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THE PLEBS

AGITATE EDUCATE ORGANISE

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THE PLEBS LEAGUE

CONSTITUTION

OBJECT

To further the interests of independent working-class education as a partisan effort to improve the position of Labour in the present and to aid in the abolition of wage-slavery.

METHODS

Assisting in the formation of classes in social science, such classes to be maintained and controlled, wherever possible, by Trade Unions, Trade Councils, or other working-class organisations. The issuing of a monthly magazine. The assistance in every way of the development of the Labour College or any other working-class educational institution with the same educational policy.

Membership and Management

SUBSCRIPTION. Each member shall pay 2s. 6d. a year to the central fund of the League, subscriptions to run from January to December.

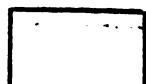
BRANCHES. Individual members shall wherever possible form branches. Every such branch to be responsible for its own expenses, and to have a voting strength at the Meet according to its membership. The work of a branch shall be to promote the establishment of social science classes, and when and where such classes are established to assist in the maintenance of a genuine working-class educational policy; to arrange for propaganda on the aims and objects of the League, by public meeting, visits to T.U. branches or other working-class organisations, press controversy, or any other method; to extend the sales of the Magazine and other Plebs publications; and to report to the E.C. on the activities of our own or other educational organisations.

ANNUAL MEET. An annual meet of members shall be held, at a convenient centre, in the early part of each year. Any alteration of the constitution shall be raised by resolution at the Meet and decided by postal ballot of all members taken afterwards.

ADMINISTRATION. The administration of the League shall be in the hands of an E.C. of seven members, meeting monthly, with, in addition, the Hon. Sec. and Editor of the Magazine. These all to be nominated, by not less than two members, a clear week before the date of the Meet, and elected by postal ballot of members, to be taken afterwards. The E.C. are empowered to decide on the practical application of League aims and policy, and to enforce same where necessary.

PLEBS LEAGUE, 11a, PENYWERN RD., EARL'S COURT, S.W. 5

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THE PLEBS

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

Vol. XIII

July, 1921

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PENCE—AS WELL AS POUNDS

A HEART-TO-HEART TALK WITH PLEBEIANS

DO you collect stamps? If so, we are going to bring to your notice an entirely new and particularly interesting variety. If not—well, you can begin now. Every Pleb with his heart in the right place will, for the next month or two, be an assiduous stamp collector—and stamp distributor. Little you dreamed, as you opened this number of your favourite monthly and prepared to peruse a dignified editorial article on Partiality in Education, of the fate in store for you. “Stamps?” you are thinking to yourself, “stamps? What the —.” Be patient. You'll find two excellent articles on Partiality, etc., later on in this issue. But don't start on them yet. Let's talk of stamps.

We must begin at the beginning of the story. And let us say right away that it's a serious story—a dead serious story, to us anyway. We opened this conversation light-heartedly, but a serious note is going to be

*A Serious
Note*

apparent from now on . . . If you were present at the Plebs Meet last February, or if you read carefully the report thereof in our March issue, you will remember that mention was made of a balance of £200 still owing to the printers on account of two books published by us last year—i.e., the new, revised editions of Craik's *Short History* and Starr's *Worker Looks at History*. This debt was referred to as "a really urgent item in the balance-sheet." And naturally it has become still more urgent since—until at the present time it is *very urgent indeed*. It has got to be paid, in fact.

* * *

This brings us to a frank statement of the present financial position of the PLEBS—a statement which our supporters are entitled to, and which we trust they will consider carefully. The magazine, on its present circulation, is *just* paying for itself; or, to be precise, it does so if

*How We
Stand*

you and the others pay up promptly. That is, it pays the bills for paper, printing, despatching, etc. But there's no margin—nothing towards essential office expenses, rent, salary, and incidentals; and although these, in proportion to work handled, are kept, we venture to assert, at a ridiculously low total figure, they nevertheless eat up the small profits of our Book Department and of sales of our own publications. The net result is that that £200 debt still remains to be cleared; and *it must be cleared before we can get on with the publication of our new textbooks*.

* * *

At the Meet, as our readers know, a Pound Fund to finance the publication of those textbooks was inaugurated; and the response has been more than gratifying. But we know, as well as anyone else, that it isn't everyone

*Send Your
Pennies*

who can subscribe a Pound even to the most deserving fund in these days. We have received not a few letters from Plebs expressing their obviously sincere regret that a Pound Fund was altogether beyond their means at the present time. We have decided, therefore, to open—alongside of the Pound Fund—a Penny Fund. And that's where the stamps come in.

* * *

We are offering for sale 75,000 Penny PLEBS Stamps, the special design of which is here reproduced. The stamp is printed in two colours, and is in effect a miniature poster advertising the PLEBS and what it stands



for. The 75,000 now lie waiting in our office, and we want to get busy despatching them. Send us sixpence *plus* a penny for postage, and we send you six by return. Send us a bob, *plus* the penny, and you get a dozen; half-a-crown, *plus* the penny, and you get 30; and *pro rata*. Each stamp is a receipt for one penny subscribed to the Fund. And when you get the stamps you *use* them. (Not in lieu of postage, of course; we don't want to do time for conspiring to defraud H.M.'s Revenue.) You stick them on the back of envelopes, or at the top of your notepaper; on the fly-leaves of your books—or on

the glass of your watch, just to remind you to get busy on our behalf. And of course you sell them—at your branch and lodge meetings, in the workshop, or wherever else two or three are gathered together. When you've sold out you send to us for more. *But we can only supply stamps for cash*, the stamps being receipts for contributions to a Fund. *And we want the cash urgently.*

* * *

That's the scheme, combining cash receipts with a PLEBS advertising campaign. Make a splash with these stamps—plant one everywhere you can (they're gummed)—and a lot of people will have their attention drawn to the fact that we exist. Some of them will become subscribers. It's up to *you*. If you've got any brainy ideas for making good advertising use of the stamps, send 'em along to us and we can recommend 'em to other people next month. We want to clear the whole 75,000 out, and if every reader takes a dozen we shall do it. But send for more than a dozen if you can; we can soon get more printed. 75,000 pence will clear off the debt, pay for the cost of producing the stamps, and leave a margin for the Textbook Fund.

You've heard the story. Are you going to join in and help us on this stunt? We have to depend on you. We get no subsidies—no "foreign gold" nor Government grants. *You* decide whether we go on or go under. How many stamps shall we be able to announce have been sold by next month? Help us to clear this debt and to start the winter's work with a clean slate and a cheerful grin. And we'll do our best to deserve your support.

TEACHING METHODS

I.

PLEBEIANS should be pleased with the note struck in "Q's" article in the June PLEBS and also with the announcement of the forthcoming conference on Teaching Methods.

"Q" is certainly right when he says that "the technique of teaching was a matter we seldom considered." In face of the growing importance of I.W.-C.E. and the revolution in teaching methods which has taken place in recent years, particularly in the higher schools, it is imperative that we review our class work with a view to ensuring that the time and effort expended shall bring the most beneficial results.

Most believers in I.W.-C.E. agree as to the subjects to be taught. But regarding the *form* in which these subjects ought to be conveyed, there is, unhappily, much confusion and disagreement. In the past our movement has had to fight, and fight strenuously, for the acceptance of the *principle* of independence, and the special aim of working-class education. In consequence, undue emphasis was put upon the points of difference between working-class and capitalist forms of education. We tended to stress a particular group of theories, rather than to use these as aids to understanding existing facts. In economics, for example, tutors set out to give, say, 24 lectures on the three volumes of *Capital*, instead of making these explanatory of and subsidiary to an investigation of economic facts as they are. What would we think of a teacher of biology who confined his attention to explaining what Darwin contributed to the science?

In economics our aim must be to explain economic facts in their

relation to present problems. And the target for our criticisms should be Messrs. Clay, Cannan and Withers, not Ricardo, Mill and Senior. In logic, Russell and Bergson, not Kant and Hegel. Or again in history, why combat the religious conception of progress, which to-day is as dead as a door nail?

Coming to the class-room itself many important points arise. Evidently, the existing state of the student's mind must be taken as the point from which new knowledge should start. Then regard must be paid to the truism that very little can be learnt without a keen interest being aroused in the student. This interest can be cultivated by the student recognising the seriousness and importance of the study. So right from the beginning a serious note must be struck by the tutor. A special chat on methods of learning will do much in this direction. The writing of essays should be encouraged. It helps in the formation of a serious tone, develops self-expression, becomes a thermometer of progress, and in many other ways is of paramount importance.

"Q" wants us to think over the relative merits of the lecture and the study circle systems of tuition. The study circle may be well suited to those who have frequented the classes for some years, or even to those fortunate enough to have had a sound liberal education when young, but for the average student who comes to the classes for the first time the lecture is probably the better method. It should be short and suggestive. In passing, it would be well to remark that our class movement should concentrate upon *new* students, the old ones being in a position to carry on alone in a study circle, with perhaps occasional guidance.

In the actual treatment of the subject it seems necessary to pursue a different method in history to that pursued in economics or logic. A lecture on either of the latter subjects works up logically from premise to conclusion by way of subsidiary deductions, so that each point bears directly upon all the others. To ensure that each student has thoroughly grasped each step a pause should be made after each. This provides an opportunity for additional elucidation. So there will be no final question time distinct from the lecture; points are dealt with and discussed as they arise. This method avoids spending too much time upon what is self-evident, and too little time upon what is abstruse.

History must perforce be treated differently. A lecturer can best begin, perhaps, with a clear statement of the particular "moral" to be derived from the specific period dealt with. The aim of the lecturer will be to convey as vivid a picture as possible by choosing the most typical facts and incidents. For it is the general impression created in support of the original contention which is the result aimed at—not a logical deduction step by step. Inviting questions before the completion of the lecture, therefore, hinders the object in view.

The map ought ever to be in front of the student and used as frequently as necessary.

There remains, also, the important question whether division of labour in class teaching based upon the aptitude of the tutor for a special subject is desirable or not. The men pre-eminently fitted to be good teachers of history are rarely capable of handling economics or logic effectively. If division is possible, it cannot but result in greater efficiency and a saving in time and labour.

FRANK PHIPPEN

II.

The facts quoted by "Q" last month with reference to the Sverdlov University are particularly interesting as showing the importance which Russian scientific Communists attach to the study of the more exact sciences (physics, chemistry, experimental biology) as a *preliminary* to history and economics. This point of view has been emphasised in a previous article in these columns* on the need for textbooks on general science.

The practical obstacle is that in these days, when it takes five years of one's whole time to get a sound grasp of any single branch of exact science, it is difficult to tackle the teaching of such subjects in the very short space of time at our disposal.

Nevertheless the difficulty is not as great as it appears at first sight. The case for the study of general science rests on the fact that only by this means is it possible to soak oneself in the habit of treatment which turns its back on the teleological and mystical prepossessions with which historical study has been approached in the past. A series of three or four textbooks giving a clear indication of the *line of reasoning* adopted in the statement of some of the great correlations of physical science, e.g., the laws of motion or organic evolution, would supply this. But the PLEBS would have to undertake their publication, because popular science books are not usually written from this standpoint, but rather to whet the palate with arresting items of information.

It is interesting to note that there is no place in the Sverdlov curriculum for Philosophy. The students, evidently, are not forced to devote a disproportionate amount of their all too restricted time to a detailed perusal of the works of Dietzgen. This is as it should be; since Dietzgen contended that scientific method abolished the need for "philosophy." There could, therefore, be no more appropriate method of honouring that energetic thinker's memory than to substitute an illustrative introduction to exact scientific reasoning for the study of *The Positive Outcome*.

On the actual method of teaching:—Study circles may be better than nothing (and admittedly nothing could be worse than a bad lecture); but study circles would require a leader just as competent as a lecturer. The experience of most teachers will agree in affirming that "study circles" are only better when and *largely because* they are smaller than "classes," so that we should need more "leaders" than we now have *teachers*.

It is all very well to regard the lecture method as old-fashioned. For most purposes it is, because it belongs to a period when knowledge was largely *oral* and textbooks were not. But this is precisely the position in which the Working-Class Education movement stands at the moment. Hence our "Pound Fund."

"Q" queries whether essays are necessary. For Plebeians, yes. You can turn out a good analytical chemist without developing in him the gift of lucid expression: but you can't turn out a man capable of spreading ideas unless you insist that he learn to *formulate* as well as to apply his knowledge. The discipline of committing our ideas to paper is the only sure means of finding out whether we have digested our studies or bitten off more from the tree of knowledge than we can chew.

P. L. E. B.

* PLEBS, October, 1920: "The Need for Science Textbooks."

LABOUR AND THE WORLD CRISIS

This is the first of a series of studies of Economic Problems which W. H. Mainwaring, lecturer in Economics at the Labour College, has written for the PLEBS. We trust that readers will draw the attention of all economics students to these articles, which aim not only at outlining the causes of economic crises in general, but at analysing and elucidating special features of the present world depression.

I.

SINCE 1918, Governments, financiers, industrial and commercial capitalists, economists, publicists, and Trade Union leaders have been engaged in trying to find solutions for what are commonly called "Problems of Reconstruction." In turn, production, distribution, transport, credits, exchanges, and many other aspects have been and are still being considered.

The various sections of the capitalist class look for a practical solution to "Decreased cost of production," while their hopes are based upon a renewal of trade. Labour leaders have contributed nothing to the discussion, excepting to restate the orthodox capitalist view and to impress energetically upon the workers the need for "increased output," "intensified production," "maintenance of British supremacy," etc. Trade with Russia, even, is urged more in the interest of capitalist England than Soviet Russia; with the hope that the present standard of life will be secured for the British worker. What a beautiful world it will be when the capitalist class everywhere sees the various sections of the International Labour movement using the whole of their power to secure the supremacy of their particular national capital; and when all fear that workmen are unproductively consuming their capital is removed!

The policy of the Labour movement has been decided by capitalist ideas. It aims at economising on the administration of industry (economies that, in the main, are to be accomplished at the expense of the workers). But hope springs eternal in the human breast and every crisis is going to be the last. If the present trouble can be overcome, at whatever cost, why trouble about the future? Things must improve, and concessions now made will surely be recovered again. This, more or less, has been the experience of the past. Despite periodical crises there has been a steady improvement in the standard of life, and upon this is based the hopes for the future. How far is this justified? To what extent do present-day conditions support this view?

This series of articles has been written with a view of indicating to students some of the factors at work. Briefly, they will outline the causes of economic crises in general, within the capitalist mode of production, and then deal with some special features of the present world depression.

The periodical movement expressing itself in the expansion and contraction of capitalist production is a well-known phenomenon and has been referred to by innumerable writers upon economic questions. Its recurrence has been widely acknowledged, but it does not follow that an understanding of its causes is equally widespread. True, the problems, Why this periodical movement?—Why economic crises?—have been solved many times. But then who is bold enough to place a limit upon the "final solutions" of capitalism? Such replies as are given concern them-

selves with certain aspects of the phenomenon, dwelling upon the surface rather than underlying causes.

Supply and demand is first favourite with the capitalist economists—the first, and almost the last, line of defence. This theory explains everything but the central point around which variations take place. It explains why prices, for example, either rise or fall from a given point, but does not explain the point itself. Supply and demand, as an explanation of the cyclical movement of prosperity and depression, assumes the existence of some central point, deviations from which are supposed to be explained by this theory. There is a certain need in society for a given class of goods. If too much is produced, and supply is greater than demand, a force comes into operation which brings the productive machinery into line. Prices fall, and production, as a consequence, is curtailed. Production responds either to the stimulating or depressing effects of prices. As an explanation of crises these phrases are altogether meaningless. In different stages of the periodical movement prices rise and fall and that is about all that is contained in such explanations. The real difficulties are either ignored completely or lightly passed over.

Demand is assumed to be outside and independent of production and is the mystic point towards which production is always attracted. Why, if the need is known, production cannot be better regulated is a question not discussed. Any workman could tell these economists that demand is not constant; that there is no fixed point around which it hovers, even. Increased or decreased production is a result of some force or forces. How do they arise? What sets them in motion?

The essential condition of capitalist production is that the elements of production—raw materials, labour-power and its means of subsistence—must be present for the capitalist to exploit. Further, producers of commodities must bring them to market and there offer them for sale; only by the exchange of their products by producers is capitalist society held together, and the social process of production and reproduction carried on. It presupposes, too, a social division of labour; and, further, that this has taken place in given proportions, otherwise some industry or branch of industry will suffer in one way or another.

To illustrate this, assume that the whole of production is divided into two branches—the one producing means of production, the other means of subsistence. Keeping in mind the nature of capitalist production, what is now required of these industries? First and foremost, a surplus—that is, a product greater in value than the elements used up or consumed during the process of production. It is not sufficient that one of them has a surplus; both must be in this position, otherwise the industry will be abandoned.

The relation of one branch of industry to the other has now to be considered. Assuming that the product of both branches of production appears together in the market, how is it to be disposed of? To begin with, let us look at the branch which is producing means of subsistence. This one now requires machinery, etc., in order to resume production; and to obtain this a part of its own product is disposed of, i.e., given in exchange for means of production. One branch gives a sum of values in the form of means of subsistence for an equal sum of values in the form of means of production.

In the second place, we will assume, on the one hand, that the remainder

of the total product of means of subsistence is consumed by the capitalists and workmen in that industry, while, on the other, the supplies given in return for means of production is sufficient to maintain the capitalist and workmen of the branch producing these means of production, who also use the remainder of their product as their own means of production.

Both branches will now have replaced their means of production; both been provided, also, with means of subsistence; and both sets of capitalists will have realised a surplus which in this case is wholly consumed. But how comes this about? Simply because they are assumed to be *in the right proportions*; such a result would always follow under these conditions. In practice, however, things are not regulated in this manner; besides which, we have ignored in our example a number of complicating factors.

First, there is the replacement of machinery, etc., termed fixed capital. In reality this is not wholly replaced in one year. It wears out piecemeal, and only after a number of years will it be necessary to replace the old with new. This factor is complicated still more by the fact that there is no uniform use of requirement for machinery. In some industries there are more, in others, less. The utility of some kinds and parts of machinery spread over a larger number of years than others; the total result being that a part only of the fixed capital comes up for renewal every year.

We have also assumed a definite demand—means of production for one branch and means of subsistence for the other. But even here we do not go quite so far as certain economists have gone in their efforts to “explain” away these problems. In our example, at least, demand arises out of production itself, and has no existence apart from it. Capitalist production is not carried on for the satisfaction of social needs, otherwise there would be no unemployment at present. The needs recognised by capitalist society are created by the process of production.

The total need is not for a fixed, definite amount, as might be the case in a Soviet republic for example, where, provided a standard of life were agreed to, and a census of the population taken, the necessary extent of production could be at least approximately estimated. Under capitalism the needs are both created and limited by the process of production. A large proportion of the working population of this country is to-day unemployed—purely on account of its relation to the means of production. The working class may claim that their needs are continuous, employed or not, and that these human needs of theirs should be met by the State. The capitalist, however, knows no such need. He recognises the demand of people who are able to pay, not otherwise. And *this* kind of demand varies, as every partly or wholly unemployed workman knows. They lack subsistence because of a lack of purchasing power. They lack purchasing power because they are not employed. They are unemployed because the means of production, for the moment, has no use for them.

Clearly there is no normal, fixed demand here, no mystical, vague demand from without. There is no demand independent of consumption, since consumption is an element within the process of production.

What then do we find? Simply that demand is both limited and created within the process of production, and that within capitalist society *demand must be a paying demand.*

W. H. MAINWARING

(To be continued.)

A PREJUDICE FOR TRUTH

This article, and the one by "Nordicus" which follows it, will be read with interest by all propagandists of Independent Working-Class Education. It is a not insignificant fact that both the writers are University-trained men.

NO movement can afford to be misunderstood by those who honestly wish to try to understand it. That there is some danger of this with Plebs principles is clear from the present controversy on the meaning of "partisan" education. Anyone who has had experience of advocating the Plebs point of view will know that there is a type of difficulty which is always occurring with many who are otherwise sympathetic. They feel that to say we believe or teach a thing because it is on the side of the working class has something dishonest about it, that the aim of real thinking is the truth, on whatever side it may turn out to be, and that true education should aim, not at any previously fixed result, but only to elicit the spirit of free enquiry. In other words they feel that, at the best, plebeian education is no better than capitalist education, but only its reverse.

This criticism must be honestly met, not by mere denial of its assumptions, but in the only way that criticism can be met, by taking it on its own grounds to show where the mistake arises.

The issue is not a remote philosophical question. I disagree with Postgate's habit of relegating to something he calls "metaphysics" any point he does not wish to discuss. He does not escape "metaphysics" by that trick. The issue of whether by "partisan" we mean something other than "true" is of tremendous practical importance. If a man says, "I do not care whether a certain idea or argument is true, so long as it is useful to the working class." then that man is a danger to the working-class fight. We cannot afford to fight with weapons that may bend in the using.

But this does not mean that we should abate one jot from our claim to be "partisan and prejudiced." The man who thinks he can ignore the class-basis of modern society and get "above" class-thinking will understand nothing of modern history, politics or economics. It is our business to show that our teaching is true because it is partisan, and partisan because it is true. And this means something more than the usual sense of partisan.

The whole difficulty really arises from the fundamental fallacy of modernism in education—the idea that the teacher does not teach. This notion came as a very proper and natural reaction against pemmican instruction or creed and dogma training. If Marxian thinking consisted either of certain selected facts or of certain dogmas to be swallowed on faith, then however "useful" these might be alleged to be to the working class, they would certainly have no educational value and (I think we may add) no use value. The working class is engaged in much too serious a fight to have any use for "vital lies."

But if the current cry of letting the learner think for himself means that each learner is to go on thinking his own silly thoughts, untutored and uncorrected, then we are really no better off than our ancestors with their authoritarian methods. For after all the fact is that the teacher does teach, and if he is unaware of it, so much the worse for him. He is always and continuously conveying experience. Education, in fact, is the initiation

of the individual consciousness into the wider consciousness of human thought and experience *at the current point of development*. According to the stage of social development this may mean in practice no more than initiation into the outlook of the tribe, of the national state, of a governing class, etc.; but always there is this character of extension from the individual to the universal even though the realisation of the universal is always socially conditioned.

Now, if this is true, then the social understanding that is behind any system of education and thought will be decisive for its value. If the fundamental bourgeois conceptions are inadequate to the present structure of society, then the whole of bourgeois ethics, history, philosophy and the rest falls to the ground. It is our contention that the whole of bourgeois learning is visibly and demonstrably false in relation to the realities of to-day.*

The position can best be understood by taking a parallel. Suppose a society built upon a slave system. Suppose that slave system by its development to be rotting the whole basis of society, corrupting its morals, destroying its production and shattering its whole frame-work. And then suppose that the normal and almost universal belief in respectable (that is, slave-owning) society was that slavery was an entirely natural and inevitable thing and that only a few erratic persons, who did not see that the only way to make people work was to force them, held otherwise. It is easy to imagine how this society would rack and probe and harass itself over its aches and pains and unrests, attributing the deterioration of morals to the decay of religion, and the decline in production to the wickedness of the slaves, and the constant wars to the visitation of God, and building up for itself a whole set of theories and schools and sects and philosophies without end, and all the time understanding nothing of anything, because it could not realise its one fundamental false assumption. Not all the impartiality in the world, not all the readiness to discuss the question of slavery quite tolerantly (as one "social question" among others) will help that society, so long as that one false assumption remains. Until that false assumption is overcome, all its ethics, politics, economics, sociology, philosophy and the rest will be vitiated, and the world will be to it a dark confusion and a nightmare without meaning.

What is that fundamental false assumption? It is the notion that slavery is simply a certain institution in society, instead of being the social and historical category under which that society falls and which determines the whole character of that society; the notion that history, philosophy, ethics, politics are so many separate subjects to be treated according to the fancy of the individual instead of only having meaning in relation to the structure of society and its stage of development. The failure to understand that principle invalidates their whole thinking, however shrewd, laborious, well-meaning and impartial it may endeavour to be.

Now that is the position of bourgeois intellectual society to-day, as anyone with eyes to see may observe. It is fogged and at sea because it cannot grasp the central social principle of its own being. The result is that the whole of its literature and learning, despite many excellent

* The puerile question whether "bourgeois" arithmetic and chemistry have anything wrong with them need not detain us here. Just so far as the sciences are abstract, they fall outside the concrete whole of reality and do not concern us in a discussion of the understanding of life and society as a concrete whole.

passages of keen perception and active thinking, is, taken as a whole, a mass of folly that will seem incredible to people a century hence. When once the simple principles of social thinking (which we call by the ponderous name of the Materialist Conception of History) have become the obvious basis of ordinary thought, present-day writing will have the same curious, antiquated, blinkered effect that much of eighteenth century writing has to us.

The most signal example of this is the war. The myriad bourgeois professors, historians, journalists and politicians, armed with all the diplomatic records and enjoying access to inside information, wrote their views on it learnedly and massively. They interpreted it in terms of nationality, liberty, democracy, public law and heaven knows what. The ignorant socialist working man, with a deplorable indifference to the niceties of the diplomatic issues, spoke simply of coal and iron mines and rival exploiters. And then unfortunately the Secret Treaties came out and proved that the Marxian socialist was right and all the learned professors were wrong. For the treaties did not mind a bit about carving up and bartering nationalities like so many pounds of flesh, but they were very careful and specific about the coal and iron mines. And the Treaty of Versailles and its sequels have proved it up to the hilt, until it is hardly polite to remind a bourgeois professor or liberal of what he wrote in 1914.

Now if the learning of the bourgeoisie, with all the advantages on their side—the picked brains, the training, the knowledge, the leisure, the documents, the special information—could go so utterly wrong on so fundamental an issue in comparison with an ignorant worker, with all the disadvantages against him and nothing but a smattering of Marxism to help him, then it is clear there must be something very wrong with the methods of the former.

It is the complete change in methods that is wanted to-day as it was in the days of the Renaissance and the Advancement of Learning. And that change is coming, as every great social change does come, with the emergence to consciousness of the new class that is the creative force of the future. The New Learning is the outlook of the workers as they shake themselves free from capitalist influences and see things for themselves. Yesterday it was called Marxism, because the mind of Marx first foresaw it in its tremendous outlines though he was not able to develop more than a tithe of its possibilities. To-day, as it spreads and develops, it is beginning to be called the culture of the working class. To-morrow it will be the common way of thought of the ordinary man. That it should be militant and defiant to-day is all in favour of its genuineness. All true learning has come sword in hand, from Plato to Darwin and from Marx to Lenin. We shall welcome it the more for that, nor need we fear to entertain a prejudice for truth.

R. PALME DUTT

PROLET CULT AND PARTIALITY

PARTIALITY is partiality, even if it is partiality to "truth." Prejudice is prejudice, even if it is a prejudice against confusing an issue by introducing irrelevant theories or misrepresentations of fact.

We Plebeians acknowledge that our position is partial and prejudiced, because we know that the human intellect is by nature an "instrument of partiality," the function of which is automatically to select certain experi-

ences and reject others ; and that all thought is prejudiced, in that it must be based on the acceptance (even if they are only accepted as working theories) of certain assumptions, and the rejection of others.

The immediate purpose of Independent Working-Class Education is to give to the workers, and especially to those who will form their vanguard, a clear conception of the relations of man to his environment ; to equip them with those parts of organised knowledge which will enable them to understand the changes which economic forces are bringing about in that environment, and to co-operate with and adapt themselves intelligently to those forces instead of behaving like lifeless bodies swept along by them, or wasting their energy in futile directions.

The mass of accumulated knowledge is too great for the capacity of the greatest individual human mind. The individual must choose, or his teacher must choose for him, the subjects of study most closely related to the objects he has in view, the parts of those subjects to be studied first, and those aspects of other subjects a knowledge of which will help towards a better understanding of the first. This course is regularly adopted in bourgeois education in those cases where the purpose is to train individuals for the exercise of a profession or trade ; medicine, dentistry, engineering, law, etc., and in the technical education provided for the workers. Such education is confessedly "partial," directed to the formation of particular habits of mind, and particular combinations of experiences and theories. It aims at a positive result ; and gets it. It is noteworthy that it is chiefly in the subjects having a bearing on man's relations to his social and economic environment that "impartiality" and "the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake," are preached by the ruling class. In practice what their educational system achieves is not impartiality, but muddle-headed indifference.

If the capitalist State encouraged the teaching of the theories of universal causation, cosmic and biologic evolution, and determinism in the realm of human behaviour, with the same amount of "partiality" as is adopted in teaching trades or professions, it would create a nation of thinking, questioning people, who might—who almost certainly would—early rebel against and overthrow the existing order. The pre-scientific teaching persists because it serves the ends of capitalism in creating an uncritical type of mind divorced from the scientific spirit of scepticism and questioning of the existing order. This systematic cultivation of muddle-headedness is labelled "impartiality." It aims at a negative result ; and gets it.*

We take our example, not from the theory on which the bourgeoisie educate the people in matters relating to their relation to each other, to the State and to nature, matters in which it is desirable, from the standpoint of the ruling classes, that the majority of people should be muddle-headed, but from the theory on which they proceed when training individuals to carry on efficiently the technical and professional operations on which civilisation depends. We are providing, by the same method that the ruling classes find successful in training professional men and other skilled workmen, "technical" and "professional" education for the great under-taking man has before him, the reconstruction of human society.

* It is not suggested that the systematic cultivation of muddle-headedness is consciously present in the minds of those who shape the educational policy of the nation. To assume this would pre-suppose a constructive statesmanship which they do not possess. The cause is rather to be sought in the shaping of educational tendencies by the unconscious mental complexes of the bourgeoisie, the outcome being clearly realised by, at most, a few exceptional individuals.

The central subjects for this training are those sciences which deal with the relation of man to his environment; economics and history (including economic geography), psychology, and the parts of biology having a bearing on these. And we insist on studying first those parts or aspects of the above branches of knowledge which are likely to lead most quickly to a clear idea of our place in nature and society. If a knowledge of a collateral subject is necessary for the appreciation of a point in one of the above subjects, we will then turn and study that portion of it which is necessary to us; and so long as a subject or theory or point of view cannot be shown to have a definite relation to our subject of study, so long as it involves assumptions which are unnecessary for a clear understanding of the facts before us, we leave it out, and refuse to be drawn off our essential studies by it. It is this rejection of irrelevant matter which constitutes *prejudice*. To think clearly we must assume certain fundamental theories, and reject others. The nearest thing we can find to "truth" is the theory or idea which enables us to foresee future happenings.

Every class-conscious student starts with the knowledge, or intuition, that something serious is wrong with society; and with the desire to discover what that something is, what the remedy is, and when and how the remedy should be applied. What he aims at can only be reached through a wide knowledge of the relevant facts, arranged in such order that they lead to theories which will work in practice.

And, because our education has for its centre the relation of man to his economic environment, and the development of constructive ideas for changing that environment so that it shall better harmonise with the instincts and tendencies of man's inborn nature, it will furnish the basis of a new culture, to replace the decadent and moribund culture of the bourgeoisie.

NORDICUS

THE FAILURE OF THE ALLIANCE

This short article opens up possibilities of useful discussion on a present-day problem of supremely practical importance. What is the next step to be—the reconstruction of the T.A. (and if so, on what lines); the creation of a Labour General Staff; or what? Those numerous Plebeians who are members of "ginger groups" within the various Unions will doubtless have suggestions to put forward.

THERE is a very serious danger that when the day of reckoning for the calamity of Black Friday comes, the cloud and smoke of personal recriminations will obscure from our view the underlying causes for that calamity. I do not for a moment suggest that we should shut our eyes to the shortcomings and betrayals of the leaders. The men who failed us in the hour of our need cannot, and must not, be trusted in the future.

What I want to do is to emphasise the fact that there is something more at issue than the delinquencies of leaders, and that our task is infinitely greater than that of giving the order of the boot to a few individuals. We must get down to the essential cause of the failure, find out why it was possible for leaders to betray us, and, if possible, discover remedies.

It seems but a moment ago since the announcement of the creation of the Alliance sent a thrill of expectation through the whole working-class movement. At long last, it seemed, we had forged a weapon equal to our

task. Then close upon one another came the series of bitter disappointments. In crisis after crisis the Alliance, with monotonous regularity, falsified our hopes and expectations—ending with the crowning shame of Black Friday.

There can be no gainsaying the fact that the Alliance was created with the best intentions, but it is not enough to mean well in order to ensure doing well. It was founded as the result of the realisation by men actively associated with the several organisations of the need for closer co-operation. Here were three organisations, representative of the three most important industries in the country, and so closely interrelated that any stoppage by one immediately affected the other two. Clearly, where there was such a vital relationship there was the necessity for unity, and the Alliance was an attempt to achieve that unity.

Having formed a loose Alliance, and built all our hopes upon it, what happened? Each section went on with its own work in the old way—formulated its own demands, prepared its own policy, and took what action it deemed wise, precisely as though no Alliance were in existence. Some times there would be a conference; the section immediately concerned in a struggle would present its case, a pious resolution of support was passed—and there was an end of the matter.

Such an Alliance could never justify the hopes or fulfil the expectations it had aroused. Disaster was bound to come sooner or later. Unity cannot be achieved, nor maintained, on abstract principles of solidarity or on platitudes about an injury to one being the concern of all—which is not true, as yet!

Unity can only arise from the realisation of a common need, and can only be maintained by the cement of a common objective. The Alliance, it is true, was the product of the need for common action felt by the mass of miners, railwaymen and transporters. To ensure the maintenance and effective use of that unity necessitated a common objective appealing to all three sections. That, in its turn, would have made essential the formulating of common demands, and the preparing of plans for joint action. But this is precisely what we neglected to do, and the far from pleasant consequences of our neglect are now upon our heads.

The Alliance is in ruins. For the time being the feeling of disgust at the circumstances of its collapse will prevail, and prevent any such discussion as would lead to a consciousness of the causes of the débâcle. But sooner or later the *need* for common action must make itself felt again, and there will be movements towards the salvaging of the wreckage. Shall we see to it that, when the work of reconstruction is taken in hand, we create an organisation which will not prove a "Cripple Alliance" in the day of battle? Plebeians—of the mines, the railways and the docks—ought to have something to say on this point.

J. GRIFFITHS

WHAT IS INDEPENDENT WORKING - CLASS EDUCATION?

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THE CO-ORDINATION OF COLLEGES AND CLASSES

The following statement, on a subject of first-rate importance to working-class educationists everywhere, has been drawn up by the Manchester and Sheffield Labour Colleges, and sent by them to the PLEBS for publication. It will be remembered that the subject was discussed at the last Annual Meet, and a resolution forwarded to the Governors of the London Labour College; but we are unable to state what steps the Governors have taken in the matter. Apparently the provincial centres now feel that it is time they themselves took the initiative.

DESIRE is being expressed throughout the Independent Working-Class Educational Movement for some means by which all provincial Colleges, classes, and study circles, could be linked together on a national basis for mutual development and benefit.

It is felt that the London Labour College, being the pioneer of the educational movement, should take the lead in bringing about that essential co-ordination of the several units.

As the working-class movement has developed its fighting instruments on the industrial and political fields, there has arisen the need for giving expression to the movement by developing the press; and alongside of this the need for understanding the why and wherefore of its own existence in the scheme of things has become clear. Hence the development of its own educational system, and where the need has been most keenly realised classes have sprung into existence, and these after a short period have grown so rapidly that "class" no longer fits as a description, and they are entitled to call themselves a College. As a matter of fact, several localities have developed in such a way that they possess permanent premises and are able to employ teachers and keep them fully occupied.

These Colleges have risen spontaneously, supplying an urgent need. The time has now arrived when there should be some connection between them.

Hitherto, the London Labour College has given little encouragement to provincial classes, and none to provincial Colleges. London still prefers to allude to these latter as "classes," though many passed this stage some time ago. Steps have been taken to get affiliation to the London Labour College as Colleges; the replies received are that classes can affiliate, but no definite reply is tendered to the application from a College.

Whether this is due to apathy or indifference on the part of the Governors of the London College one cannot be sure. In any case, there does not seem to be sufficient reason for the provincial Colleges waiting until the said Governors wake up to their responsibilities.

We desire to put forward certain reasons for co-ordination, and some of the advantages which would, in our opinion, accrue:—

1. The development, on a national basis, of Independent Educational work as a vital part of the working-class movement.
2. The facility with which an interchange of ideas—on methods of propaganda, tuition, organisation, etc.—could be conducted.
3. The setting up of some central organisation which could act as an examining body for tutors, and so ensure unity of teaching.
4. The economy of time, money and energy which would result from a central body getting out printed matter for use in all localities; e.g., class registers, enrolment forms, useful graphs and charts, lists of text and reference books, etc., etc., etc.
5. *Finance*.—Industrial and political organisations, built on national lines, are setting aside sums of money for educational purposes. These funds could be tapped

much more effectively by an educational organisation also built on national lines. Provincial Colleges and classes could then be allotted a share according to their scale of activities.

6. With a national organisation various useful schemes could be realised—e.g., Summer Schools, for which there is a growing demand, but which without co-operation are too risky a venture for separate localities to embark upon.

These factors—and every educational worker will be able to supplement them—are in our opinion sufficient to make the national organisation and co-ordination of our educational movement a matter of immediate and vital importance.

SCOTLAND'S NEXT STEP

AS all PLEBS readers are not Scotchmen—though all Scotchmen should be PLEBS readers—it may not be generally known that the Scottish Labour College, unlike the Labour College in London, is not owned by any Trade Union. Its finance is mainly derived from donations from T.U. branches and Co-operative Societies, the proportion coming in from class and affiliation fees being relatively small.

The financial statement, for the year ending March 31st last, is receiving very serious consideration by the new (provisional) committee, which comprises delegates from the annual conference, and from District Committees, T.U. branches, etc., etc. Though the assets exceed the liabilities by £100, this is only due to the handsome balance brought forward from the previous year. Summarised, the facts are as follows:—

1921. Income (apart from balance brought forward)	..	£	947
„ Expenditure	1,526

In 1920 the income was £1,496—the 1921 figure thus showing a drop of £549.

Less money—but a notable increase in work done, as these next figures will show:—

	1920.	1921.
Day students (whole time) Nil	9
Glasgow Area Evening Classes 30	30
District Committees' Evening Classes 51	69

Now as a matter of fact, despite the balance-sheet figures quoted above, the *total* income, as well as the educational work accomplished, has exceeded that of last year. For the balance-sheet takes no account of the incomes of the Aberdeen, Ayrshire, Dundee, Edinburgh, Fife and Stirling District Committees, these committees being financially independent of the centre. The income of the College *as a whole*, Districts and Centre, is considerably larger than ever before—and it has educated more students than ever before.

But the financial problem for the Centre remains—a problem. If income and expenditure remain the same next year the College will be heavily in debt. The Scottish T.U. Congress, at its last conference, referred the question of taking over the College to its Parliamentary Committee for consideration. But the mills of the T.U.C., like the mills of God, grind slowly. And something must be done meantime.

An attempt must be made, of course, to increase the income. But the writer would like to suggest, in addition, one other way of meeting the situation. Last year the superintendence of nearly all the 30 Glasgow Area evening classes was done by the *national* Secretary of the College, and many of the classes were tutored by the *national* staff tutors, since there was no District Committee in Glasgow. If such a Committee were to be formed, it might well consider paying the College a substantial portion of the salaries of the Centre staff in return for services rendered.

But neither Glasgow nor the national Committee can by themselves solve the problem successfully. It must be tackled by the whole movement in Scotland. And surely, too, we are entitled to appeal at least for the sympathetic interest of Independent Working-Class Educationists everywhere.

J. P. M. MILLAR

PRIZE ESSAY ON "CREATIVE REVOLUTION"

The prize of £1 worth of books offered for the best short essay on E. & C. Paul's "Creative Revolution" (PLEBS, 2s. 9d. postpaid) is awarded to C. F. Booth, of Wallasey, for the following:—

THE Great War and the Russian Revolution have played the very devil among the tailors with ideas. Few people are there except those impervious to change (and these don't count) who have not had to modify, adapt, or extend their previous conceptions and principles in some form or another, and Socialists are no exception to the rule. Yet after all, the Socialists—or at least the Marxian section of them—have most to congratulate themselves upon and the least painful surgery to perform, for the one rock that still stands four square "midmost the beatings of the steely sea" is the figure of Marx.

The authors of *Creative Revolution* have ransacked the modern psychologists and philosophers, and with the touchstone of the Russian Revolution have examined the trend of the proletarian movement in Europe, and pointed out the narrow, thorny path to victory—the path of Communist Ergatocracy. The idols some of us have loved so long get scant courtesy from these iconoclasts. That blessed word "Democracy" has to go overboard, so inextricably entangled is it with the idea of social solidarity. Not many of us in the workshop and the mine have any illusions these days about the actuality of the Class Struggle, and however moving the faith of those who believe in their own persuasive powers to transform the enemy through argument, it is hitting us where we live. We cannot conceive the presence or possibility of a social solidarity that argues a community of purpose while the tactic of the Class War is operated so ruthlessly against us. "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common," thunders the I.W.W., and the crude, harsh fact is obvious to all.

What, then, shall we do? The answer of

the authors is as clear cut as a Hebrew prophet's. The Class War tactic must be used by the proletariat for its own ends, and for democracy must be substituted "ergatocracy"—worker's rule. Education is the key—not to convert the enemy to the idea of social solidarity, but to create a class-conscious working class, having sufficient knowledge of the past to understand its position in the present, vision enough to conceive the future, and courage and ability to take or make the opportunity. The past century is paved with instances where the cup of victory has dropped from the trembling, hesitant hand of Labour. The next time there must be no hesitation. The modern proletariat is the counterpart of the modern imperialist, and is more inclined to agree with the German Chancellor, who said that "the earth belongs to the bold." No longer the pawns of adventurers, the workers, conscious of their goal, will cease to be satisfied with the status of wage slavery, but will demand the abolition of the Capitalist System and the institution of Communism.

Education will make of them a conscious social force. In the meantime the Russians have shown us that the workers must evolve their own instrument of expression, the Soviet, to replace the effete and obsolete House of Parliament. The authors see in the Shop Stewards' Movement the nucleus of the soviet system—representation on the basis of "How you Live" and not "Where you live." It may be so, but so far few shop stewards are conscious of the possibilities of their movement. Nevertheless, the rapid development and decay of capitalism, accelerated by the War and undermined by the increasing unwillingness of the proletariat to be exploited, are compelling the workers, willy-nilly, along the soviet path to freedom.

This is created a mass psychology at least not hostile to the Communist experiment. But an intensive campaign of education in industrial history and economics, taught from the working-class standpoint, must give the proletariat the true explanation of his position. Then and then only will he shed the illusions of bourgeois ideology, realise the

absurdity of democracy and awaken to his essential proletarian status. Realising the basic truth that "he who will not work, neither shall he eat," he will set up the temporary dictatorship of the proletariat to usher in the rule of the workers—"erga-tocracy." He will then indeed be "free"—having freed himself, and not been freed.

ECONOMICS WITHOUT HEADACHES

VII.—FOREIGN EXCHANGES

THERE have been times in the histories of all countries when the inhabitants of those countries were self-supporting. They produced their own food and drink, made their own clothing, and built their own houses. Few countries are like that now. British people have become accustomed to using tea, coffee, cotton, rubber, and a thousand and one other things that cannot be produced here. To get them we have to produce other goods that will be accepted in exchange. From this satisfaction of new wants comes, in the last analysis, all international trade.

Over a given period, the imports into a country must be paid for by exports. The exports may not always take the form of goods, because a country may have a large mercantile fleet and do the carrying trade for other countries, receiving goods in payment for this service. If the imports are not balanced by the exports (goods and services) gold is sent out to make up the "trade balance."

Because gold is the international measure of values all currencies are compared by the amount of gold contained in them. Thus the value of the British gold £1 is, measured in gold weight for weight, 25.22½ French francs; 20.43 German marks; 18.159 Norwegian kroner; 4.865 American dollars; and so on. This is known as the "par value" of the British £1 expressed in terms of the currencies of other countries. When trade circulates freely, this "par value" of the £1 is the basis of all international transactions in which British traders are interested.

Gold is not sent from country to country to pay for goods if it can be avoided. If "A" in London buys fruit from a Californian grower and has to send gold to pay for it, the gold must be insured packed and freighted

to the U.S. At the same time an American merchant may be purchasing goods from a Birmingham manufacturer and he in turn would have to send gold to Britain. Such a policy would mean that the goods would cost more than their stated price.

Assume that £1 000 in gold had to be sent from New York to Britain then it would work out as follows:—

	Dollars.
£1,000	= 4,800 (normal times)
Insurance, Freightage, Packing at .024 dollars to each dollar	24
∴ £1,000	= <u>4,890</u> or £1 = \$4.89

Under such circumstances, the Americans would have to pay 4.89 instead of 4.806 dollars for £1 worth of British goods. Put into other words, the value of the British £1 would have gone up. If British merchants were sending their gold to America the value of the British £1 would go down.

To avoid this expense and trouble Bills of Exchange are used, and the British and American buyers and sellers accept each other's bills and draw payment from people in their own country (*see* MAY PLEBS). This, however, is only possible so long as the trading relations between two given countries tend to balance.

Consider now the case of England and France. The "par value" of the British £1 is 25.22½ francs, and so long as the trade between the two countries is the same in volume it remains at that, and bills on either country are bought and sold freely. But suppose that France exports less than she imports, then bills on London representing money owed by London to France would be scarce, and their price would rise because of the greater demand. They would rise

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until 25.32½ francs was paid for a £1 bill—ten centimes more than the “par value”—but could not rise beyond that figure, because that is the price at which it is just as cheap to send gold to England. Therefore, because of the cost of sending gold, made necessary by the unfavourable balance of trade against France, we should read in the newspapers that the value of the franc had gone down. In a short time the position would right itself for France having to pay more for the goods she needed would import less, and Britain buying French goods cheaper, would import more.

If, on the other hand, Britain imported more from France than she exported to France the position would be reversed; fewer bills on France would be available, their price would rise until the British £1 only bought 25.21½ francs, and gold would go to France.

The point at which gold comes into a country is known as the Incoming Gold Point. The converse is the Outgoing Gold Point. Each of them represents “par value,” plus or minus the cost of sending gold one way or the other.

During the war, gold was not allowed to flow from country to country, and the normal movement of goods was restricted. In addition, paper money was issued in such quantities that its value was much less than the golden currency it was supposed to represent. Britain bought great quantities of goods from America and sent few thereto. Bills on America were few and far between, and so much gold went across the Atlantic. After a time there was no more gold to send and Britain was unable to pay for the goods she wished to purchase. A loan was raised in America at about 6 per cent., which meant that every £100 worth of goods

bought in America would cost £106 if not paid for in one year, and a further £6 for each year afterwards. That meant, of course, that the value of the British £1 was less than before. Had the £1 been forthcoming its value would have been normal, but Britain was in the position of a debtor, whose security was not too good, and she had to take what terms she could get or go without. The issue of paper money here made the £1 worth less here, and, therefore, worth less still in America.

In the light of the foregoing read the table given below, showing the position of the foreign exchanges on the dates mentioned. (*Times*, June 1st, 1921.)

It will be noticed that the only countries in the list that are “against” Britain are America, Switzerland, Holland, Sweden, and India, and speaking generally these were countries least affected by the war. India has the additional peculiarity of being affected by the variations in the price of silver.

The foreign exchanges are affected in times of crisis, by wars, currency depreciation, industrial troubles, mad foreign policies (*cf.* Poland), etc., and in ordinary times by such things as large numbers of travellers coming into a country with money to spend (Italy, for example) and the remission of money by emigrants from their new homes to their friends at home. It is impossible to treat the question fully here, and readers are referred to *Introduction to the Foreign Exchanges*, Hartley Withers; *Foreign Exchange in Theory and Practice*, Spalding; *Foreign Exchange Manual*, Tate; *A B C of Foreign Exchanges*, Clare; *Foreign Exchange*, Goschen; and article on the subject in *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

W. McLAINE

Place.	Method of Quoting.	Par of Exchange.	May 31st.*	May 30th.*
New York	\$ to £	4.86½	3.86—3.88½	3.85—3.89
Montreal	\$ to £	4.86½	4.35—4.38	4.34—4.38
Paris	Fr. to £	25.22½	46.7—46.2	46.6—47.3
Brussels	Fr. to £	25.22½	46.7—46.2	46.6—47.3
Italy	Lire to £	25.22½	75½—75	74—75
Berne	Fr. to £	25.22½	22.17—22.25	22.10—22.3
Helsingfors	M. to £	25.22½	187—193	185—195
Madrid	Pts. to £	25.22½	29.7—29.8	29.7—29.8
Amsterdam	Fl. to £	12.107	11.27—11.32	11.23—11.29
Berlin	M. to £	20.43	242—245	241—246
Vienna	Kr. to £	24.02	1550—1650	1550—1650
Budapest	Kr. to £	24.02	850—950	925—975
Prague	Kr. to £	24.02	265—275	265—275
Warsaw	M. to £	20.43	3800—4000	3800—4000
Constantinople	Pst. to £	110	508—528	510—530
Christiania	K. to £	18.159	25.2—25.42	25.25—25.6
Stockholm	K. to £	18.159	16.9—16.98	16.9—17.0
Bombay	per rup.	24d.	1 3¼—1 3½	1 3¼—1 3½

* Buying price and selling price (b.p. lowest and s.p. lowest ; difference is commission.)

STUDENTS' NOTES AND QUERIES

J. B., as a "green 'un," wants an antidote to "mind wandering"; he cannot concentrate.

The reply of the office joker is that a heavy chain tied round the neck and fastened to the three vols. of *Capital* has been found to prevent "mind wandering." However, the only chain we know is the will. Don't commence with books that are too steep. Get as far away from distractions as possible. Take a paragraph at a time; talk to yourself or somebody else about it or write out what it means to you. And if your mind goes off strolling, keep on calling it back. The initial efforts will be the hardest. But you'll soon be able to think of one thing at a time. Perhaps other Plebs would give their experiences in overcoming obstacles to study.

In reply to another query:—The Federation of British Industries was founded, we believe, in 1916. It now includes 25,000 firms, and represents a total capital of £6,000 millions. See Newbold's *The Gang Behind the Government* (2d.), Reformers' Bookstall, Glasgow.

Q.—Does Marx in the words "socially necessary labour-time" allow for the consumer's concept of what is socially necessary—which he measures when deciding the maximum price he will pay? (Donovan.)

A.—There are two points of confusion here. Marx never refers to "socially necessary" in relation to price but to value. Value is determined by the S.N.L.T. reproduction, and this value point is the centre of price variations. Then price itself is not fixed by the individual consumer. Exchange is not a private act. I can refuse to buy a pound of apples because I think 1s. too much, but if other people consent to pay 1s. then my abstention goes unnoticed. Price is determined by competition between buyers and sellers; it is social or general, and therefore cannot be fixed by the state of the individual's mind, even if he has the necessary cash in his pocket—and without this his psychological condition is not of the least importance. Use value is the substratum of exchange value and no more. It is a subjective individual relation, and hence cannot explain the objective social relation of exchange value. A commodity is given value in its production and not in consumption.

The importance of the New Psychology was quoted by the sender as one of the reasons behind this question. We suggest that there is a danger of spoiling a good thing by making too much of it. This new science is going to show us what "human nature" really is; it will help us in education and also in mental pathology. It will rout out the supernatural

from its last resting-place. But those "complexes" are built up from experience in life. They are results, not causes. (See NORDICUS, p. 141, May PLEBS.) As in their formation so in their expression. The sex instinct does not and cannot explain the variations in the forms of marriage. Why should the "herd complex" cause men at one time to pelt the mammoth with rocks, and at another time refuse to unload "blackleg" coal? Why should the fighting instinct express itself through Trade Union struggles for higher wages and shorter hours instead of wars for grass lands and hunting grounds? The *instinct* is the same in all cases, but only in the changing economic conditions can be found any explanation of the alteration in the channels of expression.

Our thanks to A. V. Anstee, who sends on some samples of the P.D.T. (pay-day-talks. System of educating (*sic*) the workers in Industrial Economics. The publishers, the Industrial Publicity Bureau, in an explanatory pamphlet are delightfully frank. "The P.D.T. Scheme is worked by means of simply-worded folders, which are slipped into the men's pay envelopes each week, and which they take home and read: just enough—not too much. Non-political, non-partisan, but anti-revolutionary." Many bigwigs and capitalist newspapers have blessed the scheme; many firms are using them.

We are proud of the compliment paid to us in the comment of the *Colliery Guardian*: "It is now realised that to fight the insidious forces of Marxism it is not sufficient to recapitulate exact economic 'truths' in the pages of expensive reviews which never percolate through to the worker. Yet it is of great importance that the last named should be given the opportunity to base his judgment on sound conclusions. *Here comes a bit of advice Plebeians can take to heart.*" To do this, two things are required of the apostle: he must cloak his argument in simple and direct language, and his form must be the bench and the working place."

Space forbids us diverting our readers by quoting from the folders themselves. But we *should* like to know the names of the Trade Union leaders who have privately expressed their opinion of these "educative and unbiased" efforts. There is just one little thing the P.D.T. people have forgotten: men on strike and out of work don't have pay-days, and hence will miss these charming little talks on the need for co-operation between Capital and Labour. They will have to prepare something for distribution to the queue outside the Labour Exchange!

M. S.

SEND FOR THOSE STAMPS.

TRA LA MONDO

ESPERANTO NOTES BY POPOLANO

A Plot

IT appears that another plot is being hatched in Jugo-Slavia. The conspirators are "the philosophical faculty" of Zagreb, who have determined that English shall be the universal language. Wherefore shall the *Morning Post* rejoice, and the daughters of the Primrose League shall clap their hands!

But list to the quaint and curious argument of the professors of Zagreb:—

"The artificial tongues are not fit for these reasons:—

(A) The weak side of all artificial tongues created till now consists in that, that the founders have not been able to decide the pronunciation and the syntax. They all thought, that it is enough to simplify the forms and the wording. If, for instance, Esperanto should become the universal language, every one would pronounce it according to the phonetic custom of his native language, and, as the syntax is very inadequate, every one would apply the phraseology and construction of his own language. . . ."

The professors obviously know nothing of Esperanto, otherwise they could not honestly speak in this fashion. The fact is that at International Esperantist Congresses the pronunciation of people of all nationalities is practically identical; indeed, among good Esperantists it would require an instrument more delicate than the human ear to distinguish the nationality of the speakers.

Probably the underlying motive of the professors' argument is to be found in the next point:—

(B) The artificial languages are without tradition, consequently without daily use. No nation is behind them. There could consequently be decided neither a daily use, nor a norm with which those ones who learn it had to conform. . . ."

Despite the norm of "standard" English, the learned professors, who have doubtless spent many years of their life in the imperfect acquirement of that language, manage to depart from it! In their last point the language of the professors becomes "curiouser and curiouser":—

(C) There is no ingenuity to form on the scheme of the grammar of a natural language some artificial tongue. The question is only to simplify the forms, to reject the exceptions and the irregularities, and to create as simple regulations for the forming of words as possible. It may be said, with right, that the forming of artificial tongues is a play, in which they may be ingenuously, knowledge and shrewdness. . . . If one language must be learned as means for under-

standing with the world, it is the most clever to learn such one which is already to-day the most propagated and mostly known as the English, or that which has till now been used in the international intercourse, that is the French."

But the workers of the world, in their desire for human unity, are beginning to recognise that in Esperanto they have a substantial and efficient instrument of expression, having these advantages over any national language: neutrality and facility. The exclusive use of English or French internationally would give an undue advantage to those whose mother tongue was used. On the other hand, the use of Esperanto places all who use it on an equal footing; and, moreover, Esperanto can be learnt anywhere in the world in a few months. As Henri Barbusse says, Esperanto is "the A B C of the International." . . . Perhaps that is really why the professors don't like it.

In reply to inquiries as to the most suitable books for individual students of Esperanto, I recommend the following: *The Esperanto Teacher* (1s.), and the *Edinburgh Pocket Dictionary* (1s. 6d). Obtainable from the British Esperanto Association (Incorporated), 17, Hart Street, London, W.C.1.

Internacio de la Militintoj kaj Militviktimoj.
Kara Kamaradaro!

Je la nomo de ĉiuj miaj kamaradoj el Francio kaj Eŭropo, mi permesas al mi informi vin pri la starigo, okazinta, maje 1920 en Genevo, de *Internacio de Militintoj*. Tiu Internacio enakceptas ĉiujn viktimojn de la imperialista milito (invalidoj, stumpigitoj, vunditoj, vidvinoj, orfoj, kaptitoj, k. t. p.) dezirantaj unuigi en porpaca batalo. Ĉiu aliĝinta asocio konservos sian administracian aŭtonomion. La celoj estas jenaj:

1. Kontraŭbatali la militon: konsekvenco de l'kapitalista sistemo;
2. Estigi kontraŭmilitan spiritstaton per pacifisma kaj kontraŭmilitema propagando;
3. Defendi la profitojn de la militviktimoj, internaciigante iliajn depostulojn.

La Internacio de la militintoj estos kompleta nur kiam ĝi entenos unu aŭ plurajn sekciojn. . . . La ĉeesto de viaj samlandanoj en niaj vicaj plifortigos la tutan prestiĝon bezonatan de nia Asocio. Ni estos dankaj al vi, se vi bonvolos sciigi nin, ĉu en via lando troviĝas iuj asocioj de militintoj povantaj aliĝi. Ni ne dubas, ke ilia malamo al la milito ilin instigos kuniĝi kun ni.

HENRI BARBUSSE,
Generala Sekretario de la provizora internacia sekretario.

Adreso: 9, rue de Valois, Paris (1^{er}).

NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT

Will class-secretaries, tutors and organisers note that this page of the PLEBS can—if they choose to make it so—be of considerable value as a means for the interchange of ideas on methods of tuition, organisation, etc., etc.? A paragraph on subjects of this kind is of much more general interest, as well as of more use-value, than a mere formal report of normal activities—though of course we're glad to hear of these.

SHEFFIELD Labour College has a good winter's work to look back upon, but as will be seen from the Manifesto on Class Co-ordination, on another page, they are looking forward. Along with the report, the secretary sends us a copy of a leaflet appeal "To You, Mr. Worker," which is an extremely good advertisement for I.W.-C.E., and should do much to arouse the apathetic worker. The interesting items in the report are:—23 classes organised, with a total of 450 students; a special class for "intensive" study, where 40 students are undergoing special training; 100 affiliated organisations, and "a team of lecturers on 'Revolutionary Periods in History' kept busy" at Branch Meetings, Co-operative Guilds, etc.

Sheffield Plebeians are hereby urged to reap something from this fertile ground. Sales of PLEBS have not been too good in the district—and we refuse to believe that the Magazine is not the right stuff for Sheffield students, since students everywhere else jump at it. 'Appen t'Sheffield lads don't ger it shoved at 'em. Ger at it, PLEBS boosters!

* * *

There are two items in the MANCHESTER Labour College report worthy of special notice. One is that visits are to be paid to, and "object" lectures given in, the Owens College Museum. (Manchester has a wonderful School of Technology in which the development of weaving, for instance, can be seen in actual practice. Immense use can be made of our museums in this way, and we commend the idea to other classes.) The other item is the special summer course of Monday evening lectures at the College by M. Barritz on "The Materialist Interpretation of Literature, Ethics, Art, Drama and Music" (illustrated by lantern slides, and with musical demonstrations).

During the winter session 23 classes have been held, 19 lantern lectures given, and £67 worth of literature sold. Open-air classes are to be conducted during the summer on Sundays at Hanforth Club House at 2.30, New Mills Dyers' Hall at 2.30, Ashton-under-Lyne Labour Party Rooms at 11, and Altrincham Trades and Labour Council Rooms at 2.30. On Tuesdays a special class for prospective tutors is held at 7.30 at the College and the Industrial History class on Thursdays at 8. PLEBS and educational literature is always on sale at the College.

HALIFAX reports a successful session. Four classes—besides the usual lectures in Science of Understanding, Economics and Industrial History, a course in Economic Geography was added to the syllabus. With the conclusion of the Economics lectures some of the students began a course of Esperanto. Local T.U. branches have been visited by speakers and the outlook for next session is very promising.

* * *

The CARDIFF Plebs Branch Secretary writes: "Our Class just concluded . . . very encouraging experience . . . altogether 73 students . . . attendance well maintained. Twenty-four students had their fees paid by three N.U.R. branches and the local Postal Workers. The Trades and Labour Council for a nominal rent provided us with an ideal hall for lectures, and it is certain we shall have a successful session next year. We hope to have a Cardiff Council for I.W.-C.E. next winter." In brief, Cardiff's showing those mere miners that the Rhondda *isn't* the only live spot in S. Wales.

* * *

LIVERPOOL District Council for I.W.-C.E. desire the full-time services of a Marxian Economics tutor for winter session, 1921-2. Apply, stating experience and qualifications, to J. HAMILTON, 99, Botanic Road, Liverpool.

* * *

This is the sort of letter it's nice to receive:—"I enjoy the PLEBS now, since you have increased its size and price, more than ever before. It is of tremendous assistance to me in writing my weekly column in the Adelaide Labour daily, *The Herald*, under the heading 'The Proletarian Study Circle' . . . Yours in comradeship, W. M. GORMLIE" (Adelaide, S. Australia).

* * *

LIST OF £1 FUND SUBSCRIBERS UP TO DATE:—

D. Beech, B. S. MacKay, S. Coupe, F. Browett, H. R. Foulis, F. Donaghy, Robt. Campbell, A. D. Hewlett, J. Murgatroyd, Wm. R. Crawley, A. Whitaker, A. A. Segon (Norwich Branch), G. and H. Brown, Ned Evans, J. G. Clancy, T. Eddols.

* * *

Don't forget to send for your Stamps!

Formation of new branches—local Plebs
leave note :—

• GLASGOW.—Write S. Walker, c/o Barrett, 114, Dunchatten Street, Dennistoun.

BURNLEY and District.—Will any readers willing to form branch write A. Riley, 3, Smithy Row, Fence, Burnley? Do not delay. Useful work waiting to be done.

• PORTSMOUTH.—Comrade T. Wilkey, 45, Wykeham Road, North End, suggests that a branch might be started at Portsmouth. Will local comrades move in the matter?

BRIGHTON.—“London-by-the-Sea” is waking up! G. E. Mighell, 4, Kensington Place, would like to hear from comrades interested in forming a Plebs Group.

EASTBOURNE.—Write W. G. Wilkinson, Labour Club, South Street.

BLAYDON-ON-TYNE.—H. Braun, 25, Harriet Street, will be glad to hear of Plebeians in the district who wish to “join up.”

W. H.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE “PLEBS”—FOUND WANTING

DEAR COMRADE,—My letter last month has indeed sent the editorial pen whirling through space, so much so that I hardly know where to catch on. However, to make my position clearer, I shall endeavour, in as short a space as possible, to reply to the criticism made in the “Bookshelf.”

Now, I do not intend to follow the kind of criticism displayed in some passages, which even under the glare of the editorial light fails to show any sterling worth. All I am bothered about is to make known the deficiency of which I complain, a statement of which must necessarily be made before an improvement can take place.

The aim of my last letter was to suggest that the PLEBS as an educational organ was not doing all it could do for the working-class movement; and I urged that many contributions are of little or no value, in short, are relatively non-utilitarian. Utilitarian is a very elastic term, you say. Quite so. But it appears to me that a necessary requisite to an understanding of what is utilitarian and what is not is clearness concerning the proper function of the PLEBS. That function is not, as is your contention, necessarily “to advocate the importance of I.W.-C.E.” The PLEBS is not likely, nor ought it, to make an uninitiated worker interested; this is being done by our propagandists. The PLEBS is definitely a magazine for students and tutors. It should be a means of helping the militant section of the workers to solve concrete every-day problems. In reply you say that the PLEBS “cannot supply while-you-wait solutions.” Obviously not. Is this the editorial *reductio ad absurdum*?

We want the workers to discard the capitalist point of view and take a proletarian one. To do this the theories underlying our conception of society must insistently and at all times be pointedly related to actual present-day working-class practice. What does this is useful, is a weapon to fight the class struggle. A knowledge of the technique of a bust, or an investigation into the life of a comparatively insignificant man, does not, I repeat, fill the bill. I have no objection to a critical

account of a prominent figure in the working-class movement of 80 years ago. But surely we have rightly to choose the figure. Mr. Smith and M. Ferré are quite obscure gentlemen.

It may be argued that discussion of non-practical matters will convince the intelligentsia who have leanings towards the W.E.A. that Plebeians can express opinions on matters other than the class struggle. But, then, does not this policy run counter to the avowed aim of I.W.-C.E.? And is it not tantamount to lessening the effectiveness of our educational weapon? This broad and liberal policy is precisely what our opponents would like us to pursue.

Objection is made to my confining my remarks to what is non-utilitarian, without suggesting what ought to replace the “offending contributions.” Manifestly it is easier to decide what is useful once we have found out what is not useful. However, I will venture to suggest some matters that could be discussed. There is the very appropriate question of the relation of the Average Rate of Profit to the “pool” and the present condition of the mining industry. Or the methods of class-teaching (happily begun in June PLEBS) and the relation between different capitalist educational institutions. Then, what of a series of articles dealing with the tendency towards industrial unionism in each separate industry? Each of these questions has a practical bearing upon the class struggle, and would be immensely appreciated by the class members.

It may be partly true that the men who are capable of dealing with these questions have been backward in coming forward, but this must not continue for ever. There is no need to cry over spilt milk. It is the duty of all practical Plebeians to send in their contributions.

You appear, Mr. Editor, to be much ruffled with my “direct onslaught” on Comrade Postgate. There is no intention on my part to in any way belittle his learning or ability, or to sneer at his style of writing. My criticism was directed against the subject matter, the nature of which is what is responsible for the scrappy mode of presentation. So that all talk of Postgate’s

reputation is beside the point. The so-called intellectuals can certainly give valuable help to the militant workers, but they must be subordinated to the necessities of practical tactics.

Finally, I would have all PLEBS' readers fully realise what an inestimable asset such a journal as the PLEBS can and must be (if we will it) to our ever-growing movement.

Yours frat., F. P.

["F.P.'s" letter, except for the quite useful suggestions he makes as to possible subjects for interesting articles, does not really add much to his previous contribution. Regarding his main point—that the PLEBS must be strictly *utilitarian*—we will only ask him again to remember that "utilitarian" is emphatically a relative term; and remind him that too narrow an interpretation of it would rule out quite a lot of the subject-matter studied in our I.W.-C.E. classes, as having no direct and obvious bearing on present-day tactics. There are, in fact, critics of I.W.-C.E., who insist that any study of history is a waste of time for proletarians. Marx thought otherwise. So do we.

Certainly, the PLEBS is *primarily* "a magazine for students and tutors." But *not* for advanced students, "F.P."; nor for students all cut to one pattern. I.W.-C.E. does not aim at turning out two million minds with but a single thought!

"The PLEBS is not likely, *nor ought it*, to make an uninitiated worker interested." We disagree—for the very excellent reason that we have ample evidence that it has succeeded in interesting hundreds of 'uninitiated workers' during the past few months.

With his contention that our theories must be constantly "*related to actual working-class practice*" we heartily agree. Too many of our theorists are apt to forget this, and to imagine that the mere recitation of a theory, in the manner of an incantation, is itself a "utilitarian" proceeding. But our theories have also to be related to *historical* facts—of every kind; and that is why in our classes we study history, and in the PLEBS publish historical studies.

His objection to Messrs. Smith and Ferré as not sufficiently "prominent" to be worthy of study is just a little quaint. As a matter of fact, of course, both were, in their day, decidedly prominent figures. But neither the degree of interest attached to any historical figure, nor the benefit to be derived from a study of his life or work, depends on his "prominence."

We have no space here, though we hope to return to it later, to challenge "F.P.'s" assertion that to discuss certain subjects which he labels "non-practical" is to adopt the "broad and liberal" policy of our opponents. It is, of course, nothing of the sort. We claim—and it is up to us to prove—that our proletarian point of view is valid in every department of human activity.

Finally, with regard to "F.P.'s" references to R. W. Postgate: "all talk of Postgate's reputation" may be "beside the point." At any rate, neither "F.P.'s" opinion, nor ours, will materially affect Postgate's reputation. But it was "F.P." who introduced the subject—and, further, he suggested that a contributor's reputation was, for the PLEBS, the deciding factor. He does not withdraw that suggestion. Does he still hold to it?—Ed., PLEBS.]

DEAR COMRADE,—I am inclined to agree with "F.P.," who, in your June issue, suggests that certain PLEBS' features lack definite use-value, although I think him unnecessarily sardonic as regards R. W. Postgate's work. I am also in agreement with "J. F. H." when he remarks that to all working-class problems we cannot find "while-you-wait solutions." However, I do think it would be of more value to the unenlightened proletarian if current problems were given a first place. The average workman seeks a practical and intelligible means whereby to free himself from the present economic system. He cares not one iota whether Th. Ferré reproved Rigault for singing the "Carmagnole" without doffing his beaver, nor a "twopenny damn" about the differences between Bakunin and Lafargue as to the post-revolutionary rôle of the petty bourgeoisie.

Of course there is always the question as to what exact section of the movement the PLEBS is trying to capture. (1) Is it meant to be a theoretical journal for advanced Marxist students, or a periodical presenting working-class economics to the working-class in general? (2) Is it simply an organ of Independent Working-Class Education, or does it seek to express the full spirit of Proletcult? If the latter, the meagre references to the Arts, and (as E. & C. Paul have already emphasised) the omission of a simplified form of psycho-analytical study, are flaws in its programme which ought immediately to be remedied.

The actual question of degree of utility depends on the opinions and temperaments of various comrades.

But I really fail to see the proletarian utility of arguments on such trivial things as the use of the words "partial" and "prejudiced." One might almost call the Postgate-Horrabin controversy a petty squabble in terminology. Why all this phraseological hair-splitting? It won't bring the Revolution any nearer. As a keen student of the French Marxist Press I have been struck with the almost complete freedom from internal dogmatic controversy. We are all agreed on fundamental principles and any discussion should be on important and useful themes. It would never do for the PLEBS to become a drawing-room debating society.

Yours frat.,
Audruicq, France. ERIC VERNEY

DEAR EDITOR,—The June Magazine is a real live number—some cockpit, in fact. And you'll be glad to hear that many of us appreciate the very successful way in which you provide for the varied tastes of Plebeians.

Don't let R. W. P. twist your tail. We are prejudiced—in favour of historical truth. And don't let him try to limit our studies. If he'd ever tried to explain present-day illusions as to society and social relations, he would have discovered how helpful illustrations drawn from the early stages of historical development were.

But no branch of study appeals to every taste. Nothing ever does. Personally, for example, I can't understand why the *Herald* devotes such a lot of space to the Boat Race and the Derby.

Yours, TUTOR.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

DEAR EDITOR,—In view of your request for definite suggestions for the improvement of the PLEBS, the Earl's Court Branch sends you the following as a result of a discussion. We feel that you are well carrying through the difficult task of providing for lecturer and student, hard-baked Marxian and "green 'un," at the same time. Probably other branches will be able to help you in this same way, and potential contributors will send in copy along the lines suggested.

(1) Series of reports in "News of the Movement" from the various districts—"How we run our classes." Opportune questions would be: How the teachers are provided and paid? What are the relations between the Trade Unions and our class work? What are the methods being used in our teaching and how can we improve them? This could be widened to include discussion of the possibility of using the Fisher Act by the help of official Education Committees with a Labour majority, and also the linking up of juvenile education with our movement.

(2) Contributions from Marxians in different industries and professions to show how technique is still strengthening the case for industrial organisation. For example, a Pleb in the building industry would be able to detail the changes in the nature and means of modern building; a railwayman, clerk, miner and busman likewise. This would lead to a survey of the Trades Unions in their particular field, and their future. It would end in a review of the particular difficulties and details of workers' control in each industry.

(3) Practical applications of Marxism in economics to current problems, somewhat in the manner of your own footnotes on world politics, brought closer home. We would suggest the effect of financial capital, the results of war loans, currency inflation, and indemnities, as examples of things about which the PLEBS should have something important to say.

Give us some of these things, and we'll do our best for that 10,000 circulation next winter.

Yours frat.,

D. W. THOMAS, Sec.

[A letter like this is decidedly helpful. We shall do our best to "fill the bill."—ED., PLEBS.]

THE COMING REVOLUTION

SIR,—Having been away ill, I have only just seen the review in your April issue of my book, *The Coming Revolution*, over the initials R. W. P.

I naturally never reply to reviews if they deal merely with the literary merits of a book, as the reviewer is entitled to his own opinion, whatever it is; and if my friend R. W. P. had dismissed my work as incapable of being read, I should not have felt that I was the person to quarrel with the verdict. But, as he is good enough to praise it in the literary sense, while attributing to me beliefs which I should be sorry for your readers to think that I held, I must ask to be allowed to contradict him.

He says I try to persuade my readers that everything is lovely in the labour garden; whereas, in point of fact, much of the book is devoted to showing that it is not. If, indeed, it were, why bother to write books about it?

He says I take all labour resolutions at their face value, whereas a considerable portion of the second chapter in the book is devoted to explaining exactly why it is impossible to take labour resolutions at their face value. What I do maintain is that the documents which I quote in my appendices (and which he dismisses as entirely hollow) are, though not to be taken at their face value, at the same time very highly significant and important.

R. W. P., indeed, gives me the whole of my case when he himself says: "After all, the last two years have seen more remarkable developments than the previous twenty." That is exactly my own argument. I cannot understand how the records of a remarkable development can be entirely hollow. The Council of Action, despite its failure to do all that many of us wanted, did do something quite definite: it did stop the Russian war. It did even more than that, for it demonstrated that Labour had the power by direct action to dictate foreign policy.

Of course both my book and R. W. P.'s review were written before the Triple Alliance failure to act in the middle of April. But though on that occasion the T.A. did not act, it will scarcely be denied that it came much nearer to acting than it ever has before. Like everything in revolutionary progress until the complete change, it marked a stage; and the failure to act, and the consequences for the whole of industry which have followed that failure, surely make it highly probable that there will be such

reorganisation as will lead to action in the future.

It is no use for us to exaggerate the advance of Labour. Equally, it is no use for us to ignore it. It is a real advance, even though a slight one. That is the theme of my book, and that, I take it, R. W. P. does not deny.

While no more agreeing with everything that Marx ever said than Marx did himself, I may claim to be as sound a Marxian as R. W. P.; and he does not need to be told that Marx believed precisely what I say in my book, namely, that through its trade union structure British Labour was likely to be able to establish a peaceful economic revolution.

Yours,
GERALD GOULD

SUGGESTIONS WANTED

DEAR COMRADE,—I notice in "Q's" article (June PLEBS) that the study of statistics is one item in the curriculum of the Russian Sverdlov University; and I would like to suggest that this subject ought to receive attention in our classes and in the PLEBS.

A study of statistics is surely essential to clear ideas as to the reconstitution of the productive forces of society. And the same analysis could be extended to cover facts and data concerning mortality, disease, crime, and so forth. Will any PLEBS' correspondent recommend useful (and up-to-date) books containing statistical data?

I would like to ask, also, for suggestions as to the best 20 books to form the nucleus of a Branch Library.

Yours frat.,
J. FLOWER

[We invite correspondents to reply to the two points raised in the above letter.—ED., PLEBS.]

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE TEACHER

DEAR EDITOR,—May I make a comment or two on "Q's" article in last month's PLEBS? Although not one of the lucky ones who could find time and cash to get to the Bradford Meet, I was exceedingly glad to note that a move was made in the direction of the study and discussion of Methods of Teaching. It is high time that PLEBS psychologists began to put some of their psychology into practice.

I rejoice to read of the Russians' "unconditional condemnation of the lecture method of instruction." One is reminded of the passage in *Creative Revolution* on the transition from dictatorship to administration. We deal too much in "spoon-feeding." Dictatorially inclined teachers naturally stress it. We should aim, like the Russians, rather at being "general guides and advisers"—even the orthodox educationists are setting us an example in this respect.

Psychology can teach us a good deal about the best way to teach. It is doubtful,

indeed, whether anyone can hope to be a good teacher without being something of a psychologist. And if I am dubbed a crank for so persistently advocating a study of psychology, I shall reply that we need a few more cranks of the same sort.

"Q" has rendered us good service by showing us some of our failings and indicating some possibilities.

Yours frat., J. B.

THE AGRICULTURAL PROLETARIAN

DEAR SIR,—In his note on my pamphlet, *The Farm Worker—His Past and Future*, "T. A." says: "The second part was . . . a plea for T.U. organisation, with only the most general hints as to the aims and method of such an organisation once achieved." I wish he had been able to indicate, even in a slight manner, what his own views are on this most important subject. Of course in a T.U. pamphlet one writes with limitations, but I venture to suggest that, even without such limitations, it would be very difficult to write with exactness regarding the future of the workers in agriculture. Their future and opportunity must inevitably be bound up with the future and the opportunities seized by the workers as a whole. Another difficulty is that, inside the Labour movement, there are almost no discussions about agriculture. Why, I can't say.

Perhaps it is unfair to ask "T. A." for a contribution to such a discussion, without offering one myself. I therefore offer the following observations:—

1. Trade Unionism in rural districts is not by any means secure. The Labour movement is taking too much for granted in this respect.

2. While in "mental alertness" farm workers have made great strides in recent years, the amount of knowledge existing among them on economics, history of their class, etc., can be represented by "0." Of course, time will make a great difference in this respect. It is an undeniable fact, however, that the majority of them still believe that the present system is all right, pre-ordained, and that "it'll never be no different." Doubts have frequently been expressed among them as to the fairness of taking the 4s. 6d. for them as a minimum wage!

We have a long way to go in educational work. On the countryside, the C.L.C. "doesn't exist." How, then, is the work to be done? At present technical education (in farm institutes and agricultural colleges) is out of reach for the ordinary farm worker, though some opportunities may be secured later. As to the "Social" education (in economics, etc.), the W.E.A. is the only body which appears to have any organisation which touches even the fringe of the opportunity. It is not very helpful to say "turn the W.E.A. down" when there is absolutely nothing else to put in its place. Of the two unions catering for agricultural workers, the conglomerate union, which has no business

to have such workers in it, is working with the W.E.A. in theory (nothing practical appears to have been done so far), and the other has as yet no definite policy as to rendering any assistance in the work of education for its members.

3. Much, very much, could, in the meantime, be done by literature. Plebs and others ought to turn their serious attention to this.

4. All countries require a strong and far-spread country population. The barriers between country and town must be broken down. "A civilisation which has no roots in the soil is effete."

But agricultural workers are decreasing in numbers. This is due to a variety of causes. It must stop. This means that farm life must be made attractive. The introduction of machinery to the fullest extent in farming, a system of large farms run on organised lines with scientific management, directors, foremen, shifts (if need be), electricity, light railways, will call for more alert workers and will bring these attractions.

People who declare that farming—owing to cheapness of foreign production—has no future in this country, will almost certainly have to revise their opinions. The causes which have made for cheap foreign corn in the past—cheap labour, easy credits, cheap transport, etc., are now being eliminated. Transport is dear, and likely to remain much dearer than it used to be; virgin soils now require manures in increasing quantities; while in this country experiments are likely to produce a wheat which is strong, with good straw, good yield, and capable of being grown on soils thought at present unsuitable.

5. No industry is cursed more than agriculture with middle-class people who want to "uplift" the workers engaged in it. These people—sincere as they are, of course—have got no farther than co-partnership and nationalisation. Yet they are the "experts" to whom everybody turns.

6. Plebs have their work cut out to kill the idea that town workers are and should be glad that agricultural workers get small money because it enables those living in towns to get cheap food.

Yours fraternally,

H. B. POINTING,
(Editor, *The Land Worker*).

[This is the sort of contribution we want from Plebs in other industries. And at the same time we hope that this discussion may lead to some practical suggestions as to educational work in the countryside.—Ed., PLEBS.]

THE STUDY OF HISTORY

DEAR EDITOR,—You invite outsiders to "butt in," so perhaps I may do so in the Postgate *v.* Newbold discussion.

The former's remarks on the subject of Primitive Communism remind me forcibly of the controversies which used to rage in the 'nineties between Fabians and S.D.F.-ers,

and Postgate argues on the same lines, and almost in the same words, as Graham Wallas, Macrosty & Co. used to do. His position is a denial of the Marxian method. I am not going to argue that Communism to-day depends for its validity on the fact or otherwise of Primitive Communism. We go to primitive society in order to trace the rise of present-day institutions—partly on the ground that to understand any phenomenon it is easier to study it in its simpler forms rather than in its fuller development.

Were proletarians, as Postgate seems to suggest, to confine their studies to the post-mediæval or capitalist period, they never could understand how capitalism itself had developed from the previous society, nor would they be able to explain the various forms taken on by class rule. The Materialist Conception of History would remain for them merely a barren abstract formula—as it is and has been hitherto for far, far too many British socialists. Philip Snowden, with his deification of the State, is only a natural conclusion for a man who despises all theories and has probably never troubled to think how what we know as the State arose and how it has been evolved and transformed. So far as he knows it has always been there and always will be—other people say the same of private property, marriage, etc.

Even from the utilitarian point of view it is an advantage for a proletarian if he can prove that these things as we know them are themselves subject to the law of change—and that in the words of Goethe: "Alles was entsteht ist werth dass es zugrunde geht" (*Faust* I., v. 1336)—"Everything that has an origin has only a temporary value"—in other words, what arises in time must disappear in time.

Those words, I think, sum up the philosophy of Evolution, and perhaps even utilitarian Communists might find that they could gain a good deal of practical wisdom from *Faust*, as well as from Marx and Engels.

Yrs., &c., J. B. ASKEW

GODWIN, SHELLEY AND OWEN

DEAR COMRADE,—We have not time to "butt straight in" on the general topic of the M.C.H. and poetry, but wish to refer to a minor issue that has been raised. We think that Johns is in error in believing that Robert Owen's influence on Shelley's opinions must have been negligible; and we are sure that Fox is mistaken when he writes that Owen "was first becoming articulate" in 1819-23.

The first two of the essays on *A New View of Society*, containing the essence of Owen's social theories, were published in 1813, when Owen was over 40 years of age and Shelley about 21. There can be little doubt that Shelley was familiar with these views from conversations with Owen as well as from reading. For their social philosophy,

both men were largely indebted to William Godwin. So similar were their views, that quotations from the notes to *Queen Mab* were plausibly, though wrongly, attributed to Owen's authorship. Frank Podmore, in his *Robert Owen* (p. 647), writes of "a gospel widely spread in the England of Owen's time by his master, Godwin, and by his friend and fellow-pupil, Shelley."

Yours frat.,

EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL

MUDDLED MARXISTS

DEAR EDITOR,—In last month's PLEBS "M. S." argued, in effect, that the labour-force engaged in the (so-called) circulation process does not add any value to the commodities handled in that process.

Now, in opposition to "M. S." (and the vast bulk of disciple-like Marxists), we will endeavour to argue the contrary.

To start at the base, we will define *Value*. This is created by Labour-power. Labour is the substance of value. The value of a commodity is determined by what? "The socially necessary labour-time required for its production" (Vol. I., p. 6).

Now it is clear from the foregoing that all the acts that society necessitates for the production of an article add value to the thing brought forth. It is of no consequence whether labour-power is engaged in actually hewing coal from its natural bed, or whether a labour-power is engaged in handling the coal a hundred miles from where it was produced. They both add value to the thing manipulated *if* these acts are "socially necessary." If social life demands such acts then each act is an integral part of the productive process.

Ah, say those Marxists, in whose sight every word in the books of Marx is a part of their gospel, the labour-force used up in the circulation of matter does not add value to the matter circulated, but merely "renders service." They never seem to realise that by "rendering service" this labour-force performs useful work, by performing *useful* work it performs necessary, "socially necessary," labour (if this is not so, then no useful labour is expended, nor "service rendered"), and thus (in the light of Marx's own definition) adds value to all the matter into which its energy is sucked.

The fact is that orthodox Marxists are in a hopeless muddle over this point. They say (with Marx) that the circulation process is a dead expense on production, but yet in the second vol., *Capital*, p. 144, we find: "In the production of commodities circulation is as necessary as production itself." We have now reached a state when we must ask: How can it be argued that value is only created in the so-called sphere of production when it is manifestly clear that the two processes (circulation and production) are bound up together and cannot be separated, and that without the proper

functioning of both the social needs would not be satisfied, therefore proving that the several acts of the "circulating process" are as vital and as "socially necessary" as the "productive process," and that owing to this vital correlation of acts no line can be drawn as to where or when the productive process ends and the circulation process begins?

To wind up. All labour required to produce coal is not found in the coal-mine, but is the sum total of all the labour-power engaged in the mine, and at the various points outside the mine where labour is required to guide the coal on its way to its social destination—productive consumption. The value-creating process is a composite process. A commodity is the issue of this process; the former contains within it (assume it one ton of coal) not merely the labour of mine-workers, but the labour, in part, of the whole working class. All these parts, all such infinitesimal portions of human energy, are value-creating, because they make up the grand whole—"necessary labour."

We hope that this will stir up a vigorous reply. It ought to, as this is essentially a "Vulgarist" point of view.

NED EVANS

[If our comrade will insist on knocking down his own bogeys, and if he fails to see the difference between the production of a commodity (which only ends when it has been transported to the market) and the selling of that commodity, he should be an authority on "hopeless muddle." The replies given in January and June PLEBS are not touched by the above criticism, which the author in a P.S. says he did in five minutes.—M. S.]

ONE OF OUR CRITICS

DEAR EDITOR,—I do not remember uttering the "brief but blistering" comment on the Plebs pamphlet which you quote, but I have severely criticised the pamphlet for the following reasons:—

1. The matter has been dealt with far better in other pamphlets, e.g., *Logic of the Machine*, by W. F. Hay; the writings of De Leon, Debs, Kautsky, etc., and the earlier publications of the PLEBS; and a host of others could be enumerated if necessary.

2. The thing is far too dear. To charge 3d. for it is absurd, especially as its few small pages have not even been used to their fullest capacity. There cannot be any point in leaving a quarter of the space wordless. If paper is dear, all the more reason why it should be utilised to its fullest extent.

3. The only justification for the publication of a book or pamphlet is that it deals with its subject matter better and more clearly than those already on the market; or that it expresses a totally new point of view. Is either of these true of this pamphlet? No, a thousand times No. Has its "author" the audacity to say that he deals with the subject of working-class education more clearly than

many other pamphlets now on the market? He will be a bold man who will say "Yes." Therefore, why was it published?

Yours for the advancement of Working-Class Education, F. COLLINS

[1. The pamphlet was published in response to a general demand for a concise statement of the PLEBS point of view on Working-Class Education. There did not happen to be such a pamphlet on the market; so we issued one. It doesn't pretend to be anything but a statement of the PLEBS point of view on this particular subject—nor to rival the "hosts of

others" on other subjects which Com. Collins alludes to. 2. We didn't aim at getting so many words into each page, but simply at saying what we had to say as concisely as possible. 3. We're not sure whether Collins means that 3d. is an "absurd" price for any 12 pp. pamphlet (+4 pp. cover), or whether it's only this particular pamphlet which is dear at that price; but if he can give us any practical suggestions on the subject of economising in expenses of production we should be delighted to hear further from him.—ED. PLEBS.]

REVIEWS

"WITHIN THE EXISTING ORDER"

Increased Production. By E. Lipson, M.A. (Oxford University Press. 2s. 6d.)

In reviewing this little work I am reminded of another with the same title by George Dagger, of Abertillery, also an M.A.* In Dagger's case the letters mean Miners' Agent.

It is difficult to conceive of such diametrically opposed views being expressed upon any subject but Social Science. The distinctive point of view of the Labour College and the Plebs League, as compared with the views of the orthodox social scientists, is admirably illustrated in these two books.

Mr. Lipson's is written in that temperate, sympathetic style with which we are now well acquainted. But neither good nature nor well meaning can make up for lack of reasoning, or hide the contradictions of capitalist production. He frankly assumes the present order, *with modifications*. And his aim "is to discuss how the workers can best attain a higher standard of life." But his acceptance of the present order makes it necessary that they shall remain workers.

The real purpose of the book is to discover how to increase capitalist wealth and incidentally give not a larger share but a higher wage to labour. What prevents this? Blindness and stupidity on the part of both Capital and Labour. They are really and truly friends, and should enter into a real partnership. But the curious thing about this partnership is that it requires the spur of the piece-rate system, whose praises Mr. Lipson sings very loudly. This will encourage one partner to produce more—and how willingly will the other partner reap the profit!

George Dagger also deals with the present system, and accepts it—for just as long as it must remain with us. In the meantime he examines and exposes its fatal contradictions. Packed with information, his case is proven by numerous quotations and statistics supplied by the capitalists themselves. It is not a question of appealing to faith, but to reason from facts.

* *Increased Production.* By George Dagger. (S.L. Press, Glasgow.)

The whole problem of production in its many aspects is particularly important just now, and here we have two opposite statements of the case. The student might do a great deal worse than secure a copy of each—the case for Capital and the case for Labour.

W. H. M.

WELL MEANT

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like Jeshurun) will kick, and will be prepared to accept the guidance of the resolute few. To that extent he is with the school of revolutionists who are commonly known to-day as "Bolsheviks." For though on the title-page he quotes Ibsen's famous phrase, "There is but one revolution that avails, to revolutionise men's minds," nevertheless, he realises at times that as far as average men are concerned their "minds" will be revolutionised *after*, not *before*, enviroing conditions have been revolutionised. And in his last paragraph he writes: "Revolution, even revolution of the mind, is not brought about by staying in bed and aimlessly counting the roses on the wallpaper. Revolution is brought about, on the contrary, by an exceptionally strong incentive to get up and do something. Just such an incentive is working on men's minds to-day."

Yet, though his criticism of the present position of national and international affairs is sometimes forceful, there is lacking in Mr. Jeffery's study that clear analysis of operative causes which a better understanding of Marxist economics and Marxist philosophy would give him. Marx did not say the last word in sociology; but without a full grasp of Marxist sociology no prophet, be his name Jeffery or Daniel, shall understand the Writing on the Wall.

Nor shall any man understand it who on almost every page flourishes the old and

empty symbols of Progress and the Ideal; who writes vaguely of the power of *money*, when he means the power of *exploiting capital*; whose psychology is still so obsolete that he can talk of a possible "triumph of Reason over Tendency." There can be no such triumph. What Mr. Jeffery means by "tendency" is a fundamental part of man's spiritual anatomy. Reason can guide impulse, can sublimate it, can at times hold impulse in leash. Impulse, however, will always be the driving force of life. And the real power by which the conscious mind can to a large extent control the sub-conscious is the power neither of the Reason nor of the Will; it is the power of the Imagination. In truth, the author recognises that it is the imaginative insight of the revolutionary minority which will control the situation—if anything can control it—if "civilisation" is not to lapse into chaos. But nowhere does he say so in unequivocal terms. Hence his book never "gets there" from the first page to the last. And a great many of the one hundred and sixty pages might just as well have been written by any sentimental socialist of the old school, by any "advanced liberal," as by an author who has had glimpses of the new insight. That, assuredly, is the most damning thing we have to say concerning a sincere, a well-penned, and for all its faults a readable book.

E. & C. P.

ONE OF THE LEADERS

The New Labour Outlook. By Robert Williams. (Leonard Parsons, 4s. 6d. net.)

This book, we are informed, contains Robert Williams' "considered views on policy and purpose." It certainly provides a valuable record of the relations between the Government and British Labour during the war, and gives material that could be utilised very effectively in propaganda at the present time.

In the chapter on "The Older Outlook" of Labour—prior to the war—Williams shows how economic pressure was compelling the various unions to amalgamate and to take strike action. Thus there developed a more militant policy, which expressed itself in a conflict of opinion between the two schools of "industrials" and "politicals." "Labour Unrest" was growing and the struggle approaching a climax when the war broke out, and the leaders declared a truce.

Our author then proceeds to sketch "the changing outlook" that developed during the war period, as the result once more of economic pressure in the form of profiteering and high prices. He shows how the temper of the militant section of Labour became more and more revolutionary during the war period, especially, when in July, 1917, an Unofficial Conference at Leeds attempted to form a British Workers', Soldiers' and Sailors' Council.

Next, he examines "The Newer Outlook" which has been growing since the war. His examination of the position of the Triple Alliance prior to the calling of the National Industrial Conference in February, 1919, makes interesting and valuable reading in view of the collapse of that body at the present time.

The Council of Action comes in for discussion, and Williams states that its formation in 1920 was "the result of the painstaking and ceaseless propaganda in favour of revolutionary direct action throughout 1919 on the part of the Triple Alliance." He also deals with the quibbles of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party about the use of the strike weapon for political purposes, and argues that with the formation of the Council of Action, the policy of Direct Action left the propaganda stage and became part of the

N.B.—Stamps.

explicit plan of the British Labour movement. In fact, he shows himself to be in substantial agreement with the policy outlined by Mellor in the concluding chapter of *Direct Action* (published in the same series).

Our author closes his chapter on "The Newer Outlook" with a few words on the Third International, and declares that its insistence on the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, as a means to destroy Capitalism, is an acceptance of the principle of Direct Action; whilst the supporters of the Second International, who are opposed to this principle, receive the blessings of the capitalist press.

Whatever may have been Robert Williams' attitude and policy in the recent débâcle of the Triple Alliance, he is undoubtedly a revolutionary in this book. Perhaps a remark in his Introductory Chapter provides the clue as to the part played by him on Black Friday; discussing positions of greater and lesser responsibility, he says, "I am reminded that responsibility makes for hesitancy and moderation," and he quotes Keir Hardie and Ben Tillet as examples of this. He argues that whilst Tom Mann, Smillie and himself may be considered moderate and cautious people compared to the active and rebellious members of the rank and file, this cautiousness is "in consequence of general conditions over which we have little or no control."

The position taken up by Williams in this book, the inherent weakness of the Triple Alliance as shown by Mellor, the reasons given for the Black Friday disaster at the Transport Workers' Conference in Edinburgh, all lead one to wonder whether the Communist Party acted too hastily in expelling him from their ranks. R. H.

THE PLEBS' BOOKSHELF

I WANT to devote what space I have this month to two books from the small pile on my desk, each of them well worth a place in every class library, and—if cash permits—on the individual student's bookshelf. Their subjects ("utilitarians" please note) are pretty far apart. One is *Life in Ancient Britain—A Survey of the Social and Economic Development of the People of England from Earliest Times to the Roman Conquest*; by Norman Ault

(Longmans', limp cloth, 5s.; post paid, 5s. 6d.). The other is the *Labour International Handbook*, edited by R. Palme Dutt (Labour Publishing Co., 12s. 6d.; postpaid 13s. 3d.)—a survey of current international problems from the Labour point of view. Both are books to get your teeth into.

Life in Ancient Britain deserves to be studied—and used—by our history tutors.

It's so easy to refer to Primitive Communism as an abstract sort of thing, without reference to actual time or place. Needless to remark, such reference is hardly in accord with our professed preference for the historical method. This little book (244 pp., fifty illustrations and a fine index) gives one some definite data to work on. And since any sort of national specialisation was a thing of the far distant future, it gives you—apart from a few minor points—the facts about primitive man in general, and not merely of primitive men in this island.

It is astonishing how Marxist your "orthodox" historian is when writing of the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, and the early Iron Age! He can see there that the development of the tool had more than a little to do with human progress and the development of institutions. Take these sentences from Mr. Ault's book:—"The change in man's existence from hunter to farmer, while obviously of incalculable importance for all subsequent civilisation, was the result of economic pressure alone" "How this law of mutual interaction and reflex stimulus affected them all—how new implements were called into being by new conditions of existence, and then, improving, bettered them in turn. . . ." "It is evident that the later economic and social developments, by creating new precedents, were continually superseding, modifying, or adding to the law of the clan, both customary and ceremonial."

Patient research has now made available a wealth of detail for studying the various early stages of social development, and the advances made in each. One of the most interesting passages in the book is that which brings out the tremendous progress made between the time of early and later Paleolithic man. The little imaginative pen-picture of a man of the Chellean period "stepping forward" to the Magdalenian age, and gazing awestruck at the fire, the cooked food, the garments, the bone and flint arrows, spear-heads, harpoons, the engravings on bones and the paintings on the cave walls, is a vivid and exciting bit of historical reconstruction. . . . This is a book to make a special note of.

* * *

From Paleolithic barbarian to the civilised Europeans of 1914-21 A.D.! Note those

dates, for the *Labour International Handbook* is very largely concerned with the discussion of problems raised by the Great War and anything but "settled" by the Peace. Part I. deals with International Affairs; Part II. with the International Labour Movement. One does not read a book of this sort through from cover to cover before reviewing it, so I will content myself with a brief reference to those particular sections I have so far enjoyed. R. Page Arnot's chapter on "Russia and the World" is a first-rate piece of work; a brief summary of the salient facts of early Russian history and a sketch of Russia in the 19th century lead up to "1905 and After" and thence to the present day. The tangled events of the last three years are sorted out and put into perspective with masterly skill. And the last page, which discusses "possibilities," is equally good. I may be pardoned for quoting a paragraph of especial interest to Economic Geography students:—

"Russia is one of the half-dozen economic world centres, or rather it is potentially such a centre. Just as Britain and the U.S. are marked out by their command of raw materials, their capacity to manufacture and their mechanism of distribution, so Russia by its mere size, its materials and its situation in the 'heartland' of the Old World, wants only a developing of organisation to enable it also to rank as a world centre. The virgin soil of America is all staked out, the oil wells of Texas are running dry, the forests of the West are being hewed down. But in the Caucasus and Central Asia the land is flowing with oil, in the North the world's greatest reserves of timber are still untouched, and there are rich plains in Siberia which have never yet come under the plough."

I have only left myself space just to mention Erskine Childers' account of "The Irish War of Independence"; "Deucalion's" section on the Far East; H. N. Brailsford's "Labour View of Foreign Policy"; and in the second Part of the book, R. W. Postgate's account of International Socialism, and R. Palme Dutt's chapter on International Trade Unionism. . . . Get this book for your branch or class library—and use it. It is a mine of useful material.

J. F. H.

The PLEBS invites contributions on Labour problems in general, and on subjects of interest to Working-Class Educationists in particular. All contributions should be as concise as possible, as space is limited, and "cutting" is a thankless (and tiresome) job. Articles or letters intended for following month's issue should be sent in not later than the 15th of the month. Will correspondents also remember to write on one side of the paper only, to write clearly, and to enclose full name and address, whether for publication or not? N.B.—No payment is made for any contribution—you get your reward in heaven.

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