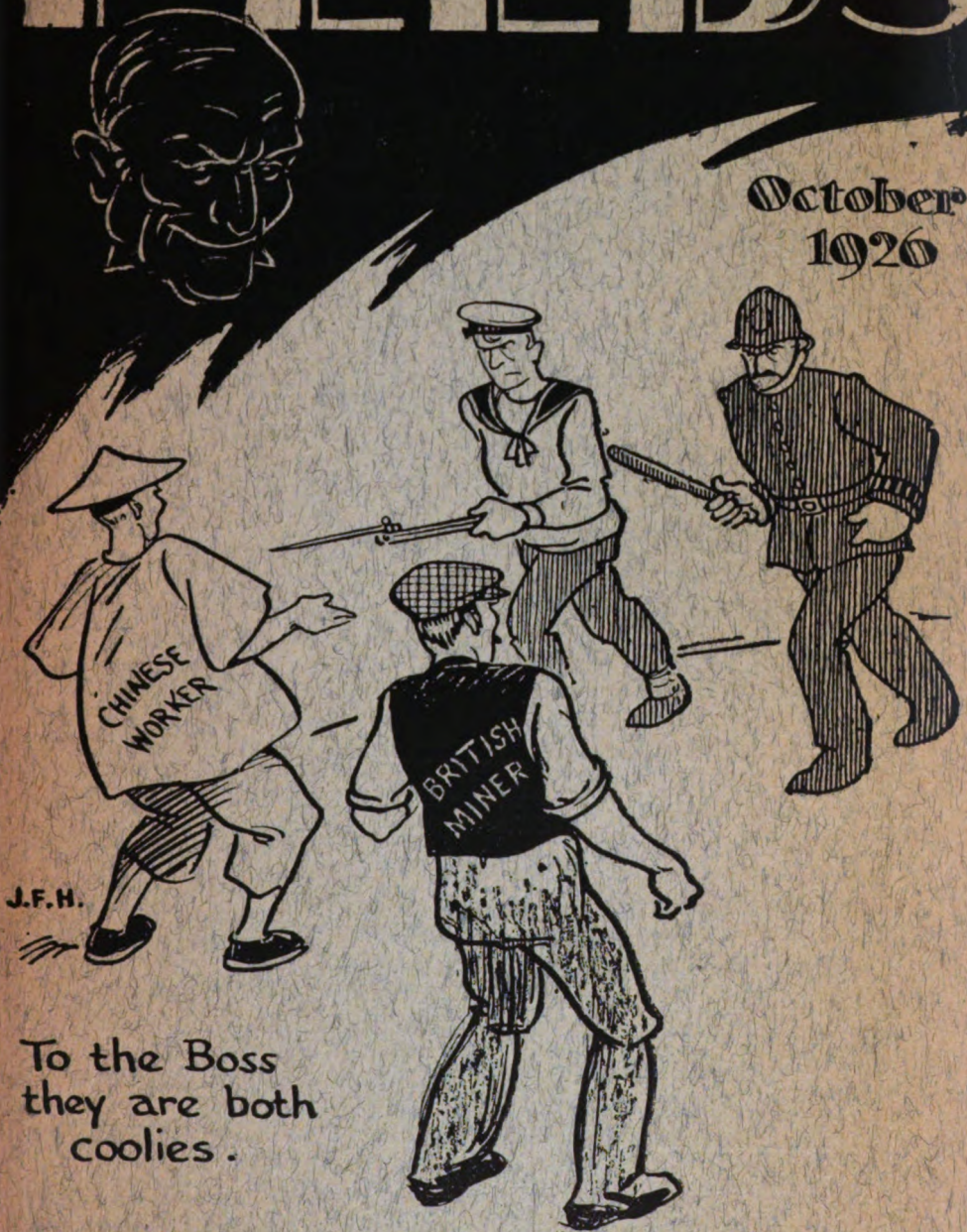


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THE PLEBS

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The Pleb Point of View <i>By J.F.H.</i>	346
Whither Russia ?	
A Page of Present-Day History.. <i>By Maurice Dobb</i>	349
The Coal Crisis in America (with Map)	
<i>By Ellen Wilkinson, M.P.</i>	357
The T.U. Congress and Easton Lodge	
<i>By J. P. M. Millar</i>	359
Strike History and Lessons :	
Maesteg <i>By Idris Cox</i>	361
Nottingham <i>By F. G. James and H.B.B.</i>	363
Ramsgate <i>By L. Fagg</i>	365
Glasgow <i>By P. Kerrigan</i>	365
History and the Workers : V. .. <i>By Mark Starr</i>	367
A Bishop and the Miners	370
Do We Still Need a Plebs League ?	
<i>By Philips Price, R. Moores, and R. W. Postgate</i>	371
Notes by the Way for Students and Tutors	373
Letters : from R. Moores, P. M. Moir, J. Jones, and L. Kent	375
Book Reviews : A New Year Book ; The Romantic Revolutionist ; Evolution	377
National Council of Labour Colleges : Notes and News	380
The Plebs Bookshelf	383

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162a Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1.

The PLEB POINT of VIEW

COMRADES—This is not an “S.O.S.” exactly. But it is a frank appeal. We are carrying on under increasing difficulties—handicapped by a growing burden of debt which, of course, is the direct result of the stress and strain through which the whole working-class movement is now passing. As we have reminded you a score of times before, we get no subsidies from anyone. The PLEBS is, as it has always been, a rank-and-filers’ venture, depending entirely on rank and file support, and compelled therefore to appeal to rank and filers for additional support in hard times. *We badly need that support now.*

By the time this number of The PLEBS is published the classes will have got to work everywhere. Will you do your utmost to push its sale among new students ; will you make extra efforts to sell our textbooks and other publications ; and will you send along anything you can spare towards a Special Effort Fund to wipe out our deficit as speedily as may be? The need for I.W.C.E. is admittedly greater than ever. The movement cannot carry on without literature. Help us to sell our goods. If we could unload our stocks of textbooks, etc., *and get the money in reasonably quickly*, we should be able to clear off all our debts. What about it? Does our position concern you?—or are you too tired to worry?

* * * *

If anything were needed to convince Trade Unionists of the vital urgency of real working-class education, the activities of the “Economic Leagues” in the various coal-
“Economic Fact” fields would surely be enough. Their job has
Merchants been to persuade the miners—by speeches, by
 leaflets, by “strike” (!) bulletins and by every
 method of publicity—to accept “economic facts” as the boss sees them (or as he would like the workers to see them, since he is probably a little too astute to be taken in by such transparent jiggery-pokery himself). These Economic Leagues, remember, were in existence—and active—long before the Lock-out began. Their mission is to teach “sane” (*i.e.*, boss-class) economics, to persuade the worker of the sacredness of such “economic facts” as make for longer hours and lower wages, and of the insanity of his demands for a bigger share of the fruits of his labour.

This naked and unashamed boss-propaganda ought to be countered everywhere by a concentrated effort for I.W.C.E. We suggest that Plebs Leaguers—individuals and groups—might well get busy in every district where Economic Leaguers are working ; collect their precious literature and use it as the text for classes,

lectures, speeches, and conversations. Hunting down and heckling these gentlemen would be fine exercise for militant-minded students. What about an organised crusade?*

* * * *

The article by J. P. M. Millar on another page of this issue describes in full the sequence of events which led the N.C.L.C.

The T.U.C. and the N.C.L.C. Executive to decide on the important step of inviting the General Council of the T.U.C. to take over the N.C.L.C., subject to an agreement

that the educational policy of the Labour Colleges should be maintained. That offer was made before our movement could be consulted, in an attempt to elicit a reply from the General Council before Congress met. We are frankly glad that, now that the first step towards testing the feeling of the movement has been taken, by the holding of a Special Conference of delegates from all affiliated bodies, the Executive's action has been emphatically endorsed.

The discussion at this Special Conference took place on the Executive's resolution that—

In view of the new situation which has developed regarding the T.U.C. Educational Scheme, and the taking over of the Labour College (London) by the T.U.C., this conference approves of the N.C.L.C. Executive to hand over (subject to a ballot of the affiliated bodies) the N.C.L.C. to the General Council, which offer provides that the N.C.L.C.'s educational principles are safeguarded; and the conference empowers the Executive (subject to the ballot) to negotiate on these lines.

This resolution was carried, after a very full and keen debate, by 22 votes to 1. We repeat, we are pleased at this result, and we hope that the ballot will ratify it. The present T.U.C. scheme, so far as it concerns non-residential work, is altogether too vague and ambiguous to be satisfactory. The N.C.L.C. is now emphatically a part of the T.U. machinery of this country. That it should be fully and formally "recognised" by the central body of the T.U. movement is eminently desirable. We agree that adequate safeguards are necessary. The state of mind which causes a General Councillor to declare, as Mr. Bowen declared at Bournemouth, that "if there was anything that trade unionism suffered from it was the misdirected efforts of trade unionists to educate themselves," has to be duly guarded against. But though we might effectually guard ourselves against it by remaining outside the main body of the working-class movement, we should certainly not be guarding the great mass of our fellow trade-unionists by doing so. Our job is to go wherever we can most effectively reach them with our message.

* * * *

We have, as our readers know—and for the same reasons as lead

* If you can get hold of specimens of Economic League literature, send us copies along; and if we can afford it we'll see what can be done in the way of antidote-leaflets.

us now to support the proposal to hand over the N.C.L.C. to the T.U.C.—supported the idea of a central residential college under T.U.C. auspices, at Easton Lodge or elsewhere. We are sorry that, even in part, the defeat of the General Council's proposals was due to financial reasons. After all, a levy of 1d. per member per annum is little enough to devote to educational purposes. But as the General Council chose to give Congress no choice but to support the scheme—with no adequate guarantees as to the evening-class work which all keen educationists (including Mr. Pugh) realise is the most important part of working-class educational activity; or to oppose it—and risk the destruction of the central residential college—we feel they have no right to be cross about the result.

We should like, briefly, to make a point here which we think the N.C.L.C. ought seriously to consider. The need of our movement is for tutors—and yet more tutors. Last month we printed a report by the President of the N.C.L.C. on the excellent work accomplished at the Training Centre held in London in August. Without prejudice to the Easton Lodge scheme (as to the probable future of which we know nothing), would not the actual requirements of the N.C.L.C. be better met by the establishment of a Training Centre giving, say, three-months intensive courses for selected students? Three terms of three months, each attended by some 30 students, would give us in a year a hundred trained tutors—not people with first-class honours degrees and repellent accents, but men and women in touch with the problems they were setting out to elucidate and with the people they were going to deal. After all, the times we live in are a little too desperate for leisurely two-year courses at a workers' university. We need those hundred tutors now. And the cost of providing them would be trivial compared with the business of equipping and endowing an Easton Lodge. Would not the Unions who support the N.C.L.C. quickly realise how good an investment such a scheme would be? We make the suggestion quite "unofficially"; but we should be glad to hear from any of those who attended the August Training Centre their ideas as to its practicability.

Keep pushing this pamphlet.

HISTORY of the MINERS' STRUGGLE

By J. Hamilton, with Foreword by A. J. Cook.

Price 3d. (3s. per doz. post paid). All profits to Miners' Relief Fund.
 PLEBS, 162a BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD, LONDON, S.W.1.

WHITHER RUSSIA ?

Which way is the course of social and economic development tending in Russia at the present time? To what extent have "modifications" of Socialism been found necessary? What are the deeper issues involved in the differences between Soviet leaders? These questions, discussed continually with little knowledge and less understanding in the capitalist press, are here ably dealt with by Maurice Dobb. And to all working-class students a right understanding of this page of history which is being written in our own day is of the first importance.

THE question, *Towards Socialism or Capitalism?*, which is the title of Trotsky's latest book*, is capable of a legion of different answers, not only according to one's reading of the facts of the case, but also according to the definition of Socialism and capitalism which one adopts. Some will define them in a purely formal way as consisting in certain forms of industrial control and administration. And on this basis one person will regard the return to money and market dealings under NEP as a step away from Socialism, because the "war communism" of the civil war period fits most closely to the ideal forms he has in mind; while another, considering that Socialism consists in the election of industrial administrators directly from below and the complete divorce of "pay" from individual output, etc., will regard the system of individual appointed managers and the introduction of piece-rates as an abandonment of Socialist "principles" for immediate expediency. By such a route one can arrive at many surprising conclusions. One can show that Russia is not Socialist because there are beggars in the streets and the tramcars are over-crowded. It is sometimes said that Russia is not Socialist because workshop discipline has to be observed, and American workshop methods are used. British and continental Social-Democrats are fond of drawing conclusions from the fact that real wages in Russia are lower than in capitalist Britain and U.S.A.

Clearly, if we approach the question from the Marxian standpoint, we should see at once that the crux of the matter is the class issue. State-ism, even with the addition of a degree of workers' control, is not Socialism, if the State is still an instrument dominated by "the City" and the F.B.I. But, if power has been transferred to the workers (in a real sense, and not a mere legal sense of a Labour Parliamentary majority), and a Workers' State is in being, then the approach of Socialism is clearly to be judged according as

* *Towards Socialism or Capitalism?*, by L. Trotsky. (Methuen & Co., 2/6 net).

the control and influence of this State is being extended, the economic monopoly of the capitalist class is broken, and progress is being made towards a classless community.

It is to the question defined in this way that Trotsky answers emphatically that Russia is going towards Socialism. In Russia power has been transferred to a Party of the working class in the very real and complete sense that effective control over the work of executive departments and economic organs, over the judiciary, the army and police, the Press, etc., is in the hands of that Party's representatives, pledged to carry out in unison the Party policy. The State, accordingly, is a Workers' State so long as that Party continues to base itself on the workers, to be of their texture, and to express their interests. Trotsky shows by the statistics of the Economic Planning Commission (Gosplan) that this Workers' State controls 100 per cent. of transport, 99 per cent. of large industry, and 79 per cent. of the whole industrial output. The domain of private capital, is, therefore, confined almost entirely to small production and to relatively unimportant spheres of the economic system. Capitalist monopoly in the means of production has definitely been broken; and industry is mainly "of a consistently Socialist type." Moreover, Socialist industry is growing—growing absolutely in the sense that industrial output is already nearly reaching the pre-war level, as against 71 per cent. of pre-war in 1924-25, and less than 20 per cent. in 1921* ; growing relatively in that, whereas private capital participated in trade to the extent of 50 per cent. in 1923, its share has now shrunk to 26 per cent., while the output of private industry as a percentage of the total has declined in two years from 23.7 to 20.3 per cent. Trotsky's discussion of these facts, in his usual clear and forcible style, is a publication of significance for our whole movement.

But, it will be asked, are there no contrary tendencies? What of the peasants who represent the overwhelming majority of the population of the country? Is it not true, as Trotsky shows, that if we include agriculture as well as industry, only 62 per cent. of the whole means of production is socialised? This is certainly true; and it is unquestionably important to evaluate any such counter-tendencies, in order to see which of the currents in the eddies of transition tend to gain the mastery. In a peasant country a Workers' State would evidently stand no chance of survival had it not a firm alliance with the majority of the peasant food-producers; and the preservation

*Trotsky gives the figure of 95 per cent. for 1925-6. In view of the corn export last winter falling short of program, and the consequent need to curtail severely the import program of machinery and raw materials, only about 88 per cent. will probably be reached as the average of the whole year. Nevertheless, by the end of the year, the higher figure should be attained.

of such an alliance must, therefore, be a pre-condition for any approach to Socialism at all. To achieve this alliance, an initial concession accordingly had to be made to the peasant in granting to him the land. Was such a concession, then, a step away from Socialism? Clearly it was not, if it made possible a development of Socialism in the towns which would otherwise have been unattainable.

A further question, however, at once arises: how far is the recovery of agriculture and the improved marketing of grain, by aiding the prosperity of the village, strengthening an anti-Socialist tendency faster than Socialism grows in the towns? And the answer to this question is not an easy one at first sight. The first consideration which we have to bear in mind in attempting an answer is that the peasantry, though an individualist and non-Socialist element, does not constitute capitalism; and the growth of the peasantry is not, therefore, synonymous with the re-birth of capitalism. Capitalism is conceived in class monopoly. But when land is divided among 13 million households, one can hardly talk here of monopoly. By itself, therefore, a concession to the peasantry does not represent any reversal of the Socialist tendency, even though it may mark a delaying of it. Indeed, if such a concession enables Socialist industry of the towns to develop more firmly, then Socialism and the final socialisation of peasant economy itself through the medium of the co-operatives, education, etc., is helped not hindered.

On the other hand, what *does* constitute a capitalist tendency is the growth of a class of rich peasants (*kulaks*) in the villages, hiring the labour-power of the poorer peasants and accumulating capital. The revival of peasant economy, with freedom to trade and to hire labour, was bound to lead again to a certain degree of class differentiation in the villages; and this tendency certainly exists clearly marked to-day. If it were to develop, a union might grow up between the village *kulaks* and the town *nepmen*, as a new embryo capitalist class, gradually attracting to itself, ideologically and politically, the more highly paid "experts" and State officials, thereby causing the State to be influenced by interests and an ideology hostile to the workers and to Socialism. But the important point is, that though this tendency exists—just as in Socialist industry itself there is a continual tendency for the officials to form a kind of "white-collar caste"—it is a tendency that is restrained within very definite limits. It is restrained by the fact that so long as the State remains a Workers' State, the apparatus of credit can be used. To aid the poorer peasant and prevent his proletarianisation, the apparatus of taxation and the exclusion of the *kulak* from the franchise can be used to check effectively the *kulak's* rise to wealth and power. And the essential safeguard against a

“perversion” of the Workers’ State which might preclude it from using its influence in such a way, and against the crystallising of a bureaucratic caste separate from the workers, is the continued supremacy and unity of the Communist Party, with its continuous insistence on contact with the masses and on the firm and unified guidance of every department of State activity in line with a carefully planned Socialist policy. As in the earlier strategy of 1917, so in the more complex strategy of constructing Socialism, the Party in Russia plays the rôle of a General Staff.

It is precisely about the relative strength of these diverse tendencies that the present controversy in the Russian C.P. is concerned. In some ways it does not touch such fundamental matters of principle as did the controversy of 1923-4, with which the name of Trotsky was associated on the minority side. The issue at that time concerned the very interpretation of the basic *smytchka*, or union of worker and peasant, on which a very important parting of the ways presented itself. One group, containing a considerable number of those engaged in the administration of industry, wished to use the monopoly position of Socialist industry to keep up the price of industrial goods sold to the peasant, while keeping down the price of grain sold for the town market, in order thereby to accumulate industrial profits at the peasants’ expense, to be used to expand Socialist industry rapidly, and so industrialise the country. Of this tendency, which one may perhaps call the “industrialist” tendency, there naturally were varying shades. Among its most emphatic exponents was Preobrazhensky, who regarded it as the duty of the State to build up Socialism by “exploiting” the peasant for the benefit of industrial accumulation, just as merchant capital of the mediæval towns sought to use its power over the urban market to exploit the countryside, and as Mercantilism and later Imperialism sought to exploit colonial areas. Others, such as Piatakov and Ossinsky, leaned towards this view; and Trotsky, though he did not commit himself explicitly to the doctrine, advanced practical proposals which led in this direction, so that the “industrialists” lined up behind him and treated him as their leader. In fact, it was felt that the theory of “permanent revolution” which Trotsky had previously propounded, necessarily biassed him along this path; for according to this theory, the workers, having seized power with the aid of the peasantry, would then, leaning against a revolution in Western Europe, have to wage a further class war against the peasantry. If politically, therefore, a war with the peasant was inevitable, why in economic relations should one care for his interests?*

*This 1923-4 discussion was dealt with summarily in an article in THE PLEBS for May, 1925.

The majority view, however, declared emphatically in favour of the other road. The opposition proposal was denounced as a dangerous blow at the *smytchka* which lay at the basis of Soviet power. What was needed was to keep a balance between industry and agriculture, and to encourage the production of grain for the town and for export. With the victory of the majority view the way was prepared for carrying out energetically the policy of reducing industrial prices, stabilising the currency, extending co-operative credit to peasant agriculture, and promoting the grain export which would enable the importation from abroad of machinery for the expansion of industry.

In this 1923-4 discussion two of the most determined opponents of the opposition were Zinoviev and Kamenev. It was they who insisted most severely on the need for unity of the Party and the inadmissibility of forming any fractions within the Party, and who wished to exclude Trotsky from the Political Bureau. It was Zinoviev and his friends who, in particular, placed the discussion on a most acrimonious and uncomradely basis by producing (in the words of Buharin) "a large number of evil-smelling pamphlets which aggravated the question to a point to which it should never have been brought." Yet at the present time it is they, now that they have a disagreement with the majority of the Central Committee, who are apparently aiding the formation of an opposition fraction, and have entered into an alliance with Trotsky and the supporters of the "industrialist" policy.

This does not mean that the issues in the 1926 discussion are those of 1923-4 served up anew. Though the diverse elements of the minority group differ from the official majority policy, they differ just as much among themselves, and have done no more than conduct a temporary *liaison* against the majority. The issues which have caused Zinoviev and Kamenev to go into opposition are slightly more complex, but at the same time not so fundamental; although they remain none the less important for Russia's future course. The discussion was foreshadowed in a lecture delivered by Stalin in June, 1925†, in which he declared that future policy must steer a middle course between two extremes, both born of a despair in the possibility of building Socialism in Russia alone. This middle course must avoid on the one side the tendency to sacrifice everything—the possibility of concessions, foreign trade and the development of Russian industry—to the artificial stimulation at all costs of a revolution in Western Europe. It must avoid on the other side the tendency to a Russian nationalism which would disband the Comintern, avoid entangling alliances with Eastern

†Published in English as *Bolshevism: Some questions answered*, by I. Stalin (C.P.G.B., 1/-).

nationalism, etc., in the interests of promoting better relations with the capitalist Powers for the benefit of Russian industrial development. With regard to the peasantry, peasant agriculture must be encouraged by lightening the burden of the agricultural tax, by extending co-operative credit, and by the provision of agricultural machinery and cheap industrial goods on rural markets, so that a corn export policy could be developed and native sources of industrial raw materials enlarged. Politically the mass of the poorer and "middle" peasants must be detached from the influence of the *kulak*, and brought into union with the workers by a "liquidation of the final remnants of War Communism in the village" (i.e., methods of compulsion, arbitrary appointment of Soviet officials from above, etc.), and the extension of "Soviet Democracy" in the village, drawing in the mass of peasantry to participation in the work of local administration, and to the feeling that the Soviets were their own, and not an organ imposed on them from outside.

The quarrel of the Zinoviev group with this policy is based, not so much on a different view of the road to be travelled, as was the case in 1923-4, but on a different reading of the social tendencies at work in Russian development, and consequently a different emphasis on the various elements of policy, and on the tactics to be employed. Having opposed Trotsky for tending to sacrifice the *smychka* between town and country altogether, in preoccupation with industry, they now criticise the Stalin-Rykov-Buharin policy for having, by the character of their concessions to the peasantry, encouraged such a growth of the village *kulak* as to constitute a distinct recrudescence of capitalism and a danger to the workers' power. They suggest that the State apparatus (and even the Party itself) is becoming infected by the *kulak* in paying regard to his interests in the desire to develop agriculture. The Workers' State, "perverted" in this way, is being drawn aside from the workers, and is ceasing to represent their interests completely. Those who accept this view are, consequently, timid of the "extension of Soviet Democracy" in the village, lest this should merely extend the "degeneration" of the State by admitting non-worker (and even pro-*kulak*) elements in increased numbers into the Soviets. They fear that the Russian C.P. may be exercising a too moderating influence in the Comintern in the interests of Russian foreign trade and diplomatic relations (for instance, Zinoviev favours the disbandment of the Anglo-Russian T.U. Committee and here links with Trotsky, who thinks the British C.P. was too moderate during the General Strike); and they call for the immediate recruiting for the Party of a million industrial workers to maintain its proletarian character.

So far this was a difference which though important, remained

merely a difference of opinion. In conformity with the principle of internal Party democracy, there was full discussion of the issues before the Party Congress. Stalin himself was instrumental in securing leave for Zinoviev to present a separate minority C.E.C. report to the Congress. When the Congress decision had been taken, Zinoviev was retained in his post on the Political Bureau of the Party (as in Trotsky's case in 1924), and Kamenev remained Commissar for Trade and a candidate to the Polbur, on condition that all should be at one in carrying out the majority decision. The disciplinary measures of removing Zinoviev and Kamenev and Lashevitch from their Party posts only came later, when they were found to be secretly working to hamper the official policy of the Party, and actually to be connected with the organisation of a secret faction (which Trotsky had never done). As Rykov said in a report on the matter on July 26th :—

“It would be damaging, unnecessary and injurious to apply such disciplinary measures to comrades who disagree with the Party on separate political questions. If differences of views were to expose us to persecution, inner Party democracy would be but an empty phrase. Disciplinary measures only become necessary when groups and fractions rise on the soil of these differences of opinion, when the Party statutes are violated, when a split threatens.”

The final outcome, therefore, raises an issue much greater than the initial difference of opinion. So long as Russia remains a composition of diverse social elements—Socialist industry and peasant agriculture, bourgeois officials and experts, skilled proletarians and unskilled workers lately recruited from the village, etc.—its development is bound to be marked by contradictions of elements and tendencies. But these contradictions will tend to grow less in the degree that a classless society appears. These different elements are even likely to have their reflection on the personnel of the ruling Party. For those who work in the village the problems and interests of the village will inevitably bulk unduly large. Those who work as managers and administrators of industry will tend to concentrate first on the interests of industrial management, and probably even to catch some of the psychology of the bourgeois colleagues with whom they work. The only surety that the Workers' State will pursue a consistent course towards its goal and not be deflected from its course by the undue pressure of any one tendency is the continued guidance of a Party in the rôle of a General Staff, united in carrying out a single policy and closely based upon the industrial workers. This Party, while guarding primarily the interests of the workers, must be fully conscious of the environment within which it works and know how to manœuvre accordingly and be both sensitive and flexible. Moreover, a General Staff leads a beaten army if its members issue conflicting directions to their command. What is to become of the grand strategy of a Workers' Party constructing Socialism in a peasant country in the midst of a

capitalist world, if the diverse contradictory tendencies of its environment are to be encouraged to imprint themselves on the Party personnel by breaking it into various groups and fractions, each representing a different tendency? The formation of such fractions would transform the Party from a General Staff into a debating society.

It is for this reason that the official policy in Russia is insisting that, while Soviet Democracy must be developed, free discussion and free election within the Party carefully preserved, and the fight against bureaucratic separatism in the State machine strenuously carried on, yet the lead of the Party in State policy and the inner unity of the Party, free from groups and fractions, must first and foremost be maintained. Were it not for the fact that the Communists of Russia are the governing power, such issues might be regarded as academic trifles. As it is, an ounce of difference of emphasis in the phrasing of a theory may make a ton of difference in the actual achievements of a policy. But though the present discussion is serious, it is probably not more serious than many similar controversies in the past. In a sense such clashes of divergent views are "growing-pains," and have occurred each time that Russia has been on the threshold of a big step forward. They occurred on the eve of October, 1917, in 1918 when Brest-Litovsk was in the balance, in 1920 before the introduction of NEP, and again in 1923 before the currency reform and the biggest improvement in Russian industry.

At present Russia has reached the point where industrial plant is utilised to the full, and the pre-war level of output is being attained. Further development is contingent on an "extension of basic capital" by the building of new factories, electrification, etc. The great problem of the future is how to procure the resources for this extension. To finance it at the expense of the peasants or of weaker nations is, as we have seen, ruled out by the circumstances of the case. Only a limited amount can be obtained from abroad by means of concessions and credits. To go further this way would be to "sell out" to the capitalist West. There remains the development of grain and oil and flax exports to provide the funds for import of machinery, the strict economy and improvements in industrial organisation, the development of productivity at a faster rate than the rise of wages. This way may seem slower than other spectacular schemes which catch the imagination, and "are of the stuff that dreams are made of." But it is sure. And if we would have the progress both fast as well as sure, then it is for the workers in the West themselves to complete what remains to write of the epic story.

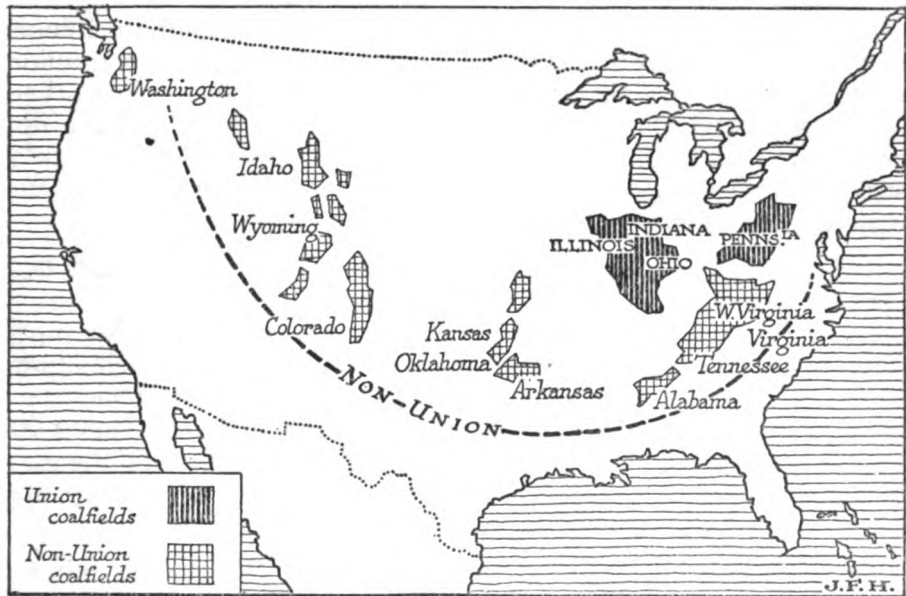
MAURICE DOBB.

THE COAL CRISIS in AMERICA

*Ellen Wilkinson who, as our readers know, has just returned from a visit to America to raise funds for the British miners, here describes the present position of the workers in the American coalfields.**

IN America the coal crisis is growing as acute as it is here. There also the miners are the shock-troops in the working-class struggle. But, as is always the case in the U.S.A., the action takes place in a harder light. There is not even talk about sentimental considerations for the miners. The deliberate attempt to break their union reads like a pirate yarn.

The miners have been highly organised since the great strike of 1902. Since the war the Anthracite Miners have had steady work,



Coalfields of the United States.

but their six months' strike of last year depleted their union treasury and forced many of them deep into debt. At the end of the strike they signed an agreement which keeps them at work until 1930, and effectually prevents them from coming to the assistance of the bituminous miners in the case of a crisis.

* Some interesting figures shewing comparisons between the American and British coal mining industries will also be found in "Notes by the Way" on another page.

The scene of action has now shifted to the soft coalmines, in which the great majority of American miners are employed. The anthracite mines are concentrated in one small area, lying in the north-east corner of Pennsylvania. The bituminous mines stretch from coast to coast, and from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico. A glance at the map will show the extent of this mining area.

The soft coalmines are divided into two great groups—the union and the non-union mines. The union mines are grouped chiefly in three States—Illinois, Indiana and Pennsylvania, with some scattered mines in Ohio. This area is known as the Central Competitive Field, and under the Jacksonville Agreement, signed two and a half years ago, a contract was made between the operators and the miners covering most of this area.

The non-union mines sweep in a great crescent, from Washington, in the north-west, to West Virginia, in the north-east. As a deliberate policy, every conceivable advantage is being given to the non-union mines. There are differential rates on the railways. It costs as much to send coal three hundred miles from southern Illinois to Chicago as it does to send it six hundred miles from the non-union fields of West Virginia. Short time has been deliberately worked in the organised mines, and the coal barons of Pittsburg have not hesitated to close down permanently several union mines where a strike was threatened. Last year, for the first time in a decade, the majority of coal entering Pittsburg was non-union.

In 1917, the Supreme Court of the United States held that a contract signed by a worker that he would not join a union was a piece of property belonging to him and to his employer. Attempts to organise such men have been ruled by the courts to be damaging to the employer's share of the "property," and so the Union has been prohibited by injunction after injunction from continuing its organising campaigns. Now there is a widespread effort on the part of employers to have these "yellow-dog" contracts, as they are called, signed throughout the non-union coalfields.

In the union coalfields all that the men in the remote mining villages have to rely upon is their union organisation. Attempts are constantly being made to break up that organisation from the inside. Everywhere the spy system is in operation, and the men are disheartened by the systematic buying of their leaders. The most recent example is the case of Mr. Frank Farrington, President of the Illinois District, who was appointed fraternal delegate to the British Trades Union Congress. Since this appointment Mr. Farrington accepted a position at £5,000 a year with the Peabody Coal Co., a most notorious anti-union corporation. The A.F. of L., of course, revoked his credentials to Britain when this was known.

It was extraordinary to meet the completely fatalistic attitude of everyone in America with whom one discussed the position. Everyone knew what was going on. It was generally assumed that April 1st would see the beginning of a terrible strike, the miners involved in a hopeless struggle against hired thugs, armed deputy sheriffs and troops supplied by the Government at the request of the employers. But no one seemed to think that anything could be done about it.

American miners understand the importance of international solidarity. One of the organisers of the United Mine Workers remarked to me: "Isn't it ridiculous that our men are working while yours are fighting the bosses? And when your men get back to work, our strike will be under way."

In both Europe and America the miners have been struggling to move onward from pit agreements to district agreements, and finally to national settlements. The progress toward a world economy has been even more rapid, however, than the miners' organisation. The black international of the mineowners must be faced by the Miners' Federation of the World.

ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P.

THE T.U. CONGRESS and EASTON LODGE

ONE of the items which aroused most interest at Congress was the General Council's Report on Easton Lodge. These proposals were as outlined in last month's PLEBS. They asked the Congress to levy the Unions one penny per member per annum for three years in order to provide £50,000. This sum was intended simply for capital expenditure at Easton Lodge. There would also have to be met by the Trade Union movement the cost of running Easton Lodge, which would amount to many thousands of pounds per annum.

No provision whatever was made for financial support for evening class work. Last month's editorial notes suggested that such proposals were distinctly unsatisfactory, as trade unionists were much more interested in evening class work for the rank and file throughout the country than in residential facilities for a comparatively small number of students. It also suggested that the amount the General Council proposed to expend would be quite sufficient to finance for the first stages a scheme including both evening class work and residential work.

In an endeavour to assist the Council to submit a scheme that would be no more costly but that would include evening class facili-

ties, the N.C.L.C. executive offered, subject to a ballot of its affiliated organisations, to hand over the N.C.L.C. to the General Council on a few very reasonable conditions, the most important of which was that the educational policy of the N.C.L.C. should be maintained. In making this offer the N.C.L.C. asked that it might have the General Council's decision before Congress in order that the Unions which controlled the N.C.L.C. might know where they stood.

The General Council, however, decided not to reply to this offer until after Congress, and went to the delegates with a scheme, the concrete proposals of which were limited to heavy expenditure on residential work, and on residential work only. When the matter was reached on the agenda, delegate after delegate got up and either spoke against the proposal or asked questions which were obviously hostile to the one-sided nature of the scheme. Out of the ten or eleven who participated in the discussion only one speaker gave the General Council unqualified support. By 2,441,000 votes to 1,481,000 the General Council's proposals were turned down.

Owing to the fact that finance was naturally stressed a good deal in the discussion, press reports conveyed the impression that finance was the main reason for the Congress's decision. It is no doubt true that some Unions based their attitude on financial reasons pure and simple, but the main reason was the failure of the General Council to do justice to the evening class work. Even delegates who voted for the General Council proposals felt in a number of cases distinctly dissatisfied with the concentration on residential facilities. Mr. Bowen did his best to defend the General Council, but he had a bad case. The President himself had to admit that evening class work throughout the country was more important than residential work.

It is regrettable that the Congress was faced with the alternatives only of turning down, or supporting just as they stood, the General Council's proposals, but the vast majority of those who are interested in a successful and well-balanced Congress scheme, including both residential and non-residential work, will frankly admit that the General Council had been badly advised. Everyone closely in touch with the working-class educational movement knows that among the unions there is a far greater demand for evening class facilities than for residential facilities, and that while quite a number of unions are prepared to spend much more than a penny per member per annum for these facilities, they are not prepared in these difficult times to spend that amount simply for equipping a residential college. They quite naturally feared, and the General Council's proposals encouraged them to fear, that that residential college would eat up practically every penny of Trade Union educational money and leave the evening class work to shift for itself. We hope that the

General Council will now re-consider the scheme, and that it will be possible for them to include those facilities that bring workers' education to the door of every Trade Unionist.

In the meantime the duty of every N.C.L.C.-er is to take all possible steps to ensure that the winter session now commencing will be a record for independent working-class education. Moreover, he should impress upon his Union, if it is not already participating in that education, the importance of doing so at the earliest possible moment. Every T.U. card should carry with it the right to attend N.C.L.C. classes at least until the Trade Union Congress has developed a scheme which will provide these facilities.

The thanks of the Trade Union movement are due to the many delegates who, at Bournemouth, prevented the Congress scheme from starting on the wrong lines.

J. P. M. MILLAR.

STRIKE HISTORY *and* LESSONS

More Reports by "Plebs" Correspondents.

MAESTEG: SOUTH WALES

NEITHER the *Daily Mail* nor Mr. MacDonald could have accused the officials of the Maesteg District of Miners "doing harm to the movement by their talk of preparation for the fight." However, the local Labour Party was more progressive than the T.U. officials, and had set up an Industrial Committee as far back as April. With the exception of the builders and printers, all the organised workers of the district were represented upon this Committee. Of the 6,000 workers represented, over 5,000 were miners, but it was the only representative Committee of its kind in the district. Despite this, attempts were made (fostered by the local T.U. officials) to prevent its active participation in the struggle. Finally, it was agreed that the Industrial Committee, together with the Miners' District Council, should form the local Council of Action.

The first meeting was held on Wednesday, May 5th, when the local miners' agent was appointed chairman of the Council of Action. In his opening speech the chairman admitted that he did not know how to proceed, that the General Strike was entirely unexpected, that we had to rely upon the General Council, etc., etc., etc. Nevertheless, when the Left Wing put forward their programme, he knew how *not* to proceed! All proposals for active participation

in the struggle were defeated—the only one accepted was the publication of a daily *Bulletin*. Even then, only official information from the Unions or the T.U.C. was accepted.

For the first three days the only information in the *Bulletin* was a ten-word telegram from the N.U.R.! The chairman protested against the bulletins posted up by the C.P., but he admitted that he could not deny that the information contained therein was true.

The next item is the spice of the programme! The Urban District Council, upon which there is a Labour majority of 11 to 5, had decided to co-operate with Baldwin's Civil Commissioners, and invited the Council of Action to do likewise! The Council surveyor, with the acquiescence of the Labour councillors, had been appointed by Finlay Gibson, Government coal controller for South Wales (also secretary of South Wales and Monmouthshire Coalowners' Association!) to supervise the distribution of coal and coke within the Maesteg district. Every application made by the surveyor was granted by the Council of Action, thereby indirectly carrying out the instructions of the Government and the coalowners! All the available coal and coke in stock at the railway and colliery sidings was allowed to be released, ostensibly for bakeries and hospitals. We were given to understand by the surveyor that the bakeries would be unable to carry on over the week-end unless we granted his request. After the application had been granted, the Labour chairman of the District Council admitted that all the bakers who had been approached had informed them that they had a sufficient supply of fuel for a fortnight!

At the next meeting of the Council of Action the few Communists present endeavoured to sever its connection with the Civil Commissioners. The chairman, together with the local councillors, pointed out the seriousness of such a course. In the words of the chairman, "it was better to be friendly with the Civil Commissioners than to be hostile." The Council of Action decided on co-operation with the Government. Even a number of N.C.L.C.-ers voted for co-operation with the Government; the chairman was (and is) also chairman of the Maesteg Labour College Council!!

Again, on the question of communal kitchens and bulk purchase from the Co-op., the Communists were the only supporters. The chairman even refused to give a hearing to a comrade who desired to outline a scheme for communal kitchens—a scheme which was in operation in other districts.

Cars and 'buses for passenger traffic were effectively stopped by means of permits, but we could not complain of the transport of goods because the Council of Action had given permission for blacklegs to remove coal from the railway siding!

Attempts were made to get into touch with other Councils of

Action, but the General Strike was called off before any effective measures could be taken. Our local officials heaved a sigh of relief ; it had been an ordeal to hold the workers in check. A meeting of the Council of Action was held on May 12th. It has not met since. It is now deposited in the museum of antiquities from which it never should have emerged !

Our experience in Maesteg has demonstrated the bankruptcy of Right Wing and Left Wing, I.L.P. and N.C.L.C. Only the Communists had any conception of "how to wage the class struggle." It is to the Communist Party we must look for inspiration for the future.

IDRIS COX.

NOTTINGHAM

THROUGHOUT the whole nine days of the General Strike, Nottingham's solidarity was never in doubt. The workers here, in all sections, eager to show in some tangible form their wholehearted sympathy with the miners, came out to a man. All forms of transport were at a complete standstill, and one of the greatest problems at the outset was how to keep those men at work who were not involved by the initial instructions from the General Council.

Under the auspices of the local Trades Council, a Strike Committee was set up, consisting of two delegates from each of the unions who became directly involved at the commencement of the Strike. This Committee was augmented by delegates from other unions as they too became affected.

Acting separately, but in close contact, was an Advisory Committee consisting of delegates from about twelve other unions, the special function of which was to interpret the T.U.C. G.C.'s instructions as they were received from time to time. Also it decided upon lines of demarcation between the different sections of workers in the various trades represented thereon, with a view to securing co-ordinated action. Called together at short notice, both these committees rendered invaluable service and contributed in no small measure to the efficiency which Nottingham attained.

Strike *Bulletins* were issued in ever-increasing numbers by the Strike Committee, and were instrumental to a great extent in counteracting the distorted information received by wireless, and that equally misleading organ, the *British Gazette*. Copies of the *British Worker* were eagerly awaited, but it was not until the sixth day of the Strike that we in Nottingham were able to obtain our official organ in any considerable numbers. News-sheets, printed by blackleg labour, notwithstanding the craving for news, met with a very cold reception.

The morale of the workers remained splendid throughout, and

we were certainly not prepared for the disappointing manner in which the General Strike was called off. Strong criticism was expressed locally against the General Council for failing to insist upon suitable terms for the reinstatement of those on strike. Such a luke-warm ending to an impressive and spontaneous manifestation of working-class solidarity was certainly not palatable to the rank and file.

However, with the exception of the tramwaymen, against whom an attempt was made to deprive them of their seniority of service, work was resumed in Nottingham without any serious trouble regarding reinstatement. Of course, I must except the railwaymen, who are even now suffering as a result of their splendid response to "the call." After brief negotiations the tramwaymen were eventually taken back on the *status quo*.

Looking back on those eventful days, I cannot help but feel that a course of independent working-class education would be of immense value to every section of the Labour movement generally, and our Trade Union leaders in particular.

F. G. JAMES.

The following additional points sent by another Nottingham comrade are interesting:—

During the first few days some sporadic disorder arose; enthusiastic crowds overturned some blackleg 'buses, and proceeded round the town, fetching out the workers of several large firms, who had not up to that time become officially involved. In one instance the police handed over the control of a large crowd to two Left Wingers, both associated with the N.C.L.C., who undertook the responsibility of interviewing managers, etc., and pointing out to them the dangers of ignoring the demands of *vox populi*, which backed its demands by threats of an extremely lurid character! When the police forces had been organised, however, they became more aggressive, and several baton charges resulted in the capture and imprisonment of numerous enthusiastic if obscure individuals.

With better known characters, more circumspect methods were adopted; W. Lees, a well known Communist and a member of the Trades Council, as the result of a speech delivered in the market, was fetched from the office where he worked, charged under E.P.A., and quietly sentenced to three months. A leader of the unemployed was sentenced to a month.

News of the breakdown was received here, as elsewhere, through the capitalist press, and was at first incredulously received. Many engineers are still walking the streets in consequence of being called out twenty-four hours before the calling off of the strike. Incidentally a local Labour Party leader, an ex-Mayor, discharged a lorry driver in his employ for ceasing work!

To sum up: the class-consciousness of the workers has been

increased by fifty per cent. ; and those who are active students have learned more than all the textbooks in the world could have taught.

H.B.B.

RAMSGATE

THE day before the strike began, the Trades Council took complete charge of all activities in the town, calling a meeting for the following evening of all committees of all Trade Unions, affiliated or not, to set up a Council of Action. This meeting commenced at 10 p.m. and rose at 2.30 a.m., receiving reports from various unions, as the delegates came along to report. This meeting constituted itself a Council of Action, and invested the Trades Council with *all power*, and to act as the Executive of the C. of A., which would only meet when called by the Trades Council, which thereafter met every night during the strike.

We set up communication direct with London and all surrounding towns by motor-cycle riders, and held mass meetings. The Transport Unions were responsible for permits, pickets were arranged, negotiations with the Co-op. were started ; and other organisations (*e.g.*, Women's Section of Labour Party, C.P., etc.) asked to be attached during the strike, so as to be under the authority of the Trades Council.

Everything was going almost perfectly, when the bombshell fell calling off the strike. For a time gloom and chaos held the field. Since then we have had the devil's own job to keep men in their Unions and try to wipe out the "Never Again" impression.

Plebs were well to the fore during the strike. I am the Council Secretary, and on the Trades Council are six other Plebeians.

LEONARD FAGG.

GLASGOW

GLASGOW has played an historic part in the industrial battles of the past. A study of how it fared in this latest phase of working-class struggle is, therefore, interesting, and, it is to be hoped, instructive.

On the Friday on which the Miners were locked out, the Trades Council, through its Industrial Committee, called a meeting of Union representatives for Monday. This meeting was called prior to the T.U.C. sending out any definite instructions, and had for its object the consideration of ways and means of assisting the Miners. In the interim, the T.U.C. acted, and on Monday night the Scottish T.U.C. General Council assumed control. In accordance with their proposals a Central Co-ordinating Committee was set up for the Glasgow area. It comprised representatives from the Trades Council Industrial Committee, and from the various unions or groups (where it was possible to group them) of unions involved.

It had practically no real powers, and was apparently designed to act as a transmission agency between the S.T.U.C. General Council, whose headquarters were in Glasgow, and the different local committees in the area.

The response of the rank and file was magnificent, and the first difficulty which the Committee experienced was in holding in certain sections which were not involved in the first call. This was particularly true of building workers engaged on housing and men in the large engineering and shipbuilding establishments. After the first day or so, the Corporation was able to run a skeleton service of tramcars on certain routes. This was mainly due to their being able to avail themselves of scab labour in the persons of University students. It had a disturbing effect on the morale of the tramway-men, and there was a slight, but steady drift back among this section right up to the end.

The various newspaper combines, as a result of a couple of technical men scabbing, the use of a number of University students and O.M.S. scabs, and the digging of one or two of their old employees out of retirement, were able to produce a daily news-sheet. The printers were anxious to counter this by having the Central Committee issue its own paper, and the plants of both the *Forward* and the *Worker* were placed at the Central Committee's disposal. But the S.T.U.C. General Council preserved an attitude of masterly inactivity towards this proposal until a courier arrived with the first editions of the *British Worker*. Thereafter the *Forward* plant was utilised, and, commencing on the Monday after the strike started, the *Scottish Worker* was issued daily and for three days after the actual calling off of the struggle.

On the Central Committee itself several weaknesses appeared. The Committee was too unwieldy, having a regular attendance of about thirty, mostly local T.U. officials. With one or two notable exceptions (as in the building trades and the printers) it was practically impossible to get the individual unions to group themselves industrially and thus reduce their representation. The most vital defect, however, was the lack of contact between the Central Transport Committee and the parent Co-ordinating Committee. From the beginning of the dispute until the last couple of days there was no one on the Central Committee linking up this important section. In the localities the various committees did splendid work, and it was generally after they adopted certain measures that the Central Committee fell into line. Progress was being made in the direction of a more vigorous prosecution of the struggle when the crash came, and the debacle then took place.

The big newspaper combines, controlling the *Glasgow Herald*, the *Bulletin*, the *Evening Times*, and the *Citizen* (all daily papers),

and a number of weeklies, declared themselves non-union and refused to reinstate their employees unless as non-unionists. Up to the present, and in spite of a boycott, they have succeeded in inducing a number of the men to accept their terms and are producing the usual issues of their papers. Over two hundred tramwaymen have been victimised, and if the tramway manager — a local Mussolini—has his way there is not even the likelihood of an enquiry into their cases. The dockers also had to accept conditions which are materially worse than those previously operating.

One or two general observations on the lessons of the struggle may not be out of place. The leadership, as exemplified in the S.T.U.C. General Council and local officials, was on a par with that of the T.U.C., and equally out of touch with the rank and file. There were exceptions, but they were in a hopeless minority. If we are determined to change the General Staff of our movement, it is equally imperative to bring the local leadership into line. The multiplicity of unions in the various industries added immeasurably to the difficulties to be faced. The T.U.C. amalgamation scheme will require to be made an accomplished fact if we are really in earnest about setting our house in order for "Next Time." Finally, there was no machinery apart from the Trades Councils in existence prior to the dispute. It is necessary therefore that we establish same, and the Trades Councils are the obvious basis of any such scheme.

P. KERRIGAN.

HISTORY and the WORKERS

The fifth of the series of articles by Mark Starr discussing the place and importance of History in workers' education, and the method of its interpretation.

V.

THE ELEMENTS OF MARXISM

MARXISM can explain its own origin. It stands in direct descent to the materialism of the 18th century in its philosophy and to the Classical Economists in its economics. The differences between them reflect the changes in the economic life made obvious by the development in the 19th century. In France from Voltaire (1694-1778) onwards and in England from Hobbes (1588-1679) and Hume (1711-1776) new views were expressed. The French materialists ridiculed the feudal institutions and beliefs and paved the way for the French Revolution. Hobbes rooted the necessity for a monarchy and a powerful State in human needs and sanctions. Man's thoughts were automatic sensations received from matter. Man was thus a machine. Matter was separated from spirit. Into this *philosophical*

or *mechanical materialism* the Marxists brought the leavening ideas of *dialectic* or *historical materialism*. The Hegelian idea of progress by a struggle between opposites was placed on a materialist and economic foundation. The seed and the earth, for example, are opposites; the first is destroyed and the qualities of the latter absorbed, but out of this comes the new life of the plant (the negation of the negation, as the Hegelian would call it). The capitalists and the wage workers struggle, yet out of this conflict comes a new social form in which capitalists and wage-workers will have both disappeared. Lenin well summarised the process in the following passage (*Inprecorr*, No. 53/1925):—

"But Marx did not stop at the materialism of the 18th century; he carried philosophy further. He enriched it with the results of classic German philosophy, especially that of Hegel's system, which again led to the materialism of Feuerbach. The most important of these results is to be found in dialectics, that is, in the doctrine of evolution in its completest and deepest aspect, free from one-sidedness; in the theory of the relativity of human knowledge, mirroring for us the unending development of matter. The latest discoveries of natural science—radium, electrons, transmutation of chemical elements—have afforded a brilliant confirmation of Marx's dialectical materialism as opposed to the teaching of bourgeois philosophers, with their 'new' retreats into old and decaying idealism.

"In deepening and developing philosophical materialism, Marx carried it through to its ultimate end, and extended his knowledge of Nature to knowledge of human society.

"The historical materialism of Marx has proved to be the greatest achievement of scientific thought. The chaos and arbitrariness which had hitherto prevailed in the conceptions of history and politics have been replaced by an astonishingly consistent and well-constructed scientific theory, showing how the growth of productive forces causes one system of social life to develop into another and higher system—how, for instance, capitalism grows out of feudalism.

"Just as the knowledge of mankind mirrors the nature existing independently of it, that is, the evolving matter, in the same way the social knowledge of man that is, the various views and teachings of philosophy, religion, politics, etc., mirrors the economic structure of society. Political institutions are a superstructure placed upon an economic basis. We see, for instance, that the various political forms of the present European states serve for the firmer establishment of the rule of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat.

"Marx's philosophy is perfected philosophical materialism, placing powerful tools of knowledge within the reach of humanity, and especially of the working class."

Opinions still differ whether Socialists should make direct attacks upon religion with which the Marxist historical materialism brings it into opposition. Lenin appealed at least on one occasion for "a propaganda of militant atheism." Trotsky, in *Where is Britain Going?* is exceedingly sarcastic at the expense of those Labour leaders who use religious terms and ideas to express their industrial discontent and anti-capitalist feeling. But in Britain organised religion has never been wholly and directly in the pocket of the capitalist class; it has never been a legally enforced code. Many use the word religion to mean idealism and a consciousness of something larger than the individual self—a participation in a greater

movement that that of the ego. In that sense Marxism itself is a religion of working-class solidarity and a participation in the freeing of the world working class. But there is the vital difference that such Marxist idealism is based on knowledge and not on vague desires or longings. There can be no truce between religion (in the usual meaning) and science, and when the working of the mind is understood and those vague generalisations made clear, there is no niche into which supernaturalism can creep for refuge. Explanation is a surer method of attack than ridicule. Marx himself worked with the Junta of the Model Unions to form the First International, and Marxists can also co-operate with those who state their wishes for an economic change in terms of Christianity or ethics until this decreasing number know better and lose their God-webs.

As we have seen, Marx turned logically to economics to lay bare the economic contradictions and the class struggle. Some of our colleagues (take, for example, R. W. P. in a *Lansbury's Weekly* (29/5/26) review of Buharin's book) suggest that acceptance or rejection of the Labour Theory of Value and of Surplus Value in Economics is something of unimportance compared with Historical Materialism. This is kicking away the ladder with a vengeance! What is the modern class struggle about if not about surplus value? How can the wage-worker's position be understood apart from an understanding of its *commodity* basis? The only scientific explanation of the exploitation ("robbery," an often used word in this connection, is not a Marxian or an economic, but an ethical term) of the worker is based on the Labour Theory of Value, which is the corner-stone of Marxism. The fluctuations and uncertainties of the Anarchists and Syndicalists—the non-Marxist revolutionaries—reveal their lack of this reliable economic understanding. Another sort of mess is reached by those who revive the Birmingham notions of Atwood and hope to accomplish revolution by ruse, or imagine that a proposal for a "living wage" will somehow dodge or lessen the necessity of organised participation in the class struggle. If Marx had not succeeded in finding a basis for his historical theory in the facts of economics, he would have rejected it. The philosophical and economic sides of Marxism are integrally connected and cannot be permanently separated without their vitiating as a clue to present and future development.

Some writers endeavour to apply an "economic interpretation" with an ignoring of the salient feature, the class struggle. In the books, for example, of Muller Lyer—with some justification called the German Spencer—there is a valuable insight into the past, but no lead for the future. The skilful grouping into "phases" of the main human achievements is no substitute for an insight into modern happenings. It may be that capitalist publishers exercise some

dictatorship in this matter. A brilliant, if polysyllabic, writer like Veblen deals with individual customs and particular institutions and shrewdly explains them, but he does not attempt to interpret mass struggles or forecast their end—much less pass from his study to participate in them.

As will be shown next month, the Marxian method yields valuable results in diverse fields of application. What Kautsky did for Thomas More and Christianity in his two valuable books upon those subjects can be done for others. But Marxism's greatest application is made by the workers. They meet the fact of the struggle in their experience. They find the facts in accord with the Marxian theory, and they are making and will make history assisted by the light of its forecasts.

M.S.

A BISHOP and the MINERS

To the Editor, "THE PLEBS."

Dear Sir,

In the August number of your magazine Mr. J. P. M. Millar alleges that Bishop Temple, late President of the W.E.A. and now Hon. President of the North-Western District of the Association, publicly withdrew his name from a letter he had signed for Miners' Relief.

As Mr. Millar did not seem to have correctly informed himself of the circumstances, I wrote Bishop Temple asking for his comments on the charge, and I have received the enclosed reply.

In fairness, I trust you will give space in your next issue to this refutation of Mr. Millar's charges.

Yours sincerely,

J. W. MUIR, (Organising Secretary).

Dear Mr. Muir,

(Copy).

I am very sorry to be a cause of anxiety to my friends. I have not, in fact, withdrawn my signature from any letter or appeal to which I had given it. I supported Arthur Henderson's appeal both with my signature and with a subscription as large as I could manage. I also expressed sympathy with a leaflet issued by Lady Slesser's committee, but did not sign their appeal because I had just signed Henderson's and a signature which appears attached to several such documents becomes useless to them all.

I was later asked whether I would support an appeal in America. I telegraphed agreement. The enquiry came from Lady Slesser's committee and I jumped to the conclusion that the appeal issued in America would be identical with that which they had sent me before. It appeared later that the American appeal was rewritten and contained expressions which I could not endorse. I did not withdraw my name from the general support of this appeal, but I did feel bound to write to *The Times* to explain the circumstances in which my name had come to be added to an appeal with whose terms I could not agree.

These are the facts. I have strongly supported the local appeals in Manchester and the neighbourhood for the wives and children of the Lancashire and Cheshire miners, and have never wavered in this support.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) W. MANCHESTER.

[Dr. Marion Phillips, Secretary of the Women's Relief Committee, informs us that the Bishop's statement of "the facts" is not quite accurate. He expressed approval of the leaflets issued by Lady Slesser's committee *before* he signed Mr. Henderson's

appeal; so that his reason for not signing the Women's Committee leaflet cannot have been that he "had just signed Henderson's." He is wrong in stating that there was anything in the American appeal which was not in the British one—with which he had "expressed sympathy"; and only when *The Times* indicated its disapproval did he hasten to write a letter which was in effect, if not in form, a withdrawal, without either communicating with the Women's Committee or waiting to find out exactly what the facts were. We believe it is true that the Bishop has supported the local appeals, though he has been far less associated with them than the Dean of Manchester. Nor can we find his signature on the letter signed by leading Manchester churchmen published in the *Manchester Guardian* early in the struggle.—Ed. PLEBS.]

DO WE STILL NEED A PLEBS LEAGUE?

The articles by Will Lawther and Winifred Horrabin last month have brought us in a budget of letters, three of which we print below. We hope that other comrades will take part in this discussion.

Concentrate on Research.

DEAR Comrade,—I have read Will Lawther's article on "How are We to Prepare for Next Time" with some misgivings. It seems to me that he is giving an interpretation to the functions of the Plebs groups and Labour Colleges which were never intended by the founders of the movement. Certain it is that many of those in the Plebs groups and Labour Colleges did not enter them in order to "attempt to build up an *organisation* (my italics) of the future in order to avoid the mistakes of the past." That function I submit is purely the function of a political party and not the function of an educational league.

Two years ago when a number of Plebeians and N.C.L.C.ers left the Communist Party, the feeling amongst them was that it was not desirable to create another political organisation. It was recognised that the work of the groups and colleges must remain educational and that any criticism of the official Labour Party or Trade Union policy must be made by individual Plebeians and N.C.L.C.ers through their local unions or Labour Parties, but not through the Plebs and Labour College organisations as such. And yet we find The PLEBS now printing articles on the "Lessons of the General Strike" which seem to indicate that it is aspiring to become "His Majesty's Opposition" in

the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress. Lawther says in fact: "We can only win by a realisation of the problem and the building of an *organisation* to overcome it." I can only assume that this organisation is to be the Plebs League. If this is so, I think the whole question of Plebs functions ought to be reviewed, because it is certainly not what I understood them to be.

My own view is that Plebs have a lot of work yet to do, but not of the nature foreshadowed by Lawther. Walton Newbold seemed to me to touch a more realistic note in his letter to the September PLEBS when he referred to the need for studying and investigating the new "technical bases" of capitalist methods of production which may act as a temporary but nevertheless serious deterrent of working-class solidarity. Here, I venture to say, in the sphere of industrial research can the best field for Plebs and Labour College activities be found, and this is particularly fitting for a body which bases its line of thought on Historical Determinism.

We are at the present time uncertain what is going to happen about the future of Working Class Education. The Easton Lodge scheme seems to be temporarily shelved by the decision of the T.U.C. at Bournemouth. But in some form or another it is, I take it, likely to revive. It is therefore very important that we should not prejudice members of the General Council against the

N.C.L.C. movement and against our form of educational outlook. We may very easily do this if we become engaged in the sectional discussions and inter-party issues inside the political Labour movement.

Yours fraternally,
M. PHILIPS PRICE.

*Groups
Necessary.*

DEAR COMRADE,—W.H.'s article raises a very serious problem, because, whilst the article may be vague, certain conclusions will be drawn from it that should be frankly discussed.

One conclusion is, that there is a feeling that the Plebs Group method of organisation is not for the good of I.W.C.E. Now we in Manchester are of the opinion that some rallying ground should be provided for people holding the principles of I.W.C.E. either as a Students' Association, individual membership of the college or a local group of the Plebs League.

If the League is retained then it should be on the group basis, but with this qualification, that it is not a strong membership we desire, numerically, but that the classes shall furnish the membership of the League and the group.

The group's first duty of course would be the propagation of I.W.C.E. It should have a sympathetic attachment to the local College, ever ready to assist in any manner the College council desired.

There are many ways a group could be of assistance. It should be the recruiting ground for potential tutors and lecturers. As a step to becoming tutors, a percentage of capable members should be available to address local organisations on I.W.C.E. for their affiliation. (This work would allow the tutors' time to be devoted entirely to class work.) A group could also render assistance by setting up a research department, relieving the tutor again from individual research in the files, which occupies so much time. In its research department it could have a stock of maps made by its own members, available for tutors.

The above is a personal view of the group's function to the college. Many comrades hold similar views.

On the broader issues raised in the article the Manchester group took up the position that in the absence of any de-

finite motion for the winding up of the League or even of reasons why it should be disbanded, the Plebs have nothing to defend. It is therefore for others to state a case against the League.

The trend of the discussion, however, was directed to showing the necessity of maintaining the League, and keeping and making the Group form of organisation more effective.

And this latter point will be the bone of contention. From what we can gather, the groups taking up definite political opinions are the cause of all the trouble. But then (and this view was expressed) it is no use meeting in a room to talk over a problem unless one arrives at a decision and that decision cannot be left in the room; we have therefore to control the members and make that decision effective.

The great thing expressed was that the League, through its group, should become a force in the working-class movement. That the groups should supply the "mass theory" in every question affecting working-class activity and so become, in practice, the "driving force" in the localities. As one of our people put it: "that we should aim at such a standard that the Plebs badge in the lapel of a coat denotes to all and sundry, here is a fighter on our behalf; what these fellows have to say on the problem is sound enough for me."

Can we bring the League up to such a pitch? We think that it can be done, and should be done, for after all I.W.C.E. is not education for education's sake, but education as a weapon in the class struggle.

Yours fraternally,
ROBT. MOORES
(Sec., Manchester Plebs Group).

*A Tutors'
League.*

DEAR COMRADE,—(1) Mrs. Horrabin's article does not offer any function sufficient to keep the League alive—it is not enough to wait for something to turn up—we have been doing it for years. As for a leaven—I don't know how to be a leaven. It seems a dull game.

(2) Running classes is no longer possible. Political activity, direct or indirect, is now ruled out—by the emergence of Left Wing organisations, and Left Wing sections in other parties.

(3) The only live function which still is retained is the publication and preparation of original work. Probably, therefore, in this sphere must be sought our real work. Also the Plebs League must become an organisation of students and tutors.

(a) *For tutors.* It must be prepared to safeguard all Labour College tutors against aggression by their employers under the T.U.C. scheme, possibly as to wages, certainly as to character of teaching. Thus it will have to become 100 per cent. organised among tutors and

be prepared to deal with complaints and do what is really T.U. work.

(b) *For students and tutors.* The inquiry into the General Strike should be made the beginning of organised research and study. Both group and isolated members should be encouraged and should be permitted to see the results of their studies in the PLEBS Magazine. The League should become the English section of the Marx-Engels institute.

Yours fraternally,

R. W. POSTGATE.

NOTES BY THE WAY

for Students and Tutors

Bourgeois Economics.

IN *Economica* for June is published a lecture by Prof. Cannan in London to commemorate 150 years since the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. In this Prof. Cannan frankly asserts that "Adam Smith may fairly claim to be the father. . . . of what has been called 'bourgeois economics,' that is the economics of those economists who look with favour on working and trading and investing for personal gain. . . . Smith came forward as the admirer and champion of the man who wants to get on." "In the *Wealth of Nations* Smith says, like a true bourgeois: 'Bankruptcy is perhaps the greatest and most humiliating calamity which can befall an innocent man.' Throughout the book he treats prodigality with bourgeois contempt; it is a kind of mental aberration: sane men save."

True to his forerunner and master, Prof. Cannan ends by deploring that "sour propaganda" of the present day which "tries to convince the wage-earners that they are working not for the public and the consumers, but for the capitalist employer." With the progress of bourgeois economics this "sour propaganda" is being counteracted; and the "impartial" Professor concludes with the hope that "no teacher in the School will ever give any countenance to the pernicious belief that steady and honest service in satisfying the demand of the people for the necessaries and conveni-

ences of life [he means the activities of the capitalist] is something to be ashamed of because it is profitable"!

U.S.A. Mining Industry.

Another article in the issue of *Economica* gives an informative comparison of the organisation of the mining industry in G.B. and U.S.A. Among the comparisons noted are the following:—

(a) Only 5 per cent. of American coal is produced for export, as compared with 30 per cent. of British.

(b) The depth of American seams is quite small as compared with British, the average being about 260 feet; while half the mines are not shaft mines, but drift or slope mines.

(c) 65-70 per cent. of American bituminous coal is cut by machinery, as compared with 19 per cent. in Britain.

(d) Although there are over 12,000 mining undertakings in U.S.A., nearly 90 per cent. of the total is produced by 1807 undertakings; while in Britain 93 per cent. of total output falls to only 467 firms. On the other hand, if we take the 50 largest undertakings in Britain and the 80 largest in U.S.A., we find that the average per undertaking of the former is 1.6 million and of the latter 2.3 million tons. "In America, therefore, concentration of capital has proceeded considerably farther at the extreme than in Britain, though not on the average."

(e) The 84 largest American undertakings own 1,188 mines altogether,

while the 4 largest own 213. Similar figures for Britain are not available, but are almost certainly smaller than this.

(f) 20-25 per cent. of the American output comes from mines owned by railway companies, steel plants and other large industrial concerns, showing a considerable development of vertical integration. The Samuel Commission carefully avoided giving us any information on this head for Britain! It mentioned that 23 per cent. of output went direct to associated concerns, but these included colliery selling agencies.

(g) "For more than 30 years the (American) industry as a whole has operated at slightly less than 70 per cent. of its capacity"—a pretty little exhibition of capitalist inefficiency!

Revolutionary Literature.

Students of the new literature of Russia have already quite good samples available in English. There is that excellent revolutionary tale by Libedinsky, *A Week* (Allen & Unwin), and the collection of sketches by Ivanov, Seifulina and others (recently reviewed in THE PLEBS), in *Flying Osip* (Fisher Unwin). Lunacharski has three plays published by Routledge in the Broadway Translation Series, though the style of these is old rather than new. In *The Sunday Worker* from time to time there have appeared short sketches by Serafimovitch and others. The whole question of revolutionary literature and art is surveyed by Trotsky in his *Literature and Revolution* (Allen & Unwin).

In *The Soviet Union Monthly* for September, there is a particularly interesting article on "New Developments in Russian Fiction," in which the work of Constantine Fedin, hitherto unknown in this country, is described. Promise is made of further articles in other issues on other new novelists, which those interested in the subject should look out for.

The Workers' Language.

Mark Starr writes:—

The sixth Congress of Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda, held in Leningrad, has been a great success. 684 members joined the Congress and 400 from 14 different countries actually attended and took part in the proceedings. A march with band and banners through the city and a great meeting at the old Hall of

the Duma, where the Comintern was founded, opened the Congress. Lunacharsky, as honorary president, sent his approval of Esperanto and a great number of organisations—industrial, political, scientific, workers' defence corps, sections of the Red Army—were represented by delegates.

Special postage stamps were issued to commemorate the Congress, the Leningrad *Pravda* ran an Esperanto section, and a *Guide to the U.S.S.R.* was also printed in the international language.

The business meetings were held in the Palace of Labour, decorated by such slogans as: "Proleta Ideologio estas la Marksismo," "Esperanto, potencia rimedo ea la Mano de luktanta Proletaro," "For La Kapitalismon." Guiding resolutions for the next year's work were adopted after careful consideration in the matter of Esperanto in the schools, in the radio, in workers' correspondence and an international press service. The delegates visited factories, electrical machinery works, rest homes and infant schools. The "living newspaper" as presented in the Works' Club Theatres, was exceedingly good—a revue narrating by songs and dances current political happenings. *Potemkin*, the film which describes the revolt in 1905 of the warship of that name, brought vivid pictures of class struggle into the cinema.

Russian Educational Experiments.

Anyone who has read Nearing's *Education in Soviet Russia* must be aware of the experiments and the investigations being made by the teachers there. This movement is more advanced in the Ukraine than elsewhere and in *La Vojo de Klerigo* there appear each month descriptions and explanations of the new steps taken in workers' culture. This review is printed in Ukrainian, but a resumé of all the chief articles is given in Esperanto and any teacher wishing to have a sample copy of this can get one by sending an addressed envelope (½d. stamp). Incidentally the Teachers' Labour League delegation found Nearing's book extremely useful in their examination of the U.S.S.R. schools.

In Moscow (writes M.S.) I was told that Radek's recent silence is due to eight hours' daily study of Chinese history by the light of Marxism. His primary purpose is to aid the Chinese students in the Eastern University where

he works. They see the M.C.H. usually applied to a Western development which they have not experienced and Radek says it's useless teaching a man the utility of braces if he's never worn trousers! Let us hope we shall not have to wait long for the English translation of the expected book. . . As far as I in-

vestigated I found that while Dietzgen's works were known in the Soviet Union, they are not widely used in Marxian philosophy classes. A Narkompros official told me that the *Outline of Economic Geography* was the most widely used text-book in the Ukraine.

LETTERS from READERS

GENERAL FUND OR GENERAL STAFF

DEAR Comrade,—I think we should be thankful to Comrade Beckett for his letter in the August PLEBS, but thankful only for the answer to a rather tedious multiplication sum and to a certain extent, for exposing the line along which some of our people are thinking. It is to be hoped that this idea of a general fund is not going to catch on. What Plebs are demanding is not a general fund, but a general staff. It is true that Beckett does not mention leadership, but he couples the need for a fighting leadership with this idea of a central fund, and instead of giving a lead in the method to be adopted to change the present "impotent" leaders, he gives us a multiplication sum as a weapon to fight the next round of the struggle. Perhaps he has not considered that a strike cannot be won with money; he must realise that for every £19,000 cajoled out of the workers by union officials, the capitalist class can oppose £190,000 against it with ease. Plebs therefore seek elsewhere for the lessons of the General Strike.

Reading the PLEBS strike stories and having in mind one's own experience of the strike, the thing that stands out in relief is the total lack of preparation, despite the fact that a General Strike had been the heavy gun in the working-class armoury, not a single word had been written on how it was to be used. The districts therefore had to improvise their own organisation without a lead, as to how it was to function, being given from the centre. This task was ably taken up, in the main, by the Trades Councils. Still the councils had no power to do a thing without the instruction came from the centre, such instruction coming from the various trade union centres to the local trade union officers and not from a central-

ised general staff to the local staffs centralised in the provinces. The obvious lesson here is that the G.C.T.U.C. must have all power in large scale disputes, the trades council becoming the replicas of the G.C. to conduct and discipline the fight throughout the country. To push that lesson home Plebs have got to support "All power to the General Council" and push forward the idea that the trades council should take their proper place in the line, that is as part and parcel of the T.U.C.

The other great lesson we must learn is that in no war must the fighters' tummies be forgotten. I think that Beckett will agree that the greatest military strategists are those who have in mind the slogan "an army marches on its stomach"; perhaps Beckett was thinking thus when he advocated a general fund; but let us remember that there is a great big phase of the working-class movement waiting to be developed into a weapon in the class struggle—the Co-op. Too long have we neglected this side of the movement. A drive is needed into the Co-ops. by I.W.C.E.rs. We should immediately become active in the societies to ensure the N.C.L.C. getting in with I.W.C.E., with a syllabus designed to point out to co-operators, that the place of the co-op. movement is lined up with the workers in each and every struggle of the workers, that if the co-operator goes down on the industrial field he will surely go down on all the fronts of the working-class independent activity. It will be remembered that the directors of the C.W.S. clearly demonstrated that they knew the working-class function of the co-operative movement, when they issued instructions to societies re credits to the workers during dispute. Therefore of equal importance with the change of leadership in the industrial and political phases of our movement is this question

of the co-op., working in that also for a change, substituting the present reactionary boards of directors with workers with some knowledge of the struggle and a realisation that the co-ops. are a weapon in that struggle. This done, I submit that there is no need for a general fund, provided we have a general staff having control of all the working-class forces industrial, political and commissariat; a general staff courageous enough to enter a large scale mass struggle with all its implications and with the will to victory.

There is much remains to be discussed yet, but in brief these are the most vital problems, crying aloud to be solved, and rank-and-file Plebians should put the principles of I.W.C.E. into operation and discuss these in their groups.

There are, of course, the other details of the struggle to be worked out such as an efficient line of communications, the creation of a press service giving authentic news of the progress of the fight, the functions of Labour on local government bodies, etc., etc., all of which cannot be left till "next time," but are preparations which we, as Plebs, should be formulating now in anticipation of the "next time."

Yours fraternally,
ROBT. MOORES.

BUKHARIN AND MARK STARR

DEAR COMRADE,—The views expressed by Mark Starr in his recent and interesting series of historical articles show a fortunately marked contrast to the opinions of Bukharin. In a newly-published work this writer shows himself fanatically wedded to determinism. He argues that history must follow a predestined course—first the establishment of the bourgeoisie, creating economic inequality, next a class struggle because of the inequality causing discontent, and finally a proletarian revolution bound to be successful on account of power vested with the working-classes through technical developments.

Starr on the other hand believes that events are not predestined and that individual minds through realising the need of their day can shape them. The chief danger to the workers is that a second Ford may establish Capitalism by "benevolent" methods (in reality a soulless brand of Taylorism), or another

Mussolini do likewise through a romantic seeming autocracy. The working-class can only be saved through being persuaded that their claim is ethically right so that they will be roused to wage a class war to prevent either of these events which seem quite probable. Bukharin's doctrine of determinism would make workers inactive through imagining success was assured, and end in a defeat arising where they expected a triumph.

Yours fraternally,
P. M. MOIR.

MIND AND MATTER

DEAR COMRADE,—Comrade Casey's rather involved letter in last month's PLEBS does not meet squarely my point of criticism.

He insists that I ought to have known that in his review he was dealing with the philosophical relationship between matter and mind. It is just here, in dealing with the philosophical range of the question of matter and mind as distinguished from special aspects of matter, that I complain he disclosed not Bukharin's "haziness" or my lack of "clarity"—but his own.

With all due modesty, I submit that this philosophical relationship was precisely the point of criticism taken up, and although my question about inorganic evolution is specially dealt with by certain branches of natural science, nevertheless, it is quite relevant to the discussion, *unless* Casey wishes to assert that philosophy is independent of science.

A philosophy that is contradicted by science is not deserving of a moment's consideration, whereas it can only be of service to science if it is itself based upon science. The orbit of philosophy is wider than that of any single science, inasmuch as it treats of the general relations of the object of science, i.e., the universe. But that does not mean that it can ignore or leave on one side any particular form or phase, e.g., the inorganic, of matter; hence, Casey's point of defining the limits is, to say the least of it, over-emphasised in this discussion.

The question Casey has to answer, and which under the cover of his reply to my question about inorganic matter, he has only evaded, so far, is a question which strictly falls within the limits of epistemology, *viz.*, which is primary and which is secondary—matter or mind?

To state, and state repeatedly as does Casey that "matter," i.e., conceived matter, cannot exist without a mind to conceive it is nothing but question-begging tautology.

The standpoint of Dietzgen, Marx, Engels and Bukharin is that material Nature is the primary and original, and consciousness of same the secondary and derived. Inorganic science confirms this epistemological standpoint, namely, that Nature existed before the consciousness of it. I submit that there is no escape from this point of view, other than idealism—the subjective idealism of Berkeley or the objective idealism of Hegel. On the other hand, it is true that outside the aforesaid limits, i.e., the limits of the fundamental epistemological question, the opposition of matter and mind has only a relative significance.

Yours fraternally,

J. JONES.

"NEWBOLD CALLS A TRUCE"

DEAR COMRADE,—What is the state of mind of a man who uses such phrases as "to feed them into the class war is to give them over to massacre," "sending others into the misery of destitution to glut your hatred of a system, rather

than conquering your emotions to get them off the battlefield," etc., etc.?

Who are these wonderful chaps that can say to the rank and file, come here, go there, do this and do that, and be sure their commands will be obeyed? How do we get them off the battlefield and where to? These phrases are either just bunkum, or "ego" run mad. Newbold seems to overlook the point that the greatest reality in life is struggle; and neither he nor I, nor all the persons we typify and represent, can make the real unreal.

We are in and for the struggle. We did not make it. We therefore cannot help but wage it. And this quite apart from the fact that even if we could cease, the boss won't let us. Would Newbold ask a shipwrecked man to cease swimming because the probabilities are against his reaching shore?

And he mustn't try to sidetrack us with silly arguments about "rapid changes in the technical bases." The old reality is there all the time—the struggle for ownership. Let us at least justify what existence we have left, by cutting all this "stuff" out and getting into the fight.

Yours fraternally,

L. KENT.

BOOK REVIEWS

A NEW HANDBOOK.

The Handbook and Directory of Adult Education (1926-1927). (Deane & Sons, 3/6 cloth, 2/6 paper).

THIS new handbook is entitled to a hearty welcome because it puts in manageable compass an amount of useful material which could only be got at otherwise with the greatest of difficulty. It is a book with which every keen Labour College Secretary should be acquainted, and little difficulty should be experienced in getting the local library to obtain a copy. Certainly every N.C.L.C. full-time official should have a copy for reference.

The Handbook includes a section on the N.C.L.C. and may thus serve to impress upon the Universities that there is a very strong body of organised working-class opinion that is firmly convinced of the Universities' incompetence so far as teaching Social Science is concerned,

and of the need for a drastic overhauling of these capitalist seats of learning—and of self-deception.

On page 32, the reader is informed that the expression "Labour College" simply covers groups of students in a locality who are organised in one or more separate classes under a Labour College tutor. It would be interesting to know who supplied this inaccurate information. A group of students does not constitute a Labour College; a Labour College does not exist unless there is in operation a Committee officially representing the local working-class movement. Thus, a group of students is simply counted as a class group or a class and no more constitutes a Labour College than a group of students constitutes a Local Education Authority. We hope this error will be corrected in subsequent editions.

As a condition of acceptance of the T.U.C. Scheme the W.E.A. was com-

pelled to agree to "education for emancipation," and to make the necessary change in its Constitution and Statement of Policy. While two-thirds of a page is taken up by the W.E.A. in describing its aims and methods, there is not the slightest reference to education for emancipation. We assume that this has been omitted because it would not make pleasant reading for the officials and members of the Education Authorities. We hope, however, that that section of the Trade Union Movement which has so far given support to the W.E.A. will have sufficient self-respect to resent such a slight from a body which, at Trade Union meetings, tries to make out that its main, if not sole, purpose is to serve the Trade Union movement.

We regret to note that the W.E.T.U.C. still persists in asserting that its educational schemes provide access to N.C.L.C. Classes. The N.C.L.C. has had several times to complain at the T.U.C. Educational Committee about this misrepresentation, and we understood that at last the W.E.T.U.C. had decided not to make such a claim. No doubt the W.E.A.—W.E.T.U.C. would like to combine the N.C.L.C.'s popularity in the working-class movement with its own State subsidies, but it cannot have it both ways, as no real working-class educational organisation will ever be offered substantial subsidies by the Capitalist State, unless in an attempt to ruin it by adoption.

The W.E.T.U.C.'s statement makes out that the W.E.T.U.C. is financed solely by Trade Unions. This is a most misleading statement as the W.E.A. facilities—which the W.E.T.U.C. exist to provide—have a very large part of their costs met by the State, the Universities and the Education Authorities. We take the W.E.T.U.C.'s suppression of this fact as an indication that it realises that the Trade Union Movement is sick of a working-class educational organisation financially controlled by the Board of Education, its sub-offices up and down the country, and those efficient providers of blacklegs—the Universities.

It is interesting to note that the voluntary bodies recognised by the Board of Education as being entitled to receive grants are: The Educational Settlements' Association, the Y.M.C.A., the W.E.A. and the National Industrial Alliance (the new name for the National Alliance of Employers and Employed), a truly harmonious collection of bed-fellows. We hope that, in view of the T.U.C. Scheme, the General Council will insist on the W.E.A.'s leaving such undesirable company. J. P. M. M.

A USEFUL HANDBOOK.

The Stream of Life. J. S. Huxley
(Watts, 1/-; paper, 7d.).

This is a reprint of B.B.C. talk which could advantageously be put into the hands of anyone afflicted by the "Devton mind." Although in his successful

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popularisation, Prof. Huxley emphasises the greater importance of environment as against heredity, in his final chapter he pleads for wider distribution of birth control knowledge and sterilisation of the unfit. Logically, it seems to us, he should have gone on to find out what barriers there are in our social environment against the good life and how those "lower classes"—whose relatively high fertility is deplored—could be swept away and not just handed contraceptives. Probably the B.B.C. would draw the line at *social* evolution being explained. However, the book is a useful summary of the modern theories of evolution and suggests books for further study.

M. S.

THE ROMANTIC REVOLUTIONIST.

A Moscow Diary. By Anna Porter. (C. H. Kerr & Co., Chicago, \$1, post paid).

This is a readable little book. It is not, as its cover describes it, "vivid"; but it is interesting and gives a satisfying account of various phases of Russian life. But one feels that the author visited Russia thoroughly convinced beforehand that everything in the garden was going to be lovely; and so whenever she strikes a "snag" she carefully explains it away before our eyes and all is well.

One wonders if it is the feeling that, behind all the poverty, dirt, and depression one still sees in Russia, something is moving to alter it all, which makes one think and write of Russian conditions in a somewhat lyrical and romantic strain. Who here would think of waxing almost delirious about the laying out of a recreation ground, or the fact that all the folk in a tenement house shared a wash-house? But over there it is different—it is all new and exciting.

Still, one cannot help smiling a little at a passage like this:—

Here it is all taken for granted—the onward march of youth over the dead traditions of a Capitalist past. A young woman friend here is eager to visit America "to see what a Capitalist country is like before it passes away." At twenty-four Capitalism to her is ancient history and the United States an anachronism.

Very nice and comforting, but it behoves everyone to keep their heads about Russia, to take a square look and try

to learn *how* the revolution was achieved. Sheer romantic nonsense like the above gets nowhere. That young lady had better stop where she is and witness the rise of a working-class industrial state with all its advantages and restrictions! The fact is the "onward march of youth" is a middle-class American Radical sentiment compared to the development of Russian industries—and will be treated as such!

Perhaps the plain, unvarnished, unromantic account of what is taking place in Russia will some day be written by some Russian who has "gone through it," and to whom the Kremlin towers do not act as an intoxicant. We need to know about Russia as it is and will be, and not as we think it is or think it ought to be. And Anna Porter certainly included some rose-coloured spectacles in her luggage.

W. H.

Commercial and Economic Atlas of the World (W. & A. K. Johnston, 1/6).

This is a handy, and certainly cheap, little atlas, though not so good from the point of view of the Economy Geography student as the two atlases published by Messrs. Phillips, most often used in N.C.L.C. classes. There are rather too many rainfall and temperature maps, and the economic maps, mainly covering a continent at a time, are necessarily much simplified to go on so small a page. But any and every atlas is interesting—and this one will give you far more lasting pleasure and profit than a visit to the pictures.

J. F. H.

RESEARCH — into local history, industrial conditions, capitalist development, etc.—has often been urged as part of the work of PLEBS Groups.

We shall publish next month the first of a short series of practical articles by various PLEBS writers, entitled

RESEARCH WORK: AND HOW TO SET ABOUT IT

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)

New local affiliations received during:
July: Leeds, 1; S.E. Lancs., 2 (late for previous PLBBS).

August: Liverpool, 2; London, 2; Glasgow, 2; S.E. Lancs., 1; Leeds, 1; Lancashire, 1.

appointments are temporary ones, subject to arrangements which may be made by the T.U.C., who now control the College. Our old friend, Tom Ashcroft, is Acting Principal. Congratulations to all three!

THE LABOUR PARTY: The following resolutions appear on the Labour Party's Agenda:

"That in view of the urgent necessity for developing the educational side of our work, this Conference pledges itself to support in every possible way the National Council of Labour Colleges, and further urges its constituent organisations to get in touch with the N.C.L.C. Movement and to arrange Educational Classes and Lectures with that body, which is doing its utmost for the Trade Union and Labour Cause."

(Stoke Newington T.C. and L.C.)

"This Conference believes the time is opportune for national recognition by the Labour Party of the National Council of Labour Colleges, and decides to affiliate to same."

(Stockton and Thornaby L.C.)

LANTERN SLIDES: Colleges are reminded that the Lantern Slides Department both sells and lends slides and that a lantern lecture is the most effective of all lectures.

NEW N.C.L.C. PAMPHLET: This pamphlet on I.W.C.E. will be entitled *The Trained Mind—Trained for What?* It will, of course, be quite different from the N.C.L.C. Year Book—*Education for Emancipation*—and will have a cartoon coloured cover.

Single copies 3d. post free; supplies at 1/6 per dozen, postage extra.

AMALGAMATED SOCIETY OF DYERS: We trust our secretaries and tutors will do their best to ensure that members of this Union take every advantage of this new scheme.

LABOUR COLLEGE, LONDON: Comrades J. Jones and Dorricott have been appointed lecturers at the College. Their

WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING.

Division 1: As a result of a circular sent to London N.U.R. Branches many are affiliating, while others are asking for speakers. London Labour Parties, too, in response to a circular and assistance from comrades inside, are waking up, and a number of them are affiliating. During the last few months A.E.U. Branches have evinced an appetite for lectures on "Lessons of the General Strike," an appetite which we have been able to satisfy. **CLASSES**: A number of new lecturers have become available for the London Division. Comrade Giles is taking two classes on a very interesting subject—The History of Education and a Survey of its Present Position. Owen Morgan is conducting two classes at Willesden and Stepney on Economic Geography. W. T. Colyer is commencing a class at Bermondsey on American Imperialism. Space forbids mention of the other tutors, some of whom are residential students at the London Labour College. Suffice it to say that with the help of the voluntary tutors the London Division will have about forty classes running during October. Some of the classes are being initiated by local Labour Parties and new ground is being broken. The Organiser addressed a Conference of Clubs at Penge in September and got the delegates to agree to get their individual clubs to support the London Division by means of affiliation. It is hoped to get into touch with all London Workers' Clubs in this way.

Division 2 (with part of **Division 3**): All correspondence to the Organiser should in future be addressed to 31 Richmond Road, Freemantle, Southampton. The Organiser has arranged interviews with Reading, Portsmouth, Southamp-

ton and Bournemouth Trades Councils. Formerly all these have been strongholds of W.E.A.ism. Comrade Quilley, sec. of Eastleigh class, debated with M. Cuthbertson, of Southampton (the W.E.A. representative) on I.W.C.E. versus W.E.A.ism at a branch meeting of the Bishopstoke Labour Party. Congratulations to our young comrade for putting up such a strong case and so decisively beating an experienced debater. Whilst attending the T.U. Congress, Jack Hamilton addressed a good gathering of the Bournemouth A.U.B.T.W. Branch. The Dorchester Agricultural Workers' Union's Educational Scheme includes fourteen week-end schools, covering the period September to April. During the first session the following will conduct the schools: the Organiser, T. W. Ward (Bournemouth), John Knight (Guildford), Glyn Evans (Labour Research Dept.), Wynn Cuthbert, Tom Ashcroft (Labour College, London) and M. H. Dobb. The second session will be conducted by other well-known Plebeians. The initiative and energy of this Union is one of the most encouraging features in Division 2 and sets the pace for all the other unions. Newton Abbott, Yeovil and Swindon are going to be active this winter again and one hopes to see Barnstaple and Plymouth active as well. Joe Mathews will be in charge of Worthing, Littlehampton and Bognor. Will any classes or unions who desire the services of Percy Collick (who was in Russia last May) to lecture on the Government of the Russian Workers, please communicate with the Organiser?

Division 3: Southend class started on September 30th—new members will still be welcomed. For Cambridge unexpected aid has come in the help of A. H. Jones, one time a Labour College student. A special one-day school was run for the Agricultural Workers' Union at Swaffham on September 19th. Posters and photos collected in U.S.S.R. will be extensively used for the Norwich School on September 26th. Jack Jones is renewing his old acquaintanceship with the Brentwood Class. M. H. Dobb is starting "Development of Capitalism" at Peterborough on October 3rd. Mr. Robinson, a critic of Esperanto, has been invited to debate the international language question publicly on October 3rd, under the auspices of the Cambridge College. It is probable that the Division

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3 E.C. will meet on October 16th and any College having matters to raise should forward them before that date. An initial meeting was fixed up for Guildford on September 29th. College secretaries are reminded that our two sets of lantern slides on I.W.C.E. and Imperialism are still available and exceedingly useful in introducing the classes to larger audiences.

Division 4 (part of 5): The Organiser has been very busy surveying the ground in Divisions 4 and 5 in preparation for extensive work during the winter. Thanks to the assistance of Mr. Pugh, of the Plasterers, a very useful conference was held at Ystrad Mynach. The Rhondda College is running 13 classes. Pembroke Dock College has been re-established. The Organiser addressed the Swansea Labour Association and good results are expected to follow.

Division 6: A record year is anticipated. Arrangements for the new session are well in hand and considerable new ground in being opened up. Organiser Barr has been busy in Coventry district and five classes will be conducted during the forthcoming session, where only one class was held last year. A conference has been arranged in Nuneaton to take place early in October as a preliminary to the class work. Barr has also visited the Potteries and a demand for Labour College classes is being met. A conference and week-end school will be held at Walsall Wood on October 2nd and 3rd. The following are the

College districts: Birmingham, Walsall, Dudley, Shrewsbury, Stafford, Coventry, Worcester and Wolverhampton.

Division 7: Division 7 held a week-end school for discussion on the best teaching methods. The school was widely reported in the local press. Another school, this time at Seacroft, resulted in new affiliations. York College held a successful demonstration with F. Shaw and S. Saklatvala as speakers. J. Backhouse, the secretary of the Bradford L.C., has won the Dyers' Scholarship to the residential Labour College, London.

Division 8: Two hundred delegates attended the North Lancs. Conference at Blackburn, addressed by Ebby Edwards, secretary of the Northumberland Miners. Discussion from the floor of the conference was of a very high order. Twelve classes have been arranged and a busy winter is anticipated. Like North Lancs. area the S.E. area and Liverpool area have their winter class list in the hands of the Trade Union branches.

Division 9: A splendid conference was held at Gateshead on August 28th, Comrade J. Beckett, M.P., was in the chair. The speakers were Will Coxon and Jack Dorricott. The Carlisle Labour College had a very successful week-end school on September 5th and 6th. The Sunday afternoon lecture was delivered by Mr. McIntyre, the Labour candidate for North Cumberland, and Comrades Rees and Bob Holder on Sunday evening and Monday. West Cumberland is very busy preparing for the winter session. The North-Eastern Labour College expects to have even a better session this winter, so far as classes and students are concerned. Durham and District Labour College is going ahead with the formation of classes.

Division 10 (Scotland): All the Colleges are busily engaged preparing for the winter session. Glasgow L.C. held a very largely-attended organising conference—speakers, Messrs. Crawford and Campbell Stephen, M.P. A similar conference is being held by the Lanarkshire L.C., with J. Harrison Maxwell and J. P. M. Millar as speakers. Lanarkshire is also holding a week-end school, the tutor being C. L. Gibbins. Glasgow is having a week-end school at Rothesay—tutors J. B. Payne and J. Harrison Maxwell.

Division 11 (Ireland): John S. Clarke is to give two lantern lectures in Belfast

on 9th and 10th of October. The Organiser addressed a very successful public meeting and N.C.L.C. Conference at Newry, on September 9th. Most of the local organisations were represented and the Newry College has been well established with Coun. Myles Connell as secretary, Mr. Chas. O'Donnell as chairman and Coun. W. F. Cunningham as treasurer. In Belfast this session we are to have the services of Coun. Harry Midgley as lecturer on "The Co-operative Movement." Harry Midgley has done a great deal of work for the Labour Movement in Belfast, being an ex-secretary of the Northern Ireland Labour Party and a Labour candidate who polled over 22,000 votes in a General Election. Coun. Sam Haslett, secretary of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, is to assist our public lecture work with several lectures on "Ireland—Past and Present." Arrangements have been made to conduct classes on five subjects in Belfast. Londonderry will have a class and there are good prospects of introducing classes in other towns during the session. The South Belfast Labour Party has affiliated. We have lost a splendid comrade and worker in H. Cleeton, who has sailed for Australia. We wish him *bon voyage* and all the best Australia has to offer.

Division 12: Comrade Jarvis, sec. of the Lincoln class, is to be congratulated on the successful organisation of a good summer class in Lincoln. The class ran into the middle of August and was well attended throughout. Members of the A.E.U. in Lincoln are the mainstay of the class. A Day School was held at the end of August at Chesterfield. J. P. M. Millar and the Div. Organiser, C. Brown, were the lecturers. Judging by the list of classes arranged and proposed, which the Chesterfield Secretary has sent along, the Day School stimulated interest in the Labour College Movement in the area. Leicester has also made its first experiment with a week-end school and Comrade Peacock is to be congratulated on the success which attended this initial effort. Derby College held its annual meeting and conference on September 5th. A good number of delegates attended. Comrade Crispin was again unanimously chosen as secretary. Arrangement of classes proceeds apace; the only question is: Shall we be able to find tutors to satisfy the demand?

- N.C.L.C. DIRECTORY—*Additions and Corrections.*
- Division 2—Divisional Organiser: D. Wyndham Thomas, 31 Richmond Road, Freemantle, Southampton.
- 2—*Oxford L.C.*: Secy.: Mr. A. Hughes, 66 Bullingdon Road, Oxford.
- Reading L.C.*: Secy.: F. Young, 26 Addison Road, Reading, Berks.
- 3—*Bedford L.C.*: Secy.: B. P. Prigmore, 41 Howard Street, Bedford.
- Cambridge L.C.*: Secy.: F. A. Moyns, 121 Burrells Walk, Cambridge.
- 4—*Merthyr L.C.*: Secy.: E. Harris, 1 Tabernacle Row, Brecon Road, Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.
- 4—*Pembroke Dock L.C.*: Secy.: Mr. B. C. Thomas, 5 Bufferland Terrace, Pembroke Dock.

- Tredegar L.C.*: Secy.: Jack Stockton, 19 Westhill, Tredegar, Mon., South Wales.
- 6—*Birmingham L.C.*: Secy.: Jack Wood, 24 Sandford Road, Moseley, Birmingham.
- 7—*Bradford L.C.*: Secy.: W. E. Strafford, 143 Sterling Street, Bradford.
- 8—*Leyland C.G.*: Secy.: W. D. Stansfield, 4 Spring Street, Leyland.
- 10—*Dumfries L.C.*: Secy.: Mr. A. Killin, 26½ Rae Street, Dumfries.
- Edinburgh Staff-Tutor*: C. L. Gibbons, c/o Williams, 40 St. Leonard Street, Edinburgh.
- 11—*Newry L.C.*: Secy.: Myles Connell, I.T. & G.W. Union Hall, Newry, Ireland.

THE PLEBS BOOKSHELF

NOT once but many times I have pleaded in this particular corner of the magazine for a keener interest in, and realisation of the uses of, literature in our educational work. I am glad, therefore, to note that in the excellent little series of handbooks now being issued by the Trade Union Educational League of America (the Little Red Library, 10 cents apiece) there have been included—among reprints of Marx and Engels, historical sketches, and essays on current political and economic issues—two items of more purely literary interest: an anthology of *Poems for Workers*, edited by Manuel Gomez, and *The Damned Agitator and Other Stories*, by Michael Gold.

The anthology opens with Ernest Jones' "Song of the Classes" ("We plough and sow—we're so very, very

low"), and includes that magnificently full-blooded parody of Kipling, "We have fed you all for a thousand years," by "an unknown proletarian," Connolly's "Legacy," and a number of poems by modern American writers, including Carl Sandburg, Jim Waters, Arturo Giovanitti, Ralph Chaplin, and Claude McKay. Also two of Siegfried Sassoon's best.

Mike Gold's stories I showed to a miner comrade. He said, "I wish those tales could be 'translated' into English characters and an English setting—they'd be better propaganda than yards of ordinary pamphlets."

Plebs will remember that I wrote recently here about a book by an American author, V. F. Calverton—*The Newer Spirit*—which approached the study of literature from the Marxian point of view. In the same Little Red Library

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mentioned above is to be issued shortly a booklet by comrade Calverton, consisting of a series of essays on *Labour and Literature*. Another American propagandist publishing organisation is getting out a book by the same author entitled *Literature and Economics*, which will probably sell for about 1/3, and which—so Calverton writes me—“will be, in a sense, a condensation and synthesis of *The Newer Spirit*.” This is good news. We hope to see both publications shortly—and to let Plebs know about them.

* * *

Upton Sinclair has written a new book—*The Spokesman's Secretary: Being the Letters of Mame to Mom*—which he announces as “a return to the good old days of Artemus Ward and Mark Twain, when the American people knew how to laugh out loud.” I've a great respect for Sinclair; but frankly I don't think he shines as a humorist. He's made me cry out loud—in *The Jungle* and *Singing Jailbirds*. But Mame only made me yawn. Sinclair evidently wanted to apply the *Gentlemen-Prefer-Blondes* recipe to propaganda purposes. It doesn't come off. He can use a sledge-hammer to good purpose; a feather-tickler is simply not in his line.

* * *

I may as well go on and be all-American this month. I've been looking through the first four or five numbers of the *New Masses*—the resuscitated *Liberator*. There's a lot of good stuff in it; but on the whole its note strikes one as a bit forced. Anything so aggressively, picturesquely and self-consciously “revolutionary” as this almost makes one want to turn respectable and read only official Labour Party policy-pamphlets, printed by the Co-operative Printing Society. One can't help wondering whether either the old game of shocking the bourgeoisie or the new one of idealising the proletariat will take one far along the road to that new “worker's art” the *New Masses* says it is “laying for.” The editors are evidently very proud of having secured an article for the June number entitled “It's a Hell of a Game,” by James “Slim” Martin, who, they tell us, was for years a wandering migratory worker, harvest hand, lumber jack, and member of the I.W.W., and then for 13 years a structural iron-worker, helping to build New York skyscrapers. His article “tells of

The book our classes have been waiting for

The history of the British Working Class Movement has always been a standard subject in N.C.L.C. classes. For some time no text book has been available. That lack has now been remedied by the publication of Postgate's

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the life and feelings of the man who walks steel beams hundreds of yards into the sky” (significant bit of melodramatic phrasing, that!) M'yes. But the editorial note also tells us that “Slim” has chucked iron-working, and become an actor, playing at the Greenwich Village Theatre—i.e., to the “arty-est” audience in New York. And he certainly writes not so much like an iron-worker, but as Greenwich Village would expect an iron-worker to write—all swear-words, and recklessness, and 100 per cent. he-proletarianism.

There's too much of the spirit of the films about a lot of this “workers' art.” As a plain orn'ery cow-puncher is to Tom Mix or Bill Hart, so is a common or garden proletarian to the mighty-muscled, oath-chewing heroes of Greenwich Village. (Even the sober Scott Nearing catches the contagion and writes a page of sheer emotionalism about Russia.) There's more real proletarian feeling in a page of *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* than in folios of the semi-hysterical stuff seasoned to tickle jaded intellectual palates. I want to shout to all this brilliant bunch of writers and artists (all except Art Young, who remains as quietly calm and genial and deadly as ever) to try the exciting adventure of being ordinary citizens for a bit, and living quiet. It would do their nerves lots of good. And it would bring them a whole heap nearer to the spirit of the workers.

J. F. H.

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In spite of demands for "economy," the Board of Education has promised the N.C.L.C.'s principal educational rival increased State financial assistance, if more work is to be done. The N.C.L.C. therefore urges Trade Unionists to see that their organisations support Independent Working-class Education and arrange Educational Schemes with the N.C.L.C.



J For Booklet, giving full particulars of the N.C.L.C.'s work, including Correspondence Courses, send 3d. in stamps to J. P. M. Millar, General Secretary, N.C.L.C., 62 Hanover Street, Edinburgh.