

Bill Bioff and the IATSE's

Why tough Willie Bioff resigned. The second of Ella Winter's two articles on Hollywood.

Hollywood.

WILLIAM BIOFF had been quite intimately connected with Chicago "trade union" tactics. In that town he had been an associate of such underworld characters as Johnny Roselli, Lawrence Mangana, Jack Zuta. He had been implicated in three murders of union organizers. On Feb. 4, 1935, Thomas Malloy, business agent of the Chicago motion picture projectionists—the strongest unit in the country—was shot and killed while riding in his auto (the shots coming, in best Chicago style, from a speeding black sedan). Five members of the union were arrested; they were all freed and George Browne, president of the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees, took over Malloy's job. These five men were appointed as Browne's bodyguard; one of them was Bioff.

Clyde Osterberg was murdered. Bioff was arrested. Osterberg was attempting to organize an independent union of theatrical employees. That was June 12, 1935. On July 19, Louie Altierie, organizer of theater janitors, met a bullet, and again Bioff was questioned; and again released. Chicago papers refer openly to Bioff as "gangster," "hoodlum," and "public enemy." The Chicago *Tribune* of Nov. 11, 1932, in connection with the Touhy kidnapping, referred to an offer "to surrender William Bioff, another Twenty-seventh Ward hoodlum." In the *Times* of Feb. 4, 1935, he was spoken of as a "gunman." There are police discharge slips in Chicago for ten different arrests, for pimping, panhandling, etc. Each time a different trade, address, and date of birth are given. On Feb. 23, 1922, Bioff rated a conviction. As No. 318907 he spent six months in the House of Correction and paid a fine of \$300.

In January 1937 an assessment of 2 percent of annual earnings was suddenly levied on all members of IATSE. The resolution whereby it was levied gives the entire fund—a yearly income of \$840,000—to the exclusive care of George Browne to disperse as he may see fit. No accounting has ever been made to the members for this fund. If a member refused to pay the assessment he lost his job.

THE SACRAMENTO HEARING

A legislative hearing in Sacramento in 1937 inquired into union funds, and some interesting facts came to light. Four bank accounts were carried by the local. One of these was the revolving fund, of which no records were kept, which was used as a convenience fund to enable the secretary-treasurer to manipulate all cash passing through his hands. The membership did not know what happened to this money. Payments by members, whether dues, loans, or mutual benefits, were

generally deposited in this account, after which they lost their identity. About \$40,000 disappeared in this way. One sum of \$6,150 was recorded as going to the "Rialto Theater case." This appears rather a large amount to unionize one house. Another entry of \$22,000 figured as a "special assessment"; of this also there was no record. The best guess is that some of this sum, authorized in January 1932, was used for the famous Stench Bomb Campaign.

Mr. M. J. Sands, the secretary-treasurer of Local 150, had the habit of making out loan cards to fictitious names, but the corresponding check for that amount to a real member. Then nothing would be paid on that loan for a couple of years. Mr. Sands had other interesting habits. He paid himself twice in one week from two different funds; and refused to show his minutes to any auditors.

The official audit of the projectionists' locals showed that a total of \$300,000 had been spent in four years in Los Angeles alone.

What was the Stench Bomb Campaign? It took place over a period when the movie theater projectionists were to be organized. Suddenly in the course of a movie a stink bomb would go off and the patrons would rush out of the theater. The theater owner would be the loser. Ninety-three theaters were bombed in this way, each bombing costing from \$25 to \$50. In Los Angeles alone thirty-three theaters were bombed in two years. Two men were arrested, and that led to developments in the Legislative Assembly hearings which have just been aired in the Philbrick report on legislative corruption which Governor Olson recently made public. But that is another story.

In the spring of 1937 there was a strike of the Federation of Motion Picture Crafts. The painters could not get recognition under the Basic Agreement; they had withdrawn in 1931 and the makeup men and scenic artists could not get recognition without them. Uncertainty of work, unemployment and low earnings, as well as the favoritism and racketeering had made the men very discontented. On Nov. 12, 1937, grips, operators, and props alone had 2,500 men unemployed. The leaders were ruthless about dues and the special assessment, using them as a blackjack and blacklist; one man, receiving compensation for a studio injury, was told to pay his 2 percent from his disability compensation.

THE OPEN DOOR POLICY

The course of this strike was stormy. The strikers were ordered publicly to retract charges they had made that the IA was a company union; Mr. Browne told the producers there was to be no settlement unless dictated by him. The IA took to replacing

strikers by IA members; threatened producers when a mild suggestion was made by Joseph M. Schenck, president of 20th Century-Fox, that the "door was open for negotiation." Mr. Browne declared: "If Schenck thinks the door is open and if Schenck negotiates on behalf of the producers with the FMPC painters' group, then his studio will be one of the first to be closed." "The painters must come to the IATSE and to no one else," said Mr. Browne. "This is a strictly union fight. If the producers keep butting in we shall be forced to cancel the showing of their pictures."

THERE WERE SOUP KITCHENS

Grand National, one of the larger independent producers, signed a closed shop agreement with the FMPC. The Studio Utility Employees sent its members back to work with a 15 percent increase an hour. The costumers signed a separate four-year agreement—and were expelled from the FMPC for doing it. The culinary workers and machinists abandoned the strike; but still the majority held out. It is hard to imagine soup kitchens for workers in Hollywood, but there were. Browne threatened that if the producers negotiated, he could call out eighty thousand union technicians and projectors.

After six weeks the strike ended with substantial gains. The painters won recognition.

The international officers were furious. Browne threatened to refuse to complete negotiations unless the FMPC got out of the picture. Pat Casey, the producers' representative, agreed with Browne. FMPC was ordered to dissolve, meetings were prohibited for ninety days. Fifteen hundred strikebreakers given cards in the IA during the strike were kept on. Thugs and gangsters hired to work in the studios during the strike were also kept on, till there were complaints of their behavior.

And now, in September of last year, broke the story that has been a major Hollywood gossip item for months, that has had the producers jittery, and that has led finally to the firm organization of the local unions with local autonomy. A complaint was filed with the Los Angeles National Labor Relations Board charging that a \$100,000 bribe was paid to Bioff by Joseph M. Schenck for bringing twelve thousand members into the IATSE. All Los Angeles papers headlined the story: "IATSE CALLED COMPANY UNION" "FILM UNION SELLOUT CHARGED" "FIREWORKS FLARE ON STUDIO FRONT OVER BRIBE STORY" "CLAIM IATSE CHIEFS SOLD OUT UNION" "FILMLAND STIRRED BY LABOR PAYOFF CHARGE"—while *Daily Variety*, a trade paper, headlined its story "IA GRANTS LOCALS AUTONOMY!"

The evidence against Bioff piled up: he had been given a house by one studio; its furniture was listed as an item in the books of another; he had stock in 20th Century-Fox and in Mr. Schenck's racing stable. The \$100,000 had been paid in a check by Laurence Stebbins, a small real-estate agent who

happened to be Mr. Schenck's nephew; Bioff kept it for four days in a safety deposit box and then withdrew it in cash.

Very shortly after this Bioff resigned.

But Mr. Browne did not resign. The time came for the charges to be heard before the NLRB. A special examiner was brought out from Washington. A hurried conference took place between the newly appointed international representative, Mr. Harold V. Smith, many lawyers, and the heads of the local groups. Producers wanted it fixed, settled, without a hearing. Delays were granted. And then, when the time had expired and the hearings were at last to come up, all of a sudden there was a quick descent on Hollywood of—more Chicago "personalities."

The news crackled with their doings. One murky dawn—at 3 a.m.—these international officials took over the locals' offices; they impounded books and funds; they stationed police with tear gas bombs at the doors. They asked for and got injunctions; they made statements to the press about "troublemakers" in the locals. A personable young woman secretary, Martha Stewart, who had charge of a "little black book" that told about some of the illegal expenditure of the illegally assessed 2 percent, disappeared. There were charges of "murder." But Miss Stewart turned up again, bright, smiling, and well dressed, on a train from Pensacola, Fla.

The locals countered by mass meetings, in which the rank and file endorsed local autonomy and voted for inquiries into the expenditures of their funds. International officials turned up at these meetings and were told by police, standing by with tear gas, to leave, for their own protection. (They left.) The locals asked for injunctions against the international officials' injunctions, and were granted them.

WHERE'S THE MILLION?

A grand jury investigation was threatened, to find out what became of that million dollars. Alas, after a two hours' discussion with certain studio officials the district attorney of Los Angeles, Buron Fitts, called off the investigation.

Then Jeff Kibre, leader of Local 37, was arrested—on "suspicion of criminal syndicalism." They found a copy of *Strictly from Hunger* by Sid Perelman, among his books! The arresting officer thought this proved Mr. Kibre's intentions. A libel and false arrest suit of \$250,000 was slapped on the officer by his victim.

It looks as if the membership had all the cards. The last few months have been a process of education for the members of the IATSE. There's nothing like seeing politics in action. They have seen it. The internationals are losing ground rapidly. The members are the guardians of democracy in their union, as in the industry; and they must win it.

The IA took to the courts and to threatening the producers. The membership took to democratic organization of all studio workers who formerly came under IA jurisdiction. In

this move the workers received help from the CIO and progressive AFL locals, notably the Motion Picture Painters.

An independent union known as the United Studio Technicians Guild was formed and the workers, disillusioned with the IA, flocked to the new banner. In less than a month of organization the USTG has won more than 50 percent of the six thousand members of the IA's biggest local, Local 37.

Browne tried to move quickly to force the producers to give him a closed shop agreement. J. W. Buzzell, secretary of the Los Angeles Central Labor Council, obliged by issuing new charters to five locals of the IA.

But Browne's threats and Buzzell's splitting failed to gain the objective desired. For several days, during which the producers were negotiating with the IA, the new union told the people of Hollywood that it had a majority of the workers and had petitioned the Labor Board for an election.

On the day set for the signing of the agreement between the IA and the producers, a sound truck rode through Hollywood streets telling listeners to wire, telephone, and write to the producers' association asking them to

suspend negotiations with the IA until the NLRB could determine which union represented the workers.

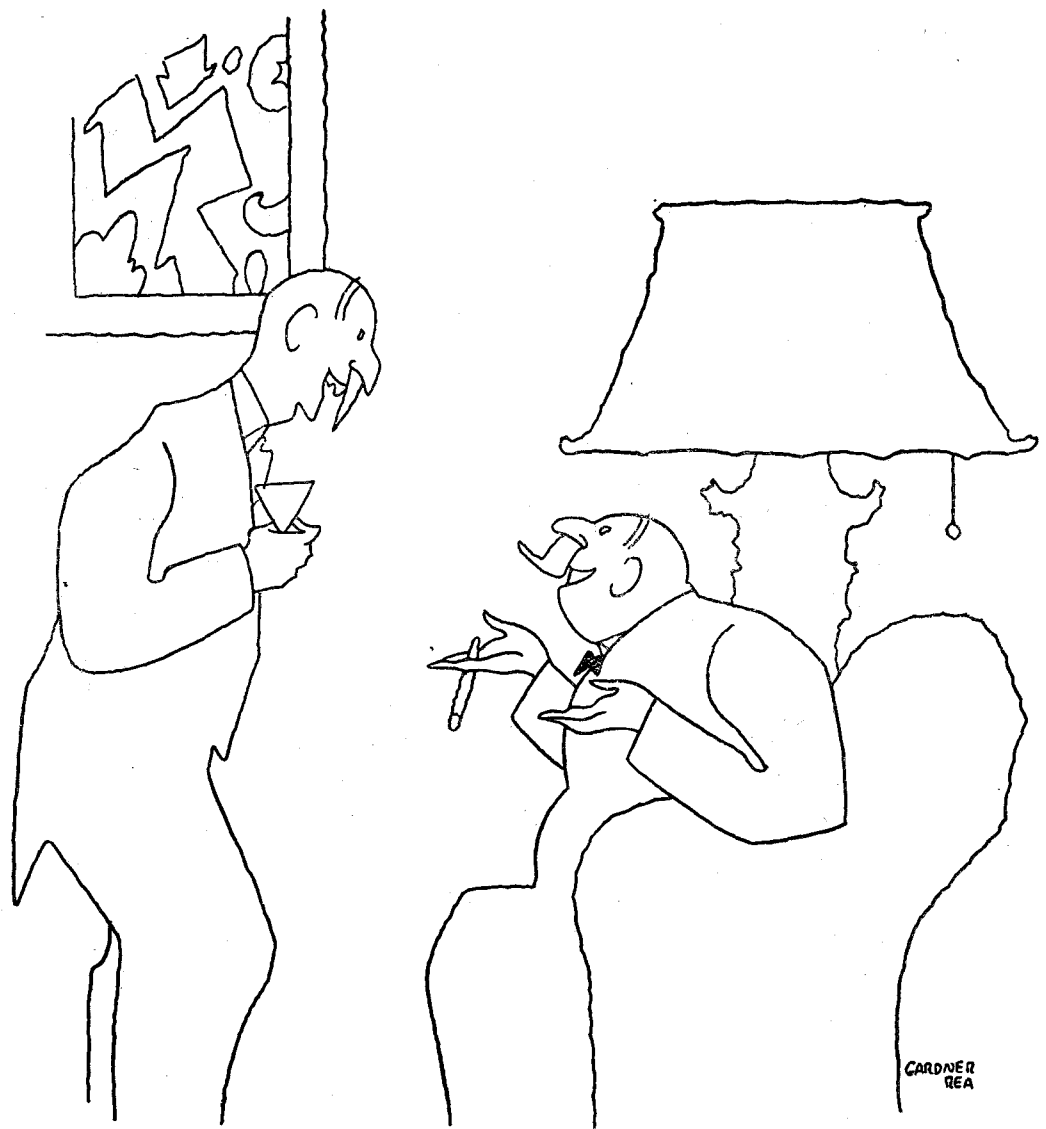
The tactic worked; Hollywood responded to the call and the producers broke off negotiations with Browne's representatives.

Meanwhile, Browne presented Whitehead and Sophie Tucker with the charter of the dual American Federation of Actors union which was recently expelled from the AAAA, the international which embraces the Screen Actors Guild, Actors Equity, Chorus Equity, the newly formed American Guild of Variety Artists, the Chorus Association, and others. [The IATSE-AAAA controversy is still shaking the industry. See editorial on page 19—Ed.]

Things have been happening at too fast a pace to describe in detail here. But one thing is certain: the USTG will win recognition and, once established, will infuse new life into the existing unions.

The studio workers aren't taken in by Browne's blustering. In answer to the IA's threats the workers say, "If the IA is so damn powerful why couldn't it get us a living wage?"

ELLA WINTER.



GARDNER REA

Gardner Rea

MAJOR NERTZ OF THE FASCIST SHIRTS

"Just think of it! Good old Jack Garner in the White House, business untrammelled, the streets gay with apple-sellers . . ."

Uncommon House of Commons

England's representatives and who they represent. The tory MP and his class background.

IF YOU got up among the Conservative benches in the House of Commons and asked, "Is there a doctor in the House?" only nine honorable members would reply. In fact, only one dentist, two architects, less than a dozen solicitors are among the 415 members of the government majority. In Britain, there are more school masters than army officers. But the latter, as a group, have seventy-nine representatives on the Conservative benches; the former only four.

"No taxation without representation" was the slogan under which a valuable group of British subjects broke away from the empire over 150 years ago. It would still make a good slogan in Britain today. The whole of the British middle classes, including lawyers, doctors, university staffs, and civil servants have the same representation in the governing body of the British people today as the insurance companies. The same goes for workers in the shops, mines, and railways, the technical experts, salesmen, and office workers who comprise 90 percent of the occupied British population. Not one of them sits on the Conservative side of the House of Commons.

On the other hand, 181 Conservatives are directors of British companies. All together, they hold 775 directorships. Representative of the most powerful business groups, they have themselves gone into a special kind of business: that is, operating the mechanism of the British government.

Facts such as these are making Britishers think this summer. Men and women in England are asking: Who represents us in Parliament? Where did he get his education? How does he make his living? How many times does he speak and vote in the House? How does he feel about taxation of the armament firms? What does he think of Hitler?

A slim, 263-page book in a simple red binding started it all. It's called *Tory MP*, written by a man named Simon Haxey, and published last month by the Left Book Club of Great Britain. Of three hundred members of the Conservative majority, 29 percent come of fathers in industry, banking, and commerce. The daddies of 20 percent more were either landowners or just coupon-clippers. Sixteen percent had paters in the Armed Forces and 15 percent were scions of professional politicians. That means that eight out of every ten get a fairly good start in life.

Naturally, the next step was Eton or Harrow, of which fully 125 members are alumni. Old Lord Baldwin expressed his loyalties in this regard rather well. "When the call came to me to form a government," he once declared, "one of my first thoughts was that it should be a government of which Harrow ought not be ashamed."

Out of school, the decent thing for a tory

MP is to inherit a fortune. For this, it is not necessary that father die, but that is what frequently happens. In the cases of forty-three MP's who died between 1931 and 1938, the fortunes of thirty-three have been traced. Twelve of these left between half a million and five million dollars. The average sum comes to about a million, or £218,156, a large sum in any language, especially in Great Britain. More than money, however, the heir may inherit a seat in Parliament, as in the case of Sir Robert Bird, who succeeded his father as the chairman of a well known custard firm and as the Conservative member for West Wolverhampton.

MORE THAN CUSTARD

Usually, most Conservatives have their fingers in more than custard. Take the railway companies, closely linked with the banks and insurance companies, employing over 600,000 workmen, the largest employers in Great Britain. None of these workers sits in the House of Commons. But of the seventy-three directors of railway firms, at least nine sit in Parliament. The favorite fields for tory MP's are the iron, steel, and coal companies with their subsidiaries in aircraft and munitions, in which at least fifty-one Conservative members hold directorships. A runnerup is insurance, in which forty-three members hold directorships, thus controlling the destinies of the proverbial widows and orphans. Banking, communications, shipping, brewing, and chemicals are represented by well over a hundred members. Just to keep a check on public opinion, seventeen Conservative members direct leading newspapers.

There are five great banks in Great Britain: the Bank of England, Barclays, Lloyds, Midlands, the National Provincial, and Westminster. Among themselves they have a capital of £205,000,000, and current deposits of ten times as much, a good share of the total capital of the community. Back in 1921, there was some disagreement between the government and the banks. The *Financial Times* inquired of a certain minister at the time: "Does he, and his colleagues, realize that half a dozen men at the top of the five big banks could upset the whole fabric of government by refraining from renewing Treasury bills?" Today, this query retains its force. Four MP's are directors of the five big banks; at least a dozen more are directors in the smaller banks. Various leading Conservatives such as Viscount Runciman, Viscount Horne, the late Lord Stanley, and Sir John Anderson invariably go back and forth from their jobs as bank directors to leading posts in the government.

Not through MP's alone is the power of British industry and wealth represented in Parliament. Undersecretaries and ministers

are intimately tied to business interests. Most prominent of these in recent months was Mr. R. H. Hudson, undersecretary for overseas trade, and author of the five billion dollar scheme for rehabilitating Nazi economy. He is the son of R. W. Hudson, whose soap firm is part of Lever Bros. & Unilever, Ltd.

In 1914, the late Philip Snowden, then a Labor leader, said it would be impossible to throw a stone among the Conservative benches without hitting a director or shareholder of one of the munitions firms. Today at least twenty-three tory MP's hold directorships in armament works. The last three Conservative prime ministers, Bonar Law, Baldwin, and Chamberlain, all come from families traditionally connected with munitions manufacture. Sir John Anderson was on the board of Vickers until his elevation to the Cabinet last fall placed him in charge of National Service and Air-Raid Precautions. L. S. Amery is on the board of Cammell Laird. Sir Eugene Ramsden and Sir Patrick Hannon are both directors of the Birmingham Small Arms firm, of which Neville Chamberlain was a director from 1919 to 1922.

Last December, the prime minister appointed a board of six gentlemen to examine "delays, defects, and difficulties in supply or production under the rearmament program." They were chosen, said Mr. Chamberlain, because "none of them were particularly connected with armaments firms." The truth is that, between them, these six gentlemen held twenty-six directorships, including textiles, rubber, chemicals, and telegraph. One of them, Sir Geoffrey Clarke, is chairman of the Associated Chambers of Commerce. All of them, through subsidiary companies in which they have interests, supply materials to the defense industries.

More than that, at least two of these men—D'Arcy Cooper and Sir Geoffrey Clarke—are members of the Anglo-German Fellowship. Two of the companies represented on the committee are corporate members of the Anglo-German Fellowship.

DEVOTED TO APPEASEMENT

This brings us to the ironic contradiction. For the Anglo-German Fellowship is the society of British banking and business men dedicated to friendship and appeasement of Nazi Germany. The marquis of Londonderry is one of its major figures. His book *Ourselves and Germany* is an open plea for a "better understanding of Hitler and his problems." Londonderry himself is a great boar-hunter with Goering. His home is Chamberlain's favorite weekend place. Over thirty MP's are members of this Fellowship and the names of the corporate members include some of the biggest firms in the Federation of British Industries.

Other organizations of the same type, and even more sinister, are the "Link," the "Friends of Italy," and "Friends of National Spain." Mr. Alfred Denville, MP, at the Chelsea Town Hall agreed with Lord Redesdale on Nov. 25, 1938, that "General Franco