

The Plebs

JULY
1924



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UP — & THEN
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THE PLEBS

I can promise to be candid but not impartial.

Vol. XVI

July, 1924.

No. 7

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“LET MY PEOPLE GO—” to a Summer School!

Perhaps the best way of conveying, to those unable to be present, some impression of the tremendously successful Plebs Summer School held at Cober Hill a fortnight ago, will be to print the following diary. A fuller report of the Meet itself will be found on another page. No attempt is made here to report the lectures fully, since the four in the History series will, we hope, be embodied in a Textbook in the near future; and the others—beginning with Philips Price's in this issue—we are arranging to publish as articles in the magazine. By this means it will be possible to share at least some of the delights of the week with Plebeians everywhere.

SATURDAY, JUNE 7TH.—The clans began to gather in the afternoon. The first-comers, intent on making as much hay as possible while the sun shone, braved the rocks of Cloughton Wyke and bathed; that is to say, they exchanged their normal attire for bathing costumes and, with chattering teeth, plunged knee-deep into the icy North Sea, and dashed out again in about thirty seconds. By tea-time, twenty or thirty of us—from London, Edinburgh, Durham, Sheffield, Leeds, Mansfield and Manchester—were assembled. And during the evening natives* of Glasgow, York, Motherwell, Wallasey, Exeter, Leigh, St. Helens, Doncaster, Staithes, Bury, Halifax and other well-known working-class health resorts arrived in batches. After supper, everybody—wearing a label with his or her name and place of exploitation upon it (this to save time on “introductions” or other formalities)—repaired to the lecture-theatre for an informal musical social (and terpsichorean) evening. The choral singing was, as yet, a little weak.† But the Edinburgh quartette—Arthur and Barbara Woodburn, and J. P. M. and Christine Millar—did some excellent individual work; and they were soon reinforced by Miss Fineberg (of Leeds) and Arthur Umpleby—who demonstrated that an E.C. member of a big Union can, if need be, deputise for Little Tich. By general consent, the Editor’s blazer, with the Question-Mark embroidered large thereon, was voted—along with Newbold’s “plus fours”—a sight worth coming far to see.

Sunday, June 8th.—Grey weather; but after consultation it was decided to stick to programme and get out into the open. John Jagger accordingly led some thirty or forty of us o’er moor and fen, o’er crag and torrent till Heyburn Wyke and liquid refreshment—from the waterfall or the hotel—were reached. (During a brief halt on top of the cliffs, commanding a view of miles and miles of grey sea, Walter Newbold’s natural instincts led him to attempt to address the mob; but on the mob immediately threatening to hurl him over, he desisted.) It was in the course of this walk that Ellen Wilkinson had a brain-storm—the addition to the week’s programme of a reading of Toller’s *Masses and Man*, by ten or twelve of us. Only one copy of the play was available; so after lunch she, with Winifred Horrabin, Miss Paterson, and Kathleen Starr—with Sydney Walker and others assisting as “dictators”—got down to the job of making typed copies of the full play. During every possible interval of this day and the next—working up to

* Or settlers in these particular wilds.

† It improved mightily later in the week.

midnight—they slaved away ; thereby causing no little astonishment among the other visitors to the Guest House, who naturally regarded typewriting—at intensified speed—as a strange way of taking your pleasure at a Bank Holiday week-end ! . . . More arrivals, including William Paul, his wife and daughter.

After supper, J. P. M. Millar spoke on the “ Present Position and Prospects of the N.C.L.C.,” giving us an excellent survey of the recent development of our movement and of the problems—particularly those connected with the T.U.C.’s educational schemes—immediately confronting us (see p. 268), John Jagger, who presided (on condition that he should be allowed a holiday during the rest of



the week) testified to his own entire satisfaction, as official head of one of the two national Unions which have entrusted their educational work to the N.C.L.C., with the work done by the latter.

Monday, June 9th.—A free morning—except for the industrious typists (see above), for a small search-party who went into Scarborough to purchase a gramophone and records paid for by a general levy on the entire School, and for the Pimlico Players, who locked themselves up for a final rehearsal in preparation for the evening’s programme. After lunch, Photograph Parade on the lawn,* and then the Plebs Meet (for a report of which see another page). The outstanding features of the many keen discussions were (i) the general agreement on the need for closer—and larger—organisation of the

* The group taken—probably the most representative group of Plebs we have yet been able to get together—can be obtained from Mr. H. L. Kettle, 18, Ramshill Road, Scarborough; print 10 inches by 4, price 2s. 8d., postpaid. Those ordering should quote “ Plebs Summer School, Cober Hill, June 9th, Photo No. 3.”

Plebs League in order to safeguard the *independence* of our Labour College movement, both as regards any conservative influences or any sort of *sectional* control of what should be a working-class activity ; and (ii) the insistence on the urgent necessity for tackling the question of providing training, by a national scheme, for tutors, in view of the inevitable limitations of the London Labour College in this respect. Another healthy sign was the general lack of docility on the "floor" of the conference, pretty nearly every member present being eager to share in every discussion.

After supper, a crowded house—including, by invitation, all the other guests at Cober Hill—for the performance of two one-act plays—*The Grand Cham's Diamond*, by Allan Monkhouse, and *The Workhouse Ward*, by Lady Gregory. In the former, Winifred Horrabin as Mrs. Perkins, a Cockney lady with a thirst for lurid adventure, J. F. Horrabin as her more respectable spouse, Daisy Postgate as their lady-like daughter, R. W. Postgate as a Mysterious Stranger (with cloak, dark moustaches and revolver), and Mark Starr as emissary of Scotland Yard, made the big audience rock with laughter. In the second, Mark Starr and J. F. Horrabin as the two elderly and unlovely Irish paupers, and Kathleen Starr as the buxom country woman who visits them, carried on the good work.† Before, between, and after the plays (for which Wilson Plant acted as stage-manager) there was a musical programme, in which Wm. Paul, Arthur and Barbara Woodburn, Christine Millar, A. Umpleby, with Miss Ionie Biddick (of the Guest House staff) as accompanist, won tremendous applause. Altogether a hectic evening!

Tuesday, June 10th.—The School proper began this morning. It had been previously agreed—in full folk-moot—that the two lectures, one on Modern Capitalism and the other on the History of the Bourgeoisie, arranged for each morning should not be held simultaneously, but consecutively. Accordingly, for the remainder of the week the economics lecturer got busy at 9.45, and the history man followed at 11.30. This morning Maurice Dobb led off with "World Politics and the Worker," R. W. P. presiding. Amid a mass of interesting and ably handled subject-matter, the point which stood out perhaps most of all was Dobb's eloquent plea to us to remember that there was nothing inevitable about working-class progress, but that the realisation of our aims depended on our own clearly-defined purpose, and our will to carry this into effect. . . . The weather having improved somewhat, J. F. Horrabin's lecture, the first of the history series—"From the Fall of Feudalism to the

† A few postcard-photographs of each play, price 6d. each, are obtainable from The PLEBS Office.

Rise of Mercantile Capitalism"—was held out of doors, under a spreading laburnum tree, with Charlie Brown in the chair. Naturally, the geographical factor got rather more attention than it usually does in history lectures, but this at any rate brought an element of freshness into the discussion of fairly well-worn ground.

There was a bathing parade—with a good many absentees—in the afternoon, and a preliminary rehearsal of *Masses and Man* after tea; and after supper came one of the treats of the week—William Paul's lecture-recital, "Music and Revolution." (When it was announced that this was to be held in the drawing-room, the voice of John Jagger was heard inquiring, "Another armchair revolution?") Two years ago, at the L.R.D. Summer School at Cober Hill, G. B. S. himself remarked that the operatic stage lost at least as much as the propagandist platform gained when Paul decided to concentrate on the latter. Paul has now "got even," and by bringing his musical skill and magnificent voice to the service of propaganda has devised a method of tremendous possibilities. One after another, he sang us twelve or fifteen revolutionary songs—Irish, Negro, Hungarian, Scottish, Russian, international—and it is no overstatement to say that half his audience were very obviously choking back the tears throughout the greater part of his recital. Perhaps the climax was reached with that thrilling song of the negro slaves thirsting for freedom, "Go down, Moses." No one who heard Paul's rendering, with the passionate refrain "Let my people go," will ever forget it. (And for the rest of the week voices of every calibre were echoing it in every interval in the programme—and James Connolly's "Rebel Song" likewise.)

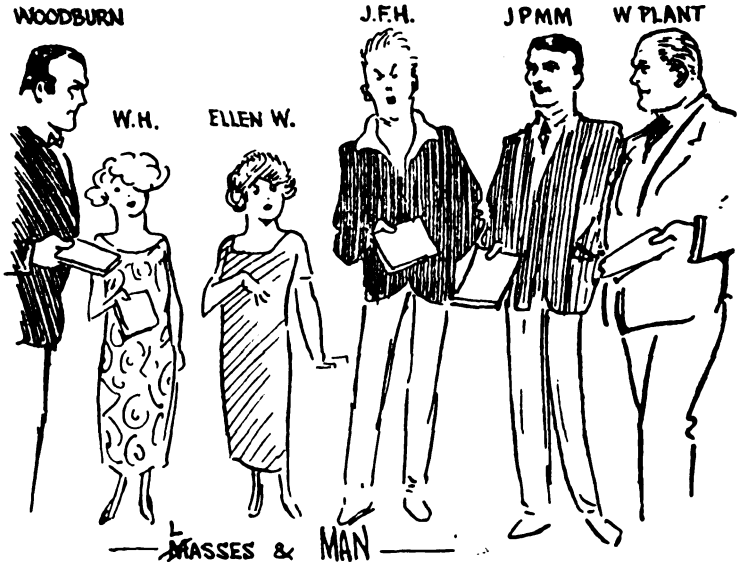
Wednesday, June 11th.—A few of our number, alas, had to leave last night, but others—newcomers—keep on arriving; these last including Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, from Preston, and, this morning, Philips Price.

Ellen Wilkinson's lecture on "Modern Workshop Methods"—scientific management, "industrial psychology," intensification of production, etc.—was given in superbly incongruous surroundings, in one of the loveliest corners of the Cober Hill gardens (and the garden at Cober Hill is surely one of the loveliest in England). Comrade Hill Brett, of Leigh, presided, and the hope was generally expressed during the discussion that the lecture should appear as an article in *The PLEBS*.* . . . Walton Newbold commenced his lecture on "Pre-Machine Capitalism" in the same idyllic spot, but we had perforce to flee indoors owing to rain before he had gone far. As

* Shortly.—ED.

usual, Newbold lightened the solid mass of his material with a good many epigrammatic sallies at Scots, Yorkshiremen and Welshmen ; but Syd Ainsworth, in the chair, had no angry rushes at the platform to deal with. . . . After lunch the " masses and men " had a final rehearsal.

Philips Price's lecture, after tea, on " The Experts' Report " (see p. 257) was not only a masterly thing in itself, but it inaugurated a discussion which should lead to some practical results in the direction of making the rank and file of the British Labour movement more alive to the dangers of what is happening in Europe at the present time. J. F. H., who presided, expressed the feeling



of the whole School when he said how proud we were to welcome Price into our movement, and followed this by pinning the Plebs badge on Price's coat-lapel.

In the evening came the reading of *Masses and Man*, and its success, it is to be hoped, will lead to further similar readings elsewhere. Twelve Plebs in all took part, all but two or three of these reading more than one character. The " stage directions " were read throughout by R. W. Postgate, the other voices chiming in in their proper place. The full cast was :—Ellen Wilkinson (the Woman), J. F. Horrabin (the Nameless), Wm. Paul (the Guide, and First Sentry), Arthur Woodburn (the Husband, and the Officer), Winifred Horrabin and Kathleen Starr (Working Women and Prisoners), Mark Starr (the Priest, and the Condemned), Wilson Plant, Geo. Williams, J. P. M. Millar and Cyril Jagger (Workmen, Bankers, Sentries, Shadows). A big red flag was the

only stage decoration ; and Toller's heart-burning words made none the less effective appeal because they alone, with neither action nor scenic effect to distract the listeners, focussed attention. One felt, indeed, that one had shared in a religious ritual—had saluted "our martyred dead" of many a workers' revolution.

Thursday, June 12th.—Indoor weather again—for lectures at any rate (though the tennis court is busy from before breakfast until dusk). Arthur Woodburn led off this morning with an amazingly interesting lecture on "Banking and Credit," which the chairman, Geo. Williams, rightly declared would make one of the most useful articles conceivable for the magazine, and which "followed" Philips Price's lecture of the evening before in effective fashion. . . . Number 3, History Course, was delivered by R. W. Postgate—"Machine Capitalism and Revolution," Steve Lawther presiding. Postgate showed—once again—his brilliant knack not merely of making history dramatic, but of concentrating attention on the main forces, factors and events and so getting a panoramic view of a big subject into perspective.

In the afternoon we divided forces—some of us making for Scarboro' and inspecting the battleship in the bay, while the rest, in three cars and a motor char-à-banc, took the switchback road across the moors to Whitby. Newbold led an expedition up to the Abbey, others formed a life-guard platoon while John Postgate paddled ; Umpleby conducted a select party to a second-hand bookshop with which he was familiar—and the stock of which was duly reduced by sundry "finds." Back home across the moors, in a thick sea-mist, which spoiled the view but encouraged conversation.

This evening's star turn was W. Paling, M.P. for Doncaster and an Old Pleb, and his performance—according to his own description of it—was a venture into the lion's den ! He spoke on "Some Aspects of the Work of a Labour Government," and he brought us down to earth with a more or less sickening thud by describing some of the actual obstacles, e.g., the obstructionist tactics of permanent officials, which Labour in office has to face. Walton Newbold, in introducing him, claimed him as a brother Left Winger, and Paling himself made it quite clear that, though he stoutly and loyally defended the Government and its achievements, he was eager to force the pace as much as possible. Two other candidates for Parliament—Wm. Paul and Philips Price—took part in the keen discussion which followed ; as did also John Jagger, Postgate, J. F. H., and Arthur Woodburn. . . . The evening concluded with an outburst of Scottish—and other—song, the "other" including the Red Army Marching Song rendered, in Russian and with vim, by Philips Price.

Friday, June 13th.—The last day of a holiday is usually a trifle depressing, but enough high spirits have been engendered this week to carry us safely through the adieux and well on the home trail. . . . Mark Starr opened the ball with a lecture on "Trusts and Monopolies," and made effective use of the "question and answer" method experimented with by Dobb on Tuesday. Com. Addison (co. Durham) took the chair, and put into words what we all felt when he remarked that the week's work and play had made him a keener Pleb than ever before. . . . For the last of the History series we had to arrange "deputies," T. A. Jackson, booked for this lecture, being unavoidably detained in London. R. W. Postgate accordingly gave a brief sketch of the main developments, bourgeois and proletarian, during the period of Imperialist Capitalism, 1880—1924; J. F. H. and Wm. Paul followed with short supplementary comments on World Geography and the Class Struggle, and the Russian Revolution; and Newbold contributed a few Finance Footnotes.

After tea came the last item on the lecture list—Dr. Jas. Johnston on "The Method of Science." C. F. Booth, who presided, told us of the magnificent work put in by the lecturer for the Labour College in the Liverpool district. Perhaps the most effective argument adduced by Dr. Johnston in support of his "thesis"—the desirability of teaching Scientific Method in Thinking by reference to facts and illustrations drawn from the natural sciences rather than from philosophy—was his own lecture as a whole; a model lecture in every sense, lucid, vividly interesting, "planned like a symphony" as Paul declared. In the discussion which followed the Dietzgenians and the anti-D.'s had a brief but breezy field-day. . . . At supper-time J. F. Horrabin, on behalf of the School, thanked Miss Andrews and her staff for their unvarying courtesy and thoughtfulness and helpfulness; and asked the staff to accept the gramophone and records purchased by subscription earlier in the week as a souvenir of our all-too-short stay at Cober Hill. . . . After supper, a Grand Final Sing-Song—with Wm. Paul again in fine voice—"Let my people go" more thunderous than ever—choruses galore from the Fellowship Songbook, solos by Miss Fineberg and Miss Pollard (of the staff), and recitations by C. F. Booth and a Manchester visitor, Mr. B. D. Taylor. Finally, "Auld Lang Syne," "The Internationale," and "The Red Flag," with three cheers for Cober Hill which roused John Bright (the peacock) from his slumbers on the lawn and evoked hearty (and throaty) responses from him.

A really memorable week, and one which will without a shadow of doubt stand out as a landmark in many memories. Up the Labour Colleges! And Up the PLEBS!!!

THE EXPERTS' REPORT

Enter the International Bankers

One of the most important tasks which we Plebs can undertake is to make clear to our fellow-workers that in the highly complex capitalist world of to-day there is no longer any division between "home affairs" and "foreign affairs." That is to say, we cannot concentrate on Housing, or Unemployment, and ignore the international situation—or we shall pay for our folly in more unemployment and a lower standard of living in the very near future. Comrade Philips Price here outlines the main arguments of his lecture at The PLEBS Summer School on the present situation in Germany; next month, he will show how this will inevitably react on the mass of the British workers.

I

WHEN we begin to study what has been going on in Germany since the war, seeking causes and explaining events, we find ourselves at once up against certain fundamental and traditional factors which lie deeply embedded in the history of Central Europe. To take an example: Comrade Newbold has referred in one of his recent articles to the failure of the middle-class revolution in 1848 in Germany, as having been one of the primary causes of the European War, because its failure left the greater part of the German-speaking countries still controlled by the families of the agrarian nobility, thus creating an area where the great international money-lending houses of Paris, Brussels and London had no access or undisputed control of the government machine. This is undoubtedly true, but one can go much further back than this and see in the failure of the merchant classes of the German towns in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to establish their influence over the feudal princes of Germany, in the decay of the overland trade routes along the Rhine and over the Alps to Venice and Genoa, in the maritime discoveries of the sixteenth century and in the terrible and devastating Thirty Years War, in which the rising mercantile classes of Holland, Sweden, France and Italy and of the counter-Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire used Central Europe as a battle ground for their national struggles for the control of the new trade routes; we can see in all these facts the real cause of the relative backwardness of Germany both politically and economically during the nineteenth century.

Germany, in fact, had not worked off—and did not till November

9th, 1918—the last relics of her feudal system. Even Bismarck, with all his astuteness, as a junker who realised that the industrial capitalist class was the coming power, was compelled to allow the agrarian nobility of Prussia large political rights and a privileged position in the military, diplomatic and civil services. And so, loaded with the burdens of the feudal past, Germany entered the war, which the international banking groups waged against the Hohenzollern regime, in order to secure for themselves in Germany a government which would be absolutely subservient to their will and permit their capital investments to flow unhindered into Central Europe and its colonial areas in the Balkans, Turkey and Russia. But it was obvious that a Germany governed by a combination of the agrarian nobility and the rising industrial capitalist class, each following different and indeed conflicting ends, could not wage war with the same effectiveness as the Allied governments, in which the State machinery was controlled by a class basing its political power on the latest phase of capital accumulation, a combination, as it was at that time, of industrial and finance capital. I make that distinction explicitly. For our Marxian outlook enables us to see in the development of society, including capitalist society, different phases, each growing up in the bosom of the other and finally absorbing or destroying its parent phase. And just as the feudal system arose out of the self-sufficient community and destroyed it, so did mercantile capitalism arise out of and destroy feudalism, industrial capitalism destroy pure mercantile capital accumulations, finance capital or fixed-interest bearing, mortgage-holding capital arise within industrial, speculative capital, deriving its accumulations from the holding of ordinary or common stock in coal, steel and engineering industries.

But finance capital has not destroyed industrial capital. That struggle seems to me to be coming now, and it is as well to face facts and not to imagine that the working class in Europe has got an easy task before it because capitalism is on the decline. It is only true that a certain kind of capitalism—industrial speculative capitalism—is on the decline, but the money merchant class that lends to governments, holds railway debentures, mortgages on land, ground rents, etc., is not only not declining in power, but has immensely strengthened its economic position since the war, and is pushing to the wall the war profiteer and munitions speculator, whom it is pressing for the settlement of the debts contracted during the war boom and inflation of after-war years.

The position, therefore, at the commencement of the war was that in the Allied countries finance and industrial capital held the balance of power in the control of the machinery of the State. Both were interested in the war, the fixed-interest or passive capitalist,

the big money-lending houses that had for some years past been consolidating their hold on all European governments except the German and Austrian ; these on the one hand and the owners of coal mines, smelting furnaces, ships, shipyards and engineering workshops, who looked to the war to provide an unlimited outlet for their products on the other, both were interested in the war and in the defeat of Germany for different reasons. Nevertheless, during the actual process of carrying on the war the industrial speculative capitalists were able to increase their economic power in relation to the fixed-interest and mortgage capitalists and bankers. The inevitable inflation and issuing of depreciated paper currencies caused fixed-interest stock to lose a part of its gold value, whereas the holder of ordinary shares in munition and allied works were able to accumulate vast profits.

The process, however, did not go so far in the Allied countries as it did in Germany, where the war profiteers of the type of Stinnes threw off the greater part of their bank debts by benefiting by the fall of the mark, and cornered the mineral resources of the country in their own interest. In France and England the passive capitalists were not ruined, though greatly weakened. It is true that the Coalition Government of Lloyd George became the mouthpiece of the war-profiters ruling England, but in France, thanks to liberal assistance from Wall Street, the franc was artificially supported and so an equilibrium of economic power was maintained between the French rentiers and the French industrialists. The Versailles Treaty was a compromise between these two classes of capitalists in the Allied countries. It enforced the payment of large cash sums from Germany, which would, if they could have been paid, have balanced the French Budget and brought the franc back to its par value. On the other hand, it contained clauses, which handed over large German coal and mineral regions to France and her economic colonies, thereby making it possible for the Comité des Forges, the association of French heavy industries, to gain control over the raw material resources of a large part of Europe.

But this very economic partition of Germany in the interests of the Comité des Forges and incidentally of the German heavy industries too made it impossible for the German Treasury to hand over even the smallest fraction of the cash sums demanded under the London payment plan. The mark collapsed and the Comité des Forges clinched its victory—the victory of the war speculators in France and Germany, of the inflationists and the heavy industry trusts—by the occupation of the Ruhr. The small investing classes of Germany were ruined and the French rentier saw the franc follow the mark.

Now begins the counter-offensive of the owners of passive

capital. Enter the International banking oligarchies with their demand for a "revision of the Versailles Treaty," the stabilisation of the European exchanges, the balancing of the German Budget, based on a unified Germany (implying the withdrawal of the French economic measures in the Ruhr), the reduction of German reparations payment to the level of what Germany is capable of paying and the assisting of this by an international loan to Germany. A feeble attempt to secure this programme's adoption was made at the Cannes Conference in January, 1922, when Rathenau in reply to a bankers' committee drew up plans to balance the German Budget, but the obstruction of Poincaré and Millerand, acting under instructions from the Comité des Forges and of the French rentiers, who were not long-sighted enough yet to see how they would be benefited by a general stabilisation, blocked the way of the bankers. An attempt was made again at Genoa, but the oil trusts complicated the issue and finally captured the attention of the conference by their intrigues to corner Russian oil. During the summer of 1922 Pierpont Morgan came to Paris and the bankers' committee was re-formed. German Treasury officials were invited to come to Paris and discuss plans. This, too, broke down through the obstruction of the inflationists and industrial capitalists in France and Germany. Then came the Ruhr occupation and the final stage of financial collapse and economic partition of Germany. The speculative capitalists and holders of ordinary shares in industrials in France and Germany held high festival!

But the process of inflation sooner or later has an end. The public in Germany became aware of the fact that the mark was worthless paper and that inflation is no good unless the fact that the currency was not worth the figures printed on it was only known to a select few. As soon as the fact is public property, the game of the inflationist is up. And it was up in Germany by the autumn of 1923. Then was the time for the international bankers to take the field and they succeeded in getting the French Government's consent to the appointment of an expert committee of the Reparations Commission to investigate the capacity of Germany to pay. The French rentier had become scared at the falling franc and at the absence of any result from the Ruhr occupation, as far as he was concerned. He was not interested in the monopoly which the Comité des Forges had secured over the mineral resources of the Rhineland, because he was in the main a holder of fixed-interest-bearing government bonds. After five months this Experts' Committee has reported and we see in it the most important international document which has appeared since the Versailles Treaty.

M. PHILIPS PRICE.

(To be continued.)

FASCISM

We publish below the second of a series of four articles on a subject of vital interest to the organised workers—Fascism, the latest form of bourgeois reaction to working-class demands. The Matteotti crime, and its reactions in Italy and elsewhere, make this month's study especially interesting and valuable.

II—THE ITALIAN LABOUR MOVEMENT

THE Italian Labour Movement has long been remarkably "left" in its ideas and policy. There has always been a strong syndicalist strain in the theories both of the Italian Socialist Party (*Partito Socialista Italiano*) and of the General Confederation of Labour (*Confederazione Generale del Lavoro*), and this has gone far to counteract the influence of the reformist elements. Actually the reformists have controlled the C.G.L. since 1911, but Italian reformism would seem a very advanced sort of socialism to some members of the British Labour Party.

The close connection between the industrial and the political sides of the working-class movement in Italy is noteworthy. The control of the C.G.L. is entirely in the hands of Socialists, and the Secretary, D'Aragona, is a member of the Executive Committee of the P.S.I. This unity is not, unfortunately, sufficiently developed to ensure immediate common action on matters of urgent importance to the workers. At the time of the occupation of the factories in 1920, much valuable time and energy were wasted in discussing whether the movement was political or industrial in character, and which of the two organisations should accordingly control it.

The policy of the P.S.I. tended continuously leftward throughout the ten years before the Great War. In 1911 the Tripoli war gave the Party an unexpected advantage. This war was remarkable even in the records of European imperialism for the brutality of its motives and methods. In the early stages, the Socialists offered only a slight resistance to the war, but the opposition grew in intensity and influence, its wide popularity becoming manifest. The membership and prestige of the Party rose rapidly and the pro-war sections were expelled.

The experience of 1911 was of the utmost value to the Italian Socialists in 1914. A campaign was started to secure the intervention of Italy on the side of the Entente, and the P.S.I. adopted a clear anti-war attitude. The usual abuse was delivered to the

Socialists, who were criticised as friends of German autocracy, when they were really the friends of the European workers. After the interventionists had triumphed and the workers of yet another nation had been led to the slaughter, the Italian Socialists were amongst the most active to secure peace negotiations. They made every effort to revive the International, and it was their influence that brought about the Conference of Socialists at Zimmerwald in September, 1915.

Anti-war propaganda was certainly more readily received in Italy than in any other belligerent country, and the position of the Party in 1918, as a result of its anti-war policy, was more favourable than ever. The membership stood at 70,000, while the Party's influence was very wide. The years 1919 and 1920 furnished great opportunities to a revolutionary party, and the P.S.I. had many things in its favour. There had grown up in the Party a clear body of opinion in favour of a final break with reformism and the pursuit of a revolutionary policy. The programme had to be brought up to date.

At the Bologna Congress in October, 1919, this step was taken. The Party had already in March of that year affiliated to the Third International by Executive resolution, and at Bologna a Communist resolution supported by Serrati and his friends, was carried. The Party declared a belief in the need for illegal and violent methods of revolution, the establishment of soviets, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Parliamentary activity was to be used solely for propagandist purposes.

Once again a bold left policy was successful. In the Parliamentary elections of December, 1919, the Party achieved unprecedented successes and became the largest single party in the Chamber. In the municipal elections which followed, 2,500 out of 8,500 communes elected Socialist majorities, including the important towns of Milan, Turin and Leghorn.

This rise of the P.S.I. was proceeding, as appeared in the first article of this series, side by side with a progressive decay of the bourgeois social system. Prices were rising; there was a constant shortage of the raw materials on which Italian industry depends; the processes of commerce and manufacture were hindered by a succession of strikes. The incapacity of the Government to re-establish capitalist order was patent. Ministry after ministry found the position hopeless and resigned. The probability of a revolution became almost a certainty. A brief summary of the rise and fall of the ministries will show the instability of the political situation.

The war had been commenced under the premiership of Salandra, a nominee of North Italian steel interests. In its early stages the war went very ill for the Italians, and Salandra took the opportunity

offered by a defeat on a vote of confidence following a series of military reverses to resign. An attempt was then made to secure a ministry which should embrace all parties and all interests, the premier being an aged politician named Boselli. This ministry lasted from June, 1915, to October, 1917, and was called on to deal with the strong anti-war campaign of 1917. This was by no means limited to Socialists, being supported by Giolitti's paper, *La Stampa*, and to some extent by the Catholics. How effective the anti-war propaganda was among the troops it is difficult to say. It certainly had a profound effect on public opinion at home and enabled the Italians to avoid some of the grosser excesses of war-hysteria that characterised this country and France.

On the other hand, the pacifist agitation probably played a part in the vast military débâcle of Caporetto, which laid open to invasion the rich plains and cities of Northern Italy. This defeat swept away the Boselli ministry, and Orlando (a prominent southerner) took office. He was still premier when the armistice was signed, and he, Baron Sonnino and Salandra represented Italy at the Peace Conference. Nitti was at the Treasury until early in 1919, when he resigned. The negotiations at the Peace Conference were, it will be remembered, protracted and contentious, in particular, the Italians found it impossible to secure the support of the Conference in their claims in the Adriatic. Ultimately, Orlando returned to Rome to report on the situation, was defeated in the Chamber, and resigned. He was replaced by Nitti, a Liberal Imperialist.

Nitti made some efforts to reorganise the police and generally to stem the tide of social disorganisation, but he found it impossible to go far on account of the impoverished state of the exchequer and of the bourgeoisie whom he represented.

The elections of November, 1919, weakened Nitti's position, but threw up no party or combination sufficiently powerful to replace him. There followed the Fiume adventure and an intensification of the social discord throughout Italy. Nitti's internal policy had grown, from the bourgeois point of view, weaker and weaker, and he was defeated on this issue in May, 1920. Again no alternative cabinet could be found, and Nitti took office for the third time. He finally fell owing to a concession made to the Socialists in regard to the statutory price of bread. The bourgeoisie were pressing for an increase, and when Nitti wavered he was defeated.

Once more Giolitti took charge of Italian affairs, and it was his lot to deal (or fail to deal) with the occupation of the factories in September, 1920. In the attitude of *laissez-faire* which he adopted he was actuated by two sets of considerations. It was not entirely the fact that he could not act, but to some extent at least that he would not. Giolitti at that time was still mainly agrarian in his

outlook : his sympathy for the industrialists was not great, and if they got into trouble with their workers, he was not prepared to go out of his way to help them. When the capitalists had won, however, Giolitti was willing to give official sanction to the proceedings and to reap some of the glory of the "settlement."

But other difficulties arose—the problem of the price of bread and the ever-growing deficit on the budget. From mere inability to know what to do, Giolitti dissolved the Chamber in April, 1921. New elections were held, resulting in Liberal and Catholic gains and Socialist losses. In the new Chamber there were forty Fascists. Giolitti resigned in June, and Bonomi took his place. Bonomi was a patriotic Socialist who was as incapable as his predecessors of restoring social order and re-establishing the economic machinery. He remained in power only till February, 1922, when Facta took his place. The latter held office until July, when he was defeated by a Fascist manœuvre in the Chamber. He resumed his position, however, and retained it until driven out by the Fascist revolution in October.

In spite of the growth of the P.S.I., its effectiveness was constantly hindered by the fact that though its majority was Communist, a reformist right wing led by Turati still adhered. This wing was powerful in Parliament and was able to secure wide publicity for its sectional views. The Second Congress of the Third International was held in August, 1920, and laid down the famous Twenty-one Conditions of Affiliation. Included in these was a demand for the expulsion from constituent bodies of all reformists, Turati being specified by name. A prolonged and very damaging controversy arose. Serrati, the editor of *Avanti*, adopted a centrist course, advocating the acceptance of the conditions but demanding the right to interpret them according to Italian circumstances. This reservation meant that the reformists should be expelled later on, it being argued that, for the moment, unity was more important to the party than theoretical purity.

An understanding of this difference between the P.S.I. and the Communist International is essential in order to realise why the Italian Socialists failed to take the opportunities of 1920 and why Fascism became not only possible but inevitable. The crux of the matter is to be found in the centrist attitude of Serrati. The undesirability of the Turati group was agreed on by the vast majority : the dispute was as to the proper time at which their expulsion should take place. The Communists urged that it should be effected at once. They insisted that, in the then existing conditions in Italy, a revolution was immediately possible ; in order that the working class should be effectively led in the critical hours of such a revolution, it was essential that the Socialist Party should be single-

mind and united ; the presence of hesitant elements was then more than ever dangerous. The Executive Committee of the Communist International wrote in October, 1920 :—" The P.S.I. acts with too much hesitation. It is not the Party which leads the masses, but the masses which push the Party. . . . In Italy there exist all the necessary conditions for a victorious revolution except one—a good working-class organisation."

The argument of the Serrati group was that the revolutionary situation was much less ripe than was supposed by people outside Italy, that unity in the Party was essential, that there were not enough suitable Communists to fill the key positions in working-class organisations, and that to get rid of reformist trade union leaders might alienate also the rank and file. They considered that Italy's economic position was such that a revolution there was foredoomed to failure. If foreign supplies were cut off by blockade, Italians would perish for lack of iron and coal. In reply it was pointed out that the proper way to get control of the Trade Unions was not through a compromising alliance with " Yellow " officials, but by direct contact with the workers. The blockade argument was admitted to constitute a real difficulty, but " if certain Italian comrades claim that they must wait for a revolution in Germany or in England, because Italy cannot exist without imported coal, the comrades of other countries present exactly similar arguments."

The essential point in the issue was the inclusion of reformists in the ranks of the Party, and the consequences of allowing this are clear enough. The Socialists talked everlastingly of revolution : they fed the workers with hopes and with words, and, when the time came to translate their promises into realities, they held back. And the influence holding them back was precisely that of the reformist elements, Turati, Treves, Modigliani and D'Aragona. They can be convicted over and over again from their own admissions. To take one instance, in 1922, when the split was an accomplished fact, these same reformists were in conference. Prampolini was speaking in defence of their action in remaining in the Socialist Party in 1919—20 in spite of their being a minority of reformist lambs among a crowd of revolutionary wolves. He said : " By remaining in the Party, we were able to fulfil our duty as Socialists. It would have been quite impossible for us to have accomplished, outside the Party, the task we achieved inside." And D'Aragona at the same sitting explained what that task was. " We were in fact too easy-going while the follies of pseudo-revolution were proceeding ; but we did what we could, i.e., to stop these ' follies.' "

There can be no doubt, in the light of subsequent events, that Zinoviev and his friends were right, and that Serrati was wrong. There is a time to hold one's hand and a time to strike hard, and

the hour for striking hard had come in Italy in the autumn of 1920. The situation was fluid. Any strongly organised Party could have taken power. The Socialists failed, and the opportunity for cunning and unscrupulous reactionaries arrived. Fascism was born.

The occupation of the engineering factories by the workers in the autumn of 1920 marked the highest point in the development of the proletarian attack on capitalism. Spasmodic strikes had occurred in the industry throughout the previous eighteen months, and in June, 1920, things grew to a climax. The F.I.O.M. (Metal Workers' Union) put forward demands for a large increase in wages and after prolonged delay the owners refused to grant any concession. A stay-in strike was inaugurated and the owners replied by a lock-out. To this a more dramatic answer was given by the workers, who forcibly seized the factories, guarded and fortified them, and commenced the operations of industry under the control of their own factory committees. The movement spread to other industries with wonderful rapidity, and the supply of raw materials for the engineers was guaranteed from a score of other types of factories which the workers were now controlling. In spite of the partial sabotage of the administrative and technical staff, considerable progress was made with the establishment of a system of centralising production, purchase of raw materials, marketing products, and victualling the workers.

While this revolutionary situation was developing, the Government stood by inactive; the bourgeoisie felt itself powerless, and it was left to others to betray the workers and deprive them of the fruits of their victory.

By 6th September the vital significance of the occupation of the factories was widely understood. A conference between the political and the economic organisations of Labour was called to discuss the situation: the question before the conference was whether the movement was political and should be controlled by the Socialist Party, or was economic and should be directed by the C.G.L. By a vote of 591,245 to 409,569 control was vested in the C.G.L., which set up a Committee of Action, dominated, of course, by the extreme right-wing leaders.

The first step of the Committee of Action was to open negotiations with the employers and the Government. These were very ready to come to terms and a settlement was reached on 19th September. The settlement contained three essential clauses: (1) giving a share in the control of the industry to the workers, legislation for this purpose to be drafted by a Commission of six workers and six employers; (2) granting a wage increase of 20 per cent. (as against the 60 per cent. originally demanded); and (3) *providing for the return of the factories to the owners.* The enormous strategic advantage

held by the workers was given away by the leaders in return for an insignificant wage-increase and for a promise of partial workers' control which, as it was bound to do, turned out to be completely useless.

The rank-and-file did not submit easily to these defeatist terms, but in the end they were induced to agree to the evacuation by the end of September.

The history of the Italian working class since the evacuation of the factories has been a continuous one of defeat. There followed all the familiar incidents of reduced wages, increased hours, partial strikes easily overcome, falling trade union membership, the loss of courage and unity among the workers—just as we saw it in this country. But the economic weapon was not enough for the triumphant bourgeoisie. They must use physical violence also to punish the workers for their temerity in taking possession of their masters' factories and attempting to secure decent terms of existence for themselves.

The Fascist movement was already well developed by this time, but no serious acts of violence had been hitherto committed. The evacuation of the factories was the signal for an outburst of physical attacks on the workers.

The record of the Fascist attack on the workers will not be repeated here in detail. As is well known, it took the form of physical violence against all leaders of Trade Unions and left wing political organisations, and against numbers of the rank and file. The victims of these attacks were forced to drink castor-oil, were beaten, and in many instances killed, on account of their working-class sympathies. Trade Union, co-operative, socialist and other working-class buildings were ransacked, smashed and burned. This campaign of terror, thoroughly well organised and subsidised, was defended in a wide-spread propaganda as an essential preliminary to instilling sound political ideas into the masses. The bacillus of Bolshevism must be eradicated before the heavenly grace of nationalism could be instilled into the purified minds of the workers.

The campaign had its natural results in intensifying the troubles of the proletarian organisations. Men were terrified out of their Trade Unions and terrified into the Fascist Unions which were established in 1921. These were not Trade Unions in the proper sense of the word, since they organised both workers and employers in their ranks. The adherence of the latter never developed to any degree, but the Unions remained collaborationist in their policy throughout. Membership of a Fascist Union gave the workers a little temporary respite from violence, but it gave few other advantages. The Fascist Unionists suffered equally with their comrades outside from the reduced wages and deteriorated conditions of labour.

Perhaps they enjoyed the advantage of preference when employment was scarce and dismissals were afoot, but even this slight benefit soon went. When the degradation of the working class had been carried far enough, the bourgeois cared no longer for distinctions between one worker and another. While they could exploit those distinctions and set "war heroes" against non-service men, Fascist workers against others, and so on, they would do so, but when they no longer needed such means to beat down their employees, they saw each worker as factory-fodder and as no more. The bourgeois victory was complete and Mussolini could receive his well-earned knighthood.

L. W.

(To be continued.)

The TRADES UNION CONGRESS and Workers' Education

The General Secretary of the National Council of Labour Colleges here outlines recent developments of the utmost importance to working-class educationists. All Plebs will read his statement carefully, file it for reference—and broadcast the facts.

TO understand the Trades Union Congress' recent attitude towards Workers' Education, it is necessary to go back to the formation of the Workers' Education T.U. Committee, instituted under the inspiration of the W.E.A. The W.E.T.U.C.'s second Annual Report states that the organisation was inaugurated at the end of 1919 "as a joint experiment of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and the W.E.A."

The T.U.E.E.C.

As is admitted in the Second Annual Report already referred to, the W.E.T.U.C. called a conference of national Trade Unions in October, 1920, as a result of which a Trade Union Education Enquiry Committee was appointed from the members of the Conference and with the approval of the Unions concerned. On this Committee some seventeen or eighteen Trade Unions were represented, *not one of which was a supporter of Independent Working-class Education*—and the same applied to their representatives. This Conference naturally recommended "the endorsement of the organisation set up by the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation

(i.e., the W.E.T.U.C.—the body that had called the Conference) as an experiment which offers the basis of a scheme providing the best and most economical means of :—

- (a) Co-ordinating the education activities of Trade Unions.
- (b) Enabling trade unions to meet the varied needs of their members by utilising the services of Universities, Ruskin College, the Labour College, the Scottish Labour College, and the Workers' Educational Association.
- (c) Providing conditions that permit of trade unions supplementing the activities of these bodies in any way they may deem necessary in the interest of their members.
- (d) Retaining control over finance, policy, and the education provided.

It will be noticed that the W.E.T.U.C. claims to be able to provide Unions with access to Labour College Classes. This they attempted to do by means of a return-of-fees scheme. The N.C.L.C., however, subsequently decided that it would have nothing to do with W.E.T.U.C. Education Schemes, on which it had not been consulted, over which it had no control, and with the educational policy of which it strongly disagreed.

The W.E.T.U.C. presented its Report to the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. and at the Congress in September, 1921, the Report of the Enquiry Committee was endorsed on the recommendation of the Parliamentary Committee and in addition the following resolution was carried :

"That this Congress is of opinion the time has arrived when the trade union movement should consider the best means of providing for the educational needs of its members. It declares that the recommendations of the Trade Union Education Enquiry Committee offer the basis of a scheme whereby the varied educational needs and demands of trade unionists may be met.

"It therefore instructs the General Council to co-operate with the Trade Union Education Enquiry Committee as to the best means of giving effect to the aims and objects of the enquiry, including the taking-over and running of existing trade union colleges, including Central Labour College and Ruskin College."

The Joint Education Sub-Committee

The practical result of this was that the General Council formed a Joint Education Sub-Committee, half of which consisted of representatives of the General Council and the other half of which represented the T.U.E.E.C. (really the W.E.A. plus W.E.T.U.C.). The two joint secretaries were Mr. Bowerman, of the General Council, and Mr. Mactavish, General Secretary of the W.E.A. *This Committee contained only one Labour College supporter, Mr. Geo. Hicks—* the remaining nine being directly or indirectly attached to the W.E.A., W.E.T.U.C. and similar organisations. It looked, therefore, as if nothing was going to stand in the way of the British Trade Union machine being thrown for the time being on the side of the W.E.A.—W.E.T.U.C. and against the Labour College Movement.

In March, 1922, the Joint Education Sub-Committee arranged

to meet the Governors of the Labour College, but no invitation was extended to the N.C.L.C., which had been formed the previous year for the purposes of unifying the activities of the many Labour Colleges that had sprung up all over the country. With the assistance of the Governors, however, the N.C.L.C. was able to squeeze into the Conference.

The next step was that the N.C.L.C., among other bodies, was asked by the Joint Committee whether it was prepared to accept Government grants on condition that they did not involve any interference with or modifications of our present educational policy and whether the N.C.L.C. was prepared to participate in a T.U.C. Education Scheme on condition that our present policy and standpoint in education remained unchanged. This involved liberty to run N.C.L.C. classes in any area and to take the necessary steps to obtain Trade Union support. On being circularised our local Colleges agreed by an overwhelming majority to say "Yes" to both the above questions.

In June, 1922, in a draft of the General Council's recommendations to Congress, the Labour College (London) was included, but nothing was said about the N.C.L.C. so that it looked as if the whole of the evening-class work was to be put into the hands of the W.E.T.U.C which was the aim of certain of those interested.

Immediate steps were taken to put this right with the result that the phrase "Labour College" was altered to "Labour Colleges," and the District Labour Colleges carrying on evening classes thus became definitely recognised by the T.U.C.

The Southport Congress

When the Southport Congress met (September, 1922) a resolution in the name of the London Society of Compositors was passed authorising the General Council to subscribe £250 each to the W.E.A., Ruskin College, and the "Central College." It appeared that the Society thought that the Central College covered the work of the N.C.L.C. as well as of the Labour College (London), but the money was sent not to the N.C.L.C., but to the Labour College. The Congress also approved of the following recommendations submitted by the Joint Education Committee through the General Council :

- (a) That the General Council continue to co-operate with the Trade Union Education Enquiry Committee for the purpose of giving effect to the Congress education resolution of 1921.
- (b) 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 (which now includes the Post Office Workers, the Railway Clerks, and the Association of Engineering and Ship-building Draughtsmen) as soon as satisfactory financial and other con-

- ditions 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 interests of the Trade Union movement.
- (c) That such arrangements shall not involve any increase in the affiliation fees paid by Trade Unions to Congress funds without authorisation of the Congress itself.
 - (d) That the General Council have such direct representation on the governing body of any college or organisation that may be taken over as will ensure that its work, policy, and method conform to the wishes of the Trade Union movement.
 - (e) That the General Council be empowered to submit to its affiliated Trade Unions plans for their fuller participation in any education scheme which it may approve or initiate, and take such further steps as it deems necessary with a view to the development of a comprehensive scheme of the character recommended in our report.
 - (f) That the General Council report to the Congress each year what steps it has taken in regard to these recommendations.

During 1923 representatives of the N.C.L.C. met the T.U.C. Joint Education Committee several times and, along with other organisations, submitted to the Committee the cost of conducting its educational work. The amount that would have been involved in taking over all the educational organisations was too large for the General Council to face, and the Joint Education Committee therefore drafted a series of recommendations. It was very obvious that from the point of view of the Joint Education Sub-Committee (which was a W.E.A. Committee) the main difficulty lay in the conflict in educational principles between the N.C.L.C. and the W.E.T.U.C. and the consequent antagonisms in the localities. The N.C.L.C., however, would not depart from its educational principles and thus in a sense the year's negotiations had resulted in nothing because the W.E.T.U.C. on its side was not prepared to give way either.

The Plymouth Congress

To get over the difficulty, the Joint Committee conceived the idea of getting the General Council to call a Conference of Trade Unions having educational schemes. The purpose of calling this Conference was apparently to keep the N.C.L.C. representatives outside, and to get the Conference to agree that the W.E.T.U.C.'s educational policy was the most suitable for the T.U. movement. Realising this, we endeavoured to get a clause inserted to the effect that representatives of working-class educational organisations should be allowed to attend the Conference, but we failed. We also asked that our representatives who had met with the Joint Education Sub-Committee in a consultative capacity should have the same status as the W.E.A. representatives who were on the Joint Committee as the result of their membership of the Enquiry Committee. Again we were unsuccessful and the following Joint Committee

recommendation was carried at Plymouth T.U.C. in September, 1923:—

1. That the time is not yet opportune for giving full effect to paragraph (b) of the Southport Congress resolution, but that the General Council through the Joint Education Committee, shall continue its efforts by consultation with representatives of working-class educational bodies for the purpose of co-ordinating such activities, and with a view to giving full effect to the provisions of the Southport resolutions.
2. That the General Council call a conference of representatives of affiliated unions which have provided or contemplate the provision of educational facilities for their members with a view to developing a united purpose and policy in Trade Union educational work.
3. That pending the General Council being able to submit a practical scheme of education work as required by paragraph (e) of the Southport Congress resolution, the Council be empowered to create a special educational fund by (a) a grant from the Trades Union Congress funds up to a maximum of £1,000 per annum, and (b) by such voluntary grants as may be obtained from the affiliated unions by the Council. The fund thus created to be available for assisting such working-class educational institutions as may be approved by the General Council.
4. That special consideration be given by the Joint Committee to the educational needs of women Trade Unionists.
5. That the recommendations with regard to the question of education for young workers be endorsed.

Supporters of the W.E.T.U.C. had high hopes that their policy would be accepted and that the Conference of Trade Unions which met in March this year would recommend that the T.U.C. should make the W.E.T.U.C. the nucleus of its educational machinery. Their hopes were doomed to disappointment. The delegates from the Trade Unions supporting the N.C.L.C. pointed out (1) that a number of N.C.L.C.-supporting Unions had not been invited to the Conference, (2) that all previous negotiations had shown that any T.U.C. Scheme must take into account the differences in educational principles between the N.C.L.C. and other educational organisations, (3) that the Unions they represented supported *I.W.C.E.* and had no intention of going back on that, and (4) that if the T.U.C. were going to have any sort of successful educational scheme the General Council would have to form a new and representative Committee as the existing Joint Committee had no N.C.L.C. representatives and was in fact a W.E.A. Committee. The result was that a recommendation to form a new and representative T.U.C. Education Sub-Committee was carried.

Joint Education Sub-Committee Dissolved

The General Council later approved this recommendation and dissolved the Joint Education Committee. This is a notable victory for the N.C.L.C., a victory that has been won after two years' struggle without the sacrifice of a scrap of our principles. For our success great thanks are due especially to Mr. Hicks of the A.U.B.T.W., and also to Messrs. Hallsworth and Robinson, of the N.U.D.A.W.

In place of the old Joint Committee, the General Council has formed an Education Advisory Committee with the following very wide terms of reference :—

The functions of the Committee shall be to evolve a policy with regard to educational work for the Trade Union Movement, through the Trades Union Congress ; to endeavour to co-ordinate such activities as are already in existence ; to undertake educational work on behalf of the Trade Unions ; and to deal with any matters relating to Trade Union educational work, both in its national and international aspect, as the General Council of the Trades Union Congress may approve.

This new Committee is to consist of five representatives of the General Council, one from the Executive of each Union affiliated to Congress which has or has decided to have a definite scheme of educational work, one representative each from the London Labour College and Ruskin College, and two representatives each from the Co-operative Union Educational Committee, the National Council of Labour Colleges, and the W.E.A.*

The real significance of the above decision, of the W.E.A.'s formation of the W.E.T.U.C., and of the hints scattered throughout the current issue of the W.E.A.'s official journal that the W.E.A. must definitely attach itself to the T.U.C. or go out of business, is that the propaganda of the Labour College movement is steadily driving the Trade Unions left-wards in their educational policy. In the struggle now going on the two organisations that count are the N.C.L.C. and the W.E.T.U.C. (behind which is the W.E.A.). It is therefore worth glancing at their respective records.

The W.E.T.U.C. conducts educational schemes for the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, the Post Office Workers, the Railway Clerks' Association and the Draftsmen. The Operative Printers had apparently joined it, but have not yet adopted a scheme. The W.E.T.U.C. naturally appeals to those who have not gone deeply into the question of what *real* working-class education is and who naturally assume that the middle-class education provided by the Universities is what the Trade Unionist needs.

The N.C.L.C. and its constituent Colleges conduct educational schemes for the following sixteen Trade Unions, and they can rightly claim to have more Trade Union financial support than the W.E.A., W.E.T.U.C. and Ruskin College all put together :—

Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers ; National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers ; Managers and Overlookers ; Lanarkshire Miners ; Mid and East Lothian Miners ; South Wales Miners' Federation ; National Union of Railwaymen ; Shale Miners and Oil Workers ; West

* An application from the Plebs League E.C. for representation has been refused, on the ground that the League is not a body actually running workers' educational classes.

Lothian Miners ; Liverpool and District Carters and Motormen ; Warp Twisters ; Fife Miners' Reform Union ; Mid and East Lothian Colliery Firemen and Shot Firers ; Northumberland Miners ; Upholsterers and Durham Miners.

Further Successes

The months of May and June still further strengthened the N.C.L.C. position. In May the National Committee of the A.E.U. had the educational question before them. Up till then this Union had been attached to Ruskin College. A resolution was moved in favour of an N.C.L.C. Scheme. The resolution had to fight five amendments in a battle lasting about five hours, and was eventually carried by a large majority, defeating in its course an amendment that decision be deferred until the T.U.C. scheme matured. The official *Journal* of the Union makes it clear that the scheme will involve evening classes and correspondence tuition for the members throughout the country.

In June the Sheet Metal Workers' Union also decided on an N.C.L.C. Educational Scheme and at the time of writing news has just come to hand that the Tailors' and Garment Workers' Conference has arrived at a similar decision.

All these decisions make it quite obvious which organisation appeals most to the Trade Union movement and are a plain indication that the time is now ripe for the General Council to make a clear and definite pronouncement in favour of Independent Working-class Education and so carry out educationally the same independent policy that they carry out politically and industrially.

J. P. M. MILLAR.

IN MEMORIAM :

J. W. Thomas

(Organiser No. 7 Division, N.C.L.C.)

Died May 26th, 1924

“ **G**O and look at the poor souls over there ; there are others suffering besides me in this place.” These words spoken to a friend by “ Johnny ” on his death-bed in the Leeds Infirmary convey in one imperishable sentence his whole life's outlook. As he was in the beginning, so he was in the end, looking and thinking “ out and beyond ” in total forgetfulness of his own needs in his concern for others ; and

yet this thought of others was the magnetism which attracted others to him.

The Halifax members of the Labour movement, particularly the older ones, will always love to remember "Johnny" as the clean-shaved youth fresh from the newly formed Central Labour College, with the fire of battle in his eye and the determined yet kindly features. It is hard to think that no more we shall listen to him lecturing in simple phrases and helping in discussion with patient forbearance to dispel the errors of the backward student. We can, however, derive a little consolation from the fact that these lessons have been carried forward and the knowledge imparted will continue to spread far and wide through the ranks of the working class in the years to come; the voice is now silent, but the vibrations will travel on. Sincerity of purpose was behind his every utterance, open to conviction though hard to convince, but once having accepted a principle and proved it correct according to the facts within his knowledge he stood by that principle no matter what the cost.

He was in residence at Ruskin College under the late Dennis Hird, and decided to take his stand with the small group which along with their principal broke away from the reactionary trammels and founded the Central Labour College, based on the need for Working-class Independence in Education. "Johnny's" share in the tremendous task which this small group set themselves to perform was destined to take place in his native town and district, viz. : Halifax and the West Riding of Yorks, and it is greatly due to his herculean work that the movement in that district to-day numbers many thousands. His activities were never of the showman type, but on committee, owing to his power of argument, he seldom failed to become the real director of proceedings.

Opponents feared him, but friends could always rely on his practical help and guidance, especially in times of stress. He hated make-belief, and the W.E.A., being to him an institution based on make-belief, he would express his opinion of its official supporters with extraordinary vehemence, although he could at the same time show the greatest patience and perseverance to convince a working-class supporter in whom he detected "sincerity deceived."

The Labour College has lost a worker it will be very, very difficult to replace, and the No. 7 Division of the N.C.L.C. will feel the loss keenly. Halifax comrades will miss him most of all. It is impossible as yet to realise that "Johnny" has gone from amongst us, "Johnny" the formulator of our plans of campaign, our adviser. Let us all become men in our sorrow and prove that his labour has not been in vain. There is still tremendous work to be done for our cause. "Let's off with our 'coits' and get into it!"

A. W.

The PLEBS MEET, 1924.

THE Meet started unpunctually at 2.10 on Whit-Monday afternoon. R. W. Postgate, chairman of the Plebs Executive, took the chair. He refused to deliver any chairman's address. He called upon the editor, J. F. Horrabin, to make a statement about their late friend J. W. Thomas, of Halifax.

Horrabin said that they all knew "John Willie" as one of the most vigorous stalwarts of the movement. His death had left his widow penniless and it was for her benefit that a "J. W. Thomas Memorial Fund" had been started—they would find collecting sheets when they got home.

The chairman called upon the secretary, Mrs. W. Horrabin, to give a combined secretary and treasurer's report. The major part of the former was published in the March magazine; but Mrs. Horrabin added an urgent appeal to Plebs to work for the better and closer organisation of the League, in order "to clothe the skeleton of our movement, the N.C.L.C., with flesh and blood in the shape of keen individual workers." (She explained that her reference to the N.C.L.C. as a skeleton was not intended as an aspersion on J. P. M. Millar's physique.) The Financial Statement and Balance Sheet for the year will be published in next month's PLEBS.

The report was adopted.

The editor having been called upon for his report by the chairman, said that The PLEBS magazine was now—at last—paying for its printing, but no more. The reduction to 4d. had led to a noteworthy increase: the circulation in January was 4,850, and in May, 6,500. It was now the case that The PLEBS had the largest real circulation of any Labour monthly. He was aware that the official Labour magazine claimed a larger figure, but everybody knew of parcels of copies that got no farther than trade union cellars. No one wished to rejoice over the defeat of competitors such as the *Labour Monthly*, but it was satisfactory to head the list.

Dealing with textbooks, he said that *Psychology* was now in its fourth edition.

The editions numbered 3,000—2,000—1,000—2,000, a total of 8,000. There were about 1,000 copies left. Of *Imperialism*, 5,000 had been printed and 3,700 sold. Of *Economics*, 5,000 had been printed and all sold; there was no copy left. Of *Economic Geography*, 5,000 had been printed and all but 1,000 sold. Of "miniature textbooks" we had sold 6,600 of a 10,000 edition of Starr's *Trade Unionism* and 4,200 out of 10,000 of *What to Read*. The special editions of Price's *Russian Revolution* and Postgate's *Revolution* were going well. Textbooks in preparation were an *Economic and Historical Geography of Britain*, draft by himself and J. T. Walton Newbold, and *Modern History*, draft by H. G. Pollard. Miniature textbooks, similar to *Trade Unionism*, would be:—*Co-operation* by J. Hamilton and *The British Empire* by T. A. Jackson. He concluded by asking whether the Meet thought there would be a market for hand-painted wall-maps.

The chairman said they congratulated themselves on a record of work well done. He feared that Horrabin was too optimistic about the *Modern History* book. Pollard could not do it. Horrabin replied that the chairman was perfectly competent and should write it himself. The chairman answered that it must wait till 1925. A. S. Woodburn (Edinburgh), believed that amateur wall-maps would not be a success. Deas (Leeds), urged J. P. M. Millar to submit a draft *Modern History* book based upon his excellent lectures. Millar was unable to recall what lectures were meant, and protested that he was very busy. It was agreed that all tutors be urged to send in their schemes to PLEBS office. Cree (Sheffield), moved "that the *Economics* textbook be not reprinted." He thought that it would be needless duplication in view of the publication of Bogdanoff's book, of which everyone spoke highly. The motion was lost by a heavy majority. The report was adopted, on the motion of Millar, with hearty thanks to the staff.

A long discussion then took place

upon the new constitution*. The first two paragraphs—including the subdivisions of paragraph two—were carried unanimously after speeches by Postgate, Horrabin, Ellen Wilkinson, Winifred Horrabin, J. H. Brett, and S. Ainsworth. On the third and final paragraph the chairman asked for full discussion, as the constitution had its sting in its tail. Mark Starr said he saw no reason for it, or indeed any particular point in having a new constitution at all, although he was an Executive member. Ellen Wilkinson said she hoped that under no circumstances would the Plebs League become anything like a political party. The aim of the League was to be a meeting ground for people of varying sections of the workers' movement, and prevent them keeping their minds in water-tight compartments. It was a place of free discussion. Woodburn said there was no free discussion when a group came to the meeting with its mind already made up. The Communist Party was organising to gain control of the Labour Colleges and drive out non-party members from all responsible positions. They had already attempted to do this in Edinburgh. There was thus no possibility of free discussion. The Plebs League must strike back by organisation. Walton Newbold emphasised the need for more organisation of the Plebs League. The League should in time become a nucleus of left-wing opinion in the country. William Paul also was in favour of better organisation. If what Woodburn said was true, it was only another proof of the need

for organisation. Deas said that like many others he was divided between the Plebs and Communist movements, each of which jealously demanded all his time. He deplored the conflict. Booth (Wallasey), said he was tired of people who proudly called themselves ex-Communists. If the work was good they should have gone on with it. Headquarters' instructions might not always be wise, but that did not matter. His experience was that it would be an error to fight the Communist Party. Horrabin said that the only way of fighting the behaviour which Woodburn described was to organise the Plebs League with the express aim of preventing any section—Communist or other—from gaining control of the Labour College movement. The paragraph was then carried unanimously.

Mark Starr, delegate to the National Council of Labour Colleges, reported on the Plebs and the London Labour College. There was general discontent with the latter body. The PLEBS had criticised its curriculum justly. The students had repeatedly struck and demanded a share in control; and they often returned to the provinces not with a new view of life but disgruntled and angry. The College was not therefore a source of strength to the movement at the present time. The Plebs League motion for expulsion of the College from the N.C.L.C. was conditional upon the inquiry not being held; it had been held, but in private. At the Leeds conference of the N.C.L.C. the Plebs resolution calling for the circulation of a full report of the inquiry was adopted.

A full discussion, impossible to sum-

*Published in May PLEBS.

PLEBS SUMMER SCHOOL,
BISPHAM, BLACKPOOL, AUG. 9th—16th.

BOOK at once if you intend to come—there are a few places still open. Among the lecturers will be Walton Newbold, J. Hamilton, Ellen Wilkinson and J. F. Horrabin. Among the delights—bathing, tennis, promenading, sleeping in tents (optional) &c. &c.—the sea at the end of the garden.

Fee, 58s. 6d. per week, or 48s. for tents in grounds. (These figures include a booking-fee of 2s. 6d. to The PLEBS to cover incidental expenses of organisation, &c.)

marise, in which many persons took part, followed. Motions were made by Walker and Woodburn, which after argument, were withdrawn in favour of one by Ellen Wilkinson, seconded by Millar, reading :

"That this Meet considers that the time has now arrived for the training of tutors to be placed on a satisfactory national basis and controlled by the N.C.L.C., and that the Plebs Executive be instructed to produce a suitable draft scheme for submission to the N.C.L.C."

This was carried unanimously.

The question of affiliation to the Labour Party then came up. It was moved that we apply for affiliation,

also that we take a plain ballot of members upon the question, also that the matter be not discussed. On the question being put the chairman declared the last carried. It being protested that certain members had voted under a misapprehension, the chairman put the question "Whether the question of affiliation to the Labour Party be discussed" again, and it was negatived by 24 votes to 22. Mrs. Woodburn asked the editor to arrange for a discussion later in the week. The editor agreed [but did not do so]. Ellen Wilkinson attempted to continue the discussion: the chairman ruled her out of order: she disputed his ruling and an argument continued for some minutes, but in the end he bore her down and closed the Meet at 7.10.

NOTES BY THE WAY for Students and Tutors

A COMRADE, who has had the opportunity of seeing some answers to examination questions on economics by university students applying for a degree, sends us the following choice samples. They give a good glimpse into the "mind" of sons of the governing class:—

"Farm labourers are very happy with what they get and really don't want any more."

"Things are moving pretty smoothly in the country except for unemployment."

"Malthus' theory is the advice for restraint in the intercourse of man and wife, so as to prevent our number being lessened by war and other calamities."

"The farm hands and sweated labourers are apt to be a very stupid lot or they wouldn't be farm hands or sweated labourers."

"Aristocrats are best suited for politics; they move in Society where politics is greatly talked."

The Almighty Dollar

The Experts' Report, drawn up under

the chairmanship of an American banker, Gen. Dawes, marks the return of America to Europe—the American financiers, that is. The financiers of London and of Paris, have hoped to "Turkeyfy" Germany. The financiers of New York regard the whole of debtor Europe as a potential colonial area. Interesting light is thrown on this by a statement of Mr. Herriot to the correspondent of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, which is quoted in the *American Nation* (Liberal), of June 11th:—

"I was informed by Millerand and de Marsal that before the American financiers agreed to what is known as the Morgan loan of \$100,000,000 for the recovery of the franc they asked for a guaranty in gold and other *rather general political guaranties*."

"The Bank of France was obliged to place funds to the credit of the money lenders amounting to 528,000,000 in gold francs as a guaranty for the loan. Aside from this, *the French Government agreed to engagements of a general character.*"

This method of treating France like Turkey is extraordinary."

One wonders if the demand of J. P. Morgan and Co., for "political guarantees" has any connection with the fall of the *Bloc National*!

London financiers are already getting anxious about this. Four years ago there seemed some danger of the financial centre of the world passing from London to New York. But a period of deflation restored the prestige of the pound sterling and of London. Now this fear is current again. Mr. Walter Leaf, chairman of the Westminster Bank, has just voiced this fear in the *Monthly Review* of the Westminster Bank. He points out that the Federal Reserve Board of U.S.A. has arranged when the Dawes' scheme operates for its resources to be freely used to purchase gold-mark bills, so as to keep up the value of the mark and keep Germany on the gold standard. Mr. Leaf sees in this new marriage of the gold dollar with the gold mark "a serious challenge to the international position of the pound sterling." The depreciated pound may be "squeezed out of world finance between the two great gold currencies." He, therefore, advocates an increase of the Bank Rate to 5 per cent. to

reduce the volume of credit, and so by further deflation to restore sterling to parity with gold. Meanwhile the industrialists are anxious for State aid to stimulate a trade revival, and to this end they tend to favour inflation.

Kribajoj

K'do Fedotov (Kiev) komencis traduki la konatan verkon de Buharin: *Teorio de Historia Materialismo*. La unuaj ĉapitroj el ĝi jam aperis en *La Plebs* kaj certe ni ŝatos kompletan Esperantan tradukon. . . . *Evoluado de la Brita Laboristaro*, longa artikolo de M.S. aperas en *Sennacieca Revuo* (Junio/24), ankau de Revo tre grava pritrakto de la cefverko de Rosa Luxemburg, Havebla ĝi estas ĉe Workers Esp. Club, 144, High Holborn, W.C. 1. (7d. postpaid).

The N.C.L.C. and the Plebs League are officially proposing a resolution in support of Esperanto at the forthcoming Conference of the Education Dept. of the I.F.T.U. at Oxford in August. As J. W. Bowen (U.P.W.) and C. T. Cramp (N.U.R.) favour the proposal and the secretary of the Ed. Dept., J. W. Brown, is sympathetic, it is probable that the Ed. Dept.—appropriately enough—will decide to recommend the use of Esperanto to its constituent bodies.

HOW to BUILD HOUSES

DEAR EDITOR,—In his work on the Housing Question (1872) Frederick Engels wrote:—"How can the housing problem be solved? In modern society this question is solved, like every other social question, by the gradual economic equalisation of supply and demand. This, however, is a kind of solution which itself constantly creates the problem anew; that is, it gives no solution. How the Social Revolution will solve this question depends not only on circumstances of time and place, but it is bound up with questions which go much further, amongst which one of the most important is the abolition of the distinction between town and country. As we are not interested in Utopian

speculations on the structure of future Society, it would be more than a waste of time to dwell on this point. One thing is certain; even now there are sufficient habitable buildings in the large towns materially to relieve the real shortage of accommodation, if sensible use were made of them. This, of course, could only be brought about by expropriation of their present possessors, and by settling in them the homeless workers, or the workers who are now living in overcrowded homes. And as soon as the workers win political power, such a measure, based on the best interests of Society, will be as easily carried out as all other expropriations and commandeering by the modern State."

If this be true much of the contro-

very on how to build houses, from the Marxism standpoint is sheer waste of time, for up every street in all our large cities and towns there are endless empty houses for sale, but few if any to let; for immediate needs these could certainly be commandeered by the Government. If, however, we grant that this is impracticable from the point of view of a Labour Government in office, and not in power, and the first essential is to find plenty of work for the unemployed, real economy must be found in the proper distribution of the product, and not in over-production.

George Hicks and Mr. Clark can't hit it off on dilution, the latter speaks of mass production and standardisation of parts, which one has now become somewhat accustomed to in the evolution of modern capitalism.

Comrade Hicks says dilution is unworkable, uneconomic, and unnecessary; in its place he would introduce one apprentice to every three craftsmen in the industry, all such apprentices to be legally indentured. I suggest to him, that this is an excellent strike-breaking apparatus for the employers (if the Labour Government don't give us compulsory arbitration) for with twenty-five per cent. of the industry thrown on their side—owing to the fact that being indentured the apprentices can't be called out during a strike—and a few foremen thrown in to look after the latter, the future of the building trade employers is assured.

The need for more houses is to be used by the boss, to lash the building trade workers into submission. Such an argument does not run parallel with all the support given by the A.U.B.T.W. to I.W.C.E. A National Housing Scheme, carried out by such methods, will go down to history as a far greater Imperial Monument than the scab-built Nelson's Column in so far as it will have the backing and support of a Labour Government, and the industrial leaders of the building trade workers.—Yours fraternally,

E. BOWMAN.

Geo. Hicks writes in reply:—

Mr. Bowman's interesting letter illustrates better than anything I have read lately the reason why the word "im-

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possibilism" was coined. Here we have a condition of house famine, rapidly getting worse, and Mr. Bowman has nothing more useful to put forward than expropriation of empty and under-occupied houses, which if done would resemble a midge in a millstream anyhow and is admitted by him to be impracticable with a Labour Government only in office. (As if being "in power" would make much difference until our own class was successfully weaned from its respect for property, a respect which arises solely from the selfish gambling notion that everyone has his chance, or his sons have, of owning and exploiting some day.)

Apprenticeship on the ratio of one in three is alleged to be a reactionary strike-breaking proposal. This is not one in three for every building trades craftsman; it is one in three upon Housing Schemes which may be anything from ten to thirty per cent. of the total building trade operatives. I think Mr. Bowman's fears quite absurd, but in any case what alternative is there but apprenticeship on adequate lines of dilution, except the utterly futile one of doing nothing, resisting everything, and letting the industry crack up from sheer incompetency?

Is it seriously put forward that a nation of forty odd millions will quietly become one of backwoodsmen to please Bowman or myself when there are substitutes for our classic materials, if only of a kind?

LETTERS

VICTIMISATION OF EX-LABOUR
COLLEGE STUDENTS

DEAR COMRADE,—I am sure that E. and C. P.'s letter last month was read with interest by many who like myself have been forced to leave the industry in which we worked prior to our leaving for the London Labour College.

It is unfortunately the fact that many of the students sent to London by the S.W.M.F. are victimised on their return to South Wales, and too often the Miners' Union makes little or no attempt to remedy matters. In a certain district there are four miner ex-students, and of these one is a tram conductor, another is navvying for the District Council, while a third is an insurance agent.

This is bad enough, but the folly does not end there. According to a recent ruling of the S.W.M.F. Executive, none of these three comrades may retain his membership of the Union since the rules say that the membership shall consist of men who are employed in and about the mines or by the S.W.M.F. If the S.W.M.F. Executive are not prepared to give a common-sense interpretation to this rule an amendment is urgently necessary. One wonders where were the Ex. L. C.ers on the Executive when this ruling was given.

As things are to-day many young men hesitate to give up their work to take up a scholarship at the Labour College when it is almost certain that unemployment and general economic insecurity await them at the end of the course.

It is commonly considered that two years' residence at the College involves no financial sacrifice on the student's part. Those who have been at the College know better. Is it expected that students will make useful "organisers, propagandists and lecturers" when they are under a continual mental strain from the time they enter college until they succeed, perhaps after years of economic insecurity, in filling a dead man's boots? The principle of work or maintenance has

applications of which those who claim to support it have scarcely dreamed.

Yours fraternally,
JACK BAILEY.

TOLSTOY'S PLAYS

DEAR EDITOR,—Just a word or two in reply to Fred Silvester's letter on my review of Tolstoy's plays.

My withers are unwrung by his opening paragraphs; for what is "criticism," at bottom, but the "passing on of impressions"—disagreeable or otherwise? The "impressions" should be backed up with evidence, more or less detailed. In this respect I did what I could in the limited space. The most important thing is that the impressions were neither hasty nor biased; my "dislike" for the plays was a purely critical dislike. On consideration I do not think there is anything in the notice that I would withdraw or modify.

Comrade Silvester is mistaken if he thinks that I intended in any way to depreciate the real greatness of Tolstoy, which does not rest upon his dramatic works.

Yours fraternally,
ERNEST JOHNS.

IRONY FROM MOSCOW

DEAR COMRADE,—I am no etymologist, but believe "Plebs" means the poor people, or something like that.

Anyhow, let us assume that it now-a-days means "worker." This being so it would be logical to suggest that yours is a journal for workers. Now, as most workers have to leave school at an early age in order to hawk their labour-power on the wage market, they are comparatively poorly educated and seldom if ever have a chance of coming into contact with foreign languages. In any case dictionaries are dear these days. For these reasons PLEBS should be written in simple language, and above all simple *English*.

Turning to Comrade Jackson's article in March number—"The Ides of March" (how many workmen know what an Ide is?)—we find a remarkable medley of cosmopolitan jargon. Com.

Jackson advertises his linguistic genius by using italics. The following is a random selection from the italicized words in his article:—

Page 96, "*flameninwerfer*" (German); page 97, "*Ci-devant*" (French); page 97, "*quondam*" (Latin); page 97, "*Fascisti*" (Italian).

I did not notice any Chinese but we find the aggressive word "Porceaugnacs" which to me is Greek, and probably is to many others who have only had a working-class education. It would not be so bad if all these foreign words were correct, but we find the German word "*flammenwerfer*" written "*flameninwerfer*." Perhaps this

is the simplified form for working-class students?

Of course this is all a good sign of the Internationalist spirit, and all that sort of thing. But Plebs official policy is generally in favour of Esperanto, and should consider this kind of polyglot-pie indigestible for the ordinary common workers, especially as Com. Jackson does not provide a glossary.

Yours fraternally,

ERIC VERNEY.

Moscow, 2nd June, 1924.

[Comrade Jackson's reply to the above was couched in "pure" English. But it is unprintable.—Ed., PLEBS.]

The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—22 ELM ROW, EDINBURGH
Gen. Sec., J. P. M. Millar (to whom all reports should be sent)

N.U.R. and Boot and Shoe Operatives.—We understand that a resolution that was sent up by a Cardiff N.U.R. Branch is somehow or other out of order and unfortunately the N.C.L.C. resolution that appeared on the agenda of the Boot and Shoe Operatives' Conference was also ruled out of order.

A.E.U.—The article in the T.U.C. published elsewhere in this issue gives particulars of the A.E.U. decision on education. For our success in winning over this—one of the very largest unions, not merely in this country, but in the world of Labour generally—we are indebted to so many A.E.U. members that it is quite impossible to name them all. Nevertheless we should like to thank most heartily Fred Shaw who moved the resolution at the National Committee Meeting, and all those other comrades both on the committee and in the districts who helped to bring about the decision. Actual negotiations in connection with the A.E.U. scheme are still to take place but naturally the members will desire to be in a position to take advantage of the scheme in the beginning of the winter and so far as the N.C.L.C. is concerned no

stone will be left unturned to make this possible.

Sheet Metal Workers and Tailors and Garment Workers.—Two further successes have to be recorded. The Sheet Metal Workers' Union, which has always been amicably disposed to our work, has just decided upon an N.C.L.C. scheme providing free classes for its members throughout the country. Again we must express our thanks to all those who assisted in bringing this about, including Comrade Redfern and Comrade Booth Wimpenny who, we believe, moved the successful resolution. . . . News has also just come to hand from Comrade Ellison that the Tailors and Garment Workers' Conference passed a resolution in favour of educational facilities with the N.C.L.C. Here again we should like to express thanks all round, particularly to the London Branch which put the resolution on the agenda and to the speakers who supported it.

Other Unions.—In view of the change in the N.C.L.C. Constitution which allows Trade Unions to affiliate at the rate of £5 5s. per annum a circular has been sent out to nearly all Unions asking them to affiliate. Will Labour College supporters who have any in-

fluence with Union Executives draw attention to the desirability of Unions affiliating?

N.U.D.A.W. and A.U.B.T.W. Schemes.—Where it is not possible to run summer classes, Colleges are urged to send lecturers to the branches of those two Unions to give short educational addresses. The arranging of Day Schools, as is done for example both in the South Wales Division and in No. 3 Division, could well be followed elsewhere during the summer. These Day Schools are free to members of the two Unions while other students pay a small sum per lecture. A record should be kept of the number of A.U.B.T.W. and N.U.D.A.W. students who attend.

The Late J. W. Thomas.—Elsewhere will be found a note dealing with the death of our late Comrade J. W. Thomas. Comrade Thomas was only recently appointed Organiser for No. 7 Division and his work, in many cases difficult work, was beginning to tell. His death is a very serious loss for our movement not merely because he is one of our oldest supporters, but because he had the happy knack of winning support for our movement where others would fail. Unfortunately Mrs. Thomas is left in very straitened circumstances and the N.C.L.C. is joining with the Plebs League in order to raise a fund with a view to assisting her. We feel sure that this effort will have widespread support throughout the country and that we are expressing the feelings of the movement when we convey to Mrs. Thomas our deep regrets at her great loss.

J. T. Walton Newbold.—Will College Secretaries please note that Comrade Newbold is prepared to act as a full-time lecturer during the forthcoming winter session? Communications should be addressed to him c/o PLEBS office.

Lantern Slides.—Sets of Lantern Slides on (1) Primitive Man; (2) The Story of I.W.C.E.; (3) The Co-operative Movement; (4) The Paris Commune; (5) Modern Imperialism; (6) The Russian Revolution, can be had at the rate of 1s. 6d. per slide, postage extra. List of Slides can be had from N.C.L.C. Office. Sets on the "History of Trade Unionism,"

"The Industrial Revolution," the "Evolution of Society" and "Economic Geography" are being prepared. Will students and friends having suitable illustrations please lend them to J. Hamilton, 11, Channell Road, Fairfield, Liverpool?

What the Divisions are doing

Div. 1.—London Division still coping in new affiliations and successfully running summer classes as well as branch lectures to Unions having National Education Schemes.

Div. 3.—Division 3 had successful Day Schools at Luton and Grays, and further schools have been arranged for Grays on July 13th; Lowestoft, August 31st; Norwich, September 21st. Essex District Council N.U.R. has decided to take part in our educational work. In connection with the Day Schools that have been held thanks are due to the following lecturers: C. F. Johnson (N.U.T.); D. Stevenson (Shop Assistants), and W. H. Hutchison (A.E.U.).

Div. 4.—N.U.D.A.W. and A.U.B.T.W. Branches being offered lectures. Steps being taken to interest the S.W.M.F. in an N.C.L.C. Educational Scheme. Further Day Schools being arranged. A number of new affiliations received. Llanelly Branch, Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, has decided to sever connection with the W.E.A. and affiliate to the local Labour College.

Div. 6.—Class has commenced at Chesterton with over thirty members thanks to the efforts of Mr. A. Rowe, an old Pleb and N.U.D.A.W. member. In Leicester, an old stronghold of the W.E.A., the Trades Council has decided to send students to next winter's N.C.L.C. classes.

Div. 7.—Fred Shaw has agreed to act as Divisional Secretary pending the appointment of a successor to our late Comrade J. W. Thomas. Some of the Yorkshire Miners' Branches have affiliated to the N.C.L.C. in the locality. When are the Yorks Miners going to arrange an N.C.L.C. scheme?

Div. 8.—During the month of August we are to have the assistance of D. W. Thomas, Divisional Organiser for No. 2 Division, and steps are being taken to utilise his services in N. Wales. Liverpool and N. Wales Council N.U.R. is asking the branches to take advantage

of this opportunity. It is hoped that all supporters in the area will do their best to make the tour a success. Burnley Labour College ran a Day School at Burnley in June with Jack Hamilton as Lecturer. E. Redfern is busy organising in S.E. Lancs.

Div. 9.—Out of the 19 candidates for the scholarships awarded by the Northumberland Miners' Association—two of which are to Ruskin and two to the Labour College, London—17 out of the 19 applicants wished to go to the Labour College. The North Eastern Labour College is running Tutors' classes at Wallsend and Spen, as well as a speakers' class at Fatfield. Cumberland Labour College is getting into stride for the winter.

Div. 10.—*Scotland.*—The Annual Meeting of the S.L.C. indicated that the College had substantially improved its position during the course of the year. Glasgow District has had a Week-end School at Rothesay; Glasgow District students last year numbered fully 11,000 (the W.E.A.s 234). Glasgow University has decided to grant £500 for W.E.A. work, to be controlled by a Committee consisting of 16 members, one half nominated by the university and half by the W.E.A. The W.E.A. has decided to appoint two members and to ask the Trades Council, the local Co-operative Conference Association and the Glasgow Federation of the I.L.P. to nominate two each. It remains to be seen whether the Glasgow Labour Movement is going to have anything to do with the scheme, which might be entitled "the University takes notice of Labour" or "She Stoops to Conquer."

Directory.—Additions and Corrections

- Div. 2.*—Dorchester Labour College, Sec.: R. Shepard, 9, York Terrace, Dorchester, Dorset.
- Div. 4.*—Ogmore Vale Labour College, Sec.: A. Wilkinson, 115, High Street, Ogmore Vale, South Wales.
- „ Bleangarw Labour College, Sec.: I. Deere, 24, Tymerawr Avenue, Bleangarw, South Wales.
- „ Merthyr Labour College, Sec.: H. Griffith, 28, Tydfils Avenue, Merthyr.

Div. 5.—Yeovil Labour College, Sec.: A. Biss, 6, Crofton Road, Yeovil.

„ Barnstaple Labour College, Sec.: F. Cocks, 1, Taylor's Court, Bear Street, Barnstaple.

Div. 7.—Acting Divisional Secretary, Fred Shaw, 35, Blacker Road, N., Birkby, Huddersfield.

„ Doncaster Labour College, Sec.: Frank Ayres, 39, Palmer Street, Doncaster.

„ Sheffield Labour College, Sec.: J. James, 10, Tea Garden Terrace, Sheffield.

„ West Riding Council L.C., Sec.: J. Sykes, 7, Clog Sole Road, Brighouse.

Div. 8.—Blackpool Labour College, Sec.: J. H. Lockwood, 25, Richmond Road, Blackpool, N.

„ Padiham Labour College, Sec.: T. Thompson, 2, Starkie Street, Padiham.

„ Great Harwood Labour College, Sec.: J. R. Butler, 19, Spring Street, Great Harwood.

„ Heywood Labour College, Sec.: J. C. Cawte, 8, Muriel Street, Heywood, Lancs.

„ Leigh Labour College, Sec.: Bernard Green, 5, Orchard Lane, Leigh, Lancs.

Div. 10.—Dundee Local Committee, Scottish Labour College, Sec.: J. Low, 67, N. Wellington Street, Dundee.

N.C.L.C.—LONDON DIVISION

A Garden Party will be held in the gardens of the Labour College, 334, Kew Road, Kew, on Sunday, July 6th, at 2.30. Music, dancing, sports, refreshments. Admission 1s. Children under 14 free, if accompanied by elders.

Liverpool and District Labour College.—Week-end School, at Walton College, 2, Stuart Road, Liverpool, August 9th and 10th. Two lectures on "Geography and the Class Struggle," by J. F. Horrabin. Play reading by T. Ashcroft—Toller's *Masses and Man*.

REVIEWS

THE ARCH-BOURGEOIS

Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary (Selections) (Allen & Unwin, 10s. 6d.).

VOLTAIRE is commonly, and justly, regarded as the most typical bourgeois philosopher. He, as much as Rousseau, was the fore-runner and inspirer of the great bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and he was more typical in that he was not tormented by Rousseau's emotional and religious hysteria. His mind was acute and calm, and to this day the leader-writers speak of the "Voltairean bourgeoisie" of France (generally imagining "Voltairean" to mean "atheist").

This book, far more than *Candide* and other writings, provides a summary of his philosophical teaching; it shows clearly that with him at least philosophy is not immune to the passage of time. Changed conditions have altered the eternal verities. We still find occasionally the witty wisdom which scandalised his contemporaries:—

"Do we not nearly all of us resemble that old general of ninety who, having met some young officers who were debauching themselves with some girls, said to them angrily: 'Gentlemen, is that the example I give you?'"

But for the most part, his daring sallies are directed against the Old Testament, or the teaching of Papist theologians, and they have lost their force. To-day we are not shocked, nor even amused, we are respectful and a little bored. Jokes about Jehoshaphat are dull.

Voltaire was a Deist, not an atheist. His reason for this was genuinely bourgeois. He speaks in one place of his contempt for "those who in their gilded and lacquered drawing-rooms ignore the labourer's exceeding wretchedness and toil," and in one daring moment suggests education for even the working classes, but on the question of atheism he remarks "that the populace has need of the greatest

curb, and if Bayle the atheist had had only five or six hundred peasants to govern he would not have failed to announce to them the existence of a God as rewarder and avenger." Atheism, he concludes, is only possible for "Epicureans, rich people fond of rest."

The essence of Voltaireanism, however, lies more in his continual refusal to accept authority. We find him, with conscious daring, using his commonsense upon every institution or belief.

"A legislator has no difficulty in making the Indians bathe in the Ganges at certain seasons of the moon, it is a great pleasure to them. He would have been stoned if he had proposed the same bath to the peoples who dwell on the banks of the Dvina near Archangel. Forbid pig to an Arab who would have leprosy if he ate this flesh in his country and he will obey you cheerfully. Issue the same veto to a Westphalian and he will want to fight you."

These remarks seem dull platitudes to us: it required courage once to say them. Voltaire's custom of questioning everything, relying only on reason, broke up the monstrous medieval prison of thought. His philosophy was a direct predecessor of the Marxist philosophy, which is based on the same fundamental attitude. It pointed directly to Marxism which in due time superseded it—and will itself similarly be superseded.

B. P.

BALM FOR THE SOCIAL CONSCIENCE
Economics and Ethics. By J. A. R. Marriott (Methuen).

The only merit of Sir J. A. R. Marriott's book is that it is clearly and pleasantly written; and should therefore be an example to ourselves in avoiding ponderous abstractions and high-sounding, unintelligible Anglo-German phraseology. The book is apparently written for Christians who have felt uneasy as to the complete righteousness of our present industrial

system. These worthy persons, "who are sorely perplexed in mind and gravely disturbed in conscience" are enabled to "order their daily lives according to the will of God" once more without any further uneasy stirrings. For the principles of capitalism are here shown to be quite reconcilable with the precepts of Christian ethics.

This purpose is achieved by a mixture of pious platitudes, which skim over the surface of unpleasant problems, and by the careful selection of words so that those denoting an economic fact which it is desired to defend shall be associated in the readers' minds with certain worthy ethical meanings. This is typified in the use of the term "productive." Capital and land and brain-labour are said to be "productive" in the sense that because they are scarce people are willing to pay a lot for them. Then by a transition to the ethical meaning of the word, it is implied that these payments are "just" because they correspond to *productivity*! In this way the author draws conclusions from economic reasoning which the more logical-minded among orthodox economists must blush to find as their progeny.

Here are some examples of this strange tangle of Economics and Ethics and of *obiter dicta* introduced from the blue:—

"The net profit, be it large or small, represents and rightly (!) rewards the differential skill of the entrepreneur—the person who 'runs' the concern."

"Profit is the Price of Brains. . . . For the business man of exceptional ability hardly any material reward can be extravagant. . . . If labour really understood its own interests, it would be lavish in the remuneration of management."

On the other hand, attempts to secure a living wage for labour are merely "interesting experiments," whose results are still "ambiguous," but which must be "watched closely and with sympathy"—that is all!

Later we have the central assumption of this book—drawn from the blue or the F.B.I. or somewhere—stated quite nakedly as:—

"The supreme importance of encouraging the accumulation of capital" and avoiding anything "which disturbs credit, discourages the thrifty, or alarms the investor." To this end "true statesmanship will endeavour to restrict expenditure and therefore taxation to the minimum."

This latter statement one feels smacks a little musty. Sir Allan Smith and those capitalists who clamour for Trade Facilities and the assistance of the Labour Government in reviving trade probably think a little differently. But, then, Oxford is such a charming, quiet, secluded spot that a Fellow of Worcester College can scarcely be expected even to be theoretically up-to-date! One can picture so well the dear old ladies of Cheltenham and Woking and West Kensington and the stuffy dignified families of Edinburgh and Harrogate for whom this book is written as reassurance, and it does not do to expect too much. With those people gentility is always the best policy; so the book will sell.

M. D.

"SOUND AND FURY"

The Morlocks. By James C. Welsh, M.P. (Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., 2s. 6d.).

This production of the House of Bindle "portrays the miner with his follies and virtues, and the terrible conditions under which he lives and works" (see jacket). As every kindly reviewer reminds us, Mr. Welsh writes on this subject with first-hand knowledge, but (as we discover for ourselves), first-hand knowledge does not necessarily produce first-class fiction. Zola was not a working miner, but his *Germinal* is at once a great novel and a realistic study of the miner. Mr. Welsh, for all his intensive knowledge of the subject, somehow fails to give us a really vivid picture of the life he knows so well.

But, if *The Morlocks* is deficient in art, it has abundance of incident. We have a miners' strike; riots and window-smashing; widespread and perpetual arson; an entombment of

miners in a burning pit; a secret society (the "Morlocks"—which by any other name would act as stupidly); numerous pathetic death-beds; a young, handsome, and mysterious stranger (of superior social standing) for hero; and for heroine, lovely Mary Morison (a collier's lass, with a penchant for good works and women's meetings). There is also a mine-manager with brusque manners and a heart of gold, and a parson who reveals his true nobility in the rescue of the entombed miners.

Thus Mr. Welsh has ample material for a popular sensation-love-romance on conventional lines, but his story is too diffuse and rambling to grip the reader and the loosely-knit incidents fail to convince. Nor is the characterisation all that could be desired: it is a clumsy trick to make Jamie Morison say "as I'm a god-fearin' man" every time the poor fellow opens his mouth.

The "wild men" are very wild indeed, apparently some of them are congenital idiots. Says one: "I'd burn, pillage, and destroy, wherever we get the chance, so long as the destruction is aimed at the resources of those that are fighting us," while another casually expresses a desire to "hang every yin o' the ruling classes tae a lamp-post, an' start a' owre again, wi' a different wye o' daein' things;" occasionally they announce their intention "to go out and start a revolution"—seemingly in the same way as one might "start" a motor-car. The hero, Sydney Barron, converses throughout in the stilted phraseology of the mid-Victorian drama—apparently, in the author's mind a hallmark of superiority. The following dialogue, between Sydney and the man who is taking him to his first job at the pit, is not without unconscious humour:—

"Why do the miners start work

so early?" he asked his companion.

"Oh, I dinna ken," was the reply, rather curtly spoken.

"I'm sure it would be a great advantage if a later starting hour could be arranged," he pursued hesitatingly.

But, apart altogether from literary values, this book is of little use to Plebs. True, workers' education is mentioned, and the hero even goes so far as to "form a class of young miners" which he "started on a course of economics and industrial history." We would judge that he did not do much more than "start" them, for neither he nor they appear to have attained any knowledge of either subject. Later in the story one of the young miners (who has specialised in incendiarism, and joined the army in remorse) denounces this educational experiment as having led him into the thorny paths of "class-hatred"; he summarises the net result of his studies as a categorical imperative to "get up against the possessing class" and announces that "Tae me there is only one way of gettin' up against them, and that is tae kill an' destroy them an' a' their belongings."

We are afraid this book will make no converts for I.W.C.E.! There are in fact no positive lessons to be drawn from a story "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," unless it be this:—

Out of the travail of sorrow a new age is born, an age purged free from the mistakes of the past; for wisdom was its mother, and love shall shape its footsteps—an age better and brighter, more beautiful and nobler, because of the suffering and sacrifices of the past.

And, as Mrs. Nickleby's eccentric admirer observed upon a historic occasion, "all shall be gas and gaiters!"

E. J.

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CURE—AND ALLEVIATION
Unemployment : Its Cause and Cure. By
 Alfred Hook (Labour Publishing
 Co.; cloth 5s., paper 3s. 6d.).

In his introduction Mr. Hook tells us that the object of his book is "to set out the essential facts of unemployment in such a way as to be readily grasped by those who have not had the benefit of a training in economics," and it will be readily granted that he has fulfilled his task admirably. He writes interestingly and his book is commendably free from "economic jargon."

However—the real test of a book such as this lies in the remedies it proposes. Mr. Hook is forced to the conclusion that "a complete solution involves a social and industrial order in which the whole community works productively and each worker takes his full share of the products." As immediate alleviations he develops a scheme aiming at the variation of the working hours; Parliament would establish a "Statutory Working Week" which could be increased or decreased to adapt production to demand; the workers would also be guaranteed (again by Parliament) a "real minimum standard of life" to maintain their purchasing power, and thus lessen slumps. Finally there would be a scheme of insurance, the only new feature of which is that the machinery administering the scheme would be the Trade Unions and not the Labour Exchanges. Mr. Hook writes of these proposals with an enthusiasm considerably chilled by the conviction that "the acquisitive, combative, and destructive spirit of Capitalism" would wreck his best laid schemes, and he has to continually remind himself and his readers that there is only "one real solution."

J. G.

A COLONIAL PRODUCT
Wage-Slavery. By G. K. Heydon
 (Bodley Head, 5s.).

Employers with the Cadbury outlook are unusual in Australia and there are there no publicists like the Webbs or the Coles to mediate between bourgeois and proletarian thought. It is these circumstances that lend a certain piquancy to the reflections

of a liberal and pious Australian employer on "industrial discontent." Having heard of Marx, but not read that "atheist," Mr. Heydon is puzzled by the phrase "wage-slavery." In seeking an interpretation he invites us to "assume the contract of service to be entered into between an employer and an employé who stand in equally advantageous positions to one another. The employer has a plentiful supply of applicants from whom to choose, and the applicants all have comfortable balances in the savings bank!" He adds that the wage earner is "an educated and enfranchised freeman." So he can't be a slave! These puerile abstractions which destroy the author's problem must be ascribed to involuntary ignorance. Unemployed without even the dole to keep them from starvation meet one in all Australian cities and the blacklisting of men prominent in the industrial or political movement is widely practised by employers there. On the other hand Mr. Heydon is a shrewd observer (witness his description of recent Australian history as government by . . . political betrayal). Hence though his remedies are no more useful than his statement of the problem is accurate, his book is worth reading as a psychological study.

V. G. C.

"HOUSES TO LET"
Speech in the House of Commons. By
 John Wheatley (Lab. Party, id.).

Brest-Litovsk situations were bound to face the Labour Party because of the backwardness of the general electorate. However, a defiant treaty, as made by Mr. Wheatley and outlined in this pamphlet, is certainly more likely to destroy that backwardness than any misguided and dangerous attempts to prove that Labour is not different to the old parties. And propagandists should broadcast his attack upon the money-lenders to hasten in the taking over of the banks and use the arguments given to prevent any splitting of the workers from jealousy of the building workers, and also to make sure that the subsidy will be provided by taxation upon the higher incomes.

THE N.C.L.C.

The N.C.L.C. is the National Council of Labour Colleges, the central organisation of the Labour College Movement. It is composed of the Labour College, London, the Scottish Labour College, 51 non-residential local Labour Colleges, the Plebs League, the Amal. Union of Building Trade Workers, the Distributive Workers, and the Nat. Fed. of Building Trade Operatives.

OBJECT:—The education of the workers from the *working-class* point of view. The Colleges have been built up by working-class organisations, the members of which have realised that only *educated* Trade Unionism is *effective* Trade Unionism. These members have recognised, moreover, that just as it would be ridiculous to join a Trade Union financed by employers, so, for education on social, economic or Trade Union questions, it is equally foolish to support Colleges or classes assisted by employers, or under the influence of educationists with employing-class ideas.

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