



ONE
HUNDRED
YEARS
OF
SOLIDARITY



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OF
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Dedication

Throughout the pages of this book, we have presented the glorious history of our International Alliance, with all its struggles and worthy attainments.

This book is dedicated to the membership—past and present—of this esteemed International Union, in recognition of your devotion to your union and in honor of your many accomplishments throughout the years. As we face the future with confidence, you, the members, will lead us into our second century of achievement.

For 100 years, the IATSE & MPMO has endured, in good times and bad, in peace and in war, and against all odds. And though we come from two separate nations, we are one union, rising to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Congratulations to all my sisters and brothers in the IATSE, on being part of these **100 Years of Solidarity.**

Alfred W. DiSolla



The Birth of the Alliance

It is a time when workers are taken for granted by their employers. Wages are low, hours are long and no one is secure. Unemployment is the highest it has been in many years. Families are suffering and there is an increasing number who have lost everything and are living on the streets of America.



This could be a description of America in 1933, or even 1993. But it isn't.

The year is 1893, and a small handful of courageous men have made a momentous decision. They will risk their jobs, their homes, even their ability to work in their chosen field for an idea whose time, they believe, has come.

Their idea is embodied in a single word: *union*.

These seventeen men were the first delegates to the first convention of the National Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees. They met in New York City on July 17, 1893, and gave voice to their frustrations with an industry in which managers and producers held all the high cards.

They knew the risk they were taking. Those same managers and producers could, and often did, fire workers for far less than

trying to form a union. Nevertheless, they persisted.

Their courage was rewarded—the National Alliance would transform the entertainment industry in the years to come.

The National Alliance received a charter from the American Federation of Labor in 1894. This charter set the fledgling union on a course it has followed without wavering since then.

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United States and Canada—as it is now known—is today primarily organized along craft lines. That is, the local unions are, in general, organized as industrial craft unions, with projectionists belonging to one local, stagehands to another, television broadcast employees to yet another, and so forth.

This structure, as a traditional craft-style union, took the IA out of the influence of the more fraternal and socialistic Knights of Labor. For ever after, the IA would pursue its work based on this principle. And the union would be faced with a continuous struggle with industrial unions for work within the blossoming entertainment industry.

The Elks Hall occupied the first floor of this building, located at 27th Street and Broadway, New York City, and it was here that the first Alliance Convention was held on July 17, 1893.



The Impetus For UNION

In 1893, the need for a union was clear. The highest paid stagehands in that year worked for about 50 cents a day, if they were lucky enough to get paid. They were expected to work around the clock, doing whatever was asked of them. They unloaded a show, set it up, handled lights and props during the performance, repeating this scenario twice a day for the matinee and evening performance.

Our late International President Emeritus, Richard Walsh, described what life was like for the stagehands in the early part of the 20th century:

"We went to work on Friday, and we worked Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and then on Monday we would put on the new stock show for that week, and then we could go home. We always brought along two or three pairs of clean socks and we would change our socks when we got a coffee break each day. I was the apprentice boy in the theatre, and for six days I received \$8. No overtime. Nothing like that. The only thing I got that was a little lucrative was that they would let me take a part in the show, like standing at the door with a rifle or some such thing. So I would get an extra \$2 for the week for that."

After all that, the stagehands were then expected to take the show down, load it up and travel on to the next one-night stand. All too often, these early stagehands were left stranded, as slick producers took box office receipts and quietly disappeared. The stagehands were then left to walk the rails back home.

Conditions for these men were brutal, yet they



loved the theatre, the lights, the look on the faces of the audiences. They loved the magic of it all.

The early fraternal organizations—precursors of the Alliance—were formed to aid the stranded stagehands. These were charitable organizations which came to the aid of those who were so cruelly taken advantage of, but they were not structured to try to stop the abuses.

The Theatrical Mutual Association was one such organization, and there were others. These groups did serve to open the door to discussions which would nurture the notion of mutual support. Shared suffering inevitably led to a search for solutions.

The convention in 1893 was not the first step, however, in the formation of the new union. That came in 1886, with the creation of the Theatrical Protective Union of New York. The members of this first union, later Local One of the International Alliance, used the strike to win such victories as a \$1-a-day wage.

They won this strike because the foolish producers in such houses as the Academy of Music believed they could hire





The Theatrical Mutual Association, shown here in 1888, was one of the early benevolent associations that preceded the National Alliance.

strikebreakers to do the work of these experienced stagehands. A story is told that, when a poorly-placed flat toppled over onto the great actor Louis James, he refused to continue until the striking stagehands were rehired.

Whether or not this particular story is true doesn't matter. Such a story could have happened wherever IA stagehands were at work, because their skills and their commitment to the show were without equal in the entertainment industry in the late 19th century.

Early local unions were composed of carpenters, scene shifters, flymen, electricians and property-men. They did their assigned jobs, and more. The work and the hours were irregular, so early stagehands were always worrying about where their next wages would come from.

When they worked, it

was often without meals or breaks. They labored in virtually every department of the theatre, often against their will. Usually, after opening night of a run, many of the stagehands who had worked so hard to load in the show were sent on their way, with no promise of future work.

A common practice of the day was to enlist young boys to help work the show or take small parts as "extras." These children, for that's what they were, were not paid in cash: they were given "free" tickets to the show as payment.

The stagehands were not alone in receiving abuse from employers. Other workers, too, saw unions as their only salvation against factory and mill owners and other industrialists. Thus the stage was clearly set and the time was right for the formation of the Alliance.

When the AFL charter came in 1894, the number

of locals had doubled from the founding convention. At the birth of the IA, there were delegates from New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Denver, Philadelphia, Buffalo, Syracuse, St. Louis, Boston, Cincinnati, and Brooklyn.

These locals represented a remarkable cross section of the United States, from

the metropolitan areas of the Northeast to the Midwest. In all those states, the theatre in some form was firmly established. And those theatres were ripe for organizing.

The first president of the IA was John G. Williams, elected for a one-year term. In the beginning, the Alliance met every year so that more and more newly-formed locals could participate. President Williams was succeeded by Lee M. Hart of Chicago, in 1894.

President Hart was a strong leader with a forceful personality. During the Third Annual Convention in 1895, he told the delegates:

"It is written in letters of fire that the day of injustice to the working men of our craft must soon draw to a close . . . Let the ties which bind us to the past, let the interests which demand our watchfulness of the present, let the nobility of our aspirations for justice, truth, liberty and a grander development of our craft in the future, be the guiding stars to our actions."





Just after the turn of the century, a group of stagehands posed before a matinee performance.



John G. Williams, the first President of the Alliance.

His words inspired his brothers. The Alliance grew rapidly from this point on. In 1902, the Alliance was chartered as an *international* union after the first two Canadian locals were admitted. Montreal Local 56 and Toronto Local 58 had been welcomed to the Alliance in 1899.

It was an uphill battle for the Alliance from the start, but in 1911, a victory was won which would make the IA a force to be reckoned with. A strike in New Orleans was called, and strikebreakers were employed by the theatre owners.

Fearful of picket line conflict, the theatre owners are believed to have circumvented the pickets by bringing workers in through a manhole in the street.

The story goes that then-President Charles C. Shay simply took a chair and settled himself atop that manhole so that no workers could get in or out.

In any case, the strike was successful in getting IA members back to work and brought about union recognition from the dominant theatre interests in New Orleans.

The Early Years of the Theatre

In the late 1880s, the legitimate theatre existed mostly in larger cities. When producers and managers saw the response of the public to the legitimate theatre, they realized the next step was to create traveling shows. The development of a national rail system in



the late 19th century made traveling shows much more feasible.

The touring companies could bring their own costumes, props and even scenery. One immediate effect of this trend was to reduce employment among local crews, since these stagehands were no longer needed to construct scenery, acquire props or make costumes for long-running shows or local stock companies' productions.

Despite this, the road shows became a principal source of employment in the entertainment industry. These shows employed not only traveling stagehands, but would often pick up local crews as well.

Estimates are that, when road shows reached their peak in 1904, there were some 420 companies touring the United States and Canada. Because the sets and scenery were usually constructed in the larger metropolitan areas, such as New York and Philadelphia, a gradual division of skills resulted.

Certain stage mechanics became specialists in the construction of sets and props in scenic shops.



Others became experts in handling the output of these shops—everything from packing the sets and loading them onto rail cars to running the show during performances.

However, the usual story prevailed: abuses were rampant.

Wages were cut arbitrarily and discriminatory practices were common.

There were many road shows that employed nonunion crews, paying them very little and working them long hours.

When strikes were undertaken, there was always conflict between the local membership, the road stagehands and un-

The Legacy of Lee Hart

One of the prominent early leaders of the IA was Lee M. Hart, who served as president of the National Alliance in 1894 and as General Secretary-Treasurer of the International from 1898 to 1914.

He played a pivotal role in bringing the first delegates together in 1893, and many consider him to be the real father of the Alliance. The 23rd Convention recognized Brother Hart in a special memorial notice in 1917, with these words: (Brother Hart) gave unsparingly of his efforts . . . and never did he evidence a desire to withdraw, to step aside, to shirk responsibility, but . . . resolutely kept to the task which he had set himself."



For many years, well-beyond the turn of the century, horse-drawn wagons were still used to deliver props, material and other theatrical supplies to theatres.

1 9 9 3



Local Union 126, Ft. Worth, Texas, circa 1906.

Specific conditions for work were set which called for strict departmentalization of jobs, establishment of a standard eight-hour work day, and perhaps most importantly, abolishing the system of employing actors and other unskilled workers as carpenters, flymen and stagehands.

At the second convention, the constitution and by-laws were rewritten to reflect changes in the industry. Work was undertaken to establish a union working card, and a committee was appointed to create a union label.

In 1912, the first blanket contract was established for road men. Under this

scrupulous workers who would come from other cities to break the strike, sometimes from Alliance local unions themselves.

Traveling stagehands were often forced to work in unfair theatres or found themselves stranded in distant locations and out of a job. They frequently seized this as an opportunity to bring the local workers into the Alliance. These very early organizing efforts served to spread word of the new Alliance and what it could do for its members.

It was in this environment that the Alliance moved to assert itself.

It soon became clear that the concerns of these early members centered

on wages and working conditions. The social reform characteristic of the Knights of Labor would simply not meet the needs of stagehands. The American Federation of Labor, which practiced a brand of trade unionism focusing on job security and wages, was a natural organization with which the Alliance could affiliate.

From the beginning, the new union moved quickly to create mechanisms to enable it to fully represent the members. At the first convention, a simple constitution had been written, per capita dues instituted, and a minimum rate of pay established.



system, bonds posted with the International guaranteed transportation home, as well as two weeks' pay for shows that closed suddenly.

At the same time, District No. 1, composed of locals in the Northwest, created a system which allowed road men to send ahead to the next destination basic information such as the size and length of time the local crews would be needed. This assured not only that there would be enough people to staff each theatre, but it made it easier to ensure that these were *union* crews.

It worked so well that the International adopted the system a few years later. It is now known as the yellow card system, which is still in use today.

Despite difficult economic times, the local unions survived. Ironically, the stability of the locals was not reflected in the leadership of the Alliance.

The top positions changed constantly. At virtually every convention for the first several years, a new president was elected.

Former President Lee Hart became General Secretary-Treasurer in 1898 and served in that position until 1915. His tenure was the longest of any leader until many, many years later.

One reason for the frequent turnover was that these officers of the Alliance were not paid a salary, with the exception of the General Secretary-Treasurer, who in 1895 had been awarded a salary of \$300 a year plus expenses.

In 1906, the delegates finally voted to pay the International President a salary of \$1,000 a year plus expenses. Until that time, the president had to rely

on his craft to provide his income. Consequently, the president would often join a show when he had the chance, and someone else would have to finish out his term. It was not a very workable arrangement, but the delegates had been reluctant to make the job a paid position, given the scarce financial resources of the young Alliance.

The membership expected a lot from their

officers. For example, the General Secretary-Treasurer had no clerical help. Brother Lee Hart, who served so diligently from 1898 to 1915, conducted lengthy correspondence, all written out by him in longhand.

The decentralized nature of the organization made obtaining recognition for the union a slow, painful process. One lock-out in Boston lasted seven years, and there were

similar situations in cities like St. Louis and Detroit.

Despite these challenges, during this period membership rose rapidly. Estimates are that in 1893, there were about 1,500 members. By 1900, that figure had grown to about 3,700, and by 1920 there were more than 21,000 members in the Alliance.

The number of local unions grew at a speedy pace as well. Locals were first organized in the larger

Local 118, Vancouver, British Columbia, members posed for a formal portrait on December 6, 1903, four months after the local was organized.



A backstage look at a turn-of-the-century theatre.

cities, and later in the more remote areas.

Annual conventions were held until 1913, when the delegates voted to establish biennial conventions.

The conventions have followed a tradition set down in the very beginning, something that has lasted to this day.

These are active, hard-working conventions which tackle all sorts of thorny questions and

issues. So it has always been.

Legislation is enacted, complaints are heard, and appeals are considered and determined.

Another complication in the early years was that the president, the secretary-treasurer and the other officers all lived in different cities. With communications and transportation systems such as they were at the turn of the century, it was almost

impossible to carry out the business of the Alliance in a timely fashion.

In 1913, international headquarters was firmly established in New York City, and the president and the secretary-treasurer were required to live there.

At last, it seemed that the Alliance had real leaders, with real authority, to conduct the business of the organization.





Employees of the Opera House carrying in the show of Maude Adams as Peter Pan, May, 1907.

Governing the New Union

The Alliance leaders next set about finding ways to enforce the constitution and by-laws. At first, they had very little authority to make their rulings stick, and members found guilty of violations often ignored the orders of their elected leaders.

At the convention of 1910, after long and heated arguments on the floor, the delegates gave the president and the executive board authority to levy fines and other penalties.

In the beginning the general executive board was composed of five members—the president and four “at-large” vice presidents. This inevitably led to conflict among the locals, with Chicago charging in 1897 that the Alliance was too strongly dominated by the East Coast locals.

The response of the convention was to establish an Eastern Executive Board and a Western Executive Board. When this proved unsatisfactory, other attempts were made until the Alliance finally settled on a board composed of the President, the regional Vice-Presi-

dents and the General Secretary-Treasurer.

Next came the need for International Representatives to conduct organizing campaigns and assist the local unions in their operations.

The President was given very broad powers, most significantly, the authority during an emergency—surrounded with due process protections—to suspend the laws of the Alliance of any local union, so long as he has obtained the unanimous consent of the General Executive Board. This power would

prove highly important in later years during the long period of strife in Hollywood.

At the 1909 convention, the delegates approved the creation of seven districts which would be responsible for winning fair wages and working conditions in the theatres in their respective regions. Often, these theatres would be owned by the same manager or theatre chain. Without the district council, it would have been very difficult to confront these chains and win equitable wage increases for the many local unions which operated in the particular area.

Home Rule

Perhaps the most significant and fundamental policy developed in this period of the Alliance is the concept of home rule.

Home rule provides for local autonomy so that a local union can fully conduct its own affairs, including negotiating contracts for wage scales and working conditions within its jurisdiction.

At the 1895 convention, the Alliance defined home rule as "New York theatres for New York local members, Chicago theatres for Chicago [and so forth] . . . and no other members of locals allowed to work within the jurisdiction of other locals without [their] consent."

It meant that local union members were to be employed first and foremost in their jurisdiction, and only when all members of that local were working could those from sister locals outside the immediate jurisdiction be allowed to take the remaining jobs.

It was also decided that any local union which refused to order its mem-

A Maryland Theatre production staged by members of Local 19 in 1910.



bers to withdraw from the jurisdiction of a sister local would have its charter revoked and could not be readmitted into the Alliance without a two-thirds vote of the delegates in convention.

Then the troubles began.

Many locals refused to obey home rule, and the early convention proceedings are filled with arguments about members who refused to withdraw when ordered to do so by

the International President.

It was not an easy time, but the concept of home rule was firmly entrenched within the Alliance and its leaders were determined to make it work.

During these difficult years, local unions were expelled when violations were proven. If they were lucky they just received heavy fines or suspensions.

Eventually, home rule was fully accepted by the local unions, and offenses became less frequent.

Home rule, with all its problems, is still an essential part of the character of the IA. It has shaped the response of the IA to its problems for nearly a century.

It was important for the Alliance to solve its internal problems because it was clearly facing enormous challenges from craft unions such as the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the Carpenters' and Painters' unions.

These other unions coveted the Alliance's work, pure and simple. They felt they should have it, although conceded they had not been doing the work before.

For example, the IBEW claimed jurisdiction of IA

theatrical electricians and this generated numerous hard-fought and heated disputes. The IBEW, because of its large numbers in the AFL, possessed a substantial political edge over the IA.

Unfortunately, the AFL itself had no real mechanism for the settling of disputes. About all it could do is revoke the charter of an affiliated union—and that it did not want to do.

So the battles raged on.

Early in the fight, attempts were made to settle the argument. A simple rule was adopted stating that all work back of the proscenium arch belonged to the Alliance. This rule did not stick for long. The development of outdoor theatre attractions, as well as the use of motion picture projectors in vaudeville theatres almost immediately complicated matters. Outdoor stages had no proscenium arches, and the new moving picture machines had to be operated from the rear of the theatre.

These disputes turned out to be the opening volleys of a long rivalry among these unions which persists to this day to some extent.

And when the movies came along, things just got worse.

Members of Local 19 in 1905.



The New Moving Pictures

When moving pictures exploded onto the scene and screens of North America, the legitimate theatre, including actors and stagehands, nearly panicked. There is no doubt they felt very threatened by the new industry.

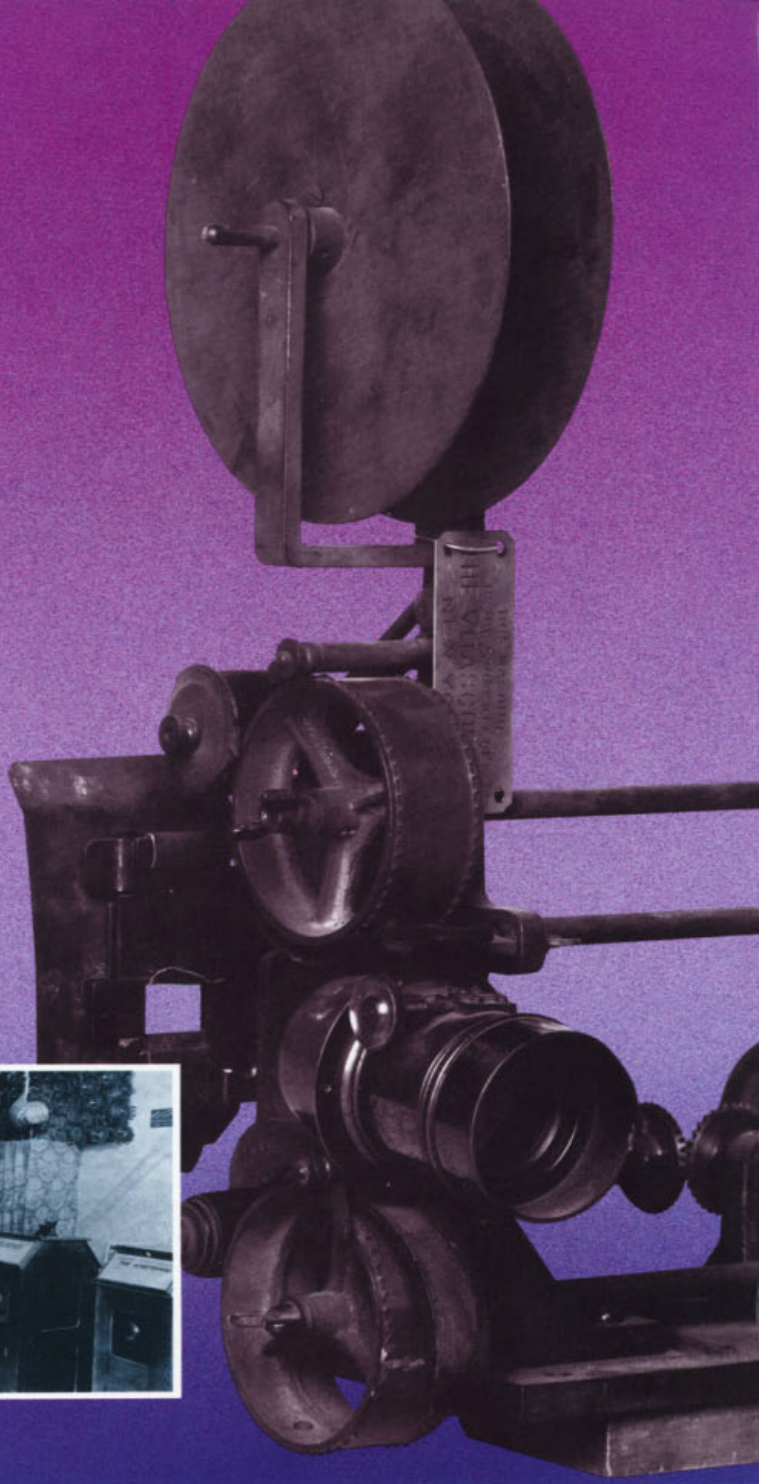
Opportunistic theatre owners fostered this fear—threatening to convert their theatres to movie houses if the Alliance and other theatrical unions did not give in to the owners' demands. This weapon was used during negotiations and as a way to drive striking workers back into the theatres.

At first, three rival unions—the Alliance, the Actors' National Union, and the IBEW—claimed jurisdiction over the projectionists.

The actors' union saw control of projectionists as a way to protect their jobs in light of the movie industry's growing popularity. If they controlled the number of projectionists,



An early Kinetoscope parlor, about 1894, in San Francisco, California.



An early Edison Studio movie set, where filming relied on the use of natural light.



they believed they could control how many theatres switched to moving pictures.

For the IBEW, it was a simple case—to their minds—anything electrical belonged to them.

The IA, however, faced a dual struggle, both externally with other unions and internally. Many locals resented the growth of the motion picture industry, and repeatedly denied membership to projectionists because they thought they were protecting the jobs of their own members in the legitimate theatre.

Many IA members clung to the belief that movies, or “flickers” as they were called, were just a passing fad and that the public would turn once again to the legitimate theatre for entertainment.

Eventually, the national leadership of the Alliance convinced the locals to accept the inevitability of the movies’ importance to show business and to the IA.

Even then it would prove difficult for the Alliance to organize projectionists. Many of them worked on the road. Some companies sent their own employees on the road to

granted for projectionist local unions.

Eventually, the Alliance as a whole embraced the fledgling industry, paving the way for some IA members to transfer their theat-



project films with portable machines. This practice led to conflict with local IA electricians or calcium light operators who would normally have operated the show but whose jobs were taken by company men.

In 1907, the Alliance asserted jurisdiction over all motion picture machine operators. The next year, specific charters were

granted for projectionist motion picture production.

In 1914, the American Federation of Labor gave the Alliance full jurisdiction over motion picture operators, thus ending the IBEW’s claim to these workers. The actors’ union had long ago given up the struggle.

The Alliance acknowledged the importance of the projectionists when it voted to change its name to include “Moving Picture Machine Operators” in 1915.

The First Flickers

The first movies were made in the suburbs of New York City, especially Ft. Lee, New Jersey. Some of the most successful early films were made there and along the Hudson River, such as *The Perils of Pauline*.

It was natural that stagehands, already familiar with creating and setting

took on a factory-like tone. The early film pioneers literally cranked out the movies, one after another, at the rate of a reel a week or more.

Ince Studios was one of these prolific but still young studios which had theatrical origins. Other filmmakers, like Ince, came to the movies with a theatrical stage background. D.W. Griffith, William Fox and Jesse

asks for without argument, no matter how crazy or impossible the request."

That statement undoubtedly sounds very familiar to every IA prop man working today, almost 100 years later.

These film pioneers were clearly influenced by their theatrical experiences. They took those experiences and put them to work in the movies. They set up their studios, meager as they were, along craft lines such as had existed in the theatre. Property men handled props; set painters painted sets; IA electricians set lights.

The movies had another appeal to IA members, especially those on tour: they could go home at night because the movies didn't travel, they could work mostly during the daytime, and they could work nearly every day.

The movies, in essence, hastened the decline in

the number of road shows that once crisscrossed the U.S. and Canada.

The public demand for movies—a form of entertainment almost everybody could afford—grew enormously after 1910. Producers and theatre owners alike wanted to tap into the gigantic collective purse of the movie-going public.

As the legitimate theatre continued to shrink in cities like Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, and Denver, the transition for IA members from the stage to the screen moved more quickly. Calcium light operators gladly took the jobs of projectionists when their theatres were converted to movies.

Stagehands became department heads in the new film production companies, and they in turn brought in their union brothers to fill jobs on the set.

While New York City



One of the earliest film studios, called the Black Maria, in West Orange, New Jersey.

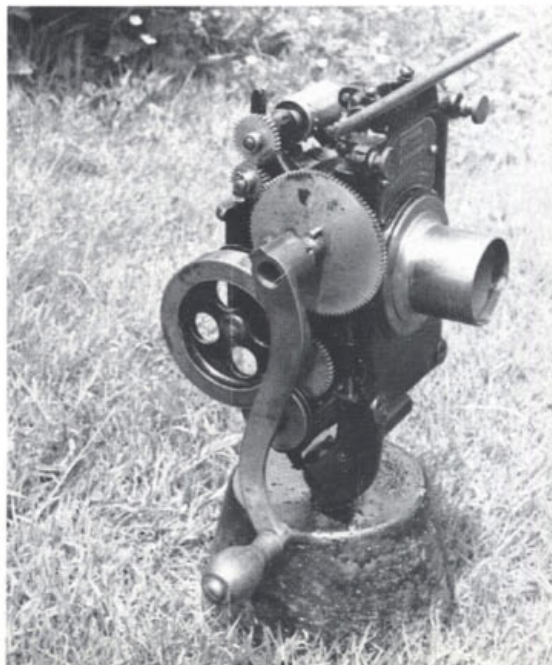
scenery, operating lights, etc., should be called upon to make the movies happen.

In the beginning, it was like a great adventure. Everybody on a movie set joined in the freewheeling atmosphere that existed. If a lighting man had a story idea, he could sell it to the producer. If a stagehand, transplanted to a movie set, conceived a new way to create a backdrop to a scene, he was welcome to make his concept become reality.

Eventually, as the flickers became more and more successful, the whole moviemaking process

Lasky came from a theatrical industry that was going into decline just after the turn of the century. They naturally turned to the theatre for the skilled workers they needed.

As Jesse Lasky explained: "It occurred to us that we could use Bill (Bowers, a propertyman) at the studio to take charge of obtaining all the odds and ends to dress the sets. I think Bill established the principle upon which the props departments function today, namely that a director gets whatever he



Edison projector, patented in 1893.



Early on-location moviemaking
in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

was clearly the core of film production, other studios were quickly established across the nation, in such places as Chicago, Florida, New Orleans and Philadelphia.

Some system was needed to duplicate and transport the movies from city to city, town to town. Film exchanges for the rental and distribution of moving pictures were created to fill this need,

and these were staffed by workers who became members of the Alliance.

In the early days, projectionists were expected to take the film back and forth from the exchange, put up posters before the show, take them down afterward and even sweep out the theater.

They worked seven days a week, for an average pay of \$10 a week.

Gradually, the Alliance was able to improve the conditions of its projec-

tionists, especially as their numbers grew. The strength and power of the projectionists would stand the Alliance in good stead in later years.

But while the projectionists and the film exchange employees were making gains, the newly born film industry was undergoing still more dramatic change.



The Lure of Hollywood

Making movies in Ft. Lee, New Jersey was fine, so long as producers were willing to endure unpredictable weather and long winter days when sunlight was at a minimum.

But the demand for movies was increasing. The industry had not yet perfected the lighting

techniques which would make filming so much easier later on. What was needed, quite simply, was better weather.

Some directors and producers were anxious to move away from the movie centers of the East because they were being harassed by the Edison Company, which held the patents on movie cameras. Edison expected large royalties from those companies

little rain and wide open spaces. Westerns shot on location were becoming increasingly popular, and the unpopulated outskirts of Los Angeles provided a perfect setting.

In 1924, a charter had been issued by the Alliance for a studio mechanics local in New York City. A year later, a similar charter was issued in Hollywood. Cameramen were organized in 1926 and 1927, and

area, aided and abetted by the *Los Angeles Times*, had for years been waging a concerted open shop campaign against all unions in L.A.

These anti-union forces were very successful. Wages in Los Angeles were low. The unions engaged in open warfare against each other, something the Chamber of Commerce and other anti-labor interests fostered and encouraged.

As in the theatres of the Northeast, the Alliance became engaged in a bitter struggle with the IBEW and the Carpenters to gain control of film industry jobs.

This struggle went on for several decades against a backdrop of economic boom and bust in the Los Angeles area.

The economic decline of the city had led to the creation, by small groups of men, of a plan to rebuild L.A. into a major industrial power. One of these men was General Harrison Gray Otis, publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*.

They created the Chamber of Commerce and proceeded to do what they could to lure businesses to town. That included keeping wages down and breaking existing unions.

It also included a plan to recruit new residents from the East. The hidden goal was twofold: stimulate real estate sales and glut the labor pool. Estimates are that this artificially large labor pool helped keep wages as much as 40 percent lower than the next biggest market, San Francisco.

Central to the plan of Otis and his ilk was that labor in Los Angeles must, at all costs, be kept unorganized. They formed the Merchants and Manufac-

laboratory technicians a year later.

But these advances did not come without enormous pain and struggle.

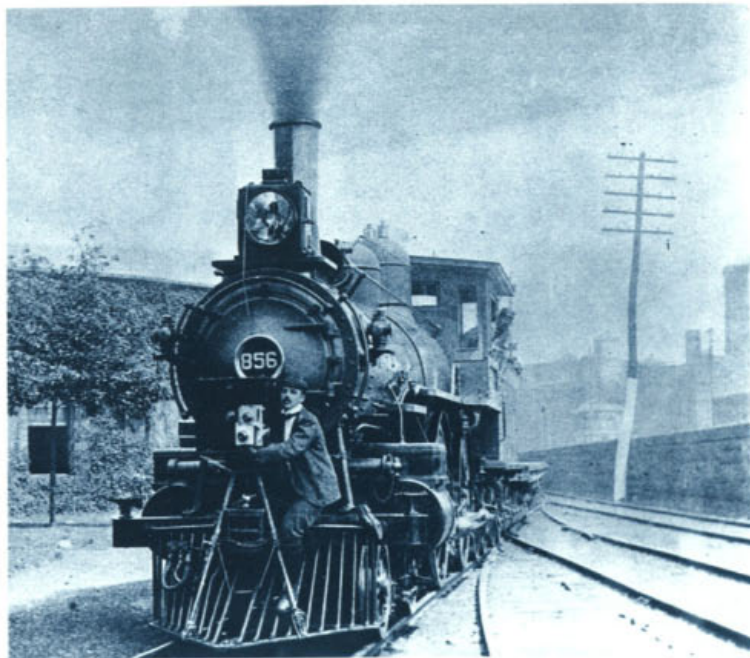
Los Angeles before World War I was a staunchly "open shop" city. Labor unions in that city were among the most hardpressed of any in the United States.

Business interests in the

using his camera.

But these tiny companies operated on a shoestring. If they had to pay royalties to Edison, they might as well close up shop. And that's exactly what they did.

Sunny California beckoned. There they knew they would have abundant sunlight, very



Billy Bitzer with Biograph camera shoots track sequence in early 1900s.

PLEASE READ THE
Titles to yourself.
LOUD READING
ANNOYS YOUR
NEIGHBORS

Charlie Chaplin, one of the most prominent stars of early silent films.



turers Association (M&M) and used Otis's *L.A. Times* as an outlet for their venomous attacks on organized labor.

This went on from the formation of the M&M in 1896 until the New Deal era came in the 1930s.

Despite this highly efficient, labor-hating machine, a theatrical workers union was formed in

Just a moment
PLEASE
While The
OPERATOR
CHANGES A REEL

L.A. in 1891 and became a local union of the Alliance in 1896.

The labor situation came to a head in L.A. in 1910, when the M&M managed to railroad an anti-picketing ordinance. The L.A. City Council was only too happy to comply.

In a very short time, 470 workers had been arrested for picketing. However, public sympathy appeared to be with the strikers because juries released defendants almost as quickly as they were arrested.

The city became an open battleground, and the climax to this ugly scene came on October 1, 1910. The *Los Angeles Times* building was dynamited, killing 20 workers.

James McNamara, brother of the secretary of the Ironworkers' union, pleaded guilty to conspiracy in the *Times* building explosion.

This event set back the cause of labor not only in Los Angeles but nationwide.

It is in this context that the Los Angeles motion picture locals were created. It was not an easy task.

The first movie company

The cast and crew of Uncle Tom's Cabin take a celebratory break after filming the first scene of the movie in 1903.



believed to have come to L.A. was the Selig Company in 1908. Francis Boggs of Selig served in virtually every capacity: director, scene painter, prop man, carpenter, and even screenwriter. The studio had very humble accommodations in Edendale, built in 1909.

From this tiny start, the industry grew in just a few short years to become the largest payroll industry in Los Angeles County,

with more than 40 companies filming in the area.

Local 33 in L.A. faced many challenges in organizing these studios. For the smaller studios, the streets of the city often served as a set. Larger companies built substantial stages and facilities for both production and post-production work.

Bringing such disparate groups together was a formidable task. Moreover, motion picture production was spread out over a wide area all around central Los Angeles, so the question of territorial jurisdiction came into play.

In 1912, the IA convention passed a resolution calling for organization of all aspects of motion picture production, and further stating that "Moving Picture Operators of the I.A.T.S.E. must refuse to operate machines handling unfair films."

The Alliance was clearly sending out a warning that, if necessary, it would resort to a secondary boycott. It was a signal that the IA would use all its might and resources to

move forward in organizing Hollywood.

Local 33, even with the assistance of permit workers from other locals, could not meet the manpower needs of the studios in those early, boom days. This opened the door for other unions, such as the Carpenters, to step in and fill the empty jobs.

In 1914, a jurisdictional battle broke out over who would control the film production workers. Local 33's leaders made matters worse by clinging stubbornly to the notion of home rule. They turned away IA members who emigrated to Hollywood from all over the country in hopes of finding work.

Local 33's leaders feared relinquishing even slightly their home rule authority, but this recalcitrance cost them dearly.

When they could not adequately respond to the incursions made by the Carpenters, they turned to the International for help. President Charles Shay was in office at the time, a powerful and assertive

leader who had already had significant success in dealing with inter-union disputes.

President Shay's strength and power and



President Charles C. Shay

Local 33's independence would sow the seeds of a conflict between the International and the local that would last for 40 years.

However, the need for organizing and for blocking further intrusions by other unions superseded all other concerns.

Workers in the Los Angeles film industry



faced difficult conditions. Work was casual and irregular, yet productions such as D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* required armies of technicians, laborers and extras, all on short notice.

Large, sometimes elaborate sets were built, used again and again and then destroyed. This went on day after day in the studios.

With the outbreak of World War I in Europe, film production overseas virtually stopped. Hollywood picked up the slack.

In response to the boom in movie production and to Local 33's difficulties in organizing, President Shay declared the local in a state of emergency and took over its operation. He brought in new members who were either working on permit or held cards in other unions. These workers were offered membership in Local 33 if they surrendered their dual cards.

In the meantime, the producers planned their own counterstroke.

They formed the Motion Picture Producers' Association (MPPA) to promote the open shop in Hollywood.

The producers weren't just worried about the technical workers; they feared that any unionization would lead to organizing of the actors whose salaries were already enormous.

In fact, Actors' Equity Association was already moving toward unionization itself. The early efforts of Actors' Equity in Los Angeles would eventually give life to the Screen Actors' Guild, the actors' principal bargaining unit in Hollywood.

The Alliance, through the aggressive efforts of President Shay, had some success in getting IA members jobs in studios. In fact, the International felt

confident enough in its position to call a general strike in 1918 against producers, demanding recognition of the IA as the bargaining agent for its members, calling for a closed shop and a wage increase. The IA also demanded overtime pay, and double time for Sunday work.

It was also the first time the IA called out the projectionists in a secondary boycott.

Unfortunately, the timing wasn't right.

Several studios remained open thanks to strikebreakers from the Carpenters. The Department of Labor eventually settled the strike, with a wage scale granted but no union recognition.

Charlie Chaplin's first appearance as The Kid, in the feature *Kid Auto Races at Venice*.



Post-World War I Hollywood

Two factors affected work in Hollywood at the end of World War I. The demand for wartime propaganda films which had kept the studios so busy dried up. And the influenza epidemic of 1918, which killed so many thousands of people, had closed down many theatres.

The studios at this time briefly closed down. Following this, there emerged a new Hollywood, dominated not by lines of work—production, distribution and projection—but by major motion picture companies.

Fortunately for the IA, producers who had been associated with the Alliance in the legitimate theatre looked to Local 33 for skilled workers. Thus it was that by 1919, more than 900 new members had joined the ranks of the IA.

Later that same year, when the IA contract with the producers expired, the Alliance struck again. This time there was even less success than in 1918, as the IBEW pledged to fill any jobs left by IA workers as part of a secondary boycott.

The production companies then began a campaign of mergers and acquisition which put power in the industry into just a few hands. The enormous financial output of Hollywood, as well as the growing power of a few mighty companies proved a big attraction for Wall Street.

Bankers got involved in the operation of the studios, and this led to a pervasive sense of insecurity among the workers.

The age of the Movie Mogul had come.

The Stagehands' Continuing Struggle

While the Hollywood locals were grappling with a tidal wave of anti-union hostility, stagehands all across the United States and Canada were struggling with their own problems.

It is ironic that the decline of the theatre and the troubles of the stagehands were a direct result of the ascendancy of the movie industry. It is no wonder that many of the stagehands resented what they saw as their brothers' prosperity coming at the expense of their own.

Little did they know of the battle for survival that their Hollywood brothers were engaged in; all they understood was that their own jobs were disappearing at a frightening rate.

There were other factors that contributed to the long decline of the legitimate theatre, though none was so dramatic as the rapid growth of the film industry on the West Coast.

Among the trends having an impact on Broadway and the other large theatrical venues was the advent of the "little theatre."

These small regional theatres, sometimes referred to as the "Straw Hat" circuit because their busy season was the summer-time, took much attention away from the well-established, metropolitan legitimate theatre.

In 1917 there were at least 50 small theatre groups, and their numbers appeared to be growing all the time. These small theatres, operating on a shoestring, did not employ union stagehands. In fact, many of them depended on volunteers for assistance.



A characteristic scene from one of vaudeville's lavish productions, probably about 1910.

These little theatres eventually evolved into community theatres which concentrated on producing Broadway hits in the hinterlands for eventual

opening on Broadway.

By 1925, there were nearly 2,000 of these community theatres. As theatre became more accessible, a renewed interest in drama and stagecraft was born. Colleges and universities began to offer courses in theatre, playwriting and acting.

At the same time, a new trend was taking place in North American theatres. The "new stagecraft," as it was called, reflected European trends in set design.

The new stagecraft was more impressionistic and less realistic. It was more visual and suggestive, rather than explicit. Set designers began to use all sorts of methods to create their desired effects.

On stage, platforms were raised and lowered in a fashion never seen before. Steps, ledges and backdrops were used more

freely, as were scenery and props. Lighting became more imaginative, often becoming an integral part of the show.

The influence of this trend is clearly seen today in such shows as *Phantom of the Opera*, *Cats*, *The Secret Garden*, *Les Misérables*, and *Miss Saigon*.

Thus, a new sophistication was infused into productions, and this trend would eventually be the savior of the legitimate stage.

But in the early 1900s, the legitimate theatre had fallen on hard times.

More and more, legitimate theatre became concentrated in the large metropolitan areas, especially New York City.

Touring companies had fewer and fewer houses to play in. In 1917 there were 1,500 theatre buildings



A playbill from the Canadian production of *Dumbells*, which featured a gag number about hair styles.



In 1891, Harrigan's Theatre in New York was located on 35th Street.

prices were so affordable that virtually everybody could go to the movies.

Legitimate shows, on the other hand, were expensive. Moreover, they were viewed by some as entertainment for intellectuals or the wealthy. In stark contrast, movies were accessible to everyone.

The commercial theatre, in New York and elsewhere, became a big gamble for all those involved. Many producers seemed at a loss as to what the public wanted, and there were far more plays that failed than there were that succeeded.

As Clare Boothe wrote some years later in *Theatre Arts* magazine:

"At present it is almost impossible to put on any show which does not seem in advance to be a 'sure' thing to a producer. Even then the producer is wrong seven times out of ten."

Stagehands, as well as musicians and actors, expecting the worst every time they joined a show, attempted to get the best terms they could up front.

Who can blame them? The wages they earned for these shows would often have to last them several months between hits.

The pessimism that was rampant in the theatre at this time made virtually everyone associated with a project very nervous and anxious. Most of them had already been through rough times—shows closing overnight, empty houses, disgruntled patrons.

Moreover, economic conditions leading up to World War II were in-

across the country that would welcome a touring company.

By 1927 that number had declined to less than 500 theatres, and many of these also ran motion pictures five nights out of the week and would allow plays only one night a week.

A columnist for the *New York Times*, Ray Hender-

son, wrote in 1931 that south of the Mason Dixon line the legitimate theatre had been all but abandoned. He noted that in a year not more than six companies had toured the South, whereas in 1910 virtually every city in the South with a population over 25,000 had its own opera company and also

welcomed several traveling companies every week.

Such was the story across much of the U.S. and Canada. Motion pictures had taken solid control of the public's imagination.

Massive and ornate movie palaces were built in the towns and cities of North America. Ticket

creasingly unstable and depressed.

What the theatre owners and the producers often objected to were strict union rules that set terms and conditions of employment. They did not like having minimum crew sizes. They did not like paying musicians for an entire performance who had very little to do before the end of the first act.

What they could not appreciate or accept was that these workers believed they had to strike while the iron was hot—that is, get the most out of the work while they could because they were likely to have a long time off between productions.

Until the problem of sporadic employment could be resolved, conflict between producers and workers would continue unabated.

Alliance members were as committed to the theatre as were any of the actors, producers or owners. They knew they needed theatrical successes just as did those sitting across the bargaining table from them. Quite simply, they needed the work, desperately.

Even George Abbott, of the League of New York Theatres, stated "I cannot say that I know of any instance in which union trouble caused the abandonment of a play."

IA members and others were angered and frustrated when they saw theatre owners taking huge percentages of receipts, 40 percent or more. These same owners were more unwilling to take

cuts than were any of the unions.

One union leader of the time noted that "some producers seem to make a good living out of having failures." He was talking about how unscrupulous producers would load expenses and costs at the front end of a production so heavily that the project was doomed from the start.

There was no incentive, therefore, for unions like the Alliance to make concessions.

At the same time, producers and owners repeatedly called for the unions to get rid of "superfluous" workers. Yet when these producers were getting ready to mount a production, they would demand large numbers of skilled craftsmen, conveniently forgetting that they had just been calling for a reduction in the labor force.

And then there were the ticket speculators and agencies who artificially drove up the cost of tickets. Unprincipled theatre owners were not above selling big blocks of tickets to these speculators, often taking a cut of the marked-up price.

It is no wonder that union members and leaders, especially those in the Alliance, remained suspicious and distrustful of theatre owners and producers. After all, most stagehands still remembered what conditions were like *before* their union was organized.

Another member of the League of New York Theatres, Rowland Stebbins, conceded this point:

"With reference to the theatrical unions and their effect upon production, I believe that certain pro-

ducers and managers took unfair advantage of their employees and were directly responsible for the existence of these unions today."

He did suggest, however, that perhaps the balance of power had shifted onto the unions' side when he said, "I think the pendulum has swung the other way now and that production is hampered and made unnecessarily costly by some of the union regulations. I feel very confident, however, that a great deal of unnecessary money is spent on production by producers who do not thoroughly know the union regulations or their rights under them."

The reality was that producers and owners were all too willing to share their losses, but never their profits, as Alliance leaders knew very well.

For many years the belief persisted that theatrical unions were mostly responsible for the decline of the legitimate stage. Authors, producers and theatre owners alike blamed the stagehands, the musicians and even the actors for the high cost of producing shows.

What they ignored or overlooked was that these shows failed not because of the wages earned by stagehands, but because the plays themselves were simply not good enough.

In addition to competition from the movies, the decline of the theatre must also be blamed on the lack of high quality plays and shows.

As the actress Lynne Fontane said, "We have read scripts by the hundreds . . . but the vast majority had neither writing nor story value to commend them. They were so bad that you couldn't chain



your thoughts to them, no matter how hard you tried . . . 'Author! Author!' is the vital cry."

As conditions grew worse, divisiveness and turmoil between the various theatrical unions—the Alliance, the Musicians, the Dramatists and the Actors—grew, making it even easier to blame organized labor for everything that went wrong.

Meanwhile, the arguments among union leaders, producers and managers continued as to what should be done to halt the theatre's decline.

It was this environment, coupled with the massive moneymaking machine in Hollywood, that would

Orpheum Theatre in Kansas City, showing the entire company: stage employes, actors and managers.



A circa 1910 vaudeville scene illustrates the detailed set created by stagehands, including marble steps, painted backdrop and props and costuming.

allow corrupt forces more than a decade later to assert a control over the Alliance that would produce lasting scars.

Vaudeville and Burlesque

For a time, vaudeville became the mainstay of live theatre. In 1919, there were reported to be more than 900 theatres in the country playing vaudeville.

Vaudeville began as burlesque, using spectacular scenery, beautiful and scantily clad women, music and comedy to attract large, predominantly male, audiences. Burlesque was little more than a collection of musical acts and parody, with heavily sexual overtones.

Early in the century, burlesque began to be transformed into modern

vaudeville, which would appeal more to the family audience.

Like burlesque, vaudeville was a collection of variety acts which also featured sketches and short plays, often featuring leading actors. Vaudeville was one of the most popular forms of entertainment from the turn of the century until around 1930.

It also kept many stagehands alive.

Burlesque, on the other hand, eventually evolved into the "strip tease" shows which operated on the fringes of legality—and also employed many stagehands.

But both burlesque, with its limited audience, and vaudeville with its liveliness and energy, could not compete with the movies. By 1931, the Palace Theatre in New York was the only remaining large vaudeville house in the nation.

All those other vaudeville theatres had been converted into motion picture houses.

In the houses where vaudeville was presented in conjunction with the movies, owners became convinced that it was the motion picture which drew the crowds, not the live show. Thus, when economic hard times hit and something had to be cut, it was usually the vaudeville troupe that found itself back on the street. And with them went the stagehands as well as the musicians.

From 1930 on, the legitimate theatre struggled to stay alive, and the movies, especially after the "talkies" arrived, continued to take a larger share of the skilled labor pool in the entertainment industry.

Growing Pains

After World War I, film production in California exploded. Between 1921 and 1927, the number of workers engaged in film production in New York and New Jersey declined by half.

In California, for that same period, the number jumped from about 1,900 to more than 12,000.

The Alliance had set a goal for itself: to link the entire film production industry under a single union label, from the camera operators to the film labs all the way to the projection booth.

It was a formidable task. Vigorous organizing efforts were often met with frustration.

A two-week strike at several film labs in New York City did little to help workers, since management immediately hired replacement workers for the 2,500 who had struck.

The film lab workers wanted a 35 percent wage increase, a 44-hour work week and union recognition. All they won was a half-hearted promise to bargain with the union over wages.

About 25 percent of the strikers lost their jobs to replacement workers.

However, IATSE's frustration with film production on the East Coast was minor compared with what was happening in the West.

The entire Building and Construction Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor—Painters, Carpenters, Electricians, etc.—had united against IATSE. These unions used the forum of an AFL convention to put forth resolutions claiming that the Alliance was unfairly forcing workers to join the IA and to give up

their dual cards in the construction unions.

The resolutions called for the IA to return these workers to their "rightful" unions and to stop making agreements with producers to provide skilled craftsmen for this work.

If the resolutions passed and the IA failed to comply, its AFL charter would be revoked. Skillful maneuvering by IA delegates prevented passage of these resolutions.

But two years later, in 1921, the building trades dealt the Alliance a devastating blow. At the AFL convention in Denver, the building trades unions succeeded in forcing the Alliance to give up nearly all studio work.

The IBEW would now do all installation work in connection with lighting, leaving the IA members only the "operation of all lights and of all devices for electrical lighting and electrical effects as well as the operation of moving picture machines."

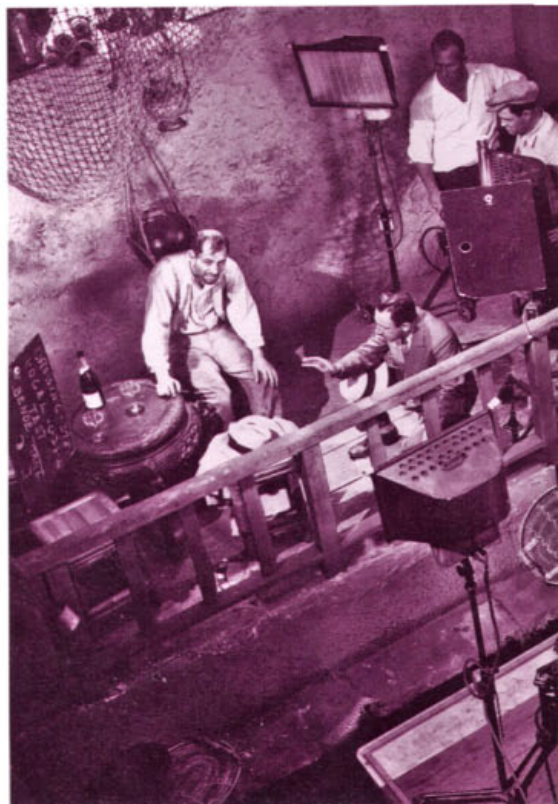
The Carpenters would take even more of the IA's work, leaving only property men and set decorators to the Alliance. Particularly galling to the IA was that Alliance carpenters could no longer make props out of wood or build miniature sets—work they had been doing in theatre property shops for more than 50 years.

Thus, the seeds of war were sown; this unfair and potentially fatal—to the Alliance—arrangement could not be allowed to stand.

Lon Chaney starred in the 1926 MGM feature, *Road to Mandalay*, shown here on the set with the crew preparing to shoot a scene.



D.W. Griffith, here directing *Mae Marsh in The White Rose* (1923), turned to the legitimate stage for skilled stagehands to create realistic sets, costumes, props, lighting and all the other details that contributed to his cinematic artistry.



The Producers Pounce

Troubles between the various unions in Hollywood gave the producers a weapon they intended to make full use of. They demanded wage cuts of 12 percent and an increase in straight time of 8 to 10 hours a day.

These demands were necessary, they said, in light of the decreased demand for film production following World War I. However, the exorbitant salaries of stars (who earned over \$1,000,000 a year in 1921) and producers (\$100,000 a year) were never mentioned.

Ironically, on July 24, 1921, an article in the *New York Times* states that there were many reasons why

movies cost so much, among them temperamental stars and directors, payrolls padded with relatives and vast sums spent on the trappings of stardom.

In 1921, salaries of corporate executives, writers, actors, directors, etc., totaled more than \$22,000,000. Wages of production workers—carpenters, painters, prop makers, wardrobe, etc.—totaled \$14,000,000.

Still, those lower paid workers were the ones being asked to take the hardest hit.

Pay cuts were imposed and union leaders met to decide what to do. Actors' Equity would not agree to a strike, despite the fact that just two years earlier, Equity had won a big vic-

All kinds of special effects were required to create the magic of the movies. Here a crew and actors film an "underwater" scene.



tory on Broadway, in part due to the strong support of IA members.

In July, 1921, about 1,200 studio employees walked off the job. Unfortunately, the producers seized the strike as an opportunity to shut down production for the rest of the summer and avoid paying expensive salaries to stars.

Briefly, the building trades unions and the Alliance put aside their differences to fend off the producers' attack, but their unity could not hold. Strikers began crossing each others' picket lines to go back to work.

This strike, and its damaging effects on smaller studios, contributed to the rise of a few, powerful studios. Wall Street bankers also favored fewer, larger studios as a way of supporting their investment.

This gave even more power to the producers, with those returning to work having to accept whatever wage rate was offered to them.

In August, 1921, the IA won jurisdiction over cinematographers and lab workers. The laboratory

technicians worked in some of the most dismal conditions in the entire movie industry.

Thirty years later, a technician from those days in Hollywood would recall:

"The expression 'lab rat' . . . is a mock-title, self-bestowed by the film technicians themselves. Wrapping film upon racks which were carried by hand and dipped by hand in one tank after another, until developing processes were completed, then winding the developed film onto large, hand-turned drums for drying was a far cry from present techniques [in 1954]. With the realization that every day was spent wading in the various solutions or working in the dark, airless rooms with the end of the shift being the completion of the job, then perhaps the phrase 'lab rat' will have a little more significance."

It wasn't until 1929 that a successful contract was negotiated on behalf of these much-abused workers.



Labor In Decline

The Hollywood problems were not unique; all over the nation, labor was in decline. Union membership decreased by almost 2 million between 1920 and 1924. The open shop movement had been revived—under the misnomer “the American Plan.”

And in Los Angeles, with its long history of unionbusting and open shop tradition, the American Plan took off with a vengeance—only in the City of Angels they called it the Better America Foundation. The question must be asked: better for whom?

Certainly not the workers.

All sorts of tactics were used against unions, including red-baiting and charges of being unpatriotic. Nevertheless, unions were making progress, most notably Local 150, IA projectionists.

Local 33 had been divided up, with the forma-

tion of a new studio mechanics' Local 37. Local 33 retained jurisdiction over the stage work.

Local 37's counterpart in New York, Local 52, had been formed out of film workers from several stagehand locals in the area.

The Alliance was not without internal problems during this formative period. International President Charles Shay, an autocratic and politically ruthless leader, was forced to resign in 1923 under a cloud of accusations that included mismanagement of some \$75,000 of union funds derived from a special assessment of the locals. The money was never accounted for.

Shortly after, General Secretary-Treasurer F.G. Lemaster also resigned. William Canavan became International President and immediately refunded part of the special assessment levied by President Shay that had been his undoing.

The Producers' Hiring Hall

In 1924, the producers established the Mutual Alliance of Studio Employees (MASE), in essence a company hiring hall for craft workers and technicians. It was nothing more than a way to circumvent the theatrical unions.

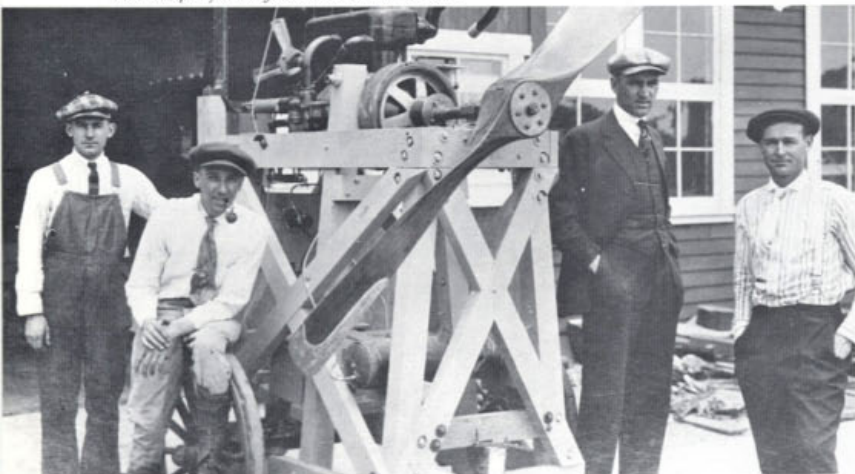
MASE added to the difficulties already facing IA workers in Hollywood. In 1925, IA International Representative Steve Newman described the situation this way:

“Conditions here are deplorable. We have more men out of work than we have had at any time since we organized. MASE are sending men out every day into the studios . . . MASE organization has the support of bosses as well as managers of studios, and their representative is allowed to go into any lot at any time. Their (MASE) men are called first and retained when our men are laid off . . . Members of the Al-

liance have been approached by bosses on the lots to sign a long term contract with the company, but must agree to stay on the job in case of trouble and renounce their union affiliation. When they refuse, they are laid off that night.”

To IA members, this was just another form of the yellow dog contract: join the company union or lose your job.

On sound stages or on location, when Mother Nature didn't cooperate (which was usually), movie crews created their own natural effects. Shown is an example of an early machine used to create wind.



The Alliance Responds— The Studio Basic Agreement

In the face of such brutal abuse, the Los Angeles unions briefly put aside their differences. The IA and Carpenters Local 1692 signed an agreement restoring prop building and miniature set work to Local 37.

In 1926, the Alliance

signed new jurisdictional agreements with the IBEW, thus stopping cold the producers' "divide and conquer" strategy—at least temporarily.

Emerging from this new solidarity was a development which would become the cornerstone of labor relations in Hollywood—the Studio Basic Agreement.

The SBA came about only after the Alliance and

the other unions threatened to strike. The IA, with its projectionists, had the power to make such a strike truly damaging.

On November 29, 1926, the producers and the unions signed the first Studio Basic Agreement—not so much a contract but a true agreement to negotiate wages, benefits, hours and working conditions, as well as grievances.

It was a major break-

through in Hollywood labor relations—and just in time. The talkies were about to burst on the scene, with a whole new field of work opening up to entertainment industry workers.

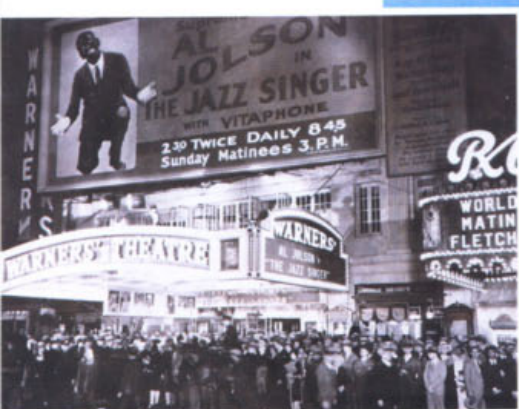
*This crew used a camera mounted on a car to film an action scene in 1923's *The Ten Commandments*.*



The Movies Speak

When Al Jolson, in all his gaudy glory, sang to his "mammy" in *The Jazz Singer*, Hollywood changed forever. Sound had come to motion pictures, bringing with it new opportunities for IA members (and ending the careers of a number of actors whose voices proved to be hideous or laughable on film).

Some in the business

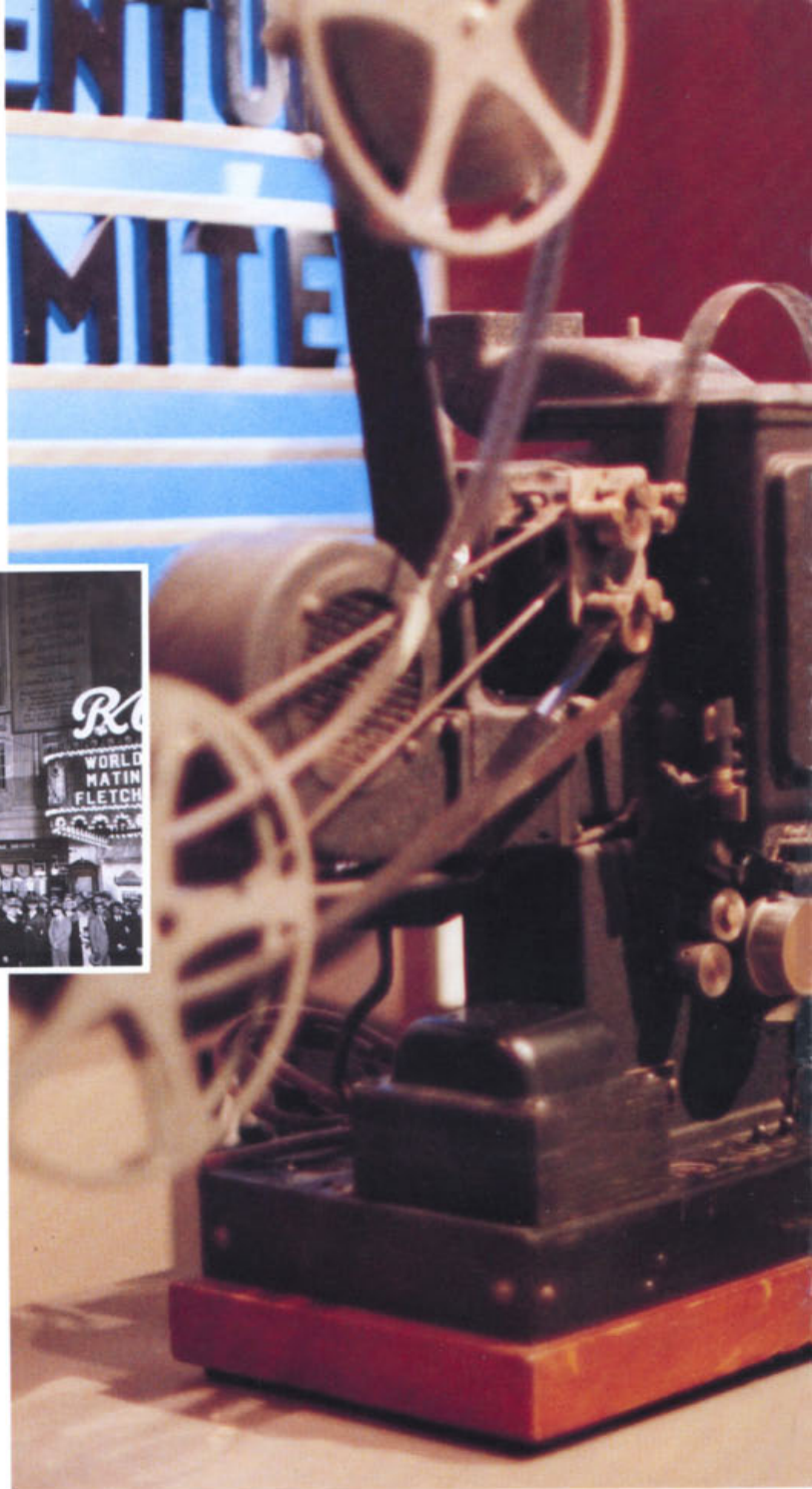


The premiere of The Jazz Singer drew record crowds.

believed talking pictures were doomed to failure. The great producer, Irving Thalberg, is reported to have said sound motion pictures were just another gimmick that wouldn't last.

The film industry as a whole was stunned by the advent of sound. Film companies immediately began to scramble to come up with their own talking pictures.

New companies, or reincarnations of old, familiar names, appeared on the scene. Warner Brothers absorbed First





National Pictures and RKO Pictures was formed from a merger of RCA and several other companies. Fox moved to acquire a large chain of theaters. Loews and Famous Players-Lasky (later Paramount) maintained their prominent positions in the industry.

Wall Street speculators were pumping money in and out of Hollywood at a rapid pace. The movie executives themselves were not above trading their own companies' stock to manipulate the prices. They engaged in all sorts of shenanigans to keep stock prices high so they could attract more capital.

In part, they needed this money to install sound equipment in their theater holdings. Estimates today are that the installation of this equipment would eventually cost the industry about \$30 million.

All of this buying, selling and merging of companies would take its toll less than a decade later, but for now Hollywood was booming.

The IA, having achieved the Studio Basic Agreement, quickly re-established camera and lab technician locals which had been so decimated in the early 1920s.

In 1927, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was formed. At first, it was little more than a company union composed of writers, actors, directors and directors of photography (cameramen).

The Academy was an attempt by the studios to exert control over this group of workers. It provided a way to stop the spread of traditional unionism among the "talent" groups, thus ensuring that the studios, not the workers, would determine the level of wages and salaries.

These actors, writers and directors were among the highest paid in the industry, outside of the studio executives. By preempting them, the studios hoped to keep them under tight control.

The introduction of sound created a box office bonanza. In 1927, movie attendance was estimated at 60 million. By 1929, that number had soared to 110 million.

But sound would bring with it new challenges to the Alliance jurisdiction.

The projectionists would later play a crucial role in assisting their brothers and sisters in Hollywood



In the early days of sound, camera operators found themselves working in padded, movable booths like this to keep the sound of the camera from intruding on the scene.

An urban street scene about to be immortalized on film, as the sound technicians in the truck go over last minute notes.



The first meeting of Local 31, Kansas City, Missouri, was held in a property room of the Warder Grand Opera House.



to meet the challenges before them.

In the past, threats to use a secondary boycott of projectionists who would refuse to show unfair films were not always successful. The IBEW had been all too eager to send in their members to replace any projectionists who walked out in protest.

But with the creation of the Studio Basic Agreement, labor relations in Hollywood simmered down. The threat of a strike among projectionists would become more of a real weapon on the side of Alliance members and not just a hollow threat.

However, sound brought with it other problems. The cost of sound equipment and installation took a toll on independent

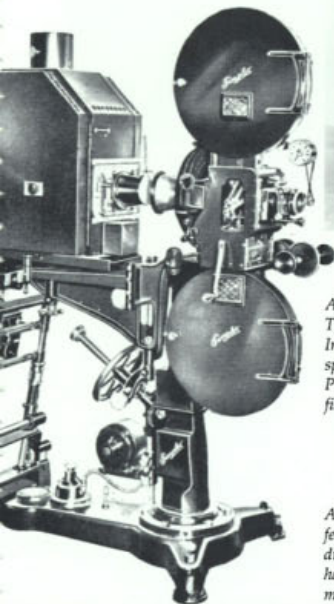
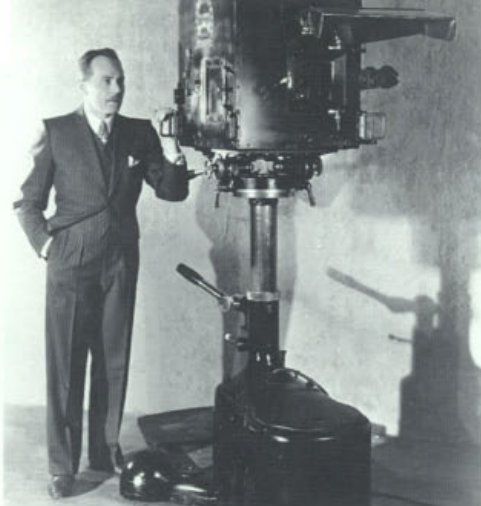


Animation and Imagination

The early cartoonists were among the most innovative and creative people working in movies. In fact, some of the most remarkable advances in *sound* came through animation, and most of these were produced by Walt Disney. The first sound cartoon by Disney was *Steamboat Willie*, in 1923. The cartoon used Cinephone, the optical sound system, and was remarkable for its integration of picture and sound. Despite these achievements, for many years the cartoonists would battle the anti-union animosity of the studios, and would find all their early efforts at organizing thwarted at every turn. Finally, after a long struggle, Local 839 was chartered in Hollywood and Local 841 was chartered in New York. The screen cartoonists at last had union representation as part of the IA.

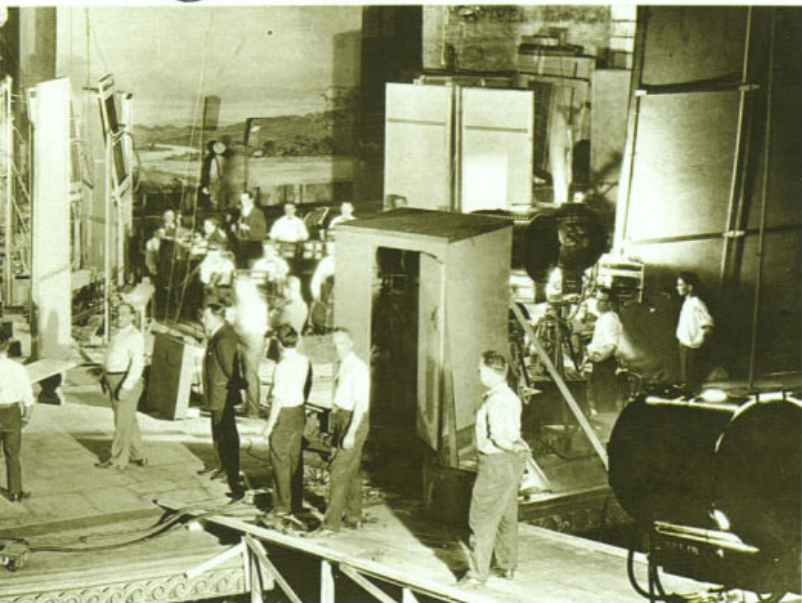


Charlie Ruggles inspects a sound-proof camera mounted on electrically-powered equipment that enabled it to move easily.



A Super Simplex Project with Type M Pedestal and H-C High Intensity Lamp. According to its specification, the Super Simplex Projector could project both silent films and sound films.

As shown here, the early musical features used elaborate stage sets, drawing from the skills of stagehands who crossed over to the movies.



theater owners, who responded by firing union projectionists. In some cities there were lockouts which escalated into major strikes.

As frustrations mounted, some theaters were bombed. Eleven people in Los Angeles were arrested, giving anti-union forces in that city another weapon in their fight to destroy organized labor.

The Two-Man Booth

At the same time, Alliance projectionists were struggling to win a work rule for a "two-man booth." Working with film and projection equipment was a dangerous job in those days. The nitrate film was highly flammable and could be ignited by even the smallest spark. In addition, it emitted noxious gases.

It was believed that an extra man in the booth would have two-fold benefits: it would make it safer for the workers and would assure quality in the projection of films, especially talking pictures.

There were two systems for movie sound in 1928: Vitaphone's disc-based system which required projectionists to handle lots of equipment, all at once; and Fox's sound-on-film, which also required someone to operate faders.

No one knew yet which system would ultimately be adopted by the industry, and the Alliance was determined to protect the jurisdiction of its projectionists, no matter what. Whatever system was finally accepted should and must be operated by IA members and no one else.

Pressure from theater owners to keep only one man in the booth led to an extended period of disputes, aggravated by declining box office revenues. Just as the Alliance was intensifying its efforts on behalf of projectionists, as well as studio craft workers in Hollywood, the stock market collapsed and with it the entire national economy.

Depression!

With the stock market crash of 1929 (headlined by *Variety* as "Wall Street Lays An Egg"), the bottom fell out of the box office.

Unemployment soared and theater attendance plummeted. The movie houses were hurt, but the legitimate theater suffered even more.

Some projectionist locals responded by taking in stagehands and re-training them to become projectionists. This was only a temporary fix, however, as the depression deepened.

Union projectionists who had worked at the same theater for years now found themselves locked out at contract time, as owners hired low-wage, non-union projectionists as replacements.

Projectionists working for Loews and Publix eventually made wage concessions. Other locals followed suit, with more than 400 taking the cuts.

It was a brutal and difficult time. In cities where union projectionists were locked out, there was violence and attempts to disrupt performances through stink bombs and other means.

The harsh responses of the union projectionists reflected the overall fear and desperation of the nation, as The Great Depression tightened its grip on the economy and the psyche of the people.

Unemployment in non-manufacturing jobs soared to more than 25 percent. In manufacturing, that figure was more than 50 percent. Half the nation's unemployed were concentrated in seven industrial states: Massachusetts,

New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and California.

In just four years, the total income of America's wage earners had been cut nearly in half. Payroll in the motion picture industry had declined by nearly two-thirds.

The Depression had a direct impact on the internal politics of the Alliance as well. When International President William Canavan proposed further wage cuts, his plan was rejected by the locals, prompting him to resign. He was



International President William C. Elliott of Cincinnati, at the 31st Biennial Convention in 1932.

replaced by William C. Elliott of Cincinnati.

By May of 1932, more than 300 theaters were operating non-union, compared with less than 100 just a few years before.

For the workers in live theatre, it was even worse—estimates are that as many as 10,000 out of 16,000 IA stagehands were out of work during this time.



A production photo from the 1929 film, *The Virginian*, starring Gary Cooper (mounted on horseback), shows the difficulty in getting action shots on location.

The IA and the New Deal

The election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the close of 1932 brought with it a glimmer of hope that the charismatic and aristocratic new president would succeed in his promise to end the Great Depression with a "New Deal."

That New Deal, however, did not begin well, at least not for the Alliance.

Inauguration Day for FDR was on March 4, 1933. That was also a National Bank Holiday. President Roosevelt had hoped the bank holiday would slow down the avalanche of bank withdrawals by frightened depositors.

Theatre owners all over the country saw this as their opportunity to slash wages and benefits, justifying their actions by saying they were "cash poor" because of bank closings.

The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) had met in secret the night of Roosevelt's inauguration and agreed to impose salary cuts of 25 percent to 50 percent for eight weeks.

The Studio Basic Agreement was one week away from its renewal date when all unionized craft workers in the studios were asked

to take a 20 percent wage cut. The unions voted unanimously to reject the wage cut.

IATSE Local 695 told *Variety*:

"The Studios took advantage of the bank situation, which climaxed their financial difficulties, to demand cuts; they also took advantage of panic among employees . . . several majors close this time of year anyhow, and others are faced with the impossibility of continuing profitably under existing contract costs. Therefore, shutdown threat means little to unions."

Local 695 was right; the studios normally closed down in February and March in order to reduce their inventory of exposed negative—the criterion upon which they were taxed by the state of California.

Even after the banks reopened, the producers continued their ruthless wage cuts and tactics of economic intimidation.

As the April 1, 1933 issue of the *Official Bulletin* put it:

"To listen to the prolonged wailing emanating from the recent predicament, one would be led to believe that the bank closings were confined and applied solely to the theat-

rical business to the exclusion of all others . . . It is common knowledge that the other various branches of industry did not attempt to make use of this opportunity by taking even temporary relief."

Some studios even employed "minute men," as they were called. These were individuals hired by the studios to observe production activities and report on people they deemed inefficient or unnecessary.

These minute men were hated by the crews, especially since many of them were accountants and had little or no understanding of how movies were made.

Still, even as producers and theater owners were trying to seize tighter control of their workers, laws were being passed which strengthened organized labor.

In 1932, the Norris-La Guardia Act was the first

in a series of laws that gave labor unions legitimacy. The Act outlawed yellow dog contracts and other means that had been employed to bring workers to their knees.

From these disputes early in 1933, two other unions emerged which would have a powerful impact on Hollywood: The Screen Writers Guild and the Screen Actors Guild.

In June, 1933, President Roosevelt signed into law another major piece of legislation that would affect workers in every walk of life in the United States—the National Industrial Recovery Act, creating the National Recovery Administration (NRA).

The NRA's first mission was the creation of a uniform system of codes to cover all of industry in the United States.

The Alliance participated in hearings lasting many months on the crea-

tion of an industrial code for the entertainment industry.

Eventually, four different codes were established:

- Code of Fair Competition for the Motion Picture Industry;
- Code of Fair Competition for the Legitimate Full Length Dramatic and Musical Theatrical Industry;
- Code of Fair Competition for the Burlesque Theatrical Industry;
- Code of Fair Competition for the Motion Picture Laboratory Industry.

The NRA did shorten hours of workers in order to spread the work around, and it set the first minimum wage level for stagehands.

However, for IA projectionists, conditions were bleak. At hearings held by the National Recovery Administration, Alliance officials testified that many IA projectionists had been replaced in the theaters

with non-union operators.

In addition, the movie theater owners were attempting to hide their open shop policies by setting up company unions. In some cases, the owners even paid the dues of members in these fake unions.

Finally, however, an agreement was reached which gave union projectionists a full week's pay for a maximum of 40 hours per week.

In the studios, craft workers had gained shorter hours for more pay per hour. They finally established standardized wages and working conditions, and there was less unemployment. The studio locals were strengthened by these changes and found they had more members with paid-up dues than before.

The Theatrical Legitimate Code Hearing, meeting in the House Office Building in 1933 to set codes for the entertainment industry.



THEATRICAL LEGITIMATE CODE HEARING
HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
AUGUST 10, 1933
DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR SOL A. ROSENBLATT

The Strike of 1933

In 1933, a jurisdictional battle broke out between the Alliance and the IBEW over sound engineers. Once again, the electricians were attempting to expand their influence into an area the IATSE believed was clearly ours.

Both the Alliance and the IBEW appealed to the Association of Motion Picture Producers (AMPP) for representation of the sound engineers.

The producers refused to take a stand; they cited language in their contracts which prevented them from taking sides in a jurisdictional dispute.

Things came to a head on July 8, 1933, when IA Local 695 called a strike against Columbia Pictures, seeking recognition and an established wage scale.

About 400 courageous IA members walked out of the major studios that afternoon. Their walk-out was brief but they did manage to halt production on two features for a short period of time.

Local 695 then sought the right to bargain on behalf of Columbia's sound technicians. The studio refused.

On July 20, Local 695's business manager issued an ultimatum to all member companies of the AMPP—pay a standardized wage scale or face a strike. The AMPP again refused.

On July 24, 1933, all IATSE locals walked off the eleven AMPP studios

in support of Local 695.

The studios' response: the Alliance had withdrawn from the Studio Basic Agreement by virtue of their strike and because they did not first take a vote from the members of the affected locals. Thus, said the studios, they had every right to hire replacements.

The IBEW was only too eager to rush in and take the jobs of their IATSE brothers.

The producers, in turn, began approaching specific IATSE members with offers of two-year individual contracts without Alliance representation.

The IBEW was also offering contracts to striking IA members in exchange for deserting the Alliance.

Once again, as they had in the past, the producers took advantage of the opportunity to set union against union, brother against brother.

And the IBEW members—"chiselers," as they were called in those days—had been waiting for just such an opportunity.

"It was a bad time to call a strike," said one IA member who was a sound editor in the studios at the time.

He was referring to the fact that many of the strike-breakers had been out of work for months. Even if their consciences bothered them a little, they were too hungry to turn down work.

And for the IA members called out, it was an especially frightening time. They knew they stood a good chance of being permanently replaced.

They knew conditions throughout the country were not in their favor. The producers were using the New Deal as an excuse to "keep operating at all costs." They declared it their patriotic duty to do whatever was necessary to



Paramount on Parade, a feature starring Nancy Carroll, was shot in California in 1930.

This photograph shows how demanding moviemaking had become in a short period of time. Moviegoers, as the producers knew, expected more authenticity and reality with each passing year.



*While director George Stevens watches from behind the camera, Montgomery Clift and Shelley Winters act out a scene from the Paramount 1931 production, *A Place in the Sun*.*

keep the studios running.

A secondary boycott among projectionists was initiated but it was not likely to do much good, since the Great Depression had reduced the numbers of union projectionists to less than half of what they had been. Here, too, the IBEW was only too eager to step into a booth left empty by an IA projec-



tionist walking out in support of his Hollywood brothers.

Nevertheless, solidarity was high among the strikers in Los Angeles. They pledged mutual support and encouragement—right to the end.

Sadly, their courage went unrewarded. The Alliance did not prevail against the ruthlessness of the producers and the IBEW.

Despite appeals to the AFL Executive Board, a lawsuit against the IBEW and the Carpenters, and appeals directly to President Roosevelt, the Alliance lost its power struggle in Hollywood.

The Studio Basic Agreement was redrawn in August, 1933. The daily rate was reduced, and the

producers' association signed with the IBEW for all sound and electrical work.

Grip and property work was taken from IA Local 37 and given to the Carpenters union.

The results were devastating. In just a few short months, Local 695 dropped from several hundred members to just over 60.

Local 37 declined from several thousand to around 40. Estimates are that the overall membership of the Alliance in the Hollywood studios dropped from 9,000 to just 200.

According to a report in *Variety* at the time:

"Two months before the strike, producers are said to have had a tacit agreement to fight the IATSE to

a finish regardless of the cost and to break the strength of the individual and combined locals. The IBEW claimed that the AFL had granted them jurisdiction over film sound technicians, but the AFL records from that period offer no evidence of such a ruling by the AFL. The claim to legitimacy under AFL fiat was nothing more than a ruse aimed at covering up what was surely yet another "back room" deal worked out between the unions—in this case the IBEW and the Carpenters—and the producers."

And all this despite a ruling by the National Labor Board that the studios "take employees back without prejudice, strikers to be given prefer-

ence before new employees are taken on, and that they may retain membership in their organization."

This ruling was not enforced.

A letter in the September 20, 1933 issue of *The Nation* gives a more accurate and poignant picture of what conditions were really like in Hollywood then:

"The next morning the men crowded outside the studio gates. Just about a hundred men, in most cases the highly skilled ones who could not be replaced, were taken back. The rest, close to four thousand, were politely told that the jobs were filled—by union scabs. But in the future, should there be any openings, they would be hired "without prejudice," providing they joined the strike-breaking unions. The strike overnight became a lockout. The men are helpless . . .

"So the New Deal has come to Hollywood in the form of unemployment to men who have loyally worked in the studios for many years. The men are bitter. Some pace the streets in a daze. Rumblings are heard about murder, beatings, and sabotage . . . In the meantime, one of the strongest unions in the country is broken in body and spirit; the men are locked out as a result of the treachery of a handful of cameramen, the knavery of two unions . . . and the great power and influence of the NRA."

But the writer was wrong; the worst was yet to come for the IATSE. The great Alliance was to face a threat and challenge—this time from within—which would nearly destroy it forever.

The Browne/Bioff Era: The IA's Dark Years

With the Hollywood membership rolls decimated, the U.S. and Canada in the throes of economic depression, and the underworld crime syndicate looking for new opportunities in North America, the mob set its sights on organized labor.

Yet despite these threats from within and without, the IA rank and file membership remained true to the highest traditions of labor democracy. They trusted in their ideals and in their leaders.

Unfortunately, two men alone were able to exploit the fears and uncertainties of the era and seize control of the IA for their own personal benefit.

IA members had been suffering from an overwhelming sense of despair, one shared by workers all across the U.S. and Canada who had been hit so hard by the Depression. On top of that, they had been frustrated for years by the tactics of rival unions who invaded the IA's jurisdiction, and by ruthless producers who sought to keep wages and benefits as low as possible.

Moreover, the disas-

trous 1933 strike shook the Alliance to its core. The outcome of the strike resulted in more than just the loss of thousands of members. The leadership of the IA was demoralized and vulnerable.

Their weakness came at a time when organized labor as a whole was preoccupied in a larger struggle between the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

At the same time, the Chicago crime syndicate, frustrated by the end of prohibition and the loss of its lucrative bootlegging franchises, was looking for new rackets. In very businesslike fashion, the Capone "family" in particular was seeking to diversify its interests. The movie industry, with its enormous cash resources, was a prime target. And the syndicate felt the best way to gain some measure of control in the industry was through the ranks of organized labor.

The syndicate was just waiting for an opportunity to infiltrate the Alliance, and that came through the moral failure of one man: George Browne, Business

Agent of Local 2, who later became International President.

To the rank and file, George Browne initially appeared to offer a way out of the terrible difficulties facing the membership. They placed their hopes for a brighter future in him, and they were brutally double-crossed.

To most IA members of today, George Browne will forever remain an enigmatic figure, a man who betrayed his union and himself. It is clear, however, that George Browne was never, in the traditional sense, a true "union man."

In 1940, near the end of his tenure, George Browne was described by Jack Gould, a writer with the *New York Times*, in this way:

"Mr. Browne can charm you off your feet if he so chooses, and is as alert as they come. Among labor union officials he is unique, scoring all the oratory . . . which in public is the stock-in-trade of some of them. He boasts a rare sense of humor, even if it works to his personal disadvantage, and (he) is not being fooled very often. With newspaper reporters he is a square-shooter, and when he gives them his word he stands by it. At the mo-

ment, he is not a well man, and living for the most part on a diet of milk. At one time he could drink with the best of them, but he is devoted now to an imported beer. Much of the year he passes in the loneliness of a hotel room."

This was written just six years after Browne was elected president at the 1934 convention. Clearly, his rise to power had not brought him any happiness or peace of mind.

The Browne era, so brief and so damaging, began in 1932, when Browne ran against General President William Elliot. He lost his bid in 1932 because of strong opposition from Eastern locals, especially Locals 1 and 306 in New York. Though Browne did not succeed in defeating Elliot, the general belief was that Elliot was still vulnerable because of the 1933 strike.

At the same time, Browne came to the atten-



This photograph was taken in 1945, showing the film storage facilities of that time. Millions of dollars worth of movies are still held in vaults like these, awaiting shipment to movie houses all across the country.

tion of a minor underworld figure, William "Willie" Bioff, who was associated with the crime gang of Frank Nitti, Al Capone's successor.

Through Bioff's influence, George Browne would eventually become involved with Nick Circella, one of Bioff's associates from the days of Prohibition. Circella was also a member of the Capone crime syndicate, under Frank Nitti.

In 1934, with Bioff's guidance, Browne emerged triumphant from the Louisville, Kentucky convention, as the IA's new International President.

Early in his first term, Browne moved to consolidate his power. One of the methods he used was the "emergency" provision of the IA constitution, using it to seize control of IA locals in several cities in order to quell opposition that began almost immediately upon his election as president.

Such tactics made it difficult for locals to resist Browne and Bioff. Despite this intimidation, however, courageous IA rank and file members, as well as local union officers, continued to fight the Browne regime every step of the way.

The Two Percent Assessment

The Browne/Bioff agenda was founded in greed, and the most blatant example of that greed was the establishment—and subsequent perversion—of a two percent assessment on the earnings of all IA members to create a defense fund which was supposed to be for the purpose of fighting unscrupulous employers.

Browne was given complete control of the fund. The assessment was about \$60,000 a month, but no real accounting of the money was ever made.

It was this very defense fund that would prove to be such a bitter pill for the locals that it would inspire them to rise up against Browne and Bioff.

While these locals were not initially successful in their struggle against the Browne-Bioff regime, they did stir up enough trouble to create a growing public awareness of the activities of these corrupt leaders.

Outraged members filed suit to gain an accounting of the defense fund. The suit itself failed, but it did focus the spotlight of publicity solidly on George Browne and especially on Willie Bioff. They would now find that they could not act with impunity as they had hoped.

The White Rats

Opposition to the heavy-handedness of Browne and Bioff led to the creation of a group of militant IA studio workers known as the White Rats.

The White Rats demanded a return of autonomy for Local 37, going so far as to send a resolution to the American Federation of Labor Executive Board calling for an end to some of the more devious practices of Browne and Bioff.

The White Rats also wanted major internal reform of the IATSE. The pressure the White Rats put on Browne and Bioff was considerable, although for some IA members, the White Rats militancy was as alarming as Browne's unaccountability.

In response to the lawsuit, the two percent assessment was lifted in December, 1937.

Browne himself travelled to Los Angeles at the end of the year, ostensibly to poll Local 37 members to see if they wanted local autonomy back.

However, Browne made it clear in Los Angeles that anyone voting for local

autonomy would be considered disloyal to the IA. And he also claimed that the restoration of autonomy would mean the return of the open shop to the studios.

Thus, at the 1938 convention, Browne reported that only 100 out of 10,000 IA members in Hollywood had voted to restore autonomy—a questionable result.

Bioff did not emerge unscathed from all this struggle, however. In early 1938, he was removed as the IA's representative in the studios.

The official photograph of delegates to the 32nd Biennial Convention held in Louisville, Kentucky in 1934.



Labor's Gains

Despite the immorality of their top leadership, IA members in Hollywood and elsewhere in the country made considerable gains in 1938, thanks to passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The law brought what organized labor had been fighting for: a minimum wage (25 cents an hour), a 44-hour work week with eventual reduction to 40 hours a week in three years, and paid overtime at the rate of time and a half.

Studio workers and stagehands for the most part already made more than the minimum wage, so that portion of the law did not affect them. What would make a major difference for all workers was the overtime provision.

Many studio workers had contracts that called for work weeks in excess of 50 hours. If the industry were forced to comply with this law, the producers would have to scramble to spread the work out or end up unwillingly paying what they viewed to be a fortune in overtime.

By the end of 1938, the studios had rearranged the production schedules to fit the 44-hour work week.

The Harder They Fall . . .

In August, 1938 as information leaked out about his dealings, Willie Bioff found himself testifying before a grand jury about various financial matters. But his troubles would not end there.

Former Screen Actors Guild president Robert Montgomery is said to have hired at least one ex-FBI agent to investigate Willie Bioff, an investigation that would prove embarrassing to him.

At the same time, the National Labor Relations Board had ordered an election to determine who would represent studio workers—the Alliance or a splinter group, the United Studio Technicians Guild. The final vote in that election was 4,460 for IATSE, and 1,967 for the USTG. Clearly, despite the cloud over the top leadership of the Alliance, studio workers knew which organization would best represent them in the ongoing struggle with producers.

A 10 percent increase for all IA workers and a completely closed shop

were then negotiated.

In the meantime, Robert Montgomery's investigator had uncovered an embarrassing fact from Bioff's past—an outstanding six-month sentence for pandering in Chicago in 1922. Montgomery gave the information to columnist Westbrook Pegler, who began a crusade against Bioff.

Daily Variety joined the crusade with daily attacks on Bioff. Bioff was extradited to Chicago, and early in 1940 he was jailed to serve his outstanding sentence for pandering.

That sentence, however, was only the beginning of Bioff's difficulties. The federal government now claimed Bioff owed back taxes of at least \$80,000.

In light of these charges against Browne and Bioff, more and more IA members began to rebel against their tyranny, especially against Bioff. This resistance was heightened by growing unemployment in the studios throughout 1940.

The IA convention of 1940 was held in Louisville, Kentucky—the city

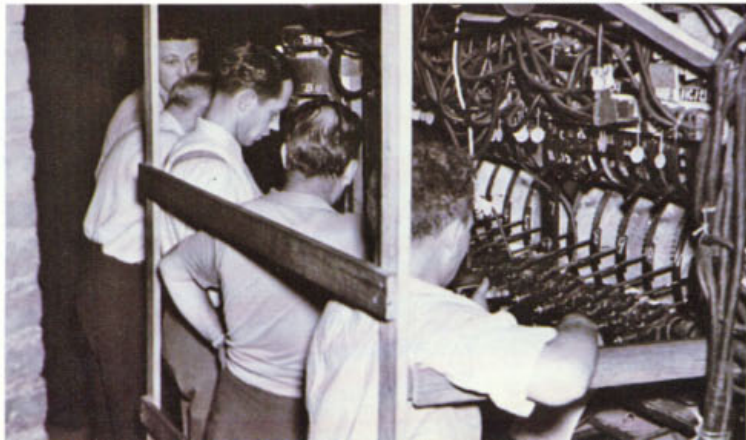


where Browne had first come to power. On the day Browne gave his keynote address, federal authorities were taking the first in a series of steps that would bring about the downfall of these two men who singlehandedly brought the Alliance to the brink of disaster.

The authorities were hearing testimony from Joseph Schenk, a producer who had been closely involved in Browne and Bioff's dealings in Hollywood.

On May 23, 1941, Browne and Bioff were indicted on charges of labor racketeering. It would take two years, but eventually the entire extent of the syndicate's involvement in Hollywood would be revealed.

Stagehands respond to their lighting cues during a performance in the late 1930s.





Irene Morra, a film editor with Fox Film Corporation in 1934, inspects a reel of film.

On Trial

The trial of Browne and Bioff involved the most famous and powerful Hollywood moguls: Harry Warner, Louis B. Mayer, Nicholas Schenk, and the producers' labor representative in Hollywood, Pat Casey.

The trial revealed the extent of corruption: over \$1,000,000 in payoffs was paid by producers to Browne and Bioff (eventually funnelled to the Nitti gang) during the six years of their control. For IA members, the trial also painfully revealed the degree to which their trust had been violated. George Browne was bitterly repudiated by the Alliance membership who, in the beginning, had based

their hopes for the future on his leadership.

He was thrown off the AFL Executive Council and resigned in disgrace as International President of the Alliance.

Browne and Bioff were convicted of extortion. Browne received a sentence of eight years; Bioff was sentenced to 10 years.

The two men later turned state's evidence, with their testimony eventually leading to the indictment of nine members of the Nitti syndicate, eight of whom eventually went to trial. Frank Nitti himself was not available to stand trial; a few hours after being indicted, he shot himself to death in the Chicago suburb of Riverside. The man who was supposedly a crime syndicate mastermind died with \$1.14 in his pocket.

Many years later, Hollywood put its own twist on the Frank Nitti story. In the film, *The Untouchables*, Kevin Costner as Elliott Ness throws Frank Nitti off the roof of a building in revenge for Nitti's murder of his friend, played by actor Sean Connery.

Browne himself testified briefly at the trial of these men, collapsing at the end due to a stomach ulcer. Bioff testified for nine days, and enjoyed every minute of it according to contemporary accounts of the trial.

His testimony resulted in the conviction of the eight defendants. Despite the severity of their crimes, most of the men managed to negotiate their tax liabilities and win early parole. They all returned to their old profession of racketeering.

Browne and Bioff were released after serving three years. The IA Executive Board had long ago denounced Willie Bioff, saying he "is not now and never has been" a member of the Alliance. The Board said Browne had betrayed his union and misled the rank and file.

How could he have been so successful? A government brief written at the time explains this phenomenon in part:

"From the labor point of view the IATSE had created an enviable labor record in the past 25 years with regard to hours, wages and working conditions . . . it was maintained and even improved during Browne's reign . . . Factually, the record shows that repeatedly these confederates did things to further the legitimate aims of their union in a manner utterly inconsistent with any theory that they were acting to the detriment of union members . . . Raises and union recognition were even obtained by Bioff for unions not a part of the IATSE . . . even a defense witness called to contradict portions of Bioff's testimony had to observe that Bioff did a good job for the IATSE."

After their parole, Browne and Bioff disappeared from sight. Bioff settled in Phoenix, Arizona, under the name of William Nelson. On November 4, 1955, he was blown up by a bomb attached to the starter of his pick-up truck. The fate of George Browne is unknown.

War: At Home and Abroad

Just as the winds of war began to blow across Europe once more, the Hollywood locals were to find themselves engaged in the bloodiest conflict in their history. The origins of the conflict went back several decades, to the 1920s and even earlier when rival unions attempted to encroach on the IA's jurisdiction or raid its ranks.

The end of the painful Browne-Bioff era unfortunately did not mean peace in the studios. Instead, the stage was set for open and protracted warfare between the Alliance and the Conference of Studio Unions (CSU), led by Herbert Sorrell of the Painters Union.

Sorrell has been portrayed as both a saint and a villain, depending on which side of the conflict one stood. What is clear is that he was a ruthless enemy of the IA who felt that any means justified the end, so long as that meant the end of the Alliance.

Many years later, Sorrell made a very telling statement when he talked about the era of studio wars. "You can't always pick your friends," he said. He was referring to charges that he and the CSU were heavily influenced by the American Communist Party.

Sorrell himself was not able to successfully deny his Communist affiliation, although he tried in later years to discount any connection between him, the CSU and the Communists.

The CSU itself was fresh from its success in support of the cartoonists at the Disney studios. It next began organizing drives to bring under its jurisdiction such diverse groups as the



International President Richard Walsh brought a new era of stability to the IA.

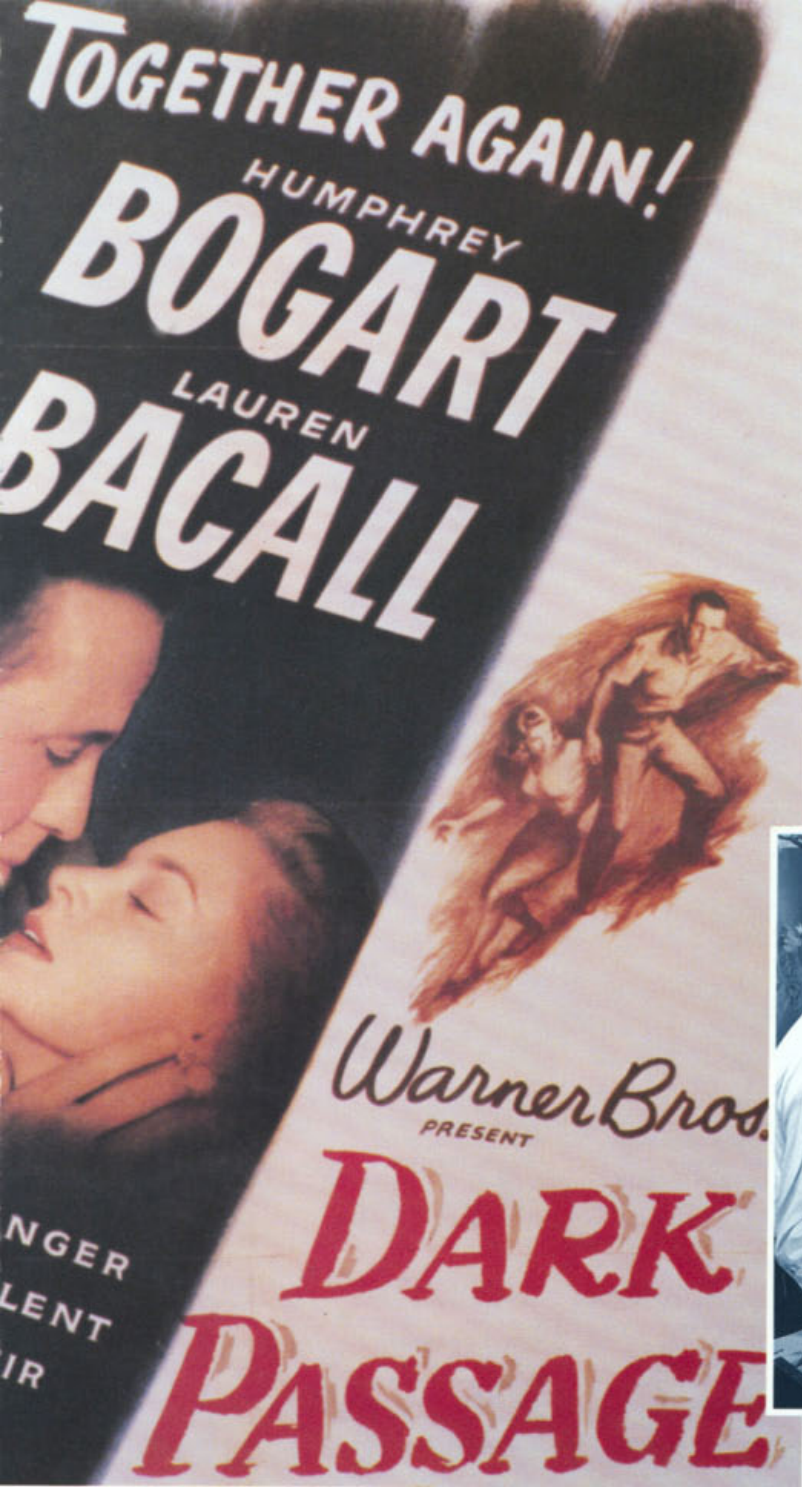
publicists, the office employees and the set decorators. The CSU had already claimed the costume designers and the scenic artists.

In 1945, IA propertymen were supervised by CSU set decorators, but many IA propertymen also held decorator's cards. The IA claimed full jurisdiction over the set decorators. The Painters Union demanded that the industry recognize the CSU as the collective bargaining agent for set decorators under the Studio Basic Agreement. This situation would bring all-out war between the IA and the CSU.

The Walsh Legacy...

When Richard Walsh became International President, our Alliance was under a dark cloud of scandal. In the years that followed, he would not only overcome that negative image, but would build the IA into a highly respected force in labor circles. His philosophy is summed up in words he spoke in 1943: "The struggle of our International will never end. We must go on and on striving for human betterments, for increases, for improvements in working conditions through the medium of our Organization. The glories of the past achievements of our Alliance should be an inspiration to all of us in strengthening the bonds of fraternal and International brotherhood, so that our future hopes may be realized."

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The Struggle For Peace And Prosperity

Richard F. Walsh, Third Vice-President of the Alliance, and President and Business Agent of Local 4 (Brooklyn, New York), was elected International President of the IATSE on the day after George Browne resigned from office.

President Walsh was only 41 years old. He was one of the youngest presidents of an international union in the American Federation of Labor. And he inherited an organization that was stunned by the betrayal of George Browne.



This background artist is shown creating the background for the Disney feature, *The Three Caballeros*. This film combined live action and animation.

A film editor inspects film at Warner Brothers studios.

He also inherited responsibility for a Hollywood situation that was about to erupt into bloody fighting. It was a heavy burden for a man so young, and it would require every ounce of moral strength and courage he had to resist the forces that were arrayed against our Alliance.

President Walsh won his first full term as International President in 1942. At that convention, changes to the Alliance constitution were approved that put the president's term of office back to two years instead of the four that had existed under Browne.

Walsh also opened the books and records of the Alliance to the bright light of examination so as to remove the suspicion of subterfuge that was Browne's legacy. He declared that under his administration, the IA would operate from then on in a "fishbowl."

President Walsh was now ready to face the challenge of the post-war period. He was also confronted with a formidable and powerful foe in Hollywood, the Conference of Studio Unions, which was openly challenging the jurisdiction of the IA in the studios.

In the vacuum left by the removal of Bioff, Herbert Sorrell of the CSU strived to become a dominant personality in Hollywood. He was attempting to build up the CSU rolls by recruiting workers



anywhere he could. This inevitably led to conflict with the Alliance.

If our Alliance was to retain supremacy in Hollywood—and thus in the entertainment industry as a whole—it would have to defend itself against attempts by the CSU to invade its rightful jurisdiction.

The dispute over set decorators involved only 77 individuals. It was a minor jurisdictional argument that mushroomed into a long, violent struggle involving thousands of

workers. It must be remembered that these struggles took place in a city that had a long history of antagonism and hatred of unions. Civic and business leaders almost seemed to welcome any internal labor unrest, especially if it helped to discredit the American trade union movement.

When the Painters Union demanded recognition as bargaining agent for the set decorators, the IA called for an election

under the auspices of the NLRB.

In response, on October 5, 1944, the CSU unions began a strike against the major studios to force recognition of the set decorators. The War Labor Board ordered the strikers back to work while a decision was being made regarding the set decorators dispute.

The Painters Union—Local 1421—filed a strike notice, in keeping with existing law, and then after a 30-day "cooling off" period, voted overwhelmingly to strike—not a legitimate economic strike.

The strike began March 12, 1945. Because the CSU strike was a jurisdictional strike against the IA, the vast majority of IA members crossed the picket lines, along with members of SAG, the Screen Writers Guild and the Screen Directors Guild. The striking CSU members attempted by physical force to prevent the non-strikers from working. It was a bitter time.

President Walsh sent in a new representative to Hollywood, Roy Brewer, who became a powerful force in West Coast labor relations.

In the early post-war period, just as the Cold War itself was getting underway, there was a strong undercurrent of fear in the United States regarding the "Red Menace." This fear permeated the debate over the Hollywood strike, since many suspected that Communists were fanning the fires of animosity between the Alliance and the CSU.

An NLRB election was finally held, but virtually every ballot was disputed, resulting in a further delay on the issue of who was to represent those 77 set decorators. A three-man

Wagon Wheels are given authenticity through the application of "cobwebs."

NLRB board set up to decide the matter was unable to do so.

The strike dragged on, with the press now virtually ignoring it altogether. The strikers became increasingly desperate. On October 5, 1945, mass picket lines were set up at Warner Brothers Studios. The event became known as "Bloody Friday."

Variety described the scene:

"Strikers and studio police lined up for battle before sunup Friday morning and the skirmishing began when non-strikers reported for work at six o'clock and tried to pass the picket line. Strikers deployed from their barricades, halted the non-strikers and rolled three automobiles over on their sides. By noon reinforcements arrived for both sides. Squads of police arrived from Glendale and Los Angeles to aid the Burbank cops, while the strikers increased to about 1,000, led by Herb Sorrell . . . When more non-strikers attempted to crash the gate, there was a general melee in which various implements of war were used, including tear gas bombs, fire hoses, knuckles, clubs, brickbats, and beer bottles. After two hours of strife, 300 police and deputy sheriffs dispersed the pickets and counted about 40 casualties, none serious."

It was an ugly scene that did nothing to help the image of organized labor throughout the nation.

The pickets returned to the battlefield the next day, this time armed with

an injunction from a Superior Court judge that barred the police from interfering with the strike.

Warner Brothers got its own injunction limiting the number of pickets to no more than three at a gate.

The following week, the violence again broke out at Warner's. This time everyone came armed with some sort of weapon. Thirty-nine people were injured.

Many Warner's workers who had managed to get through the picket lines stayed inside the studio that night. Others were brought in during the middle of the night. The violence continued throughout the week, although not so brutally as in the first days.

On October 11, 300 pickets were arrested and jailed

for violent conduct on the picket line, the public had lost its apathy regarding the strike, and there was increasing pressure to settle matters.

The NLRB was finally forced to make a decision: Who would represent the set decorators, the CSU or the IA? The NLRB decided that votes of both the strikers and their replacements would be counted. The vote was 55 to 45 in favor of the CSU.

Despite this vote, neither the strike nor the violence ended. There were still the other jurisdictional arguments that had grown out of the conflict.

After six months of struggle, a meeting in Cincinnati was called between the producers and the unions. While they were meeting, the mass

picketing and violence spread to several other large studios, including RKO, Paramount and Republic.

A settlement of sorts was reached in Cincinnati. The strike would end and a 30-day period of negotiations would be held on all jurisdictional issues. All strikers would return to their former jobs and replacements would be given 60 days severance pay. Those matters not settled during the 30-day period would be worked out by a three-member committee drawn from the AFL Executive Council.

The committee awarded set erection to IA Local 80, basing that decision mainly on a 1925 settlement between the IA and the Carpenters that led to the Studio Basic Agreement.



The Last Great Struggle

In January, 1946, members of Carpenters Local 946 staged sit-ins at Universal and Columbia to protest the AFL committee's decision. Pressured by "Big Bill" Hutcheson of the powerful Carpenters Union, AFL President William Green then issued a statement calling for a "clarification" of the committee's decision.

Carpenters' Local 946 then joined the CSU, substantially increasing the number of members in the Conference. The producers were given an ultimatum: increase pay and adjust hours to provide work for returning veterans or face a major strike.

Negotiations quickly broke down. A short time later, fights over the various jurisdictional problems—Painters and Carpenters versus IA grips, for example—were leading to layoffs of hundreds of workers.

Finally, in the summer of 1946, CSU members walked off the job. At this point, an agreement, known as the "Treaty of Beverly Hills," was reached in which the strikers returned to work and all workers received a 25 percent wage increase and a 36-hour work week.

President Walsh's Struggle

Since assuming leadership of the Alliance, President Walsh had been confronted with one major crisis after another.

He knew better than anyone that the IA was in a fight for its very life, and he was ready to fight with every weapon he had to ensure the survival of the union he loved. He endured personal attacks from his enemies because he understood them. He was frustrated that the Alliance was still being dogged by the memory of Browne and Bioff. He also devoutly believed that there was a serious threat to the Alliance—and to the nation—from communism.

Like many of his contemporaries, he was realizing that the end of World War II had not brought the peace and security hoped for by Americans and Canadians alike.

President Walsh also knew that the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) had initially welcomed the support of Communists in the 1930s (the CIO later moved to purge its ranks of Communists). In short, he and other labor leaders and politicians were frightened by the spread of Communism throughout the Eastern Bloc of Europe and were concerned about what they viewed as a very real threat to American security.

These were tense and emotional days for the nation and the world, and that mood was certainly reflected in the labor warfare in Hollywood.



The wardrobe department of 20th Century-Fox in the mid-forties. The wardrobe specialists made thousands of costumes, complete with accessories, for all kinds of movies. Some of their work, as is true today, established fashion trends that swept the nation.

The Death of the CSU

At long last, the AFL three-man committee on jurisdictional disputes in Hollywood issued its "clarification" of the set erection issue.

Apparently, the clarification awarded construction to the Carpenters and assembly to the IA. In essence, the clarification reversed in part the 1945 ruling that supported the IA's position. Subsequently, under continuing pressure by the Carpenters Union, the three-man AFL committee issued an "interpretation" of the "clarification," which further eroded the

1945 award to the IA.

President Walsh's response was strong: he declared the committee had no legal right to issue any such interpretation of the clarification altering the substance and intent of the 1945 ruling. He therefore refused to withdraw the IA carpenters from the studios.

CSU carpenters responded with a strike. The producers backed the Alliance. It was the influence of Roy Brewer and President Walsh that persuaded the producers to support the IA in the matter.

By now all of the studio workers were sick of the conflict and were desperate to do whatever it took





It was impossible to explain to those not directly involved just how critical a victory in this struggle would be. From the outside it looked like a nasty, pointless struggle over an issue that should have been settled years before.

The American Federation of Labor, which had not been successful in settling the dispute, gave the IA 60 days to obey the "clarification." However, the Alliance held its ground, and the strike dragged on throughout 1947.

Litigation in the courts was extensive. The Carpenters Union, supported by the CSU, brought one suit after another trying to oust the IA from the studios. Without exception, each suit was dismissed and on appeal the rulings were upheld.

The producers eventu-

ally replaced virtually all of the striking workers, and the Conference of Studio Unions began to disintegrate. At the end of 1947, Herb Sorrell's own local, Painters 644, voted to allow its members to cross the picket lines. Painters who returned to the studios joined IA set painters Local 729.

The picket lines began to shrink, and by the end of 1948 the CSU was gone. The Alliance was now the dominant entertainment industry in Hollywood and throughout the U.S. and Canada.

It was time to concentrate on the new challenges ahead, not the least of which was the advent of television.

The long era of jurisdictional disputes and picket lines ended once and for all in 1948, with the defeat and disintegration of the CSU.

to settle matters once and for all.

They also knew that the producers had an enormous backlog of films they could release in the event of a protracted strike. It was clearly a situation in which some workers, on one side or the other, were going to lose. President Walsh was determined it would not be IA members who came up short.

And once again, this was a strike marred by violence on both sides. More people were sent to the hospital and tensions increased by the hour. The public and other in-

dustry workers were growing tired of this interminable fighting. SAG President Robert Montgomery reflected the mood in Hollywood when he said:

"Strikers and non-strikers are not fighting over a question of wages and hours. They are fighting because two international presidents of AFL unions cannot agree on which union should have jurisdiction over 350 jobs. The livelihood of 30,000 American workers, all members of the AFL, is endangered and an entire industry has been thrown into chaos and confusion."



Television

Now that the studio wars were over and our Alliance had emerged triumphant, the entertainment industry moved into a new period of peace and stability.

Yet, despite the security that now existed for IA members in the studios, the last half of the 20th century would pose new challenges none of our IA forefathers could ever have imagined.

Technology was about to revolutionize our industry as never before.

There had already been many technological achievements by IA members all during the history of the Alliance. IA members were inventive and resourceful, and were in many ways responsible for the advances in cinematography, sound and special effects that made the movie business so lucrative for the studios.

Likewise, stagehands in New York, Boston, Washington, Chicago, Toronto, and in cities large and small all across the U.S. and Canada had helped expand the horizons of live theatre far beyond its conventional bounds.

But the introduction of television would have a profound impact on the entertainment world, transforming the industry and providing new jobs for some IA members while it jeopardized the livelihood of others.

Many old-line IA members resisted the upstart television industry, believing TV was a gimmick that couldn't last and certainly couldn't replace movies or the legitimate theatre.

For other IA members, especially stagehands in New York, television meant more regular work, especially in the days of

live telecasts when theatrical workers were called in to help build and change sets, operate lights and do all the traditional things they did in the theatre, only on a much smaller scale.

The crossover between legitimate theatre and live television was a natural for many Alliance members.

The movie studios were fascinated by the possibilities of television as well. Movie companies such as Paramount either owned or had financial



A 1930 photograph showing the camera, phonograph turntable, and the transmitter that was the first television operation.

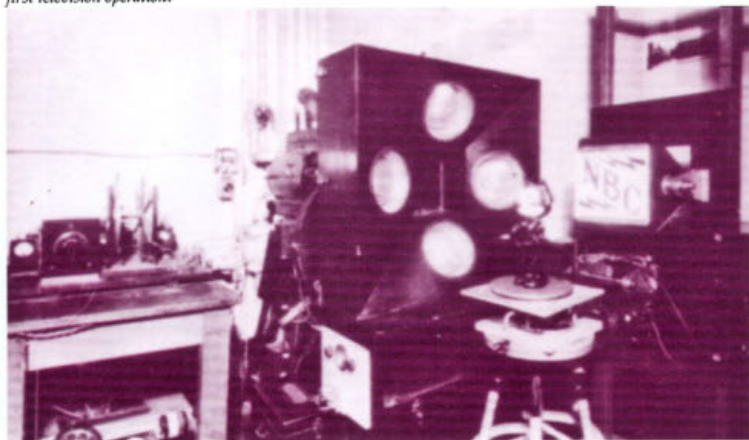


interests in some of the early television companies.

Other studios were experimenting with theatrical television systems. IA projectionists were the logical technicians to operate this equipment. In 1949, there were television systems set up in many theaters around the coun-

try, including the Fabian-Fox in Brooklyn, the Comerford West Side Theater in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and the Pilgrim Theater in Boston.

In these theaters, customers were able to watch live television transmissions of the World Series and similar "big events."





Behind Your Radio Dial was a 30-minute motion picture produced for NBC by RKO Pathe, Inc. in 1949. This scene shows the inside of a television studio.

Hollywood were over—at least for now.

The IA's main competition in organizing workers in the television industry came from the Electrical Workers and from a new, unaffiliated union, the National Association of Broadcasting Engineers and Technicians.

IA work in television came through two distinct areas, live productions at networks and film production in Hollywood.

Because the industry was so young and had not yet achieved the recognition and dominance it would later exert in the entertainment industry, wage scales for production jobs in TV were lower than in other crafts.

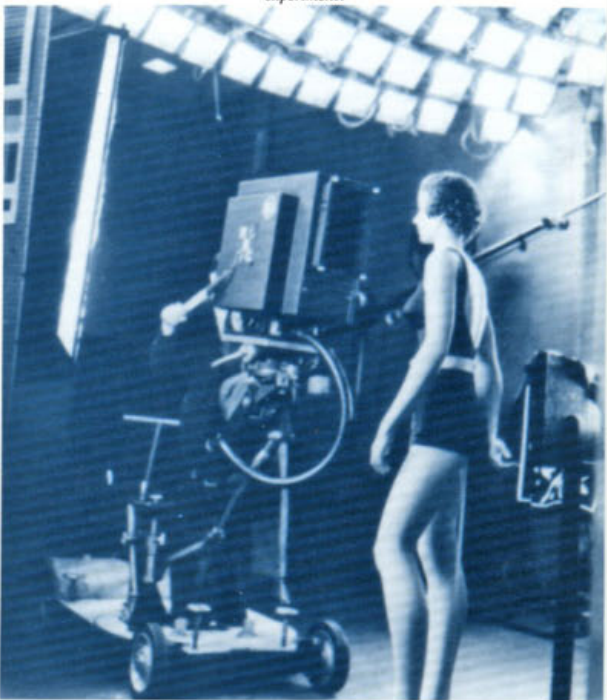
In the early years, productions were broadcast

live across the country. For IA stagehands, it was stagecraft transplanted to a TV studio. Networks hired stagehands as well as carpenters, electricians, scenic artists, wardrobe workers, make-up artists, hairstylists and other skilled theatrical technicians to fill these jobs in television.

While the pay was low, the work was steady—a fact that was very important to theatrical workers during this time.

DuMont Television Studios in New York was a prime organizing target for rival unions as well as our Alliance. Organizing

A model poses for a test by NBC of a first-generation Ikonoscope camera in a 1934 television experiment.



The picture projected by theater television was 15 to 20 feet high. President Walsh himself appeared on one of the earliest telecasts of *Tonight on Broadway*.

The Alliance was one of the sponsors of this show. When he appeared on the show on October 2, 1949, President Walsh told viewers: "You know, ladies and gentlemen, right here on Broadway is the world's greatest entertainment, and this program makes it possible for us to show some of it to you. We hope that seeing a bit of Broadway each Sunday night on television will make you want to see more—in the theater."

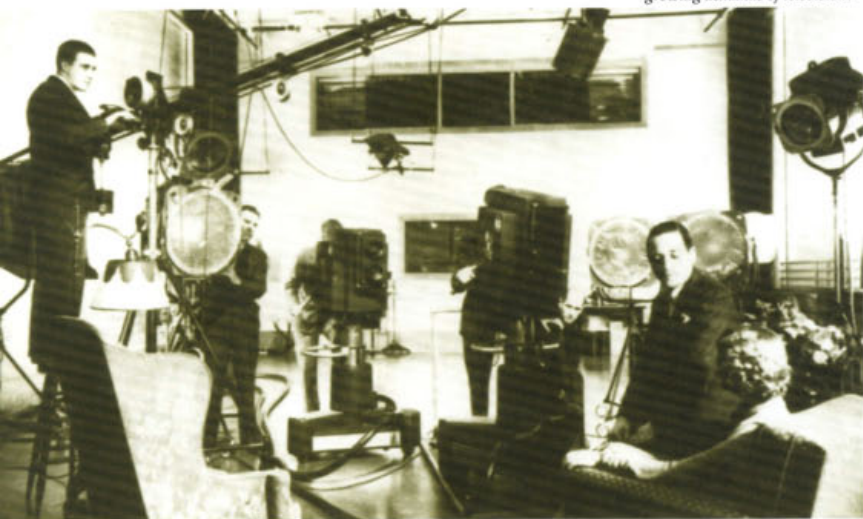
However, despite shows like *Tonight on Broadway*, the real push for television was not coming from the live theatre or from the movies, but from radio. A subsidiary of RCA—NBC—along with CBS were the first major competitors in the fledgling industry.

By the end of 1946, there were 50 television stations in the United States. By the late 1940s, the number of households with television sets increased at an annual rate of 1,000 percent! By 1948, a million television sets had been sold.

In 1947, the Federal Communications Commission put a freeze on licenses for television stations, thus slowing down the boom in TV. However, when the FCC lifted the freeze in 1952, expansion of television immediately took off like a rocket.

This increase in television watching did have an undeniable impact on the movie industry. Box office revenues declined by about 23 percent between 1946 and 1956. Profits were cut even more, with the 10 largest studios seeing their profits drop from \$122,000,000 in 1946 to \$30,000,000 in just three years. The golden years of

IA technicians like those on this set worked hard to meet the growing demands of television.



drives undertaken at this studio—then the largest in the country—caused the National Labor Relations Board to order an election to determine which union would represent these workers.

President Walsh saw this as an important battle for the IA, one that our Alliance had to win.

The IATSE triumphed and Local 794 was chartered. In 1945, a five-year contract was entered into between that local and DuMont covering all of its engineers in New York. Camera operators (who at that time were all women) got a whopping increase in their weekly pay from \$50 to \$75.

This victory led to other successful efforts later in Washington, D.C. and Pittsburgh when TV stations began operation in those cities.

As our Alliance began to fight for better wages, the major networks began to do what their theatrical

counterparts had done so many years ago. They began to recycle sets, props, and costumes as a way to save money, cutting jobs and working hours in the process.

The networks also began to rely on filmed programs throughout the early 1950s, transferring the focus from live productions in New York to film production in California.

On the West Coast, it was a replay of what occurred in the early years of live television in New York. IA members secured jobs in television but only if they were willing to accept lower wages and conditions.

In the early days of film production for TV (in the late 1940s), the production companies found it very difficult to make any money on their projects. To cut costs, they turned to 16mm film, rather than the 35mm film used in movies.

IA agreements did not cover 16mm productions, so many of the TV produc-

ers operated without union contracts. In order to win agreements, IA locals signed contracts that allowed lower wage scales and smaller crews. It was an ongoing struggle on every side for the first several years of TV production in Hollywood.

Film production for television did not become widespread until the early 1950s, when the number of television outlets had risen dramatically. New opportunities for advertisers brought more revenue to the networks, allowing for increased production.

As the demand increased, some of the Hollywood studios saw an opportunity to expand into telefilm production. Universal, Republic and Monogram all began television film production during these years. These studios already had strong relationships with the Alliance, thus organizing efforts in this area were considerably easier. Nevertheless, things did

not always go smoothly.

In February, 1952, IA workers went on strike for an hour at four of the ten major producers: Ziv, Crosby, Wisbar and Screen Televideo. All ten producers then signed a contract that was equal to that enjoyed by IA members working in theatrical movie production.

This was a major breakthrough for our Alliance. By the summer of 1952, one quarter of the IA membership in Hollywood was employed in television film production.

The IA remained strong in both New York and Hollywood because network producers knew that the Alliance could supply the skilled manpower needed to produce quality television films and programs.

But as the focus of television production shifted from New York to Hollywood, IA members on the East Coast found it difficult to obtain adequate wage scales and conditions.



The Decline of Theater Television

What had once seemed such a promising arena for IA projectionists—theater television—began to decline after 1952.

President Walsh had hoped that theater television would dominate the new industry, giving work to IA members in virtually every segment of the overall entertainment industry. He believed the public would welcome the opportunity to view live sporting events, televised news and entertainment shows on the large screens found only in movie theaters.

The major motion picture companies also promoted theater television, and they were happy to negotiate contracts with projectionist locals they already knew so well.

But the post-war public preferred to stay home and watch the tiny, black and white screens in their

living rooms, instead of spending money on theater television.

With the decline of theater television, the Alliance knew that it was essential to expand jurisdiction into the television stations themselves. Unfortunately, the studio wars of the 1940s and struggles brought about by the Taft-Hartley Act sapped the attention and strength of the Alliance. Thus, the IA came late to the game of organizing television stations.

The IA's long history of association with motion picture companies would prove very useful in this new organizing effort.

In 1947, the IA won jurisdiction over all craft and technical workers at Paramount's television station in Los Angeles, KTLA. In Chicago, the Alliance won similar jurisdiction at Paramount's WBKB.

Chicago locals also won contracts at WGN-TV, and in Philadelphia contracts were signed with WPTZ and WFIL.

Organizing efforts were not always so easy, however, since many television stations grew out of radio stations, where both the IBEW and NABET had strong bargaining relationships and thus enjoyed a distinct advantage.

Although some stagehands had worked in radio, it was not significant enough to affect the advantage the other unions possessed.

The Alliance faced enormous obstacles. In 1950, President Walsh acknowledged the organizing difficulties when he said that

The set of a TV studio at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Montreal.



"whoever has a majority of the workers in any station may get the bargaining rights for its entire technical staff, including the projectionists." The IBEW and NABET usually were the unions in the majority.

The IA had success in winning representation of electricians, lighting directors, prop workers, carpenters, wardrobe personnel, make-up artists and hairstylists, teleprompter operators and sound effects technicians.

The technical demands of television also made organizing difficult, as IA members struggled to get the training they needed to win some of the better jobs in television.

The creation of broadcast locals within our Alliance eased some of the organizing problems faced by the IA. When the opportunity came to seek representation of all the technical workers at a television station, the IA would bring these workers together as locals of Television Broadcasting Studio Employees.

President Walsh also established a Radio and

Television Department within the Alliance that had the authority to create new broadcast units separate from existing IA locals. He knew this was necessary, since industrial organizing was the only way to successfully represent these workers. The IA had already lost several representation elections to the traditional broadcasting unions, and President Walsh rightly believed that the Alliance had to become more realistic and resourceful.

However, organizing was never easy, especially under the restrictive, anti-union Taft-Hartley Act.

The history of television is one dominated by rapid technological advances. The development of videotape had a major impact on organizing efforts. In 1964, President Walsh signed an agreement with the Association of Motion Picture Producers and the Alliance of Television Film Producers (later merged as the Association of Motion Picture and Television Producers) that covered videotape productions.



Helen Hayes participated in NBC's first field test of 441-line television using the Iconoscope camera, in 1937.

The Impact Of TV News

An important part of television operations from its very inception involved the gathering of news in the field by crews consisting of camera persons, sound engineers and electricians.

These crews recorded material on film and since IA members had been performing these functions over the course of many years, the television networks and stations readily recognized the value of employing IA members in this function.

As a result, contracts were negotiated with the three major television networks—ABC, CBS and NBC—and with many other television stations covering the news film crews. These contracts provided substantial employment for IA members at favorable rates of pay and desirable working conditions.

However, as a result of technological advance, videotape came into being as a medium upon which picture and sound could be recorded simultaneously.

Videotape, although lacking some of the high definition qualities of film, offered the distinct advantage that it did not require the costly development process that was necessary for film and, moreover, videotape allowed transmission of picture and sound from the field directly to a television station, and from there direct to the public over the airwaves. This allowed for the instantaneous broadcast of news events.

The controversy over who would represent the

operators of the video cameras in the field was intense. Although the IATSE argued that the news film crews possessed the know-how and experience to cover news in the field and should therefore be awarded the jurisdiction over the so-called ENG function (electronic news gathering), the networks awarded the work to the engineering unions—IBEW or NABET.

Litigation resulted, but for the most part the award of jurisdiction by the networks was upheld by the National Labor Relations Board, by arbitrators, by the courts in some instances, and by the impartial umpire under

Article 20 of the AFL-CIO Constitution.

The end result was that the engineering unions by and large took over the function of gathering news in the field by means of electronic cameras using videotape. Many of the IA members who had done this work in the past were required to become members of IBEW or NABET in order to continue in the employ of the networks.

The IA position that work "function" should prevail over the "tool" being used did not survive the network award of the jurisdiction to the engineering unions.

"And Now, In Living Color..."

By 1953, black and white television was a multi-billion dollar industry. TV was here to stay.

Then, just when the public had become accustomed to the flickering screen in their living rooms, color burst onto the scene.

On December 17, 1953, the Federal Communications Commission approved the standards that would apply to color television broadcasting. That momentous decision had not come without long



Television news transformed the social fabric of America with its coverage in Vietnam. This was an ABC-TV crew covering the war in that country.



An overhead view of a television set shows remarkable attention to detail, from rugs to pictures to books.

years of effort and struggle.

The origins of color television go back to 1930, when RCA (Radio Corporation of America) began researching the possibility of transmitting and receiving color images.

In 1940, RCA demonstrated an electronic and optical color TV receiver to the FCC, and in 1941, the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) had achieved the first successful color telecasts with experimental transmissions from the Empire State Building in New York. In 1947, color TV was demonstrated on a ten-foot theater screen.

By 1950, RCA had developed a high-definition, all-electronic color TV system that was compatible with existing black and white TV. The color transmissions could be received in black and white by black and white TVs.

The images on the set would be superior to the normal picture viewers would see.

That same year, however, the FCC approved color TV standards for commercial use that, unlike RCA's, were incompatible with black and white television. For viewers, this would mean having to choose between receiving only color transmissions or only black and white transmissions—but not both on the same TV set unless they invested in an adaptor. And such an adaptor would only rebroadcast the color picture in black and white.

RCA had already spent millions of dollars and many decades on the development of color television that suddenly was rendered commercially

unfeasible by the FCC's decision.

The incompatible color system was not a commercial success. Then came the December 17 decision by the FCC approving the compatible color TV system developed by RCA.

By the end of the first full year of color television, color programs had become available to an estimated 75 percent of all American households.

A studio in Radio City was devoted entirely to color programming. The Colonial Theatre was leased and remodeled as a studio for major color productions at a cost of nearly \$1.5 million.

IA members on the job received extensive training in color techniques—everyone from property-men to engineers.

The problem was getting manufacturers to produce color TV sets, retailers to sell the new sets

instead of existing black and white models, and servicemen trained to repair the sets.

The public also was largely unaware of color TV in its early days. A research study made three years after the introduction of color TV revealed that only one person in four had ever seen a color program.

RCA and NBC undertook a massive publicity campaign, first in Milwaukee and later throughout the country, to bring color television into the public's consciousness.

The concept of "prime time" was born, with the color broadcast schedule aligned with the hours when public viewing was highest.

By 1959, the break-even point was reached in color broadcasting. Sales of color television sets were up, and manufacturers were starting to earn profits.

In 1960, seven years after the FCC's December 17 decision, color television was a \$100 million a year industry. By 1965, three other networks were broadcasting in color, with more than 5 million color sets in use.

TV has affected our lives in many ways. From watching the first presidential debate between Richard Nixon and John Kennedy to the first Superbowl game, from the flight of John Glenn to the first moon landing, from *Playhouse 90* to *Roots*, television is a part of our identity. We can't imagine life without it.

IA members and their families who grew up in the Fifties and Sixties would immediately remember those early days of color television, upon hearing an announcer say, "And now, in living color..."

O! Canada!

While IA members in Hollywood were struggling through the studio wars, and IA projectionists were fighting for such rights as two men in the booth, IA members in Canada were slowly building an entertainment industry that was to be marked by steady growth and stable labor relations.

The Alliance became an international organization in 1899, with the inclusion of Local 56 in Montreal and Local 58 in Toronto.

These locals had already been fully operational unions prior to their affiliation with what was then the *National Alliance*.

Local 58 was organized in 1894 and was admitted to the Toronto Trades and Labour Council in 1895. Local 56 was organized in 1897.

For both locals, gaining admission to the National Alliance was difficult. American members were uneasy about expanding

into an international organization too soon. There was considerable resistance at first, and Local 58 and Local 56 were frustrated in the first few attempts to affiliate.

The stumbling block appeared to be the whole concept of merging American and Canadian organizations, rather than simply admitting two Canadian locals into an American union. Within the ranks of the Alliance at that time were a number of stalwarts who opposed internationalism in any form.

But, in 1898, common sense prevailed and a majority of the delegates to the convention that year approved the admission of Canadian locals into the Alliance.

In addition to Locals 58 and 56, Winnipeg Local 63 was also admitted.

Local 58 was already a veteran of labor struggles. The local had fought for recognition and pay increases from the Grand and the Princess theatres and had struck the Opera House for 15 days to win similar agreements.

From the first, the Cana-



dian locals were integrally involved in the affairs of our Alliance. For example, at the 1899 convention, Montreal Local 56 sent a delegate, P.J. Ryan, who took an active part and helped prepare the report on laws and resolutions.

However, there was still some resistance from within the Alliance, as well as concerns over whether locals admitted from Canada would be viable and capable of surviving. Such was the case in 1901, when Vancouver applied for admission.

The original application had been refused by the Executive Board because the local had fewer than the minimum of the 15 members required by the Alliance constitution. The American Federation of Labor intervened, and after Vancouver sent in extra names, the matter was referred to the convention.

The delegates, obviously

still concerned about the legitimacy of this local, refused to overrule the Executive Board and allow the Vancouver local to affiliate. By 1904, however, Local 118 in Vancouver had become a fully-legitimate and affiliated local union in the Alliance.

By 1902, the bias against internationalism was fading. The delegates to that year's convention unanimously voted to apply to the AFL to change the Alliance's name to "International."

Although the now-International Alliance did not begin immediate wholesale acceptance of Canadian locals, the door was clearly open.

By 1903, Ottawa Local 95 and London Local 105 were listed on the Alliance rolls.

The trade union movement in Canada was different from that of the United States. The federal government in Canada was less hostile to organized labor and there

Early gas light mechanism, as was commonly used in both Canadian and American theatres at the turn of the century.





The Princess Theatre in Toronto, as it appeared on October 21, 1912.

was, over the years, a more progressive attitude towards workers than that experienced by American brothers and sisters.

In a publication commemorating the accomplishments of Local 58, entitled *The Stage and Screen*, it was noted:

"The history of Local 58 is one that can be looked upon with pride by the members. During all the years of its existence we had practically only one week of strike and that goes back a good many years . . . such a record as this is something to be proud of in an organization that has as good working conditions and salaries as any other Local of its size . . ."

Entertaining A Great Nation

Canada, with its vast territory and sparse population, presented a special challenge to those in the entertainment industry. Yet, the theatrical industry flourished in this great nation, spreading quickly from coast-to-coast and into the hinterlands.

Canada itself was a relatively young nation at the time the Alliance was formed. It was really a confederation of provinces that had come together as a nation on July 1, 1867.

The confederation was to provide the framework on which a great nation could be built—and so it has.

Indeed, the entertainment industry was to play a pivotal role in the settling and development of the vast Canadian territory.

Canada's close ties to the United Kingdom were evident, through the influence of British and Scottish theatrical companies who

travelled to Canada to appear in shows in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa.

By 1928, the Canadian Department of Labour listed theatrical locals in New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Calgary, Saskatchewan and Vancouver. With the inclusion of these and other Canadian local unions, the IA was quickly becoming the preeminent theatrical union in North America.

While the legitimate theatre in Canada evolved in much the same way as did the stage in the U.S., the movie and television industries struggled to develop a truly Canadian identity.

The dominance of movies and television by Hollywood and New York made it very difficult for the fledgling Canadian industry. Hollywood-made films filled virtually every cinema in the world for the first half of the 20th century.

Nevertheless, some important cinematic milestones occurred in Canada.

On July 21, 1896, Andrew and George Holland of Ottawa put on the first public presentation of films in Canada at West End Park. They used the Vitascope. The Holland brothers were also responsible for the world's first Kinetoscope Parlor at 1155 Broadway in New York.

Soon after, films were presented all across Canada, using either the Vitascope, the French Cinematographe or the British Animatographe.

The Klondike Gold Rush was filmed by Robert Bonine in 1897, as were scenes of Canadian landscapes and life by various early cameramen. Also that year was a landmark film project, *Ten Years in Manitoba*, which was sponsored by the Canadian Pacific Railroad and that

toured Great Britain.

In 1898, one of the first uses of film in advertising took place in Toronto, when the Massey-Harris Company commissioned the Edison Company to produce films promoting its products.

In December, 1898, one of the early Canadian pioneers in film, John Schuberg, filled an empty Vancouver store with patrons eager to see their first film. The next year he began touring the Canadian countryside, showing films in a "black tent theater."

While Hollywood was concentrating on commercial films and serials designed to satisfy a demanding public with a thirst for excitement and adventure, Canadian filmmakers focused on their homeland.

In particular, the Canadian government and Canadian railroad interests were looking for ways to encourage immigration. The Canadian population was still extremely small, and the government wanted to speed up the settlement process



A cover of the program advertising an early Canadian stage show circa 1917.

throughout the vast mid-section of the nation.

The best way to get the word out, they decided, was through the new medium of film. Over the next few decades, they sponsored or produced many movies depicting the beauty of Canada, her great natural resources and the economic opportunity that went with being the first to settle the Canada heartland.

To that end, the Canadian Pacific Railroad hired the Urban Company of Britain to produce a series of films designed to encourage immigration.

Throughout the early 1900s, the strong connection between Canadian railroad companies and the film industry produced many wonderful early films. Railroad executives appreciated the great potential that films promoting Canada could have in encouraging immigration and development of this vast nation.

However, they weren't above a little censorship: in many of the films they refused to allow winter photography so as not to discourage potential immigrants concerned about the harsh Canadian winters.

The Canadian Pacific Railroad had established a Colonization Department, which sponsored 13 one-reel films, 11 of them dramatic, to promote immigration. Many of the titles (*The Life of a Salmon*, *A Trip Over the Rocky and Selkirk Mountains*, *Riders of the Plains*) extolled the beauty of Canadian life and culture that is and was so closely tied to the magnificence of the landscape.

In 1902 alone, The Bioscope Company made more than 35 films in the *Living Canada* series.



One of the earliest movie theaters in Canada, circa 1909, in Dundas, Ontario.

The popularity of film increased to the point where, by 1903, store-front theatres were common all across Canada.

The first dramatic film made in Canada was *Hiawatha, the Messiah of the Obijitways*. This 800-foot reel was directed and photographed by Joe Rosenthal and was the brainchild of E.A. Armstrong of Montreal.

By 1905, before the massive shift of American filmmakers to California, many of them saw the promise of the beautiful Canadian landscape and turned their attention northward. Among the titles produced by Billy Bitzer that year were *Moose Hunt in New Brunswick* and *Salmon Fishing in Quebec*.

The first nickelodeon theatre in the world was opened in Montreal by Ernest Ouimet—the Ouimetoscope. That same year—1906—he opened the first film exchange in Canada.

This same man, one of the film industry's greatest pioneers, opened his second Ouimetoscope in 1907—the first luxury

movie theater in North America.

By 1913 American producers had begun tapping the Canadian repertoire of films, releasing many of the dramatic productions made by IA brothers and sisters in the North.

Among the early titles that proved so popular in the States were *Blood Is Thicker than Water*, *The Laws of the North*, *Pierre of the North*, *Sons of the Northwoods*, and *Into the North*.

While the influence of Hollywood and Broadway was powerful, Canadian entertainment industry pioneers were independent and creative individuals who sought their own identity.

That identity would be shaped and molded by the different approach to labor relations that the U.S. and Canadian governments took.

That is not to say that all was peaceful in Canada; indeed, there were frequent and frustrating labor disputes cropping up all over the country. However, Canada would be spared the strife and turmoil that dominated Hollywood for so many decades.

Projectionists Make Headway

Projectionists filled out the ranks of IA members in Canada for many years, just as they had in the States.

The new movie industry required many different tasks (carpentry, props, hair, make-up, etc.) on the set, all carried out by different individuals with specific skills and responsibilities. However, in the projection booth, the operators were also required to do many different jobs, often all at the same time and all alone.

Prior to sound, one man worked in the booth with one projector running silent movies at 60-feet-per-minute. These silent movies were originally accompanied by small orchestras, but these were later replaced by the new sound technology.

As T. Butler, a member of Local 302 in Calgary, Alberta, recalls, the early projectors were hand-cranked. While threading successive reels, the projectionists had to operate



for Canadian IA members during the Great Depression. In Canada, as in the States, unemployment was at record levels, with tens of millions of people out of work.

Canada was still essentially rural, and did not have the population to support a movie house during such tough economic times. As a result, many theaters in small towns all across Canada closed in the 1930s, forcing IA members to travel the countryside in search of employment.

Many of them found work on the road. Projectionists who had previously worked only in the booth were now doing everything from setting up projection equipment, chairs and screens to distributing advertising, selling tickets and maintaining equipment and transport vehicles.

Some IA members even found themselves required to run dances after the show. They worked long, hard hours for low rates of pay (as little as \$10 a week), and often took eggs, butter, vegetables and other goods in exchange for admission.

The history of movie projection in Canada is important because of the many strides Canadian members made in perfecting their craft and in making the booth a safer place for all IA members.

The Canadian government recognized early the constant threat of danger associated with movie projections, and moved to institute strict regulations and inspections of movie houses.

Nevertheless, a look at the statistics shows that it has been a constant struggle: in 1916 there were 39 fires in 1,477 theaters but by 1953, that number had dropped to 29 fires in 2,749 theaters.

Always On A Sunday

There are far more similarities between the Canadian entertainment industry and that of the U.S., than there are differences.

For example, in the early 1960s in Canada, as in the States, movie theaters were feeling increasing competition from television. It was obvious to Canadians as well as to Americans that movie houses, if they were to compete with this new form of entertainment that operated seven days a week, would have to open on Sunday.

It didn't come without a struggle. Many projectionists didn't want to give up their single day off and many movie theater owners didn't want to pay the premium rate required by contract for Sunday work. Nevertheless, the adjustments were made on both sides, and today it's hard to imagine a Sunday with the movie theaters closed.

Other Innovations

One of the first pay television stations was established in Etobicoke, Ontario, near Toronto. It was 1960 and the system was called Telemeter. The subscriber deposited coins—usually a dollar's worth—in a box installed in his living room by the subscription company. The desired program was then played on the subscriber's television set. Programming included movies which had been playing in downtown theaters just a few months before.

Money was collected every month or so by a Telemeter serviceman, who would come to the subscriber's house and empty the coin box on top of the television.

Telemeter was a successful program for its time, with more than 5,000 subscribers, but it was ahead of its time and did not survive. Telemeter's employees, during its

the stereopticon, which projected slides onto the screen asking the ladies to remove their hats and the men to refrain from spitting on the floor.

Sound effects records replaced the orchestras, and were played during various parts of the feature. Sound-on-disc also gave new depth to the flickers, but not until true sound on film was developed did the movies really talk.

According to A.L. Pat Travers, retired International Vice President and retired business representative of Local 173 in Toronto, the first theater in that city to install sound was the Tivoli, showing the 1929 feature *Mother Knows Best*.

This led to a great burst of activity on the part of projectionists all over Toronto and other Canadian cities who wanted to learn the new sound technology as quickly as possible. Sound also inspired the creation of a professional society of projectionists in Canada.

Movies with sound brought in a whole new array of equipment, requiring two men in the booth to operate two machines for an uninterrupted performance.

The art of projection became an important trade



1 8 9 3

existence, were members of Local 173.

Canadian brothers and sisters also took part in the rapid developments of the 1940s and 1950s, with the emergence of safety film, 3-D, Cinerama, and Cinemascope. Calgary's Chinook Drive-In was the first drive-in theater in Canada, but as in the United States, moviegoers had only a temporary fling with drive-ins, and now virtually all outdoor cinemas have closed.

Instead we have the sophisticated multiplexes with Dolby sound systems. Calgary was also the home of the first automated theater in Canada. Today two or three men in a booth are no longer required, and in most multiplexes around North America one projectionist manages several individual theaters. However, these projectionists must still be skilled technicians capable of responding immediately to a problem such as a broken reel or a malfunctioning projector.

The development of automatically operated projection equipment, sophisticated film transport systems and the xenon bulb lighting system have transformed the projectionist's job in both the U.S. and Canada.

From the Proceedings . . .

In the official Proceedings of the 10th Annual Convention, held at Emerald Hall in Norfolk, Virginia, Brother W.E. Meredith is listed as a delegate from Toronto and Brother Thomas Gedden is listed as a delegate from Montreal. Ottawa delegates sent in their application only a few days before the convention opened.

Canadian Picture Pioneers

One of the greatest and most successful accomplishments in Canada was the creation of the Canadian Picture Pioneers.

The organization was born on April 11, 1940, when a charter for its existence was issued by the government of Canada.

The avowed purpose of the Canadian Picture Pioneers is:

To create and promote friendly relations amongst those who have been or are engaged in, or are connected with the Motion Picture Industry;

To promote and create friendly relations and understanding between the public and those engaged in or actively connected with the Motion Picture Industry;

To aid those in need who were formerly in and part of the Motion Picture Industry, without in any way expecting or requiring the persons in receipt of such assistance to purchase or pay for such assistance either by contribution, donations, assessments or otherwise.

The organization is principally a philanthropic and fraternal organization created to provide assistance and support to needy individuals who have devoted their lives to the motion picture industry.

The Canadian Picture Pioneers have stood as a model for all other organizations seeking to fulfill these same worthy goals.



Celebrating Canada's Centennial

Just as the entertainment industry played a key role in the settlement of Canada, this industry also contributed enormously to the Canadian Centennial Celebration in 1967.

Drama, ballet, music, opera, musical shows, and special events were an integral part of the centennial celebration, which took place throughout 1967. The skills of IA members turned out to be vital to the success of this grand celebration.

IA members found employment with the many travelling attractions associated with the centennial.

The Canadian government allocated more than \$3 million to a program of entertainment that was used to tell the colorful and rich history of Canada in its first 100 years.

Stage productions were held in every province in every month of the centennial year. Canada Festival was a comprehensive celebration of the arts in Canada, sponsored by the Centennial Commission.

Original ballets, plays, music, operas and sym-

phonies were commissioned by the government, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and other sponsors.

One of the most significant events of the year was the Canadian Armed Forces Tattoo, described by then-International Vice President Hugh J. Sedgwick in this way:

"Initially, two 24-car trains will be used to transport the Tattoo, one beginning at Peterborough, Ontario, which will proceed westerly to Kelowna, British Columbia, and the other which proceeds from Oshawa, Ontario to Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, turns around and proceeds westerly to Prince George, B.C., each train playing at scheduled stops until they reach British Columbia.

"The theme of the Tattoo will be based on the developments and achievements of Canada's forces from their French and British origins to their present integrated role.

"Spectacular lighting effects will be a feature of the Tattoo, which will include massed band concerts of 450 bandsmen, recreations of various periods in Canadian history . . . Over two



Actors at the Charlottetown Summer Festival share backstage space with the IA crew.

The Stage Today

With little fanfare, the Canadian government and people have nurtured the performing arts for many decades. The result of that support and commitment is seen today in Canada's thriving legitimate theatre industry.

Toronto in particular has been experiencing a boom in the legitimate theatre. This growth has been directly tied to the refurbishing or construction of several theatres in downtown Toronto and in its northern suburbs.

Since 1987, three theatres of more than 1,000 seats have been restored to the splendor of their vaudeville days. In 1993, two new theatres of more than 1,800 opened.

The 1993 Fall roster of shows includes such blockbusters as *Miss Saigon* and *Phantom of the Opera*, as well as the classic *Showboat*.

Moreover, IA brothers and sisters will be at work on Canadian and American dramatic works and comedies at more than 120 theatres in the city.

Elsewhere in Ontario, summer festivals such as the Shakespeare festival in Stratford also afford work for IA members.

Ironically, a high percentage of theatre-goers include more than 3 million tourists, many of them American.

IA members in Canada faced many of the struggles their American counterparts faced during the decline of the theatre from the 1960s until the mid-1980s.

In 1962, for example, Toronto had only two live theatres. But, with government funding, the city started to rebuild its

theatre community throughout the next 15 years.

The biggest push came in the mid-1980s, and IA members, as well as Canadian actors, directors and writers, were ready to step in.

The first privately-built theatre in Canada in 90 years, the Princess of Wales, was constructed specifically for *Miss Saigon*, which opened there in May, 1993.

The producers of this show had a luxury not usually found in most theatrical productions: the theatre was designed to fit the requirements of the production. For example, the stage had to be large, deep and high enough to accommodate the takeoff and landing of a near-life-size Huey helicopter, as well as to allow for the shifting of such scenery and props as a gigantic statue of Ho Chi Minh and a 1960s era Cadillac convertible. Advanced sales for this production topped \$16 million.

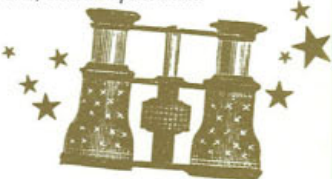
Just down the street is the Royal Alexandra, where *Les Misérables* had enjoyed a four-year run and which had been saved from the wrecking ball in 1962.

And a few blocks away is the Pantages Theatre, home to *Phantom of the Opera*, which opened to packed houses in 1989 and has been running ever since. Estimates are that more than 3 million people have seen it, many of them American visitors.

Next door to the Pantages is North America's only double-decker theatre, the Elgin and, seven floors above, the Winter Garden. The Elgin was home to *Cats*, the musical that launched the Toronto commercial theatre boom in 1985.

The Elgin's history mirrors that of theatre in

Canada. The house began life in 1913 as a 1,500-seat theatre featuring a program that included vaudeville and silents. Fifteen years later it became a full-time movie house, until it was bought by the Ontario Heritage Foundation in 1981. The Elgin is now expected to become home to one of the first Canadian-written mega-musicals, called *Napoleon* and



written by Timothy Williams and Andrew Sabiston, both in their early 20's.

Canada's theatrical industry expanded considerably with construction of the \$39 million North York Performing Arts Centre, a facility much like the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. North York contains a 1,800-seat main theatre, a 1,000-seat recital hall and a 250-seat studio theatre.

A \$6 million production of *Showboat* was the scheduled opening show for this new centre.

Canada also has a strong tradition of support of the arts. The Canadian Opera Company and the National Ballet operate out of Toronto. There are also many local productions of well-known plays, such as Tom Stoppard's *Rough Crossing* and Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

The strong connection to the performing arts has ensured a place for Canadian theatre in the hearts of the nation's citizens. It also ensures continued work for IA members, whose skills and craftsmanship are welcomed by the thriving Canadian theatre community.

hundred different costumes, typical of various periods, will be used."

IA electricians travelled with the Tattoo to ensure that no problems occurred with the huge amount of electrical equipment. Although the Tattoo itself was composed entirely of Armed Forces personnel, three IA department heads were recognized in local areas, as they normally would be, along with five IA lamp operators.

During the summer of 1967, the Gothic Parliament buildings in Ottawa were the setting for a 40-minute "Son et Lumière" (sound and light) presentation. The show used stereophonic sound and special colored lighting to re-enact the building of Canada. The show depicted the adventures, hardship and triumphs, culminating in a realistic representation of the 1916 fire which destroyed the Centre Block of the Parliament buildings.

Canada's devotion to the arts was exemplified by this centennial celebration. It is no wonder, then, that Canada and especially Toronto, has become a thriving mecca for the performing arts, one which rivals New York and London in greatness.

Theatre Grows Up

Theatre's Golden Era— And Beyond

The American and Canadian legitimate theatre experienced what critics and historians have called the Golden Age of the American Musical, from 1924 to 1937.

That era, in which IA members played so crucial a part, set the standard for the evolution of theatre, both on Broadway and in houses all across North America.

It is remarkable that this occurred during a calamity as severe as the Great

Depression and in the face of increasing competition from the movie industry. Many established stars would depart for Hollywood, especially during the height of the Great Depression. Nevertheless, those who stayed loyal to the legitimate stage would be rewarded beyond all their expectations.

In those few short years, musical theatre went from revues featuring extravagant musical numbers and lots of chorus girls—but no plot—to the other end of the spectrum with what most believe is one of our great literary masterpieces, *Showboat*.

Sandy Duncan appeared in a popular revival of *Peter Pan*, but the first staging with Mary Martin was made profitable through the sale of the production for broadcast on television.



Showboat was staged at the Ziegfeld Theatre, and the settings were lavish and colorful, filling the stage. The lively levee, the Cotton Blossom showboat itself, with its stage on a stage, and a re-creation of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, all overwhelmed audiences of 1927. *Showboat* is also believed by



Showboat transformed the musical stage when it was first staged in 1927. In the revival shown here, we can see the beauty and lavishness of the production.

many to be perhaps the first true musical play.

Moreover, it was accessible and understandable for everyone. It had a romantic story, and its songs and dances were full of life and were relevant to the plot, not just set pieces.

Showboat ushered in a new era in which set design was to play a pivotal role in bringing the legitimate stage into maturity.

With this production and others that followed, set design evolved into a sophisticated and vital part of a show, whether it was a musical, a comedy or a drama.

The words of a contemporary entertainment critic writing about one of the great set designers, Robert Edmond Jones, described the new approach this way:

"Whether the play happens to be *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *The Green Pastures*, *Much Ado*, or *Les Precieuses Ridicules*, these (sketches) of Mr. Jones' glow with theatricality. They never belong to the drab, commonplace of existence to which most of us are fettered both inside and outside of our playhouses. Such is their magic that they gild the humdrum with expectancy, and transfer reality to a world of dreams that is more real and beckoning than reality ever thought of being."

While these designs were indeed magical and compelling, it must be remembered that IA craftsmen were responsible for making those designs come to life.

Set design also began to include architectural elements, such as steps, ramps and levels, all of

The darkly humorous Sweeney Todd illustrates the remarkable talents of IA stagehands, makeup artists, set designers, costumers, lighting technicians, sound designers, and others.



them molded and contoured by lighting. IA carpenters constructed lavish, surrealistic sets, as well as accurate, detailed structures that recreated everything from a Brooklyn tenement house to an industrialist's mansion.

They even constructed a spectacular, full-scale apse of a cathedral for Max Reinhardt's American production of Vollmoeller's *The Miracle*.

The other technical elements of production—sound, lighting, props, costumes, make-up and hair—kept pace with the revolution in set design.

Producers and directors came to consider all these aspects of design as vital to the success of a show. For example, the legendary producer David Belasco referred to lighting this way:

"Lights are to drama what music is to the lyrics of a song. The greatest part of my success in the theatre I attribute to my feeling for colors, translated into effects of light."

Oklahoma! was first staged in 1943, and its boldness in staging and the use of realistic props set against stylized backdrops were milestones in the theatre. The original Oklahoma! cost \$75,000 to produce and has earned many millions in literally thousands of productions over the years.



Again, it was Alliance craftsmen who took these designs and made them real.

This golden era produced many wonderful shows. Despite the fact that sound had come to the movies and musicals were now being presented on screen, musical theatre continued to thrive.

Broadway was not unshaken by the growing power of Hollywood, however, and adjustments in theatre productions were made, especially in light of the "talkies."

Over the next few decades, theatre in North America would turn away from lavish operetta, light comedies and dramatic classics towards more pertinent, even muckraking, original material. Society was changing, and theatre with it.

One show that was characteristic of the new emphasis on satire and political comment was *Of Thee I Sing*. This show stands out as one of the great classics of American musicals, which earned its writers—George S. Kaufman, Ira and George Gershwin, and Morrie Ryskind—the first Pulitzer Prize ever awarded to a musical.

This was the era that also brought us *Porgy and Bess*, an opera staged first on Broadway with what has been called stunning realism. The sets created by IA craftsmen conveyed the poignancy and struggle of the characters. Special effects were used to simulate the terrifying drama of being trapped in a crumbling house during a hurricane, to create a

very haunting and suspenseful atmosphere.

However, despite the beauty of its music and its staging, *Porgy and Bess* was not a rousing commercial success, failing to recoup its \$50,000 investment.

It was during this Golden Era that the entire approach to set design and staging changed. The fragment unit setting was developed by Robert Edmond Jones and used with great success by other designers, especially in a production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* that was to become a milestone in the evolution of stage design.

The changing approach to staging gave designers—and IA electricians, carpenters, painters, wardrobe workers and others—the chance to participate in the entire creative process, from start to finish.

Thus, IA craftsmen and department heads became essential components of the production effort, helping to tie all the elements—stage design, props, lighting, costumes, makeup, sound—together into a cohesive whole.

Moreover, the accomplishments of IA members in the musical and dramatic theatre were also put to use in more traditional areas, such as ballet and opera.

As the decade of the Thirties drew to a close, the golden era would also end. The Federal Theatre Project, an effort by the Roosevelt administration to preserve the American theatre and provide jobs for theatrical workers, produced some innovative shows, both musical and straight.

Ironically, one of the most successful of the shows from the last season of the golden era was *Pins and Needles*, a musical play put on by the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union. It opened in the Labor Stage theatre (formerly the Princess), and the cast was recruited entirely from the rank and file of union members, such as cutters, weavers and machinists.

The union performers kept their enthusiasm under control—they were so cautious at first that only weekend performances were originally scheduled so that the cast members could work at their regular jobs.

The show was aggressively political and staunchly pro-worker. Fans of the show would make repeated visits, especially since the material was frequently updated to reflect current events. *Pins and Needles* ran for 1,108 performances.

The Forties: Facing Facts

With the advent of World War II, IA members found themselves called to the frontlines. Hollywood and Broadway—and everywhere in between from Miami to Manitoba—saw the Alliance ranks depleted.

Nevertheless, the theatre continued on its course towards innovation and maturity. During this grim time, the legitimate stage responded to the public's demand for escapist material, both musically and in straight shows such as *Blithe Spirit*.

These shows used light and color to create pleasurable ambiance, far removed from the realities of war and revolution. It was theatrical realism used idealistically.

It wasn't all light and happy, however; *Pal Joey* (1940) reflected a new realism. It was a cynical and caustic story about a gigolo and, while it performed adequately in 1940, when it was revived in 1952 before a public that was more open-minded and jaded, it was wildly successful. The costumes, lighting and stage design were all created specifically to reinforce this lively but essentially grim fable.

The 1940s brought the legitimate stage some significant pluses and some equally major minuses. The successful shows of the Forties and Fifties had extremely long runs, at the same time that the number of road companies decreased.

The lure of Hollywood, as well as the new medium of television, continued to draw many IA members away from the legitimate stage.

Nevertheless, those IA members who stuck with the theatre found new opportunities for creativity and innovation. They had the opportunity to become part of theatrical history,

thanks to such landmark shows as *Kiss Me Kate* and *South Pacific*.

One of the most significant shows of this period or any other—and one that would transform the musical stage—was the 1943 production of *Oklahoma!*. This show was a milestone for many reasons. Its story was sentimental and romantic, evoking a bygone era. It was homespun and nostalgic. And it was daring at the same time that it was innocent.

Oklahoma!'s boldness came in its staging, exemplified by its rejection of the traditional lavish opening number for a curtain rising on a solitary figure on stage. The show's sets were realistic and were placed against stylized backdrops. Colors were bright and strong, and were described by one theatre expert as "posterousque."

The craftsmanship of IA carpenters, electricians and property persons was put to the best possible use. They had to evoke everything from the wide open spaces of the Oklahoma terrain, to the gloom and disarray of the smokehouse in which the villain of the show lives. For these craftsmen and women, *Oklahoma!* was truly a *tour de force*.

The show cost about \$75,000 to put on and earned many millions in grosses during its 2,248 performances, as well as its record-breaking road companies. You can be sure that somewhere in the U.S. and Canada, every single day, there is a performance of *Oklahoma!* being staged.



South Pacific employed some spectacular special effects which combined the use of lighting with painting to transform the stage.

Playing It Straight

While *Oklahoma!* was revolutionizing the musical stage, serious and comedic "straight" plays were also breaking new ground. In the Forties and Fifties, theatre in North America saw such diversity as *The Glass Menagerie* and *Death of a Salesman*.

Death of a Salesman had some special visual effects that proved to be very dramatic. The script required a sudden flashback of 15 years and then a return to the present, all within the same scene. The designer used a main set, with all other scenes played on the forestage. Projection units in the auditorium as well as back-stage would transform the set on cue, projecting shadowy leaf and tree designs onto the back wall of the stage as well as the furniture to conjure up the past when the house was surrounded by landscape instead of buildings.

Lighting and painting were also critical to the success of *South Pacific*, a show which employed some sophisticated techniques to great effect. In one scene, during the song "Bali Ha'i," the twin peaks of Bali Ha'i are seen in the background. Slowly a mysterious cloud rings the mountains and the sea turns dark red and threatening. This stunning effect was created by painting the images on the backdrop and then revealing them by controlling the lighting directly on the drop.

At the same time, staging of serious dramatic material during this period became less directly representational and more surreal. IA carpenters, lighting engineers, flymen, sound technicians and

others found themselves caught up in what was then called "theatricalized realism."

The sets they were called on to create were different from the traditional direct realism of the past.

Surprisingly, in the mid-Forties many Hollywood stars made a return trip to the stage where they had first learned their craft, giving a much-needed boost to theatre in New York. At the same time, musical maestros Rogers and Hammerstein continued to build on their success with *Oklahoma!* with other hits, such as *Carousel*, *South Pacific*, and *The King and I*.

The Old Vic Theatre Company from London paid a visit to Broadway during this period, mounting such classics as *Uncle*

Vanya, and *Oedipus*. There were also homegrown successes, such as *Born Yesterday*, *The Iceman Cometh*, *Mister Roberts*, (which required stagehands to construct a cargo ship on stage) and among musicals, *Wish You Were Here* (in which IA craftsmen constructed a real swimming pool on the stage), *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, *My Fair Lady*, and *West Side Story*.

Despite this great productivity, which gave us many of the classics of the legitimate stage, a new trend was emerging which would have a serious impact on our Alliance and our relationship to Broadway.

Theatrical output reached one of its lowest points at the beginning of

the 1950s, when less than 60 new productions were mounted. The number of theatrical houses seemed to be decreasing every year, with many being produced in out-of-the-way venues off Broadway.

This movement away from Broadway was reflected in similar ways throughout North America. Regional theatre began to expand, with well-respected venues established in cities such as Dallas, Houston, and Washington, D.C. The regional theatre movement was given a big boost in 1959, when the Ford Foundation pledged financial assistance to resident companies of great promise.

Summer festivals also provided a way for theatre to spread outside the

Skilled stagehands re-created the actual stage set from the set designer's model.





Wardrobe employees through the years, like these workers in the early 1930s, worked tirelessly to maintain the often elaborate costumes required for major stage productions.

bounds of Broadway. In particular, the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario, begun by Tyrone Guthrie in 1953, would be very influential throughout North America. Similar festivals sprang up in such places as Ashland, Oregon; San Diego, California; and Stratford, Connecticut.

It was at this time that

there was a reversal of the long-established tradition of shows opening on Broadway and then taking to the road. For example, *Lorelei* starring Carol Channing opened in Oklahoma City and travelled for almost a year before it went to New York.

Thus, work for Alliance members was increasingly decentralized during this period.

There is one stunning example of the combination of two IA crafts emerging during this period in our history: the videotaping of the Mary Martin hit, *Peter Pan*, for television. This show posed enormous challenges for IA stagehands, who often held Mary Martin's very life in their hands as she soared above, across and beyond the stage in her flying harness. Although the show had a relatively brief run on Broadway, the sale of the whole production to television meant it was a moneymaker after all.

Beyond Broadway . . .

A stagehands, costumers, sound and lighting technicians, property persons and the many other highly skilled crafts people are not confined to Broadway. They work in theatres all across the U.S. and Canada, in travelling shows such as the Ice Capades and Sesame Street Productions, and dozens of other venues, large and small.

Sixties Seriousness

The 1960s brought a new mood to theatre in North America. Straight plays and musicals alike were increasingly serious. Theatrical productions began to reflect the disaffection felt by many Americans and Canadians, especially with regard to the Vietnam War.

The result was many highly political and adventurous productions. However, as theatre prices continued to rise, the public's expectations were rising also. Poor productions, no matter how much star power was employed, would be rejected by discriminating theatregoers.

The decade of the Sixties opened with a warning of the turbulence that was to come: theatres experienced the first blackout since 1919. This came as a result of a dispute between actors and producers.

Even after the 10-day dispute was settled, the season did not go well. There were some bonafide hits: *Bye, Bye Birdie*, *Camelot*, *The Sound of*

Music, *Toys In The Attic*, and *Beckett*.

There were some notable flops as well: *Happy Town* (closed after five performances), *The Conquering Hero* (five performances), and *The Girls Against the Boys* (16 performances).

After this, the legitimate theatre seemed to go into suspended animation, with the impulse for innovation shifting further towards off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway.

Despite successes such as *Hello, Dolly!*, *Funny Girl*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Barefoot in the Park*, and *The Odd Couple*, by the mid-Sixties the legitimate theatre seemed to be dead or dying.

When the upheavals of the late-Sixties—manifested in political assassinations, war protests, drug experimentation, and “free love”—took hold, the theatre was transformed into a focus of controversy and scandal.

Hair's staging—with its brief but discreet nudity—was as important as its music. This show, more than any others at the time, reflected the upheaval and rebellious counterculture of the 1960s.



Disorder, Disasters and Decay

The riots, drugs and economic turmoil that characterized our society in the mid- and late-Sixties was reflected in the theatre. Ticket prices soared along with inflation. Unemployment followed, and the middle class, which had for so long set the tone for what was presented on stage, stopped going to the theatre.

It was inevitable that jobs would be lost. Producers cut costs everywhere, not just in labor but in production values as well. Sets were no longer lavish and extravagant. Instead, scenery, sets, and wardrobes became spare and meager.

IA members were faring far better in television, which was becoming increasingly sophisticated, and in the movies.

As with other social trends, the malaise afflicting American and Canadian society was painfully reflected in the theatre.

The situation was not helped by the fact that new talent, as soon as it succeeded on Broadway, would depart for the movies and television, where they could make much more money.

Moreover, money that would have been used to mount major Broadway shows was now being diverted to the music industry. Rock music, thanks in part to the Beatles, distracted the public, who seemed to demand increasing energy and stimulation from their entertainment. Musical theatre, which had for so long provided an outlet for composers and performers alike, slipped into a coma. Broadway, at least at first, couldn't seem to figure out how to put rock

music to work on stage.

Hair was the exception, although the critics complained that it wasn't the music but rather the brief nudity on stage that made the show a hit.

Serious drama likewise seemed to be abandoned by the public. Radical theatre groups abounded, but blockbuster hits were not forthcoming.

One significant result of the rock music boom was the use of amplification. Actors in live theatre began to use miking with great success during this era. Today, sound amplification is an important and integral part of every stage production.

As Abe Jacobs, President and Business Agent of Local 922 (New York), and sound consultant and designer for the New York City Opera and the New York State Theatre at Lincoln Center, notes:

"With the advent of personal stereos, compact discs, home music systems and the quality of sound in TV and movies, the audiences who come to live theatre expect the sound to be as good or as brilliant as if they are listening to it in their living rooms."

The sound designer, he noted, is the "fourth member of the production and design team of a theatrical production." Along with the scenery, costumes and lighting, sound is now recognized as a major element of the overall quality of all productions that are done today.

Body microphones came into widespread use in the 1970s, and today, any actor who has a speaking or singing solo part will have a body mike. This means that on some shows, anywhere from 15



to 30 wireless microphones on separate frequencies will be used in a single performance. Electronic special effects also began to be developed at this time, so that through a single keyboard many different sounds can be duplicated on stage.

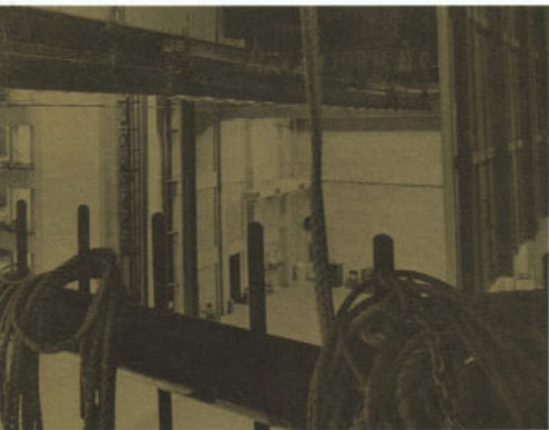
But finding a place to attach a body microphone would have been difficult in some of the productions staged in the mid-and-late Sixties.

The wildness and rebelliousness of the Sixties manifested itself on stage, where, in addition to *Hair*, such shows as *Oh Calcutta*

and *Che!* insistently pushed sex and nudity on stage. Originally performed off-Broadway, *Hair* did benefit from the publicity regarding its nude scene played at the front of the stage at the end of the first act, but its excellent score also helped give it a long life. The well-publicized nude scene took place in dim flickering lighting and proved a disappointment to patrons who expected more explicit nudity. That would come later in *Oh, Calcutta*, an off-Broadway musical revue, much of



A Chorus Line was one of the first truly technical shows, and IA members found themselves challenged to learn new skills. A Chorus Line ran for 15 years and 6,137 performances.



These stagehands (in 1967) inspect their domain before a production gets underway.

which was performed in the nude.

Following its successful off-Broadway debut, *Oh, Calcutta* was a long-running hit, playing the Eden Theatre off-Broadway to packed houses, later doing the same at the uptown Belasco Theatre.

Some of the late-Sixties productions proved to be highly successful on the road, such as *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*, and *Do Your Own Thing*. These shows played in legitimate theatres all across the country, setting box office records as they toured and providing

much employment for Alliance members.

The touring companies not only provided work for road men, they also were a source of work for in-house crews in the cities they visited. But as for Broadway... the Great White Way seemed unable to snap out of its lethargy. The last half of the decade produced some successes that are overshadowed by the lack of competition and innovation during this period.

Dames At Sea, 1776, and *Cabaret* were successes

that rounded out the decade of the Sixties, opening the door to the next decade which everyone hoped would bring peace and profits to the beleaguered legitimate stage.

Moreover, IA stagehands, wardrobe personnel working in tailor shops, wig and hair stylists, make-up technicians, and box office employees have always found steady, long-term work in such venues as the Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center. More than 100 IA members work in this theatre today, many of them with several decades of experience.

This work would serve the IA well as Broadway struggled to climb out of its slump.

The British Invasion

A members in New York were caught up in the decline of Broadway, while their brothers and sisters working on stages across the U.S. and Canada were doing a little better thanks to the success of road shows of past Broadway hits.

Runaway inflation made it hard to produce the blockbuster extravaganzas of the past, and investors grew increasingly reluctant to put money into theatre.

Moreover, the previous generation's lions of the theatre were leaving the scene. Richard Rogers, Julie Styne, Frederick Loewe and Irving Berlin had either died or were retired.

Who would write the songs and the lines? What great names were left who would be able to finance a show just by associating themselves with it?

New talents would emerge to fill this gap, but before that happened Broadway and North American theatre with it would sink further into the doldrums.

IA members who struggled through these lean years were part of a significant transition in the North American theatre. While the quality of the material might not be as superior as the critics would have it, the staging, scenic design, special effects, sound, wardrobe, and lighting made enormous strides in sophistication and complexity.

Retrospectives were restaged in spectacular fashion, such as *No, No, Nanette*, *Me and My Girl* and *My One and Only*.

The early Seventies also established what began as a trend and became permanent: fewer produc-

tions, higher ticket prices.

Then, in 1971, the first wave of the British invasion came ashore, in the form of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The show had started life as a rock music album, and it marked the first appearance of Andrew Lloyd Webber, the young Englishman who would transform musical theatre and Broadway with it.

It was pop opera, with a sung-through libretto that required careful miking and amplification. The staging, lighting and sound design were all cleverly executed by skillful IA technicians, helping to make this and other shows successful despite complaints by critics that they were unworthy.

With this new emphasis on staging and dramatic

special effects, shows (especially musicals) began to turn away from traditions of the past which had required large casts, including dozens of elaborately-costumed showgirls.

Staging became as important as songs and book, as dialogue and direction. Alliance members found themselves caught up in a rapidly changing and evolving industry.

By the time the revolution came, it was desperately needed. By the mid-Seventies, theatre in the U.S. and Canada was virtually dead. The only successful shows seemed to come from off-Broadway, although these often transferred uptown after becoming a hit, thus expanding work for IA stagehands. One example of this new trend was the

award-winning *That Championship Season*.

And touring companies of past hits continued to provide work in such shows as *Godspell* and *Applause*.

The shows that were successful in mid-decade relied on well-designed and imaginative sets executed by IA craftsmen. One such show was *Chicago*, which had an art-deco set with translucent columns showing vaudeville scenes and a band that performed on stage from the rear. Another was *On the Twentieth Century*, which relied on sets, props, lighting and sound to re-create the sensation of being on board the beautiful old train.

A Chorus Line also helped revive the struggling industry, opening in 1975

and running for 15 years (6,137 performances), providing steady employment and hope that Broadway (and the legitimate theatre in general) was about to be resuscitated.

More and more shows began to be strengthened by their technical values. *Sweeney Todd* relied heavily on its dark and brooding setting which re-created London of the Industrial Revolution. The show also used lighting and special effects to enhance depiction of the grisly murders which are central to the story.

Evita, another Andrew Lloyd Webber hit from London, finished out the decade in style. The show incorporated film clips, voiceovers and even brought stagehands out in front of the audience to change scenery.

The theatre is transformed for Cats, creating greater intimacy between the audience and the cast who populate the junkyard filled with oversized props, such as old tires and an old stove.



Up and Down in the Eighties

Legitimate theatre in the 1980s was dominated by economics. Too often both straight and musical shows closed after a single performance because their producers were afraid to risk future expenditures on anything other than a sure thing.

Thus, there were few long running hits. Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* was one of them. Stagehands transformed the Wintergarden Theatre into a permanent home for this show, which included a larger-than-life junkyard filled with ingeniously designed props that was home to the cats. It was magical fantasy and audiences loved it.

Costumes and fantasy settings also helped make another mid-decade show a success. IA members helped re-create St. Tropez as well as a flashy nightclub scene for *La Cage aux Folles*.

But nowhere was there a production as lavish and extravagant as Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Starlight Express*. The show opened in 1987 and was the most expensive on Broadway up to that time—\$8 million. It ran for 761 performances but still did not regain its investment.

Starlight's actors performed entirely on roller skates, racing up ramps, over bridges and catwalks. The show used sophisticated lighting and sound, and re-created the starlight of the title with lasers.

This hit came in the same season with what became a modern-day classic, *Les Misérables*. Broadway audiences welcomed the London hit (written by two Frenchmen) with \$11 million in advance sales.

Les Misérables remains a

favorite of many stagehands who worked on it. The show employs a massive turntable to move scenery, people and props around, but its most striking element is the massive apparatus that, during the course of a performance, is twisted, slid and interlocked to create, in turn, a Paris slum and the barricade of the doomed revolutionaries. This incredible piece of stagecraft was literally driven, through automation, to construct the various sets as needed.

Les Miz's lighting was also extremely effective, giving frightening menace to the Paris sewers through which Jean Valjean escapes.

The era of the modern spectacle would culminate in 1988, with the arrival of yet another Lloyd Webber production, *The Phantom of the Opera*.

This show attracted such attention and interest that it virtually dominated the theatrical season—and brought revived interest in the legitimate stage.

This fully-automated

show used every effect available to re-create the misty waterways of the Paris sewers or the city's nighttime skyline. IA carpenters constructed the interior of the Paris Opera house complete with box seats and grand staircase. They built a tilting bridge and a massive grid that flew up or down but that had to be strong enough to support the weight of actors climbing on it. Special effects included pyrotechnics of every sort, and everything was fully automated. Computers, operated by stagehands, controlled props and equipment ranging from the phantom's boat to the candelabra that swept in and out and up and down the stage.

It was theatrical spectacle at its finest. Critics complained about the lavishness and audiences kept the show sold out for many months. In fact, *Phantom* had advance sales of more than \$16 million.

The legitimate stage had come vividly alive.

Automation, now so important in the theatre,



The wardrobe personnel at the Metropolitan Opera in New York create some of the most beautiful and intricate costumes used in the theatre today.

could have caused us to be left behind, had not our Alliance and our members made such a strong commitment to education and training.

Only through our continuous efforts to enhance our skills and to be fully conversant with new technology as soon as it was developed were we able to protect our position in the theatre industry of today—and of the future.

Moreover, the skills of IA stage crews are in demand in venues all across the U.S. and Canada, including concert halls, arenas, auditoriums and exhibit halls and construction shops.

This versatility and ability to adapt to the demands of the workplace—at an extremely rapid pace—has earned us the respect of theatre managers and producers worldwide.

The Film Industry Transforms

The film industry in North America underwent a transformation during the last half of the IA's history. The change in the industry also transformed our Alliance, bringing with it new challenges and new opportunities.

According to the fifth edition of *A Short History of the Movies*, in 1938 there were 80 million movie admissions every week, about 65 percent of the population of the U.S. In 1990, there were an average of 20 million movie admissions each week, or less than 10 percent of the population.

In 1937 there were 500 feature films produced by the major studios, but in 1983, there were fewer than 100.

In 1987, one of the busiest years for the studios in recent history, there were 135 features. On the other hand, independents released 380. This transfer of work from the studios to the independents had a major impact on Alliance employment.

While it lasted, the studio system had a direct and powerful effect on the Alliance. The large number of films released in the 1930s and 1940s required a huge number of movie theaters, employing many thousands of IA projectionists. Film exchange workers also swelled in numbers during the studio years, as did lab workers.

These were years of great wealth for the studios. In fact, the movie industry was one of the few in North America that did not immediately feel the effects of the Great Depression. Even when economic difficulties hit,

the movies were able to bounce back within a few years.

The Hollywood Production Code, which many long-time Alliance members remember well, came into existence during this period and was enforced through the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA). The MPPDA was commonly called the Hays Office after its president, Will H. Hays, President Warren G. Harding's former campaign manager and postmaster general of the U.S.

In 1945, the MPPDA became the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). The MPAA was headed by Eric Johnston from 1945 to 1966, when Jack Valenti became its current president.

The Production Code's rulings mandated that the movies were to avoid excessive brutality, depiction of any kind of sexual promiscuity, and to avoid making any kind of illegal or immoral life seem attractive.



Imagine such rules being applied to any of the films shown in movie theaters today!

The prim and proper Production Code finally died some 30 years later, during the 1960s, when the movement began towards brutal realism and



no-holds-barred movie-making that we have today.

Hollywood reacted to the economic pressures of the Depression with another response that persisted for many years and resurfaces occasionally today as a nostalgic "gimmick"—the double feature. Two pictures for the price of one became standard in almost all movie houses in North America during the late 30's. IA projectionists suddenly found themselves working longer and harder than ever before.

Getting recognition and proper compensation for this additional work was, as usual in labor relations, not easy and did not come without a fight. Were it not for the strength of the IA in Hollywood and throughout North America, projectionists at this time would not have had much success in their efforts.

Post-War Boom

The industry bounced back, and when the boom years of World War II and the post-war era came, the studios were ready. In fact, the film industry experienced its most profitable year ever in 1946.

That is a statistic that has never been beaten, despite the blockbuster years of the last two decades. **Profits** were the key ingredient here—the movies of 1946 were far more profitable to make than the movies of the 1970s and 1980s, when the dollar had lost considerable value. Moreover, today films are expensive to make because the movie-going public expects so much more, in terms of special effects, big name actors who command enormous salaries, and overall production values.

Independent distrib-



High, Wide and Handsome, a Paramount feature made in 1937 and starring Irene Dunne and Randolph Scott, show the confined space of a movie set and the magic created by a few props and careful lighting.

utors take a larger cut, and a much smaller percentage of the overall population goes to the movies—all of which adds up to lower profits for filmmakers.

The studio system meant that, in addition to the "talent" (writers, actors, directors) that was part of a studio's repertory company, technicians were also part of the company. Alliance carpenters, electricians, sound technicians, editors, hair stylists, wardrobe personnel, and make-up artists became crucial components of the studio machinery.

These technicians helped the studios turn out thousands of pictures during these years, everything from mundane, mediocre genre pictures (gangster movies, for example) to cinematic masterpieces such as *Citizen Kane*. These films

depended on their technical effects—lighting, set design, sound—as much as they depended on script and acting and directing. Orson Welles may have had the ideas, but it took an IA technician to make them happen.

As the industry evolved, the IA evolved with it. Alliance members worked for the major studios, such as MGM, Paramount, Warner Brothers and Columbia, as well as for the growing number of successful independents, such as Disney and Samuel Goldwyn. They also worked for some smaller independents, such as Monogram, who were organized under the Independent Motion Picture Producers Association.

Eventually, Alliance members in Hollywood would find themselves negotiating with yet another association—the Alliance of Television Producers. These were the

producers of motion pictures for television.

What gave the Alliance the strength to negotiate successfully with so many rival producers? The secret of the IA's strength lay in the fact that Alliance members were involved in the motion picture process every step of the way, from concept to reality—from the sound stage to the editing room to the film lab and exchange to the projection booth.

Even IA members in the film laboratories contributed significantly to the overall product, accomplishing the many complicated procedures required to develop the film and make flawless release prints.

These skilled technicians worked under the jurisdiction of Laboratory Technicians locals from Hollywood to Chicago, from Detroit to New York. The quality of the film customers see in the theater depends on the skills of these workers as much today as it did throughout the Alliance's history. Many of the same skills are required, including an understanding of chemistry, physics, optics, electronics, sensitometry, engineering design and controls.

Despite the many changes in the film indus-

try, the skills of lab technicians, as well as those of Alliance members responsible for the distribution of finished prints, remain critical to the industry's success.

However, in recent years, with the spread of multiplex movie theaters, IA projectionists have often found themselves under siege. Today, many theaters which would have employed several projectionists now employ only a few to operate many separate projectors. However, theaters which do not employ experienced and well-trained IA projectionists find themselves beset with technical problems and angry customers.

As the technology has grown increasingly complex, Alliance projectionists, encouraged by the educational policies of the IA, have maintained an edge over their non-union counterparts thanks to their superior skills and training.

Despite that fact, changing attitudes of the American and Canadian governments towards workers in general did great damage as the end of the 20th Century approached.

But that wasn't the first time the government's actions had a profound effect on the movie industry.

The Warner Brothers 1937 feature, *Call It A Day*, starred Walter Wolf King and Olivia de Havilland. Here a technician takes a measurement before the camera rolls.



Crew and director on the set of *The Texans*, shot by Paramount in 1938.



The Government—and the Courts—Step In

Before World War II had ended, courts in the United States had ruled on government concerns about the structure of the U.S. movie industry. These rulings would effectively eliminate the studio system.

The courts ruled that the film industry's methods of distributing movies represented an illegal restraint of trade. The courts opposed block booking, claiming it was unfair to individual exhibitors because it required them to book many pictures they didn't want just to get the few they did.

Movie chains owned by the major studios made it even harder for independent theater owners to compete.

In 1948, the Supreme

Court ruled (in *U.S. vs. Paramount Pictures, Inc.*) that the studios had to divest themselves of their theaters.

That effectively eliminated the guaranteed outlet for the studios' product no matter how good or bad that product was. Now, after decades of turning out pictures by the thousands and raking in the receipts, the studios would have to start competing on the basis of quality entertainment.

At the same time, more and more Americans were buying television sets and staying away from movie theaters. TV promised work for IA members (after jurisdictional and technical problems were resolved and once the Alliance sorted out just what potential television had for the entertainment industry), but initially the new medium had a very negative impact on the studio workers.

The Mitchell BNC 35mm camera was used with great success by IA members for many decades; it provides a sound insulated casing, one-lens mounting, automatic parallax correction of the viewfinder, automatic dissolve control and several focusing controls.

The movie industry went into its own kind of great depression.

Thousands of studio workers were laid off. Sound stages and outdoor sets were left empty. The larger studios, which had acres of sets and hundreds of players under contract, were hit the hardest.

Smaller studios like Columbia managed to survive. Moreover, in 1951 Columbia had the wisdom to establish its own television division, Screen Gems. Ultimately, thousands of IA members would work for Screen Gems, making the transition from movies to TV.

Sadly, one by one the great movie palaces began to close down. The shift of the population to the suburbs and away from the city centers, where these palaces were located, hastened the decline of the movie industry and cost thousands of IA projectionists their jobs.

Gradually, new movie houses would be built in the suburbs, but in the early 1950s, the big multiplexes we have today were not even a dream.

Innovation Saves the Day

Alliance members' skills and our ability to adapt to rapid change were tested during the 1950s and 1960s, as the movie industry attempted to find ways to win back consumers who now sought their entertainment through television, sports events and outdoor activities.

One of the first innovations that Alliance members had to contend with was 3-D, a three-dimensional, stereoscopic novelty that was produced by shooting the same scene through two separate lenses set apart but contained in a single camera. In the theater, two interlocked projectors would put the two images up on the screen simultaneously, but the audience could only see the scene in three dimensions by wearing awkward cardboard or plastic Polaroid glasses.

IA cameramen and projectionists alike enthusiastically did their part to make the new process successful. Hollywood



Drive-in movies were a big success in the 1950s and early 1960s but have virtually disappeared today.



called it "Natural Vision." According to Local 659 member, Joseph Biroc, who had used the 3-D equipment, the "operating crew working with Natural Vision cameras must be exacting in their work—much more precise than 2-dimension cinematography."

The studios moved slowly but with great determination in developing 3-D movies. Nevertheless, following the success of the first 3-D film, *Bwana Devil*, other 3-D features were released in quick succession: *House of Wax*, *It Came From Outer Space*, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *I, the Jury* and *Revenge of the Creature*.

Most of the features were thrillers, since action was required to get the most excitement out of 3-D.

There are many arguments about what exactly caused the death of 3-D. Some say that the glasses that were required caused headaches. Others say that the novelty wore off and, after awhile, the ef-

fects were simply no longer interesting or exciting enough.

It took only a few years for 3-D to be abandoned entirely. For example, *Revenge of the Creature* was released in 1955, but the popularity of 3-D had already declined so much that in 1954 Alfred Hitchcock released his new feature, *Dial M for Murder*, in two-dimensional format even though it had been shot in 3-D.

Another novelty came on the scene at about the same time: Cinerama. This process, developed around 1953, held great promise since it did not require the uncomfortable and awkward glasses of 3-D.

The Cinerama experience brought the audience into the action, as opposed to 3-D, which brought the action to the audience.

Cinerama used three interlocked cameras and four interlocked projectors (one for the stereophonic sound), and the final prints were projected side by side instead of on top of one another as in 3-D.

What moviegoers actually experienced was a

wrap-around effect of three screens made to appear as one. It created the sensation that the body was in motion. It was, in its day, like a wild ride at Disneyland.

The first Cinerama film was *This is Cinerama*. It featured an exciting roller coaster ride and a coast-to-coast flight over America.

LA members eagerly embraced Cinerama, despite its shortcomings, one of which was its complex projection process, which meant only a few theaters in major cities were equipped for it. It was marketed much like the road company of a Broadway hit, with reserved seats, scheduled performances and high ticket prices.

In this way, Cinerama retained its mystique, and customers would return again and again if an opportunity presented itself, much as they do today when their favorite Broadway shows come to town.

Cinerama ran into trouble when producers tried to use it as a legitimate process for feature production. Features such as *How the West Was Won* and *It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World* were overcome

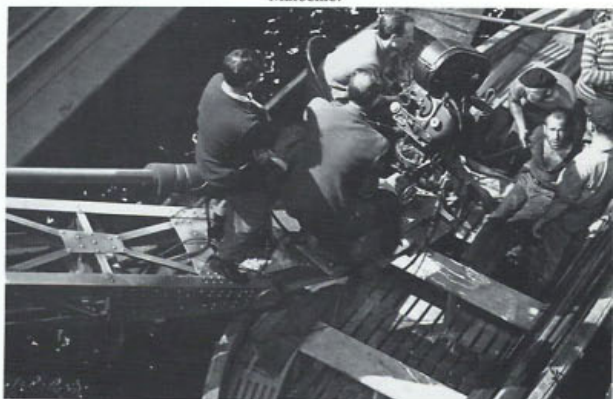
by the grand scope of Cinerama. The dramatic elements of these films were simply overwhelmed.

Just as it started to fade, however, Cinerama was given a brief new lease on life through Stanley Kubrick's landmark film, *2001, A Space Odyssey*. This film used a modified Cinerama process shot with a single camera but projected onto a Cinerama screen. Kubrick let the big screen and fast camera work enhance the story.

But there was increasing competition from another new process—Cinemascope. Cinemascope, it was claimed, would give 3-D effects without the expensive lenses and without costly alterations to projection equipment.

Theaters would need special screens developed by Cinemascope's creator, 20th Century-Fox. The screens were 64 feet wide and 25 feet high and curved to a depth of five feet, giving the feeling of being surrounded by the action. Accompanied by stereophonic sound, Cinemascope, it was

This crane shot gave the director the look he wanted of Humphrey Bogart leaving the dock in the 1944 feature, Passage to Marseille.



claimed, would engulf the viewer.

Cinemascope used 35mm film and a single, conventional camera. A special anamorphic lens compressed the images to fit the width of standard film. When it was projected with a corresponding anamorphic lens on the projector, the distortions disappeared.

The first Cinemascope feature, *The Robe*, was highly successful, convincing 20th Century-Fox and others that Cinemascope was a good investment.

In turn, Cinemascope led to other developments, including Vista Vision, a nonanamorphic process which printed the image sideways on the film strip to provide a better quality, wider picture on screen.

Also, during this productive and innovative period, other film sizes were experimented with, such as 55mm 65mm and 70mm. The first 70mm film was *Oklahoma!*, completed in 1955.

The new processes required some adjustment by directors and IA cameramen. The wide frame now had to be filled in with sets, props, and action. Actress Lauren Bacall has said that acting in a Cinemascope picture was much like performing in a Broadway play—actors had to keep moving across and in and out of the frame in order to make full use of all the room it provided. In an unskilled director's hands, standing still could reveal the downside of Cinemascope—the empty corners of the frame.

At the same time, a skilled director and cameraman could use those corners to enrich the story and action of the feature.

By the mid-1960s, the wide screen was here to stay.

Color Comes to the Movies

One of the great innovations of the movies in the last half of this century was the development of color.

Technicolor Corporation was founded in 1917 and the company was supported in its efforts by all the major studios.

At this time, the process was a two-color one, but by 1933 Technicolor had advanced to a three-color process. The first two-color process film was *The Toll of the Sea* in 1922. Walt Disney produced the first film using the three-color process, the animated cartoon *Flowers and Trees*, in 1932. The first full-length feature shot in three-color process was *Becky Sharp* in 1935.

Black and white film remained the medium of choice for most filmmakers, especially since IA cameramen and lighting technicians were refining their art so quickly and skillfully that black and white films had much more emotional impact and depth than did the color movies of these early days.

Such is the case of *The Letter*, filmed by cameraman Tony Gaudio, whose skill gave the film an ominous and oppressive atmosphere which enhanced the tale of murder and mystery on a tropical plantation.

Color was reserved for cartoons or for grand spectacles, such as *Gone With the Wind* in 1939. It was filmed by Ernest Hal-

ler, an IA cinematographer who had already filmed 80 pictures, but *Gone With the Wind* was his first color movie.

Technicolor Corporation enjoyed a monopoly and thus could dictate how its process was used. The company even developed an aesthetic code for the use of color in film.

Competition would not come until the development of a competing process, Eastmancolor. This process allowed color film to be shot with an ordinary movie camera. At the same time, color emulsions became faster and easier to handle.

However, as IA members working in the studios during the late 1940s and 1950s know, Eastmancolor was cheaper and easier to

IA lab technicians were a vital link in the film distribution process, providing a quality control check on the millions of prints that passed through film labs every year.



use but it was not as brilliant or intense. Moreover, movies in Eastmancolor proved to be unreliable, so that films using this process in the 1950s are already seriously faded. It wasn't until the 1980s that Eastman would develop a stable color film stock that would have the permanence and brilliance of Technicolor.

During the 1950s and into the early 1960s, black and white films became increasingly rare. Just as they had with black and white film, IA cinematographers, lighting technicians and scenic designers learned to use color in artistic ways as well as to contribute to the plot and action of a film.



Sounding Good

Sound was another technical area which improved dramatically in the years after World War II. IA sound technicians had always worked hard to capture good sounds despite the difficulties of the task. As Bob Weatherford, sound editor with Local 776 in Hollywood, wrote in 1958:

"From the beginning of the sound motion picture era, great care has been taken to capture the realism of sound in conjunction with the picture. . . . We sound editors believe that one picture with good sound effects is not noticed by the majority of moviegoers. They take all of the sound for granted, not knowing that the sound, and in many instances much of the dialogue, is dubbed and put in by a sound editor."

He remembered how the word "quiet" was the operative word on sound stages of old. In fact, he recalled, the sound department often flew balloons from the tops of the highest sound stages to notify planes that shooting was in progress so they would avoid flying directly over the stages.

Magnetic film changed all that in the late 1950s. Magnetic film allows the sound editor to review the dailies and decide which scenes need to be dubbed, that is, dialogue and sound effects produced in sound-proofed studios and added to the magnetic film itself. The film that is to be dubbed is separated from the rest of the film into "loops," thus giving us the Hollywood term "looping."

Dialogue editors painstakingly match the new sound with the lip movements of the actors, along with the original sound effects.

In Cinemascope, it was especially important to put the sound in the right place, because there were

It Was A Very Good Year

For the movies, 1939 was a very good year. This golden year produced at least two classics: *Gone With The Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*. The skills of IA members created such stunning effects as the burning of Atlanta and the Emerald City of Oz.

three sound positions on the wide screen, and if the voice or sound effect was on the right while the actor or action was on the left, the impact of Cinemascope was greatly reduced.

Sound effects editors have become increasingly skilled at their trade. In *The Enemy Below* (1958), all of the sound effects were either made by the sound editors or acquired from the sound effects library. This film was one of the most challenging of the era in terms of sound.

Editors had to reproduce such sounds as torpedoes racing through the water, the sound of sonar, the throbbing of the submarine's turbine engines, the sound of depth charges, the noise of explosions underwater, even the sound of footsteps in the submarine. The skill with which IA sound editors created these sounds won an Academy Award for the sound department under Walter Rossi.

What Brother Weatherford said in 1958 is still true today:

"It is really more the effect of the sound than the sound effect that is important."



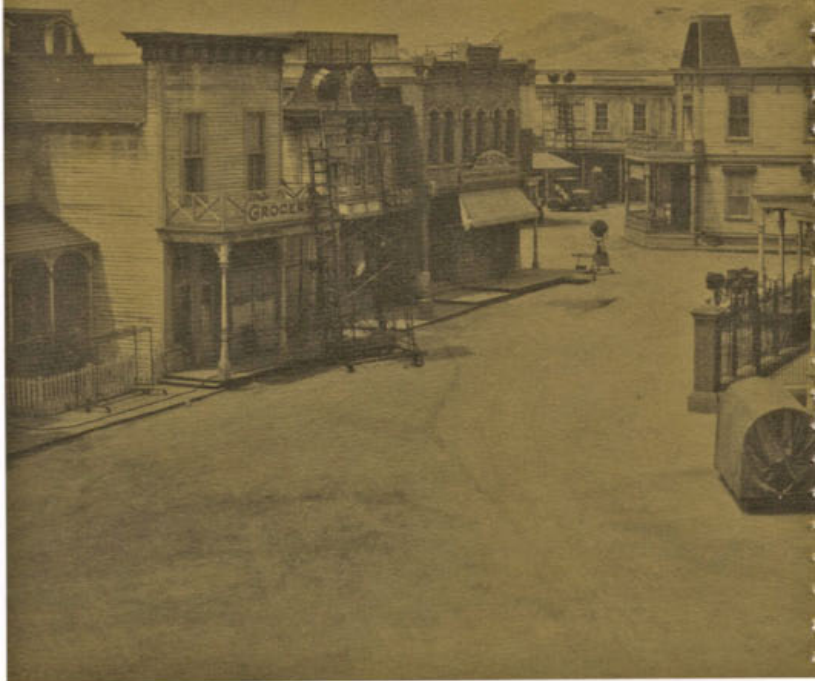
A Truce Is Declared

The war between television and movies ended in the mid-1950s, when Hollywood started making shows for TV and began selling old movies to television.

The movies began to focus on what was best about the medium, producing films that incorporated sound, color, and composition in ways that could not be achieved by television.

IA members who had worked all their lives in the movie industry found themselves working in television, as new companies bought old film studios for the purpose of making TV films. Among these were Revue, which bought the old Republic studio and Desilu, which bought RKO.

Today, it is common to see feature films that are less than a year old on television. This practice has helped studios make money and thus make more movies and provide work to IA studio mechanics. However, the practice has had something of an adverse impact on IA projectionists, since it has eliminated movie houses which played fourth or fifth-run films, as well as houses that catered to revivals of past blockbusters.



The Renaissance of the Movies

In the 1960s and 1970s, the movies underwent a renaissance. Films like *Bonnie and Clyde* introduced a new kind of anti-hero to the cinema, as well as a new realism that required much more complex make-up, costuming, props and set design.

Alliance camera

operators and cinematographers found themselves asked to supply a whole range of effects, from slow motion to freeze frames and jump cutting. Some movies even intermingled black and white with color. Attention to detail became paramount, in decor, in dress and in setting.

Fewer films were being shot on soundstages. Alliance members found themselves spending more and more time on location. The use of natural—or natural-seeming light—became prevalent, presenting new challenges for IA lighting technicians.

As the move towards ever more realism increased, IA studio mechanics were called on to stage elaborate and difficult scenes, such as high-speed car chases (as in *Bullitt* in 1968 or *The French Connection* in 1971).

These were forerunners

of the fast-paced, high-speed movies of the late 1970s, onward. The next generation of films would find Alliance members producing even more complex special effects to give audiences thrills and excitement beyond the previous bounds of their imagination.

Perhaps the first such movie—and the one that begat all others—was George Lucas's *Star Wars*. This film, and the others to follow, were fantasies, what some critics called space operas. Alliance members created a new world, a whole new universe in fact, on screen.

Make-up, costumes, models, animation and mechanical effects were all used in ways never before seen. *Star Wars* also inaugurated the era of the blockbusters—movies that brought in more than \$100 million at the box office.

Accompanying this new



Cinematographer William Clothier (behind camera) follows director Vincent McEveety down "Main Street" in the 1968 feature *Firecreek*, starring Henry Fonda, Gary Lockwood and Jack Elam.



The Paramount backlot, showing the classic Western set.

special effects (*E.T.* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*) that required a whole new generation of Alliance members, now working at Industrial Light and Magic in Northern California, to create box-office magic.

Some of the developments of the skilled technicians working at Industrial Light and Magic include THX Sound, a system of standards for the quality and balance of sound in theaters, SoundDroid, a digital sound-editing system, and EditDroid, a computerized editing station that allows movies to be edited on video.

George Lucas, and Steven Spielberg, who has been called the new DeMille because of his skill at making spectacular yet intimate and meaningful films, are the most powerful figures working in the film industry today. Yet we know that no part of their vision would have been possible without the skills and creativity of IA members.

Today, as more and more studios are taken over by huge, multina-

tional corporations like Sony, the emphasis is on profits, not art. And while the studios no longer permanently employ large cadres of skilled technicians, costumers, make-up artists, set designers, greenskeepers, and others, these workers have nevertheless survived—and flourished—under the new studio system of the late 20th Century. And despite the preoccupation with the bottom line, art continues to exist, as evidenced by films like the 1992 Oscar-winner, *Unforgiven*.

Much of the credit for the existence of such art is due to the skills and dedication of Alliance members, who labor behind the scenes, often under difficult circumstances, to help produce the memorable and emotionally riveting films of today—and tomorrow.

blockbuster movement were technical innovations that enhanced these spectacles even more. The Steadicam allowed new freedom and flexibility in shots, linking as it does the mobility of hand-held cameras with the smoothness of a camera mounted on a dolly.

The Dolby noise-reduction process improved sound quality dramatically. *Star Wars* is recognized as the film that brought a second revolution in sound to the movies. The film used Dolby Stereo Variable Area soundtrack throughout its entirety. This system allows 35mm prints to have four-track stereophonic optical soundtracks that had great clarity and range.

Moreover, this film transformed the industry in other ways. It was billed as "Episode IV," a clear

signal that there was more to come, either as sequels or pre-quels.

The movies of Director Steven Spielberg likewise employed spectacular



Paramount Studio's Washington Square set, re-creating a New York street.

Prime Time Opportunities

From its earliest days, two factors drove the development of television as we view it today, and the IATSE was vital to both. These two factors were *profits* and *technology*.

It took IA members to implement—and in many cases, to create—the technological advances that gave the medium of television the constant interest and stimulation that viewers required.

And retaining and winning viewers were essential if profits were to increase. The networks, even in the early days, were focused on profits. They also began to understand the power of television to touch people, to influence events, and to entertain.

Alliance members met the early challenges of television with ingenuity and enthusiasm. In those days, shows were broadcast live, and that brought special demands which IA

members willingly met.

There were some 425 full-time and part-time stagehands working for NBC-TV alone in 1953. These technical workers helped the network produce some 135 television shows a year, as well as more than 50 commercials.

These stagehands, according to a 1953 article in NBC's employee publication, *Chimes*, had to be versatile and quick:

"Not only must the stagehand make his scenery 'fly,' but he must be able to operate pop-up toasters, simulate rain or snow, and there have been cases when a stagehand on cue must make flies fly or buzz around a certain actor on set. . . . Old hands at the game are an invaluable asset to any TV program."

This photograph showing one of the earliest RCA television sets illustrates how the technology has changed dramatically over the years.



One show that was a major success in the early days was *The Hit Parade*, a program which had nine separate sets of three-minute numbers each. IA members working this show needed split-second timing, since the pace and movement of props, scenery and lighting was rapid-fire. As the *Chimes* noted: "There are no re-takes on TV."

This was the overriding characteristic of television in its formative years, and IA members devised all kinds of ingenious ways to make it work.

Costumers and wardrobe assistants hit upon a unique way to effect costume changes despite the limitations of tiny studio stages and the demands of continuous live action: actors wore two or three outfits at the same time and shed them while moving from scene to scene.

Lighting technicians, many of them already experienced from years on the stage, learned to use lighting to simulate aging on actors' faces, or to lead viewers from scene to scene through the use of lighting cues on the various parts of a single set. Lighting was especially critical to the re-creation of dramatic effects, such as storms and other weather changes. Boom operators had to learn to capture



A television technician monitors images of Eve Arden during an early TV production.

operators worked within these tight confines quite nimbly. For IA camera operators, the challenge was especially keen. Each camera contained several lenses so that the camera operator could switch focal lengths—close-up, medium, long—as the director demanded. The shots were blocked out in advance, but it was live TV and adjustments were made constantly throughout a show.

Eventually, television directors, actors and technicians learned that television should not try to recreate what was happening in theatre and in movies, but should instead focus on what TV can do best. The power of the dramatic story, centered on human events, became the mainstay of TV in the early years.

Underlying all of this was the commercial aspect of television. After all, sponsors had to sell their goods; they didn't want to be connected with shows that had low ratings.

Moreover, they needed an effective way to sell their products—enter IA members to help create the commercials which would quickly make the relatively new medium of television so profitable.

In fact, far more was spent to make commercials than to make the shows

they sponsored, at least during the first decade or so of television's history. For example, estimates at the time were that commercials cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per minute, while the comedies and dramas themselves cost about \$2,000 a minute to produce.

Cartoon commercials became a mainstay of television, since it cost much less to produce an animated commercial. At one time there were sixty studios in New York alone, employing about 500 members of Local 841, Screen Cartoonists. IA animators were kept busy in these and other shops all across the U.S. and Canada.

Toothpaste tubes danced, soap boxes opened magically, and animated children ate tons of candy without gaining a pound or developing a single cavity. These cartoonists worked tirelessly, on demand, despite the fact that they were repeatedly laid off when work was slow.

In addition to the cartoon commercials, the 1950s and 1960s saw the rise of entertainment cartoons—the Saturday morning staple. This work brought many IA members long-term contracts, a welcome change from the uncertainty of the early days.



And Now for the News . . .

The ascendancy of television news would have a profound impact on our Alliance. Television news did not have an auspicious beginning, but within a few short years, news and documentaries would become as much a part of the medium as gangsters (*The Untouchables*), westerns (*Bonanza*) and comedies (*I Love Lucy*).

The rise of TV news affected the IATSE in two principal areas. In the first, theatrical newsreels were gradually eliminated, eventually disappearing altogether from television and movie theaters.

The second impact of TV news on IA employment has been a permanent one. The three networks decided to stop relying on footage from sources like Fox and Tele-news and began maintaining film crews in all the major metropolitan areas instead.

The crews were generally made up of two or three technical people, a cameraman, soundman and electrician, and for a time this arrangement seemed to satisfy the networks and the public alike.

However, in most cases the news was simply reported, without analysis or context. For many years, the nightly newscasts were only 15 minutes long.

But in 1953, with the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, the networks realized that people would indeed watch newsworthy events for more than the allotted 15 minutes a night. NBC-TV went after the

IA animators in television have demonstrated their skills and creativity over the years, designing and drawing animated commercials and features.

sound without getting in the picture, knowing all the time that they had only one chance to do it.

Television studios in the 1950s were often crammed with props and equipment that were used again and again.

But it was apparent early on that the techniques applied to movie-making or the legitimate stage were not necessarily appropriate for television.

For example, close-ups—as opposed to long, wide shots—became key ingredients of a TV play, and lighting technicians, cameramen and other skilled personnel who learned to execute these tight shots were in great demand.

Cameramen and boom



A vintage 1940s camera.

coronation story in an aggressive way, even employing a completely new and completely secret rapid development process created by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

NBC set up a temporary developing lab at a London airfield, filmed the coronation directly off a television set, a process known as "Kinescope" recording, (BBC was covering the event live) and within an hour the developed film was on its way to New York.

The footage was edited en route, using bolted-down equipment set up in the belly of a re-vamped DC-6. The footage was broadcast on the NBC network as soon as the plane landed in New York.

All that frantic rush was for nothing, however. ABC used a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation telecast via cable, and beat the other two networks by minutes.

Nevertheless, the momentum for developing news coverage as a legitimate aspect of television programming was intensifying.

The public would come to rely more and more on television for **information**, not just for entertainment.

Heading West

Television production, once centered in New York, headed west in the late 1950s and early 1960s. With the development of film broadcasts, live shows were no longer the mainstay of television programming. Hollywood's ability to produce high-quality telefilms for series gave the studios an edge over New York production centers.

One other phenomenon occurred in the late 1950s which finally drove most of the entertainment programming out of New York: the quiz show scandals. Shows like *The \$64,000 Question*, *Twenty-One*, and *The \$64,000 Challenge* were found to have been "fixed." Selected contestants were given questions and answers in advance to make the programs "more interesting." This was done, supposedly, at the behest of sponsors who were intricately involved with the programming of these shows.

A congressional investigation followed these revelations, with the result that the networks rejected the game show format, turning instead to still more television films and series.

The 1959 fall TV schedule contained more than 30 new Hollywood series.

At the same time, the networks decided that documentaries and in-depth, analytical news programs would restore prestige in the wake of the quiz show scandals.

A typical family scene from the late 1940s or early 1950s, when television transformed our way of life.

Landmarks of TV News

Several major events filled the television air waves in the years following the quiz show scandals. Each of these events had a profound impact on both society and on network news programming—and therefore, IA members.

The visit of Soviet President Nikita Krushchev found dozens, perhaps even hundreds, of IA camera operators, sound technicians, electricians, grips, gaffers and other technical personnel working around the clock to cover this historic visit. They worked tirelessly, capturing on film and videotape the powerful images of a Soviet president touring such American institutions as a farm in Iowa, a Hollywood banquet and a U.S. factory.

The visit also put U.S. news coverage on the world map. Footage of Krushchev's visit was shown all over the world, spreading far and wide the message that American dominance of television all over the globe was complete.

IA members in Canada already appreciated the impact of American television. Many talented and creative Canadian IA members at this time discovered they had to migrate to Hollywood if they wanted to have any real success in the television industry.

That migration benefited Hollywood enormously, but it made it hard for the Canadian broadcasting industry to expand until much later.

Some of the names of famous Canadians who had enormous success both in front of and behind



the camera after they moved to Hollywood included Lorne Greene, Norman Jewison, Reuben Frank, Christopher Plummer, Arthur Hiller and Harry Rasky.

Another major event that transformed TV forever was the election of John F. Kennedy as president. All during the campaign, the press had followed candidates Kennedy and Richard Nixon all over the country, initiating the campaign trail coverage which so dominates elections today.

One tireless pair, Robert Drew of Time, Inc. and cameraman Richard Leacock, pioneered the use of candid photography to show a side of John Kennedy on the campaign trail that the public normally would not see. This style of presentation—letting the action provide the narrative as opposed to a

voiceover telling viewers what they are seeing and what it means—would revolutionize the way political coverage and documentaries in general were created. It became known as *cinema verité*.

The Drew-Leacock film was called *Primary*, and it was rejected by the networks because, said all three networks, it was not produced by their own documentary units.

Before the 1960 election was over, another event would occur which would make television history: the presidential debates.

The first Kennedy-Nixon debate was at a CBS affiliate, WBWM in Chicago. Station technicians were required to meet all kinds of demands on the part of the candidates' entourages, including painting the background on the set two times, the last time shortly

before the debate was to begin.

The IA members on the set of that first debate were a part of history—as so many Alliance members would be during the next 30 years of television.

The two candidates quickly appreciated the full impact television could have on a campaign. The Democrats and Republicans both spent many thousands on producing campaign films, and one employed a technique that had been pioneered by a Canadian filmmaker in *City of Gold*, a 1957 Oscar winner.

That film used still photos as a basis for telling a story, and that technique proved especially useful to Nixon's running mate, Henry Cabot Lodge. Lodge simply did not come off well on film—he seemed stuffy and pretentious—so the filmmakers used stills from his family album to tell Lodge's story, employing *City of Gold*'s effects quite successfully.

The Kennedy inauguration in 1961 lasted all day and into the night, just as coverage of his assassination would preoccupy tens of millions of Americans

just a few years later. In that instance, television served the dual purpose of informing the public and helping the nation to grieve. The coverage lasted four days, beginning early in the afternoon of November 22, 1963, and involved a rapid series of events that included the first murder on live TV—the killing of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby.

The images gathered by IA technical crews were emotionally riveting.

Forever after, IA members would find themselves in the midst of national and international events, with full awareness that Canadian and American citizens were relying on them to bring news into the living room. Wars, urban riots, the conquest of space, live telecasts of congressional hearings on everything from civil unrest to the possible impeachment of a president—IA members were eyewitnesses to all of these pivotal events and so much more.



From Camelot to Vietnam . . .

The Sixties began with great optimism but were dominated by tragedy and disaster. For IA members, the election of John Kennedy in 1960 gave hope that a new era of labor relations was about to begin. Just a few years later, literally hundreds of IA technicians would bring news of the assassination of the young president into our living rooms. For three days, Americans would stay before their televisions as IA members broadcast the funeral and its aftermath, including the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald on live television. Just a week before his death, President Kennedy addressed the AFL-CIO Convention, where he said: "Four million people are out of work . . . the nation dare not wait until it is too late." We can only wonder what might have been . . .



Elliott Ness (Robert Stack) is shown in a typical scene from the original *The Untouchables* from 1959. *IA* members working on this series faced enormous challenges in re-creating the car chases, gun fights and other action sequences that were unique at the time.

IA Members Contribute

Much of the success of television, as with the movies and the legitimate stage, is due to the skills and creativity of *IA* members.

Alliance members always tackle every production problem as if the film depended on it (as in many cases they do), and even in the early days they seemed to instinctively know that they were part of something truly special.

One long-time *IA* member, Ted Cook of Local 44, remembers the excitement and thrills of those days. Sometimes, it took a combination of ingenuity, hard work and just plain luck, as this story about the first episode of *The Untouchables* illustrates:

"The lot was bare and broke, the picture was way over budget of \$500,000 and we were taking the big master shots. Fortunately, I was working for the best special effects man around named A.D. Flowers, who could scrounge up items in a junk yard, surplus stores, or anything to make something workable . . . The shot was of a very large brewery and whiskey making plant that the FBI was going to raid by driving a ten-ton Mack truck through 30-foot high double doors. Inside we had three big beer vats rigged on the inside with five gallon cans filled with phony beer at the gun shot holes, a whiskey still to break up, plus a dozen steam pipes that had to disgorge their steam, and other explosive hits and fire power. We also had a couple of steam boilers making steam and fog.

Because of the budget (overruns) we could not have any help. Well, we did not panic. A.D. took care of the bullet hits, explosives, the door and guns. My job during shooting was to dress up as a worker, open and close the steam valves, go vat-to-vat filling beer cans, and handle the fog.

This was one of the first multi-camera shots taken in TV, with three or four cameras. One camera was set up on the floor to film the truck crashing through the door. Me being very safety conscious—I thought the camera was too close to the door. The camera crew said they had measured the distance, but I insisted that if the truck hit just right, the door could go a lot further than expected.

The crew moved farther back, and I suggested that they should not lay there while the camera was rolling, so they put a rope on the camera and moved out of the way. The shot went off very well—the 30-foot doors blew in, and all hell broke loose. Machine gun fire, vats sprouting streams of beer, and steam from pipes filled the air. The director said over and over again, 'I can't believe it, just the two of you set up all this.' I winked and said, just another *IATSE* job.

Oh, by the way, the door landed on the first camera—they got their shot but lost the camera. The rope couldn't save it. Luckily, no one was hurt."



All too often, *IA* members would find themselves in uncomfortable, even dangerous, situations, yet they always "got the shot." As Local 644 member Gerald Yarus recalls in 1967:

"Rocks, bottles and other missiles kept hitting the pavement all around me. I was trying to shoot film and stay healthy at the same time. It was the second night of the Newark (New Jersey) riots . . . Emotions were high and hatred was in the air. One fellow said he would knock me down and walk all over me if I raised my camera . . . The only people you can count on are your soundmen and electricians . . ."

Local 644 member and CBS News cameraman Larry Racies also remembers those riot-torn days:



In the 1950s, everyone loved Lucy, and this scene demonstrates some of the challenges of staging the classic comedy, which required all kinds of props, gimmicks, costumes and sets. The photograph, from November, 1955, shows Lucille Ball, Gloria Blondell, William Frawley and Vivian Vance at their madcap best.

"Keep your helmets on and your lights off." These instructions given us by a policeman were our introduction to the New Jersey riots . . . And we were off with helmets on and lights off . . . Not only was the use of handlights forbidden; it would have been folly to have lighted one even if it had been permitted. So we shot with available light . . . most of the streetlights had been shot out, but there was some light from tracer bullets . . ."

And, on occasion, the real impact of the footage gathered by IA members can take on a whole new meaning many years, even decades, later, as illustrated by this account in a 1952 issue of the *Official Bulletin* of an atom bomb test:

"For the second straight year, the telecasting of the Atomic test was brought to the public through members of our Television Broadcasting Studio Employees Local 815 . . . Perched on a series of mountain tops between the Nevada testing ground and their Hollywood transmitter, the KTLA engineers licked the snow, power failure and equipment shortages to relay the startling bursts to television sets all over the nation . . . The only sour note of the test was struck when the target area was declared 'too hot' to allow the cameramen to approach for the anticipated follow-up coverage of the damage done to dwellings and automobiles."

Exciting news footage wasn't all the public expected to see on their television sets, however. They craved realistic, thrilling

action-adventure programs as well. This posed special challenges for IA members working in TV studios in Hollywood.

As time went on, these shows became more sophisticated and the techniques used to achieve special effects grew more complex, but the success of each venture still relied on the skill and perseverance of IA members.

The ingenuity of one member of Local 44, Ross Taylor, led to many developments that served the industry well. One of these was his "harmless gun."

As Brother Taylor recalls:

"Some time ago, I decided that someone should get busy and make equipment which was dependable and safe and would give more realistic results . . . previous to the pellet gun, gunshots were made by small powder explosions or by pellets thrown with slingshots. The former was precise but blew the debris back at the camera, was expensive to install and very slow to reset . . . slingshots looked better but very few men are expert with one . . . my pellet gun solved these problems. It will shoot balls, slugs, dust pellets, splatter capsules and blood effects, on a twelve shot with repeating action and with equal accuracy . . ."

But Brother Taylor didn't stop with the pellet gun. He invented many effects, including one special one:

"I am rather proud of my mechanical striking snake, mostly because of the size of the mechanism . . . It is smaller in size than any other existing snakes, while still maintaining the regular 20-inch strike . . . The hole necessary to bring the snake to ground level is only one-foot by one-foot by three feet, and can be handled by one man. It uses compressed air for power and is controlled by electricity. On recovery it is ready to strike again . . . Saves time on retakes."

These are just some examples of the clever and ingenious innovations



Soundman working the boards for the popular television series, Northern Exposure.

that IA members contributed to the movies and television.

When color came to television, IA members' skills were called upon in other ways. The sets, props, lighting, costuming and make-up all had to be conceived and executed to look good in both color and black and white. Many homes still only had black and white sets, with color remaining a novelty for many years.

Graphic art also found a place in television, combining the skill of the artist with the technical ability of a carpenter, painter or electrician. In the beginning, IA graphic artists used hand illustrations, sculptures, airbrushing, photo re-touching, and animation to create the effects needed. Today, graphic artists use sophisticated computers to produce some of the most stunning effects seen in any venue—stage, screen or TV.

One of the early designs created by IA graphic artists was for the *Perry Como Show*, in the 1950s. The opening titles were old-fashioned and delicate, while the "Letters" segment featured floating letters.

As with other IA crafts within the studios, the work evolved through technology—and the Alliance evolved with it.

On the set of Angel Street, two IA cameramen ride the crane to get an overhead shot of the entire set.



Cable... And Beyond

Cable television first came on the scene in the early 1960s, with Subscription TV, Inc. This scheme was linked to the movement of the Giants and Dodgers baseball teams to California, but in 1964 the plan was halted by referendum. Then, in 1966, the California Supreme Court declared the referendum outlawing pay-TV to be unconstitutional.

As always, the IA would have to fight for the jobs that would be generated by cable television. During the 1970s, the number of local cable systems grew to about 4,000, with more than 15 million homes subscribing.

In just a few years, the face of television was transformed, with such phenomena as Home Box Office, ESPN, Cable News Network, MTV Music Television, even so-called "superstations" like WTBS in Atlanta. Nevertheless, Alliance members would have to struggle to gain even a measure of the work these new systems would generate.

HBO and the other pay-TV services came about because of the remarkable improvements in transmission of programming by satellite.

Satellite transmission also brought major changes to television. Satellites also brought the Vietnam War into our living rooms, and spurred a rising tide of anti-war sentiment in the United States.

In just a few short decades, viewers have grown accustomed to seeing major national and world events played out "live" on television. The most recent example is the dramatic nighttime footage of the bombing of Baghdad during Desert Storm.



The Video Age

The age of video arrived during the 1980s, but as early as 1970, the Alliance was already focusing on the coming era of video cassettes.

The 1970-71 winter issue of the *Official Bulletin* featured a comprehensive explanation of video cassette technology, including performance specifications.

"The 1970s will be the decade when an individual will be able to sit at home and enjoy entertainment of his own choice—plays, films, etc., or be able to receive instructions in sports and do-it-yourself courses or even be able to read a book," according to the article.

While things did not turn out quite like that, the prediction comes pretty close to the reality of videos in our lives.

The advent of videotape in TV had tremendous impact on the employment of IA members. Instead of live programming, which

required extensive rehearsal time, shows could be recorded on videotape in the same way that filmed shows were made—by the stop-and-go method. Tapes could also be edited like film, so shows could be put together out of sequence.

Several shows could be taped in a day or a week, whereas with live TV it took much longer. This resulted in less work for IA members who had been working not only the actual production of shows but the rehearsals as well.

Worst of all, shows recorded on tape could be re-broadcast many times over, thereby providing networks with a source of program material that dispensed with the necessity of IA crafts.

Additionally, with the development of mobile video cameras used in the field to cover news stories, the work of operating electronic cameras was assigned to engineering crews and displaced some IA film cameramen, though a number of IA news film camera operators found work in



IA crews work in all kinds of weather and under all kinds of difficult conditions, as shown by this photograph from the set of CBS-TV's *Northern Exposure*.



An IA hairdresser working on the set of the popular television series *Northern Exposure*.

these units, operating the electronic tape cameras.

Videos, and videotape, also had a profound impact on the Alliance in other ways. Tape could be reused, and did not require as much careful lighting as film. Video cameras were perfected to the point

where virtually anyone could use one. The result was that many "independent" producers began to make video films for television as well as movies.

Video cassette recorders also allowed viewers to tape programs and watch them later, at leisure. The video boom also brought massive copyright infringement, a problem that continues to this day and which the Alliance and others continue to

fight with great vigor.

The pirating of Hollywood productions eventually led to the commercial release of major films on the video market, as a way to circumvent the movie and television pirates and to encourage the public to buy the tape before it hit commercial TV or a pay channel.

But a new phenomenon would have an even greater impact on the industry itself—the mergermania of the 1980s.

The buying and selling of television networks, movie studios and individual station outlets caused great upheaval in the industry during the 12 years of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

Out of this came a fourth network, the Fox Network, and the takeover by Time, Inc. of the Warner communications empire. These two events were momentous in the evolution of the entertainment industry.

Unfortunately, while these activities resulted in the need for more and more shows to fill air time,

quality in programming was not immediately part of the formula. And IA members did not benefit from the station explosion.

Re-runs of old TV shows popped up on cable, along with old and not-so-old movies. Networks and superstations began filling their late night hours with news shows and talk show programming.

The increase in broadcasting hours provided some work to Alliance members, but, as always, every job was fought for and hard won.

Television is still a new medium, especially when compared to movies and the legitimate stage, but it has exerted a powerful influence over Canadian and American life.

And the IA has been a proud and integral part of television's development from the earliest days.

Script Supervisor on the set of *Angel Street*, takes some last-minute script changes.



The Challenges Of Today

For more than a decade, with the election of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States in 1980, organized labor in North America was under siege.

This new era of attacks on unions was ushered in when Ronald Reagan fired the air traffic controllers' organization during a strike in 1981. Business, both big and small, saw that move as a green light to declare open war on organized labor.

For the next 12 years, working people would see their standard of living diminish at the same time that corporate profits skyrocketed. Moreover, the Reagan/Bush philosophy of "free" trade encouraged many major companies to close shop in the U.S. and reopen in Third World countries where wages are disgracefully low and environmental and safety laws are virtually nonexistent.

The Reagan/Bush years brought a wave of anti-worker actions, such as the permanent replacement of striking workers with non-union employees, the demand by employers that workers accept cuts in wages, reduced benefits and more givebacks in working conditions, and the growing use of temporary or part-time workers in every phase of business and industry.

The IATSE's response to these and other actions was strong and uncompromising.

In 1990, President Alfred W. Di Tolla told delegates

to the 60th Biennial Convention that, "to defend ourselves against further encroachments, we must coordinate our talents, efforts and resources."

"We must educate and train ourselves to make sure our services become necessary and indispensable to employers . . . for if we remain strangers to new developments and unskilled in new techniques, others will attempt to oust us from our traditional jurisdiction, claiming that we are both unsuited to the task and out of date."

Training and Education

Thus, a new era of emphasis on training and education was underway, for all areas within the IA.

In recognition of the everchanging technology in our industry, the IATSE launched a program of expanded training and education that will stand as President Di Tolla's true legacy for the next generation of IA craftsmen and women.

New and expanded training programs have been instituted on both an international and local level. A specific department in the IATSE was created just to implement new education seminars and training programs throughout the international.

Training has focused on existing crafts, new technology, and retraining for those whose jobs have changed or who have been displaced by recent economic and technical developments.

Moreover, through Convention action, Defense Fund monies were specifically earmarked for education and training. The use of the Defense Fund for training spurred new investments by local unions in educating their members in the newest technologies over the years, since the use of the fund for this purpose was first approved by delegates to the 1988 convention.

IA members enthusiastically embraced these new opportunities for additional training and education.

In addition, during the



At Hudson Scenics in Bronx, New York, some of Broadway's most delicate and elaborate backdrops are created.

1980s, the IA joined with other labor unions to voice our opposition to a government that created a Department of Labor which no longer cared about workers, that packed the National Labor Relations Board with anti-union members, and that engaged in the most blatant disregard for the dignity and rights of working people.

Now, as the IA begins its second century, hopes are high that a new era of concern for and better treatment of workers is about to begin, and that we will see an end to the environment of hostility that has permeated labor relations for more than a decade.

Organizing The Unorganized

Under the leadership of International President Alfred W. Di Tolla, the IA has reaffirmed its commitment to organize the unorganized, an effective response to attempts by employers to compromise the integrity of our working agreements.

Intensified organizing campaigns were undertaken during the 1980s, as the IA moved to bring all aspects of our industry under the Alliance banner and to stop the diversion of work to non-union employers.

In pledging an increase in organizing, President Di Tolla warned that "the more non-members there are in our areas of employment, the easier it is for employers to push us and our demands aside . . . the easier it is for employers to replace strikers with non-union employees, the less likely it is that strikes will have a dramatic impact on either the employer or the public."

However, on the brighter side and despite this persistent practice, the IATSE has made headway in organizing a growing number of nonunion productions, many of which would never have been made union 10 years ago, and efforts are being intensified to bring future projects under the IA label.

In stressing the need for more organizing campaigns, the IA has declared that it "must continue to organize to increase our bargaining strength in order to withstand the emboldened attacks of employers."

Those were prophetic words, as organized labor came more and more under fire from hostile employers and a blatantly anti-union government. Still, the IA was able to

resist these attacks better than most unions in the U.S. and Canada.

In fact, the IA achieved a remarkable increase of more than 10,000 new members during these turbulent, anti-union years.

The 1980s also brought a virulent assault on the National Endowment for the Arts. The IATSE responded to this attack by sending a letter to both the U.S. Congress and the AFL-CIO outlining the Alliance position on this issue. The letter read, in part:

"The IATSE, whose 70,000 members work in every segment of the arts and entertainment industry throughout the country, strongly supports the reauthorization of funds for the National Endowment for the Arts . . .

"Given the salutary effects of the arts in the economic and cultural life of all communities—large and small—it is distressing that the very existence of the Endowment may be in jeopardy because of a small but vociferous and vocal opposition to specific grantees that resulted in works not to its liking . . . Obviously I (President Di Tolla) have written as President of an organization whose members' economic and professional well-being depends on a thriving arts environment.

"It is equally apparent, however, that I write also out of a broader concern about the harmful effects, overall, upon both the economic prosperity and the cultural quality of life of the nation as a whole, that would result should Congress fail to reauthorize funds for the National Endowment."



IA lighting technicians set lights during filming of an on-location, outdoor scene.

The Endowment survived the attacks of right-wing conservative members of Congress during the 1980s and early 1990s, although those attacks are expected to continue—and the IA will be there to support the Endowment in any way we can.

Also, for the past six years, the IA has been actively involved with the AFL-CIO and the Department of Professional Employees, utilizing the resources of the Industrial Services Department, to expand organizing efforts into every sector of our industry. These efforts will be expanded in the coming years, as the IATSE prepares for its second century of achievement.



Growing Stronger

The IATSE has taken other steps in recent years to strengthen the membership. Smaller locals have been merged in order to gain strength in specific jurisdictions. Open lines of communication have been established, to build solidarity among all members of the IA. This proved to be especially important during the anti-union Reagan/Bush era, when the actions of government sought to undermine the feelings of brotherhood and solidarity among all union members.

The IATSE benefit plans continue to function on a financially sound basis. They have kept pace with the changing times to ensure that benefit levels are appropriate and do not lead to a lower standard of living for IA members. In addition, health plan programs for smaller

locals have been developed, especially in those areas where the membership is not large enough to allow them to create their own comprehensive program.

While some areas of the Alliance jurisdiction saw gains, other areas had to fight to hold on to what they have. One area that has been under siege for some time is that of projectionists.

At the 58th Biennial Convention in 1986, Di Tolla (who had succeeded President Walter Diehl several months earlier) noted that many projectionists have been displaced by automation in the booth.

"The new automated equipment is delicate and complex and needs expert maintenance and repair," he noted, adding "our members must be trained and qualified to do that job and the training, if not furnished by employers, must be provided by us."

Four years later, in 1990, President Di Tolla would again address the concerns of the projectionists:

"Throughout the past 20 years we have seen an erosion of our projectionist jurisdiction which has dictated the necessity for direct and decisive action by the International office . . . the advent and incursion of automation into our job area and the continued advancement of technology, has demanded a total re-evaluation of our function in the modern theater as projectionists, engineers and service technicians..."

"Where we have taken the time and trouble to keep our members current with evolving technology and have been willing to accept new and changing job functions and assignments, we have proven that not only can we secure full-time employment for our members, but we can also achieve increases in wages, pension and welfare benefits and excellent working conditions."

The projectionists that year were urged to seek further education in "sound, HVAC refrigeration and other technological areas utilized within the theater."

On The Road

A members continued to obtain work in touring attractions, with increased employment for traveling stage, wardrobe, makeup and hair stylist employees. These productions travel under Yellow Cards, and thus the shows have created employment opportunities for locals as well.

Traveling productions are increasingly complex, exposing local members to the more sophisticated shows that are commonplace on Broadway today. As President Di Tolla noted, "the need to keep up with the trends in this new technology is of the utmost importance for our local crews so as to maintain our reputation of providing competent personnel."

Film lab technician prepares film for distribution.



A bill poster puts up the advertisement for one of 1993's hottest movies, Indecent Proposal.



An IA steadicam operator on the set of 1993's Dennis the Menace.



NABET and the IATSE Join Hands

One historic event occurred as the IA's 100th anniversary approached: the merger of two NABET film locals with the IATSE. These two locals, NABET 15 on the East Coast and NABET 531 on the West Coast, brought together under one roof all those crafts associated with the film industry.

At the 60th Biennial Convention, President Di Tolla reported on negotiations with NABET (which were to prove successful). He told the delegates:

"A single union in motion picture production can most effectively serve the interests of the people employed in this area . . . the two organizations can work out mutual assistance pacts in television to strengthen our bargaining positions vis-a-vis the networks . . . the networks have changed in character since they were taken over by purely commercial interests that do not hesitate to exploit the advantage they have since unions are divided instead of joining forces to combat a common enemy."

By joining forces, members of the IA and of these NABET locals as individuals will benefit from the combined might of a single union that will be able to negotiate with producers from a position of unity and strength.

This kind of action—putting aside differences for the common good of all—represents one of the basic tenets of trade unionism.

For more than 25 years, NABET's membership

had included similar craftspersons as the IATSE in the film industry, and the competition thus engendered served only to undermine the standards of each organization to the advantage of the employers. This merger eliminates that danger and recognizes that we share common challenges and common goals which, together, we can surmount.

The establishment of studio mechanics locals also helped to strengthen the IATSE's position in film and television. The creation of these locals has enabled the IA to more effectively represent movie production workers in areas where they were not adequately covered before.

The studio mechanics locals provide specific procedures and mechanisms to ensure that these members are protected from exploitation, that they receive appropriate wages and benefits and that their working conditions are safe and adequate.

The studios themselves have benefitted as well, since the locals can provide reliable sources of highly-skilled, well-trained workers regardless of location.

In addition to these advances, still another area received renewed focus, resulting in a nationwide agreement covering thousands of IA members. The National Industrial Agreement provides exhibition workers all across the U.S. with uniform protection of their wages, working conditions and benefits. This agreement was a major step forward for this aspect of our industry.

These various efforts have created a remarkable record during the last few decades. In fact, the IA is one of the few international unions in the U.S.



Stagehands working in scene construction shops produce much of the elaborate scenery seen in today's theatrical productions.

and Canada to actually experience membership increase, during a time when so many other unions saw their membership decrease—in some instances by as much as 50 percent.

It is a record of remarkable achievement.



The Legacy of Walter Diehl

Walter F. Diehl served as International President of the IATSE from 1974 through 1986. He began his career as a projectionist and served in a succession of leadership roles in his local union and at the International level. As his legacy to his fellow IA members, Diehl continued to enhance the image of the Alliance in the public eye. He was scrupulous in his determination to see to it that the affairs and finances of the IA and its affiliated locals were operated in a manner that was beyond reproach. In doing so, he put his own distinctive stamp on the office of International President, as well as continuing the efforts of his predecessor, Richard Walsh, to ensure that the IA would remain the preeminent labor organization, as it is today in the entertainment industry.

A stagehand checks to be sure that all the lights are working properly.



Overcoming Obstacles

In spite of the atmosphere of anti-union hostility that marked the last decade, the Alliance successfully overcame obstacles placed in its path by employers attempting to take advantage of the federal government's open war on organized labor.

For example, CBS-TV moved to change dramatically the longstanding contract that existed between Local No. One and the networks. During long and intensive negotiations, CBS made it clear that it wanted tremendous concessions. The network made its "last, best and final offer" to the local, including a deadline which, if it passed without agreement, would put this final offer automatically

into effect. Workers would either come to work under these conditions, or not come to work at all.

Local One did not agree to the terms, and a strike of several weeks occurred.

This event had significant and far-reaching ramifications for many IA members at work in the other networks, since those contracts had expired and negotiations were still underway. What occurred with Local One and CBS would set the stage for all other contract agreements with the remaining networks.

Finally, after a great deal of effort and struggle, a compromise agreement was reached. While not perfect, this agreement did ensure that basic crews as well as extra employees who worked on a steady basis would maintain their earnings and would not suffer any major loss of income.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Local One members endured yet another challenge to their security. The League of American Theatres and Producers' contract with Local One expired, and the League—in keeping with the prevailing pattern under the Reagan/Bush era—demanded substantial concessions in working conditions.

Again, Local One's leadership knew that what happened in these negotiations would set a precedent for the rest of North America, affecting not just stagehands, but other theatrical crafts that included wardrobe, box office employees, ushers, ticket takers, and hair and make-up employees.

Negotiations reached a grim impasse, and, as required under the IA Constitution, Local One

asked the International for assistance.

As a result of the intervention of President Di Tolla, a four-year contract was reached which included satisfactory increases and, of equal if not more importance, held the line on all basic working conditions.

The contract was overwhelmingly accepted by the membership. The four-year contract has now been adopted by other unions in the theatrical field, both within New York City and outside, not only for League theatres but for other employers as well. This has led to a welcome period of stability and peace in an industry that has been beleaguered in recent years.

Another event of great significance occurred in 1992, this time involving Local 110 in Chicago.

Negotiations between Local 110, Chicago Projectionists, and Cineplex/Odeon Theaters were initiated at that time, with management making demands for major rollbacks in wages and working conditions.

Local 110 had previously enjoyed the highest wages and conditions of employment for projectionists within the IATSE.

Concurrent negotiations were underway at the same time with General Cinema and Loews Theaters, whose contracts had also expired. These were separate negotiations but frequently conducted in the same room and at the same time as the talks with Cineplex/Odeon. There was direct communication and exchange

of information between the companies at all times.

During the course of the negotiations, Cineplex/Odeon found it necessary to lock out the Local 110 projectionists, and replace them with imported non-union personnel. General Cinema and Loews did not follow this move. Instead, they were able to obtain a "favored nations" clause which would give them the benefits of conditions eventually arrived at with Cineplex.

Local 110 projectionists continued to work for these two chains while negotiations went on.

A picket line was established by Local 110 at the Cineplex theaters, resulting in a loss of business to the company.

On November 10, 1992, International President Di Tolla received a letter from Local 110 requesting assistance in the negotiations and support from the General Defense Fund. He then assigned International Representative Walter Blanchard to assist Local 110 in its efforts.

In addition, a meeting was held in Toronto by President Di Tolla and International Representative Blanchard with Allen Karp, President and CEO of Cineplex/Odeon. Karp explained the financial picture which confronted Cineplex, and that it was not the intent of the company to become non-union but that it was necessary to reduce the operating costs of the chain drastically in order for Cineplex to survive.

Karp stated that there have been across-the-board, major reductions in the management and administrative staff of Cine-

Backdrops and other scenery are executed with great artistry.





IA President Di Tolla accepts the American Theatre Wing's Antoinette Perry "Tony" Award honoring the IATSE for 100 years of Service in the Theatrical Industry.

The Example of Atlanta

In the President's Report to the 61st Biennial Convention, President Di Tolla states:

"Over the past three years, no place has served as a better example of the revitalized IA than Atlanta . . .

"Atlanta is the United States' prime convention and exhibition city. The Georgia World Congress is the largest exhibition center in the country . . .

"Except for a small fraction of the work under contract to a tiny local of the Plastics and Novelty workers, the town was unorganized."

The former local in Atlanta was insolvent and had failed to organize its stage and exhibition jurisdiction. That local was dissolved, and two new locals—Stage Local 927 and Exhibition Local 834—were chartered.

Collective bargaining agreements were signed with several exhibition companies. Specific actions have been taken to bring still more firms under contract.

The referral system established in Atlanta now contains more than 950 names, with another 800 listed as qualified for referrals. This extensive system required the opening of a full-time office in Atlanta.

A jointly-administered welfare fund has been established which will serve both the stage and exhibition workers.

Organizing of stage employees has proceeded at a slower pace but negotia-

tions continue and are very promising.

Training of these workers has been a central part of the overall effort, just as it has been in other parts of the U.S. and Canada.

In his report to the 1993 convention, President Di Tolla noted:

"... we are, I believe, well on the way to achieving our goal of providing stage and exhibition workers in Atlanta with an opportunity to work with dignity and security under IA agreements and with union benefits . . . For the future, I intend to continue the organizing efforts with the goal of creating two strong autonomous locals in Atlanta. It is our duty and responsibility to do no less if Atlanta is to be an IA stronghold throughout our second hundred years."

Praise From Others

The IA's 100 years of excellence have not gone unrecognized in the entertainment industry. Praise has come from many quarters. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the League of American Theatres and Producers, and the American Theatre Wing, to name only a few, have issued honorary awards to the Alliance for its valuable contribution to the entertainment industry over many years.

In addition, the IA has received accolades from the trade press, including labor newspapers from around the U.S. and Canada.

IA members are rightfully proud of the honors they receive, especially from these groups who are such an integral part of the entertainment world.

At the 1991 AFL-CIO Convention, then Democratic Presidential Candidate Bill Clinton meets with IATSE President Alfred W. Di Tolla.



plex, including a loss of more than 100 employees in the corporate office alone. This same policy—of reducing staff—necessitated the demands made by Cineplex in the Chicago area, he claimed.

Karp and President Di Tolla agreed to send the negotiators back to the table to try to find an accommodation which would be the least onerous to Local 110 members.

Arduous negotiations followed, and finally a proposal was achieved and ratified by Local 110 members in February, 1993. This final proposal ensured that the least number of Local 110 members would be displaced.

It should be noted that this contract could not have been ratified without a majority of the members who would be the ones actually displaced knowingly voting for the contract in order to save the remaining jobs for their brothers and sisters. Their action was courageous and commendable.

Moreover, it is important to note also that the contract that resulted still exceeds terms and conditions of any other projection contract in the United States.

Facing The Future, With Confidence

The International Alliance is now a century old. These 100 years have been marked by tumultuous change, by remarkable technological advances, and by courage and persistence on the part of our membership.

During the 1980s, the Alliance, like all of organized labor, was under siege. Twelve years of Republican rule in the White House, first under Ronald Reagan and then under George Bush, brought with it unprecedented attacks on our collective bargaining rights, on our wages and benefits, and on our dignity as highly-skilled working men and women.

Then, in 1993, a new Democratic Administration was swept into office. As we celebrate our centennial, hopes are high that the tide of anti-union sentiment and hostility will be turned back forever.

Alliance members met the challenges of the 1980s by working harder and

smarter. IA members all across the U.S. and Canada sought training in the many new technologies being developed for theatre, movies and television.

Today, efforts to improve virtually every aspect of Alliance activity have intensified enormously. Training is now a dominant focus of the International office, and steps have been taken to expand training opportunities to all Alliance members.

Organizing efforts have increased considerably over the last decade, as the Alliance responds to the pronounced and virulent anti-union, anti-worker policies of the government and corporate North America.

The Alliance, always mindful of how the ability of a union to achieve gains and benefits for its members can be seriously diminished by unfavorable labor laws, has been extending its reach into the halls of Congress to bring about much needed



IA carpenters construct an elaborate stage set for an opera production.

changes in the law. In recent years, this effort has been expanded perhaps more so than at any time before in Alliance history.

With the advent of the Clinton administration, a window of opportunity now exists that was shut tight for the past 12 years. Efforts in this direction are proceeding by the IATSE on its own as well as in conjunction with the AFL-CIO and, more specifically, with the DPE, the arm of the AFL-CIO that deals with matters pertaining to the unions and guilds in the amusement and entertainment field.

In addition to these political efforts, the Alliance recently has increased efforts to enter into coalitions with other unions in the entertainment industry so as to be able to deal more effectively with uncooperative employers. It has been the

An IA carpenter at work in a theatrical shop.



An IA stagehand rehearsing cues from a production.



Stagehands at the Metropolitan Opera remove a canvas drape from the stage in preparation for that evening's production.



An IA craftsman makes a repair to stage scenery at the Met.

sad experience of many unions that attempting to go it alone against hostile employers has proved to be quite ineffective and unsuccessful. When unions combine in a joint effort to cope with employers that are determined to undermine the standards achieved over

many years the chances to prevail are increased immeasurably.

This is particularly true of the situation of the television networks, where thus far no individual union acting on its own has been able to succeed in a strike against the em-

The IATSE Family . . .

Stage Employes • Moving Picture Machine Operators • Studio Mechanics • Camerapersons • Studio Grips • Script Supervisors • Production Office Coordinators • Production Office Accountants • Production Office Secretaries • Production Office Auditors • Sound Technicians • Cinetechnicians • Laboratory Film Technicians • Video Technicians • Costumers • Make-Up Artists • Hair Stylists • Wardrobe Employes • Studio Electrical Lighting Technicians • Set Painters and Sign Writers • Treasurers and Ticket Sellers • First Aid Employes • Motion Picture and Videotape Editors • Studio Arts Craftspersons • Television Broadcasting Studio Employes • Audio Visual Technicians • Studio Projectionists • Publicists • Exhibition Employes • Studio Cartoonists • Art Directors • Radio and Television Sound Effects and Broadcasting • Set Designers • Modelmakers • Teachers and Welfare Workers • Costume Designers • Airline Motion Picture Employes • Casino Hotel Employes • Bill Posters, Billers and Distributors • Story Analysts • Painters • Scenic Artists • Sound Designers • Sound and Figure Maintenance Technicians • Affiliated Property Craftspersons • Motion Picture Crafts Service Persons • Television Engineering • Motion Picture Studio Production Technicians • Laboratory Technicians • Arena Facility Employes • Motion Picture Set Electricians . . . and the many others who are so much a part of the IA Family

ployer. The need for an alliance of television unions to operate in mutual support of each other is an important item on the IA agenda.

With the support of their local leadership as well as at the International level, IA members have expanded the boundaries of work available to them. In this way, they have opened up new vistas and significantly increased the opportunities available to them.

Alliance craftsmen now work in ice shows that travel all over North America. They are at work in exhibition halls across the continent, helping to set up and break down massive conventions and trade shows which host hundreds of thousands of people every year.

IA members can be found working in casinos from Las Vegas to Atlantic City. They are ticket sellers. They are publicists who meet the demands of a curious public as well as the needs of various industry clients and corpo-

rations, and they do it with skill and sensitivity.

They dispense first aid on television and movie sets. They serve as teachers for young performers. They are model makers who construct everything from miniature cities to planets and space ships.

They are sound and figure maintenance technicians who are responsible for the sophisticated animatronics in theme parks all across North America. They are bill posters who work in all kinds of weather to put up theatrical artwork on billboards. They are treasure hunters and ticket sellers in box offices, and they are prop shoppers who purchase everything an entertainment production needs for authenticity, from shoes to chairs to pictures on the wall.

These are just some of the jobs that IA members today perform with the greatest skill and diligence; there are many more too numerous to mention.

What all of these diverse

An IA member working at Walt Disney/MGM Studios in Orlando prepares the Indiana Jones Stunt Spectacular set for the next performance.



occupations add up to is a remarkable record of achievement during this past century. IA members may be very different from one another in the jobs they do, but they share a common bond that is powerful and unbreakable—a love of their industry. And this devotion to their trade includes a powerful commitment to

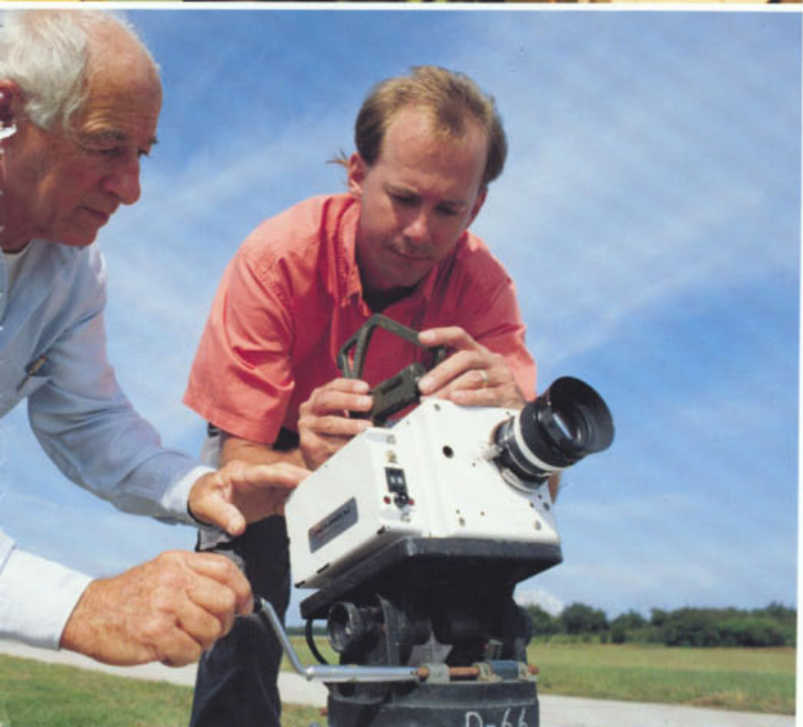
their union, a faithfulness that has its roots in that day 100 years ago when a small group of visionaries joined together to form this great International Alliance.



IA technicians at East Coast Theatre Supply in Cornwall, New York, construct the massive helicopter used on stage in Miss Saigon.



IA film lab technicians, like this worker, are an integral part of the film distribution process. This employee is removing film from stock for distribution to movie theaters across the country.



Despite all attempts to destroy it, the Alliance is still here and is still a powerful force that works tirelessly for the benefit of the rank and file membership.

The future will bring even greater challenges and opportunities, many of which are now beyond our imagination.

Could our forefathers who met that day in 1893 have imagined that their brothers and sisters of the future would help broadcast pictures of Americans on the moon? Could they have imagined lasers and computer-driven props and fantastic pyrotechnics that are now so common in the theatre?

They could not have predicted these remarkable accomplishments, just as we cannot predict what the future will hold for the Alliance of tomorrow. But we know, just as our brothers knew 100 years ago, that the IA has an important role to play in that future, and we, like our founding fathers, will be ready when we are called.

As we reflect on the past, and celebrate the many accomplishments of these 100 years, we must renew our commitment to the future, and continue to believe in ourselves and in our great union.

Our noble struggle goes on; our story continues . . .

NASA camera operators prepare still photo cameras which will operate at an extremely high speed. They are setting cameras which will be used to shoot the space shuttle landing at Kennedy Space Center in Florida early the next day.

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