

SACHA LEHFREUND

Union plays on the art in artisan

By David Lister
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ROBERT TRESSELL, the novelist whose story of working-class suffering, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, has inspired socialist thought in generations of teenagers, would have been delighted.

A stage version of the novel by the Birmingham Rep, on a nationwide tour of Britain, has been sponsored by the nation's second largest trade union, the GMB, and is winning it new members.

The success of the play and the sponsorship deal could have unforeseen implications both for the arts and for unions. It is highly unusual for a union to sponsor a play, but GMB officials realise what an excellent deal they have achieved for £7,500.

The union logo is on the front of the programme, and a full page message inside, and although the union decided to avoid active recruiting of audiences, it did set up stalls at two performances.

"It has been remarkable," Phil Woolas, communications and campaigns director for the GMB, said. "We have had our name on half a million posters on the most prime sites in Britain. If we had asked an advertising agency for that sort of exposure, they would have added a couple of noughts on to the £7,500. The play has been



Laying out boomerangs at the Rebecca Hossack Gallery, London, for an exhibition of Aboriginal artefacts which opens today and runs until 11 May. The boomerangs, which date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are for sale at about £100 to £200. The exhibition is part of an Aboriginal arts season at the gallery which ends in August