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September, 1918.

The
PLEBS
MAGAZINE



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THE PLEBS MAGAZINE

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

Vol. X.

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No. 8

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The Annual Meet

THE TENTH ANNUAL MEET of the Plebs League was held Monday, August 5th, at the Labour College (by kind permission of the Governors), If not so representative as previous gatherings, it was very well attended and was characterised by a spirit of comradeship which was an inspiration to all.

THE MAGAZINE has paid for itself during the whole of the year, a notable BEN MAC KAY in the chair welcomed the friends present.

THE SECRETARY read the following report of the year's work and presented the balance sheet (see pages).

"The Report falls roughly into three parts—The Magazine, the Classes, and the Publications' Department.

achievement considering our difficulties. The circulation maintains itself at a steady 5,000 per month (6,000 for the May issue), a considerable increase upon last year. The Government decree, "No returns," did not affect us, as we have always worked upon the advance order plan. We should be flourishing if it was not for abnormal conditions and paper restrictions, which will increase our difficulties during the next year.

We regret that during the year the Editor had to leave for service abroad, but the Secretary, who had been taking over the work, continued to do so. A private subscription fund was raised to pay the Secretary, as it was realised that this had now become full time work. We can safely say that with a little encouragement in the way of donations to keep its spirits up the Magazine can now earn its own living.

THE CLASSES—Full reports have appeared from time to time, so that it is only necessary to give a general survey. Conferences have been held at London, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Halifax, Glasgow and Durham,

with excellent results. Classes and Branches have grown up and become so popular that we hope to be able to organise, in the near future, seven Plebs District Divisions namely—(1) Scotland; (2) Durham and Northumberland; (3) Yorkshire; (4) Lancashire and Cheshire; (5) Midlands and S. Western; (6) South Wales; (7) London and Home Counties. In most cases the Classes have been run by the Trade Unions, and our main idea is that the Plebs League Branches should act, not as controlling forces, but more as a "ginger" committee to spur the Classes on to greater effort. The number of our teachers has been sadly depleted, but in many cases our publications have proved invaluable to Classes without a tutor and this brings us to the work of the

PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT—We started in July last year with no capital and no assets except the enthusiastic help of our friends. We have issued and sold 5,000 leaflets, 25,000 pamphlets, and 9,300 of Mark Starr's book. We confidently anticipate a renewal of orders, and with £125 worth of books in stock, we hope to be able to make enough money to continue our Publishing Department. Any commercial firm knows that the past year has been *the* most difficult year in the whole history of the printing trade, so that we may be forgiven for feeling proud that we have accomplished so much. A ready response to our appeal, and we shall be able to publish Ablett's *Easy Outlines of Economics*, and so start the winter with what we have always lacked—a simple Industrial History, and an elementary text-book on Economics. Next year will be a difficult one, but we look back with gratitude to our friends. We are faced with a stiff fight ahead, but nothing gives more confidence than a feeling of good work already accomplished.

Our hearts go out to our comrades in France and in prison. It is because their capacity for work is paralysed that we feel we *must* fight to preserve and extend that which they helped to build up.

Inspired by their efforts in the past and our success during the past four years, we can face next winter with confidence and hope."

The Report was accepted, and the Secretary then called the attention of the Meeting to the Balance Sheet, pointing out the lack of donations and the large amount of the outstanding accounts. An appeal was made to Trade Unionists to try and obtain grants for educational purposes from their branches, and a request was made to voluntary agents of the Magazine to settle their accounts month by month. The Balance Sheet was adopted, and the question of "ways and means" referred to the Executive Committee.

FRANK JACKSON moved "That this Meeting calls upon the Executive Committee to start an organising fund for the purpose of paying a salary to the Secretary." Upon this being seconded and carried it was agreed that the Executive Committee take charge of this fund and issue an appeal to the whole organization.

After considerable discussion, the following two resolutions were passed:—

Moved by **J. T. W. NEWBOLD**—To insert the words, "The formation of local branches to bring together individual members in order to promote Classes for the study of Social Science" in the first paragraph under "Methods."

Executive Committee resolution also moved by **J. T. W. NEWBOLD**—

To insert the words, "An Executive Committee composed of delegates elected by ballot of local branches representing the District (or Division)," under "Management." It was felt that these two suggestions would help considerably in re-organizing the League.

Executive Committee resolution moved by the Secretary—"That this Annual Meeting invites the N.E., C.L.C. League, and the newly-formed Workers' Educational League of S. Wales to call themselves the N.E. Plebs and the S.W. Plebs respectively," was withdrawn, as the discussion supplied information that had been lacking. It was pointed out that without the constitution of either organization being before the Meeting, the procedure was impossible unless the aims and methods of both organizations were the same as that of the Plebs League

GEO. BROWN then moved :—

“ That this Annual Meeting of the Plebs League, recognising the splendid devotion and self-sacrificing efforts made by Comrade Craik on behalf of the League, instructs the Executive Committee officially to take charge of a subscription which is being raised to assist his dependants, in appreciation of his services.”

Testimony was given of the work done by our Comrade and the resolution was heartily endorsed and carried.

The London Plebs League resolution :—“ That the Central London Plebs League request the Plebs League definitely to state its policy with regard to the war,” provoked the longest and most heated discussion. Mrs. Vanwy Westrope, in moving the resolution, spoke eloquently upon the need of a decisive, clearly-stated policy on the part of the League in connection with the war. After the discussion, in which it became apparent that the feeling of the Meet was that the resolution was outside the scope of the League, the resolution was withdrawn. The feeling of the meeting was that the League is an educational body, creating opinion to be expressed politically through the other organizations which exist for that purpose.

W. H. MAINWARING moved the re-election of all officers till such time as the new E.C. meet. This was agreed to.

A very hearty vote of thanks to the Printers for their help in printing and despatching the Magazine was passed and the Meeting closed.

In the evening a successful and enjoyable Social was given by the London Plebs Committee. The thanks of all are due to Mrs. IDA CHAYTOR and Mrs. GRACE KIRKHAM for the trouble they took, not only to organize the Social, but also to see that tea was provided for those who attended the afternoon Meeting.

The singing of “ Auld Lang Syne ” with more meaning than ever, and the “ Red Flag ” brought the day to a close.

After four years of European War and ten years of Class War we are ready to keep the flag flying, and look forward to a stiff fight ahead. To quote our American friends, “ We take off our hats to the past, and our coats to the future ! ”

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

Plebs Account August 1st, 1917, to July 31st, 1918.

							Receipts.		
							£	s.	d.
Cash in hand	...	...	...	...	...	...	17	2	4
Sales of Magazines	...	...	...	...	...	...	348	18	11
League Subscriptions	...	...	...	...	...	...	10	12	0
Donations	...	...	...	...	...	...	6	0	9
Advertisements	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	5	6
Affiliation Fees	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	2	6
Sales of Bound Volumes	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	16	2
							<hr/>		
							£388	18	2
							Expenditure.		
							£	s.	d.
Printing	...	...	...	...	...	...	264	15	3
Despatch of Magazines	...	...	...	...	...	...	76	3	2
Advertisements	...	...	...	...	...	...	5	2	0
Office Material	...	...	...	...	...	...	7	2	2
Miscellaneous (Last Meet, Binding Volumes, Defence Funds, Meet Expenses	...	...	...	...	...	...	10	8	9½
Repaid Loan to Treasurer	...	...	...	...	...	...	5	0	0
							<hr/>		
Cash in hand	...	...	...	...	...	...	£368	11	4½
							<hr/>		
							20	6	9½
							<hr/>		
							£388	18	2

BALANCE SHEET.

July 31st, 1918.

		£	s.	d.
Liabilities.				
To late Treasurer (Loans, 1913 and 1914)	...	47	9	1
Repaid	...	5	0	0
		<u>£42</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>1</u>
Assets.				
Cupboard and Office Material	...	2	10	0
Outstanding Accounts	...	45	0	0
Cash in hand	...	20	6	9½
		<u>£67</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>9½</u>
Liabilities	...	42	9	1
		<u>£25</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8½</u>
Audited and found correct, July 31st, 1918.				

J. T. MURPHY,
C. WATKINS.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

Publications Account, August 1st, 1917, to July 31st, 1918.

		£	s.	d.
Receipts.				
Donations	...	21	0	11
Loans	...	63	16	9
Sales of Publications	...	313	11	7
		<u>£398</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u>
Expenditure.				
Printing	...	285	13	11
Repaid Loans	...	63	16	9
Postage	...	17	13	0
Advertisements	...	3	17	3
Cash in hand	...	27	8	4
		<u>£398</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u>

BALANCE SHEET.

		£	s.	d.
Liabilities.				
To printing Balance of Account	...	68	6	8
Assets.				
Outstanding Accounts	...	50	0	0
Books, etc., in hands	...	125	0	0
Cash in hand	...	27	8	4
		<u>202</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>
		<u>68</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>
Surplus		134	1	8

Audited and found correct, July 31st, 1918,

J. T. MURPHY,
C. WATKINS.

Reminiscences of a Pioneer¹

WE, of the younger generation of socialists, are always interested in books which deal with the early history of our movement. As we scan the splendidly printed volume before us, we feel that we are not having the vain outpourings of an egotistical person thrust upon us. The modesty of Mr. Bax—which as he infers, is the natural condition for one who assumes to be “a mentally fairly well-conducted person”—makes his book a pleasure to read. It deals not so much with the author as with the movement. The work is, indeed, almost impersonal. And it is this charm which makes it a more distinguished and much cleverer piece of work than Mr. Hyndman's *Record of an Adventurous Life*—a book which tires one because of its egotistical bombast.

Mr. Bax, who is now 64 years of age, gives us some idea of the mental outlook of the middle-class when he was a youth. He contends that the so-called deep religious feeling of the sixties, and the fear of Freethought, was mainly due to the dread that

there would be no security for property and its interests. Apart from the truth of theological doctrine or political theory, religion and the English Constitution were necessary to keep the lower classes in order (p. 18).

At a later period, however, the capitalist class was pleased to observe that the terrible Mr. Bradlaugh was no revolutionist, but rather a most bitter and determined opponent of Socialism. To-day it is Mr. J. M. Robertson, with his *Economics of Progress*, who is the most subtle upholder of Capitalism. And if we wish to touch the lowest depths in hack journalism, it is only necessary to watch Mr. Joseph McCabe attack a socialist like Trotsky. It would seem that the bourgeois freethinker was superstitious regarding Capitalism as the Roman Catholic is of Heaven.

We think, however, that Mr. Bax is hardly fair to Charles Bradlaugh. It is true that Bradlaugh was opposed to the social theories of the Communards in Paris in 1871. But our author is surely aware that during the Franco-German War it was Bradlaugh who was the greatest worker against the jingoes of Britain who desired to help Germany to crush France! For his services on behalf of Peace, Bradlaugh was publicly decorated by the French Government. But when Bradlaugh went to France to intercede for the Communards it was the same French Government which threatened to arrest him unless he immediately returned to England.² Such an incident as this ought to have been noticed as being at least one noble service which the great atheist-freethinker rendered the Communards.

Mr. Bax says that it was the Commune which “led to my becoming a convinced Socialist.” It is perhaps one of the most ironical things in the book that the author should have joined the movement as a result of the imperialist war of 1870-1, because he has virtually abandoned the cause as a result of his pro-war attitude during the present imperialist conflict. The argument wherein he justifies his jingo bias is a sheer sophism. Mr. Bax, in extenuation of his desertion from the logic of anti-militarism, which is involved as the result of one being an international socialist, adopts a piece of annoying special pleading. He argues:—

There is an element in the psychology of the ultra-pacifist British Socialist which must not be lost sight of. It is the acute anti-patriotic bias which reduces political and ethical judgment to an absurdity.

¹ *Reminiscences and Reflections of a Mid and Late Victorian.* By Belfort Bax. Published by Geo. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 40, Museum Street, London, W. 1.

² See *Life of Charles Bradlaugh.* By Mrs. Bonner and Mr. Robertson. Also *Socialist*, March, 1917.

The bias implies that because Great Britain happens to be on a particular side, that side must necessarily be in the wrong *and its enemies in the right* (p. 253).

The final passage, which we have italicised, shows what havoc war mania can achieve in the mind of an otherwise acute reasoner. The inference is that the revolutionary anti-militarists—who are *not* pacifists, and who are *not British* socialists—are opposed to the war aims of Britain because they are in favour of the imperialistic aims of Germany! This is a sheer travesty of socialist anti-militarism. Its absurdity almost descends to the level of the hysterical criticism of Messrs. Blatchford & Hyndman. The international socialists of Britain—who must not be confused with the emotional pacifists—have clearly defined their attitude of opposition to *every* nation involved in the present imperialist debauch.

Mr. Bax is only able to justify his nationalistic and jingoistic policy by first of all abandoning his Marxist principles. That is why, in his reflections, he strains the argument against the validity of Historical Materialism. Both he and Hyndman sought to trace the war to non-capitalist sources. They were completely annihilated by our comrade, W. W. Craik, in his brilliant defence of Historical Materialism, which appeared in the columns of the *Plebs* during 1916.¹ It was, indeed, a triumph for the younger Marxists against the sophisms of the "Old Guard."

It is a thousand pities that the veteran Bax did not mention, or venture to make any pronouncement upon, the work of the younger Marxians in this country. In a book which discusses the war, and mentions tendencies in the I.L.P. and B.S.P., a few words on the present position of British Socialism would not have been out of place. The reason for suggesting this is because our European comrades have been deeply interested in the new and powerful influences at work in the Marxist movement of this country. Our old friend, J. B. Askew, at present, unfortunately, interned, has recorded his interest in the work of the Labour College and of the S.L.P. And quite recently Mr. Stephen Blackpool, writing in the French *La Verite*, stated:—

Marx has, to-day in England, followers with whom, I believe, he would be genuinely satisfied, and in whom he would see and recognise his own revolutionary genius. They are *The Socialist Labour Party*, and especially the *Labour College*, this admirable nucleus of fighting workers is based on the essential doctrines of Marx working towards the enlightenment and action of the working-class.

To these young fighters the mere conquest of political power is not everything. They do not look upon political action as useless, but they feel that the creation of a revolutionary spirit among the workers is more important than waging war at parliamentary elections; and they recognise the importance of the strike and the preparation of the workers for controlling industry themselves. . . . One may be certain that they will play a very important part in the years to come.

Marx and Engels are not treated with great enthusiasm by Mr. Bax. We are pleased, however, at this, because hero-worship is disgusting. Besides, the very essence of Marxism lies in its critical attitude towards all things—including its own theories. A great deal is made out of the alleged fact that Marx and Engels were poor judges of men. Unfortunately, for Mr. Bax the illustration put forward to prove this not only destroys his contention; on the contrary, it rather demonstrates that Marx and Engels were splendid and shrewd judges of character—at least in the cases cited by Mr. Bax. He shows that Marx and Engels had a very poor opinion of Mr. Hyndman and Mr. Adolphe Smith. To anyone acquainted with the internal history of Socialism in this country for the last twenty years, it is well known what havoc the egoism and opportunism of Mr. Hyndman has played. And to go back to 1884 we find that the Socialist League was founded by such honest stalwarts of Socialist teaching as Wm. Morris, Scheen, Eleanor Marx,

¹ To save postage. Copies of May and June *Plebs*, 1916 (in which the articles appeared) are not available. We have no back numbers.—ED.]

Edward Aveling—and, incidentally, Bax himself. These people complained that the S.D.F., led by Hyndman, Burns, Williams, Quelch, and Fitzgerald, was "anxious to subordinate the propaganda of socialist principle to the urging forward of immediate practical aims in politics by the ordinary political methods" (p. 77).

The Socialist League was founded by people who resented the political opportunism of Messrs. Hyndman & Co., and who—were desirous of pushing a purely Socialist propaganda without regard to the expediencies or exigencies of practical politics, and without wasting time (which might be better employed, it was thought) with the methods and aims of the political life of the movement (p. 78).

The indictment drawn up against the old S.D.F. in 1884 by the Socialist League anticipated the reason why certain active elements at a later period withdrew and formed the S.L.P.

In so far as Hyndman was the most influential force in the S.D.F., his policy made for weakness. Since 1914 the seeds of opportunism have so developed that the collapse has been as complete as it was a climax.

Again, the egoism of Mr. Hyndman, the patronising way in which he deals with the proletariat is well testified to by Mr. Bax in an illuminating passage: Hyndman is not an abstainer, or at least not in principle. On the contrary, he rather prides himself on his good taste in wines. Yet, nevertheless, he has often shown himself a rigid disciplinarian in the matter of temperance, *especially as regards the proletariat*. Always a man scrupulously moderate himself, he is inclined to be hard, many think excessively hard, not on drunkenness, which, of course, is out of the question, but on anything suggesting the idea of the very slightest excess in liquor in others, *especially if those others happen to be working men* (p. 98).

Sufficient evidence has been furnished to show that Marx and Engels were much shrewder in their estimation of men than Mr. Bax seems to have realised. Our author, as a young man, was as intelligent as he was modest. He assures us that he got on well enough with Marx and Engels, even though he had fierce and heated arguments with the latter. We can easily understand this. But neither Marx nor Engels could stand the superficial "intellectual" prig who was as bourgeois as he was conceited.

We think Mr. Bax should have let us know more about Wm. Morris, one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest, of English socialists. It is a pity, indeed, that the uncompromising Morris should not receive his full due at the hands of Bax, even if Morris did oppose the compromises of the S.D.F. Another man, Paul Lafargue, is rather rudely dismissed by our author.

Coming to Mr. Bax himself, we readily admit that he was, intellectually, the ablest man associated with the old S.D.F. His three volumes of essays in the *Social Science Series* (published by Messrs. Allen & Unwin) are splendid reading. His most ambitious work, and the one which will earn him a reputation in the future as an historian, is his study of the social side of the Reformation in Germany. This survey in three volumes entitled *German Society at the Close of the Middle Ages, The Peasants' War, and The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist*, should be on the shelves of every Plebeian library. This work is, in its way, a splendid contribution to the study of History.

One of the finest text-books on Socialism is *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome* (published by Messrs. Allen & Unwin), which Bax wrote in collaboration with Wm. Morris.

Mr. Bax is also a writer of repute upon philosophical subjects, as his two volumes on *The Roots of Reality* and *The Problems of Reality*, testify. The latter work is based upon conclusions outlined in the first book. Our author says that he considers *The Problem of Reality* his most important contribution to the liberation of human knowledge.

To those anxious to critically study the rise and growth of Socialism in this country the *Reminiscences and Reflections* of Mr. Bax is worthy of study.

W. PAUL.

TO READERS

We anticipate criticism of our present form by saying frankly that we do not like ourselves ! but necessity compels us to reduce both the size of the type and the space at our disposal. We cannot exist unless this is done. Even now we expect a small deficit each month.

We are going to try to keep the price at 2d., but this will mean that each individual Plebeian will have to help us.

When we appeal, comrades, it is not because we want to fill the Magazine, but because we want your help. To the query, "What can I do?" we humbly suggest the following (to be going on with) :

- (1) If you are a voluntary agent and do not sell books for a living, give us 2d. each or 2/- per dozen for the Mag.—that will help.
- (2) If you are a member of a Trade Union (if not, join at once !), ask your Branch to send us a donation to keep the Magazine alive—that will help.
- (3) If you take only one copy get it from one of our agents rather than through the post, it will save money and—that will help.
- (4) If you take a parcel, keep your own account and pay monthly directly on receipt of your parcel—that will help.
- (5) When you see a red cross on the front page send us your subscription at once—that will help.
- (6) If you ever have such a thing as spare cash or war bonus send us a little—that will help.
- (7) Remember the next year will be our hardest fight. We have a good sound Movement now if everyone will put their shoulders to the wheel. Once the paper restrictions are removed we shall flourish. All this begging is only temporary (a war measure). We have the circulation and the workers now. It rests with YOU, comrade, to keep the Magazine alive.

W.H.

News of the Movement

We are always having to appeal for something, it seems, so here is a new one. We appeal to readers of the Magazine to read the Magazine. It isn't hard ! Seven times during this week we have written and replied to queries all of which have been answered previously in the pages of the Magazine. Once more, then, for the Nth time, we do not sell anything except our own publications and (for this time only) the Shaw pamphlet, advertised elsewhere. Also we have no back numbers—and have only bound volumes of 1917 for those who have ordered them. We shall be pleased to hear from those who have received their 1916 volume, and have not paid for it. A full list of names and addresses of Plebeians who have NEVER been known to respond to any appeal will shortly be published—unless they reform !

* * * * *

We apologise for the fact that one whole page in this number is taken up by an advertisement, but explain in extenuation of this, that we hope to be able to make a little towards our "expected" deficit by sacrificing one page of the words of wisdom for filthy lucre. You can help us by patronising the

Reformers' Bookstall. All the books and pamphlets that we *not* sell, they do, and some of ours as well.

We call the attention of Plebeians to the altered constitution and urge the formation of branches. More of this later. The temporary E.C. will meet soon to discuss the whole question, meanwhile the formation of actual Plebs League branches continues.

SHEFFIELD has just formed a branch. The Sec. (J. A. Oxley, 5 Store Street, Priestly Street, Sheffield) will be glad to hear from Plebeians in that district who wish to link up. The branch is independent of, though affiliated to, the Sheffield Labour College Committee.

LIVERPOOL is organizing an Educational Conference—Clarion Cafe, 30 Lord Street, Liverpool—Chair to be taken at 3 by Mr. G. Jones. J. T. Murphy will speak on the general question of Education. Comrades in the district hope big things from this Conference, and we trust they will not be disappointed. Please note date and place of meeting, Org. Sec., J. Hamilton 10 Mill Lane, Islington, Liverpool, from whom particulars may be obtained.

GLASGOW flourishes and promises well for the forthcoming winter. An Esperanto class is to be held, amongst other activities, and Comrade Ferguson, the "instruisto" of the last class, was presented with a barometer, with suitable inscription, at the conclusion of the session, Saturday, June 29th. We hope it will always register "set fair" for Glasgow activities.

V.L.T. sends the following:—*N.E. Coast*: Annual Meeting of this district will be held in the Socialist Society Rooms; Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, on Saturday, September 14th, at 2.30. Visitors welcome.

Classes will be in full swing again e'er these notes appear. Anyone requiring information *vs* same write addresses on back page. The debate on our policy *versus* the dying Ruskin College theory, will take place during the month, when Will Lawther will carry the flag for us, at Crawcrook, on September 14th. Bigger fry is to be taken on with the B.W.L.

T.U. CONGRESS.

Great Demonstration will be held in the Central Hall, Derby, on Sunday, September 1st. Speakers:—

N. ABLETT, GEO. BARKER, S.W.M.F.

EBBY EDWARDS, Northumberland Miners.

Chair to be taken by Will Lawther, Durham Miners.

In connection with the above notes from Durham we should like to say that our comrade, G. H. Warne, a Plebeian from the beginning, is to run for secretary of the M.F.G.B. Comrades in all districts please note. There will be ballot vote in all the districts, and the Plebs expects that every man that day will do his duty!

In sending reports, once more we "appeal" to secretaries to restrain their enthusiasm, and remember those two magic words, "Space permitting!"

We have purchased a number of

How to Settle the Irish Question

BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

They were issued at Sixpence, but "as Mr. Shaw is anxious that as wide a circulation as is possible should be secured," we are able to offer them at 2½d., post free, or 1/6 per doz.

Cash, with order, to **Sec. Plebs League**, Kemp Hall Press, High Street Oxford).

Reviews

Capitalism in the Northern Coalfield. By Geo. Harvey. 3d. To be had from the author, Miners' Hall, Wardley Colliery, Pelaw-on-Tyne.

At last ! we have in a handy form a complete list of the coal kings of the N.E. coast, showing how one company after another has linked up, until it is impossible to decide with any degree of certainty who are owners or not of any particular form. Their connections are clearly shown in this booklet, and the moral drawn that it is *outside* of the present method of organization that we must move towards if we are to successfully combat the forces of organized capital. Their profits and transactions over a period of years are clearly shown, and no alternative can be accepted as to what "we must do to be saved." A searching criticism of the Whitley Report is given and Harvey concludes :—

Economic development cannot be hindered by Whitley Reports, nor yet can the progress of the tendencies that operate in capitalist society to the advantage of the owners of large capital be impeded. Production in future will be on a still larger scale, Capitalism will be more triumphant, and will take *control* of the whole social mechanism.

. . . The Whitley Report ignores the facts of *possession* and *control*. These carry true social powers, and, until we have *possession* and *control*, talk about "freedom" is so much nonsense. . . .

If we, as miners, cannot get rations for the body physical, here at least are rations in abundance for the mind. W.L.

AN APPEAL TO MINE WORKERS.

COMRADES,—I have in the Press, and about ready for the Press, several publications for mineworkers. In order to publish a pamphlet every month or every two months, I plead for assistance. The best assistance can be rendered by sending for a few copies of *Industrial Unionism and the Mining Industry* (post free 1/3), and a few copies of *Capitalism in the Northern Coalfield* (post free 4d.). Will S. Wales readers note this especially, for in the Press now we have a splendid booklet upon *Capitalism in the S. Wales Coalfield*. Orders to Geo. Harvey, Miners' Hall, Wardley Colliery, Pelaw-on-Tyne.

The Plebs Bookshelf

It is not very often that we say a good word in these pages for any work of the W.E.A.! This is not because we want to be nasty, but because of certain very vital and fundamental differences. We have received however *The W.E.A. Education Year Book*, and we offer our friends the enemy an unsolicited testimonial thus, "The W.E.A. Year Book is a splendid piece of work. It is a mine of information and contains enough fuel to keep our firebrands burning until the Millenium (and after)." We regret that we cannot give much space in this issue to it, but hope to do so next month.

Personally it inspired me with a desire to rush out, nail the nearest person and compel them to come in and argue about education. In the preface the Editors disclaim any responsibility for the ideas expressed in the book, and well they may! It is almost a scandal that the sober, respectable W.E.A. should offer us such heady wine. I confess it went to my head. Every line almost is chock full of debating points. (I don't know how much the book costs, that is not divulged on the cover or elsewhere, but the preface, by G. B. Shaw, is worth the money !) He says that "it is an appalling fact that nobody in this country seems to know that intellect is a passion." I

accuse the W.E.A. of deliberately inflaming the passions of the mob under the sober guise of a Year Book. It is full of interesting and instructive facts as well as of good articles, and I think myself it is one of the most useful books published since the war. If the W.E.A. want to remain "impartial" and "non-party political" they had better suppress their Year Book straight-away!

Good resolutions often come to nothing. We cannot help giving a few extracts from G.B.S. to whet the appetites of Plebeians:—

"The only solution of the difficulty is controversial education. That is what all the real education we have at present is. The student must be informed that there is, for example, a controversy between neo-Darwinic Weissmannism and Butler-Bergsonism; and if he feels interested he must hear champions of the opposed views fighting it out in debate and be encouraged to take part himself. . . the world cannot be run on evasion and paralysis; and where knowledge stops intuitions and dogmas must come to the rescue. England cannot expect every man to do his duty until she makes up her mind as to what his duty is: . . . The child must be taught, in direct contradiction to the current cult of salvation by personal righteousness, *that men in society must reform society before they can reform themselves.* The individual may see a better line for the main road, but he should be educated to understand that his business is to persuade his fellows to make the new road and plough up the old, and not immediately to trample and trespass along his new line as if the business concerned himself alone."

And again:—

"One of the main objects of education is to prevent people from defeating their own civilization by refusing to tolerate novelties and heresies which history proves that they had better tolerate.

All our conventional schools at present teach false ethics, false science, false history, and false hygiene. And if there were sufficient vested interests in false geography and false arithmetic they would teach these too. Truth is a guilty secret, heavily punishable on discovery; and the parent who allows his child to be taught truth without also leaving him an independent income, must be prepared to hear his child curse him. This, I think, *is the real reason why we dare not embark on controversial education. It would tear away the camouflage from commercial civilization.*"

After the Preface A. Clutton Brock begins his essay, "Two Views of Society—and Education" by saying—

"Behind all educational theory there must be social theory. We must know what we wish society to be before we can know what we wish education to be; and all ideas about education are based on ideas about society, even where no social theory is consciously expressed"

In despair, for there is no one near to argue with, the following catches our eye, "Education is needed to supply direction to democratic force." J. A. Hobson this. I hope the W.E.A. won't go and argue itself out of existence. I should miss it so—but what a subtle form of torture, that this book should come out when we are restricted to 14 pages. Forty-eight pages twice weekly will not suffice us.

"Space permitting" (when I die those two words will be found written on my heart), we hope to give a review of W. N. Ewer's pamphlet, *Paying the Piper. A Word on War Loans and War Prices* (Herald, 21 Tudor Street, E.C. 6d.). The get-up is beautiful, and we envy our comrades their good printing.

We have received a quaint and amusing little work called *Industrial Loyalty*, by Boyd Fisher (Routledge, 2/6). Its cover says that the United States Government have recently distributed enormous quantities through-

out the States. It is an "Efficiency" book, what ever that is, and a glance inside reveals the fact that someone in America has discovered that workers are MEN ! It now remains for men to discover what the bosses are—but of course there are obstacles. I once heard a workman say that what was most need in the world was "a bloody revulsion." We know what he meant to say, but the phrase is apt in describing what one feels towards intellectuals who use their brains trying to persuade our industrial princes that their plundering, murder and rape are the occupations of gentlemen ! More of these three books later—"Space permitting !" W. H.

A recent number of the *Highway* the organ of the W.E.A., contained an interesting review of the late Mark Hovell's book, *The Chartist Movement* (reviewed in our May issue). From it I may quote the following sentences:—

The leaders (of Chartism) were vehement and crude, . . . but without sufficiently strenuous purpose or *coherent aim*. . . . Hence Chartism was a series of splutters, not a *definite propaganda* seriously planned and ably led. . . . It failed . . . mainly because it lacked a *firm basis of consistent thought*, and leaders capable of *distinguishing between essentials and non-essentials*.

The tragedy of Chartism . . . was that, while its political theory was definite and straightforward, it floundered bewilderingly (bewilderedly ?) amongst a mass of social theories, vague and unsubstantial, but yet an expression of the agonised needs of the submerged and downtrodden.

But can any of us in this generation afford to throw stones at the Chartists ? To the writer it appears that *we have still to face the same essential problems*. . . . *The supreme defect of the democratic movement at the present time is the want of a social philosophy—a philosophy broad, masculine and coherent, to correlate the activities of all the groups in the democratic army*. . . . What we most urgently require is a new synthesis of democratic theory. . . . Chartism failed to reach such a synthesis—and so it collapsed.

Now such criticism, in a W.E.A. organ, seems to me distinctly amusing. It is just because the educational policy of the C.L.C. has had a "coherent aim," has endeavoured to provide that "firm basis of consistent thought," a "social philosophy," and the power of "distinguishing between essential and non-essentials," that the democrats of the W.E.A. have tried to prove it of little worth. Precisely because, for "a mass of social theories, vague and unsubstantial," the C.L.C. has substituted a "definite propaganda" the W.E.A. has declared it to be of but secondary importance to the Labour movement ! It cannot be alleged that the social philosophy of the C.L.C. is not "coherent" enough, or "masculine" enough; but it is probably not "broad" enough—for some people. The correlation of the "activities of all the groups" in the "democratic army" is a job which would make for breadth rather than for depth. There are *some groups*. . . . But it is hardly necessary to labour the point. J.F.H.

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Shall the Plebs continue to Exist?

DEAR COMRADE,—

You will read in the Magazine a Report of the work we have been able to do during the past year. You will notice that there is in the financial statement no charge for office-rent, or salaries, and this is because up to November, 1917, all our work has been done voluntarily. The success of our organization was the only reward that was ever looked for by those comrades who have devoted their time to, and slowly built up, our Movement. During the last four years the work of the League and Magazine has increased so much that it is now impossible for anyone to carry it on in their spare time. You will notice in the Report that in March our Editor was sent abroad on Active Service, so that the entire work of carrying on the Magazine and Publications Department fell upon the shoulders of the Sec.-Treas. It is hardly necessary to state that *this entails whole-time work of an arduous nature*, and a number of friends guaranteed that a salary should be paid in order that the work could be done until the Annual Meeting.

The following resolution was passed at the Meet:—"That this Meeting calls upon the E.C. to start an Organizing Fund for the purpose of paying a salary to the Secretary," for it was felt that the League, as a whole (and possibly readers of the Magazine) would like to show their appreciation of the work already done by contributing to such a Fund. The work to be done is not only a great responsibility but entails the expenditure of many hours a day. The Plebs must be kept growing, and without some such Fund we can no longer exist.

The E.C. suggest that members (and friends) try to guarantee a small sum weekly, either individually or in groups, and so make the Fund a charge on the whole Organization. REGULAR CONTRIBUTIONS, however small, will be the most useful, but any sum will be welcome.

We regret that owing to a falling off in the contributions no salary has been paid to the Sec. for eight weeks, and we urge all to send cash or promises as soon as possible to

Sec. Organizing Fund : J. H. Pratt, 13, Havelock Road, Shrewsbury.

We make this statement so that all may know exactly where we stand. The Sec. is to be paid 30/- per week. If it were not for the cost of paper and printing we could meet this expense out of current receipts, so that in making our appeal we feel sure our Comrades will understand that the Organizing Fund at the present time is the life-blood of the Magazine.

SHALL THE PLEBS CONTINUE TO EXIST?

We are, yours in the Cause,

J. T. W. NEWBOLD
GEORGE MASON
C. T. PENDREY

B. SKENE MACKAY
C. TERRY
FRANK JACKSON

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