

# Be Careful, Mrs. Hopkins

NATHAN ASCH

MRS. HOPKINS at last thought she heard a noise and rose from her rocker, immobilized its movement with her hand, peeked with half-closed eyelids at the floor searching for stray lint, dragged her feet to the curtained window and again peered out through the torn lace fabric. A car had stopped in the outside alley. She turned and her eyes quite closed against the bare electric light, she stood in the direction of the door. There came Miss Wurdman's three imperative knocks, there came the click sharp turning of the knob and Miss Wurdman came. Miss Wurdman's voice was hurried and suddenly cold with apprehension, Mrs. Hopkins thought that there was anger in Miss Wurdman's voice. Miss Wurdman said: "I'm late. And I would have let it go, but I was forced to see you, Mrs. Hopkins." Mrs. Hopkins imagined Miss Wurdman wore a wrap and an evening gown, but the naked bulb always hurt her eyes and she did not dare to shade her face from it and look. She waited, breathless. Miss Wurdman said: "Mrs. Hopkins, we've had complaints about you from our other clients. Mrs. Hopkins, I'm going to be very firm with you." Mrs. Hopkins heard her own sharply exhaled breath. "Mrs. Hopkins, you can't afford to buy it and you know you bought last week three pounds of butter." Mrs. Hopkins' heart loudly began to beat, she felt heavy and she imagined she was going to fall. She heard the hiss and whistle of her own voice: "Miss Wurdman, I didn't buy no butter." Miss Wurdman's voice became very high; it hissed like Mrs. Hopkins' voice. "I'm not going to argue with you, Mrs. Hopkins. We've been doing for you everything we could. And here we receive a letter you've been buying butter." Mrs. Hopkins repeated: "I didn't buy no butter." From the outside there came toot-toot and Miss Wurdman said: "This is after my office hours, Mrs. Hopkins, and if I wasn't feeling sorry for you, I would have simply recommended that we stop relief." Mrs. Hopkins became very, very cold, she began trembling and she couldn't stop. She tried to move forward, to beg Miss Wurdman with her hand, to fall before the young lady on her knees, but she couldn't move. She couldn't even speak very well; she couldn't control her loosely shaking head; and slowly she repeated: "I—didn't—buy—no—butter." Miss Wurdman almost lost her temper. "We know you did. Your own grocer wrote us. He said he couldn't afford to give his own family that amount of butter. And he pays taxes, Mrs. Hopkins, for the support of clients like you." Now Mrs. Hopkins couldn't even speak; all she could feel was her crazily-shaking head and the line of electric light in her half-closed eyes. "When we can't trust our clients,

Mrs. Hopkins, we begin to suspect everything they want. There is even a question now of allowing you the visits to the dentist." All Mrs. Hopkins could say was weakly: "Oh-h-h."—"What we cannot imagine, Mrs. Hopkins, is where you found the money, since your budget is only \$2.80 a week. Maybe your son came back and you kept the news from us." Mrs. Hopkins' lungs suddenly caught some air, the words came with an awful rush. "No, Harry ain't come back. I ain't heard from him in almost two years. Maybe he's somewhere on the road. Maybe he's sick. I don't know, Miss Wurdman." From the outside there came an impatient this time triple toot and Mrs. Hopkins desperately hurried with her words. "You can't stop relief. I didn't buy no butter. I hardly eat anything at all. I ain't lit the stove in almost two weeks. What would I be doing with a lot of butter? I

sit here and I wait for the postman and I think maybe I'll hear from Harry." Now from the outside the toot-toot began evenly and persistently repeating and Miss Wurdman said in a leaving voice: "Well, Mrs. Hopkins, we'll investigate. You're not to worry if you told the truth. Maybe someone did make a mistake and I'll be the first one to come and tell you so. Goodby, Mrs. Hopkins, you will hear from us." The toot still continued and Miss Wurdman left; then all at once everything was quiet. From the outside came the slamming of a door, came the sound of a motor starting, quieter and disappearing as it left the alley for the street beyond. Mrs. Hopkins slowly dragged her feet into the little kitchen, shut the door behind her, for a moment stood opening her eyes to the resting darkness. Her hand lifted to a little shelf, her fingers felt the wood, crept to the side, touched the sudden coolness of an earthenware jar, lifted the paper that was covering it and sank in the well-spooned butter.

She rubbed her fingers for a while in it, then put them into her mouth and sucked them between her toothless gums.

## Seed and Stubble

LOLA PERGAMENT

Bewildered now he lifts above the land  
his face long martyred to the wind and frost;  
years have availed no peace into his hand,  
hours have been his timeless holocaust.

Denied by earth and her invisible store  
that time will stake against the want of him,  
he feels a fitful hunger that will bore  
like spring entombed within the barren limb.

What dream deceived his flesh that he come to this?  
What prayer beset his mind with such confusion?  
Earth, that had once returned a lover's kiss,  
is now his poverty and disillusion.

Into a wilderness and stubborn track  
his fathers built the coffers of his need;  
the tree that was a shelter broke a back,  
starvation nourished in the planted seed.

And there were times when drouth unsexed the earth  
and parched the womb that strove and could not yield;  
but there were times when labor reaped its worth  
as plentiful as grain upon a field.

Bewildered now he lifts his head, unknowing  
all but the heartbreak of his meagre ration;  
where stubble rots the corn silk should be blowing  
its peace into his singular starvation.

Out of a heritage his plough lies rusted,  
his field unfurrowed and given back to sheep,  
and he, an alien to the land he trusted,  
stands on a grave wherein he cannot sleep.

# Labor's Dividends Under the New Deal

## *A Record of Workers Killed in the Past Six Months*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Circumstances of the Killing</i>
Feb. 3	Columbus ("Pink") Walker	Rossville, Ga.	Walker was an unemployed man, a sympathizer of the United Textile Workers of America. He was shot by a scab, Talmadge Lindsey, during a strike at the Richmond Hosiery Mills.
Feb. 14	Frank Petrosky	Larksville, Pa.	Petrosky was a coal miner, a member of the United Anthracite Miners Union. He was killed by a scab in a strike at the Woodward Colliery of the Glen Alden Coal Company.
Feb. 14	Valentine Rascavage	Hanover Township, Pa.	Rascavage was a member of the United Mine Workers of America, and was killed in a quarrel about leadership of the strike then going on.
Feb. 17	Paul Knight of Santa Maria, Calif.	El Centro, Calif.	Killed by vigilantes during a strike of lettuce workers under the leadership of the Fruit and Vegetable Workers Union, A. F. of L. Scene of the killing was the William Wahl shed.
Feb. 17	Kenneth Eldridge Hamaker of Westmoreland, Calif.	El Centro, Calif.	Killed at same time and under same circumstances as Paul Knight.
March 18	Abraham Young, Negro	Sladen, Mass.	Young was an organizer among the share-croppers. He was threatened by Hardie Mackie, an agent of the landlords, who pulled out a gun. Young shot in self-defense and was lynched.
March 20	James Thompson, Negro	New York City	Shot by Detective Nicholas Campo, during the police terror that swept Harlem when the Negro people rose in resentment against their long-accumulated grievances.
March 22	August Miller	New York City	Died of a fractured skull suffered at the hands of police during the Harlem events of March 19.
March 23	Andrew Lyons, Negro	New York City	Died of internal injuries received during the Harlem events of March 19.
March 24	Edward Laurie, Negro	New York City	Killed by Policeman Abraham Zabutinski, on the excuse that he had "talked back." This was part of the police reign of terror established in Harlem.
April 4	Ignacio Velarde	Gallup, New Mexico	Unemployed veteran, killed in the fire of the sheriff and his deputies during a workers' demonstration against the eviction of unemployed miners.
April 12	Solomon Esquibel	Gallup, New Mexico	A member of the Section Committee of the Communist Party. Died in the hospital as the result of wounds received on April 4, when Velarde was killed.
April 17	Andy Latiska of Port Arthur, Ohio	Toronto, Ohio	Killed when guardsmen poured 100 shots into the crowd of strikers at the Kaul Clay Company. Strike was led by the United Clay Workers Union.
April 21	Edris Mabie	Springfield, Ill.	Member of the Progressive Miners of America. Killed by a gang including Ray Edmondson, President of the United Mine Workers of America in Illinois.
April 27	Ray Morencey	Stockton, Calif.	Was vice-president of the local warehouseman's union. Killed by Charles Gray, son of the owner of the trucking company where the union had called a strike.
May 11	Fonie Stephens	La Grange, Ga.	Injured by National Guards who were evicting strikers from the company houses. Died in hospital as result of these injuries.
June 14	John W. Duster	Omaha, Nebraska	Killed by police fire during the strike of streetcar men.
June 14	George Melhelm	Canton, Ohio	Died in hospital from injuries received when struck by tear-gas bomb fired by Republic Steel Company guards during the strike at the Berger Manufacturing Company.
June 17	Dewey McCoy	Omaha, Nebraska	Died as a result of injuries inflicted June 14 by police during strike of streetcar men.
June 21	W. H. Kaarte	Eureka, Calif.	Killed in attack by police, with riot guns and tear gas, at Holmes-Eureka Mill where lumber workers were on strike.
June 24	Thomas Wilstrom, Negro	New York City	Died in Bellevue Hospital as result of fractured skull inflicted by police during Harlem events of March 19.
June 25	Harold Edlund	Eureka, Calif.	Shot in same attack of police on the lumber workers that killed W. H. Kaarte. Died in hospital.