

You Might Find It Interesting

(Note: The opinions expressed here are those of the reviewer of this book and do not reflect the editorial opinions of Organized Labor or the San Francisco Building Trades Council.)

Modesty is a rare quality among writers; so rare that it is hard not to warm to an author who begins his book (The Case of the Legless Veteran, New Park Publications, \$1) as does Mr. James Kutcher:

"In most respects I am an ordinary man. I have no special talents. I never showed any capacity for leadership. In school my marks generally put me in the middle sections of the class, sometimes lower. I never rose above the rank of Pfc in the Army. Often, when I got into a discussion, I don't think of the right point to make until hours afterward. I was active in a political organization for over ten years and never made a speech in all that time. I am a 'Jimmy Higgins' by nature, the fellow who collects tickets at the door and sweeps up the hall after a meeting. People like me generally get their names into the papers twice, when they come into the world and when they go out."

The truth, of course, is that Mr. Kutcher is not a professional writer. He is a man who would most likely never have taken the cover off a typewriter unless he had experienced two crushing blows in his life.

The first was that he lost both legs in the Battle of San Pietro in Italy in 1943; the second was that he was discharged from his job with the Veterans' Administration in Newark, New Jersey in 1948 after having been charged by the VA Loyalty Board with being a member of the Socialist Workers' Party. He made no secret of this membership. The American Legion, no sympathizer (one would think) with the SWP, found this persecution of Kutcher too much for it to take, its National Americanism Commission remarking: "His job in the VA was definitely non-confidential or sensitive. . . . The Kutcher case is therefore an almost perfect example of bureaucratic bungling in how not to handle a doubtful loyalty case."

The Washington Post, in the course of a long editorial on the Kutcher case, raised one of the most relevant questions concerning this humble victim of the madness of his time:

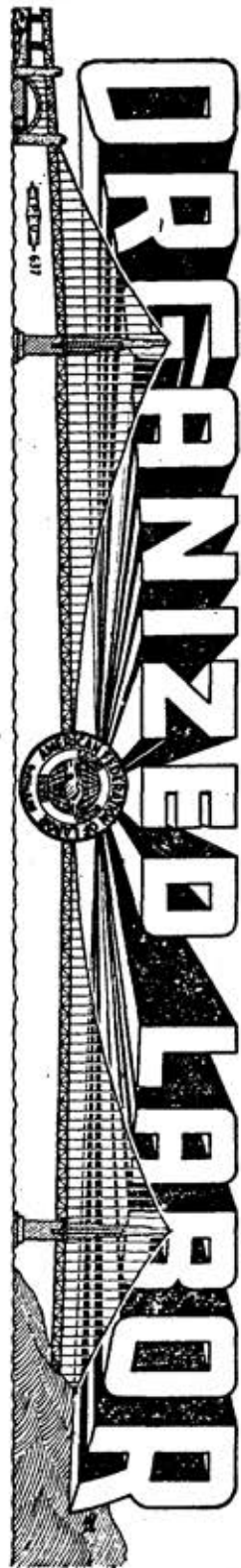
grievous wounds, a little compassion in unorthodoxy, and how his country, in whose service he became a man dependent on artificial legs, whisks away the tiny bit of security he had to find him a pariah.

What must he think of us, who permit this to happen? His book answers this question. It is better than an intelligent answer; it is a compassionate one. He forgives us. God help him.

"One cannot help wondering," the Post's editorial comments, "why the United States goes to so much trouble to punish James Kutcher. The loyalty program is supposed to protect the national security. But the national security needs no protection from a legless file clerk working in the Newark branch of the Veterans' Administration. The punishment of Mr. Kutcher serves no national interest. It serves no interest save vindictiveness. And Mr. Kutcher is made a target of this vindictiveness solely because he entertains certain unorthodox and unpopular political opinions."

Those of us who, perhaps because of early religious training, tend to think of martyrs as extraordinary persons looming up as tall as their terrible fates, will get a shock from Kutcher's book. This is the martyrdom of Mr. Everyman; all he has known are depression, war,

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL



PUBLISHED SINCE 1900

Year—No. 31

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1954

Whole No. 2733