

115

# The PLEBS

Organ of the National  
Council of Labour Colleges

Monthly 4<sup>d</sup>

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AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 1928

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# THE PLEBS

*Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges*

Vol. XX.

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 1928.

No. 8

## CONTENTS

TWENTY YEARS ... .. 169	WHAT'S WRONG WITH "PLEBS"? : (Letters) 180
WHAT IS THINKING? by J. P. M. MILLAR 171	THE ANNUAL MEETING ... 182
THE MODERN CASE FOR SOCIALISM by ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P. 172	THE BOOKSHELF by J. F. HORRABIN 184
THE SUMMER SCHOOL (A Prize Essay) 174	A HISTORY OF SOCIALISM by A. L. WILLIAMS 186
INTERESTED IN SCIENCE? by J. P. M. MILLAR 176	BOOK REVIEWS ... .. 189
THE GENERAL COUNCIL by GEORGE HICKS 178	BACK TO A BOB By W.H. 190
	WHAT'S DOING ... .. 191

## TWENTY YEARS

**W**E celebrate an anniversary next February. It was in February, 1909, that Vol. I. No. 1 of *The PLEBS* appeared. Twenty years. . . .

We want to celebrate in the best and most appropriate way—by a big push for I.W.C.E. this winter which will enable us, when February comes, to announce a higher circulation figure than *The PLEBS* has ever reached before.

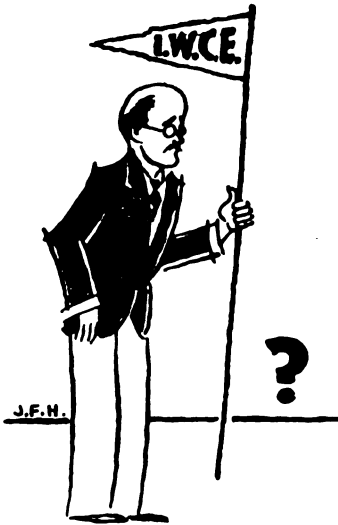
We want also a record membership figure for the League (see particulars of re-organisation decisions elsewhere in this issue). Members are to be Mag.-pushers, and we're asking for a big organised "drive" during the coming months.

On our side, we intend to do our utmost to make the Mag. better worth while than ever. We're planning special features for the winter, and we shall inaugurate these next month by publishing the first of two vividly-written articles by R. W. Postgate on "The Story of Trade Unionism."

August is a holiday month—you have time just now to think your plans over. In September we want to start the ball rolling.

**Have we made a Convert?**

"There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. . . ." Did you notice the *Herald* report of a speech by Mr. Arthur Pugh, president of the W.E.A., at a week-end school held at Newport (Mon.), July 7th-8th? It was headed



### CLASS CONTROL IN EDUCATION

#### MR. PUGH ON MEANS OF ECONOMIC DOMINATION

And the speech lived up to the headlines! "It was becoming more and more generally recognised," said Mr. Pugh, "that the greatest obstacle to democracy was class control of educational institutions. *Those who controlled education used their position to sustain their domination, particularly in the economic sphere.*"

Well, we've been saying that for quite a number of years. And we always understood that Mr. Pugh took the view that to talk about class control in regard to education was inaccurate—and slightly vulgar. We trust that he will now forward his bob to *The PLEBS*, and henceforth stand solid for I.W.C.E.

"To overcome present industrial difficulties," Mr. Pugh went on, "the leaders and administrators of the Trade Union movement must be equipped with a *knowledge of how the present industrial system worked.*" True. But is the economically dominant class which, as Mr. Pugh says, controls education likely to provide workers with the means of acquiring such knowledge? Not. . . . likely. If T.U. leaders and administrators want such knowledge, for themselves or their people, they will have to see to it that the Trade Unions have

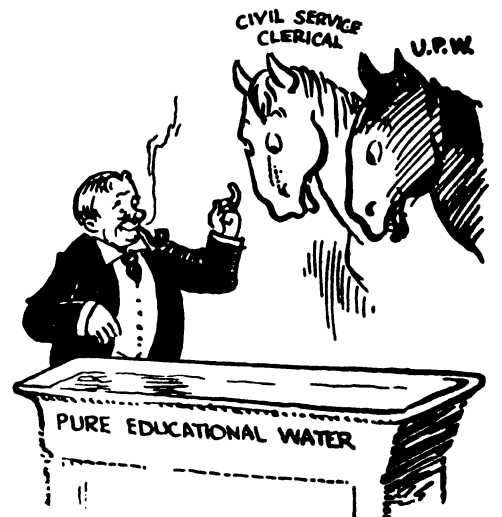
their own educational machinery, independent of any sort or kind of control by their economic enemies.

#### The Govt.'s Testimonial to I.W.C.E.

When the Blacklegs' Charter was being pushed through the House of Commons one Labour M.P. voiced the fear that the Act would prevent Unions having educational schemes with the W.E.A. (W.E.T.U.C.). Had he more fully appreciated the Government's educational policy he would have realised that his fears were groundless.

One of the achievements of the Blacklegs' Charter is that it compelled the Civil Service Unions to cut themselves off from the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party. Encouraged by the Act the Treasury—a faithful interpreter of the wishes of the governing class—has decided that Civil Service Unions, while they may have as many educational schemes with the W.E.A. as they please, may have none at all with the N.C.L.C. We congratulate the Government on its intelligent class-consciousness, and thank it for the compliment to I.W.C.E.

We should, however, like to know what the Union of Post Office Workers thinks about the situation. Prior to the Anti-Trade Union Act, the U.P.W. (quite a



"You may lead a horse to the water....."

number of its branches excepted) was a faithful (and financial) supporter of the W.E.A. It could not appreciate the case for I.W.C.E. as presented by the Labour Colleges. Now that the Government has stated the case so plainly we hope the Union realises that just as there "is eggs and eggs" so there is "education and education." We hope, too, that such Unions as the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and the R.C.A., which fought the Black-legs' Charter, will take the opportunity the Government has given them of revising their views on Trade Union education and joining the bulk of their colleagues by arranging education schemes with the N.C.L.C.

There was some discussion at the Annual Meeting about the desirability—and possibility—of selling The PLEBS and other literature at T.U. branch meetings when visited by an N.C.L.C. speaker. Some comrades declared that it was impracticable. Others that results were so small that it was not worth while carrying literature along.

The most effective answer to these arguments is contained in the following brief item from Organiser Coldrick's report just to hand:—

Branch meeting (20 present).

PLEBS sold . . . . . 20.

Will all literature secretaries and organisers ponder over those figures?

### *Ten minutes Talks with New Students:*

## 7—WHAT IS THINKING?

By J. P. M. MILLAR.

**I**N our endeavours to understand how we think we last month examined our idea of what constitutes a pen. We saw that we had knowledge of all sorts of pens—steel pens, fountain pens, quill pens and so on. Yet our idea of what constitutes a pen was not that it was a writing instrument of steel, for instance, for that would rule out the golden-nibbed fountain pen. A pen, we say, is a sharp-pointed writing instrument using ink. How did we construct that idea? is the question we asked ourselves.

Let us take another idea, that of the blackleg. Among blacklegs there is the Baronet who served as a steward on an Atlantic liner, the student who thinks he is serving society by taking the place of a striker, the trade unionist who for the sake of extra money continues to work in a "struck" shop, the slum-dweller who wants the beer that is offered to blacklegs. But our idea of what constitutes a blackleg is not that he is a baronet, a student, a bad trade unionist or a slum-dweller with a passion for beer. Our idea of a blackleg

is a person who takes the place of a man or woman who is on strike.

### The Common Feature.

In examining the idea of pen and the idea of blackleg, what do we find our mind has done? It has singled out from the many different pens the quality that is common to all. It has extracted from the many different kinds of blacklegs the quality common to all blacklegs, merely that of taking a striker's place.

This enables us to say what thought is—not our thoughts about pens or about Mondism or about blacklegs, but about *all* thoughts. Just as food in general is that quality which is common to all foods, i.e., nourishment, so is thought in general the quality that is common to all kinds of thoughts. When we examine various kinds of pens and get the idea of what constitutes a pen, when we examine the various blacklegs and find what a blackleg is, when we examine various foods and discover what food is, what does our mind do? It singles out the feature common to all pens, the feature common to all blacklegs, the feature common to all foods.

Thus we see that thinking, the faculty of thought, is the capacity of seeking out that which is general or common to all the objects or thoughts under consideration. Thinking therefore is the faculty of extracting the unity from the variety, the general from the particular; in brief, the ability to classify.

# THE MODERN CASE FOR SOCIALISM

by ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P.

SINCE the war there has been a curious hiatus in this country in the succession of books on general political Socialist theory and policy. The small books, written by MacDonald and Snowden in 1920, might have been written in a different world from that in which we live to-day. They wrote amid the hashish dreams of post-war speculation, which they looked at with the eyes of 1910. Amid this sterility, Brailsford's book, *Socialism for To-day*, was a welcome spring; but, brilliantly written though it was, its main concern was the exposition of the I.L.P. theory of the Living Wage. Socialist doctrine was crammed into a rather stiff strait-jacket.

## Shaw's Shocks for Sleepers.

This year has been notable for two excellent books on Socialism: Bernard Shaw's *Guide* and now *The Modern Case for Socialism*, by A. W. Humphrey.\* Shaw's book is literature. It will be read when all the problems he discusses have been replaced by quite different ones. His *Guide* is a bombshell rather than an exposition. A good sub-title would have been "Shocks for Sleepy Socialists." The author went back to a few of the first principles of the movement, and in the face of Labour M.P.s and trade union hierarchies emphasised its essential egalitarianism.

A. W. Humphrey is neither Shaw nor Marx, but he is a very competent journalist, accustomed to getting his points across. He argues the case for Socialism from the facts of the modern world. In this he is more akin to Marx than Shaw, for G.B.S. tends to evolve his theories, like the German's elephant, from his inner consciousness.

We are living in a period in which Marx would have thoroughly enjoyed himself,

watching the working-out in practice of some of his more daring prophecies. It is significant that the first three chapters of this book take the Marxian analysis for granted. Incidentally it is the clearest and simplest exposition of the basic theories of Marx that I have read. Some N.C.L.C. lecturers would profit by a careful study of the language and method.

Any Socialist propagandist who keeps the usual muddle of press cuttings must have longed for a book which get these facts across as a reasoned case. Humphrey's chapters on the claims of capital and the passing of competition are a mine of up-to-date propaganda material. When Shaw barbs an epigram, Humphrey weighs in with a fact.

## Britain for the British!

Of course a book of this kind covers so much ground that no chapter can state the whole case. An encyclopædia, not a total of 270 pages, is needed for that. My main criticism of the book is that it tends to isolate the British problem, to treat it as though the rest of the world hardly existed. America is the only other capitalist country that is even mentioned in the index.

The author admits in the preface that his book needs another to complete it. In that other volume imperialist as well as insular Britain should be studied. For example, in discussing whether the theory of "abstinence" confers any moral rights on capitalism, Humphrey rightly points out that it was the worker not the capitalist who did the "abstaining." The gross underpayment and overwork of the textile operatives in the early nineteenth century built up the reserve of capital needed for the full exploitation of the new inventions, but he omits entirely the important contribution of

\* Allen & Unwin, 12/6.

the plunder of the East and the pillage of India.

The chapter on "The Power of the Banks" would make an excellent propagandist pamphlet, but it is too slight and too descriptive to form of itself the whole case for the nationalisation of the banks, which the author cheerily remarks is "one of the first objectives of Socialism to-day." After my experience of the Programme Committee and of Mr. Snowden I wish I could be as sure of that as he is!

### Workers' Control.

The two chapters on public enterprise in industry and practice give a lot of new facts and assemble into a logical case many of the more familiar ones. The final chapter on "Democracy in Industry" is the only part of the book which is not right up to date. The author should have read his own first three chapters, with their excellent Marxian analysis, before he tried in ten somewhat hasty final pages to sketch the economic democracy of the future Socialist state. Mr. Humphrey has appar-

ently seized on Guild Socialism as an easy way of avoiding that big problem of the status of the worker in socialised industry. He evades it neatly by referring us to the Mr. Orage of 1914 and the G. D. H. Cole of 1919.

But the Russian experiments in practical socialisation have happened since then. No modern case for Socialism can be adequate which does not include a discussion of the lessons they have learned and the practical difficulties they have had to tackle. Mr. Humphrey's bibliography does not list such key books as Dobbs' *Russian Economic Development Since the Revolution*, or even the I.L.O. reports.

It is maddening that books like Shaw's *Guide* and this *Case* should have to be published at 15/- and 12/6. Humphrey's book is indispensable for the up-to-date propagandist. It would form an admirable textbook for Labour study circles, and would give a useful "foundation" course for N.C.L.C. classes. A cheap edition is urgently needed.

## IS RUSSIA GOING BACK TO CAPITALISM?

The answer to this ten-year-old question is supplied, so far as the mining industry is concerned, in

### "Workers' Control in the Russian Mining Industry"

by John Strachey, with a foreword by A. J. Cook.

This 48-page pamphlet is the result of two months spent in the Russian coalfields, studying the industry with special reference to workers' control.

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THE NEW LEADER  
14 GREAT GEORGE ST. - LONDON, S.W.1

# THE COBER HILL SUMMER SCHOOL.

## *A Prize Essay*

*At the N.C.L.C. Summer School at Cober Hill, we offered a prize of £1 for the best essay describing the various activities of the School. The prize has been won by Miss Mary Dightam, of Leeds, whose essay is printed below. Excellent essays were also sent in by C. W. Nunn (Middlesbrough), Ethel Mack (Leeds), R. Aston (Barkingside), Mrs. D. Sindrey (Sheerness) and Marian Jessop (Leeds). We may note that the prize essay does not mention the visit of Comrades Geo. Hicks and A. J. Cook to the School; but every competitor left out something!*

**H**URRAH! The train steamed out of a murky station towards Cloughton, where we knew—having some experience of Labour College Summer Schools—we were in for a real treat. On arrival at the Guest House one felt this was truly the heaven the poets dreamed of. A beautiful house standing in its own grounds; this was to be ours for the week. After a hurried “brush up” we went down to partake of our first meal at “Cober.”

From all quarters one was greeted by “Hullo, comrade.” No, we were not meeting long-lost friends, but merely people imbued with the true spirit of comradeship. On Saturday evening we were left free to wander round and drink in the beauty of our surroundings which helped us to feel at one with our fellows and get the true Summer School spirit.

“Coming to the sea?” was the general cry, the sight of which was truly a treat.

Sunday morning J.P.M. announced, “Conference at ten,” and the poor old delegates had to come down to brass tacks amidst such glorious surroundings.

In the theatre on Sunday evening we had a concert and dance, at which we were treated to a sketch by comrades Horrabin, Barr and Mrs. Millar, the author of which

was John S. Clarke. Modest as usual, “John S.” refused to announce the author's name, but left that to our imagination.

Monday morning found us eagerly awaiting comrade Horrabin's lecture on “Empire Problems and a Labour Government.” A good discussion ensued, and we went indoors to lunch feeling that we had spent a very profitable morning.

The Social Committee announced at lunch a Fancy Dress Dance, to commence at eight that evening. So our brains had to work very rapidly, particularly as they had also arranged sports to commence at five o'clock—and N.C.L.C. students proved to be great sports. At the fancy dress it was proved beyond a shadow of doubt that workers of all nations can fraternise with very great success.

Tuesday morning's lecture, “The Economic Problems of a Labour Government,” proved to be of far greater interest than the title would lead one to believe. Arthur Woodburn pointed out that capitalism was production for profit and that capitalists had amalgamated to prevent overlapping, and controlled markets which means the controlling of territory. He showed that the capitalist State was the head of one big vertical trust.

Trade Unionism, he said, was the workers' controlling power of capitalism, and trades and conciliation boards were becoming a national way of deciding wages. A very good discussion again!

It was announced at lunch that we should have to work overtime in the afternoon, comrade James Maxton being our taskmaster. Maxton seemed very optimistic and said that provided you had 8,999,999 really class-conscious workers and 350 class-conscious Labour M.P.'s a lot could be accomplished. He advocated nationalising by one Act of Parliament mines, railways, land and banks.



During the discussion and questions, comrade Maxton was asked if he really thought the capitalists, the people who really control the State, would allow this to take place, and he replied that with real class-consciousness a lot could be accomplished within a year. We all hoped Maxton's optimism would prove correct, but in view of the present apathy it seems very much like a dream which will take more than hard work to become a reality.

On Tuesday evening we spent a very enjoyable time at the social, where we found even N.C.L.C. organisers participating in such hilarious games as musical knees, etc. But they were not prepared to be dictated to by "O'Grady." Community singing brought a most enjoyable evening to a close.

An interesting address was given on Wednesday by Mrs. Barton on the Co-operative Movement, and of what use it might be to a Labour Government. Mrs. Barton stated that the Co-operative Movement was as democratic as at its inception. Some questioners wondered whether if Robert Owen were alive he would have had the same opinion. The lecturer showed how the knowledge the Co-operative Movement had gained would be of great help to a Labour Government. The general feeling of students was that although the Co-operative Movement could be a great asset to a Labour Government, the outlook of the Movement still needed to be greatly altered.

During the afternoon the staff from Cober Hill took us a delightful ramble to Heyburn Wyke, a glorious ramble about two-and-a-half miles from the Guest House. In the evening comrade Owen gave a demonstration of the new type of lantern which is specially suited for use by such organisations as the N.C.L.C. Although his chief object was to demonstrate the efficiency of the lantern, one could not help en-

joying the pictures of the changes that have taken place in Russia since the Revolution, the palaces that have been converted into rest homes and so on, for use by the workers.

The last lecture of the week was given by H. N. Brailsford on Thursday morning, the subject being "The Labour Party's Foreign Policy." He dealt with the enormous possibilities of the League of Nations, and when asked what a Labour Government would do when dealing with the Foreign Policy, replied, "Exactly what the capitalists would allow them to do."

Friday morning found us all eagerly awaiting our trip to Robin Hood's Bay, that gloriously rugged place on the Yorkshire coast. Even the Southerners had to admit that Yorkshire has its beauty spots. The day was spent lounging about on the beach and many of us had great fun in the water. Three of us had unsought-for fun when we fell from a raft fully clothed into the sea, and the rest of the afternoon had to be spent in bathing costumes.

When we were awaiting the arrival of the train we delighted the rest of the passengers by "Bolshie" songs, including "Vladivostock," which, needless to say, made some of the listeners hold their breath, as owing to ignorance they disapproved of our language.

Friday night—the last night—had arrived, and we determined to make the most of it. An excellent concert was given by the Cober Hill house party, but before the dance commenced some of us crept away to say farewell to the sea and the Cober Hill grounds.

The spirits of the students were very low when farewells were said, but very solemn vows were taken that we would all meet again next year, and as we entered our respective trains the only words that were heard were "Only fifty-one weeks to next year's Summer School!"

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**DON'T SIT ON OUR CIRCULATION**  
**GIVE IT A LEG UP BY SEEING THAT YOUR FRIENDS BUY THE PLEBS**

# INTERESTED IN SCIENCE?

By J. P. M. MILLAR.

**R**ECENTLY a leading London newspaper, which ironically and yet accurately calls itself the *Standard*, collected the opinions of members of the Houses of Lords and Commons on the question of whether women's hair should be long or short. For several nights columns of space were devoted to that important topic.

By that, one is reminded that the ordinary newspaper reader gets little opportunity of looking into the world of science and discovery. He lives in what might be called the Dope Age to distinguish it from the Stone and Iron Ages. A welcome is due, therefore, to those books that in straightforward English, freed from phalanxes of scientific terminology, enable the worker to peep into the laboratories of the scientists and follow, even if only in outline, the efforts of those who open up the world to human understanding.

To the worker the branch of science that has the greatest interest is social science, but it is of great value to him to have as a background a knowledge of natural science.

A great many scientific discoveries seem at first sight to have little practical value. Others again, at once cater for the practical man. As an instance of the latter case, J. G. Crowther in *Science for You* (Routledge, 5/-) gives an example of special interest to miners.

## Hot Places in the Mines.

As the upper layers of coal are exhausted the pits in this country become deeper and deeper. In consequence the temperature in the working places grows hotter. In a 3,500 feet deep pit near Manchester the air is so hot that the miner loses nine to eighteen pounds in sweating during each five-and-three-quarter hours in which he is at the coal face. He drinks about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. of water, which is much less than the weight of sweat lost.

Cramp often seizes miners in very hot pits, and in losing 18lbs. of sweat a man loses one ounce of salt. The question then arises as to whether this loss of salt causes cramp. "When colliers showed symptoms of cramp they were given water containing a teaspoonful of salt per gallon and the symptoms disappeared."

The little difficulties that crop up in man's struggle with Nature are illustrated by the story of the stiff corn, quoted by Mr. Crowther. Everyone knows how heavy rains or winds often spoil great quantities of grain by beating it down to the ground. Some agricultural scientists, to get over this difficulty, bred a type of corn with very stiff stalks. When, however, the farmers grew this corn the results were disappointing. The very strength of stalk which enabled the corn to withstand wind and rain, made it possible for the stocks to support the weight of Mr. Sparrow, who often picked the ripe ears clean.

Mr. J. B. S. Haldane (*Possible Worlds and Other Essays*, Chatto and Windus, 7/6) does not think that science in its present state can be applied to politics. To predict man's social behaviour a science of psychology is required, and Mr. Haldane is of the opinion that the expert politician knows about twice as much about it as the expert psychologist. The difference between the two, argues Mr. Haldane, is that the psychologist's knowledge, though abstract and meagre, "can be put in a form accessible to other psychologists. The same cannot be said about the politician's. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Lord Younger would probably, despite their different standpoints, agree on the probability of gaining votes by a given speech or measure. Yet they could not put into words the processes by which they arrive at their estimates. . . The psychologists are just beginning to give an account of these processes. In another two or three centuries they will be beating the politicians at their own game."

In *Oil* Upton Sinclair tells us of an oil magnate who paid an expert chemist \$6,000 a year to save him millions. That, as Mr. Haldane sees it, is the position of the average scientist under capitalism. A man may make a small fortune by inventing a little attachment that will open a blacking tin. A scientist may discover a new element and be not a penny the richer. We are still paying Nelson's heirs for their forbear's efforts at the battle of Trafalgar, but we are not paying a penny to Faraday's heirs though a discovery of his was successfully applied to the manufacture of our practical dynamo.

Many a man, if he will only admit it, thinks that astronomy is of little practical value, because the gifts of astronomy have been indirect and unperceived at the time of discovery. "I fear," said Mr. Haldane, "that few racegoers as they take out their field glasses bless the name of Galileo, who made the first at all powerful telescope to observe the stars. Nor does the engineer or surveyor always remember that both trigonometry and logarithms were invented by astronomers to aid them in their calculations." It was from astronomy that the spectroscope developed by means of which is possible the analysis of minerals and the detection of poisons.

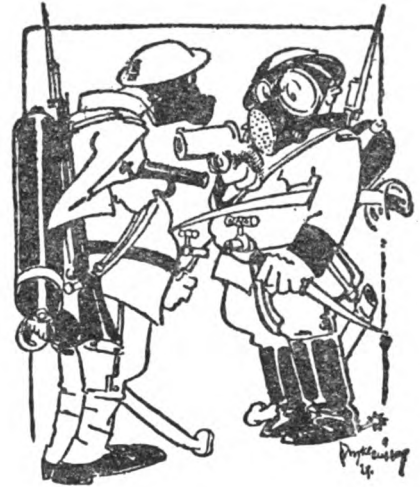
Students of economics periodically come across the question of how differences in quantities result in differences in qualities. In discussing gravity, Mr. Haldane gives as an illustration: If the ordinary man were asked what would happen if a man and a mouse fell 500 ft. he would say that both would be killed. As a matter of fact a mouse can fall down a 1,000 yard mine shaft and if the ground is fairly soft the mouse gets a slight shock, but is able to walk away. "A rat is killed, a man broken, a horse splashes." The reason for that is that the resistance of the air is proportional to the surface of a moving body. "Divide an animal's length, breadth and height each by ten; its weight is reduced to one-thousandth, but its surface only to a hundredth." The result is that a small animal offers a much greater resistance to falling than does a large one and consequently lands more lightly.

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## "SECURITY"



*Capitalism aims at preventing War by provoking it — by aiming at "National Security," and arming to the teeth.*

\* \* \*

*Socialism aims at ensuring Peace by working for International Understanding. The more the workers of different nations know of each other's problems, the less likely they are to be cajoled into slaughtering one another.*

\* \* \*

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# THE GENERAL COUNCIL

## *Are Changes Needed?*

By GEORGE HICKS

*(Vice-Chairman T.U.C., and General Secretary A.U.B.T.W.)*

*In this article Comrade Hicks raises a matter of fundamental importance to the workers' movement. We hope that a good discussion will ensue, and we invite contributions from our readers.*

**T**HE Trade Union movement is a great human movement. It is plastic, subject to change, is, indeed, continuously changing in response to changing needs and circumstances. At its head is the General Council, its leading central organ. Events are thrusting upon the General Council matters of intimate and vital importance to the Trade Unionists of this country, and the workers generally. Its power is growing, and must continue to grow because of the class alignment of forces. Its influence over the Trade Union movement is increasing and, because of that, it is emphasising its discipline. It is, in effect, becoming the Cabinet of the organised working-class movement. A study of the Interim Joint Report of the Conference between the General Council and the Melchett group of employers will show that the General Council is arrogating to itself very definite and peculiarly determined powers over the whole movement. It is to be hoped that the affiliated Trade Unions will subject this aspect to the closest scrutiny.

So significant is becoming the General Council in relation to the well-being and proper growth of the movement that it is time the question was raised as to *whether the present body is the best kind of leading central organ the movement can have*. The whole place, position, and constitution of the General Council ought to be reviewed.

### The Constitution of the G.C.

The General Council of the Trades Union Congress—including the Chairman and

Secretary—consists of thirty-three members. Of these over twenty are General Secretaries of their respective Trade Unions. Some of the others are full-time Trade Union officials, immersed in the detail work of their organisations. Some are also members of Parliament. Of none of the members, apart from the Secretary to the T.U.C., can it be said that they are free to devote themselves entirely to General Council work.

### Sectional Views.

The General Secretaries are necessarily largely absorbed in the intimate detail work of their Unions. They cannot avoid being so. Their Unions demand an increasing watchful care: there are difficulties with branches, numerous disputes of all kinds, negotiations, the administration of benefits, questions of finance—matters calling for immediate decision—which insistently call for constant daily attention. A general secretary of a big Trade Union has to carry more in his head, has more burdens on his shoulders than a Cabinet Minister. The very circumstances which surround them compel them to think almost wholly in terms of their Unions and their particular industries. The internecine struggles in the Trade Union movement—the scramble for members, and place and position, in which many of the Unions are involved—emphasises and stiffens their sectional outlook.\*

The General Council, as at present constituted, consists of a body of men who necessarily find it difficult to regard the Trade Union movement as a single whole, who seldom think of the workers as

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\*I am not for a moment suggesting that, in any changes, the special knowledge and experience of the general secretaries should not be utilised.

workers, but as miners, or railwaymen, or iron and steel workers, or engineers or building workers, or textile workers, as the case may be. Yet what is pre-eminently required in its members is *class sense* and not the sense of sectional interests. Their minds should be free to deal with matters wholly from the general movement point of view.

### Meetings.

The General Council meets once a month. Occasionally there are special meetings. Sometimes the members of the Council who are resident in London hold a quick meeting to dispose of matters of pressing urgency. Between times the Secretary, with the assistance of the staff at Transport House, and occasional consultations with the Chairman, gets through the business.

The Trade Union movement is the largest, most compactly organised, part of the organised working-class movement. It is the movement exercising organised control over the largest and most important numbers of workers. It exercises a stronger, more definite hold over its members, than does the Labour Party over its members, or the Co-operative organisations over theirs, and imposes a discipline and ensures a loyalty which no other part of the general movement can claim. It is the *basis* of the whole organised working-class movement, industrial, political and co-operative. And the General Council functions—as I have indicated—as the Cabinet of the working-class—to a much greater degree than does the National Executive of the Labour Party. It is, since the Trade Union movement is the basic movement, the basic Cabinet of the workers.

### Responsibilities Get Heavier.

The swift movement of events, economic changes, the consolidation of the employers' forces, the necessity for national and general negotiations with the employers as a whole, are determining that its influence, its power, its definite leading position will grow increasingly as time

goes on. Problems and questions are rapidly crowding upon it. Its organisational work—especially in regard to Trades Councils, Union amalgamation, membership recruiting, etc.—is becoming immense, and would be infinitely more so were adequate attention given to it. It really has to do now, with a small staff, a small technical apparatus, the services of a general secretary and the part-time services of a chairman, and a Council consisting of thirty odd men and women who at best can give but casual attention, the work for the Trade Union movement, which the Cabinet in the Government, with its great Departments, and its highly elaborated civil bureaucracy with its numerous personnel, does for the country.

### What Changes are Needed?

In an article, such as this, it is only possible to indicate matters on general lines. It is impossible to indulge in an exhaustive survey. I have written sufficient, however, to show that the problem of the General Council is deserving of very close consideration. It is not my intention to encourage the development of a big bureaucratic machine. But everyone must admit that the Council, as at present constituted, is not the final solution of the question of developing an effective, efficient and fully representative leading central organ for the movement. Under the present circumstances highly important matters can receive but cursory attention. Decisions affecting vital matters are sometimes delayed and much of their value lost consequent thereon. The organisational possibilities of the movement are not fully realised. The industrial and political progress of the movement is hampered because the General Council does not function as it might do. There is too much responsibility thrust on the General Secretary, too much left to the staff, and the representative character of the Council is not emphasised sufficiently. Never was there greater need for the General Council to rally and inspire the Trade Union movement than at the present time.

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH "PLEBS"?

Dear Comrade Editors,—Last month's issue is conclusive proof that something is wrong, damnably wrong. That The PLEBS, which claims to be the premier working-class educational journal, should contain the following statement and that over the signatures of the Joint Editors is enough to blast the Mag. for ever. What say the oracles? "It is not our business to discuss the Maxton-Cook Manifesto, from the angle either of its tactical wisdom or its immediate political implications." To think that I.W.C.E.s, whose *forte* has always been "purposive" education, whose *bête noire* is academics, should now appear with animistic aberrations and taboo all discussion upon one of the most important problems that ever faced the British working-class movement! The question devolves upon us—"Where is The PLEBS going?"

vitaly affecting this "winning through," The PLEBS says "No Discussion." I fear, comrade editors, that unless the Mag. at least permits "discussion" upon this "hard practical problem," it is doomed to the fate of all obsolete organs and weapons. Then must The PLEBS suffer the same epitaph as the patrician—Caesar.

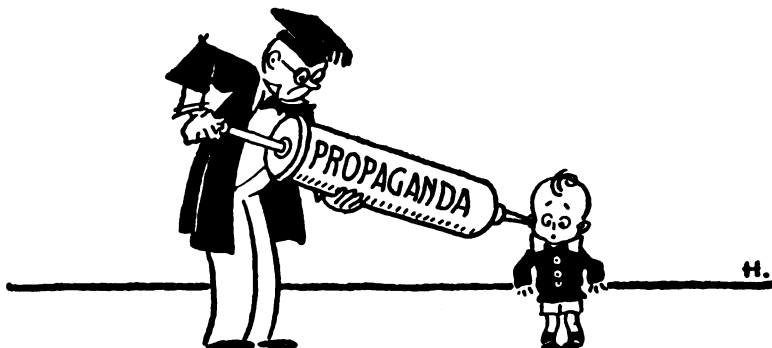
Yours, etc.,

TREVOR DAVID.

[We do not know what "animistic aberrations" may be, or what Caesar's epitaph was, but we are quite sure that our correspondent did not read what we wrote in last month's Editorial very carefully. The only things we ruled out of discussion in The PLEBS were the "tactical" issues arising out of the Cook-Maxton manifesto. These, we repeat, are not "fundamentals." On the latter, we welcome discussion.—THE POPES.]

SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT.

Dear Editor,—May I make a few comments on



(With acknowledgments to the "Locomotive Engineers' Journal," U.S.A.)

The powers that be threw us poor Dubbs a sop in the following:—"We must welcome the reassertion of the 'class basis' of the Labour Movement." Otherwise we would undoubtedly find it difficult to justify the existence of either the Plebs or the N.C.L.C. But to welcome a reassertion suggests a tendency to drift away from fundamentals. Is this so? In disaffiliated Rhondda it's only too painfully true. Yet when the Manifesto recognising this deviation calls for a critical self-analysis of the movement, and challenges the leadership and direction of the present Labour Party, along comes Pope Millar-Horrabin issuing a "bull" and placing all "Discuss"-ion on the Index.

On another page last month Tom Ashcroft says in condemnation of a bourgeois author that the book "as was inevitable. . . lacks constructive conclusions." But how can we arrive at these conclusions if editors abolish all Discuss-ion? Again, might we turn to the review of our late comrade, Bob Holder. "The book. . . deals with the *hard practical problem* of winning the way through to Socialism." Yet when a Manifesto is issued

D. J. Williams's article on "Rationalising the Robot," in the July PLEBS? He says there:

"Scientific management aims at squeezing the maximum amount of energy out of the workers in the least possible time. It is scientific exploitation carried to the *n*th degree. For this purpose the most varied devices are adopted. The worker is placed under the most complete surveillance and is subjected to the most absolute system of vigorous military discipline. His life becomes a matter of clockwork. . . The speed of working is forced up to the maximum." Later he mentions the opposition of workers to Taylorism, both in U.S.A. and here. Still later he says: "Part of the object of scientific management is to squeeze more surplus labour from the worker"; and, finally, he affirms that these methods "create antagonism between worker and worker" and "cut at the roots of working class solidarity."

Now, I want to suggest that Williams's view, though justified as far as it goes, doesn't go far enough. Scientific management has, since Taylor's day, developed into the science of Industrial Psychology. This study aims at finding (a)

The right man for the right job in as strictly scientific and accurate a way as an engineer finds the right strength of material for a particular purpose. That sounds a tall order, of course, but it will be possible some day!

(b) It aims at finding the best possible conditions, in the factory, in the worker's home and of the worker's own body and mind, for doing a task well—and *happily*. Also a tall order, but it's already more than a mere dream.

And (c) yes, it seeks strenuously to find ways and means of doing the maximum amount of work in the minimum time and with the minimum wear and tear for the man at the job.

Now think what all this means to the worker. Think of the tremendous saving in human energy and the tremendous increase in individual happiness and efficiency which the "right man in the right job" would bring about. The absolute necessity of the knowledge I have labelled (b) needs no labouring. And as for (c): well, if a man can be taught to lay 350 bricks an hour instead of 120, he need not work 8 hours to lay his 1,000 bricks, but 3 hours. Here's an approach to the problem of unemployment! So it seems that the worker should not be hostile to these attempts at scientific study of the worker at his work. There is nothing inherently wrong or anti-working class in scientific management and its latest development, Industrial Psychology. No. They can be of extraordinary use to the worker. But—and that's the real trouble—they are dangerous in the hands of the bosses. It's the same with any science—and yet we don't bare our teeth at medicine, for instance, because artificial sunlight, which is needed most by the neglected children from Poverty Land, is available only for the banker's son; or at engineering because it has built the "Majestic" for millionaires to go cruising about the world in idleness. Industrial Psychology, like all the other sciences, can be put to its true *ethical* and *scientific* function only in a properly organised society; and I have a feeling that Williams and I would, more or less, agree upon this point. So if anyone is inclined to be venomous on these matters, let him direct his anger to the *right* culprits.

Yours, etc.,  
M. FORTES.

#### THE GREAT TREK.

Dear Comrade,—In the review of Eric Walker's book, *A History of South Africa*, M. Fortes writes:—

"In 1837 some thousands of Dutch farmers, objecting to certain doctrines of equality then abroad in the Cape and to the emancipation of the slaves 'trekked' inland. It took them about thirty years to hack their way through the native population of the interior."

Eric Walker's book, which I have not read, cannot be voluminous at 2/6, but if this is the impression of the "Great Trek" it has left behind in the mind of M. Fortes, then PLEBS readers

would be well advised to stick to their half-crowns. That one paragraph creates the impression that the Boers, under Potgieter and Retief, were against doctrines of white equality and were the only slave holders in South Africa. The facts are as follow:—The Boers may have been "financially bankrupt" and "economically stagnant" (there must always be a reason for "annexing" another people's territory), but the Boers themselves were quite happy until the British came. They had their problems just as the present-day Russians have theirs, but they were quite capable of looking after themselves. Their livelihood and their religion were their chief concerns—Empire building did not come into their dreams. When Britain got "permanent possession" of the Cape, the Boers were soon faced with new troubles not of their seeking. They were subjected to a foreign and unsympathetic Government; their language was prohibited in public offices and law courts; their slaves were emancipated without adequate compensation; they were lied about by the philanthropic societies; the entire black population was placed upon an equal political footing with them. There were two courses open to them—to rebel and fight, or clear out. They adopted the latter course and "trekked." They faced and suffered massacre, exile, the toil of breaking the wilderness and the manifold privations of the uncivilised wilds, rather than submit to the indignities heaped upon them by the rotten British Empire-makers. The "Great Trek" of 1837 is the Boer epic—its central point, the defeat of the Zulu Dingaan by Pretorius at the Blood River—is celebrated annually by the ringing of bells and the lighting of bonfires. It did not take them "thirty years to hack their way, etc." *They had completely demolished the Zulu power within eighteen months.* Their worst enemies were the British, who followed them up and wrested Natal from them in 1842, after they, by courage and hard toil, had made it a land fit for heroes to live in. In the history of South Africa the British cut a sorry, not to write contemptible, figure.

Yours, etc.,  
JOHN S. CLARKE.

## DELPHOS

the future of International  
Language.

by *E. Sylvia Pankhurst*

Published by Kegan Paul, Trench  
Trubner & Co., Broadway House,  
Carter Lane, London, E.C.4.

"TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW"

SERIES, 2/6.

# THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE N.C.L.C.

**D**ELEGATES to the Annual Meeting of the N.C.L.C. (held at Cober Hill Guest House on Saturday and Sunday, July 7th and 8th) proved their devotion to the cause by sticking steadily at work indoors for four or five hours on the Saturday, and seven on Sunday; and that despite the fact that the weather outside was perfect, the gardens of Cober Hill idyllic, and the sea only five minutes' walk away!

The Chairman, John Hamilton, opened his address on Saturday afternoon by a reference to the death of Robert Holder, whose conscientious and unassuming character, he truly said, had been a pillar of the movement since the early pioneer days. He went on to "report progress" so far as the N.C.L.C. movement generally was concerned, and stressed the fact that, despite the slump in industrial and political affairs, six new Unions had during the past year arranged educational schemes with the N.C.L.C.

Before business began Ness Edwards, D. J. Williams and Mark Starr were appointed as Standing Orders Committee, and Stuart Barr and W. J. Owen as tellers.

## Chasing the Executive.

Saturday's agenda consisted of various resolutions critical of Executive decisions, most of which were lost. One from Glasgow "strongly disapproving of the action of the Executive in not pursuing the case of an official of the Scottish Labour College National Committee speaking under the auspices of the W.E.T.U.C." led to a lengthy discussion in which Scotsmen naturally played the biggest part—with the Sassenach looking on more or less patiently. Glasgow also moved "that the wife of an N.C.L.C. official must not hold a paid position under the N.C.L.C." This roused the women, and was lost by a big majority; as was also Division IV.'s protest against the Executive's decision to cancel

the National Tutorial Training Centre this year (a decision which, it was explained, was due solely to financial considerations).

There was some keen questioning on the Executive's report, but no casualties.

## Changes in the Constitution.

The main business on Sunday was the proposed changes in the Constitution of the N.C.L.C. The Executive had tabled various amendments, and Divisions and Districts had evidently been over these with a small tooth-comb. We have no official information as to whether the Standing

### BRIGHT SPOTS FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING

*A delegate having referred to Machiavelli, C. L. Gibbon (Edinburgh) observed in reply that the argument seemed to have more relation to Cinguevalli than to Machiavelli.*

*Another delegate, discussing T.U. procedure, spoke of "statuary meetings." A bit unkind!*

*In a breakfast-table discussion on British Empire problems, somebody ventured the opinion that future historians would probably write of the "Suez-cide Canal."*

*A woman delegate pleaded for "An 8-hour Day for Women." Whereupon Geo. Hicks enquired whether he had understood her aright—was she pleading for an extension of women's working hours?*

*E.C. MEMBER: "If I tried to do a clerk's job, I should probably make a mess of it." (Loud cries of 'Agreed!') "And if a clerk tried to do my job he'd probably make a mess of it." (Loud cries of 'Question!')*

Orders Committee got to bed at all on Saturday night, but they must certainly have put in some overtime on the job of simplifying the mass of overlapping propositions.

Some changes—e.g., London's—were aimed at a reorganisation of the whole divisional machinery; but the general feeling appeared to be that the London proposals were suited only to London's peculiar conditions, and they were not widely supported.



The Executive's own proposal to issue the final agenda of the Annual Meeting four weeks before the date of the Meeting was generally welcomed. A Glasgow resolution which would have made it unnecessary for affiliated bodies circularising constituent bodies on matters of discipline and policy to send copies of such circulars to the Executive seven days before issue was lost.

**The New Executive.**

Scotland moved the deletion of the Plebs League from the constituent bodies forming the Executive; but it was pointed out that the terms of the agreement under which the N.C.L.C. had taken over publications forbade this, and moreover that the reorganisation of the League (to be discussed later) would, it was anticipated, make it a body fully deserving of recognition and representation. The Executive is to be strengthened by the inclusion of one representative from each of the twelve Divisional Councils, elected by the Divisions themselves, in place of the five 'divisional' members hitherto elected at the Annual Meeting. Division IV.'s amendment that each Divisional Council should decide for itself what method of election it should adopt was carried.

A keen discussion took place on Division I.'s proposal that "no salaried official of the N.C.L.C. should be eligible for election" (to the Executive). It was defeated by a two to one majority. The Executive's proposal that there should in future be two statutory meetings each year met with considerable opposition, though it was pointed out that the expenses of E.C. meetings were going to be bigger as a result of the enlargement of the Committee. "At least two meetings" was the compromise decided on.

North Lancs. L.C.'s amendment "that all full-time Area and Divisional organisers shall attend the Annual Meeting at the expense of the Executive, but shall have no vote," was carried; as was also Glasgow's proposal that tutors should be allowed to attend and speak at the A.M., but not vote unless acting as delegates. Future chairmen will have their work cut out deciding upon credentials and qualifications!

**The Future of the Plebs League.**

Among the final items of the agenda, which included the various Reports on Class Work, Finance of Local Colleges, the Labour College (London), etc., the most interesting discussion took place on the proposals for the re-organisation of the Plebs League and N.C.L.C. Students' Association (dealt with on another page). The resolution embodying the new basis of membership was carried with only one dissident.

Viewing the conference as a whole, one feels that too much time was taken up by purely "domestic" matters—matters which were the concern of the Executive rather than of a general meeting. It would be well if Divisions and Colleges, when sending in resolutions, would aim rather at the discussion of points of policy than at questions of administrative detail. As things were this year, the delegates—and the chairman and secretary—are to be congratulated on getting through the long agenda in anything under a week.

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## THE BOOKSHELF

By J. F. HERRABIN

**C**AN you point to Bolivia on the map? It sounds, doesn't it, like one of those romantic lands where film heroes live lives filled with passion and pictorial possibilities? . . . The reality is rather more prosaic.

Tin cans. When next you open a tin of pears or peaches, salmon or sardines, think of Bolivia. And, remembering that the advance of science has made it possible for the labouring masses of mankind to subsist in whole or in part on tinned, instead of fresh, fruits of the earth and the sea, you will realise that the places where tin comes from are by no means unimportant from the point of view of capitalist world economy.

\* \* \*

Bolivia is one of these places. The third largest of the South American republics; third among all the countries of the New World in mineral wealth (only the United States and Mexico surpassing her); her tin deposits the second largest in the world, and her output of that metal about 25 per cent. of the present total world production. This is one side of the picture.

Another is "a primitive, poverty-stricken and inarticulate native population," vastly smaller than the resources of the country, properly developed, could support,\* 85 per cent. illiterate, and some 50 per cent. practically always at starvation level.

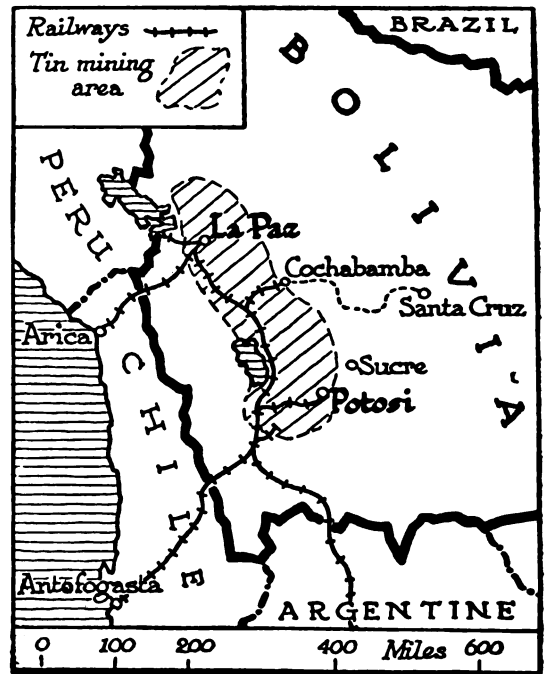
The third is foreign capital.

Bolivia, in short, provides a perfect picture of modern imperialism in being—not precisely the kind of picture usually shown at the cinemas.

\* \* \*

You can read all about the country in *The Bankers in Bolivia*, by Margaret A. Marsh, one of three new studies of American Imperialism published by the Vanguard Press of New York (obtainable from the N.C.L.C., price 5/- each, postage extra; and if you're wise you'll see that

\* "Capable of supporting from 25 to 30 million people, the present population is well under three million."



RAILWAYS AND TIN MINES OF BOLIVIA.

all three volumes are in your local College library.)

Four centuries ago events in Bolivia bore certain marked resemblances to what is happening there to-day. Then "the famous silver mountain of Potosi and other silver mines made Bolivia the richest part of old colonial Peru"; and Spaniards, instead of Yankees, waxed fat at the expense of the native Indians. Spaniards settled in the country and, after the first mad rush for silver had subsided, became agriculturists. "Naturally," as Mrs. Marsh observes, they took the best lands; "and with the land, under the Spanish colonial system, went the Indians who cultivated it; the value and size of a *finca* is to-day told in the number of its peons (serfs) rather than in acres." The whites, descendants of the Spanish conquistadores for the most part, to-day comprise about 14 per cent. of the total population; and so far they have contrived to keep almost all political power in their hands.

The Indians—50 per cent. of the population is pure Indian, and some 30 per cent. half-breed—are as we have seen, illiterate and half-starved. The "mental inefficiency and spiritual inertia" which characterise

them are, says Mrs. Marsh, the direct results of under-nourishment. "Parched corn, dried beans and frozen potatoes are the staples, with chili or aji for seasoning, and supplemented by the indispensable coca." (Coca is a leaf which the Indian chews incessantly—part drug, part stimulant.)† The half-breed class provides the foremen in the mines, the overseers of the big estates, and the small merchants and artisans of the country. This section is beginning to make itself felt in politics.

The Indian is the labourer—in the mines or on the land. And not even the Spaniards can have driven him harder than he is driven to-day. "In one of the mines in Potosi the Indians work on thirty-six-hour shifts, remaining underground during that entire period and living on nothing but dried corn and coca." Take note, miners of Britain, how much lower your standards of living can yet go! . . .

At the time of the fiestas advantage is taken of the prevailing state of intoxication to bind the Indian to a mine by signing him up and advancing him some pay, which being promptly drunk up, the Indian is in the debt of the company and must work in the mine to pay it off. Wages vary from half-a-dollar to a dollar-and-a-half (U.S. currency) per day.

\* \* \*

And the tin which is produced from all this expenditure of human blood, bone and soul? It is shipped, *via* Panama, to England to be smelted (much of it near Liverpool), then re-shipped as a metal back across the Atlantic, to be made into tins in the factories of the United States Steel Corporation.

A hundred millions of American dollars are invested in Bolivia; "something over forty millions in Government bonds, and the balance principally in mining and petroleum development." Government bonds mean—railways. Bolivia is an inland country, and transport is a difficult problem. Three-fifths of the country's foreign debt (in 1908 she had none) has been incurred on account of railways. "Long-term financing" of Bolivia has been a good thing for Wall Street since 1908 (London comes in only to a relatively small extent.) And the American bankers are

† Cocaine is extracted from it.

now the virtual owners and rulers of Bolivia—customs receipts and other taxes pledged to them, and a Permanent Fiscal Commission of three, two members of which they nominate, in charge of the country's finances for the next quarter of a century. Capital demands—and gets—its price! The conquistadore spirit is not dead.



UNCLE SAM TAKES A LOOK AT CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA.

Gropper, in *Gudok*, Moscow.

I hope I've said enough to prove that this book is worth while. The other two volumes are equally good. They are *The Americans in Santo Domingo*, by M. M. Knight, and *Our Cuban Colony*, by L. H. Jenks. I have not discussed them solely because it seemed better to give something like an adequate idea of one of the three than to deal sketchily with them all. Together they form a really valuable addition to the library of Economic Imperialism.

\* \* \*

#### BOOKS FOR YOUR FREE LIBRARY LIST.

- Lenin*. By V. Marcu (Gollancz, 21s.).  
*Anatole France Abroad*. By J. J. Brousson (Butterworth, 10s. 6d.).  
*Great Britain in Egypt*. By Major E. W. Polson Newman (Cassells', 15s.).  
*The Silver Tassie*. By Sean O'Casey (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.) O'Casey's latest play.  
*Marco Millions*. A Play by Eugene O'Neill (Cape, 5s.).  
*America*. By Hendrik van Loon (Harrap, 10s. 6d.).

# A HISTORY OF SOCIALISM

by A. L. WILLIAMS

**A**S Socialism becomes, to an ever-increasing extent, the inspiration and the guiding force of the working-class movement, it becomes increasingly important to understand the origins and development of Socialist thought and of the Socialist movement. A recently-published book,\* by an American, Dr. H. W. Laidler, is a useful addition to the already big literature on the subject.

In ancient times there were men who railed against the oppression of the many by the few, and who advocated universal equality as a panacea for social ills. Laidler considers these men to be the originators of Socialist thought, and devotes the first part of his book to them. But the true beginning of Socialism dates from the publication of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*.

## Thomas More.

More, an intelligent man, deep in the "New Learning," and well versed in affairs of State, saw clearly the causes of the misery of England in the sixteenth century, and in the first book of *Utopia* castigates those who were robbing the people and driving them from the land, at the same time as they were adopting drastic measures against vagrancy. In the second book, he sketches the outlines of a social organisation where goods and labour are communal. More had little hope of converting the princes of Europe to his Socialist views; yet there appeared to be no other way of realising his ideal commonwealth.

Following More a number of Socialists appeared, among whom Gerard Winstanley is of importance. Winstanley was active during the English Civil War in the seventeenth century, and called upon the people who had overthrown the king to take possession of the land, and to construct a communist society. With a few followers he actually took possession of some land in Surrey and commenced to dig it. The

settlement was dispersed, but the "Diggers" carried on a vigorous agitation for a number of years with little success.

## The Coming of Industrialism.

The political revolution in France, and later the growth of industrialism, provided the soil for a crop of Socialist theories. Saint Simon, Fourier, and Louis Blanc, all formulated theories relating to the reconstruction of society on Socialist lines, and all hoped to convert the ruling powers by example; Saint Simon and Fourier by setting up independent communities, and Louis Blanc by his National Workshops for the unemployed, which he was able to create when a minister in the Revolutionary Government of 1848.

In England, in the meantime, the Industrial Revolution had been the cause of much suffering to the working class. Robert Owen, a successful textile manufacturer, devoted himself to discovering the causes of this suffering, and formulated an interesting theory in relation to it. The purpose of human existence was happiness, but the great mass of the people lived in misery. This was not due to the greed of the capitalist, but to an error—to the belief that the individual was responsible for his own character, whereas the character of man was determined by his environment. The duty of the reformer was to spread the truth relating to the formation of human character, in order to gain universal consent for such a change of conditions as would produce good characters. An abundance of wealth was necessary for the creation of good conditions, and the means of producing wealth in untold quantities were present. But under the competitive system these were not utilised to the full, and the majority of the people lived in poverty; consequently it was necessary to reorganise production on a co-operative basis.

In order to demonstrate the truth of his theory, Owen took over control of cotton

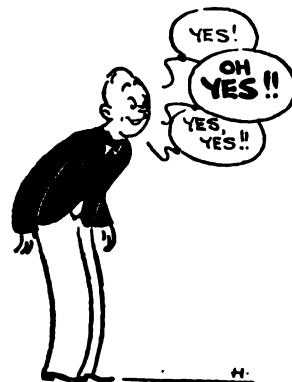
\* *A History of Socialist Thought*, by H. W. Laidler (Constable, 15/6).

mills in New Lanark, Scotland. By his progressive reforms he was able favourably to alter the moral and physical condition of his mill workers, and gained a world-wide reputation as a philanthropist.

### Owen's Experiments.

He later turned to factory legislation, and agitation for the formation of Villages of Co-operation for the Unemployed, where the unemployed would live on a communal basis, producing the things they so much required. The Villages of Co-operation were to be the first steps in the direction of the Co-operative System. Little interest was taken in his suggestions and he began to despair of ever converting the ruling class to his views. When the Rappite Colony of Harmony in U.S.A. became vacant, Owen and some friends decided to purchase it, and go there to commence life under Socialist conditions. They hoped that their anticipated happy and prosperous life in New Harmony would provide the necessary proof of the irrationality of the competitive system, and the necessary incentive for the conversion of Capitalism into Socialism. The experiment was a dismal failure, and Owen returned to England a much poorer man. On his return, he connected himself with the working-class movement, and was responsible for the inspiration of a number of Utopian schemes, such as Labour Exchanges, the Builders' Guild, the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union, but these also failed. Viewed from the standpoint of practical achievement, Owen's life was a record of continual failure, but the movement permeated by his ideas was the first mass movement of the world proletariat, and it laid the foundations for the modern Socialist movement.

Owen was the last of the great Utopians, and his withdrawal from activities betokened the end of the Utopian phase of Socialist history. The common characteristic of all the Utopians was that they believed the ills of society to be due to mistaken ideas, and that it was only necessary to prove by word and example the correctness of their own views, in order to bring about the ideal social order.



Do you know him? He's

## THE 'YES' MAN

—the chap who says 'Yes' to everything you say about *The PLEBS* needing a bigger circulation—who agrees that something's got to be done about it—but who never by any chance DOES anything!

\* \* \*

Don't be a 'Yes' Man, dear reader. Help us to get a real move on.

### Marx.

The second phase of Socialist thought commenced with the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1847. The *Manifesto* was written by Karl Marx, in conjunction with Frederick Engels, for an organisation composed of German working men living abroad, and known as the Communist League. The work is a classic of Socialist literature; not only a clarion call to action, but also a scientific statement of the Socialist position. In the *Communist Manifesto* Socialism is no longer Utopian and idealistic, finding its justification in, and based upon, abstract principles and rights. It is now part of the natural evolution of society, developing from Capitalism, just as Capitalism developed from Feudalism. The developing forces of production bring the working class into constant conflict with the capitalist class. The Utopians had abhorred the

class struggle, but it was the duty of the Communists to awaken the workers to a knowledge of their historic mission; the conquest of political power, the ending of social contradictions, and the construction of Socialism.

In later works the Marxian theories were further developed. The basic theory of them all is that of Historical Materialism, with its insistence that the class struggle is the vehicle of social progress. According to Marx, Capitalism, in its mad rush for profits, was riding to its downfall, concentrating production into larger and larger units, increasing the ranks of the proletariat by the dispossessed middle class, reducing the market to a state of anarchy, and ultimately bringing about complete economic collapse.

### Working-Class Internationals.

As well as forging theoretical weapons for the working class, Marx engaged in their practical struggles, and was the power behind the International Working Men's Association. The I.W.M.A. exercised a considerable influence in Europe until after the defeat of the Paris Commune, when its General Council was removed to U.S.A. Shortly afterwards the First International died. Marx himself died in 1883, but now there was in the majority of the capitalist countries a Socialist movement, accepting in general outline the Marxian philosophy.

The period immediately after Marx's death was a period of unforeseen economic expansion, and in the general prosperity of the capitalist world Socialism underwent a change. Throughout Europe the franchise was being extended to include working men, and legal rights were being granted to trade unions. Wages and conditions of work were improving considerably, and the economic collapse of capitalism seemed very far off. Socialists now began to visualise the achievement of their desires by peaceful evolutionary means. The spread of social education among the workers and the other classes, the extension of the principles of municipalisation and nationalisation, the development of the consumers' co-

operative and the trade union movements, and finally the victory of the working class at the polls, were all means of bringing about Socialism.

### The Gradualists.

This view is essentially different to the original Marxian view, which saw the achievement of Socialism by the forceful overthrow of the bourgeoisie, in a situation created by the economic collapse of the system. In England the Fabian Society (formed 1884) and the Independent Labour Party (formed 1893), and in Germany the Revisionist Movement propagated this gospel of the inevitability of gradualness. Though in theory the new gospel was not always accepted, in fact it was practised by the majority of the world's Socialist parties.

The World War and the Russian Revolution acted as an electric shock to the Socialists, and brought the question of the forceful overthrow of capitalism to the forefront. The Socialist movement has split in two over this question. The Communists maintain that capitalism is in decline, and that in its death agony it will press the workers further and further down, until they overthrow bourgeois political power, destroy the State, and erect the dictatorship of the proletariat. This can be done only in alliance with the peasantry, the oppressed colonial peoples, and all who are held in bondage by Imperialism. The Reformist Socialists, on the other hand, flushed by the enormous increase in the Socialist vote since the war, believe that they will be able to gain political power by democratic means and introduce numerous legislative reforms, leading in the direction of nationalisation of the main industries, and ultimately reach Socialism.

History will decide which of the two schools, if either, is wholly correct, but in the meantime it is essential that the student understand clearly the exact position, and Dr. Laidler's book, though it contains a number of slight errors, will be a great help to those attempting to arrive at such an understanding.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**M**OST of us have formed our opinions of Robert Owen, from what we have read about him. In *A New View of Society and Other Writings* (by Robert Owen, Everyman's Library, 2/-), we are able to judge him from his own utterances. To those who dislike second-hand opinions this is very desirable.

Owen's "Plan" of a New Society was based upon his belief that "Heredity makes a man and Environment modifies him." Hence his criticism of the whole paraphernalia of existing society from its prisons to its pulpits. The trouble, according to Owen, arose from man's belief that man formed his own character, and was responsible for his own misdeeds. On this false assumption was based our teachings, our coercions, and punishments. The poor were poor because they were worthy of nothing better, the rich, rich because of their superior qualities. Owen's purpose was to reveal the "true laws of human nature" that man's character was made for him and not by him. This "true law" once understood would recommend itself to all classes, and instead of seeking each other's hurt, all would co-operate in the general advancement.

Too much belief in the altruism of human nature where economic interests are concerned, and a failure to realise the conflicting class interests in society were among Owen's weaknesses.

This book is well worth reading and some of his criticisms, such as that on unemployment, sound quite up to date, although they were offered in 1819.

W.P.C.

\* \* \*

Personal impressions received by travellers in Soviet Russia abound, but we do not know where such a useful collection of facts about Trade Unionism is available outside *Soviet Trade Unions*, by Robert W. Dunn and issued by the Vanguard Press. (N.C.L.C. 2/8 post free). The first underground societies, the part played by the unions in the Revolution, their transformation from compulsory organs of the Government into voluntary bodies safeguarding the workers against the possible bureaucracy of the State Trusts and the private capitalists and foreign concessionaires, and their many-sided present activities, are briefly yet clearly described. Students of Trade Union structure will appreciate the diagram and details of how the Soviet General Council caters for the industrial and territorial groupings of the workers. At present the unions choose the Minister of Labour and have their members on every important ruling body from the Gosplan downwards. It is hoped they will, in the future, become the organs of production and distribution when industry is completely socialised. There is now a slowing down in increases in real wages owing to the allocations for new plant, etc.; the figure of 112 taking 1913 as 100 is quoted by Dunn from the unofficial U.S. T.U. delegations

in July, 1927, which is increased to 135, when privileges of rent and services are included. This matter is only one of the many treated in an illuminating way. The only drawback is that Dunn views the Soviet Unions exclusively through glasses coloured by Passaic happenings, "yellow dog contracts," the Colorado shootings and such like. It would be more interesting to get the reaction of, say, one of the relatively well-paid members of the Locomotivemen's Brotherhood. Unfortunately, such will not visit U.S.S.R. and the Soviet unionists will continue to look at U.S. and England through minority glasses which magnify somewhat the feelings of discontent to be found amongst workers under capitalism. Would that the actual discontent was much greater!

M.S.

\* \* \*

*Madame Bovary* (by Gustave Flaubert, Everyman's Library Series, 2/-) is the work of a great French writer of the eighteenth century. It is of particular interest to N.C.L.C.ers by reason of its translation by E. Marx-Aveling, daughter of Karl Marx.

From a literary point of view the book is the work of a genius and an artist.

In *Madame Bovary*, the beautiful, selfish, luxury-loving wife of a commonplace doctor, is shown a woman of the middle-class in the early period of French Capitalism. To what extent the conditions of her time and her environment effected her character is well worth study. Petty and narrow, we see in *Madame Bovary* little to appreciate. In her associations we see the sordid atmosphere of the middle-class of this period.

The picture of the crude methods of surgery give the reader some idea of the lack of development of technique in this art at this particular time. The book will appeal to students of the conditions of society as well as to lovers of a good story.

F.W.

\* \* \*

Everyman ought indeed at some time of his life to handle and read part or the whole of Darwin's *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (Everyman's Library, 2/-). It is one of the great

## Is an International Language Possible?

by E. Sylvia Pankhurst

Published by the Academia Pro Interlingua (British Section).

6d. post free from Morland Press, Carey Street, London, S.W.1, and A. Hodson, 36 St. Peter's Hill, Grantham.

books of the world, like Plato's *Republic*, the *Bible*, Newton's *Principia*, and *Das Kapital*. Apart from the greatness of his subject, Darwin had a peculiarly excellent quality of scientific mind. He was extremely industrious and cautious, besides penetrating. These qualities have given his masterpiece a wonderful lastingness, since scarcely a fact or an idea in it has since been proved to be wrong. But the elaborate care and caution make it a bad book for the beginner. Facts and ideas are woven into a fine network of theory full of saving clauses, and the simple broad ideas of evolution do not stand out from the explanation. Sir Arthur Keith might have been expected to have given such an outline for Everyman in his introduction, but he has not risen to the occasion. He has merely dogmatically reasserted the more obvious ideas of Darwin's thesis, and omitted to explain the defects. He seems to think that intelligent men are still bothered about the fact of evolution of some sort, whereas the real difficulty now is the theory of mutations. We are satisfied that things *do* evolve, now we want to know *how* they evolve. Consequently, the work of the geneticists and experimental biologists is now of the greatest importance. There is no hint of the outlook of modern biology in Sir Arthur Keith's

introduction. If the reader wishes to form his ideas on works less than eighty years old, he should eschew Sir A. Keith and study, for example, *Evolution and Genetics* by T. H. Morgan.

\* \* \*

#### PAMPHLETS RECEIVED.

- The Presidential Election and the Workers*, by J. Lovestone (Workers' Library Publishers, N.Y., 20 cents.).  
*The Estimated Cost of the Hadow Committee's Proposals* (W.E.A., 2d.).  
*Adolescent Education—the Next Step* (W.E.A., 2d.).  
*The Zinoviev Letter*, by W. P. Coates (Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee, 2d.).  
*Education Through Experience*, by Martha Anderson and Eduard C. Lindeman (W.E.B., N.Y., 25 cents.).  
*At the Parting of the Ways*, by P. Braun (C.P.B.G., 6d.).  
*Parliament and War Resistance*, by Wilfred Wellock, M.P. (No More War Movement, 1d.).  
*Militarism Unmasked* (No More War Movement, 2d.).  
*Russian Prisons*, by E. Shirvindt (I.C.W.P.A., 2d.).  
*The March of the Women* (C.P.G.B., 2d.).

## BACK TO A BOB!

**T**HE long-delayed question of the future of the Plebs League and the subscription, etc., was fully discussed at the Annual Meeting. And it was agreed that the old subscription of a minimum of one shilling a year should be adopted again. It is hoped that everyone will re-join and bring the League and Students' Association membership up to a good round figure before the year is out.

The following resolution was passed with only one dissentient:—

"That the minimum subscription to the Plebs League and N.C.L.C. Students' Association shall be 1/- per annum, payable to headquarters; the main work of the League and its members to be the securing of publicity for I.W.C.E. Any surplus funds to be used for advertising The PLEBS.

J. F. Horrabin moved the resolution, which was seconded by A. L. Williams (Lancs.).

Comrade Redfern (Manchester Students' Association), in supporting, pointed out the good work that could be done by an efficient local organisation for students and sympathisers. Comrades J. V. Wills and Ellen Wilkinson also spoke in support.

All supporters, past members, sympathisers, tutors, students and "officials" are therefore asked to send along their shilling sub. The League and Students' Association with a big membership can be made a very helpful part of our organisation.

Locally all kinds of publicity work can be undertaken. Amateur artists (and professionals for that matter) can be roped in to draw posters—or chalk pavements. Socials and dramatic performances can be arranged with the special object of advertising our movement, and raising further funds to make it known. Individual members can "catch their pal" in the approved manner.

The central expenses of the League will be small. It is confined to paying an affiliation fee to the N.C.L.C., and postages, etc., for circulars sent to members. It is hoped that we shall enrol enough members to have a sum of money which can be devoted to special advertising—say, a series of ads. of The PLEBS in Labour papers.

One thousand shillings is fifty pounds, not a big sum, but enough to do some much-needed publicity work for the Magazine. Rally round again, comrades, and make the League and Students' Association a real help.

The new Executive Committee will be appointed for the New Year. It is thought that this will give time for enrolment and re-enrolment of all interested. It would hardly be fair to have a ballot now, when the membership is still small.

Please note that the card of membership has been abolished. A receipt will be sent for each separate subscription.

*What about a Thousand Bobs before Christmas?*

W.H.



# WHAT'S DOING

## *The N.C.L.C. at Work*

**T**HE following is a list of *new* affiliations obtained in July by local Colleges: — Merthyr, 3; London, 2; Cheltenham, 1; Edinburgh, 1.

**WINTER SESSION:** Preparations should now be made for the first winter session so that lists of classes may be in circulation four weeks before the session commences. In September Colleges should organise Conferences and meetings as part of a campaign to interest the workers in the coming classes.

### WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING.

#### DIVISION 1.

The garden party at Highfield was, despite the unfortunate clash with the London Labour Party Crystal Palace fete, fairly well attended. The sports, dancing and the production of Shaw's *Augustus Does His Bit*, etc., were enjoyed very much. Woolwich College has arranged for Day Schools on August 18th and September 8th. Subjects include: Marxism and Darwinism, Banking, Rationalisation, etc. Classes have been arranged for the coming winter in conjunction with the London Co-operative Society. The South Suburban Co-operative Society has affiliated, so that the three Societies covering London are now affiliated to us. Classes are being arranged by us for the Watford Co-operative Society. Brighton College is running a class for the Shop Assistants' branch. Tutor, Comrade Harrison. The July meeting of the Tutors' Council had a big attendance and much discussion. J. Jones opened a discussion on the value of the Dialectic in Marxist thought. W. T. Colyer was very scornful of the value of the *Hegelian* form of the Dialectic with, as he termed it, its flights of three. There will be no tutors' meeting in August.

#### DIVISION 2.

Will all classes note that the Divisional Council at its last meeting decided to make a grant of 30/- towards the fund to be raised in the Division for the purpose of purchasing a portable lantern? Each class will be asked to raise some money for the fund and all monies should be sent to the organiser. The Oxford N.C.L.C.ers arranged their day school at Carterton, this summer, with the organiser as tutor. The Transport Workers' branch and the Trades Union Club co-operated. The Divisional Council approved of arranging for a series of public meetings under N.C.L.C. auspices, to be addressed by A. A. Purcell, M.P., on "Modern India." The dates will be announced later. Now that Eric Godfrey, of Guildford N.C.L.C., has passed his B.Sc., he will be able to take classes at Dorking, Camberley and Farnborough. The Guildford comrades have been instrumental in arranging for the organiser to address the Surrey Federation of Labour Party

branches and Trades Councils. The Bournemouth Typographical Association was the first branch of this Union in Division 2 to invite a N.C.L.C. speaker to address them—a dozen PLEBS sold. The programme of classes looks like being a record. Conferences are to be held during September preparatory to commencing the winter classes.

#### DIVISION 3.

About fifty enjoyed the sunshine and our school at Wickford and we are much indebted to Mrs. Haynes and her local colleagues who valiantly met the demand for food and drink—especially the latter in those heat-wave days. It is hoped to make the rally there an annual event and to bring along the Y.S.S.S. again also. Classes are already being fixed up at Southend. Com. Feder, of the class, was a candidate for the T.U.C. scholarship at the Labour College and the local Plebs hope that he will come through. High Wycombe has fixed up a day school at Highfields, Hackwell Heath, for September 9th. Any London comrades wishing a day in the country should book to Loudwater and inform us beforehand if meals are required.

#### DIVISION 4.

The organisation of the West Wales College is making fair progress, and thanks to the efforts of Nun Nicholas we are able to welcome the co-operation of the Cross-Hands Class and Sub-Council No. 3 of the N.U.R. At Ammanford a successful day school was held with N. Nicholas as tutor. Our energetic Secretary at Merthyr is doing some splendid work and securing increasing support for the N.C.L.C. Thanks to his efforts the Labour Club, I.L.P. and Co-op. Women's Guild are linking up and making preparations for class work next session. The Western Valley L.C. is running a very successful class and doing good propaganda work in the branches and lodges. A series of day schools is being organised to inaugurate the winter session. The Organiser addressed the local women's section, and arrangements were made for winter class work. The Div. E.C. with the co-operation of the Colleges is making a definite effort to meet the need for tutors.

#### DIVISION 5.

Good work was done in Torquay at the weekend school. Comrades Jagger, Reeves and Fox gave some excellent lectures and the result should be encouraging to Comrade Burley, the college secretary, and his supporters. Plymouth College is organising a conference of trade unionists and supporters for September. Prominent members of the local councils and the Organiser will address the meeting. It is hoped that the trade unionists of Plymouth will attend in large numbers to hear the case for the N.C.L.C., and to show their

appreciation of the good work of Comrade Liver, the college secretary. Bristol College is meeting this month to prepare its plans for class work next session. With the assistance of the Trades Council, it is the intention to run a record number of classes. Meetings of the General and Municipal Workers, the A.U.B.T.W., in Cornwall, and the Sheet Metal Workers have been addressed by the Organiser. At one of these twenty members were present and twenty PLEBS sold.

#### DIVISION 6.

Birmingham College has arranged an outing to Sutton Park on September 8th and has asked for the co-operation of Walsall College. Two tutors' classes are being run. Nuneaton and Coventry Colleges are arranging for a joint week-end school in September. We are hoping to open up new ground in these districts. The Divisional Council meets on Saturday, August 18th, to hear the report of N.C.L.C. annual meeting. Organiser Barr has addressed several A.E.U., E.T.U., A.U.B.T.W. and N.U.D.A.W branches recently and is arranging visits to other organisations with national schemes. Walter Lewis, Labour agent at Nuneaton, has recently been married. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis are both keen supporters of I.W.C.E. We wish them all the best.

#### DIVISION 7.

The Leeds College will hold its third annual day school on Sunday, August 26th, at the Clarion Club House, Chevin End, Menston. Roland Hill (R.C.A.), will lecture upon "Mexico" and Arthur Haigh upon "Language as a Propaganda Weapon." A fee of 1/9, which includes tea, will be charged. Will all the West Riding Colleges please make parties up for this school? Arrangements are completed for the fourth annual week-end school, to be held at Heathmount Hall Guest House, Ilkley, on September 15th and 16th. Comrade Millar is down for one of the lectures, and it is hoped that all the Divisional tutors will take advantage of the invitation of the Div. E.C. Visitors are invited and the terms are 12/6 inclusive for the week-end. Let me have your application in at once. The Bentley and Wath Main miners' class groups are jointly organising a day school for Sunday, August 12th, to be held at Wentbridge. This village is one of the beauty spots of Yorkshire and is situated upon the "Great North Road," about twelve miles north of Doncaster. The Organiser will take the classes. Inquiries for classes next winter have been received from Helli-field in the north and Cottingham in the east, both country districts; the Organiser is making arrangements to meet these new demands. Another new class will be at Hoyland Common, near Barnsley.

#### DIVISION 8.

S.E. LANCs. AREA—The Openshaw Class carried through a successful rally at Romiley. J. A. Brewin was the lecturer. Members of the class gave musical and vocal items during the evening. Forty attended. Well done, Openshaw and

Brewin! Jack Hamilton was the lecturer at the day school held at Greenfield on July 22nd, at which sixty students attended to hear what proved to be two splendid lectures. Plenty of questions and discussion.

NORTH LANCs. AREA.—We had beautiful weather for our week-end school at Roughlee, and E. Redfern and H. Sara were able to give their lectures in the open air. Some sixty students attended the school, of which number several had been granted scholarships by their unions. The services of M. F. Titterington (deputy Lord Mayor of Bradford) and S. O. Davies (vice-president S.W.M.F.) have been secured for the Annual Delegate Conference, which is to be held in Blackburn on Saturday, September 22nd. S. O. Davies is to lecture at a day school in Burnley on the Sunday following. There are hopes of a class being formed in Lancaster, and one has been arranged for Clitheroe for next winter. Classes have not been held in these towns previously.

LIVERPOOL AREA.—We very much regret to state that Dr. Johnstone is seriously ill. We wish him the speediest of recoveries.

#### DIVISION 9.

A day school is being arranged at Darlington for September 8th. Ellen Wilkinson and W. Coxon are to be the lecturers. It is expected that Comrade Derricott, of the Labour College, will take two week-end schools for the North-Eastern Labour College. Durham Labour College is preparing for its winter work and expects to increase the number of its classes.

#### DIVISION 10 (SCOTLAND).

Lanarkshire College held a week-end school at Motherwell, with C. L. Gibbins as the lecturer. Edinburgh is holding a school at Bathgate at which A. Woodburn will lecture on "Labour Problems." Another school is being arranged for Galashiels.

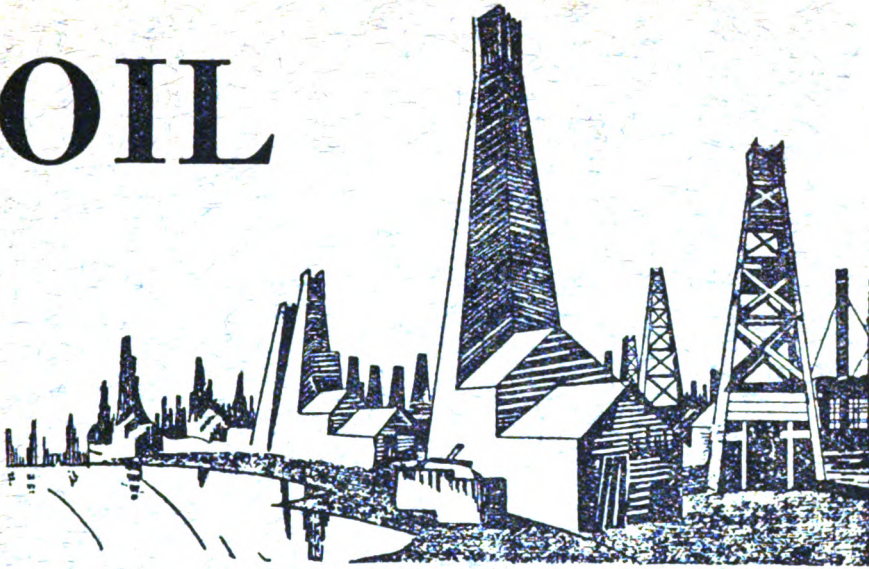
#### DIVISION 11 (IRELAND).

The Belfast College anticipates arranging a public meeting, with A. J. Cook as speaker. J. F. Horrabin and Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., are booked to address a public meeting and the annual conference of the Belfast N.C.L.C. in October. At a later date a lantern lecture on "Burns," by John S. Clarke, is expected.

#### DIVISION 12.

Arrangements are in hand for a day school in Long Eaton on September 9th. It is hoped that all old members of N.C.L.C. classes in Long Eaton will assist in making the effort successful. Derby comrades are grateful to Tom Ashcroft for his fine lectures at their week-end school in July. The exceptionally fine weather adversely affected the attendance, but none the less good work was done. Lincoln comrades are to be congratulated on rallying to the summer class in the way they did. Nottingham and Northampton are both arranging for a second week-end school during September. Steady work and growing interest augurs well for the future.

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Managers' and Overlookers' Society  
Military Musical Instrument Makers' Union  
National Union of Distributive and Allied  
Workers

National Union of Sheet Metal Workers

National Union of Corporation Workers  
National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades'  
Association

National Association of Plasterers  
National Union of Shop Assistants  
National Union of Textile Workers  
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