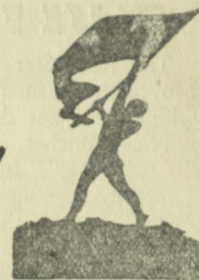


# THE RED STAGE



"Art is a weapon of the  
Revolution."

ORGAN OF THE  
**WORKERS' THEATRE MOVEMENT.**

Vol. I.

NOVEMBER, 1931.

No. 1.

## THE GROWTH OF THE WORKERS' THEATRE.

The issue of a monthly Journal by the Workers' Theatre Movement marks a big step forward, and is a good indication of the growth of our movement.

The fact that we feel strong and confident enough to run our own printed paper is a sign that we have developed from the day when we consisted of a few scattered groups working on very loose lines.

To-day, we are a rapidly growing body with groups springing up all over the country — groups coming into existence faster than the central organisation can cope with them.

### DRAMATISING THE STRUGGLE.

Our value as a means of exposing the capitalist system and its supporters in all their brutality, hypocrisy, lying knavery, is undoubted.

By means of our sketches, written, produced and acted by workers, we are able to show our fellow-workers (the fellow whom the press refers to as the "man-in-the-street"), the meaning of the present crisis and the attempts to delude the workers into sacrificing lives for their bosses and bankers. By means of our sketches we show the effects of capitalist and socialist rationalisation; we demonstrate the heroic strike of the Atlantic Fleet; we endeavour to give in dramatic form the day-to-day struggles of the workers; the frantic efforts of the financiers and statesmen to pull their system off the precipice of destruction. And, side by side with the pictures, we portray the vigorous and energetic life of the Russian workers in their triumphant battles towards Communism.

### THE CLASS STAGE.

You may be amazed at our audacity in bringing the Theatre on to the street. But our stage, comrade

reader, is situated wherever workers gather together, in work or pleasure. Our stage is the open street, the borrowed lorry, the trade union branch room, the meeting platform. We disdain spot-lights, lime-lights, "stars" and other trappings of the bourgeois theatre. Our only spot-light is a Workers' Britain; our only star—the five pointed badge of the Soviet State.

As the movement recognises our worth, so will the W.T.M. become greater and more effective—a vigorous weapon in the class struggle.

### GREETINGS.

The Secretariat of the INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DRAMATIC UNION sends greetings to THE RED STAGE and congratulates the WORKERS' THEATRE MOVEMENT of Britain on their initiative in producing their own paper.

The sharpening of the class conflicts in Britain, the going over of the capitalists to naked fascism, demands increased activity from every working-class organisation.

The workers of Britain can only save themselves from ever-worsening conditions, from starvation and misery, by the might of their own determination and solidarity. The Workers' Theatre Movement has the task of exposing capitalism and its Labour lieutenants to the broadest masses of workers in meetings, on the streets, outside the factories, and of arousing in the workers confidence in their own ability to overthrow the system that enslaves them.

Without a paper a Workers' Theatre Movement on a national scale is impossible. By means of it, by discussions, criticism and mutual assistance in its columns, the Workers' Theatre will develop in every working-class area, raise the fighting spirit of the workers and play its part in the coming struggles for a Worker's Britain.

Secretariat, I.W.D.U.

this way we can make our paper a leader in our struggle to build a stronger W.T.M. in Britain.

And to those outside our ranks—a welcome awaits you in our organisation. Join up to-day!

### NEW GROUPS.

In Bethnal Green, Walthamstow, Croydon and Woolwich new Groups have been set up and reports of their activities will appear next month. As we go to Press we hear the welcome news of the revival of the Deptford Group.



## PRAISE FROM THE PRESS.

The Red Star Troupe of the Workers' Theatre Movement, a smart company of young elocutionists, with a gift for dramatic action, gave two thrilling political sketches, one entitled "Crisis," and the other "1914-1931." In the former, typical "capitalists" (smoking huge cigars and wearing box hats) were seen plotting against the "workers," in which occupation they were joined by sinister-looking politicians armed with swords labelled "cuts" and "Tariff Reform." The dialogue of these individuals was frankly cynical, and made no secret of the fact that they were out to "crush" the workers for the sheer joy of so doing.

The second sketch dealt with the "lies" of the "Capitalist Press" in stirring up the war of 1914, and its "plot" to invent a "crisis" to-day.

The players declaimed salient passages in unison with striking effect, and evoked much applause. It was an interesting illustration of a new method of propaganda.

*The above was taken from the "Acton Gazette," 2-10-31.*

*Troupes are reminded of the importance of reporting their activities not only to the "Daily Worker" but also to the local Press.*

## THE SCOTTISH TOUR.

*(The following is the Diary of a Member of the Troupe which recently toured Scotland).*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3rd.—A Ford van was lent the "Red Pioneers" Troupe by a comrade. Left London 8 a.m. At Retford we refilled with petrol. By a great piece of luck the garage was run by a sympathiser. This comrade insisted on supplying petrol and oil free of charge as a contribution to the cost of the tour. If this meets the eye of Comrade ———, the W.T.M. wishes to thank him for this comradely action. Put up for the night at Catterick, where we were right truly stung for bed and breakfast!

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4th.—Left Catterick 9.0 a.m. Arrived Glasgow 6.30 p.m.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5th.—Left Glasgow 12.30 p.m. Arrived at Lumphinans 5.0 o'clock.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6th.—This morning we gave an open-air show at Loughgelly, on a wide space surrounded by miners' tenements ironically called "Happy Land." The show was well received; the workers crowding out of the tenements to see us. In the evening we supported Gallagher at Lumphinans Miners' Institute. The hall was crowded. Our sketches (of which we worked four) going very well. We had arranged an open-air show at Loughgelly Cross before Gallagher's meeting, but as it was raining hard we did not go. When we returned to our digs they told us that the miners had walked several miles to see us in the pouring rain, and were very disappointed, as we had made quite a name for ourselves at the Happy Land show.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7th.—Still raining. We gave an open-air show at Kely for the local F.O.S.U. Then back to the Institute for a show to the Women's Guild (U.M.S.). The Troupe has become something of a rage around here. The old Ford is recognised wherever we go.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8th.—Gave a show outside Loughgelly Labour Exchange on our way to East Fife. The "N.U.W.M." sketch is proving the most popular of our sketches. Arrived at Methil 12.30. After dinner gave two open-air shows at Leven. At 7 o'clock we supported Gallagher at East Wemyss. Several hundreds of workers were present, our show going very well.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9th.—This afternoon we went around Methilhill with the Ford for about 15 minutes. With the aid of a bell and a couple of megaphones we succeeded in drawing about 150 workers to the Miners' Institute, where we gave a performance consisting of four sketches and some songs. At 7 o'clock we were at Port Brae, Kirkcaldy, performing before an audience of over 700, in the open-air. The largest crowd seen here since 1926! We were so well received that the local comrades insisted that we come back for another show. The Troupe is now working together like a real team. Comrade W. Woodward's voice is a bit hoarse, but it will wear off all right!!

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10th.—Two morning shows between miners' tenements. At 6 o'clock we were outside the "National Bar," Methil. Comrade Savage acted as speaker. Three of the four cops on duty were round the meeting. It is to be hoped that the one remaining cop was successful in preventing any crime against "Ioranorder." The "Jimmy Maxton" item always goes well.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11th.—Left Methilhill at 10.15. Arrived at Dundee (Unity Hall) at 12.15. The local comrades had booked the Forrester's Hall (which seats 1,000) for us. When we arrived people were lined up as if going into a theatre. Every seat was occupied and several rows standing, both on the floor of the hall and in the balcony. We gave seven sketches and a number of songs. Each item was received with tremendous applause. Comrade Savage again acted as speaker, as all the leading local comrades are "doing time." Glad to say all our voices are holding-out. The comrades tell us that hundreds were turned away, as the hall was packed.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12th.—This evening we held a Meeting in St. John's Hall. We repeated the programme of the previous night. After the meeting we all went to the Unity Hall with the local comrades. There we had a social among ourselves till midnight. The Dundee comrades are a fine crowd. We feel as if we had known them for years.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13th.—Left Dundee at 10.30 a.m., stopped at Port Brae, Kirkcaldy for a return open-air show. Over 700 workers gave us a great welcome. We then left for Loughgelly, where we gave a full show at the Co.-Op. Hall for the Women's Guild (U.M.S.). Rather a small hall, but the women were quite bucked, as after an appeal for the Guild, they secured several new members.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14th.—Left Loughgelly at 10 o'clock. Arrived Edinburgh at 1.45. We performed at a meeting in the Synod Hall, where the three candidates (Tory, Labour and Communist) gave a short address. In the evening there was a demonstration round the town, which finished at the Mound, a big open space in front of the National Gallery. We gave a show from the steps in front of the National Gallery to over 5,000 workers. Enthusiasm was tremendous. After our show an effigy of Graham, the Labourite, was burnt amid cheers. A great night!!



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15th.—Arrived Greenock 2.15. After dinner we gave two open-air shows to very large crowds. Our big meeting was held at 7.30 in Grey Place. Over 3,000 workers followed our sketches with great interest, each item being enthusiastically received. Fergusson, the candidate, paid us a big compliment. He said: "If only you could stay till polling day, it would not be a question of getting in, but how big a majority we would have."

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16th.—At 11 o'clock we gave a show at the Labour Exchange. It was held in a *cul-de-sac* which sloped downwards. So we rigged up a platform with some trestles and boards at the bottom. About 1,000 workers were present at our sketch, and 60 recruits were made for N.U.W.M. Arriving in Glasgow at 2.30 we gave a show at Gorbals to over 500. Then on to the Springburn Division, where we gave two shows. Both were well attended, about 300 at the first and 500 at the second. All items were received with cheers.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17th.—Left Glasgow at 10 o'clock. Arrived Liverpool 9.30 p.m. Too late for a show.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18th.—We gave a hastily arranged show at the Broadway, Norris Green, to about 200. After tea we were at Islington Square with an audience of over 5,000. Each sketch and song was greeted with thunderous applause. At the finish they called for three cheers for the "Red Pioneers." These were given, and must have been heard all over the town. We then crossed by the ferry to Birkenhead, and played to about 1,000—this being the last show of the tour. We left Birkenhead at 11 p.m. Arrived in London after an all-night drive.

W.W.

## THE VERDICT.

In summing up the results of the tour we can say that the boldness of the experiment seemed to have been rewarded by exceptionally fine weather—which contributed largely to its success, as all but 6 of the 30 performances were able to be given in the open air.

About 2,500 song sheets were sold, and were in great demand everywhere. Large collections were also taken for the Election Funds.

In Dundee a new and vigorous group was set up, and in Edinburgh, Greenock, Glasgow and Liverpool the existing groups were spurred into renewed activity. Other useful contacts were made.

Our repertoire of eight sketches was tried out under all sorts of conditions. We can report the following order of popularity and effectiveness:—

1st. The N.U.W.M. Sketch, The Crisis, Jimmy Maxton and the I.L.P.  
(Played at almost every performance).

2nd. Gas.

3rd. Russian Timber "Dumping."

4th. Our Leaders, Preachers and Teachers.

5th. 1914.

"Meerut" would undoubtedly have been among the first four had our meetings all been indoors, but it was found to be unsuitable for open air work.

There is no doubt that this must be the first of many such tours, and that each group, when established, should consider it to be its duty to organise tours into the areas immediately surrounding them—if only for a week-end at first.

There can be no doubt of an enthusiastic reception for an efficient and forceful troupe with the right repertoire.

## INDIVIDUALISTIC SELF-BOOSTING ?

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—After the last all-London show of the W.T.M., the film critic of the DAILY WORKER ended a generally appreciative criticism of the show with an attack upon the "individualistic self-boosting" he found in it. Anxious to end these tendencies, if they exist, the Central Committee asked Dave Bennett to give details of this grave defect in our work. His reply raises questions of sufficient general importance to our work to initiate a discussion, and we hope that other comrades will let us have their views].

He writes as follows:—

"The passage was cut somewhat, but the general meaning was that I thought the tendency in one or two of the sketches was to allow the stressing of individual qualities of acting, both in the type of material used and in the specific manner of presentation."

"The door was left open for too much individualistic expression, and this, in my opinion, was one of the reasons for the ghastly failure of (I believe), 'The Crisis at No. 10.'"

"I think the W.T.M. is on the correct tack in the use of rhythmic utterance of mass slogans, etc.; this helps to keep in the forefront mass spirit, and teaches the audience to think in terms of mass effect, movement and action. Also the other type of sketch—satiric comment on political events by using political types as mouthpieces—is excellent."

"But the danger here must be that any latent tendencies towards individualism naturally receive freer scope here than in the other kind of work. This, I think, actually happened in one or two of the sketches and must be carefully guarded against. This was my real point of criticism."

"In general, however, the show was certainly the best the W.T.M. has done, as the general tone of my criticism implied."

TO THE EDITOR, *Red Stage*.

I am very glad that Comrade Dave Bennett absolves our show from what the majority of D.W. readers must have thought he meant by that unfortunate phrase "individualistic self-boosting."

This removes the discussion from the question of whether individuals were getting a personal boosting out of the show, to the very different question whether we are to encourage and develop individual acting and expression, or to confine ourselves to mass slogans and movement.

In my view mass speaking is one of the most effective weapons in our armoury, but we must not blunt its edge by incessant use, by ignoring the whole array of other weapons at our disposal. In fact its effectiveness is heightened by keeping it in reserve as a climax. To insist on our playing at "full throttle" the whole time would limit our work after a while to the level of the "long live" slogans at the end of a manifesto—which everybody takes for granted.

And what about the superb individual acting which characterises the great Russian films, is this to be condemned too, Comrade Bennett?

The danger of individual comrades being more concerned with their personal successes than with the meaning of what they are playing, a danger what is not unknown even in mass-speaking, can only be combatted by political education of the right sort, not by attempting to lop away one of the greatest branches of our work.

Yours fraternally, T.T.



## RED RADIO RADIATES.

Phew! What a hustle! Friday, two shows to crowded audiences in Bethnal Green. Saturday, three open-air shows in Bermondsey and Greenwich. Sunday, two performances in Stepney—one to an enormous outdoor meeting (you should have seen the interest displayed by our theatre attendants—the cops); the second to an indoor meeting of over 2,000 workers, who greeted our sketches with wonderful enthusiasm.

Then a whirlwind tour of Bethnal Green on the eve of the Election. Three shows. At the last show the poor policemen were shoving the spectators back off the tram lines, so dense was the crowd—but they might just as well have tried to hold back the decay of capitalism!

We sold 500 song sheets in these four days. Two people paid half-a-crown for their copy! (What about that, Dundee?).

Well, that's how Red Radio spent the last four days of the General Election. Since then we've done—no, we won't say what we've done—but wait for the first report of a group to beat our record of ten shows in four days.

P.J.P.

### RED FRONT TROUPE, STREATHAM.

Our Troupe has now fully recovered from the temporary loss of three members on the Scottish Tour. During the past fortnight we have given three very successful performances, and have recruited several useful members to the group.

One of our members has written a Co-operative sketch with which we hope to penetrate into some of the local guilds. We intend to become missionaries for the W.T.M. to all the districts near to us. So watch out, Croydon, Battersea, etc. We shan't be satisfied until every district south of the river has its own Troupe.

### MANCHESTER AND SALFORD.

Our group has been making good headway with topical items, and is warming up to its work of direct propaganda entertainment, gradually building a reputation in Lancashire.

We have had our first real experience of open-air work at an N.U.W.M. meeting, and mean to develop this side, as there is ample scope to reach large masses of workers in this way. With the sale of the song-sheets we hope to inspire our audiences to join lustily in the singing of our songs.

The group congratulates the London comrades on their initiative and organisational and creative work, and hopes that the new groups just formed will help to form a chain of "theatres" on the working-class front.

### RED FRONT TROUPE, DUNDEE.

We have put through three shows since last I wrote you, one in the Britannia Cinema on Tuesday, Polling Day, and two the following night, first in the Forresters Hall to 1,100 workers, then to an overflow meeting in the Unity Hall. We were very well received at all of these performances, and are confident of a welcome from the workers on any platform or stage. The quality of the group's work continues to improve at each rehearsal.

I enclose a copy of a skit I have just written on the B.B.C. The announcer reads out some amusing news items and then introduces a lecturer who gives an "unbiased" view of the Soviet Union, and is fiercely contradicted by a worker, who gets hold of the "mike" and broadcasts the truth.

Apologies to groups cut out! A bigger paper next time!!

## COMINTERN

(The Communist International)

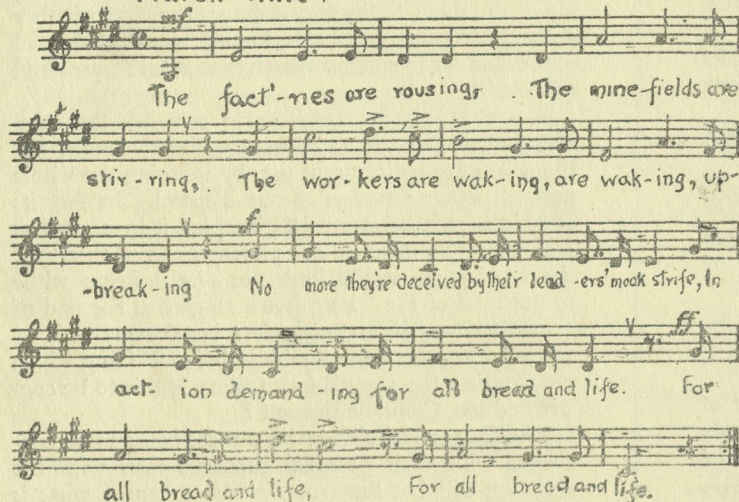
Music:

Hans Eisler.

English Text

T. Thomas

March Time.



For us, unemployment!

For them, mad enjoyment!

The rich ever richer, while millions are starving,  
With nothing to lose but our hunger and chains,  
We fight for the country and all it contains—  
And all it contains, and all it contains.

Betrayed where we trusted,  
Our wages "adjusted,"

Driven deeper and deeper in misery and hunger,  
One banner remains under which we unite,  
One Party stands boldly and leads in the fight—  
And leads in the fight, and leads in the fight.

In Germany and China,  
Arabia, Bulgaria,

Where workers and peasants are fighting for freedom,  
Wherever the peoples are enslaved and suppressed

The Communist Party leads all the oppressed—  
Leads all the oppressed, leads all the oppressed.

And in Soviet Russia

The workers have conquered,  
They're marching to Victory, led by the COM-INTERN;

Our aim is united, our flag is unfurled,  
A Soviet Republic all over the world—

A Workers' Republic all over the world.