

Workers'

Theatre



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WORKERS'

Directors



EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE
of Vassar College

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GENERAL

WORKERS' THEATRES AND THE KENTUCKY MINERS' STRUGGLE.

By H. Ellen, W.L.T.

For the first time in the history of the workingclass movement the workers theatres entered upon a united constructive program to raise relief for the Kentucky miners. At a meeting of the Workers Dramatic Council it was decided that a large affair be arranged by the groups for the benefit of the striking miners. Six groups including the Red Dancers are participating in this affair not only organizationally and artistically but are, also making every effort to sell enough tickets to make the affair a success. The date for the affair is February 4th.

Up to the present time most of the groups engaged in agitational work alone. There was no effort made to enter and develop a campaign for a specific purpose independently. This act is certainly a step in the right direction. We have every reason to believe that the affair will be a tremendous success.

But this is not all. At the last Dramatic Bureau meeting plans were being prepared to arrange a similar affair in Newark, N.J. The Jack London Dram-Section undertook the organizational task of arranging the affair. The New-York groups will cooperate in arranging the artistic program. The date for the affair is February 28th.

There is no reason why similar affairs should not be arranged in every city where there is a Workers Theatre Group. It can certainly be done in Boston, in Chicago, in Los Angeles, in Buffalo and in Philadelphia. The Workers' Theatres in these cities should set themselves the task of organizing such affairs in the nearest future, so that we may show what can be done concretely by way of mobilizing active support for a struggle - in this case the struggle for the Kentucky miners.

Forward, comrades in the Workers Theatres! Support the struggle of the Kentucky miners! Arrange affairs, raise funds, so that the miners may win.

THE "ARTEF".

Nathaniel Buchwald

The ARTEF (short for Arbeiter Theatre Verband, meaning Workers Theatrical Alliance) grew out of a mixed-proletarian and petit-bourgeois organization named "Peoples Art theatre Alliance". This organization strove for the establishment of an ideal art theatre for all classes. In reality it was a kind of voluntary auxiliary organization to the privately owned Yiddish Art Theatre. The organization embraced nearly the entire field of Jewish workers' organizations with a considerable admixture of non-proletarian elements. Under the leadership of a group of revolutionary workers a left wing was crystalized in the "Peoples Art Theatre Alliance" in 1925. The left wing soon gained control of the organization, abolished the "Peoples Art Theatre Alliance" and in its place founded The Workers Theatrical Alliance (ARTEF), putting forward for the first time the slogan of a proletarian theatre for the working class.

Nominally the ARTEF is an all-inclusive mass organization, embracing all the central bodies and branches of all the left wing organizations of Jewish speaking workers' unions, fraternal bodies, women's councils, workers' clubs, etc. The highest authority is lodged in the annual conference of delegates elected by each of the member-organizations. The number of such organizations exceed one hundred, and the number of delegates to the annual conference generally is above two hundred. The conference determines the broad line of policy for the organization and elects an executive committee of from thirty-five to forty-five members. For practical purposes the direction of the ARTEF is in the hands of an Action or Management Committee of nine to eleven members, elected by and from among the executive committee.

In addition to the management committee there is an Art Council of an equal number of members. The duty of the Art Council is to select the repertory for the ARTEF and supervise its productions. A business manager and a clerk comprise the paid staff of the organization. It is important to note at the outset that the ARTEF at first had no player-group in its organization. For three years the ARTEF conducted its activities, such as they were, without a player-group and without producing any plays. The aim of the organization, as formulated at the founding conference, was to establish a proletarian theatre for the working class and with this aim in view the ARTEF conducted an extensive campaign of propaganda and education among the Jewish workers.

In view of the present-day ideas and practises in the field of workers' theatre it may appear odd that a working class organization should busy itself with propagandizing the idea of proletarian theatre without actually engaging in producing proletarian plays in a proletarian manner. But it must be remembered that a-

Among the Jewish workers there has been a traditional reverence for serious theatre and that the Yiddish Art Theatre, for all its nationalistic and bourgeois character, was in high repute even among the class conscious Jewish workers. By putting forward the idea of a proletarian theatre the ARTEF intended to counteract this tradition and to discredit the Jewish bourgeois theatre, reeking of national sentiment, capitalist morality and religious tradition, mixed with rank vulgarity and cheap sensationalism. The ARTEF could not, however, ignore the regard of the workers for an art theatre and for this reason it set out to organize a theatre that might on the artistic side meet the Yiddish Art Theatre on equal terms and on the ideological side put into the art theatre a definite revolutionary proletarian content.

In its formative period the ARTEF had no clear program for the realization of its "ideal" of a proletarian art theatre. Some members of the organization considered it quite in keeping with the "ideal" to organize a group of professional actors whose sympathies were with the left wing labor movement and to produce proletarian plays on a professional commercial basis. The idea that the workers' theatre must train and develop its own actors from among the workers was at first considered non-essential and in the circumstances rather utopian. In spite of its many activities during the first three years, occasional concerts, presentations of short plays, lectures, symposiums and the like, the ARTEF was floundering and did not give in practice that which it promised in theory-- proletarian theatre.

A definite turn in the organization was marked at the end of 1927 when the ARTEF completely abandoned the idea of operating a proletarian theatre with a group of professional actors and decided to develop a workers' player-group of its own. Fortunately there was such a group in existence-- the Freiheit Dramatic Studio. This organization was founded almost simultaneously with the ARTEF. It functioned as a kind of dramatic evening school for workers under the direction of a professional actor and a staff of professional instructors. The Freiheit Dramatic Studio was a member organization of the ARTEF but had complete autonomy and its ultimate aim of producing proletarian plays was in a sense a duplication of the aim of the ARTEF. In 1927 an understanding was reached between the ARTEF and the Freiheit Dramatic Studio to the effect that the members of the studio were to be regarded as the playing group of the ARTEF and that they would constitute the troupe of the Workers' Theatre when such would be formed.

It was understood that at first the ARTEF players would give their time and effort without compensation but that ultimately when the planned Workers' Theatre would be established on a firm business basis the players would be paid as professionals and would devote their entire time to the Workers' Theatre.

In 1928, when the Freiheit Dramatic Studio was about to present a full-length play as its first formal presentation under its own

auspices, the ARTEF decided to sponsor the production and to announce it as the beginning of the Workers' Theatre for Jewish speaking workers. The play, a nebulous symbolic piece with vague poetic revolutionary ideas and a strong admixture of the messianic element, met with a lukewarm reception on the part of the audience and unceremonious criticism on the part of leading workers. It also proved a financial failure that burdened the ARTEF with an enormous deficit and tended to discourage further activities. Opinion was, however, unanimous that the Freiheit Dramatic Studio acquitted itself with high honors as a capable group of actors for the proletarian theatre.

In 1929 an unforeseen circumstance placed the ARTEF in a position of peculiar responsibility before the labor movement. Following the uprising of the masses in Palestine against British imperialism and its Zionist agents, an orgy of chauvinism was let loose against the Jewish communists here because of the policy of the Communist Party and the Morning Freiheit which presented the Palestinian situation in its true light. All the nationalistic and chauvinistic elements of the Jewish population united in a virulent campaign of boycott against the Morning Freiheit. The owners of the Jewish theatres and the social-fascist officialdom of the Hebrew Actors Union led in the boycott. The left-wing workers, consolidated more than ever around the Party and the Morning Freiheit, answered the boycott by boycotting the Jewish theatres.

The ARTEF remained alone in the field as a theatrical organization allied with the revolutionary labor movement. Naturally, the Jewish workers now relied upon the ARTEF to take care of all the theatrical needs of the left-wing organizations, to provide revolutionary plays and to organize its productions with a view to "benefit" performances in the same manner as the commercial bourgeois theatres.

It must be borne in mind that with the Jewish organizations, proletarian and non-proletarian, benefit performances constitute a regular source of income. The organization subscribes for a whole performance or buys a block of tickets at greatly reduced rates and sells the tickets at full price, thus realizing a profit. Many of the left-wing organizations depend for their very existence upon the income realized from benefit performances. This economic aspect of the theatrical problem made it possible for the Yiddish Art Theatre and other bourgeois Yiddish theatres to count on the support of the left-wing movement even tho the plays they presented went counter to the ideas and sentiments of the left-wing workers.

When the ARTEF was forced into a position of premature monopoly of the theatrical field it naturally had to care for the "benefit" needs of the left-wing organizations, and this circumstance put upon it the obligation to produce full-length plays that might meet both the ideological and artistic demands of its labor audience and satisfy the financial needs of the left-wing organiza-

tions. Clearly, the ARTEF was not prepared for such an enormous task, and if during the first season of its regular activity it managed to produce two full-length plays and to participate in a number of mass festivals and demonstrations of the revolutionary labor movement, it was only because of the splendid devotion of the ARTEF players and because of the indulgence of the left-wing workers who willingly put up with many of the shortcomings of the ARTEF both on its organizational and artistic side.

In 1930 the ARTEF embarked on a policy of professionalism and full time operation. It rented a small theatre in the Broadway district and began operating on a schedule of nine performances a week. The ARTEF players were placed on the payroll and were to give their full time to the theatre. The policy proved disastrous in many ways. Financially the ARTEF could not make ends meet and the burden of a large overhead made it impossible for the organization to produce the kind of play expected of it by the labor movement. With much effort and with the splendid cooperation and guidance of the Jewish bureau of the Communist Party the ARTEF managed to extricate itself from a disastrous situation and wind up the season with some deficit but without any injury to the labor organization that paid in substantial sums in advance for their booked benefit performances. Now the ARTEF again operates on a non-professional basis, the players contributing their efforts free. It operates on a week-end basis and its rehearsals are conducted during evenings, sometimes as many as five or six rehearsals a week.

In its activities the ARTEF has made a definite step forward in the direction of agitprop theatre. The full-length play produced on a professional basis and operated as a business enterprise is no longer the main feature, even if it continues to be the most conspicuous one, of the Jewish workers' theatre. Short playlets designed for the meeting hall and the clubroom rather than for the well-equipped stage occupy more and more prominence in the repertory of the ARTEF. Participation in the festivals and mass gatherings of left-wing workers has become a regular and increasingly frequent function of the ARTEF players. The ARTEF now has a half dozen playlets or group recitations that can be presented in any workers' meeting-place without cumbersome settings or complicated stage effects. Within a month or so it will be possible for a number of ARTEF groups to perform simultaneously before several audiences, in addition to about a dozen individual performers who participate in the programs of the various affairs given by labor organizations such as branches of the International Workers Order, Women's Councils, Workers' Clubs, left-wing trade union groups, open forums, etc. Already the ARTEF manages to meet the entertainment demands of ten to fifteen organizations at a time, and the activity in this direction is being constantly extended.

The ARTEF is also training a group of directors for workers' dramatic circles and another group as a new ARTEF-studio whose members will ultimately be added to the player-group of the ARTEF. Every effort is being made to promote the self-activity of the workers in the field of proletarian theatre.

But there are many obstacles that the ARTEF must overcome-- obstacles of an organizational and ideological nature, before it can become as effective in its field as a proletarian theatre should be. On these obstacles and the efforts to overcome them I shall dwell in another article.

WORKERS' THEATRE PLAYS

Florence Rauh

There has been much discussion on what should be the technique of workers' theatre plays but not very much about their contents. It has been more or less understood that the class struggle is the subject matter of workers' theatre plays. It is also understood that the aim of our plays (pageants, etc.) is to clarify the class struggle as it is being lived thru at the present day. This by no means excludes history but only in so far as it is used as an interpreter and a vivifier of the struggle of today has it a place in workers' theatre plays.

But the workers' theatre does not only include plays, short or long, it also includes pantomimes, pageants, mass recitations, choruses, motion pictures, reviews, etc., and any combination of these which help to clarify the subject presented. And how far is the workers' theatre separated from the workers' life of struggle? Not at all, for does not the class struggle itself develop into an art as it progresses? The struggle succeeds as the conditions of struggle are made to fit the immediate situation, whether it be by the tactics of the strike or of the demonstration or of the more limited stage of the Workers' Theatre, the general aim of all these is the same, each having its place in the class struggle.

In all of the forms of the workers' theatre we aim to interpret the class struggle. But do we use the same subject matter in all of these instruments of the workers' theatre? Not very likely, or else one form would do just as well as another, and so only one form would be necessary.

Firstly we have different audiences to appeal to. We play to the class conscious worker for recreation and stimulation; to the class conscious worker to clarify his ideas of the class struggle; to the worker without class consciousness to interest and awaken him to the class struggle and its aims.

We aim to play to workers in factories and at factory gates, to workers at union halls and to great masses of workers at large meetings in-or out-of-doors, and in any other situation which arises where workers congregate.

Sometimes it will be preferable to have a mass chorus, sometimes a pageant or a play or a mass recitation, etc., and not only because of the outward conditions enumerated above but because of the particular angle of the class struggle which we want to clarify. Certain angles of the class struggle may be portrayed thru a revolutionary rythm of a dance; another aspect thru a chorus of many voices calling to the audience of workers; or in the motion picture thru the broad views and continuous motions of the constantly shifting revolutionary scene we can best make our point. Again thru the repetition in rythmic sentences of the mass recitation or thru the interaction of a group of individuals we can most effectively clarify an issue of the class struggle. In the latter case we use the play, the short play generally because of the position of the workers in the present capitalist society.

In every worthwhile play of any time the individual characters are symbolic and indicate the reactions of a whole class when placed in similar situations. If the characters of our plays, the capitalist the worker, etc., are immediately recognizable by the audience of workers thru their outward characterizations they will get a pleasant reaction from this familiarity with their friends and their enemies, but this in no way can affect the value of the play which in order to interest must always be fresh and original. To attain this in our plays requires a thore knowledge and understanding of the constantly moving and changing current events in their relation to the class struggle.

If you ask for rules governing the writing or production of worker theatre plays, I should say make your own rules if you feel the need of them, and if they will guide you in producing the kind of play you think will best convey the idea you want to convey; but I should not advise you to make rules for others because the rules may not fit in with what others have to say.

The most valuable contributions we can make to the theory of the workers theatre is an account of our experiences in actually carrying on the work, how we succeeded or why we failed to carry out our aims. From this other workers in the theatre can form their own judgments of the value of the work to the development of the worker theatre generally. The workers' theatre is a Marxian (and Leninist) theatre; it lives and develops by action and self-criticism.

When we have something very vital to say we will learn thru practice and observation how to say it; but if the initiative of the workers theatre writers and producers is curtailed by too many admonitions and regulations the things will not be said at all or not effectively.

Why do I emphasize this angle of playwriting and producing? Because the workers theatre has among its purposes to strengthen and develop the initiative of the workers; to make the workers conscious of their tremendous creative power and by the militant use of this power to hasten the time when, following the example of Soviet Russia, this creative force will have full sway in a worker-controlled society.

REVOLUTIONARY THEATRES IN FASCIST JAPAN

(continued from Jan. issue)

The Drama League of the Left Theatre, which is fifty percent underground, is the largest organization of its kind in Japan. It publishes a monthly organ: "Dohshi" (Comrade), thru which its 55,000 members exchange opinions, offer suggestions and plans for the theatre, etc. As a direct result, the percentage of workers in the audience has been increasing considerably since 1929. In Tokyo this percentage is already over 78%.

Plays are prepared in two ways: by collective revision and by improvization. For carrying out the former method, there is the Association of Proletarian Dramatists in Tokyo with about twenty members. The method of improvization is naturally most suited to the moving agit-prop groups. Before producing a play, a conference of all the members of the theatre is held to examine and revise the play and determine the principles of the mise en scene in detail, in the light of the existing needs of the struggle.

Men and women are trained as future members of the theatre in The Institute for Proletarian Theatre which is attached to the Tokyo Left Theatre. The Institute has a membership of about forty, and gives a six months' course in dramatic theory and practice.

As a result of the intense and growing interest of the class-conscious workers of Japan in the theatre movement during the past few years, a number of dramatic groups have been organized by the shopworkers themselves. Altho these groups are as yet small and young, they constitute the nucleus for the Japanese proletarian theatre movement, as in the USSR, Germany, Cheko-Slovakia, France, etc.

In contrast to the revolutionary NAPP, there are certain Japanese social-democrat art groups, such as the Rono-Geijutsuka-Remnei. This Socialist group has split itself time and again. Since its latest split in May 1934, it has rapidly lost influence with the masses. It takes refuge in its official organ, the "Bungei-Senshen or Bunsen" (Literary Front), among whose editors and contributors are to be found some of the outstanding exponents of decadent social-democracy, such as Koichiro Maeda (the Japanese Upton Sinclair), Suekichi Aono, Yobun Kaneko, Yoshie Hayama, etc. This is the group which sent an open letter of protest to the secretariat of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers. The reply of the I.U.R.W. to this letter was published in the August issue of NEW MASSES, and clearly exposes the demagogic character of the group. At the same time, the majority of members of the Bunsen Gekijo theatre, which is a section of this social-democratic group, have abandoned this reformist theatre to join the revolutionary Left Theatre of Tokyo.

NAPP is the only Japanese federation of proletarian art groups functioning under the marked influence of the Communist Party of Japan (which grows stronger every day in spite of the brutal gov-

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ernment terror that has resulted in the imprisonment and torture of nearly 1000 Party members and sympathizers). Its official monthly organ, NAPP, is published and grows in the face of oppression. In this year's June number comrade Furukawa writes: "Up to now, the Japanese proletarian cultural movement has made great progress in the field of art. But other important fields, such as the anti-religious, red sports, radio, educational, scientific, and Esperanto movements have been rather neglected. Of these, the red sports, educational, scientific, Esperanto and anti-religious movements already have their own organizations, but these do not as yet have proper connections with the NAPP. In order to really function as a wing of the Communist movement in Japan, all proletarian cultural organizations, including NAPP, must be nationally centralized under one federation... The five associations constituting the NAPP should join such a national federation. The directing staff of the new federation must exchange delegates with the Communist Party in order to insure its proper political development. At the same time the associations constituting this new federation, such as the writers', theatre, artists, sports, anti-religious, radio, educational and Esperanto associations, must join their respective international organizations... At the congresses of the five associations of the NAPP held last year, steps were taken to direct the entire revolutionary movement along definite Communist lines. This year we must reorganize every association of the NAPP to include hitherto neglected workers' and peasants' art groups, in accord with the criticism made by the masses regarding our last year's activities in the industries. Thus we prepare ourselves for the coming stage of our movement..."

The third congress of the PROT was held in Tokyo on May 17 of this year. One of the most important resolutions adopted at this congress in line with the thesis of the Fifth Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions on revolutionary cultural and educational activities, and the decisions of the 1st Congress of the International Workers' Dramatic Union, was to strengthen the initiative of workers in the theatre movement. Concretely: 1. to organize and strengthen the workers' dramatic groups in industries; 2. to raise the percentage of workers in the theatres comprising the PROT at the present time; 3. to prepare the repertory thru collaboration between the PROT theatres and their working class audiences.

Further duties laid down at the congress were: to fight against the bourgeois and social-fascist theatre movements; to stimulate revolutionary mass action against the oppression under which the proletarian theatre movement suffers; to clasp hands in comradeship with our class brothers in China, Korea and Formosa by means of the theatre movement functioning as an able section of the International Workers' Dramatic Union.

The Japanese revolutionary cultural movement, especially the theatre developed itself rapidly. However, to insure its further development and as part of its international revolutionary responsibility it feels a vital need for the establishment of closer relations with the revolutionary cultural movements of China, India, the U.S., Mexico and other Latin-American countries. To this end, steps are being taken to form the first Pan-Pacific secretariat for proletarian cultural movements.

THE BREADLINE COMES TO BROADWAY

B. Reines

The breadline has come to Broadway. The "art of the theatre", the great "profession", has served its own workers exactly as the other sectors of capitalist industry have served the day laborer, the skilled worker, and the white-collar slave. The bourgeois theatre, run for the profit of the theatre magnates and real-estate owners, finds it can no longer make money out of so "many" actors. There is no room for all of even the scant few thousand who constitute the entire "profession", a profession which has never yet in capitalist America reached more than a small fraction of the total population; a profession which for the most part serves to pass the time away for a small portion of the "upper" (and parasitic) class. And so, with the bankruptcy of the capitalist system as a whole, now comes the newest degradation of the theatre-workers-- the breadline. Thus the bourgeois theatre enters the lower depths.

Of course, no bourgeois theatreman calls it by such a blunt, crude name as "breadline" -- nor even "soup kitchen". To dress it up, to conceal its real social significance, it goes by the dignified name of the "Actors' Dinner Club" -- in the words of the New York Times, "serving free dinners to unemployed actors, and at 50 cents a plate to players fortunate enough to have jobs". It is located in a hall of the Union Methodist Church, on West Forty-eighth Street-- the hall being "furnished without rent" by the pastor. The Church, as usual, is quick at showing its "sympathy" for a few of those who are both "respectable" and in distress, but at the same time growing fat thru lending all its support to the maintenance of the system which denies the right to work and live to more and more millions of workers-- including thousands of actors.

Maintaining the fiction of "dignity" in the face of this charity apparatus the Times reported the opening night, Dec. 7th, with its customary ugly bourgeois smugness: "No one present knew who had paid or who was a guest". (Note the "guest"). So all's right with the theatre world. Maybe Jim So-and-So, a capable actor and out of a job for more than a year, ate his free meal with more relish and looked forward more cheerfully to future long seasons of unemployment because maybe his table-companions thought he was still able to pay for his meal. Maybe this will cheer up that 50percent of the membership of the Actors' Equity Association who according to President Gillmore's own estimate are unemployed.

This breadline, a mere crumb in the face of the great need of thousands of actors, was established "with all branches of the theatrical world lending a helping hand". A few bits must have been contributed by even those branches-- the big producers like the house of Shubert, Erlanger and others-- who fight bitterly to cut down the irregular salaries of the great bulk of actors,

to cut down the number of actors to be employed in their productions, to cut the wages of the stage-hands, etc. The "solidarity" of the profession is a mask under cover of which the big producers increase their exploitation of the actors and stage-hands alike. The producers seek to maintain this fiction of "solidarity" which benefits themselves at the expense of the actors. And they deliberately foster hostility between actors and stage-hands, so that actors should believe it is the stage-hands and not the producers who are making extra profits at their expense. The actors, unemployed, and never secure even when working, must come to realize that their own interests require a class solidarity, a solidarity of all exploited workers, whether they work as actors, as stage-hands, as office-workers or as day-laborers. The solidarity of the exploited actors must oppose itself to the solidarity of the owners. The actors must fight against the attempt of the producers to introduce the seven-day working week in the guise of Sunday shows. This Sunday performances move is presented as "an economic measure to solve the financial difficulties of the legitimate playhouses". There will be talk and some half-hearted proposals about guaranteeing the actor "one day's rest in seven". But the experiences of the workers in all other fields of industry have shown that such "guarantees" are never lived up to; that longer working hours are forced thru on one excuse or another; that wages are cut; that more actors will be forced into the ranks of the unemployed. The actors must beware of Frank Gillmore's wishy-washy stand on the question of Sunday performances.

They must realize that a decaying capitalism is dooming them to increasing unemployment, misery and degradation. That under capitalism no such measures as Sunday performances or cuts in salaries can guarantee them employment; that in fact these measures increase the profits of the producers and real-estate men while they also increase unemployment.

The time has come for the actor to consider his position seriously. The actor is a worker. All his life is devoted to working for various producers, and to supplying "the public" with dramatic fare. (It is true that the very plays in which he performs serve as propaganda to sustain this system of capitalism which dooms him to an uncertain and increasingly miserable existence. But that is not the subject of this article). As a theatre-worker, the actor is entitled to the right to live and practice his "profession" as a human being. But no producer, no real-estate man, no capitalist government, will of its own accord make any worker secure in his livelihood. The actors must rely upon their own solidarity and the solidarity of the entire working class who are exploited by the same type of big business men who squeeze the actors. The actors must remember the lessons of their own history-- the fight to build their union, the Actors' Equity Association, as an instrument for bettering their conditions. They must beware the weakening of Equity, a weakening which Gillmore and the others have done nothing to check. They must remember that they have waged great strikes for better

pay and better conditions-- and have won.

The way out for the actor lies in the direction not of a longer working week but of a shorter one, with no reduction in total pay; not in wage-cuts; not in weakening of the union and resort to "arbitration" but in the strong and organized solidarity of all theatre-workers, in the amalgamation into one union regardless of race, creed or color.

The way out for the actor is the same as the way out for the rest of the working class. The actor must join his fellow-workers in fighting for the Workers' Unemployment Insurance Bill which demands that full wages be paid by the government to all workers (which includes actors) wholly unemployed or working part-time only. He must sign and distribute the petitions demanding its passage. He must pour with his fellow-workers into the streets on February 4th, National Day of Demonstration for Unemployment Insurance. He must transform "the revolt of the actors" from a mere phrase decorating a book to a living, classconscious reality.

And he must see and know that the way out taken by the workers in the Soviet Union has resulted there in the growth of a tremendous theatre movement, with special training and good pay for tens of thousands of professional actors, and with millions of workers and peasants engaged in small-scale dramatic work. In capitalist America the bourgeois theatre makes a few rich, throws more and more actors out of work, forces unemployed actors to suicide, occupies itself with trashy or vicious material, and is totally insignificant. In the Soviet Union the theatre grows stronger every year under the Five-year Plan, and has become a mass theatre of mighty proportions, acting as a tremendous cultural force in the fight for a new and better world.

(Editors note---We would like to hear from actors on any points in the above article.)

TECHNIQUE IN THE WORKERS' THEATRE

A. Prentis

(Continued from Jan. issue)

In the previous article we have shown that plays written for our theatre as well as those written for the bourgeois theatre differ primarily in the content and not in the technique of writing. (We should mention that this applies only to the realistic or pseudo-realistic type of play and not, say, to a mass recitation which is

essentially not a play and for which the unities mentioned there do not hold). In the present article we will try to see whether bourgeois techniques of play production, their "theatre arts", may not also be utilized for our theatre whenever necessary. We may do this by, first, considering a production a dynamic unity and comparing its elements, and, second, by analyzing the bourgeois theatre arts.

First as to "dynamic unity". A performance in progress forms continually a dynamic unity, each of whose four elements cannot be considered apart from the remaining three. These elements, 1) the actors, 2) the audience, 3) the environment-- stage, auditorium, lights, etc., 4) content of the play, form a unity that is shifting every moment, the elements are continually interacting upon each other and for this reason cannot be considered without each other. Thus, were there no actors, there would be no audience but a number of people sitting in an auditorium; were there no audience, the actors would be merely shouting into empty space; the environment-- the stage, auditorium, lights,-- have their effect upon the audience and actors; were there no content, that is, no play, neither the actors nor the audience would be there. Hence these four elements form a "dynamic unity" and are inseparable from each other.

How do these four elements in a bourgeois theatre differ from those in a workers' theatre? In the bourgeois theatre the actors are trained workers, in the workers' theatre the worker-actors are not trained, but will become trained in due time. While the audience in a workers' theatre (especially a classconscious audience) is different from a bourgeois audience, the audiences that we aim to play for, that we aim to convert, are not vastly different-- especially since the majority of petty bourgeois of today are the workers of yesterday, and with the continuation of the depression will be the workers of tomorrow. The environments are intrinsically the same-- a platform or stage at one end of a hall or auditorium or theatre. The only element that is definitely different in the two theatres is the content-- the bourgeois content expressing reactionary propaganda disguised as entertainment, ours aiming at revolutionary propaganda, and entertainment.

We may therefore conclude that the elements of a performance in the two types of theatre are essentially the same and differ only in the objectives of the two theatres-- entertainment and reactionary propaganda in the bourgeois, training in the class struggle plus entertainment in ours.

When we analyze the so-called bourgeois theatre arts we see that we can utilize them also for our theatre. These arts may be divided into four groups-- movement, sound, light, plastics-- all self explanatory. To take them one by one. Movement (action) in a workers' play will not differ materially from that in a bourgeois play, and will depend mainly upon the content; sound (acoustics, speech of the actors, etc.) will again depend mainly on the con-

tent and the type of theatre structure; light, likewise; so will the plastics (environment, stage settings and the auditorium). Since all these "arts" are essentially the same in both theatres and differ only in application, which is in direct relation to content, we may conclude that these arts may also be utilized by our theatre.

We may therefore sum up that just as the written play, the produced play may, whenever necessary, adopt all the bourgeois techniques and adapt them to our purposes; that to call bourgeois technique "junk", as Com. Gardener does in the December issue of WORKERS' THEATRE, shows a limited view of the theatre. As a matter of fact, we should take over all bourgeois technique, subject it to a materialistic analysis, discard the useless and utilize the useful and practical.

The conclusion that we may utilize bourgeois technique whenever necessary is inevitable. The culture of a people is a continuous process and it is impossible to develop a new culture by completely breaking with the past. Even in the case of a revolutionary change, when culture undergoes a sharp break, this break is conditioned by the forerunning culture and thus ties the pre- and post-revolutionary culture into a continuous, tho not necessarily evolutionary, process. Our culture must reorient itself towards the new objective, utilize the tools it has at its command, and gradually moving toward that new objective, junk the useless tools and techniques only after it has developed new ones. Not before.

This fact was recognized by Meierhold, a graduate of the bourgeois theatre, and is recognized by the younger generation of directors in Soviet Russia. Just as it is recognized by Soviet Russia building a Socialist State with the aid of machinery and specialists imported from the United States.

And so, we should try to learn all that the bourgeois theatre has to teach. We should invite their theatre workers to lecture to us. We should even ask them to work with us. Some may not want to, since we can offer no fat checks, but others realizing the meaning of our cause will join us. These will bear watching for a while so that they do not stray from our objective; we will have to retrain some of them; but once they decide to work with us, they will strengthen our work and thus reward our efforts manifold.

WORKERS THEATRE STRIDES FORWARD.
AN ANSWER TO AN ATTACK.

A. Saks

The Workers Theatre is growing rapidly in the United States. As is the case with all new revolutionary forms, the old moss-eaten reactionary, conventional, static minds find themselves choking on their own hostility. They view the birth and growth of anything new as dangerous. They are bewildered, ill at ease, and in defense assume a scornful mocking attitude towards this new medium that they are afraid may spell destruction to their present theories. This is the one force of critics, they who wish to uphold the old because they are a part of the old. On the other hand thinking in terms of the development of the theatre, intelligent critics are ready to welcome the approach of the new. This intelligent approach to the new forms and ideas arising from the Workers Theatre is taken by Hallie Flanagan, a woman who has time and again shown her understanding and knowledge of theatre in general and who has made a special study of the Workers Theatre movement in the United States.

To write intelligently on any subject one must know the subject thoroughly. In the February issue of the Theatre Arts Monthly there is a letter presumably attacking Mrs. Hallie Flanagan's article on "Our Theatre is Born," (a brief history of the Workers Theatre movement in the United States) actually, a vicious, consistently inconsistent attack on the Workers Theatre movement and Communism by someone who is an amazing dunce in the matter of Workers Theatre and theatre in general; who when he does not know what he is talking about advertises the fact, and then tries to make a virtue out of this stupidity. As is the case with all critics who are fond of the old, because they are a part of the old, the logic of their polemics usually speak louder than screaming prejudices of their deep-rooted and violent antagonism to new ideas in the theatre.

When Huntly Carter, an Englishman who has written some good books on the Russian Theatre (which our friend would do well to read, or if he has read, re-read) and who is one of our acknowledged intelligent men of the theatre appeared with his first book on the New Russian Theatre, he was confronted with an identical situation. The critics booed and hissed Mr. Carter. Every mis-numbered page was seized upon as a pretext for getting rid of this new evil, and the old critics proclaimed that such a theatre existed only in the imagination of Mr. Carter. Today we realize the truth of what he said, and admire his pluck and perseverance for sticking to that truth. Our critic also believes that the Workers Theatre movement exists only in the mind of Mrs. Flanagan. He asserts, "I say the workers of New York despite Mrs. Flanagan's statement to the effect that these workers theatres are being born in Chicago, San Francisco, and other large cities beside New York. I have never heard of a Workers Theatre here in Chicago." We certainly feel sorry for this Mr. Herman, but ignorance is no excuse for writing a dogmatic article accusing Mrs.

Flanagan, who has collected data and made a special study of Workers Theatres, of drawing on her imagination to build a workers theatre movement. For your benefit Mr. Herman the address of the Chicago Workers Theatre which calls itself the Blue Blouse Dramatic studio and has three acting groups is 3644 W. 15 st. I can also send you the addresses of workers theatre groups in Boston, Detroit, Portland, Ore. Philadelphia, San Francisco, Los Angeles Houston Tex. St. Louis, and a large number of smaller towns throughout the United States.

But this is only one of the points that Mr. Herman does not know. Throughout the entire article he displays an astounding genius for not knowing. His well of ignorance never gives out. He keeps constantly supplied with facts he does not know. He reminds me of the students who spend six days in Russia and then come tripping back to give a series of lectures on the five year plan—and its effect on the political, social, and economic background of Russia past, present, and future.

He does not know the difference between the travelling blue blouse theatre and the permanent theatre as he constantly mixes the one with the other. He is inconsistent in pointing out that the Russians had to simplify the stage so as to appeal to the childish mentality of the peasants, and in the very next column he states that no one but the Russians would dare to use enormous and intricate modern sets—is that also part of the process of simplification? Is it simplification to place complicated sets before these crude peasants who could understand nothing.

He does not know that before, during and after the revolution, the Moscow Art Theatre, The Kamerny State Theatre, the Moscow Art Studio the Meyerhold Theatre continued producing in their repertory for these same childish peasants and workers the dramas of Dostoevski, Materlinck, Hamsun, Chekof, Gorki, Ostrovski, Turgenyev, Pushkin, Tolstoi, Dickens, Strindberg, Gogol, Shakespeare, O'Neil, Byron and countless others, as witness this statement. "The cultured, refined audiences of the Moscow Art Theatre of Stanislavsky were no more. and in their stead were those whose dramatic fare had consisted of crude traveling vaudville performers,——the real drama of Chekof, Gogol, Ostrovsky, and Shakespeare was beyond them." The slightest acquaintance with facts would have shown him that these theatres continued to produce their former repertories, the change toward more revolutionary drama did not manifest itself even in such a right wing group as the Moscow Art Theatre until 1922—five years after the revolution.

He is pathetically ignorant when he says "Here in America, the theatre has been made accessible to the workers———In fact the success of such popular pieces as Abies Irish Rose, the Green Pastures and the perennial success of Shakespeare can be attributed to the attendance of the middle and workingclasses. Hence these audiences have become theatre minded. They are able to fathom the intricacies of subtle nuance in thought and movement. They have

to be written up to rather than down to." Of the three pieces he mentions *Abies Irish Rose* is the only one that has ever reached anything like a mass audience. And if Mr. Herman considers *Abies Irish Rose* an intricacy of subtle nuance in thought and movement, then Mr. Herman should see a few of these Russian performances that are written "down to" the audiences.

He does not know of the thousands of workers who can only sign their names with an x or who scribble off their full name in ten minutes of painful gesturing with a pencil, and I am not speaking of foreigners, but of the stalwart American miners, farmers, steel workers. He is totally ignorant of the conditions in the mining towns where the Dreiser committee disclosed fact after fact concerning the starvation conditions and general educational level of the miners. Facts such as these—"many of the miners children have never been to a movie—or know what a radio looks like." (from an excellent pamphlet by Harry Gannes, called "*Kentucky Miner Fight*.") He is unaware of the millions of negroes who because of economic conditions have been forced to accept horrible living conditions and illiteracy. He does not know of the millions of workers in the steel mills, in the lumbercamps, the textile shops, on the farms, who would register a total blank at the mention of Shakespeare, Green Pastures, Theatre Guild, Pasadena Playhouse or any other little theatre in the United States. This is the public that the great American Theatre has made conscious. This is the public that must be written up to rather than down to. The largest entertaining medium in the United States is the movies. Mr. Herman feels that the movie themes of today are written up to rather than down to the American working class.

He does not know that the little theatre movement within the last five years has crumbled at a pace even faster than capitalism. He himself points out the non-existence of the Provincetown players—incidentally, Greenwich Village was at one time dotted with various Art Theatre groups. At present there is not one of these art groups in existence. He asks, "Why is the Goodman Theatre empty? I can answer that question. Because the Goodman is one of those thousand of "civic theatres, with ideals," (Mr. Hermans words) where the masses gather to be taught to fathom the intricacies of subtle nuance in thought and movement." (again Mr. Herman speaking). That is exactly why the Goodman is empty now. And that is the reason for the decline in the little theatre movement and civic movement in this country—because the middle classes and the workingclasses make it their business never to miss a performance of these little theatres. Because the ideals of these little theatres are ideals that have nothing to do with an audience of workers, or as the crisis deepens even with the middle class who desert the little theatres. These theatres are built for the refined and cultured audiences of the "Theatre Guild."

Mr. Herman takes no notice of time. In 1917 says he, the peasants were crude, childish, etc. therefore the theatre had to come down to the crude mentality of the peasants. A remarkably short time

passed and the Russian film and theatre has already reached a stage beyond that of other countries. One cannot deny that the Russian films are in technique, and content far superior to that of any other country. He does not know that the Russian theatre, while other countries are sliding backward—is pushing forward with experimentation in designing, acting, directing, etc. as never before. Thousands of dramatic groups springing up overnight (Eugene O'Neil is of the same opinion since his visit to Russia), and this in a country where a few years ago the peasants were childish crude. Can we say the same of the American theatre? Mr. Herman does not take the trouble to point out these facts, possibly because he is, or wants to be ignorant of them.

Later Mr. Herman resorts to a strange form of logic when he points out that because he saw a rehearsal of a workers theatre three years ago (and this mind you was not in his imagination—even three years ago he knew of the existence of a workers theatre), therefore, says he, the workers theatre movement has not gone forward but backward. Three years is a long time as witness the remarkable changes in Russian theatre and to contend that the Workers Theatre has not developed because he saw a rehearsal three years ago is a form of logic that for one have never come in contact with.

He does not know that Michael Gold has contributed practically nothing to any organized workers theatre movement in the United States excepting perhaps his name. He is right in one instance when he uses the past tense in speaking of Floyd Dell as an ardent Communist. He does not know that the Workers Film and Photo League, which he speaks of as another fantastic dream is at present in existence with headquarters in the larger cities such as Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, New York, etc.

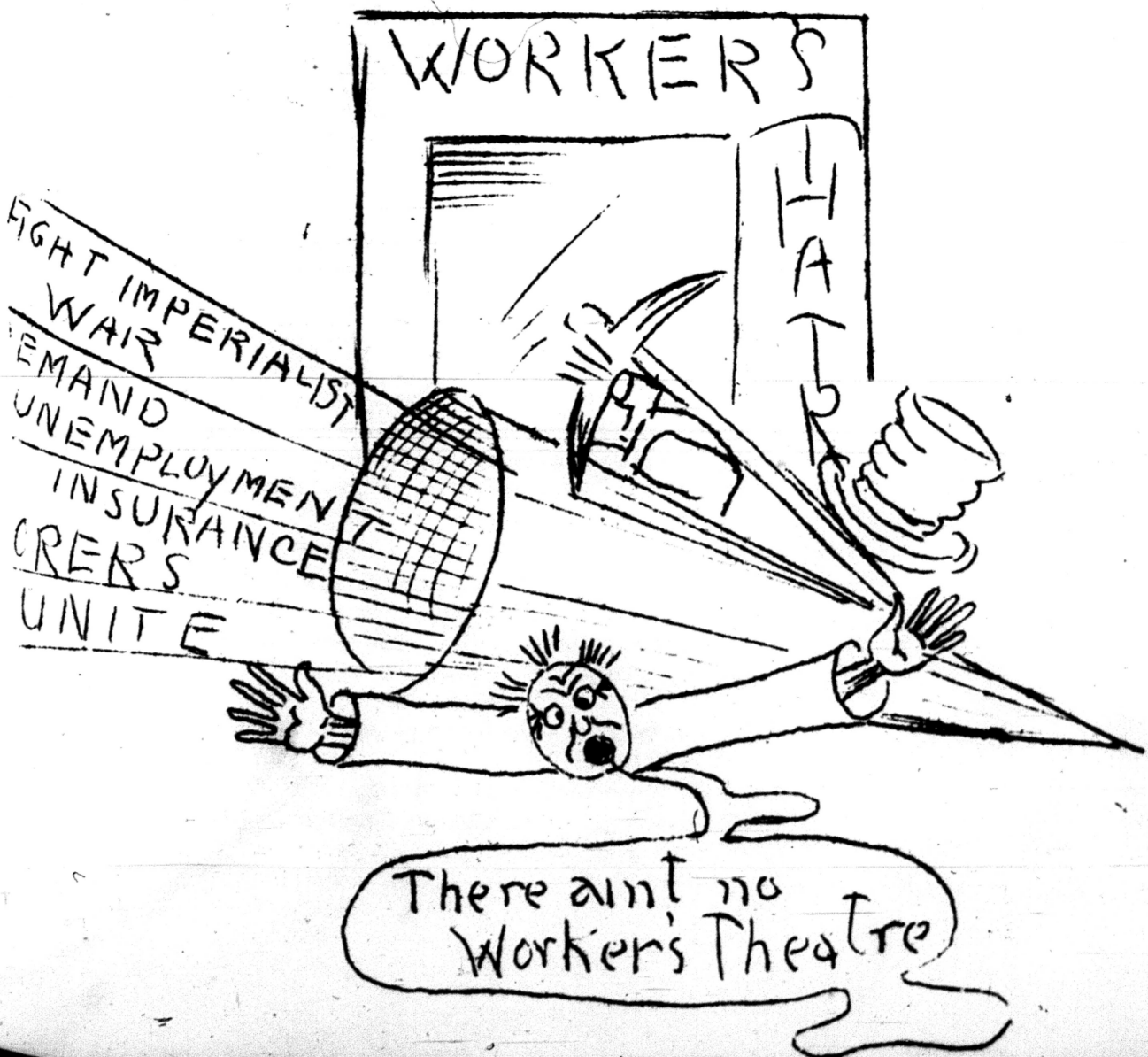
He has not read the workers theatre magazine thoroughly when he states that "One of the dictates is that 'the non-essentials which have become synonymous to it, must be divorced from the theatre.'" This is the opinion, of one member of the Workers Theatre. Had he read other articles he would have seen that this extremist view is not shared by all members of the Workers Theatre. The tenet that only fools refuse to profit by the experience of the past is certainly one of the major premises of the Workers Theatre. Had he looked further to read articles upholding the bourgeois forms and stating that the Workers Theatre must learn all it can from the bourgeois theatre he would have gathered that the workers theatre has within its ranks various shades of opinion, left, centrist, and right viewpoints, and are only in agreement in one basic principle—that the theatre must have its foundations in the masses. That this ideal of art for all and not for the few cannot be realized unless you dramatize the problems of the masses and assist the workers in solving these problems.

He does not know the difference between the Communist Party and the Workers Theatre movement as he constantly insists on twisting one into the other. We are primarily a workers theatre. Always for the worker. Wherever the workingclass is subject to starvation;

disease, unemployment, etc., it is the duty of our workers theatre to dramatize the problems for the workers and attempt to constructively assist in solving the problems through a direct appeal for aid or whatever the case may be.

There are a number of other points where Mr. Herman has shown a thorough lack of knowledge but too much space has already been devoted to showing Mr. Herman the necessity of education. Once more I wish to say that the workers Theatre is in the process of growing--a process of experimentation. During this process the workers Theatre Magazine as correctly reflecting the workers Theatre movement must have articles on all shades of opinion about workers theatre. Today, a right viewpoint will praise an article, tomorrow an extremist will attack. Both of these viewpoints help eventually to clarify the position of the workers Theatres in this country. Both of these help to mold the future policies of the mass workers theatre in the United States. Discussion of these matters are as important to the growth of the workers theatre as food to the growth of the body.

As to Mr. Herman, we hope that in the future, any further attacks on workers Theatre will have the goodness to show some common sense and not be given over to irrational, emotional, sputtering.



PLAYS

"THE MINERS ARE STRIKING".

by A. Prentis, W.L.T., New York.

Six players are required: Worker, woman, girl, priest, 2 players can take all the remaining parts.

The scene in the mine must be done with the stage and audience in absolute darkness. The remainder can be done in the dark with each actor, during speaking, flashing a flashlight to identify himself. The capitalist at his silk hat, the priest at the cross, the sheriff at the badges. Or the scene may be done in the light. Three workers are in the audience, all the rest on stage.

(The stage is dark. Only the rapid, rhythmic thumping of 2 picks is heard for about one minute. They stop.)

Steve: (despondently) Take it easy, Mike. No use. (They cough time and again)

Mike: (Excitedly) Can't -- got to be doin somethin--may be we'll break thru--maybe they'll find us--

Steve: No chance. The level is choked up, all way from the shaft, and I jst aint got ne more strength.

Mike: Can't give up like that-- we got to push on--

Steve: Where're you pushin to?-- Maybe we's here two days now pushin and we aint got nowhere. Take it easy now.

Mike: Can't. You's single, you aint got a wife and three kids. I want to see the wife and the kids.

Steve: You's funny that way. The gas is gettin thicker so's you can't breath, and you jst want to go on. (coughs) (Apressure fan is heard far away)

Mike: The fans-- the fans-- (yelling hoarsely) Bill-- Henry--

Steve: (joining) Henry--Mr.Stevens--Henry-- (The fans continue for a few seconds, then suddenly stop)

Mike: The fans stopped--Henry, Bill, Mr.Stevens--(pause, coughs)

Steve: (faintly) No answer--(coughs, several faint coughs from both, and all is quiet)

(A priest's unctuous voice is heard on the stage)

Priest: Oh Lord, our Father in Heaven, have mercy on these children. May their souls rest in peace. Amen.

Worker: (From the left of the auditorium is heard a worker's voice, strong, militant)
Due to negligence, due to capitalist desire for profits, thousands of workers die in mine explosions every year.

Woman's voice: (from right) They leave wives and children hungry, cold, miserable.

Priest: (submissively) Who can question the wisdom and goodness of God?

Worker: There is no god--he was invented by the capitalists and the church to keep the workers in subjection.

Priest: Jesus said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy god, and him only shalt you serve. You must have faith.

Woman: You can't have faith-- when your breasts dry up for the lack of milk, when your children die of pellagra--you must find another way--

Priest: There is no other way--

Worker: There is--organization--solidarity of the working class.

Priest: Truly religious people will not organize--they will not associate with anarchists and communists.

Worker: All oppressed workers will affiliate with leaders who help them to organize.

Priest: There is nothing to be gained by organization.

Worker: When oppressed workers organize they strike.

Capitalist: (Harsh voice) Who is striking?

Worker: The Kentucky miners are on strike!

Cap. The Kentucky miners?

Worker: January 1st 18,000 miners struck in the Kentucky mines.

Cap. What are they striking for?

Worker: The strike for a living wage.

Woman: They strike for better living conditions.

Girl: Against capitalist terror.

All three: For the right to organize.

Cap.: Lies, lies-- their wages are the best paid anywhere.

Worker: They get 30 cents a ton for coal that sells here for 15 dollars.

Cap.: They don't need better wages, their standard of living is low. Besides we provide them with stores where they may buy anything they want at low cost.

Woman: The cost of groceries is 50% higher there than anywhere else, but they can't buy anywhere else because the company pays in scrip which can only be exchanged at company stores.

Cap.: They would drink away any money left at the end of the month. We provide them with homes at cost.

Woman: These homes are ramshackle hovels that leak in the rain.

Cap.: We provide them with churches.

Priest: And Jesus said, "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be filled, blessed are you poor for your is the kingdom of god. To him that smiteth you on one cheek, offer also the other, and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not also thy coat. Rejoice and leap for joy for, behold, your reward is great in heaven.

Cap.: We provide them with schools.

Man's voice: (In monotone) A survey made on behalf of the coal operators of this mine region shows clearly that to educate the miners children is both a financial loss and a social waste. Some of them acquire radical ideas, others leave the region for work elsewhere, and thus decrease the supply of cheap labor necessary for the mine operators to pay dividends.

Worker: 18,000 Kentucky miners are on strike.

Cap.: I'll break them. Central, central, central, give me the Agency. Hello, hello, Mr. Burns, I need 500 deputies to be used as strike breakers.

Burns: We have only 200.

Cap.: I'll wire the governor to pardon 300 convicts. O K with you?

Burns: O K with me.

Cap.: The tougher they are the better I like it. Let them kill, rape, commit any crime, so long as they break the strike. I'll pay well.

Burns: You'll be satisfied.

Worker: In Bell and in Pineville, in Evarts and Harlan, the miners are marching. From the pitheads over the entire mine region the miners are marching to the picket line.

Woman: Their women are marching.

Girl: Their women and children.

Worker: The miners are marching shoulder to shoulder, they are crushing the scabs and the bosses terror-

Cap.: (excited) Holy father, I'll contribute to your cathedral, I'll donate a memorial window in your church, I'll send you a fat check, tell the men not to strike.

Priest: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Blessed are those that are meek. Slaves obey your masters. Cursed are those that defy the law. All those that strike will be expelled from the church.

Worker: Liar and hypocrite. Your hour is struck, the workers know you as the tool of the capitalist and are turning from you. It won't take long before your empty churches will be converted into schools and libraries for workers.

Cap.: And as I was saying, judge, these Reds, this National Miners Union, bring discredit upon the community and spoil business all around. Something's got to be done.

Judge: What did my brother say?

Cap.: He said that unless you do something quick both his and your shares of the stock in coal company won't be worth a damn. The mines are closed.

Judge: I'll tell you what I'll do. First I'll give you an injunction against the National Miners Union, then I'll arrest some of the organizers on charges of criminal syndicalism, and frame others on murder charges. That will fix them.

Mac.: I tell you, Lefty, that was the slickest thing we done yet.

Lefty: How's that?

- Mac.: First we arrested all them organizers just as they was comin off the train. We beat hell out of them, and then the judge put them up for that there criminal syndicalism.
- Woman: All the organizers are in prison.
- Mac.: The next batch that came down we arrested too. We'll coop up every damn bastard that comes down here.
- Girl: As fast as organizers come down they arrest them.
- Worker: The miners are an iron wall, when one leader is arrested another takes his place.
- Cap.: (As tho reading) And I wish to report to the citizens' committee that so far all means to stem the tide of the strike have failed. There is only one means left--to dynamite their relief kitchens. We can yet win out. So long as they have one meal a day they will hold out. I am sure all first citizens of this community will wish to participate in this work of dynamiting.
- Woman: (Excited) They have dynamited a kitchen.
- Girl: They killed tow of our men.
- Deputy: That was a good shot, sheriff.
- Sheriff: Ha, ha, clean thru the head. It's not the first time I done it and I'll do the same next time. Well, here's to you.
- Deputy: Drink hearty, sheriff.
- Worker: Another kitchen is put up.
- Girl: They dynamited it.
- Worker: Another kitchen is put up..
- Woman: They dynamited this one.
- Girl: The miners have nothing to eat. Their wives are starving, their children are sick.
- Worker: We'll put up another kitchen, we'll put up ten, hundreds of kitchens over the entire mine region.
- Girl: But they'll destroy them again.
- Cap.: We'll dynamite every kitchen as fast as it is put up.
- Worker: As fast as one is destroyed two will spring up .

Cap.: We'll jail all the leaders.

Worker: As fast as one leader's arrested ten will step in his place.

Cap.: The police are with us. We have bankers, millions of dollars.

Worker: We have all the workers, hundreds of millions.

Woman: They are with the miners

Girl: Solid behind them.

Cap.: They are not behind them. We have been able to crush many strikes before and can do it again.

Worker: You have been able to do so because you were able to play white against negro worker.

Woman: Unorganized against organized.

Worker: That day is past. The unorganized are organizing, the white and negro march shoulder to shoulder.

Cap.: You have no money to carry on the strike.

Worker: We'll get it when we need it. We'll send out a call

Woman: To the womens' councils

Girl: To the youth organizations

Worker: To the mass and fraternal organizations

Woman: To the workers here tonight.

Cap.: The workers here tonight cannot give you any money because they haven't any, I made sure of that--I gave them wage-cuts, unemployment.

Worker: The workers here tonight, like the workingclass all over, know their tasks and duties. Every woman knows that the strikers need bread, milk, vegetables. The strikers must have food to keep up their morale. And the workers here tonight will support the strike - for the strike of the miners is not only the miners fight - it is everyone's fight - it is the fight of the whole workingclass. For - should the strike be lost it will be a loss to the whole working class.

WE DEMAND -

----- by Bernard Reines, W.L.T., N.Y.

Characters: Government, Secretary, Banker . Railroad magnate General,
5 workers.

Government and Secretary come in. Secretary assists Government into chair set high up on a table. Government sits back comfortably. Secretary steps to the side and returns.

Secretary: Mr. Money to see you, sir.

Government: Show him in - come on there, stir.

(Secretary shows in Banker, and goes out)

Government: (Rising, speaks warmly)
How do you do, Boss? How do you do?

Banker: (Shaking hands) Very well, sir. And how are you?

Government: (Coming down) The Government is always sound.

Banker: *Of course - with me behind you.
You're firmly set on solid ground.
But down to business: I thought I'd find you
Ready to help me in my need.

Government: Help you, Master? - Yes indeed.
That's what your Government is **for**
What would you like?

Banker: Well, business ain't what it used to be
This here depression -

Government: Yes, yes, I know.

Banker: My banks are in a shaky condition.
Unless we act fast, the banks will go
From bad to worse. Our whole position
Is threatened. Hundreds of banks will crash,
And the desperate workers will rise and smash
Our blessed system.

Government: May the Lord forbid!

Banker: He will - if you and I act quickly.

Government: How much do you need?

Banker: Five hundred million dollars will do it.

Government: Five hundred million.

Banker: Will see us thru it.
But we've got to act fast. No time for delay.

Government: I'll see that you get it rightaway.
I'll form a Finance Credit Corporation
To save the bankers of the nation.

Banker: My Government. I'm proud of you.
Three cheers - Three cheers for the red, white and blue.
(Banker goes out)

Secretary: (rushing in) Master, master - The unemployed -

Government: Very busy. Can't be annoyed.

Secretary: But - but master, they're complaining -

Government: Let'em. They've had the proper training.
They'll grumble a little and then keep quiet.
We've fed them a law-and-order diet
For hundreds of years, so that they behave,
From the day they're born till they're in the grave.
They won't make trouble.
(Railroad Magnate enters as Secretary is going out)
Tell them that Congress will end the depression
By passing a law at its very next session.

Railroad
Magnate: Well done, well done, my Government.
Too much money is being spent
Where it does no good. And now to the next point: -
Our railroad system is in a hole.

Government: How's that?

Railroad
Magnate: The profits are not enough to pay
Full interest on bonds and stocks.
Our railroads will go on the rocks -
The suffering will be intense
Among our stockholders - unless we get
A grant long-term loan from you.

Government: How much do you need, to see you thru?

Railroad
Magnate: A billion dollars will just about do.

Government: A billion dollars.

Railroad

Magnate: No time for delay.

Government: I'll see that you get it rightaway.
I'll form a Railroad Credit Corporation
To save the railroads of the nation.

Railroad

Magnate: My Government - I'm proud of you.
Hurrah - hurrah - red, white and blue.
(Railroad Magn

Government: A good day's work. Now for some fun.
(enter Secretary)

Secretary: Master. the unemployed. - They've begun -

Government: Again. There's nothing that can be done
But to wait until the depression passes.
Tell'em I said so.

Secretary: But master, they're getting out of hand.

Government: What do you mean?

Secretary: They say they will not simply stand
And starve, in a land so rich as ours -

Government: Tell'em we're using all our powers
To help them, - we're are making loans to banks,
To railroads and to industry,
To bring back our lost prosperity.
(Secretary goes out. - General enters)
Good morning, General. What's new?

General: I want to get this budget thru.
The War Department this year needs -

Government: How much?

General: A little over a billion dollars
Will cover the army and navy budget.

Government: It's a lot of money - but I don't grudge it -
Not to our brave defenders, who
Have protected our loans like heroes true,
Bringing the blessings of civilization
To many a barbarous foreign nation -
To Nicaragua, Cuba, China,
To Africa and Asia Minor,
Killing off those who can't understand
The blessings we bring to their heathen land.
To make the world safe for the rich man's dollar -

General: The words of a gentleman and a scholar. -

Government: Over a warship our fair flag blows
Wherever the money of Morgan goes.

Government
& General: But most of all -
We're building our army
We're building our navy
We're building our aeroplanes
Not caring
How much it costs;
Preparing -
For -
War.
War before it is too late
War against the land we hate
War against the worker's state -
SOVIET UNION.

Government: Growing strong
While we grow weaker,

General: Building up
While we tear down,

Government
& General: Urging the workers and farmers of the world
To do as they did
And overthrow us.
A dangerous land -

General: That's why we build

Government: With billions of dollars

General: Our army, our navy, our Air Force.

Government
& General: Not caring
How much it costs;
Preparing
For
War.

Government: On every side she must be beset -

Government
& General: WE MUST CRUSH THE SOVIET.

(General goes out - Secretary rushes in)

Secretary: The unemployed are marching here!

Government: What's that?

Secretary: The unemployed will soon appear
From north and south, from east and west
They come, although we've done our best
To break them up. Our brave police,
Trying in vain to keep the peace,
Have clubbed them and slugged them in dozens of towns,
But they couldn't be stopped, and now --

(Five unemployed workers enter)

Government: They're here!

1st Worker: We delegates elected directly by hundreds of thousands of workers, employed and unemployed, Negro and white, native-born and foreign-born - we, speaking in the name of the twelve million unemployed workers of the United States, in the name of the millions who are working part time, and in the name of the workers now employed, who must live on starvation wages and who may be thrown any day into the ranks of the unemployed -
WE DEMAND-

2nd Worker: We who have labored for many long years to dig the mines, to lay the railroads, to build the factories, to till the farms -
WE DEMAND -

3rd Worker: We who in the last war faced death, and destruction, by bullet and bayonet, and poisonous gases, while you and your bosses grew richer and fatter -
WE DEMAND -

4th Worker: Immediate cash relief of \$150.- for every unemployed worker

5th Worker: With \$50.- more for each dependent.

1st Worker: We demand

2nd Worker: Unemployment insurance at full wages.

3rd Worker: To be administered by a committee elected by the workers.

4th Worker: We demand

5th Worker: Free food and clothing for the children of unemployed and striking workers.

Government: But - but this is preposterous! Where is the money to come from?

1st Worker: By heavy taxation of all incomes over \$5000. a year.

2nd Worker: Heavy taxation of all fortunes over \$100,000

3rd Worker: Cancellation of payments to bankers of the interest on the so-called public debts.

4th Worker: By turning over

All Worker: All war funds to the unemployed!

Government: Never! Billions for war** but not one cent for unemployment insurance.

Secretary: Never! It would destroy your individualism!

Government: Unemployment insurance is a ~~do~~
It might save your body, but would ruin your soul!

1st Worker: That is your answer. Now listen to ours:
We're going to work with all our powers
To tell the workers what you said,
To organize the fight for bread,
To build more councils of unemployed,
And farmers leagues, and militant unions.

2nd Worker: We shall come back

3rd Worker: Stronger than ever.

(They turn to audience)

1st Worker: Workers

2nd Worker: Unite

3rd Worker: Organize

4th Worker:

& 5th " Fight

1st Worker: Workers

2nd Worker: From coast to coast

3rd Worker: Let your voices thunder

All: WE DEMAND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE.

Editor's notes

The play "Liberty in the U.S.A." - published in the Jan. issue of this magazine should always be followed by a strong revolutionary play or mass recitation. This play-a satire of the capitalist parties - does not show ~~what~~ the workers must do to crush these parties, and for that reason must be followed by a revolutionary play.

MOVIES

WHO OWNS THE MOVIE?

Harry Alan Potamkin

The movie was born in the laboratory and reared in the counting-house. Today it is the slave-child of finance capital. Wall Street dominates it. Its direct managers, the producers in Hollywood, are all as far from the needs of the audience as Hollywood is from New York. For, who is the audience? Back in 1909 a Harvard professor recognized the movie-fan as "the self-respecting petty-bourgeoisie and the workingman". In 1916, the pioneer American film-director, D.W.Griffith, called the movie "the laboring-man's university". Nine years later the American writer, James Stevens, designated it as "the laborer's art". In brief, the larger audience of the movie is the workingman and the member of the middle-class who touches upon the proletariat. He supports the movie, art of "the machine age", of corporate economy, of mass-production. And the producer? He is generally a former shopkeeper, manufacturer, money-lender, the newly-rich. His "ideals" are the themes and tones of the film.

At first the producer was one individual, the distributor another, the exhibitor a third. But as business became more and more consolidated, as the trust began to form, the movie too, being an art controlled by business, became more and more consolidated into fewer and fewer hands. Producer-distributor-exhibitor became one. Soon they were one in the hands of Wall Street. Having completed this trustification for mercantile and financial purposes, the movie had to extend centralization into the field of ideas. The Hays organization was formed, the moral, intellectual, political concentration of the movie industry. Today the movie is body and soul directed from a central point to influence the mind of the audience.

Why does the dominant class expend all this effort in the film? The movie is the most generally enjoyed amusement. It is the education of the masses. People remember best what they see. Sixty-five percent of what we believe has come to us thru the eyes, twenty-five percent thru the ears. The movie is today sound and sight, 90%. Add to this the fact that the movie is not a frozen image seen once and quickly but something which retains us for two hours at a time, something we can "feel", and the influence is very close to 100%. It is the mass-art, the mass-amusement, the mass-education. And therefore the dominant class wants more minute control of it. In direct proportion to the volume of the influence is this control. A play is seen by a limited number; the control over it is limited. A

book is read by more than see the play but by fewer than see the film; therefore the control over it is greater than the control over the book and less than the control over the film.

Marx and Engels have said, in The Communist Manifesto, that the class that controls production will pay only that wage which will assure the desired production. In brief, the minimum. Similarly, the class that controls movie production will present only that idea which will assure passivity in the audience. When the movie was not yet fully under central control, Upton Sinclair's novel, "The Jungle", was produced. The company that produced it was allowed to go bankrupt. And we must remember also that "The Jungle" has been persistently read down as a tract for pure food. The dominant class has also an interest in that.

The movie was very early used in self-defense. In 1906, when "The Jungle" appeared as a novel, the Armour meat-packers took a film of their plant made in 1900, dusted it off, and released it as an "answer" to the accusations of the novel.

Another novel by Upton Sinclair, "The Moneychangers", which explains the panic of 1907 as having been manipulated by J.F. Morgan, was purchased for the screen by Ben Hampton, a personal friend of Sinclair. Hampton promised to preserve the text and spirit of the novel. When the film appeared it was a melodrama about Chinatown. Hampton has just published "A History of the Movies", but he has not included this incident.

Very early, in fact the same year as the film of "The Jungle", pictures began to appear making a hero of the scab, preaching against violence and for the support of the church in cementing relations between labor and capital. Today, even the existence of such a hyphen as labor-capital is not admitted. The Universal producers are to make a film called "Steel" (not John Wesley's play). The steel trust has consented to loan their facilities as a setting, provided that no mention is made of the relation between labor and capital. The producer is on the defensive; his class is in a critical position. The Fox company forbids any newsreel clips of breadlines or "anything that might possibly be construed as Bolshevik propaganda".

Might not, one may ask, the director, the creative artist of the screen, bring another note into the movie? Well, who is the director? Generally speaking, he has been an actor, a newspaperman, a baseball-player or the like. His experiences and interests, the bribes payed him, keep him very far from the audience for whom he is making his films. And even if he wanted to make a film more critical of conditions, he would be sat upon. There's the case of the film "The Touchdown", which a young director wanted to make as an indictment of college football. It starts out that way, but the producers took the film in hand and made it end as a whitewash of the coach and college. The

young director, because of his opposition, was not even thanked, his name did not appear on the screen. "Queer People", a novel ridiculing Hollywood, was bought by a rich young producer. So threatening has been the central control, that no actor has dared to accept a part in it, and the producer has laid the film aside. He has even refused to let the film be made in England. "Once in a Lifetime", another satire on Hollywood, almost received the same treatment, but Laemmle of Universal has promised the film won't hurt anyone's feelings. Hollywood, don't forget, is vested interest. It is a closed circle in which all the people live according to the fables they see and act in on the screen. They are going to preserve and protect their property, even if it means keeping new energies from entering. They conspired to keep out the young Soviet director, Eisenstein. The actors of the screen, the golden trade-mark of the movie, young upstarts or old fogies, live in the atmosphere of their own perfumes. They certainly cannot understand the needs of the audience. Yet it is their "personalities" that are fed to the workers who go to the movies!

(to be continued next month)

THE CLASS-STRUGGLE THRU THE CAMERA-EYE

Every weapon is being used by the ruling class to smash the strike of the thousands of Kentucky and Tennessee miners against starvation and terror and for their rights. The bosses know well that this strike is the highest point yet reached by the American labor movement; that it is a counter-offense to shatter the official Wall Street-Hoover campaign of hunger; and, if won, will rouse the workers of this country to militant struggle.

The strongest and most insidious weapons are therefore being directed against the heroic struggle of the miners. The church, charity institutions, the press, courts, armed thugs, police, schools, every strike-breaking agency is being used. Only by exploiting every means, every method and tool available can the workers meet and drive back the terrific mobilization of the forces of reaction and oppression.

The movies in this country controlled by the bosses are a means of vicious propaganda, poisoning the working class with anti-working-class doctrines: racial superiority, religious delusions, jingoistic patriotism and its accompaniment, pacifism. This poison is intended to subdue the will of the workers, to sever their ranks and deprive them of essential

unity by obacuring the real issues with emotional fogs.

The revolutionary working class must itself utilize the movie for the proletariat against the ruling class. In its hands it can and must become the strongest mobilizer, educator and organizer for this struggle of which the Kentucky strike is the pivot. The movie will agitate for better conditions, unemployment insurance and inevitably for the overthrow of capitalism-- if the workers support their own cinema!

THE FILM DEPARTMENT OF THE WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL RELIEF places at the service of workers' organizations and groups every aid to carry thru successful mass movie meetings: budget advice, projectors, screens, operators, publicity material, technical advice, and what is even more important, Workers' Films and Newsreels. The Workers' Newsreels, film records of demonstrations, strikes, unemployment, police terror, hunger marches, evictions and so forth, are especially effective in linking all phases of the class-struggle. As powerful antidotes to the poison of Hollywood, and as positive assertions, are the Soviet films and productions of the German WIR, which the FILM DEPARTMENT OF THE WIR is able to supply.

At this time every single workers' organization, every worker connected with any organization-- American Legion, fraternal, sick and death benefit societies, veteran organizations, churches, schools, A.F. of L. locals, and if possible, foreign fascist groups-- should think first of how he can help organize a MASS MOVIE MEETING in support of the striking miners. Despite the misleaders and control of these organizations, all workers should bring the rank and file of such bodies into our broad united front by creating MASS MOVIE MEETINGS. The Kentucky strike is the first dramatic charge of the aroused workers in this critical period; it is also the spearhead for the proletarian cinema.

WRITE OR SEE THE WORKERS'S INTERNATIONAL RELIEF SECRETARY IN ANY MAJOR TOWN. OR DIRECTLY TO THE FILM DEPARTMENT OF THE W.I.R. CENTER, 16 W. 21st STREET, N.Y.C.

W.I.R. FILM PROGRAM:

- A. Immediately-- A large WIR Mass Movie Meeting in each city.
 1. For immediate funds to be rushed to the strike area.
 2. For immediate mobilization of Kentucky, Tennessee Strike Relief Volunteers to lead in the campaign of day-to-day canvassing, mass collections, mobilizations and thundering agitation.
 3. For organizing more mass movie meetings in the same vicinity.
 4. For establishing a permanent hall as a WORKERS FILM CENTER for raising more relief funds every week-- like the WIR weekly showing at the Labor Temple, New York City.

B. Film Tour in each WIR district, arranged by WIR Film Directors in cooperation with workers' clubs, etc.:

Boston-----J. Krantz, 775 Washington St.
 Providence ----- W.I.R., 1775 Westminster Av.
 Connecticut-----+ Saul Kress, 43 East Av., West Haven, Conn.
 New York City----- E. Robson, 16 W. 21st St.
 Rochester, N.Y.---- G. Koren, 25 Watkins Terrace.
 Philadelphia----- J. Lyman, 629 Chestnut St.
 Newark, N.J. ----- G. Clay, 144 Springfield Av.
 Pittsburgh----- Tom Rodgers, 611 Penn Av.
 Cleveland----- H. Strong, 1426 W. Third St.
 Cincinnati----- E. Hammond, 310 E. 8th St.
 Detroit----- A. Yonik, 4819 Hastings St.
 Chicago----- E. Beran, 2457 W Chicago Av.
 St. Louis----- S. Levine, 1346 Hawthorne Place.
 Austin, Texas---- H. Preece, Box 1599, University Place.
 Houston, Texas--- Francis Owens, 107 1/2 Main St.
 Omaha, Nebr.----- J. Stalker, 2023 Burt St.
 Minot, N. D.----- A. Olmholt, Box 871
 Milwaukee----- John Ballen, 926 N. Plankenton Av., Rm 33
 Portland, Ore.---- Mikka Kiapanen, 719 Montana Av.
 Seattle, Wash.---- T.S. McCahon, 219 1st Av. S.
 San Francisco---- E. Hanoff, 77 4th St.
 Minneapolis----- M. Krinsky, 306 3rd Av. S.
 Denver, Colo.---- W.I.R., P O Box 2823
 Salt Lake City, U.- O. Lorson, 53 W. 1st St. S.
 Butte, Mont.----- Paul Newich, P O Box 33

Workers everywhere should get in touch right now with the nearest WIR Film Dept. Director for booking their organizations and their cities on the WIR DISTRICT FILM TOUR. Create a Kentucky Mass Meeting in every town and village! Broaden the United Front!

John Ballam's FILM LECTURE TOUR: From coast to coast he will organize mass movie meetings in over a hundred and thirty cities. Ballam will show workers' newsreels produced by the WORKERS' FILM & PHOTO LEAGUE OF THE WIR, featuring "Strike Against Starvation", the 3,000 foot film dealing with the Penn-Ohio-W. Virginia-Dentucky mine strike; and "The New World", 2,000 foot film dealing with the history of workers' Russia, 1914-1931.

Over fifteen Kentucky Movie Mass Meetings have taken place. Striking miners have appealed for relief to hundreds of workers' gatherings. And now, at future showings, workers and friends should jam the halls to capacity.

REVIEWS

"THE TRIAL OF THE YELLOW PRESS"

Mass Pageant for "Daily Workers".
Produced by Dram Council, N.Y.

Reviewed by H. Elion,

It is generally accepted that the primary aim of a pageant produce at a large mass meeting is agitation for the purpose that the meeting was called for. In this case the meeting was arranged with the idea of bringing the Daily Worker Drive for Subs to a climax. The topic for the Pageant, therefore, was well selected and the substance carefully prepared. However, there were some shortcomings in the presentation, not shortcomings of a technical nature but of unbalanced emphasis, and hence, ideological weakness.

The "Yellow Press", played by the Red Dancers was featured too prominently, in a conspicuous position and for lengthy period of time, on the other hand, the "Red Press" only came on the stage for a relatively short time and was - in its first scene - placed behind the props, so that very little could be seen by the audience. As a result the climax was much weakened and the agitational value of the play was dampened.

This shortcoming was probably due to the fact that the "Yellow Press" rehearsed separately and the unity of the pageant was lost.

However, technically the pageant was well prepared. The props were well constructed and they played a very prominent part in the play.

The problem of presenting pageants at mass meetings is becoming more and more burdensome. A few years ago a pageant would be presented once a year. Now every large meeting calls for a pageant. As a result we must rely upon comrades not active in theatre groups to put on the pageant, for the theatre groups must carry on their daily work, and cannot give all their time to mass performances. This means that the comrades who participate in the pageants are not regular at rehearsals. At every rehearsal there is a new group of comrades and to the last minute characters have to be cast because of the absence of comrades. This fact accounts for the few shortcomings in the last production.

"ON THE BELT"

Produced by Prolet-Buehne, N. Y.

Reviewed by Pauline Ecklar.

Ed. Note: The following review was sent in by a visitor of a Prolet-Buehne performance in the Workers Center. As the reviewer does not agree in all points with the political aims of the revolutionary theatre her criticism is so much more valuable for our attempts to find the most efficient way to impress and convince our audiences, and especially such audiences which are not yet politically close to us. All groups should arrange discussions on this review in order to check up and correct their methods of work.

"On the Belt" was the basis of my enthusiasm and it is chiefly of that I now write. I can't recall any play which moved me anywhere as much. The marvel of it was that, devoid of stage settings, costumes, make-up, etc., the effect upon the audience was overpowering. The sincerity of the actors, their seriousness and earnestness very quickly communicated themselves to the spectators. I think the piece was superbly done. The force was tremendous.

I scarcely think that any amount of coaching at a dramatic studio could have fired your German group as did its belief in the thing it was doing, its devotion to a cause, and its hope of amelioration for the suffering masses.

What made the content of "On the Belt" doubly forceful was the art with which it was executed. Personally, I have never been interested in full, bold propaganda. I have always felt that, when presented as a series of hammer blows, it defeated its own purpose. I realize of course, that it is far more difficult to combine propaganda with art but, when that is achieved, the enthusiastic reception of such efforts are boundless.

-1931-

by Claire and Paul Sifton.

Reviewed by H. Elion.

"A good play for us," proclaims the Group Theatre in its program, "is not one which measures up to some literary standard of 'art' or 'beauty' but one which is the image or symbol of the living problems of our time. These problems to-day are chiefly moral and social, and our feeling is that they must be faced with an essential affirmative attitude, that is, in the belief that to all of

them there may be some answer, an answer that should be considered operative for at least the humanity of our time and place. Such plays may be tragedy, comedy, fantasy or farce; they may be indented with any aesthetic category; but they must be directly relevant to the audience for which they are presented." Thus the Group Theatre has for its purpose 1) to present plays that deal with living problems of our time, 2) to present them in the belief that to all these problems there may be some answer and 3) that the plays must be directly relevant to the audience for which they are presented. I will attempt to analyze this production in the light of this aim, that the Group Theatre set for itself. Not because I think that this aim is in thorough agreement with my views on the theatre but because, it seems to me, the Group Theatre failed in the performance of "1931" to fulfill this aim.

Let us take the play itself. It is true that the play deals with a very important social problem of our time, a problem that affects the lives of millions of people - unemployment. In this respect the Group Theatre made a good choice. But does the play fulfill the other requirement? Does the play '1931' attempt to present an answer to the problem of unemployment?

This question must be answered in the negative. Thruout the play there is not even an inkling of a positive suggestion as to what the unemployed should do. Adam, the young trucker, gets fired from his job. He wanders from factory gate to factory gate and can't get any work. We meet him in lines waiting for the factory to open, in the mission on the Bowery, in the company of masses of workers, but none of these workers, even the intellectual hoboes, are aware of the reasons for unemployment. Not one of them attempts to place the blame anywhere, even if it were with prohibition. We see masses of workers throwing themselves at cops like enraged animals, but no sign as to why they throw themselves at cops. At the end when Adam finds a job in a restaurant, and discovers that his sweetheart had become a prostitute because of lack of any other means of making a living Adam decides to join a demonstration outside. We have seen demonstrations before, so have the author and the director of the play, but none of us has ever seen a demonstration that had no sign of organization behind it, no slogan, no poster, no intelligible protest. This is an obviously conscious elimination of any positive element in the performance. If the producers did not intend to go all the way and show the solution to unemployment, the solution operating in the Soviet Union, they could have resorted to their own formula and presented "an answer that should be considered operative for at least the humanity of our time and place." Such a solution is unemployment insurance and immediate relief. A solution for which the organized working class is at present waging a struggle. They failed to do even that and thus failed to accomplish part of the task the Group Theatre set for itself.

Now to the last question, "that the plays must be directly relevant to the audience for which they are presented". What audience did the Group Theatre have in mind when they produced "1931"? Surely;

they could not have in mind the millions of unemployed, first because the unemployed could not afford the price of a Broadway performance, and second, even if they could, what would an unemployed worker gain by seeing a worker going thru the hell of being unemployed. It seems to me, to put it mildly, that an unemployed worker knows better than the Group Theatre what it means to be unemployed, he would much more prefer to see a way out. If, however, they aimed at the "high hats", then, possibly, this group might get a positive suggestion out of the play, and that is, use machine guns. Of course the high hats would be fooled because a director of the Group Theatre told me that the intention was to show that the workers march on in spite of machine guns. But this point is so subtly put across that a capitalist will prefer machine guns.

Thus the Group Theatre put on a performance of technical excellence, but failed to achieve the aim it set for itself.

PREPARE FOR THE NATIONAL WORKERS THEATRE CONFERENCE AND SPARTAKIAD, N.Y. APRIL 16TH-17, 1932

- 1) Have discussions in your group and send in your motions and recommendations
- 2) Arrange local affairs to raise money for this important event
- 3) Sell tickets for the Spartakiade

PARTICIPATE

- 1) by sending delegates
- 2) by performing in the Spartakiade

Send all communications to

DRAMBURO
16 WEST 21ST ST.
NEW YORK.

CORRESPONDENCE

A SUGGESTION

From Workers Theatre
7 E 15th Str. N.Y.C.

Workers Laboratory Theatre
16 W 21st Str. N.Y.C.

Comrade:

It has been called to my attention that you are conducting a series of lectures, and publicizing them in the newspapers as "Workers' Theatre Nights".

Might I suggest that, as we are also running talks on the theatre and advertising them under the title of our organization, the conflict of the two series may possibly bring about a confusion equally unfortunate for both of us. As you are officially known (and generally known as the Workers Laboratory Theatre, it would seem that a logical procedure would be for you to use your entire name in all advertising and publicity. I trust that you will consider this matter and let me have an immediate reply.

Fraternally
Joel Lloyd.

Ed. Note: The stationery used for the above communication is as remarkable as the letter itself. The letterhead shows the slogan "Art is a Weapon", while the letter foot exhibits besides others the following individuals as "sponsors" of the so-called "Workers Theatre": Heywood Brown (Author of "Shod the Works". (Workers Theatre mind you!), Morris Hillquit (fighting the Soviet-Union, paid by the Oil Magnates), Norman Thomas (Jimmy Walker's conscience), and some more of the type.

And "the Logical Procedure"

From Workers Laboratory Theatre of the W.I.R.
16 W 21st Str., N.Y.C.

Joel Lloyd "Workers Theatre"
7 E 15th Str., N.Y.C.

Sir:

The Workers Laboratory Theatre of the Workers International Relief has been running a series of WORKERS THEATRE NIGHTS. These are not

Workers Laboratory Theatre Nights but just what we say they are:- WORKERS THEATRE NIGHTS. The speakers discuss the problems of the workers theatre, and not the problems of our one workers theatre group, the W.L.T. But of course we are very careful in all our publicity to declare that these WORKERS THEATRE NIGHTS are arranged by the Workers Laboratory Theatre of the W.I.R., and are held at the Workers Laboratory Theatre of the W.I.R., 16 West 21st Str., N.Y.C.

We, in conjunction with another workers theatre group, the Prolet-Buchne, publish a monthly mimeographed magazine called WORKERS THEATRE. Our workers theatre group and our workers theatre magazine were in existence before we ever heard of your organization and before your organization existed. The phrase "Workers Theatre", perhaps you may not know, is a general term for an international workers theatre movement that is devoted to furthering the class interests of the workers and farmers of the world, to the conquest of power by the workers of this and every other country in which the workers and farmers are still at the mercy of the capitalist class. The workers theatre is a revolutionary theatre. Its slogans include "Art is a weapon" - "Theatre is a weapon" - "Workers theatre is a weapon in the class struggle", and others. A real workers theatre does not merely use these slogans as decorations for letterheads; to a real workers theatre they are a guide to action. "Art is a weapon", that was Marx's analysis, as it is ours. And if this weapon is not used as a sharp weapon in the direct service of the working class, but as a toy for experimental souls to play around with, then art is still a weapon, not for but against the workers. This has happened in many countries.

This last bit of exposition does not touch directly on the point raised in your letter; that was done in the first paragraph. But we wished to take this opportunity to make clear to your entire workers theatre group just what is the position of the Workers Laboratory Theatre of The W.I.R. on the workers theatre movement. We certainly feel that under no circumstances is "workers theatre" a phrase to be monopolized by any particular group. At the same time we are as careful as can be, not to confuse our theatre group with yours, nor the workers theatre movement with your group or groups.

From the little we hear of the work of your "Workers Theatre", we believe that there exists a considerable lack of clarity among your workers and students and those others among the group who believe that "art is a weapon" is a correct analysis, and who wish to use the theatre as a weapon in the service of the working class,- a lack of clarity as to just what this slogan implies in the way of an actual working program. We shall be very glad to have an exchange of opinion between your group and ours on this, as you no doubt realize, important question.

Yours
Workers Laboratory Theatre
of the W.I.R.
Org. Comm.

THE GROUPS IN ACTION

BUILDING UP SYSTEMATICALLY.

A report from the "Solidarity Players,"
Boston.

Since we last wrote to you, we have been very busy. On November 1eth, we presented "The Groggy Compass" which was in preparation when we last wrote. The performance, at a local celebration of the Russian Revolution, was a very successful one. The scenery, painted by some of our own comrades, created a very impressive atmosphere. The audience liked the play very much. The main criticism, as brought out at the discussion meeting which was held shortly after the performance, was that the climax came too long before the end. We discussed this point and came to the conclusion that what followed after the so-called "climax" was too important to omit, but that it should be speeded up.

Our next performance was of a short play written by one of our own comrades. As we had only one week in which to prepare the piece, the result was not very successful. Besides the lack of preparation, we decided that the play itself needs improvement. It will have to go to our laboratory committee for revision before we can put it on again. We are sending you the play, "Here and There" by Louis Sgan, in its original form. We should like to have your opinion of it.

Now, before we tell you about our laboratory committee, we want to tell you about some practical work that we have done. The "Solidarity Players", with the help of the local W.I.R., arranged a lecture with Prof. Dana on the subject of "With Shaw in Moscow". The proceeds of the lecture, about sixty dollars, were turned over to the W.I.R. for the benefit of the textile strikers. Out of this sum ten dollars were returned to our treasury for use in covering our expenses for properties and rent. We are now planning another affair of the same type, a lecture with Michael Gold on Jan. 17th, the proceeds to go to the striking miners.

And now about our laboratory committee. The chief duty of this committee is to read all new plays before they are read to the group. The accepted plays will then be read to the entire membership, and if accepted by the members will go back to the laboratory committee for any corrections or improvements that may be found necessary.

Our laboratory committee has already shown how it can function. When we were invited to perform at the Liebknecht Memorial Meeting, we found that we had nothing appropriate to offer. We, then

instructed our newly-elected committee to look for suitable material and report back to the group. At the first meeting, one of the members suggested an anti-war play, which had been printed in the Jewish Morning Freiheit. The play was read and accepted by the committee. Then came the problem of translating it. The committee immediately set to work. After three meetings of hard work, the play was ready to be read to the membership. It was unanimously accepted and we are now rehearsing "Why" by P. Rom for January 15th.

As you see, comrades, our laboratory committee is a valuable asset to the "Solidarity Players", in that a group of five people can work more efficiently, in this instance, than a group of fifteen. The "Solidarity Players" are doing work and are constantly benefiting by their own mistakes.

AN EXPERIENCE WITH WORKERS CHILDREN

by E.W. Mareg, Prolet-Buehne, N.Y.

The Modern Sunday School of Queens was to have an affair on Dec. 19th at which they intended to give a play by the children of the school. This information was given to the Dram Buro who asked me to put on and direct a play for this affair of the Modern Sunday School.

The first time I met with the children I handed out several plays that are printed in the Workers Theatre Magazine. After having read the plays, the children decided that the play "The History Lesson" was the one they liked best. They were very enthusiastic about putting it on.

The next step we took was electing a chairman and an organizer from the ranks of the children to carry out the organizational work in order to establish discipline and punctuality. It was very interesting to see how precisely the children knew who were the ones that were best fitted to carry out these functions.

Before rehearsing the play we found that it had to be changed somewhat for two reasons: 1. in order to propagandize the aims of the Modern Sunday School, and 2. to give each one of the children that wanted to participate in the play at least a few lines. This change was done together with a member of the Dram Buro and myself.

We had some difficulty in finding someone to play the part of the teacher. The elected organizer got in touch with a girl that used to belong to the Modern Sunday School and who at the same time was supposed to have had some experience in acting. However, when this girl came to the rehearsals we found that she was absolutely unable to handle the part of the teacher, because her conception of the play as a whole was: that the children in school would never speak

the way they do in the play, and that it was not real. It was entirely impossible to convince her to look at the play from a different angle, since she was not the kind to understand. The children then decided that she should not be in the play, and then I was forced to play the part of the teacher. The children had made that suggestion before, I had objected, but it was now the only way out.

This incident was our only difficulty. The rehearsals went on smoothly and the excellent performance was proof of the cooperation of the children amongst themselves, and showed all the enthusiasm that the spirit of a real workers children play can produce in the players on the audience.

I never before experienced so much willingness for cooperation in order to work successfully than with these children. Altogether 31 children participated in the play, and only at one rehearsal 2 boys were absent. At another rehearsal one girl came an hour late. When asked why it happened she said that because it was raining her father forbid her to go but she sneaked out after he left, and that was why she was late. When we rehearsed the song "Solidarity", which we needed for the play and which was unknown to the children, I was told by a member of the parents committee of the school that the children had never sung one of their own school songs with such a spirit. We had to sing "Solidarity" at the end of every rehearsal.

I learned an important lesson from this work with the children of the Modern Sunday School, and that is: We must under no circumstances neglect this work. No better and more unspoiled element can be found than this type of workers children. A very great part of the attention of the Dram Council of the Workers Theatres must be concentrated towards the direction where these elements are found. It should not only be the task to keep in touch with these children but it must be our duty to organize them by means of the Workers Theatres for the class struggle and make conscious fighters for the working class out of them.

Thus Workers Theatres become a real weapon in the class struggle.

SPECIAL COMBINATION SUBSCRIPTIONS

				REGULAR	COMBINATIO
"WORKERS THEATRE"	and	"NEW MASSES"		\$ 3.--	\$ 2.50
"WORKERS THEATRE"	and	"COMMUNIST"		\$ 3.50	\$ 3.--
"WORKERS THEATRE"	and	"SOLIDARITY"		\$ 2.--	\$ 1.50
"WORKERS THEATRE"	and	"NEW PIONEER"		\$ 2.--	\$ 1.75

NEWS AND NOTES

WORKERS' DRAMATIC COUNCIL, N.Y.--

Sessions were held Jan. 11th and 25th. The reports of the delegates proved of the systematic development and the increasing activities of some groups while other groups are still lagging behind organizationally as well as politically and artistically. The dramsection of the Jack London Club, Newark, especially, made remarkable progress. The Harlem Progressive Youth Club requested assistance in developing the dramatic group. The Buro recommended, in agreement with the delegate of the group, that the whole group should work together for a few weeks with the Workers Laboratory Theatre, while two capable comrades should participate in the training course of the Council in order to be prepared for leading functions. For the Young Communist League which requested forces to organize and train an Agitprop group, special plans will be worked out by the Dramburo. In the report on the Mass Pageant for the Daily Worker Anniversary most of the groups were criticized for still underestimating the political importance of pageants and neglecting their duty to take active part in these performances. -- It was decided to arrange a special affair to raise money for the striking miners. The affair will take place at Manhattan Lyceum on Thursday, Febr. 4th. The following organizations will participate in the program: Workers Lab. Theatre, Prolet-Buehne, Artef, a Jewish Dramsection, the Ukrainian Dram Circle, the

Red Dancers, and the W.I.R.-Brass Band. Proletcult is in charge of the organizational work for the evening. The Dramburo functions as the arrangement committee. -- The next meetings of the Dram Council will be on Febr. 15th and 29th.

AN INTERNATIONAL WORKERS THEATRE NIGHT IN NEWARK, N.J. for the benefit of the striking miners in Kentucky and Tennessee is being arranged by the N.Y. Dram Council. Besides the Dramsection and the Music group of the Jack London Club, Newark, the following work theatres will participate: Workers Laboratory Theatre, Proletcult Dramsection, Prolet-Buehne, and Red Dancers. The Jack London Club is in charge of the organizational preparation. The affair will be held on Febr. 28th, 8.30 P.M. sharp.

JACK LONDON CLUB, DRAMSECTION, NEWARK, N.J. The Dram Group gave 9 performances during January for the W.I.R., the T.U.U.L., the Anti War Youth Com., and in Elizabeth at an I.L.D. affair for the benefit of the striking miners. On the repertory are "Mr. God is not in", "Step on it!", and the mass recitation "Lenin Calls".

THE RED PLAYERS, N.Y. gave 7 performances in January. Besides "Step on it", the group is playing the mass recitation "Lenin Calls" (which appeared in the Dec. issue of "Workers Theatre"). It has been planned to introduce a uniform costume for all members of the group (which proved to be very effective in the agitprop performances of the Prolet-Buehne).

AMERICAN YOUTH CLUB, BROOKLYN.-- The Dramsection has "Mr. God is not in" on the repertory. "The Case of Tom Mooney" is being prepared.

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INVITATION TO

ALL WORKERS THEATRES IN THE U.S.A

TO PARTICIPATE
IN THE

FIRST NATIONAL WORKERS THEATRE CONFERENCE AND SPARTAKIADE. NEW YORK, APRIL 16TH-17TH, 1932

- 1) by sending delegates
- 2) by taking part, as a group, in the socialist competition of the Spartakiade

PROGRAM April 16th: NATIONAL WORKERS THEATRE SPARTAKIADE
Performances by about 15 groups in all languages

April 17th: NATIONAL WORKERS THEATRE CONFERENCE
1) Reports and discussion on the main problems (political and artistic training, methods of work, repertory, exchange of experiences, international contacts, etc.)
2) Organization of the Workers Dramatic Union of U.S.A.

PARTICIPATION EXPENSES

The participation of groups out of New York is of special importance. By using cars of comrades or sympathizers and by making arrangements with other cities on the road to New York, the transportation costs can be kept so low that it will be easy to raise the money for them thru affairs, collections, donations, etc. The Dramacouncil New York will take care of board and lodging.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

The groups are urged to register as soon as possible for participation. Concerning contact with other cities or any information you need:

WRITE TO

WORKERS DRAMATIC BUREAU
16 West 21st St. New York City, N.Y.

PREPARE FOR THE FIRST NATIONAL WORKERS THEATRE CONFERENCE AND SPARTAKIADE

PROLET-BUEHNE, N.Y. gave 13 performances during January, including one new production: the group recitation "Lenin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg". The English production of the group was started by 3 performances of the Scottsboro recitation in the English version. "Liberty in U. S.A." in the English translation and an original English Agitprop play, written by a member of the group, are being prepared. - The group regards the struggle for the liberation of the nine Scottsboro boys and the relief activities for the striking miners in Kentucky and Tennessee as its main political task for the present time. \$ 43.75 for the miners have been collected at two performances with audiences of about 100 each. - For March 5th, the annual affair of the "Arbeiter", German Revolutionary weekly paper, the group is arranging a new full evening program consisting of several one act plays in German and English. All plays are being written by the group. - The group has the following 9 bookings for February: Feb. 4. "I.L.D.", "On the Belt" (Workers Theatre Night for the striking miners, Manh. Lyceum) 2.6. "Scottsboro", "Tempo, Tempo!" (Painters Union, T.U.U.L. group, 1610 Boston Rd), 2.9. "Liberty in U.S.A." (German Seamen, Farewell Banquet, 2700 Bronx Park East), 2.12. (9 P.M.) "Scottsboro" (Fr. Douglas memorial meeting, L.S.N.R., 137 W 130), 2.12. (10.30 P.M.) "Value and Surplus Value", a pantomime, and "Unite and Fight" (Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, New Star Casino, 107. St. and Park Ave.), 2.13. (9.30 P.M.) "Unite and Fight" (I.W.O.Br. 272, 808 Addy Ave), 2.13. (10.30 P.M.) "Scottsboro", "I.L.D." (C.P. Unit 27, 2700 Bronx Park East), 2.27. "I.L.D." (I.L.D. Bazaar, German Night, New

Star Casino, 107. St. Park Ave), 2.28. "Unite and Fight" (Workers Theatre Night for miners relief, Newark, arranged by Dram, CDuMoil, N.Y.), - For March, the group has already 4 bookings. An affair for the support of the National Workers Theatre Conference will be held in March. - New bookings will not be accepted before March 5th on account of the preparation for the new repertory.

THE NATURE FRIENDS AGITPROP GROUP, N.Y. is rehearsing a new play propagandizing workers sport.

JOHN REED DRAM GROUP, PHILADELPHIA gave 6 performances during January. The group has several bookings for Feb. for the T.U.U.L., Exservice-men's League and other organizations. On the repertory are: "It's Funny As Hell"; Mr. Box, Nox and Fox", "Step on it", "Yankee Doodle", "Lenin Calls", "Follow Lenin", and a revolutionary tableau "Lenin Leaves". - 3 members of the group were elected as a committee to prepare the organization of a Dram Council in Philadelphia. - The group decided to send a delegate and a group to the National Worker Theatre Conference and Spartakiade to be held April 16th and 17th in New York. A series of lectures on "The Workers Theatre" is planned for February and March.

THE WORKERS LABORATORY THEATRE OF THE W.I.R. N.Y. gave 7 performances in January, one of them in Jersey City. - For Feb. the WLT has 12 bookings so far, more than half of them for miners' relief. - Group 1 is preparing a revised version "Fight Against Starvation", group has in its repertory "Tempo! Tempo" and "Scottsboro". (English versions of the Prolet-Buehne plays). 3 members are participating in a shock-brigade troop to function during the Needle Trades Strike in N.Y.

SEND NEWS ABOUT THE WORK OF YOUR GROUP REGULARLY TO "W.T., 16 W 21.

IN THE RED SPOTLIGHT

HOOVER VERSUS BRADY

Prosperity will be back in sixty days--said Hoover, as he swallowed another fat steak--and now a statement from another steak eater, (a fat producer in the bourgeois theatre), a statement which is destined to do as much for the theatre crisis as Hoover's statement has done for the twelve million unemployed workers of America.-----Read it and laugh----- "The American Theatre presents to the youth of today more opportunity for success and fame than any other profession," says, William A. Brady in the New York Times of Jan. 17, 1932. "It is often said that the American Theatre is declining and the profession is an idle profession, this is not true"*****further says Mr. Brady, "right at the present time there is no business in America which extends such an opportunity for achieving greatness, fame and international recognition. Hoovey says the unemployed actor standing in the breadline without a decent meal for days. And the thousands of other starving actors smile grimly to themselves and mutter---yeh---success---success hell,---the only opportunity you got in the theatre business is the opportunity to STARVE.

It is not surprising to hear asinine remarks like this from producers who have grown rich at the expense of actors, stage-hands, writers, and all workers who are a part of the theatrical business.

If you are interested in reading just a few of the thousands of hardships facing theatre workers today I refer you to an article by Com. Reines in the present issue. When you finish that article turn to the red spotlight once more and just way of contrast.

In the Soviet Union--The theatre is taking giant strides forward with the five year plan. Thousands of theatres springing up throughout Russia. Universities present thorough training courses to work on acting, directing, etc. NO UNEMPLOYMENT FOR ACTORS OR ANY WORKERS IN THE SOVIET UNION. NO STARVATION. Perhaps it was the Soviet Union the Hon. Wm. A. Brady was dreaming of when he described the possibilities of the stage today.

A LABOR SCHOOL LEADS THE WAY.

And here is a choice bit of news concerning Commonwealth college, a labor school located in the heart of the drought area. The students at Commonwealth decided to produce Hallie Flanagans play about the starving conditions of the farmer "Can you Hear Their Voices. But all reports have it that the play was castrated and all references to Communism thrown out. Well---There are labor schools and labor schools--and you could sing that if you had a tune to it. And by the way, if this hits the eye of someone in Commonwealth who would like to furnish us with the facts,-----Lets hear from you.

FORGIVE THEM--I CAN'T FORGIVE THEM--FOR THEY KNOW WHAT THEY DO?

And Red Spotlight after all these months of anticipation got a letter about the John Reed Club Ball, Webster hall, and the letter was naked of passes as a miner of coal. Old R.S. seeks the comfort of a little less fireplace--reason--\$1.50 in at \$2.00 at the door--so long