

"I can promise to be candid, but not impartial"

GOETHE

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THE

# "Plebs" Magazine

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# The "Plebs" League

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## Object

To further the interests of the Central Labour College, for working men and women, at London, and to assist in the formation of similar institutions elsewhere, all of these institutions to be controlled by the organized Labour bodies.

## Methods

The holding of an Annual Meet: the issuing of a monthly Magazine, the pages of which shall be open to any proposed application of reason to human problems: and the formation of Local Branches to promote the object of the League, and for the study of Social Questions, History, and Economics—from the working-class standpoint.

## Membership

All Students (R. C. and C. L. C.), past and present (Resident and Corresponding) and **Sympathizers** are eligible for membership


Each Member shall pay 1/- a year towards the Central Fund for general expenses in connexion with the Annual Meet, &c.

## Management

An Executive of five members elected annually, and the Editor of Magazine, who shall be responsible as to publication and meets, &c.

The Magazine shall be 2d. per copy, 2½d. post free.

Subscriptions payable in advance: Quarterly 7½d., Half Yearly 1/3, Yearly 2/6

 **The Fifth Annual Meet will be held in London (Bank Holiday), August, 1913**

**G. SIMS, Secretary-Treasurer**

To whom all P.O.'s should be made payable

13 Penywern Road, Earls Court,  
London, S.W.

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## EDITORIAL

**B**Y the time this number of the magazine is in the hands of our readers another May Day will have come and gone, leaving behind once more a memory of the meetings held by workers the world over, to offer fraternal greetings to their fellows in every land. Labour only, of all the international movements, stands for the socializing of human relationships, the fraternising of peoples, without an If or a But; *is* the true Open Door to the advancement of the human race without cash calculation of material gain. True the Labour Movement in its international, as in its national aims, seeks for material progress, but, it is material progress shorn of the narrower aspects, the limited good, upon which all former movements have been based. Class movements in former times have aimed at the establishment of yet another form of *class* interests as opposed to the then ruling class. The modern working class, compelled by the force of circumstances to organize as a class, will by its victory over the forces of capitalism abolish the conditions for class antagonisms, will bring about a set of conditions which will make impossible its continuance as a class. The results of its victory will be the establishment of a society in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. The Labour Movement is not distinguished from other movements in its claim to benefit humanity at large; what does distinguish it from all other parties, past and present, which have aimed at establishing Heaven upon Earth is the fact that it, alone, has a ultimate aim in line with the evolutionary social forces. This aim is the social ownership of the social productive forces, for Socialism, in this general sense, will be the keynote of the resolutions of the Labour forces the world over. For however nebulous, confused, or antagonistic the present proposals of the various groups that make up the giant Labour International may be, or appear to be; however earnestly sections may deny causal connexion between industrial evolution and the growing solidarity of the organized workers as a world movement, this fact of Socialist theory, the Historic Mission of the Working Class, is taking shape, is organically forming, for the overthrow of the final system of private property and the individualistic State, *viz.* Capitalism.

WHAT do we Socialists mean when we refer to the Historic Mission of the Working Class, and who are the Working Class anyway, says the inquirer? The Working Class of Socialist theory is the class of wage-labourers, the people who have nothing to sell but their power to labour. The wage labouring class is the

### The Classes

last great historic class. True there are sub-divisions of society, below, intermediate, and above, of the two great classes, into which we theorists generally divide society. Just as we find it impossible to draw sharp lines of division between organic and inorganic creations, between one class of animal and vegetable life, between early animal and human remains. This does not prevent separation and classification into species and sciences. And the same reasoning is followed in social science. We divide society into two definite great classes—capitalists and wages-labourers, for the same good reasons that the exact sciences formulate their subject-matter, i.e. because the elements are, in the main, quite distinct and therefore in determinable groups, and because the intermediate forms are distinctly evolving towards one of these great classes, or are in the process of dissolution. It is true new *types* come into being, but they naturally fall into their place in the classification of a given class. A little consideration of the social classes will help us to more fully grasp this. The groups in society may be roughly, but for all that, effectively, divided into landowners, capitalists, small independent producers, salaried people and wage-earners, there is the fringe of the first two groups, the professional people, and on the fringe of the latter group, the pauper and slum proletariat. Lastly, there is the Suffragette of whom, perhaps, more anon.

The landowners, as a class privileged by reason of ownership of land, have ceased to exert much influence. It pleases one section of the capitalist class to raise the cry of Land Taxation, but no one who has given any attention to the study of the mechanism of industrial production seriously thinks that the abolition of land monopoly makes for the improvement of the wage-workers. In America the farmers are freeholders, and a study of their position holds out no hope to our agricultural proletariat *via* free land. Capitalism applied to agricultural products had already determined on the areas to be developed, and Britain is not included in the scheme; the same thing applies to pastoral products. Historic evolution in Britain has left the landed aristocracy some remnants of their former power, but it is altogether dependent upon an alliance with the big financial and business capitalists. Such facts are common knowledge to the student of social science.

Small independent producers and distributors exist merely as agents of larger businesses. They are permitted or eliminated at the dictates of business economy. If it pays to let the independent (?) small owner use or distribute the product of the big firms, they remain; if it pays to open branch businesses and to carry out the

whole functions of production and distribution, the little man is crushed. Take any line of business you will, watch its operations in any area, the possibilities of the given area for the absorption of a particular commodity, the regularity or irregularity of the trade, distance from a central market in relation to the business done, and on a combination of all these factors you can prophecy with considerable accuracy the attitude of big capitalist enterprise to their small brother. The lion and the lamb lie down together, but whether the lamb is inside or outside will depend entirely upon the toothsome-ness of the Canterbury; if it is ill-developed it will be permitted to retain its individuality, if it is well-developed it will go the way of all food.

The salaried group is but the glorified proletariat, the transformed independent small producer. In the evolution of capitalist industry part of the old middle class, the small independent capitalists, retain their place as agents of the big industry, part become submerged into the ranks of the wage-earners, and part become the paid directive ability of the big men-salaried people. They are more or less favoured as against the average wage-earner. Still competition is no respecter of persons. Capitalist centralization, by eliminating the small capitalists and by extending its scope supplies competitors from above and within; and by its development of science and technical education supplies competitors from below. The latter being by far the most distressing competitors, more vigorous in their methods of dealing with employees, often with a practical experience and inside knowledge of the conditions of production, and with a lower standard of living, the prospective salaried man from among the wage-earners ranks plays havoc with the standard of life and the social standing of the salaried group. While it is true that a few favoured ones among the salaried people get nearer to the ranks of the capitalists, for the majority there is the ever present nightmare of the constantly lowering salary on the one hand, or the ranks of wagedom on the other. The difficulty of keeping foothold increases in proportion to the onerous character of the work to be performed, and further and further recede the possibility of securing the "plums" mentioned above. Large production increases the departmental overseer's work, makes results more and more dependent on the skillfulness and directive ability of the departmental chiefs. On the other hand it raises the status of *the* chief, lessens his personal responsibility, and leaves the office open more and more to persons having powerful friends "at court." It may be stated as a law of capitalist development that, the minor salaried positions increase in importance to the result achieved in the ratio that they decrease in remuneration and vice versa. New methods may lead to a temporary advancement of the status of the inventor or even to the whole grade of workers to which he belongs; the ultimate effect, however, is in the opposite direction,

THE general results of capitalist development is to centralize production and distribution. It also enormously enhances the importance of financial capital. Big businesses can only develop by obtaining the use of other people's money. Small business capital,

### **Labour's Mission**

no longer able to act alone, the savings of all sorts and conditions of people, all these are joined together to develop the large industrial concerns. The credit system favours the big operators, such as bankers and bill-brokers. It is now common knowledge that the stability of states and businesses is dependent on the goodwill of "high finance"—rings of financial capitalists. The Concert of Europe, the alleged Great Powers, are in reality mere puppets who blow hot and cold at the bidding of their bondholders, the great financial houses. This centralization is a process of elimination. The dependent class increases, while the independent class decreases. All attempts to minimise this process by a recital of Income Tax Returns is a case of not being able to see the wood for the trees. The Morgans, Rothschilds, Cassels, &c., are the financial facts of centralization: the Liptons, Levers, Harmsworths, Rockefellers, Krupps, &c., are the business ones. Labour Unrest is the wage-earner's reply. Capital and Labour, capitalist and wage-worker, these are the real divisions of modern society, and every fresh development of one is at the expense of the other.

So far the "honours" have been with the capitalists. We are, however, witnessing a growth of working-class activity and solidarity, a growing consciousness of its class interests, an increasing desire to act for itself. We are in the habit of mistaking the lion's skin for the animal itself, of letting our desires colour our judgment, of reading into events more than the facts warrant. Nevertheless, shorn of all exaggeration, the coming events are casting their shadows before, and the shadows converge. Amalgamation of industrial organizations is the shadow, the shadow which is slowly but surely materializing. The material form will inevitably be class organization, and class organization based on a recognition of the antagonistic character of the social relations of product.

We should be asking too much of the working-class movement to expect a general recognition from it of the nature of the task before it. No class ever yet started on its mission with such understanding. The revolution in England in the 17th century and the revolution in France in the 18th century, alike idealised their aims, the conquest of political society in the interests of the rising capitalist class, and the substitution of the rule of the manufacturer for the rule of the landed aristocracy—the one clothed in Biblical garb, the other in Roman paganism. Both trumpeted forth the watchword of—Freedom. Each advanced capitalist private property under the guise of Liberty, and the conditions for the further exploitation of the productive forces under the cloak of Equality. The mission of the capitalist class, i.e., the scientific exploitation of the earth's natural

resources to the uttermost limits consistent with individualistic ownership, is now drawing to its close, and the stage is set for the next act of the world drama. Enter Labour. Its mission: the emancipation of society from all class distinctions, all oppressions. The further development of capitalist production is becoming impossible owing to the almost complete exploitation of the markets of the known world. More and more capitalism is being turned in upon itself. The growing accumulation of capital, the necessity for its employment, the increase of competitors and of the productive powers, accompanied by a decrease of its powers of absorption of the increasing labour-power of society, all this makes for the intensification of the conflict between capitalists and capitalists on the one hand, and capitalists and labourers on the other. From being a promoter of the productive forces capitalism becomes a fetter on their further development. The only solution of the problem of modern society is the abolition of private property in the means of production and distribution, and the substitution of social ownership—the Historic Mission of the Working Class, the last class and only class yet to be emancipated. It is with the growing recognition of this fact among the organized workers of all lands that the hope of the future lies. Every year the May Day celebrations increase in importance, and the language of the movement's resolutions more clearly expresses the nature of the workers' aims, the more thoroughly recognises its historic mission.



WITH all the causes for congratulation on our progress here in Britain, we have also things which give us furiously to think. We cannot pretend to be satisfied with the recent developments of the machinery of State. Whatever may be our opinion

**Merrie  
Britain**

of the value of the Women Suffragists' methods of campaign, we cannot help but recognize that the brutal and coercive measures adopted by the Government and police have possibilities which are not altogether inviting. The "Cat and Mouse" Bill, the prohibition of public meeting, and forcible feeding are surely the Limit in the direction of official savagery. Coming on top of the many other methods adopted by this precious Liberal Government, such as the employment of soldiers, sailors and police in industrial disputes, it surely behoves us to be up and doing. We cannot afford to stand idly by while popular liberties, dearly bought, are curtailed—no matter what the excuse urged in justification. We cannot forget that precedents of this kind are dangerous things. Once used, without protest, and the next occasion will not be long delayed. It is not difficult to become outlawed under the present régime. To-day it is the Suffragettes, to-morrow it may be strikers—who knows!

Well, here's to another May Day! We join with our fellow workers the world over in proclaiming the kinship of the toilers without distinction, in hailing the signs of growing discontent, of growing solidarity and class consciousness. And yet once more we cry aloud our talismanic watchwords—

EDUCATE! AGITATE! ORGANIZE!

## Central Labour College

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The College is still badly in need of Funds in spite of the splendid results to date from the Appeal—and we do not hesitate to ask our readers to obtain more Cash.



## Collective Telesis

[One of a series of papers contributed to the American  
*Journal of Sociology* in 1897.]

THE more we study the facts, phenomena, and laws of the sentient world the more thoroughly do we find them permeated with the idea of utility. Metaphysics asks the question, Why? pure science asks the question, How? applied science asks the question, What for? The first inquires after the cause of things, the second inquires after their laws, the third inquires after their uses. The last of these is the standpoint of all feeling beings, while the others are confined to beings endowed with high reasoning or speculative powers. The nature of utility as the term is used in both economics and sociology was considered in the fifth paper, and in the ninth paper it was shown that both these sciences are utilitarian in their character, and, indeed, that all science is necessarily so. It is true that pure science takes no account of this fact and pursues truth for its own sake, but as there shown, the chief defence of this method has always rested on the essential utility of all truth, and although the sciences differ widely in this respect, still it is true that every pure science has or may have its applied stage, and although sociology can perhaps afford to wait a long time yet before it attempts to justify its existence by showing what it exists for, still, sooner or later, this attempt will be made. In view of the fact that its claim to the qualities of a true science has been widely disputed, there is the more reason for it to justify that claim as early as possible, and the true test of a science is the application of its principles to some useful purpose.

The subdivision of systematic knowledge into a plurality of sciences is based on the existence of as many so-called forces, *i.e.*, so many somewhat distinct modes of manifestation of the universal force. Each science deals with a particular one of these forces, or, at least, with a group or class of more or less similar ones. Sociology, as I understand it, differs in no essential respect from other sciences except that it deals with the social forces. The telic progress of society, as reviewed in the last paper, does not to any marked extent involve the control of the social forces. In so far as it does relate to them it is only from the standpoint of the individual who seeks to subject everything to his purposes. It was seen that the progress thus attained resulted from the intelligent direction by man of the various natural forces. This does not exclude the social forces, but the efforts described were chiefly expended upon physical, biotic, and psychic forces, the last mainly in relation to animal domestication. The phenomena were all social in the sense of their mutual utility to the members of society, but the acts were mainly individual, each member or small group seeking personal satisfaction. They were only in a limited degree collective.

Now while, in so far as even individual action really utilizes the social forces, this constitutes an application of sociological principles, still this is not what I have intended to include under the head of collective telic. I propose to restrict that term to the collective action of society in the direction of restraining, controlling, directing, and utilizing in any manner the natural forces of society. It is obvious, therefore, that, however much we may dislike the term (and it is a very offensive one to me), we are essentially dealing with the phenomena of *government*, since this word in a philosophical sense simply implies the organization through which society expresses and enforces its collective will. It is true that, owing to the great differences that exist among human races, due to the differences of language and the vicissitudes of human history, the population of the world is now, and is long destined to remain, divided into a great number of distinct nations (not to speak of savage and barbaric tribes), each with a government of its own, so that collective social action cannot generally extend beyond the territorial limits of each national autonomy. Still, international action of certain kinds is already becoming quite extensive and is destined to increase with the progress of civilization. Hence, when I speak of collective social action it is to be taken in the sense of national action, or at least of action on the part of nations, although a considerable number may have taken the same action. Thus defined and restricted, there remains no other essential difference between individual and social action. It also includes, however, the action of subordinate governing bodies, states, municipalities, towns, &c., deriving their powers from the general government.

It was seen that telic progress consists essentially in the process called invention, which presupposes the perception of the relations of objects and a knowledge of their properties, i.e., of the uniform laws of the phenomena they present. Invention materializes itself immediately in art, and art is the basis of civilization. It is customary to say, and most people believe, that art precedes science, but this is because altogether too narrow and special a meaning is given to the word science. Science is simply a *knowing*, and this is all that the word etymologically implies. Art is exclusively the product of the knowing faculty. It is wholly telic. As I have shown, the simplest of all arts, that of wielding a stick, is impossible without a knowledge of the physical principle which makes it effective. To judge from some of the discussions of this question it might be supposed that most of the simpler arts were the result of pure accident; that they had merely been blundered upon without any thought or knowledge. If this were so we should find animals in the possession of arts. But this is not the case. Every art is the product of thinking, knowing, reasoning, no matter how feeble these powers may be. Between empiricism and science there is only a difference of degree. The faintest exercise of the telic or intellectual faculty is, in so far, science.

The exactly intermediate step between individual teleis and social teleis is an organization of individuals into a limited body. Such organizations are always for some specific purpose, and the word *purpose* sufficiently indicates their telic character. It shows that there may be a thought common to a number of persons, and that several individuals can, as well as a single one, act teleologically towards a desired end. In modern society there is scarcely any limit to the variety in such organizations. These bodies may in a very just sense be regarded as conscious and intelligent, and they conduct their operations in all essential respects in the same way that individuals conduct theirs. Even if we were to suppose such an organization to embrace all the individuals of a nation and no others, it would still differ from the government of that nation in its specific object. The supposition is, however, inadmissible, since a limited organization must be voluntary, and the inhabitants of a country include minors and infants who have no intelligent ideas of the purposes of association. If a very large and powerful limited organization were to coerce its members or other persons to perform certain acts, it would be usurping the sphere of government, and if this were acquiesced in it would become, in so far, *the* government. Such was the case when the Church of Rome assumed such powers.

If a small number of individuals may think and act for a common purpose a larger number may, and there is no necessary limit until the totality of the people is embraced in the number. If such a universal organization has for its sole object the good of its members in general it thereby virtually becomes the government. To justify this title, however, and to accomplish its purpose it must assume full power, and this single act deprives it of the character of a purely voluntary association. No government can be such, although, so long as the right of voluntary expatriation exists, as it almost always has done, it is virtually a voluntary association.

Now there is a sense in which the very existence of government implies a consensus of intelligent purpose. Mr. Spencer, the severest critic of the acts of government that we have ever had, admits that all governments roughly represent the general sentiment and will of the people, and cites the failure of the Commonwealth under Cromwell as an illustration. He also admitted that intelligence conduces to association, and says that "the chief prompter is experience of the advantages derived from co-operation." The same idea was also expressed much earlier by him in his *Data of Ethics*, and need not be further insisted upon. What specially concerns us here is the fact that even the rudest forms of government constitute a sort of collective intelligence devoted to the object of protecting society and advancing its interests. The mere circumstance that the personnel of government is made up of human beings, members of the same society, and possessing the imperfections of mankind in general, and the fact that these favoured individuals often use the

powers which society has conferred upon them to further their own egoistic ends at the expense and to the injury of society, should not, as it so often does, cause us to lose sight of the principle and turn aside to combat the accident. Any other set of men would do the same thing, as our own political tergiversations have shown, and the only remedy is the general improvement of human character and the "eternal vigilance" of society.

On any "social organism" theory, government must be regarded as the *brain* or organ of consciousness of society, and the small amount of "brains" shown by government is simply in confirmation of the conclusion reached in the third paper, that society represents an organism of low degree. Whatever purpose government attempts to accomplish, it has to deal with the social forces, to direct and control them on the same principles that the individual applies to the other natural forces. When treating of the latter in the last paper mention was made of the distinction between the exercise of the telic faculty on animate and on inanimate objects, and of the moral quality that enters in when the feelings, especially of men, are the objects of egoistic exploitation. This feature was not dwelt upon, as properly belonging to the present paper, but attention was called to the fact that so great a power directed into so delicate a field became a menace to society which would become intolerable if not antagonized by the same power wielded by the collective body of society itself. This is really the strongest reason for the existence of government, and it cannot be said to have grown less with the progress of civilization. In a certain way it has grown stronger, for with the increase of intelligence the inequality in the degree to which the telic power is possessed by the individual members of society has greatly increased, and this has correspondingly augmented the ability of some to exploit others. Moreover, with this same advance in intellectual acumen the methods have changed, and open warfare, even mental, has given way to the most subtle arts of deceiving the unwary and "making the worse appear the better reason," until the less favoured members of society require to be not merely "wide awake" to their interests and perpetually on their guard, but they must be keen analysers of human motives and philosophic students of "human nature" if they would avoid being ensnared in the sophistries of the cunning leaders and makers of public opinion. The self-seeking class which formerly feared government which they knew existed to foil their plans, is to-day striving with Machiavellian diplomacy, and, it must be admitted, with considerable success, to enlist government itself in its service and thus to multiply its powers.

The individual teleology hitherto considered may be regarded as unconscious. The social benefits that it achieves are not thought of. They are as much accidental and unintended as are those that result from purely genetic or spontaneous activity. On the other hand the social teleology now under consideration—the action of the

central body which society creates to look after its interests—is conscious in the sense that, as a body, it always aims to benefit society, which is a conscious good. Most such action, it is true, involves very little exercise of the higher powers of mind. The decrees of a monarch are always for some purpose, but they rarely aim to accomplish that purpose indirectly. They are usually not only mandatory—thou shalt—but negatively so—though shalt not. Little more can be said for the great body of laws enacted by the legislators of representative governments. That is, legislators usually employ the direct method. That is more or less successful, but always requires a physical power behind it. It is the purely empirical stage of government, as government is an application of what society knows about the nature of the social forces, it is a true art, but the condition in which we now find this art corresponds to that in which all other arts are prior to the application to them of the wider principles of systematic science, and society may be considered to occupy the place, relatively to what it will ultimately attain, that art occupied before the era of science.

(To be continued)

LESTER FRANK WARD

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## Syndicalist Organization in France

[The following article of topical interest is from the *New Review* an international Socialist weekly published at 150 Nassau Street, New York, U.S.A.]

**I**N a former article I have examined briefly the organization of the Socialist party in France: I would now like to show the operation of the Syndicalist associations and their numerical strength, and speak not only of the syndicats, which are the primary form of such associations, but also of the Labour Bourses, the unions of syndicats, the federations of trade and industry and the General Confederation of Labour.

The French Syndicalist movement has developed especially during the last fifteen years. If we ask why it has taken so long to establish itself on a solid basis, we find numerous reasons:

(1). Legislation has always been placing obstacles both of political and of economic character in the way of labour associations. Every organization of the proletariat, whatever may have been its object, was regarded as suspicious and subversive. Immediately after the Great Revolution, or rather during the Revolution, the so-called Chapelier Law prohibited both labour unions and strikes. The Penal Code of the Empire was made stricter still, and the

Monarchy of July, in the presence of the outbreaks at Paris and Lyons, which indicated the awakening of the industrial proletariat, added still more to this severity. It was by all sorts of expedients that the wage-earners succeeded, in spite of everything, in taking concerted action for the protection of their interests. They formed at first more or less professional "Mutualities," and then "Resistances," which, without threatening the framework of the social system itself, and faithful to the same spirit that moved old English trade-unionism, struggled against the reduction of wages or for increase in wages. But these "Resistances" were jealously watched by the police, and continually were attacked and dispersed. The Republic of 1848 showed some fleeting signs of liberalism, and suddenly there appeared an enormous efflorescence of labour associations; most of them succumbed, however, in the repressions of June, one of the wildest episodes in the history of class struggles in France. The Second Empire carried police interference still farther, until finally it discovered that in spite of all its measures to the contrary the labour movement was growing. The government was forced in 1864 to proclaim the principle of free coalition; shortly afterward, it was obliged to leave in practice a rudimentary freedom to the syndical chambers, which had replaced the "Resistances."

The syndical chambers had concentrated especially in Paris, where they tried, on the eve of the War of 1870 and the fall of Napoleon III, to form a collective organization. But they were then in the period of arbitrary despotism: at the least movement of any significance, they were dissolved, and their directors arrested and imprisoned. They were obliged rather to conceal the fact of their organization and limit themselves to the same tasks as before, although the spirit of the International had already penetrated into their midst.

After the downfall of the commune (March-May 1871), in which many of the syndicals of that time participated in Paris, a new era of repression began. The syndical chambers were dissolved at one stroke. The associative movement was nevertheless so strong, and the French proletariat so energetic, that within six years after the Commune, corporative associations were springing up everywhere. It has been estimated that in 1882, 60,000 workmen were members of the syndicats or syndical chambers, the first name prevailing after the Law of 1884 recognized the existence of professional associations. This law, which was veritably forced through by the will of the proletariat, although it was not entirely favourable to the workers, assured a very relative freedom. Henceforth the syndicats could be formed without authorization, but they were obliged to communicate to the government their statutes and the names of their directors or administrators. Practically, the law left to the government strong weapons against the working class; and whenever the government has been able, it has sided against the

syndicats. It has further made use of the provisions of the Penal Code whenever a social crisis, a general strike, has broken out, and it has never hesitated to arrest those whom it considered the leaders. Nothing, however, has prevented syndicalist enthusiasm from manifesting itself with increasing prestige.

(2). If the French syndicats present smaller contingents than those of the English Trade Unions or the German Gewerkschaften, it is not only because the French proletariat is slightly inferior to that of Germany and much inferior to that of the United Kingdom. The reason is that great industry has not made on the territory of the Republic the same astonishing progress that it has made elsewhere. It is not difficult to understand this. France has no coal deposits comparable to those of the United States, of England, or of Germany. She has only 200,000 miners as compared with 1,100,000 in the United Kingdom. Her metal works, her weaving and spinning factories, although their products are advantageously quoted on the market, do not deliver to the trade quantities equal to those furnished by her two neighbouring rivals. France has remained a country of artistic and "de luxe" industry, and the production of such commodities scarcely demands a powerful concentration of personnel: in addition to the great labouring groups of Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, Lyons, Saint-Etienne, Rouen and Reims, we must consider the artisan class as well. Finally the rural element forms a considerable bulk, and it is a matter of common knowledge that this class is less susceptible than any other to syndicalist propaganda.

(3). The French working man, as I have already pointed out, is essentially individualistic, and hostile to close agreements imposing strict obligations. He does not like to bind himself. He understands solidarity and is quite capable of sacrificing himself on those great occasions when deep convulsions stir the proletarian class to the very depths; he shrinks on the contrary from the petty annoyances, the humdrum sacrifices, the tasks without glory, which unions demand from day to day. It is only recently that the French labourer has become aware of the virtue of permanent associations, which do indeed exact of each man a partial gift of himself, but which return this gift a hundred fold, by winning him inestimable collective advantages. As one reviews the history of the "Mutualities," the "Resistances," the "Syndical Chambers," the "Syndicats," in the nineteenth century, one notices, at every moment ruptures, dissolutions, re-organizations, all entailing endless expenditures. The federations of trades which are finally developing to-day, have passed during the last twenty years very critical moments. The groups composing them have waged the bitterest struggles against each other. Accusations were hurled against the most devoted militants, who finally in sheer exhaustion gave way. Their departure brought about confusion and all incorporation lapsed into the silence of death, till some element more active and courageous tried again to rouse it into life.

It has seemed as though the French proletariat has been quite as eager to form syndicats as it has been careless about making them permanent.

Here then are some of the reasons why labour unions in France, have been and still are inferior in efficient contingents to those of other great countries. It might perhaps be desirable to touch on the history of the internal revolutions of France, revolutions which have followed each other in rapid succession, and at times without apparent or appreciable preparation. These uprisings have accustomed the masses to love insurrection for itself and to believe in the omnipotence of violence. It was not until the concept of the general strike, so revolutionary in certain of its aspects, came to replace the romanticism of the barricade, that syndicalism felt its power increasing.

The spread of syndicalism has been apparent from several considerations: (1). The membership of the syndicats has increased. (2). The syndicats of particular trades have tended to fuse with one another. It is noticeable that in direct ratio to this tendency, the total number of syndicats has progressed less rapidly than that of syndicat members. (3). The syndicats of particular trades have assembled in national federations so as to generalize their claims and to prevent the workers of one region from blocking the efforts of those of another. (4). The syndicats of all the trades of a given locality have formed unions and Labour Bourses (Bourses de Travail). So the labour unit must express itself in each city through the community of action which reigns among all the organized wage earners, whatever be their trade. A single enthusiasm thus impels the whole proletariat, conscious of unity, toward a single goal by sustaining the same claims. A given syndicat, very feeble in its isolated action, conducts a very efficient campaign if it can count on the support of all the other syndicats, from whatever trade they may come. Departmental federation, which has recently appeared, has extended largely and effectively the field of operation of the local union. (5). The unions and federations have concentrated, or more exactly federated, into the C. G. T. (Confederation Generale de Travail), the origins of which go back to 1895, and which equipped itself in 1904 with its present constitution.

These are the elements of syndicalism we are about to discuss in their order, overlooking for the moment the divers tendencies which manifest themselves among the French syndicats, as well as the doctrines which confront one another in the congresses.

It is extremely difficult to obtain authoritative statistics on the syndicats and on their members in France. The elementary groups do not themselves publish any census which might serve as a stable basis for calculation. The federations or the unions of syndicats are not acquainted with the numbers of their component elements, the latter often concealing the truth in order to obtain assessments as low



as possible. The C. G. T., at its last congress at Havre, was obliged itself to recognize that its adherents numbered some 200,000 more than its taxed members. Certainly, regrettable abuses exist in this regard. It would be desirable that all the members of the local syndicats should become contributors to the departmental and national federations. At any rate, we must content ourselves with the few facts we possess. These are derived from the Bureau of Labour, from the Ministry of Labour, and from the Social Bureau; they must be accepted with circumspection, first of all, because the sources of information of these official bodies are rather uncertain; then because the local corporations, when questioned, may consider it to their interest to conceal the truth; and finally, because the totals presented confuse the syndicats of the Reds—who stand more or less for class war—and the syndicats of the Yellows, which are properly associations of strike-breakers, started under the protection and for the protection of large capital. I may add that the Yellows represent but slight contingents.

In 1884 there were 68 known syndicats of workmen; in 1887, 501 in 1890, 1,006; in 1893, 1,926; in 1896, 2,243; in 1900, 2,682; in 1905, 4,625; in 1910, 5,260; in 1912, 5,217. Between 1908 and 1912 there has been a falling off of 307 syndicats, but this diminution as we shall see, in no way corresponds to a numerical weakening of the syndicalist army. It results rather from a systematically prosecuted fusion of locals in a given trade, which formerly were running counter to each other to the greater prejudice of the proletariat.

In 1890, the syndicalists numbered 139,692; in 1893, 402,630; in 1896, 422,777; in 1900, 491,647; in 1903, 643,757; in 1906, 836,134; in 1910, 977,350; in 1912, 1,064,410. In short, the progress has been without interruption, save in 1909, a year, which in France as elsewhere, but less than elsewhere, was as might be expected from the economic crisis, marked by a reduction.

In 1890, the average membership of a syndicat was 139; in 1895, about 200; slightly declining then in 1900, to settle in 1912 around 204.

These syndicats have created around themselves institutions of varying nature. If in general they adhere to the doctrine of class war, and look forward to a complete overturning of the social system they nevertheless do not repudiate partial reforms, such as the reduction of hours of labour, increase in the guarantees of hygiene and safety, improvement of the condition of the workers, the better thereby to strengthen their capacity for struggle. They also adapt themselves to the present social structure in order to organize a concrete solidarity for the mutual advantage of their brothers: 1,137 of them have bureaus of employment for the workers in their trades; 1,502 have started libraries; 808 have funds for mutual aid; 624 have

funds for those out of work ; 473 distribute mileage to those of their members who have to move in search of work ; 357 have founded trade schools ; 79 pension endowments ; others have instituted co-operatives of distribution or even of production. Thus more than 6,000 locals serve as the centre, the home, of proletarian activity.

Above the syndicats, we have, as has been said, the unions and federations, the functions of which we have defined.

The local unions of syndicats, which are also called Labour Exchanges, but inexactly (for the union is the assemblage of local syndicats, while the Bourse is the edifice, usually municipal\* which shelters this assemblage) are tending at present to give way or at least to subject themselves to the Departmental unions of syndicats. That is, the new unions are intended to have a vaster territory and their propaganda should cover a far wider zone. The last congress of the C. G. T. at Havre (September, 1912) decided that this transformation should be completed by January 1, 1913, and it expected the greatest results therefrom, as far as regards the diffusion of syndicalistic ideas ; for under the present organization it happens that two and even three local unions are operating in one department side by side, and accordingly a considerable portion of that department is lost for syndicalism ; it also happens that unfortunate rivalries are occasioned between these neighbouring unions.

According to the Annual Government Report, there are in France 141 Labour Bourses ; according to the reports of the Confederation, there are 153 local unions of syndicats.

The trade Federations, which extend their influences over the whole territory, are numerically estimated only so far as they adhere to the C. G. T. This central, though not centralized, organization counted 53 federations, most of which are federations of particular trades : match workers, furniture makers, launderers, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, shoemakers, &c. ; while others are federations of industries, food-stuffs, pottery, fabrics, skins and hides, &c. These 53 federations unite 2,837 syndicats. The tendency which has been in evidence for some years and is still at work, is in the direction of concentrating trade federations into industrial federation. Thus the federation of mechanics was expelled from the C. G. T. because it refused to fuse with the federation of metals. The latter federation of industry had already absorbed the firemen, conductors and engineers, while that of skins and hides was taking in the trade federation of furriers.

The largest federations are the builders (80,000 members), the railroads (11,000), skins and hides (10,600), metals (28,600), mines (20,000), ports and docks (16,000), textiles (13,500). Certainly these figures are underestimated, for the federations generally conceal a part of their membership, in joining the C. G. T., to avoid high assessments.

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\*For some years past the local unions have shown a tendency to leave the Bourses, where they were subject to annoyance from the municipal authorities.

The C. G. T. has two branches, the one the Bourse section, the other the section of Federations. It has a permanent bureau formed by appointment: two secretaries, one treasurer and one assistant treasurer. It is administered by a federal committee composed of delegates of Bourses and Federations. A congress is held every two years. The budgets are likewise formed every two years, to cover the interval between congresses. From 1910 to 1912, the receipts for 24 months were 139,000 francs, derived especially from stamps sold by the federations and unions of syndicats, and of federal papers delivered to the members.

At the present moment, the Confederation has 400,000 dues payers and 600,000 members. The difference is explained from the fact that only general groups, that is federations or local unions, can be admitted as voting elements, and these groups enroll themselves always for a part only of their membership. In a word the C. G. T. embraces more than half but less than two-thirds of the French syndicalists, admitting as exact, which it probably is not, the total of 1,064,000 given by the Annual Government Report.

PAUL LOUIS (Paris).

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## J. V. WILLS

JACK WILLS, treasurer of the C.L.C., militant trade unionist, Socialist, and Plebeian, has been ill for some time. Having just been operated upon in hospital it is likely to be some time before he can resume work. He has a large family and a very small income. In similar circumstances, for others, he has never failed. An appeal has been issued for help. We thought some of his friends outside London would like to know this. Send cash to—

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## Central Labour College

### Rochdale Branch

**A** DEBATE took place on April 5th between representatives of the C.L.C. and the Workers' Educational Association in the Spinners' Institute, Rochdale, before an audience of 60 or 70 trade unionists. The subject of debate being "Which organization provides the better education for workpeople, the C.L.C. or the W.E.A.?"

Seeing that we had thrown out the challenge it was deemed necessary that H. Piper, of Manchester (an ex-student of the C.L.C.) should open on our behalf. This he did in a clear, convincing style. After a few preliminary remarks, he traced the history of the trade union movement from its inception up to the present period, pointing out its different stages of development as the class cleavage between the wage worker and the capitalist became wider and wider.

His next point was that the changes in the superstructure of society were due to economic changes, and therefore in order to obtain success in their struggle with the capitalist class on the industrial field, the workers must receive an independent working class education. Such educational facilities must be owned, controlled, and administered by the working class.

In conclusion, Piper pertinently pointed out that the condition for progress consisted in the abolition of the present system, and he appealed to his opponent, not to attempt to prove or justify his case by the number of affiliated societies they possessed, but to give reasons to the audience why the workers should look to the capitalists for an education that would result in the overthrow of capitalism.

In his opening statement, E. J. Hookway, the W.E.A. representative, failed to give these reasons. He based his case on the fact, that, owing to the pressure of the members of the W.E.A. the Trades Union Congress had passed a resolution calling upon the Government to bring in legislation to provide an education of a free and secular character, and also that the social reform of the present day was due to the efforts of the W.E.A.

Their case being so lamentably weak, he began to enumerate the number of their affiliated societies and appeared gratified when the bell rang for him to retire.

On H. Piper rising for a second time we heard him at his best. He pointed out in a logical manner, that if it were true that the organization that receives the most support from the workers on the educational field was the best for the workers, then on the political

field the best organization for the workers was the Liberal Party, since they got most support from the workers on the political field. He also pointed out that the capitalist class was prepared to offer facilities to a member of the working class in technical science so long as it suited their purpose.

In his second reply, E. J. Hookway disputed H. Piper's point on technical science, and claimed that all students were compelled to pay for such. He next asserted that the Universities, though they were on a bad basis at present, could in the future be utilised in the interest of the working class.

For the third and last time H. Piper was called upon, and he at once commenced to prove his statement that had been disputed by his opponent respecting technical education, this he did in a satisfactory manner and on concluding received an ovation worthy of his effort.

E. J. Hookway now had his opportunity to straighten matters a little, but this he failed to do, he appeared to welcome the approaching conclusion of his arduous task, his only point being, that he claimed to be an educationalist before a trade unionist.

With the usual vote of thanks to the chairman, Mr. Bell, who carried out his duties in an admirable manner, the long looked for debate came to a conclusion, ending satisfactorily as far as we are concerned. We thank our fellow student H. Piper for his services and also appreciate his capabilities in putting the C.L.C. case.

FRANK JACKSON.

## The Workers' Educational Association

**S**O many inquiries reach us from time to time about the W.E.A. that, in self defence, we must again encroach on the valuable space of the Magazine to deal with the subject. Incidentally it may be useful to our readers.

In the first place, then, why do the C.L.C. and the "Plebs" League oppose the W.E.A.? Isn't all education good? Such is generally the opening question and challenge of the supporters of the latter organization. Let us preface our inquiry by defining the term "education." Herbert Spencer remarks somewhere that: "To prepare us for complete living is the function which education has to discharge." Not a good definition taken literally, but we might liberally translate it thus: "To prepare us to make the most out of life—to live well." Not a good definition even now, language is so equivocal, but passing fair for our object. "To live well!" can we start out with a general agreement as to what "living well" means? 'Tis difficult, but here goes. To have a sufficiency of the material things upon which life depends, i.e., food, clothing and

shelter: further, leisure and opportunity for recreation, whatever form the latter may take short of limiting the enjoyment of others. Are these conditions to "living well" possible under or within the present social system? We can answer emphatically, No! Why? Because the present social system is based on inequality. What is the nature of this inequality? Private ownership of the means, instruments, and products requisite for the maintenance of life: land, machinery, and articles produced. "He who owns the means whereby I live owns my life," and being "owned" is the lot of the major portion of the human race. A subject class is not "free." The workers are in subjection to the owners of the means and instruments of production. Therefore the working class are not "free." Technically, under the law, of course every one is "free" in Merrie England. That is to say, if I am a railway worker I cannot be legally compelled—apart from a daily, weekly, &c., "mutual" contract—to work for Sir Guy Granet: *but I must work for some railway magnate*. My freedom otherwise can only be expressed through abstinence from labour; and abstinence from labour for me, as a propertiless worker, means abstinence from food: abstinence from food means, in time, starvation. I am not "free"! I am in subjection.

The subjection of the worker is based on the needs of the owner of the means and instruments of production—the capitalist—*plus* his own will to live. The development of the tools of production has placed the working of those tools beyond the physical powers of the capitalist owners,—even had there ever existed any desire on their part to operate them, to work—they must have the labour-power of the toolless class available. It has often been urged as a moral justification of capitalism, that the capitalists organize the productive powers of society for the general good. Leaving aside the questions of over-production or under-consumption of the means of subsistence, for the moment, we have some difficulty in squaring this beneficial social work of capitalism with the production of shoddy and useless goods. By "useless" goods I mean all those abominations which we stigmatize as "Brummagem," produced for the purpose of "dealing" with the "backward" races. What then is the object of capitalist production? The production of—profit! Now we have it! Only this can explain the facility with which the capitalist will enter upon the manufacture of commodities—articles of merchandise—without regard to their character, aim or destination. It explains also over-production or under-consumption—for *what is over-production but under-consumption*. You see the definition all depends upon whether you are a capitalist or a wage labourer! Markets are glutted not because social wants are satisfied, but because the larger part of society, the wage earners, cannot bring to the market an "efficient demand," to use the term of the capitalist economists: in other words, the workers' wages are too scanty to enable them to regularly absorb the goods they produce.

We have arrived then at this decision: That the aim of the capitalist is to produce—not goods, but—profit. From whence does this profit arise? We cannot elaborate here the various theories of value current, sufficient to say there are, broadly speaking, two schools of economists—the school representing various capitalist theoretical solutions of its (values) origin; and the school representing the working-class theory, the Marxist. *The capitalist economists say* that value is created by (1) abstinence, (2) the directive ability of the capitalist, (3) by supply and demand, (4) buying cheap and selling dear, &c., &c.

All we need say about these theories here is: the "abstinence" of the capitalist is often displayed in orgies of luxuriousness and senseless parades of extravagance, while all the time his wealth increases beyond his power of dissipating it: that "directive ability" is often vested in infants, madmen, or dotards, and in joint stock enterprises no possibility exists for some of the owners of capital to display this alleged genius of direction: that when "supply and demand" are equal it would appear that there can be no value present; or again, is bread always in that excess of supply to demand or diamonds in that excess of demand to supply that their normal prices indicate? Finally, most of the orthodox economists will agree that in normal market conditions goods are exchanged at their value. "Buying cheap and selling dear" belongs to primitive social epochs!

*The Marxists say* that value is created by labour; that between the value the labourer creates and the value he receives (wages) is a surplus. This surplus-value forms the capitalist's "profits": and it is about the distribution of this surplus-value that the struggles between Capital and Labour centre—the class struggle. Profit is the result of labour, and the reward of idleness. The antagonistic theories of these two schools of economists bring about far-reaching results. They explain the antagonistic views held by them with regard to the interpretations of history and present social relations: they give rise to antagonistic political, industrial, and educational aims and methods: to antagonistic ethics, i.e., theories of right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust. Let us be quite clear about these Marxian economic theories, for they are of immense importance to our conclusions. They are:—

1. The object of capitalist enterprise is the production of profit.
2. That all value is created by labour.
3. That labour-power in action (work) creates a value greater than its "reward" (wages)—a surplus-value which becomes dignified under the title of "profits."
4. "Labour unrest" is but the struggle for the division of this surplus-value—the class struggle.

I have laboured these points on purpose to draw certain conclusions therefrom which have a material bearing on the subject of W.E.A. education, I wished to make a few points quite clear, viz:—

1. Labour is the source of all values— and profits.
2. These labour-produced profits are realized by a numerically small class—the capitalists and their lieutenants.
3. The capitalists rely for the maintenance of their rule on the acceptance by the workers of capitalist explanations of these social relations of production.
4. These social relations are controlled by superstructural institutions, e.g. by law, legislation and administration, education, &c.
5. With the development of the productive forces and the concentration of capital grows the need for counter organization on the part of the labourers ; first, through industrial organization—trade unions ; then, through political organization—Independent Labour Party ; then, independent educational organization based on class theories in antagonism to capitalistic teaching.
6. The workers finally become a class, separated from the capitalists in organization, methods, theories, and aims. The class struggle is perceived by them and they set out upon their mission—the control of society in the interests of all its members.
7. Education, so far as social science is concerned, is not impartial. It has to explain the parts played in society by the capitalist and the labourer, respectively—antagonistic parts. Workers need a knowledge of social science for the purpose of waging a fight for better working conditions and increased wages—as a basis for "living well." Education not for us is against us.

The points enumerated above seek to emphasize the following facts :—

The basis of rulership is economic, i.e., is determined by property interests.

These property interests can only be safeguarded effectually in so far as the rulers control the legislative, the legal, and the educational machinery of the State.

While there is economic inequality, Parliament, the Law Courts, and educational institutions must interpret social activities in the interests of the propertied classes.

All industrial, political, or educational bodies that do not openly acknowledge, or secretly act, upon these facts are convicted of ignorance of the nature of the social forces.

All appeals to organizations for support are to be judged solely from the standpoint of whether they advance *class* interests. This is a hard saying! True, but *facts* usually are. It is not individual progress that organizations are built up to conserve, but the interests of the individuals *collectively*.

The *primary*, not the *only*, interest of the workers is economic : and concerns itself with "What they shall eat, what they shall drink,



wherewithal they shall be clothed" and housed. It is only through the *collective* (the class) interests that the *individual's* interests are firmly established. Educational institutions or organizations must be judged, therefore by their ability to secure the progress of the class—and from our point of view, the working class.

Hence only working-class education in social science is compulsorily scientific. Why? Because its own theoretical conclusions are constantly tested in two ways: (1) in opposition to capitalist theories as voiced in the Press and Pulpit and as spoken from the Platform; (2) as a confirmation of the everyday experience in the workshop, in civic matters, in the home.

This question of education is something vital and real. On our understanding and interpretation of the facts of our everyday life depends the effectiveness of our efforts to improve our position as workers. We are getting quite accustomed to the sneers of superior persons on the subjects of propaganda and economics. As for the reproach re propaganda we are quite satisfied to be labelled educational propagandists. A "propagandist" as defined by Webster's Dictionary is: "a person who devotes himself to the spread of any system of principles." And we are frankly devoting ourselves to the spread of the Marxian system of principles: a system that does scientifically explain the position of the working class in society. Is there any other social science? As for economics, surely, if we are to make good our claim as workers for "a place in the sun," we are prepared to "stake our claim" on scientific proof of our right to bask in the sunshine. We don't want philanthropy—merely justice. If the workers, apart from what are euphemistically called the "sweated industries"—God wot!—are now obtaining the full results of their labour, we are seeking charity. On the other hand Marxism, and Marxism alone, scientifically demonstrates the justice of our claim of: the world for the workers—and that through the despised science of economics. If we hope to take effective steps to improve our position as workers, then, we must understand the nature of the industrial process, of the mechanism of the present social system, of the science of society. We should be the last to belittle the advantages of culture, of the value of the liberal arts, and of the inspiration of field, flower, and hedgerow. But—shall we keep our heads so far above the earth that we see not the misery, the hopelessness, the heart-hunger of the daily round of the mass of our class! that we forget the ever present spectre of Want dogging the steps of our fellows! Of a truth we want culture, but if we have to choose between culture and Bread—what then? Let us not blind ourselves with phrases. The mass of us want a regular supply of bread and cheese—when that is secured we shall tread lightly and blithely the pathway to the stars, to the golden realms of art. Our first work then is to conquer the Machine! To treat of the man (include woman) as a worker! Education for use, not ornament.

Now what is the attitude of the W.E.A. towards education? It claims to be non-partisan. It is thus impaled on the horns of a dilemma! Either it is non-partisan because it is ignorant of the position occupied by the working class in the present social system, or it is acting the part of a decoy duck for the capitalist class. The W.E.A. is dimly conscious that there is "something rotten in the State of Denmark," for it is continuously clamouring for the workers to "capture the Universities," and "democratize" them. Whether this "democratizing" of the 'Varsities is to be physical (changing governors) or mental (changing teaching) does not seem to have been settled. Sometimes the W.E.A. tells us that the 'Varsities are controlled because of wealth, sometimes it informs us that our masters control (us and) the 'Varsities because of their education. In any case it seems a curious solution of the Labour question, this partaking by the workers of the education that fits our masters for the adequate performing of their duties as rulers. The education in social science that fits one to function for capitalism would certainly unfit one for the work of overthrowing that order. However, 'Varsity education does not dominate capitalism *but* capitalist teaching does dominate 'Varsity education. To advocate a 'Varsity education for the workers, therefore, unfits the W.E.A. for participating beneficially in the organized Labour Movement. The W.E.A. must get a new educational policy, it must be born again of working-class parentage, or—it must be hung higher than Haman.

The W.E.A. is supported by (1) The State educational departments. (2) By many members of the propertied classes of all political opinions, which shows that the interests of the propertied classes are, in the main, mutual. (3) By the Universities. True they have support from working class bodies, just as many workers still support Liberal and Tory politicians. In both cases it only goes to prove that many workers are still unable to distinguish their enemies from their friends. All this only emphasizes the fact that, the W.E.A. educational policy is a menace to the workers; the master class is using it as an indirect method of continuing their domination of the forces of labour: "divide and conquer" has been replaced by "devise and conquer" via the W.E.A. and kindred bodies. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that the Lords, spiritual and temporal, the priests and the lawyers, the capitalist-politician and the politician-capitalist provide sinews of war or that the State educational authorities assist it with doles. Assuredly these investments are more profitable than Marconi's and more deadly than Dreadnoughts, for the Lambs of Labour are to be fleeced and the theoretical citadel being erected by the aid of the works of the Germans, Marx and Engels, is to be destroyed by the aid of the "humane" Marshall. It is not the German warships that are *the* danger but the German warriors' cry: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of all lands, unite!"

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