

# NEW MASSES

ESTABLISHED 1911

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## WPA Front Stiffens

A NOTABLE stiffening of New Deal lines on the WPA front has confounded those who, after the House lopped \$150,000,000 off the President's requested \$875,000,000 appropriation, believed that the administration would be routed in the Senate with equal ease. What has happened is that the people have swung into action. The AFL, the CIO, the Workers Alliance, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the United States Conference of Mayors, and many thousands of "the folks back home" have spoken up—with the result that the relief-cutting drive has been slowed up considerably and may ultimately be defeated.

The bi-partisan tory coalition leading the drive has been compelled to alter its tactics. The flank attack has replaced the direct assault: the majority report of the Senate Appropriations Committee provides that WPA dismissals until April 1 be limited to 5 percent of those now on the rolls. This is, in fact, an admission that the large-scale reduction of WPA contemplated by the reactionaries would entail serious hardships. But as Senator McKellar, who submitted a minority report, points out, the program of the tory Democrats and Republicans would mean that after April 1 WPA would be cut by two-thirds until no more than about 1,050,000 are left on the rolls at the end of June. This, as Senator Wagner emphasizes, would be a serious blow to recovery.

The Workers Alliance is organizing a nationwide push for a WPA appropriation of at least \$875,000,000; on Saturday, January 28, parades for "jobs and recovery" will be held in all parts of the country. The gains that have been made during the past week demonstrate the power of organized action. They vindicate the judgment of NEW

MASSES that the election results have not necessarily predetermined the activity of Congress. If the New Deal wins the WPA fight, it will be in an excellent position to move forward on other fronts.

## Barricades in Barcelona

AS FRANCO's divisions storm the outer defenses of Barcelona Mussolini calls the 1901 class of reserves to arms. Il Duce's warships shuttle off the coast of Barcelona. The invaders are throwing everything they've got into the giant battle. The peril is extreme; it cannot be ignored. To democrats throughout the world, it dare not.

Mussolini is determined to win a Mediterranean Munich. Pre-condition to that is a Franco Barcelona. That the men of Catalonia will fight to the end is a foregone conclusion. Spain will never forget Madrid. The beautiful Barcelona streets leading to the front are black with old men, young men out to build the fortifications, to man the barricades. Women march with them.

But there are not enough rifles to go around. The Catalans go to forestall the assaults of the invaders—and their hands are empty. That abominable thing called "non-intervention" has afforded Franco the thirty thousand shells daily to put through his gains; it has stolen the rights of the loyalists.

The fascist armies race against time, against world opinion. Men like Henry L. Stimson have spoken up; Anthony Eden expressed it well when he castigated the policies of retreat to the dictators. He contrasted the withdrawal of the International Brigades by the government with the "large-scale participation of foreigners" on Franco's side.

"Foreign airmen bombing, foreign artillery shelling, and foreign infantry marching across Spanish soil," Eden said, would be responsible should Franco win.

"How can any of us deny," he asked, "that if Franco wins, his victory will be a foreign victory?" Eden said a lot but not quite enough.

This "foreign victory" would be a fascist victory: a terrible defeat to democracy on a worldwide scale. That is the corollary.

It dare not happen. As Gabriel Péri said yesterday in France "Everything is threatened—but everything may still be saved."

Action, indefatigable action on the part of all democrats, is the way to win. The war is being fought in Spain, but it can be lost in Washington. Or won there.

Above all, Americans should note this news dispatch:

Fourteen submarines capable of operating in American waters were laid down for the Italian Navy during 1938.

Remember that.

## New Anti-Lynching Bill

THE Wagner-Van Nuys-Gavagan Anti-Lynching Bill which was approved last term by the House and sabotaged by Southern Tories in the Senate, has been modified for resubmission to the Senate. With the additional sponsorship of Senator Capper, the new bill contains two main changes: (1) Where the original bill held enforcement officials in a lynch area liable for criminal suit and made the county government responsible for damages, the new bill puts the burden of proof on the parties bringing suit instead of requiring the authorities to clear themselves. The distinction makes it much more difficult to obtain convictions but counterbalances that with a provision that calls for Federal Bureau of Investigation assistance in fixing responsibility. (2) The new bill removes gangster killings from the lynching category.

The new bill has the President's approval and also mass support from the South itself, organized since the first attempt to outlaw lynching. The Southern senators who filibustered the first version off the floor are thus backed into a difficult strategic position, although Senator Connally of Texas, one of the leaders of these throwbacks, announces that he will run off at the mouth long enough to kill the new bill. There have been seven lynchings since the original introduction of the bill; no convictions. The bill's effectiveness in preventing lynching is proved by the fact that there were no mob murders from the time of its introduction until it was smothered by the reactionary yelling marathon. The lynch vermin laid off until their defenders guaranteed them immunity. Then seven lynchings occurred to reward the brave senators' battle for states' rights. The new Anti-Lynching Bill provides the answer to this crime. It must pass.

## New York Scareheads

THE New York papers have had a full year's portion of municipal scandals in the past ten days. The scareheads started on January 17 when District Attorney Thomas E. Dewey announced that eight employees of the Independent Subway System had mulcted the company and the public of \$1,500,000 in nickels. Later in the week Republican Councilman Joseph Clark Baldwin charged that the city police under Commissioner Valentine were less than efficient; in fact, Baldwin said, more than a murder a day was being committed in Harlem alone and thousands of gambling and vice establishments were functioning without any trace of police interference. And all the time these stories were getting front-page space, John Harlan Amen's sensational investigation was being carried on in Brooklyn.

Mr. Dewey is an ambitious little man who often sticks closer to the headlines than to the facts. Before he was troubled by visions of the Executive Mansion in Albany, he turned in some nice jobs and was responsible for exposing and prosecuting some of New York's most notorious municipal skullduggery. But Dewey's story of the subway steals is a bit hard to take. For \$1,500,000 makes a lot of nickels, too many, indeed, for eight ordinary men to cart away unnoticed in six months. It is more than probable, of course, that someone was taking advantage of the inadequate machinery of the Independent turnstiles, which permitted them to be turned back so that there was no way of checking income, but the figures Mr. Dewey gave were multiplied beyond all reason and given far more newspaper space than they deserved.

Mr. Baldwin's charges, if they had been specific, would have been more serious. But the figures Baldwin gave for murders in Harlem far exceeded the average for the entire city, and he refused to explain his points about vice and gambling. What the charged boiled down to was animosity toward the LaGuardia administration and LaGuardia's appointee, Valentine. Valentine, to date, has been more efficient than most of his predecessors, and if there be any doubt of LaGuardia's desires for a decent police department, we advise our readers to turn to the article on Brooklyn by Robert Ange and Richard H. Rovere in this issue. It was LaGuardia who, hearing of police corruption in Brooklyn, turned investigators to the situation. If, in addition, the anti-labor activities of certain precinct captains in Brooklyn are exposed and the men prosecuted, it will be a victory for the LaGuardia city administration and the borough's people. Murder, as the article points out, is still safe in Brooklyn, but it has nothing to do with the present city regime; on the contrary, it is so because the old regime has been permitted to linger beyond its time in Brooklyn.

## Hitler-Franco "Culture"

ALTHOUGH it has long been obvious to all intelligent observers that the press and propaganda of Franco's Spain are directed by Goebbels, the recently announced "cultural pact" between the Nazi government and Franco's junta should assure that the Nazification of rebel Spain will proceed apace.

A Francoist *Mein Kampf* has already been prepared called *What Is the "New Spirit"?* and its author is one of the chiefs of the Burgos Ministry of Education, José Pamarin. It contains such dogma as: "We have said before that we in Spain had the right to be more papist than the Pope, in the

same way we can be more fascist than fascism itself, because our fascism must be perfect, absolute"; "Fascism is a religious conception," Mussolini has written."

Numerous Catholic clergy in the United States who support the definitely anti-Catholic and illegal rebellion of Franco might very well profit from the experience of the Austrian hierarchy, the German hierarchy, and the prisoners of the Vatican. By their actions in protesting the lifting of the embargo on republican Spain, they are throwing the Catholic Church in Spain into the hands of its great enemy—fascism. They can hardly expect forgiveness from their people or their church, for they *know* what they do.

## Patents and Profits

How many Americans would be willing to buy a radio tube that lasts fifty times as long as the best now available? This is no academic question. There really is such a tube. But nobody can buy it. The reason can be summed up in one word—monopoly.

Testimony before the Monopoly Committee last week wrote a new chapter in the story of monopolistic abuse of the patent laws. Dr. Frank B. Jewett, president of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, Inc., coolly told the committee that a 50,000-hour vacuum tube had been in use over the long-distance circuits of the Bell system since 1923. This tube could be produced for radio purposes by the Radio Corp. of America and the General Electric Co., but they don't do it because, said Dr. Jewett, "it isn't commercially to their advantage." The next day the committee learned that the monopolistic corporations had also not found it commercially to their advantage to place television on the market.

Last week's testimony is particularly interesting in view of the fact that in 1935 Gerard Swope, president of General Electric, appearing before the House Patents Committee, categorically denied that RCA and General Electric ever suppress inventions. In an illuminating article in the November issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Dr. Bernhard J. Stern of Columbia University shows that such suppression is common practice.

Technological "birth control" is especially characteristic of the present epoch of capitalist decay. It is unknown in the Soviet Union where, as was pointed out in a recent United States government survey, *Technological Trends and National Policy*, "technological progress is being fostered as a means of achieving the governmental objective of a Socialist, planned, large-scale economy for the satisfaction of expanding consumers' needs." But even in capitalist Amer-

ica legislative measures can be taken to provide some protection for the public against the monopolistic perversion of the intent of the patent laws.

## Fortifying Guam

THE proposal to fortify the island of Guam seems to have stirred up considerable quantities of printer's ink. The Japanese press has replied to the proposal, which was contained in the report of the Naval Board headed by Rear Admiral Hepburn, by threatening to "smash" the American fleet—no doubt in the same convincing manner in which the Japanese "smashed" the Soviet army at Changkufeng last summer. And certain Tories and professional pacifists have raised a clamor that fortification of this strategic island in the Pacific would "provoke" Japan.

We confess ourselves enormously unimpressed with the argument about not "provoking" Japan. It is this argument that formed the noose around Austria, Czechoslovakia, and, if the fascists and "non-provokers" have their way, around Spain. It is the Japanese policy of provocation and aggression in the Far East that makes necessary additional defense measures on the part of this country. And if the fortification of Guam is necessary for the defense of the United States and its possessions—and the experts say that it is—the question of whether or not the Japanese will like it is decidedly beside the point.

President Roosevelt has indicated, however, that the island will not necessarily be fortified immediately. The sum of \$5,000,000 for this purpose is merely authorized in legislation introduced in Congress. There is the clear intimation that whether or not this authorization becomes an appropriation depends on how the Japanese behave.

This whole question, moreover, needs to be correlated with our foreign policy. A trade embargo against Japan, which now secures in this country more than 50 percent of the materials for the prosecution of its war against China, will do more to halt aggression in the Pacific than the mere fortification of a half-dozen Guams.

## A Backward Step

IN SUSPENDING two locals of the American Federation of Teachers last week, the Central Trades and Labor Council of New York did a grave disservice to the labor movement. The reasons given for the suspension indicate that reactionary forces in the AFL are prepared to outdo the Dies committee in their effort to smash progressive trade unionism. The Teachers Union locals are accused of taking part in allegedly "Communist" activities. Specifically, these activi-



ties are: (1) cooperation with the Workers Alliance in its campaign to prevent WPA cuts; (2) participation in the American Congress for Peace and Democracy, at which two million other trade unionists were represented; and (3) welcoming home the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion. Such brazen Red-baiting gives aid and comfort to the enemies of the New Deal and to the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis.

The truth is that both the WPA local and the College Teachers local of New York have carried on trade-union work which is in the best traditions of the AFL. The WPA local has cooperated energetically with the AFL in the fight for the WPA program. The college local has fought consistently, and to a considerable extent successfully, for tenure and salary rights of teachers, for democratization of the schools, and for the economic rights of non-instructional groups in the colleges. The attack on these locals can only serve to widen the distance between industrial and white-collar workers—a step backward for the labor movement—and to obstruct the efforts of President Green and the AFL to retain WPA at full strength. The fight of the Teachers Union locals deserves the widest support.

## Serpents in Detroit

THE serpent in Eden was guileless in comparison with the strategists of big business. They are out to cripple, divide, and ultimately, if they can do it, completely destroy trade unionism in America. In this light we can understand what is happening in the United Automobile Workers Union. Here is not merely a battleground of personalities, but a plot to destroy the union.

The chief conspirators are the Ford Motor Co., Father Coughlin, the Lovestoneites, Homer Martin. Their plot is one of a series. Remember that this attempt to split the UAW occurs simultaneously with the expiration of the agreements of the auto workers, the miners, the steel employees. The first skirmishes of the far-flung offensive occur in Detroit; but the open-shop generals expect to attack all the way down the line.

The indictment drawn up by the Executive Board of the UAW against Homer Martin is not only revealing, it is startling. Here, implemented by names, places, dates, is a picture of treachery. It is obvious, as the indictment states, that Martin has worked "to create a secession movement within the union with the view of destroying the union and building a dual organization among the auto workers." For these reasons the union is holding a special convention in Cleveland, March 20—and the Executive Board has elected R. J. Thomas, formerly Martin's closest associate, to the acting presidency.

The entire picture is clearer: the assault is not only on the UAW; it is on the CIO. But the enemies of labor won't stop with the CIO. The AFL will be next; in fact, all labor organizations are menaced by the plot.

We can see why the Scripps-Howard press took the line it did in presenting the Stolberg articles. We can see why big business hires George Sokolsky for his excellent advice. It's a big war, and the enemy has plenty of money—and men who can be bought for money. Those of us who have other standards must pull together at this juncture of our history—or they will take us separately, one by one.

## The People's Health

MEDICAL surveys show that only people with annual incomes over \$2,000 get anything like adequate medical care. Economic surveys show that over 75 percent of the American people do not have annual incomes over \$2,000.

It was this situation which prompted President Roosevelt and other New Dealers to urge Congress to accept the outlines of a national health program and work them out in further detail. The program President Roosevelt proposed last Monday would be one of cooperation between state and federal government. Through the extension of the present Social Security Act, approximately \$850,000,000 would be expended, mostly through grants-in-aid to the states, to develop clinics and health centers, maternal and child-health services throughout the country.

The plan should receive the approbation and active support of all progressives. As it stands, it is flexible enough to be made to fit the needs of specific state and regional conditions; it is up to us to assure its passage and see that it is kept out of reactionary hands and molded for the people's service.

## Crisis in German Economy

THE removal of Dr. Hjalmar Schacht as president of the Reichsbank is one more symptom of the growing crisis of German economy. Dr. Schacht is one of the ablest, most cunning, and most unscrupulous representatives of German finance-capital, whose political career has been distinguished by his readiness to serve reaction under any label. The secret of his wizardry, however, is more likely to be found in Downing Street than in Wilhelmstrasse. But despite the heroic efforts of Chamberlain and Montagu Norman of the Bank of England, the Schacht hypodermics have failed to induce in the Nazi colossus anything approaching a state of health. Apparently more powerful—if more risky—stimulants are to be administered by his successor, Walther Funk. A Berlin dispatch in the

financial section of the New York Times states: "On all sides it is assumed that Herr Funk will have to resort to 'cautious' inflation and that many great public works for economy's sake will be temporarily suspended."

The lesions in Nazi economy, six years after Hitler's accession to power, can no longer be hidden. Despite all the Four-Year Plan bombast and the doctoring of statistics, the past year has seen the beginnings of a new economic crisis, signalized by the crash on the Boerse last summer, production declines in some industries, and the growth of unemployment. And the cut-throat policies which Schacht developed in pursuit of foreign trade have been powerless to prevent a trade deficit for Greater Germany in 1938 of 432,400,000 marks, which means a further drain on the dwindling Nazi gold reserve. On top of this the 1,500,000,000-mark loan which closed January 9 proved a decided failure, the banks having to take a large portion not subscribed by the public.

The changes in economic policy undoubtedly presage new adventurism in the political sphere. It is no coincidence that the removal of Schacht was immediately followed by two measures designed to fuse the army more closely with the regime and diminish the influence of the old officer caste among whom there has been opposition to some of the more extreme Hitler foreign policies. The Nazis are preparing for a new push that may come in the spring, and its direction will not necessarily be east. But a prerequisite for this is the conversion of Spain into a fascist colony. Thus, Spain more than ever is the rampart of world democracy.

## Greetings to the Daily

THE *Daily Worker*, at fifteen, is no adolescent. A decade and half is a long time for a working-class newspaper, but in that period the *Daily* has pioneered and expanded, developed new modes of revolutionary journalism, and won for itself a permanent place in the tradition of the American press. All this in the face of extreme economic hardship, working with none of the coddling the capitalist press receives, having only the good wishes and slim resources of its friends.

The *Daily Worker*, at fifteen, is going ahead, and the *Sunday Worker*, at three, comes out in new dress. On a January 22, around midnight, the *Sunday Worker's* new three-part edition was offered to New Yorkers, and a few hours later it was being acclaimed up and down the Eastern Seaboard. It was splendid. The whole progressive movement can greet the staffs of both papers, knowing that we can expect from them continued service to democracy, to labor, to the people.

# Forsythe's Page

## Is the Theater a Waste of Time?

**A**MONG the more pathetic spectacles to be seen between acts at the opening night of a Broadway play are the old woman selling gum, the old man selling Life Savers, and George Jean Nathan. According to the vital statistics preserved in Washington, Mr. Nathan has passed the age of fifty and for at least twenty-five of these years he has been casting his bored and caustic eye on the theater. If he has seen fifty genuinely first-rate modern plays in that period, he is fortunate. If there are ten of that number which can stand revival, they will be found among the works of two men: Shaw and Ibsen. For the rest Mr. Nathan must waste his thunderbolts on victims not worthy of a popgun.

My argument is not, however, addressed to Mr. Nathan, who has received enough blows from the keys of this typewriter. He is merely a symbol. He is the Peter Pan of the theater, the gentleman of eternal youth who never tires of the fooleries of the mimes and clings desperately to the conviction that the theater has importance. On the contrary, I am afraid it has very little importance and I say this with some sadness because I too have been living in a land of wistfulness. With extreme reluctance I have been forced to the conclusion that while the theater is still a place for novelty and creativeness, its influence upon American thought is negligible. In a manner it may be compared with poetry, which is no less worthy than ever but which unfortunately is so limited in its appeal that it may be disregarded as a literary force. No author who seeks the widest audience for his message will confine himself to the stage, any more than he would sacrifice prose for the sake of pentameters, no matter how beautiful.

Paradoxically, this status has been reached at a time when men such as Sinclair Lewis and Thornton Wilder are forsaking their books for the smell of grease paint. At the very instant when it is historically important for all men who have influence to use it where it will be the most effective, they have preferred to occupy themselves with an art which is as limited as a family corporation. Since the American theater is confined almost entirely to Manhattan Island, the greatest success which either of these gentlemen might hope to achieve could never reach as many sections of the population as any one of their books.

This myth of the theater is obviously a hangover from the days when a play, even in this country, could have seven or eight com-

panies acting it simultaneously. When that was true the playwright was justified in feeling that he was speaking to America. Even now the rewards of a Broadway success are tempting enough for any man's attention, but it will be necessary to admit that the urge for expression in the contemporary theater is less intellectual than mercenary. Strictly speaking, the American theater has become a metropolitan pastime, joined in by such convention delegates who may be in the city on expense accounts, plus such other individuals of the wealthier groups who can afford a yearly pilgrimage to Manhattan.

The case of the current Broadway sensation *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* is very much in point. It happens that I am one of the sacrilegious few who hold it to be less than a great play, but I am willing to waive my objections on the theory that it is an important work for these times. As a statement of democracy at its best, it is the timeliest weapon we have in the struggle against world fascism—and yet it sits proudly at the Plymouth Theater, playing to its eight or ten thousand patrons a week. At last reports it had played to a total audience of 100,000. In the course of a year it will have reached, at the most, 500,000 people. If the legitimate theater still existed as a national institution, we should by now have four or five road companies of the play in operation. Admittedly it would be difficult to cast the principal role and from an artistic viewpoint it is probably much better that the original company, with Mr. Massey playing Lincoln, should be kept intact until the property is disposed of to the movies, but in the meantime history moves with the speed of a rocket and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* is wasting its efforts on sabled audiences who are neither amused nor convinced by the magnificent speech against Stephen Douglas or the stirring appeals of Herndon. It is a calamity that the people of America are not seeing this play at this time.

But the fault lies more with the theater than with Mr. Sherwood or the Playwrights Company. Last season Mr. Nathan was beating the drums for *Shadow and Substance*. Unfortunately, I did not see the show but I am willing to accept Mr. Nathan's judgment that it was the finest play of the year. That makes its fate all the harder. It played on Broadway and subsequently made the customary brief stops in Chicago, Philadelphia, etc., but for all practical purposes Mr. Carroll's masterpiece is no longer of this world. If it is printed in play form, a few will

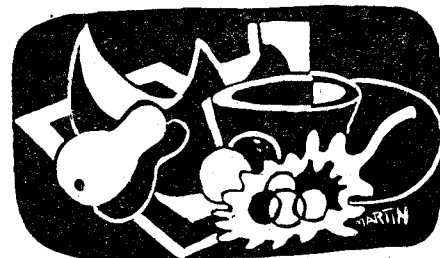
read it, but there is almost no likelihood that it will ever be revived, and hence it will have come and departed like an embarrassed and distant relative, fleetingly with us and then gone forever.

It may be true that there are writers who by the very nature of their brain's contour are playwrights and nothing else, but they are few, and most assuredly Sinclair Lewis is not among them. The contrast between Lewis the author and Lewis the playwright is striking. Imagine the difference if he had written *It Can't Happen Here* originally as a play. It would have had the usual Broadway run, if he were lucky, and the usual pathetic road tour and that would have been the end. Whether one regards it as a bad novel or a good novel, the fact remains that it was read by hundreds of thousands of people and permeated the nation. Perhaps it will be answered that it would be well if the present Mr. Lewis were not writing at all, but I am not arguing that point.

It may be merely that I am getting old, but I must confess that I rarely come out of a theater moved by what I have seen on the stage. The theater in Russia is exciting because it gets to the people, productions having as many as a hundred simultaneous showings throughout the country, but aside from *Pygmalion* at Old Vic in London and *Julius Caesar* and *Heartbreak House* by the Mercury Theater here, I have seen nothing in several years that did anything but leave me with a dull feeling. If it is age in my case, the situation becomes worse when one realizes that the young people even in New York are no longer attracted to the theater. There are the customary hopefuls who want to be actors but the youngsters in the audience are almost invariably bored by what they see on the stage. I am not going to the other extreme of saying that the films have succeeded where the theater has failed; I merely report that in my estimation the stage has ceased to be an important factor in our cultural life.

That there will always be a theater I do not doubt, but I think it is worth pointing out to sincere authors that what they conceive to be their mission of reaching the public through the mouths of actors may be no more than their yearning for the moon. They are still living in an illusion, the illusion of backstage romance, grease paint, the-show-must-go-on, and other equally unimportant fictions. To deliberately restrict their influence at this stage of history does credit neither to their astuteness nor to their sense of responsibility as artists.

ROBERT FORSYTHE.



Charles Martin