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The PLEBS

Organ of the National
Council of Labour Colleges

Monthly 4^d

15th MARCH, 1928

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THE PLEBS

Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

Vol. XX.

15th MARCH, 1928.

No. 4 ✓

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DO YOU WANT TO BE PRIVILEGED?

THE N.C.L.C. was once accused of providing not education, but—to copy the critic accurately—"proper ganda." Anyway we want propagandists now—or at least the burning enthusiasm that hall-marks the propagandist.

March usually sees the end for six months of really active literature-selling. Is there any sound reason for that? It should give any good Pleb a pain behind the breast-bone to be at a summer school, for instance, where no literature is on sale, or to see a winter class end without any arrangement being made for the summer distribution of The PLEBS to the students.

The Ear of Henry Dubb.

For very good financial reasons it is most important that the sale of the magazine should not drop during the summer months. For still better educational reasons it is essential that the students should keep in touch by reading The PLEBS. Every class and every College should therefore make arrangements for the systematic distribution of the magazine. What is *yours* doing? The summer sales will not only keep old students in touch: they can be used to rope in new students. Help The PLEBS to get the ear of Henry Dubb.

We have received many complimentary notes on the new PLEBS. While that

flatters editorial vanity—and editors, like the old horse, require a word of encouragement—it doesn't add one unit to the circulation. Here, therefore, is the kind of letter (received from W.J.E.) that deserves a gold frame:—

“I find that your magazine is not advertised in our town, or at least few people buy it. To me it is the best magazine published by the British Labour movement and *I would like to be privileged with a dozen to sell.*” (Italics ours.) Won't you be privileged too?

Literature in Barrow Loads.

Think of the early days of the Socialist movement when propagandists sold barrow-loads of *Merrie England* in the streets and when Clarion cyclists invaded the villages and traded pamphlets for coppers to an astounded population. These were the boys of the propagandist breed. They're not all dead by any means. South Lancs. has substantially increased its PLEBS sales—H. Ingle alone sells over thirty in the workshop. In Edinburgh district J. Robertson sells about sixty a month. They are both privileged. *Won't you ask to be privileged, too?*

Think of it! The *Daily Herald* has about 400,000 readers. Not one in sixty-five reads The PLEBS. Probably not one in thirty is really aware that The PLEBS exists. Think of the millions of Labour voters who've never been shown a copy of The PLEBS. We're not a secret! The printer is perfectly willing to print ten thousand extra copies. The Postmaster-General, with the assistance of the U.P.W., is prepared to handle the parcels. All we want is the distributors. Unsold copies can be returned. You run no risks. *Write us now saying you want to be privileged.*

T. A. Jackson Replies.

We have received from T. A. Jackson the following letter in reply to our editorial comments on the *Sunday Worker's* attack on the N.C.L.C.:—

Dear Comrade,—May I have a word of comment upon the remarks of J.F.H. in your last issue?

The heading—“Where is the N.C.L.C.? Is it

deserting to Marx's Enemies?” which the “S.W.” put to my review of Clarke's book is, I agree, an arresting one; but I cannot admit that it was a “stunt” or a “misleading” one. Anyway I have already accepted responsibility for it along with the article; and wish here to re-emphasise (what I have already said in the “S.W.”) that it was intended to do no more than to mark my sense of the gravity of the situation created by the issue (by the N.C.L.C.) of Clarke's book.

My charge is (a) that the book is *not* an introduction to Marx; that it is at best “near-Marxism”; and (b) that it represents a grave and (to old Plebs like myself) an ominous lowering of standards for the N.C.L.C. to sponsor such a work.

I wrote as a member of the Plebs League, and a friend to the N.C.L.C., from the Plebs point of view; the fact that I am also a member of the Communist Party had simply nothing whatever to do with my criticism and J.F.H. has no right whatever to imply that it had.

I tried very hard in my second article in the “S.W.” to make this clear, and to prevent the question being discussed along party lines. I am more than sorry that I did not (apparently) succeed.

Perhaps this second effort will succeed. If so we can get down to the discussion of the real question: “Is Clarke's book up to the N.C.L.C. standard?”

Upon that head may I offer this observation in regard to Max Beer. *There is no evidence whatever that he has read the book at all.* All we have is an assurance that he praised the articles on which it was based when they appeared in an I.L.P. journal.

It is obvious (surely?) that one might regard articles tending towards Marxism in an I.L.P. paper as “useful” without therefore committing oneself to the opinion that they were “up to N.C.L.C. standard!”

We will make our reply to this brief, merely repeating (a) that the suggestion in th “S.W.'s” headline that the N.C.L.C. was “deserting to Marx's enemies” was both misleading and unjustified, though; unfortunately, quite in keeping with the general hysterical tone of “S.W.” headlines; (b) that, in whatever capacity Jackson wrote, support for this suggestion about the N.C.L.C. came in the main from Communists who were, rightly or wrongly, annoyed that they were unable to control N.C.L.C. policy. Jackson's arguments *in re* Max Beer suggest that he might, had he cared, have made a reputation as a lawyer; their ingenuity is only equalled by their entire lack of generosity.

THE PLANNED STATE

By ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P.

Russian Economic Development Since the Revolution. By Maurice Dobb (Routledge, 15/-).

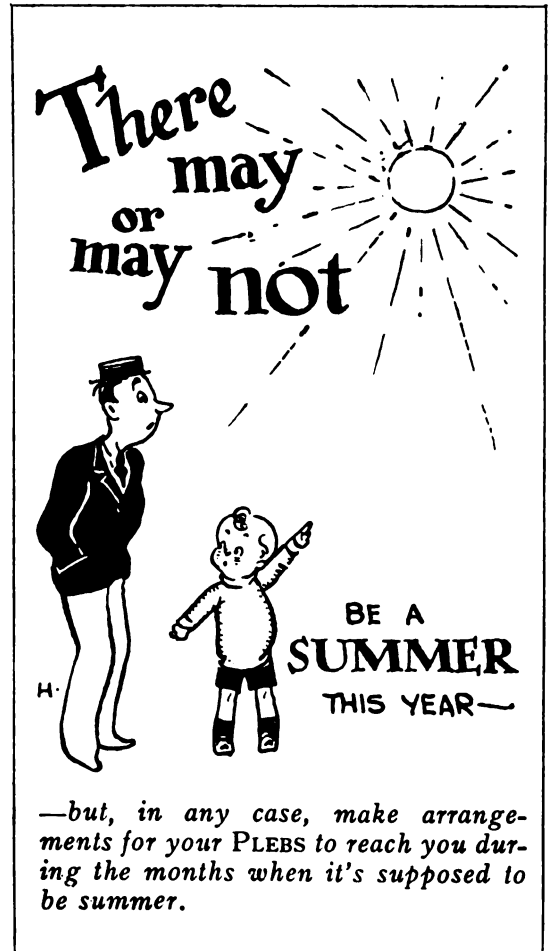
Britain's Industrial Future. Report of Liberal Industrial Enquiry (Benn, 2/6).

A HUNDRED years or so ago, the rising middle class of merchants and traders, anxious to take full advantage of the new invention of steam power, fought hard against national and customary restrictions on trade. They won their "right to be left alone." With the minimum of State interference and the maximum of chaotic waste, Europe stumbled through the nineteenth century to the Great War—the inevitable result of the competitive period.

War organisation caused many changes in the haphazard *laissez-faire* British industry. After 1918 there were desperate attempts to force it back into the old channels, but that old world was gone for ever. In the place of the family business was the gigantic trust, or the federation of employers, that had come to rely on State assistance and to realise its possibilities. Some employers—like the coalowners—saw merely a helpful instrument to suppress rebellious workers. The more far-sighted saw the possibilities to themselves of a properly planned State. They realised that unrestricted competition had defeated itself and would be ended by the wrath of the workers. But a carefully-planned State worked by the right people could give enormous strength to great monopolies, while at the same time sufficiently improving the lot of the mass of the workers to keep them relatively quiet. Mussolini had tried out the idea very crudely. The Liberal manufacturers went to work in a much more scientific way. They appointed an impressive committee, and produced on excellent paper, bound appropriately in yellow, a well-printed report.

Why Not Film It?

The report is a careful study of how to retain power in the hands of a small owning class by making concessions to democratic sentiment. It gives a detailed estimate of how much can be allowed as sops to the awakening workers without infringing any essential part of capitalist power. A remark on page 242 summarises perfectly the motif of the report. "Liberalism has stood consistently for private property, but it should not be limited to a few, otherwise the resulting discontent hampers economic progress." Why not film this remarkable



production? It could be advertised as:—

A RACE AGAINST TIME.

Can Capitalism be Saved?

How to Save It. In 5 reels.

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Scenic effects by J. M. Keynes and

Seeborn Rowntree.

A Study In Contrasts.

Dobbs' book on Russia should be read in conjunction with the Liberal Report. It offers a study of the complete contrast. The Liberals want to preserve a class State, making some concessions while not altering the status of the workers. Dobb's book shows that the important fact about Soviet Russia is not the success or failure of this or that Socialistic experiment, but that the workers are in power, and are evolving a classless State. "The characteristic feature of this system, sharply dividing it from other countries, was that in Russia a Party of the workers held the commanding heights, and in storming them had dealt a blow at the foundations of class monopoly."

Lenin had this in common with the experts of the Liberal Industrial Enquiry. He realised that it is not the form or type of organisation but who holds the power in a State that is the really important thing. Dobb's early chapters are concerned with the interesting thesis that widespread nationalisation of industry was no part of Lenin's original plan. He was solely concerned with the consolidation of the workers' power. The circumstances of the civil war and counter-revolutionary sabotage forced him into the drastic expedient of war-communism.

The result was a "bossing complex." People who had always been bossed went mad about issuing orders to everyone else. From the constipated rigidity that followed, the Russian workers and peasants have been slowly extricating themselves. The Trotsky opposition consists of the people who have been unable to cure themselves of this complex. Dobb's book shows us the new State taking shape as the result of hot discussions, new experiments, trials

and errors. Having no far-seeing capitalists to measure out freedom in droplets, the Russian workers are consciously planning a Workers' State.

Oh, These Dons!

It is a pity that this book has had to be issued at so high a price as 15/-, for as a study of Socialism in the making it ought to be read by every Labour student. My only criticism of it is that Dobb, like all Cambridge economists of whatever school, cannot resist the temptation to put in chunks of economic theorising, quite valuable in their way, but written in that peculiar jargon which Cambridge dons love. Talking in these terms, they feel themselves, not as students in tree-shaded studies, but real he-men out in the world's markets. For the same reason I suppose the crippled Henley or the consumptive Stevenson always loved to write about pirates. But Dobb makes up for this little foible by his interesting story and telling illustrations. Horrabin has done a striking frontispiece to this excellent book.

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FOYLES FOR BOOKS

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OIL IN IRAQ

Was the War Worth While?

By J. F. HERRABIN.

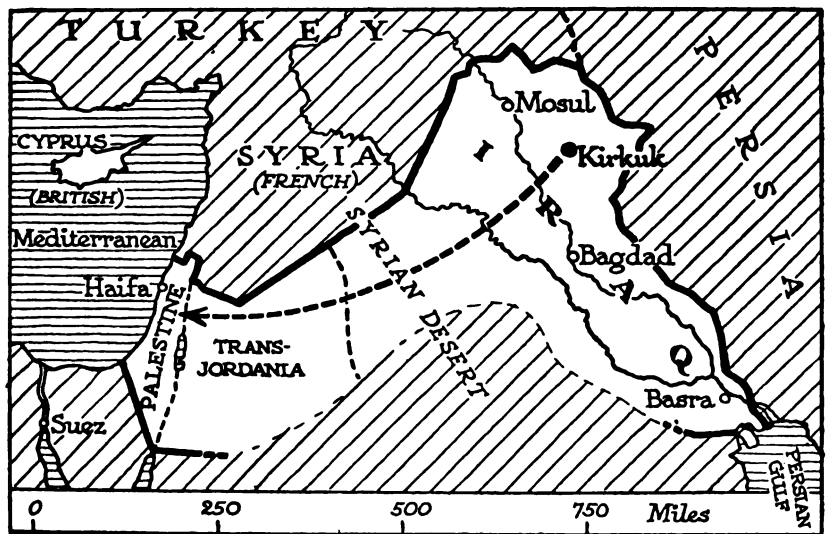
“AN EVENT the importance of which is likely to be more generally realised in the future than it is at present occurred last October,” says a writer in the *Times* Annual Financial and Commercial Review; “namely, the ‘bringing-in’ near Kirkuk, in Iraq, by the Turkish Petroleum Co., of a well estimated to have a capacity of 90,000 barrels (say 13,000 tons) a day of light oil with an abundant petrol content. There is general agreement among the best authorities that this well definitely proves a new field, and that the field so proved is a large one, possibly resembling that of Musjid-i-Sulaiman, in Persia, in size and productivity.

“To drill further wells is easy,” the writer goes on; “the chief problems are transport and marketing. The situation of the field requires a pipe line or lines some 700 miles in length to transport the oil to seaboard. The distance is approximately the same from the new field to the Mediterranean on the west, and the Persian Gulf on the south-east, but the Mediterranean proposal holds the field at present.”

This statement seems to settle once and for all the question whether the Mesopotamian oilfield was really as important as, immediately after the war, it was generally declared to be. E. C. Eckels’ assertion (*Coal, Iron, and War*) that Mesopotamia was “the best commercial transaction of the

war” seems, at best, to have been pretty well justified.

The importance of the new field may be gauged by comparing its estimated output with the production of other oil areas in the British Empire. The largest of these,



“Plebs” Map.

India, produced in 1927 8,000,000 barrels. If the estimate of the capacity of the Mesopotamian well proves correct, its output will be more than three times this figure. (Other Empire oilfields produced in 1927:—Sarawak, 5,000,000 barrels; Trinidad, 5,500,000; Canada, 500,000.)*

The question of the pipe-line to the coast (as our map shows) brings out the far-sightedness of the British Government in accepting the mandate for Palestine and Trans-Jordan, as well as Iraq. This gives possible access to the Mediterranean by a route entirely under British control. Such a line would of course save some 4,000 miles of sea-transport by the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, and Suez to European ports.

* Figures given in *Times* Annual Review.

BEASTS OF BURDEN

What an Irish "Hiring Fair" is like

By A. ELLIS

CAPITALISTS all over the world have for centuries appreciated the cheapness of the Irish labourer, driven from home by adverse circumstances. The Irish labourer is well-known in the fields, factories and mines of Great Britain, but apparently, little is known of the methods employed to utilise the cheap labour in Ireland. The conditions in Ireland can partly be illustrated by a description of a "hiring fair." Hiring fairs, perhaps better described as slave markets, are held in the months of May and November. The fair held in Newry typifies Irish hiring fairs generally.

Newry is situated in Northern Ireland, about forty miles south of Belfast, on the main rail and road routes to Dublin. It is the centre of an agricultural area and has a population of 26,000.

The scene of the fair is the cross roads, bordered by rows of houses and shops, within a stone's throw of the Cathedral.

How it is Done.

At the fair there is nothing to strike the eye beyond what appears to be an ordinary crowd of three to four hundred persons all dressed up in their "Sunday clothes." The crowd, however, is composed of farmers and perhaps a few shopkeepers, and labouring men and women, boys and girls, and, lurking in the background, the Army recruiting sergeant anxious to obtain recruits to defend the glorious liberties of Empire.

The farmers function as buyers or hirers, and the men and women, boys and girls as the sellers or those "on hire." The farmer wanting a plough-man, or general farm hand, will take careful stock of the physique and general appearance of the men on hire. Having spotted a strong and healthy hide he would like to exploit, a little shuffling through the crowd, a smile,

a nod, a chance remark, and the hirer is on speaking terms with the man. The farmer or hirer usually has an associate near at hand to say a good word or two on his behalf, or to function as witness for him at a later date, should that be necessary. Immediately, the contracting parties become the centre of a group in the crowd. (The crowd is in fact composed of such groups.) The farmer looks his best, as kind, gentle and humane as possible. He might ask the labourer, "What can you do?" The labourer replies with pride, "Plough, sow, milk, feed cattle. In fact, there is nothing about a farm which I cannot do. Not afraid of hard work; hired last with farmer X; can go back there if I wish, etc."

A Home from Home.

If the labourer appears to be suitable the farmer offers a price, *e.g.*, £10 for the hiring period of six months, adding that the labourer will get good food, a comfortable bed, etc.; in fact, a home from home. The labourer may ask for £14, but after much talk around and about it, the argument takes a more matter of fact tone as to whether the price shall be £12 or £12 10s., the farmer making special reference to the "home from home" prospects as an inducement. If the labourer has been hired before, however, and has paid for his experience, he will, most likely, ask the farmer a few straight questions, such as "Where will I sleep; in the house or in the barn?" "Will I get the same kind of food as is served to the family?" "Will I get time off on Sunday to go to Church?" etc. The farmer will endeavour to avoid direct answers by means of a joke, or an associate may ease the situation for him by affirming that the farmer in question is the best in County Down, etc.

At the psychological moment the farmer

offers 2/- to the hired to clinch the bargain. This is known as "earnest money" and functions as the King's shilling of the hiring fair.

Once the "earnest money" is accepted the labourer belongs to the farmer for the ensuing six months, to work from the early hours of the morning till late at night—seven days per week. He is at the mercy of the hirer, be he a brute, or at best, a farmer struggling in a small or large way—to make a fortune! If "the hired" runs away he can be brought back to complete his six months. But so strong is the custom amongst "the hired" of adhering to their part of the bargain that few cases of broken contracts occur.

One of the peculiar features of the hiring is the complete absence of any documents or receipts in connection with it. All arrangements are made verbally, and in due time "the hired" will meet his owner at the railway station or 'bus stop, carrying his bundle of clothes.

In the same way mothers and fathers appear at the fair with their sons and daughters (and guardians with orphans) endeavouring to get the best price and most benevolent-looking purchaser for their offspring. Men and women, boys and girls, are hired in this way for farm work, domestic or even shop work.

Progress!

For the benefit of contracting parties a local newspaper, on the chief day of the hiring fair, reminded its readers that in 1877 lads at the hiring fair asked £5 for the half-year, and that twenty-five years ago, on November 15th, 1902, the following prices were agreed upon:—

"Ploughmen, £9 to £10 for the half-year; labourers, £7 to £8; young men, £3 to £7; women accustomed to dairy work, £6 to £8; girls, £4 to £5."

The prices on Thursday, 17th November, 1927, were slightly higher!

The number of persons hired in this way would be difficult to estimate, as the fair is held on three successive Thursdays, and hiring takes place in many parts of the town in a private way, in addition to the hiring done at the customary spot. The hired, however, can be seen leaving the town by practically every 'bus and train for destinations ten, twenty, or even fifty miles distant.

Thus are the poor of Ireland compelled by adverse circumstances to accept almost anything that offers a crust of bread and a bed of straw, be that in a barn or over a stable. The conditions of their life and labour are indicated by the fact that in the localities they are taken to there are many workers already unemployed. It is, however, more profitable for the farmers to

THE ·OUTWARD·BOUND TRAMP

This poem, by Jim Breslow, a sailor before the mast and an ex-student of the Liverpool Labour College classes, was recently published in the *Daily Herald*.

WHIRLING wave and smoking
spume,

Spindrift hissing thro' the gloom,
Crash of breakers o'er the rail,
Mingling with the moaning gale.

Shock and shudder, roll and reel,
Helmsman frozen to the wheel,
Through the wild mid-winter night,
Charging by the last shore-light.

Skipper, sleepless, cold and grim,
Peering 'neath sou'wester brim—

In a mist of stinging spray,
Waiting for the grey of day.

Reeking demons down below,
Toiling in the furnace glow,
Where the song of spinning steel
Rises from the quivering keel.

Darkness to the light gives way,
Light of one more living day.
Through the pain of storm and strain,
Comes the birth of dawn again.

travel miles to a hiring fair and bring home hired labourers or domestic workers than to employ local wage labour.

Furthermore, the unemployed persons residing in the town where a hiring fair has been held, when appearing before the Labour Exchange authorities for extended benefit, will be asked, as evidence of "genuinely seeking work," "Did you offer yourself for hire at the fair?"

Such conditions in Ireland explain the eagerness of the Irish emigrant when arriving in England, or elsewhere, to accept any class of employment at a wage considered disgraceful by the resident worker.

Irish Trade Union Difficulties.

Furthermore, such methods of obtaining farm labourers in Ireland make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to organise the workers into Trade Unions. The labourers' conditions, once he is hired, are sealed for a period of six months. He cannot be assisted to improve those conditions, nor does he look to a Trade Union to improve his lot; he relies rather upon the benevolence of his employer.

How many persons are at a given moment existing in this hired state it is difficult to estimate and their sufferings must remain unknown. At best they exist as beasts of burden, to whom the relative freedom of ordinary wage workers must appear as a paradise.

There is no doubt that hiring as a method of obtaining labourers is on the decline, but the fact that it exists at all in 1927 calls for immediate attention.

The introduction of wage labour under such circumstances, with a recognised working day and pay, however low, represents a step forward, providing as it does the basis of working-class organisation to struggle for improved conditions.

As capitalism in Great Britain has "blood on its coal," so in Ireland it has slavery, destitution and misery behind its bacon and eggs.

Ten minutes Talks with New Students:

2-WHAT SCHOOL DOESN'T TEACH

By J. P. M. MILLAR

WE are so accustomed to looking upon civilisation as an accumulation of motor cars, grain elevators, docks and printing machines, that we sometimes forget that all these things are the products of science—of knowledge. Civilisation does not depend so much on the existence of a mass of all sorts of goods, as on the power to remake them and this power lies in knowledge. It is because of the secret formulae man has wrested from nature that he is able to turn iron ore into locomotives and coal into electric light.

Science—the Miracle Worker.

Science enables man to swim like a fish, by means of the submarine; to run faster than a horse, by means of the express train; to fly like a bird, by means of the aeroplane; to travel below ground like a mole, by means of underground railways; to talk with men thousands of miles away, by means of wireless; and to reproduce the voices of the dead by means of the gramophone. Science can solve, however, not merely problems of industry; it can also solve social problems. The price therefore of human comfort and progress is knowledge—science.

Perhaps the greatest gift of the nineteenth century was the wonderful theory of evolution. This theory enables us to understand how the world came into existence; to understand the history of animals and plants; to understand the story of man as an animal and the story of man as a social being. So all embracing is the theory that

HAS YOUR UNION an N.C.L.C. Educational Scheme?
If not, why?

a man "cannot be a good dentist unless he knows something about evolution."

What Evolution Means.

Evolution means an unfolding or development. A common illustration is the example of how the aeroplane has developed from the bicycle, through the motor cycle and the motor car. If we like to take an illustration from animal life, we find that the theory of evolution shows that all animals, no matter how different, appear to be descended from a common ancestral group, just as the motor car, aeroplane, and motor cycle may be said to be descended from the hobby-horse—the early bicycle.

The name of Darwin is, of course, inseparably connected with the theory of evolution as applied to Nature. It is sometimes forgotten, however, that the same theory applies to society which has evolved through numerous stages, *e.g.*, ancient civilisation and feudalism. The man whose name is most closely connected with evolution as applied to society is Karl Marx and his theory is known as Marxism.*

The most obvious lesson which the theory of evolution teaches is that everything, even the apparently unchanging mountain ranges, is in process of change and, as the working-class is the section of society which has most to gain from social changes, the theory has a special interest for workers.

Evolution and Revolution.

The remarkable thing is that the theory of evolution, which is probably the most revolutionary theory in the world, although accepted by every scientist worth the name, is not taught in the great majority of even secondary schools. In his book, *Coal, Iron and War*, E. C. Eckel throws some light on the reason when he says:—

"the scientific advances of the past half century had all tended to lay stress on the universal applicability of evolutionary theories and when these were applied to social problems and pushed to their limit, in a purely materialistic way, there were opportunities offered for trouble. . . . If natural evolution governs all progress,

why not allow survival of the fittest to operate logically and put an end to weak States and *weak classes in the State?*" (Italics ours.)

Obviously, from the point of view of numbers, the capitalist class is a weak class, and we can understand that self-protection compels it to discourage the theory of evolution, particularly as applied to social life. The more the workers are encouraged to believe that Adam was the first capitalist and his spade the first capital, the less they will be inclined to join Trade Unions and generally to participate in the work of revolutionising society. That is, however, a very sound reason why the workers should know something about evolution and those who desire to follow up this chat should read "Marxism and Darwinism"†—an invaluable little book.

The working-class movement stands for very great changes and cannot do without a knowledge of evolution, which, like a main switch, can flood the history of man with the light of understanding.

† 9d. post free from the N.C.L.C.

PLEBS ATLAS

The Russian edition of the *Plebs Atlas* has been favourably reviewed and we lift the following out of J. Filipov's comments in *Vojo de Klerigo* (Nro. 12/28):

"The name of Horrabin is sufficiently well known with us because of the *Outline of Economic Geography* which has run to several editions in Russian and Ukrainian. In the *Atlas* the author's wide Marxian outlook, his happy capacity to bring into bold relief the important features and his acquaintance with worker-readers are clearly shown. The majority of modern international problems are made alive and clear for the ordinary newspaper reader. Even where there is no special map the index enables one to find the spot desired.

"Maps on the problems of trade union organisation, the revolutionary movement and the League of Nations are obvious gaps. The harbour Pechleve, about which U.S.S.R. and Persia recently were in negotiation, is not marked. Improvements for the next edition would be a book list of the chief works on world politics and economic geography, advice on how the *Atlas* should be used in club and school work, and a short guide to the political implications of the maps.

"We hope that this *Atlas* will be not merely 'the first swallow,' but that others will follow such as the not less necessary one dealing with U.S.S.R. on the same principle of leaving out non-essentials."

* See *Marxism and History* (N.C.L.C., 1/1 or 1/7 post free).

HAS THE WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT COME TOO LATE?

By A BIOLOGIST.

In these articles I venture to put out provocative matter. The ideas involved make powerful appeal to me and I hope that those who have thought deeply about these things may be able to show, from their greater knowledge of industrial and political history, where I am wrong.

(1) HISTORICAL.

NOT so long ago biologists and antiquarians thought about human history in this way: Man evolved from anthropoid animals; he invented tools; he began to acquire mastery over inimical nature and the other animals. He became a savage and the savage passed through several stages, gradually attaining to civilisation. Man then made customs, machinery, communities and so on, becoming what he now is, in say, China or Europe. In other parts of the world he may not have reached our level yet.

Civilisation a Continual Process?

That means that Civilisation has been one continuous process from the lower animal through the savage to the modern civilised man. Now there is no evidence at all in favour of that hypothesis. There is not very much evidence of any kind about human developments, but what there is points to a series of *cycles of civilisation*, and not to a unique one.

There was a Greco-Roman Civilisation about which we know a great deal for its material achievements remain, in their vestiges; much of its fine literature remains; its legal codes form part of our modern legal systems and even its military ideas and terms exist. Its material achievements were at least as great as ours—remembering that there were no scientific applications—and its literature was, at least, as great as ours. Yet this classical civilisation attained a climax just before the be-

ginning of the Christian era and it became decadent almost to the point of extinction, during the first ten centuries A.D. Something of it was saved, of course, and persists in our literature and legal codes, and in works of art..

It is more difficult to trace earlier civilisations for these did not leave writings to us—or at least they did not leave manuscripts. We know them partly by vague tradition, but mainly because of the existence of en-

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during sculptures, buildings, pottery, inscribed stones and other things that have resisted the forces of destruction. And by critical examination of these remains we have become convinced of the existence of three civilisations that preceded the classical one. These are the Late, Middle and Early Cretan civilisations.

Development—Climax—Degeneracy.

In each of them there was the same course of events. There was a progressive development, marked by increasing originality and finish in the works of sculpture and architecture. Then came a climax when originality petered out. Followed an age of imitation, then degeneracy, and lastly revolution. In this ultimate phase the institutions were destroyed and the people enslaved or destroyed.

Before the Cretan Civilisations there were the early Egyptian ones and these display the same histories of ascent, climax and degeneracy. And long before these earliest Egyptian politics there was, at least, the Cromagnon Civilisation, some 25,000 years ago, or about that, more or less. Only the scantiest relics of this exist, but they are suggestive indications.

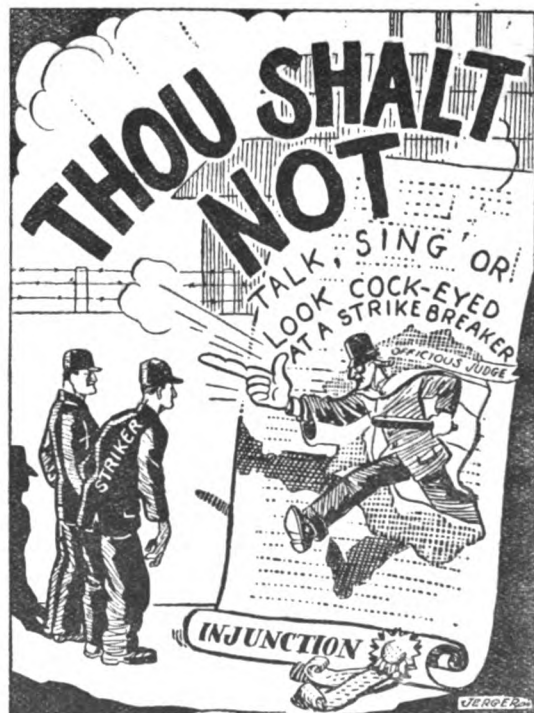
Now it has been argued that this modern civilisation of ours already offers just the same indications of degeneracy as we can trace in the earlier ones. It differs from all others in that it is based upon scientific achievements—or rather upon the applications of scientific achievements. That seems to many people to be the guarantee for its greater (or absolute) permanence, but I shall urge, later on, that precisely the opposite result is to be expected from our scientific age. More rapidly perhaps than any other precedent civilisation will ours tend to crash.

The Collapse of Capitalism.

It will be remembered by readers of *The PLEBS* that, in 1916-18, the collapse of modern industrialism was expected and was much discussed. The expectation came, I believe, from the study of Marxian analyses of the nature of the Capitalist Civilisation. I have discussed this question with very acute men who expected to see Capitalism crash in their own lifetime. I never anticipated that, knowing the re-

sources of science that are yet unexploited. But, none the less, I believe that the prognosis was sound, though the culminating point and the initiation of decadence cannot be forecast with the knowledge that we have.

One other difference between our civilisation and its predecessors is to be noted—the working-class movement. That is the “dark horse,” the element of uncertainty. In a later article I will return to this consideration, but meanwhile I must discuss some matters of fundamental importance. In the meantime I can only indicate the result to which I will tend—that the present civilisation, founded on the exploitation of the accumulated natural wealth that exists, as coal, oil, mineral ores, etc., has no permanence and is even likely to have only a few more centuries to last before its extinction.



A good many people, when the Trades Union Bill was in course of being put through Parliament last year, wanted to know what an injunction was. Here (from the "Locomotive Engineers' Journal") is an American explanation of it—and having "had some" over there, they know!

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SIR ALFRED MOND

By ARTHUR WOODBURN.

"It is no use elaborating schemes of profit sharing if there are no profits to share. It is no use asking the working class to be content to continue under an economic system, under which many of them, after long centuries of experience, are still on a standard of life of an inadequate character, unless you can hold out and demonstrate that the prevailing economic system is one which can be developed and which will place them in a better position in the future."

"The Government has got to justify the existence of the present order of Society."

*"There never was a time when the workers were so disheartened by the blind alleys in which they find themselves through the folly of their leaders. They are hesitating; with whom are they to throw in their lot? Are they going to join with their natural leaders and co-workers (i.e., the Capitalists) or are they going to swing over to the revolutionaries?"**

SOcialists believe in industrial peace, they believe in international peace, and therefore must give reasons why they object—if they do object—to talks with Capitalists on the question.

As Marxians, we know that industrial unrest and strikes are not caused by "agitators," but that certain economic conditions in industry bring into existence agitations and strikes. Mond is therefore quite right when he states that if Capitalism can deliver the goods, Capitalism will have industrial peace. We are therefore first of all concerned to discover whether Capitalism can provide prosperity for the working class, before we can pronounce judgment on "industrial peace" moves.

Sir Alfred Mond has just published a book where he details facts, hopes, fears and challenges, and he regards his proposals as a way by which Capitalism can provide prosperity. He looks on the present as the psychological moment when the workers are disheartened by strike and fight, to lay before them such hopes as will

* Extracts from *Industry and Politics*, by the Rt. Hon. Sir Alfred Mond, Bart., LL.D., M.P. (Macmillan, 12/6).

prevent their turning towards revolutionary solutions of their difficulties.

Mond's Mission.

He takes quite an evangelical view of his championship of individualism and, as he is one of the most powerful figures in British capitalism, his theories have to be examined with care for he makes no secret that he regards his suggestions as the Capitalist alternative to Socialism. "I am glad the mask is off at last. It is a clean issue between individualism and socialism," he says.

His proposals include:—

Profit Sharing and Co-partnership.

Compulsory Arbitration.

Absorption of the Unemployed.

Rationalisation of British Industry.

Forming the Empire into an Economic Unit.

Intensification of Empire Competition with the World.

Where He Goes Wrong.

The quotation at the beginning of this article states the simple truism that "it is no use constructing profit-sharing schemes if there are no profits to share." The whole case for Capitalism, therefore, rests on the possibility of profits being made by British industries. Sir Alfred Mond goes on to make the mistake of assuming that because a few firms have increased productivity and have rewarded the co-operation of the workers by bonus and profit-sharing schemes, that this is possible in every industry.

Moreover, he forgets that though workers by increased productivity may benefit at the inception of a scheme, they might find the next year, though they produce still more, that there are no profits to share, owing to circumstances (e.g., financial manipulations, foreign competition, etc.), beyond the control of both the firm and the worker.

Up Against It?

Here, Capitalism is brought face to face with the main problem, that when the increased productivity has been achieved, there is *no guarantee* that there is or will be any market for the material. This would mean that the profit-sharing would be confined to the small proportion of the workers left in employment, while the larger number would receive as their reward for co-operation "the dole." It will be easy for Sir Alfred Mond to show that this profit-sharing is possible for the chemical industry and one or two advanced specialities, but the main test is to show where it will ever be possible to absorb the tremendous potential productivity of the coal, iron and steel industries.

He "solves" the market difficulty by proposing to secure existing and future markets by intensifying competition, and suggests as a weapon in this struggle, the rationalising of industry.

British Capitalism, he sees, cannot conduct this external fight successfully, if it is waging a class war at home. Therefore, an essential part of the plan is to secure the workers as allies in the fight, and by an allied British Capitalist and Worker organisation eliminate all but British goods from the markets of the Empire, and undercut the foreign Capitalists in other markets—in short, a break with European Capitalists and an Empire economic unit making war on the world.

Another Omission.

He believes that this United Empire Unit will be able to practically dictate its terms, as he states it controls—

77%	world's wool
87%	„ rubber
27%	„ wheat
66%	„ rice
53%	„ cattle
51%	„ sheep

And produces	
69%	world's gold
42%	„ tin
88%	„ nickel
30%	„ zinc
23%	„ lead

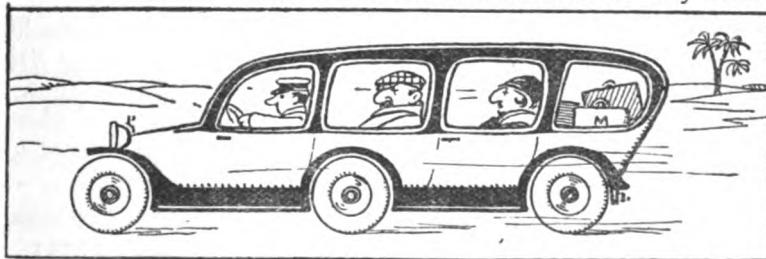
Unfortunately for his argument, he leaves out an important logical result of his reasoning, that the rest of the world will not submit quietly to British Empire domination, and will reply by intensifying *their* economic war, and in the last analysis, resorting to armed force.

The proposals, then, which Sir Alfred Mond makes to the British Trade Union movement are that, in return for a prosperity which he *thinks* Capitalism can provide, British Labour will renounce its Socialist tendencies, break its international connections, and enter into co-operation with British Capitalism to make industrial, and, if necessary, armed war on the world, in short—*A choice between Socialism or War.*

A Will o' the Wisp.

No one wants war, and no worker wants strikes, and, indeed no body of workers have ever entered a fight with the employers thinking that the struggle could have been avoided. War with the workers is costly to the capitalists, and capitalists only force strikes and lock-outs on the workers when their profits are at stake. It is because we, as Marxians, have analysed the dynamic tendencies of Capitalism that we *know* that permanent industrial peace is a will o' the wisp except in a co-operative state of Society. There is therefore no possibility that employers and Trade Union leaders will solve the contradictions of Capitalism. Perhaps few of the leaders expect to do so; they appear to be trying to make the best of a Brest-Litovsk peace. If not, so much the worse.

It is essential, however, that the Unions should realise to what policy Sir Alfred asks them to commit themselves, and Mond's book makes this abundantly clear.



THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL CROSSING THE WILDERNESS—NEW STYLE.
(According to the press, Sir A. Mond recently crossed the Syrian Desert to Iraq in a six-wheeled saloon car.)

CLASS BIAS IN THE SCHOOLS

By the Education Secretary of the Teachers' Labour League.

IN the January issue of *The PLEBS* Mark Starr concludes his article on *Hate and History* by the remark that nationalist bias in school text-books is often eclipsed by anti-working-class bias. The investigations that the Teachers' Labour League is conducting into the many evidences of class bias in present-day education have shown the truth of this.

Nearly all history text-books are written by authors who belong to the middle class or have imbibed middle class ideas, usually at Oxford or Cambridge. Small wonder then that it is rare to find a school text-book where history is regarded as any more than an account of the doings of a small class of politicians, militarists and navalists. It is still rarer to find any work that is not thoroughly imperialist in tone. A school text-book that attempts to give a faithful account of the history of the working class is difficult to find and stands very little chance of being introduced into our schools.

"The Mob."

The class bias of the authors is revealed in deliberate statements and in omissions and in the use of certain expressions. The preference for the contemptuous expression, "the mob," when referring to any mass movement, is a striking though unconscious betrayal of a point of view.

In *Great Britain and Ireland: A History for Lower Forms*, by Dr. John Morris, the author refers to the people of France at the time of the French Revolution as "the mob" and mentions Burke's attack on "the howling mob of Paris." We are later told

that William IV. "hated violence and would not sanction mob rule." The movement for the Reform Bill of 1832 we learn was, however, "a national movement, not merely a question of criminals and loafers." What he apparently means is that it included the middle class as well as the working class and was for the advantage of the former. Another work, *The Re-Making of Modern Europe; from the outbreak of the French Revolution to the Treaty of Berlin*, by J. A. R. Marriott, also very widely used, remarks that, "The capture of the Bastille marked the beginning of Mob Rule in Paris." Twice later does he refer to "the mob" in narrating the events of the Revolution as he also does in reference to 1830 and 1848. The reference to the Commune of 1871 is too good to omit: "The Hotel de Ville was seized by a mob consisting partly of fanatics, but chiefly of the Paris Canaille." Mob is not sufficient; he has to resort to French to express his contempt.

The sins of omission are everywhere evident. It is usual, for instance, to describe the enclosure of the commons in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries without giving any indication that it meant the destruction of the peasant class in England. Trade unions usually receive no attention till 1906, when they are described as being made "privileged bodies." Such, for example, is the view of R. B. Mowat, a very popular and very reactionary writer of text-books in his *A Hundred and Sixty Years of British History* and of the Liberal Imperialist, Ramsay Muir, in *A Short History of the British Commonwealth*. Co-operatives are naturally hardly ever mentioned.

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THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Edited by H. B. LEES-SMITH, M.P.

Foreword by Rt. Hon. J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, M.P.

The publication of this work not only marks a distinct development in the Labour literature of the present time, but it will also be one of the most important contributions to Labour literature of all time.

THE FOREWORD.

In a brilliant Foreword, in which he defines his idea of what the Labour Movement stands for, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald says of this Encyclopædia :—

“Here we have something of sober authority, something that can be depended upon, something written not with a political, but an intellectual object. Both our defence forces and our critics may turn to these volumes, and understand what in truth the Labour Party is, what is its outlook, what its range of vision, what discipline and knowledge it brings to its work.”

THE CONTRIBUTORS.

Among the Contributors are 18 Members of the First Labour Government, including :—

Rt. Hon. J. R. Clynes, M.P.	Lord Parmoor of Frieth.	Viscount Haldane.
Rt. Hon. Philip Snowden, M.P.	Rt. Hon. Arthur Henderson, M.P.	Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas, M.P.
Lord Olivier.	Rt. Hon. Sidney Webb, M.P.	Rt. Hon. John Wheatley, M.P.
Rt. Hon. Charles P. Trevelyan, M.P.	Rt. Hon. Noel Buxton, M.P.	Rt. Hon. William Graham, M.P.
Rt. Hon. Arthur Ponsonby, M.P.	C. R. Attlee, M.P.	C. G. Ammon, M.P.
A. V. Alexander, M.P.	Miss Margaret Bondfield, M.P.	Arthur Greenwood, M.P.

Of the other Contributors, the following may be mentioned as being representative :—

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A. J. Cook.	The Lord Bishop of Manchester	Lieut.-Col. L'Estrange Malone, M.P.
Mrs. Barbara Wootton, M.A.	George Lansbury, M.P.	A. Fenner Brockway.
Harry Snell, M.P.	Miss Ellen Wilkinson, M.A., M.P.	Rev. L. A. O'Hea, M.A., S.J.

OUTLINE OF THE CONTENTS.

There are over 250 separate articles contained in “The Encyclopædia of the Labour Movement.” The following are some of the subjects dealt with:—International Arbitration—The Coal Industry—Communism—Education—Fabianism—The Labour Party's Foreign Policy—Labour in Germany—Housing—The Labour Party's Taxation Policy—Local Government—Municipal Trading—The Poor Law—Pensions—Unemployment—Feeding of School Children—Trade Unions and the Law—The Co-operative Movement—Keir Hardie—Lenin—Karl Marx—Robert Owen—Rousseau—Vandervelde.

GUIDE TO READING.

One of the most striking features of the work is the Guide to Reading, which has been compiled by the Editor and the Contributors, and which gives a selected list of the best books for the reader who wishes to acquire a specialised knowledge of any particular subject.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS, many of which have been very difficult to obtain, are a contribution of considerable importance.

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The Money Savers.

Examples of bias expressed in definite terms abound. A very popular book in the higher forms of Secondary Schools, *The Groundwork of British History*, by Warner and Marten, describes the post-war problem facing Britain in terms that are identical with those of every popular defender of capitalism: "The problem

ALL State education is a sort of dynamo machine for polarizing the popular mind; for turning and holding its lines of force in the direction supposed to be most effective for State purposes.

*The Education of Henry Adams:
An Autobiography.*

before Great Britain is how at one and the same time to secure improved conditions for the wage-earners, who provide the manual labour, and reasonable profits for the money savers who risk their capital and provide the enterprise and organisation, and yet to keep the price of production low enough to enable Great Britain to compete and compete successfully in the markets of the world."

Peace For Exploitation.

A last example may be taken from the latest edition of a book whose popularity is indicated by the fact that it has been reprinted nine times—*A First Book of English History*, by F. J. C. Hearnshaw, Professor of History in King's College, University of London: "To the general trend towards peace there were only two serious exceptions during the years 1925-7, and both of them owed their seriousness to one and the same cause, viz., to fomentation by the Soviet Government in Moscow. The first was the Coal Strike and the supplementary General Strike of 1926; the second was the Anti-European and peculiarly Anti-British movement in China. The Coal Strike, which came as the culmination of a long period of agitation and unrest in the British coalfields, began on May 1, 1926, and continued until it died out in disastrous failure towards the end of the ensuing November. For nine days (May 4th to

13th, 1926), it was reinforced by a General Strike, involving besides the miners about a million and a half of working men and women. It was the most formidable challenge to constitutional government which this country had known since the seventeenth century. Fortunately the nation realised its sinister significance and completely defeated it. The result of these two lamentable essays in industrial war, although immeasurably injurious to all who were involved in them, were (*sic*) not wholly without compensation. The complete collapse of both the strikes, and the incalculable losses and miseries which they brought in their train, immensely strengthened the hands of those who were striving for industrial peace. Similarly, it is to be hoped that the troubles in China, when they shall have subsided, will convey to all concerned the lesson—which apparently can be learned only by painful experience—that the essential condition for prosperity and happiness is tranquillity." This is what a Professor considers to be history.

The importance of all this is evident. Not only are working-class children thus given such conceptions of history as suit the dominant class, but teachers receiving their training from the same books are constantly being turned out ready to continue the same tradition. The N.C.L.C. has set out to counteract these evil results on the workers; the aim of the T.L.L. is to reveal to the teachers and to the workers the truth about modern capitalist-controlled education.

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THE BOOKSHELF

By J. F. HERRABIN

MAKE a note of the title of this book:—

KENYA FROM WITHIN. By W. McGregor Ross. (Allen and Unwin, 18s.).

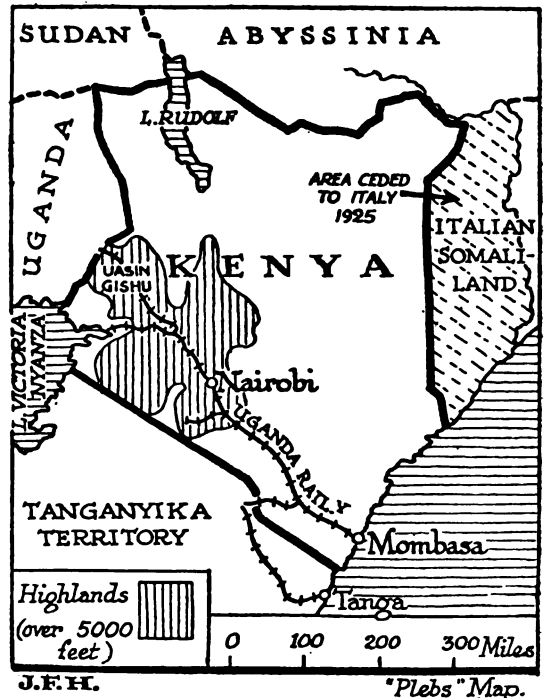
Then—unless you happen to be “in funds” and have eighteen bob to spare, which I know is unlikely—go straight round to your local Library and kick up a fuss until you get the book. See that they have more than one copy of it. Tell your friends about it. Above all, read it. It is a book in a thousand.

The Man on the Spot.

Kenya from Within is a study, at first-hand, of Capitalist-Imperialism in actual operation. Its author knows his subject “from within,” having begun his career as a construction engineer on the Uganda Railway twenty-eight years ago, and continued it as a Government official—Director of Public Works, East Africa Protectorate (Kenya)—from 1905 until 1923, when his steady opposition to the views and activities of the ruling clique of the Colony resulted in his being retired on pension. He tells the story, which Dr. Norman Leys has also told, of land-grabbing from natives, of solemn contracts torn up as “scraps of paper,” of forced native labour (at three hours a penny), compulsory registration, heavy taxation (not of whites) and of denial of all political rights to black men and of very nearly all to Indian immigrants. He tells of these things with a wealth of details, comments, and personal touches which makes his book not merely invaluable as an authoritative record, but a fascinatingly interesting “human document.” Even if you have read Dr. Leys’ book, therefore, you will find Mr. Ross’s in more senses than one supplementary.

The East African Commission.

This Kenya question is given “topical” interest just now by the recent departure of a Government Commission (consisting of



three financial experts and a missionary) to East Africa. The nominal business of the Commission is to inquire into the desirability of a Federation of the various East and Central African colonies (and mandates), “and to make recommendations on this and cognate matters.” What some of the cognate matters are which lurk behind this camouflage issue of Federation Mr. Ross tells us.

One word, first, on the geography of Kenya. Its total area is more than twice that of Great Britain. But only a part of that area, *viz.*, the land in the south-western corner of the Colony lying over 5,000 feet above sea-level (see map) is of first-class economic importance. Not only has it great agricultural possibilities, but (and this is the vital point) its climate, by reason of its altitude, *makes it a possible country for white men.* This area was “opened-up” by the building of the Uganda Railway, constructed to bring the cotton of Uganda to the seaport of Mombasa. It is, as Dr. Leys puts it, “a fertile island, set in a desert sea, with deserts north, east and south of it,” and the fertile lands of Uganda to the north-west.

The White Man's Burden.

The problems which make Kenya to-day one of the danger-zones of the Empire arise out of the discovery that white men—white owners, to be precise—could live in, and make big profits out of, the fertile highland area. But this made necessary two things: first, the taking of the land from the native occupiers; second, the turning of these same natives into wage-labourers (at three hours a penny) on the white man's lands. For "chapter and verse" on these matters read Mr. Ross. The first business, that of taking the land away from the native, involved the breaking of various solemn contracts and promises made by the British Government, or its representatives. One such agreement, guaranteeing to a native tribe, the Masai, occupation of a certain area "so long as the Masai as a race shall exist," lasted, Mr. Ross points out, for exactly six years, 261 days. White settlers were then given lands in this area, *the Masai, during the six-and-three-quarter years, having vastly improved the land.*

The making of the Africans into wage-slaves was a more difficult job. But by dint of trickery, bribery (of native chiefs), and force, this has been in great measure achieved. Every native in Kenya must "register," and carry about with him everywhere registration papers, including fingerprints. He may not leave the native reserves except as a wage-labourer (at three hours a penny). He is heavily taxed, in order to give him no choice but to work for the white man's wages (a penny for three hours) in order to get the money to pay the tax. He *must* do at least a minimum period of wage-labour for white employers every year.

Despite all this the handful of white settlers in Kenya (some of them millionaires) are dissatisfied with the degree of exploitation of native labour. They want more compulsion—and bigger profits. Their more extreme demands have so far not been acceded to—at any rate openly—by the British Government, which is of course a little embarrassed by its various promises and protestations about "trusteeship" for the native peoples. The white

settlers want "self-government" for Kenya; by which they mean the government of a quarter-of-a-million Africans and some 12,000 Indians by some 9,000 of themselves. It would appear that the British Government has suggested that some sort of camouflage for this blatant demand should be found. Hence the call for "Federation"; and hence the Commission, to find good and sufficient reasons for Federation.

Our Glorious Empire.

It is a dirty story. Mr. Ross makes it a live one. He was in pretty close contact with most of the chief actors in it. And he has a dry wit. I will quote only a couple of his sentences. The first is the opening of the chapter on native taxation, headed "Shifting the Burden Slightly":—

For the year 1924 the yield of direct taxation from natives in Kenya was £561,828. European poll-tax yielded less than £9,000. The White Man's Burden is to-day being borne manfully—by black men.

The second is the concluding sentence of a chapter describing the difficulties of an honest Government official, the sort of treatment he gets from his superiors and from the white land-owners:—

It really is a satisfaction, when all is said and done, to have gentlemen to deal with.

One day, the East African native will say just that same thing—with an even more contemptuous irony.

A MAN'S BRAIN

consists, we are told, of 300,000,000 nerve cells and 3,000 of them are destroyed every minute. Everyone therefore is growing a new brain.

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a good send-off by taking an
N.C.L.C. CORRESPONDENCE
COURSE.

CAPITALISM AND THE CINEMA

A Mighty Propaganda Weapon

By HENRY DOBB

THE major-generals, lawyers, screw-manufacturers, cotton brokers, bankers and Tory members of Parliament who lay out capital want a return for the money they expend. What better investment than a growing, get-rich-quick business like the Cinema? But they are not going, with an art in such wide and constant contact with the masses, to allow the expression of any views that will imperil the system which has permitted them to amass the boodle.

We might examine the German industry where the U.F.A. concern is the dominant factor. We would find that this great octopus is almost entirely controlled by the Nationalist Party and the Deutsches Bank. (Its late foreign manager, Dr. Becker, came straight from the Stinnes concern.) We might look at the Italian Industry where the two main producing concerns were amalgamated and are now watched carefully by the one and only Mussolini. We might turn to India and discover that there a Government committee has been appointed, composed of three Indian nabobs, a soldier and three Government officials, to discuss the control and production of films. In Canada we should learn that the Government had enlisted for aid in the production of propaganda films no less a person than the redoubtable Captain Bruce Bairnsfather, whose *Carry On, Sergeant*, will not, I fear, be a complete expression of the Tommy's point of view.

Art and £ s. d.

But seeing we are in England, let us see what the English do. Working backwards

from the theatre door so to speak, we get to the Publicity or Exploitation Departments. In charge of these are usually men and very often women of tried experience in the capitalist press. It is their business to stress the selling points of the films. They organise "tie-ups" with chocolate manufacturers, boot dealers, British Legion and daily papers. It is their great ideal to enlist the aid of the army or the aristocracy to add a fillip to the productions. By this means they boost both their shops and the class for whom they work.

In the trade papers, whether by accident or design, the editorial jobs are held by "safe" men. The editor of the best of these was wartime head of the Film Section of the Ministry of Information. As to that self-imposed gateway through which the trade passes its films, the Board of Film Censors, I can but refer the reader to a recent article of mine in the *Sunday Worker*. There I gave a select list of reasons for which films are cut. They included Bolshevik propaganda, lampoons of monarchy, and themes "hurtful to our allies" or deprecatory of the police.

Virtue—and Dollars.

Thus we work back to the film itself. "Popular Appeal" is the ideal aimed at. Films thus composed are roughly of three characters—comedies, dramas and adventures. There are sub-divisions, especially in the second category. But in nearly all, especially in the American model, the characters are of the propertied class, and the workers play a buffoon role in the Shakespearean tradition. Vice is always

HAVE YOU ARRANGED TO GET YOUR PLEBS DURING THE SUMMER?

punished and bourgeois virtue triumphant. If a commoner is in a heroic role he or she must end up a member of the possessing class, otherwise workers and their life are mere themes for clowning in the manner of *The Cohens and the Kellys* or *Private Izzy Murphy*. Sometimes working-class life is portrayed faithfully. It was in Stroheim's *Greed*, in *The Salvation Hunters*, and recently in *Master of the House*. Such films are ruthlessly cut and then ignored by the renters. A genius such as Pabst produces one of the greatest films ever made, a film that showed the tragic aftermath of war, *The Joyless Street*. Only a cut version is shown semi-privately in London. *The Big Parade* in its original form was an anti-war film. It is not generally known that the version shown here was hacked about and clipped of many bitter episodes, such as the shell-shocked Tommy in hospital.

War-Boosting.

Fifty per cent. of the 1927 productions were war films. And they are still doing them. *Mons, Zeebrugge, The Somme, Remembrance, The Flag Lieutenant, The Flight Commander, For Valour, The Luck of the Navy, Coronel and Falklands* are but a few. In the production of these the aid of the Admiralty and the War Office is enlisted.

A favourite theme just now, vide *The Flag Lieutenant* and *The Flight Commander* is anti-Chinese and anti-Russian propaganda. British Instructional are known for their superb nature pictures. But they spend much more money on producing such works as *Zeebrugge* and *Tell England*. There are numerous institutes and leagues watching the cinema on behalf of the capitalist class. The most amusing of these is the British Empire Film Institute, with Lord Askwith as chairman. Its activities are, however, mainly confined to luncheons.

I do not wish to convey the impression that there are no good films. Rather I insist that there are masterpieces awaiting us. But with the industry so tightly in the hands of the capitalists there is little chance for the work of such geniuses as Pabst,

Gance, Renoir, L'Herbier or Dulac to develop, or for such films as *Matthew Pascal, New Year's Eve, Le Train Sans Ueux, or Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* to reach us.

The Cinema in Russia.

Only in Russia, where the cinema has become the plastic expression of a liberated class, has the film developed and received the credit that is its due. There it is both a social instrument and an art. In sanitation and hygiene it has proved an invaluable factor in reaching the hitherto illiterate masses. Pavlov, perhaps the greatest psychologist in the world, has called the cinema to his aid. Travelling cinema trains reach the innermost corners of Russia with news, medical advice and new methods of agriculture.

With the encouragement and aid of a workers' state the cinema has developed so quickly that already it has produced *Potemkin* and *Mother*, both acknowledged to be supreme achievements of the film. In these films technical resource is allied at last to intellectual content. In Russia the cinema is an art, and none of its artists are content with anything but the best. The Sovkino, the Government concern, has established numerous schools of training in all branches of production. Few American or British producers would pass its exams! Its results are seen in the Russian cinemas. And these cinemas are always filled.

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AMONG THE BOOKS

By
"PLEBS" REVIEWERS

ONE of the most useful of the "Vanguard" series to students of Economics is A. S. Sach's "Basic Principles of Scientific Socialism." It treats of the essential principles of Marxian thought. Historical Materialism and the Class Struggle are adequately explained, and a useful comparison is given of the Utility and Labour theories of Value. A final chapter on the trend of industrial development in America, with striking statistical data, confirms the theories of Scientific Socialism. "Vanguard" books are well bound and printed and cost 2/6, or 2/9 post free, from N.C.L.C. Head Office.

J.H.

* * *

The publication of *Pitman's Economics Educator* (to be completed in about thirty fortnightly parts. Part I.—1/3) is certainly a sign of the times. Encyclopaedic knowledge at a shilling a dose, History on the instalment plan, Science, Literature and Art by easy stages, we know and are familiar with—but not the so-called Dismal Science in this form.

Intending readers should note that in each number a variety of subjects is considered, each article forming a single chapter of a treatise "to be continued in our next" until completed—when other subjects will take their place until the whole work has been published. Thus, in the present number we have the opening sections on twenty different branches of Economics. This method renders it difficult to estimate the value of the *Educator*, especially when one has only a series of Introductions as in this First Part. But at least it can be said that in every case the introduction is extremely lucid and interesting; and that there appears to be every promise that for about a penny a day, one will be able to gain a thorough, all-round knowledge of economic science as generally understood and accepted to-day. It is hardly necessary to agree with the inevitable point of view in order to appreciate the value of so comprehensive and authoritative a treatment as this promises to be. T.A.

* * *

In *Individual Liberty* the best known of American anarchists, B. J. Tucker, expounds his beliefs. Those who think that anarchism is bomb throwing and nothing more should read this volume issued by the Vanguard Press (2/9 post free from the N.C.L.C.). S.M.

Democracy under Revision by H. G. Wells (Hogarth Press, 2/-) is a typical Wellsian romance but, nevertheless, a refreshing and thought-provoking examination of a provoking problem. Democracy appears as a great force of social liberation finding its expression in Industry, Politics, Literature, Art, Music, and Drama. The individual and social restrictions of the past give way to social administration by popular consent. To-day the progress of Democracy has come to an end; its historic dissolution of restraints, obstacles and controls is challenged by the need for the reorganisation of the economic, social, and intellectual life of mankind.

The post-war problems remind us of the futile efforts that have been made by democracy to find a solution. Parliamentarianism is discredited and will disappear. In its place will arise a social organisation the quality and spirit of which is historically expressed in Russia, China, and Italy. While insisting that he is anti-communist and anti-fascist, H.G.W. pins his faith to the realisation of the Modern Utopia—the World State ruled by a self-devoted organisation of volunteers.

W.J.O.

* * *

It may appear strange to us in this country that a whole Social Philosophy can be built on the concept of a Single Tax (i.e., a tax upon land values, which supposedly would make any other form of taxation unnecessary), but in the U.S.A., where rapid expansion has made the question of land values of great importance, it will be easily understood.

The style of *What is the Single Tax?* by Louis F. Post (Vanguard Series, 2/9 post free) is irritating, and there is much unnecessary material contained in it. At the end is a list of the outstanding supporters of the Single Tax proposals ! ! ! ! It is certainly not up to the standard we have been taught to expect from the Vanguard Press.

A.L.W.

* * *

One of the few criticisms that can be made against the earlier six books of this excellent Piers Plowman series is that the medieval monastery is viewed through rose-coloured spectacles. Book VII. (1830 to the present day—Phillips, 3/6) now completes the series. In Chap. 10 of this volume there is an attempt to show that the mysteries yet unsolved by science justify the retention of religion. Not but what Bury's *Freedom of Thought* and Darwin's books appear in the reading list. There is a wealth of useful reference matter, and although there is a glossing over of social antagonisms, the use of such a book in—and outside—the schools will be a sign of progress. M.S.

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5/- per year or 2/6 per half-year and a free copy of PLEBS each month.

Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets (Vanguard Press, 2/6; 2/9 post free) is an interesting and thought-provoking collection of Anarchist-Communist pamphlets, two of which appear for the first time in English. Kropotkin's philosophy is a mixture of idealism and materialism to which the scientific Socialist will find many objections. Nevertheless this book is a contribution to revolutionary literature that no working-class student can afford to miss. The notes by the editor are very helpful. J.S.B.

The *Main Stem*, by William Edge (Vanguard Press, 2/6). This is a splendid story of Hobo life. Blondy is initiated into the language and ethics of the migratory workers mainly under the tuition of Slim. Slim is a fine character who has escaped from the hollowness and chicaneries of bourgeois environment. He has an admiration for Blondy, but has a contempt too. There is a spirit of freedom running through this book, but we are always brought back to the hard stern realities. The *Main Stem* provides enjoyable and stimulating reading and is not overdrawn. S.R.

P's and Q's

We have received dozens of appreciations of the new PLEBS. On the other hand, we have received three unfavourable opinions. One of these states that if we "make the PLEBS a bit larger and introduce a few more comic pictures we ought to capture the devotees of the *Funny Wonder*!"

In February last a letter addressed as follows was received at the N.C.L.C. :—

"Bernard Shaw,
c/o Plebs and N.C.L.C. Students'
Association."

So this is greatness!

Mr. A. C. Baker, deploring the falling off in members at a local W.E.A. Annual Meeting, complained: "Here we are offering an Eton education for 2/- a year and having it turned down. . . . Why do the local Labour parties all shun our offers in the way they do?" Presumably because they think the education dear at the price!

Writing on a Night School, a correspondent of a Sheffield daily said: "But one room is, to my mind, the holy of holies. It is, by the kindness of the Education Committee, who provide also light, warmth, and seating accommodation, consecrated to the W.E.A.—the Workers' Educational Association. Here come, as well as youths, middle-aged men and women, to supplement, if it be not too late (and it never is!) that which life has dealt out in somewhat niggardly fashion to them. They are passionately curious after knowledge; eager for, and infinitely humble towards understanding. They come, some of them, panting and perspiring with the rush to get in in time after day has taken its toil of them in hard, demanding toil. Or they come, knowing that they go straight from class to

a night's work; in the pit, perhaps; perhaps in forge; at the furnace. But they come! And they work, taking copious and laborious notes. And they listen! Oh! How they listen, with such drinking faces!"

We have said some hard things about the W.E.A., but we have never gone so far as to allege that its students had "drinking faces."

"In a speech at Indianapolis Mr. Wilbur, Secretary of the Navy (says Reuter) admitted that the U.S. Government was being bombarded with telegrams, letters and resolutions expressing horror at their nine-year naval building programme which calls for an expenditure of \$740,000,000 (£148,000,000). Mr. Wilbur deprecated such criticism of the Administration's policy. The women of America, he said, spent more than twice as much as that sum on cosmetics in a single year. There were times when gun powder was more valuable than face powder."

But there are also times when it is not nearly so effective!

RELIGION AND TRADE UNIONISM. TO THE EDITOR.

I hope you may have space for a short comment upon your reviewer's account of my play, "The Fires of France." I am grateful for M.S.'s judgment that "if only N. D. Deuchar had not made his Trade Union stalwart turn to God in the final act his play could be wholly recommended to the dramatic and play-reading groups in connection with our classes." But the "if only" is surely irrelevant. The Trade Union martyr in my play did turn to God, but he did not give up his belief in Trade Unionism. This man said: "I knew that God could speak through a Union . . . I knew that the Unions were one form of the truth of God, which is love and liberty. Seek Him first, and your Unions will not be denied . . . I liked my work (as Union agitator) and would do it all again . . ." etc.

It is probable that even those readers who do not agree with me that God exists and is supremely important, will agree that there must be something which we may call supernatural, religious, or divine, some faith higher than mere understanding, to sustain any good effort in the world.

Yours fraternally, N. D. DEUCHAR.

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WHAT'S DOING?

The N.C.L.C. at Work

THE following is a list of *new* affiliations obtained in February by the Local Colleges:—

London, 6; Lanarkshire, 3; Lincoln, 1; Liverpool, 1. This is surely not a complete statement! Will College Committees please arrange that a note of the new affiliations is sent on each month?

TRADES COUNCILS: Liverpool reports that the Liverpool and District Trades and Labour Council has decided to cease affiliating to the W.E.A.

SCARBOROUGH AND BRUSSELS SUMMER SCHOOLS: These schools begin on the 7th July and 4th August respectively. The booking fee of 10/- should be sent on immediately. Students are requested to ask their Unions to grant scholarships. Members of Unions which have been in the habit of granting scholarships should apply for scholarships immediately.

SUMMER WORK: Colleges should now be preparing a scheme of summer work to include day and week-end schools, classes and tutors' training classes. Every Committee should make special arrangements for distributing The PLEBS during the summer and should see that The PLEBS is on sale at all week-end schools.

SHOP ASSISTANTS' UNION: The N.C.L.C.'s very sincere thanks are due to the national conference of young shop assistants which on the motion of the Douglas and Edinburgh Branches urged the young members to take full advantage of the N.C.L.C. scheme.

ENGLISH BAKERS' UNION: We understand that the English Bakers' Union is prepared to pay for a number of N.C.L.C. correspondence courses for members who like to apply. In addition to making application to the Union, it will help us if the members will send a copy of their applications to the N.C.L.C. Office. Please make this widely known amongst the members.

NATIONAL UNION OF BOOT AND SHOE OPERATIVES: We understand that this Union has an educational fund and that if a member desires a free correspondence course, he should apply through his branch, who will in turn approach the Union's Head Office.

WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING.

DIVISION 1.—Immediately following the Divisional Council meetings, held on the second Sunday of each month, an evening school will be held in the "Emily Davison Club," 144 High Holborn (top floor), W.C.1, at 7 p.m. On April 15th (the second Sunday in this month falls on Easter) W. H. Bagot (N.U.D.A.W. National Executive) will speak on his recent visit to Russia. Mrs. L. Thomas has a class for the Hammersmith Women's section on Tuesdays. Affiliated bodies have so

far subscribed £3 6s. towards providing women's scholarships to our week's school at Lancing Camp, June 23rd-30th. J. F. Horrabin and W. Paul have agreed to lecture. Silvertown N.U.D.A.W. is providing two scholarships to the Newdigate Camp School, May 5th and 6th. An Essay Examination is being held in April for N.C.L.C. students. Ramsgate A.U.B.T.W. has started a class on Working Class History.

DIVISION 2.—The Divisional annual meeting will be held on May 5th at Morris Hall, Southampton. All classes and colleges are to send delegates with financial and educational reports. The new tutor for Reading is Syd Walker, of the head office staff. A number of colleges are arranging for six lectures on "Soviet Russia." Littlehampton is running a social evening to raise funds. Portland have had special lectures by the organiser on "Merchants and Missionaries," and by W. Clarke on Sir Thomas More's "Utopia." There is a larger number of nominations this year for the A.U.B.T.W. scholarships to the Summer School. The Itchen I.L.P. has affiliated to the Southampton College. Sales of literature quite good.

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DIVISION 3.—The Agricultural Workers' Union has paid the fees of its member Comrade Elliott, of Norwich. At Colchester the secretary of the local Co-operative Society and members of the Management Committee attended a special A.E.U. branch lecture on the "Mutual Relations of Co-operation and Trades Unionism." The Shop Assistants' Branch there is fixing up a special social evening at which the Union's education scheme will be explained. At Braintree an influx of new students has compelled the division of the Esperanto Class into beginners and advanced. (Incidentally may we recommend to other classes the direct method manual "Petro" and the desirability of using its workers' songs at the opening and closing of classes?) Staines has done well for a first year—tutor, Miss Cranham. Will Colleges please note that the Divisional E.C. meets on April 21st and forward reports, resolutions—and cash if possible—in good time? Thanks to Comrades Hulyer and Dobb, Cambridge class has begun. Ipswich students are doing some local research to get local colour into their Social History homework.

DIVISION 4.—J. S. Williams, the Merthyr secretary, states that the local branch of the General and Municipal Workers is taking a voluntary collection at two of its depots to assist College funds.

DIVISION 5.—Bristol College is still making headway—two new classes started last month. This month a further class has been established at Winterbourne. Meetings of the Assurance Workers, the Woodworkers and the Plasterers have been addressed. The Women's Section of the Labour Party has become affiliated to the Bath College and has a class. Miss Stoddart is making every effort to revive the classes in the Gloucester area and a good gathering of the comrades was addressed by the organiser.

DIVISION 6.—A special course of lectures is being conducted by Organiser Barr on "Working Class Philosophy" each Friday evening in Digbeth Institute, Birmingham. Over sixty students have enrolled. A conference of the Birmingham Federation of the Guild of Youth was addressed by the organiser on the subject of "Youth and Education." Stoke is arranging a conference at an early date.

DIVISION 7.—The Skipton College has a new class on Tuesdays in the Textile Club—tutor, Dan Wilson. A new secretary has been appointed for the Doncaster College—W. C. Emerson, 116 Carr House Road, Doncaster. Everyone interested is asked to report to him. A delegate conference was held during January by the Shipley College. A class was arranged with Felix Walsh, of Bradford, as tutor. A new secretary was appointed—Miss Nellie Naughton, 5 Thompson Street, Shipley. York College had a very successful demonstration with Tom Mann as speaker and new students were enrolled. The Organiser, who is in South Yorkshire on Sundays, had to arrange with

a friend to motor him over from Huddersfield to Wath to convey him to Rotherham for a train to York for the meeting. The Organiser's cycle has been awaiting a post-mortem since last September. R.I.P. Hector Highley, of Halifax College, who has been laid up with a septic foot, will soon be back at his classes. The Dewsbury Class is excelling itself.

DIVISION 8.—**NORTH LANCS. AREA:** The Week-End School at Nelson was a great success, nearly 200 students attending. The Preston School is now to be held on April 1st in the Labour Rooms, Lancaster Road, with W. Paul as lecturer.

S.E. LANCS. AREA: Over 100 students attended a meeting of the Students' Association in Manchester when Fred Casey lectured. On Saturday, March 24th, N.E. Lancs. students will be entertained. The programme includes a special lecture at Manchester Museum, followed by tea and social evening. The Manchester Dramatic Group will provide the programme. A PLEBS push has resulted in an increase of circulation of fifty copies, thanks to tutors and class secretaries. One tutor, H. Ingle, disposes of over thirty copies per month in the workshop.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT.—A fair attendance was recorded at the recent quarterly delegate meeting at which Comrade J. W. Horan gave a much-appreciated address on his recent visit to Russia. A joint meeting was held with the Newton Labour Club, when Comrade Horan lectured to over seventy students.

DIVISION 9.—A successful Day School was held at Willington when Will Coxon delivered two splendid lectures on the "Present Outlook of the Working Class" and the "Future of the Working Class Movement." The response to the circulars sent out by the Durham College is encouraging. Miners' Lodges which in the past have been neutral are in several instances asking for speakers to put the N.C.L.C. position. Tutors and students in the Middlesbrough area are working hard in the election campaign in Middlesbrough West.

DIVISION 10.—Colleges are busy with the second session's work. There is nothing exceptional to report.

DIVISION 11.—No report.

DIVISION 12.—Comrade Foulger, late of the Labour College, is rendering good service at Mansfield and Huthwaite. In some of the mining areas the terrible intimidation which prevails has created a situation where it is dangerous to show any Labour activity. This is creating difficulties for us in some places. Derby reports the formation of a new Committee, accompanied by a revival of activity which is very welcome. Northampton College is hoping to arrange a day school with the newly-elected member for the Borough as lecturer.

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