

*Vol. XII. No. 12*

*December, 1920*

# THE PLEBS

AGITATE EDUCATE ORGANISE

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When the workers are fully  
conscious of their goal, then  
“the science of social forces will  
itself become a social force.”

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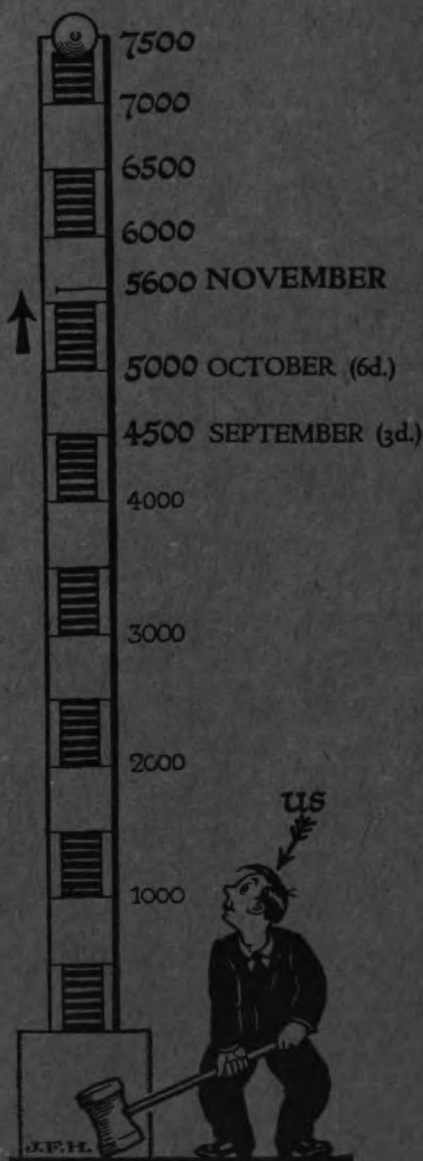
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# THE PLEBS

“I can promise to be candid but not impartial.”

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Vol. XII.

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## OUR POINT OF VIEW

(Which is Prejudiced, Partial and Partisan)

ONE cannot—even if one wished to—get away from Mr. H. G. Wells. Years ago in the PLEBS we illustrated an article on G. B. S. with a portrait of that accomplished tympanist performing (*solus*) on the big drum, outside an exhibition of his wares. Mr. Wells can hardly be said to have taken over Mr. Shaw's mantle; but he appears to have borrowed the drum. Long before the tumult and the shouting over the *Outline of History* has died away, he is once more in everybody's mouths—as the author of the vividest, liveliest and—to our side—most encouraging account of Things as They Are in Russia which has yet appeared. He may qualify his praises of the Soviet Government in all sorts of ways—and the *Sunday Express* may promote his little qualifications into half-page headlines (“Blundering Bolshevism,” “Planless Communism,” and so forth); but the fact remains that, taking his articles as a whole, they constitute as handsome a compliment to the present rulers of Russia, and as hard a blow at the Churchill gang, as either has yet received.

So much for the general. Let us now turn to the particular. In the first place we have to thank Mr. Wells for his reference, in Article 3, *Mr. Wells on* to the PLEBS. To be bracketed with *Pravda* and the New *The PLEBS* *York Liberator* is an unsolicited testimonial which we appreciate, and which more than consoles us for the *Times'* merciless description of us (October 28) as "distinctly high-brow." True, we should have appreciated it still more if the rest of Mr. Wells' article had afforded any evidence of first-hand knowledge of the Marxist movement in this country, its press or its personnel. But one can scarcely expect a single writer to have time to be an authority on everything. And we should be delighted, if Mr. Wells would let us, to take him on a conducted tour through Great Britain which would set him right in this respect, help him to see his native land as he has seen Russia, and destroy a few of his illusions.

\* \* \*

His illusions about Marx and Marxism are many and wonderful. He will, perhaps, be able to understand our feelings of bewilderment *The Beard* as we read his "undefereential" comments on the author of *of the Prophet* *Capital*, if we say that they remind us of nothing so much as G. K. Chesterton writing on physical science. Only up to a point, however; for whereas a sort of a point of view does emerge from Mr. Chesterton's gambollings, Mr. Wells, so far as Marx is concerned, has not so much a point of view as a kind of mischievous itch to be perverse. Apparently, the edition of *Capital* he once got hold of had a frontispiece portrait of the author; and Mr. Wells got no further than the frontispiece. Marx's "vast, solemn, woolly, uneventful beard" annoyed him. (And he seems to think that disrespectful references to that beard will annoy Marxists!) Now one can imagine Mr. Chesterton, "criticising" the Theory of Evolution, making great play with Darwin's beard; but Mr. Wells would be among the first to point out that such criticism was not really helpful. . . . Has Mr. Wells, by the way, ever seriously considered Thomas Henry Huxley's side-whiskers? . . . And quite probably Mr. Chesterton regards Darwin as "a bore of the extremest sort." But that is hardly an argument against the Theory of Natural Selection.

\* \* \*

It is difficult to deal with Mr. Wells' comments on Marx just because he never got beyond the frontispiece. Half the time he is criticising *Wells* Marx he is talking Marxism himself—and doesn't know it! *the Marxist* It is the existing system, and not propaganda, he declares, which makes Marxists, "wherever industrialism has developed." "There would have been Marxists if Marx had never lived." Could anything be more Marxian than that? *The economic structure of society . . . to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.* But, of course, Mr. Wells hasn't read the *Critique*. His Socialist education he received from the fount of Fabianism—one of "the peculiar styles of thinking," which, as he mentions, "we cultivate in England"; and Fabianism regarded Marx as obsolete. . . . Or, again, when he talks about the "proletariat" and the impossibility of defining it; and, a few paragraphs later, is pointing out the special nature of the problem in Russia, "which worked its factories with *peasant* labourers . . . and so had scarcely any *proletariat* at all." What does Mr. Wells mean there by "prole-

tarian" as distinct from "peasant"? If he answers that question he will, we fancy, have supplied a definition of "proletariat"; and it will be the Marxian definition.

\* \* \*

But, indeed, one regrets his small acquaintance with the literature of Marxism and of anti-Marxism for his own sake. For had he been more familiar with the latter, he would not all unknowingly have given us such a terrible string of *clichés* as he now does regarding this matter of defining the "proletariat." One pictures him, glancing through an anthology of anti-Marxian criticism, and exclaiming "Good Lord! have I numbered myself with these?" . . . Or one pictures Mr. Chesterton (again), radiantly discovering the undeniable differences between a whale and a squirrel, and triumphantly defying the scientists to "define" such an obviously "phantom unreality" as the class, *Mammalia*. . . Postgate's answer to Kautsky (*The Bolshevik Theory*, p. 115) is enough for Mr. Wells also, on this head:—

The fact that a class cannot be closely defined . . . does not mean that a class is . . . non-existent. On Kautsky's lines it can also be argued that there is no colour red because it shades imperceptibly into orange, also that a swift runner can never overtake a tortoise, and many other pleasant conceits, in which the Greeks excelled.

Again, if Mr. Wells had ever got past the frontispiece to Marx's works—if, even, he had read his *PLEBS* recently—he would never have so completely delivered himself into our hands as to say that "it is by the Marxist theory all wrong that the social revolution should happen first in Russia." He would have been aware of the fact that Marx himself expressly declared that it was not merely possible, but extremely probable, that Russia might leap the intervening stages and pass almost at once from Tsarism to Socialism. But naturally, a critic who sets out by admitting that he has "avoided Marx's works" is hardly likely to avoid sundry little mistakes when he proceeds to describe their contents.

\* \* \*

What, of course, has really irritated Mr. Wells is not so much the prophet's beard, as the fact that the disciples have called Mr. Wells a "Planless Utopian. So, to get even, he says a lot about "Planless Communism." "Marxist Communism is without plans and without ideas . . . a theory of revolution" merely. And so on. All of which means only that Marxism, being a *realistic* policy, puts first things first; and therefore concentrates on the job immediately ahead—the job of clearing away the jerry-built social edifice which at present cumbers the ground. But every single line of his whole series of articles contradicts Mr. Wells when he says that "Marxism is not merely lacking in creative and constructive ideas, but hostile to creative and constructive ideas." If he means that he found among the Marxists—as is very likely—many stupid and unimaginative people who were hostile to constructive ideas, he should say so—he is keen on accurate phrasing. But to say that *Marxism* is hostile to creative and constructive ideas—Marxism, which in the "Soviet" system has made the most notable contribution to a new machinery of government; which in Industrial Unionism, too, worked out a scheme of workers' organisations that were at once fighting forces for the revolution—the destructive part of the job—and the skeleton of a new social order afterwards. Mr. Wells has probably never heard of Industrial Unionism, but he has surely kept sufficiently in touch with the modern Labour Move-

ment to have heard of Guild Socialism; and Guild Socialists, anti-Marxian though in certain respects some of them may be, would hardly deny the debt they owe to Marx and to the Marxian Industrial Unionists. . . . Mr. Wells rates the Russian Communists for being without plans on the morrow of the revolution. May we ask him a question? If they had been knee-deep in previously prepared plans for the reconstruction of society, would any of them have been likely to have taken into account, as the foundation on which they would have to build, the almost unparalleled chaos which he himself so vividly describes in his first article as the state of affairs in the Russia of 1916-17? Would they not naturally have taken as the basis of their plans the existence, in more or less working condition, of the normal machinery of a modern State? And what good, then, would all their plans have been? . . . No. Marxists are not "hostile to creative and constructive ideas," nor, necessarily, to Utopias. All they urge upon Utopians is that they should not waste energy in going too far ahead with the plans until they are sure upon what foundation they have to build, and what materials they will have at hand to build with.

But our space has run out. We must content ourselves by remarking that if a critic of Mr. Wells' calibre can make out no better case against Marxism than he has managed to do, then, indeed, we are glad that we are able in the PLEBS—along with *Pravda* and the *Liberator*—to help spread the "limited ideas" of Marxism.

### THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY

*Another plea for the study of Psychology as a valuable part of proletarian education.*

**I**N *Creative Revolution* we attempted to show how the New Physics based upon the thought of Newton, the New Biology which grew up as a sequel to Darwin's *Origin of Species*, the New Economics formulated in Marx's *Capital*, the New Philosophy expounded by Bergson, and the New Psychology now in process of exposition by Freud and his followers were parts of a comprehensive whole; we attempted to show how all these new outlooks must be understood and synthetized by the modern revolutionist, by one who would grasp this sorry scheme of things entire, would first shatter it to bits and then remould it nearer to the heart's desire. "NORDICUS," in the October PLEBS, hangs his forceful exposition of "The Mechanism behind the Mind" upon a review of Goddard's *Psychology of the Normal and Sub-Normal*. This is evidently an admirable work, but it is addressed mainly to specialists, and its price makes it practically inaccessible to proletarians. What students need is a comparatively simple account of the new psychology, in its general setting as part of the new outlook on life, and this A. G. Tansley's book\* goes far to supply at a price, which though high, does not positively threaten bankruptcy. It is not a treatise on "Independent Working-Class Psychology"; it is not written by a Marxist, but its author has a remarkable understanding of the modern working-class movement, and no one can read his book carefully without gaining helpful lights upon the full significance of many Marxist terms, upon the inner meaning of "proletarian ideology" and "bourgeois ideology."

\* *The New Psychology and its Relation to Life*. By A. G. TANSLEY. (George Allen and Unwin, 10s. 6d. net.)

The book is written simply and clearly, with no more than the indispensable minimum of new terminology. That minimum will have to be mastered, just as those had to master a new terminology who, in the seventeenth century, wished to make their own and to use the ideas of Newton, or who, in the nineteenth century, wished to understand and turn to account the evolutionary biology of Darwin and the revolutionary economics of Marx. The demand for simplicity of exposition, for the avoidance of "jargon," is natural and commendable, but new psychological concepts cannot be expounded in "the language of the workshop." Men and women of the workshop will overthrow the old world and rebuild the new—if and when they learn to use new weapons and new tools. One of these novelties has been Marxist economics. Another weapon, another tool, no less essential, is that furnished by the new psychology, whereby fresh light is thrown upon the springs to action among the warring components of the human herd. He who would cast aside the boomerang or the knobstick in order to make use of up-to-date weapons like the magazine pistol or the Lewis gun, must not shrink from the labour involved in learning to use the new arm. Some of the elements of the new knowledge can be gleaned from "NORDICUS's" article and from a review of Trotter's book which (under the title *Socialism and the Herd Instinct*) the present writers contributed to the PLEBS for October, 1917. It is to be hoped that the enlarged magazine will be able to find space for a series of articles by different contributors dealing with various aspects of the new psychology. But the senior student will need also to turn to some such comprehensive treatise as Tansley's.

In this brief review, at any rate, no coherent exposition of the new psychology can be attempted, and we must content ourselves with two illustrations of its bearings upon revolutionary thought. The first of these is taken from another author than Tansley, though it need hardly be said that Tansley's outlook is identical. But the writer from whom we quote happens to make less extensive use of unfamiliar words. Edward Jones (*Psycho-analysis*, p. 93) refers to "the minimum of evidence often necessary to secure the acceptance of an idea that is in harmony with existing mental constellations, or to reject one that is incompatible with these. In both cases it is often affective [emotional] influences rather than intellectual operations that decide the question. The same evidence is construed quite differently when viewed in the light of one affective constellation from the way it is [construed] when viewed in the light of another. Further, when the general attitude towards a question changes in course of time, this is often due at least as much to modification of the prevailing affective influences as to the accumulation of external evidence."

Our comment here is that the "affective" element in belief is strongly exemplified in "tendentious" economics, in proletarian and in bourgeois economics respectively. Marx's "economic basis" for ideology is *affective*. The member of a bourgeois herd "thinks" as he does for emotional reasons; and so, conversely, does the class-conscious proletarian. But the man who is proletarian by status is often mastered by bourgeois ideology. Were it not so, the walls of the capitalist Jericho would fall at the first blast of the assailants' trumpets. The purpose of religious "dope," the aim of such pageants as the public burial of the Unknown Warrior and the mid-November pilgrimage down Whitehall, is to equip the un-class-conscious proletarians with an emotional basis which will make them greedily swallow the "ideology" of the master class. Thus equipped, thus immunized, they angrily resist the attempt to

inoculate them with proletarian ideology.—“*People yourself!*” exclaimed a workman to one of the good folk who were endeavouring to found a People’s Theatre. “I’m just as good a bourgeois as you!” (Romain Rolland, in *Jean Christophe*.)

The second illustration is a quotation from Tansley’s chapter on “Partial Herds and the Universal Herd.” With this quotation, uncriticised, we must close our review. “Finally, we have the great partial herd of the proletariat, whose ‘class consciousness’ has increased so enormously, and is still increasing with every step in the direction of better education, improved means of inter-communication, and more clearly realised demands upon society at large. . . . So powerful had become the class consciousness of the proletariats of the different nations of Western and Central Europe, even before the war, that it threatened, or was thought to threaten, the old primary division of mankind into national herds, by cutting across the boundaries of nations and welding together the proletariats of that part of the world. It used to be said, for instance, that if the Governments of France and Germany declared a state of war between these nations, the proletariats of each would throw down their arms and refuse to fight against their brothers. This, as we know, did not in fact happen. The national herd proved stronger than the international proletariat. The ties of common race, common language, and common tradition, the love of fatherland—in a word, all the bonds of the national herd—prevailed against the newer and as yet, at any rate, weaker ties of economic interests. But the circumstances of the test were all in favour of the national herd. . . . Whether this intense heightening of national feeling will last, or whether the ‘Internationale’ will arise rejuvenated and stronger than ever, we cannot yet tell. The issue will largely depend, no doubt, upon economic factors, on the rate of the economic recovery of Western and Central Europe.” The Marxist student should not fail to note that, in the light of the new psychology, class consciousness must be regarded as an affective or emotional state quite as much as or even more than it should be regarded as a cognitive or intellectual state. It embodies a subconscious urge no less than a rationalised understanding.

In conclusion, we reiterate our recommendation of this brilliant volume. Every class-centre should add the book to its library. All Plebeians who can beg, borrow, or steal a copy should hasten to study *The New Psychology*.

EDEN and CEDAR PAUL

## FRIEDRICH ENGELS

BORN *a hundred years ago*, on NOVEMBER 28, 1820

**E**NGELS’ life, compared with Marx’s, was uneventful. He had never to bear the terrible grinding poverty which his friend suffered. His father did fairly well in Manchester, in the cotton trade, and when Engels was ordered up there to join him, and abandon his revolutionary work, he “sighed as a Socialist, but obeyed as a son.” When his father’s hand was removed, he returned to London, almost a wealthy man, and remained to the end Marx’s confidant and support.

“Who were these Marx and Engels?” I heard a questioner ask recently at a lecture. “Marx taught, etc., etc.,” said the lecturer, and never in his answer referred to Engels at all. Ultimately, he was right. For Engels really had no



separate existence. He finished off neatly and expounded in simple language the discoveries and theories of his friend. He dustied and tidied, as it were, Marx's mind—which needed it! And, of course, there were few or none who could have performed this dusting without breaking valuable things. He alone could have edited and produced the last two volumes of *Capital*. He wrote the brilliant and clear-cut exposition of Marxism, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, a masterpiece of lucidity, ability and compression. He wrote the heavy bludgeoning defence of Marx, *Anti-Duehring*, which has been so vilely treated by its arrogant and incompetent translator, A. Lewis. (The man actually has the impudence to cut out large sections as "superfluous," "out of date," etc., in order to make room for his verbose and imbecile Introduction.) But in the works which seem to be Engels' own—*The Condition of the Working Class in 1844*, and *The Origin of the Family* for example—we do not see originality so much as a



learned and logical mind, able to give a complete study of a limited historical subject, or an able exposition of his master's view, but not capable of anything greater.

The PLEBS is candid. We must speak a little more strongly. Watts-Dunton, you remember, when Swinburne grew old, led him away from the world, hid him in Putney, and took over his household, ordering him what to say or write and whom to see. Engels was Marx's Watts-Dunton. He manifested a violent jealousy against anyone who approached Marx. He induced Marx to withdraw from the fellowship of the General Council of the International and form with him a permanent cabal, which assumed a dictatorial control and led directly to the fatal split. He persecuted the Secessionists from the International (many good revolutionaries) with slander and intrigue, which disgraced Marx as well as himself. He was always spiteful and full of petty devices. Hyndman in his

memoirs even asserts that he used Marx's pecuniary indebtedness to him to consolidate his control over him, and that Mrs. Marx bitterly resented his tyranny.

Nevertheless, we owe too much to Engels to let these thoughts influence us. He preserved Marx for us. He rewrote and elaborated his theories in a brilliant and incisive manner. He carried out many invaluable studies of detail. So surprisingly able was his exposition of political theory that Lenin (in *States and Revolution*) habitually quotes him rather than Marx himself, because he is so much more coherent, detailed, and explicit. Even if frequently he forgot himself in personal quarrels, his life as a whole was ungrudgingly given to the service of the workers, and few of us have the right to throw a stone at "old Frederick." If Engels were alive now we would willingly put up with all his crotchets for the sake of his brilliant and acute brain.

R. W. POSTGATE

## SOCIALIST CLASSICS

*This is the first of a series of short articles designed to serve as introductions to some of the classics of Marxian Socialism. While the series should prove to be of especial interest to the beginner, it ought also to appeal to the more advanced student, by reviving his impressions of books he may have read more than once, but which can hardly be studied too carefully or too often.*

### I.—"THE 18TH BRUMAIRE OF LOUIS BONAPARTE"

**T**HE working-class student who opens Marx's *Brumaire* for the first time almost invariably feels overwhelmed by a mass of detail and allusion outside the range of his historical knowledge. But a preliminary course of 19th century French history is not essential to an appreciation of its main lessons; and, to-day almost more than ever, these are supremely valuable to the man or woman desirous of attaining a *reasoned* working-class outlook.

*Its Aim and Subject:*—The aim of *The 18th Brumaire* was to apply, for the first time, the then new Materialist Conception of History to events which had only just taken place. The events thus critically examined were those which occurred in France between February, 1848, and December, 1851—a period marked by revolutionary outbreaks in various parts of Europe. It was the time, in fact, of the first great *conscious* struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie; and Marx's analysis of that campaign is a veritable text-book of strategy and tactics for all those engaged in the same struggle to-day.

*Its Main Outlines:*—The book opens with a short but illuminating statement of Marx's philosophy of history. "Man makes his own history; but he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as are at hand." The success of men's attempts to make history depends not only on what men *will* to do; but on whether their will has taken into account the conditions which determine *what they can do*.

Marx points out a striking difference between all previous revolutions and the Social Revolution which it is the workers' task to bring about. Those earlier revolutions have all been harkings back to the past—to some Eden when men were free and equal. So they drew their inspiration from the past; Luther masquerades as St. Paul; Cromwell draws his language and inspiration from

the Old Testament. The Proletarian Revolution, on the other hand, is not a harking back to the past, but a venturing forth into a new world which is to be won. And, moreover, the Proletarian Revolution must constantly criticise itself, and march *consciously* to its goal.

This contrast is clearly brought out in the review of the events of 1848-51. And it seems to me to be the clue which lights up the whole book once it is appreciated.

In the first period of the Revolution we find all the sections, bourgeois and proletarian, which had united to overthrow Louis Philippe and the high financiers, feeling their way. It is the "Provisional Government period" of the Revolution.

Then the sections draw apart, and each strives to put its own stamp upon the victory won over reaction. The Paris proletariat try to achieve a social revolution and to secure the victory for themselves, but at once bourgeoisie and peasants unite, and the attempt fails in the June insurrection of June 23-5, 1848. The workers were betrayed by the very people who had overthrown Louis Philippe by their help.

After their defeat the proletariat recedes to the background. They lose their revolutionary ardour and content themselves with schemes that savour of Whitley. Meanwhile the revolution takes on the character of bourgeois revolutions, and harks back to the past by attempting to revive the Republic. It moves blindly—non-consciously—from stage to stage, running finally into the arms of the adventurer, Louis Bonaparte, who places himself on the Imperial throne. It dreamed of the restoration of the Republic of 1789, and landed itself in the hands of the Great Napoleon's nephew.

*Its Lessons:*—What Marx makes us see is that amidst all this clash of parties and watchwords the real underlying forces—camouflaged by high-sounding phrases—were certain *class interests*. They had, for example, a "Party of Order" in those days, a monarchical party, divided into two sections, Legitimist (Bourbon) and Orleanist. Each pleaded faith, tradition, and so forth as the basis of their allegiance; while the reality was that the first stood for Large Landed Property, and the second for Capital and Finance.

We have clearly revealed for us, also, the part played by the "Popular Parties"—bourgeois republicans, largely professional classes, intellectuals, etc.—who come into power during the transitional stage following a political revolution, who want to found a democratic constitutional government "broad based upon the people's will," etc., etc. They are tolerated by the economically dominant class for just so long as they leave the economic system fundamentally intact, and merely tinker with petty reforms. But once they begin to tamper with the economic supremacy of the bourgeoisie, they are buried—along with all their pretty slogans.

Finally, nowhere is Marx's superiority over the conventional historians more manifest than in his masterly analysis of Louis Napoleon's rise to power. In the ordinary history book you will find Napoleon the Little's triumph treated either as the victory of the Strong Man over the forces of anarchy, or as the success of an Astute Man over others not so clever. Marx shows us how the adventurer was carried to power because of the economic interests of the class which was the strongest numerically in the France of that day: the class of the peasant-farmers. "As the Bourbons were the dynasty of large landed property, and the Orleans the dynasty of money, so the Bonapartes were the dynasty of the

farmer—*i.e.*, of the French masses." This peasant-farmer class owed its very existence to the breaking-up of the large estates by the first Napoleon. Since then they had fallen on evil times and the "Napoleonic tradition" meant for them a revival of their former prosperity. They, and their interests, made Louis Napoleon's *coup* a possibility.

One need not point out the many parallels between this history of France in the mid-19th century and the events of our own time. *The 18th Brumaire* is not merely a record of the Past; it is a study of the Past written with the express purpose of helping us to solve the problems of the Present.

JIM GRIFFITHS

## TEN-MINUTES' TALKS WITH NEW STUDENTS

### II.—THE BOSSES' "IDEA TRUST"

*J. P. M. Millar, lecturer for the Edinburgh District, Scottish Labour College, continues his short talks with beginners. His first article, "On the Power of Ideas," appeared last month.*

**A** GOOD many people—not all of them workers—feel that something is wrong with present-day conditions, and many remedies are suggested to put things right. Yet pretty nearly all these schemes are opposed to any such idea as "All Power to the Workers." Almost without exception they take it for granted that the present social system—of production for profit—is the only possible one. Now does it follow that because most current ideas are "pro-capitalist" that therefore pro-capitalist ideas are right?

Certainly not. For thousands of years men believed that the sun, to give them light, moved round the earth every twenty-four hours. That idea was universally accepted. But it was wrong.

Now, to thinking workers, the failure of capitalist society to give everyone a decent life is so obvious that a good many of them are convinced that all well-to-do people who support capitalism are deliberately dishonest; that, in fact, no honest observer could sincerely defend such a system. If that were so, our struggle against the Boss would be less difficult, for no man—or class—fights well if he knows his case is bad.

But it is not so. The vast majority of those who champion the present social system really believe that—repaired and patched up a little—it is the Best Thing Possible this side of Heaven. (For that matter, most of the workers seem to be of the same opinion!) So we are still faced with the problem—Why do most ideas on current social problems oppose the entire scrapping of the existing system?

All of us are apt to imagine that, if a new idea is true, it will at once be accepted. We forget that truth may be unpleasant as well as pleasant. If a new idea is agreeable it will be welcomed like a wealthy visitor; but if it is disagreeable, men will try hard not to see it, just as they will shut the door on a beggar. Men are only inclined to believe what they want to think is true, just as a fond parent, though perfectly honest, is often quite blind to the failings of a worthless son.

It is not difficult to find many cases where men unconsciously reject the truth or accept an untruth simply because it suits them to do so. During the war numbers of honest, well-meaning people greedily swallowed any German

atrocious story. Because they were fighting Germans, they were ready to accept any sort of yarn that threw discredit on their enemies. In the same way, an employer has often little difficulty in convincing himself that "bad feeling" among his workers is due, not to the low wages he is paying, but to the activities of some agitator.

Besides that, we all know that men are not fond of having their settled ideas disturbed. To rearrange one's ideas means effort, and effort isn't popular. Thus we have the secret of the *power of tradition*.

Yes, you may say, but though these things may explain why the wealthy classes still pin their faith to capitalism, they don't show why workers, who suffer from it, still support it, and vote Coalition—the Triple Alliance of Rent, Interest, and Profit. Surely *they* ought to welcome the new ideas? They ought. And they would—if *they got a chance of coming into contact with them*.

For how are ideas "circulated"? New ideas are always being born. The more unsettled conditions are (as is the case to-day) the more new ideas are thrown up as a result of men rubbing against new problems. There are always a number of different ideas about the same question, especially if it is a social question. These ideas will, therefore, *compete* with each other for acceptance, in the same way as workers compete for a job.

The Boss decides who gets the job. Who selects the ideas? *They are selected by the ruling class, by the wealthy, by the Bosses*. They and they alone practically control pulpit, platform, schools and press—the four great means of spreading ideas. The ruling class aims at a vast "Idea Trust," and at squeezing out all competitors! The mass of men, therefore, can only select *from the selection already made!*

Not because they are deliberately dishonest, but simply because men most easily believe what they want to believe, the ruling classes accept only those ideas that threaten no harm to their ways of life. And only these ideas, accordingly, are allowed, generally speaking, to reach the minds of the workers. All new ideas on social questions have to go through a rigorous process of selection. But the selecting is done by the folks whose interests are bound up with the maintenance of things as they are. New ideas which threaten those interests will, if possible, be frozen out. So far as they are able the ruling classes will keep up their monopoly of ideas.

So again we are brought up against the necessity for the workers to have *their own means* for spreading *their own ideas*. They have got to break down the capitalist monopoly. They have got, therefore, to look after *their own* education.

J. P. M. MILLAR.

### THE END OF A CIVILISATION?

**T**HE opening words of Mr. Brailsford's latest and noteworthy book\* are of a sombre significance: "Can Europe feed herself?" That question is forced upon him by a survey of the present conditions in Europe, which he depicts with gloomy eloquence:

The fact that faces us is world shortage, the dwindling of populations, the decay of industry, the twilight of civilisation.

That this condition of things is due not merely to the War, but also to the Peace has now become a platitude. The Treaties are one and all stamped with

\* *After the Peace*. By H. N. BRAILSFORD. (Leonard Parsons, Ltd. 4s. 6d.)

the image and superscription of the twin gods who inspired them, Mammon and Mars; and by the same token, they reveal clearly the character and cause of the war which preceded them. "It was the fated march of economic Imperialism which led to this War and this Peace."

But this economic Imperialism is not everywhere of exactly the same character, nor does it everywhere go to work in exactly the same way. It is this fact which enables us to find a solution to the problem of the internal contradictions of the Treaties; the two countries whose policies animate and dominate the Treaties are of widely-divergent economic character and interests.

Britain sought its end in the destruction of Germany's industry, of her commercial privileges and opportunities, and of her Navy. The capitalist class of France, on the other hand, can derive but little direct advantage from the destruction of German industry and commerce. Her capitalism is pre-eminently of the financial order. She is still predominantly agricultural and even her agriculture is for the most part on a small scale. Such manufactures as she has are likewise on a small scale and her exports largely consist of luxuries.

Whereas we take a business and mean to run it, the French desire a tribute in hard cash. That is the mentality of the *rentier*, the man who lives on the interest of capital. We visualise wealth as the possession of a big and expanding business. The French visualise it rather as the possession of share certificates and title-deeds which bring in their punctual interest. The two national characters are built upon this broad economic difference.

This difference of economic conditions, interests and outlooks in the two nations has led to the misunderstandings and mutual recriminations which find ever more open expression, and threaten final rupture. Britain, having destroyed Germany's industry and power to compete, was more or less ready to admit that Germany could not pay the huge indemnity demanded by the French. With the prospect of at least sharing in the exploitation of the once-German markets in Africa and China, we were prepared to be fairly calm and critical concerning Germany's powers for the immediate and near future. But France was not in a position to view the matter so philosophically, and she insists upon her share of the spoils which, if it is to be of use to her, can come only in the form of a cash indemnity.

It is, then, these two different forms of capitalism which have conspired to make a Peace which is "a nightmare of economic lunacy." Thus far, the Allies have succeeded in preserving their Alliance—rebaptised as the League of Nations! The naval might of Britain, together with France's military power, backed as it is with African levies which number 200,000 and which will vastly increase as her African policy gets established—this is now the governing power in Central and Western Europe, in Africa and in a large part of Asia. But even this dual Entente is no very comfortable or stable co-operation. A quarrel over the indemnity, the Russian problem, or the Turkish Treaty seems ever to overshadow the relationship; and it is now a very frail bond of interest which keeps them together.

The future of Europe, however, includes the future of vanquished as well as of victors. Even though the Allies fail to evolve some saner and more relevant revision of the Treaty, it is not to be supposed that Europe will accept passively the sentence of starvation. There are three policies possible—Revolution, Reform, Reaction. At the close of the war, Central Europe chose the middle path, in the hope of receiving better peace terms than would have been received by the old military autocracy. Those hopes were not realised, and Liberalism

fell into utter discredit. Thus Revolution and Reaction stand as direct and sole alternatives in those countries.

This situation has led Mr. Brailsford to an analysis of the tendencies which were the dynamics of Revolution in Russia, Hungary and Munich, and to an attempt to discover how far they are indispensable factors and whether we may reasonably anticipate a recurrence. "The study is inordinately complex, for psychological considerations cross the economic factors in the most baffling way," but we may select two tendencies.

Firstly, there was the widespread economic misery. We have, however, in this to take into account the result of the war upon the outlook and the hopes of the different nations. Poland was even more deeply plunged in misery than Hungary, but in spite of it all, "the general mood was one of elation and hope"—it was on the winning side, and looked forward to a speedy liberation from the ills that afflicted it. Hungary, on the contrary, could only expect the woes of the vanquished.

Secondly, the break up of the armies, whereby disaffection or rapid demobilisation was, though temporary, an essential factor in the success of the violent revolutions. It was the soldiers—suddenly released from the armies where they had been relatively well fed and clothed, and plunged into the miseries imposed upon the civil population by the Allied blockade—who formed the most dissatisfied, the most active and, from the standpoint of the existing order, the most dangerous, part of the proletariat; and at the same time this meant further that the Governments had not at their disposal the armed forces with which they could quell the rising.

But though some of the factors of revolution still remain in Central Europe, Mr. Brailsford holds that changes have taken place which must needs render further revolutions less probable. In this connection, it is well to bear in mind that if we attach importance to economic misery as a factor making for revolution, we necessarily imply the expectation that the change is going to bring a decided, and, what is more, an immediate improvement in material conditions. But the turmoil of a violent revolution—and it will be admitted that any revolution which could take place in the near future, must necessarily be accompanied by a demonstration of force—is hardly the general condition which would make for a smooth-running industrial machine. We may recognise that Russia has not been given a chance; but Russia is in certain important respects far more favourably placed than the other European countries. Hence we can well appreciate the older view which looked to a crisis of over-production as the best time for "making the revolution"—a time when there was an abundance.

Therein lies Russia's strength—she is capable of feeding herself. Yet even in Russia, the question of a working agreement between proletariat and peasantry has been one of inordinate difficulty, and may yet prove to be the rock upon which the Revolution may split.

The fact is that the old relation between town and country was completely altered in Europe during the war. Previously the town was living more or less at the expense of the country—was for ever receiving more from the country than it sent back. But now the town can send nothing at all—except paper money; and the country will have none of those scraps of paper. The result of six years of war and blockade is that "half-starved towns everywhere confront an opulent countryside." In fact, it is hardly an exaggeration to speak of a new blockade, the blockade of the town by the country.

We have, however, to take into account the third possible line of development—militarist reaction. The activities of the Allies in this direction have already borne fruit, and in the various countries of Central Europe parties have arisen which, while not disdaining such constitutional methods as Press propaganda and Parliamentary activity, rely ultimately upon force.

In Germany, for example, a new standing army has been created, which is primarily, if not solely, a weapon of the counter-revolution. In Hungary, again, the White Guards have signally distinguished themselves in the savage suppression of Socialism. As for this country, Mr. Brailsford offers us comfortable congratulation upon our own immunity from such experiences:—

In England it is still possible to have a professional army which is as yet more or less non-political, because our Labour Movement has scarcely begun to raise fundamental issues.

But though the present outlook is so dark, and so dark seemingly the immediate future, man must needs act; and our author, while taking a pessimistic view of the general situation, errs, we fear, upon the side of optimism when he turns to an immediate international policy for the Labour Party, and suggests the general principles which should guide that policy. They may be summarised under two headings:—

- (a) The attempt to undo some of the harm created in the past six years by putting an end to all informal alliances among the Entente Powers, and by a sane and courageous revision of the Peace Treaties.
- (b) A positive policy for the creation of an Economic League of Nations, the object of which should be, "by the rationing of raw materials and the breaking down of every artificial barrier to exchange, to create a vast economic unit."

The effort to bring "peace and plenty" in their reality to the world would demand courage, determination and imagination. Our home policy and our international policy must be consciously organised as interdependent and co-ordinated parts of a single purpose. Capitalism is condemned. "By its greed of profits, by its militarism and imperialism, Capitalism has evolved on suicidal lines." But how shall judgement be pronounced? We are hopeful that, after all, it will be as the happier of the two alternatives with which Mr. Brailsford concludes his eloquent and able study:—"It may ring out as the rallying cry of a revolution. It may stand upon the tombstone of a defeated civilisation."

T. ASHCROFT

### STRIKES AND EMERGENCY EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

*At our request Ness Edwards here elaborates an idea put forward by him recently in the "Workers' Dreadnought." We shall be very glad to receive readers' opinions and suggestions on the matter. Don't, please, treat it as a merely academic discussion, but as a question of immediate practical importance.*

**A** DAILY HERALD reporter recently gave an account of the riot at Tonypany, and described in realistic fashion the square which was the scene of the fracas. This square, he observed, is "the only sort of meeting place for miles around. It is scarcely as large as the average London flat, and into the little pocket hundreds of young men pour down in search of amusement and companionship." We who have lived in such areas can understand the significance of his statement.



In those narrow mining valleys, sunk down between dreary barren hills, the means of enjoyment are at a minimum, and, during a strike, thousands upon thousands of men aimlessly waste their time in uninviting surroundings. Needless to say, such conditions—especially when worsened by rain—tend to encourage "strike weariness." The question, then, presents itself to Plebeians; can we help to prevent this strike weariness, and take advantage of the strike situation to further independent working-class education?

In most mining areas in these days the local Miners' Council, Trades Council, Plebs branch, or Council for Independent Working Class Education, has brought into being evening classes at which are taught the various branches of social science. Mostly, the students and teachers attending these classes have considerable influence in the local trade union organisations, which in turn control the Miners' Institute and branch meeting rooms. During a strike, as at other times, these buildings are idle for the major portion of the time; so, too, are the men who attend the evening classes.

*Why, then, cannot the evening classes be turned into day schools and become miniature Labour Colleges?*

Not only would morning studies be advantageous, and evening-class students be glad to get on with their education, but hundreds of other young men would jump at the chance of doing something else than idly kick their heels. For the new students, who would come mainly because they had nothing else to do, lectures dealing with the need for working-class education and the economics of the dispute would possibly be best. The possibility of capturing new permanent students in these temporary classes would certainly be great, and additional evening classes would almost certainly result.

I can hear the pessimist croaking "Yes, it sounds all right, but where are you going to find teachers, rooms, etc.?"

Well, I have already hinted that for the most part students and teachers control that machinery which controls the meeting rooms. That hint should be sufficient. To supply teachers is more difficult. We can only make suggestions. The evening class teachers will continue their courses in the morning and work overtime to conduct other classes. For the temporary classes formed for the strike duration, some of the older students from the evening classes could be utilised. There are quite a number who have been studying for years, and they ought to be capable of taking on these "emergency" classes.

In some districts there are as yet no classes. May we suggest to Plebeians in those districts that the formation of study groups is not a difficult task during a strike.

If our pessimist is not now satisfied, we would whisper in his ear (so that the Principal may not hear) that there are forty students in the Labour College controlled by his organisations, and, in the last resort, they could be utilised.

So far we have dealt only with the educational programme; evenings can be filled up with propagandist (excuse the distinction) lectures and addresses which will meet the needs of the older and non-studious men.

Do not let us lose such valuable opportunities in future strikes. Where local machinery exists, possibly it can adapt itself to the needs of the strike; where no machinery exists there Plebeians can set to work to build some. The effect of such educational activity will be the leavening of the movement with a keener conscious understanding which will generate a more intelligent strike enthu-

siasm. This will prevent, to a great extent, "strike weariness," will spread the demand for working-class education, "driven well home" by the hard facts of strike experience. During a strike, lethargy gives way to activity, minds become more alert, contradictions present themselves with glaring sharpness. It is precisely in such periods that our blows should fall quick and heavy, for at such times they make the most impression. What do you think of it?

NESS EDWARDS

### THE MINERS' NEXT STEP: SOME QUESTIONS

*We print below a series of questions aiming at producing a useful discussion on the lessons of the recent Miners' Strike. No one can regard the present state of affairs—acceptance of the Government's offer merely because the men's majority against it was not big enough—as likely to last for long. And the workers cannot too soon learn from their mistakes and prepare their plans for the next struggle. We invite replies from our readers to all or any of the following:—*

#### NATIONALISATION

1 To what would you attribute the failure of Nationalisation to become a real issue? What part would you assign to the following as possible factors:—

(a) The general apathy of the majority of the miners themselves, to whom the question is more or less an abstraction compared with a concrete wage demand.

(b) The lack of support given by the active minority to the official plan because of their fear of a bureaucracy.

(c) The weakness of the M.F.G.B. arrangement in the matters of compensation and share of control.

2 Would you favour an intensive propaganda to interest other unions in the question, or simply concentrate on wage demands?

#### THE RECENT CRISIS

3 Do you favour a repetition of the tactic of insisting on a reduction of prices along with wage demands? Do you think it was a mistake to sacrifice that (14s. 2d.) part of the demand because of Government arithmetic?

4 To what extent did the Triple Alliance fail, and where does the remedy lie?

5 Would you consider the unpreparedness of the workers sufficient justification for the fear of the leaders to create a revolutionary situation? Or would you think that other factors (e.g., fear of a General Election, dependency of England upon foreign food supplies) explain their position?

6 Do you think the proposed Joint-Committees for Inquiries into Output are likely to achieve anything?

#### THE FUTURE

7 In your opinion are the following proposals worthy of immediate attention:—

(a) Linking up the active minorities in every area with a view to increasing the efficiency of the organisation and shaping it for speedier action.

(b) Preparing local bodies (Trades Councils or Councils of Action) to control foodstuffs and carry on industry in a future crisis.

8 Can you suggest any other lessons taught by the recent crisis?

R. S. V. P.

## GEOGRAPHICAL FOOTNOTES TO CURRENT HISTORY

## II.—IRELAND

*In contrast with the liberal treatment held out—though now apparently withdrawn—by the British Government to Egypt, a treatment as new as it was explicable, stands the case of Ireland. A study of the map will aid us to appreciate the difference.*

**W**HILE the economic and cultural centre of Western civilisation remained within the Mediterranean basin, Ireland (with Britain) was at the end-of-the-world. Such stray parties of traders or pirates (it has always been difficult to disentangle this pair!) as ventured beyond the Pillars of Hercules found it easier by reason of winds, tides, and ocean currents to strike the shores of Ireland. The ancient legends of Ireland speak of it as having been conquered and populated from "Spain"—which, in these legends, is curiously confused with Egypt and this again with the Other World of the Gods. In any case, Ireland was the earliest to receive an infusion of Mediterranean culture and when this culture lapsed with the overthrow of the Roman Empire, Ireland's isolation preserved it from the ravages and influences of the barbarian incursion



to such a degree that it became a refuge for "saints" and scholars. It was Christianised apparently by Greek missionaries not only before England, but quite independently. Ireland's geographical position thus early gave it an individuality distinct from that of Britain.

When Western civilisation recovered and the Baltic lands began to interact with the Mediterranean, then the North Sea, the Rhine Valley, the passes of the Alps, the Danube Valley, and the English Channel became points of world importance. Flanders and the Netherlands, as the meeting-point of North, South, East and West, became more and more the great economic centre. The rivalry of the towns south of the Alpine passes gave special stress to the sea-route viâ the English Channel. Ireland was shut out from all this. While the chief economic centres lay South of the Alps or East of Britain, Ireland was blocked from intercourse with them by the geographical interposition of the larger island. Her east and south coast ports, Drogheda, Dublin, Wexford, Waterford and Cork (which were originally Scandinavian settlements) were, moreover, early captured by English invaders. In a word—while Europe and its

trade landward was the thing that mattered, England was so placed as to control or throttle all Irish commercial expansion.

When the discovery of America transferred the commerce of the world from Mediterranean and Baltic to the Ocean highway, the Atlantic ports became those of world importance. But Ireland's advantage of situation was neutralised and then changed into a disadvantage.

Trade to and from America, while navigation was so technically imperfect as to make a half-way house necessary, went by way of the Azores and even by Madeira, the Canaries, and the Cape Verde Islands. Although this route took navigation somewhat south of the Munster ports, it still brought them potentially within the sphere of economic importance. Hence it is not surprising to find that Navigation Laws were expressly designed by Britain to cripple Irish shipping and prevent the development of these ports. Among the earliest effects of improvements in navigation and the growing importance of American-European trade was the revolt of the American Colonies, which gave them control of their end of the traffic, and the destruction of the independence of the Irish Parliament.

Ireland was politically incorporated with Britain. With the coming of steam power, Queenstown was developed as a port of call on the route to Liverpool, the Channel, the North Sea and the Baltic—England at first acting as a clearing-house for both the latter—and Belfast grew into importance alike as port and ship-building station in close relation with the Clyde and Glasgow. Any attempt on the part of a European mainland power to gain control of the European end of the American trade route was certain to bring it into conflict with Britain, whose geographical advantages for blockading the whole of Europe single-handed were demonstrated overwhelmingly at the beginning of the 19th century and in 1914. (One might almost say that the author of the North Sea, the Shetlands and the Straits of Dover was the author of the Great War!)

Now that the war has made America the economic head of the nations, another shuffle of the cards is due. That, other things remaining as they are, a war for economic and political mastery between Britain and the U.S.A. is inevitable, nobody can deny. And plain before the eyes of the statesmen at Washington is Rebel Ireland.

An independent Ireland protected by the U.S.A. might develop Limerick or Galway into a new Liverpool, or Cork into a greater Southampton. The pastoral possibilities of Ireland under an efficient and pushful Board of Agriculture might well appal Denmark and give great glory to the Butter Trust. And the innumerable streams of Connaught and Kerry under proper attention could supply cheap electric motive power which would neutralise the advantage of England's coal deposits and permit the growth of Clare and Kerry into a new Lancashire—(from which may St. Patrick and the entire Soviet of Irish angels protect her!). Strategically, the case is even more compelling.

English Imperialism must choose between making such a surrender to the militant Irish Nationalists as will make them virtually the masters of England—with the power to break the alliance in favour of the U.S.A.—or a complete subjugation of the island and its fortification against War from the West. As we have gathered from the Press, that subjugation is proceeding. When the World War comes—and it will if we let it—Irish Republican enthusiasm, heated to a white heat of fury by the Black and Tan regime, will provide a spear-head for the U.S.A. to drive into the heart of the British Empire. THOS. A. JACKSON

## WORTH WHILE, OR NOT WORTH WHILE

*Verdicts of PLEBS Reviewers on Recent Books.*

## CIVILISATIONS

*Revolutions of Civilisation.* By W. J. FLINDERS PETRIE. (Harper's Library of Living Thought. 2s. 6d.) *Modern Man and His Forerunners.* By H. G. F. SPURRELL. (Bell. 7s. 6d.)

COUNT OKUMA, a Japanese statesman, is stated to have described the late war as "the suicide of European civilisation." Various sections of capitalist society are seriously discussing whether they can save European civilisation. They are waking up to the fact that capitalism has destroyed more than it can ever re-create. While their apprehensions are taking shape it will be useful to us, who are engaged in studying the evolutionary processes which are sweeping away the existing order of capitalist society, to read the works of scholars who have studied "Civilisations" from quite a different standpoint, but whose conclusions yet confirm those based on the economic study of the history of our present civilisation. Such conclusions may be found in the books named above.

Flinders Petrie points out that the evolution of human society has not proceeded by the continuous and gradual development of a *civilisation*, but by the temporary rise, growth, triumph, decay and downfall of *successive civilisations*. We are living in what appears to be the declining phase, or, perhaps, the premature rush to its downfall, of the great civilisation of north-west Europe, which succeeded the classical Greco-Roman civilisation (say B.C. 1200 to A.D. 450; 1650 years). Prior to this there were (in Europe) the "Late Cretan" or Mykenzan civilisation (B.C. 2600 to B.C. 1200; 1400 years), the Middle Cretan (B.C. 4000 to B.C. 2600; 1400 years), the Early Cretan (B.C. 4960 to B.C. 4000; 960 years).

A similar duration, averaging about 1500 years, characterised the successive civilisations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, South America, etc. Our present civilisation has completed about 1470 years. Each civilisation passes through the same succession of cultural stages: sculpture, painting, literature, mechanics, wealth, luxury, decay, just as a man passes through childhood, adolescence, manhood, old-age, decay, death. And, like an organism, a civilisation has a definite span of life, about 1500 years.

Every such civilisation appears to be originally founded on the enslavement\* of one nation, class, tribe or caste by another, and is, on the economic side, a condition under which labour is controlled by a governing class for the production of wealth. When primitive man discovered the value of the slave, he made civilisations possible.

\* When we speak of enslavement as the basis of civilisation, we use the word in a wide sense, including not only chattel-slavery, but the conditions under which the inhabitants of a conquered territory were left in occupation of the land subject to dues in labour and kind to the governing class (e.g., feudalism), or the modern conditions in which a dispossessed proletariat is "free" to work for wages or starve.

But civilisations are a recent growth; the earliest known do not go back more than 8,000 or 10,000 years, a very small slice out of the hundreds of thousands of years of man's existence on earth.

It was to this compulsion, exercised by a governing class in making a governed class work *harder than they need work merely to support themselves*, that all the great works of bygone civilisations, cities, roads, bridges, aqueducts, irrigation works, temples, etc., were due; and this same power of compulsion, now exercised behind a thin veil of pretended "liberty" and "democracy," is the force which has always created *capital*, and has incidentally created *capitalism*. It was also the compulsory labour of the governed classes that gave to the governing classes the *leisure* to develop arts, writing, learning, science. But this leisure, and the culture which it rendered possible, has always been the monopoly of the governing classes, and the working classes have been excluded from it.

We are now in a position to distinguish clearly two phenomena usually included and confused under the word "Civilisation." There is (1) the organisation of society into a governing and a labouring class, and (2) the accumulation of commodities, knowledge, amenities of life, etc., made possible by organised compulsory labour.\*

The problem before Socialists and Communists is how to save the latter in the coming wreck of the former. Compulsion must be retained even when capitalism and class rule are abolished. Man will not, any more than any other animal, work more than he needs or wants to work. For a long time to come there will be dirty work and drudgery to be done, and there will be a big number of people who will do all they can to shirk doing it. The solution will not, it is safe to prophesy, be *no compulsion*, but *equal compulsion for all*. This is the prospect that so enrages the parasitic classes. Read their outbursts on compulsory labour in Russia. But, while the downfall of capitalism and of the two-class State will mean compulsory labour for all, it will also mean equal rights for all to the leisure, education and culture which have hitherto been the monopoly of the "leisured" classes. And the first nation or community to throw open this monopoly to all who do their fair share of the necessary work will probably liberate and realise such a volume of latent talent, now lying undeveloped in the labouring class, as will result in progress which will stagger more backward communities.

The downfall of each civilisation is associated by Flinders Petrie with the growth of *democracy*, the setting up and overthrowing of rulers by the *vox populi*. (p. 113.) A constant feature is the

\* In the German language the word *Kultur*, so grossly misinterpreted in this country for propaganda purposes during the war, is used for the second of these phenomena. The English word "Culture," on the other hand, is used for a certain combination of learning and intelligence, or, by certain people, as the equivalent of an education at a Public School and Oxford or Cambridge.

loss of power by the governing class and a loss of servility by the governed. Spurrell (who, with his aristocratic-militarist outlook, can see no working alternative to class rule) puts the same idea thus:—"A rebellion against all forms of authority begins which ends in the destruction of the civilisation, and the escape of the slaves towards an animal existence, pending the arrival of fresh masters to begin the cycle anew." (p. 100.)

But let us consider what factors, peculiar to the existing civilisation, may make for the ending of the whole cycle of two-class civilisations, and the substitution of a new order of things, the one-class commonwealth, based on equal opportunity for all, and the abolition of advantages based on *ownership*. One of these factors, probably the most important, is the self-destructive trend of industrial and financial capitalism, which tends to speed up the collapse of the present social structure while still leaving a mass of commodities, knowledge, amenities of life, etc., ready for use by those who step into its place. Capitalism will collapse when the potentiality of production is at a maximum. Its material products will be there ready for its successors.

Another factor is the existence of an educated and class-conscious section—even if a minority—of the proletariat, increasingly reinforced, as time goes on, from the bourgeois intellectual and professional classes. Yet another is the accumulating mass of knowledge as to the nature both of the economic forces acting on society and of society's reactions to them. Man's intellect is an organ, developed in the course of ages of biologic evolution, to enable him to profit by knowledge and experience, and so to shape his actions that natural and economic forces (like those which have presumably led to the collapse of past civilisations) may be directed into channels useful to him.

These factors, the scientific knowledge and class-consciousness, and the idea of a constructive purpose to be achieved, possessed by the proletariat, are new factors, not present in the decline of previous civilisations. They are themselves part of present-day economic developments, brought about by and operating as a part of the great chain of cause and effect, or economic determinism, which is working out the destiny of Europe to-day.

Another factor is the world-wide distribution of the material and intellectual benefits of the present civilisation. Even if particular peoples and nations hold back, and if some of the older nations have not the environmental conditions or the native vigour necessary to stave off the lapse into darkness, there will still be peoples (corresponding to the young and creative stages of civilisation, as interpreted by these writers) who will see the great change through, and bring to the older nations the benefits of the new order, as in the past the nations of western Europe brought their civilisation to the economically backward peoples of the world.

And when the commonwealth, based on equality of opportunity and scientific knowledge in the service of the whole community, comes, we will

have the cultural side of civilisation, the creative factor, without the two-class structure of society and the consequent class-struggle which it involves, which has been the main cause of the disintegration of earlier civilisations; and we may therefore hope that it will have a degree of stability and permanence impossible in civilisations based on the separation of the people into exploiting and exploited classes. NORDICUS.

#### A BLIND GUIDE

*The A B C of Evolution.* By JOSEPH McCABE. (Watts and Co., 2s.)

One of the first services to human kind performed by the Soviet was the reform of the Russian alphabet; after Mr. McCabe's handling of it the A B C of Evolution stands in need of similar treatment. As a popular writer his most conspicuous quality is an accomplished looseness of phraseology. Throughout this book he uses the term "evolution" to cover such fundamentally dissimilar processes as the origin of stars, the descent of living beings, the development of human society, the differentiation of the elements, and, one is tempted to add, "the crew of the Captain's gig."

Let it be conceded that in Chapters III-IX the author gives the beginner a readable and breezy account of the geological record. But his last chapter, with the misleading title "Social Evolution," could hardly be worse. It begins with a confusion between organic evolution and social development: and proceeds to make the totally incompatible and even more grotesque proposition: "The clash or contrast of different cultures is the great secret of human progress. . . . The struggle of ideas and ideals in a perfectly harmonious group is enough." It is only fair to Mr. McCabe to remark that the reviewer has not the least idea what the "harmonious group" referred to is!

There is no space here to discuss the scientific value of the book as a whole; but the pages dealing with the present position of evolutionary theory especially compel comment, since they enable one to see why Mr. McCabe has failed to grasp the true significance of social development from a biological standpoint. Within nineteen lines (pp. 8 and 9) the author condenses every imaginable species of misunderstanding and elementary error. To make this clear in a few words, the actual position may be summarised thus. Since Darwin's time Weismann's influence has led to the recognition that new hereditary types arise, not by changes in the body (acquired characters), but in the constitution of the reproductive cells; later, Mendel's experiments revealed that, though they may skip a generation or two, new hereditary characters cannot be swamped by crossing with dissimilar types; and in consequence the *constructive* rôle attributed to Natural Selection by Darwin (that of preventing the swamping of better adapted types by cutting off those less adapted) is no longer accepted. Natural Selection has been relegated to a passive part, and the inheritance of acquired characters discarded.

In his résumé, Mr. McCabe—who was

apparently, no conception of modern evolutionary theory as a composite whole, to which various workers (Darwin, Weismann, Bateson, Mendel, De Vries) have each contributed—proceeds to classify theories of the factors of organic evolution under three headings: (i) Darwinism, (ii) Weismannism, (iii) Mendelism. As regards (i) the author defines the doctrine of Natural Selection in a sense in which it is obviously true, acceptable to all evolutionists, and in no way diagnostic of the specific importance attached to it (erroneously) by Darwin (as indicated above). Turning to (ii) Mr. McCabe's summary of Weismann's ideas is misleading, partly because it makes no reference to the fact that the latter went farther than Darwin in over-emphasising Natural Selection, and partly because Weismann's denial of the inheritance of acquired characters is shared by modern scientists, and the contrary was never explicitly admitted by Darwin in his earlier work.

The most discreditable mistake in a book claiming to be scientific is the definition of (iii)—Mendelism. "Small changes or improvements in offspring would be lost or swamped. Large changes in which the offspring differs considerably from the parent often occur and these make new species." The actual truth is, of course, that Mendelian experiments show that NO true hereditary changes can be swamped, large or *small*: further, the *size* of such a change, from the standpoint of the present-day Mendelian, does not matter, since, according to the Mendelian conception of a species as an aggregate of unit characters, all hereditary changes are instrumental in evolution.

If Mr. McCabe recognised the fundamental contention of the Mendelian school, that evolution is discontinuous, he would not blind himself to the fact that the human race has seen no appreciable increase in *intelligence* since the close of the Old Stone Age. He would then be forced to interpret the panorama of *social change* in terms of the tool-using habit which enables Man alone among animals to create the character of his environment.

P. L. E. B.

#### PIPING TO THE MIDDLE CLASSES

*The Passion of Labour.* By ROBERT LYND. (Bells, 6s.)

These short essays appeared in the *New Statesman*, most pharisaical of papers, the paper which, writing on the Lord Mayor's death, could find nothing better to say than to read the Irish a long lecture on the folly of violence, and warn them against losing the good feeling of the London crowd, which was not sufficiently blackguardly to insult the hearse—a piece of insolent arrogance from an English paper; the paper which periodically emits wails about the degradation of the *Daily Herald* by the £75,000 incident, knowing that that has done the paper no harm whatever, but hoping in the end to drag down Mr. Lansbury, close the open door which the paper now has for Left views, and clamp its policy within the narrow compass of Webbery.



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In such a paper these essays appeared brilliant. But now, reprinted separately, they are less inspiring. Lynd's style is as always impeccable. He has a charming turn of phrase. He tells the most amusing anecdotes, and revives stories unedifying to the upper classes. I like, perhaps, best the tale of how Pitt, during one of Fox's greatest speeches, was so drunk that he had to go behind the Speaker's chair and be sick.

All the same, in these essays (which are chiefly generalisations about Labour aspirations) there is a notable weakness. It is not in clearness or intelligence. In his fifth essay he says, very clearly and definitely, that the working classes are rightly refusing to work any more for private profit. He frequently elsewhere states a truth as clearly and definitely. But he has no courage. After making this statement he draws no conclusion whatever. He simply talks vaguely about freedom, Utopia and a new spirit in industry. His proposals are not sufficiently concrete to be called reactionary. They are merely a damp douche of sentimental phrases.

The reason of this is that he is in these essays only carrying out a certain portion of the *New Statesman's* programme. He is piping to the middle classes that they may dance into the Labour Party. For the most part he does so openly. He urges them (p. 12) to stream into the party which alone will save them from "red reactionaries on the one hand and red revolutionaries on the other." He reiterates fiercely that what Labour desires is no disturbance at all, or any sort of upset, but "a new heaven and earth"

which is to come in some way which he does not state, except by generally indicating Parliament. "The great need of politics in Western Europe is," he says, "a revival of respect for Parliament."

Indeed, he only lets himself go once. And that is in a paper on the Wrights of—Birds!

This "petty bourgeois ideology" (the phrase for once is just) pursues him even when he deals with the ever-refreshing subject of beer. He attacks Prohibition tentatively on the grounds that probably poverty is the real enemy, and that it is an invasion of freedom anyway. As if freedom was a cake, or a doughnut, out of which you could take a bite! Mr. Lynd must know that "freedom" does not exist: it is merely an idea whose absolute existence is impossible.

Since I am on the booze, however—I should say, on the subject of booze—it is worth while remarking that the abolition of poverty is not the result which any sane man expects from Prohibition. I read once in a Canadian Union monthly a small parable which seemed to put very well the real revolutionary case for Prohibition. It was divided into three scenes in a new Western industrial town. The first was a Board meeting of the company that practically owned the town. The directors complain that drunkenness and rioting are losing them money. The lost time and bad work are terrible. The Board, which has the Town Council in its pocket, issues the order for a Prohibition campaign. The second scene is after the carrying of Prohibition. All is smiles. Profits are up to an amazing figure. Time lost is negligible. Every shop is working like clockwork. The third scene is three years later. The Board meeting looks like an undertaker's shop. A Labour majority has captured the Town Council. Rates for decent housing, etc., have shot up, and the Company pays. Every one of its employees is in the Union. Taxes are extracted mercifully.

The writer had, perhaps, a naïve idea of the ideal Labour State. But he had the guts of the matter. The absence of the facility for easy drinking is the first and most essential need of the disciplined proletarian army. Moderate drinking (soaking everybody sees is bad) means a continual dulling of the worker's faculties, to say no more. It deadens his anger and produces cynical contentment and revolutionary indiscipline. Tillett complains that Prohibition takes the worker's beer and not the rich man's wine. If only one could be sure of that! It would be ideal if the workers could clear their own ranks of alcoholism and leave to their rulers the unhampered privilege of getting blind to the world. A half-seas-over ruling class and a sober proletariat would bring the revolution twenty years nearer.

R. W. P.

#### DARK PAGES OF SCOTTISH HISTORY

*A History of the Working Class in Scotland.* By THOMAS JOHNSTON. (Forward Publishing Co., Glasgow. 10s. 6d.)

No child can attend school nowadays without being taught what our educationalists call History. But what History! Its pretended ex-

planations of events in many cases would hardly do credit to the knowledge of a savage. It leaves history a weary desert of inexplicable happenings. Its textbooks can only be compared with the books written on plant and animal life before Darwin applied the master-key of evolution to nature. Yet it is 70 years since Marx laid open to view the causes that brought about the changes in history—70 years since he showed how history could be rescued from the hands of the annalists and talk-spinners, and shown as a thing of coherent movement.

If the worker turns to the histories provided by our seats of learning, he finds the historians eager to overlook or to apologise for the cruelties and crimes of the ruling class. Peasant revolts are put down to the riotous instincts of the rabble; the masses are "the mob," and so forth.

No one, of course, expected that sort of stuff from Johnston. The great service he rendered to the landed nobility of Scotland by writing the true history of "our noble families"—a service, I believe, they have not brought themselves to appreciate—was a guarantee that there was little chance of his being "taken in" by the thick veneer that generations of class-conscious historians had laid on the facts of Scottish history. His volume is a very notable addition to the growing pile of working-class literature. To read the book will stiffen the back of the timidest. Yet there is no wind, no rhetoric. What we get is hard historical fact. In this book history speaks with the voice of one of the people.

No class-student should miss it. So far as Scotland is concerned, it is a treasure-house of information. Not only do we get the facts we want, but generally speaking we get the *explanations of the facts*. It is a history, not a series of old wives' tales. I can best give an idea of the contents of the volume if I quote a few of the chapter headings:—

"Capital under the Barons," "The Democratic Theocracy," "The Struggle in the Towns," "The Reivings of the Common Lands," "Under the Capitalist Harrow." In addition it contains short sections on various groups of workers: for example, the miners, the hand-loom weavers and the factory workers: besides having a good index and a glossary to help us over Scotch legal terms.

His opening sentence, perhaps, invites criticism. It reads, "The original cause or causes of human slavery is not so much a question for the historian as for the philosopher." Maybe Johnston follows in the footsteps of a certain occupant of a university chair who said that "if something were difficult to understand, it was science, and if it were impossible it was called philosophy." In his second sentence, however, the author has forgotten all about his first, and is busily engaged in explaining the social developments that made slavery possible.

The book might be called a massacre of Scottish myths. From the chapter on the Scottish Reformation we learn that all the gilt-edged, brass-clasped, leather-bound books which were alleged to give us the true history of the martyrs were nothing but the expensive re-



ceptacles of nonsense stories. Following Buckle, Johnston makes it as clear as day that the Scottish Reformation was a successful attempt (carefully wrapped in by no means prepossessing religious garb) of the nobility to grab church lands, and of the manufacturers and traders to put a stop to what they felt were the wasteful 45 days' holidays of the Roman Church.

It may surprise some readers to learn that in Scotland the miners were not free from serfdom until as recently as 1799. In the 18th and beginning of the 19th century, the mine-owners had a short and sharp way of dealing with industrial unrest. James M'Neil, an old serf miner who died in 1844, declared that in his day refractory miners, their necks encased in iron collars, were nailed to the stoop side or to a prop for a day at least, and that on other occasions insubordinates were brought to a reasonable frame of mind by the process of "tying his hands in front of the gin horse, and compelling him to run round the gin gang back foremost before the horse when winding the coal up the pit-head."

For the student who wants to know how the great stretches of Scotch common land were stolen, who wants to learn something of the struggle between feudalism and the old clan system, or of the tugs-of-war that went on in the towns between the oligarchy of merchants and the "lower orders," who is curious about the bloodthirsty cruelties practised by the pious Scotch Kirk Sessions, or who wants to know the painful history of the Scotch working class, *this is the book*. Those who cannot afford 10s. 6d. should pray for a cheap edition—or perhaps it would be quicker to worry the Forward Publishing Co. with post-cards on the subject.

J. P. M. M.

#### NINEPENNY-WORTH FOR 9D.

*Increased Production.* By GEO. DAGGAR. (S.L. Press. 9d. net, 11½d. post-paid.)

This little book provides, at a very low price, a large amount of useful information on the subject of increased output, now being preached to the workers by millionaires and Trade Union leaders as the one and only cure for the problems confronting society to-day.

After drawing attention to the point that "the chief factor recognised by the champions and supporters of increased productivity is the unfettered introduction of machinery," Daggar examines the historical origin of the machine industry, and reminds us of the tragedy embodied in the gradual extinction of the English hand-loom weavers as affording proof of "the high price expressed in blood and tears that the workers have paid for progress." He does not merely assert, but backs it up by actual evidence, that increased output under our present system of capitalist control does not mean more prosperity for the workers. On the contrary, new and improved methods of production are a means for concentrating wealth into the hands of a few, not distributing it among the many.

The greater the production, the greater the amount taken by the capitalist class. As our

author bluntly puts it, "What is the advantage to the workers if £1,000,000 extra wealth is created, if one individual is permitted to take £999,000 worth of it?" Those Labour leaders who advocate "increased production" are shown to be under the illusion that the capitalist is in industry for the good of the community.

Daggar proves conclusively that not "increased production," but control of the productive powers already developed should be the aim of the working class. This book is emphatically worth while.

R. H.

#### A SLOW MARCH

*The March Towards Socialism.* By E. MILHAUD; translated by H. J. Stenning. (Leonard Parsons. 8s. 6d.)

This march towards Socialism refers to the gradual transformation of private ownership in industry to State and municipal ownership. The book is Fabian both in theme and treatment. In Webbian manner it produces statistical proof of the unequal distribution of wealth in Society—particularly with reference to France—with its attendant disastrous effect on national physique; of the failure of private ownership to serve human needs and the better service rendered by State ownership. On the critical side the book may impress those people who have withheld their support from the Labour Movement because it has not been statistically proved to them that the workers are being exploited and are doing the world's work without an adequate return for it. However, if these people have more than a mythical existence they certainly are few in number.

On the constructive side the book is even less attractive and is hardly likely to arouse much enthusiasm in English working-class circles. Petty bourgeois ideology peeps out in the shape of that personification of the lower middle-class—the consumer. Cheap milk, cheap railway service, cheap groceries—cheapness is the hallmark of the middle-class mind, which measures social progress by the cheapening of services. The book may find readers among the "milk and water" municipalisers, but is hardly likely to find its way to many Marxists' bookshelves.

G. P.

#### GOOD MATERIAL

*A History of British Socialism.* By M. BEER. Vol. II. From Chartism to 1920. (Bell, 15s.)

In his first volume Mr. Beer gave us a very painstaking and sympathetic record of the Socialist pioneers produced by the Industrial Revolution, and of such earlier figures as Wycliffe, John Ball, More, and the Levellers and Diggers led by Lilburne and Winstanley. In Vol. II he traces the history of Chartism through every stage of its development, and sketches the warring personalities of its leaders; proceeding then to tell the story of subsequent events in the British Socialist Movement down to our own day.

Many personal touches enliven these later chapters, in which Daniel de Leon, Tom Mann, Robert Blatchford and many others make their appearance. Mr. Beer is a Revisionist, worshipping at the shrine of the Webbs, and somewhat unsympathetic towards "the catastrophic theories" of Marxism. But he is always expositor rather than critic, and his narrative is admirably detached and well-balanced. He has a gift for neat expression—for example this, about Keir Hardie, "He had little tuition, but a good deal of intuition." He quotes a remark made to him personally by Professor Beesly—"Marx was a walking encyclopædia, in knowledge of history, economics and philosophy having hardly an equal." Plebeians will note the reference to their own movement's part in creating "the revolutionary ferment" of to-day.

Class lecturers will here find much material, and the book (27s. 6d. the two vols.) should certainly be in every class library.

M. S.

#### CURRENT PHILOSOPHY

*Essays in Common-Sense Philosophy.* By C. E. M. JOAD. (Swarthmore Press. 8s.)

*Essays in Common-Sense Philosophy* concludes by referring to "the irrationality of endeavouring to make others see truth as we see it"; which provokes the question—"Then why devote 250 odd pages to the attempt?"

Mr. Joad is a young writer of the Guild School who has undertaken to discuss philosophy in terms intelligible to the "plain man"; on his success in this philanthropic enterprise we cannot congratulate him. The philosophic controversies of the last hundred years have mainly registered the attempt to readjust the mind to the enormous extension of scientific knowledge in machine-made civilisation, and the author has evidently insufficient familiarity with any branch of mathematical or general science to equip him for the task. He therefore falls between two stools; for he will neither satisfy the traditional metaphysician, nor find favour with any essentially modern school of thought.

Thus, in his introduction, he recognises that there lurks behind the traditional systems the ubiquitous and altogether unjustifiable assumption of an extra-cosmic purpose in terms of which the universe is a self-explanatory whole. He even verbally admits that when this is realised the scope of philosophy becomes severely limited. He concedes, in fact, sufficient to indicate that the whole content of actual knowledge falls within either the methodological (mathematics and logic) or positive (physical and social) sciences. So that it would seem sufficiently clear that the problems with which the traditional philosophers busy themselves are either unreal, being based on assumptions of their own making (and therefore not worth bothering about) or else fall within the legitimate scope of scientific inquiry. This is the position adopted fifty years ago by the Socialist philosopher Joseph Dietzgen; it is also that of the scientific philosophers, Loeb, Mach, Ostwald, Pearson, of our own time.

It is not, however, as objects about which experience is necessary for sound judgement that Mr. Joad discusses the meaning of Beauty, Monism, the Theory of the State, etc. As the concluding sentence suggests, the purpose of the book is rather artistic than serious; not that the problems themselves are intrinsically trivial. There is a problem of Beauty; and if Mr. Joad had, on the basis of recent advances in psychology by Freud and others, given some general account of the way in which what he called "the perception of beauty" is related to instinct and external factors operating on the mind, he would have made a contribution to its solution. Instead, we find such journalistic rhetoric as: "The form of Beauty exists independent and transcendent. It is neither in space nor time, and is, therefore, eternal and immutable."

Similarly there is a profitable object for study in the Theory of the State; and Mr. Joad would have made a serviceable addition to contemporary knowledge if he had attempted to correlate the various rationalisations men have fabricated about their social conduct with the changing economic conditions to which they have been subject. Instead, we are regaled with such pious reflections as: "The State is no longer a statically administrative body. As conditions change, and change mainly from economic causes, it must pass laws to check the blind effects of those changes on individuals. As the moral sense of the community progresses it must make laws to interpret the progress by imposing a higher standard of minimum conduct upon individuals. Thus in both the economic and the ethical sphere, the State is concerned with the general background or conditions of the actions appropriate to those spheres. . . ."

Is it not time for the world's proletariat to take over the universities? . . . This book in truth sums up the difference in mental attitude between the Guild philosophy and our own. Guildsmen are looking into the past and arguing about what *ought* to be; Bolshevik social theory seeks by a scientific understanding of Society to discover what *can* be.

P. L. E. B.

#### (1) GUILDS. (2) HAY

*Guild Socialism.* By G. C. FIELD. *The Voice of the People.* By J. L. STOCKS. (Wells, Gardner, Darton, Ltd. 5s. each, net.)

Mr. Field's book claims to be a criticism of Guild Socialism by one who is opposed to it. It is rather verbose and cloudy, and is written in a foolishly petulant tone, yet there is occasional good matter in it. For example, he is quite justified in saying that Guildsmen get muddled and contradictory in describing the details of Utopia.

But as a whole the book is nearly valueless. What a desolation there must be in the brain of a man who thinks that when Socialists complain that "Labour is regarded as a commodity" they are attacking the employers for a nasty frame of mind! And what is the use of devoting whole pages of a very small book to complaining that G. D. H. Cole's manners are rough and rude?

One wishes, after reading this book, that they were much rougher and ruder.

The only point on which Mr. Field scores is in discussing the details of the future Guild State. The position of the consumer, the finance of the Guild, mobility of labour under the Guild, the possibility of inventions—there are innumerable and entirely profitless questions which Guildsmen insist on discussing. But when Cole or Hobson is drawing a picture of the future society, beautiful as a work of Michael Angelo, and all divided into compartments, anyone else can claim *his* jerry-built structure is better, and this useless argument will go on for ever. Once Guildsmen start regarding "the Guilds" not as a possible form of the victory of the proletariat, but as a "system" to be put into operation like

proportional representation or prohibition, then they collapse miserably to the level of any one else whose main occupation is fitting together jig-saws. Cole's *Social Theory*, for example, is all jig-saw, and he has a chapter on jig-saws in that otherwise able book, *Self-Government in Industry*. And, therefore, he now meets a just fate, being jeered at by a provincial professor.

Dull though Mr. Field's book is, it is not as horrible as J. L. Stocks'. This book (properly enough it consists of lectures delivered to the patient W.E.A.) is all about democracy. It doesn't consider anything outside democracy as possible, and is devoted to considering devices for making "democracy" more "democratic." It is a pompous and empty book, the sort of book which leaves a taste like hay in the mouth.

R. W. P.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### "NORDICUS" AND SOME CRITICS

"These [characters] acquired during the life of the individual, cannot be transmitted by heredity to the offspring." (October PLEBS, p. 173.)

**D**EAR COMRADE,—This point of the non-transmission of acquired characteristics, which appears to be taken for granted by your contributor "Nordicus," raises a doubt in my mind.

The basis of my objection is this: Every single characteristic or attribute of man, physical or mental, must at some time or other in the evolution of the race have been acquired. If it had not been possible to inherit adaptations to environment brought about during the life of the individual, life would surely still be at the stage of the amoeba.

How else did bird evolve from fish, and how, indeed, above all, did man secure his inheritance of the upright position from which ensued consecutive speech, and consequently thought in speech-form instead of only in picture forms, which is the whole basis of the supremacy of *homo*? And, if it was once possible to hand down acquired characteristics, when did the race lose this ability?

Unless led off on the dualistic spiritual sideline, we must admit that thought is only the result of that material-mechanism, the brain. Brain and nerves being of the same material and subject to the same laws of evolution as the rest of the body, I challenge anyone to say it is not possible to evolve a higher type of mentality than the present.

"Nordicus" says:—"The nature of man is made up of his hereditary stock-in-trade—*i.e.*, his reflexes, instincts, etc., on the one hand," and acquired characteristics on the other.

Now what are reflexes and instincts but inherited memory? As children, we have painfully to acquire the skill of what later on become reflex processes. So in the childhood of the race, certain skill has been acquired and has been inherited in the form of reflex processes. Is it not possible that any single pre-eminently striking

experience or scene in the life of an individual could so burn itself in (with the greater facility the more nervously susceptible the individual) as to leave its register on the mind-plate of a descendant or descendants?

The whole subject is of immense interest, and as from the contrary point of view it is held to be still debateable whether instincts are really inherited or whether they are processes taught post-natally (as, it is argued, in the case of the songs and nesting of birds) I should very much like to know what is the latest scientific opinion on this point, as my own conjectures are only those of an amateur.

MADELEINE STEWART WERTHEIM

DEAR COMRADE,—I read "Nordicus's" article in the October PLEBS with great interest. On some points I disagree.

We Communists challenge the sham Liberal institutions which at present go under the name of Democracy; but we surely believe in Democracy, *i.e.*, in community rule, after the overthrow of capitalism? What else is workers control but *real* democracy?

Again; admitted that men are born unequal. But do not various material conditions play a part in this? And shall we not have it in our power to alter these material conditions, and so change the millions who have had all creative imagination crushed out of them by capitalism into free and useful citizens of a Communist Republic?

I don't like "Nordicus's" tone about "these dull people." We don't want to create yet another ruling caste—of super-intelligent people—and have to begin our struggle for freedom all over again. And why should the dull gravitate to the bottom under Communism? What bottom?

Yours fraternally,

S. WARR, JUN.

DEAR COMRADE,—Can you find me space for a few lines of earnest (if uncultured) protest against "Nordicus's" attempt to sidetrack the Plebs movement into the wilderness of "Psycho-

Analysis"? If I mistake not, the same hand was responsible for the article in the April number on "The Importance of Biological Studies," which also attempted to make this modern "witchcraft" a recognised subject in the Plebs curriculum.

The Plebs cannot afford to waste time exploring blind alleys, however noisome. To my mind this pseudo-science of morbidity and neuroticism is futile and nasty. The "Psycho-Analyst" finds bawdry in stones, sex in the running brooks, and filth in everything. I have in my possession a pamphlet by a doctor which, by "Psycho-Analytical" methods, traces class consciousness to sexual perversion.

I hope I have said enough to warn proletarian students off this unsavoury subject.

Yours, etc.,

ERNEST JOHNS

"NORDICUS" writes:—In reply to Comrade Wertheim; I used the term "acquired characters" in the sense usually adopted by biologists since Weismann published his theory of their non-inheritance—that is to say, characters acquired by an individual organism during its lifetime, by the action on it of its environment. Such are the mental qualities mentioned in the sentence preceding the one she quotes; such, on the physical side, are the massive muscles of the blacksmith or the poor physique of the slum child. These characters are regarded by the majority of biologists as incapable of being transmitted to offspring.

The above use of the word excludes characters which arise—we do not yet know how—by some internal change in the organism, to which the terms "variations" and "mutations" are applied. These are the characters we make use of in selective breeding of cattle, poultry, plants, etc.; and they are obviously transmitted from generation to generation. Our present ignorance of the origin, in the first instance, of these characters does not, of course, warrant our adopting the "dualistic spiritual sideline" deprecated by Com. Wertheim; indeed, to do so would be to revert to the level of the American Indian (instanced by Goddard) who, unable to understand an eclipse of the sun, assumed that a large animal was eating it up!

With regard to instincts and reflexes, recent biological and psychological investigation indicates that they are not inherited memories, but tendencies to act, or mechanisms of action, which, arising first as "chance" variations or mutations, were favoured in the process of natural selection if their presence was useful to the individual or the race. In some cases (for example, the peculiar instincts of the sterile workers of ants, bees, etc.) it is clear that, as these instincts are absent in the males and queens, which alone leave progeny, their transmission cannot be due to inherited memory. The processes painfully acquired in childhood, which afterwards become automatic, e.g., reading aloud, riding a bicycle, etc., are usually called *habits*, to distinguish them from inborn reflexes.

The case of the nest-building and song of birds probably involves two factors, an inborn tendency to build a nest, and certain environmental influences—experiences, education, imitation. (For a useful survey of the case of nest-building see Karl Groos, *The Play of Animals*, translated by E. L. Baldwin, pp. 152-157.) This liability of the inborn instincts to be modified in their operation by experience (intelligent action), and even for their effective operation to be impossible without the co-operation of the mechanism of associative memory, is the distinguishing mark of the behaviour of the higher land vertebrates, culminating in man, who owes to it that versatility which has enabled him to create the economic environment (tools, etc.) by means of which he subdues the forces of nature.

In reply to Comrade Warr's point about "Democracy"; I used the word firstly for democracy *as it is*; and secondly for the democracy of Liberal theory, which is based on the assumption that man's actions, including his political opinions and the way he will vote, are determined by reasoned considerations, and amenable to education. I am inclined to restrict the word to these uses, and not to try to extend it to workers control, in a communist society, which is a later and probably a higher idea.

I think there is something to be said for avoiding using a name that has become associated with abuses, for something that is different from, better than, and even the opposite of those abuses. For that reason I welcome the word ergatocracy. (Compare the terminology that calls the high altruistic ideals of the atheist revolutionary "Christianity," or those natural phenomena of nature not yet expressed in terms of the laws of causation "God.")

The question of the influence of environment I have already dealt with above.

The last sentence of my review was intended as a challenge and to elicit statements of opinion as to the organisation of the future communist society, not as a scheme for a ruling caste. I suggest that it is probable—correct me if I am on the wrong track—that in a communist society developed on the ruins of an industrial capitalist State every man's time will be divided into a portion in which he takes his share (if necessary, under compulsion) in the necessary work of the community, and a portion in which he is free for self-development. The degree of freedom which the individual will enjoy in the latter will depend, I take it, very largely on the degree of efficiency, discipline, and non-interference by the unintelligent and ignorant which exists in the former. (I refer to ignorance relative to the work in question—e.g., a dentist's ignorance of coal-mining, or a distinguished general's of economics.) To this end, I should imagine, the community will make use of such devices (now being used by capitalist employers for their own profit) as testing the individual's fitness for particular types of work, and excluding from particular jobs persons shown by

scientific tests to be unfit for them.\* Such devices, in a communist society, will mean less hours of necessary work for all, or more of the good things of life to be enjoyed by all. Therefore, I anticipate that the community will use discrimination in choosing what individuals hew coal, what individuals tend complicated machines, what individuals are taught to act as shorthand typists, cooks, airmen, teachers, overseers, etc. Is it too much to expect that at least a similar selection will be exercised in choosing those individuals whose job will be to give expression to the will of the community in matters which in a Class-war State are called "Government," such as regulating the relations between industrial, craft, geographical and other groups, regulating production, and settling those personal and group disputes which, in an imperfectly socialised animal like man, are not likely to disappear at once.

As to the question of individuals being at the bottom, so long as human beings differ in inborn characters, men will classify their fellow men according to their degree of fitness for the business in hand. In the unit of communist society, as in the T.U. branch, or the group of men in a workshop, there will be some who take and show themselves fit to take responsibility and initiative, and some who are mere passengers, or even regard such effort as waste of time that might be devoted to the gratification of other tastes. In such a group, and as regards its particular functions, the latter would be "at the bottom." If, on the other hand, it were a question of picking a cricket eleven or a tug-of-war team, a different set of values would be introduced, and the man who was top in one classification might be bottom in the other.

Letters which challenge statements of fact or theory, or question expressions of opinion, like the first two above, are useful both to the writer challenged (who is forced to examine and criticise what he has said) and to other readers, to whom they furnish fresh information and new points of view.

Comrade Johns' contribution serves no such useful purpose. It simply gives an outlet, in emotional and rhetorical language, to a particular individual's dislike of one of the several methods of investigating the working of the mind (psycho-analysis), and one of the several theories of the nature of the prime motive of action (the Freudian theory of Sex). To call this method and theory names relieves Com. Johns' feelings.

Least any reader of the PLEBS should be discouraged by his outburst from seriously considering the importance of a scientific study of the science of behaviour (psychology), I may point out that the particular theory which finds in the sexual impulse the driving motive for most of all human action, is one of the most controversial theories in psychology; and that, the question of its utility or otherwise, as an aid to the study of man's reactions to his economic

\* For an account of the nature and practical utility of some of these tests see B. Muscio, *Industrial Psychology* (Routledge, 6s. 6d.)

environment, does not in any way affect the question of the utility, for this purpose, of a knowledge of modern psychology as a whole.

#### PROHIBITION

DEAR COMRADE,—Allow me to protest mildly against "Nordicus's" attempt to inveigle the "Left Wing" movement into taking sides on the Prohibition question. I am not going to dispute the fact that to the man whose lot is damnably unjust alcohol does offer a way out; but I deny that "Prohibition will release a volume of creative material which will be a real strength to the class-conscious left wing."

Man's emotional needs in this imperfect world of ours demand some diversion, some form of intoxication. The Methodist gets this by Bible-punching. Some Socialists get it by chanting an Athanasian creed, "Whosoever will not believe, the same shall be damned." The ordinary man gets it by alcohol, or by excessive sexualism.

It is a moot point, indeed, whether the latter is not a greater "dope" than excessive alcoholism. Why not, then, support a movement for the prohibition of sexual intercourse because excessive sexualism stunts reason, and robs the movement of the "creative rebel?" Why not prohibit water because a number of people are foolish enough to get drowned in it?

Our only concern with the Prohibition question would be one of revolutionary tactics in time of crisis. It might then be like our tactic of dictatorship, a necessary measure. But none of us like dictatorship or prohibition as anything save as temporary measures made necessary by circumstances.

Meanwhile, whilst capitalism exists let us keep off the question.

Yours fraternally, A. E. COOK

[If the Methodist finds alcohol unnecessary and satisfies his "emotional needs" by Bible-punching, why should not the proletarian satisfy his emotional needs by way of a more highly-developed class-consciousness?—Ed., PLEBS.]

#### ESPERANTO

DEAR COMRADE,—You are looking for new features to help Pleb students. Among the other classes running in Liverpool, Glasgow and elsewhere are classes in Esperanto. Your space, of course, must be mainly occupied with the primary subjects—History and Economics. But could you not spare a corner for students of Esperanto, which, by the way, is now officially recognised as the language of the Third International, and which some of us feel certain is going to be of immense service to the international working-class movement?

Yours fraternally, SKORO

[To meet the expressed wishes of several readers we have asked Mr. P. J. Cameron, a competent Esperantist (and a Pleb) to contribute monthly a column of matter in Esperanto, consisting of items of interest to Plebeians.—Ed. PLEBS.]

## A WORD TO THE GOVERNORS OF THE LABOUR COLLEGE

DEAR COMRADE,—I was exceedingly glad to see in the October PLEBS the announcement that the Governors of the Labour College had sent a special representative to Russia to report on methods of proletarian education in that country. I trust this will result in the publication of a report and recommendations, which latter I suggest ought to be drawn up by the staff of the College, in consultation, if need be, with representatives of the provincial classes.

Now that the College is financially "on its feet," it is high time that it devoted serious consideration to a whole series of problems concerning teaching *methods*, as distinct from its *aims and policy*. Hitherto, as one can readily understand, more immediately urgent questions have occupied all its time and energy. But in order to make the most of the College, and of its educational *principles*, it is essential that such questions as (i) method of selecting students; (ii) length of residence at the College; (iii) specialisation in particular subjects or for particular purposes; (iv) methods of tuition—lectures and essay-writing not being the only possible ways and means of study—should be fully considered and discussed.

One sympathises with the natural reluctance of a Board of Governors, all busy men with other work to do, to tackle such problems. But they will surely be acting very shortsightedly—and very uneconomically—if, having taken over the control of an educational institution, they do not devise schemes for developing its efficiency, and, therefore, its value to their organisations, to the utmost; and if, having got together a staff of men with a long experience as students and teachers, they do not afford those men whatever temporary relief from routine work may be necessary to enable them to devote some time to the discussion of such schemes. Yours, etc., A PLEB

## PEASANTS IN POLAND

DEAR COMRADE,—May I add a postscript to my review last month of the Labour Delegation's Report on Russia? The difficulty of obtaining foodstuffs from the peasants is referred to in the Report and is always a prominent feature of anti-Soviet attacks in the capitalist Press. But this peasant-cum-foodstuff difficulty is *not* confined to Soviet Russia. The problem is also encountered in the new Austria and in Poland. In Poland in the early part of this year the Government were devising new and stringent methods of "food control" and distribution. The farmers (the peasants so-called) were so incensed at the "onerous" terms that their leader, Witos (now

but not then Prime Minister), threatened in the Diet that his friends would *refuse to grow food except for their own personal necessities*. This speech met very rightly with vociferous denunciation even from the Extreme Right.

Yours, etc., A. P. L.

## PROPAGANDA: WHOSE?

DEAR COMRADE,—On September 17 last, the *Daily Herald* published a paragraph about a leaflet which was being distributed by the Mines Dept. of the Board of Trade just before the Coal Strike. It was headed "No. 153: A Word to the Wife," and, to put it bluntly and briefly, it was a piece of anti-strike propaganda. The only indication of its origin was the words "Harrison, Jehring and Co., Printers, 11-15, Emerald Street, W.C.1"; and the *Herald* quite rightly asked why, if it was an "official" leaflet, it was not printed at the Stationery Office; who was paying for it; and where one might procure Nos. 1-152.

A Plebeian, noting this, wrote to Messrs. Harrison, Jehring and Co., and received this reply, which will interest miner-readers of the PLEBS:—

Dear Sir,—We received your card this morning, but as the only circulars *re* Coal Trouble we have printed have been on *behalf of the Coal Association we have sent your card to them.*

Yours faithfully,

HARRISON, JEHRING & CO., LTD.

October 7, 1920.

That answers part of the *Herald's* questions. With regard to the query about Nos. 1-152; the writer has in his possession anonymously published pamphlets numbered 15 (*Black Coat Labour*), 16 (*What's That*), 17 (*The Country and "Labour"*), 17A (*Publicity Manipulation*), and 18 (*Our Dictators of Labour and Germany*), all of which, as well as several un-numbered leaflets, are printed by the Boswell Printing Co., Ltd., East Temple Chambers, 2 Whitefriars Street, E.C.4, or 1 & 2 Plough Court, E.C.4. Can any Pleb throw further light on this very clever anti-working-class propaganda, or inform us whether the above-named are part of the series, 1-152?

SENTINEL.

[Another exciting 20-pp. pamphlet which has come our way recently is *The Red Plot*, by one Oldstock Ryder—and the mentality of the author is very evidently that of an old stock-rider. The only clue to the origin here is the imprint—"Waddington, Ltd., London, W.C."—Ed. PLEBS.]

## STUDENTS' PAGE

Q. (1)—Does transportation add to the value of a commodity? Or is transportation "dead" expenses of capital, as such reducing the surplus value of the capitalist?

A.—The labour of transportation and storage, if socially necessary, does add to the value of a commodity. The commodity is not fully pro-

duced until it is placed in the market. It needs "the additional process of production of the transportation industry." (See *Capital*, Vol. II, pp. 169-172.) It is unnecessary to explain that the labour spent in carrying coal to Newcastle would not add value, because socially unnecessary. What is more puzzling is that the price of a

ton of coal is often the same at the pit-mouth as it is, say, 50 or 100 miles away. But what has happened is that, owing to a local monopoly, the cost of transportation is averaged over the whole output irrespective of the place of the sale of various portions. Naturally, the individual non-transporting capitalist wishes that he was next door to the market, forgetful of the fact that, if his rivals were similarly placed he would have no advantage. It follows that if the express owner, the railroad director and the shipowner are themselves productive capitalists they, instead of reducing the surplus value of other capitalists, take to themselves the unpaid labour or surplus value created by the railway worker, the seaman and other workers engaged in transport. The trouble behind the question arises from the confusion between capital engaged in buying and selling (*commercial capital*) which, like financial or banking capital, functions in circulation; and *industrial capital*, which we have shown includes the capital of the transport industry. (See Students' Page in July PLEBS.) Mistakes are pardonable because often the merchant not only buys the commodity from the industrial capitalist, but before selling it has to continue its production by transporting it. The way is now clear for a further question (next month) as to the worker engaged by the commercial capitalist.

Q. (2)—A Stockport student is troubled by the Marxian use of the word "wealth," and Ablett's definition (p. 16 *Easy Outlines*):—"Wealth is merely the material upon which human labour is expended." Then he asks:—*What was produced (1) in the Primitive Commune, (2) under Chattel Slavery, and (3) under Feudalism? Is wealth something apart from human energy?*

A.—Confusion often arises from the fact that in Economics (as in other sciences) words are used with definite meanings which are also used with wider and more general meanings in everyday talk. Let me remind our comrade that Ablett is not writing an encyclopædia, or discussing wealth in the Ruskinian sense, but is, in a chapter headed "Commodities," definitely examining capitalist production, in which it is necessary to distinguish between natural wealth—the earth, timber, minerals, sunsets, fresh air and such like—and the economic value given to some of those things by human labour. If he will carefully read the context, he will see that the use values produced in each of the social systems he mentions are also here taken for

granted. The value of a commodity which matters is its *exchange value*.

In the general idea of wealth are included natural wealth, economic wealth, social wealth, individual wealth, mineral wealth and so on. Human energy, not natural or animal energy, is responsible even for the idea and the word for wealth. In that sense wealth is not something absolutely apart from human energy. Opening the eyes and walking up a mountain to enjoy the wealth of a glorious sunset or consciously inbreathing the wealth of fresh air are all forms of human energy inseparable from the particular "wealths." These, however, are not studied in Economics which is concerned with "economic wealth," or to use the more definite economic term "value." Here natural wealth is truly "merely the material."

Q. (3)—E. A. Oliver wants to know if there is anything in "the exchange argument" as explaining why Germany at the present moment can export commodities to this country to sell at lower prices than the home manufacturer.

A.—Yes there is. Owing to an inflated currency, huge indebtedness to other countries, and the disturbed state and uncertain future of production in Germany, the exchange rate is very heavily against her. The British £ now (November 11, 1920) will buy (about) 300 marks instead of about 20 of "par," which means that the purchasing power of £1 is approximately £15 in Berlin.

Hence an article sold by the British manufacturer for £1 can be sold in this country by the German trader for a smaller sum, because when he translates the smaller sum from British money into marks he will, despite export price restrictions, still receive more marks than he would have got for the same article if he had sold at home.

In some future PLEBS we hope to treat the whole question of inflation and foreign exchange, with all the complications of the present abnormal post-war situation, as simply as the matter will allow.

A. HUGHES writes that a big cause of increased—and still increasing—prices is the growth of huge combines. He quotes the findings of the Government Committee (Cmd. 563) concerning the profits obtained in the cotton, electric lamp, tobacco and matchmaking industries, and instances other Trusts which are international in their scope. The moral? The workers must control these monopolies or be controlled by them. Choose—"Dominate or be damned."

M. S.

## NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT

### BRANCH DIRECTORY

**A**NY Plebs League member willing to form a branch in his or her locality should write to the Secretary at once, and get his address added to this list.

**BIRMINGHAM.**—A. W. Morris, 58, Colville Road, Small Heath.

**BRADFORD.**—Mrs. A. Coates, 141 Girlington Road.

**BURY.**—J. Ainsworth, 24 Openshaw Street.

**CHESTERFIELD.**—F. Rogers, Rock Side, Brimington Road, Tapton.

**COVENTRY.**—H. Hinksman, 11 George Eliot Road.

**DERBY.**—W. Ellison, 184 Brighton Road.

**GARNANT.**—D. R. Owen, Stepney Villas.

**HALIFAX.**—Miss A. Crabtree, 1 Tyson Street, Parkinson Lane.

LEIGH.—T. Brookes, 41 Tunnicliffe's Old Row, Firs Lane.

LIVERPOOL.—D. O'Hagan, 74B Limekiln Lane.

LONDON.—HACKNEY—G. Vandome, 38 Queensdown Road, E.5. STRATFORD—A. E. Dennington, 518 Romford Road, Forest Gate, E.7. HAMPSTEAD—Miss Ivy Collins, 6 Brookside Road, Golders Green, N. WALTHAMSTOW—G. W. Brain, 51 Cleveland Park Avenue, E.17. WOOLWICH—L. Barnard, 84 Granby Road, Eltham, BARKING—R. F. Martin, 47 Clarkson Road, Barking. EDMONTON—G. H. Crouch, 11 Warwick Road, Edmonton. FINSBURY PARK—W. Begley, 318 Green Lanes, N.W.4. EARL'S COURT—D. Wyndham Thomas, 13 Penywern Road, S.W.5.

MANCHESTER.—J. McGee, Woodlands Lodge, Crescent Road, Crumpsall.

MANSFIELD.—G. J. Williams, 48 St. Andrews Terrace, Littleworth.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.—T. A. Jackson, Soc. Rooms, Royal Arcade.

NORWICH.—A. Segon, 41 Stafford Street.

PONTNEWNYDD.—W. G. Davies, Myrtle House, Pontrepiod.

SHEFFIELD.—J. Madin, 109 Devonshire Street.

TREDEGAR.—F. W. Francis, 132 Charles Street, Tredegar.

WORTHING.—H. H. Hellier, Claremont, Browning Road.

*Branches are urged to concentrate on organising and increasing sales of PLEBS in their localities. Who'll break the record?*

\* \* \*

A full report of all the classes now running would mean a 144-pp. PLEBS instead of a 32-pp. one. Everywhere work is in full swing, and it is safe to say that if every student bought the PLEBS we should go up to our 7,500 mark at one swipe—and beyond. So it's up to you, class-secretaries and tutors!

\* \* \*

All the big centres are booming. LONDON, where the Council for I.W.-C.E. was only formed this summer, has already 33 classes going. EDINBURGH, which last month reported 490 students, notifies us of 617 at the beginning of November, and the sale of PLEBS in the "East windy, West endy" city has risen from 11 dozen to 20 dozen in a month. LIVERPOOL, MANCHESTER and SHEFFIELD are all booming. CARDIFF, which appears to be bent on showing the Rhondda that it (the Rhondda) is *not* the only pebble on the Welsh beach, has a class going very successfully, and we hope to hear of a Plebs branch in being there in the near future. Local comrades have been busy putting the I.W.-C.E. point of view to the Trades and Labour Council; and the class is being carried on in the Labour Hall (Tutor, T. Watkins; subject, Industrial History; all particulars from Allan Pope, 1 Ruthin Gardens, Cathays).

The TREDEGAR class has made a business-like start by circularising every T.U. lodge and branch in the district. Two comrades are to follow this up by addressing the branches. This is the right line of action. A speaker in the branch is worth two letters in the branch-secretary's waste-paper basket!

And not only are Plebs busy in the industrial centres. In Easy-going Essex, for instance, CHELMSFORD has just got going (in collaboration with COLCHESTER, reported last month). All particulars from P. F. Pollard, 23 London Road, Chelmsford. . . . And in Glorious but Reactionary Devon—subject of songs, but not usually associated with militant proletarianism—a plucky Pleb has got a good class going at TAUNTON. His name is A. W. Lovey, and his address 29 Station Road. If you live in them parts, write to him.

\* \* \*

J. W. Hudson, Socialist Institute, Union Street, NELSON, will be glad to hear from Plebs wishing to form a branch, or from students desirous of attending classes. . . . J. Abbott, 10 Turner Street, KEARSLEY (Lancs.), would likewise be glad to hear from like-minded ones in his district.

\* \* \*

Some more samples of the sort of letters which cheer us up! The first from Scotland, from the COATBRIDGE Communist Party:—"We have just begun a Science Class for branch members, and we find in the PLEBS a magazine which will stimulate to incessant study and comprehensive knowledge of working-class conditions, as well as counteract the gush served up by the luminaries of the Impartial camp." The second from a Cambridge undergrad:—"May I congratulate you on the new PLEBS, which I think is an admirable combination of simplicity and academic knowledge, of good style and proletarianism. I look forward to sitting monthly at the feet of the Gamaliel of proletarian education!" . . . Telegraphic address, Gamaliel, Penywern Road! What?

\* \* \*

One or two correspondents, replying to our request for suggestions and criticisms, have urged that the PLEBS is not a good name for the magazine; not sufficiently explanatory, and so forth. But surely it has corresponding advantages—it's short, and noticeable, and easily remembered, and provokes questions, etc. And in any case it would be rather doubtful policy to change it now, just when it's beginning to be famous! . . . What about *The Highbrow* (vide the *Times'* reference to us); or *The Gamaliel of Prolet. Education*?

\* \* \*

The BLAYDON Class sends us a syllabus of an elementary course on "Trade Unionism: its History and Future" (by W. Pearson), which is worth reprinting in full as an interesting attempt to solve the problem of a general introductory course for beginners:—

(1) What Education means to the worker; (2) The source of wages and profits; (3) The Class



Struggle; (4) The organisation of Labour; (5) Reform or Revolution; (6) The nerve centres of Socialism—the State, Morality, the Class Struggle; (7) Maxims for Revolutionaries; (8) The Historical origin of the working class; (9) The Industrial Revolution; (10) Trade Unionism in the 18th and early 19th centuries; (11) Trade Unionism 1825–1835; (12) The Chartist Movement and the Anti-Corn Law League; (13) Trade Unionism 1850–1900; (14) The Industrial Unrest of the 20th century; (15) Rise of the Labour Party; (16) Rise and Progress of Industrial Unionism; (17) Organisation by Industry: Facing the Future.

tunities of joining in controversies in the local Press? And when you write, will you adroitly work in a reference to the PLEBS—"the well-known organ of etc., etc." ?

\* \* \*

We must hold over until next month the full list of those kind friends who have sent donations, big or small, recently. . . . Increasing pressure of work in the PLEBS Office and eyetrouble on the part of the Hon. Sec. has necessitated (see p. iii of cover) the engagement of a paid clerical assistant. Promptitude in paying accounts, and increased orders, will therefore be doubly appreciated henceforth. W. H.

We are constantly being asked by individual Plebs what they can do to help. Here are some examples of commendable activity:—The Labour College, North-Eastern Area (Northumberland and Durham) has just issued a leaflet to classes urging all Senior Classes to form Plebs branches, and to push the sale of the PLEBS. The leaflet concludes with a series of questions, which include:—"Are you taking the PLEBS? If so, how many? If not, how many will the class take?" If District Secretaries will get busy on these lines our circulation will soon be up. . . . A MIDDLESBORO' comrade, a member of the R.C.A., was so struck on Millar's "Ten-Minutes' Talks" last month, that he had it typed, duplicated and distributed to 350 Union members. If he'd only added a note, "Reprinted from the PLEBS, 6d. monthly," he would have helped the Mag. as well as the cause generally. Can you use the "Ten-Minutes' Talks" to interest new readers? . . . A BIRKENHEAD friend sends a cutting of an admirable letter contributed by him to a local newspaper, putting the case for the PLEBS (v. the W.E.A.) ably and well. Do you take all oppor-

"DOINGS" AT RUSKIN  
**A** SECTION of the Ruskin College students has been—and still is—dissatisfied with the educational policy of that institution. At the beginning of this term a Marxian group was formed, and at a recent college debate members of this group championed the declaration—"That the emancipation of the working-class can only be secured by a policy of independent working-class education." A lively debate ensued, the final vote being: For, 20; Against, 23. After the debate was formally closed, discussions continued in various parts of the hall, and, according to our report, the college porter had to intervene and separate more than one pair of disputants.

During the first week of the Coal Strike the house-meeting unanimously agreed to send a "good luck" wire to the M.F.G.B. But the Principal refused his sanction to the message going as from the College; and it was accordingly despatched in the name of the students. And Ruskin is a *Labour* College! S. L.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

The ANNUAL PLEBS MEET will be held about the middle of February (at a week-end) in SHEFFIELD or BRADFORD. Branches are urged to forward resolutions for the Agenda without delay. A preliminary Agenda (and full details as to date, place, etc.) will be published in the January PLEBS. Amendments, etc., can then be forwarded, and a final revised Agenda printed in the February issue.

### THE PLEBS BOOKSHELF

**I** WANT to recommend very strongly to all senior students and class-library secretaries a book which I wish Craik had had time to review at length for us—*The History of Social Development*, by Dr. F. Müller-Lyer, translated by E. C. and H. A. Lake (Allen & Unwin, 18s. net). I can best briefly describe its scope by quoting a few sentences from the Introductory Notes by Professors L. T. Hobhouse and E. J. Urwick, and the Preface by the author. Prof. Hobhouse calls it "a serious attempt at an Inductive Sociology." Its aim, he says, is that of "distinguishing, describing and correlating the successive phases through which human societies have passed." The author attempts "a scientific classification of the mass of facts which the Anthropologist, the Archeologist and the

Historian proffer to the inquirer." Prof. Urwick writes of the need for a book "which should co-ordinate the general facts of social development and so furnish the student with a scheme within which to group the elements of both primitive and historical civilisation." The author himself, in his Preface, writes:—"We shall work from the sociological facts (which, speaking generally, include all people, all parts of the earth, and all times) to the phases of culture, from the phases of culture to the lines of direction of progress, from the lines of progress to the laws of cultural development." And here is a selection from his chapter-headings:—Concerning the Origin of Culture (origins of speech; reciprocal effect of speech and intellect; hand and tool; social nature of man, etc., etc.); History of the Evolution of (1) Food,

(2) The Tool, (3) Clothing, (4) Dwellings; History of the Evolution of Labour (the organisation of labour; the division of labour; distribution, etc.); The Economic Laws of Development; Causes of Economic Development (origin of the separate family, of primitive trade, of specialised industries, of developed industrial organisation, of capitalism, etc., etc.)

The book is an absolute mine of material for the student or tutor of industrial history or economic geography. Such summaries as that on pp. 95-96, "The Most Important Peoples on the Various Stages of Culture," or (pp. 130-131) "Genealogy of the Tool," or (pp. 324-325) "Synopsis of World Economic Development," ought to be re-drawn as charts for every classroom. No Pleb who buys it will want his money back. And, to forestall possible criticism, let me point out here that I objected to the price (8s. 6d.) of Jas. Clunie's book because it was issued as a *textbook*; and that I am not recommending Müller-Lyer's volume as a textbook, but as a work of reference for more advanced students. I know that 18s. is a long price. But some books are worth it; and this is one.

I must just, in conclusion, comment on the afore-mentioned Introductory Notes by Profs. Hobhouse and Urwick. It is not a little interesting to a Pleb—in view of our persistent criticism of the *methods* of orthodox social-historical teaching (quite apart from its point of view)—to find these gentlemen regretting the too general tendency for the student of sociology to concentrate on a *specialised* study of a particular period or branch of economic activity. "This method," says Prof. Hobhouse, "produces valuable special studies, but it does not give us a sociology [nor a Pleb may add, a philosophy of history]. It yields no theory of the nature and development of society as a whole, it gives no account of the general trend of civilisation." Prof. Urwick's words on the same point I have already quoted. One feels that if these gentlemen go on a very little bit further they will discover Marx—as Dr. Müller-Lyer very evidently has done.

Students of Fairgrieve's *Geography and World-Power* should make a note of a book recently published by Messrs. Black—*The Making of Europe*, by W. H. Barker and W. Rees (6s.). This is "a geographic treatment of the historical development of Europe," and I recommend it to all who want to go on from Fairgrieve's broad outlines to more intensive study. I can't resist quoting a sentence from the first chapter which shows how these modern university gentlemen—how far consciously or not I can't say—are

becoming good Marxians:—"The change of environment from grass to forest land produced a change in the lives and occupations of the people. Instead of nomads they became settlers, cultivating the lands adjacent to their new homes. Such settlements necessitated organised labour, *so that laws and customs also gradually changed.*" (Italics mine.) The book is plentifully illustrated with maps.

Two or three books to be published shortly will be of special interest to Plebs. Lenin's *Left Wing Communism* (Communist Party, 2s.) is sure of keen readers. I have had the opportunity of glancing through advance proofs of the book, which is very nicely turned out—by our own printers. . . . Grant Richards is issuing immediately a book by R. W. Postgate (of the Plebs E.C.) entitled *Revolution*, consisting of selected documents illustrating the French Revolution, Chartism, 1848, the Commune, and the Russian Revolution of 1905. We shall have a good deal more to say about this book later. It is going to be an invaluable "source-book" to use along with the PLEBS history textbook. Finally, there is *The Life and Teaching of Karl Marx*, by Max Beer (author of *A History of British Socialism*), shortly to be published by the National Labour Press. The price, it is hoped, will be 3s. 6d. If it can be issued at that it is sure of many hundreds of buyers among PLEBS readers. Books on Marx are scarce, and a new one is an event. This one was written for the Marx Centenary and has had a wide circulation in Germany. It is, I am informed, both biographical and critical.

This is an absolutely true and unvarnished record of a conversation I overheard at tea-time to-day (November 23) in a café not many yards from Fleet Street. The speakers, who sat at the next table to mine, were well-groomed, clean-shaven gentlemen with large pipes and West End accents—professional men apparently. I don't know whether they had been discussing H. G. Wells' *Sunday Express* articles. The first remark which made me sit up and notice was—"Of course, no working-man could read a book like what's-its-name—*Das Kapital*" (drawled with the true Englishman's amused contempt for a foreign name). "Simply awful stuff. Awful!" Whereupon the other man chimed in, "Well, I don't know. I met a working-chap once—started to tell me all about the Materialist-Conception-of-History—I think he called it—proved *how modern society had developed from cannibalism*. Yes. Very amusing!" . . . Our educated classes! J. F. H.

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