Rob Wagner's Script

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THE HOODED BRETHREN RIDE AGAIN

THROUGHOUT the war—while we and our allies were fighting for a better world—a home-grown menace lay coiled in the dark, sharpening its fangs and planning a sinister postwar future of its own. We were spared from it during the war years because America was too strong in democratic unity. So the menace could do no more than wait and bide its time, building up strength and cementing its ties with other vicious underground forces.

That it succeeded is apparent — for only a few weeks ago, atop a mountain in Georgia, a gigantic cross suddenly burst into flame, as advertised. Newspapermen and photographers had been invited to attend. Even children were on hand to witness the event. And it was an event, for the menace had finally uncoiled and lashed out. The Ku Klux Klan had reared its ugly hood once more!

Its bold rebirth was no surprise to those who are acquainted with KKK aims. They expected its resurgence, and for good reasons. The Gerald L. K. Smiths have been stirring up race hatred since V-J Day. (Klansmen live for race hatred.) The economic and social difficulties of reconversion have been even greater than expected. (Depressions, economic insecurity, and unemployment are grist for the Klan's mill. Happy people do not hate.) Add this to the plans of organized labor to unionize the underpaid, underprivileged workers—on a "no discrimination" basis—in the South, and the factors in the KKK's new appearance become clear. (Perhaps this is where the cross-burners received their funds, from those same Southern industrialists who do not want to pay decent union wages.)

It did not take very long for the flames to spread. In many regions of

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the South, moth-eaten white robes began tasting the night air again, guns and bullwhips were cleaned and oiled for the campaigns of terror to come, and peaceful secluded groves were earmarked for chilling, future programs. The rest of the country watched, waiting to see what would happen next, wondering why nothing was being done about such obvious native fascism below the Mason-Dixon Line. Yet in our own Congress, Rankin of Mississippi was horrified when his un-American Committee was asked to investigate the Klan. He could not understand why, he claimed.

"White Supremacy!" was the shout in the Georgia night.

"Segregation," "No Labor Unionizing," "Pure White Protestant Americans Only," "Down with Jews and Catholics!"

These were the slogans from the mountaintop. And we comforted ourselves by thinking it could happen only in the South.

Then, on a dark night up near Big Bear, California, the KKK served notice that it had not been halted by anything so flimsy as a mythical boundary line. It announced its presence in California, in force, and ready for action. The flaming cross at Big Bear was its challenge to all those who disagreed with its principles.

Attorney General Robert Kenny accepted that challenge in the interest of the state's decent citizenry. His first investigation revealed the following: The KKK has 100,000 members in California, and is trying to recruit more in order to get its terrorist program against minorities underway immediately; it is reported that the homes of Klansmen are completely equipped with guns and ammunition.

The Ku Klux Klan is ready to roll!

Intelligent citizens of California were horrified and bewildered. A costly war against such ideologies had just been concluded. The blood of thousands of young Americans who had given their lives fighting such terrorism was not yet dry in their foreign graves. If the Klan was going to take up where Hitler had left off, why had these boys died? Why? . . .

But even while Robert Kenny was investigating the KKK at Big Bear, the hooded brethren of hate were at work in Los Angeles. A cross was set on fire before the modest home of a

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Negro who refused to bow before the rulings of a "restrictive tract society." Following the burning of the cross, threatening letters were sent. Next on the list was a synagogue, which was desecrated and vandalized at night. On the wall a calling card was left—the Swastika. A thrice-wounded Chinese-American veteran of General Stillwell's Burma heroes and Merrill's Marauders also felt the same sting. The little house he purchased on West 56th Street is not for anyone but a Pure White Protestant American, it seems.

These were the first noticeable movements of the local Klan. They were just beginning to stretch their postwar muscles. They were just getting into condition for the bigger things to come. Crosses and KKK symbols before a USC Jewish fraternity house and a Negro's home were merely introductory activities. Their plans go much further than such methods against these particular minority groups.

The Klan history proves this. From flaming crosses and threatening letters, the night-riders progress to kidnappings, floggings, dynamiting and *lynching*. From Negroes, Jews, Chinese-Americans, Nisei and Mexicans, they will graduate to Catholics, all citizens of foreign extraction and—finally—to anyone, white protestant American or not, who does not support their principles.

The veterans of World War II were quick to recognize the menace of Ku Kluxism. They had met it before, in the shape of European and Japanese Fascists. John Sheppard, state chairman of the American Veterans Committee, started the counter-attack. He demanded, in the name of AVC, that the law enforcement agencies immediately . . . "track down the persons guilty and prosecute them; furthermore, that this prosecution does not cease until the last of the persons implicated, no matter who they may be, are brought to justice."

Other civic and democratic organizations joined in the AVC's protest against persecution, bigotry, and terrorism. But they were powerless in the face of the Klan's legal right to existence, despite its avowed purpose of creating *race hatred*. They were also unsuccessful in getting sufficient pro-

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tection for those people already under Klan attack. H. G. Hickerson—the Negro before whose home the first local cross was burned—could not get a police permit to carry a gun for his own defense. (Yet the KKK is fully armed and lists among its members such artillery-packing braves as a working deputy sheriff and a Kleagle who was said to be one of Gerald L. K. Smith's bodyguards.)

Something had to be done immediately—and Attorney General Robert Kenny did it. Before taking any punitive steps against the organization, he brought the matter before Judge Alfred Paonessa's court. There, he demanded that the Klan be outlawed on the following two counts:

1)—The Klan's failure to conform to its articles of incorporation which would keep it legally alive.

2)—Because it is not a benevolent or eleemosynary institution, but an organization desiring to teach racial hatred through force, violence and intimidation.

Witnesses of KKK atrocities appeared to support Kenny's stand. Only one man tried to intervene as a "friend of the court," when the case opened. He was Attorney R. C. W. Friday, head of the "People's Lobby," which backed recalled-councilman Meade McClanahan, the G. L. K. Smith supporter.

As a result of the overwhelming evidence presented by Attorney General Kenny, Judge Paonessa outlawed the Ku Klux Klan as a legal organization in California.

This is the first step, yes. But it is only a small one. Total victory must be won if we are going to have the kind of democracy our Constitution and the Bill of Rights guarantees. The Klan and other groups of its ilk cannot be outlawed permanently by any court. They must be stamped out by the people, by all of us. They must be exposed, reviled, and abolished by the whole of America. For what they advocate is lawless and medieval bigotry, the spreading of race hates, the persecution of the very minorities who helped found, build and defend this nation of free men.

To allow them to carry out their plans against, first—racial minorities,

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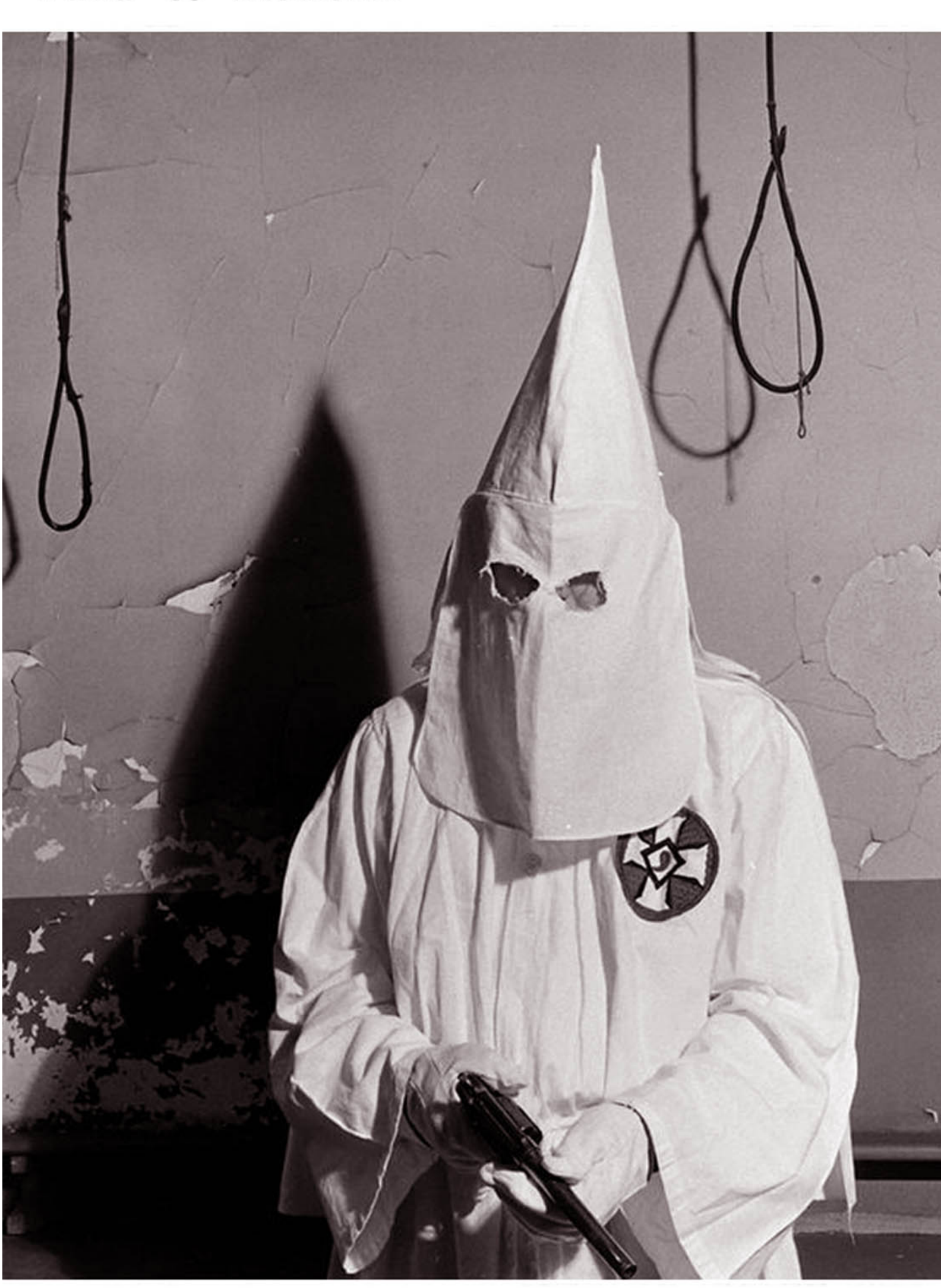
second—religious minorities, third—trade unions, fourth—progress in any form—is to set the American clock back to the Hitler Germany of 1933. These groups are the same that the Nazis had to crush before they could get into power. They succeeded. The rest is history.

The KKK would die a natural death, permanently, if there were no poverty, no economic insecurity, no ignorance. But these are social diseases that only long-range planning can hope to solve. In the meantime, we must all do whatever we can in our homes, in our schools, in our daily contacts to break down the Hitlerian KKK racial and religious myths. To fail at this, is to admit that fascism is stronger than democracy.

One of the men who has a plan for defeating the Klan permanently is Representative Ellis E. Patterson. It is his contention that: "If these preachers of hate ever become successful in pitting one race against another—one religion against another—they will have America where they want it, on the road to fascism."



Patterson's answer to this is outlined as five preventative courses of action. They are as follows:

1)—We can enact a Fair Employment Practices Bill both in the State and Nation to prevent job discrimination.

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2)—We can stop the mails from being used by native Fascists to spread their poison.

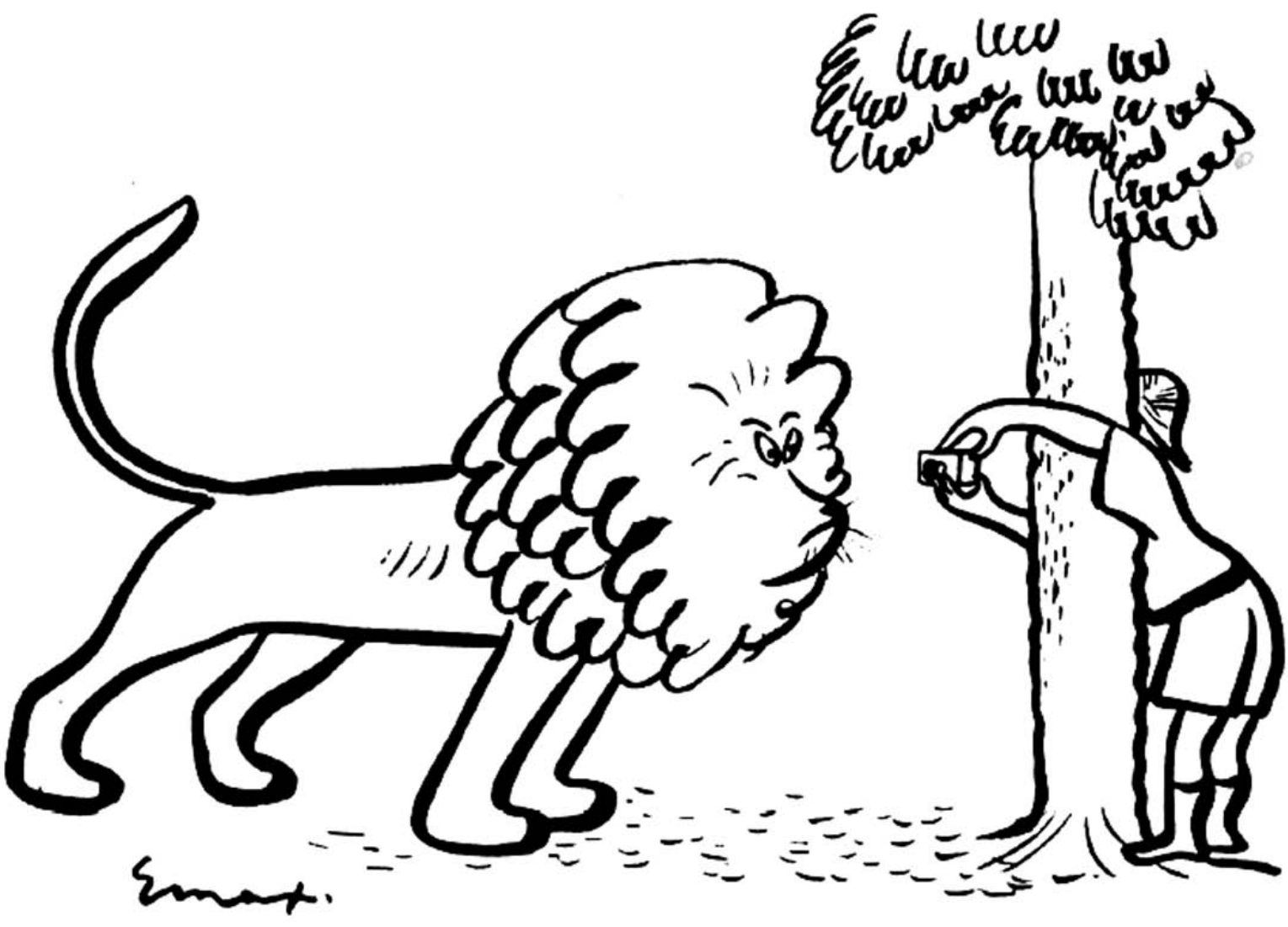
3)—We can improve our educational system and make it teach the true meaning of democracy and the facts of equàlity.

4)—We can see to it that the civil rights law of our state and nation have teeth in them to protect all citizens.

5)—And we can, as citizens, as office holders, as human beings, stand up and fight against everyone who uses racial discrimination as a weapon in the cause of reaction.

Mr. Patterson sums up the situation with these words: "We must fight for those economic rights which Franklin D. Roosevelt saw were the foundation of our security and the greatest insurance against the spread of fear and hatred."

From where we stand these words make good sense. —*M. J. King*



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