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cialist" Fairchild, it betrays Lindley's limitations as an observer and a political journalist

Perhaps Mr. Lindley does not realize how disillusioned he seems with capitalism, because he has not permitted himself to direct his fine intelligence to the solutions communism offers? It is necessary to remark that *Soviet Communism* by Beatrice and Sidney Webb is not only a scientific work of the highest order: it is also documentary proof that there is only one way Mr. Lindley's problem will be solved anywhere by anybody valuing democracy. E. C. DEAN.

Professor Ross's Story

SEVENTY YEARS OF IT: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY, by Edward Alsworth Ross. D. Appleton-Century Co. \$3.

PROFESSOR ROSS may be characterized as an academic early Lincoln Steffens—not in personality, for in this respect they were poles apart—but as a dauntless critic of big business and of the consequences of its rule. Yet whereas Steffens before his death came to see a revolutionary way out, Ross remains today a muckraking liberal.

His autobiography reveals a rugged personality, of a piece with his giant physical frame. Researches carried him to the storm centers of the world, to Russia, Japan, China, India, Mexico, Africa, not to speak of various countries of Europe. He associated intimately with the most eminent men in political, industrial, and academic life at home and abroad. But in attitude and sympathy he continues to be a Midwest farmer. He eloquently proclaims his fealty: "As I hobnob with the ruling privileged classes in various parts of the world I never come to feel that I have share or lot with them. I don't belong nor do I wish to belong. My place is with the masses that draw the furrow, slop the hogs, fell the trees, or smooth the planks; that I happen to earn my living teaching and writing does not make them any the less my folks."

Among the best parts of his autobiography are those pages which reveal why it is imperative for a teacher to identify himself with the masses of country and city if he is interested in the cause of truth. The story of Professor Ross's ousting from Leland Stanford University because his utterances on Chinese immigration and bimetallism antagonized railroad magnates and the widow of the founder of the university, is a stirring chronicle. The accounts given of the manner in which he has been constantly harassed by reactionary forces in Wisconsin is *must* reading, particularly for those who still wonder why universities are largely academic mortuaries. All forms of social pressure have been used against him. Here is an internationally known scholar of old American stock of Scotch descent, not a revolutionist, but merely outspoken in his denunciation of corruption and exploitation by the mighty and their agents. Yet attacks upon him by the Hearst press and the Chicago *Tribune* have been relentless. But his defiance

is lusty, and inspiring to teachers comparably beset by Red-baiters.

Coercion could not prevent him from speaking out on the Soviet Union, which he saw at first hand in different periods and which he characterizes as affording "peeps into Utopia." His service to the Bolsheviks was great through his book *The Russian Soviet Republic*. In a famous chapter entitled "The Poison Gas Attacks," he exposed forty-nine lies about the Russian Revolution, current in the United States, among them the smut on the communization of women. And when he revisited Russia in July 1934, he was enthusiastic over the absence of a "pampered gentry with a spare tire about the middle," over the care given to children, over the alertness of Communist youth who "possess uncanny insight into anti-social situations which we have been taught to tolerate." He chuckles with delight over the use of the mansions of the czar and the nobility for rest homes for Soviet workers—"the neverworks chased away after centuries of crass parasitism and the despoiled occupying their palaces." "For the first time in the life of humanity you have plain overalled workers in the role of public heroes," he writes of the *udarniki*, who proved the error of his earlier support of the orthodox economists' contention that under socialism production would slow down fatally through lack of personal initiative.

He had rare perspectives with which he might evaluate developments in the Soviet Union. For he had seen the functioning of imperialism and the plight of the masses in the Orient, in South America, in Portuguese Africa, in South Africa, and in India. His descriptions in his original works of the gruesome conditions prevailing in these areas, and as reviewed in the chapters of this book, are vigorous indictments of the crimes of what he prefers to call the "business-control System." Moreover, his *Sin and Society*, which was published in 1907 as a blistering broadside against the rulers of America, contained such strong passages as, "Today the villain most in need of curbing is the respectable, exemplary, trusted personage who, strategically placed at the focus of a spider-web of fiduciary relations, is able from his office chair to pick a thousand pockets, poison a thousand sick, pollute a thousand minds or imperil a thousand lives." But the weakness of *Sin and Society* lay in what Ross's friend, President Theodore Roosevelt, hailed in its preface, as its strength—the rejection of the principle of the class struggle. And Ross is still content with the muckraking approach of the first ten years of the present century, for he here declares that he would not alter a comma of the book.

He is not so unyielding in other respects, for he retracts many of his earlier views. Although he still defends his achievement in putting over the present restricted quota laws, he admits that he was too alarmist as to American and west European population trends. He declares that "Difference of race means far less to me than it once did. Far

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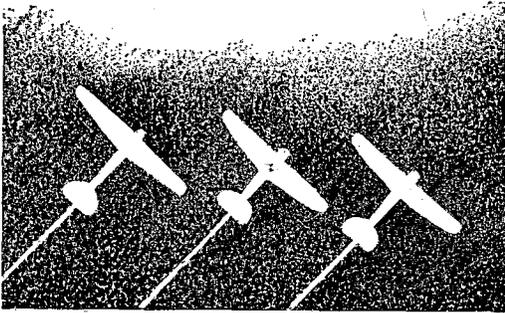
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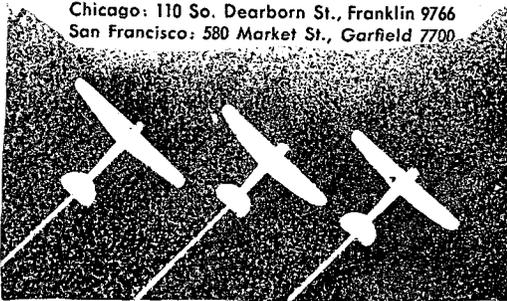
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behind me in a ditch lies the Nordic myth," and generously acknowledges his basic error when he states: "I blush to confess that nearly two-thirds of my life had passed before I awoke to the fallacy of rating peoples according to grades of culture. I had assumed that if a people cleaves to its low culture that is about all it is fit for. Slowly I came to see that many factors beside disparity of natural endowment explain why *this* people has a high culture and *that* people has a low culture." If these wiser judgments had been arrived at sooner, much of the thunder of his anti-immigration drive might have been stilled. Ross likewise penitently acknowledges the error of affixing his signature to the shameful petition of the faculty of the University of Wisconsin attacking the war record of the elder La Follette, and he denounces war as mass slaughter.

In failing to acknowledge the verity of Marxian social philosophy, Ross falls short of carrying to their ultimate conclusion the lessons of the major part of his life's work. In pairing communism and fascism as equal objects of his distaste, and contending vaguely that "the clear advance we have registered over certain other societies and over our own past demonstrates that it is possible to progress without making the Great Change—from *private* capitalism to *public* capitalism—which the Marxians insist, is the *only* thing that will count," he lags behind his own evidence. The struggle for power he proposes is "to strengthen our public educational system, promote adult education, make 'academic freedom' a reality, multiply labor unions, co-operatives and credit unions, build a 'labor press,' and fight along the familiar lines of the platform, the hustings, and the ballot-box." These are to him not only immediate tactics; he envisages no drastic change in the social structure, for he has no quarrel "with private economic enterprise in a competitive field which respects its obligations to its workers and its customers." His battle has been one against the abuses within capitalism, against "this monstrous business-control System which has boosted 'profits' and 'returns to capital' far beyond what is necessary for activating production, while consumers, workers and unorganized producers (farmers) are gouged and gypped in a great variety of ways."

These strictures against the limitations of his social philosophy are not meant to minimize his courage. Let sociologists mark well his mordant comment: "I wouldn't give a snap of my finger for the 'pussyfooting' sociologist. His sneering at 'reformism' and condemning 'value judgments' may not be altogether due to zeal for the 'purity' of our science; to me they suggest a 'rationalization' of 'ducking'." Ross did not duck but fought for the principles of democracy with a zest and integrity that merit acclaim. And this surging autobiography, naïve, rough in its literary form, and over-punctuated with exclamation-points, gives a genuine picture of the man and his milieu.

BERNHARD J. STERN.

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SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

Dodsworth in Hollywood—"La Kermesse Héroïque" and a fine labor short

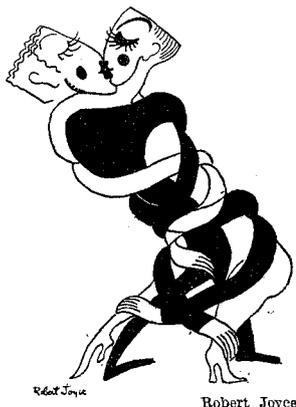
DODSWORTH, the movie, does everything it sets out to. Sidney Howard's adaptation is superior to the Sinclair Lewis novel and Walter Huston achieves all the emotion that could possibly be drawn from the botched character of the book. Axiomatically, there would have to be a quota of balmy Southern California touches. The script has Mary Astor living in a Naples villa to save money, but at the same time she is shown wearing two-hundred-dollar gowns and a mink wrap with H. Jaeckel & Sons oozing from every skin. When Dodsworth sells his great automobile plant an overalled worker in the yard says, "Sorry to see you go, Sam." But the scenes click off in a sequence that has the logic of its own premises; and these premises are as shallow as Lewis's book.

That thesis was valid in Norway at the time and under the conditions Knut Hamsun worked it out in *Shallow Soil*. In a contemporary American setting it is a pretty and spurious anachronism. Sam Dodsworth is the familiar Sinclair Lewis business man. He might not be much of a hand at explaining old cathedrals and he might not know the difference between a demi-tasse and a demi-monde and when it comes to Vatsyayana's erotic theories, why he jist don't know from nothing, but, by gum, he stands for good plumbing, concrete roads, and free wheeling. Dodsworth spells progress. Dodsworth has got to be on the go. A Dodsworth out of harness isn't worth a plugged dime.

And that, according to Sinclair Lewis, is the tragedy of Sam Dodsworth. His wife has dragged him off to Europe, he's out of harness, he hasn't a thing to do. Fortunately, you can't down a good man and he hits on a new project, an airway between Seattle and Moscow, so the tragedy is not really a tragedy, but a triumph of individual initiative. Here is where Dodsworth is fundamentally vitiated as a contemporary symbol.

It would be silly to explain that Sam Dodsworth is not meant to be any such thing, because his most significant characteristics recur throughout Lewis's writings.

The essential tragedy of a real Dodsworth would lie in the fact that he is a gifted man, full of decent, fruitful, creative impulses which are repeatedly checked by his job and its implications. A real Dodsworth no longer symbolizes progress in any important sense. Automobile manufacturers no longer manufacture "the best possible car at the price." They consciously make cars that won't last too long, they wilfully buy up inventions to keep them out of circulation; their big job now is to break unions. This would be part of the essential tragedy in the life of decent Sam Dodsworth. And those philistine streaks about which Lewis and Sam Goldwyn are so complacent could be made to intensify this tragedy.



Would it be too much for a hard-headed business man to realize that a Seattle-Moscow airway is at best chimerical in the present international setup? If that's the most hopeful notion Sam could hit on, Progress must be in a hell of a shape. That airway would not resolve the difficulties even of the Lewis-Goldwyn Dodsworth. Mary Astor is their only solution. Because the movie fails to face the problems of a real Dodsworth, its overwhelming emphasis is of necessity placed on his marital tangles and that is what makes it tangential and unimportant. All the actors do good jobs, the photography is adequate and if you're in the mood for a picture, see this one in preference to *The Texas Rangers* and *The General Died at Dawn*. In New York the Rivoli is being picketed, so New Yorkers may have to wait. EDWARD NEWHOUSE.

BRILLIANT satire on the screen is a very rare occurrence. There are only a very few films that fall into this category: René Clair's *The Italian Straw Hat* (*The Horse Ate the Hat*), Pabst's *Dreigroschenoper*, Boris Barnet's *The Patriots*, Chaplin's *Lady of Paris* and *Modern Times*, some of the early work of Lubitsch, and Jacques Feyder's *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*. And now Feyder, the Belgian who failed in Hollywood (remember *The Kiss* with Garbo and Gilbert?) has made an extraordinary film satire that is brilliant, witty, lusty, and human: *La Kermesse Héroïque*, which opened New York's newest film house, the Filmarte.

As in every good film of its type, the plot is simple. The quality is achieved through the characterizations and the production. Feyder has gone back to early seventeenth-century Flanders, during the invasion of Philip of Spain. Preparations for the annual carnival in the provincial town of Boom are interrupted by a messenger of a Spanish duke giving notice of his impending arrival with the troops. The timid burgomaster and his aldermen, fearing plunder, rape, and murder, pretend the death of the burgomaster, trusting that the Spaniard's respect for a village in mourning will make him seek other shelter. But their wives take matters into their own

hands. The burgomaster's wife (beautifully played by director Feyder's wife, Francoise Rosay) organizes the women of the town to give the Spaniards such a welcome as will save Boom from fire and sword—and which pretty well erases the "iv" from "carnival."

Every scene—especially the long shots containing an enormous amount of detail—is handled with precision and finesse. Feyder has caught the essence of that period of the Renaissance. Many of the scenes are reminiscent of a Peter Breughel canvas in more ways than one. It would be difficult to underestimate the quality of the director's work.

This initial program at the Filmarte was further distinguished by the presentation of America's first professional labor sound film, *Millions of Us*. It is the first offering of a group of film workers in Hollywood under the name of American Labor Films, Inc. It is equally significant that this militant plea for organized labor should come from people in an industry that has contributed so much to anti-labor propaganda. In two reels it tells the story of an unemployed young man who is prevented from becoming a scab by a union organizer. From a mechanical point of view the film has the best Hollywood can offer. The main defects lie in the direction and the scenario. But those are minor faults at this time . . . for it states its message clearly, simply, and with eloquence. The film contains the famous quotation from Lincoln on the revolutionary right of Americans to overthrow the government when it no longer serves them. And it is amazing to hear Lincoln hissed and booed by some in the audience. The censors wanted to ban the film because of the Lincoln quotation. But when they learned that it was from the first inaugural address (those distinguished censors of ours, under the guidance of the University of the State of New York, had to be told) they were compelled to give *Millions of Us* a free passport. It is a film that deserves the fullest support. Only audience response will insure the continuance of such films. The management early this week, however, apparently in response to pressure from enemies of labor, decided to cut this picture from the program. But the hisses that the silk-stocking crowd gave Lincoln in the first few days were nothing to the applause of the later audiences. Insistent demands from potential audiences should be able to put it back on view. PETER ELLIS.



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