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Straws in the Wind

*Has Capitalism Stabilised?—The Miners' Struggle a Portent?
The Decline of Europe—Rise of Colonial Nationalism
The Significance of China to Britain—British
Labour's Next Step.*

THERE can be no real doubt that in the last two years—that is, since the adoption of the Dawes Scheme—Capitalism in Europe has achieved a partial stabilisation. Production in various countries and in different branches of economy have been to some extent “levelled-up” (production in Central Europe, e.g., being raised to nearer its pre-war proportions relatively to Western Europe); money and the exchanges have been stabilised, and trade revived. But this struggling out of the acute collapse of the post-war period has only been achieved on two conditions: first, by the “buying off” of the reformist workers’ leaders to accept coalition and class collaboration with the capitalists, thereby persuading the workers (who were still in the main bound by bonds of loyalty to their former leaders) to accept a worsening of their conditions without a struggle; second, by Europe becoming debtor to U.S.A.

There were many who, as soon as the first signs of this stabilisation appeared, jumped uncritically to the conclusion that this constituted a complete and unconditional stabilisation, a sudden passage from mortal weakness to normal strength, a return to the pre-war upward curve of capitalist development. And since the seizure of power by the workers is objectively most possible when capitalism is weak or is most rapidly on the decline, it was concluded that the entry of the class struggle on an advanced and acute stage was now postponed for a decade or so; and that, consequently, the workers’ movement must adapt itself to the more sober needs of a long, preparatory period—education and propaganda and the tactful attraction of backward sections of the masses—rather than publish slogans which raised the struggle for power as an imminent issue. It was even implied that it might be necessary to conclude an armistice with the enemy on various parts of the front, in order to allow the work of education and propaganda to proceed. In other words, once the assumption that capitalism had returned to “normal” was made, it followed that there was no need at present to displace the Reformist leadership—in fact, it might still have a rôle to play in the building of the movement; that the struggle could still be

allowed to proceed on separate sectional fronts, without uniting it into a single political struggle raising the issue of the assault on capitalism itself; and that on political issues like Imperialism, because the time for the political struggle for power had not yet come, it was more advisable to be merely neutral ("We will not fight for the Empire, but neither will we at present organise to fight against it," etc.).

Clearly, the truth or falsity of this assumption is of tremendous importance for the whole strategy and tactics of our movement at the moment, and an understanding of its importance is vital to an appreciation of the next stage in the class struggle on which we are entering. If the assumption is true, then the General Strike and the miners' struggle was just a "flash-in-the-pan," an isolated break in a general upward curve, a romantic "scrap" which is unlikely to occur again for a year or so, and from which we now have to return to the normal humdrum details of trade union work or of preparations for the next election, just as the *Herald* turns from being a strike broadsheet to its normal Fleet Street discussions of future fashions in men's waistcoats, the latest murder mystery, or (on its literary page) the saintly aspirations of Eva Gore-Booth. But if the assumption is false, then the struggle of 1926 was not an isolated incident from which we return to where we were before it began. It was a symptom and a portent of what is to come—the beginning of a new phase of struggle which, because it is new, creates new needs and problems and cannot be interpreted merely in terms of what went before. It means that we have got to probe into the character of this new phase, and put hard thought into the sifting of its problems.

I think there can be no question that a survey of the facts in any real Marxian fashion cannot possibly sustain the assumption that the stabilisation of capitalism is complete, still less that it has returned to its pre-war character. To maintain as much would be to neglect the fact that while Europe's production has scarcely risen by more than a few points above 1913 and her trade is still several points below 1913, the production of North America has increased in the last 14 years by 26 per cent. and her trade by 37 per cent., and that of Asia by 24 per cent. and 36 per cent. respectively.* Hence European capitalism, burdened by debts and armaments, is finding its markets narrowed, and is faced with the necessity of organising against America (which means intensified scramble for markets and increased exploitation of colonies) or else submitting to further

* Indices given for 1925 in *Memorandum on Production and Trade* (League of Nations).

decline. To maintain such an assumption is to neglect the rapid strides made in the trustification and syndication of European industry since the war, aimed at restricting supply and raising prices on the home market, which means that "rationalisation" and improved organisation does not expand the scale of production as it did in the heyday of competitive capitalism, but rather contracts it, and so burdens the workers with unemployment and lower real wages. Further, it neglects entirely the immense significance of the two entirely new factors which have appeared in the post-war and were absent in the pre-war period—the rise of Soviet Russia and the anti-Imperialist revolt of the colonial peoples. The influence of the former has been of great importance in awakening the workers of Europe to a new revolutionary consciousness and to an appreciation of the issues involved in the struggle for power. The latter has shaken the pillars of Imperialism, set bounds to the possibility of extended monopolisation of colonial markets and of European capitalism arresting its decline by means of the profits of intensified colonial exploitation. That is why the struggle in China is one of the two most important events that have affected the British workers' movement since 1918.

If the assumption cannot hold of European capitalism as a whole, still less can it hold of British capitalism. For since British capitalism formerly had the strongest position of all in the world's markets, any new factor of competition, whether from America or the colonies, must inflict on her a decline in her position at a more rapid rate. What was the essential fact in the position of British capitalism before the war? It was the fact of her monopoly position in the world's markets enabling her to reap large profits out of foreign trade and banking, and so making her capitalists wealthier and giving her workers a higher standard of life than those of other countries. In the 19th century this monopoly position was due to her technical and organisational superiority over other countries; in the last 30 years it was due to the building up of special "preserves" in the shape of Empire markets, in which British capitalists as buyers and sellers possessed a virtual monopoly. Now her technical and organisational superiority has passed to U.S.A.; she is even being surpassed by other European countries (e.g., the continental steel cartel). As a result she tries to maintain her position of dominance in Europe through Locarno diplomacy, playing off one country against another (e.g., Italy against France, etc.), exerting influence through the League of Nations to secure a lowering of tariff barriers which shut out British exports. More important still, she turns to intensified Empire development; and it is here that she comes face to face with the principal factor in her

decline—the disintegration of the Empire. To keep her tie with the Dominions, she has to make concessions to them. Barring the way to increased exploitation of the colonies stands the rise of the colonial nationalist movements, to which she is already having to make concessions. Hence the vital importance to British capitalism at the moment of the Chinese question! Hence the sharpening hostility to Soviet Russia as the strongest ally of this anti-Imperialist revolt.

The crisis in the coal industry accordingly is intensely symptomatic: it is a symptom of the sharpening decline of British capitalism which hits the export industries and the most highly organised workers first. It is a harbinger of a new sharpening of the class struggle which is ahead, as the decline grows more acute: it marks the threshold of a new era in our movement, not an isolated incident from which we return to where we were before. The Dawes Plan and the Return to Gold may have given temporary relief and a “breathing-space”—an arresting of the downward curve for a season. For Central Europe it has meant an actual recovery of markets and of production. But against the more fundamental factors worsening the position these stabilising influences can exert no more than a temporary influence. The only chance which British capitalism has of arresting its decline is if it can “damp down” the class struggle and persuade British workers to accept a worsened position, and if, at the same time, it can break colonial nationalism and tighten the bonds of Imperialist exploitation. It is for this reason that the Labour Imperialists, of whom Haden Guest is merely the most outspoken, fill the rôle of agents of capitalism within the workers’ ranks; and to fail to attack and expose them on principles of “dislike of personalities,” “loyalty to leaders,” a sham “unity,” etc., is a criminal stupidity which amounts to forming a silent pact to turn a blind eye to treachery.

The fact that capitalist decline will continue in the future lays the objective basis for a sharpening of the class struggle and its entry on a completely new stage. In this new stage the question of the struggle for power is directly raised. The historical conditions which, as D. J. Williams in his interesting article points out, have made trade unions so strong in Britain, have also given it features which constitute a fatal weakness for the new stage. Growing up to meet the needs of the period of British capitalism’s monopoly in the world market, trade unions have been built on a sectional basis, each adapted to secure a share of the fruits of British capitalism’s monopoly in the particular section with which the union was concerned. Having that aim, it is natural that the leadership, spending its time in detailed work of negotiation, conferences, tribunals, etc.—

in other words, in negotiating continual armistices with the enemy—should have developed a reformist ideology of class peace and adaptation to capitalism, and should in turn tend to impose that ideology on the rank and file. To break the influence of that ideology, to replace the leadership with a new one, and so to forge the heterogeneous sectional elements which constitute British Trade Unionism into a single army able to go forward to the seizure of power—that is the urgent next step before us. But how can this be done except by some single organisation which takes the political struggle for power as its single objective, exercising its influence on the rank and file in the new direction, organising the united move for a new leadership, and by raising the slogans of the new political struggle forging sectional elements into a united whole? Only a marvellous faith in “spontaneity” could expect otherwise such a mushroom growth. Moreover, how can it be done unless one is willing to expose and drive out of the movement those elements of the old Reformist stage (which may have played their rôle in their day) which now act as a drag on the movement, keeping it split into sections, tying it to the capitalist machine and breaking its *morale*, leading inevitably in every fresh struggle to a repetition of May 13, 1926? To build up unity for the new political struggle, we must begin from the bottom, uniting the rank and file on a new basis, and raising the slogans which rally them to the new struggles which the new phase requires.

ZED.

MARXISM: MUMBO-JUMBO or SCIENCE?

THE author of a new cogently-worded attack on Marxism* is one of that small group of intellectuals who, reacting against the stifling tyranny of trustified American capitalism, joined their sympathies to the cause of the workers and gave much service to the revolutionary movement in a literary capacity. But though they joined themselves emotionally to the workers, most of this and similar groups failed to merge completely with the workers and share their problems, and remained largely in a *milieu* of their own, preserving a distinctive psychology.

It is an observable characteristic of this psychology of the intellectual to place an exaggerated value on the forms of thought and on the mere apparatus of analytical thinking and to over-estimate the part which the conscious purpose of leading personalities plays

* *Marx, Lenin and the Science of Revolution*, by Max Eastman (Allen & Unwin, 7/6 net).

in shaping the course of history. Such persons are likely to be drawn by a real enthusiasm to events such as October, 1917, as is a child by the lights and noise of a fair; but then later, when they have found that all is not coloured lights, and that there are elements uncongenial to their personal desires, they begin to fret and to grumble. So the author of this book, after a visit to Russia in 1922-3, retired to the remote quiet of a Mediterranean bay and turned his pen first to attack the leaders of the Party that was building Socialism in Russia, and then to criticise the apparatus of thought with which they were working out their problems.

In the first of these books this over-estimation of the rôle of personalities was the crux of his interpretation of events. In this present volume the same characteristic makes the author play the strange dual role of critic of Marxism and champion of the idea of Revolution. His inclinations lead him towards support of Anarchism, but not unreservedly; for he accepts the need for proletarian dictatorship and a revolutionary party, states that Anarchism bears a similar relation to Marxism as alchemy to chemistry, and trounces the syndicalist Sorel for an arch-mystic and "medicine-man" as soundly as one could wish. He is Utopian (i.e., he projects his own desires into the future) with regard to the goal of social endeavour; but he limits his Utopianism by asking how far present facts place his Utopia within the bounds of possibility. He joins with Bakunin and Kropotkin in wanting first to arrive subjectively at a conception of what is *desirable*, and then, *secondly*, using scientific analysis of the facts to discover the means of achieving this postulated ideal. This latter he calls a Science of Social Engineering, which he would put in place of the Marxian philosophy, and he hails Leninism as essentially this science.

The flaw in his initial approach leads to a one-sided appraisal of Lenin's doctrines, amounting in places to definite falsification. It leads him to tear from its context Lenin's insistence on the rôle of "professional revolutionaries," to give it an exaggerated Blanquist-twist, so that the rôle of a Party and of "leaders" becomes almost 95 per cent. of everything, and the masses scarcely anything at all—mere passive material in the hands of the engineer. It leads him to deny that art and morals can be interpreted in terms of class environment, and to assert that "Right" and "Left" tendencies are not primarily to be defined in terms of the influence of class circumstance on the groups showing those tendencies, but rather in terms of individual character (p. 151 seq.). It leads to its *reductio ad absurdum* in the claim that to define a certain phase as "the period of the break-up of capitalism" is mere mumbo-jumbo (p. 177). In other words, the author's separation from the actual struggle causes him to over-estimate the influence of "subjective factors" and

belittle the importance of "objective factors"—which means much what a physiologist would mean who told Coué that his auto-suggestion could not mend a broken leg!

In the matter of philosophy, Eastman's central argument is as follows:—Thinking has always been broadly of two types: *animistic* and *scientific*. The former has its roots in the savage's belief in external objects as animate persons, and in the attempt to adjust his *attitude* to the world on this basis. Hence he weaves out of his inner consciousness a consistent picture of the universe in these terms, projecting his own beliefs and desires on to the outside world and representing the latter in terms of his own fantasies. Scientific thought, on the other hand, arises from the needs of actual work, and is the attempt to govern action by aid of a systematic body of experience, and so implies the assumption that "the world really is what the artisan assumes it to be in his daily work." This latter accordingly develops as technology develops. Now, Hegel is considered by the author to have been in the direct line of descent of metaphysical-animistic thinking. Hegel wove out of his inner consciousness a consistent picture of the universe, explaining history as the product of the self-development through negations of a mystic *idea* which had the animistic qualities of a person (will, purpose, logic, etc.). Marx, says Eastman, thought that by turning Hegel "upside down" he had banished metaphysics. But he had only substituted a material god for a spiritual one: he had merely put a self-evolving "*Process of Production*," possessing mysterious animistic powers of purposive movement on its own, in place of the *Idea*. The virtue of Lenin was that in all matters of *action* he thought purely scientifically, while still paying lip-service to Marxian animism.

Now, it is undoubtedly true that Marx and Engels, reared in the school of Hegel, had their minds cast in a Hegelian mould; and avowedly they expressed their theories in Hegelian language. It can possibly be argued that Marx never lived long enough to assimilate completely the immense material with which his theories dealt, and so never framed them in perfectly clear-cut finished form; and, as a result, some of his followers may well have failed completely to sever the umbilical cord between Marxism and Hegelian metaphysics. But to admit as much is to touch merely the incidentals, not the essentials, of Marxian theory. Whether the distinction between "science" and "animism" is a valid one or not, we will not stay to discuss here. Certainly it is suggestive and brilliantly expressed; but it is not complete; and it seems clear that it leaves the door open wide enough for Eastman to project his own subjective desires into the future and make them the basis of his "social engineering," and also for an implied mental "Will" or "Purpose,"

independent of its material environment, as an important factor in the march of history. Anyhow, what was essential in Marx's theory did not rely for its validity on a *priori* reasoning from "animistic" postulates about the nature of the universe, but was strictly scientific in a realm where science had never before trod; and to champion science against "animism" is to champion Marxism, not to dethrone it.

It is true that the only assumptions which science need take are the adequacy of knowledge based on experience gained through the five senses, together with a certain uniformity in such experience so that recurrences and associations of events which science has recorded (termed "causal laws") will apply to the future as they have done to the past. This enable *forecasts* of the future to be made in so far as science has correlated sufficient associations and recurrences from past experience; and such forecasts have attaching to them a certain degree of probability which may approach, but not reach, certainty. Now to the extent that an assumption of this kind, more general than any one science, is made, we have made a philosophic statement; and it is precisely this assumption which modern scientific materialists make. Only, they make this assumption into a positive and general assertion (which each scientist *in practice* acts on in its own sphere) that no factor (God, Idea, Spirit, Will, *Elan*, Life-force, Purpose) can influence human experience other than things which are ascertainable through the senses and follow the ordinary rules of causal association. Eastman here apparently prefers to be agnostic and say "I do not know"; and so he leaves the door open to the hawkers of metaphysical wares, who now peddle not *ikons* but "psychic forces," and to a glorification of subjective purpose. Scientific determinism, on the contrary to being either fatalism or else a contradiction as Eastman declares, merely assumes the nature of the universe to be such that, if scientific knowledge were absolute, the course of the future could be inferred from the present on the basis of correlated past experience. To the extent that science is insufficiently developed to foretell which of two roads will be taken (e.g., a case of human choice or of unstable equilibrium of mechanical forces), one's estimate of the future will obviously be affected according as one or other of the alternatives occurs.

There seems really no very valid reason to doubt that Marx's abstractions ("Productive Relations," "Productive Process," etc.) were not unseen gods behind the stage of history pulling the strings, but had value simply as descriptions of actual events, or as general labels for groups of things. That part of the Hegelian dialectic which he carried over to his own philosophy consisted in general descriptions which seemed to Marx most adequately to sum up the observed course of social evolution and the nature of intellectual knowledge.

Eastman, indeed, quotes approvingly (p. 115) Lenin's explanation of the dialectic as consisting in the conception of the real world as in a continuous state of change. This implies that, while the intellect draws static "diagrams" of events and isolates events into separate points in time and space, these "diagrams" must not be confused with the actual world, which is ever changing and in which every part influences every other part, and so must be regarded in its totality to be comprehended. This is a very important observation concerning the nature (and limits) of knowledge, which is completely in accord with modern scientific conceptions. Buharin, for instance, whom Eastman sweeps aside as a "metaphysician," uses the dialectic in precisely this sense in his *Historical Materialism*; he translates the concept of "contradiction" as the factual idea of "unstable equilibrium"; he defines "cause" as "the constantly observable connection between phenomena" (p. 32); and defines "historical necessity" as that without which society would cease to develop (p. 48).

Marx was like a physician who starts with a diagnosis of a patient and on that bases the procedure (whether the knife, medicine, or mere quiet) necessary to restore the patient to health. Like a physician arguing with a Christian Scientist, he was bent on emphasising that the *main* influence on history was economic conditions acting on the psychology of the members of various classes—this and not ideologies working in water-tight compartments or falling "out of the blue." It was natural that Marx should stress the *limitation* of the influence of conscious purpose (as the physician in his argument would tend to belittle the reciprocal influence of mental states on physique). It was natural, too, that Lenin, approaching the problems of a more revolutionary epoch, should attack those who could see only the one side of Marxism, and that he should have laid verbal stress on the rôle of conscious purpose (for at such times when society is in a state of unstable equilibrium the influence of conscious purpose is at its greatest). But it is false to make this a reason for placing Lenin in antithesis to Marx, to use the words of the former in an attempt to banish the latter and to glorify human purpose as though it were independent of the material environment which shapes and conditions it. At any rate, it provides no excuse for playing second fiddle to the bourgeois chorus that Marx is "obsolete"—for that is what Max Eastman is doing, even though he array himself for the concert in a red tie.

M. H. D.

THE STRUGGLE *in* CHINA

THE Labour Research Dept. booklet, *British Imperialism in China* (6d. and 1/-), has made its appearance at a time when events are moving rapidly. It gives in brief the whole of the story of British piracy in China from the activities of the British East India Company in the 18th century down to the present day. A mass of detail concerning the use of British imperialism, trade statistics, and a most valuable table giving a summary of foreign loans are included, the whole forming a most interesting study for the student of the Chinese revolution. The booklet, however, has its faults. The frontispiece map is bad. The booklet is, of course, very compressed, and so omits some interesting history connected with the Taiping rebellion of 1849-60, which it is said cost a hundred million lives. But a more serious fault is the way in which the Chinese peasant problem has been practically neglected. The peasants hold the key of the revolution in their hands. Their co-operation is essential to save the revolution from the dangerous reaction of the nationalist bourgeoisie.

The industrial proletariat are indeed an important force, particularly because they are active; but in numbers, compared with the peasantry, they are few. Less than 5 per cent. of the population can be classed as industrial, whilst the peasants form upwards of 80 per cent. of the whole. Of these, more than half do not own sufficient land to make them independent, and thus they are forced to hire land from the big landlords, who charge extortionate rents.* The rent is as a rule paid in kind, a definite share of the produce going to the landlord, the peasant keeping the remainder, which, when all has been paid and the various small feudal dues settled, seldom amounts to more than 35 per cent. of the produce. Thus the peasant is continually living on the brink of starvation, and should any exceptional event occur, such as a drought or civil war, and the crops do not mature, the peasant at once falls in debt to the landlord, whence it is a short step into the hands of the ever-ready moneylender. A large portion of the population live in this condition, drifting from agriculture to banditry and back again, or, perhaps, going to the rising industrial towns to swell the volume of under-paid labour which is such a profitable field for imperialist exploitation. Thus there is a tendency to the creation of a landless industrial proletariat.

* There is considerable difficulty in ascertaining the population, as the figures given by the English Press in China are arranged to make it appear that the population has increased under imperialism. The common estimate is 448,231,000, but a reliable authority gives 380,500,000 as a more correct figure.

Imperialist exploitation has taken two forms, political and economic. The story of the political exploitation is well told in the L.R.D. booklet. Wars to ensure the British opium trade; heavy indemnities extracted by force, and then loans to the defeated Chinese to enable them to pay the indemnities—thus giving the reins of political power more and more into the hands of the imperialists; the seizure of concessions in the treaty ports, and then the appointment of foreign customs authorities to secure the interest on loans—all form a tale of political brigandage which has been equalled nowhere else. The various Powers each in turn have played the same game, but it was Britain who led the way and secured the largest share of the plunder.

Political penetration is only the spearhead of economic penetration. When Britain began to search for new fields of exploitation for her capital, China was at once noticed as an economic sphere as yet untouched. With no means of communication except rivers, deposits of some of the most valuable coal, iron and oil in the world, and a population both ready to work for a starvation wage and forming an invaluable market for cheap cotton goods, China was, indeed, an Imperialists' paradise. Railway and mining concessions were both sought after and obtained, often by force. This process has naturally led to a conflict of interests between the various Powers. Whilst Britain is chiefly concerned with China as a market for her capital, and has her interests concentrated in Engineering, Ship-building, Railway, and other constructional trades, Japan looks greedily to the raw materials which China can provide for Japanese industry. Thus we find that Japan controls almost the entire output of raw iron and a considerable proportion of the foreign-owned coal, whilst she owns 50 per cent. of the capital and has a Japanese director in the Hanyehping iron works near Hankow, which before the war was regarded as an entirely British sphere of influence. Britain and Japan also have big commercial interests, and here come into competition with America, which has practically no industrial or railway holdings. Financial competition has for the moment been reduced by the formation of an international banking Consortium of the four great Powers, Britain, Japan, America and France. The object of the Consortium is to prevent financial competition and to systematise the giving of railway and other loans. America at present practically controls the Consortium as she has more free capital available for investment abroad than all the other Powers put together.

This economic penetration has produced three results. First, the rise of a native Chinese bourgeoisie, partly industrial, partly commercial, which comes into competition with the Imperialists. It will be shown later that the distinction between these classes of the

nationalist bourgeoisie is of some importance. Whilst they are nationalist in that they wish to see the concessions returned to Chinese ownership and extra-territorial rights withdrawn, yet the commercial class are generally more pro-British than the industrial, for they are more dependent on British credit and financial stability. The industrial section, on the other hand, find themselves competing with British goods in the Chinese market, and so are anti-foreign. The native Chinese interests are chiefly in cotton spinning, coal mining, and some small industries such as tobacco-growing. Their commercial interests are considerable, including a number of wholesale firms, shipping companies, and banking establishments. Secondly, this economic penetration has resulted in the rise of a Chinese intelligentsia educated with Western ideals and often touched with Socialism. A large number of Chinese students are educated in America every year under the American scheme by which a portion of the Boxer indemnity is set aside for Chinese education. Thirdly and lastly, it has led, as we have seen, to the growth of a landless industrial proletariat becoming more and more class conscious.

From this welter of conflicting forces the Kuomintang, or People's National Party, has found birth. It is the natural result of the rise of the three classes mentioned in the previous paragraph. Headed by the Western-educated intelligentsia, obtaining a large body of support from the native bourgeoisie, who find themselves in growing competition with the Imperialists, and having its backbone and fighting force drawn from the proletariat and peasants, the Kuomintang is a party composed of mixed elements. It was founded by Dr. Sun Yat-sen on two main principles, those of nationality and freedom from the domination of foreign imperialism, which is the natural step to the realisation of free nationality. Thus the Kuomintang is predominantly anti-imperialist. A split took place within the party in 1924, chiefly on the question of peasant policy and Communist affiliation. As the result of this split two wings of the party made their appearance. The Right Wing, composed chiefly of the *commercial* bourgeoisie, who are dependent on British credit, and are therefore anti-Russian, established themselves at Shanghai. The left wing, composed of the personal followers of Sun Yat-sen, and seeking to base their policy more on the peasants, is supported on the one hand by the Chinese Communists and on the other receives lukewarm support from the *industrial* bourgeoisie, who, as indicated, find themselves in competition with the imperialists. This Left Wing, which is the true Kuomintang, formed its headquarters at Canton, and it was after this split with the Right Wing that Sun set about the development of a revolutionary army with the aid of Russian Red officers. Since its forma-

tion two years ago, the Canton army has performed miracles. It has cleared practically the whole of Southern China as far as the Yangtze from the control of the British-supported Wu Pei-fu, captured Hankow and its valuable arsenal, and to-day is at the gates of Shanghai.

Those in control at Downing Street have during the last two months seen the error of their "gunboat" policy, in that it was driving Chinese public opinion to friendship with Russia. The new policy is outlined in the Memorandum to America. It marks a change to a policy of granting concessions to the Cantonese in the hope of detaching the Right Wing of the Canton Kuomintang from its pro-Russian policy and thus splitting the movement. It is an attempt to kill the revolution with kindness. The stroke has been well timed, as the Chinese bourgeoisie are becoming alarmed at the forces they have let loose, and they see how much their interests are bound up with those of Britain. In addition, the rapidly rising tide of the class-conscious proletariat is giving rise to strikes which inconvenience their business. Whether the British policy is successful or not remains to be seen, but, meanwhile, it is necessary to form the basis of the revolutionary movement in the masses of the peasants and workers.

Such a policy alone can save the revolution from the dangers of bourgeois reaction supported by foreign Imperialism. Better organisation of the Trade Unions in the towns and Peasants' Councils in the villages, and closer organisational unity between the two, should be aimed at. In addition, the Canton army must be made into a real revolutionary army (by extending political education, etc., in it), for it is a most important element in the situation. In these matters the young Chinese Communist Party is doing veteran service. Under its influence the Kuomintang is developing a more vigorous peasant policy, and most of the leadership in the new Trade Unions comes from it. Further, there is a pressing need for the Western workers to unite to prevent armed intervention. It is only when the worker has learnt to understand the forces of imperialism that he will be able to realise what the Chinese are fighting against, and so will be in a position to give active aid in preventing the dispatch of troops to China. It is of little use looking to the leaders of the Labour Party for help in this direction, as they have often shown that they are Imperialists in all but name. Whilst some protest against armed intervention, they fail to take active steps in organising resistance to the Government policy, and others declare that it is the duty of the Opposition to strengthen the Government's hands in a matter where so much is at stake. Thomas has even stated that if the Government thinks it necessary to send

troops, he "would infinitely prefer them to send a big army than a handful of people."

The Kuomintang have announced their intention, that as soon as they have freed themselves from imperialism they will do the same for all other subject races. Already the Capitalist Press is talking about the Burma frontier and its defence, whilst India, in despair of freeing herself from British rule, is looking anxiously towards the victorious armies of the Kuomintang. The Chinese are not idle boasters. What they announce their intention of doing they will do.

DAVID NAYLOR.

RESEARCH

TWO and half years ago I came up from the anthracite mines in South Wales to the Labour College, and shortly afterwards made my first acquaintanceship with "Research Work" on the invitation of the Secretary of the Labour Research Department. Perhaps if I describe my first experience it will make clear the practical nature of research work and its contact with the fight in the districts.

First of all I was engaged in sorting, classifying, and putting away the mass of material that is necessary before the work can be carried on: annotating of cuttings, diarying work, compiling of indexes, etc., occupied my time at the beginning. Then when I had become more or less familiar with the material I received my first "stripe."

An enquiry was handed me. A South Wales Trades Council were running a Labour candidate to contest a seat on the Council. They wanted "full particulars of a company"; further, "did the opposition candidate held shares in that particular company?" It was my first task. The process is as follows:—

First of all *The Stock Exchange Year Book* is searched. This is a hefty volume with over 8,700 companies tabulated (over 90,000 companies exist in England and Wales). Each company is alphabetically arranged under industries or some particular category with an index in the front pages. First of all the company needed is found in the book. It gives first the nominal, then the issued or paid-up capital. In most companies this is divided up into ordinary and preference shares. The debentures are in the form of a loan for which a certain percentage is paid as interest, and has first claim on profits. The preference come next (cumulative preference implies that if a company fails to pay its (say) 5 per cent. the first year the following year it has to pay 10 per cent., and so on). The ordinary comes last, and reaps in all the extra profits that may be made (unless an agreement with other arrangements are embodied in the articles of association).

The capital of the company being known, we must follow on to the next part, the dividend paid. If the company has more than fifty shareholders it is called a public company, and has to give more detail on its accounts than if it is a private company (less than fifty shareholders). In the case of a public company dividends usually can be traced back to the formation of the company. If private, then the tomb is silent, and many of the most significant companies are private. The reserve sum and amount carried forward to the following year are stated. We have also to look and see if any bonus shares are paid out.

The bonus shares mean that reserves have been accumulating for a period, and rather than pay out in cash the directors issue it in the form of shares to the ordinary shareholders, thus increasing the capital without adding to it any money gotten from outside. This is the process known as "watering" of capital.

There are important parts to be taken out of the *Year Book* before we leave it, that is the list of directors, which is always given.

We have finished with the capital; we have the dividends but not the profits made. If the company publishes its reports these will be found in either of the three main weekly financial papers: *The Economist*, *The Stock Exchange Gazette*, or *The Statist*. The index is used, and we proceed to copy down the list. Usually the profits for the past three or four years are given. But it is wise, by the way, to look up also company meeting reports either in these papers, or, still better, in the daily Press. Statements are made in these meetings that would give the clue to other things of importance; of impending amalgamations; contracts abroad; their relation with financial interests in other countries, etc. *The British Empire rests and is kept going because of these important financial relations.*

Another chapter in the analysis of a company must now be opened. The directors have been enumerated; there now remains the shareholders. One must turn his footsteps to that pile of masonry, Somerset House, the home of records. One obtains the latest returns, a copy of which every company must forward there by Act of Parliament. For each year is filed a list of capital and a list of shareholders; occasionally the agreements are also filed, which give details about amalgamations, etc. One looks for the biggest shareholder; very often two or three individuals or firms hold the preponderance of shares. The policy of that firm can easily be guided then according to their behest. In using these files it must be remembered that in most cases the ordinary shares give voting control of the company in ordinary matters.

Since you have the return, you might (if it is a private firm) get further details about the capital and bonus issues, though, of course, profits and dividends will not be stated. Though many points can

be got which are important, directors' fees, etc., we must return to the original company and thoroughly analyse it.

We now have the directors, shareholders, profits, dividends, and bonus issues. We must go further afield. We want now the connections of the company. This is done by taking each individual director and shareholder and searching another book. The *Directory of Directors* is the next volume to inspect. The majority of directors' names and their connections are given. The names are arranged alphabetically, and their connections follow. For example, one reads :—

Sir Hugh Bell, Bart., C.B., member of F.B.I., is also on the board of
 Brunner, Mond & Co., Ltd.
 Dorman, Long & Co.
 Pearson, Dorman, Long & Co., Ltd.
 L.N.E. Railway.
 Yorkshire Insurance Co., Ltd.

We have not finished yet. Each of these companies has a separate directors' list. We look it up and probably find, for example, Sir Alfred Mond, of Brunner, Mond and Co. What are his connections? Amalgamated Anthracite, etc. Thus a connection. The North coal-owner in the person of Sir Hugh, and Sir Alfred in the Anthracite. Thus we can go on. The close relation of financiers is revealed. Their relation in the form of things is expressed in outlook and policy shown during the General Strike. As one man they stood together against the miners, and always will against the working class.

I have described one of the jobs of research in some detail because it is necessary to make clear the point that while this work is necessary to the districts, it can only be carried on by a large and special accumulation of material. A central body is necessary which can supply, not only, as in the case I have taken, details of a company for a trades council, but, say, information about all the firms in any industry to a trade union engaged in a wage dispute ; facts about local rates, or guardians, about movements of capital, which so vitally affect the workers, about the big trusts which are covering the world, and also many other facts about the development of capital, the future course of trade, etc.

These jobs need to be specialised to some extent, but they are not, and cannot be, separated from the daily struggle. They are not "academic" or "theoretic," but require to be carried on in vital contact with the workers in local and national organisations in response to their needs.

The workers need to-day special information about the capitalist class and their relation to the class struggle ; this they can only get from a Labour Research Department on a national scale.

A. GLYN EVANS.

SOVIET FICTION

(A SKETCH OF ITS DEVELOPMENT, SUBJECT-MATTER,
AND TENDENCIES.)

IT would be a sorry kind of social revolution that left no impress whatever on the art and culture of the country in which it occurred! When the anger of an oppressed people overflows, it carries down in the flood rather more than the economic and political foundations of society; all the rotting beams and devitalised plaster, the gimcrack furniture and gaudy decoration in the superstructure crumble down also and are swept away, leaving standing only what is rooted deep in social reality.

Little wonder then that the Russian revolution had no mercy on the reputation of certain writers who had been regarded as the foremost exponents of their art immediately before 1914. The whirlwind of revolution had nothing in common with the morbid pessimism of Chekhov, the overwrought decadence of Andreyev, or the metaphysical abstractions of Myerezhkovski. These and others like them were swept into the limbo of oblivion or into the domain of historico-sociological study, and only a few younger and more vigorous writers could withstand the blast. The Russian revolution had very largely to throw up its own artists.

The actual revolutionary period left the established writers half-stunned and gasping for breath. Before the rush and surge of such gigantic and kinetic events, awed by elements of titanic energy, fury and creativeness they had never dared to conceive, they were beaten and cowed into silence. Nor was the new writer vocal during these earlier years to any large extent, for almost without exception he or she was engrossed in making history, and had no time to write about it.

Hence Soviet fiction does not properly begin until after 1920, the last year of civil war and War Communism. Before that time there had been fragmentary sketches, scattered feuilletons, propagandic anecdotes, but almost nothing that could be classed as fiction. But the return to comparatively normal conditions gave the storytellers their opportunity, and within two or three years new writers had emerged, younger men and women whose lives had been so full of event that almost any page in their story was worth the telling. At the end of 1920 Boris Pilnyak was finishing his long revolutionary tale, "The Hungry Year," writing in a vivid episodic style that was to be adopted by several others, such as Vsevolod Ivanov and Nikifor Nikitin. For these men life itself had been largely episodic, a swift succession of incident and action; and their stories were treated in the same fashion. Their chosen method was that of a stark, non-imaginative realism, the graphic description of life—and death—in

its crudest and most elemental phases, with the suppression of no detail of the photograph. Ivanov took for his subject the wild nomadic existence of the partisan bands that roved Siberia from 1918 down to 1921 and 1922, groups of peasants who, driven out of their homes and lands before one or other of the more regular armies, foraged and plundered as and where they could, lawless, unprincipled, their hand against every man's, their moral code a rough and ready justice relating all things back to their own needs. Such were the stories: "Partisans" and "Armoured Train No. 14-69" of Ivanov, and those in "Insurrection" and "Things about the War" by Nikitin, written from 1921 to 1923.

But about the same time several writers were dominated by another theme, that of the terrible famines in town and country from 1919 to 1921; and two writers stand out by their powerful treatment of this subject. Sergius Semiov's "Hunger" has already been mentioned in *THE PLEBS*,¹ and I need only comment that this diary of a young girl is a story of ever-deepening gloom, unmitigated by any hope or heroic background, presenting only the very worst side of the hungry days—sheer unlovely misery and still more unlovely death.

Even had Nievierov written only "Tashkent, Town of Plenty," he could not have avoided fame. He had chosen the peasantry as his subject before the war, and his other stories are striking revelations of Russian village life.² But the famine provided him with the opportunity to write an heroic romance of a peasant lad who travelled from Samara Gubernia down to Tashkent, some 1,500 miles, in the autumn of 1920, in a desperate endeavour to bring home "bread" for his mother and brothers. His many adventures, riding on tops of goods waggons, fronts of engines, even the buffers, in company with a shifting section of that vast army of peasants who fled from death by plague and starvation in 1920, his many subterfuges and shifts to dodge the Cheka and other interfering busybodies, his many mishaps and failures, his final arrival at Tashkent aided by a friendly engine-driver, and his comparatively happy return to his village—all are told with a naked realism that grips from beginning to end. Mishka is a poor sort of kid judged by bourgeois moral standards, he lies, he steals, he struggles for life in a perfectly disgusting fashion, he and his like are deplorably natural and unsophisticated—some of the passages itemise every possible detail of human suffering and human nastiness, down to dysenterial evacuations—but Mishka is real, Mishka is heroic; he is the embodiment of the revolutionary spirit—in a starving lad of twelve.

The village in its various aspects has been the favourite subject

¹ May, 1926, in Ellen Wilkinson's "Literature of the Job," a review of *Flying Osip*.

² E.G. "Women." Translated in *The Calendar* for October, 1926.

of more than one writer ; indeed, it is the most popular of all. Lydia Seifulina achieved her finest effort (despite the excellencies of "The Lawbreakers") in "Virinea," the story of a young peasant woman from before 1914 down to her death during the civil war period. The background affords the writer scope for a remarkable description of village life in pre-war days, not at all like Stephen Graham's sickly imaginings, but much nearer actuality, a village throbbing with primitive lusts and passions, and dominated by the economic impulse. Virinea is no psalm-singing, Jerusalem-journeying peasant, but a healthy, rather physical woman with strong sexual passions and attractions. She finds life with a sexual impotent in bonds of holy matrimony quite inadequate to her elemental needs, but until the outbreak of revolution she can find outlet for her energies only in love escapades. Then, during the war she finds a companion, and together with him she leads the pro-Soviet elements in the village, finally, while he is away fighting, being captured by Cossacks through the exploitation of her mother instincts. In attempting to escape she falls and strikes her head on a piece of iron, but her ears in death catch the cry of her baby, the infant new order to which she has given birth.

I need not stop over "The Lawbreakers," especially as it has been translated.* It is an incident rather than a story, of the young, lawless children with whom ordinary people, in Soviet Russia as in England, can do nothing. But in "The Crime" Seifulina's treatment of the "sex problem" is characteristic of Soviet writers. The "sex problem" looms quite large in Soviet fiction, and in a number of stories it is the main or a subordinate theme. In "The Crime" it is considered as it affects the Young Communist groups, and Seifulina deals with it sympathetically, understandingly, as a biological problem of adjustment and direction of energy, and with the application of common sense, untrammelled by super-civilised, hypercritical morality.

The revolutionary and civil war period engaged the attention of many writers, who viewed it from various angles. Liebidinsky, in *The Week*, told the heroic story of one little provincial town, and contrived to compress the epic of almost every provincial town in Russia into seven days and a hundred pages. Veresaev, the famous author of "Memoirs of a Physician," wrote in "Cul-de-Sac" of the coming of the Red forces to the Crimea and to a middle-class family, drawing the conclusion that intellectuals who sought to be neutral could only find themselves in a blind-alley, with no way out save their own extinction from inanimation. Babel wrote of life with the ragged and happy Budionny regiments in "The Cavalry Army" : episodic, vividly realistic studies, written with a terrible power of

* In *Flying Osip*, Fisher Unwin.

concentrated horror. His "Letter," supposed to be written by a young peasant soldier to his mother, in which he casually tells how he deliberately killed his father—for the sake of the revolution; and "With Our Old Man Makhno," an incident of a page or so in which a peasant lad chatters vacuously to a Jewess ravished the night before by six Makhno⁴ soldiers, complaining indignantly to her of their scurviness in not letting him take his turn, when he had assisted in holding the girl down, are without rival in Soviet fiction for their overwhelming terseness of tragedy.

By 1924 the trickle of stories had become a flood. Several of the older, pre-war writers (Zamyatin, Serafimovitch, Alexes Tolstoy, etc.) had "resumed publication," while the number of post-revolutionary writers was beginning to be legion. Of the latter, Zoshchenko was making a name for himself as an author of short stories dealing with the humorous side of Soviet life, employing a gently quizzical style that develops at times into caustic satire of Nepmen, of bureaucrats, of speculators, of the parvenu type of Communist, and of Russia's general cultural disabilities. Such stories as "The Aristocrat," in which he ridicules the susceptibilities of a certain type of Communist for *beaux yeux* and *beaux legs*; "The Housing Crisis," in which he depicts the ludicrous situation of a man and his growing family living in a bathroom; and "Madonna," a character study of a Soviet office-worker "citizen" who, on getting a rise, decides that he can afford to fall in love, does his best with the first young thing in short skirts and face-paint he meets on the street, raves about his new-found madonna, takes her home with him, and has his idyll shattered by being charged five roubles for his experience next morning. Such stories are inimitable studies of the particular forms of human fallibility prevalent among certain types of Soviet "citizen." Apart from his success as a laughter merchant, Zoshchenko plays a unique rôle in directing public attention to the abuses and failings of the day.

Elia Erenburg demands, though perhaps he hardly deserves a paragraph to himself. Originally a Bolshevik, his intellectual sceptical anarchism and innate satirical romanticism got the better of his social sympathies, and provoked him into writing one of the most remarkably virulent and devastating satires in any language. The "Extraordinary Adventures of Hulio Hurenito" is a vitriolic, diabolic diatribe against Europe after the war, with "Vanity of Vanities" as its *leit motif*. "The Life and Death of Nicholas Kurbov," "Six Stories of Light Endings," and other short and long tales are amazing blends of the pseudo-romantic and sexually amatory with certain decadent and revolting nether sides of Soviet

⁴ Makhno—one of the many attaman leaders of anti-Soviet partisan banditry in the Ukraine during 1918-20.

life during the transition period. "Rvach,"* his greatest work to date (in length at least), relates the downfall of a naive young Communist, led astray by his weakness for wine, women, corrupting nepmanic luxury and speculative activities. It is painted in gloomiest colours, but contains the saving grace of a brother who retains his Communist faith and his Communist determination to live and work for the future. For its vivid, circumstantial background of life in the towns from 1917 to 1924 the story is without equal.

So I might go on, telling of Pastyernak, of Arosyev, of Romanov Yakovlev, Slonimski, Lidin, and others, and also of the multitude of writers who have leapt into prominence overnight with a single story, and then returned to obscurity. But space forbids, and I can only deal now with three outstanding novels which demand special consideration, as being characteristic of present-day Soviet fiction and also indicative of its probable future development.

(To be concluded.) H. C. STEVENS.

PROBLEMS OF DICTATORSHIP

The Syndicalist tendency in the pre-war Labour Movement had considerable importance as a rank and file reaction against Reformism. To the latter's obsession with Parliament the former replied by an emphasis on Trade Unionism and industrial action as the sole and sufficient instrument for carrying through the conquest of power and achieving Socialism. This view is still influential in certain sections of our movement. Below we publish a clear and interesting exposition of this point of view as a contribution to the discussion started in our January issue.

THE article on this subject in the January PLEBS raises a very important issue for the British working class. That article attempted to consider the problem from the experience of the Russian Revolution. This is an attempt to consider the question in the light of the experiences of the General Strike and of the history of the British working class.

It is evident at the outset that the analogy with the Russian Revolution can be—and very often is—strained too far. There are vital differences between the two countries, and, in particular, between the experiences and traditions of the British and Russian workers. In his debate with Scott Nearing on this subject Bertrand Russell rightly emphasised the influence of tradition on social

* Published in Paris in 1925.

groups, but he missed or ignored one of the most influential traditions in the lives of the British workers—the tradition of Trade Unionism, the loyalty to, and the discipline of, the Trade Unions. In the case of the British worker this is far stronger than any political or party attachment. Generations of British workers have been brought up in the traditions and atmosphere of Trade Unionism, which has become a definite part of their industrial and social lives.

Nothing like this existed in Russia—or in any other country for that matter. It is peculiar to Britain as the oldest capitalist country. In Britain Trade Unionism existed long before there was a working class political party. In Russia, on the other hand, Trade Unions came after the political party—very often under the guidance and direction of the party. Thus the organisation of the workers in Britain and Russia has taken entirely different courses, and the attitude of the workers towards organisation differs correspondingly.

The rôle of the Trade Unions in the struggle of the British workers was brought out quite clearly during the memorable nine days. The General Strike revealed many defects in Trade Union organisation, but above all—and this is a point upon which sufficient emphasis has not been laid—it revealed the reality of Trade Union discipline. The workers came out in their millions at the call of the Unions. Their Unions instructed them and they obeyed. They may not have been animated with an enthusiastic devotion for M. Sorel's "social myth." The important point to note is that they did what their Unions told them. Only a Trade Union could wield such an influence over the British worker. This confidence of the worker in his Union was not created in a day. It has a century of history behind it. But there is more in it than tradition. The Trade Union is a part, and an important part, of the worker's daily life. It protects his interest on the job. It helps him when he is in trouble. Almost instinctively he goes to his Union with his grievances. He is proud of his Union and is jealous of its good name. The Trade Union has become an integral part of the lives of those sections of the British workers which count in the class struggle.

This was abundantly proven by the experience of the General Strike. Moreover, the General Strike revealed quite clearly the orientation of the class forces in Britain. The bourgeoisie rallied round the State machine. The workers rallied nationally around the General Council, locally around the Trades Unions and Trades Councils. The whole formal political machinery of democracy simply disappeared. Parliament was rendered impotent from the first day to the last. All the political parties—Tory, Liberal, Labour, I.L.P., and Communist—as organisations were swept aside. There was no room for them in the struggle. In some cases, it is true, political parties were represented on the Trades Councils

and Strike Committees. In most cases they were not. Individual members of most parties took their part in the struggle, but only because they were Trade Unionists. Nowhere did the direction of the struggle fall to a political party. Nowhere did the workers look to the political parties for a lead. As organisations the political parties from the first day of the strike went out of existence. Where, as in some cases, a political party was at variance with the Trade Unions, the workers followed the lead of the Unions and ignored the political party.

During the General Strike the British working class, through the Trade Unions and Trades Councils, came very near to the establishment of a dictatorship. Indeed, in many areas the Strike Committees wielded a virtual dictatorship. Here, therefore, were the Trade Unions, hitherto regarded by the theorists as "purely industrial" bodies, definitely taking on political functions.

The General Strike has made it perfectly clear that in any crisis in Britain the workers will follow the lead not of a political party, but of the Trades Unions. In Britain the Dictatorship of the Proletariat when it comes will be exercised through the Trade Unions. Most Marxian theorists have assumed—so far as they have considered the question at all—that the dictatorship in Britain, as in other countries, will be wielded by a political party. They agree that the Trade Unions will be necessary, but postulate that at some undefined point in the struggle the political party will step in "to take the lead."

British experience offers no grounds for such an assumption. There is no denying that the dictatorship will be a political institution, just as the General Strike was—or, at least, developed into—a political weapon. In the General Strike the Trade Unions, nationally and locally, wielded this political weapon. Our experience proves that in any social crisis, industrial or political, with or without a Labour Government, the Trade Unions will be not only the live units of the struggle, but the rallying centres and leaders of the masses as well. If history is any guide, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Britain will be a dictatorship of the Trade Unions.

It may be urged against this that the Trade Unions are industrial organisations, unfitted by their structure to take up political activity. This is not borne out by the history of the British Trade Union movement, and certainly not by the experience of the General Strike. For a long time the British Trade Unions showed an aversion to politics. In the early part of the second half of the nineteenth century the Junta and their followers raised the slogan of "No politics in the Unions." But even with this cry on their lips they were forced to enter politics. Since then political activity on the part of the Unions has become more pronounced every year. The Trade

Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee, the Labour Representation Committee, the Labour Party, the Councils of Action of 1920 and the Strike Committees of 1926 mark the successive stages of the participation of the Unions in politics. They did not take these steps under the guidance of a theoretical programme, nor under the leadership of a "left" or a "right" wing. The degree of the participation of the Unions in politics has always been determined by the extent to which the political and legal framework of capitalism hampers the realisation of their objects and demands. The more restrictive the pressure of the political machine on the Unions, the more aggressively do they participate in politics. In the present stage of capitalist instability even the normal "economic" demands of the Unions acquire an increasingly political significance, and the struggle to achieve these demands becomes definitely a political struggle. If circumstances are such that, as in 1926, a dictatorship is necessary, then the Trade Unions have at their disposal all the resources, machinery and organisation for the task.

It is true that the structure of the Unions will have to be modified and altered. This, however, is a process that is going on all the time. The process can be hastened and stimulated, but not, as seems to have increasingly become the fashion recently, by the artificial classification of the movement into "rights" and "lefts," "majorities" and "minorities," "good" leaders and "bad" leaders, which irresistibly reminds one of cheap melodrama with its heroes and villains. We cannot change the programme of the movement with a manifesto, however eloquently phrased. But we can concentrate on stimulating tendencies which are already in operation. Our immediate tasks are 100 per cent. Trade Unionism, extension of the policy of amalgamation, strengthening of the Trades Councils, and the granting of supreme power to the General Council over the industrial and political organisations. These are the basic "organisational" conditions for a successful and efficient working class dictatorship in Britain.

D. J. WILLIAMS.

THE STRIKE HISTORY

The E.C. of the Plebs League accepts no responsibility for statements and opinions appearing in *A Workers' History of the Great Strike*. The Committee had no opportunity of reading the book before it went to press. The authors are, therefore, solely responsible for all that appears over their names.

Reviews of Books

TEACHING

H. G. Wells: Educationist. By F. H. Doughty (Cape, 5/-).
A Hundred and Sixty Years of British History (1763-1922).

By R. B. Mowat

(Black, 3/6).

THE first book is a dry dissection of all the writings of Mr. Wells to find out what he has said about education. As one might expect, the verdict is that Mr. Wells has very little practical to say and what he has said has changed repeatedly and in contradictory fashion. Mr. Wells, by his biological training, became a scientist in that department, but he has never had a science of society and he always ignores how men are going to take the next step to become like gods. His latest idea is that the middle-aged supermen, the Clissolds, are going to put the world into shape. Because Marxians have had a science of society and an understanding of development, apparently outside Mr. Wells' reach, his inferiority complex manifests itself in funny desires to cut off Marx's beard and such like. However, the creator of Mr. Polly will live despite these freakish ideas and doubtless will continue to mix "alluring cocktails of sex and sociology" as hitherto.

A reading of even Mr. Mowat's preface reminds one that Mr. Wells has rendered a notable and necessary service in attacking "corridor" history. On the contrary, Mr. Mowat in this school

text-book says: "The study of history should be a means of acquiring knowledge, of training the mind, of forming habits of duty, and of cultivating admiration for all that is noble in British people as they were and as they are." So from the beginning of the book—where the British arming of Germans and Indians in the American War of Independence is ignored—right to the end—where Mr. Churchill's opinion is quoted on Socialism, and Communism is said to have "destroyed the social and economic fabric of Russia and laid waste its population with famine and disease"—we know what to expect. Kipling is suggested as the one writer who has been "a potent moving force among a whole people" in Post-Victorian letters. The "statesmanlike J. H. Thomas," "the handsome person and the simple charm" of the Prince of Wales, arguments against nationalisation of the mines, the high war wages of the workers compared to the sacrifices of the royal family, the war guilt of Germany and the glorification of the "British Commonwealth of Nations" are among the passages proposed as "history."

M. S.

LITERATURE

Science and Poetry, by I. A. Richards (Kegan Paul, London, 1926, 2/6).

Principles of Literary Criticism, by I. A. Richards (Kegan Paul, 10/6).

THE first of these books consists of little more than eighty very small pages, and is therefore, at half-a-crown, high priced for working-class readers. But it contains the elements of a new theory of aesthetics, which is outlined in more detail in the larger book, and should therefore be begged, borrowed, or stolen by all who have a knowledge of the requisite psychological fundamentals, and are interested in the subject of which it treats. Only the elements—the scattered elements—which Mr. Richards

does not fully succeed in combining into that coherent whole we call a book! Probably he would excuse his failure by saying that neither in his mind nor in any one else's does the thought he is trying to convey exist in an integrated form.

Edmund Gurney caught a gleam of it about forty years ago when he wrote (admiringly) of "the non-reasonable element of poetry." What was wrong with the present writers' *The Appreciation of Poetry*, penned twelve years ago, before they were at home in the New

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Psychology, was precisely that they failed to recognise the true nature of this non-reasonable element. But Charles Baudouin, in his study of Verhaeren, brings out the essence of the matter more clearly than Mr. Richards. As we write in our preface to the translation of that book (Englished as *Psycho-analysis and Aesthetics*, 1924): "The delight in poetry is largely an affair of the subconscious. The symbols in which the mind of the imaginative writer or the painter seeks self-expression, are tinged with an affect that wells up from the depths; and in the hidden recesses of the mind of the observer or the reader there is an affect that rings responsive. . . . In artistic appreciation, deep calls to deep."

That quotation summarises Mr. Richards' main message, or one aspect of the message. Another aspect is this. The writer, who is healthily atheistic, refreshingly anti-mystical, considers that in earlier phases of social history man's emotional nature found a necessary, a health-giving satisfaction in religious and mystical outlooks on life and the universe. Modern rationalism makes those outlooks impossible to reasonably intelligent people. But without some satisfaction of the same kind, our lives will be affect-starved. Poetry, and the other fine arts, such as music and painting, can feed these sides of our composite nature as well as religion and other forms of mysticism did in the old days; and can do so without introducing poison into our daily food. (For there is nothing incompatible—far from it—between this view and Marx's contention that religion is the opium of the people!)

That is why poetry need not pass with the passing of what Mr. Richards calls the Magical View of the universe, the view that there are occult powers whom man must propitiate. Religions are one kind of poetry, and are fundamentally dope. Other kinds of poetry may be dope. But poetry is not necessarily dope; and poetry, artistic symbolism which appeals to our emotions as well as to our intelligence, is a necessary part of "human nature's daily food." Perhaps we all need "guiding fictions," and our business as thinking men and women is to see whether these fictions are really guiding us.

What is the bearing of all this on the class struggle? To those who have read the present writers' *Prolecut* and *Creative Revolution*, that question hardly needs an answer. But, in closing this brief review, we will answer it with a quotation from *Science and Poetry* (p. 44): "Contemporary poetry which will . . . modify the attitude of the reader [familiar with earlier poetry] must be such as could not have been written in another age than our own. It must have sprung in part from the contemporary situation. It must correspond to needs, impulses, attitudes, which did not arise in the same fashion for poets in the past, and criticism also must take notice of the contemporary situation. Our attitudes to man, to nature, and to the universe, change with every generation, and have changed with unusual violence in recent years. . . . When attitudes are changing, neither criticism nor poetry can remain stationary." Thus the changing attitudes of this revolutionary age must find expression, are finding expression, and guidance, in a new poetry.

E. & C. P.

THE appearance of *A New View of Society* and other writings by Robert Owen (Everyman Library, Dent, 2/-) should be greeted with loud hoots of joy by all working class students. It means that, with the autobiography of Owen (published at the same price by Bohn's) all the writings by or about Owen that he needs are now available in cheap editions. The introduction to this volume is by G. D. H. Cole and is admirably done.

The works included all date from Owen's earlier period—not his later, when he became verbose, dull, and confused by spiritualism and secularism. The famous "Report to the County of Lanark" is among them, and "A New View of Society (Essays on the Formation of Character)" which really contains in brief form all the essentials of his later doctrine.

R. W. P.

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Militarism in our Educational Institutions, by Rennie Smith, is a timely pamphlet on the menace of the Cadet Corps and O.T.C. in our public schools. There are 171 schools with junior divisions with a total strength of 608 officers and 32,180 cadets, and 20 schools and universities in the senior with an enrolment of 4,254.

The training involves preparation for every kind of modern warfare, and if a suggestion recently made by Mr. F. S. Hurlstone-Jones headmaster of Holloway Council School, that these Cadet Corps should be formed under the control of the War Office so that "the country

could be made reasonably safe in time of emergency" means anything, then a "time of emergency" may also mean during a period of strikes or lock-outs.

During 1925 special grants for this work cost the taxpayers £162,500. Of course, there is no compulsion to join the corps, but as is pointed out the answer is *always* in theory "no," *almost always* in practice "yes." "At a public school convention counts for so much that one can say definitely that most boys are taught militarism under compulsion."

Quantities of this penny pamphlet can be obtained from the National Council for Prevention of War, 39 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1. J. HAMILTON.

Hundred Per Cent. Indian, by C. G. Shah (printed by I. K. Yajnik, at the "Advocate of India," 21, Dalal Street, Bombay, price 6 annas) is a sixty-page pamphlet, directed against the sterile and reactionary theories and practices of Mahatma Gandhi and other Indian "idealists." Though the name of Marx is not mentioned, the essay is written from the Marxist standpoint, and will be useful to all Marxist students of Modern Hindustan. We have space only for two telling quotations:

"The Caste System of the Hindus was the social organisation of the Aryan conquerors to hold in eternal slavery the vanquished, suppressed, exploited, and half-assimilated non-Aryan population" (p. 28).

"If the Hindu Society as organised in the Caste System survived for ages, it is due, not to any inherent vitality or immortal principle in it. It is only the privilege of the living to die, not of the corpses. *Corpses never die!*" (p. 30).

E. & C. P.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Economic History of Modern Britain: Early Railway Age, by Dr. J. H. Clapham (Camb. Univ. Press, 25/-).

Population Problems in the Age of Malthus, by Griffiths (Camb. Univ. Press, 12/6).

The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century, by Dorothy Marshall (Routledge, 12/6).

Monetary Reconstruction, by R. G. Hawtrey (Longmans, 10/6).

History of England, Part III., by G. M. Trevelyan (Longmans, 4/-).

Call to Youth, by Wm. Rust (Young Comm. League, 1d.).

Congress of Young Fighters: Fourth Congress Young Comm. League Report.



Notes by the Way



MEXICO AND U.S.A.

THE Mexican revolution is a revolution of *Peasants* and *Workers*—in that order. Just as the Russian revolution is a "*Workers' and Peasants'* " revolution, in which the workers dominate and lead the backward peasants, so in Mexico the mainly Indian peasants and their attendant small traders, etc., dominate the backward workers who have only just begun to organise into trade unions. It is, further, oppressed by the nearness of United States Capitalism, which can, whenever it chooses to make the effort, crush the Mexican revolution out of existence.

Nevertheless, as is being shown by the case of Nicaragua, the Mexican revolution is inspiring a series of revolts against U.S. Imperialism in America, just as Russia has inspired Nationalist revolts in China and elsewhere in Asia. As a result, an international organisation (independent of the Communist International) for revolution in Latin America has arisen. As is inevitable in backward countries like Venezuela, Peru, etc., students play a disproportionately large part.

We are indebted to Comrade Dela Torre, the chief of the organisation in Europe, for the following details:—

The A.P.R.A. (*Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana*) stands for the Single Front of manual and intellectual workers against Dollar Imperialism in Latin America. Its five fundamental points are:—

Against Yankee Imperialism; For Federation of the countries of Latin America; For the Nationalisation of Industries and Land in Latin America; For the Internationalisation of the Panama Canal; For Solidarity with all the oppressed nations and classes of the other Continents.

The A.P.R.A. has national sections in several countries of Latin America and a group in Paris. The "intellectual" branch of this Anti-Imperialistic movement (the writers, journalists, university professors who are in the movement) is

organised in the "*Union Latinoamericana*" which was founded by Professor Jose Ingenieros of the Buenos Aires University (Argentine), author of several books and the best theoretical propagandist of the Russian Revolution's political principles in Latin American Universities (died in 1925).

The International Executive Committee of the A.P.R.A. is presided over by Haya-Delatorre, founder of the organisation, leader of the first Single Front of Worker-Peasants and Students against the Peruvian Government (whose policy is under the financial direction of Wall Street). Haya-Delatorre is a honorary president of the Students' Federation of Peru and other Latin American countries and was exiled from Peru with many other students and workers for his anti-Imperialistic campaign. The General Secretary of the A.P.R.A. Group in Paris is another Peruvian student, exiled also, Eudocio Ravines, and the others members of the Paris Local Executive Group (members of the World Executive) are: Cesar Zambrano (Peruvian student, exiled), Alfredo Gonzalez Willis, Jacinto Paiva, Felix Cardenas, J Ochoa, Edourado Enriquez.

The Secretary of the A.P.R.A. in Buenos Aires is Dr. Oscar Herrera (exiled from Peru), and among other members there are in Buenos Aires Señor Cornejo (exiled), Señor Arcelles (ex-general secretary of the Workers' Federation of Lima, Peru, exiled), and Señor Heysen, student, exiled from Peru and Chile and present president of the University Students' Federation of La Plata, Argentina.

The Secretary of the A.P.R.A. section in Bolivia is Señor M. A. Urquieta (Director of the Workers' University of Arequipa, Peru, exiled). The Secretary of the A.P.R.A. section in Mexico is Señor Estevan Paivelich (Peruvian student, exiled), and among others there are Señor J. Hurtwitz (ex-Peruvian student, exiled), and Señor Mella, former President of the Students' Federation of Cuba, and leader of the Single Front against

Imperialism in that country. Señor Mella is an exile from Cuba.

The anti-Imperialist movement in Panama is led by Señor Alberto Rodriguez, former president of the Panama Students' Federation and leader of the Workers' and Students' Single Front against Yankee Imperialism. Señor Rodriguez and several other members of the Panama anti-Imperialist movement have been more than six months in prison for "offences against the American authority." (There were bloody clashes between the American Army and the Panama people in November, 1925.) There are many others, students and workers (from Venezuela, Bolivia, Guatemala, etc., exiled) as a result of their anti-Imperialistic campaign in the Latin-American countries. Among them there are Señor Genaro Machado, exiled from Venezuela, Señores Teros, Lecaros, Wilson, Secada, Bobio, Delgado, exiled from Peru, Señor F. Chavarry, exiled from Guatemala.

The A.P.R.A. is a very young movement and was founded at the end of the year 1924. In the present conflict between U.S. and Mexico the A.P.R.A.'s slogans are "Back the Mexican people," "A Single Front of the Latin-American workers against the North American Intervention on Mexico," "Manual and Intellectual Workers of Latin-America: make the Single Front against Yankee Imperialism."

International Trusts.

An I.F.T.U. statement gives the following information:—

While Germany has shown so unprecedented an activity in the concentration of enterprises, *internationally* also this same year has seen agreements concluded between industrial leaders of various countries, the importance of which can scarcely be over-estimated. The foremost incident of this description is the founding of the *European Steel Cartel*, originally established by France, Germany, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Saar Territory, but shortly afterwards also joined by Austria, Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia. Britain and Poland are still outside, but it may confidently be asserted that in this important branch of industry, the liberal slogan of "free competition" has yielded completely to the principle of collective agreement.

Besides the Steel Cartel, the year 1926 has seen the formation of an *Aluminium Cartel* (covering France, Britain, Switzerland, Germany and Norway), a *Copper Cartel*, covering the European, American and African output (or about 90 per cent. of the world production), an *International Union of Superphosphate Factories*, covering 13 countries, a new *International Incandescent Lamp Cartel*, and the so-called *A. B. C. Trust* (the American, British and Continental Corporation) established in New York with a capital of 14 million dollars, and comprising ten of the largest banking establishments in the world. In addition to these gigantic international formations, numerous other international agreements, control companies, rings, etc., have been organised in the year 1926. If we compare the respective rates of the formation of trusts and cartels now and in pre-war times, we see that the pace is being steadily accelerated, and is covering steadily-growing areas.

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THE RISE AND FALL OF JOHN BULL

There is room for a study of Capitalist cartoons from the standpoint of the M.C.H. Here is a note that may be of assistance to the prospective investigator.

When Mr. Bull first emerged as national representative (in the time of Queen Anne) he was, naturally enough, a well-to-do farmer; thus symbolising the staple industry of the country in its most acceptable type, and avoiding the dangerous extremes of the idle rich landowner and the poor but industrious agricultural labourer. For two centuries this fine old gentleman holds the centre of the cartoonists' stage as the ideal representative of the British nation (with occasional incursions of Britannia when the theme rises to super-mundane heights). True, he suffers slight adaptations of costume in deference to our growing industrialism, his pristine hayseedness gives way to a dapper air of mercantile prosperity, and in some later representations there is a suggestion of almost high-financial solidity. His sartorial metamorphoses since 1841 may be traced in the pages of *Punch*. It is interesting to compare the John Bull of Leech (1857), Tenniel (1870) and Bernard Partridge (1916).

Still, despite superficial changes, it is in essence the same old figure, but now his days are numbered. Even cartoonists' conventions cannot ignore indefinitely the changing world without. The representative character of John Bull has long since ceased to have any relation to reality, and at least our cartoonists are forced to realise that he has practically lost his propaganda utility. Consequently they are compelled to displace him by a new lay-figure, "John Citizen." He was christened by "Poy" in the *Mail*; Strube in the *Daily Express* leaves him nameless, but both creations are very similar.

The clerks, salesmen, shop assistants commercial travellers, shop-keepers and small businessmen, who are the main support of our "great" popular dailies, whose press-inspired views constitute the "public opinion" to which their leader writers so airily appeal—these people cannot be expected to recognise themselves in the figure of a prosperous farmer, however urbanised. But they do recognise themselves in the harassed little ratepayer with his bowler hat and umbrella. Their protective instincts and

self-pity are aroused by the sight of "John Citizen" staggering under an immense burden labelled "taxation," being bullied by the bureaucrats, "Dilly and Dally," or pushed and insulted by a coarse proletarian. Their anger is carefully directed, not against the rich, but against their "natural" enemies, State Socialism and Bolshevistic Labour. Furthermore, the lower middle-class ambition to rise in the social scale is flattered by an occasional representation of the sorely oppressed "John Citizen" driving a "posh" little car or presiding over a sumptuous private office. Even in his most unhappy dilemmas, this incarnation of the great British public is unmistakably distinguished from the vulgar masses, and the readers who have come to identify themselves with him are comforted by the pleasing reflection that they are at least superior to the common working man.

Thus is the "black-coat" kept in the paths of respectability, and the "middle classes" consolidated against the Socialist menace.

ERNEST JONES.

STOP PRESS: Prize-winner in Esperanto Letter Competition: Miss J. Harris, "Brooklyn," Sykefield Av., Leicester.

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A DANISH EDUCATION SCHEME

We have received the following information concerning an education scheme recently adopted by the Labour movement in Denmark, which should be of interest in relation to the discussions in our own movement:—

"The Danish Labour movement is well aware of the great importance of working-class education. Formerly the different sections of the movement had all their own educational schemes and at the Executive meetings of our Local Labour Party branch we had also to deal with several requests for help in order to carry on the educational work. When contributions had just come in, as a rule we gave a small amount to all the organisations which had applied for it, but when we came to the end of the quarter we did not agree to most of those requests. This was not to handle the question in the right manner; and it was, therefore, a good step forward when our last Labour Party Congress (held every fourth year) in September, 1923, decided to amalgamate all these different kinds of educational schemes into one organisation called 'The Working-class Educational Association.' This organisation consists of eighteen members, six representing the Trade Union Congress, six the Labour Party, three the Co-operative societies, and three the Labour Party's Young People League. Contributions are fixed as follows:—Trades Union Congress pays five ore ($\frac{1}{3}$ d. per year for each member), Trades Unions which become members of the Educational organisations pay 20 ore per year for each member, but if the Union is not affiliated to the Trades Union Congress it has to pay 25 ore for each member. The Labour Party also pays 25 ore for each of its members, while the Labour Party's Young People League pays 10 ore for each of its members. The Co-operative societies have to pay in accordance with a special agreement. Whenever possible the Educational organisation has to elect local branches in which Executive the different sides of the Labour movement—Industrial, Political, Co-operative and Young People's League—shall be represented.

"The local branches often receive considerable allowances from the municipalities. The work is carried on by summer schools, evening classes, lectures, correspondence courses, lantern slides, etc. The new arrangement has many advantages; while formerly the different schemes often competed with each other, now the whole of the educational work is carried on systematically."

A. BUTKEREIT.



DIALECTIC.

DEAR COMRADE,—I am interested in the letter from Eastman, wherein he twice mentions "the legend of dialectic thinking." Will Eastman please explain just what he means by that phrase? My dictionary tells me that the word "legend" means "a fabulous narrative" and we all know that a fable is a fiction. Does Eastman believe that dialectic thinking is a fiction?

The dialectic method of thought is not a "theoretical attitude" as Eastman says it is, it is a tool, a weapon, "a guide to action," as Lenin said, which is used by the Proletariat to attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and

ruling class. How then can the dialectic method of thought "and the attempt to help it up automatically withdraw science from the people"?

If "Marx never studied the origin and development of the thinking mind," he at least formulated the dialectic that enabled other workers to do so, such as Dietzgen, Lenin, Casey, etc., and Eastman too if he would learn to understand it instead of wasting his time writing such dope as *Since Lenin Died*, thereby adding to the confusion that already exists among the Proletariat.

Fraternally yours,
S. GORDON NOWELL.

The N.C.L.C. at Work



(Reports for this page should be sent to J. P. M. Millar, General Secretary, National Council of Labour Colleges, 62 Hanover Street, Edinburgh).

NEW LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: The following is a list of the new affiliations obtained in January by Local Colleges:— London, 10; Durham and District, 4; Sowerby Division, 4; Lanarkshire, 2; Liverpool and District, 1; North Lancs. Area, 2; Blaina, 1; South-East Lancs. Area, 1; Winchester, 1; Woking, 1.

RAILWAY CLERKS' ASSOCIATION: The Annual Conference of the Scottish R.C.A. Branches carried a resolution by 23 votes to 1 emphasising the need for Independent Workers' Education and calling upon all Branches in Scotland to affiliate to the local Labour Colleges. The R.C.A. have W.E.A.-W.E.T.U.C. Scheme.

CAMPAIGN AMONG THE UNIONS: All students should be reminded of the importance of getting their unions to arrange N.C.L.C. Educational Schemes.

WOMEN'S N.C.L.C. COMMITTEES: London Division and South Wales have both gone far to set up N.C.L.C. Women's Educational Committees. Other Divisions and large Colleges are asked to report what steps they have taken and to send in the names of any capable women speakers.

"PLEBS": Colleges are requested to make all possible arrangements for the sale of PLEBS during the summer months. Before the classes close present students should be canvassed so that they may place a definite order.

LABOUR COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS: The T.U.C. is prepared to offer to members of its affiliated unions three residential scholarships to the Labour College, London. N.C.L.C. students who desire those scholarships should apply immediately through their unions. This will be an excellent chance for keen class students whose unions do not have Educational Schemes.

NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL AND ANNUAL MEETING: This will be held at Kiplin Hall, Scorton, Yorkshire, during the

fortnight 2nd to 16th July. The charge per week will be £3 3s. (class tutors and College secretaries £3). The booking fee is 10/- and this should be sent as speedily as possible in order that proper arrangements may be made and students not disappointed. Class students should do their best to get their Trades Councils and other working-class organisations to provide scholarships. The A.U.B.T.W. is offering a scholarship to each of its Divisions. Applications must be made through the member's branch. The lecture programme will be announced later. The Plasterers are offering free scholarships, as are the Transport Workers and the General and Municipal Workers.

TRAINING CENTRE: A fortnight's Training Centre will be run during the last week of July and the first week in August. The National Executive is offering a free scholarship to each Division. Students who desire to be considered should forward their names to the Divisional Organiser through their local College. The A.U.B.T.W. is offering one free scholarship. Applicants should apply direct to the Divisional Organiser, who will forward applications direct to N.C.L.C. Head Office.

LANTERN REGISTER: Will Colleges send in particulars of any lanterns owned by Labour Organisations in their localities?

"EDUCATION FOR EMANCIPATION": The new edition has now come from the printer. Every class student should have an opportunity of purchasing a copy as only by that means can the students be up-to-date in his knowledge of the Movement. If your College has not yet ordered its supply, please do so immediately before the classes close. See that the other organisations you are connected with have the pamphlet on sale.

LANTERN SLIDES: There has been a satisfactory increase in the use made of the Lantern Slides' Department and Colleges who have so far not arranged lantern lectures should do so.

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WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING.

Division 1: The London E.T.U. Branches are quickly taking advantage of the N.C.L.C. Scheme. Putney, Fulham and Plumstead Branches have already started a series of fortnightly lectures on Modern Problems; East Ham Branch is following suit. West Norwood is now starting a class for the first time. The courses conducted by D. Richards at Stepney, Leyton and Holborn are going well. A large number of Women's Co-operative Guilds have been addressed by the Organiser. Many of them affiliated. Mrs. W. Horrabin addressed the Bow Women's Section on February 8th and got enthusiastic support for the projected London N.C.L.C. Women's Committee. The February Divisional Council Meeting decided to arrange an essay competition in April on the following subjects:—History, Economics, Imperialism, Sociology, Philosophy, Trade Unionism.

Division 2: Our most recent class has secured the affiliation of the Winchester N.U.R. Oxford is working hard for local affiliations. Tom Ashcroft's lectures are highly appreciated. We hope to develop a strong College in Reading. A new group is being started at Newbury. Comrade Quilley is to tutor a new class at Twyford. J. Bowden is trying his hand as a tutor in Economic Geography at Wyke-Regis. Sales of literature have been quite good. The youngest member of the Salisbury Class has done some research work into the beginnings of this historical city. The Dorchester Agricultural Workers state that they have never had such an intellectual treat as that provided this winter. They suggest having a big open-air rally in June on the historic Iberian site of Maiden Castle. The Littlehampton class have already arranged a rally in June.

Division 3: The reference to the postponement of a lecture by the fog in the last report was to the activities of March L.C. where Comrade Turner is maintaining a successful class in Social History. J. Jones is winding up his appreciated course on Sociology at Brentwood. A new subject is being arranged. A public lecture was given at Brentwood on "Red Russia." The Braintree special meetings for the Women's Section L.P. and the Trades Council obtained a good response. Keen discussion marked Southend's One-Day School. At Norwich

Comrade Lay is taking a course on Scientific Socialism; special lectures are fixed up for the local N.U.G. & M.W. and A.U.B.T.W. Branches. A special course of lectures has been arranged for the boot and shoe operatives and a One-Day School was held in the Hardie Hall. During March a visit to Felixstowe on the 7th and a One-Day School at Guildford on the 13th with M. H. Dobb as lecturer have been arranged.

Division 4: Lantern lectures have been given by Merthyr and Pontypridd L.C. A new College has been formed at Abergillery. Llanelly L.C. is proud of D. Griffiths' class, which has an average attendance of 60 students. Newport desires assistance of more tutors. South Wales is busy setting up its South Wales Women's Education Committees.

Division 5: Mark Starr ran a weekend school at Bristol and is now taking a class on Thursdays. Public meetings have been held in the Forest of Dean with Comrades Purcell, Tillet and the Organiser as speakers. Bath Labour Class has started a class with Comrade Hitchins as tutor.

Division 6: No report.

Division 7: The Divisional Organiser, Fred Shaw, has been appointed President of the Yorkshire Federation of Trades Councils.

Division 8: The Assurance Agents' Chronicle is publishing a series of article on "Education For All," written by Fred Casey. A feature of the work of the Liverpool College prior to Christmas has been the number of lantern lectures given. Public lectures were given under the auspices of the Garston Co-operative Society, Runcorn Labour League, Bootle Trades and Labour Club, Earlestown Trades and Labour Council, Birkenhead Class and St. Domingo (Liverpool) Labour Party. Lantern lectures have also been given in connection with the Liverpool (N.U.D.A.W.) Central Class, Carters' Union Class and Liverpool A.U.B.T.W. Juvenile Section Class. A Warrington Group with an individual members' section has been formed, subscription 3d. per week. Secretary *pro tem.*: Mr. L. Baker, 1 Huntley Street, Sankey, Warrington. If there is a sufficient response, a Tutors' Training Class (subject, Economics) will be held in Liverpool to commence in May. For the convenience of those living in other districts, correspondence tuition



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can be arranged. Prospective students should send in their names to the Organiser, J. Hamilton, 11 Channel Road, Fairfield, Liverpool. While on a visit North, F. J. Adkins (author of "English for Home Students" and "Europe's New Map") gave stimulating lantern lectures at Earlestown and Birkenhead.

Manchester Borough L.P. has established a class in "Constructive Thinking," with W. Greave in charge. Students have been selected from the various Divisional Labour Parties; average attendance 30. Manchester has planned for three Tutors' Training Classes.

Division 9: A joint propaganda committee has been set up composed of representatives of the North-Eastern Labour College and the Durham and District Labour College. This Committee has at its call quite a number of very efficient speakers who are prepared to attend Trade Union branch meetings, etc., to state the case for the N.C.L.C. Branches are being circularised asking them to accept speakers. This ought to stimulate interest on the North-East Coast. There are many things contained in the circulars received from Head Office which could be acted upon promptly by such a body of speakers. An All-Durham Conference is being held at Redhills on March 26th, to be addressed by Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., and J. P. M. Millar. There will be a great increase in the number of Week-end and Day Schools run in the coming summer months.

Division 10 (Scotland): Congratulations are due to the Dumfries L.C. and to Comrade Killen for carrying on, despite the loss of their previous tutor. Comrade Killen has taken on the duties of tutor. In Edinburgh John S. Clarke's lantern lectures are still attracting large crowds. The Edinburgh College Secre-

tary, A. Woodburn, has been asked to take over the editorship of the local Labour paper during the illness of the editor. R. Williams, Leith's Labour candidate, is a voluntary tutor of this College. Good luck to him. A. M'Clushie has been appointed tutor of the Ayrshire College. He is a product of Ayrshire College's own educational work. We wish him every success. Reports show that the Edinburgh College has been active in arranging lectures for branches of unions with national schemes. *Other Colleges have some leeway to make up in this respect.* Glasgow intends arranging week-end schools during the summer. It is running those classes for the Co-operative Movement.

Division 11 (Ireland): During the month the Organiser addressed the Combes Labour Party which decided to affiliate and to form a class on "Economics," with George M'Bride as tutor. The N.F.B.T.U. invited the Organiser to address their Northern Ireland Conference held in Belfast. This should assist the formation of classes in towns within easy reach of Belfast.

Division 12: Class work goes on methodically from week to week throughout the Division. Men who have passed through our classes are beginning to find their way on to Trade Union Committees and Miners' Councils and to play an increasing part in the public activities of the Labour Movement of the Area. Arrangements are in hand for a Conference at Leicester on March 6th, with George Hicks as the chief speaker. We hope to make this a huge success. The Propaganda Committee of the Lincoln Class Group is taking steps to organise a Conference and public meeting on March 27th. During the month new classes have commenced in Heanor, Ilkeston and Nottingham.

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The PLEBS Bookshelf



AS two members of the Plebs Executive Committee have exercised their right to say, in print, just what they thought about the latest Plebs publication, the *History of the General Strike*, I take it that I am entitled to use a little of my space here to make one or two comments.

First, I don't think a reviewer is justified, because he disagrees—however strongly—with certain passages of a book, in distorting the character of the book as a whole. To say that *A Worker's History of the Great Strike* is “a defence of the General Council” is just silly—as any fair-minded reader can discover for himself. Primarily, the book is a record of facts, a plain narrative without “trimmings.” I don't for a moment suggest that it is without bias; but that bias is emphatically not against the miners. And as a matter of fact, the postscript to the Preface stating that the N.C.L.C. had no responsibility for the book was inserted because those N.C.L.C. representatives who saw the proofs of the book took precisely the opposite view of it to that taken by the *Sunday Worker* and *Workers' Life* reviewers.

Second, the Plebs E.C. has not “re-pudiated” the book; and to say, as one of the reviewers does, that the book does not represent the E.C.'s “policy” with regard to the General Strike is just blether. The E.C. has no “policy” with regard to the General Strike; it is no part of its business to have any such policy. What the E.C. did in relation to this book was to commission three of its members to write it. And those three members readily agreed, when certain of their colleagues stated that they did not share certain of the views expressed in it, to a public statement (see another page of this magazine) that the E.C. as a whole did not see the book before publication, and were therefore not “responsible” either for its judgments or its facts. There was never any question of them seeing it. The three authors

were expected to do their job honestly, and shoulder the responsibility for it. One of the reviewers impeached their honesty. But let us charitably assume that this was due rather to a passion for alliterative headlines than to an intentional desire to make a rather serious charge.

* * *

The Plebs who met Phillips Russell during the time when he was in this country, on the original staff of the *Sunday Worker*, will be interested to know that his book, *Benjamin Franklin: The First Civilised American*, is a “best-seller” in the United States just now. It deserves to be. It is written with humour and human insight. It takes down a “great man” from his pedestal and very quietly and undramatically shows him to have been a human being.

LABOUR MONTHLY



Among other articles the March number, which is now ready, will contain:—

ARTHUR HORNER

(S.W.M.F. Exec.)

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SIR AUSTEN VON HINDENBURG.

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(In fact, Russell’s style of writing is curiously like his talk.)

Lytton Strachey has done this sort of thing for some of our own Victorian heroes and heroines. But one doesn’t always love Strachey’s subjects more when he has finished with them. Whereas one feels a real affection for Franklin after reading Russell’s book. And as it must be wrong to feel thus towards so typical a bourgeois as Benjamin I shall expect the *Sunday Worker* to tick Russell off.

* * *

Another twenty volumes have just been added to the Everyman Library (2s. net), two of which the publishers have sent to us. One of these, a collection of Robert Owen’s writings, is reviewed in *THE PLEBS* elsewhere. The other, Barbusse’s wonderful war book, *Under Fire*, I need say little about here. If there are any Plebs who don’t already possess the book, they’ll be foolish if they don’t hasten to buy and read it now.

* * *

Readers of that great little book of Brailsford’s, *Shelley, Godwin and their Circle*, should note that *The Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft* has just been added to the World’s Classics series (2s.).

* * *

Have I ever mentioned *The Wallet of Kai Lung* in these pages? If not, it isn’t entirely inappropriate to do so now. *Kai Lung* is a Chinese story-teller; and if you want to love your Chinese fellow humans—quite apart from their politics, Red or White—read him. There is a cheap edition—2s., I think—published by Methuens’; and a slightly more expensive one in Cape’s Travellers’ Library series at 3s. 6d. *Kai Lung* is worth the money.

J. F. H.

* * *

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