

227115
ORGAN OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
LABOUR COLLEGES

THE PLEBS

Monthly, 4d.

JUNE, 1929 ✓



MAN
versus
MECHANICAL
MAN—

IT'S YOUR
PROBLEM

(SEE INSIDE)

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

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A. A. PURCELL, M.P. (N.A.F.T.A.)	The New Industrial Revolution in India.
MAURICE DOBB (Author of <i>Plebs Outline of European History, and Russian Economic Development since the Revolution</i>).	The New Industrial Revolution in Russia.
CARA COOK (Brookwood Labour College, U.S.A.)	Rationalisation and the American Trade Union Movement.
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THE PLEBS

Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

VOL. XXI.

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KEEP ON KEEPING ON

AT the time of writing no one can tell what will be Labour's fate at the polls. If there is a landslide, a Labour Government will follow, provided the landslide is big enough. But whether a Labour Government comes now or later, the workers deceive themselves if they think the battle is over when a Labour Government takes charge at Westminster. It is only just beginning. Social revolutions are not achieved by the simple process of putting crosses on ballot papers.

To imagine that to establish a Labour Government is to establish Socialism is to be guilty of day-dreaming in a decidedly dangerous form. Governments, whether Labour or otherwise, are subject to the economic forces outside. Governments may propose but economic forces dispose.

The strength of the workers' economic power lies in the Trade Union and the Co-operative Movements. The power that can be wielded by these two movements depends on size, yes, but by no means on size alone. The outlook of the membership plays a very vital part. To carry out a socialist policy requires a sufficiently large number of socialists and that is a question of working-class education.

That is, of course, a truism, but it is a truism that is often mentioned but much less frequently realised. In this year of grace 1929, some working-class organisations have no educational schemes at all. Others have schemes based on quite definitely anti-

BOOK
YOUR PLACE

Labour conceptions, for example, the idea that the social sciences taught in the universities are impartial.

If Labour's case against the existing order is worth consideration, it must be backed by economics and history. It implies that there is something wrong not only with the existing order but with that part of the education of the existing order which is devoted to the social sciences.

Some time ago Professor Charles Beard said that he thought that social science was about ten thousand years behind natural science. It is Labour's job to wrest social science from the dead hand of Capitalist ownership and to realise that, just as the development of natural science was indispensable to the development of capitalism, so is the development of social science indispensable to the development of socialism. *And Labour cannot farm out that job to the universities or the schools, no matter how tempting it may be to do so.*

Unfortunately, there are still many rank-and-filers in the Trade Union and Labour movement who don't see the need for independent working-class education. There are plenty of officials sailing—we should say drifting—in the same boat. "Education is something easy to do without" seems to be the motto in some quarters. It is the special job of PLEBS readers to stress the fact that we must not only agitate and organise but Educate.

We've done it for more than twenty years now. We've achieved what can be fairly described as remarkable results, but never was it more necessary than now to keep on keeping on.

* * *

It was not difficult to see several years ago that snags were likely to arise in the workers' educational movement in the States. Education with a "University label" will not mix with education with a "Trade Union label." Miss Cook's article in this issue shows that these difficulties are coming to a head. Official "thumbs down" on Brookwood was to be expected; it stands to reason that, as the A.F. of L. (the American T.U.C.) does not see the need

for a Labour political party, it cannot be expected to appreciate the importance of anything approaching independent working class education.

Brookwood was probably the most effective workers' educational institution in the American Trade Union Movement. Fortunately, the A.F. of L.'s action is not likely to affect the policy of any of the Unions that at present support Brookwood, and so far as the A.F. of L. is concerned, it does not subscribe a penny to Brookwood anyway.

TECHNOLOGICAL *unemployment covers that vast field where, through one device or another, and chiefly through a machine supplanting a human, skilled workers have found that their trades no longer exist and that their skill is no longer needed. What becomes of these men? What can be done about these thousands of individual tragedies? What do these individual tragedies mean to society as a whole?*

It is an imponderable thing. Some of the experienced witnesses who appeared before your committee stated that new industries absorb the labour turned adrift by machine development. The automobile, the airplane, the radio, and related industries were suggested as examples. Undoubtedly there is much truth in these statements, but nevertheless we are not relieved of the individual problem. It offers little to the skilled musician to say that he, who has devoted his life to his art, may find a job in a factory, where radio equipment is manufactured. Then, there is the delay, that inevitable period of idleness when readjustments are being effected, the suffering, the loss, the enforced change in environment. True, this may all be "the price of progress," but society has an obligation to try, at least, to see that all this "price" does not become the burden of the worker.

United States Senate Committee on
Education and Labour in its 1929
Report on Unemployment.

MAN *versus* MECHANICAL MAN

By R. M. FOX

(Author of *The Triumphant Machine*).

ALL men but dead men should be interested in the astonishing development of the machine. Ellison Hawks, in his *Book of Remarkable Machinery* (Harrap, 7/6), has written a volume packed with information about machines of all kinds. A typical marvel, shown in a full page illustration, is the fifteen arm glass bottle-making machine, which can turn out 120 pint bottles a minute or considerably over a million a week. Bottle-making used to be an irksome and dangerous proceeding. And the case for the machine is that it eliminates cumbersome methods of working. But turning to *Automaton* (H. Stafford Hatfield, Kegan Paul, 2/6) we see what dangers an unrestrained enthusiasm for a mechanical order may bring with it. Dr. Hatfield accepts this unreservedly.

He is the inventor of a Chemical Robot which was displayed in London. He tells us how the machine is advancing to take the place of man. First it was a conquest of limb, of muscular power. This was easy. Machines have been invented which are far more powerful than any human limbs. Sensitiveness—capacity to respond—is essential for some industrial tasks. But machines have been invented which are far more sensitive—in every way useful to production—than are human nerves. Only the citadel of brain remains. A satisfactory machine substitute for the human brain, it is admitted, has yet to be found. But even here rapid progress is being made. Machines embodying the "corrective principle" have been devised. They are self-adjusting and are able to flash warning when anything goes wrong. They are superior to routine minds because they are not subject to human vagaries. The calculating machines, described in Ellison Hawks' book, illustrate this. As industry is formed more and more

upon a gigantic machine pattern, human beings must accommodate themselves to it and machine substitutes for men become increasingly possible. Dr. Hatfield describes the process—

"A vast and successful activity . . . strives perpetually to create communities of well-washed, well-fed, well-regulated, well-behaved, mildly cultured people as devoid of all individuality as machine-made automata . . . they become as monotonously alike and characterless as a well-cared-for herd of cattle. . . . Industry demands that the supply of such semi-automata shall keep pace with the demand and that they shall be clean, healthy, simple-minded, undisturbed by rude passions, whether animal, political or spiritual; regular in their habits, fertile in a sufficient degree but not beyond it, and dependable in the matter of attention to their tasks. . . . A low grade of intelligence is a positive advantage and even the higher traits of character are positively inimical. All that is required is natural muscular skill and persistent practice."

Machinery is being graded up while humanity is being graded down so that a rough equation—an interchangeability—becomes everyday more practicable. For the old-fashioned skilled worker there is no machine equivalent. But the modern worker who pulls a lever may at any moment be displaced by a mechanical device. Our expert looks forward to the time when the inferior grade of worker, produced by modern industry to serve its needs, will be displaced altogether. With the dispassionate logic of the engineer he considers the possibility in the near future of pilotless aeroplanes, equipped with self-steering apparatus, dropping loads of poison gas or bombs upon an exact spot selected. He comments, "the

moral aspect of the matter will play very little part. After all the work of an inventor of automatons is, in any case, to abolish unnecessary human beings."

The Last Man

But Dr. Hatfield, inventor and scientist, is guilty of one lamentable human weakness. He is indignant because certain firms treat their research staffs as if they are routine workers. He demands that these scientists shall have room for individuality, opportunity for free play of scientific imagination in their work. The firms hold that this is unnecessary. They only want that efficiency which serves their ends. If a scientist employed in the laboratory conducts experiments with the object of improving out of existence some commodity which the firm has spent a fortune in advertising, they not unnaturally object. They want to confine the research workers to tasks of petty improvements. No abstract reasoning about science will convince them that anything else is needed. The human factor enters. The firm objects to its business being injured. The scientist rushes to the support of his

fellow scientists. The worker resents the attempt to deprive him of every vestige of personality in the works. This is bound to be so, for we are concerned with human as well as technical relations. Science for its own sake is even more barren than art for art's sake. It conjures up the monstrosity of a completely mechanised world in which the only human being left is an extremely clever and extremely worried scientist who keeps the whole machinery running. Having "abolished unnecessary human beings" and rendered the human race redundant, he keeps the machine running purely for his selfish scientific pleasure in the hope that some day when he has learned the secret of perpetual motion and perfected the "corrective principle" he will make it completely self-adjusting and succeed in abolishing himself. But the absurdity of this fantastic world in which none but scientists are allowed to have personality should strike even a scientist. And that un-machine-like quality of indignation which flares out in our expert when he finds scientists being treated as machines is shared by other people who are not scientists. It is a valuable human quality.

The Two Horrors

Dramatists in plays and films have shown us humanity haunted by its own handiwork, repelled by the perfection of the machinery which it has constructed. The problem which perturbs these artists is that of crushed personality. In *R.U.R.*, trouble occurs when the robots do not proceed with their tasks in the customary, well-regulated manner but develop human characteristics, likes, dislikes, longings, impulses, which disturb their mechanical precision. To this presentation of the conflict between mechanism and man, which the dramatist senses, strips of its vagueness and expresses in definite form, the technical expert makes impatient reply. "The tragedy of machines without souls," he remarks, "is no tragedy at all! What conceivable use are souls in machine production? Luckily our machines do not possess them so we are saved from many awkward situations." Yet, despite this retort, the artist and the dramatist are expressing a deeper truth than the technical

*A re-valuation and
re-statement of
Labour and Socialist
Policy*

The NEXT TEN YEARS

IN BRITISH SOCIAL
AND ECONOMIC POLICY

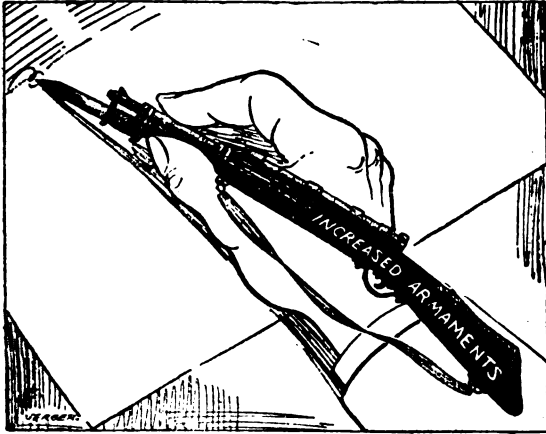
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expert perceives. For, once admitting that individual qualities are a nuisance in machine production, we are brought sooner or later to the question of how far in the interests of industry can men be persuaded or compelled to relinquish individual characteristics. The horror posed by the dramatists of a machine equipped with a soul is paralleled by the horror of the machine worker, stripped of personality—as outlined by Dr. Hatfield—in order to make him a thoroughly efficient machine. The dramatists stated the case paradoxically, but its essential truth remains.

There are in fact two problems:—

1. That of efficient production, which has been solved largely by machinery (too much so under present conditions when idle producers are walking the streets).
2. How to widen opportunities of life, how to equip people mentally and physically to get the best from it, how to have human beings, unlimited, unblunted.

This latter problem is just as much a part of the present struggle as the piling up of goods—it is at least as important. The deadening of existence for thousands of routine workers is not an admirable thing. And the so-called demand of industry—presented by Dr. Hatfield—for well-washed,

carefully regulated fools, is a blasphemy on human life.

Automaton is the antidote to *The Book of Remarkable Machinery*. It prevents enthusiasm for mechanisation running wild. But where is the antidote to *Automaton*? It is a problem with which the worker—whom it most closely concerns—has hardly begun to grapple. In fact there are many in the workers' movement who deny that such a problem exists. "Humanity must make sacrifices," they say. But how can the degradation of humanity serve humanity?

THE CRISIS: WORKERS' EDUCATION IN THE STATES.

By CARA COOK.

(The writer of the following was for two years tutor at Brookwood Labour College, U.S.A., and has been studying workers' education in England this year. She wishes to emphasise that this article is "on her own," and not an official statement of Brookwood's point of view. Miss Cook is to be one of the lecturers at the N.C.L.C.'s Summer School).

THROUGHOUT the latter half of 1921 persistent rumbles were heard from labour educational groups throughout England emphasising the need for "class organisation and co-ordination." This movement culminated in October in the formation of the National Council of Labour Colleges, to "bring together the various colleges, districts and groups already in existence, with a view to extension and mutual help."

During the early half of 1921 organisers of the already existing two dozen workers' education groups in the United States, together with labour leaders and teachers inspired by the growth of workers' education in England, began to consider a similar co-ordinating problem, and the upshot of their deliberations was the formation in April,

1921, of the Workers' Education Bureau of America.

About the same time, and encouraged by many of the same individuals, equally ambitious plans were being considered for the establishment of an independent, resident, trade union college in the United States, and as a result in October, 1921, the doors of Brookwood Labour College at Katonah, New York, opened for the first time to a handful of machinists, garment workers and coal miners, who came with tremendous enthusiasm, though some trepidation, to their co-operative experiment.

Education For What?

In an article in the PLEBS of Dec., 1921, commenting on the above-mentioned W.E.B. conference, Mr. J. P. M. Millar wrote:

"The plans of the W.E.B. are similar to those of our N.C.L.C. It is to be a statistical, advisory, publicity, research and publishing body, but its AIM is different. It is simply to assist the movement for "workers' education"; it does not stipulate any *kind* of education. This did not pass unnoticed in the conference."

He continues by quoting the remarks of a delegate:

"We emphasise the fact that it (the W.E.B.) is an agency to help in the education of the workers. Yet we refuse to face the fundamental fact in the workers' movement—the class struggle. We so act because we are anxious to fit our enterprise to the labour movement of America, and to adapt it to both the radical and conservative elements therein. We wish to please the one side and not antagonise the other. It is a very pious wish. But will it work? I rather think it will not, and I suggest therefore we

face reality.'" The conference, however, did not face the reality; it decided to attempt to mix the oil of I.W.C.E. with the water of W.E.A.'ism."

The two ingredients remained in working agreement for seven years, but they have refused to mix finally. At its sixth convention held in April last, the Workers' Education Bureau, by a decided majority, further strengthened the control of the American Federation of Labour over workers' education by depriving local classes and colleges of their previous share of direct control in the Bureau, and in this way endorsed the previous action of the Federation towards Brookwood Labour College, of which I shall speak presently.

Delegates were treated to the spectacle of the Bureau's president, James Maurer (himself a prominent Trade Union official) throwing down a challenge in his opening speech to the Convention by declaring that it was attempting to kill "one of the most successful enterprises" in the American labour movement, Brookwood Labour College. "If this action isn't resisted, the Bureau ought to fold up its tents and go home, for it hasn't life enough to last another year," Maurer declared.

He reverted to the original purpose of the Bureau "to bring such information to the workers as they can use in their struggle to control their own lives under conditions better fitted for their collective welfare, that is, intelligent guidance to a new social order. But now, the Bureau is to be made an agency for mere study of routine trade union organisation. . . . If suppression of criticism is to be its policy, it cannot live."

Other supporters of Brookwood attacked the constitutional changes proposed as leading to autocracy in the control of workers'



IN JULY ALL ROADS WILL LEAD TO THE SUMMER SCHOOL.

education, and quoted from Samuel Gompers' own plea for free and unhampered education in economic, social and political ideas. A. J. Muste, head of the College, declared that the movement for independent workers' education would not be crushed. "A great many of us are going to continue to work for the kind of education we believe in. We will not only work for it, but fight, and if need be, suffer for it."

Does this, perhaps, sound familiar to those who have fought for independent workers' education in England?

Brookwood

Perhaps I should insert here a word about Brookwood. I assume that you all read Mark Starr's article in the PLEBS of January last and so know all about it. In a word, Brookwood is the only resident college for trade union students in the United States. Its students and graduates represent many industries and nationalities, and every faction within the labour movement.

They study analytically the history, problems and administration of organised labour movements in the United States and other industrial countries, under the direction of teachers with long experience in the labour movement and all affiliated to the A.F. of L. through the Teachers' Union. There is not room in this article to start talking about Brookwood, but if you want details as to courses, admittance (and Brookwood is anxious to have some foreign students) and policy, write to Brookwood, Katonah, N.Y., U.S.A., and get the literature.

The story goes back of the W.E.B. convention, however, to August of last summer, when a reporter of the *New York Times* called up Brookwood and conveyed the startling news that the A.F. of L. Executive Council had just voted to advise its affiliated unions to withdraw "moral and financial support" from Brookwood. Did we have any statement to make?

This being the first inkling we had of such action, and knowing nothing of the charges against us, we indeed had nothing to say at the moment, but by the next afternoon the chairman of the Brookwood faculty had been dug out of a meeting in New Jersey

where he was attempting to bring some scattered silk workers' unions into the A.F. of L.; a hurried meeting of the directors was called, and the wires to Washington were being made hot with indignant protest at this arbitrary method of settling a labour grievance.

Lenin and Gompers

It was soon learned, indirectly through A.F. of L. publicity, that the charges against Brookwood were "anti-American, anti-religious, and pro-Bolshevik," that statements "unfavourable to the A.F. of L." had been made at the College and "received with approbation," and that at the May 1st Celebration pictures of Lenin, Trotsky and Karl Marx adorned the walls of the School, along with that of Sam Gompers!

It was also learned that the action of the Council was based on an admittedly secret investigation by Vice-President Matthew Woll. Much of his "evidence" was taken from one or two dissatisfied students who are known to have grossly misrepresented the school's activities and policies. Testimony from a great number of Brookwood graduates and students, loyal members of the A.F. of L., was apparently disregarded throughout the controversy.

Repeated demands for copies of the evidence and a hearing for Brookwood were ignored. A flood of protests continued to pour in from friends of Brookwood, both in and outside the movement—and were answered evasively or not at all. The letter of condemnation was finally sent to affiliated unions on October 30th.

Brookwood directors then decided to lay the matter before the annual A.F. of L. convention, but were given no opportunity of a hearing on the floor. The matter would have been quietly passed by but for a resolution to establish a National Labour College. This led to mention of Brookwood, and the fat was in the fire. Debate was heated, but the outcome was concurrence in the action of the Executive Council.

Can't Brook Brookwood

Now the concluding step has been taken by the convention of the Workers' Educa-

tion Bureau, "the official educational arm of the A.F. of L.," and henceforth, so far as the Bureau is concerned, workers' education in the United States will be under the control of the affiliated international unions and the Executive Committee of the A.F. of L.

A slight distinction should be noted at this point. In America the official labour movement, the American Federation of Labour, has itself selected the "watery" type of education (to continue the figure quoted above); in England the official trade union movement gives, at least in theory, equal endorsement* to both expressions of workers' education, and leaves the rank and file to make its own choice. That seems to me a tribute to the influence of I.W.C.E. in this country, and a challenge to the toleration of the official movement in America.

Now what are the non-technical results of this situation; what real residue is left after the shouting and voting die down?

By far the most important effect of the controversy has been a reawakening of militant progressivism within the labour movement of the U.S., a movement which has been suffering from acute individualistic philosophy and chronic defeatism since its hey-day after the war. Aroused at first among the immediate supporters of Brookwood, this feeling, for it is hardly more than a feeling now, has spread outside the Brookwood area, and progressive trade unionists all over the country are saying, "It is time to take an inventory, dust off the shelves, and get in some new stock."

The direction of this move is indicated in the "Challenge to Progressives," an editorial statement in *Labor Age* for Feb. 1929, which is arousing widespread comment. I urge PLEBS readers who want to "get a line" on what's happening in that labour movement which I often hear you criticise as "hopelessly backward," to write to *Labor Age*, 104 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y., and ask for a copy of the Challenge.

Another important result, of course, is the clarification of policy in workers' education. The "oil of I.W.C.E. and the water of

* The bulk of Trade Union educational schemes in Britain have been placed with the N.C.L.C.—Ed.

W.E.A.'ism" have apparently admitted their incompatibility, and agreed to disagree. That does not mean either that the W.E.B. in America and the W.E.A. in England are wholly similar organisations, or that "I.W.C.E." and the type of education Brookwood is carrying on are exactly alike. There are marked differences; terms mean different things in the two countries, and the economic and industrial backgrounds are so different that comparisons are difficult to draw.

Which Label?

But in general it does mean that in America officially-controlled workers' education "with a university label" is now distinct and separate from independent workers' education "with a trade union label," and that whatever advantages the former may have in the way of finance, equipment, prestige and technique, they count as nothing to those workers who believe in independence, self-control and freedom in their education.

*By the VICE-PRINCIPAL of
RUSKIN COLLEGE, OXFORD*

EXERCISES IN ECONOMICS

By ALFRED PLUMMER

*B.Litt., M.Sc. (Econ.), M.A., LL.D.
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Finally, I think it should mean a strengthening of the bonds between workers in the two countries. If this controversy has proved anything, it shows again that trade union movements develop along similar lines, though at different times, in different countries. Surely then they have much to learn from each other, and their work can be greatly strengthened by an exchange of experiences.

For the individual that means first of all more familiarity with foreign labour movements. I've been amazed at the lack of understanding among some British workers of the problems of the American movement. It isn't enough to dismiss it as backward, or narrow, or reactionary without studying the causes behind it. And surely the British movement isn't so strong just now that it can ignore the support, even of a weaker brother.

“CLASH”

ONE of the earliest scenes in Ellen Wilkinson's novel, "Clash" (Harrap, 7/6), is set in the Memorial Hall, London, where delegates from Trade Union Executives sit in conference on the question of a General Strike. "In all the history of their class wars had been decided for them. But now Cabinet Ministers were waiting to see what *they* would do and whether *their* decision was war or peace."

Joan Craig, a young Trade Union official, who is the central character in "Clash," is present at this conference. From the age of eighteen, Joan has organised workers, addressed public meetings and shown herself pre-eminently qualified for a life of public service in the Labour movement. During the Strike period and for many weeks afterwards she is entrusted with various jobs of real responsibility and far-reaching importance, and emerges from each ordeal with the exhilarating knowledge that she has been fit for the job.

This sort of work—propagandist and administrative—appeals to Joan and provides the necessary outlet for her vitality. The majority of women are individualistic and prefer work of a more personal nature—for husband and family, or for some small, congenial group—but personal ties do not hold Joan long when she can participate in a job affecting, not this or that individual, but the whole working class. When she finds herself in love, therefore, and confronted with the renunciation of a career that exercises all her faculties and gives her a bracing sense of competence, Joan is faced with a clash of interests that keeps the reader guessing as to which force in her nature will prove the stronger.

Apart from this clash of personal interests there is, in almost every chapter of the novel, a reminder that Capital and Labour cannot consort even in Bloomsbury. The author's political experiences and her intimate contact with workers of many types in various parts of the countryside have enabled her to reintroduce to us types we have all met. There is, for instance, the secretary who can't be interrupted in his work of drawing red lines under certain regulations in his Book of Rules, though his official visitors have motored miles at break-neck speed to call a mass meeting at a few hours' notice; and there is the Town Clerk who doesn't know what to think about the Strike, because the newspapers are held up.

There might have been a risk that a novel by one who had participated so intimately in various aspects of Strike activities might have been a disjointed collection of reports, brightened by a few humorous incidents, but "Clash," both as a novel and as an interesting narrative of the most critical event in the last ten years, is so good that it is to be hoped that further novels by our PLEBS novelist will follow. The Labour Movement has had few novels written about it. If it is going to embed itself in the minds of the workers it must appear as frequently in the novel as it does on the political platform.

C. M.

We Hope to Meet You at the Summer School

WHY SCOFF AT MATERIALISM?

Some Comments on a "Daily Herald" Controversy

By J. P. M. MILLAR

QUITE a little controversy took place in the *Herald* recently for and against Materialism. Unless my memory misleads me it arose out of a *Herald* reviewer taking for granted the materialist conception of history much to the astonished annoyance of some *Herald* readers—human testimonials to the miseducation that is provided in our schools and universities.

One of these readers, writing to the *Herald* in protest, suggested that the *Herald* ought to know that materialism was out of date and that idealism had the support of modern science. No doubt many modern scientists are idealists, *i.e.*, support the view that mind or spirit is the fundamental thing in the universe and that matter is a crude fellow of quite secondary importance. Although experts in their own special branches of science most of these gentlemen, on the question of materialism versus idealism, hold views which are as reliable as those of the local palmist.

No PLEBS reader need be reminded that being a materialist or an idealist in the sense used in this discussion has nothing whatever to do with whether a man has ideals or not. The International Socialist movement, for example, which has developed to realise certain ideals, is in the main materialist in its views of the universe.

The Great "I Am"

To himself man naturally tends to be the most important item in the universe. At certain stages in history he is so obsessed by the importance of his little personality that he imagines the sun is hung in heaven by day and the moon by night in order to provide him with light. In the same way he becomes so proud of his ideas of the world that he imagines that ideas are the fundamental and fine things of the universe and that matter is clumsy, coarse and quite secondary.

In *Jesting Pilate*, Aldous Huxley presents the idealists with a few salutary thoughts that they ought to frame and hang in their bedrooms. He says:—"In the philosophy books matter is generally spoken of slightly, as something lumpish and crude. To the subtlety of their own minds, on the other hand, the metaphysicians can never pay a sufficiently glowing tribute. But in reality—if I may be pardoned the philosophically gross expression—it is to matter, not mind, that the attributes of subtlety, fineness, complexity belong. Our mental picture of the world and its component parts is a crude symbolical affair, having about as much relation to the original as a New Guinea idol to the human body. It is precisely because it is so crude and simple that the thought-picture is valuable to us. Reality—again I apologise—is infinitely too complicated for our understanding. We must simplify. But having simplified, we ought not to say that those Papuan images of the world, which are our philosophical and religious systems, our scientific hypotheses, are subtle; they are not. They are crude, compared with the original, and it is, precisely, their crudeness which gives them value, for us."

Some workers may think that this mind or matter question has no bearing on the class struggle. In that view lies error. The working-class movement requires the best of modern science, *i.e.*, modern science freed from the dross of governing-class superstitions.

The custom of scoffing at matter and elevating mind to the pinnacle of existence is of great practical value to the ruling class. It is a fine sedative for discouraging the spirit of revolt amongst the working class. The workers are asked to picture the wealthy man who has all his material needs satisfied and yet is unhappy. The workers are then invited to believe that happiness is a thing

of the spirit—the mind. They are told that the Kingdom of Heaven is within them and nothing else really matters.

Idealism versus New Hats

If one can draw perfect happiness from the mind or spirit alone—if the Kingdom of Heaven is within us, there is little sense in struggling for an extra suit a year or a more frequent new hat or a bathroom. Consequently, why bother to form Unions, Labour Parties or Labour Colleges? Or why want to reorganise production to provide plenty of material goods for all?

Obviously, therefore, this "idealist" conception of the universe must appeal very strongly to the class that holds the present in its hands—*i.e.*, the capitalists.

(To be continued)

THE FUTURE OF THE LABOUR COLLEGE

ON April 18th last, a Conference of the South Wales Miners' Federation considered the following recommendation of its Executive Council:—

"The E.C. recommend that the responsibility of the South Wales Miners' Federation for the Labour College shall cease after July, 1929, unless the Conference decide to provide additional funds for this purpose by Special Levies."

When the vote was taken by show of hands there was a majority in favour of continuation of support, but on a card vote being taken the recommendation was carried; and as the Conference did not give any instructions for the raising of Special Levies, the decision was interpreted as an instruction for the E.C. to take the necessary steps to withdraw. And this—as far as is possible—is already being done.

The meaning of this will be immediately manifest to all who are concerned for the future of the residential College and the cause of Independent Working-Class Education.

In the 20th year of its existence, the Labour College is faced by the menace of extinction; instead of celebrating its coming-of-age with an appropriate expansion of its activity and capacity, it is in danger of death and burial.

After several years, during which the pioneers of I.W.C.E. laboured and sacrificed to establish a residential College, the S.W.M.F. and the N.U.R. undertook the task of maintaining the College until such time as the working-class movement realised its responsibilities in regard to the education of its membership. But the S.W.M.F., owing to the financial difficulties of the present depression, have now declared their inability to do so any longer; and the N.U.R. Executive Committee will, in all probability, take similar steps to withdraw along with the Miners after July next.

The Labour College is one of the significant monuments to the faith of the workers in themselves and in their own capacity to solve the great problems confronting them. It would be at once a tragedy and a heavy blow to the prestige of the working-class movement in this country, if the College is allowed to die. And, **unless aid is immediately forthcoming**, that will take place.

The special task of the College in the education of the workers for the workers by the workers is not ended—it is only beginning. And at the time when all sections of the movement recognise the need for a Labour Government independent of the capitalist Parties, and for a closing of the ranks of Trade Unionism, we appeal for what is the indispensable corollary of these—we appeal to class-conscious workers everywhere to ensure through their organisation such a measure of help as will secure not merely the survival of the College, but an extension of its activities and possibilities worthy of the history and traditions of the British Working-Class Movement.

L. C.

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THE EXPLOITER UNDER THE HARROW

By W. MCGREGOR ROSS

Many of our readers will know Mr. McGregor Ross's fine book on Kenya, reviewed in our pages a year ago. In this article he is dealing with a subject of which he has, of course, first-hand experience.

BEFORE me, as I write, lie two books, both entitled *White Capital and Coloured Labour*. One is a paper-backed book, published by the I.L.P. in 1906 at one shilling. It appeared as No. IV. of "The Socialist Library," edited by J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P. My copy is a little bit frayed in the binding, as it was widely lent to a circle of friends—officials, settlers and missionaries in East Africa—during the sixteen years that followed its appearance. The writer, Sydney Olivier, C.M.G., made history with that little book. Now, under the same title, Lord Olivier gives us a book of 348 pages, published at 12/6 by the Hogarth Press. Every reader of PLEBS should see to it that the public library in his or her district has a copy on the shelves, taking an early opportunity to get it off the said shelves for a few hours' reading, which will be both instructive and diverting.

For those who are a trifle concerned as to the immense vogue that the idea of "trusteeship" at present enjoys, this book's pungent revelations of conditions accompanying "modern Africa's exceptionally pure demonstration of the interaction of White Capital and Coloured Labour" will be entirely satisfying. Present-day chatter about a majestic "Dual Policy," for application in corners of our Empire where large profits and quick returns are wanted from the wage-paid labour of Africans, will be found to assume a sanctimonious tinge as the book proceeds. The outstanding crime of the present-day white man in Africa—the theft

of land—is seen to lead to most of the anxious situations in which the welfare of subject races is disregarded or considered to be of only secondary importance to a demand for profits by Europeans. The chapter on Portuguese activity in Africa leaves one wondering what sort of a judgment can be hovering over a nation which permits such practices, and how soon it is going to fall. The gloomy record of the white man in South Africa is brightened by allusion to the minority of white people there who hold "the long view," who are steadily becoming a force to be reckoned with, and who may ultimately bring "South African Labour policy into line with that of the rest of the civilised world."

Lord Olivier reviews missionary activity among backward races from the days of Spain's enslavement of the American Indians down to the present day. He records that missionaries "very generally" complain that the contact of the civilised man, in pursuit of his own profit, with the coloured, has been largely demoralising. The outstanding exploit of the latter-day missionary has been that, in season and out of season, he has unremittingly laboured to pass on the torch of learning; and it is only as the African gets educated that he will ever be able to protect himself against the exploiter, whether that be Government or investor. And although Gilbert and Sullivan would have us believe that

"There is a length to which, you know,
Colonial Bishops cannot go,"

they failed to take account of such a warrior as Frank Weston, the Bishop of Zanzibar, whose pleasing pamphlet against forced labour, entitled *The Serfs of Great Britain*, is extensively quoted.

Naturally, it is from Kenya Colony that Lord Olivier finds the most glittering targets for his shafts of irony. Beautiful presentations of the settler's point of view are quoted from *Kenya Days*, written, as Lord Olivier perceives, "with some irony and reservation," for the writer there is the wife of a Government official who has frequently intervened in protection of native interests. The pliability of the local Government in the hands

of white exploiters is well written up; Lord Delamere's complaint that a satisfactory labour supply will never be available for white employers, so long as the natives are allowed sufficient land to support themselves on, is appropriately recalled, as also is the celebrated Major Grogan's essay in support of the educational value of forced labour.

Attention is called to the fact that Mr. Amery recently attempted to initiate a profound departure in Britain's policy in East Africa. His predecessors, since the days of the Duke of Devonshire, had held to the categorical statement that undivided responsibility for our national policy in East Africa lay with the Imperial Parliament, that this responsibility could neither be divided nor delegated, and that it would be discharged in Africa by the officers of the Colonial Service, *and by them alone*. Mr. Amery's attempt took the form of the despatch to East Africa of a "Special Commission" to see whether the time had not now arrived when the British Government should associate with itself, in this high and honourable duty, some of the white employer class in Kenya. The report of this Commission was published on January 18th of this year (Cmd. 3234). It has been a rebuke to Mr. Amery and a bombshell in Kenya. It lays down that at no time in the future can this white employer class in East Africa ever be allowed to have control of the political situation there, and that it is only in so far as the whites in Kenya accept and support the policy defined and imposed by Parliament that they are to have any further share in legislation or administration. Lord Olivier points out that many of the findings in this Report echo the recommendations of the Labour and Socialist International at the last Conference in August, 1928, and he points to the valuable work of the International Labour Office at Geneva as mobilising world-wide influence upon the improvement of the industrial and social conditions of the subject peoples of to-day. If PLEBS readers will undertake to start this book, they will have an entertaining time, and the end will be reached much too soon.

CANADA—KEY OF CAPITALISM

THE very interesting study of the Canadian railway system in its relation to imperialist rivalry, which *enormous* has contributed to the April *enormous* is worth further elaboration. Several aspects of the subject was omitted, probably by reason of the fact that, outside of the Middle West, they are very seldom considered and even more rarely canvassed.

The Grand Trunk Railway, with its western extension beyond the International Boundary at Sarnia, into the middle-western metropolis of Chicago, was constructed at a very early date, with a view to diverting the produce of the Mississippi Valley, whose clearing centre was at that meeting-place of so many railways, from New York and from Philadelphia to Montreal, *en route* for Liverpool.

Motivated by very similar ideas is the present-day project for a waterway capable of passage by ocean-going steamers from the lower St. Lawrence to the wharves at Fort-William, Duluth and Chicago. Similar, save that Montreal regards with suspicion, born of something more than the natural hostility of the hydro-electric power trusts, any idea of ships loading up with wheat on the Great Lakes rather than needing, as now, to receive it from the thousand spouts projecting from the transshipment sheds and elevators of that greatest of all the world's grain ports.

Montreal has been driven time and again into the arms of the moneyed men of New York and of Boston by the eagerness of the aristocratic investors incorporated in the Hudson's Bay Company and of the financial fraternity in London to get direct access to the prodigious resources of the Canadian and American Middle West.

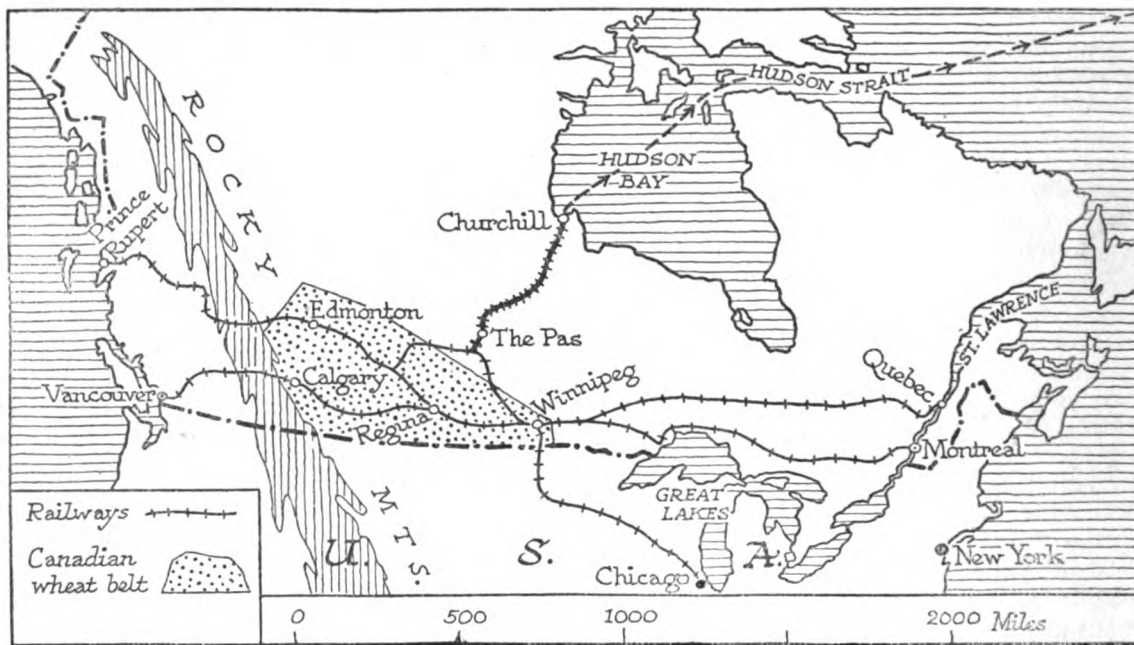
Furious was the fight between them for the concession from the Dominion Parliament of the privilege of building the first trans-Continental line, *viz.*, the Canadian Pacific

Railway. For years was this held up, now by the one and now by the other of these antagonistic forces, the Colonial (Montreal) and the Imperial (London and Winnipeg) interests, until, on the morrow of the Russian War scare of 1878, the home Government had the strongest desire to have a railway built along which, if need arose, troops could be hurried to India otherwise than ^{by} the Mediterranean and Suez Canal route ^{Gregor}.

The Canadian Pacific Railway originally crossed the Rockies at a point not shown by Horrabin upon his map, viz., by the Crow's Nest Pass. That route was very much easier to negotiate. No spiral tunnels, such

States not unquestionable, another line was built leading from Winnipeg west to Prince Rupert and from Winnipeg east across the unpopulated wilderness of northern Ontario direct to the city and port of Quebec. That line was barely ready when the Great War broke out.

Latterly, has this other line to the Hudson's Bay been built by the Canadian National Railways, north-east from Saskatchewan. Already there is in progress a fierce antagonism of economic interests, British and American, for the exploitation of the fabulous mineral wealth of the Flin-Flon and the development of the water-power (mightier than Niagara) on the Nelson River.



as had to be cut at the Kicking Horse Pass and Golden and Glacier points, were needed.

But, unhappily, the line ran all too near to the International Boundary. It abutted almost on the U.S. border. It was disconnected by lake passages. So, later, at enormous expense, the more expeditious and strategically secure line was constructed to the north of the Crow's Nest. Even so, the C.P.R. ran too near to the American boundary and, in the new century, when war with Germany became a probability and the benevolent neutrality of the United

Dubious to a degree are the prospects of this northern route through the Hudson's Strait and Hudson's Bay. Little to be counted on in a crisis are its potentialities as a strategic line of reinforcement, as compared with the railway running north to Winnipeg from Chicago.

One thing is, however, certain, that along the line of the Hudson's Bay Railway will be transported thousands of miners and to the head of that other line, the Peace River Railway (from Howe Sound, north of Vancouver across the Rockies) there will

be emigrated other thousands of more or less willing settlers.

Canada, beyond a peradventure, becomes with each succeeding year, with every ensuing month, the most important of all areas wherein to observe the uncertain equilibrium of financial forces, co-operative and competitive, interacting between Britain and the United States.

Yours very truly,

WALTON NEWBOLD.

THE SHALLOWNESS OF ORTHODOX ECONOMICS

By T. ASHCROFT

SUPERFICIALITY and scepticism are the key-notes of modern orthodox economics. Gustav Cassel's *Fundamental Thoughts in Economics* constitutes a remarkable example.

The writers of the Classical School rightly regarded the problem of value as an indispensable starting-point for the analysis of capitalist relations; and since the capitalist was in those days actively engaged in the economic life of society—being not only an owner but also the user of capital, exercising that managerial capacity and organising ability of which we have heard so much—the economists of that period had no hesitation in regarding and proclaiming human labour to be the basis of the value of commodities. Adam Smith's exposition was, indeed, neither very definite nor very consistent; but in Ricardo a Labour Theory of Value was so clearly expressed that the Utopian socialists found him a quite adequate theorist for their demands on behalf of the workers. In actual fact, Ricardo's theory was a very incomplete one. To solve the contradiction which manifested itself in Ricardian economics, it required the contribution of Marx, which can broadly be summarised in the qualification, "socially necessary," prefixed to "labour-time" as the source and measure

of value, and his vital distinction between labour and labour-power.

But at the very moment when Marx was thus completing the Labour Theory of Value, the progress of capitalism was eliminating the independent individual enterprises of the earlier phase. The second phase of the Industrial Revolution—the application of steam to land and sea transport—was enormously enlarging the scale of organisation and rendering at once necessary and possible the advent of the Joint Stock Company as the typical form of business enterprise. The limitation of the shareholder's liability to the capital actually subscribed brought the law into line with the imperative need of industry for greater and more elastic capitals. The mass of capitalists were now reduced to the position of mere owners of money, while the utilisation of their capital was given over to the specialised classes of promoters and entrepreneurs; the former finding opportunities for the remunerative investment of capital (incidentally paying themselves very handsomely for their services), the latter undertaking the actual use of the capital in industry or trade.

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Thus, as Marx has pointed out, one of the consequences of the Joint Stock form of enterprise is that profit is clearly shewn to be unpaid labour. The mass of capitalists who had formerly been actively engaged in production were now converted into consumers pure and simple. Political Economy, therefore begins to be modified accordingly. On the one side, the old classification into three agents of production, Land, Labour and Capital, is no longer adequate. A fourth factor, Management, must be added. On the other hand—and more to our present purpose—the Theory of Value undergoes a drastic change.

The Short-Sighted Detective

So long as the capitalist could be represented as the principal and the most productive of the workers, a Labour Theory of Value was tenable; but now, with the capitalist converted into a mere consumer, it had to be shewn that it is consumption which confers value! Not the conditions of supply, but the conditions and complexities of demand are decisive in determining

the value of the commodity! Admittedly, supply has a certain importance, for it affects demand! Hence arose the Theory of Marginal Utility which, disguised as a Theory of Value, expends the minute care of a short-sighted detective in tracking the manifold complexities of the relations of supply and demand.

But supply and demand can illuminate only the problems and the fluctuations of Price—not of Value. This is just as true to-day as ever. The complicated relations, the thousand-fold divisions and sub-divisions of production do not alter the fact by one jot or tittle. Beneath all these relations and fluctuations, still is the foundation of value, the expenditure of human labour-power.

The Marginal Utility theory could only illuminate Price; it is a theory of Price. But the economists still spoke of it as a Theory of Value. There was still a consciousness that in a commodity-producing and exchanging society, a Theory of Value was indeed indispensable and they conferred upon the Marginal Utility theory the title of a Theory of Value.

Gustav Cassel is the first to throw overboard both this and every other Theory of Value.

Fundamental Thoughts in Economics consists of four lectures on Advanced Economics, delivered at the University of London four years ago, and now reprinted in Benn's choicely-produced Essex Library.

The author selected as the subjects of his lectures:—Aims and Methods of Economic Theory; Economics as a Theory of Price; The Principle of Scarcity and the Conception of Cost; and the Scarcity Theory of Money. In these lectures we have the distinctive teachings of Cassel, the essential principles underlying his whole work, "the ideas which run through the various investigations and make a logical unit of them." And of them all, the most fundamental thought is contained in Lecture II.—Economics as a Theory of Price.

True, this seems familiar and orthodox enough; for, as we have seen, the modern Theory of Value is, actually, only a theory of Price, but Cassel goes far beyond the orthodox theory in this connection, denying

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the validity or utility of the theory of Marginal Utility, and roundly denying either the existence, the possibility or the necessity of a Theory of Value.

"In fact," he writes, "value always means a price paid under certain circumstances"; and therefore his studies have been "devoted to directly building up a theory of price without the use of a separate theory of value."

The use of money arises out of the development of exchange and in the study of exchange economy, "we have at once to introduce a unit of money in which we can measure all values. The values will then be prices and we are no longer concerned with a separate conception of value."

Unfortunately this happy issue out of all the afflictions of the beginner in Political Economy, due to the difficulties and complexities of the Theory of Value, brings in its train the logical consequence that "of course we must give up the idea of any valuation of the unit (*i.e.* money) itself, but this"—our

author consoles us—"is of only formal importance," and will depend upon its scarcity.

Thus if we have driven Marginal Utility out of the door, supply and demand fly in at the window—the only advantage being that we have avowedly scrapped the category of value.

Cassel's book is therefore a revealing essay in the tendencies logically contained in orthodox theory; and as the work of one of the most distinguished of modern economists, is worthy of study from that angle.

JUMBLED HISTORY

LAST summer I was chided by an American professor, himself an avowed Socialist, for some very definite and unfavourable opinions I had expressed in PLEBS regarding the aims and characters of most of the American leaders during the War of Independence. The available historical material was so enormous, said my critic, that only an expert who had waded through the entire mass of it had the right to come to such conclusions. It was true that the considerable volume of evidence collected by Charles Beard (on which my own judgments had been based) did make a *prima facie* case against some of the "declaration-signers"; but it was only a *prima facie* case, and should be treated as such. One must not, he added, be unduly influenced by the circumstance that Professor Beard's facts had been withheld from the reading public by generations of patriotic historians—and so on, and so on.

Such hesitancy in forming opinions is no doubt a more or less conscious reaction from the ignorant cocksureness of the Babbitts and Elmer Gantrys who figure so prominently in contemporary American life. As an alternative to that cocksureness, however, it is not effective, and its results are almost wholly bad.

Doubtful Thomases

These reflections are prompted by an *Economic History of Europe in Modern Times*, by three American professors* who evidently believe in their hearts that to be non-committal is the supreme virtue in a historian. The writers are guilty here and there of startling lapses into dogmatism or propaganda, but their avowed conception of history is that it is "an account of sequences of events," including "changing forms of economic activity," "alterations of the economic structure of society," and "the emerging of new economic problems." It is, in their view, no part of the historian's duty to search for underlying principles or to make serious use of history in meeting the problems of to-day or in preparing to meet those of tomorrow. They definitely reject the view that "history is simple enough to be arranged in trends for use in making fairly broad prophecies about the future."

* *Economic History of Europe in Modern Times*. By M. M. Knight, Ph.D.; H. E. Barnes, Ph.D.; and F. Flugel, Ph.D. Allen and Unwin, 15/-.

PLEBS LEAGUE SUBS.



From the *South African Railway Workers' Journal*.

Instead, they gloat over the statement that "it often takes a highly trained and intelligent worker years to bridge one little gap in our knowledge of the past."

In their final paragraph (p. 793) our authors present us with this inspiring thought:—

"Every set of conditions is a mixture of new and old factors—mostly old. The only prophetic function which history can have is to aid in recognizing the old factors and calculating their probable strength in the presence of the new ones, which are always an unknown quantity." (Italics ours).

If, in fact, the practical value of historical study is so limited, the reader is entitled to enquire what excuse a healthy-minded person can have for devoting much time and trouble to it. Leaving that question to be answered by Professors Knight, Barnes and Flugel, we pass on to another—how was it possible for three professional teachers to produce so formless and, on the whole, so unsatisfactory a book on so fascinating a subject? The quotation just made supplies part, at any rate, of the explanation. If the future is so slightly related to the present and the past that history can help us little in forecasting it, then obviously a like disconnection must exist between different parts of the past. In the absence of any unifying or classifying ideas, history appears rather as a "jumble" than as a "sequence" of events, and in the view of one reader, at least, the work under notice can rightly be described as a jumble. The three professors may not unfairly be likened to a firm of contractors who have contented themselves with dumping unsightly heaps of material and supplies in the space where they should have erected a building.

Now let us take a look at the aforementioned heaps of material. These contain much good stuff which will give good service in the hands of people who know how to use it. Valuable statistical tables, admirable maps, plenty of detailed information about particular inventions and industrial trends, are to be found here, together with quite a few interesting and suggestive observations. One or two allusions to Marxian theory will have special interest for Plebs. Thus:—

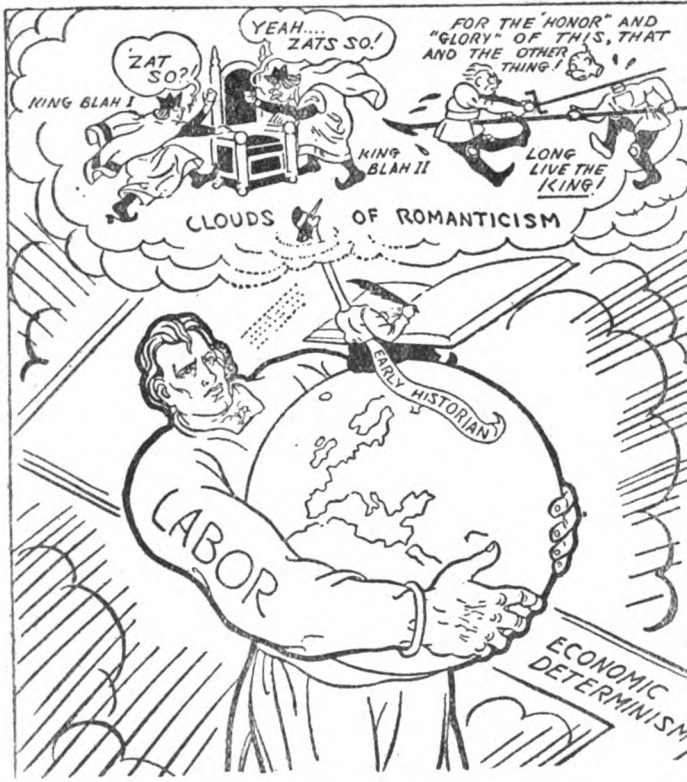
"The materialistic conception of history is a terrain avoided by all prudent angels, and one approaches it with a sense of its pitfalls and possibilities for ambush. Whatever Hegel's shortcomings before the Marxian reconstruction, we can at least appreciate his famous remark that history teaches us that it can teach us nothing; which meant, in its original setting, that reflection on what people think history has taught them does not inspire to optimism." (p. 430).

and

"Whatever his (Marx's) motives in picking the rise of modern capitalism as the avenue for approaching and traversing the Industrial Revolution, and however wrong his conclusions may have been, the method has been exceptionally fruitful as pursued by more recent scholars." (p. 386).

The Professors Forget Themselves

The chapter on South-eastern Europe gives in a condensed form much very interesting information about post-war conditions in the various Balkan States, and, remarkably enough, exhibits our professors in the role of political prophets! Starting with the



History Old and New

"The idea that labour conditions are important enough to be recorded is of comparatively recent growth."—*Locomotive Engineer's Journal*.

guarded statement that "temporarily, at least, the war and the Russian Revolution have greatly weakened as a world issue the Balkan corridor between Central Europe and the Levant, and the cross-current of Russian ambition at the Straits," they become gradually bolder. On the next page they tell us that "instead of being a focal point of European 'economic imperialism,' the Balkan Peninsula has now become of interest chiefly because of its own peculiar problems." and "that we need not expect such fierce and cumulative economic rivalry as characterised the period before the war, over a region which never was considered of first-rate importance in itself." Maybe; but as one thinks of the still unsettled question of Russia's outlets to the sea, and of Italy's search for places of settlement abroad, to say nothing of Rumanian oil, one cannot help pondering these statements and shaking one's head very doubtfully.

After so much criticism it is pleasant to be able to end with a quotation about which we can feel really enthusiastic. After describing the beginnings of speculation and marine insurance, the authors proceed as follows:—

"Frauds were so common that an attempt was made in 1559 to regulate the business by law. Life insurance was also in use, limited chiefly to fixed periods, such as the duration of a journey by land or sea. This also led to frauds, and even to crimes.

Such an atmosphere was the breath of life to promoters and adventurers, as well as to captains of industry, finance, or commerce."

Much can be forgiven you for that gem, Professors Knight, Barnes and Flugel | W. T. C.

THE MAN WHO MOVED THE MOUNTAIN

By A. ELLIS

IN 1907 at the World Congress of the Second International, Rosa Luxemburg, pointing to Lenin, remarked to Klara Zetkin, "Take a good look at him. That is Lenin. . . . That man will try to overturn mountains. Perhaps he will be crushed by them. But he will never yield."

In those days Lenin was unknown to the workers of the world. Had they known him and his determination to overthrow Tsarist capitalism they would have assured him that "It couldn't be done." But the so-called great man has always been one who has worked systematically to attain that which others regarded a impossible.

Klara Zetkin* provides some vivid pen pictures of Lenin in the home, in Congress and in private conversation. We learn something of the simplicity and sincerity of a man to whom the "plums of office" made no difference. We learn also of the man who was chiefly concerned with putting theory into practice.

Lenin's work consisted very largely in getting a correct estimate of the strength of his own and of the

* Klara Zetkin: *Reminiscences of Lenin*. (Modern Books, Ltd., 2/-).

enemy forces, which to him was the determining factor in his policy. To that end he noted details which the average man did not count.

Theory was the finger pointing out the road along which he had to travel, but the strength of the social forces determined whether an advance or a retreat had to be made. This was clearly seen in his support of the Brest-Litovsk and Polish Peace Treaties when he had to struggle with the "extremists" in his party who accused him of giving too much away. The popular idea of Lenin as a man always more left than the left does not fit the facts.

Klara Zetkin pictures the "terrorist leader" discussing the March Action in Germany, when the Communist Party leaders were drawn into premature action which suited the German "Black and Tans," which he regarded "as a putsch-ist fall from grace and no theoretical, historical, or political soap will wash away the reality of that fact." (Though Lenin extended sincere sympathy to the workers who took part in the fighting because they were "provoked by Horsing's barbarous crew.")

Lenin even takes Klara to task, gives her a "few lessons" and asks some awkward questions such as—"Tell me, how could you commit such a capital stupidity, yes, indeed, a capital stupidity, as to leave the Central Committee?"

"Politics," says Lenin, "is concerned with effects and not with good intentions."

Nor does he spare those who make a sport of hunting the "rights" and "lefts" and he considers it an easy matter to make a revolution on paper in the Congress Hall, without the masses, in an atmosphere free from objective conditions.

When dealing with the progress of the Russian Revolution, Lenin quotes with delight a letter which he had received from children in a remote little village addressing him as—

"Dear little grandfather Lenin,

We want to tell you that we have become very good. We study diligently. We already read and write well. We make lots of pretty things. We wash ourselves carefully every morning and wash our hands every time we eat, etc,"

which to Lenin was a sign that "we are making progress in every sphere, serious progress."

The Women's Question.

Again, when dealing with the "women's question," he exhibits the same practical treatment, the usual accurate calculation of forces and theoretical clearness. He was greatly concerned with the task of bringing the mass of women into the proletarian struggle, and if the publication of a women's paper or establishment of a women's section would assist the work, then the paper and section must be introduced, and he got quite enthusiastic about the prospects of an international non-party women's conference.

But Lenin did not desire the women's movement to become a mere "feminist" movement, nor to concern itself chiefly with sexual problems. Whilst realising the dependence of the forms of marriage upon property and the economic life, he did not consider such matters the most pressing in the women's movement. He deplored that even the youth movement, as well as the women's movement, sometimes supported the worst features of capitalist society under the heading of "modernity." "The little yellow-beaked birds who have just broken from the egg of bourgeois ideas are always frightfully clever."

Lenin treats the women's question as a vital one for

the working class movement. Many women are backward because the life of a working woman is a sacrifice to the daily round, and many men still treat women as their slaves, but even slaves take revenge. In this case the woman decreases the joy and determination of men in the fight against capitalist exploitation. Russia is fighting this backwardness by establishing communal kitchens, public eating houses, laundries, kindergartens, etc., by freeing the woman from household drudgery and dependence on man.

Klara Zetkin's close-up views of Lenin, and their discussions on tactics, right and left wings, women, art, etc., make interesting reading—and provide a reminder that those who wish to move mountains must pay some little attention to the mole hills.

AMONG THE BOOKS

By

"PLEBS" REVIEWERS

ONE of the few good fruits of that evil tree, the world war, is a wonderful group of novels that will enable all who care to read to understand the machine-like brutality of modern war. In the hands of the keen I.W.C.E.'er these novels can be a potent means of stimulating an interest in social problems among the more careless and apathetic humans who cannot be approached through the medium of ordinary propaganda.

Among these war novels is the *Case of Sergeant Grischa* (by Arnold Zweig, Marin Secker, 7/6).

Sergeant Grischa is a Russian prisoner of war in the hands of the Germans on the Eastern front. He is a plain, unsophisticated soul. The Germans worry him. "What with barbed wire, the kaleidoscopic orders of the crazy Germans, so scared that they would scarcely let you breathe, and would almost have you breathe by numbers: 'breathe in, breathe out, wipe your nose, now go to the latrine'; the cramped sleeping quarters in the barracks, and the staring eyes of the officers—all this stifled him." He had been a prisoner for sixteen months. The spring was at hand. He determines to escape. He will start off on the long journey to his wife and his little Jelisabetja, whom he has never seen. His Russian fellow-prisoners think him mad, but, "as a stone falls, so was his mind set."

He does escape but, later, is caught. Through fatally assuming the identity of another man, he is sentenced to be shot as a spy, despite the fact that he is only an escaped prisoner of war. He sets out to establish his real identity. He does establish it. Alas, poor loveable Sergeant Grischa is in the web of the German military machine. The fly struggles, the web gives a little, only to be later drawn tighter and tighter, until at last Sergeant Grischa sets out, the enforced and agonised guest of a firing party.

"Grischa realised that until now he had never really quite believed that his last moment would

really come. . . . He tried to tear at the straps that bound him and he opened his mouth to cry out, but an inner power, engrafted in his soul hundreds of years ago, forced his wrenching fingers to relax and rub themselves together as though for warmth and stifled his shriek into a gasp for air. Only the despairing glitter of his watery blue eyes above his high cheek bones betrayed his agony."

A novel in ten thousand.

J.P.M.M.

Liberty under the Soviets (by Roger Baldwin, Vanguard Press, 2/8 post free, from the N.C.L.C.) is an important addition to the splendid work of the Vanguard series of special studies on the first Workers' Republic. This study is a cross section of the Bolshevik regime and one feels very grateful to the author for such a wealth of information in his detailed description of the controls and restrictions of individuals and organisations in the realm of economics, nationality, religion, press, etc. Here and there one gets a clear impression that there is more liberty for the peasants and workers of the Soviets than under the Tsarist rule or any other existing dictatorship. Even accepting the Communist philosophy that all controls are for the "economic needs of the peasants and workers" in building a class-conscious Socialist State, Roger Baldwin is of the view that "far greater liberties than are tolerated are consistent with the maintenance of the Soviet regime and even with the Communist party dictatorship." Although political, press and civil liberty for all opponents of the Soviet regime is suppressed, he observes "as far more significant the basic economic freedom of the workers and peasants and the abolition of the privileged classes based on wealth." Whilst emphasising the high-handed control and monopoly of the Communist party, he concludes "that it is doing the most heroic piece of social reorganisation in history and that in a country of primitive economy and culture."

D.W.T.

Thus and Thus (by Henri Barbusse: J. M. Dent, 7/6 net) is, like Sinclair's *Boston*, contemporary history in the form of fiction. Barbusse assures us that "Invention plays no part in these stories; their substance, and even their form, I have taken from scenes that I have witnessed myself, or else gathered from trustworthy sources." His object is to open our eyes to "a true picture of our 20th century—a century that may be described as the Age of Gold, of Steel, or of the Jazz Band, but, above all, as the Age of Blood!"

Told with convincing artistry, these tales of murder, torture and horror will not be denied; they carry with them the stamp of truth that is stronger than documented evidence. As we read them they seem to defy us to doubt and when we have read them they become as real as personal experiences. Most of us know that these horrors of War and White Terror have been, and may be again, may be even now in some more-or-less distant country. We accept the facts theoretically; we do not realise them. Barbusse brings the thing home to us, and makes us *live* it. We blink at the horrible, and try to forget it; Barbusse forces us to look it full in the face, and we can never forget.

It is well that we do not forget. We owe that at least to the countless army of our martyred dead.

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And while we remember, we shall strive likewise by word and deed to bring to an end the accursed class domination which makes these iniquities possible, until "at last we shall hear the sound as yet unheard of marching feet that we sent on their way." E.J.

In a dispassionate and temperate fashion W. J. Chamberlain has written a history of the Resisters' Movement during the Great War—*Fighting for Peace ; No More War Movement*, 2/6. To C.O.'s this book will be looked upon as a memento of very stirring times. To others it will be of interest as a record of a Movement unique in British History. We are told that over 16,000 men refused to take up arms, and of these over 1500 refused every kind of alternative service, choosing to remain in prison until released at the conclusion of the war. Nearly 900 served sentences of two years or more. Ten died in prison and 59 died after release. Thirty-one lost their reason as the result of their experiences. While their compatriots were fighting for freedom abroad (at least so they were told) the C.O.'s were opposing tyranny at home. To many who read this book will occur the thought that magnificent as the War Resisters' Movement was during the last war, yet, to efficiently oppose the next war (which is surely pending), resistance will have to be still better in its aims and its organisation. Simple resistance, no matter how courageous, is not enough. A knowledge of the economic causes making for war and sound organisation are essential. The Socialist Movement has still a vital and immediate task in front of it.

S.W.

Lend Me Your Ears.

Thanks. I won't keep them for long, but I do want to have a word with them.

Most of our readers think me good. Some think me excellent. A few think I am not up to much. The latter write sometimes to tell me so; it pleases them and keeps me modest.

Anyway, the point I want to make is that practically every one of my readers could help to make me grow.

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There are, however, hundreds of towns where there are no PLEBS agents. In practically all other towns I want more agents. Will you (yes, you—not the other chap!) help by taking a parcel each month on sale or return? I don't care how small the parcel is. I'll travel in any parcel, large or small, for I've no dignity and am as willing to go to a village as to a large town.

You believe in a strong Labour press in theory—how much do you believe it in practice?

I do want to hear from you.

Wishing you very few "returns,"

Yours fraternally,

THE PLEBS.

N.B.—And don't forget to push my books. Thousands more Labour men and women would buy them if you ordered a parcel and said to your friends a few kind words about the contents. Now then, what about it?

THE BIRTH OF MODERN SCIENCE

By J. G. CROWTHER

THE growth and influence of science is the chief distinction of modern civilisation. The acquaintance of science is to be cultivated because it is the most wonderful thing in this age.

Those who drift through the twentieth century without noticing science are like Italians of the Renaissance period who never learnt there was a Renaissance and had never heard of Michael Angelo. Though it is not hard to realise science as the chief creative activity of the day, it is not easy to appreciate its present magnificence. There is now such an accumulation of special knowledge in every branch of science that it is difficult for anyone without technical training to appreciate what is known. The mere quantity of scientific knowledge leaves the wanderers on the outskirts with rather a hopeless feeling, so they turn away and soon forget the existence of the chief current of modern creativity. For spiritual reasons it is necessary to show the scenes of present creative achievement as widely as possible. The diffusion of the spirit of scientific achievement is fundamentally important. The spread of scientific fact helps toward, but is not the same thing. Mere facts can never rise above the curious to the significant. Failure to understand this renders much exposition of science trivial.

The Century of Genius

The experience of other centuries in disseminating scientific knowledge may assist in approaching the present problem. In a recently republished book, the late Dr. Martha Ornstein of Barnard College, U.S.A., has made a remarkably interesting survey of *The Role of Scientific Societies in the Seventeenth Century*. That "century of genius," as Professor A. N. Whitehead calls it, witnessed the end of mediaevalism and the beginning of modernity. In that century Isaac Newton was discovering the theory of gravitation during the period when Charles II. "cured" the diseases of 1600 persons by his royal touch. Shakespeare, Galileo, Leibnitz and the now under-rated Boyle, flourished in the seventeenth century. The Hon. Robert Boyle, "father of chemistry and uncle of the Earl of Cork," was an even greater man than has lately been believed. Dr. Ornstein's researches emphasise his immense influence in his day, and only recently Professor Paneth of Berlin has shown Boyle's wonderful insight into the nature of chemical theory. Boyle had a powerful grasp of the relativity of scientific knowledge. He was the first to insist on the notion of an element as that which defied existing methods of analysis, and not as a final elementary substance.

Vanity and sloth tend to suggest the latest discovery is final, thus removing the impetus to future research. These tendencies are dissolved by a relativistic outlook offering an infinite perspective hidden only for a moment in the finality of the latest discovery. Boyle

actually wrote that elements might be changed into each other if sufficiently powerful agents could be found capable of disintegrating the atoms of hitherto unanalysed elements into their parts, or into portions of a more primitive substance. His vision of the disintegration as being accomplished by "subtile and powerful" agents foreshadows remarkably Sir Ernest Rutherford's method of disintegrating atoms. He said "There may be some agent found out so subtile and powerful, at least in respect of those particular compounded corpuscles, as to be able to resolve them into those more simple ones whereof they consist."

A Young Leg-Puller

Without enquiring into the actual causes of the appearance of experimental physical science in the 17th century, Dr. Ornstein has clearly established that it appeared as a fashionable hobby, in its external manifestation. In Italy princes and dukes and municipalities felt their amenities incomplete if there were not a natural philosopher to demonstrate divers curious and amusing natural phenomena. In England country gentlemen became interested in the curiosities of fighting cocks besides cock-fighting. Any odd or peculiar natural phenomenon became an object of fashionable interest. The early volumes of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* contain many amusing examples of the credulity and ignorance and enthusiastic enquiry of the first members. They considered the case of a boy of twelve, said to be suffering from gall stones. They were informed that "Some of the stones were round, some oval, some angular. Some of a pyramidal form, some cubical. The colours were different, some whitish, some brown, some bluish, some black, or of a dark colour, the consistency of a sandy stone, and some looked like bricks, some in thickness the tenth part of an inch, some the twelfth part of it, some half-an-inch long; most of them approached a triangular form." During a fortnight he produced sixty of these stones. Some time after this information had caused its appropriate sensation a notice in the *Transactions*, by Dr. J. Wallace, F.R.S., said: "It was from Dr. Pitcairn that I had the discovery of the cheat of those stones that an account was sent you of . . . Dr. Pitcairn was at the pains to find out the imposture; and it was discovered at last that a roguish boy, to be kept from school, had so much cunning as to impose on a fond mother and other people."

Outside the Universities

Modern experimental science, especially in England, arose as a diversion for ingenious gentlemen. It was only incidentally a search for philosophic truth. The more serious of these true amateurs found after a while that they had to meet together to exchange their discoveries and discuss results. The Royal Society was a crystallisation of these informal meetings. It rapidly became one of the foremost, if not the foremost source of inspiration to scientific learning in the world. The origin and early character of the Royal Society is extremely interesting. It drew virtually no inspiration at all from the universities. Many of its members had not been shaped by the "smooth lathe of a university tuition." They preserved their natural characters and formed a gathering of remarkably varied personalities. Their freshness of mind had not been destroyed. The division in spirit between the universities and the brilliant Royal Society is shown by the fact that Newton lectured on

his great discovery of the resolution and composition of light into the spectrum colours at Cambridge for three years before the alert Royal Society heard of it. Perhaps this is explained by the fact that Newton's lectures, like those of other dons, sometimes failed to draw any audience of students. This used to please Newton, because it enabled him to get back to his own work with the minimum interruption. The famous mathematician, John Wallis, the English precursor of Newton, left Cambridge because the study of mathematics had died out there. The universities had evolved as a machinery for the inculcation of pre-scientific knowledge. They could not operate with the new raw material of culture, as old textile machinery cannot operate with new varieties of raw material which it was not designed to handle.

A rather similar position is arising to-day. The public is getting hopelessly out of touch with the forefront of science. Who will close up the gap? Not the professional scientist; it is not his job. He will not depart from the machinery of teaching and research in science, now almost as stereotyped as the machinery of mediaeval scholastic learning. A new type of organisation is required to fructify the public mind with the new scientific ideas, standing outside the universities as did the scientific societies in the seventeenth century.

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

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

GENERAL ELECTION.—We go to Press too early to chronicle the election to Parliament of any I.W.C.E.'s. We are very pleased indeed, however, to see how many Labour College supporters are standing for Parliament. If we had a complete list it would be a long one. Amongst the numerous Labour College standard-bearers are two N.C.L.C. Organisers, C. Brown and J. Stuart Barr. Ebby Edwards, one of our oldest supporters, is carrying on the battle in Smilie's old constituency, and a number of ex-residential Labour College students are standing—for example, A. Paton of Leith, A. Bevan of South Wales, W. Brooke of Bradford. Voluntary tutors and secretaries, such as A. Woodburn of Edinburgh, are also standing, as is, of course, J. F. H. himself. We should like PLEBS readers to help us to make a complete list. Please put the names on a post card and address it "General Election," c/o THE PLEBS.

FINANCE.—The problem of raising finance in localities has always been very important and will be very important this year. Colleges would therefore do well to pool experiences. Leeds Labour College, for example, raises quite a substantial sum from a list of honorary members, who become honorary members by paying anything from 2/- upwards.

ROLL OF HONOUR.—One of the Colleges which should find its place on the roll of honour this year is Bournemouth. Although Bournemouth is a summer resort, the local Labour College has done work that outshines some Colleges in districts with far greater opportunities. More power to Bournemouth—and the others!—and congratulations to the Secretary, Comrade Barrow, and his colleagues.

J. W. HUDSON.—We are pleased to chronicle the fact that J. W. Hudson, of the Nelson Weavers' Assn., one of the Unions with an N.C.L.C. scheme, has been appointed secretary to Great Harwood Weavers' Association. Comrade Hudson has been a consistently helpful supporter of the Labour College movement and we offer him our heartiest congratulations on his appointment. The appointment reminds us that throughout the country there are many Trade Union officials and Labour Party agents who have been closely associated with the I.W.C.E. movement. These comrades will be willing to give what assistance they can to our movement and it would be a great help if the divisions would make a complete list so that the services of these comrades could be requested from time to time. We should be very glad to have copies of the list at Head Office.

N.U.R.—The N.U.R. Annual General Meeting will have before it resolutions asking for an N.C.L.C. scheme. We hope that the Conference will decide to keep the Union to the forefront educationally by endorsing the request that has been sent in by a number of branches.

WEEK-END SCHOOLS.—Now that the General Election is over, steps should be taken to organise as many day and week-end schools as possible, and to arrange for branch lectures. Full advantage should be taken of the enthusiasm engendered by the General Election. At all meetings and schools literature should be available, preferably literature having some connection with the subject discussed.

"PLEBS" SALES.—Comrade Frampton, the Plebs agent in Luton, states that he is not satisfied with the sales in that district and is therefore starting a campaign which will involve leaving with anyone likely to be interested, a leaflet inviting the recipient to place an order for PLEBS each month which will be delivered by Comrade Frampton. If this campaign were made a general campaign throughout the country we should see not only a big increase in our circulation but a big increase of support in working-class organisations.

N.C.L.C. ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND N.C.L.C. SUMMER SCHOOL.—The Annual Conference and the Summer School begin on 27th July. Scholarships are available for members of the A.U.B.T.W., Transport Workers, General and Municipal Workers, Draughtsmen, and N.A.S.O.P.A. Applications should be sent in immediately. The Annual Meeting and Summer School provides a splendid opportunity for our supporters from various parts of the country meeting together in ideal surroundings, and we hope that as many PLEBS readers as possible will determine to be at the summer school this year. Welywn being close to London, although in the country, will give those who desire to do so the opportunity of visiting the Metropolis, and, if need be, paying their accounts in person at the N.C.L.C. office! Please make the school

MANY TIMES

have you said, "I must get my branch to send to the Union's Conference a resolution asking for an N.C.L.C. Educational Scheme," — but

HAVE YOU DONE IT?

known to your friends and do not leave them under the misapprehension that the school is only a school. It is a school and holiday combined.

NEW (NOT RENEWAL) AFFILIATIONS.—S.E. Lancs., 2; London, 1. Why is your College not in the paragraph? What about next month?

WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING

DIVISION 1.

Our Day School at Hammersmith on the technique of electioneering was a great success. With the help of J. Selwyn Jones, the chairman, and Morgan Phillips, the lecturer—both of them Labour Party Agents and ex-Labour College students—a very profitable discussion took place. Most of the Labour Parties in West London were represented. The Women's Committee also ran a most successful Day School at Balham with Mrs. Clayton and Mr. F. J. Adkins as lecturers. The attendance—principally of Co-operative Guild members—was higher than it has been at any previous School. A class on elementary economics has commenced at Hackney with the help of the S. Hackney L.P. Youth Section and is being conducted by Comrade Nichols, Wood Green. The London I.L.P. Guild of Youth has agreed to affiliate to us and to set up classes for every Guild, if possible, during the next winter. During the election campaign many of the Trade Union Branches obtained speakers from us on election topics such as banking, national debt, etc. London North E.T.U. is still going strong with its fortnightly series of lectures, now conducted by Comrade W. James, Chiswick. This branch has been running fortnightly lectures for nearly two years. In April, Comrade Kiddell, Leyton, ran a lantern campaign in his district among the N.U.R. Branches and Co-operative organisations, mainly on the Russian Revolution.

DIVISION 2.

Very successful classes have been run on the problems of a Labour Government and what is rationalisation? at Salisbury, Bishopstoke, Southampton, Guildford and Bournemouth. The Croydon class is

having a special course of lectures during the summer by Tom Ashcroft on "Current Economic Problems." This college is arranging a delegate conference for next Sept. The division is increasing its list of Week-end and Day Schools. Dates for week-end schools are Bournemouth, July 6 and 7, at the Labour Hall, with T. Ashcroft and the organiser as tutors; Guildford, July 13 and 14, with the organiser as tutor. The secretaries are circularising all Unions and labour organisations inviting scholarships. Bishopstoke will have a day school on June 16, with three lectures by the organiser. The afternoon and evening session, if fine, will be held in Stoke Woods. The secretary is arranging for a record class attendance on this occasion. The annual meet of the Littlehampton class will be on June 23rd at Amberley Woods with J. F. H., Wynn-Cuthbert, Joe Mathews and organiser as tutors. The secretary invites all N.C.L.C.'ers of Surrey, Hants and Sussex to join in and make this a bigger success than ever. Two motor boats will leave Littlehampton at 10 a.m. with comrades Gladden and Mitchell as skippers. Nuff sed! Oxford N.C.L.C. has arranged a day school at Carterton for June 30th, with Ashcroft and the organiser as tutors. The bus will leave the Central Labour Club at 9.30 a.m. to arrive Carterton at 10.30 a.m. Inclusive fee, 6/-. There are prospects of more day schools at Burley, Sway and Portsmouth. All unions affiliated have been circularised with an offer of special branch lectures.

DIVISION 3.

Successful Day Schools have been held at Southend, Luton and Ipswich, where Fascism, Rationalisation and India were the subjects under discussion. Great interest was also taken at Ipswich in the debate upon the I.L.P. Living Wage policy between Comrade L. Frost (late I.L.P. Organiser in East Anglia) and the Organiser. The Lantern Lecture on Imperialism was well received at Southend, March, and Harwich, the latter meeting being organised by the Eastern District Council of the N.U.R. All class secretaries are asked to note that the Divisional Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, July 20, and also that the time has now arrived for the great final prize-drawing push.

DIVISION 10.

EDINBURGH AND EAST OF SCOTLAND.—John S. Clarke addressed the annual conference of the Edinburgh district. C. L. Gibbons' report indicated that 48 classes had been run on a variety of subjects. At the day-school in the Zoological Park, addressed by Dr. Drummond Shiels, M.P., and Miss Jacob, B.Sc., 400 students were present. At the Labour College Burns Supper

360 students made war on an unknown number of haggis and inflicted severe losses. Three tutors of the Edinburgh Labour College (including the secretary) are Parliamentary candidates. The summer classes on electioneering have been a great success.

GLASGOW AND WEST OF SCOTLAND.—Eleven of our College tutors are doing propaganda for Labour candidates, whilst many of our students have gone from our classes on public speaking and chairmanship to try their "prentice hand" on the soap box. The organiser, Councillor A. L. Ritchie, is running classes on public speaking, history, and a special tutorial class for young students anxious to become tutors. Both the organiser and several of College tutors have taken this opportunity of making themselves useful to candidates run by organisations affiliated to N.C.L.C. Willie Brooke of the Dyers, David Kirkwood, A.E.U., Hunter, R.C.A., Tom Henderson, Co-operative, and several of the miners' candidates are being assisted. Our week-end rambles are proving a big success and afford a fine opportunity for our city workers getting into the country and enjoying the fellowship of our College Players. Our class on election law has now closed—26 students, mostly election agents, attended.

DIVISION 11.

IRELAND.—The Belfast Summer Class arrangements include classes on Esperanto and Logic. Lectures to Trade Union branches will commence after the elections. The Esperanto group is making good progress, and recently the tutor, W. M'Elgunn, entertained a number of students at a house party. Esperanto readings, speeches and gramophone records were a feature of the social evening. Our women students contributed materially to the comfort of all present. J. Orr and Jas. Macaulay contributed songs and recitations and eventually brought the proceedings to a close by a few well-chosen remarks in appreciation of the tutor's services.

DIVISION 12.

A number of classes have been run during April and May. A good group has met on Sunday mornings at Eastwood, Notts. Kettering has had a Speakers' Class, and Nottingham has run a Short Course on General Election issues. Northampton held its most successful week-end school on May 11th and 12th. The Organiser was the lecturer. On the 11th the chair was taken by Col. Malone, the Labour Candidate for the Borough, and on the 12th by Councillor Townley, the President of the Boot and Shoe Union in Northampton. Comrade Weston is to be congratulated on his successful organising of the school.

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