

Norman out of the citrus belt. The Klan was tipped off. They went further than they intended. Today a big man, six feet four, weighing 190 pounds, likes to remember the way he disposed of a "Red."

That Red's wife and child? They live in Lakeland. Most women would be crushed by the tragedy. Mrs. Norman gets relief—\$1.20 a week. But Mrs. Norman understands what Frank was driving at, why he paid for his work with his life. Mrs. Norman feels that she has much to live for.

THE Constitution of Florida reads: "White and colored children shall not be taught in the same school, but impartial provision shall be made for both." Further on, "All marriages between a white person and a Negro, or between a white person and a person of Negro descent to the fourth generation inclusive, are hereby forever punishable." It is a crime against the state for a white person to teach Negroes. From his earliest days, the white child is indoctrinated with this deep, unreasoning contempt of the Negro. Thomas Nelson Page, author of that classic of race hatred, *The Negro*, expresses the attitude of the backward South:

The Negro does not generally believe in the virtue of women.

In the next place, his passion, always his controlling force, is now, since the new teaching, for the white woman.

The urgent need is for Negroes to divide into classes, with character and right conduct as the standard of elevation.

To say that Negroes furnish the great body of rapists, is not to charge that all Negroes are ravishers. To say that they are ignorant and lack the first element of morality, is not to assert that all are so.

Page's ugly conviction of white superiority is echoed by the ruling class throughout the South. The managing editor of *The Lakeland Evening Ledger* leaned back in his chair, the "kind, southern gentleman," finger-tips together, twinkling eyes surveying me as he explained, "Yes, suh, the one ambition of every nigger is to sleep with a white woman. When they do, they know what to expect. Now, I likes to see niggers get ahead, but you sho' gotta be ca'ful with 'em, else they'd be runnin' the show. That's why we don't let 'em vote, not in the white man's prim'ry. Now, a nigger's got a legal right to vote, but just you let one of 'em try it. When a man's 'lected on the prim'ry down here, he's 'lected fo' good. If the nigger's itchin' to vote, he can in the run off, that is if he's seen to it to pay his poll tax—that's a dollar a year and it's got to be paid up fo' two years. We don't want niggers runnin' us—guess we couldn't stand fo' that."

So the Negro is something apart, something lower. Even the liberals reflect this attitude. A man who prided himself on his socially-minded point of view, prodded me

with his finger, saying, "Y'know, I ain't got no prej'dice 'gainst the nig—Negroes. I think they're jest's good as we are. Trouble is, they're dirty."

I visited Negro homes—crude crate-like huts, no running water, no electric light, no toilets, no heat, poor ventilation. Water must be hauled from the pump. No paved streets in the Negro district, but dust, thick dust, that the slightest breeze blows into the rickety shacks with their corrugated iron roofs. An old bent woman showed me through one. "Rain leaks in jest like it was outside," she told me. "Dust, ev'ry time the wind kicks up a little, blows into everythin'. People says cullud people ain't clean. Well, I scrubs and scrubs, but the boards ain't no good and scrubbin' doesn't get out the rats 'n the bugs. How's we goin' t'wash decent? And we pays \$1.50 a week f'r this. 'N even if we could afford better, we ain't 'lowed to live on'y in this section o' town. My husband, he's got work now, skilled work. He gits \$12 a week. I takes in washin'—fifty cents a bundle an' they sho' are some big bundles. But yo' can't live decent in shacks like these—and white folks calls us dirty. I'd like to see some of them live here and see how clean they'd be."

Frank Norman attempted to organize the Negroes, to preach that they too are human and have human wants and needs and the right to life. That is a crime, the most serious of crimes, in the South. Frank Norman paid for that crime with his life.

THREE white men and a Negro squat at the edge of the lake. The moonlight reflected in the water is pale chromium; on the opposite bank are the street lamps against the background of dark houses, the occupants already asleep. Behind, a row of palm trees rustles in the slight breeze.

We whisper together; a swan sails out of the dark, feeds noisily in the patch of water lilies. The three of us who are white shield the Negro from the glare of the occasional passing automobiles. He talks slowly, soft-voiced, looking out at the lake, at the path of moonlight on the water. "He was the fines' white man I ever knowed, Frank No'man was. He was like part of me, part of all of us. He knowed us and he meant what he said. We have so many upsets—when he was takin', was like my own kid dyin'. That was the way all'n us feel."

The bank smells fresh, grassy. "And now?" I asked.

"We's got a hard time organizing. So many upsets for the workin' man. We don't get much chanct fo' organizing, strong like. Cullud folks is afeard. One don't get and never have gotten since we was born, a livin' wage. Our people's unstable like, 'cause they's scared, scared of the fire, scared of the rope. Capitalist organization sho's is strong. But it ain't too long a time

till people know what we's comin' to, what is the way we's all gotta go."

He broke off. The swan squawked, made off down the lake. I looked at our companion, watched him roll grass between his fingers. "My kid goes t'school," he said suddenly. "Only learns devilment, that the black man ain't no good. He thinks that right, hears it so much. When I tells him, 'How come you believin' such things?' and I 'splains to him that the Negro's got t' know, he says, 'Well, mebbe. Reckon could yo' get by wit' that without you gotten killed?'"

Again he paused, clearing his throat. "Sho'," he added. "Times are we c'n make twelve, fo'teen dollars a week. But we can't live decent. We must lie down and let it rain in yo' face. We should have bathrooms. We try to live decent, but yo' sho' can't do that without finance. I get two dollar a day. I pay \$1.35 for a sack of flour, \$1.50 fo' rent, twenty-seven cents fo' a pound of meat. All the cheapest—fifty-five cents fo' lard. Cullud people gotta eat heavy food. If it wasn't fo' the fear, we'd all do sumthin', but the fear—we's pow'less now. But if a bridge 'cross a lake get worse 'n worse and you must cross it, pretty soon yo' goin' t'do somethin', fix it. Frank No'man, he knowed. We ain't fo'gotten what Frank No'man say."

He stood up, looking out across the lake. "No," he repeated, his voice low, almost to himself. "We ain't fo'gotten Frank No'man. He was the fines' white man I ever knowed."

"Every revolution was first a thought in one man's mind, and when the same thought occurs to another man, it is the key to that era," said Emerson.

BLANK COLLEGE REVISITED

The college boys go wearily by
Wearily seducing
The college girls; the college girls
Drearily refusing

The curriculum conjures chaos up
Life's gimcrack mystery
Sustains a cardboard hero
Through pseudo-tragedy

And Prexy is a "Socialist"
The faculty liberal to a man
Ponder fake problems of the age
And reap what hope they can

Having turned the lights out all
These "grope in darkness for salvation"
Lock their own door, then beat the wall
Come, lovely liquidation

JOSEPH BRIDGES.



THE SPENDING IS OVER

Russell T. Limbach

Battle of the Century

EMANUEL EISENBERG

ON August 26 the North American Conference of the New Education Fellowship (subtitled Section of the New Education Association under the Auspices of the Secretary of Public Education) innocently opened a six-day congress in Mexico City in the incredible Italian Renaissance-Roxy building called the Palace of Fine Arts.

Under the heading of "The Arts in the Mexican Schools," Diego Rivera, Mexico's most famous and most prosperous artist, delivered a lecture the second evening on "The Arts and Their Revolutionary Role in Culture" in his usual facile manner, with an erudite reference here and a well-leavened gag there. The customers, almost entirely schoolteachers, were thoroughly contented and nobody thought any more about it. The fantastic demagoguery of the Mexican government, which teaches its school children "The Internationale" and circulates the works of Marx and Lenin while crushing strikes and paying fascist bands to break up orderly Communist demonstrations, had been advanced another pace among American leaders of education.

The following afternoon David Alfaro Siqueiros, almost as famous as Rivera but with not a fraction of his prosperity, devoted a similar period to a reading of his already widely circulated analysis of the Mexican muralist movement and the part played in it by Diego Rivera. This analysis is familiar to readers of *THE NEW MASSES*, where it was published a year and a half ago. Siqueiros had just launched into his specific comments on Rivera when the door theatrically opened and the victim himself unexpectedly entered — large, hippopotamus-like, grinning. Naturally, this was a perfect cue for the actor to intensify his highly effective voice and enter upon improvisations of the printed intentions before him.

He had succeeded in developing no more than a handful of his charges when Rivera leaped up out of his seat and screamed that every one of these accusations was answerable and defensible. Here the chairman, José Muñoz Cota, acutely unpopular head of the Department of Fine Arts of the Secretary of Education, stood up to cry that this was no debate; Rivera had had his say yesterday. It was now that Diego, long distinguished as a gun-toter, pulled out his pistol and waved it in the air and announced that he demanded a chance to answer or else —

The schoolteachers were considerably relieved to hear the chairman ask the intruder whether he was ready to suggest an early date for official retort and to hear Rivera offer the following afternoon at four. The pistol was replaced in its holster. Siqueiros was permitted to complete his increasingly

fiery talk; and the schoolteachers went on to the third arduous day of their Congress.

BY THE following morning the incident was not only known to all Mexico City, having crashed the front pages of practically all the newspapers in town, but to numerous foreign capitals as well, the cables having done their part nobly. By four o'clock the Palacio de Bellas Artes (Palace of Fine Arts) was jammed with people in the lobby and up and down the stairways: everybody had shown up; countless painters, reporters, art dealers, government employees in the arts, a handful of teachers from the Congress, thirty or forty other Americans, practically all the members of the Section of Plastic Arts of the L.E.A.R. (League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists, the one authentic revolutionary cultural organization in Mexico),¹ and the usual percentage of curiosity hounds. At least a thousand people were there. Something rare was about to happen.

Mexico is probably the only country in the world where a controversial meeting of two painters, in much less than a day's notice, could be calculated to attract a thousand people. In an overwhelmingly illiterate country pictures perform the most immediate communication in the arts, and the tradition carries through to the intellectual world. Mexico is, further, the one place in the world where the bases of a popular public quarrel could be such accusations as false revolutionism, demagoguery, chauvinism, tourism and reactionism.

But there were more immediate and specific reasons for the exceptional interest stirred by the quarrel. Since Rivera's expulsion from the Communist Party of Mexico in 1929, he had attempted no public justifications or explanations about his new stand beyond a lying martyrish statement to the bourgeois press that he had been thrown out for Trotskyist convictions. It happens that he was expelled for maintaining an important government post (head of the Department of Fine Arts) while functioning as a member of the Central Committee, openly cooperating with agrarian reformist elements and refusing to sign a petition protesting the government's counter-revolutionary road and its terrorism against the Communist Party. At the John Reed Club in New York in 1932 he did attempt to restate his stand that only the revolution can inspire great art, but with small success. In February of that year, Joseph Freeman published in *THE NEW*

MASSSES an analysis of Rivera's career as painter and politician. Rivera maintained a discreet silence for a year and a half, then attacked Freeman in the liberal journals without once referring to the most important accusations which any muralist knew were true. All this happened in New York; in Mexico Rivera never explained himself. And Siqueiros had been attacking him in public since 1931. This was Rivera's first response in four years. Everyone had begun to give up hope of getting a rise out of the smug, prosperous, official national artist.

It is pretty safe to say, therefore, that the crowd had turned up to hear Rivera defend himself and not to listen to the all too familiar attacks of Siqueiros. The crowd and excitement increased. Siqueiros, with his unfailing flair for the theatrical, stood hard against the precise middle of the balcony, giving statements to the press and conferring with a dozen different people. Frightened guards scurried up and down assuring everybody that nothing was going to happen. Nobody budged. At 4:30 Rivera arrived, large and grinning, and joined Siqueiros on the balcony. There was tremendous noise and jittering and it was impossible to tell what was up.

Finally Siqueiros spoke. Not only had the teachers tried to sabotage this tremendously important discussion, said he, but the government officials were attempting the same thing. They offered a small hall that was utterly inadequate. Rivera then announced his contempt for Muñoz Cota, head of this building, and repeated the demand for the largest hall. The crowd booed and howled and insisted. There was a brief and violent flurry of activity in a side office, a confused pause — and then, suddenly, everyone was pouring into the main hall, where plays, opera and dance recitals are given.

SIQUEIRO'S spoke first. In case his arguments are not known to certain readers, they may be summed up thus: Indoor murals of government buildings are seen only by stenographers; there should be outdoor murals in workers' districts; production has been individualist and not related to the masses, the use of architecture non-functional, non-social, the composition lyrical and mechanical instead of dialectic and scientific, the technique ancient Italian and Egyptian instead of modern mechanical, the content pedagogical, archeological, esthetic, mystical, religious, static, psychologically passive, obscure, dilettantish, fetichistic, opportunistic, counter-revolutionary (the speaker's own string of adjectives). Rivera is the natural fruit of the false ideology of a petty-bourgeois revolution and of the idea that an artist can cooperate with a reaction-

¹ This group, analogous to our former John Reed Club, originated less than two years ago in opposition to the government's Federation of Proletarian Artists and Writers. Its influence has grown slowly and steadily.