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Whatever you may be planning for Friday evening, January 5th—cancel it now! For on that evening we are celebrating, with fitting ceremonies, a truly cosmic event—the birth of the weekly New Masses—and you'll want to be there.

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Of NEW MASSES, published monthly at 31 E. 27th Street, New York, N. Y., for Oct. 1, 1933.
State of New York } ss.
County of New York }

Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared William E. Browder, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the business manager of the New Masses, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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2. That the owner is: The American Fund for Public Service, 2 West 13th Street, N. Y. C.; James Weldon Johnson, President, 2 West 13th Street, N. Y. C.; Robert W. Dunn, Secretary, 2 West 13th Street, N. Y. C.; Morris L. Ernst, Treasurer, 2 West 13th Street, N. Y. C.

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WM. E. BROWDER, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 17th day of October, 1933.

Max Klitzes, Notary Public.

My commission expires March 30, 1934.



new Masses

JANUARY 2, 1934

IN presenting this first issue of the **NEW MASSES** as a weekly, we think we can best indicate our program in these concrete terms: The **NEW MASSES** has friends and it has enemies. It supports the militant sections of the working class, the living core of which is the Communist Party. Its enemies are the enemies of the working class, the upholders of capitalism: bankers, militarists, imperialists, Fascists, labor fakery, Social Fascists, and all other open or hidden defenders and apologists of the capitalist order. The **NEW MASSES** must keep in step with our rapidly moving revolutionary epoch. It addresses itself to those in the middle class who have shed their illusions about bourgeois democracy and are ready to fight for a Communist society in alliance with the vanguard of the workers. The **NEW MASSES** will reach out to those workers and farmers whose interest in the revolutionary movement extends beyond the economic and political to the cultural front. We hope to become a strong factor in uniting groups of the middle class with the working class in a fight for immediate demands of fundamental importance to their welfare: against imperialist war, against Fascism, evictions, hunger and wage-cuts, lynchings and oppression of the Negro people.

FASCISM confronts the American people in no academic sense: today, January, 1934, there are the revived K.K.K., and the Silver Shirts, the Khaki Shirts and the Crusaders. At the same time a more insidious form of Fascism is being foisted on the people, represented by the logical evolution of the National Recovery Act and Roosevelt's assumption of powers never attained by former Presidents in time of peace. In this period men are forced to come to decisions — irrevocable decisions determining their viewpoint toward life and their relationship to the classes about them. The **NEW MASSES** as a weekly, aims to help these to reach decisions to throw in their lot with the only forces that are creating, straining for life in a society rotten and doomed. The signpost points two ways: to the right, the



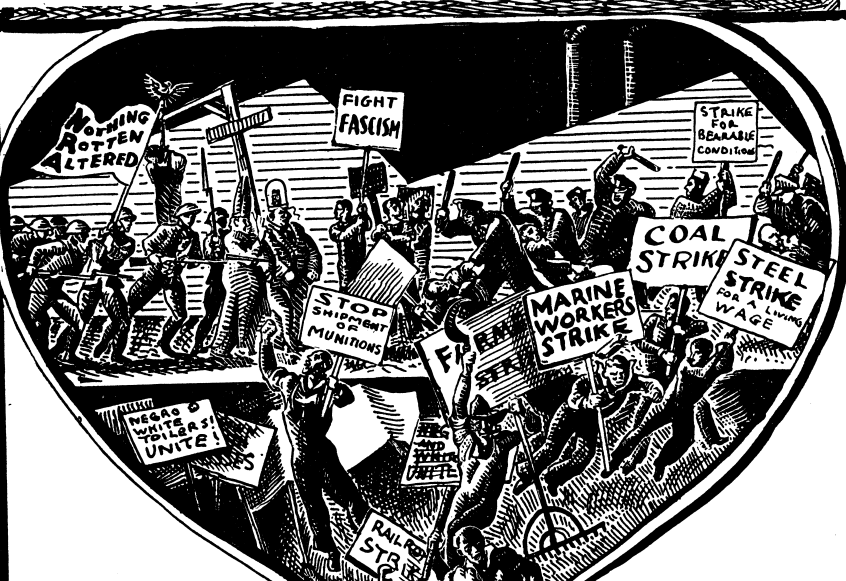
Merdi Gasner

medieval brutalities of Hitlerism; to the left, the freedom of a classless society.

SISLEY HUDDLESTON'S remark that the capitalist nations are speeding to war like express trains headed for a huge smash finds ominous corroboration in latest news dispatches. Communist Deputy Doriot's inquiry showed that French export of arms and munitions to Japan have increased in one year from 260,312 to 384,444 pounds, a leap from 10,786,00 to 25,000,000 francs in value. While the French government was trying to explain how this activity is perfectly compatible with efforts toward world peace,

the Japanese Diet appropriated an additional \$289,850,000 for its army and navy. . . . And almost simultaneously Japan's official news agency Rengo, broadcast scare-stories about U.S.S.R., China and the U.S.A. "exerting economic pressure against Japan" going so far as to suggest that U.S.A. is planning to rent Sakhalin from the U.S.S.R.

OF COURSE Rengo scrupulously avoided mentioning that in Chester, Pa., condemned U. S. Shipping Board vessels are being cut up into scrap-iron (from which shrapnel is made) and shipped to Japan, or that nitrates are being constantly exported to Japan from Hopewell, Va., with the



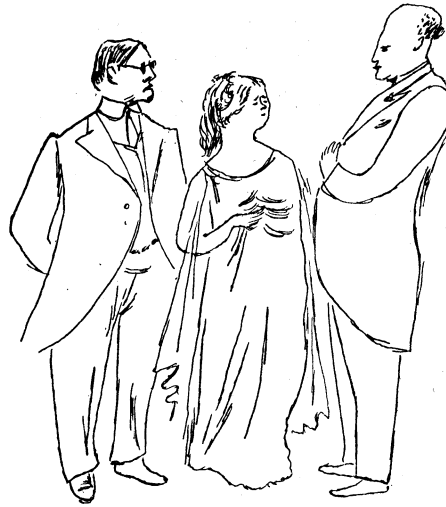
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probability that these death-dealing materials will some day be used against the workingmen who have manufactured and are shipping them. Had Rengo felt any need for apologizing for Japan's arms-budget it might have said a word or two about the billion-dollar war appropriation of the Roosevelt government, or stressed the use of public works funds for improving military roads, coast artillery defenses, building battleships, etc. That 1914 is being prepared all over again cannot be denied by any who have eyes to see. And the problem: Can the capitalist nations resolve their mutual rivalries for a temporary period sufficient to present a united front against the Soviet Union? The workers of all the world will have a part in the answer to this riddle.

TO prop his tottering Recovery Program, President Roosevelt has turned his eye to the starving artists. Ignoring their sensibilities, he has instructed 2,500 artists to turn in murals, easel paintings, statues, friezes, memorial tablets, designs for linoleum, and drinking fountains by the end of six or, the latest, eight weeks at \$34 a week. The country has been divided into art districts headed by specially appointed administrators, mostly museum directors, who are to distribute commissions and choose the best works for museums and public buildings. So far, the directors, including Mrs. Juliana Force of New York, have oriented themselves on well-known names. Less famous artists have been left to starve. Altogether, this CWA plan exposes the perennial bourgeois piffle about "pure art," "self-expression," "art for art's sake," etc. The Maecenases, in order to prevent the artist from showing up the hideousness of their system, have always managed to mesmerize him into believing he was too fine and spiritual—all soul and no stomach!—to meddle with the sordid things of life. While their system worked, they were able to bribe some artists and bamboozle others into acqui-

escence. Now that it is clear to everyone, even artists, that capitalism is decaying and that NRA is a flop, our affable dictator is attempting to bribe the moulders of public opinion and channelizers of mass emotion with pitifully small handouts from the Federal Treasury.



The Art Committee SIMON BRASQUIN

HITLER'S program to sterilize 400,000 people deemed genetically unfit suggests some fearful possibilities. That sterilization of political enemies has already been perpetrated in Nazi chambers of horror there can be little doubt. The recent Daily Worker exposé of Nazi intentions to inject syphilitic germs into Torgler, Dimitroff, Taneff, and Popoff indicates what the Nazis are capable of. Officially, to be sure, Hitler urges this program, not as a political weapon, but as a eugenic means of purifying the German race. Nothing but the best and the purest makes adequate cannon fodder, says Hitler. Since being a Jew or a Communist is already a crime in the Reich, Hitler's next logical step is an official declaration that Jews, Communists, and other politically undesirable elements are genetically unfit and subject to sterilization. To obviate criticism, he will find plenty of Nazi pseudo-scientists to prove Marxism and Judaism hereditary diseases which can be extirpated only through wholesale sterilization. The Aryan priests of Valhala can then proceed to elevate sterilization to a central mystery of their faith, weaving a magnificently revolting Nazi ritual around it.

THE Westbrook Pegler incident wherein a columnist in a liberal paper condoned Gov. Rolph's statement is of especial significance because of its connection with lynching: that most ex-

treme expression of the system of oppression of the Negro people. This native American institution displays chauvinism in its extremest form, the actual working out of the ideology of white superiority. Lynching has its root in the powerful remnants of slavery still extant in Dixie, economically based in the semi-feudal share-cropping system, socially in the all-embracing discrimination against the Negroes, in their total exclusion from the social and political benefits of bourgeois democracy. The rope and the faggot are the coat-of-arms of American bourbonism. The lynching of the kidnapers in California arose out of different circumstances and was impelled by other motives. But the statement of Rolph had, primarily, the effect of condoning lynching, not in its exceptional manifestations, but in its specific function in the oppression of the Negro.

IN THE present frame-work of the world crisis, in an atmosphere pervaded by Fascism and with the marked Fascist tendencies of the N.R.A., lynching takes on added meaning. The semi-feudal South is the most fertile soil for the production of the first major army of American Fascism. There is located the chief generating center of the "Nordic" and white myth. There is concentrated, in foreboding masses, the American counterpart of the Non-Aryan—the Negro. In the South, there already exists in completely worked out form far better than Hitler could hope for, the outlawry of a whole people measured down to the one-thousandth of a percent of "black blood." There is to be found not only the framework but the whole edifice of "race superiority" built without benefit of special decrees or the overthrow of bourgeois democratic institutions. In fact, outside of the brief interval of a few years after the Civil War, these institutions never reached the same level of development in the South as in the rest of the country. And this state of affairs has been granted further Federal acknowledgement and legalization in the double standards of the N.R.A. codes.

The Scottsboro case, more than any other single event, has shown the tremendous revolutionary potentialities of the struggle for Negro rights. The rapid development of a revolutionary movement among the American Negroes, no less than among the American working-class as a whole, will prove one of the most effective bulwarks against the maturing of Fascism.

THE NEW MASSES invites all our readers who want to say something to the editors—particularly you of the working class and ruined middle classes, you students and professionals, to write in to a department which will be one of our most important sections in forthcoming issues. This department will be called "Letters from America."



The Art Committee

SIMEON
BRAGIN

THE Governor's Committee of Forty-four, appointed to investigate education in New York, reports that "Scientific studies show that increasing the size of class registers does not necessarily decrease efficiency." Though small classes and the kindergarten rank among the greatest advances in modern education, Dr. Paul R. Mort, in his report to the Governor of New Jersey, also advocates increasing the size of classes. Furthermore, he recommends what amounts practically to wiping out the kindergartens. The New York committee was heavily packed with representatives of big business, but prominent educators also participated. Their task was to see that the principles of education should not suffer from "economy." They succeeded. They changed the principles to suit the retrenchment program. Professors in Uniform, like writers and scientists, are worth their hire. Classes of sixty have been tried "experimentally" in Cleveland, and pronounced a "success." Cleveland, New York, and New Jersey are not isolated instances of retrogression. Throughout the country the Professors in Uniform do their part, cutting appropriations, telescoping classes, saving on text books—while Federal appropriations burgeon to the

skies, so that there may be more guns and more battleships.

AS we go to press, three important student conventions are in session in Washington. The National Students League, after two years of vigorous leadership in campus struggles throughout the country, is convened with the purpose of coordinating its activities to facilitate work among Negro students, particularly in the south, and to find concrete ways of working in unity with the advanced guard of the working class. The League for Industrial Democracy, reduced by vacillation and opportunism to virtual impotence, needs an organizational apparatus distinct from the adult section of the L. I. D., and free from the reactionary domination of the Socialist Party. And now, the Student Union of Young America makes its debut. Under the social-amelioration banner of Dewey, Barnes and Co., this group appears as a new impediment to student unity. It naïvely proposes to propagandize the profit system out of existence. In the December issue of the Student Review, the National Students League addressed an open letter to the L. I. D. signifying its willingness "to convert its national con-

vention . . . into a unity congress of the American student movement." Students here and abroad will await with intense interest the outcome of the Washington conventions.

THE first John Reed Club of Revolutionary Artists and Writers in this country was organized in New York in 1929, just about the time of the great crash. Since then about thirty John Reed Clubs have sprung up in the various sections of the United States. A number of these clubs have launched or are about to launch their own publications—New Force in Detroit, Leftward in Boston, The Partisan in Los Angeles, Red Pen in Philadelphia, The Partisan Review in New York. The main function of these magazines is to provide a creative outlet for our younger talented revolutionists. What characterizes most of these modest John Reed Club publications is their spirit of experimentation, their interest in the revolutionary aspects of their crafts, and their consecration to the struggles of the proletarian vanguard. In this country, these John Reed Club magazines are among the first seeds of the genuinely profound and variegated revolutionary culture that promises to blossom forth in the coming years of intense struggle and great proletarian victory.

THE NEW MASSES would like to pose a question at this moment of discussion over the outcome of the Reichstag fire trial: What do you, Messrs. White and Pickens, of the N.A.A.C.P., and all the others Messrs. of the liberal and civil liberties groups feel about mass pressure at this moment? Our memories are good and we recall the national hulabaloo you raised in the press about the mass pressure tactics of the International Labor Defense and the Communists in the Scottsboro trial. Your voices were loud and too effective in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. But 1933 was not 1927. The working-class and its supporters have learned, and possibly you have, too. The Scottsboro boys are still behind bars in Alabama and the lynch mobs hover near-by. Will you help create sufficient mass pressure to free the boys—or will you once again raise the cry: "The Reds' tactics—and not the Southern lynchers—are to blame." If you want to free the boys—if you really want to help the fight against lynching and class justice—then you've only one answer: mass pressure and more mass pressure!

new Masses

EDITORS:

NATHAN ADLER, JACOB BURCK, STANLEY BURNSHAW, JOSEPH FREEMAN, WILLIAM GARDENER, JOSHUA KUNITZ, GRANVILLE HICKS, HERMAN MICHELSON, JOSEPH NORTH, ASHLEY PETTIS.

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VOL. X, No. 1 C O N T E N T S JANUARY 2, 1934

No Rights for Lynchers.....	6	The New Republic vs. the Farmers.....	22
Roosevelt Tries Silver.....	6	Books	24
Christmas Sell-Out.....	7	An Open Letter by Granville Hicks;	
Fascism in America,.... by John Strachey	8	Reviews by Bill Dunne, Stanley Burn-	
The Reichstag Trial.. by Leonard L. Mins	12	shaw, Scott Nearing, Jack Conroy.	
Doves in the Bull Ring.. by John Dos Passos	13	John Reed Club Art Exhibition.....	
Is Pacifism Counter-Revolutionary.....		by Louis Lozowick	27
by J. B. Matthews	14	The Theatre..... by William Gardener	28
The Big Hold-Up.....	15	The Screen..... by Nathan Adler	28
Who Owns Congress.. by Marguerite Young	16	Music..... by Ashley Pettis	29
Tom Mooney Walks at Midnight.....		Cover..... by William Gropper	
by Michael Gold	19	Other Drawings by Art Young, Adolph	
The Farmers Form a United Front.....		Dehn, Louis Ferstadt, Phil Bard, Mordi	
by Josephine Herbst	20	Gasner, Jacob Burck, Simeon Braguin.	



No Rights for Lynchers

TO THE Social Democrats and liberals of Germany the Weimar Constitution was the embodiment of bourgeois democracy: it was the weapon with which Fascism was to be overcome. This, however, is not purely a German attitude. Sanction of the present series of lynchings by Gov. Rolph and the consequent windy storm of liberal protest draws attention to analogies in the American scene. It appears that the Bill of Rights, Weimar's model, is to serve also as the standard for the American shadow-boxers against Fascism.

Westbrook Pegler, another sports writer elevated to the Olympian dignity of a liberal ideologue, wrote within the sacrosanct confines of his column a frank defense of lynching. Gov. Rolph, he said, had taken a courageous stand, and the machinery of regularly constituted justice, with its delays and loopholes, was altogether too clumsy for speedy administration. From the standpoint of formal bourgeois democracy this was a frontal attack upon its fundamental precepts. Furthermore, the column appeared in the New York World-Telegram, one of the outstanding purveyors of philistinism. A telegram appeared in the paper signed by members of the Writers Committee Against Lynching, deploring the expression of such views in its columns. Then the significant happened: the World-Telegram declared editorially that it disagreed with Pegler's views, but that to deny him or any columnist full freedom of expression was a subversion of the very principles of democracy to which the newspaper was dedicated.

The editorial created confusion in the ranks of the writers committee, whose secretary sped into print to make it clear that the protest telegram simply criticized the views expressed by Pegler but did not at all mean to imply he should be denied the right of expressing them. Many of the members of the committee went into special pains to clear themselves of any suspicion of complicity in a plot against the literary life of Pegler. Similar incidents there are portending a role for American liberalism and social-democracy as inglorious as that of the German brand. We need only recall the offer of the American Civil Liberties Union, that quintessence of liberalism, to defend the right of Hitler's agents to a free platform in this country. As is to

be expected from our own and the German experience, the American Socialist leaders find themselves in accord with this viewpoint.

Bourgeois democracy, about which the writers committee is so harassed, is no abstract formal principle, but a weapon in the class struggle. It is an instrument used by both sides for the attainment of their ends. The logic of the Pegler incident, if the mountainous dimensions of the German fact has obscured its essence, should in itself reveal the absurdity of adherence to formal conceptions of democracy.

The workers and their supporters want the right of free speech in order to organize, with a minimum of obstacle, against capitalism and Fascism. The Fascists, under the cover of bourgeois-democratic institutions, prepare the counter-revolutionary forces, prepare the complete denial of these very institutions. The workers will seek to broaden their democratic rights with an eye to

increasing their means of preparation for liberation struggle. And here lies the fundamental difference between a revolutionary Communist conception of democratic rights, and the mere formal pratings of liberals and Socialists. No retreat to bourgeois democracy in the face of utter Fascist reaction, but a defense and utilization of already existing democratic rights and a struggle for new ones to be utilized for the overthrow of bourgeois democracy, Fascism's parent.

To permit lynchers and Nazi agents full freedom of expression under the pretence of keeping intact at any price the formal principles of democracy amounts to outright aid to fascism. We would deny democratic rights to Fascists, to lynchers, to all those who wish to use them as a means of winning mass support for reaction. We will defend democratic rights, seek to broaden them when used as a means of organizing the forces for the overthrow of capitalism. This is the only logical position not only for a revolutionist, but for any honest liberal, any real democrat, any real anti-Fascist.

Roosevelt Tries Silver

LAST WEEK Roosevelt authorized the coinage of newly-mined silver in the United States. He is utilizing the Thomas inflation amendment as a springboard towards new inflationary measures. The government mints are to buy all silver mined in this country at 64.5 an ounce, more than 21 cents above the current market value of silver. Roosevelt's plan calls for payments to mine owners through the coinage of half their silver. The other half will be collected by the government as a seignorage fee and be kept in bullion form by the treasury. The program is scheduled to run 4 years. It will cost about \$15,500,000 the first year, since American silver production in 1932 amounted to about 24 million ounces.

Roosevelt reached into his medicine kit of monetary tricks and pulled out his silver prophylactic. It is designed "to assist in increasing and stabilizing domestic prices, to augment the purchasing power of peoples in silver using countries (and) to protect our foreign commerce against the adverse effect of depreciated currencies." In plainer language, Roosevelt hopes to use the silver

plan for the double purpose of inflating prices, and as another weapon in the fight for Far Eastern markets.

If we take up the advantage claimed for the silver plan one by one, we shall see that the proposal is mostly bluff, and is primarily meant to be a tactical instrument for use against internal pressure for soft money, and against rival imperialist powers in the international battle of monies.

(1) There will be no world stabilization of the price of silver at 64.5 cents or thereabouts. The United States produces only about one-seventh of the world's output of silver, and the outstanding silver stores of the world are estimated to be around a billion ounces. The purchase of 24 million ounces—or even twice that amount if production is stepped up—will not seriously affect the world price of silver.

(2) There will be no large increase in American foreign trade through an automatic increase in the purchasing power of India and China. The Brookings Institute has published a study which shows that during the crisis, and for many years before, India has been

an importer and not an exporter of silver. That is, India does not buy foreign goods with silver, but purchases silver by exporting goods. Neither America nor the other silver-producing countries want India to sell silver on the world market. This would be the only way India could purchase goods and take advantage of higher silver prices. But one of the main objectives of the international silver agreement at London (of which the Roosevelt plan is a phase) was to limit strictly the sales of Indian silver, in anticipation that the dumping of silver by India would disorganize the world market even more than at present. The Brookings Institute points out that China also buys silver with exports. Chinese purchases of silver are 3 to 4 times as large as the sale of Chinese silver abroad.

(3) The silver purchase plan will no more affect internal commodity prices in the United States than did the Warren gold purchase plan. Silver stocks will go up, and the big mining interests will receive a New Year's gift of 15 million dollars. In this country, 80 percent of mined silver is derived as a by-product of copper, lead, and other metal mining. The 25 companies (mainly the big copper companies) who produce 80 percent of American silver will probably increase silver production in order to get even bigger bonuses, and will thus pile up large supplies of unsold stores of copper and other metals.

It can be seen, therefore, that Roosevelt's plan can only operate as a tactical weapon. It is significant that so far Roosevelt has not authorized the remonetization of silver as a part of the monetary basis of the country, a form of inflation that many farmers and other sections of the middle class mistakenly advocate. He has made a gesture in their direction—but given a gift of many millions to the copper trust. More significantly, Roosevelt has made a threatening gesture at British imperialism in the form of a new effort to capture Asiatic markets. The silver plan can best be understood in the light of the steps that Roosevelt is taking toward the permanent devaluation of the dollar at 50 or 60 cents. By this silver move, he is trying to put more pressure on the British imperialists in the hope that they will be forced to accept a devalued dollar.

The silver plan is but a smokescreen for more important policies. A special meeting of the Federal Reserve Board was held last week. It was indicated that

the next step in the inflationary drive was worked out. The aim is not a bi-metallic base for the currency (the present ratio of silver to gold is more than 50 to 1) but the devaluation of the dollar to 50 to 60 cents. Under cover of "legal" devaluation, the government will probably secure the resulting profits on the 3.5 billions in gold held by the Federal Reserve Banks. Then the government will "legally" issue "gold certificates" to the tune of 3 or 4 billion dollars.

All of this illustrates that the future course of American monetary policy is

towards a further shrinkage of gold as the basis of the capitalist credit structure. Roosevelt was driven to inflation in part by the staggering burden of private and public debt (estimated to be from 175 to 200 billions of dollars), a burden accentuated by the developments of the crisis. Inflation is necessary for American capitalism to save its credit and banking structure. But for the workers it means progressive indirect wage cuts, and the threatening catastrophe of a new imperialist war as the American ruling class struggles for a better foothold in its foreign markets.

Christmas Sell-Out

TRANSPORTATION strikes have a peculiar native knack of developing into fierce class conflicts. When the National Labor Board of the N.R.A. got the wire that more than a score of thousands of cab, milk, delivery, and baker drivers had walked out on the Philadelphia streets to strike in support of the taxi drivers of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit, there were long faces in Washington. And they grew glummer when within forty-eight hours word flashed over the wires that 150 cabs had already gone up in flames; that the police had already clapped 400 strikers in jail; that the Trade Union Unity League and the Communist Party had issued calls for a united front of all labor groups and parties for a general strike in Philadelphia.

Washington had great occasion to fear: Weirton was only a few days past, and here in the highly industrialized Delaware River area the workers had learned through some bitter experience what they could expect from the medicine man on the Potomac. The Budd Manufacturing Company workers, the Ford strikers of Chester and the shipbuilders had learned that the company could ignore—and without fear of reprisal—all Washington's thunderings about collective bargaining. The Philadelphia strike was called principally against the decision of the National Labor Board ordering the taxi drivers back to work without any demands won, with the extremely dubious gain of a promise to arbitrate. And the P.R.T. did not choose to arbitrate. The truck drivers had gone through this experience earlier in the year: arbitration had not materialized to this day.

The general strike was called two hours after Dr. William Leiserson and Senator Wagner of the N.L.B., Director of Safety Woods and Superintendent of Police Joseph Le Strange exhorted singly and in chorus, "You men must stick by Roosevelt." Nine unions affiliated with the Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen and Helpers, were out fighting the N.R.A. But the workingmen reckoned without their Judases. The wires to and from Washington got hot and soon D. J. Tobin, president of the International of Teamsters, the N.R.A. officials and William Green of the A. F. of L. evolved a common policy, The highly geared sell-out machinery began to revolve.

First, Tobin wired T. O. O'Brien, organizer for the teamsters brotherhood in Philadelphia that the strike was illegal. He threatened all who joined a general strike with revocation of the charter. The strikers had cold dinners over Christmas but considerable chance to ponder the intricacies of N.R.A. For the A. F. of L. big shots had succeeded in breaking the united front—and only the milk drivers, the laundry drivers and one teamsters local are still out with the taxi drivers as this magazine goes to press. The lesson, however, is not lost, for the submarginal living standards again teach a grueling moral: that the National Labor Board is a strikebreaker. Weirton's refusal, Budd's refusal, Ford's refusal, and now P.R.T.'s refusal to deal with the men collectively—and nothing to fear from Washington—show the men one thing and one thing only. Strike is their weapon: the medicine man in Washington is expert only at applying sedatives.

Fascism in America

JOHN STRACHEY

THE question of Fascism in America; the question, that is, of the possibility of its rise; of its nature, if and when it does arise; and of the best methods by which the American working class can combat it, is of capital importance.

We are often asked whether Marxists consider that Fascism is inevitable. The proper answer to this question seems to me to be to say that *an attempt* to establish the Fascist form of the capitalist dictatorship in America is inevitable, but that there is nothing whatever inevitable about the *success* of a Fascist mass movement.

Marx long ago expressed the inevitability of the attempt by the present holders of power to maintain their position by a more open and flagrant use of violence and terror. He said that "every revolution inevitably breeds its counter-revolution." He meant, of course, that as the ever deepening crisis of capitalism drove the workers into mass action, as the horrors of capitalist war alternated with the horrors of capitalist peace, as the workers were forced slowly and reluctantly, but inevitably, to come into action against the system, so also the violent and terroristic action of the armed forces of the capitalist class would increase.

Is there anything more crassly ignorant than the charge, now commonly leveled by liberal intellectuals against us, that Marx never realized the possibility of Fascism? It is true that the word was not invented in his day. But, both in terms of general theory, and in the particular case of that regime, Fascist in all but name, the Third Empire of Louis Napoleon, Marx studied Fascism with peculiar care. He never for a moment fell into the Utopian delusion that the working class would be allowed to take power without the most desperate resistance on the part of the capitalist class. And Fascism is precisely the most violent and the most desperate form of this resistance.

The question of the form in which Fascist movements are likely to develop in America is of importance. There seem to be two broad possibilities. I would call them respectively:

(a) *Fascism Proper*, that is to say, a

pseudo-revolutionary mass movement closely modeled on the German and Italian examples, recklessly using economic demagogic promises of scotching the bankers, big capitalists, etc., and mingling these with appeals to race hatred and jingoism of every kind.

(b) What I would call *State Fascism*, that is to say, a gradual and concealed abandonment of democratic forms by the existing capitalist state, so that political democracy is slipped off without the need for a seizure of power by a specially organized mass movement.

There are plenty of signs in America today of the growth of both these forms of Fascism. I have attempted some slight study of the various efforts now being made to establish demagogic mass movements along Nazi lines in America.

There are the silver shirts, the khaki shirts, and the reconstructed Ku Klux Klan, for example. All these movements are of a perfectly orthodox Fascist character. There is nothing surprising even about the extreme illiteracy, and indeed insanity, of their programs and of the statement of their leaders. Every one of the fantastic utterances of Mr. Pelley of the Silver Shirts, for example, could be paralleled by German prototypes. Here is a quotation from an article in Mr. Pelley's journal *Liberation* for April 22, 1932:

Israel, at least that part of it represented by the tribe of Judah, contains a great mass of entities from Cosmos who have incarnated in this generation to stir up a vast Armageddon against the White Peoples—cosmically speaking—of the earth.

Such statements could be paralleled from the programs of most of the present Fascist organizations. It would, however, be the greatest mistake in the world to think that this gibberish necessarily makes them negligible. On the contrary, it is probable that these organizations, using the wildest type of anti-Negro, anti-Jew, pro-jingo demagogy, stand a good deal more chance of success than do saner-seeming Fascist movements. Mr. Lawrence Dennis, who has recently turned Fascist, is, for example, attempting to create a Fascist movement around his new journal *The Awakener*. Mr. Dennis, however, suffers the disad-

vantage of possessing an intellect. Accordingly he seems to find it difficult to use the full Fascist incantations. However, he will probably soon get over such intellectual squeamishness.

The question, however, of which, if any, of the present embryo Fascist organizations will rise to formidable dimensions is at bottom the simple question of which, if any, of them, will attract a really large amount of financial support from some big capitalist interest. The formula of Fascist demagogy is now pretty well established. But it needs heavy financial backing to make it effective. Each of the would be American Fascist leaders is, of course, perpetually engaged, as was Hitler, in trying to capture some really important capitalist, or capitalist group, from whom to draw funds. And the first man—whether Mr. Pelley of the Silver Shirts, Mr. Dennis of *The Awakener* or another—who "lands" a Ford or a Morgan partner, or a Myron Taylor, and thus receives several million dollars, will become the leader of the demagogic Fascist movement in America.

For it is in this way that Fascism becomes the bludgeon of capitalism. To suggest that the capitalists themselves "think up" Fascism for their own protection is to oversimplify the question. What actually happens is that certain ambitions, able and unscrupulous types see the possibility of organizing a mass movement by wild demagogic promises, combined with the inflammation of race hatred and nationalism to the nth degree. They then make a start with what resources they can muster, and it is only when they have already some nucleus of a movement that they are able to enlist heavy capitalist contributions. They do this by balancing their confused anti-capitalist, anti-"money power" street-corner propaganda with the most binding public and private pledges to the capitalists to serve their interests faithfully, if and when they come into power.

If Mr. Lawrence Dennis finds it difficult to mouth Mr. Pelley's wild nonsense about "freeing the nation from the Jewish money power," he is particularly strong on promising capitalists that his movement will protect their interests to the very last dollar. For example, his

COMMANDER'S HEADQUARTERS
Lansing Division.

William Dudley Alley

Silver Shirts of America

229 E. St. Joseph St.,
Lansing, Michigan,
November 22, 1933.

IN ANSWERING THIS DESPATCH
PLEASE REFER TO:

Mr. _____,

Dear _____

The Washington Presidium has recognized Russia which is not at all strange as "birds of a feather flock together." The groundwork for recognition was done by the Pro-consul for International Jewry in America, Bernard Baruch, famed "acting president" while Roosevelt was on his vacation; and Finklestein, alias Litvinov, and his fellow marplot, Trotsky, or Bronstein, in a meeting held in France this summer. There can be no doubt now as to whom it is that holds the reins in Washington.

Now that the N.R.A. is an apparent flop we are to have foisted upon us Jew Gerard Swope's plan. Didn't the papers on November 2, have headlines, "SELF-RULE TO REPLACE N.R.A. GETS BACKING." "HUGH JOHNSON QUICK TO APPROVE PLAN OF GERARD SWOPE." The American people are to be worn out by plan after plan until ruin and starvation accomplish their purpose. The intelligentsia in America cannot be stood up in front of a firing squad like they were in Russia, not yet at least. So under the guise of rescuing us from a "depression" created by the same gang of marplots who are ruining Russia, the nation will be asked to patriotically support plan after plan until its patriotism is debauched and the Spirit of 1776 destroyed. In their desperation and bewilderment Communism will be put over on the people. Today we can witness the beginning of the complete Sovietization of the United States under the N.R.A. Isn't this a strange way for President Roosevelt to become America's greatest President,-- or its last?

To hasten the above event we have a satrap press, screen and radio all telling us what a fine thing it would be to let some 300,000 to 400,000 Jews from Germany many of whom are Communists come over here. And they are coming, we have the word of Secretary Hull for that. Immigration laws mean nothing now since the N.R.A. chucked the Constitution in the waste basket, at least they do not mean much to Sammy Dickstein, Chairman of the Immigration and Naturalization Committee of Congress, unless some 300 Germans want to come over here. Then they work splendidly. Just think the Germans might tell the truth about the "persecuted Jews" in Germany, why they might even join the SILVER LEGION. So they were stopped.

But with 300,000 Jews, that's different. The Baruchs, Warburgs, Frankfurters, Meyers, Wises, Untermeyers and Frams have spoken. The Judan Horde is on its way. With a rubber-stamp organization for Congress,--when it does meet,-- and a Jew-is administration,--un-official, if not official,--who is there to say them, Nay!. NONE SAVE THE SILVER LEGION! I wonder if Prof. Haber knows Michigan's quota?

Give your support to the SILVER LEGION before it is too late.

Sincerely yours,

Conrad Erickson

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER RECEIVED RECENTLY BY A SILVER SHIRT "PROSPECT."

paper, *The Awakener*, thus addresses President Roosevelt:

While you are heroically trying to salvage our economic institutions from the most blighting depression in history, these, your trusted assistants, have been trying to destroy capitalism. Instead of saving America, they have endeavored to socialize it under the mantle of your faith and confidence. They have reeked upon the country a blighting, withering socialism. The American people beseech you, be great enough to admit the mistakes of your subordinates. Scrap the unworkable economic measures which they have inflicted upon the country. Restore the nation to the rule of natural economic law which alone can return prosperity.

The last sentences are particularly noteworthy. Here we have the pledge, not only to abstain from any radical measures, but actually to repeal any modifications of classical capitalism which the New Deal may be thought to have introduced. Here is the pledge (not that it is one that it is humanly possible to execute) to return to classical *laissez faire* capitalism.

There is really nothing to distinguish this program from that of the Republican Party. And it is as an up to date substitute for the obsolescent Republican Party, able to create a mass movement by playing on race hatred, etc., and willing to rule the rest of the nation by terror, that Mr. Dennis is trying to sell his movement to the American capitalists. For just as the Republican Party was the instrument by which American capital held the nation in an iron grip while it industrialized the continent, so Fascist, in Mr. Dennis' dream, is to be the instrument for the new purpose of the American capitalists. And that purpose is nothing less than to hold down the American people by terror at home, while conquering the rest of the world in a series of Imperialist wars.

This, in fact, is the program, the content, of Fascism wherever it appears in the world. Fascism is terror at home and Imperialist war abroad; *and it is nothing else*. But it is not sufficient for us to assert this. It is urgently necessary that we prove, both by theory and by example, that this is the case. For the Fascists are able, by the enormous propaganda resources which their capitalist funds put at their disposal, to represent themselves effectively as a constructive movement which can solve the economic problem. This claim is so obviously ludicrous to anyone who has had even

the elements of a Marxist training that we sometimes tend to underestimate the effectiveness of its appeal to untrained minds.

It is necessary again and again to show that the Fascist pledges, reiterated both before and after they achieve power, that they will not disturb the private ownership of the means of production, absolutely prevent them from even attempting a solution of the economic problem. It is necessary to show in detail, with the aid of the Fascists' own work, such as Pitigliani's book *The Italian Corporative State*, that in the ten years of Fascist rule in Italy nothing whatever has been done to solve the capitalist crisis or to improve the lot of the Italian people.

The reiterated, groveling, assurances of Hitler and all his underlings—such as Fedev—to their Junker and capitalist masters that the whole purpose of the Fascist movement is the protection of private property, that they would not dream of beginning to execute even one of their pre-power promises to "nationalize the big banks and trusts," must be continually rubbed in. For in the long run it is this, viz, the exposure of the total inability of the Fascists to solve the economic crisis, which is our most effective anti-Fascist propaganda. The effect of this exposure is, in the long run, more important than appeals to emotion, than the reiteration of atrocities and the like. For people may be shocked by Fascist atrocities, but if they believe that Fascism can show them a way out

of the crisis, they will follow the Fascists, atrocities or not.

The revolutionary movement in America has a unique opportunity of exposing Fascism at its very birth. We must avoid at all costs falling into the Charybdis of underestimating Fascism, or the defeatist Scylla of assuming that the triumph of Fascism is inevitable. Let us remember, on the one hand, that no matter how ludicrous the Fascists may appear today, they have the great advantage of enjoying the sympathy of a large part of the present capitalist forces of repression. After all, the police officers have themselves been holding down the workers and breaking up all revolutionary agitation for decades. So how can they fail to look with sympathy at these new allies which they observe coming into the field?

A reporter recently asked a leader of the Khaki Shirts at a parade in Chicago: "How is it that the police allow your men to carry these clubs while Communists would never be allowed to carry clubs?" Smith, the since exposed leader of the Khaki Shirts said: "Well, we are on the right side." It is this which makes it highly dangerous to underestimate the possibilities of sudden Fascist growth, which makes it possible for the Fascists to appear so much stronger than the revolutionary forces. They are not stronger. They are incomparably weaker. But they are in alliance with the existing state forces.

On the other hand, and in order to combat the defeatist suggestion that Fascism is inevitable, let us never forget that the whole Fascist program, the nature of which can always be proved from the Fascists' own utterances, is in deadly contradiction to the interests of nine-tenths of the population. Let us never forget that the Fascists always act in the interests of a tiny minority of the biggest bankers and capitalists alone, and that it is only necessary to open the eyes of the masses to this fact in order to make the recruitment of a Fascist mass movement impossible.

Finally let us always remember that whatever temporary success Fascism may have in any particular country at any particular time, it can do nothing whatever except to hasten forward the final disintegration and chaos of the capitalist system. In particular, Fascism plunges towards that new cycle of wars in which the capitalist classes of the world will destroy themselves, and open the road to the workers' power.



Louis Ferstadt



Louis Ferstadt



Louis Ferstadt



Art Young

Art Young

AFTER TWENTY YEARS



Art Young

Art Young

AFTER TWENTY YEARS

The Reichstag Trial: A Nazi Defeat

LEONARD E. MINS

WHAT is probably the greatest political trial of the Twentieth Century, overshadowing even the Dreyfus case has come to a long-delayed end. The Nazis endeavored to prove in open court, that the four accused set fire to the German Reichstag on the night of Feb. 27, 1933 "as a signal for the Communist uprising"—this endeavor has collapsed. Collapsed in a Nazi-dominated courtroom, in a trial that mocked even the standards of bourgeois civil liberties, where the accused Communists were not allowed to conduct their own defense as they saw fit, where defense witnesses were refused safe conduct to appear and testify, and where obviously perjured witnesses were shielded by the combined resources of the German Supreme Court, the Attorney-General, and the iron ring of censorship around the Fascist Third Reich.

When the curtain finally rose on the stage in Leipzig, after seven months of police investigation and seven successive postponements, the outside world awaited with some misapprehension the surprises planned during these long Nazi preparations. It is a curious but significant circumstance that at the very beginning of the hearings Attorney-General Werner chose the discreet course of refusing to issue the 253-page-long indictment for publication. He held the thick volume in his hands, declaring that it contained the proof of the Communists' guilt, but he did not disclose these proofs.

During the past three months the reason for this curious behavior has become clear. From the trial's very first day the Leipzig prosecutors were on the defensive. They were not trying the men who happened to be in the prisoners' dock; they were putting on trial the organizations and the men who were spreading the truth about the Reichstag fire abroad. They were trying desperately to clear Germany's Nazi rulers of the charge that it was they who set the Reichstag on fire to capitalize the ensuing events for their own political profit.

The Reichstag fire trial is over, and the Nazi court has failed to lift a corner of the veil assiduously thrown about what actually happened. As far as the hearings were concerned only one thing

was proved: the Reichstag did burn. Marinus van der Lubbe, the young Dutch mason's apprentice—a former member of the Communist Party of Holland who had turned Fascist and been expelled from the Party some four years before—had admitted setting fire to the building immediately after his arrest at the scene of the crime. But to drive home the major political charge, on which everything else depends: that it was the Communists, rather than the Nazis, who ordered the firing of the Reichstag, the Attorney-General had to prove the complicity of Torgler and the three Bulgarians: Georg Dimitroff, Blogoi Popoff, Vassil Taneff. All the prosecution was able to prove was that Torgler and the three Bulgarians are Communists—which they never tried to deny. In failing to link the four Communists with the actual fire, the Nazi case broke down utterly. It scarcely required a trial to prove that the four defendants were Communists and hence "traitors" in the eyes of the Hitler government.

In failing to prove that the Communists burned the Reichstag, the Reich Supreme Court was left in the presence of an embarrassing spectre—the Nazis' guilt. For the whole world realized that there was no alternative. Either the Communists were found guilty, or the entire structure upon which the Nazi regime of terror, the countless murders, beatings, night raids and tortures had been erected would lose its moral underpinning.

Why, with dictatorial Nazi rule in Germany, were the four Communist defendants acquitted by this court, which had shown itself so utterly subservient to its Fascist superiors? Only because it had become politically inexpedient for the Nazis to place the heads of Torgler, Dimitroff and their comrades upon the headsman's block. And this political situation had been brought about by two major factors: first, the total collapse of the patchwork of perjury and unsubstantiated hearsay that comprised the prosecution's elaborate case; and secondly, the tremendous wave of indignant protest against the Leipzig farce, that rolled in upon Germany from the four corners of the earth. In the face of this

gigantic manifestation of international solidarity, scarcely equalled even in the Sacco-Vanzetti or Scottsboro cases, and in the face of the pitiful breakdown of the indictment under the relentless questioning of Dimitroff and Torgler—ably supported by the Brown Book and the London International Commission of Inquiry—the Hitler-Goering-Goebbels camarilla was forced to retreat.

For the Nazis, this trial has been a succession of defeats. Planned as the principal political campaign against Communism, it has discredited the Nazis even within Germany. The accused Communists in defending themselves, have turned the courtroom into a forum for the defense of their party, and have pilloried the Nazi regime in all its brutality and blundering. Dimitroff's courageous and masterful cross-examination of the prosecution's witnesses evoked the reluctant admiration of practically every foreign correspondent at the trial. He has given the workers of the world a supreme object-lesson in how a revolutionary conducts his defense before the bar of a hostile class court. His self-possessed bravery, facing Goering in what was possibly the most dramatic scene in the forensic history of the past fifty years, has made him the "secret national hero of Germany," as the semi-official Prage Presse editorially described him. This paper's correspondent reports Nazis in Germany as saying of Dimitroff: "An imposing fellow; pity he isn't a Nazi!" This incident shows the extent to which the Communists' defense at the Reichstag trial has helped undermine Nazi prestige among the German masses, and obviously enough, to strengthen the determination and self-confidence of the anti-fascists working underground in the Reich.

The trial is over, but the acquitted Communist defendants are not at liberty. Torgler will doubtless be tried, together with Ernst Thaelmann and other party leaders, for "high treason." Dimitroff and his Bulgarian comrades face deportation to Fascist Bulgaria, where death sentences have already been handed down against them *in absentia*, with the possible alternative of mere expulsion from Germany, with the

right to go where they choose. Again, they may very likely be tried again on the charge of having false passports. Finally, there is the ever-present likelihood that these heroic Communists, like so many of their comrades, will one day be reported to have "died of heart failure" or to have been "shot while attempting to escape."

That the Reichstag trial was held in public instead of secretly, that Torgler, Dimitroff and the others are alive today at all, that the Nazis have been forced to acquit them of the Reichstag

arson charge—all this has been achieved as the result of mass pressure. It is not the "even-handed justice" of the Nazi-controlled court nor a "liberal attitude" on the part of the Nazi rulers that has snatched these Communists from the headsman's axe. International solidarity, the mounting total of demonstrations, protest telegrams, pitiless publicity and mass pressure, have shown in the Reichstag fire trial that the working class has an effective weapon in its battle against the class justice of its capitalistic enemy.

Doves in the Bull Ring

JOHN DOS PASSOS

IT WAS a hot Sunday morning in July. Members of the Socialist Party had come from all over northern Spain for the big meeting in Santander. They had come with their red gold-lettered trade-union banners, with their wives and children and lunches in baskets and leather canteens of wine. They had come in special trains and in busses and in mule carts and on bicycles and on foot. The bullring held about ten thousand; every seat was taken, agreeable mildly intelligent looking people mostly, mechanics, small storekeepers and farmers, shoemakers, tailors, clerks, school teachers, bookkeepers, a few doctors and lawyers; for this part of the world a quiet characterless crowd, but a big crowd.

The proceedings began by the singing of the *Internationale* by a bunch of school children in white dresses with red bows. They sang it very nicely. It passed the time while we waited for the speakers to arrive. The more important dignitaries seemed to be late. Then when the speakers filed onto the stand set up in the broiling sun in the center of the bullring, everybody sang the *Internationale* again, standing, red bunting waved.

Somebody may have gotten the idea that it would be effective to send up two white pigeons with red ribbons round their necks, but (maybe it was the heat or that the ribbons were tied too tight or that the pigeons were sick) the pigeons couldn't seem to fly, they fluttered groggily over the heads of the crowd, and crashed against the wall of the bullring. One of them managed to rise over the roof of the stands and disappeared into the sizzling sunny sky, but

the other fell back into the crowd. People tried to coax it to fly, to give it a starting toss into the air but it was too weak. It finally came to rest in the middle of the bullring, right in front of the speaker's stand. It stayed there all through the speaking, a very sick looking pigeon indeed. I kept expecting it to flop over dead, but it just stood there teetering, with its head drooping.

The first speakers were local leaders, working men or trade-union officials. They spoke simply and definitely. The fight at home, as all over the world, was between socialism and fascism, the kind of order the workers and producers wanted and the kind of order the exploiting class wanted. The Socialist Party had no choice but to go ahead and install socialism right away (cheers) . . . through a dictatorship if need be (more cheers). When the deputy to the Cortes spoke he was a little vaguer, he talked more about world conditions and the course of history and economic trends, but in the end he could think of no other way of finishing his speech than by promising socialism (wild cheers). But when the Socialist Minister spoke (cheers, cries of *Vivan los hombres honrados*, Hurray for honest men) things became very vague indeed. It was very hot by this time, the Socialist Minister was a stout man with a neat academic beard. Neither the stunning heat nor his obvious sweating under the black broadcloth suit introduced a single tremor into his long carefully modulated sentences. He used the classical form of address, subjunctives and future subjunctives and future conditional subjunctives and conditional subjunctive futures. He brought in history and literature, phil-

osophy and the fine arts as if he was speaking to his students at the university, and he ended with a throaty oratorical period that quite took the audience's breath away. The gist of it was that the Socialist Party was the party of discipline and order and that the best thing sincere Socialists could do was stay at home and pay their dues and leave talk about attaining a socialist state in the interest of the workers to their betters, their political leaders who had the interest of all humanity at heart and understood the need for law and order and were honest men besides. The interests of all humanity demanded confidence and discipline from the Socialist Party.

When the speaking stopped, the sick pigeon was still teetering in the center of the bullring. With as much discipline, but perhaps with less confidence than they'd had that morning, the members of the Socialist Party grouped themselves for the parade through the center of town. Everybody was telling everybody else that the watchword was order.

By that time it was afternoon and very hot indeed. The Socialist Party members with their banners and their children and their lunch baskets marched without music through the center of the town to the beach, mild, straggling, well-mannered and a little embarrassed. All the cafés were full. The people sitting at the café tables were telling examples of the type of Spaniard who's hated in Mexico. A gachupin, pear-shaped men with gimlet eyes and predatory lines on their faces, jerkwater importers and exporters, small brokers, loan sharks, commission merchants, pawnbrokers, men who know how to make two duros grow where one had grown before, men who'd discovered the great principle that it's not work that makes money. They'd never been much before, mostly they'd had to scrape up their livings in America, at home the hierarchy, the bishops, the duchesses, the grandees and the Bourbons had high-hatted them off the map, but now the feudal paraphernalia was gone, the gachupinos were on top of the world. They sat silent at their tables looking at the embarrassed socialists straggling by. There are a great many socialists; it took them a long time to pass with their banners and their children and their red ribbons and their lunch baskets. The silent hatred of the people at the café tables was embarrassing to them. They filed on by as innocent as a flock of sheep in the wolf country.

Is Pacifism Counter-Revolutionary?

J. B. MATTHEWS

THE Fellowship of Reconciliation, largest pacifist organization in the world, reached a decisive moment in its history Dec. 16. By a narrow margin of three votes, its national council decided that a referendum of its members should be interpreted as placing the organization squarely on record against all violence in the struggle between classes just as it has opposed the violence of international wars. The concrete action based upon this interpretation was the dismissal of one of the Fellowship's executive secretaries and its Southern representative, Howard Kester. Even an expelled heretic may be capable of an objective analysis of his opponents' view without incurring the suspicion that he is setting a vengeful torch to the Church, especially if his analysis—presented with annoying reiteration—was the ground of action against him.

Let us begin then with the generous and sincere admission that the pacifist cause is infused with a social idealism that rejects physical suffering and torture as a tolerable condition of human life.

Conceding the best of intentions among pacifists, let us examine their mental and social behavior touching the struggle of workers to make a revolutionary overturn of capitalism and establish a classless society. Nothing could be more revealing than the questions in the referendum which the Fellowship of Reconciliation sent to all of its members. It is offered here for the enlightenment, as well as the amusement, of the readers of THE NEW MASSES:

In seeking for a "social order which will suffer no individual or group to be exploited for the profit or pleasure of another" I believe the members and secretaries of the Fellowship should go far to:

1. Proclaim the ideal of such a social order and endeavor through methods of love, moral suasion and education to bring in the new order, but refuse to identify themselves with either the under-privileged or the privileged class to the virtual exclusion of the other. (210 votes)

2. Identify themselves with the just aims of the workers and under-privileged, and protest against the use of violence by the police, militia and under-privileged groups;

raise and distribute relief to workers striking for a living wage; attempt peacefully to maintain civil liberties of exploited groups and espouse publicly their aims, but without the use of any form of coercion. (189 votes)

3. Assist in organizing the workers into unions and in leading them in strikes for a living wage, and if need be in a non-violent general strike; assist in organizing the workers into a political party which will use non-violent political and economic coercive measures in order to secure the abolition of capitalism, but dissociating themselves from any group that used armed violence to gain its ends. (169 votes)

4. In case the legal owners of the essential industries resort to armed force in an attempt to maintain or to regain control of their property, refuse to use violence against them, but offer to serve the workers as a social worker among their families, as a maintainer of food supplies, as a nurse or stretcher bearer, or in other non-violent ways. (310 votes)

5. In the situation described in No. 4 consent to the use of armed force if necessary to secure the advantage of the workers, but regretfully and only while the necessity for it continues. (99 votes)

6. In anticipation of general class warfare, assist in the arming of workers and in other ways prepare for the struggle; when war is fully joined, urge workers to **acts of violence and participate with them** in such acts. (19 votes)

The underlying bias of these questions will be apparent to the most politically illiterate. How then did they come to serve as the basis for the determination of the policies and personnel of the Fellowship? The answer to this question will show clearly the tactics to which the professed adherents of democratic techniques will resort when their vital interests are at stake. At the recent annual conference of the Fellowship held at Swarthmore where the issue of participation in the class struggle was fully joined, there were exactly 68 members present out of the total membership of more than eight thousand! These 68 members elected one-half of the National Council with the full knowledge that the National Council would assume the responsibility for determining the outcome of the issue upon the basis of a referendum. (The other half of the National Council was elected a year

earlier at the annual conference held at Vassar College with a similarly small attendance of members.)

The Council thus elected, primarily by those few members who found no trouble in paying their way to the annual conference and who also were determined to have a cleaning-out of the organization, went ahead full steam, paying not the slightest attention to the protests raised against their loaded questions. The political innocence of the pure pacifists regarding fundamental issues of the class struggle is amply made up for the most astute political tactics in defeating those who hold a working-class viewpoint. All efforts to insert questions in the referendum which would have embarrassed the beneficiaries of large unearned incomes were in vain. Yet these pacifists, be it noted, are the very individuals who cling tenaciously to the theory that the casting of ballots is an adequate device for transferring power to the working class!

So much for the "democratic" tactics of devising the questionnaire! Now for the voting—both in the Council and in the membership at large. There appeared the most striking correlation between *income* and *non-violence*. Also between *incomes* and *non-coercion*. The larger the unearned income, the greater the faith in love, moral suasion and education! Remembering the moral obtuseness of religious groups in the past when faced with the rising wrath of revolutionary forces, one might have expected, in a group so small, a bit of calm reflection on this point. But it was not to be found. Once again there was an almost perfect demonstration that those who have a vital stake in privilege are to be found arrayed against the only methods which, according to history, promise the slightest success in overthrowing the rulers of a parasitic order.

The secretary of the Fellowship who was retained voted for proposition No. 2 in the list above, rejecting "the use of any form of coercion" to say nothing of any form of violence. This it was assumed, in the bias of the framers of the referendum, was the completely non-violent position. Two simple considerations blast the assumption. First, such a position can only have the effect of

maintaining the *status quo* of capitalism, and therefore the *status quo* of capitalist violence beside which the abbreviated violence of a workers' revolution is as nothing. Second, the refusal of social idealists to align themselves with the advancing proletariat that would gladly accept a bloodless though necessarily coercive revolution only necessitates the greater measure of violence on the part of the proletariat. Whereas the committee assumed that positions No. 5 and 6 were the "violent" propositions in the questionnaire, some of them may live to see that those who subscribed to positions No. 1 and 2 were, after all, the supporters of the greater violence.

Position No. 4 contains a salve for the moral conscience of many pacifists which will unfortunately amuse many revolutionaries. In this position it is assumed that workers are engaged in violent warfare with the legal, or once legal, owners of the essential industries, but that in spite of this deplorable behavior on the part of workers the pacifist will continue his complete identification with them, only refusing himself to be morally besmirched by violent acts.

In proposition No. 3 the pacifist promises to dissociate himself "from any group that uses armed violence to gain its'ends." Surely there can be no doubt that the owning class uses armed violence every day of the year to gain its ends, and the chances are a thousand to one that workers will, as a class, do likewise when the revolutionary moment arrives. This type of pacifist is, therefore, under compulsion to dissociate himself from both the owning class and the proletariat.

Modern Italy and Germany amply illustrate the consequences of pacifism for the working class. The Socialists parties of both countries were inoculated with the virus of pacifism, not when crushing the Spartacist revolt, but when dealing with the ruling class, with the result that the bloody terror of Fascism now grips both lands. While workers, if they are wise, will maintain eternal vigilance against *agents provocateur* who would lure them into the snares of provocative violence and will build the largest possible mass support for the exigencies of the final conflict, they will not, when the revolutionary day dawns, be found splitting hairs with counter-revolutionary pacifists in a brave effort to preserve their consciences pure and undefiled.

The Big Hold-up

REPPEAL, Roosevelt's pet stimulus for business, has been thoroughly and, it seems, systematically bungled. With the alcoholic millenium less than four weeks old, the bungling is costing more than \$500,000 a day in taxes which someone forgot to levy and millions more in sucker prices for "legal liquor," half of it rotgut. Already Federal indictments and Congressional investigations are talked of—the usual belated locking of the barn. James Doran, who behaved like a weathervane in a hurricane as head of the Federal Alcohol Control Administration, has been eased out of the government to land in a snug job as head of the National Distillers Institute. Joseph Choate, the new head of the Federal Alcohol Control Administration, is trying to clean up the mess left by Doran.

But meanwhile, certain big distributors have got in on the ground floor. As the result of meaningless regulations about labels, a mysterious juggling of import quotas, permits, customs visas and waiving of rules, all of it yet to be satisfactorily explained, these companies possessed of clairvoyant insight into the government's mind have already collected huge profits in the first hysterical days of liquor-buying. We set down a few significant facts:

Last fall Doran issued a ruling that any importer bringing in liquor under a medicinal permit had to guarantee that the liquor would actually be sold for medicinal purposes. Honest and unimaginative firms, unable to make such a guarantee, did not apply for large medicinal permits. Some four months ago Doran is said to have handed down a ruling that no liquor brought into this country under a medicinal permit prior to Repeal could be sold for other purposes after Repeal. Medicinal permits, when issued, were for one percent of the quota asked.

On Nov. 25, importers were asked to fill out applications for import permits. They were asked to state how much liquor they would need to fill orders for sixty days. They were warned that an over-estimate would prejudice later applications. On Dec. 5 import permits were issued. Quotas were set at from one-tenth to one-third of the amounts asked on imports from all countries except Italy, and Germany. On imports from these two Fascist coun-

tries the quotas were granted for the amounts of wines and liquors the importers had requested. Finally, the quotas were to run for 120 days, twice the time stated in the questionnaire.

The effect of the quotas has been to skyrocket prices. Profits for the importers alone are from 60 percent for some wines and whiskies up to 80 percent for champagnes and liqueurs. Dollar Port was sold at from \$2.00 to \$2.50 at wholesale. (Jobbers and retailers get very much more, with the result that a case of champagne bought for \$10 in Cherbourg or Bordeaux costs the American consumer \$72 or more.)

After the most extensive cutting and blending of the available liquor stocks in the United States, it was estimated that the supply would not begin to meet the demand. It was then that the import quotas became important and American distillers, blenders and distributors began to stir about in Washington to get action. As far as outsiders knew, the first definite action came on Dec. 5, when import permits were issued, accompanying regulations stating among other things, that the cases of imported liquors must bear upon arrival the importer's name and permit number. Here is where the mystery comes in. Although the permits were not issued until Dec 5, and although liquor consigned to the United States could not be cleared from a foreign port without the visa of the U. S. Consul, ship loads of liquor were waiting off the American coast. This liquor, much of it consigned to Schenley and National Distillers, came in immediately after Repeal.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that R. H. Macy and Co., brought in, immediately upon repeal 3,500 cases of champagne. If this was cleared from France under medicinal permits, then the Macy applications must have aggregated 350,000 cases, with an F.O.B. value of about \$4,000,000. (The average annual American importation of French champagnes from 1910-14 was less than \$5,000,000.) If this champagne was not shipped under medicinal permits, then how was it cleared from the French port, and how was it put through the New York piers and warehouses? Jesse Isidor Straus, head of R. H. Macy & Co., is American Ambassador to France.

WASHINGTON.

SOME five hundred bankers, corporation lawyers, Ku Klux Klansmen, factory owners, preachers, insurance brokers, vaudeville actors, and odd numbers such as a former representative of Machado, the Assassin, and gentlemen of unknown occupations will assemble in the Capitol in a few days to begin, with prayer, the first regular session of the Seventy-Third Congress.

The majority are entering the session under the ancient dodge of "going along with the President," even though that may mean enacting higher tariffs; approving further radio, telephone and cable mergers; sluicing more millions into "public works" in the form of Army and Navy building; and thinning the dollar. Several titans of the Progressive bloc have declared that their interest lies in channeling the "benefits" of NRA toward "little business." Probably the ablest of the opposition to Roosevelt's program is Senator Dave Reed of Pennsylvania, whose alternative is to "balance the budget" and let nature take its course. As for the impending battle on inflation, there is every indication that the real campaigns will be fought where those on every important issue of last winter's special session were waged, in the President's study.

Who are these people anyway? Library of Congress supplied me with a study of the "professions" of the membership, by Frances M. Sadd. This is what it showed:

Profession	Senate	House	Total
Business	10	87	97
Law	68	256	324
Journalism	3	7	10
Editing, Publishing	3	6	9
Steel Worker	1		1
Medicine	1	5	6
Teaching	2	10	12
Dentistry	1	3	4
Farming	4	20	24
Unknown	3	25	28

Also, in the House, one each in the following: accounting, army officer, chemical engineering, coal mining, engineering, locomotive engineering, mining engineering, ministry and editing, printing and publishing, railroad, railroad trainman and train conductor.

One glance at this table reveals that worker-representation is practically non-existing. The overwhelming majority of both houses actually occupy personally the economic heights in whose defense they act. And this observation is only

reinforced by inquiring into the individuals who make up the professional groupings. The one Senator listed as a "steel worker," for instance, is none other than our old friend "Puddler" Jim Davis of Pennsylvania, Harding's, Coolidge's and Hoover's Secretary of Labor, the erstwhile Moose lottery magnate. Under the innocent classification, "law," we find such financiers' lackeys as nimble-

witted David Reed, of Pennsylvania, court pleader for the mighty Mellons; Hiram W. Johnson, counsel to William Randolph Hearst; Joseph T. Robinson, the Senate Democratic leader who is retained by Power-Potentate Harvey Couch, of Arkansas; Representative James M. Beck, the Constitutional pedant of Pennsylvania, who is understood to be employed by some big banks seek-

Congress—Who's In It and Who Owns It

MARGUERITE YOUNG



Jacob Burck

ing Constitutional "outs" from the fight—engendering promises made to labor by the NRA; and that other old friend, Representative Hamilton Fish, Jr., who inherited millions as well as a red-phobia. Here also we find Henry T. Rainey, of Illinois, Speaker of the House and owner of a 500-acre farm complete with everything, including Japanese deer. With the farmers, there is

Henry Arens, new Farmer-Labor Representative from Minnesota, vice-president of the unsavory capitalist cooperative, Land o' Lakes, Inc.; and with the "medicine" men, appropriately enough, Royal S. Copeland, of New York, radio entertainer of J. P. Morgan's Fleischmann's yeast, a doctor entrepreneur whose annual take is estimated at somewhere around \$100,000 (in fact it is

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rumored that the Administration is considering banishing him to France, as Ambassador.) Under "publishing" we have aristocrats Carter Glass, of Virginia and Bronson Cutting, of New Mexico, each owning two newspapers. Scratch any category—even the "unknowns"—and you find a business. For example, Unknown Warren W. Barbour, of New Jersey is a manufacturing mogul; to be precise, president of the Linen Thread Company, director of the huge United Shoe Machine Company and of the Central Hanover Bank and Trust Company, as well as self-advertised amateur pugilist.

From another angle, take a look at the "new" elements brought into Congress by the late alleged silent revolution at the polls. Sixteen new Senators and 160 new Representatives. But are they new?

Is William Gibbs McAdoo, of California, once legal counsel to Oilman Edward Doheny, now one of the purest gems in the crown of William Randolph Hearst? Or Frederick Van Nuys, native Indianapolis political spell-binder who comes bearing this endorsement from Smiling Jim Watson who made a record in the Senate as a reactionary trader: "If I had to lose, I'd rather have lost to him than to any other Democrat. He is safe and sane." Or Elbert D. Thomas, of Montana, a "Liberal" by reputation, who won on a platform of a new steal in tariff, bigger and better than Smoot's? Or Bennett Clark, of Missouri, son of the Champ and a founder and former Commander of the American Legion, whose officers are engaged in a nation-wide anti-communist drive?

Or will we find the new leaders in the House? In Representative F. H. Shoemaker from Minnesota, Farmer-Laborite who recently acknowledged himself the former Washington representative of Bloody Machado? In Ernest W. Marland, of Oklahoma who built the \$150,000,000 Marland Oil Company on a cemetery he took over from the Indians? (He went "broke" in 1930 but still has an estate big enough to indulge his hobby, landscape gardening.) In M. C. Walgren, of Washington, jeweler and amateur billiard champion of the Pacific Coast? Or William I. Traeger, Stanford University's 250-pound answer to Los Angeles' prayer for a sheriff to enforce her open shop laws? Or Magnus Johnson, the glassblower who became the mountebank of the Farmer-Labor party? Or Reuben Terrell Wood,

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ing Constitutional "outs" from the fight-engendering promises made to labor by the NRA; and that other old friend, Representative Hamilton Fish, Jr., who inherited millions as well as a red-phobia. Here also we find Henry T. Rainey, of Illinois, Speaker of the House and owner of a 500-acre farm complete with everything, including Japanese deer. With the farmers, there is

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president of the Missouri State Federation of Labor from 1912 to 1932, one of Hoover's wartime food-rationers, who recently declared himself for "legislation which will return the country to a prosperous condition . . . which will permit all classes to share in the great natural resources of our country?"

Key men on the Committees through whose hands all labor legislation is sifted are Senator David I. Walsh, paternalist labor defender who wrote protective laws with one hand and pounded the other on his desk in behalf of a higher tariff on Massachusetts manufacturers' shoes; William E. Borah, of Idaho, who prosecuted Bill Haywood after he was kidnaped in Colorado to be tried for murder, with Moyer and Pettibone, in the Coeur-de-Leon strike frame-up; and Representative William P. Connery, Jr., the vaudeville actor whose idea of solidifying Labor's rights under the NRA is to place more American Federation of Labor kingpins on the strike-breaking boards of the Roosevelt government.

The first question on the agenda of the Congressional congeries will be how we drink, rather than how we eat. After liquor legislation will come money, the appropriations and the currency question; and then whatever the President desires with respect to routine matters.

Speaker Rainey was good enough to explain to me in detail his plan for a short, sweet session. He tugged at his Windsor and told me: "There'll be plenty of debate on NRA, but nothing done. I will give everybody plenty of time to get his troubles off his chest, while discussing the eleven supply (appropriations) bills, and then they will be ready to go home. They all know that the man who stands in the President's way will have trouble in his election."

"No, there's not much chance of serious talk of unemployment insurance," Rainey continued, adding pointedly, "though of course I personally feel that our association with Russia will have an effect, so that when we escape from our present relief program we will drift into the kind of humane relief that takes care of the unemployed and the old." All of which suggested to the sometime-radical Rainey that "revolutionary" changes are actually being effected under the New Deal. I soberly inquired whether he foresaw any discussion of a capital levy next session.

"No," he said, "that would be just confiscation. We're not going to take

it away by force. We're going to see to it that in the future labor gets bigger wages and shorter hours, so that the employing class will take a smaller share."

And so to tariffs: "There may be some tariff action," Rainey explained, "but it will be tariff increases. You know, those of us who have been internationalists and who still are internationalists, have got to be nationalistic now. The policies of twelve years of Republican rule have made us a smaller America and we've got to live for ourselves . . .

"More money for the Army and Navy? Yes, probably. The whole world is preparing for war. Nobody wants it but everybody is preparing for it and the world always gets what it prepares for. Unless we get some kind of international disarmament agreement—no, I don't think we will—we've got to keep up. There's a new generation now and they've forgotten the last war, and if they get into a muddle in Europe and sink our ships, we'll resent it just as we did last time."

Of course, Rainey is not one of the Brain Trust; but just the same he, as top-sergeant of the biggest Democratic majority since 1906, is necessarily informed of his master's plans. His conclusions if not his reasons, furthermore, were echoed by many returning lawmakers. There is every prospect that the Rainey program will burgeon here and fade there. There is yet the possibility that drastic developments, a tall wave of strikes or another bank collapse, might bring, respectively, enactment of the Dies proposal to deport "alien Communists"; or unlimited inflation. The latter, I was informed by Senator Thomas, of Oklahoma, is "as sure as Christmas." He wants the President to bid up the price of gold to twice its normal price, and then issue goldbacks as needed. Which he insists would have to stop at the paltry figure of \$4,320,000,000 worth of "expansion," since we have only that much gold now. That would mean, incidentally, a currency-credit boost of around \$86,000,000,000—for the gold holdings of 4-billion-plus mean a currency-credit of ten times that amount. Devaluation by 50 percent would double the power of the gold, jacking the potential expansion to the basis for a currency-credit expansion of \$86 billion. In addition, the government now has authority to issue greenbacks to the amount of \$3,500,000,000, to



Louis Ferstadt

JOHN NANCE GARNER

finance the Public Works Administration, so the potential currency-credit emission would ultimately be about 89½ billion dollars.

"Sometimes," Thomas confessed, "I become frightened at the amount. But the simple fact is, it isn't a matter of choice. We owe, in bond, notes, etc., 250 billion dollars. We've got to repudiate or reduce the debts. Reduction is the only course open, unless we're going to let the whole dam wash out." And so, I suggested, he was going to cut wages and salaries?

"I agree with all your contentions," he candidly responded. "I agree with all of labor's contentions that prices would advance faster than wages. But as business advances, wages would advance. I'm trying to save something. Yes, the die is cast. Nobody's going to be hurt—that is, injured perceptibly."

Then he explained that the opposition he is encountering from bondholders, who don't seem to listen to the Rev. Father Charles Coughlin, results from the fact that "they don't understand I'm working for the bondholders more than for the farmers." And then he forecast that \$1,700,000,000 would be appropriated for public works. "Yes," he concluded, "we're not going—we are running by leaps and bounds—toward Communism." "You mean Fascism—not Communism?" I blinked. "The same thing," the Senator said. "The same thing exactly."

NEW MASSES



Louis Ferstadt

JOHN NANCE GARNER

Tom Mooney Walks at Midnight

MICHAEL GOLD

I

THE prison sleeps! A murderer moans. A boy insane
fingers the bars.
Down the long corridor flickers a sick yellow star to
light the dreary acres of steel and death.
And a guard paces the tower under a powerful moon.
And yawns!
They sleep!
Wife-killer, bankrupt, fool and rogue.
Children of the poisoned social womb.

2

Does Comintern live?
Are the workers marching?
These are the thoughts that ache and burn
In the heart of a class-war prisoner
Alone in a cell at midnight.

3

It is the dark hour.
Tom Mooney paces his cell.
At midnight battles are lost and won.
Tom opens his door. Glides through the steel and concrete.
Unlocks the gate to the world.
The guard cannot see:
Tom walks the hills to his world.

4

Two pale miners from the Ruhr lie on a straw bunk in con-
centration camp.
"Is it well with you, my comrades?"
"It is well, Tom Mooney!
In Berlin streets our songs are sung by bloody lips.
Hitler will end!
In steel mills our teachers stoke the furnaces of a red tomorrow.
Hitler will perish!
On every ship our navigators steer the course to freedom.
Hitler must die!
Our factory forts are still unconquered!
Fascism is the last frenzy of a dying ape!
We have gained the last terrible clarity. All or nothing!
It is well with us, Tom Mooney!"

5

Tom Mooney walks the world at midnight.
A sentry raises his blithering bayonet. The moon lights his
calm young face. It shines on tents and a trampled
ricefield.
"Who goes there?"
"Tom Mooney."
"Welcome, comrade, to the Red Army of Soviet China!"
"Comrades, is it well with you?"
"Well! Our Soviet is a symphony of hope rising from sixty
million broken hearts of proletarian China.
We are building the beautiful world of brotherhood, peace, and
rice.
One race—one class—one dream: Communism!"
Cannon boomed from the Dragon Hills,
The sentry woke the vast army,
Red flags saluted Tom Mooney in China.

6

Tom roams the Arctic shores. Fishermen greet him: Swedes,
Lapps, Finns.

They report to Tom Mooney. All is bitter. All is well. The
ocean has its ebb and flood. Comintern is never still!
In Africa the drums beat. Voodoo priests make the old mum-
mery. But in the mining camps Lenin speaks.
A secretary of the African Laborers' Union is reading a
pamphlet on imperialism.
"Comrade Mooney, the African race is a young giant reaching
for the Marxist key that unlocks all jails."
The two embrace, and know that all's well.

7

Paris! Belgrade! Barcelona! Hamburg!
Rome! Athens! Lisbon! Tel-Aviv!
The planet turns, the moon is a lamp for secret building.
Among Australian ranches and Hindu mountains Tom finds
comrades who tell him all is well.
In Tokio a secret conference of workers, peasants and students
elect him to their presidium
And red poets of Japan chant their solemn ballads to Tom.
Moscow! Kharkov! Tiflis! Baku!
A brigade of young shock-troopers report:
"Comrade Mooney, for each year you have suffered in prison
we have built a hundred monuments: Red factories!
Member of the Moscow Soviet, it was Lenin who nominated
you. We elect you year after year.
The Pacific Ocean does not separate us. It is our leader who is
locked in San Quentin!"

8

Havana! In a sugar mill stands a Red Guard in ragged overalls.
He smiles at Comrade Tom and salutes.
Lima! Bogota! Buenos Aires! All is well!
The planet turns, the earth bears fruit, Communism marches!
Battles are lost, but the war is being won!
Vera Cruz! El Paso! Galveston! It marches!
Chicago! A proletarian tide sweeps the streets clean of their
century of capitalist filth and blood!
New York! In Union Square fifty thousand workers shout the
great name "Mooney!" in a challenge to the skyscrapers!
Alabama! In the mysterious pine woods Negro and white share-
croppers weld their union and greet Tom Mooney!
The South awakes like a long fallow field! The ice smashes
up in the farthest north!
Tom Mooney is inspecting his world!
San Francisco! His mother:
"The blood of the proletarian centuries is in you,
The voice of the famine, the heart of our poor, hungry Ireland.
It is better to be in jail for the Working Class
Than in the White House for the capitalists,
With all my eighty years of sorrow and labor
I say to you, all shall be well!"

9

Tom Mooney in his cell at midnight—
It is then battles are lost and won,
It is then a worker reviews his world,
Tramps the dangerous roads of birth,
Finding the far-flung comrade-armies,
Who tend the flame of Comintern,
And fight and bleed and will never rest until truly all is well.

The Farmers Form a United Front

JOSEPHINE HERBST

(Miss Herbst's article on the historic Farmers Conference in Chicago should, of course, have been published much earlier. The circumstances which prevented its appearance before, and which makes it possible for the NEW MASSES to present it now, are set forth in the correspondence between Miss Herbst and the New Republic, on page 22 of this issue.—The Editors.)

SEVEN HUNDRED AND TWO farmers from 36 states representing 58 farm organizations applauded their own program at the Farmers Second National Conference at Chicago for cash relief, cancellation of debts, against evictions, and other radical measures aimed directly at helping the "busted farmer." Probably most of the delegates present in People's Auditorium, Nov. 15 to 18, had voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

A year ago the Farmers First National Conference at Washington rolled up only 238 delegates from 26 states. The chief demands had been for a moratorium and against evictions. After less than a year of the New Deal this group representing the militant farmers of the country whether from conservative Grange or militant United Farmers League, cheered the demand for cancellation and adopted it unanimously.

These farmers have been picketing roads and stopping sheriff sales for a year. In Nebraska they have some forty thousand farmers. Negro croppers in the black belt, 5,000 strong, have so entrenched themselves in one section that sheriffs cannot get white deputies to go in and smash them. Some of the delegates have been in jail, 75 percent of them are in debt, 39 percent of them cannot pay their taxes, half of them have participated in sheriff sales or other militant action. Those who are still free from debt are like the farm woman from a Grange in South Dakota who said to me, "We see the future, we are soon going to be in the same boat with the poorest."

In this convention Negro share cropper sits beside poor white farmer. Whether the speaker is John Sumption of South Dakota, dirt farmer of old American stock, militant Snyder of Oregon, Menonite Artemus Stover of Pennsylvania or Negro or white cropper from the south, the story is the same.

Drought, grasshoppers, lower than production prices, evictions and debts have united these different elements into one fighting front.

Armed with government statistics and surveys, these farmers went into a four-day study session. Today there is no such critter as "a farmer." Perhaps he disappeared with rugged individualism. There is rich farmer, middle farmer and poor farmer, the rich and the poor farmer highly antagonistic and the middle farmer either neutral or rapidly becoming poor. If the farm income for 1933 is a billion dollars more than 1932 the Chicago farmers will tell you it did not filter down to them or the class they represent. Nor did the hundred million paid to the cotton farmers of the south for plowed-under land go to the Negro or white cropper. It went to the landlords and the creditors of the cropper. The rise of prices in July could not help the farmer who had no crop to sell, who had parted with his crop out of necessity earlier to the landlord or scalper. The acreage curtailment plan cannot help the tenant farmer, numbering almost half the total number of farmers. The hog reduction plan has brought no increase to the poor farmer and has appalled him with its waste. The back-to-the-home plan can only mean he must accept peasantry.

"Hunger," says the farmer, "makes a man think." On the floor they joke good humoredly at the city fellow's idea of the dumb farmer, "brother to the ox." But if the type farmer has disappeared, so has the type city fellow. The old blanket antagonism between farm and city is divided. Now the poor farmer sees the bankers, insurance companies, railroads, processors who get the rise in price on the farm products, the milk distributor who gets the spread in milk, and he also sees the city unemployed and poor who are in the same boat with himself.

This is a new self-conscious type of farmer meeting at Chicago. Talk to him on any subject relating to his condition and he has a confident, militant answer. The New Deal did nothing for him except to make him realize where he stands. The A. A. A. theory of surplus production he ironically twists into surplus-starvation. The blue eagle has been

to the poor farmer nothing but a blue buzzard. Perhaps no other class of people is in such a favorable position as the farmer to see the contradiction in the New Deal surplus production plan. The frugal farmer has raised food all his life, he has been drilled by the government on every device to get the most from the soil. Now he is ordered to turn under crops and to destroy hogs. He also knows there are millions unemployed in the cities and many hungry on the farms. Some of these town men came out to help the farmer on the picket lines. In Sioux City they did not spill milk on the roads during the strike but gave it to the unemployed. That the government talks "surplus" under such conditions makes the farmer feel he is living in a world absolutely crazy and that officials are proceeding with straight faces does not restore his confidence.

If the cotton acreage production plan for 1934 is put through it will take 15 million acres out of production. If the tenants who have been raising cotton on this land are dispossessed, 800,000 families will be evicted from their homes. The 20 percent acreage cut proposed in the Corn Belt will not help the tenant farmer when the owner gets the check. Croppers' checks in the south go first to the landlord who takes his half and then deducts from the balance what the cropper "owes" him. This merely reduces the old debt and gives the cropper nothing for seed or feed. If the landlord leaves anything, town creditors get at what is left before the cropper does. The rise in cotton in July did not benefit the cropper or poor farmer who had long before had his cotton taken from him for "debts."

In a Department of Agriculture survey taken over 6,383 individual farms, the average yearly income per family showed up at \$66, not counting interest on mortgages and other debts amounting to \$173 a family. The survey covered farms of 233 acres to 50 acres. The average farm in this country is 157 acres and there are 2½ million farms of 49 acres or under. The government plan of acreage reduction contemplates dispossessing two million now on farms.

What will happen to these people? This conference represents the farmers slated to go. They may be pushed to

the back-to-the-home 5 acre plot. If so, this farmer sees himself as a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, not only without hope for education for his children or comforts he feels are his right in a country he has been taught from the cradle up to consider the richest in the world, but without a chance to make even a bare living.

It is a platitude now to say the farmers are mad but it is quite to the point to say they are fighting and organizing. The farmers represented here are not relying much upon government legislation but neither are many followers of Milo Reno. This group splits from the Reno crowd in not having any faith in that opportunistic leader who calls and calls off strikes much too arbitrarily to suit the rank and file. This group will not put trust in any leader not picked and guided by the mass of dirt farmers they represent.

The delegation from my locality in Pennsylvania may be taken as a cross section of this conference. Here are four solid Menonite Pennsylvania Germans, a Quaker of pre-revolutionary stock, two naturalized citizens who have "only" been on their farms 25 and 17 years respectively. Most of these farms are superior farms, with fine well kept stone houses, huge barns, machinery and hired help. What moves these men to throw in their lot with the impoverished Negro share cropper from Alabama?

Nothing except the conviction that their struggle against mass ruin is the same. The farmers in this convention hall represent some 115,000 voting farmers from California to New York and Alabama, but actually they express the situation and belief of a much greater number who are convinced the official policy means to save the well to do farmer at the expense of the middle and poor farmer.

If they are demanding cancellation, not moratorium, it is because with a 12 billion dollar debt, larger than that owed us by our allies, they can never hope to pay. Interest charges alone amount to \$900,000,000 a year and together with the property tax took one-fourth of the farmer's gross income for 1932. His income of 17 billion dollars in 1919 has dropped to 5 billion dollars in 1932 with a possible six billion in 1933 but with farm prices dropping 6 points between July and September and commodities he must buy, rising 9 points, he sees little advantage.

For the past six years an average of

184,134 farmers a year have been forced out of ownership. Tenancy seems just around the corner for nearly half the farmers who still hold their own farms. In a sample study on farm mortgages made by the Department of Agriculture 36 percent were delinquent in payment of principal or interest due or both.

This situation has brought the farmers realizing it down to bed rock. Facts are not handled with kid gloves by these farmers from all over the country, some of them taking weeks to get here. Their trucks with slogans, *Our First Mortgage Is to the Wife and Children, New Dealers Use the Same Old Deck, Farm Surplus Starved Millions*, stand in a parking lot across the street from the auditorium. On the night of a big mass meeting in the Coliseum when Chicago workers met with the farmers, a parade 8 blocks long packed with singing, yelling farmers scooted through the streets.

During this last year these farmers have thrashed out their troubles in local meetings; through struggles and strikes

they have gained in numbers and confidence. On the second day before outlining their demands, they sat back and listened to what the different political parties had to say to them. It was no surprise that the Republican party sent a letter enclosing the Republican platform of 1932 and it brought a good natured laugh. The Democratic reply, written on Mr. Farley's stationery, suggested the convention refer to the Democratic program and to Mr. Wallace. Another and louder laugh. The Socialists sent a speaker who inspired interest and applause but whose silence on the Negro share cropper and concrete problems of the farmer caused whispering among neighbors near me. If the Communist party representative, Clarence Hathaway, raised cheers it was because his talk was plain and concrete and the farmers are sick of hot air. They are not yet, as a whole, politically minded. But they are not afraid to have visions of a new social order. That auditorium was as spirited a place as I've ever been in, with a kind of contagious



"IT HAS 2 PLEATS AND 6 RUFFLES!"



Adolph Dehn 1933.

Adolph Dehn

"IT HAS 2 PLEATS AND 6 RUFFLES!"

The New Republic vs.

the Farmer

belief in the rights of farmers rather than merely needs.

The wording of their demands give the temper and expectation of the farmers. Demand 1 reads:

We Demand Adequate Immediate Cash Relief for All Needy Farmers in Order to Live and Continue Production:

For all other toiling farmers we demand production credit without collateral and without interest. We demand the distribution of surplus food and crops in storage, in warehouses and on the farms, at the expense of the government, to the destitute farmers and unemployed workers through committees elected by these farmers and workers themselves. We demand free medical aid and dental care for farmers and workers.

We demand that the government guarantee a nine months' term in all public schools, the reopening of closed schools, no further closing of schools, free textbooks, free transportation, no overcrowding in schools, the building of new schools, no discrimination because of race or nationality, and free hot lunches not at the expense of the teacher.

Where local funds are insufficient these demands are to be met at the expense of the government.

We demand further free education with all expenses paid, through grade school, high school, and any college desired.

There are six other demands for cancellation of debts, against foreclosures and evictions, for higher purchasing power, tax relief, reduction in rents, and a complete cancellation of all Negro share cropper debts and abolition of terror against him. Higher prices are not to be gained by raising prices to the consumer but by cutting the profits of the middleman. They know they need buyers and that the workers need work but they are not so sure this system of society can give either. But it would be a mistake to imply that their eyes are not on the immediate future. Their program may sound ambitious but these farmers are not going to accept a bare subsistence without a struggle.

Forty-two women delegates met in a separate session backing up the men and coming out with a program for birth control and education. Youth groups and the Negro delegation added fire to a convention astonishing to anyone who knew this same class of farmer a few years ago. The migratory worker, forgotten since the I. W. W. was present with 31 delegates and a program of action. If ever a group gave the impression of knowing what it wants and how it means to get it, the Second Farmers National Conference is that group.

(In submitting to the New Masses her article on the Chicago Farmers Conference, which appears in this issue, Miss Herbst also gave us, for publication, her correspondence with the New Republic regarding the article. "Under dates of Nov. 3 and 10," Miss Herbst informs us, "arrangements were made to have me write a report of the farm conference at Chicago, dates Nov. 15 and 18. The report was sent Nov. 25. Three notes respecting the article were sent to the New Republic office with no response. One of the notes criticized Mr. Bliven's position in his New Republic articles then appearing and quoted from Mr. Short's Sioux City The Unionist concerning the doubtful nature of some of his statistics. The article was returned under date of Dec. 12." The Bliven-Herbst correspondence follows.—THE EDITORS.)

Mr. Bliven to Miss Herbst

DEAR MISS HERBST:

Your article about the convention of radical farmers only reached my desk on Monday of this week. I am terribly sorry about the delay; it was partly because I was away in New England, and partly because Malcolm got temporarily buried in work.

We should have been delighted to have an article about the convention, if it could have been published promptly. We now feel however that it is pretty late. This sounds as though it were the fault of the office that we have not used your article, but this is not the case. What you wrote should have had to be rewritten, by yourself, in any case.

What I suggest therefore is that you keep this material at hand, and wait for the next time that developments in the news make the subject opportune. The farm strike might flare up again, or there might be another meeting, or the President or Wallace might make a speech. What we should then like you to do would be to send us a 1000 word article, not about the Chicago convention, but about radicalism among the farmers and about the desperate conditions of "the lower crust." In the course of it, you should summarize all the important resolutions adopted at Chicago, not just the ones mentioned in your piece. You could do this as illustrating the attitude of the radical farmer, and mention the convention and give the date.

I might mention one weakness of your present article, which you ought to guard against in revising the material. It is that you don't distinguish between reporting and editorializing. If you're going to describe conditions you ought to do so by citing the facts about them and not by making editorial assertions of your own about deplorable conditions. This is not to say that we disagree with you, but is merely a point about effective writing.

I was much interested in your letter of December 4, and should like to discuss the matter sometime when you are in New York. I am too hard pressed to write you at length about it as I should like to do. In the meantime, I will just note one or two things:

1. Short had already sent me the material from his paper supporting the argument that the Des Moines Register and Tribune is unreliable in reporting the situation of the farmers. However, the questionnaire which he referred to was not one of those which I quoted, and had nothing to do with them. I talked with the men who did the work on this questionnaire, and they certainly seemed to me as honest, intelligent, and progressive as one could reasonably expect. Remember, they printed the names and address of every farmer they quoted. If these men were misquoted, it would be an easy matter for Short or anyone else, to find this out.

If they skipped the radical farmers, that also could easily be checked up. I feel that Short ought to bring forth some concrete evidence to support his view. Why doesn't he make a similar investigation, even on a smaller scale, and report the results?

It may be, as you say, that the Des Moines Register and Tribune is pretty discredited among the farmers, but if that is the case, why do they go on reading it? Have you compared their rural circulation with the total farm population of Iowa?

All this, of course, is comparatively a minor matter. I said in my article that I had no means of proving whether their questionnaire was correct or not. However, it checks so closely with everything else I hear (including reports from the farm town near Sioux City where I myself lived for seventeen years) that I shall continue to believe that it represents a very thick "upper crust" until I see some proof to the contrary. Faithfully,

(Signed) BRUCE BLIVEN.

Dec. 12, 1933.

Miss Herbst to Mr. Bliven

DEAR MR. BLIVEN:

I can understand your returning my article on the farm conference because after all it is perfectly permissible for The New Republic to have a definite policy, but I cannot understand why, when you yourself admit it was a timely article, you took over two weeks to return it, unless you wanted to make it impossible for me to use it elsewhere. This article reached you in the same time that it took Mary Vorse's report on the Washington Conference a year ago, which you printed. And it was an article about which I had had correspondence with the New Republic staff before I ever went to Chicago. When a magazine definitely asks for such an article it seems to me in all fairness to the writer and to his material that he should be given a prompt reply.

But I am even more astonished at your paragraph of advice to me on the subject of effective writing. I have very carefully looked over the article and can find nowhere an expression of personal opinion about the "deplorable" conditions of the farmer. On the contrary, this was a distinctly direct report—too direct as it now appears for The New Republic—of a very remarkable convention. Any ideas in that article were not mine—but almost the literal ideas of the convention. The article is packed with figures, the farmers' figures, not mine, as these figures were the basis of the conclusions of the convention and of the demands. This is not the first time by a long shot that I have reported in this manner. Over a year ago I wrote up the Iowa farm strike for Scribner's Magazine and used exactly this method and brought out exactly the same definite point of view. I am not responsible for the point of view and its distinctness. That can be blamed only upon the farmers themselves. I want to say, also, that had I editorialized, it seems to me only appropriate for The New Republic and surely you set an excellent example in your own farm articles. What is your entire section entitled *The Bourgeois, Bourgeois Farmer* but that? I see no reason why a "journal of opinion" should not express opinions and I am all for your editorializing. I would have editorialized and thought myself well within my rights as I was doing a signed article, not the work of a novice reporter, but I just happen not to work that way. In fact I have so much a reputation for the contrary method that a sentence in my last novel expressing an editorialized opinion was widely commented upon as being an extraordinary deviation from my regular manner. I go to this length in commenting upon your advice to me because whichever way you look at it, it was an unusual thing to have said.

There is no doubt about it that you very ably represent the point of view of the upper strata of farmers and it was my mistake to imagine that a liberal magazine would care to discuss the fate of those lower down in the scale, particularly when that discussion is from the point of view of the class discussed. Your conclusions concerning the future

of farming if the present scheme runs its course are sound and platitudinous. The striking farmers were discussing those very issues a year ago around their bonfires on the roads. The pressing problem is what is going to happen to the farm population affected by the changes in agriculture. In 1930 the government figures showed that 58 percent of the farmers did not have hired help. This percent has undoubtedly increased since that time, according to all reliable sources. These are the people who would become impoverished when large scale production actually succeeds. Your articles do not even touch upon this class nor hint that there is such a fellow as a middle farmer.

Difficult as it is to cover the whole field with reliable statistics, we do not need to rely upon your observations or mine when it comes to certain questions. Concerning the effects of the NRA program in the South for instance. You state—quite editorially, of course—that the Southern farmer is very well pleased with the cotton program. No one has any doubt that certain small groups of landlords have reason to be fairly well satisfied. But if you will look at a coming article of Webb Powell's in Harper's Magazine using a two year survey as a base, you will see that I was not editorializing when I listed the disadvantages to which the bulk of small cotton farmers and share croppers—and in the South they form the majority—fall heir.

Your statement about the cash income of the farmer going up 50 percent and if prices rise as they should, 100 percent, is of course, your own personal opinion but one I have not heard even one well-to-do farmer (and of course I have not talked to them all) admit. When farm prices rose in July, the prices of commodities the farmer must buy had already jumped way ahead. This has happened for the last years and there is no guarantee under the NRA that it will not continue to happen. So long as the prices for things he must buy rise faster than the price of his products, I don't see where the 50 percent increase is coming from, let alone the 100 percent.

I was hasty in assuming that Short's figures were yours, and I don't doubt the integrity of the reporters. Unfortunately that guarantees nothing. And the figures mean very little one way or the other. Your opinion that if the farmer could get back the prosperity of 1920 his radicalism would disappear is of course one of the commonest arguments. Well, why not? If the farmer or anyone could be assured of a decent living and a future free from perpetual crises, why not? It is because the farmer more and more is becoming convinced no such prosperity is in store for him, particularly under the Rooseveltian plans, that he is striking and relying on direct action. Even the concessions made by the NRA would not have been made in all probability if these militant groups had not pretty well made themselves felt all over the country during the last year. But we have only the concession made in different states to prove this, where there were militant demonstrations, such as North Dakota, more concessions were granted to the farmer. And naturally he was most militant in the more distressed areas.

If you will allow me to say so—and I am taking the liberty as you took the same liberty with me—I suggest that your articles would gain if they drew more from farm sources and less from town and newspaper opinion about the farm, more from the small farmer and less from the well-to-do farmer and small town banker. But even the well-to-do farmer is more considerate of the poor farmer than you, as I found out a year ago at the time you were writing in The New Republic that if the farmer in Iowa had been forced to strike he must be very ashamed. Nobody but the big town newspapers representing the opinions of the Cham-

bers of Commerce and business men, was ashamed. Many rich farmers who realized conditions were all for the militancy, including 9,000 acre Alvern Wendell of Bronson, Iowa. Wendell said the farmers would be justified in any means they took to better their conditions.

When it comes down to it you quite evidently sincerely believe in the efficiency of the Roosevelt program, and while fifty percent of the farmers at the conference had voted for Roosevelt and some had even voted for Hoover, time had shown they had nothing to expect from his proposed measures and much to fear. I don't doubt that some farmers still out of the red—and there are such—agree with you and those undoubtedly would feel, just as you do, the same antagonism toward the Chicago group whose facts are so against the grain that you would rather think it "editorializing" on my part than actuality.

I would like to see you take your own prognostications about the future of farming and turn them into human possibilities, not production possibilities. But perhaps that is out of the range of a liberal magazine in this particular era. I admit I was mistaken in the aims of The New Republic and I regret that I wasted my chance to give publicity to this remarkable conference.

(Signed) JOSEPHINE HERBST.

Erwinna, Pa., Dec. 16, 1933.

Mr. Bliven to Miss Herbst

DEAR MISS HERBST:

This is just to acknowledge your letter, received today. The paper is just going to press, and I haven't time to answer it adequately at the moment, but I'll try to do so within the next couple of days. I don't doubt that there is a good deal in your criticism both of The New Republic and of myself. I'll talk to George and Malcolm and see whether we can't make an immediate practicable suggestion about your piece. Cordially and sincerely,

Dec. 18, 1933

(Signed) BRUCE BLIVEN.

DEAR MISS HERBST:

I consulted George and Malcolm, and I have a suggestion to make to you which I think will at least partially solve our difference of opinion about your article. I suggest that you write us a signed, paid communication of 1,500 words for immediate publication, on radicalism among farmers. You could base it, if you like, on my recent articles, saying that you don't feel I told the whole story, or that you think I am crazy, or whatever you like, and you could then go on to assemble your evidence, partly from your manuscript about Chicago and partly the other material you have on this general subject. You could mention the Chicago meeting as supporting evidence, without building your communication around it. I assume that would make such a communication as definite and factual as possible, trying to indicate roughly what proportion of farmers in what states are supporting the radical movement.

For such a communication, we would pay 2c a word, which would come to about \$30. This is about as much as you would have received for the article, which would have been drastically cut in any case.

If you should criticize my own articles, I should probably want to append to your communication a few lines saying that I still think my observations were substantially correct, and I shall assume that you won't object to my doing so.

I do feel that we owe you an apology for not giving you a more prompt decision on your piece. This is not my fault personally, since I never saw your article until December 11 and I wrote you about it December 12. We are short handed in this office, partly because we are trying to save money, and once in a while our routine slips a cog.

As for the other points in your letter, I wish you'd come into the office and discuss them; a debate on paper takes a lot of space and it is easy for misunderstandings to arise. The only point I am concerned about is that you should have thought

the Farmer

of farming if the present scheme runs its course are sound and platitudinous. The striking farmers were discussing those very issues a year ago around their bonfires on the roads. The pressing problem is what is going to happen to the farm population affected by the changes in agriculture. In 1930 the government figures showed that 58 percent of the farmers did not have hired help. This percent has undoubtedly increased since that time, according to all reliable sources. These are the people who would become impoverished when large scale production actually succeeds. Your articles do not even touch upon this class nor hint that there is such a fellow as a middle farmer.

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As for the other points in your letter, I wish you'd come into the office and discuss them; a debate on paper takes a lot of space and it is easy for misunderstandings to arise. The only point I am concerned about is that you should have thought

I said, a year ago, that "if the farmer in Iowa had been forced to strike he must be very ashamed." I am sending you herewith a clipping of my article, so that you can see what I did say. As for "supporting" the Roosevelt program, I am not conscious of doing any such thing. It seems to me that what I said was that the Roosevelt program would pour so much money into the farm area that for the next few months, the general discontent would be greatly lessened. If you can prove that this is not true, for heaven's sake put that proof into your communication. Sincerely,

(Signed) BRUCE BLIVEN.

Dec. 19, 1933.

Miss Herbst to Mr. Bliven

DEAR MR. BLIVEN:

In your note of the 18th to me you say you don't doubt that there is a good deal in my criticism of The New Republic and of yourself. Writing on the 19th in the letter received today, you feel you are substantially correct. Now just where do you stand, I wonder.

While I would have welcomed a 1,500 word article a month ago I now believe that our controversy has brought to light our relative positions on this important subject that are more significant than the type of story you suggest. Your offer of a limited 1,500 word article is in glaring contrast to the leading articles in two issues given to your side of the question, and I think quite aptly shows your own emotion of the relative importance of the two classes under discussion.

Any statistics relating to actual representation at the farm conference may be had by referring to the Farmer's National Weekly. But the issue between you and me does not relate to the actual number of militant farmers but to the group interests those farmers represent as opposed to the group whose interests you represent.

If you did not literally say that the farmer in Iowa must be very ashamed, you said, "If the editors of The New Republic barricaded themselves in West Twenty-first Street and began throwing tear-gas bombs at the Italian organ grinder, they would feel no more *shamefaced* (italics mine) than these sons of Iowa soil must have felt." If possible, this remark seems even less understandable than the one attributed to you. The last words in that same piece, dated Aug. 31, 1932, are much more significant: "When Iowa resorts to violence, it is time to take horse and gallop through the countryside, calling 'Flee to the hills: the dam is going out!'" The dam *is* going out but you have decided that your role is that of the boy who puts his finger in the dyke.

You say you are not conscious of supporting the Roosevelt program. Well, Mr. Bliven, not to be conscious is a very grave shortcoming. If you are not supporting Roosevelt, who in hell are you supporting?

And I must point out that you did *not* say that the Roosevelt program would pour so much money into the farm area that for the next few months, the general discontent would be greatly lessened. You said that so much money would be put in within the next few months that in your judgment present protest will subside. Your time element referred to money, not discontent. The implication was that discontent would be pretty much a thing of the past.

No one denies that money is going to be poured into the middle west. But into whose hands? My entire contention has been, not that farmers are not being helped, but that the Roosevelt program means to save the wealthy farmer at the expense of the poor and middle farmer.

Your proposition to air the troubles of the farming class whose interests are served by the militant farmer in a limited 1,500 word article in your organ, comes, true to the role of the liberal, too late!

(Signed) JOSEPHINE HERBST.

Erwinna, Pa., Dec. 20, 1933.

Books

An Open Letter

To *New Masses* Reviewers:

BEFORE me as I write there is a list of nearly a hundred of you—nearly a hundred men and women who have been, or in the course of time will be, invited to contribute reviews to the *NEW MASSES*. There are novelists and poets on this list, well-known critics, experts on painting and music, historians, economists, philosophers, scientists, labor organizers, journalists and pamphleteers, leaders of the Communist Party. Though I shall be writing you personally, I take this opportunity of greeting you collectively and of saying to you as a group certain things that you may be interested to hear.

There are a few practical considerations that had best be touched on first. Although I have no intention of making a fetish of publication dates, and although I hope you will never sacrifice the quality of your reviews to the demands of the deadline, I think you will agree that timeliness is important in revolutionary journalism. Our comments on books will have greater impact if they appear when the books are being read and discussed. This means that reviews must be written promptly; and if anything suffers in the process, it should be our convenience and not our reviews. Promptness is also necessary in the answering of letters, especially so, because I am handicapped in the editing of this department by living outside New York City. I do not apologize for stressing such points; for efficiency, even on the most mechanical level, is an essential part of the discipline of a revolutionary movement.

But of course what I want principally to speak about is the unusual opportunity in which we have been given a share. In the weekly *NEW MASSES* it will be possible to review all the important books—all the books, that is, that are important to workers, farmers, and intellectuals who read the magazine. We shall, of course, review those books that grow out of the revolutionary movement. We will review them, needless to say, candidly and critically. We shall also review the books that are opposed to the revolutionary movement. We will review them intelligently and discriminatingly as well as searchingly. And we shall review many, many books that, in the minds of their authors and most of their readers, have nothing to do with the revolutionary struggle. We will review them thoughtfully and not unsympathetically, but we will review them from a particular point of view.

The gratifying, the encouraging thing about the *NEW MASSES* is that it has a point of view. We constitute a diverse group. And yet any one of us can speak with confidence of the group's point of view. Every one of us believes that the capitalist system must be destroyed by the power of the proletariat, in

alliance with the exploited farmers, the ruined middle class and the aroused intellectual and professional class. Every one is determined to fight such manifestations of capitalism as war and fascism. Every one is resolved to support the workers and poor farmers of America wherever they are struggling against injustice, starvation, and oppression. And these convictions and this determination are fundamental, the very basis of the attitudes and judgments that our reviews will express.

This does not mean that there will be no variety in the *NEW MASSES* reviews. No dictator is going to impose some narrow and arbitrary interpretation of Marxism upon reviewers. Each one of us will work out for himself the application of the revolutionary point of view. And since our interests, knowledge, and experience are so varied, there is little danger of standardization and monotony. We are engaged, after all, in a co-operative venture, to which each contributes what he can. But we are united in our knowledge of our goal and our determination to reach it.

Moreover, the majority of our readers share our point of view. Some readers of the *NEW MASSES* will undoubtedly be hostile to its purposes; we shall have to be accurate, logical, and well informed, not because we can convert these enemies, but because otherwise they will use our mistakes to fight our cause. Other readers will glance at the *NEW MASSES* because they are beginning to feel a little doubt about the system in which they live; the more fully and fairly we set forth our point of view, the more likely we are to win them to our side. But most of the readers will be sympathetic towards—many, of course, active in—the revolutionary movement. It is to them that we are primarily responsible. That is why we must not be bookish or pedantic or abstract. Our task is not simply to write about books; it is to interpret the intellectual currents and the emotional forces of our time as they are reflected in literature.

"We ought to dream!" said Lenin, calling for a periodical that "would become part of an enormous pair of smith's bellows that would blow every spark of class struggle and popular indignation into a general conflagration." The *NEW MASSES* may not be the most important weapon of the revolutionary movement, just as the literary section may not be the most important department of the magazine; but here our opportunity lies, and here we shall succeed or fail.

GRANVILLE HICKS.

Preparedness—Then and Now

OVER HERE, by Mark Sullivan. \$3.75.
Charles Scribner's Sons.

President Roosevelt on Dec. 8 reorganized and further centralized the control of the

most powerful bureaucratic machine ever assembled in peace or war—the machinery set up under the National Industrial Recovery Act. Frank C. Walker, former attorney for the Anaconda Copper Mining Company and Montana Power Company (subsidiaries of Standard Oil), and treasurer of the Democratic National Committee, was made executive director of the National Emergency Council. By this act Walker had thrust into his hands more power than any other one person in any government in the world possesses—with the sole exception of the President himself. His authority extends over every department of N.R.A. and consequently over the entire mass of the working population. Upon his qualifications for such a post, the working population has not been allowed to pass, even by the limited and restricted use of the franchise as practiced in the United States. Another long step has been taken towards an open dictatorship divested of democratic trappings. The dictatorship of monopoly capital has been extended immensely. American imperialism moves rapidly to put itself on a war basis—for war against its rivals, for war on the revolting colonial peoples, for war on the workers, exploited farmers and Negro masses at home.

The similarity to the war preparations of the Wilson government is too obvious to escape the attention of any revolutionist. The great value of Mark Sullivan's *Over Here*—Volume V of *Our Times*—is that it furnishes in detailed and documented form the factual basis by which the analogy can be made unshakable. In the opinion of this reviewer a series of articles, a pamphlet, or perhaps a book on the most important aspects of this question, for the widest possible circulation, is a burning need of the working class. Here, however, space does not permit more than one or two outstanding points for emphasis.

Speaking of the way the draft was put over, Sullivan, an enthusiastic supporter of all these measures, says on pages 292-94: "This depriving the draft of the appearance of compulsion, but at the same time getting the advantage of compulsion, is attributed to Secretary of War Baker. Baker, like Wilson, knew the importance of appearances, had

Have you read

THE Future Comes

A Study of the New Deal

by CHARLES A. BEARD
and George H. E. Smith

\$1.75

MACMILLAN

much of Wilson's skill with words. . . . Baker, before Congress had passed the Draft Act . . . indeed with care to prevent Congress from knowing—Baker, acting through General Crowder and he through Major Hugh S. Johnson, arranged with the head of the Government Printing Office, to print *secretly* the more than ten million blanks that would be required to put the draft in effect when and if Congress should enact it. . . . *Still no word of the operation reached the public or Congress.*"

There are few things more important today than a study of how Morgan's war was popularized by Morgan's puppets in high places. On page 301 Sullivan writes cynically: "But if the youth, taking his way to the registration place along the mountain roads of West Virginia or the city streets of New York, had any sullenness, it was dissipated in most cases by finding shortly that Baker's art had made him, unexpectedly, a hero. Presently, under the influence of the national spirit, he began to believe it. Speeches from the mayor, the clergyman, and the Chamber of Commerce head; congratulations by star-eyed committees of women, more intimate attention from young girls, turned most of the draftees to feeling the war would be a grand adventure."

Such is, briefly, the technique of the organization of mass slaughter for imperialist aims. It is being used again—with improvements. Words of peace are ever on Roosevelt's lips. But the greatest armament campaign ever launched in a country not actually at war is under way. 350,000 young workers are being militarized in the C.C.C. "In 1933," says Sullivan in a footnote to the above, "the technique was revived to cause the country to accept a new relation between government and business, called the N.R.A. . . . As during the war, the process included compulsion exercised by the majority upon the minority. . . . The technique of N.R.A. in 1933 was a duplicate of that of conscription in 1917. The Gen. Johnson who administered N.R.A. in 1933 was the same man who as Major Johnson had managed preparation for the draft in 1917."

Morgan's men are riding again. Their keen noses, trained to the trail of blood in the World War, already scent the rotting bodies of murdered workers on future battlefields of imperialist glory. Baruch and Baker are back. Creel, who slaughtered more workers with his lying pen than Pershing did with his artillery, once more rides the crimson crest of a war wave. The N.R.A. bureaus are filled with these professional organizers of Wall Street wars.

To complete the broad outlines of a picture of war preparations, implicit in a comparison of the period dealt with by Sullivan and the present—and it must be remembered that the capitalist crisis makes for far greater speed than in 1914-17—it is only necessary to quote a paragraph from the New York Mirror's "Washington Merry-Go-Round" of Dec. 10: "Significant of how the administration's mind may be working is the fact that a general staff

officer, a trusted adviser of General MacArthur, has just returned from a swing around the country. *He has been inspecting the distribution of the U. S. Army from the point of view of riot suppression.*"

The question raised by *Over Here*—entirely without any such intention on the part of the author—is: *Shall it be again?* The answer will be given in the factories and mines, on the railroads, ships and docks, by American workers in the revolutionary struggle against imperialist war headed by the Communist Party.

BILL DUNNE.

Valiant Attempt

UPSURGE, by Robert Gessner. \$1. Farrar and Rinehart, 1933.

Look! We are the depression bastards!
You of America, our fathers, look at us!

These opening lines of *Upsurge* spurt from the mouths of the "youngest old men in the world" who have "been given the run across your private continent three times, four times—ten!"; whose numbers form an "unseen army moving over America." They warn: "You won't see us taking it below the belt with our mouths shut! . . . Give us the world! We'll fix it!" The next thirty pages are verse—sketches of England, France, Germany, and Russia, commenting on each nation by elucidations of particular, significant locality or episode. The feebly proud chaos of England, the militant chaos of France, the mad, bloody chaos of Germany become all at once anachronized in the light of the hope and harmony in the "green land of the Soviets"—hope, not for Russia alone, but for the whole world:

The youth of Russia is marching in a uniform . . .
Clasping hands with the builders of America,
Clasping hands with the workers of the world!

And the poem ends with an ultimatum from the depression bastards:

Give us back the land! We'll run it!
Give us back our farms!
Give us back our tools! We'll use 'em!
Give us back our factories!
We'll take your God-damn country!
It's ours!

In attempting this vast project Gessner uses the method of his first prose book, *Massacre*: a more than adequate documentation presented so as finally to convert the reader by sheer preponderance of data. In *Upsurge* this method is applied within the confines of a group of fragmentary notations.

Gessner's sincerity communicates itself by a driving bitterness which mounts to a frenzy of affirmation. But this general impression does not issue from a series of particular, memorable passages. The imagery lacks inevitability; sometimes it is frankly questionable (as for example "the mouth of the World's Empire," Southampton: "These unwashed teeth not masticating?") Occasionally the fusion of ele-

ments in the image is unpleasantly superfluous (cf. final lines, page 21). On the other hand *Upsurge* does contain some precise commentaries: "The long patience of the hopeful free," for instance; or

Look down from your turrets and towers
Into this grave of Lenin, pulsating
Waves of warmth in a warming land.

Frequently Gessner's images are made by juxtaposing startlingly unrelated elements. This popular method is effective when sparingly and expertly used; otherwise it seems mannered. Likewise, excessive use of hard-boiled lingo, which breeds the danger of canceling its effectiveness. Both juxtaposition and overlong stretches of violent language frequently lead to overstatement which conveys the poet's personal anger but vitiates his poetry.

Gessner's difficulty in controlling his vast subject-matter is reflected in a lack of integration in the poem, and a concomitant inadequacy of rhythmical pattern. The most successful passages appear to be those which did not harass the poet by the pressure of too recent events. But no understanding reader can deny that *Upsurge* is a valiant attempt. Remembering the effect of the whole poem and of such a passage as the six-lines ending "the earth flows under fences, beneath flags," many readers will be hopeful of the contribution Gessner may make to our growing literature of proletarian revolutionary poetry.

STANLEY BURNISHAW.

Dr. Beard Cooperates

THE FUTURE COMES, by Charles A. Beard and George H. E. Smith. \$1.75. The Macmillan Co.

The Future Comes is a study in current history. The authors of the book are trying to describe the New Deal and to analyze the forces that called it into existence.

The forces behind the New Deal are traced from the morning of Oct. 29, 1929, when "the big gong had hardly sounded in the great hall of the Exchange (New York Stock Exchange) . . . before the storm broke in full force," to the Roosevelt inaugural on March 4, 1933. Stock prices, commodity prices, national wealth, farm indebtedness and unemployment are listed. But there is no word of the international aspects of the crisis, nor is there a

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suggestion of such underlying factors as accumulating capital surplus and falling rate of profit.

The New Deal program itself is set forth in considerable detail, with chapters on Economy and Efficiency in Government; Industry and Transportation; Agriculture; Finance; Relief and Public Works, and Principles of the Recovery Program. At times the authors grow lyrical in their enthusiasm. They describe the Agricultural section of the Recovery Program as "amazing." "Without taking over agriculture, as was done in Russia, the Government has so penetrated the institutions and procedures of the industry, from the highest national groupings to the smallest local units throughout the land, as to gather into its hands absolute control over every act of production, processing, manufacturing, and marketing of practically all agricultural and associated commodities. Within the framework of the land bank system, it has established a net-work of banks and credit institutions adequate to meet almost every conceivable need for agricultural finance and credit."

In this and parallel passages, they seem to take for granted the fulfillment of the program, when, as a matter of fact, they have before them little more than its paper promises. But for the most part they merely hit the high spots of the program, leaving the readers to draw their own conclusions.

The key principle of the Roosevelt Recovery Program lies in cooperation. The authors quote with approval the President's statement of Oct. 22, 1933: "The secret of the NRA is cooperation," without asking whether the conditions that make cooperation possible are present. Certainly the gold purchase policy has not increased the cooperativeness of such rival empires as Britain and France. As for recalcitrant die-hards, like Henry Ford, and the owners of the Weir steel interests; the embittered denizens of Wall Street; the bankrupt farmers in a dozen agricultural states, and the militant left-front fighters for a Soviet America, they are further from cooperative action since Roosevelt showed his hand than they were before. Mr. Roosevelt may wish that cooperation was the secret of the NRA. It takes more than wishes, however, to conjure away imperial competition and the class struggle.

Signs of capitalist decline are multiplying in the United States. It was these very signs that called the New Deal program into existence. The authors ignore them.

The lines of a bitter struggle for power are emerging in the United States. Mr. Roosevelt is straining every nerve to mobilize sufficient forces to guarantee the propertied and privileged a victory in the struggle. The authors float so far above the battle that they have evidently failed to detect even the evidences of class alignment.

The Future Comes is a feeble effort, quite unworthy the author of *The Economic Interpretation of the United States Constitution*.

The times call for forth-right analysis and sturdy prescription. This book does not even rise to the level of the milk-and-water apologetics that are labeled out in the average college class room.

The authors, in their preface, describe *The Future Comes* as a memorandum, prepared by Mr. Smith, under Prof. Beard's direction, to assist them in making an extended study on National Interest. The book is just that. A memorandum it was and a memorandum it should have remained. By no stretch of the imagination can it claim the stature of a book.

SCOTT NEARING.

The Sex Life of Vridar Hunter

PASSIONS SPIN THE PLOT, by Vardis Fisher. \$2.50. Caxton Printers, Ltd.

The second volume of Vardis Fisher's tetralogy ends with Vridar Hunter still, presumably, an involuntary virgin, though he has just married Neloia Doone. The bulk of *Passions Spin the Plot* is concerned with Vridar's love life at Wasatch College in Salt Lake City, where he learns about women from the incredible—yet somehow plausible—A.M. ("Forenoon") McClintock, who never spent more than five dollars on a girl whom he intended to seduce. At first Vridar is horrified by McClintock's crass attitude; dark-eyed Neloia Doone is a vestal to him. Vridar is fond of highfalutin' and melodramatic language, such as that found in the works of Bertha M. Clay, *The Duchess*, and other predecessors of the flourishing literary school popularized by the Macfadden Publications. Occasionally this weakness intrudes upon the style of Mr. Hunter himself, but not too often. Then Vridar learns that Neloia—she denies nothing when pressed—has been "intimate" with three different men. Despite her besmirched past, Vridar loves her yet. He will still wed her if she will go to school, improve her mind, and sin no more. She must prepare herself for the exalted station that will be hers as the wife of Vridar Hunter. But he does not trust her; he hears rumors of her carrying on, and decides to learn something about life to get even with Neloia. This portion of the book assumes the character of a gallery of women, some of them hot and some of them cold. Some of them are too elusive, others too bold. Vridar never gets what he wants and needs, and the reader wishes he might do so and get it off his mind.

Mr. Fisher, as in the first volume of his tetralogy, maintains an excellent balance. He doesn't people his book with the contented cows of *State Fair*; neither does he veer to the antipodes of the "stark and primitive" novelists who love to write about foredoomed and impotent man, a straw blown by the mighty and relentless winds of Fate, pitted against Nature and Destiny (but never Capitalism). Mr. Fisher's background is authentic, his characters are human and full-dimensional. Their social significance is not so readily apparent.

Vridar calls himself a Socialist because he hates war; he justifies stealing on the grounds that the rich are always stealing from the poor. His moral code, inherited from narrow-minded and ultra-religious parents, keeps him in eternal torment. He would like to be "intimate" with the girls, but his bashfulness, the pangs of conscience, and his ineptitude usually queer things for him. When he finds one that is willing, her boldness deflates his ardor.

Mr. Fisher's supple and colorful prose, the fidelity of his characters' speech, his aptitude for etching a personality—often in a few lines combine to make *Passions Spin the Plot* an eminently readable book. Vridar's poverty is emphasized less than in *In Tragic Life*, and as a consequence the present volume loses some of the strength manifested in the first. A few of Vridar's drinking and hell-raising bouts might have been omitted to give a clearer idea of how he managed to keep going at Wasatch. It is true that his manner of living is suggested at times, but these interludes are not nearly as vivid and as fully realized as the passages dealing with Vridar's experiences with and thoughts of sex. When Mr. Fisher indulges in satire against the social system, he is rather ineffectual. He writes in the tradition of an earlier day—the "Main Street" period.

Neloia Doone, Vridar's uneducated but enigmatic sweetheart, is one of the most human and convincing characters of recent fiction. She serves as a striking contrast to the theatrical and violently emotional Vridar, who considers her far beneath him and envisions himself as becoming a great man, probably a famous writer. Mr. Hunter has somehow contrived to clothe Neloia with a kind of dignity and even nobility. At the end of the book, Vridar has not yet "awakened the woman" in her. To him she is two women, a harlot and an angel. He isn't sure which is the woman he's married. "He looked into the future and he saw there only loneliness and the dark."

JACK CONROY.

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John Reed Club Show

THE SECOND annual exhibition of the John Reed Club in which non-members participated, is in some respects superior to that of last year, in spite of the smaller number of participants. There is, generally speaking, a clearer comprehension of the unity between conception and execution; there is a militant class consciousness seeking an embodiment in form that would impress its message most eloquently, and transmitting an emotional impact that is contagious. The theme in itself is less diffuse than last year's Social Viewpoint in Art.

George Biddle and Edward Laning are at their best. The subdued color scheme of the grayish browns and greens fit admirably the mood of hunger in its blackest, in its most hopeless aspect. Undoubtedly there is an element of despair, of defeatism in the picture; but the artist's unqualified condemnation of the state he depicts hardly requires an explanatory signpost. Laning presents a wider perspective by a skilful confrontation and characterization of the two classes at war.

Cikovsky, Ribak, Quirt, Shahn, Noda and several others are represented by paintings that treat of hunger, unemployment, demonstrations, the Mooney and Scottsboro cases, done with a competence and assurance that would give them a prominent place in any gallery. Gropper's vitriolic *Recruits*, Orozco's harrowing *Negroes*, Fogel's poignant *In the Land of Plenty*, Bryson's *Unemployed Madonna*; drawings by Hoffman, Tamotzu, Stavenitz, Wilson, Kopman and others prove there is no lack in the exhibition of militant ideology and good pictorial quality.

It would be wrong, however, not to admit serious shortcomings, not to point out the minus, as the Russians say, along with the

plus. The aim to depict hunger, Fascism, war, not as congealed facts but as dynamic processes, to describe them not purely empirically but from a definite class viewpoint, to create the pictorial flesh that would clothe the underlying thematic skeleton—is a very difficult as well as high aim. Our standards must be correspondingly strict. We must admit that some of the work exhibited is immature, some of it is muddled. We must admit even that some of the best work suffers occasionally from a disharmony between manner and matter.

Noda, for example, possesses a highly individual gift and has a fine sensitiveness to color; yet his desire to say much in little space leads him to crowd his pictures with too many figures and details, so that even the clearest ideas (the Scottsboro case) become hard to decipher. His method of using a variety of incidents and several moments of time simultaneously, while a perfectly legitimate and fruitful procedure, if used with great care, only adds to the confusion. Ishigaki tackles the interesting problem of employing a nude in a revolutionary painting and proves successfully that it can be done. His painting represents a Japanese girl revolutionary in the torture chamber, bent over forcibly by one policeman while another is applying a burning match to her bare thigh. Despite the great amount of labor that went into the painting, it is not completely convincing because the main center of interest, the nude girl, seems to pose, apparently unaffected at all by the torture applied. Quirt, known for his cartoons and drawings, is winning a definite place in proletarian art. He is well aware of what is happening in contemporary art and is hard at work on the creation of a style. While his workmanship is meticulous (though his painting as a whole is less success-

ful than those of last year) the full intent of the picture is confusing. Are the "humanitarians" ready with charity or police clubs according to their needs? Is the workman a passive tool? A variety of interpretations or—what is worse—misinterpretation is possible. Many of the difficulties confronting the artist flow from the desire to state a problem and solve it—all within the limits of one frame when a series of pictures would probably be required. That, of course, explains the interest in mural painting among revolutionary artists. The difficulties, given time and application, are not insurmountable.

One regrettable circumstance must be noted. Hugo Gellert, Phil Bard, Jacob Burck, Philip Reisman, widely regarded as ideologic and cultural guides in the Club are not represented in the Exhibit at all, although at this very date a few of them are exhibiting in other galleries.

The capitalist press, naturally, took no notice of the exhibition except in a splenetic review by the critic of the Times. We are not concerned with Mr. Jewell's political views; we should like, however, to correct some of his misapprehension with regard to revolutionary art. If "anything at all will do" for "the social struggle" in quotation marks, as Mr. Jewell views it, nothing less than the best technical equipment will suffice to give pictorial expression to the real social struggles—the struggles which even the news that's fit to print cannot escape notice. Furthermore, even one unsympathetic to the revolution might know that a tendency which seeks the aesthetic equivalent for the most thoroughgoing social transformation in history requires more than a couple of years for its full fruition. Perhaps it is one of our fast going liberal illusions to expect from the art section of a newspaper fairer treatment than the revolutionary movement receives from its editorial pages.

LOUIS LOZOWICK.



REVOLT OF THE FARMERS—Design for a Mural in Workers' Center, New York, by Phil Bard.



REVOLT OF THE FARMERS—*Design for a Mural in Workers' Center, New York, by Phil Bard.*

The Theatre

WORK in the theatre may be art or it may not be. Whether or not it is art, it is bound to contain its element of propaganda. The propaganda may be positive and easily recognizable, whether in favor of one social class or another. It may even be aggressive in this respect. Or the propaganda may be entirely negative. That is to say, the element of propaganda may originate in an author's mere acceptance of a social *status quo*. If a playwright accepts a social *status quo*, it is dollars to doughnuts that in his play he will seek in some way, perhaps only half-consciously, to justify it.

It should be clear, therefore, that to understand the American theatre it is necessary to do more than applaud or condemn from one arbitrary angle alone. For example, suppose we take the Theatre Union's production of *Peace on Earth*.

What is the more important factor about this production? Is it that this play has been produced under any circumstances at all? Or is it that the Theatre Union's production definitely marks a technical advance over previous plays in America of similar intent?

Broadway, the capital of the American bourgeois theatre, has been making swift progress in stage mechanics in the past three or four years. Is it significant that the Theatre Union in *Peace on Earth* at the Civic Repertory Theatre has appropriated to itself all it could of this technique, for the sake of improving the technique of propaganda? Or, regardless of technique, as such, is it still more significant that the art of the theatre has been irrefutably impinged upon by the subject matter and the portent of this play?

Then there is always the possibility, in this period at least, that the typical Broadway comedy may be taken too lightly and the typical Broadway drama too seriously, by critics interested in the point of view of a particular

economic class, or by members of an audience, who have a similar interest. The advent of the Theatre Union seems to make this truism doubly sure. The avowed policy of the Theatre Union cuts directly across the tacit and complacent class policy of the established Broadway producers. It is a challenge. It is also a challenging invasion of a field that has been considered by the ringmasters to be inviolate, for the reason that art, of whatever form or medium, has been assumed to be "pure" in the sense of being safe from politics.

If there is always the chance that the Broadway comedy may be taken too lightly and the drama too seriously, a journal of revolutionary opinion may be especially in danger of making these mistakes. To turn either form glibly backward upon itself—the comic form or the catastrophic form—is always a temptation. And I use the term catastrophic, instead of tragic, advisedly in this reference to form, because the writers who express the serious aspirations of the capitalist class in the present phase are no longer possessed of the genius of tragedy, which is the higher conception.

There would seem to be good reason, in this Number One of the weekly *NEW MASSES*, to call attention to the possible scope of dramatic reviewing on this page.

The drama, whether comic or serious, will always be considered controversially as art and as propaganda. At the same time, and with a slightly different approach, notable tendencies in the drama as a whole, as well as points of departure in a particular play, must be treated plainly as fact. Whatever their social content, plays are sometimes also facts to be reported upon objectively. Sometimes the simple reporting of a fact about the theatre is the most useful kind of criticism. This is only true, however, when the report is related to and governed by a point of view, a policy.

This department, furthermore, will assume always that its remarks and reports are addressed mainly to three different elements in American society. All three are important, though not equally so.

The first group consists of members of the

proletariat who have advanced to the point of demanding that art expression and art enjoyment, along with meat and potatoes, shall belong to the workers, and who are consequently interested in arguments on the subject. The second group consists of intellectuals who have advanced to the point of being actuated in their affairs by social consciousness, the ultimate pivot of such consciousness being the Marxian conception of the class struggle. The third group consists of the many proletarians and the few intellectuals who have already merged their interests to the extent of participating together in the revolutionary struggles of the Communist Party. In this third category, of course, the intellectuals have altered their individualism in favor of sufficiently complete identification with the working class.

And the first principle of every commentary and of every objective report will be that any play offered as light entertainment or any play offered as an emotional stimulus, or any play offered as political argument, shall be understood to contain testimony as to the special interests of a particular economic class.

WILLIAM GARDENER.

The Screen

EDDIE CANTOR has always been an excellent gauge for the petty bourgeois temper. The shifting emphases in his humor have reflected admirably the shifting world-view of the American middle classes during the past ten years. In the golden age of Coolidge his was the smirking smart aleck humor of the boy who had made good, his trivial wit revolving about wives, commuters, office secretaries and first generation Americans.

But it was in 1929-30 that he first became a popular national figure; the Everyman of the stock market crash, the sorely pressed petty bourgeois of the Hoover-Roosevelt world. Now, in *Roman Scandals*, the Goldwyn production that opened on Broadway the other day, he has added his voice, too, to the most recent development in American bourgeois thought. The desperate need of the middle classes to replace the uncertainty of the present day, to escape into the stability and tranquility of the past has produced during the past six months films like *Alice in Wonderland*, *The World Changes*, *Dr. Bull*, *State Fair* and a host of others that have assumed the proportions and significance far beyond the ordinary cycle.

By joining this parade into yesterday, Cantor, whose expression has always been more vulgar and less abstracted than the average bourgeois statement, has indicated how profound this temper for the past is. In the role of Eddie, the homeless errand boy of the township of West Rome, America, who sees about him political corruption and the eviction of poor families, he expresses his desire to return to ancient Rome "where men were real men." Not, however, till Cantor has gath-

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ered the evicted tenants about him, and, in song, persuaded them that there is nothing better than living in the street, with the stars for your parlor ceiling and the buttercups and daisies for a carpet.

But, unlike the bourgeois escapists who find perfection in the past, Cantor finds grafters and politicians even in Ancient Rome. In the end he is forced to rely on the good individual, the "friend of the people." The petty bourgeois temper recognizes at all times a "social" problem—"bad" government in need of reform, "unfortunate" circumstances (evictions, unemployment)—and the tendered solution is always with the "good" individual.

Though the recognition of the current social predicament is present, Cantor, and the petty bourgeoisie, are too much rooted in the sentiments and values of the golden age, they still retain the smug optimism, the drooling, mawkish sentimentality and the glittering tinsel.

This is all apparent in *Roman Scandals*, and it has resulted in a dull and uninteresting strip of celluloid pieced together according to the time worn Hollywood formula: so many indexed gags, so much female nudity and "dance" numbers, a chase, and presto!—a film has been created! Even with Cantor's limitations the story contained the possibility of an excellent farce but it is easier for Hollywood not to think and to forget what a camera can be made to do; it is easier to grind out the usual hokum.

NATHAN ADLER.

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Music

THE advent of Arnold Schoenberg to our shores would have been an important musical event at any time. Coming, as it does, as a result of Hitler's anti-Semitism, at a time when there is a great need for leadership among the expanding creative musical forces of America, there are aspects of special significance attached to his arrival.

That we should eagerly welcome a man of Schoenberg's fame in music, is the continuance of a greatly honored American tradition. The American bourgeoisie, which has always dominated our musical life, has only turned to cultural considerations after having attained financial preëminence. The development of a genuine musical culture indigenous to our soil, even if otherwise possible, would have certainly been frustrated by the stifling patronage or indifference of our bourgeoisie. Not having within its own ranks sufficient talent to place in the position of leadership, which it controls, and not having the perspicacity or patience to search for such talent elsewhere in America and develop it until it reaches that point where it can stand comparison with the best from other parts of the world, our bourgeoisie has always imported our musical artists from other lands. That we have had many distinguished foreign artists of great attainment goes without saying. Yet the criteria governing the choice of those elevated to positions of preëminence in our musical life are not entirely musical. Our musical lights must shine with a fame so bright that our social-musical leaders may bask in the warmth of their glamor and fame, and shine in their reflected glory.

The glamor of Schoenberg's name has long been known to us. While American audiences have occasionally had opportunity to hear his works, yet it is undeniable that part of the glamor has been the result of enchantment lent by distance. With Schoenberg's first American appearance, and certain utterances of his to the press, much of the aforesaid glamor, together with any hopes we may have had that he would bring a new, significant leadership to the creative forces of America, have been dispelled.

The need for musical leadership has long been felt by those who are in touch with the

various phases of musical creation existing in this country. With many young composers, imbued for the most part with no definite ideology, writing in the manner of any influence which happens to catch their fancy for the moment, from jazz to Stravinsky, there is a great opportunity for an inspiring musical genius to crystallize this musical chaos, to purge it of an eclecticism which diffuses and makes sterile its efforts, to imbue it with a definite ideology which will point the way to great heights of achievement.

In this connection it is not amiss to quote from Tchomodanoff's *"History of Music in Connection with the History of Social Development"* (the first attempt at a Marxian interpretation of the whole range of musical history): "Often an artist adopts his ideologies without synthesizing them internally, only connecting them mechanically. Such are the artist-eclectics. A great artist, who has his own creative style, is never an eclectic; he does not feed himself upon bits of ideologies, but upon whole ideological systems of definite class groups. The process of this feeding is often hidden from the consciousness of the artist. However, it exists. It is realistic."

Since such wealth of talent, largely without spiritual direction or definite ideology, exists today in America, there are many attempts, so far futile, to seize the leadership for which there is such urgent, pressing need. Even the redoubtable Paul Whiteman has tried to make secure his slipping crown by offering a substantial sum of money for a new, significant composition in "modern" idiom (in Broadway parlance, "modern" being synonymous with "jazz"). Aaron Copeland at Yaddo and elsewhere, Howard Hanson at Rochester, etc., etc., are other manifestations of these attempts toward musical leadership.

Since no composer of world significance had heretofore chosen this country for residence, it is quite natural that many should have looked to Schoenberg for inspiration and guidance. Here was not only a great master, but a man, perhaps a great man, directly connected with one of the most engrossing, significant upheavals in modern times, an exile from his adopted land. Surely such a one would exert an influence on our musical life as would mould our musical tendencies for a long time to come.

The League of Composers, probably unwittingly, performed a service to the musical life of this country of the greatest significance in introducing the distinguished guest in a program composed entirely of his own works. It is well known that few composers, living or dead, can successfully withstand such a terrific test. Without going into long or technical analyses of the various works, the general impression, upon as distinguished an audience of musicians and musical intelligentsia as has

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been seen in New York in many years, was one of utter sameness—so much so that the most appropriate description can be found in the native tongue of the composer: "*Sehr langweilig.*"

Schoenberg has been unquestionably a leader in the creation of a "modern" idiom, that is, a manner of musical speech in which a consistent use is made of dissonances, both as a result of polyphonic (many-voiced) movement, and as a result of new chord structure and progressions. But the basic lack of vitality in ideas; the unutterable sameness; the twinges and spasms of warped emotion; the feeling, with due respect for Schoenberg's sense of form, of loose ends, without cohesion, succeed finally in conveying the sense of utter futility. This feeling of complete frustration might be compared to the efforts of a sculptor who had a concept of form, of pattern, in his mind, but who attempted the hopeless task of moulding handfuls of sand into definite shape.

If anyone doubts that Schoenberg's work is evidence of the final struggle of a decadent and dying culture, let him listen to his songs. Here the subject matter deals with the same idealistic, poetic symbols which were characteristic of the "romantic" period in music. In that period, these emotions were elevated by the highly individualistic genius of such masters as Schubert, Schumann, Wolff, Brahms, and others, to such a great height of inspired attainment, that to follow in their footsteps is to retrogress. Hence, Schoenberg's much vaunted leadership has not been a spiritual one, but one of form, which, in the absence of profound impulse and impetus, degenerates into mere formalism. In short, in dealing with "spring, young and warm," "nightingales," "birds," and personal emotions connected with such matters, he is harking back to a period in music which is past. This he does not do by direct imitation of the old masters. Not at all. Being a "modernist," a "leader," he must be different. So he pours old wine into new bottles, for certainly all this poetry reeks of the old German romanticism—yet only occasionally does the old familiar, appropriately lyrical musical treatment appear in the momentary glimpses of cadences and musical phrases redolent of the past, which stalk through his pages like ghosts, ill at ease in their up-to-date garb. In spite of all this "modernism," one suspects Schoenberg of gazing longingly, like Lot's wife, behind him, and of being at the same moment petrified at his attempts to feel and express.

The piano pieces are as arid, still-born examples of creation as exist in musical literature. Here is novelty of harmonic structure, and it may be argued that, at any rate, he attains a certain interdependence of form and content. Yet the basic ideas are again of such fragmentary, spasmodic aridity, that the death knell of the value of his form is sounded with the opening tones.

In a recent article in the *American Spectator*, entitled "The Composers Turn Buffoons," Edward Robinson takes Schoenberg, among others, to task, for not having

picked up the "burning torch" of Schumann and Brahms, and continued their traditions. It may be evident some day that this is exactly what Schoenberg has done. But this torch burned so fiercely in the hands of Schumann and Brahms, that to the dismay of himself and others, he found himself bearing aloft not a "flaming torch," but dying embers.

In the light of certain interviews Schoenberg gave upon his arrival, one is enabled to see, more clearly than heretofore, the direction and danger of his leadership. He has said that a composer is uninfluenced by social changes and upheavals, and that he goes ahead with his work unconcerned with world affairs. In his Marxian interpretation of musical history, Tchemodanoff, the great Russian critic, observes: "An artist, as well as a philosopher, does not suspect that his creative ideas are influenced by the social conditions of this or that class. Moreover, he would deny this connection if someone were to point it out to him. He would insist that he was absolutely free in his creation and that he worked only in the name of art and his own great ideas. Nevertheless, there is not a single artist, no matter how formally free he may be, who can escape the influence of the ideological atmosphere which surrounds him."

It is not to be believed that Schoenberg has evolved his "different" chord structure merely from his inner consciousness, without his being aware of musical changes taking place in the world, whose revolutionary character may be traced to shifting social conditions to which they are indissolubly linked. His failure, in the last analysis, seems to be his self-confessed unawareness and grasp of the larger significance of inevitable changes taking place in a world of ever-present reality, in which musical utterance is a most vital phase of expression. Were he great enough to sense the profound significance of these universal changes, his work would break the bonds of mere formalism, a new transcendent spirit would imbue his creations; the "professor" would emerge from the narrow confines of his study, transformed into a real musical leader, catching the new spirit of mankind. The attempt to make

the ideal, the unreal, live, would no longer concern him; but the inspiration of the new era, the glorification of the real, would elevate his musical expression to new heights, quickening the form which has the aridity of a desert.

One is led to speculate what the influence, if any, upon Schoenberg's ideology would have been from his exile to less friendly shores, or even to the safety of Hitler's "protective custody." After all, the concurrence of Schoenberg's misfortune with the advantage to the conservatory in Boston may be Schoenberg's tragedy. **ASHLEY PETTIS.**

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