

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD BY BOARD OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FEDERATION OF SCREEN CARTOONISTS.

December 16, 1940

The meeting was held at the home of the president, Bill Roberts. Meeting was called to order and the following members responded to roll-call:

- Jack Kinney
- Eloise Tobelman
- Truman Woodworth
- Rae Medby
- Joan Orbison
- Jim Baumeister
- Russel Dyson
- George Gopper
- Harry Reeves
- Wick Hays
- Art Babbitt
- Harry Hamsell
- Brice Mack
- Jean Ritchie
- Norman Ferguson

NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD  
 CASE NO. 2104 BOARD 2104 EXHIBIT No. 21  
 IN THE MATTER OF Walt Disney  
 DATE 10/15/42 WITNESS Estelle  
 ETHEL E. FISHER, OFFICIAL REPORTER  
 BY Ambrose

The following members were absent:

- Hugh Hennessy
- George Feldcamp

BILL:

I want to explain everything that has happened, to the best of my ability, since we met here about a year ago. Anyway, at that time I asked you to vote, or at least the committee asked you to vote on the question of what we would do about that contract that we had offered the studio. There were three alternatives offered. One was that we would put a time limit on the contract and if the firm didn't sign it within that time limit then we could put in a complaint to the Labor Board. Another alternate was that we could just let it ride and not try to force the issue and see what the outcome would be, thinking that maybe the firm would come around to seeing that it was to their advantage to sign that contract sooner or later. The third alternative was that we would dissolve the union. Those were the things that I asked you to vote upon and it was voted that we would let the matter ride. That was the middle alternate I mentioned. We could have gone before the Labor Board with a complaint on the thing. We let the thing ride. Nothing more was heard on the thing until we were called in to Gunther Lessig's office.

He had had correspondence from that local that Truman knows the number of -- it's a manera man's Union.

TRUMAN:

Local number 659.

BILL:

Yes, that was it. They claimed that they had a majority in that department down there. Lessig wanted to know what we, representatives of the Federation of Screen Cartoonists were going to do



Bill:  
Cont.

about it. Well, we said, "What can we do?" "We have no contract with the firm, what can we do?" We weren't interested in doing anything about that thing. So Gunther thought that we ought to get busy and revive that Union and make it an active thing and we told him that we didn't think the membership would be interested in going any farther until we could get a signature on that contract and he evaded the issue on the contract. He didn't want to sign the contract. He wanted to make up a letter of some kind saying that they wanted to bargain with us collectively and that would be the contract we would have. We thought a contract was necessary. However, they wondered what to do in that camera department and they said that they had gone over the people in the camera department and found that they hadn't had raises in a year and they had a list made up of certain recommendations and wanted to know if we would do something -- talk to the people in that camera department and lead them to believe that we had suggested these figures. I called Bill Brazner and George Feldcamp up to my room and I asked them about the situation -- oh, there is something I've forgotten. I'll have to go into that too.

Previous to that last meeting, Gunther called us to the old Hyperion studio after we had moved to the new studio. He called us to the old studio and said there was trouble over there and he asked us to go into it and see what the trouble was. I found that it was a matter of salaries and that the fellows weren't getting raises and I took the matter up with Mickey Batchelder and he drew up a list. He had already had this list drawn up on his own hook and I felt and could see that he was playing for the fellows. Well, he had a list of raises there and I went to Herb Lamb and Bill Garity to find out if they could work on that thing. Mickey had a very good schedule there where little by little he could gradually increase all the employees over a years time and it all sounded so reasonable to me that I recommended the thing to Herb Lamb. He said he'd have to have Bill Garity in on it, too, and he said that Bill Garity was busy with certain engineering jobs that were going on there and I talked to Bill and he said that he would go into it. However, the union wasn't very active and none of us were very active in pushing the thing and the matter slid along so that when this local came in there and tried to get the membership, I found that no raises had been given since that previous time I had talked to Mickey and Herb Lamb and Garity regarding that schedule. None of these raises had been given.

So I suggested that they'd better start giving those raises if they wanted to keep any unions out. They'd have to give those raises. They said that they were willing to do that but they wanted it understood that it was the Federation of Screen Cartoonists who got the raises. They didn't want it to look as if the outside union had forced them in any way to make those adjustments that had long ago been suggested. So I heard no more from that. Then, I should judge, in something like three months ago, Herb Lamb wanted to talk to me. He wondered what was happening to this union and he said, "Well, I'm interested in the welfare of these boys here and I know it's not to their advantage to join these outside unions." And he wondered why I didn't get the thing going



BILL:  
Cont.

and why we didn't get the thing going. I could see that Herb was merely interested in it from a company standpoint and I already knew how we felt concerning the contract and getting a signature on it so I didn't pay any attention to him. I imagine he called Art in at the same time or around that period, so that slid over.

Then I should judge, two months ago, or ten or twelve weeks ago, Gunther Lessing called the grievance committee -- that committee is Hugh Hennessey, Art Babbitt, Jim Baumelster, Norman Ferguson, and myself -- that was about ten weeks ago, is that right Art?

ART:

About right, yes.

BILL:

Did he have any letter to show us at that time? I don't think he did?

ART:

No. That was still in connection with the IATSE having signed up seventeen fellows in the camera department at that time and their suddenly realizing that all the things that we had forecast a year or so before were coming true.

BILL:

That's right. He called us in and evaded the contract issue again. He was willing to give us some paper or other showing that they were willing to bargain with us. Let's have that understood. He has always said that they were willing to bargain with us but they wanted an oral understanding. We had our charter and were designated by the NLRB as the bargaining agent for that studio and he felt that was all we needed. He wanted it just that way and that was what happened ten or twelve weeks ago. He wanted us to be active but he didn't want to sign the contract. We all talked it over -- that is, the five of us -- and we didn't feel that the membership would be interested. We were cold on the thing -- disgusted, in fact. We didn't even call a meeting. Maybe we should have, I don't know. The thing kind of slid off. I had even forgotten about it. Then I got down sick. I was home for seven weeks. I went back to the studio and was there for about two weeks and Walt called me on the phone. I went up and he showed me a letter. The letter was from Attorney Bodle, attorney for the Screen Cartoonists' Guild -- that is the name of their organization -- and it said that they had a majority in our studio. They didn't say any department or anything, they just said they had a majority in the studio -- and I want you to correct me, Art, if my memory is wrong -- and it called for either recognition from the studio or they wanted an election. I forget which.

ART:

I don't think it was that, Bill. I think they wanted to meet with the studio or something.

310



BILL:

11

Anyway, they wanted to get together and dicker with them. I said, "Well, I don't know what they mean by a majority, but if they mean literally a majority, I'm sure it's all bluff." And I said, "However, that they might mean that they have a majority in one small department. I didn't know then what department that might be in. I found out later that it was the first floor, which I gather to be the inbetween department where they were getting their membership. Walt wanted to know what we of the Federation were doing. I told him why -- that the contract wasn't signed and regardless of what Gunther Lessing told us concerning the necessity of such a contract, that the membership felt that the thing was necessary at the time. Walt wanted to know if there was any possibility of bringing the thing to its feet and I told him that without a contract that we wouldn't have any faith in the thing and I didn't think they'd be the least bit interested. That we couldn't get any backing from our membership if we didn't have a contract. I talked about a half an hour.

He called me in the next day and Gunther Lessing was sitting there and they had the contract and it was the same thing again -- the same conversation that took place the day before. And I said, well, I'm just one of a group, let's call the grievance committee in. So the five men on the grievance committee were called in -- I was already there, of course. It was around eleven thirty and Walt had them put on lunch and we talked, beating around the bush until three o'clock. It finally turned out that they were willing to sign this contract with certain reservations. They didn't like certain clauses we had in there. You may remember that we thought when we drew it up that there would be dickering about some of those clauses and that we might have to compromise on some of them.

Anyhow, they were willing to sign the contract if that was the only thing we thought would get the thing going. I don't know the exact conversation that went on there but every man showed that he, personally, was not interested. We were disgusted and we felt the thing was dead or dormant and would take a lot of hard work to get the thing going and we plainly showed that we weren't interested. But the firm was rather insistent and we have talked the thing over between ourselves until our heads ached. We called the lawyer. They wanted me to call him that day. They seemed to want to sign it right now or talk about the possibility of compromising here or there and drawing the thing up. I called the lawyer and he wasn't in. The next day he called back and I told him that at least the studio had come to a point where they were willing and anxious to sign the thing, with possible reservations. I said, "Are you willing to go ahead and go on with this?"

Now I'll have to go back again. We once had him on a retainer fee and when we weren't active he volunteered himself -- he agreed that we would pay him whenever we needed him. We only used him a few times and paid him as we used him. I called him and asked him if he would be willing to go any farther if the firm would be willing to sign the thing. He said he'd have to think it over. He said, "It sounds to me like the



~~BILL:~~  
Cont.

same thing over again. Dilly-dally-dilly-dally. You get all het up and nothing comes of it." He said he'd have to think it over and I said I think they mean it this time. He called me the next day and said he wouldn't be interested in it. I've only gathered and Art interprets his attitude as this -- and Art has seen more of him than I have -- that Janofsky is suspicious that we're a company union. That we're company dominated, and that, in Art's opinion, is why he doesn't want to go any further. That is a possibility there, and the second possibility is that we've been a one-horse outfit and he's gotten tired messing with it. I asked him if he could recommend somebody. He said he couldn't think of anyone off hand. If he got an idea on somebody he'd call me. And I haven't heard from him since. That was four or five days ago, I don't know just when. So the only lawyer that I knew personally -- and it's a man I have only met once -- is Leo Ward. He's a life-long friend of Bill Herwig's, if that's any recommendation, and he knew Jack Dunham. He's a man of about 45 or 46 or so. He handled a case for Jack -- an automobile accident -- and he knew Bill McKee at the studio -- I don't think Bill's there any more. I went to him because he was the only lawyer I knew. I called him on the phone and told him that I was looking for a lawyer that had had union experience. And he said on what side of the fence? And I said "Well, we're an independent union." He said that he had had experience on both sides -- a brewery case -- and he claimed he had union experience. I said, "Well, maybe you'd be interested in this thing." He said, "Well, I'd have to go into it." So I asked him when I could see him and made an appointment and went down. This was with the knowledge and full consent of the grievance committee, and Art went down to correct me if my memory was bad and it was.

We told him frankly how we had been called into the office and the firm had tried to shove us off and put us off for so long and that we had come to bat on certain occasions when emergencies arose and we felt that the studio was just using us to get over humps with and now they were willing to sign the thing and asked if we had any legs to stand on. I told him that I felt obliged to do something if the membership -- if the people as a rule -- felt we ought to do anything about it. So I told him we'd have a meeting and find out how the employees felt. To really do that you'd have to have a mass meeting and get all the employees at that mass meeting which would be terrifically hard. Have them there and take a vote on whether the majority of them wanted to go ahead and revive this thing and revive it on a permanent basis. Get an outside office and hire a business agent to keep the thing alive and keep the membership alive and collect dues and all those things, but we could only get that majority by having a mass meeting and I thought that rather than try to have the mass meeting that I would feel out you fellows first and find out what the general opinion was among you fellows. I sort of feel this way, I don't know whether we have a right to or not, but I sort of feel that if we as a group decide not to do anything -- that should kill the thing. It seems that that should represent the majority of employees



BIA:  
Cont.

because after all we are representatives. I don't know whether that's right or whether I would merely get a "yes" or "no" from you fellows -- at least a majority one way or the other and then if it's yes to go to work for a mass meeting in which we could get the opinions of all the employees. That is where we are today. Art, that is all very sketchy, you may want to add something.

Art:

I'd like to add to that and then I'd like to leave. I had no intention of being here at all tonight because if anyone was thoroughly disgusted, I have been. Right from the start we have always maintained that not only were we trying to keep out an outside union, but we mentioned the specific outside union and that was the IATSE. We never said anything about trying to keep out unions in general. I have always made it very clear that my <sup>own</sup> personal standpoint has been that I have no bones to pick with unionism. I am entirely in favor of it and I think it is necessary. We had a peculiar situation at our studio where we had our own people to think of, and I set aside my own personal beliefs and prejudices because at that time I felt that it was the best thing to do. We never said all in all that we were being mistreated by the studio or that this was a measure to get even. We have always been very fair in what we asked and when we drew up our demands it was with the utmost consideration for the studio and what Walt stands for. Since last Wednesday, or whenever it was that Walt called us in his office, I have been terribly distressed because this whole thing is being misused. I would like to read just a little section out of the Wagner Act.

"RIGHTS OF EMPLOYEES -

"Employees shall have the right to self-organization, to form, join or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing and to engage in concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.

"Section 8

It shall be an unfair labor practice for an employer to interfere with, restrain or coerce employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed in Section 702.

It shall be an unfair labor practice for an employer to dominate or interfere with the formation of any labor organization, or contribute financial or other support to it."

ART:  
Cont.

That's the whole essence of that act. I want you to keep that in mind all the time. Nobody has a right to tell you what to do. If, in your hearts, you find that you are doing the right thing by following the suggestion of the studio, that is your own business. As for me, I don't think it's right. I'm not judging just from my own personal thoughts. I don't feel vindictive about the thing -- I have no bones to pick with anybody. I think it's all due to a misunderstanding on everybody's part. If Walt had taken the trouble to find out what



we  
we were doing and why/were doing it, the contract would have been signed a long time ago. And if the very same contract had been signed even six months ago, I would have jumped at it, because I would have felt that the studio had thought it over and were doing what they were doing because they thought it was right. But now I can only feel that this is being used as an expedient. I think they are going to pull down the wrath of God on their heads. I think the employees are being used. I think that not only will the studio's name be smeared all over the place by every liberal organization but I think it will cause an awful lot of resentment among the employees themselves. I'm particularly upset about the thing for a purely selfish reason. I would have like to have said to Walt, "Well, you're the boss -- whatever you say goes," and then I'd be a good boy. But still at the same time I feel I owe an obligation to all the people that have been foolish enough to follow me into this thing, and I can't feel that it's right. I really can't. If you want to go ahead with it -- if you feel that you are doing the right thing -- if you believe it will help the studio in the long run, and if you believe that you will be helping yourselves and the fellows you work with, then go ahead. But I think it's a mistake. The very fact that Janofsky -- and I think we all have a great deal of respect for him, he's proven himself honest and square and straight shooting and I've never heard anyone complain about him -- the very fact that he won't represent us, if for no other reason, I'd stop and think about it. That's all I have to say.

TRUMAN: Then you're for the other union?

ART: I'm not for any other union.

TRUMAN: But you're against this -- what do you want to do?

BILL: I think Art wants nature to take its course.

ART: I think that I'm labeled a visionary, but so far as these hallucinations go they have turned out to be pretty solid. We are going through a social change and it is inevitable that there will be union organization. Every day the studio is dealing with electricians, unions, actors unions, musicians unions, but aside from that, assuming that I was wrong, assuming that there wasn't that change taking place, I can't have confidence in what Gunther Lessing says today after all the times we have been stalled and pushed around and made fun of. I'm under the impression that he thinks he's dealing with a bunch of children and anything he wants to do is O.K. Again, I'm only one person. I have nothing to gain by joining or not joining. I'm taking a hell of a chance because although the Wagner Act would protect me for speaking the way I do, things could be awfully unpleasant for me at the studio for what I have said right now. I'd like to oblige Walt, and I'd like to do what he wants us to do because all in all he's been pretty square, but I don't think that this is going to do him any good or us any good.



TRUMAN:

I can see the way you feel about it and I don't know what goes on in the animation building, but I know the boys over there and I know that for the last three weeks all the work that has been done in the camera department could have been done by two men, but all the men get their pay checks and they wouldn't if they had another union and they know it. If they had the IATSE in there they would have been getting more money per hour but they wouldn't have had more money at the end of a year. I've talked to these guys at other studios and outside of a choice few these guys get \$1.55 an hour and with their unemployment insurance they make about \$20 a week.

ART:

I'm not arguing about that. There is no argument on that point at all.

BILL:

May I butt in. Let's let the conversation revolve around the question at point. I'm not saying that these questions are out of line, they are perfectly in line, but if we stick right to the point we can get this thing thrashed out tonight. I know that in the past that I, as well as all of us, have gotten off the issue and wasted a lot of time so stick to the point with your questions and opinions.

BRICE:

Along that same line, I have been thinking about this thing for several days, and on one side I personally feel somewhat the way Art does. I feel like I would be quite a stooge to go on with this union the way it is headed. I feel that way and I would resent it merely on personal pride. But this is a little bigger than pride and I guess we would resent it more than the other employees because we have been a little more in on it, so to speak. Aside from feeling like a stooge, maybe we ought to pocket that feeling if we felt we'd be doing ourselves more good by going ahead with it. It seems as if that other union is going to get into the studio and even if we move maybe they will get in anyway. The question is if we should pocket our pride and go ahead being a stooge. Will we gain anything by it. So to figure that out I'd like to find out what is the other union. I think the word "union" scares people. So I have been trying to question people on what this other union is that wants to get into the studio, and there are lots of points in it's favor as far as many people in the studio are concerned and to settle the question I think we should all tell as much as we know about this other union. Because if we try to settle our problem without knowing what this other union is and without knowing if we wanted it more than we wanted going ahead and being stooges here. Maybe that other union would be bad or maybe it would be better and go ahead and put up this front.

BILL:

If there is anyone here that knows enough about this other union, I think they ought to tell us what they know because we ought to know something about it.



REEVES:

I don't know an awful lot but MGM has this union and I talked to a fellow in the camera department and he told me that if they ever brought this union in the studio that there wouldn't be half those camera fellows over there who could keep their jobs because they weren't good enough to be in the union and those fellows would be out the gate and they wouldn't bother with that type of men. And this fellow is one of the head men over there in the MGM camera department in the same union. And furthermore, I have driven some of these fellows to work that belong to certain unions there and they tell me that once you get in that deep water it's pretty hard to back up because if they don't attend those union meetings you get fined five dollars unless you have a doctor's certificate. So I'd like to feel pretty cautious before I jump in.

BRICE:

They say that they get fined for not going to a meeting. Who levies that on them? Do they set them against themselves. I tried to find out about that union and I don't know for sure but they told me that they pretty much run themselves over there. They make their own charters and what-not.

ART:

Let's make this clear. We're not trying to sell one union or the other. The only reason that I bring up my side particularly at this time as I have said before, if only six months ago the studio had accepted out contract our part of contract because we had expected to negotiate, it would have been swell. I would have jumped at it because it meant that everything we had been fighting for was gained. But now, no matter how honorable the intention might be, it must be to the eyes of everybody concerned with the labor movement and in the eyes of the NLRB it will be company union and nothing else. And I'm afraid that as smart as Gunther Lessing is he's not so smart that he can fool the NLRB. By the move they may stymie the union -- they may stymie them for 30 days or half a year or a year -- but during that period they are going to be smeared all over the place. Inevitable they will have to give in because you are starting on the losing side when you are starting with that label. And maybe I'm wrong, but that is the way I feel.

BILL:

The labor board always recognized the wishes of the majority involved and that if somebody thinks they have a majority -- another union -- they can call a vote and the NLRB will have an election. I think it is staid in the act itself that they will have an election and determine for themselves who we want to rule us. So the Labor Board isn't for the unions and not for the company but they are trying to prevent as much strife as they possibly can between labor and capital.

BRICE:

One question, Art. What do you think -- and you too, Bill -- do you think we could turn this union into something with a little teeth in it and keep it along the same lines that we have it or not?

ART:

I don't know. The way I feel about is if we are being told what to do today, what will happen a year from today?



BRICE:

That's what I want to know. That's the way I feel. But do you think we possibly could not be told what to do and make a union out of this or not?

ART:

I don't know. I wouldn't like to be in on it, I'll tell you that.

BRICE:

Bill, do you think that we could make ourselves into a union or are we going to be stooges?

BILL:

I feel that we shouldn't even be interested unless we want to go after it tooth and nail and do our best to make it a permanent thing. I wouldn't be interested in the thing on the wish-washy basis that we have been going. I think a lot of that has been due to the fact that we have never appointed a business agent. If we had had one he would have left after the proper people to keep the thing moving. If we started again, I think we should get that agent as soon as we could. As far as this lawyer is concerned, Leo Ward, that I went to the other day, Art was with me and I tried to explain what had happened including being called into the office and having them suggest that we revive the union. He didn't seem to be alarmed at any of those things. He understood when I went down that he was going to study this thing over and look into it with the view of possibly handling the thing, and I think that if it looked messy and beyond hope and looked like we didn't have a case he would have dismissed it and still may. But as yet he is not alarmed at anything that has taken place. I called him today and we even gave him Janofsky's telephone number and he was going to call Janofsky to find out why he turned us down and I don't know what Janofsky will say to him. I said first of all I want to know if we have a leg to stand on and he didn't feel as though we had done anything wrong. I called him today and asked him if he had talked to Janofsky and he hadn't been able to get in touch with him and I told him that we were having a meeting of the representatives and I told him that in case he could get Janofsky on the wire before quitting time and talk to him then I would like for him to come to this meeting. And he said he didn't think he should do that whether he talked to Janofsky or not, and I said the fellows will have a lot of questions to ask and they'll want to know if they have broken any laws. And he said, "You have not broken the law, as yet." The act says that employers shall not coerce or dominate a union, but it takes a court to distinguish between coercion and persuasion. We are not qualified to say whether we have been coerced or persuaded. It takes a court. I don't know where the border line is. So we can't say that we have been dominated. The fact that they say, "You ought to get up and get this thing going." It would be coercion if there was a threat there that said "Your job is at stake." That would be coercion. Jack Kinney is having trouble with his car. I'd hate to have to push him home tonight. But if he couldn't get the car started I'd feel it was my duty to push him all the way to Burbank and I couldn't say that he was using me to get him home, and there is a sense of duty concerning this time limit on it. If we had had one and that time limit had expired I would say we could all wash our hands and have no obligation. But now the firm wants to



sign the thing and regardless of who's running the firm now, I feel that we are at least obligated to consider the thing seriously. The very fact that we are here and voting is proof that we're not dominated. The court might prove that we are. It might depend on the evidence, but it would take a court to determine that. I think that any company would try to avoid signing as long as they could.

GEORGE:

Art, how well do you know Janofsky?

ART:

Regardless of what Gunther might tell you, he didn't have anything to do with the selection of Janofsky. I went to Walsh of the Labor Board and it was the Labor Board -- Nylander and Walsh--who gave me a list of nine attorneys. And the reason that Janofsky was picked was that he was representing the Screen Writers' Guild and doing a damn good job of it. And incidentally he's representing the Screen Editors, who chose him after they had seen the job he did for us at the Labor Board. And another reason we chose him was that at one time he was on the Labor Board.

GEORGE:

We'd like a reason why Janofsky has faded out of the picture.

BILL:

Jim has talked to him every time I have. He's never said anything to me to lead me to believe that he thinks we are company dominated or that we are in collusion with the firm and Fergy has been there too and he felt that we were not in collusion with the firm but he felt that we were easily influenced by the firm or being twisted around their finger, but that we were not deliberately in collusion with the firm.

FERGY:

To use the man's exact words, almost, he said he wouldn't like to see us get in trouble as far as our jobs were concerned. When the contract had been submitted to the firm a year ago January and nothing had been done until three months ago--in nine months time nothing had been done on the agreement--so he probably sensed that we were just that. That we were a little bit afraid possibly of pushing this thing through to be signed by Walt. So that's the way the conversation ended. He didn't want to see us get in trouble and the best thing to do was to let it ride. And what is happening now this thing here (picks up bulletin of Screen Cartoonists Guild) would inevitably have happened.

BRICE:

One thing that I haven't been straight on is why we have this thing that we call a union, in the first place. Was it a protective measure to keep out another union?

ART:

Yes.

BRICE:

A large number of people in the studio feel that we need a union for a union's sake--not a bluff union. Because since the time we met last year, our collective salaries are not as much as they were a year ago. And there are a lot of people way down the scale who would like a union to be a union.

508



REEVES:

The last time, I said, "Boy, that 's sure some fake." That's what I told the fellows around me. And I think everybody feels the same way. I understood it was to keep our another union; but after I got up here I got kind of enthusiastic. I got kind of sincere. Art had promised me it would be a sincere thing. I don't think I'm too radical. I'm not afraid of Walt, and I know damn well he's not afraid of me and I think we ought to do something with this but let's be considerate about it. I felt a lot of delay this year, but we have had the hardest year we have ever had in this business and the studio has good reason to feel around to find out which way they're going. I think we can make something out of it but let's do it in a good way. Let's be sincere as we first were. The second time we came up here I felt there was something wrong with the setup. I felt that everyone was afraid to express their opinion after the studio wouldn't accept the union.

BILL:

When the blitzkrieg started that had a lot of effect on how everybody felt. Most of them were afraid of their jobs and everybody that would have had a squawk in ordinary times were afraid to squawk then and they were willing to keep their grievances to themselves and I think it affected how everybody felt. You might be interested in knowing that the studio claims that they have lost either 40 or 45% of their revenue by losing the foreign market, and we all know that we went through a hard pull, and I think that's why there were no grievances, or not many that were brought out in the open. I know that when they were cutting secretaries salaries they cut Toby's salary and that kind of touched me because I knew that she was delivering the work and yet I didn't feel as though I wanted to make an issue out of it. I think that I would have if Toby had claimed it as a grievance and that the union should take it up, but inasmuch as she didn't I didn't feel that I should make an issue of it. <sup>because of conditions, being as they were those things were happening</sup> and I think those that could afford that cut -- they didn't like it -- but they were willing to take it and make the best of it.

ART:

May I ask this question, Bill. I think you will recall that we got our charter October 12th or October 20th, 1939, wasn't that right? That's about a year and three months ago. Now I think at that time "Pinocchio" hadn't even been released and I don't think that the war conditions had anything to do with whether the studio wanted to negotiate with us or not. I'm sorry about that later development and Lord knows I wouldn't want to bleed the studio any more than anyone else, but I have an underlying fear that this is not on the up and up.

BRICE:

I think one thing, that the people we represent in the majority don't resent any of the pinching that we have had to take through salary or working harder but they do resent the attitude that they seem to get from the studio.

JACK:

Has anyone ever brought up any grievances to the Grievance Committee?

BILL:

Not in a normal business-like way, but they have been brought up.



TRUMAN: I've talked to Mr. Aller, he's the representative for Local 659, and I've been to every meeting and talked as much as anybody, but this last meeting that we had they really got down to brass tacks and I was there and saw the fellows sign up. I didn't sign myself. As a matter of fact, I talked against it as much as I could. Aller didn't make any promises at all. He didn't say I can do this or I can do that. He didn't have anything to offer and he told us just that. "I won't promise that I can get you any more money. All I can do is try."

ART: It might interest you to know that Aller was one of the ten or twelve guys that I faced at the Labor Board. I wouldn't give you twelve cents for anybody in the IATSE. Don't be mistaken and think I'm trying to plug last of all the IATSE.

TRUMAN: Harry mentioned something a minute ago that somebody said that some of the cameramen would be let out of their jobs if this other union came in. If this IATSE came in you couldn't fire anybody. You'd have to carry dead-heads and all. You just can't get rid of them. Like this Benchley stuff. I happened to be there when one of the electricians turned his work over to the next man and he gets the same pay and everything but this guy said "I can't do it --- go to hell" but he gets the same pay and everything. I'd like to know more about this Screen Cartoon Guild.

HARRY: Before this ever came up, this guy was talking to some other fellows and I was listening. The studio gave a party -- they had this dance out in the country there and that's the way this fellow expressed himself. Nobody was asking him, he was just talking, that's all.

TRUMAN: If we are going to have things like that, I think this other thing is worth fighting for.

BILL: Brice asked a question -- he said what was the value of our union over any outside union? The whole thing was started on the promise that the value of having our own union meant that you could rule yourselves and that you wouldn't be paying dues to somebody outside who was probably interested in it mainly as a source of income and in some cases making purely a racket out of it and not giving anything in return. Not giving you even a voice, but making it solely like a racket. If it did nothing else but that it would have some value. But I'd say on top of that it should give you as much in the form of wages and working conditions as the outside union. I feel that. I feel that if an outside union can get you more money per year than our union can, then I'd say



you'd better take the outside union. That is if you want to make more money. Some people like to work at our place because it's a nice place to work. They are offered more money someplace else and they want to work here. Well, that's their business.

JACK: But how can this union ever be made to have power to exert any influence or strength?

BILL: All it has to do as I understand it is to maintain a majority membership and keep the membership in good standing and at all times be an independent union and not dominated by the company. That is what it would have to do. There might be times when other people would claim that we were company dominated and they might have a case and it might have to be proven in court one way or another.

ART: Let me tell you this, Jack. Mind you, I'm bringing up everything that is not constructive because I want you to think about this. In the first place, those slips that were signed by the fellows stated very specifically that the Federation was representing them for one year. That year has expired some time ago. YOU'd have to start in from the beginning signing up your members all over again. Here's another thing to remember. We speak of not having coercion, not having intimidation and not having any of those things in the studio and less than two hours after we finished that meeting with Walt up in the office the girl that collected the time cards said, "What's this about you reviving that old union?".....

BILL: How do you think the thing got out?

ART: Gunther Lessing told Hal and Hal told Johnny Bond and that's how the whole thing started. Do you know when I got home that night I got two calls from outside unions?

HARRY: Right away when I was called up I said, "I guess it's a union meeting." Nobody said to keep quiet.

JACK: Suppose the organization wanted to reorganize and they wanted to make it a union. How in the world could they ever get enough power?

FERGY: The majority is power. The only point involved, I think, Art, is that in this reorganization we're putting ourselves in wrong with the Labor Board. Isn't that it? Due to the fact that we were an organization and are no longer in effect and consequently an investigation can be started by these people here as to where this whole thing came from all of a sudden. But on the other hand, I never thought of this before, suppose in this business of finding new members you found that you had the majority regardless of the Screen Cartoon Guild?

ART: But there would be nothing to prevent them from claiming before the Labor Board and proving that this was a result of suggestion, let's say, on the part of the employer. An employer is not even supposed to put slips in pay envelopes saying, "You boys are happy -- you know what's good for you." Mr. Ford had his hands slapped for that a few weeks ago.

TRUMAN: Say that Walt has pushed this contract around. Say that everybody signs up with this other union. I'm just asking questions, I'm not



TRUMAN: saying that you're for a guy, I just asked a question and happened to be looking at you, and I think you know more about it because you started this thing. I'm not holding that against you.

Stop  
Clock

REEVES: If this other thing gets in, maybe the studio will go broke.

TRUMAN: My point was that Walt would be against something because they wouldn't sign this other thing. Suppose they press this demand. He could change his production schedule or anything. He didn't want to sign this and he might not want to sign the other thing.

ART: That's a good point. I said at this meeting that he'd never be pushed around and he won't ever be pushed around. If necessary, he'll curtail employment or cut down on production, and I'm not saying that it wouldn't be good if he did. But I can't feel that it would be right if he did.

BILL: He's made two other suggestions--not seriously for the record, but just talking like he does--but he said if the unions got in there and tried to control the business and make him pay bigger wages even if he could afford it, he'd cut the business down to the size that he'd like to have it. And my own interpretation is that he would still stay in business but he would produce just the pictures that he would like to work on--use it as a hobby--and have enough people to do that which I imagine would be a feature every two years.

ART: Immediately I'd call that intimidation.

BILL: Another time he said this, "Hell, if they come in here and try to run me, I'll turn the business over to the employees and let them do what they want." That's what he said. That's just talking.

ART: This is an entirely personal thing with me. As well as Walt has been in the past--I'm not polishing any apples, I've got my foot in too far--he's never taken the trouble to see the other side. He's firmly convinced that all unions are stevedores and gangsters. It has never occurred to him that he might find a decent person to deal with. It's all one-sided. He's said as much--that the only people who belonged to unions are guys who want something for nothing or guys who want to get something out of dues. If that were the case you wouldn't find men like Lawrence Tibbett or Toscanini in unions. I don't think they are trying to get something for nothing and I do think Walt is very much in need of a little education along those lines. Now isn't the time to do it. I think his feeling is so strong against these other unions and one of the first things he can do to stop them is reorganize this Federation.

BILL: Is there anyone here who thinks this Screen Cartoon Guild has an organization in this studio. I was wondering if anyone felt they might have.

BRICE: Maybe they have a majority of inbetweeners and that would give them a majority. They can represent any group. Couldn't they say "We represent the inbetweeners and then pretty soon they get the junior assistants



BRICE: and then the assistants.

JIM: The animators at Schlessinger's signed up and they were the only ones who signed up at that time.

BILL: That's an awful state of affairs.

REEVES: They eat around the edges 'till they get the whole thing.

TRUMAN: The fellows who tried to look at it sensibly felt about like this, that if the IA got the camera department, which they were trying awfully hard to get, if they got them signed up they'd be quiet for awhile and then eventually try to get the others. Just like the projectionists--if they don't want them to show anything they just say it doesn't have a union label. They can make the camera boys think that so and so is not using union labor.

BILL: Using one group as leverage against the others.

TRUMAN: That was the department they wanted because their camera union was very tight.

BRICE: Art says that we are not trying to put one union against the other, but if we're ~~tryin~~ not trying to decide which of these unions we want, what are we trying to decide?

ART: Actually, should we go ahead with this reorganization.

BRICE: But we don't know if we could reorganize legally or not and we don't know whether, if we do reorganize, we would go on being a bunch of stooges and we don't know what the other union offers and whether they are a bunch of gangsters or what. And I don't know what I'm weighing one against the other.

BILL: Well, none of us do. As far as officers are concerned, the by-laws state that we are elected for one year or until our successors are elected. As far as the law is concerned, I'm still president and Art is still vice-president and Art says that may be we are a king without a country because that application that they signed gave us permission to represent them for one year. Those are things that somebody else would have to determine. We have to make a step--we can't wait until those things are thrashed out. We have to go ahead and start somewhere. And I'd like to ask a question--it could be a vote. Do you feel--you girls and boys--do you think that you are qualified to represent the opinions of your department? If you were to vote no, then I would put it up as a personal proposition. Are you personally interested in furthering this thing and if you are I think we'd all be open to suggestion as to what to do then. Maybe call a mass meeting and find out from the employees how they feel. Art keeps saying that we have no membership, but we could have a mass meeting to determine what those employees want to do. I would feel obliged to continue if the majority want to. Or I would be willing to fold up if the majority wanted that.

HANSELL: Are we dead now?

BILL: It would take a court to prove that.

ART: The slips authorized the union to represent you for one year. Another



union could prove that the thing had not been active and suddenly became active.

**BILL:** They can't say we are dead and then walk in. They have to prove that they have a majority.

**FERGY:** Look on the brighter side. We might have a majority.

**GEORGE:** I can't quote any names because I can't get any names but since the salaries were out -- we had a lot of salaries out -- but I heard through the mouth-to-mouth proposition that this union was coming in and that the fellows were signing up against their will and I have been asked what was the matter with our union and they were only signing for protection and to make more money and because of the fact of the position I hold they naturally wouldn't say much to me. But lately, in the past month, I have heard so much about the union and I have been called up in the office upstairs and they asked me to do something but the percentage is so great among the inbetweeners -- and that's the lower floor -- and there is a great percentage among the assistants and last week it was quoted that they have a majority. But they got the majority against their will and if this thing would come to life I think they would be glad to go with our agreement. They don't want something where there are any big dues to pay because most of them are for the studio in spite of the fact that they are getting lowly paid. They are still for the studio. I tried to find out what the other union's terms were -- I knew our side -- and I would only get vague answers of \$25 or \$30 for inbetweens and \$40 or \$45 for assistants and \$85 for junior animators. These are minimums.

**BILL:** Do these other unions pay more to the inkers than Disney?

**RAE:** I don't know.

**Fergy:** Do you know anything, Art?

**ART:** I just remember these things that I read in the Hollywood Reporter, that the inkers have a minimum of \$20 a week. That's \$2 more than the girls here get.

**BILL:** Our contract called for a minimum of \$20. I noticed on the contract that was sent up to the studio somebody had expressed themselves in pencil on the side and I noticed that that figure was questioned. There was another figure questioned -- I think it was the inbetweens minimum. Those were questioned. But those are knots that would have to be pounded out. Personally, I'm convinced of this, that Walt all along has shown a tendency to neglect the people in those jobs, and I think some work would have to be done on that if we ever tried to start this thing. I think that's the first thing we'd have to do, because Walt isn't interested in them. He's interested too much in what he calls the "creative and inspirational help". And he isn't interested and doesn't respect those jobs where there is tedious but absolutely necessary work and hard work. And that's one thing that I'd be willing to work as hard as the devil on myself.



FERGY: Do these people know that this thing is up for signing with the company?

BILL: These people here know that the firm is willing to sign. Willing to sign after a session with the executive board.

FERGY: The outcome of the whole situation was this. They were going to submit to us a scale of wages and we were supposed to balance our agreement against theirs and then the battle was supposed to start. That's the state of the situation right now. It's a question of getting a union back again. It's a question of organizing a union again and negotiating on the demands and from there on everybody is about as wise on it as I am. As for how far the thing can get before the Cartoon Guild stops it or demands an investigation of it, I don't know.

ART: I don't know either. I want to mention again that if this had happened six months ago, I'd have jumped at it. The only suggestion I have to offer is that I think at best it would be a temporary measure.

REEVES: I don't think it will be if they put their John Henry's down there. And it looked awfully nice at the time we talked it over, and I don't think any of us here benefited by it, but we were doing something nice for someone else.

BRICE: The reason this was originally formed was to fight a union and it looks as though that's what it is being organized for again and I think that before we do anything we ought to find out what this other union is all about.

ART: We never organized to fight this union.

BRICE: I was trying to find out and I found out that they say -- and this may be gossip -- that we would still control ourselves. We could still elect our own president and have our grievance committee? Is that true or not?

ART: If I were president of the Screen Cartoonists' Guild, I could tell you.

BILL: You'd have to know their by-laws to know that.

BRICE: Maybe we ought to find that out.

BILL: There are an awful lot of people in our studio whereas the other studios are smaller. It is quite possible that we have more employees than all the other studios put together. So if the membership here ruled the thing like a decent union should, why then I think we would have a voice. If they said "Well, Fleischers out -- you guys strike." It might be that we'd vote not to strike. I don't know. I'd have to see a lawyer about that.

REEVES: We wouldn't want to have to do a walk out every time a carpenter drops a nail.

ART: We'd have to find out.



BRICE:

As I understand it it's another union that we're fighting and all I know about the other union is hearsay and I've heard from fellows at MGM that they're very happy with it and they like it and think it's fine. They get their forty hour week and there's not any bullying and they don't have to pay too high dues and they're satisfied with it. And no one that I have talked to at the studio seems to know definitely much about this outfit. Everything is hearsay. If we can find out what it is we can find out what we're fighting.

TRUMAN:

Can't we organize without fighting. Can't we organize to benefit ourselves without fighting anybody.

BRICE:

O.K. But I understood and I think everybody understood that we were organizing to keep this other union out. That was the reason it was formed. P.S. - We'll get some better salaries for inbetweeners. It was organized to fight something which doesn't exist to fight.

ART:

It was just the one union we were fighting. We even had meetings with the Screen Cartoon Guild we were so anxious to maintain a nice relationship. There has never been any question of fighting them or anyone else.

BILL:

Brice, after all the membership makes a union what it is. You can make it primarily a wage proposition if the majority think it ought to be that.

FERGY:

The strength of a union within your own studio is the fact that you are governing yourself. Your's not involved with any other outside studio. That's a point in the favor of our union.

BILL:

There has been a lot of discussion back and forth. I was wondering how we could bring this meeting to a head. In answer to Brice, I would say this, if we were to continue this thing the first thing we would want to do would be to have a mass meeting and at the mass meeting the lawyer could get up and tell you where you stood. He could tell you what rights you have. Whether we have broken the law or not and what our future possibilities are. I think first of all we have to get past this point here some way or other. Maybe it isn't legal that we should vote for the majority over there, but as far as the records show we are still representatives whether we have any membership or not so I think we're entitled to vote. So I think we ought to vote on that one point, whether we should prolong the union or let it die.

FERGY:

That would be a personal feeling. We'd have to go on from there and find out what the mass feeling was.

ART:

You'd have to refer it to the entire studio.



JIM:

There is only one person here who knows how his department feels. The camera department is the only one who knows how people feel. I think it would have to be a mass meeting.

FEROY:

All that is going to be voted on here is does this body want to start the thing going.

BILL:

I don't want to go past this night without knowing whether you personally want to go ahead with this thing or not. Do you want to raise your hands or vote on a piece of paper.

TRUMAN:

I want to say something about what Jim mentioned. You mentioned the camera department and all I can say is the way most of the fellows feel. There are fellows in the camera department who are in favor of the IA and in favor of anything and everything. Some of the guys are plain lumberjacks and just want to belong to a union.

JIM:

You at least know that some of them are that way and some aren't.

JOAN:

As far as our department is concerned, if you were trying to re-organize again I think you'd have a hard time because they are tired of being fluffed off. But I think if they knew the thing was starting up again as a bona-fide union of our own and on the level and that they knew that probably the contract would be signed with maybe a couple of little changes as Bill said, then you might be able to get them started again, but right now they are pretty dead.

RAE:

I think that's the general feeling.

BILL:

I want to say this. The other day at Walt's office the matter of the contract came up and there were two clauses in there that were discussed and one was the closed shop idea. It is not exactly closed shop, it's a union shop. A closed shop is where you can't hire anybody unless he belongs to the union. The other is the idea that you can hire an apprentice and if he stays with the firm he has to belong to the union. They didn't like the three months angle. They think it should be six months with three months grace. If they want to stall along they would have three month's grace but after that they'd have to go. The firm, I think, is going awfully strong to concede that point. However, there is this one selfish angle from their viewpoint, if they want this union that is one way of keeping it intact. They are making a sacrifice in one respect but they gain something, too. But I think that is a necessary part of the union. I think they must join the union, even with that extended time. I think that is reasonable, because in the art field especially it's hard to tell whether a fellow has talent or not in six months. Especially the young fellows. That is one point. The other point was the question of a five day week. It was mentioned rather casually but it developed into quite a thing. I don't think there is any opportunity for us having a five day week for some time to come. The firm claims they have figures on the week they tried it in the summer and that they definitely lost a lot of work. They thought the people would work hard to get their Saturday's off and would accomplish as much, but there was a world of difference. Now



some boys take Saturday morning off or they will go home early -- there is a certain amount of that. But when they had a five day week they claimed that a lot of them were going home Friday afternoon because they were getting week-end possibilities and to get an earlier start on the week-end they'd go home Friday noon and there was such a loss of production they had to go back on it. They assured us they were as anxious as we were to get a five day week and thought that maybe the thing should be started on an every-other-week basis and work into it. So it may be a matter of years, God only knows, but I think you ought to know that that one clause is going to be tough.

S/P

REEVNS:

U  
U

That wasn't a fair judging because at that time they had just finished a big feature production and they just threw fellows on stuff and on the shorts and said "Keep 'em busy if you have to have them sweep fellows". There was nothing for them to do but sit in a room and work on creative stuff. That wasn't a fair trial.

BILL:

U  
U

I'd like to vote on this -- and let's call it a personal vote -- on whether or not we want to continue, and then I think that those who must go home can. Those that wish to stay around and talk about certain things may. I think we have discussed things thoroughly enough and laid the cards before you and I think you know almost as much as we do if not more.

JOAN:

U  
U

Do you think -- really think -- that supposing we did decide to re-organize again, do you suppose we would be building up to another let-down like we were before. Supposing we went to all the work of getting everything started and getting the membership back and do you think we'd be fluffed off again later. They might change their minds again and that would be cute, too.

BILL:

U  
U

That's a possibility. I couldn't guarantee that they'll sign the thing. I really don't know. But they seem to be willing and I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you if I didn't think they meant business. I wouldn't even bring it up if I didn't think the thing had a good chance of sticking, if we get a business agent and get re-established.

BRICE:

U  
U

Do you think we'd get anything to show anybody or would they just sign a letter or something and then we'd go right on working?

BILL:

I think we should get a little publicity on the thing.

FERGY:

U  
U

Draw your own conclusions, Brice, but Walt said he'd rather see a union in the studio governed by the men in the studio. He'd rather do business with something like that. One of his fears is the fact the he feels that an outside union getting in there that there is a possibility of it developing into one of those unions, you know. As Art says, he's very definitely against unions on that basis because he thinks they're all that way. If you can figure something behind that, that's your own opinion. But those are his words, practically.

BILL:

He's felt that all along. From the very first day. If he had thought it over he would have known that he'd rather have a union within the firm than the outside unions.

RUSS:

You spoke of a mass meeting. Why not have the men vote



RUSS: on that at a mass meeting and as Jim says, they have all lost  
Cont. faith in the thing.

BILL: I agree that it should be a mass meeting.

FERGY: I think that you have to present them with something at the  
mass meeting. The thing has to be a setup "This is what you're  
going to get -- do you want it or don't you want it?"

REEVES: We haven't anything to call.

JACK: Why don't you bring it up in the groups instead of getting a hell  
of a big mob.

GEORGE: Why can't we represent our groups?

BILL: Can these other unions --- can the Screen Cartoon Guild --- tell  
these men how much money they are going to get before they put  
their names on the line.

RUSS: I think it has just been what they have read in Variety and the  
Hollywood Reporter.

FERGY: They knew the scale.

ART: I'm actually under the belief that the guys that signed with  
another union signed because they were discontented and I'm sure  
it wasn't all salary.

BILL: What would it be if it wasn't salary? Fresh air? Opening the  
windows or something?

ART: We can be funny about it if we like but I'll give you an example.  
Somebody gets fired. You know everyone that gets fired has a  
grievance. He's all right and the studio is all wrong. That  
causes a lot of dissension and it's something like that that makes  
the guys want to join a protective organization.

BILL: They tell these fellows that they couldn't get a job outside  
unless they were a member of this union. Of course, the studio  
lawyer says that that isn't the case. That if you got a job at  
Mintz, the union would be obliged to sign you up. That is what  
they're using as a selling point and it has a lot of force and  
aside from that there is salary. As far as wanting screen  
credit goes, I don't think anyone is signing because they want  
screen credit. And there are six in a room but after all some of  
these other studios are all one room, with little wooden partitions.

TRUMAN: Harry mentioned the cameramen at MGM. One of Allers' selling  
points was that he'd signed MGM and Schlessingers. They signed  
about four guys. That's all they've got.

REEVES: I was thinking, Bill, are we going to have a mass meeting and  
give them our agreements on one side and then are we going to  
read what the other union has to offer? This other union will  
have a five day week and we'll say every other Saturday.

BILL: Harry, that other union can't promise them anything. They can



BILL: tell them what they stand for but they couldn't tell them what they'd get.  
Cont.

5  
11  
FERGY: Could it be put this way, if everybody is in agreement whether we want to go through with it or not could they go through and find out if the guys want to attend a mass meeting, that the union is starting up again and how do they feel about it. There is going to be a mass meeting. Would you attend? And then have the meeting and lay the names down and find out what you have got.

BILL: I'd hardly have the courage to call a mass meeting if I thought that more than half of these people here wanted to drop the union.

5  
11  
FERGY: I'm looking for a way out of this nicely, to be frank about it. And at the same time I feel that if the majority want the union I'd be obliged to stick along with it until another election of officers because I don't think I can fill the bill, but if we can find out who wants to join this thing and find out that we are handicapped there, there is no use putting on a mass meeting. There is no use having a mass meeting and have thirty guys turn out. I think we should find out through personal contact.

5  
11  
BILL: I think we ought to canvass this crowd here and find out at least personally if you think we ought to go ahead. I think we should vote to see if we should have a mass meeting. Just tell them what the situation is. Just tell them there is an agreement drawn up, would you attend a mass meeting to hear what this thing is.

Vote is taken of representatives present.

Result: 14 in favor of going ahead with development of union.

2 Opposed.

5  
11  
BILL: That means we contact people to find out whether they want to attend a mass meeting and have them all there to get a true opinion of what they want to do.

Motion made and seconded that meeting be adjourned.

Motion is carried.

Respectfully submitted,

8/15  
Jean Ritchie  
Secretary

December 16, 1940

ONS