

**The Welsh  
Entertainment  
Scene Special  
Features  
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# CLUB STAGE

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IN  
WALES?  
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By MELVILLE THOMPSON

## WAGES ON THE SPOT

WHY NOT TRY A NEW SYSTEM?

It is fashionable at the moment to write and argue about Prices and Incomes policies. Everyone is agreed that there should be at least one. That it should be based on an arrangement that everything they buy should be as cheap as possible; that everything they sell should be as dear as possible; that their own wages should be as high as possible and everyone else's wages as low as possible. It is all quite clear. When it is applied to the wages of performers it is more involved.

Our wages—except when we are exported abroad—do not have any effect on the National economy. Even in radio and television performers' salaries are such a small proportion of the total outlay, their alteration has only a minute effect. We are affected by the prosperity of the country, and by odd happenings like the Gaming Tax, Selective Employment Tax, a rise in the price of beer and the weather.

At present a policy for the price and income of artists would have to be deduced by a computer operated by an Einstein with the concert secretary of Mudbanks Workingmen's Club to give him advice.

We are not subject to the old Scots economist, Adam Smith's law of Supply and Demand. (There is always a greater supply of entertainers than there is a demand for.) We don't seem to fit in with any of the tenets of John Stuart Mill. (All of which, except "Free Trade" for all I have forgotten.) And we certainly don't come under Karl Marx's definition of Value as being equal to the number of human labour hours expended—Definitely not! And, fortunately! Maybe there is some

modern economic theory that could apply. I am rather out of date.

What I do know is that in the field of clubs there is a danger in some places that exorbitant salaries will "kill the goose that lays the golden eggs"—or make it very sick; and in other places that a meanness over wages from clubs that are spending anything from £10,000 to £100,000 on renovations will result in entertainers which fails to attract worthwhile audiences and lead to a lowering of standards that may drive people back to their television sets.

It is time that there was more uniformity all round. Clubs by this time should know what their entertainment budget shall be. It shouldn't be very different in Sheffield from what it is in Pontypool, Bromley, Bacup or Penzance. They should know from experience what the best form of entertainment shall be: a star act and a supporter, a star act and two supporters or—as I think it ought to be—a minimum of five acts. I think the ideal evening's entertainment is like a precious ring with a central diamond and a number of lesser gems surrounding it.

More and more clubs are adopting this set-up. The danger being that when the diamond is too flashy and expensive there is only enough money left to provide some trash which ruins the whole artistic arrangement.

It seems to me that more clubs who engage 'name acts' should work on a 'percentage-of-the-takings' basis. In Social Clubs where the takings in the Concert Room are not related to the club outlay on entertainment this may not be practi-

able; but I think the idea that free entry to the concert room is the automatic privilege of club membership or associates is outdated and it would be to everyone's advantage if a minimum charge was agreed nationally and this varied only slightly from club to club or area to area.

A few years ago, in Sheffield, agents and managements were indignant because one of the concert secretary associations was trying to peg individual wages to a particular scale. So-and-so is only worth so much, let none of us pay him more.

This was the wrong way to go about the problem. Although a lot of the blame could be attributed to the artists who should have organised, decided on a minimum wage for all artists and argued the thing out with the concert secretaries. If they couldn't agree they should have got an independent arbitrator to decide.

This kind of negotiation is what is wanted on a national scale. In the proprietary club field it is about to come about in the Northern Branch of the Variety and Allied Entertainment Council, in Manchester.

A lot of old methods will have to be discarded. It is no longer feasible to talk about a week of twelve performances with matinees. The six-day week has become the seven-day week, sometimes the three-day week and sometimes a long or a short weekend.

New agreements should be made in terms of 'spots' and should specifically mention the number and lengths of them.

In this way a formula can be devised that will fit any club, whether it is a social club, a proprietary club or a night-club. Special consideration will have to be made when an act is 'dual-purpose' or gives two completely different types of 'spot' and when it is composed of more than one individual.

Allowance should be made for transport from the home or from the local venue.

That is how I think it should be arranged. But no doubt a lot of muddling will go on in the meantime—and afterwards!

## TOPPING IN CLUBS

NOW "The Pied Piper" has ended its phenomenally successful run at Coventry Freddy "Mr. Parrotface" Davies is giving his joints for cabaret appearances in leading northern clubs.

Living in Blackpool, he is already a great favourite in this area, but now, following his big panto success, he returns to these venues as top of the bill in practically every club.

Dates lined up for him are: w/c March 19, The Ritz, Brighton and Kontiki, Wakefield; w/c March 26, Continental Casinos, Blackburn and Burnley; w/c April 2, Batley Variety Club and The Crystal Bowl, Castleford; w/c April 16, Fiesta, Stockton and La Strada, Sunderland; w/c April 23, Variety Club, Spennymore and The Carousel, Chester le Street; w/c April 30, Litherland and The Shakespeare, Liverpool; w/c May 7, Parkside and New Orleans, Nottingham; w/c May 14, Cabaret Club, Manchester and Darrels, Wythenshaw; w/c May 28, Greasbrough, Kettlethorpe; w/c June 4, The Garrick, Leigh and The Towers, Warrington.

**Our Yorkshire Correspondent James Towler Argues the Case For Better ...**

## MANAGEMENT

THE other evening I made a bit of a fool of myself. I was entertaining some friends in a well known supper club. Rightly, or wrongly, I considered the service to be well below par, so much so that my temper became a little frayed and I refused to pay the 10% Service Charge.

That would have been the end of it as far as I was concerned but for the reaction of the management to my little bit of bravado. The managers, normally the most reasonable of women, pointed out, politely but firmly, that it was all my fault. Didn't I realise that there were staff problems? What right had I to depart from normal custom? So it went on. No apology, just a case of 'my club—right or wrong'.

This was really too much. I believe I started to become a little facetious. And, to cut a long story short, the whole thing ended as a bit of a damp squib, leaving a rather nasty taste in several mouths—in particular my own.

Now you may well ask what my own short coming, or those of this particular supper club, have got to do with management. I'll tell you. Forgetting for the moment the little incident I've recalled, I am, nonetheless, astonished by the lack of good management to be found in many of our clubs. This not only applies to the private establishments but also to the C. & I. U. venues.

While the last thing I want to see is the dropping of the amateur status of the W.M.C.'s isn't it rather ludicrous that a business (after all that is what a club is) with an annual turnover of over £100,000 a year doesn't even have a typewriter, let alone anyone who can use it. Yet, for the sum of £15 you can get a very good second hand machine. Moreover I am certain that for a couple of quid a week plus a few run and peps, any club could recruit the services of a short-hand typist who, in three or four hours each week, could work wonders with that "In" tray. Just think of the time it would save in doing away with all that laborious long-hand.

Then how about some sort of rationalised filing system? I know that one can go on for some time making use of old

crisp boxes, yet one doesn't need a firm of management consultants to point out that this isn't a really satisfactory way of going about things.

I've lost count of the number of times I've been to the opening of clubs who have spent hundreds (sometimes thousands) of pounds on expensive lighting systems yet have completely overlooked the importance of the hand operated spot. Easy enough to blame the architect or electrical contractor but the real fault is with the management.

Then we get the place—and I know of several—where the evening's proceedings are continually interrupted by announcements over the P.A. requesting that the owners of cars number so and so to go and remove them as they are causing an obstruction. No doubt who is at fault—the driver. But then, if there had been a car park attendant, it all could have been avoided.

A modest investment in a sprightly O.A.P. can work wonders in a congested car park, and the good man can make the job really worth while by what he earns in tips. These are just a few points that come to mind. No doubt you can think of plenty more. However, the most important thing of all is the attitude of mind of the key man in the club whether he is the owner, manager, or elected official. As well as being the visible figurehead, and this is very important in itself, he (or she) is the fulcrum on which the whole success of the club depends.

This is the chap who everyone knows and who, in his turn should know everyone. He is always pleased to see you, even if he cannot stand the sight of your face. He is almost always there, justifying himself by his very presence, keeping a shrewd eye on



James Towler

things, rather than dashing about all over the place like a scalded cat. And, if some cantankerous old so-and-so like myself starts getting a bit uppish, this is the man to calm him down and even turn the 'incident' to the advantage of the club by the use of a little gentle tact.

Now I know I'm not writing about your club Mr. ———, nor yours Mr. ———, so you have no reason to get upset. This article is not intended to 'knock' anyone, except, perhaps, myself. Even so, no matter how high your profits were last year, I have one final thought. A Balance Sheet is only past history. It's what is happening today and what is likely to happen tomorrow that should really be receiving your attention. Come to think of it—that is what management is really about.

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FREDDY DAVIES

During April Freddy will be seen on television in "The Good Old Days" and he joins The Bachelors for a summer season at the Futurist Theatre, Scarborough from June 17 until September 9.

Freddy, who only turned professional three years ago, feels that pantomime success has been a great experience and will give him added confidence for his top of the bill status.