

WORKER'S THEATRE



JULY
1931

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Workers International Relief
Mass Recital

Nine persons are used for this Mass recital; each having one number.

1. Friends

1.2. Fellow Workers

1.2.3. Comrades.

1. We will explain to you:

1.2.3. W.I.R.

All Workers International Relief.

Sign (W)-7

k. Workers

2. Who is a worker?

1. He who sets machines in motion. He who plants the seed in earth,

1.2. He who labors in the mines, he who wields a hammer daily,

2.3.4. He who makes the bread and meat, clothing music, houses heat,

1.2.3.4.5.6. He who daily works for others and owns nothing but his powers

All: Workers.

8-Sign (I)

2. International

3. What means international?

1.2.3. The whole world

All. Without exception.

4. Soviet Russia,

5. China,

6. Japan,

7. Germany,

8. Italy,

9. England,

1. France.

1.2.3. Every country.

4. Europe,

6. Asia,

8. Africa,

1. America,

3. Australia,

1.2.3. Every continent.

All. The whole world without exception.

All. International.

9. Sign (R)

3. Relief

2. What means relief?

1. Relief for whom?

All. For our fellow workers,
For our comrades.

9. When?

4. In strike,

5. Lockout,

6. Hunger,

7. Flood,

8. Destitution.

4.5.6. Strike in Pennsylvania,

7.8.9. Hunger in Pennsylvania,

1. Starving miners,

2. Starving women

3. Starving children

All. Starvation is the weapon
of the bosses.1.2.3. Our comrades are fighting
Our comrades are starving,

All. They need help.

6. Who will help them?

All. We.

4. How?

1. Through Solidarity.

1.2.3. Solidarity of the working
class.All. Solidarity is the weapon of
the working class.

1. All for one.

2. One for all.

3. That is:

1.2.3. Workers International
Relief

All. W.I.R.

1. Friends,

1.2. Fellow Workers,

1.2.3. Comrades.

4. Rush Support,

5. Money,

6. Clothing,

7. Food.

1.2. For the starving miners,

2.3. For the starving women,

1.2.3. For the starving children.

8. This means:

1.2.3. Solidarity,

All. Solidarity of the Working
Class.

1. All for one,

2. One for all.

All. Workers International Relief

All. W.I.R. (song)

Training the actor for the Proletarian Theatre
by
H. Shapiro

Among the numerous factors that go into the training of actors, these two factors or rather subdivisions involving numerous factors, in themselves are most important: (1) The understanding of the particular theatre and its purpose (2) The perfecting of the tools with which to accomplish this purpose.

About the first division: every class conscious worker knows the purpose of our theatre and with a little practice will find the type of theatre needed. He or she will be in the dark, however as to the method of perfecting the tools for this purpose. This comes from a lack of knowledge of the theatre and its history rather than a lack of specialized technique. It comes particularly, from a lack of a revolutionary proletarian viewpoint in the history of the theatre, and also perhaps from a forgetfulness that he or she is not the first one to usher in the birth of a new theatre.

Numerous books have been written on the theatre covering useful stages on the one hand and social freaks on the other. These latter parts may be likened to the human appendix, dead implements left over from one state of development to the other that have been ornamented by artists and given the semblance of necessity. This might have been the case with our physical appendix if it had been external, ornamented with a bow tie or other adornment. However, ignoring these freaks (a subject worth covering by some comrade) we find that the theatre, in its healthy state, depends for its birth and development to its zenith, on its usefulness to the society of its time. Its chief purpose was to train subjects for their particular class in society, and training an actor meant to present a perfect specimen of a class as an example to the rest of the people in his class.

Example: The barbaric theatre - preparation for harvest; preparing for religion; invoking the gods for rain, power, victory, etc.

The early religious theatre: To teach and to propagate religion, the manner in which religious subjects should conduct themselves, to teach their code of ethics etc.

Folk theatre: marriage ceremonies, paired dancers intended for match making, market plays, fair festivals, etc.

Court theatres: courtly bows, behavior of the king, manner of behaving before the king, duelling, etc.

Last, but not least, the Bourgeois theatre with its conglomeration of experiments and constantly changing figures, with but one purpose, and that is to keep the mind of the worker steeped in bourgeois sentiments.

A glance over these theatres tells us that to be a good actor was to be a perfect specimen of that society. To be able to do the various things in the barbaric theatre, for instance, was to be equipped for that particular form of society, as is also the case with the actors in other forms of society.

Of course it must be remembered that we are speaking of a useful growing theatre like our own, where the audience and actor have a common interest, and not the

Decadent theatre where special inducements such as " individuality ", " personality ", exotic lights and sets are necessary to attract the audience for lack of subject matter.

It stands to reason then, that to be a good actor in the revolutionary proletarian theatre is to be a good class-conscious worker equipped with Marxist-Leninist teachings and willing and ready to fight for the cause of the working class.

" The aim of the proletarian theatre is the International Soviets " - Meyerhold. The question becomes somewhat simplified. It does not deal any more with developments with the intangible, mysterious thing called an actor, but, with the development of a very tangible being, a being that throws fear into the capitalist and imperialist powers. This being is the class conscious revolutionary worker, the Communist.

Our tools become then - a voice not to parade beautiful sounding diction, absolute professional pronunciation - a delicate nuance; but a voice that would be heard all over the hall or street corner and would be understood by every worker. This consists of clear pronunciation and an understanding of range. Both are not as difficult as they sound and years of study are not at all necessary. Blurred words often come from some affectation causing lip movements that are foreign to clear pronunciation. Speaking slowly without any emotion and without giving any meaning to the words is a good exercise for this. Of course some cases may need individual treatment which should not be difficult for the leading comrades to analyze. The thing to be remembered is that it does not begin with the lips, but rather with the affectation and should be treated accordingly.

Understanding of range is also very important, particularly since we move from place to place and the length of our hall, or the size of our audience, is never the same. Although our actors are not hot house products from small studio rooms and are accustomed to yell across a shop for tools, down or up shaftways for bundles and the like, still some exercise is often necessary. Many have been devised for the peasant theatre in the Soviet Union. Such as placing two people in different rooms and making them converse through a wall and of course not allowing them to shout. An exercise we find useful is to engage the comrade in need of this exercise in a conversation and begin to walk backward causing a constant change of range and compelling the comrade to meet up with it, still not create a temptation to shout. Other exercises may be devised for that purpose but they must be so as to be easy for the worker to take.

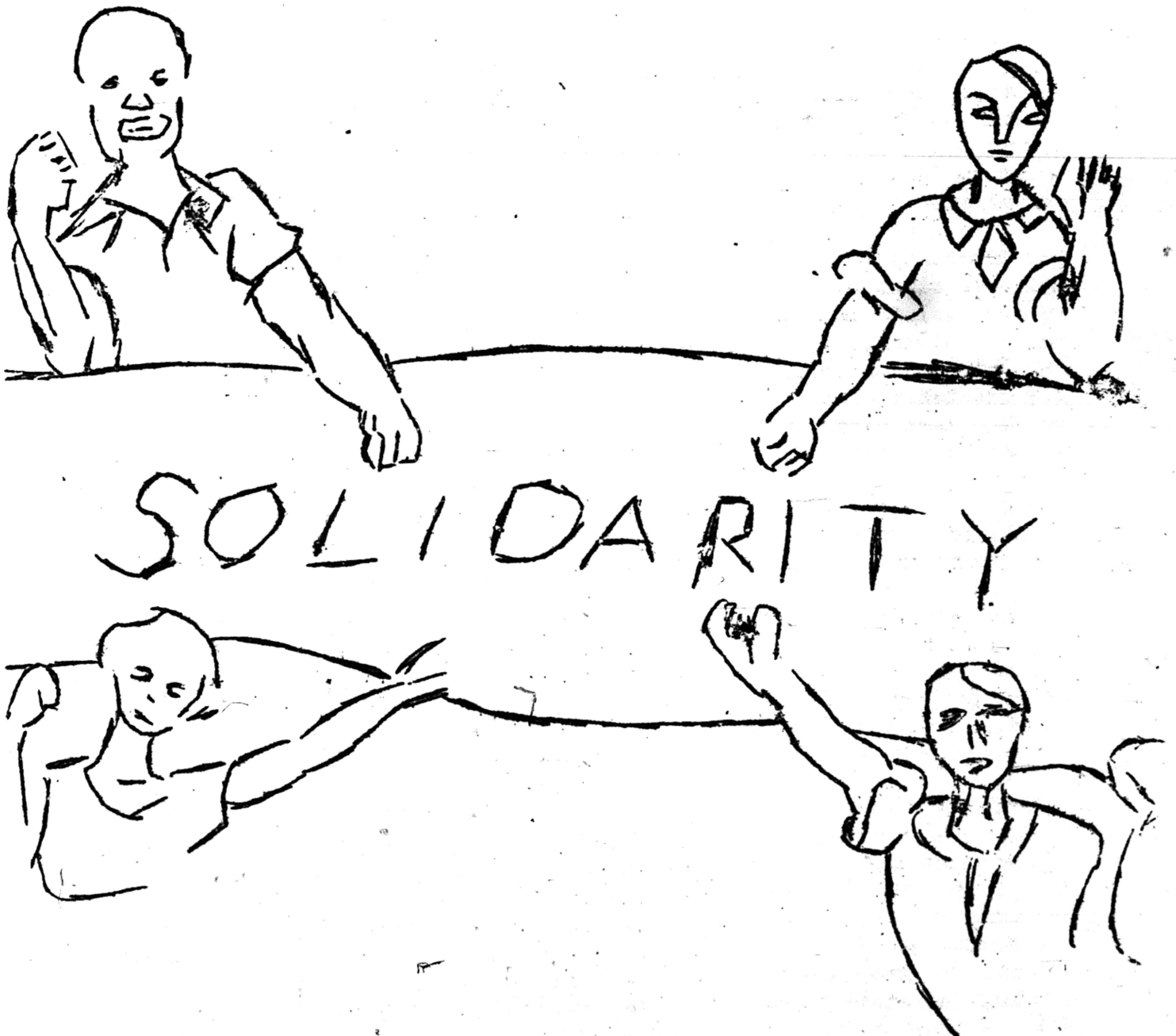
Another necessity is gesture. Here again it must be remembered that gesture is not for the purpose of showing elegance, or graceful poses, but purely for the purpose of emphasising our words and teachings, that they may be better understood. One method used in Soviet Russia is to make people converse without the use of words - merely through gestures. Other exercises here again, must be short and simple. The worker has not much time to practice.

Portraying characters, a thing that sounds very difficult and high flown, is really much easier than it seems. It is to be remembered that it is not necessary to portray a particular character but rather a class angle or conception of that character, which should not be difficult for a class conscious worker. The leading comrade therefor, must be careful not to force his or her conception of the character upon the actor, but rather the class angle - our angle, through the actors own person. Under such conditions no compromise will be made with our teaching and, therefor, none with the aim and purpose of our theatre. Another thing to remember is that we should not satirize or exaggerate characters to such an extent of ridicule as to make it impossible for the audience to identify them.

and therefore defeat our aim.

Stilted expression, such as reading lines as if obviously learned by heart, or carefully, as seen for the first time, or listlissly, without any meaning can be corrected by improvisation on the theme in question or a similiar theme. All rehearsals in fact should start with improvisation only, which will keep the actor away from a good many faults that people fall into when studying the part entirely from the script.

In conclusion, comrades, let us remember that sound ideology and a will to emancipate ourselves and our class are the greatest factors in our theatrical training.



Film and Photo Call to Action!

by

Harry Alan Potamkin

Workers Film and Photo League

After ups and downs the Workers Film and Photo League may be said to be on the up. It has sloughed off the self-centered ones who could not see beyond their own noses, long or short--who were more interested in their own enthusiasms than in the prospects of a mass organization of workers-photographers and workers-cinematographers. A nucleus now exists which seems much more responsible and more magnetic worker-members. With the help of the newly founded Workers Cultural Federation, through its Film and Photo Commission, the League hopes to achieve stability and effectiveness this fall. In the meantime, it has organized classes in still photography under one of the best American professionals, Howard D. Lester, a member of the executive board, and in film projection by the League members who conduct the film-showing at workers clubs and camps. Later other classes will be inaugurated in the history and criticism of film and photo, film editing and titling cinematography, etc. Beginnings have been made in contacts with other cities than New York and with groups and individuals in England, Mexico, Soviet Russia, Germany, France, Holland, Denmark and Czecho-Slovakia. The prospects for an international film league are good. An International Buro for worker-photographers already exists. It has called for an international exhibit in Berlin, October in conjunction with the tenth anniversary convention of the Workers International Relief. A conference on the photo will be held and it is possible the league will be represented. A move has been made from this side to include the film in the discussion. In anticipation of the October international, Proletarian Photo week has been declared for the last week of July and all who have work showing the life of workers in America are requested to send negative or positive into the league, Room 330, 799 Broadway, New York City. Everyone interested is urged to enroll for membership. An exhibit of the acceptable work will be given at the John Reed Club.

The League looks forward to work in the following decisive ways:

1. The education of the workers and others in the part the movie plays as a weapon of reaction;
2. The education of the workers and others in the part the movie plays as an instrument for social purposes--in the U.S.S.R.;
3. The encouragement, support and sustenance of the left critic and the left movie-maker who is documenting dramatically and persuasively the disproportions in our present society;
4. The creation of a chain of film-audiences who morally and financially guarantee such films;
5. The regular publication of a periodical devoted to our purposes;
6. The fight against the class-abuses of capitalist censorship;
7. The attack upon the invidious portrayal in the popular film of the foreign born worker, the Negro, the oriental, the worker generally;
8. The opposition to the interests of the institutions like the church as they participate in the shaping of the monopolized film;
9. The use of methods of direct action, boycott, picketing, against the anti-working-class, anti-Soviet film;
10. The distribution of suppressed films of importance;

11. The defense of artists and critics abused by reactionary elements (as in the Eisenstein case);
12. The re-discovery and presentation of neglected films of significance;
13. The education of the critic and worker by closer contact. THE SECOND PART OF NUMBER 3 IS EVENTUALLY OUR MOST IMPORTANT PURPOSE! Our film-makers need more training, and that is got by more opportunity. THIS PURPOSE IS MADE MEANINGFUL BY NUMBER 13.

In film-criticism we must develop the worker-correspondent in the film. At film-showings educational, critical material should be supplied each spectator--in regard to the film shown--and discussions encouraged. In Germany the Arbeiterbuehne and Film publishes "Proletarian Film Criticism" from the non-professional, the worker-spectator. This has proven so effective, tantamount to boycott in some cases, the trade press has become virulent in its attack on the worker-correspondent film-critic.

But--in speaking of the film, let us not forget the photo. It too is a powerful weapon. And one that is more easily wielded and by many more than can wield the weapon of motion picture. The League understands that full effectiveness is the capture of the image we want with the greatest economy of time and expense. But to capture the image means to capture it well--clear, expressive, dramatic, convincing. That is why a class has been started. The worker-photographer should be able to carry through a job from the taking to the printing. JOIN THE WORKERS' FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE.

In establishing the League we must not forget there is still a necessity for a broad association for spectators. Such a society can serve the League--functioning within the larger and looser organization--as a base for influence outside of itself, as a contact with the various levels of film-audience, as self-education, and as a financial source. The English Federation of Workers Film Societies has seven units in Britain: in London (1200 members), Glasgow and Edinburgh (400), Liverpool (350), Newcastle (550), Manchester (350), and Birmingham, a new group. R. Bond, secretary writes me: "They are all united in this Federation which also organizes the production work. We have made three workers topical news reels (demonstrations, strikes, hunger marches, etc.), a montage film on Russia, made up from out-outs from various Soviet films, and "1931" a documentary, 1500 feet, just completed. I have been in charge of all production work to date, but our activity is severely restricted by lack of cash. They are evidently about where we are in the matter of production. ("1931" costs us 40 pounds--we could not afford more)." In London and England there are numerous bourgeois societies, which, as comrade Bond says, "are only interested in the art angle." But we in America have not had that. Such societies can be formed and serve the Workers Film and Photo League as I have indicated. It is no impossible. However, I do not imply that we are to form bourgeois societies. We should form very broad ones which in no way would take the place of the special workers club film-showings. We should have our workers in these bodies to keep their corpuscles red, but allow for "art"--as the film-art-lover sees it. I have in mind what the W.I.R. did in Philadelphia when it established the World Cinema League there. Though it is stated that this body "has as its sole objective: the furthering of the film as a proletarian art," the membership is not altogether proletarian. Comrade Nonemaker writes me: "Membership runs about 600 to 800 with occasionally 1000 turning out for an especially good program." This is a broad organization to ~~the~~ films. On the program, now and then, are shown amateur films, which might be better chosen. A much more valuable thing than the showing of worthless "experiments"

("antiquated novelties" badly done) by vain young men would be a comparative showing of an American and Soviet film. The League has voted yes on this for camp showings, if feasible. The League must serve as a propaganda unit in a variety of ways and avoid sectarianism and cliquishness.

The Workers Film and Photo League, beginning with the above article, will be included in each issue of the WORKERS THEATRE MAGAZINE.



FILM

IS A WEAPON

IN THE

CLASS STRUGGLE

The Workers' Laboratory Theatre of the W. I. R.
B. Reines

The Workers' Laboratory Theatre made practically a new start with a reorganization and with almost wholly new forces when it began the season's work at the end of November 1930. At once it tied itself definitely to the workers' revolutionary movement by joining the newly reorganized Cultural Activity Department of the Workers International Relief. It was given rehearsal quarters and office space in the rooms of the W. I. R. It undertook to accept bookings to perform before workers' organizations thru the office of the W. I. R.

From the beginning, altho most of the forces were new to theatre work, it had far from a strong background in political ideology, and had like almost all American workers a bourgeois background culturally; nevertheless the theatre went to work on definitely proletarian premises. First, the workers' theatre must be above all a propaganda theatre, with a revolutionary ideology. Second, the workers' theatre must not stay in it's own hall but must go out to the workers. Third, all activities must be carried on so far as feasible on a collective basis.

Almost the first task of the Workers' Laboratory Theatre was to prepare a pageant for the Lenin Memorial Meeting indoors in New York City on January 21, 1931. The production, picturing the course of Leninism from 1903 till the present, was the finale of a tremendous mass meeting of more than 20,000 spectators.

Then the W. L. T. settled down to a steady routine of playwriting and producing. A repertory system was adopted, each play being kept always ready for performance at brief notice. Five plays have already gone into the repertory, namely, UNEMPLOYED, a general play with a small mass chorus; BUY NOW, a satire on the capitalist back-to-prosperity slogan; THE BIG STIFF, a skit on sick Uncle Sam; AS FUNNY AS HELL, in which workers break up a charity relief conference; and STRIKE, a needle trades play.

Fifty-four performances were given up to the end of May, twenty-four of them during the last two months. The W. L. T. ran a short series of Saturday night symposiums at its own W. I. R. hall, with a speaker, a new play, and a discussion each time. Except for this series, all performances have been given at affairs run by workers' organizations-- at political meetings, at dances, at cultural affairs. Frequently the theatre has given two performances in one evening, even before dividing into two groups.

Performances have been given at affairs held by, among others, the W. I. R., various unions of the Trade Union Unity League, the International Labor Defense, the International Workers' Order, the New York City Scottsboro Conference, various workers'

clubs, the United Front May Day Committee, the National Youth Day Committee, units of the Young Communist League and of the Communist Party.

On May Day the W. L. T. collaborated with the fine German group, the Prolet-Bühne, in a stirring pageant at a great indoor mass meeting of more than 12,000 workers. The pageant was repeated at Passaic, New Jersey, on National Youth Day.

Audiences average 250-300 at the lesser affairs and 600-800 at a few of the larger ones. 15,000 at such affairs, well over 20,000 at the first pageant, over 12,000 at the two performances of the second pageant, make a total of more than 50,000 workers who in these few months have seen the work of the Workers' Laboratory Theatre of the Workers' International Relief.

In April the theatre began the publication of a monthly magazine-**WORKERS' THEATRE**. It is mimeographed, with cartoons and a colored cover. Each issue contains a short play, workers' theatre correspondence, and several practical articles. Beginning with July, each issue will have a Children's Section.

The first issue of **WORKERS' THEATRE** was sent to all U. S. workers' cultural groups whose addresses were on record. The New Masses for May gave it high praise. Shortly afterwards, letters began to come in from workers' organizations and individuals asking for plays and material helpful to workers' theatre groups. Quickly the W. L. T. saw that here in the cultural field was a great organizational opportunity for the revolutionary movement. An Organization Committee was immediately established and assigned the work of handling all such correspondence, of drawing cultural groups into the field of propaganda theatre, and of fostering the establishment of new workers' theatre groups wherever possible.

In a short time some twenty-five correspondence contacts have been established. Already several have requested affiliation with the W. L. T. A list of dramatic organizers has been prepared who go out on request, and later on, on the initiative of the W. L. T., to organize groups within short traveling distances. A manual on How to Organize Workers' Theatre Groups will soon be prepared.

The W. L. T. is still very weak in technique. It is only about to begin the necessary work for training new technical functionaries. In this respect it will be greatly helped by the Prolet-Bühne's fine technicians who recently proposed to work jointly with the W. L. T. The theatre is now divided into two groups which rehearse different plays but otherwise work together. This enables the W. L. T. to handle two bookings for the same evening without difficulty. It also makes easier the development of more functionaries. At the present, there are from twenty-five to thirty comrades devoting much time to the many activities.

After the conference of workers' cultural groups of the New York area, called for the middle of June by the John Reed Club to lay the basis for a national federation, the Workers' Laboratory Theatre will take an active part in the work of forming the American section of the International Workers' Dramatic Union.

Just now, both groups of the W. L. T. are rehearsing a stirring play, LYNCH LAW, based on the frame-up of the nine Negro boys sentenced at Scottsboro to burn in the electric chair. Copies of the play are being sent all over the country. It is also published in the June issue of the WORKERS' THEATRE. This case will see the first extensive use of the theatre in the U. S. on the side of the workers in the class struggle.

Many tasks still await the W. L. T. Foremost is that of becoming a real agitprop theatre, constantly dramatizing and clarifying current news of the class struggle in short skits that can be staged in the streets and before factory gates, after the manner of the German agitprop groups. The W. L. T. must be in the streets during the elections this fall.

The problem of improvement in technique will be taken up this summer. A method of systematic technical instruction for the whole theatre must be worked out.

The W. L. T. must learn to use the mass recitation.

It must develop dramatic readings, music features, singing and dancing.

It must intensify the organizing work already so well begun.

It must carry forward the red banner of proletarian ideology into all workers' and sympathizers' organizations.

As a revolutionary organization on the cultural front, it must organize--organize--organize. The need is great, the prospects are bright. With the proper use of the available forces, the Workers' Laboratory Theatre of the W. I. R. can help very much in building the workers' theatre movement of the U. S. into a mighty mass movement.

Paul Sifton's "The Belt".

A. Prentis

It will bear repeating again and again that the aim of the Workers' Theatre is to awaken the masses to the need of organizing into classconscious revolutionary organizations. Hence, plays produced by workers' dramatic groups must stress this aim in the theme, they must be constructed so as to be easily producible by such groups and written in a manner workers will easily understand. Conversely, plays failing to satisfy any of the above conditions should not be produced by workers' groups. Paul Sifton's "The Belt" falls into this class.

In this play, a young worker, Bill, loves Nance but refused to marry her because he wants to do "big things". Her father, Jim, a co-worker of Bill's on the Belt, resents this refusal and calls out his secret order, "for the preservation of pure white womanhood", to run Bill out of town. Nance, in love with Bill, tries to divert the attention of the mob by disclosing to them that the plant they are employed at is about to close down and throw

11. WORKERS THEATRE
thousands out of work. This infuriates the mob, which now led by Bill goes to the plant to start a strike and "talk to the Old Man". There they break up the machinery, the cops come in, shoot Nance and arrest Bill.

A very poor plot this, seeming to imply that inconsequential things like love affairs between two workers, and not economic oppression, may lead to strike situations; that the strike leaders did not have the strike planned but were swayed by mob sentiments; and that the leaders considered wrecking the machinery as likely to solve the problem of the shutdown.

This much for the main plot and implications. When the writer begins to develop the play he shows that either he knows very little of strike objectives and mob situations or that he deliberately perverts them for theatrical effect as he conceives it.

Thus, when the mob goes to the plant they bring with them banjos and guitars and sing and dance around the Belt-- this in the face of a threatened shutdown. Then Nance urges all the women to "grab yourselves a man, the night is yours". When Jim asks Bill, at the end of the play, "What do we (the workers) gain by it?", Bill answers, "Nothing, but in twenty years from now every one of us will be telling how we broke up the Belt". (Aint that sumpin?) When the Old Man asks Bill, "What can you do for them (the workers)?", this spineless strike leader says, "Nothing-- not a Goddam thing", and this right after the Old Man has been urging the men to get back to work because they don't know a damn thing about business, cars, railroads or million-acre farms and they shouldn't act like a lot of damnfool Russians. Of course, the author can claim he did not then know of Autostroy, Turksib, Kolchoz, which the strike leader would naturally think of before answering the Old Man's denunciation. In actual life, however, Ford (who is called the 'Old Man' in the play) knows better than to call the Russian workers damnfools. Instead, he does business with them. The situation demanded a rousing answer, a definite reply at least that would carry the play along to a logical conclusion, if nothing more, and obviously there was room for much more. Instead, we have a weak "Nothing, not a goddam thing". A strike that has no semblance to any strike, and absolutely defeatist.

The playwright shows himself absolutely ignorant of workers' psychology. Workers are not obsessed with sex as he seems to imply in the play--the struggle for existence precludes that--and the present writer who happens to have worked in numerous assembly shops as well as construction outfits can vouch for it. This harping on sex in a play which demands no sex at all gives a misleading and malicious picture of the workers. It is misleading when the author shows that all the troubles of the workers are due to the Belt, without qualifying that the Belt could be a blessing if used for the benefit of the masses and a curse when used for profit for the capitalists. It is misleading when the author portrays the Old Man (Ford) as a nice shy man; we don't doubt that he is a tender father or grandfather, but in his relations with workers we see in him the symbol of capitalism, his face is the cruel face of the exploiter.

Many workers' groups are producing "The Belt". In considering plays for such groups the directors should rather choose plays

that are easy to produce and are economical (one actors are best), that are simply written and to the point, but above all plays that have a stimulating, not a hindering effect on organization like "The Belt" which is anything but stimulating. Directors must also remember that plays must teach workers how to behave under similar circumstances-- plays that have simple, common-sense plots are the most effective for this purpose.

The Crisis in the Bourgeois Theatre B. Reines

In the theatre of the bourgeoisie all is confusion. "A bad season, both commercially and artistically, it is pretty generally agreed", says the Theatre Arts Monthly. "The Broadway stage has practically no appeal right now for the writer interested in a serious analytical study of characters and situations", declares George Kelly. Everywhere laments, everywhere gloom.

There is, of course, an undercurrent of professional optimism. Something to the effect that well, anyhow, it's been a good thing; this bad season, because it has gone a long way towards purifying the theatre-- real estate men have had to get out and leave the job of actually producing plays to capable artists-- producers have had to go out of their way seeking for the novel and unusual-- only really good plays now succeed-- in the words of the Theatre Arts Monthly, "much that was bad in the past but acceptable because it paid, now that it no longer pays is sloughed off-- permanently, let us hope." But all of this esthetic moralizing can not cover up the fact that the theatre of the bourgeoisie is in a very bad way.

And when it comes to analyzing the reasons for the decline of this theatre, the critics are just as befuddled and shallow as are the bourgeois economists who seek to explain the economic crisis on the basis of the flow of gold, tariffs, overproduction, or pessimistic psychology. George Kelly, himself a playwright, blames the "increasingly large number of inept and incompetent persons who are trying to write", also producers who "know nothing whatever of the theatre and have no legitimate interest in it"-- as if under capitalism an interest in making profits is not the most legitimate of all interests. Others blame speculation in tickets, high rents, high salaries, high union wages for stagehands, the competition of the talking pictures, high prices of tickets-- almost anything you can think of is on someone or other's list of reasons.

Whereas to moderately intelligent people who have even a slight knowledge of the conceptions of Marxism, it is plain that in a society which shows every sign of rapid decay-- as in capitalism right now-- the culture of that society will likewise be in process of decaying. Many of the elements of this process can be seen.

First, is "debunking"-- the end of illusion. The normally slight extent of this type of attitude has in recent years become highly intensified. The glory of war, the romance of the press, of big

business, chivalry, patriotism, bourgeois honor in sex relations-- all have been exposed in greater or less degree as hypocritical, as not at all what they are professed to be. Today, who can write sincerely on the basis of the tenets of capitalism? Who can picture bourgeois democracy as fine, bourgeois war as noble, bourgeois industry as idealistic, bourgeois marriage as unselfish cooperation? The illusions of capitalism are ready for the grave. No theatre can flourish on such illusions.

Then too, this feverish search for novelty--for bizarre techniques and exotic subject-matter-- acclaimed by bourgeois critics as a sign of progress, is really in its intensity a further sign of decay-- for a healthy society would furnish its theatre with a huge supply of good material directly from its common life-- witness the theatre in the Soviet Union. The unusually large number of revivals this past season is another sign of the weakness of present-day bourgeois sources. The development of the little theatre, commonly hailed as a sign of progress, also needs to be examined as a symptom of this declining culture-- but that must wait for a later issue.

How then, must a new theatre arise? Another article will take up the question of the new theatre-- the workers' theatre-- that bases itself upon the struggles of the only progressive force in society today-- the workingclass.

SOVIET UNION The Russian Association of Proletarian Writers held a theatrical conference in January. Their Theatrical Section has set up a special committee to study the chief problems of the workers theatrical of Germany, England, France, and America.

*** **

" WE are no longer able to content ourselves with showing in ridiculous and caricature form the fascist, capitalist or priest; we must completely realize the great danger of the existence of such society. Satire alone is insufficient to show up the class enemy. Hence the searches for new forms, for fresh methods. The 'Red Trumpet' in Berlin has arrived at the form of , one might say, collective speech.

---Margareta Lode, Germany

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SOVIET UNION "The turn of the whole cultural mass work with face to industry requires the nuclei of the proletarian mass art to perform not only on the stage but chiefly at the shops, dining-rooms, factory yards, and barracks. This demand brought about the necessity of giving up cumbrous stagings and of adopting such forms of work which would enable to achieve the turn with face to shops."

--- E. Rosinov, Soviet Union

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SOVIET UNION The review of the artistic mass activities of the Moscow trade unions took place in February, March, and April. 700 theatrical and musical brigades and organizations, with a membership of more than 14,000, demonstrated their work during the review.

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The Workers' Theatre and Mass Demonstrations
by
H. Ober

One of the most difficult tasks that the workers theatre groups have to cope with is the question of reaching the bulk of un-organized workers in order to bring to them the problems of organization. During a parade such as the one held May 1st in New York, or on National Youth Day in Passaic, a great deal of effective propaganda work can be done. During such a parade thousands of workers crowd the sidewalks and look on. Most of them are not class-conscious enough to join the parade. They stand on the sidewalks, listen to the songs and read the signs that the demonstrators carry. From time to time the parade halts due to traffic conditions. At such halts the theatre groups can do a great deal of work. We found this to be true of the above mentioned demonstrations.

The first time we did some propaganda work on the streets was on May 1st. The night before, the Workers Laboratory Theatre and the Prolet Buehne rehearsed for a May 1st pageant which culminated on a mass recital. The two groups marched together in the parade and one of the players started with one of the slogans of the mass recital and the rest soon joined in. The results were surprising. The slogans came over very effectively. The performance, however, lacked organization. The next time we were more prepared and the results showed a great improvement. The whole group brought along megaphones and the recitation was done in a more serious and organized manner. It will be a long time before Passaic forgets the slogans of the mass recital. Later in the afternoon I passed a boy who was engaged in a game of handball. Every time he threw the ball against the wall he shouted, "Unite and Fight." He probably knew very little of the importance of the slogan he was repeating, but with the experience of a strike or wage-cut such a slogan takes on meaning and becomes a reality.

This work can be further developed and utilized to a much greater extent and can become a very effective means of reaching un-organized workers.



" Art is a Weapon "
 (mass recitation)

CAPITALIST: Art is.....between ourselves, quite confidentially...

Art is a weapon-

Art is a weapon in the fight for my interests -

That may sound strange coming from me,

However, it is a fact. And of course facts
 cannot be.....Oh yes they can.

One can deny facts

One can distort facts

One can juggle facts

One can do with facts whatever - I want.

That is, art is a weapon

art is a weapon in the fight for my interests.

For example - in the U.S. we produce yearly tens of thousands

novels

short stories

poems

plays

shows

movies

sculptures

concerts

All nonpolitical - presented thousands of times before:

school children

factory workers

students

housewives

teachers

office workers

soldiers

unemployed

All these works of art

do not state

but imply

and hammer and hammer away

as though it were a fact...

That the United States is the freest country in the world

That the laws of this country are made for the benefit of the workers

That the workers must fight and die for their country

That every worker not born here is inferior and suspicious

That every worker not born white is inferior and despicable

and so on and so forth...

Now then *

ART

is a weapon

in the fight

for my

interests.

Of course.....quite confidentially.....between ourselves..

(the song LEFT is heard off stage and a mass of workers march on singing)

song:

LEFT LEFT LEFT LEFT
 The bugles are calling to fight
 Left, Left, Left, Left,
 We'll answer the call to unite.
 We're marching hand in hand with the masses
 We dramatize the fight of the classes
 With powerful melody.
 Our work will weld our strength and might
 And what we play is dynamite
 To the culture of the Bourgeoisie.
 Hello comrades! We greet you comrades!
 We raise our fists to the fight
 Workers of the nation build our federation
 For victory comes with might.
 The bosses onslaught is steady
 And we are bearing the brunt.
 PROLETARIANS, let's get ready!
 RED FRONT! Red Front!

CAPITALIST: Ladies and gentlemen, how do you do...

GROUP: RED FRONT.

CAPITALIST: Pardon my curiosity- whom have I the honor?

1. United Workers theatres of New York
2. Workers Laboratory theatre, New York
3. Prolet-Buchne, New York.

GROUP: Agit-prop troupes in New York.

CAPITALIST: Agit-prop?...

GROUP: Agitation and propaganda.

CAPITALIST: Agitation and propaganda - for what?

GROUP: For the Class Struggle.

CAPITALIST: Class Struggle? Against whom?

GROUP: Against you. (all point)

CAPITALIST: Ladies and gentlemen.... there is some misunderstanding here. First you introduce yourselves as a theatre group....and now you talk about political propaganda. These are two distinctly different subjects. Art has nothing to do with politics. Art is free. Art for art's sake.

GROUP: Art is a weapon.

) theatre is a weapon

) workers theatre is a weapon

) workers theatre is a weapon in the class struggle.

GROUP: A weapon in the class struggle.

CAPITALIST: Ladies and gentlemen, you are making an unfortunate mistake. Art soars miles above the commonplace of daily routine, above politics, above petty strife. Art is the expression of our yearning for beauty and harmony.

GROUP: Art is the expression of our yearning -

) yearning of slaves for freedom

) yearning of the hungry for bread

) yearning of the homeless for shelter

) yearning of the persecuted for rest

) yearning of the unemployed for work

) yearning of the victims of capitalist brutality for justice

) yearning of the mistreated negroes for equality

) yearning of a suppressed class for the abolition of all classes

) yearning of the rebellious for the final conflict

-) yearning of the rebellious for the final conflict
-) art is a weapon
-) theatre is a weapon
-) theatre is a weapon in the class struggle.

CAPITALIST: False, false. - one hundred per cent false. Art is impartial. Art belongs to all. Art makes us forget.

- WORKERS:) it makes us forget that you are our oppressors and exploiters
-) it makes us forget that we the producers of all commodities are starving
 -) it makes us forget that you enjoy the fruits of our labors
 -) it makes us forget that we sacrifice our strength, health and time for your pleasures
 -) it makes us forget that there is a way to freedom
 -) it makes us forget that there is one way to freedom - through fight.

CAPITALIST: This conception of yours, contradicts the age-old definition of art

WORKER: This conception of yours contradicts the age-old definition of BOURGEOIS art.

CAPITALIST: This means destruction of culture.

WORKER: This means destruction of a decayed culture of oppression and exploitation.

CAPITALIST: Destruction by means of the theatre?

WORKER: Destruction by all weapons - also theatre.

CAPITALIST: That is revolution.

WORKER: That is revolution.

-) the theatre of the future is the theatre of revolution.

) we

o awaken

) enlighten

) arouse

) every working man

) every working woman

) every young worker

) all proletarians

) the masses

) to action.

) We do not play

) for your and our entertainment

) we play

) because participation in the class struggle

) is your

) and our

) duty.

) We show

) the exploitation of the workers

) We show

) the way out.

) we show the only way out. --

) mass organization

) mass action

) organized mass action.

) That's what we play for

o and fight for

) we

GROUP: United Workers Theatres of New York

) Workers Laboratory Theatre, New York

) Proletkuchno, New York

GROUP: Theatre of Revolution.

WORKERS THEATRE
DAILY WORKER
mass recital

18.

Nine persons were used in this performance. The arrangement was as follows:

1. 2. 3.

4. 5.

9.

Number 9 is off stage up to the point of Daily Worker faces suspension. at this point rushes on stage and gets into position then speaks.

1.2.3. Fellow Workers
6.7.8. Fellow Workers
All. Fellow Workers:
1. Our comrade is in danger
6. What comrade?
3. Our torch is growing dim.
7. What torch?
3. Our voice is failing.
6. What voice?
7. What comrade?
7,8. What torch?
6.7.8. What voice?
4. Who fights our battle in the shop or mine?
5. Who fights our battle on the picket line?
7. Who unmasks the bosses lies?
8. Who helps us organize?
5. Who?
3. The Daily.
6.7. Who?
3. The Daily.
6.7.8. Who?
1.2.3.4.5. The Daily Worker.
All. The Daily Worker.
9. The Daily Worker faces suspension.
All. Suspension.
9. Rush Support.
1.2.3.4. Rush Support
All. RUSH SUPPORT!
1. Every hour.
8. Every second.
4. counts.
1. We must save
6. The workers paper.
5. We must save
7. The Daily Worker.
3. We must spread
8. The workers paper.
1. Over land
3. Over sea
5. Every shop
4. Every ship
3. Every mill
6. Every mine
7. Every factory.

1.2.3. Every worker it must reach
6.7.8. Every worker it must teach
6.3.5. Daily worker faces suspension.
All. SUSPENSION!
1.3. Every hour.
6.7.8. Every second.
4.8.9. Counts.
All. RUSH SUPPORT.
1.2.3. Give
6.7.8. To save
All. The Daily Worker.
9. YOU
1.2.3. AND YOU
6.7.8. AND YOU
4.5. AND YOU
4.5.9. GIVE
1.2.3. NOW
4.5.9. GIVE
6.7.8. NOW
All. THE DAILY WORKER MUST GO ON!



The songs for the other mass recitals will be sent upon request.

The Children in the Cultural Front
by
Deutchman

Up to the present nothing was done to draw the children into the workers theatres. In this the Workers Laboratory Theatre has taken the initiative to include the children as an important factor. We are beginning by including a children's section in the Workers Theatre magazine.

We have learned that children, if given the impetus, can write plays for their own use. This is proven by a play we have in our files written by a group of workers scouts who went to the breadlines to get the actual material for this play.

It has been proven time and time again that in a movement that is based not only on the present but also on the future, the children cannot and must not be excluded. The Children are important now. Their work in the present means a great deal, but they must be taught the mistakes of the present so that they may build in the future. The children of the workers must be taught to be the leaders of their class, the working-class and must not be excluded from a single field, neither cultural nor political.



WORKERS THEATRE

On the Inauguration of a Children's Section in the
Workers Theatre Magazineby
Deutschman

- Worker Mother: Revolutionary greetings to the children!
- 1st Child: To the Pioneers
- 2nd Child: To the Workers Scouts
- 3rd Child: To all workers children.
- All: To the leaders of the fight when the present recedes and the future is now---Greetings!
- Worker Mother: "The future of revolution lies in the hands of the young."
- 1st Child: The bourgeois have said that the children cannot understand the significance of life.
- All: They can be made to understand that they are children of workers.
- 2nd Child: They understand when hunger gnaws at their bellies
- 3rd Child: They understand when their brothers and sisters are sick and there is no money to pay the doctor
- 1st Child: They understand when they are thrown onto the streets
- 2nd Child: They can be made to understand when a few children have too much to eat and so many have nothing.
- 3rd Child: They can be made to understand that the few children belong to parents that are the bosses and these will be bosses
- 1st Child: That the many children belong to the exploited workers who in their turn will be exploited
- 2nd Child: They can be made to understand that they are the children of workers
- 3rd Child: That they belong with the workers in the class struggle
- All: In the fight against the bosses.
- Worker Mother: We are opening a children's section in the Workers Theatre Magazine.
- All: To the leaders of the fight when the present recedes and the future is now
- 3rd Child: To all workers children
- 2nd Child: To Workers Scouts
- 1st Child: To the pioneers
- All: GREETINGS!

Dear Comrade:

Our last executive committee meeting voted to affiliate with the Workers Theatre movement now being organized thru your organization.

We realize that only thru a united movement of all worker theatre groups will we be able to make better progress and be of better service thru exchange of ideas, technical information, reportory etc., in the interests of the working class. Your monthly bulletin is a step in this direction. Next we must bend all energy towards the permanent establishment of a national organization.

We are ready to do what ever we can, and are anxious to know more of the plans for this work.

Comradely yours,
Victor Cutler, Sec'y.,
REBEL PLAYERS

Editorial Committees Note:

We have since received another letter from the Rebel Players, enclosing a list of plays they have available and a very attractive leaflet announcing their performance of *The Groggy Compass*, a play about forced labor. They intend to begin organizing other groups on the coast. All in all, they show themselves to be one of the best of workers theatres.

From the June "Arbeiterbuehne und Film" (Berlin), on the "Workers Theatre"

"We have just received a new American journal for the workers theatre movement, published by the WORKERS LABORATORY THEATRE (New York),

associated with the W.I.R. We greet our new brother-organ most heartily!

The journal is issued for the time being in a very simple format: not printed but mimeographed. We wish our comrades in the U.S.A. to be able very soon to build up and improve technically their new revolutionary cultural organ.

As soon as further numbers of the journal are at hand, we will publish a detailed criticism, which will occupy itself more closely with the contents.

THE BRIGHTON WORKERS DRAMATIC SECTION

The Brighton Beach Workers Club has recently formed an English speaking dramatic section which has already begun to work on the ironically humorous play, "Its Funny As Hell," taking for its example the untiring efforts of the Workers Laboratory Theatre. With the interested leadership and direction of active comrades of the W.L.T., we ought to, I think make pretty good progress. We have already eight members who are all active in cooperating with these comrades. We are also considering producing a play about the Tenants League.

Tho we do not despair and fully well foresee the importance of a dramatic group here in Brighton, we also realize that we are confronted with two handicaps. First, the Brighton Workers Club being a Jewish speaking organization we cannot expect to find many English speaking comrades habitating the club rooms. Secondly, those few members who do speak English have either a foreign accent or a Jewish intonation, which makes training doubly difficult. However those of us who do, or at least think that we do speak fluent English are making a feverish endeavor to gain English speaking comrades by encouraging our friends to join.

These handicaps become petty when we begin to scan the advantages that a successful dramatic unit would bring to the Brighton Workers Club. Besides those already pointed by the W.L.T. magazine of the May issue, that of being a medium of propoganda, there are several other very essential attractions that such a group would bring to an organization of our kind. It will help to increase the membership by attracting English speaking comrades who when join our group automatically become members of this Brighton club. I cannot stress too much the importance of this fact. The foreign element is quite widespread and active in this constantly growing community and it is the English element that needs planting and distribution. I think this would be a particularly attractive means of drawing the interest of young American workers. Another thing, this should be a most opportune time to do important work, the population is doubled and tripled here during the summer months, the influx being mostly comprised of abused workers who seek relief for their tired bodies in the cool and indifferent ocean. This should be a critical and tactful moment to awake these workers to class consciousness. And we are hoping perhaps to give outdoor performances on the beach, let us say in form of beach parties. Last but not least the success of our dramatic section here will I am sure inspire other workers organizations in the different boroughs to establish such groups.

We are just now depending upon members of the W.L.T. for plays, we hope, as soon as we have started to follow their method of collective playwriting; to produce plays equally as well.

SHIRLEY WEINSTEIN, Secretary

News Notes

GERMANY- The proletarian agit-prop troupes are the most untiring propagandists of the revolutionary movement. During the last nine months they gave no less than 1,400 performances to 500,000 spectators in Berlin and its suburbs alone.

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA- The Union of Workers Theatrical Amateurs of Czechoslovakia organized a central school in Prague to which 10 comedians from various localities should be sent. Political reports on the following subjects were made at the school: 1) What is a crisis, 2) economic struggles and imperialist war, 3) fascism and socialism. The following questions concerning theatre were discussed: 1) What is mass qualification of proletarian actors. 2) workers criticism is the best weapon of mass qualification.

GERMANY- Ten officials of the police service burst into the bureau of the Workers Dramatic Union of Germany, and then went to the private lodgings of the members of the agit-prop troupes and confiscated everything that caught their eye.

FRANCE- A strike of textile workers embracing several districts, taking place at present in the north of France. Over 100,000 strikers are involved. The Federation of the Workers Theatres sent special agit-prop brigades to the strike region.

WORKERS CULTURAL FEDERATION

NEW YORK- The conference of workers cultural groups in New York are, the first such conference in New York, was held June 14. It was called by the John Reed Club, and was attended by 265 delegates representing 130 organizations. 19 of these organizations were workers theatres.

It was an enthusiastic meeting that did concrete organizational work. An executive committee of 35 was chosen. This committee has divided itself into eleven commissions for the different branches of cultural work. A national conference is to be held in November. There is an account of the conference in the July New Masses.

The theatre commission is at work on a survey of the workers theatre movement in America. All workers and sympathisers, all groups, that do dramatic work are asked to send information about themselves to the Workers Cultural Federation, care of: John Reed Club, 102 West 14th St., New York City, and to the Workers Laboratory Theatre, 799 Broadway, New York City.