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Monthly, 4d.

NOVEMBER, 1929

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THE PLEBS

Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

Edited by J. F. HORRABIN, M.P., and J. P. M. MILLAR

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PUTTING SALT ON THEIR TAILS

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, in opening a hostel at Plymouth, expressed the opinion that Oxford and Cambridge Universities should be razed to the ground and their foundations sown with salt. Whether Mr. Shaw was putting out his tongue at grandpa to make the old gentleman splutter, Mr. Shaw alone can say. It was suggested—it sounds like sour grapes—that his purpose in hitting Oxford and Cambridge with his knuckle-duster was to advertise the claims of Plymouth University as a centre of learning. *Plebs* readers will hope that there was something more in the criticism than that. Anyway, his remarks resulted in a leading article in the *Daily Herald* urging that the universities bring themselves into line with the needs "not of a class but of society, of the people as a whole."

This suggestion does strike us as a little vague. Who constitute the people? Is the Duke of Northumberland included? And what of Lord Beaverbrook and Sir Alfred Mond? In the ordinary meaning of the English language, dukes and dustmen, unemployed engineers and noble lords are all included in the term "the people." Perhaps the *Herald* meant that the Universities should be made to serve the majority of the population—the workers. If so, it's a pity that was not clearly stated, for the British working-class movement does love vague phrases—it glories in them. Anyway, in justice to the universities we must admit

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BACK TO BROUGHAMS!

THE motor, a noisy and ostentatious mark of class distinction, by enabling his poorer neighbours to see the same rich man half-a-dozen times, when a brougham would have exhibited him once only, has given a false impression of the number and riches of the new rich," says Professor Henry Clay in "The Problem of Industrial Relations" (p. 257).

that they do serve society but, naturally, capitalist society and not, of course, some ideal or future society.

The Tool of Government

Universities have been described as (we quote from memory) :—

"Places where, with moderate application, One gets a good, sound, middle-class education."

"Capitalist education" would be even more accurate.

The purpose of the Universities is to serve the needs of the existing social order. It is their job to advance those sections of knowledge, e.g. chemistry, that improve capitalist production—that is, give the capitalists an increasing control over nature. It is their job to give capitalists some culture—teach them not to eat peas with a knife! It is also their job to enable the capitalists to consolidate and extend their control over society and therefore over the workers, for education is the chief tool of government. In importance it dwarfs the power of the courts and the army and navy combined.

The consequence is that the universities set out to train not only the intellectuals who will serve as the technical assistants required by capitalism—highly skilled engineers, chemists, teachers, journalists. They reach right down into the bowels of the working-class movement itself so that even those workers who set about educating themselves in their spare time do not, if the universities can help it, stray from the paths

of orthodoxy. The result is that of many workers who draw their knowledge of history and economics from the University we can say, "The hands are the hands of Labour but the voice is the voice of Capital."

Under capitalism it is possible for a strong Labour movement to compel the Universities to find more room for the sons and daughters of what one university gentleman once described as the "dregs of the population"—the wage workers. That does not seriously threaten the stability of capitalism. While capitalism lasts, however, the universities must continue to teach capitalist social theory. It will be time to expect Oxford and Cambridge to teach history from the working-class point of view when the Bank of England and the F.B.I. have joined hands in a campaign for socialism.

This side of socialism, then, the working-class movement must itself take social science in hand and do for sociology what capitalism has done for natural science. History and economics are not simply intellectual toys for amusing the curious. They can be blinkers skilfully hung over the eyes of the working-class movement to misdirect its vision, or, if the workers like, they can be the intellectual crowbar that enables the workers to break their way out of capitalism.

If you think there is something in the latter idea—spread it. Make independent working-class education a household word among the workers. The power of an idea lies in the number of men and women who believe it, and make it the keynote of their activity.



"MONKEYING" WITH THE CURRENCY

A Further Reply to H. Norman Smith

By ARTHUR WOODBURN

Mr. H. Norman Smith, Lobby Correspondent of the DAILY HERALD, in last month's PLEBS maintained his view that the maintenance of the gold standard was folly, and that real progress lay along the lines suggested by Major Douglas. "The Douglasite," he wrote, "says, 'Do not let employers and workers fight for the present absurdly limited production of industry; let them instead increase the product and at the same time take steps, by adopting rational finance, to ensure the full distribution of the product.'"

Mr. Arthur Woodburn, National Secretary of the Scottish Labour College, replies to Mr. Norman Smith, and gives at the same time an explanation of what the gold standard means.

IGATHER from last month's *Plebs* that Mr. Norman Smith now agrees that Trade Unionism is stronger to-day than ever it was. It is quite a serious mistake, to assume because trade unionism is not as strong as it might be that this means it is less strong than it used to be. Trade Unions to-day are undoubtedly stronger in numbers, in consciousness and in organisation than they ever were, and it is the business of all of us to strive for a still higher standard. This is important, for the power of Labour in the long run depends upon its economic strength, which lies mainly in its industrial organisation.

Let me assure Mr. Smith that I am in entire agreement with him in his desire to bring under social control the powers of credit issue at present exercised by the Banks. He will find ample evidence of this in my pamphlet *Banks and the Workers*, published by the *Plebs*.

The questions now in dispute between us are whether the gold standard should be maintained, and whether currency reform is a cure for our social ills.

Mr. Smith, in stating that the earth has not enough gold to enable the gold standard

to function, seems to be confusing the function of gold as a means of exchange with gold as a measure of value. It is a waste of human energy to go on digging for gold to provide a means of exchange when paper-notes or bank book-keeping entries do the job much better. This use of delegates for gold is, of course, already the practice, since millions of pounds of transactions take place by cheque for instance.

The Gold Standard

The term "gold standard" refers to gold as a *measure of value*. If any two articles are each equal in value to an ounce of gold, they are equal to each other, and can be exchanged fairly. The gold standard is an automatic guarantee that in exchanging products a yard will, so to speak, always be a yard. If I lend a person a yard of cloth, it is on the assumption that a yard will still be three feet when he pays me back. If the standard were altered in the meantime and I were only repaid with two feet, I should regard myself as having been swindled. In the same way, if I sold my yard of cloth for £1, and found when I came to spend my £1 that someone had manipulated the currency in the meantime, with the result that my £1 was only worth half-a-yard of cloth, I would feel no less swindled. The gold standard provides an automatic guarantee that £1 will remain £1, and at the moment I prefer to trust an automatic brake rather than the human fallibility of financial experts like Mr. H - - try. Far from requiring huge quantities of gold, the standard works in this country almost without the use of gold at all.

The use of gold to-day is practically confined to its being a commodity which embodies great value in small bulk, and which is acceptable as such all over the world. All international exchange is an exchange of *goods*, and if Britain buys more goods from

abroad than are paid for by the goods which she exports, Britain is obviously in debt to someone abroad. If that someone demands payment, gold is the most convenient form of goods which can be exported, as it costs least in transportation. I agree with Mr. Snowden that this is wasteful transportation, but until such time as a better substitute is provided, it seems to me that gold will continue to be the commodity used to settle international debts. It is also, however, transported abroad when speculators borrow "credit" for investment abroad beyond the capacity of the market for our goods. The raising of the bank rate is the brake by which the Bank of England restrains such investment. No exception can be taken to raising the interest on such borrowing, but I cannot see why the Government should have to pay extra interest on existing borrowings, but that is, of course, a question of the relationship of the Government to banking. The main point is that we must have some standard of value, gold or an index figure, and gold so far has worked better than the index figure. Unless we can improve on gold for the purpose of measuring value, it must, I think, maintain its position.

Society's Cashiers

In order, however, to exchange all the material produced "in a world of increasing productivity and rising population" means of exchange and methods of payment are required, and these at the moment are provided principally by book-keeping in the offices of Society's cashiers, the Banks. The Banks have the power to create "credits," which is the equivalent of creating money, and this new money is called into being in order to exchange goods already produced or to be produced. The production creates the credit, and when the product is sold and the transactions completed, the "credit" or money is cancelled and disappears again. The Banks charge the producers with interest for this service, which gives the banks exorbitant profits for what should be a public service. No one, however, can take exception to the service in itself.

The Banks, of course, go beyond the mechanical service just mentioned, and indulge in gambling on the ability of persons to make profit. Financiers regularly depend on the banks to create money to enable them to carry through their gambles. The Banks are occasionally left with losses, but these are easily covered by their exorbitant profits. The Banks also create such credits for enterprisers likely to make profit and it is here that the Douglasites seem to me to invite Labour to help. "The Douglasite says," according to Mr. Smith, "do not let the employers and workers fight for the present absurdly limited product of industry; let them increase the product and at the same time take steps, by adopting rationalised finance, to ensure the full distribution of the product." It is not the purpose of the Labour Movement to allow the credit-creating power of the Banks to be used to place more purchasing power in the hands of employers in order that they may make more profit out of employing the workers. It is the purpose of the Labour Movement to see that such powers of employment are directed as far as possible into channels under public control. The power of controlling credit is the power of determining to what purposes the Labour of the country will be directed, and I submit to Mr. Smith that, while it may not be possible for some time to refuse credit to private enterprisers, Labour will give preference to all schemes which are in line with its programme.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that where credit is created beyond the possible productivity of goods, it becomes inflation, and inflation is a form of taxation which injures the poor more than the rich. The best form of taxation is a graduated form according to ability to pay, and it would be much wiser to transfer the existing income by taxation from those who use it wastefully to the Government, so that it might be used for carrying out Labour's programme of national reorganisation. To depart from that programme, based as it is on a sound examination of present economic tendencies, and concentrate on one part of the problem like currency, is to leave the substance and follow a will-o'-the-wisp.

HOW TO SPEAK IN PUBLIC

(1) *The First Steps*

By J. P. M. MILLAR

THE spoken word is the means by which the bulk of Labour propaganda is done. The power that vibrates human vocal cords is much cheaper than the power required to drive a printing machine. Moreover, the workers are much more inclined to read the publications of Capital than they are to read the publications of Labour. We have consequently to follow them up with the human voice. The keen Labour man or woman, therefore, wants to be able to state in public the case for Labour. As a result, the question is frequently asked—"How can I become a public speaker?"

Even with the best training and the most careful practice everyone cannot become an orator. The average intelligent person can, however, equip himself or herself to state a case—to be a speaker—and the timid can take courage from the fact that a natural "gift of the gab" is not necessarily an asset—it often results in the holder beginning a gabbler and ending a gabbler.

The first thing the would-be speaker has to realise is that he must have something to say. This may seem to be stating the obvious, but one frequently comes across would-be speakers who imagine that if they are able to get up in public and make noises with their vocal cords, some supernatural power will supply the necessary flow of ideas to their brains.

We shall assume, for the purposes of the article, that the would-be speaker knows what he is going to say—that he has all the facts and the ideas he requires. His next step is to decide how long he intends speaking. No novice should think of beginning with a speech lasting an hour or anything like it. Fifteen minutes is long enough to start with.

Public Speaking or Public Blethering

Moreover, he should write out his speech beforehand. That sounds like work, but public speaking is work. Even very

experienced speakers often write out their speeches beforehand. That does not imply that when the speaker gets on his feet he will repeat word for word what he has written on paper. To do that effectively would involve learning the speech by heart—a big job—and in the case of an unskilled speaker the speech would probably sound very wooden.

One advantage of writing out the speech lies in this: that the speaker is able to ascertain before he gets on his feet whether he has an intelligent case to state. If he can't make out a satisfactory case in the unhurried quiet of his own room, he is not likely to do so simply by getting up and beginning—"Mr. Chairman and friends." If he tries to, his friends are likely to become his enemies.



From the *New Masses*.
B

The Elusive Right Word

A further advantage of writing out the speech is that it gives the speaker an opportunity of choosing the right words. When they are not sought out previously, they are sometimes wonderfully backward in coming forward! The result is that the poor speaker hesitates, pauses, gropes and then wildly clutches at the first word that comes into his mind or fails completely to finish his sentence, sometimes much to the embarrassment of the audience, which usually experiences acute discomfort when it sees a speaker floundering into difficulties.

The Visual Memory

Writing out a speech has another advantage; it impresses it on the eye and that is a great help to memory. It also gives the speaker confidence. Moreover, it enables a speaker to estimate fairly accurately the time required for his speech, and, like the dress rehearsal of a new play, enables the author to eliminate faults prior to the public appearance.

Two big enemies of the apprentice speaker in the working-class movement are often grammar and pronunciation. The speech of many workers is far from being perfect from the point of view either of grammar or of pronunciation. Despite that, the average worker expects those who speak in public to come up to a decent standard. The mispronunciation of a word may have an alarming way of nullifying the value of a sensible speech. A "self-made" Lord Provost made himself a laughing stock in his day and caused himself to be remembered for generations afterwards by pronouncing the "Legend of Montrose" as the "leg-end of Montrose."

Make an Ally of the Dictionary

Writing out a speech is a great help in discovering grammatical weaknesses, and by means of a pronouncing dictionary the speaker can make certain beforehand of the correct pronunciation of a word about which he is doubtful. The apprentice speaker should, moreover, take every opportunity

of listening carefully to good speakers, noting carefully how the more unusual words are pronounced and how the sentences are constructed.

The speaker's first job is to be sure that he is going to make himself understood. The young speaker whose educational training has been so many years at an elementary school, a big gap, and then a course of Marxist reading has specially to guard against using words which convey no meaning to his hearers. Most Marxist books are full of technical words. The speaker must do his utmost to avoid these and to translate them into simple English.

The extreme importance of using simple language was illustrated by a member of an audience I addressed not long ago. This chap put in a plea for language which the workers understand. To drive home his point he said that some time ago he urged a very intelligent young fellow working at the same bench to take a course of economics. The reply he got was: "What do I want a course of economics for? That's for the missus. She does the spending."

Long Words and Little Knowledge

Some speakers imagine that in using long technical words they are demonstrating the great depth of their knowledge. As a matter of fact such a speaker may be unconsciously concealing from the audience *and from himself* that he does not really understand the subject about which he is talking. It is, as a rule, the man who can translate technical jargon into simple English who actually knows his subject and can explain it to his hearers.

The final point for this month is that you can read all the books ever written about how to speak in public without being able to make one speech. It's not sufficient to know *how* to do it: that's only one part of the job. Practice is required—practice and still more practice. Why not make a start this month by writing out a short speech and you will then be ready to make use of the other hints we hope to give next month? If you've any friends interested in public speaking, draw their attention to this series of articles.

THE WAGE-WORKERS' PLACE IN LITERATURE

By ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P.

YOU can test the position of any class in a civilised community by the part it plays in the literature of that country. When the intelligentsia of Andreyeff, the middle-classes of Tcheckof, the officials of Gogal were swept away by a revolution of peasants and artisans, the stories of Libedinsky, Gladkov, and Semenor appear almost as soon as the eddies settle. Only from Russia have come, as yet, great interpretations in art of working-class life and psychology, because only in the socialist republic are the workers the dominant class. Judged by this standard, the writers of Western Europe rank pretty low in the social scheme. Revolutionary Germany gave us Toller and Georg Grosz before the great industrialists, led by the Stresman to whose memory (our own being short) we have been offering bouquets recently, drowned the real revolution in blood and paper marks.

This is not to say that there have been not great novels of working-class life where the proletariat was crushed and servile—Gorki (*Mother*), Upton Sinclair, and even Charles Kingsley—but in pre-war Russia such novels were the desperate propaganda of a smothered people, and in the English tongue, the kindly efforts of well-disposed middle-class writers to interest the reading public in the wrongs of the lower classes. There has been, as yet, no great interpretative novel in English of working-class life, a novel that would rank in importance with Van Gogh's pictures of workers, the art of Daumier or Steinlen. Jack London, perhaps, came nearest in his earlier novels, and Sean O'Casey in his first two plays to giving us sagas of our class. That Chesterton poem, *The Secret People*, concentrates the literary history of the British workers into a half-dozen verses. It is still true—

"We hear men speaking for us of new laws strong
and sweet,
Yet is there no man speaketh as we speak in the street.
It may be we shall rise the last as Frenchmen rose the
first,
Our wrath come after Russia's wrath and our wrath
be the worst.
It may be we are meant to mark with our riot and our
rest
God's scorn for all men governing. It may be beer
is best.
But we are the people of England ; and we have not
spoken yet."

In the pride-glutted post-war England there seems no audience, therefore no inspiration, for the art forms of the workers. Write about decadent society, about the intelligentsia of Bloomsbury living on its own vitals, English officers and their comic batmen ; bring in the workers as an amusing dialect-speaking, uncouth background to all this 'refinery'—and the audience is to hand. Round that little West London stretch the great areas of Shadwell and Stepney, Wapping and Whitechapel, and further still, the coalfields of the Midlands and the furnaces of the North. "We are the people of England and we have not spoken yet."

The Twilight of the Kings

In Germany, ten years after the war, where deflation and great industrialists have done their worst, there is coming back, after the numbness of misery, a stirring of consciousness among the workers. There has been a revolution they realise. The courts of the dull little dukes and littler kings, with their interminably fertile broods, have actually been smiled away. Are the mushroom dynasties of the Krupps and Stinnes and Thyssens, so pathetically dependent on chance, on world fluctuations, on the slender thread of one man's life, any firmer rooted? In the German consciousness is growing something of the sense of power of mass that Russia so joyfully accepts and so powerfully

expresses. Modern German architecture, capitalist German building at that, is dominated by this sense of Mass. In the workers' movements it is finding expression in sagas of mass struggle and of mass power.

One of the most significant of the new German writers is Anna Seghers. She is not herself a proletarian. She is, I believe, a graduate of Heidelberg University. But in her marriage with a Hungarian Communist as young as herself—they are both under thirty—she has found her way to a deep spiritual understanding of “the people who have not spoken yet.” Her novel, *The Revolt of the Fishermen*,* which won a famous German literary prize, has been adversely criticised in this country because the bourgeois critics simply did not understand it. “Here,” they said scornfully, “is a novel about a strike. It doesn't say where the strike takes place, where the leaders came from. It gives neither date nor place nor time, nor any specific details of any kind. What are we to make of such vagueness? And who is interested in petty labour revolts? Can we even call it a novel at all?”

Perhaps not, but it is a great interpretation of all strikes, an inspired understanding of the souls of the oppressed. There is an island, in the north somewhere, where everything depends on the fishing season; and the wages paid by the Company will not quite buy food for the rest of the year. Here is a little picture of what “not quite enough” means:—

“The children finished their food first, then they looked at Andreas' plate out of the corner of their eyes. Two little scraps were left on his plate, always when their own plates were already empty these two little bits of food were slipped over to them. Andreas sat between them. The children glanced furtively at Andreas' face; now the moment had come for his eyes to twinkle, but Andreas was looking in a quite different direction . . . he had always been hungry, but now, for a little while, he had been feeling a different kind of hunger. This new hunger made one feel so light in the head. All afternoon Andreas had thought of nothing but those beans, how they would taste, how they would smell. Finally the beans were actually before him—no these two mouthfuls belonged to him, to Andreas. He scraped them together quickly and swallowed them. . . . The children looked angrily straight into his face. Andreas flinched. He had swallowed the bits of food, he was still hungry and he felt ashamed.”

* Elkin Matthews & Maurot, price 6/-.

This a long quotation from a book from which it is difficult to quote. There is nothing “snappy” anywhere in it, but the truth of this quotation will be felt by anyone who has been hungry and has seen children go unfed.

“Masses and Man”

The strike is led by a stranger. It fails, because the folk of the other villages did not stand firm with Santa Barbara for three-fifths of the haul. They scab under police imported by the company. When all is lost, there is nothing left for Santa Barbara but to give in or starve. They starve. Andreas suddenly goes out in a scab ship. It sinks. He has scuttled it, and yet he alone is saved. The company is suspicious. Andreas takes to the cliffs. He is captured and killed. Hull, the strike leader, is arrested the same day. The soldiers took him overland to the prison. The fishermen drift back to sea.

“The only result of their revolt was that the fishermen of Santa Barbara put out to sea later than usual; the agreement with their employers remained what it had been for the last four years: . . . and Santa Barbara looked just as it did every summer. But long after the militia had left, long after the fishermen were back at sea, the insurrection hung, brooding over the empty white market-place.”

These are the first words of the book, not the last, but they give that sense of impersonal struggle that makes the mass of the fisher-folk, not Andreas and Kedennek and Hull, the real hero, the real protagonist of the fight. There is queer love in it, too—a prostitute, fast woman, all men's desire; impersonally she is the heroine—the Mary.

The book must owe a great deal to its translator, Margaret Goldsmith, for it could have been ruined in the change of language.

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SCIENCE FOR EVERYBODY

By J. G. CROWTHER

(Author of Science for You and Short Stories in Science)

IF only the author of *Chemistry in the Home** could write like the author of *Men Who Found Out*,† and the author of the latter had the knowledge of the author of the former, what a perfect pair of books we should have! As it is, both books are sound in their respective ways.

Dr. Firth has set out to discuss the chemistry of things used in the home, and has provided a lot of sound information. He will tell you about the air we breathe, the beverages we drink, and the goods we eat, the fuels we burn, the materials we wear, the soap we use, etc. He writes in the style of the informative text-book author, so his book should suit best students of domestic science in colleges where that subject is taught.

The housewife who reads it voluntarily will have to be distinctly earnest-minded. She will come across words like "polysaccharides," "pyvoxylyns," and so on. If she is not routed by these, she may learn what "dry-cleaning" really is, why tea should not stand more than five minutes and why it bucks her up, why stale bread is more easy to digest than new, and the truth about calves-foot jelly. The following is an example of Dr. Firth's style:

"Milk is secreted by the females of mammalian animals for the nutrition of their young. It is Nature's most perfect food. Milk is highly complex in nature and to some extent variable in composition. It contains the fundamental constituents of food, *i.e.*, proteins, fats, carbohydrates, salts, water and vitamins.

Cow's milk is an important component of our diet. It is a white or creamy fluid in which various substances are held in suspension. The colour is due to tiny globules of fat, which may be readily observed when a drop of milk is examined under a microscope."

* By J. B. Firth, B.Sc. (Constable, 5/-).

† By Amabel Williams-Ellis (Howe, 5/-).

Mrs. Ellis's book is the reverse of this in style. In the middle of a charming essay on the life and work of a famous scientist, she admits that of course what he did was rather difficult, and that she doesn't understand it herself, and she hopes no one will mind. For children or those who know nothing, perhaps it is rather nice and jolly for us all to be ignorant together. Galileo was a great man, and someone at Cambridge says that what he did was extraordinarily clever.

As a matter of fact, some of those "some-ones" at Cambridge and elsewhere have put the author on to some good and new things. Her training as a writer has enabled her to make very readable precis of the standard biographies, and these new facts supplied her make a pleasant seasoning. The introductory remarks about the character of the Greeks, the story of the Flying Dutchman and "yellow jack," etc., are good, and an example of how popular writing should be done. She has some imagination but little knowledge, whereas Dr. Firth has more knowledge than imagination.

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BLUE TRAIN OR HOB-NAILED BOOTS

By W. COLDRICK

HOW is socialism to be realised? That is the question. Shall we reach it by travelling in the Blue Train, or will the road be such as to require hob-nailed boots?

To those who look upon socialism as the inevitable outcome of the contradiction between private ownership and social production, with its corollary the class struggle, the path will be one the workers alone are likely willingly to tread. They alone will have an interest to serve in liberating the forces of production from the restrictive bonds imposed by private ownership, and in seeing that henceforth these forces are utilised for the common good. In fact the whole struggle for socialism is a struggle for the control of the labour process. Whoever controls that process controls society. The control at present is in the hands of the capitalist and by it he is able to impose his will upon society. To deprive him of that control is the task history has assigned to the working-class. The mission of the class-conscious socialist is to make the workers conscious of the rôle they have to play. Once the workers as a class understand the source of their trouble, and the task which confronts them, time and energy will not be frittered away in seeking salvation by petty reforms, and in elaborating plans for the New Jerusalem. In short, those who subscribe to the theory of the class struggle recognise that straight is the path and narrow the way that leads to socialism. That path promises no joy rides.

Opposed to this school of thought are those who believe socialism to be primarily a matter for the citizen and not for the worker. The citizens organised as a community are asked to forget they are workers and capitalists, and to work together to bring all things upon which the communal

well-being depends under the control of the community. The struggle for socialism is a struggle between good and evil; darkness and light. What the Marxist sees as a class struggle is to this school a struggle between habit and reason. The reasonable are socialists; the unreasonable conservatives. The dividing line in society, on the basis of habit and reason, is obviously much broader than the line of the class struggle. Neither habit nor reason is confined to a class, so members of both classes, if they are reasonable, have an interest in working for socialism. Capital and Labour can cooperate to establish socialism. This indeed is a Broadway, and all sections of the community, like mineowners and miners, can travel together over its smooth surface without any unpleasant shaking. In brief, all of us who are reasonable are going the same way home, so we might as well go by the Blue Train as any other.

This theory of "communal consciousness" is adequately set forth in *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*, by J. R. MacDonald, M.P. (Cassell's Pocket Library, 3/6). The book contains a great deal of valuable data which can be advanced to support either of the theories stated above.

The criticism of socialists so far has been mainly concentrated on the old political parties. With the coming into power of a Labour Government, much of that criticism is destined to find another target. Any serious failure to provide the benefits which the workers demand from political representation based upon communal support, is likely to create much criticism of the Labour Party. Anyone wishing to know the principles upon which this party is at present working, and what its leader is thinking, will find this book of great value.

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THE NEW STAGE IN THE AMERICAN LABOUR MOVEMENT

By CARA COOK

(Brookwood Labour College, U.S.A.)

THE organised Labour movement in America includes only about 12% of the workers; what this means in bargaining power and prestige is at once apparent.

The American Federation of Labour was born about 50 years after the British Labour movement, and grew more slowly under very different economic conditions. The size of the U.S., the competition of free land, the prevailing individualistic psychology of the apprentices who believed that in time they would all become masters, and the great scarcity of labour, all combined to create an opportunistic craft psychology and craft form of organisation which at that time, without doubt, was best suited to the economic needs of the workers.

The history of the American Labour movement can be divided loosely into three periods:—(1) the period of growing class consciousness and the establishment of craft unions; (2) the militant period of collective bargaining; and (3) the present stage, union-employer co-operation. It is the latter period only of which I shall speak now.

This period has been summarised by Prof. Carver of Columbia University, in a book entitled the *Present Economic Revolution*, and I want to quote a couple of paragraphs from his book:—

“The only economic revolution now under way is going on in the U.S. It is a revolution that is to wipe out the distinction between labourers and capitalists by making labourers their own capitalists, and by compelling most capitalists to become labourers of one kind or another, because not many of them will be able to live on the returns from capital alone.

“The Labour movement in this country is so far in advance of that in any other country, as to make comparison impossible.

In European countries, including Great Britain, Labour organisations and the more conspicuous Labour leaders, are still pursuing antiquated methods that are comparable to the attempt of a man to lift himself by his boot-straps. Here they are using the solid ground of capital ownership, and are actually lifting themselves into positions of well-being that amount to affluence in comparison with the conditions of European labourers.

“In European countries their organised political activities are dominated by a psychology that was built up in a primitive and fighting stage of social development. Here they are emerging from that stage, and are beginning to think in constructive terms such as belong to a progressive and industrial stage. In European countries they are grasping at the shadow of political control, but never has and never will that means put an ounce of the substance of economic prosperity into the hands of any labourer. In this country they have refused to be deceived by shadows, and are rapidly gaining the real substance of prosperity.”

In the next paragraph he adds that “those minds that are still thinking in terms of the primitive tactics of class war will not understand a single syllable of the last paragraph,” so be comforted!

The three principal evidences he gives of this revolution are (1) the growing of savings deposits among workers, (2) their increasing investments in corporation shares, and (3) Labour banks. That is a professor's view of the American Labour movement. I believe he voices the sentiments of the majority of American capitalists.

Here is what the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labour reported to the delegates at the last convention:—

“There are two opposing policies of making progress—one which makes force alone its agency for progress, and the other endeavours through intelligent strategy to make progress without strife. The advocates of force believe that men’s decisions yield only to force, and that Labour must rely solely upon militant tactics. Those who believe that progress is made through better agreements and relations between employers and employees hold that problems must be settled by conference and discussion, even after the fight is over, believe that it is therefore better to develop a strategy that will make the fight unnecessary, and then concentrate on gathering facts and following policies that will enable the Union to sustain its proposals at the conference.”

The Devil and the Deep Sea

And finally, the point of view of a minority progressive group in the American Labour movement is voiced by the monthly magazine *Labour Age*. In an article headed *Between the Devil and the Deep Sea*, it says :—

“It seems to be a clear case of damned if you do, and damned if you don’t. Rationalisation is bound to go on. We do need production. Mere dogged resistance to change hasn’t got the unions anywhere in the past. But to go along with the present development raises terrific problems for the Labour movement, and the fact is that under the new policy the movement is not gaining membership or power, and is suffering in morale.

“A union that keeps steadily before itself that it is an organisation of, for and by the workers, that it must get gains for them and must constantly strengthen itself against the forces that would destroy it, and which compromises and co-operates in order to strengthen itself and get results for the workers, is one thing.

“A union which, consciously or unconsciously, comes to think of itself as an agency to help the employer to get efficient production, and which tells itself that as a result of this the workers will inevitably benefit and the union get strong, is a very different thing. The one is an honest-to-

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God union; the other is a company union, no matter what sign it may have in the front window.

“If the union has the former point of view, almost any compromise may be justified; if the union has the latter attitude, any compromise is a step on the road to ruin and the betrayal of the workers. In other words, so long as there are employers who own machinery and capital and workers who work for wages, the union must first of all be a militant organism to protect the workers, improve their conditions and advance their status. Everything else comes behind.”

Reference is made in the latter quotation to what is perhaps the chief menace facing organised Labour in America to-day, and that is the company union. If any proof were needed that organisation of the labour force is necessary, company unions give that proof, for employers have found they cannot run their industries efficiently without grouping their workers into functional units. Scientific engineers themselves reiterate that

"AND SO THE POOR DOG HAD NONE."



From the American Locomotive Engineers' Journal.

employers must realise the need for organising their workers into "company union, labour unions, what you will."

There is the rub, of course. Is it to be a "what-you-will" policy for the employers, or is Labour going to have some say as to how it will be organised, represented, and what share in managerial responsibility it will hold? I have no space to describe in detail company unionism and its twin evil, welfare capitalism—drugs prescribed by the efficiency experts as guaranteed to keep all workers quiet and contented. There is an admirable book on this subject, *Company Unions*,* by Robert W. Dunn. If you ever feel that class-conscious spirit waning within you, I prescribe a couple of chapters of that book.

To go back to co-operation. There is a fundamental difference in the situation in the two countries. Co-operation in England is being carried on by a group of employers and the official trade union leaders. In the U.S. co-operation has grown up in individual

industries, localities, or even separate shops. There are no national bodies speaking for either group. Therefore, it can be seen at once that the American workers are at a tremendous disadvantage. Even if their local union is 100% strong, which is seldom the case, they have no strong national authority to back them.

Perhaps a couple of the outstanding examples will indicate the course of this movement in the U.S. The pioneer and best-known case is the so-called "B and O plan," an agreement entered into by the shop craft employees of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad with the railroad management. It was considered a great day when trade unions, of their own accord, hired a scientific engineer to draw up a plan of co-operation in order to regain the ground lost by the disastrous shopmen's strike of 1922.

Fighting for Recognition

The first principle laid down by this plan was recognition by the management of the existing trade union as the proper bargaining agent. This, too, was an historical step, for trade unions in the U.S. are still fighting for recognition. Stabilisation of production and equal sharing in the resulting profits were other features of the plan. The first year brought £300,000 of work to the B. & O. shops, which, it was claimed, they would not otherwise have secured. This meant £7000 more in wages. The next year there was £500,000 of additional work, which was equal to one month's extra work per employee.

But the trend of unemployment in the railroad shops could not be permanently checked, and employment is now increasingly unstable. At present many B. & O. shopmen are working only twenty-two days a month, and indefinite furloughs often result in permanent unemployment. At the last convention a resolution was passed asking the management to adopt the principle that the co-operative plan would not operate to reduce the number of employees. The real test of the plan to-day is, will the workers support it, fearing that their support means increasing lay-offs?

It is too soon to tell. There are many other causes operating for unemployment

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on the railroads, and fortunately the railroad unions, among the best organised in the movement, are awake to the situation. The four big brotherhoods have launched a campaign for the six-hour day, and have threatened militant action in defiance of their cherished conciliation machinery if it is not granted.

Pitfalls in Plenty

Another well-known instance of co-operation, in this case an admitted failure, was the so-called Mitten-Mahon agreement, between the Street and Electric Railway Employees and the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company. Under this agreement the union pledged itself not to organise employees on the existing properties of the Mitten Company, and in return the company conceded them the right to organise on any properties "to be acquired or operated by the Mitten Company in the future." When two-thirds of the employees on those new properties vote for the union, the management will deal with union representatives.

The plan further stated that "the standards of economic excellence of the non-union properties would be the standard by which union performance in co-operation with the management on other properties shall be measured." That is, the company union standards would be the example for the union to follow, and when they attained equal standards, then the management would consider the trade union organisation of its present company union employees.

The agreement when adopted is supposed to continue in force "during delivery of co-operative effectiveness," which is interpreted as "that degree of assistance in securing the result on the new properties as is secured by Mitten Co. on the non-union properties." The pitfalls in this plan, even thus briefly described, are so obvious that they need not be pointed out.

The attitude of the A.F. of L. towards union-employer co-operation, I have already indicated by the quotation. In a weak bargaining position, dominated by craft psychology, and confronted by the most powerful financial combines in the world, the

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Hypocrisy under the Lash

IN Buffalo, as in Cleveland, I could not help but see that, in spite of our boasted democracy and equality of opportunity, there was as much misery and squalor and as little decent balancing of opportunity against energy as anywhere else in the world. The little houses—the poor, shabby, colourless, drear, drab little homes, with their grass-less ‘yards,’ their unpaved streets, their uncollected garbage, their fluttering, thin-flamed gas lamps, the crowds of ragged, dirty, ill-cared-for children! . . . I used to listen, as part of my reporting duties, to the blathering of thin-minded, thin-blooded, thin-experienced religionists, as well as to those of the kept editorial writers, about the merits and blessings and opportunities of our noble and bounteous land; but, whenever I encountered such regions as this, I knew well enough that there was something wrong with their noble manudering. Shout as they might, there was here displayed before my very eyes ample evidence that somewhere there was a screw loose in the ‘Fatherhood of God—Brotherhood of Man’ machinery.”—Theodore Dreiser, in “A Book About Myself.”

official trade union movement has not been sufficiently alert to guard its members against some of the worst forms of exploitation masquerading under the guise of industrial reorganisation and co-operation. It has remained conciliatory and compromising, and discourages militant action and constructive criticism. Resistance to the evil effects of rationalisation has appeared either in progressive local unions, which have hired their own expert economists to work out joint agreements, or in the left wing and communist groups, whose militant organisation work has been the chief feature of many of the recent strikes.

Confronted by a crying need for organisation of the unorganised, the A.F. of L. has talked much and done little. In politics it has alternately bargained with the two

capitalist parties, supporting the one which seemed to promise it the better of a bad bargain, and been consistently smacked in the face for its pains. Despite the growth of large-scale organisation of industry, it has clung to a craft form of organisation, with little regard for the great masses of unskilled, unorganised workers. And while Labour in other countries grows slowly more internationally minded, the A.F. of L. steadfastly refuses to enter into any “entangling Labour alliances.” Truly, it is a worthy child of our national government.

British workers have heard enough about the narrow craft philosophy of the American movement, its abstention from independent political action, its fear of international socialist bogeys, for me to digress on these points, but I do think the criticisms I hear in this country are often hastily made, without regard to the history and particular problems of the American movement. I should be the last to defend the reactionary policies of some of our trade union leaders, but they should be studied and understood and not condemned wholesale as I have so frequently heard done here.

A Break in the Clouds

During the last couple of years and greatly accelerated in the past few months, there has been growing up among the younger, more progressive elements in the Labour movement, a strong disapproval of some of the A.F. of L. policies. Looking about them they find this paltry 12% of workers organised in the greatest industrial country in the world—a sort of aristocracy of skilled labour, a job trust, one of your countrymen has called it, and they see everywhere the infringement of workers’ civil liberties by court injunctions and the police and military forces of the state. These new progressives, therefore, are drawing together in their respective fields of educational, political, and trade union work, in a determined effort to revive the militant unionism which characterised the American Labour movement ten years ago at the height of its post-war power.

This movement had certainly been growing before the censure of Brookwood Labour College by the A.F. of L. last summer gave it added impetus, but that piece of high-handed action has proved a strong rallying point. This group has now organised itself into a permanent Committee for Progressive Labour Action, with headquarters in New York City. The independent monthly, *Labour Age*, has been adopted as its official organ.

I can conclude this article in no better way, perhaps, than by quoting what the New Progressives have to say in their Challenge concerning the subject we have been discussing:—

“Support and help to work out effective methods of collective bargaining and of union control in the shop under the conditions existing in modern industry. A trade union is not a revolutionary political party. It must deal with the situation as it finds it, and must make compromises from time to time. It cannot take a merely negative attitude, assume a crude opposition to the introduction of machinery and methods in industry. Such a policy has proved suicidal in the past. On the other hand, the union must regard itself as primarily an instrument by which the workers may defend their rights, improve their conditions and raise their status. A union that exists mainly in order to enable the boss to attain certain ends is a company union, even though it be masked as a *bona fide* union, and the workers will not be long deceived nor give it devotion and enthusiastic service.

... “Insist upon the fact of the struggle between the employer and the employee under the present system, and the function of the union in that struggle, as so clearly set forth in the preamble to the constitution of the A.F. of L., which states that ‘a struggle is going on in all the nations of the civilised world between the oppressors and the oppressed of all countries, a struggle between the capitalist and the labourer, which grows in intensity from year to year and will work disastrous results to the toiling millions if they are not

combined for mutual protection and benefit.’

... “Keep alive the soul of the Labour movement; set forth the movement as a great idealistic force having for its goal a social order controlled by the workers. Man lives by bread, and therefore the union must struggle to get immediate results in higher wages and better conditions for its members. Workers will follow leaders who get such results, and not be too squeamish about their methods. Nevertheless, it is also true that ‘man shall not live by bread alone,’ that the union that has lost its soul will perish as surely as the union that has lost its practical efficiency. In a period when it may be difficult, if not impossible, to go to the great masses of workers and promise them any immediate improvement of conditions over what the boss is giving them, only a movement marked by idealism, leading American workers on to freedom and independence, can win them away from company unionism, can stir and hold them.”

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THE BOOKSHELF

Two Plays—and Some Real Life

By J. F. HORRABIN, M.P.

THE *Apple Cart*, Shaw's latest, is G.B.S. sliced very thin indeed. Like several other Shaw plays, it is "conversation" rather than drama. But O, what garrulous conversation! And what stretches of windy talk between the passages with sparkle in them!

Everybody, I take it, knows the "story" of the play by this time: how King Magnus of England, ordered by his Cabinet to forego the Royal Veto—even any mention of it—and become a really-truly constitutional monarch, a "rubber stamp," retaliates by threatening to abdicate, stand for Parliament, form a Party of his own, and defeat his present Ministers. How the Ministers promptly tear up their "ultimatum" and accept the *status quo*. . . . With an interlude containing a conversation between the King and his mistress about nothing in particular. The conflict, of course, is not really between a king and a group of democratic leaders, but merely between an intelligent man and a bunch of fools. And whatever justification there may be for showing us a Cabinet which, as one of the characters remarks, reminds one of nothing so much as "an over-crowded third-class compartment," there is certainly not much basis in history for presenting a King of England who is obviously quite out of place in such company. Of course, the stalls applauded. Whether they were sure or not of what it was all about, they did apprehend one thing—to wit, that Bernard Shaw of all people was telling them that a gentleman of birth and breeding could always turn the tables on these dam Labah fellahs. That, I'm pretty sure, is the one idea that would get across to an average audience.

Sean O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie* is more vital stuff, even though it, too, is a trifle long-drawn-out. In opposition to most of the critics, I found the second act—the "expressionist" part of the play—far and away the most interesting. It, and indeed the whole play, was the Saga of the Common Soldier. *Journey's End*, interesting and admirable as it is in many respects, deals with "officers and gentlemen"; in the true Shakespearean tradition, representatives of the lower orders only come into the picture to provide the low comedy. *The Silver Tassie* readjusts the balance with a vengeance. It sees war from the angle of the common man. O'Casey, indeed, had made clear in earlier plays his strong view that men lacking a public-school education might still be figures of tragedy.

I am writing only two or three nights after the play's first performance. I shall be agreeably surprised if it is still running by the time these words are in print. But if it goes on tour, Plebs will be well advised to make extra special efforts to see it.

I turn from the world of the theatre to the actual world we live in—to the biography of a very real, if

somewhat mysterious, man of our own time—*The Career of Sir Basil Zaharoff*, by Dr. Richard Lewinsohn (Gollancz, 12/6). And, curiously, while reading this book, I was strongly reminded of a play which doubtless a good many Plebs have seen or read—Munro's *The Rumour*. Zaharoff, "the Man behind the Scenes" or "The Mystery Man of Europe," as he has variously been labelled, was for fifty years a prince among armament-sellers. He began as agent in the Balkans for the Anglo-Swedish firm of Nordenfeldt. Later, the firm was Maxim-Nordenfeldt. Later still, Vickers-Maxim. And throughout all that quarter-of-a-century or more before the Great War, during which Europe was feverishly arming for the conflict, Zaharoff flitted from capital to capital, from government to government—selling the goods. That meant, of course, taking a pretty definite (though hidden) hand in politics. "When a Government policy," as Dr. Lewinsohn says, "did not result in sufficient orders, that policy had to be changed. For the armament industry was not run for the sake of politics, but politics were there for the sake of armament industry."

A really intimate life of him would be a source-book indeed! But there is enough even in this somewhat non-committal biography to remind one of the ways in which war was engineered in *The Rumour*. During the Great War, Sir Basil put himself and his millions (he was a commission-agent on a grand scale, you see) at the service of the Allies and Democracy; and finished up a Grand Commander of the Order of the Bath, a Knight of the British Empire and an honorary Doctor of Civil Law of Oxford University, not to mention the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour. After the War he dabbled in international politics, backed—and then threw over—Venizelos, played with an oil company or two, and finally took over the Casino at Monte Carlo and made another little fortune.

One wonders what Samuel Smiles would have made of him! Anyway—tell your Library Committee this is a very edifying biography indeed.

LABOUR BROADCASTING

IN the July issue of the *Plebs* there is an article entitled "Squeezing Labour off the Ether," by J.P.M.M. The article commences "Outside of Russia there has, we believe, been only one Labour broadcasting station in the world; that run by the Chicago Federation of Labour, for slightly more than two years."

Evidently it is not generally known that the Labour Council of New South Wales has its own broadcasting station erected on the top of the Trades Hall, Sydney.

It is a very powerful station and can be heard by listeners-in all over Australia and New Zealand. On occasions it has been heard in the Pacific Islands, and even in South America. The name of the station is 2KY Broadcasting Station, and it has been owned by the Labour Council for several years. At present there are two sessions daily, from 10 to 12 in the morning, and from 6 till 10 every night, Sundays excepted.

We use the station for working-class propaganda, especially during strikes, and campaigns such as the recent Anti-Imperialist War Campaign. The station is also used by Labour candidate prior to elections.

J. RYAN, Director,

Labour Research and Information Bureau,
New South Wales.

AMONG THE BOOKS

By "PLEBS" REVIEWERS

HISTORY UNDER THE MICROSCOPE.

ENGLAND in the Nineteenth Century, 1801-1805 (by A. P. Fremantle. Allen & Unwin, 16/-) is a very odd book. It does not fit into any of the classifications that a careful reviewer forms to save his time. It is a large book (555 pages) and it is in intention a history of only four years—not very interesting years at that. (Also, a second volume is threatened). Nor is it a very detailed history. One might expect a book filled with the minutiae of political intrigue—the King, the Prince of Wales, Fox, Pitt, Addington, sniggering stories in Greville's diaries and so forth—which would be amusing if a little trivial. There is none of this. Mr. Fremantle does not dip beneath the surface of politics. His judgments are always conventional and his narratives follow the accustomed route. Pitt dies sober and saying "My country! how I leave my country"; there is no hint that port had as much as Austerlitz to do with his sudden end. The reflections on the Pitt-Dundas reign of terror at the end of the century are of the kind which you would expect from a retired cavalry officer previously in the Indian Civil Service. One is surprised to find the paragraphs do not end with the words "What? What?" and a loud hawking in the throat.

The place that might have been filled with political anecdote Mr. Fremantle very wisely fills with economic description, which fills a large portion, much the most valuable, of the book. He is right, logically as well as historically. For to give a history of even four years properly, it is—theoretically, anyway—necessary to describe fully all the conditions in which the events happened—the state of politics, of the law, of the machinery of government, of industry, of agriculture and landholding, the types of religion, recent political and industrial events. At the end, the book is a little top-heavy; this enormous introduction leads up to events which are insufficient to bear the comparison. It is as though a Bach prelude were played as an introduction to a small boy playing *Where Did You Get That Hat?* on a comb. However, the prelude is quite good. Mr. Fremantle is not original, nor particularly a good writer, but he is industrious and has collected in a convenient place much matter that is otherwise scattered.—R. W. POSTGATE.

Rationalists usually attempt to explain religious mysticism on the basis of natural phenomena alone. This method is open to strong exception. A clear understanding of religion requires an understanding of Society as well as of Nature. As Marx pointed out, it is the mode of production and distribution of the necessities of life that, at bottom, explains religion, art, politics—the "superstructure of Society." In *How the Gods were made* (a Kerr Book, 1/1 post free), John Keracher sets out to explain the evolution of the idea of God. It traces the gods of the various peoples in their natural and historical setting and provides a very stimulating shillings-worth of reading. K. C.

Some time ago we reviewed at some length the first volume of *An Illustrated History of the Russian Re-*

volution. The second volume, substantially larger than the first, is now available (Martin Lawrence, 15/-). The first volume dealt with Russian Revolutionary struggles in 1905 up to the earlier part of 1917. The second volume gives the history of the seizure of power by the Soviets in October, 1917, describes the civil war that followed and takes the reader right up to the new economic policy.

As one reads through the book there comes vividly before one's mind the time when the Russian revolution was the one break in the coal-black clouds of a world waging capitalist war. The newspapers published each day new stories of the downfall of the Russian Revolution that caused the heart of every live socialist to sink into his boots.

By means of the *Illustrated History* we can follow the difficult paths along which the Revolution marched. The fundamental fact about the whole position was that "bullets cannot feed the hungry, nor Cossack whips dry the tears of mothers and wives; a sea of suffering cannot be drained by the hangman's rope, the people cannot be appeased by bayonets, nor can a tottering industry be maintained by the commands of generals." Only the Bolsheviks were able to recognise these elementary facts. The demand for peace, land and bread formed the great flood that washed away generals and politicians and the Czarist system itself. To see how the history of the Revolution was made, the reader cannot do better than to read these two volumes, along with that wonderful novel *Cement*,* which deals with the same period.

The Illustrated History concludes with a very useful chronicle of events from 1905 to 1921 and the pictures emphasise a very vivid story

C. M.

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PEACE AND DYNAMITE

LOOK at the list of persons who have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the best work for "the understanding between peoples and for the abolition or reduction of arms as well as for helping and spreading of peace congresses." There are—Bertha von Suttner, Alfred H. Fried and Quidde excepted—not one politician who has worked seriously for peace. There are gaping gaps where the names of Barbusse, of Karl Knauss, Rosa Luxemburg, MacDonald and Fritz Adler should stand. But Roosevelt, Wilson, Stressmann and Austen Chamberlain, they are there in letters of gold, for did they not use much dynamite and accomplish a little peace?

The real failure of the Nobel Institute becomes clearer when we know the will as written by Nobel, and when we see how little Nobel understood the realities of life. In a letter to Bertha von Suttner he wrote: "There is the cry that anything is better than war. One suggests that the frontiers remain as they are and that any aggressor should be faced with the opposition of the whole of United Europe. But that would not be disarmament and I am not sure whether this would be quite desirable. A new tyranny—that of the lower classes—moves in the darkness and one can hear its voice in the distance."

This is the pacifism of Nobel, who certainly was a clever discoverer and first-class technician but certainly a miserable social student and still more miserable politician.

Nobel believed faithfully in the goodwill for peace of the capitalist powers and he blamed the masses, for he wrote in a letter to Belgium: "It seems to me that the governments have great pains to appease and control the idiotic passions of the public, which are stirred up by the worst section of the press."

How much the Press and Capitalism, Governments and Capitalism, go hand in hand—Nobel was quite unaware. That the "idiotic passions of the public" are the work of the politicians and their capitalist leaders and the Press, he was, to judge from what one reads of him in this official publication, quite unaware. ("Nobel, Dynamite, Petroleum, and Pacifism." H. Schueck and R. Sohlman. From the Nobel Institute, German Edition).

And although one must, after reading the book, admire the qualities of Alfred Bernhard Nobel as a very clever technician and business man, a good and intelligent citizen according to his lights, one must admit that he was but a childish politician. He himself would have awarded his prizes more or less on the lines of the Institute which bears his name and acts as his executor.

He wished to do the best according to his light, but dynamite and capitalist interests are far more powerful than the goodwill of one man, far more powerful than a few million carefully hoarded gold pieces which can only influence when there is no danger of war. Nobel had, by the terms of his will, neglected far-sighted and earnest pacifists and socialists, or else something really good might have come of his intentions.

Nobel's work was this—for War he brought dynamite and for Peace he brought a few millions of money which are well administered, but which cannot be used for the really serious work of peace propoganda.

By L. CORINNA

CONGRATULATIONS

to J. S. Jukes of Rossendale, who has become a star literature pusher. His latest wheeze to get the proletariat to peruse *Plebs* lit. is to run a gramophone concert at which he has on sale *Plebs* books and the mag. Can we have a hundred Juke's this winter? A live literature agent is one of the most powerful of propagandists. We have a good bunch of them, but we want more. Will **you** help?

THE PASSING OF THE CENTRAL LABOUR COLLEGE

SO the old place has gone. But it is not an *old* place, and therefore I am denied the literary wail involved in the passing of an institution with traditions. How can institutions have traditions at 21 years of age? Moreover, how foolish to point to a place, a building, and say, "There is the first Labour College." One must fall back on an old idea, vague and metaphysical! Our college is a building "not made with hands." We must liken it, when we talk of it, to a gathering of those early-wandering scholars, who by their cross fertilisation of ideas set back the boundaries of the nations.

J. F. Horrabin is responsible for some suggestion about reminiscences of early days. What recollections! They flit rapidly across one's mental eye. How we left Ruskin College at the end of term, and stepped with a new-found health and vigour into the new Labour College. Prior to that there were the never-to-be-forgotten scenes—visits of sympathisers, including M.P.'s; great evenings of controversy on the strange new doctrines of I.W.C.E.; a flying visit from Mrs. Bridges Adams; interviews, shorthand reports and law-suits; College strike; resumption; and the final leave-taking when we went to the new Labour College at Bradmore Road, Oxford, and rejoined Sims, Craik, Skene-Mackay and Hird. So commenced in October, 1909, the first term of the Central Labour College.

Plain living and high thinking may be good; the plain living was obvious; the high thinking—we did our best. But need I weary you with those Spartan days? A notch in the stick was made when our crude cubist furniture arrived. Then there was Hird as Principal, with Craik as interpreter of History, Sims as clerical Pooh-Bah, Ablett a visitor from another planet, myself fully-fledged lecturer in Economics and Evolution, Hacking in the Correspondence School. In the privacy of an unfurnished room, Sims would tell us with bated breath that somebody had sent a cheque, and would Brown of Dukinfield, Comptroller of the Household (to wit, cook), just say what was

to be bought in. Then Jenkins (A.L.), now S.W.M.F. Commissioner for Prohibition, and I would cycle to Mr. Grub of High Street, Oxon., for loaves and then down George Street for the fishes. No complexity about our food stuffs. You could forecast with mathematical accuracy what would be on the table, and its exact position at any time, although it was often influenced by the law of quantity.

In those lotus-eating days we were the Mecca for all sorts of "comrades and friends," and when I look at the photo which appeared in the *Burning Question of Education*, little delightful memories come to me. For instance: a little talk with Tom Johnstone in the cool of a summer's evening; dear old Hacking, with his Hebrew and his Sanskrit, and his joyful anger when you "pinched" his queen at chess; Frederick Charles and those teas with the "intellectuals"; Dennis Hird and his never-failing helpfulness, and those nights of nights with "Ferdinand Lassalle" and Dennis in his most epigrammatic mood.

When we launched our classes, Craik, Sims, Ablett, and I, together with Kershaw of Rochdale, gave ourselves up to the making of a syllabus. Compared with that task, the creating of the Socialist Commonwealth is child's play. The syllabus was one on Economics and History and is before me as I write. By means of it we brought the good news to Lancashire and started classes with the help of the "Rochdale pioneers." Thus was the Genii released from the bottle, never to be got back again.

Some of our colleagues of the early days have gone. Others live on and have become M.P.'s, Trade Union officials, Lord Mayors, councillors, company promoters, lecturers and organisers, whose profound knowledge is appalling. But how many of us have retained that freebooting, may-morning, pioneering cocksureness of those purple days?

The College is dead. Long live the Colleges!

By MEREDITH F. TITTERINGTON

LETTERS

MORE ABOUT MATERIALISM

DEAR Comrade,—I must begin by apologising for the belatedness of my reply to your comments on my note—*Why Flatter Matter?* However, better late than never.

(1) I did not attempt to disprove any of the points in Comrade Millar's article, because it was not my intention to oppose materialism in any way, but only to maintain that idealism is no whit less compatible with socialism.

(2) When I say that Comrade Millar flatters matter, I mean that he considers materialism to be superior to idealism as a philosophical theory and as a medium for expounding socialism in philosophical terms. I cannot disprove this superiority in this necessarily short reply, but I may point out that Comrade Millar has not said anything to prove it. Moreover, Comrade Millar's theory really corresponds to what philosophers call "dualism." It is only by giving to the word "matter" an unusually wide meaning that his view can be called materialism at all. This is part of what I mean by saying that he flatters matter.

(3) I do not at all propose to keep dark the fact that materialism is compatible with socialism and that as a matter of history socialism has till now been in most cases allied with materialism. But I likewise object to keeping dark the fact that there is no logical necessity

in this association. My suggestion is that this view is likely to hinder rather than to promote the progress of socialism at the present stage of its evolution. As Comrade Millar himself says, there are many socialists who are idealists, and the number of such is likely to increase.

(4) Materialism and idealism are terms not only of metaphysics, but also of ethics. Most of the clergy do not understand the metaphysical issue at all. In metaphysics they are really materialists without knowing it. Also, they have only the vaguest notion about what "idealism" means in ethics. They call themselves "idealists" because they are confusing the two entirely different meanings. The same is true of the hosts of political economists and publicists who have defended capitalism, and of these latter a very large proportion have not claimed to be idealists even in the ethical sense.

(5) It is quite true that socialism has grown up on a basis of materialism. It is equally true that it has grown up on a basis of capitalism. The association with materialism is really the result of the association with capitalism, which has likewise grown up on a basis of materialism. In proportion as socialism overcomes capitalism it should free itself from the narrowness of exaggerated association with materialism.

Yours fraternally,
S. C. SOPOTE.

[Comrade Sopote says that it is only by giving the word "matter" an "unusually wide meaning" that my view of the materialist *versus* idealist question can be called materialism at all. Quite so. That is the big distinction between bourgeois materialism and socialist materialism which all along I've tried to emphasise. It is also the distinction that blows to fragments bourgeois idealism.

Comrade Sopote says that the number of socialists who are idealists (in the philosophical sense, of course) is likely to increase. He submits, however, no evidence. Even if he is correct, that simply means that there are considerable numbers of people who are political socialists, but who have never troubled to re-examine the orthodox philosophic point of view that has its roots in Feudalism and even back in the stage of savagery. That is no case against socialist materialism; it is an argument for some socialist education.

I can't accept Comrade Sopote's views of the clergy, political economists, etc. They, in the main, accept the religious view of the Universe, which elevates Spirit far above matter—they are idealists, even if traditional idealists.

I don't, for the life of me, see how socialism's association with capitalism is the cause of only a *temporary* association between socialism and materialism. Looking at the question historically, we find that, as man's knowledge of the material world grows, the extent of the spiritual world contracts. In that sense Comrade Sopote is right in suggesting that there is a connection between the technical developments of capitalism and materialism, but as man's control over nature will increase under socialism, the outlook for all forms of idealism seems particularly bleak.

I think that possibly the reason for the doubts raised by Comrade Sopote lies in the fact that I have not sufficiently clearly explained the great difference between socialist materialism and bourgeois materialism. Readers who are interested can follow the matter up by reading *Feuerbach: the Roots of the Socialist Philosophy* (2/9 post free) and the *Positive Outcome of Philosophy* (10/6 post free, from the N.C.L.C.)]

J. P. M. M.

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

15 SOUTH HILL PARK GARDENS
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IT was a great pleasure to meet the enthusiastic little band at Oxford who keep the N.C.L.C. flag flying in one of the greatest fortresses of educational reaction. I congratulate Organiser Thomas in having the assistance of such first-class workers as the Secretary, Comrade Hughes; the Development Secretary, Comrade Lloyd; and the Literature Secretary, Comrade Sopote.

AFFILIATIONS.—As the classes are now in full swing the assistance of the students should be secured in the job of obtaining new grants and affiliations and in obtaining new students.

UNIONS WITH N.C.L.C. SCHEMES.—College Secretaries should ascertain to what extent the members of their unions are attending the classes. Branch lectures should be arranged for every convenient opportunity. It not only "pays to advertise"; we've got to advertise.

NEW (NOT RENEWAL) LOCAL AFFILIATIONS.—Liverpool, 4; Edinburgh, 3; London, 3; Plymouth, 1; Bristol, 1.

WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING

DIVISION 1.

Westerham Hill School, with Comrade W. T. Colyer as lecturer, was a great success. Hearty thanks are due Comrade Bayly, the Secretary of the local Men's Co-op. Guild, and his wife. The Leyton Women's Co-operative Guild is taking a class. The S. Hammer-smith Women's Guild has already started a class, which has an attendance of about eighty. The Oxted Men's Co-op. Guild is running a very live class on Economics, nearly all the members taking part in discussion and writing essays. S. Walker is commencing a class for the Chiswick I.L.P. on Sociology. Two classes are also running in Chiswick for the Chiswick L.P. with J. Jones and Geo. Phippen as tutors. Chiswick A.E.U. is receiving a course on Banking from John Thomas. An excellent Speakers' Class is being held at Islington with the help of the local Labour Party and conducted by J. F. Lessels, late of Dublin. A meeting of London N.C.L.C.ers has discussed the National E.C. proposals for a Training Centre. The meeting felt that the proposals ignored the greatest difficulty—that of finding suitable students who would accept scholarships for a short period with the probability—and the certainty in many cases—that they would be unable to regain employment at the end of their training period. This difficulty, together with other minor considerations, led the meeting to declare in favour of local training centres.

DIVISION 2.

The Oxford N.C.L.C. had a good conference which was addressed by J. P. M. Millar. The local press gave considerable publicity both to the conference and the

controversy that followed. Good conferences were held at Guildford where three classes will be held on Local Government, Industrial History and Public Speaking. The Organiser addressed delegate meetings at Bournemouth and Bishopstoke. The class subjects at Bournemouth are Nationalisation at the Central Class, and Marxian Economics at Moordown (Tutor—Miss Whitehead). Sturminster Newton Shop Assistants are arranging for a visit from Miss Whitehead. The Weymouth Labour Party held a meeting to discuss an educational programme and passed a resolution to affiliate to the W.E.A. before Miss Whitehead arrived, but after her address, reversed it and decided to start an N.C.L.C. class on Local Government. The Totton N.C.L.C. have arranged for 12 lectures by the Organiser on Capitalism and Socialism, with G. B. Shaw's book as the text. The Organiser visited Croydon and addressed the class and the Trades Council. F. J. Adkins will conduct a course on Public Speaking. The Southampton A.U.B.T.W. have applied for a lantern lecture. The Woking N.C.L.C. has been re-started and at the first meeting 23 students enrolled; committee and officials elected and Rationalisation selected as the subject.

DIVISION 5.

Swindon College has made a good start with a class on Public Speaking and Local Government. Through pressure of business, Comrade Beavis has been obliged to resign the secretaryship. The class recorded its appreciation of his services and appointed Comrade Godsall as his successor. The Organiser addressed a joint meeting of the Glovers and the Trades Council in Yeovil, and a unanimous desire was expressed that the local college secretary keep the members acquainted with the class work. Thanks to the good work of Comrades Mrs. Medland and Kershaw, the class at Newton Abbot shows better signs of success this winter. Plymouth, too, is making good progress and the local secretary is to be complimented upon his work in securing the services of a local tutor in Comrade Llewellyn. A new class has been started in Bristol for the members of the N.U.D.A.W. This has been made possible through the service of Comrade Sperring, who volunteered to act as tutor.

DIVISION 6.

Circulars have been forwarded to all affiliated and non-affiliated organisations in the chief centres in the Division. Members of affiliated organisations in Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall, Worcester, Nuneaton, Wolverhampton and other towns in the Division are urged to get their Branches to appoint delegates to form N.C.L.C. Committees. The Organiser is arranging Classes on The Economics of Rationalisation. All Plebs supporters are requested to communicate re class work, branch lectures or organisational matters, with Organiser A. Ellis, c/o A.E.U. Office, Unity Chambers, 262 Corporation Street, Birmingham. If you live in the shires of Warwick, Worcester, Staffs, or South Shrops, drop Organiser Ellis a card.

DIVISION 7.

The Division started off the term with 36 classes fully arranged and with five other classes in course of arrangement. New classes have been started at Wombwell and Rawmarsh, whilst a further class for

LOOK YOURSELF IN THE FACE!



AND ASK YOURSELF
WHETHER YOU'VE GOT
US THAT
NEW READER.

the Conisboro district will commence in October. Rotherham class group has a conference in hand for Sunday, Nov. 10th. Wm. Paul will speak at 3 p.m. and at night a lantern lecture will be given by the Organiser Comrade Hatfield of York, who has taken classes under the old West Yorks I.W.C.E. Committee of 1917 and since, now finds that, due to pressure of other work, he will not be able to continue to tutor. The Divisional Council express its appreciation of his splendid services. Hull College had a fine conference with Miss Ellen Wilkinson as speaker. Arrangements have been made for a lantern lecture on Nov. 2nd in connection with the Annual Meeting of the Managers' and Overlookers' Society. The Leeds tutorial training class upon Historical Materialism is well attended. A tutors' council has been formed by the Divisional tutors. Amongst other objects it will tackle the job of finding the best ways of training new tutors.

DIVISION 8.

S.E. LANCs. AREA—Twenty-two twelve-lecture classes have commenced successfully; the attendances being good. It is hoped to arrange some shorter courses during the present session. The Students' Association has put in some good work; A. A. Purcell has agreed to give a lecture on The Machinery of the British Labour Movement in Relation to its Objective, and he has also written an article for the *Students' Bulletin* on Organised Education. The recent Conference was well reported in the *Northern Voice*, and has produced excellent results.

N. LANCs. AREA—Classes have been arranged at Padiham, Nelson and Blackburn with an average attendance of 30; the classes at Preston and Darwen

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are also well attended. In addition to these classes, taken by the Organiser, there are classes at Accrington, Burnley, Clitheroe, Great Harwood and Leyland, the attendances showing a good average. An ex-Correspondence Course student, E. Parker, is taking a Local Government Class at Great Harwood, and J. N. Banister is taking a course at Burnley on The Co-operative Movement, using the *Plebs* booklet on the subject as the text-book. The Great Harwood Weavers have made a grant of £5, and the Organiser has arranged to address the Blackburn Weavers and the Darwen Trades Council. Despite the handicap of a late start, interest generally in the N.C.L.C. is being well maintained.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT—The Classes generally are being well attended. The Editor of the Liverpool local *Wheatshaf* has inserted a good display advertisement of the N.C.L.C. activities which has resulted in several enquiries. In connection with the Biology classes, arrangements will be made for parties of students to visit the Liverpool Museum under expert guidance. A course of Sunday evening lectures on Topical Subjects is being arranged for the Walton Divisional Labour Party. The Secretary has been honoured by an invitation to give a Course of Lectures on Economics at Walton Prison.* On behalf of the College Committee, S. C. Hills took part in a joint debate with Liberal and Tory opponents on the subject of—Is there a Cure for Unemployment? He carried the meeting with him.

DIVISION 9.

The Durham College has suffered another loss through its efficient secretary, Comrade Lonsdale, being moved from the area. All who knew Lonsdale greatly regret his departure. No doubt Division 3 will be able to use him to advantage. The difficulty of finding a secretary has been overcome as Comrade Coxon is taking charge. The College delegates again breathe freely. The College is to make an attempt to obtain the free use of schools. The new E.C. of the North Eastern College intends to map out definite work to be done by the E.C. members in each of their areas. From that one can understand new affiliations to the North Eastern can be expected shortly. The Darlington College expects to improve on last year's working. The lantern lectures, to open up the class session, went well, and new students are expected as a result.

* Perhaps the authorities don't mean to let him out.—Ed.

DIVISION 10.

Classes have commenced in Glasgow and Western area, Edinburgh and Eastern area, Lanarkshire area and arrangements are in process in Fife area and Aberdeen. Port Glasgow Trades and Labour Council have affiliated unanimously. A successful Conference was held in Falkirk of Stirlingshire organisation—speaker H. Pilkington. The Grangemouth Trades and Labour Council and other organisations are affiliating in Stirlingshire where classes have been commenced. A conference was held in Kirkcaldy attended by 46 delegates from all parts of Fifeshire and addressed by A. Woodburn. Jas. Clark, 159 Overtoe Road, Kirkcaldy, was appointed Provisional Secretary and will welcome any assistance. D. J. Williams, James Birrell, and Councillor Wright have arranged to take classes, and the outlook in Fife seems distinctly hopeful. Other districts will be glad to learn that any difficulties over the action of the late Glasgow College are now practically liquidated. Under Councillor Ritchie and Comrade Sculler, Glasgow and West of Scotland are so successful in educational work that it is proving a strain on the financial resources. John Wilson's reports from Lanarkshire are good, affiliations and demands for college lectures are being received. Edinburgh and the East shows its usual good beginning. C. L. Gibbon's classes on The Case for Socialism are arousing considerable interest, while A. Woodburn started off with an Economics class of 68. "Jobane" has a class on Finance and prospects are generally good. The main difficulty in Scotland now is to overcome the economic one of footing the bill in scattered areas. As the movement has flourished over difficulties, the difficulty does not deter us.

DIVISION 11 (IRELAND).

The Classes are well attended and a considerable amount of literature is being sold. Mr. J. Freelan of the A.E.U. attended our first class held in Belfast and in a short address introduced the new Organiser. A public lecture was held in Belfast on the N.C.L.C. and Its Work. The opportunity was taken to restate the principles of I.W.C.E. The speakers which followed very keenly discussed those principles and many suggestions were made as to giving our work the widest publicity. A branch of the Students' Association which was formed last year, has been reborn again. It will render great assistance to the Organiser. Arrangements have been made in conjunction with the I.L.P. to hold a lantern lecture in the I.L.P. Hall once every month. The subject of the first was *War Against War*.

DIVISION 12.

Twelve classes started the winter session. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Harrison, Secretary of Gainsborough N.U.D.A.W., arrangements were completed for a lecture course in Social History. At the first meeting twenty text-books were ordered and five members were enrolled for Correspondence Courses. All capable of doing tutorial work in the Division should write the organiser. The shortage of tutors we hope to overcome via tutors' training classes. All I.W.C.E.s in the Division are urged to get their organisations to affiliate. Armed with *Working-Class Education*, 1s. *Education for Emancipation*, 2d. and *The True Mind*, 2d, a sound case can be stated. These are obtainable from N.C.L.C. Head Office. All interested in our work should write the Organiser—Mr. E. Reiffen, c/o 32 Baden Powell Road, Sneinton, Nottingham. Do it now!

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