


SPEAKING CANDIDLY

FREEDOM RADIO

(Columbia)

 DIRECTED in England by Anthony Asquith, with the stars of *Cavalcade*, Clive Brook and Diana Wynyard, this picture deals with one of the most melodramatic stories of what has, in many ways, been a melodramatic war—the story of the German Freedom Station. Not unnaturally, therefore, it treats the subject very melodramatically, and not unnaturally also it doesn't neglect the opportunity for propaganda. For both these reasons, there is a contrast between the heroes and villains of the piece so sharp that it takes one back to the old days of the screen when the "goodies" were always pure white and the "baddies" were always deepest black, whereas (if one may suggest it even about Germany) the prevailing colour of real life is grey. It is because of a lack of restraint in action and characterisation that this film misses our highest grading—but not by much.

Many people, including the Communists, have been given credit for operating the Freedom Station. (Where is it now, I wonder; we haven't heard of it for months?) But according to this ver-

sion its originator is a Dr. Roeder (Clive Brook), a fashionable Berlin physician and Hitler's own throat specialist, who turns in disgust from the excesses of the Nazis to this method of overthrowing them. The film is perhaps most successful in the early part, wherein it shows the doctor's gradually increasing awareness of how his country is losing its soul to Hitler. A strong atmosphere of growing menace is built up as one by one the former decencies of German life are sullied, the doctor's Jewish friends are wafted away by the Gestapo, another friend, a priest, is murdered in his church, and the doctor's wife (Miss Wynyard) succumbs to the surface attractiveness of the Nazi doctrines.

At last, using his position as the Fuhrer's doctor to protect him as well as to gain knowledge of facts embarrassing to the regime, the hero launches his Freedom Station, with the aid of a few staunch friends. It is immediately successful, and the rest of the story is a man-hunt by the Gestapo, with the quarry dodging about all over the country. It is frequently exciting, but it is also sometimes so far-fetched as to be absurd, as when the gallant doctor breaks right into the middle of one of Hitler's big speeches



CLIVE BROOK


"Hullo, hullo! This is the Freedom Station calling!"

and tells the German people that they are being led straight to disaster. And how the Gestapo, talking to the doctor one minute and hearing him on the air the next, would fail to recognise immediately such a distinctive voice as Clive Brook's, I can't imagine. Eventually, of course, they do hunt him down, and with him his wife, who has had a change of political heart. I, personally, think that it would have been more effective to leave their actual fate to our imagination, but the audience is in at the bitter end, though the shots which silence the doctor and his wife do not put the Freedom Station off the air. His friends carry on.

In this picture, Diana Wynyard returns to movies after a long absence, but her performance suggests that we have not been missing as much as might have been imagined from the fact that when she retired from the screen she was rated as one of its top-rank stars. In actual fact hers is not a very strong role and plenty of other actresses could have played it equally as well. However, there are several other good performances, notably that by Clive Brook, whose development of the doctor's character in the early part of the story is probably the best bit of acting he has done for some time.

BOOM TOWN

(M.G.M.)

 ON seeing *Boom Town* it strikes you (or perhaps I'd better stick to the first person singular) that providing five major stars for the picture—Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Claudette Colbert, Hedy LaMarr, and Frank Morgan—put such a strain on M.G.M.'s budget that they couldn't afford to pay for a story, so just made one up as they went along. M.G.M. is such a wealthy company that that can't, of course, be true, but that's how it strikes you (or only me?)


It also strikes me as rather amusing that M-G-M (at that time a major defendant itself in an anti-trust suit involving the cinema industry) should have seized on *Boom Town* as a chance to make a covert attack on the Sherman

Anti-Trust Act by setting up Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy, two oil magnates, as noble examples of that rugged individualism which M-G-M apparently thinks all good Americans should venerate. Prosecuted under the Sherman Act for trying to corner the oil industry, Gable is whitewashed by his former bitter rival, Tracy; but the latter's eloquent plea from the witness box about America's debt to men of Gable's stamp might have impressed me more if I hadn't had a mental "flashback" to the opening scenes of the picture and realised just what this particular variety of rugged individualism has involved. It has involved, in the first place, highway robbery and the theft of equipment by the two "heroes" in order to develop an oil well. It has involved a prolonged feud between the two which originates from a cause so futile that, by the time it is half over, the audience, if not the principals, has almost forgotten what started it. What starts it, in actual fact, is the rugged individualism of Gable's love-life. Not content with having walked off with Tracy's girl (Miss Colbert) and married her, Gable has to go and neglect the poor girl, thereby rousing all the quixotic qualities of Tracy's unrequited passion. In a mood of embittered devotion he gets busy making fortunes in oil wells and losing them, with Gable going up and down at the other end of the see-saw. From the dericks and mud of the boom towns, the rivals eventually move to the plush carpets and high finance of Wall Street, where the monotonous game continues until Tracy gets a chance to prove what a loyal friend he really is. The only thing that kept even a spark of interest in the picture alive in me was the prospect of seeing Hedy LaMarr (as advertised). But her eventual appearance as a Wall Street siren who again arouses Gable's rugged individualism and Tracy's protective instincts is as disappointing as almost everything else in the film. Gable's performance as the loud-mouthed go-getter may please his staunchest admirers, but I found him myself both boorish and boring. And Tracy's portrayal of square-jawed, self-sacrificing friendship has become too familiar to be very exciting.

Boom Town, in brief, is all noise and hardly any substance.

SHE KNEW ALL THE ANSWERS

(Columbia)

 THIS film is like the proverbial curate's egg—with the proviso that the curate would need to be a particularly easy-going sort of person. The main trouble is that the director apparently couldn't decide whether he was making a drama or a crazy comedy. The result is like eating plum pudding with popcorn. The story—what there is of it—concerns a young man, rich as only a Hollywood hero can be, who is prevented from marrying a chorus girl (Joan Bennett) by his guardian (Franchot Tone), with pince-nez and an office on Wall Street. To prove to this old fossil that she would make a worthy wife for the play-boy, the girl forces her way into a job in his office, seeking only a letter of recommendation from him. In pursuit of this letter she even goes to the length of turning down the gift of a mink coat

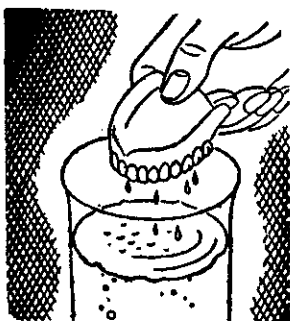
(Continued on next page)



Millions are doing it the 'Steradent' way!

Everybody is enthusiastic after they have tried this modern method of cleaning false teeth. It's so *easy* and so *effective*. You merely leave your dentures in 'Steradent' solution overnight

or while you dress. 'Steradent' cleans every crevice, completely removes all film and stain, leaving dentures perfectly clean, wholesome, and sterilized. No wonder new 'Steradent' users are enthusiastic. No wonder regular 'Steradent' users number millions. Why not let 'Steradent' do the cleaning for you? Obtainable from all chemists.



HOW TO DO IT

Half tumbler warm water. 'Steradent'—the cap of the tin full. STIR. Steep dentures overnight or 20 minutes. Rinse well under the tap.

Steradent

cleans and sterilizes false teeth

St.36