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ABSTRACT

THE PLAYWRIGHT AS PROPAGANDIST: A STUDY OF THE DRAMATURGY OF SIX PROPAGANDA PLAYS OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE

by Daniel J. Fleischhacker

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of the playwright's purpose upon the dramaturgy of six propaganda plays produced in New York City between 1930 and 1939. The elements of dramaturgy which occupy the focus of the analyses are characterization, structure, and dialogue.

The plays analyzed are "Newsboy," by Gregory Novikov; "Waiting For Lefty," by Clifford Odets; They Shall Not Die, by John Wexley; Stevedore, by Paul Peters and George Sklar; We, The People, by Elmer Rice; and The American Way, by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart.

Among the considerations of the analysis of characterization are the character as a representative of a social group, as the voice of the author, as a symbol of an abstraction, and as an individualized person. Cause and effect in plot development, the use of the traditional "unities of the drama," and the nature of the climactic scene serve as guidelines in the analysis of structure. The use of the propaganda techniques of Name-calling, Glittering Generality, Transfer, Testimonial, Bandwagon, Plain Folks, and Card Stacking, are examined in the dialogue, along

with the nature of the rhetorical argument employed in the persuasive scenes, and the content of the speeches delivered directly to the audience.

The following are the results of the study:

1. The propaganda dramatist's message ranges from militant leftist to conservative, with the majority of the playwrights demonstrating a liberal attitude.

2. The propaganda dramatist makes use of groups of characters, rather than individuals, as protagonists and antagonists.

3. The propaganda dramatist hopes to transfer the behavior of his stage groups to their corresponding group in society.

4. The propaganda dramatist creates at least one conversion figure to attest to the rightness of his position.

5. The propaganda dramatist structures his play in an episodic manner, frequently disregarding the unities.

6. The propaganda dramatist structures his play so that the protagonist group rises from a position of subservience to the antagonists, to a triumph over them.

7. The propaganda dramatist is often careless about craftsmanship, namely in the frequent use of coincidence, digression in plot development, and repetition.

8. The propaganda dramatist relies heavily upon Bandwagon and Name-calling, consistently employing "Reverse Name-calling" to make the antagonists appear unsympathetic.

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THE DRAMATURGY OF SIX PROPAGANDA PLAYS OF
THE AMERICAN THEATRE

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ernst Toller, the German playwright, wrote that during periods of violent social battles, the theatre will reflect those battles.¹ Toller had no intention of placing the theatre as an instrument of social change, above theatre as art or entertainment. Rather, he observed that the theatre cannot escape the reflection of social conflict.

This observation is supported by the current of serious drama written during the Depression in America. The problems brought about by the economic crisis motivated the serious dramatist to protest injustice, and at times, to urge specific reforms. These playwrights used theatre as a means of propagandizing to awaken audiences to the need to improve intolerable conditions. Anita Block supports the view that external social conditions motivated the increase of protest drama during the 1930's:

As political changes in Europe obtruded more
and more inescapably in our American conscious-

¹Ernst Toller, "The Machine-Wreckers," Playwrights on Playwriting, ed. Toby Cole (New York: Hill & Wang, 1961), p. 222.

ness, and in addition, a shattering economic crisis at home brought America into the arena of social upheaval, it was inevitable that all this should serve not merely as a stimulus to the writing and production of plays of the social conflict, but that these plays should become more and more sharply positive in their point of view.²

Whether the propaganda playwrights succeeded in motivating social reform is disputed, but the belief that they did, for a time, create a genuine theatre of ideas, is supported by John Gassner:

The theatre of the thirties will be remembered not because [the playwrights] produced masterpieces for the ages, but because they responded to the challenge of their times vigorously and excitingly. They had the defects of their virtues of course, and they left few examples of distinguished artistry, but they were faulty and alive instead of perfect and dead.³

Some critics believed that the propaganda theatre of the Depression offered the strongest hope of re-vitalizing the American stage, which had become addicted to light comedies and musicals. It was through the vigor of the insurgent playwrights that hope was generated for a theatre in which the problems of society could be argued on a serious, adult level. John Howard Lawson saw a virile future for the American theatre as social drama began to find its way onto the stages of the commercial Broadway theatre:

I believe the coming season [1934-35] will see a

²Anita Block, The Changing World of Plays and the Theatre (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1939), p. 251.

³John Gassner, "Playwrights of the Period," Theatre Arts, XXXIV (Sept., 1960), 19.

further intense development of the revolutionary theatre; and that this is the only direction in which the stage can develop new integrity, vitality, and imagination.⁴

Edmond Gagey summarizes the importance of the propaganda theatre of the thirties by suggesting that social protest drama left an indelible mark on the theatre of that period:

Realistic drama provided a forum for the free discussion of current ideas in a difficult and troubled period. Right or wrong in their opinions the playwrights wrote scathingly and earnestly on what they saw or felt. They maintained always a liberal or radical point of view. They showed sympathy for the down-trodden and the exploited. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that their work has been the most significant drama of the period.⁵

Purpose of the Study

It is the purpose of this study to describe, analyze, and evaluate the dramaturgy of selected American propaganda plays produced between 1930 and 1939. The study will describe the characteristics common to the propaganda play, analyze the effect of persuasive purpose upon the structure, characterization, and dialogue of the plays, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the propaganda play to the extent that evidence makes this possible.

⁴John Howard Lawson, With a Reckless Preface (New York: Farrar & Rinehart Inc., 1934), p. viii.

⁵Edmond Gagey, Revolution in American Drama (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), p. 174.

Definition of Terms

A satisfactory definition of propaganda drama can be developed from a study of definitions given by propaganda authorities. Leonard Doob, one of the most respected of these authorities, makes a distinction between intentional and unintentional propaganda. Since this study is concerned with intentional propaganda, this definition is most significant:

[Intentional] propaganda is a systematic attempt by an interested individual (or individuals) to control the attitudes of groups or individuals through the use of suggestion and consequently to control their actions.⁶

Doob emphasizes the systematic method, the control of attitudes through psychological suggestion, and the control of actions of groups.

The necessity of commitment to a course of action specified by the propagandist is more explicitly stated in a definition of propaganda given by The Institute For Propaganda Analysis:

[Propaganda] is the expression of opinion or action by individuals or groups deliberately designed to influence opinions or actions of other individuals or groups with reference to pre-determined ends. . . . The propagandist's object is to bring about a specific action.⁷

⁶Leonard Doob, Propaganda, Its Psychology and Technique (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1935), p. 76.

⁷The Institute For Propaganda Analysis, The Fine Art of Propaganda, ed. Alfred McClung Lee and Elizabeth Briant Lee (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939), p. 15.

In both definitions cited, the action desired is a specific one, and the audience is pressured psychologically rather than physically.

Harold D. Laswell believed that the propagandist achieved his aim by the "manipulation of representations" which may be spoken, pictorial, or musical.⁸ The propagandist's purpose is to "intensify attitudes favorable to his purpose, to reverse obstructive attitudes, [and] to win the indifferent, or at least prevent them from becoming antagonistic!"⁹ Laswell supports Doob's belief — that the influencing of attitudes is basic to propaganda.

Hummel and Huntress further develop the idea of the importance of the propagandist-propagandee relationship. The result of a proper interaction between the two will be concordance:

The propaganda process is a complicated interplay between audience and propagandist, depending largely upon the extensions of those beliefs which the propagandist can make seem "necessary" and "logical."¹⁰

In this definition the emphasis is placed upon the manipulation of the propagandist, and the passive reception by the audience.

⁸Harold D. Laswell, "Propaganda," The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. Edwin R. A. Seligman, XI-XII (1944), 522.

⁹Ibid., p. 524.

¹⁰William Hummell and Kieth Huntress, The Analysis of Propaganda (New York: William Sloane Assoc. Inc., 1949), p. 85.

Karin Dovring also believed that the propagandist's control of his audience was central to the propaganda process. She indicates that propaganda arises from a controversial issue, and the propagandist attempts to impress his audience with the feasibility of accepting his viewpoint. To accomplish this, the propagandist "presents the facts in a way that tries to link his own and his public's interests in a certain direction, evoking from his public the particular responses or decision he wants."¹¹

The audience's decision to accept the propagandist's conclusion is an irrational one. Wayne C. Minnick emphasizes that this is the hope of the propagandist. He defines propaganda as:

A form of suasion that aims to secure acceptance of belief and action without, or with very little, rational justification being presented. . . . The propagandist seeks conviction by driving solely or principally at the non-thinking side of human nature¹² at man's emotions, habits, prejudices, wants.

This emphasis upon an irrational decision to accept a certain conclusion is also included in Edgar Henderson's definition. Henderson examined many definitions of propaganda and evolved the following from the common elements he found in them:

¹¹Karin Dovring, Road of Propaganda (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 13.

¹²Wayne C. Minnick, The Art of Persuasion (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), p. 5.

Propaganda is any antirational process consisting of pressure techniques deliberately used to induce the propagandee to commit himself before he can think the matter over freely, to such attitudes, opinions, or acts as the propagandist desires of him.¹³

A summary of the definitions of propaganda presented reveals four essential characteristics of propaganda. (1) The propagandist's bias assumes that there is a controversial issue; (2) The propagandist's inducement is deliberate and systematic; (3) The propagandist's method emphasizes control of attitudes through the use of non-rational appeals; and (4) The propagandist's purpose is to secure a commitment to a specified course of action.

Assuming these characteristics, one may define propaganda drama then, as a serious play in which the playwright makes a deliberate attempt through the use of emotional appeals, to influence the attitudes and thus the actions of his audience, in support of a specified solution to a controversial issue.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to serious American plays with propagandistic intent produced in New York City between 1930 and 1939.

In order to secure a representative sample of

¹³Edgar H. Henderson, "Toward a Definition of Propaganda," Journal of Social Psychology, XVIII (Aug., 1943), 83.

propaganda plays, selection was made from both the commercial theatre of New York,¹⁴ and from the left-wing theatres, both amateur and professional. Four plays were chosen from the commercial producers, and two from the revolutionary theatres.

Another criterion for selecting the plays for analysis was to isolate the common themes of social drama of the period, and select plays which dealt with these themes. Although this study is not exclusively a thematic analysis of the plays, the grouping of plays according to theme proved to be a useful tool in selecting the sample. Four of the most popular themes of Depression drama were racial prejudice, exploitation of labor by management, the plight of the common man during the Depression, and patriotic plays supporting Democracy and condemning Fascism.

Exemplary of these themes, the following six plays were chosen for the study: They Shall Not Die, by John Wexley, produced by the Theatre Guild; "Waiting For Lefty," by Clifford Odets, produced by The Group Theatre; We, The People, by Elmer Rice, and The American Way, by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, both independently produced on Broadway. "Newsboy," produced by the amateur left-wing theatre, The Workers Laboratory

¹⁴For purposes of consolidation, producing organizations such as The Group Theatre and The Theatre Guild are considered part of the commercial theatre of New York

Theatre; and Stevedore, by Paul Peters and George Sklar, produced by The Theatre Union, a professional left-wing theatre, were chosen to represent the revolutionary propaganda theatre.

Summary of Related Research

In an unpublished study¹⁵ Jacob Flavel Foster examined the commercial theatre season by season from 1919-1939, and tabulated the number of plays produced which dealt with social themes. His findings revealed that during the Depression the number of plays treating social issues increased.

A more recent study¹⁶ examined plays which were non-realistic in form, and included comedies as well as serious plays. In the study the author describes the common methods of argument employed by the playwrights included. He also discovered that the mise en scene was an important consideration of theatrical persuasion.

Drama As A Form of Persuasive Communication, by Ross Scanlan,¹⁷ examined the extent to which dramatic

¹⁵Jacob Flavel Foster, "The Development of Social Criticism in the Broadway Theatre During the Inter-War Period: 1919-1939" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University), 1942.

¹⁶Bertram Barer, "A Rhetorical Analysis of The American Presentational Social Theatre of the Thirties" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Minn.), 1960.

¹⁷Ross Scanlan, "Drama As A Form of Persuasive Communication" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell Univ.), 1947.

interests and persuasive interests coincide. His purpose was to determine whether the dramatist's intent to be persuasive had a detrimental effect upon the play as a work of art. Scanlan concluded that the theatre is an excellent medium of propaganda, and that the lack of artistic excellence found in many propaganda plays was not the fault of the author's persuasive purpose, but was due to the playwright's lack of creative ability.

In Everett Merrill Schreck's study, Drama as a Medium for Propaganda,¹⁸ the author found that persuasive intent on the playwright's part was responsible for serious flaws in dramatic technique.

An important recent study of the political propaganda theatre was done by Morgan Y. Himmelstein.¹⁹ Himmelstein examined the left-wing theatre in New York City during the 1930's. It was his purpose to compare propaganda in "leftist" plays with that advocated by the Party. He relied heavily upon reviews of plays taken from The Daily Worker and New Masses. It was found that very few of the plays, including those written by communists, satisfied the critics. Frequent criticism of the plays was that they did not advocate a revolution of the workers as the only solution to the problem

¹⁸Everett Merrill Schreck, "Drama As a Medium for Propaganda" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell Univ.), 1942.

¹⁹Morgan Y. Himmelstein, Drama Was A Weapon (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1963).

presented. Himelstein suggests that the failure of the communists in the American theatre was the result of two things: (1) the ever-changing party-line, and (2) the failure of the theatre to become an important force in the daily lives of the workers.

The most thorough study of non-dramatic propaganda available is Leonard Doob's Propaganda, Its Psychology and Technique.²⁰ Doob believes that propaganda affects people psychologically, and that this is the crux of a study of propaganda. The psychological process which underlies propaganda is suggestion. Doob classifies propaganda into three types: (1) revealed propaganda, (2) delayed revealed propaganda, and (3) concealed propaganda. Revealed propaganda makes its bias explicit throughout the duration of the message; delayed revealed propaganda arouses interest first, then reveals the message; and concealed propaganda never makes its purpose explicit.

In another study,²¹ Doob modified some of the beliefs he held in his earlier work. For example, his definition is changed to include the emotional nature of the propagandist's appeal, rather than a reliance upon rational thought. The propagandist

²⁰Leonard Doob, Propaganda, Its Psychology And Technique (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1935).

²¹Doob, Public Opinion And Propaganda (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1948).

dispenses conclusions which he hopes will be accepted without question.

For Doob the importance of the study of propaganda is that propaganda creates public opinion, and public opinion creates social change. Doob mentions that the theatre has limited use as a propaganda medium, but feels it will continue to be one of the forces molding public opinion in our society.

The Institute For Propaganda Analysis made a study of selected speeches of Father Coughlin, titled The Fine Art of Propaganda.²² This study is important because it named seven devices used by the propagandist. Name Calling, which labels an idea or a person as undesirable, is a technique which discredits the opposition; Glittering Generality is a technique which creates a favorable attitude toward a concept or a person by association with a "virtue word"; Transfer gains acceptance or rejection of an idea or person by use of authority sanction; Testimonial is a means by which approval or disapproval is reinforced by the testimony of some revered or hated person; Plain Folks is a device which makes an idea seem good because it is of "the common people"; Card Stacking distorts the truth to build either the best case in

²²The Institute for Propaganda Analysis, The Fine Art of Propaganda (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939)

favor of an idea or the worst case against an idea; and Bandwagon is a device by which the propagandee is convinced that the idea under discussion must be good because "everybody is doing it."

Wayne C. Minnick²³ studied the methods of persuasion, and since propaganda and persuasion bear certain similarities, a study of persuasive techniques aids a study of propaganda. Minnick's distinction between persuasion and propaganda stresses that the propagandist attempts to secure commitment with very little rational justification being presented, while persuasion emphasizes logical argument. Through the use of "pseudo reasoning," which is more deceptive than enlightening, the propagandist motivates action. Minnick believes that the continued existence of propaganda, in spite of its dubious method, is due to the unwillingness or inability of people to analyze arguments.

Method

The first consideration of the study of each of the plays is the isolation of the playwright's propaganda message. Typically, the message is explicitly stated in the dialogue, and may be repeated several times in the play. Since it is assumed that the message is the playwright's greatest concern, it should follow

²³Wayne C. Minnick, The Art of Persuasion (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957).

that the play will be constructed to best express that message.

The three dramatic components which best aid the playwright's persuasive purpose are characterization, structure, and dialogue. Some considerations of character are the use of a character as a symbol of an abstraction; a character as a representative of a social group; a character as raisonneur; and characters created as individualized persons.

In the study of structure, the arrangement of scenes to create the most advantageous means of expressing the message, is an important consideration. Further considerations of the structure are the use of cause and effect in plot development; the presence of digressive scenes which deter plot development and affect unity; and the nature of the climatic scene.

The dialogue of the plays may be approached with the following considerations: the presence of propaganda devices²⁴ in the language; the use of rhetorical argument; the content of presentational speeches delivered directly to the audience; the emotional tone and word choice employed in the discursive or horatory scenes in the play.

²⁴These devices are Name-Calling, Glittering Generality, Testimonial, Transfer, Plain-Folks, Card-Stacking, and Bandwagon.

In addition, a brief synopsis of each play is given along with a description of the playwright's ideal audience.

CHAPTER II

PROPAGANDA AND THE DRAMA

Throughout history the theatre has been used to some degree, as a medium of propaganda. Playwrights stirred audiences with patriotic fervor, condemned war, urged social reform, and occasionally, attempted to provoke mass action. Mordecai Gorelik indicates that persuasive drama has been a part of theatre since its beginnings:

The primitive war dance was propaganda against the enemy. Greek drama inculcated the principles of religion, as did . . . liturgical plays of the Middle Ages in Europe. . . . The Romantic theatre on the contrary, spread the doctrine of the greatness of every individual soul. The Naturalistic theatre was an advocate of social reform. Even our present day theatre, which has concentrated so much effort on rising above propaganda to the plane of art, has never given up the effort to influence mankind through what Gordon Craig once called "the inspiration exhaling from its beauty."¹

Dramatic representations offer one of the most appealing mediums of propaganda because of the emotional excitement of the theatre, and this was recognized by many playwrights. Alexandre Dumas films,² George

¹Mordecai Gorelik, New Theatres For Old (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1962), p. 10.

²Ibid., p. 169.

Bernard Shaw,³ Eugene Brieux,⁴ John Galsworthy,⁵ Emile Zola,⁶ Ernst Toller,⁷ and Clifford Odets⁸ are among the playwrights who have specifically stated that at times, their plays were written with the intent of awakening audiences to the need for reform. For some playwrights it was the highest purpose of their dramatic composition.

Many critics, and some playwrights as well, felt that propaganda was wholly inappropriate in the theatre. During the late 1920's and 1930's a full-fledged controversy erupted. Ross Scanlan described the argument in this way:

There were two clear-cut sides--those who believed all propaganda belonged in church or text books, and those who deduced, logically, that the theatre was a legitimate place for propaganda. The propaganda dramatist was undoubtedly surprised that his "artistic" opponents couldn't see the nose on their face, and the critics who railed against persuasive drama, were equally short-sighted in their surprise

³George Bernard Shaw, "Apology for Mrs. Warren's Profession," European Theories of the Drama ed. Barrett H. Clark (New York: Crown Pub. Inc., 1947), p. 473.

⁴Archibald Henderson, The Changing Drama (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1914), p. 111.

⁵Ramsden Balmforth, The Problem Play (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1928), p. 11.

⁶Emile Zola, "Naturalism On The Stage," Playwrights on Playwriting ed. Toby Cole (New York: Hill & Wang, 1961), p. 9.

⁷Ernst Toller, "Hoppla, Such Is Life," Cole, p. 226.

⁸Thomas Sugrue, "Mr. Odets Regrets," American Magazine, CXXII (Oct. 1936), 108.

that any playwright could be ridiculous enough to suggest the theatre as a soap-box.⁹

The traditional attitude of dramatic criticism supported the contention that propaganda was not compatible with fine art. Drama, like the other fine arts, existed for the purpose of creating beauty. The theatre used its power to inspire and enoble the human soul; anything less than that was a debasement of art. The use of theatre for utilitarian ends meant that the artist ignored his higher purpose. According to Sheldon Cheney:

[The purpose of drama] is the innundation of the spirit in beauty and clarity, toward which the art of the theatre gropes. And this, in a world from which divinity and mystery have been unsparingly shorn, this is as near as we are likely to come to the divine and the spiritual. It is the Dionysian experience, our ecstatic participation in the divine life.¹⁰

Constantin Stanislavsky based his aesthetic philosophy upon the same principle, and voiced an explicit objection to propaganda in the theatre:

We who knew the true nature of the Theatre, understood that the boards of our stage could never become a platform for the spread of propaganda, for the simple reason that the very least utilitarian purpose or tendency brought into the realm of pure art, kills art instantly.¹¹

⁹Ross Scanlan, "Drama As A Form of Persuasive Communication" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell Univ. 1937), p. 81.

¹⁰Sheldon Cheney, The Theatre (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1958), p. 8.

¹¹Constantin Stanislavsky, My Life In Art, trans. by J. J. Robbins (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1924), pp. 379-80.

Writing in the midst of the critical controversy of the thirties, Ford Maddox Ford echoes Stanislavsky:

For myself, I hold so profoundly the view that the moment an artist introduces propaganda of whatever kind into his works of art, he ceases to be an artist; and I have so many reasons for holding that belief that I do not propose to waste time on doing any more than make the assertion. It is the merest common sense.¹²

One of the strongest objections to the propaganda play was its emphasis upon a call to action. Gilbert Seldes recognized that "the truly effective propaganda play does not wish to induce only a feeling, but an action; not a 'be' but an 'act'!"¹³ Seldes, like others, believed that a work of art should not lead to an action.¹⁴

Because the propaganda dramatist wishes to provoke mass action, his success is measured by the degree to which he is able to polarize his audience. In so doing, the individual loses some of his identity to the crowd of which he becomes a member. George Jean Nathan takes the position that a work of art should not attempt to diminish individuality, but rather, should

¹²Ford Maddox Ford, "Hands Off The Arts," The American Mercury, XXXIV (April, 1935), 402.

¹³"Why the Propaganda Play," Part I by Gilbert Seldes, Stage, XII (Dec., 1934), 15.

¹⁴Ibid.

make the individual more aware of himself:

The fine drama or the fine piece of music does not make of its auditor part of a crowd; it removes him, and everyone else in the crowd, from the crowd, and makes him an individual. The crowd ceases to exist as a crowd; it becomes a crowd of units, or separate individuals.¹⁵

Ford Maddox Ford felt as Nathan did, that a work of art caused an arrestment of activity, not an urgency to a new activity.¹⁶

Propaganda drama also offended those critics who felt that preachment and persuasion negated the entertainment value of the theatre. Edith Isaacs, critic for Theatre Arts, believed that "the theatre can never be anything but a release from actuality, or--to use a word much abused by reformers--an escape."¹⁷ Thus the dramatization of unpleasant actualities of life, so frequently seen in propaganda plays, provided no respite from life's struggles.

Benjamin de Casseres supports Isaacs' views. He criticized Elmer Rice for abandoning theatre as entertainment in favor of theatre as propaganda. In a review of We, The People, he said:

When a playwright like Mr. Rice--who gave us the vital Counsellor-at-Law, the amusing The Left Bank,

¹⁵George Jean Nathan, The Critic and the Drama (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), pp. 39-40.

¹⁶Ford, pp. 407-08.

¹⁷Edith J. R. Isaacs, "Swords Into Plowshares," Theatre Arts, XVII (May, 1934), 322.

and the vital Street Scene--turns his muse (or whatever has inspired him since his return from Stalin's Utopia) into Union Square soap-box platitudinous drivel at things as they are, then it is time for all theatre patrons who go to the theatre to be entertained, amused, or just to pass the time, to utter a shouting protest.¹⁸

The editor of The Nation took a less impassioned view of propaganda drama. Although he accepted the possibility of propaganda in the theatre, he rejected it as art:

It seems to us that a play or a novel may possibly be of service to a social or philosophic idea in one or more of three quite separate ways. In the first place, it may be genuinely exploratory in the sense of seeking to discover and present new aspects of a subject. In the second place, it may aim to convince by argument those not already convinced; and finally, it may, like the typical political rally, which does not exist primarily either to present new arguments or to convince members of the opposing party, seek merely to sustain or intensify the enthusiasm of the convinced partisan. Neither the second nor the third of these possible aims can be called a genuinely artistic aim, but both are perfectly legitimate methods of propaganda.¹⁹

The use of drama to further a humanitarian cause seemed to be the highest function of theatre art for some dramatists. This seemed especially true in times of social unrest. All other subjects paled when issues of corruption and injustice were offered as alternatives. The serious writer felt a need to touch at the heart of

¹⁸Benjamin de Casseres, "Broadway To Date," Arts And Decoration, XXXVIII (March, 1933), 58.

¹⁹"Propaganda In Plays," The Nation, CXXXVIII (Feb. 21, 1934), 208.

the issues of his time:

The cry for justice in times of widespread horror becomes the only universal cry; then it is the writers' one utterance, for it would be difficult for him to tell love stories and stories of mother-fixations and jealousies and tangled impulses, when a more general immediately crucial problem draws him into his generation.²⁰

Stanley Burnshaw, a revolutionary poet, disagreed with the critics who censured the writers of propaganda works. Although Burnshaw's position stemmed from his leftist ideology, his defense may be applied to many non-revolutionary writers:

Show me the poet worthy of the name who can be excited into writing about such things [fields and streams and meadows] when the entire social system in which he lives is bursting apart in chaos. Revolutionary poets are not any less fond of fields, streams, meadows, or the spots on a butterfly's wings than are reactionary poets--but these things cannot interest them when hundreds are dying daily of starvation at the same time that food is destroyed by legislative ordinance; when a government curtails education and appropriates the largest sum in the history of mankind for war material; when strikers are shot down for exercising the rights supposedly guaranteed them by the National Recovery Act.²¹

An interpretation of the critical controversy as the voices of revolution versus the forces of reaction would be an inaccurate over-simplification. The importance of the left for the protest dramatist was its liberalism, which encouraged support of the victimized,

²⁰Meyer Levin, "Playwriting and Protest," Theatre Arts, XVII (May, 1933), 359.

²¹"Stanley Burnshaw Protests," Poetry, XXXIV (Sept., 1934), 351.

and criticized injustice, rather than its commitment to a militant philosophy of revolution. John Gassner points out that the "leftism" of the thirties was the banner under which one fought for human decency and social reforms, and fought against fascism and Nazism. The majority of the propaganda dramatists did not advocate an overthrow of capitalism through the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat.²²

Clearly, the propaganda play had a purpose different from conventional plays. That purpose was decided by the playwright as he conceived his work. Any discussion of the worth of the propaganda play must come to the conclusion that distinctions between "art" plays and propaganda plays are possible:

In such a discussion the distinction between art plays and propaganda plays is not in the final worth of the plays either as art or as propaganda, but rather in the intention of the writer at the time of the work's conception. Was he interested in first writing a good play, or in writing a play that would be something, a play that would do something?²³

Ernst Toller supports the distinction made by Levin, and indicates that the perceptive playwright realizes that a propagandistic intent in his work will result in something less than art, yet at the same

²²Morgan Y. Himelstein, Drama Was A Weapon, Forward by John Gassner (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1963), p. ix.

²³Levin, p. 354.

time, something more:

One must not confuse potential creative writing with propaganda that uses poetic means. The latter serves exclusively for daily purposes, it is both more and less than creative writing. More: because it contains the possibility of inciting the audience in the strongest, and best hypothetical sense, to act immediately. Less: because it never explores the depths which are reached by literature. . . . ²⁴

Perhaps the entire critical controversy of the thirties is summed up best by Kenneth Burke, who concluded that art in the framework of a capitalistic system, must, at times, be corrective. Undoubtedly the conditions of the Depression influenced Burke's belief in the corrective nature of art; however, his conclusions seem based upon sounder reasoning than that given by many other writers:

Since pure art makes for acceptance, it tends to become a social menace in so far as it assists us in tolerating the intolerable. And if it leads us to a state of acquiescence at a time when the very basis of moral integration is in question, we get a paradox whereby the soundest adjunct to ethics, the aesthetic, threatens to uphold an inethical condition. For this reason it seems that under conditions of competitive capitalism there must necessarily be a large corrective, a propaganda element in art. Art cannot safely confine itself to merely using the values which arise out of a given social texture and integrating their conflicts as the soundest "purest" art will do. It must have a definite horatory function, an element of suasion or inducement of the educational variety; it must be partially forensic. Such a quality we consider to be the essential work of propaganda.²⁵

²⁴Toller, p. 223.

²⁵Kenneth Burke, "The Nature of Art Under Capitalism," The Nation, CXXXVII (Dec. 13, 1933), 677.

CHAPTER III

NEWSBOY

Introduction

With the advent of the Depression, the Communist Party in America began a strong campaign to reach the workers of America through theatrical presentations. Realizing that their efforts would not be rewarded by assaulting the commercial Broadway theatre, the Marxists concentrated upon reaching an audience in which many had never before seen a stage play. Marshalling under the Soviet slogan, "Theatre is a Weapon in the Class War!" they hoped to use the theatre to spread revolutionary propaganda. "Newsboy" is the product of one of these revolutionary groups--The Workers Laboratory Theatre of New York City.

"Newsboy" is an "agit-prop" (a contraction of "agitation" and "propaganda"), a unique form of theatre expressly developed to present inflammatory propaganda through the medium of drama. The "agit-prop" is unusual theatre, and an analysis of "Newsboy" is considerably aided by knowledge of the elements of "agit-prop" drama.

The "agit-prop" cannot be called a play in the conventional sense, for there is little or no plot, the characters are symbols, and the dialogue consists of

slogans repeated again and again. An examination of several of the "agit-prop" scripts reveals a consistently naive and crude use of the elements of the playwright's art, however they frequently succeed in generating an emotional excitement even in the reading of them. Although the "agit-props" presented their messages in a blatant manner, perhaps they were more successful in reaching the unsophisticated worker audience in this way than if they had relied upon the more artistic subtleties of the drama.

A popular device of the "agit-props" was a chorus which sometimes sang or chanted in rhythmic patterns building emotional excitement and tension. In addition, the chorus moved in dance-like formations underscoring the song or chant. John Gassner describes the nature of the "agit-prop" as performed by the Prolet-Buehne, the German agitational troupe which introduced the "agit-prop" form in America:

Prolet-Buehne depended upon a theatre of slogans, denunciation, and caricature, held together by rhythmic movement and song-like expression. Its characters were broad types, easily distinguished and symbolic; thus the capitalist wore a top hat and the worker an open shirt, the employer was a mealy-mouthed oppressor, the employee was a down-trodden worm until he turned.¹

The conflict presented in the "agit-props"

¹John Gassner, "The One-Act Play in the Revolutionary Theatre," The One-Act Play Today, ed. William Kozlenko (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1938), p. 252.

showed typically the clash of abstractions such as "mass apathy" on the one hand, versus "mass pressure" on the other; or the "spirit of militarism" versus the "spirit of pacifism" as seen in "Newsboy." These abstractions are personified in the puppet-like characters who almost always act as mouthpieces for the author. The protagonists are worker-heroes who are all-good, but oppressed and victimized, and the antagonists are capitalists who are always wholly unsympathetic. The resolution of these sketches shows the triumph of the workers over their bosses, frequently achieved with surprising ease. Hallie Flanagan witnessed such a performance:

A score of workers marched up the aisle singing and argued with another worker whose silk topper and over-refined accent proclaimed him to be a capitalist. Their conflict was over the purpose of drama, the capitalist insisting that art was an expression of man's craving for beauty, while the workers insisted that art was a weapon in man's struggle for justice; to the apparent delight of the audience, the workers overcame the capitalist argumentatively and physically.²

Since the "agit-props" were propaganda primarily and theatre secondarily, many were written to capitalize upon some current injustice. "Lynch Law," based upon the Scottsboro trial, is an example. An excerpt from the play reveals the symbolic nature of the characters, the sloganized dialogue, and the use of a chanting chorus

²Hallie Flanagan, "A Theatre Is Born," Theatre Arts, XV (Nov. 1931), 910.

building to the militant conclusion:

Mass Chorus Offstage: WORKERS UNITE TO SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP.

D. A. R. (rushes on from left side): Congratulations. You will always uphold Southern traditions of justice.

Judge: Niggers must be taught to respect Southern justice.

Mass Chorus: SOUTHERN JUSTICE IS BOSS CLASS JUSTICE. WORKERS, NEGRO AND WHITE, UNITE TO SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP.

K. K. K. (from right): Congratulations, congratulations. You will teach the nigger to know his place.

Judge: Niggers must be taught to respect law and order.

Mass Chorus: FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE OPPRESSED NEGRO WORKER. JOIN THE LEAGUE OF STRUGGLE FOR NEGRO RIGHTS! SUPPORT THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENCE! SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP!

Visitor: Congratulations. You have set a dignified example for the rest of America.

Judge: Niggers must be taught to know their place. Our institutions must uphold the supremacy of the white race.

(Tableau of Judge and his lackeys onstage.)

Mass Chorus Offstage: UNITED FRONT TO SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP.

ONLY MASS PRESSURE WILL FREE THEM!
ORGANIZE! UNITE AND FIGHT!
SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP!
SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP!
SMASH THE SCOTTSBORO FRAME-UP!

(Curtain falls on third slogan.)³

As the Workers Theatre Movement spread across the

³Workers Laboratory Theatre, "Lynch Law," mimeographed manuscript, n.d., p. a-12.

country affiliate groups were constantly requesting new agitational sketches for presentation. The Workers Laboratory Theatre maintained a play bureau to fill these requests. In order to establish a repertoire of sketches, many of the "agit-props" were hurriedly written, which accounts in part, for their crudities.

In 1931 the play bureau had twenty-three short sketches on hand, and at the height of the movement, The Workers Laboratory Theatre offered eighty-three "agit-props" for production by member groups.⁴ A few of the titles available from the play bureau were, "Fat Fiorello," "Unemployment," "The 15 Minute Red Revue," "The Adventures of a Telephone Booth," "Mr. God is Not In," and "It's Funny as Hell." "Newsboy" is probably the best example of the "agit-prop" theatre.

There were writers within the revolutionary theatre movement who recognized that crude playlets written by amateurs with no theatre training, only touched upon the potentiality of the theatre as a propaganda medium. They believed that if art is a weapon, the best art becomes the best weapon. Albert Maltz wrote, "Critics within the Workers Theatre Movement had recognized for years that raw, undeveloped propaganda

⁴Morgan Y. Himmelstein, Drama Was a Weapon (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press., 1963), p. 14.

skits were not enough to satisfy audiences."⁵ Michael Gold emphasized the same point in a speech delivered before a convention of workers cultural groups:

We must not only have ideas, but fitting stage forms for those ideas. A worker will not come to a workers theatre where the production is poor when he can go to a bourgeois theatre where the production is good. It is not enough that we are doing a new thing. We must do it in a new way and we must do it well.⁶

Out of the "agit-prop" theatre came two genuinely respected one-act plays, "Waiting For Lefty," by Clifford Odets, and Irwin Shaw's "Bury The Dead." Few playwrights found in the "agit-prop" form the freedom of expression they wished, and as a result, the "agit-prop" theatre soon disappeared.

Analysis of "Newsboy"

Synopsis

"Newsboy" opens on a dark stage. As the lights come up a Crowd moves about a busy streetcorner. The First Newsboy stands in the Crowd shouting headlines of murder, rape, and scandal. The Crowd begins a frenetic "ballet" in which chaotic movement and the murmuring of their voices create a discordant babble symbolizing a world gone mad. A Black Man challenges the Newsboy accusing him of deluding the people with lies. The

⁵Albert Maltz, "The Left-Wing Theatre in America," The New Republic, LXXXIII (July 24, 1935), 304.

⁶Flanagan, p. 910.

sensational headlines mask the true issue of America's involvement in another war. The Black Man is ignored. Following a blackout, three characters representing William Randolph Hearst, Huey Long, and Father Coughlin, each make a short speech defending war. The Crowd rolls its newspapers into "rifles," and assembles in marching formation. An unemployed beggar passes through the Crowd asking for money. He is told to join a C. C. C. Camp or the Army, but the Unemployed Man condemns both as institutions dedicated to perpetuating war. The moment it appears that the Crowd has accepted the necessity of another war, a Second Newsboy enters and distributes a communist newspaper, Fight. In it the Crowd reads the statistics of those killed or wounded in World War I. Convinced that another war is wrong, they band together and denounce the First Newsboy. The playlet concludes with a speech by the Black Man to the audience, urging them to join in the fight against war and fascism.

Persuasive Purpose

"Newsboy" is anti-war propaganda. The premise of the message is that war is a concomitant of fascism, thus all who advocate war are automatically fascists. The playwright does not seek to prove this contention, but rather, proceeds as though it were fact. The playlet is inflammatory propaganda which attempts to arouse action through accusation and denunciation. That desired action,

is a commitment to pacifism.

The playwright has established a category of those who favor war, and named this category "fascist." Therefore, those who seem to favor another war become fascists through guilt by association.

Another important consideration of the propagandist's purpose is his repetition of the accusation that the rich are deluding the poor; that the workers are the victims of a conspiracy to lead them into war. Thus an urgency is created to fight this conspiracy before it is too late.

The most meaningful agent of protection against the conspiracy, and also the strongest force of opposition to war is the Communist Party, and more particularly, The American League Against War and Fascism. Although this group is not specifically named in the dialogue (it is mentioned twice in the stage directions), the author, nonetheless, wishes to enlist support for it by encouraging the audience to read its periodical, Fight. One may speculate that the propagandist wishes the audience to join The American League Against War and Fascism once it is familiar with Fight, and ultimately become a member of the party.

The message of "Newsboy" may be stated as "the fascist conspiracy will lead America into another war unless the workers give their active support to anti-

war organizations." Although Novikov's play implies this from the very beginning, it is not until the entrance of the Second Newsboy that he specifically states his message:

Fight against War and Fascism. Learn the truth about the munitions racket. (He enters with a magazine bag at his side. He is holding aloft a handful of papers spread fanwise, so we cannot see their titles.) Fight against war and Fascism. Fight NOW against the racket of the death manufacturers.⁷

The endorsement of Fight as the voice of "truth" in the war against fascism is central to the play. It is Fight which is responsible for the conversion of the Crowd from their complacency to an active defiance of war. This united front is symbolized in the action:

(The First Newsboy runs onstage, shouting his slogans and wheeling each person of the Crowd around so they face the audience. He is faced by a solid wall of Fights. . . . Above the wall, like a banner, the Second Newsboy waves his copy of Fight.)⁸

If the audience had any doubts as to the ideological affiliation of the protagonists, this is dispelled by the Black Man in his final speech:

Get yourself a trumpet, buddy, a big red trumpet, and climb to the top of the Empire State Building, and blare out the news. . . . Now is the time to fight war and fascism. (Comes center and speaks to audience.) Black Men, white men, field men, shop men, it's time to fight fascism. . . . Get yourself

⁷Gregory Novikov, "Newsboy," Workers Laboratory Theatre, mimeographed manuscript, n.d., p. 4.

⁸Ibid., p. 5.

a trumpet, buddy, a big red trumpet . . . and blare it out .⁹ . . time to fight war . . . time to fight fascism.

Two related ideas are touched on in the play. The first is that the C.C.C. Camps are places where young men are indoctrinated by the government, into acceptance of the necessity of war. The second is that the Army offers no security for the unemployed since soldiers sacrifice their lives to guarantee profits for munitions manufacturers. Neither of these ideas is treated in depth in "Newsboy," and each is integrated into the play through insistence of the propagandist that Fight contains the truth about the C.C.C. Camps and exposes the munitions "racket."

The Audience

"Newsboy" was written for the unsophisticated working-class audience which attended the workers theatre productions. These audiences were composed of both Negro and white workers, and undoubtedly included many people of foreign birth. Above all, they lacked theatre-going experience, for drama had remained almost entirely outside their everyday lives.

"Newsboy" appeals strongly to the concerned worker; the worker who questions the complacent acceptance of "the system." Exploitation was a keen issue to

⁹Ibid.

them, and a feeling of indignation at injustice, considerably aids the acceptance of the propaganda message of "Newsboy."

Many of the workers were undoubtedly sympathetic with the work of the Communist Party. Anti-communist sentiments in the playlet are expressed by the antagonists, and are deliberately used to establish sympathy for the communist protagonists.

Characterization

The characters of "Newsboy" are personified abstractions. The protagonist is the spirit of pacifism, the antagonist the spirit of fascism. As a result, the characters may be placed into two groupings according to the ideology represented. The first of these groups shows the spirit of pacifism personified in The Black Man, The Second Newsboy, and The Unemployed Man. None of the protagonists is given a name. This tendency to eliminate individuality in favor of symbolism further indicates that the author does not hope to create rounded characters as seen in conventional drama.

The second grouping of characters represents the conflicting philosophy of militarism and fascism. Three characters compose this antagonist group--William Randolph Hearst, Huey Long, and Father Coughlin. It is interesting to note that these three characters are the only ones given names in the playlet, and in addition,

are supposedly real people. The selection of these three men from actual life was undoubtedly an intentional one, designed to build antipathy for the antagonists, for from the point of view of the partisan audience, each was readily-recognized as a prominent American "fascist."

A third grouping of characters in the play constitutes the Crowd, a collection of many differing physical types, designed to represent a cross-section of the American public. The Crowd adopts no allegiance to a particular ideology until the end of the play. In fact, it is the author's purpose to show the Crowd moving from confusion and ignorance, to commitment and knowledge in the total acceptance of pacifism as the only solution to the problem of war.

Since the characters are unusually limited, a conventional character analysis is hardly meaningful, however, one may examine the way in which the author manipulates his characters to achieve his desired end. The Black Man is the first of the protagonists to appear in the play. He repeatedly warns the Crowd of the fascist conspiracy, and they repeatedly ignore him. Thus the author uses him to establish the "ignorance" of the Crowd. The fact that The Black Man is a Negro is never made clear. One may speculate that Novikov hoped the audience would sympathize with him because he was a member of a minority group. In addition, The Black Man

is apparently a communist, for he urges the audience to get a "big red trumpet" to protest war. However, little is made of his being a communist. Since it was common knowledge that the Workers Laboratory Theatre had an espoused left-wing association, it would appear only logical that the raisonneur be a communist.

The Black Man exerts pressure upon the Crowd to reject the coercion of the "war-mongers," but it is interesting to note that he has little effect upon their change of attitude. Rather than employing reason or argument, the tools of the persuader, he merely repeats his warning again and again. The Crowd, however, is not moved until it reads Fight. Thus it is apparent that The Black Man accomplishes little of the author's major aim--the conversion of the Crowd. Rather, to indict Hearst, Long, Coughlin, and others like them, as fascists, is his most important function in the author's propaganda purpose.

The Unemployed Man also serves to indict "fascists," especially as they relate to militaristic practices in America. For example, he refuses to accept the recommendation that he find security in a C.C.C. Camp. In his opinion the C.C.C. Camps exist to indoctrinate young men to the need for war. In response to his joining the Army as a means of subsistence, he replies that the Army is dedicated to fighting war. The only quality shown in The Unemployed Man's character is

a bitter hatred of war; he would rather starve than be associated in any way with it. Again, the author's message is reinforced since he makes it seem desirable to reject the military. Also, the indictment of the C.C.C. Camps carries the criticism of "fascist" practices in America a step beyond that of The Black Man.

The most significant character among the protagonists is The Second Newsboy, but only because he represents The American League Against War and Fascism, and distributes Fight, not because he possesses any depth of character. His character, in fact, is even less fully realized than that of The Black Man and The Unemployed Man. He functions less as a mouthpiece for the author's ideas, than as a puppet manipulated to achieve the needed conversion of the Crowd. It is interesting to note that he does not appear in the play until the very moment an idea is needed to change the attitude of the Crowd. Since the author wishes to accomplish quickly and efficiently the conversion of the Crowd, and thus prove his point, he cares little about the nature of the character who accomplishes this purpose.

The "fascists" also show an alarming lack of depth in characterization. A single phrase or suggested environment is sufficient to identify each of them. Hearst, for example speaks before a wall covered with title streamers of the New York American, Mirror

and Journal:

Rush through the following scare heads. Very boldest type. "Six Million Starve to Death in Soviet Russia." "Communism Must Go." "Down With American Reds." "USA Spends One Billion Dollars on Armament to be Vested as Airplane Bombers, Cannon, Gas Bombs. . . ."10

Huey Long speaks before a drape of red-white-and-blue bunting:

Every man a king. That's my motto. Share the wealth. Every man is entitled to his rights, but no man should make over a million dollars. Every man a king, that's the motto of the Kingfish. A war wouldn't be such a bad thing, boys, ha, ha, ha--every man a king. . . ."11

Father Coughlin appears wearing a priest's collar and speaking into a microphone:

But our country, right or wrong. Of course, I am not a militarist. . . . (Sweetly) No man of Jesus can be a militarist . . . Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches humility and pacifism. . . . BUT on the other hand, if our nation is in danger of an attack by a foreign nation who is after our gold--or, more particularly, our greatest asset, our silver supply . . . it is the God-ordained duty of every American Citizen to fight and die for its protection. Our government will be only as safe from without her borders as she is from within. Let us stamp out this ugly stain of Communism with its militant peace policies. I can only repeat the words of that other great American, Chauncey Depew--"Our country, right or wrong. . . ."12

Novikov does not wish to characterize them, but rather, to identify them. Once identified they are recognized as "reactionaries." The methods used to

¹⁰Ibid., p. 2.

¹¹Ibid., p. 3.

¹²Ibid., p. 3.

achieve this identification are unusually naive and obvious.

The Crowd is the "conversion figure" in "Newsboy." They are led by the strongest voices, and in the earlier part of the playlet, Hearst, Coughlin and Long shout the loudest. However, these forces of reaction are overwhelmed by the voice of Fight. Thus in the conversion of the Crowd, Novikov makes his strongest point in favor of reading Fight. This is demonstrated in the action, although it is rather weakly done. Since the play does not occur in the framework of realistic motivation, the action may be seen on a symbolic level. Although the conversion of the Crowd is weakly motivated in the realistic sense, it nevertheless achieves the author's purpose symbolically.

Structure

In "Newsboy" Novikov has attempted to combine a propaganda structure and a dramatic structure. His attempt is not successful since the propaganda purpose overrides the dramatic purpose, and the result is a weakened dramatic structure.

The propaganda structure follows three steps: the first is the discrediting of the "fascists"; the second the introduction of Fight as the voice of truth; and third, the presentation of the desired course of action--the support of The American League Against War

and Fascism. The majority of the sketch is devoted to accomplishing the first step.¹³ The Black Man warns of the fascist conspiracy; Hearst, Long, and Father Coughlin personify this conspiracy; and The Unemployed Man presents his indictment of militarism. The remaining two steps are accomplished rather quickly in the last page of the play. After the examination of Fight, the Crowd immediately reverses its attitude. The final step is accomplished in the last speech by The Black Man urging the audience to emulate the action shown onstage.

In this structure Novikov employs the Bandwagon technique. This is especially true in the conversion of the Crowd. After those onstage have been converted, the Bandwagon appeal is carried directly to the audience.

The dramatic structure is considerably weakened because of Novikov's emphasis upon his propaganda purpose. The conflict of the two opposing groups is very weak. The protagonists and antagonists never confront one another. As a result there is almost no dramatic tension. In an attempt to create some feeling of anticipation, Novikov shows, early in the sketch, that the antagonists occupy the position of power. Thus, the desire to see the Crowd turn against the "fascists" and reverse the power roles, generates some suspense. But

¹³This segment includes the first three and one-half pages of the total four and one-half pages of the play.

since the two groups never clash directly, this suspense is weak. In addition, the brief scene in which The Unemployed Man attacks the C.C.C. Camps and the U.S. Army represents a digression which weakens the line of development of the play.

Another example of the subordination of the dramatic structure to the propaganda purpose is the weakness of the climactic scene. Novikov accomplishes the conversion of the Crowd with surprising ease. The instrument of conversion, Fight, has never before been mentioned in the playlet. There is no preparation for the sudden reversal of attitude. Since the dilemma of the Crowd is solved by an external manipulation not unlike the deus ex machina, the dramatic power of the climax is considerably weakened. It would undoubtedly have been stronger to have the Crowd decide to investigate Fight, rather than having it thrust into their hands by someone else.

The Black Man's speech at the conclusion of the sketch offers further evidence of the subordination of dramatic structure to the propaganda purpose. The speech is an anti-climax. The play's action has reached its conclusion with the conversion of the Crowd, yet Novikov disregards this in favor of a final appeal urging the adoption of his specified course of action.

Because of the author's repetitive indictment of the "fascists," the crude manipulation of the conversion

device, and the anti-climactic final speech, the tension inherent in the reversal of the power position of the two groups, is not fully realized.

A redeeming feature of "Newsboy," is a consistency of style which gives the sketch unity. The opening of the play is particularly effective in arousing audience attention and setting the tone of the play; however, Novikov relies upon the stage technician to accomplish this:

(When the curtain rises the stage is dark, but the shuffling of many feet is heard. Slowly a light is thrown along the street surface which lights up only the feet of the passersby. We see all types of feet, well-shod, and poorly-shod, walking, strolling, and running back and forth.)¹⁴

When the lights come up fully, several pantomimes occur, each suggesting a streetcorner in a large city. Since Novikov specifies that there is no scenery, he establishes the stage as a platea, adaptable to any locale he wishes. This aids in compression of time and space, and creates a proper atmosphere for the symbolic nature of the playlet.

Stage lighting is further employed for symbolic effect, aiding the propaganda purpose of the play. The author specifies that the opening scene is bathed in a "sickly amber glow," suggesting the unhealthy atmosphere of a world on the brink of war. Later in the sketch,

¹⁴Novikov, "Newsboy," p. 1.

Novikov specifies that the entrance of The Second Newsboy be specially lighted, calling attention to his importance. In the reliance upon unusual lighting effects, "Newsboy" is an atypical "agit-prop." Since these playlets were designed for very simplified staging in meeting halls, cafeterias, or even outdoors, stage effects are usually limited.

The Crowd, moving in dance-like formations, adds imaginative visual interest to the playlet. The danse macabre, early in the sketch, symbolizing chaos, and the military formation with newspapers rolled into "rifles," shows the author's use of symbolic action.

The brevity of "Newsboy" is a second redeeming feature of the work. Although characterization is lacking and the structure is weak, Novikov makes his point quickly, with visual and aural variety. His audience never becomes disinterested. Also, and somewhat more important, they have little time to think, and are therefore more likely to accept the playwright's attitudes without resistance.

Dialogue

In "Newsboy" Novikov does not employ dialogue in the usual manner--to reveal character, progress the plot, or probe the dimensions of his theme. Rather, he creates a rhythmic excitement which is often unrelated to the literal meaning of the words themselves. Thus, Novikov

does not use dialogue to persuade--there are no argumentative speeches in the play--instead, he intensifies attitudes already held by his audience.

The two most significant characteristics of the dialogue are repetition and overstatement. The repetitive nature of the dialogue is evident throughout the entire playlet. The Black Man, for example, repeatedly warns the Crowd of the "fascist conspiracy." His accusations may vary in their wording, but the idea is always the same. The repetition of accusations is also true of the language used by the antagonists, especially that of Hearst and Father Coughlin. Both emphasize that America must defend herself from possible attack by Soviet Russia. Repeated denunciation of the opposition is the only "persuasion" employed by Novikov.

The accusations contain surprisingly few examples of Name-Calling and Glittering Generality. Hearst, for example, calls the communists, "reds," and Father Coughlin makes one reference to the "ugly stain of communism." But these are mild considering the propagandist's hatred of fascists. The same is true of the use of Glittering Generality. Father Coughlin's phrase, "Our country right or wrong," which is picked up by Hearst later, is the only example. None of the protagonists employs either Name-Calling or Glittering Generality. The lack of specific techniques normally found in propagandistic persuasion, is perhaps accounted for because

all of the accusations are "true" from the partisan viewpoint, and there is no need to carry them to the extreme of Name-Calling. Repetition of the accusations is the propagandist's means of emphasizing that they are "true."

The second technique employed by Novikov is overstatement. When used by the antagonists it makes them seem undesirable. Father Coughlin insists that "It is the God-ordained duty for every American Citizen to fight and die for [America's] protection." He is made to seem an alarmist, and since he is a priest and preaches the gospel of peace, a hypocrite as well. Hearst's speeches also overstate the alarmist tone.

However, the use of emotional overstatement has quite a different effect when used to present an idea favorable to the author's cause. After the conversion of the Crowd, a man reads, "Eight and a half million men killed for the profits of the munitions makers," and the Crowd picks up the chant, "Eight and a half million men murdered in war--murdered in war."¹⁵ In this example one sees the manner in which Novikov combines emotionalized overstatement and repetition in a chant which intensifies the emotional feelings previously aroused in the audience.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 4.

As dramatic dialogue, the language of "Newsboy" is awkwardly employed, suggesting that Novikov had little previous experience as a playwright. A speech by The Black Man is typical:

Why don't yer stop kiddin' yerself, Newsboy? Don't yer see yer drunk with the poison gin of lies. All this talk of C.C.C. Camps and Boy Scout parades and International insults . . . you've got poison in yer bellies and its eatin' yer guts and rottin' away yer minds. Yer linin' up fer war . . . that's what! Yer gettin' ready to fight again and kill again, and slaughter again. . . .¹⁶

The attempt at dialect is disconcerting for it suggests that the speaker is illiterate. Ideas are stated but not developed; the references to the C.C.C. Camps and International insults, for example. The word choice employed in "poison gin of lies," "eatin' yer guts," and "rottin' away yer minds," is more repellant than effective. The shift in person suggests that he now includes more than the First Newsboy in his accusation. The author does not aid the reader here with stage directions.

Novikov does succeed in one respect--the "telegraphic" style of the sentences, like newspaper headlines, match the dominant image of the play, that is, that newspapers (represented by the Newsboy) are responsible for the molding of public opinion. Novikov, however, never seems aware that a playwright cannot create interesting stage dialogue out of a series of newspaper headlines.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 2.

CHAPTER IV

WAITING FOR LEFTY

Introduction

The Labor Theatre Movement had attracted little attention from theatrical critics, largely because the productions remained crude and poorly-written. However, this was abruptly changed with the premiere of "Waiting For Lefty." The play created a sensation, and many critics and Broadway theatre-goers found they could no longer ignore the propaganda theatre.

"Waiting For Lefty" was written in response to a contest sponsored by New Masses and New Theatre for a one-act revolutionary play. Odets composed the play in one week-end and subsequently won the contest. "Waiting For Lefty" was given a special production on January 6, 1935, at the Civic Repertory Theatre by the New Theatre League, with actors from The Group Theatre performing the roles.

In the spring of 1935 the Group Theatre revived "Waiting For Lefty," and paired it with another one-act by Odets, "Till The Day I Die." The production ran 136 performances. Himelstein notes that this production

marked the farthest left the Group Theatre had leaned. It had, in his opinion, surpassed The Theatre Union as the most revolutionary theatre in New York.¹

"Waiting For Lefty" provoked immediate controversy because of its strong communist propaganda. It was banned in Boston, and other attempts to censor productions of the play only served to increase its notoriety. For example, in New Haven, a scheduled production by the Unity Players was cancelled by police order. The American Civil Liberties Union, The International Labor Defense, and Yale students rallied to support the play and successfully fought the injunction.

"Waiting For Lefty" became the most popular play of the amateur labor groups who wanted better plays than the "agit-props" previously offered them. By June of 1935, just six months after its premiere, "Waiting For Lefty" had been performed in over fifty American cities.²

Analysis of "Waiting For Lefty"

Synopsis

"Waiting For Lefty" opens at a strike meeting of New York cab drivers. Corrupt union officials, led by

¹Morgan Y. Himelstein, Drama Was A Weapon (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1963), p. 168.

²Ibid., p. 41.

Harry Fatt, try to dissuade the strikers by suggesting that the strike is communist inspired. The members of the cab drivers' committee, Benjamin, Miller, Stein, Mitchell, Phillips, and Keller, refuse to act until their leader, Lefty, joins them. In a series of flash-backs, each of the men reveals the reasons which forced him to the strike meeting. Mitchell's wife intends to leave him if he doesn't bring home a larger salary; Miller turns down a tempting salary because it means spying on a fellow-worker; Stein cannot marry his fiancée because of lack of money; Phillips, an actor, can find no work in the theatre; and Benjamin, a doctor, is released when the hospital trustees discover he is a Jew. As the strikers await Lefty's arrival, Fatt introduces a labor spy named Clayton, who warns the men of the dangers of a strike. He is exposed by his brother who happens to be one of the taxi drivers at the meeting. As the men become increasingly restless, news is brought of Lefty's death; he is a victim of a gangland assassination. Fatt's power is broken as the men surge out of the hall shouting, "Strike!"

Persuasive Purpose

In "Waiting For Lefty," Odets dramatizes a call to protest injustice in the form of a strike of New York taxicab drivers. Odets advocates the strike for three reasons: (1) because his ideological concept is that the

good worker is a militant worker; (2) because the strike represents a means of resistance in a war against the "boss class"; and (3) by striking, the workers are able to regain their dignity and live a decent life.

The message may be stated, "Workers, unite and strike to fight the capitalist "bosses," and regain your dignity as human beings." Human dignity is of vital concern to Odets. That any man should have to suffer humiliation and loss of self-esteem just because he is a worker, is deplorable. The only solution is retaliation. This is well illustrated in a speech by Edna Mitchell:

(With great joy) I don't say one man! I say a hundred, a thousand, a whole million, I say. But start in your own union. Get those hack boys together! Sweep out those racketeers like a pile of dirt! Stand up like a man and fight for the crying kids and wives.³

Edna also alludes to the unlimited power of numbers. Odets, like other labor propagandists, makes the solidarity of the workers seem the only step needed to overthrow their oppressors. Sid Stein reiterates this idea in a speech to Florrie:

They know if they give in just an inch, all the dogs like us will be down on them together--an ocean knocking them to hell and back and each singing cuckoo with stars coming from their

³Clifford Odets, "Waiting For Lefty," Thirty Famous One-Act Plays, ed. Bennet Cerf and Van H. Cartmell, The Modern Library (New York: Random House Inc., 1943), p. 257.

nose and ears.⁴

Odets' treatment of this aspect of his theme seems naive when one considers the serious problems resulting from the decision to strike. The lack of money during the strike, violence, and the possibility of blacklisting, may mean that conditions would be worse than before the strike. But to Odets the strike becomes a symbol of the power of the workers to dictate to their bosses. The act of striking appears to be a panacea for the problems of the worker, and is, in itself, good; Odets does not want his audience to think beyond this.

One may argue that Odets did point out the dangers of the strike through the death of Lefty. However, Lefty's death is important not because it illustrates the danger of striking, but because it illustrates the corrupt power that the strikers wish to overthrow. Lefty, then, becomes a martyr in the class war. Rather than act as a deterrent, his heroic death spurs the workers on. They are not afraid to die if necessary. "And when we die they'll know what we did to make a new world! Christ, cut us up to little pieces. We'll die for what is right! Put fruit trees where our ashes are!"⁵

⁴Ibid., p. 533.

⁵Ibid., p. 544.

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The Audience

Odets wrote his play for the specialized audience attending the workers' theatres. "Waiting For Lefty" depends upon that audience to achieve its maximum effect as propaganda. The audience may be characterized as follows: they were workers, especially that embittered group of workers who felt victimized and exploited. Hatred for the wealthy would aid the playwright's purpose immeasurably, since Odets equates wealth with corruption.

The audience aimed at includes communists or "fellow-travelers." Odets shows the communists in a favorable light throughout his play. The Stenographer, for example, calls the Young Actor "Comrade," and offers to loan him a dollar; Agate points out that the man who helped him when he was starving called him "Comrade"; and the repetition of communistic slogans is used by Odets to dispel the fear of the "red bogeyman" which the capitalists have invented.

Although Odets touches only lightly on the anti-war theme in the play, a sympathy with pacifism would aid identification with Miller, and build hatred for Fayette, manufacturer of poison gas, who intends to profit from war. It is interesting to note that Odets advocates pacifism with regard to a "Shooting war," but absolute and dedicated militarism in the "class war."

They are sympathetic with minority groups, particularly Jews. At least three of the important characters are Jewish--Stein, The Stenographer, and Doctor Benjamin. Anti-Semitism which is the theme of the episode involving Dr. Benjamin, would provide a means of strong identification for Jews.

Characterization

In "Waiting For Lefty," Odets employs a technique used in "Newsboy" and other propaganda plays--groups of characters rather than individuals are used as protagonists and antagonists. The antagonists are introduced first. They include Harry Fatt, a racketeer; Fayette, an industrialist; and Grady, a theatrical producer.

Odets is not interested in showing these men to be individuals; he relies upon physical types rather than mental traits as a major means of characterizing them. Emphasizing obesity, he describes Harry Fatt as "a fat man of porcine appearance." Apparently Odets hoped that a fat man in times of starvation, would be universally disliked.

Fatt's speech pattern parallels the grossness of the physical image. He uses profanity, frequently uses "ain't" and other colloquial expressions, which suggest a lack of education. His quickness of temper reinforces the image of insipience, for Fatt seems to be a person who is unable to solve a problem with his

brains and therefore must resort to threats and force. The ever-present armed henchmen, sullen and menacing, are the living symbols of Fatt's explosive nature.

Fatt smokes a large cigar. Odets employs the cigar to symbolize the capitalist just as the early "agit-props" used the silk top hat for the same purpose. The cigar, ugly obesity, lack of intelligence, and the use of force, show Harry Fatt to be the stereotyped gangster.

In his notes for production, Odets specified that Harry Fatt was intended as a symbol. "Fatt, of course, represents the capitalist system throughout the play. The audience should constantly be kept aware of him, the ugly menace which hangs over the lives of all the people who act out their own dramas."⁶ Since the play simulates a union meeting and each dramatized episode is a flashback, Odets is able to keep Harry Fatt onstage throughout the entire play, thus accomplishing his symbolic purpose.

Grady, the theatrical producer, appears only in Episode V. Odets specifies that the part is to be played by Fatt. In this scene, Odets uses the Stenographer to characterize Grady before he appears. Thus, when he does appear, played by Fatt, his group allegiance is obvious.

⁶Ibid., p. 545.

The Stenographer shows Grady to be a hedonist. He takes perfumed baths, has his apartment done in oriental decor, keeps a Russian wolf-hound, uses his position to take sexual license with women who audition for him, and drinks to excess. When he appears, he shows a complete lack of sympathy for the unfortunate actor, and is only interested in protecting his investments. The theatre is a business to him, not an art form. In fact, he tells the Young Actor, "Nobody [is] interested in artists here."⁷

Odets proves his mastery of the art of the "capsule characterization," suggesting the nature of a person by a single revealing line or gesture. Grady explains to Phillips that talent is non-essential in his view of the commercial theatre, "And Jesus Christ, himself, couldn't play a soldier in this show . . . with all his talent. (Crosses himself in quick repentance for this remark.)"⁸ The action is both humorous and revealing, for it suggests that Grady might rationalize his immoral existence by observing the outward forms of religion.

A second such moment comes as Grady orders the Stenographer to send out for a bromo-seltzer. He prefaces the request with a gross belch. Again, the action is humorous but also revealing, for the belch symbolizes

⁷Ibid., p. 538

⁸Ibid., p. 539.

his gluttony and self-indulgence.

The third capitalist in the play is Fayette, "an industrialist." Fayette's equivocal manner makes him appear affected and insincere. For example, he drinks, but for him it is a sign of sophistication; in others, however drinking is a sign of indolence. "I like sobriety in my workers . . . the trained ones, I mean. The Pollacks and niggers, they're better off drunk--keeps them out of mischief."⁹

In Odets' view, Fayette shows himself a true capitalist, for he has no concern for human life. The development of a poison gas to be used in the "next war," will result in profit for him. His cruelty is revealed when he indicates that human life cannot be a consideration to a businessman:

Miller: They say 12 million men were killed in that last one, and 20 million were wounded or missing.

Fayette: That's not our worry. If big business went sentimental over human life, there wouldn't be big business of any sort.¹⁰

Odets also uses the "capsule characterization" for Fayette. As he sits talking with Miller, he reaches out and pats Miller's knee. Fayette's coldly inhuman attitude, coupled with forced camaraderie with his subordinates, shows him to be insincere and opportunistic.

⁹Ibid., p. 528.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 529.

One last consideration of Fayette's character is that he, too, smokes the cigar used to symbolize the capitalist, and his name, "Fayette," is a sophisticated embellishment of the name, "Fatt." The antagonists are all cut of the same cloth. They are concerned only with profit, and regard human life as having little importance.

Odets achieves greater variety of character in his protagonists, Joe Mitchell, Miller, Sid Stein, Phillips, and Dr. Benjamin. Each of these men has been elected to a strike committee representing the cab drivers. Flashbacks show how each came to be converted to the cause of the strike.

With five protagonists, Odets runs the danger of splitting his group into too many pieces, making it difficult to achieve identification on the part of the audience. He achieves needed unity, however, by showing the group to be held together by two factors: (1) each of the men is a "conversion" figure; (2) each is the victim of a corrupt capitalistic system which has stripped away his dignity; thus the struggle of each to regain his self-respect becomes a strong unifying element. In each case the act of striking is the first step toward regaining the self-respect which has been taken from him.

Joe Mitchell is a war veteran and proud of his service. His appeal is that he is an ordinary working man, sober, diligent, but servile. His marriage is in

serious danger since the effect of poverty has been the death of love and intimacy between him and his wife. Edna repel's Joe's attempts to kiss her with, "Do it in the movies, Joe--they pay Clark Gable big money for it."¹¹ The lack of love emerges as a root motivation for Joe's awakening. Joe does not need to be converted to the cause of the workers since he is already a member of that class, but he needs to overcome fear and to have an appropriate course of action pointed out for him. It is, in fact, Edna's threat to leave him for another man, that pushes Joe into the ranks of the militant.

Odets places Joe in the position of having to make a choice; his situation is hopeless. He cannot solve his problems by running away or dreaming of some miraculous solution, thus some positive action must be taken. The situation is shown in this interchange:

Joe: Jeez, I wish I was a kid again and didn't have to think about the next minute.

Edna: But you're not a kid and you do have to think about the next minute. You got two blonde kids sleeping in the next room. They need food and clothes. I'm not mentioning anything else--but we've stalled like a flivver in the snow.¹²

Joe faces the choice of a break-up of his marriage and continued humiliation at the hands of the company, or the prospect of saving his marriage and his self-respect by striking. It should be pointed out that Joe's

¹¹Ibid., p. 523.

¹²Ibid., p. 524.

awakening is not the result of the persuasion of a communist agitator (although Edna's militant attitude certainly approximates this at times), but arises out of his own personal desires.

Sid Stein is a single man who has been engaged for three years and cannot marry because of lack of money. He may be thought of as Joe, five years earlier. Sid, too, needs awakening to a proper course of action to change conditions. The agent of his awakening is the same as Joe's, that is, the possible loss of the woman he loves. As a result, his choice is made, like Joe's, on the basis of personal motives.

Sid, too, has been humiliated by his circumstances which Odets attributes to a flaw in the social system. Sid is denied the normal wants of marriage and a family. His desire for Florrie has resulted in constant temptation to place their relationship on a sexual basis without marriage. Because of his strength of character, he has not done so. Sid embodies the romantic-sentimental concept of the "noble worker." Obviously, he and Florrie could remain unmarried and enjoy sexual relations, but the implication is that Sid's ethical nature would produce feelings of self-digust:

Florrie: We wanted to have kids . . .

Sid: But that sort of life ain't for the dogs which is us. Christ, Babe! I get like thunder in my chest

when we're together. If we went off together I could maybe look the world straight in the face, spit in its eye like a man should do. Godammit, it's trying to be a man on the earth. Two in life together.¹³

Again it must be noted that although Sid realizes that the capitalists are responsible for his dilemma, his acceptance of a militant cause is not prompted by communist preachment.

A third member of the workers group is Miller, a laboratory assistant in a chemical plant. Miller has achieved his position by diligence and clean-living. For example, he will not smoke or drink even to impress his boss, Fayette. Miller needs conversion to the cause of the workers, for he has, in reality, been working along with the capitalists. His awakening comes when he is asked to violate his code of ethics by spying on a fellow worker. In addition, he discovers that the company is developing a deadly poison gas. Since his brother was killed in the First World War, Miller has become a pacifist, and cannot accept a position which would mean profiting from the slaughter of war.

Thus, Miller's dilemma is clear-cut--live comfortably and suffer the pangs of conscience, or struggle in poverty and retain his ideals. He says, "[I'd] rather dig ditches first."¹⁴ Miller, then, is not above ordinary labor; one could easily substitute

¹³Ibid., p. 533.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 530.

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"drive a cab" for "dig ditches" in his speech. His choice is again motivated by Odets' concept of the "noble worker." The strike becomes a way of fighting war, and evil, and Miller chooses the side of right.

The three workers are shown to be distinct individuals rather than carbon-copies of each other. Each longs to achieve something good and worthy in life, and each is deterred from this goal by a situation which Odets attributes directly to a flaw in the capitalistic system. In Joe's and Sid's cases, there is no choice but to fight back against the "bosses" who are made to seem directly responsible for their suffering. Miller has more freedom of choice, but the strength of his ideals will not permit him to consider the unethical way.

All three are faced with the choice of living in self-disgust and inaction, or fighting actively against the system that caused it. All three choose the latter, and thus considerable sympathy is enlisted for them.

The two remaining members of the protagonist group are placed in similar dilemmas. Phillips is a young actor, so naive that he is unfamiliar with the term, "casting couch." His dedication to the art of acting is belittled by Grady who insists that the theatre is a business, and acting depends upon physical type rather than talent. Under capitalism, then, art is

reduced to a money-making venture. Phillips' dignity is stripped away as he is forced to beg for a part, no matter how small. Also, since Grady does not accept his previous experience as worthwhile, Phillips is forced to lie to impress him. But Phillips is a guileless person, and cannot lie successfully. The episode depicts Phillips at the most humiliating moment in his life; his encounter with Grady is the last in a series of similar encounters with other producers. Thus, he is ready for conversion.

Phillips' choice is aided by the persuasion of the Stenographer who is a communist. She advocates that he read the "Communist Manifesto," and as a result he is converted to the cause of the workers. It may be significant that Phillips, the most naive character to appear in the play, is the only one directly converted by a communist.

Doctor Benjamin, the last of the protagonist group, is a victim of anti-Semitism, the product of a diseased social order. Although he is of the professional class, he is sympathetic with the working class as shown by his concern for the lives of his patients, and above all, by his distress at the decision by the hospital to close one of the charity wards.

Since Odets does not wish to change the direction of his play by an undue emphasis upon the anti-

Semitic theme, he introduces the idea that the hospital is controlled by politicians, thus continuing his indictment of capitalist practices. Dr. Barnes points this out:

Doctor's don't run medicine in this country. The men who know their jobs don't run anything here, except the motormen on trolley cars. I've seen medicine change plenty--anesthesia, sterilization--but not because of rich men--in spite of them!¹⁵

With regard to the anti-Semitic theme, Odets hopes to equate the strike with the first step toward a socialistic utopia in which prejudice does not exist. In his production notes, Odets suggests that the committeemen onstage inject comments during the dramatized episodes:

In the climaxes of each scene, slogans might very effectively be used--a voice coming out of the dark. Such a voice might announce at the appropriate moments in the "Young Interne's" scene that the USSR is the only country in the world where Anti-Semitism is a crime against the State.¹⁶

Benjamin's personal worth is challenged because he was born a Jew. He may regain his dignity and that of other victims of prejudice, by joining the workers and fighting against corrupt capitalism. There is no doubt that he has been influenced by communist thought for he says, "Lots of things I wasn't certain of. Many things these radicals say . . . you don't believe

¹⁵Ibid., p. 542.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 545.

theories until they happen to you."¹⁷

Both Benjamin and Phillips take the final step because of contact with revolutionary philosophy. Phillips' conversion is perhaps, the less credible of the two, since he is won over simply by reading the "Communist Manifesto." Benjamin is, however, already sympathetic toward the workers, and has been thinking about the ideas of communism, especially the concept of socialized medicine as practiced in the USSR.

Some attention should be given to that group of characters which is responsible for the awakening and conversion of the protagonists. Edna Mitchell is sharp-tongued and thoroughly materialistic, and is the most vehement of the three. Several of her speeches illustrate this indignation: "And any other hackey that won't fight . . . let them all be ground to hamburger";¹⁸ and, "Get brass toes on your shoes and know where to kick."¹⁹

The Stenographer, who is the only communist in the play, resembles Edna in her hard-boiled attitude toward life. Both have been unduly embittered by the conditions of the time, although the Stenographer shows herself a little more soft-hearted than Edna, when she offers to lend Phillips a dollar. She and Edna both

¹⁷Ibid., p. 542.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 525.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 527.

advocate the "fight or else" attitude. Edna, because she is untutored in the ideology of the "left," advocates fighting back for its own sake, while the Stenographer has read the "Communist Manifesto" and believes it contains all the needed answers. Her militant attitude is spelled out at the close of Episode V:

Steno: I'm saying the meek shall not inherit the earth.

Phillips: No?

Steno: The MILITANT! Come out in the light, Comrade.²⁰

Dr. Barnes is a dignified and respected gentleman. Nowhere in him is the shrewishness of Edna or the hard-boiled wise-cracking of the Stenographer, but in their place is substituted the quality of despair:

That's right . . . that's right. Young, hot, go and do it! I'm a very ancient fossil, but life's ahead of you, Dr. Benjamin, and when you fire the first shot, say, "this one's for old Doc Barnes!" Too much dignity--bullets. Don't shoot vermin! Step on them!²¹

Each of the three persuaders also acts as a voice for Odets in pointing out that the conditions dramatized are the result of a decadent capitalistic system. Edna blames the bosses. She responds to Joe's laissez-faire attitude:

This is the subject, the EXACT SUBJECT! Your boss makes this subject. I never saw him in my life, but he's putting ideas in my head a mile a minute. He's giving your kids that fancy disease called the

²⁰Ibid., p. 540.

²¹Ibid., p. 542.

rickets. He's making a jelly-fish outa you and putting wrinkles in my face. This is the subject every inch of the way.²²

The Stenographer has observed in her position with the producer, the emasculation of people. She tells Phillips as they talk of the castration of Grady's dog, "They [the capitalists] do the same to you, but you don't know it."²³

Dr. Barnes gets at the heart of Benjamin's problem by showing that the rich of America have perverted the ideals of Democracy:

Vermin! See this delicate sensitive hand? Four hundred years to breed that. Out of a revolutionary background! Spirit of '76! Ancestors froze at Valley Forge! What's it all mean! Slops! The honest workers were sold out then, in '76. The Constitution's for the rich men then and now. Slops!²⁴

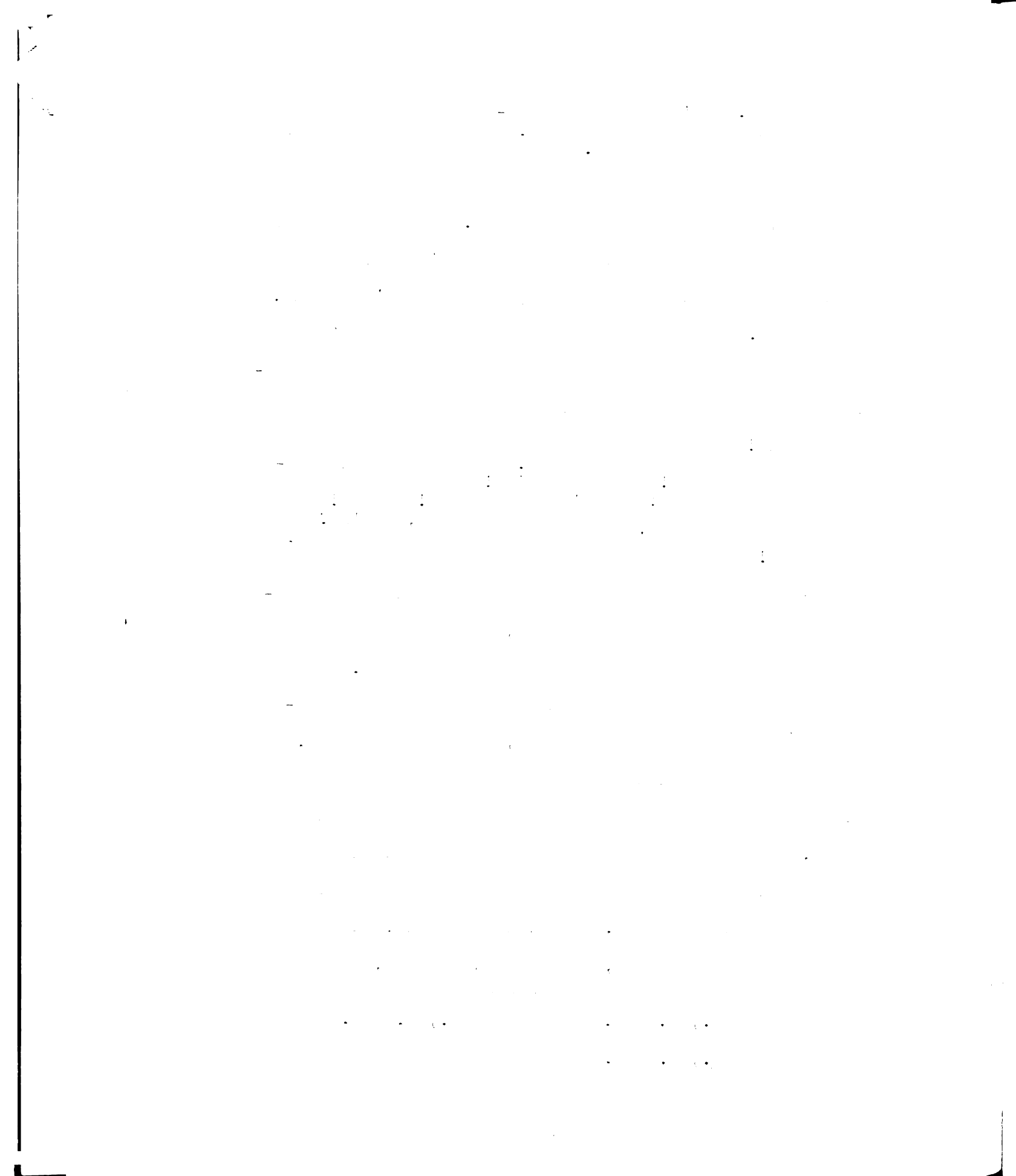
The three function as spokesmen for the author by casting the blame on the capitalists, and insisting that aggression is the only way to fight corruption.

Odets has shown in his treatment of the characters that the rich are all bad, the poor all good. The workers are stifled by a capitalistic system which places more emphasis upon money than upon personal worth. The workers are better people than their wealthy opponents, who are categorically blamed for all the problems of the workers. Edna, for example, blames a boss she has never seen, for hunger, disease, and even

²²Ibid., p. 526.

²³Ibid., p. 539.

²⁴Ibid., p. 542.



for her own moral lapse as she contemplates adultery. Thus, any means of fighting against the rich, whether labeled "red" or not, is desirable. It is not coincidental that the philosophy of the militant worker, advocated by the communists, appears to be the best means, since Odets undoubtedly sees the clash of the characters in terms of a genuine class war.

The awakened, militant workers may not, however, solve their problems as easily as Odets seems to indicate. The strike may, in fact, increase their problems, but Odets avoids this entire line of thought by consistently demonstrating that the worker-heroes will be able to achieve self-respect and personal worth by striking.

Structure

The structure of "Waiting For Lefty" is episodic and cinematic. There are five dramatized episodes, loosely related to one another, yet well integrated. The strike meeting provides a framework for the flashback scenes, the strike committee remaining onstage in a semi-circle during the whole of the play.

Each of the flashbacks is a self-contained unit; none grows directly out of the one preceding it. Odets said he made use of the vaudeville form, and each episode may be thought of as a "speciality number." The stage is used as a plateau, with only a chair or two and a few hand properties; thus no attempt is made to

reproduce a realistic environment for the portrayal of each scene. The characters merely step out of their places into the playing circle and enact the scene. Thus, the physical arrangement of the staging provides a major means of unifying the unrelated segments.

The concept of the production, with short vignettes occurring within a lighted circle, parallels the thematic content of each of the scenes; the characters step from the darkness of fear and oppression to the light of knowledge and commitment. The Stenographer's lines at the end of Episode V, parallel, in dialogue, the conceptual image of the play: "Come out in the light, Comrade."²⁵ Since the use of stage lighting is an important factor in this concept, Odets' staging requirements resemble "Newsboy," which also required a fluid use of light to unify the play. Odets specifies no transition except with light, between some scenes in the play. For example, Episodes II, III, V, and VI are played in this way. However, this is completely acceptable since Odets has established the pattern of the play in the very first Episode, creating a frame of reference for the audience. Joe Mitchell, the subject of the first Episode, introduces himself in a speech before the strikers. The speech has the transition to the flashback built into the dialogue:

²⁵Ibid., p. 540.

My wife made up my mind last week . . . "God," the wife says, "eighty cents ain't money--don't buy beans almost. You're workin' for the company," she says to me, "Joe! you ain't workin' for me or the family no more!" She says to me, "If you don't start . . ."26

The lights fade and Joe and Edna enact the flashback. Here the dialogue provides a smooth segue' to the first Episode. At the end of the scene the author has provided a bridge to return to the strike meeting:

(For a moment Edna stands triumphant. There is a blackout and when the regular lights come up, Joe Mitchell is concluding what he has been saying.)

Joe: You guys know this stuff better than me . . .27

With this careful construction of transitions in the first scene, Odets may be less concerned with them in later scenes, since the pattern has been effectively established.

In his arrangement of the scenes, Odets provides for an alternation of presentational and representational scenes. The labor strike meeting is designed to draw the audience into the meeting by means of speeches made directly to them, and by answers and retorts from "plants" in the audience. Here Odets wishes to reduce aesthetic distance to a minimum. In the flashbacks Odets uses dim lighting to increase aesthetic distance, to provide an atmosphere for

²⁶Ibid., p. 522.

²⁷Ibid., p. 527.

vicarious involvement with the characters' lives.

The Episodes are structured so they bear similarity to one another. All except Episode III, "The Young Hack And His Girl," end on a strong climactic note followed by a quick blackout. Joe ends Episode I by angrily leaving to find Lefty; Episode II shows Miller punching Fayette in the nose; Episode V closes with the Stenographer's militant call to action; and Episode VI ends with Benjamin at the height of his indignation. Thus, each scene repeats the call to action, which is Odets' purpose in writing the play. There is no discernible reason for the order of the scenes, except that the Episodes in the first part of the play, Episodes I-III, are concerned with the workers, and Episodes V and VI are concerned with the professional men. All of the episodes point ahead to the conclusion of the drama, in which the entire meeting of strikers rises up and out of the audience in a surge of anger and emotion.

The scenes in the union meeting are designed to show the conflict of the two groups--the protagonists and the antagonists. They are loosely unified by the presence of the same characters, and by the suspense created by frequent references to the absent Lefty. The first meeting hall scene shows the antagonists in power. Succeeding scenes demonstrate the destruction

of the power of Fatt and his henchmen. The "Labor Spy" Episode, for example, shows the exposé of the company spy, and scores a point in favor of the workers by embarrassing the unscrupulous Harry Fatt. The fact that the exposé is implemented by the contrived coincidence of Clayton's brother in the union hall, seems less annoying in light of the unrealistic framework of the play.

The final scene shows the workers charged to a fever pitch, as Agate, a professional agitator, arouses them. Here the conflict of the two groups is symbolically demonstrated. Fatt orders his gunmen to quiet Agate:

(His speech is broken by Fatt and Gunmen who physically handle him. He breaks away and gets to the other side of stage. The two are about to make for him when some of the committeemen come forward and get in between the struggling parties.)²⁸

Agate concludes the speech by urging the adoption of the communist salute, and is joined by the committeemen. Thus, the repetition of the militant conclusion of each of the Episodes acts as a Bandwagon appeal culminating in the vote to strike. The announcement of the murder of Lefty at the peak of emotional energy, is a melodramatic contrivance. But since it serves to implement a decision which has already been made, it cannot be thought of as a deus ex machina. Rather, it serves to

²⁸Ibid., p. 543.

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Dialogue

The structure of "Waiting For Lefty" has shown a vast improvement over the "agit-prop." Odets' dialogue shows an even greater advance. Where the stick-figure characters of "Newsboy" spouted slogans, Odets' characters speak the language of real people. His forte is reproducing the terse, hard-boiled, humorous, rhythmic dialect of the lower-middle-class New Yorker. An example of Sid's speech illustrates this dialect:

But wait a minute! Don't he come around and say to you--this millionaire with a jazz band--listen Sam or Sid or what's-your-name, you're no good, but here's a chance. The whole world'll know who you are. Yes sir, he says, get up on that ship and fight those bastards who's making the world a lousy place to live in. The Japs, the Turks, the Greeks. Take this gun--kill the slobs like a real hero, he says, a real American. Be a hero.²⁹

Odets' characters all use an impertinent tone. Some examples are: "What's this crap about goin' home to hot suppers?" (Joe); "Tell it to the A & P!" (Edna); "Stop talking bull!" (Joe); and ". . . this pussy-footed rat . . ." (Clayton's brother). The workers have learned to be hard because of the times. Florrie's brother sums it up in a single line, "You gotta be hard as a rock or go under."³⁰

²⁹Ibid., p. 533.

³⁰Ibid., p. 531.

Although Odets reproduces the speech of everyday life, he succeeds in creating many fresh turns of language. A number of these depend upon the use of the simile: "That Wop's got more guts than a slaughterhouse." (Joe); "It's plain as the nose on Sol Feinberg's face." (Joe); "We're stalled like a flivver in the snow." (Edna). Others take the form of a flippant retort. When Joe asks Edna what she has up her sleeve, she responds, "My arm'd be up my sleeve if I had a sleeve to wear." Florrie's response when Sid asks her what she is thinking about is, "The French and Indian War." Miller replies in the same manner when Fayette asks, "Don't you read the papers?" "Nothing but Andy Gump."

Odets also creates certain combinations of words which give the dialogue a fresh, breezy quality: "Red and yellow makes a dirty color, boys." (Fatt); "You still got apples in your cheeks and pins for buttons." (Stenographer); and "Turn your gimlet eyes elsewhere, Doctor." (Barnes).

Odets captures the deeper feelings of his characters as shown in an occasional poetic use of language. In Edna's line, "I only know we're at the botton of the ocean," the hopelessness of their situation is painfully revealed. Florrie and Sid also use poetic language with the same emotional effect. Speaking of her invalid mother, Florrie reveals all

the tension and sadness of her mother's slow death in the line, "She can die in peace instead of looking at the clock on the mantlepiece all day." Later, she tells Sid, "But something wants us to be lonely like that-- crawling alone in the dark." Sid expresses a feeling of longing and frustration, "A guy who wants his baby like you and hot sun in his face!" Dr. Barnes distills a lifetime of placating the hospital trustees in the single line, "In a rich man's country your true self's buried deep."

The dominant image of the play is aggression, as exemplified in the word "fight." This word is used frequently throughout the play. The "fight" image culminates in the slogans, "Working class, unite and fight," and "Fight with us for right," at the end of the play. The action has a cumulative effect also, for the Episodes build in tension as the dialogue builds in emotion toward the aggressive climax:

Agate: . . . HELLO AMERICA! HELLO! WE'RE STORM-
BIRDS OF THE WORKING CLASS. WORKERS OF THE WORLD
. . . OUR BONES AND OUR BLOOD! . . . (To audience)
Well, what's the answer?

All: STRIKE!

Agate: LOUDER!

All: STRIKE!

Agate and others (onstage): AGAIN!

ALL: STRIKE, STRIKE, STRIKE!³¹

The effect of the choral ending is a propaganda Bandwagon appeal. As such, it parallels the Bandwagon appeal which is ingrained in the structure of the play.

Special notice should be taken of the capitalized sections of dialogue. The "agit-props" made extensive use of this technique to signify emotional emphasis.³² Thus the capitalization of "STRIKE" emphasizes the triumphant and militant conclusion. Odets repeats the word three times as the lights black out.

In "Waiting For Lefty," three segments of the action are forensic scenes in which characters are persuaded to act in a prescribed manner. The scenes are the "Joe and Edna" Episode, "The Young Actor" Episode, and Agate Keller's speech to the audience at the end of the play. Each of these scenes accomplishes its persuasion in the same manner; the persuaders belittle the men by suggesting that they lack masculinity. The effect is to add personal insult to the already humiliating nature of their circumstances. Edna makes Joe believe that his attitude of complacency is a result of his lack of masculine aggression. She insults him with: "You gutless piece of baloney," "You're a four-star bust," "You're crawling like a

³¹Ibid., p. 544.

³²Supra, p. 28.

worm," and ". . . when a man knocks you down you get up and kiss his fist." Her respect for her husband is entirely gone, so that she says she is past caring what happens to him:

Joe: Don't you wanna see me alive?

Edna: (after a deep pause) No . . . I don't think I do, Joe. Not if you can lift a finger to do something about it, and don't. No, I don't care.³³

Her attitude is summed up in the words, "Stand up like a man and fight." The implication of the scene is clear; if Joe would strike, Edna would regain her respect for him, and also restore their marriage to a sound sexual basis. She places Joe in a situation which no man could resist.

The Stenographer uses the same approach with Phillips that Edna uses with Joe; however, the Stenographer's attitude is less argumentative. The Stenographer is unable to respect actors, especially Phillips who continues a determined search for any part in any play, just to be on the stage:

But you're fools, all you actors . . . Watch you parade in and out all day. . . . But in six months you'll be like them--putting on an act. Phony strutting "pishers"--that's French for dead codfish! . . . What kind of job is this for an adult man!³⁴

Later, after she has checked on the condition of Grady's

³³Odets, "Waiting For Lefty," p. 525.

³⁴Ibid., p. 537.

wolfhound who is being sterilized, she tells Phillips, "They do the same to you but you don't know it."³⁵

Each of the two women climaxes her remarks with a persuasive action; Edna threatens to leave Joe for an old boy friend, and the Stenographer gives the actor a dime to buy the "Communist Manifesto." Edna's is the more acceptable since the sexual situation of the marriage is clearly shown to be one of the problems of their poverty. The surprising eulogy of the "Communist Manifesto" by the Stenographer, is unprepared for, and seems contrived.

The same manner of insulting the men is used by Agate in the climactic scene of the play. Agate says, "LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, and don't let anyone tell you we ain't got some ladies in this sea of upturned faces! Only they're wearin' pants."³⁶ He goes on to show the results of his humiliation by relating a hypothetical story:

Today, I couldn't wear my union button. The damndest thing happened. When I take the old coat off the wall, I see she's smoking. I'm a sonofagun if the old union button isn't on fire! Yep. The old celluloid was makin' the most god-awful stink: the landlady come up and give me hell! You know what happened? That old union button just blushed itself to death! Ashamed! Can you beat that?³⁷

³⁵Ibid., p. 539.

³⁶Ibid., p. 543.

³⁷Ibid.

Agate's persuasive appeal is capped by the announcement of Lefty's death, which makes the men decide to strike. However, the effect of insulting their masculinity has already angered them.

The last consideration of the dialogue is an examination of the speeches of Harry Fatt. Throughout the play, Fatt attempts to persuade the men not to strike. His appeals are emotional in nature, but they have little effect upon his audience because of his irritating habit of over-stating his case:

What the hell do they [communists] do for you? Pull out and run away when the trouble starts. Give these birds a chance and they'll have your sisters and wives in the whore houses, like they done in Russia. They'll tear Christ off his bleeding cross. They'll wreck your homes and throw your babies in the river. You think that's bunk? Read the papers!³⁸

Fatt's tirade against the communists has the effect of "reverse name-calling," that is, the name-caller is shown to be undesirable. Odets keeps his preachment to a minimum in "Waiting For Lefty," utilizing dialogue in balance with action and characterization to achieve his persuasive purpose.

³⁸Ibid., p. 521.

CHAPTER V

STEVEDORE

Revolutionary Theatres In America

Stevedore was the second production of the Theatre Union, a professional left-wing labor theatre, and the most important propaganda theatre in the United States during the mid-thirties. It was not, however, the first revolutionary theatre to operate in New York City. In 1926 a group of writers that included John Howard Lawson and Michael Gold, formed the Workers Drama League, the first propaganda theatre in New York. It lasted just one season, and produced only one play of some merit, The Biggest Boob In The World.

A year later the group reorganized, and with an endowment of \$100,000 from Otto Kahn, became the New Playwrights Theatre. Among the writers who joined Michael Gold and John Howard Lawson in the New Playwrights Theatre, were Emjo Basshe, Upton Sinclair, Paul Sifton, Francis Farragoh, and John dos Passos. Their aim was a theatre of social protest ... a theatre pledged to the production of plays revolu-

tionary in method and theme.¹ The New Playwrights Theatre was firmly dedicated to the playwright's freedom to express himself in a manner which would not have been acceptable in the commercial theatre:

The New Playwrights announced a program to bring social reality back into the theatre, for freeing the playwright from the fetters of commercial dramatic conventions, for restoring the creator's right to experiment with form and subject matter.²

Among the plays produced by the New Playwrights Theatre were Hoboken Blues, by Michael Gold; The Centuries and Earth, by Emjo Basshe; John Howard Lawson's Loudspeaker; John dos Passos' Airways, Inc.; The Belt, by Paul Sifton; and Singing Jailbirds, by Upton Sinclair. The last two plays attracted the most notice. In 1929, after failing to impress either the labor audience or the theatrical critics, the New Playwrights Theatre discontinued production.

John Gassner pointed out that the New Playwrights Theatre was a theatre for the workers, but not of them,³ which accounted, at least in part, for the

¹John Howard Lawson, "Towards a Revolutionary Theatre," New Theatre (June 1, 1934), 7.

²Ben Blake, The Awakening of the American Theatre (New York: Tomorrow Pub., 1935), p. 11.

³John Gassner, "The One-Act Play in the Revolutionary Theatre," The One-Act Play Today, ed. Wm. Kozlenko (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1938), p. 250.

tepid response from the working-class audience. Perhaps the most typical response to the work of the New Playwrights Theatre was stated by John Mason Brown:

There was . . . a playhouse down in Greenwich Village where . . . those dramatists who used to be referred to laughingly as "The Revolting Playwrights," produced their bitter indictments of Capitalism and Big Business. Few people took them seriously.⁴

The Theatre Union

The Theatre Union was the most successful of the revolutionary theatres. It differed from the New Playwrights Theatre in its emphasis upon reaching the mass laboring audience, rather than upon the production of unusual experimental plays. There were three principles of operation of The Theatre Union:

(1) [To] produce plays that deal boldly with the deep-going social conflicts, the economic, emotional, and cultural problems that confront the majority, whose lives usually are caricatured or ignored on the stage. We do not expect that these plays will fall into the accepted social patterns. This is a new kind of professional theatre, based on the interests and hopes of the great masses of working people.

(2) We have established a low price scale so that masses of people who have been barred by high prices, can attend this theatre. A scale of thirty cents to a dollar and a half (no tax), with more than half the seats priced under a dollar, is bringing thousands of people into the theatre who have never seen a professional play, or who have not gone to the theatre for years.

⁴John Mason Brown, Two On The Aisle (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1935), p. 197.

1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions of the Board of Directors of the Corporation.

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(3) In order to exist we organize our audience through benefit theatre parties and subscribers.⁵

The Theatre Union operated upon the idealistic belief that great numbers of working class people would be attracted to the theatre if ticket prices were low and standards of production were high. The use of professional actors, directors and stage technicians for the production of revolutionary plays was the essential difference between The Theatre Union and workers' theatres. Certainly, the aims of the group were worthy, although perhaps, too unrealistic to suggest a very lengthy stay on the New York theatrical scene.

The Theatre Union debuted in 1933 with Peace on Earth, by Albert Maltz and George Sklar. Peace on Earth was an uncompromising anti-war drama in which a group of pacifists protest the loading of munitions to be exported abroad. A liberal professor is converted to the cause, and loses his life in a riot incited by the pacifists. The Broadway critics objected strongly to the radical propaganda in the play, and for a time, it appeared that the Theatre Union would quickly go the way of its predecessors. However, the Theatre Union was determined to keep the play running until an audience could be recruited. Many seats were given away, while others were sold at reduced rates. Through sustained

⁵Anita Block, The Changing World of Plays and The Theatre (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1939), p. 275.

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effort, Peace on Earth was kept alive for 144 performances, and it appeared that the Theatre Union's first play was a box-office success.

Stevedore, the second production of the Theatre Union, opened December 10, 1934, and ran for ninety five performances. This play, which stressed the need for Negro and white dock workers to join together in labor unions to protect themselves from exploitation, was called the best labor propaganda play yet produced in the American theatre.⁶

With the success of Stevedore, the critics revised their attitudes toward the Theatre Union. Brooks Atkinson concluded his review of the play with these remarks:

If the Theatre Union is capable of stage work of this superior quality, it will quickly make a place for itself in this town, not only as a labor group, but as a vigorous producing organization.⁷

Stage magazine also praised the work of the Theatre Union with its production of Stevedore:

With this production the Theatre Union grows up. It ceases to be a worthy social experiment which

⁶Eleanor Flexner said, "Next to 'Waiting For Lefty,' [Stevedore was] the finest among the earlier militant plays." American Playwrights 1918-1938 (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1938), p. 302. Edmond Gagey said Stevedore was the "best, perhaps, of the American plays [of labor]." Revolution In American Drama (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1947), p. 160.

⁷Brooks Atkinson, Review of Stevedore, The New York Times (April 19, 1934), 33:2.

one can patronize with the adjectives reserved for sophomores of fine promise and insurgent principle. It now takes its place as part of the American theatre.⁸

Stevedore not only showed promise for the Theatre Union as an excellent producing group, but it offered for some, the strongest hope for a people's theatre in America:

With a few ineptitudes, Stevedore suggests that the Theatre Union definitely is a new force to reckon with in the American theatre . . . this organization professes a non-profit making interest in betterment of conditions for our working classes and in providing stage-room for picturization of injustices. If such a selfless idea is sincerely maintained, we may see, before very long, fulfillment of many dreams for a people's theatre in America.⁹

After Stevedore, the Theatre Union began to decline. Its four remaining productions, Black Pit, Mother, Bitter Stream, and Marching Song, were failures. The lack of new plays by American playwrights of suitably revolutionary spirit, was strongly felt by the theatre. Also, continued high standards of production and low price scales, undoubtedly caused financial difficulties. But perhaps the strongest factor was that the working class audience did not support the propaganda theatre. In 1937, the Theatre Union collapsed.

⁸"A Playgoer's Discoveries," Stage, II (June, 1934), 8.

⁹Review of Stevedore, Review of Reviews, LXXXIX (June, 1934), 48.

Analysis of StevedoreSynopsis

Stevedore opens in a dark alley in a residential neighborhood in New Orleans. A married woman and her lover have a bitter quarrel and he strikes her. To protect her reputation the woman says that she was attacked by a Negro. The police immediately arrest several Negroes and try to force a confession from them. Lonnie Thompson is one of the Negroes brought in on suspicion. Lonnie is an outspoken Negro who believes in equal rights. Released for lack of evidence, Lonnie returns to his job at the Oceanic Stevedore Company. In an attempt to protest a shortage in their pay envelopes, Lonnie and his fellow workers challenge Walcott, the dock foreman. Lonnie is beaten because of his disrespectful manner. The police continue to suspect Lonnie, and he is finally arrested, but escapes. The Negroes hide Lonnie at the dock until Lem Morris, a white union organizer offers to hide Lonnie in his house. Meanwhile, angry white mobs roam through the Negro neighborhoods of New Orleans threatening Negroes, and smashing windows. Lonnie escapes the mob in an exciting moment at the end of Act II. As the fear of violence increases, the Negroes band together in hiding. However, Lonnie persuades them that fighting the white mob is the only way to strike out for decency and self-

respect. The Negroes arm themselves with makeshift weapons and prepare to meet the mob in a courtyard. Just as the white mob attacks the Negroes, Lonnie is killed. The Negroes panic, but before they have a chance to retreat, Lem Morris arrives with a large force of men from union headquarters. Together they rout the white mob and kill Mitch, the leader of the terrorists.

Persuasive Purpose

Stevedore is a melodrama which dramatizes the message that Negroes and whites must loose their suspicions of one another, and unite in integrated labor unions for the good of the workers of both races. Although the play is set in the South, the problems of integrating unions was felt throughout the country. Act II, scene i, makes explicit the propaganda message of the play. Lem Morris argues with another worker over the idea of integrating the union:

Lem: Listen, Al. We've had this out before. The only way we can tie up this river front is by organizing these black boys. There are three of them to every white man on these docks. And if you think you're going to pull a strike in two weeks without them, you're crazy. Now what do you want them to do? Stick with us, or scab for Walcott?

Al: They'll scab on you anyway. You can't trust those dirty niggers.

Lem: That's it! That's the stuff! You call them dirty niggers, and they call you low white trash.

If you'd cut that out, if you'd get together and fight the Oceanic Stevedore Company for a change, maybe we'd get somewhere. [*Italics mine.*]

Al: Aw, you're talking through your hat.

Lem: Don't be such a damned fool. You work for the Oceanic Stevedore Company just the same as they do. And every time they get it in the neck, you can be pretty damned sure you're going to get it in the neck, too.¹⁰

In Act II, scene iii, the message is touched on again as Lonnie Thompson is defending integrated unions:

Jim Veal: Yes, you had to go and complain to de boss, Lonnie Thompson.

Lonnie: Dats what I do, Jim Veal.

Jim: Yes, you de boy dat was gwine organize, organize de black race and unite wid de whites.

Lonnie: Dat's right, Jim Veal. And de black man gwine do dat some day.¹¹

The radical nature of the propaganda is shown in two ways: (1) the union agitators are accused of being "Reds" and do not deny it; and (2) the insistence upon violence as a means of carrying out the aim. Lonnie defends Lem when he is called a "Red," and the Negroes are freed from white terrorizing only by fighting to the death. The support of integrated labor unions is a liberal theme, while the method, advocating violence as the only way, is radical.

¹⁰Paul Peters and George Sklar, Stevedore (New York: Covici-Friede, 1934), p. 62.

¹¹Ibid., p. 84.

The Audience

The ideal audience for Stevedore is composed largely of workers, especially those workers involved in labor unions and the problems of unionizing. Ideally, they would support any action of labor unions without question.

The audience will include both white and Negro workers, with many Negro non-union members present, since this is the group at which the message of the play is aimed.

Although it is not essential that these workers be communists, it is necessary that they believe the Party is on the side of the workingman.

Characterization

An examination of the numerous characters in the play shows that they fall into three distinct groupings: (1) the Negro dock-workers, with Lonnie Thompson as their leader; (2) the white union members, with Lem Morris as their leader (both of these groups function as protagonists); and (3) the prejudiced whites who advocate support of the status quo, and are opposed to both the Negro dock-workers and the white union group. This group is designed to receive the antipathy of the audience, and is therefore, the antagonist.

The sharp division of characters, as outlined above, would suggest a rather obvious conflict between

the two groups, however, the authors have added complexity to the conflict by placing one member in each group who rightfully belongs in an opposing group.

The first two groups, the Negro dock-workers and the white union group, overlap in the characters of Lem Morris and Lonnie Thompson. Lem is the leader of the union group, but is so intimately involved with the Negro group, that he may be thought of as a member of that group. Lonnie Thompson is the leader of the Negro dock-workers and also a member of the union. Through the dual function of these characters, the two groups of protagonists become one larger group, although the boundaries of the two segments remain rather rigid. The permanent union of both segments into one solid group, is the main concern of the action of the play. This is not accomplished until the conclusion of the play, and then is implied rather than shown. The conditions favorable to joining these segments, are present as the play ends.

An even more interesting use of overlapping characters is the presence of one member of the antagonist group in each of the protagonist groups. In the Negro group, Jim Veal upholds the status quo; he is content in his position of subservience to the white man, and is strongly opposed to the integration of unions. By race, he has identity with the Negro group,

but by belief he becomes a part of the white prejudiced group.

Veal's counterpart in the union group is Al Regan. Al is opposed to the integration of labor unions, a stand which is incompatible with that of the union. During the course of the play he is ejected from the union and reappears as a member of the lynch mob in Act III.

Since the authors are more interested in the nature of these three groups rather than in individual members, an understanding of group characterization is important to the study of the play. The antagonist group will be dealt with first. This group is rather loosely held together, and contains more characters than the other two groups. However, this does not add complexity since each of the members is an exact duplicate of the others. A speech by Walcott, the dock foreman, characterizes the antagonist group:

That god damn shine's been hanging around with Reds, that's where he gets those notions! Organizing! Equality! Christ, those coons are just running riot! This country won't be fit to live in any more. Look at all the rapes they've been pulling in this town. Look what they did to that Reynolds woman. And did they catch anybody for it? No! Where the hell are the cops? By God, I'm going to call up Severson. (He dials with angry motions as he talks.) If they don't do something about it, I'll organize a posse and go after them myself. It's high time those niggers were put in their place. (Into phone) Severson?¹²

¹²Ibid., p. 40.

One characteristic of this group is the use of profanity and vulgarity. "God damn," "Christ," "Where the hell," "By God," although mild enough, suggest inferior intelligence and ideals. It definitely helps to characterize the group as undesirable. But even more important is the consistent belief that the Negro is preoccupied with sex. Walcott's first thought is of the rape of white women by Negroes. Another example of this attitude is shown in Act II, scene ii, in which the white mob, led by Mitch, terrorizes the Negroes. One of the men begins molesting a young, attractive Negro girl, while Mitch, himself, makes a vulgar proposition to Binnie, the proprietress:

Binnie: Pick on somebody yo' own size, why don't you?

Mitch: Like you, huh. (Looking her over lecherously.) Um-m, I'll bet you're a hot mama. Think I'm your size, brown sugar? (The white men laugh.)

Binnie: No, you couldn't handle me. You ain't man enough.

Mitch: Say, you know what we do to nigger wenches where I come from? Push them over, that's all.¹³

Here the double standard with regard to Negroes is shown. While it is unthinkable that a Negro man and a white woman would be sexually intimate, it is perfectly acceptable for a white man to seduce a Negress.

A second characteristic of the antagonist group

¹³Ibid., p. 90.

is its constant reference to Negroes as "shine," "coon," and "nigger," and Walcott at one time, calls Lonnie a "black son-of-a-bitch." These colloquialisms and profanity are consistently found in the speech of each member of the group.

A further earmark of this group is the disregard of the Negro as an individual. They are always thought of as a group. Thus the action of one Negro implicates all Negroes. The frequent use of "they" in Walcott's speech clearly indicates that he regards the Negro as a group rather than as an individual. It is interesting to note in Walcott's speech, that he begins with a specific accusation of Lonnie, then abruptly shifts to "they," accusing all Negroes.

A last consideration of the group is that its members occupy positions of authority, and uphold one another in maintaining a white power structure in the South. Walcott is the foreman at the dock; a police sergeant, a detective, and another policeman, use their positions of authority to frighten the Negro into subservience. They are not above using physical force to accomplish this. Perhaps this is best illustrated when Walcott knocks Lonnie down for "sassing" him.

Since it is the objective of the playwrights to convince the Negro workers that they can successfully fight against prejudice and tyranny only with the help



of the union, they must characterize the white union group as honorable. One of the most important ways is to show them to be without prejudice. Since the aim of the union is to integrate, the members are sympathetic with Negroes. They already work closely with Negroes in preparing literature to distribute to the workers, and agree that the proposed organizational meeting be turned into a protest meeting over the framing of Lonnie Thompson for rape. This attitude of respect for Negroes is shown most dramatically in Act II, scene i. Al Regan objects to integration, and he is forcibly thrown out of the union for expressing his belief:

Lem: There's no Jim Crow in this union, and you knew it when you joined up.

Al: All right, then go ahead! Help that rape nigger. Distribute your goddamned leaflets. But you're not going to rope me in on it. (He seizes the leaflets and throws them on the floor.)

Marty: What the--

Lem: Pick 'em up.

Al: Who says so?

Lem: Pick 'em up.

Al: The hell I will.

Lem: Then get out of here. Go on, get out! (He pushes Al out.)¹⁴

¹⁴Ibid., p. 63.

The union group is characterized largely through Lem Morris. His function is to prove to the Negroes that the union is sincere in its promises to help them. Throughout Act II and III, Lem hovers in the background, helping where he can. He gives Lonnie a hiding place in his own room, and he agrees to use his union members to help the Negroes in their battle at the end of the play. He is described by the authors as "a simple, rugged white longshoreman of about forty. . . ."15 He is energetic, kind, and perhaps, the most intelligent person in the play. But the authors are careful to show that Lem is not too refined. He uses profanity occasionally, but in this case the profanity shows that Lem is a virile man. He is not afraid to fight, and the incident in ejecting Al Regan from the union hall serves just as much to characterize Lem, as to demonstrate a point.

In spite of the fact that Lem possesses these features, he somehow seems bland. Perhaps it is because the two qualities mentioned are all the audience is permitted to see of Lem. His character is firmly established in Act I, scene i, the first time he appears in the play, and thereafter, no further aspects of his nature are revealed. Lem never makes it known why he is so dedicated to the union, or how he has managed to

¹⁵Ibid., p. 57.

survive in the face of white objections. Lem never discusses the moral issue of prejudice, but rather regards integration as an advantage for the union. Through the character of Lem Morris, the union is pictured as "all good." Lem is little more than a puppet, used by the authors to demonstrate to the audience that the unions are sincere about integration.

The group of Negro dock-workers is the focal group, and the most complex in the play. There is a stronger attempt to differentiate between individuals, even though the authors rely almost solely upon physical types for contrast. These types are indicated as the group enters for the first time:

(A group of Negroes from the wharf enters. Blacksnake Johnson is a large, dynamic, energetic Negro; Joe Crump, awkward and slow; Rag Williams, small, vivacious and chattering; Jim Veal, sullen and lean; Bobo Valentine, a flashy type; and Angrum, an indolent boy.)¹⁶

Each is further typed by his name which suggests a personality stereotype. Blacksnake Johnson embodies the dynamic virility of the Negro; Rag Williams, their good-natured love of dancing and joking; Joe Crump, their slowness; Bobo Valentine, their love of flashy clothes and women; and Angrum, their shiftlessness. It is obvious, from this limited treatment of the Negroes, that the authors are more interested in the

¹⁶Ibid., p. 25.

group, than in individual character development.

Of the Negroes, Lonnie Thompson is given the most opportunity to act, and therefore the best opportunity to show development. However, he too, is given a one-dimensioned personality. He is characterized as an angry Negro full of hatred for whites. A sampling of a few of his speeches clearly shows his indignation:

God damn dem anyhow. What dey think I am? Do I look like some kind of animal? Do I look like somebody who'd jump over a back fence and rape a woman?

What right dey got to treat us dat way? Line up, nigger. Get back in yo' cage, nigger!

I think of dat, Sam, and I just burn up inside. Dey don't treat us like human folks, Sam. We just dogs to kick around.¹⁷

Well, here one black man ain't satisfied being just a good nigger. What de sense of it? What it bring you? You wo'k like a mule, dey cheat you on pay, and all you can do is hush up and be a good nigger. Well, by God, I ain't gwine hush up. I gwine to Walcott and tell him we work twenty-four hours and we want to get paid for it.¹⁸

Lonnie's anger is directed not only at whites, but at the members of his own group as well. Throughout the play he tries to mobilize the Negroes to fight for their rights:

Sho, dat's right. Forget it, forget it! Let'em cheat you and rob you and work you all night. What do you care? Black man just made to be cheated and stepped on all de time.¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 30.

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He is ridiculed by his friends, which serves only to intensify his disgust:

Bobo: Come on, folks. Listen to Black Jesus. He gwine to tell you how to solve de problems of de whole colored race.

Jim Veal: Dat nigger think he as good as the white folks.²⁰

Lonnie's will, in conflict with the white power group, creates a repetitious pattern of action in which he is continually subdued by the whites. In Act I, he speaks disrespectfully to the police sergeant and is reprimanded; in the dock foreman's office, he is knocked down for antagonizing Walcott. The upshot is that Lonnie is arrested for the alleged rape of Florrie Reynolds, merely because he is an outspoken Negro.

Lonnie's will, in conflict with his own race, provides the framework for his most important function in the play. Since Lonnie already advocates a policy of aggressiveness, and gets support from the union, it is his purpose to convince the rest of the Negroes to emulate him. He succeeds in marshalling them to protest a shortage of two hours pay, and convinces them in the last act of the play, that violence is the only way to fight violence.

The authors characterize Lonnie completely in Act I, scene iii; no further development of his character is shown after that. This method was also

²⁰Ibid.

employed to characterize Lem Morris, as was noted earlier. Since the major characters are entirely developed early in the play, it forces the authors into a repetitious pattern. This pattern will be more fully discussed in the following section dealing with structure.

There is a third character who is of special interest in the study of the propaganda technique of the play. This character is Binnie, the proprietress of the lunchroom where the Negro dock-workers gather. At first, it appears that she functions to furnish comic relief, for her good-humored banter provides laughter. But a closer look shows that she becomes the "conversion figure" of Stevedore.

In the first act of the play she clearly sides with the group of dock-workers who believe in preserving peace by obeying the whites:

Lonnie: Dat's de whole trouble wid de black man. Always crawling, crawling on his belly.

Binnie: Well, crawling on yo' belly's better dan hanging by yo' neck.²¹

Later in the play, she accepts Lonnie's point of view. The change occurs when a white mob terrorizes the Negroes gathered in Binnie's lunchroom. After they have smashed the window, Binnie remarks, "De supreme white man! Ain't dey brave."²² Her speeches from

²¹Ibid., p. 25.

²²Ibid., p. 81.



this point onward, take on the indignant tone of Lonnie's speech.

Binnie's conversion is shown most strongly at the end of the play, when armed with an old pistol, she joins the men fighting Mitch's mob. The "reward" for her conversion, is that she shoots Mitch during the course of the fight. Binnie is the only character to show a perceptible change during the play. This change is a direct result of the harassment of the white mob, and is demonstrated in action as well as speech. She exemplifies the new-found strength in conversion from a position of subservience to that of militant action.

Structure

The authors are more interested in creating sharply-delineated situations than in a logical progression of cause-to-effect. A de-emphasis of plot development allows the authors to move the action as their purpose directs them. An examination of the structure of each of the situations, reveals that every scene in the play, with the exception of Act II, scene ii, builds to a sharp climax and is followed by a blackout. The first scene of the play serves as an example. The curtain opens upon a bitter argument between Florrie Reynolds and her lover, Bill Larkin. Bill beats her, and her screams arouse the neighbors. Since Florrie is married, she wishes to protect her

reputation, and hysterically stammers that the attack was made by a Negro:

Florrie: Somebody just jumped out of the dark and grabbed me.

Neighbors: Good God!
Did you see who it was?
Who was it, Mrs. Reynolds?

Florrie: It was--it was--(She breaks into sobs.)

Freddie: Who was it? Who did it?

Florrie: It was (weeping desperately) a nigger!

BLACK OUT²³

The shock of her lie startles the audience. No further development of the situation is given. Each succeeding scene is a variation of this form. A sharp climax signifies a completed unit and the scene following begins in another situation. The advantage of using a series of situations or scene units, is that each succeeding climax increases the tension of the play.

The episodic nature of the play (there are ten scenes in eight different locales) presents a major difficulty--that of creating effective transitions between scenes. The authors of Stevedore are aware of the difficulty. As a means of providing transitions between some scenes, they have made use of sound effects. A police car radio, heard in the darkness, acts as a transition between scenes i and ii, and scenes iv and v of Act I. It is admirably

²³Ibid., p. 15.

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used between scenes i and ii. After Florrie's hysterical accusation, the lights black out and the following is heard:

Voice: Calling car 34. Calling car 34. Woman attacked at Poidras and Magazine Streets. Pick up all suspicious Negroes in neighborhood. Calling car 34. Calling car 34. Woman attacked at Poidras and Magazine Streets. Pick up all suspicious Negroes in neighborhood. Calling car 34. Calling car 34--(The voice fades out. A telephone bell rings. Light comes up on a room in a police station.)²⁴

The logical use of a police car radio after the alleged attack serves as a good transition to the scene in the police station. The device is less effectively used between scenes iv and v. At the close of scene iv, Walcott has just punched Lonnie, and is making an angry phone call to the police:

(In the dark an auto horn, then the voice of the police car radio: "Calling all cars above Jackson Avenue. Renew search for Reynolds case assailant. Pick up all suspicious Negroes. Renew search for Reynolds case assailant. Pick up all suspicious Negroes. Renew search for Reynolds case--" (Ship whistles and wharf sounds. Then a Negro voice singing wearily.)²⁵

The police call radio returns to the plot thread of the alleged rape of Florrie Reynolds after a digression in scenes iii and iv.

A second use of sound for transition between scenes occurs between scene ii and iii of Act I, and ii and iii of Act II. Here the sound of a mournful

²⁴Ibid., p. 16.

²⁵Ibid., p. 41.

blues tune is heard over the radio. Both of the scenes following the transition occur in Binnie's lunchroom. In this case, the blues song does not help establish locale but does succeed in suggesting the mood of the scenes.

Although the technique of sound for transition is not consistently used throughout the play, it does serve, when used, as a *segue* to minimize the abrupt shifts in locale, and to cover needed changes in setting.

The slender plot line helps to make the scenes seem less isolated. Act I uses scenes i, ii, and part of iii to introduce the plot line and Lonnie Thompson. However, in the latter half of scene iii and in the entirety of scene iv, the plot line is abandoned abruptly as Lonnie leads the Negroes to Walcott to recover two hours' pay. Scene v again returns to the plot thread as Lonnie is arrested for the "rape." This digression serves to introduce Lonnie's function in the propaganda purpose of the play--to persuade the Negroes to band together and fight for their rights. Scene v of Act I unites the plot and theme lines introduced in Act I, for Lonnie very nearly persuades the Negroes to attack the white mob, and Lonnie is arrested for the rape.

Act II opens with the scene in union headquarters, and states the theme of the play. The scene

represents a momentary digression, then returns to the plot thread as Lonnie's escape from the police is revealed.

Scenes ii and iii are directly concerned with Lonnie's situation, and the lynch mob makes its appearance onstage. Both scenes are repetitious in structure. In scene ii, Lonnie makes his escape again just at the moment of discovery. In scene iii he is nearly captured a third time, but makes his escape.

In Act III the plot line and thematic lines are united. In the first scene, at a makeshift funeral for Sam Oxley, Lonnie succeeds in persuading the Negroes to fight the lynch mob. The funeral serves as a device for gathering all the Negroes together. In this scene, Lonnie's function in the propaganda purpose of the play is fulfilled. With the assurance of Lem Morris that the union will provide support, the preparation is complete for the climax of the play.

In scene ii the tension reaches its highest point, as the battle between the Negroes and the mob is shown in action. The scene makes use of two melodramatic contrivances: the death of Lonnie, and the arrival of Lem's men as a deus ex machina to resolve the conflict. Just as the Negroes have reached a fever pitch, Lonnie is killed by a shot from the mob. His death comes as a surprise, for no preparation is made for it, and it is somewhat confusing in view of the

fact that he had escaped three times previously. A closer look shows that his death is a necessary agent to the working out of the propagandist's message. When Lonnie is killed the Negroes panic, and for a moment, it appears that they will retreat. However, this indcision is resolved when Lem Morris and the union men arrive to revive the spirits of the Negroes, and help them to triumph over the white mob. The coincidental timing of the arrival of the men helps to retain suspense to the very last moment, and is necessary to prove the thesis of the play. Scene ii provides an undeniably exciting climax to the play.

Since it has already been established that the authors of Stevedore are interested in the clash of groups, some discussion of the structure of the play as it affects the groups, is necessary. Act I serves to introduce and characterize both the white prejudiced group and the Negro dock-workers. The condition for the conflict of the groups is presented; the protagonists are in a position of complete subordination to the antagonists.

Act II introduces and characterizes the union group. It further demonstrates the superiority of the antagonists as the lynch mob terrorizes the Negroes. The antagonist group reaches its highest point of dominance, while the position of the protagonists is at its lowest.

Act III shows a reversal of the positions as the protagonists triumph over their opposition. Thus, the play achieves a satisfying ending. All that remains to be accomplished is for the Negro workers and the union group to unite permanently. Although this is not demonstrated, the play ends with all conditions favorable.

Dialogue

The language employed by the playwrights attempts to capture the speech of everyday life, with its humorous moments as well as its serious ones. The use of humor tempers the edge of seriousness in some scenes. Scene iii of Act I uses humor to balance the tone of indignation in Lonnie's speeches. Bobo Valentine tires of the talk of being cheated in their pay envelopes, and changes the mood:

Bobo: Sho' forget it! Forget it! De hell wid Walcott! Enjoy yo'self. Dat's what you hyar fo'. Good eats, good clothes, and loving womans--dem's my principles. (He reaches over the counter and smacks Binnie across the buttocks.) Ain't dat right, sugar?

Binnie: Keep yo' hands off, jelly-bean.²⁶

In scene v, the Negroes are again engaging in desultory talk during lunch hour on the docks. After the serious theme of the rape is touched on, Bobo again introduces

²⁶Ibid., p. 29.

humor:

Rag Williams: What you doing upstairs wid dat Phyllis?

Bobo: What de hell you think I doing upstairs wid dat Phyllis?²⁷

Rag Williams, who frequently chants improvised doggerel, introduces humor as the Negroes tease Jim Veal:

Negroes: Watch out!
He going to eat you up alive.
He's a wild man.

Rag Williams (Clapping his hands and chanting):
Jim Veal, he a fighting man,
Do his fighting on his can.²⁸

It is important to note three things about the use of humor: (1) it is not used later in the play when the mood becomes entirely serious; (2) although humor is frequently employed, none of the scenes is entirely comic. The situations dramatized are always serious; (3) Lonnie Thompson remains consistently dour in the play, and never engages in lighter conversation.

Another touch which adds realism in the dialogue is the use of profanity. It is interesting to note how the authors make use of a "double standard" of vulgarity. It is used to characterize the antagonists, suggesting ignorance and stupidity. In Lem's case, however, the profanity showed him to be a rugged, masculine figure. In Lonnie's case the profanity is also justified as a means of expressing his indignation.

²⁷Ibid., p. 42.

²⁸Ibid., p. 46.

A characteristic of the dialogue is the use of Name-calling. It is most often employed by the members of the rejected group. The phrase, "nigger-lover," or "god damn nigger-lover," is used ten times to describe Lem Morris. The effect of the Name-calling does not discredit Lem, but has the reverse effect of making the name-caller appear undesirable. Lem succeeds in making the term a compliment:

Nigger-lover! We've been working day and night to build up this union. If we're ever going to get anywhere--if we're ever going to get a decent living wage, it's going to be through this union. And if fighting for this union makes me a nigger-lover, all right, that's what I am.²⁹

Lem is also called a "Red," and a "Red bastard," in the play. Although it is never established that Lem is a communist, the communists and sympathizers in the audience would not care. It would, in fact, make him appear harrassed by "reactionaries."

Name-calling is the major means by which new characters are placed in their proper groups. Since the play changes locale frequently, many new characters appear in each scene. A reference to the Negro in one of the common slang terms serves to place the character in the rejected group with no further explanation needed. A good example is shown in Act I, scene v, when a detective is brought in to arrest Lonnie:

Lonnie: Wait a minute. You can't arrest me dat way.

²⁹Ibid., p. 62

Detective: What do you want, nigger? A warrant?

Lonnie: You can't arrest me dis way.

Detective: Don't pull any funny stuff on me, you black bastard! ³⁰

The detective's allegiance is immediately shown, making it clear that Lonnie will not receive fair treatment from the police.

The last consideration of the dialogue of Stevedore is an examination of the forensic scenes in the play. There are three of these scenes and in each Lonnie Thompson convinces his fellow Negroes to arm themselves and fight against the white prejudiced group.

In Act I, scene iii, Lonnie persuades the Negroes to go to the dock foreman to right a discrepancy in their pay. The Negroes scoff at first, realizing that this might get them into trouble and cause them to lose their jobs. Lonnie begins by making an appeal to a sense of fairness:

Well, here one black man ain't satisfied in being just a good nigger. What de sense in it? What it bring you? You wo'k like a mule, dey cheat you on pay, and all you can do is hush up and be a good nigger. Well, by God, I ain't gwine hush up. I gwine to Walcott and tell him we work twenty-four hours and we want to get paid for it.³¹

Here Lonnie transfers the pay discrepancy, which he assumes is a deliberate attempt to cheat the Negroes,

³⁰Ibid., p. 52

³¹Ibid., p. 31.

as behavior characteristic of all the "white bosses." A second appeal is that the Negro who remains quiet in the face of injustice, has little self-respect.

The persuasion closes with a Bandwagon appeal:

Blacksnake: You go and I go wid you!

Jim Veal: You go and you lose yo' job.

Lonnie: We don't lose no job if we all stick together.

Joe Crump: Lonnie's right. Why shouldn't we get what's coming to us?

Sam: We got a right to ask. Dey can't fire us fo' dat, I guess.

Blacksnake: Come on, let's go.

Lonnie: We get de rest of de boys on de wharf, too.

Rag Williams: Come on, Joe Crump. You coming ain't you?

Joe Crump: Well, I don't know. You gwine, Sam?

Sam: Reckon so, if everybody go.³²

The persuasive effectiveness is aided by three conditions: (1) the appeals are made in simple terms which are understandable to the Negro workers; (2) Blacksnake Johnson is already in sympathy with the idea, and therefore helps Lonnie to convince the others by being the first to concur; (3) the emphasis on safety in numbers is part of a repeated appeal made throughout the play.

³²Ibid.

In Act I, scene v, Lonnie again persuades the Negroes to act. Here the situation is more serious, for he advocates fighting the white mob led by Mitch and Pons. The pattern of persuasion is exactly the same as scene iii. Lonnie begins by emotion-charged anger, determined to retaliate against an attack upon him as he returned from a union meeting. The Negroes object because they are afraid of harm. Lonnie then makes a transference of the actions of the white group to "white bosses" in general, and appeals to the Negroes' sense of equality and dignity:

(Lashing out at them) Look at 'em. Look at 'em, standing dar. De white boss spit in deir faces. De white boss make slaves out of dem--cheat 'em--rob 'em--laugh at 'em. And dey just stand dar. "Beat me some mo' white boss. Sho', I like it. Beat me some mo' !" Lawd, when de black man gwine stand up? When he gwine stand up proud like a man? (A silence)³³

This speech initiates a Bandwagon appeal which is again begun by Blacksnake:

Blacksnake: I gwine cross de viaduct wid Lonnie.

Joe Crump: I gwine, too.

Rag Williams: Me, too. Come on, Lonnie. Come on, men.

Men: Let's go.

Us'll show dat Mitch's gang.

Let's clean up de street wid dat white trash.

(A few dissent)

Dey kill you, man.

Dat's suicide, sho's you bo'n.

³³Ibid., p. 48.

Lonnie: (Picking up the crowbar again, shouting)
Arm yo'self, men! Get yo' crowbars, men! (A
scramble for weapons; shovels, crowbars, clubs,
canthooks.)

Men: Whar my axhandle?
Give me dat shovel, Big Boy.
I'se gwine use dis canthook.
Man, just look at dat club (whizzing it down)
U-umph!

Rag Williams: (Shrieking at the top of his lungs)
Yip! Look out dar, you Mitch's gang. Rag Williams
and de wharf hands coming! (With a grunt he spears
his canthook into the wharf; shrieking, he leaps
after it. The blood of the longshoremen is up.
They raise their weapons roaring.)

Negroes: De wharf hands coming!
De wharf hands coming!³⁴

At this moment the whistle blows to signal a return to
work, and the Negroes falter, then return to their jobs.

Act III, scene i, is the scene most given to
preachment. Lonnie convinces the Negroes that fighting
the white mob is the only way to meet the situation.
In the scene, Lonnie finds his most eloquent persuasive
voice. He begins with a less-impassioned mood than in
his previous attempts. He points out that running away
does not solve the problem. It is, in his opinion,
lower than animal behavior:

The lowest animal in the field will fight fo' its
home. And all you can think of doing is running.
And supposing you do run away? Whar you gwine go
to? Baton Rouge? Mississippi? Is it gwine to be
any different dar? Dey gwine treat you better dar?
You gwine find jobs? You gwine get yo'self a home?
Nassuh. You got black skin. You can't run away
from dat. Make no difference whar you are, dey

³⁴Ibid., p. 49.

hound you just de same.³⁵

.
Nassuh, you can't run away from yo'self, black
man. You been running away fo' two hundred years.³⁶

After this introduction, Lonnie again makes a transfer of the cruelty of the white mob to the "white boss," and reiterates his major appeal to the sense of human dignity:

Every time de white boss crack de whip you turn and run. You let him beat you, you let him hound you, you let him work you to death. When you gwine say: "You can't do dat. I'm a man. I got de rights of a man. I gwine fight like a man." (Silence.)³⁷

Jim Veal objects because the conditions of white domination can't be that easily changed, and because it only means more trouble for the Negro. The preacher objects because violence is against the law of God. Lonnie's response is to ignore the theological issue and appeal once again, to the greater issue of injustice:

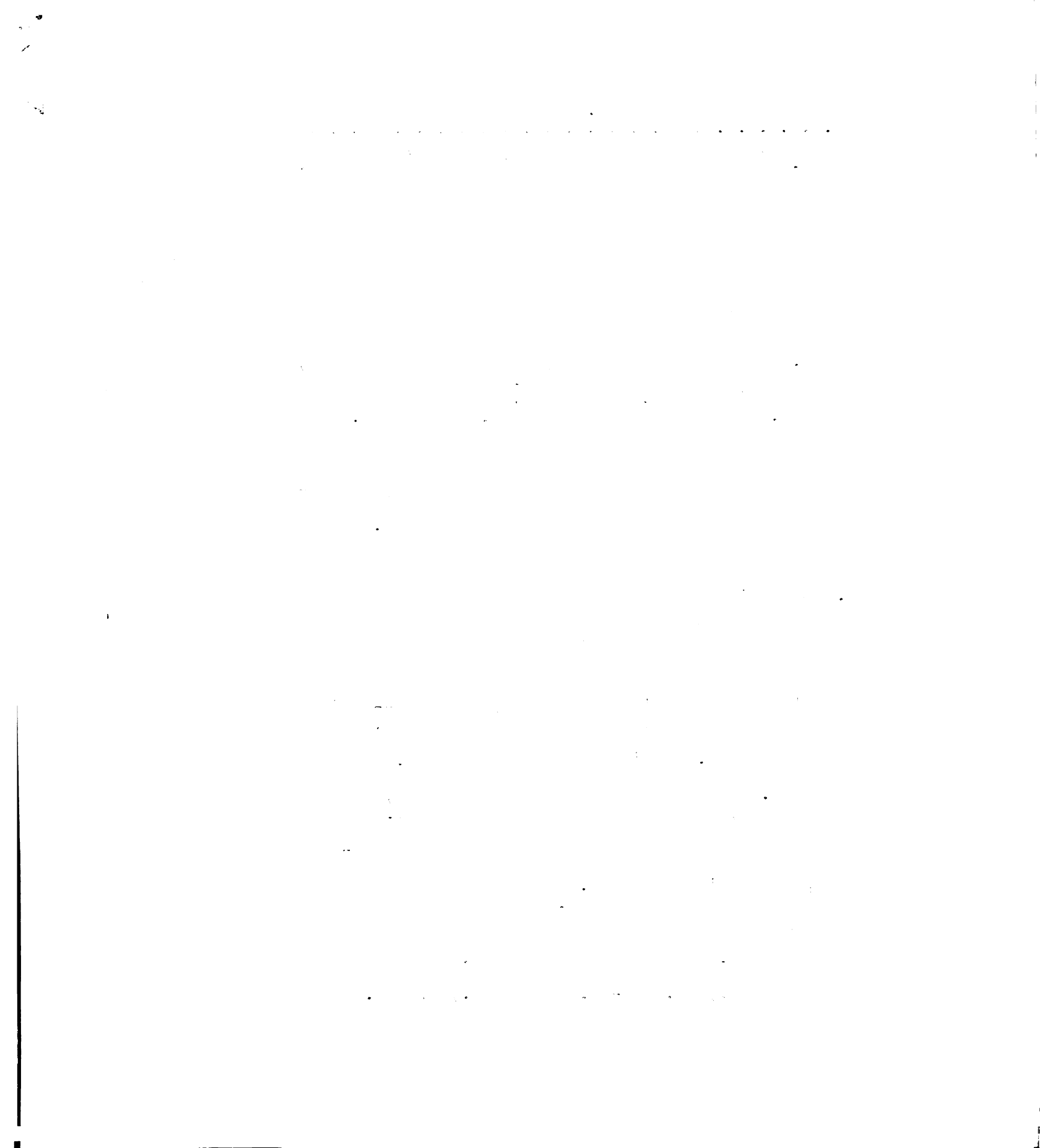
Ain't no peace fo' de black man, preacher--ain't never gwine to be, till he fight to get it. Jim Veal say you try to organize and you run smack into trouble. Sho' you run into trouble. Why? We try to organize to get ourselves a decent living. And what happen? Dey beat us up, dey arrest us, shoot us, burn down our houses. Why? Why? Why dey do dat? Because dey just plain mean? Because dey want to give you pain? Because dey like to see you dangling from a tree? No, dat ain't de reason. De reason is dey want to keep de black man down.³⁸

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 106-07.

³⁸Ibid., p. 108.



The authors structure a sequence of statements by Lonnie echoed by the Negroes in a chant. The cumulative effect builds emotional tension and heightens the fever for battle:

Lonnie: And why dey want to keep de black man down?
Because dey want to use him fo' de hardest jobs dey got.

Negroes: Dat's right.
You said it.

Lonnie: Dey want him to work for nothing.

Negroes: Dat's what dey do.
Work de life out of you.

Lonnie: Dey want him satisfied wid a crust of bread.

Negroes: Dat's de living truth.
You right dar.
Starve you to death.

Lonnie: Dat's why dey keep him down. Dat's why dey burn and lynch him. And dat's why we got to stand up against it. We got to show 'em dey can't do it no mo'.

Negroes: Yes, Lawd.
Amen! Hallelujah!

Lonnie: We got to show 'em we won't live dat way no mo'.

Negroes: Nassuh!
Glory to God!³⁹

Just as Lonnie has the Negroes highly excited, he emphasizes that Lem Morris will stand with them. He then makes a direct appeal to individuals to commit themselves:

³⁹Ibid., pp. 108-09.

We can't wait fo' de judgment day. We can't wait till we dead and gone. We got to fight fo' de right to live. Now--now--right now. We don't stand alone hyar. We ain't just a handful. Lem Morris' union, dey stand behind us, too. Dey hold a meeting dis afternoon and dey say dey gwine help us. Now what you gwine do? Put yo' tail between yo' legs and run away? Or are you gwine stand up and fight? You--Rag Williams--you gwine fight fo' yo' home or are you gwine run away?

Rag Williams: I ain't gwine run away.⁴⁰

The Bandwagon appeal is successful as the Negroes all agree to fight:

Negroes: I fight too.
Me too.
Me too.

Binnie: We all fight. De women too.

Bertha: Glory to God, we ain't gwine leave our homes.

Lonnie: All right. Den you all gwine take yo' stand?

Negroes: Yes.

Lonnie: You all gwine stick together and fight!

Negroes: Yes.

Lonnie: Ain't none of you gwine run away!

Negroes: NO!!

Bertha: Shame on him who runs away.

Binnie: May God rot his bones.⁴¹

The persuasion is aided by two important conditions: (1) previous to the appeals the Negroes were already emotionally aroused by singing spirituals;

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 109.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 110.

(2) the Negroes have their backs to the wall and are forced to make a choice.

A summary of the persuasive scenes in Stevedore shows that the major appeal is made to oppression of Negroes, and a sense of human dignity. A transfer of brutal behavior from the whites to the "white bosses," is made in each case. Here the authors wish the audience to associate the acts of violence of the white mob with whites in general. After a reinforcement of "safety in numbers" has been accomplished, using Lem Morris and the union, a successful Bandwagon campaign is initiated which carries the Negroes toward the goal of violent retaliation.

CHAPTER VI

THEY SHALL NOT DIE

Introduction

The most notable cause célèbre of the 1930's was the Scottsboro case, upon which John Wexley based his play, They Shall Not Die. The case concerned nine Negro boys who were sentenced to death for the alleged rape of two white women. The convictions were considered a miscarriage of justice arising out of racial prejudice in the South. Because of an international protest campaign, riots were staged in many parts of the world; people were killed; letters and telegrams of protest deluged the Governor of Alabama and the U.S. Supreme Court; and nearly a million dollars was collected to provide a legal defense for the Negroes.¹ The Scottsboro case became synonymous with racial prejudice and all its attendant injustices.

They Shall Not Die was produced by The Theatre Guild, February 21, 1934. It ran sixty-two performances, and critical reaction was generally favorable.

¹A thorough presentation of the background of the case is given in Arthur Garfield Hays, Trial By Prejudice (New York: Covice-Friede Pub., 1933).

Brooks Atkinson praised the work as, "the best propaganda play we have had in years."² George Brandt, writing in the Review of Reviews, stated, "Let us say now, They Shall Not Die is magnificent drama, building steadily in its impact from early jail and prison scenes to thundering culmination in the courtroom."³ And John Mason Brown felt that John Wexley had worked the "ugly facts of the Scottsboro case into a stirring melodrama."⁴

The Theatre Guild And

Propaganda Drama

The production of They Shall Not Die by the Theatre Guild was part of a varied program which included other examples of protest drama. Himmelstein points out that this interest in social plays was due largely to the condition created by the Depression:

After the crash of 1929 the Guild . . . [produced] more dramas of social significance--an increase caused by the increasing awareness of the social, political and economic changes brought about by the Depression. The Theatre Guild was keeping up with the times.⁵

²Brooks Atkinson, "Seminar Bulletin," The New York Times, IX (Jan. 12, 1936), 1:1.

³George Brandt, "Manhattan Offers," Review of Reviews, LXXXIX (April, 1934), 48.

⁴John Mason Brown, Two On The Aisle (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1938), p. 196.

⁵Morgan Y. Himmelstein, Drama Was A Weapon (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 123-24.

They Shall Not Die was unusual in that it represented a leftist leaning not previously shown by the Guild. It should be pointed out, however, that the production did not indicate any concerted effort on the part of the Guild to become a propagandist theatre. Phillip Moeller wrote, "[The Guild] was willing to produce a communist play as quickly as an imperialistic play, so long as it was a good play with a definite idea to project."⁶

The leftist nature of They Shall Not Die was due in part, to Wexley's desire to present the facts of the case, since the communists had definitely seized upon the Scottsboro convictions for propaganda purposes. They hoped to accomplish three things: (1) to illustrate the oppression of minorities under the capitalistic system; (2) to enlist support, and perhaps gain converts, through a world-wide propaganda campaign; and (3) to provide legal counsel for the Negroes through an affiliate organization, The International Labor Defense.

Some understanding of why the Communist Party became involved with the case, is necessary to a meaningful study of Wexley's play. In 1930, at the Seventh National Convention of the Communist Party of

⁶Phillip Moeller, et al, "Introduction," The Theatre Guild Anthology (New York: Random House, 1936), p. ix.

the United States, the leadership decreed that future efforts were to be directed toward liberating the Negro worker. Segregation in the South, and evidences of racial prejudice in all parts of the country, provoked the Party's decision. However, the changing of social conditions by a revolution of the workers, was too radical to provide for much support from the general populace; the Party had made little progress in its aim. However, with the Scottsboro case, there appeared an unmatched opportunity for the Party to propagandize for the Negro cause:

With a blare of trumpets the communists seized upon the Scottsboro convictions. It was, they realized, a golden opportunity to put into effect the plan decided upon by the Third Internationale and upon which they had assiduously worked but with only a modicum of success--to capitalize on Negro unrest in the United States against lynching, jim-crowism, proscription, [and] insult. . . . The Scottsboro case offered the most dramatic opportunity yet offered for this campaign.⁷

But perhaps the best evidence of a propaganda intent came from the International Labor Defense, itself. Carol Weiss King, one of the attorneys working on the case, wrote a letter to the New Republic, in which she said:

It happens to be the view of the International Labor Defense that propaganda and the arousing of public opinion are quite as important for the defense of the boys as the actual legal defense

⁷Frederick Lumley, The Propaganda Menace (New York: The Century Co., 1933), p. 429.

put up for them in the courts.⁸

As a result of some of the methods employed in their propaganda campaign, The International Labor Defense was accused of being more interested in agitation than in saving the lives of the Negroes.⁹

Arthur Garfield Hays believed that the central issue of the guilt or innocence of the Negroes was distorted by the desire to propagandize:

The individual liberal or group like the National Advancement Association [sic] is interested in guilt or innocence. This concerns the communist little. To him, the victim, if a member of the working class or of the oppressed minority, has always suffered injustice. The injury of one is the concern of all. The particular case, as well as the particular individual is of little importance.¹⁰

The theatrical reviewers, too, recognized the propaganda intent of the play. Theatre Arts said, "They Shall Not Die, by John Wexley . . . is an honest, impassioned, direct defense of the Scottsboro boys."¹¹ The Literary Digest stated that the play was "a frankly

⁸Carol Weiss King, Letter to the New Republic (Jan. 24, 1931), 155.

⁹For example, Mrs. Wright, mother of one of the Negro boys was taken to twenty-eight foreign countries to appear at protest meetings. The effort was so successful that the communists sponsored eight other "Mother Wrights" to appear simultaneously in widely separated countries of the world. The incident is related in Don Congdon (ed), The Thirties, a Time to Remember (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1962), p. 171.

¹⁰Hays, p. 85.

¹¹Theatre Arts, XVII (May, 1934), 323.



propagandist play in behalf of the indicted Negro boys in the Scottsboro case. . . ."¹² Joseph Wood Krutch said:

He calls his play "They Shall Not Die," and by the downrightness of that title he suggests what his whole treatment reaffirms--namely, that his purpose is to make the most direct assault possible upon the feelings of his audience and the most direct appeal for the active participation of its members in the public protest against the execution of four Negroes convicted of rape in an obviously prejudiced court.¹³

Analysis of They Shall Not Die

Synopsis

The small Alabama town of Cookesville is thrown into hysteria as nine Negro boys are accused of raping two white girls, Lucy Wells and Virginia Ross. Both girls are prostitutes, but Sheriff Trent and Solicitor Luther Mason seize upon the opportunity of convicting the Negroes for personal advancement. The Negroes are subsequently tried and convicted. The convictions result in a wave of protest from around the world. With the aid of The National Labor Defense, represented by Rokoff, the verdict is appealed and the Negroes are awarded another trial. The National Labor Defense

¹²"Two American Plays: Superficial Culture and Propaganda," The Literary Digest, CVII (March 17, 1934), 22.

¹³Joseph Wood Krutch, "Drama," The Nation, CXXXVIII (March 7, 1934), 284.

engages the famous lawyer, Nathan Rubin, to defend the boys. In spite of the fact that Lucy Wells testifies that the charge was entirely false, the Negroes are again convicted by a prejudiced, all-white jury.

Persuasive Purpose

They Shall Not Die attempts to convince its audience that they must protest en masse to free the Scottsboro boys, and thus take a positive step in fighting racial prejudice in the South. The purpose is clearly stated by Rokoff, the representative of The National Labor Defense:

We'll go to the workers of America, to the workers of the world. We have proof that you're innocent of these rape charges. We'll show them this proof. Then we'll say to them: Black and white workers of the world! Workers of America! Down in the South nine innocent boys are being put to death because they have black skins. Are you going to stand for that? And they will answer with a shout that will ring around the whole world . . . NO. We will not. Yes, we will force the South and those in the South who are trying to murder you . . . we will force them to free you. Yes, they will. They'll be afraid of fifteen million black workers who will stand shoulder to shoulder with fifty million white workers and who will roar . . . Don't you touch those boys! Don't you dare touch those black children workers . . .¹⁴

The acceptance of three ideas is essential to the author's purpose: (1) The National Labor Defense is the best organizer of mass protest; (2) Negroes and whites must join together in protest; and (3) there

¹⁴John Wexley, They Shall Not Die (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934), pp. 96-97.

is unlimited power in numbers.

Rokoff's speech clearly indicates that The National Labor Defense can provide the best legal counsel as well as the most meaningful protest campaign:

Now, you're thinking if things are as hard as I say they are, what can be done? What can the N.L.D. do? I'll tell you what we can do. First, we'll get the finest lawyers in this country to fight the courts at their own game . . . but more important than that, we'll go to the workers of America . . .¹⁵

The National Labor Defense as the most effective agent of protest is emphasized by Rokoff again in Act III, scene i:

That's our policy. A two-fisted one. (He clenches both fists and holds them up.) With the right fist . . . the finest legal analytic defense in the country, Nathan G. Rubin . . . and with the left fist . . . the greatest, widest mass protest action on a national and international scale . . .¹⁶

The union of Negroes and whites is essential to the success of the mass protest campaign. Here, Wexley joins the idea of breaking racial barriers with the idea of unlimited power in numbers. Rokoff, attempting to persuade the convicted Negroes to accept The National Labor Defense as counsel, emphasizes the power in unity:

Men should stick together. Now, I'd like to show you what I mean and how we work. Just suppose there are two men on this side of me . . . (He demonstrates with gestures his meaning) fighting

¹⁵Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 131.

against a certain thing and they're being licked. And on this other side, are three men fighting against almost the same kind of thing and they're being beaten, too. But if these two fellers and these three fellers would get together . . . (He holds up two fingers on one hand and three on the other) . . . then there would be five . . . and nobody could lick 'em. That's what we work for. You see, up North and out West and here in the South, there are white workers fighting for liberty and justice and a right to live happy. And down here in the South, you black workers are fighting for the same thing . . . but you're all fighting apart. Now, if you will fight for the white workers in the North and the South and the East and West then they'd get together and fight for you black fellers down here.¹⁷

This protest campaign will succeed in freeing the Negroes because it has already shown results. Another National Labor Defense lawyer, Harrison, emphasizes this:

Last summer we engaged, as you know, one of the finest Constitutional attorneys in the U.S. to plead the case in the Supreme Court in Washington, and we didn't hamper him any. But we do attribute to a great extent the decision for this new trial, to the demands of thousands of workers all over the world and not to any generosity on the part of the courts.¹⁸

Wexley bypasses the question of guilt or innocence in the play, and centers upon an indictment of Southern prejudice. He makes this quite clear in Rokoff's explanation to Rubin, the man selected to defend the Negroes:

You see, all I wanted to do was to show you the various underlying reasons for the case, economical and sociological . . . this is not merely a rape

¹⁷Ibid., p. 94

¹⁸Ibid., p. 131.

case . . . it's bigger than that. It's the Southern ruling class on trial.¹⁹

An important consideration of the message is that the appearance of mass protest as a force, is not present onstage. Therefore the results of such a protest remain to be realized in the future. If the author is determined to recruit members to the protest campaign, he must show them that the result is yet to be realized.

Wexley advocates mass protest, but he does not support a revolution of the workers, and thus the message cannot be said to be communistic. Perhaps the playwright's point of view is best illustrated by Rokoff's reply when asked if he is a communist, "I'm not a member of the party, but there are a great many things they advocate that I do agree with."²⁰

The Audience

They Shall Not Die was produced for the Broadway commercial audience, but there are many indications that this play was not intended for the typical Broadway theatre-goer. Wexley's play is aimed at those who accept racial prejudice as a concomitant of the capitalistic system, and deplore it in any form. Secondly, Wexley assumes that they are familiar with the International Labor Defense (National Labor Defense in They Shall Not Die), and agree with its methods.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 132.

²⁰Ibid., p. 130.

Ideally, it would enhance the possibilities for success if the audience was more than passingly interested in the work of the Communist Party, although it should be emphasized that one need not be a member of the Communist Party to sympathize with its aims.

Characterization

There are seventy-five characters in the play, yet They Shall Not Die has no focal character. The play's conflict centers not in the conflict of individual characters, but in the conflict of two groups. All of the characters in the play fall into one of these groups: (1) white, prejudiced Southerners (the antagonists), and (2) The National Labor Defense (the protagonists).

Act I of the play is devoted largely to characterizing the antagonist group through the characters of Sheriff Trent and Solicitor Mason. Sheriff Trent represents the lower-middle-class Southerner. Although he does not appear again in the play, he is a principal figure in Act I. Trent has no redeeming qualities; the author has characterized him as both immoral and irresponsible. His vulgar attitude toward sex is an example. As soon as he has discovered that there were two white girls among the Negroes taken from the freight train, he assumes that the Negroes have forced them to have sexual relations:

Trent: Jest hol' on. It 'pears tuh me that these heah niggers musta fooled 'round with you gals . . .

Virginia: We never done nothin' like that . . .

Trent: We'll find that out soon 'nuff. (Looks her over carefully for an instant.)²¹

When talking with Mason about the matter, Trent repeats his belief that it was impossible for the Negroes to be with the white girls without a sexual intention. "You ain't sayin' Luther, that them niggers were left alone with these white gals and din't try to . . .?"²² His belief is not peculiar, however, for a white mob quickly gathers outside the jail to lynch the Negroes for rape, based upon the same reasoning. Clearly, Trent embodies the stereotyped view of the Negro as a sex maniac.

Trent is more than passingly interested in the prostitute, Virginia Ross. After she has agreed to support him in a false rape charge, Trent responds to her sexuality in his typically vulgar manner:

Virginia: Say, couldn't I just have a dip o' snuff fo' chewin' while we're waitin'? (Winks at Trent and rubs up against him.)

Trent: Sho'. Sho'. (As they exit) You're one hot gal, ain't yuh?

Virginia: (Throwing her head back proudly) I sho' am. Hottest in Chattanooga.²³

Sheriff Trent's hatred of Negroes is his most characteristic feature. He refers to them as "black

²¹Ibid., p. 17.

²²Ibid., p. 20.

²³Ibid., pp. 45-46.

bastards," "black bitches," "bitches," "dumb nigger mules," "goddam stinkin' black bastards," "dirty swamp scum," and "stinkin' nigger lice." Never once does he call one a Negro, or even the Southern equivalent, "nigra." He clearly regards Negroes as no better than animals.

Trent's brutal treatment of the accused Negro boys typifies his hatred of them. He slaps one Negro in the face, kicks another, and punches a third in the stomach. All of these attacks are unprovoked. After a brief interlude, Trent renews his assault on the Negroes with calculated vigor. He kicks and slaps Parsons, then beats him into unconsciousness and continues to kick him as he lies on the floor. The beating resumes after the boy is revived. Trent follows this by holding a loaded shotgun to the head of fourteen-year-old Roy Wood, and threatens to kill him. That these beatings and threats are evidence of a warped personality is clearly indicated by the author:

Trent: (Frenzied. Punches him three or four times to face and stomach. Kicks him as he falls against the desk. He is evidently much the sadist.)²⁴

At the height of his excitement he removes a short riding crop from his desk drawer and beats Parsons.

²⁴Ibid., p. 54.

The stage directions read: "The whip cracks mercilessly. Parsons cringes, tries to crawl away under the desk, but Hillary [a deputy] drags him out."²⁵

Trent hopes to make use of the publicity surrounding the case to further his personal aims. For this reason he agrees to call in the State Militia instead of turning the Negroes over to the lynch mob:

Mason: I'm certain you're doing the wisest thing, Trent. And if you get an appointment as Federal Marshall . . . you can thank this idea of mine.

Trent: I hope so. (Then with conviction) An' it'll show up fo' certain with them soldiers heah, that them niggers did rape 'em . . . (Slight pause) I sho' could use a Marshall's salary . . . Mrs. Trent's been needin' a tumor operation fo' years and my boy Tom . . .²⁶

By showing Trent to use foul language, given to sexuality, a sadist, and an opportunist, Wexley builds antipathy for him.

A second important representative of the antagonist group is Luther Mason, the Solicitor. Although there are minor differences between Mason and Trent, both are essentially alike in their regard for Negroes. For example, while Mason avoids the profanity and foulness of Trent's speech, he nevertheless describes Negroes as, "black fiends," and "savage brutes."

Mason also intends to use the case for personal profit. The guilt or innocence of the Negroes is of little concern to him as he anticipates political

²⁵Ibid., p. 56.

²⁶Ibid., p. 35.



advancement:

Mason: Trent, I want you to call up the Governor and ask for troops.

Trent: (Surprised) Yuh ain't foolin'?

Mason: No . . . I'm serious. It's the smartest thing we could do. Because if . . . if they drag out and burn up these niggers . . . that's goin' tuh ruin you for anything but sheriff and act on me indirectly . . . but . . . if we call in the troops, why the whole state'll hear about it . . . and it'll be in the papers in Birmingham and Atlanta and Chattanooga . . .²⁷

Mason is an unscrupulous person, and this is best shown after he and Trent have agreed upon a fabricated rape charge. Mason tells the telephone operator to spread the rape story about the town. Even if the Negroes had been guilty of the crime, this action is unethical.

Realizing that Virginia Ross is the key figure in the rape charge, Mason threatens her with the possibility of losing her job at the mill and a prison sentence for vagrancy if she doesn't aid them. Mason's use of false charges and threats to force people to his will is a fascist technique. Coupled with the uncouth, sadistic figure of Sheriff Trent, Wexley has characterized law enforcement in Cookeville as corrupt. But Wexley also shows that whites who occupy positions of power outside of Cookeville also use their power in the same way. Captain Kennedy of the State Militia,

²⁷Ibid., p. 33.



treats the Negroes with similar cruelty:

Kennedy: This one of the rapers?

Trent: Yeah. He's a bad 'un. Don't want to confess the truth.

Kennedy: They're all that way, them sons-of-a-bitch niggers. (Spits at the figure of Parsons.)²⁸

The author has succeeded in characterizing his rejected group as immoral, brutal, and irresponsible. All of the members use their positions of authority and power to uphold an immoral situation--segregation in the South. In addition, their oppression of unfortunate and helpless people by means of coercion and violence, shows them to be fascists.

Act I serves to characterize the antagonist group and to emphasize their position of power. There are no further dimensions to this group, even though new characters appear who obviously belong to this grouping. Their similarity to Trent or Mason serves to place them properly. An example is given in Act II, scene ii. The Negroes are in death row in Pembroke Prison. Wexley does not allow his audience to lose sight of his antagonists, and introduces the Warden of the prison as representative of the group. The Warden has just appeared in the scene when he reveals how he feels toward Negroes:

Warden:(Shrewdly): Don't yuh . . . smell anythin'

²⁸Ibid., p. 58.

round heah?

Rokoff (Sniffs): No. I don't. Why?

Warden: I guess you got a Yankee nose. Don't yuh know theah is a natural smell 'bout niggers?

Rokoff: There may be . . . but I don't smell anything.

Warden (With a chuckle): Sho' yuh don't. This prison has got one of the finest shower bath systems in the South. That chases away the smell.

Rokoff (With a twinkle in his eye): But if its a natural odor, Warden . . . how do you make it disappear?

Warden (Perplexed): Ain't I just told yuh we gives them baths to chase it away?²⁹

Again Wexley makes use of an official of law enforcement to represent the antagonists. Although the Warden is not characterized as strongly as either Trent or Mason, he shares their regard for Negroes as sub-human.

This scene also introduces two representatives of the American Society for the Progress of Colored Persons (ASPCP) in the characters of Treadwell and Lowery. It would appear logical that this organization would side with the Negroes and become a nucleus for the protagonist group, but it is quickly shown that the ASPCP is no more than a parasite group attached to the antagonists.

Treadwell, a mulatto, is described as a "college graduate [who] speaks with a slight affectation."³⁰ His

²⁹Ibid., p. 90.

³⁰Ibid., p. 82.

condescension toward the less-fortunate Negroes is shown as he makes them appear ungrateful for the help of the organization. Further, it is implied that Treadwell is not convinced of the innocence of the boys. He tells the Negroes that the ASPCP will appeal to the Governor:

Parsons: Whut he goin' tuh do?

Treadwell: Well, he can do a great deal for you. He can have mercy on you and commute your sentences from death to life imprisonment.

Parsons: He kin do that?

Treadwell: Yes, that's in his power, but he won't do it unless he feels you deserve it. Unless he feels you're innocent.³¹

Treadwell loses sight of the fact that if the Governor feels they are innocent, they will be freed, not imprisoned for life.

A Negro preacher who accompanies Treadwell, echoes Treadwell's suggestion that perhaps the ASPCP is not completely convinced of the innocence of the boys:

If yuh is all 'lectrocuted an' dies yuh'll go tuh Heaven sho' as yuh're born if yuh're sho' yuh ain't had a hand in this terrible crime . . .
(Italics mine.)³²

A third member of the trio, Lowery, an attorney engaged to defend the boys, reveals his true feelings about the Negroes when he is angered that the boys seem

³¹Ibid., pp. 83-84.

³²Ibid., p. 86.

too interested in the plan offered by The National Labor Defense. Lowery strides forward menacingly and says, "Now don't you pay attention to this talk. You better be white man's niggers or . . ."33

Treadwell also advocates suppression of publicity regarding the case, instead of publicizing the miscarriage of justice. After the boys have asked them to bring their parents to visit, Treadwell dismisses the appeal because, "It might only increase the anger and feeling against you boys."34 This attitude of placating the white power structure shows Treadwell to be far too fawning in his relationship with white people to offer much hope of winning freedom for the Negroes. That the Negro boys themselves, sense this, is shown later in the scene when Andy Wood says:

Mist Treadwell. He's too slick for me. An' I can't hardly understan' his talk. Huh! maybe he ain't even a nigger.35

Treadwell's superior attitude toward the ignorant Negro boys, his embellished language, his fear of angering the prejudiced whites, and his casual attitude toward the defense of the boys, shows him to be too closely allied with the antagonist group to receive much admiration. The ASPCP is shown to be a parasitic appendage of the white prejudiced group.

³³Ibid., p. 95.

³⁴Ibid., p. 87.

³⁵Ibid., p. 43.



The National Labor Defense is introduced in this scene through the character of Rokoff. Since the author has already discredited the weak attempt at defense planned by the ASPCP, he hopes to show The National Labor Defense in a favorable light. Just as Trent and Mason are uncompromising villains, Rokoff is pictured as a paragon. He speaks kindly to the Negroes, arranges to let them out of their cells, shakes hands with them, gives them cigarettes, and above all, brings their parents to see them. Rokoff succeeds in establishing a close contact with the Negroes by pretending ignorance of the existence of the color barrier. For the first time in the play, the Negroes have some reason to hope. By showing Rokoff to be a liberal-minded Northerner, not intimidated by the Southern "fascists," and kindly toward Negroes, The National Labor Defense becomes the best agent to defend the boys.

Cheney, a Southern lawyer who accompanies Rokoff, is a member of the protagonist group. His importance in the group is that he represents the liberal-minded Southerner who deploras the miscarriage of justice. But in case there may be any confusion about his allegiance, Wexley places him in the protagonist group as soon as he appears on the stage. He tells the Warden, "Oh . . . I like to see every human being, black or white, get a fair deal. This

isn't my first colored case, you know."³⁶

Rokoff, as it was pointed out, functions as the spokesman for the protagonists in Act II, but he is not the defense lawyer for the Negroes. The National Labor Defense engages the services of Nathan Rubin, a well-known Jewish lawyer from New York City. As Rubin takes over the case, Rokoff drops away as spokesman for the group. This exchange occurs in Act III, scene i. Rubin is shown to be an efficient, capable, and altruistic person. No further characterization is given of him, and in terms of his function in the play, no further dimension is needed.

By the middle of Act II Wexley has defined and characterized the protagonists and the antagonists of the play. The allegiance of the audience presents no problem since the author has equated group identification with good and evil.

Wexley employs the same technique as Peters and Sklar in Stevedore. He uses characters to represent groups, and therefore spends little time in making them multi-dimensional people. He is interested in generalized qualities which may be easily applied to the social group which they represent. The nine Negroes, for example, are hardly differentiated from one another. Only Heywood Parsons and Olen Moore are somewhat set

³⁶Ibid., p. 90.

apart from the others. Parsons is slightly older, slightly more intelligent, and more outspoken. Moore is a visionary whose dreams presage disaster. For example, in Act II, he relates a dream he had of a flock of crows flying over a cornfield. The farmer killed some of them with a shotgun, and as the crows fell to the ground they turned into "little nigger-boys wid wings. . . li'l nigger-angels."³⁷

There is one character as yet not treated, who is important in the play--Lucy Wells. Of all the persons in the play, she is given the most dimension. She is a frightened, soft-spoken girl, completely under the domination of Virginia Ross. Lucy Wells agrees, somewhat reluctantly, to lie about the rape. Because of this decision, she is placed temporarily in the antagonist group.

In Act II, two scenes are devoted to showing Lucy Wells' awakening of conscience. She is shown earning money as a prostitute, but it is clearly emphasized that it is not by choice, but by circumstance. Her work at the mill has fallen to almost nothing, while Virginia Ross is working full-time. Obviously the mill owners have not treated her fairly. If so, she would be able to live on her wages, abandon prostitution, and regain her self-respect.

³⁷Ibid., p. 82.

Lucy Wells becomes the conversion figure of They Shall Not Die. Her change from the antagonist group to the protagonist group is motivated by her guilt feelings, her desire to find a will of her own, and her intention of ending her unfair treatment at the mill. All of these contribute to one important objective for Lucy--to regain her self-respect. Lucy's decision is made in Act II, scene iii, when her love affair with Russell Evans awakens her conscience, and when she is victimized by Sheriff Nelson, who forces her to sign a paper stating that she was drunk when she wrote a letter recanting her original testimony.

Lucy Wells, then, becomes the pivotal figure in the play, for her conversion to the side of right is important to the cause of justice for the Negroes. The change is prepared for in Act I by her reluctance to join the antagonists, and is motivated by the awakening of her conscience, not by the persuasion of any "left-ists" in the play. Although Wexley makes her appear a victim of unscrupulous labor practices, he wisely makes this a secondary motivation.

Structure

The structure of They Shall Not Die is directly influenced by the playwright's propaganda purpose. Within the conventional three-act form, Wexley demonstrates the clash of the two groups already outlined.

Act I may be divided into three segments: (1) an introductory unit in which the situation is revealed and the inciting incident occurs; (2) a large segment devoted to characterizing Trent and Mason, centering about the false rape charge and ending with the successful coercion of Virginia Ross; and (3) a section almost entirely devoted to Sheriff Trent's beating of the Negro prisoners. The first two parts accomplish quite efficiently the exposition of the situation and characterization of the antagonists. The most important points that the author wishes to make--that the rape charge is without basis, and that the antagonists are in power--are established here. Section three represents a repetition of an earlier action, that of Trent's beating of the Negroes. This repetition acts as a strong emotional appeal to enlist sympathy for the Negroes. However, in the logical progression of the development of group conflict, the last segment of Act I may be seen as a structural fault. In his desire to instill animosity for the antagonists, Wexley overstates their villainy.

Act I relies upon action to achieve its purposes, but Acts II and III disdain action in favor of talk. All the remaining scenes of the play are "discussion" scenes.

Scene i of Act II is entirely exposition since the author must show Lucy Wells' character and situation.

The scene is important because it introduces the "conversion" figure.

Act II, scene ii, is devoted entirely to the protagonist group. The purpose of the scene, in the propaganda intent of the play, is to show the formation of the favored group and to present their spokesman. As the Negroes sign with The National Labor Defense, the play's protagonist is established.

Scene iii of Act II reiterates Lucy Wells' reasons for recanting, and ends with her decision to change groups. Act II, then, is structured to show the protagonists' rise. The act structure is cumulative, since each of the scenes shows new members joining the group. Act II concludes with the protagonists in a position to meet the antagonists on equal footing. The preparation for this inevitable clash is completed.

Act III, scene i, continues the strong rise in the power of the protagonists. Its function is to transfer leadership from Rokoff to Rubin. Structurally it would perhaps have been better dramaturgy to move immediately to the obligatory scene. Rokoff has demonstrated his marvelous powers of persuasion, and would undoubtedly make a fine defense attorney. But since Wexley is writing a modified documentary, he introduces Rubin because this follows the actual pattern of events in the case. The one saving feature of

the scene is that it demonstrates yet another convert to the group in the person of Lewis Collins. Collins, a white man, was arrested at the same time as the Negroes in Cookesville, but was released because he refused to swear that he witnessed the rape. His sudden appearance in Act III is a coincidence unmotivated by any previous action of the play, and must be regarded as a melodramatic manipulation by the author.

Act III, scene ii, is the obligatory scene, showing the clash of the two groups at the trial of Heywood Parsons. The antagonists re-appear, represented by the defense attorney, Dade. The power of the corrupt white group is supported by the judge whose feeble attempts to conduct a fair trial demonstrate the unethical practices which are directly responsible for the antagonists' triumph. The protagonists have won in spirit, however, since they so emphatically exposed the corruption of the power group. Thus the propaganda message is driven home with greater effect, for the outrage may be corrected only by joining in action to defeat the white power structure.

Wexley remains consistent with the conflict as presented, by showing in his denouement, the momentary triumph of evil. Where Stevedore dramatizes the triumph over evil, They Shall Not Die does not resolve the conflict, and therefore serves to arouse greater indignation. Stevedore shows the emotional surge

of triumph; They Shall Not Die demonstrates righteous anger at defeat.

Dialogue

Since Wexley depends heavily upon argument to achieve his purpose, the analysis of the dialogue in two scenes of the play, illustrates how persuasion is used to achieve the playwright's ends. Act II, scene ii has already been pointed out as a pivotal scene in the play. Rokoff convinces the Negroes to accept The National Labor Defense as their defense. The scene is structured as a modified debate between Treadwell representing the ASPCP, and Rokoff representing The National Labor Defense. The objective of the debate is to acquire the signature of the boys on an affidavit authorizing their defense. The Warden of the prison acts as a "judge." Here the suggestion of a courtroom is intended. The argument is carefully structured to achieve the playwright's objective--to award the defense of the Negroes to The National Labor Defense.

Treadwell begins by stating the case for the ASPCP. At this point the opposition has not yet entered the scene. The aims of the ASPCP are to engage Lowery, one of the best lawyers in the South, to appeal to the state Supreme Court for a re-trial, and to make an appeal to the Governor of Alabama for a stay of execution. These aims are made to seem suspect by the insincere

and impatient manner of both Treadwell and Lowery. The Negroes are not impressed. Treadwell then calls upon a Negro preacher who accompanies them, to deliver a prayer. The emotional effect upon the Negroes is intentional. The preacher equates the ASPCP with the Lord, The National Labor Defense with the devil. Twice within the prayer he establishes this dichotomy. The choice between the two groups is made a moral one; the God-fearing person will choose the ASPCP. As a result of this appeal, four of the Negroes agree to sign with the ASPCP--Roberts, Walters, Warner and Morris, with Moore about to sign as they are interrupted by the arrival of Rokoff and The National Labor Defense.

From the moment of his arrival, Rokoff takes over the debate, with only feeble objections from Treadwell. Rokoff begins his appeal by disarming the suspicions of the Negroes by allowing them to come out of their cells, shaking hands with one of them, and by offering cigarettes to them. After a strong rapport has been established, Rokoff begins his oration, which builds to a strong emotional climax. Wexley's stage directions indicate this:

(From now on there are no serious interruptions and the prisoners all listen very attentively and become absorbed. The speaker increases his tone and tempo as he goes on until he quite loses himself, and everyone on the stage including the Warden and Cheney are quite absorbed by the power

of his speech.)³⁹

Rokoff emphasizes two points in his speech:

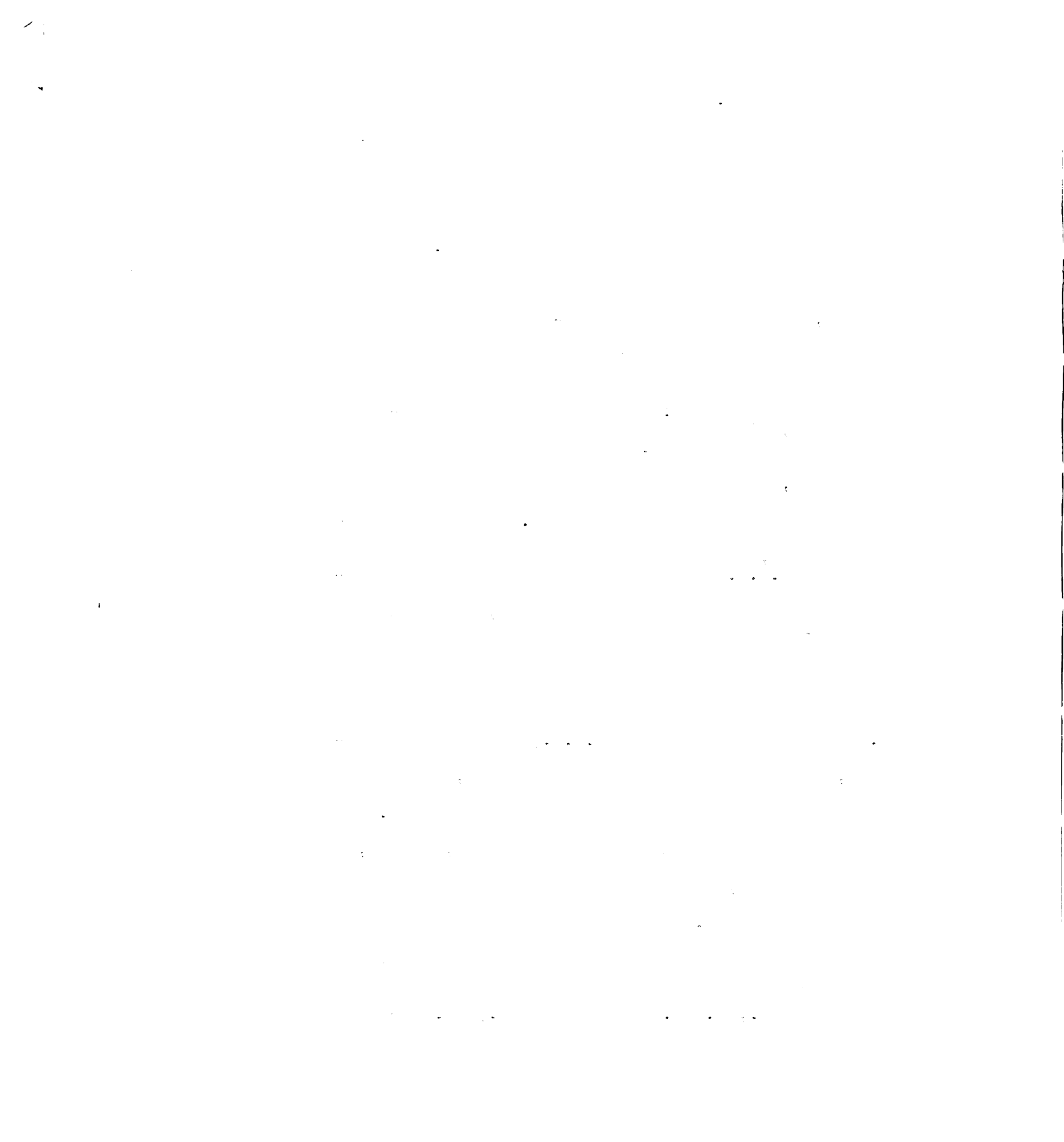
(1) only by joining with other workers in a common aim can the Negro fight injustice; and (2) the Negroes did not receive a fair trial in Cookeville. Here Treadwell interrupts, allows himself a rare emotional outburst, and indulges in a Name-calling tirade against The National Labor Defense:

(Somewhat excited, unable to contain himself)
Listen to me, boys! I'm one of you and God-willing, I'd like to be darker than I am if that would help my people. And therefore I want to warn you against this dangerous National Labor Defense, this radical organization which only wants to use you boys as a cat's paw to pull their chestnuts out of the fire. You poor children are too young to know it but they are about the worst, insidious group of traitors to this country . . . They not only want to spread rebellion and revolt through your case but they also want to destroy and ruin the great, benevolent ASPCP.⁴⁰

The Plain Folks appeal at the opening of the speech is overstated in order to emphasize the insincerity of the man. The use of "dangerous N.L.D.," "radical organization," and "insidious group of traitors," is clearly designed to discredit The National Labor Defense. The speech closes with a Glittering Generality, "great, benevolent ASPCP," designed to reinforce the "godliness" of the organization. However, these benevolent aims are quickly shown to be worthless when the Negro,

³⁹Ibid., p. 93.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 94-95



Parsons, asks Treadwell how he intends to go about insuring him of a fair trial:

Parsons: How . . . how yuh gonn git this fair trial?

Treadwell (annoyed): We . . . we will not spare any effort to protect you from the death penalty.⁴¹

With this feeble retort, Wexley withdraws the ASPCP from an active part in the debate.

Rokoff continues his speech by stressing the injustice of the Cookesville trial, building to a high pitch of excitement through an appeal to fear of death at the hands of the whites:

The South wants you to burn. They want to teach you blacks a lesson, they want to frighten you blacks with the burned up bodies of nine Negro boys. They want to make you shut up and keep quiet. They want to keep the nigger in his place . . . that's why . . . and so . . . the only thing fair that you'll ever get will be a fair amount of electric juice to burn you alive on the chair in there . . . (points to door leading to electrocution chamber.)⁴²

Rokoff has disdained specific appeals to individuals, which Treadwell used, in favor of a larger appeal to the Negroes as a race fighting for their lives. The implication is that they will be betraying their race, and will also risk death, if they do not accept The National Labor Defense. The timely reference to the adjacent electric chair serves to heighten the emotionalism.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 95.

⁴²Ibid.

At this point, rapport has been established with the Negroes, and an introductory emotional appeal has been made. Rokoff now states the plan of The National Labor Defense. First, they will engage the best lawyers in the country to defend the boys. Secondly, they will spearhead a protest campaign of world-wide proportions. The National Labor Defense does not intend to play down the publicity of the case; in fact, just the opposite intention is shown. Rokoff closes his appeal with a repetition of the necessity of the banding together of the workers, and the fear of harm at the hands of the whites. The Warden's reception of the speech indicates the strong effect Rokoff's rhetoric has achieved:

(Shaking himself as if to rid himself of a trance or spell. [*Italics*]mine Then shouting, red with fury) Stop! Stop that . . . !⁴³

At the emotional apogee, the parents of the prisoners are brought in. As the mothers leave, they urge their children to support the side of right. Several of them have already decided that The National Labor Defense represents this right. Mrs. Williams emphasizes, as the Preacher did earlier, that the choice of groups is a moral one. However, in this case, she has reversed the roles:

⁴³Ibid., p. 97.

Mrs. Parsons: Good-bye, Heywood, and God bless yuh. Don't give up yo' hope, an' keep a-lookin' at the Lo'd.

Mrs. Wood: Don't worry, my chillun . . . we got the N.L.D. wid us.

Mrs. Purcell: Don't fo'git tuh pray, Ozie . . .

Mrs. Williams: Yes pray . . . chile. Pray fo' yo' life an' fo' the blessed N.L.D.⁴⁴

The effect of the parents' pleas reiterates the appeal made twice already by Rokoff--that the boys will live only if they accept the N.L.D.

Rokoff delivers a summation in which he stresses that the parents were brought as a gesture of kindness, not as a device to sway the boys, and that no matter which decision they make, the N.L.D. will continue to work for them. Rokoff's persuasive appeal has not had an immediate effect, for the boys ask for more time to decide. Four Negroes, Walters, Roberts, Warner and Morris (the four who earlier signed with the ASPCP), still hold with that initial decision. Purcell, Parsons, and Roy and Andy Wood agree on the National Labor Defense, with Olen Moore indifferent. The deadlock is deliberately structured by Wexley to provide one more opportunity to make an appeal in favor of The National Labor Defense. This appeal is made by Parsons. Parsons offers no new arguments, yet accomplishes the conversion of the Negroes to the side of The National

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 99.

Labor Defense. Warner and Morris are the first to change, with Roberts, Walters, and Moore following. This Bandwagon appeal is climaxed by the singing of a gospel hymn.

There are several significant points of concern to a propaganda analysis of this debate: (1) Rokoff, for all his spell-binding oratory, only indirectly convinces the Negroes. Heywood Parsons is the final agent of the persuasion. This succeeds in creating suspense, and avoids the "pat" conversion of the boys by Rokoff; (2) the entire debate is heavily slanted in favor of The National Labor Defense. The ASPCP is given no chance at rebuttal, and Treadwell is reduced to a cowardly name-caller as his only means of argument; (3) the persuasive appeals are almost solely emotional; and (4) the use of Bandwagon appeal is strongest, since The National Labor Defense has made it appear that the Negroes are joining a huge force already in action.

The trial of Heywood Parsons in Act III, scene ii, further illustrates the persuasive nature of the dialogue. The most significant speeches for analysis are the summations to the jury. Two important points should be considered as a background for the summations: (1) the defense had clearly shown that Virginia Ross was lying, and (2) the Alabama jury feared the glib New Yorkers, and resented what appeared to be



the harassment of a helpless Southern girl.

The first argument for the prosecution is presented by Slade, the assistant to the prosecutor. His most significant appeals are Plain-Folks and anti-Semitism. Slade equates good with Alabama and the South, and evil with New York and Jews. He apparently has no qualms about his unethical method, for he makes a personal attack on Lewis Collins. He calls him Lewis "Colinsky," suggesting guilt by association, for if Jews are evil, then anyone who appears to be a Jew is also evil. He further states that The National Labor Defense is a communist group. An interesting touch is that he pronounces it "Communists," suggesting that he is accusing people without knowing what the evil is.

This attack is followed by dressing up a popular cliché. "Free this nigger . . . and every white father will tremble for his daughter's safety as he goes to sleep tonight."⁴⁵ He closes by reiterating his Plain-Folks appeal coupled with his anti-Semitism: "Gentlemen of the jury, tell 'em, tell 'em that Southern justice cannot be bought an' sold with Jew money from New York."⁴⁶

Cheney is the first to sum for the defense. His argument is ad hominum, in which he stresses that

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 181.

⁴⁶Ibid.

his character and background are the important thing. The appeal is Plain-Folks; he is a native Southerner, his father fought in the Civil War, he is a Baptist and a Democrat. In the tradition of fair play, characteristic of the intelligent Southerner, he pleads for a verdict of innocent.

Nathan Rubin follows Cheney. Since he is the spokesman for the protagonist group, his is the longest speech. His arguments are broken into two parts, a defense of his character, and an appeal for acquittal. In the first segment, Rubin makes three points in favor of his character: (1) Jews fought in World War I, and no distinction was made at that time because of religious belief; (2) he is carrying on the defense because he believes in the cause of justice for all, and therefore will not receive a fee; and (3) his life has been threatened by fanatics. The curious thing about these appeals is that they are all emotional in the face of an opening statement in which he said he would appeal to logic and common sense. One can only conclude that Rubin hoped the jury would accept emotional appeals as rational appeals.

Rubin then spends a great deal of time reviewing the evidence in favor of acquittal. He calls attention to the unethical nature of the summation by Slade, and the attempt to lead the jury by saying that only a stupid person would believe Slade's accusation that

Collins and Lucy Wells were bribed.

The last section of his summation is again a series of emotional appeals building to a strong climax. He plays upon the mother-child relationship by pointing out the defendant's mother in the courtroom:

Are you going to tear out her heart, the apple of her eye, her baby, her son? Are you going to strap him into a torturous electric chair, slit his pants leg, shave his head, prepare him like a stuffed goose for the cooking, then go and fry him, scorch him, burn him alive with two thousand volts of electricity, then cut out his insides in an autopsy and finally throw back his charred and mutilated corpse into his mother's waiting arms on the sole, lying, miserable testimony of a whore?⁴⁷

Here Rubin's Name-calling is justified since he has already proved Virginia Ross to be of disreputable character. In Rubin's final appeal, he draws upon religious emotionalism. The appeal to a common God known to all believers regardless of church or sect, is culminated in the recitation of "The Lord's Prayer." It should be pointed out once again that Rubin did not make appeals to intellect and reason as he said he would, but relied almost solely on emotional appeals to fear, motherhood, and religion. Since he does not attack individuals or groups, except Virginia Ross, he remains in a favorable light as far as the audience is concerned.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 186.

The final summation is made for the prosecution by Dade. He opens his speech by deploring a judgment made upon the basis of prejudice. He then follows this with a Plain-Folks appeal stressing resentment of outsiders. He attacks The National Labor Defense as a group of radicals with treasonous aims. Dade builds further upon his Plain-Folks appeal by noting that his father, too, fought in the Civil War. His next step is to draw an analogy between Lucy Wells' "betrayal" of her people and Christ's betrayal by Judas.

The last segment of his speech centers upon the strongest appeal made by the prosecution--fear of the Negro "stepping out of his place":

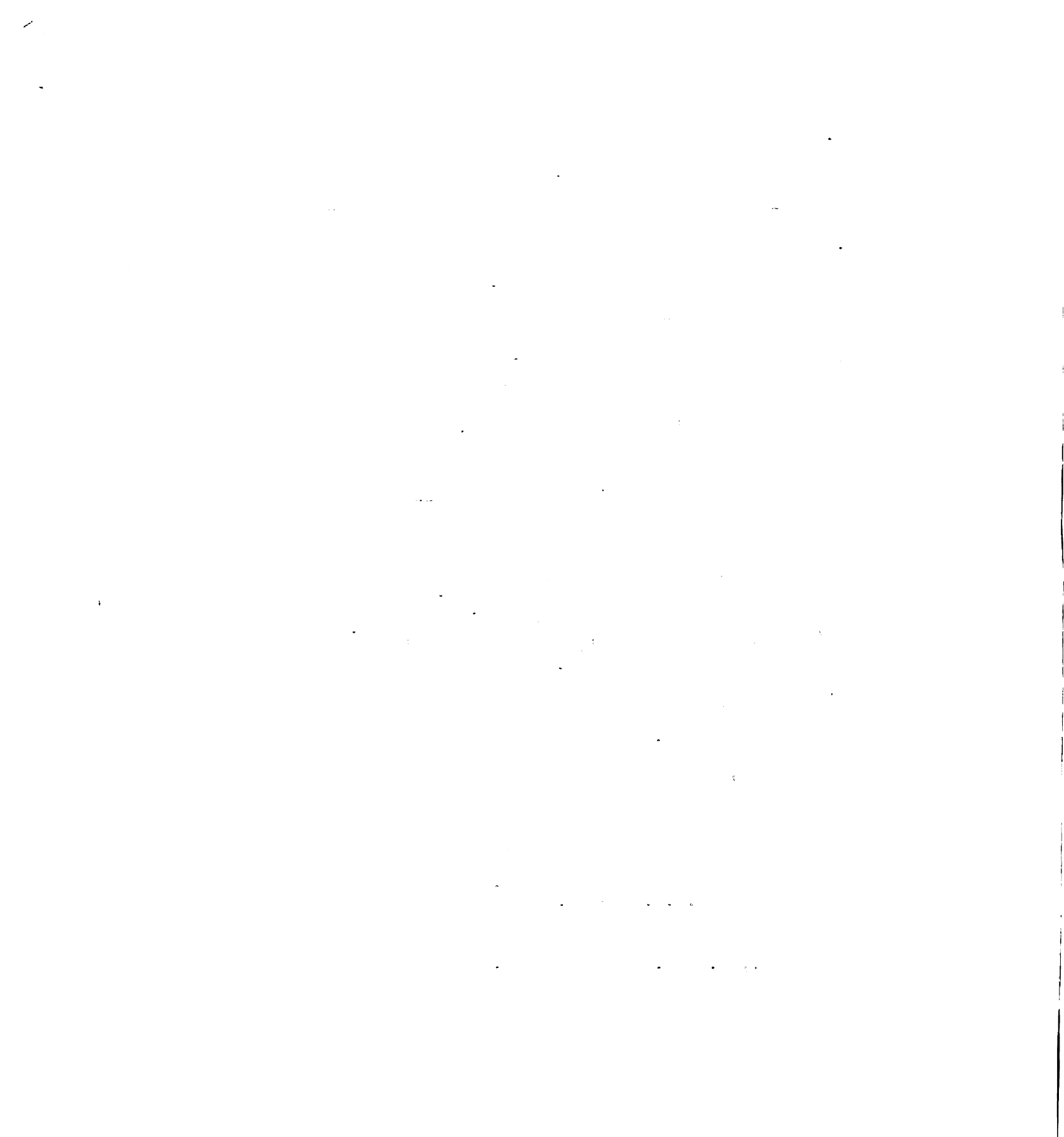
Remember this, that we cannot, we must not permit this fiendish criminal theah to go free. You yourselves know what that would mean. It would mean, theah would be no holdin' 'em down anymo'. Your wives', your sisters', your daughters' very lives and honor are at stake.⁴⁸

In Dade's opinion, acquittal would mean free sexual license for all Negroes. The final statement concludes in the same vein, as Dade emphasizes the horror of sexual congress with a Negro:

I demand that this horrible fiend, this rapist die for his terrible crime he and his cronies committed on the white body of Virginia Ross. I demand the highest penalty . . . De-ath.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 189.

⁴⁹Ibid.



Dade exceeds the bounds of ethics here by emphasizing that the original trial accused nine Negroes of the attack. However, Heywood Parsons alone, is now on trial. The prosecuting attorneys do not rely upon the evidence they have offered. They make emotional appeals which are more likely to be successful when made to ignorant people.

The analysis of the four summation speeches shows that the prosecution made use of unethical methods by appealing to prejudice. Their major appeals were to Southern sectionalism, by stressing the fear of outsiders, prejudice toward Negroes by suggesting that licentious behavior would result if acquittal is the verdict, and anti-Semitism. Although Cheney and Rubin make use of strong emotional appeals, they remain within the bounds of ethics.

CHAPTER VII

WE, THE PEOPLE

Introduction

We, The People, by Elmer Rice, opened January 21, 1933, and ran for forty-nine performances. By 1933 the Broadway stage had begun to feel the effects of the dramatization of social problems.¹ According to Broadway standards, We, The People was a failure. However, the play attracted attention because it was the first serious propaganda play written by one of the American theatre's established writers. Elmer Rice had won the Pulitzer Prize with Street Scene five years earlier, and maintained his reputation as one of the frontline Broadway writers with such popular successes as The Left Bank and Counsellor-at-Law.

After the failure of We, The People, Rice did not abandon writing propaganda plays. Judgment Day, a dramatization of the Reichstag fire trial, and Between Two Worlds, were produced on Broadway in 1934;

¹See Morgan Y. Himelstein, Drama Was a Weapon (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1963), Chapter X, for a treatment of social drama on Broadway between 1929-1941.

however, each had a run of only thirty-two performances. The failure of Rice's propaganda plays led to a bitter feud with the critics, culminating in his decision to abandon the Broadway theatre. The most severe critical objection to these plays stemmed from the belief that propaganda was not compatible with the artistic aims of the theatre.²

Several of the critics, however, liked the play.

Meyer Levin wrote:

We, The People came the closest of any recent work to being a completely acceptable play of protest, and this was proven by the strong response the performances received from some sections of the public in spite of the generally unfavorable reviews.³

Theatre Arts said, "It is a skillful, mature, and large and free treatment of a difficult subject."⁴ The Commonweal reviewer believed We, The People was no ordinary propaganda play. "It is full of expert characterization, of clearly etched scenes with swift incisive action, of dialogue that, for the most part, has authentic tang and flavor."⁵

Brooks Atkinson said that Rice "has never spoken in the theater with such grim force before."

²Supra, Chapter II.

³Meyer Levin, "Playwriting and Protest," Theatre Arts, XVII (May, 1933), 356.

⁴Barclay McCarthy, "Three Designs for Living," Theatre Arts, XVII (April, 1933), 259.

⁵Richard Dana Skinner, Review of We, The People, The Commonweal, XVII (Feb. 8, 1933), 411.

Something is fatally bloodless about a theatre that cannot take a play like this in its stride."⁶ And Joseph Wood Krutch praised the play for its treatment of a difficult subject:

No previous effort of the same sort has been anything like so ambitious and none has been within its limitations, so effective. . . . Here are clarity, logic, and an intense sincerity, plus a very unusual gift for dramatic writing.⁷

Analysis of We, The People

Synopsis

Helen Davis, a young schoolteacher, and Bert Collins are engaged to be married, but are forced to postpone their plans because of economic conditions. They eventually drift into a sexual relationship. The Davis family begins to feel the effects of the depression, but conditions are favorable enough for the son, Allen, to attend college. As economic conditions worsen, Allen is forced to withdraw from college, Mr. Davis loses his job, and the family is forced to move from their home. Allen becomes bitter, and is arrested for stealing coal. He serves a sentence of six months for this crime. Once released, he lives with a girl he met in college, Mary Klobutsko, and both engage in

⁶"Returning to We, The People," Literary Digest, CXV (Mar. 4, 1933), 19.

⁷Joseph Wood Krutch, Review of We, The People, The Nation, CXXXVI (Feb. 8, 1933), 158.

anti-war protest meetings. Allen is accused of murdering a policeman, a crime he did not commit. He is convicted and is sentenced to death. The play closes with a protest meeting to free him.

Persuasive Purpose

Elmer Rice wrote of his play:

We, The People was a panoramic presentation of the economic-social situation in America, an expose' of the forces of reaction which stand in the way of a better life for the masses of American people and a plea for a return to the principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.⁸

We, The People, then, is an indictment of the capitalistic system. Rice felt, at the time of writing this play, that an imbalance existed in our social system. Many honest, hard-working people were being deprived of the simple necessities of life, while a few wealthy people had much more than they needed. Rice hoped to illustrate this imbalance through dramatizing the hardships of the Davis family--a typical American working class family during the depression.

Rice maintains throughout the play, that the victims of the system did not create the conditions under which they suffer, and are therefore powerless to change them. After Allen Davis has been apprehended for stealing coal, he says:

⁸Elmer Rice, "Apologia Pro Vita Sua, Per Elmer Rice," The New York Times (Dec. 25, 1938), IX:3.

I took the coal from the railroad company because we needed it to keep us warm. If that's being a crook, then I'm a crook. But who made me a crook? Is it my fault that I can't get a job? Is it my fault that the bank failed and that we're being put out of our home?⁹

The idea is expressed by others in the play. Helen Davis, who has consistently maintained an optimistic attitude in the face of deprivation, finds that the capitalistic system seems to betray, rather than reward those who are industrious:

I don't think it's our fault that things turned out this way. We've all tried our best. I don't understand very much about politics and economics, although I did study them in normal school. But it seems to me there should be some way of people getting just the few simple things that they want. It doesn't seem right that people who want to work can't find any work to do and that their homes should be taken away from them . . . Why? Why must things be that way? I'm sure there's plenty in the world for everybody to have his share and yet there are so many that haven't even enough to live.¹⁰

The author supports the workingman in his indictment of a system which denies the majority a right to even a simple existence, while a minority enjoys a life of luxury. The core of the problem is an unequal distribution of wealth. Rice evidently felt that wealth concentrated in the hands of a few was wrong. Allen Davis points out what Rice has observed:

Well, by God, I'll take anything as long as it's

⁹Elmer Rice, We, The People (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1933), p. 184.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 248.

work. But there isn't any work. I see lots of people riding around in limousines, girls going around in fur coats and women wearing diamonds, having dinner in the big hotels, but try to get somebody to give you a chance to earn ten dollars a week.¹¹

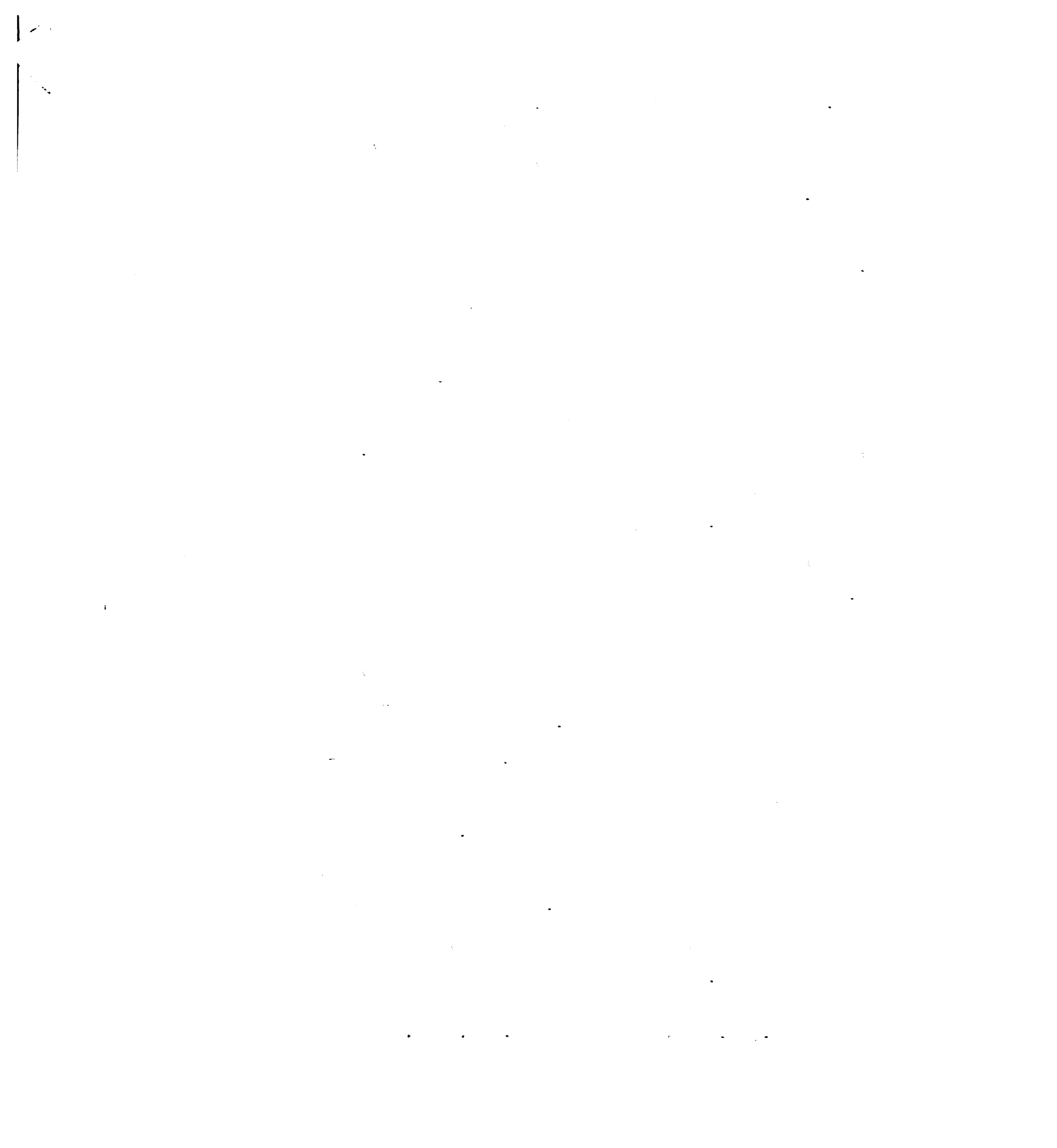
Rice blames the rich for the conditions of the times. He goes beyond the simple idea that the rich should help the poor in times of hardship, and insists that the institutions which support the evil social system are controlled by wealthy businessmen. Rice shows that government, education, the courts, and the press, are directly controlled by the moneyed class. The capitalists, Walter Applegate and Willard Drew wish to nominate Dr. Purdy, President of the State University, as a candidate for President of the United States. That they intend he will be sympathetic toward their aims is clearly shown by Drew:

We want a man who can rise above party politics, a man who can put an end to all this government interference with business and who can put industry back on its feet again.¹²

Through the relationship of Dr. Purdy to Applegate and Drew, Rice shows that higher education is subservient to the dictates of the wealthy. The Board of Trustees of the University is made up of capitalists, two of whom are Applegate and Drew. Policy is formulated by the trustees, not by the president, the faculty, or the student body. This is perhaps best demonstrated

¹¹Ibid., p. 151.

¹²Ibid., p. 171.



in an ironic scene in which Purdy has dismissed a teacher, Professor Hirschbein, for participating in a radical meeting. Professor C. Carter Sloane participated in the same meeting, but Sloane is from a prominent family and he is not dismissed. Also, Purdy is a relative of the banker, Drew. There are implications in the play that Purdy was appointed to his position because he was sympathetic with the upper class.

The courts, too, are controlled by conservatives sympathetic with business interests. Rice's denunciation of the conservative upper class is illustrated in the character of Judge Thomas who employs a double standard in judging the wealthy and the poor. Through Thomas, Rice also shows that the press is the tool of conservative interests. Thomas' father owns several daily newspapers and a broadcasting station, committed to the support of political candidates endorsed by the capitalists.

Elmer Rice is concerned in We, The People, that a small minority controls the wealth, government, education, courts and the press in American society, and that representatives of these institutions support each other in maintaining what is, in Rice's view, an unjust social system. Rice makes a plea for protest against the intolerable conditions of a decadent social order. It is his view that protest is a healthy and

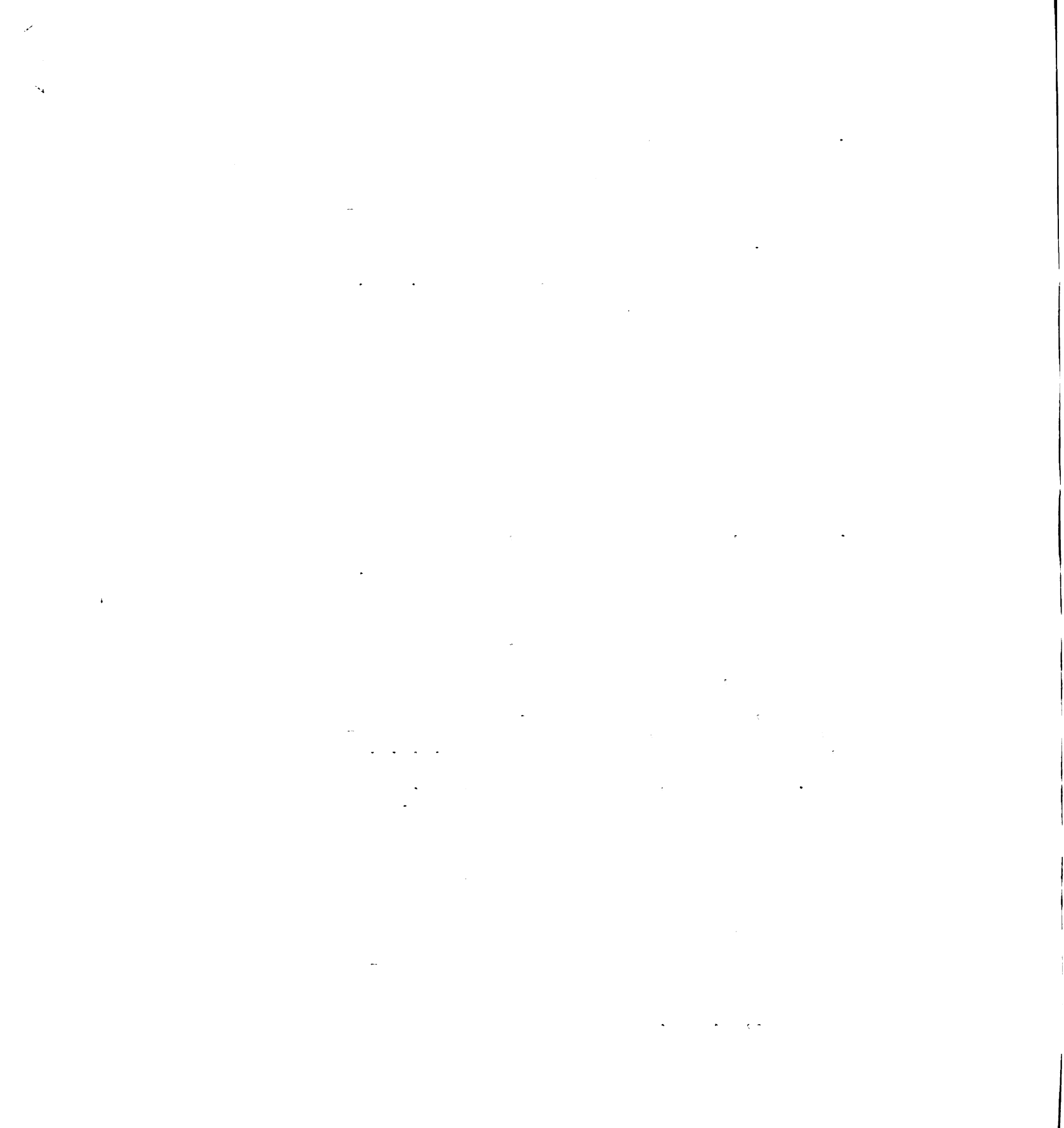
cherished part of the American tradition of freedom of speech. In this respect, Rice presents his strongest indictment of the capitalists, for they have used their power to still the voices of protest by force, a fascist technique. The idea of the use of force to stifle protest is a constant thread in We, The People. Mr. Davis is shot by Applegate's armed guards as he led a peaceful protest march of unemployed workers; Allen Davis is victimized by the police who alter evidence to convict him of a crime he did not commit; Professor Hirschbein is dismissed from the teaching staff of the University because he participated in a protest meeting; and Mr. Volterra, an immigrant worker, is deported to Italy because he belonged to an "anarchist group." American society does not allow protest although it purports to protect freedom of speech. In the words of Mary Klobutsko, an immigrant girl:

In America, you must not cry out. You must be meek, no matter what, no matter if you are starving, no matter if you are sent to prison. . . . My father came here to find freedom and food for his family. To America, to the land of plenty. What did he find? He found starvation and death.¹³

The position of the conservatives on this issue is stated by Judge Thomas as he sentences Allen Davis:

[Your] crime strikes at the very root of our social order, which is founded upon respect for the law and upon recognition by the individual of that supremacy of organized government with-

¹³Ibid., p. 249.



out which civilization would fall speedily into decay and man would relapse to a condition of anarchy and barbarism.¹⁴

Rice uses protest against profit from war to illustrate his thesis. The wealthy power structure stifles anti-war protest by making it seem un-American. A protest march to enlist government assistance for unemployed veterans, ends with suppression by the police. One of the major reasons why Allen Davis is falsely accused is that he has been unusually outspoken in his hatred of war:

It's up to us to see that there isn't another war. We're the ones that'll be expected to fight. And now's the time, right here and now, for us to say we don't want militarism, we don't want to be trained to be soldiers, we don't want to fight.¹⁵

Reactions to Allen's stand make him appear to be a coward, un-willing to fight for his country.

For Rice, however, the issue is one of freedom of speech. Professor Hirschbein points this out to Dr. Purdy with regard to suppression of the student protest meeting:

But why was permission refused? Because the speakers were known to be men of unorthodox economic views, who would attack not only Applegate, but the social system which he stands for and which protects him. I call that a free speech issue.¹⁶

Rice believed that the sceptical view was healthy, and that protest was of value to society rather than detri-

¹⁴Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 202.

mental to it. Sloane, the liberal professor, tells a group of students:

A college student should not only familiarize himself with the social system in which he is going to function, but he should learn to view it critically and with a certain amount of skepticism. . . . If we are against militarism, against war, against social and economic corruption, we must make ourselves articulate, right here and now. I don't agree with Schwarz that protest is futile. I think that every voice that is raised has its effect.¹⁷

We, The People also indicts the capitalistic system for supporting the evil of prejudice. Steve, a Negro servant, points out that not all Americans have the rights accorded the majority:

I thought this was supposed to be a free country, Mr. Williamson, with everybody havin' the right to express his own opinion about things. But I guess I've been on the wrong track. I guess if your skin don't happen to be white, an' you've got nothin' in your pocket but holes, about all you're free to do is keep your mouth shut.¹⁸

Mrs. Collins a conservative farm woman, is appalled that her daughter-in-law ran off with "some foreigner like that--a Roman Catholic besides."¹⁹ Hirschbein is relieved of his position at the University not only because he has radical opinions, but also because he is a Jew.

Those of foreign birth experience the bitterest prejudice of all. Whipple, a boarder at the Davis house, is most outspoken in this respect:

¹⁷Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 103.

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Well, I'm here to tell you it's about time they kicked all these dagoes and Polacks the hell out o' here. They shouldn't have let 'em in in the first place. We don't want a lot o' crummy foreigners in this country, stinkin' up the place an' takin' jobs away from Americans.²⁰

Helen Davis points out that all Americans were descended from some foreign stock. Whipple, unable to understand her implication, continues: "I'm talkin' about all these wops and Jews. I suppose you'd like to marry some greasy dago and have a lot o' kids by him."²¹ Through prejudice against national groups, Rice shows that American society has perverted the original ideals upon which America was founded, that is, a haven for foreigners seeking freedom from tyranny.

Rice not only accuses, but offers a solution. He does not advocate any radical philosophy which would change our government, but rather, insists that a solution lies in a return to those principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence. Professor Sloane quotes from this document in the play:

We hold these truths to be self-evident. That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain un-alienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them

²⁰Ibid., p. 124 .

²¹Ibid.

shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness.²²

Therefore, when injustice is allowed to go unprotested, it does a grave harm to society. Again, Sloane presents the author's opinion:

When you snuff out the life of an Allen Davis, when you murder him judicially, in an access of frenzy and fear, you do more than take a human life. You proclaim to the world that America has forsaken justice for lynch-law, democracy for class-rule, and liberty for tyranny.²³

The return to the ideals of the founders of America is not, however, a specific solution, and Rice does not present one in his play. However, there is an implication present with which one must agree after an examination of Rice's indictment of the wealthy. Allen Davis comes closest of any character in the play to stating it. "Well, I guess some way could be found by making guys like Applegate loosen up so that some of the rest of us can have a chance to live."²⁴ It seems that Rice is appealing to the conscience of the rich to work for the general welfare rather than their own narrow interests. Along with this, Rice also makes pleas for the encouragement of protest as a guarantee of free speech; to encourage acceptance of the worker, including the Negro and the foreign-born; and a plea to end war.

²²Ibid., p. 252.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 151.

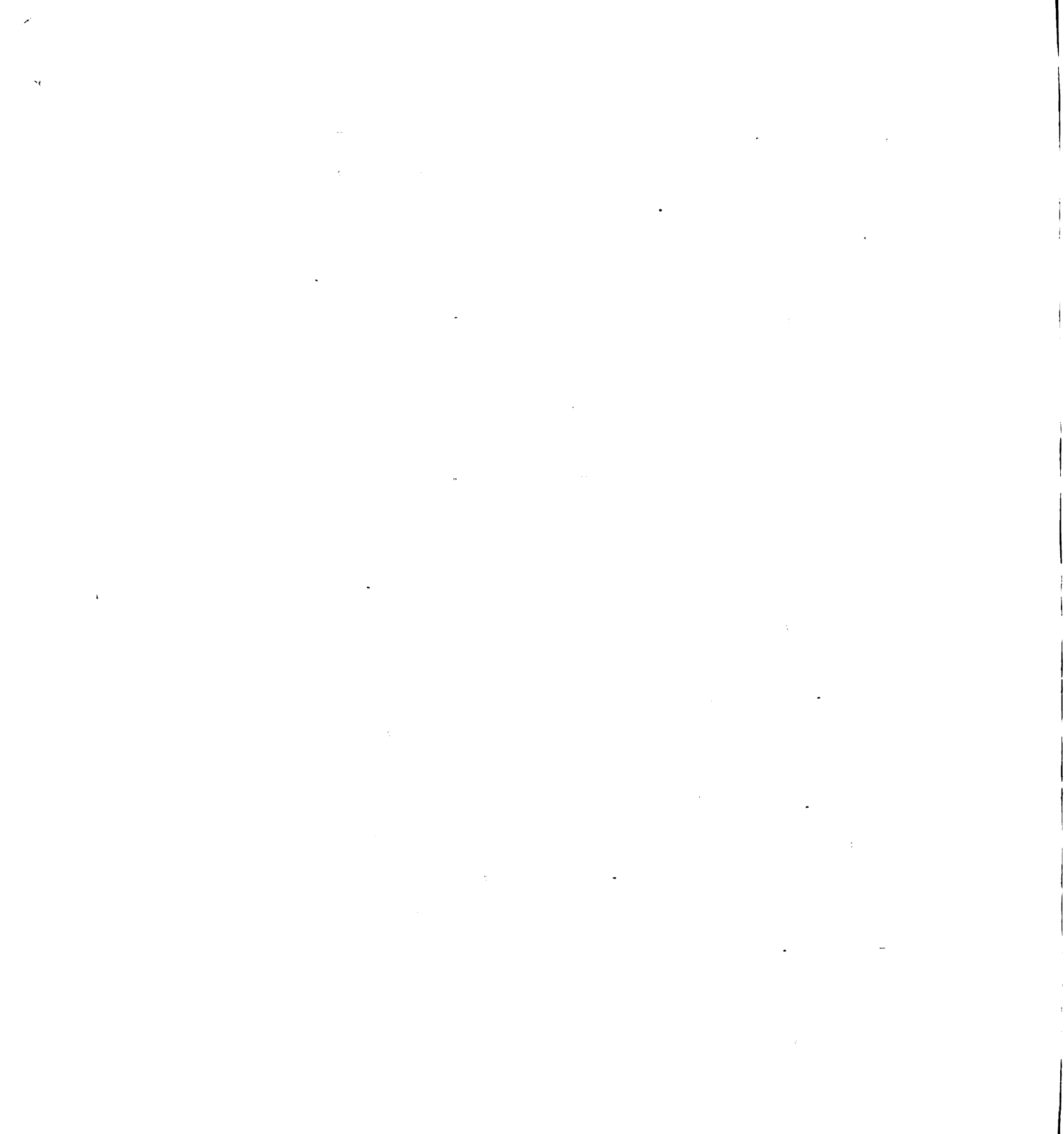
The major difficulty in a thematic study of We, The People, is that in creating a "blanket indictment" rather than a concentration upon a single theme, Rice overloads the play. A further problem is that Rice's ideas are scattered freely throughout the play and they never seem to be satisfactorily drawn together. And finally, the solution offered is vague.

The Audience

In a very general sense, Rice is appealing to anyone within earshot; therefore the makeup of the audience may be varied and non-specialized. A strong support of a liberal political philosophy is necessary since the author upholds this stand and condemns the conservative position as reactionary and fascistic. As a result, staunch conservatives would most likely be offended by the picture Rice presents of them in the play. However, since Rice hopes to convince this group of what he believes is its duty to society, they must be present in some numbers or the persuasion would be wasted. If Rice's indictment of the affluent is valid, then the Broadway "carriage trade" would be an ideal audience for his play. Hopefully, the audience would deplore prejudice of any kind as immoral and un-American.

Characterization

We, The People is a thesis play rather than a



play of action. There is no protagonist; rather, Elmer Rice makes use of many characters to present a panoramic picture of America during the Depression. He specifies, for example, that the play takes place "in the United States of America," not in any particular locale.

The large cast of characters is readily divided into two groups, the working class people and the wealthy people. Since Rice is dealing with an indictment of the rich, these form an antagonist group, while the workers form the protagonist group. It should be noted that Rice does not make his divisions as mutually exclusive as have some previous playwrights in this study. For example, there are among the working class, some who support the conservative views held by the rich, and among some of the wealthy there are feelings of sympathy with the workingman's position.

The protagonists of We, The People are of two distinct kinds: the sober, hard-working, loyal American citizen, exemplified in Helen Davis, William Davis, and Bert Collins; and those who are active protesters against conditions, particularly Allen Davis, Mary Klobutsko, C. Carter Sloane, and Morris Hirschbein.

In the first group, Rice creates some rounded characters who supercede type, by allowing the audience to see some personal dimension of the characters. Helen Davis is the focal figure in the first half of the play.

She is a schoolteacher, possessed of an indomitable spirit in the face of hardship. Her dilemma is a rather sentimental one; she and her fiancé, Bert Collins, are unable to marry because she would lose her job. As a result she is forced into a clandestine affair with Bert. Since Helen is a conventional person, Rice does not wish to suggest that she may be immoral; rather he hopes to show that her behavior is typical under the circumstances. Her conscience bothers her to the extent that she feels the need to confess to her mother:

Helen: I just feel that I don't want to go on lying about it any more. Anyhow, you're my mother and I want you to know about it.

Mrs. Davis: Ach, but Helen dear--

Helen: We love each other so, mother. Do you think it's so very wrong for us to try to get a little happiness.²⁵

Helen, then, is a wholesome American girl, who longs for sexual fulfillment in marriage, but is prevented from attaining these needs by the conditions of the times. Helen needs awakening to the awareness that more than her hopes and optimistic spirit are needed to correct conditions. By the conclusion of the play she has joined the voices of protest to help free her brother. The moment of her awakening is not dramatized and as a result she is a weak conversion figure.

²⁵Ibid., p. 91-92.

Bert Collins is an ordinary young man. His function, too, is to show that decent young people are unable to realize their dreams in the face of economic conditions. Bert, too, is naive, colorless, and inactive. Just as Helen is a rather romanticized version of the American working-girl, Bert is her male counterpart.

In the character of William Davis, however, Rice succeeds in demonstrating dramatically, what his thesis hopes to illustrate--that the reactionary factors stifle protest by force. Davis' attitude at the beginning of the play is the same as Helen's--that protest is subversive and disloyal. He believes in the future of the workingman in America, and says, "I'd like to know where a workin' man or any other man is any better off than right here in the U.S.A."²⁶ Increasing hardships do not seem to alter his belief. After a pay reduction, he is finally laid off indefinitely, yet, in spite of all these difficulties, Davis says:

I don't bear Applegate any hard feelin's. It ain't his fault that conditions are bad, any more'n it's mine. You can't blame a man for shuttin' down production when he's not gettin' any orders. It ain't common sense to keep a shop open when you're losin' money.²⁷

Davis discovers that his optimism has been self-delusion. He agrees to lead a peaceful protest

²⁶Ibid., p. 16.

²⁷Ibid., p. 152.

march to Applegate's factory, and is shot down by the armed guards at the gate. At the end of the play, Davis is brought into the protest meeting in a wheelchair, "a shrunken figure with a blanket about his knees."²⁸ Through the character of William Davis, Rice presents his strongest testimonial to the destruction of the worker by the social system.

The second group of protagonists is composed of the protesters. The four members of this group are alike in that they all serve as raisonneurs, arguing the author's thesis, and they are intellectuals. Allen Davis and Mary Klobutsko are far above average students, and C. Carter Sloane and Morris Hirschbein are teachers at the university.

Allen Davis is the focal figure of the latter half of the play. He has shown from the beginning, a strong dislike of social conditions, and a particular hatred of war. His attitude is vehement: "Let's kick the general conditions in the pants and get some new ones."²⁹ At a street-corner meeting to protest militarism, Allen defies a policeman who tries to break up the crowd:

The Policeman: Hey, you, lay off that kind of talk.

Allen: I'll say anything I want to and just try to stop me.

The Policeman: Yeah, well, you can it, or you'll

²⁸Ibid., p. 245

²⁹Ibid., p. 152.

get run in.

Allen: Shut up, you thug.³⁰

Because of this defiant attitude, Allen is victimized by the police, and convicted of a crime he did not commit. As Judge Thomas sentences Allen to death, he articulates the typical reactionary view:

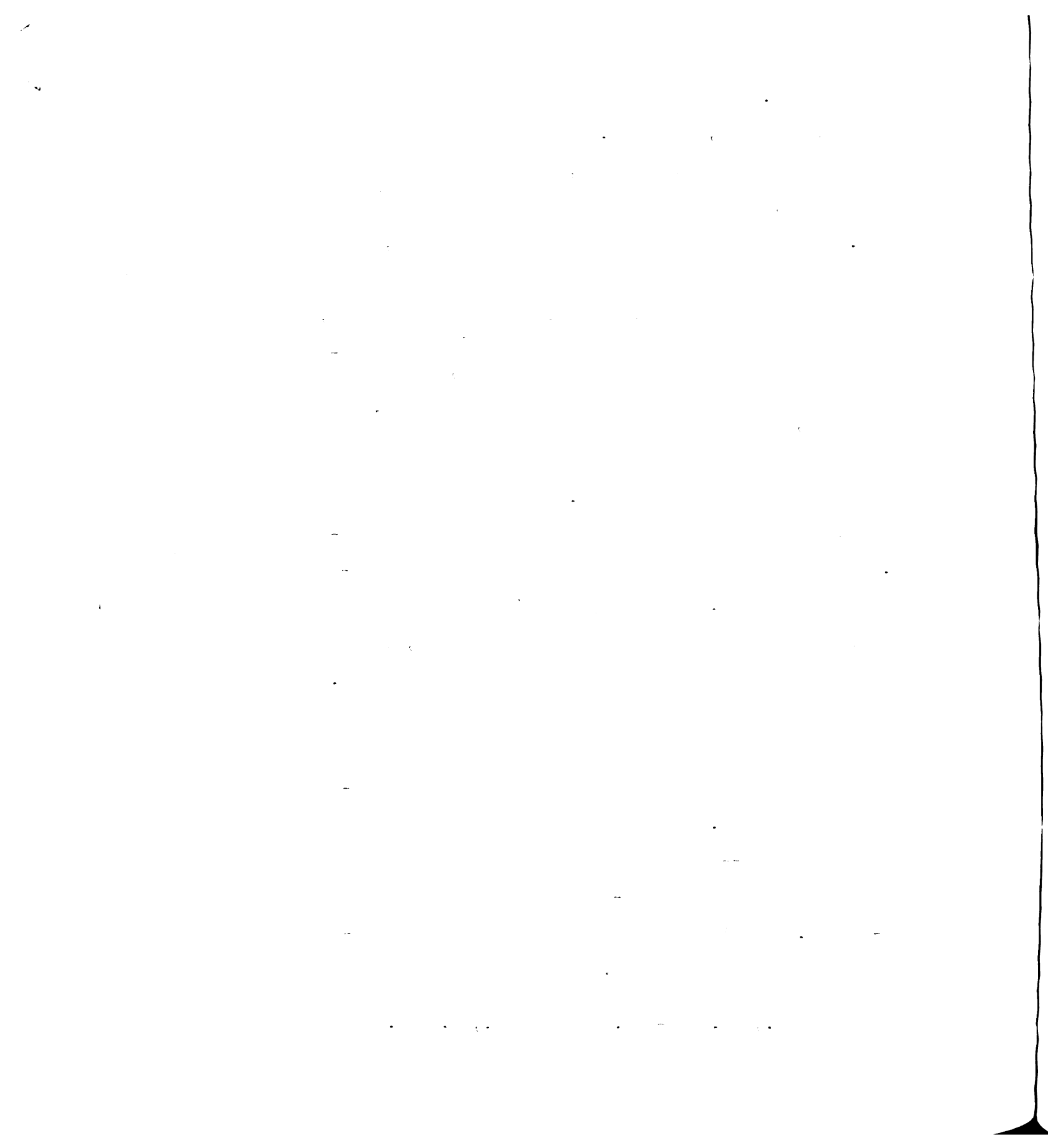
You were born of sober, honest, hardworking parents, reared in comfort and with loving care. It was to have been expected of you that you would make something fine and worthwhile of your life, that you would embrace the manifold opportunities which America offers young men of brains and ability. And yet, what have you done with your life?³¹

Rice uses Allen to illustrate the lengths the system will go to stifle protest. But there are several difficulties in accepting Allen Davis as an heroic martyr. There is an annoying tone of adolescent peevishness in his protest. Secondly, Allen's innocence of the murder of the policeman is never made clear, raising a serious doubt about his being a victim of the system.

Mary Klobutsko resembles Allen in her militant attitude; however, she emerges as a more interesting character than Allen even though she appears less frequently in the play. Her dissatisfaction with society is well motivated--she is the daughter of an immigrant who died as a result of over-work and the conditions of slum-living. Mary's rebellious attitude may be attributed to a deprived childhood.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 238-239.

³¹Ibid., p. 243.



Mary's militant attitude is somewhat tempered by her career ambitions and her sentimental feelings. She anticipated a college education, but had to withdraw when she realized that college was a "place for hiding the truth from people, for making the students satisfied with the present conditions."³² She developed an interest in the performing arts in college, and hoped to become an actress. "That's what I would like to be: a wonderful actress. Oh, that must be wonderful."³³ When she visited Allen at the State Penitentiary, she returned home and "cried for two days."³⁴

Yet, in spite of her disillusion with life, Mary's spirit is not broken. In fact, the intensity of her protest increases even in the face of death:

Because my lover was not silent, they have told him he must die. Perhaps they will tell me that I must die, too. It is the only way they can make me be silent. Until then, I shall protest, protest, protest! And when my child is born, I shall teach it to protest, too. With my milk it shall learn to protest.³⁵

Through the unborn child, Rice symbolizes the continuation of protest as long as human life exists.

The two professors embody a more enlightened view than that of the youthful protagonists. Sloane is a professor of history and Hirschbein a professor of economics. Sloane particularly functions in the

³²Ibid., p. 230.

³³Ibid., p. 141.

³⁴Ibid., p. 231.

³⁵Ibid., p. 250.

play as a raisonneur. He is descended from "Mayflower" pilgrims, among them one of the first signers of the Declaration of Independence. His father was a distinguished professor of philosophy at Harvard. Thus Sloane's protest is not motivated by prejudice or deprivation. Rather he represents the view of the enlightened liberal who believes that protest is necessary:

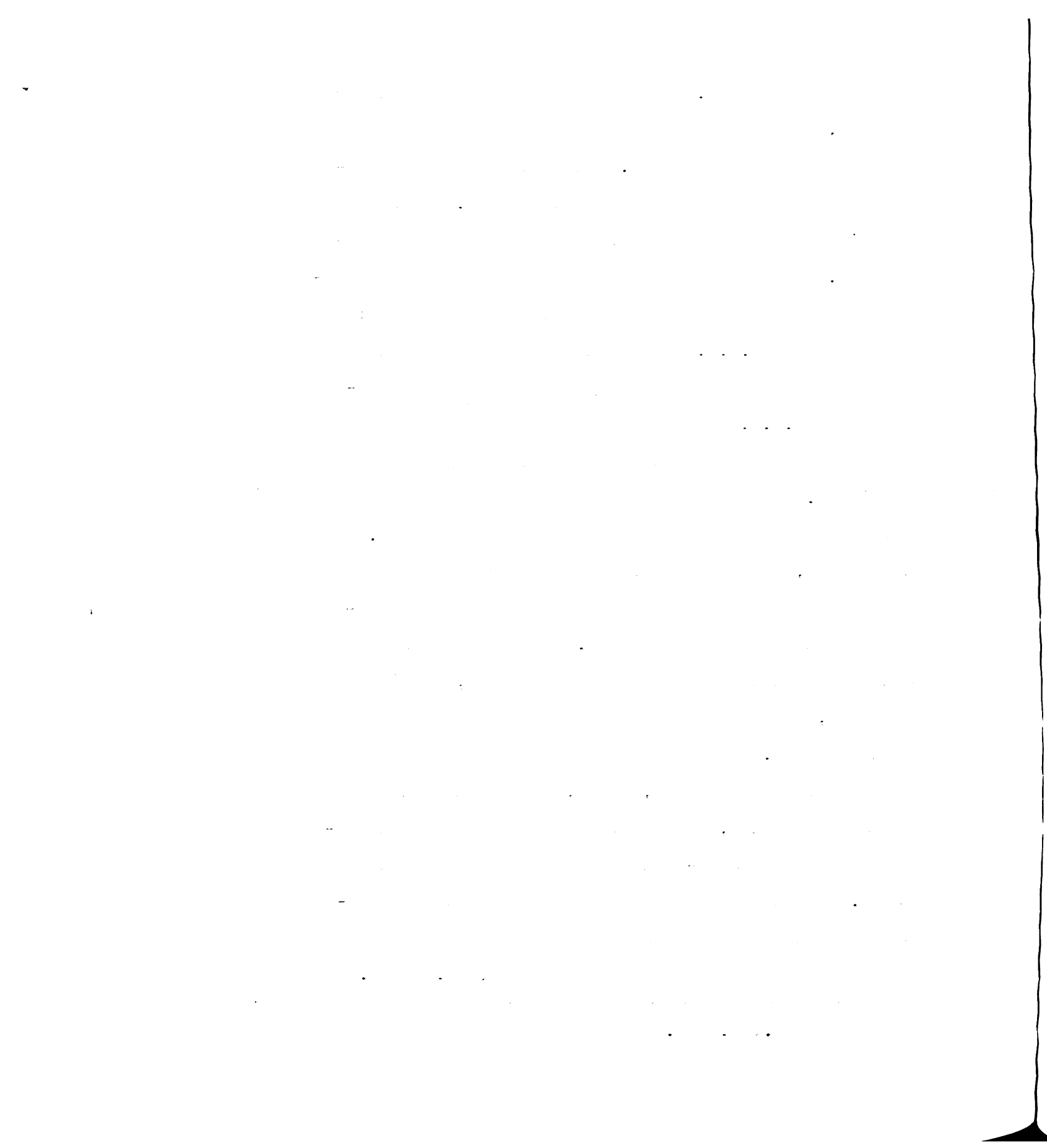
[When] acts . . . are committed in contravention of those ideals and those rights as guaranteed in the Constitution [and] deny the noble and humanitarian principles upon which our government was founded . . . ³⁶

Sloane demonstrates that he lives by his principles. He refuses to continue teaching at the university if his protesting voice must be stilled. In addition, he works actively for a pardon for Allen Davis because he genuinely believes that the case represents miscarriage of justice. Sloane possessed the admirable quality of protesting with vigor, confidence and logic, free of the adolescent emotional defiance of Allen Davis.

Morris Hirschbein, a Jew, appears in only two scenes of the play, and is obviously intended to introduce the idea of anti-Semitism in a corrupt social system. The injustice of his release from the university is indicated in his speech:

I have a wife and two small children, Dr. Purdy.

³⁶Ibid., p. 252.



Do they have to suffer because I don't happen to believe that men seeking employment should be murdered in cold blood?³⁷

Hirschbein's outspokenness seems obnoxious, even though he is speaking the truth. This quality of candor is illustrated in an interchange with Senator Gregg:

Is it not a fact that you are a former member of the banking firm of Drew and Company, which has underwritten bond issues for at least seven corporations engaged in the manufacture of munitions? Is it not a fact that you were formerly a director of three of these corporations?³⁸

The readiness with which Hirschbein attributes criticism of his aggressive quality to his being a Jew, suggests a paranoid personality. Rice may be saying that even though a person may be disliked because of his personality, this should never prevent him from exercising his right of free speech.

Rice has avoided the tendency to treat his protagonists as paragons. Each has some of that human quality of misdirection. For example, Helen Davis momentarily abandons her scruples and has sexual relations with Bert; Allen Davis steals, and also lives openly with Mary without being married; and Hirschbein is aggressively obnoxious. Each enlists the admiration of the audience, however, because each lives by his principles even in the face of vilification and danger.

The antagonists of We, The People represent the conservative position of the wealthy class. Where

³⁷Ibid., p. 204.

³⁸Ibid., p. 216.

the "agit-props" made use of top-hats, and Odets used a cigar to symbolize the capitalist, Rice uses subtler means to delineate his group. Within the group of five, there is a great variety. Willard Drew and Walter Applegate are businessmen, Dr. Purdy is a president of a university, Harry Gregg is a United States Senator, and Cleveland Thomas is a judge. Purdy, Gregg and Thomas are shown to be the pawns of business interests represented by Drew and Applegate. Since such a division of the group is possible, the businessmen will be treated first.

Willard Drew appears first in scene iv. Three important facets of Drew's character are revealed in this scene: (1) he is interested in munitions orders which the Japanese government placed in France; (2) he favors meeting a stock dividend by cutting workers' wages; (3) he has much more money than he needs.

The prospect of Drew being involved with munitions manufacture is only suggested in this scene:

Drew: Now this telegram to our Paris office. Say: Imperative I have at earliest possible moment precise information as to orders for munitions placed in France by Japanese government.³⁹

However, it is revealed in scene xvi that Drew has underwritten bond issues for at least seven corporations manufacturing munitions. Since Drew profits indirectly

³⁹Ibid., p. 38.

from war, he becomes one of the most unscrupulous of businessmen.

By suggesting that the wages of Applegate's men be cut to meet the stock dividend rather than taking it from surplus, Drew is shown to be completely out of sympathy with the workingman. He rationalizes the decision by making it appear as though he is being unusually ethical:

But listen old man, we've got a duty to the public. They're sitting back waiting to see what action we're going to take, and if we pass that dividend, you know what it's going to do to the market, don't you? It's our duty to maintain public confidence. . . . You've got to cut wages. . . . You can't maintain wages in the face of falling commodity prices. It's bad business and bad economics. Well, it's a question of cutting twenty thousand men ten or fifteen percent or of shutting off the income of a hundred thousand preferred stock-holders.⁴⁰

Profit is also threatened by a proposed higher tax on industry by the government. Rice achieves a particularly effective irony after Drew has just ordered the wage cut when he objects to the new tax schedule with these words, "You can't expect a man to give his time and brains if you take all incentive from him."⁴¹

Drew's anger is motivated by his view that business should be protected by the government, and that the government should therefore, be strongly influenced by the wants of business. He says, "The interest of business are the interests of the whole country. When

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 39-40.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 40.



business prospers everybody prospers."⁴² Obviously Drew is being short-sighted here, for his business is prospering well, but the condition of the country is intolerable. Drew embodies Rice's indictment that the government is too strongly connected with private interests to provide a meaningful representation of the American public.

In spite of Drew's alarmist attitude, it is clear that his personal income has not suffered as a result. In fact, Rice attempts to show that rather than sacrifice his income, he would rather cut away the incomes of his workers. Drew's daughter is planning a society wedding in Westminster Abbey with a honeymoon on the family yacht. Mrs. Drew intends to pay half a million dollars for a Titian, but on the advice of her husband, she agrees upon a bid of one-quarter million. Drew intends to exert pressure upon the seller since he is aware of the broker's financial position. "I happen to know the gentleman in question is in financial difficulties. Well, you leave it to me and I'll get it for you for half."⁴³

Drew has proved somewhat generous in donating \$50,000 to the Mayor's Committee for Unemployment Relief, and another \$5,000 to his daughter to help the Junior Auxiliary fill their quota. However, this

⁴²Ibid., p. 161.

⁴³Ibid., p. 47.

generosity is neutralized by the fantastic expenditure for the wedding and the painting. Besides, Drew is made to appear directly responsible for the unemployment of the men, and therefore should feel ethically obligated to provide for their welfare.

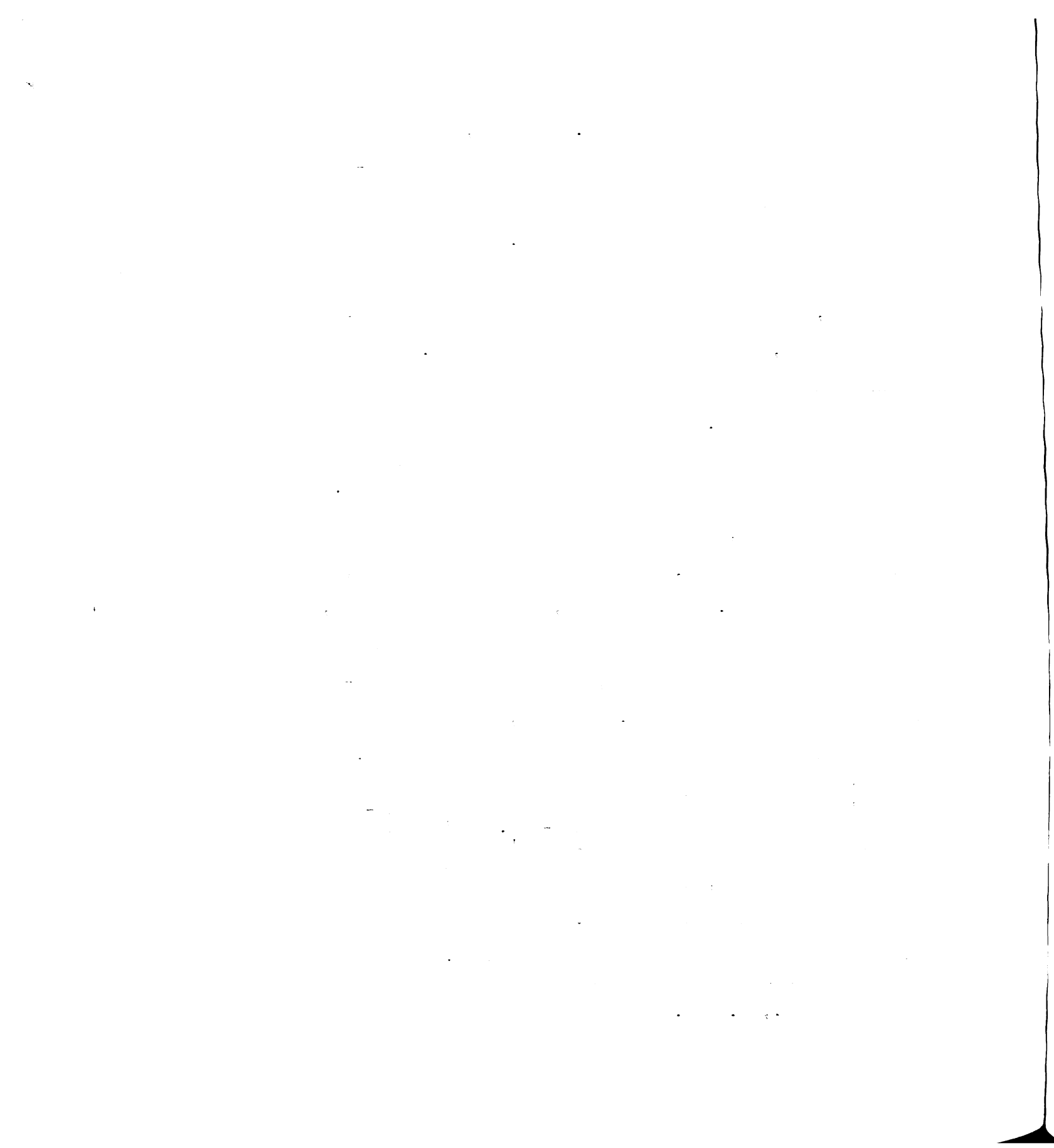
In a time of precarious financial security for the worker, Drew lives in a world of society weddings, dinner parties, art auctions, and trips abroad. Drew typifies Rice's belief that the rich have much more money than they need.

Walter Applegate and Willard Drew are closely allied; Drew is on the board of directors of Applegate's manufacturing firm, and both are on the Board of Trustees of the State University. Applegate possesses a gruff, antagonistic manner. He maintains, throughout the play, that the role of government is to protect the business interests of American industry, particularly with reference to investments abroad. As such, he advocates a ready military force to protect American investors:

Let's have less talk about peace and good will and let's do something about protecting American industry and the American working-man. We're always worrying about the foreigner. We'd be a damned sight better off if we served notice on them that we mean business, if we had an army and navy that was ready and willing to protect the interests of the American investor abroad.⁴⁴

This attitude shows him to be an imperialist.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 160.



The three sycophants of Drew and Applegate are Dr. Purdy, Senator Gregg, and Judge Thomas. Each serves to support the System which allows the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few. Dr. Purdy is President of the State University, and renowned for his scholarly pursuits. He is far from humble, however; in fact, he is almost unbearably pompous and conceited. A sample of his speech pattern illustrates this:

Gentlemen, I don't know what to say. I'm really quite bowled over. But before I attempt to say anything else, let me thank you from the bottom of my heart for this most generous demonstration of your esteem. I am deeply touched, more deeply than I can tell you. Coming as it does, from men whom I esteem in turn, it is most gratifying.⁴⁵

The sententious cliches are certainly not the mark of a renowned scholar and educator.

Purdy maintains the belief that he is sacrificing of himself to accept the Presidential nomination. His own self-esteem prevents him from seeing his position as a tool of business interests. Purdy is more concerned with his public image:

It's a rather disturbing thought. Still I suppose if one undertakes to serve the people, one must suffer a certain amount of popular canonization. Saint Elbert Purdy!⁴⁶

Rice further shows Purdy to be self-deluded. He views himself as a liberal when in reality he is a staunch conservative. When reprimanding Sloane for his

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 171-72.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 198.

participation in the student protest meeting, he urges Sloane to be more conservative and "not allow yourself to be led astray by these shallow and spurious doctrines which are abroad at the moment."⁴⁷ Then, after Sloane has congratulated him for his success in the Oregon Presidential primary, Purdy answers:

I am not politically ambitious, Mr. Sloane. I have consented to enter this campaign only with the hope of introducing into the conduct of our public affairs, an element of enlightened liberalism.⁴⁸

One point which must be accorded in Purdy's favor is his consistent dislike of war and militarism. However, should Purdy be elected to the Presidency and war were to threaten, he would be faced with making a decision based on his own personal belief, or the dictates of those who support him. Fortunately, Rice does not have him faced with this dilemma. Purdy emerges as a pompous, rather pathetic figure, self-deluded and self-enamoured.

Senator Gregg, like Purdy, is a pawn of big business, supporting the conservative stand. Like Purdy, he is self-deluded, for he believes that his career is one of genuine public service. Gregg is more closely allied with business interests than is Purdy, since Gregg once served as a partner in Drew and Company. He is upset about criticism because of

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 207.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 209.

this previous association. "I'm up against the same thing: cranks and radicals denouncing me as a servant of the interests simply because I happen to be an ex-partner of Drew and Company."⁴⁹ Gregg, however, does support "the interests" with especial regard to defense spending:

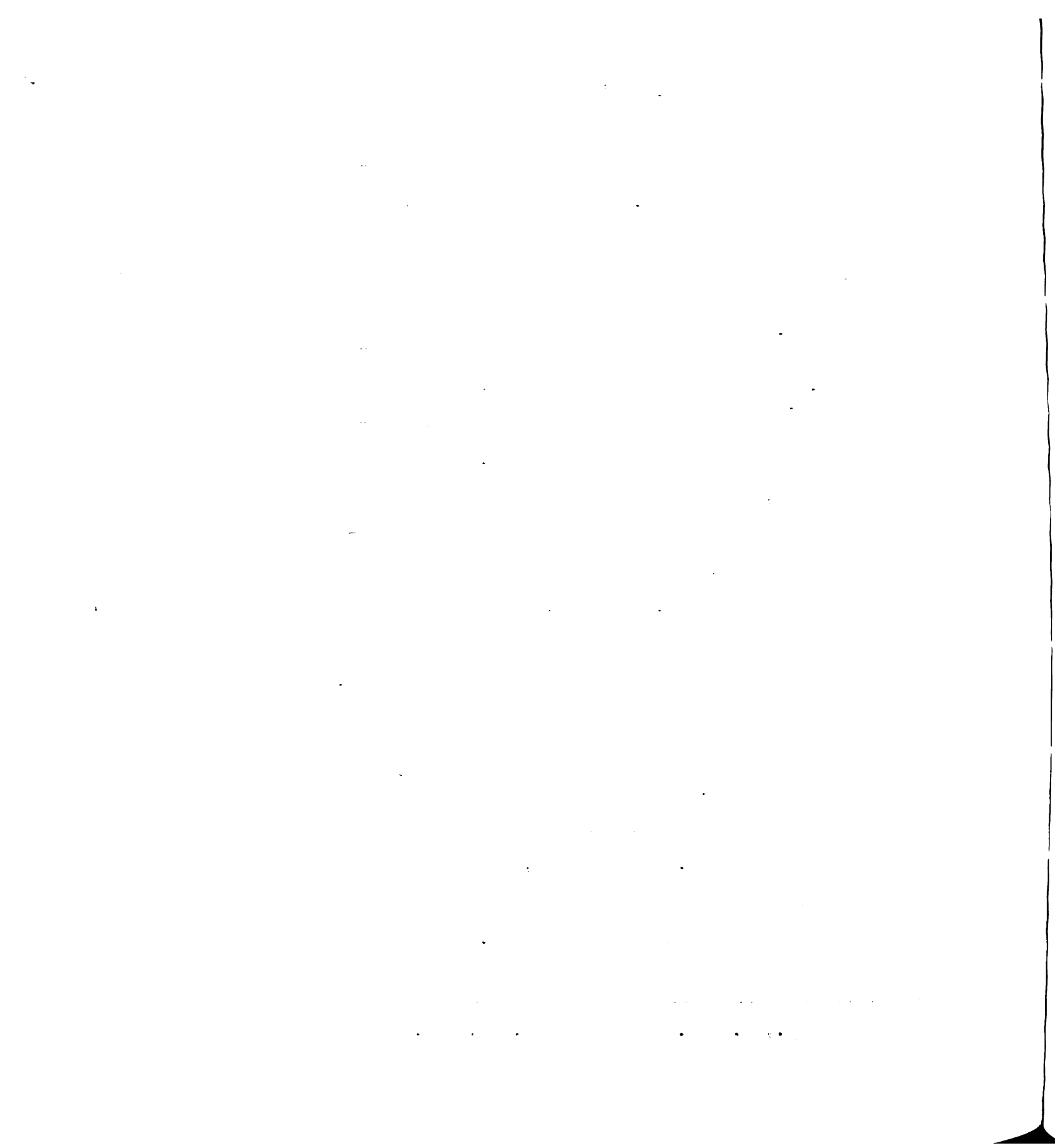
I agree with you that the burden of armament must be reduced. But the responsibility with which we are entrusted here in Washington makes it imperative that we do not allow our emotions to sweep us away. We must look before we leap, ladies and gentlemen. And so long as the other great nations of the world continue to pile up armaments, a regard for our national security demands that we shall not leave ourselves defenseless.⁵⁰

However, when it is revealed that Gregg served as chairman of three corporations engaged in the manufacture of munitions, one can easily see how much lip service is given to peace. In fact, Senator Gregg has learned the value of lip service to any idea, believing that he can placate both sides by sitting on the fence. He has developed an equivocal manner which allows him to shift ground and never become committed to an idea or a course of action.

Judge Thomas shows little else but that he is an extreme conservative. Through him, Rice implies that the courts are more dedicated to the support of the status quo than in dispensing justice. Thomas displays an unethical emotional slanting in his

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 162.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 215.



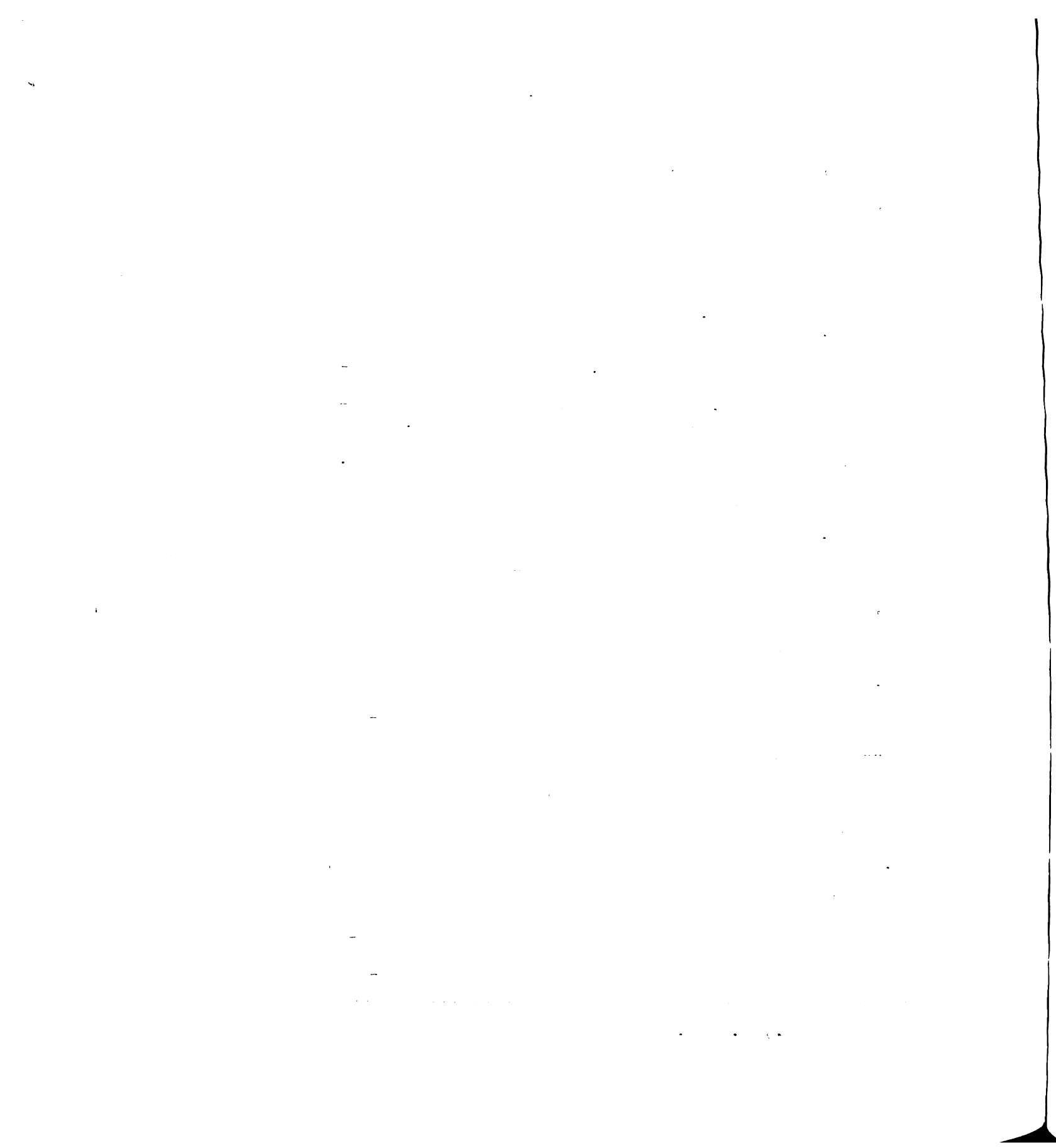
summation at the trial of Allen Davis. Because Davis has defied convention and retained his outspoken voice of protest, Judge Thomas, along with the rest of the court, tries Davis for the opinions he holds rather than the crime he is charged with:

On the other hand, the testimony of the defendant and of his corroborating witness is open to the gravest suspicion. The defendant has a criminal record. His violent hostility to the police and his open threats against them have been testified to by a number of witnesses. His attitude throughout the trial was one of open defiance of the forces of law and order. In addition, he has admitted deflowering a virgin, under the age of consent. Under our state statute this constitutes the crime of rape, one of the gravest offenses known to the law. And although the defendant was not on trial here for this crime, it must be taken into account as bearing on his character and affecting his credibility.⁵¹

Judge Thomas supports the police frame-up of Allen Davis, and protects the conservative minority from open criticism, by forceful stilling of a protesting voice.

All of the antagonists are alike in one respect--they believe that their efforts are dedicated to the best interests of the public, when in reality the "public" has a rather specialized definition for them. Drew insisted that "we have a duty to the public," but that "public" consisted of preferred stockholders in Applegate and Company; Applegate believes that government suppression of agitation was a means of pro-

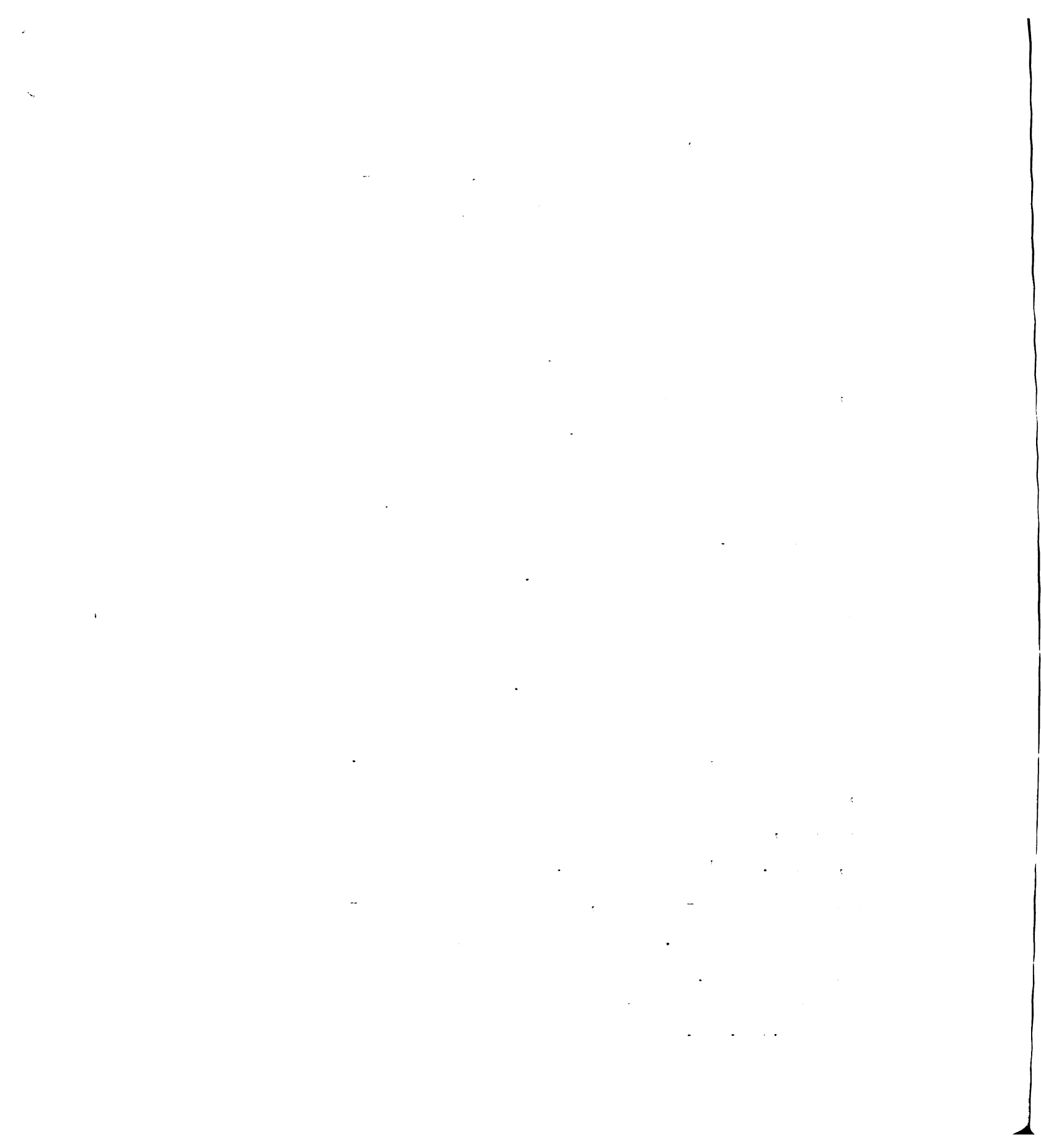
⁵¹Ibid., p. 241.



protecting the workingman; Senator Gregg serves the "public" which for him, is that small group of wealthy businessmen who supported his campaign; Dr. Purdy envisions a life of dedication to the "public," also composed of the wealthy few; and Thomas operates his courtroom in dedication to justice for the "public" so long as they are not poor or are not in conflict with his own conservative viewpoint. Through these five men, Rice emphatically shows that democracy has taken a major step toward fascism.

A character who merits special discussion because of his importance to the propaganda intent, is Reverend Williamson. Williamson is the closest Rice comes to creating a conversion figure. Williamson is a sympathetic but reticent person who learns that only through protest can one attempt to restore those rights which belong to every American citizen. Early in the play he "straddles the fence" between the conservative Protestant tradition, and his own innate liberal bent. He says, in response to his encouragement of the Negro servant, Steve, "I always encourage every man to speak his mind, Sarah. It's educational!"⁵² He comes from a tradition of liberal-thinkers, particularly with regard to racial prejudice. "I have a family leaning towards the black man. My grandfather was one of the

⁵²Ibid., p. 60.



first Abolitionists--a close friend, in fact, of William Lloyd Garrison."⁵³

In spite of his liberal leanings, however, he speaks the cliches of the stereotyped clergyman. He cautions Steve, the rebellious Negro, that "pride is a deadly sin . . . ," and later, when Donald Collins announces his decision to join the marines, Williamson advises him:

God bless you and keep you. And remember one thing, my boy, you'll find many temptations where you're going. Try to keep your mind and your body clean.⁵⁴

Reverend Williamson joins a delegation representing the League for World Peace--a group advocating total disarmament--and protests arms spending in an interview with Senator Gregg. Williamson becomes increasingly outspoken, and at the protest meeting to free Allen Davis, acts as chairman. A sampling of his language at this point indicates a new-found protesting voice:

Yes, let us give Allen Davis a chance to live! And let us in freeing him, give a message of hope to imprisoned youth everywhere--imprisoned by fetters of poverty, or ignorance, of racial discrimination.⁵⁵

Later in the same scene, he denounces American intervention in Haiti:

Are we to waste these strong, eager, beautiful

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 116.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 248.

young lives--allow them to be ground out by cruelty and injustice? I could tell you of one such wasted young life--a youth dear to me, as though he were my own son, thrown away, squandered ruthlessly in the service of imperialistic greed.⁵⁶

As further proof of his liberalized attitude, he introduces Mary Klobutsko as "a young woman who in every sense but a strictly legal one, has the right to call herself the wife of Allen Davis."⁵⁷ With the understanding that Allen and Mary were living together without marriage, the above statement by a clergyman, indicates an unusually liberal attitude.

Reverend Williamson's discovery is that if one is truly Christian, he must speak out against injustice or live a life of hypocrisy. As such, he is a testament to Rice's belief that protest is good rather than bad. Rice also provides a personal motivation for Williamson's conversion--the death of Donald Collins. The seeds of his conversion are planted early in the play, and his awareness and awakening are thoroughly motivated. However, Williamson is at best, a minor figure in the play, and little emphasis is placed upon his conversion.

Structure

The structure of We, The People is episodic. There are twenty scenes with thirteen different locales. The unities of time, place and action are disregarded

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 250.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 248.

in favor of a loosely-structured and sprawling play. Rice freely uses time since the action spans about a year. Unity of action is violated as three major lines of action are present in the play.

The play may be broken into three large segments unified by the plot line contained in each. Rice does not indicate act divisions, but these three segments correspond to the three-act structure. The first segment contains scenes i through vi, and centers on the love affair of Helen Davis and Bert Collins. This segment culminates with the establishment of a sexual relationship between Bert and Helen. In a very broad sense, this part is unified by place, since these scenes all take place in the same city, and in places immediately connected with the lives of the two focal figures. Time is not a unifying factor in this segment.

The second segment centers upon the hardship of the Davis family. It encompasses scenes vii through xiii, with scene xiii providing a transition to the third segment. Four of the seven scenes occur in the Davis living room, and each shows another step in the destruction of the family. The scenes intervening (there is an alternating pattern of a scene in the Davis house followed by a scene elsewhere), deal with sub-plots and indicate a passage of time. Taken as a unit, the scenes concentrating upon the Davis family

provide a carefully-planned sequence. Scene vii shows Mr. Davis experiencing a ten percent salary reduction; in scene ix the bank closes, wiping out the family savings; scene xi finds Mr. Davis unemployed and Allen Davis forced to withdraw from college, and the family forced to take in a boarder to make ends meet. The second segment provides the closest unity of place found in the play because of the constant returning to the Davis house. Even so, the intervening scenes tend to diminish the unity of the whole.

Scene xiii is a transitional scene; it climaxes the hardships of the Davis family in the arrest of Allen Davis for stealing coal, however, this is also the generating incident for the plot of the last section of the play. The third part includes scenes xiii through xx and centers upon Allen Davis' destruction at the hands of the power structure. The third portion of the play does present a development in concept, if not a logical progression of plot, in that it follows a section which shows the destruction of the family by "the system," with one which shows the destruction of the individual by this same "system." Section three is least effectively unified. Unity of place provides little assistance since all of the eight scenes occur in different places, and so far as scenes xvii through xx are concerned, the relationship of the locale to the rest of the play, is unknown.

The structure of We, The People then, shows two half-completed units with a complete unit between them. The first section begins after the action has been initiated, picking up the plot thread after Bert and Helen have been engaged for some time. The center unit is a complete one showing how the fortunes of the Davis family change from relative prosperity to severe adversity. The final section ends with the fate of Allen Davis undecided. One is constantly reminded that We, The People bears stronger resemblance to a novel than a play. Since most of the scenes are scenes of exposition, this form may have aided Rice in his purpose.

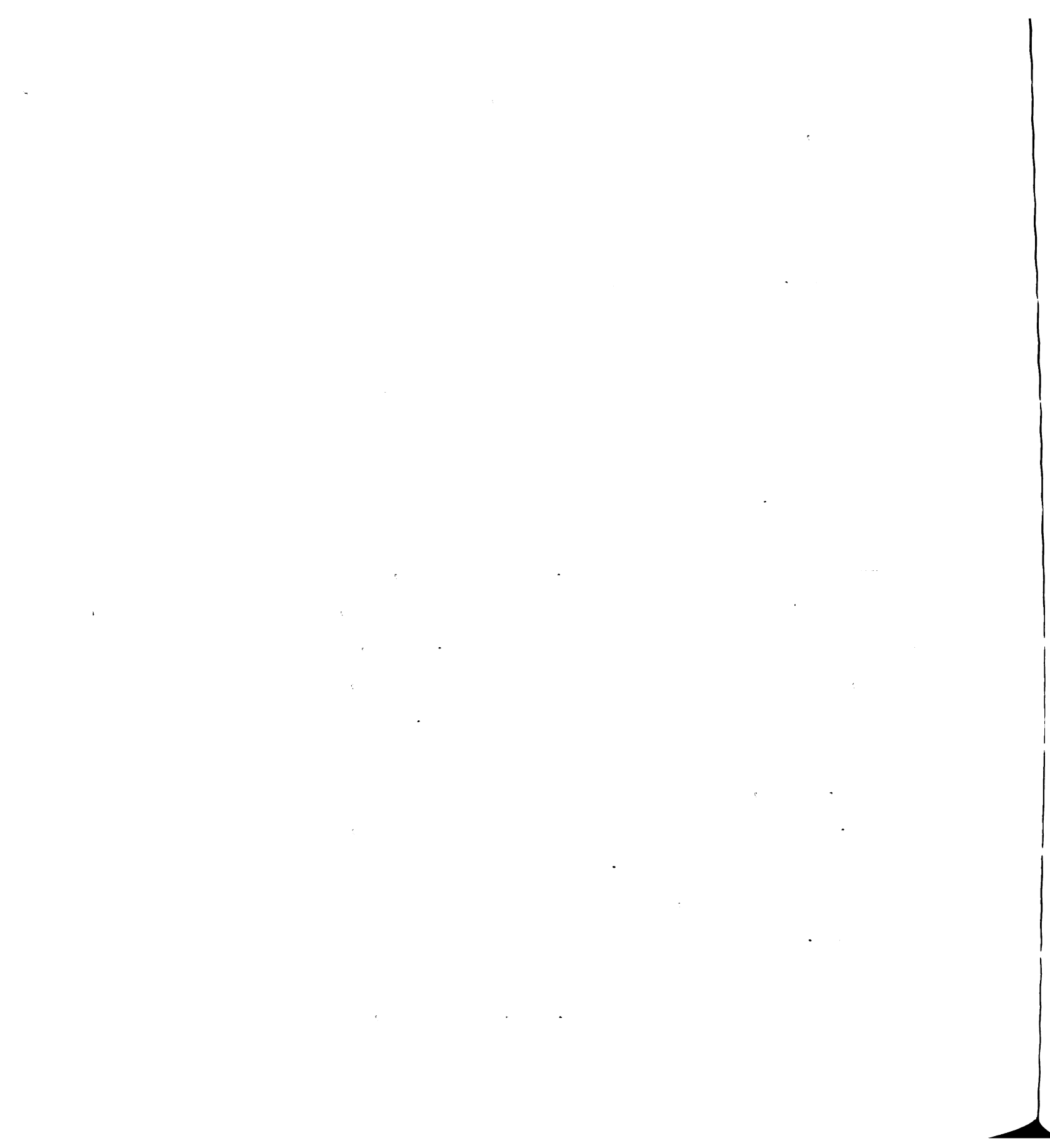
The scenes which are not directly related to the three lines of plot previously mentioned, are carefully chosen to show certain characters in their typical environment. For example, Willard Drew is shown in his luxurious office carrying out the daily activities of a business tycoon.

The second important function of the locale is to provide an ironic commentary upon the content of the scene. Scene i of the play, for example, is set in a schoolroom. As Helen and Mr. Volterra discuss the problems of democracy, the setting displays pictures of George Washington, and The Battle of the Monitor and the Merrimac. The schoolroom is the place where children are first taught the ideals of democracy.

A protest meeting to abolish war, which ends in violence, is held in a public park at the base of a monument inscribed: "To the memory of those who fell in the World War"; the final scene is a protest meeting held in an auditorium with the stage backed by a large American flag. Unfortunately, Rice is not consistent in his use of setting as an ironic commentary upon the content of the scene; for example, Senator Gregg's office in the Senate Office Building in Washington, does not specify any details of setting which might accomplish the same ironic commentary so well handled in other scenes.

Some attention must be given to the obligatory scene--the final scene of the play. First of all, the two groups outlined in the play do not come to a clash, diminishing the dramatic effect of the climax. Rice, instead, substitutes the audience for his antagonists, and makes use of speeches made directly to them. The effect is one of berating the audience to awaken them to action. Here, Rice breaks the entire pattern of his play. That pattern consisted of realistic scenes, representational in character. The final scene is presentational in style, out of keeping with the rest of the play.

Several of the plays in this study have shown the triumphant militant conclusion. We, The People,



on the other hand, shows righteous indignation at defeat. In this respect it is similar to They Shall Not Die.⁵⁸ The audience should leave the theatre determined to right injustice.

Dialogue

Rice's use of the episodic form and multiple plots, presents a major problem in the use of dialogue--the handling of exposition. Rice uses time freely in the play; there are frequent time lapses between scenes. The author is thereby obligated to show in each new scene, what has happened in the interim. The sequence of scenes in the middle portion of the play illustrates this well. In scene vii, William Davis reveals that he has had to take a salary cut, and in the following scene involving the family, the bank has failed. Scene xi again returns to the family after another lapse of time. In this interim Davis has lost his job, Allen has withdrawn from college, and the Davises have taken in a boarder. In scene xiii the mortgage has been foreclosed. In each case the audience must be informed of the present status of the family's affairs.

Rice is aware of his problems in exposition, and attempts to break up long sequences of exposition by introducing a momentary diverting action. A good

⁵⁸Supra, Chapter VI, pp. 142-143.

example occurs in scene iii as Bert and Helen are sitting in the park discussing their situation. Another couple passes in the midst of a violent argument:

The Man: Oh, is that so?

The Woman: Yes, that's so.

The Man: A hell of a lot you know about it!

The Woman: Well, I know more about it than you do--an' how do you like that?

The Man: Aw, you give me a stiff pain--an' I don't mean in the neck, either!

The Woman: Yeah? Well, maybe a good swift kick in the same place would do you a lot o' good!⁵⁹

The subject of their argument is never known, and neither appears again in the play, but their presence in this scene breaks up the expository sequence with a bit of humor.

The quality of the dialogue of We, The People is mundane. The language seldom rises above the ordinary functional use of language. Rice rarely creates any fresh use of language, evocative description, or other poetic turns. The last scene of the play marks the one place in which the rhetorical eloquence raises the dialogue to a slightly higher plane.

Much of the dialogue bears a strong resemblance to serialized afternoon dramas. In many ways, Rice's play resembles this genre, although the treatment of his theme raises it above them. Examples taken at

⁵⁹Rice, We, The People, pp. 31-32.

random illustrate this:

1. Helen: There are other things to think about, too.

Bert: What?

Helen: Lots of things.

Bert: You mean a baby?

Helen: Yes.

Bert: But darling, if we're careful--

Helen: Yes, I know.

Bert: There's nothing to be afraid of, dear--truly there isn't.

Helen: No, Bert, I can't.

Bert: Well, if you don't want to--

Helen: Oh, darling, I do want to--I do.⁶⁰

2. Bert: Hello, Mr. Williamson.

Williamson: Good evening, Bert.

Bert: Hello, Mother.

Mrs. Collins: (beginning to sob) Oh, Bert!

Bert: Don't Mother, don't. It's all right, Mother. Don't cry.

Mrs. Collins: Oh, Bert, Bert, what's going to become of us?

Bert: Never mind, Mother, never mind.⁶¹

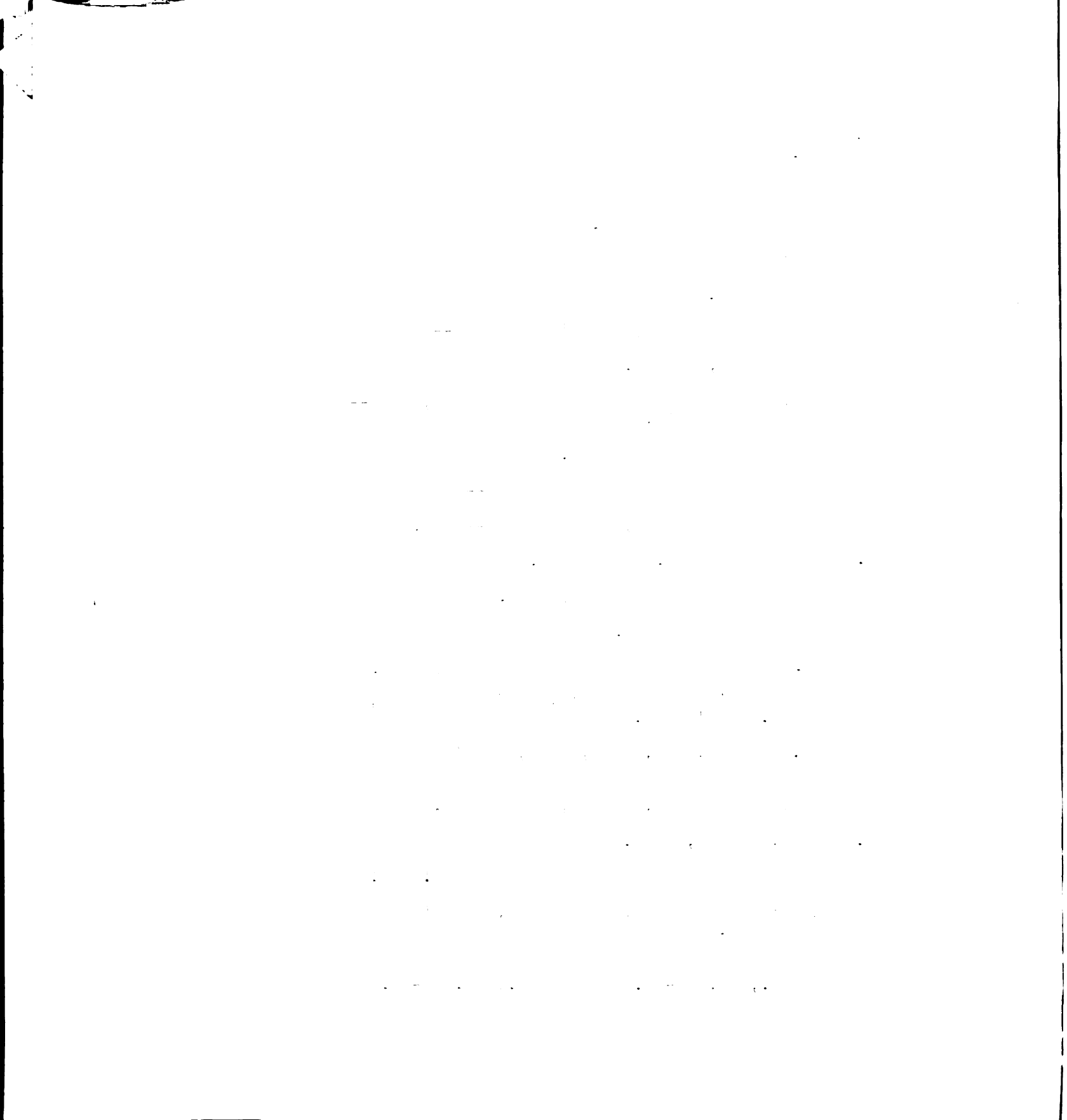
3. Allen: Hello, Mary.

Mary (Surprised and overjoyed): Allen! No!

Allen: How are you, Mary? Gee, but I'm glad to see you.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 34-35.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 98-99.



Mary: Oh, I am so glad to see you, too. I just wrote you a long letter. I didn't expect to see you yet for ten days.

Allen: They gave me ten days off for good behavior. I just got out this morning. My family doesn't even know I'm out. I haven't been home yet.⁶²

Surprisingly, Rice's dialogue is most pedestrian in the moments of tenderness and sentimentality. There is some improvement in the argument scenes, and his dialogue is best in the final scene. Before an analysis is made it is well to note that the speeches in this scene do not represent conventional dialogue. There is no interchange between characters. Each of the speakers delivers a speech to the audience, and thus the language functions not as dramatic dialogue, but as persuasive rhetoric.

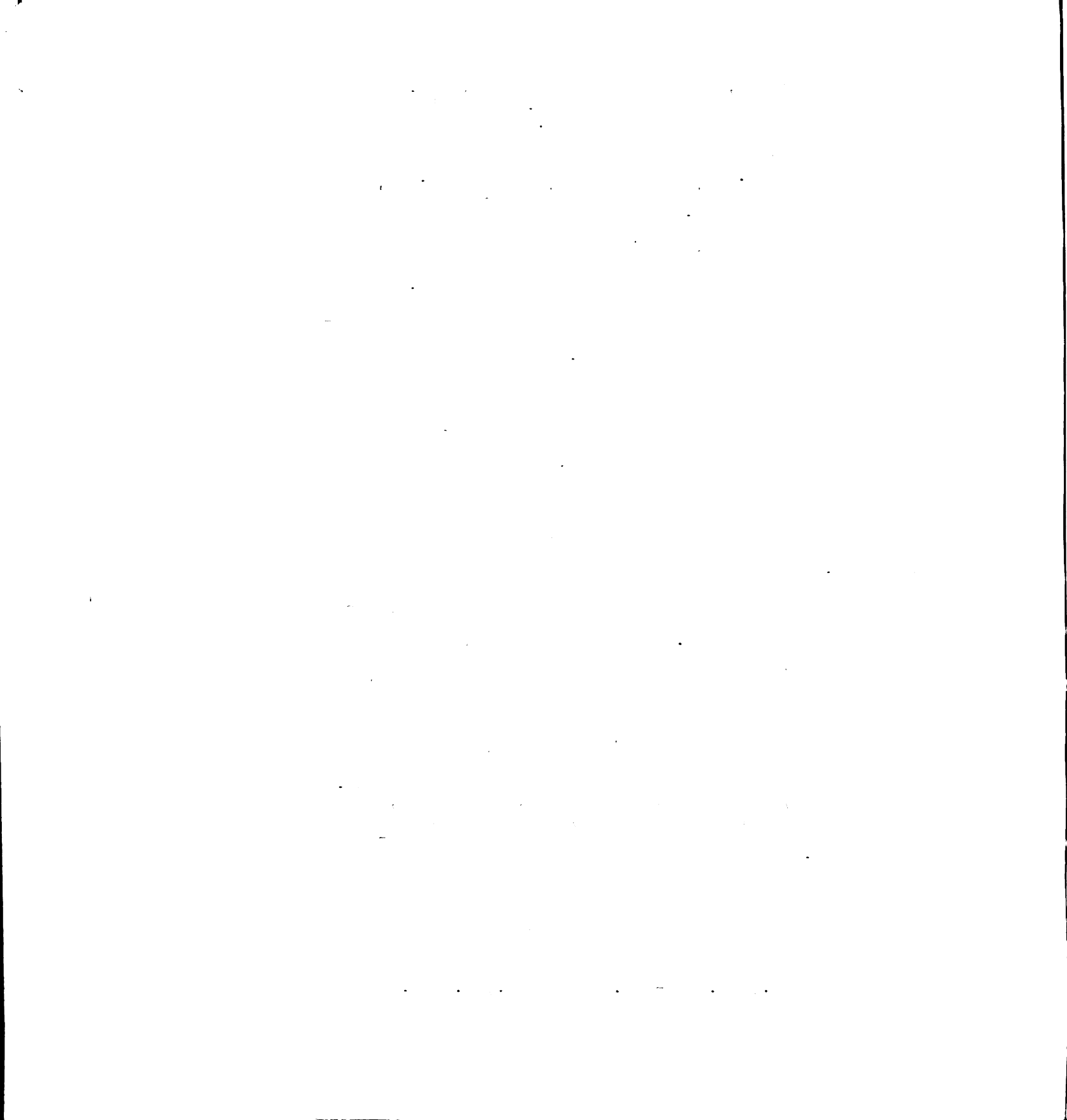
Rice makes frequent appeals to oppression, injustice and patriotism. More specifically, he uses the propagandist's Bandwagon appeal early in the scene, by having Williamson call attention to the vastness of the reaction against Allen Davis' conviction:

These rumors of doubt have echoed around the world. In Paris, in Geneva, in Hamburg, in Vienna, in Buenos Aires, in Mexico City, popular feeling has made itself articulate in sharp tones of indignation.⁶³

He follows this with a patriotic appeal to the American sense of pride in justice and fair play:

⁶²Ibid., pp. 225-226.

⁶³Ibid., p. 246.



My friends, we cannot shut our ears to those reverberations. Our love of America, our pride in its fair name demand that we be jealous of the integrity of our judicial processes.⁶⁴

Throughout the scene, Rice relies on this common love of America as a means of maintaining rapport between speaker and audience.

There follow testimonials of various kinds. Helen Davis testifies to Allen's character, and Mary Klobutsko offers her life as a poverty-stricken immigrant, as testimonial to the evils of the capitalistic system:

I was not born in America. I was born in Poland. In 1920, when I was a little girl, I came here. In Poland there was civil war and starvation. My father came here to find freedom and food for his family. To America, to the land of plenty. What did he find? He found starvation and death. Days he worked in a sweatshop and nights he lived in a slum, until he coughed away his lungs and died. It is so with millions.⁶⁵

Reverend Williamson follows these testimonials with an appeal to religion. "As the servant of One Who made the weary and the heavy-laden His especial care, the fervent plea of this child moves me to deep commiseration."⁶⁶

Sloane closes the play with a lengthy speech. His opening appeal is to past glory, building upon the common bond of patriotism which has already been established. An appeal to the flag is the height of his

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 249.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 250.

emotionalism:

I was taught to love and to venerate the flag. And I do love and venerate it. For me, it has always been a symbol of the ideals of freedom, of justice, of equality and opportunity, of those unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.⁶⁷

Sloane then moves to a series of emotionally loaded rhetorical questions designed to build tension:

In the name of humanity, ladies and gentlemen, in the name of common-sense, what is society for, if not to provide for the safety and well-being of the men and women who compose it? . . . Does that mean a denial of the rights of assemblage and free speech? Does that mean millions without employment or the means to provide themselves with food and shelter?⁶⁸

The closing appeal is very restrained. In it Rice presents his course of action. He calls upon the entire audience to make an effort to restore America to its original ideals. Rice does not suggest a definite means of accomplishing his aim, but rather, suggests that the first step is for each member of the audience to examine his own conscience. Without personal commitment to the cause of free speech and belief in the equality of all men, no progress will be made in the correction of these injustices.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 252.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 253.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AMERICAN WAY

Introduction

The American Way, by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, produced in 1939, was one of the most successful propaganda plays in the American theatre; it enjoyed a run of 244 performances. The success was partly due to the nature of the propaganda. The American Way, unlike the liberal-radical messages of many early Depression plays, emphasized patriotic spirit, and glorified freedom and democracy in America.

Propaganda plays of a similar nature had been produced sporadically on Broadway. The Theatre Guild produced The Ghost of Yankee Doodle, by Sidney Howard, in 1937, and Phillip Barry's Liberty Jones in 1941. Howard's play dealt with a wealthy family's realization that war is not the best solution to the problems of the Depression, but is the lesser of two evils when compared with the alternate choice--a revolution as advocated by the communists. Barry's allegorical play demonstrated the destruction of fascism by democracy.

The Playwright's Company produced more plays of national spirit than any other group between 1937

and 1941. Beginning with the popular success, Abe Lincoln in Illinois, by Robert Sherwood, the Playwright's Company produced three other patriotic plays. Elmer Rice offered American Landscape in 1938, and Flight to the West in 1940. American Landscape concerned the proposed sale of an old New England farm to an American Nazi organization. The ghosts of famous Americans return to convince the family that democracy must be guarded against fascism.

Flight to the West was a melodrama set on a trans-Atlantic airliner. It dealt with the necessity of America's involvement in the war to protect democratic ideals. The play enjoyed a run of 168 performances. The Theatre Guild joined the Playwright's Company and together they produced Maxwell Anderson's Candle in the Wind in 1941. Although not set in America, the play did show that Americans were willing to fight fascism to protect freedom and democracy.

Analysis of The American Way

Synopsis

Martin Gunther, a German immigrant cabinet-maker, brings his wife, Irma, and his two children, Lisa and Karl, to settle in Mapleton, Ohio, in 1896. The play spans forty-two years in his life, from 1896 to 1938, as he rises from a one-man shop, to owner of several large furniture factories. He becomes a

respected and revered citizen of the town. Gunther's life in America covers all the accomplishments and crises faced by the country. The crises of the country also become the crises of the family. Karl is killed in the First World War, and Gunther loses his entire fortune in the bank failure of the Depression. Finally, Gunther, himself, is killed by fascist fanatics as he attempts to prevent his grandson, Karl Jr., from joining a German-American radical group. Throughout the play, Gunther never loses his faith in America and the rightness of democracy.

Persuasive Purpose

The American Way presents the thesis that American democracy has survived crises in the past, and will continue to survive because loyal citizens are willing to die, if necessary, to protect its ideals. The vehicle for this message is the dramatization of the life of Martin Gunther. The crises faced by the Gunther family are the crises faced by America itself. Two major emergencies are shown: America's entry into the First World War, and the Depression. By emphasizing America's recovery from difficulties in the past, the authors build confidence for the successful weathering of the current threat of another war. Kaufman and Hart use a portion of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's inaugural address as the keynote of the play:

This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. . . . Our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with the perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for. . . . The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths . . .¹

Near the end of the play, as Martin Gunther faces the fascist group, he reiterates this idea:

Think! Think what you are doing! There are not many countries left that are free! If this country goes down, what will men do? Where else can men go? Do not do this thing, I beg of you! Do not bring this madness over here! You will not starve in this country. There will be jobs again, just as there have been in the past. This is not our first crisis! Read! Read the history of America! Again and again we have fought our way through. . . . Democracy is not finished; it still exists in many countries of the world, and we are not going to let it die!²

The thesis of the play is optimistic even though conditions were bleak. No indictment of society is presented; no radical method is asserted; no specific solution is offered to the problems of the Depression or war. Rather, the authors seem to accept crisis as a matter of course, and that time and faith are the requirements to endure. Also, because American citizens have remained loyal in the face of despair, the United States has successfully weathered crisis where other

¹George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, The American Way (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 121.

²Ibid., p. 152.

countries have failed.

America's strength lies in her devotion to the principles of freedom, and her weakness is a lack of faith in democracy as an adjunct of freedom. Thus the conflict presented in the play is ideological--loyalty versus disloyalty. The successful weathering of crises depends upon the complete unification of the American people. The ability to survive future crises is seriously threatened by disunity. This conflict is best shown when Karl Gunther Jr., Martin's grandson, confronts Gunther with the challenge that the old forms no longer have meaning:

You're living in the past--the world's moving. You don't know what's going on. We've got different problems now. And the same old system can't meet them any longer.

.
Go back--wave the flag. Let the bands play. But if you stop listening to "The Star Spangled Banner" for a minute, you can hear this whole rotten system crashing around your ears.³

His despair seems justified in the face of the Depression, yet the authors deplore his attitude as dangerous. Even if the problems of society are different with each generation, loyalty to American democracy is the only way that they may be solved in the opinion of Kaufman and Hart.

A last consideration of the theme of The American Way is that loyalty must be more than mere lip service.

³Ibid., p. 143.

Americans must be willing to die to preserve freedom. It is most emphatically shown in Martin's death at the hands of the fascist fanatics. His death is foreshadowed by previous references to the idea of death for liberty. In scene ii of Act II, Samuel Brockton tells Martin of his pride that his ancestors died to preserve freedom. Martin responds, "It's not a bad thing to die for, Mr. Brockton--freedom."⁴ As the First World War faces the country, Martin urges his son to fight, despite the objections of his wife. The boy is killed. Out of his death comes hope for a world without war and suffering.

Martin reiterates the idea as he challenges the fascists. "My son . . . died for this country, and I would rather see this boy [Karl Jr.] dead than here tonight."⁵ In the final scene of the play, Samuel Brockton delivers the eulogy at Martin's funeral. In it he shows that the authors wished Martin's death to be exemplary, rather than a tragic waste:

He had a deep and simple faith in the goodness of his fellow-men, and he died fighting for that which he felt gave meaning to life--for that which made it rich and beautiful--Freedom. He died for the thing he loved--his country.

. . . I see in the life of Martin Gunther, and even in his death, high hope for America. It will go on, this country, so long as we keep it alive for the thing that Martin Gunther died for.⁶

⁴Ibid., p. 41.

⁵Ibid., p. 152.

⁶Ibid., p. 155.

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Gunther's death, then, is the highest tribute he could have paid his country, and since it is equated with the finest kind of patriotism, it represents the means by which each American may prove his loyalty.

Although Kaufman and Hart have not gone beyond patriotic cliches in their play, they have succeeded in their purpose--to instill in the audience a feeling of intense patriotic spirit in a time when American security was threatened. The glorification of the past, the insistence that dissent is disloyal, and the implication that war may be the only means of stopping fascism indicates the propaganda to be conservative rather than liberal.

The Audience

Kaufman and Hart wrote The American Way for the audience of the commercial Broadway theatre. Since the play is intended as a patriotic glorification of America, it should appeal to a very wide audience. Since there is little persuasion to convert radicals, the authors are indifferent to their presence. The production of the play during the New York World's Fair of 1939, may have found an audience in many non-New Yorkers visiting the city.

Characterization

In spite of a large cast, The American Way focuses upon a single protagonist, Martin Gunther.

This fact makes the play unique among the plays in this study. Focus is admirably maintained; Gunther appears in virtually every scene of the play.

In spite of this, Gunther's character lacks depth and dimension. This is perhaps due to the authors' use of him as a symbol of the abstraction, "American spirit." Although Gunther experiences a full life, there is no change or development of him as a person. He comes to America full of the love of this country, rather eager and sentimental, and his attitude never changes. Even in times of stress, Gunther does not falter or despair.

Since Martin Gunther is not a native-born American, it is ironic that the authors use him to symbolize the spirit of America. Perhaps they felt that an immigrant could better see the wonderful opportunities in America since he freely chose to live here. Another speculation is that all Americans can trace their ancestry to a foreign country, and thus Gunther symbolizes America as a "melting pot" of many peoples.

One fact which aids the playwrights is the rapidity with which Gunther becomes integrated into American life. He learns English in one year, studies American history, and adopts American customs rather than clinging to those of his birthplace. His personality is an asset to this integration, for he quickly demonstrates that he is trustworthy, humble, and kind.

He befriends Samuel Brockton when Mrs. Brockton dies; becomes public-spirited and finances the fireworks display at the annual Fourth of July picnic; and retains the human touch even though he becomes a wealthy businessman.

That Gunther has irrevocably broken all ties with his native country is most dramatically illustrated when he urges his son, Karl, to join the army and fight the Germans in World War I:

Irma, Liebshen, he must go. This is our country, Irma, and I am proud that we have a son to go. We cannot divide our allegiance, Irma--we are either Germans or we ⁷are Americans, and I say we are Americans! . . .

At another point in the play, the leader of the Nazi group challenges Gunther's loyalty to the United States, since he is a native-born German. Martin responds, "I am a German--yes! But that does not matter. I could be Russian, Italian, anything--I am an American!"⁸

Gunther's most impressive characteristic is his honesty. Early in the play, when he is still working in a small shop adjoining his living quarters, he is refused a large furniture order because of his friendship with Winifred Baxter, the local suffragette. Rather than destroy that friendship, he risks the cancellation the the order even though it means hard times for his family. Martin explains that his action is a

⁷Ibid., p. 88.

⁸Ibid., p. 152.

matter of principle:

Martin: But in a way I am like you. A little bit stubborn. I do not like even Mrs. Samuel Brockton to tell me who my customers should be.

Winifred: Well, that's fine if you can afford it, but remember I'm not exactly popular in this town. I'm considered not quite a lady. I'm what they call a radical, you know, and Mrs. Brockton and a number of other ladies don't happen to like that . . .

Martin: . . . This is a free country--no? You have the right to chain yourself to lamp-posts; I have the right to choose my customers. No?⁹

Samuel Brockton is bewildered, but impressed, with

Martin's show of principle:

Brockton: You threw a thousand-dollar order away just because--(He shakes his head, mystified). Why did you do it, anyhow?

Martin: I don't know, Mr. Brockton. I must do what I think is right. Do not misunderstand me--I did not like to throw away that order. But if you will forgive my saying so, Mrs. Brockton was not fair. Miss Baxter has a right to what she thinks even if that is different from what Mrs. Brockton thinks. All my life, Mr. Brockton, my one idea was to come to America. Why? Because then no one can tell me what I must do, how I must think.¹⁰

Because of this integrity, a lifetime friendship is formed between the two men.

Although Martin Gunther rises to become a titan of big business, he never loses the common touch. His workers respect him for it:

A Third Man: He's a good boss. First man in this town to give you time and a half for overtime.

A Fourth: Well, it ain't so long ago he was at the bench himself.

⁹Ibid., pp. 36-37.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 40-41.

The Second Man: Did you see him finish off that chair yesterday? Better than I could have done it.¹¹

Even with age and prosperity, Martin does not forget his start as a common worker. In a nostalgic moment, he tells Irma:

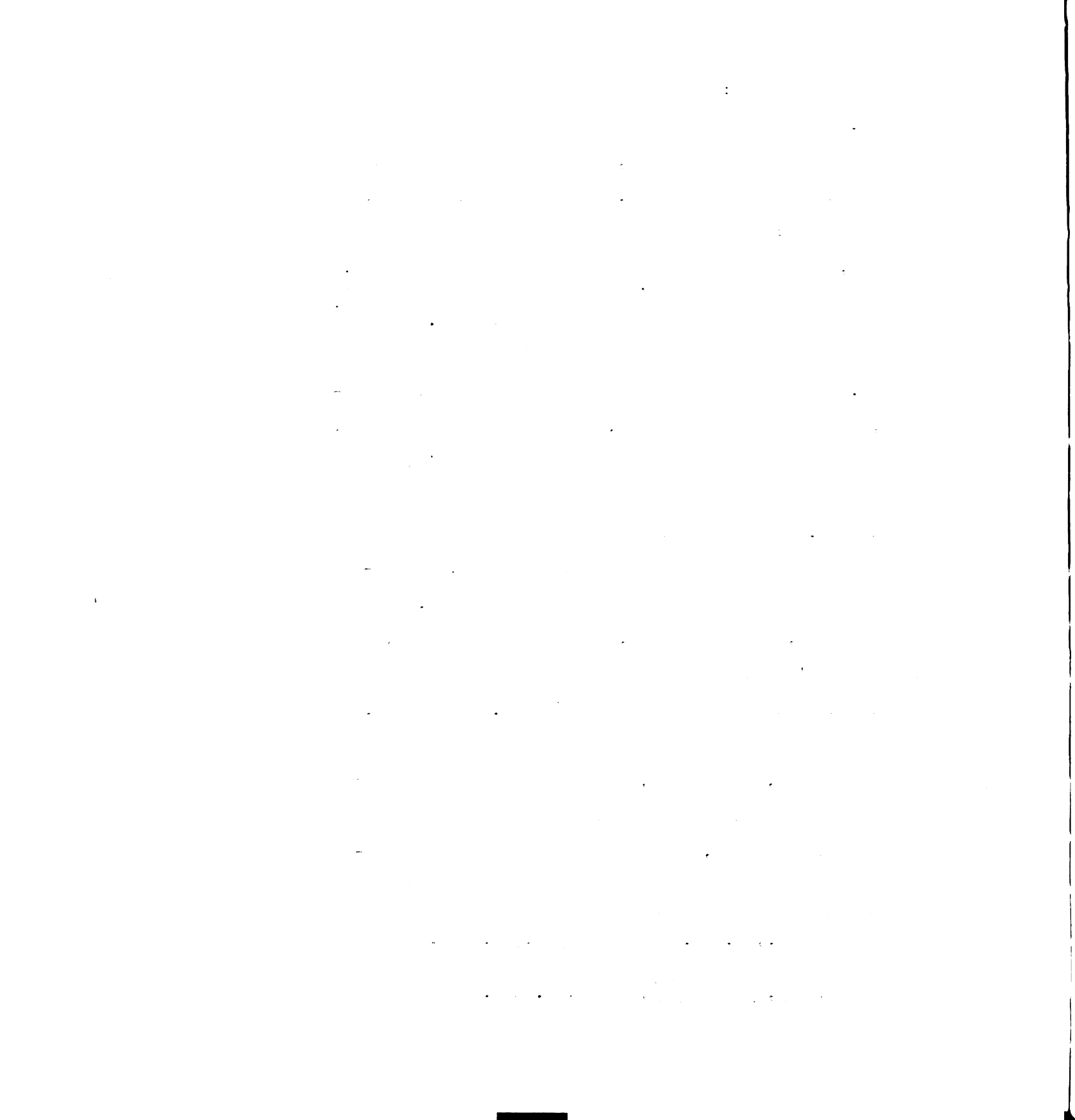
Yes, sometimes I think I am back in the shop again. I have to pinch myself. You know what I did today, Irma? I went into the factory and made him a train. I can still make a pretty good train, Irma.¹²

The authors have made Gunther's integration facile. He seems to fit by nature into a white, Protestant, conservative small town. Like others in the play, he admires a dissenting voice like Miss Baxter's, so long as the roots of conservatism are not seriously challenged. In addition, Gunther has the advantage of being a capitalist in a capitalistic country, an advantage not enjoyed by a majority of immigrants.¹³ Gunther then, is not typical. If this is the case, the authors' justification of him as the "Spirit of Americanism" is open to serious question. Obviously, Kaufman and Hart did not intend their audience to challenge this, but rather, wished to show two things: (1) the amalgamation of many different nationalities is uniquely American, and (2) the free enterprise system in America offers opportunity for even immigrants

¹¹Ibid., p. 44.

¹²Ibid., p. 107.

¹³See for example, the picture of the immigrant as shown in We, The People, Supra, p. 195.



to achieve wealth and position.

Martin Gunther achieves this position not because of ambition but because a loyal person is rewarded. Gunther is not aggressive; in fact, he says he would be contented with a two or three-man shop, but because he is a fine and loyal American, he is rewarded under the free enterprise system. Gunther is more acted upon than active, a frequent fault of symbolic characters.

The protagonist of the drama has been isolated as an abstraction--American spirit; the antagonist, then, becomes the spirit of un-Americanism. The clash of these abstractions is strongest at times of crisis. In each case, Martin defeats the spurious attitudes with his indomitable faith. After the loss of the anticipated furniture order from Mrs. Brockton, Irma suggests that the life they anticipated in America may not materialize:

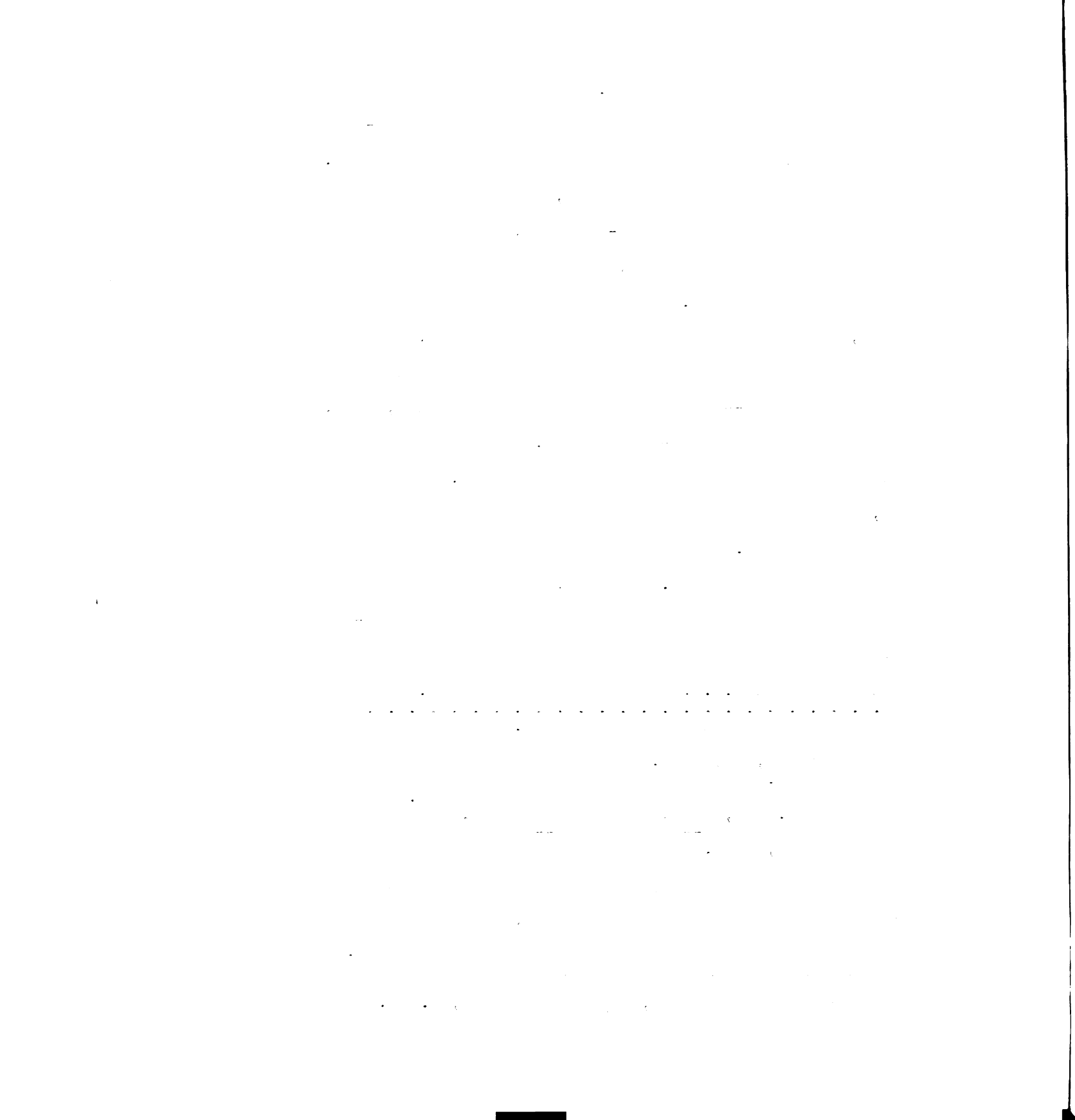
Irma: Martin . . . maybe we should go back.

 Perhaps America is not good for us.

Martin: No, no, Irma. Whatever happens we stay in America. Why did we come here? We do not want our Karl to be used just for an army like me. Like my father. No, Irma, we do not give up. It is worth working for--these things--for our children and for us, both.¹⁴

At another time of crisis, as the citizens of the town force the closing of the Mapleton bank, Martin offers his entire business as a vote of confidence in America.

¹⁴Kaufman and Hart, The American Way, p. 35.



Although he loses everything, he still does not despair.

The conflicting attitude is most strongly shown in the character of Karl Gunther, Jr. Karl believes that the American system is no longer salvageable. Having grown to manhood during the Depression, Karl is understandably bitter. The difficulty with Karl's character is that it is not clear why he is ready to accept fascism as the solution to his problems. After Martin has been killed trying to prevent Karl from joining the fascist group, Karl is convinced that his attitude was incorrect; Martin's death has saved Karl. "Grandpa! Grandpa! It wasn't all for nothing! If you could only know that! If you could only know that!"¹⁵

Only once does Martin's confidence seem to falter. After his son has been killed in the war, Martin remarks, "Soldier heroes . . . I hope it was not all a waste. I hope he did not die for nothing."¹⁶ In this case, it is Irma who reminds him of his ideal, obviously having profited from his good example:

Perhaps it is not all a loss, Martin. Maybe the world learns a little bit from all this. Maybe when Karl's son is a man he finds a better world than Karl knew.¹⁷

Of the peripheral characters in the play, the most interesting is Winifred Baxter. Miss Baxter campaigns avidly for women's suffrage, and is labeled a

¹⁵Ibid., p. 155.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 93.

radical because of it. She is a divorcee, she smokes, and she drives an automobile, all of which were considered somewhat suspect at the time. She is the stereotyped "emancipated" woman. But by no means is she intended to be a radical in the subversive sense; her loyalty is never a question. When the country is at war, she joins the Overseas Ambulance Corps.

All of Winifred's "radical" activities are tolerated in a good-natured spirit, and she, herself, retains a fine sense of humor. She tells Martin:

You're going to lose another customer everytime I chain myself to a lamp-post, and you'll lose 'em by the dozen week after next when I go on a hunger strike in Senator Fletcher's bedroom. Don't let that get around yet.¹⁸

After the vote for women has become a reality, she evaluates her campaign with characteristic good humor:

Say, it wasn't so long ago that I was the younger generation. 'Votes for Women'--remember? Shocked everybody. Well, that's all over now. The ladies have got their vote. And what was the first thing they did with it after all my struggles? They elected Warren G. Harding President of the United States.¹⁹

As a result, Winifred Baxter emerges as a somewhat eccentric, but thoroughly likeable person.

Winifred Baxter abandons her "radical" ideas as she mellows with age, and not so surprisingly, becomes a successful businesswoman. It is strongly implied that the most sensible outlet for her rebel-

¹⁸Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 108.

lious spirit was to find some "useful" enterprise to occupy her efforts. She opens the first beauty shop in Mapleton and it is an instant success.

Through the character of Winifred Baxter, the authors seem to be saying that freedom of expression is a reality, so long as it remains relatively harmless. Also, since Kaufman and Hart glorify the free enterprise system in America, they are consistent in showing that Winifred Baxter finds fulfillment as a successful businesswoman.

There are three disagreeable characters in the play, and none of them occupies a position of importance. Mrs. Samuel Brockton is the wealthy snob, a stereotype of the nouveau riche matron. Mrs. Brockton is a contrast to the Gunthers, for although they have amassed as much wealth as she, they do not lose their common touch.

Two young fascists appear in the last scenes of the play. Ed Lorenz is a sinister young man who speaks and acts insolently. The Leader of the fascist group is not given a name, and the only suggestion of character is to show him to be mentally unbalanced. The authors indicate that his speeches are given in "the voice of a fanatic." Perhaps an association with Hitler was intended, although this is not made explicit. A more plausible purpose is to show that fascism is dangerous because it attracts fanatics. In no way can either of these men be considered antagonists in the conven-

tional dramatic sense.

Structure

The American Way is constructed in two acts containing many scenes. The flow of action, however, is never impeded, since the authors have utilized the fluid production style of musical comedy. The staging specifies a forestage, two side stages, and a large inner stage, all of which are capable of being used in isolation or in various combinations. The pattern of the scenes--a long scene played on the full stage and a short scene played in front of the act curtain, or on one of the side stages--is a form used frequently by musical comedy. The short scenes facilitate the changing of settings without an awkward break. The advantage of this style is that the compression of time, so necessary in the dramatized biography, is greatly aided. Also, a variety of stage locales provides visual variety.

Specific stylistic elements increase the resemblance of The American Way to musical comedy. The play makes use of songs, dances, and parades. In Act I, scene ii, two young men of the Gay Nineties sing a duet to "I Don't Want to Play in Your Yard" as they pass through the town square; at the annual Fourth of July outing a community sing features songs popular in 1908; the children of the Gunthers gather with their

friends and sing favorite songs of 1914 as they sit on the veranda on a warm summer's night. These examples are by no means exhaustive. Songs are used throughout the entire play.

Dances occur at the Fourth of July outing as a local song and dance man performs his act, and two townspeople do a satiric vaudeville act; and on the terrace of the Mapleton Country Club, at the opening of Act II, couples are dancing popular dances of the twenties. The parades may be thought of as a kind of dance since their movements in formation resemble dance. During scene ii of Act I, two political parades supporting McKinley and Bryan march into the town square; another parade signals the audience of the Hoover campaign in scene ii of Act II; and a large parade accompanies the return of the soldiers after the Armistice of World War I, in scene xii of Act I. The assembly of the young fascists in scene vi of Act II is done in a dance-like formation.

The importance of music in the play is twofold: first it aids in setting time, and secondly it intensifies emotional spirit. Since there is a free compression of time between scenes, the establishment of the time of a scene is often set by the music. The songs at the Fourth of July picnic are popular songs of 1908, and they indicate that time has passed without requiring awkward exposition. "Tipperary" is readily recognized as a song of World War I, thus the audience is told that

the country is now at war. "Ramona," played by the Country Club dance band, sets the scene in the late twenties, indicating that about ten years have elapsed since Act I concluded.

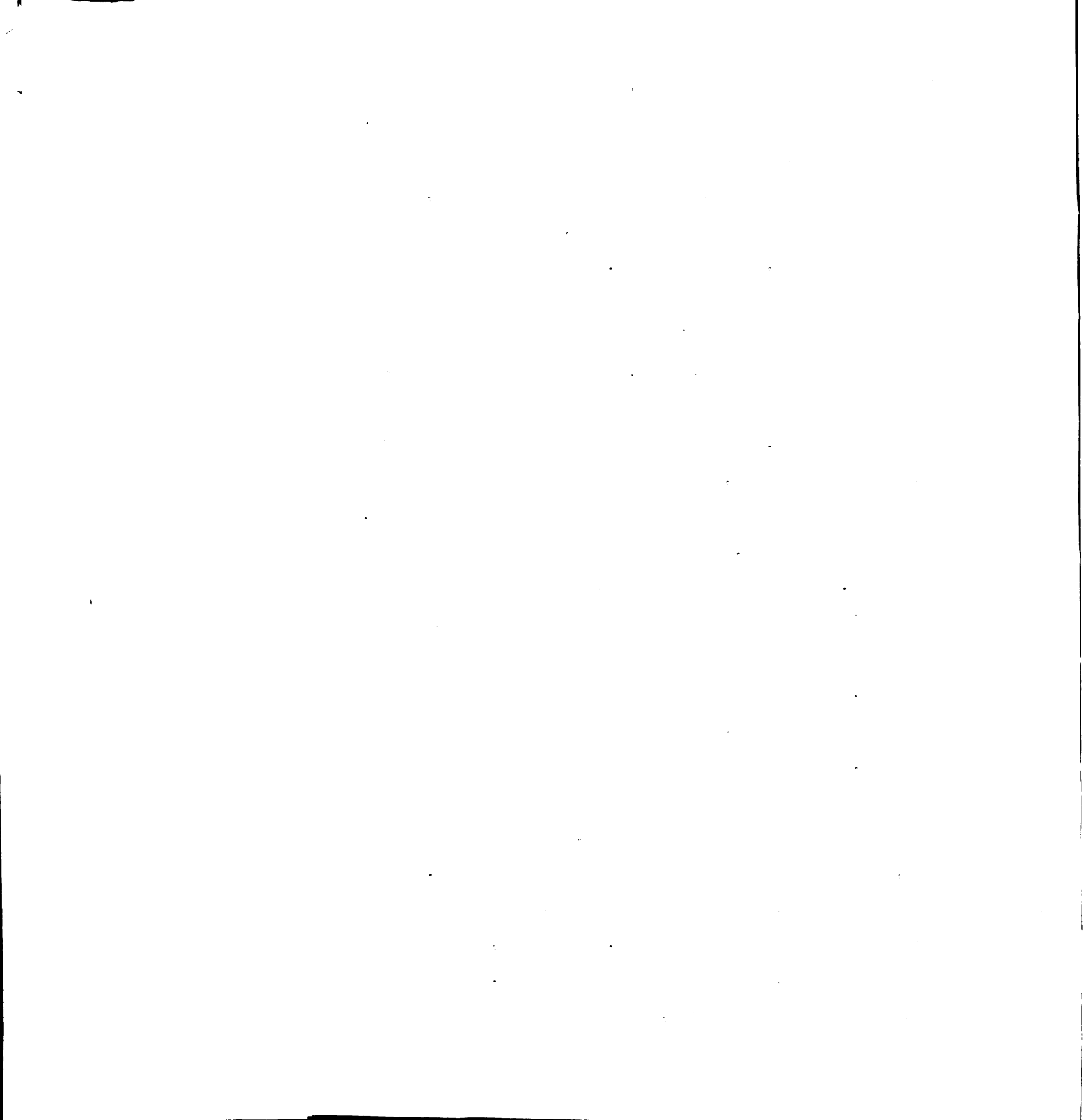
A last consideration of the use of song is the emotionalism created by the use of patriotic songs. At the opening of the play, as the immigrant ship approaches, the band plays "My Country 'Tis of Thee." In the schoolroom scene, the children again sing the song. During the World War I episode, songs such as "Over There," "Keep the Home Fires Burning," and "Long, Long Trail," though not strictly patriotic, are so reminiscent of the war effort that they take on the feeling of patriotic songs. When Lindbergh successfully crosses the Atlantic, the Country Club orchestra plays "Yankee Doodle," and at Martin's funeral, in the last scene of the play, the curtains close with the assembled cast singing "The Star Spangled Banner." Considering the authors' purpose--to glorify American spirit--no better means of achieving a receptive emotional mood could be employed than the singing of patriotic songs.

Music was seen to be a valuable aid in setting the time of a scene and thus facilitating exposition. Kaufman and Hart also make use of signs, banners and placards to achieve the same effect. During the McKinley-Bryan campaign scene, the actors carry placards with popular election slogans. This is repeated

in the Hoover campaign scene, and in the scene in which the soldiers assemble to fight in the First World War. Slogans associated with the war effort are carried on placards by the crowd: "Remember the Lusitania," "Lick a Thrift Stamp and Lick the Kaiser," and "Mapleton Eats Liberty Cabbage," are examples.

The Fourth of July picnic opens with a large banner over the speaker's stand which says: "Mapleton Annual Outing July 4th, 1908." The audience can immediately see that five years have elapsed since the preceding scene. In scene iii of Act II, "For Sale" signs in the stores, and a large banner stretched over the square proclaiming: "Give To The Community Chest. Remember The Needy," indicate the Depression has hit Mapleton. In scene v of Act II, the occasion of the Gunther's fiftieth wedding anniversary is proclaimed by a great arch of carnations arranged to spell "Golden Wedding." The use of placards and banners gives the play a unique style, which is its most admirable feature.

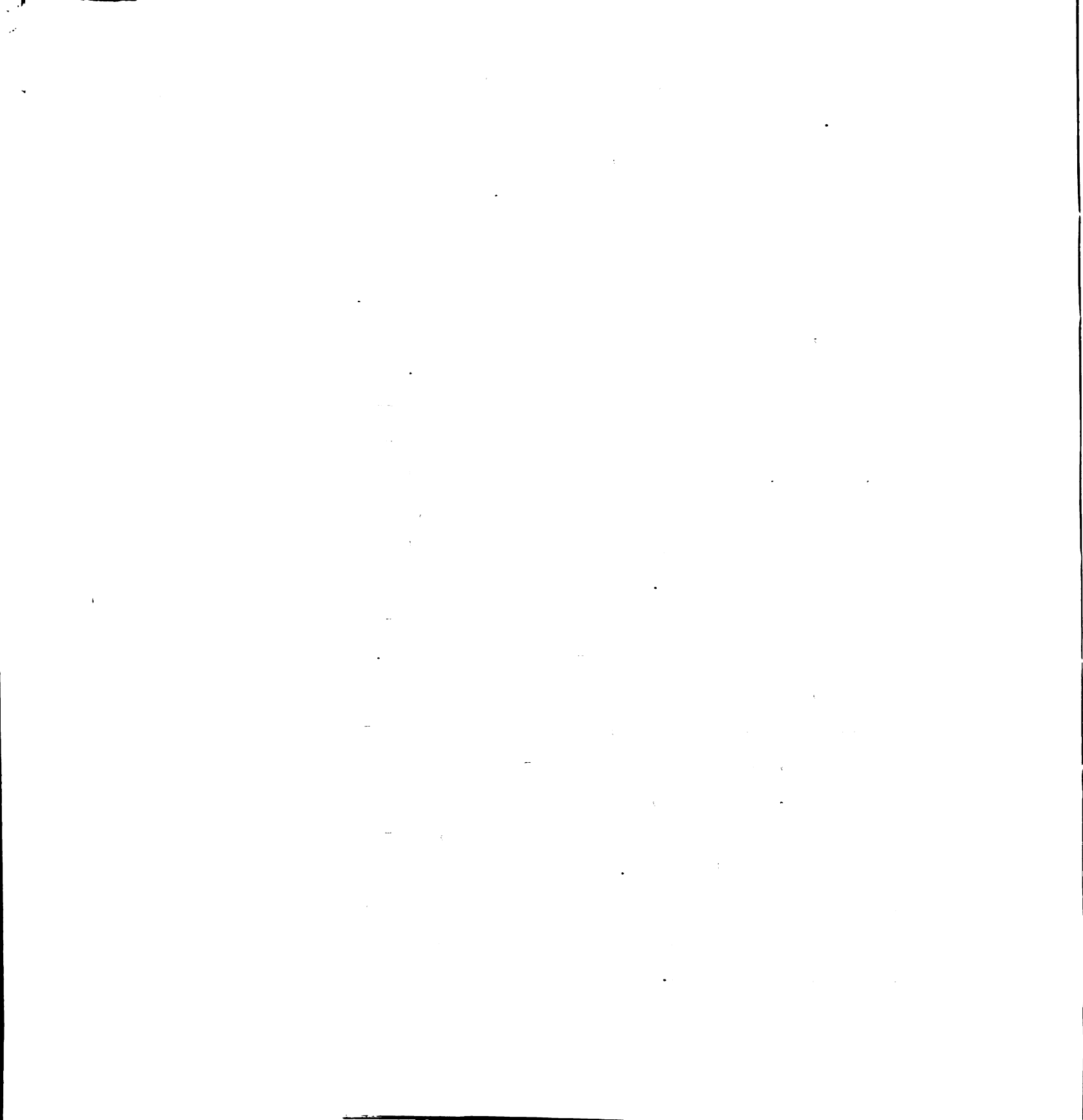
The arrangement of the scenes in The American Way follows no particular pattern. In a very general way, both Act I and Act II are structured alike. Each of them dramatizes a minor crisis followed by a major crisis which concludes the act. In Act I, the minor crisis is the loss of the furniture order. After this crisis has been weathered, the Act concludes with the



climactic scene of the loss of the Gunther's only son in the war. Act II shows the bank failure of the Depression as the first crisis, followed by the death of Martin Gunther which climaxes the play.

A second characteristic which makes the acts resemble one another is that the scene of strongest climax always follows the scene of tenderest sentiment. For example, the family argument concerning Karl's joining the army is the emotional height of Act I. This scene follows a scene of strong sentimentality--the scene on the veranda of the Gunther home in mid-summer, in 1914. In Act II, the terror of Martin's death is preceded by a similar sentimental scene, in which the family gathers to celebrate the Gunther's golden wedding anniversary.

Scenes of a serious nature are heavily overbalanced by scenes of a nostalgic-sentimental nature. For example, Act I shows the annual Fourth of July celebration with its fireworks, band concerts and pie-eating contest, as well as the already-mentioned scene on the veranda. In Act II, the country club dance glorifies prosperity and a feeling of security, symbolized by Lindbergh's flight. The golden wedding anniversary also provides an opportunity to reminisce. Kaufman and Hart have deliberately sentimentalized their picture of the past.



The playwrights make use of the deus ex machina in some scenes of the play. For example, the disappointment at losing the furniture order is quickly neutralized when Samuel Brockton unexpectedly returns it because he disapproved of his wife's action; the factory workers are about to fight over a trivial item in the newspaper, when the announcement of free beer, supplied by Martin, sends them hurrying off; and a sudden rainstorm ends the Fourth of July outing. Considering the unrealistic style of the play, the rather arbitrary conclusion of some of the scenes is not seriously disturbing.

Dialogue

Three qualities of the dialogue of The American Way are economy, humor, and sentimentality. All of the scenes are economically written. Exposition is smoothly handled with a minimum of awkwardness. For example, as the Gunther family emerges from the church in mourning, Helen says: "I'll take mother home. . . . Come, mother. We'll give Baby his dinner tonight--just you and I."²⁰ This brief speech shows that Helen and Karl have been married, had a baby, and that Karl has been killed in the war.

The lack of dependence upon long speeches aids the economy of dialogue. Representative dialogue is

²⁰Ibid., p. 92.

composed of short sentences which aid the rapid flow of the play. When Samuel Brockton visits Martin to return the furniture order cancelled by his wife, he begins the conversation in this way:

Brockton: Tell me, Gunther, did you really throw my wife out of your shop this afternoon?

Martin (Astonished): Why no, Mr. Brockton. Certainly not.

Brockton: You're sure?

Martin: Why, yes, Mr. Brockton. Of course I'm sure.

Brockton: Well, why didn't you?

Martin: I beg your pardon.

Brockton: That's what I would have done in your place.

Martin: Are you joking with me, Mr. Brockton?

Brockton: Not at all. The fact is, Gunther, you're entitled to a medal, but you'll have to be satisfied with just getting that furniture order back.²¹

Another example of this crispness of writing occurs in the workmen's scene as several of the men are discussing the latest feat of the Wright Brothers reported in the newspaper:

The First Man: Those Wright Brothers went up in their flying machine again. Stayed up in the air two minutes.

The Fifth Man: They did?

The First Man: That's what it says here.

The Second Man: I don't believe it.

²¹Ibid., p. 39.

The First Man: What do you mean you don't believe it? It's in the newspaper.

The Second Man: I don't care if it's in fifty newspapers. It's impossible.²²

Humor is basic to the play. A great deal of humor surrounds Winifred Baxter whose suffragette activities provoke comedy. In scene ii of Act I, she challenges a McKinley campaigner on the subject of votes for women:

A Woman's Voice: Where does William McKinley stand on votes for women?

The Speaker: Lady, does your husband know you're out tonight?

(Derisive laughter from the crowd)

The Woman: Do you intend to answer my question, sir? Where does Mr. McKinley stand on votes for women?

The Speaker: Lady, I don't think Mrs. McKinley has ever asked him.

Well, Folks, after votes for women I suppose we ought to have votes for monkeys.²³

Winifred's wit is her most engaging quality. At the Country Club dance she reacts to the Gunthers' dancing with, "Well, it's the first time a schottische has ever been danced to 'Yes Sir, She's My Baby.'" ²⁴ And later, when Samuel Brockton asks her to dance to "Barney Google," Winifred answers, "Thank you, Mr. Brockton. You don't know what it means to a woman to

²²Ibid., pp. 45-46.

²³Ibid., pp. 22-24.

²⁴Ibid., p. 101.

have a man save 'Barney Google' for her."²⁵

Other kinds of humor also enliven the play. The Mayor of Mapleton is a bumbling small-time politician who confuses the geography of his own town. Town "urchins" also add moments of pleasant humor. One example occurs in the schoolroom scene as the children are preparing to meet Mark Twain at the depot. The proceedings are interrupted by the discovery that two of the boys are concealing "Sweet Caporal" cigarette pictures. The teacher's reaction is, "I shudder to think what Mr. Twain would say if he knew that little boys collected cigarette pictures."²⁶ Humor is an obvious means of sugar-coating the propaganda.

Sentimentality is the most characteristic feature of the dialogue of The American Way. It is most pronounced in the domestic scenes, and the scenes in which Martin defends America. The domestic scenes are designed to show the Gunther family as an unusually close one. The sentimentality of watching one's children grow up is shown in Act I, scene viii:

Irma: I don't know where the summer has gone to, this year. The end of July already, and so much to do yet. Do you realize, Martin,--only six weeks till your daughter is a married woman?

Martin: Yes, I know. (He chuckles a little)

Irma: What is it?

²⁵Ibid., p. 102.

²⁶Ibid., p. 29.

Martin: I think Karl's got a girl, too. That girl that's visiting here from Chicago. A nice little girl, too.²⁷

The warm night and closeness of the group causes both

Martin and Samuel Brockton to wax sentimental:

Brockton: Doesn't seem like four years since Flora passed on, does it, Martin?

Martin: No. Is it four years, Samuel?

Brockton: Nearer five. You know, I'd be pretty lost, Martin, if you hadn't taken me into the family. Lisa and Karl seem almost like my children.

Martin: You are one of the family, Samuel.

Brockton: Well, it's very nice of you to think of me that way, Martin. Very nice, indeed.

Martin: Samuel, everything that I have in the world I owe to you.

Brockton: Nonsense, Martin.

Martin: Yes, yes. That day you walked into the shop--when first we talked together--that was the beginning of everything for me.

Brockton (Laughing a little): Your idea of a factory was two helpers--remember, Martin?

Martin: If anyone had ever told me I would some day employ hundreds of men--it wasn't so long ago, either. Fourteen years. Remember--you said next week we start a new century, nineteen hundred. They have been a wonderful fourteen years for me. . . . America. God has been good.

Brockton: Well, Martin, some good years ahead, too, eh? Lisa's children, then Karl's. Not a bad way to grow old. Like this. Sitting and talking on a nice summer night. Watching the children grow up. What more can anyone want?²⁸

Another opportunity to sentimentalize is provided at

²⁷Ibid., pp. 65-66.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 71-73.

the golden wedding as Martin and Irma reminisce:

Martin: Can you believe it? We have been married fifty years?

Irma: No, Martin. I cannot believe it. To me it seems just a little while.

Martin: Me, too, Irma.

Irma: I remember so well--that day you came to my father's house and told him your prospects--and that you wanted to marry me.

Martin: Yah . . . Yah . . .

Irma: I listened outside my father's door--I can see myself now. And then I went upstairs and waited for you to propose. Two days I waited, Martin.

Martin: It took me two days to get up my courage.

Irma: It seems such a little while ago, Martin. And now it is fifty years.

Martin:(Nods): Tell me, Liebchen, would you do it over again?

Irma: You know I would, Martin.²⁹

A sentimental patriotic tone is an important feature of the dialogue. Irma's first view of America is interpreted in glowing terms by Martin in scene ii of Act I. The entire scene is summed up in Martin's line, "And our babies, Irma--Lisa and Karl--they grow up in a free country. They are Americans."³⁰ In scene vi of Act I, the townspeople wish Martin to make a speech:

I am not a speechmaker. Please! What can I say? Here I am, and it's the Fourth of July. I never knew what the Fourth of July meant until I came to

²⁹Ibid., pp. 137-38.

³⁰Ibid., p. 19.

America, but now I am very glad that George Washington and those other men--went across the Delaware--Ach, I cannot make a speech.³¹

In scene x, Martin's view of the conflict of Germany and America in the war is resolved by his intense dedication to America:

No, Irma--Karl must go. This country opened its arms to us, reared our children. Everything that we have and everything that we are we owe to America; the children that Karl will have will be Americans, and I am an American, Irma. And so are you!³²

All of Martin's arguments are based upon a sentimental love for America. As such, the persuasive scenes never rise above patriotic clichés. In scene x of Act I, Martin and Irma argue about Karl's going into the army. The dilemma is an emotional one. Irma envisions her own son killing her relatives. Martin solves the entire difficulty with a speech of patriotic allegiance.

In the obligatory scene in which Karl, Jr. and Martin confront one another, Martin again depends upon sentiment. His arguments always proceed from the belief that because he achieved success and prosperity in America, anyone can do it. That Martin is short-sighted is obvious. However, his short-sightedness is that admirable short-sightedness the authors advocate, because it makes him a devoted American:

³¹Ibid., p. 61.

³²Ibid., p. 88.

I will tell you what I have got, Karl. I have got everything that I wanted from America, and more. I came over here a poor boy with nothing, and I got from America riches and years of happiness. All right, the riches have gone. That does not matter. But freedom there still is, and that is what does matter. I don't care how they are trying to change this country, or what name they call themselves. They are all the same--all these things--they are un-American. What really matters, Karl, is that you and the young people like you should take over this country, and keep it what it has always been.³³

The difference between Martin Gunther and Karl Gunther, Jr. is that Martin came expecting little and received a lot; Karl expected a lot and received little.

Martin's answers provide little help for the distress felt by Karl, for there is little comfort in starving even in a free country. The dilemma is an irreconcilable one, for the two men are not arguing about the same thing. Martin's defense is ideological, stressing freedom and optimism. Karl's is practical, stressing jobs and food. Since this is the case, there is really not a clash at all. The scene merely provides the authors with another opportunity to allow Martin to sing the praises of American democracy. Although it appears that Martin is short-sighted with regard to the specifics of the problem, Karl is equally confused. It is not clear why he has decided that the fascists have the answer to the problems of the Depression. None of these ideas is treated in any depth,

³³Ibid., p. 144.



and sentimentalized patriotism as the solution to all problems, shows that Kaufman and Hart are not really interested in the argument.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It was the purpose of this study to describe, analyze, and evaluate the dramaturgy of selected propaganda plays in light of the playwright's persuasive purpose. Six plays written between 1930 and 1939, were analyzed. Four dramaturgical aspects occupied the focus of analysis: persuasive purpose, characterization, structure, and dialogue.

Persuasive Purpose

The nature of the propaganda message in the six plays ranges from militant leftist to conservative. "Newsboy," "Waiting For Lefty," They Shall Not Die, and Stevedore demonstrate strong leftist leanings; We, The People is liberal in viewpoint, while The American Way is conservative. Two of the playwrights advocate violence as the means of achieving the desired action, "Waiting For Lefty," and Stevedore; three advocate protest, "Newsboy," They Shall Not Die, and We, The People.

Although the specific purposes of each of the playwrights is different, there are certain common

attitudes held by all the writers in this study. The most apparent is that each champions the workingman, siding with him against those who attempt to exploit him. Several of the plays create the worker-hero as a human being with ethical standards which are admirable. As a parallel, the writers show a consistent dislike for the rich, especially those who have amassed their wealth by profit from war and unfair treatment of their workers. It is true that The American Way glorifies the opportunity to achieve wealth in America, however, Kaufman and Hart deplore those who do not use the power generated by wealth in an ethical manner. All of the writers deplore war, some taking strong pacifistic stands. The last commonly held attitude is that prejudice, in any form, is undesirable.

The strength of commitment of the propaganda playwrights varies. Some of them suggest the need for total commitment--that is, one must die for his cause if he really believes in it. Three of the characters in the plays die because of their dedication to their purpose. Lefty, in "Waiting For Lefty," Lonnie Thompson in Stevedore and Martin Gunther in The American Way. Although Allen Davis is not executed, he has been convicted and sentenced to death because of his beliefs. Rubin, the defense attorney in They Shall Not Die vows to dedicate his

life, if necessary, to right the injustice of the Scottsboro convictions.

Characterization

All of the plays analyzed in this study, with the exception of The American Way, make use of groups of characters as protagonists and antagonists. The dramatization of social issues, which concerns the propagandist, logically leads to group protagonists and antagonists, since social problems are group problems. The propaganda dramatist is concerned with public issues, not individual problems. The result is that individual character development is frequently over-simplified.

There are, however, greater advantages to group characterization than isolating two sides of an issue. This method facilitates audience identification. By multiplying the sympathetic characters, the playwright increases the opportunity for the audience to find at least one character to enlist his support. Further, one may feel secure in casting his lot with a group, since it diminishes the suspicion that his identification is with a "radical crack-pot."

Another aid to audience identification is that the careful structuring of groups of characters forces the audience to identify with the author's favored group; group allegiance is not a matter of choice for

the audience. The coercion takes the form of creating a dichotomous moral situation--the protagonists represent good, the antagonists represent evil. There are no shadings of choice. By thus stacking the cards, the playwright pressures the audience by appealing to their ethical nature, into siding with the protagonists. Even those who may not be totally in sympathy with the protagonists, must ally themselves with them, since the alternative is to uphold immorality.

Group characterization also aids the playwright in transferring his indictment from the stage characters to their corresponding group in society. The sadistic treatment of Negroes by the antagonists in They Shall Not Die and Stevedore, makes it appear that all members of law enforcement in the South do likewise. When the behavior of one member of the group is supported by other members of the group, the indictment seems more plausible. Since the antagonists in They Shall Not Die and Stevedore include a large number of characters, the suggestion is that all of white Southern society behaves as they do.

Guilt by association achieved in this manner, is open to serious criticism. The propagandist is being unethical. Whereas one normally associates unethical propaganda with the spread of lies designed to be accepted as truths, one may be equally unethical in

dispensing half-truths. This is the fault of the propaganda dramatist in creating groups which are not accurately described. For example, one is aware that there are bosses who do not intend to victimize their workers, or sheriffs who do not brutalize Negroes, or white Southerners who deplore prejudice. Therefore the suggestion that groups in society act as their stage counterparts do, is unethical, unless the depiction of these groups is scrupulously accurate. As was seen, the limited development of characters within groups, and the distortion of groups by the playwrights, indicates a lack of accuracy. The groups bear only surface resemblance to actuality, and therefore are not truly representative.

Some common techniques are used by the playwrights to characterize the protagonists and antagonists. The antagonists frequently favor war, often because it means monetary profit. The antagonists of "Newsboy," We, The People, and Fayette, in "Waiting For Lefty," are examples.

A second commonly employed technique is to show the antagonists as prejudiced. Hatred of Negroes serves to characterize the antagonists in Stevedore, and They Shall Not Die, and is touched upon in We, The People. The rejection of the Black Man by the Crowd in "Newsboy," may be interpreted as an example of pre-

judice, for the fact that he is a Negro is never explained. Anti-Semitism appears in "Waiting For Lefty," in the episode involving Dr. Benjamin, in They Shall Not Die in the prejudiced references to Jews by the prosecuting attorneys, and in We, The People in the character of Professor Hirschbein. One also notes prejudice against nationality groups in We, The People.

Prejudice against communists is used to characterize the antagonists in four of the plays. Hearst, Long, and Father Coughlin, in "Newsboy," are made to seem evil because of their strong anti-communist feelings. Prejudice against "reds" is a consideration of the characterization of Fatt in "Waiting For Lefty," in Stevedore, and in They Shall Not Die. The leftist leanings of these playwrights undoubtedly accounts for this, but it is interesting to note that these authors obviously hoped their audiences, too, would deplore prejudice against communists.

A third means of characterizing the antagonists is to show that they use their positions of power for unscrupulous purposes. It is perhaps most strongly shown in They Shall Not Die. Hearst, Long, and Father Coughlin in "Newsboy," are examples, as are Fayette and Grady in "Waiting For Lefty." In Stevedore all of the antagonists take unfair advantage of their position to suppress Negroes. Applegate is the prime believer in



force to quell protest in We, The People, and although the idea is not strongly developed in The American Way, it is evident in the person of Mrs. Brockton, who withdraws her furniture order because Gunther has "radical" friends. The suggestion that wealth and power have a devastating effect upon the moral fiber of these people, is the issue with which these playwrights are concerned.

Other means used to characterize the rejected groups are vulgarity as seen in Stevedore and They Shall Not Die, and "Waiting For Lefty"; the use of profanity and Name-calling, which appears in many of the plays, but is notably characteristic of the antagonists of Stevedore and They Shall Not Die; and sadistic tendencies in Sheriff Trent in They Shall Not Die, Grady in "Waiting For Lefty," and Walcott in Stevedore.

The protagonists are shown to be honest, hard-working, ethical people. In the propaganda plays in this study, one sees the emergence of a new stage character, the "noble American worker." All of the plays emphasize the strong ethical nature of the worker. The point which is repeatedly made is that the worker is a better person than his wealthy boss.

Some evaluation of the character of the "noble American worker" is demanded in a summary of characterization. Many of the playwrights fail to create memorable worker characters; they are frequently bland,



colorless, and acted upon rather than active. When one reviews the plays, the outstanding characters are most often from the antagonist groups. Grady, Fatt, Sheriff Trent and Drew, stand out more sharply than do Lem Morris, Helen Davis, Allen Davis, The Scottsboro Negroes, or even Rokoff. Only "Waiting For Lefty" consistently creates memorable worker-heroes.

Some conjecture is possible. The ordinary workingman may possess little which would make him an interesting stage character. Another may be that the playwrights wrote what they felt about the worker, rather than writing from a genuine understanding of him. Elmer Rice demonstrates this in We, The People, for his workers seem to be the result of what he imagined them to be, rather than what they were. A third conjecture is that by overemphasizing the evil nature of the antagonist groups (which is consistently done in the plays), there is little need to explore the protagonists in depth. All that is needed is to show them to be good people.

Many of the protagonists are members of minority groups. The Black Man in "Newsboy," Lonnie Thompson in Stevedore, and the accused boys in They Shall Not Die, are Negroes; Sid Stein and Dr. Benjamin in "Waiting For Lefty," Nathan Rubin in They Shall Not Die, and Morris Hirschbein in We, The People are Jews.

Several nationalities are represented in We, The People; and Lem Morris and Rokoff are leftists. An exception is noted in The American Way. Although Martin Gunther is a member of the German immigrant minority, he does not experience prejudice as a result. Undoubtedly, audience sympathy is enlisted for these protagonists because they are victims of prejudice and maltreatment because of their minority affiliation.

A second aspect of characterization of the propaganda play is the conversion figure. In each of the plays in this study there is at least one conversion figure; in some plays there are several. All of the heroes of "Waiting For Lefty," the Crowd in "Newsboy," Binnie in Stevedore, Lucy Wells in They Shall Not Die, Rev. Williamson in We, The People, and Karl Gunther Jr. in The American Way qualify as converts.

The conversion figure is a strong testimonial to the desirability of being on the side of right. The audience sees demonstrated before them, the acceptance of the desired attitude by one who was unenlightened, and this reinforces that attitude as good.

The reward for conversion is important in considering the propagandist's success in using the conversion figure to further his purpose. The Crowd in "Newsboy" is awakened just in time to save them

from another war; Binnie is rewarded for her new militant attitude by shooting Mitch who terrorized her and was directly responsible for her awakening. The reward for converts in "Waiting For Lefty" and for Lucy Wells in They Shall Not Die, is the regaining of self-respect. For Rev. Williamson it is a deeper understanding of his Christian faith. Only Karl Gunther, Jr. experiences no discernible reward for his conversion, and it is, therefore quite unimpressive. Because each of the conversion figures is rewarded to some degree, it makes the conversion seem all the more correct.

A study of the character as raisonneur does not provide a profitable avenue for analysis of the plays. Although these characters exist in profusion, for the propagandist must have a mouthpiece, no one character is consistently used for this purpose in any of the plays. Within the same play, many characters may speak for the author. It is, therefore, safe to assume that any member of the protagonist group is acting as the voice of the author.

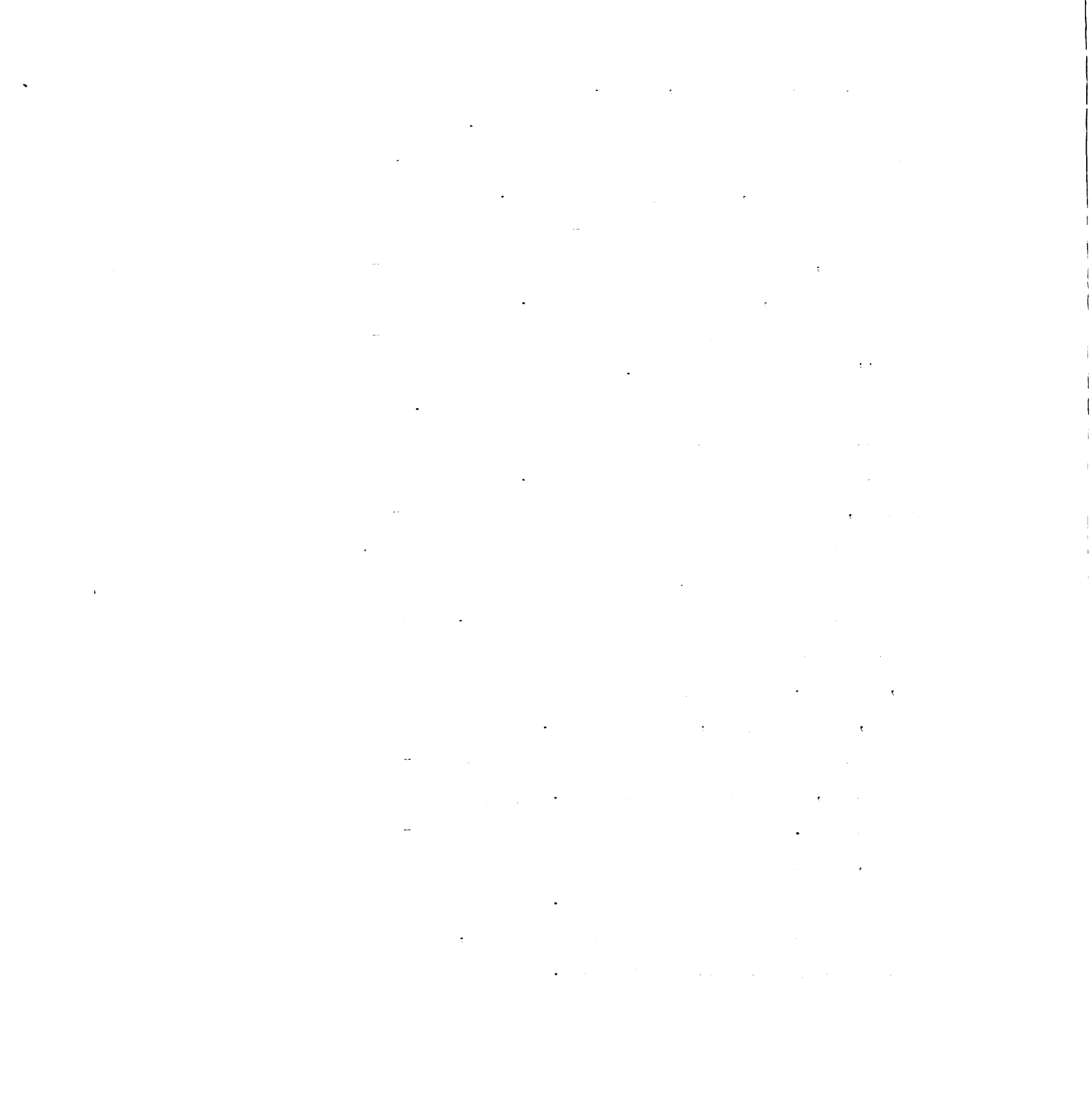
Structure

The propaganda plays analyzed in this study possess certain commonalities in dramatic structure. In a general way the plays resemble one another because they are episodic with multiple scenes and locales. The unity of the plays is weak. The con-

ventional unities of time, place, and action are not used by any of the dramatists in this study. The unity of style provides for consistency in "Newsboy," "Waiting For Lefty," and The American Way.

Most of the playwrights de-emphasize plot development, concentrating instead upon sharply delineated situations, often loosely related. The lack of plot development is directly attributable to the playwrights' emphasis upon groups. The plays which are most dramatic show these groups in sharp conflict. Typically the play begins with the protagonists in a subordinate position to the antagonists. As the play develops, the protagonists grow in strength and numbers until they meet their opponents in a direct clash. The protagonists triumph, even though the triumph may be a moral victory rather than a physical one. All six of the plays in this study are variations of this form, with We, The People demonstrating the weakest example, and Stevedore, the strongest.

In those plays which are conventional realistic plays, the pattern is clearest. Stevedore is the prototype. They Shall Not Die is nearly as exemplary, varying only because the conclusion does not show the triumph of the protagonists. In the plays which are less conventional in style and form, the conflict is symbolically represented. In "Newsboy"

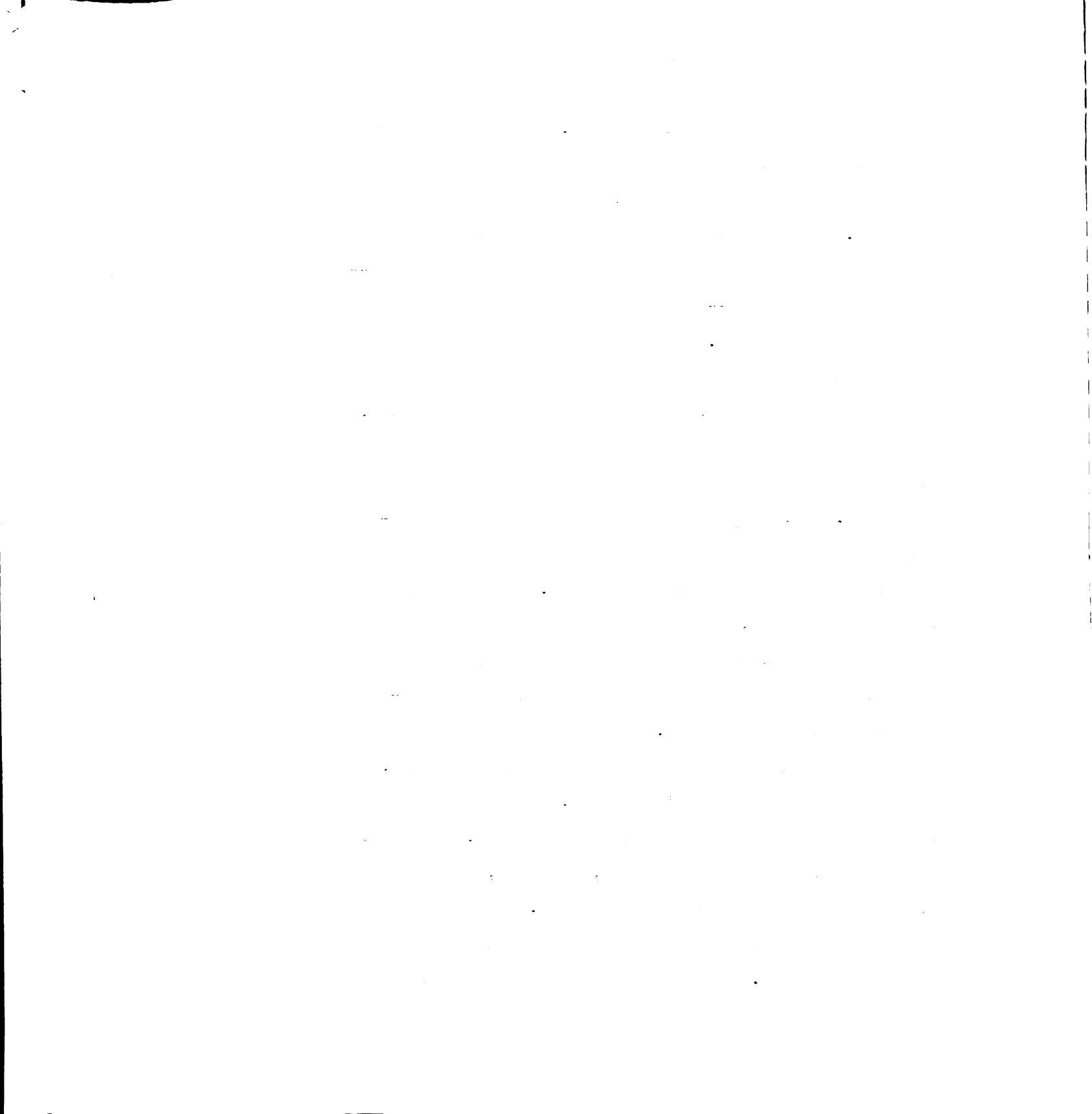


the conflict is reduced to the facile conversion of the Crowd by a cursory perusal of Fight. In "Waiting For Lefty" the defeat of gangster power is symbolized as the committeemen rise en masse, forcing Harry Fatt to withdraw. The defeat of the spirit of anti-Americanism is accomplished in The American Way by a grand gesture--the death of Gunther--rather than as the result of a sharp clash of groups.

Since the clash of groups is sharp in Stevedore and They Shall Not Die, these plays seem more dramatic. The lack of dramatic tension in "Newsboy" arises from its weak clash of groups and the facile conversion of the Crowd. We, The People is notably lacking in dramatic tension because its groups do not meet in a direct clash at any point in the play. As a result of these observations, it would seem that the clash of groups with the triumph of the protagonists, is most effective when combined with the form of the conventional realistic melodrama.

The triumph of the protagonists is of course, basic to the propagandist's purpose, for it suggests that such a triumph is possible in actuality. However, the desire to prove a thesis may, at times, cause the playwright to be careless about detail.

The use of coincidence is frequently found in the plays studied. Stevedore resolves the conflict of



the groups with a deus ex machina. Just as it appears the Negroes will be defeated, Lem Morris and the union men arrive to turn the tide from defeat to victory. Also, Lonnie Thompson is killed with no preparation given. His death occurs at the moment most devastating to the cause of the Negroes, thus increasing the dramatic tension until the last moment of the play.

In "Waiting For Lefty" it is by coincidence that Clayton, the labor spy, is exposed; his brother happens to be present in the meeting hall. Since the expose of Clayton is a major step in humiliating Harry Fatt, the coincidence of its occurrence weakens its effectiveness. Also, Odets brings the news of Lefty's death at the most crucial moment in the strikers' dilemma.

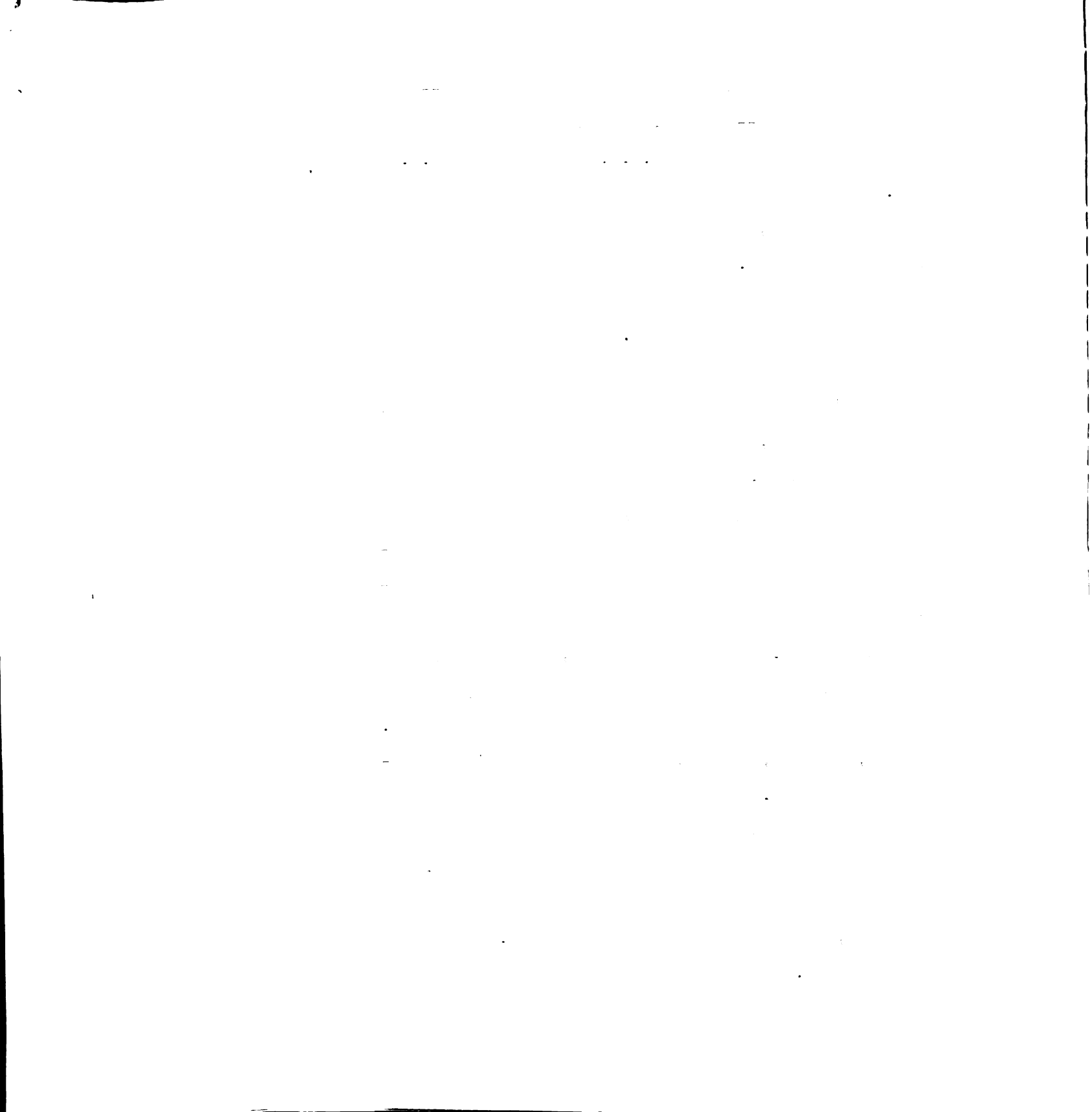
In They Shall Not Die, Lewis Collins appears by coincidence, to testify for the defense. No preparation is made for his reappearance in the play. Since his testimony is of great importance to the rise in power of the protagonists, it greatly aids the propaganda purpose.

In addition to coincidence, many of the playwrights studied employ a digression in plot development, for the purpose of emphasizing the message. The incident involving The Unemployed Man, in "Newsboy"

has little to do with the major aim of the play--to convert the Crowd--however, it allows the author an opportunity to attack the C.C.C. Camps and the U.S. Army. In Stevedore several of the scenes do not advance the plot, but explore the side issues of the propaganda purpose. The best example occurs in Act I, when Lonnie convinces the Negroes to go to Walcott and protest their pay discrepancy. Although unrelated to the "rape" of Florrie Reynolds, it is the first step in Lonnie's campaign to awaken the Negroes to action, and is therefore, essential to the working out of the propaganda intent.

In They Shall Not Die, the last part of Act I in which Sheriff Trent beats the Negroes, is not necessary in the development of the plot, but it is extremely necessary in characterizing the depravity of the antagonists. Many scenes in We, The People, particularly those involving the capitalists, do not advance any of the three threads of plot in the play. They do, however, serve to demonstrate Rice's indictment of the rich.

A third structural characteristic of the plays studied is the repetition of a pattern of action. In "Newsboy" the Black Man makes two appeals to convert the Crowd, and neither meets with success. Both are exactly alike. "Waiting For Lefty" is structured as

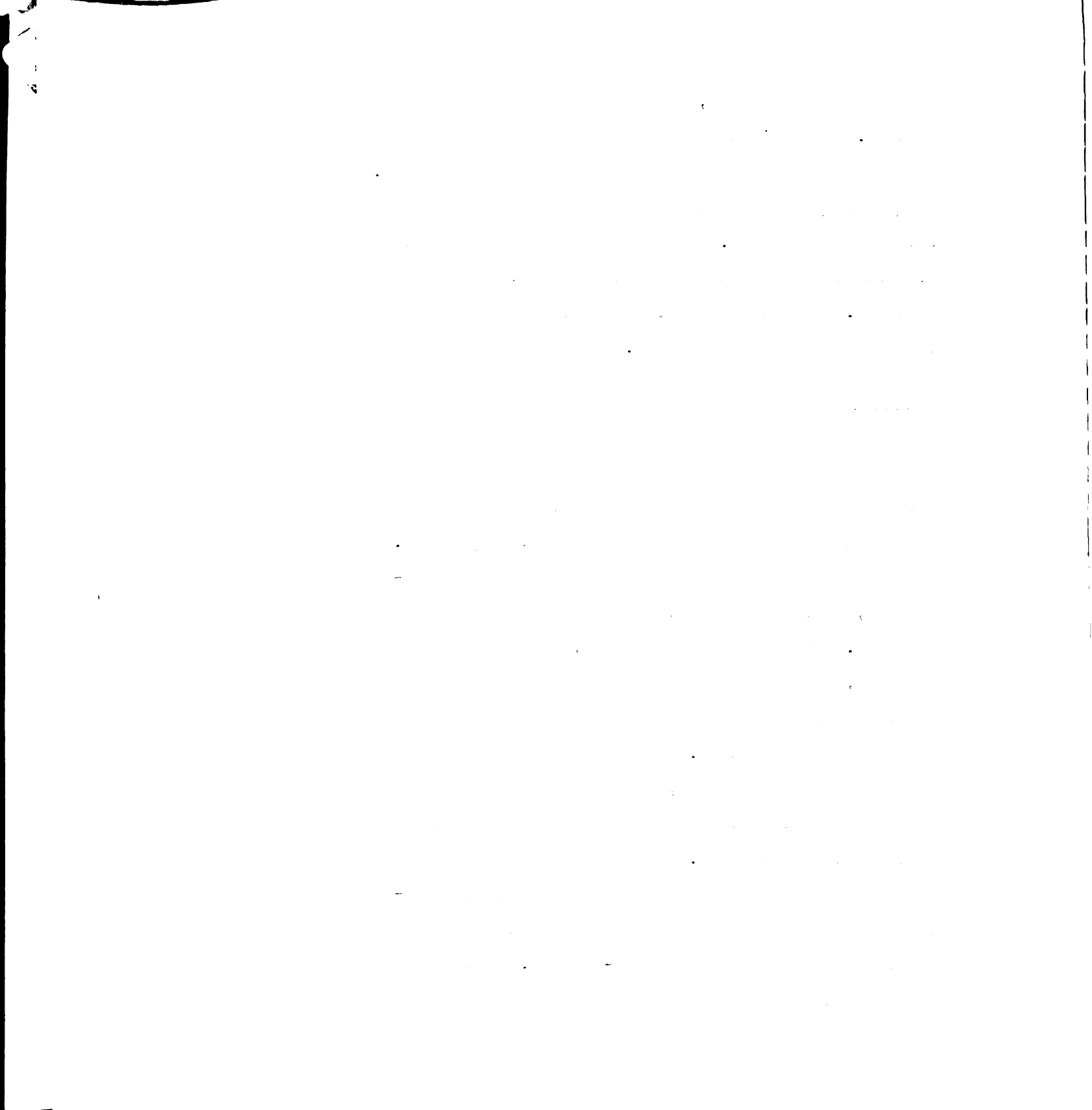


a series of flashbacks, each repeating the same pattern. Lonnie's three escapes from the police seem an unnecessary repetition of action to build suspense. The American Way repeats a series of units showing the triumph of democracy. The use of repetition aids the playwright by emphasizing his indictment, or desired attitude. The digressions, however, are weaknesses in the structure of the drama.

Dialogue

The quality of the dialogue of the propaganda plays in this study covers a rather wide range from extremely good in "Waiting For Lefty," to unusually awkward in "Newsboy" and sections of We, The People. The awkwardnesses are often the result of undue repetition, poor word choice, and lack of flow between speeches. The witty use of simile, fresh turns of language, and poetic usage raises the dialogue in "Waiting For Lefty" considerably above the rest of the plays in this study. Since there exists such a disparity among the plays, it is impossible to make conclusive statements regarding the quality of the dialogue in these plays.

The use of propaganda techniques in the dialogue reveals that the propaganda playwrights rely heavily upon Bandwagon and Name-Calling. All of the plays in this study employ Bandwagon in the



persuasive scenes. This may be explained by the playwright's desire to secure a commitment on the part of his audience to his recommended course of action. By making it appear that many others were already committed, his task is made easier. The combination of Bandwagon appeals in the dialogue and the Bandwagon appeal ingrained in the structure of the reversal of the group roles, suggests that Bandwagon is an inherent part of the dramaturgy of the propaganda play.

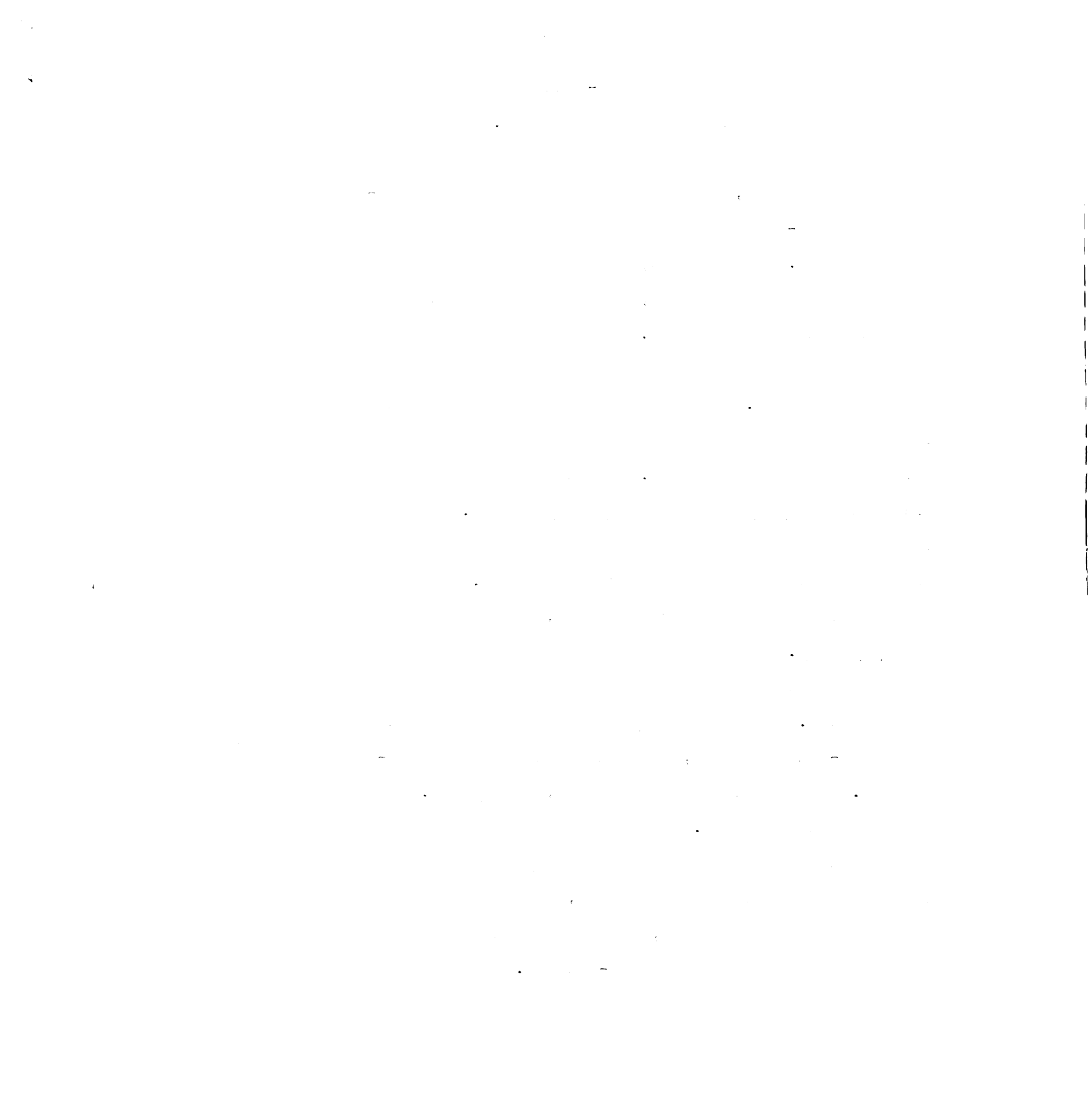
Name-Calling is a technique also frequently employed by the dramatists in this study. In most of the plays the use of Name-Calling serves to work in reverse. The name-caller, rather than succeeding in belittling his enemy, in reality discredits himself. The use of Name-Calling in reverse was employed to characterize the antagonists in "Newsboy," "Waiting For Lefty," Stevedore, and They Shall Not Die. In only one play, "Waiting For Lefty," is Name-Calling used in its more conventional sense. Edna, the Stenographer, and Agate belittle their "victims" which serves to anger them enough to retaliate.

The effect of Name-Calling in reverse is to characterize the antagonists by making them appear cowardly. Since they are prejudiced, Name-Calling is a symptom of that prejudice, and it suggests intolerance and short-sightedness. But perhaps the

strongest effect of reverse Name-Calling is to intensify rapport between audience and protagonists. Since those in attendance have allied their sympathies with the group under attack, the audience would most likely regard the Name-Calling as aimed at them as well as the group onstage. As a result, identification with the protagonists is intensified, and further alienation of the antagonists is achieved.

A third technique which appears in some of the plays is Transfer. It should be noted here that all of the plays imply Transfer from the stage groups to their corresponding social groups. Explicit uses of Transfer are seen in Stevedore and They Shall Not Die. Lonnie Thompson makes a transfer of behavior from the white prejudiced stage group to all "white bosses." Rokoff achieves the same Transfer in Act II, scene ii of They Shall Not Die.

The remaining propaganda devices are used infrequently. They Shall Not Die is the only play to use Plain-folks appeals, as well as Glittering Generalities. Testimonial was used in We, The People. One conjecture is possible. Those plays which are given most to discussion and persuasion (They Shall Not Die is the best example in this study), make greater use of a variety of techniques, although still relying heavily upon Bandwagon and Name-Calling. Since these



techniques are more often associated with rhetorical composition rather than dramatic writing, they would be more likely to be used by a person with training in persuasion and propaganda. John Wexley displays the most adeptness at the use of rhetorical dialogue, which suggests that he may be more familiar with propaganda techniques.

The Theatre As A
Medium of Propaganda

The frequency with which playwrights continue to use the theatre as a means of persuading audiences to accept their views, is testament to the potentiality of theatre as an excellent medium for dispensing propaganda. In practice, however, the theatre in America has proved to be a disappointing avenue for propagandizing. Several reasons account for this: (1) the theatre in America does not reach a vast enough audience to have much effect. When compared with television or the movies as a medium of mass communication, the theatre offers little comparison; (2) the nature of the commercial theatre of New York does not provide for a repeated exposure to a planned program of propaganda drama, which is essential if the theatre is to exercise even a limited effect; and (3) the belief that theatre exists to provide stage entertainment, is so strongly ingrained in American audiences, that

propaganda drama, which is frequently argumentative, provocative and depressing, does not attract audiences.

Implications for Further Research

This study of propaganda plays is by no means exhaustive. It is limited to undisputed examples of propaganda plays. Two important areas of the propaganda theatre need examination: (1) borderline propaganda plays, and (2) satire as a propaganda device. Borderline propaganda plays are those which seem to indicate a persuasive purpose, but that purpose is counter-balanced by other purposes in the play. They are debatable examples of propaganda drama. Many of the playwrights of the thirties wrote such borderline propaganda plays--Maxwell Anderson, John Howard Lawson, Lillian Hellman, and Robert Sherwood are a few. The examination of borderline propaganda plays should also be extended to other periods of dramatic writing. One might examine plays by Dumas, Zola, Galsworthy, Ibsen, Brieux, Hauptmann and Arthur Miller.

Secondly, the study of propaganda drama would be incomplete without an understanding of the comic theatre, particularly the use of satire as a propaganda technique.

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2. The second part of the report focuses on the importance of regular reconciliation. This involves comparing the company's internal records with external statements, such as bank statements or supplier invoices, to identify any discrepancies. Regular reconciliation helps to prevent errors and ensures that the company's financial records are up-to-date and accurate.

3. The third part of the report discusses the importance of maintaining proper documentation for all transactions. This includes keeping receipts, invoices, and other supporting documents for a period of time that meets the requirements of the relevant tax authorities. Proper documentation is essential for defending the company's financial records in the event of an audit.

4. The fourth part of the report discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all assets and liabilities. This includes keeping track of the company's cash, accounts receivable, accounts payable, and other assets and liabilities. Accurate records of assets and liabilities are essential for determining the company's net worth and for preparing financial statements.

5. The fifth part of the report discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all income and expenses. This includes keeping track of the company's sales, purchases, and other income and expenses. Accurate records of income and expenses are essential for determining the company's taxable income and for preparing tax returns.

6. The sixth part of the report discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all payroll and benefits. This includes keeping track of the company's payroll, including salaries, wages, and benefits. Accurate records of payroll and benefits are essential for determining the company's payroll taxes and for preparing payroll reports.

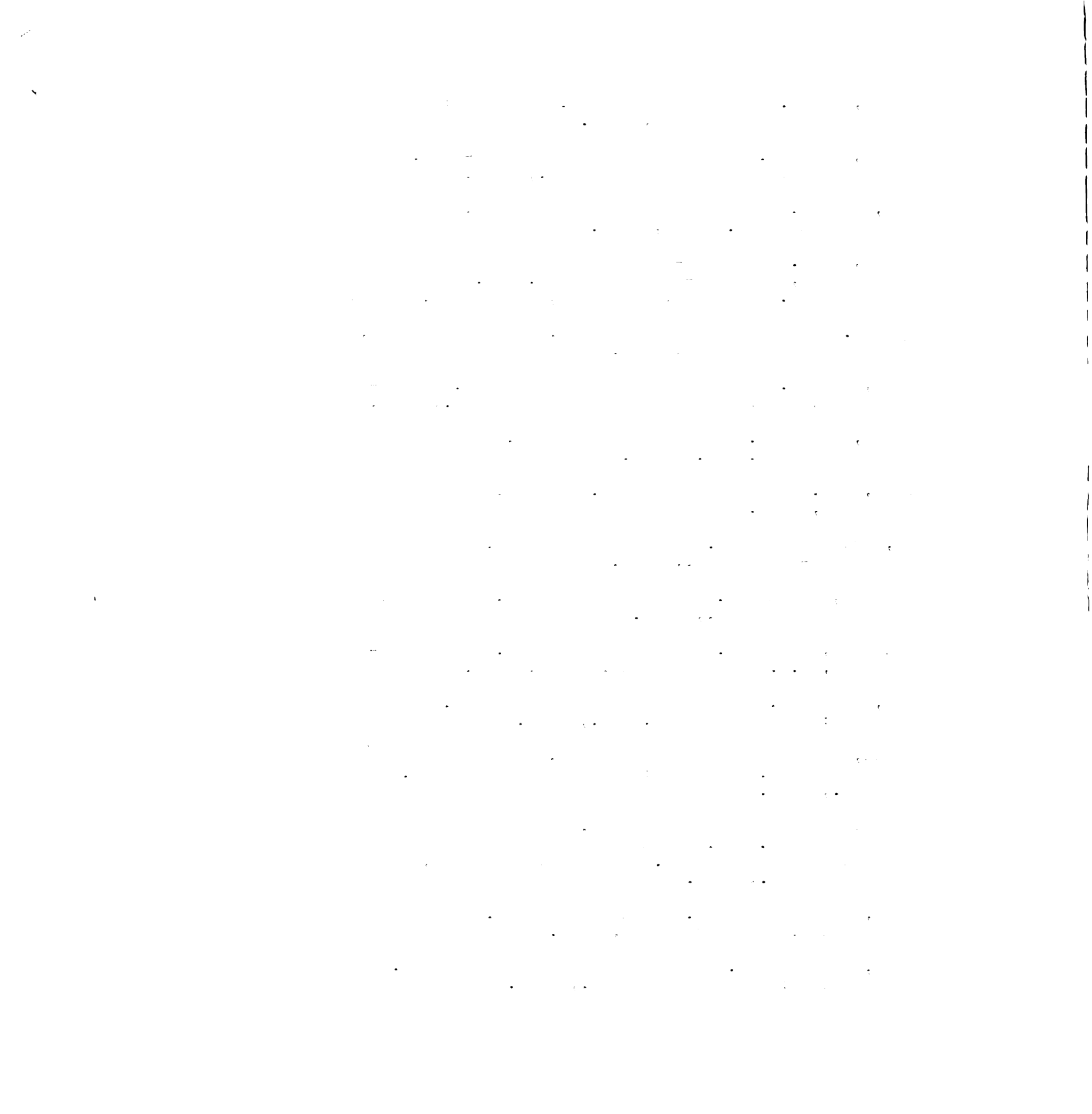
7. The seventh part of the report discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all other financial transactions. This includes keeping track of the company's interest income, dividends, and other financial transactions. Accurate records of other financial transactions are essential for determining the company's total income and for preparing financial statements.

8. The eighth part of the report discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all other financial information. This includes keeping track of the company's debt, equity, and other financial information. Accurate records of other financial information are essential for determining the company's financial position and for preparing financial statements.

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1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and the role of the accounting department in ensuring the integrity of the financial statements. It also highlights the need for regular audits and the importance of transparency in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document focuses on the implementation of internal controls to prevent fraud and ensure the accuracy of financial data. It outlines the key components of a robust internal control system, including segregation of duties, authorization procedures, and regular monitoring and evaluation.

3. The third part of the document addresses the challenges faced by organizations in managing their financial resources effectively. It discusses the importance of budgeting and forecasting, and the role of the accounting department in providing accurate and timely financial information to management for decision-making.

4. The fourth part of the document explores the impact of technology on the accounting profession. It discusses the benefits of automation and the use of cloud-based accounting systems, as well as the need for continuous learning and professional development for accountants.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes by emphasizing the importance of ethical behavior in the accounting profession. It discusses the role of accountants as trusted advisors and the need to adhere to the highest standards of integrity and honesty in all financial transactions.

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1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses, which are arranged in a grid-like format. The names are listed in the first column, and the addresses are listed in the second column. The names are: John Doe, Jane Smith, and Bob Johnson. The addresses are: 123 Main St, 456 Elm St, and 789 Oak St.

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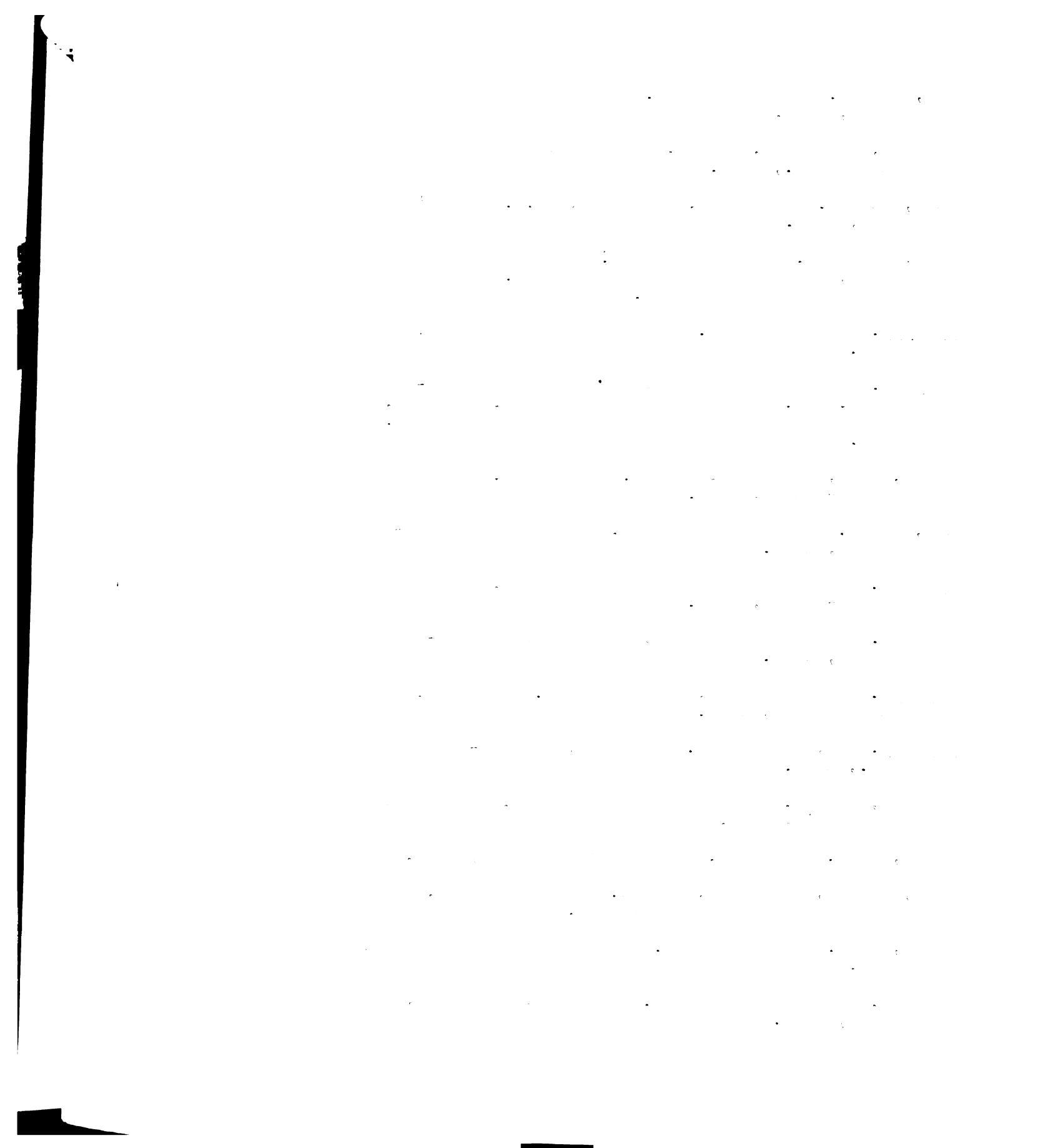
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