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THE PLEBS MAGAZINE

"I can promise to be candid but not impartial."

Vol. IX.

July 1917

No. 6

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The Old War and the New?

(Translated for the *Plebs* by Eden & Cedar Paul).

In a recent issue of *Critica Sociale* (Italian Socialist fortnightly) appears a discussion between Augusto Osimo and Filippo Turati as to whether the Russian revolution and the intervention of America in the war necessitate are vision of the Socialist attitude towards the conflict. It is needless to reproduce Osimo's contribution, for this is sufficiently summarised in Turati's rejoinder. The Italian Socialist Deputy, it will be seen, considers that the two new factors, and above all the Russian revolution, do necessitate a rectification of aim. So confident is he, that he entitles his article "Towards New Dawns. . . ." The war, he considers, now enters upon a new phase. It is a new war, altogether different from the war which has hitherto been waged between two contending imperialist groups. Since the aims of the

Italian government in the war have been perhaps more avowedly imperialist than those of any other member of the Allied group, and since Turati himself writes throughout with one eye upon the censorship, it is difficult for him to expose the full force of his arguments, and the reader must supply a number of suppressed considerations. We reproduce the article as an interesting opening for a possible discussion, and with that end in view have replaced Turati's confident title by one that is questioning and non-committal.

AUGUSTO OSIMO puts the matter perfectly. The victory of the Russian revolution, the revolutionary program, and American intervention in the war to secure a lasting peace are three distinct facts which, taken in conjunction, serve to impress a new character upon the war. The conflict is entering a new phase. We must adopt a fresh outlook. Important new tasks devolve upon the Socialist parties and upon the proletariat which that party represents.

But I think and I assert something more. I insist upon a great deal more. These three facts are in the material sense the outcome of the war; in this sense, they are caused by the war: but essentially, in the realm of the spirit, they are the negation of the war. Only persons of a meanly superficial and formalist spirit, only rancorous sophists, can imagine that they put us in an embarrassing position when they point out that we applauded and made our own the President's message demanding prompt and just peace, peace without victories (did not the message in truth incarnate the principles of the international proletariat?)—and that shortly afterwards this same Wilson left us in the lurch, and induced the United States Congress to declare war.

The facts are the very reverse of this. The two messages are perfectly consistent. The proposal for a just peace, peace without victories, was rejected alike by the Central Empires and by the Allied powers. America's intervention in the war, intervention on the side of the Allies to defend herself against submarines, but intervention against England, that is to say against the Allies, through the proclamation (to mention but one point) of the absolute freedom of the seas—America's intervention is an attempt to impose this same peace with the sword.

Herein we see an incoherence in point of form, but the only possible consistency as far as concerns the spirit. There is no occasion to ascribe to the American President secret, fraudulent, and traitorous designs, nor is there any occasion to make of him an angelic missionary on behalf of the pure ideal. Doubtless, in acting as he has done, his main object has been the defence of American interests, bourgeois and capitalist interests. We are absolutely convinced that this is so. But, as a matter of fact, the capitalist and bourgeois interests which he defends coincide perfectly with a greater interest, that of civilisation. There is nothing new about such a conjunction, and there is no occasion either for surprise or alarm.

Similarly, the Russian revolution was born out of the war, but in what sense? Not from imperialist war, not from victorious war, not from the war foreseen and desired whether by the Central Empires or by the Allies. Had the Allies gained the victory, had the Russia of the Czar conquered, the revolution would not have broken out or would not have triumphed, and the same statement would have applied in the event of the Central Empires proving victorious. The revolution was in the material sense born of the war, but spiritually it was born of the discomfiture of Russian arms, of the interminable wastage of the nations in the war, of the failure of war; it was born, in fact, of that which negates and condemns war.

Further, the program of the Russian revolution expressly denies and renounces the spirit and the aims of the war. The first utterance of the Provisional Government is a word not of war but of peace. It does not, indeed, demand that "separate peace" about which those rave who are never weary of denouncing the masked conspiracies of Socialist traitors. It does not suggest a peace of desertion or of treason. But it demands a just peace, peace without annexations, peace that will respect the rights of the nations, the peace of Wilson—which is the peace of Zimmerwald, our peace, the peace of those who renounce war. In proof of this it suffices to point out that all the members of the Provisional Government and all the most authorised interpreters of the movement, reject the guarantees for the possession of Constantinople which were given by the Allies to the Russia of the Czars. The new Russia disdains and refuses this conquest.

Who can fail to see that the upshot of these changes is that the situation has been completely transformed, and that this war is a different one from that which has hitherto been waged? In view of the complications of the situation who can fail to see that it is the repudiation of war, that it is anti-war? Who can fail to see that just as a rectification of aim was imposed upon Wilson, so a rectification of aim is imposed upon the Socialist parties, in homage to the very principle of consistency?

Osimo does not recognise this clearly enough, and because he does not recognise it clearly enough, he declares that we do not recognise it at all. He clings to an indulgent attitude towards the other war, the war of yesterday, war for war's sake, whilst, with a remarkable manifestation of colour-blindness, he accuses us of having been made prisoner by our own formulas of negation.

But we were the first to say what he has now been writing about the new phase of the war. We stressed it, as he himself records, in the Chamber of Deputies, not as personal opinions for which we could claim personal merit, but as the opinions of the parliamentary group, of the Socialist party. Elsewhere the party endeavoured to give even fuller expression to the same ideas. But since this recognition of the new phase of the war neither promoted nor

could promote an indulgent attitude towards the preceding phase, the censorship would give us no opportunity for further expression of these views.

On April 12th, the parliamentary group, in conjunction with the Socialist Executive and the Confederation of Labour, issued from Milan an appeal to the Socialists of all lands wherein the truth affirmed by Osimo was declared with the utmost plainness. The government, appealed to by the censorship (which had at least the grace to feel some doubts !), prohibited the publication. Witness the blank columns in *Avanti*. The appeal insists upon the need for a review of the situation owing to recent important events, and proceeds as follows (I excise a few phrases in the hope of escaping the blue pencil of authority) :

With the Petrograd revolution, initiated and controlled by proletarian forces, there necessarily disappear all imperialistic desires felt by the Muscovite power. The war remains henceforward purely defensive. More important still, it has become a war on behalf of the newly acquired liberties, against a German occupation which might possibly lead to an attempt at restoring the old regime. Moreover, liberty is heralded and secured, not alone for the races and classes of Russia, but also for the people of the Balkans, the focus of the European conflagration; heralded and secured therewith is the internationalisation of the Bosphorus. No longer does there exist any just ground for the claim put forward by the Central Empires that they are fighting for economic existence. There is an end, too, to the pledges by which the armies and the resources of the Allies have been constrained to support the lapsed ambitions of Czarist imperialism.

On the other hand, while war weariness and the folly of the war have notably restricted the desires for dominion and for conquest which formerly inspired all the nations engaged in the struggle, and while the Kaiser, losing faith in the vaunted alliance with the German God, turns to woo the favour of his own people by concessions which are at least symptomatic whatever we may think of their substantiality or their sincerity, the intervention of America tends to guarantee for all the freedom of the seas and the freedom of exchange which constitute the permanent and joint interest of the nations. . . .

In place of two opposing imperialistic groups, we discern henceforward an alliance of States dominated by the Russo-American spirit, the spirit of innovation and democracy against an effete and futile autocracy, which needs merely a vigorous shock from within, if only this were ventured, to destroy it utterly. . . .

From these considerations we may deduce the duty of the proletariat of all nations, the duty and the right of the new international. . . .

FILIPPO TURATI

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The C.L.C., The W.E.A., and The Plebs League

THE W.E.A. has at length broken silence, and "retaliates"—officially—on the Plebs League in a pamphlet, *What is Real Democratic Education?*, (W.E.A., 14, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London, W.C.1., 1½d. post paid). The pamphlet contains Ebby Edwards' speech at the Newcastle Conference of the W.E.A. on February 24th last, together with Mr. Mactavish's reply, and a 'foreword' by him.

It is a disappointing production. One prefers, when fighting, to be up against a foeman worthy of one's steel; and this pamphlet—if it be indeed the best case the W.E.A. can put forward—is hardly worth answering. Edwards' criticisms are not replied to—not even referred to. Instead, Mr. Mactavish makes a number of wild—almost hysterical—charges against the "educational methods" of the Plebs League. These methods are described as "of the middle ages"; to which we are tempted to reply that a mediaeval labourer would most probably have regarded Mr. Mactavish's plaints and platitudes—his whole mental outlook, indeed—as quaintly out-of-date.

However, we are not concerned with Mr. Mactavish's critique here, but with a circular letter, signed by the North-Eastern District Secretary of the W.E.A., sent out with copies of the pamphlet to T.U. branches and Labour organizations. This letter explains that—

Our reason for issuing the pamphlet is that as Mr. Edward's criticism is being circulated by the Plebs League,* as a leaflet, we feel that it is necessary that Trade Unionists who are interested in the future of adult education—a question of extreme importance to the whole Labour Movement—should have an opportunity of considering both sides.

Then follows a brief paragraph which marks a new line in W.E.A. tactics, and which we commend to the very careful notice of all C.L.C.'ers:—

It will be noticed that Mr. Mactavish's criticism *does not apply to the Central Labour College, but to the educational principles and policy which the Plebs League is endeavouring to induce the Central Labour College to adopt when it is reopened*, and which we feel the majority of Railwaymen and Miners would not approve if consulted.

(Please read this delicate little bit of innuendo twice before proceeding). What the reason is for this attempt to suggest that the C.L.C. and the Plebs League are two distinct bodies, with

*A small inaccuracy—but let it pass.

differing educational aims and methods, we do not know; nor do we know the motives which inspired it, nor the hopes entertained of it. But of one thing we are very certain—that the Railwaymen and the South Wales Miners who have repeatedly at their annual meetings endorsed the educational policy of the Central Labour College will very decidedly resent the suggestion, by an outside body, that they do not know their own minds. They will, we do not doubt, be duly grateful for this gratuitous interpretation of their real feelings, as well as for the anxious solicitude displayed on their behalf.

Moreover—let the W.E.A. “feel” what it may on the subject—it would be well-advised to abstain from deliberate falsehood when attempting to convert others to the same way of feeling. Every word of Mr. Mactavish’s criticism—such as it is—applies to the Central Labour College precisely as much as to the Plebs League; for the simple reason that the “educational principles and policy” of both are identical. The Plebs League exists to advocate the principles and policy of the C.L.C.—the principles and policy which have been the C.L.C.’s since its foundation eight years ago. The statement that the Plebs League is endeavouring “to induce” the C.L.C. to adopt, “when it is re-opened,” principles and a policy in any way differing from those which have always characterised it, is a fantastic perversion of facts, which could only have been made either as a result of ignorance or of wilful intent to deceive. The men who founded the C.L.C. (after previously founding the Plebs League) advocated these same “principles and policy”; that was exactly *why* they founded it, and why they strove—successfully—to win the support of their fellow-workers. The C.L.C. stands for these principles and that policy; so therefore, does the Plebs League. The implied assurance of Mr. Mactavish’s good-will to the College, as distinct from the Plebs, would—if it were not so comic—be an insult to all C.L.C.’ers. It would be a sorry day for the College if it ever earned the blessing of the Secretary of such an organization as the W.E.A.

We trust that any T.U. branch receiving a copy of this letter will demand from the sender some explanation of this very mystifying paragraph.

THE GUILDSMAN July 1917

TOWARDS DEMOCRACY IN INDUSTRY

(A Memorandum on Workshop Control).

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Mr. Mactavish on "Real Democratic Education."—A Rejoinder.

MR. MACTAVISH, Gen. Sec. of the W.E.A., has (as promised in his letter to the May *Plebs*) issued a pamphlet containing his reply to the "continuous attacks" of the Plebs League. One would have expected such a pamphlet to deal with these attacks, and to answer the criticisms we have made; to tell us just *how* the W.E.A. teaches Social Science from a non-partisan and impartial standpoint—yet in the interests of the working-class. Instead of facing this issue—the only real issue—Mr. Mactavish contents himself with reprinting his speech at the Newcastle Conference (slightly 'trimmed,' we think)—that reply being a singularly futile attempt to misrepresent and ridicule the Plebs League.

He adds a brief Foreword, in which he explains that the purpose of the pamphlet is "to help my fellow-workmen to realise the importance of *freedom*, more especially in adult education." "Freedom," indeed, is the keynote of his sermon. We have previously charged the W.E.A. with regarding education as an end in itself, rather than as a means to an end. We must withdraw that charge. We have got a W.E.A. spokesman to admit that education *is* a means to a certain end; that end being "freedom." (And "freedom," you will note, is so important that we *must* have it, here and now, in our education—whether or not it is calculated to lead towards freedom, of other kinds, later).

It is generally thought (says Mr. Mactavish) that the Labour Movement is no more than a struggle for economic betterment. But important as improved conditions are to the future of the working-class, such an interpretation of the movement is none the less totally inadequate. . . *Rightly understood the Labour Movement is spiritual, for it is a struggle for freedom. . . True freedom can only come from the possession and use of one's full powers.* This means that the Labour problem is fundamentally educational, for *it is only by the development of human faculties and power that social freedom can be won and permanently maintained.* Society is the home of the human spirit. . . *

So we have (1) the aim of the Labour movement defined—"a struggle for freedom;" (2) Freedom defined—"the possession and use of one's full powers;" (3) the method to be followed by the Labour movement indicated—"the development of human faculties and power;" therefore it is "fundamentally educational." And (4) we get Education defined, in Mr. Mactavish's reply, as being "primarily concerned with the development of *personal* power, and the fostering of *human* growth." . . Is it necessary—so far as intelligent, class-conscious workers are concerned—to reply to such vapourings?

*Italics ours.

All this talk about "development of one's full powers," "fostering of human growth," &c., &c., would be alright if we were living in a free society, with social and economic barriers and injustices swept away. But until they are swept away, the "fostering of human growth," &c., is impossible. We, too, are aiming at these things. We realise, also, that *the Labour Movement alone can achieve them*; and, further, that if the individual members of that movement make "the development of personal powers" their main aim in life, they can only do so, in a society constituted like ours, at the expense of others, and at the expense of postponing "freedom for all" indefinitely—if not making it unattainable. Before men can be free, we must have a free society. "The slave," as Mr. Mactavish himself declares, "is still a slave whether he is well-clothed, well-fed, and well-housed. . . ." And the wage-slave is still a wage-slave, though he be well-clothed, well-fed, well-housed—and 'well-educated'; unless this latter acquirement enables him to get out of his class, leaving his fellow wage-slaves behind—still wage-slaves. If he "develops his personal powers" and remains a wage-slave, he will be acutely conscious of the injustice of his social position; unless, indeed, the *kind* of development he has attained has been cunningly contrived by his owners and masters to blind him to plain facts, and to make him blissfully ignorant of his real position.

"Freedom," indeed, according to the W.E.A. view, is a matter of education, pure and simple. Freedom is "the possession and use of one's full powers"; Education is "the development of personal powers." So that the "Labour problem is *fundamentally* educational." We, too, insist on the vital importance of education. But we don't go quite so far as this! Does Mr. Mactavish suggest that the Labour problem is nothing more than an attitude of mind? Does he imply that all our social and economic differences are simply due to educational differences? Does he imagine that the workers merely have an *idea* that they are oppressed, and that if you remove that idea, you remove the oppression? The Plebs League believes in the importance of education; but it is an education designed to equip men and women to *do* certain definite things; not an education which in itself is the freedom which they are striving after.

The Labour Movement is striving after no abstract freedom. It is striving to free Labour from its economic bondage. (Mr. Mactavish's 'individual' is, apparently, neither affected nor limited by the character and relationships of our economic and social organization. "*Society is the home of the human spirit!*" There is a scientific definition for you—and Mr. Mactavish talks about "the methods of the middle ages!") Labour's 'spiritual' demands are based on real things—common needs. Take away their connection with these realities, and you reduce them to mere phrases

—mere “wind and fury, signifying nothing.” No wonder Mr. Mactavish confesses, “We are not so much concerned with what is taught, as *how* it is taught.” An association which aims at securing nothing can well afford to teach nothing—and concentrate on using ‘method’ in the process.

The W.E.A. ‘educates,’ Mr. Mactavish tells us; the Plebs League merely ‘instructs.’ And “Instruction narrows the human outlook, cramps and petrifies human powers, and enslaves the human mind.” What, then, is this wonderful education in which no instruction is embodied? Does the W.E.A. put before its readers the theory that the earth is round and moves round the sun, and the converse theory that it is fixed and flat; disdaining to ‘instruct’ them in either view, but leaving them “perfectly free to form their own opinions.” Does it suggest to them that whether or not $2+2=4$ is a matter for individual judgment? Does it hang eternally suspended between ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ on every point? If not, it *instructs*: and we make no doubt that on every other subject except the subject of society and social relations (which *is* a ticklish subject for nervous people!) it *instructs* unashamedly enough. The Plebs, Mr. Mactavish declares—

argue that in economics the W.E.A. should teach adults nothing but socialist doctrine, that in the teaching of socialist doctrine it should confine itself almost entirely to the writings of Karl Marx, and that in the study of Marxian doctrine, it should accept the Plebs’ interpretation of it.

Rubbish—and Mr. Mactavish knows it! Is Mr. Mactavish a member of the I.L.P.? Does he believe in the principles of that organization? Does he regard the propagation of those principles as mere instruction—“cramping and petrifying human power,” &c.?

The Plebs insists that it is the business of the workers to face, and to understand, the facts. It asks them to accept neither ‘theories’ nor ‘doctrines’ which are not based upon the facts. The educational principles and policy of the Central Labour College are not based on ‘authority’—neither Marx’s authority, nor anyone else’s—but on the facts of social existence; *on the same facts on which the Labour Movement is based*. It urges the need for the men and women of the Labour Movement to understand the reasons for the existence of that Movement. The Plebs hold that it is *as workers*, that men and women are exploited and suffer the consequences of exploitation; it is *as workers* that they organize in trade unions, in the interests of the workers; it is *as workers* that they need to vote for Labour representatives; and it is *as workers* that they require to *know*. On this ‘doctrine,’ and on this alone, the principles and policy of the Central Labour College and the Plebs are based.

We will refer in conclusion only to one other point in Mr. Mactavish's "argument." Towards the end of his reply, after again insisting that the working-class "can only win freedom by the development of personal powers, intellectual, emotional, and volitional," he goes on to remark:—

By such means, we believe, the working-class will produce writers and thinkers, who, if not such intellectual giants as those Germany has produced, will be better suited to their native genius.

We do not wish to dwell upon the childlike simplicity of the assumption that the aim of the working-class movement is to produce "writers and thinkers." We merely desire to point out the caddishness—we use the word deliberately—of this appeal to patriotic prejudice, by the insinuation that the Plebs reserve their admiration for 'Germany' and 'Germans' (though indeed there might be some justification for such an attitude if Mr. Mactavish's mentality were to be taken as typically British). Such an insinuation is unworthy of any cause. If Mr. Mactavish so far forgot himself in the heat of debate as to make it in his actual speech, we should have expected that, having had time to recover his sense of fair-play, he would have deleted it from his pamphlet. That he has not done so suggests that he has "developed his own personal powers" further in an emotional, than in an intellectual direction.

EBBY EDWARDS.

J. F. HORRABIN.

The Luddite Movement

A SUMMARY

At our request, W. H. Mainwaring has written, as an Appendix to his translations from Schlüter's *History of Chartism*, the following brief summary of the social and economic conditions which led to the Luddite movement of a century ago, and the reasons for its inevitable failure.

PREVIOUS to the industrial revolution which took place, during the latter half of the 18th century, the general economic conditions of England could hardly be distinguished from those of other European countries. Industry was unimportant, towns small, population thin—most of the workers obtaining their livelihood from agriculture.

Long before this, however, changes had been slowly forming within the womb of society. As a result of the discovery and colonization of new lands and the trade routes to India, commerce had extended, agriculture improved, and better and more efficient methods of production introduced. Under the stress of this development a good many of the old feudal restrictions had been broken down, all of which assisted in the development of trade and the break-up of old social relations. It also enabled trading capital with division of labour to establish its superiority over the more

primitive domestic economy. The success of the Flemish woollen trade gave an impetus to the forceful release of the peasants from the soil. Land which hitherto had been under cultivation was now turned into sheep runs. Manufacture had also made inroads upon handicraft and domestic economy.

Then came the industrial revolution. Between 1764 and 1776 a number of mechanical discoveries were made which completely revolutionized production. Within the next ten years steam-power was applied to the factories, making them independent of localities having natural or artificial stores of water-power. These changes were mainly centred in the textile industry. But alongside and even within this industry others began to develop. Machinery was soon applied to the production of lace and woollen goods. Iron, steel, and others industries followed, and with the continued development of mechanical invention and the use of steam as a motive power, coal-mining assumed much greater importance.

At the same time a great shifting of the population took place. Each new industrial district became a centre to which men migrated. In this way huge centres of population were created which in the first period of expansion proved of immense importance to the manufacturers. With the continued development of these factors two things were determined; first, the complete victory of industry over handicraft; secondly, the full growth of the conditions necessary for the formation of the modern working-class.

The application of machinery to industry had at first produced a betterment of their conditions amongst those workers concerned, and indeed proved an inducement to them to enter industry. These conditions however soon changed. Machinofacture gave the possibility of introducing unskilled instead of skilled labour, and that of women and children for men—thus reducing the cost of labour-power to a minimum, where the whole family had to work in order to win the barest subsistence. Add to this the terrible effects of wars, and of the sufferings resulting from unemployment, low wages and the increase in the cost of living; and you have a picture of what the general conditions of the great mass of the English workers were at the commencement of the 19th century. The *Beggar's Complaint* mentions the fact that wages dropped 50% in the course of the twenty years preceding 1812, and that during the same period the cost of living went up 100%.*

Such were the general conditions obtaining in England at the

In **Ben O' Bills*, mentioned in the *Plebs* recently, it is stated that the price of wheat was 8/- per stone; probably this is exaggerated. Thorold Rogers says it was somewhere about 100/- a quarter. *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* (Mark Rutherford) is somewhat interesting, as it deals with the "Blanketeers," and mentions wheat as being 103/- per quarter.

time of the Luddite riots.‡ It is hardly likely that in the history of any modern nation any body of workers had to suffer as did the English workers at this period. The years 1811-1812 saw even these conditions worsened. Ever more machinery was being introduced and new inventions made, each one adding to the army of the unemployed. The failure of the crops in these years added further to the rise in the cost of living. All organization by the workers was forbidden and this at a time when new branches of industry were continuously being developed from handicraft to machinofecture. Small wonder that the workers both saw and felt that the machine was responsible for the evil conditions that overwhelmed them. Their hatred of the machine was a perfectly natural one and the whole country became honeycombed with secret organizations for the purpose of destroying machinery.

From our point of view, as Schlüter points out, the means they used and the form their opposition took were alike obsolete and ineffective. But it is the easiest thing in the world for people who live some time after a great change takes place to criticise the actions of those who lived through the actual process itself. At the time of the industrial revolution the modern working class was in the making, without experience or organizations, and, what was more, without definite ideas as to what was taking place around them. This absence of an historical view point as well as of organized forces on their part led to a kind of extravagance of ideas. The failure to grasp the nature of the struggle they were engaged in led Robert Owen and others to believe that the evil lay in human nature. The same point of view is held to-day in connection with the war. Everybody who either fears or for some other reason fails to get at the real causes of the conflict ascribes it to the nature of the Germans. Once they agree on this point, the remedy lies in improving human nature, and all kind of Utopian proposals are made. Committees with ideal conditions, equalitarian communism, educational establishments where ideal citizens would be produced, co-operative commonwealths, &c.

But economic development is as unmindful of Utopian dreams as it is of the wishes and decrees of governments, and in time the workers were compelled to realise that the machine had come to stay. Then dimly they began to perceive that the enemy was not the machines but the class that owned them. How dimly even this was perceived can be imagined when we consider how difficult it is to get the workers of to-day to realise it.

‡ "The names they assumed were 'Luds,' 'Ludders,' and 'Luddites,' and they are said to have derived them from a youth named Ludlam, a reckless character. . . Whether this youth actually directed the operations of the desperate bands is not positively known, as the secrets of the society were wonderfully well kept; but it is not at all improbable, as the proceedings were evidently planned beforehand, and it is also plain that the various bodies acted in concert."—*The Riseings of the Luddites*, by F. Peel.

The great lesson to be learnt from the Luddite Movement—is that our efforts should be directed to work in harmony with economic development ; not attempting to impose any scheme upon society. Socialism as taught by Marx is not a solution to an evil condition in which the working-class finds itself. It is this undoubtedly, but it is also much more. It is something rising out of the very basis of the present system. If we have understood this, then we shall have also realised that our task consists in the preparation and training of the working-class for that struggle which inevitably springs from the economic basis of society.

W. H. MAINWARING.

The August Meet

THE Annual Meet of the Plebs League will be held on Sunday, August 5th—full particulars in next month's issue. The Exec. Committee take this opportunity of extending a hearty invitation to *all friends interested in the aims and work of the League, whether members or not* to attend the Meet. Book the date now—Sunday, August 5th. The Exec. Committee has drawn up certain resolutions, which are printed below together with resolutions received from branches. These are here published just as received. In the August *Plebs*, we hope to publish an Agenda, drawn up from these various resolutions, condensed with a view to making the best use of the time at our disposal at the Meet. Amendments, or new resolutions, should reach us not later than July 12th, in order to be included in the Agenda.

Moved by the Executive Committee, Plebs League.

That the paragraph headed "METHODS" in the Constitution of the Plebs League (see p. 3 of cover) be deleted, and the following substituted :—

METHODS.

The formation of local branches and classes for the study of social science, in connection with the Central Labour College ; the formation of these branches into Districts, with a District Committee, appointed by the branches ; and the appointment of a Central Exec Committee of the League, consisting of one representative from each District, together with a Secretary, Treasurer, and Magazine Editor elected at the Annual Meet.

The issuing of a monthly magazine, mainly devoted to the discussion of Labour questions, theoretical and practical.

The assistance in every way of the development of the Central Labour College, and its maintenance of a definitely working-class educational policy.

Moved by the Executive Committee, Plebs League.

That the following words be added to the paragraph headed "MEMBERSHIP" in the Constitution of the League :—"Any expenses incurred by District organizations shall be met by an additional payment from members within that area."

Moved by the Executive Committee, Plebs League.

That Representatives of the C.L.C. League (S. Wales Division) be invited to take part in the discussions at this Meet, and to move the resolutions standing in their name.

Moved by the Executive Committee, Plebs League.

That the C.L.C. Leagues in the S. Wales and Tyne districts be invited to amalgamate with the Plebs League, adopting the name and objects of the latter.

Moved by the E.C. of the Central Labour College League, (S. Wales Division).

1.—That the name of the Plebs League should be changed to the Central Labour College League, as being a link with the College, and conveying to the outsider more information than the present title.

2.—That this League establishes District Organizations, as has already been done in S. Wales by the formation of the C.L.C. League.

Moved by Birmingham Social Science Class.

1.—That in order to meet the growing demand in all our great industrial centres, the Plebs League Executive shall formulate a scheme whereby lecturers associated with the Central Labour College or the Plebs League or affiliated bodies would be available for lectures promoted by branches of the Plebs League or affiliated bodies.

2.—That in order to promote independent working-class education the Plebs League should undertake the publication of a series of cheap books or pamphlets dealing with various aspects of social science from the Central Labour College standpoint.

3.—That in order to facilitate the formation of provincial classes, a scheme should be formulated whereby the services of tutors living in the provinces, whose qualifications have been endorsed by the C.L.C. tutorial staff and the Plebs League Exec., could be utilised to the best advantage in the particular district in which they reside.

Moved by the Executive Committee, Plebs League.

1.—That as a basis for the immediate future activities of the League the following points be embodied in a circular to be sent to all branches :

(a) The organizing of all readers of the Magazine in each locality to form a branch or branches of the League with the object of discussing working-class problems, so that a general agreement may be reached as to the policy to be advocated and supported by the members in their respective T.U. branches, &c.

(b) Each branch to work to secure further increase in the sales of the Magazine.

(c) Each branch to organize, besides the regular meetings of members, public lectures as often as circumstances permit.

(d) Wherever possible the branch to form a C. L. C. class for the study of social science. Where a tutor is unavailable it is recommended that (1) a class be formed with a leader to study such a text-book as W.W. Craik's *Modern Working-Class Movement*; (2) or to discuss matter published in the Magazine; (3) or to take a series of Lectures-by-Post, to be supplied by the Exec.

(e) Every branch to do all it can (1) to agitate for the re-opening of the College at the earliest possible moment; (2) to secure an increase in the number of students (men and women) to be sent to the College

to be trained as class-lecturers; (3) to endeavour to get the T.U. movement to undertake educational work as part of its activities; (4) to obtain support and assistance, by affiliations, donations, &c. from local T.U. & Socialist branches.

2.—That the Exec. Committee should arrange, at the earliest possible time, (a) for the publication of text-books or pamphlets (e.g., a reprint of N. Ablett's *Easy Outlines of Political Economy*) designed for use in the classes; (b) for the drawing up of a complete list of qualified lecturers in all districts; (c) for the issue of a Book List of all works recommended to students; (d) for the issue of Lectures-by-Post on Economics, History, and Logic, to be used by classes where a tutor is unavailable.

THAT Pamphlet—at Bargain Prices

PUTTING THE LID ON THE W.E.A.

WE hope to have our new pamphlet, *What does 'Education' Mean to the Workers?* ready early this month. If you have not already sent your order, do so now. The first edition is already almost entirely bespoken. We are glad to be able to announce that the Manchester District Council of the N.U.R. (under whose auspices Robert Holder did such good work last winter) has ordered 1,000 copies; and we are hoping to receive similar orders from other Councils. Some friends in Sheffield, as reported in "News of the Movement," have forwarded us £5, and we have put this to the Publication Fund.

We are anxious that the pamphlet should have the widest circulation possible, and have therefore stuck to the original price of a penny. Now to publish a 16 pp. pamphlet at 1d., these days, is to sell at cost price.

To have any margin at all to carry over towards our fund for future publications, we must 'sell out,' and, if possible, make a second edition necessary. That will be *easy*—if all our friends do their utmost to book orders for us; from T.U. branches, Trades Councils, &c., &c. Let's break all records!

We are offering the pamphlet at the following *rock-bottom* prices :- Single copies, 1d. (1½d. post paid); per dozen, 10d. (post paid); per 100, 6/- (post paid). And we defy all competitors to beat those prices with paper at its present cost. Get going!

The Burning Question for all Workers.

NOW OUT.

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(What it is, and what it isn't).

Price 2d. Published by the Building Workers' Industrial Union.

Single copies 2½d., post free; or 3/6 per quire of 26 copies. From C. W. TRURAN, B.W.I.U., 440, Harrow Road, Paddington, W.(9); or from J. HAMILTON, 10, Mill Lane, Islington, Liverpool,

Correspondence

DEMAND JOHN McLEAN'S RELEASE.

Sir,—Permit me to make a most urgent appeal to all members of the Plebs League and, indeed, to all your readers, to leave no stone unturned and no effort neglected to secure the release of our comrade and pioneer in the cause of Independent Working-Class Education, John McLean, from Perth Gaol. McLean has now been imprisoned for more than 14 months out of his term of three years' penal servitude, and the strain, first of the convict life at Peterhead, and now of his incarceration in Perth has told upon his health most severely. He is on the verge of a serious breakdown, such as to incapacitate him for a long time to come even if it does not assume such gravity as to ruin him completely.

His fearless advocacy of class-conscious and revolutionary action during the Clyde troubles in the winter of 1915-16; his magnificent endeavours, along with MacDougall, to establish a clear-cut Socialist educational movement in Glasgow; his criticism of the little Welsh Wizard and his speech outside that gentleman's St. Andrew's Hall Meeting on a famous occasion, naturally, made him,—shall we say,—unpopular with the powers that be.

On a second conviction, under the Defence of the Realm Act, he was sentenced to the above mentioned term of imprisonment, although the Judge stated that the evidence was conflicting. He, of all the men connected with the Clyde agitation, remains in prison. The deportees have been pardoned or permitted to return. Meanwhile the Sinn' Fein agitators and rebels have been released. John McLean, a man without a strong Union or a menacing organization to plead the case for official generosity, languishes in prison. Comrades, shall he suffer for the sacrifice he made of the professional career and the place which his academic qualifications would easily have secured for him? Shall he find his comrades in our struggle for Socialist educational independence lukewarm and careless of what befalls him? Let our voices be heard everywhere demanding his release. In every Miners' Lodge and Trade Union Meeting, at every available opportunity, move resolutions insisting upon his freedom being granted. The Congress of the Workmen and Soldiers' Representatives of All Russia has sent him its greeting "where he sits in prison for proclaiming Internationalism." Answer them in the name of the Social Democracy of Britain, overwhelming the Premier, the Home Secretary, and the Secretary for Scotland with the cry—"Release John McLean *at once!*"

30, Applegarth Road,
London, W. 14.

Yours fraternally,
J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD.

AS TO POLITICS.

Sir,—Having been much interested in the discussion between Noah Ablett and W. W. Craik on the subject of Political Action, I was disappointed, on getting my June *Plebs*, to find that it had come to an end. Surely Plebeians are not going to let a subject like this fall flat, so I write this short letter to try and 'draw' other readers.

It appears to me that what Ablett argues against, and Craik upholds, is the workers taking hold of the Parliamentary machine. Now, while I believe in political action, I hold that no good can come to the workers through Parliamentary action. But Political action is not necessarily Parliamentary action. Before we can have an industrially-organized working-class, we have got to take *political* action—that is to say, we have to go out into the open and deliver our message to the workers—be it in the T.U. branch room, public meeting, or by writing to this or that journal. If we don't use these means, then there is only the other alternative—secret, or anarchist methods. *Political* action means open and above-board methods.

Yours for Political Action, INDUSTRIAL UNIONIST.

APPRECIATION.

Sir,—We would like to say a friendly word about the *Plebs*. You know how journalists usually "read" papers. But the last six or seven numbers of the *Plebs* which you were good enough to send us were really *read*—a very different matter. The *Plebs* actually gains in force by such consecutive reading, whereas, as a rule, two or more numbers of a paper in prompt succession produce an extremely unpleasant sensation of surfeit. The *Plebs* is certainly what we have long been looking for in Socialist periodical literature.

Yours, EDEN & CEDAR PAUL.

(Our readers will note that our friends have given very practical proof of their interest by translating for us the article from the *Critica Sociale* which appears in this issue.—ED.)

THE WORK BEFORE THE PLEBS.

Sir,—In his article in the April *Plebs*, Walton Newbold wrote:—"I have one serious fault to find with the literature of the S.L.P. and the text-books of the Plebs League. . . They are too purely theoretical and too advanced for the beginners." In the May *Plebs* I rebutted this statement, particularly as regards the S.L.P. pamphlets. Newbold, in the June issue, is still unconvinced that the S.L.P. pamphlets are not caviare to the general. Perhaps the following unsolicited testimonial from Tonypandy (Rhondda) on behalf of my defence of the De Leon and Kautsky pamphlets will convince him that not only is S.L.P. literature easily grasped by the man in the street, but is a stimulus to his intellect:—

"Dear Mr. Silvester—I hope you will pardon me taking the liberty of writing you, but the reason of my doing so is to seek a little advice in order to make a study of Marxian Socialism. After reading a letter by yourself published in the *Plebs*, I took advantage of the information supplied therein and purchased the Kautsky pamphlets—"Working Class," "Capitalist Class," "Class Struggle," "Socialist Republic"; and two pamphlets by De Leon "Preamble to I.W.U." and "What means this Strike."—which I must confess are very educating and have left me with a keen desire to be more conversant with the subject."

My correspondent concludes with a request for information as to where he can obtain best literature on Social Science.

Next month I hope to reply more fully to Newbold's article in the June number. Yours frat., FRED SILVESTER, (Sec. B'gham Social Science Class)

News of the Movement

Things are moving everywhere! Sheffield, Huddersfield and the Clyde are getting to business—*our* business that is. Fresh plans are being laid for "blud-coning the working-class into accepting the doctrines of Marx" as Mr. Mactavish puts it. A. J. Solomons (S.L.P.) writes from Glasgow:—"We are drawing up an appeal to T.U. & I.L.P. branches and other working-class organizations asking them to attend a Conference for the purpose of arranging for a series of Economics and Industrial History classes in Glasgow and district. We have many capable instructors (O lucky Glasgow!—Ed.) and we feel confident that in a short time it will be possible to start a Labour College here. . . . And then as Newbold says "We'll get the Home Hun on the run, and keep him trotting"! "

* * * * *

Sheffield friends interested in the formation of a Plebs League branch with a view to running a C.L.C. class (or classes) should communicate with C. Watkins, 47, Laverack St., Richmond Rd., Handsworth; J. T. Murphy, 69 Primrose Avenue, Shiregreen; or E. Lismar, 56, Rushdale Rd., Meersbrook, all of whom are out, among other things, to Put the Lid on the W.E.A. & on Imitation Working-Class Education. . . . Some friends in Sheffield have recently forwarded to us, per A. E. Booth, the sum of £5 (the proceeds of a little jollification) "towards the cause of Working-class Education." We have put the cash to the credit of our Publishing Fund; and we herewith thank very heartily all those concerned.

* * * * *

At Huddersfield arrangements are now being made for a class this winter, with Fred Shaw as tutor. All those interested should communicate with Jesse Townend (1, Market Walk, Huddersfield). Further particulars will be announced later. What about a Yorkshire District in the near future—Halifax, Huddersfield, Sheffield, Leeds, and Bradford, to begin with? Play up, Tykes!

* * * * *

There was a good sprinkling of Plebeians among the delegates to the Leeds Convention on June 3rd. Ablett was there, and Ebby Edwards and George Brown—all of the Old Guard! Also Newbold and Lewcock and other friends from various parts. The Editor and the Secretary, being domiciled in Sheffield for a few days, were able to attend; (lest zealous Plebeians might cast a conscientious eye over the year's Financial Statement we hasten to mention that they 'stood' their own ex's). For the especial benefit of the officials of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union and other patriots, we had better add that all these people did *not* go as delegates from the Plebs League, but as representing S. Wales Miners, Northumberland Miners, B.S.P. branches, Trades Councils and other insignificant organizations. We hope Plebeians everywhere will attend the District Conferences, which are to follow up the work begun at Leeds, now being arranged to take place during July in various towns.

* * * * *

J. H. Potter, of Warrington, sends a glowing account of the classes carried on in that district during the past six months with Robt. Holder as lecturer. A course on Industrial History was commenced on Jan. 8th with a bumper attendance, which was maintained right through the series. So keen was the interest displayed by the students, remarks our friend Potter, that "on more than one occasion the lecturer came perilously near missing the last train home." Then, when at the end of March Holder's engagement with the Manchester Dist. Coun. N.U.R. terminated, Warrington—"having a small balance in hand (this is not a joke, fellow Plebeians) and calculating that we could keep the lecturer's body and soul an entity (relative) for a month at any rate"—

decided to run a class on its own. It was arranged that the district should be canvassed and an attempt made to get classes going elsewhere. The local B.S.P. invited Holder to deliver four lectures on the Need for Working-Class Education; and later, made a grant of £3 towards the working expenses of the classes. Negotiations were opened with the Widnes Trade and Labour Council which resulted in a class being formed there. A little later, a second class was started in Warrington under the auspices of the Engineering Amalgamation Committee.

"Thanks are due to the Freedom Fellowship," comrade Potter continues, "for the use of their room for the classes. . . Prospects are extremely promising. Classes in Widnes and Warrington are certain this winter, and it is almost as certain that a third will be started in Wigan, where comrade Holder has already addressed a meeting of 42 T. U. delegates." (We have received a copy of the circular calling the Wigan Conference, signed, on behalf of the Committee, by our friend Alex. Evans. It is good stuff!—Ed.) "There is also a possibility of two other classes being formed in St. Helen's and Earlestown. So that altogether the C.L.C. lecturer in S.W. Lancs. looks like having a busy time this fall."

Our congratulations to all concerned; to comrade A. E. Seabury, secretary (and "mainspring") of the Warrington Class; and to Bob Holder, whom now, alas! the Military Service Acts will prevent from going on with the work so well begun. May he be "on the job" again in the very near future! And, in the meantime, may Warrington, Widnes and Wigan express their appreciation of his work in the best possible way—by carrying through a vigorous educational campaign.

* * * * *

Those "fanatical dogmatists" (*vide* Mr. Mactavish) of the Tyne district, refusing to be silenced by the adverse vote against the Ashington resolution (see last month's *Plebs*) at the Northumberland Miner's Annual Meeting, have issued a circular letter to the branches, challenging all and sundry supporters of Ruskin College or the W.E.A. to public debate on the principles of working-class education. We like the irony of the signature—"Yours in anticipation (!), EBBY EDWARDS." No Northumberland champion has, we believe, so far signified his readiness for the fray (so crude, you know, these C.L.C. fellahs—public debates, indeed!) But in the adjoining fair county of Durham, at the Co.-Op. Hall, Consett, on July 8th, Will Lawther is to endeavour to persuade County Coun. John Lawson (E.C., Durham Miners) "That the emancipation of Labour can only be achieved by the adoption of a policy of Independent Working-Class Education, as advocated by the Central Labour College." Mr. W. Whiteley (acting-Presdt., Durham Miners) will preside.

* * * * *

Jim Nixon writes from Edinburgh:—"The action of the Military has deprived a few classes of teachers, but I guess we're unluckier than most, as by the removal of the ban on the Clyde deportees we've lost our teacher *again*. But don't think we're down-hearted! We've struck oil. We read a chapter of Industrial History; then questions; then a chapter of *Wage Labour and Capital*, and more questions. And we work questions thus:—somebody asks one, and the chairman fixes on another member to answer it. The idea has caught on—everyone's eager to answer the questions and almost everyone joins in the discussion. I recommend the idea to classes where a tutor is not to be had—it's great!"

* * * * *

Don't forget the Mect. And *please* don't forget to square up your A/c as *early as possible* this month, so that the Financial Statement for the year may be as satisfactory as possible.

SOLD OUT AGAIN.

Our June issue (larger than ever) was again sold out early in the month. We shall be glad of a few copies, if any subscriber has them to spare.

Review

AN INDUSTRIAL UNIONIST IN A HURRY.

Industrial Unionism. By E. L. Pratt (Editor of *Solidarity*). (Solidarity Press, 29, Theobald's Road, W.C., 1. 3d.)

A pamphlet or a book on this subject is—particularly at the present time—something to be thankful for; but it is a pity that, the opportunity being so fitting, better advantage of it should not be taken than by the author of this pamphlet. He has neglected to treat the historical side of the T.U. movement fully, and he does not explain the conditions which brought it into existence—merely making a statement here and there in regard to it, and proceeding to dilate at some length on the structure which is to take its place. That is to say, he tends to treat Industrial Unionism not as growing out of, developing from, the existing industrial organizations, but as a new scheme of organization, to be built up forthwith “according to plan.”

The opening statement gives one something of a shock:—“What is the most noticeable fact about the Trade Union Movement to-day? Why, simply that it does not *move*.” (The italics are the author's). One is impelled to point out to the author that if the Movement did not move, it would not exist; and although one may agree that it has reached the stage of rotten-ripeness, it still exists—until such time as it becomes wholly rotten. On p. 9 a scheme is outlined as to the form the Industrial Union should take—“the rungs on the ladder.” There are six of these “rungs,” each with a new title; titles which appear quite unnecessary. There are already in existence industrial organizations, both local and national, which could be, and probably will be, utilised for the administrative purposes of Industrial Unionism. Trade, or craft, organization will be changed in name just so soon as it changes in character; and what was once a Trades Council will become an Industrial Council.

Space forbids further detailed criticism now. I can only say in conclusion that, in my opinion, this pamphlet falls far short of the standard set by Geo. Harvey's *Industrial Unionism and the Mining Industry*. Such pamphlets as this last, dealing with particular industries, are urgently needed.

FRANK JACKSON.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LIBRARY.

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The Plebs' Bookshelf

Those Plebeians who—naturally enough—complain that recommendations to buy books only make them more acutely conscious of the inadequacy of their war-bonuses are not going to have any (or many) grounds for protest this month; for most of the items on my list are pamphlets, and you can acquire the lot (postage apart) for somewhere about a bob. I'd better begin with the most expensive—*James Connolly, A Study of His Work and Worth*, by Gerald O'Connor (4½d. post paid, from National Labour Press, Blackfriars Street, Manchester). This is a sketch of Connolly's life and work which will be of considerable interest to every student of his writings. It is not an altogether satisfactory piece of work—on its critical side; though the biographical facts are well and interestingly told. It begins well:—

Connolly, as a student of social history, knew that feeling without knowledge is not a sure weapon to use in reform. He sought out the causes, historical and economic, of present conditions, and he brought method to the study of those conditions. . .

It is not by his Socialism the future will appraise him, but by his wonderful application to Irish history of the Marxian dictum that the economic is the true interpretation of history; by his steadfast attachment to the belief that without political freedom there could be no permanent progress; by his pioneer work in the study of town conditions and poverty in Ireland; by his adoption of the intellectual method of agitation in preference to the methodless ways of the demagogue and by his unselfish sincerity and fearlessness.

This is good. But note that "It is not by his Socialism. . ." What *was* Connolly's Socialism, if it was not these very things here named? So, all through, the writer appears to be apologising for, or putting in the background as something negligible, Connolly's "Socialism"; while all the time he is, for the most part very intelligently, summarising and emphasising the very characteristics of Connolly and his work which are nothing if not Socialist. The explanation may be that he is writing for a Catholic audience to whom "Socialism" means Atheism and other dreadful things; at any rate, the result is curiously unsatisfactory, and at times almost puzzling.

He goes a bit "wild" here and there, as when he declares that—

Had the transport workers of a century or half a century ago been sufficiently educated in the workings of the system of which they were the drudges, to understand how vital transport was to industry, they might have developed sufficient organized strength to check the development of capitalised industry along the vicious lines which its growth still follows. They might, had they had vision of the future (!) or even an understanding of the past, have prevented the greatest tragedy in human history. . . the herding together in millions of propertyless people in cities for the creation of wealth which they themselves could not own.

"They might. . ." This is rather like the economic interpretation of history turned upside down! There is a good deal too, about "the tyranny of (State) Socialism," which, to say the least, is a little beside the mark when dealing with an Industrial Unionist like Connolly. Still, the author says some good things, and says them well:—

Labour must not wait in the hope that freedom will come to it in its slum. Labour must cut its way to freedom. *Knowledge, and action guided by knowledge*, will enable it to clear the tangles and rocks from the upward path to emancipation.

But it will be "Socialist" knowledge !

* * * * *

Now we come to the two pamphlets on Industrial Unionism recently published—one by Solidarity Press (price 3d.) and one by the Building Workers' Industrial Union (440, Harrow Road, London, W. 9. Price 2d.) The former Frank Jackson briefly reviews on another page. Let me just say here that, though I agree in the main with his criticism, it is certainly a pamphlet to be read—particularly since it links up the Shop Stewards' movement and the whole matter of workshop organization with the theory of Industrial Unionism. One criticism I should like to make 'on my own,' and that is that 3d. is a long price, even in these expensive days, for a 16 pp. pamphlet—though it has a cover on it. I should have thought that—with *Solidarity* to push it—it could have been issued at a lower price (and I happen to know what 16 pp. pamphlets cost just now). The other pamphlet, published by the B.W.I.U., is a more general "propaganda" pamphlet, and as a brightly written appeal to the ordinary Trade Unionist, as distinct from the student, it is very good. The author has the gift of making appropriate quotations—from Mr. Dooley, Hilaire Belloc, Sir W. Lever and W. W. Craik among others ! And he can himself "put the thing in a nutshell," as for example :—

Hence the formation of Trade Unions, and, to counteract and defeat the workers' organizations, the formation of employers' combinations and federations culminating in the Trust, and finally in one huge Trust—the State. . . (State) Socialists place their confidence in legislation; the Industrial Unionists, reasoning from history and social science, in industrial organization. . .

Some of the sectional headings—"As to the State, and Politics," and "Capitalism—The New Phase"—suggest that the writer reads his *Plebs*. And on p. 15 we find him urging that "educational work should be fostered and classes financed for the study of social science taught from the working-class standpoint"; particular reference being made to the "invaluable work in this direction" being done by the Central Labour College and its students. Both the *Plebs* and W.W.C.'s *Modern Working-Class Movement* figure in the short list of "What to Read" on the back cover.

* * * * *

Next, please ! *Labour & Empire*; by Wm. Paul (S.L. Press, 50, Renfrew Street, Glasgow. 1d.). Certainly no one can complain of *this* pennyworth—24 pages, and a cover; with a map (reproduced, we're quite proud to say, from the *Plebs*) and an exceedingly useful wages-chart constructed from Thorold Roger's *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*. The substance of this pamphlet appeared in article form in the *Socialist* a month or two ago. It is hardly necessary to say, considering who wrote it, that it was well worth reprinting. It admirably summarises the most important points of Boudin's *Socialism and War*, and Newbold's *How Europe Armed for War*; and although it

concludes frankly as an S.L.P. propaganda appeal, it should be read by working-class students of every party. Here again, too, we have the need for Independent Working-Class Education emphasised:—

The first duty of the Socialist movement is to educate the workers in order that they may understand the problem to be solved. *To understand the problem is the first step towards solving it.*

* * * * *

Many students of the history of economic theory may be interested to know that John Bellers' *Proposals for Raising a Colledge of Industry* (1696) is obtainable in a very nicely got-up little reprint (Headley Bros., Kingsway House, Kingsway, W.C. (2). 3d. post paid). Bellers was the individual of whom Marx spoke in *Capital* as "a veritable phenomenon in the history of political economy." The prefatory note to this pamphlet mentions that when Robert Owen, in 1835, published his *New Vision of Society*, he reprinted Bellers' "Colledge of Industry" in full; and also that a considerable section is devoted to Bellers in Bernstein's *Pioneers of Modern Socialism*.

* * * * *

One more pamphlet, which although written from the bourgeois "democratic" point of view, is well worthy of study by all internationalists:—*Russia's Idea of Peace*, by G. G. Armstrong (William Morris Press, Ltd., 41, Gartside Street, Manchester. 1½d. post paid). This is a careful and sympathetic examination of the Russian peace proposals based on "no annexations or indemnities"; and is a plea for a re-statement of their terms on the part of the Allies.

* * * * *

When strongly recommending Mr. H. N. Brailsford's *League of Nations* last month, I mentioned that its price, 5/- net, was a stiff one. The publishers (Messrs. Headley Bros.) have since remedied this by issuing a popular edition at 2/-. Put it on your list at once; you will find this book well worth while . . . Three months ago I suggested that you might celebrate the Russian Revolution by treating yourself to Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, in the World's Classics series (1/3 net). I did not realise when I made the suggestion, how especially interesting, in view of the Revolution, *Resurrection* was. The vivid pictures of peasants and peasant life, of the bureaucracy under the old regime, of the varying types of political prisoners—all make it a book to read just now. Tolstoy as a social reformer may leave a lot to be desired; but Tolstoy as a great artist in words is quite another matter. . . . Another book, recommended here some time back, is doubly interesting at the present time—Maxim Gorky's *Comrades* (2/6). Gorky, by the way, though his paper, *Novaya Jizn* (New Life) is playing a very active part in the new Russia of to-day. Readers of the weekly Foreign Press Supplement of the *Cambridge Magazine* will have noted several refreshingly outspoken comments on Militarism, Capitalism and Imperialism, quoted from Gorky's journal—the sort of comment that is less likely to be censored in Russia than in "the free democracies of Western Europe" nowadays.

* Obtainable from *Herald Office*, 2/3 post paid.

Solidarity for June contains an enquiry from a hawk-eyed correspondent who wants to know why T.U. Secretaries, Workers' Committees, &c. "invariably misspell the word 'convener.'" "Even such an authority as the *Plebs Magazine*," he says, "spells it 'convenor.'" We blush gracefully at being referred to as an "authority" in these matters; and apologise for having (in an article by J. T. Murphy, we discover, last February) permitted this particular error to creep into our usually immaculate pages. Our slip was probably due—as *Solidarity* neatly points out in reply to him—to the same cause that made this correspondent misspell the word "misspell."

* * * * *

In a leading article in its issue of June 16th, the *Merthyr Pioneer* replied to a criticism that it had of late "lowered its flag" :—

The *Pioneer* stands to-day, as it has stood since its foundation, for the class-war, scientific socialism, internationalism, and peace in accord with democratic principles. . . Its call is to-day, as then, the Marxian call to the workers to unite and found the social world. . . It has always and will always attempt the education of the workers in economics along class-conscious lines. . .

In the same article, it is pointed out that the *Pioneer* is a part of the Nat. Labour Press, and "in that sense as much an official organ as the *Labour Leader*." I congratulate it on its statement of policy. Against *this* sort of I.L.P.-ism we of the *Plebs* can make no criticism! . . . By the way, Mark Starr had a good article in the *Pioneer* of May 26th on "The Aims of the C.L.C." . . . And, by the way again, the other *Pioneer*—the Bradford one—now publishes T.U. Notes by "Plebeian." Is this, I wonder an old Bradford friend of ours?

J. F. H.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

Political Parties. By Robert Michels. Translated by Eden & Cedar Paul. (Jarrold & Sons, 12/6 net).

Industry Brings Plenty. (John Beller's Scheme for a Colledge of Industry, 1696). A Reprint with Prefatory Note. (Headley Bros., 2d.).

Industrial Unionism. By E. L. Pratt. (Solidarity Press, 3d.).

Industrial Unionism. What It Is, and What It Isn't. (B.W.I.U., 2d.).

URGENT.

Will all subscribers endeavour to settle their accounts before July 15th, in order to facilitate the preparation of the Financial Statement to be submitted at the Annual Meet?

NOTICE—TO MANY ANXIOUS INQUIRERS.—We understand that the second edition of W. W. Craik's *Modern Working-Class Movement* will be ready immediately—if not by the time these lines are in print. (From W. T. A. Foot, 119, Harvist Road, W. Kilburn, N.W.6.)

The "Plebs" League

Object

To further the interests of Independent working-class education as a partizan effort to improve the position of Labour in the present, and ultimately to assist in the abolition of wage-slavery.

Methods

The holding of an Annual Meet: the issuing of a monthly Magazine, mainly devoted to the discussion of the various questions of Labour, theoretical and practical: the formation of local branches and classes for the study of social science, in connexion with the Central Labour-College, and in every way to assist in the development of the latter institution, and its maintenance of a definite educational policy.

Membership

Open to all who endorse the object of the League.

Each Member shall pay 1/- a year to the Central Fund towards meeting the expenses in connexion with the Annual Meet, &c.

Management

An Executive of five members elected annually, and the Editor of Magazine, who shall be responsible as to publication and meets, &c.

✉ The NINTH Annual Meet will be held in London, August 5th, 1917.

The *Plebs* Magazine.

The Magazine is published monthly, price 2d. (2½d. post paid).

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P.O.'s TO BE FORWARDED TO

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Ravenscourt Park, London, W. 6

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(Organ: "PLEBS" MAGAZINE, Published Monthly,
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