

Readers' Forum

Stanley High's Falsifications

TO NEW MASSES: Falsification is one of the methods of the reactionaries in an attempt to confuse and divide the progressive forces. This fully applies to the article of Mr. Stanley High in *The Saturday Evening Post*.

I could never have related "the part that the Communists had played in a whole series of recent Detroit strikes, particularly sitdown and wildcat strikes," because the Communists have not organized or advocated any wildcat strikes. As a matter of fact the Communists who might be members of the United Automobile Workers of America or any other union have always fought against any wildcat strikes. The Communists were in opposition to the wildcat general strike in Lansing called by the Lovestoneite board-member Washburn and supported by Martin. The Communists were in opposition to an unauthorized strike in Pontiac which was stimulated by the Trotskyites, among others by John W. Anderson, a strong supporter of Homer Martin. Communists were against the proposal advanced by Martin supporters for a general strike in Detroit during the American Brass strike last May.

Equally untrue is the falsification when the same Mr. Stanley High states that I named Mortimer as "party's representative on the board of the union." Even if that were so—which it is not—it would be questioning the intelligence of anybody to make such a statement. But I made no such statement to Mr. High or to anybody else, because it is not true. Mortimer is not a member of the Communist Party.

I wish to add one more point as to how Mr. High misrepresents the situation. In his article he declared that the so-called progressive caucus, headed by Martin, "had as its only objective the achievement of peace between the various factions." Everybody who wants to know knows that the progressives' caucus, as headed by Homer Martin and his political advisers, the Lovestoneites, have done everything in their power to carry on war within the union—and not only against the Communists. As a matter of fact, the war that Homer Martin carries on behind the smoke-screen of fighting Communism is in reality a war against the CIO. It is a war that threatens the destruction of the union. This is proved by the applause of William Randolph Hearst, the *Chicago Tribune*, and Father Coughlin.

The Communists, as Comrade Weinstone and I outlined in the article "Factionalism, the Enemy of the Auto Workers," which appeared in the *Daily Worker*, clearly stated the position of the Communists: namely, we are against factions and groups within the union and for their abolition; for the unification of the union on the basis of the progressive program of the CIO, yes, including the twenty-point program which, if there was any violation, it was violated by the Martin administration. And as far as the Communists are concerned, we will continue to carry on our work to the best of our ability, of building, strengthening, and maintaining the UAWA as a mighty union, part of the great CIO. We have no other objectives. We never had.

The repudiation of Homer Martin in reckless, irresponsible actions against five duly and unanimously elected vice presidents and secretary-treasurer by district councils of the UAWA of Detroit, Cleveland, Canada, and California, and such local unions as Flint Local 156, West Side Local 175, Dodge Local 3, and some fifty others that represent unquestionably an overwhelming majority of the membership is the best answer. Surely even Mr.

High's imagination cannot stretch far enough to label all of these people as just simply Communists.

We are confident that the heroic auto workers who built their union in the face of the attacks of the General Motors will be able to preserve this union. It will do more than that: it will organize the Ford Motor Co.; and the banner of the UAWA will fly over the last citadel of the open shop in the auto industry. In these efforts of the constructive forces of the membership of the UAWA and its leadership, the Communists will loyally give their assistance to the best of their ability and without any objectives of "capturing" the UAWA. Strange as it might seem to Mr. High, the Communists have no other objective than that of the working class—in this case, specifically, the 400,000 auto workers.

B. K. GEBERT.

Detroit, Mich.

Library Organization

TO NEW MASSES: The sixtieth annual convention of the American Library Association in Kansas City, Mo., June 13-19, had one unique feature: in the exhibition hall usually devoted to displays of library fittings, books, etc., the State, County, and Municipal Workers of America had a booth. For the first time there was obtruded into the cloistered atmosphere of librarydom the contemporary (and to some ears, discordant) note of unionization of library workers. During the week the booth had many visitors, for librarians have intellectual curiosity if no sense of their identification with all workers. There were on hand at the booth throughout the week well-trained persons to answer questions and a wide variety of informative literature was freely distributed.

At the meeting of the Staff Organizations Round Table Wednesday evening, the all-important question of the *form* of organization was discussed. Representatives from the CIO locals in the public libraries of Chicago and Cleveland and the AF of L local in the Milwaukee Public Library described the formation of their unions and what they had accomplished, while members of the Staff Associations of the New York Public Library and the



John Heilker

University of Washington described their organizations and achievements. To a disinterested spectator, it seemed apparent that the most effective form of organization was that affiliated with, and supported by, the broad ranks of organized labor.

But there were few disinterested or unprejudiced persons present that night. The cleavage in the assembly was wide and deep. It was only too evident that the majority of librarians are not yet ready to discuss unionization on its merits and without emotional coloration. Their social thinking has not yet been touched by the material on contemporary events which they handle daily. At the moment they show less awareness of their positions as workers in the social fabric than do teachers. But a breach has been made in the cloister wall which has been built up about the profession of distributing books to the public.

OSMOND PARKER.

New York City.

Anschluss Anecdotes

TO NEW MASSES: A friend of a friend of mine visited me last night. He arrived in New York from Vienna one week ago. Dr. — is a sinologist, he has been professor of Chinese literature in the University of Vienna for the past sixteen years. By giving over to the Nazis nearly every cent he owned, he managed to get himself and his family out of the country.

He told me many stories of Vienna since Hitler. Stories of terror, desperation, humiliation, and hope. Three stories stand out from the evening's conversation.

During the first days of the terror, the Nazis selected their victims by profession. One day doctors, one day lawyers, one day teachers. Dr. — was chosen on the teachers' day and assigned to clean latrines in an SA troops barracks.

One day while he was working, two SA officers came up to him and one of them started to heckle him.

"Tell me, Herr Doktor," he said mockingly, "what do you think about now, when for the first time in your life you work in your proper element?"

Dr. — stood at attention and answered quietly, "Herr Leutnant, I do this work because I am forced to do it. However, I am not obliged to tell you my feelings while I am doing it."

The SA man slapped him across the mouth crying, "Pig of a Jew! Still insolent!" and passed on with his fellow officer.

A little while later the SA man who had not spoken returned. He touched Dr. — on the shoulder and said softly, "Courage, comrade, courage! Rot Front!"

Dr. — said that a woman friend told him this story.

She returned to her apartment and found two SA men just finishing a search. She stood in the doorway holding her handbag under her arm, hoping the SA men would not notice it. But one of them took the handbag and went through it.

He saw the package of anti-Nazi tissue-paper leaflets but did not take them out. He returned the handbag to her and whispered, "You should be more careful, comrade."

The third story is really Dr. — son's story. The boy Karl, nine years old the day he arrived in New York, had a day of sightseeing while his father was busy. The next day Karl said, "Now, Papa, I will show you America."

They got into a subway to go down to the Battery. There was a man lying in the train stretched out over four or five seats.

"There—that's America!" said Karl, pointing to the sleeping man. "I saw such a man yesterday too. He was lying on the seats and nobody bothered him at all, and no policeman came and hit him. And when he got ready, he stood up all by himself and went away. Nobody made him. That's America, Papa!"

CORA MACALBERT.

New York City.

REVIEW AND COMMENT

The Strong Hands of Robert Forsythe

THE problem of reviewing a new book by Robert Forsythe, with inspired illustrations by William Gropper (*Reading from Left to Right*. Covici-Friede. \$2), for the benefit of the readers of NEW MASSES is no problem at all. Most of the pieces which go to make up the book have already appeared in the magazine and have brought laughter and cheers to the entire circulation. No sooner do I bend over the microphone and start "And now I wish to introduce our favorite . . ." than the whole hall stands up on its chairs and lets out a loud, enthusiastic yell. The band blares forth the *Internationale*; the delegation from Maine grabs the nearest American flag and starts a parade; the Negro from California and the automobile worker from Detroit lift Forsythe up on their shoulders, and the crowd goes wild. "Arise, ye prisoners of starvation . . ." The movement has a humorist—a combination of Robert Benchley, Joe Louis, and Bernard Shaw. "A better world's in birth."

So much for the reception of this new book by the left. What about the right—and center? There seems to be a general feeling among the denizens of the more comfortable arm-chairs that humor is one of God's greatest and most indispensable gifts to man and that the purpose of this Great Gift is somewhat in the nature of a mild anesthetic to be inhaled whenever the going becomes a bit tough. Under the terms of that pleasant theory the humorist is he who makes you agreeably conscious of the fact that trouble is only a bubble and that we are all of us brothers under our

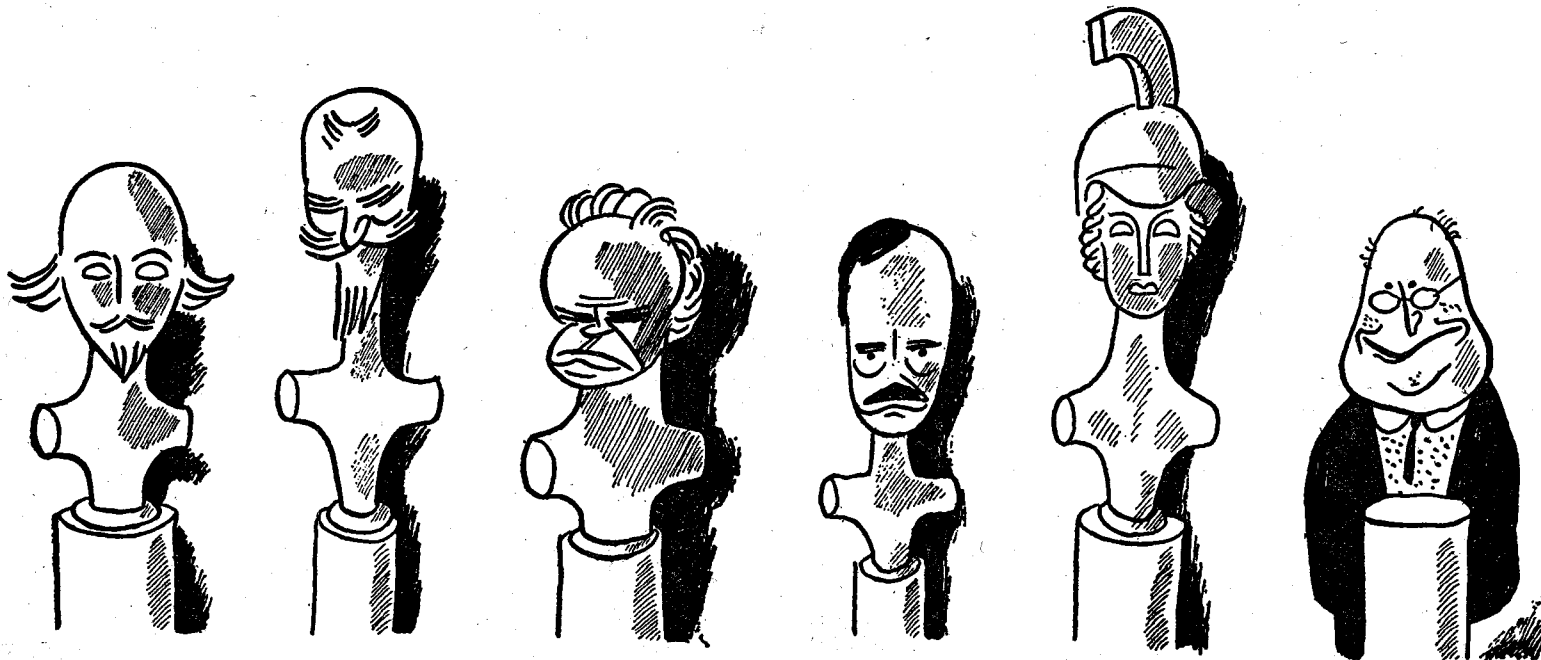
(or somebody else's) skin—occasionally ridiculous, often laughable, but on the whole, pretty good fellows. We have the approval for this theory of no less an authority than Max Eastman, who, in his *Enjoyment of Laughter*, demonstrates more or less conclusively that humor is nothing but child's play and that the best advice to the would-be humorist is "be unimpassioned." Mr. Eastman, being more or less of a scientist, has verified his theory by consulting with all whom he considers to be America's leading humorists. For some reason or other I do not find the name of Robert Forsythe on Mr. Eastman's list.

That omission, however, is understandable when one considers that the promulgation of this theory about humor entitles Mr. Eastman (even more than some of his other more or less scientific theories) to the J. Pierpont Morgan Kiss on Both Cheeks. There must be nothing more pleasing to the Possessor of Worldly Goods than the knowledge that the humorists of this country are hard at work convincing everyone ("unimpassionately," of course) that Life Is a Joke and that the way to overcome their trifling difficulties about food and shelter is to Laugh at Themselves. It may dismay some of our better known humorists to be told that they are working for the rich—but it should not surprise them—any more than it should surprise clergymen and college professors who find themselves enlisted under the banner of the "haves." Humor is a commodity—just like religion or education—and when the "haves" see any com-

modity that they can use in their fight against the "have-nots" they are not long in taking it over. Will Rogers, for instance, was a humorist—in the homely, simple American tradition. A man of the people. Nobody's slave. But Will Rogers came to agree with the jolly-good-fellow school of humor, and he died with a prayer of gratitude on his lips that he had "never hurt anybody's feelings." His gratitude must have been very much appreciated by many of the big shots—but I doubt if it was echoed by the one-third of a nation from whom he came and in whose behalf he should have used his great gifts even at the risk of "hurting somebody's feelings."

In the Los Angeles *Examiner* of recent date I read of the return to this country of a Mr. Laszlo Schwartz from a five-year trip for the purpose of studying the humor of the world. Mr. Laszlo's conclusion is that "the greatest natural humorists are the oppressed races of Jews, Negroes, and Chinese." How fortunate for them—and for their oppressors. Under those conditions, how nice that many American humorists are heeding Mr. Eastman's advice to be "unimpassioned." And how embarrassing that a man like Robert Forsythe should make his appearance at the banquet of such jolly good oppressed fellows. Forsythe is loud; he yells; he says unpleasant things; he doesn't give a damn whether he hurts someone's feelings or not. Throw him out! Or, rather, let's just pretend we don't notice him.

But, fortunately, Forsythe can't be disposed of quite that easily. He's too good a humorist, in the first place. He belongs at any banquet



William Gropper in "Reading from Left to Right"