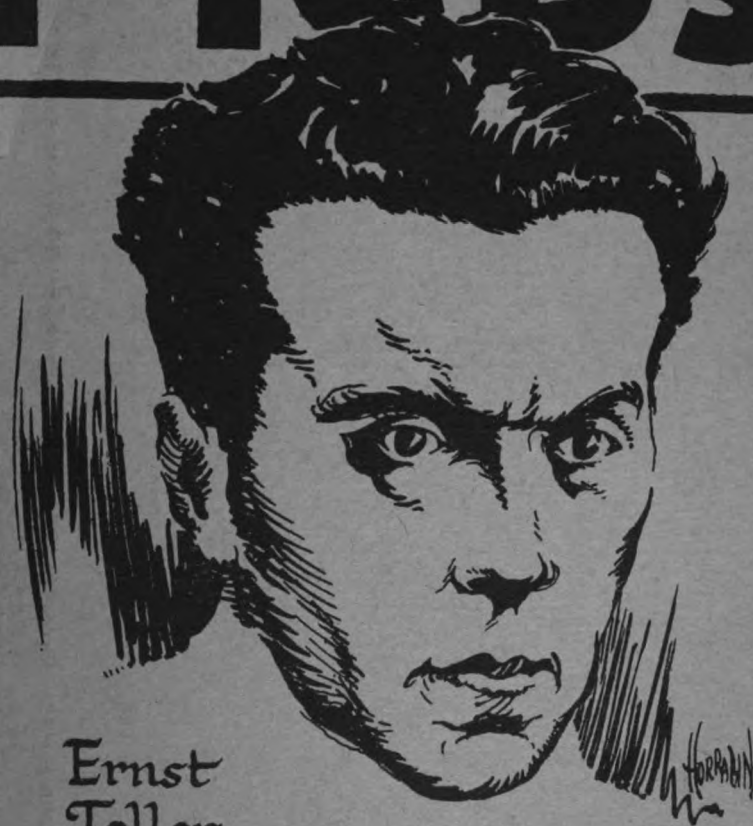


The

September  
1924



# Plebs



Ernst  
Toller,  
author of  
"Masses & Man"  
(see special announcement  
inside)

❖ Contents include: ❖  
"FASCISM" by L.W.  
"BANKS - & Tanks"  
by A. Woodburn  
"Socialism & Drama"  
by T. Ashcroft  
Book reviews, &c.

# DO YOU COUNT?

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In the struggle for working-class emancipation, the hub round which current history revolves, *do you count?* Just as the individual, himself weak, adds mightily to his strength by co-operating with his fellows, so can he, with his very limited experience add tremendously to his mental power by drawing on the knowledge of his fellows—by educating himself!

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LABOUR COLLEGES  
22 ELM ROW, EDINBURGH

The Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

# THE PLEBS

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

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Vol. XVI

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No. 9

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## CONGRESS and WORKERS' EDUCATION

**T**HE agenda of the Trades Union Congress (which, by the time this magazine is in our readers' hands, will have commenced its sittings at Hull), contains the following resolution, put forward by the Managers' and Overlookers' Society:—

"That this Congress instructs the General Council to take a more active part in the furtherance of independent working-class education."

▲

To this the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers is moving the following addendum :—

“—and recommends that any scheme which may be finally established should embody the definite principles advocated by the National Council of Labour Colleges and the London Labour College.”

It is probable, therefore, that Hull will be the scene of the keenest debate on the *principles* of workers' education which has yet taken place at any Congress.

We say *principles*—and we hope and trust the discussion will be confined to principles ; though the experience of the N.C.L.C. and Plebs delegates at the International Conference

*A Conflict of Principle*

on Workers' Education at Oxford a fortnight ago has warned us that the other side will be quite unscrupulous in putting into practice the ancient dictum—“No case—abuse plaintiff's attorney !” The

resolution and addendum raise a fundamental question of principle ; a question which both the General Council of the British Trade Union Congress and the Executive Committee of the newly-formed Workers' Educational International will have to face, and to decide upon, before they can take any definite steps in the provision of educational facilities for workers. Both bodies can avoid such a decision so long as they content themselves with giving a vague blessing—or even cash support—to existing educational bodies with divergent aims. But the moment either of them resolves to inaugurate any actual educational scheme, it will be compelled to make up its mind about the principles on which that scheme is to be based.

The two opposing principles in the sphere of workers' education, represented in this country by the W.E.A. on the one hand, and the Labour Colleges on the other, are, as we

“ *Extension* ”

*versus*

“ *Independence* ”

pointed out last month, simply this :—The W.E.A. stands for *extension* of ordinary education (i.e., *ruling-class* education) to workers ; the Labour Colleges stand for the development of specifically *working-class* education, with *working-class aims*, and under *working-class control*. The W.E.A. stands for co-operation between the workers' own organisations and the educational institutions owned and controlled by the master-class ; it wants the workers to have *more* of the kind of education provided by such institutions. The slogan of the Labour Colleges is “ Not more, but *different* ” ; and they assert that the workers will never get the education they need from the class against whom they are organised politically and industrially.

That is a clear and simple issue, and it can be argued without any reference to personalities at all. Sooner or later it *must* be so argued. Up to now, the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, finding it impossible to "co-ordinate" bodies thus based on fundamentally opposed principles, has rested content with giving equal financial assistance to each. But it is desirous of inaugurating some scheme of its own; *and it cannot inaugurate any such scheme without committing itself to one principle or the other.*

That is the meaning of the A.U.B.T.W. addendum to the resolution quoted above. And we hope that the advocates of Independent Working-Class Education, in and out of the Congress, will make this point of principle clear to their fellow Trade Unionists. Neither resolution nor amendment asks for unqualified support of the N.C.L.C. as at present constituted (if anybody has any valid objections to its constitution), or seeks to gain for it any advantage or privilege to which it has no claim. The I.W.C.E. movement from its inception has stood for the contention that the organised Labour Movement ought itself to be responsible for the education of its members. But we also insist that control and responsibility are valueless unless *the kind of education* so provided is education *for* working-class aims and *in* working-class interests; unless, in short, it is education undertaken for the same aims, and in the same interests, as those for which the Trade Union movement itself exists.

Precisely the same arguments apply in the case of the new "International Federation of Labour Organisations concerned with Workers' Education." Such a federation can be of relatively little use until it has made up its mind what it means by "workers' education," and extends its "tolerance" only to those organisations which take their stand educationally on precisely the same principles which are the basis of the International Labour movement. Those principles are to-day neither new nor strange. What is amazingly lacking in so many quarters is simply realisation that they must be applied educationally in the same way as they have been applied politically and industrially.

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## SEE OUR SPECIAL BOOK ANNOUNCEMENTS

on p. 353 of this issue  
and place your orders  
without delay.

# The BLACKPOOL SCHOOL

*Space is so tight this month that we can give only a summarised report of our second successful Summer School—at Bispham, Blackpool, August 9th—16th. But even this brief account will, we trust, convey to those unable to attend something of the spirit of the proceedings.*

**S**ATURDAY, AUGUST 9TH.—Plebs are eager people! A group of them actually landed at Bispham before breakfast this morning—evidently keen on getting as full a week as possible. By evening close on sixty had arrived—from Yorks, Lancs, Scotland, London, Brighton, South Wales, and Vienna!

*Sunday, 10th.*—School began with a really brilliant lecture by W. T. Colyer on “Americanism,” Frank Dixon presiding. [By the way, when is the Labour Publishing Co. going to do a cheap edition of Colyer’s book on that subject? It will have a sale among Plebs.] Bathing parade in the afternoon, with umpteen square miles of sea and level sand to play about on—some contrast to the rocks of Cober Hill! After tea, Ernest Johns on “Poetry and the Proletariat,” with Newbold (as the least poetical person present) in the chair. The discussion afterwards was hot and strong; W. H. had to be forcibly restrained from throttling Sam Ainsworth, while Comrade Waight threatened blue murder against all those rash persons who smiled at the name of Dietzgen—who was somehow or other dragged into the discussion.

*Monday, 11th.*—Newbold brought us back to earth with a lecture on “Capitalism in Lancashire.” Interesting discussion on trusts, shilling shares and boll-weevils. The presence of a (visiting) parson in the audience kept the atmosphere quite “parliamentary,” which was a good thing, since occasional performances by a gentleman with a concertina in the near neighbourhood tempted the lecturer now and again to blaspheme. In the evening (after a Ladies v. Gentlemen cricket match, in the course of which Anise Crabtree gave a magnificent batting display), we had an “extra turn”—a talk by Michael Gold, of the *New York Liberator*, on “The Labour Movement in America.” Gold’s description of an S.L.P.er at a meeting held under the auspices of some other Socialist party was a thing to be remembered!

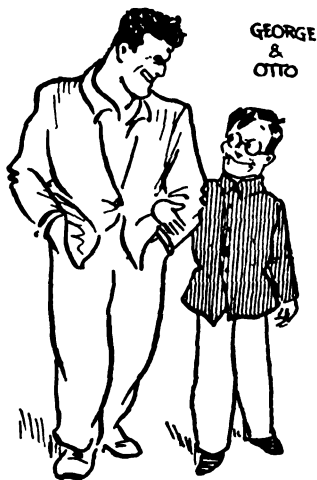
ANISE  
AT THE  
WICKET



*Tuesday, 12th.*—J. F. H. on “British Workers and the Empire.” Again a first-class discussion, in which Gold (America), Eichler (Vienna), Ellen Wilkinson, Colyer, and the chairman (Ernest Johns) took part. . . . In the afternoon, George Williams led a Personally Conducted Party into Blackpool—up, and down, the Tower, through ballroom and zoo, and thence to the Pleasure Beach. In the interests of Scientific Research into the Industrialisation and Large Scale Production of Amusements for the Masses, pretty nearly every form of torture in the grounds was personally investigated. After being hurled upwards, slid downwards, whirled round and bumped, and generally shaken to pieces, we were escorted by the Conductor to Yates’ Wine Lodge—to recuperate. Thence home to Bispham, the evening concluding with a sing-song—solos by Comrades Wm. Paul and Boothroyd, and recitals of John S. Clark’s ballads by Dave Morton.

*Wednesday, 13th.*—Ellen Wilkinson on “The Industrial Revolution of To-day”—a second edition, revised and corrected, of the highly interesting lecture she delivered at Cober Hill in June. Everybody overjoyed at Fred Casey turning up for the day. . . . After tea, a “mixed” football match, between teams captained by Paul and Horrabin; followed by long, and thrilling, rounders match between same teams. Both events won by Paul’s team; as also sundry three-legged races, wheelbarrow races and other contests—until, in a 100-yards sprint, Paul’s avoirdupois at last told against him, and he could achieve nothing better than an “Also Ran.” . . . After supper, J. E. Matthews introduced his world-famed Plebs Glue Singers; their rendering of A. B. Elsbury’s “It’s a Long Way to Vladivostok,” and of some entirely new and original compositions (“Bolshies, keep your Heads Up!” etc.) rousing uproarious applause.

*Thursday, 14th.*—(First and only wet day). Otto Eichler (Vienna) on “The Youth Movement in Austria,” followed by a keen discussion of the aims and possibilities of workers’ education. In the afternoon, Jack Hamilton (Chairman, N.C.L.C. Exec.) gave an admirable summary of N.C.L.C. history and recent developments. Many questions on practical points. After tea, a sale and auction of Russian Peasant goods, organised by Kathleen Starr, Mrs. Knight and other women comrades, on behalf of W.I.R. funds, realised over £6. Later in the evening the Glue Party again got busy.



*Friday, 15th.*—Colyer gave an address on the Labour Defence Council and the legal position of the workers. Excellent discussion on Fascism—the discussions here have taught us not to fill the lecture-programme quite so full as we did at Cober Hill. . . . In the evening, Comrade Birrell (of the Kingdom of Fife) gave an account of the Fife Miners' Reform Union, and this paved the way for a general discussion of Minority Movements. . . . At a farewell sing-song, Misses Whiteley and Lumb (piano solos), Comrades Ainsworth, Boothroyd, Bob Davies and Matthews (songs), and Waight, Morton and Comrie (recitations) all distinguished themselves; Jack Armstrong, presiding, expressed the hope that before another summer we might hold our School in a house of our own.

And so say all of us!

But we shall have to go "all out" to beat the times we've had at Cober Hill and Blackpool in 1924.\*

## SOCIALISM and the DRAMA

*Comrade Ashcroft's article was written as a "foreword" to a reading of Masses and Man, and has therefore a special interest in view of The PLEBS' arrangement for a special cheap edition of that play (see Book Announcements on another page).*

THE function of the drama, according to one of the greatest masters, is "to hold the mirror up to nature." Now the mirror is that article of furniture to which those having most reason—or thinking themselves to have most reason—for self-complacency most naturally and frequently turn. And as with the individual, so with society. When self-satisfied with its achievement, then it transforms the stage into a mirror—to see itself as it were before its own eyes, played out by dramatists and actors paid for the purpose. Such periods of social self-complacency are evidently unlikely to call forth any serious effort to change society. It is when society seems most stable that it transforms the drama into a mirror.

But society is not always stable. And when the currents of change are bearing society to some new base, the drama—like every artistic expression—is intimately affected. It assumes a new character. While the dramatist will continue to mirror society—

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\*Prints of a group taken at Bispham by Com. Duckworth can be supplied to anyone forwarding 3d. and a stamped, addressed envelope to him at 6, Walsh St., Queen's Rd., Halifax.



especially, however, to reflect its defects—he is no longer content with that. He makes of the stage a platform, or a bar of judgment; and he draws attention to the new social forces destined to sweep society from its old moorings.

Shakespearian drama was a mirror. There, the artist devoted his great powers, his profound insight, mainly to the motives of the individual. In a sense, this gives his work a universal and perennial appeal. The emotions of his characters reside, in a greater or less measure, in all of us, and can therefore be appreciated by all of us. But Shakespeare had nothing to say of the social order in which he lived and its reactions on those individual traits of character which he knew so well how to depict.

Contrast with this the work of another supreme dramatist—Ibsen. The difference is startling, and must be felt immediately. Here, too, is a marvellous power of characterisation. But now the effort and achievement of the individual is not in opposition to other individuals so much as against society at large. Here, we are not so much invited to admire a hero or to scorn any villain in the piece; we are made to feel the social forces ever at work moulding the individual in their own image. To Ibsen, the arch-individualist, heroism consists in resisting these social forces and retaining one's own personality. Finally, he actually asserts that "the strongest man is he who stands most alone."

Here, then, we have two contrasted types of drama. And it is again clear that the second of these types will be in the ascendant, expressing ideas germinating in the soil of social change, during times of social instability. Thus, the characteristic drama in any period is in definite relation to the social life of the time; and does not depend upon the dramatist who, like his own characters in the modern drama, is in the grip of social forces.

What, then, is and what will be the nature of Socialist drama? What is the relation between our Socialist goal and its artistic expression? That there is such a relation we are all agreed, to whatever school of Socialism we belong.

It has been customary to draw a distinction between the "idealist" and the "materialist" Socialist, or between the evolutionary and the revolutionary Socialist. There is here an important problem, both philosophically and politically; but here, we are concerned only with the matter in relation to the problem of Socialism and Art. We need only say that the Socialist is of necessity both materialist and idealist. The most hardened materialist will assert that the material or economic revolution is a means, not an end. The most emotional of idealists, by the very fact of being a Socialist, demonstrates that he recognises the economic revolution to be essential in order that men may live in freedom and fellowship;

he is anxious to be known, not merely as an idealist, but as a *practical* idealist ; and what is this but another word for *materialist* idealist ?

What, then, is this change, this revolution ? It is the communal organisation of social resources, material and human, for the general well-being, as opposed to their present abuse in the interests of a small section of society. Let us, however, specially emphasise that expression, "communal organisation." Here we shall have one of the characteristics of the new drama of Socialism. It will enthrone communal effort. It will show the masses as the masters of their destiny, and not as to-day, the mere tools or pawns of great heroes or great villains. The older drama, born of an individualist system, spent itself upon individuals and their motives. The new drama will celebrate the power and the infinite possibilities, material, intellectual, moral or spiritual, of co-operative effort.

It is evident, however, that we are anticipating. If art must mirror life, drama must concern itself for the time being, not so much with the future triumph of the masses, as with their struggles. It will nerve the workers to the struggle that lies before them by depicting their present position, their strength and their weakness. In this sense, the greatest link perhaps between the old drama and the new is Eugene O'Neill's masterpiece, *The Hairy Ape*. There you have the life of the workers, their tremendous power and their almost equal weakness. At the same time, the characterisation is very strongly marked—the chief characters are quite unforgettable. But O'Neill is pointing the moral that the workers' problem is not a personal or individual one at all. Another step is taken when the characters have no individual name at all—because they are not intended to stand for particular persons, but as the type of their class or craft, etc. Now Dick, Tom and Harry appear no longer, but simply the Soldier, the Workman, the Billionaire. In *Masses and Man*, one of the "characters" (if so he can be called) is actually named The Nameless.

What, then, are the qualities of the new dramatist—those, that is, which distinguish him from the old ? They may be summed up in a word. He must be a revolutionist if he would portray the revolutionary struggle and triumph. But who and what is the revolutionist ?

The revolutionist is a Socialist who recognises that the business of Socialists is to bring Socialism. He is a Socialist first, last and all the time—not an Englishman, Scotsman, or Dutchman first and a Socialist afterwards. Not a Liberal first, but a Socialist when it will gain a few more votes. And he is a Socialist first, because he sees that the social problem is the whole problem—whereas most of us are too much under the dominion of the past to recognise this. Such an outlook breeds a resolution and determination of

purpose which follows its course with a single idea ; to achieve the object by the most direct and expeditious means, with the least possible waste of energy—and, if it comes to that, with as little mess as may be. Thus one of the most important characteristics of the revolutionist is that he is undisturbed by internal conflicts. He has "squared his intellect with his conscience." Since he has no mental conflict to contend with, he can devote the whole of his energies to the external, social problems which face the working class.

But most of us are subject to a great dissipation of our energies through the tug-of-war that goes on within our minds between different and opposing complexes. And this psychological conflict is the real subject of Toller's great play, *Masses and Man*. The chief "characters"—the Woman and The Nameless—are merely the personified complexes of any individual Socialist actually engaged in the class struggle. Toller himself, perhaps the greatest of the younger school of German poets and dramatists, was one of the leaders in the Bavarian Revolution, 1919, for his part in which he was arrested and sentenced to five years' imprisonment in a fortress, from which he was released a few weeks ago. He had already served one imprisonment for leading a strike of Munich munition-workers in the early days of 1918. But, though so fearless a fighter on behalf of the workers, he has never attained that mental peace and equilibrium of the true revolutionist. For that reason, his play is perhaps the more interesting to English Socialists. It shows to us the conflict going on in the minds of many of us.

T. ASHCROFT.

## 1914 and 1924 by Ernst Toller

*Written in Esperanto by the famous German dramatist for the special Anti-War Supplement of "Sennacieca Revuo" (August 1924), while he was still imprisoned at Niederschönenfeld.*

**T**HE day of the beginning of the World War was for the workers a day of damnable and deep disgrace. Then there was perpetrated in every land the great crime against the spirit of the International ; on that day comrade marched against comrade ; a generation completely failed.

Has this decennial anniversary day become one of pride ? Have the workers accomplished their task ? Have they created the

embankments which will stop the inrush of the great tide of murderous madness, and prevent the world again being changed into a place of feverish agony for helpless mankind?

Who believes to-day in the power of the Versailles League of Nations to make peace, or in the pacifism of ministers of capitalist states?

Only the Russian people have the right to celebrate joyfully the 4th of August. For other workers this decennial anniversary day must be a day of solemn resolve.

*We have received a letter from Comrade Toller expressing his gratification at the fact that Masses and Man is now made available to the workers in a cheap edition, and stating that he hopes to see something of the Plebs movement when he visits Britain this winter or next spring.*

## FASCISM

### IV.—FASCISM IN POWER

**T**HE rise of the Fascist Party was a triumph of political organisation, and the efforts of its leaders to achieve the ends for which they stand have been remarkable for their intensity and skill. It is true enough that Fascism has no intellectual content, no theoretical basis, that its political arguments carry no conviction to a reasonably intelligent critic and that its programme fluctuates in a chaos of contradictions. But these facts do not in the least alter the value of Fascism as a weapon in the hands of the industrial bourgeoisie. Mussolini's political tactic may be summed up as one of dividing his opposition and setting section against section. He carefully distributes concessions to the industrial capitalists; gives exemption from taxation to the agrarians; offers alternately fair words and bullets to the proletariat. He threatens the capitalists with Bolshevism and the workers with unemployment if they do not support him. And over all he throws the glamour of patriotic romance, telling of Italy the ancient heiress of the Roman Empire, the fair queen of the Mediterranean, the centre of mediaeval art and culture, now again to be raised to the forefront of nations—if only the Fascists retain power, and if only the workers will collaborate with the employers and not pursue their own selfish ends. By such means he has broken down all opposition; he has smashed the working class in Italy, imposed on them his ideology and established the heavy industrialists for a time in control of events.

An important point in the Fascist triumph is the degree of unification which it has secured in the bourgeois ranks. Italian parliamentarism has always been the field of countless sectional quarrels between small groups of the bourgeoisie, each with its own private or local petty interests to foster above the interests of the class. The menace of the proletarian revolution after the war was so serious that unity of action became essential if the ruling classes were to survive. This was a large part of Mussolini's work—to put an end for a time to the competition between individual professional politicians and the intrigues of their little sections and to build up in the place of this a bourgeois united front against the workers. In this he achieved a remarkable measure of success which could not, in the nature of things, be lasting. The character and the extent of the divisions in the bourgeois ranks are such that no statesmanship can ever nullify their influence permanently.

The proof of the subservience of Fascism to heavy industrial interests may be seen most clearly in the way the early Fascist programme was repudiated when Mussolini came into power. This contrast indicates, not merely the waning of enthusiasm common to politicians after the election, but a complete antithesis between the interests of the class whose votes were sought and of that which Fascism exists to support.

The programme had demanded a very democratic reform of the electoral law. The law was indeed drastically reformed, but in a sense by no means democratic nor favourable to the workers or the petty bourgeoisie. The political conditions of 1923 led to the introduction of the famous electoral law in the following circumstances.

Throughout the summer of 1923, Mussolini's power was constantly threatened by political dissensions. Not only was his Government subjected to attacks from hostile parties, but the Fascists themselves were sadly split. The ground of external attack was the question of constitutionalism, and inside the party also a division grew up between the Diehards who stood by violent methods, and the "evolutionists" who wanted to compromise with parliamentary and constitutional forms. Mussolini himself saw the undoubted advantages of settled and constitutional government, provided that its machinery was guaranteed to work in his favour and in that of the interests which he represented. The first requisites were a compact parliamentary majority for the Fascists and a weak and disunited opposition. To secure these ends a scheme of parliamentary reform was worked out.

The electoral law of July, 1923, is remarkable even among the electoral devices designed to secure bourgeois supremacy. The main features of the law are as follows : the whole of Italy is treated

as one electoral area, and each constituent votes, not for an individual, but for a Party. He may, if he so desire, also indicate his preference for an individual candidate in the party list which he selects. The votes cast for each Party are then counted by the authorities and on these totals an amazing scheme is based. The party which heads the poll receives, not a representation proportionate to the number of votes cast, but *two thirds* of the number of seats. The winning party will quite probably receive only a minority of the votes, but it nevertheless enjoys complete and unchallengeable supremacy in Parliament.

As regards the remaining one-third of the seats, these are divided among the unsuccessful parties in proportion to their votes. The opposition parties are thus split into the maximum number of fractions, while the party in power is united. The scheme is a clear expression of the Fascist dictatorship in the realm of Parliamentary government. It is not remarkable that the Bill met with much opposition, and that Mussolini thought it well to arrange for the Fascist Militia to meet in Rome when the project was before Parliament—a plain hint that the familiar Fascist methods would, if necessary, be employed to secure the passage of the measure. The hint was turned into a threat in the final debate, when Mussolini offered either collaboration or a fight to a finish on Fascist lines. The deputies chose collaboration and voted the bill by 225 to 123.

Such was the Fascist achievement in regard to electoral machinery. Their record in other fields shows equally their subservience to the interests of Big Business.

The eight-hour day which had been promised was guaranteed in words. It was, however, made subject to so many exceptions both as regards special trades and particular circumstances, that its value to the workers was negligible. As an example we may take the case of railway workers, where a system of "spread-over" makes their effective hours of duty often 12 or more a day. No minimum wage bill was ever introduced but, instead, wages were drastically reduced through all branches of industry. The existing scheme of national insurance against sickness and old age was abolished. Instead of developing the system of workers' control in industry, the Fascists destroyed the few remaining Works' Councils. A further obstacle to the development of industrial democracy was furnished by the Fascist policy of denationalisation. The capitalist sharks gathered round the State with hungry jaws agape and one by one the dainty morsels were flung out to be devoured by the profiteers.

Telephones, wireless, parcel post, matches—each State monopoly was handed over to private control. Even the railways were in the market and would have been sold but for an amusing incident. Mussolini had himself seen to the details of this transaction and

the sale was on the point of final ratification. The lucky capitalists who had nearly secured the prize were delighted, but their rivals were not! One group of rivals who had themselves been in the bidding succeeded in raising trouble, suggesting that there had been a corrupt deal and practices contrary to the national interest. So in this case the falling out of thieves enabled the community to retain its own. In the more recent case of the concession of the oil-bearing lands of Italy to an American syndicate, the results were even more embarrassing to the Government, as will appear later in this article.

The Fascist defence of their policy in this matter is that the services in question have been ill-organised under State management. Such statements are always highly suspect, coming as they do from those who have a direct interest in vilifying public ownership and bolstering up private enterprise. If Mussolini found the bureaucracy inefficient, he had ample power and opportunity to reform. If he really held the Guild Socialist views of D'Annunzio and Odon Por, with which some friends credit him, here was his chance to apply them. Instead of this, he played into the hands of his capitalist masters, and the idealists who believe in his essentially revolutionary objective are still waiting for him to be free to realise his heart's desire!

Mussolini seems actually to have achieved some improvement in the technical efficiency of the civil service, but the staff reductions were merely window-dressing episodes. The dismissals were promptly followed by the appointment of Fascists to the vacant posts.

The policy of the Fascist Government as regards public finance shows unmistakably its anti-proletarian character. The programme favoured expropriatory taxation of the rich; the Fascists in power remitted the luxury tax, the motor-car tax and inheritance duties. In place of these there have been imposed taxes on wages (i.e., a reduction in the exemption level for income tax) and increased indirect taxes. A new land valuation was carried out with a view to raising revenue from heavier taxes on land, but so far the agrarians have succeeded in preventing this. Giolitti's government had appointed a commission to inquire into war profits. Normally, such a commission would have reported to parliament, but Mussolini directed that it should report to him personally and threatened with six months' imprisonment anyone who should prematurely publish any details of the report. When the document was published with the official *imprimatur*, it had been discreetly castrated to avoid offence to that section of the bourgeoisie which profited most from war conditions, i.e., the steel magnates. As a final instance of the contrast between the vote catching programme and the reality, we may note the proposal to impose a tax on ecclesiastical

property. This proposal was entirely dropped when the Fascists achieved power, and a pro-clerical policy was pursued. Religious teaching was re-established in the schools—a most reactionary policy in a country where the church is so potent a weapon in the hands of the possessing classes. Next to omitting to exhibit a picture of Mussolini in the school, the most serious offence a teacher can commit is to neglect to hang up a crucifix.

The anti-militarist talk of the early Fascists soon ceased. The record of the Fascist Government is one of extensive additions to all the fighting arms. The period of obligatory military service has been raised from 8 to 18 months, thus increasing the standing army from 230,000 to 350,000 men. A big forward policy was pursued in laying in extensive stores of arms and ammunition. The navy was increased and many new flying machines built. The whole fighting machine was developed and strengthened at very heavy cost.

But more remarkable even than these military preparations was the policy of the government in regard to the Fascist militia. When the Fascists had attained control of the State, their own armed forces, the black shirt squadrons, were still in being and their disposal became a matter of no small difficulty. The thousands of young men who had been absorbed into the ranks found life there by no means unpleasant. They were paid and maintained on a generous scale. They had become accustomed to their work, which no longer disgusted even the most squeamish of them: the danger of the occupation was slight since their numbers, their organisation and their weapons were markedly superior to those of their working-class opponents.

Many of these young men had never followed any regular employment, or had lost, in the course of their military service, all aptitude for useful work. In these circumstances, to have disbanded the Fascist squadrons would have been to throw on to the labour market at a critical time a mass of largely unemployable men used to securing their ends by violence and liable to increase the difficulties of their late employers. The Fascist forces had by this time developed a hierarchy which ably pushed their interests as a corporate body before the eyes of those in power. Every concession had to be made, therefore, by the Government to the armed body that had brought them to power and on whose strength they must continue to rely. The means taken to keep the Fascist troops in being under the pretence that their purpose was a national and not a party one was to enrol the black shirts in a Militia for Public Safety. The militia, which is responsible to Mussolini and not to the King and is strictly Fascist in membership, control and objective, exists to this day. In one sense it is Mussolini's main support; in another it



is one of his chief difficulties. The unanimity with which the Liberal and Democratic parties demand its disbandment shows that it is a valuable support to the Fascist Government. On the other hand, the militia has constantly tended to get out of hand and to pursue an extremist policy regardless of Mussolini's desire for moderation. After the Matteotti murder, Mussolini made frantic efforts to placate the opposition and promised among many other things the fusion of the militia into the regular army. Efforts to achieve this seem to have been made, but they have not really gone far. The militia, though its members are now to be required to take an oath of allegiance to the King, remains in effect the organ of a party and the practical means by which Mussolini in a crisis can keep himself in power. The "constitutionalisation" of the militia was postponed again and again and recent public utterances of its chief officers show clearly that its loyalty is to the Fascist Party and not to the crown.

The bourgeoisie to-day is by no means united in supporting Fascism, and the future of the movement is threatened as much by dissensions among the bourgeoisie as by the opposition of the proletariat. Quite apart from the antagonism of the land-owning classes who were deprived of their control of the State machine by the instrumentality of Fascism, there are important cleavages of interest in this matter among the capitalists themselves. For example, Nitti has shewn considerable fear of the developments of Fascism. This politician is the instrument in Italy of English and American financial interests, which have watched with keen anxiety the rise of Fascism backed by heavy industrialists in close association with French coal and iron magnates. Giolitti was originally a protagonist of agrarian interests and was keenly anti-fascist. But early in 1922 the financial group (headed by the Commercial Bank) on which he depended began to develop industrial interests which had formerly been the preserve of the Discount Bank (bankrupt in December, 1921). With this change in the policy of his masters, Giolitti swung over to a modified support of Fascism. But he regarded it primarily as a stick with which to beat the workers.

In fact, all groups of the bourgeoisie united in support of Fascism in so far as it was specifically anti-proletarian. All groups had a common interest in the re-establishment of law and order on a bourgeois basis and in subjecting the workers to wage reductions. For six months after the Fascist seizure of power this community of outlook sufficed to keep the bourgeoisie united in support of the new State. But it was impossible for this to last, and before long the inherent divisions made themselves apparent.

The struggle in the bourgeois ranks revolved round two main issues—military preparations and the restoration of constitutional

government. The former issue is a real one, the second, a mere veil to cover the crude reality of a struggle for power.

The only section really concerned to foster a forward military policy is that of the heavy industrialists. These have a threefold need for military and naval preparations. In the first place, the manufacture of munitions means profits for themselves; in the second place, they have to provide the weapons for their Militia in order to keep the opposition in forcible subjection; and, third, they must pursue a firm foreign policy to establish Italian prestige abroad and to ensure markets for their exports. Meanwhile, the militarist policy of the Government is opposed by all other sections of the bourgeoisie, who see it primarily as a means to the economic and political aggrandisement of the heavy industrialists, and who, moreover, object to the indefinite postponement of national economic recovery which follows from continued expenditure on military preparations.

An examination of Italian foreign policy since the Fascists have held power, shews clearly their heavy-industrial bias. In regard to France, their policy has been to endeavour to secure ample supplies of Lorraine iron for their steel industry. As a bargaining weapon in their struggles for this, they have used the Franco-British-German quarrel over the Ruhr. If France will guarantee iron supplies, then Italy will support her Ruhr policy; if not, then the Italians will turn to England and Germany. The imperialist necessity for markets demands an energetic colonial policy. The administration in Tripolitania, and other North African colonies has been tightened up; frequent military operations against the natives have been undertaken, not always with complete success. The reverses recently experienced by the Italian troops have led to accusations against the rival imperialist Powers established in North Africa, it being suggested, for instance, that the French are supplying arms to the natives. Jubaland has been added to the Italian sphere of exploitation and the aims of the Fascist imperialists are still soaring. The Adriatic and even the whole of the Mediterranean are claimed as the proper preserves of Italian commerce—much to the horror of *The Times*, and the leading French papers, who warn the Italians in avuncular terms against such exaggerated claims.

Inside the Fascist Party, the dissension between the "old" or "dissident" elements and the orthodox supporters of Mussolini grows rather than lessens. This dissension is a fairly straightforward one and is between the agrarian elements still in the Party and the Fascists proper. The presence of agrarians has always been a thorn in Mussolini's side, and the powers of censorship have been applied to criticisms raised by the dissidents against the Government. A large concession of petroliferous land has recently been

made to the American Sinclair Syndicate. The dissident Fascists in their journal *Il Nuovo Paese* have attacked this policy on nationalist grounds, but further criticism has now been prohibited by the Government. The policy is equally distasteful to the Nationalists and another break in the bourgeois front is made.

The quarrels in the bourgeois camp have recently come to a head as a result of the murder of the Socialist Giacomo Matteotti. There is no doubt that this was an act of the utmost unwisdom. It had the result of uniting all the elements of the opposition against the Government. In spite of Mussolini's policy of "moderation," his personal attitude towards violence was highly compromising, even five days before this murder. Speaking in the Chamber in reply to criticisms raised by the communist Gennari, the Premier pleasantly remarked:—"What you want is a bullet in your neck. We have the courage to see that this is done, and we shall do it. We have still time, and we shall act sooner than you expect. . . ." The extremists were shouting for a victim and Mussolini gave way. Matteotti was selected.

It is not difficult to see why the choice fell on Matteotti. He was a brilliant, capable and honest leader of the reformist socialists, but this did not of itself mark him as a danger to the Fascists. His offence lay in his efficient exposure of the corruption in the Fascist movement. He recorded the deeds of Fascism day by day—not only its deeds of violence and tyranny, but its deeds of financial jobbery and commercial dishonesty.

The enmity of the Fascists towards Matteotti was comprehensible enough, but they should have hesitated before they gave such rein to their passionate hatred. The murder of Matteotti, as Mussolini remarked, was not only a crime but a blunder. It played into the hands of the opposition by giving them an invaluable ground of attack on Fascism. Fascism, they argued, is defended as a means of restoring order and avoiding anarchy, and here is the sort of order it secures.

The opposition was, moreover, singularly perturbed by the death of this particular member of their ranks. In Italy, as elsewhere, a reformist-socialist government is one of the last and most valuable defences of the capitalist system. The Italian bourgeoisie, if the dictatorship of Fascism fails, may have to rely on the constitutional support of the middle and lower classes, organised politically in right-wing socialist parties. Matteotti would have been an invaluable leader in such a political move. Even as things stood, he was doing good work for the capitalists by canalising the rebellious tendencies of the workers into the safe ways of reformism and hindering the development of communism.

Mussolini's reaction to the political storm which followed the murder was to throw overboard all members of his ministry who were more blatantly associated with terrorist methods. Previous murders of Socialists and other opponents of Fascists had been successfully lived down without any pretence of legal action against the guilty parties. But in Matteotti's case a vast appearance of activity on the part of the police was set going; suspected persons were arrested and imprisoned, and a trial may eventually be held; the personal complicity of many prominent Fascist leaders in the outrage is already beyond doubt. In the political sphere, the cabinet was reconstituted to include several non-Fascists, all selected from the bourgeois parties.

It is still too early to see how far Mussolini will succeed in weathering the storm. He has made considerable concessions to the opposition and he will undoubtedly make more if necessary. He has, of course, given away much more in promises than in reality. The incorporation of the Fascist militia into the regular Forces of the crown is still only a project. The order which he promised is still only a thing of the future. Fascist violence continues and new forms of tyranny (the new press censorship, for example) are being imposed. In all things, Mussolini acts with cunning. He sees to it that the press decree is applied to *one* Fascist paper and to a score of opposition journals: he can then point to the impartiality of the administration.

If Fascism is to remain in power as the organ of the wealthy bourgeoisie, it must secure (either constitutionally or by force, but preferably the former) the continued support of the petty bourgeoisie and the compliance of the workers. If it cannot do this, its masters will throw it over and will use the device so popular just now of a Liberal-Labour Government to keep Italy safe for capital. Another alternative is that the bourgeoisie will have to resign the reins of power in favour of the workers.

L. W.

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## BANKS—and TANKS

*The Big Five Banks did their best to sabotage the British negotiations with Russia. They will collar two-thirds of the proposed rent of the Wheatley houses. In the following article, re-written from his lecture at our June Summer School, Arthur Woodburn explains the secret of the bankers' power.*

IT is generally considered that a man is wealthy if he possesses money, and so accustomed are we to accept this, that the relationship of money to wealth is not generally understood. In the first sentence of *Capital*, Marx says that "the wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities." In the thorough understanding of this statement lies the key to the whole mystery of money and banking. What is this vast accumulation of commodities? It is simply the goods which man has stored up in the form of houses, clothing, foodstuffs, luxuries, machinery and other means of production—in short, everything which man has wrested from nature with the object of satisfying his necessities and desires. Of course, man has always wrested from nature what has been necessary to supply his wants, but the peculiarity of the capitalist system is that the goods are not produced to meet the producers' needs, but in order to obtain profit, which is realised in selling the goods to the person requiring them. Wealth in this form has the special name of commodities.

Since under this complicated system of production, the time between the start of production and the distribution of the product is so long, mankind could hardly survive if this accumulation were destroyed or if access were wholly prevented. It follows, then, that whoever controls this accumulation of commodities controls the human race, and it is of the utmost importance that we should all understand who controls it, how it is built up, how maintained, and how distributed—in short, we cannot neglect economics.

But though our very lives depend upon this accumulation of commodities, they do not belong to us, and if we can picture the total wealth of humanity contained in a huge tank—which in reality is shops, warehouses, factories, etc.—we will be able in a simple way to see the process.

*The "wealthy" man*

A wealthy man is, then, one who possesses a great many commodities; yet we do not see wealthy men carrying about packs

on their backs like Bunyan's "Christian." Lipton, for instance, may possess an immense quantity of foodstuffs, and yet he never handles them nor even sees them, so being wealthy implies also the power to "persuade" those without wealth to keep themselves and others from touching the wealthy one's commodities. This power comes partly from custom, and partly because custom is backed up, if necessary, by a central institution called the State. If the commodity-less people should feel tempted to break their custom of being watch-dog and become wolf, the State is backed up by arguments like the police and military, composed of more commodity-less people, but disciplined. The State guarantees to the wealthy that no unauthorised person can obtain goods from the tank, and authority to consume goods from the tank can only be obtained from the wealthy or their servants if and when the commodity-less one is required to do the wealthy one some service. The irony of the position is that the commodity-less workers are forced to fill the very tank over which they have no rights at all. The control of the tank, therefore, means the control of the lives of the workers.

*How it ought to work*

In theory, if a man produces and puts commodities into the tank, he receives other goods of equal value. If he puts 100 tons of coal into the tank, he can receive in exchange 20 tons of iron. But he may not desire to use any goods at the moment. In this case, if he must take some commodity in exchange to keep till he requires something to use, what will he take? He will look for some commodity which carries value equal to 100 tons of coal in small bulk. As society discovered, this could best be done by taking gold, in which case he can take 25 ozs. of gold, which he re-exchanges as and when desired. This is exactly the reason why gold was the commodity chosen as the one by which wealth could be easily stored. Considering the variety and amount of commodities produced under modern capitalism, it would be quite impossible for the owners to exchange them for gold—there is not sufficient gold in the world. So, whether it was desired or not, developing commerce forced the surrender of the right, when one put goods into the tank, of obtaining a pledge commodity in exchange, and capitalism developed a system by which only a receipt on paper was given which entitled the producer to withdraw from the tank at his convenience a value equivalent to his contribution. Even receipts have practically given way to a great system of accounting or book-keeping, which keeps a record of what is put into the tank by each owner of wealth and what is withdrawn, showing at any time what each person has left in the tank. The keepers of these

records or books, and therefore the *custodians* of the tank, are the *banks*. As our lives depend upon the goods in the tank, and whoever controls these goods controls our lives, the mechanism of this control merits our careful attention. We shall, therefore, examine in some detail this wonderful system of capitalist accounting.

*Banks and their mechanism*

Modern accounting is a kind of scientific note-taking, extremely efficient but apparently complicated to those who do not deal with figures. Many probably who are professionally employed keeping bank books do so efficiently without understanding the underlying principles. If, however, the reader will persevere with us in our journey from the simplest note-taking through its evolution to the highly specialised form of modern capitalism, he will undoubtedly not only have a theoretical knowledge of modern accounting, but may also find himself more able to accept duties (such as auditor in his "branch") hitherto beyond his "ken."

Banks record every transaction with the social tank, noting all goods which go in and all goods which go out. In its simplest way it might be noted like this :—

May	1	Received from T. Brown	..	..	£10
	3	Received from F. Jones	..	..	5
	5	Paid to T. Brown	..	..	2
	6	Paid to F. Jones	..	..	3
	10	Received from F. Jones	..	..	1

but, as will be easily seen, if these transactions were noted month after month and year after year, each time the bank desired to know whether there was more leaving the tank than entering, it would mean adding up transactions as long as the Chartist petition. But capitalism does not long persist in useless energy and continually revolutionises itself in the office as in the workshop. Instead, therefore, of mixing receipts and payments, these are drawn apart and all the payments are entered under each other and all the receipts in another column. Not only that, but lines are drawn between the pounds, shillings and pence to prevent adding the one into the other, so that in this step forward we get clarity from neatness and a quicker method of finding how the stock in the tank stands. It would appear like this :—

Receipts or Dr.			Payments or Cr.		
May	1	To T. Brown	£10	0	0
	3	F. Jones ..	5	0	0
	10	F. Jones ..	1	0	0
May	5	By T. Brown	£2	0	0
	6	F. Jones ..	3	0	0

And if we add up each side, we see that the tank has received £16 and paid out £5 of goods. But if transactions go on we would soon have a long screed of figures, which would compel again an improvement in method. This is done by "balancing" the account periodically and adding the fresh figures since the balance. In the above account we would find that the receipts were £11 heavier than the payments, so we would add the £11 to the payments as a balance, rule it off to close the account, and then show the £11 as a balance on the side where it was heavier. In this way we can go back to any date and say "the tank stood so much to the good on this date." The closed account would be as follows:—

Receipts or Dr.*			Payments or Cr.*		
May 1	To T. Brown	£10 0 0	May 5	By T. Brown	£2 0 0
3	F. Jones ..	5 0 0	6	F. Jones	3 0 0
10	F. Jones ..	1 0 0	12	Balance ..	11 0 0
		16 0 0			16 0 0
12	To Balance ..	11 0 0			

Figures in this way never reach unmanageable dimensions, and the system of book-keeping so far examined is called "single-entry," i.e., each entry is only entered once.

In spite of the improvements we have noticed, however, as the entries grow in number, another difficulty arises so soon as we desire not to find out how the tank stands, but to find out how Brown stands with the tank. Is he receiving more than his contribution or has he a balance in the tank? This difficulty has been solved by the system of book-keeping known as "double-entry." The above is the bank's record, but presumably Brown and the others also keep records. When the bank receives £10 from Brown, it "debits" itself or acknowledges liability for it, but the opposite will take place in Brown's books, and Brown will "credit" himself with the amount, or refer the liability for its keeping to the bank. The bank, in order to know how each of its customers stands, not only keeps its own record as above, but also keeps a copy of the same transactions as recorded in their customers' books. So, when the bank received the £10 from Brown, it would make an entry in its books as shown above, and then turn to its copy of Brown's

\* The idea of receipts being called the "debtor," and the payments the "creditor" column, is simply that everything under the Dr. is due by the bank to someone, therefore "debited" to the bank, and on the other side they are "credited" with everything they can account for as having been paid out.



account and make an entry there, which would obviously be on the opposite side, since what is a credit for Brown is a debit for the bank, and *vice versa*. Let us look at the double entry of our bank's account.

T. BROWN'S ACCOUNT.

Dr. = debtor.				Cr. = credited.					
May 5	To Bank ..	£2	0	0	May 1	By Bank ..	£10	0	0
If we balance this account we add—									
May 12	To Balance ..	8	0	0					
		10	0	0			10	0	0
					May 12	By Balance ..	8	0	0

F. JONES' ACCOUNT.

Dr.				Cr.					
May 6	To Bank ..	£3	0	0	May 3	By Bank ..	£5	0	0
	Balance ..	3	0	0	10	" "	1	0	0
		6	0	0			6	0	0
					May 12	By Balance ..	3	0	0

If we reflect on these records, it stands out clearly that if the tank has goods in it, there must be record in the bank books that it is due someone, and here we find that the state of the tank at the "balance" shows the tank to have £11 in hand, but as every entry to the bank's debit shows an entry in their customers' books to their credit, it follows that when we examine Brown and Jones' accounts, we find that Jones has £3 to his credit in the tank and Brown £8, and the addition of these make up the amount in the tank. This, then, is the principle of double entry book-keeping, and taking all the books—the bank's and all their customers—all the credits must equal all the debits, this checking to some extent the accuracy of the accounting.

It will be seen, however, that any number of entries could be made on both sides of the records, and the books would still balance. This brings us to the really interesting point of our story.

*How the banks pay themselves*

An idea exists in the mind of a great many people that "money breeds money" and you just turn the sovereigns into the bank as the rancher turns cattle on to the ranch, and at the end of a year,

all that is needed is to count the little sovereigns. But alas! not one commodity can come out of the tank which is not put into the tank by human labour-power, and the mystery to be solved is how the banks can pay interest—i.e., give commodities out of the tank—merely for the privilege of looking after the tank. If the cashier of a big firm offered to pay his employers for being allowed to work, it would be time, we will all agree, for the firm to send for the auditors to examine the books, and probably the police would follow immediately.

If we act as auditors, what do we find? As accurate trustees of the goods which Society puts into the tank, only those people who have contributed to the tank have any claim on the goods, and, if we examine the books, we are entitled to assume that Jones and Brown have contributed goods to the value of £3 and £8 respectively beyond their withdrawals. But we would also find that big firms had sums to their credit—i.e., they stand in the books as being entitled to draw from the tank—and if we investigated we would find that *they had not contributed any goods to the tank*. How, then, do they have "credit" in the books, or why cannot anyone have "credit"? Because nobody knows at any given moment, owing to the anarchy of capitalist private enterprise, how the tank stands in relation to the claims, and as the whole working is in the hands of the banks, they can give claims on the goods to whom they like. They do not give them for charity. They give them to such firms as are able to show that they are in a position to draw goods from the tank, employ human labour-power and produce goods of greater value than those withdrawn from the tank. For allowing these firms the use of other people's goods, the banks receive a share of the new value created, so that at the end of the successful production, the value of the goods borrowed is replaced and more goods are put into the tank partly owned by the bank and partly owned by the firms. The people who owned the goods are none the wiser, and the banks and their confederates are both the richer.

ARTHUR WOODBURN.

(Concluded next month.)

## MARKED PASSAGES

### *Economic Haggis*

"The Socialism of Scottish people and their leaders is not that of Karl Marx, but is based on the teaching of Jesus Christ and Robert Burns."—John Robertson, M.B.E., M.P., (Junior Lord of the Treasury), in *John Bull*, 28-6-24.

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## ROBOTS ONCE MORE !

*This short article follows up in an interesting way the subject discussed by Ellen Wilkinson last month—the Industrial Revolution which is going on in our own day, as a result of the application of “scientific methods” in various industries.*

“THE first step in checking the spread of unionism in the [U.S.] coal mines and in restoring the industry to a sound position . . . will be to . . . mechanise the mines thoroughly, to standardise every operation down to the minutest detail, so that no responsibility of any kind will fall on the worker.”

Thus writes T. A. Stroup, superintendent of the Utah Fuel Co., in a report to the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers (an employers' institute). He is discussing the spread of the “unnatural condition” of trade unionism among coal miners, and how best to combat it.

Thanks to mechanisation and standardisation, the Metal Miners' Union has, he says, decayed to become the shadow of its former self. “In the metal mines, the tradition of the individual miner, capable and responsible, has been abolished. . . . The trade of the metal miner has ceased to exist, they are now all mine workers fitting into niches and conforming to the routine laid out by their managers.” A dose of the same medicine is needed by the coal miners. Then, says Stroup, the troublesome organisation known as the United Mine Workers of America, will follow the Metal Miners' Union along the path of decay.

“In coal mining” (as contrasted with metal mining) “the tradition of the individual worker has been maintained, even extended; mechanisation has been very slowly and reluctantly brought about. . . . This has caused to exist a group of skilled workers intensely jealous of their special knowledge and easily maintained in compact organisations.”

He goes on to discuss “levels of intelligence” and “Taylorism” (see *The PLEBS Outline of Psychology*, pp. 96—99). The robotised worker will not only be a better tool for the capitalist, a more successful instrument for the production of surplus value; he will also (says Stroup), being for the most part of low-grade intelligence, be more contented and better off in proportion to the extent to which he can be dehumanised till he fits into the niche prepared for him, and blindly follows the routine laid down for him by his manager :—

“The simple fact of the preponderance of the subnormal in our working population must be the point of departure for all successful schemes of employer-employee relationship.”

But, of course, this kind consideration for the welfare of the robotised worker is a mere sop to the capitalist “conscience.” The essential trend of Stroup’s argument is that the mechanisation of industry, and *the degrading of the worker’s intelligence*, will help the capitalists to combat the spread of trade unionism.

Here we have one more instance of the way in which the acquisitions of “impartial” science can be used to further particular interests—interests that are anything but impartial. The war was a supreme object lesson in this. All the great mechanical and chemical forces which had been developed mainly with a view to production, were from 1914 to 1918 switched off into the work of destruction. There is a bourgeois use of Darwinism, and there is a proletarian use; just as there are two sciences of economics—master-class economics and working-class economics. The fact that there are “mental levels” can be turned to account on either side of the barricade (*Outline*, p. 98). The science of industrial psychology has other potentialities besides those that make it useful to the exploiter and the union-smasher. Let us quote the *Outline of Psychology* in conclusion:—

“Under communism, the bourgeois studies of industrial psychology, scientific management, Taylorism, etc.—originally undertaken by the master class to promote a more exhaustive exploitation of the workers—will furnish the means of finding the right man for the job, and the right job for the man, and of securing the most harmonious and most efficient use of labour power during those hours when every member of society will be required to take his fair share in productive work.”

EDEN and CEDAR PAUL.

## LETTERS

### THE EXPERTS’ REPORT

DEAR COMRADE,—I really must protest against Comrade Philips Price’s base perversion in his article in last month’s issue of Lenin’s attitude towards the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in order to justify his own spineless plea that the Labour Government should not stand up and face the Experts’ Report.

This is what he says of it:—

“It is our business to see that the Labour Government, while being forced to accept it (the Experts’

Report), does so under protest, just as Lenin accepted the conditions of the Brest Litovsk Treaty, being unable to summon up enough strength in Russia to resist them.”

Let us recall exactly what Lenin said.

At the C.E.C. of the Russian Communist Party there was a fierce discussion on the question of the acceptance or otherwise of this treaty. Losovsky in his booklet, *The World Trade Union Movement* (page 28), repeats a description of the discussion as related

by Radek. "Ilyich (Lenin) said, 'The peasants have already voted for peace.' Radek asked with a stare, 'When?' 'They voted with their feet,' answered Ilyich, 'because they are running away from the front, and against this vote nothing can be done.'"

Are the German or British workers, may we ask Comrade Price, running away of their own free will from the Experts' Report? No. Then who is running away? The leaders of the German Social Democratic Party and the British Labour Party. Comrade Philips Price joins in this shameful retreat—"under protest!"

He, a professed Marxist and therefore a leader of the working class, advises the British workers to accept the Report with a protest—owing, forsooth, so he says, "to the relative strength of the classes throughout Europe not being in our favour at the present time." Who is responsible for this—the workers or the leaders whom he now supports? He exposed these so-called leaders of the German workers—the heads of the German Social Democratic Party—in his book, *Germany in Transition*, as the most devilish and bloody counter-revolutionaries: he showed how they split the German workers' movement by means of the most damnable betrayals, the most revolting murders, and the most widespread and wholesale debauchery. Now he supports them.

He says: "Let the advice (of the Experts) be turned into demands, and this will assist the German Socialists in their struggle."

Who are these "German Socialists"? Who is leading the struggle against the Experts' Report? It is the German Communist Party. Who has accepted the Experts' Report with open arms? The German Social Democratic Party—the "socialists."

Price's position is only equalled by the position of Kautsky at the beginning of the war. Lenin described the position most definitely in his booklet, *The Collapse of the Second International*. On pages 41—44 of the S.L.P. edition, he quotes a passage from one of Kautsky's pamphlets wherein Kautsky tries to ridicule the suggestion that the leaders of the German S.D.P., whom he says are accused of suddenly becoming imperialists at the outbreak of

war, were able to compel four million class conscious proletarians to veer right round within twenty-four hours and go against their aims. Lenin shows (1) that it was only the leaders who could speak, write and vote at that period with immunity; (2) that these leaders never consulted the masses; (3) that the leaders by their treason—a treason, the symptoms of which had already shown themselves—had betrayed the masses and had left them to be driven at the command of the military; and (4) that the masses could not act in an organised way because their previously created organisation incarnated in those leaders such as Kautsky had betrayed them.

Now, we ask Comrade Price, have the German or English masses been consulted or allowed to vote on the Experts' Report by the German S.D.P. or the English Labour Party? Neither of these things has happened.

Comrade Price, you know quite well when the masses are consulted through the efforts of the German and British Communist Parties, they show uncompromising hostility to the Report. Are you then, also to be ranked with the opportunists distorting Lenin to justify your opportunism as Kautsky distorted Marx to justify his?

Yours fraternally,

H. P. RATHBONE.

#### THE "WOBBLIES"

DEAR COMRADE,—Will British Labour Organisations with the International spirit protest against the imprisonment of the Centralia "Wobblies," buried alive in Walla Walla Jail, on sentences from twenty-five to forty years? Protests should be sent to the nearest U.S. Consular Agency, asking why these men remain in jail while the murderers of their comrade, Wesley Everest, have never been even arrested. (Everest was foully done to death—lynched in the sight of his comrades—although he was an ex-soldier, and was only defending himself when I.W.W. hall was raided and destroyed.) Organisations should send appeals for a Federal Investigation to President Coolidge, White House, Washington, U.S.A., and to Gov. Hart, Olympia, Washington, U.S.A., asking that the sentences be commuted. Copies of a

pamphlet with fuller particulars, *Eight Men Buried Alive*, will be sent to any comrade or organisation. Act quickly, comrades, these men have been in prison since 1919.

Yours fraternally,

ELISABETH GILMAN

(Chairman, Maryland Committee Civil Liberties)

London Address:—

c/o Coutts & Co., 440, Strand, W.C. 2.

AMERICAN LIBERTY

DEAR COMRADE,—The gentle satire of R. W. P.'s review of Louis F. Post's book, *The Deportations Delirium of 1920*, is altogether too kind to a brand of Liberalism that is more dangerous to the Labour movement than is the most outspoken reaction.

My wife and I were among the victims of the delirium of which Mr. Post writes. Among the 450 kept in jail by Mr. Post under deportation warrants issued in New England alone, three were driven insane, and one of these committed suicide. The conditions under which Mr. Post's Department held us were subsequently described by a United States Court as "filth, confusion and unnecessary suffering." This language is as much too gentle as Postgate's treatment of Post. During the worst period Mr. Post went on taking his salary as Assistant-Secretary of Labour, but never moved a finger to improve conditions for his victims. Eventually it was Post who signed our deportation warrants; the only persons "saved" by Post were aliens who had been arrested in error and whom Post's paymasters wished to retain in the United States as wage slaves.

It is true that Mr. Post subsequently had to put up with the kind of attack to which every man in American political life is liable. He then endeavoured to capitalise the attacks made upon him, in much the same way as, during the war, he capitalised his reputation for fiery pacifism. As a paid member of the war administration Post, the pacifist, was one of its most valuable assets. His tenure of office led many easy-going Liberals to excuse the brutal repression inaugurated by Wilson, by saying:—"If it could be avoided, Louis F. Post would never countenance it."

Will you permit two who have had

dealings with him to protest against the use of the pages of The PLEBS to describe this super-Pecksniff as a "worthy old gentleman?"

Fraternally yours,

W. T. COLYER.

A MINERS' BANNER

DEAR COMRADE,—The Chopwell Miners' Lodge has suddenly jumped into national prominence or notoriety—(I'm not sure which). They have raised the ire of the local and national press by having dared to place on their new banner photos of Keir Hardie, Marx and Lenin. True, we had slight local hostility, but with that we are not concerned. Once our own people who are opposed to us understand the full significance of the lesson portrayed on their banner, they will defend it against all comers. And while at the moment the press is rejoicing at the "profound commonsense and political wisdom" displayed by those misguided women who were hostile to the banner, they are really alarmed at the profound *working class* commonsense and political wisdom of a body such as the Chopwell Miners, who have acquired sufficient intelligence to purchase a banner such as theirs.

The only reason put forward against the banner is, that the Lodge officials are stated to be of the advanced political type. If that be a crime, I am afraid that not only the officials but the Lodge as a whole must plead: "Guilty and proud of it" as the designs and inscriptions were selected by majority vote. We are proud of our banner, proud also of the fact that we are the first Miners' Lodge in Durham County, and so far as we know the country, who have borne aloft a banner on which appeared photos of those three great pioneers, Marx, Lenin, and J. Keir Hardie.

Yours fraternally,

JACK GILLILAND,

(President Chopwell Miners' Lodge).

VICTIMISATION OF LABOUR COLLEGE STUDENTS

DEAR COMRADE.—During the last few days I have met three ex-Labour College students, all of whom have been victimised since their return from college.

Each had a tale of woe; each had been idle for over ten months. They were all miners, and to their long list of

grievances had been added a further one—a most galling one—that of being deprived of membership in the organisation under whose auspices, and at whose invitation, they had gone to college.

These men, whom we as miners have helped at considerable expense to educate that they could serve us on their return, are now being allowed to eke out a miserable existence with hardly a protest from any quarter.

Can the miners afford this to continue? Does not the miners' organisation require the services these men could render? If at any time we could afford to be without them—that time is not now.

They are certainly poorer on account of victimisation: are we not also poorer in allowing it? Something must be done!

One never hears or sees anything which indicates that the S.W.M.F. is thinking, much less discussing the question.

The men affected have no access to their organisation—they are no longer members of it—it therefore remains for us within to move in the matter. The pages of *The PLEBS* are undoubtedly open for a discussion of ways and means of giving the problem full publicity.

Let us get together and make suggestions—and that immediately.

Yours fraternally,  
G. L. J.

#### "THE PLEBS" BARRED

DEAR COMRADE,—I wrote to the Libraries Committee of the Ilford Urban District Council on June 29th asking if they would care to exhibit copies of *The PLEBS* at the Seven Kings Public Library, and offering to donate copies. The Librarian replied on June 30th and asked for copies to show his committee. These were supplied (two copies of the July issue), and the Librarian finally replied on July 29th thanking us for our offer and adding: "The committee, however, were unable to recommend the council at their meeting last week to accept the same."

I may say that copies of the *Highway* always used to be at the library, but *The PLEBS* is evidently taboo. Probably the fact that Sir Frederick Wise, M.P. (of the Federation of British Industries) is president of the local W.E.A., is a guarantee that the W.E.A. magazine is safe for the Ilford public.

Yours fraternally,  
A. J. H. OKEY

(Ilford District Secretary, N.C.L.C.).

## REVIEWS

### SCHOOL BOOKS—NEW STYLE

*Man Before History.* By Mary E. Boyle (Harrap, 2s.).

*The Building of the Modern World: Book I. The Childhood of the Western Nations.* By J. A. Brendon (Edward Arnold, 2s. 6d.).

HERE are two books—each excellently printed and illustrated—which demonstrate the advances made in the teaching of history in elementary schools during quite recent years. The first summarises in interesting fashion all the main facts so far ascertained about prehistoric men, beginning with a chapter on the Ice Ages, and going on to discuss the tools, pursuits, and dwellings of Early Men, and their principal developments from later Palæolithic times down to the beginnings of the Bronze Age and the first written history, 3000 B.C. In addition

to a large number of smaller drawings, the book has five full-page colour plates of cave-paintings of animals. A wonderful two-shilling-worth.

The other book is the first of a series of four, which aim at meeting H. G. Wells' demand for school histories which should not be simply English history, but which should relate the latter to European history. This first book covers the period between the decline of the Western (Roman) Empire and the fall of Constantinople—the end of the Middle Ages. It concerns itself perhaps a little too much with the genealogies of monarchs; but it has quite excellent sections on Feudalism, the Church, the Monasteries, the Crusades, etc., many good maps, and a useful chronological chart, A.D. 400—1500.

We Plebs need to keep in touch with books like these—if only because



the human material which comes on to us from the elementary schools will, as a result of their use, be considerably better-informed, and therefore more critical, than the men and women of our own generation had any chance to be.

J. F. H.

FREUD

*Sigmund Freud.* By F. Wittels. Translated by E. and C. Paul (Allen & Unwin, 10s. 6d.).

The absence of a sense of humour may be a serious handicap—may, indeed, be nearly madness. It was Robert Owen's monstrous seriousness and humourless-ness that made him engage in so many hopeless projects and load up his propaganda with trivial and dangerous accretions. Marat's unbalanced ferocity, in his later years, sprang also from the utter lack of humour which made him see accidental checks as injuries of overpowering gravity.

For a complete lack of humour, ultimately, means a sort of madness because it means an utter lack of sense of proportion. Humour, most times, consists in the perception of a sudden and agreeable disproportionateness—as for example between Mr. Churchill's head and his hat, or between Espoir's George V. and the idea of Regal Majesty.

In this way, the almost complete lack of humour in the Freudian and sub-Freudian school of "new psychologists" gives the key to the present flood of literature of which this book is one example. Humour is not only absent; it is a positively evil thing. Wit is "an economy of thought" remarks Herr Wittels irritably, only "because it diverts attention from the fundamental problem." [Nobody, of course, has ever admitted that they have no sense of humour, nor does our author. But his—and Freud's—idea of a joke can be seen on page 199.] Only from such roots could arise a pseudo-science, an alchemy, whose evidence is trivial, whose conclusions are evidently and strikingly absurd, and whose practice is frequently pernicious.

Perhaps that last phrase is excessive. But it is at least a tenable view and one that should be stressed in face of the tendency of vague "Leftists" to swallow Freud on the principle of

accepting any new thing. (Herr Wittels, by the by, wants to forbid women studying medicine in order to cultivate feminine rotundities! Sounds very advanced!) Take for example the following axioms, upon which further theories and practicable treatment of patients are based:

(1) Oedipus complex—apparently a universal complaint:—"The (usually unconscious) desire of a son to kill his father and possess his mother." (Perhaps one should mention that the translators weakly regard this definition as a bit "uncompromising.")

(2) Nothing is mislaid by accident. There are no blunders or forgetfulness or spoonerising. Everything is deliberate action by "the unconscious." (Try to relate this to your own every day experience, if you can!)

(3) "Ultimately he [apparently, man generally] wants to castrate all the men in the world, that he may be autocrat in the realm of love."

[Two further "axioms," and an instance of the dangerous practice of psycho-analysis, have been omitted from this review, as unsuited to a magazine like *THE PLEBS*, which does not circulate exclusively among students of medicine or physiology.—Ed., *PLEBS*.]

The method of investigation pursued in this "science," as shown by the instances of dream interpretation in this book, will charm all students of scientific method: "A patient dreamed of Kaa, the great python in Kipling's *Jungle Book*. Kaa represents strength (Kraft). But K, in the German alphabet pronounced Kah, is also an initial letter. Most of the Jewish surnames beginning with K were originally Kohn. The woman with whom the dreamer was in love had been called Kohn and changed her name to Kraft." Or see, perhaps better, the instance on page 80.

Now, it is not astonishing that people should believe these things and work them into a coherent system. They are not as wild as the "British Israel" theories. Another example would be one of the Greek ministers executed recently who believed he had glass legs, and acted coherently on that basis. But is it just to class the "new psychologists" with people who believe they have glass legs? I do not know.

Yet there are certain evidences of abnormality in the Freudian school, which suggest that it has become a magnet for people abnormal in one way or the other—who have mightily increased of course as a result of the war.

Among these evidences is Wittels' account of the Freudian circle. He describes it as a mass of seething personal hatreds and frantic jealousies. None of the satellites will consent to read the books of any of the others, but condemn them as pretentious nonsense. They listen only to the words of the Master. The Swiss and Austrian schools have been on the worst terms for years; legal action to prevent the others calling themselves "psycho-analysts" is contemplated by either side.

Every few years Freud picks out one of the crowd for a special favourite. He swears eternal friendship with him and for a short while the temporary Crown Prince is not only associated in all Freud's work, but is given a vexatious authority and predominance over the others. Within a few years, however, the Master ejects the Crown Prince from his seat with violence and contempt. His views are discovered to be detestable, his scientific abilities to be contemptible. The whole school, in the public press, flings itself upon him in ecstatic fury, covering him with abuse and his theories with ridicule until he prudently withdraws from the danger zone. Jung, Stekel, Adler and Wittels are all such dethroned and disgraced princes.

Herr Wittels also mentions that psycho-analysts are given more than others to suicide, not so much because of the horrible things they find in their patients' minds as because of what they find in their own.

It only remains to be added that he is not an opponent, but an advocate, of Freud's principles. The translators have done their work well. They have added an appendix containing many strange and ugly words and one lamentable excursion into philology.

R. W. P.

#### THE DISTRIBUTIVE WORKER

*Commercial Employees and Protective Legislation.* By J. Hallsworth (Lab. Pub. Co., 1s. paper; 2s. 6d. cloth).

Trade union action has never yet succeeded in standardising the conditions

for shop assistants and commercial employees generally. Regarding themselves as "a cut above the manual worker" their wages and conditions have yet been such as no body of artisans would tolerate. Their only protection from absolutely unrestricted exploitation has been merely scraps of legislation of a patchwork character, several of which, such as Child Labour Legislation, Public Health Legislation, and The Truck Acts, only incidentally affect shop workers. Even this scanty protection is largely of a permissive nature and is complicated by a kind of local option which varies conditions in different localities according to the measures taken by the Local Authorities.

The active shop worker and his trade unions naturally seek to take full advantage of any protective legislation, and this little book is invaluable for that purpose. It summarises clearly and concisely all the legislation affecting the conditions of shop life and the index makes it easily available for ready reference. No trade union branch catering for commercial employees should be without it.

The summarising of this legislation also enables one to see how little legal protection this class of worker has, and it impresses one more and more with the need for a strong trade union organisation. Even the proposed legislation, which the book deals with, mild though it is, requires for its adequate enforcement trade union supervision and a share in the administration of the Acts by the unions. The author points this out and hopes that future legal enactments will clear the road for further industrial action.

It is probable, however, that trade unionism will spread among shop assistants, even apart from legislative reform, owing to the development of the large stores and multiple shops, in the same way as the herding of the workers into the factories led to the growth of trade unionism among the factory workers.

The best legislation is the result of industrial activity, whereas trade union organisation that results from legislative action is not likely to be of either a strong or permanent character. This is not likely to be forgotten by a man with the record of trade union activity

among shop assistants that Mr. Halls-worth has, and he sums it up on the last page when he says "it would be most unwise to check the growth of trade unionism among the workers at present outside the ranks by teaching them to rely entirely on the legislative method of obtaining reform."

Unfortunately there is that tendency at work, and properly used this little book should help to counteract it.

DAN STEPHENSON.

#### PROUDHON

*General Idea of the Revolution of the XIXth Century.* By J. P. Proudhon (Freedom Press, 2s. 6d.).

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Proudhon was cited as one of the high priests of "bourgeois socialism." In the present work, completed some three years later, he demonstrates that the particular sections of the bourgeoisie for whom he feels are the business men and the small proprietors generally; a very natural feeling for a French social philosopher—especially in 1851.

The business men—who, though not naturally modest or self-effacing, could hardly recognise themselves in the eloquent, flattering eulogies of Proudhon—have ever been, it appears, the saviours of society, ever the initiators of the progress of society; and he appeals to them in his dedicatory preface to resume their traditional role, and save the untutored but inoffensive masses from themselves.

Proudhon, as we are not unprepared to find, vigorously attacks the then developing industry with its minute sub-division of the labour process. Who, he asks, "Who would be daring enough to take one man for a hammer, another for a spade, this one for a hook, that one for a lever? Who could arrogate the right to exploit such a body of slaves?" Proudhon's reason and justice could not justify such exploitation, but his admired business men had no such qualms and history has not failed to reward such daring and arrogance.

What Proudhon's reason and sense of justice dictated was an association of employer and employed. Such association he declares to be "abso-

lutely right and necessary," and he further informs us that "there is not one of the mercantile class, acquainted with commerce and industry and their innumerable risks, who would not prefer a fixed salary and honourable position in a working association to all the worries of a private business."

On the other hand, the mass of peasantry will have no incentive to work satisfactorily without the promise of the private ownership of the land they cultivate. And "myriads of small manufacturers, dealers, and artisans" will prefer complete independence to either association with employers and other workers or to private possession and cultivation of the soil, these being "sure of a country wherever they can find work." Such is to be the foundation of the "grandiose" structure of the Revolution as proposed by Proudhon, who thus seeks to make himself all things to all men.

Proudhon's idea of revolution is therefore association of the classes, a not very original idea either before or since 1851. As he puts it: "Reconciliation is revolution, I assure you"—the ones whom he seeks to reassure being his beloved business men. And it is, of course, these who must be reconciled with the untutored working men. The latter, on their side, must "get rid of a mean and jealous spirit and recognise that there is room for everyone in the sunlight of the Revolution."

If only the bourgeoisie will assume the heroic role of leadership assigned by Proudhon, and if the masses will but see the folly of their interminable and destructive quarrels, all shall be better than well. Unfortunately, capitalism and its class struggles have gone their way neglectful, and for the most part quite ignorant, of the pleadings and preachments of Proudhon. The value of his work lies not in these things but in his assertion of the final absorption of the functions of government in the economic organism.

T. A.

#### SPAIN

*Spain To-day.* By Frank B. Deakin (Labour Publishing Company, 7s. 6d.).

The existing social system in Spain is doomed to an early break-down.

The governing classes are in a condition of prolonged panic and recently took steps to consolidate their power by establishing a military directory and a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. But the position remains unstable. There are a number of conflicting currents in the stream of events. Not only is there a state of violent hostility between the workers and peasants on the one hand, and the capitalists and the landlords on the other, but there are important divisions in the ranks both of the exploiters and of the exploited.

The rulers of Spain are still chiefly a parasitic class of aristocratic landowners and their hangers-on. But their hegemony is strongly contested by the industrial capitalists, whose claim to power is the real basis of the separatist movement in Catalonia (the most highly industrialised area containing the important city of Barcelona).

The challenge to the existing order which is offered by the working class is violent but ineffective. The population is largely illiterate. The whole population is bemused by religion and constitutionally disinclined to constant effort owing to racial characteristics (e.g. the oriental stoicism of the Arabic elements) and to lack of political ability. Moreover, a reformist Labour movement does much to sap the vitality of the working class.

The chaotic condition of public affairs brought about by the corruption and incompetence of the Spanish rulers almost passes belief. Education, hygiene, transport, are grossly undeveloped. Mr. Deakin gives graphic details of the deficiencies of the country in these matters. He hopes for a new régime of a Liberal-Labour sort, inspired by high ideals and gifted with technical efficiency. He sees that material progress will never be made under the rule of the landlords, but he does not seem to realise that a triumph of the industrialists, while it might bring material improvements, would not solve the social problem. He is really an advocate of a bourgeois revolution qualified by social reform.

The book contains many useful and interesting facts, but suffers from the lack of a clear principle. The class division of society is recognised, but the class issue is not shewn as the

fundamental one. The chapter on "The Workers" is inadequate. We could well have spared the prolonged description of bad smells in Madrid (even "a few yards outside the grounds of the British Embassy itself!") for a complete account of the working class and their organisation.

L. W.

## THE W.E.A.

The W.E.A. has sent for review a large souvenir, engraved on wood, with woodcuts, of its 21st birthday celebrations. The paper is good and the inking well done. The woodcuts are not uniformly successful and there will be two opinions on the quality of the wood-engraver's lettering. The whole effect, however, is not displeasing.

There are two serious errors. The first is, the inclusion of a portrait of Cobbett. Cobbett's leading ideas on education were three: (1) a devouring contempt for University teaching, and its exponents; (2) a contempt for all education that was not of definite use to the workers; (3) a deep conviction that the workers must control their own educational institutions, or the others would ruin them. It is easy to imagine how he would have flayed the collection of smugs who make up the W.E.A. It is not clear why they have chosen to insult his memory by including his portrait here.

The second error is that the souvenir is printed in red by mistake for yellow.

R. W. P.

## FIFE MINERS' UNION

*The Fife Miners' Union Split* (No price or publisher given).

This most important little pamphlet is one of a kind that fortunately is very rare in Britain. It describes a split on ultimately political grounds in a union. In almost every continental trade union such splits have occurred. The strength of the workers has been crippled by the conflicts between right and left wings, and the only man to benefit has been the boss. In Britain up till now that has not been so. There is the Fife Miners' Split, and the recent breakaway of yellow P.O. telegraphists. Perhaps one could also count the seamen's dissensions as vaguely similar. But these three complete the list—and may it grow no longer.

This pamphlet gives the case of the rebels who have broken away, under the leadership of Mr. Hodge, from the old union dominated by Mr. Adamson. According to the statements in this pamphlet the behaviour of the existing officials was flagrantly dishonest and corrupt, and a large majority of the union rank and file vainly exhausted every constitutional avenue to express its will, being met with American boss methods that made members' control over the union impossible. If this is true—we have only one side before us—and only if this is true, the rebels' action was justified. But short of such

extreme circumstances, to split a union is a serious crime against the working class.

R. W. P.

The *Socialist Review* (New Series, No. 1), gives prominence to an article by the editor, John Scurr, M.P., on "Labour and the Empire." A good deal of this article consists of quotations from—or paraphrases of—our Economic Geography Textbook; but the writer makes no acknowledgment of his indebtedness. We respectfully submit that this is not quite playing the game.

## "EDUCATION—A MEDLEY"

### A Play for Plebs

AS our readers will note, our Book List for this autumn includes two plays, each of great interest to worker-students. Toller's great drama is referred to elsewhere in this issue. The second play (by the author of *English for Home Students*) is of peculiar interest to all Plebs, and hence our reason for making special arrangements with the publishers, Messrs. Allen and Unwin, for a PLEBS Edition at less than the ordinary published price.

*Education: A Medley in 4 Acts* is not written specifically from the Pleb standpoint. But it raises, in a vividly interesting way, such questions as "Are the universities class preserves or 'national' training centres?"

"Can the workers expect to get what they want from existing universities?"

The story of the play might have been

devised by an I.W.C.Er. Each of the first three acts tells how a lectureship was founded at Cambridge; the first by a mediæval abbot who, bested by a Jew money-lender, desired to arrange for the annual preaching of a sermon against usury; the second by a mid-Victorian railway king, anxious to popularise capitalist economics; and the third by a Co-operative Society, which decided to expend a post-war boom "divi" on founding a lectureship in "co-operative economics." The last act tells how the university authorities "pooled" all three endowments and appointed a Professor of Economics whose job it would be to reconcile the divergent aims of the three.

It is a pretty little piece of satire, and as a public reading—in whole or in part—with the "moral" rubbed in from the I.C.W.E. point of view, it will make excellent propaganda.

## NOTES BY THE WAY

### A Secret File

R. W. P. writes:—Searching at the Record Office recently I was able to consult—perhaps through official inadvertence—a volume of "private and secret" Home Office correspondence from 1819 to 1844. The earlier part is full of

letters encouraging the use of spies and eagerly collecting their information. But I was somewhat surprised to find no trace of spy activities against the Chartists. I inspected thoroughly from 1838 to 1844 inclusive and found only innumerable warrants ordering the opening of letters. The victims included

Dr. Taylor (whose correspondence was to be lost in case the delay was noted) practically all the Chartist leaders, T. S. Duncombe, M.P., and Richard Cobden!

The Home Secretary, Graham, was anxious in 1842, unlike Sidmouth, to prevent troops ever being used to break strikes. He writes (25-8-42) to Earl Talbot desiring him to urge the masters to grant the "just causes of complaint" of the workers about their wages. "I am by no means prepared to use Military Force to compel a reduction of wages or to uphold a grinding system of Truck."

Thus, with Sidmouth, before the Reform Bill of 1832, we have a shaky landowners' government, cruel because frightened, and scaring itself stiff with spy report. After the Bill and the advent of the middle classes to power, a strong capitalist government, conscious of its strength, cool, collected and almost generous.

*Notindaj Aferoj*

La Traduka Komitato de B.L.E.S.

decidis ritigi la literaturon por laborist-studentoj tutmondaj per Esperantigo de *Skizo de Ekonomia Geografio*. Jam komencis la laboro kaj la Eldonfako de S.A.T. baldaŭ ricevos la presindan verkon.

La ruĝuloj de S.A.T. kongresis kvarfoje sub la honorprezideco de Ernst Toller ĉe Brussels, Aug. 14-16. Britaj delegatoj partoprenis la diskuton pri grava problemo: kiel pli bone apliki Esperanton al la servo de la laboristoj. Plena raporto aperos en *Sennaciulo* la nova ĉiusemajna gazeto.

Tre leginda estas la Augusta numero de la *Lit-Scienca Aldono de S.R.* (78 pp.). Por ĝi Barbusse, Gorki, Toller, Rolland, Upton Sinclair kaj aliaj verkis specialajn artikolojn kaj ĉiu denuncis la militon je la dekjara datreveno de la mondkatastrofo, 1914a, Havebla ĉe Spiller, 13, Dewsbury Rd., London, N.W. 10, 6d. postpaid.

## The PLEBS "ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY" & "IMPERIALISM" Textbooks

*We have just received a copy of the Russian edition of the Plebs "Outline of Economic Geography," which has been translated for use in the Soviet schools; and we are informed that a Russian edition of our "Outline of Modern Imperialism" is in the press, and will be published shortly. Our readers will be interested in the following translation of the special Preface to the Economic Geography Textbook.*

**T**HE book here presented, though small in size, is rich in content. The account of the contemporary economic and political geography of the world is preceded by a sketch of universal history. In this respect, the work differs from ordinary geographical textbooks, which usually exclude historical considerations.

But this is not the only merit of the book. Nor is its only merit that it contains from 40 to 50 historical and geographical maps. We have here a Marxist manual of geography in which

the geographical and historical part is linked to the political problems of our own time, and in especial to the fundamental problem of the conquest of power by the international proletariat, the creation of a world-wide socialist economy.

There can be no doubt that this book will secure tens of thousands of readers; that, above all, it will be an indispensable aid in our schools and especially in the Party schools; that, finally, it will be very useful to the average Party member. Our Party (recently reinforced by the accession of 200,000

ron per l'ar  
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workers), since it rules the State, must in its everyday life concern itself and interest itself in the problems of international politics—must "think in continents," to quote the phrase of the British imperialist, Joseph Chamberlain.

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Of course, the elements of economic and political geography presented in this book do not furnish all the knowledge requisite for such an understanding.

There is one thing to be regretted. That is the fact that the book was written for British readers and in the English tongue, from which this translation has been made. This indispensable manual of geography has appeared in capitalist Britain, whereas here in Russia, where the communists are in power, no such manual as yet exists!

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Nay, worse! Not only have we not had an economic geography of the world; we have not yet even a satisfactory Marxist economic geography of our own Union of Soviet Republics!  
N. POPOFF.

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#### LABOUR COLLEGE (LONDON) STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION.

**T**HE students held their annual "breaking up" social on Saturday, July 19th (the summer vacation being from July 26th to September 16th). The number of students finishing their two years' course are only three. This leaves twenty-four students to return after the vacation for their second year's course.

The three students, who are returning to the South Wales coalfield, have no prospects whatever of finding work. This question of securing employment for ex-students ought to be settled once and for all by the two Executives. If this is not done, the Unions concerned cannot expect to get full value out of the students for whose training they have paid.

Several students have taken the opportunity to visit Russia for practical experience during the summer vacation. They left on July 26th, sailing with the returning fifty Russian trade unionists who had been on a visit to this country. Many of us deplore the reception these Russian comrades re-

ceived from the official Trade Union movement in this country. Much of their time was wasted in looking for suitable accommodation during their visit. Our students from the Labour College have been granted certain privileges and facilities during their visit to Russia.

The Committee of Enquiry gave permission to the present residential students to send one representative to state their case. The Enquiry has now finished, and everyone is keenly awaiting the report which is somewhat overdue.

J. T. D.

#### THE MINORITY MOVEMENT AND I.W.C.E.

The following resolution, moved by Com. Aitken (Coatbridge and Airdrie Trades Council), and seconded by a N.U.R. delegate (Covent Garden branch), was passed unanimously at the National Minority Movement Conference, held at Battersea, Aug. 24th:—

This Conference of the National Minority Movement places on record the important part which education must play in the training and development of an intelligent and militant rank and file in the Trade Union Movement.

It declares that for this purpose the Education to be provided must be free of all capitalist control through the Universities or otherwise.

Further, it must be definitely working class in character, be based on a recognition of the class struggle, and have for its immediate purpose the education of the workers for their industrial and political struggles against capitalism throughout the world and for the abolition of the capitalist system.

This Conference notes with pleasure the increasing interest which is being taken on this question throughout the Trade Union Movement, and declares that the National Minority Movement shall recognise as one of its immediate objects the adoption of Independent Working-class Educational schemes through the medium of the National Council of Labour Colleges by the Trade Unions of this country.

# 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)*

**T**HE Labour College, London.—W. H. Mainwaring who has for some years been the Economics Lecturer at the Labour College, London, as well as Vice-Principal, and who is one of the best known supporters of I.W.C.E. in South Wales, has recently been elected Miners' Agent for the Rhondda, and the movement extends to him its hearty congratulations. We understand the Governors of the College have made Alex. Robertson Vice-Principal in his stead, and that T. Ashcroft, who has been doing excellent work in the Liverpool area, has been appointed Lecturer in Economics at the College.

**Building Trade Dispute.**—It is a pleasure to report that a considerable amount of help has been given by N.C.L.C. organisers and lecturers to the Building Trade Workers. This is the way to show that our education is of practical value to the working-class Movement.

**N.C.L.C. Executive.**—Two new members have joined the Executive—W. D. Rae (of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union) and G. S. Aitken (of the Scottish Labour College).

**Vehicle Builders.**—No one has yet written Head Office saying what happened to the N.C.L.C. resolutions. Will someone kindly oblige, and will enthusiasts in this and other Unions please note that it will be a great help if, whenever they get an educational resolution put down for any Conference, they advise the exact terms of the resolution to N.C.L.C. Headquarters?

**Week-end Schools.**—Colleges are strongly advised to arrange non-residential Week-end and Day Schools to which members of the National Unions having Educational Schemes will be entitled to free admission, others paying a small fee. This is one of the best means of making our educational work a success during the summer period.

**British Trades Union Congress.**—The General Council of the British Trades Union Congress has made a grant of £100 to the N.C.L.C.

**Supplies.**—In reply to requests duplicate letter books have been printed for the use of local Colleges and duplicate receipt books are also being printed for the same purpose. A propaganda leaflet intended to interest workers in our Movement entitled "Are You A Live Wire?" has been published. The reverse side is blank in order that Colleges purchasing supplies from Headquarters can print thereon particulars of the local winter classes or any other information. Full use should be made of all these supplies.

In a number of cases, local Colleges are providing their young lecturers with N.C.L.C. Correspondence Courses with a view to assisting them in the earlier stages of lecture work. This is an excellent plan that might well be followed by other Colleges.

**Lantern Slides.**—There is no doubt that the lantern lecture is by far the best means of popularising our work and if a charge is made it can, as a rule, be a source of income. Colleges desiring sets of slides should order them as soon as possible.

**What the Divisions are doing:**

**Division 1.**—Classes have been running at Canning Town, Bethnal Green, Holborn, Islington, Tottenham and Willesden. In addition a substantial number of branch lectures has been given and new affiliations are still being received. London readers might inquire whether their organisations are affiliated.

**Division 2.**—An extensive lecture tour is now being arranged for this Division.

**Division 3.**—Up to August 12th, 31 lectures have been given to meetings organised by Building Trade Disputes Committees with attendances of 250 in



big centres. "What an educational movement we could have if men hadn't to go to work!" was one comment. We have certainly interested other sections of the N.F.B.T.O. Special Meetings arranged at High Wycombe, Peterboro', Lowestoft, Grays and Norwich with Alex. Gossip, G. Young and Newbold among the lecturers and we hope by use of lantern slides to make a general start with classes by September 21st. Two lantern lectures are to be given at A.E.U. Institute, Luton, on September 21st and 28th.

*Division 4.*—A successful conference was held in the Swansea area for the purpose of stimulating and developing our activities and a committee was elected from the conference in order to carry out the necessary steps. Further Day Schools have been run with very satisfactory results and we hope to make a big forward move during the course of the coming winter.

*Division 6.*—In Birmingham the I.L.P. Council has appointed two delegates to the Birmingham Labour College Committee. This is part result of the campaign that is presently being carried out in Birmingham in order to develop a strong Labour College. It is hoped to report substantial progress in the Potteries shortly.

*Division 7.*—Our old Comrade Walter Hill, the N.U.D.A.W. agent for the Shipley division, is going to assist in opening classes in a number of towns in Yorkshire. Everything promises well for a good winter's programme throughout the division.

*Division 8.*—In consequence of the loss of our good friend Comrade Ashcroft's services we are at present considering applications for the vacancy. After an address by Jack Hamilton, the Darwin District Trades and Labour Council unanimously agreed to affiliate to the North Lancs Area, N.C.L.C., and to organise classes for next winter. A most successful week-end school, with J. F. Horrabin and T. Ashcroft as lecturers, was held on August 9th and 10th with A. N. Denaro, Secretary of the Liverpool and District Carters and Motormen's Union and A. Davison, Secretary of the Liverpool Trades and Labour Council in the chair on Saturday and Sunday respectively.

The Annual Meeting of the Liverpool Labour College will be held in Clifton House, 41, Islington, Liverpool, on Saturday, September 20th, at 3 p.m. The speakers will include J. Gibbins, M.P., T. Ashcroft, and (it is hoped) Geo. Hicks.

*Division 9.*—With reference to the paragraph in last month's notes we have since learned that at the last moment the British Broadcasting Company refused to allow Comrade Coxon to give his address without very severely censoring his speech. The consequence was that he refused to proceed on the ground that the censorship made it impossible for him to state the case for the N.C.L.C. We are having a further week-end school in September and a successful meeting of the Wheatley and Sherburn branches of the N.U.D.A.W. has been held. A band of the Ashington District students arranged a trip to Edinburgh where they were met and taken about by some of the officials and friends of the Edinburgh and District Labour College.

*Division 10 (Scotland).*—The Aberdeen Labour College has held a successful conference at Inverurie with D. Browett as speaker in addition to its Annual Meeting at Aberdeen which was addressed by J. P. M. Millar. Secretary Morrison and his Colleges deserve all praise for the way they are pushing our work in the North. Glasgow District has been busy organising and one result is the affiliation of the very large Glasgow branch of the U.P.W. The Renfrewshire Committee is organising a conference in the Greenock part of its area and steps are being taken to organise a conference for Dumbarton. Both the Lanarkshire and Ayrshire Committees are busy endeavouring to get increased support from the local mining organisations. A. J. Cook is to address the annual conferences of both committees.

#### TO WORKERS' UNION MEMBERS

Will all Plebs who are members of the Workers' Union, get their branches to include an education scheme in their amendment to union rules, which must be in early next month?

## The PLEBS Page

### Can we run our own Guest House?

**T**HE description of Cober Hill Summer School moved many comrades to write expressing their envy at the lucky ones who were present, and those who were present at Bispham realised what possibilities are latent in these gatherings of the clans. Bispham will be famous for one thing, and that is the idea that was brought forward that we needed (and could run, if we set about it) our own Guest House. We had a jolly group of comrades and the weather was perfect *but* . . . and contained in that *but* are many things better left unsaid. We were not able to book the whole place, which meant that our political ideas as expressed in riotous song displeased other visitors; and the accommodation was not up to the standard that we have come to look for after Culheth and Cober Hill.

*So what about it, Plebs?* I may as well confess that I am as keen about this as about anything for a long time, and am willing to place myself at the disposal of the League in organising what I feel sure would turn out to be one of our greatest assets. Will everyone and anyone interested write their ideas, suggestions, send cheques (if any), and begin discussing the proposition? I can promise that all the material shall be carefully collated and that as the idea materialises Plebs Leaguers shall be kept informed through these pages of what is taking place. Here are some preliminary ideas about it, so that comrades will have something to criticise:—

We need a largish house with ground attached and room to develop. It must be in a central position in England, but not too near any one of our centres, as it would be important that no one College should have too great an advantage over others more distant in making use of such a house. Rather a remote place preferred as the cheaper it is the better. A seaside place would obviously be desirable as far as the Summer School is concerned, but there are two important points

to be borne in mind against a seaside place: (i.) If any use is to be made of it in winter, inland is better than seaside; (ii.) it is almost impossible to get either a cheap place or a place that is more or less equidistant from the different districts at the seaside. The question of place seems to point to the Peak district of Derbyshire, or round about Belper, Wirksworth or Derby. (Local comrades, please note.)

The money might be raised in several ways: (i.) The formation of a company on the same lines as C. H. Kerr and Co. worked on in their publishing business; shares subscribed by individuals or groups; no dividends, but reduction in fees to shareholders for board and lodging. All profits to go to improving the Guest House, adding further buildings, or making it more available for the shareholders (schemes such as the pooling of fares, etc.); (ii.) classes, groups or individuals to donate furniture or other requisites; (iii.) money for the purchase of buildings to be subscribed by special efforts such as popular lectures, whist drives, dances.

For the convenience of head office, will comrades writing on this subject mark letters "Guest House," or, if enclosing in other correspondence, write on a separate sheet? Let us hear from everybody.

One of the liveliest agencies for reviving interest in the organisation of N.C.L.C. students is the Liverpool Students' Association. Membership includes enrolment in the Plebs League, and in a Book and Magazine Club, and groups are active in propaganda, debates, play readings, etc., in Birkenhead, Liverpool, St. Helens and Wigan. The secretary is Mr. S. C. Hills, 4, Mason Street, Birkenhead. One of the best ways of building up our movement is to get students (after they leave the classes) to join the League (either directly or through such an organisation) and Liverpool comrades are finding that a great deal of good propaganda can be done by this means. Other districts please take note. W. H.

# The PLEBS LEAGUE

## CONSTITUTION

*Object.*—The general aim of the Plebs League is :—To develop and increase the class-consciousness of the workers, by propaganda and education, in order to aid them to destroy wage-slavery and to win power.

*Methods.*—The means used for this end are :—

1. The support of the National Council of Labour Colleges and the classes run under its auspices.
2. The maintenance of the class-conscious character of the teaching in the present organs and institutions of independent working-class education.
3. The publication of a Magazine and, in concert with the N.C.L.C., of text-books, syllabuses and other publications.
4. The holding of summer schools, teachers' conferences, etc.
5. Propaganda among workers' organisations for the adoption of new schemes of independent working-class education or the extension of existing schemes.

The League is intended to link together members of the Labour Movement for the discussion and advancement of a revolutionary industrial and political movement suited to British conditions.

*Every supporter of independent working-class education —“Education towards Revolution,” in Morris's phrase—should join the Plebs League. The League is the link between tutors, organisers, officials, class-students, and every worker in our movement.*

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