

Light Entertainment

● Circus Fantastic '75 — a welcome harbinger of seasonal delights in store for Blackpool holidaymakers — is being launched tonight, May 15. This Dick Hurren production co-starring veteran clown Charlie Cairoli and Mary Chipperfield and staged in the famous Tower ring may well have a new theatrical slant this year. For Mary, daughter of Longleat Safari Park chief James Chipperfield, it is her first Blackpool season. She has brought the largest collection of circus animals ever seen at the Tower: her entourage includes five African elephants, four llamas, two lionesses, 15 horses, five camels, one leopard, a zebra, 12 ponies, six donkeys, and four monkeys.

● Grapefruit Productions are presenting the first variety bill at the new Kenneth More Theatre, Ilford, week commencing May 26 with Cavan O'Connor in Holiday Spectacular. Also featured are George Williams, Andrew Betts, Vincent Hayes, Sandra Carrier, Martin Glade, Jackie and Jenny and Lorraine Trews. Musical

director is David Carter. Press: Torington Douglas, who is also publicising the Grapefruit Production Holiday Varieties at Grays week of May 26 which features the Pex Puppets and Vincent Hayes. The February programme was so successful that this show has been re-booked for the week. Musical director, Brian Farley.

Varieties Theatre, Leeds, 6 weeks pre-panto season in "Magic of the Music Hall" and a 16 weeks panto which established a theatre record. Next month George opens his Summer Season at Scarborough in "Olde Tyme Music Hall," prior to which he is guesting in "Palace of Varieties" at the Palace Theatre, Redditch.

Marshall Ward, The Infirmary, Pontefract. Johnnie would be glad to hear from friends in the business.

● Breaking new ground this summer are Windsor Davies and Don Estelle, stars of the BBC-TV series "It Ain't Half Hot Mum," who are doing a season at the Watersplash, Jersey.

● Ricky Rich, the Midlands comedy entertainer, is now manager as well as host at the New Castaways, Birmingham.

EDITOR SIDNEY VAUNCEZ

TOPPING OUT



● The scene at the BRINSWORTH New Wing 'Topping-Out' ceremony with EABF secretary REG SWINSON pointing out to ELLIS ASHTON the latest stage in the construction, as TOMMY STEELE, LOUIS BENJAMIN and other V.I.P.'s drink a toast to the completion of a very worthwhile project.

Closed Shop For Clubs

Tough Equity Proposals carried at AGM

EQUITY is going all out for 100 per cent unionisation of professional performers — and Clubs.

If they don't get it management will be blacked and clubs picketed.

This motion was passed after a stormy session at Equity's Annual General Meeting at the VICTORIA PALACE on Sunday.

It instructed Council to: "enforce Union contracts in every establishment employing professional entertainers; to set a date not later than six months from this meeting, for a closed shop in all fields of work, at which time any management not using an Equity contract will be blacked, and all necessary measures, including pickets, be taken to ensure that Equity's instructions are enforced; and to request the full co-operation of the MU and NATTKE for this policy."

Monday morning at 10 am was set aside for Variety business which time RONNIE ALDEN protested made it difficult for artists who may have been working till 11 pm, 12 or much later the night before, to attend, especially if they lived out of town.

This was the probable reason why he, as secretary of THAMES NORTH BRANCH, had to propose a composite motion on behalf of two branches (WEST OF ENGLAND and SOUTH WALES) calling on Council "to start negotiations with the CIU, BRITISH LEGION and other recognised bodies and local trades councils and to obtain the support of all unions within the TUC which have social clubs for their members, with the effect that only EQUITY members will be employed as artists."

MICHAEL CHATTIN, Variety Secretary for EQUITY, in supporting the motion on behalf of the Council hoped that there would be a unanimous decision to try and get for Variety members what obtained in other fields, but it would not be easy.

In Lancashire alone there were more employers of Variety performers than there were of this type of entertainer in the whole of Britain.

He told how it was easy to make agreements with employer's associations like the British Legion but showed what a large gap there was between what was said and what was done.

A fine start had been made in Scotland where NUM clubs were already imposing a closed shop.

GEOFFREY GILLAM, secretary for the NORTH EAST BRANCH, said that in his area they really meant business. As a practical suggestion he proposed that a few of the larger clubs in

the area employing artists every evening, should first be warned of possible action by a certain date, and if they failed to conform, consequences such as picketing would follow. Then, as results were achieved, smaller clubs would be tackled.

BRUCE BIRCHALL pointed out that there were others in the field besides variety performers and spoke of Fringe artists and the need to understand and mix more with fellow trade unionists.

CHRISTINE PATERSON from the North East branch pointed out that since, in the social club field, there was about 90 to 95% non-membership, picketing was not the answer. The concert chairman was the power in a social club and he should be approached amicably.

In summing up RONNIE ALDEN complained that some of the supporters of the motion had no knowledge of Variety. He asserted that if club managements were challenged in an aggressive way it could lead to Bingo replacing artists. In his area it had taken all of six years to get some concert secretaries together, but at last advance seemed imminent.

Other subjects which Variety representatives raised concerned amalgamation with other unions and safety measures to prevent electrocution.

After a lengthy discussion on Amalgamation in which PETER PLOUVIEZ and PETER HONRI pointed out that one couldn't FORCE the matter — "it takes two to tango" — the meeting passed a resolution calling on Council to seek a conference of Rank-and-file members of all entertainers' unions, thus by-passing union "bureaucrats".

MELVILLE THOMSON

FIVE FOR TEA



● After the Brinsworth 'topping out' ceremony a distinguished quintet gathered for tea. They are I to r: NAT MILLS (of the famous Nat Mills and Bobbie Act) LOTTIE REEKMAN, MARION MOSLEY, TOMMY STEELE and LESLIE MACDONELL. Marion resides in Brinsworth's Tommy Steele Room, and Lottie in the Leslie Macdonnell Room.

DAPHNE LACEY

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