

NOTICE.—The new address of Central Labour College is 13, Pennywen Road, Earl's Court, London, S.W.

For G. SIMS' address, see page 2 of Magazine cover.

THE
"Plebs" Magazine

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No. 9.

EDITORIAL

"THE DAYS OF STRIKES ARE OVER"! How often during recent years have we not listened to this wonderful piece of wisdom, to the voice of Capital speaking through the mouths of its priests and prophets, among whom are numbered not a few leaders of Labour? And while they were yet proclaiming "The Strike is dead! Long live Conciliation and Arbitration"! while they were yet reading the burial service, a strike took place, the like of which has never been witnessed in this country. Even some of those who had been showing anxiety to officiate at the interment of the Strike, were forced by the live current of rank and file pressure to make a show of willingness to throw Conciliation and Arbitration into the open grave. We offer no comment at this stage upon the results of the strike in so far as any economic gain or means thereto is concerned. We will say this however. The "settlement" which marked the culmination of the railway strike does not appear to be at all adequate to the demand, or the volume of might with which the demand was backed. What we are here concerned with is the display of solidarity and determination exhibited by the railway workers *of all grades*, a display that effectively paralysed the railways of the country for forty-eight or more hours. Never before has the power and possibilities of united industrial action been brought home so vividly both to the working class and employing class of this country. The railway magnates made a grave miscalculation. Puffed up with past successes, mainly due to craft disruption, and filled with the inevitable contempt of a governing class for those who toil and spin for them, the railway companies threw down the gauntlet. Their exploited employees promptly,—without any of the false etiquette that has characterized past strikes, as for example tendering a fortnight or a week's notice,—picked it up in a way that the dividend-raking magnates had not been accustomed to and had not reckoned with. On some railways, where the authorities had stated that 60% of their employees would remain loyal, over 90% and in some cases 99% came out. Even the great Beasley, of Taff Vale renown, could not repeat his former triumphs, his offer to treble the wages notwithstanding. How altruistic and philanthropic the Beasley's and the Granet's are in time of war? But the trick is a bit too ancient now to deceive many

workers. It is now more clearly seen that this ephemeral increase of wages is for the purpose of beating down wages for more lasting periods of time. The magic call of "loyalty" has lost its power to charm, even if it is rewarded by a collection taken up by Lord Bunkumfudge. Men are more generally beginning to value their self-respect, and the respect of their exploited fellow workers, too highly to be anxious to court the respect of their exploiting masters. They realize that to win the one is to lose the other. There grows naturally with this realization an increasing contempt for all forms of black-legging, non-union or union. The atmosphere of the recent revolt has been cleansing and invigorating. Slavish ideas cannot live in it nor servility breathe its air. A new spirit seizes hold of men, a spirit of self-reliance expressed through collective action; a spirit of determination on the part of each to stand by all and of all to stand by each; a spirit which announces the impending doom of the the last form of slavery. For when the workers of the world discard the ineffective sectional methods of warfare, as the railwaymen of all grades did in the recent strike, there is nothing on the earth that can step between them and their emancipation. The petty differences that have disrupted the various grades of railway workers during the past years, and which have been responsible for the failures of each grade to rise in the scale, disappeared in the recent crisis. A common platform and a common policy was the order of the day. While these sectional differences will no doubt revive and rise again they will be in an enfeebled condition. The sentence of death has been spoken over sectionalism and already it is in the condemned cell. The day of *sectional* strikes is over. But the days of systematic and more general strikes have only *begun*. Agression, not conciliation, is the need and slogan of the hour. And all the "stop the strike" bellowings of modern Canutes cannot prevail against it.



THROUGHOUT the press all sorts of reasons have been given for the cause of the recent outbreaks. Free Trade, increased cost of living, failure of Conciliation Boards, lack of discipline, irresponsibility

The Cause of Strikes

among the organized workers, and many other causes are put forward from pulpit, platform, and press, as being responsible for the strikes. None of these are adequate reasons. True, the cost of living has increased, wages have fallen behind, the Conciliation Boards have completely failed, but these are inevitable expressions of an antagonism which is identical with the system by which our living is obtained. It is this antagonism which the working class must clearly apprehend if the cause of strikes is to be removed.

The inner mechanism of the present system of wealth production must be understood ere the troubles that afflict the producers shall be overcome and strikes cease from troubling. Men will strike so long as they are struck down in the process of producing wealth. They will instinctively raise the arm of revolt against the downcoming

weapon of economic oppression. It requires a cleaner consciousness of the nature of that weapon, of the hand that wields it, and of the manner of its descent, to substitute intelligent aggression for instinctive defending. There are only two ways of securing the necessities of life: you must produce it by your own labour or acquire it from someone else. Both these methods are in vogue to-day. There can be no consumption without production. But if some are consuming without producing there are some producing who are not consuming the full fruits of their labours, some who are going short. And here we have this amazing anomaly. The people who go short are the people who work, and work long. Surely no microscope is required to see the comedy of a situation in which only the workers are poor, in which wealth is the reward of idleness and poverty the lot of the industrious! How does this situation arise, how is it maintained, how can it be ended? These are vital questions which penetrate beneath the surface of our social life. To produce food, clothing and shelter one must have access to the instruments of production, to the material out of which these things are made, to the workshops in which they are made. The class who work, who produce and transport the "wealth of nations," have no means of production. They are divorced from them. It becomes more and more impossible for an individual workman to regain them. This condition has been brought about by an historical process, the mainspring of which is the tools of production. Time was, when these tools were small, could be made by an individual and operated by an individual. This period of historical development was known as the handicraft period or petty industry, and which prevailed in England up to the 16th century. The capitalist mode of production was as yet in embryo, in the germ. The demand for products was chiefly local and known, while the craft guilds saw to it, that no opportunity was given to one producer in the craft to thrive at the expense of the others, either through under-selling or employing more journeymen and apprentices than the others. By the reign of Elizabeth, the blessed and virtuous, this form of production was no longer in harmony with the new conditions which were arising. Geographical discoveries led to the opening of the world market, to an increasing demand for commodities, the extent of which was unknown. The old form of production fettered the growth and expansion of the productive forces, prevented participation in this new world trade. The old form fell to pieces, and the new form of capitalist production took its place, to the slogan of freedom—freedom of trade, freedom of competition, and blessed above all, freedom of labour. Larger aggregations of labourers were required by the rising factories and workshops to build up "England's Greatness." And the supply was forthcoming in more than abundance thanks to the forcible expropriation of the peasants from the soil, an idyllic process, extending from the 15th century to the last third of the 18th century, in which the agricultural population was "set free" from any guarantee of

existence—for the benefit of manufacturing industry! Having no means of production they were "free" to sell the only commodity they now possessed—their labour-power—or starve. The larger the productive forces grew, the greater the scale upon which production was carried on (and therefore the more capital required for engaging in "business"), the larger became the dimensions of this army of the sellers of labour-power, the more hopelessly divorced from the means of producing their own existence. Finally the tool is torn from the hands of the producer and the latter is confronted with mechanical automatons which make use of him. Wider becomes the gulf that separates the producers from the owners of the means of production, and more impossible to bridge. The rich become richer and the poor poorer. More and more wealth is produced and less of it get they who produced it. Greater becomes the productiveness of labour and more and more precarious becomes the condition of the labourer. Want stalks in the midst of abundance, poverty in the midst of plenty. And all these appalling anomalies spring from the merchandise status of the labourer, from the dual position that he occupies (1) as a producer of wealth, and (2) as a buyer back of his produce. The labourer sells himself for so many hours a day at a certain price, in the same way that a bale of cotton or a head of cattle is sold. That is the only way he can exist. In order to secure the bare existence that his wages allow him, he has to forfeit the greater part of his labour, gratis, to the buyer of his labour-power, the owner of the means of production, the capitalist. This unpaid labour is represented by "dividends." The latter can only increase by decreasing the paid labour represented by wages. These two parts cannot both increase together. *One can only increase at the expense of the other.* Mr. Chiozza Money speaking in Parliament on the debate on the Railway Strike stated that the increase of net profits of the railways in 1910 amounted to nearly £50,000,000, and that if they took the increase of profits that had accrued since 1900 it would be sufficient to pay every railway servant an additional 5/- a week. And this within the halcyon days of holy conciliation! Every penny of that increase has been gained at the expense of those who run the railways. Increased profits for Railway Companies spell decreased wages for railwaymen; and that although the nominal wage may remain the same, or even rise. That is what has actually happened. That is why we have strikes. That is why the days of strikes are *not* over. *There is only one way to end strikes, and that is to eradicate the cause of them—the buying and selling of labour-power.* As long as the energy of the labourer is merchandise, strikes will continue. Conciliation will not stop them. That has been proved by practice. It is impossible to conciliate two forces that are in a relation of antagonism. That conciliation should fail, is therefore not surprising. "If the two sides cannot agree there is no remedy but the withdrawal of labour," said Mr. Fagg, one of the witnesses before the Railway Commission, the other day; and when questioned

as to the advisability of having an outside chairman with a casting vote, in case neither side agreed, he replied, and rightly, "No! The difficulty is to find an unbiassed man," and he further added, "It is class against class in my mind." From that position he would not be dislodged, by all the subtle and tortuous questionings of his examiner. It was the soundest contribution made so far to the evidence tendered to the Commission, and we heartily congratulate Mr. Fagg. *It is a position from which one can dislodge but cannot be dislodged.* It is impregnable against all assaults. It is a position which, when generally taken up by the producers of the world's wealth, will result in the dislodgement of the forces of class rule and oppression. To know that it is "class against class" is to leave behind the antiquated illusions and tactics that waste the energies of men in blindly moving round and round, weakening the will, darkening the way, keeping them from the higher ground. This is truly a "knowledge which is power," a truth that shall make us free.



BUT there are those who are very anxious to conceal from the workers this knowledge because of its power, who are endeavouring to put the veil over this truth in order to prevent the freedom that follows from its general recognition. The *Western "The Better Understanding"* (a Tory daily) of Thursday, August 24th, contributes the following in a leaderette, entitled "Labour and the State":

LABOUR AND THE STATE

The abuse of power of which those responsible for the organization of Labour have been guilty on numerous recent occasions lends a significance to the Summer School for representative workers now concluding at Oxford University which the promoters of that school could not have anticipated. A School for representative workers, where leaders and office bearers of Trade Unions and other artisan organisations might obtain a better insight into the structure of society, where Labour M.P.'s and Labour councillors might improve their understanding of the mutual obligations of the various parts of the social organism, appears to be the need of the moment. Men eminent in learning have taken a leading part in this School at Oxford, and their object has been to enable the workers who come to them as pupils "to enter upon a wider intellectual life by means of instruction which interprets the facts of daily experience in the light of history, science, and literature." Two hundred students have attended, most of them from the ranks of manual workers. It is encouraging to know that a large measure of success has attended the enterprise, and that the zeal and earnestness of the students have impressed beholders. Such an educational enterprise is of particular value in view of the industrial upheaval through which we have been passing, for most of the obnoxious features would have been absent

had a better understanding of social obligation prevailed among those who supplied the motive power and direction of the agitation. The safety of the community is endangered when there are those in its midst possessed of power almost unlimited—at least in its range of destructiveness—who prove by their words and deeds that they are deficient in the qualities, training, and experience which are appropriate to their position.

The Summer School referred to is a phase of the work of the Workers' Educational Association, an organization which is deeply interested in the Trade Union Secretary and the Labour Member's Educational needs. The *Western Mail* very clearly recognizes the value of such an education—

In view of the industrial upheaval through which we have been passing, for most of the obnoxious features would have been absent had a better understanding of social obligations prevailed, among those who *supplied the motive power and direction of the agitation.*

A better understanding of social obligations! Understanding of the mutual obligations of the various parts of the social organism! And how is this understanding presented by the "men eminent in learning who have taken a leading part in this school at Oxford?" How do they interpret the facts of daily experience? In quite Menenius Agrippa fashion. When the plebeians of old Rome struck against the Roman patricians and retired to the Sacred Mount there to manage their own affairs, the learned patrician, Menenius Agrippa, set out to give them a "better understanding of the mutual obligations of the various parts of the social organism." This was how he "interpreted the facts of daily experience"—

Once upon a time the members refused to work any longer for the belly which led a lazy life and grew fat upon their toils. But receiving no longer any nourishment from the belly, they soon began to pine away, and found it was to the belly they owed their life and strength.

The patrician belly fed the plebeian members of the social organism. This was "the better understanding" of the patrician genius. And this is "the better insight into the structure of society" that twentieth century patricians and their pouter professors are so anxious to give to the working class. But they, like Professor Menenius Agrippa, fail to demonstrate that you feed the members of the wage-labourer by filling the belly of the capitalist. We have abstracts of the lectures given at the Oxford Summer School before us and wherever the structure of society has been dealt with, capital and wage-labour, the capitalist and the wage-labourer, are regarded as eternal necessities, mutually harmonious parts of the social organism. The labourer is regarded as a partner of the capitalist. The labourer is to have his share—his fair share. A fair share of the wealth *he* produces! *He is to share fairly*, not with his fellow producers, but *with those*

who do not take part in production at all. Only partners in production should be partners in the division of the product. As it is today the worker is *not a partner* of the capitalist, *but a partner* to the capitalist of the greater portion of the value which he creates. In order to live, in order to secure a bare subsistence, he is compelled to furnish those who own what they have neither made nor use, with quantities of unpaid labour every day of his labouring life. He may change his employer, but the conditions remain the same. Either furnish the employer with unpaid labour, with surplus value, or starve. Either work for a value less than the value created, or be workless, foodless, clothesless, and houseless. There is no escape into a condition where he can work for himself. He has nothing but his hands. He is parted from the means of production, therefore he must part with his labour power and the results of it. This is the great "parting," the economic cleavage which creates war in society, which divides society into two hostile classes with antagonistic interests and aims. But such an insight is not furnished by the *Western Mail*, the Summer School, or any other capitalist organ or institution. These are for the purpose of concealing the real "facts of daily experience." So false is their learning, so superficial their education, that they vainly think that by distorting the "interpretation" of experience, they can alter that which they interpret. *The daily antagonism of wage-labour and capital is not removed in practice, because it is absent in the theories of "the eminent men of learning."* The cackling of the geese cannot save the capitol, nor the screeching of the owls delay the dawn.

W. W. C.

THE "PLEBS" MEET

BY the time this number of the Magazine is in the hands of our readers, three years will have passed since forty or more of us met to found the League. Three years! how long ago it seems. Looking back, we have often tried to remember just what we expected from the establishment of the League and its Magazine. Speaking from memory one would say that the only thing we were at all certain about was that Ruskin College was in danger—and *that was then* considered all-sufficient cause for apprehension. Perhaps some thought also of the need of keeping intact the friendships and associations formed at the College—remember we were nearing the end of the College year, and the thought of parting from one another was not very palatable. Whatever the thought uppermost in our minds at the time, we brought sufficient energy and enthusiasm to the meeting to have moved mountains. We should have laughed with youthful scorn if anyone had told us then, that in three years' time we should have been indifferent, nay hostile, to Ruskin College and all its works. We should have been even more scornful if some

"doubting Thomas" amongst us had predicted that at least two-thirds of us would also be quite indifferent to the working-class education movement. And what would have been said to the cynic who dared to suggest that our friendships and the associations of our Oxford life would, by the majority of us, be buried without a passing sigh or tear! Alas! friendships have been severed, the seemingly impossible things have happened, and many of us have departed from the straight and narrow way that leadeth unto Life—for the League, the Magazine, and independence in working-class education.

Some such thoughts as these were in the writer's mind while waiting for the meeting to open on the afternoon of August Bank Holiday. Yet there was no reason for feeling despondent if one judged by the numbers present and the general cheerfulness and comradely spirit displayed. When our chairman, Mr. T. P. Keating, opened the proceedings there was over sixty in the audience—a very good percentage of League members, if one judges by the membership fees paid—among those present being quite a goodly number from Wales, the North of England, the Midlands, and London—while one had come from Germany. The ladies—Here's to them!—were well represented, the Rochdale and District Classes sending two: let us hope that the time is not far distant when the C.L.C. will be in a position to open a Women's Residential Section at headquarters. A notable absentee was our good friend and colleague Mrs. Bridges Adams, away on an Education progaganda tour in Scotland.

The Chairman, in his opening remarks, made reference to the splendid work accomplished by the League in spreading the principle of independence in working-class education, and in thus securing the amazing amount of success that had attended the work of the Central Labour College. Considering the forces that the opposition were able to bring against them, remembering how little assistance they had received from the active leaders of the Labour Movement—nay, in many cases even much opposition from them—he thought that they of the rank and file, who had accomplished so much, had reason to congratulate themselves on the results achieved. Still there was much work yet for the League to do, so, although the financial position of the League was rather depressing, he hoped that ways and means would be forthcoming to continue their work with, if possible, an even greater courage and enthusiasm than had been displayed in the past.

Mr. Reynolds, acting secretary-treasurer, then presented the financial statement. He showed that the League was confronted with a deficit of about £60, an increase on the sum owing last year, and this in spite of a small increase in the sales of the Magazine. The falling-off was due to the small percentage of members who had paid their membership fees, and to a fairly big sum due from members for magazines supplied.

The sales of the Magazine were between 700 and 800 per month : to make the Magazine self-supporting this number would have to be increased to 1,000 copies per month. The expenses of the League and Magazine were about £10 per month. He thought the sum necessary to continue our work was very small, and if every reader would take up a membership card of the League, costing 1/- a year, also do something to increase the sale of the Magazine, they would not only be able to go on with the work of the League, but would be able to enlarge the Magazine—a thing, he was sure, they all devoutly desired. The Executive committee met the previous evening and had considered various suggestions for putting the League on a more business-like footing. They had finally decided that the best thing would be to put the position of the Magazine clearly before this meeting, and leave it to the members present to decide whether we should continue publication, as, to do so successfully, we must depend entirely on the hearty co-operation of *all* the members of the League.

Mr. Sims thought a better understanding of the position of the Magazine would be obtained if a little history of the League were given. Before doing so he should just like to say, on behalf of the Executive Committee, how indebted the League was to Mr. Reynolds for his work during the course of his (Sims') illness. In addition to doing the secretarial work of the C.L.C., he had also carried on the entire work of the League and Magazine, and that in a most admirable way. He felt proud of the fact that he had nominated Mr. Reynolds to take his place, as he had proved a most capable substitute. They would also like to add the names of Messrs. Craik and Pratley. In spite of the heavy work the former had to do for the Rochdale and District Classes, and later at the C.L.C., Mr. Craik had found time not only to write his usual editorials, but, also, to supply series of articles on history and The Theory of Understanding, articles which had done much to secure increased sales for the Magazine. Mr. Pratley, who worked very hard to found the League, had given of his time unsparingly to lick the budding literati of the League into shape, and to prepare the Magazine articles for the printers—a work of no mean importance, as those who have any experience in such matters know. The League was founded in October, 1908, by the students in residence at Ruskin College, Messrs. Hird and Hacking taking part with them. When the question of issuing a Magazine was raised, the students who were leaving the College in the following December settled all doubts about the possibility of running it by agreeing to take twenty magazines each, on sale or return : it was further decided to ask ex-students and sympathizers to help to secure the necessary number of subscribers to guarantee the financial success of the Magazine. It was agreed to canvas for

members to join the League on payment of 1/- per annum, this sum to be used to cover expenses of the League, Annual Meet, any deficit on the Magazine, &c. The students leaving Ruskin College in December, 1909, numbered about 40, and these, with the addition of ex-students and sympathizers who promised to assist the sale of the Magazine, led us to order 2,000 copies of the Magazine monthly. Of this number some 1,600 were sent out during the first few months of 1909. The results were not up to our expectations. By the end of 1909, only about three or four of the 1908 students were selling twenty copies or more, some were taking a dozen or half-dozen, and some only a single copy; in addition to this, many others to whom the Magazine was sent neither paid for them nor asked for them to be discontinued.

The reason for this result is difficult to trace: true the events at Ruskin College in March, 1909, onward, led to a change of policy on the part of the League, but on taking a plebiscite of the members only five disagreed with the proposed change; it looks, therefore, as though apathy caused the slump. The thorough overhauling of the list of people to whom the magazine was dispatched was delayed by the work necessary to found the Central Labour College, and incidental thereto. The expenses of the League were increased by the necessity of making ourselves responsible for a pamphlet on the dispute—*The Burning Question of Education*—and leaflets which had to be issued from time to time in defence of our position, one might indeed say that upon the League fell the work of establishing the College and defending the principle for which it stood. From 1910 onward we have been able to lick our League affairs into shape and our expenses in future, apart from the issuing of the magazine, will be very considerably diminished. The most hopeful sign of all is the increasing support being accorded to the magazine, and we do not doubt its future success if the present incubus of debt is removed. The debt is, in some measure, due to my incurable optimism in our future, and that being the case I have pledged myself to be responsible for the bulk of it, in the event of the League failing to respond to our appeal. But, apart from this responsibility, I trust we shall see our way clear to discharge our obligations and to continue the work of the League and magazine. If £6 is guaranteed at this meeting the Executive Committee have decided to continue the publication of the magazine for a period of three months, to allow of a general appeal being made to the members of the League to wipe off the existing debt. Should the appeal be satisfactory, the magazine will be continued as heretofore.

The Chairman then invited questions and discussion on the Report. Afterwards, on Mr. Hird's suggestion, the following resolution was moved by Mr. Ed. Gill, seconded by Mr. H. Slack, and, after discussion, carried unanimously:—

That, to enable the magazine to be continued, a collection be taken at this meeting: in addition, that members present be invited to give I.O.U.'s, redeemable on November 1st, 1911; and the Secretary be instructed to issue a similar appeal to all the readers of the magazine and members of the League. That, in view of the necessity of increasing the circulation of the magazine to make it self-supporting, a further appeal be made to readers and members to make an extra effort to increase the Sales.

A collection, &c., was then taken up with the following results:—G. Davison, 20s.; Noah Ablett, 10s.; J. Clatworthy, H. Slack, and M. F. Titterington, 5s. each; E. Gill, 4s.; Dennis Hird, W. Hancock, W. Jones, H. Morgan, and W. L. Wintle, 2s. 6d. each; E. Brandt and J. A. Jones, 2s. each; W. Dent, 1s. 6d.; R. W. Hazlett, 1s. A collection was also taken amounting to 21s. 9d; this making a total of £4 9s. 9d.

In addition, the following members took up I.O.U.'s redeemable three months hence:—F. Burgess and G. Davison, 40s. each; J. Evans, F. W. Fox,* E. Gill, T. P. Keating, Tom Rees, and the Rhondda "Plebs," 20s. each; H. Slack, 15s.; J. A. Jones, H. Kershaw, J. H. Pratt,* and J. Parks, 10s. each; H. Beaumont, L. Bowen, A. J. Hacking, Miss M. Howarth,* A. Jones, S. Jones, B. Lee, Miss Schofield,* and P. Shawyer, 5s. each; E. Brandt, 4s.; J. L. Rees and J. S. Whitehead,* 2s. 6d. each. Total, £15 9s. 0d.

The next item dealt with was concerning the magazine's policy, and the following resolution was moved by Mr. T. Rees, and seconded by Mr. M. F. Titterington, viz:—

That this Annual Meeting of the members of the "Plebs" League endorse the policy advocated in the Magazine editorials as being in accord with the Object of the League.

Carried, with two dissentients

This annual tit-bit provoked a very interesting discussion, albeit very one-sided. The policy of leaving the Workers' Educational Association severely alone, nay, even treating it as a friend, having secured an additional supporter—Mr. H. Beaumont. Messrs. J. S. Whitehead and Beaumont pounded away at us in fine style, "Jim" especially being in fine fettle. "The policy ye have advocated by one and one, ye shall support by two and two," but, alas, "Jim," your house is left unto you desolate! for Hubert has since resigned, and well may you ask "shall I ever see his like again—at the 'Plebs' Meet?" We trow not. Like another great man you must "plough your lonely furrow"—alone! Ibsen, it is true, has said "He is strongest who stands alone," but, for securing the plums, we favour Nap.'s "big battalions."

This closed the business of the League, but friend Seed obtained permission to address the members on the subject of the proposed revival of the Printing Trades strike newspaper *The Daily Herald*.

* Have since redeemed I.O.U.'s.

EXPENDITURE.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
By Printing, Fox, Jones & Co.:						
Balance due 26th July, 1910	...	46	17	8		
„ Ditto, ditto, Magazines, &c.	...	55	13	6		
					102	11
„ Office Materials : to Account rendered	...					12
„ Postage : Magazines	...	15	12	10½		
„ „ Receipts, Notices, Appeals, &c.	...	4	19	7		
					20	12
„ Cash in hand : Mr. J. Reynolds	...					5½
„ Liabilities. Balance due to Fox, Jones & Co., Sept. 11th, 1911	...	53	6	2	1	0
„ Treasurer : Loan	...	9	16	0		
					63	2
						2
					£187	17
						9½

Audited and found correct,

Sept. 21st, 1911.

(Signed) B. T. AMES.

NOTES FOR OUR READERS.

The total number of Magazines sent out during the 14 months included in the Balance Sheet returns was 12,586, less 210 free copies, makes an average of 884 each month. If all were sold this would produce £103 2s. 8d. plus postage £118 15s. 6½d. The actual income shows a deficit on this sum of £28 18s. 11d. The circulation each month is thus, with postage expenses, 635; without, 770. In the income from Receipt Books is included about £4 for membership fees, and payments for Magazines left over from last Balance Sheet—this last item is probably balanced by sums due for Magazines already supplied. So deducting the £4 for membership fees, we get the following amended circulation figures—adding postage, 601; deducting postage, 736.

What is wanted to make the Magazine pay its way. The cost of producing and distributing the Magazine is £10 each month. We therefore require **400 members of the League, and a monthly sale of 1,000 copies.**

IT CAN BE DONE AND OUR READERS SHOULD DO IT.

EDITOR.

The Law of Social Progress

IV.

The Working Class-Movement

(Continued.)

THERE was a phenomenon new to history: the masses reduced to beggary and destitution because their labour had been too productive! The workers must perforce suffer and starve because too much wealth had been brought into existence!

In order to get over the crisis of "over-production," manufacturers increased their efforts to get foreign peoples to buy more of their goods. For the next quarter of a century an increasing amount of consumable goods—chiefly cotton and woollen—was sent abroad. But, about the middle of the century, orders began to arrive from our foreign customers for machines to make the goods which we had hitherto been sending. Then began the exportation of machinery which has continued to this day. But every machine sent out means a new competitor in the world's market and an intensification of the problem produced by "over-production."

In this way one country after another has been brought within the vortex of the capitalist system. Meanwhile, the great industrial crisis which started in England in the year 1825 has reappeared in ever-recurring cycles, with ever-narrowing orbits, until industrial depression at last has become a normal feature of capitalist society. Just at present, some relief to the congestion is being given by the developments going on in the new countries such as Canada, Australia, and others, which are taking some of the surplus labour and capital of the older developed countries. But in a very short time, these new countries will have their up-to-date productive plants, and will be seeking an outlet for their surplus goods. Moreover, China, which has been looked upon as the future dumping ground for European and American surplus products, has at last thoroughly awakened, and is making rapid advance in the development of her resources; so that instead of being a market for Europe, she is likely soon to be sending to Europe a glut of her own surplus commodities. And, on the top of all this comes along the automatic machine which, in one industry after another, is displacing workers wholesale, and increasing the productive powers of society enormously.

Here, in their latest manifestations, we see the effects of that fundamental contradiction which lies at the basis of capitalist society.

To increase their profits, the capitalists are ever seeking a saving in labour cost and improved methods for increasing production. But this increased production demands an ever-expanding market as an outlet. The capitalists, however, are perpetually destroying their own market by cutting off the wages of their displaced workmen. Automatic machinery hastens this process tremendously. When industrial processes are performed automatically who will purchase the goods produced in this way? The workers cannot, because they have no wages.

It is the failure of the capitalists to find a satisfactory solution to this question that is hastening on the crisis that will produce a great Social Revolution.

The capitalist class having produced a problem it cannot solve, it falls upon the working class to find the solution.

The working class movement after a century of struggle, during which time it has vastly increased its powers of organization, begins at last to realize the futility of all these attempts to maintain or improve the standard of existence of its adherents while forces quite outside its control are incessantly forcing down the standard. In spite of the increased power and prestige of working class organization, the workers' standard of living has actually declined during the past fifteen years, while, in the same time, those who live on profits have increased their incomes by four hundred millions a year!

Faced with this problem, and conscious of its own growing strength and importance, the working-class movement throughout the world is preparing itself for the supreme effort of getting into its control and possession the world's productive resources, so that they shall no longer be used for the enrichment of a few and the impoverishment of the many, but may be used in the general interests of mankind.

With the productive forces in the possession of the organized community of producers, an end will be made of all forms of class exploitation and class privilege. Wealth socially-produced will be socially appropriated, and harmonious relations will be possible throughout human society.

Then social development will again take a higher form. No longer will there be internal conflict and progress by class struggle, but the social activities of mankind will be co-ordinated for the one supreme aim of engaging more effectually in the struggle against the still unconquered forces of nature,

When in retrospect the whole range of historic evolution is surveyed from the standpoint of Historical Materialism, human history appears as something more than a mere recital of the intrigues of kings and Court favourites, or the exploits of military chiefs. The men who figure so largely in the books of the historians have been but the unconscious instruments of material forces and dominating interests of their day and generation. The real makers of history are the millions of men of succeeding generations, who, in however small a way, have contributed their quota to the sum-total of human achievement. These silent builders may not figure in the works of the historians, but they have, nevertheless, earned for themselves immortal fame. And in the days that are yet to be, when mankind shall have the wisdom to come into possession of the accumulated wealth and knowledge of the ages which are its legitimate heritage, the deeds of all who have contributed to these vast possessions will be remembered and cherished for future generations.

C. WATKINS.

Ethics and Socialism

The matter which serves for the basis of this pamphlet are two speeches delivered on the 18th and 19th of September, 1906, for the S.D. Union of the 12th and 13th Parliamentary Division of Saxony. For their reappearance in this form, the verbatim reports which appeared in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* have been drawn upon; nevertheless, much has been re-written, details gone into, and, we hope, generally improved.—ANTON PANNEKOEK.

INTRODUCTION

FOR several years the question of Ethics has been discussed at our theoretical debates, particularly so since the advent of revisionism. Bernstein has in several of his writings gone back to Kant in order to fight the dogmatic materialism in our own ranks; the neo-Kantians have raised the claim that the cold historically-determined basis of Socialism laid down by Marx and Engels must be made complete through the warmth of Kant's moral ideals. Kautsky's excellent book, *Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History*, has done much to introduce clearness into our conception of Ethics. But Kautsky examines the subject particularly from the historico-evolutionary side, whilst here, above all, the formal, the philosophical side, shall be considered.

We must by this treatment commence with the question: What is understood by Ethics? Ethics is the teaching of morals, the teaching which concerns itself with what is moral, and what becomes accepted as moral. It is, therefore, very important, because it covers the very important ground of human actions. Our actions are

primarily determined by our own interest; the instinct of self-preservation is the most potent instinct, in man as well as all living beings, which forces with irresistible power its will on the importance of the individual interest. But strong as this instinct is, all actions are not determined by it; it often happens that the individual lays aside his own particular interest in order to serve a "higher" interest. We often read in history of men who have sacrificed their life for the sake of their country, or the people, and day after day we see working men ignore and neglect their own interest for the solidarity of their fellow-workers. Why do they thus? It is as if some inner voice said to them: "Thus shalt thou do," a voice which they can not withstand. Such actions are named, good, virtuous, moral, and the moral feeling which inspires them ever belonged to the most important source of human actions; it was consequently an exceedingly important factor in human history. This sentiment, and the actions which originate therefrom, actions not only not dependent, but often in opposition to the individual interest, form the object with which Ethics concerns itself.

It must be carefully observed, in order to avoid misunderstandings, that the word Ethics has two distinct meanings. On the one hand, one understands by Ethics the whole of the instincts and conceptions which pass for moral. We speak, for example, of the Ethics of Christianity, and understand thereunder those conceptions of Christianity which are good and moral, and inversely those which are bad and immoral. We can also speak of the Ethics of capitalism, and we ourselves often use the expression: and the Ethics of the proletariat, wherewith we designate the whole of the conceptions of good and evil which exist among the modern Socialist workers. In this sense one could discuss the dependence of Ethics and Socialism, at the same time pointing out how, through the Socialist-labour-movement, with its definite aim of a classless society, totally new moral conceptions have arisen in the ranks of the working-classes.

Our discussion, however, is of quite a different character, because we take the word Ethics in its other signification, viz., in the sense of the Science of Morals, the science which will investigate and understand the nature and origin of moral conceptions. In this sense of the word there also exists an important connexion between Ethics and Socialism. Socialism, as is known, is not only striving after a new world order, but is also a new insight, a new science which we daily employ in our practical struggle. This scientific Socialism has given to us a totally new insight into the nature of society and of all social phenomena, and has also fundamentally illuminated the nature of Ethics. One can even assert that it was only through the progress of Socialism that Ethics was raised to a real science. To prove this is the object of this discussion.

It will now become quite clear whence originates the dual application of the word Ethics. With the advance of knowledge, names must change their meaning. Prior to the time when Marx and Engels formulated the principles of scientific Socialism, it was quite impossible for it to become a positive science in the modern sense. In those early days of bourgeois enlightenment, the opinions of the bourgeoisie circulated after they had been given a definite social form, which naturally and obviously could only be the bourgeois form of society, which rested on the free competition of privately produced commodities. Even so was held the belief in the eternal foundations of law and morality, which were, above all, best acknowledged where rational men lived. Indeed, experience taught that there were other forms of law and morality, but these were either the cause of the lack of culture and ignorance or temporary degeneration of barbarism. With such a conception it were equally impossible to speak of a Science of Ethics which sought the "How" and "Why" of human actions, as to expect a scientific investigation of society; both were "natural," and consequently each further question concerning their origin was excluded. The aim of the teaching named Ethics could then only be the investigating and collecting of the best, truest, and most rational conceptions of good and evil; or the seeking after rules to be applied to the state of society, and to inculcate the same by means of education and sermons into the minds of both old and young.

Here lay the practical application of the teaching close to hand. To those who embrace this bourgeois conception of Ethics, it must appear that, compared with these direct and "practical" aims, our conception of Ethics as a science can only have a cold, useless, and theoretical application. But for us our conception has, above all things, a very practical interest. It, as with every other science, must help us to understand society. Our aim, the aim of Socialism, is not to make men morally better by preaching to them beautiful sermons, but to revolutionize the social order. And in this we will far better and quicker succeed the more we fundamentally grasp and understand the instincts of man in relation to society. The aim of this science is thus to make us quite clear what inspires man and what moves his soul.

THE ETHICS OF KANT

When one considers Ethics from the philosophical side, one must commence with the epoch-making views of the greatest and best known of bourgeois philosophers—Kant. Not because other philosophers had not expressed such reasonable and more correct opinions, but because Kant represents a class, or better still, the rising of a new class, with new ideas and a new world-conception. In spite of the applause which Kant received from all the thinkers of the 19th Century, in spite of the contradictions and frailty of his system, there can be no doubt that the views put forward by him are not

accidental and personal views, but are rather general mass opinions to which he has given the best expression. His greatness as a philosopher lies directly therein that he presented in their purest philosophic form the bourgeois world conception, the world conception which in the high tide of the bourgeois origin was the natural Weltanschauung of the ruling class. Prior to the appearance of Kant, the ruling Ethic was—with the exception of a few individuals—the Christian Ethic. For the believing Christian the only ground for moral action was the command of God; he espoused good and eschewed evil in order to perform God's will. The difference between good and evil was to be found in the Bible, summed up in the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount: Thou shalt this do: thou shalt that not do. Religion was thus the foundation of Ethics; and obviously Ethics is consequently fixed and immutable for all eternity: what is once good and evil will be good and evil for all time.

Already in the 18th Century these religious beliefs were being criticized. Owing to the advance of Science and Culture, religious truths were being doubted in several circles; whilst the French Materialist energetically fought against religion and declared for reason, the German Nationalists busied themselves with seeking for arguments to prove the existence of God and other religious tenets. When things have developed so far, that man desires to prove by reason and beautiful and polished arguments what religious belief should be held there can be no better sign that the old belief is at an end and that doubt takes its place, thereby breaking down the foundation of Morality.

To be continued.

ANTON PANNEKOEK.

(Translated for the "PLEBS" Magazine by Nun Nicholas).

Economic Determinism and the Natural and Mathematical Sciences *

WILL you afford me a little space in which to refute an assertion of Bax? Not that I wish to substitute myself for Rothstein, who needs no one to answer for him, nor do I desire to discuss the value "in itself" of the Marxist method; I avoid the scholastic discussions beloved of Bax's metaphysical mind.

Bax claims to demonstrate the imperfection of the method in affirming that the natural and mathematical sciences are not attached by any connexion to the economic conditions, or if such connexions exist they are of insignificant importance. This is a rather bold assertion!

* Reprinted from *The Social Democrat*, March, 1906. By kind permission of the Editor, Mr. Harry Quelch.

Bax says, with perfect justice, "that man attained to natural knowledge essentially through observation of fact (supplemented later on by experiment), and reasoning from fact." But are not the every-day experiences and observations made constantly by men in procuring the means of existence a thousand times more numerous and varied than those made by savants in their petty scientific laboratories? Are those observations which are made in the gigantic economic laboratory not susceptible of forcing man to reason and to seek out general laws?

"The doctrine of Natural Selection" which Bax has cited in support of his thesis is on the contrary an excellent example of the superiority of the method that he condemns. In effect, Darwin gathered in the economic world the observations and the experiences which he needed to complete the observations which he and the naturalists had made in the natural world, and to conceive his doctrine. Let Bax open the *Origin of Species* and he will read that Darwin says that the first suggestion of his theory was afforded him by Malthus's "Law of Population," which placed to the account of Divine Providence the miseries of the workers engendered by capitalist production, just as Aristotle made nature responsible for slavery. It was by starting from the social struggles of man that Darwin conceived the idea of the natural struggles of animals. But industrial and commercial competition, which, on the one hand, deteriorated the producer by poverty and excessive toil, and, on the other, transformed the capitalist into a social parasite, could not furnish him with the idea of progressive evolution; that was suggested to him by economic phenomena of another order. He saw and admired the farmers and breeders around him, who experimented upon the various animals, long before the naturalists had dreamt of doing so, and who, by "artificial selection," perfected horses and other animals in order to increase their exchange value. Darwin is, perhaps, the naturalist who has devoted the most attention to the variations of domestic animals. He was led to think that Nature did *unconsciously* what the farmers did *intentionally* for the sake of profit. It may, therefore, be advanced that the doctrine of natural selection could only have been produced in an epoch of ferocious commercial competition, and in a country in which methodical and intelligent breeding was carried on.* It is necessary to add that the works of constructing the railways, and of mining coal, which have given birth to a new science, geology, by drawing from the bowels of the earth the remains of extinct plants

* All plants and animals cultivated and bred for the market have for centuries been transformed by persistent experimentation; it is only since the last forty years that naturalists, who had confined themselves to observation, are attempting some few timid experiments. If, like Darwin, they had begun by making themselves acquainted with the experiments on plants and animals made by cultivators and breeders of all countries, and if they had studied their method of work, they would be surprised by their numberless experiments, quite as interesting as that of De Vries on the *Oenotheries*, of which they have retained only the practical results, without drawing the theoretical consequences, as the Dutch botanist has done from his one experiment.

and animals, have incontestably prepared the scientific mind for the idea of the progressive evolution of the organic world.

"The history of mathematics is a crucial refutation of the one-sided Marxian view," says Bax. Let us see. He is obliged to recognize "that geometry had its origin in land measurement may be perfectly true. But it is the correctness of the formulation of the space-relations involved in it that is the crucial point for the science as such. The practical necessities which led men's attentions to these relations is the mere superficial and proximate cause." Quite too metaphysical is this disdain for the "practical necessities" which have caused men to count and to calculate, and which have furnished the axioms of mathematics. It is not because the mathematical sciences make abstraction of the properties of things and consider only a few of them—number in arithmetic and algebra, the point and the line in geometry—it is not because in the abstract sciences observation and experimentation are consequently useless and are replaced by speculation, that one ought, as philosopher of "the thing in itself," to declare that they owe nothing to experience. They are groups of speculative theorems rigorously deduced from a small number of axioms of an incontestable and incontestated truth; the axioms, then, are of capital importance. If they are not found mathematical sciences cannot exist, and if they are erroneous the rigorous speculative deductions are false. But the axioms—(two and two make four; a straight line is the shortest way from one point to another; from a given point we can only draw one line parallel to another straight line, &c.—this third and important axiom bears the name of the *postulatum* of Euclid)—are undemonstrable. Leibnitz has vainly endeavoured to demonstrate that 2 and 2 make 4. They have been given to us not by reasoning but by experience, and, I would add, by economic experience.

It is probable that animals have bequeathed us many axioms. For example, ducks in going to the water follow a straight line as being the shortest way; pigeons know that 1 and 1 make 2, since they do not sit until they have laid two eggs, &c. Economic experience has given a value to the axioms inherited from the animals and has caused others to be discovered of equal importance, as, for instance, the *postulatum* of Euclid.

We know that numeration is very limited among savages, that many of them can only count up to 20, and that the first figures have, in their language, the names of the fingers because they count by naming and touching the fingers one after the other. The savage must extend his numeration in proportion as the number of animals and other objects he may possess increases. When they are too numerous to be counted on the fingers, he makes use of pebbles, as is shown by the word "calculate," which comes from the Latin *calculus*, signifying pebble; in order to obtain an account of their augmentation, he is obliged to invent addition, the beginning of

arithmetic, and algebra, the operations of which are only additions transformed, complicated by unknown and imaginary quantities, and simplified; and in order to state any decrease in their numbers he must invent subtraction, which is only the addition of that which remains to that which has disappeared—the unknown quantity to be found. The Romans performed these two operations with pebbles, as is evidenced by the expressions *calculus ponere*, to place the pebble, and *calculus subducere*, to withdraw the pebble, which indicated that they added and subtracted, by adding or taking away pebbles. As exchanges multiplied it became necessary to calculate the number of objects to be given in order to obtain some other; in order for anyone to estimate his wealth in animals and other objects, he had to invent multiplication, which is only a long addition simplified. The traders of the maritime cities of Asia Minor and of Greece made multiplications long before Pythagoras had erected the table which bore his name, and which, perhaps, they had invented. When they had to share out the gains of a commercial expedition according to the number of participants they discovered division, which is a complicated operation of multiplications and subtractions. Many centuries after economic necessity had compelled men to find the four rules of arithmetic, the mathematicians made their theoretical demonstration.

If the possession of flocks and herds and other objects developed numeration, and brought forth the invention of the rules of arithmetic, the manufacture of baskets and of receptacles for liquids engendered the idea of capacity; and the production of precious liquids, such as wine and oil, taught the measurement of the capacity of vessels.

The savage, while he lived by fishing, the chase, and on the wild fruits of the earth, did not dream of measuring the land; but when he became a cultivator and had to divide the arable land among the different families, he had to learn to measure it. The Greek philosopher attributed to the Egyptians the invention of geometry, because after each inundation of the Nile it was necessary to redistribute the fields, the bounds of which had been swept away by the overflowing river. The men of all countries had no need to go to the school of the Egyptians; the agrarian divisions they made every year were the masters that taught them the first elements of geometry.

The savage cultivators, not knowing how to measure surfaces, solved the problem of equal division of land, by dividing the field to be shared out—generally a level ground more or less *plane*—by long and narrow bands, which, having the same length and the same breadth, were equal; these bands were quadrilaterals, the sides of which were parallels, as the straight furrows which bounded them were of an equal distance from each other. The obtaining of these straight furrows had such an importance that in many languages the word

"straight" has come to signify that which is just.* The equal length of the furrows was obtained by passing over each an equal number of times a staff which served as measure. This measuring staff had in their eyes so august a character that in the Egyptian hieroglyphics it signified Justice and Truth; while among the Russian peasants the staves used for measuring in the division of land are called sacred measures. Haxthausen, who, about 1846, assisted at one of these divisions in Russia, declared that the measurements are made as accurately by the illiterate peasants as they would be by scientific land-surveyors. This primitive land measurement, which may still be seen in India, gives birth, says Paul Tannery, the erudite historian of the *Science Helene*, to a "collection of processes, but loosely related, serving for the solution of the usual problems of life, and the demonstration of which, when it was made, found its support on propositions regarded as evident, but which were rigorously proved very much later." One of these propositions is the famous *postulatum* of Euclid, on which rests geometry. This "empirical" geometry, long before the creation of scientific geometry, enabled the Egyptians, the Greeks, and, in fact, all peoples, to construct monuments which, by their grandeur, their solidity, and their harmonious proportions awaken the wonder and admiration of modern engineers.

The primitive cultivators divided level lands which they regarded as *plane*. The geometry of Euclid starts from the hypothesis that space is absolutely *plane*. Consequently, two straight lines at equal distance from each other are parallel and can never meet, as well in the level lands of the primitive cultivators as in Euclidian space.

But the idea of *curved space* was introduced in science towards the middle of the nineteenth century. Lowachevsky, Rieman, Helmholtz, Sophus Lee, and other mathematicians, rejecting the *postulatum* of Euclid, created what has been called the non-Euclidian geometry, of which the rigorously deduced theorems are, however, in complete contradiction to the theorems of the Euclidian geometry taught for two thousand years as the absolute truth. The illustrious mathematician Gauss, who, at the end of the eighteenth century, already foresaw the possibility of a non-Euclidian geometry, dared only to speak of it in private letters, which have been published recently, for fear of arousing "the clamours of the Bœotians." The solutions of the new geometry, which overthrow all accepted ideas, are, according to the mathematicians, more simple from the purely mathematical point of view, than the solutions of the old geometry; which, however, retains its practical utility because surveyors, engineers and architects, operating on surfaces of small extent, neglect, like the primitive cultivators, all their unimportant curves. The creators of the new geometry, on the contrary, take account of every curvature in space, however slight it may be; and they also think there will be as many non-Euclidian geometries as there are places on the terrestrial globe.

From whence came this idea of the curve of space?

* The French word "droit" is the equivalent of both "right" and "straight."—*Trans*

The savage cultivators regarded the level lands they divided among themselves as *plane*. When men conceived an idea of the earth, they imagined it to be flat, like a disc, said Archelaus. But their voyages having shown to the traders of the Mediterranean cities that different places of the earth were lighted one after the other by the sun, they represented the earth as a hollow half-sphere, the border of which was lighted before the bottom. But as a result of astronomical observations, the Greeks, towards the fifth century B.C. regarded the earth as a solid sphere. But the idea of the sphericity of the earth remained barren practically and theoretically. It led to no practical result until the fifteenth century, when Columbus, misled by an error of calculation of Ptolemy, discovered America instead of the maritime route which he sought for commerce with the Indies and which the Venetians monopolised. It was necessary still to wait some centuries before the sphericity of the earth, demonstrated every day by merchant ships, determined the mathematicians to deduce from it the theoretical consequences. The geometers, after having taken account of the observations collected by sailors, merchants, travellers and savants, conceived the earth as a sphere flattened at the two poles, and enveloped in an atmosphere corresponding to its solid form. All the plans constructed on the earth or in space would, therefore be necessarily curved; all the lines traced on these plans would, perforce, be curved; the line which describes the flight of a cannon ball, whatever may be its initial velocity, is a curved line. The curvature of these plans and these lines must vary as the place at which they are traced is more or less distant from the Equator. The *postulatum* of Euclid, on which geometry rests, and which cannot be demonstrated by reasoning, is then false experimentally. The non-Euclidian geometries, which appeared to be erroneous, opposed to reason, because they contradicted the truths to which men had been accustomed for thousands of years, are then a superior approximation to the truth. Absolutely plane space, which the necessities of agrarian divisions and of architectural constructions had introduced into the heads of the mathematicians, began to be elbowed out by the idea of curved space only after commercial voyages and expeditions on land and sea had popularized the idea of the sphericity of the earth and of its atmospheric envelope.

Bax, therefore, cannot say that "the history of mathematics is a crucial refutation" of the Marxist method.

I may remark, in conclusion, that Marx did not present economic determinism as a doctrine, but as a tool for historical research, valuable only according to the ability of him who uses it. In his hands it has given us the theory of class struggle, which explains the political history of human society. If after an essay with economic determinism Bax finds it defective, it is because, like all metaphysicians, he has been unskilful in applying it, and, like the bad workman, he ascribes his own want of skill to the tools.

PAUL LAFARGUE.