

**WORKERS**

**JUNE 1931**

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# WORKERS THEATRE

JUNE

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The Workers Theatre and the Scottsboro Case

by Harry Ober  
Workers Laboratory Theatre

There is no more fruitful time than the present for Workers Theatre all over the country to get busy and do some real work in rallying the negro and white workers to the defense of the nine framed, colored workers in Scottsboro. These nine boys were rounded up on a freight train on their way to find work. Two girls were found on the same train. This was enough to set the stage for a frame-up on a rape charge. The girls have police records. It was an easy matter to intimidate them to testify against these boys. The trial was rushed through without any adequate defence for these boys.

The International Labor Defence and the League Of Struggle for Negro Rights are the only organizations really fighting to free these boys. The whole working class, colored and white realizes the importance of this case. We must once and for all show up the bosses attempt to crush the rebellious spirit of the poor negro masses against their miserable conditions. In this case there is real drama. Not drama of the bourgeois theatre but actual class drama, where social forces play their part.

The Workers Theatres cannot stand aside in this case. We can expose the treachery of the bosses on the stage before thousands of workers. We must show the negro and white workers that our real enemy is the Capitalist Class and not skin color.

In this issue of the magazine we include a play on the Scottsboro Case. The material in this play may be rearranged to suit the capacities of every Workers Theatre group. No time should be lost. Workers theatres put this case on the stage and **SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP!**

NEGRO

UNITE



AND WHITE

AND FIGHT

Consolidation of the English-speaking Theatre Movement  
S. Roberts  
Workers' Laboratory Theatre

For a number of years attempts have been made in the various parts of the country to organize workers' theatre groups. Most of these functioned for a short time and disappeared, some still exist but their influence in most cases is limited and weak. Lately efforts to organize these groups have been renewed, and as a result thruout the country workers' theatre groups are being started or there is talk of starting them. This is due to the growing realization among class-conscious workers of what an effective instrument of propaganda the theatre can be. Many workers, mostly of the "white collar" category, who were formerly associated with bourgeois theatres, amateur and professional, pressed by the crisis have turned to the workers' theatre in revolt against the dying bourgeois theatre and out of desire to fight against capitalism with their special abilities. The Russian and German workers' theatre movements are additional inspiration for the formation of groups here. Everyone has read how in Russia the Blue Blouse groups spread their influence over vast territories in the Soviets, teach the workers and peasants the new life and helping to keep up & their morale during these trying times of socialist construction. In Germany the Red Blouse groups have done wonderful work, carrying the theatre right into the actual everyday struggles of the workers--at strikes, at demonstrations, during election campaigns, spreading propaganda, teaching lessons, exposing the capitalist system and helping to win over more workers into the struggle.

Yet with all this we have done practically nothing here in the United States or have failed to do any really valuable work with the workers' theatre. Why have groups formed and quickly died? Why are the existing ones of little importance as a vital propagandistic force? The outstanding reason and the key to the entire condition is the lack of a central organization.

Here we have dozens of groups forming, working, disappearing. One group doesn't know another, the experience of one is closed as a lesson to the other. They form in an isolated way and work along in an isolated way. This results in not having a united, definite line of work to carry out, there is utter confusion as to what type of plays to put on, where they should be put on and how.

One group starts out with the impossibly ambitious program of presenting as a beginning some complicated three act play. This immediately curtails their sphere of activity, compels them to stay in one place, puts them in a position where they have to wait for workers to come to them and sets them therefore on the side-lines as a passive sympathizer in the class struggle. The intentions of the comrades in this case may have been of the best but handicapped by not knowing the

## WORKERS' THEATRE

experiences of other groups and unable to formulate a correct line by themselves, they blunder into this blind alley and eventually degenerate to nothing more than an artistic group with a proletarian name.

Other groups starting off less pretentiously find themselves stopped by not having a good director perhaps, or difficulty in getting proper plays or inability to construct their group organizationally and so on. Each has its problems and each finds it must settle them alone.

If there was a central theatre group to which all other groups could look for guidance and to which delegates could come from all the theatres, then we would have a clearing house for our problems, a pooling of our ideas, a centralization of our experiences and thus be in better position to work out definite plans of united actions and avoid blunders. Workers desiring to form groups could get assistance from the central body or be referred to an associate unit in the particular locality from which the request comes. During the time when there is a national campaign for some workingclass program such as social insurance or the Scottsboro case, all the groups could concentrate nationally on the demands and thus render most valuable service in the advancement and spreading of the demands.

The need for this central body is now being crystalized into its formation through the Workers' Laboratory Theatre of the Workers' International Relief. They ask that all groups throughout the country, no matter what their name or political affiliation, as long as they intend to use the theatre in the fight for workingclass interests, to communicate with the Workers' Laboratory Theatre, 131 West 28th Street, New York City. With these contacts established further steps can be taken toward consolidating the workers' theatre movement from separate isolated groups into a movement of united, organized action. This should not be neglected, members of workers' theatre groups reading this must realize the importance of such a central body and take it up with their respective organizations. Action must be taken on this immediately.

Workers who want to start a theatre group in their town, union, factory or mass organization, should communicate with the Workers' Laboratory Theatre and they will be given assistance. There are at present a number of plays available and groups in need of plays can have them by writing in. More plays are needed, requests are coming in all the time. Workers who have written plays should send them in to the Workers' Laboratory Theatre where they can be distributed and put in to work.

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WANTED: A TECHNIQUE FOR THE WORKERS THEATRES  
IN AMERICA

By  
Sidney Ball, W. L. T.

The workers theatre groups of Germany and Russia are a powerful force for propaganda. In Germany, the agit-prop troupes have gained millions of votes for revolutionary candidates; In Russia, socialist construction has been speeded up. How has this been possible? In these countries there are many theatre groups using similar methods of production and a central body distributing plays that are used by the groups. On a specific issue, say the campaign against imperialist war, it is merely necessary for the central body to issue a play on this subject. In a short time groups throughout the country are playing it. Literature is sold at the performances. Application cards are distributed. There is a countrywide, uniform campaign that is tied up with the struggles of the mass organizations and unions of the revolutionary movement.

Such a unification of the theatre groups in this country must be accomplished if the theatre is to be an effective propaganda weapon. But this can only take place after a definite technique has been adopted by all groups in the country. Examine the plays used so successfully in Germany and Russia. We immediately notice that they have discarded realism. Why? A worker speaks simply, forcefully. He moves strongly. To take a worker and train him to use a modulated tone, or to walk with a mincing step requires a long period of training - yet it is necessary if we are to have him take the part of a businessman or a priest in a realistic play. In these expressionistic plays this is not done. The character is represented simply, perhaps the capitalist wears a high hat or the priest carries a cross; but the actor delivers his lines in the straightforward manner natural to him. Any worker can take a part at a few days notice, only a minimum of rehearsals are needed. Even a worker active in the revolutionary movement can give up the few days necessary to put on such a play.

We have spoken of the difficulty of creating characters for a realistic play. But once the characters have been created there is more to be done. It is necessary to build up situations, atmosphere must be thrown in to make the action seem plausible. For example, we wish to produce a play about a strike. We show the workers in the factory. They stand at their machines and talk, some are telling jokes. Others are reading newspapers. Perhaps one young fellow plays a trick on another. All this is good atmosphere. It is a necessary setting for the strike we are going to show in realistic fashion. **But** in all this dialogue there is very little propaganda. If the jokes are good, we may try to remember them. We may become interested in the problems of the specific dialogue has done very little to further the idea back of the play and may even confuse or becloud our original theme; the value of the revolutionary unions. If we had thrown realism out of the window we could have had one of the workers tell the rest the necessity for the strike and the position of the union. Other workers could advance the typical arguments against it. By this

theoretical discussion our points could be brought out sharply and clearly - the play would be of definite educational value.

At present there is a tremendous countrywide campaign to save the nine negro boys framed up in Scotsboro, Alabama. What can the workers theatre movement do to help them? Very little as long as each group works by itself, each with its own particular methods, its own theories. But if there were a similar technique used by all the groups, it would be an easy matter to distribute plays throughout the country. Performances could be given at protest meetings. Application cards for the League of Struggle for Negro Rights could be given out at all productions of the play. The theatre would be a vital force in the bringing together of negro and white workers.

It is because of such campaigns that this article is called "Wanted: A Technique." Without some uniform technique such a campaign is difficult. And only an expressionistic technique can be used to put on plays with untrained actors in the short time available.

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TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WORKERS INTERNATIONAL RELIEF  
(Manifesto of the International Committee)

August, 1931 will mark the 10th anniversary of the Workers International Relief. During its 10 years of activity, the WIR relentlessly worked for effective international working-class solidarity.

Owing to the sacrifices and support of millions of toilers in all countries, the WIR was able to carry out different international relief campaigns of the greatest political importance such as the relief given to the starving workers and peasants of the Volga territory in 1921, the support to the German workers during the famine of the Winter of 1923, the Japanese and the Chinese relief activities, the solidarity campaign for the British miners strike in 1926, the struggles in the Ruhr (1928) Germany and in the Northern France--the greatest manifestations of working-class solidarity in the history of the revolution movement.

Since its existence, the WIR raised the tremendous amount of \$18,500,000 from the workers in all countries and distributed it for the support of labor struggles. This achievement is a symbol of the solidarity and self-sacrifices of thousands and thousands of workers, friends, sympathizers, and members of WIR, who gave or raised these funds by pennies and nickles.

In vain did the class enemy try to counteract the growing of the WIR, with police suppression, by valanders or by the creation of fake organizations in the field of "mass relief" (including the new fascist relief organization in Germany, the National Socialist Workers Relief in Germany,) the National Socialist Workers Relief" of Hitler. The WIR, built and promoted by the sympathy and love of millions of workers and small peasants in cooperation with the revolutionary intellectual, scientists, developed within hardly 10 years, one of the greatest international organizations.

(continued on page 10)



WORKERS THEATRE

Fight the Social Fascists!

by

Deutchman

Workers Laboratory Theatre

Mathew Woll, introduced as the secretary of the American Federation of Labor and president of one of those faddy committees organized by the bosses to relieve the unemployment situation, spoke over the radio in a nation-wide hook-up. His profound solution of unemployment was to restrict all emigration to the United States, for his hypocritical and worn-out logic is that foreign born workers are willing to work for less than native workers. The subservience of the American Federation of Labor to the bosses was very clearly explained by Woll when he made the statement that the AFL had made an agreement with the bosses not to fight for higher wages (not that they ever did), if the bosses did not reduce the wages. That was last year when the Communist Party of the United States on March 6th came out in a monster demonstration and brought to the attention of the country the great unemployment in the United States. What has happened? The AFL has not called a single strike, has not made a single fight for the workers (as is usual), keeping their part of the agreement. Have the bosses kept their agreement? Wages have been very regularly lowered. More and more workers have been put on part-time jobs. Millions of workers have been thrown completely out of work. The American Federation of Labor have kept their promise to the bosses. Yes, while millions of workers are starving. It is the expected and usual results of compromise and as with the AFL, complete sell-out to the bosses.

Workers theatre groups, what are we going to do about it? Will we become arty in the attempt to reproduce to the workers the lives of the workers and the hoodwinking of the masses by the social fascists and the so-called 'friends of labor'? Or will we go to the workers with a clear picture of the betrayal of the lackeys of the bosses and the bosses? WORKERS THEATRE GROUPS THERE IS NO MEDIUM. AGITATE AGAINST THE SOCIAL FASCISTS AND THE BOSSES. FIGHT THE BOSS SYSTEM. DRAMATIZE THE CLASS-STRUGGLE.

NEWS

The Workers Laboratory Theatre and the Prolet Buchh

As a result of the joint performance of the W.L.T. and the Prolet Buchh in the May first pageant, an understanding has been reached between these two groups for future cooperation and exchange of ideas and forces. The second joint performance was held May 30, at Passaic. Plans are now in progress for a mass performance at the W.I.R. picnic on June 21. We hope that more arrangements will be made amongst W.T. groups.

On Breaking Thro' the Proscenium  
by  
Jake Shapiro  
Workers Laboratory Theatre

For the past number of years a great deal has been heard in the more advanced theatrical circles about 'breaking thro' the proscenium.' The term proscenium is used here of course in a symbolical sense. It is applied to the at much discussed invisible fourth wall of the stage through which an audience is privileged to peek into an idealized world beyond and apart from them.

The extensive use of this phrase, even among bourgeois students of the stage shows a growing dissatisfaction with the conventional peek-show concept of the theatre. It is felt that the prevalent play and mode of production have established this fourth wall as a real barrier, none the less effective for its being invisible, between the audience and actor.

At present the theatre-goer buys his way into a theatre to watch a performance rather than to partake in a theatrical experience. There is no real band of sympathy or kinship between audience, actor and play, and the sum total is a dreary buy and sell spirit, a total lack of enthusiasm or vitality on either side of the foot-lights.

The mistake made by the bourgeois students of the theatre is that they ascribe these abuses to qualities inherent in the present-day theatre itself rather than in the social and economic conditions of a capitalist world which has commercialized everything from bread to art. I have seen a witness to some of the bourgeois attempts to break thro' the proscenium. Some will perhaps remember Danton's Tod, a Rheinhardt production; The Miracle, also a very pretentious production of Rheinhardt's; The Beggar on Horseback, an American production; and many more. I have mentioned here outstanding productions of the past number of years which have a bearing on the subject. In these productions the direction, by one technical means or another, attempted to unite the audience and the actor. The results although perhaps striking as an innovation were only significant in so far as they accentuated the impossibility of breaking through the proscenium in the commercialized, bourgeois theatre. The introduction of actors into the audience in some of these plays resulted in the bizarre only. Rather than having stepped through the proscenium these actors seemed to have carried the proscenium with them. The reaction in the audience was one of, "Heh, heh, can you imagine! A real actor coming right off the stage into the audience! Interesting rather, isn't it?" It only served to intensify that barrier of strangeness rather than to destroy it. It shocked and tickled but did very little else.

However, we of the revolutionary workers theatre need shed no tears over the tribulations of the bourgeois. The same problem in our hands becomes very simple. In fact there is no problem because we have no proscenium in that sense. Our plays dramatize the economic struggles, the revolutionary aspirations of our audience and actors. They attempt to teach and propagandize the masses. They are designed not to tickle the masses but to awaken them. They are vital to our audience. Our actors are workers. They carry no halo. They are part of the masses and the message of the play is their message. In the face of this no imaginary proscenium can possibly stump us.

The question now becomes, being what we are, what are the theatrical tools at our command and how shall we use them most efficiently in order to carry our message to the workers.

We are new to the theatre. We have a trade to learn and we will doubtless learn it as we go on. But this much we may start with: our plays need not be restricted to our actors, they should be shared, whenever possible, by the audience and the measure of their effectiveness should be, hid the audience share in them. Our stage need not be restricted to the actual stage if there happens to be one. Our actors can walk off into the audience or rise from the audience without danger of being bizarre. They are working men and women and walking off among their comrades. With us these measures will not constitute an obvious trick as it is in the bourgeois theatre, these means are legitimately ours, by virtue of our Proletarian solidarity and by virtue of our never having recognized a proscenium.

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#### NEWS

On May 30th, at Passaic, we met a comrade from the Solidarity Players of Boston and got some first hand information regarding the work of this group. It seems to us that this group works generally on the correct line except in one case where they made a great mistake. After working for months on a program the group played once at a special affair and dropped the program. No attempt was made to solicit other working-class organizations with a view of putting on this program for as many workers as possible. It must be remembered that a workers theatre must make it its business to reach as many workers as possible. From the point of view of technical construction of the program, however, this group did very well.

## Dos Passos on the Theatre

A. Prentis

Workers LABORATORY THEATRE

In writing on the Theatre in the April 1st issue of the "New Republic," John Dos Passos makes some statements that should be questioned. He states, "In a world of collectives the theatre which has always been a mass art, is one of the most simple and obvious organs of contact between the mass and the individual member of the crowd". We agree with him in this. But we disagree when he continues, "We want a permanent reputable organization to put on plays", and "one attempt to buck the tide and put on plays dealing with the individual life around us in a novel experimental manner....the New Playwrights'.....failed after two seasons".

For, the theatre of the masses that hopes for cannot be brought about by "reputable organizations". The primitive theatre, the Greek theatre, the mediaeval theatre, the Russian theatre, these were inseparably tied up with the struggle of the masses as a whole not with wishes of reputable organizations. Nor were these theatres interested in novel experimental productions, as much as with expressions of desire towards victory in the struggle for existence, realization and self development.

But, perhaps Dos Passos is not talking about the Mass Theatre but about the "show business". He says, "the standard of production is high", and he is sorry "we have gotten too sophisticated for good crook melodrama. Then again, "the stage presents a body of actors that are material for any kind of a theatre" also, "the real American theatre art lies in musical comedy, revues, vaudeville, night-clubs entertainments", and the parent of them all "burlesque". Undoubtedly the Broadway "show business", that entertainment manufactured for our tired businessmen, for the bootleggers, for the buyers coming to town. If so, it is questionable whether these "shows" have a mass appeal and could, form the basis for a mass theatre as Dos Passos suggests. If they could, how\* is being deserted in favor of the movies and is fast becoming a subsidiary of the latter?

In our heart, however, we know that Dos Passos is really interested in seeing a Mass Theatre. Not being a worker, however, he can only visualize his own conception, the conception of a writer, of what a worker would want. And that is why he makes the above statements.

In concluding Dos Passos says, "a severe tightening of the financial crisis might wreck Broadway.....then if groups existed which had the nerve and the energy to try to create a new theatre, they'd have the technical equipment, the actors, the stage hands, the electricians, the dramatists, the scenic artists". Coming from a New Playwright this is the wrong dope to say the least. He himself tried to hire them and failed. A New Theatre would necessarily have to train new dramatists and actors, and being economically poor could not and would not pay even a fraction of the salaries the present theatres have been paying them. We fear the dramatists and the rest will have to join the ranks of the technologically unemployed.

If all the above statements on the theatre had been written by anyone ~~show--~~ is it that the theatre is being--etc.

else we would not have bothered to notice them, knowing what to expect in the New Republic. But when written by Dos Passos long affiliated with the radical cultural movement, himself a radical playwright and theatre man, it puts a different face on the matter. We can only wonder where he had been keeping himself all these years.

He finds that the whole show is on the skids--and who doesn't know it?--and comes to the conclusion that the only thing to do is to start another organization (perhaps a Newer Playwright?) and to utilize the present theatre mechanism. Isn't he aware that if the show is on the skids and the mechanism goes with it too? Doesn't he know that economic and cultural factors naturally will preclude the scheme from being a success? Doesn't he realize yet that the only theatre that will be successful is one definitely tied up with the revolutionary struggle of the masses? If he hasn't learned at least this by now, then the New Playwrights have indeed been in vain.

Dos Passos says, "Every theatre has at any given moment a basic myth that lives in the subconscious fantasies of the audience. In Russia it's the myth of the leader killed and the revolutionary mass sweeping on." We may state that this is also becoming one of the 'myths' of the American theatre of the masses. The struggles of the working class were not confined to Russia alone but are world wide and can be successful only if the masses carry on even if the leaders go down. For the masses are all powerful and permanent while leaders are powerless and temporary. Therein perhaps lies the reason also why a Workers' Theatre can go on with the masses, and Copeau, the Provincetown, the Neighborhood, Piscator and the New Playwrights must go down into oblivion, while their directors wonder..... and write silly scenarios in Hollywood.

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(Cont. from page 5)

The Workers International Relief today, with all its affiliated organizations HAS A Membership of more than 15,000,000 individuals and collective members.

In 1930, important sections of the WIR developed into a mass organization of real strength in Iceland, Canada and Bolivia. WIR committees are working in the main countries of colonial struggles, especially in India and China. 1931 has added a section of the WIR in Spain. At the opportunity of its Tenth Anniversary, the International Central Committee of the WIR is calling an International Congress for September, 1931. The exact date and order of business of the Congress will be announced by the General Secretary.

The undersigned Central Committee appeals to all revolutionary organizations to revolutionary unions and trade unions, to agricultural workers and peasant organizations, to unemployed councils, to worker war veterans and to the labor sports unions and labor defense organizations and to all other bodies in the field of labor welfare and cultural activities to send delegates to this congress.

with the participation of all Working class organizations, the WIR International  
(continued on page 2-b)

# LYNCH LAW

DOWN  
WITH  
LYNCHING

A play in 4 scenes based  
on the *Scottsboro Frame-Up*  
written and published by the  
WORKERS LABORATORY THEATRE of W.I.R.



Workers Laboratory theatre  
131 West 28th St., N.Y.C.

LYNSH LAW  
a Play about the Scottsboro Case

s c e n e I

The scene is laid in the Scottsboro Chamber of Commerce. There are a few chairs and possibly a table. On one side of the stage two women are talking; on the other side, the men, Roddy and the prosecuting attorney.

1ST DAUGHTER OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION- And then we turn to the Red Menace.

2ND D. A. R. - Isn't it horrible! What is happening in our democratic country? I'm frightfully sorry I couldn't attend our convention. Do tell me about this Red Menace.

1ST D. A. R.- Oh yes, what was that phrase, such a lovely phrase and so significant! Let me see. Oh yes - UNDERMINING OUR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS.

2ND D.A.R.- Undermining our democratic institutions?

1ST D.A.R.- Yes, can you imagine? They force everyone to work in Russia. And they want to spread that system all over the world. Why, if we forced people to work here, there would be a revolution.

2ND D.A.R.- Oh decidedly. As Daughters of the American Revolution it is our patriotic duty to combat this menace. And tell me, what is this dumping I've heard so much about?

1ST D.A.R.- Dumping. Oh yes, dumping. We decided it was time to put a stop to this pernicious practice - this atrocious dumping. The nerve of these Russians: they are trying to win the world market by underselling everyone else. It will mean the ruin of our nation. We must put a stop to it.

2ND D.A.R.- But how?

1ST D.A.R.- With the aid of our dear Hamilton Fish. The convention voted to conduct an extensive campaign until congress passes a law forbidding such practices. In the meantime we must do our bit: we must not buy any Russian goods.

2ND D.A.R.- No Russian goods!

1ST D.A.R.- No - nothing. We will show these Russians.

2ND D.A.R.- But my dear - what shall we do about caviar?

1ST D.A.R.- We've already thought about that and we have come to the conclusion that we can make an exception in this case. After all, caviar is not really dumping.

(Enter from right Judge Hawkins and Jones. They sit down with the men.)

JUDGE- Hello boys. Meet my friend Mr. Jones from Alaska. Meet the boys Mr. Jones. This is Roddy one of our prominent lawyers, and that's Mr. Bailey, the best prosecuting attorney in the state of Alabama.

RODDY, JONES, ETC.- Glad to know you. Ha-are-ya? Mek-ur-self-at-home in Scottsboro. Put-it-there.

JUDGE- I was about to tell Jones the story about the colonel that ran for governor. It seems that his opponent attacked him in



a speech: " The colonel isn't fit to be governor - he's got several black bastards." The colonel happening to be in the audience, jumped up and shouted: " At least I take care of mine, which is more than you do." ( laughter )

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY- Which one got elected?

JUDGE- The colonel won because he took care of his.

JONES- These things don't really happen, do they? You see, there are no negroes where I come from.

JUDGE- Oh, that's all right. To understand the negro you have to live near him.

JONES- I am quite interested in the negroes. I am told that they are a source of cheap labor.

JUDGE- Yes. They form the bulk of the unskilled labor power of the south - on the farms and in our industries.

PROS. ATT.- Especially in Alabama. The negro population of our state is greater than that of the whites.

JONES- Is that a fact?

RODDY- We couldn't get along without them.

JUDGE- That's right. In fact, the secret of the growing industrial success of the South is expressed in the formula: CHEAP NEGRO LABOR POWER.

JONES- Well, you must have some problem in government.

JUDGE- How's that?

JONES- Why, being in a majority, the negroes must run the elections. ( general smiling all round )

PROS. ATT.- Jones, you must be terribly misinformed. Negroes don't vote in Alabama.

RODDY- Not in the whole south.

JONES- Why I thought that equal rights were guaranteed by the Constitution....

JUDGE- ( interrupting ) Sir, the Constitution has nothing to do with the negro. He has always been a slave and has not changed since the Civil War. He is unfit to assume the responsibilities of democracy. He is all right only when he does as he's told, when he knows his place.

RODDY- Yes, that's why the Ku Klux Klan was organized right after the civil war. If it wasn't for the Klan, the negroes would be ruling the south and you and I would be slaves.

JUDGE- Equal rights! Why that's ridiculous. You would not speak of such utopias if you really understood the blacks. A bankrupt white can be freed from paying his debts, but give that privilege to a nigger, and every cotton picker in the United States would be trying to escape paying his hust debts. When a nigger is brought into court before me I always make a good example of him for the rest of his race.

PROS. ATT.- That's what I say, Judge.

JUDGE - I always give a nigger a heavier sentence than I give to a white for a similar offense. Make 'em respect the law.

RODDY- If you don't, they'll take advantage of you.

JUDGE- That's right. Why look at the railroads. They've been hit by the depression, while thousands of shiftless blacks ride the freight trains on pretext of looking for work. Cheating them of legitimate profits. No respect for private property.

PROS. ATT.- Not only that, but we've got to protect our womanhood. They have no respect for our women.

JONES- By the way, Judge, do you ever try cases of negroes assaulting

white women?

JUDGE- ~~Very~~ seldom, very seldom. In such instances, indignant citizens usually take the law into their own hands rather than wait for the slow and costly process of the courts.

JONES- You mean lynching?

RODDY- Sure. We burn them too.

JONES- But that is considered barbaric.

JUDGE- Nothing of the sort. These unfortunate spectacles are not prompted by the lust for blood. They are prompted by the highest ideals of justice.

PROS. ATT.- It's inspiring to see a nigger strung up. Nothing gives me more confidence in the supremacy of the white race.

RODDY- And nothing is more effective in keeping the nigger in his place.

JONES- Still, if you gave them at least a semblance of equality they would appreciate....

PROS. ATT.- ( interrupting ) That would give them a chance to get together against us. They'd set fire to our homes, steal our property and even set up their own government.

JONES- But there's no possibility of that happening at the present is there?

JUDGE- No possibility? With all this unemployment and hardship. And there's something else that's causing a lot of trouble. These damn reds are getting in and organizing these niggers. Strikes, unemployment demonstrations. Uniting them with the whites. The poor whites are getting restless too. If they ever get together...

1ST D.A.R.- That's quite true. It was reported at our convention that the Reds are organizing unions that take in niggers and whites.

2ND D.A.R.- Oh how terrible. Do you mean that blacks and whites are in the same organization?

1ST D.A.R.- Yes. Something must be done immediately before it gets too far.

PROS. ATT.- There is an old civil war law that carries a death penalty for uniting blacks and whites in the same organization.

JUDGE- Yes. We must enforce that law by all means.

LADIES- ( relieved ) Thank God.

JUDGE- We have been too lenient with those agitators and the so-called unemployed. From now on we will make an example of them.

PROS. ATT.- I'm with you, Judge.

JUDGE- I'll teach them to respect private property. ( growing sound of mob off stage, angry murmurs. )

RODDY- What's that? sounds like a scrap.

PROS. ATT.- Sounds like it's coming from the jail.

JUDGE- Hm. It sounds ominous.

BUSINESS MAN- Hello everybody.. Say the sheriff of Paint Rock just rounded up nine niggers for riding freights and scrapping with some white boys. There was a couple of white girls picked off the train also.

PROS. ATT.- Rape?

BUSINESS MAN- Don't know. The girls won't talk for some reason.

PROS. ATT.- Wait till I get my hands on them. I'll get them out of them. Listen judge I'll bring the niggers into court tomorrow.

I want you to set the trial for the earliest possible date.

JUDGE- Alright. Let me see...when will be a good date.

BUSINESS MAN- I have it; Set the trial for next Monday, the day of the Fair. Boy what a holiday that will be. The whole countryside will turn out. Business has been bad, but this will certainly boost things.

JUDGE- All right.

PROS. ATT.- Fine. I'll get the case ready. ( exit )

BUSINESS MAN- I guess I'll join the crowd. ( to visitor ) Want to come along? You might see a real lynching.

JONES- That would be interesting. ( turns to judge ) Aren't you joining us?

JUDGE- Sorry, I can't. Legal dignity, you know.

BODDY- Well, it looks like this case is going to be settled out of court.

BUSINESS MAN- It would be a shame. The trial would certainly help the fair.

JUDGE- Ha. Ha. Take care of yourselves, boys.

- CURTAIN -

S c e n e II

Anteroom of a jail. Chair and table.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY- Do you repeat that you never saw these nine boys before in your life?

1 PROSTITUTE- No.

PROS. ATT.- They weren't the ones that rode with you?

1 PROS.- No. I tell you that we were riding alone. We didn't even know that there was a fight on the train.

PROS. ATT.- You didn't see any niggers on board the train?

1 PROST.- No. We got on at Chattanooga and never left the car for a moment.

PROS. ATT.- Are you sure that you were not soliciting those niggers?

1 PROST.- Honest, boss, we never saw them before. We were on our way back home to Huntsville.

PROS. ATT.- Now listen here. We got your court record in this state. Didn't you get six months for soliciting on the streets of Chattanooga?

1 PROST.- ( nervous ) Yes...yes,yes.

2 PROST.- But we're straight now. We're working honestly. You haven't got anything on us.

PROS. ATT.- You were caught riding on a freight masquerading in men's clothes. That's six months in the workhouse. And with your court record you'll get a couple of years.

BOTH PROST.- ( excited ) We ain't done nothing. What do you want from us. Aw, give us a break. We'll get but of town quick.

PROS. ATT.- Now, listen here. Take it easy and I'll see that you get off all right. All you got to do is forget what you know. Here's your story. ( picks up a statement ) You were riding disguised as men because you feared being attacked by negroes. These boys saw you get on at Chattanooga and followed you on. Later they attempted to attack you. Some white fellows came to your rescue, but the negroes beat them up and threw them off the train. Then they all attacked both of you. That's your story, get it.

BOTH PROST.- ( waivering ) Well? You're sure you'll let us go?

PROS. ATT.- Sure. Leave it to me. Now sign this statement.  
( the girls sign )

PROS. ATT.- You can go now. Come in tomorrow and we'll go over the details of your story. You'd better go to the doctor now for a treatment. You must make an appearance.

PROS. ATT.- ( to attendant ) See that they're taken to the doctor. Now bring in Clarence Norris.  
( Norris enters )

PROS. ATT.- It looks pretty tough for you kid. I want you to tell me what happened after the train left Chattanooga.

NORRIS- Well, I climbed into a flat car where there was some cross ties. So, I just sat down on those cross ties and stayed there all the time.

PROS. ATT.- Was there anybody else in the car?

NORRIS- A fellow by the name Charley Weems, he was sittin in there too.

PROS. ATT.- What part of the train did you get on?

NORRIS- On the back end - near the caboose.

PROS. ATT.- Why did you hop the freight?

NORRIS- We were going to Memphis to look for work on river boats.

PROS. ATT.- Did you notice anyone else on the train?

NORRIS- Charley and I we noticed some coloured boys and about six or seven white boys get on the cars near the locomotive.

PROS. ATT.- Did you see a fight between the blacks and the whites?

NORRIS- No.

PROS. ATT.- Didn't you see the two white girls get on the train?

NORRIS- No sir. We didn't see them till the Sheriff pulled them off. That's where we met the other boys.

PROS. ATT.- You know you can get a year on the chain gang for riding the freights?

NORRIS- Yes, boss, but I ain't got no money. My parents are starving and I just had to look for work.

PROS. ATT.- Never mind that. You were riding a freight train weren't you?

NORRIS- Yes, but...

PROS. ATT.- You committed a crime didn't you?

NORRIS- Yes, but....

PROS. ATT.- Two girls were riding on the same train?

NORRIS- Y-e-e-s

PROS. ATT.- They were raped weren't they?

NORRIS- I don't...

PROS. ATT.- Well, they were. We have their signed statements. They were raped by negroes and they have identified their attackers. You were on the same train. No white jury will believe your story.

NORRIS- I tell you I am innocent. We didn't do nothing. You got no right to harm us.

PROS. ATT.- Well, that's up to you. If you do as I say, I'll see that you get off easy.

NORRIS- Well.....

PROS. ATT.- ( picks up statement ) You sign this statement that you saw the other eight beat up the white boys, threw them off the train and rape the white girls. Get that?

NORRIS- But I didn't see them do it. They didn't.

PROS. ATT.- ( interrupting ) How do you know that? You said that you were apart from the rest.

NORRIS- They told me about it in the cell. Besides I won't lie against my friends.

PROS. ATT.- Never mind that. You saw them rape the girls!

NORRIS- But they didn't. They didn't. If they did they'd have jumped the train before the sheriff came.

PROS. ATT.- You saw them do it didn't you?

NORRIS- No. We're all innocent.

( rising murmur of lynch mob off stage: "lynch the blacks," etc. )

PROS. ATT.- Shut up... You hear that? They're waiting for you. ( pause ) If you don't sign this I'll let them in. ( shows paper and pencil toward Norris )

NORRIS- ( wavers as he listens ) I, I, No! No! I'm not going to lie.

You're framing us.

PROS. ATT.- All right. ( rings bell. Attendant enters ) Take care of him and get this paper signed. ( exit Norris and Attendant. )  
( Roddy enters )

PROS. ATT.- Hello Roddy. Step in. So you finally took the case over. Didn't know that you handled nigger cases.

RODDY- Big people behind this one. In these days a niggers money is as good as whites.

PROS. ATT.- Who is backing it?

RODDY- Interdenominational Ministers Alliance and the NAACP. But don't repeat this. They're trying to keep it quiet.

PROS. ATT.- ( jokingly ) Do you think you'll win this case?

RODDY- Don't get funny. You know they haven't a chance. They're innocent all right, but with the mob outside I'll be lucky to get them off with life sentence. How's your case getting along?

PROS. ATT.- The two women will accuse them all. I think that's about all the evidence I'll need to burn them. ( sound of Norris being beaten off stage, screams. ) Besides, one of the niggers is turning states evidence.

RODDY- I see. Aren't you running an awful risk? What about the white bums that were thrown off the train?

PROS ATT?- Not at all. The niggers can't do nothing about it. The girls are gonna leave town right after the trial, and the bums are not going to testify.

RODDY- I don't think I'll call them either. They might complicate matters. ( reporter rushes on stage )

REPORTER- Hello boys. I got a hot tip for you. The Governor is sending the militia to guard the trial. Boy! How's this for a headline: " SOUTHERN JUSTICE FOR SCOTTSBORO NEGROES ". If we keep that up we'll have at least 10,000 people for the fair. Now listen, I got to have a statement from you guys for tomorrow's paper. How about you Roddy?

RODDY- ( nonchalantly ) Well, just say... " The defense is making a bitter fight to save the lives of the defendants. "

REPORTER- Is that all? And you?

PROS. ATT.- Let's see... " The State is ready for the trial. Quick trial. All the evidence points to the dastardly crime committed by these morons. The two innocent victims have signed a statement accusing the nine defendants. ( attendant enters bearing paper. )

ATTENDANT- It's signed chief.

PROS ATT?- ( continuing ) " Charles Norris has confessed and accused the others of the crime. We expect a quick trial. The state will demand the extreme penalty. ( shakes statement in air ) We will demand Southern Justice. SOUTHERN JUSTICE; "

CURTAIN

S c e n e III

The Courtroom.

JUDGE- What says the state?

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY- We are ready, if the court pleases.

RODDY- I am here, your honor, but not as employed counsel by these defendants, but people who are interested in them have spoken to me about it and as your honor knows I was here several days ago and appear again this morning.

JUDGE- I only want to know whether or not you appear for these defendants.

RODDY- I would rather your honor appoint counsel. You honor, if I was paid down here and employed it would be a different thing, but I have not

prepared this case for trial and have only been called into it by people who are interested in these boys from Chattanooga. Now they have not given me an opportunity to prepare the case and I am not familiar with the procedure in Alabama, but I merely came down here as a friend of people who are interested. I am here without any preparation for trial and I think the boys would be better off if I step entirely out of the case according to my way of looking at it and according to my lack of preparation for it and not being familiar with the procedure in Alabama. I don't know a thing about it. I am here just through the courtesy of your honor, if you will extend me that courtesy.

PARKS ( another lawyer ) As far as I am individually concerned if I represent these defendants it will be from the high sense of duty I owe to the state and to the court and not to the defendants. I am a member of the bar and I could not refuse to do what I could for the court if the court saw proper to appoint me.

JUDGE- I understand your situation, Mr. Parks. Just an officer of the court trying to do your duty, under your oath. That is what I am trying to find out from Mr. Roddy, if he appears as counsel for the defendants, I don't think I ought to appoint counsel. If he does not appear then I think the members of the bar should be appointed.

RODDY- If there is anything I can do to be of help to them I will be glad to do it. I am interested to that extent.

JUDGE- I don't see, Mr. Roddy, how I can make a qualified or limited appointment, of course I don't mean to cut off your assistance in any way. Well, gentlemen, I think you understand it.

RODDY- Your honor, the gentlemen here have been very agreeable and want to do what they can to express themselves that way to me, and I was willing to appear with their assurance they will go ahead with me in the trial of these cases.

JUDGE- All right. Now what says the defendants?

RODDY- Your honor, we have a petition for a change of venue.

PROS. ATT.- If the court please, we object to the filing of this petition on the grounds that it comes too late. I think the statute provides that there must be reasonable notice of it. A week has passed and to wait till the day of trial to introduce change of venue comes too late. That is the first ground. We move to strike it because the substance of it is setting out a mere conclusion; all they have is a newspaper article which is not sufficient.

JUDGE- anything else from the defense?

RODDY- That is all.

JUDGE- Well the motion for the change of venue is overruled, gentlemen. Are you ready? Call the first witness.

( Victoria Price is called ) ( oath is administered )

PROS. ATT.- Your name is Victoria Price?

VICTORIA PRICE- Yes sir.

PROS. ATT.- Where do you live?

V. P.- Huntsville.

PROS. ATT.- How old are you?

V.P.- 21.

PROS. ATT.- On Wed. the 25th of March were you on a freight train going through Jackson County?

V.P.- Yes sir.

PROS. ATT.- Where did you get on the train?

V.P.- At Chattanooga.

PROS. ATT.- Who was with you on the train?

V.P.- Ruby Bates.

PROS. ATT.- Was there any white boys in the same train with you girls?

V.P.- There was seven white boys.

PROS. ATT.- Tell us what happened.

V.P.- We were riding along and then these nigger boys came into the car.

PROS. ATT.- Who started the fight between the white boys and the coloured boys?

V.P.- Wasn't no fight started, I don't reckon.

PROS. ATT.- The white boys and the coloured boys didn't fight didn't they?

V.P.- Sure they did; in the box car where we were, they were trying to defend us, trying to help us out.

PROS. ATT.- The white boys were not friends of yours, you met them on the train?

V.P.- Yes sir. Just met them on the train.

pros, att.- After the white boys were thrown off the negroes attacked you?

V.P.- Yes sir.

PROS. ATT.- Those were the boys? ( pointing )

V.P.- Yes.

PROS. ATT.- That's all.

JUDGE- Will you take the witness, Mr. Roddy?

RODDY- No that's all.

( Weems is called and receives oath )

PROS. ATT.- Do you realize that anything you say will be used against you?

WEEMS- I do.

RODDY- .- What is your name?

WEEMS- Charley Weems.

RODDY- .- Where do you live?

WEEMS- Hunstville.

RODDY- .- What is your work?

WEEMS- I ain't got no steady work. I does all kinds of work. I works down on the cotton fields sometimes-- I ain't working now --but I got a job waitin for me me down in Memphis on a riverboat.

RODDY- .- Tell the court what happened the day you were caught.

WEEMS- I don't know. I was riding on the freight car.

RODDY- What time was it.

WEEMS- I dunno. Sometime in the morning.

RODDY- Well, tell us what happened.

WEEMS- Just me and my buddy hopped that freight - that's all. We kept ridin and ridin and then we heard a lot of yellin and we looked out the freight car.

RODDY- What did you see?

WEEMS- We seen a lot of whites and coloured fellows fightin.

RODDY- Yes.

WEEMS- Then the coloured fellows throw the white fellows off.

RODDY- Did you see anything else?

WEEMS- No, that's all we seen. We went back in the car and kept ridin.

RODDY- Nothing else?

WEEMS- Well, nothin - except when we got to Paint Rock the train stopped.

RODDY- Go on.

WEEMS- And the Sheriff went through the train and picked up nine of us.

RODDY- When did you first see the two women?

WEEMS- When the sheriff took us off the train.

RODDY- That's all?

WEEMS- Yes, that's all.

RODDY- All right your honor.

( prosecution examines the witness, )

PROS. ATT.- Have you ever been arrested for any other crime?

WEEMS- No.

PROS. ATT.- Do you know that riding the freight trains is against the law?

WEEMS- Yes.

PROS. ATT.- You did it even tho you knew it was against the law?

WEEMS- What are you gonna do when you ain't got no money.

PROS. ATT.- And did you first see these two girls?

WEEMS- Ah ain't never seen them before the sheriff brought them along with us.

PROS. ATT.- You mean to sit there and tell the court that you never saw these two girls before the sheriff picked you off the freight?

WEEMS- No.

PROS. ATT.- When you heard the yelling you stuck your head out and saw the fight going on. Didn't you take part in the fighting yourself?

WEEMS- No.

PROS. ATT.- Didn't you and your eight pals throw the whites off the train?

WEEMS- No.

PROS. ATT.- Who was in the car with you?

WEEMS- Just me and my buddy.

PROS. ATT.- Who?

WEEMS- Just me and my friend.

PROS. ATT.- You never saw two women in the car.? WEEMS- No;

P. A.- It was possible for the two women to have been in the car without you knowing it?

WEEMS- No.

PROS. ATT.- Why not?

WEEMS- Cause we looked around the car when we got in.

PROS. ATT.- How long have you been out of work?

WEEMS- About a year - times is hard.

PROS. ATT.- That'll do. Just answer the question. I have here before me a statement signed by your friend. The statement implicates you and your friends. We have it written in black and white. This confession says that you did ~~the~~ fight with white fellows.

WEEMS- No.

PROS. ATT.- It further says that you did throw the whites off the train.

WEEMS- No.

PROS. ATT.- It goes on to point out that there were two girls and nine negroes in the car.

WEEMS- It ain't so.

PROS. ATT.- And that you and your eight friends did attack these two defenceless women.

WEEMS- At's a lie.

PROS. ATT.- Would your own pal confess against you, if it weren't true?

WEEMS- You beat him, you beat him. It's a lie. It's all lies. Ah ain't afraid no more. Ah ain't afraid. You beat us all. You scare us wid dat mob outside. You tell us we goin be lynched, if we don't confess. Ah ain't afraid no more. You all know at ain't true. You wants to lynch us cause we're niggers. It's cause you're afraid of us. You goin kill us but it ain't cause we raped those white girls. You know that's a lie. It's cause we're niggers. It's cause



your afraid of us. You rich whites is afraid we goin get together You frame us up. You wanta show the rest of the niggers where dey belongs. De white boss keep the nigger down. Ah ain't afraid no mo.

JUDGE- Silence in the courtroom, silence.

WEEMS- Das awright, I'm through, I'm through. Ah ain't got no mo to say.

## CURTAIN

## S c e n e IV

Seven days after conviction - in the courtroom.

PREACHER- You must stop the International Labor Defense from taking over the case. They are making an issue out of it by shouting " frame-up ".

RODDY- Yes, by all means. But they have filed an appeal for a retrial and we can't do anything until the judge passes on the motion.

PREACHER- Do you think his honor will rule them out?

RODDY- Don't worry. He's a friend of mine. The boys have received a fair trial. There was no intimidation of witnesses. The jury was impartial. There is absolutely no technicality or basis forma retrial - except in the case of Roy Wright. The only thing to do now is to appeal to the state supreme court. However, we will ask Judge Hawkins advice on this.

PREACHER- I fully agree with you. The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People has faith in the courts of Alabama. However, some of the backward elements in our organization are clamoring for a retrial so we will have to continue with the case as you suggest.

RODDY- I trust that your organization realizes the great expense involved. The case is almost hopeless and it will take some time to prepare the brief.

PREACHER- Yes. Of course. We are raising the necessary funds.

( enter secretary carrying telegrams. )

RODDY- Hello Miss Dale, is the Judge busy?

MISS DALE- He hasn't come in yet but he should be here any moment. By the way. You should be interested in this. A bunch of telegrams have been coming, demanding the release of the nine nigger boys. They're signed by all kinds of working class organizations. Trade unions, young workers, womens circles. The funniest part is that most of them are from white workers groups. Gee. They must think they're running the country.

PREACHER- White? Why this is scandalous. It's, It's anarchy.

RODDY- Has your organization anything to do with this?

PREACHER- Why sir! We do not use such low brow methods. Our motto is dignity. We have faith in the justice of American courts. The International Labor Defense is back of this. They are rousing the lower instincts of the masses. They are " Reds ".

ILD LAWYER- who said anything about " Reds "?

PREACHER- I did. As a representative of the NAACP I denounce them as traitors to the negro race.

RODDY- They're always out for trouble. They try to make a case out of nothing by shouting  
frame-up.

PREACHER- They preach to the negro workers, to openly unite with the whites.

ILD- law- Imagine that.

RODDY\* The swine! Why that will destroy our society. Isn't that so, Reverend?

PREACHER- Quite right. The NAACP is opposed to such anarchistic principles.

SECRETARY- Order in the court room the court is in session. (enter judge Hawkins, sits on stand, notices telegrams.)

JUDGE- Good Morning Mr. Roddy; I am to hear a motion for a retrial on the case of the nine negroes. It has been filed by a representative of the I.L.D. Am I to understand that you have withdrawn from the case?

RODDY- Your Honor, this is preposterous. My clients have requested me to continue. So I request that you deny this motion. I am appealing the case in the state Supreme Court.

PREACHER- Your honor, I am representative of the NAACP. We have been interisted in the case from the very beginning. We engaged Mr. Roddy and we want him to continue as our attorney. We appeal to you no to recognize the ILD or any other organization. We have nothing to do with them.

ILD- Mr. Roddy and the NAACP are representing the defendants against their wishes.

RODDY- I protest your honor, the court is not interested in hearsay evidence.

JUDGE- I am sorry Mr. Roddy, but your objections must be overruled.

ILD- I have here the statements of the parents of the defendants, requesting the ILD to take charge of the defence of the boys. (hands him paper.)

RODDY- Your honor, this is immaterial.

ILD- Every one of the boys is below 19 years of age and is therefore a minor. The consent of the parents is a valid credential.

PREACHER- Your honor, I protest. The ILD is making a political issue of this case.

JUDGE- Em. The defendants are minors and if these credentials are authentic, I am forced to recognize the ILD attorney. I am sorry Mr. Roddy. Legally your client cannot be considered as a representative of the defendants, unless they cooperate with the ILD.

PREACHER- Your honor, we refuse to have anything to do with the ILD. We will continue to appeal independently. (Roddy and preacher exit)

JUDGE- Now Sir, what are your contentions for retrial and change of venue. I wish to warn you that I have no patience with technicalities. This case has cost Jackson county thousands of dollars. I will not allow any further effort to frustrate the course of justice.

ILD- A) The defendants were not allowed any time to prepare their case.

B) There is evidence of intimidation of witnesses and of actual fabrication of evidence. The two women testifying had criminal records.

C) The jury was prejudiced by a presence of a lynch mob in the court-room and outside. Furthermore. The defendants are all minors and should have been tried in a juvenile court.

JUDGE- Your demands are extreme. I failed to detect any intimidation

The state Militia preserved order during the trial. As to the false evidence, the district attorney assured me personally that his witnesses were all honest. Furthermore, the defendant gave contradictory evidence.

ILD- Your honor, they were intimidated.

JUDGE- I saw no intimidation, motion denied.

ILD- Your honor, this case is an obvious frame-up against these unemployed workers. We have evidence to prove their complete innocence. All over the country resentment is rising against the frame-up execution of these boys. Workers organizations are rising in protest.

JUDGE- That will do. I'll have you understand that this is a court of justice. The law will not yield to the clamor of organized mobs. I will not destroy the respect of the American people for law by listening to the clamor of these mobs. (Waves protest telegrams)

SECRETARY- (enters with telegrams) More telegrams, your honor.

JUDGE- I, I---. This is going too far. (reads some of the names T.U.U.L., W.I.R., I.S.N.R., Washinton Chronicle, Pittsburgh Daily patch. This court is impartial. I will not be intimidated by public threats. However I will grant a hearing for a retrial and a change of venue. But I wish to warn you that I have no patience with a case based on technicalities.

ILD- We do not need technicalities, your honor, we want justice for these young workers.

JUDGE- I'll see that they get it in my court. (exit ILD)  
(Business man rushes on, shakes judge's hand)

BUS.MAN- Congratulations, you won't let them get away?

JUDGE- There is no court in Alabama that will let them get away.

MASS CHORUS OFFSTAGE- WORKERS, UNITE TO SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP.

D.A.R.- (rushes on from left side) Congratulations. You will always uphold Southern traditions of justice.

JUDGE- Niggers must be taught to respect Southern justice.

MASS CHORUS- SOUTHERN JUSTICE IS BOSS CLASS JUSTICE! WORKERS, NEGRO AND WHITE, UNITE TO SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP.

KKK- (from right) Congratulations, congratulations. You will teach the nigger to know his place.

JUDGE- Nigger must be taught to respect law and order.

MASS CHORUS- FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE OPPRESSED NEGRO WORKER!  
JOIN THE LEAGUE OF STRUGGLE FOR NEGRO RIGHTS!  
SUPPORT THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENCE!  
SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP!

VISITOR- Congratulations, you have set a dignified example for the rest of America.

JUDGE- Niggers must be taught to know their place. Our institutions must uphold the supremacy of the white race.

(Tableau of judge and his lackeys on stage)

MASS CHORUS OFF-STAGE- UNITED FRONT TO SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME UP!

ONLY MASS PRESSURE WILL FREE THEM!

ORGANIZE! UNITE AND FIGHT!

SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP!

SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP!

SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP!

Curtain falls on third slogan.

Correspondance column

Workers Theatre Groups in America, send in your articles.  
Subscribe to the WORKERS THEATRE MAGAZINE!

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Comrades;

We regret exceedingly the way we neglected your request for a reply, and will not be at fault any more. Upon receipt of the magazine we determined to establish immediate correspondence, but we failed to definitely assign the task and so it hung in the air. All the time we believed that the W.I.R. representative was keeping you in touch with our activities, but evidently she was too occupied, or forgot to do so.

However, comrades, there is nothing we wish more than a closer unity with your group, for we feel that together we can serve the revolutionary movement on the cultural front.

On May Day we emerged from behind rehearsal doors, and brought a new note into the celebration of the Communist Party. After weeks of steady work and earnest endeavor the group presented three bits that we hope lay the foundation stone of proletarian theatre in the town of beans and puritan hypocrisy. It was a simple but very definite beginning, one which left the workers enthusiastic and craving for more. It raised the hopes of the players, and opened up new vistas for intense yet delightful propaganda work in the movement.

One of the interesting features of the work of the Solidarity Players is that we are attempting to create our own forms of drama, and use a synthesis of the American vaudeville and Russian Blue-Blouse technique. All our things have been written by our own members, directed by them, and produced by them. We will send you a copy of our plays as soon as we get duplicates.

Comrades, let us commence to create a theatre front with more vigor and creative progress. We thank you a hundredfold for your publication; it provided us with valuable information and inspiration.

As director of the Solidarity Players, I would appreciate any information you think would serve our group. And rest assured that you will receive our whole-hearted cooperation.

Comradely;

Samuel G. Pezner  
Solidarity Players  
30 Walnut Park  
Roxbury Mass.

\*\*\*\*\*

Good Work---Let's have more like it!

WORKERS!

BUILD YOUR OWN THEATRES!

Dear Friends:\*

On June 14th at Irving Plaza, New York, a conference will be called for the purpose of forming a Federation of Workers' cultural groups in the New York area. We invite your organization to be represented. At your next meeting two delegates should be elected to this conference; or, if you have no regular meeting before June 14, appoint delegates through your executive board.

The New York federation will be the nucleus around which will eventually be built an organization of all workers' cultural groups in this country.

The question of such a federation was raised at the World conference of Revolutionary Writers and Artists, held at Karkhov, USSR, last November, and the American delegates, representing the John Reed Club and the New Masses, assigned the task of initiating it.

On the basis of the Karkhov Conference, as well as of requests from many of the nearly 2,000 working class cultural organizations in this country, The John Reed Club now sends this call.

The benefits of such a federation are plain. It will act as a clearing house for the dissemination of ideas and experiences through the press and the publication of bulletins. Without in any way interfering with existing organizations, it will broaden the cultural front of the masses and make possible cooperation between various groups as such organizations already have in Germany and the USSR.

The Conference will be called promptly at 10:30 A.M., Sunday, June 14, at Irving Plaza. The importance of your delegation to the success of the whole plan cannot be too greatly stressed.

Fraternally;  
THE JOHN REED CLUB

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\*Note: This call was issued to all cultural organizations of New York City and vicinity. The June convention will have as one of its major tasks the problem of laying the basis for a national Cultural convention which will be held in the near future. In the mean time workers cultural organizations, particularly Workers Theatre groups should get in touch with the Workers Laboratory Theatre so that we may establish closer contacts and start preparations for this work on a national scale.

(cont. from page 10)

Editorial Committee

Congress must become a huge, forceful international demonstration against the general offensive of the capitalist class for State relief to the unemployed, in the deepening crisis, for solidarity in the mass struggle.

Laboring masses of all lands, participate in the preparations for the World Congress of the WIR! Elect delegates, and affiliate them with the Workers International Relief, greatest and most effective proletarian aid organization.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE WIR BERLIN

Workers Theatre Groups IN the United States

The Workers Laboratory Theatre of the Workers International Relief has received the following letter from the International Workers Dramatic Union;

Dear Comrades;

Recently the "Blue Blouse" organization, with which you corresponded, has handed over its international contacts to the International Workers' Dramatic Union, and we thus had the opportunity to familiarise ourselves with your letter.

We wish to inform you that the work of setting up international contacts between the revolutionary workers theatres of all countries is being led by this organization, organized more than one year ago. We are herewith sending you some informational materials, from which the scope and swing of this work will become clear to you. At the present time the I.W.D.U. has its organizations in about 20 countries with a membership of about 20,000 worker-actors (besides the USSR, where there are about 500,000, while together with the peasant circles, to about one million persons). We know of the existence in the U.S. of several workers' theatrical organizations. It is necessary to consolidate their ranks in the nearest future. The I.W.D.U. requests you to let us know whether it would be possible for you to take the initiative of consolidating the section of the I.W.D.U. in the USA. Please carry on all future correspondence with us, and also with the West-European Secretariat of the I.W.D.U.

MEMBER OF PRESIDUM OF THE IWDU

(DIAMENT).

The WLT is undertaking this consolidation. We ask all workers dramatic groups in the USA to write to us about their activities, the size of their membership and anything else of significance for the workers theatre movement. By establishing such direct contacts with each other, we shall be able to exchange plays, experiences, and other helpful material. This will greatly stimulate the growth of the workers theatre movement in the United States. The monthly magazine, WORKERS THEATRE, should be built up to be the organ of all workers theatre groups. Write for it.

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WORKERS-----BUILD YOUR OWN THEATRE  
EVERY WORKERS THEATRE GROUP IN THE  
INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DRAMATIC UNION

## Squaring the Circle

by

Sam Beder

Workers Laboratory Theatre

4-b

With nervous tension (I feared the possibility of a real workers' play) did I anticipate the performance of "Squaring the Circle", a Russian play by Valentin Katayev, given by the Young Circle Dramatic Studio of the Rand School, "a workers' group combating capitalism thru drama".

As soon as I entered the theatre, however, I became somewhat skeptical as to the genuine desire of this theatre to fight capitalism, for capitalism was staring directly at me in the bourgeois audience, with it's women in their glaring dresses and jewels, it's intellectuals, it's deceivers, all waiting to see the performance that is to "fight capitalism thru drama."

The play deals with the story of two worker-students living in Moscow at the present time. Both marry the same day and soon find that their present married life does not allow them to live happily. However, they find that by changing wives with each other all will be well. Thruout the entire play both the dialogue and action concentrate upon the morals and ethics of the two workers and their wives, the attempt of the workers to adjust themselves to their new environment and ideology.

The Young Circle Drama Studio seems, however, to accept the author's intended self-criticism in the play as a form of burlesque to entertain the bourgeoisie, to place the Soviet workers in a ridiculous plight, to clown them whenever opportunity offers itself. The director has made sure to direct the play and actors for bourgeois entertainment only. This group does not show the Soviet workers working together to build socialism, they refuse to show the workers as students developing and raising their cultural level, aiming to break down the vestiges of bourgeois ideology, it's corrupting morals and ethics.

The methods of the Young Circle Dramatic Studio to fight capitalism are the same as used by the social fascist group, the very group which sponsors this studio. They only aim to deceive the masses, to misrepresent and break down the inspiration which the Soviet Union is to the entire working class of the world.

Groups like the Young Circle Dramatic Studio must be answered and will be answered by the Workers Revolutionary Theatres, by exposing these hypocrites and deceivers of the working class.

Comrades, answer the social fascist drama groups with new Workers Theatre groups who truthfully dramatize the class struggle. **DOWN WITH BOURGEOIS DRAMA---ORGANIZE REVOLUTIONARY THEATRE GROUPS.**

## The Whirl of the Machines

by  
A. Saks

Workers Laboratory Theatre

There is a Yiddish proletarian theatre in New York. It is called the Artef. How many of the Jews in New York have heard of the Artef? And if most of them have, what is their reaction to a theatre of the workingclass? The question can be easily answered by an analysis of this theatre and its mass appeal. I remember once at a performance of "Jim Copperhead" a comrade came out between the acts and spoke with burning zeal about the aims and ideals of a proletarian theatre---how the Artef was dedicated to the international revolution. The speech was excellent but the play belied everything the speaker said.

What is the Yiddish situation in New York City? There are thousands of exploited Yiddish workers who know nothing about communism except what the conservative, orthodox, capitalist press hands out. There are more under the influence of the fake social fascists. What then becomes the duty of a proletarian Yiddish theatre dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism? Plainly to win over the masses of Yiddish workers to the movement. How has the Artef gone about accomplishing this task? Nothing can bring this out plainer than a brief review of their work.

"Aristocrats" -- the first production. A play dealing with the class differences between servant and master in a very genteel fashion. The most important thing one carries away is the manner of presentation-- a mimic of a Habima stylized production.

"Jim Copperhead" -- the second production. This play was negligible from all standpoints-- on top of that, an intellectual discourse without the intellect. It is amazing to see how badly proletarian actors can handle a scene in Communist headquarters. Carry home a blank excepting perhaps the flash at the opening and the closing. The closing scene played on different levels with the workers coming in bared to the waist, fists up, singing the International deserves a better fate than being jumbled with "Jim Copperhead".

"Diamonds" -- the third attempt. A play from Soviet Russia, which although handled fairly well still copies the Habima and falls far short of a revolutionary play of any value. The Artef wins another blank and should a Yiddish worker wander into the theatre without knowing its claims to the proletariat, he would have to look well on all sides for any differences between, say, the Artef and the Yiddish Art Theatre which has long been a dead article. If the comrades from the Artef are trying to compete with the Yiddish Art Theatre they are a success. But it is a success which is not worth while mentioning. If the Artef calls itself a workingclass theatre then Morris Schwartz has also created a theatre for the proletariat.



The truth of this can readily be seen if we note this. The Yiddish Art Theatre, although not a proletarian theatre, produced a Soviet play-- "The Man with the Portfolio". This play had emotionally more possible propaganda for Soviet Russia, much as they may have striven to dampen it, than any of the plays I witnessed at the Artef. How then, aside from its name, are we to recognize the theatre of the proletariat from the theatre of the bourgeoisie? A common sense question in this case. The answer lies in the fourth production of the Artef, "The Whirl of the Machines".

With the "Whirl of the Machines" the Artef whips in the revolutionary drama. With much heretofore seeming distaste for America and American workingclass problems, the Artef finally lands with both feet squarely on this continent. Here is a play that with all its faults is part and parcel of a workers life. Here is a play that any worker can immediately understand and emotionally recognize as his own.

The story deals with Abrasha, a young immigrant who arrives in this country with nothing but a few radical ideas. Equipped with a Marxian philosophy he gets a job in a dress shop in New York where his young cousin Rose works. There follows, of course, the love between Rose and Abrasha, the conflict of ideas between the two and an estrangement. At the moment a strike breaks out in the shop and Abrasha assumes leadership of the strikers. Rose refuses to go out on strike and is treated to the confidences of her boss. The boss hires a gang of thugs to break the strike. Rose remains loyal to the workers and upbraids the boss for the brutal methods he uses to break the strike. There is a picketing scene where the workers fight with the scabs and in the scuffle one of the gangsters is stabbed by Abrasha. The last scene in prison on May Day shows Abrasha and three cell companions-- follows a discussion of working class philosophy-- and the scene closes with the strains of a revolutionary song floating in thru the cell windows.

Theatrically the faults are many. There is a lack of unity in the direction. Some of the individual characters contribute excellent performances but the mass scenes which should have carried the play, and were by far the strongest points in the play, were poorly directed and showed a complete lack of revolutionary understanding.

The construction of the play is sloppy. Although it has for its central themes the life of Abrasha and the strike, yet there are so many minor themes that fill the scenes that one loses sight of any definite and coordinating point.

Nevertheless, with all its bad points it is a step in the right direction. The material deals with a live issue and one which confronts the workers of New York daily. It is with plays going into our every day struggles, dealing with red hot issues, that we can hope to best utilize the theatre as a medium toward the international revolution. It is with such plays that the Artef can hope to rally the masses to the movement.