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THE PLEBS MAGAZINE

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

Vol. XI.

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The Goose that lays the Golden Eggs

The fable of Æsop is well known. Just as well known is its application, or, rather, misapplication, by the defenders of the present economic system. It is only one of the many illustrations of the perverted judgment of private interests. In a society where the many are sacrificed to the few, everything concerning society appears inverted in the outlook of the few. The semblance is mistaken for reality. The pyramid appears to stand on its apex. It is the capitalist, with his wonderful and bountiful directive ability, who provides for the needs of his ungrateful labourers. "Paul may plant and Apollos may water," Jones may hew and James may haul, but Capital "giveth the increase." Capital is the "goose that lays the golden eggs."

There were many warnings uttered the other day at a sitting of the Coal Commission, warnings intended, of course, for the reflection of the Miners' representatives, about the grave risk of "killing the goose." Each of the three witnesses who cackled about this piece of "frightfulness" finally drew from the unaffected and irrepressible President of the M.F.G.B. the observation: "We shall roast the goose before we have finished." It was what "Tommy" would call "giving them the bird."

I hope that there will be an extensive circulation of the Report of the Coal Commission among the working class. It contains not only the case against the coal owner, but against private ownership in general. It provides a liberal education in political economy. The facts disclosed are a triumphant vindication of what the Labour College has taught and teaches concerning

Capital and Labour. They prove that, as Robert Smillie said in reply to the manager of the Ashington Coal Company: "The goose that lays the golden eggs is the miner, and if you kill him you kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

All value has its source or substance in labour. That is the first article, the fundamental proposition, in the science of economics. What has converted the uncultivated wild into cultivated fields? Labour! What has turned the forest into pit-props? Labour! What has taken from the rock strata the coal, and made it serviceable fuel? Labour! What has made it possible for all those things to yield revenue to the people that own them? Labour! And who enjoys the results which this revenue, created by labour, affords? The people who labour? Let the evidence of the Coal Commission decide.

But does not Capital make some of this wealth possible? Does it not contribute to the creation of value? What is capital? Wealth used to produce more wealth! That does not tell us much, not even who produces it. Walk round the colliery and examine the wealth used as a means to the production of coal. There are the props. Who made them props? The owner of the forest, or of the sawmill, or of the ships that conveyed them across the seas? No! Props are what they are by nature of the labour of the forester, the sawmill workers, the sailors, etc. We look at the iron and steel instruments of production—the engines, the cage, the shaft, the screens, etc. All these the coal owners bought from the owners of the industries manufacturing these things. What gave the unshaped iron and steel those serviceable shapes, those useful forms? Labour! Not the labour of the owner, of the capitalist manufacturer, but the labour which is expended by the workers who sell themselves for so many hours per day to the owner, and for that time form the living creative ingredient of his capital. Capital is not labour, whether living or dead, materialising or materialised. Capital is the ownership of labour, the ownership of the labour of yesterday and of to-day, the ownership of the labour materialised in the pit props, the steel cage, the winding engine, and of the living labour which sets all in motion and embodies itself in the saleable product coal, in the value and price of coal, and, therefore, in the forms of revenue which are derived from the value—the wages of the labourer, the profits of the coal owner and coal merchant, and the royalties of the landowner.

Living labour can become productive only in contact with the materialised labour. Because the latter is privately owned—capitalised—the labourer must sell himself to the capitalist, and during the time of his function become a part of the owner's capital. However much the form of capital may conceal the creative rôle of labour, the fact is indisputable that it is not capital, *i.e.*, ownership, which extracts coal from the earth, but labour. What capital extracts is two-thirds of the value created by labour. Capital does not "lay the eggs." It extracts them from the nest. And the pleasing feature of this process, from the point of view of the owner, is that the eggs always yield more than is necessary to keep the goose in a condition for the continued laying of the eggs.

When the workers go on strike, living labour is withheld from the capitalist function, all the materials and means of production remain inert and motionless, and no value is created. Living labour has a two-fold quality. At the same time as it creates new value, it preserves the values existing in the plant and the raw material. As it uses these up, it transfers their value to the new commodity. When the colliery, the railway, or any other productive concern stops, there is not only no new value created, but the existing values deteriorate without any compensating transference and, results, therefore, in a dead loss to capital.

The witnesses for the coal owners at the Coal Commission held the view that a reduction of the working day in the mining industry was impracticable on

the ground that it would reduce output and diminish trade. What is that but a virtual acknowledgment of the fact that a decreased quantity of labour results in a decreased magnitude of value, a vindication, therefore, of the law that labour alone is the substance of value.

On the question of wages, the evidence submitted to the Commissioners corroborates the same conclusion that Labour and not capital, the miner and not the mineowner, produce "the golden eggs." The increase in wages demanded by the miner would ruin the British export coal trade and steel trade, because these could not compete with foreign traders in the same commodities. Here we have an acknowledgment that wages may rise without a corresponding rise in prices. The same quantity of labour creates the same magnitude of value. If wages rise and the quantity of labour remains the same, the increase in wages results in a decrease of profits. That is the real meaning of those picturesque descriptions entitled "The Ruin of Trade."

There is only one way by which the demands of the miners for increased wages and shorter hours can be conceded without involving "disaster," say the coal owners' representatives. The miners must produce more coal. They must intensify their labour. Intensification means an increase in the quantity of labour and, therefore, results in an increased magnitude of value. Once more we are enlightened by the spokesmen of capital on the subject of the "goose" and the "eggs."

The question has often been asked: Can Labour work without Capital? According to the point of view of those who gave evidence in opposition to the miners' demands labour is so dependent upon capital that every consideration for the life and wellbeing of the labourers is made to depend upon how far capital can, after granting concessions to labour, have as much or even more, profits than before. The gentlemen who gave evidence the other day did not say so in plain words. They assumed, indeed, in many cases quite a sympathetic attitude and agreed that the miners deserved more wages and shorter hours and decent houses, *but* could the "industry" stand it; could the "trade" be kept going; could these demands be conceded without involving the commercial ruin of the "country." Really, however, "industry," "trade," "country," are just so many high-sounding words by means of which the profiteers give their narrow private interests the appearance of broad general interests. One of the witnesses, Mr. A. J. Hobson, the Sheffield steel magnate, when challenged by Smillie on the Consett Steel Works' 30 per cent. dividends, replied in more matter-of-fact language than that used by his colleagues:—"It is a very good thing for Labour that such a thing can be done, because if there were not great prizes in industry you would not get capital into industry." The facts disclosed in the evidence submitted to the Coal Commission assert, contrary to the wisdom of this eminent Bolshevik, that it would be a good thing for labour if capital did *not* go into industry. Capital is to-day an intolerable hindrance to the development of industry. The capitalist form of production has become a fetter on the forces of production. There are many instances of this in the coal mining industry. Mines are sunk, not when the natural situation of the coal offers the quickest service to the production of coal, but where the artificial situation of private ownership of land offers the cheapest cost and the highest profit to the coal owner. In every coalfield thousands of yards of coal, which constitute boundaries between private collieries, remain unutilised. Again, in the working of coal, *e.g.*, in the matter of drainage, natural advantages are forfeited because two different landowners own the land and two different sets of coal-owners work the coal and, in consequence, make it impossible to utilise the ready-to-hand facilities for production that nature has provided. Artificial means of drainage have to be introduced, and labour, that would otherwise be available for productive purposes, is tied up in an unproductive way. Still further, throughout the coalfields of the country, productivity is restricted through the retention of antiquated machinery and

wasteful methods, simply because it does not pay the coal owner to scrap them, because to utilise better and more economical means and processes would diminish for him "the prizes of industry."

Not only in the colliery do we find capital acting as an impediment to production. Similar instances are to be found in the sphere of transportation and circulation. Coal gains nothing in its heat-giving utility because it passes through the hands of half a dozen different private middlemen, before it reaches the consumer. It only enables those merchants to collar "the prizes of industry." In order that a few people may pocket profits, a large quantity of labour is held up in unproductive processes.

Gentlemen, you have been seriously concerning yourselves with the fearful prospect of restricted output which you say will ensue from the reduction of the miners' hours and the increase of his wages. With fear and trembling and horror you contemplate the disasters that must result from any decline of productive power. But, gentlemen, *you* are the real stagnating influences, the actual impoverishers and squanderers of human energy. You sit in judgment upon those who supply the living force which sets in motion the machinery of production. You prophesy that any enrichment of this living force will result in that idleness with "which you are so familiar." An increase of "voluntary absenteeism!" *You* can certainly be permitted to speak with authority upon that point. Gentlemen, *you* who are *permanent* absentees, but your "absence" does not "make the heart grow fonder" of you. Do you really wish to help production? Then cease to hinder it, by playing a useful part in it. "The prize of industry" should go to those who participate in industry, not to those who prey upon it and paralyse it. You are appealing to the community, gentlemen, to stand by you and defend you with "all their resources" against the triumphantly vindicated claims of the real producers. You appeal to the community as if you were their true friends and real allies and the miners, railwaymen and other workers, their enemies. What sort of friend to the community you are you proved when you pocketed five millions of profits out of the enhanced selling price of coal to the community. You would not have haggled at the Coal Commissioner about the increase of wages to the miners if you could have repeated the same outrage upon the community once more. No, gentlemen, the workers are the real friends of the community, are, in fact, the only class that has a genuine and abiding interest in the commonwealth. The "public" that you talk about so much is merely a piece of verbal camouflage wherewith to conceal your very private interests. It is not the miners who hold a pistol at the head of the nation. *You* are the actual knights of the highway who hold the means of the nation's life in your possession and take from the nation's work the wealth which you do nothing to create. Gentlemen, you must go to work.

W. W. CRAIK.

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Parliamentarism and the Servile State

Have the miners been side-tracked by this Coal Commission? Why was the Commission foisted on them? Why is the miner to submit to a tribunal the terms upon which he will sell his labour-power? Is there some ulterior motive behind this manoeuvre of the Government? My impression is that the politicians were beaten in their attempt to protect the employing class against the miner's demands, and this Commission is an effort to outwit us.

For years the miners, the railway men, and the transport workers have been perfecting their organizations, until now the three unions are for all practical purposes blackleg-proof. We are about 1,500,000 strong, and form the most formidable industrial alliance in the world. After we have organized ourselves to the triumphant point, where our power—our *legal power*—is irresistible, we are fobbed off with a Commission of Inquiry. The politicians are kindly instructing us that Parliament is supreme, that no section of the community, however powerful, has the right to "usurp the functions of Parliament"—and if the Alliance can hold up industry then it has too much power. This is nice teaching from the lips of avowed Labour leaders, who are members of their industrial organizations! Why do they not preach this to the Shipping Federation, the Mining Association, and the Employers' National Federation? Why is all this blarney handed out to the miner when he is asking for what he earns by his blood and his life? Are the miners to be made the first serfs of the Servile State?

Do our Labour M.P.'s think we have built up our industrial organizations just to send them to Parliament? Do they think, if this Parliament lasts for five years, that the workers are going to wait with asinine patience for another Parliament to deal with their demands? What! Just now there is a sane and wise compact between industrialists and politicians to use the two weapons, industrial action and the vote. If the politicians depart from this compact then so much the worse for them. One thing, above all others, bitter experience has taught the worker, and that is that his great strength lies in his power to withhold his labour.

In my opinion, the Triple Alliance was on the eve of the greatest triumph in industrial history when the miners turned aside to accept the Commission. The principle of the right to strike must not be jeopardised by any substitute, however specious its claims. If the miner is deprived of the right to sell his labour power then he is no longer a free man, but a slave of society. If men have the right to sell merchandise the worker has an infinitely higher right to sell, or refuse to sell, his life's energies, even though the well-being of the so-called State is in question.

What does the State or society care for the worker? Nothing. The worker's function is to fill the markets of the world with commodities, and thereby throw himself out of employment. There is a world war existing at the present time—against labour, and it is getting ever fiercer in intensity. There is about £50,000,000 of debt hanging round the necks of the workers of Europe. The worker cannot pay huge dividends to the capitalist class and pay the interest on this colossal debt.

This is no time for titled or decorated M.P.'s to decry the power and strength of our industrial organizations. The time is fast approaching when the M.P. must do his work in Parliament and leave the Federation to do its own work. The man who belittles the supreme importance of industrial organization is no friend of the workers, and the sooner the workers realise this the better for them.

GEORGE BARKER (*Miners' Agent, Abertillery, Mon.*)

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Ergatocracy and Ergatology

Two, at least, of those mentioned in Maurice Reckitt's stimulating contribution to the *March Plebs* are interested in the suggestion of a symposium upon the question of the hour, viz., the reorganization of our industrial and social structure on soviet lines, and (as a preliminary) the consolidation of the left wing of the socialist movement as a party inspired with fairly definite conceptions of method in social, political, and economic reorganization. The whole subject of the application of the soviet system to industry and politics (which seems to Reckitt to be "a hopeless confusion of civic and industrial functions") is being threshed out, in the theoretical field, at the various "unity" and "communist" conferences now in progress. In the practical field, a gigantic experiment is being tried in Russia under immense difficulties. The undersigned, for two, will feel better equipped for participation in the proposed symposium when the aforesaid theoretical discussions shall have been carried a stage further, and when the re-opening of free communications with Russia and the restoration of peace conditions in that country shall have enabled us to secure detailed and trustworthy information regarding the working of the soviet system under the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic.

Be it granted without further parley that a system found useful (if found useful) for socialist reconstruction in a land where four-fifths of the population are peasants, may require considerable modifications before it will be equally useful in lands where capitalist evolution is much further advanced. But we are discussing the *general principles* of the social revolution of the 20th century in the countries where the capitalist economy prevails; and, despite the reservation just made, Russia has since the liberation of the serfs in 1861 been passing through the capitalist phase.

For the nonce all we propose in this brief article is an attempt to allay some of the prevailing dubiety regarding "dictatorship." As we have written before in your hospitable pages, we are not in love with the idea of dictatorship, bourgeois or proletarian, but we incline more and more unhesitatingly to accept the view that the dictatorship of the proletariat is an indispensable stage in the abolition of the extant dictatorship of the bourgeoisie—that bourgeoisie which avails itself of various expedients to maintain its power over the bodies and minds of men, one of the most successful of these expedients being the flying of false colours. The bourgeoisie flaunts the flag of "democracy." But what is democracy? "The political and social aim of democracy," writes Masaryk, "is to abolish a relationship of subjection and rule. The derivative meaning of the term democracy is 'people's rule.' Modern democracy does not aim at rule at all, but at administration, at the administration of the people, by the people, for the people. How this new conception, this new estimate, of state organization can be carried out in practice is no mere question of power; it is a difficult problem of administrative technique."—(*The Spirit of Russia*, Vol. ii., pp. 507-8.—Written in 1913). On page 511 of the same volume we read: "The question arises, whether there is a specially democratic philosophy as a unified outlook on the universe and on life, and if so, which system is the chosen one"; and he adds in a footnote (the president of the Czecho-Slovak Republic is a champion word coiner, and has taxed our capacity as translators to the utmost), "If the name be not liable to misinterpretation, we might speak of 'demology,' as related to democracy, just as theology is related to theocracy."

Masaryk is a critic of Marx, and would not fully accept the present writers' conception of socialist tactic and socialist philosophy. None the less there is implicit, in the passages we have quoted, a group of ideas which could be better expressed in yet bolder neologisms. To be consistent, we contend, he should have written of "ergatocracy" (workers' rule) and "ergatology"

(the theory of working-class rule), instead of writing of "democracy" and "demology." What Masaryk implies is, at any rate, the advance from pseudo-democracy to democracy. But if we substitute "workers" for "people," if we say that "ergatocracy aims at the administration of the workers, by the workers, for the workers," we have advanced yet further, from democracy to bolshevism, or ergatocracy. We may summarise our outlook by saying that, just as theocratic aristocracy has had in the past to yield place to capitalist democracy, so capitalist democracy is, before our eyes, yielding place to communist ergatocracy. During the transition period, dictatorship is essential, for no exploiting class will yield its privileges without a struggle. When there are no longer any exploiters or potential exploiters, there will no longer be a dictatorship. As Klara Zetkin phrases it in an admirable article (just issued in English translation by the S.L.P.), we shall have progressed "through dictatorship to democracy." We prefer our own phrasing, "through dictatorship to ergatocracy." For a not unsympathetic statement of this "ergatology," this theory of working-class rule, we are pleased to be able to refer to a somewhat hostile critic, J. Ramsay MacDonald, whose socialist philosophy has not remained stationary during the war. He does not use our fire-new terminology, and he (whose faith in parliament still lags superfluous on the stage) envisages a renovated parliament rather than federated workers' committees and a central soviet. But he has more of the root of the matter in him than he himself is willing to admit when, despite his gibe at the "pseudo-scientific argument which is destroying all conceptions of government, of social functions, of communal co-operation," he ably marshals the views of those who hold that "a majority declared now will be that of the capitalist minority, but when the revolution is complete—and only then—it will be the majority of the working-class minority. Then 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' will have ended and its revolutionary gains will have been made secure by democracy." ("Why Bolshevism Spreads," *The Nation*, March 15th, 1919.)

So much for the "dictatorship" question. As to what Reckitt speaks of as "the workers' committee expedient," considered mainly as a method of industrial reorganization, the primary question would seem to be whether, when the capitalist class has been frozen out, the new workshop organization will furnish an adequate form of, or an adequate substitute for, what Achille Loria terms "the coercion to associated labour," supplied in various ways under chattel-slavery, feudalism, the medieval guild system, and capitalism. But that is another story. This article is already long enough, and we have given our reasons for deferring consideration of the matter.

As far as we are concerned, this is a mere preliminary skirmish. We will re-enter the field, will participate more fully in the symposium (of course with editorial indulgence, and with goodwill on the part of readers of the magazine), when others have had their say, when paper is cheaper, and when the *Plebs* has been sufficiently enlarged. But perhaps ere then the soviets will be at work in Britain, and the epoch of bourgeois parliamentarism will be concluded.

EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL.

Scotland in Revolution

II.

In the previous article we dealt with the first phase of the revolution accomplished by the Scottish lairds and nobles in the social and political economy of that nation. Durig the later 16th and early 17th centuries, these classes, or "estates," as they called themselves, were transforming lands held from the Crown as the self-appointed trustee of the people, from public or partially claimed or Church property into private property. They were resisting the centralising policy of the Scottish crown or bringing that institution under their own control, using their legal opportunities to further their private

and their class ambitions. They were possessing themselves of land and labour-power in such a legal fashion as to enable them to accumulate their primitive forms of agrarian, commercial and moneyed capital.

The middle and closing years of the 17th Century were employed by the protagonists of private property in land, as well as by the commercial interests, in overthrowing the remaining political forms and safeguards of temporal and spiritual feudalism; in other words, in finally curbing the power of the Monarchy.

After a long and bitter struggle, into the details of which we need not enter, the landed and mercantile classes of the Lowlands took the decisive step, acting in conjunction with their co-religionists and co-landlords and merchants of England, of forcibly expelling the reigning dynasty of Stewart, or rather, in the first instance, of setting aside the King in favour of his daughter and his son-in-law, William of Nassau and Orange.

This action has been commemorated in many a respectable record and reputable history as "the Glorious Revolution." It seems strange that Clyde workers cannot proceed to the Glasgow Green, but they must file past a statue set up as a memorial to a Revolution, a Revolution that brought in a German house; that they must needs assemble in a square sacred to the German patronymic of a ruling house here introduced by revolutionary action; and that they cannot find lodgment for sedition but they go to Duke Street—of that Bloody Cumberland, who finally overthrew the Scottish clans and established by armed force private property in the Highlands under Hanoverian patronage.

Yes—Scotland had a Revolution, and no infamous or unworthy Revolution was it, no revolution to be scarified, lampooned and execrated. It was a "Glorious Revolution." Needs must it have been glorious when we find that the Meeting of the Estates in Edinburgh gave over the "regulation of Public Affairs" to "a Committee of Noblemen, Barons, and Burgesses appointed for that purpose by a Meeting of the Estates." This Meeting of the Estates was quite out of order, quite unconstitutional and signalled its revolutionary career at an early stage by deciding, on receipt of a letter from James VII., that, regardless of any dismissal it might contain, they should continue to sit. They addressed a memorial welcome to William of Orange, and they chose as their President His Grace the Duke of Hamilton. He was supported from the revolutionary Clyde by the Earl of Home, Lords Belhaven and Blantyre, the Laird of Lamington, and Sir Daniel Carmichael of Malslie, Wm. Cuninghame of Craighs, and Thos. Hamiltoun from Lanark. Sir Wm. Fleming of Ferne and Lord Belhaven were both in command of armed forces of rebels; and in the following year, 1690, we find that the town of Paisley was granted two yearly fairs as a reward for its support of the Revolution in sending a company of soldiers to guard the Estates at Edinburgh. To find the name of a lord of Blantyre sitting at an "unofficial" strike committee, and to discover a company of warriors proceeding on revolutionary business from Paisley makes us wonder why so much ado about the Lanarkshire Miners' Unofficial Committee and so much indignation at Gallacher's classic allusion to "a six-inch howitzer."

When the Revolution had been firmly established by the adequate exercise of a Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie, the now duly constitutionalised Parliament set to work to function in the interests of the classes who controlled the State. It began to inquire into and to attempt to "control" the price of that laird's necessity—brandy; to forbid the making of rum from molasses for home consumption, because it "doth hinder the consumpt of strong waters made of malt, *which is the native product of this Kingdom*, as also that the said Rum is rather a drug than liquor, and highly prejudicial to the health of all who drink it"—a quality that did not invalidate its use in export trade to the Red Indians in exchange for furs and skins; to encourage the export

of victual and to permit lairds to levy taxes on beer and malt to pay for erecting harbours in their burghs of barony and regality. It passed a single sweeping enactment "for dividing Commons" and for "division of Mosses." At the same time it revived the Acts of the Council anent the Poor "and ordains them to be put to vigorous Execution in all poynts."

Some thirty years later the landlords and merchants secured by Parliamentary enactment the setting up of a Board of Manufacturers which made grants to persons starting bleachfields and bounties for planting flax. In 1746, says Bremner, in his *Industries of Scotland*, the Duke of Argyll and other nobles and gentlemen, "with a capital of £100,000, the subscribers of which were actuated solely by patriotic motives . . . imported flax, linseed, and potashes, which they sold on credit to suitable persons, afterwards buying at a fair price the yarns and linens made from the material supplied." So was started the British Linen Company, "solely for patriotic motives" to stimulate the growing of flax and the manufacture of linen in places wherein the said Duke of Argyll and his co-partners were in the habit of collecting their rents.

That was an ominous year for landlords to be "actuated solely by patriotic motives." For there figures on the Statute Book of the United Kingdoms in that year an Act for abolishing certain land tenures. The land of Scotland hitherto had been held from the Crown on Ward Tenure with the duty of keeping "Watch and Ward," i.e., by military holding or in return for rendering military service to the King as custodian of the realm. In 1746 the chiefs superior, i.e., the landholders holding direct from the Crown, were relieved by their corporate selves "in Parliament assembled" of this immemorial duty and their tenure "converted into Blanch (free) holding," or upon payment of a nominal quit rent of "ane Scots penny." At the same time, and by the same Act, the "tenures of Ward Holding held of any Subject Superior" were "to be converted into fen holding." That is to say, whilst the landlord became a freeholder, discharged of all military or alternative service, his tenants were relieved of the former only to have it transformed into a rent payment. It was the moment of this self-sacrificing act that the Duke of Argyll chose for his adventure in patriotic altruism indirectly contributing to the increase of the rental value of his new freeholds.

When we recollect that the Scottish lairds not only legalised—under a revolutionary constitution—their seizure of the Commons and Mosses and their transformation of the Custom of Land Tenure, but barefacedly and brazenly broke the law of minerals and worked these as if they were their own property, we can understand what a mortal antipathy their descendants, now involved in agriculture, commerce and industry, have to the propaganda of exposure and education carried on by the Scottish Labour College and the Plebs League. Comrades! here's to "the Wee, Wee German Lairdie" and "the Glorious Revolution" as reputable precedents to which we can refer!

J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD

The Re-organization of the League

I have been instructed by the Executive Committee to make a statement on their behalf with regard to the reorganization of the League, and to invite suggestions and discussion in the Magazine.

It will be remembered that at the last Annual Meet the following resolution was passed:—

That the E.C. be composed of delegates, elected by ballot of local branches, each delegate representing a District (or Division).

The formation of seven districts (or divisions) was suggested—(1) Scotland; (2) Durham and Northumberland; (3) Yorkshire; (4) Lancs. and Cheshire; (5) Midlands and S. West; (6) S. Wales; (7) London and Home Counties. The old E.C. were to carry on until such time as the new committee could be elected.

Certain difficulties which have since arisen, and certain changed circumstances, make the carrying out of the resolution practically impossible, even if (to the same extent, at any rate) it is now desirable. In the first place, there is no uniformity in our branch and district organization. Obviously, the formation of the districts above-mentioned could not be done "from the centre," but must be the work of the districts themselves. "Districts" have been formed, but not on the lines indicated. In Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow, for instance, there are flourishing "districts" (*i.e.*, groups of classes, with large numbers of T.U. branches affiliated). But there are numerous branches in Lancashire entirely unconnected with either Liverpool or Manchester; and in Scotland, unconnected with Glasgow. In S. Wales, again, where there is a network of classes, there is no "district" organization at all. (And the fact that classes are only occasionally "Plebs" classes, and are more often run under the auspices of Trade Unions, Councils, or other Labour organizations, makes a uniform district organization difficult, if not impracticable.)

Varying local needs and conditions have, moreover, resulted in widely varying constitutions. Some branches affiliate to the Plebs League, as organizations. Others consist of individual members, each of whom pay their membership fee to the central body. Some have local T.U. branches, etc., affiliated to themselves—others send on these affiliations to the League. Sometimes a "branch" is a class, the majority of the students only paying their local fees and having no direct connection with the League. Obviously it is impossible to draft a scheme for nominating and electing an E.C. which will meet all these differing cases.

Matters are further complicated by a change in circumstances. Previous to the war, most provincial classes were affiliated to the Labour College, the Plebs League existing simply as a propagandist body. When the College had to close, the League took over and carried on the organizing of the classes. Now, however, it is most probable that the College, when it re-opens, will invite classes to affiliate. Such a course is desirable in every way, since the College will, in the near future, be able to provide lecturers as well as correspondence courses, lectures by post, etc. But the scheme for district organization of the League was largely necessitated—or rendered desirable—for the sake of the classes. And if the League is to be no longer directly responsible for the classes, but is to become once more mainly a propagandist body, the question of district representation *versus* a small committee acting "at the centre" has to be discussed.

The E.C. accordingly invite the opinions and suggestions of League members on the following points:—(1) The holding of a special conference—in connection with the Meet, or earlier?—to discuss provincial class organization, overlapping, etc. (2) By what means the expenses of any such conference (railway fares, etc.) are to be met. (3) Alternative means of electing an E.C.—*e.g.*, by postal ballot of all individual *paid up* members of the League—instead of at the Annual Meet, as at present. [This latter course, in view of the difficulties of election by districts, seems to me, personally, the most desirable]. (4) Methods of more efficiently organizing and increasing the circulation of the Magazine, since this, if the College takes over the classes, will be the principal work of the League.

WINIFRED HORRABIN (*Sec.*)

Will Secretaries of all classes send particulars of meeting-place, subjects, teachers, average attendance, etc., to the Secretary, Labour College, 13 Penywern Road, Earls Court, S.W., *in the course of the next fortnight.*

May we remind *Plebs* readers than an Organizing Fund in connection with the League and the Magazine is open for subscriptions, which are still needed. The Secretary of the Fund is Heber Pratt, 13 Havelock Road, Shrewsbury, who will be glad to hear from our supporters.

Correspondence

M.F.G.B. AND THE LABOUR COLLEGE.

DEAR COMRADE,—My appeal to Plebeians in the February issue was responded to well, over twenty Lodges of the Durham Miners' Association sending in the resolution for discussion. Alas! the best-laid schemes reckon not of old rules and constitutional methods. The resolution was ruled out of order, as the rules do not permit of the association being part-owners or controllers of an educational institution—even of the kind beloved by Sir E. Cassell. We hope that some of the other mining districts will have it on the agenda of the Annual Conference of the M.F.G.B., and then . . . we will move on. In the meantime, a project is on foot in Durham for two scholarships.

Yours fraternally, W.L.

News of the Movement

The MANCHESTER and District Plebs Council are running a Tutorial Class for the summer months, commencing Wed., April 2nd, at Ancoats Settlement. Mr. F. Casey (of Bury) is the lecturer, and the first eight chapters of *Capital and Labour* form his subject-matter.

LIVERPOOL, too, declines to take a vacation just because of a (problematical) change in the weather. Lectures have been arranged for Sunday evenings in April; commencing 8 p.m., as follows: 6th, Mr. J. Hamilton, "Gothic Architecture," B.S.P. Rooms, Marmaduke Street, Edge Hill; 13th, Mr. E. F. Moroney, "Evolution of Machinery," Engineers' Institute, Price Street, Birkenhead; 27th, Mr. J. Hamilton, "Evolution of Architecture," at same place. The Liverpool Committee has also been getting busy on its scheme for linking up all the classes and Plebs branches in the county, and the conference held at Wigan was enthusiastically in favour. All information from J. Hamilton, 52 Byrom Street, Liverpool. (Liverpool balance-sheet held over till next month.

From BRADFORD and GARNDIFFAITH we have received reports of good progress. The Bradford class (on Economics) has grown into two (on Philosophy and Indust. History). A Plebs branch is to be formed at GRIMSBY. THROCKLEY and District (Northumberland) Co-operative Society has decided to support the local classes—thanks in the main to Tom McKay's persistent "pioneering." MIDDLESBORO' class has had, regretfully, to bid farewell to its tutor, Will Lewcock, and made him a presentation on his leaving the district. Chas. Carman takes his place.

The Plebs Bookshelf

The advertisement inviting applications for the post of Lecturer in Economics at the College printed in last month's *Plebs* appeared also in most of the Labour weeklies. It was also published (free of charge!) in a prominent position in one London daily—at the top of a column article in the *Daily Graphic* of March 6th, headed:—

BOLSHEVIST NURSERY.

WHERE THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO KARL MARX IS TAUGHT.

Only last month we quoted the same journal's reference to "hot-headed young Socialists who have sat at the feet of Mr. Sidney Webb and imbibed the fallacies of Karl Marx." Evidently, since then the *Graphic* has been making investigations and realised that the "feet" are not Mr. Webb's. "The basis of the educational system of the Labour College," announced the writer of this later article, "is the economic theory of the German revolutionist Karl Marx—the theory that has been carried into effect by the Bolsheviks of Russia with such disastrous results to that unhappy country. . .

Marxian theory is taught as a gospel to be accepted without question, as Catholicism is taught to a novitiate. Other economic theories are examined only to be distorted and rejected. Marxian theory is the intellectual basis of Syndicalism and Bolshevism. Hence these tears. Ex-students of the College "return home and engage in propaganda." The miners become check-weighers, "an occupation which provides exceptional facilities for disseminating the teaching of the college among the workmen." All ex-students become active in trade-union work, "and rarely experience any difficulty in securing election to some official position in the local branch." A handsome compliment to the efficacy of their training! And a still greater tribute to the college follows, for we are assured that "the influence of the College and its Marxian theory cannot wisely be ignored" in connection with the trouble in the coal industry, and the possible action of the Triple Alliance. Messrs. J. H. Thomas and Tom Richards, whom the writer had always regarded as "moderate constitutional" men, are invited to explain how it is that their two organizations support the institution "from which most of the pernicious (Syndicalist) doctrine emanates." Can it be—dread thought!—that there is "some deep, ulterior motive embodied in the trade union programmes"? Are the aims of miners, railwaymen and transport workers exactly what they purport to be, or do their demands form "part of a plot to rob the owners of industrial concerns—do they represent merely one step in a Syndicalist conspiracy?"

In the following day's issue, "A Socialist" writes to allay these fears. Are not Messrs. Hyndman and Will Thorne "representative Marxian Socialists"? And are they not out to kill Bolshevism? Marx was "in no sense or shape" either Syndicalist or Bolshevik. Bolshevism "in theory means the running of industry by the worker for the workers; in practice it spells absolute failure, social degeneracy, national chaos." Whereas Socialism means nothing of the kind. It means State railways, mines and farms. But the writer of the original article refuses to be comforted. "The so-called educational movement controlled by the S.W.M.F. and the N.U.R." is not out for "the mild kind of Socialism your correspondent suggests." He has an uneasy feeling that its aim is rather "the running of industry by the workers" (plot to rob the owners of industrial concerns, etc., etc.) And to ensure that readers of the *Graphic* should be properly informed of the sinister nature of Marxian doctrines that eminent economist, Mr. Harold Cox, is brought forward (March 14th) to discourse on "Karl Marx: The Apostle of Present-Day Socialism." Mr. Cox, after quotations from Keir Hardie and the Glasgow Plebs centenary pamphlet on Marx, proceeds to give a few extracts from *Wage-Labour and Capital* (the language of *Das Kapital* being too "repellently Teutonic and involved" to be capable of quotation). His peroration is as follows:—

This is the kind of stuff which prominent trade unions are paying young men to study. Every proposition is false. The value produced in ploughing a field is not due only to the ploughman; it is partly due to the plough and to the team and to previous draining, manuring, fencing, road-making, and barn-building. The capitalist lives not by robbing the labourer, but by providing those elements of production which enable the labourer to do more than he could possibly accomplish with his own two hands alone. The labourer does not grow poorer as capital expands; he grows richer, as is abundantly evident to anyone who will compare the average condition of the wage-earners of England to-day, with their condition sixty years ago, when Marx was formulating his theories.

What a gift it is to be an eminent economist! And how "abundantly evident" that the "average (mental) condition" of the intellectuals of England to-day is much as it was sixty years ago, when their fathers, in blissful ignorance of Marx and his theories, were busy demonstrating that the capitalist was the saviour of society,

Here, by way of contrast to Marx's jaundiced views, is a specimen of "impartial" economics. It is from a work entitled *The World's Cotton Crops* (1915) and the author, J. A. Podd, is Professor of Economics at University College, Nottingham:—

. . . Since the liberation of the slaves, good negroes have become almost the exception; the average "nigger" has an incurable aversion to steady and especially to prolonged labour. Two or three days' labour will earn a wage sufficient to keep him for a week, and that is all he wants . . . The scarcity of labour has only resulted in the raising of the general level of wages and enabling the negro to adopt a higher standard of living, and copy the luxuries and the vices of the white man. A horse and saddle to ride to town with on Saturday, expensive clothes, and the best brown boots that money can buy, gold-filled teeth, and gramophones, are his idea of life. The contrast between all this and the position of the Egyptian fellah with his unlimited capacity for patient plodding work from morning till night, for almost seven days a week, and from one year's end to another, on a wage of less than a quarter of that of the American negro, which yet enables him to maintain a standard of living that makes him the healthiest and strongest agricultural labourer in the world, is painful in the extreme.

Recent happenings in Egypt lend an added interest to this touching passage.

Popular politicians, during the war, made considerable play with the "Rights of the Small Nations." More high-falutin' speakers and writers discoursed at length on Nationality and the National Idea. We were to satisfy the claims of Nationality, and all was to be well with the world. Current events in various parts of Europe hardly seem to bear out these optimistic forecasts. The Poles—one of the suppressed nationalities—have already come to blows with the Tchecko-Slovaks, also aspirants for "freedom"; over what?—over the mining district of Teschen (Austrian Silesia) to which they both lay claim. Yet another subject race, the Ukrainians, have declared war against the Poles on another frontier; again, for what?—for possession of the oil-wells of Galicia. And the harmony of the 1919 Concert of Europe is gravely threatened by the falling-out of Italians and Southern Slavs—over the strategically and commercially important Dalmatian coast. Mines, oil-wells, seaports—these form a very material basis to the "national" aspirations of idealists.

It is as difficult as it would be interesting—particularly to Plebeians—to find out just what the Soviet Government of Russia is doing and planning in the matter of education. One had hoped that some definite information might be obtainable from the pamphlet recently published by the Workers' Socialist Federation, *Self-Education of the Workers: The Cultural Task of the Struggling Proletariat*, by Lunacharski, the People's Commissary for Education. The pamphlet, however, is scarcely more than a leaflet, and is couched for the most part in very general terms. A footnote states that during 1918 the Soviet Government opened over 1,000 new elementary schools in the province of Moscow alone, and six new Universities throughout Russia. But it is the curriculum of those Universities, and of the schools for adults in every part of the country—the Bolshevik "nurseries," to use the *Graphic's* phrase—that it would be so interesting to know more about. We have the evidence of Mr. John Rickman (*Manchester Guardian*) among others, that a real educational revival is taking place in Russia. And that our rulers and governors fear the prospect of one section of the workers being taught the truth is evident from the tone of their press in commenting on it. The *Morning Post* (February 18th) had a column article headed "Aesthetic Side of Bolshevism: Bizarre Art and Education," which made characteristic play with the idea of "Proletkult," the "bizarre" name by which Lunacharski's Department of Proletarian Culture is known in Russia. "Proletkult," the writer admitted, had nationalised the theatres, reformed the

archaic Russian alphabet, spread broadcast "good, but duly Bolshevised" literature and educational cinema films, and democratised the universities, high schools and technical colleges; all of which things may strike a *Morning Post* correspondent as "bizarre," but which will doubtless appeal to *Plebs* readers as eminently satisfactory. The *M.P.* man also mentions that the Moscow Proletarian University awarded prizes to distinguished foreign Socialist writers, including Dr. Anton Pannekoek (he does not spell Pannekoek correctly), but one would hardly expect his non-bizarre education to have advanced so far). A writer on "Bolshevik Aims and Bolshevik Ideals" in that omniscient organ, the *Round Table* (March, 1919) refers to this Moscow University as "in reality nothing but a school for agitators"—a remark which must sound strangely familiar to C.L.C.ers' used to W.E.A. criticisms of Independent Working-Class Education. The same writer also mentions the decree for the free education of the working-classes, and admits that "although it has naturally not been possible to give immediate effect to this reform, a vigorous commencement has been made for the spread of Bolshevik education amongst the masses. The *Russian Commonwealth*, the organ of the Miliukoff "Liberal" and anti-Bolshevik group in this country has an article (March 10th) gloomily headed "The Destruction of Instruction," roundly accusing the Bolsheviks of working all sorts of harm to "the national education of Russia"—which, however, it confesses "had never been placed on anything like a proper footing" (and that, one would say, is putting it mildly!) "Celebrated professors," it appears, "have been obliged to leave the universities which they had made famous." Shocking. "All the schools in Russia are ruined." Very probably—from the point of M. Miliukoff, the *Round Table*, the *Morning Post*, etc. The *Commonwealth* also waxes very satirical at the scheme of one municipal council for a "street university." "Each of the principal thoroughfares of Voronezh is now described as a faculty—of law, economics, history, literature, science, etc. The walls are placarded with posters, containing brief biographies of men distinguished in one or another branch of knowledge, and brief items of information concerning the respective subjects." Such a "democratisation" of culture the *Commonwealth* considers very humorous. Yet, as a way of appealing to a largely uneducated population, unused to books, this plan of enabling him who runs to read seems distinctly useful. The *Commonwealth* writer, like the *Post* aesthete, is also shocked at the new orthography in which the classics of Russian literature are being published—"orthography so barbarous that it is most painful to an educated reader." Gorky's truce with the Soviet Government and his acceptance of the offer to edit these classics is referred to with a like lofty scorn. "For Russia, Gorky was never more than a very gifted novelist" and what such persons do matters neither one way nor another. True bourgeois attitude to the arts! Of these State-published editions of classics Mr. Alymer Maude tells us (*Manchester Guardian*) that the Government has nationalised (*i.e.*, appropriated the copyrights of) the works of Russian authors no longer living. Enormous editions are printed and sold at very low prices. For instance, "Klyuchevsky's historical works could not be purchased complete just before the war, for less than R. 65—then equal to about £6 10s. The Bolsheviks have reprinted them in three volumes at R. 1 each, which, at the present rate of exchange, is less than 6d. a volume." J.F.H.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

The Collapse of Capitalism. By H. CAHN. (C. H. Kerr.)

Socialism and the State. By E. VANDERVELDE. (C. H. Kerr).

[We hope to review both these books next month] ❧

The Industrial Chaos: The Labour Crisis, and The Way Out—National Guilds. (N.G.L., 51 Queen Alexandra Mansions, Judd St., W.C. 1. 1d.)

The Call of the Religion of Humanity to You. By F. J. Gould. (Watts & Co., 17 Johnson's Court, E.C. 4. 3d.)