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November, 1922.

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# THE PLEBS

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

Vol. XIV

November, 1922

No. 11

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## OUR POINT of VIEW

**P**LEBS Textbook No. 2, *An Outline of Modern Imperialism*, will be published on the 25th of this month. We look to every reader of The PLEBS to order his (or her) copy without delay. We don't *plead* for your support. We **EXPECT** it. And we have a right to expect it. This production of compact, simple books for the use of worker-students is one of the most important jobs we can set our hands to—and one of the most urgent needs of our movement. It is the biggest job The PLEBS has undertaken to do for the Labour Colleges. It would get done a good deal quicker if the Plebs to whom it falls were not—like the rest of the people in our movement—workers whose time has mostly to be spent in earning a living, and incidentally

in running classes and doing their part in the general work of the movement. Just remember that they can't earn a living at writing textbooks ; nobody gets paid for their work on these. (Which is one reason why they can be published at the price.)

Well, here's another one ready ; on as vital a subject as any of us can study. We look to you to see to it that a second edition is soon called for.

The conference, held at Oxford last month, of the British Institute of Adult Education was notable for some plain, if somewhat belated, speaking by one or two disillusioned working-

*Adults with  
Childlike Faith.*

men—plain speaking which must surely have grieved not a little the sensitive spirit of the chairman, Mr. Albert Mansbridge. Mr. H. Wooldridge, of Reading, for instance, asked one of the University speakers bluntly whether he was “proud of the men Cambridge had turned out for our government.” From Cambridge he turned to Oxford, and remarked that it was an Oxford man who had said we needed a large army of reserve labour. “If that was the kind of education that was to be given by the Universities, the workers would see to it that they had their own colleges in time.” Excellent ! But where, O where, have you been living, Mr. Wooldridge, that you didn't know the workers had already “seen to it” ? Mr. Mansbridge could have told you that years ago certain workers not only *felt* as you now do, but *acted*.

Another delegate, Mr. R. J. Hall, of Manchester, had also made the discovery that the Universities were “suspect to the working classes, in regard to economics especially.” And a third, Mr. Geo. Dallas, of the Workers' Union, announced that the workers were *almost* tired of the old Universities, and that the time was quickly coming when, unless the Universities did something about it, they (the workers) would provide themselves with the education they wanted.

It is a significant fact that these delegates, representing workers who, despite all that has happened during recent years, yet pinned their faith to the Universities, are at length beginning to realise that something is wrong. But it is also tragic that, having delivered themselves of their criticisms, they should—apparently—have gone away satisfied that, thus admonished, the Universities would straightway turn over a new leaf. “Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel !”

A member of the Plebs E.C. was recently asked by a London I.L.P. branch if he would be willing to take part in a debate on the question of working-class education with a certain



*W.E.A. Tactics*— well-known W.E.A.er. The Pleb said yes.  
*New Style.* The W.E.A.er declined the invitation, on the ground that there was really nothing to debate about between W.E.A. and Plebs, except the latter's "disapproval of the W.E.A."

This, of course, is the new tactic of the W.E.A. "left wing"—to assert that there is no real difference between the two organisations, and to claim working-class support on that very ground. It is a significant change of front, and an adroit one. "We believe in Independent Working-Class Education," these strategists declare in chorus; having discovered, of course, that it is hopeless to appeal to the more conscious sections of the workers on any other programme. One is reminded of a certain Liberal daily's loud assertions that it was a "frank and fearless friend of Labour"—at a time when a Labour daily was becoming a more and more serious rival. We know those "frank and fearless" friends!

Plebs opposition to the W.E.A. is not, as these people would suggest, a mere matter of cantankerousness. It is a matter of principle. We stand for Independence, not in *phrase*, but in *fact*; independence, that is, of capitalist University and capitalist Government support. And the best answer to these new-style "opponents" is to ask them bluntly why, if they have now discovered the virtue of Independence, they do not frankly throw in their lot with the organisation which has always stood for that, first and foremost.

We have heard of several instances recently of opponents of the Plebs and N.C.L.C. movement asserting that Plebeians are merely Communists in disguise, and that our real aim is to recruit members for the Communist Party. This assertion they base on the fact that some prominent contributors to *The Plebs* and some active N.C.L.C. workers in the country are members of the C.P. Quaintly enough, on the other hand, both our classes and our magazine are regarded with suspicion by certain Communists just because they are *not* run under C.P. auspices.

We want it to be clearly understood, by Communists and non-Communists alike, that our policy is now, as it has always been, *working-class control of working-class education*. We are not, we never have been, and we do not intend to be allied to any one *section* of the working-class movement. Our especial aim is to get the Trade Unions, as the backbone of that movement, to recognise that education in Social History, Economics and similar subjects ought to be part of their activities. Experience has proved that this aim can most effectively be worked for by people grouped as *educationists*, irrespective of whatever tactics or immediate policy

they individually favour. And if for no other reason than that our classes provide a meeting ground for comrades of varying opinions on these questions, they would be well worth while.

This does not mean that, like the W.E.A., we stand for "broad" views concerning education. We stand for an education definitely aiming at assisting the organised working-class movement to overthrow Capitalism. We assert that such education must be controlled, and can only be provided, by that movement itself. And we are only too glad to accept the help of any section of the movement which is prepared to work along these lines.

A tentative step is being made towards extending Plebs work to a fresh sphere. Simplification and vulgarisation and all must of course remain our main task; nevertheless, *Plebs Research Work.* the original research behind these cannot be neglected. You can only simplify what you already know thoroughly; you cannot "simplify" stuff that you have only a vague idea of. Arrangements—as yet only in the initial stages—are being made for the formation of Plebs Research Groups, for such definite and detailed study. A history and an economics group seem possible.

Results of these studies might perhaps be published in *The PLEBS*, but it is the intention of the E.C., if these schemes come to anything, to use such groups for the production—in due course—of the modern history textbook, which is still entirely in the air, and perhaps possibly, in the *High and Far Off Times*, of a further economics book. If there are any comrades in the provinces who are lucky enough to have the time and books available, and the will and habit of study sufficiently developed to be able and anxious to assist in this suggested research work, perhaps they would signify same in the usual? As we have said, the arrangements are only tentative as yet.

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## JOIN the PLEBS LEAGUE

The League was founded in 1908 "to further the interests of independent working-class education as a means towards the abolition of wage-slavery." Its job is propaganda—educational propaganda—in T.U. branches and other working-class organisations. It is out to do the pioneer work for the National Council of Labour Colleges, which co-ordinates the classes and colleges as they are actually formed. The Plebs League links together the active individual workers in the N.C.L.C. movement, and its membership is open to every believer in Independent Working-Class Education.

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# “NO POLITICS” AND REVOLUTION

A new article by Karl Marx

(Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul.)

*This hitherto unknown work of Marx was written in 1873 for an Italian year book. It deals with the anti-Parliamentarian revolutionaries (Bakuninists) who at that time based their cry of No Political Action on their “master” Proudhon. They correspond, as will be observed, almost exactly to the groups censured by Lenin as Infantile Leftists. Next month we shall publish an article dealing with the same groups by Engels.*

**T**HE working class must not form any political party, under no pretext whatever must the working class engage in political activities, for to fight the state means that we recognise the state, and this conflicts with immutable principles! The workers must not strike for higher wages or a reduction of hours, for this would imply a recognition of the system of wage labour, and would thus conflict with the immutable principles of working-class liberation!

If the workers, in their political struggle with the capitalist state, join forces to extort concessions, they are making compromises, and this conflicts with immutable principles! We must therefore condemn all such political movements as those which the British and American workers are, unfortunately, in the habit of promoting. The workers must not waste their energies in the endeavour to secure a legal limitation of the hours of labour, for we should compromise with the employers were we to agree that they could exploit the workers for ten or twelve hours daily instead of exploiting them for fourteen or sixteen hours. Nor must the workers endeavour to secure the legal prohibition of factory labour for girls under ten years of age, for the passing of such a law does not prevent the exploitation of boys under ten. Here would be another compromise, another infringement of immutable principles!

Still less ought the workers to demand that the state, whose budget is based upon the exploitation of the working class, should be compelled (as in the United States) to provide elementary education for the children of the workers. Elementary education is not universal education. Better that working men and working women should be unable to read, write and cipher, than that they should receive instruction from a teacher in a state school. Far



better that the workers should be brutalised by ignorance and by a working day of sixteen hours than that there should be any departure from immutable principles.

When the political struggle of the working class assumes a revolutionary form, when the workers replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by their own revolutionary dictatorship, they are committing the terrible crime of treason against principle. For the sake of their paltry and commonplace daily needs, in order to break the resistance of the bourgeoisie, they give the state a revolutionary and transient form, when what they ought to do is, simply lay down their arms and abolish the state. The workers must not form any trade unions, for this involves the perpetration of the social division of labour as it exists in capitalist society. But this division of labour, which separates the workers one from another, is the real cause of their enslavement.

In a word, the workers are to fold their arms, and are to refrain from wasting their time upon political and economic movements. Such movements can achieve nothing more than immediate results. Like truly religious folk, the workers, despising daily needs, full of faith, must cry : " Let our class be crucified, let our race perish, so long only as immutable principles are never infringed ! " . . . .

Whilst awaiting this glorious social revolution, the workers are to be on their good behaviour, to conduct themselves like the sheep of a well-fed flock, to let the Government alone, to fear the police, honour the laws, and uncomplainingly permit themselves to be used as cannon-fodder.

Throughout the doings of their daily lives the workers must remain the most obedient servants of the state, whilst inwardly protesting to the uttermost against the existence of the state. Their profound theoretical contempt for the state must be testified by the buying and reading of pamphlets concerning the abolition of the state. But they must be careful to avoid resisting the capitalistic order of society in any other way than by declamations anent the society of the future, into which the detested existing order is ultimately to be transformed !

It is obvious that had the apostles of political abstentionism spoken as plainly as this, the working class would promptly have told them to go to the devil. The workers would have realised that these would-be teachers were merely doctrinaire bourgeois, men whose stupidity (or cunning) induced them to forbid the workers to use any really effective means of struggle. For in contemporary society the workers must avail themselves of all the aforesaid means of struggle, and the inevitable conditions of the struggle are unfortunately such as make it impossible to adapt the means of struggle

to the idealist phantasies which our doctors of social science idolise under the names of "liberty," "self-government," and "anarchy." But the working-class movement has now become so strong that these philanthropic sectaries lack courage to reiterate concerning the economic struggle the "great truths" which they are never weary of proclaiming anent the political struggle. They are too cowardly to apply these truths to strikes, combination, trade unions, to the laws dealing with women's and children's labour, with the length of the working day, and so on.

Let us now examine the extent to which they appeal to old traditions, to shame, to honour, to immutable principles.

In the days of Fourier, Owen, Saint-Simon, and the other early socialists, social evolution was as yet insufficiently advanced to render it possible for the working class to form itself into a political party. These writers were therefore constrained to limit their activities to the description of the model society of the future, and they condemned all attempts on the part of the workers to better their lot by way of strikes, combination, and political action. But although we have no more right to repudiate these patriarchs of socialism than modern chemists have the right to repudiate their forefathers the alchemists, we must none the less guard against relapsing into the old errors, for on our part these errors would be unpardonable.

Yet long after these pioneer days, in 1839 when the political and economic struggle of the British working class had already become strongly accentuated, Bray, a disciple of Owen and one of those who had discovered mutualism years before Proudhon, published a book entitled *Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy*.

In a chapter on "The Inutility of the Remedies at Present Contended for," he severely criticised all the economic endeavours no less than the political endeavours of the British working class. He condemned the political movement, strikes, the reduction of the working day, the regulation of the factory labour of women and children, etc., for in his opinion such measures, instead of tending to deliver the workers from the extant order of society, chained them to that order, and actually increased the prevailing discrepancies of status.

We now come to Proudhon, the oracle of our doctors of social science. Although the master protested vigorously against all economic movements (combination, strikes, etc.), which conflicted with the salvation-bringing theories of his mutualism, nevertheless in his writings and by personal participation he furthered the political struggle of the working class, and his pupils did not venture to take an open stand against the political movement. As early as 1847, the year after Proudhon's leading work, *Systèmes des Contradictions Economiques, ou la Philosophie de la Misère*, was published,

I confuted all the sophisms he directed against the labour movement.\* But in 1864, after the passing of the *loi Olliviér* which to a restricted extent secured the right of combination for the French workers, Proudhon returned to the charge in a work entitled *De la Capacité Politique des Classes Ouvrières*, which was published a few days after his death.

His polemic gave so much pleasure to the bourgeoisie that in 1866, on the occasion of the great strike among the London tailors, the *Times* did Proudhon the honour of translating some of his onslaughts, and applying them in condemnation of the strikers. Let me give a few examples of Proudhon's censures.

There had been a miners' strike at Rive-de-Gier, and troops had been hastily despatched to bring the workers to reason. Quoth Proudhon :

"The authorities who had to shoot down the miners of Rive-de-Gier were in an unhappy position. But they behaved like the elder Brutus when, for the safety of the republic, he had to sacrifice his feelings as a father that he might fulfil his duties as a consul. Nor has posterity ventured to condemn Brutus on this account."

No worker will be able to remember any occasion on which a capitalist employer has hesitated to sacrifice his men for the sake of his own interests. The bourgeois are conspicuous Brutuses ! But let Proudhon speak once more :

"No, we can just as little claim that there is a right of combination, as that there is a right to practice blackmail, a right to cheat or to steal, a right to commit incest or adultery."

We must certainly affirm that there is a right to be an ass.

But what are the immutable principles in whose name the master fulminates his anathemas ?

FIRST IMMUTABLE PRINCIPLE : "The level of wages determines the price of commodities."

Even those who are absolutely ignorant of political economy, even those who do not know that this traditional fallacy was confuted once for all by the great bourgeois economist Ricardo in his *Principles of Political Economy* (1817), are none the less acquainted with the significant fact that in British manufacturing industry, though higher wages are paid than anywhere else in Europe, commodities are produced more cheaply than elsewhere.

SECOND IMMUTABLE PRINCIPLE : "The law that permits labour combinations is opposed to sound juristic and economic principles, and conflicts with the interests of society and with social order. In a word, it conflicts with the economic right of free competition."

Had the master's mind been less restricted by national limitations, he might have asked himself how it had come to pass that more

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\* Cf. Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, especially the fifth section of Chapter Two, which deals with Strikes and Labour Combinations.



than forty years earlier a law had been promulgated in England that conflicted so grossly with the economic right of free competition ; he might have inquired why, in every capitalist state, as if in obedience to some iron destiny, it had been found necessary, as industry progressed and as free competition concomitantly developed, to inaugurate similar legislation. He would perchance have discovered that this Right ("Droit" with a capital "D") exists only in economic treatises compiled by the ignorant members of the fraternity of capitalist economists ; he would have learned that it exists only in the textbooks which contain such pearls as the following : "Property is the fruit of labour"—forgetting to add that it is the fruit of the labour of *others*.

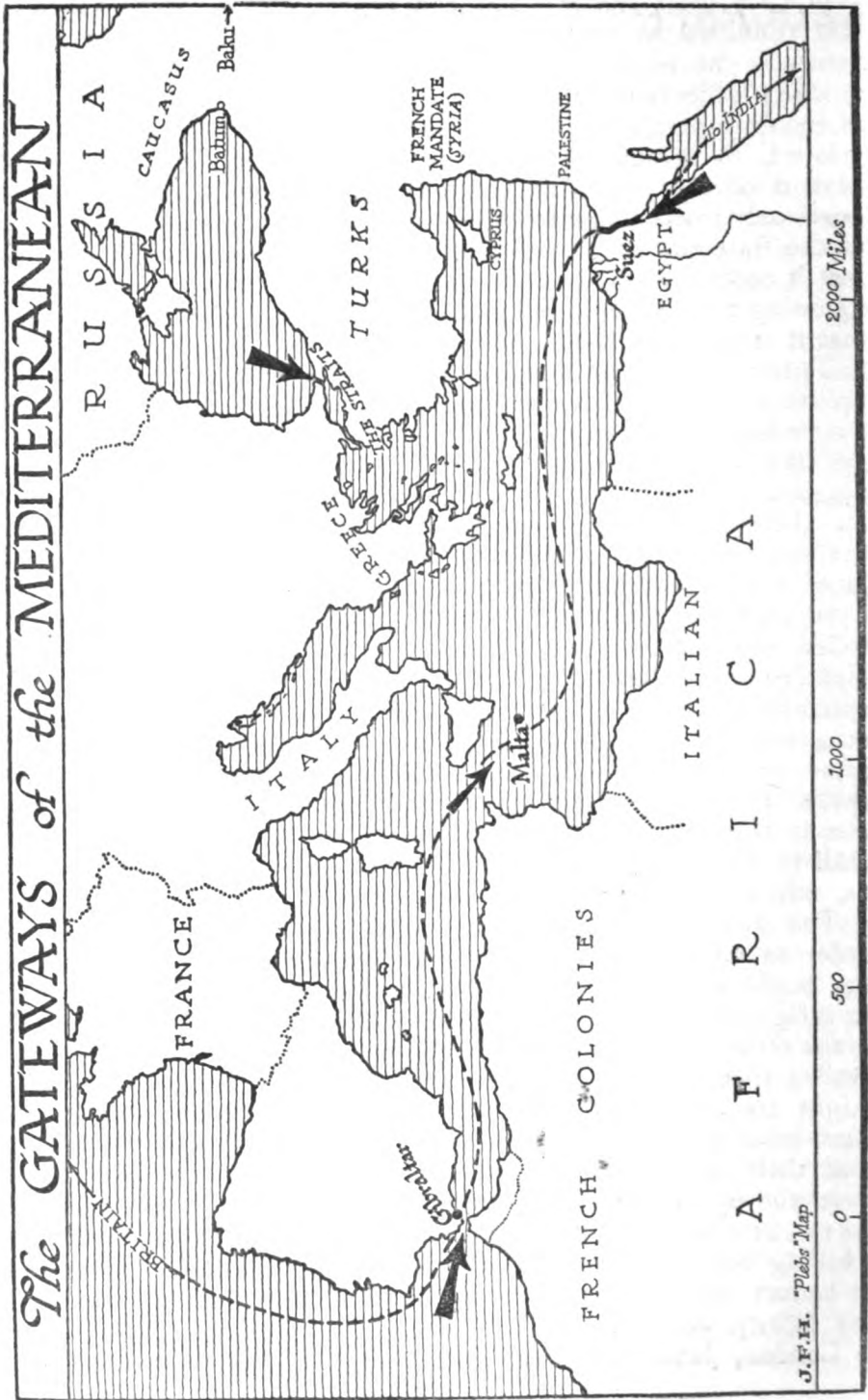
THIRD IMMUTABLE PRINCIPLE : "Thus under the pretext of uplifting the working class out of its so-called social inferiority, people begin by denouncing a whole class of unimpeachable citizens : the class of masters, employers, entrepreneurs, and bourgeois. The democracy of manual workers is incited to feel contempt and hatred for these terrible middle-class conspirators. The struggle upon the commercial and industrial field is preferred to coercive legislation ; the class struggle is preferred to the methods of state police."

In order to close for the working class any egress from its so-called social debasement, Proudhon condemns the labour combinations which marshal the workers as a class hostile to the respectable category of factory owners, entrepreneurs, bourgeois, etc., who for their part, like Proudhon, unquestionably prefer measures of state police to the class struggle. To save this respectable class from such inconveniences, the good Proudhon recommends that until the establishment of his mutualist society there shall be freedom or competition for the workers, for this, he tells us, offers despite its grave disadvantages "our only guarantee."

The master advocates indifferentism in the economic field, in order to safeguard freedom or competition, our only guarantee ; the pupils advocate indifferentism in the economic field, in order to safeguard civil liberty, the only guarantee they recognise. Just as the early Christians, who likewise preached political indifferentism, availed themselves of the strong hand of the emperor that they might transform themselves from oppressed into oppressors, so these modern apostles of political indifferentism are far from thinking that their immutable principles impose on them any abstinence from the worldly joys and fleeting privileges of bourgeois society. Be this as it may, we cannot fail to note that, with a stoicism worthily rivalling that displayed by the Christian martyrs, they find it possible to endure the fourteen or sixteen hours of daily toil imposed upon the factory workers.

London, January, 1873.

KARL MARX.



**GEOGRAPHICAL FOOTNOTES TO CURRENT HISTORY:****The GATEWAYS of the  
MEDITERRANEAN**

**F**OR thousands of years, from the time when Cretan and Phœnician first carried civilisation from coast to coast and island to island, down to just over four centuries ago, the Mediterranean was the main scene of human history. On its sheltered waters men could develop the technique of navigation, until the sea, at first a barrier, became a link between the peoples of all the lands surrounding it, and their geographical unity at last, under Rome, became a political unity. The break-in of the barbarians from the unknown plains of the north and east destroyed that unity; but for another thousand years the Mediterranean remained the chief centre of commerce and of civilisation.

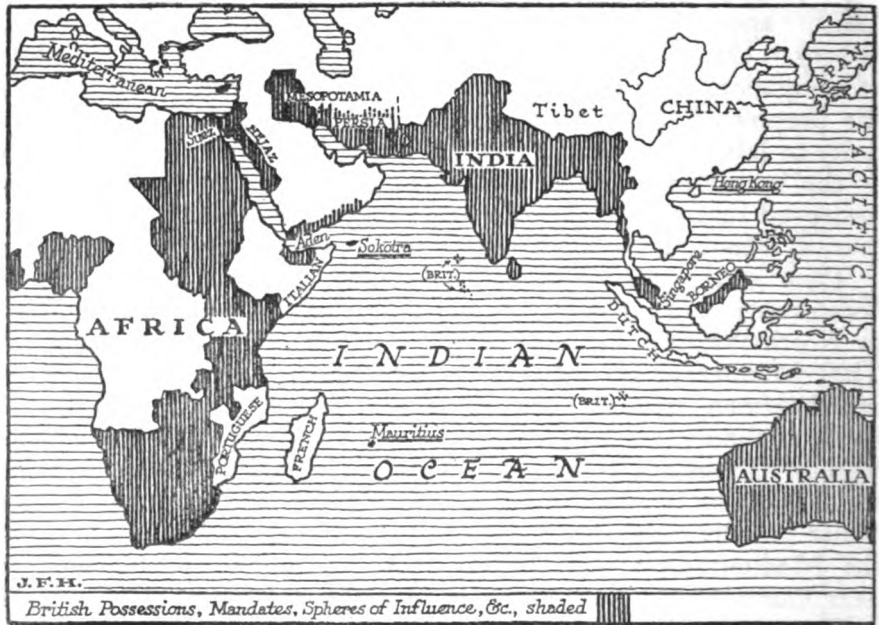
Then at the end of the 15th century, with the opening-up of ocean routes and the discovery of a new continent, the centre shifted to North-Western Europe, to the lands fronting on the Atlantic. The Mediterranean became a backwater. Pirates instead of merchantmen cruised from Algiers to the Levant; and in the lands of the eastern basin, on the ruins of Greece and the Eastern Roman Empire and the Arab civilisations of Syria and Mesopotamia, the last of the nomads to break into Europe, the Turk, held sway. Quite literally, now that the way to the Indies lay round the Cape, the Mediterranean was a blind alley, leading nowhere; and the next four centuries were centuries of decay instead of development.

That period ended when man's steadily increasing technical—tool-using—power enabled him to cut a channel through the narrow land barriers of Suez, and to make a new and much shorter waterway between Europe and the East. Once more the Mediterranean became a high-road of world commerce; once more, therefore, a factor in world affairs. The development of land transport during the 19th century, too, was helping to spread industrialism eastwards and southwards in Europe. Italy, the Balkan lands, Russia, all were awaking, and their economic and political development lent still greater importance to the re-opened sea. Modern Imperialism, and the need for monopolistic control of routes and raw materials, completed the transformation. To-day, the "problems" of the Mediterranean and the Near East lie in the very front of the world-picture—have, indeed, of late overshadowed all others.

The emergence of America as the dominant power in the modern world has, indirectly, made more acute the question of the control



of the Mediterranean. To the extent that the growth of America's sea-power makes her the unquestioned mistress of Atlantic and Pacific ocean routes, Britain, it is safe to say, will tend to concentrate her attention on the Indian Ocean, and on the *Mediterranean-Suez-Red Sea route thereto*. That route will become more and more the main highroad of British commerce; and the maintenance of absolute British supremacy along that route will become more and more a first aim of British policy. For alone among the great world-groups of to-day, the British Empire has no geographical



#### WHERE BRITAIN'S MAIN INTERESTS LIE

unity. Scattered in haphazard fashion over two hemispheres, her colonies, protectorates and "mandates" are linked only by sea communications. And now that Britannia no longer exercises undisputed sway over the waves, she will best be able to preserve her dominion over those territories which can be linked together by one main sea-route. She remains—and will remain for at any rate as long as American and Japanese interests lie first and foremost in the Pacific—mistress of the Indian Ocean. The way thither, which runs through the Mediterranean, is therefore a concern of the greatest importance to her financiers and politicians (and it would still be that even if there were no oil in Baku or Mesopotamia, no Russia to blockade, and no other interests, political or economic, centred within the Mediterranean area itself).

Thus the "gateways" of the Mediterranean come decidedly within the sphere of British interests ; and the two main ones—the western, natural one, commanded by the Rock of Gibraltar, and the eastern, man-made one, the Suez Canal—are both under British control. Between those two lies the half-way house of Malta, opposite the strait of shallower water between Sicily and Tunis, the gateway between the eastern and western halves of the sea. The Power which controls these gates has obviously gone a long way towards control of the entire sea.

But Britain is not the only Power with vitally important Mediterranean interests. France—the new France, with growing "heavy" industries based on possession of the biggest iron resources in Europe—looks across the sea to her Northern African possessions, and must safeguard communications with her mandate in Syria. And divergent French and British interests have recently been made plain in the intrigues and secret agreements made by the one in support of the Turks, by the other of the Greeks. British intervention in that particular quarrel is largely due to British interest in yet another Mediterranean gateway—"the Straits," Dardanelles and Bosphorus. That gateway does not lead to the open ocean ; but it leads to the mineral wealth and the wheatlands of southern Russia, and, through Batum, to the oil of the Caucasus. It is Russia's one sea outlet to the south. And it was not surprising, therefore, that this should be the only one of the Mediterranean gateways to be placed under "international" control when the new world was a-making in 1919—20. Some other-worldly idealists talked at that time of the desirability of internationalising Suez and Gibraltar ; but these were mere dreamers.

The Straits were "internationalised" because neither France nor Britain would ever have consented to see them placed under the absolute control of the other. They therefore assumed joint responsibility, calling themselves the League of Nations in order to make the proceeding look less like "flat burglary." But their only common interest in holding the Straits was to do any damage possible to Russia. In relation to all other factors their interests were opposed—witness their constantly diverging actions and policies during the recent crisis.

Sooner or later the Power which has the most vital interest of all in this particular gateway will have her say in its control. That Power is Russia. And though it cause the Socialist-sentimentalists to sigh over "Bolshevik imperialism," it is evident that the Soviet Government will be forced, alike by the facts of geography and of present-day society, to take whatever steps may be necessary to keep the gateway of the Straits open.

J. F. HORRABIN.

# CHAPTERS from WORKING-CLASS HISTORY in SOUTH WALES

## II.—THE WORKERS' FIRST RISING.

*Last month we printed from Ness Edwards' "Industrial History of South Wales" some passages describing the terrible conditions under which the miners (men, women and little children) worked in the early years of the nineteenth century. The following extracts tell us something of the beginnings of organised revolt against these brutalities. "The ferment of democratic ideas, the depression in trade, and the Truck System were combining to bring the working-class mind to boiling point."*

**O**N Monday, May 30th, 1831, a large meeting of workers was held at the Waun Fair outside Merthyr. Flags with inscriptions of "Reform" on them, and red flags, were planted in the centre of the meeting. The meeting had been called to consider the "Reform Question," and a huge number of workers attended.

"I heard several speak," said J. Petherick, coal agent of Merthyr; "one of them from notes, in which he described the revenues of Bishops and the Church of England. Most of them spoke in great praise of the Reform in Parliament, by which, they said, the men would obtain their rights. . . . Other speakers got up and went into new matters. Two or three complained of the conduct of the parish officers towards the poor, also of improper use of the parish funds, and of the use of the public money generally. . . . One of the speakers said they must and would have the Court of Requests down, he also said 'you have been petitioning Parliament several times and for years, and there is no notice taken of them. My plan is to bring matters to a short conclusion, and I advise every one of you to refrain from working any longer!' He was a stranger to me and advised them to 'apply to the Parish Offices in the parish you live for relief which is allowed by law. You will then be removed to the parishes to which you belong, in the case of you being strangers. All this and your support will cause very great expense, which must fall on the ratepayers, who are generally farmers, and who cannot afford to pay more than they now do.' The question whether the resolution 'not to go to work' was then put. . . . As far as I could see the motion was carried almost unanimously and with acclamation."

On the following Thursday the workers met in a large assembly at Merthyr. Crawshay \* had been boasting that the wages he paid were higher than those paid elsewhere. The rumour got abroad that Fothergill, the managing partner of the Aberdare works, had said that his men received five shillings per week less than the Dowlais and Merthyr workers. This roused the strikers and they decided to march to Aberdare to meet Fothergill. On arriving at his residence they compelled him, by threats, to sign a paper stating that he had not said that the miners of Mr. Crawshay were getting five shillings per week more than his miners. They then demanded food, and all the bread, cheese and beer in the house was given to them. Afterwards they proceeded to the company shop and compelled the manager to throw all the food out to the crowd of hungry workers.

Then they marched back to Merthyr with the intention of pulling down the Court of Requests, and thus destroying the institution which took away the furniture from their houses even when their stomachs were empty. The debts which most of them had accumulated were kept account of in this Court, and so the majority of them had an immediate interest in destroying both Court and accounts. They first wrecked the houses of the Court bailiffs, then marched on to the Court and wrecked that, too. The Clerk of the Court was compelled to hand over the account books, and the workers made merry with a fire of the evidence of their own indebtedness. The Cyfarthfa Works were stopped working, after which they proceeded to Penydarren and Dowlais and stopped the works there.

The local capitalists had become more than ordinarily frightened, and sent urgent messages to the Brecon Barracks for soldiers. As a result, a section of the 93rd Highlanders arrived on the Friday morning, Crawshay, Hill, Homfray and other employers proudly walking at their head through the town. The soldiers were drawn up outside the Castle Inn, whilst the local capitalists in the legal garb of magistrates considered the position with the High Sheriff. The strikers, also, had agreed to meet and deliberate, and whilst the employers were discussing the situation inside the inn, the workers hemmed in the soldiers outside. Many were armed with clubs, mandrils and staves. Their numbers and temper made them desperately brave, and threats and defiant statements were shouted at the soldiers. This menacing attitude brought forth the employers out of the inn, and the High Sheriff mounted a chair. He earnestly requested them to desist and spoke to the poverty stricken crowd of law and order. The great Guest † followed him,

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\* A prominent ironmaster and coalowner.

† Sir John Guest, owner of the Dowlais Works, and a "pillar of Wesleyanism."

and was exceedingly fluent in describing to the workers the consequence of their illegal action, in a general way threatening them with (legal) vengeance. But, as a rule, empty stomachs have no ears for words of warning, and it is not surprising that one of the workmen, gaining courage from the number of his fellows present, replied to Guest in equally militant style.

As the previous speakers had failed to impress them, Mr. Crawshay, not to be behind his confrères, felt moved to speak more strongly to the men. "Go home," he roared, "you shall get no advance of wages from me by threats or violence. I defy you! Go home if you value the safety of your lives. But this I promise you," he added, "if you go home quietly, and send a deputation from each mine-level to me in fourteen days, I will thoroughly investigate your complaints of distress, and do everything in my power to relieve you."

If the employers had desired the workers to rise in revolt they could not have used more effective taunts, and these speeches only served to render them more desperate still. Their leader, "Lewis the Huntsman," was immediately hoisted up on to a lamp post and addressed the workers in Welsh.

"We are met, boys," he declared, "to have our wages raised, instead of which the masters have brought the soldiers against us. Now, boys, if you are of the same mind as I am, let us fall upon them and take their arms away." Almost immediately the workers rushed upon the soldiers, who being incapable of understanding Lewis's words, were taken quite unawares. Very quickly the workers became possessed of about thirty muskets, and a general struggle occurred. The workers pressed on and gradually beat the soldiers back into the passage of the inn. A number of the soldiers, with the ironmasters, had beforehand been placed behind the inn windows, and just as victory seemed certain for the workers, a deadly fire was poured into them from the windows. Several volleys were fired into the heart of the crowd, and after about twenty minutes of this unequal struggle the workers fled.

They took up a position some distance from, yet overlooking, the inn. Before the inn at least fifteen of their number lay dead, whilst more than sixty were badly wounded. The soldiers and employers were now besieged in the inn, and the whole district was in the hands of the workers. However, by five o'clock the Glamorgan Militia and the Llantrisant Cavalry had arrived, and, because of its commanding position, it was deemed safer to attempt to move the force to Penydarren House. This was done, and the house prepared for defence. Only half a mile away, Cyfarthfa Castle was being fired at, yet any attempt at reprisal by the soldiers was deemed impossible. The night passed off fairly quietly, the



workers, tired after their previous night's march, taking advantage of their situation to obtain some rest.

On the Saturday morning the workers took up their position in a ravine about two miles from Merthyr, at a place called Coedycymmer. On the high hills which flanked the Brecon road other sections were posted, and in this way it was hoped to prevent extra soldiers coming in from Brecon. A system of outposts was arranged all around the district, and this ravine was made the headquarters. Information was received that extra ammunition and additional soldiers were expected from Brecon, and an ambush was prepared.

A number of the Cardiff Cavalry were sent from Penydarren House to escort the Highlanders. At Cefn both parties of soldiers met, and quickly made for Merthyr. Everything went well with the soldiers until they came to the ravine. Here, on both slopes, the workers had prepared heaps of great boulders for rolling down. It was a perfect death-trap, and the soldiers had to retire. News was immediately sent down to Penydarren House of this state of affairs, and 100 more cavalry were sent to relieve the others. On attempting to pass up through the ravine, the cavalry were swept with showers of rolling boulders. The horses' legs were badly knocked about and the relief party had to abandon its attempt, and eventually regained Penydarren.

No sooner had this attempt failed than the workers' outposts brought in the information that a detachment of Swansea Cavalry was on its way to quell the revolt. A considerable number of workers were now sent off to take a position on the Aberdare Road, along which the soldiers would have to pass. Old fowling pieces, muskets, and the arms taken from the Highlanders, were all distributed among this party.

By one o'clock that afternoon the cavalry came jingling along, and so skilfully planned was the ambush that they rode right into it, and so hopeless was their position that they gave up their arms without resisting. Having disarmed them, the workers sent them back to Swansea, warning them not to come again.

With these additional arms, and cheered by two victories, the workers became more enterprising. They decided to attack the force which had fortified itself in Penydarren House, and by five o'clock they had concentrated for that purpose. But by this time, the ironmasters had succeeded in persuading and coercing "twelve orderly workmen" to act as a deputation, bearing an offer of a truce from the employers. This offer was rejected and the workers commenced to march on Penydarren. Some apprehension was felt as to the extent of the defending forces, and eventually it was decided that the assault should be deferred to the Monday, in order that the workers of Monmouthshire and further west could come

to their aid. The more ardent spirits spent the rest of the day drilling and exercising, some went to other districts to obtain more recruits for the revolt, whilst others went back to their homes.

Postponement meant defeat! This general dispersal was of great value to the military, as it enabled the remainder of the Highlanders to get to Penydarren House and to bring in fresh ammunition. The military force now consisted of about 500 soldiers, together with a number of special constables. Probably they possessed about ten times as much ammunition as the workers had, and now provided a pretty formidable force to be attacked by badly armed men. The defeat of the Saturday and the ignominious disarming of the Swansea Cavalry filled the soldiers with a desire for revenge.

On the Monday morning, the general meeting of all the workers engaged in the Breconshire, Monmouthshire, and East Glamorgan-shire works and collieries was held on the Waun Hill, by Dowlais. It was estimated that quite 20,000 workmen attended, but this figure is probably much too high. By ten o'clock the march to the attack on Penydarren had commenced, but the soldiers marched out to meet it. John Guest and his profit-making colleagues marched in front of the soldiers, the Sheriff carrying the inevitable Riot Act. In the narrow part of the valley where Dowlais is situated, the soldiers and workers met. Each party seemed afraid of the other, the soldiers by the numbers of the workmen, and the workmen by the arms of the soldiers. During this standstill, Guest advanced towards the workers and warned them of the consequence of such unseemly acts. The workers shouted derision. The Sheriff read the Riot Act with alacrity, and the soldiers were ordered to level their muskets. Gradually the workers faltered and sullenly retreated. They had been trapped and the advantage was all on the employers' side. The postponement of the attack from Saturday to Monday had allowed their enthusiasm to evaporate and produced failure. Many of them returned to their homes, but the majority made for the headquarters in the ravine which saw their first successes. They carried with them two black flags, emblems, as the bourgeois historians put it, of mischief. The ever watchful Crawshay watched their retreat from the tower of his palatial castle and reported that they were drilling and parading in the ravine. About noon the whole body was seen as if making for the town and preparing to attack it. Then owing to some differences the ranks thinned, many of the workers making their way over the mountains to Tredegar and Aberdare.

Crawshay, seeing this split, sent an urgent message to the military, urging them to attack and rout the divided workers. As a result of a misapprehension this policy was not adopted, the

military confining themselves to clearing the large numbers of strange workers out of Merthyr. By six o'clock all the armed bands had been dispersed from the town and the organising of scouring parties had been commenced. The local capitalists, as the heads of the various search parties, were the most energetic sleuth-hounds, and guided the soldiers into the secret nooks and dingles among the hills, where many of the workers were hiding. The party, led by Guest, captured fourteen of the ringleaders, whilst the energetic Crawshay, with his party, had a bag of quite as many, among whom was "Dick Penderyn." "Lewis the Huntsman" still eluded them and the local employers searched every wood, hill and dale in order to find him. These man-hunts were carried out in a most ruthless manner, each party vying with the other as to who would bring in the most rebels.

On Wednesday information was taken to Crawshay that "Lewis the Huntsman" was hiding in a wood above Hirwain, and that night Crawshay, under the cover of darkness, led a party of soldiers to the wood and succeeded in catching him.

NESS EDWARDS.

## OUR NEW TEXTBOOK.

WHEN Plebs Textbook Number One appeared there were some folks who grouched and said: "Why Psychology?" Now that Number Two is on the verge of publication we are waiting to hear a whisper from the disgruntled—"Why Imperialism?" As a matter of fact, we shall be disappointed. Why?

Because every I.W.C.E.er knows, even if he may have had a prejudice against Psychology, that the study of Imperialism and its significance to the working-class movement is just about our most important here-and-now job. Look through The PLEBS file; you'll find no end of meat on Imperialism—articles by Newbold, Horrabin's "Geographical Footnotes," Maurice H. Dobb's series on "Colonial and Imperialist Expansion," not to mention a host of others. Perhaps the "browsers" will say, "Why have a Textbook if the stuff's all in back numbers of the Mag.?" Well, we aren't all browsers; and we don't all like searching through a file for the stuff we want.

Moreover, many of the articles on Imperialism in the Mag. have been either too advanced, or simply too much sketches of detail, to be the sort of stuff to hand out to our chaps—especially the beginning chaps—in the classes.

Of course, there are many most valuable books of one sort or

another on Imperialism—J. A. Hobson's classic *Imperialism*, for instance ; or L. S. Woolf's equally classic *Empire and Commerce in Africa*. There is Woolf's smaller *Economic Imperialism*, and Pavlovitch's *Imperialist Policy*. There are excellent sketches like T. A. Jackson's *British Empire*, and *THE PLEBS* has printed more than one syllabus on the subject.

Yet somehow none of these books (and the many others—Brailsford or Boudin, for instance) quite fill the bill. Hobson is liberal, not up-to-date, and anyway completely unobtainable. Brailsford and Boudin overstress the metallurgical basis of Imperialism—Pavlovitch is chiefly concerned with theory. Woolf's big book is just a magnificent monograph—a full picture of one corner of Imperialism ; his little book is not much more than a précis of the big one with an added chapter on Imperialism in Asia.

No ! What is wanted is a short, graphic study of Imperialism *as a whole*, sketching the growth and development of the Imperialisms of Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Italy, Japan and the U.S.A., their catastrophe in the Imperialist war of 1914, the development of Imperialism during the war and its expression in the Peace Treaties, and, finally, the moral of the whole thing for the working class. *Now this is just what the new Textbook does*. Look at the chapter headings. An introduction on the Economics of Imperialism, then the Imperialist development of each of the great powers recounted and analysed, ending with a summary—and Conclusions for Workers. Here is a History and an Analysis of modern Imperialism, compact and neat and as complete as is humanly possible in less than 200 pages.

The basis of the new Textbook, as Plebeians know, is T. Ashcroft's series of articles in the *Railway Review*. But these articles have passed through the melting pot of an Editorial Committee, have been very thoroughly chewed up, revised, and new stuff added. So don't flatter yourself, if you kept cuttings of the *Review* articles, that you've got the whole thing.

You've often read of "Spheres of Influence" and "Protectorates" no doubt ; do you know the real meaning of these nice phrases ? You'll find definitions of these and other terms in the Glossary, which is a special feature of the Textbook. (How about "Peaceful Penetration," Chartered Companies, Manchesterism, also ?) Did you know that the Argentine was all but a "Sphere of Influence" of British Imperialism ? Or that our "gallant little ally" Portugal (otherwise "those ruddy dagoes") is, and has been these many years, safe and sound in the pocket of Britain—a fact not unconnected with British interests in Portuguese African colonies ? When the Men Who Know have talked wisely about the Morocco Crises, did you know just what in heaven they were getting at ? Did

you know that it was a British loan which enabled Tsarism to crush the Russian Revolution of 1905—6? Have you a clear idea of the real forces behind the famous Fashoda incident of 1898—when a French officer hauled up the tricolour and a British officer asked him to haul it down, and Britain and France nearly went to war?

Well, you'll find concise and clear information in reply to all these and suchlike queries in the Textbook.

Essentially the Textbook is a historical summary and commentary; and this is perhaps its main value. We are always talking about Imperialism—but how many of us are sure of the main facts of modern imperialist development, of the fateful drift, through ever-recurring conflicts and crises, to the World War, and its necessary consequence, the chaotic world economic situation of to-day—with the working class down and out? To know these main facts, to understand the significance of this development, is unquestionably the first job of every worker with any pretension to class-consciousness. Read the Textbook—and you'll have got that first job done!

Among its special features are the Glossary, already mentioned, an Appendix on Theories of Imperialism (which is not merely potted Pavlovitch!) and Maps by J. F. H. To study the two maps of Africa, one in 1880, the other in 1900, is in itself an instructive lesson in Imperialist expansion and exploitation.

The make-up of the Textbook will be similar to that of the Psychology Textbook—limp cloth covers, clear printing on good paper, each chapter carefully sub-headed for convenience of reading and reference; in short, the most colossal value for half-a-crown. In these hard times thirty pence are certainly thirty pence—but if you don't hustle with your order for *An Outline of Modern Imperialism* you'll find yourself in the cold having to wait for a second edition. Don't forget we sold two editions, totalling 5,000 copies, of the Psychology Textbook within five months.

We want to break that record with Textbook Number Two. Now then, YOU want to know all about Imperialism (and from the working class point of view, don't forget)—and if you're one of the learned ones you want at any rate something to refresh your memory with occasionally, and to keep the outlines of the subject clear in your mind while you pursue your profound and detailed studies of it. The Textbook caters for all sorts; it sets out to do the thing simply, but to do it well. It will be an absolutely indispensable addition to the library of every I.W.C.E.er—and we venture to prophesy that the thousands who will buy it will find it the most genuinely useful book investment they've made for many a long day.

G. A. H.

## WHAT WE STUDY—and WHY

*The previous outlines in this series of six talks on the principal subjects studied in Labour College classes appeared in the September and October numbers of The PLEBS.*

### OUTLINE V.—THE HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONISM.

**I**N previous talks we have emphasised again and again the fact that all things are always changing. But it is not enough to know that; we must further ask ourselves how and why they change.

This is clearly a matter of very direct and practical importance when we come to deal with such a subject as that of Trade Unionism. It is more or less clearly recognised that Trade Unionism changes. We all know of certain changes that have taken place in our own day, in our own Unions. If we take the general history of the T.U. movement, we shall find certain stages clearly marked, and an examination of these various stages leads us to an answer to the question *why* Trade Unionism changes.

A century ago Trade Unions were already in existence. Indeed, laws had been passed at the end of the 18th century for the purpose of suppressing them. But in spite of these laws the Unions continued in existence, and when in 1824—25 the laws were repealed, a great outburst of renewed activity took place. Now what was the character of those Unions? The difference between them and the Unions of our day is this: they were local, confined to a single town or district. And when attempts were made in the 'thirties to form national Unions, they fell to pieces almost as quickly as they were formed. Why was it impossible to establish national Unions? It was because industry itself was local in character. True, there was some degree of transport and communication between the various parts of the country, but it was very slow and laborious. It was not until the wide extension of the railway over the whole country that industry became truly national. Then, following in the wake of the railways and the linking up of the centres of industry came the national Unions, based on that national organisation of industry.

Local industry—local Unions; national industry—national Unions. *The general organisation of industry determines the form of organisation of Trade Unionism.*

But when we reach this stage, we find that it is not only the form or structure of the Unions which is determined by the general economic

position ; the policy also of the organisations is dependent upon that industrial system. The great national craft Unions came into existence in the 'fifties and 'sixties. The development of the railway and steamship had proceeded farthest in Britain, and had confirmed her industrial and commercial supremacy among the nations. Britain remained the workshop of the world and the carrier of the world's trade. The opening up of new markets in every continent seemed to promise a career of endless prosperity. In such circumstances the very last thing wanted was industrial strife. With an expanding market, the employers sought to conciliate the workers, and rather than fight them over smaller questions of conditions and wages, they were prepared to meet them half-way in a "reasonable" adjustment of their differences. And on their side the Unions, fighting for recognition by the State, were anxious to prove their sanity and level-headedness. In this they were greatly assisted by the tendency of prices to fall ; for this meant, even with the same rates of wages, a slow but sure rise in the standard of life. The policy of the Unions, therefore, was one of compromise and conciliation.

This whole position, which was the very foundation of the national craft Unions and their policy, received a shattering blow in the 'eighties. Other industrial nations were appearing on the horizon, notably Germany and the U.S.A. Britain's supremacy was now challenged ; and the only hope of her capitalists lay in the introduction of new methods. This was done. New machinery was introduced ; the division of the crafts into detail processes went on apace, and with it the conversion of the craftsman into a mere machine-minder. Again, because the market, instead of expanding, seemed to be closing, and the problem of disposing of their goods was becoming ever more difficult, the employers were less ready to meet the men half-way in their demands. Instead of appealing to reason, they displayed a growing readiness to fight to a finish. And so also with the Unions. The men felt their old standards being undermined, and saw their places being taken by lower grades of workers. They now took on a more militant attitude towards the employers, while at the same time they steadily opposed the opening of their ranks to the semi-skilled and unskilled workers, who had served no apprenticeship, but who nevertheless were taking their jobs. But the latter had their own troubles also, and increasingly felt the necessity of some weapon to defend themselves against the employers. It was in vain to apply for membership to the existing craft Unions, which regarded the unskilled workers as being hopelessly beneath their notice ; and thus the unskilled had to form their own separate organisations. The 'eighties saw, therefore, the formation of the general workers'



Unions, and the great Dock Strike of 1889 showed that these had already become a force to be reckoned with.

The forces were already at work which were to make the opening years of the 20th century a period of intense and widespread industrial unrest. These factors were the dilution of labour, the degradation of the skilled craftsman to the position of a mere machine-minder, and the consequent difficulty of maintaining the old standards of conditions and wages. In the 20th century, these factors were reinforced by another, which worked slowly but surely and ruthlessly against the interests of the workers—the steady rise in the cost of living. From the middle of the 19th century until the very last years, the tendency of prices was to fall. In 1896—97, the downward tendency ceased, and an upward movement commenced. The workers, already finding it difficult, if not impossible, to maintain their old rates of wages, discovered that even where they were successful in doing so, they were steadily losing ground—the real value of their wages had fallen, and it was ever harder to make both ends meet. The result was a growing effort to force increases of wages, in order to restore the old standard of life.

The success attained in this effort was only partial. It is doubtful whether they ever recovered the position they had held before the period of rising prices. But they did something else which was quite unforeseen, but which was of even greater importance than the object they had set themselves. The experience of the struggle proved to them the weakness and ineffectiveness of their weapons; they found that the old form and structure of their Unions was incapable of meeting the new situation and the new needs of the 20th century. The result was the formation of a number of important amalgamations and federations in the Trade Union movement. *Once more the general economic situation had imposed changes upon the Trade Unions*; or rather upon certain Unions, in certain industries. Where the fight was hottest, there the weakness of the old structure was most clearly revealed, and the need for a stronger organisation most felt. On the other hand, other Unions in other branches of industry less affected still clung to the old form of organisation. Hence we find to-day an extraordinary diversity of structure in the Trade Union movement in this country, and a hopeless lack of co-ordination.

Now what is the lesson that we learn from this glance at the history of Trade Unionism? It is this: Trade Unionism is closely related to the general system and situation, and its policy and structure must be in accordance with that system and situation. In the past, the movement has adapted itself, but very slowly and haltingly. Why? Just because there was no conscious understanding of the relation between the two. To-day, to the extent that we do

understand that, we shall recognise what is needed, and shall consciously mould the structure and pursue the policy required for the realisation of our needs and hopes.

What, then, is the general industrial system and situation to which we must shape our movement and policy to-day? The outstanding feature is the organisation of huge combinations of Capital. The day of the small capitalist has gone, the day of free competition has gone. Huge combinations of Capital—this is the power that organised Labour has to meet to-day. And these great capitalist powers are magnificently organised, not merely to carry on their primary purpose of profiteering but also to mould the political policy of the country, and to present a united front against Labour whenever necessary.

Think, for example, of the Federation of British Industries, with its control over a capital of £4,500,000,000. What a power that represents over the lives of millions of workers. This Federation, in its structure and its manifold activities, forms the highest example of the solidarity of British capital, and teaches a much-needed lesson to Labour. Contrast its form and policy with that of the Trade Union movement :—

*Federation of British Industries.*

1. 17 large groups, each representing a single industry.
2. All united, and co-ordinated for a militant policy.
3. With a definite policy ; and finding a way (or making it) for the furtherance of that policy.

*Trade Union Movement.*

1. Over 1,100 Trade Unions representing, generally, isolated crafts.
2. Divided and rent by internal dissension, without any co-ordinating body possessing real power.
3. Each Union absorbed in its petty details, content to wait and see, content to wait till action is forced upon it by the enemy, which is, of course, at his own time and place, and therefore to his great advantage in the struggle.

The Trade Union movement must learn the lesson which that contrast vividly teaches. It must bring its organisation and policy into line with the realities of 1922. It must set itself the task of organising a Federation of British Industrial Unions. It must have its 17 Industrial Unions instead of 1,100 Craft Unions, and these must be welded into a united, co-ordinated body, with a militant, forward-looking policy.

That is the form of organisation which will give the masses the strength, the courage, and the self-confidence for the tasks which lie before them. That is Labour's road to power.

#### OUTLINE VI.—THE SCIENCE OF REASONING.

We have seen that the Trade Union movement has changed in the past, but that the changes have been forced upon it from without. Instead of reasoning together, and coming to some clear understanding of the changes necessary for the efficiency of their organisations, the Trade Unionists used the old structure and clung to the old policy as long as they could. It was only when the organisation failed them in some critical struggle that they felt the necessity of change. We therefore described the changes as being lacking in consciousness. They were instinctive, and they had to fight against another instinct, namely, conservatism. W. S. Gilbert has told us that every little boy and girl that comes into the world is a little Liberal or a little Conservative. He was wrong; we are all born little Conservatives! We all want to go on doing the things we've been accustomed to doing, and to do them in the good, old-fashioned way. It requires thought, effort, courage, to do the unaccustomed thing, and we have all sorts of ill names for the man who demands new methods which would stir us out of the mental sloth that is habitual to us.

We gave an example of the instinctive character of change when we said that the chief result of the industrial unrest of the present century was, not the securing of the higher wages which was the direct object, but the growing unity and power of the Unions themselves in certain industries. How would a really conscious movement have gone to work? It would have begun by considering the situation, and deciding the power and policy necessary for achieving the purpose in view. Then it would have moulded its structure and policy in accordance with that situation and that purpose. The use of science is to enable us to approach our tasks with consciousness and understanding, so that we can go about our work, knowing just what the task is, what the means at our disposal are, and the nature of the solution. Science, therefore, is of the highest practical importance.

In our own generation we have seen the rise of new universities, devoting themselves in much larger measure to the problems of to-day than ever the old universities did. The popularity of the Economics course at these universities is quite as much a sign of the times as the growing interest among the workers in the working-class point of view in regard to the same subjects; and it is fitting that these new universities, with their modern capitalist outlook,

should have been built in the great industrial centres. True, industry and commerce were here long before universities were built for the study of the many problems arising from them. Men were successful in them, made fortunes out of them, without passing through a university course. But the growth of competition, and the growing intensity of the class struggle also, have rendered a greater understanding of the why and the wherefore highly desirable, if not indispensable.

This, then, is the value of science : it enables us to work consciously, to tackle our problems with greater certainty of success, because we understand just what it is that we have to do, and what are the means at our disposal.

Now what is the *instrument* by which man arrives at this scientific and conscious understanding ? It is, of course, his brain. And just as in our ordinary daily work, we must know the nature of the tools we use, so with this most important instrument of all, the brain : we need to know what its work is, and how it does its work. Like the heart, the brain goes on with its work, whether we are fully aware of it or not. Countless generations of men lived and died before the real functions of the heart were discovered. In the same way, the functions of the brain are even yet but little understood.

Why do different people hold different and often contradictory views about the same thing ? There are two reasons. In the first place, there is the fact that some brains work better than others, are brighter, more efficient machines. Secondly, the material put into the machine is widely different in different cases. These materials out of which the brain fashions our thoughts are our experiences. And some people, as we know, have a wider, more varied experience than others. Naturally the thought which emerges is different in quality according to these differences in the range of experiences. We expect the judgment of a person of wider and longer experience to be more valuable than that of a relatively inexperienced person. We are prepared to deal leniently with the mistakes of the latter, but, as we usually put it, the more experienced person "ought to know better." The science of understanding shows the way in which the brain takes this experience-material, and fashions it into thoughts, ideas, and ideals.

We hear much, for example, about liberties, rights and duties. If we attend the meetings of the various political parties, we find that all, Liberal, Tory and Labour alike, are trying to promote freedom and right. Why, then, are there these differences of party at all ? And how comes it that each spends far more time in attacking the others than in its own constructive work (if it has any) ? But when we inquire more closely, we discover that though

the same word is used, the object aimed at is widely different. The "liberty" for which the capitalist organises and fights is not at all the same thing as that for which the labourer longs. The liberty of the labourer is the right to leisure and fulness of life in return for the fulfilment of his share of the necessary social labour ; but the liberty of the capitalist is the right to leisure and luxury without taking part in that labour at all. And those two liberties are clearly irreconcilable.

Again, both claim to be interested in democracy. But actions speak louder than words ; and it is evident that democracy is acceptable to the capitalist only while he has the power, through his ownership of the Press, Platform, and the Picture House, to make the people think as he wishes them to think. Any desire of the masses which is opposed to what he thinks is desirable cannot be permitted : it is Socialism—or rather in these days, it is Bolshevism—it is Atheism, Free Love, The End of All Things ; in fine, it must be Put Down.

Then there is the demand of both capitalists and workmen to say what shall be done in the matter of workshop conditions. How many battles have been fought over that question ! Both sides are sure of being in the right, of course. The only difference is that the capitalists' right is the right to exploit, while that of the workers is the right to lessen, and finally to remove, the burden of exploitation ; rights which, once more, are obviously irreconcilable.

As workers we need to understand these problems of the relations between employer and employed, between the individual and the community, between rights and duties. The several subjects dealt with in previous talks, history, economics, etc., all have a very direct bearing upon them. The science of reasoning, which explains understanding itself, completes our knowledge of these relations.

It is then to these various subjects that we urge the workers to devote their attention. But our object is not merely a mental satisfaction in understanding them. Such an understanding is, for us, not an end in itself, but only a means to a further and greater end. The thing is, to carry our growing knowledge and vision into our Trade Union and political activities, and to work for a form of organisation and a line of policy that will make our movement more conscious and more efficient—which will transform it into a real fighting machine, an army marching with deliberate purpose and steady step to Labour's new republic, in which we shall consciously organise our whole resources for the general well-being. Therein lies the meaning and the justification of Independent Working-Class Education.

T. ASHCROFT.

# CLASS ROOM NOTES

## For Students and Tutors

*Students and tutors are invited to send along queries or items of information likely to be of general interest. All communications should be marked "Class-room Page."*

**C**RITICS of Marx are ever ready to point to agriculture as disproving the theory that in all industries large-scale production tends to increase. But R. B. Walker, General Secretary of the National Union of Agricultural Workers, has no doubts about the coming of large-scale farming. In the *Daily Herald* (13-9-22) he wrote :—

I am convinced that these large *industrial* farms [10,000 acre ones] will come, and that sooner or later we shall arrive at the end of all the nonsense talked about farming being different from all other industries.

J. B.—No review of a recent pamphlet entitled *The Failure of Karl Marx* has appeared in *The PLEBS*, simply because the thing is too silly to waste space on.

A teacher suggests that a striking way of showing the difference between *savings* and *capital* is to point out that if Adam had started to *save* £3 a week 6,000 years ago, and was still doing so, he would not be a millionaire yet. Compare this with Henry Ford's £100,000 a day income, and his total undertakings, which could be capitalised at £400,000,000.

G. MALTON sends us an interesting syllabus for younger students used by the Young Socialist Education Bureau. It covers world history, and has been planned by F. J. Gould. The principal textbook used is Marvin's *The Living Past*. In some instances the bibliography could be improved, and perhaps undue space is allotted to the earlier periods. But it makes an interesting outline. The six sections are issued in page-proof form, for insertion in the tutor's notebook, and they can be obtained for 1s. 9d. post paid from the Plebs Book Dept.

The class syllabus issued by the Edinburgh District, Scottish Labour College, contains the synopsis of an interesting-looking course by J. P. M. Millar entitled "Present Day Problems : A Course in Applied Marxism," which strikes us as a model which

might well be followed elsewhere. Here is the list of lecture titles :—

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. How Our Opinions are Controlled.          | 13. Politics and Oil.                                 |
| 2. Functions of the Press.                   | 14. The Co-operative Movement : Value and Limitation. |
| 3. Other Means of Opinion Control.           | 15. The Case for Capitalism.                          |
| 4. The Struggle for the Turkish Straits.     | 16. The Intellectuals.                                |
| 5. What is Imperialism ?                     | 17. Waste in Capitalism.                              |
| 6. The Meaning of the S. African War.        | 18. Class Points of View.                             |
| 7. France and the Future.                    | 19. The Rise of a New World Power.                    |
| 8. India : The Crown and Thorn of Empire.    | 20. The Meaning of the Washington Conference.         |
| 9. The British Empire and Its Difficulties.  | 21. Working-Class Effort in Russia.                   |
| 10. Development of Modern Industrialism.     | 22. Incentives in the New Society.                    |
| 11. Basis of Modern Industrial Development.  | 23. Evolution of Transport and Its Effects.           |
| 12. Driving-force of Industrial Development. | 24. Korea and Imperialism.                            |

Our new *Imperialism* Textbook will provide useful reading matter for quite a number of these lectures.

The first two syllabuses to be issued in the new Labour Research Dept. series—*The Development of Capitalism*, by M. H. Dobb, and *English Economic History*, by G. D. H. Cole (6d. each)—will both be found exceedingly useful for N.C.L.C. classes. Dobb's is for a course of 12 lectures, the headings of which are :—

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Domestic Industry.                | 7. Capitalism in U.S.A.                  |
| 2. The Genesis of Capitalism.        | 8. Capitalist Imperialism.               |
| 3. Textile Capitalism and Politics.  | 9. Features of Modern Capitalism.        |
| 4. The Second Industrial Revolution. | 10. Features of Modern Capitalism.       |
| 5. Capitalism in Germany.            | 11. The Theory of Capitalist Production. |
| 6. Capitalism in France.             | 12. Present Position of Capitalism.      |

There is a 2 or 3-pp. synopsis of each lecture, and a list of Books for Study appended to each. It is, in fact, a sort of Textbook-in-little, and it would certainly make an admirable basis for a volume in our own Textbook series. Meantime it should be studied by every reader of Ashcroft's new book. . . . Cole's syllabus goes over rather more familiar ground, but an interesting new feature is the experiment made in the opening lectures, the first of which deals with "The Economic System as It Is," the second with "A Century Ago," and so, working backwards, to the Middle Ages. The idea of this "retrospective" method is to "begin study as near as possible to the immediate practical interest of the student," instead of, as is usually done, "beginning with a study of primitive conditions which have no apparent relation to the world of to-day." It would be interesting to hear the views of tutors on this idea.

[Both syllabuses can be supplied singly or in quantities from the Plebs Book Dept.]



G. BARACCHI sends us an interesting letter, too long to print in full, controverting Max Beer's declaration, in the April-May *Labour Monthly*, that Engels was the father of modern reformism (see "Plebs Bookshelf," July). Beer based his argument on the "introductory chapter, instinct with reformism," which Engels wrote to Marx's *Klassen-Kampfe in Frankreich* in 1894. This Beer described as Engels' last will and testament, and he claimed that Engels used his authoritative position to lead the German Social Democracy away from revolutionary ideas. But, says Comrade Baracchi, Engels disavowed this "last will"—or at any rate wrote a codicil upsetting it, in the form of a letter to Kautsky, in which he said:—

My text had to suffer from the timid legalism of our friends in Berlin, who dreaded a second edition of the Anti-Socialist Laws—a dread to which I was forced to pay attention at the existing political juncture.

This letter Kautsky published in his *Road to Power (Der Weg zur Macht, Vorwärts, 1909, p. 42)*. But its existence is not known to most English students, for the reason that A. M. Simons, when translating Kautsky's book, omitted this particular passage on the ground that it was merely concerned with German local politics! . . . Certainly the fact that Engels did write such a letter, and did refer in such a way to the "timid legalists" of Berlin, constitutes an important footnote to that notorious Preface. But whether it can, as Baracchi argues, be held to nullify entirely the whole spirit and substance of the Preface seems to us "not proven." (That does not mean that we agree with Beer, who appears to us to strain his "case" rather too far.)

A. WILLIAMS.—A great deal of work remains to be done on the history of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. The accounts in Webb's *History* and Postgate's *Revolution* are very valuable, but much more could be done by regular team work. We understand that the Co-operative Union has in its records some of Owen's correspondence which gives an entirely new light upon the internal affairs of the Union. The first secretary, John Browne, was a figure-head, and behind him was a more educated man, William Neal, of whom little appears to be known. A lot of matter is hidden in the file of the *True Sun* in the British Museum. This was a Radical London daily, and has not yet been properly searched. We find always, of course, that the records of the bourgeoisie are well-searched and analysed; but the records of the workers in recent times are lucky if they get studied at all.

P. D.—It is true that Cole suggests in his introduction to the 1s. 6d. reprint of Thomas Hodgskin's *Labour Defended* that Hodgskin was a forerunner of Plebs education. The quotation from Hodgskin on last month's cover proved this. All the same, too

much can easily be made of it. Hodgskin's remarks were no more than casual statements, as is shown by the *Mechanics' Magazine*, which he issued. This was not in the least like *The PLEBS*, but an "improving" magazine of the ordinary type, devoted to technical education, mathematics, dynamics, etc. Hodgskin himself was a socialist theorist of considerable importance. See for his ideas Max Beer, *Hist. of British Socialism*, I., 259.

G. TUCKER writes objecting to the statement in *October PLEBS* that "price and value are two different things." We agree that changes in values can change prices, and also that over a long period price and value may be treated as identical. Yet it is necessary to notice the difference between exchange value and its *monetary expression*—price. Price is determined by supply and demand; exchange value by the socially necessary labour needed to reproduce a commodity. The examples taken were temporary increases in prices owing to special spurts of demand.

## REVIEWS

BY A PLEB, FOR PLEBS.

*Out of the Past: Some Revolutionary Sketches.* By R. W. Postgate. (Labour Publishing Co. Paper, 3s. 6d. Cloth, 5s.).

WHAT do working-class students need in the way of history? Three things, surely. First, and most important as a groundwork, broad outlines of world history written from the viewpoint of historical materialism. Second, more detailed studies of specially significant periods. And third, historical records—the more detailed the better—of their own movement; these last quite as much for "sentimental" reasons as for their utilitarian value.

Postgate's new book belongs to both second and third classes. It contains half-a-dozen detailed studies of specially significant periods in modern working-class history. For each of these sketches, though nominally dealing with a single figure, is as a matter of fact quite as much concerned with the historical background—of the Owenite movement, of '48, of the Commune. Four of them—those dealing with Ferré, the Police Chief of the Commune; Parker, "Admiral" of the Nore Mutineers; J. E. Smith, "the brains of the Grand National

Trades Union"; and Louis Blanc, "a citizen of '48"—first appeared in our pages; and they were very well worth reprinting in book form.

But the most important item in the book is the longer account of the life and writings of L. A. Blanqui; which, indeed, by judicious use of large type, ample margins, and the inclusion of an appendix or two, might well have been made into a book (and a much-needed book) by itself. Part I. of this, which tells the story of Blanqui's life, is a vivid and moving piece of writing. One will not readily forget the pages describing his early days in Paris and the struggles of Bourbon-Romantics and Republican-Classicists; the year at Jancy with his young wife, "the one really happy year of his life"; the day, four years later, when they opened the door of his cell in Mont-St.-Michel and told him shortly, "Your wife is dead"; or those last days, thirty years later still, when the old man, again in prison, wrote his *Eternity by the Stars*... Perhaps someone, some day, will make the figure of Marx as real to us.

Part II. discusses Blanqui's writings; and here Postgate makes out a strong case for Blanqui's claim to be "first

formulator and public advocate" of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, as also of the phrase "arming the proletariat and disarming the bourgeoisie." Blanqui was no theorist; but he had studied to some purpose in the school of actual revolution, and he was a master of revolutionary tactics. His point of view is pretty well summarised in his aphorism—"Communism and Proudhonism stand by a river bank quarrelling whether the field on the other side is maize or wheat. Let us cross and see." Not that he failed to discuss "the field on the other side" himself. And the men who have since crossed and seen—the Russians—have found, Postgate remarks, that events have "underlined the truth of every word that Blanqui wrote" on post-revolutionary policy and tactics. "A leader only less in importance than Marx" is the summing-up here; and few revolutionists, as distinct from theorists pure and simple, will dispute that verdict.

This book will not sell in tens of thousands. It is written for proletarians, and the number of proletarians who would rather read about the Grand National Trades Union than about the Grand National Steeplechase, or about the Commune than about Carpentier, is few. Those few will buy *Out of the Past*. (They will be well advised, if they can afford the money, to get the cloth-bound edition, which is quite a handsome and well-turned-out volume.)

J. F. H.

#### BAD VALUE.

*The Theory of Marginal Value.* By Dr. Birck. (Routledge, 14s.)

The theory of marginal value or the theory, as worked out here, of final utility balanced against final disutility as an explanation of value is simply—or perhaps more elaborately—the old theory of supply and demand. Yet though the author states that—

It is *not the amount of sacrifice*; it is the *strength of the desire* which is the governing *principle* in the formation of value. Goods have not utility and consequently value because work is "crystallised" in them, but we are willing to apply labour to them *because* they yield us utility. *Consumption* is the final

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object, and, consequently, the  *motive*  of our economic actions, production only the  *means* . This seems so obvious that only the fact that Stuart Mill's theory of the cost of production (for the old school of economics) and Adam Smith's theory of labour as the basis is of value (for the Marxists) have become dogmas, justifies us in emphasising the fact that labour is only of secondary importance for the creation of value,

he has hankerings after the Marxian analysis and uses the technical cost, which in the long run is a labour time cost, as an explanation of value taken over long periods, that is, apart from the price or temporary fluctuations.

For instance, in criticising Marx, he says that with

Our changing desire, which—through the effect of the distribution of income—is materialised in subjective prices, . . . the objective element is also present—in the technical conditions under which we may procure the article desired. Karl Marx speaks of the "socially necessary work" as the determinant of value. This is, however, only a catch word, because he does not explain which work is "socially necessary." The schedule of demand, however, shows us this, because it states the possible prices at which the different quantities of the article can be sold. Scarcity (shortage, the  *technical cost of production* , which varies for different quantities) decides  *which*  of the many possible prices of the schedule of demand will, as marginal price, be equal to the market price.

Apart from the idea of  *materialised*  prices being only  *possible*  prices (and possible only when the technical or labour cost fixes the price), what is this but a sneaking acknowledgment? Again he says "it is desire which makes us attribute utility to goods and—conditional upon scarcity—also value."

Later on we find the author using the idea of "socially necessary labour" both in regard to technical development and also in regard to the cost of reproduction. To quote again:—

We may also say that the cost

of reproduction affects the minimum price of the seller, but only in proportion as to how quickly reproduction is possible before the stock is cleared. If there is a possibility of quick reproduction, the cost of reproduction is the minimum and in most cases also the maximum price, but the longer the time which is required for reproduction, the less will be the price determining influence of this cost in relation to the daily market. . . . Behind the selling price—the cost of production, we find something objective—the technical cost.

The whole analysis practically works out to a hesitating and tentative admission of the Marxian position that there is in society so much socially necessary labour performed and performed in answer to social economic demand; that with a fairly normal demand for a commodity the value will correspond to the technical cost, which here means the labour cost, including means of production. But the theory is so perverted in presentation that one has to stand on one's head economically to make sense of it at all. With such a phrase, for instance, as "The distribution of income determines the direction and amount of production as well as the prices of goods," one can't seriously quarrel; or, "just as absurd as it is to produce motor cars where there is no rich class to buy them, so absurd is it to produce books for a population whose income only runs to wooden shoes."

The author then concludes that for short periods value, as he calls it, is the result of desire or supply and demand, and for long periods the technical cost decides at what price a thing will be sold.

For the rest the book is a mathematical study, by graph and price schedule, of all the theoretical possibilities of supply and demand seeing against each other—the basis of the whole movement being "incorporated units of energy" in one paragraph, and in the next "marginal desirability."

The analysis of supply and demand here given, so far as it is a guide to possible prices and possible sales, though

quite interesting as an indication of tendencies, is more useful to the merchant and the taxing authority than to the labour student. In addition, some of the formulæ are quite unsuited to anyone who hasn't had some mathematics.

There is some interesting and useful matter in the chapter on the "elasticity of consumption," especially in reference to war-time fluctuations. Another interesting chapter is that on "The Subjective Price of Labour," where the "standard of life," "revolution," and Trade Unions are discussed in reference to each other. Other titles are "The Normal Market," "The Monopoly Price," and "The Value of the Precious Metal"—the last containing some contradictory theories.

The book is an elaboration of Marshall and contains nothing new. The lack of an index is a serious disadvantage.  
A. M. R.

WAGE-FIXING MACHINERY.

*Industrial Negotiations and Agreements.*  
(Labour Party, 2s.)

This is a useful little reference book showing how wages are fixed in the various industries, how negotiations are carried on, and what existing wage agreements there are.

It is a book which the "realist" should ponder over, for there can obviously be no effective common action between the workers in different industries until these diversities of wage-fixings are understood—and removed.

HOW TO WRITE HISTORY, AND HOW NOT.

*Fifty Years of Railway Trade Unionism.*  
By G. W. Alcock. (N.U.R. 10s. 6d.)

*Dr. William King and the "Co-operator,"*  
1828—1830. Edited by T. W. Mercer. (Co-operative Union. 5s.)

When Mr. G. W. Alcock was asked to write the history of the N.U.R., he excused himself on the ground that he had started work at seven and had no qualifications. He was overruled, and it is the melancholy task of a reviewer to say that his first impulse was wisest. Not all the hard work he has put into his task, nor all the enthusiasm that he

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has brought to it, has been able to outweigh his lack of training.

He has not, or has not been able to carry across to the reader, any general idea of the history of the times of which he is writing. He does not place the history of the N.U.R. in its proper relation to the history of surrounding events; he gives us no idea of what was happening outside, or why the Union arose at this time, suffered this at another. Apart from the *Beehive*, he seems to have read nothing whatever outside the files of Unity House. This lack of balance has impressed itself even on the internal history, where events and meetings are recorded one after the other without a proper estimate of their relative importance. Long documents, unreadable and unimportant, are inserted bang into the narrative. Meeting after meeting is described at tedious length, until the mind is in a whirl with meaningless detail. People named "Evans" and "Hall," and so on, drift in and out of the narrative. You have to pick up and guess who they are. For an

explanation of the large outlines of the history he substitutes such phrases as :

The ebb and flow of facts, of circumstances, pessimism or optimism are all factors that determine the life or death of movements which have altruistic aims.

Writing in such a way, he is unable to explain to the reader even what he most anxiously wishes to. He desires to show up C. B. Vincent as more than half a charlatan; all he does is to leave the confused reader with an idea that Vincent was rottenly treated but that Alcock is for some reason very pleased about it. It would not matter that his grammar is a bit rocky, if he could have made himself clear, but he writes sentences like this:—

The phrase "towards the close Vincent dropped in" is one of conduct seen again later.

The noticeable feature of the correct guiding hand in the turning points of our history is also marked by its evolutionary spirit.

For the later part of his history, Mr. Alcock seems to have worked in chains. This history was obviously directed as a counterblast to last year's A.S.L.E. and F. history; that was a vast pamphlet against the N.U.R., this is a vast pamphlet to prove the N.U.R. all that is good. Neither, of course, is history. But this 200,000-word pamphlet is also a glorification of one particular N.U.R. leader, the great J. H. Thomas. In earlier days Mr. Alcock's instinct leads him to damn a refusal of aid to fellow workers as "wishy-washy"; but when the Thomas Era approaches everything has to be lovely in the garden—even on Black Friday. Perhaps it is imagination, but I suspect that Mr. Alcock is not quite easy about his hero's actions then; any way, he flies off hastily to tell us that the *Communist* published "atrocious libels" for which it was "fined £1,000"; neither of which statements is accurate.

In case the Buttering of Jimmy should not be done sufficiently, or perhaps from fear that the readers will never plough through as far as it, the great man himself contributes a preface in which he talks of recent

events. A steady current of "I.... I....I...." runs through it. To me, it seems the most offensive piece of self-advertisement that I have seen for a long time. Only Horatio Bottomley could equal it. Indeed, I am quite sure the writer deserves a place beside Bottomley....

It is a relief to turn from painful if necessary criticism of misspent labour to a thoroughly good book. Mr. Mercer's edition of King's paper is a model of terseness and scholarliness. He reprints the number of this early co-operative paper (1828—1830) exactly, spelling and all. He contributes an admirable sketch of King's life, some selections of his letters, and a few brief but exact notes. The only fault in this unpretentious and valuable piece of work is the absence of an index.

What I have read of the *Co-operator* itself—I have not finished it yet—shows clearly that it is an important rediscovery, affecting the early history of Socialism and Co-operation. The sight of this volume turns me green with jealousy. What would we not give for such an edition of the *Communist Manifesto*? And there are many other books waiting to be done.

One word about the printing of these books. Both are printed by the Co-operative Press, and both are abominable. The only excuse for ornate type is that it should be beautiful. The Co-op. Press has used for both books fancy type, which is simply hideous. As a result, Alcock's book is almost unreadable, and gives you quickly a dizzy headache. It is printed throughout in black type like a grocer uses to announce that you are "Dr. to Messrs. Blank, of so and so." Surely the Press should be taught the lesson—If you can't print well, print plain.  
R. W. P.

#### BUILDING.

*The Romance of Building.* By A. S. Walker. (Philips, 2s. 6d.)

This book disappointed me; but that is because I have recently been in touch with many building *workers* and their problems, and have realised that from their point of view there is not much "romance" in their trade. While it is very wonderful to follow how the rude cairn of stones became

in time St. Paul's Cathedral, that development is no consolation to workers now living in scandalously over-crowded dwellings. The building worker of to-day, instead of becoming lost in admiration of "poems in stone"—magnificent shells from which the kernel of life has gone—needs first to understand how to meet modern changes in the methods and materials of building construction, and how to avoid the demarcation disputes which these involve. To him the 44-hour week and wage-reductions are more important than Doric and Ionian columns.

Students of the new geography will be interested to note that the spire of the north is an elongation of the slanted gabled roof necessary only in climes of rain and snow; the flat roof originated in the south. Also, that the Egyptians built colossal figures of men and animals simply because their granite did not lend itself to delicate carving as did the marble of Greece. Thus does natural environment influence architecture and sculpture. There are a few points of this kind to be picked up from these pages—points which might well have a special appeal for building-worker students.

Apart from such incidental points, this is the kind of book to be studied by those preparing to show a country aunt round town. K.

## MIXED.

*What We Want and Why.* (Collins, 7s. 6d.) is very mixed stuff, as one might guess when the names of Noah Ablett, Mrs. Snowden, J. H. Thomas, J. Bromley, Tom Mann and Robert Williams all appear upon its title page. J. H. T. wants cheap transport and "confidence in one another." Williams wants to explain away Black Friday. Bromley wants to show that he can let off steam in the literary sense, *i.e.*, by "fine writing," and achieves a ludicrous anti-climax.

There is an interesting peep into Noah Ablett's earlier days in the earlier portion of his essay. What he wants is to get rid of the coal owner—which sounds refreshingly real after some of the rhetoric in the other chapters.

M. S.

## FOR STUDENTS OF IMPERIALISM.

*The Problem of China.* By Bertrand Russell. (Allen & Unwin. 7s. 6d. net.)

This book is the best short statement of the facts about the recent history of China and Japan that I have come across. It contains fifteen chapters, nine of which are quite definitely useful from the point of view of the working-class student of modern Imperialism. These bring the story down to the Washington Conference (which has a chapter to itself), while an appendix adds the essential facts down to June of this year.

The other chapters are interesting, if not so useful. These discuss such topics as "Chinese and Western Civilisation Contrasted," and Mr. Russell appears to come to the decision that, for a middle-class intellectual, life is on the whole rather more desirable in China than in Western Europe. He writes with a pretty irony on the "ideals" of the two types of civilisation, though here and there he lets his bias against industrialism carry him into rather silly statements, such as that Western progress in science has merely meant "greater proficiency in the art of killing." Only a few pages further on he is regretting that Chinese students in Europe do not pay more attention to technical-scientific subjects (instead of concentrating chiefly on "theories of politics") and he points out that Western knowledge about afforestation, for instance, if applied in China, could prevent the periodical great floods which sweep away whole districts. So that apparently Chinese lack of science can achieve something in the "killing" line!

Mr. Russell does not like the Bolsheviks, and severely criticises what he calls their "new imperialism." He objects, for instance, to the Soviet Government claiming a voice in the control of the East China Railway on behalf of the "Russian labouring masses." He says Chinese coolies built the railway, and they, apparently, ought to own it.

But there still remain those nine useful informative chapters, and the book is well worth while the attention of students for the sake of those.

W. B.



## LETTERS from PLEBS

## THE LABOUR COLLEGE.

**D**EAR COMRADE,—In your August issue I noted with feelings of a mixed character—they were of pleasure, disgust and astonishment—a letter from B. Woolf, purporting to deal with the Labour College, its curriculum, and incidentally the students resident therein.

Firstly, let me state that I am in thorough agreement with the suggestions made, and welcome any criticism, if that criticism is honest. Secondly, I was disgusted to learn, in reading through that letter, that coupled with the criticism, were to be found many inaccuracies. Thirdly, I noted that Woolf had gone out of his way in making his criticisms to direct a veiled attack upon the students at the College; hence my astonishment.

I admit the College's development has been sporadic, for reasons which are obvious to all who understand the purpose for which the College was founded, but never lopsided, as Woolf chooses to write of it.

The first obstacle to effectiveness is the small amount of general education that most of the students bring with them, is a further remark from Woolf. This may, or may not, be true; it depends upon what he means by effectiveness, and in what direction it is used, and for what purpose. Furthermore, does Woolf expect that students should come to the College equipped with a bag, full of certificates and diplomas? One must agree with him that facilities are extended to the workers to obtain a knowledge of the subjects he has named, but here Woolf fails to appreciate the point that all miners and railwaymen who comprise the students at the College do not reside in London, and our other large cities and towns, where these facilities are granted. Even did they, the majority of them work at such places and times that a regular attendance at classes is out of the question.

I heartily agree with Woolf's remarks and suggestions with reference to the curriculum. It needs no patching up, but rebuilding. And I may

add that the present students are doing their best to attain that objective, and they are best fitted to know what is really wanted, and how to get it.

Woolf remarks, "I have never seen a single work of fiction upon a student's bookshelf." This statement is either pure fiction, or Woolf during his visits to the students' rooms had sleeping sickness.

What does Woolf know of the College residents making use of Kensington Public Library? What does he know of the students attending L.C.C. classes, and the use the students make of the Museum and lectures given at these places? I answer "Nothing."

If he will just come around the students may be pleased to give some information upon those items of interest, and thus stay Woolf's imagination from running riot in the future.

The Labour College. F. LEWIS.

## THE BRUSSELS CONFERENCE.

[The following letter has been forwarded by J. P. M. Millar, Press Sec., N.C.L.C., to the *Highway*, the organ of the W.E.A.]  
The Editor, *The Highway*.

SIR,—May I point out that that part of your report on the Brussels conference which deals with resolution number two is a little misleading? That resolution was not moved in the form stated by your correspondent. It was originally a weak-kneed resolution which talked about the "intellectual and cultural education of the working-class," and declared that the aim of this education was to further "the economic and political progress of the working-class." The wording your report gives is the *amended wording* that resulted from the vigorous opposition led by Mr. Craik and the delegate from the National Council of Labour Colleges.

Another point. When Mr. Craik suggested the insertion of "independent" in front of "working-class education," he was opposed by Mr. MacTavish, the secretary of the W.E.T.U.C. I find on referring to p. 13 of the report of the Trade Union

Education Inquiry Committee, which is signed by Mr. MacTavish as secretary, that the W.E.T.U.C. is stated to practise "independence" as understood by the Labour College." Perhaps Mr. MacTavish will throw some light on the matter and, if the W.E.T.U.C. does not practice inde-

pendence as understood by the Labour College, he will arrange that this claim is not again made on behalf of the W.E.T.U.C. It will save unnecessary misunderstandings.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) J. P. M. MILLAR  
(Press Secretary).

## ESPERANTO NOTES

*East London.* Plebs in this district are asked to support the class for men at the Bethnal Green Men's Institute, Wolverley Street L.C.C. School, E. 2, rd. ride ('Bus 8) from Liverpool Street Station, Mondays, 7.30—9.30. (Lecturer, Mark Starr.) Fee, 2s.

B.L.E.S. shows a good record of work done in the quarterly report just issued. In view of the trifling subscription (1s.) the desired increase in membership should be quickly realised. Address, 6, Windermere Avenue, N.W. 6.

*Sveda Laborista Esp. Asocio* (Brynäsatan 30, Gefle), havas anojn en 25 lokoj, kaj nun eldonas propran organon, "Sveda Lab. Esperantisto" (prezo, 15 öre). Ĝi estas ruĝe presita sur bonkvalita papero, kaj enhavas ilustraĵojn kaj literaturaĵojn. En numeroj 1 kaj 2 aperis artikolo pri Liebknecht, traduko el Gorki, kaj originalaĵo de Daniellson.

*La Fervojistoj* havas Internacian Asocion (Praha II., Tesnov No. 10, Ĉeĥoslovakio) kaj organon, "La Fervojisto."

*De Nederlanda Lab. Esp. Servo* (Daŭrigata). Jes, la registaro bone zorgas pri la materia kaj spirita farto de la popolo. Ĉu vi konas la mondfamajn verkojn *Faust* de Goethe kaj *Nathan der Weise* de Lessing? Nu, la Holando Ministro pri Instruo eltrovis, ke tiuj libroj estas danĝeraj por la junularo, ĉar ili enhavas ideojn kontraŭaj al la nuna vivpercepto. Kaj ili malpermesis la uzadon de ili en ia supera lernejo en Amersfoort. Ĉu ne estas ridinde?

Ankaŭ en la kolonioj, en Indio la registaro bele praktikas sian potencon. En tiu ĉi lando, kiu donas al la Holandaj kapitalistoj ĉiujare milionojn kaj milionojn, komencas iom post iom ekvivi la organizaĵoj metiaj kaj politikaj.

Tio kompreneble ege maltrankviligas la registaron kaj ĝi aplikas la plej brutajn rimedojn por kontraŭi tion. Propagandistoj estas malliberigatoj kaj kondamnataj sen ia pruvo de kontraŭleĝa agado. Defendi sin estas superflue. Tiel oni ekzilis la Holandajn propagandistojn Sneevliet, Baars kaj Bergsma. Kaj nun antaŭ nelonge oni ekzilis la Javanon, Malaka, kin estas komunisto kaj pro tio danĝera por la regantoj.

Jus okazis la elektoj por la dua ĉambro de la parlamento. Ekzistas tie ĉi la sistemo de proporcia reprezentado. Sed nun por la unua fojo ankaŭ la virinoj partoprenis. Fondiĝis lastatempe ĉiuspecaj grupetoj kaj ligoj kiuj klopodis sendi apartan reprezentadon al la parlamento. Artistoj, liberpensuloj, kamparanoj, ĉiuj havis sian apartan kandidaton. Eĉ grupetoj de kontraŭparlamentaj anarkiistoj kandidategis iajn nebonfamajn personojn nur por ridindigi la parlamentan agadon kaj protesti kontraŭ la deva voĉdonado.

Kaj nun la rezultato. Ĝi ne estas kuraĝiga. La malnova ĉambro havis 50 dekstrajn kaj 50 maldekstrajn membrojn. Inter la dekstraj la katolikoj havis la plimulton, do el ili formiĝis la registaro. Inter la maldekstraj membroj estis 22 social-demokratoj, 3 komunistoj (el kiuj unu origine apartenis al la Ligo de Kristan-Socialistoj, sed post la malfondo de tiu ligo aliĝis al la Komunista Partio) kaj 1 sindikalisto. La nova ĉambro konsistis el 60 dekstraj kaj 40 maldekstraj membroj. Inter la lastaj estos 20 social-demokratoj kaj 2 komunistoj, la ceteraj estos diversspecaj liberaluloj.

Do la reakciuloj plifortiĝis. Kaj la regantoj plueniros sur la vojon ĝis nun suriritan, sub la nuntempe aktuala devizo "malŝparado." Tio signifas por la laboristoj malplialtigon de ilia jam sufiĉe mizera ekzisto-nivelo.

C. V.

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## The PLEBS Page

**T**HE question of the precise work to be undertaken by Plebs League Branches was duly discussed at the joint meeting with the N.C.L.C. Executive (see report on another page). In the main, our suggestion in the September PLEBS—that Plebs Branches should concentrate on the propoganda and publicity work of the N.C.L.C. movement—was accepted and endorsed; with one important reservation, however, which, needless to say, we entirely agree with. This is, *that in every area where a Labour College centre has been established, the Plebs group should work under its direction so far as organised public propoganda is concerned.* This is clearly essential, if confusion and waste of energy are to be avoided. In areas not yet “opened up” the Plebs groups will take the initiative. But wherever their efforts have been successful, and a Labour College class centre, linked up with the N.C.L.C., has been established, the groups will of course work under the instructions of the Labour College Committee.

*BUT this does not mean that there is no necessity for Plebs groups in these areas, or that such groups, once a Labour College Committee has been formed, should disband. They should keep in being, as a group, and discuss and make suggestions as to propoganda to the Committee. They should train themselves for the job of propoganda speaking in T.U. branches, etc., and then place themselves at the disposal of the Committee. And it is up to them to worry the Committee to find them work to do* (which sentence is italicised at the express request of the N.C.L.C. President).

As regards the other activities suggested by us here two months ago, Plebs groups should act on their own initiative without waiting to be told how or where to act. They should make themselves into *recruiting-sergeants for the classes, and “pushers” of The PLEBS and of Plebs publications inside the classes.* And they should aim at enrolling, for work of one kind or another in the I.W.C.E. movement,

all those students who cannot undertake actual tutorial work. There is no machinery in the N.C.L.C. organisation—other than the Plebs League—for keeping in touch with students after they have attended this or that course of lectures. It is up to Plebs Leaguers to devise ways and means of meeting that need.

Will class-tutors and secretaries note that we can get sketches for charts or diagrams copied, on large or small scale for class use, cheaply and effectively, by a skilled sign-writer. Send in diagrams, or inquiries, to PLEBS office, 162a, Buckingham Palace Road.

One LONDON district has made good use of our 2pp. Book List leaflet by printing on the back of it its Syllabus for the current session. Other classes may care to follow suit—and give our Book Dept. a “boost.” We will supply, for cost of postage, to any class or district ordering a quantity at once, copies of the Book List as printed in this issue of the Magazine, with back pages left blank for you to get your own matter printed on. This will reduce your own costs—since we supply paper; and the book advertisement on the reverse side will stimulate your own literature sales.

*We have received several complaints about late delivery of parcels of PLEBS. We should be very glad if any of our distributors receiving his parcel later than the 1st or 2nd of the month, would send along the label of his parcel, with full particulars as to date and time of arrival, to The PLEBS office, so that we can make investigations.*

W. H.

### MARN'S GRAVE FUND.

The work of restoration and renovation has now been put in hand. We have received the following further subscriptions and tender our thanks to the senders:—Previously acknowledged, £8 15s. 6d.; L. Fagg, 3s.; Hyde Plebs, 2s. 6d.; Messrs. James, 2s. 6d.; Faulkner, 2s. 6d.; Winstone,

8d.; Banks, 3s.; George, 1s. Four Buddies, 4s.; Hadden, 2s. 6d.; total received, £9 17s. 2d.

Our friend, Jack Carney, editor of *The Voice of Labour*, Chicago, reprinted our appeal and promises a contribution to be forwarded shortly. There are also contributions from comrades through the *Communist*, which have

been acknowledged in that paper.

The sum realised will pay for the work undertaken and also provide that the grave will be kept in order for three years, so that we can now feel that it will be properly cared for. Any further sums received will be reserved for the annual upkeep of the grave.

## N.C.L.C. ITEMS and NOTES

THE A.U.B.T.W. scheme is now in full swing. The work in connection with it is provoking considerable activity in the W.E.A. camp. Our "short course" idea is also stimulating them to follow suit, as is evidenced by the syllabuses advertised by them in various parts of the country. The only thing they can't do is to deliver the goods. It is up to us to emphasise the distinctions and differences of outlook and aims at all times and in all places.

One of the most satisfactory results of our campaign for the A.U.B.T.W. is the bringing home to a number of former supporters of the W.E.A. the need for a definite purpose in education, a class purpose. It is our strong card and our promise of success. It only needed the short courses of lectures to popularise the instinctive appeal towards I.W.C.E. among the organised workers.

The Black Country is now undergoing a brightening process through the education conferences being conducted by the Birmingham Labour College comrades. Although the revolution is not yet complete, sufficient evidence of future N.C.L.C. success is apparent, and for a first campaign on behalf of I.W.C.E. the results are distinctly heartening. The South and West country are also stirring and will yet challenge the educational supremacy of the North.

Meantime our ancient strongholds do not lag behind. *Liverpool* reports that the S.E. Lancs District Management Committee of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers has adopted the A.U.B.T.W. scheme for their members. A howl of joy went up from one N.C.L.C. throat when this accession

was recorded. Now let the Plymouth A.S.W. Management Committee (and others) fall in and follow S.E. Lancs—and waste no time regretting that they might have led the way! *Liverpool* has also secured the support of the *Liverpool* and N. Wales Council N.U.R., which has voted £50 to cover tuition for N.U.R. members in N.C.L.C. classes throughout the area. Other districts should note this, and approach their local N.U.R. Council for a similar grant.

An N.C.L.C. Area Council has been formed for North Lancs. The provisional committee includes representatives of Blackburn, Barrow, Accrington, Burnley, Nelson, Colne, Preston, and Darwen. G. Flint, 36 Clifton Street, Blackburn, is Sec. (*pro. tem.*)

In London the season is in full swing, and fourteen classes are already going strong. A unique feature about this London season is the demand for courses in Economic Geography and Imperialism. The only fly in the ointment is the illness of the popular ex-secretary of the London Council, Robert Holder. If the sympathy and good wishes of his friends throughout the country are of any avail, then "Bob" will soon be well and strong again. In the meantime, George Phippen makes an admirable successor, and can be trusted to keep the flag flying in the Big Smoke!

The *West Riding*, *Sheffield*, *Mansfield* and *Hull* "bhoys" are determined to work the A.U.B.T.W. scheme for all it is worth, and it's not their fault that the scheme has not yet been fully exploited. If any Plebeian wants to win spurs in any of the above districts, apply to the secretary of their area council. There's work enough

for the veriest glutton in these or any other N.C.L.C. area.

The Eastern Counties have long been stony ground for I.W.C.E. There were isolated classes here and there—but hefty gaps between! Now, thanks to the help of the A.U.B.T.W., and the organising work of Mark Starr, the difficulty is to find teachers. Jack Jones (late Rhondda) is busy at *Brentwood* and *Southend*. Lewis, Williams and Harrison (Lab. Coll. students) are teaching at *St. Albans*, *Hertford* and *Grays*. E. W. Smith is taking a class at *Felixstowe*. Calthorp is visiting *Ipswich* and helping Pope to keep things moving at *Colchester*. Attempts are being made at *Braintree* and *Halstead*. *Chelmsford* is lucky in having lantern lectures from H. W. Gardner. Mrs. L. Manning is in charge at *Cambridge*, and B. Woolf has promised to visit *Newmarket*. Lectures have been given at *Luton*, *Hitchin* and *Bedford*. Even *Stamford* has its class. The *Norwich* stalwarts, Stephenson, Lay and Segon are doing good service in their own town, and also at *Lowestoft*, *Yarmouth* and *Cromer*. H. Stephens has been pushing I.W.C.E. in the *King's Lynn Citizen*. Altogether big strides forward are being made. We hope no one in the neighbourhood is waiting for an invitation to join in the work!

From Scotland come the following

corrections and additions to the N.C.L.C. directory:—

*Dundee* Dist. Sec. is now Sturrock Ross, 7, Mollison Street. *Glasgow* Dist. Sec. is now J. Wood, 196, St. Vincent Street. New District Committee, Lanarkshire; Sec. is Mrs. A. L. Aitken, "Carleva," South Biggar Road, Airdrie. *Ayrshire* Dist.: the staff tutor, W. Joss, who has done magnificent work for the College in Ayrshire, is leaving for an appointment abroad. The *Aberdeen* staff tutor, J. B. Payne, who has also put in a lot of hard work for the College, has resigned to take up another appointment in the Labour movement, we believe. The newly-formed *Lanarkshire* Committee has set to work in earnest and is opening some ten classes to begin with. An excellent start. A conference of *Glasgow* and district Labour bodies is being arranged, with Duncan Graham, M.P., in the chair. Addresses from James Maxton and J. P. M. Millar. *Edinburgh* Dist. has made a start for the winter by opening twenty one classes, and has the following subjects on its curriculum: Economics, Advanced Economics, Industrial History, History of the British Working-class, Present-day Problems—a Course in Applied Marxism Trade Union Law, Biology, Esperanto, Economic Geography, Public Speaking, Science of Understanding, Class Tutoring. What are *Fife* and *Stirlingshire* districts doing? Play up, Scotland!

## REPORTS OF N.C.L.C. EXECUTIVE MEETING & JOINT MEETING WITH PLEBS & LABOUR COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES, SEPT. 23 - 24.

*Executive Meeting of N.C.L.C., Sept. 23rd.*

Present: Hamilton, Millar, Sims and Smith. The Secretary (G. Sims) submitted a report on the A.U.B.T.W. education scheme. A report on publicity was submitted by the Press Secretary (J. P. M. Millar), who also reported as N.C.L.C. delegate to the International Conference. It was agreed to continue the steps already taken to encourage other Unions to follow the example of the Building Workers. Districts are asked to press the claims of the N.C.L.C. on the E.C.s of National Trade Unions through the

branches in the locality. Such activities, however, should be arranged in conjunction with the National Secretary of the N.C.L.C., and Districts are asked to keep him informed of any likely openings or favourable decisions. There are prospects of bringing in another large Union.

*Trades Union Congress.* The N.C.L.C.'s activities were successful in getting the recommendation submitted by the General Council extended to include not only the Labour College, London, but all the Labour Colleges. The following is the vital part of the recommendation carried at the congress:—



That the General Council be empowered to take over Ruskin College, the Labour Colleges, and the organisation set up by the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation... as soon as satisfactory financial and other conditions can be agreed upon, and pending such time as they are taken over the General Council be empowered to enter into such arrangements with them as it deems to be in the best interests of the Trade Union movement.\* (Italics ours).

This resolution gives the N.C.L.C. and all its affiliated Colleges definite status with the T.U.C.

With regard to the £250 each voted by the T.U.C. to Ruskin College, the W.E.A. and the Labour College, it was decided to approach the General Council and urge the claims of the N.C.L.C. for a similar grant. Districts are asked to forward resolutions to the General Council of the T.U.C. (Eccleston Square, London) urging that the grant be given.

*N.C.L.C. Annual Conference.* This is to be held on the week-end, 30th—31st December, if a suitable meeting place is to be had at that time.

*W.E.A. and Labour College Tutors.* It was reported that a representative of the W.E.A. had unofficially approached a Labour College asking for the services of a tutor. It was unanimously agreed that Labour College tutors should not take classes for the W.E.A. or the W.E.T.U.C. and that this policy should be followed by individual members of the I.W.C.E. movement.

*W.E.T.U.C.* Details were submitted of the activities of the W.E.T.U.C., and the following resolution was carried unanimously:—"Though the W.E.T.U.C. has never consulted the Labour Colleges on the matter, it is being generally advertised that Trade Unions can provide their members with Labour College education through the medium of the W.E.T.U.C. The E.C. of the N.C.L.C. desire to state that, on

the contrary, the Labour College movement, entirely disagreeing with the educational policy of the W.E.T.U.C., cannot co-operate with it in any way. Labour Colleges are therefore advised not to participate in the W.E.T.U.C.'s scheme for the return of fees as laid down in its publications." Trade Unions or Trade Union branches desiring the facilities offered by the N.C.L.C. must apply direct to the Colleges.

*Slides.* J. Hamilton reported that the work of preparing slides was being held up through lack of cash. Orders with cash are required.

*N.C.L.C., Labour College and Plebs League.* Since the formation of the N.C.L.C. circumstances have shown that it would be of great value to have a meeting of representatives of these three bodies, and a meeting had been arranged jointly with the Plebs E.C. for such a meeting to take place on the 24th September. The E.C. felt that the governors should be invited to play a more active part in the general movement.

The E.C. also felt that the N.C.L.C. should have a definite share in the control of The PLEBS Magazine. Its interpretation of the resolution under which the Publications Committee was formed (the Committee to consist of the Plebs E.C. plus two N.C.L.C. representatives) is that control of magazine policy was to form part of this Committee's responsibilities. The Plebs E.C.'s view, which had been ascertained by correspondence, was that the Committee was to deal only with publications other than the magazine. The E.C. decided that they could not accept this as a correct interpretation.

It was further agreed to suggest that a Policy Committee should be formed to deal with any question of magazine policy that might arise, and that this Committee should be composed of three from the Plebs E.C., two from the N.C.L.C. E.C., and one from the Labour College Governors.

With regard to the Plebs E.C.'s suggestion in the September PLEBS that the propaganda and publicity work of the N.C.L.C. should be allo-

\* The General Council's report recognises "the different theoretic views in regard to working-class education" and that "it is in the best interests of working-class education that these differences should exist and be discussed."

cated to the Plebs League branches, it was agreed that as it stood the suggestion was not workable. Certainly the League branches could do invaluable work in opening up new areas, but wherever a properly organised Labour College arose, the latter would be responsible for the local propaganda and publicity work, in which case the Plebs work would have to be carried on under the direction of the local College, if confusion was not to result.

*Joint Meeting, September 24th, at PLEBS Office.*

Present:—Hamilton, Millar, Sims, Smith (of E.C. of N.C.L.C.); Mainwaring (for Labour College Governors); Horrabin and Postgate (of Plebs E.C.).

*W.E.A. and L.C. Tutors.* The N.C.L.C. decision was reported and approved, the joint meeting being responsible for the reference to "individual members."

*Relationship of Labour College to N.C.L.C.* The N.C.L.C.'s resolution was discussed and a further resolution

was carried asking the **Governors** to suggest a date for a joint meeting of themselves with the E.C., of the N.C.L.C. and the Plebs E.C. to discuss future work and common responsibilities.

*Relationship of PLEBS to N.C.L.C.* The N.C.L.C. minute was submitted and in the discussion that took place on the interpretation of the resolution under dispute, both parties stood by their own interpretation. The N.C.L.C. representatives urged the desirability of the N.C.L.C. having definite voting power, as distinct from a mere consultative position, on questions of magazine policy affecting the N.C.L.C. movement as a whole. The Plebs representatives put the case for entirely independent control of the magazine by the Plebs League. It was finally agreed that the matter be deferred for full discussion at the Annual Conferences of the N.C.L.C. and the League. There is no question, however, that the joint discussion cleared up many difficulties and will have good results.

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THREE SKETCHES OF THE COMMUNE.



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## The PLEBS Bookshelf

I HAVE just received my copy of the Plebs Edition of Philips Price's *Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution*. And you've already had yours—if you've paid for it. If not, make up your mind quickly. Only a very small edition has been printed, and there'll be no lack of demands for it, once the book has been seen. If you put your name down for a copy earlier in the year, send in the cash (6s. 6d.) without delay. *Copies cannot be reserved—for anybody—longer than for a few days from now.*

When you get the book you'll settle down to a real treat—and a long one, for the book runs to 402 large pages. Its interest never flags, for Price, as well as being a Marxian, is a skilled writer. Like Marx himself, he brings you into touch with men and events, as well as opening your eyes to the play of social forces beneath. From the opening chapter, "The Red Dawn in Moscow," on through the days of Kerensky, the November Revolution, Brest-Litovsk, and the struggle of the Soviets against the victorious Allies outside and counter-revolutionaries within, it is a story which grips, as well as a critical analysis which gives the historical student abundance of material to ponder over.

Of course it would have been nice to have had it in a cloth binding, but that would have meant another 2s. or 2s. 6d. on the price. As it stands it's a marvellous six-shillingsworth. You won't be likely to want your money back!

Are we going to beat the *Psychology* record with Textbook No. 2—*Imperialism*? It will be interesting to see. The subject-matter of the new book ought to ensure at least as big a demand; and I don't think there will be any complaints about the way that subject-matter is handled.... Meantime, as near as we can say, the *Elementary Economics* book will be ready before Christmas, i.e., in ample time for use during the New Year session. As I remarked last month, it will not be a book for Pontiffs or Panjandrams, but for Plain People.

Here, to give some idea of its scope, is a list of its chapter headings:—  
Introduction.

1. Modern Production.
2. Commodities: Value and Surplus Value. (Appendix on Marginal Utility Theory.)
3. Wages.
4. Capital: Profit, Interest and Rent.
5. Exchange.
6. Exchange (ctd.)
7. Banking.
8. Recent Developments of Capitalist Production.
9. Industrial Crises.
10. Trusts and Combines.
11. Export of Capital.
12. Culmination of Capitalism.
  - (a) Glossary.
  - (b) Historical Appendix.
  - (c) Bibliography.
  - (d) Index.
  - (e) Notes for Students.

Obviously a book dealing with that little list in 160 to 180 pages can be no more than an *outline*. And that is precisely what this book sets out to be.

I note that the *New Leader* reviewer (whose spiritual home is assuredly the *Nation*), discussing Van Loon's *Story of Mankind* and Barton's *World History for the Workers*, gives it as his opinion that Barton's book is not "so interesting or so useful to the worker" as Van Loon's. Barton's "horizon is not wide enough"; whereas if you are introduced to history by a writer of Van Loon's "free spirit," you will not have your mind "clogged by a false point of view."

Here are a sample or two of Van Loon's "free spirit." Growth of the modern proletariat:—

...the new age of iron and steel and machinery. First one part, then another of the old Ship of State was changed.... Better living quarters were established, but many people were forced to go down into the stoke-hole, and while the work was fairly safe and remunerative (!) they did not like it as well as their old and more dangerous job in the rigging....

The enormous improvement [in the lot of "the so-called proletariat"] since the thirties and forties of the last century is not due to the efforts of a single man. The best brains of two generations devoted themselves to the task of saving the world from the disastrous results of the all-too-sudden introduction of machinery. They did not try to destroy the capitalistic system. This would have been very foolish, for the accumulated wealth of other people, when intelligently used, may be of very great benefit to all mankind....

CHAP. 63.—"THE GREAT WAR, WHICH WAS REALLY THE STRUGGLE FOR A NEW AND BETTER WORLD."

These extracts will serve to indicate Dr. van Loon's point of view. Obviously it is not a working-class one. And here is a further quotation to show that at times it is a singularly silly one:—

Marx believed that all history was a long struggle between those who "have" and those who don't "have"... According to him, the third estate (the bourgeoisie) was growing richer and richer and the fourth estate (the proletariat) was growing poorer and poorer, and he predicted that in the end one man would possess all the wealth of the world while the others would be his employees and dependent upon his good will.

I don't deny that Van Loon has a wonderfully vivid touch at times; and that there are a good many really suggestive passages in his book. But the book remains, as I remarked last month, the work of a slick journalist, with a Woodrow Wilson outlook. Barton's book on the other hand is written by a class-conscious worker; and it makes a sincere attempt to get the essential facts of world history sorted out and stated for the use of workers.

If you want "free spirit"—at 12s. 6d.—get Van Loon. If you want a limited horizon—limited, that is, to facts that matter from *our* point of view—get Barton.

The *Psychology* Textbook, by the way, is once more available, the 3rd edition having just come off the press. A good part of this edition was ordered before publication, for the book had been out of print for three or four months. I may take the opportunity of quoting from the latest review to hand, which appeared in the *American Labour Age* for August:—

Most texts on psychology are dry as dust, and few indeed make any attempt to show how their science can be of any utility to the workers in the struggle against capitalism. On the other hand, when one picks up a volume on some science which is written expressly to show its possible utility to a vital movement, one unconsciously is on one's guard to see that propagandist zeal hasn't carried the writer beyond what impartial adherence to truth justifies. It was, therefore, with pleasure and admiration such as we have seldom experienced that we read *An Outline of Psychology* (Plebs League), and saw that not only had the authors avoided these pitfalls, but they had made their compact little handbook reflect the most up-to-date and well-considered point of view of modern psychology. There are few books indeed which we so hardily recommend to the attention of readers of *Labour Age*.

Here's the best of luck to Fred Silvester in his Poetry Publishing venture. Every Pleb, whether keen on poetry or not, will get a copy of his *Working Class Ballads and Songs* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. post paid from the author, 8, Evelyn Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham).

J. F. H.

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