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GREAT WOMEN ARTISTS? Yes, indeed. More than 200, some hitherto unknown, are represented in a growing collection of slides compiled by Union WAGE [Union Women's Alliance to Gain Equality] which will be shown Saturday, May 4, at 7:30 p.m. at Jenny Lind Hall, 2267 Telegraph ave., Oakland. For tickets

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Lithographs by Kathe Kollwitz



CHAPLIN with Dawn Addams in "A King"

films

'A King In NY' is back

A KING IN NEW YORK. Written, directed and produced by Charles Chaplin. At the Clay theater.

SAN FRANCISCO

IN THE later 40s and 50s Charles Chaplin, the greatest comic filmmaker of all time, became disgusted and not a little horrified by the wave of McCarthy-un-American Activities Committee-type fascism that was sweeping the country. Threatened and bullied, his films banned and picketed, warned of possible deportation because of his generally progressive views, he chose self-imposed exile, and took his family to Europe. His anger against the repressive forces demanded some form of artistic expression; a few years later this film, a savage satire, was made in England. Intended to show people in the U.S. the insanity dominating their social scene, it was refused an import license by the government, and as a result was shown everywhere in the world but here.

The reason for the boycott is clear. Never has a film been so explicit in its attack upon bigots, ignorance and cruelty. The humor is visceral and cuts with a broadsword rather than a stiletto through the hypocritical political repression of that period. Never before has a film mocked and exposed officials wallowing in anti-Communism. Never before have we seen dramatized — and ridiculed — the House un-American Committee as it threatens and bullies hapless schoolteachers who willingly speak of themselves but refuse to become stoopigeons, which the committee demands of them as a price for their freedom from prison. In

the end Chaplin himself, as King Shadov, is subpoenaed to appear, and he routs the committee by symbolically putting out the fire. Enough. This has to be seen, and not spoiled by the telling here.

THE STORY, like all those written by Chaplin, is disjointed, hilariously comic and in turn very serious. Chaplin plays an exiled monarch of a mythical kingdom who arrives in New York and discovers himself to be penniless. Manipulated into TV advertizing by a beautiful woman, he becomes an overnight sensation in the world of product promotion, and is once again wealthy.

His goal is Utopian; he has a plan for the peaceful use of atomic energy which he hopes will be accepted by the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. As a deposed king they will not bother to listen to him, but when he becomes a celebrity after advertizing deodorants and whiskey, they seek him out. While waiting for them he visits a progressive school where by accident he comes upon a 10 year old prodigy who is reading Das Kapital. The lad, sensitively played by Chaplin's son, Michael, is a passionate and fearless advocate of Marx, and is separated from his parents who are being hounded by the House un-American Committee for their Communist affiliation.

The plot moves between the zany satire of the advertizing business and the all-too-sane horror of political repression: Chaplin makes them part of each other. The tragedy comes at the end, when Chaplin says goodbye to the little boy whom he has come to love as well as admire.

TECHNICALLY there has been a sometimes disturbing contradiction in Chaplin's later pictures. After he retired his classic comic tramp, his symbol of modern society's victim, the characters he played were more realistically related to contemporary society; Hitler as in "The Great Dictator," the mercenary murderer in "Monsieur Verdoux" and now King Shadov.

The politics in his themes frequently clashes with the hilarious sight gags and absurd visual routines. But these latter are his trademark; indeed they would be missed were they not in the film. Yet there are moments when one feels the farce is an intrusion, so important is the central action.

Not always.

In this, perhaps his greatest and most important of latter day films, there are many moments when laughter is as joyous as it is explosively uncontrollable. But now and then Chaplin arbitrarily interrupts the more serious moments of the story he tells to inject laughs. Perhaps this is a quibble. The film is a work of art.

"King in New York" comes to us at long last, 18 years after it was made. A conspiracy between the government and elements in the film industry kept this film from the U.S. people when they needed it most. Do they feel more secure today that they permit it to be shown?

Better late than never? Whether or not, don't let anything keep you from seeing it.

—LESTER COLE