

lows the Communists five pages for direct rebuttal while Trotskyites, cops, stoolpigeons, Dr. Wilner himself, misled workers, dilettante society girls have hundreds of pages to air their opinions.

The form of *Citizens* requires comment. In a special note appended to the text Mr. Levin states that while many of his characters are composite ones, the story is based directly on the events of the Memorial Day Massacre. He argues that a novel is the best form to describe these events on the printed page; a factual account of the strike would not allow sufficient latitude for the novelist who must interpret as well as report events. This thesis, of course, is open to argument, and Mr. Levin's own book does much to impair his stand. The most important, moving, and exciting parts of Mr. Levin's novel are the passages based directly on facts—the least impressive sections of the book deal with fictitious characters. And, when writing of events so widely known, Mr. Levin's form sacrifices the impact of fact. The whole structure of this novel hangs awkwardly and loosely around the bones of the Memorial Day tragedy. Writers, it would seem to me, must be far more masters of their form if they would deal with specific fact successfully. John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (perhaps an unfair comparison) used fact next to fiction which was also fact, and the cumulative effect was stern and imposing.

I cannot find *Citizens* dramatically or structurally successful; its failure in form reflects the author's own confusion. But the whole question of whether to write a novel or a history, or a history in novel form, about a specific event in American life cannot be settled by one book, or by four books. Many better writers must experiment before some answer can be evolved.

RUTH MCKENNEY.

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This reviewer would hasten to deposit a grateful bouquet if in all conscience he could agree with the publisher's blurb that the book "offers every man and woman a chance to master the economic principles." But the fact is that having granted its good will one must reject its economics.

On page 3 we read, "This science is called

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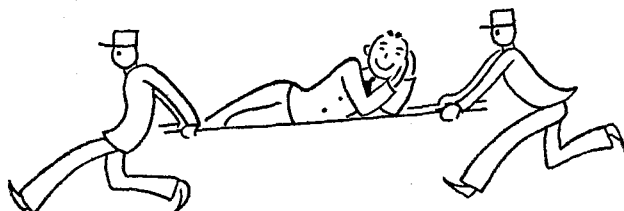
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By now you have read
BILL GROPPER'S
LETTER on page eight.

THIS week we were compelled to print **NEW MASSES** without cartoons. Next week we may not be able to go to press at all. **NEW MASSES** urgently calls on you to help at once. Every penny counts.

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economics." But by page 175 we are faced with the explanation:

The laws of economics are no more "immutable" and "inflexible" than the laws of love, or recreation, or benevolence, or any other laws that are based upon human nature, which, in spite of all proverbs to the contrary, is one of the most changeable things in the world.

We can agree that human nature can be changed, but it is new social relations which will effect that change. This new society can arise only out of new relations in production. And in the historical process we have clearly seen that it is not men's social consciousness which determines the society in which they live but rather the society that shapes their consciousness.

We observe other strange confusions. Rent and interest are "forms of prices" instead of the shares of landlord and banker in the surplus value created by labor. Depressions are caused mainly by the "harsh fact that big income receivers in modern society simply will not spend their entire receipts, or anything like it, for consumer goods and services." Since the book explodes all labor theories of value by a tautological handspring, the very concept of the surplus value which labor creates and which the entrepreneur appropriates is missing. It appears that the ownership of business gives the capitalist the ownership of the commodity "by social custom." All this is further supplemented by an insistence upon the author's "original" contribution to the science of economics, a distinction between capital and business. To this reviewer it has always appeared that a business is an organization to operate capital for a profit. But it seems we were lacking in subtlety.

In a world shaken by the imperialist lust for markets we read here, "Foreign trade is by no means extinct, but there is general agreement among experts that the day is over when it could be made a source of great prosperity to any particular nation." That is true. But its truth can be demonstrated only in terms of the unequal development of capitalism, the diminishing rate of profit, and the development and characteristics of imperialism. Of these factors there is no mention.

With such flimsy economics to explain capitalism, it is no surprise that under the heading of socialism the author can discourse on an absolute monarchy, or speculate on the desirability of retaining individual ownership of business. Of course, since socialism is "essentially democratic" the chances are that the people would not select an absolute monarch as their leader. Since socialism is not a political but an economic system, "we could still have a multiple party system."

So we arrive at socialism, the professor and the reviewer. His is the more pleasant way. This system doesn't work, therefore let's have social ownership instead of individual possession of the means of production. The book trots amiably into the future society without considering the proletariat, the class struggle, and a host of serious problems which must be considered.

ROBERT STARK.

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GOINGS ON

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SENDER GARLIN, formerly Moscow correspondent, speaks on IS FRANCE FIGHTING FOR DEMOCRACY? at Progressive Forum, 430 Sixth Avenue, on FRIDAY evening, APRIL 19, at 8:15 P.M. Subscription 25c.

CLARENCE HATHAWAY, Editor, Daily Worker, speaks SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2:30 P.M. Subject, FROM VERSAILLES TO THE NEW WAR. Victoria Room, Irving Plaza, Irving Place & 15th Street. Admission 25c.

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ALFRED GOLDSTEIN, popular political analyst, reviews THE NEWS OF THE WEEK every SUNDAY EVENING, at Workers School, 2nd floor, 35 East 12 Street. Admission 25c.

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Medicine for the People

A Living Newspaper, with a message for the AMA . . . Pauline Lord in a "better-than-average" thriller . . . A new technique in folk songs.

ORIGINALLY scheduled for Federal Theater production, Oscar Saul's and H. R. Hays' *Medicine Show*, a Living Newspaper, has finally reached production at the New Yorker Theater. It is an interesting attempt to dramatize, in the form made so popular by *Triple-A Plowed Under*, *Power*, *One-Third of a Nation*, and other FTP plays, the problem of public health in the United States. The American Medical Association, which is under indictment for conspiracy in restraint of trade in the matter of a Washington group health plan, will not like the show at all. For *Medicine Show* capably attacks the bureaucratic and reactionary policies of that policy-making body of American organized medicine.

In the documentary form, it speaks of the 250,000 preventable deaths that occur annually in this country, and it points the way to a remedy for so catastrophic an incidence of curable disease. It lays the blame largely at the door of the AMA, whose insistence on the "sanctity" of the doctor-patient relationship has been made into a fetish effectively barring any progressive measures that might be undertaken in the interests of public health. It makes it clear that disease follows definite class lines, that "the poorer you are the sicker you are," and the less treatment you are likely to receive. As a signpost to reform, the play deserves a wide audience, for its appeal is direct and it hits us where we live.

But the fact remains that *Medicine Show*, while dealing in a capable and didactic manner with the statistics of nationwide medical practice, has several handicaps both in writing and direction. It moves and halts. The play expounds, in many places effectively, but does not fully attain the indignation which it should. The facts and figures of the plight of the majority of our people whose access to medical care is severely limited by their purses are not too well externalized in theatrical terms.

THE ACTORS

The performance of Martin Gabel as a statistical commentator has impact and sincerity. Alfred Ryder's Dr. Young is appealing in the conviction the actor brings to the role of a young doctor, impotent to fulfill the Hippocratic oath because he is strapped and bound by the rigidity of medical "ethics," which can deprive him of his license and his reputation for stepping "out of bounds." William Hansen, whose old man with a dog was memorable in the recent *Night Music*, gives us an excellent country doctor in a bit part. As a quack, Norman Lloyd reveals a fine sense of farce-fantasy. Hanns Eisler's incident

tal music is integral to the play. *Medicine Show* is an honest and useful piece of work.

ANTI-WAR PLAY

Now is the time for bigger and better anti-war plays. They should be opening on every hand; they should be written by our most accomplished playwrights and performed by our most distinguished actors, and they should be available to the widest possible audience. Therefore the little anti-war play at the Cherry Lane Theater in Greenwich Village is a sadder affair than it should be. *Death Sounds the Trumpet* is the title, the author is Louis Sack, and the producer the Actors Ensemble Theater.

Inept in its writing and performance, *Death Sounds the Trumpet* is unlikely to have wide influence. We shall have to wait for Mr. Sack to show more evidence of dramaturgic talent, and the cast more signs of histrionic ability. This, of course, does not invalidate the honesty of the playwright's and performers' intentions.

SUSPECT

Edward Percy and Reginald Denham, the British authors of *Ladies in Retirement*, which you will eventually have to see, are here again with another psychological murder play, *Suspect*, which brings Pauline Lord to the Playhouse. This time they are not so happy in their choice of material or their handling of it, although the story of Mrs. Smith, suspected of having committed a particularly horrible pair of murders some twenty years before, is certainly a better-than-average effort in its class.

Again the drama springs directly from the character of the former Scots girl who did or did not kill her father and step-mother in a fit of adolescent frustration; and the suspense from the efforts of people who think they recognize her to make her resolve a tense situation by confessing. Much of the motivation and writing of this one is of a routine order. Arthur Beckhard's direction is wooden, and the authors could not resist ringing in a spot of Allied war propaganda in the bargain. But let that go for the nonce; it is barely relative to the play. The whole adds up to a fair evening of entertainment in the theater, entertainment that relies mostly on the performances of Pauline Lord as the suspect and Grayce Hampton as her nominal housekeeper.

Miss Lord, whose performance in O'Neill's *Anna Christie* has not been forgotten by a generation of playgoers, has dropped some of her more stylized mannerisms with the years. She plays with valid emotional power and dramatic instinct. Miss Hampton is a dour

Scotswoman whose stage relationship to the unhappy Mrs. Smith is gratifying in its intelligent understanding of human motives. You will want to watch them both at work.

ALVAH BESSIE.

"The Cradle"

Timely revival of Blitzstein's show at the New School.

THE blistering satire and musical charm of Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* received a fairly professional expression at the New School for Social Research last week when the Flatbush Art Theater's players revived it for the last time this season. It has not lost anything since the Federal Theater refused to sponsor it and it was first presented on a bare stage with the (recently Guggenheimed) composer at the piano.

Credit is due to this vigorous young group from Brooklyn, its leading lady, Betty Garrett, Bob Sharron, Lou Cooper, the musical director, and to the American Ballad Singers who performed in it. We look forward to their next season.

H. C. A.

Polish Folk Songs

Refreshing new technique of Marion Corda at Town Hall.

FOR concertgoers who wish to obtain relief from the usual stuffy and formal recitals, Miss Marion Corda is recommended. Billed at her recent Town Hall recital as a "Polish singing actress," Miss Corda in a diversified program of folk songs from different countries overcame conventional concert "niceties" by a generous use of props, body movements, and vocal manipulations. This intimate presentation abetted by style, language, diction, acting ability compensated for a voice of small proportions and achieved on the whole some very entertaining results.

The choice of material, however, was not quite so fortunate. While all folk music has an innate charm, no matter what the subject, its range is much broader than the boy-girl theme Miss Corda chose to accent. Every country has a wealth of people's music that deals with their daily work, struggles, and aspirations. From these has come some of the most poignant and touching folk music. It is to be hoped that Miss Corda will include the latter in her future recitals for not only will her repertoire have a better balance but she will acquire a new and broader audience.

LOU COOPER.