

JOHN HENRY

They hung John Henry
From the highest tree,
From the highest tree.
We cut him down, John Henry say:
"Man could hardly breathe that way."

Then they buried John Henry
Six foot down,
Six foot down.
We dig him out, John Henry say:
"Man could hardly move that way."

Then they throwed him in the river
Tied roun' a rock,
Tied roun' a rock.
We fetch him out, John Henry say:
"Man could hardly swim that way."

Then they shot John Henry
In the back twelve times,
In the back twelve times.
The smoke died down, John Henry say:
"My clothes ain't gonna last that way."

Then they hung John Henry 'bout a
hundred times:
We cut him down he walked away.
Then they hung John Henry 'bout a
hundred times:
We cut him down he walked away.

IRVING SEGALL.

A MARRIED COUPLE IN THE PARK

Marriage has given them a summer indolence;
See how they stroll, a memory of satiate bliss
And soft and easy sleep on their familiar limbs,
A yielding bondage obvious in word and glance
And time for them suspended like a silent clock;
And when they stand and talk with one another
It is with the companionable nudging
Of two trees rolling in slow wind at summer noon.

RALPH KNIGHT.

THE VASE

For all its elegance, the vase is useless:
Rotund or slender, upon a rosewood base,
Or behind velour curtains like a sacred
Bird, soulful shape of the eye's training
It stands, symbol of gloom and conscience,
Its proud neck the complement of windows,
A shaft of yellow light, a guest's wink,
The restful sonata and the curator's touch.

But it is not the shape or gifted shell
That marks it for a fevered eminence,
It is the price, the price, and after that
Its ghostly origin and genius is recalled:
The vase then says, "I am the gift of years
Whose Assyrian daughters dipped me in a boat;
My brim held fish, sun, and nectar bright."
But then the collector bids, and it is sold.

Useless, I say; industrial demons rear
Their brassy heads in each provincial store,
Profane the necklace and the common toy
Where children play with caves and do not see;
And in their houses mount the wild elk,
Endow the occult because of its prestige;
And I will ask them why, and they will nod,
"We are the living, and this the way of God."

ALLAN BLOCK.

AN OLD SONG

Still unconcernedly the girls
Twist paper-curlers in their hair
Seeking the error
In a cracked mirror
And gravely question how and where
To cast and keep their fragile pearls.

And still oblivious the boys
Chart the bulge of growing arms
Looking for honor
In a torn banner
And con the swift and secret charms
For winning gold from base alloys.

And still in silent ease the sun
Regards his lovely satellites
In radiant cluster
Circling their master
And deals them alternate days and nights
Rebuking nothing, praising none.

ROBERT BRITTAIN.

HOLLYWOOD LETTER

by N. A. Daniels

Hollywood.

YOU may have read in your papers some of the remarks that Eric Johnston, president of the Association of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors, addressed to an open board-meeting of the Screen Writers Guild on June 3. There are several angles to this story that were not stressed.

For one thing, the evening was half over before it was announced that Mr. Johnston's remarks were off-the-record and that he was speaking as an individual. This was a distinct disappointment to the writers, who were less interested in Johnston's personal opinions than they were in what he might have to say as head of the producers' association. For the AMPPA has been party to the endless smear of the SWG as an organization captured by Moscow and acting under the direction of "the fourteen men who sit in the Kremlin and pull the strings," as Mr. Johnston so cleverly put it.

For that matter Johnston himself must have been disappointed by the size of his audience (150 of the 1,400 SWG members) and the reception he received. At no time during the long evening did he have his audience with him, with the exception of a few boys from the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, who anticipated every musty anti-Communist gibe and drowned their hero out. (For important meetings the SWG has frequently had as many as 700 in attendance.)

And the Red-baiting was all that made the papers, thirty-six hours after it was announced that Eric the Red-hunter was speaking both as an individual and off-the-record. Apparently Eric changed his mind and decided that what he had had to say was so interesting he would give the benighted a chance to read about it. It won't be necessary to repeat it here, for it was a liberal compendium of everything that has been said about Communists and Communism by Dies, Rankin, Hitler, Tenny and J. Parnell Thomas.

A number of pertinent questions were asked Mr. Johnston during the course of the evening. These questions and the answers he gave were not reported to the press—for ample and sufficient reasons. *Question:* What about the lockout of several thousand progressive unionists which has been going on for nine months? Why has the AMPPD absolutely refused to sit down and bargain with these workers? *Answer:* Sorry, there isn't a thing we can do about it. It's a jurisdictional dispute. We'd love to have these people back at work, but until Bill Hutcheson of the Carpenters changes his mind, there's not a single thing that we can do.

Question: The Production Code makes it impossible for us to make pictures of quality, such as the British are making. American pictures lack realism to the Europeans. *Answer:* You're absolutely wrong! Every British picture has passed our Production Code Office (*sic*).

Question: It is very flattering to be characterized as the most important group in the industry, but what does the producers' association feel about the fact that over seventy-

five percent of our membership is unemployed? *Answer:* I'm sure (flashing his every-minute-on-the-minute smile)—I'm sure the producers are very much concerned about it.

At this point one prominent writer who characterized himself as having been associated with the Left took up, point by point, all the statements Johnston had made about the Left, and every evasion he had made of pointed and important questions. In a forceful speech he stated that the SWG was much concerned about its veteran-writers, whose failure to win reemployment in the industry Johnston himself had earlier characterized as "a matter of outrage." Most were still unemployed. We are concerned about the lockout, he went on, and you say it is a jurisdictional strike and is insoluble. We are concerned about the American Authors' Authority and your Association has smeared it as a Moscow plot. We are concerned about increasing unemployment of our writers and the producers are guaranteeing further unemployment by reissuing old pictures and remaking others. Does the industry have any responsibility to its writers and other workers? You have characterized the Left as phonies instead of arguing the case on its merits. Why the smear? Why is the Left subversive?

Johnston's only reply to this was an additional orgy of Red-baiting. The MPA boys applauded wildly. The rest of the audience sat on its hands. Johnston went on to say that he had "employed" James F. Byrnes to see to it that Hollywood got "a fair trial" in the eyes of the public and the Un-American Committee. He disapproved of smearing people. He wants names, facts. He dislikes Rankin. He did not approve of the Taft-Hartley bill "in its present form." (No clarification.) *Question:* Did he think it realistic to expect Hollywood to get a fair trial from the Un-American Committee as presently constituted? *Answer:* I will try to get a fair investigation. I will welcome the cooperation of the SWG.

THIS Johnston is a pretty cold fish. Despite the automatic smile (that ran on the bias across his face from left to right) the writers got the feeling from him that he was no friend of theirs. He is a Very Important Person who is accustomed to speaking on terms of perfect "equality" with such notables as Roosevelt, Truman, Stalin, Churchill and even Jimmie Byrnes. It is rumored here that far from his having hired Byrnes, it was the industry that hired Byrnes precisely because Johnston has not been doing such a hot job of representing the boys in Washington, and therefore needs someone to bail him out. However that may be, he still speaks for the producers on or off the record—and he knows what they want and is out to see that they get it. That is: weak or defunct unions, wage-cuts, thought-control, intimidation of anyone who gets out of line. The writers alone may not have the answer to Mr. Johnston, but the public certainly has.

For by his own admission the producers are worried to death by dropping box-office receipts and foreign competition: "They do not like our pictures abroad," he said. But what is the producers' answer? Reissues, remakes and the hog-tying of anyone who might have an idea that would be good enough to make a better picture. Mr. James K. McGuinness, an executive producer at MGM, was more explicit in a recent talk at the Yale Club when he said that the "Reds" in Hollywood don't want actors "jumping up and shouting 'Hooray for Stalin!' on the screen. It is the constant portrayal of comic politicians, bankers who are Scrooges and dishonest judges that becomes dangerous."

You get the idea.