

JAN 2 1930

ORGAN OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
LABOUR COLLEGES

THE PLEBS

Monthly, 4d.

DECEMBER, 1929



SNOBBERY IN EDUCATION

Principal Contents

- Snobbery in the
Labour Movement
- Broadcasting of Bias
- A Labour Party in U.S.A.?
- How to Speak in Public
- "Lesser Breeds" and
"Lower Orders"
- Marxism and Fundamentals
- Barking up the
Wrong Tree
- Plebs Bookshelf
- Etc.

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Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

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

VOL. XXI.

DECEMBER, 1929.

No. 12

[Published on the 1st of each month.]

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THE BROADCASTING OF BIAS

MARK STARR'S new book, *Lies and Hate in Education*,* has hurt the feelings of the *Listener*, the organ of the B.B.C. Mark is wicked enough to suggest that the B.B.C. contributes its quota to bias in education and the *Listener* is decidedly pained.

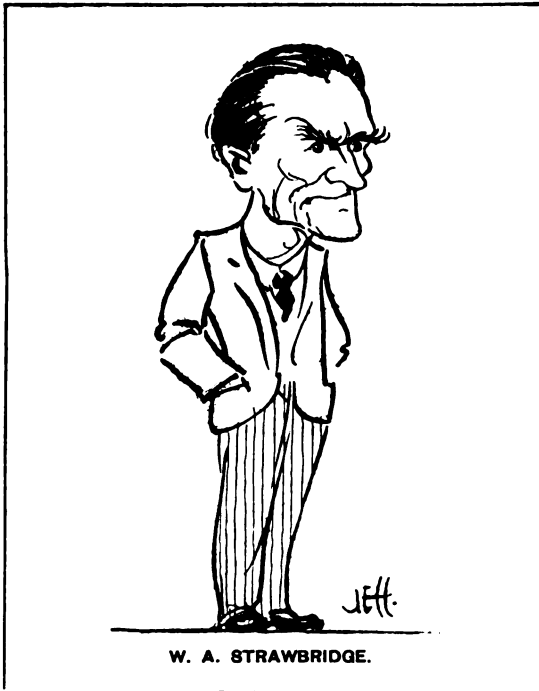
Surely the *Listener* is not attempting to persuade itself that the B.B.C. is unbiased! In the first place every educational institution that has ever existed has been biased in the direction of truth—as seen by those who controlled the institution. The B.B.C. cannot make itself an exception to the laws of history, any more than it can persuade a sausage to sing *God Save the King*.

The General Strike showed conclusively where the bias of the B.B.C. lay. More recently the B.B.C. decided to refuse representation to the N.C.L.C. on its adult education committee, while giving representation to so-called workers' educational bodies whose education is under the control of the universities and the Board of Education. May we suggest that that leaves one in no doubt that the B.B.C. in private is not quite unconscious of a bias in its education?

In the same article the *Listener* says that in *The Art of Straight Thinking*, Professor Clarke, in dealing with the problem of bias, "goes to work more scientifically" than Mark Starr. Apparently the result of the Professor's profound thinking is—we quote

The advertisement facing this page was refused by *The Times* and the *Observer*. The drawing was too "gruesome." The extreme delicacy that shied at publishing such a sketch but allowed the hounding of youths into the worst war in history passeth all understanding and—all decency.

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the *Listener*—"Prejudice is not some original sin inherent in human nature; nor can it be accounted for by phrases such as 'vested interests,' 'class bias' or 'convention.' Professor Clarke traces the root of the trouble to the fact that in our complicated modern society, 'no one person, however skilled he may be, can solve a problem all by himself, because the solution of social problems is found in the coming to agreement of groups of men who have been holding conflicting positions.'"

Presumably, therefore, the cave man, living in an uncomplicated system of society, was a model of impartiality. If that's all the great light of science can show us, we should be better with the farthing dip of superstition.

The human brain is a biased instrument, for its purpose is to preserve the human species at all costs. Moreover, man has a natural dislike of new ideas—he hates to be jugged out of the rut of habit, either mental or physical. Vested interests and class bias can be accounted as a cause of bias, otherwise the proportion of socialists among capitalists would be as large as the

proportion of socialists among wage-workers. This is, of course, very elementary sociology, but it is apparently two thousand years in advance of that available at Savoy Hill.

We invite the B.B.C. to remove the scales from its eyes and recognise that it is a part of the educational machinery of British Capitalism, and that it will only get rid of its capitalist bias to the extent that the Labour Movement is strong enough to get rid of capitalism.

* * *

At its last meeting the N.C.L.C. Executive elected W. A. Strawbridge (A.U.B.T.W.) to be president and A. Hodgetts (N.U.D.A.W.) to be vice-president. They are the two oldest inhabitants (excluding the general secretary) of the N.C.L.C. Executive village. As our sketches show, the president and vice-president are not in a position to create the same impression on a weighing machine (due perhaps to some difference in the "delegation allowance" paid by their respective unions) but both have rendered magnificent service to the I.W.C.E. movement and their election to office has been well deserved. Hearty congratulations to them *and* to their organisations.



SNOBBERY IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

What a German Socialist Thinks

LOOKED at from the point of view of the Continental socialist, the British Labour Party is a theoretical rag bag. It has no unified socialist philosophy: it is made up of anything from fiery atheists to enthusiastic "bible-punchers." The theories, even on social questions, held by its active members, are as numberless as the sands of the sea shore.

The Continental Labour Movement is predominantly Marxist. As a unifying force it has, therefore, had a great theory. It used to be the habit of the Continental socialists and some of the most enthusiastic socialists in this country to talk about the backwardness of the British Labour Movement.

There is no doubt there was a time when the British Movement was far behind that on the Continent. This was partly due to the fact that when Britain was the workshop of the world it was possible for her capitalists, for the sake of peace in industry, to give the British artisan a standard of life that was almost lower middle-class compared with that of the artisan in, say, Germany.

It is often a great mistake, however, to judge a movement solely by its theories. The first International Conference on Workers' Education held in Brussels in 1922 was a lesson in that respect. One would have expected the Continental Marxists to support education based on a recognition of the class struggle. When put to the test, however, most of the "Marxists" were found supporting, though shamefacedly, the W.E.A., so that the independent working-class education movement of Britain found itself trying to teach the elements of Marxist practice to Continental Marxists.

Man Proposes—Conditions Dispose

A mass movement's activities are determined not, in the main, by its theories, but by the pressure of economic conditions.

The consequence is that, while the British Labour Party is intellectually in many respects a thing of shreds and patches, it is in its practical activities often as nearly Marxist as are the Continental parties—sometimes perhaps more so. The consequence is that in our own movement we have men who, despite all their dearly-held, anti-general-strike theories, have declared and led a general strike, and men who, through councils of action, have challenged that Holy of Holies, the constitution, by threatening the duly-elected government of Great Britain with the direst consequence if it dared to make war on Russia.

This does *not* mean that correct theory is no aid or incorrect theory no handicap. Obviously, the same man or movement well equipped theoretically is going to act more effectively than would be the case otherwise: sound theory is a great fighting weapon. But even if a man's theories are wrong, the pressure of events may well cause him to throw them overboard and do the right thing. On the other hand, a too rigid theoretical equipment may be a big handicap, by preventing a man or movement from quickly adjusting itself to unexpected events. After all, valuable as theory is, it can never be absolutely complete. Theory, like other things, has its limits. There have been one or two very small socialist parties in this country, for instance, that squeezed themselves into a straight jacket of theory that has made it impossible for them to strike one real blow in the class struggle or (to use a polite British phrase) in the cause of Labour.

The advent of the Labour government makes it all the more essential for the active worker to scan very carefully the history of the Party and the direction in which it is going. I know of no finer book to encourage him to do that than Dr. Egon Wertheimer's *Portrait of the Labour Party* (Putnam's 5/-). It is the most stimulating

A PLEB?

MY neighbour, V.N.S., told me that every time his uncle, Fet-Shenshin, the famous poet, drove through Mokhovaia Street (in Petersburg) he would invariably let down the window of his carriage and spit at the University. He would expectorate and spit out noisily. His coachman got so used to it that, as he drove past the University, he would stop and wait for Fet to spit.

(Anton Tchekhov's Diary, 1896).

book I have come across for many days. Dr. Wertheimer is a German socialist who acts as London correspondent for the German Socialist Press, and by contrasting the British Labour Movement with the Continental movement he has given us a book that is indispensable to every student of the British Labour movement.

That does not mean that one has no crows to pick with the author. His surprise in learning that despite its lack of Marxist theory the Labour Party is often realist in practice, appears to have rather betrayed him into a *too* great admiration of the Labour Party and a tendency to scoff unduly at the orthodox Marxism of the Continental parties, even allowing for their weaknesses. Moreover, he is apparently unaware of the very big Marxist influence exercised in the British Labour Party by the movement for independent working-class education. In fact, he hardly appears to know that that movement exists and that its work is sufficiently important to cause some Unions to contribute more to the work of the National Council of Labour Colleges than they contribute even to the Labour Party itself.

The Clerical Collar

On the other hand, the book gives a striking picture of the Labour Party and the ways in which it stands out in deep contrast with the socialist parties of the Continent. Dr. Wertheimer begins by saying how his experience of the British Labour

Party clashed with his Continental experience. Of his first attendance at a Labour Party meeting he says:—

"Even the platform offered to the foreigner an astounding sight. Here sat—a thing undreamed of—a parson with his clerical collar among the speakers of the Socialist Party. Suddenly there was a movement in the crowd, and a young man, with the face of the ruling class in Great Britain, but the gait of a Douglas Fairbanks, thrust himself forward through the throng to the platform, followed by a lady in heavy costly furs. There stood Oswald Mosley, whose later ascent was to be one of the strangest phenomena of the working-class movement of the world, a new recruit to the Socialist movement at his first London meeting. He was introduced to the audience, and even at that time, I remember, the song, "For he's a jolly good fellow," greeted the young man from two thousand throats. Unthinkable that, in Germany, a man of barely twenty-eight years, a recruit, a typical aristocrat, a renegade, should have been so greeted by an assembly of workers, or should have let himself be so greeted."

What Dr. Wertheimer has to say about the Labour Party relative to governing class culture will be of special interest to I.W.C.Eers. The close affinity of the Labour Party with national cultural traditions has, he says, been favoured by the party's tardy birth, the lack of a class-conscious point of view and of any bitter conflict with the State. "Separated by no class barriers from the mental and spiritual concepts of Capitalism, the Labour Party has never," says Dr. Wertheimer, "been able to make a clean breakaway from capitalist culture." How true this is, *Plebs* readers will be the first to admit. The wide-spread religious non-conformity, which served in early days as a means of expressing working-class discontent with the governing-class, persists in many instances to-day and thus stands in the way of definitely socialist culture. In more recent times, as the influence of non-conformity has decreased, its work of maintaining the links between the workers and the culture of capitalism has been entrusted with great success to the Workers' Educational Association, with its cohorts of University tutors and its lavish State subsidies.

Dr. Wertheimer says that "It must not be forgotten that a great part of the lack of social revolutionary impulse in the British working-class during the last fifty years has only been made possible by the tact of the ruling class." In our opinion its support

of the W.E.A. is an outstanding example of that tact.

Snobbery and the Wage Worker

The consequence of all this is that Dr. Wertheimer is justified in saying that the Labour Party, in comparison with the Marxist socialism of the Continental parties, is on cultural questions "a neutral, not to say conservative, body." That, to my mind, goes far to explain why most Labour people and trade unionists are ashamed to demonstrate in a Labour procession, why they don't buy Labour papers, and why the British movement, so far as its young people are concerned, is completely out-organised by the Scouts and Girl Guides—to give two instances.

It also explains why, as Dr. Wertheimer argues, "In Great Britain, more than in any other country, there is a strong element of what might be termed proletarian snobbery."

A Portrait of the Labour Party says:—

"The number of workers, organised in trade unions and owing political allegiance to the Labour Party, who feel rather flattered by the presence of members of the ruling class in their midst, must run into hundreds of thousands. A certain amount of moral responsibility for this lies at the door of the yellow and illustrated press, circulating in millions among the working-class, which has aroused this condition of mind by its insistence on interest in its columns of society gossip and twaddle. For the foreigner the columns devoted to this form of social activity, even among papers with an exclusively working-class and petty bourgeois circulation, is a thing calculated to arouse astonishment. And especially as to him it must appear that they are not concerned with the doings of the real aristocracy, but with the vulgarities of the plutocracy. Into this category falls the extreme interest and excitement which the nuptials of high society seem to arouse among the masses. The spectacle presented by a queue, formed almost exclusively of working-class women, braving wind and rain to catch a glimpse of bride and bridegroom as they emerge from the portals of a West End church and enhancing the glamour of a rather ridiculous parade of vanity, is among the most peculiar that ever strikes the foreigner. It must ever remain for him impossible to reconcile the great measure of self-respect possessed by the British working-class, a self-respect which cannot fail to strike him, with this tenderly wistful interest in the vacuous doings of the upper ten thousand.

In the second half of the nineteenth century there were similar phenomena to be observed on the Continent. In Vienna, for instance, the proletariat took tremendous interest, not in the marriages, but in the funerals* of the great ones of the earth. The

*Personally I think there's more sense in that.

—J.M.

arrival of the Socialist parties, their powerful press and their ceaseless propaganda, at last knocked the shameful and ridiculousness of this attitude into the heads of the working-class and actually made their realisation of it the touchstone of their proletarian culture. Possibly the continued existence of this proletarian snobbery in England is due to the fact that there is no clear dividing line between the mental and spiritual outlook of the working-class and the bourgeoisie, a division rendered a matter of course to the workers on the Continent by Marxist teaching. On the Continent any worker showing interest in the social round would be certain to be found in a non-socialist party. In England loyalty to the Labour Party has nothing to do with these reactions and display, . . . of lack of class pride."

A Portrait of the Labour Party is full of passages that just ask to be quoted. The section on the "Future of the Labour Party" alone is of great value and might well form the backbone of an extremely interesting and pointed debate. Anyone concerned about the future of the Labour Party must not miss this book. Dr. Wertheimer's apparently Marxist training has enabled him to give us a volume that makes most books about the Labour Party look like the efforts of first-year Sunday School teachers.

J. M.

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A LABOUR PARTY IN U.S.A.?

British and American Scenes Compared

By MARK STARR

WILL Labour in the United States travel the British road? Has the "new capitalism" in the United States, by paying high wages, eliminated the sharp struggles seen elsewhere? Is the political situation such that the old Republican and Democratic Parties can be influenced enough to make an independent Labour Party unnecessary?

John P. Frey, the brainy but conservative head of the Metal Trades Department of the American Federation of Labour (A.F. of L.), maintained in a conversation with the writer that, not only were there great differences between conditions in U.S.A. and in Europe, but that those differences were becoming greater.

On the other hand, William Green, the President of the A.F. of L., at the A.F. of L. Convention, 1925, envisaged at least the possibility of change, for he said:—

"There may be a time when we in America can organise an independent political party, when our nation becomes an industrial nation, as Great Britain now is, when the centres of population have grown and the distances between our villages and cities are greatly reduced, when the line of demarcation between village and village and city and city is so indistinct that it is scarcely discernible. We shall have to change in America from an agricultural nation to a semi-industrial country before we can make a success along that line, and with the constitutional instrumentalities at our command the voters of America can make out of this government what they wish it to be."

Contrarily enough, although many of these changes have come to pass, Mr. Green more recently asserted in a lengthy article (*New York Times*, Aug. 4, 1929) that the British lead would not be followed because conditions in America were different. According to Mr. Green the differences were:—

- (a) The density and homogeneity of the British population and its freedom from language, racial and colour problems.
- (b) The United States is the land of oppor-

tunity in which workers do not regard themselves as a distinct class.

- (c) Disruption would be created in the American Unions by the attempt to form a third party. In any case previous attempts to form such a party had failed.
- (d) The non-partisan policy has succeeded—real wages are higher in U.S.A. than elsewhere (189 in Philadelphia as against 100 in London); there is an automobile for every five people; since 1913 eleven million baths have been installed and there are eleven and a half million house telephones.

Unfortunately for Mr. Green's arguments, it is the foreign language groups in many cases which have favoured political activity. His arguments about the well-being of the American worker can be and are used by the opponents of trades unionism, who thus explain why England has 35% of the gainfully employed in unions, while in U.S.A. the percentage is only 12. Certainly the Clayton Act, which was supposed to give protection to the unions, as did the reversal of the Taff Vale Judgment in Britain, has proved entirely inadequate to protect the unions from injunctions, the use of the military and mass arrests of the workers in strikes.

The underlying factor in the situation is that the A.F. of L. has no further objective than higher wages and shorter hours, which it thinks can be obtained endlessly inside the present system. It fails to see the strength of company unions, with their industrial form of organisation and with their provision as a gift of the social insurance which a Labour Party would win as a right. It fears, too, that the Socialist intellectuals would capture such a party. But these conclusions run ahead of the story of how the U.S. got that way.

Has this belief in the peculiar and separate nature of the United States any roots in past development? Such authoritative historians as the Beards in their latest book, *The Rise of American Civilisation*, explain it by the distribution of free land:—

"Before the titanic social war broke in upon the peace of the land in 1861,* printers, machinists, iron-moulders, stone cutters, hat finishers and other special groups were well organised in the industrial cities and more or less effectively federated on the national stage. If it had not been for the multitudes of foreign emigrants, the constant drift of mechanics to the cheap lands of the frontier, and the possession of the ballot by practically all native and naturalised working-men, the American labour movement of the mid-century would probably have matured in a national form as early as that of England. Even so, American trade unionists during the forties were more powerful in their influence on the course of domestic politics and legislation than were the disfranchised and uneducated labourers of the English mill towns.

Moreover, there was hardly a phase of the European labour agitation that was not duplicated in this country during the period" (p. 645).

Farms For All

Then comes the change and:

"Energies which in the normal course of affairs would have been devoted to building up trade unions and forming schemes of social revolution were

* American Civil War.

diverted to agitation in favour of a free farm for every working-man, whether he wanted it or not."

The Socialistic ideas of Brisbane, of the Marxian German immigrants, and of Horace Greeley, however, lingered on.

"Not until the national domain was flung by the Republican party to the hungry proletariat as a free gift, more significant than bread and circuses, did the socialistic idea sink into the background of the labour movement and the strictly realistic business of raising wages and reducing hours monopolise the thought of labour organisers. . . .

"Unquestionably the civil cataclysm of 1861 and the free land opened to labour by the Homestead Act of the following year checked for decades the strong radical drift" (p. 751).

A huge continent awaiting settlement by individual homesteaders—this is the main factor that explains to date the difference between the British and American Trade Union Movements. In addition, the personnel of the settlers has to be considered. While the immigrants were at first religious and social rebels and dissenters seeking liberties denied at home, the later tides of immigrants came from Southern Europe, where standards of life were very low and where peasants had no socialist ideals. Some of the latter came merely to make some money and return home. In the



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towns the great masses of cheap labourers supplied the needs of the New England mill-owners and were also the easy game of the political bosses of the Democratic and Republican parties. The Constitution's assertion that "all men are equal" expressed the equality felt by frontier pioneers and was applied in the easy enfranchisement of the immigrant. The American workers never graduated in the bitter school of Chartism, never attained a nation-wide class movement on the political field. Big Business soon learnt how to overcome and manipulate the franchise system, and the middle-class—unlike its counterparts in other countries—had no quarrels with any clerical, military or feudal castes.

American Individualism

The immigrants who went West faced in a very sparsely populated country all the loneliness and the hazards of pioneer life, perhaps most vividly described in Rolvaag's *Giants of the Earth*. The preponderance of food advertisements, the over-eating which is the most popular form of recreation in the States, the insistence upon having the biggest of everything, these are the reaction against the past uncertainties of food supply and comforts during the lone white's struggle with nature on the one hand and the Indians on the other.

To the outlook of the farming pioneer add the gambler's psychology to be seen in the gold rushes, the lucky strikes of oil, the chance acquirement of what becomes a corner lot in the town business section—and the roots of "rugged individualism" are laid bare. This gambling spirit still flourishes, for example, in the speculation boom that preceded the recent collapse in Wall Street. There are still enough prizes in the lottery to keep the ambitious worker full of hope. If he has not succeeded yet he may tomorrow get the promotion to land him into a highly-paid administrative position and enjoy the careers featured in the newspapers. No scientist has yet been able to forecast the duration of the "cultural lag" after its economic basis has changed, but the individualistic 'success psychology' has still a

strong enough appeal to be included in Mr. Hoover's presidential campaign speeches.

Unlike the American capitalists, the British capitalists have not the resources to finance company unions and welfare work on any wide scale as is done in the U.S.A. The I.W.W. strikes—themselves the result of imported revolutionary practices and ideals planted in the fertile soil of the bad conditions of the migratory foreign-born workers—alarmed the employers into taking preventive measures against trade unions of any sort.* For some time the superiority in natural resources, in technical equipment, in mass production, in labour management and in foreign investment will allow the American capitalists to give some sections of their workers a relatively high standard of life. All these are obstacles to any forward move.

The Changing Tide

Yet the conditions that have spelt strength to the American employers are being undermined. Aviation has made it possible to travel from East to West coast in 48 hours. The number of people engaged in agriculture falls steadily. Federal action and the spread of trusts in production and distribution tend to grow, despite the boundaries of forty-eight different States. For reasons of efficiency, the old spoils-to-the-victor system in appointing federal and state employees (the great backbone of the two orthodox parties) is being replaced by the merit system, under which three-fifths of the federal employees have already been appointed. It certainly will be difficult for Labour to run its tickets in all the States and to overcome the intricate constitutional system of checks over the powers of Congress—Senate, President and Supreme Court—but it can be done. Many of the leaders of labour are kept men literally in the pocket

* Incidentally the I.W.W. drained out of the A. F. of L. the militant and healthy younger elements which otherwise would have influenced that body. The foot-loose rebels put up some splendid fights, but left no permanent organisation. The Socialist Party for many years coquetted with dual unionism, despite its expulsion of Haywood (1913) and was also often sectarian and in opposition to the start of a Labour Party. That is now no longer true, but the Socialist Party has about an eighth of the members (109,000) it had in 1918.

of the older parties and they naturally will oppose any change from the non-partisan policy—men scrambling for immediate prizes have no eyes for the future goal for labour. But against these probable internal disruptions and splits, Labour politically organised would receive a great deal of support from progressives and intellectuals who are to-day not included in the trade unions. The growing similarity of the programmes and the financial supporters of the Democratic and Republican Parties and the confessed failure of the A.F. of L. to combat adverse judicial decisions will finally compel independent action. It is a mistaken view that, in the interim period of ten years suggested as necessary to build up a Labour Party, organised Labour would have no influence. Social reforms were greatly accelerated in Britain by the appearance of a very small Labour Party. At present as prominent E.C. members of the A.F. of L. often take opposite sides, and as the rank and file members do not follow official recommendations, the Labour vote is held in contempt and many State Federations confess their impotence. The existing negative non-partisan policy cannot rally and enthuse the workers! Further, if ever the masses of unskilled workers are organised they will need the aid of legislative enactment to improve their conditions more than the craftsmen enjoying often a temporary monopoly.

One of the special problems in the States would be the linking up of the farmers with the organised workers in any new political organisation. The last census in 1920 discovered that 26% of the gainfully employed worked in agriculture, but of the nearly eleven millions so engaged, over eight millions are employers and self-employed. Therefore the problem is one of organising wage-workers and small owners. Aside from North Dakota, Farmer-Labour Parties have been short-lived in the past and it remains to be seen whether a working alliance can be made.

Individualism in Deep Water

The more one investigates, the more hollow and specious sounds the plea of keeping the Government out of business. What it means in practice is that the ship-builders shut up the publicly-owned yards and then get a Government subsidy. The President, priding himself upon "rugged individualism," endorses a Federal Farm Board with power to spend five hundred million dollars to teach the farmers how to co-operate. Almost daily, mergers are recorded, ranging from movie news-reels and circuses to banks and power trusts up in the billion dollar class. Investment trusts and holding companies, chain stores and public utility companies lead this accelerated tendency to concentration. The craft unions participate in American expansion, as the British model unions did in the 1860-70 period, but large masses of workers are badly paid and suffer from a greater insecurity than is the case in Europe. Compared with what it should be, in face of natural endowment and industrial productivity, the standard of life is low. The problem of markets for manufactured goods is becoming serious and great markets abroad become more and more essential. Big changes are consequently looming ahead for the American workers.

At present organised Labour in U.S.A. is officially opposed to public ownership and to the creation of an independent political party. It is making no generally effective attempt to organise those who are not sharing in American prosperity. There are, however, left-wing groups now becoming active and endeavouring to influence the unions and the masses outside. These are the Conference for Progressive Labour Action (the C.P.L.A. is the ginger group inside the trade unions) and the League for Independent Political Action. The latter is linked with the previous attempts to run Farmer Labour Parties in the Middle West, and also makes a bid for general radical support. It stands for public ownership,

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steeply graduated taxation on the higher incomes, protection for the unions from injunctions, lower tariffs and wheat and cotton pools for the farmer. The C.P.L.A. is more closely linked with the industrial organisations and, by means of its organ, *Labor Age*,

criticises many of the actions of the A.F. of L. in supporting militarism and its inaction in the matter of organising the unskilled and giving a lead to the formation of a National Labour Party.

HOW TO SPEAK IN PUBLIC

(2) *Organising a Speech*

By J. P. M. MILLAR

LAST month we saw that, as a rule, even the most practised speakers carefully prepare their speeches beforehand. In listening to a good speaker we may be under the illusion that his orderly procession of sentiments, ideas and facts is not the result of careful preparation, but is sheer gift or inspiration. Gift there may be—especially if the speaker is a good one—but, above all, there has been hard reading, hard thought and hard writing.

We shall assume that our would-be speaker has accepted the hints contained in last month's *Plebs* and has written out a speech calculated to last not more than fifteen minutes. Even fifteen minutes is often too long for the beginner. If so, there is no objection in the world to a speech of five minutes.

Having got his speech ready, our speaker now wants to unload it. One way to do that is to take the chair at a small meeting. But not at any meeting, because the chairman's lot is frequently like the policeman's—"not a happy one." The charring of a meeting called to discuss contentious business is no task for the novice, because it is at that sort of meeting that the point-of-order fanatic is likely to get busy.

As chairman, the speaker has the opportunity of making a few introductory remarks—usually the fewer the better—which will get him accustomed to speaking on his feet and hearing his own voice in public.

If it is not possible to get the opportunity to act as chairman, or if the speaker wants to speak longer than the usual few minutes allowed, he might take the opportunity of describing to his branch meeting the work of the N.C.L.C., for example.

The apprentice speaker is, of course, anxious not to lose the thread of his speech in his natural excitement. At the same time he knows that he ought not to read his written-out speech, word for word. It's quite possible, if the speech is a short one and is well prepared, that the very fact that he is on his feet and *must* speak will call into play unexpected reserves of memory, so much so that he may deliver his speech right off without even looking at his notes.

The Speaker's Guides

The speaker cannot, however, by any means count on doing that. Consequently he ought to arrange his speech in such a way that an occasional glance is sufficient to keep him to what he intended saying. He'll find it a great help, therefore, if he writes or types in capital letters at the top of each paragraph the main idea with which the paragraph deals. If, moreover, there is any vital phrase in a paragraph which the speaker wishes to be sure to use, he can underline it in red or write it in red ink and in a larger hand than the rest of the paragraph. The speaker should also indicate his quotations, so that he is never in any doubt as to where they are. He can do that by, say, writing them in blue, underlining them in blue, or putting a blue "Q" opposite each of them. It doesn't matter which method he adopts, but it is important to follow the same method invariably, so that he does not get muddled up by his own signs. Just as railway signals always are red for danger and green for clear, so must the speaker's own signals be consistent if he wishes to avoid disaster.

The Value of Careful Planning

Once a speech is marked out in the way suggested, it is a thousand times easier for the speaker to ensure, by occasionally glancing at his notes, that his remarks are following the course laid down. In that way he can make sure that he neither loses the thread—an agonising experience—nor drags in irrelevancies, nor omits any telling illustrations or jokes. All this may sound very mechanised, but think of the last concert you were at or the last piece of music you heard on the wireless. The very sounds that stirred you then had all, prior to their reaching you, been carefully worked out, had been a hundred times more accurately planned by the composer than were the front-line trenches during the Great War.

It stands to reason that the speaker's notes should be in a form that will make them extremely easy to handle. If, for instance, he uses such thin paper that, after vainly trying to separate the pages, he has to resort to separating the sheets by blowing them apart, he can't be surprised if some unfeeling humourist calls out, "Tuppence worth of brandy-balls, please!" The paper used should be fairly thick and either quarto (10 by 8 inches) or octavo (8 by 5) size. Some speakers prefer to use cards. In any case, the speaker should see that the pages are in order before he starts. It's very disconcerting for a young speaker to turn over his first page of notes and find that his final page has somehow or other foisted itself into the place of the second. It's still more tragic if, through having failed to number the pages, the speech has to go through quite a process of hurried and flurried shuffling in full view of the audience before it can be persuaded to dress off by the left. Ability, if not genius, is, after all, very largely the art of taking pains.

In the case of a more practised speaker, who proposes to speak for an hour, his notes may occupy anything from a dozen to two dozen pages. Even if he is pretty confident that at the meeting he could manage with no more than the heads and sub-heads of the paragraphs, he'll find that to have the whole of the matter with him will give

him that confidence that goes far to spell success. If, of course, the speech is repeated frequently, the speaker will in time be able to carry on one card all the notes he requires.

Platform Fright

Obviously, the more the speaker can memorise his main points, the more confidence he will have and the more will he be able to get and maintain control of the attention of his audience. If he frequently hesitates and betrays too great a need for notes, he can't expect to get the best results. No objection will be taken to the apprentice speaker's sticking close to his notes; he is wisely ensuring that he will not lose the thread of his speech and that's the first essential, for he, especially, has to guard against stage fright coming between himself and his memory.

Just as there are eggs *and* eggs, or butter and "servants' butter"—the polite name for our old friend "marge"—so there are memories and memories. Every speaker, however, will find it a great help if, immediately before the meeting, he writes out on a separate slip of paper the main heads of his prepared speech. If the speech is a new one he won't use the short summary at the meeting, but will take the full speech or at least a fairly full summary. The mere fact of writing down the heads just before the meeting will help to photograph them on his memory. The speaker will also find it helpful if, on his way to the meeting, he can read over the full notes and quietly soak his mind in the contents of the speech. It's a mistake, though, to try to worry the brain into remembering the speech by utilising every second between home and hall in scanning and re-scanning the notes. A worried brain will not produce a good speech: worry and a clear head do not go together.

Next month we shall see the speaker on to the platform. Perhaps he is disappointed he is not there now. If so, he can console himself with the fact that it may take three or four hours to cook a dinner, although five minutes is sufficient in which to serve it.

“LESSER BREEDS” & “LOWER ORDERS”

Mark Starr's Handbook for I.W.C.Ers.

By J. F. HORRABIN, M.P.

FOR some time before he went to America, Mark Starr had been collecting material for a book which Plebs have long needed; a book which would make a careful examination of various textbooks (principally, of course, history books) used in elementary and secondary schools, and give actual examples of that class and “patriotic” bias which we I.W.C.Ers have always insisted such works displayed. Here at last is his book—*Lies and Hate in Education* (Hogarth Press, 197 pp., price 5/- net). Our propagandists will now be able to supplement their general charges of capitalist class “tendenciousness” with specific chapter-and-verse instances; and the case for a definitely working-class education will be immeasurably strengthened by proof after proof here set down of the way in which the present educational machine is used to instil into the young the kind of ideas which their present rulers think it fit and proper for them to absorb.

Mark Starr was the proper man to tackle this particular job. He is, as the whole movement knows, a single-minded and devoted advocate of Independent Working-Class Education, with a passion for collecting news-cuttings and for digging out from every conceivable quarter material likely to prove valuable in putting the case for his favourite subject. If, indeed, his book has a fault at all, it is a fault on the right side—it is almost overweighted with actual quotation and reference. Book after book is examined, and its general tone and attitude not merely summarised, but emphasised in deadly fashion by actual samples of its quality. The thanks of everyone who at any time has to put the case for our movement and

its aims are due to Mark for this piece of work.

Quite rightly, English books and schools come in for the largest share of his attention. He points out that the two kinds of bias with which he is dealing—“nationalistic” and “class”—are most usually found together: “the same historian who misrepresents ‘the lesser breeds’ is also unfair to ‘the lower order.’” Thus, the Mr. R. B. Mowatt who has nothing to say about the real causes of the Opium Wars except to say that the trouble began with the seizure by the Chinese of a British schooner, writes of “the combination of violence and deceit” in the Chartist Movement, and tells his youthful readers that “a strike is really a conspiracy in restraint of trade.” And the same J. A. R. Marricott, who excuses the British fleet’s bombardment of Copenhagen by describing it as a “disagreeable necessity” (who said “Germans and Belgium”?) can never speak of the “people” but only of the “mob,” when describing either the first French Revolution, or the Revolutions of 1830, ‘48 or ‘71.

It is, of course, in the examples of class bias that Plebs will be most keenly interested. And here the sins of omission are even more important than the actual mis-statements.

Often the children of workers go out into life from school without an inkling of social development, or of the important work done in the past by trade unions and co-operative societies. . . . *Hansard* (27/4/28) reports Mr. A. V. Alexander as saying that he had been unable to find in an elementary school class any boy who knew who Robert Owen was, or when the Co-operative Movement was begun, although in the matter of Henry VIII.’s wives they were well informed.

Mark quotes the story of a London boy who, when told by his teacher that the

A First-class Present for a Labour Friend

is an annual sub. to the *Plebs* ————— What about it?

League of Nations was going to stop all fighting, at once remarked, "But then there will be no more history, sir, will there?" There is not a word about Trade Unions in the Fletcher-Kipling school history of Britain. In Warner & Martin's *Groundwork of British History* there is no mention of Owen, Place or Cobbett. Practically all the school books ignore John Wilkes—though one which does give him a line makes the priceless comment—"He was not a good man, and perhaps some of his actions really deserved punishment." And of course if such a subject as the Enclosures is mentioned it is never suggested that there was any encroachment on the rights of the poor.

But it is not only the history books which contrive to "put the dope across." Geography and science manuals can be tendentious too. And Mark quotes in full a mathematics examination question set by the University of London, which took the annual financial statement of the N.U.R. as its subject matter, and very cleverly *implied* a criticism of trade union extravagance in the matter of administration.

Besides the chapter on textbooks there is another very useful one on "Dangerous Ceremonies and Atmospheres in British Schools," which it is to be hoped the Labour Minister of Education will study. As I wrote in *THE PLEBS* two or three months ago, it is no use, from the Labour point of view, to raise the school age, and leave the curriculum of schools, and the textbooks used therein, entirely under the control of conservative-minded people. Not the least valuable feature of this book is that it is not merely concerned with destructive criticism. As an appendix, it gives a "White List" of text and reference books already in existence which, though many of them fall far short of our ideals, are at least less objectionable than those analysed and criticised in the body of the book. Reasonably good material is, in fact, available. Surely a Labour Board of Education can, by recommendation at any rate, do something to ensure its more general use. Plebs could do good work locally by finding out what sort of textbooks are used in the schools in their vicinity, and comparing them with those mentioned in this White List.

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MARXISM AND FUNDAMENTALS

By T. ASHCROFT

HITHERTO English readers have known only one of the more important studies of Plekhanov—his *Socialism and Anarchism*.*

Fundamental Problems of Marxism, by G. Plekhanov (Martin Lawrence, 5/-) constitutes a significant contribution to our knowledge, not only of its author, but also of the basic principles of Marxism.

In this country especially, the work of Marx and Engels has been appreciated, hitherto, chiefly in its historical and economic aspects; in its philosophic aspect, it was often thought necessary to supplement, or to provide a basis for, it by the work of this or that thinker whose system—or lack of system—may be, actually, in fundamental contradiction to the Marxian theory. Plekhanov shews that sufficient materials exist in the work of Marx and Engels to furnish at least a solid foundation, philosophically; the real difficulty is that few are in a position to utilise these materials, which would necessitate a knowledge both of Hegel's philosophy, the key to Marx's *method*, and of the history of materialism, the indispensable key to the teachings of Marx's immediate predecessor, Feuerbach. Plekhanov pays high tribute to Feuerbach's work, as elucidating the relation between thought and being and setting forth a view which was adopted by Marx and made the foundation of his materialist conception of history. The essential modification and amplification made here by Marx lie in his recognition of the active principle contributed by the human mind:

"Feuerbach emphasises the view that our ego cognises an object solely by exposing itself to the action of that object; but Marx says that our ego cognises an object by reacting upon it" (p. 12).

In the latter's own words, in one of his theses on Feuerbach: "The (old) materialist doctrine fails to take into account the fact that circumstances are modified by men" and

*2/9 post free, from the N.C.L.C.

that the educator must himself be educated." Here was the problem which only the M.C.H.* could solve; and from this point Marx and Engels had to build for themselves, though even here Feuerbach provided some valuable if vague pointers as, for example, when he wrote: "Art, religion, philosophy and science are only manifestations of the human essence," and this human essence "can only be found in the community, in the unity of man with man."

These vague suggestions constituted the culmination of Feuerbach's contribution; and it was necessary for Marx first of all to define more clearly and accurately the meaning of this term, "the human essence," as the totality of social relations and to indicate the basis and moving force of social change in the economic structure and the development of the productive forces. This discovery constituted the key, not only to historical development, but also to the full solution of the problem which materialism had been vainly trying to solve for centuries. Plekhanov notes the precise significance of this discovery as follows:—

"When I speak of a full solution, I do not mean the arithmetic of social evolution, but its algebra; I do not mean an explanation of the causes of the various phenomena, but an explanation of the way in which we must set to work in order to discover these causes. This means that the value of the M.C.H. is primarily methodological." (p. 24).

If "the anatomy of civil society" is determined by the economic structure, this raises the problem of the causes of the evolution of the production forces of society.

The Stage of History

Here the first factor is to be found in the nature of the geographical environment; and though others had already, in passing, drawn attention to this important factor, it was Marx who anticipated the modern

*Materialist Conception of History.

teaching of economic geography, indicating both its positive and its negative factors, the value and the limitations of this study as an explanation of the course of history. While the geographical environment forms the stage upon which man must enact the drama of his own history, the significance of particular geographical factors or conditions is dependent upon the stage attained in the evolution of the productive forces, which are at the same time the foundation and the driving force of the general social evolution. On the other hand, the social regime, once having come into existence, reacts upon the evolving forces of production; between the two there proceeds a play of action and reaction which assumes at various epochs the most divergent forms. The evolving forces of production are, however, the primary fact. Thus, "the conditions of a hunter's life have determined not only the general outlook on the world, but also the moral ideas, the sentiments and even the artistic tastes" of such a society. "We see exactly the same thing in pastoral peoples." And these are but particular examples of the general law. Plekhanov devotes two or three sections of his essay to demonstrating the essentially social and especially social-economic roots of the ideological activities and manifestations of primitive peoples. In certain fields this law of historical materialism, as applied to primitive society, has already been exhaustively demonstrated, and Plekhanov quotes illuminating examples of this from the field of primitive art—dancing, decorative art, poetry and dramatic representations. Many writers, however, have approached these and other historical problems with an inadequate grasp of the Marxian theory, or have regarded it as an easy formula, relieving them from serious preliminary work in the scientific field, from sustained intellectual labour.

The Growth of Hypocrisy

According to Laplace's famous dictum, after Newton's great discovery, fifty years passed before it was supplemented by other important discoveries. But the obstacles in the way of Marxism are enormously greater than those which confronted New-

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ton's theory. Apart from any question of the inertia of the human mind, it was inevitable that, with the growing acuteness of the class struggle, hypocrisy should eat more and more deeply into the vitals of bourgeois thought; while, in reaction against the increasingly incisive criticism of bourgeois ideology, the language employed by the dominant class becomes ever more high-flown and virtuous, more abstract and idealistic—forever declaring, in words, the preference of the bourgeoisie for abstract sweetness over sugar and attempting in very practical fashion to thrust the same upon the workers; thus a revival of idealism proceeds side by side with the decadence of bourgeois society and its increasingly obvious incapacity to serve the general need.

Man and his History

Where social investigators, again, are driven to the employment of the Marxian method for specific purposes, they deny all the more vehemently its general validity. On the other hand, we have the significant fact that "the consistent opponents of the M.C.H. feel it incumbent upon them to prove that sociology cannot exist as a science," which simply means that "their 'criticism' becomes an obstacle to the scientific progress of our era." As the old philosophy had its roots in the failure to solve the problem of the relation between thought and being, so the criticism of Marxism fails to achieve a dialectical resolution of the seeming contradiction between freedom and necessity, as in the oft-repeated fallacy that if social evolution takes place solely as the outcome of casual necessity, any conscious endeavour to collaborate in this evolution is an obvious absurdity; or asserts that Marx himself has not been able to escape from a teleological outlook. This argument is akin to the former and will, no more than the former, bear critical examination. Certainly, Marx recognises that men seek to satisfy certain needs of the human organism and that—to use a familiar phrase of Marx himself—"in order to produce, men enter into specific mutual relations." But it by no means follows that these relations are the outcome of action undertaken in order to attain a

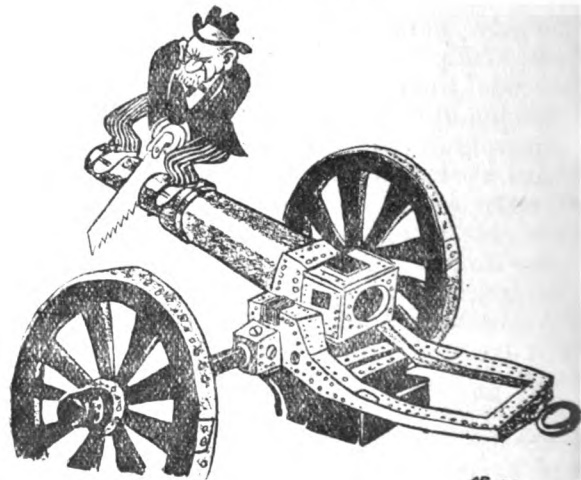
foreseen end—in this connection one has only to ask oneself the vital question as to why, in order to satisfy the same need, the "specific mutual relations" into which men enter, change so radically from time to time. Once more, "men make their own history." But the character of the contribution which they can make is determined by social forces and the degree of the ripeness of these forces for new social achievement, which thus is sometimes limited to more or less gradual reforms, but can sometimes assume the form of revolutionary change.

Plekhanov concludes his fine and important essay with a reference to the "robust optimism" of Marx's declaration that "mankind never sets itself any tasks which it is not able to perform." But from the special standpoint of this essay, the declaration is but a new way of expressing "the idea of the unity of subject and object in its application to the process of historical evolution."

It is hoped that sufficient has been said to indicate the character and scope of this brilliant essay,* which, considering the comparative paucity of our literature on the subject, possesses, perhaps, a special value to us in this country.

*5/6 post free, from the N.C.L.C.

DISARMAMENT



From the *New Masses*.

BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE

A Reply to H. Norman Smith and Arthur Woodburn

By W. HARNWELL (Political Secretary, London Co-operative Society)

In the August PLEBS, H. Norman Smith had an article in which he said that "the teeth of the proletariat have been drawn with the pincers of rationalisation." He suggested that Labour's ills could be cured by Government control of credit and creation of purchasing power. Mr. Woodburn replied in the following issue in an article entitled the "Currency Will-o'-the-Wisp," and the controversy has gone on merrily since. Back numbers of PLEBS may be had for 5d post free.

I HAVE followed the articles by the above two doughty protagonists with such great interest that now I feel inclined to say, "O Rationalisation, thy right to power is justified by our incapacity to comprehend the possibilities of thy development!"

Both Mr. Smith and Mr. Woodburn make the common mistake of considering Rationalisation solely as a productive process. Mr. Smith goes so far as to say, "only incidentally is it concerned with distribution." This is a common fallacy indicating the productive complex. Rationalisation is just as much concerned with distribution as with production, and has advanced so far in that sphere as to be able to control the retail prices of several thousands of articles in common use at the moment, and its scope is continually extending.

This is a factor of vital importance, for it should be obvious that while the control of prices remains with the rationalised process, any increase of purchasing power, whether by legislation or by "monkeying" with the currency, must be rendered ineffective, even when the margin of profit is reduced to a minimum, which the increase of share capital can always ensure.

The utmost that legislation can do is to inquire into the distributive process at every stage, advise co-ordination and perhaps limit the percentage of profit at different stages. The effect of this, however, is easily nullified

by the known methods of the capitalist when he wishes to hide his profits. If bulk purchase is undertaken by the State, the distribution must be made through the channels of Private Enterprise, the Co-operative Movement, or the Municipalities. If the distributing agencies of Private Enterprise are used as they may have to be, owing to the Municipal enterprise or Co-operation not being sufficiently developed to undertake this function, the social benefits of State purchase immediately disappear.

That the power of the finance capitalist is a force to be reckoned with, every student of modern economics will agree. While Mr. Smith is inclined to exaggerate the power of the financier, Mr. Woodburn certainly underrates it. Mr. Woodburn says, "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, etc." How will the Labour Movement prevent it? To assume that the Banks control the direction of credit is a fallacy accepted by most people at its face value. The Banks do not control the direction of credit; this is controlled by the people who require the credit. No Bank, not even a State Bank, could or would, refuse credit to any association or person who has good security to offer, especially if this credit were to be used in the development of home industry.

"Labour would give preference to all schemes which are in line with its programme," says Mr. Woodburn, but how is this to be done? That is what I for one would like to know?

What Mr. Woodburn says about the gold standard and tinkering with the currency is quite correct. To toy with currency manipulation is to follow the trail of a red herring. Like most theorists, both Mr. Woodburn and Mr. Smith begin at the top instead of at the bottom.

Both agree that it is not the creation of credit which is wrong, but that the credit when created is not put to social uses.

The reason for this is simple and should be obvious; it is because the purchasers buy from Private Enterprise. The consumer requires clothes, credit is created to produce and supply clothes; credit is created to produce and supply food, houses, agricultural implements, manures, and all the multitudinous requirements of a complex social order.

When working people learn to procure their requirements through socially-owned and controlled channels, the flow of credit will automatically follow. That they can and will learn by education and practical experience is proved by the phenomenal growth of the Co-operative Movement during recent years. Too many socialists are trying to kill Capitalism with their mouths by vocal declamation, at the same time renewing it at its source by purchasing private traders' goods. The only way to combat effectively the principle of private ownership is to purchase and consume goods made in collectively-owned, controlled and administered factories, and distributed through machinery operated on the same principles.

The question I would ask Mr. Woodburn is, "Can capitalist rationalisation, by the process of modification, ever become a social service while the product is controlled at the source of production and at the point of distribution?" To Mr. Smith I would say, "Why monkey with the currency, the effect of which cannot be foreseen or accurately estimated, when the Co-operative Movement is at hand as an alternative both to Rationalisation and the control and direction of credit?"

A profound examination of Co-operation will prove that it is the only Socialist alternative to Rationalisation, and that the Trade Unionist is barking up the wrong tree when he tries to come to an arrangement with the rationalised industries to share in the exploitation of the consumer.

THE BOOKSHELF

By J. F. HERRIN, M.P.

I HAD the pleasure of meeting the late Sir Harry Johnston more than once at the time when he was enthusiastically contributing highly-contentious footnotes to H. G. Wells' *Outline of History*. As a mid-African explorer and Empire-builder he was, to say the least, a bit of a surprise. A little dapper gentleman, with a squeaky voice—it was hard to picture him facing cannibal chiefs, tropical beasts, and all the hardships of life and travel in virgin territories. His brother, in the *Life* of him which has just been published,* says indeed quite explicitly that it was in part because of this lack of physical "presence" that he never reached the rank due to him in the British Government service.

It is not a particularly well-written book, this *Life*. But it contains a good deal of material of interest to students of modern imperialism. Johnston was one of the men on the spot in the great scramble for Africa of the 1880's. His first trip to the Dark (but Desirable) Continent he made as a kind of amateur, "painting his way" (he was an artist of great skill) from one European trading-station to another. He met the great Stanley, who at that time "was already racing the French champion, De Brazza, for political possession of the Congo." Johnston returned to England just at the time when Sir John Kirk, the British representative at Zanzibar, was reporting that French and German "scientific" expeditions were becoming alarmingly active in East Africa. He urged that a British "scientist-explorer," "with political power and responsibilities," should be sent to Mt. Kilimanjaro. So Harry Johnston was chosen to head a Natural History and Botanical Expedition, financed by the Royal Society, the British Association and the Royal Geographical Society; and he was given permission by the Foreign Office to "make treaties with chiefs in certain strategic positions." (Entirely disinterested pursuit of knowledge on the part of learned societies named!). The late Lord Salisbury's general advice to his "men on the spot," quoted by our author, was "Use your own discretion; don't ask for more money, and don't let the matter get into Parliament." Johnston accordingly collected butterflies, observed the manners of elephants, and bought land and made treaties which were "the foundation of our East African protectorate."

His next job was in West Africa—as Government Vice-Consul of the Oil Rivers and the Cameroons. Here he was "up against" the Germans, and particularly a certain "hard-drinking nephew of Prince Bismarck," on account of whose truculent behaviour Lord Rosebery extorted an apology from the German Government. He did some risky exploring, penetrating into cannibal country; on one occasion being captured by a specially ferocious tribe who put him and his men into a pen and proceeded to kindle large fires. Johnston, however, kept cool, argued with the chief, and succeeded in convincing him that it "would

* *Life and Letters of Sir Harry Johnston*. By Alex. Johnston. (Cape, 12/6).

OUT OF PRINT describes the position of *War Against War*. A new edition will be available in about a month

be better to 'make a book' with him than a meal off him." A treaty form was then produced, and the chief men's crosses duly "insured that Victoria was by the grace of God not only Queen of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of India, but also Suzerain of Ededama, the name of this cannibal country, which not even her Acting Consul had heard of before." On another occasion he had to eat human flesh as a ceremonial sealing of a treaty bargain.

Queer folk these West African natives—inheritors of the bestial cruelty which the slave trade had first brought to their shores. There was one "king" who made a fortune by acting as middleman between the produce of the interior (chiefly palm oil) and the traders of the coast, and whose sons had all been educated at boarding-schools in England. This man, to seal a treaty with a confederate, had a slave "split in half from the crown of his head in precisely the same manner as a sheep is chopped by a butcher"; and a woman who had attempted to sell oil to white traders direct, tied up to a tree in a market place, a few feet from a stream, and left to die of thirst. "Cannibalism," wrote Johnston himself, "is still occasionally practised by men who telegraph their orders to Manchester firms."

From West Africa Johnston went as Consul-General to Portuguese East, and after that he was put in charge of the British Central African Protectorate—"a region about as big as Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy put together." It was here that he got "across" Cecil Rhodes. Johnson was an Imperialist, but he was a man of honour; and there were certain things he declined to do, even to oblige the "Colossus of South Africa." (Johnston was the Government Administrator of Northern Rhodesia, his officials were men paid by the British South Africa Company). When Chamberlain, the friend of Rhodes, became Colonial Secretary, Johnston's advancement in the Government service was blocked. He had been used to lay foundations, but he did not get on with the men of the newer Imperialist type, the concession-hunters and concession-granters pure and simple, and they did not get on with him.

He came back to England, tried—unsuccessfully—to enter Parliament, and settled down to write books. Some of these were intended for juvenile reading, "but as they lacked bigotry or national bragadocio their value as school prizes did not stand as high as their historical accuracy." He wrote a history of the New World Negro, in which he insisted, contrary to the cherished British delusion, that in the humane treatment of subject races Spain stood first, Portugal second, France third, and Britain a bad fourth, "being only excelled in wicked cruelty and brutality by the Dutch."

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AMONG THE BOOKS

By "PLEBS" REVIEWERS

NO intelligent workers' bookshelf is complete without a copy of Beers' *History of British Socialism* (G. Bell & Sons, two volumes, 7/6 each). The new edition has two advantages over the first—it is cheaper and it has an additional chapter which covers the years 1917-28. In these hard times 15/- is a good deal of money, but there is no better way of spending that sum. In return one gets in 950 pages the fascinating story of the development of the Socialist Movement. To the tutor the book is especially valuable, for it must contain the backbone of at least a score of lectures.

If you want to know the place of direct action in the Socialist movement, if you want to know what part the I.L.P. or the Socialist Labour Party has played in British Socialism, you'll find it in Beer. To misquote a well-known advertisement—It's great stuff this Beer!

One little point of criticism. The Labour College, the Plebs League and the Scottish Labour College are mentioned, but there is no mention of the development of the N.C.L.C. and the rising tide of Trade Union education it represents. Perhaps the omission is due to the mass of material, including the events of the General Strike, which had to be bottled up in the last chapter. We do, however, think that to have trade unions contributing in some cases as much to independent working-class education (in our case, at least, much more) than they contribute to the Labour Party itself marks an event of some significance in socialist history.

R. D.

* * *

Many books have been written about the oil industry, but few about the personalities who have played an outstanding part in the oil game. Difficult as it is to keep track of the many ramifications of the industry, still more difficult is it to obtain reliable biographical material about the "kings" who have ruled in oil. John D. Rockefeller, for instance, has been a shadowy myth for years, but now John K. Winkler in *John D., a Portrait in Oils* (Vanguard Press, 10/-) lifts the veil and gives a picture of the world's mightiest resident. Many will think it a "water colour" study, for on the whole it is very kind to John D. Mr. Winkler has painted him with an exquisite delicacy in places where another hand would have justifiably daubed him heavily, but if it be true that John D. was and is money-mad, then the book is exceedingly clever, for no one can read its pages without experiencing a nausea about the subject. There are some good stories in the volume. The oil king's pet yarn concerns a nervous woman passenger on a train who, as a climax to a hundred foolish questions, asked the conductor: "Conductor, why do you wave your hand when you want the train to start?" "Oh," replied the tormented man in uniform, "when I wave my hand that means get the hell out of here." Someone who overheard the conductor's tart answer warned him that the nervous woman was the wife of a director. "Phew!" exclaimed the conductor, "guess I better apologise." He paused at the woman's seat, took off his hat and began a fulsome apology. "She didn't say anything," narrates John D. "She just waved her hand!"—B.

FOUR pamphlets have been published by the T.U.C. dealing with varied and important aspects of Trade Unionism. They contain the matter of speeches which were delivered at the T.U.C. Summer School this year by W. M. Citrine, general secretary of T.U.C.; Arthur Pugh, general secretary of Iron and Steel Trades Confederation; and A. W. Petch, financial secretary of the N.U.D.A.W.

In *Trade Unionism in Modern Industry* (2d), Mr. Citrine deals with the evolution and character of present-day industry. From the unregulated and chaotic condition of the last century, the modern tendency is towards order and regulation. This growth of industry from individual or "one-man business" into the great combinations of to-day has had a marked effect upon the growth and policies of the Trade Union Movement. Having survived the brutal efforts to crush it, Trade Unionism has succeeded in enforcing a recognition of its place in the structure of society. This place is recognised by all kinds of governments, and T.U. representatives are now chosen to serve on all sorts of Commissions dealing with subjects ranging from Currency Reform to Prohibition. There is an ever-increasing necessity for the trade union to be given a rightful place in the direction and control of industry. With the growth of this many-sided recognition, the trade union leader is obliged to realise more and more a greater sense of his responsibility. Knowing his followers are to be counted in thousands now where at one time they could be numbered in tens, he has to give more weighty consideration to the words of advice offered. In times past, the trade union leader could be a demagogue; now he must be a statesman. This broader conception of Trade Unionism, the author thinks, has been manifested in the willingness of the T.U.C. to enter into the Melchett-Turner conferences. One is inclined to think that a justification of these conferences is the chief aim of the pamphlet. It is of considerable value, enabling the reader to understand the official point of view of the Trade Union Movement.

In the *Future of Trade Unionism* (2d) we are made aware of the difficulties which beset the path of the trade union reformer. Most of these are the outcome of the way in which the trade union movement of this country has grown up. There has been no planning, and now the problem is how to reduce a chaos of about 1100 unions into an ordered movement. Most experienced trade unionists will readily agree with the author in saying it is much easier to dogmatise about what should be the structure of the future organisation when one is unaware of the inherent difficulties, than when one is confronted with the practical problem of creating it. The pamphlet should be a good corrective for those who can legislate perfectly for the ideal abstract trade unionist, but who have nothing to offer when dealing with the imperfect concrete man of the movement. In a brief comment on education, the author lays more stress upon the need for educated trade union officials than for education among the masses.

The pamphlet of A. Pugh on *Wage Fixing* (4d) contains a great deal of valuable information concerning the various methods adopted in the Trade Union movement for fixing wage payments. The main criticism is that it doesn't show how to get more wages!

Trade Union Administration (6d), by A. W. Petch, should be of good service to all those who desire to learn something of the administrative side of the movement. The average man will be a better secretary or auditor for his branch by reading this pamphlet. Efficiency does count. W. C.

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LETTERS

STILL AT IT

EDITOR of the *Plebs*.

Sir,—Mr. Arthur Woodburn seems to be unaware that—

(1) So long as central banks adhere to conventional reserve ratios, it is idle to draw distinctions between the functions of gold as a measure of value and as a means of exchange. Nearly all central banks now hold much greater stocks of gold in proportion to the foreign trade of their countries than before the war.

(2) The gold standard has *not* provided any "automatic guarantee" of stability, as Mr. Woodburn would discover if he had taken the trouble before airing his views to look at any table or chart of general prices for any ten years of the nineteenth century.

(3) Instead of the possibility of human fallibility, with which Mr. Woodburn (in company with the orthodox) is so concerned, the gold standard provides the *certainty* of an impersonal fallibility, which is nevertheless held up for our admiration as being beyond criticism.

It would be interesting to hear of the occasions when gold has "worked better than an index." For many years Brazil had an inconvertible paper currency, which served much better than did gold during the prolonged depression after 1873, but a commodity price index has yet to be used as the indicator for central bank policy.

(4) The country has a favourable total trade balance as the result of payments due on past transactions. Adverse exchanges, caused by the sudden efflux of money from London, could hardly be corrected by a corresponding export of merchandise. It is a question of the foreign countries not wishing to buy to that extent, rather than (as Mr. Woodburn ingeniously suggests) of this country being unable to supply them.

(5) It is very rarely that the banks in this country "gamble on the ability of persons to make profit." They usually require their customers to provide ample security.

(6) A creation of credit "beyond possible productivity" is almost impossible in a modern industrial nation in time of peace. A small dose of inflation would only harm those among the poor who can do no work at all. The others would be employed at higher wages and would benefit to a much greater extent than they would lose by the slight rise in retail prices.

Mr. Miles is equally stupid on this point. The "exploitation" of "the worker," over which the Marxians exercise themselves so much, is relatively unimportant compared with the losses suffered by all debtors and irregularly employed workers during periods of falling prices. But the only creditor who does not gain substantially is the wage-earner, who advances labour weekly to his employer without even getting interest for this abstinence!

GEOFFREY BIDDULPH.

[Mr. Biddulph seems not to have grasped the all-important distinction between gold as a measure of value and as a means of exchange. Stocks of gold are held for reasons of security and international settlements and have nothing to do with either of the functions mentioned. Gold could measure value if there were not one ounce in the bank.

Mr. Biddulph's second point is a mere assertion, due to making a general rule out of a particular instance. He might as well say that health is not the natural state of man, because he has ups and downs.

Mr. Biddulph asks for an instance where gold was an improvement on the index figure. The decrease in the cost of living was given between December, 1924, and June, 1925, by

The Board of Trade	as 7.2%
Statist	as 11.2%
Times	as 13.2%

and an Inquiry into the Coal Mining Industry in connection with the 1925 dispute had a memorandum accompanying its report, where Sir Josiah Stamp took the *Times* figure and made it 14%, thus providing an invaluable argument against the miners' case, showing how much better off they were than he would have been able to do with the Board of Trade figure.

Mr. Biddulph's fourth point, I cannot follow. If America does not want our goods, we cannot supply them. I did not say we could not produce them.

The sixth point is extremely interesting, for all the trade unionists will be glad to hear that they would obtain an increase in wages corresponding to the inflation rise in the cost of living. It has never happened in the past, and the Engineers' wages are very far down to-day, and neither they nor their employers see any prospect of getting them raised. We cannot allow any "monkeying with the currency" without firmer assurances than Mr. Biddulph's.

I cannot see that Mr. Biddulph has provided any justification for departing from the sound basis of "measure for measure" and a fair deal in trading relationships—A.W.]

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

15 SOUTH HILL PARK GARDENS
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CONGRATULATIONS to Comrades Knight (S.E. Lincs.), E Richards (Newport), Coldrick (Div. 5), Redfern (Div. 12) as first-class literature pushers in November.

QUESTIONS:—

What progress has your area made this session as compared with the Oct.-Dec. session of last year?

Have you sent out your circulars giving all Labour organisations particulars of the coming Jan.-Mar. classes?

Have you sent a special circular to the Branches of Unions with N.C.L.C. schemes?

Are you always on the look-out for additional tutors, and do you carefully survey the classes with a view to encouraging promising students to train as tutors?

Are your class students convinced that reading good text-books is quite as important as attending the lectures?

Is the circulation of the *Plebs* increasing in your district?

NEW (NOT RENEWAL) LOCAL AFFILIATIONS.
—Warth Main, 2; Liverpool, 2; London, 2; Plymouth, 1.

DIVISION 2.

The Bournemouth N.C.L.C. and I.L.P. are co-operating to organise a social and dance evening early in the New Year, to attract new students and increase the funds. The Oxford N.C.L.C. are running weekly lectures and they have had fine lectures from some N.C.L.C. students resident at Ruskin. Classes for Women in the afternoons are to be arranged at Bournemouth and Totton. The subject chosen is Capitalism and Socialism and is based upon Shaw's book. The Salisbury Women's section is inviting Miss Whitehead to give an address, and here again one may hope for an afternoon class. The Woking N.C.L.C. has restarted with 23 students. The Portsmouth N.C.L.C. has arranged 12 lectures by the organiser and is out to arrange a big delegate conference early in the New Year. The Guildford N.C.L.C. is running a class on Industrial History (in addition to Local Government and Public Speaking) at which students take turns as tutors. Eastleigh has arranged for a course of lectures on Marxian Economics; Bishopstoke on Capitalism and Socialism. The names of three N.C.L.Cers were among the successful Labour candidates at the Borough elections. Charles Sankey won the first socialist victory at Winchester. He was the N.C.L.C. secretary three years ago. Comrades Godfrey and Wilkinson were successful at Guildford. Both have rendered yeoman service to the N.C.L.C.

DIVISION 3.

Through the closing of the Labour College, Jack Jones has broken (temporarily, it is hoped) his six years' connection with the Brentwood Class. Fortunately, Secretary Bright has secured the services as

lecturer of Miss Thompson, the local Headmistress, and an I.W.C.E. enthusiast. After a slow start, the Trades Council Class at Chelmsford is improving. At Ipswich, Comrades Chinery and Barker are busy marshalling their forces for a successful demonstration. It will be addressed by A. J. Cook and others. Mrs Colyer writes enthusiastically about F. J. Adkins' class on Public Speaking at Welwyn Garden City. The new class at Slough is also doing well, where Trevor David and Secretary Sergent are maintaining interest by the organisation of two lantern lectures on "All Quiet on the Western Front." Peterborough and Bedford are breaking attendance records. Soermus, the Russian violinist, has been booked for Peterborough. Any college, class or organisation in the Division desiring Soermus's services can get full information if they write the Organiser immediately.

DIVISION 4.

Pontypridd L.C. is making headway under the secretaryship of Llew Jenkins. Classes are established at Pontypridd, Hopkinstown, and Llanharran, while others are being organised at Llantrissant and Cilfynydd. Merthyr, Newport, and Cardiff Labour Colleges co-operated in a series of Day Schools, with the assistance of E. F. Wise, M.P., and R. C. Wallhead, M.P. Swansea L.C. is coming into its own. With the assistance of Gwilym John, a good class is running at the Dyfatty Schools, and the Organiser has a successful class in the Dockers' Hall. West Wales College is suffering from lack of tutorial assistance. N. Nicholas is unfortunately unable to assist, and the classes at Clydach, Ystalyfera, Crosshands, and Ammanford are struggling to keep the flag flying. Unless we can get tutors, the hard work of past years will not bear fruit. What is the National E.C. going to do about it? The Divisional Portable Lantern is in great demand, especially the lecture, "All Quiet on the Western Front." Already bookings are made by Rhondda L.C., Cardiff, Newport, Pontypridd, Western Valley L.C. There are still a few dates open, and an extensive list of lectures to select from. Abertillery L.C., Newport and Cardiff are building up important class libraries by a system of weekly contributions. Newport already records over 100 important works, and thanks are due to the efforts of Comrades Richards and Williams, and the splendid support of all class students. The Anthracite Miners' district has tabled a resolution asking the E.C. of the S.W.M.F. to arrange an N.C.L.C. educational scheme. We hope that this proposal will be supported throughout South Wales.

DIVISION 5.

The Chippenham Labour Party has arranged to run a class in conjunction with the local college. The Organiser is acting as tutor. The Plymouth class is showing good activity, and Comrade Thomas, the college secretary, is making great efforts to increase the local finances. A very good meeting of the A.E.U. in Devonport was held during the month, which proved to be of great interest and caused a lot of discussion. Next month a number of meetings with trade unions and Labour parties has been arranged. The classes in Bristol are doing well, and we are hoping soon to have from these a supply of speakers for branch lectures. The A.S.W. branches have arranged for a considerable number of lectures for this winter. Congratulations are offered to Comrade Baston, secretary of A.U.B.T.W. upon his success in securing a seat on the City Council. The Organiser would be glad if those readers of *Plebs* in towns where no classes are held would get into touch with him with a view of starting a movement locally.

DIVISION 7.

A South Yorkshire Conference is now being arranged for January 18th at 3 p.m., in the Miners' Welfare Cadeby, near Rotherham, with A. J. Cook as speaker. On the Sunday, A. J. will speak for the Hebden Bridge College in the Co-operative Hall at 6.30 p.m. The two Halifax classes are going well, with A. Waight upon Economics on the Wednesday nights and the Organiser upon Social Theory in the Dyers' Club, Thursday nights. A lantern lecture will be held at the Mexboro A.E.U. with A. C. Lygo as speaker. After a visit by the Organiser, the Cadeby Main Y.M.W. agreed to affiliate to the Division and arrange a class with the Organiser as tutor. We are pleased to learn that A. Smith, the late Halifax secretary, has been discharged from the sanatorium. Joe Sykes the late Brighouse secretary, who was sent to a Swiss Sanatorium two years ago, is now back again and feeling A1. The Division has secured the new lantern film upon the Industrial Revolution; particulars upon application. The new class at Wombwell, with Comrade Madin as tutor, is going well. Literature sales are down for the Division. Will colleagues please note this, and do their utmost to sell our books.

DIVISION 8.

LIVERPOOL AREA—In the Liverpool area new classes are to be commenced at Croxteth and Allerton. The Kirkdale Young Labour League Class has an average attendance of over 60.

NORTH LANCS. AREA—In N. Lancs. arrangements have been made for Councillor P. L. Taylor to address the Blackpool Labour Party on the "Work of the N.C.L.C." The Organiser has interviewed the committee of the Blackburn Weavers, and is to address the annual meeting of the Darwen Trades and Labour Council.

SOUTH EAST LANCS. AREA—Sleford Labour Party has decided to support our work. Carlton and Netherfield Trades Council has formed an Educational Committee and arranged for a class to begin on December 1st, with Coun. Booth of Hucknall as tutor. Nottingham Co-operative Society is again paying the class fees of their members attending our classes. Our students and supporters in other districts might use their Co-operative Societies to copy and to give grants in aid of our work.

DIVISION 9.

Under the auspices of the Darlington Class, Miss Jennie Lee, M.P., addressed a public meeting at the Theatre Royal, Darlington. Thanks to Secretary Smith and the students, somewhere about 800 people attended despite the hurried arrangements. The meeting had a good press report. Miss Lee put the position of the N.C.L.C. very clearly. One of her many telling remarks was "We have many people in the working-class movement who are willing to die for Socialism—but for heaven's sake don't ask them to study for Socialism." At a mass meeting held at Lanchester, under the Barnard Castle Divisional Labour Party, it was arranged that Coxon speak at this meeting for the express purpose of creating an interest in the class which was starting. Lanchester has a class under the N.C.L.C. for the first time. A whist drive and dance, held at Whicham on November the 1st; Pat Carr was in charge. It is expected that the North-Eastern will financially benefit. The Coundon-Leeholme Class held a dance on Nov. 8th. This was a financial success.

DIVISION 12.

Please note Organiser's new address—E. Redfern, 36 Lord Nelson Street, Sneinton, Nottingham.

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P's and Q's

According to the *Evening Standard* the *Westminster Bank Review* recently pointed out that in 1925 of America's exports 16 per cent. were made up by articles of food and drink, 44 per cent. by raw or only partly manufactured materials, and 33 per cent. by fully manufactured articles. In 1927 the percentage of raw or only partly manufactured materials had fallen to 40½, while that of fully manufactured articles had risen to 37½. In the same period the percentages of United Kingdom exports, which are 6 per cent., 14½ per cent., and 72 per cent. respectively for the three groups, remained practically unchanged.

A close examination of the geographical distribution of American and British exports shows that since the war America has gained much ground and the United Kingdom has lost ground in practically every important buying market. A revival of British export trade is all the more urgent from the fact that, whereas foreign commerce is still regarded as of the nature of a by-product of America's economic activities, it is vital to Great Britain's existence.

It is estimated that between 25 per cent. and 30 per cent. of the whole product of British industry, mining and agriculture, is exported. This is lower than before the war. If the pre-war proportion of exports could be attained, employment would be found for an additional 700,000 to 800,000 wage-earners. In America, on the other hand, exports represent only 9.6 per cent. of the exportable production of the country.

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