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WPA Federal Theatre Produces 18 Plays in Five Months.

Eighteen plays by new playwrights in five months of operation is the production record of the Federal Theatre, Mrs. Hallie Flanagan, national director, reported today. One of these, "A Woman of Destiny" by S. J. Warshawsky, has just been sold to the movies for $25,000 and a share of the net profits. Others have been among the outstanding successes of the theatre project of the Works Progress Administration.

"Censored", by Conrad Seiler, has been purchased by Al Woods for commercial Broadway production next Fall. It was first produced by the Federal Theatre in Los Angeles. "A Woman of Destiny" had its premiere in the Try-Out Theatre branch of the Federal Theatre in New York City.

Among other Federal Theatre hits by new playwrights is "Chalk Dust" by Harold Clark and Maxwell Murnberg, which has been running many weeks in New York and has prompted negotiations for Hollywood movie rights. Another is "Jefferson Davis" by John McGee, which recently completed an extensive tour of the Southern states.

In stressing the development of new playwrights through this medium, it was explained that "new" is used to designate all those who have had few or no previous professional productions.
In this connection Federal Theatre has introduced an innovation in customary theatrical practice; the playwright retains all rights in his own work. It is common practice in the commercial theatre for the manager first producing the play to share in profits from subsequent productions or sale to motion pictures. Federal Theatre pays the playwright a fair royalty, but after it has finished with the script the playwright receives every penny from commercial production or sale. This is true even of scripts produced by Works Progress Administration employees, provided, of course, they were written in the author's spare time. Only plays written specifically as part of their work for Federal Theatre - such as the composite "AAA Plowed Under," produced by the "Living Newspaper" in New York - remain the property of the government.

In the case of plays produced by the Try-Out Theatre, the commercial managers purchase the first option and bring the script to Federal Theatre for production at its expense. In this case, the playwright has doubtless made some sharing arrangement with the commercial manager, but this is a private transaction and does not affect the Government's rule that it claims no financial share in the success which it made possible.

Mrs. Flanagan is eager for new scripts. She feels that the encouragement of young playwrights is one of the essential functions of Federal Theatre, and that their fresh ideas and youthful outlook on life will bring a valuable and invigorating note to the American Theatre. This is especially to be hoped for inasmuch as Federal Theatre is equipped to produce many good plays which because of initial expenses of unusual subject matter would not readily be bought by the commercial managers.