

The May 1926

# PLEBS

---

---

*Thoughts on May and October*

Maurice Dobb

*The American Civil War  
and British Labour*

T. A. Jackson


*The "Literature of the Job"*

Ellen Wilkinson, M.P.

*Easton Lodge and the N.C.L.C.*

J. P. M. Millar



Published  monthly by  
THE PLEBS LEAGUE  
162a Buckingham Palace Road S.W.1  
FOUR PENCE

*"There has probably been no greater revolution of ideas than in the new educational system as practised in Soviet Russia."*  
—Report of the British Trade Union Delegation, 1925.

# EDUCATION IN SOVIET RUSSIA

BY

SCOTT NEARING

*(author of "The American Empire," "Dollar Diplomacy," &c.)*

This is the first detailed account to appear in English of the educational work and experiments carried on by the Soviet Government. It is, therefore, a book of special interest to all I.W.C.E.ers. As the list of chapter-headings shows, it covers the whole Russian educational system, and it is the result of a first-hand study of that system—Scott Nearing having only recently returned from a tour in Russia in the course of which he visited the various educational institutions here described.

## CONTENTS

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Foreword.   | 9. Institutes.  |
| 2. A Dark Educational Past (Education under the Tsar). | 10. Experiments with Subject-Matter: the Course of Study. |
| 3. The Soviet Educational Structure.                   | 11. Experiments with Methods of Instruction.              |
| 4. Pre-School Educational Work.                        | 12. Organisation Among the Pupils.                        |
| 5. Social Education—the Labour School.                 | 13. Organisation Among Educational Workers.               |
| 6. Professional Education—High Schools.                | 14. Higher Education for Workers.                         |
| 7. Higher Technical Schools.                           | 15. Unifying Education.                                   |
| 8. Universities.                                       | 16. Socialising Culture.                                  |

160 pp. Paper covers. Price 2s.

*(Postpaid 2s. 2d. Per 12, £1 1s.)*

Published by THE PLEBS LEAGUE,  
162a Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1

The Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

# THE PLEBS

---

---

Vol. XVIII

May, 1926

No. 5

---

---

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>The Pleb Point of View</b> <i>By M.H.D., M.S., &amp; J.F.H.</i>	162
<b>Thoughts on May and October</b> .. <i>By Maurice Dobb</i>	165
<b>American Civil War and British Labour</b> <i>By T.A. Jackson</i>	171
<b>The "Literature of the Job"</b> <i>By Ellen Wilkinson, M.P.</i>	177
<b>History and the Workers:</b>	
II. "Getting it Over" .. .. <i>By Mark Starr</i>	179
<b>Easton Lodge and the N.C.L.C.</b> <i>By J. P. M. Millar</i>	182
<b>Notes by the Way for Tutors and Students</b> .. ..	184
<b>Letters:</b> <i>from F. Griffiths, H. A. Marquand, J. M. Williams,</i> <i>Robt. Buchan, J. F. Stone, &amp;c.</i> .. ..	188
<b>Reviews:</b> South Wales History: Proportional Representa- tion: Russian Gold: British Trade Unionism: <i>Via Utopia</i> .. ..	189
<b>National Council of Labour Colleges: Notes and News</b>	194
<b>Plebs League Notes</b> .. .. <i>By K. S.</i>	198
<b>The Plebs Bookshelf</b> .. .. <i>By J. F. H.</i>	199

---

Published by The PLEBS LEAGUE,  
162a Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1.

## The PLEB POINT of VIEW

**A**T the time of writing it is still uncertain whether these words will be read under normal circumstances, or whether the coal-owners will have forced a great industrial deadlock by their brutal determination to cut down the miners' wages still further below subsistence point. Every I.W.C.E.er, if the struggle is upon us, will play his part—in the Councils of Action which will be needed in each locality—helping to obtain and distribute food supplies—serving in Protection or Propaganda corps, or in the organisation of couriers which would ensure contact between the various districts. The aim of our movement is *Education for Action*; and when action is needed it's up to us to prove that we have been well and truly educated! We study history in order to fit ourselves to make it.

*The Crisis*

On another page this month J. P. M. Millar states the N.C.L.C. point of view on the Easton Lodge College Scheme. With that statement we of The PLEBS are entirely in agreement. Easton Lodge, controlled by the Trades Union Congress and supported by every Union in the country, may mark a great step forward in the history of workers' education in Britain. Whether it actually does so or not depends on two things: (1) the aims of the College and the character of its teaching; and (2) the extent to which it is linked with the evening-class movement throughout the country—not only providing that movement with capable and well-equipped tutors, but drawing its students from those classes, and seeing that the classes give these students the preliminary training which will enable them to make fuller use of their term of residence at the College. We hope and trust that in both these particulars the new College is going to fill the bill.

*Easton Lodge*

Meantime, may we press upon the General Council—if only as an obviously necessary condition of the wholehearted support which the College will need if it is to make good—the desirability of taking into their confidence at the earliest opportunity not only those educational bodies which have done the pioneer work, but the rank and file of the Trade Union movement as a whole. The more the workers know about the new College and its aims the better for its chances of real success. And surely those organisations which, *within the working-class movement*, have for years been carrying on educational work and propaganda, have earned the right to be

taken into consultation before the plans for the College are all cut and dried.

British capitalism has had a hard struggle to get back to "normalcy"—to 1914 conditions. And still, eight years after the Armistice, and twelve months after the much-vaunted return to gold, there is no break in the gloom of the worst depression British capitalism has known! A 5 per cent Bank Rate, and over a million unemployed! In fact, some bright "optimists" are beginning to say that we have already had all the trade "boom" that we're going to have, and that it's now time for a fresh depression!

For some time some of the more far-sighted capitalist henchmen have seen that something radical will have to be done if capitalism is to regain even its 1914 position—let alone advance beyond it. They see that British capitalism has lost some of her position in the markets of the world, that British industry is out-of-date and inefficient, and that wage-reductions are no remedy, because they merely intensify the class-struggle. Nearly two years ago Mr. Keynes suggested breaking allegiance to King Gold, and pursuing a policy of "a little inflation," which, like a drug to a consumptive patient, might revive capitalism to a brief burst of prosperity, in which improved employment would ease discontent, and big capital-development schemes in electricity and transport might serve to raise British capitalism to a higher level of efficiency.

Now we see the new "progressive" policy of British capitalism heralded with a burst of trumpets. Praise of American efficiency methods echoes from every wall: "The Economy of High Wages"! Two engineers visit U.S.A. and return to write a book on the secret of American prosperity, prefaced by the Editor of *The Economist*, acclaimed in bold headlines by all the press. Deputations of tame trade unionists are sent by the *Daily Mail* across the Atlantic like twentieth century Magi to bring back a similar message. America is prosperous because she has high wages and no labour-troubles, hard work, mass-production and low costs! If British capitalism is to retain her position, she must do the same!

This new policy is not very surprising, after all, if we consider it carefully. Dawes was the attempt to stabilise Europe with U.S.A. help. The Baldwin Government marked capitalist consolidation against working-class revolt at home and in Europe. Locarno was the attempted political stabilisation of Europe (against Russia and against the working class), and the attempt of British Imperialism to regain a position of political leadership in European affairs. Now, after consolidation, comes British capitalism's "new economic policy" in order to fight to retain her "place in the sun"

against the forces of decline and the dangerous rivalry of U.S.A. This means bringing industrial methods up-to-date and increasing the intensity of labour by "scientific management." Red Friday showed them that open assaults on wages are fraught with danger. Openly to attack trade union status arouses opposition from the mildest Methodist of Eccleston Square. Therefore, more indirect and subtle methods must be tried. To preach "The Economy of High Wages" will gain the support of the leaders of Labour who have been preaching it for years. These can be made partners in the campaign, along with the Oswald Mosleys, etc., and so be made excellent instruments against the militant "Left-wing." And behind this fat and tempting worm there is some chance that the rank and file will not see the barb of "payment by results," weakening of T.U. privileges, and American methods of "speeding up"! As Purcell wrote after his recent visit to the U.S.A., wages may be high there, but prices are high too, and "the American industrial regime is a monotonous tyranny, in which the worker is regulated and ordered and disciplined to the last possible degree . . . nothing more nor less than a slave system."

But "high wages" are still only in the realm of words, and for the present are likely to remain so. We don't see the mineowners or the engineering employers acting on these fine phrases! So we want a united class front in defence of the miners to-day; and we want equally a united class front against Fordism (if it comes) to-morrow. For be sure the capitalists won't do anything for love! They will want a good stout *quid pro quo*.

Fordism means working the worker to death like a machine for a score of years, and then throwing him onto the scrap-heap!

Whatever our views as to its economic—or tactical—practicability, we, as working-class educationists, should welcome the new "Living Wage" slogan of the I.L.P., for the opportunity it offers of pressing home economic truths and of re-discussing working-class policy as a whole. The test of our usefulness, as a movement, is that we should be ready to adapt ourselves to the needs and problems of the moment; making those problems the immediate text of our teaching, and relating them to those economic and historical principles which are its groundwork.

Such a development of Socialist propaganda, therefore, as is foreshadowed by the new I.L.P. programme ought to be a challenge to us to demonstrate the value of our educational work by concentrating on a clear exposition and discussion both of the principles involved and their application to the strategy of the day-to-day struggle. On one point we should certainly lay stress from the

outset. The Trade Unions have always been attacking the commodity status of the worker, and the demand for a Living Wage (or income) is only an extension of that attack. But we should be hoodwinking ourselves if we relied upon a Commission, and not on our own *organised strength*, to carry that attack to a successful conclusion. To the building up of that necessary *power* every wing of the Labour movement must devote itself. That, emphatically, is the first lesson that history teaches.

“A series of revelations from beginning to end . . . .

To the teacher-propagandists in the movement this book will be an inspiration.”

*Forward's* review of Scott Nearing's new book.

## THOUGHTS on MAY and OCTOBER

**W**HILE May Day gives inspiration to us as workers in various parts of the Labour movement, it should also give to us as educationists pause for thought as to improved ways of filling old and new needs in our educational work. How far have we in the past succeeded in adapting our work to the real needs of the movement? Are there any new functions which a rapidly changing historical process requires of us?

It is a commonplace to say that history has changed many things since the beginning of the I.W.C.E. movement, and has given us in the meanwhile many epoch-making events to think about. We are now at the stage when the workers' struggle is reaching its culminating and acutest phase. We have witnessed in the history of Europe in the last ten years, events connected with this phase that are considerably richer in lessons than the example of the Paris Commune. Moreover, we have now a veritable literature in English on the subject of these events. Is it not urgent, therefore, for us to make a study of this rich experience an important part of our educational work? Does not the changed situation require that, in addition to description and analysis of the *objective factors* (the economic factors which are “making conditions ripe,” “giving birth to certain social tendencies,” etc.), we should analyse the

*subjective* factors of current history as well—the aims, methods, strategy and tactics of the mass struggle? And I say “analyse” advisedly and not merely “recount” or “describe”; for facts are of little interest unless they “speak”; and it is the aim of science in general and Marxian sociology in particular to handle facts so that they are made to “speak.” In other words, is there not a need to study not merely economics, but also politics, by which is meant, not electioneering devices and Parliamentary procedure, but the whole organisation and strategy of the workers’ struggle?

We are not lacking, as I have said, in the literature on which to begin. Three years ago, Trotsky, in a very brilliant preface\* pleaded for greater attention to the lessons of the Russian Revolution of October†, 1917, and attempted himself to adduce some lessons from it, which were touched on in an article in *The PLEBS* of May, 1925. Comrade Louzon, in July, raised some further questions in connection with this discussion. The course of events in Germany and Italy, and the reasons for the defeat of the workers’ movement in those countries have received attention in two very admirable studies.‡ We have the experience of our own Labour Government, of Black Friday and Red Friday, and an excellent detailed account of the problems besetting Labour Parliamentary Government in Australia.§ The stories of Austria and of Hungary, of the subsequent events in Germany in March, 1921, and in the autumn of 1923, and of Bulgaria in 1923, have not yet been told save for a few scattered articles in periodicals.|| Nevertheless, we have sufficient here for several lecture courses, and a most fertile field for the researcher.

Finally, we have recently had two publications of first-rate importance. One the famous book by John Reed, superb as a piece of literature, of first significance as an historical account of those October days; the other a collection of letters and articles which Lenin wrote between August and October, 1917. The letters end with the famous “Letter to the Comrades” on the eve of the crucial days, when he replies point by point to those in his own party (Kamenev, Riasanov, Zinoviev, etc.), who pleaded that the time was not ripe for the seizure of power.

\* Since published in English as *The Lessons of October, 1917*, by L. Trotsky (Lab. Pub. Co., 3s.). See also comments on it in *The Errors of Trotskyism*, (C.P.G.B., 2s.).

† The Russian Revolution took place on October 25th according to the old Russian calendar, which was November 7th by the ordinary Western calendar.

‡ M. P. Price, *Germany in Transition* (Lab. Pub. Co.) and L. W., *Fascism* (PLEBS, 6d.).

§ V. Gordon Childe, *How Labour Governs in Australia* (Lab. Pub. Co.).

|| See PLEBS, November, 1924; *Labour Monthly*, April, 1924 (World of Labour), and July, 1924; *Communist International*, Nos. 2, 3, 16.



John Reed's book puts these letters against the background of events ; and the story as it develops forces on one the irresistible feeling that October was essentially the "psychological moment" and that Lenin in seizing on this fact (though he was in exile in Finland), was right. It was the point at which the tide had reached its high mark, and was beginning to ebb. A month earlier the masses had not sufficiently abandoned faith in the old Menshevik leaders, who were represented in the Government and on the Executive of the Soviets (elected some months before). A month later Kerensky might have replaced the "Red" Petrograd garrison by "White" Cossacks ; he might have yielded to the insistent advice of the officers and bankers to take repressive measures against the Bolsheviks ; the Constituent Assembly (Parliament) with its overwhelming peasant influence, would have met and probably induced the Soviets to retreat to an insignificant back seat. Two months earlier as a compromise to ensure a "peaceful progression of the revolution," Lenin had advocated support of a Menshevik Government, provided it were made entirely and exclusively responsible to the Soviets (like a Macdonald Cabinet reporting to and getting its instructions from a national Council of Action). By October, the situation had so changed as to make that no longer a possibility ; and he accordingly advocated the immediate planning of a seizure of power. This could be organised by the Bolsheviks through the machinery of the Petrograd Soviet, where they now had a majority, and should be timed for the day *before* the meeting of the All-Russian Soviet Congress, so that the Congress would meet a *fait accompli* and face the necessity of organising a Soviet Government.

The various attitudes of opposition to this demand are particularly interesting ; for they show clearly tendencies which one can already see at an earlier stage of development in the movement in this country. There were those inside the Bolshevik Party who thought the time was not ripe, and argued that the enemy were too strong, that bread supplies were insufficient, that other countries would not follow suit, that Blanquism was not Marxism, etc. There were the intellectuals gathered round Gorki's paper, who were opposed to Kerensky, but thought it better to wait for the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, when the "Left" could adopt the role of a powerful "ginger group" to keep the Kerensky Government "up to scratch." There were the Left Social Revolutionaries, the extreme peasant party, who sided with the Bolsheviks against their opponents, and at times entered into coalition with them, but were not prepared to take the initiative, preferring to "wait and see." After the actual seizure of power had taken place, these three groups of opinion combined in advocating the formation of a coalition in government of *all* the Socialist Parties and the disbanding of Trotsky's

Military Revolutionary Committee with its military measures, and in opposing the suppression of the bourgeois Press.

But whereas Lenin would brook no compromise in the seizure of power, it was precisely his shrewd realism in knowing the right time to make concessions *after* the power had been won that settled the seemingly insoluble problem of the peasantry.\*

What kind of lessons, then, can we learn from a study of October and of like situations in other countries?

Trotsky, in the preface already mentioned, tried to draw two chief lessons. First, he declared that it taught the importance of the "psychological moment"—the time (it might be a few weeks or even a few days), when the complex of conditions was most favourable to a seizure of power. At such times, it is clear, history has the character of a chemical compound rather than of an aggregation of mechanical forces: an additional element will change completely the whole compound; the addition of one small cause will produce an effect of very great magnitude. To hesitate at such a moment to supply this additional factor is to lose the golden moment; since at such times the objective situation (mass emotions, the strategy of the ruling class, etc.), is continually changing, and once it has changed, the favourable combination of events may not occur again—at least for a considerable time. His second conclusion was that it was the organised, disciplined class Party of the workers that was necessary to supply this additional *active* factor, a Party capable of leading the masses, and organising and carrying through the strategy of this culminating phase of the class struggle. The absence of such a party in Germany and Austria in 1918; its immaturity in Italy in 1920-1, and Germany in March, 1921; its union with the Social-Democrats in Hungary in 1919 (coalition of Socialist *leaders* instead of a union with the peasant *masses*), and hence the paralysis of the workers' dictatorship in taking the requisite measures to consolidate power; its failure to seize the "psychological moment" in Germany and Bulgaria in 1923—these were the reasons why history took a different course in Central Europe, and why we now see capitalist dictatorship and White Terror more strongly entrenched there than before.

The Russian critics of Trotsky at the time of the appearance of this Preface argued that, while it was important to study October, Trotsky gave too much stress to this: while emphasising the value of the Party during the insurrectionary period, he neglected its importance in the preparatory struggles and in the subsequent consolidation of power and building of a Socialist State. Comrade

---

\* A parallel to this in our case would probably be the relation with the nationalist movements in India, Egypt, etc.

Louzon followed up this question in The PLEBS of July, 1925, by suggesting that, while Trotsky was right in stressing the insurrectionary value of a disciplined Party as a kind of Blanquist organisation during the October days, he had also been right in his pre-1917 days, when he had opposed Lenin in designing a less "sectarian" attitude and a looser body to embrace the Gorki group and the Left Mensheviks. This, and not a closely organised Party, was necessary for the preparatory period.

The multitude of important questions which hang on an issue of this kind can only be approached in a scientific spirit by a study of the post-war history of the class struggle in Europe. For instance, wherein did Lenin's October policy differ from Blanquism? Or is Louzon right in identifying them? As we have noticed, it was exactly this argument that Leninism was Blanquism which was used by those who opposed his October policy. To this, Lenin in his "Letter to the Comrades," gives a very characteristic and vigorous reply:—

"A military plot is pure Blanquism, *if* it is not organised by the Party of a determined class; *if* the organisers of it do not justly estimate the correct moment; *if* they have not on their side the sympathy (proved by deeds) of the majority of the people . . . *if* the slogans of insurrection have not acquired the widest diffusion and the greatest popularity; *if* the advanced workers are not convinced of the desperate situation of the masses and assured of the support of the country workers . . ." etc.

In other words, Blanquism is a sectarian Party *without the masses*. Lenin succeeded in October precisely because his Party had become a Party linked with and supported by the masses; because his action fitted into and consummated the objective situation.

Of course, if one identifies the October events with Blanquism, as Louzon does, it is not difficult to deduce from it that the party-organisation suited to that situation is unsuited to other situations. That conclusion would apply, certainly, to Trotsky's Military Revolutionary Committee, formed *from* the Party to meet the October situation. But it does not apply to the Party itself, the importance of which is the kernel of Leninism. If Leninism implies the Party *plus* the masses, and not either the one or the other alone, how pursue an October policy if the Party has not played its part as a leader of the masses in the preparatory period, building tradition of unity and experience within itself, and forging a living contact with the masses? If Lenin's Party had not been closely disciplined in the past, there would have been small chance of the inner unity essential to its task, small chance of the October policy carrying the day against the hesitating "wait and see" elements. A Blanquist conspiracy might be engineered overnight; but not a Party in the Leninist sense, capable of taking power at the "psychological

moment" and *construing* Socialism. This, the experience of Germany and Austria and Italy shows.

Lenin declared that to underestimate the importance of such a Party was to overestimate the *spontaneity* in the masses (as in his controversy with Rosa Luxemburg): it was to underestimate the role of the "conscious" factor in history, to underestimate the importance of seizing the "psychological moment," and in practice to join the ranks of the party of "wait and see." It comes close to what Lenin wittily characterised as *Khvostism* (dragging along at the *tail*): the policy of dragging *behind* the masses, instead of going ahead and leading them, always excusing one's own slowness and inactivity by the slowness and immaturity of the masses.

One sees, too, from a study of October and similar events how the democratic institutions at times of crisis in the class struggle fall into the background—and this fact one sees in our own Red Friday. Elected on a geographical basis some time before, perhaps on unreal issues, they do not reflect the real issues of the crisis, nor the existing balance of forces; and being closely linked with the bourgeois State apparatus, either become passive spectators, or else (like the Petrograd City Duma) centres of reaction. To think of the class struggle, therefore, in purely Parliamentary terms and make one's instrument and rallying-point an electoral propagandist machine, is really to side-track the struggle—to take the Liverpool rather than the Scarborough road. One sees, too, the folly of making the struggle wait upon democratic forms and formal Parliamentary procedure. This involves *Khvostism*, from the necessity of watering down one's slogans in the search for votes to meet the temper of the backward sections of the workers, or even of the petty bourgeoisie. It means to let the "psychological moment" pass ("waiting for the Constituent Assembly," etc.), or even to fail to notice that the moment has arrived; it rests on the assumption that the objective situation and the tactics of "the other side" remain static. For instance, at the moment, the immediate fight for internal trade-union unity in defence of the miners and resistance to the "splitting" policy of the Parliamentary Right, for Anglo-Russian and anti-imperialist trade-union unity against Dawes and Locarno, etc., are far more important strategically and as rally-cries for the masses than the details of the Parliamentary game and elaborate legislative programs for the next election. One sees, too, from the experience of Russia and Germany and Austria and Italy alike, the prime importance of detaching the masses from their faith in the old Menshevik and Social-Democrat leaders who scheme merely to lead the workers into coalition with capitalism. A "left-wing" that does not follow Lenin's advice of criticising Kerensky *while*

attacking Kornilov will not have the masses with it when the "psychological moment" arrives.

Moreover, one sees most clearly of all, perhaps, the impossibility of constructing Socialism, of ending war and imperialism, and of introducing a scientifically planned economy, until *after* supreme power has passed to the workers. Hence the necessity, for the present, of all tactics and "partial demands" and slogans being strictly adapted to this end. One sees that capitalist power does not rest in a Parliamentary majority; but in control of big industry, the banks and transport, the civil service, army and navy, education and the Press. To win power means to have control (*real* not *nominal*) over these institutions through the medium of the workers' own organisations (T.U.s, factory and soldiers' committees, Councils of Action, etc.).

There has been some murmuring of late that our teaching is too academic. May not the truth behind the murmurs be that new times have put new questions to us, and that the time is ripe for an extension of our studies to solve questions such as those touched on here? May not the May Day message be for us:—"The experience of the last ten years, rich in lessons for us which we shall neglect at our peril, cries out for analysis. Some of the material is already available in English. When are we going to begin?"

MAURICE DOBB.

## THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR and BRITISH LABOUR

*In his recent review of Trotsky's "Where is Britain going?" Postgate questioned whether the American Civil War "led to" the British Reform Act of 1867. This, he says, is "a remarkable historical discovery for which some evidence should be produced." The following is an (all too rough) outline of the process I imagine Trotsky had in mind—T. A. J.*

**W**HEN in 1861 the conflict between the Northern and Southern states of the American Union broke out into open war, the effect upon Britain was great and far-reaching. Cotton manufacture was then so much Britain's leading industry that any crisis affecting it produced consequences running through the whole of Britain. The Civil War cut off the supply of raw cotton and commenced a first-class economic crisis.

The economic life of Lancashire and of the U.S.A. had, it must

be remembered, grown side by side for a century. The trade that "made" Liverpool in the first place was the slave trade with the American continent, paid for by raw cotton. As Lancashire perfected its methods of manufacturing so the Southern States perfected their methods of producing the raw cotton. Ultimately the point was reached where Liverpool's shipping was wholly employed in bringing in American cotton, tobacco and sugar and taking out in return British manufactures. Lancashire, as a whole, had grown to pre-eminence on the cotton trade and for that trade—and the commercial ascendancy of Britain that went with it—the products of the Southern States were indispensable.

The blockade by the North of the Southern ports and the declaration of cotton contraband thus struck Britain a staggering blow.

Its effect upon British politics was instant and cumulative. From 1830, when the Reform Bill enfranchised the upper strata of the industrial capitalist class, the ruling classes in Britain had grown steadily more conservative. Those who had lost rather than gained by the Reform Bill expressed their antagonism in all the varying schools of Radicalism.

Chartism appeared, ran its course, and dissolved. The Trade Unions, after sundry vicissitudes, had become settled and permanent facts. And Chartism and Trades Unionism had each added its quota to the bitterness with which the ruling powers greeted any demand for further enfranchisement.

Dominant in British public policy at home and abroad was the Manchester school. The cotton crisis, therefore, did much more than interrupt the profits of cotton-capitalism. It displaced the centre of gravity of British politics. It knocked away the foundation pillar of the supremacy of textile capitalism and opened a way for the rise to dominance of the iron-and-steel capitalists (and their politics) of Birmingham.

This transference of British political power was completed by the subsequent history of the American struggle. The grounds of cleavage between the North and South were by no means solely the slavery question. There was involved the whole future development and policy of the U.S.A. The South looked to Europe (and primarily Lancashire) as a market for the products of its slave labour. It had no interest in the development of home manufacturers or mining. But for the Civil War and its consequences the U.S.A. would have continued to play economically the role of a British subsidiary.

To the struggling manufacturers of the North the vital need was some sort of protection from the "dumping" tactics of British manufacturers, and some chance in consequence to erect a "Lancashire" on the soil of the U.S.A.

On the issue of Free Trade or Protection, therefore, the division between North and South though less vocal was as fundamental and as irreconcilable as on the issue of slavery. When, with the southern ports blockaded, President Lincoln imposed (for revenue purposes) an import tax upon all goods coming into the U.S.A., his act had even greater effects upon subsequent history than his later war measure, the Emancipation proclamation. He had laid, without knowing it, the foundation for that series of "scientific" tariffs which American economists claim gave a starting-point for the rise of the U.S.A. to the economic dominance of the world.

The effects in Britain were plain in the conduct of the ruling class. The more, as Tories, they had denounced the idea of "Separation" in the case of Ireland or Poland the more they denounced the iniquity of the North in denying the right of the Southern States to secede. Loud demands were raised for the "recognition" of the Southern Confederacy and for intervention on its side. When commissioners despatched by the Southern Confederacy to secure "recognition" from Britain and the other Powers were taken by a U.S. warship from a British vessel a declaration of war was only narrowly averted.

And that it was averted was due more than anything to the massed protests of the proletariat—particularly of Lancashire.

Marx says, in the Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association (1864):—

"It was not the wisdom of the ruling-classes, but the heroic resistance to their criminal folly by the working-classes of England that saved the West of Europe from plunging headlong into an infamous crusade for the perpetuation and propagation of slavery on the other side of the Atlantic."

The conduct of the workers of Lancashire was truly heroic. Flung into almost complete and utter destitution by the paralysis of the cotton-trade, they resisted every endeavour to incite them into violent agitation for the breaking of the Blockade, the recognition of the South and the crushing of the North. Even if it be conceded that their motive was chiefly sentimental and rooted in a hatred of slavery as such their heroism is in no wise abated thereby. And when in the end the "chivalrous" and "aristocratic" South surrendered to the plebeian but victorious North the British workers, particularly in Lancashire, had every reason for taking a personal pride in the victory.

Thus it was that, under the *form* of a conflict for and against the "slave-owners' rebellion" of the Southern States, there developed in Britain a *class* conflict in which the aristocracy and upper-bourgeoisie of Britain suffered a moral defeat in the fall and surrender of their protégés.

This fact had a direct bearing upon the events which followed—the growth of the Reform League and its agitation ending in the triumph of 1867.

It is well-known that the Reform Bill of 1830—granted as it was only from fear of an imminent revolution—enfranchised only the bourgeoisie. The town artisans and the proletariat generally not merely gained nothing, but actually lost in the suppression of those few cases where they had votes under the older regime. Chartism had emphasised this fact, put forward its demands, run its course and died. But there still remained, in more or less of activity, a number of Radical and Republican clubs and societies which more or less feebly agitated for further reform.

It had become a settled conviction by 1860 that no further Reform was possible, while Palmerston lived to lead the Whigs; and Disraeli's acute endeavour in '59 to induce the Tories to "scoop" the credit for what he saw to be inevitable proved premature. Matters were thus at a stalemate when the cotton-crisis once again set agitation aflame.

Their agitation received a backing from—and gave an impetus to—the development of more definitely and consciously working-class bodies.

In 1861 and 1862, Howell and Odger each raised the question of the extension of the franchise before the newly formed London Trades Council; at that time with little success. By 1866, however, Odger and Applegarth succeeded in winning over the Council to the support of the National Reform League's Demands and earlier in the same year a working-class organisation with the same object in view had been formed.

This "London Working-Men's Association" led by Geo. Potter (of the *Beehive*) had as its first object demonstrations in favour of the Reform Bill (Gladstone's) then (1866) before the House of Commons. Palmerston was dead and Gladstone as Leader of the House of Commons had bowed before the growing storm sufficiently to bring in (in the teeth of opposition from a section of his own party) a Reform Bill.

The measure, weak enough, was carried on its Second Reading by five votes only, and the government were defeated later on an amendment moved during the committee stage.

It was during the recess prior to the general election that occurred the famous Reform riots (1866) when a monster demonstration of London Radicals and Reformers led by the National Reform League and supported by Potter's group, marched to Hyde Park, and being refused admission, tore up half-a-mile of railings and broke in.

After this the new Government (Disraeli's) saw that a Reform Bill must be brought in and, moreover, that it was dangerous to



resist the demands of the Radicals. The Bill introduced by a Tory Government in February, '67, was by the time it passed in August of the same year so amended by the Radicals (Disraeli consenting) that it considerably bettered the measure upon which Gladstone had been defeated the year before.

It is clear that the ruling oligarchy in Britain found it necessary to open a safety-valve (in the form of an extension of the franchise) to prevent a revolutionary explosion. Can we trace any connection between this revolutionary temper and the fact and outcome of the American Civil War?

That the British workers were growing more "class-conscious" is evidenced by the formation of the International in 1864, in the rise of the "Model Unions," and the advance of trade-unionism generally during the same period. Similarly the tumultuous welcome given to Garibaldi on his arrival in London in 1864, was such as to give the Court serious concern—with the result that private pressure was brought to bear to induce him to abruptly curtail his stay.

The Hyde Park riots of 1867 thus were to contemporaries no isolated incident. They formed to reactionaries, along with the Sheffield "outrages" which produced the Commission of Inquiry into Trade Unions (1867) part of a general wave of "sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion" whose centre and core was—either the "Red" International or the Fenian Brotherhood.

The Irish Republican Brotherhood (commonly and affectionately known by its first title the "Fenian" Brotherhood) was first formed in 1852 by some young Ireland exiles of 1848 then sojourning in Paris and living in close contact with the Parisian Red Republican secret societies of that period.

Operating on an essentially Blanquist plan, Joseph Stephens and Edward O'Mahoney set to work to found a secret, oath-bound, military-revolutionary society which should, when it had gathered sufficient volume, and the time was ripe, be able to take the field as the army of the Irish Republic.

As a political force it counted for virtually nothing until the outbreak of the Civil War. Among the many unique features of that exceptionally innovating episode was the fact that the rebel South had at the outbreak of hostilities the best military establishment and the better supply of trained military commanders. The North had to improvise its armies by mass recruiting, and they were in far greater measure recruited from the towns and the proletarian population.

Among other special means of recruiting was the raising of an Irish Brigade (commanded by the '48 "rebel" T. F. Meagher). The South followed suit, and it was the fortune of war that the two Irish Brigades—with one '48 man in command of the Northern

and the two sons of another (John Mitchel) serving as officers with the Southern—should be brigaded opposite to each other at the critical battle of Chancellorsville (at which “Stonewall” Jackson was killed) and put each other out of commission as brigades for the rest of the war.

Irishmen in great numbers served on both sides during the war, and the opportunity of recruiting, drilling, arming and equipping the force of which they had dreamed was not lost by the leaders of the Brotherhood.

At home in Ireland the crisis of the war created an immense impression. For one thing it gave a new turn to emigration, stopping it, that is to say, except for able-bodied men willing to serve in the U.S. Army—a practice not then condemned by the Foreign Enlistments Act. Not a little recruiting for the Irish Republican Brotherhood was done under the camouflage of recruiting for the U.S.A.

The exploits of the Irish Brigades on either side, and of every commander with an Irish name (such as Sheridan) were all good propoganda for Irish Nationalism ; and Fenian journals began to appear and secure wide circulation.

When the war ended in 1865, and the armies were disbanded, the men and munitions thus liberated at once made Fenianism a first-class menace to the British Empire.

It is a noteworthy fact, that whatever its founders may have intended, Fenianism proved to have a peculiar attraction for the proletariat. It was so in Ireland when the Fenian newspaper the *Irish People*, barely held its own against the more moderate and constitutional Nationalist journal. It was still more so in the towns of Britain and America when (especially in the former) the *People* competed its rivals almost out of existence.

James Connolly quotes with approval the statement that :—

“Fenianism was regarded with unconcealed aversion, not to say deadly hatred, by not merely the landlords, and the ruling class, but by the Catholic clergy, the middle-class Catholics and the great majority of the farming classes. It was, in fact, only amongst the youngest and most intelligent of the labouring class, of the young men of the large towns and cities engaged in the humbler walks of mercantile life, of the artisan and working classes that it found favour.”

How great the menace seemed to the rulers of Britain was shown by their suppression of the *Irish People* and the arrests of the Fenian leaders at the end of 1864.

This served only to give the movement a fillip, and after April, '65, with the Civil War adding enormously to its resources Fenianism became hourly a greater menace to the British Government.

How far British Radical and Republican clubs were at the time used by the Irish in Britain as a camouflage for the organisation and

recruiting of the I.R.B., cannot at this date be defined with precision. All that we know for certain is that it was done and done systematically. The fact too, that when the crisis came several of the dramatic blows of Fenianism (in 1867) were struck on the soil of Britain proves that the alarm of the authorities was not altogether baseless.

It is true that in the end the long-deferred Fenian rising proved a fiasco. But that was at the end of '67, after the Reform Bill was passed. The fear of Fenianism and of its alliance with the British proletariat was a factor of prime importance in determining the attitude of Whig and Tory alike to the growing demand for the admission of workers to the franchise. And the influence of the Civil War in this movement and its profound reaction upon the contending classes in Britain stand out clearly.

P.S.—It is not for nothing that the song of May Day and the most popular amongst British Socialists, *The Red Flag*, was written by an ex-Fenian and is sung (despite its author's protests) to a tune made popular by the Civil War!

T. A. JACKSON.

## The "LITERATURE of the JOB"

**I**F you want to know what it is like to have a revolution, read the stories of *New Russia* published by Fisher Unwin\* under the title *Flying Osip*. Here is none of the painful self-questionings, the complicated analysis of pre-war Russian literature. A group of younger people, the survivors of those who went through the Revolution, have just written straightforward tales of the kind of thing they and their comrades endured.

Most of these stories are tales of the job. "The Soldiers" tells what happens when the troops mutiny because there are no supplies, and a busy administrator, having had no food himself for two days has to go and persuade them to continue to fight Denikin on empty stomachs and bare feet.

"Lenin" is an impression of what it was like in the most hectic crisis of the war, when devotion to Ilyich seemed the only cord that held hungry soldiers and disgruntled peasants in some sort of unity, to hear on the telephone that an incredible idiot of a woman had shot him.

"A Mere Trifle," describes a day in the life of a Soviet official when a well-armed bandit gang takes possession of the local bath house as a preliminary to looting the town. The story is told with

---

\* *Flying Osip: Stories of New Russia*. (Fisher Unwin, 7s. 6d.—but let us hope a cheap edition will soon be available!)

the brevity of a newspaper paragraph. It is a flashlight photograph of the sort of crisis young men were dealing with in their everyday work, when hammering piles for the foundations of the new state in the swamp of chaos left by the Civil War.

The two longest stories, "Lawbreakers," by Lydia Seifulina and "Hunger," by S. Semenov, who fought in the ranks of the Red Army, show the realities behind those reports and statistics which Nansen presented to a sneering Assembly of the League of Nations, and Edo Fimmen to the indifferent "comrades" at Amsterdam.

"The towns are starving," said Nansen, in 1919. "Hunger" is the diary of a little post-office girl clerk in the days when the rations were being cut down week by week, and when some weeks there were none to cut down. The slow breakdown of family affection under the iron pressure; the love turned to hatred of a father who got an extra armoured ration; his death through starvation and overwork; the sudden realisation at the graveside by the girl of what their hatred must have meant to him, is one of the grimest things in literature. During this summer, maize was being burnt in the locomotives of the Argentine to get rid of the stuff.

These stories are the beginning of a new form, not because of their subject. Others have written of wars and revolutions. These are the striving after expression of the men and women who have been through the fires of experience, and who are themselves of the material of which the new order is being built. They are not a separate literary caste, observing a crisis and expressing it artistically. They are creating the "literature of the job."

Their language, we are told in the excellent preface, is the actual speech of the new Russia, the peasants, soldiers and workers, interlarded with the strange new vocabulary of energy and administration unknown to lazy Old Russia. Much of their best work is therefore untranslatable. There are no equivalents. In this book the device has been adopted of using a modified American slang to give the spirit of the originals. It is queer at first, but one gets used to the convention.

Compare these tales with the typical English short story. The Russians are interested in the job, in making things work, in getting the new order going. They dramatise the re-opening of a wrecked mine, they see the human interest of a trade union meeting. Sex is never a main motive. Hardly does it enter as any unusually important factor in these lives of men and women who put their work first. In the Western Stories, sex is the obsession. The relations of this man to that woman are treated as the only interesting theme of otherwise meaningless lives.

Where is the literature of the British workers to answer this

new note struck by Russia? There is a little—more plays and poems, curiously enough, than stories. Yet the story of the life of any section of the British working class in this pre-revolutionary period would be as interesting and as valuable as the Russian contribution.

“No market for it in capitalist Britain.” Well, perhaps that is true, but even Labour papers who would be glad to print stories of the job do not seem to be able to get them. The *Daily Herald*, making a valiant attempt, could only follow “Young Imeson” with simpering serials by a middle-class lady with romantic ideas, who saw in every pretty girl worker the illegitimate child of a nobleman, to be provided therefore with a handsome young labour leader as husband, also of mysterious, and usually aristocratic extraction. Monica Ewer, who knows better and can write is now grinding out for our only Labour Daily the standardised machine product of the lovely adventuress moving in the highest circles.

The valiant Pleb, deep in his Dietzgen, will growl, “Does it matter? Is there not Karl Marx?” There is, dear comrade. There are also thirty odd millions of proletarians in this country who could not be induced to read a line of, or about, him.

These millions, who could make a revolution to-morrow, absorb in every line they read, every movie they see, the subtle propaganda of the sorrows of the rich. The workman is nearly always a comic figure except when he is defending the boss. Then he is a hero.

The I.W.C.E. movement has given the idea of class-education to the workers. Can we help to produce a class-literature?

ELLEN WILKINSON.

## HISTORY and the WORKERS

### II

#### GETTING IT OVER

**T**HE primary use of history to the worker is, as we saw last month, to destroy for ever the static outlook and to give an understanding of past and future social changes. In its study we have to remedy the bias and perversions of the orthodox records. But not only has the worker-student a vested interest in truth in the subject matter, but he also is concerned with the way of approach and the methods used in teaching history.

In our Movement it is generally accepted that Social History is taken before Economics or any other subject. The growing practice to begin with Economic Geography is not a break with this

custom ; for, in this last, the study of the natural environment is but a background to social development. Most workers have a knowledge of a few historical facts which can be made a point of introduction to others, and the working of economic factors can be seen before they are examined by themselves. As we shall see later more fully, in our interpretation, history is economics set in motion. In Marx's *Capital* the theory and its historical illustration are combined ; but, even there, the latter is by far the easier line of approach. If the theory of history were treated first, there would be a danger that the student would but acquire a thought-saving stock generalisation to be applied rashly or not at all. In these articles we are endeavouring to keep in mind the majority of students. In some cases, where the worker has read deeply and thought himself out of a religious training, the approach by way of Marxian philosophy and the writings of Dietzgen has best served.

Attempts have been made to teach history backwards. In *Economic History* by Cole (L.R.D. Syllabus, No. 6) separate institutions are taken and followed back to their origin. The plan is unworkable for general history, which can be best followed in its growth. The end desired—of making the *known* the starting point, and establishing real contacts between the present and the past—can be secured by repeated comparisons and connections between any period under survey and the concrete things with which we are familiar. The classic story of the worker who, after a lecture said he was " sorry for them there proletarians " should be a warning for us.

In the recent extension of our work, we have been forced to introduce starting courses in Trades Unionism, and in other subjects the present tendency is to run six or twelve lectures or talks instead of the time-honoured twenty-four or thirty-two. The time is ripe to consider how these short courses—where conditions are favourable—can best be planned into a minimum of study which our students should undertake. For the first year, Trades Unionism, Economic Geography, and Social History would be appropriate. Economics, theoretical and applied, could be taken in the next year ; while, in the third year, Historical Materialism as applied to philosophy, art, political institutions, etc., would find a place—in addition to Modern Problems. After such a course a student could well fend for himself in study groups, as a class leader and an active trade unionist. This is not an exclusive or detailed syllabus, but a proposal which could be adapted and enlarged.

When we turn to the materials for our work, we find that we are still largely dependent on the research work of capitalist institutions. Much of this, of course, is useful to us. But it is certain that much which has escaped the eye of the orthodox researcher

would be disclosed by actual re-reading of historic documents and investigations. It is of interest to note that some of the younger Marxists of Germany are re-reading and re-writing the history of the various movements treated by Kautsky, because they accuse him of ignoring the struggle for power in those uprisings. But even when Labour in Britain has the means to undertake historical research (as it is just beginning to gather modern information) the "Outlines," which the Plebs have so widely used to give a large-scale treatment of particular subjects for those who cannot study them in greater detail, will still be needed. As the education movement grows, we shall certainly have more local syllabuses and textbooks.

Our great task is to make history *live* and to make each student capable of recognising and participating in its movement. The tremendous difficulties of worker-students make the writing of essays, even in the form of letters to the teacher or in answer to short clear questions, a matter of difficulty. Such methods as the Dalton plan—presuming an available supply of books for use in an undisturbed room and whole-time students—are quite out of reach: However, there are great efforts being made to bring out the student. The "one man show" of the loquacious lecturer and the dumb students has disappeared. The class is an orchestra and the teacher the conductor. The students themselves give a summary of the lesson; they reply to questions and interrupt to raise any point that is not clear.

Visits to museums, to factories, to buildings having a local interest, and the use of historical novels, plays, and other contemporary art manifestations are of great assistance. Where some of these are lacking, comparative pictures of machinery (e.g., the last L.N.E.R. engine alongside the "Rocket") and photographs of the different processes of industry can be used with good effect. The British Museum's pictorial postcards are more effective than talks upon the Stone Age and the Bronze Age. Diagrams, maps, and charts to show the historical stages, supplemented by impromptu black-board work, are indispensable.

The more costly technical aids remain beyond our means, but we ought to be aware of their possibilities. In the Belgian Labour College they use a projector which throws photographs, pictures and diagrams out of any book on to the screen by means of electric light and an arrangement of enlarging mirrors. This is more convenient for our class-work than our own N.C.L.C. lantern slides. The projector costs from 700 to 1,850 francs, and is portable. For a small moving picture a Kodascope costs £40 and, as there is little in the film library that would be of use in classes, another £18 18s. would be necessary to make the pictures required. We notice

that the Dutch workers educational movement is selling a somewhat similar apparatus for fifty gulden, and has already a library of films (*De Tooris*, April, 1926). The British Instructional Film Co. have interesting films of animal life and mechanical processes, but their historical and economic shootings are deeply dyed with imperialism. Here again the cost is prohibitive, for the portable projector alone costs nearly thirty pounds. It looks as if we shall have to get in touch with "Proletkino" before we can make use of these modern aids to our work. However, the six sets of slides used by the N.C.L.C. is a start, and the teacher will remember that the eye is more important than the ear as an avenue to the mind.

MARK STARR.

## EASTON LODGE and the N.C.L.C.

"WHAT about the T.U.C. Scheme?"—"What about Easton Lodge?"—These questions have been frequently put to N.C.L.C. officials during the last few weeks.

So far as Easton Lodge is concerned, the Executive of the N.C.L.C. welcome the General Council's decision to run a residential College, and greatly appreciate the action of the Countess of Warwick—a Marxist—in presenting Easton Lodge for that purpose. Whether the College will justify the support of trade unionists will, as has already been pointed out in *The PLEBS*, depend upon the curriculum.\* While some may have the idea that Easton Lodge should be a kind of "business school" for Trade Union officers, or, on the other hand, a tiny model of Oxford or Cambridge, where social department would be taught to aspiring Labour personalities, there can hardly be any doubt that the General Council as a whole will want an educational institution that will equip students to become fighting forces in the Trade Union and Labour Movement.

At the same time, a good deal of misunderstanding exists in some quarters with regard to Easton Lodge. The T.U.C. Scheme generally and the Easton Lodge proposal in particular have been used on several occasions—nearly always without success—in an endeavour to prevent Unions arranging educational schemes with

---

\* With regard to the relationship of the London Labour College, to Easton Lodge, we understand, unofficially, that at a joint meeting the Executives of the N.U.R. and S.W.M.F. decided to defer a decision. No doubt the unions will desire to have definite assurances with regard to the curriculum that is to be in force at Easton Lodge before coming to a decision.



the N.C.L.C. Such attempts are not calculated to help the Congress Scheme or to provide trade unionists with an education that will make them more effective members of their organisations.

Easton Lodge—which is not, of course, ready, as building operations have still to begin—will be a residential College. While some doubts have been raised as to the suitability of the existing building and its situation, satisfaction has been expressed in all quarters that the T.U.C. has decided to take the important step of running such a college. As such, Easton Lodge will not, however, conflict in any way with the N.C.L.C.'s evening class activities throughout Great Britain and the North of Ireland, but should be a valuable supplement to them.

Moreover, N.C.L.C. schemes, providing as they do opportunities for the rank and file *throughout the country*, offer facilities that are much more important from a trade unionist's point of view than residential facilities (important as these are), of which only a very small percentage can ever avail themselves. A Union that arranges residential facilities before it has provided evening class opportunities is to a considerable degree failing to spend its educational funds to the best advantage. This was the point of view of the Shop Assistant's Union's Conference held last month, when by 92 votes to 43, it was decided to have an N.C.L.C. scheme and to turn down the Executive's recommendation that the Union should support Easton Lodge and not the N.C.L.C. or the W.E.A.

The success of the Easton Lodge proposal will largely depend on (1) the extent to which the College attracts students who have been through N.C.L.C. Classes, and have thus obtained at least the fundamentals of a working-class education; and (2) on whether the residential work is co-ordinated with the evening class work.

The suggestion has been made that trade unionists should support Easton Lodge as it is the T.U.C. Scheme and leave the "outside educational bodies" alone. It has already been shown that Easton Lodge is and can be only a very small part of a comprehensive Congress scheme. Moreover, the scheme passed at Scarborough explicitly provides that Unions may arrange educational facilities directly with the N.C.L.C. In the third place, the phrase "outside educational organisation" can well apply to those educational bodies whose *effective* control (i.e., financial) is largely held by outside bodies like the State, the anti-Labour Universities, and the anti-Labour Educational Authorities. The term, however, cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be applied to the N.C.L.C., for this body is completely controlled by trade unions representing 1,800,000 of the trade unionists affiliated to Congress; is by far the largest trade-union educational organisation; and, actually, is *part of the T.U.C. Scheme*.

Meanwhile some W.E.A.ers have been busy explaining away the T.U.C. Scheme (with its object of education for social and industrial emancipation of the workers) to the Education Authorities and the Board of Education on which it is financially very dependent. The N.C.L.C., on the other hand, has tried to make it clear that the scheme means what it says. In doing so the N.C.L.C. was quite within its rights under Clause 7 (Rights of Criticism and Propaganda) of the T.U.C. Scheme. As the position is still under the consideration of the General Council Education Sub-Committee, I refrain from further comment, and shall merely protest against the suggestion that the N.C.L.C. has been guilty of a breach of the T.U.C. Scheme. There is absolutely no warrant for such a contention.

J. P. M. MILLAR.

## TWO CORRECTIONS

An error appeared in John Hamilton's article "Coal and Britain's Future" in last month's PLEBS. In the table of products of one ton of coal (p. 127) as the result of carbonisation at the gas works, "12,000,000 cubic feet" should read "12,000 cubic feet."

We also owe an apology to both

author and reviewer for an error in Ellen Wilkinson's criticism of Mr. Gordon Hosking's *A Summary of Socialism*. Both in the quotation from the book and in the reviewer's comment thereon "workers, children and invalids" should have been "mothers, children and invalids."

## NOTES BY THE WAY

### *Statistical Method*

FOR tutors desiring to give to their students a grasp of the meaning and use of scientific method in relation to economic problems a small 14-page pamphlet issued by the Industrial Fatigue Board should be invaluable (*The Function of Statistical Method in Scientific Investigation*, by G. Udny Yule, F.R.S., H.M. Stationery Office, 6d.). Apart from supplying material for tutors, it would be not at all a bad thing to put into the hands of every student beginning economic study. In very clear and readable language it explains the purpose of statistical investigation, how it can do for sociology what laboratory experiment does for chemistry and physics, how to use the method of "sampling" and averaging, and some fallacies to avoid, each point being illustrated from some actual piece of investigation in industry made by the author.

He describes the function of statistical method as follows: "Statistical methods are methods for handling and elucidating the meaning of data affected by 'disturbing causes,' or generally by a multiplicity of causes . . . Experiment is most perfect in physics and chemistry. Here the influence of disturbing causes is usually small. . . . But (in economics) the investigator cannot play about with conditions, and alter them this way and that as he pleases in order to observe the effect of the alterations. (Hence) the need that he should 'think statistically' and use statistical methods." Again, on the method of averaging (he is taking an example of analysing mangel roots to find the percentage of dry matter and hence feeding value in them):—"An average is the more trustworthy, the greater the number of observations on which it is based. But, further, if the *range of variation* in the individual roots had been, not

from 10 per cent to 20 per cent (of dry matter) but only from 14 per cent to 16 per cent, it is evident that we should have had a good deal more confidence in an average based on twenty roots. . . . (Hence) *an average based on a given number of observations is the more trustworthy, the less the original observations differ among themselves*; the less trustworthy, the more they are scattered." This is what is meant by finding the "*frequency distribution*" and the "*dispersion*" of a sample. Without this a mere average can be misleading.

To set a class a few simple experiments of this kind to work out averages and frequency distributions and suggest from the result possible causes, might be a very good way of giving class members a practical grasp of the meaning of scientific method.

#### *Whitewashing Capitalism*

We are likely to see in the near future the capitalist henchmen in the universities starting a campaign for whitewashing the Industrial Revolution, on which the researches of the Hammonds have thrown so much mud. We see the beginning of this in a singularly unconvincing article in *Economica* of March on "The Factory System of the Early 19th Century," which attempts to show that the picture drawn by the Hammonds is exaggerated and untrue. Another article in the same issue on "The Dynamics of Capitalism," attacks the Marxian conception of capitalism as expressed in a book by Dobb. More interesting is an article on "The Beginnings of Banking in N. Wales," which should give useful material to tutors.

#### *Trustification After Dawes*

The *M. G. Commercial* of April 8th records the formation of a giant steel and coal trust—the Vereinigte Stahlwerke A.G. This will control "*nearly half of Germany's steel production and one-quarter of the Ruhr coal output.*" "Substantial cheapening of production through specialisation in the various works and standardisation of types (and) reduction of stocks and freight costs" are anticipated. The trust will have a capital of £40,000,000 of which a large part will be provided

by "a banking consortium in process of formation."

This is a combine into *one* firm. The same issue also describes the formation by separate firms of *syndicates* for selling purposes, which embrace nearly the whole iron and steel industry. Before the war syndication "applied only to semi-products, rails and section iron." "Last year, after stabilisation (i.e., the Dawes plan), the industry secured the imposition of high duties on iron imports. It then proceeded to syndicate all along the line." This has been so successful that light castings and steel castings are now the only articles for which there is still no sales syndicate, and "a final agreement as to the latter is expected during the present month."

But this is not all. This monopoly of the German market is aided by international agreements, first with the sales agency of the United Czech Rolling Mills, then with the Lorraine ironmasters, allowing the latter a definite import quota free of tariff, provided it is supplied exclusively to the Raw Steel Union (one of the German syndicates) for resale. The result is that some products have been raised in price 30 to 40 per cent. "The syndicates work on the plan of *varying prices according to the circumstances of their customers.* The big customers who might find ways of covering their requirements abroad are supplied at the price charged by the works. All others have to pay dealers' surcharges, which are *raised to the highest level for the smallest and weakest customers*"!

#### *Imperialism and the East*

No. 17 of *The Communist International*, a Special Eastern Number, should not be missed by students of Imperialism. It contains highly useful surveys of the Labour movement in China, Japan and Turkey, and accounts of recent events in Persia, Syria and Indonesia. Students should also make a point of ordering from the Lab. Research Dept. their new study in the Colonial Series, *Brit. Imperialism in E. Africa* (1s.). And note that full details of the new Plebs book, *A Short History of the British Workers*, by R. W. Postgate, will be announced next month.

# THE PLEBS

## LETTERS

### ARE WE TOO ACADEMIC ?

**D**EAR COMRADE,—We have read and discussed Comrade Williams' article, "Are We Too Academic?" In our opinion it contains more than a modicum of truth, and we thank the writer for his timely and healthy criticism.

As long as the N.C.L.C. produces enlightened fighters we shall not carp, but if it is going to cater for men who are seeking knowledge for its own sake, or for some other reason equally nebulous—then the movement will not be serving its purpose.

We believe he has pointed to a real danger and would like to emphasise the saying of William Morris—"The knowledge we have to help people to is threefold—to know their own, to know how to take their own, and to know how to use their own."

Fraternally yours,

(For Cross Hands N.C.L.C. Class),  
FRANK GRIFFITHS, Secretary.

**D**EAR COMRADE,—In the March number of *The PLEBS* which I have just received there is an excellent article by Comrade J. M. Williams in which he attacks—justifiably, it seems to me—the devotion of too much time in N.C.L.C. classes to sociology and psychology of doubtful accuracy, and advocates instead concentration upon immediate problems. But he also says: "Why should English become a burden on N.C.L.C. funds?" There I feel sure he is wrong.

English, if properly taught in a Labour College class, can be the most practical and useful of subjects. Williams wants the workers "to salute their masters with three short words like 'go to hell.'" Excellent. But at present they, even those who are skilled in study of "Reparations, Russia, the industrialisation of backward countries, over-capitalisation of industry, the relations of wages and profits to-day," are far more likely to say: "According to the Marxian materialist interpretation of history the evolution of the bourgeois capitalist class is gradually tending towards their immersion in everlasting fire, and that

process it is the historic function of the proletarian working-class to assist." And they will never convince their fellow workers until they appreciate the difference between English and jargon. For two years I was a member of a Trades and Labour Council. Towards "closing-time" there was always a shrinkage of attendance at its meetings; and it was the regular custom to adjourn at 10.0 p.m., leaving most of the important business to the Executive. The main reason for this was that most delegates, because of a difficulty in self-expression, occupied half-an-hour in saying what could have been put succinctly in five minutes. Most of the arguments were in reality (though this was rarely seen) due not to differences of opinion but to the practice of befogging every issue in clouds of meaningless long words. In the elementary schools the pupils are taught sufficient English to enable them to read *The News of the World*. If they are ever to read *The PLEBS* they will have to learn more.

Yours fraternally,

H. A. MARQUAND.

Michigan, U.S.A.

**D**EAR COMRADE,—Lack of space in the April *PLEBS* left untouched several points risen in this controversy. May I add replies to one or two?

My contention regarding neglect of current social problems remains intact. Much as J. Hamilton emphasises his knowledge of the educational movement nationally, we feel we cannot treat his omniscience with the reverence it may demand. For all the facts show that studies of Economics and History—not excluding the N.C.L.C. Correspondence Course—do not concentrate mainly on modern problems. This, which it is idle to deny, suggests rather a big and obvious flaw in J. Hamilton's presidential optimism. His concern about my secluded environment I reciprocate, trusting that our comrade, as an ex-monumental mason, does not still suffer from the influence of the cemetery.

A. Woodburn, in criticising my knowledge of the N.C.L.C., may be

reminded that there is quite a large number—of which I happen to be one—of N.C.L.C. workers whose experience, individually—although perhaps not so highly sweetened with the uses of advertisement—is at least twice as extensive as that of the critic. This will enable our friend to correct his *Who's Who*. His wail about my lack of clear thinking arises directly from his own lack of clear reading. A wealth of words, accompanied by poverty of thought, we agree is dangerous. So is also a mere assertion of "clear thinking" without any evidence of it. Experience has familiarised us with the juggling jargon of the "clear thinking" cult, and we are now fully aware that with no rigid fatality do clear thoughts leap into life from the repetition of its standardised phrases. Too often, indeed, we are reminded of the clarity of the vacuum.

I note, we continue to be informed, that English is useful. Whether our friends fear I shall burst out in Welsh or Gaelic I don't know. However, since English has not been shown to be a branch of Independent Working-Class Education, I still contend it can be taught by outside agencies—and taught better.

"Long phrases," we agree, might often be given a short shrift. But they are certainly not the monopoly of a few Marxian miners in one part of the country. Moreover, Economics, like any other science, has its own technical terms, which make for precision and, oftener than some realise, for simplicity. Only a passing acquaintance with any science—natural or social—must show that Anglo-Saxon, with all its virtues, is often inadequate. Further, the economic jargon of the miners at its worst can scarcely be more irritating than the psychologic jargon of some of their scholastic critics.

The eagerness with which our "intellectuals" from all sections of the movement urge their "culture" upon the workers reveals one grave error, which is not on the side of modesty. It is the unfounded assumption that the workers are in the main less cultured than themselves. The same old culture cant, the same crumbs of condescension, as of old! To my own knowledge

there are thousands of manual workers in Wales and the North who have forgotten more about poetry and music than most of the polished pebbles of our public schools will ever learn. And if even the humblest product, from Penywern Road cannot interpret literature—which is rather more important than the parrot-like repetition of a few sonnets—more intelligently than most undergraduates from Oxford and Cambridge, he should be sentenced to a kindergarten for seven years without the option of a fine!

When criticisms take a more relevant form, we may be able to resume our original discussion of Independent Working-Class Education.

Yours, etc.,

J. M. WILLIAMS.

[We had unfortunately to cut down Comrade Williams' letter last month, and accordingly have given him space to clear up certain points above. We do not think, however, that any useful purpose would be served by continuing the discussion in this vein, so this correspondence must now close.—Ed., PLEBS.]

#### THE HAMMONDS' LATEST BOOK

DEAR COMRADE,—The review of *The Rise of Modern Industry*, by Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, in your April issue provokes protest.

The reviewer writes that the book "relates events to ideas. And in that sense (it) is certainly more Marxian in spirit than many works which quote the master," etc. Since when have bourgeois historians ceased habitually to relate "events" to "ideas?" If that is all that can be claimed, then the Hammonds do not depart one iota from the bourgeois tradition. But perhaps J. F. H. thinks that the exposure of the appalling "wrong" of the workers in the past and the incredible "callousness" of past rulers ("industrial history—with blood and tears!") makes a book on social history in some sense "Marxist"? But J. F. H. should be aware that in class societies in general and in capitalist society in particular the machinery of government not only *may* be used, but is *normally* and *habitually* used by the socially dominant group to maintain and perpetuate its dominance. He

should be aware that a ruling class can remain the ruling class by no other means. All through the Hammonds' books their pathetic inability to see this is manifest. The Marxist conception of government is one they would repudiate with abhorrence. They are genuinely and deeply shocked at the fact that the machinery of government has been used in the past in the interests of a class. They do not and cannot see that capitalist government is normally and all the time the instrument of a dominant social group.

When the Hammonds stick to description and abjure fundamental interpretation their books are interesting and contain matter of considerable value to worker-students. But when they leave the sphere of conditions, events and personalities and attempt to discern basic social processes they give us nothing but the stalest rhetorical clap-trap. (Note in *The Rise* :—"mind of contemporary Europe," "imagination of the times," "impulse to make a society," "the wide mystery of fellowship," "predatory and sympathetic temperament," "possessive and generous instincts," "the robber and the artist in man" and so on *ad nauseam*). What better could we expect? Mr. and Mrs. Hammond are petty-bourgeois intellectuals who write and cannot but write petty-bourgeois history. They do not understand and are never likely to understand the A.B.C. of scientific social historiography. This last book of theirs is the feeblest of the four and will earn no praise from any responsible Marxist.

Yours fraternally,

ROBERT W. BUCHAN.

#### NO MORE WAR

COMRADES AND FELLOW WORKERS OF ALL LANDS,—On behalf of those who in our own country recognise the brotherhood of the whole human race, we send you May Day greetings. Too long we have been separated from

each other by narrow nationalism. Too long in the interests of a few we have learned to mutilate and destroy one another.

We ask you, our brothers and sisters, to unite with us in the May Day celebrations, in pledging our determination to resist, with all our power, any attempt once again to create divisions between us and to hurl our people into the abyss of another war. In this the springtime of our movement, with the strength and the joy of youth urging us forward, let us clasp hands across all frontiers, determined to break down those barriers that have divided us in the past, by each one refusing to take up arms against another, and by seeking to get the movement to which we belong to prepare organised refusal of every kind of war service. Let us work unceasingly, that we may usher in the day of international co-operation and service, which is our common goal.

ERNEST BEVIN.

A. FENNER BROCKWAY.

C. T. CRAMP.

GEO. LANSBURY, M.P.

ARTHUR PONSONBY, M.P.

JOHN SCURR, M.P.

ROBERT SMILLIE, M.P.

ERNEST THURTLIE, M.P.

BEN TURNER.

#### THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

DEAR COMRADE,—There is one obvious element in the character of Jesus which Comrade M. Philips Price fails to see or he could not have made the statement "Jesus becomes converted." That element is the gift of sarcasm. When Jesus told his disciples to "buy a sword" he was quite clearly sarcastic.

A C.O. would say exactly the same thing to one who thinks he can conquer the world with a weapon of brutality. And, unfortunately, our comrades would say the C.O. was "converted."

Yours fraternally,

J. F. STONE.

### THE COMMUNIST BOOKSHOP

16, King Street, Covent Garden, W.C.2.

OUR WELL-STOCKED SHELVES ARE AT YOUR DISPOSAL

**WE SUPPLY EVERYTHING READABLE**

Send for Catalogue

Mail Orders a Speciality

## REVIEWS

A TEXTBOOK BY A PLEB

*History of the South Wales Miners.*

By Ness Edwards (Lab. Pub. Co., obtainable from PLEBS, 2s. 6d.).

*John Frost and the Chartist Movement.*

By Ness Edwards (From author, 1s.).

**N**ESS EDWARDS has again placed us greatly in his debt by compiling from many scattered sources the main facts concerning the beginnings of trade union organisation in South Wales. His *Industrial Revolution* made accessible the detailed results of that great social change in this area, and now he supplements it by a description of the workers' reaction to it. Those who read his account of that terroristic body, the "Scotch Cattle" of 1832, when it appeared in *The PLEBS*, will need no further recommendation to place the book on their shelves.

From 1801 onwards there were repeated attempts in South Wales to make organised protests. Riots provoked by dear food and "truck" robbery were crushed by gibbet and jail. Suppression was met by secret societies, which physically attacked non-unionists and undercutters; mass picketing and marches closed down collieries. But permanent and widespread trade unionism dates from the activities of the Amalgamated Association of Miners. Met by this body—which was able to limit the import of blacklegs and to give financial assistance in the bitter disputes—the employers secured industrial peace for a while by the Sliding Scale arrangement of fixing wages according to the prices of coal. For a while, with the A.A.M. broken and bankrupt, such organisation as remained was merely for the collection of dues to maintain Mabon and others as the workers' representatives in the wage-fixing machinery. That did not last. The breakaway of the Hauliers' Strike (1893) and the struggle led by William Brace (how are the mighty fallen!) against the Sliding Scale, is the story of the formation of the S.W.M.F. and its inclusion in the M.F.G.B. The reader following this development will be disappointed that

Com. Edwards leaves the story at '93, but will have his appetite whetted for the promised history of the S.W.M.F. itself.

Minor points of possible improvement are the insertion of the weight of iron, the price of which (p. 4) falls from 12s. to 10s. 6d. From the Appendix (p. 121) the Webb date (1869) for the start of the A.A.M. is rejected, but no reason is given. Ness accepts the cessation of the Newport-Birmingham coach as a planned signal of the Frost uprising, but Cole says that no coach then ran. Further in a book so "meaty," an index, however small, is indispensable. Some will also ask for a pronouncing glossary. Not only did the South Wales miners participate in Doherty's National Association and Owen's G.N.C.T.U., but they were active in the Chartist Movement with a Welsh paper, *Udgorn Cymru*, printed at Merthyr. Although this is treated in *John Frost and the Chartist Movement*, at least some reference should have been here included.

Labour's triumph would come more quickly if this book were used as it ought to be, as a history primer in the schools of South Wales. M. S.

**CANDID—BUT NOT AT ALL IMPARTIAL!**  
(*Proportional Representation—Its Dangers and Defects*, by George Horwill, B.Sc.(Econ.) (Allen and Unwin, 6s.))

One might almost expect the workers' movement in Birmingham—where Labour polls 120,000 votes and gets one seat, while Toryism polls 160,000 votes and gets 11 seats—to have leanings towards P.R. Mr. George Horwill, who is head of the Birmingham Boro' Labour Party's Information Department, seems possessed of a fierce determination to stamp out any such heresy—to extirpate it root and branch. Yet, for all the crusading zeal shown in his book shrewd analysis is not sacrificed to prejudice and those (like the reviewer) who, while rejecting P.R. on grounds of expediency, have a feeling that it has justice on its side, find that Mr. Horwill has greatly reinforced their first case by reasoned argument.

The introductory chapter alleges that the motive behind the P.R. agitation is not a thirst for impartial justice, but a "simple egotistical desire for the self assertion of a group" or, as it is aptly put, "Minority Egotism." He points out, artfully enough, that "where the votaries of any particular political change form a small minority group, they are enthusiastic supporters of P.R., but when the advocates of the same political theory are in a majority, or a large enough minority to warrant the belief of becoming a majority, they are strong opponents." This charge he illustrates by quoting Socialists in Switzerland and France, Conservatives in Australia, and Liberals in Great Britain.

There is some clever argument in the second section of this chapter ("wickedly clever," one had almost written) under the heading "Fear of Majority Rule," where, by quoting speeches made by capitalist spokesmen every time, from 1832 onwards, that the franchise was extended, he manoeuvres P.R. advocates into the position, not of defenders of democracy, but of siding with its bitterest enemies. Mill, for example, speaking in the House in favour of an amendment to the Bill of 1867 (an amendment expressing the essence of the present P.R. proposals) said :

"Predominant power should not be handed over to persons in the mental and moral condition of the working class,"

thus providing the P.R. Society with an inconvenient and most unwelcome bedfellow.

Chapter 1 explains in general detail how P.R. elections are conducted and is a horrifying maze of arithmetical calculation. Subsequent chapters show how, largely as a result of the introduction of P.R., stable government has become almost impossible all over Europe, by breaking up political parties into a multitude of small groups and promoting ever changing coalitions, with the inevitable corollary of sacrifice of principle and eventual corruption.

The attack is pressed home. The disadvantages of large constituencies, the increased power of the party caucus, and the general debasement of political education are all carefully exposed. Not content, the author

carries the war into enemy country. He challenges the assertion that the present electoral system allows minorities to govern and shows how, in the British General Election of 1924, if the votes are grouped on some particular subject on which the election was largely fought—e.g., the Capital Levy—the seats obtained by the two groups correspond to the wishes of the electorate with a discrepancy of only 5 per cent, a percentage of accuracy actually greater than that obtained in Northern Ireland at the same time under P.R. 1

The final chapter deals with the proper functions of minorities, and instances cases where P.R. may be used advantageously—i.e., in the realm of administration.

There are 150 pages of appendices, giving an examination of the working of P.R. in an imaginary University election with the single transferrable vote, extracts from speeches against P.R. by Bright, Disraeli, Gladstone, MacDonald and Austen Chamberlain, examples of the list system in France and Belgium, and an extract from the report of the Royal Commission on Electoral Systems of 1920. References are given throughout the book and there is a useful index.

Mr. Horwill is to be congratulated on the successful manner in which he has tackled and mastered an intricate subject, and presented his case with a lucidity which his zealous partizanship has in no way obscured.

S. B., M.P.

#### RUSSIAN GOLD

*Currency Problems and Policy of the Soviet Union.* By Prof. L. N. Yurovsky (Leonard Parsons, 7s. 6d. net.).

This book, by the chief of the Currency Department in the People's Commissariat of Finance, Moscow, is of considerable interest to all students of monetary affairs and of recent Russian events. It is interesting too, in view of the recent discussion in Russia as to whether the hastily improvised "War Communism" of the civil war period was true communism, and whether the way in which Russian industry is organised to-day is a "retreat" towards State capitalism, or whether, so far as industry is concerned, it is true socialism.



There certainly seems to have been a very prevalent feeling in 1918 that a socialist system of industry necessarily involved a moneyless system, just as some considered that it involved election of managers directly from below. With N.E.P. in 1921, however, transactions in money were re-introduced and extended and the urgent need for some stable unit of measurement and calculation was realised. Heroic efforts were accordingly made to stop the depreciation of the rouble; and a new basis of calculation was eventually provided in a new money unit, the *chervonets*, issued by the State Bank as equivalent to ten gold roubles.

This book gives in very readable fashion, the story of the various stages of the monetary reform; and its virtue is that the story is told, not by an outside observer, but by one who participated in the task himself. The *chervonets*, based on gold, provided a stable basis of calculation, and soon became popular and was adopted speedily as a universal means of exchange. At the same time paper roubles continued to be inflated and to depreciate in terms of things in general and of *chervonets*. The tendency was, of course, for people to use *chervontsi* and get rid of the depreciating paper roubles (an inverted Gresham's Law), thereby depreciating the latter still further; but continued circulation was secured for these paper money tokens as "small change" by providing that *chervontsi* should only be issued in large units. Finally, in 1924, the Budget of the Finance Commissariat was sufficiently balanced to make further revenue by inflation unnecessary. The issue of the old paper roubles was discontinued, and their place was taken by State Treasury Notes of 5, 3 and 1 roubles. These were convertible into *chervontsi* at the fixed rate; and to avoid over-issue and further inflation, their quantity was limited to one-half of the amount of *chervontsi* in circulation, the latter in turn being limited by the need to have a  $\frac{1}{2}$  backing in gold and foreign currency reserves.

The whole story of this remarkable constructive achievement, which has won admiration even from bourgeois monetary experts, is told in a clear and interesting fashion. M. H. D.

## Books you want!

Foyles can supply them. Over a million vols. (second-hand and new) on every conceivable subject in stock, including Labour questions. Unequalled stock of Books for Study. Tens of thousands of book bargains. If unable to call, write for Catalogue 303 (gratis and post free) mentioning interests.

### SPECIAL OFFERS

#### THE BLACK MAN'S BURDEN

By E. D. MOREL. Upon the new Democracy in Britain is laid immense tasks in regard to the administration of dark-skinned peoples. These tasks constitute the greatest moral responsibility which the Democracy has to face. This book lays down the fundamental principles of a humane and practical policy in the government of Africa by white men. Published 1920, at 3s. 6d. Foyles' Special Offer (new), 1s. 3d. post free.

#### FOYLE'S ENGLISH DICTIONARY

A handy guide to the spellings and meaning of over 14,000 common and out-of-the-way modern terms. Appendix containing foreign words and phrases with English translations. Clear type, strongly bound, pocket size, 8d. post free. Extraordinary value!

#### PAINE'S POLITICAL WRITINGS—

During the American and French Revolutions— including "Common Sense" and "The Crisis," which not only record historical events, but actually helped to make history. Paper Covers, new, 8d., post free.

#### BRITISH COAL TRADE

By JEVONS. A popular and very exhaustive account of the industry and modern methods of working coal. Special attention paid to the economic and social aspects, including the lives and organisations of the miners. 875 pages, fully indexed and illustrated. Published 1924, 6d. Offered practically new, 4s. post free.

For above quote Offer 303. Money refunded if books are unsuitable.

## FOYLES FOR BOOKS

121-126, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.2

### BRITISH TRADE UNIONISM

*The Trade Union Movement of Great Britain.* By W. M. Citrine (I.F.T.U., 1s. 6d.).

The Acting Secretary of the Trades Union Congress has endeavoured to include such a wealth of descriptive detail concerning trade union structure, negotiation machinery, the legal position, composition of the General Council and the Trades Council that this book is on the heavy side. However, it is all necessary data, and when one stands back from it a little—even as Citrine does in a few places—the lines of development stand out clearly.

In many ways the book is typical of British Trades Unionism in its cautious and guarded statements, in its emphasis on experimental methods and its suspicion, if not antagonism, towards any clear-cut bold theory regarding the method or aim of the workers' organisations. For example, because certain industries overlap, the author—not accepting the production of a commodity as his guide—finds "industry," and "organisation by

Industry," hard to define and also withholds his judgment on Whitley Councils.

Yet, as one expects, the changing position of the British worker is also mirrored in Trade Union policy. Slowly but surely the General Council is giving the lead and the direction to the unions as a whole. It is considering the extension of the work of the Trades Councils as executive agents of the growing power of the General Council. And in these Trades Councils, covering the whole of the organised workers as a class, the vote catching of the political party will be a secondary matter. Amalgamation is being advanced and the women workers organised. Workers' control and the changing of the social system are recognised by comrade Citrine as the goal.

One notable omission from this important little book is any reference to the T.U.C. Delegation to Russia (1924) and the Anglo-Russian T.U. Unity Committee. Here also British Trades Unionism is instinctively doing the right thing, and no qualms of the publishers should be allowed to exclude mention of such a matter. Another point needing correction is the reference (p. 78) to the N.C.L.C. and W.E.A. as almost exclusively deriving support from Trade Union and working-class organisations. A glance at the balance sheet of the former will show that in the case of the N.C.L.C. the "almost" can be cut out, while three-fifths of the W.E.A. income is provided by the State.

Apart from this, we warmly recommend the book to all our fellow trade unionists as a timely survey.

M. S.

#### VIA UTOPIA

*An End to Poverty.* By Fritz Wittels. Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul (Allen and Unwin, 5s.).

This is an interesting and well written book by a disciple of a sociological thinker who was a Utopian of the anarchist school of thought.

The thinker was Josef Popper, or Popper-Lynkens, who died in Vienna, 1921, at the age of eighty-three.

The disciple is Fritz Wittels—a doctor.

Lynkens elaborated in several books an ingenious scheme for the solution



## FIRST CO-OPERATIVE INVESTMENT TRUST, LTD.

BROAD STREET HOUSE, LONDON, E.C. 2  
Registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts:

Chairman: Alderman A. EMIL DAVIES, L.C.C.  
Auditor: Sir JOHN MANN, K.B.E.

Capital (2/ Shares) .. ..	£279,000
Members .. ..	5,260
Investments .. ..	228

Dividends of 7 per cent. without deduction of tax paid since inception.

### TO FIRST CO-OPERATIVE INVESTMENT TRUST.

Broad Street House, London, E.C. 2 LTD.

Please send me a copy of the Booklet "What an Investment Trust Is," also a list of the Trust's Investments.

Name.....  
Plebs.....  
Address.....  
.....

of the social problem. This scheme is the abolition of want by the creation of a subsistence army which will provide *in kind* a minimum of food, clothing, shelter and furniture for everyone, and if practicable supply whatever is requisite over and above bare necessities to make life comfortable. Men and women will be conscripted in this subsistence army, males serving thirteen years and females eight years. There would be no need, as a first step, to abolish Capitalism or to control the State. In the field of luxuries Capitalism would continue to exist. So much one gathers from the translators' preface.

Wittels' exposition is brilliant, but not convincing. Are his proposals practicable? Would his plan stand the test of reality?

The aim and end of Socialism is universal social service based upon social ownership of the means of wealth production. This presupposes the abolition of Capitalism, or wage-labour production, and the Capitalist class state. It<sup>o</sup> surely inconceivable

that Universal Civil Service could be introduced whilst capitalist society exists, or even on the morrow of the Social Revolution. The reason is not far to seek. It lies in the disproportionate development of Capitalist industrial enterprises, and in the disproportionate development of farming. Side by side with huge trusts and combines there exist large numbers of medium and petty industrial undertakings. Side by side with large and up to date farms there are a large number of medium and small sized farms, and, in countries like France, innumerable peasant holdings tilled by hard-working but egotistic agriculturists. In order to ensure a minimum subsistence in kind for, say, the huge population of Great Britain, practically all the existing undertakings which supply necessaries would have to be socialized together with the land.

How could this be done without a revolution? Even supposing the land were socialized, the productivity of our present system of farming would not suffice to feed the population, so that until our farming could be so developed as to make it productive enough for the purposive end, food would have to be imported, as it is to-day, in exchange for manufactured commodities in excess of the supply for the home market. In these circumstances how could the minimum army supply everyone with food, clothing and shelter in kind?

Another insuperable difficulty is that two incompatible and mutually exclusive systems of production would be in operation: one, pure communism providing a minimum subsistence in kind; the other, capitalism based on wage-labour producing commodities for exchange on the money markets.

How could Lynkens' scheme work? It would break down in practice as did Robert Owen's Labour Note Exchanges.

Lynkens, in opposing his scheme to that of the Socialist solution of the social problem views society from the standpoint of the individual rather than that of the class struggle. He quotes approvingly the saying of Elisée Reclus: "Every individual seems to us the central point of the universe."

Wittels makes much of what he calls Lynkens' great discovery—the *private crisis*. Marx explained commercial crises, but, thinks Wittels, he overlooked the private crises. Lynkens suffered much from penury, and his philosophy is a revolt against the economic insecurity of the individual in modern society. Marx suffered no less from the same cause, and his science is his manifesto to the workers of the world to break the chains of wage-slavery in order to inaugurate a social system which will end once for all the ages-long exploitation of man by man.

It is said that the way to hell is paved with good intentions. It can also be said with more truth that the pathway to the inevitable destruction of the Capitalist system is paved with private crises. How many of the women who fought for the vote were actuated by private crises? Let the women answer! Have not private crises brought thousands into the ranks of the revolutionary proletariat? Right down the ages private crises have inspired the plots of countless literary works; have stirred up rebellions; have been the spur to the heroic deeds of revolutionary leaders; have converted indifferent men and women into religious fanatics or zealous social reformers.

\*\*\*\*\*  
 MAY  
**Labour Monthly**  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 THE COAL REPORT AND  
 AFTER By Arthur Horner  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 SHOOTING NIAGARA  
 By R. Page Arnot  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 THE GENEVA FIASCO  
 By W. N. Ewer  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 TEACHERS AND THE CLASS  
 STRUGGLE By A. M. A.  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 ITALY TO-DAY By L. W.  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 Price Sixpence, or 3s. 6d. for 6  
 months, post free, from 162 Buck-  
 ingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1  
 \*\*\*\*\*

Nevertheless, through all this welter of social crises and private crises—acting and reacting on each other; and despite the martyrdom and heroism of humanity, man has not been able to make his own history “out of conditions chosen by himself, but only out of such as he finds close at hand.” Hence “an end to poverty” by means of Universal Civil Service, being of

the nature of the kind of history its originator desired to make out of conditions chosen by himself, will go the way of all Utopias.

In Russia, the first Proletarian Revolution has been “made out of conditions close at hand;” and the practical experiments now being made there are a better basis for hope than even the rosiest Utopia. SVL.

## The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—62 HANOVER STREET, EDINBURGH

*Gen. Sec., J. P. M. Millar (to whom all reports should be sent)*

**S**HOP Assistants' Union.—In opposition to a motion from Edinburgh and Tottenham, which asked the E.C. to arrange an N.C.L.C. Educational Scheme, the E.C. recommended to the Conference that no action be taken on those lines and that the Union should simply support the Easton Lodge proposal. Edinburgh's Motion was ably moved by an old College Student, A. H. Smith, and was carried against the E.C.'s recommendation by 92 votes to 43. Special thanks are due to Comrades Wade, Shaw, Nutall, Lee and many other good supporters in the Union.

Hearty congratulations to Comrade Wade on his election to the Union's E.C. Comrade Wade is an old Labour College student as well as a Tutor.

*Electrical Trades Union.*—This Union is balloting immediately on the question of an N.C.L.C. Educational Scheme. Will all I.W.C.E.ers in the Union do everything possible to ensure a favourable issue?

*Plumbers and Domestic Engineers; General and Municipal Workers; Corporation Workers.*—The question of an Educational Scheme is coming up at the Conferences of these Unions. All

I.W.C.E.ers are asked to lend their aid.

*New E.C. Members.*—Arthur Dawson represents the National Union of Textile Workers on the N.C.L.C. Executive. He is an old supporter of the I.W.C.E. A. Woodburn has been appointed the Scottish representative.

*Personal Notes.*—Hearty congratulations to Divisional Organiser Barr and Divisional Organiser Ellis on the occasion of their marriages and all good wishes to Mrs. Barr and Mrs. Ellis. All N.C.L.C. supporters will be interested to learn that J. F. Horrabin has become Labour Candidate for Peterborough. There will soon be an N.C.L.C. Class in the House of Commons!

*National N.C.L.C. Summer School.*—This school is advertised elsewhere. It is emphasised that early booking is essential.

*Training Centre.*—The N.C.L.C. is hoping to run a Training Centre for Tutors during the first fortnight in August. Intending students should write Head Office immediately.

*New Local Affiliations.*—The following list speaks for itself. Does your College's name appear? London, 6; South-Lancs East, 4; Stirlingshire,

---

### *Preliminary Announcement*

**A SHORT HISTORY of the BRITISH WORKERS**

*By R. W. Postgate*

*Full Particulars next month*

3; Southend, 2; Dudley, 1; Perth, 1; Chesterfield and District, 1; Griffithstown, 1; Glasgow District, 1; Liverpool, 1; Carlisle, 1.

*Returns to Head Office.*—The Executive have expressed concern at the failure of some Colleges to make the periodical returns of class students, etc., which are required at Head Office. Will members of College Committees please make a point of giving what assistance they can to the Secretaries to ensure that these returns are forwarded?

*What the Divisions are doing*

*Div. 1.*—The classes conducted by the additional full-time lecturer, J. Jones, have greatly appreciated his services and desire his re-engagement next winter. The affiliation of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society has resulted in further affiliations from its attached Guilds and in many applications for speakers. The Divisional Organiser will welcome applications for speakers from any London Area working-class body. Nearly fifty students entered for the Essay Competition. The book prizes for the winners will probably be distributed at the proposed July Garden Party.

The Divisional Organiser (11a, Penywern Road, Earl's Court, London, S.W. 5), will be pleased to receive more applications from advanced students who are prepared to undertake an intensive course of training for the purpose of becoming tutors on Industrial History or Economics. So far, it has been provisionally arranged to run these Tutor's Classes at three centres: East London, West London and Battersea. The London Council is inviting all organisations desiring free access to our classes for all their members to affiliate at the rate of 2d. per member per year. Subsidiary sections of affiliated organisations such as Women's and Youths' Labour Sections and Co-operative Guilds are to be allowed to affiliate at the minimum rate of 2s. 6d. per year.

*Div. 2.*—The Secretary of the Littlehampton Class reports that they highly appreciate the services of J. E. Mathews who tutored the class on Industrial History and Economics. The visit of J. F. Horrabin to Newport and Cowes proved highly successful. Comrade Knight has concluded his lectures on

## N.C.L.C. & PLEBS NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL

*Cober Hill, Scarborough,  
July 10th to 24th*

*Fee per week (including  
board)—£3 3 0*

*(Tutors, College and class  
secretaries—£3)*

**Send your booking fee of  
15s. (in part payment) to  
N.C.L.C., 62 Hanover St.  
Edinburgh.**

Agriculture and the land question to the Dorchester Agricultural Workers. The Organiser also conducted a week-end school at the same place and is now able to report that the Branch has set itself the task of raising £25 as an educational fund which will be used entirely for N.C.L.C. Education. Everybody is optimistic of success and this experience will be very valuable for opening up other parts of the Division for N.C.L.C. activities among land workers. Tutorial classes and week-end schools are being arranged for the summer. The Divisional Council which met on March 20th expressed their best thanks to all who have assisted the N.C.L.C. during the winter.

*Div. 3.*—Most of the classes ended with Easter. Southend, Peterboro', Bedford, Slough and Windsor, however, are endeavouring to keep going throughout the summer. At Peterboro' the Day School on the 9th of April proposed two classes and, now that the PLEBS Editor is the adopted Parliamentary Candidate for this town of his birth, we shall be able to intensify our activities there. In addition to those mentioned in the March issue a Lantern Lecture

has been run at Braintree—thanks again to Mr. Hickley and his lantern—and a play-reading at Luton. A special meeting at Southend was arranged for April 18th, and T. Ashcroft is in charge of a Day School there on May 2nd. Braintree Trades Council is sponsoring for May 29th-30th an Education Conference, a Gramophone Demonstration for the Esperanto Class, Lectures on Trade Unionism and a play-reading. Bedford's Day School is due for June 6th.

Will all Colleges send in names of their delegates for Divisional Conference School, May 8th and 9th, and prepare them to make reports upon past year and suggestions for future? Comrades in London will be welcomed to the lectures of A. M. Robertson (*The Work of the Labour Colleges*) and J. F. Horrabin (*Teaching of Economic Geography and Textbooks*), at 7.30 p.m. on Saturday, and 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Sunday, respectively; 1s. fee for the three lectures.

*Div. 4.*—The new Constitution of the Maesteg Labour Party includes a clause for the provision of Education on N.C.L.C. lines. Glynneath L.C. reports successful Day Schools at Cwmgwrach and Skewen, the speakers being S. O. Davies, subject, "Education and the Mining Crisis." The Afan Valley Miners have accepted an N.C.L.C. Educational Scheme providing Free Classes and Free Correspondence Courses for the contribution of 3d. per member per year. We shall be pleased to receive the co-operation of all I.W.C.E. adherents in the area. Aberavon L.C. reports a successful Day School with Comrade S. O. Davies as Lecturer.

*Div. 5.*—The response to the circular sent out to affiliated Unions is excellent. Eight branches in a fortnight have received a lecture on the "Economics of the Coal Crisis," and many more are arranged for April. Many thanks to Comrades Gameson and Gribble for assistance down Plymouth way. Branches are keenly interested in the Mining crisis and are appreciating the N.C.L.C. in providing lectures on the topic. Organiser Phippen disposed of twelve dozen copies of "Facts from the Coal Commission" (L.R.D.) in March.

Affiliated Unions please note—that

Branch lectures are available throughout the year. Note also that the A.S.L.E. and F. is the most energetic in arranging Branch Lectures. Can't you beat it?

Bristol L.C. has four summer classes. A class for propagandists and tutors will be arranged in May. Swindon has a new class on History. Chard and Newton Abbot Colleges held successful meetings in the middle of March with J. T. W. Newbold as lecturer.

*Div. 6.*—Classes closed for one month. Nechells I.L.P. has affiliated to Birmingham College and a new class commences at Nechells session. Alum Rock finished session with a very successful social evening. Birmingham Committee have arranged a Carnival to be held on 24th April. A meeting of students from all parts of the city has been held and good discussion on the problems of I.W.C.E. movement took place. The Divisional Council meeting was held on 28th March, and the organiser was congratulated on the success which had attended his efforts since coming to the division. An effort is being made to arrange a summer school.

*Div. 7.*—A. J. Cook and Divisional Organiser Shaw are the speakers at the N.C.L.C. Conference to be held at Sheffield on May 15th, the chairman being Councillor E. G. Rawlinson, President, Sheffield Trades Council.

*Div. 8.*—J. Hamilton has been appointed one of the adjudicators of the Merseyside Arts and Craft Festival, 1926. A student of the Great Harwood L.C. has been returned at the top of the poll at the Local Elections. Three Class Members are determined to train as Class Tutors for work next winter. The College is forming a lending library and would be glad to receive books. The Co-operative Classes at Wallasey and Rockferry have asked that next year they again have Labour College Classes with Dr. Johnstone and J. Hamilton as tutors. A scheme for co-ordination is being introduced in North Lancs. The national executive are transferring A. L. Williams to the area to act as full-time organiser-lecturer.

*Div. 9.*—Thanks to the efforts of Comrade Holder and some members of the A.S.L.E. and F., a Class Group

has been started in Carlisle. All supporters in that area are asked to communicate with the Secretary, whose name will be found elsewhere on this page. A large conference on I.W.C.E. is being held in Durham on May 8th, the speakers being A. A. Purcell, M.P., and J. P. M. Millar.

*Div. 10, Scotland.*—At Mrs. A. Woodburn's class at Tranent on Public Speaking there were six Parish and Town Councillors. The Fife Reform Miners' Union have given a special grant to enable the Fife College to

Serfdom; 5. Peasants' Revolt; 6. Branding of Labourers; 7. Beginnings of Industrial Revolution; 8. Chartist Movement; 9. Fight for Trade Unionism; 10. The Miners' Struggle; 11. The Great War; 12. The Aftermath of War; 13. Symbolic Presentation of Labour; 14. International Solidarity of Labour; 15. New Era.

A Day School was held at Sutton-in-Ashfield, with Harry Hicken, Treasurer of the Derbyshire Miners, as lecturer. Tutors' Classes have been arranged in Nottingham and Chesterfield. A Day School is to be held at Wellingborough on June 12th with Mark Starr as lecturer. Nottingham is holding Week-end Schools on May 29th-30th and June 26th-27th; while Northampton is to have a Day School on June 4th.

## COBER HILL

*July 10th to  
24th*

retain the services of Tutor Williams during the summer. G. S. Aitken, Staff Tutor for Lanarkshire and representative on the N.C.L.C. Executive, has resigned, having gone to Russia. Hearty thanks to him for the good work he has done.

*Div. 11, Ireland.*—The Divisional Council has now been organised. All branches of affiliated organisations are being offered a selection of special lectures. A Tutors' Training Class is being held to equip voluntary tutors for the next winter session.

*Div. 12.*—Leicester Labour Party decided to affiliate to the local College by forty-four votes to four, after an address given by Organiser Brown. A. V. Williams, who has been recently acting as temporary Lecture-Organiser for the N.C.L.C., is organising on behalf of the Labour Party a very extensive "Pageant of Labour." The pageant is to deal with the following episodes and it is expected that there will be upwards of 2,000 participants. The pageant, he says, will be a tremendous boost for I.W.C.E.:—

1. The Cave Man; 2. Primitive Communism; 3. Chattel Slavery; 4.

*Have you booked  
the date—and your  
room?*

- Directory.—Additions and Corrections.*
- Div. 4.*—Maesteg L.C., Sec.: I. Cox, 5, Cwmfelin, Jenkins Terrace, Garth, Maesteg, South Wales.
- Div. 6.*—Leamington L.C., Sec.: H.G. Painting, 28, Grove Street, Leamington.
- .. West Bromwich L.C., Sec.: F. Able, 126, Bromford Lane, West Bromwich.
- .. Worcester L.C., Sec.: W. L. Huckfield, 298, Astwood Road, Worcester.
- .. Walsall L.C., Sec.: A. H. Fox, 30, Bescot Street, Walsall.
- .. Divisional Organiser: J. Stuart Barr, 44, Park Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham.
- Div. 8.*—North Lincs. Area Council, Sec.: G. Holt, 116, Rectory Road, Burnley.

## PLEBS LEAGUE NOTES

**T**HE May issue, and a later special International Number of The PLEBS occupied the attention of the April E.C. During the summer months, when class readers are scattered, and it is difficult in some areas to keep in touch, special numbers (i.e. dealing with a special subject from various points of view) have proved to be attractive and the means of holding the circulation up to winter figures—and of finding new readers. It is hoped that the June issue of PLEBS will serve this purpose by dealing with the vital question of International organisation.

Arrangements were made for the publication of Postgate's book *A Short History of the British Working Class*. It will be uniform with *A Worker Looks at History*, and sold at 1s. 6d. The Atlas will follow soon after.

Several very interesting manuscripts were discussed, all of which PLEBS would like to publish as acquisitions to its Book List, but cash considerations decided that only one could be kept for further consideration. This is a translation of Comrade Wittvogel's little book on China just published in Berlin. The E.C. were informed of the possibility of an English edition of Mehring's *Life of Marx*.

But don't let the prospect of new publications take your attention off the all important question of distributing those already out. We have again taken the bit between our teeth and sent out parcels of Jack Hamilton's pamphlet, *The Class Struggle in the Mining Industry*, to many of our agents without waiting for orders. By the time these notes are read we hope that the whole 5,000 will be out of our hands—but if you haven't had any, don't let this deter you from writing for copies. A new phase in the struggle may have already opened, but this history of the past struggles will nerve us to new efforts in the present.

From the reviews to hand of *Education in Soviet Russia*, it is receiving

well-merited appreciation. No local member of the N.U.T., or other teachers' union should be left unaware of this publication. This is where you come in.

Reports of activities are coming in from our branches. The Blyth branch has recently elected a new secretary, but its members desire to put on record their appreciation of the splendid work done by Comrade Kennedy, who has acted as secretary since 1917. We are glad to note that he is not severing his connection with the branch, but will continue to work with the comrades whom he has so beneficially influenced.

Manchester is running a Week-End School at Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire, on May 29th-30th (note—the end of Whit week); terms are very moderate, and accommodation limited! To all whom it may concern, *buck up* and *book up* at once or there will be no room. Write:—Robert Moores, 134, Alexandra Road, Moss Side, Manchester.

Thornaby-on-Tees is holding regular weekly meetings at which seventy-five per cent of membership attends. Other branches please copy. Bolton is still busy, and has a fine programme of subjects for the monthly Discussion Circles. Comrade Kinge, of Wallsend, writes:—"We have just chosen our candidates for the November elections. . . . It may, perhaps, interest you to know that out of five new candidates four are Labour College students, including me."

Plebs is the poorer for the loss this year of two old comrades: Geo. Spanton, of A.M.W., who in the past has done much to bring PLEBS to the notice of comrades in South Africa; and Mrs. Rosa Lucas, our oldest member, who died in hospital at the age of 82. Can we welcome recruits to fill the gaps in the ranks?

W.H. is now on a visit to Russia, and we hope to have some "impressions" from her in next month's PLEBS. Meantime, all communications will be dealt with by—

K. S.



## The PLEBS BOOKSHELF

IT is now three or four years since I tried to sketch out, in a syllabus published in *The PLEBS*, a line of approach to a study of literature based on a proletarian point of view. (I say "proletarian" rather than "Marxist" because, if ever I'm rash enough to say anything about Marxism on this page, some stern critic hastens to expose my gravely inadequate grounding in the faith: see, for instance, our correspondence columns this month.) At various times since, other writers and myself have urged that there was room in our educational work for a historical survey of literature aiming at relating ideas to social forces. I heard, therefore, with a good deal of interest of a book entitled *The Newer Spirit: A Sociological Criticism of Literature*, by an American author, V. F. Calverton (Boni and Liveright, New York, \$2.50); and, having just read it, I am hoping that a cheap English edition will be available some day.

Mr. Calverton thus sums up his own thesis:—

Although revolutions in æsthetics are due to revolutions in ideas, every revolution in ideas is a consequence of a revolution in the social structure that the prevailing material conditions have produced.

His book is not an attempt at a history of literature, but a collection of essays dealing with various authors and literary movements, mostly contemporary. The first essay is the only one in which he looks backward, and very briefly analyses certain periods of literary history in order to expound his point of view.

The argument of this essay is this: Since the time of the Greek tragedy has always been considered the supreme form of literary art. And no form of art has more clearly reflected the social concepts (themselves arising from material conditions) prevailing in any age.

Until the eighteenth century, when the bourgeois class had acquired

sufficient power to exert a permanent influence upon social conceptions, the attitude towards tragedy was uniformly feudal and aristocratic. The distinction between higher and lower drama, tragedy and comedy, throughout the Middle Ages and extending to the decline and debase of feudalism, was considered by critics as being fundamentally a distinction of social status. Tragedy could be concerned only with noble characters—the illustrious—and to conceive it as being written about a bourgeois protagonist would have been literary sacrilege. . . . Tragedy, says d'Aubignac [the French classicist, 1604–76] "inheres not in the nature of the catastrophe, but in the rank of persons." . . . [Or] in Dryden's words, "tragedy, as we know, is wont to image to us the minds and fortunes of noble persons . . ." Even Oliver Goldsmith, a struggling genius acquainted with all the pain and torture of deprivation, maintained that "the distresses of the mean (the middle and poorer classes) by no means affect us so strongly as the calamities of the great."

After illustrating this feudal, aristocratic concept from the dramas of Shakespeare, Mr. Calverton traces the development of a bourgeois point of view in literature, quoting Lillo's *The London Merchant* (staged in 1731) as marking the origin of *tragedie bourgeoisie* in England; and he goes on to study the emergence of a proletarian spirit in literature, and the gradual realisation by literary artists—precisely to the extent to which proletarian class-consciousness had developed in the country in which they wrote—"that there is a soul in the common man, that the proletarian is not without his tragic affections and aspirations." Dramas like *The Weavers*, *Strife*, and *Beyond the Horizon*, and novels like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Frau Sorge*, and *Sons and Lovers*, are now recognised as "tragedies of genuine and vital character."

Commenting on this development, Mr. Calverton very wisely remarks:—"In understanding this social process, however, we do not mean to conclude that all these artists who in their work embody this conception are aware of the sociological factors that have made it a part of the civilisation. In the greater number of instances, on the contrary, the attitude prevails in spite of ignorance of its cause. The attitude becomes a kind of social-reflex."

In his second essay, Mr. Calverton applies this sociological criticism to the work of Sherwood Anderson, one of the three or four most notable figures in contemporary American literature. "Anderson's work," he claims, "affords an excellent introduction to what we may call the proletarian concept exemplified in literature." In his earlier novels, *Windy McPherson's Son* and *Marching Men*, Anderson is still idealising individual proletarians, and his realism is strongly streaked with romanticism. In the later volume of stories, *Winesburg, Ohio*, we have realistic tragedy, written by a man whose attitude "is that of the condoning artist, the knower of causes, the critic of conditions." His work here challenges comparison with that of the contemporary Russian writers discussed in Ellen Wilkinson's article on another page.

I hope I have said enough to show that *The Newer Spirit* is an exceedingly interesting book. I have only one word of criticism to offer. Mr. Calverton writes in cultured-American, which is a terrifying language. Phrases like "unsucculent of the spirit of the rising generation," "the half-schizophrenic psychology of Edgar Wilson," "its energy and pulchritude unluckily are potential rather than kinetic," "vague and mystical verse, impregnated with an almost solipsistic pessimism" are—well, mouthfuls; though nobody in America seems to find any difficulty in masticating them.

By the way, Mr. Calverton refers to works by Plechanoff entitled *Art and Social Life*, and *Materialism and Art*. Does anybody know if these are obtainable in England?

The persistent uninterestingness of

*A Tract for the Times*

THE  
CLASS STRUGGLE  
IN THE MINING  
INDUSTRY

By J. Hamilton  
(President, N.C.L.C.)

16pp. 2d.

Per 12, postpaid 1s. 8d. Per 25, 3s. 3d.

This pamphlet has been revised and enlarged from the article published in the March PLEBS. The facts it contains are just those which every Trade Unionist needs to know in view of the present industrial situation. Get a supply and push them among your fellow-workers.

**NOW—not next year!!**

PLEBS, 162a Buckingham Palace Rd.,  
London, S.W. 1

the *Daily Herald's* literary page—from the point of view of a proletarian spirit in literature and literary criticism—was partially atoned for the other day by the little article headed "The Song of the (Chinese) Shirt," which quoted two poems from the *Chinese Recorder*, a monthly published in Shanghai. As examples of a proletarian consciousness, expressed in the idiom of a newly-industrialised nation, both were magnificent. Consider the stark pitifulness of this verse from "The Song of the Cloth Seller":—

"Big Sister weaves cloth,  
Big Brother sells cloth,  
Baby wears worn trousers,  
No cloth to patch them."

And these lines from the other poem ought certainly to be printed on all the "Produce More" posters:—

"Speed up! Work!  
From dawn to dark.  
Fourteen hours, fifteen hours.  
Speed up! Speed up!  
Speed up—to Age!—to Want!—  
to Death!"

J. F. H.

# BOOKS FOR WORKERS

*Plebs Textbooks—*

PSYCHOLOGY  
ECONOMICS  
ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY  
EUROPEAN HISTORY

Each 150 to 160 pp., illustrated, 2s. 6d.  
(*postpaid 2s. 8d.*) Per 12, £1 6s.

*New Revised Edition—*

A WORKER LOOKS AT  
HISTORY *Mark Starr*

1s. 6d. (*postpaid 1s. 8d.*) Per 12, 15s. 9d.

*Plebs "Sixpennies"—*

TRADE UNIONISM  
CO-OPERATIVE  
MOVEMENT  
FASCISM

*We can also supply—*

A WORKER LOOKS AT ECONOMICS  
*Mark Starr (1s.)*

WORKING-CLASS EDUCATION  
*J. F. and W. Horrabin (1s.)*

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN  
S. WALES *Ness Edwards (2s. 6d.)*

THE TOWN LABOURER 1760-1832  
*J. L. and B. Hammond (2s.)*

PLEBS, 162a Buckingham Palace Rd., London, S. W. 1

# THE WORKERS' BATTLE FRONTS

The Trade Union Movement wages the workers' war in the field of industry.

The Workers' Political Movement carries on the struggle in politics.

The National Council of Labour Colleges gives battle in the sphere of education.

Every Trade Union should have an N.C.L.C. educational scheme providing free access to classes, free correspondence courses, and free access to non-residential day and week-end schools. Such Unions as the A.E.U., A.U.B.T.W., N.U.D.A.W., Plasterers, Sheet Metal Workers, Bury Textile Warehousemen, National Union of Textile Workers, Derbyshire Miners, Shale Miners, A.S.L.E. & F., Managers' & Overlookers, N.A.F.T.A., Tailors & Garment Workers, etc., have N.C.L.C. educational schemes.

*Has YOURS?*

Send 3d. stamps to J. P. M. Millar, *Gen. Sec.*, N.C.L.C., 62 Hanover St., Edinburgh, for "Education for Emancipation" and full particulars of N.C.L.C. Correspondence Courses.