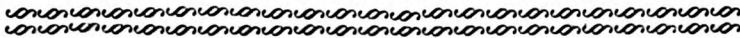


Vol. XII. No. 7

July, 1920

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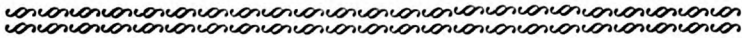
THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

Contributions by K. KAUTSKY, PROF. J. B. NICHOLSON,
JOHN MACLEAN

BRITISH FINANCE AND THE POLISH OFFENSIVE

Reviews

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No. 7

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OUR NEW VENTURE

6^d. is to be the price of the new and enlarged series of the PLEBS starting with the October number. "It's a lot of money," say some of our friends. But is it? Sixpence a month in these days is not more than equal to the 2d. a month which the PLEBS used to cost you in the dear dead days beyond recall. The 7d. novels you bought in those days cost you 2s. now—a 250% advance. The 1d. Socialist weeklies are now 2d., which works out at more than 6d. a month. *And we shall increase our size*—to as near double our present bulk as YOU, by supporting or not supporting us, decide.

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BRITISH FINANCE-CAPITAL, RAW MATERIALS, AND THE
POLISH OFFENSIVE

[Translated by W. H. MAINWARING from our German contemporary, the *Red Flag (Rote Fahne)*, Berlin.]

WHETHER has watched the British Labour Movement during the last few weeks cannot but have observed that the burning question of the day is not so much "increase wages" as "reduce the cost of living." Resolutions have appeared from every part of the country demanding that the Government take immediate steps to secure a decrease in prices. It is clear that the workers are beginning to realise that to increase wages further is to participate in a series of endless movements which neither reduce prices nor control the profits of the capitalists.

The Government, however, is moving in an opposite direction, as shown by the increasing tendency towards de-control; the Minister of Labour, Sir Robert Horne, stated a short while ago in the House of Commons that "the time had arrived for the coalowners to resume private control of the coal mines of this country." The representatives of the financial interests behind the British Empire are taking energetic steps to remove every semblance of public control over their operations in the world-market.

The critical condition of French capital has made it in reality a mere appendage of London and New York, and while the French militarists may serve, in the present state of affairs in Middle Europe, to keep down any movement for freedom, the rôle of France as a factor in world-politics is played out. The conflict within capital itself is at present carried on between the trusts of Wall Street and the London Syndicates. British high finance has set itself the problem of securing, as far as possible, the unlimited control of world-sources of raw materials; first, in order effectively to compete with America, and secondly, to decrease prices in Great Britain. Should this fail to reduce prices, it would adopt Imperial (preferential) importation. With cheap food, and the consequent removal of inflammatory material, the British proletariat would quickly reach such a condition as would render unnecessary any kind of control of the trust operations.

Conditions, at present, are such that the materials essential for enabling the home market to reduce prices are to be found only in backward or partly-developed regions, where the proletariat live under conditions that make them partly slaves, partly serfs, and the cost of production is reduced to a minimum. These areas lie, mainly, in the regions between Europe and Asia, on the Russian steppes, and in different parts of the Middle East, in the Caucasias, Mesopotamia and Persia. The importance of these areas for British capital is further increased by reason of the fact that unless it comes immediately under the influence of British finance it will come under that of the American trusts. So we have three world-powers engaged in a struggle for control of the raw materials lying between Europe and Asia—the finance-capital of Britain, the trusts of America, and the Workers' Republic of Russia, which requires this material for the reconstruction of her industries upon a communistic basis.

The offensive against the Red armies of Russia carried on by Polish capital, under the auspices of the British Minister for War, is quite clearly the work of the London group of financiers on whose behalf Mr. Winston Churchill speaks.

It can be distinguished from the offensive carried on by Denikin and Koltchak in that it is not a blow at the heart of Soviet Russia aiming at taking Moscow and Petrograd and reinstating Czardom. The policy is obviously the same as that followed by the German General Staff at Brest-Litovsk—to isolate the industrial districts of Central Russia and separate them from the coal and oil regions of the south and south-eastern border lands. Possession of these areas by the London bankers, through their Polish mercenaries, would have a dual effect: first, it would extend the sphere of operations of these banks in their endeavours to secure raw materials and fuel, and would thereby enable them to reduce prices in Great Britain; secondly, it would succeed in making the Russian Soviet Republic, and this without the need of a costly military expedition, dependent upon them for all her raw material.

It is a question whether, in view of the difficulties of transport, etc., in this part of Russia, it is possible to bring any great quantity of Ukrainian wheat into the British market. In North Caucasia, on the other hand, are one and a-half milliard puds* of cereals ready for export to Western Europe. In the Don region 70 per cent. of the capital invested in the coal mines in pre-revolutionary days was in the hands of French and Belgian banks. There is some ground for the belief that part of this was taken over by a great British Mining Syndicate, headed by Mr. Urquhart, as a set-off against loans made to France during the war and financial agreements made by the French Government since the signing of peace. This Syndicate is one of the most influential factors determining British participation in the Allied intervention in Russia. It controls the copper and iron mines of Bogoslousk and Troitsky in the Urals and West Siberia, and was the unseen power behind Koltchak's great offensive in the spring of 1919.

But, for the moment, London finance-capital is less concerned about coal, copper, and iron than it is about oil. The prevailing opinion at the British Admiralty is that oil is to be the chief marine motive power of the future, and this is reflected in the British business world in relation to the possibility of applying liquid fuel to industry. According to Lord Fisher, in a letter to the *Times*, our policy has been based upon the words—"If at first you don't succeed bore, bore, bore again." The creation of the new "Shell" Syndicate, which includes the Dutch oil interests of East India and also the newly-formed company exploiting the oil fields of Mohammerah in South Persia, is the first step towards securing a world monopoly and control.

After long negotiations between London and Paris the French Government has at last been induced, through the secret treaty of 1916, to give up all pretensions and claims upon Mosul and Upper Mesopotamia. What this transaction involved is not altogether clear; but it is obvious that the French Government liquidated a part of its liabilities to Great Britain by the terms of this arrangement, which gives to the "Shell" group control over the great oil-fields of Mesopotamia.

There remain the oil-fields of Baku and North Caucasia. The possession of this rich area by the "Shell" Syndicate is admittedly not of much importance so far as the satisfaction of the demands of the British home market is concerned. But, as frequently happens under capitalism, sources of materials are sought for, not in order to satisfy a hungry market, but in order to prevent competition and extend the capitalists' control over *all* sources. So that a capitalist, rather

* A pud = 36 lbs.

than see natural wealth of this kind in the hands of a competitor, prefers to see it destroyed. One need only instance the wholesale destruction of the mines in the north of France by the Prussian militarists, and the wholesale burning and destruction of the oil-fields of Galicia and Rumania in 1915-1916 by the Czarist armies and by British engineers—and this at a time when Europe was suffering from an extreme shortage of such materials. Some years before the war the Nobel Syndicate in Baku bought up the land around Grozney and Maiko in Caucasia, in order to prevent the oil being taken into the market and thus, by influencing prices, reducing their profits.

The same thing occurred in Baku. An expert, in a letter to the *Times* (May 12), explained how, in the course of the year 1919, hundreds of thousands of tons of oil were allowed to run into the Caspian Sea because the pipes, etc., between Baku and Batum were too small to carry it west, and because the Entente governments by their blockade of Russia made it impossible to convey it by ship into Russia—the natural market for the oil from the Baku area. The same purpose is apparent in the Polish offensive against South Russia.

If they succeed in conquering the Ukraine and the Don region, then Soviet Russia will be prevented from obtaining the supplies of oil so necessary for the reconstruction of her industries. This will have a two-fold effect; first, it will make Russia dependent upon the "Shell" Syndicate for fuel, etc., and, secondly, make it impossible for Russia to exchange the oil of Baku for machinery, etc., from America. It would also give the British a monopoly in the provision of machinery and technical requirements for Russia, and—apart from the Standard Oil Company of America (the only real competitor of the "Shell" group)—give them control of oil resources with which to break down monopoly prices.

In and for these interests the Polish armies are now marching, under the leadership of the "Socialistic" Pilsudski, towards South Russia.

SYMPOSIUM ON THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

(Continued)

KARL KAUTSKY

I AM very busy, and can answer only with a few sentences.

I attribute the rise in the cost of living during the last two decades *before the war* to two main causes:—(1) The depreciation in the value of gold, due to the decrease in the cost of its production. (2) The exhaustion of the immense regions of woodland and prairie in America and other new countries which were originally under no restrictions of private property. They were, at first, cultivated without much cost and yielded abundant harvests, after having supplied cheap wood. Now they give us no more harvests without intensified culture, and they have become private property.

If the prices from 1890 to 1899 are taken as = 100, their movement in America (according to the statistics of the Labour Bureau in Washington) was as follows:—

	<i>Pine Wood</i>	<i>Agricultural Products</i>	<i>Cotton</i>	<i>Manufactures</i>	<i>Garments</i>
1897	93·7	85·2	92·2	90·1	91·1
1911	201·9	162·0	168·0	126·6	119·6
Increase Rise	108·2	76·8	75·8	36·5	28·5

The causes of the rise in the cost of living during and after the war are of another kind. I don't think the above-mentioned causes had any material influence on this rise, if any at all.

The chief causes now are, firstly, the inflation of paper currency in most countries, and, secondly, the excess of demand over supply. Both these causes have one common cause, the rapid extension of unproductive consumption by the war, and the rapid decrease of production for productive purposes.

There is only one radical cure for the disease:—The increase of productive production—*i.e.*, production of machinery, of ships for commercial purposes, of agriculture, etc.,—and the decrease of unproductive production of warships, guns and other implements of war, and the complete cessation of warfare in Eastern Europe as well as in the Far East.

These are, in a few sentences, my views on the questions you have put to me.

PROF. J. B. NICHOLSON

(a) I have dealt with these questions in a number of papers republished in my *War Finance and Inflation* (1919). I must refer to these books for fuller expression of the answers given below.

(b) (1) When the gold standard is effective, as before the war in the commercial world and now in U.S.A., variations in the value of gold are *measured* by variations in general prices as *shown* by index numbers. They are not *causes*. (2) The *de facto* abandonment of the gold standard during the war allowed of an indefinite expansion of credit. (3) Currency notes took the place of gold and the limitations of the expansion of credit were removed. (2) and (3) are necessarily combined. (4) Demand means desire backed by means of purchase. The increase in money (paper) so far increases demand. In any determination of values *both* demand and supply must always be considered. Relative scarcity through war or under-production raises prices. In my opinion by far the greater part of the rise in prices since the beginning of the war has been due to monetary causes.

JOHN MACLEAN

Prices tended upwards from 1896 till 1914. The *Statist* index number for 1896 was 61 and for July, 1914, 82'4. (See *Statist*, January 10, 1920, for details.) Prof. W. J. Ashley, in a footnote in *The Rise in Prices and the Cost of Living* (1912), had to admit the Marxian contention that this rise was due to the large issue of gold of greatly reduced value.

The gold output began to rise in 1890 owing to the opening up of the Rand. (See the Gold Production Chart in Kautsky's *High Cost of Living*.) In 1890 the world's gold output was valued at £24'6 millions and rose to almost £100 millions in 1914. Naturally, time elapsed before prices were affected; 1890-95 being a period of declining trade and prices, and continuous improvement in methods of production tended to reduce the cost of production. The opening up of the Rand gold area on capitalist lines, with the latest rock-drills and crushers and the introduction of the cyanide method of separating the gold from the quartz rock (and the vastly reduced price of cyanide owing to a great change in the method of production) resulted naturally in the extraction of each ounce of gold taking less time; with a consequent fall in the value of gold.

As a Marxian might expect, farm produce and raw materials first began to rise in price, followed by manufactured wholesale goods, then by retail goods,

and ultimately, after great strikes from 1911 onwards, by wages. The *Labour Gazette* provides data as to the movement of retail prices and wages.

The *Statist* index number for August, 1914, is 87·9 and for December, 1919, 235·2, the rise being fairly steady over the whole period. During this period the fighting forces grew and imports shrank. Supplies tended to decline—except those for the fighting machine. Demand on the whole certainly went up. But supply and demand were limited in operation by the growing control of production and markets by the Government.

I contend that the inflation of the currency gives the most satisfactory explanation of the rise in prices. The *Economist* gives the statistics of the issue of currency notes since August, 1914, as well as wholesale prices index number. *The Currency and Foreign Exchanges Interim Report* shows that the currency on June 30, 1914, was almost £180 millions. On December 31, 1919, currency notes amounted to fully £356 millions, whilst the notes issued by the Bank of England amounted to almost £110 millions. The total currency was, therefore, about £466 millions.

Note that prices rise 167%, whilst currency rises 160%—quite a wonderful approximation. Rent restriction and bread subsidy with the lag of retail behind wholesale prices explains why the rise in the cost of living was 125%.

The White Paper (Cd. 434) gives further confirmation by showing the respective rises in currency and prices.

	<i>Currency all kinds 1913=100</i>	<i>Wholesale Prices 1913=100</i>	<i>Retail Prices 1914=100</i>
United States	173	206·0	181
United Kingdom	244	257·2	217
France	365	330·0	263-281
Italy	440	329·9	293

The increase in the use of credit instruments tends to eliminate the use of currency in business transactions and so tends to make a part of the currency superfluous. But this may be counteracted by the relative and absolute number of wage-earners who deal essentially with currency. If it could be proved that during the pre-war period the need for currency tended to decrease, then it might be contended that this would tend to raise prices by producing effects similar to those experienced in America by the sudden and great influx of gold since 1914 and in Europe by the issue of paper money. So far I have come across no proof.

PRODUCTION AND POLITICS

II.

THE COW AND THE CHURN

WHILST the producers of the matriarchal communities were slowly and laboriously developing the infinitely crude technique of pottery-making, weaving, leather-curing, and digging with the wooden spade, there was evolving likewise from the chase and from attempts at taming or at corralling on the part of the men, the herd of cattle. These were being collected together, bred in captivity and fed on corn and on dried grasses, so that, tentatively, the

Kindred became a pastoral or grazing folk. This seems to have been, particularly, the economic foundation of early Aryan society in Europe and pre-eminently the occupation of the Celts.

This great people and those who followed them across Europe came, *organised by tribes*, wandering over the Continent, eventually making their way, Gadhelic and Cymric Celts, into these islands. Needless to say, they did not acquire an enduring link with any locality. They, and even more so the Teutons, had their gods domiciled now on one mountain top and again upon another. Their social ties were personal. Their whole system depended upon the Kin, upon the blood-tie. Mr. Gomme, in his *Folklore as a Historical Science*, says of the Aryans that "they conquered in tribes, and it was because of the strength of the tribal organisation during the period, first of migration and wandering, and then of conquest, that the settlement after conquest was possible and was so strong." He stresses the enormous importance of this blood-tie, remarking of the tribal organisation that it was "the great institutional force from which spring all later institutions. Its roots go back into the remotest past of Indo-European history; its active force caused the Indo-European people to become the mightiest in human history; its lasting results have scarcely yet ceased to shake the aspirations of political society and to affect the destinies of nations. The whole life of the early period was governed by tribal conditions—the political, social, legal and even religious conceptions were tribal in form and expression."

The tribal organisation rested upon the cow, upon the economy of grazing, and, latterly, of the use made of oxen in the cultivation of the land upon which the pastoral people eventually settled and made their enduring home. Cows constituted the first embodiment of the concept of property, and with this concept the father, keeper of cattle, became conscious of his power.

Realisation of his sexual indispensability; a gradual but continuously developing unbelief in the woman's mystic communion with life-giving powers and of the magical qualities with which they endowed her, combined with an ever more confident estimate of his own importance, as herdsman and husbandman, caused the father of the family (*paterfamilias*) to assert his authority over the woman. At the same time, the introduction of the primitive system of property replaced a horizontal association of men by a vertical hierarchy of loyalties and obediences to elders. Social rights and duties of the most sacred and binding character now made their influence felt upon the relations of mankind. The tie was one of blood, and, ultimately, of fire—curiously enough, the sign and symbol of the Christian religion in its crudest modern expressions.

The Kindred can, so far as these islands are concerned, be observed best in Wales, in Ireland and in the Highlands of Scotland. In the first two until the English conquests, and in the last until the middle of the eighteenth century, not only the grazing economy but also the super-imposed social organisation continued. In Wales the unit, first, of society and, eventually, of landholding was the *gwely*, or group of families in three generations from a great-grandfather, who, as chieftain, gave to each of his descendants as they came of age the *da* or allotment of cattle, in return for which the descendant paid a food-rent. When the great-grandfather died, the rights he held were apportioned among his children, and when they had all died a new division was made amongst their children, and so on until the great-grandchildren constituted new family groups, new *gwelys*. In the *gwely* the daughters as well as the sons went shares,

but when they died their portions went back to their own *gwely* and did not pass on to their children unless the line of male descendants failed, when succession passed to the female line.

The *gwely* consisted of three generations from a common ancestor. The Kindred was composed of from seven to nine generations similarly descended. Marriage was, probably, taboo within the *gwely* and beyond the Kindred.

The rights began with the *gwely*, and the *gwely* occupied a group of huts or a hamlet known as a *tref*. This *tref* gave its name to the village-group or *trevgordd*, viz., group having a churn. The laws of Wales state that:—

This is the complement of a lawful *trevgordd*: nine houses and one plough and one oven (*odyn*) and one churn (*gordd*) and one cat and one cock and one bull and one herdsman.

But of all these things, be it noted, it is the *churn* into which the milk of the territorial unit of society in the grazing period. It was the prevailing *tool*, and that tool was not yet the plough drawn by oxen, but the churn in which milk was manufactured into the finished product of a pastoral society. As Mr. Seebohm remarks:—

The *trevgordd* was a working unit of co-operative dairy farming . . . Just as in the Domesday Survey the number of ploughs affords such a unit (of tribute or taxation), so in a tribal community a district might easily be fiscally estimated at so many beds, or so many churns or so many ploughs. All these would mean so many *trevgordds*.

Already we see the plough and the oven—both held in common. The former is coming into use, drawn by oxen contributed by the inhabitants—the Kinsmen living in the *tyddyns* or homesteads of the *tref*. Both the plough and the oven—a survival, probably, from the single homestead of an earlier time—we shall find again in the manor. As yet there is no common mill. There is nothing more complex than the hand-quern—which the Norse said had been stolen from behind the door of hell!

Since the hearth-stones of the *tyddyns* could be and were taken up and removed as the *gwely* moved from one grazing ground to another, we may say that every means of production, every form of property was still moveable. The chief item of property was the cow, the chief means of production the churn.

For the time being the social unit moved from place to place, but the tribal chieftain came to estimate his tribute and to exact it from the occupants of the *tref* or of the *maenol* or group of *trevs*. Rent and taxes were estimated in land and not in cattle or in Kinsmen. Finally, of course, land was measured in the cattle necessary to support and capable of being managed efficiently by a *gwely*. Slowly, as the system of production changed, the social unit modified. Grazing was the primary occupation, though steadily cultivation of the waste by the eight ox plough was taking up a more and more important place.

In Wales, as in Ireland and in Italy, in the pastoral period value was estimated in terms of cattle and money based on cows. Rents were paid in the yield of the cow, and, if not held as sacred here in the West, the mighty prestige which it has earned, if not enjoyed, for its part played in the economy, polity and ideology of Europe may have given to the animal that air of superiority and of contemptuous unconcern with which, as it chews its cud, it regards the mere man whom it has unwittingly but enormously enriched.

J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD

IMPERIALISM UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Empire and Commerce in Africa. By L. WOOLF. (Labour Research Department, 20s.)

MR. WOOLF'S study forms a striking contrast to Mr. Morel's *The Black Man's Burden*, reviewed in the May PLEBS. The dominant note of the latter is its author's humanitarian idealism. Mr. Woolf, on the other hand, is primarily concerned to track down the causes of the problem of modern Imperialism. He concludes that the mainsprings are to be discovered in the beliefs and desires of men, and that therefore the hope of the future lies in a changed outlook—what our fathers would have called "a change of heart." Thus he says:—

Policy is determined by our beliefs and our ideals: it represents our view of what we want the State to be, and what we want the State to do in the world of States. . . . Man's past was caused by what men desired and believed; the future will be caused by what men desire and believe. . . . There is no logic of events and no logic of facts; there is only a logic of beliefs and desires.

Hence to Mr. Woolf the profound change which has taken place in the function of the State during the past century is to be explained by the fact that men have fashioned for themselves a new outlook: a new, a commercial ideal has taken possession of them, and instead of the State being regarded as the vested interest of the monarch or of a few noble families, it is looked upon as a kind of super-joint-stock company, the value of which could not escape the attention of the industrial age.

The modern view is illustrated by an apt quotation from a speech by Joseph Chamberlain, delivered in 1896, only a few months after he had become Colonial Secretary:—

All the great offices of State are occupied with commercial affairs. It is not too much to say that commerce is the greatest of all political interests, and that that Government deserves most the popular approval which does most to increase our trade and to settle it on a firm foundation.

We have here, then, the definite recognition of commercial interests as the end of political life and organisation, and of that organisation, the State, as the means; and the only problem for the politician is the method to be adopted in order best and most effectively to realise that end.

The possible methods are many; Mr. Woolf is concerned with one only—Economic Imperialism. The feature which distinguishes modern from earlier forms of Imperialism is the purity and the consciousness of its fundamentally economic character. Imperialism is assuredly no new thing under the sun, but now it has to express itself in a new environment and hence it acquires a new nature and produces new results. In previous epochs there may have been a number of other factors entering more or less directly and exerting their influence—dynastic, sentimental, religious, as well as economic; but in modern Imperialism, the economic factor is in undisputed authority.

This new phase commenced during the closing decades of the 19th century. During the years 1880–1914, the great Powers of Western Europe had acquired large non-European Empires.

The part played by Joseph Chamberlain in England was in France played by M. Jules Ferry. But it is in the written and practical policy of Germany that the purely economic character of modern Imperialism is most obviously manifest.

The German has a brutal habit of saying what he thinks and of calling spades spades. In Germany trade is not a symbol for Christianity nor finance for civilisation.

The new movement in Germany was heralded by the brilliant and impressive work of Fabri, which admirably met the needs of the strong financial and commercial interests, more and more coming to dominate colonial policy. The close connection between colonial policy and commercial interests is, of course, by no means confined to Germany—we recall also the Belgians on the Congo, the Italians in Abyssinia, and, as we shall see, the British in East Africa; but none the less, the history of the conversion of Bismarck to the new imperialism remains one of the most striking passages in the book. All the different agencies which could exercise any influence or exert any pressure either upon Bismarck directly, or in the preparation of public opinion to demand and to support the new policy, were called to the aid of the imperialist interests. "Propagandist associations and commercial companies, literary and political imperialist agitators, traders, financiers and explorers"—all worked closely together, and by 1885 they had converted Bismarck so completely that thenceforth he consulted only economic interests and thought only of economic motives.

Instructive, too, is the story of Leopold of Belgium, his "International Association of the Congo" and the Berlin Conference of 1884. The Conference, after giving promise of a new era of colonial administration, actually resulted in the complete division of Africa among the Powers of Europe, who fell upon it "like a pack of snarling, tearing, quarrelling jackals." The formation by Leopold of the so-called "International" Congo Association marked the commencement of the new epoch which was to set in motion the terrific forces of national policies and the bitter rivalries of economic imperialism, and the Congress of Berlin—like another Conference which we in our later generation have but too much reason to know—realised none of the hopes which it had inspired, but inaugurated a new era whose "main impulse was the determination to use the power and the machinery of the European State for economic ends in Africa and Asia."

But Mr. Woolf is by no means content to give a general diagnosis of the situation. His task is an inquiry into the details of results, and, following out his own view of history, he has to "follow the trail of beliefs as the springs of action, and track desires to their ends in failure or success." The main body of the book consists, therefore, of his detailed examination of the results and the lessons of the application of the power and machinery of the European State in Africa, where we have, perhaps, the finest field for this particular study, since there the policy was at once more conscious, more naked and unashamed, than elsewhere. Never, surely, has Imperialism been subjected to such a shattering assault as is here made upon it. The case, with an overwhelming weight of facts, is presented with tremendous power: one is made to feel the strength and subtlety, the seeming fatality, of this mighty force which man has conjured up, but which now uses man for its own purposes and which, like some Frankenstein monster, defies his power to dispel. The restraint with which Mr. Woolf writes—his avoidance of sensationalism in language or in detailing either the horrors of the treatment of the natives or the dangers to Europe itself occasioned by the Imperialistic rivalries in Africa, his deliberate choice of examples which are relatively favourable to the Imperialists' case—all add to an impression which, if less immediately vivid, is the more deep and lasting.

What then are the final results and conclusions? These affect Europe and Africa in different ways, though both disastrously.

We express the matter perfectly naturally when we talk of "Europe" and how it is affected by economic Imperialism. But what is "Europe"?—we rarely stop to consider that question. Mr. Woolf reminds us that "Europe" is a mere abstraction, the actual content of which is the masses of Europeans. And the same applies to Africa. Both in its causes and in its effects, the problem is a human problem. It is living Europeans, men and women, who are the responsible agents in the relations of the two continents; it is living Africans, men, women, and little children, who are affected by the results of that policy. We all recognise the anthropomorphic fallacy in religion by which man creates God in his own image, but we rarely make allowance for a perfectly analogous fallacy in history by which we make personalities of States.

This personification of the State has undergone an important modification with the coming of an Imperialism definitely economic in its nature. The necessity of *actual control* by the representatives of iron and steel capitalism over those parts of Africa in which they are particularly interested has led to the partition of Africa among European States, and consequently to the glorification of conquest—the building up of the Empire—while on the other hand any loss of territory is regarded as a serious blow at the pride and power of the losing State.

Cutting down, however, through this broad but tenuous covering of sentiment to the real foundation of the relationship, what, *in fact*, has this policy added to the European States?

Has it added power? Mr. Woolf considers this extremely doubtful. In every case, with the possible exception of France, the European States have had to expend or "tie up" in their African possessions more military power than they have got out of those territories. Has it added wealth? It is certain that in no case has it added to their wealth, and here Mr. Woolf marshals much evidence to show the ridiculously small value of the exports of European countries to their African possessions and the consequent absurdity of the Imperialists' demand for the acquisition of these territories in order to reserve them as a market for their country's exports, and so "to keep the wolf of unemployment from the door of the working man." As for prestige and glory, Mr. Woolf dismisses them with curt and cutting sarcasm.

Men have always worshipped images, sometimes of cats, of gods and now of States, and they have made strange sacrifices to their gods.

In fact, so far as any power, wealth or glory has been realised, it has been that only of individuals or small groups of individuals within each country. The politicians and officials who have been instrumental in actually setting into operation the power of the State have themselves been put in motion by another small group of persons, the financiers, capitalists and traders who are seeking particular economic ends in Africa. In this matter, the politicians and officials doubtless regard themselves as acting in the interests of "Empire," but none the less they accept the doctrines of Economic Imperialism and become active agents in translating doctrines into policy. So much for the officials in the colony or protectorate itself.

T. ASHCROFT

(To be continued)

ECONOMICS

(1) Q.—*Is not the worker's energy and trained skill his capital?*

A.—Only to the person who has never really understood what capital is. Sometimes the same superficial view also calls the few tools still left in the worker's possession his capital, or makes the word identical with "savings." Such woolly ideas often conceal a desire to befog the issue. The power and skill of the worker to labour only becomes the variable part of capital after it has been sold to the capitalist. In the case of the slave no sale was necessary to make him a part of the means of production. He was not the seller of a commodity, labour power, but himself was bought and sold. Capital always implies a relation between employer and wage-worker in which the surplus labour of the latter is appropriated.

If the worker's labour-power is capital, why has he to labour? If his wages are merely interest, how comes it that he is totally unable to transfer his principal? The idea will not hold water.

(2) Q.—*Could you supply information, or details of its whereabouts, which would most effectively meet the argument that capital is the result of "abstinence"?*

A.—The first point to emphasise is that capital is not savings and that history gives the direct lie to "abstinence" as the cause of capital. It was not without point that the Lord Chancellor referred to "shoddy economics" when, with an amazing combination of impudence and ignorance (*Weekly Dispatch*, March 21, 1920), he explained that capital, "the worker's ally," is the result of saving. However, this Daniel come to judgment had perhaps been copying from Lord Leverhulme, who was reported (*Daily Sketch*, March 8, 1920) as having traced capital back to Adam in Eden; for he, when he had made his first spade, started out as a capitalist! The fallacy of making capital the result of savings is closely akin to that which makes capital identical with the means of production. Sir Geo. Paish is one of the last to give this idea public utterance. He says (*Daily Herald*, March 25, 1920), "Capital is the machinery of production," and he made it include houses, railways, ships and everything needed for the production and distribution of wealth.

Such dangerous nonsense can always be met by pointing out that Adam, if he had lived for 6,000 years and saved £3 a week, would not have been a millionaire yet. The true account of the way in which primitive accumulation did originate can be seen in any historical work dealing with the 16th century (*cf.* the incomparable Part 8 of Vol. I, *Capital*). At the risk of wearisome iteration, it must be said that capital is neither savings in a stocking nor in a bank, nor is it the means of production; it is wealth used to appropriate the unpaid labour of a wage-working class. This social relation can be destroyed without affecting in any way the usefulness of the

means of production, in just the same way as the relation between monarchy and subject can be removed without hurting the hair of a Windsor or a Hohenzollern.

There is a very effective piece of satire on the "abstinence" of the modern capitalist in the closing paragraphs of Lassalle's *What is Capital?* And it is noticeable that our modern captains of industry thrive not by thrift, but rather by ostentation in the way of palatial offices and well-advertised gifts to public institutions. Only in this way do they get the prestige necessary to attract and control social capital.

INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

(1) Q.—*Is it true that Francis Place, who did so much to make Trade Unions legal organisations, believed that they had no future?*

A.—Yes, a letter written by him to Sir Francis Burdett in 1825 (p. 217, last edition of *Life of Francis Place*, by Graham Wallas) shows this very clearly: "Combinations will soon cease to exist. Men have been kept together for long periods only by the oppression of the laws; these being repealed, combinations will lose the matter which cements them into masses and they will fall to pieces. All will be as orderly as even a Quaker could desire. He knows nothing of the working people who can suppose that, when left at liberty to act for themselves, without being driven into permanent associations by the oppression of the laws, they will continue to contribute money for distant and doubtful experiments, for uncertain and precarious benefits. . . . If let alone, combinations, excepting now and then, and for particular purposes, under peculiar circumstances, will cease to exist." By the aid of hindsight, it will be seen that although a prince of wire-pullers and agitators, Place was far from being a successful prophet. Like many other men he found that the consequences of the part he played were the opposite of those expected. His opposition to the later Ten Hours Bill for factories, as well as to the Combination Acts, is to be explained by the personal influence of Bentham and James Mill in forming his ideas about capital and wages and his belief in the Fixed Wage Fund and the Malthusian Theory.

(2) Q.—*Can you briefly indicate the reasons for the long-continued pause in the industrial development of China?*

A.—China for forty centuries has largely remained under a patriarchal despotism, based upon the agricultural small-holdings of peasant cultivators. There was movement, it is true, but, compared to the great changes passed through by Western nations, China was static. The main factors behind this well illustrate the early influence of "geographic control"; these factors are now being overcome by the results of the economic development of the more progressive nations. Buckle's factors by no means complete the modern picture.

(1) *Isolating Barriers.*—China was isolated on the west and north-west by mountains and desert—the Tibetan “roof-of-the-world” mountain plateau and the Gobi desert.

(2) *Fertility of Soil.*—The fertile river valleys in the extensive rice-growing plains were the basis of the spade culture of the Chinese. The high productivity of the “loess” (a light friable soil brought by the winds from the desert) made unnecessary any initiative in the introduction of new tools and methods of agriculture and industry.

(3) *Size and Absorption Powers.*—The invaders who overcame the natural protections of (1) were absorbed in the solid land mass of 1½ million square miles which forms China. Pressure coming from the north—it could only come from south and west when the technique of navigation had developed—was dissipated among the millions of inhabitants, who could always find room in the alluvial land farther south without being driven against the seaboard.

(4) *Comparatively Short and Unindented Coast-line.*—Compare with Norway and the history of the Norsemen for contrasts. China was self-sufficient, and its inhabitants were not forced by overcrowding or lured by tales of fabulous riches into schemes of conquest in other lands; they felt no spur to make them dare the perils of the ocean. A Mediterranean with its many leaping-off points and gulfs forming a nursery for seamen was absent in the case of China. It was only in the 15th century that the

trader, and later the invader, appeared upon the south. Opium wars and the economic needs of modern capitalism have removed for ever the quiescence of the East.

For an elaboration of these reasons, Chap. xiii of Fairgrieve's *Geography and World Power* is helpful. This with a good atlas should enable the student to see beyond the usual superficial reasons put forward, such as ancestor worship and the admiration of the past, the bound feet impeding travel on the part of the women-folk, or the domination of a literary caste resulting from the conservative hide-bound and extremely difficult nature of Chinese reading and writing. H. G. Wells, who upholds “the free intelligence of mankind” as the dynamic of history, favours the view that the imprisonment of the Chinese mind by the complexity of speech and writing was the chief cause (p. 132, Part 5, *Outline of History*). However, by the help of his commentators (pp. 400–3, Part 13, *ibid.*) he furnishes details which support the less idealistic factors indicated above.

M. S.

A Correction:—

A very obvious error crept into No. 1 reply in the last issue. Instead of £1000 and £100, £1000 and £100 should have been used. It was not £10 or £1 that had been gained, but £100 and £100 out of the use of £1000 and £100 respectively.

NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT

WE are making a special effort to clear up our accounts to the end of September, in order to start the new 6d. Magazine with a clean slate. Let us have your cash, if possible, pre-paid up to September. Accounts are being sent out as rapidly as possible, but if you're a good friend of ours, you won't wait for this. You know whether you owe us anything, so make a guess at the precise figure if you're not sure of it, and send something over if possible. We need cash badly. Printing costs have just gone up again, and our bills are big ones. Nobody subsidises us. Nobody's left us any money. We just rely on our friends everywhere.

Also, let us know in good time exactly how many of the 6d. Magazine you'll take. Don't leave us guessing. It's a risky undertaking, and we shan't be able to send out a single copy “on spec.” Now's the time to let us know whether your heart's in our work, or whether you're only a fair-weather friend.

* * *

For purposes of filing and for the “Branch Directory,” will secretaries of Birmingham, Halifax, Chesterfield, Warrington, Wigan, Bury, Wolverhampton, Doncaster, Dowlais, Barry, Colne and Tredegar branches of the League please write Gen. Sec. at once.

* * *

“SCOTLAND,” writes Comrade W. Leonard, “has been well attended to in the matter of Con-

ferences. The Scottish Labour College held eight Conferences in different parts of the country, bringing the propaganda efforts to a close in a National Conference in Glasgow, presided over by Mr. John McLure. The St. Andrews Hall, provided with tables for 535 Delegates, representing 335 Organisations, was, indeed, an inspiring sight. W. W. Craik gave an interesting and telling 20-minute address, and was followed by Neil Maclean, M.P.

“The report of the year's work was then submitted, and many points of value were raised in the general discussion which followed. The report stated that 51 District Classes had been held in various parts of Scotland, not including 30 Classes in Glasgow, the total number on Students' Roll being 2,854. The balance-sheet showed an income of nearly £1,800 with a credit balance of £669. This is a pretty definite indication that the Labour Movement has at last realised that Education pays, and that in directing such support to the S. L. C., it is desirous of maintaining the same independence in the field of Education that it does in Politics and Industry.

“We are much hampered by the lack of suitable premises, and the new committee will require to give serious consideration to this aspect of our work. But we face next session with high hopes, and will endeavour to deserve and secure even greater support.”

The Labour College—NORTH-EASTERN Area—held a most successful Summer School, Whit Week-end, at South Shields. Over 200 delegates attended, and Comrades Jackson and Ebby Edwards put the aims and objects of the College. Sunday and Monday, the organiser, T. A. Jackson, gave two lectures on the Working-Class Movement. The conference was, indeed, inspiring and augurs well for the work in this area.

* * *

The LIVERPOOL District Council for Independent Working-Class Education sends a splendid report, which shows 43 affiliated societies, and many classes catering for 350 students. A huge programme is outlined for the next session, and, not content with plans for winter work, the Council are holding Week-end Schools. The first was held Saturday and Sunday, June 12 and 13; lecturer, John Hamilton (the indefatigable secretary); subjects—"Medieval Guilds," "Struggles of Capitalist Class for Power," and "The State, its origin and function." The second is to be held July 10 and 11 at Beechcroft Settlement, 15 Hollybank Road, Birkenhead; Lecturer, Chas. C. Stevenson; subject, "The History of Germany." All particulars of accommodation, etc., from Secretary, 99 Botanic Road, Liverpool.

London has now a new council organised on much the same lines as that at Liverpool, and if it can show as fine a record as the above at the end of the first year's work it will have reason to be proud. Branches of Trade Unions, Socialist parties and Plebs League branches are urged to affiliate with all possible speed, so as to co-ordinate effort for the plans for next winter session. The Secretary [*pro tem.*] is J. H. Burns, and the office address is 11A Penywern Road, S.W.5.

* * *

We are glad to announce that a conference will be held, under the auspices of the Plebs League and Labour College Classes, at the Cory Hall, Cardiff, on Saturday, September 4, at 2.30 p.m. Chairman—Noah Ablett. *Business*—To consider the following matters:—

- I. To invite co-operation and receive suggestions as to the production of textbooks on Social Science Subjects for the use of Plebs League and Labour College Classes.
- II. To consider and decide upon means for providing a Fund for the publication of the above-mentioned textbooks.
- III. To formulate a Scheme for the systematic organisation and co-ordination of the Classes in South Wales during the coming winter session.

All bodies or individuals interested in Independent Working-Class Education are cordially invited to be represented. A delegate fee of 1s. will be charged to help defray expenses.

Should your Organisation be desirous of being represented at this Conference, kindly send particulars, with delegate's fee, to D. Davies, Cemetery Road, Perth, Rhondda.

* * *

Meetings of the LEIGH Plebs branch are held every Thursday, 7.30 p.m., at the Labour Exchange. Will local comrades rally? Further particulars from T. McWalter, 86 Firs Lane, Leigh.

* * *

T. Sladdin, Secretary of the HALIFAX Labour College Class, writes reporting a very successful year. Lecture programme included—Philosophic Logic, Theory of Historical Development (M. Collins); Economics, Elementary (H. Highley); Economics, Advanced (A. Waight); Ethics (G. H. Potterton); Esperanto (W. Greenwood). Com. Collins also conducted classes at Elland.

* * *

BURY ran a successful class last session, conducted by J. T. Walton Newbold. Eighty-two students were enrolled and the attendance well maintained. It is proposed to run classes next winter, and F. Casey is at present training teachers for this purpose. All in the district should get into touch with J. Ainsworth (Plebs Branch Secretary), 24 Openshaw Street, off Wilson Street, Bury.

W. H.

REVIEWS

FOOTNOTES ON WELLS

The Outline of History. By H. G. WELLS.
(Newnes. Parts 10 to 14 inclusive, 1s. 2d. each.)

PARTS 10 and 11 are occupied with the history of Rome, the downfall of which marks the end of ancient civilisation. What will probably strike the Plebs student most is that Mr. Wells is not inclined to linger long over the economic basis of Roman civilisation and, despite the fact that he gives Julius Cæsar, for example, a much more modest place in the gallery of history than historians usually do, one cannot help wishing that he had devoted more space to the fate of the peasant proprietors, the effect of production for exchange, and the growth of slavery.

The most interesting and obvious question

that the period raises is: What caused the break-up of the Empire? How was it that a great civilisation should go down so easily before the invading barbarians? Here Mr. Wells is inclined to flit from reason to reason. In one place he mentions the destructive influence that war and usury had on the backbone of the Roman State—the peasants. Later he informs us that money was the canker which ate out the heart of Rome; and later still he lays down a series of causes which may be tabulated as (1) Absence of any free mental activity; (2) strategic failure in not including Germany in the Empire; (3) neglect of sea-ways; (4) failure to continue to improve military technique; (5) failure to develop industrial power as a counterpoise to barbarian bravery; and (6) neglect to create in the masses a united Roman outlook.

Surely the fact is that Rome did not fall because of the rise to power of money (which, though it did play some part, was rather an effect than a cause), nor through the lack of "free mental activity"† Her downfall can be explained briefly in two words—war and slavery. The swords which built up the power of Rome in her early days were the swords of peasant farmers, men who had much to lose by defeat. The further, however, the frontiers of Rome extended the further away were the battlefields. The peasants' lands became uncultivated; resort was had to borrowing; and soon the lands of the peasants were in the hands of the lenders, and the peasants, now beggared freemen, congregated in the towns to form a rabble. Thus did the source of military power depreciate.

War had another effect: it brought slaves. It was slave labour, not free labour, that cultivated the great estates. But slave labour cannot be compared with peasant labour. The slave does as little as he can, and does it as badly as he can—he even destroyed his master's property and tortured his animals—and, therefore, though the territories of Rome grew, productivity sank lower and lower. Industry is the life-blood of all societies, and as Rome's industrial pulse beat slower and slower, so did the Empire near its end. This aspect is treated much more fully in Paul's book on *The State*, and his section on Rome should certainly be read along with Mr. Wells' *Outline*.

In Part 12 Mr. Wells turns to consider the rise and development of Christianity. He writes obviously with an eye on the religious susceptibilities of his readers, and walks warily in order to "do things" as quietly as possible.

It is difficult to criticise this section. Sometimes Mr. Wells writes like a historian—e.g., when he points out that Christianity advocated common property, and was bitterly anti-rich and revolutionary in tone. At other times he writes like a curate—take this as a definition of early Christianity: "Jesus had called men to a giant undertaking, to the renunciation of self, to the new birth into the Kingdom of Love." In fact in more than one place, Wells reduces Christianity to the one word "Love," so presumably the man who loves his fellow-man but totally disbelieves every Christian article and even doubts whether Jesus ever existed is a Christian. That is abstraction with a vengeance.

Early Christianity had two sets of characteristics: the one nationalist, the other non-nationalist. In the former were its monotheism, its belief in the Messiah or the coming victorious Jewish leader and its revolutionary, anti-Roman note. In the latter were its proletarian attitude, its hatred of the rich, its communism and its contempt for work. If an author likes to call this "Love," no one can prevent him, but in the interest of understanding one would prefer plainer terms.

Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about Mr. Wells' outline of Christianity, is that, for

all practical purposes, he omits to give his readers any clear indication of how it was that Christianity became so widely and rapidly accepted, not merely by Jews, but by Gentiles. One would have thought that, in the study of a new religion, which made most remarkable progress in a very short time, the historian would be at pains to show the connection between the conditions of the period and the growth of the new religion. Mr. Wells is not much troubled with that aspect of the matter. Surely it deserves more attention.

In course of time Christianity, once the religion of beggars, outcasts and poor handicraftsmen, became increasingly corrupted in the interests of the rich, and words began to pass muster for deeds. Mr. Wells endeavours to explain this from the contents of the human mind and puts the change from practical communism to religious bureaucracy down to the weakness of the flesh. It is all very well for him to say that "the line of least resistance for the flagging convert was to intellectualise himself away from the plain doctrine." It's a pretty sentence, and ought to be presented to those Socialists who, the nearer Socialism approaches, fear it the more; but it doesn't explain how a religion that was once of the poor and for the poor, that fed the hungry and held out hopes of a heaven not behind the clouds, but on the brown earth, that was a shield and buckler for the masses and a two-edged sword against the rich, became a means of controlling the masses, of protecting the Roman State and of exploiting the believers.

The great propagandists of Christianity were Dissatisfaction, Hunger and Misery, and these went arm in arm with the dissolution of Roman Civilisation. It was its proletarian characteristics that appealed to the masses, and, although it may be unspiritual, it is certainly more likely to be true that the early Christian Communities had a much higher regard for bread than for "Love." As mass poverty grew, so did the communities, but, just to the extent that they did grow, so did it become steadily more difficult to provide the common meals, and so, too, therefore, did the need to convert the rich arise. Here is the turning point. Here Christianity begins to lose its early characteristics and, discarding the rags of poverty, dons the vestments of a religion of the ruling class.

The whole question is an exceedingly difficult one, and, pending the translation of Kautsky's *Origin of Christianity*, the student could hardly do better than read G. Bang's chapter on "The Rise of Christianity" in *Crises in European History*, along with Mr. Wells' very suggestive chapter.

Parts 13 and 14 are mainly concerned with Muhammad and Islam, but they also contain a very interesting section on China and the cause of its stagnation. These parts serve to remind us that we are not just indebted to the Arabs for a breed of horses, but that from them came also much of Europe's science.

J. P. M. M.

A FARTHING DIP

The Light of History. By K. W. SPIKES. (Hodder and Stoughton. New Teaching Series. 4s. 6d.)

In the advertisement of this book the publishers claim for it that it is part of a new educational series peculiarly adapted to present circumstances. They even suggest that the whole series, and particularly this book, would be of use to the workers. It might fill our bill, perhaps. And it is certainly true that there is plenty of room for a short general European history, such as this is, which would give a brief account of facts and pay proper attention to the economic foundations. Nor need it be written by a Socialist: Maitland and Gibbon are of the greatest value to us and all good history is grist to our mill.

But this book is not good, and will not fill our bill. Had it been an unpretentious account, consisting of facts, dates and figures, it would have been useful for reference. But it is a pretentious history of Europe, in which the facts are squeezed in where they can get, in order to make room for the authoress' reflexions and explanations. These "explanations" are uniformly of this kind (p. 183)—"The Holy Alliance failed because it was in opposition to the forces that were to be the dominating motives of the age—an overwhelming desire for the fulfilment of nationality and democracy." It is doubtful whether this remark should be characterised as a lie, because the reasons for the fall of the Holy Alliance were economic in the ultimate analysis, or as an imbecility, since it does not explain anything, there being no suggestion that Miss Spikes feels any need to explain the "desire for the fulfilment of nationality." And the whole book is chock-full of such trite and meaningless statements.

In addition the writer has made a number of fairly serious mistakes on points of fact, which, in some cases, show really startling ignorance. On page 227 are concentrated more elementary mistakes than one would have thought possible. We are informed, in effect, that when "unions were made legal," in the eighteen-twenties, that is, there "was a movement from below in the earliest trade unions and socialist societies"! (The very word socialist did not exist then.) "These early trade unions were generally exclusive, being actually hostile to unskilled labour"—which is not true, nor does it become true for thirty years. This age, moreover, *before* the Chartists, as she carefully explains, was the age of William Morris. Which will be news to most of us!

Later, "the great influence was the German Jew, Karl Marx," who said that "salvation for mankind" (you recognise Marx' style, don't you?) "could not be obtained by parliamentary action," but by a struggle of the working class "to better its own condition and gain control of industry." Then she says, gently but firmly: "His interpretation of history was false." And that is all. There is no argument about it. *Ipsa dixit.* Teacher says so.

On page 224, among the list of questions

which the miserable pupil must answer, is one which reads: "Explain how the Liberal movement in Russia has become revolutionary." Oh, God! Oh, Miliukoff! Could a woman make a more elaborate show of ignorance in one sentence? Plums like this abound. I think I like best the description of the French constitution in one sentence (p. 220). "The future of the country is in the hands of its people." How true.

I suppose the reason for the issue of books like this is to give the worker who has any desire for knowledge a thorough sickener of education. Clio is a Muse, as a reviewer in the *Daily Herald* remarked recently, but she need not be a harlot. This *Light of History* is a red light, but not of revolution; it is rather the modest lamp outside a Continental brothel.

R. W. P.

A "FREE PRESS"

The Brass Check: A Study in American Journalism. By UPTON SINCLAIR. (From the author, Pasadena, California, price 1 dollar post free; or from Reformers' Bookshop, Bradford.)

Upton Sinclair would be placed, I imagine, by "scientific Socialists" among the "sentimentalists." But unlike many of the "sentimentalists," Sinclair does know something about Labour and the Labour movement, at least in America, and has directly assisted in many of its fights, e.g., in the exposure of the brutal methods used to break the Colorado coal-strike. A number of American Socialists were sent to Europe by President Wilson on a propaganda mission after the entry of U.S.A. into the war—I think Charles Edward Russell was the leader of the little band. This group got busy "propaganding" as to America's vast preparations to "make the world safe for democracy" and worked in France, Italy and Britain right up to the Armistice.

Most of these "sentimental" pro-war Socialists and propagandists of Wilsonism are now largely discredited in America, but not so Upton Sinclair. Sinclair's viewpoint is well expressed in his chapter in this book on "The Press and the War." He says: "The writer of this book supported the war against Germany and has no apology to make. He believed that the world would be a safer place for radicals to work in when the Kaiser had been overthrown; he still believes this—even though at the moment it seems that the result of our fighting has been to set up new imperialisms in Italy, France, England and America." This extract contains, I'm afraid, a little bad history about imperialisms, but it is a frank, honest statement; the last portion I earnestly commend to the notice of our advocates of a capital levy, for all of them seem to have entirely overlooked the fact that Soviet Russia has been waging war for two years *without the issue of any interest-bearing bonds or loans.*

In the same chapter our author refers to the case of Henry Ford, who brought a libel suit against the *Chicago Tribune* for stating that Ford workers drafted into the army would lose their jobs, and that no provision would be made for

their dependants. The *Tribune* had to recant, but it came out in Court that Medill Patterson, the editor (a renegade Socialist), had stopped the pay of all his employees who went to the great war. One wonders how many "patriots" of his kind there were elsewhere than in America!

In every chapter—and there are three score—our author deals with some actual case *within his own personal knowledge* in which the vileness, mendacity and corruption of American journalism are made manifest, and every case is documented and substantiated—frequently by evidence from the Courts. He shows how the Press ignored or misrepresented his own show-up of the American meat-packing industry; how it lied about his "Venture in Co-operation"—a trial of co-operative housekeeping in which he and some of his friends joined; how it lied about "Shredded Wheat biscuit" (one of the funniest episodes in the book); and many others. Here in this country we know that the Press frequently suppresses letters of refutation or of criticism, but even the London *Times* on occasion can be frank, as for instance when it published recently a denial by Prof. Goode of some of the statements concerning him made by the Rev. Mr. North (late British Chaplain at Moscow). But in America seemingly it is a general rule that any journal making an untrue statement about you will subsequently ignore your letter of refutation. The severest strictures—and rightly so—are perhaps reserved for the "Associated Press News Service," which is to the U.S.A. even more than Reuter is to us, and whose potentiality for evil is therefore immense. Sinclair gives many instances of its methods of operation.

Our author of course makes full use of Russia as "the perfect case of journalistic knavery, the case which, in the annals of history, will take precedence over all others." He proceeds to enlarge, somewhat muddle-headedly, upon his own views of Bolshevism and Bolshevik theory. But his criticisms have little bearing on the Russian situation as it actually was and is, and in any case they neither add to nor detract from the value of his book as regards its main subject. He ends with a proposal for the founding of a journal which will tell the truth, and on which Socialists and Liberals and the A.F. of L. and the Federation of Protestant Churches and decent capitalists like Vanderlip would collaborate. One would have thought the need was met in America by such relatively "straight" journals as the *New Republic*, the *Nation*, and *Pearson's* (under Frank Harris' control).* But the obvious moral of his book, and it is abundantly rubbed in, is, of course, that Capitalism means a corrupt Press, and that you can only abolish one when you abolish the other.

A. P. L.

* Cf. Harris' courageous and vigorous protest against the trial and sentence on Jim Larkin in the June number of his magazine.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

The Coming of Socialism. By L. DESLINIÈRES. (9d.) *Revolutionary Essays.* By BELA KUN. (7d.) (B.S.P., 21A Maiden Lane, W.C.2.)

The further capitalism develops, the more its

opponents' fighting tactics are bound to vary. This, though inevitable, unfortunately provides many opportunities for the literary parasite, as is only too apparent from a good deal of socialist literature, of which plagiarism is the most notable characteristic. It is with real satisfaction, therefore, that one comes across booklets such as these, marked by a real attempt at original thinking.

The courageous author of *Revolutionary Essays* gives us a masterly analysis of events in Hungary prior to the Revolution. While we have a detailed account of the labyrinth of cross-currents and tendencies which ultimately resulted in the crisis, the writer does not sacrifice the wood for the trees, but, like a true scientist, not only describes but interprets events.

The Coming of Socialism might well be a sermon on Lenin's text—"Socialism is not a glorious debating society." Deslinières discusses practical problems and tries to find practical solutions. He wants us to be ready for the time that will "try men's souls," and he puts forward many carefully thought-out suggestions for the period of transition which must precede a new social order. Both these publications deserve to be described as Ammunition for Socialists.

T. McK.

What's Wrong with the Middle Classes? By R. DIMSDALE STOCKER. (Cecil Palmer and Hayward. 6d.)

This little booklet will not meet with the approval of the Middle-Class Union. Its description of the moneyed origin of the Middle Class and of its present superfluous character will certainly offend the susceptibilities of its members.

There are some minor points to which Plebeians would take objection, such as the view, for instance, that insurance agents come within the economic boundaries of the Middle Class, and the suggestion that the Guild system will provide the solution to this Middle-Class problem. On the whole, however, the booklet is an admirable short summary of the rise of the Middle Class and the Labour movement, and of the challenging attitude taken up by the latter to the capitalist philosophy of the former. Well worth placing in the hands of Middle-Class acquaintances.

G. P.

What the PLEBS discusses to-day, other journals will be talking about next year! It is amusing to a Plebeian to find the *Times*, the *Observer*, and other high and mighty organs busy just now debating the merits of a new word "ergatocracy," which by this time is quite familiar to ourselves. They are doing it *apropos* of Eden and Cedar Paul's new book, *Creative Revolution* (Allen and Unwin, 8s. 6d.), which we hope to review shortly, along with other volumes which our limited space forbids us dealing with in this issue.

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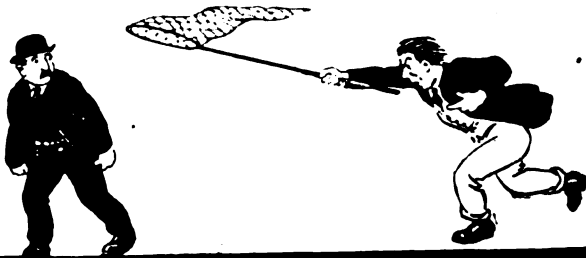
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