and conservative groups throughout the country are being given the credit for saving the boys from the electric chair and it is well known that Fraenkel and Pollack, retained by the I. L. D. drew up the brief which was presented to the Supreme Court. At the present time the I. L. D. is desperately in need of funds to continue the defense of the boys and it is urgent that the organization receive even greater support than it has in the past.

Defending Emma

MR. ERNEST L. MEYER, of *The New York Post*, comes to the defense of Emma Goldman. Writing like an old companion-at-arms of Miss Goldman, this protégé of Mr. David Stern places her above criticism for her acts. What if she lies about the Soviet Union today? Yesterday, she was "hounded, harrassed and deported." "For her cause she has endured poverty and prison." What if after all this, she deliberately blackens the country built by the workers, which she has not visited since thirteen years ago, when a civil war was raging? Mr. Meyer, quoting *THE NEW MASSES* editorial, which pointed out the misrepresentations in her article in *The American Mercury*, takes us to task. He repudiates this "appraisal of her as a gross libel." He says we are "a small boy making faces at a woman on the barricades." He calls us a "snarling whippersnapper." But if Mr. Meyer is full of revolutionary ardor in praising Emma Goldman's past, it cools when he thinks of the Soviet Union. He admits no difference between Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin. In short, like Miss Goldman, Mr. Meyer himself is a sniper at the workers' government, unscrupulously giving circulation to falsehoods about it, while he pretends to

champion injured innocence and "revolutionary" old age.

Hunger's Czar

THE investigation of the New York City relief administration by the Aldermanic Committee last week filled the air with so many dead cats that it was reminiscent of the fights between General Johnson and Donald Richberg over who was dealing the New Deal. "Bunk" and "junk" were the words Lloyd P. Stryker, counsel for the aldermen, used about some of the white-collar work-relief projects; the City Affairs Committee called Mr. Stryker, in turn, "public enemy number one"; the aldermen confessed their ignorance of "boon dogging," eurythmic dancing, and the "study of samantics," which were among the subjects being taught by work-relief instructors, and Mayor La Guardia suggested that the aldermen make more use of the public libraries. Meantime Tammany legislators at Albany woke up to the possibility of revenge for the Seabury investigation of Jimmy Walker, and talked about a legislative commission on New York relief, but withdrew the threat. Resignations were beginning to fill the mails when the Mayor announced that everybody was all wet and he was going to appoint a supreme czar of relief and to demote the whole army of the faithful, beginning with Hodson. The

"czar," duly appointed by radio ceremonies on April 7, is O. W. Knauth, of Macy's, a member of the notorious National Economy League.

THE trouble began when William Hodson, Welfare Commissioner, charged that "chiselers" were receiving \$24,000,000 worth of relief money per year illegally. This charge resulted in the setting up of the Mayor's Complaint Bureau, a city-wide machinery of espionage by which men, women and children on the relief pittance could be further hounded by administrators. There may be persons benefitting to the extent of \$24,000,000 a year "illegally," but they are not the destitute people of New York. The hue and cry raised over strange-sounding names of projects, which turn out to be perfectly legitimate recreational and academic studies capable of being taught by white-collar relief workers, is a convenient cloak for the real grafters. But the squabbling of rival gangs in public office is not the burning question. The real scandal of relief administration is that millions are being undernourished and degraded; that the bankers are swilling in the trough, while the poor are made the scape-goat; that the masses are paying for their own relief by the sales tax, while the city of New York rescinds its income tax of 15 percent on the amount of the federal as-

sessments. This was a perfectly legitimate source of relief funds, by which it is estimated a revenue of \$20,000,000 was raised. It is characteristic of capitalist maneuvers, that when a fairly impartial exposure appears, such as the report of the Committee on Unemployment Relief, commented on in these columns last week, it is buried in a cloud of mud-slinging. The situation in New York is only a more gargantuan instance of how every community in the United States is gambling with the lives of the majority of its people.

The Triple A

FIVE years of government promises to farmers have resulted only in wasteful and pauperizing schemes that destroyed farm products, plowed under crops and slaughtered cattle. Farmers find themselves with staggering debts at high rates of interest impossible to meet. They are forced to live at subsistence level, and threatened with evictions. Now four hundred delegates, representing tens of thousands of poor and middle farmers, have journeyed to Sioux Falls, S. D., by truck and bus, hitch-hiking and on foot, to attend the Farmers' Emergency Relief Congress. Forty-one organizations have sent delegates from the agricultural fields of the West and Middlewest to the broadest united front of farmers ever held in this country. Workers participate in the discussion on an equal basis with farmers. In answer to eviction and starvation, the delegates demand the passage of the Farmers' Emergency Bill (H. R. 3471). The bill—similar to the Lundeen bill (H. R. 2827)—provides for the cancellation of all debts, for long-term crop production loans without interest, and categorically states that no farmer may be evicted from his land for non-payment of debts. It provides further against discrimination in relief or loans.

THE farmer delegates heard the proposal of Clarence Hathaway of the Communist Party for a Labor Party. "Your stock cannot live on hopes . . ." Hathaway stated. "We can't solve our immediate problems with empty bombastic speeches. Organize for immediate needs and demands in the countryside."

The Farmers' Emergency Congress is a long step toward effective organization. The Roosevelt program has attempted to plough under the farmer along with the crop. The Congress is

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an answer: the formation of a united farmers' movement to resist the New Deal drive on farmers' living standards and government recognition of the basic needs of this vital section of the country. The farm congress—which endorsed the Workers Unemployment Insurance bill, the Lundeen bill—realizes the importance of alliance with the other fighting sections of the population, and brings organized strength to the working-class movement.

THAT Wallace-Tugwell masterpiece of hunger legislation, the A.A.A., is being socked around the lot. The Farmers' Emergency Relief Conference has denounced it. Now comes the charge in Harper's Magazine that the Roosevelt subsistence homestead program is only a means of "perpetuating poverty." The Harper's article declares that the plan will develop company towns and further the trend toward starvation existence. Mrs. Roosevelt, whose pet "charity" project at Reedsville has created so much interest among dowagers who like to see our "poor" made "happy," admitted that mistakes have been made. But, she maintains, "I think, personally, that a much more truthful way of putting it would be to say an effort is being made to create for those who have had poverty a more bearable poverty." What this means it is difficult to say, unless a federal blessing and occasional visits from the First Lady make starvation more "bearable." Mrs. Roosevelt also denies that subsistence homesteads can ever be the same as company towns, because the homesteader will have a stake in his home and a plot of ground. She adds that the homesteader will be able to move out if he doesn't like his location, with of course the provision that he must pay rent on property occupied. She does not mention that the homesteader cannot earn enough rent to be choosy and is therefore tied to unproductive land. Subsistence farms are in reality an attempt to drive the standard of living still lower by isolating the unemployed and tying them down to small plots of land. The dirt road of the subsistence farm is the road toward fascization and serfdom. Two bills combatting this drive are now before Congress—the Workers' Unemployment Insurance Bill (H. R. 2827) and the Farmers' Emergency Relief Bill (H. R. 3471), which provide real relief to hungry workers and farmers.

Murder in Harlem

"MOTHER, an officer shot me for nothing. I wasn't doing anything." Those were the words of Lloyd Hobbs, sixteen-year-old Negro boy of Harlem, a few days before his death in Harlem Hospital. The boy's mother, Mrs. Lawyer Hobbs, further reported that the police threw him into the radio car, after mortally wounding him, and one patrolman sat on his stomach during the ride to the hospital. Other witnesses testified that Lloyd Hobbs had been shot in the back by Patrolman John G. McInerney. At the hearing presided over by Arthur Garfield Hays on April 6, demands were made for the punishment of the police killers, by Mr. Hobbs, the boy's father, by Robert Minor, Communist leader, and Joseph Tauber and Edward Kuntz, International Labor Defense attorneys. The tragedy of Lloyd Hobbs is only one incident of irresponsible terrorization of Negroes in Harlem March 19, which has resulted in four deaths. The mystery of the boy who was beaten in Kress's store has not been cleared up. When Lino Rivera, the unharmed youth produced by the police, appeared at the same hearing, according to The Times, the crowd in the courtroom shouted, "He's a paid witness. . . . He wasn't the only boy in that store." Harlem people are aroused to their own defense against jimcrowing, extortionate rents and prices, and starvation on relief. The present investigations are doing a work of exposure that might have taken years had it not been for the outburst of mass indignation in March.

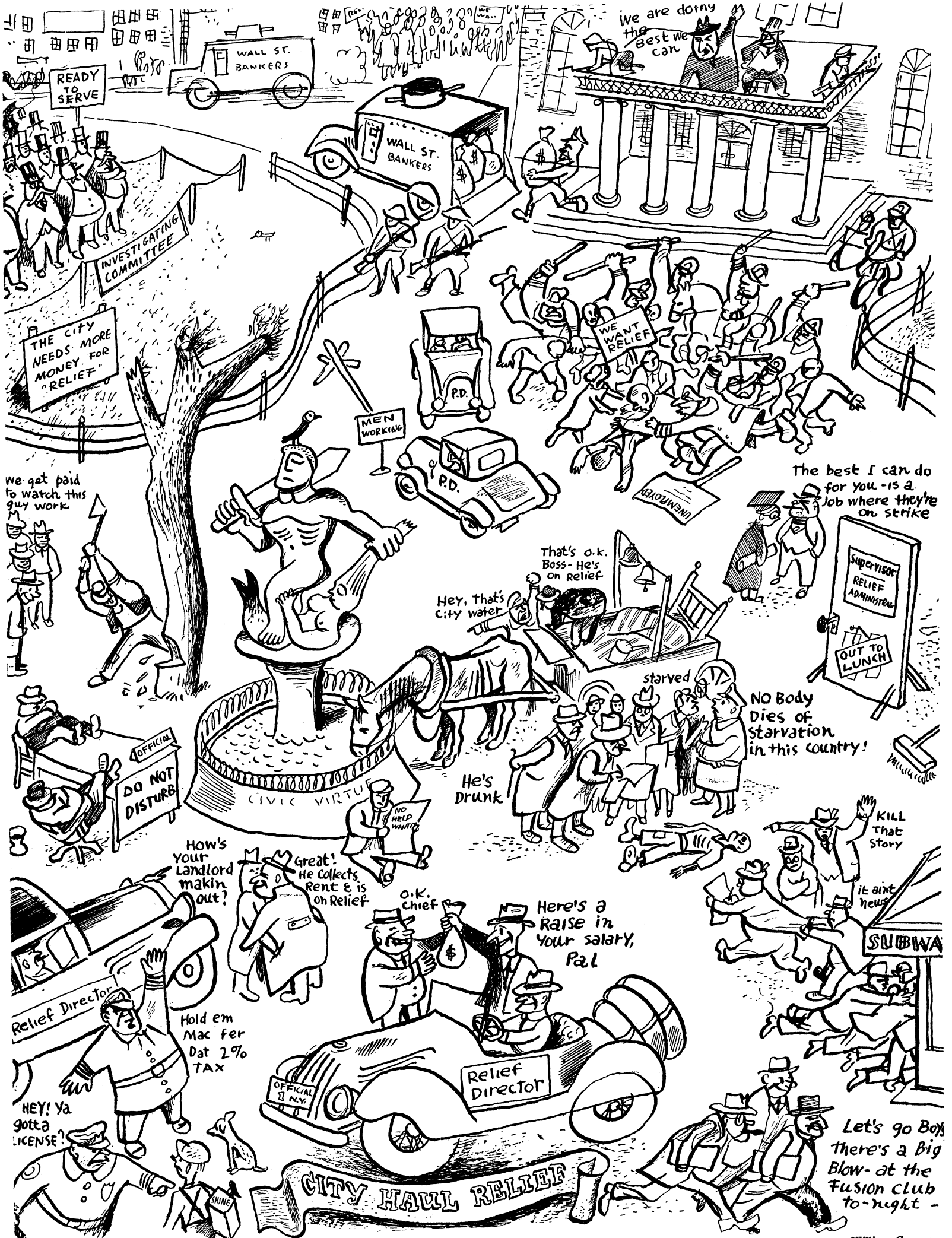
Departing Music

THE effort of the super-patriots to deport John Strachey proved a ludicrous flop. Undaunted, The Los Angeles Illustrated News has launched a new drive against another revolutionary—this time Hanns Eisler, one of the most talented composers and musicians today. The Illustrated News finds the fact that Eisler is "one of the half dozen greatest composers" particularly sinister. For, the paper goes on to show, men like Eisler write revolutionary songs that are sung by the masses and that serve as a unifying force in the fight against fascism. A good artist, an honest thinker, a militant worker, threatens the precarious existence of the order supported by the Hearst-inspired press. And so The Illustrated News finds that "Hanns

Eisler becomes a proper subject for deportation to Germany where he faces the prospect of the Nazi axe." The drive against all who raise their voices against unemployment, fascism, oppression, is on. California sentences eight young men and women to the penitentiary for the crime of conspiracy to violate the Criminal Syndicalism Act. It organizes and condones vigilantism. And naturally Hanns Eisler, opponent of Hitler's rule, advocate of the working class, world-recognized artist, is anathema to the ruling caste of California.

The Book Union

A GREAT cultural achievement of the revolutionary movement is the establishment of the Book Union (headquarters, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York City). Today, books are needed to help the workers, the professionals, the white-collar workers, the farmers, understand the forces that operate the world; forces that make for misery and oppression and war and forces that are driving onward toward a new and free society. Out of the conflict of classes there is arising a new literature, in fiction, poetry, class struggle theory and the drama. Profit-seeking publishers do not publish or push such books much, although they loudly bewail the fact that the market for the bourgeois output has fallen away. Every month, the Book Union will select an important revolutionary play, a fine proletarian novel or drama, a volume of poetry or an essential work on economics. The selection will be available at reduced prices—made possible through selling in volume—to members. So will other books which a monthly review, to be issued by the Book Union, will describe and recommend. The membership of \$1 a year thus would soon be made up to members through lowered prices, though there is no obligation for a member to take more than two books a year. Of even larger importance than the individual saving to members, however, is the fact that this literature, now hardly obtainable without a great deal of expense and trouble in most places, will be made easily available to all. Revolutionary writers will be encouraged. The wider distribution of such works will constitute an enormous aid in the fight against fascism and war, will be a bulwark against which the attacks on freedom of thought of the Hearsts, Longs and Coughlins will batter themselves into defeat.



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THE CITY NEEDS MORE MONEY FOR "RELIEF"

INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE

MEN WORKING

R.D.

R.D.

WE WANT RELIEF

The best I can do for you - is a job where they're on strike

SUPERVISOR RELIEF ADMINISTRATION

OUT TO LUNCH

That's o.k. Boss- He's on Relief

Hey, that's city water

starved

NO BODY Dies of starvation in this country!

He's Drunk

KILL that Story

it aint news

SUBWAY

Here's a Raise in your salary, Pal

O.K. chief

How's your Landlord makin out?

great! He Collects, Rent & is on Relief

Hold em Mac fer Dat 2% TAX

HEY! Ya gotta LICENSE?

Let's go Boys there's a Big Blow- at the Fusion Club to-night -

The Statistics of Hunger

WE ARE not in the habit of proffering a helping hand to our bourgeois contemporaries when on occasion they admit their baffled inability to explain one or another of the "mysteries" of the crisis. We have come to believe that that is not one of our functions in running a revolutionary journal. But even we cannot remain obdurate in the face of the editorial moan that emanated from the Times Square Building last Saturday. Saturday, April 6, was a memorable day on other accounts, too. It was the day on which the press carried the news that the administration Work-Relief Bill had been passed by the Congress. This is the bill that condemns millions of unemployed to a condition of peonage, and millions of "unemployables" and the aged to a pauper's life. It is the bill that will serve as the most powerful weapon of the bosses to cut wages on the widest front. In other words, it is the bill that most completely admits that Roosevelt's recovery program has utterly failed excepting as it has reassured the flow of profits to the bigger capitalists, thereby also assuring the continuation of the depression; that, as far as the mass of the workers are concerned, the professionals and the small business man, the tenant and the poorer farmers, the N.R.A. was but a snare and a delusion, as all along, we insisted it was. That Saturday was also Army Day when the soldiers and sailors and marines, the silk hats and the patriotic societies marched down Main Street to prove that the last war was not the last war. That was the day on which The New York Times chose to declare to the world its perplexity in the face of certain figures bearing upon the state of the union. It did that in an editorial entitled "Relief Rolls."

The editorial concerned itself with the latest monthly report of F.E.R.A. The report showed that for last February, relief expenditures throughout the country declined 8 percent as compared with January, and that the number of families carried on the relief rolls declined 1.3 percent. The Times thinks that the decline of 8 percent in expenditures for the month may be explained on the ground that in many localities the month included only four pay days instead of the five

pay days in January. And it hails the 1.3 percent decline in the number of families on relief rolls, though "fractional," as "at least encouraging." Of course statisticians might put a different construction on these figures. It is barely possible that in addition to the shrinkage in the number of pay days there also have occurred shrinkages in the individual family allotments. It may be that the 1.3 percent shrinkage in the number on the relief rolls represents the negative balance between the multitudes forced off relief and the multitudes put on the rolls for the first time. These figures may mean that the cut in the relief amounts was even greater relatively than the number forced off the relief rolls; this, together with the smaller number of pay days. We do not know that this was so. But in the absence of details we may permit our statistical fancies to roam a bit.

However, this was not the matter that gripped our hearts to the extent of proffering a helping hand to the New York Times editors. That matter concerns their inability to explain the increase of "nearly 2,000,000 families on the relief rolls that has occurred simultaneously with an increase of \$163,000,000 in mutual savings bank deposits during 1934 . . . and with an increase of \$793,000,000 in the volume of new business handled by the larger life insurance companies." That is, as The Times puts it:

Factory employment increased . . .	4.5%
Factory payrolls	14.0%
Saving bank accounts	3.2%
New life insurance	10.1%
Families on relief	72.5%

Hence the editorial perplexity: "These figures do not fit together easily."

We shall not stop to explain for the *n*th time that the employment and payrolls figures are entirely unreliable. The index of employment upon which these percentages are based is for the number of persons on payrolls, whether the persons work one or six days a week. Thus, it comes about that when the workers are made to share their work, *more* workers go on the payrolls, and the index increases. The number of working hours in the course of the year has shrunk considerably; no exact figure is possible, because of the seasonal

shifts in the various industries. But last summer Richberg boasted that between June, 1933 and June, 1934, during the first year of the N.R.A., the working week shrank six hours. The figures haven't changed much since. As regards payrolls, the *percentage* figures are misleading. The size of a percentage depends upon the base from which it is calculated. In the present instance the rise is from 60.6 to 69.1, and is 14 percent. The same rise of 8.5 points from, say 100 to 108.5, would be only 8.5 percent. The point to note is the *low* index of payrolls compared both with the index of employment, 81.2 and of both with the base, the monthly average for the years 1923-1925—of eleven years ago. For every one hundred workers that were employed in 1923-1925, only eighty-one are employed today, and that in the face of the fact that since that time some 7,500,000 more persons have become of working age. And the payrolls,—for every \$100 that was paid out to every one hundred persons working eleven years ago, \$69 is now being paid out to every eighty-one persons working. And from fourteen to fifteen million workers get nothing at all by way of wages.

To clarify these points still further let us observe that industrial production figured from the same index base stood at ninety-one this past February against eighty-three the year before. But this increase of eight points figures up roughly only to 10 percent. The same rise from a level of sixty would amount to 12 percent. Note, however, also, these pertinent comparisons—that while industrial productions, figured from the index base of 1923-25 as one hundred, stood last February at ninety-one, employment stood at 81.2 and payrolls at 69.1. More is now produced by fewer workers who get still less in wages.

These facts alone might have been sufficient to enlighten the Times editors on the question of the increase of 2,000,000 on the relief rolls in the year elapsing between February, 1934 and February, 1935. But there remain the bank deposits and the life insurance figures. On the first set of figures, we respectfully refer our esteemed contemporary to an editorial in The New York Times of some months past, entitled "Banking Improvements," in which the "interesting feature" of the Annual Report of the Comptroller of the Currency for 1933 is recorded

that 97 percent of the depositors of the national banks of the country were made up of deposits of less than \$2500 and that these 97 percent of the deposits accounted for less than 24 percent of the total deposits. During the year 1934 this tendency towards ever-increasing concentration of wealth and income in ever fewer hands has gone on apace. But in the crisis, the recipients of these vast amounts of money find no place for their investment, and so they put them on time deposits in the commercial banks,—the sums thus put on time deposits had become so great by the end of last year that the banks will not pay more than one percent interest on them nor on less than \$10,000, and in the savings banks, where the return might be a bit greater than in the commercial banks, and for the time being are more safe than in the speculative markets.

And the latter fact also explains the increase in the amount of new life insurance written. This increase was not *in life insurance* as such, but in *annuities*. Last December, at the meeting of the Life Presidents' Association, the fear was expressed freely that the life insurance companies were being overwhelmed with funds coming in on annuity purchases, both of the fully paid-up and of the deferred types. Whereas in normal years income from annuity premiums has at most amounted to about 10 percent of total premiums, in the past year or two it has grown

to about 25 percent. The rentier class, finding no place for investing its funds,—the capital market as every one knows is almost non-existent judged by past standards—buys annuities. It thus throws the burden of investing these funds upon the insurance companies—many of these companies are discouraging large annuity contracts, for they too cannot invest them profitably. And this is where these increases in savings deposits and in life insurance premium income come from, not from the employed, whose total payrolls are now only 61 percent of what they would be on the 1923-1925 basis; not from the fourteen to fifteen million unemployed. On the contrary, it is precisely because, among other things, these wealthy classes of the population are continuing to be able to swell the savings bank deposits and the premium income totals of the life insurance companies, that we have the low payroll totals, and the large number of unemployed, and the 2,000,000 increase in the number of families on relief in the one year February, 1934—February, 1935. The bill to perpetuate this maldistribution of wealth has appropriately enough been passed at the moment the New York Times editors scratch the scruffs of their necks in perplexity, to explain these contradictions. And the patriotic societies march down Main Street to remind us that capitalism has still one more trick it might use to stave off complete collapse—war.

Liberty Bonds and to fill government contracts at boom prices while the workers fought for "democracy." The boards of trustees stand behind the college presidents, and the college presidents in turn oppose the student strike. Thus President Butler of Columbia (who turned his campus into an armed camp during the war) now publicly deploras war and at the same time condemns the student strike. For, President Butler argues, "To organize a strike against war is to show a strange lack of sense of humor, for the strike itself is a form of war." President Butler keeps his sense of humor working overtime when he suggests that the way to fight war is to put our faith in the League of Nations and the World Court. Similarly, Superintendent of New York Schools, Campbell, refuses to grant high school students permission to leave classes, because "it is not in the cause of peace to countenance such a demonstration."

His reasoning is based on the "very bad precedent" set by such demonstrations—students might learn to rule themselves, to have a voice in their own affairs. More openly still, President Sproul of the University of California, who ordered the city police to arrest students distributing handbills calling for the strike, has called a mass meeting of the entire student body to be held on the same day and the same hour as the student strike. No one will wonder at this, since Sproul sanctions vigilante organizations backed by the American Legion on the California campus. In Los Angeles, young Bernice Gallagher was suspended from the John Marshall High School for anti-war activity.

But intimidation and suspensions, arrests and pronouncements, cannot stop the strike. Students are vitally concerned in the threat of war and fascism. They realize the danger of Hearst jingoism, of Coughlin's and Long's demagoguery. They understand the implications of subsistence farming and the C.C.C., and that when they graduate they are facing unemployment. Above all, they have learned the lesson of fascism in Italy and Germany, and the lesson of the "war to end wars," in which fathers and brothers were killed or maimed, or survived the fight to save the world, only to be reduced to a starvation standard of living and the prospect of being swept into another imperialist war.

The Students Teach

AS WE go to press, plans for the national student strike to be held on April 12 have gained great impetus. At the same time, the hostility of college and school administrations grows. But the strike at University of Michigan (held early because of vacations) where over 1,000 demonstrated and adopted a resolution endorsing the call to a National Student Congress next fall to carry on the fight against war and fascism, promises that the strike will meet with enthusiastic response. The student strike is not an isolated protest against war and fascism. It will result in resolutions calling for future congresses and is a move to consolidate student struggle against military preparedness which is reaching the fever stage. The students

will also oppose the flood of repressive legislation that at this time swamps state legislatures and the national Congress, and seriously threatens not only freedom of thought and expression in the schools, but also in all other phases of activity.

For the first time, the student strike will invade even the southern states, even the Negro colleges of Shaw, Howard and Virginia University. The response to the call in the South has approached the response in all other localities. As might be expected, the leading "educators" come out openly to attack the strike. Boards of trustees are composed of large industrialists, of "leading citizens" who can remember back to 1917 when it was exceedingly profitable for these "patriots" to buy

Mail-Order Dictatorship

The Rosenwalds and 12,000,000 Negroes

LOREN MILLER

RUMOR has it that Julius Rosenwald counted as charity any investment that failed to yield at least 10 per cent. Some such policy and his connections with the Chicago mail-order house of Sears, Roebuck and Company made him a rich man and fitted him for the role of philanthropist.

His earliest gifts were made to local and Jewish charities and it was not until 1901 that he made a sizable contribution to Negroes when he gave \$25,000 to a drive for a Negro Y.M.C.A. in Chicago. In 1911 he announced that he would give \$25,000 to any city for the construction of a Negro Y.M.C.A. provided the community would match his gift with another \$75,000. Washington availed itself of the plan the next year and since that time more than a score of cities have been the recipients of Rosenwald aid.

Such generosity was bound to attract the attention of Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee educator soon got in touch with Rosenwald to press the claims of the Alabama school. Collis Huntington, J. P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller had already placed their stamp of approval on Tuskegee and the canny Chicago financier, who believed in employe welfare work because "it pays, because it is good business,"¹ became an ardent supporter of the institution and a warm friend of Washington's. In 1912, Rosenwald gave the educator \$25,000 to be spent as the latter saw fit. Washington decided to spend part of it on nearby rural schools. The seed had been planted, out of which grew the Rosenwald rural school program.

Formal announcement of the rural school plan was made in 1913. Gifts for the erection or improvement of southern rural schools for Negroes were conditioned on each community's securing enough money to complete its own project. The plan was continued for the next twenty years and abandoned in 1933 lest it "become a crutch rather than a stimulus."² In those two decades more than five thousand schools were built. Rosenwald, and after his death the Fund he had established, gave \$4,364,869. Negroes contributed \$4,725,871; other whites gave \$1,211,775 and \$18,165,805 came from public tax funds to which Negroes contributed directly and indirectly. But the schools are styled Rosenwald Schools, monuments to the their cost.

Sears, Roebuck catalogues spread over the South. Rosenwald philanthropy grew so rapidly that in 1917 the mail-order king formed a corporation—almost entirely a family affair—to supervise the work. That corporation lived until 1928; and its organization in 1917 ended the first phase of Rosenwald giving. Upwards of four million dollars had gone to Negro charity. Sears, Roebuck and Company had grown too—its war-time and post-war profits were almost fabulous—but no budding Negro mail-order executives sat at its far-flung desks.¹

Such Negroes as were employed—they were few—held traditional menial tasks despite many well-mannered importunities from suave Urban League secretaries. The policy of training Negroes and then denying them the opportunity to practise their trades or professions is extremely paradoxical unless, of course, one believes in complete separation of the races, with the corollary development of racial enterprises.

Out of the reorganization of 1928 emerged the Julius Rosenwald Fund, a much more ambitious organization than the old family affair. Edwin R. Embree, descendant of Tennessee abolitionists, soon emerged as its guiding spirit and spokesman. By his own admission, Embree is a "confirmed optimist," fortified with the conviction that a "satisfactory and satisfying future for [the Negro] is already assured."² Apparently this theory is that all that is necessary is to strengthen existing institutions.

After assuming charge of the Fund, Embree blazed a new trail into Negro life. Rosenwald benevolences fell like manna on all sorts of institutions. Beneficiaries listed in the official report for the years from 1928 to 1933 include seven state industrial and normal colleges, National Association for Advancement of Colored People, twenty-one prominent private colleges and universities, National Urban League, fifteen hospitals, a half-dozen industrial high schools, Boy Scouts, Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Young Men's Christian Associations, National Negro Health Week, National Commission on Interracial Cooperation, a model housing project, a nursery school, six state departments of health, and sundry boards, conferences and various types of institutes.³

¹ Chicago Negroes charge that Sears stores there even Jim-Crow Negro customers—Chicago Defender, July 1, 1933.

² Brown America, Viking Press, N. Y., E. R. Embree, page 285.

³ Rosenwald Report of 1934—(may be had from Fund officials) gives report 1928-1933.

Rosenwald Fund records show an expenditure of roughly five million dollars for Negro work in those five years. The greater part of the money has gone to institutions that mold Negro thinking. Almost every important school or college has received aid. The National Urban League publishes Opportunity magazine; the N.A.A.C.P. issues The Crisis magazine. The leading Negro historian has written his books with its aid. School teachers, college presidents, Y. secretaries and social workers are obligated to the Fund.

In short, the immense Rosenwald Fund is a vast paternalistic institution, capable of exerting a tremendous influence over Negro life. The Negro people never delegated any power to it. The Fund simply assumed this leadership because of its ability to give or withhold financial aid to needy institutions. More than that, the Fund is entirely controlled by whites and it was not until 1935 that a Negro, Charles S. Johnson, was placed on its board of trustees.

Rosenwald's death in 1932 was bewailed as a major disaster. Memorial meetings were held in Rosenwald-aided schools, colleges, Y.M.C.A.'s and community centers. One newspaper suggested that a day be set aside to honor his memory. The Fund he established lives after him to continue his work, and do him honor. And, it must be repeated, the fountainhead of this philanthropy was the head of a great profit-making corporation religiously adhering to the principle of Jim-Crow in the employment of workers.

The gifts made in his name went to support and encourage social institutions built on the principle of racial separatism. Each in its own sphere is a supporter of that system of property relationships on which the Rosenwald fortune was built.

Obviously enough the men whose lives center around Rosenwald-aided institutions are amenable to Fund influence. Other men striving to establish schools or community centers must be careful to comply with the wishes of Fund directors if they hope to secure aid. Still other men, prominent in Negro life, are respectful toward the Fund because of its grants of fellowships and scholarships. More than three hundred and fifty thousand dollars has been spent in this manner in the past six years. In 1928 only \$13,034 went to fellows and research students. The sum leaped up to \$136,793 in 1930-31 and showed the effects of the depression by dropping to \$17,793 in 1933-34. The Fund professes to have no list of those who have received aid of this kind.

¹ Men Who Are Making America, B. C. Forbes, page 316, New York, 1921.

² Report of Fund for 1933—See Baltimore Afro-American, Dec. 9, 1933.

A partial roster reveals: W. E. B. Du Bois, author, former editor of *The Crisis* and now professor at Atlanta University; Dr. M. O. Bousefield, Chicago physician and former president of the National (Negro) Medical Association; Dr. Ralph Bunche, head of the department of political science at Howard University; Richmond Barthou, sculptor; James Weldon Johnson, author, former secretary of the N.A.A.C.P. and now professor of creative literature, Fisk University; Horace Mann Bond, dean of the college, Dillard University; Dewey R. Jones, city editor, *Chicago Defender*; Charles S. Johnson, author, former editor of *Opportunity* magazine, former research secretary of the Urban League and now head of the department of sociology, Fisk University; Max Bond, Tennessee Valley Administration employe; Clarence Cameron White, violinist and composer; Dr. Ernest Just, head of the department of zoology, and a host of others who occupy key positions in Negro life—365 of them in all.

"Many of the most distinguished of the younger Negroes owe a part of their present eminence to the unusual opportunities provided by these Rosenwald fellowships," Embree boasted in his report this year.¹

Not all these men can be charged with taking orders from Fund officials. But evidently Embree does not want them to forget their benefactor and certainly students ambitious for careers cannot be blind to the fact that they can further their own ends by endearing themselves to those who have it in their power to extend or withhold aid. Quite naturally, the Fund is enabled to exercise a subtle kind of censorship through selection of research projects for which it is willing to grant aid. Only the directors know how far that censorship extends but in one case a student was refused funds for a project on the ground that it was "too dangerous." He got aid for another and supposedly safer project.

One young Chicago doctor sought a fellowship and was refused when he declined to work in a pet hospital project in the South after his work was finished. Those who are granted fellowships are given opportunities to have their material published through Rosenwald influence and to that extent the Fund dictates what is to be read by and about Negroes.

Rosenwald Fund influence is exerted in other ways. The Commission on Interracial Cooperation has been subsidized so thoroughly that it has become the Fund's alter ego, and W. W. Alexander, Commission leader of Atlanta, was placed at the head of Dillard University after that school was reorganized to the tune of a quarter of a million dollars of mail-order money. It is common knowledge in Negro academic circles that professors, unless they are outstanding au-

thorities, dare not offend the Fund directors if they want jobs at certain colleges and universities. That type of control is exercised through Charles S. Johnson, previously mentioned Fisk professor. Johnson is an industrious collector of statistics who has been inflated to the rank of an authority through Fund influence. He never misses an opportunity to second Embree's every wish and Negro professors privately dub him the Simon Legree of the Rosenwald Fund.

The collapse of the stock market hit the Rosenwald Fund. Resources at its command dwindled from thirty million dollars in 1929 to five million dollars in 1935. Its influence has not dwindled in the same ratio. Rather the overlordship over Negro life has been extended through an amazing flyer in politics, by virtue of which the Fund has constituted itself the dictator of the Negro policies of the Roosevelt administration. That dictatorship is exercised through Clark Foreman, until recently advisor on Negro affairs in the Department of Interior and now special counsel to Secretary Ickes. Scion of the wealthy Howells family of Atlanta, Foreman is proud of the fact that he is a "ten generation southerner." He was "lent" to the administration in 1933 by the Rosenwald Fund for which he was serving as director for studies.

More remarkable still, both he and his Negro assistant, Dr. Robert C. Weaver, remained on the Fund payroll even after he was installed in his official position, according to charges published in *The Baltimore Afro-American* and never denied. The story of his elevation is an instructive chapter in the technique of putting Rosenwald-obligated Negro intellectuals through their paces.

Until Roosevelt's election, first Booker T. Washington and then Robert Russa Moton, as heads of Tuskegee Institute, had acted as unofficial administration advisors on Negro affairs. But Moton, spokesman via the General Education Board for the Rockefeller interests, belonged to the older order. And this was the New Deal. The problem of how to displace the old-deal Negroes with a new group was difficult—but not too hard for Embree. Let us turn to his report for 1934, issued through Negro newspapers:

We called a conference in Washington in the spring of 1933 where the situation was thoroughly canvassed by government officials, economists, and business men of both races, and plans were made for active campaigns to see that the Negro was given consideration in all proposals for relief and recovery. We lent one of our own officers, Clark Foreman, to serve as *special advisor* to the Secretary of the Interior and to act as *liaison officer* to keep Negro welfare before the attention of all government departments.

The conference to which Embree refers met in Washington on May 11, 12 and 13. To insure a creditable attendance the Fund not only "invited" a select list of Negro intellectuals, it also paid transportation costs and living expenses for some of those who attended. It is hardly necessary to stress the

point that Fund officials had been given no mandate from the Negro people to call this conference or to plan their relations with the Roosevelt government. At that time its board of trustees was entirely white; its funds came from a white corporation that practised discrimination in employment. Among those present at the conference were W. E. B. Du Bois, Bishop George Clements, now deceased, democratic A. M. E. Zion, bishop; T. Arnold Hill, then industrial secretary of the National Urban League; Charles S. Johnson (of course!); Professor Ralph Bunche of Howard University; Horace Mann Bond, then Fisk professor; and an assortment of Negro "leaders" in various fields. Even the ubiquitous Moton was there to attend his own political funeral. The three-day sessions were conducted with a great show of liberality, even to the extent of yielding to the demand of James W. Ford that he be permitted to speak.

These "government officials, economists, and business men of both races" named a committee to sum up the conference deliberations. Charles S. Johnson headed it. Other members were W. W. Alexander, Bishop Clements, R. R. Moton, Walter White, T. Arnold Hill, Red-baiting Prof. Kelly Miller and Broadus Mitchell. The report was a hodge-podge of liberal and even radical phrases. One significant sentence recommended the "more extensive employment of *Negro technical experts in federal relief services which are of special importance to Negroes.*"

The stage was set.

In September, 1933, Foreman was named to the newly created post by Secretary Ickes, former president of the Chicago branch of the N.A.A.C.P. and close to Fund officials. The Baltimore Afro-American charged what everybody already knew when it called the appointment "this evil-smelling dose of white leadership" and branded it as "the first fruit of that ill-fated Rosenwald economic conference." A wave of protest welled up.

Foreman made a few speeches in which he urged Negroes to ask for political and economic equality. Protest began to die out and soon *The Chicago Defender* discovered that Foreman "deserves to be given free and unhampered opportunity to carry out his program."

Other "technical experts" were appointed to government jobs "which are of special importance to Negroes." Brain trusts were the fashion of the day and the group earned the title of the Black Brain Trust. Appointed were Eugene Kinkle Jones, secretary of the Urban League, Negro advisor to the Department of Commerce; Henry A. Hunt, principal of Fort Valley Norman and Industrial School, assistant to the governor of the Farm Credit Administration; Forrester B. Washington, Atlanta University professor, assistant to Relief Administrator Harry L. Hopkins; Lawrence A. Oxley, North Carolina social

¹ Ibid—Printed in *Louisiana Weekly*, New Orleans, Dec. 8, 1934.

worker, advisor on Negro affairs in the Department of Labor; and Dr. Robert C. Weaver, assistant to Foreman. The Urban League and the schools from which these men came had received Rosenwald money. Oxley had worked closely with the Fund in his state and when Weaver took his job, part of his salary was paid with Rosenwald money. Every one of the appointees, at least through institutional connections, had been close to other philanthropic funds. They were men who knew how to act in the presence of wealth and authority.

Foreman quite soon showed them who was boss.

In a desperate effort to muscle in on the New Deal, Moton, in November, 1933, wrote directly to the President suggesting the naming of a group of Negroes to advise the administration. Roosevelt referred the letter to Ickes who in turn consulted Foreman. Foreman vetoed the obvious effort to unseat his group and countered by setting up a "black cabinet" composed of the Negro brain trusters and the few purely political Negro appointees. The mail-order dictatorship was complete.

There have been a number of abortive attempts to unseat the Forman clique. Last fall Gretchen McRae, a former government employe, exposed the fact that segregation existed in the Department of the Interior right under Foreman's nose and charged him with winking at it. Her persistence led to rumors that the whole setup would be replaced. But nothing came of it beyond the kicking of Foreman upstairs and the elevation of Weaver, his assistant to the old Foreman post. That meant nothing. At the present time the Chicago Defender is tilting at the Rosenwald dictatorship. Charging that "certain interests" are dictating the Negro policies of the administration, The Defender recently branded the "fifty educators of our group who have been selected to represent and presumably speak for twenty million black people in America" . . . "a detriment to our racial progress."

It is too early to foretell the results of this crusade. Foreman's bungling ineptitude has resulted in a great deal of internal discord and Forrester Washington resigned his post last fall. Other Negro brain trusters cling to their sinecures and content themselves merely with serving as press agents for the New Deal.

These "technical experts" have done nothing to protect the rights of Negro workers and farmers. The administration record requires little comment. The A.A.A. has been used to dispossess more than 100,000 tenant farmers and share croppers. Differential wage scales against Negroes have been written into N.R.A. codes. The minimum wage scale for F.E.R.A. projects was abandoned when southern industrialists protested to Roosevelt during his visit to Warm Springs last fall—a move that meant a return to the

old slave wages in the South. Anti-lynching legislation was shelved at the last session of Congress and the outlook is dark again this year.

Yet the Negro brain trusters have done nothing.

Of course, basic problems of the Negro people have not been tackled. The social service philanthropists by proxy, who "represent" the Negro people in the government, are not favorable to any disturbance of that already assured "satisfactory and satisfying future" foreseen by their bosom friend and benefactor, Edwin R. Embree.

One of the most disturbing phases of the new setup is that it carries over into the government the theory of philanthropists that the Negro people are wards of the class in power. Study of their problems is classified as "welfare work." The Negro brain trust is in reality a Bureau of Negro Affairs all too similar to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. As yet it has no official sanction in law, but Emmanuel Cellar, New York democrat, and Arthur Mitchell, Negro democrat of Chicago, have bills before Congress calling for the establishment of a Negro Industrial Commission. The proposed commission would have charge of Negro affairs just as the Indian Bureau exercises control over affairs of Indians. Cellar's bill admits as one of its purposes the desire to fight Communism. There is nothing to indicate that Foreman inspired these bills directly, but it is significant that he once suggested a plan for separate homestead projects for Negroes that amounted to the establishment of Negro reservations.¹

Sears, Roebuck and Company is close to the administration; so close Roosevelt was determined to name its president, Gen. R. E. Wood, head of his proposed federal work projects. Mr. Embree and Mr. Roosevelt apparently understand each other. Just after the abandonment of the F.E.R.A. minimum wage scales with the consequent wave of protest from Negroes, the President discovered that rural school facilities for his Negro neighbors at Warm Springs were very inadequate. This intelligence was communicated to Embree, who immediately announced that despite its abandonment of school construction, the Rosenwald Fund would provide \$2,500 for the erection of a Negro school. These lessons are not wasted on ambitious Negro public figures and subservient editors. As a result there is little criticism of the Rosenwald Fund political activities. The Fund's power in educational circles and the potency of Sears advertising also operate to still the critical. An extreme example of the Fund's power occurred when Eugene Davidson, then chief of Associated Negro Press Bureau in Washington, released a story in May, 1934, attacking Foreman and ex-

¹ Statement to Associated Negro Press, by Foreman, Pittsburgh Courier, Nov. 25, 1933. See Protest by N.A.A.C.P., Courier, Nov. 25, 1933.

posing Rosenwald Fund political activity in Washington. The A.N.P. promptly distorted the story and twisted it into a paean of praise for Foreman!²

Philanthropy has always played a large part in Negro life, but never has a nine million dollar investment paid larger dividends in social control than those shown on the Rosenwald balance sheet. Ten percent indeed! Even the Rockefeller General Education Board's twenty million dollar benefactions have not yielded as much. Perhaps it is giving him too much credit, but the rumbling wave of Negro discontent is some proof that Julius Rosenwald foresaw the time when his gifts to Negro institutions and intellectuals would play the same role in protecting his investments as have his employe-welfare and profit-sharing plans. For it must not be forgotten that those who play philanthropist to the Negro people distill their wealth out of the profit system. If they are givers of fortunes they are at the same time die-hard defenders of capitalism. Sears, Roebuck and Company, for example, contributes to fascist organizations! It is against the old order and its fascist defenders that the Negro people must array themselves in their struggle for liberation. They cannot look for leadership to those subsidized out of the same funds that go to encourage potential storm troopers.

² Afro-American, May 12, 1934.

Palm Springs, Cal.

(To the pleasant surprise of the smart colony at Palm Springs, a new Oriental note was introduced last week at the desert resort. From now until the 1935 season closes, winter vacationists will tour the streets in Jinrikishas, similar to those in Japan. . . .

—The Los Angeles Examiner.)

It's a new sport this season, to indulge
The festered minds, long bored with floating
power;

Amusing now to watch, some casual hour,
Live tendons strain and shining muscles
bulge.

"An innovation,"—the resort ads state.
When has it ever been a novel sight
To view wealth riding, as its cushioned right,
While some stooped figure bears its useless
weight?

With all the culture cradled in the East,
This then, the custom we must ape. Re-set
The ages' clock, for man again is beast.

"Land of the free—" we share all things:—
some get
The yoke, and some the cushions. Is this
reason?

And there may be a whip to swing, next
season.

IRENE KILBOURNE.

Coming: "A Damn Big Strike"

A First-Hand Report from the Men in Steel

AMY SCHECHTER

WEIRTON, W. VA.

THE sweeping decision handed down several weeks ago by Federal Judge Niels upholding and legalizing company unionism, and outlawing the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers in Weirton, has done more to destroy the faith of the steel workers in the government and its labor boards than 10,000 propagandists working twenty-four hours a day could have done. It has given a tremendous impetus to sentiment in favor of a general steel strike this spring.

It was obviously rash for the government to announce in public that in a federal court the steel corporation can lick it with one hand tied behind its back. It is apt to get the people thinking that either the government is impotent in the face of the steel corporations or conniving with them.

When I went to Weirton to see how the Weirton decision was affecting the workers, and how workers live under a company-union regime supported by the federal court of the United States, I found them talking strike, and a lot of them talking revolution. A solid young semi-skilled worker, 100-percent American, who was not a Communist, and had not even heard of *The Daily Worker*, said: "You know what they're saying all around the plant? They're saying, 'By God, if our Congress don't have the right to legislate laws for the welfare of the laboring people then it's time to get together and turn the country upside down . . . it's time to start a good revolution!'"

Weirton, according to the Weirton Steel Corporation, is the biggest unincorporated town in this country. It has a population of 27,000. An unincorporated town has no mayor, town council or other elected officials. The population is disenfranchised as far as local issues are concerned; and processes of government, policing, etc., are in the hands of the company.

During the hearings on the Weirton Case, some of the newspapers wrote about how Weir had built his own beloved town for his own beloved workers in a West Virginia apple-orchard, twenty-four years ago. This was an argument against "outside unions" like the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers intruding into the employer-employee idyll.

Perhaps remembering about the apple-orchard heightens the impact of the barren ugliness of Weirton today. Not the great steel-plant, where 10,000 men work, but "residential" Weirton with its gangrenous shacks where Weirton workers breed and

die. Weirton is set in a long, narrow valley, which is crowded with acre on acre of massive buildings and blast-furnaces of the steel plant. The workers' shacks teeter at the edge of mud roads that sprawl in shaky parallels up both sides of the valley. Main Street is paved. It runs past the plant offices, and the plant first-aid station, and shabby little stores and eating-places of Weirton proper, along the rusty heaps of scrap-iron edging the steel mills, over the viaduct into Halliday Cove, where more of the Weirton workers live, past a couple of movie-houses, and more shabby stores and eating-places.

The company does not own the Weirton houses. It makes a point of not owning them. "Hell, they don't have to own them," a leading union man told me. "They own the mortgages on most of them." There is a Weirton Improvement Company to handle the houses, and there are the local banks. In the boom days Weirton Steel encouraged the "Own Your Home" drive among its employes. Hundreds put their lifelong savings into buying homes, and when earnings fell, lost them to the company. Foreclosure of mortgages and, in the case of rented houses, eviction, is being systematically used as a weapon against active union men.

Mill officials live outside Weirton, beyond the reach of the all-penetrating greasy-brown smoke, near the luxurious Williams Country Club, named after the president of the company. When workers ventured on the grounds of the club, Weir gave orders to have the benches removed, I was told, and some were threatened with arrest for trespassing when they ventured near the golf course. This is interesting, because in the course of the Weirton hearing the company conveyed the impression that this Country Club was one of an infinite number of contributions it had made to the welfare and happiness of Weirton employes. Another contribution was the swimming pool, which a company-union official by the name of Jimmie Thompson, with the title of "Chairman of Recreation," cited as an example of what the company did for the workers. Workers told me he failed to add that the company charged 25 cents apiece for the use of the pool, and made money out of it.

Once the Country Club was open to the workers, that is, for a month prior to the Employe Representation Plan elections. The company threw parties for its employes in the club, served free drinks and sandwiches, even sent busses for some of the girls who were known as leaders among the girls working in the sorting room of the tin mill. After the

drinks and sandwiches company officials told them: "If you want your bread and butter every day vote the right way," and asked them to teach other girls in their shop this cheer:

Ice-cream soda
Ginger pop
Company union
Goes over the top.

Seventeen of the girls signed an affidavit about the party they attended, for use of the Amalgamated Association at the Wilmington hearing. The company replied with the statement that not the company but "a group of employes" threw the party.

Everything comes back to the company union in Weirton. Start with rents, or the price of pork chops, and the talk swings round to the company union. The Wilmington decision has brought the whole question before the workers in the sharpest terms. A number of workers told me how they voted for the Employe Representation Plan "voluntarily and without coercion" in the December, 1933 election which the company claims established the company union as "the union of the workers' choice." An employe of the sheet mill department stated, "In the sheet mill department there appeared campaign cards with the company slate printed on them. These cards said, 'Vote for these men, don't vote yourselves out of a job.'" Another described the procedure as follows: "The foreman came up to us and said, 'Two men of the crew haven't voted yet. Better get them the hell over there and vote!' I said to my roller, 'Is this compulsory?' He said, 'You heard it.' I went over and voted."

A group of Italian workers employed at the Steubenville plant of the Weirton Steel Corporation, three miles from Weirton, across the Ohio River said, "They called a meeting for Italians and one for Poles in the basement of the church. They served beer and sandwiches. Then the super made a speech. He said, 'If you want more work and more money, vote for the company union.'" However it was not all done so subtly. One of the same group told me: "The foreman of the gang at the coke-plant said, 'If you don't vote, stay home tomorrow.'"

Under compulsion a large number of the workers voted, but hundreds deliberately spoiled their ballots by casting them for Mae West, Popeye the Sailor, Hitler, Mussolini, the Emperor of Timbuctoo and the Prince of Wales. At the Wilmington hearing when the ballot boxes were opened, despite the

strenuous objection of Earl F. Reed, chief corporation counsel for Weirton Steel, it was found that over 30 percent of all the ballots bore the name of one of these celebrities, or obscene drawings and inscriptions that graphically expressed the way the workers felt about these shotgun elections where you voted or lost your job, and had the choice of voting for the company union or for the company union. Men who were present as union witnesses told me that the first ballot opened had this message to the big boss scrawled across it: "E. T. Weir, as sure as there is a God in heaven you will burn in hell for this."

There are a large number of foreign-born workers in the Weirton plants, especially Greeks and Italians. The company uses the heads of the various fraternal organizations to hold the workers of their respective nationalities in line. At the Wilmington hearing the company produced an affidavit from the president of the Greek Ahepa Lodge in Weirton, Steve Rolus, to the effect that his entire membership was against the Amalgamated Association and for the company union. The man who told me this added, "Rolus is no longer president of Ahepa." The president of the Greek Community made an affidavit to the same effect. He is foreman of the pickling department at the plant. "He's all washed up too," my informant added.

Hatred of the company-union regime is reaching white heat among Weirton workers today. When it first came in they hated it on general principles as a threat to their independence and desire for a bona fide trade-union organization. After working under this regime for a year and a half they hate it for a variety of specific reasons.

First, they have learned that the Employee Representation Plan operates primarily as an elaborate plant espionage apparatus. The Employee Representatives are all handpicked company men who are given good jobs. If they have children, they are taken care of too. What so-called collective bargaining through such representatives means was pointed out to me by one of the Weirton union men. (The blacklist makes it impossible to give names.) He showed me the boast made by Larkin, the general chairman of the Employee Representatives, at the Wilmington hearing, to the effect that "only last week our forty-eight-inch strip mill broke an all-time world record for production. . . ." The man added "What would happen if we went to him with a complaint on speed-up? Look at this," he continued, opening up the booklet issued by the company union on its plan, "the steel code set a minimum of \$3.20 a day for an eight-hour day and then left it up to us to bargain collectively. . . . Well, there's nothing collective in this whole book. It's individual bargaining. Each man has to come as an individual with his grievance. First he has to go to a foreman, and then if the case is not settled, he has to come to one of these Employee Representatives. That's worse than

before, because it means he has to expose himself twice, once to the foreman and once to one of these stoolpigeons the company calls representatives."

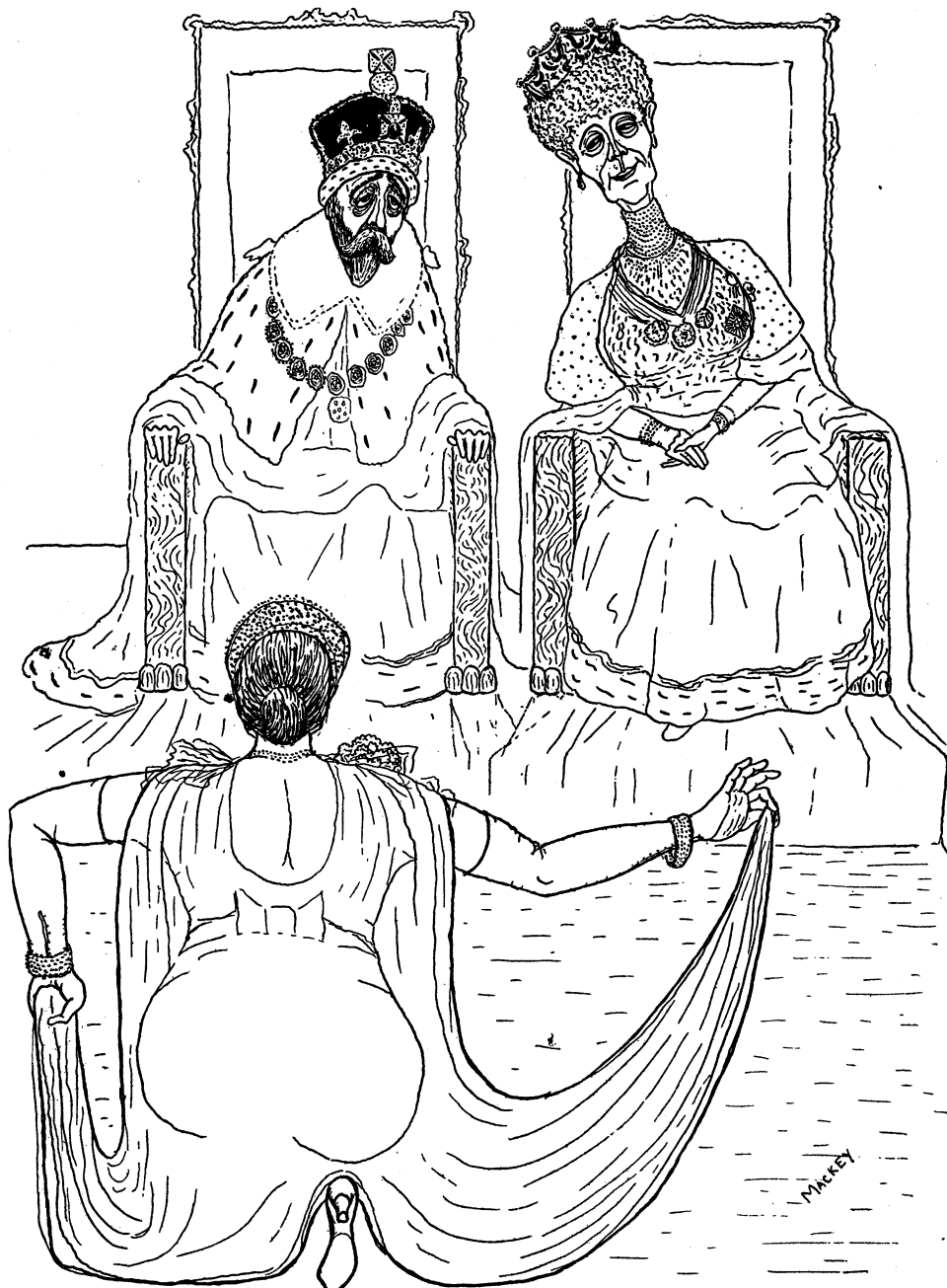
Under this system, the man who kicks is either fired outright, or shifted to a lower job, with the threat of being shifted on out. The company gyms the men in a dozen different ways, with impunity. Men in one department of the Steubenville plant reported the following practice: The company has raised production standards to an impossible level. If an employe fails to reach this standard in eight hours, he is forced to go out and punch his card, and then go back and continue working, one, two or more hours extra without pay. One of the men summed it up: "If you do go back to work after you punch your card, and then get hurt, you're out of luck. No compensation. If you don't go back you're out of luck. No job."

Semi-skilled workers in this plant said they have to get out about one-third as much work again as in 1930, and make less. They made

\$4.27 to \$4.72 and mostly worked not over six hours. Now they work from eight to ten hours and make \$3.75. They added that the cheapest grade flour had risen from 39 cents pre-N.R.A. for a twenty-four pound sack to 91 cents, lard from 6 to 33 cents; pork chops from 12 to 30 cents.

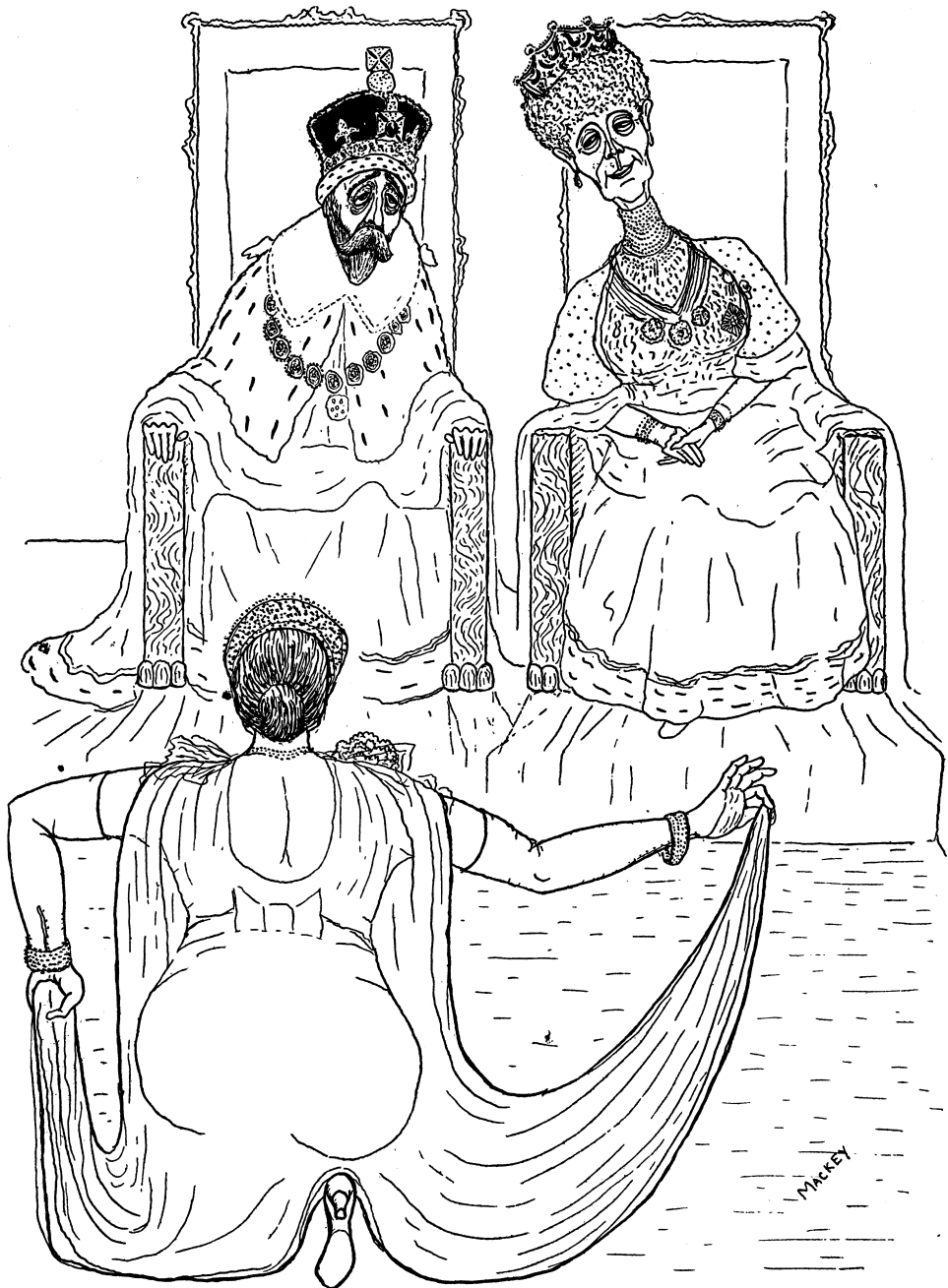
"You have to give up clothes and all pleasures if you want to eat," the pretty young wife of one of them said.

The growing job insecurity is the outstanding grievance that affects workers of all grades and has been one of the main factors spurring the Weirton workers to strengthen their union which discrimination, espionage, and blacklist had weakened, as well as weakness in the local leadership of more than one of the five lodges. The company has deliberately increased job insecurity by extending the use of the "spread" in work, or "floating-crew" system. Hundreds of extra men have been taken on so that with the mill running about full, as in the past weeks, the regular employes get at most four days a week, the ex-



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Mackey



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tra day being worked by a member of the floating crew. This means a 20-percent cut in earnings. But, principally, it means that the management hopes to keep the worker on the jump and out of the union with another man always threatening his job. The union took a census a couple of months back, and found while about 1,000 new men had been taken on, 400 were still blacklisted.

With a strike drawing near, the Weirton Steel Corporation has launched a new offensive on the union membership. The attack corresponds exactly to the attack of the Amalgamated Association bureaucracy on the men supporting the rank and file program in steel, who in Weirton, as in steel towns throughout Pennsylvania and Ohio are bringing the union to life again. The company is shifting a number of known militants to lower paid jobs. It fired Mel Moore, a leading member of the national rank and file organizing committee in the Amalgamated, which is in charge of the present intensive organizational drive and the preparations for national strike in steel. The time the company picked to fire him was when he returned from a visit to Bill Green as member of a committee to demand action on Mike Tighe's wholesale expulsions of lodges supporting the rank and file program.

The firing of Mel Moore has roused considerable excitement in Weirton as a sort of test case. Moore is the leader of the Weirton workers. He was recently elected president of the organization formed by the consolidation of the five lodges that had previously existed in various departments of Weirton Steel. He is also president of the Second District of the Amalgamated Association, which embraces West Virginia and northern Ohio.

Moore demanded a hearing on his dismissal before the National Steel Labor Board. I went to Washington to the hearing and found myself witnessing a duel between the forces of capital and labor that was intensely dramatic, for all its quietness, and the impersonal conventionality of the conference room.

The hearing opened in a pleasing atmosphere of N.R.A. democracy, impartiality and general lovingkindness. White-haired Admiral Wiley, chairman of the National Steel Relations Board, presided. There was Earl F. Reed, counsel for Weirton Steel; T. E. Millsop, vice-president of Weirton Steel; Phil Caine, manager of the sheet mill department of Weirton Steel; Bert Shrake, superintendent of the sheet mill department; Earnie Manack, chief clerk of the sheet mill department, and there was Mel Moore.

Mel Moore rose to testify in his own behalf and in behalf of the hundreds of other blacklisted Weirton workers. He took the hearing into his own strong steel-worker's hands, and turned it into a exposé of the motives and methods of Weirton Steel. Under Moore's irresistible logic the urbanity of the stout corporation lawyer split wide open. "If we are going to be put into a position to bring our managers here to be harassed by

discharged men, I want to know it," he shouted. The conference room became the setting for a still out of the N.R.A. reel that caught the rigid N.R.A. class lineup with precision. Moore stood there, tall and lean, with grizzled sandy hair, typical American skilled worker, bucking the whole outfit.

Till the day he was fired Moore was getting \$20 a day as crack roller of the sixteen employed at the Weirton plant (over four times the average pay). He had made \$30 a day in pre-depression days, and is reputed to be the most skilled roller in all West Virginia and Ohio. But after employing him for eleven years Weirton Steel gave poor work as one cause for his dismissal.

Mel's version was as follows. When the Employee Representation Plan was first brought into Weirton in June, 1933, he was appointed Employee Representative in his department. The company had reason to believe that he would be O.K. But, as he said:

I called a meeting to explain what the plan meant to the men. Mr. Williams [the President] called me in and asked me to postpone the meeting . . . said he was going to get an attorney to explain. The boys were discouraged, and wanted to strike. They wanted to strike all the time, simply because they were not satisfied with the plan or their wages. The men sent me to Washington to the steel code hearing. When I got back, I called a meeting in the Steubenville Hall, and reported on the Steel Code. About 600-700 were there. I brought in an Amalgamated Association organizer. I told the men they had the choice, whether they wanted the company union or the Amalgamated. All of them joined up in the Amalgamated that night but two men, and they walked off the floor. . . .

From that time on there was discrimination. My tonnage was down. Scrap was up. I was off too much. Everything was wrong. . . . I'm the only roller has fought for these men . . . the other rollers haven't fought . . . they're taken care of. . . .

If I was to bring witnesses from the mill, they wouldn't work there any time . . . why, they'll get rid of them like they did of me. . . . I ain't going to expose any man. . . .

Weirton Steel hasn't dealt with me fair. . . . I understood when 7a was wrote into the N.R.A. we had a right to organize a union of our own choosing . . . but when I was elected for district president . . . then they found fault with my work. . . .

Moore gave detailed testimony regarding company espionage, intimidation and blacklisting. He told of foremen hanging around outside the union hall to spot the men as they came from the meetings; of a foreman who told a worker talking union to another that "he'd have to quit or lose his job"; of leaders discharged, and workers who gave affidavits for use in the Wilmington hearing, on coercion, etc., in company union elections.

Attorney Reed charged that Moore had been a disruptive influence, through his refusal to speak to men in his department who had scabbed in the 1933 strike, and his abuse of company officials in union meetings. Moore readily admitted the former charge. . . . "And I never will speak to a scab . . ." he added. The latter charge he refused to answer, on the grounds that it happened at the union hall. "Mr. President . . . our meet-

ings are meant to be held closed . . . if they've got stool-pigeons in our hall, that's got nothing whatever to do with the case. . . ."

As usual, the Admiral upheld Reed's demand for Moore to answer. Reed stated, "He referred to Mr. Weir and officials of the company as skunks and robbers." "Yes, they are robbers," Moore answered, "and I don't deny they're skunks."

After the hearing I asked Moore what he and other steel workers expected from the N.R.A., and the Steel Board after the Weirton decision. "I'm done with labor boards," he said. "We've got the dirtiest damned deal out of the N.R.A. that man ever give man . . . we don't expect nothing out of this board . . . nobody is going to help us . . . the next thing is to organize, and get out and have a damned big strike . . . what else is there to do . . . we've went through every other proceeding and got no place . . . we've got to use the big stick too. . . ."

And that is the opinion of most workers.

Heard at Dnieperstroi

Who has sung the Dnieper?
Who has caught his currents in rimes,
Made his eddies echo on since saga times?
Who has pulled his beard through rapids
Heard him scream like scampering kids?
Who has seen the moon upon Dnieper?

Herodotus heard Borysthene,
The Romans Danapris
And the Tauri grunted Usu
Did the Byzantine remember Allah?
Did the Normans swim to Athens?
Who has sung the Dnieper?

Pushkin pulled the river to the ocean
Gogol sat beside its lake
Cossacks rode its waves like mermaids
Did Deniken write rimed verses while he
swam from bank to bank?

I have seen the Dnieper waiting for a song
Standing in his strength like a wading
fisherman
Holding between his feet the harness and the
chain.

The song of the Dnieper is the gallop of a
million horses
Along the shimmering wires strung from
town to town
Galloping into farmyards where there are no
horses

Trotting into city streets where there were
no streets before
Carrying workers from homes to factories
and back to homes
Erecting the factories and charging them
with sparks and thunder.

These are the Wild Horses of the Dnieper,
tamed and powerful
Theirs is the song of the new-born Dnieper,
Dnieper of Ivan, worker and farmer and
owner of a million horses.

ROBERT GESSNER.

Why I Quit Liberalism

BRUCE CRAWFORD

NORTON, VA.

I HAVE quit publishing Crawford's Weekly. It was too radical for its bourgeois customers and not radical enough for me. Like capitalism, it was full of contradictions. Hence it could not go on.

Most of the editorial obituaries on my retirement from the field of Virginia journalism mourned my literary demise. By way of text for this article, I quote from one by the liberal editor of The Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, who has refused to bury me:

In the end, the crusader decided that the game of righting human wrongs while tied down by the limitations of a weekly, dependent on the favor of the satellites of privilege for its sustenance, was not worth the candle. There is work for him to do—out in No Man's Land where only the brave pickets venture, where the lines are facing each other for the new Battle of the Century. Out there he can swing his sword in a wide arc without fear of wounding the feelings of subscribers or advertisers. His less venturesome colleagues of the publishing world will hope that he wins through to the Croix de Guerre. No more consecrated soldier in the war of human rights was ever graduated from the training school of Virginia journalism.

If I am graduating, I hope it is into left-wing radicalism; and I urge my many liberal friends to come along.

A flash-back on the Crawford's Weekly that was unable to survive its contradictions is in order: Seventeen years ago I started the paper with typical bourgeois ambitions for it and for myself. The name of the paper showed a desire for a career. I bought a big press that printed from newsprint rolls, and installed other costly equipment. The paper would be literary as well as the usual purveyor of small-town and rural news. It would also take flyers into iconoclasm, *à la* Brann. It would raise hell and make its editor known. And who would object to a man being a success?

To an extent Crawford's Weekly achieved most of its aspirations. It dished up local news, often too starkly for its clientele. It became literary and offered pleasurable reading when the content was of no importance. It imitated Brann's Iconoclast until the Mencken vogue set new standards of debunking. It was a Mencken disciple so long as he was "having at" religionists, Babbitts and current idiocies. But Mencken was a false god. Having blasted a hole through the mountain, Mencken stood aside. His followers went on through and left him. Crawford's Weekly finally recognized the Baltimore critic as a Tory, who berated "the boobs" *but didn't account for them*. He was seen as a critic of democracy who did not attribute its corruption to the capitalist society he lives in—did not show that it was a capitalist democracy.

Gradually my Weekly began to be a house divided against itself, psychologically. True,

it realized that in a society cracking up, there was no use trying to save the so-called democracy whose inherent faults had brought about its collapse; no use being a liberal and trying to follow a middle course when anything right of the Left would precipitate one toward the extreme Right, ultimately. So Crawford's Weekly, which had always defended labor and the poor, went farther and farther to the Left. And yet it was relying almost wholly for its support on advertisers, small town merchants, local dealers of General Motors, and other "satellites of privilege." Herein was the two-faced position of the paper. It found itself fighting its customers—an unrealistic, impossible attitude for a business.

So the Weekly would alternately "go berserk" in favor of the coal miners and small farmers, and lapse into community-boosting activity that, in spite of certain communal phases, did not offend the bankers and coal barons.

The paper advocated public ownership, municipal ownership, of electric power long before it became safe and popular to denounce Samuel Insull. It advocated a taxpayers' strike by farmers and home-owners, but bond companies averted a strike by agreeing to refund the county debt. The paper helped to crack up the Ku Klux Klan in Norton. Its comments on a local lynching, while causing expensive repercussions, were partly responsible for the passage of an anti-lynching law by the Virginia legislature. As a reporter, I ventured into Harlan in 1931 and was shot in the leg. When I went back into Harlan as a member of the Dreiser committee, I was served with a \$50,000 slander suit by the late Sheriff Blair, who abandoned the suit when he found I was ready for a trial. When Virginia coal miners, here at my own door, had to fight for unionization, Crawford's Weekly took their side. I never put much faith, however, in the U. M. W. of A. leadership. The lack of faith was justified. The miners made small if any gains, in some respects they did not lose ground, whereas the companies took a new, firmer lease on life.

Last year I ran as an independent for Congress on a radical labor platform. My speeches closed with: "I favor ownership of railroads, electric power, telephone and telegraph systems, in fact all means of production and distribution, by the government—and the ownership of government itself by the working people."

The labor rank and file was for me, but Virginia's poll tax laws disfranchise the poor (not 10 percent of the miners were able to pay the poll tax). And did the U.M.W. of A. leaders back me? Not at all. They, together with Democratic coal operators, supported the

New Deal candidate, who, himself a coal operator, had denied his miners the rights promised them in the Recovery Act which he praised to labor! Most of the miners have since begun to see through the New Deal demagoguery and to wonder at the union leaders.

I never entertained hope of election, except by a fluke. Nor was I surprised at being called a Communist by the coal operator-controlled newspapers and by the New Deal candidate himself. Why shouldn't they? I had worked with the National Miners' Union in Harlan after the U. M. W. of A. had cleared out. I had signed the endorsement of Foster and Ford issued by professional groups. My weekly had for four years advocated Communism. I had gone with the delegation sponsored by the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners to investigate the Tuscaloosa lynchings. I had helped Allan Taub organize the Southern League for People's Rights in Atlanta. I had, as an editor, defended Soviet Russia while telling the masses to put no faith in the New Deal. I had "harbored" Reds passing through to Harlan or the far South. And while my name was still on the Methodist church membership roll, I had announced in print years ago that I didn't believe in God. So why shouldn't they label me a Communist, from most practical standpoints? Well, the campaign was worth while, I think, in that it sowed seed which may sprout yet.

Crawford's Weekly, then, was going Left and its radicalism was most objectionable to the money bags when it was applied locally. Right under my nose I could see the further impoverishment of the poor: Relief wages were only \$10 a month at most. In many cases the applicant was denied relief if the coal company for which he had last worked indicated he was not deserving. Wages in the coal-field dropped (total time and income considered), while the cost of living rose to and above that of 1929, according to the local relief administrator. Many former coal miners will never be re-employed, operators admit. It is not uncommon to find families living under cliffs with boards and coffee-sacks protecting them against the winter winds and rain. Rehabilitation on patches of land is now being tried as a move to take the victims off direct relief and make them "self-reliant." The land is as poor as the human soil. Even where the family can grow its own table needs, it will still need money for doctor's bills, clothing, and a hundred other items requiring cash. Should such a family manage to sell any of its produce in the local market for needed cash, then the commercial farmer—who has called on the government for help—will holler like hell. It won't work.

Meanwhile, this industrial region, regarded

in bygone years as "the richest section of Virginia," has become so impoverished that 70 percent of its taxpayers have quit paying taxes and the relief demands have been the heaviest in the state. Nearly half of the population of my county has been on relief. But this relief, according to the local administrator, has been tragically inadequate.

"If I had to live out here and look at this poverty and degradation," remarked a visiting newspaper man from Richmond, "I'd go Bolshevik too!"

But I hadn't gone Bolshevik completely. How could I, while depending for ads and job-printing on the merchants and county politicians beholden in the last analysis (if not in the first) to the coal operators who control payrolls? But I had gone Red enough to make it very difficult to run a printing business representing about \$17,000 investment, some of it still owing. Although I had a

union printshop, the U. M. W. of A. district secretary, who supported the New Deal coal operator for Congress, instructed the various union locals to order their printing from other union-label shops.

It was still possible to keep going, catering to the middle class and to labor over the heads of its misleaders. But the results, from the standpoint of radical or even liberal furtherance, would not have justified the tenacity and sacrifice. Holding a bear by the tail, without hope of reinforcements, is a waste of time, energy and opportunity. And that's what many liberals are doing. They are holding on to the bear's tail and afraid, where their inclinations are leftward, to turn loose and apply both hands and all energy to the job of revolutionary salvation.

So I have let go! I have, for a consideration amounting to a salvage, turned over to my competitor "all that was mortal" of

Crawford's Weekly—its machinery, advertising contracts and nearly-expired subscription list—and let the rest of Crawford's Weekly "put on incorruptibility"—as in the Biblical sense, only that which no longer exists can! If and when a fascist regimentation comes (and what could a weekly paper drawing support from fascist elements do to prevent its coming?), I shall not have any bourgeois appurtenances that can be laid hold of to cramp my style. I have joined the great unemployed. If I get into trouble and my head cracked, neither customers nor creditors can deplore my activities or accuse me of being recreant to obligations! If I get shot in the leg again, or go to jail, there won't be that damned feeling of apology to the respectable. Now, as a liberal graduating into radicalism, with the more tangible roots to bourgeois life severed, I hope to know a new and meaningful freedom, whatever the hardships.

When Counter Revolution Wins

Documents of America's Role in the Paris Commune

HENRY COOPER

(The Paris Commune was the first workers' government ever established. It arose in the midst of the Franco-Prussian War, when the German army was closing in on the French capital. The Emperor Louis Napoleon had fled at the approach of the enemy and on September 4, 1870, France was declared a republic. That "monstrous gnome," Thiers, together with other bourgeois politicians, stepped into the executive offices. But when the Prussians neared Paris, the "saviours of France" followed Napoleon's example and fled. Incensed by this betrayal, the workers of Paris seized power in their own name. On March 18, the Commune was proclaimed. For seventy-one eventful days it maintained power in behalf of the working class, holding back the besieging Prussians on the one hand and on the other fighting the counter-revolutionary troops of Thiers, who had crawled back to Versailles and established his headquarters there. After

a heroic defense against the overwhelming reactionary onslaught, the Communard lines began to break on May 22. The Versailles troops entered Paris and advanced slowly on the nerve-center of the Commune, every step contested by the workers. Then began "Bloody Week," when thousands of working men and women of Paris, unarmed, were lined up in front of open graves, against walls and along river banks, and raked down by machine-guns. That week the Seine ran red with blood. It is estimated that from thirty to forty thousand Parisian workers were massacred. The Commune finally fell on May 28.

The document discussed in this article throws new light on the last days of the Paris Commune, and reveals the important part played in its downfall by the American Ambassador to France — a comparatively unknown phase of that historic event.—
THE EDITORS.)

Prussians knocked at the gates of Paris. He saw the angered workmen and women take their places at the abandoned breastworks and fight the invaders to a standstill. He saw them seize control and set up their own government in the name of the working class of France. He saw those same workers restore order to a chaotic, demoralized capital, and administer their affairs so efficiently as to wring a grudging admiration from even their bitterest foes.

Washburne hated that workers' government with all his heart. He understood its universal implications. He knew that this government, functioning more efficiently than any of its predecessors, would serve as a model for the working class throughout the world, if permitted to stand. Its very existence was a living refutation to the slander circulated then (as it is now by Hearst and others) that the working class is the least capable of ruling. He was keen enough to sense the danger, not only to the ruling class of France, but to his own class back home. He was determined to do all in his power to help destroy the Commune. As the only foreign minister retaining his headquarters in Paris after the Commune was proclaimed, he enjoyed a strategic position in working toward that end.

Like his notorious prototype of a later generation, David R. Francis, U. S. Ambassador to Russia during the Bolshevik uprising, Washburne did everything in his power to discredit the revolution, and to aid international intervention. While soft-soaping the Commune leaders with protestations of sym-

WHEN Elihu B. Washburne was sent to Paris in 1869 by the newly-elected President, U. S. Grant, it was a reward for his leading part in placing the General in the White House (and, incidentally, ushering in a regime of graft unparalleled up to that time). Before leaving for France he occupied, on his own insistence, the post of Secretary of State in Grant's cabinet for one week. With characteristic political shrewdness, he had sensed the added prestige this nominal honor would bring abroad and also, perhaps, its potential value in the campaign for the presidential

nomination he waged some years later, upon his return to the United States.

Washburne had been in Paris little more than a year, glorying in the endless round of brilliant and costly functions at the court of Napoleon III, when the Franco-Prussian War broke out. He saw pompous Louis Napoleon flee when the Prussian army marched on Paris. He saw Thiers and his unscrupulous henchmen leap to the head of the government when the republic was declared in September, 1870. He saw the Thiers government betray the people and follow the erstwhile emperor in flight when the



William Sanderson

pathy, he sent out false "atrocities" stories, both in an official and unofficial capacity, exceeding even the vituperation of the world capitalist press, aghast at the spectacle of a working class seizing power and wielding it effectively. Although he rode at will throughout Paris during the whole course of the workers' regime, and witnessed with his own eyes the peace, quiet and orderliness that characterized the city under the Commune,¹ he insisted, in his official dispatches and magazine stories in American periodicals, on describing it at all times in terms of "Communist excesses, cruelty, anarchy, massacre and incendiarism."

In the meantime, he actively intrigued with the reaction in its efforts to strangle the workers' revolution. While enjoying every privilege and courtesy conferred upon him by the Commune's leaders, (who mistakenly trusted him, regarding the government he

¹In his diplomatic dispatches and in articles written for *Scribner's*, he not only repeated the usual canards directed against the Commune, but invented many of his own. Every one of these calumnies were later admitted to be false by the bourgeois press itself (when the Commune had been crushed and it no longer felt the hot breath of revolt on its neck). We haven't the space to go into Washburne's particular libels on the Commune; his every word on the subject breathes slander. In contrast, it is refreshing to turn to the realistic description of Paris under the Commune, written by a conservative vicar of the Church of England for the conservative *Fraser's Magazine* in August, 1871, ending with these words: "And so my story ends. I've no horrors to tell you. I saw none. . . . The Commune was a mistake; but it did keep Paris clean and morally wholesome; it did manage its police, its schools, its hospitals strangely well. This is to me the greatest marvel of all—the mixture of practical ability and wild dreaminess in the men who headed this grand confederacy. . . . Let me be understood: I am not their apologist."

served in the light of the revolutionary traditions of 1776. They failed to realize that that government had no sympathy with its own aims, that it was intent not on encouraging a new order, but on conserving an old one) he acted as a secret spy of the Thiers government. He was a convenient go-between of Thiers and his agents in Paris, and relayed vital information to him throughout the existence of the Commune.

To Washburne is attributable much of the frightful tragedy that attended the last days of the Commune; on his head rests the blood of thousands of the victims who fell in the reactionary wave of "Bloody Week" and after. It was he who, by a stroke of cold-blooded treachery, lowered the guard of the Commune at the very moment when alertness was needed most, and thus prepared the way for the unbridled white terror that was to follow.

Washburne's ugly role in the last days of the Commune, hitherto overlooked by historians, is revealed in a document sent by the International Workingman's Association (the First International) from its headquarters in London to its American section in New York following the fall of the first proletarian republic. The writer stumbled upon this communication in a long-forgotten bound volume of pamphlets at the New York Public Library. The charges and revelations it contains are of no little interest and importance for us today. Large sections of the American working class—even the most advanced sections—are still inclined to look upon the historic Commune as an event isolated from and unrelated to the United States. Here, through this document, stands revealed for the first time, in this connection, the American link in the chain of international solidar-

ity of the imperialist countries in their common war on the proletariat everywhere. The U. S. government is clearly implicated, for throughout his whole active part in the fight against the Commune, Washburne was in constant communication with the Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish (grandfather of the present Ham). It is inconceivable that the Minister to France could have carried out the treacherous activities charged to him by the International without the implicit sanction of his chief.

The International's communication is in the nature of a protest against Washburne, reinforced by statements of a participant and an eye-witness in the Commune. It ends with the request that its United States section familiarize the working class of America with the duplicity of the agent of American imperialism in Paris. Of the two statements affirming the charges against Washburne, one was made by Mr. Robert Reid, a liberal correspondent for English and American daily newspapers during the siege of Paris and the Commune. The other is a deposition by a member of the Commune.

During the last weeks of the Commune's existence, Reid witnessed the barbaric cruelties of the reactionary troops under Thiers, whose slow advance against the barricaded Communards was strewn with the corpses of captured workers lined up and shot without even the formality of a court-martial. Shocked by these incredible horrors, Reid naively called upon Washburne to intercede for the helpless victims in the name of humanity and the government Washburne represented.

Washburne's position in this respect proved particularly propitious. As the only foreign envoy remaining in Paris during the



Commune and one who was an active agent of the Versailles government, any effort he might make in behalf of the workers would necessarily have carried weight. But Washburne soon gave Reid to understand that neither he nor his government was interested in preventing the massacre of tens of thousands of workers. Reid's deposition notes the haughty arrogance and cold brutality with which Washburne punctuated his rebuffs.

On May 24, 1871, in a conversation with Reid carried on before witnesses, Washburne told him "with the air of one who knows the truth of what he is saying" that "*All who belong to the Commune, and those that sympathize with them, will be shot.*" (Italics Reid's.)

And here the duplicity of the agent of the American government is shown in all its hideousness. For on the very day (May 24) that Washburne informed Reid in a semi-official capacity that all Communards and their sympathizers were to be massacred, he sent his secretary to the headquarters of the Commune with an offer of intercession on the part of the Prussians beleaguering Paris, for which act he claimed he had full authorization. The terms of the intercession, as laid down by Washburne, avowedly acting as an intermediary of the "neutral" Prussians, were as follows:

1. Suspension of hostilities (between the Communards and the Versailles troops headed by Thiers).
2. Re-election of the Commune on one side, and the National Assembly on the other.
3. The Versailles (reactionary) troops to leave Paris.
4. The National Guard (Communards) to continue to guard Paris.
5. No punishment to be inflicted on the men of the Federal army (serving the Commune).

This proposal was accepted by the Commune in good faith. (As in other instances, the Commune reposed too much trust in representatives of the bourgeoisie, a weakness for which it was to pay dearly. Washburne, it should be noted, was given carte blanche throughout Paris by the Commune during the whole course of its reign, at a time when—as was subsequently made clear—he was acting as a willing tool of the Thiers government, sending it reports on developments regularly, etc.)

The Paris Commune almost immediately acted upon the proposed agreement, and in the ensuing two days sent deputations to negotiate the pact, but these deputations were all turned back by the Prussians who disclaimed any knowledge of Washburne's action! Washburne had duped the Commune: all his efforts had been part of a plot to lull the Commune into inaction, while the enemy gathered its forces for the final onslaught on the workers' government in Paris.

not only the Communals but even their mere sympathizers were irrevocably doomed to death, he informed, through his secretary, the Commune that not only its members were to be saved, but every man in the Federal army.

We now request you, dear Citizens, to lay these facts before the Working Class of the United States, and to call upon them to decide whether Mr. Washburne is a proper representative of the American Republic.

The General Council of the International Working Men's Association:—

M. T. Boon, Fred. Bradnick, G. H. Buttery, Cahill, William Hales, Kolb, F. Lessner, George Milner, Thos. Mottershead, Chas. Murray, P. MacDonnell, Pfander, John Roach, Rühl, Sadler, Cowell Stépey, Alfred Taylor, W. Townshend.

Corresponding Secretaries:—

Engène Dupont, for France; Karl Marx, for Germany and Holland; F. Engels, for Belgium and Spain; H. Jung, for Switzerland; P. Giacomini, for Italy; Zévy Maurice, for Hungary; Anton Zabicki, for Poland; James Cohen, for Denmark; J. G. Eccarius, for the United States.

HERMANN JUNG, *Chairman.*
JOHN WESTON, *Treasurer.*

GEORGE HARRIS, *Financial Sec.*
JOHN HALES, *General Secretary.*

Office—256, High Holborn, London, W.C.,
July 11th, 1871.

"The result of this American intervention (which produced a belief in the renewed neutrality of the Prussians, and their intention to intercede between the belligerents) was, at the most critical juncture, to paralyze the defence for two days," according to the deposition of the Commune member. Full of confidence in Prussian neutrality, many Communards "fled to the Prussian lines, there to surrender as prisoners. It is known that this confidence was betrayed by the Prussians. Some of the fugitives were shot on sight by the sentries; those who were permitted to surrender by the Prussians were later turned over to the Versailles government." (It is also known, however, that many Prussian soldiers deliberately disobeyed strict orders to shoot all Communards fleeing in their direction, and actually helped the latter to escape.)

"During the whole course of the Civil War," the Communard's statement continues, "Mr. Washburne, through his secretary, never tired of informing the Commune of his ardent sympathies, which only his diplomatic position prevented him from publicly manifesting, and of his decided reprobation of the Versailles government."

The First International, in its letter to the American workers, notes:

To appreciate fully Mr. Washburne's conduct, the statements of Mr. Robert Reid and that of the member of the Paris Commune must be read as a whole, as part and counterpart of the same scheme. While Mr. Washburne declares to Mr. Reid that the Communals are 'rebels' who deserve their fate, he declares to the Commune his sympathies with its cause and his contempt for the Versailles Government. On the same 24th of May, while in the presence of Dr. Hossart and many Americans, informing Mr. Reid that not only the Communals but even their mere sympathizers were irrevocably doomed to death, he informed, through his secretary, the Commune that not only its members were to be saved, but every man in the Federal Army.

The letter, signed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels among others, calls upon the American section of the International to

lay these facts before the working class, and to demand the withdrawal of the treacherous Washburne.

Another dark page in Mr. Washburne's career as American ambassador is not recorded in the International's protest letter. This concerns his energetic and unceasing attempts to force intervention *against* the Commune, not only by his own government—on the time-worn pretext that "attacks" on American property might be "anticipated"—but by others. He actually made at least one recorded attempt directly to invite the German troops (which, it will be remembered, were outside the gates of Paris, supposedly maintaining a strict neutrality) to invade Paris. On May 20th, he sent a message to Bismarck claiming that Communard troops had entered the American embassy and threatened to ransack it, and urging Bismarck to order his army to enter the city and crush the Commune. This provocative act of Washburne's was entirely unjustified. His house had never been entered, as he himself explicitly admits in his *Recollections* (v. 2, p. 134). The Prussian government thereupon sent a peremptory note to the Commune threatening to enter the city if "satisfaction were not given within 24 hours," but the incident was closed by the revolutionary government's exposure of the baselessness of Washburne's charges, and by the fact that Bismarck was still biding his time with the object of selling his services to his supposed enemy, Thiers, at the highest possible price.

Thus is again affirmed the truth of Marx's statement in his masterpiece of historical literature *The Civil War in France*, completed within two days after the fall of the Commune: that when capitalism is confronted with a working class asserting its right to power "class rule is no longer able to disguise itself in a national uniform; the national governments are *one* as against the proletariat!"

Correspondence

Students Strike on the West Coast

TO THE NEW MASSES:

William Randolph Hearst may well have telegraphed congratulations recently to Robert Gordon Sproul, president of the University of California, hailing the college head as an eager co-worker in Hearst's drive to keep American campuses safe for imperialist war. Eighteen of Dr. Sproul's students have been arrested, finger-printed, and duly arraigned for distributing anti-war bulletins. The handbills that brought about the arrests urged students to join in the one hour international strike against war which has been called for April 12 by the World Student Congress Against War and Fascism.

On March 20, a phone call from University officials brought Berkeley city police to the campus to arrest nine distributors of anti-war leaflets. Eight were arrested the following day; but sixteen new distributors were posted at the main entrance to the campus on the third day, and approximately thirty on the following Monday. Teaching-fellows and graduates of the philosophy department distributed a sympathetic leaflet in conjunction.

By the third day this was too much for the police. They conferred again with University authorities before trying a new tactic, one not unknown elsewhere. Three students of obvious Jewish appearance were singled out for arrest, although numerous other students were distributing alongside them.

Of the twenty students arrested, eighteen face trial and possible jail sentence for technical violation of a 1913 ordinance, passed to regulate commercial handbills and never before invoked against the tens of thousands of student leaflets issued. Actually, the eighteen are being prosecuted for attempting to translate resentment against approaching war into action.

Letters protesting the use of arrests and racial prejudice to curb anti-war activity among students should be sent to Robert G. Sproul, University of California, Berkeley, and Judge Oliver Young, City Hall, Berkeley, Calif.

DOROTHY SHENKMAN,
U. C. Anti-War Committee.

Another Mooney Case

TO THE NEW MASSES:

The longest trial in the history of the country has ended. Convicted of the charge of "conspiracy to overthrow the government" eight young California workers—three women and five men—face sentences of fourteen years apiece in the state penitentiary at San Quentin. The trial, which began with the selection of the jury last November, was marked by every attempt both on the part of the state and the large corporations to railroad militant trade unionists and Communist Party members to jail for the crime of leading strikes and organizing agricultural workers.

Caroline Decker, young secretary of the Cannery & Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union, refuted every charge made against her, and challenged the prosecuting attorney by stating:

The prosecution will wrap itself in the flag and say that the Communists advocate hatred and destruction. We *do* want to destroy the American institutions of unemployment, war, exploitation, bloodshed, and prostitution. A government is only sacred to the extent to which it betters the lives of the people—when it doesn't, it must go. The issue is, have people a right to hear what others have to say? We *do* care if we go to jail—it's not pleasant to spend the best years of our lives there. If we do go, there are many people who have sat through this trial who will take our places—we call on them to do so.

And after this, the special deputy prosecutor, Mc-

Allister, stood up, and with his beefsteak Irish face aflame with sentimental hokum, saluted the courtroom flag, pleading that conviction meant:

a vote for that flag; for my country 'tis of thee, my own United States, my good old U. S. A. and the Star Spangled Banner—and God will bless you.

But McAllister was not content to rest his case on such histrionics. He also threatened: "Only one body has the power to stop this [the Communist propaganda]. If you don't stop it, an aroused public will take the law into its own hands! Vigilantism will stop them then—you'll have bloodshed, another Pixley and another Harlem!"

This was too much even for the judge, who ordered the sentence struck from the record.

McAllister gained convictions. The Associated Farmers had spent too much money not to be repaid. But workers in California and the nation will fight the frame-up, will fight for an appeal and a final reversal of a verdict that condemns workers for going on the picket line and organizing into unions.

Sacramento, Calif.

MARTIN KENT.

Oh, They're Building Men in the C.C.C.

TO THE NEW MASSES:

We had been going for an hour, and that hour seemed like a day. Suddenly I noticed Tommy Haines, working on my left, acting peculiar. The way he stumbled along, through the cold and wind, tired and listless, as if every part of his body were paralyzed!

"Tommy," I called to him, "How ya makin' out?" His answer was a low mumble, barely audible. He cursed the cold; then, before I could say another word, tears rolled down his cheeks.

"What's up, guy?" His answer was a sob. By now he had attracted the attention of the rest of the gang. They gathered around. Jerry, the government forester, ran up from the rear and demanded, "What's coming off here?"

But Tommy uncorked his pride and was rapidly assuring us that he was all right. Jerry, the forester, was anxious to resume work to make up for the five minute delay. We lined up and set off again, feeling deeply the cold and Tommy's suffering.

Twenty steps more and he passed out. He died in a hospital of pneumonia brought on by exposure.

ALVIN WALKER.

Class-Conscious Jazz

TO THE NEW MASSES:

I, for one, deeply appreciate Sergei Tchemodanov's article, entitled "The Origin of Music." I hope for more articles of this type in later issues. Could not one study be devoted to utilization of jazz, as the dominant (by volume) form of music used by and for the masses, in the interests of economic classes?

Hugo, Minn.

LOUIS C. KIRCHLI.

The Truth about Harlem

TO THE NEW MASSES:

As a witness to the Harlem episode, I would like to congratulate Miss Thompson for writing the first truthfully accurate account of the incident.

The several women I had spoken to who had been in the store all agreed as to the description of the boy. He was a small boy of ten or twelve years of age—not a tall sixteen-year-old—he was caught stealing candy, not a knife.

A Negro woman appealed to the mothers in the store to form a delegation to go to the police station and demand the boy's release. Four volunteered. When they arrived there they were refused any aid or information concerning the child's condition.

The capitalist publications again proved their remarkable ability to mutilate truth. White Italian

Barber Beaten! Reds Incite Riot! White Girls Molested! The few communists I noticed were trying to pacify the aroused Negroes—telling them not to be incited to riot but to boycott. The Italian reported cruelly beaten, was peacefully home asleep. As for molesting white girls, at no time was I or my companion approached.

Let Dodge devote himself to investigating the economic plight of the Negroes in Harlem to discover the causes underlying the revolt of that Tuesday—the shame, insults, the added hardships discrimination and intolerance brings—the northern brand of Jim Crowism in their own neighborhood.

New York City.

SUE SOMMERS.

We Can Do It with 100,000 Readers

TO THE NEW MASSES:

The only criticism I have to offer of *NEW MASSES*, I find also bothers many of my friends. Articles are too short, too sketchy. People want long articles.

The remedy I suggest is the quarterly 48-page issue be made a monthly. Perhaps charge fifteen cents for it on newsstands. How about it?

New York City.

HAROLD K. BERGER.

Are We Really Parochial?

TO THE NEW MASSES:

It occurred to me that you might be interested in the reasons for my reluctance to subscribe again to the *NEW MASSES*.

In a word, it is too parochial for me; at least, the last three or four issues have been. Now, I am an intellectual (alas!) and I want to be en rapport with the best and most important that's going on in the intellectual world. Your periodical meets the need only in the case of literature, and meets it satisfactorily. But I am forced to read other periodicals to meet the whole need—general, not special—and I have neither too much time to read others, once I get the *MASSES*, nor the money to buy them with.

I am writing this because I would have *THE NEW MASSES* go on, I should like to see it satisfy the average intellectual (for it is addressed to the average intellectual, isn't it?).

With the least encouragement I am ready to subscribe and induce others to.

New York City.

T. HERMAN.

Bouquet

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Apropos of Gladys Fisher in the issue for March 26—I disagree absolutely. What I seek (and find) in the *NEW MASSES* is alleviation of political ignorance. In fact, I do not know where I should find reliable political information were it not for the *NEW MASSES*. For instance, such articles as Martha Andrews' and Sender Garlin's are invaluable. Please do not change.

Bronxville, N. Y.

ISABEL LEWIS.



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REVIEW AND COMMENT

Required Reading for American Writers¹

I MAY be allowed, at this assembly of Soviet writers, to express some surprise that the Leipzig trial, this tremendous material, this mighty chapter of revolutionary theory and practice of the proletarian movement, has not been utilized and worked up in the slightest degree. (A voice: Hear, hear, Comrade Dimitrov.)

I know a number of foreign authors—the poor fellows do not want to write like the bourgeois authors, only about love, only about subjective experiences, and merely lyrically. They would like to help the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in some way. And these unhappy geniuses sit about racking their brains for a subject to write about. If they would look at the thousands of strikes, trials, demonstrations and conflicts between the workers and the class enemy, if they would penetrate more deeply into the material of the Leipzig trial, they would find subjects enough, and motifs sufficiently striking.

Only remember the figure of van der Lubbe. Van der Lubbe must be pointed to as a proof of the manner in which workers can be made into instruments of the class enemy. The negative example of van der Lubbe can be made into an educational warning for thousands of young workers, and thus for fighting the influence of fascism among the youth.

At the present time we are experiencing a remarkable forward movement in the labor movement of a number of countries. Comrade Smolyanski has related here a number of facts about the development of the people's front against fascism in Germany. In such a period as this, cadres of revolutionists are more necessary than ever for the work of assembling the forces of the proletariat and regrouping these forces, for spreading enlightenment in the ranks of the social democrats and among the misled toiling masses. These cadres must be trained, and they are best trained in the practical struggle itself, in the overcoming of difficulties, and by living example. I can remember myself what book influenced me most out of the literature which I read in my youth. What influenced my character as a fighter? I must say that it was Chernishevsky's *What is to be Done?* (Applause.) The perseverance which I learned during the years in which I took part in the labor movement in Bulgaria, the determined perseverance, the certainty, and the firmness which I was able to display at the Leipzig trial, all this is undoubtedly closely bound up with this work of art of Chernishevsky, which I read in my youth.

Where in our belletristic literature are the heroes of the proletarian movement of Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, China and other countries described? Where are the figures which millions might emulate? Give us living examples, show us human beings of flesh and blood, that youth may learn from these living examples.

Literature plays an enormous role in the education of a generation of revolutionists. Help us, help the working class, the Comintern, give us sharp weapons in an artistic form—in poems, novels, stories! Help us to train our revolutionary cadres by means of your creative art!

At one time the revolutionary bourgeoisie carried on an energetic struggle for the cause of their class and utilized every available means, including that of belles lettres. What made the last of the knights the butt of general ridicule? Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. *Don Quixote* was the most powerful weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie in its struggle against feudalism, against the aristocracy. The revolutionary proletariat needs at least one little Cervantes—(laughter)—to give it such a weapon as this in the struggle.

I read a great deal when I have the opportunity. I must, however, admit that I have not always the patience to read our revolutionary literature. (Laughter.) I cannot read it, and I do not understand it; I am not a specialist. (Laughter.) But in so far as I know the masses, the workers and their psychology, I must say: no, this will not meet with much approval from the workers. The worker looks at these books and sees that they contain no figures, no examples to emulate. A revolutionary writer is not one who merely repeats: Long live the revolution!

The only writer who can claim to be revolutionary is the one who actually promotes the process of the revolutionizing of the masses of the workers, and mobilizes them in the struggle against the enemy. (Hear, hear!)

I must apologize, I am perhaps speaking a little too sharply. (Voices: Go on, Quite right! Applause). But you do not hear me today for the first time. (Prolonged applause.) I call things by their right names. But I believe that now, since the association of Soviet writers has been formed, you Soviet writers will now be working under conditions ensuring new possibilities for fruitful and large-scale work.

The writers of the Soviet Union find themselves in conditions highly favorable for their creative work. The writers of the Soviet Union live in a country boiling over with construction, with enthusiasm, with upsurge, with exhilarating advance; the atmosphere, the air of the Soviet Union itself is creative.

The revolutionary writers abroad have to struggle against enormous difficulties. Many of them are living in poverty, and many are in prison or in concentration camps.

Creative art must be placed at the service of the proletarian revolution, and employed in the struggle against fascism, against capitalism, in the struggle for the mobilization and revolutionary education of the masses. The work of art must be made the means of bringing over to the revolution the millions of non-party and social-democratic workers, must be utilized for popularizing the work of socialist construction and the mighty achievements of the Soviet Union. Creative art must be placed at the service of the great revolutionary ideal of the millions of the toiling masses. (Prolonged applause. Cries of "Long live Dimitrov!")

The Hunted and Booted

SOMEBODY IN BOOTS, by Nelson Algren. *The Vanguard Press*. \$2.50.

IF YOU have a yen for yarns dealing with the "glamor" of hobo life, with picturesque vagabonds sired and conceived by Hollywood ex-tramps of the genus Jim Tully, you are likely to find *Somebody in Boots* painful and disturbing reading. It is a story of American *bezprizorni*, cheap criminals, bums, whores, perverts, jailbirds, and scum of the earth. There is little of the "gentle satire" of Robert Nathan, for whom love in a Central Park toolshed laughs at locksmiths and the depression. Algren knows how to be gentle and tender, but he cannot forget the sadistic bulls, the crummy jails where sheriffs profitably impound "vagrants" yanked from freight trains

and feed them—or less than half-feed them—on rotten grub for which the counties pay the sheriffs at the rate of sixty cents per day for each man.

Commonwealth College, the small Arkansas labor college now under investigation by the state legislature for its activities in trying to organize sharecroppers, publishes a literary magazine, *The Windsor Quarterly*, and in the current issue an excerpt from *Somebody in Boots* was scheduled to appear. This excerpt, entitled "Thundermug," is a sordid and revolting episode of jail life known to almost every hobo who has served time in a Southwestern hoosegow. But Algren, so far as I know, is the first writer to tell baldly about it. Though "Thundermug" appears on the index page of *The Windsor Quarterly*, the pages

¹ From a speech recently delivered by George Dimitrov at a conference of Soviet writers.

allotted to it appear blank, and the college officials sorrowfully admit that they dare not print the story because it "violates ancient taboos" and would surely invite further persecution from fundamentalists whose sensibilities would be outraged by the Elizabethan robustness of Algren's speech.

And *Somebody in Boots* does "violate ancient taboos" throughout. It is a violent and brutal book, and articulates boldly and in plain words about unspeakable things, such as unnatural sexual practices among prisoners. "Lonely" people in jail who manage somehow to gratify their desires cannot be credibly dished up in the delicate manner of Miss Kay Boyle. A fight in stir is not like the clean, manly give-and-take of "action" magazines or even the refined Hearst's *Cosmopolitan*.

"There is nothing quite so terrible to see as a fight in a blue-steel jailhouse," writes Algren. "There is steel and stone all around, up, down and across. You fight between steel hinges, iron spoonholders, projecting bolts, on a gray stone floor. There is no one to cry 'Stop!' no one to shout 'Foul!' no one to say, 'I guess he's had almost enough.'"

It's stomp and bite and gouge, and the knee ramming the groin or the vicious kick between the legs. The other prisoners and the jailers howling like wolves and betting on the outcome.

Cass McKay, Algren's protagonist, is the son of a fanatical railroad engine hostler in a small Texas town, and before Cass is dry behind the ears he dreams of escape by the freight train route.

"Ah'd like to git out of this pesthole some day," he mused to himself. "Ah'd go to Laredo or Dallas or Tucson—anywhere ah'd take fancy to go. Ah'd get mah right arm tattooed in New Awlins, ah'd ship out f'om Houston or pr'aps f'om Port Arthur; ah'd git to know all the tough spots as well as the easy ones. Ah'd always know best where to go next. Ah'd always be laughin' and larkin' with folks."

Unendurable as his home life was, Cass found the road no bed of roses. He learns that he must not associate with Negroes, and that it is a lamentable breach of jail etiquette to show any pity for a friendly Mexican boy whom he is forced to beat with a belt at the order of Nubby O'Neill, judge of the kangaroo court. He becomes a petty thief in Chicago. He is weak, boastful—altogether useless as a member of society.

One would judge upon hearing all this that *Somebody in Boots* is a pretty grim performance. And so it is. But there is a surprising leaven of the macabre humor one finds in the best prose of H. H. Lewis, who also writes realistically of the hunted and booted of the great Southwest. Algren does not fail to explore skillfully and effectively all the nuances of his theme, but it is evident that he has not set out to produce a "stark" document or a labored "shocker." He does succeed in mirroring an aspect of American existence that few writers have dealt with, and in doing this with a passionate and convincing awareness. The lewd songs of the box-car and jail-house,

the bawdy jokes told around jungle campfires fed by creosoted ties, the human cattle shunted from town to town, outraged, beaten, betrayed; the cheap cooch shows of Chicago's South State Street—The story of the raping of a Negro girl who ventured to ride in a box-car full of men desperately hungry for womanflesh—any womanflesh—All these components and many more as representative make up a design for living that is all too familiar to those who have "one hell of a time getting beat up, shot at, dragged out, thwacked, swung and belammed from one slop-and-soup line to the other."

Somebody in Boots is an angry book, and nobody can be doubtful as to Algren's political position. However, in the latter portions of the novel he sometimes indulges in direct invectives which seem merely hortatory and add little to the texture of the narrative. The experiences of the various characters, so clearly and powerfully presented, comprise in themselves a terrific indictment of capitalistic society. The only important affirmative character in the book, Dill Doak, a radical Negro performer in the tawdry burlesque for which Cass is a sidewalk barker and roustabout, never quite achieves commanding stature as an individual. But these are only minor flaws in a moving and tremendous canvas, brilliantly and solidly executed. *Somebody in Boots* is a novel which serves to elevate still higher the constantly rising standard of American proletarian literature. JACK CONROY.

Shallow Deeps

HE SENT FORTH A RAVEN, by Elizabeth Madox Roberts. The Viking Press. \$2.

ELIZABETH MADOX ROBERTS' *The Time of Man* was good enough to permit her reputation to survive the five failures with which she has followed it. For there is no getting around it: *He Sent Forth a Raven* is just as disappointing a novel as *My Heart and My Flesh* or *Jingling in the Wind*. And it is more disappointing than *The Great Meadow*, which at least had the merit of being completely and moderately satisfying in its own nostalgic terms.

Miss Roberts' career suggests something like literary suicide. She has kept herself cooped up for so long in her little world of romantic beauty that she seems to be dying of suffocation. In her first novel there happened to be some correspondence between her private world and the real world, and as a result *The Time of Man* has vitality, significance, and genuine beauty. But the happy accident has never occurred again.

The striking thing about *He Sent Forth a Raven* is that in it Miss Roberts actually tries, in her own peculiar way, to come to grips with problems that occupy mature minds. There is a certain amount in the novel about the World War, and "those who seek deeper meanings," as the blurb puts it, may surmise that the book's theme is the

conflict between individualism and collectivism.

But look at the way in which she has chosen to approach her theme. In the first place, the story is told from the point of view of Jocelle, who is another of Miss Roberts' romantic women, or perhaps it would be more exact to say, the same woman who has appeared in all her novels. Jocelle's poetic mysticism would be enough in itself to blur the issues. In the second place, the individualist is Stoner Drake, Jocelle's grandfather, who has sworn an oath, on the death of his second wife, never to set foot on earth again. In the third place, the collectivist, Logan Treer, is a vaguely idealistic pacifist engaged in some sort of vaguely idealistic anti-war activity. Add to all this the chorus provided by Briggs, the religious fanatic, and Dickon, the eccentric village atheist, and you have the material of the story.

In other words, the book is pretty close to nonsense. I have no objection to symbolism, but I do insist that the symbols convey some adequate perception of the realities the author purports to deal with. I do insist that, if a writer is going to write about individualism and collectivism, he write about them in such a way that his treatment is illuminating for his readers and his solution relevant to their interests and needs.

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MAJOR J. HENDERSON

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GRANVILLE HICKS.

Analysis of Communication

PERMANENCE AND CHANGE. An Anatomy of Purpose. By Kenneth Burke. New York: New Republic, Publishers. 351 pages. \$1.

IT IS not easy, in a brief notice, to give a complete idea of *Permanence and Change*. Burke's approach is that of the classical essayist who delights in the process of thinking, lets his ideas roam at leisure and is ever ready to leave the main road of argument in order to follow some tempting goat-track of speculation. His book, instead of a rigid division of principal and subordinate ideas, presents themes which recur in all sorts of variations. It may be described as a criticism of criticism, an attempt at a new metaphysics, and an analysis of "communication." This last aspect seems dominant and will be the subject of this review.

By "communication," Burke means spiritual intercourse, that is, in the broadest sense of these words, language and ideas. As such, communication is part of every social structure; it becomes an acute problem in the advanced stages of bourgeois society, when individual consciousness appears to be separated from the consciousness of the group. At that moment a process of adjustment is necessary, and a host of interpretations and orientations arises. But this only increases the general confusion, and finally we find ourselves in a sort of modern Babel: at the very time when a collective effort is needed more than ever, there is no common medium of communication; words are detached from their meanings and float at random; everybody is free to invest them with an arbitrary content. Fascist demagoguery of which the great art is to twist words and concepts for its own sordid purposes is proof that the state of things described here is far from being merely "theoretical."

Kenneth Burke, though aware of the social basis of his problem, does not take it as a starting point; he nevertheless achieves noteworthy results by discussing the present forms of "communication." In general outline (not to count the fertile seeds of observation generously strewn about his book) the valid part of his argument may be summed up as follows: All psychological criteria of conduct are relative; each can easily be replaced by its opposite. "Inferiority" is, in a different context, "superiority," "piety" is "impiety," "success" is "failure," etc. In analyzing communication we soon discover that we deal not with particular attitudes, but with entire systems (*Weltanschauungen*) related to given social patterns. And in considering the best-known modern theories, Burke reaches what seems to me the most important result of his analysis:

the interchangeability of all these theories. They pass into one another by a simple substitution of terms. The little "systems" invented every hour by intellectuals in their desire for originality burst like so many soap-bubbles; their futility is proved by their facility. Burke is even able to offer a sort of formula with the aid of which any average "thinker" can readily construct his own "perspective by incongruity" and achieve fame in the freak show of bourgeois philosophy. There is perhaps no better way to discourage these brave efforts than to show how unoriginal is their "originality."

Unless we resign ourselves to the skeptical dizziness resulting from these facile systems, we must, in order to find a way out, transcend the condition of their facility. This condition is their seeming detachment from practical activity. The innumerable bourgeois "points of view" are paraded as pure products of the Mind; but their universality is only verbal, it covers an unconscious class basis. Now, of course, one may say with Burke that Marxism is an "appeal to a flat counter-morality whereby one group squarely pits its structure of moral weightings against an opposing structure." But two *fundamental* differences between Marxism and any other philosophy must be kept in mind. First, the admission that it expresses a definite group does not have to be wrung out of Marxism, nor established by circumstantial evidence: Marxism is *consciously* correlated with the proletariat. Second (and this is possible only thanks to its *conscious* admission of a social basis), by proving that the particular interests of the proletariat are also the general interests of mankind, Marxism achieves a universality that is not merely a verbalization, but has true material roots. By uniting practice and theory, the particular and the universal, Marxist sociology furnishes all the necessary premises for solving the problem that justly preoccupies Burke: the creation of a universal medium of communication.

However, having taken insufficient account of these two *essential* features of Marxism, Burke seeks a theoretical solution of his own, and gets entangled in the same metaphysical net of concepts detached from a *definite* social basis, which he had so brilliantly unmasked by the application of Socratic irony. For him, the abundance of "points of view" arises from stressing the differences of various social structures, and he wants to solve the problem by looking for identities. He is thus led to assert a philosophy of Being (as opposed to Becoming) and attacks historicism and "progress." This system, "metabiology," locates the rock of certainty in the organic "structure of life."

The point of view of "eternity" is easily revealed as an abstraction from history; and that "metabiology" can at best be only a halting point in the progress of thought is apparent as soon as we ask how this "permanent" structure of life is to be determined. Obviously, there is no better method than science. The criterion is thus transferred from "life" to "science," and, starting with the question, "What is good science?" the logical dance begins all over again. Fortunately Burke himself reintroduces history and sociology when, for instance, he insists that "industry, virtue, science, and wealth are all clearly instruments of good living." A consistent theory can be attained only by integrating all human knowledge and history, by conceiving them in terms of their own movement (this is what dialectical materialism does), by putting biology in its place among other sciences.

Burke believes that the basic desideratum for any society is good "communication," that a sound communicative system can only be grounded in material cooperation, and that material cooperation can only be established by Communism. (Note, incidentally, the *sociological* nature of concepts like "communication," and "cooperation." These concepts are vague if we remain in the sphere of pure biology). And he advocates the practical solution of Communism in most noble and eloquent language, for he knows that

there seems far too little likelihood that those who have control of our economy will peacefully relinquish this control in the interests of culture. Rather, they will continue to degrade people, and to condemn them for being degraded. Their very "morality" is involved in their privileges; their means and purposes are adjusted to them; their concepts of the good life are grounded in them; their fabulous possessions are their tools and shelter; their incapacity is their training. Hence, it is not likely that we can expect a better day until the opportunity to persist in their kinds of effort has been taken from them.

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tor's philosophic preoccupation is with the lordship of time, and his clinical pessimism boils down finally to the "what's the use? Chew terbacca, spit the juice"

variety, with, for the sum of his vision:

Then out of all this there came on and on
Nothing but morning after merely dawn.
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The Theatre

A "NEW THEATRE"—theatre of high artistic integrity and social purpose, free from profit-seeking—has been an American dream for more than a quarter of a century. Wealthy "patrons of the arts" have from time to time endowed what were vaguely proclaimed as some such new type of theatre. For a while the little theatre movement seemed to give promise of nourishing this new theatre, as it brought forward such young hopefuls as Eugene O'Neill, Philip Barry, Sidney Howard and a long string of others. They succeeded in greatly advancing the quality of American drama, but the "new theatre" whose standard-bearers they thought they were was never born of them.

It remained for the American working class to make the dream come true. In the space of four short years, a new theatre has risen prominently into American life, a theatre deriving its inspiration and strength from the lives and struggles of the masses. Such artistic achievements as *Newsboy*, *They Shall Not Die*, *Peace on Earth*, *Stevedore*, *Recruits* and *Waiting for Lefty* have in the past two seasons won for it a secure place in the professional theatre no less than in the amateur. Every serious dramatic critic writes about it constantly. It is on Broadway though not of it. But back of its recent sensational advances is a little-known story of pioneering sweat and sacrifice.

A new theatre could only arise from a new—and clear—social outlook. This was what the O'Neills and Howards, the middle-class idealists who set out to reform the theatre ten and twenty years ago, did not realize. They had become aware that America seen from a Park Avenue drawing-room was quite different from the America seen from, say, the company-owned hovel of a miner, or the mortgage-shadowed cottage of a small business man. But they failed to penetrate to the roots of the social forces at work in the post-war world. Reform could not build a new theatre—it required revolution. It was the new revolutionary outlook of the most advanced sectors of the working class, as crystallized in the theory of Marxism, spreading as the crisis deepened from the fields of politics and economics to that of culture, that brought to life the workers' theatre movement. And it was the workers' theatre which furnished the impetus for the broader current of the new social theatre of today, the theatre which voices the needs of the masses who constitute the overwhelming majority of the American people.

From that day a few years back when an amateur actor stepped onto a small platform in a shadowed loft and spoke the simple words, "I am hungry," the problems of the masses have never been absent from the American stage. The titles of even the earliest plays of the new theatre can bear witness. From the days of *Unemployed*,

Scottsboro, *We Demand* and *Fight Against Starvation*, down to the recent *Jews at the Crossroads* and the song *U Don't Need a Biscuit*, the workers' theatre through its portable productions of hundreds of short agitational plays has given dramatic life to the things that matter most to the American masses. Nor has there been any lack of sympathetic concern for the problems of the masses of other lands. *Tempo Tempo* and *Hands Off* (both about the Soviet Union), *China Awake*, *Cuba Libre*, *Dimitrov*, and *Free Thaelmann* are some of the plays of international solidarity that have been produced.

It is clear why such a theatre, in spite of a huge crop of artistic flaws which are slowly being eradicated, endears itself to its mass audience, sinks firm roots in the native soil, and is actually producing a considerable and vital "native American drama"—a thing of which professors and scribes speak so longingly and abstractly. At a moderate estimate, about 95 percent of the plays produced by the English-speaking groups of the new theatre are written by its own American playwrights. Hundreds of young playwrights are learning their craft in actual work with amateur groups. At the same time, more and more of the professional playwrights are writing either directly for or in the spirit of the new theatre, which alone lends a self-respecting purpose to the dramatist's craft in a land ridden with misery.

While there have been radical attempts at a social theatre in the past (the most notable venture being that of the New Playwrights' Theatre in 1927 and 1928), they never took on the aspect of a continuous and spreading artistic movement until a little more than four years ago. It was then that two groups in New York, the Workers' Laboratory Theatre and the German-American troupe

Prolet-Buehne, who were already pioneering with mobile short agitational dramatic forms, set themselves the further task of spreading the idea of the workers' theatre throughout the land. In April, 1931, the first mimeographed number of the magazine Workers' Theatre (destined to grow into the splendid New Theatre of today) issued from the ink-stained fingers of its seven elected editors, who did every job on it, from writing the copy to turning the handle of the mimeograph, clipping the copies together and dropping bundles into the mailbox. The first issue of 200 copies, published from the tiny office of the Workers' Laboratory Theatre on a loan of five dollars, was quickly exhausted, leaving the editors dazed with delight—and sorry they hadn't published 250 copies. For a year thereafter Workers' Theatre came out regularly every month, and it seemed almost as if every copy planted the seed of a new theatre group—so many letters came in from individuals and organizations inquiring how to start dramatic activities. In this short space of time the new revolutionary theatre reached a stage where it could hold the first National Workers' Theatre Festival, in April, 1932, at New York. Fifty-odd dramatic groups were there represented by delegates, some of whom had hitch-hiked and ridden the rods from points west of Chicago. A dramatic competition with twelve groups performing was held as

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part of the festival. This first conference established the League of Workers' Theatres of the U. S. A. (popularly known as the L.O.W.T.), and affiliated with what was then the International Workers' Dramatic Union. For it had become known that the rise of the workers' theatre was no exceptional American phenomenon, but a worldwide cultural process.

From that time on, the L.O.W.T. was at work, laying a firm foundation for the new theatre which has now come of age. Through its national and regional dramatic festivals held each spring, through its publication of short revolutionary plays, and especially through its theoretical and practical guidance in the pages of the early New Theatre, the L.O.W.T. interested and encouraged thousands of workers, farmers, and artists to participate in building today the theatre of tomorrow. It became the guiding force not alone of the workers' theatre movement, but also and increasingly of large sections of the bourgeois little theatre and professional theatre—indeed, of every genuinely progressive trend in American drama.

Recently the organized new theatre has taken a step of the utmost importance for the future of American culture. Recognizing the need for active cooperation on the part of all serious and socially minded people and organizations of the theatre, not alone on artistic grounds, desirable as that is, but also for defense of the art of the theatre against reactionary social and cultural forces, the League of Workers' Theatres boldly proceeded to replace itself with a broad organization. The object was to establish a league which, while firmly rooted in the workers' and farmers' movement, would embrace all theatre groups and individuals from whatever walks of life, who could be united upon a simple minimum program of principles. The broader organization which is already carrying on is the New Theatre League. The program of the New Theatre League, short and to the point, declares: *For a mass development of the American theatre to its highest artistic and social level; for a theatre dedicated to the struggle against war, fascism and censorship.*

Many member groups of the League go beyond this program, functioning as clear-cut revolutionary theatres. Others range right down to theatres that are definitely not

revolutionary, but simply and determinedly anti-fascist. Individuals and organizations of varying political tendencies—Communist, Socialist, Farmer-Labor, and liberal among them—are included. The League's program is one to which all sincere friends and workers of the theatre can rally, regardless of affiliations or differences. It is a program which has already begun to receive a wide and enthusiastic response from coast to coast—among others, from dramatic groups of the American Federation of Labor, of churches, colleges, Y.M.C.A.'s and Y.M.H.A.'s, farmers' organizations, as well as the little theatre and professional theatre.

There are today many theatres, as yet unaffiliated with the League, that are by their social outlook an important part of the new theatre. Outstanding among these is, of course, the Theatre Union, whose fine professional productions have won great prestige for the new theatre as a whole, have inspired similar projects in a number of cities, and have set high standards for the advanced groups of the League to aim at. Philadelphia now has its New Theatre, Chicago its Drama Union, Los Angeles its Contemporary Theatre and Hawthorne Players; and there are others. In a special category is the Group Theatre, the country's foremost professional art theatre, whose repertory increasingly reflects the social outlook of the new theatre. Though it has staged various types of plays, some of its recent productions have received wide acclaim as perhaps the best achievements of the revolutionary theatre to date. Also, many individual members of the Group Theatre have contributed their fine talents to the technical training of new theatre amateurs.

The New Theatre League conducts many services, most of them available to non-members as well as members. Its national office, located at 114 West 14th Street, New York, includes a Repertory Department which is today the only central source of plays with serious social content. Its Training Department has recently opened an evening theatre school in New York, offering eleven courses at extremely low rates with some of the best

instructors available. An Organizational Department carries on a voluminous correspondence, issues an organizational bulletin, and secures new affiliations to the League. The Productions Department conducts "New Theatre Nights" that are sometimes the most exciting programs this side of the Atlantic. (*Waiting for Lefty* had its first performance at one of these nights.) A Bookings Service centralizes the booking of most of the New York groups and sends out speakers on request.

In addition, the League's work with New Theatre magazine, which it publishes jointly with the New Dance League, has assumed tremendous proportions. New Theatre has definitely become one of the "big three" American magazines of the theatre. The services that have been developed in New York are step by step being organized in other sections of the country too, notably in Chicago.

All this work is being carried on in the face of handicaps that the ordinary theatre person would label impossible. The New Theatre League, operating on the most modest budget any national theatre organization has ever had, was begun without capital. Financial difficulties crop up often. The League has determined to settle them once for all, and is at present engaged in a drive for a fund to end this drag on its activities. Contributions come from those in lowly as well as in high theatrical places.

Steadily and unspectacularly the New Theatre League goes about the task of building a new theatre, a task which seen in its true historical perspective is of heroic proportions.

How far it has advanced from the early days of political and artistic crudeness, will be demonstrated soon, during its annual "National Theatre Week." From May 12 to 18, lectures, conferences, and competitive dramatic performances will be held simultaneously in various sections of the country. Particularly stressed will be the part the theatre can play in the struggle against war, fascism, and censorship, as well as the ways and means of uniting all progressive theatre groups and individuals for this purpose. Thus the April issue of New Theatre has been devoted mainly to articles dealing with the theatre arts in war. Anti-war and anti-fascist plays will be prominent in the dramatic competitions. The activities of National Theatre Week this year will not be restricted to members of the New Theatre League. Every individual and group seriously interested in the defense of theatrical art against cultural and social reaction will be welcomed on an equal fraternal footing, as co-builders of the united theatrical front against war, fascism, and censorship. This front of defense becomes a mobilization against reaction. The new theatre of the American masses is preparing for a new advance.

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Movies

Moscow Laughs

IT IS entirely fitting that Gregory Alexandrov, who until a year ago worked together with Eisenstein, should choose the musical comedy as his initial independent venture in the cinema. He is an excellent musician and a fine poet. The scenario and dialogue of *Moscow Laughs* (previously known as *The Shepherd of Abrau, Jazz Comedy, and Happy Fellows*) substantiate these claims.

Moscow Laughs is frankly experimental and must be accepted as such, for the musical comedy is new to the Soviet cinema. Alexandrov used this film as a laboratory. It incorporates every type of comedy known to the screen: from the slapstick of the Harold Lloyd-Mack Sennett school to the sophisticated satire of René Clair. Although it is essentially an experiment in form, *Moscow Laughs* is not devoid of social consciousness. As a matter of fact, its high level of clear class humor is its paramount virtue.

This film is not the first slapstick comedy to come from the Soviet Union, as some critics have insisted. One must remember that there is a rich tradition of native theatrical comedy; Alexandrov's early training in the theatre provided him with the necessary background. Also the immense popularity of the early Chaplin and Harold Lloyd films in Soviet Russia has provided the necessary source material. One of the very first Soviet films (produced before the nationalization of the film industry), *Three Comrades and One Invention*, was a slapstick comedy of notable excellence. It is also important to recall the early film comedy work of Protozanov: *The Process of Three Million, Festival of St. Jorgen*, and others.

But to get back to *Moscow Laughs*: its significance lies in the theme:

We can sing and laugh like children
Amidst enduring work and struggle. . . .

This theme opens the film and is developed with variations until the very end when the hero and heroine sum up:

We can sing and laugh like children
Amidst enduring work.
For, we were born into the world,
So that we surrender to no one, forever!
A song leads us and calls us!
And he is never lost
Who goes through life with a song. . . .¹

The director develops the satiric element in a secondary theme: he laughs sharply but good naturedly at the bourgeois elements in contemporary Soviet society; at musicians who excuse their bad temper in the name of creative work; and finally, the director makes room for a little of that good old Bolshevik trait, self-criticism.

The plot spins around the adventures of a

gay and witty shepherd-musician, Kostia, who is mistaken for a visiting Italian conductor by Helena, a "Torgsin Baby" (the Soviet slang for a citizen who hangs around foreigners in order to enjoy certain bourgeois comforts). Helena thinks she has a voice (she hasn't) and she hopes that this foreign conductor will help her secure an engagement at the Bolshoi Theatre. She invites the shepherd to a reception. After a series of adventures the musician is "exposed" as being only a shepherd (but he insists that he is not an *ordinary* shepherd, but the *head* shepherd); anyway, "today a shepherd, tomorrow a musician." "Then come tomorrow," says Helena's mother. But our rural musician is really loved by Helena's servant. After some months, Kostia comes to Moscow, where he accidentally conducts a grand orchestra (this scene is a take-off on the Warner Bros. musical extravaganzas) in Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsody." Later he becomes the leader of a jazz band. After a series of mishaps, the band finally lands a booking in the celebrated Bolshoi Theatre. But a recent escapade ruins their instruments and they are compelled to perform with their lips in the manner of the Mills Brothers.

This bare outline doesn't do justice to the complexity of the film. It must be seen to be appreciated. There are certain structural faults and some of the humor is lost because it is too local to be understood by a foreign audience. But it is a first film and as such it is remarkable. Part of it places it miles ahead of any American musical comedy film.

In preparing this film for the American market there was a certain amount of bad judgment used. In the first place, a serious mistake was made when the lyrics remained untranslated . . . even in the printed program. Secondly, there was no reason in the world for listing Helena as "the daughter of a foreign

engineer." Not only is this untrue, but it takes the edge off the satire. It is surely significant that the Soviet Union can take time off to laugh at its non-proletarian elements as well as the human weaknesses and "bad manners" of certain members of the working class. It was also a mistake to place an unnatural emphasis on the slapstick character of *Moscow Laughs*. For example: in the sequence where Kostia talks to Helena about the statue of Venus de Milo, the superimposed titles translate the dialogue into the stale joke about the armless lady and what she would do in the event she had an itch. The actual Russian:

Kostia: I was thinking what such a woman can do on the eighth of March. It's terrible.

Helena: Why?

Kostia: She has no hands, how will she vote?

A perfectly fine example of proletarian humor and Soviet psychology sacrificed for a cheap gag—entirely out of keeping with the poetry of Alexandrov's scenario.

Nevertheless, despite these things and despite certain structural faults, *Moscow Laughs* remains a constantly enjoyable, sometimes hilarious and truly enlightening picture of contemporary Soviet life . . . an aspect so far not presented in any Soviet film.

PETER ELLIS.

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¹This is a crude literal translation of what is very charming poetry in the original Russian. (P.E.)

Down With the Novel

ROBERT FORSYTHE

HAVING launched my campaign against the British successfully, I am now prepared to take up the matter of the novel. My theory in this regard is simple: Novels should be written by novelists. Furthermore, it might be well to forget about the writing of novels entirely. As it stands, there is a presumption, fostered by booksellers and publishers, that a poet or a playwright or a competent writer on scientific subjects not only can write a novel but must do so forthwith. If a man has written a good biography, he will feel the need of stopping work in the middle of his *magnum opus* to do something which might catch first the eye of Mr. Harry Hansen and later the eye of Mr. Samuel Goldwyn.

This is bad enough with writers who interest me neither with their serious work nor with their fiction but it is doubly disturbing in young proletarian authors. The young man who has a story to tell must tell it in fiction, thus risking 90 percent of its effectiveness. What is important in revolutionary writing is that the story be told without loss of vigor and without torturing the author so completely out of his natural bent that he is writing on his left ear. Much of our novel writing gives me that impression. It is not natural, it is not normal and easy and right.

One of the most important books of recent years is Vincent Sheean's *Personal History*. Told as a novel, it would mean nothing. If Mr. Sheean were to present in fiction the same views he has given as coming from himself, there would be little belief in them. The reader who was determined not to believe would say simply that it was all very well for an author to write as he pleased but the reader had an equal right to feel that the characters were overdrawn. In working-class novels, the bourgeois critic invariably charges that the dice are loaded and that the proletarian hero is something never seen before on land or sea. If the same material was used as autobiography, there would be the usual hesitancy in admitting that the truth could really be the truth, but there would at least be an end to questioning the actuality of the character. There is the further difficulty that the young writer, faced by the great novels which have preceded him and fearful of the charge of unoriginality, will strive so desperately for freshness and uniqueness that he will not only ruin his story by elaboration but make it ridiculous by his fine writing. Because there have been heroes and villains and climaxes and strong scenes, there must be all of these in every new novel. A story which could be stirring as a straight narrative be-

comes a soggy, inert mass which had better been left in the oven.

As opposed to this picture there is the author who is naturally a novelist. I have no wish to rob him of his birthright. I say only that left-wing writers should be more concerned with effect than form because if there is no effect there is nothing, even in a bourgeois novel. When Louis Adamic rewrites *Laughing in the Jungle* as a novel called *Grandsons*, he is perhaps humoring a desire he had long possessed but he has written nothing comparable to the original book and certainly nothing to be mentioned by the side of *Native's Return*, which had an almost perfect form for its subject matter. Because he was writing in the first person, there were no limitations of form and he could include straight travel material, personal experiences, tales of the lands he was visiting, political comment, indignation, interviews and pure reporting. The result was a warm, rich, informative book which surpassed most novels of the year in those very qualities which are supposed to make the novel pre-eminent. *Grandsons*, his novel, is a wooden attempt to express the author's personal observations through the mouths of various manufactured characters. It is hardly likely to convey Mr. Adamic's message or to enhance his reputation as an artist.

The books that stick in my memory are not the widely-exploited novels but the first-hand experience reports of writers who have been stirred by their surroundings. I will remember Pat O'Mara's *The Autobiography of a Liverpool Irish Slummy* long after *Anthony Adverse* has been forgotten even by the teaching staff at the Breadloaf Conference. There is little chance that I will ever forget Karl Billinger's *Fatherland*, the remarkable picture of life in Hitler's terror camps and prisons. Billinger writes with extreme sensitivity and even with objectivity, the observant reality which comes from a firm founding in Marxism and faith in a cause. He neither rants nor rails nor complains; he reports and interprets. Only a genius could hope to present, in fiction, characters as real and believable as the men Billinger is writing about. Because he has treated them exactly as he must have seen them, without dramatics, without fake heroics, his book has a quality of magnificence and beauty quite startling in a setting so cruel and hard. What remains with me is not the torture, the sadism of the Nazi guards and the bestial degradation of the Nazi officers, but the courage of the prisoners and the adaptability and strength of the human animal under stress.

Nothing I have read recently has interested me so much as Dmitri Furmanov's

Chapayev, the book from which the motion picture was made. I approached it fearfully because I had been knocked silly by the pictures and felt that nothing could equal it in prose. In truth, the book is extraordinarily good. There may some day be a great novel like *War and Peace* to cover the period of the civil wars after the October revolution but until then you will find nothing better than Furmanov's account of the famous guerilla warrior. Chapayev himself is so fully a character out of fiction that Furmanov's work was simplified but nothing could possibly be better than his recounting of the great man's foibles and exploits. Not only is it a picture of Chapayev but it is the history of the period, a fascinating depiction of the difficulties surmounted, the wild men who carried on the fighting and the physical and ideological conquest made. Furmanov writes it as a narrative and not in the first person, but he is so definitely the Fedor of the book that no reader is fooled for a moment and no critic would think of complaining of the book's lack of reality.

But to speak of autobiography and first-hand narratives does not solve the problem. We have always had such books but obviously it is not possible for every writer, proletarian or otherwise, to confine himself entirely to his reminiscences; a man may want to write more than one book in his lifetime. What remains is the novel, that horrifying specter which haunts the dreams of young authors and turns prospective artists into verbal mechanics. The thing has become a fetish. Whenever I meet a young author, I know he is going to tell me he is working on a novel. He may be an excellent critic, a fine poet or a brilliant historian, but his life will be incomplete until he has wasted six months manufacturing a set of fictional robots and producing a book which will be read by seven hundred people and have all the artistic significance of a subway advertising poster. It is my conviction that the novel is a dying form. While it once afforded a roomy medium in which the artist could ramble at will after the strait-jacket of poetry, it has now become so formalized that it is a hindrance to free imagination. What will succeed it I do not know, but I should like to see something attempted in the way of reportage, autobiography, comment, philosophy and even nonsensicality. I mean I want to see these elements combined in one volume. I want writers to forget about the novel and concentrate upon expressing themselves in the way which is easiest for them and, by indirection, easiest for the reader.

Because writers who turn Left are breaking away from their old thought habits, they

are often as anxious to show their independence of old forms. What we have then is not a new form but a torturing of the old in such a fantastic manner that the ambition of the writer to reach his new audience is entirely frustrated. It is for this reason that I hope to see the start of something new. What is the sense of bothering with the novel when a novel may not be what we want to write at all? We need less necromancy and more artistic freedom. We need novelty but not obscurity. While many of our left wing writers are producing novels as complicated and abstruse as the blue print of a turbine, there are bourgeois authors who are writing lucidly and straight-forwardly, in a way understandable to intellectual and worker alike. It is not that proletarian writers cannot write simply and effectively; it is not that they scorn reaching the worker at his own level; it is not even that they should sacrifice one artistic principle or deviate in the slightest from the highest artistic standards; it may only be that they are clinging to a form which does not fit them. I want to avoid threatening gestures but if somebody doesn't launch the new form, I may have to do it myself. I hope this will be warning enough.

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Between Ourselves

ROBERT FORSYTHE'S identity, we are told, is fast becoming the new national guessing game. During the last year we have heard of all sort of candidates, but the March 26 issue of The Chicago Daily Times beats everything. Writes columnist Gail Borden, "Robert Forsythe of THE NEW MASSES is none other than our old pal and friend of child movie stars, Damon Runyan." Although we don't want to spill the beans just yet, we can assure you Forsythe is not Damon Runyan. Neither is he William Lyon Phelps.

Forsythe's piece in this issue on the novel, like Dimitrov's on revolutionary literature in general, will undoubtedly afford considerable discussion material for the forthcoming Writers' Congress.

Some of the attentive listeners at The New Masses-New Theatre production of Panic observed a slight difference between the spoken and printed versions of V. J. Jerome's contribution to the critical symposium. Lack of space compelled us to omit the following passage:

The *Communist Manifesto* speaks of a specter that haunts capitalism. But let us remember that in the *Manifesto* the specter is but the dramatic foreshadowing of the class of proletarians, the men who rise to wield the weapons that bring death to capitalism. The *Manifesto* ends with the words: "Workers of all lands, united." That is why it is aesthetically as well as politically a masterpiece.

Amy Schechter, whose second article on the basic industries appears in this issue, is a well known union organizer.

Among the other contributors to this issue: Henry Cooper, research worker and sociologist, is a frequent contributor to the working class press.

Loren Miller, is well known in the Negro

press as a columnist and newspaper editor. A California resident, he is at present engaged on a history of Negro literature.

The American Union Against Reaction is giving a cocktail party for THE NEW MASSES on Sunday, April 28, at 4 P. M. at 210 Fifth Avenue (fifth floor). Admission \$1 (three months) subscription to THE NEW MASSES. Music and entertainment. Admission at the door.

New Masses Lectures

Monday, April 15

Ben Goldstein, "Fascism and the Jew," 9:30 P. M., at Greater Pythian Temple, 135 W. 70th St., N. Y. C.

Tuesday, April 16

Sender Garlin, "The Inside Story of Huey P. Long," at Eighth Avenue Temple, 8th Ave. and Garfield Pl., Brooklyn. Auspices: Men's Club.

Thursday, April 18

Ben Goldstein, "Culture Under Fascism," at 504 6th Ave., New York. Auspices: Branch 500, I.W.O.

Friday, April 19

James Casey, "The Role of the Press," at 1207 Kings Highway, Brooklyn. Auspices: Ernst Thaelmann Branch, I.W.O.

Sender Garlin, "The Inside Story of Huey P. Long," at 1373-43rd St., Brooklyn. Auspices: I.W.O., Branch Y-4. (Erroneously announced for April 12 here last week.)

Harry Carlisle, "Fascist Terror in California," People's Church, 709 North 11th St., Milwaukee, Wis. Auspices: Writers' Group, John Reed Club.

Ashley Pettis, "Modern Soviet Music," at 35 Hillhouse Ave., New Haven Conn. Auspices: John Reed Club, 8:30 p. m.

Sunday, April 21

William E. Browder, "The Middle Class Must Choose," at 2075-86th St., Brooklyn. Auspices: Branch 817 and 140, I.W.O.

Announcement: The New Masses Club of Omaha, Nebraska, holds a dinner followed by a featured speaker every Sunday evening at 6 P. M., at Studio Inn, 19th and Jackson Streets. Readers and friends of The New Masses are invited to attend.

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