

"The Forgotten Factor"

BOSSSES' WEAPON

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CAPE TOWN.

THE Forgotten Factor is a weapon in today's war of ideas.

Unless we take its lesson to heart, our democracy is doomed."

This is how a speaker introduced The Forgotten Factor, a play brought by the Moral Rearmament Group to South Africa, to the first night audience in the Hofmeyr Hall, Cape Town, last Monday.

In a lecture on Moral Rearmament at the end of the play, another speaker, a member of the cast, said: "We believe that here is the answer for everybody in this ideological age. Moral rearmament is democracy's inspired ideology. It is without party, race, class or creed."

Both speakers claimed that The Forgotten Factor was reality. Well, it just is not. It is "unmitigated bunk, sentimental tosh," to quote a member of the audience I overheard. And it is also clever propaganda against militant trade unionism.

The Forgotten Factor gives the recipe for settling industrial disputes. The ingredients? The president of Wilson Consolidated, the president's son, a union organiser, a couple of wives and daughters, and a few workers, including a leader of a "faction" in the union.

This faction leader is the villain of the piece. Joe Bush by name, he is out to split the union (according to union organiser, Jim Rankin). And knowing something about union-breakers, one first thought Joe Bush was a boss's stooge. But far from it — boss's stooges don't exist in the world of The Forgotten Factor.

No, Joe Bush is apparently an agitator. "If you and I don't get together," honest Jim Rankin says to honest Mr. Richard Wilson, Sr.,

in the closing scene, "America will suffer and fellows like Joe Bush will come out on top."

But I am anticipating. The Forgotten Factor is a play in three acts. The first is of two scenes in the Wilson home — a worried father, a mother with her own worries, a schoolgirl daughter and a son — the hero of the piece.

CHANGE OF HEART

For the son undergoes a change of heart. Something simply must be done about the trouble at the works, he tells himself. It's really too, too upsetting — all these workers milling around, demanding higher wages, and his father adamant, not budging. Surely something can be done about it all? Of course! He has it! A spirit of loving kindness can make the world go round.

So in the next scene young Dick Wilson breaks in on the Rankins at home. Here, too, there is a worried father, a worried mother, a son, a daughter — but all on a shabbier scale, of course.

Jim Rankin has a strike on his hands, but after some adroit handling by hero, Dick Wilson, he agrees to listen, and after further adroit handling, accepts an invitation to breakfast in the Wilson home the following morning.

HISTORIC MEETING

So we are transported back to the Wilson home to watch, with bated breath, the historic meeting between the boss and the union organiser. Of course, there are difficulties. Wilson won't take Rankin's hand at first. But everything ends happily.

Even hard-hearted Wilson is converted by The Forgotten Factor (which, we are told, is God). He always, secretly, thought some of the workers' demands were reasonable, he says. "We'll come to an agreement, you and I," he cries to Jim Rankin. And, with Joe Bush ignominiously defeated, the curtain drops on Wilson and Rankin toasting each other over the breakfast coffee.

HYPOCRITICAL

The Forgotten Factor is hypocritical cant. But it is more than that. It is an attempt to deny the existence of the class struggle, to maintain that the interests of employers do not conflict with those of their employees, to argue that everybody can live together happily under capitalism provided they remember God.

It is, in a sense, an attempt to outlaw strikes and impose compulsory arbitration. It is a weapon of the bosses, so cleverly concealed that it has taken in many workers' leaders.

Among the South African sponsors for this play are Nationalist Cabinet Ministers, Broederbonders, United Party Parliamentarians, professors, ministers of religion — and trade unionists.

The names? Among others, Senator Karl Bremer, Professor J. F. Brock, Mr. J. Calder, Dr. N. Diederichs, Dr. E. G. Jansen, Mr. Harm Oost, Dr. A. J. Stals, Mr. R. Stuart, Dr. H. van Eck, Dr. P. J. van Nierop, the Mayors of Johannesburg and Cape Town, and Mr. T. B. Bowker.