

ORGAN OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
LABOUR COLLEGES

THE PLEBS

Monthly, 4d.

MAY, 1929 ✓

FIVE YEARS
OF CLASS
WAR

MAY 32 1929
SPECIAL
ELECTION
NUMBER

LABOUR'S
POLITICAL
STRUGGLE

N. C. L. C., 15 SOUTH HILL PARK GARDENS, LONDON, N.W.3

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THE PLEBS

Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

Vol. XXI.

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"GET ON TO T' FIELD"

*All out for a
Workers' Victory*

WE are making this month a special feature of articles bearing on Labour's political struggle, and we take this opportunity of urging every I.W.C.Er to do his or her utmost to apply the lessons learned in N.C.L.C. classes to the needs and problems of the General Election. For the time being our educational "wing" is a subsidiary, but vitally important, part of the great Labour army. Our plain duty is to put every ounce of energy, enthusiasm and ability we possess into the political class-struggle. We I.W.C.Ers make no pretence of being "impartial." We do not temporarily suspend our educational activities during an Election, and separate into different political camps. On the contrary, we intensify our educational work, making it an integral part of working-class propaganda in every town and district of the country.

The greatest possible dis-service we could do to our own I.W.C.E. movement would be to sit back now, acting the part of mere spectators, and leaving to others the hard tasks of the moment. We stand for *education with a purpose*, and that purpose is the emancipation of the workers from capitalism. Now is the time to prove to our fellows in the Labour movement that we are not arm-chair theorists, but practical workers—all the more skilled because we have taken the trouble to educate ourselves

PLEASE NOTE

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

on Back Page

for the job. "An ounce of help," says an ancient adage, "is worth a ton of pity." And every piece of actual electioneering work done by N.C.L.Cers for Labour's cause at such a time as this is worth a ton of theoretical arguments on behalf of Independent Working-Class Education.

To those Plebs—and they are many—who are well in the thick of the fight, as candidates, agents and organisers, we offer our best wishes. To them, and to every one of our friends, we would say again—Lose no opportunity of pointing out that the education the N.C.L.C. stands for is no detached, "impartial," "non-partisan" affair, but a very real and tremendously important, part of the wide field of Labour propaganda.

And will all our readers help us by bringing this special number of the PLEBS to the notice of Labour friends.

* * *

A recent *Daily Herald* leading article urged that the "paramount need is an educated democracy." That is true, but an examination of the way votes are cast at elections indicates that as a general rule those voters who have been longest in the orthodox educational machine vote anti-Labour.

With the *Herald's* advocacy of maintenance grants to enable workers' children to remain longer at school we have every sympathy, but all the maintenance grants in the world are not going to provide an "educated democracy" in the *Labour* sense of that term. What maintenance grants alone will do is to enable the rising generation (1) to absorb more deeply the ideas of the governing classes as regarding the existing social order (the continued existence and rightness of which is implied in every line of school teaching) and (2) to enable more workers' children to compete for the better-paid posts under capitalism. Neither of those ends is going to solve Labour's educational problem.

It is not uncommon to find Labour speakers and periodicals criticising the governing class for giving education lip service. We venture to suggest that the capitalist class has a much clearer conception of what it wants from education than has a

very large section of our own Labour movement. The capitalist class never is in any doubt whether to support independent capitalist-class education, of the orthodox kind, or independent working-class education. Because the governing class is not in a hurry to raise the school leaving age is no solid ground for assuming it pays lip service to its own type of education. It realises, however, that it is cheaper (once they can read and write) to teach young workers false history, false economics and false conceptions of society by means of the cinema and the popular press than it is to add a year or two to the school leaving age.

In capitalism, as in every social system, education exists to serve very practical purposes—(1) to educate the governing class, (2) to educate, as producers, the producers of the wealth of the governing class, and (3) to educate the minds of the producers into an acceptance of the existing form of society. "Behind every educational theory there must be a social theory."

In talking of education we should not overlook the fact that many trade unions, as unions, do not spend a penny on workers' education. In some cases they even look with amazement on those unions that spend 3d per member per annum on education. It is not very long ago since a representative of a union boasted that his union was "doing a great deal for workers' education." Actually it was spending less than one farthing per member per annum!

In these circumstances it is pleasant to record that the Conference of the National Union of Distributive Workers, which has at present an N.C.L.C. educational scheme costing £1000 per annum, has asked its executive to consider spending a further £100 per year in order to provide scholarships to summer schools. We hope that those unions that have no schemes will give the matter serious consideration—"the paramount need is an educated democracy."

Don't forget that Election Meetings give you a fine opportunity to Push Plebs Literature.

1924-1929

FIVE YEARS OF CLASS WAR

How Capitalism has Dug Itself In

By ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P.

THE sinister election of 1924 was an important landmark in British social history. The voters were stampeded by a newspaper stunt, helped by shady intriguing at the Foreign Office, because conditions were not ripe for the Labour Government which had so unexpectedly reached office in 1923. Numerical weakness, aided by the timidity of certain old men who were given ministerial posts because of past services, made a bold grasping of the nation's problems impossible in those few months of contemptuous toleration by the capitalist parties. Reaction scored a smashing victory in these exceptional circumstances. But the more farsighted among its leaders realised that those circumstances were unlikely to occur again. These five years of Conservative rule have, therefore, been used to strengthen the class war front against the working class. When the crowded history of this period is put into perspective the events group themselves round three main lines of policy:—

The privileged class dig themselves in at home.

They begin the offensive against the workers.

They make the world safe for plutocracy.

Digging themselves in

Mr. Churchill's first Budget (1925) needs two metaphors if it is to be described in terms of the class war. It was a great concrete emplacement behind which the wealthy classes could resist all wage demands; and it supplied a great engine of offence with which to attack the comfort level of the workers. The return to the gold standard gripped the working classes in a vice. Restricted credit, dear money,

falling wholesale prices, immediately checked enterprise and the demand for operatives. Labour glutted its own market. The ruthless rationalisation carried through in certain industries to meet the credit situation only made things worse by still further reducing the demand for labour. The Tory Government restored London as a great money market and at the same time made inevitable the coal lockout and the General Strike.

Only by a general fall in wages could price levels be restored, and the 1925 Budget was immediately followed by a general move to reduce wages. As in 1921, when a similar operation had to be carried through as a result of Lloyd George's agreement to sudden deflation, the miners were the first to be attacked. Readers must turn to the PLEBS *History of the Great Strike* for a detailed consideration of that struggle. Its importance for this "potted history" of five years is that in spite of the fact that the capitalists won the spectacular battle, their actual offensive was checked. Their biggest success was the Miners' Eight Hour Act. The General Strike will, I believe, prove to be the turning point in that period of British social history which began with the fall in wages as the century opened. Though it has been apologised for, disowned almost, by the men who led it, that great gesture and the obstinate stand of the miners stemmed a much bigger movement against the workers. Capital could not afford a repetition of 1926. It returned to a "digging-in" policy.

The Offensive against the Workers

The Trades Union and Trades Dispute Act was an attempt to prevent the workers

ever uniting again on such a scale. It was, as even its authors now realise, the building of walls of sand against the tide. As the cheery docker remarked, with suitable adjectival additions: "If we want to strike, we shall strike." But the Act served the purpose for the moment of soothing the harassed nerves of Lombard Street and Mayfair, and harassing the collection of Labour's political funds.

The Tory Government hoped to take advantage of the panic which it believed the General Strike had caused to secure a permanent Conservative veto on any possible Labour Government through a "reformed" House of Lords. It came up against the rooted dislike of hereditary government in the British manufacturing and industrial classes which the snobbery of the Press so carefully tries to conceal. Dismayed by the indignation in the country Mr. Baldwin disowned the peer who had been given the task of flying the necessary kite.

The immediate political effect of all this was shown in the results of the local government elections, when in certain areas the Tory opposition was almost wiped out. Labour in power in Local Government has always applied with marked success slices of its Socialist policy. Improved wages, successful direct building, extension of municipal enterprises, the demand for powers to establish municipal banks, and the real care of the poor by Labour Guardians, alarmed the Tory Government, which did not propose to allow its central majority to be undermined by Labour through the local authorities. The De-Rating Bill (which was really six different bills in one) gave unprecedented powers of interference to the Minister of Health, swept away altogether the Boards of Guardians, substituting nominated Committees by the County Councils (in all except County Boroughs) thus placing the field which Labour was conquering in the power of those bodies on which, for financial reasons, it has always been most difficult for Labour to secure representation.

The enormous gifts of money to the employers and dividend holders, the complete de-rating of agricultural land which is a gift to the landlords, and the extension

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of protective tariffs to certain industries, were all part of this settled policy of "digging in," both industrially and politically. The sales of public property such as the Beam Wireless, and the attempt to hand over the L.C.C. trams to the Traffic Combine fit in to the general Conservative scheme of making hay while their sun shines.

This was further helped by the taxation policy. Every Budget gave rebate in taxation to the wealthy and middle classes, while taxes were heaped upon many articles of common use in the homes of the workers—incandescent mantles, buttons, wrapping paper, dried fruits, artificial silk—a long list which added appreciably to the housewife's budget.

More Workless

All this time unemployment grew steadily worse as the effects of the capitalist policy worked themselves out. The exhaustion of Union funds after 1926 made the offensive against the workers much easier. The stand of transport workers and railwaymen had prevented the worst of the attack on wages, but the lowering of conditions went on steadily. The Factories Bill was thrown overboard at the demand of Big Business, and Government representatives backed up the employers in sabotaging any international agreement on Hours at Geneva, but these were small in comparison with the organised system of spying and tyranny made possible by the army of unemployed at the gate and the general atmosphere of defeatism. The Mond-Turner conferences were a strange outgrowth of this situation.

It is a curious fact (which I have heard many workers, especially in my own union, discuss without a satisfactory solution) that this period was coincident with the rapid decline of any influence that remained to the Communist Party. The Labour Party Conference was able to exclude Communist delegates in 1925, and by 1928 had secured a similar attitude in the Trades Union Congress General Council, which, as a result of personal attacks on its members, was prepared to go even further than the political organisation.

The policy of the Government as regards

the unemployed was frankly to shift the burden from national funds to the rates and thus relieve the big taxpayer. When the big ratepayers grumbled they relieved them of three-quarters of the burden and placed the full cost of future improvements on the localities. In the necessitous areas this simply meant that the poor were forced to keep the poor. The full effects of the De-Rating Bill will, of course, only be felt after 5 to 7 years, by which time, unless drastic alterations are made, the plight of the coalfields and the Northern industrial towns will be terrible.

The tightening-up of insurance administration was accompanied by drastic revision of social service expenditure. Mr. Chamberlain, the Minister of Health, took pride in the fact that £12,000 a year had been saved on the grants for milk for necessitous mothers and their children. These were turned over to the Poor Law, so that the cost could be deducted from the relief. The reduced expenditure on elementary education was concealed in estimates which had to make some new capital provision for the new housing areas. Mr. Chamberlain, who had jettisoned the Wheatley scheme in its infancy, announced the reduction of the housing subsidy, hoping apparently to give the impression that the satisfaction of the demand for semi-detached villas constituted a settlement of the housing problem. The only attempt to deal with the slum clearance problem was an agitation about the wrongs being inflicted by local authorities on the slum landlord.

Making the World Safe for Plutocracy

The Tory policy abroad, both in the Empire and as regards international relations, faithfully reflected the wishes of the most die-hard of its supporters. All the sentiment poured out on the Locarno agreement only hid for a few months the stark fact that it meant no change in the Francophile policy of Sir Austen Chamberlain. Neither the French nor the British Governments desired any real settlement in Europe. They wanted a colonised and helpless German proletariat producing a fairly surplus which would somehow manage

to pay their inconvenient debts to America without flooding the French and British markets with cheap goods. How this is to be done, the experts and Dr. Schacht are still trying to settle.

Relentlessly the French governing class have pursued their aim of annexing the Rhineland, unrestrained by the polite Sir Austen, who seemed content with compliments on the perfection of his French accent. How thin is the crust of this shoddy French Empire stretched over a ruthlessly exploited proletariat was shown in the Franc scandals, which needed a Zola to expose them.

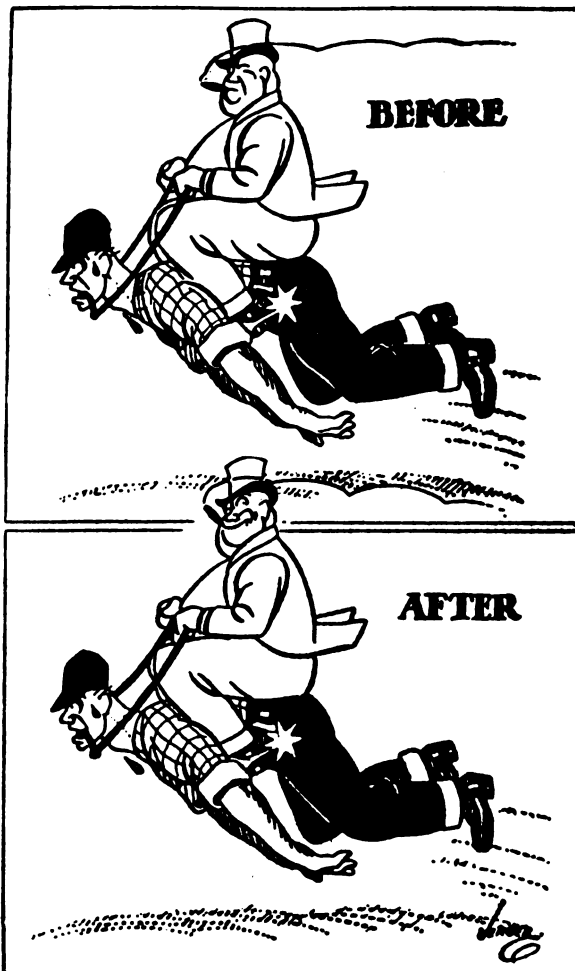
The British Government assisted the French in making the proposals for disarmament made by Russia and later by America into a farce. The realities of the Anglo-French naval pact poked their ugly bones through the pretty tissue of compliments paid to Mr. Kellogg.

In its dealings with Russia, British capitalism over-reached itself. The two sets of people concerned, the bond-holders and the business men, wanted exactly opposite things. The bond-holders were out for blood and the overthrow of the Soviet regime, making the repudiated Czarist debt the excuse. Harassed business men, with no love for Stalin, badly wanted orders. The British Labour movement added to the confusion by demanding trade with Russia while breaking off relations with Russian trade unionists.

The farcical episode of the Arcos raid simply meant that Russian orders went to Germany and America, and in 1929 a deputation of business men went cap in hand to beg for orders which in 1925 they could have had for the asking.

Behind the scenes the desperate fight of the Oil Trusts went on to secure control of Russian oil. The price war, which had given the British Exchequer the opportunity to finance its De-Rating Scheme by a tax on the artificially low price of petrol, suddenly ended in a victory for Russia and a joint agreement with the trusts. The price of petrol bounded up, and a dismayed Chancellor was left to contemplate the nasty results of a casual smack of the tail of the Capitalist whale.

Mr. Amery's Empire did not quite fill its hoped-for role of taking off his hands all the unemployed men that capitalism had no further use for at home. The Canadian Harvesting scheme, small though it was, was bungled in the usual Tory way. In spite of heavy preference duties and expenditure on fancy posters, Mr. Baldwin had to learn the lesson that trade is now a world concern and the attempt to canalise certain rivulets in patriotic channels ends in expensive futility. The White Empire of Britain drew no nearer the Mother Country in spite of Mr. Baldwin's coaxing. The



A WARNING.

This cartoon from the *American Loco. Engineers' Journal* indicates that company unionism brings no change. Neither will the General Election unless Labour kicks up his heels in earnest.

THE ART & CRAFT OF ELECTIONEERING

Some Hints to Workers

By H. DRINKWATER

(Editor, *The Labour Organiser*)

WHEN a Labour Government is returned to power, a matter that might well claim early attention would be a strengthening of the law relating to election expenditure and a removal of other handicaps to a Workers' Party.

Our grandfathers, or they who framed the Ballot Act and our Corrupt Practices Acts, were undoubtedly well-meaning fellows, and an outstanding fact to-day still is that the main provisions of the Corrupt Practices Acts are a boon and a blessing to the Labour Party, and no Party stands to lose more by a disregard of their terms. But in their Victorian innocence the framers never contemplated the ability of their successors to drive coaches and horses through these Acts. To-day a new statute is necessary to deal with a new set of electioneers, new conditions, modern inventiveness, and modern inventions.

My own postbag constantly proves that Labour electioneers desire above all things to conduct their fights according to law, and the canons of common, if not election, honesty. But it also proves that more light is needed, and so perhaps a restatement of some of the main provisions of election law may not be out of place here.

Immediately Parliament dissolves a day is fixed for nominations. This day is technically "the day of election." Nomination papers are provided by the Returning Officer, or any similar form may be used.

One proposer, one seconder, and eight assentors, are needed to a nomination. The particulars concerning the candidate *must* be filled in before signature. Persons on

oppression of the Brown and Black Empire was intensified. British Guiana was openly taken over as a capitalised business concern. The wrongs of the natives of Kenya received no redress, though the mere threat of trouble by the small fraction of white settlers secured a Commission which went as far as it dared in the direction of giving the white men control over the millions of natives of the country. In Egypt the Tory Government found the shadow of independence a useful screen to secure the suppression of Parliament by its puppet King. In China, active intervention on behalf of the Shanghai financiers and merchants was carried to the point of sending troops and battleships to occupy Chinese territory.

India has not been an easy problem. In spite of the desperate attempts to keep up the appearance of a patriotic and devoted Empire, India has succeeded to Ireland's place as the step-child of Britannia. To attempt to placate Indian opinion by sending the Simon Commission was like trying to pacify a maddened elephant by putting a dainty lace cover on its back. India forms an ugly legacy for the next Government to take over.

In this brief outline of the history of five crowded years it is not possible to do more than touch peak points, but the moral of the story is plain. The virus of the war fever has been well worked out of the blood of British proletarians. The danger now is that of the apathy of an underfed and oppressed people. Peptonised politics are as attractive to tired minds as peptonised food to exhausted stomachs. In the coming struggle the Liberal party is, in effect, only a smoke screen for a hard-pressed capitalism.

The real fight is between Socialism and Reaction. We have no time now for the bored intellectualism of certain "Marxian" classmates who prefer to talk about the Social Revolution instead of helping it. Lenin scorched them sufficiently with the blast of his contempt. The next few weeks are our battle ground, just as surely and far more effectively than if we were behind barricades in the streets.

the new register only may sign. In practice it is advisable to take no signature unless it corresponds with the entry in the register.

Spot Cash

Two hours will be fixed for nominations, and one hour afterwards for objections. The papers must actually be handed in by the candidate, or his proposer or seconder. The agent, as such, cannot attend at nominations unless he is the "one other person" permitted to accompany the candidate. The latter, or "someone on his behalf," must deposit £150 with the Returning Officer during the two hours for nominations. Cash is demandable and almost invariably required. The hardship of providing this deposit is felt most keenly by a Labour candidate, and even in this election it will prevent some nominations.

During nominations or objections the candidate or election agent may give notice that he requires the poll to be extended by one hour, either morning or evening, or both. This "request" cannot be refused.

During the election no person may be employed for payment except the agent, sub-agents (County Divisions only), clerks, messengers, and polling (personation) agents. Labour is not likely to exceed the number allowable! Canvassers must not be employed, nor bill distributors, nor motor car drivers, as such, though the latter may conceivably have a status as messengers. Employment of fetchers-up or number-takers is illegal.

Before or during nominations an election agent must be appointed and the name and address declared in writing to the Returning Officer. If the candidate acts as agent he must notify his own name.

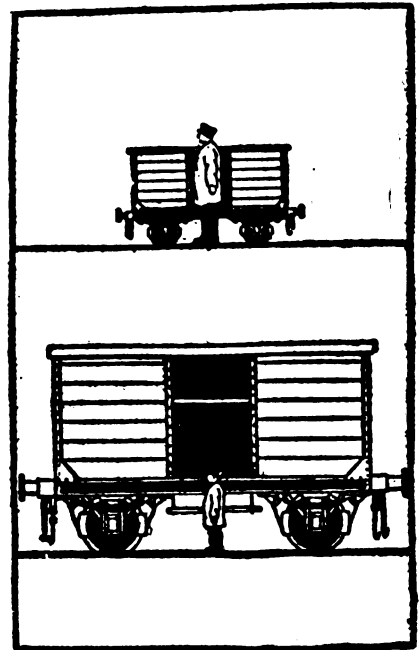
If sub-agents are appointed the agent must declare their names and addresses at least one clear day before the polling. It is eminently desirable to declare them earlier.

The candidate may appoint unpaid polling agents, but the agent appoints any paid ones. One polling agent at a time in any booth is all that is likely to be permitted. A polling agent may act for more than one booth and it follows that he has liberty to leave at will,

but he must be sworn in to secrecy before the opening of the poll and strictly observe his oath.

The names of polling agents must be sent in to the Returning Officer. In practice, though not obligatory, this should be done one clear day before the polling day to allow of proper notifications to be sent. One clear day's notice is obligatory in the case of persons appointed to attend the counting. The candidate may appoint these persons. They may not be paid. Frequently the Returning Officer invites the agent to do the

RATIONALISATION IN PRACTICE.



Daily Loading and Unloading Work in Zurich Goods Station.

Above: In January, 1919, 252 waggons with a staff of 315.

Below: In August, 1927, 549 waggons with a staff of 225.

(From "Der Eisenbahner," the Journal of the Swiss Railwaymen's Federation.)

Rationalisation is to be one of the principal subjects discussed at the N.C.L.C.'s Week-end Summer School.

appointing and notification; there is no objection to this practice.

On polling day the candidate has a right of entry to all polling stations, but the election agent has not, unless appointed as a polling agent. No persons are allowed in the booths except the official staff, the properly appointed polling agents, the candidates, and persons proceeding to vote. In country districts this provision is frequently ignored and Labour voters should immediately object to the presence of unauthorised persons.

The ballot is secret—if the regulations are carried out. This again will oftentimes depend on the vigilance of Labour people. The voting compartments must be “screened from observation.” The ballot paper once marked must be folded up by the voter, mark innermost, before dropping in the box. The voter’s name and register number must be called out when a paper is applied for, but not the number of his ballot paper. Even blind and illiterate voters are protected by the oaths of the officers and the stipulation that the booth must be cleared *before* the vote is given.

Polling the Graveyards

Personation, like treating and bribery, is better prevented than detected. These evils can be reduced by public announcements of the risks and punishment given by placard and at meetings. Personation of dead voters can be made harder by supplying the Returning Officer with names beforehand.

The proceedings at the count are too detailed for treatment here, but real live counting agents are desirable. The innocent errors of wary counting clerks would fill a book—and also alter the representation in Parliament of some seats. Recounts cannot be “demanded,” though often granted as a courtesy.

Now about the tricks of the trade. That men would get elected, corruptly, if in no other way, struck our knowing fathers long ago. For elections were elections in the old days. So we got Corrupt Practices nicely defined (bribery takes one-fourth the length of this article to define), and properly punished—if the culprit is caught. But

there were other practices, not “corrupt” even in Victorian eyes, that were held unfair or undesirable. So we got Illegal Practices. I haven’t space to particularise further.

Bribery, treating, undue influence, personation, false declaration of election expenses, or incurring election expenses without authority, are all Corrupt Practices. Illegal Practices, and the kindred offences of Illegal Payment, Employment or Hiring include making improper payments, of which there are divers, publishing false statements concerning a candidate, acting disorderly at a public meeting, procuring prohibited voters to vote, failing to make the election return, paying accounts after time, voting more times than allowed, employing persons improperly, letting or hiring hackney carriages, giving favours away, publishing without printer’s imprint, and a host of other offences.

In what do our enemies offend most? The lot, did someone say? I shall particularise in two things only.

What bold man will say that the vast sums now being spent in the constituencies by both our opponents is all unconnected with the “conduct and management of the election” of the Liberal and Tory candidates in whose constituencies these activities are being paid for? Yet none of the trumplings, the cost of halls, of relays, the travelling circuses and touring talkies will appear in the returns, neither will the deluge of literature, posters and the like. The law prescribes, but the strong defy. The dice is loaded. Every 6d spent by Labour is covered by a crown from those that hath.

And the fleets of cars on polling day. I have always contended these are illegal as the law stands. One is permitted a “small expense legally incurred.” But the huge petrol bills, garage charges, replacements, meals and lodgings for chauffeurs that these cars imply is no “small expense” but a definite infraction of the law.

I am tempted to speak of the campaign of slander that Labour has to meet, but as one of our candidates last time did invoke the law, and vindicated herself and it, I leave the matter there as a reminder to our side that they must make this victory better known, and profit by it to silence lying tongues.

LOOKING BACKWARD

The Hundred Years' Struggle for Political Representation

By W. T. COLYER

In view of the forthcoming General Election, the following article should be made good use of by all I.W.C.Ers. It outlines the adventures of the British workers in learning the lesson of political independence.

THE first great political agitation in which the British working-class actively participated was that which culminated in the Reform Act of 1832, by which supremacy in Parliament was transferred from the great landowners to the manufacturers and merchants of the towns. With a trustfulness that, in the light of history, can only be described as pathetic, the hard-driven wage-earners ranged themselves behind their employers, frightened the government of the day into granting their masters' demands, and then retired from the contest to cultivate a temporary disgust for the political game. Then came the turn of the anti-Parliamentarians, under the leadership of Robert Owen, and the main current of working-class revolt was directed into the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union.*

After a period of extravagant hope, followed by disillusion, on the industrial field, political agitation was resumed under the name of Chartism. For its basic ideas the Chartism of 1838 went back to the National Union of the Working Classes, the organisation of the minority who, during the Reform Bill agitation, "defended the standpoint of class war with extreme acrimony, and were opposed to every alliance with the middle classes." The Chartists were definitely revolutionary in objective, but laboured under two great disabilities—(1) an entire

* It would be useful to read in conjunction with this article *A Short History of the British Workers*, by R. W. Postgate (1/8 post free from the N.C.L.C.).

misconception of the character and function of the State, and (2) the presence of Feargus O'Connor, a leader whose genius for appealing to the masses was combined with an amazing lack of reasoning power, an appalling ineptitude for practical business, and an utter incapacity for team work.

According to the "law of nature" theory of the Chartists, the sovereign power of the State was based upon a social contract made by the men who originally constituted the society over which the State ruled; the laws promulgated by the State were the moulding forces in social development, determining the methods of holding property and all other economic relations; the power of the State had been usurped by a minority and used to oppress the working-class which had interests diametrically opposed to those of the usurpers. What was needed, therefore, was a social revolution by the working-class to oust the usurpers and remould society. It will be observed that they entirely overlooked the economic forces which control the State and make it an instrument of class rule for the dominant economic group.

The six points of the Charter—manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, abolition of property qualifications for parliamentary candidates, annual parliaments, voting by ballot, and payment of M.P.'s—would, the Chartists believed, confer upon the workers complete control of the State machine. They did not expect—most of them—to get it without a fight, and, if necessary, they were prepared to fight for it.

Petitions and More Petitions

National petitions for the Charter were deposited and rejected in 1839, 1842 and 1848. During the ten year period over which the petitions were spread, a number of

other things happened. In 1839 an abortive attempt was made to organise a general strike in support of the Charter and a hopeless insurrectionary outbreak was staged in Monmouthshire. 1840 saw all the leaders (except those who had already been transported) under lock and key in British prisons. Feargus O'Connor split the movement in 1841 by deciding to work with the Tories, despite the opposition of the more intelligent section led by Bronterre O'Brien. Subsequently O'Connor allied himself temporarily with the Whigs, but returned to his Tory friends in 1847, securing election as M.P. for Nottingham with their help. In 1848 a Select Committee was appointed by Parliament to examine the affairs of the National Land Company, established by O'Connor for "the accomplishment of the political and social emancipation of the enslaved and degraded working classes." Two hundred and thirty persons had been placed on the land at the expense of 75,000 shareholders to whom no proper accounting had been given. O'Connor satisfied the Parliamentary Committee that he had not stolen the shareholders' money, and the Company was wound up.

Everything connected with the presentation of the last petition in April, 1848, was hopelessly mismanaged. O'Connor, who had for years been talking about mass demonstrations at the gates of Parliament, dismissed to their homes the multitudes of demonstrators who had been brought to Kennington Common; he informed the House of Commons that he had nearly three times as many signatures as were actually found there; and he and his assistants had failed to realise that forgery is hardly worth while if the most casual glance can discover the fraud. The petition was overwhelmed with ridicule, and under the now unfavourable conditions the Chartist movement slowly withered away, although as late as 1857 we find Ernest Jones running as a Chartist candidate for Nottingham.

From 1857 to 1866 was a period of stagnation so far as Parliamentary agitation was

concerned. In the latter year was founded the London Working Men's Association,* which made an unsuccessful effort to promote a Working Men's Parliamentary Election Fund for the General Election of 1868—the first at which the town workers exercised the franchise. Indirectly, however, the L.W.M.A. rendered great service to the cause of Labour representation in Parliament. It was founded by a militant London building worker, George Potter, and an old Chartist, Robert Hartwell, as a rival to the London Trades Council, which at that period was an instrument whereby the "Junta"—William Allan, of the Engineers, Robert Applegarth, of the Carpenters, and their friends—imposed a cautious and uninspiring leadership upon the trade union movement at large. In accordance with their usual habit, after a turn of "hot-as-hell" political incompetence, the workers had submitted to the very different domination of a group of "cool-as-cucumber" trade union financiers; but the time was now approaching for another change.

Raiding Union Funds

A decision of the High Court in 1867 that trade unions were illegal, though not criminal, associations, and were consequently entitled to no protection for their funds under the Friendly Societies Act, came as a terrible shock to the relatively wealthy "Amalgamated Societies" controlled by the Junta. These societies were also thoroughly alarmed at the fierce anti-trade union campaign for which a few acts of violence against blacklegs in Sheffield had been made the excuse. For the purpose of dealing with the legal situation and presenting the trade union case before the Royal Commission which the Government had agreed to set up to enquire into the whole trade union question, the Junta established a "Conference of Amalgamated Trades" consisting, in the words of

* Quite distinct from the earlier organisation bearing the same name which had been created by William Lovett and his friends in 1836.

IS YOUR PARTY SELLING PLEBS BOOKS?

G. D. H. Cole, "entirely of their own friends." The L. W. M. A. at the same time called a really representative national conference which appointed its own Committee to safeguard the interests of the Movement as a whole. With the disputes and activities of the two rival groups we are here concerned only to the extent that they led to the establishing of the Trades Union Congress in 1868—at first without the Junta, but from 1871 with its support and, for some time thereafter, too much of its point of view.

The Lib-Labs

The Trades Union Congress in 1869 endorsed the principle of Labour representation in Parliament, and in the same year the Labour Representation League was formed to promote candidatures of working men, and the registration of working-class voters. The League was essentially Liberal in outlook, its nominees on several occasions withdrawing in order to let in official Liberals. Its first electoral successes occurred in the General Election of 1874, when two of its fifteen candidates—Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt—were sent to Westminster. Both were miners and sat as Liberals. The activity of the miners' organisations in politics was due not to any exceptional development of class-consciousness, but to the fact that their peculiar industrial conditions had focussed their attention upon the need for protective legislation; Macdonald had, in fact, been largely responsible for the agitation which resulted in the Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1860.

Annual debates and resolutions at the Trades Union Congress kept the movement on record in favour of Labour representation, and the work of the Parliamentary Committee in promoting amendments to particular laws prevented the growth of anti-Parliamentarism. Little progress, however, was made in the election even of "Lib-Labs"; in 1880 Henry Broadhurst joined Macdonald and Bury; and in 1886, in which year Congress elected an Electoral Committee, as well as a Parliamentary Committee, eleven were returned, of whom six were miners. Such figures were obviously absurd to anybody interested in real working-class representation.

Keir Hardie's independent Labour candidature in Mid-Lanark in 1888 marks a new departure. The Social Democratic Federation had, of course, waged a number of propaganda fights by running its own candidates, but the new movement was something quite different. One immediate consequence of Hardie's defeat by the "Lib-Labs" was the formation of the Scottish Labour Party in 1889. Following this example, the London Trades Council formed a Labour Representation Committee in 1891, and similar bodies came into existence in Manchester, Bradford, and elsewhere.

At the General Election of 1892 the new movement scored three wins—Hardie at West Ham, John Burns at Battersea, and—oh, irony of fate—J. Havelock Wilson at Middlesbrough. The "Lib.-Labs" now numbered twelve.

In 1893 the Trades Union Congress voted to create a special electoral fund, but defeated an amendment to set up an independent party. Earlier in the year, however, the Independent Labour Party had itself been established by a Conference of working-class organisations held at Bradford. Burns and Wilson refused to come into the new party, leaving Hardie as the sole "independent" Labour M.P.

After 1893 the movement for independent Labour representation suffered a number of temporary set-backs. Hardie lost West Ham at the General Election of 1895, and even the "Lib-Labs" lost three seats. The standing orders of the T.U.C. were revised in a reactionary direction to hinder the "perversion" of an "industrial" organisation to "political" ends.

By the year 1899, however, things were again looking up. The T.U.C. instructed its Parliamentary Committee to call a conference of co-operative, socialist, trade union and other working-class organisations to devise ways and means of increasing the number of Labour representatives in Parliament. This Conference duly met in February, 1900, and adopted the name "Labour Representation Committee." Confronted almost immediately with the Khaki Election of 1900, in the midst of the Boer War, the Committee did well to secure the return of

THE CAPITALIST POLITICAL PLAYERS

THE domain of politics is the most superficial of all ruling-class activities. It is here that the veil is the thinnest, and, consequently, the paint and powder most lavish. Every General Election has and the essentials of a first-class farce. The same characters, the same incidental music, the same composition of audience, with slightly re-arranged properties and re-painted scenery, the whole played on the same stage—all is a fitting apotheosis of the grotesque in capitalism. But at the opposite pole to the comic there stands the tragic. The "pit and gallery" section of the audience is not aware that what it applauds is a farce—that it is the victim of a burlesque."

(Editorial, PLEBS, February, 1910.)

two of its fifteen candidates—Hardie for Merthyr, and Richard Bell for Derby. The "Lib-Labs" were reduced to eight. It must be understood that a large part of the trade unions did not at once support the L.R.C.; the miners, for example, abstaining until 1910, although they had been financing their own union candidates since 1874.

Legal Cure for Political Blindness

A very important factor in speeding up the growth of the L.T.C. was the Taff Vale decision in 1901. In that case the Law Lords declared that the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (now in the N.U.R.) was liable as an organisation for damages caused by the actions of its officers, and that its normal activities could be prohibited or interfered with by injunction or *mandamus*. If such was the law, no union could feel safe, and many trade unionists who had hitherto been blind to the need for independent Labour representation had their eyes opened in a hurry. Twenty-nine of the fifty Labour candidates were returned in 1906, and their backing in the trade union world was so vigorous that they were able to force

the Liberal Cabinet, much against its will, to sponsor a Trade Disputes Act which secured the right of picketing and freedom from collective responsibility for the acts of individuals. The name of the L.T.C. was in this year officially changed to that of "Labour Party."

Having secured the reversal by legislation of the Taff Vale judgment, the Labour Party next had to face the Osborne judgment in 1909. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants was again involved. Mr. W. V. Osborne, of Walthamstow, objected to paying union levies for political purposes, even though the levies had been properly sanctioned by a vote of the membership. With financial support from capitalist sources, Mr. Osborne contested the legality of such levies, carrying his case from the High Court of Appeal, and fighting it finally before the Lords. The net result was that the raising of money for political purposes was declared outside the scope of legal trade union activities. Not until 1913 was this right partially restored, by permitting political levies subject to individual "contracting-out." In preparation for the coming election, the Tories have now enacted that only those who "contract-in" shall be permitted to pay the levy after it has been authorised by a majority vote.

Despite the Osborne judgment, the strength of the Parliamentary Labour Party after the election of January, 1910, consisted of forty members, the miners' representatives having come in the previous year. Two additional seats were gained in December, 1910, and from that date until the conclusion of the World War there was no General Election. During the war, the Labour Party, in common with all other Socialist organisations, was split from top to bottom on the question whether the workers should support "their own" capitalists, or should decline to take any part in a struggle that was not of their making and had no reference to ends in which they were interested.

After the war the Party was reconstituted so as to include individual members as well as affiliated organisations. Its victories and defeats since 1918, its brief tenure of office as a minority government in 1924, are matters of such recent history as to be within the memory of every reader.

WHY SHOULD I VOTE?"

By JENNIE LEE, M.P.

THIS is an excellent little book* which is making its appearance just at the right moment and fulfils a definite need. Written in clear and concise style, it states in a commonsense way the main political issues that will come before the electors in the course of the next few weeks.

This is exactly what men and women with a newly-awakened interest in politics are looking for. It deserves a special welcome from the young women voting in May for the first time. Nothing is more discouraging to a beginner eager to take an intelligent interest in public affairs than to be handed some ponderous volume of abstract theory and left entirely in the dark as to the meaning of terms repeatedly referred to in current political speeches and articles. Yet that unfortunately is what very often happens.

Even the daily press is flooded with not imperfectly-understood phrases:—Export Credit Schemes, Taxation of Land Values, and Trade Facilities Act. The intelligent young voter wants to know what it is all about. These terms are simply and clearly defined in this competent little book. If *Why Should I Vote* served no other purpose it would have earned a welcome as an elementary grammar of current events. But it does more than that. Early in the book a simple account is given of the present economic plight of Great Britain. The vicious circle of decreased wages, followed by a reduced home market, followed by increased unemployment, and so on *ad infinitum*, is carefully and convincingly explained.

Once having stated the problem of Britain's present position, the authors hasten to analyse its causes, then round off their task by describing the solutions offered by the three political parties. How far the statement of Tory and Liberal policy would meet with the approval of supporters of these two parties I don't venture to say. Certainly the Labour Party has no cause for complaint, as the writers keep strictly to *Labour and the Nation* in the concluding chapters.

It is up to literature secretaries and political agents to make the most of such a book. No better introduction card could be handed to the undecided voter. Unfortunately the price is rather high for such a slight volume and the cover design is a liability rather than an asset. However, the book deserves a warm welcome and if given its chance, will prove in these pre-election days well worth the money.

**Why Should I Vote?* By Amabel Williams-Ellis and L. A. Plummer. (Gerald Howe, 2/6).

Mangal Das Goradia, c/o Messrs. Laxmidas Devidas & Co., 16 Bonfield Lane, Calcutta, India, wishes correspondence on Socialism and the Youth Movement in India.

Mr. A. A. Purcell, M.P., tells us that the article on *The Menace of India* we published from his pen, in the December PLEBS was extensively quoted in sixteen Indian papers.

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HARRAP

THE BOOKSHELF

By J. F. HERRABIN'

ANTI-WAR propaganda, to be effective with ordinary folk, needs to be something more than a presentation of statistics (about blood and money)—something more, even, than an analysis of war's underlying causes. Both of these are essential, and it is these, of course, which it is our particular job, as working-class educationists, to supply. But, as with the broader issue of Capitalism itself, our intellectual attack loses a good deal of its force unless we can make our hearers feel the horror, the injustice, the vicious stupidity of the thing we are attacking. We need to feel, as well as to know.

That is why many of the books and plays about the War, recently published or performed, have a real value to us educationists. They supplement our Marxian analyses of the causes of war by giving us pictures of war's actual reactions on human beings. And even those of us who have memories of our own of war's horrors will be none the worse for having those memories revived and stimulated by the story of other men's experiences. Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War*, Gristwood's *The Somme*, Sherriff's play, *Journey's End*, the German novels, *Sergeant Grischka* and *All Quiet on the Western Front*—all these, in recent months, have given us pictures of actual War experience, at home or in the trenches.

To this list of worth-while war-books must be added one just re-issued in Cape's "Travellers' Library" (at 3/6)—Frederick Voigts' *Combed Out*. Voigts' book was originally published in 1920, at a time when the very natural reaction from war-strain tempted most of us to put on one side literature that told, coldly and realistically, of what we or our fellows had just been through. It received all too little attention. But to-day, ten years later, relief at having survived one war is giving place to a healthy nervous anxiety about the next; and the publisher is to be congratulated on having brought out *Combed Out* in a new (and cheap) edition.

Here, in a series of sketches, is war as seen by the ordinary conscript. This book goes up on my shelves next to Gristwood's *The Somme*. Voigt does not go in for fine writing, nor for emotional effects. But he builds up, by a succession of quietly deadly details, picture after picture that makes one feel again something of what one felt in 1914-18. If you know of any youngster who has any romantic hankerings after the "glories" of soldiering, set him to read Voigts' chapter, "The Fatigue Party." There is the real rock-bottom truth about army life, guaranteed to puncture all picturesque illusions. If anything more is needed, prescribe another chapter of this book—"The Casualty Clearing Station."

Romanticised "war" films and flag-wagging orators need to be counteracted. This book—a bucket of very cold (and very muddy) water—is a useful antidote.

A review in the *Daily News* recently raised a point of considerable interest to the Marxian student of literature. Someone had written a book of literary criticism regretting the absence of a set of fixed and "absolute" standards by which a writer could be

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definitely placed, and his work precisely adjudged; instancing, as illustrations of the absence of this standard, the fact that many men who died unrecognised have later been discovered to be masters, and *vice versa*; and, also, that men whose reputations have endured, in a quiet sort of way, for, say, a couple of centuries, are suddenly rediscovered, and their work hailed with enthusiasm as much bigger and better than it had hitherto been assumed to be. Very sensibly, the reviewer pointed out that any *absolute* standards of literary values were impossible, since a writer's value and significance were not isolated "things in themselves," but could only be estimated *in relation to the needs, atmosphere, ideas and ideals of a particular society*. A part of a writer's work, therefore, which had but little value or appeal to his own contemporaries, might well come to have a special significance for a later generation. Standards, that is, are not fixed, but changing; changing in relation to social needs. So, for example, the story of Spartacus, or of John Ball, take on altogether new and different significance for the proletarians of a later age than they possessed for the literary students of another class and century. And the growth of working-class consciousness will mean the re-valuation, by a different set of standards, of the whole body of literature.

* * *

The first number of the new monthly, the *Realist*, "a Journal of Scientific Humanism," had among other articles of varying interest, written by people with more or less famous names, one by John Gibson, a building-trade worker, entitled "Has Labour to Fear Science?" I don't think the writer quite answered that question; but he did certainly write about it in a way particularly interesting to workers, and from a genuinely working-class point of view. One good point he made was that the workers, as a class, have no reason to love the scientist, since that gentleman, in applying science to industrial processes, not only ignores the question of the men and women whom his new invention will displace, but very definitely leaves the worker out of account in designing his mechanisms. The scientist, for example, who designed the pneumatic drill, may have produced a masterpiece of ingenuity, but the effect of the thing on the luckless man who has to use it does not seem to have been thought worthy of consideration.

* * *

Joseph Reeves, Education Secretary of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, has written a little pamphlet with the very pertinent title—*Co-operative Education: Where is it Leading*; (published by the Southern Co-operative Education Association, 66 Great Prescott Street, E.1 No price stated). The pamphlet is an able plea (1) for a *purpose* in Co-operative education; and (2) for relating that education to the definite needs of the Co-operative movement. With both aims we N.C.L.Cers have every sympathy; all the more because we are convinced that, the more Co-operators realise their own educational needs, the closer they will draw to ourselves and our own educational work.

A LETTER TO AN AMERICAN PAL

By W. H.

DEAR Mike,—When we played football, "Men" versus "Suffragettes" on that humpy field at Bispham, Blackpool, in the (alleged) summer of 1923, you made us realise that although you had a slow-moving sleepy sort of look in repose, in action you were rather a lad. When you shoved, the "Suffragettes" had to look spry and side-step as gracefully as they could. Nippiness had to be brought into play against your young-bullock-like charges. You made us realise that in one sense at anyrate we did belong to the weaker sex!

And now it seems you are putting that punch into American literature, on the side of the proletariat.

It makes good reading and excellent propaganda. The massed hordes of capitalist apologists, hangers-on, supporters, sycophants, and camp-followers will have to do some very spry side-stepping to avoid getting it right in the neck. Your literary punch is as good, if not better, than your physical one (which we still remember, achingly!).

120 *Million*, by Michael Gold, Editor of the *New Masses* (International Publishers), is a safe candidate for a place on any "fighting" worker's bookshelf. There is a challenging little slogan that runs, "Irish! And proud of it!" Yours, Mike, should be, "Worker! And proud of it!"

Here in England (and, of course, over there in America) there are so many respectable literary people to explain us away. When I say "us" I mean the working-class. They don't like our dirty hands, our big boots, our smelly clothes, our truculence, our *gaucherie*; and, above all, they don't like the fact that we don't care what they think about us. I am afraid we have come in and put our feet on the mantelpiece, and spit in the fire, said rude words, dropped our aitches, spread orange peel about, *and they don't like it*.

Your sketches, Mike, do all those things. All the things that aren't done. Just like your football against us "Suffragettes."

Poetry is a shy woodland nymph; not a factory lass. She doesn't roll up her sleeves and do a job of work for her class like your "mass recitation" called "Strike!" or get down on her knees and scrub up conventional ideas of Justice like your "Vanzetti in the Death House."

You don't seem to realise, Mike, that poetry is a lady. "Faster, America, Faster," is positively rude to your country. "Third Degree" is an insult to the police. As for the other sketches that throw a searchlight of understanding, pity, rage, despair and triumph into the lives of the workers, and of which you write in your "Foreword,"

"The Social Revolution in this country is a wheat

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kernel fighting through stony soil. My book is a beginning, too";

we can only say that if these tales and poems are a beginning, then American Capitalism is going to feel just like we felt at Bispham when you charged down the field and shoved us into the middle of the next week!

Go on punching, Mike—Worker, and proud of it!

Yours in the "Beginning" and the
End, too, I hope,

WIN HORRABIN.

[Editor's footnote:—The N.C.L.C. has for sale a few copies of *The Damned Agitator*, by Mike Gold, paper covers, price 3d, post paid.]

In the introduction to *The Passing of Gugo and other Poems*, by Huw Menai (Hogarth Press, 4/6) the author relates that he left the Ragged School at twelve. He is now an unemployed miner. That explains, presumably, why he is not read and quoted by the literary world, for there is more real poetry in this volume than I have read for a long time. If you write nonsense such as:—

"As it was. As it is. Is it as it was. It is and as it is and as it is"

you are reputed a genius to-day. But if you write: "Moonlight's pale loveliness, and mountain stream Deepening the silence with its lone low sound; Shadows, and sheep, and here and there a mound Of coarse grass whereon clinging night-dews gleam,"

as Huw Menai does, you are an unemployed miner. Such is Capitalism! L.T.

WELLS ON WAR

By "BENN"

DURING the war a certain pro-war gentleman wrote a book called *The Peace of the World*, in which he described how, after Germany had been thoroughly and deservedly crushed, the nations should get together and come to some gentlemen's agreement to guarantee world peace. After the war this same person went to Russia and could find little more to say of the greatest upheaval, and the most remarkable event, in modern history than that "Lenin was a little man." This individual was H. G. Wells, and his rather hysterical, and what he would call feminine, outlook on life has coloured a large proportion of his literary output. It has also overweighted and unbalanced his latest novel in film-scenario form, *The King Who Was a King*.*

Wells is certainly no Marxian, and his approach to the problem of war and imperialism is mainly sentimental. In this book he describes a world-struggle for calcomite, a raw material necessary for motive power in the future. Two small states, Agravia and Clavery, are jockeyed into war seemingly by the two great powers who desire the control of calcomite, England and the United States of America; but the causes of war and the direct interest of the two great powers in the struggle are very hazily outlined. In fact, while at one time Wells seems to point to England and the United States as being the master brains controlling the two pawns, Agravia and Clavery, in general

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throughout his book he indicates that war is really a struggle between different types of mind.

These different types of mentality, or moral viewpoints, change from time to time throughout Wells' work—at one moment the conflict is between Science and Ignorance (between the mind that thinks in terms of scientific advance and machine-production and the mind that is ruled by tradition and mediaevalism); at another moment it is between two cousins, that is between two closely-related and dependent ideas, one good and the other evil—in fact, Wells even manages to drag in a character that he calls the evil man as representing the spirit of evil. Regard war, then, simply as a moral conflict.

In addition to this muddle-headedness about the causes and meaning of war, Wells has once again shown the mental bankruptcy that results from a Fabian upbringing. War is declared by Agravia on Clavery, but is averted by the King of Clavery refusing to fight and appealing to Agravia and the world to outlaw and to crush war. War, according to Wells, and Capitalism are going to be driven from the Earth not by the common people but by the rulers of the world—the statesmen, the scientists, the teachers, the governors. Peace is going to be imposed from above and Socialism is going to be ushered in by agreement among the world capitalists.

All very pretty and comfortable, but hardly, one would suggest, quite in conformity with fact and with scientific thinking. War and Capitalism will only be banished by struggle and by the determination, born of necessity, of the workers that they will overthrow the domination of their rulers, the financiers and capitalists who make war, and the domination of their mental rulers, the teachers and press lords who help in the fomenting of the war spirit. If Wells had written his novel from that angle he might have constructed a fine film-scenario, for he undoubtedly has ideas that would make splendid screen material.

But, unfortunately, he has been content to follow on lines that are, mainly, orthodox, and so *The King Who Was a King* falls very far short of Pudovkin's handling of the war theme in his magnificent film, *The End of St. Petersburg*.

Wells is hampered by a Fabian and a literary tradition—a great war film requires a Marxian and a cinematic education and outlook. No, Mr. Wells, the light comes from the East, not from the West.

* *The King Who Was a King*, by H. G. Wells (Ernest Benn, 7/6).

DRIESER A PLEB

By F. G. STONE

POSTERITY may wonder at this story—*Jennie Gerhardt*, a Novel by Theodore Dreiser. (Constable, 7/6.) It is a study in loneliness. Jennie Gerhardt, the ladylike daughter of a "common washerwoman" and an "honest woodcutter," is seduced by a wealthy and well-meaning radical senator who does good to the poor. He dies and she has a baby. In a further effort to improve the family finances she goes and lives with a big business man, Lester Kane. Her mother and father die. After many years Lester leaves her for a respectable marriage. Her child dies, and Lester dies. She is alone.

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—*Millgate Monthly*.

" . . . this book is to be recommended."

—*Sunday Worker*.

"A masterpiece of compression . . . Those who get this little book will get more than value for their money."—*The General Workers' Journal*.

Are we, the workers of Britain, any better off for the possession of chunks of land in various parts of the earth? I leave the answer to my readers. When they have paused and read Herrabin's little book their answer will be the more decisive.—M.C.L. in the *New Leader*.

"Herrabin ought to be ashamed of himself. The tone of the book is deplorable."

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The landmarks in Jennie's life were the deaths of her friends, and when we finally leave her our sorrow on her account is largely because she has no one left to die. But Dreiser shows that her loneliness is due not only to her giving herself to other people but to the surrounding economic conditions that dictate conventional conduct. The point is well brought out in the finely drawn character of Lester Kane. He seduced the pretty housemaid in the spirit proper to the wealthy libertine, intending to cast her off when he was bored. But to his surprise he didn't get bored. She set herself out to keep him and succeeded for a very long time. He grew fond of her and didn't see why he should give her up. Disillusioned (like most of the rich) by a world that gave him more wealth than he needed and withheld the necessities of life from others, he refused to observe the conventions that were the price of his wealth. "Marry her or leave her," said society. "Mind your own business," he replied. But Society proved the stronger and he at last left the loneliness of his secret home life for the greater loneliness of society festivities and a respectable wife. But even at his death he insisted that his mistress should come to his respectable bedside. "This is my death," he said; "If I'm dying, I ought to be allowed to die in my own way."

I have said that posterity may wonder at this story, but we are already posterity. It was written before motor cars were in use, and we can look back on it almost as a schoolfellow of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. It bears resemblance to "Tess" not only in the story, but also in the restraint of its telling, for Dreiser has told it very simply and directly in short chapters without any of the details that he found necessary to introduce in his later novels. The character of Jennie is just like that of Tess, and after all when you have said that a woman is beautiful and has all the virtues and none of the vices, there isn't much more to say about her; so Dreiser swaps horses in mid-stream and lets Lester Kane pull the book through the remainder of its journey.

But the fundamental difference between Hardy and Dreiser is well brought out in a comparison of these two novels. For the universal tragedy of the poor woman seduced by the rich man, Hardy blames God. Dreiser blames Man. The last words of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are "The President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess." For the President of the Immortals, Dreiser would substitute the economic system. "We live in an age," he says, "in which the impact of materialised forces is well-nigh irresistible; the spiritual nature is overwhelmed by the shock." The women who cut Jennie did so because they had to keep their place in respectable society, and the only person who was strong enough to reject her ideas was the big business man, and even he was eventually brought to heel, an unbelieving worshipper. It is the materialist conception of history.

SACCO & VANZETTI

By A. C.

THE Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti (Constable, 7/6) form rather a memorial of these working-class martyrs than an exposition either of their view of life or of the atrocious treatment they received at the hands of capitalist "justice."

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Here is a job for every real PLEB. See that the library gets the books that matter and, of course, encourage your friends to read them.

An Appendix of some thirty pages provides a clear summary of facts that have already been published elsewhere, but the bulk of the volume consists of letters written by the prisoners to American friends who were trying to help them.

The two Italians were writing in a language over which they had little mastery, during a period of long-drawn-out mental torture (1920-1927). Those to whom they wrote were not fellow-anarchists but new friends, mostly of Liberal and Fabian sympathies, whose interest was excited in the first instance by the brutality of the general campaign of repression against all "Reds" in 1920. For that reason the points discussed in the letters seem at times laboured or elementary. Nevertheless, what is wonderful is that men in such a position should have been able to express so much and to reveal such striking personalities in an unfamiliar medium. Vanzetti, as a natural student, wrote the more easily, and his letters occupy a much larger number of pages than do those of Sacco, the practical mechanic and lover of the open-air, who would often declare that he could never learn English in prison.

What a contrast between the attitude of the writers of these letters and the behaviour of the eminent lawyers, highly-paid officials and respectable jurymen who sent the two victims to their doom.

Here were a fish peddler and a shoemaker, charged with the robbery of \$16,000 and the murder of the two men from whom the haul was made. Were they guilty? Between the date of the crime and their arrest they had been following their usual simple manner of life, there was no evidence that either of them was in possession of any of the stolen money, and they both established perfect alibis. Nevertheless, a New England jury condemned them. Later, Madeiros, a youthful member of a "gang," confessed to a guilty knowledge of the crime. He had everything to lose by speaking out, as the case for which

**NEXT MONTH'S
PLEBS**

will contain, among other articles,

**THE CRISIS IN AMERICAN
WORKERS' EDUCATION**
By Cara Cook

**A review of ELLEN WILKINSON'S
Novel, *Clash***
By Christine Millar

**"WHITE CAPITAL AND
COLOURED LABOUR"**
Reviewed by McGregor Ross
(Author of *Kenya from Within*)

he was at the time under sentence was being appealed to a higher court. The quite comprehensible motive which he gave for his action was the shame he felt on seeing Mrs. Sacco and her children visiting the prison. "I seen Sacco's wife come up here (jail) with the kids and I felt sorry for the kids."

Here, then, was a clue which promised to provide some motive for the robbery, which the Sacco-Vanzetti theory entirely failed to do. More than that, we are told on good authority that the police had in fact suspected the Morelli gang, which Madeiros' confession implicated, but had "dropped the matter after the arrest of Sacco and Vanzetti." Then again the statement made by Madeiros fitted in almost exactly with the evidence given in the defence of Sacco and Vanzetti by a number of witnesses of the crime.

What then? There followed, of course, the demand for a new trial. Judge Thayer refused a new trial. The most strenuous efforts in all possible directions failed to secure one. When the question of Judge Thayer's prejudice against the prisoners, because of their views, was raised, the issue was brought before Judge Thayer himself and "Judge Thayer found that he (Judge Thayer) had been without prejudice." Well, well! An American said to the writer, who was another of the few thousands caught in the Red Raids of 1920, "What is your complaint? You are getting justice in the courts now, aren't you?"

* * *

Wage Labour and Capital, by Karl Marx, has been issued in an excellent form at 4d, by Modern Books Ltd. Every PLEBS reader should have a copy as the booklet is as valuable to-day as ever it was. It's a splendid introduction to Marxian economics. At the same price, Modern Books have also published *Ten Years of the Communist International*. O.H.

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LETTERS

A REMINDER

DEAR Editor,—May I remind Fred Shaw that the abolition of religion and government, desired by that middle-class "reformer," William Godwin, would at least achieve a very big reform. And, further, that the programmes of a considerable number of class-conscious proletarian revolutionaries would, in their completest fulfilment, occasion little more than a very tiny revolution

H. MACE.

PAY FOR YOUR POLITICS

SIR,—Since the General Election has come within measurable distance, several newspaper correspondents have sought to create the impression that the Labour Party is in a financial position equal to, if not better than, that of the other political organisations. It is true that a week or two ago Lord Younger made an appeal to the members of the Carlton Club on behalf of the Conservative Party and it is evident from the preparations that are already announced that there will be no unusual shortage of funds at Tory Headquarters. It is also common knowledge that the Liberal Party's Fund is of ample proportions. The Labour Party has few wealthy supporters and it cannot exchange honours for contributions from its political friends. A number of our Labour Candidates will be financed by affiliated Trade Unions, but the Government's Trade Union Act will temporarily affect their political funds, though it seems clear that in the case of some Unions at least, the number of members eventually contracting-in will exceed those previously contributing. In the interval, however, many Unions will find the financing of their Candidates a considerable strain, and in any case there will be little possibility of their assisting the Central Party Fund.

The greater proportion of Labour Candidates, however, will depend upon the finances raised by the Divisional Parties in their constituencies, and many of these, unfortunately, have been gravely affected by the long-continued depression.

The National Executive Committee of the Party has decided that the state of the nation is such that the electors, old and new, should have the opportunity of putting a Labour Government in power, and accordingly, the maximum number of possible seats will be contested on its behalf.

Our Local Parties are rallying magnificently to the fight, but the conditions prevailing in many districts are so difficult that the Party has decided to issue a Public Appeal for Funds to enable the greatest possible assistance being rendered to the areas where there is the keenest need.

Contributions, large or small, will be very welcome and may be forwarded to the Party Offices, Transport House (South Block), Smith Square, London, S.W.1.

Yours very sincerely,

ARTHUR HENDERSON.

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS RUN RIOT

DEAR COMRADE,

In view of a recent discussion in an N.C.L.C. Class, comprised almost wholly of textile workers, I am compelled to ask you to define what is meant by Class-Consciousness, and where it should begin and end. I always understood it to be applicable to every worker, regardless of the type of industry or trade of the

individual, in respect of the Capitalist Class. This is not the view generally held.

In the discussion referred to I had reason to defend the interests of shop assistants when the view was expressed—and apparently held by the majority of the students—that shop assistants were *not workers, but merely people who went to business*. Is this view held in all areas?

If any particular group of productive or distributive workers have *apparently* attained what is merely an approach to the higher standard of life to which we all aim, have they to be penalised by workers less fortunate and dubbed "middle-class," therefore not workers?

Our aim is for the workers' complete emancipation, but, in my opinion, until we begin to try to understand workers in trades other than our own, and realise that the advocacy of narrow craft views is wrong, we shall never succeed in our efforts.

Why do some of us cultivate an inferiority complex and then accuse those who must serve our needs behind the counter of being "superior" beings, not workers, because their job demands a keeping up of appearances which is often a struggle for the average shop assistant.

When Karl Marx said "Workers of the World Unite," he didn't split them into class sections. We are all workers and—we need to remember it.

Yours etc.,

FLORENCE WHITTAM.

KAUTSKY AND LENIN

Dear Editor,—I don't know who A.W. among your reviewers may be, but if PLEBS cannot print a better review of Lenin's book, it will certainly run short of readers. *MacDonald and Lenin spoken of as if they were working on similar lines*. If Marxists are to become apologists for MacDonaldism and Mondism, the N.C.L.C. should shut up shop. There are *greater tragedies* than Kautsky's in the British working-class movement and possibly your reviewer is one of them. But the PLEBS is not exactly the place for anti-Marxism and traducing Lenin.—W. N. DEES.

[If our correspondent will look at the review again he will see that A.W. did not say that Lenin and MacDonald "were working on similar lines" and that A.W. in no way traduced Lenin.—ED.]

"I do not like acting as an N.C.L.C. Tutor without being a member of the Plebs League and N.C.L.C. Students' Association," says B.F., in enclosing her sub.

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WHAT THE N.C.L.C. IS DOING

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THE General Election will, to some extent, interrupt the summer's educational work, but every care should be taken to see that both before and after the Election the maximum amount of educational work is done. There is still very big scope for more Week-End and Day Schools and some of these should be arranged by every College. Classes should, of course, not be overlooked, nor the tutorial training classes, because it is of vital importance that our Movement should each year produce new tutors to replace wastage and make possible the extension of our work. Particulars of Day and Week-End Schools should be advised to Head Office four weeks before the schools are due to be held.

N.C.L.C. ANNUAL CONFERENCE—As previously announced, this will be held in conjunction with the Summer School on the 27th and 28th July. Last day for receiving resolutions is 31st May.

ANNUAL STATEMENTS—College secretaries and committees are requested to ensure that their statements are sent into Head Office immediately if they have not already been forwarded. Unless these statements are received it will be impossible for Head Office to send out much of the Executive's Report before the date of the Annual Meeting.

ORDER BOOKS—The Order Books, referred to in a recent General Circular, are now ready. Each large College and each Division should make use of at least one.

LITERATURE SALES—It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of continuing the sale of PLEBS and literature throughout the summer. Each Day School should, of course, have a supply of literature on sale, and every lecturer giving a lecture to a branch of an organisation should take with him a supply of one or two books and pamphlets besides the PLEBS. If literature was on sale at all the occasional lectures given by us, our literature sales would be doubled. If the lecturer takes with him a book or pamphlet having some bearing on the subject of his lecture, he will have no difficulty in disposing of a number of copies. Advantage should be taken, also, of the election meetings and open-air meetings to sell such books as *The British Empire* and, of course, the magazine.

NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL—Particulars of the Summer School are advertised elsewhere. Will College Secretaries and Officials do their best to encourage their students to book places? The School is not only of considerable value educationally, but is also the rallying ground and meeting-place for our active folks from all over the country.

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES—Speakers at Branch meetings are requested to draw attention to the N.C.L.C. Correspondence Courses. Folders giving particulars may be had on request.

NEW LOCAL AFFILIATIONS—Slough, 1; S.E. Lancs., 1; Port Talbot, 1.

WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING

DIVISION 1.

Leyton Class is extending its course on Social Psychology. Miss Birkinshaw, the tutor, is making this subject very interesting. The Bow Day School for women, conducted by E. Cruse, L.C.C., and Mrs. Clayton, created much enthusiasm in the district. Another Day School for women is being held at Balham. Biggin Hill class, run by the local Men's Co-operative Guild, has now completed its course on "Modern Working-Class History," and is very much pleased with its first attempt at educational activity. It is going to carry on some work during the summer and has already arranged for a Whitsun school with W. T. Colyer as tutor. Visiting students can obtain accommodation from tea on Saturday to tea on Monday, inclusive, for 13/-, which includes charge for school. Further details can be obtained from the Organiser, 71 Prebend Gardens, W.6. Week-end Schools have also been fixed for July 6th and 7th at "Treetops," Albury, and August 31st and Sept. 1st at Newdigate. Charges, 10/- and 9/- respectively. Sheerness College is running a Day School in June. Woolwich Labour College is also running Day Schools at "Shornells," Bostall Heath. The March Tutors' Council Meeting discussed an address by Comrade Dorricott on "The Present Position of the N.C.L.C." The discussion was pretty vigorous and resulted in a decision to discuss "What is Marxism?" at the May meeting.

DIVISION 3.

Despite the discouraging influence of the cold spell, all classes have successfully completed this session's courses. Southend and St. Albans have continued their popular Sunday Lectures and Colchester A.E.U. Branch has become almost excitedly interested in the problem of "Rationalisation." So far, Day Schools have been arranged for Southend, Braintree, Luton, Staines, Ipswich, and Felixstowe. The only spot on the sun is the Divisional deficit, which can be removed if a vigorous application of the "Prize Drawing" is made. Staines deserves congratulation for the way it has come to our assistance financially and no one will grumble if its organisation of profitable social functions might act as a tonic and example to other colleges.

STOP PRESS

The position of the Residential Labour College is not fully understood at the time we go to press. Next month we hope to have an article explaining what was decided at the S.W.M.F. Conference and what basis there was for a statement made regarding the N.U.R. and the College.

DIVISION 4.

The Divisional Half-Yearly Meeting was held at Penarth, and thanks to the splendid facilities provided by the Penarth comrades a very enjoyable time ensued. The spirit of comradeship and enthusiasm marks this meeting as one of the best held in the Division. On Easter Tuesday, the Rhondda L.C. held its Rally, under the auspices of the Mardy Class. Comrades Cox and David opened up discussions upon "The Political Implications of Rationalisation" and "Fascism." The attendance was a splendid compliment to the organisation of our Mardy comrades. Comrade David has given a further series of successful lantern lectures and has made arrangements for others. Crosshands Class held its first Annual Rally, with a good attendance of students and sympathisers. Arrangements are being made to run a Summer Class. F. Griffiths will be pleased to have the support of all adherents of I.W.C.E. Arrangements are now well in hand for a series of Pre-Election Classes on Public Speaking and Chairmanship at Cardiff, Brynmawr, Gilwen and Maesteg. Activity along these lines will ensure contact with bodies that will be of assistance in future development. Newport L.C. has arranged its Annual Rally, and prepared the course for Summer Tutorial work. Merthyr L.C. is arranging its Annual Meeting and preparing for a Summer Class on the British Empire; while at Aberdare, Comrade Williams is continuing the Shop Assistants' class.

DIVISION 5.

Swindon College has concluded a very successful first season. The attendance has been well maintained and the discussions have been lively and interesting. The chairman of the college council gave a report at the last branch meeting of his Trade Union upon the lessons learned and the work done. It is hoped that similar efforts will be made by other class members, so that a wider circle of trade unionists may know of our activities. Our best thanks are also due to Comrades Beavis and Sheldon for their invaluable aid. Yeovil is still carrying on the class on "The History of the Workers," and good reports are to hand of the interest shown. In Plymouth, Comrade Thomas is proving an energetic secretary and with the aid of the local comrades he is making a big effort to secure added financial support. We have concluded successful classes in Bath, Cheltenham and Chippenham. Summer Schools must come next.

DIVISION 8.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT COLLEGE.—General regret is expressed over the serious illnesses of two of our voluntary tutors, Comrades J. S. Blackburn and Councillor S. C. Hills, who are both in hospital. A Day School and Inter-Meet with Manchester students will be held in the Newton-le-Willows Labour Club on June 16th. The programme includes tea, tennis, talks, and lectures. A Tutors' Training Class is being held in the Transport Building, 41 Islington, Liverpool, on Wednesdays. An Esperanto Class for beginners is proposed to commence in June. Names of prospective students should be sent to the organiser. V. Meek (N.U.D.A.W.) will be the tutor. Warrington students are continuing their studies through the medium of a fortnightly discussion class.

N. LANCS. LABOUR COLLEGE.—Appreciation of the work done by A. L. Williams in the area was expressed in a practical form at a Social held in Blackburn on March 23rd. He carries with him the best wishes of all

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in his new sphere of activity. H. Highley (Halifax) who stepped into the breach to conclude the Classes has been heartily congratulated on his work. The Secretary (*pro tem*) for the Area is Councillor P. L. Taylor, 17 Rose Terrace, Preston. J. R. Cressey (Accrington), an old stalwart in the movement, has been elected Divisional representative on the National Executive following the resignation of the Divisional Organiser from that position. The Divisional Organiser addressed the Cumberland and Lancs. Delegate Board Meeting of the N.U. of Blastfurnacemen on March 13th. A resolution was unanimously carried in favour of active participation of the Union in work of the N.C.L.C.

S.E. LANCs. COLLEGE.—The following Day Schools and Inter-Meets have been arranged:—Whit-Sunday, Inter-Meet with No. 7 Division at Hebden Bridge; June 16th, Inter-Meet with Liverpool L.C. at Newtownle-Willows; July 21st, Inter-Meet with No. 7 Division at Castleton, Derbyshire; August, probably on the Ribble with N.E. Lancs. L.C.; Sept. 8th, Inter-Meet with No. 7 Division at Greenfield. In addition, groups of the N.C.L.C. Students' Association are arranging summer activities. Groups of the S.A. have been formed in Hyde and Ashton-under-Lyne and Renssentials is likely to follow suit. Note new N.C.L.C. local secretaries: Mr. O. Binyon, 40 Bennet Street, Newton, Hyde; Mr. J. Taylor, 20 Gordon Street, Waterloo, Ashton-under-Lyne. For full details of summer activities throughout S.E. Lancs. write to E. Redfern, 1 Langdale Avenue, N. Reddish, Stockport.

DIVISION 9.

A very successful Week-End School was held at Newcastle at Easter. The school finished up with a splendid concert by the Newcastle Clarion Vocal Union. There were more applications for National Union of General and Municipal Workers' Scholarships than scholarships offered. The North-Eastern College is organising Tutors' Classes in each of the following areas—Blyth, Wallsend and South Shields. The Shildon Class, which started in a very small way, is increasing in numbers every week, thanks to the energy of the Class Secretary, Comrade Oliver Watson of the Shop Assistants' Union. The Willington Class on Wednesday, April the 17th, to celebrate the conclusion of a very successful Winter Session, has arranged a social. A Day School is being held at Coundon on Saturday, April 27th, 1929. W. Coxon will deliver two lectures. Day Schools are being arranged for South Shields and Willington and Week-End Schools for Wallsend and North Shields.

DIVISION 10.

For some time the Labour College Movement has had a class in the Orkneys. We are now pleased to state that this winter there has been a good class in Lossiemouth, which to the Londoner is almost as far north. The class has formed a Class Group and it is hoped to set a local college on foot. All good wishes to Comrade Younie and his supporters. They are already giving points to some of the older Colleges in the energy they are putting in the distribution of *Plebs*.

EDINBURGH COLLEGE.—A successful winter session has closed and the first part of the Summer Programme has commenced with the opening of nine classes. Two of these are in Intermediate and Advanced Esperanto and seven on Electioneering. The Electioneering classes are being conducted by Staff-Tutor Gibbons and include lectures on Corrupt and Illegal Practices, Committee Room Work, Canvassing, Chairing and Duties of Polling Agents. These classes are being very well attended and the instruction given should be of great assistance in the coming General Election. A visit of the Glasgow Labour College Players is being eagerly looked forward to. The Annual Conference takes place on the 27th April, and is to be followed by a social-dance and dramatic performance.

GLASGOW AND WESTERN COLLEGE.—During January to March session we were successful in running 24 classes covering the districts of Renfrewshire, Stirlingshire, Dumbartonshire and Glasgow City. The subjects in greatest demand were Economics, History, Psychology, Economic Geography, Public Speaking and English Literature. We had an enrolment of 560 students and in addition 20 special lectures were delivered to various organisations. Our Labour College Players, under the direction of Chas. MacDonald, have been playing to packed houses all over the West of Scotland. Most of the plays have been written by the Players themselves. Comrade Tim Watson actually produced four single-act sketches this session, one of which, "Diplomacy and the Draughtsman," was broadcast by the B.B.C. For the summer months, week-end rambles to places of historic interest are arranged, where short lectures will be given to students attending. Alex. McGillivray, LL.B., is presently running a successful class on Election Law, which is much appreciated and well attended by Agents, Labour Candidates, etc. Whiteinch is arranging for a Summer Speakers' Class to help our young propagandists and tutors both for college work and general Labour movement lecturing.

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