

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

Greeks bearing gifts?—Children in the movies—That play *Tovarich*—Living art

NOBODY can say that Hollywood is not at least as alive to the march of events as the White House or the NEW MASSES. The latest evidence of this awareness is a movie based on the coöperative movement, which of late has been under scrutiny in Sweden and elsewhere by various New Deal emissaries and which came in for critical comment in an article in this magazine about a month ago. In that article it was suggested that unless a more solid alliance was established between organized labor and the coöperative movement, there existed a danger that finance capital might seize the opportunity to pervert the coöperatives into a mass base for its own unpleasant purposes. We do not relish looking a gift horse in the mouth, but when Hollywood undertakes to broadcast favorable propaganda for the coöperatives, it is time for all good men to pay keen and critical attention. *The President's Mystery* (Republic Pictures) is cleverly offered as having been based on the story in *Liberty* last year which was written by Rupert Hughes, Samuel Hopkins Adams, Anthony Abbott, Rita Weiman, S. S. Van Dine, and John Erskine, around an idea supplied by F.D.R. In the movie, the gentleman with the \$5,000,000 cash-convertible estate undertakes to spend his money rehabilitating a New England town by erecting a canning coöperative. Through this fabric runs the lively, melodramatic tale of how the gentleman in question manages to erase his identity and start life anew from scratch.

Child actors have unnecessarily been for a long time a thorn in the flesh of moviegoers who like their fare to have at least some faint resemblance to the facts of life. Perhaps this disaffection has grown to the proportions of effective mass protest of late, because we are beginning to see some films in which children get half a chance to behave as they really do. The recent *Girl of the Ozarks* did some satisfactory pioneering in that direction, and now *The Devil Is a Sissy* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) gives a tribe of scholboys an opportunity to show in realistic terms the terrific dramatic tension that arises day by day through such events as the accidental fracturing of school windows, snatching of fruit from the green-grocer, and the more serious consequences of stealing money for serious ends. The filmic moralizing that surrounds these departures from the alleged cultural norm is superficial, but the goings-on among the kids is handled by them and the director in a fairly genuine way.

Julie Haydon, who did such an appealing and skilled piece of work in Hecht and MacArthur's *The Scoundrel*, seems to be getting kicked around the M.-G.-M. lot in a way she

doesn't deserve. You can see her now as a shop girl in a current melodrama, *The Longest Night*, which is all about how her sweetheart is accused of murdering a lady buyer who is his mother, and how the store is, and then again is not, to be sold by Robert Young.

ROBERT WHITE.

THE THEATER

REVIEWING a play like *Tovarich* for a Marxist magazine is a bit of a headache. In its own terms the play is so arrant a romance that it might seem captious to complain seriously of its two or three nasty and historically unjustified cracks at Communists and the Soviet Union. It might seem like complaining that a book like *Graustark* was an untrue picture of imperialist intrigue in the Balkans. And especially the complaint might seem stupid in view of the play's cracks at White Russians and in view of its brief, yet deft and telling argument for trade-unionism. Yet the cracks against Communists and the Soviet Union must be complained of, because first, they are put into the mouths of characters who are supposed to be speaking seriously from their own experience, and second, because they repeat canards that are being widely used at the present time in the rising tide of anti-Soviet propaganda.

But please don't get the idea that *Tovarich* has been conceived and offered as anti-Soviet propaganda. It is really a very pleasant comedy about some émigrés in Paris and how the four-

billion-franc fund entrusted to them by the last czar is at last turned over to the Soviet government. They are imperial highnesses or majesties or something, and they go into service with the family of a French banker where they eventually find themselves called upon to serve a Soviet commissar with whom they have had dealings before. The story is not very important, and there is a quantity of about-facing on the part of the Whites and the Red that assumes a logic only in terms of what we have been taught to believe is the romantic French point of view. Jacques Deval, who wrote *Her Cardboard Lover*, did the French text from which Robert Sherwood has written this English version. Whatever else may be said, it is interesting to see how the Soviet commissar stands out as the only character of the play to have a dynamic historical meaning extending beyond the bounds of the dramatic action. And this wasn't the author's intention; it just couldn't be helped.

If you see the play, you'll enjoy it except for the few minutes when slanders are coming across the footlights. The acting company includes the very talented Marta Abba, an Italian actress who appears in an American theater for the first time, and other such capable performers as John Halliday, Ernest Lawford, Jay Fasset, and Margaret Dale. Gilbert Miller's direction and Raymond Sovey's sets are eminently suited to the occasion.

A. W. T.

THE FINE ARTS

BECAUSE for decades the American worker was deprived of access to works of art in any form it is peculiarly true today that every work of art produced in this country in a sense is revolutionary. The groping for artistic expression is a primitive stirring of forces which, as they grow more sophisticated, can become the basis of deliberate social protest. Only in recent years have the American people adopted the movies, the radio, the phonograph record. And these have, for the most part, been successively perverted so that they failed to satisfy the needs of the audience.

The simultaneous opening this week of 250 exhibitions sponsored by Living American Art, Inc., of New York, in 225 cities in 46 states indicates beyond cavil that art on a mass base is here. An estimated attendance of 500,000 people in the run of these shows warms the heart of the painter who has become accustomed to shows inspected by a few hundred. The painter's best work has always been literally stifled in collections. Would it be crediting the Pittsburgh steelmasters with too much caginess to suggest that their private collections were frequently inspired by dread that vigorous works might fall into brawny



A. Walkowitz

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arms? Siqueiros has observed that Mexico resorted to the mural as a primitive device to expose paintings to large numbers of people. The collotype process with its incontestable fidelity of line and tone is a readier solution for an industrialized country. Moreover, reproduction on a large scale permits the painting to enter the home where its cultural effect can be exercised at a maximum. The potency of the artist's weapon, multiplied in vast number, is impossible to exaggerate. True, Maxfield Parrish has been run off on calendars in astronomical millions. But the square root of a zero dream infinitely multiplied still produces zero.

To the painter, Living American Art opens vistas of a decent living from an unexpected quarter. Royalties will be paid to the artists themselves, regardless of the current ownership of the originals. Such royalty rights have no established legal recognition at this time and it has been customary to ignore the painter's moral right to a return from sale of reproductions of his work. Roughly, this project may be expected to do with painting what the phonograph record did with music. It must reach untouched social strata where the hunger for works by native sympathetic artists is part of a general hunger for understanding. It paves the road for a great period in American painting. One of the most astounding facts in the current political campaign is the failure of Landon to jibe at W.P.A. support of artists: less than thirty years ago an administration that thought artists needed to live would have been laughed out of office.

SIDNEY KAUFMAN.



The Radio

(Times given are Eastern Standard, but all programs listed are on coast-to-coast hookups. Readers are asked to report at once any anti-working-class bias expressed by these artists or their sponsors.)

FORTHCOMING BROADCASTS

Earl Browder, Fri., Oct. 23, 10:45 p.m., N.B.C. red.
Stephen Vincent Benét, "American Poetry," Fri., Oct. 23, 11 a.m., Columbia.

Irvin S. Cobb, Sat., Oct. 24, 10:30 p.m., N.B.C. red.
Julian Sawyer, Communist Party candidate for lieutenant-governor of New York. Mon., Oct. 26, N.B.C. blue.

Parent-Teachers' Association (National Congress). "Prenatal Growth," Wed., Oct. 28, 4 p.m., N.B.C. blue.

National Education Association. Dr. Belmont Farley on "Equal Educational Opportunities for Every Child." Wed., Oct. 28, 6 p.m., N.B.C. red.

"Mother" Bloor. Fri., Oct. 30, 11 p.m., N.B.C. red.

Theater Collective. Continuing the series of weekly programs sponsored by the International Workers Order, supplemented by the I.W.O. symphony and mandolin orchestras. Thursday, Oct. 22, WMCA, N.Y., 9:45 p.m.; Thursdays, Oct. 22, 29, WCFL, Chicago, 8:30 p.m.; Thursday, Oct. 22, WIP, Philadelphia, 9:30 p.m.; KQV, Pittsburgh, 9:15 p.m.; Friday, Oct. 23, WJBK, Detroit, 9 p.m.; WHK, Cleveland, 10:30 p.m.

FOOTBALL

St. Mary's-Fordham. Sat., Oct. 24, 2:15 p.m., Columbia and N.B.C. red.

Yale-Rutgers, Sat., Oct. 24, 1:45 p.m., Mutual.

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