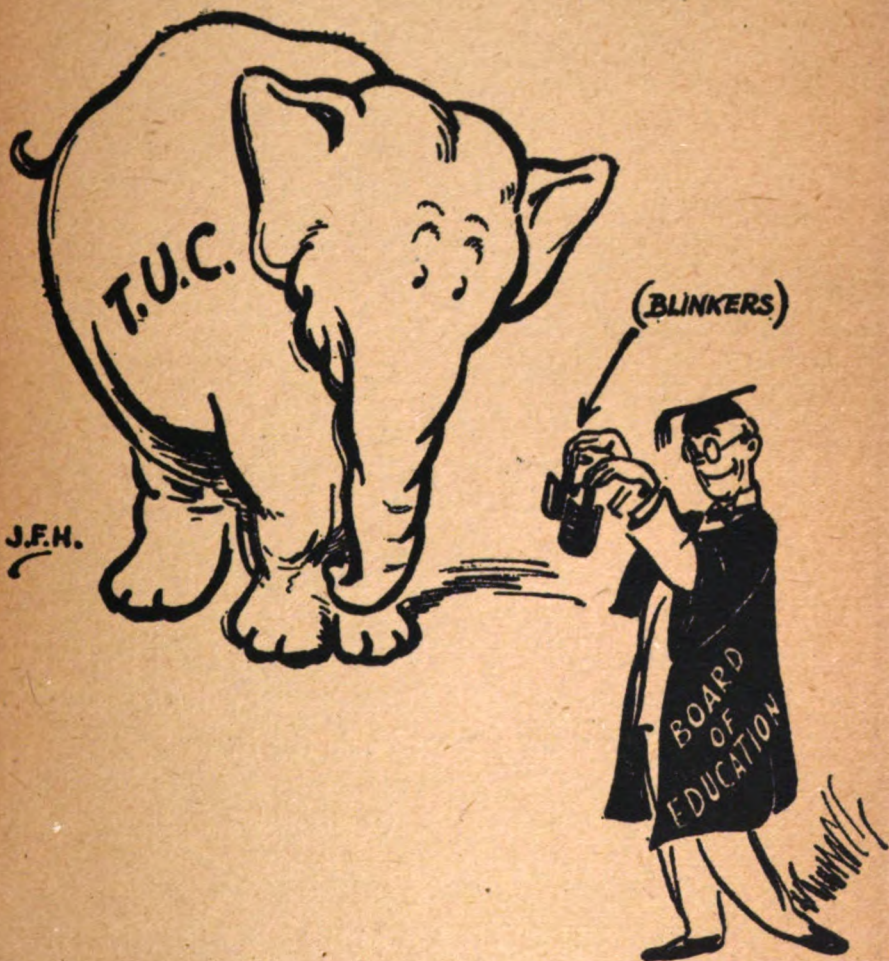


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# THE PLEBS

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Vol. XVIII

August, 1926

No. 8

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## THE T.U.C. EDUCATION SCHEME

*The most important matter discussed at the N.C.L.C.'s Annual Meeting was the T.U.C. Education Scheme and its bearing on N.C.L.C. activities. We print here the report of the N.C.L.C. Executive presented to the Annual Meeting, and we think our readers will agree, in view of its interest to every active worker in our movement, that the publication of this report, in full, is more useful than a brief summary of the proceedings of the Meeting. We ask any of our friends who are attending Congress next month to read it carefully and prepare themselves accordingly.*

IT will be recalled that the T.U.C. Scheme, passed at Scarborough, involved the setting up of a National Committee of Educational Bodies, but including a Chairman and two other members appointed by the General Council. It also involved that Divisional Committees consisting of representatives of the educational bodies carrying on class work should be set up. These Divisional Committees, however, had very little power, the work in the main being confined to exchange of information, propaganda and similar activities. The Scheme, of course, allowed Unions to arrange Educational Schemes directly with the N.C.L.C. or any other working class educational body included in the Scheme, and allowed to the educational bodies the rights of criticism and propaganda. The General Council was authorised to earmark £2,000 for Trade Union educational work, and it was provided that this fund, plus any amounts raised from the Unions, could be used—among other purposes—to make grants to the recognised educational institutions. So far as the residential institutions were concerned, the General Council was empowered to take over the Labour College, London, and Ruskin College, subject to certain conditions.

During the year, the General Council made no attempt either to call together the old Committee on which the N.C.L.C. had been represented, or to form the new National Committee laid down under the Scheme. This allowed us no direct influence over the Easton Lodge question mentioned later. Some months ago a leading article in *Education*, the official journal of the Education Committees, indicated that someone interested in the W.E.A. had described the objects of the T.U.C. Scheme as being a mere "rhetorical flourish." These objects, it will be recalled, provided for education for the purpose of securing "social and industrial emancipation." As a

*The Past Year*

result of our General Secretary's replying and pointing out that the objects meant what they said, and that the W.E.A. had agreed to those objects, a first-class controversy developed, in which Mr. Pugh (Chairman of the Congress Education Sub-Committee), Professor Lindsay (Master of Balliol and Vice-President of the W.E.A.), Mr. J. M. MacTavish (General Secretary of the W.E.A.), and the Minister for Education (Lord Eustace Percy) all took up the cudgels for the W.E.A.

Following upon that, a letter was sent to the Executive of the N.C.L.C. complaining of the attitude of the N.C.L.C. "towards other educational bodies recognised by the [General] Council, as reflected in various printed statements, letters, articles and advertisements appearing in different Press publications over the name of your Secretary, J. P. M. Millar, and others." There is no doubt the main complaint was the controversy in *Education* which had put the W.E.A. in an equivocal light. The letter asked that the N.C.L.C. send three representatives to discuss the matter with the General Council Education Committee. The Executive, after going into the question, endorsed the action of the General Secretary, as they were satisfied that his actions were quite permissible in view of the Clause with regard to propaganda. They were, moreover, satisfied that what the W.E.A. feared was that the T.U.C. objects would result in the withdrawal of State support, and that that explained the extremely unsatisfactory attitude of the W.E.A. That this was no idle fear was borne out when later on, as a result of the publicity given to the objects of the T.U.C. Scheme in *Education*, the Association of Education Committees went into the whole question and called the W.E.A. before them to explain its position. Meantime, their official journal, *Education*, expressed concern at the nature of the objects of the Scheme itself.

Eventually a Sub-Committee was appointed to go into the matter with a view to ensuring that the W.E.A. would continue on its old lines, and that Sub-Committee drew up a series of conditions on which grants should be made to the W.E.A. The conditions, which were afterwards accepted by the W.E.A., were as follows :—

*The Education Authorities' Conditions*

(a) Courses of study assisted out of public funds must aim at freedom from Party bias and from any flavour of political propaganda.

(b) Such courses must be conducted by teachers who have a thorough knowledge of the subject and have the experience and training, as well as personality and understanding of the students' needs, necessary to impart that knowledge. It is by

these tests alone that the qualification of teachers should be judged.

(c) Such courses must be open to all students who desire to take them and are able to profit by them.

(d) In order to ensure the proper observance of the foregoing conditions, it is essential that each class aided by a Local Education Authority should be open to inspection by the Authority and that the syllabus and tutor should be approved by the Authority or by such other body as the Authority may consider qualified to exercise those functions.

In the meantime, the N.C.L.C. delegates had met the General Council Committee and explained that the N.C.L.C. had not been guilty of any breach so far as the T.U.C. Scheme was concerned. It will be observed that in accepting Clause B, the W.E.A. lays itself open to being charged with a breach of Clause 6 of the T.U.C. Scheme, which lays it down that tutors should be properly qualified by having "sympathy with and understanding of the Working Class Movement"—unless, which seems very doubtful, the reference to "sympathy with" was ruled out accidentally. Moreover, the W.E.A. lays itself open to being charged with a further breach of the same Clause, part of which reads "that every effort shall be made . . . to ensure that all tutors taking classes are members of their appropriate Trade Union or professional organisation." The last sentence of the Education Committees' Clause B definitely rules out this condition and in a letter explaining their attitude to the T.U.C. Scheme the W.E.A. expressly stated that they *would not make membership a condition of appointment*. This series of conditions is interesting for another reason, and that is that the N.C.L.C. representatives were continually told by the W.E.A. representatives at the old T.U.C. Education Committee meeting that State grants were given entirely without conditions. It has now been demonstrated that these conditions, if not stated, were definitely implied, which has been our opinion all along.

The General Council Education Committee were not satisfied with the visit of the N.C.L.C. deputation, and they therefore put their objections in writing for the consideration of the full Executive. The Executive sent a reply answering those objections point by point. We understand that this reply did not satisfy the Committee, and eventually it was expected that the Committee would once again meet the N.C.L.C. The General Strike, however, has prevented this meeting.

The Scheme itself has been used on a number of occasions in

an attempt to prevent Unions adopting N.C.L.C. Schemes. This happened at the Lancs. and Cheshire Miners' Conference with success. A similar attempt was made at the Shop Assistants' Conference, but without success so far as the carrying of the resolution was involved.

*How the Scheme has affected N.C.L.C. Work*

During the course of the year, the position was somewhat altered, so far as residential colleges were concerned, by Lady Warwick's offer of Easton Lodge. This offer was accepted by the General Council, who circulated the Unions asking for subscriptions to the extent of £50,000. It is hoped by the General Council that the Labour College, London, will be absorbed in this Scheme. Despite the opposition to moving Ruskin College from Oxford, indicated by a manifesto issued by a number of those interested in Ruskin College, the very unsatisfactory financial position of the College and its still less satisfactory financial future, resulted in Ruskin's agreeing to hand over lock, stock and barrel, without any conditions whatever, which wipes out the Scarborough condition that Ruskin's educational aims and objects were to be retained. The General Council has now accepted the responsibility for keeping Ruskin going until Easton Lodge has been started. After that, the assets of Ruskin, if any, will be transferred to Easton Lodge. Of all working class educational organisations, Ruskin has been the least successful, and its Trade Union support, instead of growing, has been withering away.

The General Strike has had such serious financial results for many Unions that it is most unlikely that the General Council will be able to start Easton Lodge as a residential college for even fifty students, during the next twelve months at the very least. Attempts may be made to utilise it for some sort of Summer School work. The N.C.L.C. Executive are watching the position very carefully because they realise that if Easton Lodge is properly conducted, it may be a great asset to the Trade Union Movement. There is a danger, on the other hand, that it may become indistinguishable from a very small University College. There is also a distinct danger that Easton Lodge might be run on such an expensive scale that every penny of Trade Union educational money would be utilised in keeping it going, which would result in the evening class work throughout the country—undoubtedly the more important—being at the mercy of Board of Education subsidies and therefore from the working-class point of view unsatisfactory.

We understand that the present Sub-Committee of the Education Committee of the General Council consists of Messrs. Pugh (Chairman), Bowen, Beard, Hicks, T. Richards and J. H. Thomas.



So complicated is the present position that the Executive anticipate that some substantial changes in the T.U.C. Scheme are likely, in which case it will be necessary to call a special N.C.L.C. Conference to deal with the matter. What these changes will be we cannot, of course, yet say. In the meantime we must make every effort to add to the Unions with N.C.L.C. Schemes and to retain those we have. By that means, we shall do much to mould Congress educational policy—a matter of the greatest importance, as the T.U.C. Scheme has come to stay.

THE PLEBS

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## The N.C.L.C. SUMMER SCHOOL

“**N**EVER again!” will emphatically *not* be the slogan of those comrades fortunate enough to attend the N.C.L.C. Summer School at Cober Hill, 10th—24th July. Every year our Summer Schools go one better than before.

Not all the lecturers who had promised were able to attend. But those who did found themselves the centre of rousing discussions. Geo. Hicks (“The General Strike”), E. F. Wise (“The Problem of British Agriculture”), W. M. Citrine (“Industrial Organisation”), Ellen Wilkinson, M.P. (“The Parliamentary Labour Party”), Will Lawther (“The Miners’ Struggle”), A. Heron, Financial Secretary of the Irish T. & G.W.U. (“Recent Irish History”), H. B. Pointing (“Workers’ Control in Agriculture”) all gave of their best, and got the best out of their audiences. J. P. M. Millar and C. L. Gibbons filled gaps in the programme, and filled them very successfully.

The N.C.L.C. Annual Meeting (10th—11th July) was the largest and most representative yet held. There is no space here to report the discussions—or those at the Plebs Meet on Sunday, 18th. But, later, many of the questions raised will be dealt with in the magazine.

The five members elected to the N.C.L.C. Executive by the Annual Meeting were W. Coxon, J. Hamilton, W. J. Owen, Fred Shaw and J. D. Thom.

The social side of the School was an unqualified success. Fancy-dress dances, sports, tennis, croquet and bowls tournaments, revues, play-readings, and excursions made up a crowded programme, and



the Social Committee (including the group which formed a Minority Movement and ran a rival revue during the first week) are to be congratulated.

Edinburgh comrades took part in highly successful readings of Susan Glaspell's *Suppressed Desires* and *Trifles*, and of J. J. Bell's *The Pie in the Oven*. The dramatic event of the second week was a revue, *I.W.C.E.*, written, designed, rehearsed and produced on the spot.

Among the students were a contingent from Ireland, one or two recent goal-birds, and comrades from Switzerland and Germany. And—as before—the success of the School was due in no small means to the unfailing kindness and helpfulness of Miss Andrews and the Cober Hill staff.

## STRIKE HISTORY

### Stories of the Nine Days from North and South

*We continue this month our series of reports from correspondents in various parts of the country, describing local organisations, activities, etc., during the General Strike. As a basis for discussion of plans for Next Time, the information here collected will be of real value.*

#### NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE

**T**HE ninth day found Newcastle as solid as the first, despite the lack of previous preparation.

Dormant life in the Trade Union offices was frantically awakened—circulars, telegrams, etc., conveying instructions brought back from the Central offices were rushed off to the Branches; strike sheets prepared; meetings held here, there and everywhere to scratch up the necessary response from the rank and file to the midnight call.

The first problem to grapple with soon came along—Permits. Different unions had differently interpreted their instructions and pickets of one union were complaining that members of another were still carrying on under official permit. The T.U. offices themselves were bombarded with people of all sorts requesting permits for anything from removing furniture to "Revue managers" anxious to get "our gals" back home and incidentally stage scenery and truck. The word "Permit" assumed nightmarish proportions for those who had to deal with and watch them. Soon the opinion was expressed that no permits whatever should have been issued, for our wily profit-seekers had not wasted much time in forging their own. The permits only increased the difficulty of picketing!

In the first rush to get things going the absence of news was not felt keenly—when word of the arrest of our Comrades W. Lawther and H. Bolton, the breakdown of the local O.M.S. and brutal attacks on miners' pickets by the police, reached us—it then became plain that something more than the nightly official T.U. Bulletins received over the 'phone from London was needed. A cyclostyled sheet produced by the Newcastle Council of Action could only give very brief information, and even these sold as quickly as they could be run off.

Not until my services were transferred to the Northumberland and Durham General Council did I grasp the significance of this body which had gradually grown up to direct the General Strike in the area. It had seemed to me that each Union ran its own course in such matters as strike pay, keeping up the spirit of the members, issuing their own bulletins, etc., and only on general questions such as permits, etc., did the officials come together. This accounted for the mysterious meetings, which certain officials attended morning, noon and night, and in some cases left their members grumbling. It was on this Council (which had no less than 28 organisations represented by 36 officials) that the local T.U. officials, members of other working class organisations, came down to earth. In the early meetings they spent much valuable time in trying to make up for the previous lack of preparation. The Council considerably cleared the air for pickets by withdrawing all permits on Friday, 7th May.

From the Council circular instructions were sent out to the newly-formed councils of action, strike committees, etc., in an endeavour to organise that huge mass of energy which the strike had let loose. To the Council these bodies sent in reports, inquiries, etc. Step by step this body learned its job and perfected its machinery.

Members of this Council interviewed Sir Kingsley Wood (Chief Civil Commissioner) and turned down his proposal to settle the Food Problem jointly with the O.M.S.

On this latter all-important problem, the Council spent many days meeting C.W.S. directors and deputations. No definite solution had been reached up to the call off, but on the other hand from no part in the Area had any report been received of an immediate food shortage.

A central despatch office had been established (on Monday, 10th May) in the offices of the T. & G.W.U. which would guarantee more certain and quicker communications.

By Wednesday morning, 12th May, Newcastle did not show any sign of the strike weakening. With the members of the Engineering Trades added to the strikers, the position was growing stronger. Countless workers had been added to the unemployed through lack

of work, large drapery establishments generously gave members of their staff their annual holiday—and if the sign all round was not one of awakened class-consciousness, it was one of a desire “not to work.” The scab Press was the first to announce the call off—official confirmation by wire from T.U.C. did not reach us till after 4 p.m.—and all our conjectures on conditions never got so low as the actual facts, which again the Press told us. Prisoners, victimised members, what mattered they? The General Strike is off!—and the Miners—we are just beginning to remember the reason why the strike was called “on”!

Looking back on those nine days reminds me of the proverb “A stitch in time saves nine.” I.W.C.E.ers must continue *sewing* (both ways) hard, hard, hard! There was hardly a single Council of Action, Strike Committee or other communication that I saw which did not bear the name of one of our supporters. Four of the N.E. Labour College tutors are now resting in goal—and no less than eight members have been summoned. LILY DAVISON.

### CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE is essentially a “backward area.” Although it is a large railway centre, with cement works and a jam factory on the outskirts and has considerable industrial population, it is dominated by the atmosphere of the University. Scarcely a family but has someone working for the University in one way or another.

Hence the Labour movement is backward, and dominated by T.U. officials with a sectional outlook and a 19th century ideology.

A Joint Emergency Strike Committee was set up from the Trades Council, with representatives from the Labour Party. This remained little more than a “co-ordinating” committee, assuming scanty powers and leaving initiative and action mainly to the separate unions. The strike was regarded mainly as a “gesture,” and hence all that was required was to fold hands and await developments. A proposal to set up a Council of Action was heavily defeated, and in fact mention of the word was not allowed in the local Strike Bulletin, even in reports from other centres. Mention of Government acts of provocation was also forbidden.

The rank and file, even in outlying villages, rallied splendidly, and remained on strike on the 12th to counter the railway companies’ victimisation. Public meetings were held in the town and surrounding townships. Among the chief activities were those of the Entertainments Committee, which organised concerts, church parades, games, lectures by University dons and tours round colleges on the principle of “keeping the men occupied.” In addition a Publicity Committee was set up; and mainly on the initiative of a

few individuals a daily Strike Bulletin was issued (under strict official censorship) after the 6th, and the distribution of *The British Worker* for East Anglia was organised.

The Electricians remained at work. Permits were issued for transport of food. A few bookbinders returned to work—but that was all.

Briefly the chief features of the situation were that the local leaders adopted a purely passive attitude, regarding the Strike as a short-lived and isolated incident. The rank and file generally were content to take their cue from the leaders.

Every attempt was made to prevent any "class struggle" moral being drawn from the event. The movement remained sectional, each section acting on its own according to instructions from its own London H.Q. The Joint Committee had no real power for action, even if its members had desired to take the initiative.

Publicity was handicapped by inability to secure permits for printing work to be done; and by inadequate preparations, which meant that publicity arrangements were not started until the night of the 5th.

The Co-operative Society was hit by the Strike, if anything, more hardly than private traders. No special arrangements were entered into between the Co-op. and the Strike Committee.

But the rank and file were magnificently solid, could have held on considerably longer, and were ready to carry out whatever orders might come from H.Q.

MEMBER OF STRIKE COMMITTEE.

### MANSFIELD DISTRICT

**M**ANSFIELD is the centre of the North Notts Coalfield, the most important town in the "favoured" Eastern Area of the British Coalfield. Its strike organisation, of course, had to be rapidly improvised.

The atmosphere was electric; the response to the strike call magnificent. Railwaymen, tramwaymen, organised busmen were out to a man—just an odd railway clerk at work here and there, that was all. The printers responded splendidly. Not one of the local journals circulating in the area appeared during the strike. A few filtered in, after the first few days from outside, from Sheffield and Nottingham—and of course Churchill's *British Gazette* was posted outside the Police Stations. Stray copies of the *British Worker* made their appearance here after many days.

The Mansfield Trades and Labour Council set up its Strike Committee, with the secretary of the Council as secretary of the Committee. The assistant secretary was a well-known N.C.L.C.er in Mansfield, who worked like a Trojan during the whole of the nine days and afterwards.

The Railwaymen had their own Strike Committees in Mansfield and in all the towns in the area, they were regularly in touch with each other and kept up communications between the various strike committees. Though they met separately, they appointed representatives on the various strike committees throughout the district.

In a town adjacent to Mansfield a perhaps novel method was employed to get a strike committee functioning. A mass meeting of strikers was called, and a strike committee elected by it, care being taken to have each section of workers represented. Whatever may be said about this method, it certainly secured representation of the rank and file.

Gradually as the days passed the workers' organisation improved. Regular contact was established between the various committees. Strike bulletins were circulating freely, originating in such places as Belper, Chesterfield, Nottingham, and later in Mansfield itself, though they were never on sale in any quantity in the smaller towns of the area. The craving for news in these places was intense. There was general distrust of the *British Gazette* and the news sheets printed by blackleg labour. The Mansfield Strike Committee almost entirely concerned itself with the town of Mansfield. There was a failure to realise the strategic importance of Mansfield and the necessity to have in the town a Central Strike Committee on which all the adjacent towns and villages should be represented. As the strike went on a move was made to set up this Central Committee in Mansfield and this would certainly have materialised had the struggle continued.

The policy adopted by the T.U.C. of calling out some affiliated workers and not others prevented the general strike from being as impressive and effective as it otherwise would have been. Scattered over this area where mining is the predominant industry are a number of hosiery factories, and a good few spinning mills. The workers in these industries did not receive the call to strike. This gave the employers concerned the opportunity to encourage and connive at the use of blackleg transport for the movement of yarn and finished goods. This policy of the T.U.C. presented the O.M.S. with an opportunity to show its powers, and also was responsible for small bus proprietors approaching Strike Committees for permits to carry factory workers to and from their places of employment. Needless to say they were not granted. The policy of the T.U.C. did not help toward the smooth and efficient running of strike machinery. Many of the workers in this area at these mills and factories were restive and dissatisfied, and would gladly have joined hands with their fellow workers had they been allowed to do so.

There were many exciting moments during these historic days. The main cause of the gathering of masses of strikers at certain



points was the spasmodic attempts made by small bus proprietors to run their buses. This was keenly resented by the organised transport workers who were on the streets. The loyalty of the tramwaymen was splendid; not a single tram was run during the nine days. Naturally, the attempt to run odd buses gave rise to high feeling. "Mass" picketing was resorted to in many places; this resulted one night in the police charging a crowd who were demonstrating against one of these buses. The next day a Tory newspaper, printed in an adjacent town, stated the police were attacked with bottles and stones by the crowd. There was not an atom of truth in the statement.

There has been some talk by members of the General Council that the strike had reached its maximum effectiveness when it was called off. That was not true of this area. When the call-off came, the strike was solidifying, strike machinery was working better with each succeeding day; the ranks of the strikers could have been considerably augmented by calls to workers in other industries. There were no signs of a breakaway. The solidarity was amazing to those of us who knew the district best. The fighting *morale* of the workers was as splendid as it had been in the wonderful demonstration eleven days before.

C. BROWN.

### SHREWSBURY

**I**N Shrewsbury the General Strike order met with a response that was amazing. An old market town, mainly residential, far removed from any big industrial area, the bulk of its working-class population is employed on the railway; and, previously, the town had not built up a reputation for industrial solidarity. But we progress even here, and Tuesday, 4th May, put new life into the Labour stalwarts, though there were members of the railway clerical and supervisory grades still at work.

A Joint Strike Committee had been formed as soon as it appeared inevitable that a General Strike would be called, and this committee worked unitedly and amicably throughout the whole of those strenuous nine days. The busmen were out to a man, and there was an efficient supply of dispatch riders to carry news over a wide radius. Among other activities was the issue of a daily bulletin from which the following program for the day is taken:—

- At 9.45 a.m. .. Intercession service at a local chapel.
- 10.45 a.m. .. Strike Committee meeting to which all strikers were invited to listen to the business discussed.
- 12.0 noon .. Service at St. Mary's Church.
- 3.0 p.m. .. Mass Meeting.
- 7.30 p.m. .. Concert.

This was the daily routine, and, in addition an emergency committee was in session, also a finance committee for dealing with cases of hardship. The members of the police force were very decent and the Chief Constable complimented the strikers on their orderly behaviour. From which one would scarcely expect any police cases. However, following the termination of the strike, two young engine-drivers were summoned at the instance of the Railway Co. but the cases were dismissed. At the time of writing there are railway workers who have not yet been reinstated, mainly supervisory grades and shopmen.

On Saturday, 8th May, we had a very welcome visit from Miss Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., and Mr. J. F. Horrabin. Their visit was a real tonic, and at the crowded meeting held in the public park their stimulating addresses were greatly appreciated and made a deep impression on their audience as was evident from the constant references made during the following week. We were also greatly cheered by the presence in Shrewsbury during the strike of Mr. David Lawley, our prospective Labour Candidate, who addressed numerous meetings.

Certainly there was no revolutionary atmosphere in Shrewsbury but there was a definite advance in working-class solidarity. The question with us as with others is—how is this advance to be maintained and extended? Frankly, it seems very doubtful that there will be so splendid a response to any General Strike of the future unless the rank and file can feel assured that the official element show the same discipline as they demand of their members.

If the General Council—or whatever body is in charge of a dispute—is to have authority to call out the rank and file on strike then they must have authority to terminate the dispute in its entirety. The workers will refuse to be pulled in this direction or that like so many marionettes. And that raises the problem—what body will it be that can control all sections of the Trade Union movement, that can issue commands to strike or to return to work, with the power to enforce those commands? The logical conclusion is that only with the workers enrolled in one big union—divided into departments according to the nature of occupation—can this power be obtained.

Alice Pratt.

#### PETERBOROUGH

SUNDAY morning, 2nd May, found the local Trades Council in session and discussing plans to deal with the General Strike in this locality. It was resolved that the Council should form themselves into a Central Strike Committee, and invitations asking for representatives were sent to all unaffiliated branches. By Monday evening we had a

strong committee of 70 delegates, all eager to assist in carrying out the greatest task with which organised labour had yet been confronted.

Before we adjourned (in the early hours of Tuesday morning) the General Strike was in full swing and reports from the branches showed that the call had been answered with magnificent solidarity. The railways were at a standstill, a number of men refusing to complete the night shift. The streets were alive on Tuesday morning with the first line of defence—transport workers, engineers, electric supply workers, etc.

A number of E.T.U. men were left in at Electric Power Stations to supply power to hospitals and for food production, but local officials refused to confine supplies to these essential services, and after repeated negotiations all men were called out and electric supply was carried on with blackleg labour.

By Wednesday the situation was well in hand, communication was established between the various Strike Committees within a radius of 30 miles, and thus we were able to send news and messages to the outlying rural districts, and in return receive assurances of their solidarity.

A Sports Committee was set up and performed excellent work in organising concerts, tennis, bowls, football, etc. The Mayor and Chief Constable gave material assistance by allowing the use of the various sports grounds at reduced prices and in some cases free of charge. Bulletins were issued twice daily to counteract the broadcasting of "dope."

The chief difficulty experienced was in getting men to remain at work who were not affected by orders of T.U.C. All through the nine days enthusiastic meetings were held and the spirit and determination of the workers was beyond praise. I must make special mention of the Boilermakers who, although having no strike pay (and given a free hand by their Executive) came out solid to a man. Such a spirit of brotherhood, of splendid self-sacrifice, is impossible ever to forget. Thanks to very generous contributions to the "Central Distress Fund" all known cases of hardship received assistance.

In common, apparently, with the committees of other areas, we too had requests for permits to transport a variety of commodities. The local representatives of the Railway Companies appealed to us for men to go in to deal with perishable foodstuffs. It is pleasant to recall how, in no uncertain manner, these particular requests were refused.

On Tuesday, 11th May, the following resolution was forwarded to the T.U.C.: "That this Council is of the opinion that the time has now arrived when the General Council should call out all workers

engaged in those industries not yet affected by strike orders." The next day, as if in reply to this fighting request, came—the tragedy; humiliating and crushing the finest mass struggle since the days of Chartism.

To write of the lessons to be learned from the General Strike is far easier than getting the lessons home to the rank and file. With every admiration for the spirit of the working-class movement, one is compelled to express the opinion, that this time it certainly was not a conscious revolutionary struggle. With the *British Worker* tearfully pleading for constitutionalism and giving frantic assurances that this is not a "Political Issue," all hope of a revolutionary situation was killed. What is of importance is to get leaders who are not left cold by the class-struggle, and are not concerned about the respectability of "His Majesty's Opposition." Then, instead of "Never Again" we shall say "Ever Again and Again," until we have achieved our conscious purpose—the Socialist Commonwealth.

ALFRED S. BOOLS.

### DERBY

**A** FEW days prior to the Strike a Central Strike Committee was formed in Derby, composed of the joint Executives of the Trades Council and the Labour Party, with power to co-opt representatives from unaffiliated unions becoming involved in the dispute. The A.S.L.E. and F., R.C.A., N.U.R., and Transport Unions also formed a joint strike committee in accordance with instructions from the Transport Section of the T.U.C. at Unity House. This transport committee, however, agreed to subordinate itself to the Central Strike Committee. Thus, apart from a few initial misunderstandings, there was uniform control.

Difficulties arose almost immediately with regard to the interpretation of wires from the Transport Office in London; what did "All transport must be stopped" mean? What was the intention of the T.U.C.? There were several good I.W.C.E.ers on the C.S.C. and they entered into a fierce controversy with the Right-Wing elements, in the persons of local political celebrities, who entirely failed to appreciate the character of the struggle until a day or two before the strike was called off. The most acrimonious discussion centred round the local Co-op.; the committee decided that the D.C.S. should be limited to their usual activities in motor transport, but the Society desired to make long journeys to fetch supplies, and throughout the stoppage there was endless conflict with the manager of the Society. Even after the Society's deputation had been before the C.S.C. and had given pledges not to act contrary

to the wishes of the committee in such matters, motors were sent out by them and in one case a member of the C.S.C. was ordered to take a lorry beyond Birmingham for supplies of vegetables.

The members of the committee worked splendidly; the dispute was handled very efficiently, the members out on strike increasing every day. A cyclostyled bulletin was produced and 50,000 copies sold. The social sub-committee arranged free concerts and football matches which were played on the County ground (lent by the Club). There were no arrests and little or no conflict with the police; Labour J.P.s and Councillors obtained the use of the Parks and Recreation Grounds for mass meetings and agreement with the Chief of Police that the police should not be in attendance, and when a small bus owner started running buses on some of the tram routes he was persuaded to order them off the streets.

Trams and buses, with the exception of a few small firm's buses, were all stopped throughout the dispute. The response of the rank and file was magnificent; even the R.C.A. had 600 members out, although the head offices of the old Midland Railway are situated here. A surprising feature was the solidarity of the railway shopmen, catered for, as they are, by so many contending unions, and there being consequently a very large non-union element. The L.M.S. sought to enlist the services of retired and dismissed guards, drivers, firemen and signalmen, but with very little or no success; on one occasion they sent for a retired driver who had died a fortnight previously.

The aftermath has been very black here; there are 96 clerks still out, including the chairman and secretary of the R.C.A.; many men of other grades are also out, while others have been reinstated this last week; the majority that are working only work 3 days a week and the shopmen, true to the motto the men give the Company, are Losing Mondays & Saturdays.

At the moment the C.S.C. are acting as a Miners' Relief Committee and have forwarded over £1,000 to the central fund; the Watch Committee will not allow a Flag Day, but despite that the fund is growing rapidly.

J. CRISPIN.

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# HISTORY and the WORKERS

*This is the third of the series of articles on the teaching of History which Mark Starr is writing for The PLEBS. Numbers I and II appeared in our April and May issues.*

## III

### ITS INTERPRETATION

SO far we have only recognised the utility of history in making us conscious assistants in social change, and surveyed some of the methods used in teaching that subject. But Nordau, for example, has argued that history can teach us nothing; it cannot teach us the reason for past movements nor forecast future changes. It may be useful to throw a supporting glamour upon existing institutions, but the historian is only a novelist working within the limits of certain accepted series of events. Man is a mystery to himself here and now, so how can he analyse human actions in the mass and in the past? History cannot be a science and find out universal laws operating from an inspection of the "causal connection" of events. However, Nordau in his *Interpretation* proceeds to give a meaning to history and bases its stages consecutively on parasitism, illusion and scientific knowledge.

In many minds trifles are made to determine development: for example, if Cleopatra had been snub-nosed the history of Rome might have been different. In later days, so it is asserted, if Parnell had not met Mrs. O'Shea, Ireland would have won Home Rule without the subsequent bitter struggle. Such speculations lead only to alluring "what might have beens" and are obviously inadequate in the cases mentioned to explain the expansion policy of the Roman Empire or the division among the classes and forces struggling for self-government in Ireland. Human beings are not the sport of chance. History is more than a meaningless mass of events. Growth and development are recognisable.

To some, Empires repeat the human story of infancy, maturity, and senile decay. The melancholy reference to "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome" is used to foretell a similar fall for existing Powers. But history is not a circular switch-back, for the advances made by man in control of his environment have never been lost. There is no law of growth dogged by decay so far as society as a whole is concerned. And this is the more true to the extent that civilisation is not an affair of isolated regions but of an inter-connected world.

We have previously seen that even in the selection of facts we tend to choose and arrange them in accordance with some idea of

their interest and importance in relation to a theory or a viewpoint held. Theory, interpretation and law are used with the same meaning in this sense and we all are theorists perforce. We generalise from experiences received by ourselves or others, and these generalisations save us repeating experiences and also forecast our future actions. For example, man has proved that boiling water poured upon tea leaves makes a refreshing drink. Hence there is no need to repeat any attempt to make tea with cold water or cabbage leaves, and we can also foretell what we shall do to obtain such a drink in the future. A law in science, it should be noted, is only an explanation or description of what follows under certain circumstances; it states a "causal relation" between things. Our test of any such law or theory is whether it works and explains the facts. We may establish a "causal relation" between beer-drinking and a man's red nose, only to find that he has always been a teetotaler. We cannot alter the colour of the nose but we can and must find out another theory adequate to explain that fact.

One of the most widely held and oldest theories of historical change was that all events were shaped and fashioned by outside forces or powers. In its later stages this theory concentrated into referring to a "Divinity which shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will." Things became complicated when one tribal group or nation decided that it was "the chosen people" though which this Power made history. Unconsciously or otherwise there has been a general abandonment of this explanation. The Fundamentalists may foam, but no one seriously maintains that Divine intervention can be used as a cause of events nowadays. "God knows" is synonymous with ignorance. "An Act of God" is a survival in legal phraseology to cover unforeseen and accidental happenings. Individuals may, as Dr. Jordan, the head of a Welsh scientific institute, publicly proclaim that difficult technical problems could be solved by "a few minutes spent with the Divine Instructor," but the majority of men are conscious of no such suggestive aid. In modern factory life there are no mysteries and hence irreligion is a by-product of capitalism, out of which also grows the working-class which will control social forces as the technical forces have been already mastered.

Some historians—notably Carlyle—saw in the actions and behaviour of great men the cause of change. The more his classic examples are examined the more they appear as the mouthpieces of certain economic groups and interests. Luther's attack upon the Pope coincided with the desire of the German princes to obtain the lands of the Papal Church. Cromwell swept away the powers of the absolute monarchy because the rising class of traders and capitalists needed such a change. Spencer wrote of the "great"

man :—" He is powerless in the absence of the material and mental accumulations which his society inherits from the past, and in the absence of the co-existing population, character, intelligence, and social arrangements. Given a Shakespeare, and what dramas could he have written without the multitudinous traditions of civilised life—without the various experiences which, descending to him from the past, gave wealth to his thought, and without the language which a hundred generations had developed and enriched by use? Suppose a Watt, with all his inventive power, living in a tribe ignorant of iron, or in a tribe that could get only as much iron as a fire blown by hand-bellows will smelt; or suppose him born among ourselves before lathes existed; what chance could there have been of the steam engine?"

A man's greatness consists in the power to interpret aright the tendencies of his time and to act in accordance with them. If the late Lord Rhondda had advocated a return to hand-spinning instead of concentrating colliery concerns, he would have been unnoticed. Lenin cannot be understood apart from the Marxian theories produced by the development of capitalism in Western Europe and the opportunity afforded by a completely bankrupt social system in Russia.

In viewing the "great men" as "creatures" and not as "creators" of their age, there is no implication of individual irresponsibility. The individual is powerful, but only within certain limits. In the study of the success and failure of "great" men we get an understanding of their times, and the biographical method may be a valuable introduction to social history. The responsibility of investigating the social forces of our own day and of acting upon our findings and making them widely known is in no way lessened by a rejection of the "great man" as the dynamic of history.

There have been and are many attempts to give what can be termed "idealist" explanations of historical change. Hegel's "Idea" working itself out through contradiction and struggle into the consciousness of men as a demiurge of progress attracted considerable attention. Writers now widely read, like J. McCabe and H. G. Wells, when unable to give a "causal relation" between events, fall back upon references to "the general unfolding of the human mind" or "the free intelligence of mankind." These are "idealist" explanations in the sense that they put the change in ideas before the change in conditions. In effect they say: As a man thinks so he lives. Whereas the materialist explanations give ideas a secondary place and hold them to be determined by the conditions of life. As Marx phrased it: "The ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected and transformed into forms of thought."

Modern psychology in the hands of some of its exponents endeavours to explain individual and social behaviour by the structure and "complexes" of the mind itself. Other investigators explain behaviour by the absence or presence of certain "glands." Whatever may be the uses of these ideas and however much light they throw upon the actual working of the mind itself, they cannot be of great assistance in explaining history. For example, if we take the ego, the sex and the herd complexes of the psychologist they are *stationary* factors which cannot explain change. The sex complex gives no clue to the many changes in the forms of marriage institutions. Apparently it is the same herd complex which in prehistoric times leads a band to stone the sabre-toothed tiger, and now in modern times leads different groups to form trusts and trade unions. The difference has to be sought outside the mind itself. The will to live, and the will to live better, set going forces, start the struggle for the ownership of the tools and give rise to the dominance of the class having that economic power. This interpretation we will examine and apply in the next article.

MARK STARR.

## The GERMAN METALWORKERS' EDUCATIONAL SCHEME

*We published recently a short article by Scott and Nellie Nearing on the Labour College at Schloss Tinz, Germany. Here is a translation by Eden and Cedar Paul of an article describing another German workers' educational scheme.*

**T**HE educational activities of the German Metalworker's Union have always been exemplary. This union has never spared expense when there was a chance of promoting the education of its members and of training its own officials. Even during recent years, when there has been a great decline in membership, and when there have been extremely heavy calls on the union funds for the support of strikers or locked-out and unemployed members of the union, there has been no curtailment of educational facilities. At the very height of the economic crisis, the effect of which was especially severe in the case of the metalworkers, the union ventured upon a most notable pioneer step (pioneer as far as Germany is concerned) in the domain of independent working-class education. It opened a trade-union college in Dürrenberg, a spa in central Germany.

Previously, the educational activity of the union had mainly consisted in the giving of itinerant courses of lectures (analogous to the summer schools of Great Britain). Apart from the difficulties in the way of the concentration of students in scattered industrial areas, this method of itinerant courses was not so fruitful as might have been hoped, owing to the lack of any lasting personal tie between teachers and pupils. As soon as the course was over, contact was lost, and even the students in the locality failed to keep in touch with one another. It was beyond the power of itinerant teachers to effect any enduring concentration of the students. Furthermore (and this was the greatest disadvantage of all), the system did not lend itself to the establishment of a satisfactory educational technique.

But in the school opened at Dürrenberg on 14th March, 1926, these difficulties have been overcome, for the school is residential, and throughout the course of study teachers and pupils combine to form a working community. All distracting influences are kept at a distance; and even during the hours that are not occupied in class studies, there is ample opportunity for the most valuable mutual stimulation and influence. A point of especial importance is that the education can now be made far more definitely purposive. There are to be special courses for the different branches of the metallurgical industry, due allowance being made for the peculiarities of each. There are also to be special courses for union officials, for the members of factory councils (shop stewards, and the like) and, ultimately, for those officials of the Metalworkers' Union who, as the Factory Councils' Law directs, will be delegated to the supervisory councils [a German counterpart of the Whitley scheme].

To begin with, the duration of a course at the college has been fixed at three weeks, fifty students taking part in such a course. The union defrays all expenses, giving free board, lodging, and education; an allowance for travelling expenses; and a further allowance for loss of wages during the time of tuition (the compensation for lost wages amounts to four-fifths of the standard rate). All teaching materials are provided free of charge. A little while before their course begins, prospective students are supplied with a free copy of a booklet dealing with urgent problems of the working-class movement. The principal is Comrade Engelbert Graf, a well-known expert in working-class education, and he has two experienced resident assistants. For special subjects of study, selected teachers visit the school as circumstances may demand. These are to be chosen on principles which will ensure that the spirit of the Dürrenberg school shall be uncompromisingly socialist. In conjunction with the workers' residential university at Tinz in Thuringia (which has already won a great reputation for Marxist



education), Dürrenberg will become an effective centre for the promotion of class-consciousness among the workers.

EDUARD WECKERLE.\*

\* Comrade Weckerle has for several years worked on various newspapers run by the Independent Socialist Party of Germany. Since the fusion of the Independents with the Social Democrats, he has lived in Amsterdam, being at first connected with the Trade Union International, and for the last two-and-a-half years with the International Transportworkers' Federation, of which Edo Fimmen is secretary. He is the author of a remarkable book on *Man and Machine*, which has been adopted as an official textbook by the German Metalworkers' Union, and about which we hope to publish some further particulars in *The Plebs* shortly.

## NOTES BY THE WAY for Students and Tutors

### *The Economic Crisis in Europe*

**V**ARGA, in the issue of *Imprecor* for 27th May, gives an Economic Survey for the first quarter of 1926, in which more detailed light is thrown on the "stabilisation crisis" of European capitalism. He concludes from the available world statistics of production as follows: "If we examine the data for the most important raw materials, coal, petroleum, iron and steel, metals, wool and cotton, we find for the whole world an increased production, both in comparison with pre-war production and with that of last year. But when we compare the present production of coal, iron and steel in *Europe* with pre-war production, we find that though there is an increase as compared with 1924, still the production is less than before the war. And when we compare this fact with the enormous growth of the actual apparatus of production, we arrive at the conclusion that in Europe a great part of the productive apparatus is permanently laid idle." As a way out of this crisis the progressive capitalists try to secure (a) concentration of production in the undertakings possessing the best technical equipment, i.e., trustification, (b) "the introduction of new technical methods, the *rationalisation of production*," (c) the reduction of wages and lengthening of hours, (d) the formation of international cartels and restriction of production, to which we have referred above.

Since before 1914 "the progress of European capitalism was based upon the economic and political dominance of Europe over the rest of the world," this situation is causing "a chaos in foreign politics such as has rarely been experienced in Europe. Innumerable open and secret negotiations, alliances and counter-alliances . . . an acute crisis in the League of Nations." Meanwhile U.S. capitalism, to which "the centre of world economics" has been transferred from Western Europe, tries to bring pressure to bear on Europe, "to break up the League of Nations, and to seize upon the leadership of world politics."

The world economic situation in the first quarter of 1926, says Varga, has revealed "a great lack of uniformity in its development." In U.S.A. boom continues, though with signs of an impending crisis. In England a "slow development," punctuated by the coal crisis. In Germany, a "stabilisation crisis." In France a crisis of the franc exchange. In Italy the sudden appearance of a new crisis and increase of unemployment. A survey of South America, rich in statistics, shows the increasing rivalry between Britain and U.S.A. in those markets. This should be compared with the survey of "Trade and Production" in Britain in the L.R.D. *Circular* for July.

### *Progress in U.S.S.R.*

Statistics of illiteracy and health in U.S.S.R., just to hand in this country,

show remarkable progress. Illiteracy among trade unionists shows the following decline in important unions :—

	1922.	1925.
Land workers ... ..	80%	13%
Miners ... ..	60%	14%
Builders ... ..	20%	6%
Metal workers ... ..	14%	1%
Railwaymen ... ..	10%	none
Post Office workers ... ..	2%	none

In regard to health *The Soviet Union Monthly* for July shows a decrease in the death rate between 1913 and 1923 from 27.4 to 21.6 per thousand; and in infant mortality from 25.6 per cent. in 1910-4 to 19.4 per cent. in 1924. That is, the decrease in 10 years, thanks to the Revolution, is *over four times as great as that in the preceding 50 years, 1867-1914!*

In respect to production, production in large scale State industry, in April, 1926, showed an increase of 50 per cent. in April, 1925 (according to *Imprecor*). *The Soviet Union Monthly* shows that output for the first half-year 1925-6 represents 50.1 per cent. of the program for the year; and this program provided for a 50 per cent. increase on the year before. In the sphere of electrification "the works which will be opened this year are equal in strength to 62 per cent. of all the pre-revolutionary power works (233,000 kilowatts)." (*Imprecor*, 17th June).

#### International Monopoly

The *M.G. Commercial* of 3rd June, 1926, gives further details of the solidification of German "heavy industry" into trusts and cartels, and the attempt to link these internationally. "Under the leadership of the Raw Steel Union the German iron industry is trying to come to arrangements with concerns in other countries which will virtually put an end to foreign competition in the German iron market." The form these arrangements take is "to allow fixed quotas to foreign competitors on condition that the goods imported are marketed *through the Raw Steel Union at its own prices*. A similar end is being pursued in the negotiations for the formation of an international cartel to regulate production, and probably also prices."

These agreements have so far taken place between Germany, Belgium and

France, and as a result "the iron and steel works have already raised prices in N.W. Germany, Silesia and East Prussia above the level assured by the protective tariff."

The system, therefore, is for a group of countries to make an arrangement whereby each secures a monopoly in its own home market behind a tariff wall, and arranges not to "poach" on the others' preserves. This "stabilises" the *home market* of these countries, and allows the cartels to reap monopoly prices; but it leads to increased cut-throat rivalry in *outside markets*, on to which surplus goods are "dumped" at especially low prices. Production is reduced below productive capacity for the home market, and monopoly profits thereby secured. And then the surplus productive capacity is made use of to produce goods for outside markets to be marketed at specially low prices. (What the economic textbooks call "discriminating monopoly"!)

#### Tariff Dumping

That this "tariff dumping," as it is called, is likely to become a principal characteristic of capitalism is shown by two recent pronouncements by W. T. Layton, the Editor of *The Economist*, and Dr. Leaf of the Westminster Bank. The gist of these pronouncements is that U.S.A. gains from her *large home market*. This large assured market gives a basis for mass production, and this mass production enables goods to be produced and sold for export to South America, Asia, etc., at prices much lower than British industry can manage. Hence, what British capitalism requires, in order to compete with U.S.A. and to "keep her place in the sun," is to build up an *assured European market*. This will be a basis for extended large-scale production in Britain, lowering costs, and then making possible export at low prices to markets outside Europe. Layton suggests, to this end, a *European Free Trade Union*—a lowering of tariffs to all countries inside Europe, while keeping them up for imports from non-European countries. Dr. Leaf suggests (what would amount to the same thing) an extension of the system of *export cartels linked by European agreements*, similar to those already made between Germany, France and Belgium. Each country would by arrangement allow

to other countries a definite import quota free of tariff, *provided its sale was made through the cartel of the country in question* (as with the German Raw Steel Union). This would give to British capitalism an assured market in Europe, dominated by monopoly arrangements through an export cartel. Then the surplus production could be "dumped" outside the European tariff wall in competition with U.S.A. goods in South America and Asia.

The City Editor of the *M.G. Commercial* (22nd April) declared that this "concentration of competition in the markets of South America and Asia might easily lead to inter-Continental friction and bitterness of a very undesirable kind; but while the U.S. clings to its present attitude . . . its spread must be inevitable."

The new policy is under discussion by a sub-committee of the International Chamber of Commerce, working "in harmony with the proposed Economic Conference of the League of Nations." It is significant that the International Chamber of Commerce has arrived at most of the big economic decisions (including the Dawes Plan) which have

been carried out in Europe in recent years.

*Labour's Economics.*

Comrade D. A. Kennedy in *Forward* (6th March, 1926) has been well upholding the Marxian theories against some of the recruits to Labour who mix sympathies for the workers with a hash of bourgeois economics. It is a pity, by the way, that such an industrious student and expounder of historical documents as Max Beer in *The Life and Teachings of Karl Marx* should leave his own field of history and refer to the possibility of the Labour theory being only "a political and social slogan." Thus encouraged, the Eccleston Square reviewer (*Labour Magazine*, February, 1926) of Kautsky's book—with colossal cheek—suggests that "hardly any intelligent Marxians now adhere to the theory of value" elaborated in *Capital*, and Kautsky's defence of it "has a propagandist rather than a scientific aim." It is presumably the same writer in the March issue who gushes over the fact that the Master of Balliol condescends to write patronisingly about the Marxian theories. Easton Lodge is certainly needed.

## LETTERS

### STRIKE BULLETINS

**D**EAR COMRADE,—By resolution of the Executive it has been decided to collect materials for a study of the great strike, and I have been allotted that share of it that consists in going through the Strike Bulletins issued locally and extracting all valuable material in them. The appeal, made in a previous number of the Mag., for Strike Bulletins to be sent in, is not a frivolous appeal, but a serious one.

We want specimens and, if possible, full files of *all* the local bulletins for a serious historical purpose, and we hope to bind them up and keep them from destruction.

The finest period of British trade unionism, up till 1st May, 1926, was the period of the Grand National Union of Owen in 1834. Of that period there remain exactly two records—a pamphlet in a secondary London library and a circular buried in a Trade Union cellar.

The rest is conjecture. Don't let our great effort vanish into the same obscurity!

This endeavour is run by arrangement with *Lansbury's Weekly*, and no one need hesitate, therefore, as to where to send his strike sheets.

Will all comrades please post them to the PLEBS either at 162A Buckingham Palace Road, S.W.1, or to *Lansbury's*, 200 Palace Chambers, S.W.1.

Yours fraternally,

R. W. POSTGATE  
(Chairman, Plebs E.C.).

### A FIGHTING FUND

**D**EAR COMRADE,—May Day, 1926, marked a definite point in the development of the class struggle. There is every indication of an increasing militancy on the part of our people. This means a gradual change from industrial conflict to revolutionary strife and a disappearance of the difference between the political and industrial wings.

To face this position we must have a central fighting leadership, dominated by the rank and file and with adequate central funds. The General Council did not fail because they were all traitors, fools and knaves. Good comrades like Purcell and Swales seemed as impotent as any other member. We must look further for the cause of our defeat. The General Council is not a representative body. Its members are not elected by the workers. Each member represents not the working class but some limited sectional interest. The necessity for weaving together sufficient block votes, wielded in saloons and hotel lounges, to ensure re-election is always before them. Add to this their extremely limited financial resources and one begins to understand their inadequacy.

The workers can never hope for success until they possess an effective central governing body with adequate funds behind it. The Tammany system of election must be swept away and the General Council elected by ballot vote of the workers themselves. Last year a prominent Left Winger withdrew a resolution hostile to the Right Wing in order to secure the N.U.R. vote. This leaked out, but how many corrupt bargains of this kind go on in secret? We want a General Council elected by, and responsible to, the rank and file.

When elected, the Council must have adequate revenue. The days of sectional fighting are almost over. It is pretty safe to say that our battles of the future will continually trend towards full scale engagements. The movement cannot deal with this situation without permanent central funds.

There are something like four million workers affiliated to the T.U.C. If every one of these paid 3d. a week into a Special Emergency Fighting Fund we should never need to be told we must submit to injustice because there was no money to fight. If only three million paid we should have a steady flow into the war coffers of roughly £19,000 per week—nearly a quarter of a million a year. Double the contribution while a fight is on and you have £38,000 a week to beat the boss with, apart from the accumulated sums from previous contributions, etc.

If the Left Wing concentrated on these proposals we could combat the

challenge of the "moderates" that we are purely theorists and carry the battle into their own camp by showing the inadequacy of the machinery the practical men have devised.

Yours fraternally.

JOHN BECKETT, M.P.

#### HOW NOT TO DO IT

DEAR COMRADE,—We are all agreed that we must change the leadership of the trade union movement, if any sort of move is to be made towards the social revolution. We have just had a magnificent example of how *not* to work towards that end. You can get a reactionary put out and his place taken by a revolutionary by one of two means:

Firstly, you may put up a revolutionary candidate with a Left Wing policy, and agitate openly on his behalf—as for example, A. J. Cook. The branches or lodges in that case vote for him with their eyes open, reject or approve his policy as they choose, and will not go back on him afterwards. There is no trickery, and he has a solid backing behind him of people who knew what he wanted when they voted him there.

Alternatively, you may follow the example of the wirepullers of the Right Wing, and attempt to squeeze resolutions through congresses by secret organisation, and by getting your delegates not to follow the instructions of their branches, or persuade the branches to take up enthusiastically a revolutionary programme, but getting them quietly to substitute instructions "from another organisation," as the phrase goes. And then, of course, since your enemy is not a fool, he gets wind of what is happening and is able to make plain trade unionists angry with you. [Even if your candidate ever got in he would not have the necessary *mass* backing.]

This last has been the policy of the Communists and has just succeeded in giving J. H. Thomas the greatest victory of his career at a Conference which looked like delivering the heaviest blow ever directed at him. The whole conference swung over in one day to him, and not only did he recover his prestige, but the humiliating surrender of the May Agreement was endorsed, and the coal embargo defeated. Here is a great victory!

*Pravda* (according to the *International Press Correspondence* of the Third International) is asking "Is the British Communist Party a brake on the Revolution?" The organ of the Russian C.P. answers, "Yes, it is." The rank and file of the British C.P. unless they can check and alter the policy of their leaders on this and many other questions, cannot complain if genuine revolutionaries regard them as hindrances to the revolution. Will they clean up their own house?

Yours fraternally,

R. W. POSTGATE.

#### FASCISM

DEAR COMRADE,—The PLEBS booklet on Fascism contains a few inaccuracies which it may be interesting to correct, as my information is from an undoubtedly reliable source.

p. 8.—Mussolini was never a Right Wing Socialist, but an extreme Left Winger. He was commander of barricades in Romagna during Red Week 1913, and at the Socialist Congress at Ancana successfully opposed admission of Freemasons into the organisation on the grounds that, though Radical, they have other than Socialists in their ranks. His betrayal of one-time comrades is thus complete.

p. 9.—The prime cause of revolutionary fervour was the Russian Revolution. This is not mentioned in the pamphlet.

p. 12.—Bonomi was not a patriotic Socialist, but a poor fish who in his youth belonged to Reformist Socialists and later became, in name, a Democrat.

p. 19.—Mussolini has perfect control of the terrorists, but he is careful to play thus in order to avoid personal accusation when a blunder, like Matteotti's murder, occurs. They are, however, always *his* terrorists. His death by violence is to be the signal for wholesale slaughter of the male opposition by his "uncontrolled" terrorists. Proof of this fact is given in the recent Zaniboni frame-up.

p. 22.—That the King alone sided with Mussolini is not quite true. The latter is backed by the Duke of Costa who brought his influence to bear on Victor Emmanuel, thus turning the scales.

p. 27.—Since the pamphlet was written the Militia have been placed on equal footing with the other armed forces.

p. 35.—Fascism has never captured the minds of Italian workers; it holds them only by terror. None but a Fascist can find employment; all workers must belong to Fascist Syndicates. Opposition leaders have either been murdered, victimised and fled from the country or live in terror and are constantly clubbed, *and* unemployed.

Passports are not granted to non-Fascists. Thus has opposition been suppressed so that propaganda is practically impossible. All letters by post are subject to free examination and destruction.

Thus has Italy been "saved by Fascism."

Fraternally yours, R. W. M.

L. W. (author of the PLEBS booklet) writes :—

(1) The reference to Mussolini as a Right Wing Socialist applies only to the war period immediately prior to Italian intervention. R. W. M. is, of course, correct in saying that Mussolini was originally a Left Winger, and a fuller account of his political metamorphoses would have recorded this, and many another, fact of relevance for a proper appreciation of the Duce's personal psychology.

(2) I agree that a reference to the Russian Revolution should have been made at this point. Although this important factor in Italian politics is not specifically mentioned, the relations between the Communist International and Italian affairs is dealt with at such length as to indicate the vital significance to Italy of events in Russia.

(3) Bonomi was a reformist socialist excluded from the party on account of his royalist tendencies. When he became premier he was, as R. W. M. says, a democrat.

(4) I cannot agree that Mussolini's control of the Fascist terror has always been complete. He has pursued a constant policy of extending and intensifying his hold on the machine, and has now achieved a large measure of success. But in the early stages of the Fascist party he had great difficulty in controlling his extreme wing. It is, of course, quite true that Mussolini is an adept at throwing over his colleagues whose activities turn out to be indiscreet, but this does not invalidate the point made in the pamphlet.



(5) The pamphlet does not say that the King *alone* sided with the Fascists.

(6) "Capturing the minds of the workers" is a vague phrase. It could be interpreted as including the mental acquiescence induced by terror. But the Fascist propaganda has also had its effect and a measure of agreement with Fascist aims and even methods has been induced. The main factor in keeping the workers subdued is, of course, the terror, but psychological causes also operate.

## ESPERANTO TRANSLATION COMPETITION

**T**WENTY-TWO very good translations of the July Esperanto article were sent in. W. Moseley (N.16) and H. W. Williams (S.W.6) divide the prize, and if they will let us know their choice we will forward to each a copy of one of our textbooks. For this month we offer the same prize for a statement in *Esperanto* not exceeding 500 words, answering *Kial la laboristo alprenu Esperanton?*

## REVIEWS

### WAR AND PEACE

*The Limitations of Victory.* By Alfred Fabre-Luce. (Allen and Unwin. 12s. 6d.)

It was a common superstition before the war that however incompetent in other respects members of the governing classes might be, they made good diplomats; their government at home might be foolish and mismanaged, but they alone were capable of dealing with foreign affairs. Since 1914 we have come to realise that it is in precisely what was considered their own especial sphere that our rulers have blundered most badly. As M. Fabre-Luce understands the events, none of the statesmen of Europe were wicked and Machiavellian, deliberately bringing on the great conflict for their own sinister ends; they were merely stupid and timorous, and plunged their countries into the war without realising where they were going. It was a tragedy in which the villains were only fools, and most of them well-meaning fools. People felt vaguely that a great European War was inevitable sooner or later, and the Great Powers, panic-stricken at the idea of isolation, formed rival groups of alliances. Each side tried to score diplomatic triumphs by bluffing, but thought it certain that the war would be avoided for the present. M. Fabre-Luce divides the blame for the war almost equally between the two sides. Germany egged on Austria to pursue her aggressive ambitions in the Balkans, and was unable to control her when war threatened. Russia, with the approval of France, made war

inevitable by her mobilisation. England, after supporting a bellicose policy since 1905, was bound by her secret obligations. Peace might have been secured at the last moment, but the atmosphere of suspicion was too heavy; each nation was anxious to be in a strong military position should war come.

A clear and good account of the events leading up to the war is given in this book, but practically no attempt is made to discover any causes underlying the mutual jealousy and suspicion. The picture given is one of an irrational desire for diplomatic prestige and an irrational fear of foreign armaments. No doubt many of the causes of the war were purely irrational, but we do not think enough stress is laid upon economic rivalry, and, in particular, the anxiety of both groups of powers to control the Middle East.

In spite of its title, less than a third of the book is occupied with the history of Europe since 1918. This section is largely an indictment of French policy for hoping to get so much cake, and for being unable to make up its mind whether it should eat or have what it could get. Successive Governments tried to squeeze immense sums out of Germany, while at the same time they aimed at securing a permanent hold on the Rhine Provinces, thus seriously diminishing Germany's capacity to pay.

M. Fabre-Luce seems to fear international hostility as much because he thinks another great war would bring about a social revolution as for any other reason. "Conservatives must realise that they can only preserve the social order by effecting a change in our

international relations. Capitalism, coupled with periodical war, is just as impracticable as Communism and leads straight to it." He flies for safety to the League of Nations.

This book was originally published in French under the title of *La Victoire*. As a statement of facts it is good, but it is not well constructed and is heavy reading.

N. H. F.

#### POVERTY AND STATISTICIANS

*Has Poverty Diminished?* By A. L. Bowley, Sc.D., and Margaret Hogg, M.A. (P. S. King. 10s. 6d.)

Prof. Bowley is one of the leading statisticians in England. By temperament he is an old-fashioned nineteenth century liberal, with the psychology of the small bourgeois who looks with equal disdain on the big financial bourgeois and the proletariat. In this book he gives the result of a detailed statistical investigation into the condition of life of a "sample" of working-class families, comparing the situation in 1913 and in 1924. The "sample" taken consists of about 3,800 families in Northampton, Warrington, Bolton, Reading and Stanley.

Here one would think there could be no question of class bias. A statistician with a great reputation clearly could not afford to risk it by using figures wrongly or adopting anything but a strictly scientific method. But it is exactly an objective statistical survey of this kind that is so instructive in showing how bias can have powerful influence in the selection of the kind of facts to record, in the framing and presentation of them, in the relative emphasis, and the implication which the reader is left to draw for himself. Moreover, nothing can be judged except in relation to the circumstances of its time, as part of a whole. And the important fact about this study is its appearance at a time when an attack is being made on the workers' standard of life. There is little doubt about the use to which these figures will be put. Like Prof. Bowley's last study on *The Division of the Product of Industry* they will be used to point a reactionary moral. They will serve to demonstrate how rapidly poverty is disappearing, how prosperous the workers really are, and what little ground there is for blaming misery

and exploitation at the door of capitalism. Persons who have resisted every attempt of the workers to improve their conditions will now unctuously use the figures of such improvement to show what little ground there is for the workers to be discontented, and . . . as a reason for reducing wages again.

The main conclusion which Prof. Bowley draws from his statistics and underlines is as follows: As a result of the war two significant changes have taken place: (a) The money wages of unskilled workers have risen relatively to skilled, and so have risen considerably *more* than the average, and more than the cost of living; (b) The birth-rate has declined, so that smaller families on the average have to be supported by a given wage (the average number per family of children under 14 years has fallen from 1.50 to 1.20). These two facts mean that the proportion of families living below a minimum subsistence level "was in 1924 little more than half that in 1913." "If there had been no unemployment, the proportion of families in poverty in the towns taken together would have fallen to one-third (3.6 per cent. against 11 per cent.) of the proportion in 1913."

In the figures themselves there is nothing very much, so far as one can see, to criticise. They were collected in the various towns by independent investigators of a conscientious W.E.A. type, and the sample taken seems roughly a representative one. Stanley is a mining town, where conditions were *relatively* good in 1913, and where low wages and unemployment existed in 1924. Hence, the bad position of the export trades finds reflection in the sample. True, the towns taken are not the worst that could be found; but neither are they the best; and the *average* which applies to them is *probably* not far from the average of the whole country.

But there are three respects in which the figures can definitely be criticised as erring on the optimistic side. First, the fall in the average per family of children under fourteen years from 1.50 to 1.20 in the towns taken is larger than for the whole population of England and Wales, where it is from 1.29 to approximately 1.06 (page 9).

Second, the unemployment percentage for Northampton, Bolton, Warrington and Reading was 9.6 on the average, as compared with 10.5 for the whole of Great Britain (excluding shipbuilding and some steel). Third, as the L.R.D. *Circular* for April showed, the month of the investigation was the month of lowest unemployment since the slump.

But with the implications of these figures we can quarrel pretty severely. The conclusion which the reader is left to draw from them is that capitalism has improved the condition of the workers. Is this true? What, after all, is the real implication of the figures? They merely show that, as a result of strenuous efforts by the workers to exact the fulfilment of a small part of the promises of "a new world" and "a grateful country" after the war, and to resist the strenuous attempts of the capitalist class to reduce wages, actual starvation has been diminished by a half in the course of ten years! And only the threat of "Red Friday" prevented Mr. Baldwin with the help of the statisticians from putting even this figure back again to 1913! Moreover, this small improvement has been effected mainly by a "shuffling" round of wages themselves: it has been *at the expense of other wage-earners*, chiefly skilled workers who are generally worse off than in 1913. For the rest, it is probably because workers have had the independence, in spite of the doctors and the clergy and the imperialists, to limit their families by birth control. Even if this were not so, the improvement would not necessarily mean that exploitation was any

the less; it would merely mean that the poorer workers had gained what small *rentiers* and "black-coated workers" had lost; while Finance-capital, in all probability feathered its nest better than ever before.

And even if there has been a decline in actual starvation, what of the picture that still remains? It is easy to soothe the soul with figures of "improvement," provided the past has been sufficiently bad. The magnitude of what still remains is the important thing. The definition of poverty adopted in this book places the limit as low as it possibly could be. It is a *minimum* limit, below which semi-starvation will exist, *not a standard of decent existence*. The standard adopted includes no more than a wage sufficient to purchase a minimum workhouse ration *plus* 2 lb. of meat a week and 2 oz. of tea and 1s. 5d. a week for clothing and lighting—namely, 9s. a week per man and 7s. 6d. per woman—*plus* rent and insurance contributions. Yet 6.5 per cent. of working-class families fall below this standard; and another 1.5 of "marginal" cases are not appreciably above it. In Reading the proportion was much higher at 11.9 per cent.; and in Warrington and Stanley at 7.9 and 7.2. (It was only the exceptionally low figure of 2.2 per cent. for Northampton that pulled the average down.) Housing conditions are definitely worse than in 1913. In Durham 30 per cent. are living in overcrowded conditions (more than two persons to a room), and in Warrington 13 per cent. as compared with 6 per cent. pre-war. More-

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At Bedford and Peterboro' the students are keen and able enough to carry on in the lecturer's absence. Slough A.E.U. had a special lecture on 12th July. Bedford, Slough and Southend have enjoyed the services of T. Ashcroft. The current hard times restricted attendance at the Divisional Conference School, 3rd and 4th July, but 13 colleges sent 22 delegates. A. M. Robertson gave us a good description of the work of the Labour College and explained a modified Dalton Plan—modified in the direction of collective as against individual work—which was being tried out in Social History. J. F. Horrabin on Sunday stated the value of Economic Geography to the working-class and gave many useful points on the preparing of maps, etc.; and out of the discussion on the literature of our Movement in the afternoon there came requests for an *Outline* on World History and at least a "sixpenny" survey of the development of agriculture and its problems, and also a survey of Marxism. In preparation for next winter session will any capable I.W.C.E. teachers not enrolled but available for service let us hear from them at once. Further, will all College Secretaries let us have their opinion, as early as possible, upon all the proposals made to them by circulars so that a full class list can be arranged as soon as possible.

*Div. 4.*—No report.

*Div. 5.*—For the time being organiser W. J. Owen (13 Waengron Street, Blaina, Mon.) has been appointed by the National Executive to act as Secretary to the Divisional Council. In the carrying on of the Division's work he is to have the assistance of organiser D. W. Thomas.

*Div. 6.*—No report.

*Div. 7.*—A. J. Cook's visit to Sheffield and Doncaster has given a splendid stimulus to the movement. In Doncaster about 5,000 people were present at one meeting. A tutorial class with 38 students (mostly from miners' lodges) is being run by the Divisional Organiser on Sundays at 3 p.m. in the Trades Hall, Doncaster. Hebden Bridge Trades Council was visited on 7th July and a visit to the Todmorden Trades Council has been arranged for 10th August. Classes are

to be arranged at the above mentioned places and also at Cornholme. A Conference is to take place in the Morley Trades Hall on 28th August in order to form a College in that town. A week-end school will take place, 21st and 22nd August, in the Dore Moor Clarion Club. Full particulars from J. Madin, 9 Bannon Street, Crookesmoor, Sheffield.

*Div. 8.*—We have pleasure in reporting the decision of the Liverpool and District Carters' and Motormen's Union to continue their educational scheme on the same lines as previous years. The organiser addressed a well-attended delegate meeting of the National Union of Labour Clubs, at Thatto Heath. It is anticipated that a stimulus will have been given the Clubs to undertake definite educational work as part of their activities. The Annual Report of the Preston Labour College discloses a useful year's work. S.E. Lancs. Area has organised a considerable number of lectures in mining districts. Winnington, Northwich and District Co-operative Society Education Committee are sending two students to the Culcheth Week-end School arranged by Liverpool Labour College.

*Div. 9.*—No report.

*Div. 10 (Scotland).*—July is the holiday month in Scotland and educational activities were naturally at a standstill.

*Div. 11 (Ireland).*—During the month Mr. Salthouse, an able exponent of Credit Reform, accepted the invitation of the Belfast Students to give a lecture on "Credit and Finance." The lecture was followed by numerous questions and an interesting discussion. The organiser has addressed several organisations on the work of the N.C.L.C. The first report to hand is to the effect that the Belfast Operative House and Ship Painters has decided to affiliate.

*Div. 12.*—The Lincoln Class Group has among its students the first two members of the Journalists' Union to attend. Organiser Brown has been the prospective Labour Candidate for the Rushcliffe Division.

#### N.C.L.C. DIRECTORY—ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

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