

That Demonstration in Atlanta

Herndon Tells Story of 'Crime' for Which State Asked Death

FLASHES and CLOSEUPS

By DAVID PLATT

"NEW GULLIVER" broke all weekend attendance records at the Cameo Theatre last Saturday and Sunday, eclipsing records made by "Chapayev" and "Three Songs About Lenin" . . . Only a tried and true Communist could perform the feat of Lou Bunin who, I hear, was so enthralled by the puppets that he remained for six straight performances going without food for ten hours. . . . It is now going into its third record week.

Somebody is considerably worried over the rumor floating around the movie trade journals that "Peasants" grossed \$20,000,000 in the Soviet Union this year, and that Friedrich Ermler, director of the picture will receive 2½ per cent of the gross receipts, a neat but not gaudy sum of \$400,000 for his effort. It is true that "Peasants" is expected to gross 20,000,000 roubles, not dollars, this year. It is also true that Ermler is entitled to receive 2½ per cent of the gross receipts or 400,000 roubles. However there is a limit on the amount that any artist, director or writer in the Soviet Union may receive as bonus or royalties. I am informed by an authority that there is a high progressive tax levied by the Soviet Government on all sums which artists and directors receive in addition to their salaries.

ANNA STEN, the former Soviet motion picture actress, refused to appear on the radio in a play about Russia when she learned that her role was that of a counter-revolutionary white guardess. The cast was recruited from a White Guard acting troupe in London. The famous actress explained that she was a Russian of today, not a White Guard, and under no circumstances could she play the role of a counter-revolutionary. Bravo Anna Sten!

Edwin Carewe, a well-known film director, has announced that he is practically ready to carry on a campaign against "subversive propaganda" through the film. He proposes to supply churches and schools with free sound films and a thousand projection machines with which to show free films attacking the Reds. Since the cost of even 16-mm sound projectors is from \$500 to \$900, it is easy to see that Carewe's venture against Reds is going to cost somebody at least half a million dollars. The director refused to state where he was getting the financial backing for his educational campaign against the revolution, but it is more than safe to say that it came either from Louis B. Mayer of M-G-M or William R. Hearst of Warner Brothers, the two big guns against radicalism on the coast. . . .

ACCORDING to Warren Starr, A writing in the current issue of "New Theatre," Victor Lighthorse McLaglen, professional soldier of fortune likes to have his press releases decorated with gems like this: ". . . always has his ear to the ground waiting for another war to break out . . . declares it would be hard to hold him in Hollywood if one did."

Lately however, according to Starr, this super-professional patriot, has been dragged at least a dozen times through the local courts for crimes ranging from assault and battery of varying degrees of brutality, breach of contract, larceny, petty and grand, libel, evasion of taxes, walking out on hotel and other sundry bills, speeding and what not.

Ladies and gentleman, says The

What did Angelo Herndon do for which the jury's recommendation of mercy meant 18 to 20 years on the Georgia chain-gang — death through lingering torture? Just before leaving to surrender in Atlanta, Herndon wrote the story of that memorable day in 1932. This is his story.

By Angelo Herndon

THURSDAY, June 30, 1932, is one day of my life that I can never forget. That day saw the first great joint demonstration of white and Negro workers in Georgia, in more years than almost anyone could remember.

That day was the start of the Herndon "insurrection case." So many people have asked me: "How did it all begin?" that I want to tell, here and now, the story of that demonstration. Here are the facts, and they prove that the sentence of 18 to 20 years on the chain-gang, which the Georgia courts have handed down and the Supreme Court upheld, was given for one reason only—that I dared to ask for bread for starving people.

When the relief stations in Atlanta closed down in the middle of June, 1932, twenty-two thousand men and women were brought face to face with starvation. Not poverty, such as they had always known even when they were at work. Not the hunger they experienced on the half-rations and quarter-rations doled out by the relief stations. But, quite simply and literally, starvation and eventual death.

Community Chest Had Money

Why were these workers being thrown off relief, people asked? They remembered that only a few weeks before that, the Community Chest of Atlanta had closed its drive for funds, with the announcement that it had collected \$800,000. The question was put most sharply by the workers organized in the Unemployment Councils which were meeting in groups of five or six, in private homes, behind drawn shades.

After the relief stations closed, the Commissioners of Fulton County, of which Atlanta is the seat, met to consider the situation. Some of the commissioners were in favor of piling more taxes on the workers and small homeowners. But Frank Neely, the executive director of the Community Chest, had another idea. He pointed out that hundreds of farms in the state had been taken over for taxes—which was quite true—and were lying idle. He proposed that the city and county authorities round up all the "idle" in the city, and ship them, with their families, to those farms, to work for their board. Neely said: "A little elbow grease won't hurt them."

When the workers of Atlanta heard about this proposal, they were sore. They knew a coupe of things that hadn't been discussed in the County Commission. One was that the farms had been abandoned because the farmers, even with an experience gained over many years, even with the small fund of tools and work-animals they had, been able to accumulate hadn't been able to make a go of farming. They had failed, first and foremost because hungry and ragged people had no

THE LEAFLET

WORKERS OF ATLANTA!

Employed and Unemployed — Negro and White
ATTENTION!

MEN AND WOMEN OF ATLANTA:

Thousands of us, together with our families, are at this minute facing starvation and misery and are about to be thrown out of our houses because the miserable charity handout that some of us were getting has been stopped! Hundreds of thousands of dollars has been collected from the workers in this city for relief for the unemployed, and most of it has been squandered in high salaries for the heads of these relief agencies.

Mr. T. K. Glenn, president of the Community Chest, is reported to be getting a salary of \$10,000 a year. Mr. Frank Neely, executive director of the Community Chest, told the County Commission Saturday that he gets \$6,500 a year while at the same time no worker, no matter how big his family, gets more than two dollars and a half weekly to live on. If we count the salaries paid the secretaries and the investigators working in the 38 relief stations in this city, it should not surprise us that the money for relief was used up and there is no more left to keep us from starvation. If we allow ourselves to starve while these fakers grow fat off our misery, it will be our own fault!

The bosses want us to starve peacefully and by this method save the money they had accumulated off of our sweat and blood. We must force them to continue our relief and give more help. We must not allow them to stall us any longer with fake promises. The city and county authorities from the money they have already collected from us in taxes, and by taxing the incomes of the bankers and other rich capitalists, can take care of every unemployed family in Atlanta. We must make them do it.

At a meeting of the county commissioners last Saturday, it was proposed by Walter S. McNeal, Jr., to have the police round up all unemployed workers and their families and ship them back to the farms and make them work for just board and no wages, while just a few months ago these hypocrites were talking about forced labor in Soviet Russia, a country where there is no starvation and where the workers rule! Are we going to let them force us into slavery?

At this meeting, Mr. Hendrix said that there were no starving families in Atlanta, that if there is he has not seen any. Let's all of us, white and Negroes, together, with our women folk and children, go to his office in the county courthouse on Pryor and Hunter Streets, Thursday morning at 10 o'clock and show this faker that there is plenty of suffering in the city of Atlanta and demand that he give us immediate relief! Organize and fight for unemployment insurance at the expense of the government and the bosses! Demand immediate payment of the bonus to the ex-service men. Don't forget Thursday morning at the County Courthouse.

Issued by the Unemployed Committee of Atlanta, P.O. Box 339.

money to buy the food and cotton that the farms could raise. And here the county commissioners were planning to send workers who had no knowledge of farming, no tools, no work-animals, no seed, and dump them on these worn-out farms!

"I Can't See Any Starvation!"

The workers knew, also, that Frank Neely drew \$6,500 a year on his job, and maybe more on the side.

One of the commissioners, Mr. Hendrix, said that there were no starving families in Atlanta, or if there were, he hadn't seen any. Well, he probably hadn't at that. The unemployed of Atlanta had too much "manners" to walk up and down Peachtree Street and spoil the good times of the well-to-do people popping in and out of its beautiful stores and theatres and restaurants. The Atlanta jobless were standing in line at the relief stations, or huddling over fires made from their last bit of coal. They were polite enough to starve out of sight, in places where Mr. Hendrix never came.

Walter S. McNeal, another one of the commissioners, was enthusiastic about Mr. Neely's idea of having the police round up the "idle" and ship them back to the farms. The word "idle" was no doubt a slip of the tongue. Mr. McNeal and Mr. Neely didn't mean the "idle" wives of the bankers sitting in on bridge games; nor the "idle" sons of the big factory owners playing about on the golf

courses. He just meant people who were "idle" because all the factories in Atlanta had turned them away.

"Insurrectionary Literature"

The Unemployment Council got up a leaflet—which was later given the name of "insurrectionary literature," and presented to the grand jury as one of the reasons why I should serve 18 to 20 years on the chain-gang.

The call was for June 30, and on that morning the Atlanta cops got the surprise of their life. One hundred white and Negro men, women and children gathered in front of the county courthouse and walked up to the fourth floor and demanded to see the commissioners. The workers showed a new spirit that day. When one of the cops approached a worker and said: "We're going to ship you all back to the farm to work for your keep," the worker answered: "I know two who aren't going." The cop wanted to know who they were, and this is the answer he got: "Me, and you if you come after me." The cop backed off and said he was only fooling.

The next day the county commission voted \$8,000 additional relief for the jobless. And eleven days after that—during which the police were keeping a sharp eye on Box 339 at the post-office—I was arrested as I went there to get my mail.

That was how the "insurrection" case started — because we were hungry.

WORLD of the THEATRE

Obituary for Jim Crow

MULATTO, a play by Langston Hughes, Vanderbilt Theatre.

Reviewed by
LOREN MILLER

AMERICA owes the term "Jim Crow" to the theatre. In the early 1820's an enterprising promoter picked up a crippled Negro who was making out a precarious living doing comic songs and dances on the streets and introduced him to theatre-goers under the name of Jim Crow; the appellation soon passed over into common usage as a contemptuous designation for separate facilities enforced on Negroes. The Jim Crow tradition still retains its vitality on the stage too; rarely is the Negro more than a harmless buffoon or a clownish menial.

Any drama that breaks with this old idea and attempts to present the Negro as a dignified human being is entitled to serious and sympathetic consideration. For it is apparent that the theatre can never deal adequately with Negro life until it does away with this vicious tradition and comes to grips with the fact that "this old stereotype, no matter what the intention of the playwright, is only a weapon in that vast arsenal of devices by which the Negro is bludgeoned back into his place. That, I think, is the chief virtue of Langston Hughes's *Mulatto*, now playing at the Vanderbilt Theatre.

MULATTO is the story of the clash between Colonel Thomas Norwood, "the richest man in this part of Georgia," and Bert, his illegitimate mulatto son. Colonel Tom who has been living with Bert's mother for years has four children by her and the story opens as Bert returns from a northern college. He ruins his father's political ambitions by boldly announcing that the old planter is his parent. The comparative freedom of the North has unfitted Bert for life in the South; he walks in at his father's front door, he refuses to knuckle to the village postmistress and upsets enough Georgia traditions to set in motion forces that lead him to kill his father, excite a mob bent on his own lynching, drive his mother to insanity and offer the overseer a chance to rape his (Bert's) sister.

Plainly, this is the stuff of melodrama and critics have been quick to assert that Hughes's play falls into that classification. I am not sure that this criticism, even if true, is adequate. It is evident that Hughes wanted to show the manner in which the southern racial set-up damns both whites and blacks. But the whole South is drenched in violence and any playwright who attempts to deal with the explosive personal relations between a white man and a Negro will find himself with a whole series of violent acts on his hands.

The dilemma of melodrama can be escaped only if the dramatist paints in bold strokes the entire background that leads to the bloody business of raping and lynching and chain gangs. That requires a good deal of understanding and the weaknesses of this play make out a pretty good case for demanding that the playwright possess sound political knowledge as well as a mastery of his technique.

IT is easy to point out defects in the play. There is too much talking and too little action on the stage and the drama suffers from bad direction; Bert alternates between being a brash young fool and a victim of circumstances. More clear-cut direction could have done much to eliminate the danger that the casual spectator may carry away with him the conviction that education does spoil "good Negroes."