

**theatres . . .**

**Humor mingled with deep meaning**

By Tom Marks

The Charles Playhouse' latest offering, 'Major Barbara', is a superb production of one of George Bernard Shaw's greatest plays. The play deals with war, religion, and poverty in the manner which Shaw describes as "the tragicomic irony of the conflict between real life and the romantic imagination."

The play takes its conflict and story from the Undershaft family: Andrew Undershaft, millionaire, armorer extraordinaire, infernal old rascal, and founding heir to a strange tradition; his wife, Lady Britomart, the daughter of the Earl of Stevenage; their daughter Barbara, a major in the Salvation Army; their son Stephen and daughter Sarah, two simpering idiots of the first order; and Adolphus Cusins and Charles Lomax, fiancées of Barbara and Sarah.

Lady Britomart, who has been separated from Andrew for many years, discovers that he plans to fulfill the Undershaft tradition by disinheriting Stephen and leaving his "death and devastation factory" to a foundling who will be given the name Andrew Undershaft. She invites her husband to visit and see his children, whom he has not seen since they were babies, and hopes that she will be able to persuade him not to go thru with his plan. Andrew is not

to be dissuaded, but when he sees Barbara he falls in love with her. His struggles to win her from the Salvation Army and her efforts to save his soul make up the basic conflict of the play and the foundation from which its message is delivered.

Barbara, in her efforts to "save his soul," preaches to him the doctrine of the Salvation Army—love, charity and pity—all of which she offers along with treacle and bread to the poor.

Andrew says that his religion is money and gunpowder: money enough to be free from the seven deadly sins—food, clothing, rent, drink, taxes, disease, and children—and gunpowder enough to have the power to be free. "Poverty is the only crime," he contends. "Money is the counter that enables life to be distributed socially."

The play moves swiftly to its climax and solution as Barbara deserts the Salvation Army, when she finds that it is accepting money from its foes. She is persuaded to replace it by embracing her father's faith only when Adolphus reveals that by a legal technical-

ity he is a foundling and accepts Andrew's difficult challenge to succeed him and make war on war.

'Major Barbara' is side-splittingly funny. Shaw never fails to interrupt even his most serious declarations with humor, as though he wished to deflate his own pomposness. In each bit of humor there is a bit of message; in each message there is a bit of humor.

All of the performers acted well, but the three principals distinguished themselves. Ronald Bishop's Andrew Undershaft was a magnificent tour de force, Edward Zang's portrayal of Adolphus Cusins was beautifully paced and convincing, and Lucy Martin's Barbara was an excellent performance. The play also bore all the earmarks of good directing, convincing lighting and sound, and excellent blocking.

**THE BIBLE says:**  
For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.  
—Romans 3: 23  
But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.  
—Romans 5: 8

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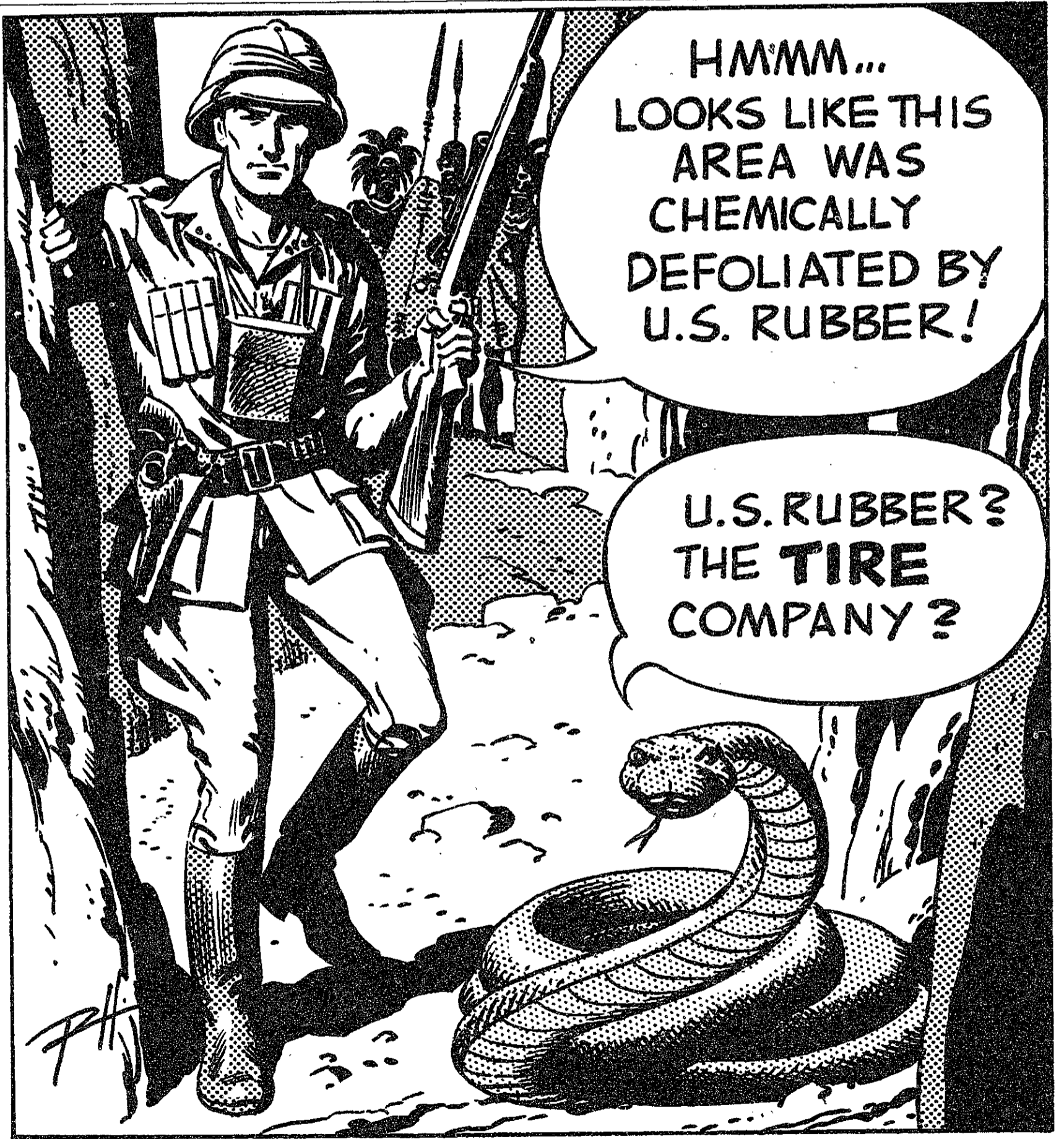
**Three plays by Shaw at Kresge**

The MIT Community Players, under the direction of Mr. Robert Lehan, will present three one-acters by George Bernard Shaw during the next two weeks. 'Over-ruled,' 'How He Lied to Her Husband' and 'Dark Lady of the Sonnets' are scheduled for production January 13, 14, 15, 20, 21 and 22 at 8:30 pm in the Little Theatre of Kresge Auditorium. Tickets are \$1.00 Thursdays or \$1.50 Fridays and Saturdays, and will be on sale at the door. Reservations may be made by calling 864-6900, x2910.

**Talking Rock . . .**

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bums that they resent upper middle class people who snub them on account of their super-long hair and unusual leather garments. My guess is that it is these people, whose purpose in life is to maintain an image of respectability through conformity to somewhat artificial standards, without involvement in anything, whom the Kinks are knocking here, as Sonny Bono did in 'Laugh At Me.' In the first verse they comment on his punctuality in working regular hours; this fits the theory of his doing the accepted thing. The bitter satire really begins in the second verse where they show that things aren't really so proper after all, with mother going to meetings and father calling the maid (this seems to be a reversal of the norm) and the maid flirting with the guests. This reaches a peak in the fourth verse where they show that the subject represses his desire for the girl solely for the sake of respectability. In the third verse, the allusion to the Kinks' snubbing by the high society populus occurs, when they refer to his conceit to the exaggerated state that "his own sweat smells the best." Although other interpretations certainly exist (a local radio personality has suggested that the allusion is to one particular anonymous critic of the Kinks), this one seems to fit, with the implications of conservative actions for the sake of respectability despite some concealed unrespectable actions and thoughts and of snubbing through conceit.



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