

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

CONFLICT

(Warner Bros.)

HEIGHO! Here we go again; all set for murder, with a psychologist in the foreground to take the place of the once-indispensable but now-outmoded detective and direct our attention (quite unnecessarily, since it is so obvious) to the "one little slip" which mars the otherwise perfect crime committed by an engineer named Mason. Mr. Bogart plays this homicidal fellow and it is rather difficult to know whether he is actuated mainly by an illicit passion for his young sister-in-law (Alexis Smith) or by the nagging of his wife (Rose Hobart). Perhaps because it is at least partly the latter, one is led to feel a certain amount of sympathy for him, especially as it immediately becomes clear that he hasn't a dog's chance of getting away with the murder of his wife, in spite of all his clever planning. I am sure that nearly everybody in the theatre must have noticed

his slip as soon as he made it, and this of course gave us all a nice comfortable feeling of superiority and added to our sympathy for the engineer as he grew more and more bewildered and frustrated because things weren't working out right.

I have seen Humphrey Bogart in many better roles than this, but he certainly has the ability to look thoroughly harassed; and that's perhaps the chief requirement in this portrayal of a man who, having taken infinite pains to dispose of his wife in circumstances which clearly point to accident, and being all set to take advantage of his freedom (he already has plenty of money), keeps finding most disturbing evidence that the dead woman is apparently still alive; either that, or she is really dead and haunting him. The person responsible for spoiling his uneasy utopia is Mr. Sydney—er—Greenstreet, portraying the psychologist who traps the criminal into giving himself away by playing tricks with his nerves. Mr.

Greenstreet, we are assured, belongs to the Freudian school which believes that LOVE is the source of all trouble. It is interesting to notice the airy way in which our screen psychiatrists now chatter about the mysteries of the mind; there is a much greater assumption of knowledge on the part of the audience than there was at the beginning of the psycho-cycle. One of these days soon we may be sufficiently indoctrinated to have Freud quoted at us correctly. But there isn't much difference, at that, between sex and love in Hollywood's vocabulary.

Still, if we've got to have this kind of fare, Messrs. Greenstreet and Bogart are as good as anybody at dispensing it. *Conflict* isn't a dull picture; it's just a routine one.

O.S.S.

(Paramount)

THIS title, as I expect you realise, is not a cry for help, nor has it anything to do with women's foundation garments. Possibly it was the deliberate intention of the studio to make it a teaser, and it may be in furtherance of this aim (or is it because of some curious form of snobbery?) that

in the theatre advertisements the title is being consistently translated as "Officers' Strategic Services." However, you probably don't need to be told that it stands for "Office of Strategic Services," the organisation responsible during the war on the American side for all kinds of hair-raising espionage and sabotage activities behind the enemy lines; and the film clearly attempts to do for this organisation what *The House on 92nd Street* did for the F.B.I. The attempt, for largely avoidable reasons, does not succeed. The material was there ready-made, so the fault clearly lies with the treatment, which turns what should have been a convincing and exciting documentary drama into just another Hollywood spy thriller.

Everybody knows, or should know having been told so often, that fact can be as exciting as fiction, and I do not therefore presume to challenge the authenticity of the events in this picture. I would not dare anyway, in the face of the endorsement from the head of O.S.S., Major William J. Donovan, and that imposing list of seven O.S.S. technical consultants who worked with Paramount. But one is entitled to comment on the remarkably convenient way

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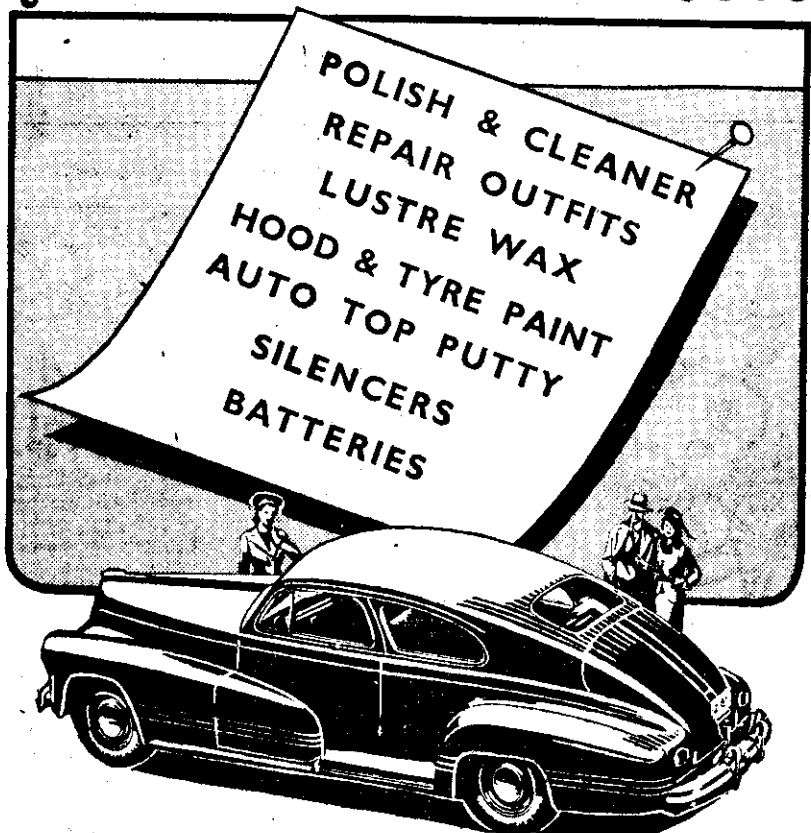
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