

# MRA Information Service

## 'A MIXED DOUBLE'

by H W ('Bunny') Austin  
and Phyllis Konstam

Chatto and Windus 42s

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**THE AUSTINS.** Jennifer Austin, speaking on behalf of her brother John and herself, said, 'I wish that militant students could meet my parents who have never compromised or sold out their principles for popularity or box office'

*photos Strong*

HUMANITY and a fighting spirit hall-marked the meeting launching *A Mixed Double*, by H W 'Bunny' Austin and Phyllis Konstam, at the Westminster Theatre on Sunday.

These qualities characterize the authors of this first, lively and contro-

Nora Swinburne said, 'The time here in the Westminster Theatre was my happiest time in my 50 years in the theatre'



versial husband and wife autobiography. 'Bunny' Austin was a member of the victorious British Davis Cup team 1933-6 and his actress wife Phyllis Konstam, a star of the West End and Broadway.

Muriel Smith, star of *High Diplomacy* at the Westminster Theatre, said, 'There is a time when you do have to profess a faith in God more urgently than at any other time—when people are trying to undercut it at every turn. If we who do believe keep silent about our belief, the other forces take over. I am very grateful for what the Austins have said in their book about that Great Power.'

Representing the sporting world, West Indian cricketer Conrad Hunte said, 'Bunny Austin and Phyllis Konstam have steered a steady course, however hard the billows of life have been. Through it all they have emerged the real champions with room in their hearts and in their home for everyone of every race.'

*The Sunday Telegraph* and the *Sunday Express* noted the publication of

## Britain's first and controversial husband-wife autobiography

**A MIXED DOUBLE** launched

the book in the light of the controversy over Austin's non-membership in the All England Lawn Tennis Club. Remarking on the presence of Sir Carl Aarvold at a reception to launch *A Mixed Double*, Michael Williams's *Diary in The Sunday Telegraph* commented, 'As President of the Lawn Tennis Association, Sir Carl's presence was an indication that Austin, said to be the greatest player never to win Wimbledon, should be restored to his rightful place as a legendary and respected figure of the game.'

Speaking with his wife Phyllis and daughter Jennifer, Austin said that he had written the book for two reasons: 'I long to see all the nonsense talked about MRA cleared up,' and 'There is an answer and I burn to make it known.'

About his battle to regain membership in the All England Lawn Tennis Club, Austin said, 'The reason I am fighting it is that I do not like discrimination. It is a dangerous thing, and it can be the thin edge of a very nasty wedge.'

EVELYN THOMSEN

# Theatre personalities voice support

THE NEW THEATRE of hope and humanity which 'Bunny' Austin and Phyllis Konstam have worked to create was very much in evidence on Sunday.

Present with Muriel Smith, star of Broadway and London's West End, were: Richard Warner, a member of the Committee of the Council of British Actors' Equity and well known actor in West End plays and television; Nora Swinburne, who performed in the films *Quo Vadis* and *Third Man on the Mountain* and in such West End successes as *Outward Bound* and *Watch on the Rhine*; Gillian Scaife, whose husband Anmer Hall created the Westminster Theatre in 1931 and who was herself an actress of distinction; Madhav Sharma, who plays the Indian Delegate in *High Diplomacy*; and Roslyn Dunbar, who is a member of the Sadlers Wells Opera Company in Britain.

Madhav Sharma presented the Austins with flowers on behalf of the entire cast and stage management of *High Diplomacy*.



**Muriel Smith**

*photos Strong*



## **Madhav Sharma**

'The idea of all of us blowing each other up does horrify me and to work in a theatre that believes in doing something towards a hope—that theatre has my full support all the time. It is the first management I have worked for that has made me feel important as a person, in addition to being an actor. I bought the book and I read it and I must say that very rarely in my life have I been moved as much as I was by this book—the superb record of courage and sheer hope and joy.'



## **Roslyn Dunbar**

'From the help I got from the Austins and others, my life was completely changed. People come into this theatre with hungry hearts and have gone away with ideas that have matured over the years. A lot of shows have closed in the West End recently and people in management are worried. You are the people who can tell them why the shows have closed. I want you to go out and really become vocal on what you want in entertainment to turn the tide of what we are having.'



## **Richard Warner**

'I am grateful for this opportunity to say in public what wonderful employers these Trustees of the Westminster Theatre are. They have created conditions which make it a real joy to work in this theatre in contrast to other theatres. It is a great pleasure to me to be able to be here today, I hope as a real friend, to testify to the great and brave spirit of these two, to their devotion to each other and to all their friends, and above all to their complete and absolute dedication to the work of MRA.'

## Young actors meet 'Bunny' Austin and Phyllis Konstam

KEVIN WILLIAMS, member of the cast of *High Diplomacy*, and friends from drama school, talk with 'Bunny' Austin and Phyllis Konstam. Speaking at the meeting Miss Konstam said, 'The theatre of Rome was like our modern theatre. It became increasingly cruel and obscene, and in the end actors were killed. This desire to titillate the cruelty in man is the most terrible thing that is happening in this country and I thank God every day of my life that we have been led into the Westminster Theatre. It is God's gift to this generation.'

photo Strong



## The ILO—moral growth must match material progress

INTERNATIONAL audiences and platform speeches are no novelty in Geneva. But last week's gala performance of the European revue, *Anything to Declare?*, and the challenge of young men and women from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe speaking at the end had a difference about it. At least, that is what the 125 ILO delegates who crowded round them afterwards seemed to think.

The performance was given specially to mark the 50th Anniversary of the ILO. Twenty-one nations were in the cast. Forty-two nations were in the audience, including Ministers of Labour from different continents, national Chairmen of Trade Union Congresses, senior industrialists, bishops, and international personalities, such as the Chief Justice of Dahomey, Louis Ignacio-Pinto, and the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Abdel Khalek Hassouna, and his family.

Long after midnight the ILO delegates, Geneva citizens and the cast were still deep in conversation. 'What a refreshing change after what we have experienced recently in America,'

said the head of the Clothing Workers of the United States. 'This would mean replacing our ideas with the ideology of class peace. That would be difficult,' said a senior official from Eastern Europe.

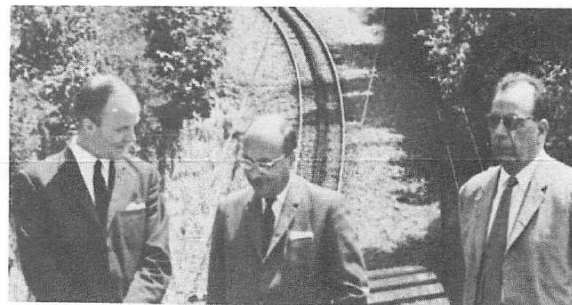
'Mankind must match its material progress with moral and spiritual growth,' was the keynote struck by U Thant for this 50th Anniversary Conference.

### Delegates at Caux

Delegates who have been going at the weekends to the MRA conference in Caux have said it has shown them how this might be done.

One trade union delegate said that his delegation to the ILO, which had been split down the middle, had been reunited through his meeting MRA this week. A Nigerian trade unionist said, 'I came in this evening believing violence was the only way. But this is the way.' An American oil executive, giving four times the sale price for a copy of *Peter Howard: Life and Letters*, said, 'I came in believing we were too late in the world. I go out knowing we are not.'

Many contributed money towards



Robin Evans, from Britain; Dr Salih K Burgan, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Jordan; and Hamed Busriwil, Minister representing Libya at the ILO

photo Franzon

the work of Rajmohan Gandhi in India and the advance of Moral Re-Armament in South-East Asia. The Senegal Workers' delegate, summing up what was expressed in conversations all round the foyer, said, 'I shall report to my President that this is the real revolution, because it deals with the real problem—man.'

Ninety-two government employers' and workers' delegates from 31 countries were at Caux last weekend. Among them were Dr Salih K Burgan, MD, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour of Jordan; Hamed Busriwil, Minister of Labour of Libya; Damsy-hien, Minister of Labour of Vietnam; and N M Tidke, Minister of Labour of the Indian state of Maharashtra.

# Thought-provoking theatre

London Theatre today is a potpourri of experimentation, success and expensive failure, of new ideas and old themes. In this situation can theatre today have a purpose that is constant? Last week one of the West End's most experienced directors, HENRY CASS of the Westminster Theatre, turned his attention to this theme and spoke at a lunch in 45 Berkeley Square. After briefly commenting on the various forms of entertainment available in the West End—romance, murder, violence or leg shows—Henry Cass said:

THERE is another form of theatre. Shall we call it the thought-provoking theatre? The theatre where entertainment is through plays which make you think, as well as making you laugh. Many people will raise their hands in horror at the thought of going to a theatre where you have to think. They want to forget, not remember.

In a free world it is up to them to choose which sort of theatre they will attend, but I would like to spend a short time telling you of the joys of the Theatre of Ideas. Shaw, Ibsen, Tchekov, Galsworthy, among playwrights of every description, were giants. They wrote plays to stimulate the mind, and the higher senses. Shaw's *St Joan*, one of the greatest plays of the last 50 years, showed you what one woman could do to change the course of history. Joan, as created by Shaw, heard voices which inspired her to action which saved her country from the British.

Was it chance that gave Joan her voices, or was it, as she claimed, the still, small voice of God giving her instructions? Joan was a person alone with her inspiration—a person seeking truth above all else, and therefore hated and misunderstood by all—even her friends, even those she helped to be put back into power. Shaw also showed the fact that justice can pursue a cold intellectual logic which has little to do with truth, and that a person can be martyred, sacrificed, burnt at the stake even, if considered an unfashionable nuisance.

This play, *St Joan*, produced in the early 1920's, is a play which stirred your emotions, made you think and become very much aware of your sense of values, of your sense of right and wrong. Of course Shaw wrote many other plays, all of which were designed to make the audience aware

of their social responsibility in a world full of injustices.

Therefore I would like to suggest that the theatre, at its best, is a place where stimulating ideas are put before the paying public. I think that the best entertainment is equal to the greatest clash of ideas—particularly if those ideas help to formulate one's own ideas and give one a sense of direction.

The Westminster Theatre exists for a very specific purpose. It was bought by the Trustees in Memory of those soldiers who died fighting in World War II, and is used to create understanding among men of all nations, creeds and colour—so that wars of every sort will not occur again. At least that is my personal interpretation of the ideology behind the Theatre and it is one of the reasons I am happy to work for it.

The purpose of all the plays produced at the Westminster Theatre is to show how Man can live with Man. How men and women can live together harmoniously—even the happily married. How families can learn to understand each other and how this spirit carried forward can apply to different nations, races and creeds.

This is where the Westminster Theatre in its policy differs from other theatres.

**The plays dare to give an answer to all the problems which beset Man. They pose the various problems—of hatred, greed, vanity, fear, and then try to show the way for people to rid themselves of these major negative passions, or anyway show how people, races, nations might try and rid themselves of these mighty passions which create havoc in the family and tragedy among the various people of the earth.**

When you think of it, it's fantastic that a few people (I talk of the people



Henry Cass (right) and Kenneth Belden, chairman of the Westminster Memorial Trust  
photo Wennberg

in MRA) should care so much about *all* other people, I repeat, *all* other people, that they spend their time, money, energy, in attempting to make people understand each other. Some writers talk of lack of communication—a very sad phrase, and leave it at that. They say, 'Brother, you're in a mess, and we're going to leave you there.' They prove that people do *not* know how to communicate. But the Trustees of the Westminster Theatre are determined to show that communication and understanding are possible, and this is what their plays are all about.

Need I say that this is a great challenge? It is a challenge to the authors, the actors, and to myself. We can lead an expedition to the North Pole, fly in space, send people to the moon, or challenge people to give thought as to why we are all here in this remarkable world which is so full of wonderful opportunities. It is impossible to dispute the fact that a theatre which might help, however little, to create better understanding among all people, is essential and deserves every support.