

Mr. Rice's Resignation

On January 23 Elmer Rice, the well-known playwright, resigned as regional director for New York of the WPA Theater Project. Mr. Rice's resignation was accepted with obvious alacrity by Jacob Baker, national administrator of the WPA arts, but it is difficult to see how the incident can fail to be embarrassing to the Administration.

Mr. Rice, who says that he was promised an absolutely free hand and that partisan politics would not enter into the matter, charges the government with bad faith and a determination to exercise a censorship which it had agreed to withhold. Ostensibly the clash came over the first edition of the proposed "Living Newspaper," which dealt with the Ethiopian situation, but Mr. Rice insists that the issue raised here was merely a pretext. Baker and Hopkins, he says, were alarmed by the possible political consequences of two other proposed scripts, one dealing with relief, the other with the plight of the share-croppers, and were determined to force his resignation on a less clear-cut issue. Accordingly Mr. Cabinet just before the production of "Ethiopia," issued an order forbidding the representation on the stage of any foreign ruler, minister, or Cabinet member, well knowing that "Ethiopia" could not be presented under the ruling and that Mr. Rice would be compelled to resign. Miss Hallie Flanagan, though sympathizing with Rice, feels that the whole project is too important as a relief measure to be dropped at the present moment and will remain as national director of the theatrical and musical projects of the WPA. Philip Barker has been appointed temporarily to fill Mr. Rice's place.

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