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THE PLEBS MAGAZINE

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

Vol. X.

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Three Books on Textile Capitalism

Sir Charles Macara, by W. Haslam Mills. (Sherratt & Hughes, Manchester. Remained. 2/6).

The Making of Modern Yorkshire, by J. S. Fletcher. (G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 7/6.)

Cotton as a World Power, by Jas. A. B. Seherer. (Frederick A. Stokes Co., New York. 12/6).

WHAT most conspicuously differentiates the modern industrial system from that which prevailed before the Industrial Revolution is the fabrication and manipulation of products by means of machinery. The whole of modern society is upborne on a solid framework of iron and steel, and interlaced across land and sea by the same means. These materials are required at once for the creation of wealth and then for its conveyance in the guise of commodities from one place to another. For the arts of peace and the conduct of war the machine, whether stationary or movable, is indispensable. Hence, the all-importance of understanding the structural development of those industries which are concerned with the production of the means of production and of transit. Coal and iron may be said to be the basic factors in modern industry and commerce, and for that reason the education and organization of the workers engaged in their handling to be our most urgent task.

But in order more clearly to grasp the full meaning of the statement that this is the age of coal and iron it is necessary to know how and why these two industries have attained to this pre-eminence, and to trace their con-

nexion with the other great branches of production which have played their mighty part in moulding the habits and thoughts of civilized humanity. Prior to these latter days of world industry and commerce the businesses of clothing and feeding mankind have been of prime importance in the scheme of things. Hence, woollens, corn and cotton have, at various times, swayed the destinies and determined the life of men. The material of capitalist production in its classic era was, essentially, cotton, and cotton it was that, spun and woven by labour, made Lancashire. Of somewhat less consequence were the woollen and worsted fabrics of the West Riding, the linens of Belfast and Fife, and the jute materials of Dundee. These, amongst them, constituted the great Textile Manufactures on which was built up the economic and political greatness of 19th-century Britain, and which made of her the Workshop of the World. The reservoirs of surplus values which gathered in Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Glasgow, Paisley, Dundee and Liverpool are almost unfathomable in their content. From these centres drained off innumerable canals of capitalization in every conceivable direction. Not only the great merchant houses, banks and investment corporations of this country, but the towering might of Wall Street is reared upon "dry goods."

Three books lie before me which have much to tell of these all-important topics of textiles. Perhaps it may seem strange that a student of Steel should manifest so much interest in Cotton, but one whose earliest memories are of the gleaming windows of spinning mills seen across the night, whose first wanderings were from the place whence George Stephenson directed the construction of the Manchester & Liverpool Railway, on the march where Cotton meets Coal, has a romantic predilection for the fascinating story of Lancashire and the sympathetic histories of Yorkshire and the Clyde.

Mr. Mills' sketch of the career of Sir Charles Macara is interesting to one who knows Manchester, and invaluable for the connexions which it reveals between Dundee jute magnates, Glasgow merchants and Manchester cotton "houses." Perhaps, unwittingly, he makes certain things plainer than he meant, and when he shows the relationships of the great Lancashire magnate to the Cox family of Dundee he gives a clue to the enormous financial and political influence wielded by his hero. Also when he recalls the part played by Macara in the campaign against the Tariff, he puts one in mind that there was probably no accident about the transference of Winston Churchill from North-West Manchester to the banks of the Tay. Massed money—the sinister power of jute-made millions—stands behind the pushful scion of the house of Marlborough. The cousin of the Guests, the political choice of the cotton and jute lords, American land speculators, Indian merchants and railway stock magnates of Manchester and Dundee is a catspaw worth watching. It is good to be reminded that Sir Charles Macara was the inventor of the National Register as a means of estimating "the human resources" of the nation. The genius of the Brooklands Agreement and the British Empire Cotton Growers' Association is a type fit to rank with the notable instruments of capitalist Lancashire, and his career and associates will repay study just as will those of Huskisson, Peel, and Gladstone.

J. S. Fletcher is a writer of another order. He has put out a most readable, somewhat superficial sketch of the history of Yorkshire from 1760 to 1914. The best thing in the book—and it is well done—is his introductory chapter on "Yorkshire in 1750." If he was as keen in his appreciation of modern institutions as he is in his treatment of the Anglican Church in that year, methinks he would be less agreeable to some of his friends. There is much that is very useful in his chapters on means of communication, power and machinery, and his comments on such firms as Fairbairn's, Marshall's, Crossley's, Kitson's, Gott's, Lister's, Salt's, Holden's, are good as indicators for students of a more analytical and scientific turn. His later sections, dealing with "Reform," "Thrift," and "Nineteenth Century Yorkshiremen" strike me as being distinctly scrappy and inadequate.

The story of Yorkshire would well repay the attention of some of our Marxian students, fortunate in their access to good libraries in Leeds and Bradford (Sheffield is *the limit*). The stories that can be collected on the Dales, traces of old customs, relics in stone, both secular and ecclesiastical, suggest a veritable store-house of material for devotees of Morgan. There are appearances that point to something other than religious opposition to Protestantism in Tudor times, for nowhere did the old faith die harder than in Yorkshire. Later, Chartism and the "Plug" Riots might well engage attention, for was there ever a place so radically obstreperous as Halifax? Whilst to turn from the people to their livelihood, the rise of the iron and engineering industries of Keighley, Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield awaits its chronicler. Meanwhile, on the practical side, might I urge on our people to "get a move on" around Barnsley and from Doncaster southwards on what is destined to be the most productive coalfield in Britain.

In Yorkshire, the industrial aspects of the transition in Capitalism from textiles to minerals can be followed perhaps better than in Lancashire, for Sheffield and Middlesbrough have absorbed immense volumes of money from Manchester, where the wealth of Free Trade marches on without its soul, and where John Bright's nephew may be found, not in cotton, but as head of the pioneer producers of armour-plate.

Now for a really *great* book—*Cotton as a World Power*. It is American, and a monument of research as well as a pillar of understanding. Would it were not so expensive! To Marxists it is a treasure-trove indeed, with its exquisite revelation of the material basis of those successive waves of "disinterested and high-souled idealism" which perhaps cause our pacifist brethren to quiver with emotion at the very thought of President Wilson. The spectacle of the North and the South changing their gospels with their changing interests is not spoiled by the author's tribute—"For it is true, as Karl Marx pointed out, that in changing the modes of production mankind changes all its social relations." First in favour of a greater measure of federalism and protectionist, the South voted strongly against slavery before Eli Whitney's gin brought the cotton boom. Then it championed "State rights," swung over to Free Trade, and fought for slavery. Meanwhile the North changed as completely in the opposite direction and ended up, like Morgan and Rockefeller, in going to war for Liberty! We see, as of course is shown by Gustavus Myers, the struggle for fresh cotton lands with its influence on the Mexican War and, ultimately, on the Civil War.

We must give just a few quotations from a work far too rich to condense or to rifle:—

According to Adams, the Constitution was "the work of the commercial people in the seaport towns, of the planters, of the slave-holding states, of the officers of the Revolutionary army, and the property holders everywhere."

And this for the Free Trade enthusiast:—

The South, now conscious of its strong solidarity, alining itself on the side of Free Trade and States-rights, while the manufacturing North preferred protection, and became the defender of the Union.

Again:—

Unquestionably an important impetus in the wave of law for liquor restraint that has recently swept over the South was supplied by far-sighted mill-management, anxious to enliven temperance in the interest of efficiency, and inducing operatives to vote for it.

The book is admirably checked with references and has an excellent bibliography of works on the industrial and political development of America.

It affords a valuable introduction to the study of the cotton period of Capitalism, and I heartily recommend it to those who have the means to acquire it.

J. T. WALTON-NEWHOLD.

An Outline Economics Course

Continued from last month.

Lecture V. Money.—If we think of a simple society where the surplus above bare subsistence consists of only two commodities, say a bow and arrow and a deer-skin which are equal in value : as the society grows richer more commodities are introduced which will be bartered for the original commodities until we could say one bow and arrow is equal to a pair of skin boots or ten deer skins are equal to one plough. Commodities are here directly exchanged for commodities as we say by barter : as the society grows and the commodities increase exchange by barter becomes inconvenient because A has only got what B does not want, and *vice versa*, until the society is forced to use one commodity (the one most useful, and whose value is generally recognised) which everyone will give their goods for, as they know it can command exchange. That one commodity becomes—money. As the society still grows, the need for usefulness in the exchange medium grows less, and when the precious metals are discovered their adaptability to act as money is easily perceived, and so in time gold is produced, not so much for its usefulness as a commodity, but for its use as money.

Lecture VI.—In modern society money fulfils many important functions, but the two essential functions on which all others are based are—the measure of value and the medium of circulation. (1) Measure of value.—When a commodity is sent to market it bears a label signifying the owner's estimation of its price. This estimation is not a guess, but the result of his experience of the capacity of the market to measure value. This pricing is not a concrete operation performed with actual money, but is a mental process on the part of the seller. But the existence of hard cash is necessary before this mental process can be performed. (2) Medium of Circulation.—Because the commodity, on its appearance on the market, has had its value measured by, say, £1 in imagination, the commodity will readily exchange for the actual golden coin. All commodities go through these two processes and by these means circulation is immensely accelerated. Here the actual money is seen to be the medium by which circulation of commodities takes place.

Lecture VII. Tokens and paper money.—A sovereign fresh from the mint contained 123,027,447 grains of gold, but a few years of wear and tear causes it to decrease in weight. Nevertheless, it still continues to circulate, because it can be exchanged at need for a full weight coin. This fact makes it clear that the actual use of gold as money *in circulation* is not essential providing that whatever is used in its place can be readily exchanged for the actual gold. In this country, only gold is legal tender in payment of a debt of over £2. Yet gold is rarely used, its place being taken by silver, copper and paper. Twenty silver shillings equal about 18 shillings in gold, 240 pennies equal five shillings in gold ; paper is still less valuable. But the circulation of these substitutes or tokens is strictly limited and can always be exchanged for the actual gold. As a medium of circulation gold then can be represented by inferior substitutes, but as a measure of value hard cash is the only thing that counts. Failure to distinguish between these two functions is responsible for enormous errors. Note the paradox : The gold which appeared to count only in imagination is indispensable to exchange ; the gold which appeared to be actually present in its own function can be represented by imaginary gold.

Lecture VIII. Standard of Price.—This function of money merely means that an ounce weight of gold always equals £3 17s. 10½d. That is to say, that the Government stamp on a piece of gold guarantees that it is a definite aliquot part of the standard. The word "pound" now used to represent a sovereign used to mean when silver was money that a pound weight of silver was the standard from which fractional or aliquot parts were taken. Means of

payment or credit money.—In an advanced society commodities have to be exchanged which take very different periods to produce, say, bridges or canals and textile products. As there can be no immediate exchange money will have to function as a means of payment, the products which take the longer time to produce being mortgaged until they become fruitful.

The interval between exchange and payment here may be very prolonged. Too long an interval may bring about a commercial or a money crisis, which is a periodical feature since the development of credit money. Nevertheless, it is an immense accelerator of production without which capitalism could never reach its present proportions. *Bullion Money*.—In International trade money takes the shape of bullion. In the Asiatic countries silver is still money; consequently gold and silver bullion is international, money coins being only in use in their own countries. As far as possible the actual use of the metals is economised, the balancing of accounts by exchange avoiding their use.

Lecture IX. Currency and the Banking System.—The wear and tear of gold in circulation is a costly business, and the actual use of money in exchange is so slow an operation as only to belong to a very undeveloped society. The banking system is the great economiser and accelerator of currency. A owes B money, and *vice versa*. The money remains in the bank, and instead of paying money the clerks of A and B make entries in their respective ledgers, and only over a long period will the money be used. Money is mostly in use in small transactions. The employer draws money from the bank on Friday, pays out wages on Saturday; the wages are mostly yielded to tradesmen who place them in the bank on Monday, whence the employer again draws them out on Friday, and so on. The richer the country, the greater the volume of trade, the less relatively will money be in use. Money can be too plentiful and be a drug on the market. The money required in any district depends on the number of exchange transactions less the number of moves made by each coin. The more efficient the banking system the less money will be required.

Lecture X. Capital.—We have seen money developing as a means of exchanging goods. To-day, under Capitalism, it is the other way; goods are exchanged as a means of obtaining money (by money we do not mean the actual metals). By capital is meant means of production used for further and increased production with a view to profit. Unless we understand the motive we cannot understand Capitalism. All commodities are produced to-day, not because they are useful or will be used, but because they can be sold. Their sale will enable further and increased production, for the purpose of further and increased sales. The motif commences and ends with a sale. Production is only a means. Capital grew not by the power of individual capitalists, but by the growth of the productive process. With the motif of profit production grows on an ever-increasing scale, but in such a way that the results are an increasing bulk of profit to the class of owners of capital. The money and consequent command of commodities brought about originally by the process of the exchange of useful goods is now converted into capital, a power for increasing profits.

Lecture XI. Sale of Labour-power.—How is it done? How is Capital produced? Not only to-day, but even from its commencement? When the capitalist and the workman meet on the labour market the capitalist appears as the fully developed owner of the means of production; the workman appears as only the possessor of certain muscular and nervous strength which resides in his body. In such a market the workman is compelled, by hunger, to sell the use or use-value of his strength to the capitalist, who by means of his instruments of production consumes the strength of the workman. The resulting products belong to the capitalist. The capitalist pays to the workman the market price of his strength, *i.e.*, the subsistence wage. The

difference between the price of the energy of the workman and the price of the product goes to the capitalist. He uses a portion to replace the wear and tear of the instruments of production, a portion to increase these instruments (and thus to become a wealthier capitalist) and the remainder for his own revenue. The end of the transaction leaves the workman where he was with merely the money to recruit his strength which he will have to sell again to-morrow : but it leaves the capitalist a richer and more powerful capitalist. This process has been going on for some centuries with the result that workmen still get subsistence wages while the capitalists number many millionaires in their ranks. This is the secret of capitalism.

Lecture XII. Capital and Labour-power.—The individual capitalist is not the lord of his fate that he appears to be. He lives in a world of competition, to the laws of which he has to conform or become himself a wage-worker. The great law of competition is cheapness. When one capitalist wants to become richer he must endeavour to sell cheaper than his competitors. How can he do so ? By purchasing larger and more costly means of production to save the use of labour-power and consequently produce more goods at a lower price. For a short time he reaps a benefit, but soon the other capitalists follow suit, and sell at a still lower price. When the new means of production are in general use the price has fallen to such a point that the rate of profit per £100 may be even less than when the new means

were introduced, though the bulk of profit may be larger. Every capitalist is always on the look-out to defeat his neighbour by these means, with the result that the productive process is constantly increasing at a feverish pace. Larger and larger armies of workmen employed by the competing capitalists ; greater and more costly means of production ; combination between capitalists, striving to defeat the laws of competition, only to be met by more intensified competition between rival combinations ; until the whole class of capitalists are hurried to a goal they did not consciously seek, to an end their very class position prevents them seeing.

Lecture XIII. Effects on the Working Class.—At the commencement of Capitalism the working-class was abjectly striving for a livelihood. For centuries they were oppressed and ill-treated without any sign of revolt. The laws on our Statute Book are eloquent evidence of this. When the last feverish leap of capitalism took place at the commencement of the 19th Century, by the growth of machine-factory, the workmen's only revolt was instinctive and directed against the machines. But by the very growth of the productive process : by the increase of the number of labourers in the same factory : by the new machinery taking away the skill of the craftsmen : by the feverish increase of production causing the son to belong to a new industry from his father : by all this process of hustling the workers from pillar to post, these very evils have produced an organized working-class. The very education necessary for production have been used by numbers of the workers to build an organized revolt against capitalism itself. The naked and brutal oppression of a century ago would not be tolerated to-day. The workman is beginning to perceive that his labour-power is his only wealth ; and, as that is sold like all other commodities, he himself is only a-commodity ; and he is resolving to become a-man ; when that is achieved it will be the day of Social Revolution, and the Capitalist will have been found to have dug the grave of Capitalism.

NOAH ABLETT.

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Reviews

A VALUABLE PAMPHLET.

Independent Working Class Education : Thoughts and Suggestions. By EDEN and CEDAR PAUL. (From the Workers' Socialist Federation, 400 Old Ford Road, Bow, London, E. 3. 6½d., post paid.)

Eden and Cedar Paul's pamphlet (containing seven articles recently contributed to the *Workers' Dreadnought*) is one that every Plebeian will assuredly possess himself of. It may embody a programme which, for one reason or another, he may regard as somewhat visionary at the present time. Nevertheless the question of its practicability or otherwise should not hinder any of those interested in the question of working-class education from coming to some conclusion as to its desirability. "All that we advocate," say the authors, "is that a somewhat wider scope should be given to the telling phrase in the preamble by the founders of the Central Labour College: 'Why should we not independently manage our own educational affairs?'" The scheme they put forward for Labour educational institutions "outside the framework of the capitalist state" begins, accordingly, with infant education on the lines of the Montessori system; and goes on to elementary education designed "to rival and ultimately to supersede capitalist state education, in accordance with the principles of the 'New School' movement." Finally, there must be education for young adults "in the way already vigorously promoted by the Labour Colleges and the Plebs League." "Why," they ask, "should Labour not interpret Independent Working Class Education as meaning infant education and elementary school education as well as the teaching of socialist history and socialist economics to those who have outgrown the school age?"

Succeeding sections deal with each of these three "planks" in the Labour educational platform. Plebeians will note with interest that our authors regard the preamble of the C.L.C. as "a document, we think, destined to rank in socialist history beside the Communist Manifesto and the Preamble of the American I.W.W."

Circumstances are compelling, and will more and more compel, our attention to the problems herein stated. We cannot afford to rely on the chance "conversion" of the young worker to an interest in his or her own education. We have to think out some scheme which will rival the attractions of the "pictures" and the street-parade, and win over to our side the 15 or 16 year-old youngsters who will later become serious students in our more advanced classes. Eden and Cedar Paul deserve our gratitude for having raised the question, and opened the discussion in so interesting and informative a manner.

A GUILD TEXT BOOK.

The Meaning of National Guilds. By M. B. RECKITT & C. E. BECHHOFFER. (Palmer & Hayward. 7/6 net.)

Guilds literature grows apace. The bibliography at the end of this volume contains the titles of several books and a whole string of pamphlets. But there was room for a book of this kind, in which the authors have aimed at "editing"—co-ordinating, formulating, and presenting systematically—Guild "doctrines," rather than at treating their subject from any new or individual point of view. Guild Socialism has been too often discussed in these pages, and the space at our disposal is too short for any further discussion of it here. This book must become the "standard work of reference" on the subject; for *National Guilds* (S. G. Hobson) was altogether too fragmentary and sketchy.

There is an interesting paragraph in the Introduction to this volume in which the authors remark that "It would be interesting, if space allowed, to trace the respective shares of the various influences which have contributed to the formulation of National Guild principles and ideas, and to disentangle them."

We should find the craftsmen's challenge and the blazing democracy of Wm. Morris; the warning of Mr. Belloc against the huge shadow of the Servile State and, perhaps, something also of his claim for the individuals' control over property; the insistence of Mr. Penty on the perils of industrialism and its large-scale organization, and his recovery and bequest to us of the significant and unique word "guild." We should find something of French Syndicalism, with its championship of the producer; something of American Industrial Unionism, with its clear vision of the need for industrial organization; and something of Marxian Socialism, with its unsparing analysis of the wage-system by which Capitalism exalts itself and enslaves the mass of men.

Morris-Belloc-Penty-I.W.W.-Marx—a mixed ancestry! And to this list one might add—something of Mr. Chesterton, with his dislike of Victorian "Progressivism" and his quaint misreading of the theory of Evolution; something of Mr. Orage, with his love of generalisations—especially about women; and a lot of Mr. Cole, with his Research-Department passion for accumulating facts and figures, and his Oxford passion for the devising of elaborate schemes thereon. The chapter headings of this book give a hint of all these "sources"—The Failure of Progressivism; Servility or Freedom? The Middle Class and National Guilds; Trade Unionism and Beyond (1. The Meaning of Industrial Unionism; 2. The Reconstruction of Trade Unionism; 3. The Future of T.U. Policy); The Mirage of Reconstruction; The Transition to National Guilds; National Guilds in Being. The final chapter, on Problems and Policy, summarises a number of discussions between Guildsmen on various questions upon which they have yet to agree.

"The essentials of the Guild idea," declare the authors, "are the recovery of initiative by the ordinary worker, his release from bondage to the base purposes of profit, and his achievement of complete and responsible industrial democracy." With those "essentials" no Plebeian, at any rate, will quarrel. And he will, if he gets hold of this book, assuredly be grateful to Messrs. Reckitt and Bechhofer for a very competent and very suggestive piece of work.

J.F.H.

Correspondence

GUILDSMEN AND INDUSTRIAL UNIONISTS.

DEAR EDITOR,—May I have a little space for a word with Eden and Cedar Paul (with reference to their article in your October issue).

It is good to find them pointing out how near together are the positions of Guild Socialists and Industrial Unionists. But it is even better to be able to reply to them that the gap is still narrower than they think.

The main point which we have imagined to be at issue is the necessity for a political as well as for an industrial organization in a free society. And when the Pauls say that we must "aim at the construction of a new political organism," they cross that breach and leave us, except for far less important matters, in complete agreement.

They insist that the new organism should be of a "Soviet" rather than of a "Parliamentary" type. Again I agree, and though I speak only for myself, I do not think they will find any Guild Socialists who would make the retention of the "Parliamentary" form an article of faith.

Yours sincerely,

W. N. FEWER.

QUERY.

SIR,—What is idealism, and how does it differ from materialism? After reading Ramsay Macdonald and arguing with our I.L.P. friends one learns

that they are idealists. Materialists say that the brain receives its impressions from without, the problems for the mind to solve being set by the material conditions outside us. The psychologists tell us that the mind cannot create absolutely new ideas, but can only rearrange and combine old ones.

The human mind, then, receives its impressions from outside, rearranges them more to the desire of the individual, who sets to work to alter things accordingly. These alterations are in their turn taken up by the mind, and so on. But the idealists say that their utopias and ideals are only the expression of how they think things should be altered, that idealism is the force or power behind the alterations. Where is the difference, then, between the two theories? The problem seems like the can and the dog's tail. Is it the rattle of the can that makes the dog run, or the dog's running that makes the can rattle?

Yours, etc. L.B.

News of the Movement

Space forbids a discourse on the success of our movement. We are booming as never before, and all Plebeians are urged to link up with the classes in their district.

Manchester Class Directory.—*Dukenfield*, Newmarket Tavern, King Street, Sunday, 12.30. Sec. Brown, 73 Astley Street, Dukenfield. Tutor, Hadfield.

West Gorton.—Gorebrook Hall, William Street, Sunday, 3.0 p.m. Sec. Siddle, 30 Margaret Street, West Gorton. Tutor, Poole.

Openshaw.—B.S.P., Margaret Street, Sunday, 3.0 p.m. Sec. Taylor, 14 Orrell Street, Openshaw. Tutor, Dickson. *Manchester*, Clarion Cafe, Market Street, Monday, 8 p.m. Sec. Sheard, Denmark Road, Oxford Road, Greenhays. Tutor, Genge. *Manchester* Branch, Sheet Metal Workers, Royal George, Lever Street, Sunday, 10.30 a.m. Sec. Hopwood, 4 Langton Street, Seedly. Tutor, McGee. *Longsight* Branch N.U.R., Stanley Hall, Stanley Avenue, Sunday, 11.0 a.m. Sec. Jenkinson, 55 Agnes Street, Longsight. Tutor, Redfern. *Ashton-under-Lyne* B.S.P., Co-operative Hall, Oldham Road, Wednesday, 7.30 p.m. Sec. Cocker, 136 Portland Street, Ashton. Tutor, McGee. *Shaw*, Oldham, Pine Apple, Shaw, Tuesday, 7.30 p.m. Sec. Golding, c/o 40 Albert Avenue, Shaw. Tutor, Hill. *Ashton-under-Lyne*, Hist St. John's, Sunday, 2.0 p.m. Sec. Jackson, 2 Egerton Street, Ashton. Tutor, Cavanagh. *Salford*, Hyndman Hall, Liverpool Street, Friday, 8.0 p.m. Sec. Genge, Hyndman Hall. Tutor, Davis. *Hulme*, No. 12 Branch N.U.R., Temperance Hall, York Street, Chester Road, Hulme. Sunday, 3.0 p.m. Sec. Bearnand, 16 Blantyre Street, Hulme. Tutor, Munro. (We apologise for brevity in the above. Comrade McGee did not send either the initials or titles (if any) of the comrades who are conducting the classes).

A conference at *Halifax* on September 22nd was very successful, 76 delegates attending, representing 30 Trade Unions. Chairman, E. Holroyd, A.S.E. Speakers, G. Kaye, President Halifax Trades and Labour Council, and Fred Shaw, A.S.E. Two classes will be held Sunday morning. Economics lecturer, A. Waight. Thursday evenings, "Philosophic Logic." Lecturer, F. Smith. Full particulars from Sec. H. Highley, 171 Spring Hall Lane, Halifax.

Derby has also had a good conference, 60 T.U. delegates meeting to form a branch of the C.L.C. Chair was taken by H. Pearce and Comrade Shaw supported the resolution which was put by Mr. Green, and seconded by Mr. Sutton. A class of close on 60 students is in full swing, with J. Drabble as leader, every Sunday at 11, in the Co-op. Educational Room, Exchange Street. Fuller particulars from Mrs. Sutton, Clarion Club, Wardwick, Derby.

Leeds will not be beaten by Bradford or Sheffield, and classes and study circles are being formed. J. T. Ashurst, 2 Rosebank Street, Woodsley Road, Leeds, will be glad to help and send particulars to Plebeians in that district.

Comrade J. W. Deakin, indefatigable worker for the *Plebs*, is conducting a class at Barrow-in-Furness (where the 75 pound notes came from for the Publishing Dept. l) Newbold's syllabus is being taken and the class is held Saturday. Write J. W. D., 6 Newcastle Street, Barrow-in-Furness.

Under the auspice of the *Edinburgh* and *Leith* Plebs League and Forth Workers' Committee classes in Economics and Industrial History commenced Friday, October 25th, in the Printers' and Papermakers' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh, at 8.15 p.m., and in the Presbyterian Church Hall, Garden City, Rosyth, on Monday, October 28th. Lecturers, T. Drummond, Leith, and J. Cluny, Dunfermline. Particulars for F. Morrison, 113 Pitt Street, Leith.

Bristol has an Industrial Hist. Class. Sec., Mrs. A. E. Chapple, 25 Kensal Road, Victoria Park, Bristol. This is a new district, and all comrades are asked to give their support and help to make it a success.

Wallsend-on-Tyne comrades have taken a large shop at the Masonic Buildings, Station Road, Wallsend. The premises are to be known as the Wallsend Labour College, and classes are already formed, many young workers attending. The College is to be open every night from 6 p.m. Fee, 2d. per week; young workers free for the first year. Sec., A. Smith, 25 Eden Street, Wallsend. Tutors, J. Barber and J. Stewart.

Chopwell has had a Will Lawther night (instead of a flag day). This prophet is honoured in his own country, and we are glad to hear that his comrades appreciate his services. On October 5th, after a concert and appropriate speakers, a leather attaché case, a fountain pen and pocket wallet, also Bouger's work on "Criminology and Economic Conditions" were presented to Comrade Lawther in acknowledgment of his services to the working-class movement. A very pleasant evening closed with supper, games and music.

REORGANIZATION.

Secretaries of Plebs League branches are asked to send in a full list of members' names, addresses and subscriptions. Individual members who have not already done so are asked to send in their subscription (1/- per annum, September, 1918, to August, 1919.)

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Plebs Publications

There was a printer's error in our advert. of Ablett's book last month. We offered 25 for £1 5s. and 50 for £1 10s. Obviously this last should read £2 10s. We had several people who trustfully sent us 30/- for 50 books, but none sent only 5/- with a request for the second 25! Whether this is the Law of Diminishing Returns or something to do with Marginal Utility I cannot say (till I have read Ablett's book!); what I do know is that we can't sell 50 books at that figure. Many apologies.

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The orders for the book, with cash, are coming in very well, and we shall send out as soon as ever the book is off the press. Election printing may delay us a little, but we hope to be able to have all the books out early in the New Year.

* * * * *

Once more we ask all comrades to beg for the support of the Magazine in the branches of their organizations. We have an enormous printing bill each month which we *cannot* meet out of the sales of the Magazine. We have, therefore, to rely upon donations to meet our deficit. We have brought the Magazine through the last stormy months—only a little more effort is necessary. Once prices regain their normal or even drop a little we shall flourish. *Our appeal is to all our comrades.*

* * * * *

We have to thank two comrades this month for special help and support. Lady Warwick has sent us a donation of £50, together with a letter that would have helped and encouraged us even if it had not contained any enclosure. It was a donation from Lady Warwick that helped us to launch Mark Starr's book, and this second donation will enable us to put the publishing of Ablett's book on a sound footing. We shall not forget. "A native Sheffield woman," out of what she calls her "hard-earned and tight-fisted economy," sent us a donation to the organizing fund. She sent no address, so that we acknowledge the receipt of it here with sincere thanks.

* * * * *

Please note.

We have sold out of the paper-covered edition of Mark Starr's book, that is, 10,000 copies since January, 1918. We hope to re-print as soon as we can. The more cash-with-orders we get for Ablett's book, the quicker we can re-issue Mark Starr's. Meanwhile, we have a quantity of the cloth edition. (2/6 each; 2/9 post paid). We have still a few bound vols. of the *Plebs* for 1917 (5/- post paid), and shall be glad to send out those that were ordered *if comrades will apply for them.*

* * * * *

We still get letters asking for books we do not publish. We only stock our own publications.

As soon as it can be arranged we hope to start a Book Agency again. Due notice will be given. If inquiries for books are sent in they should be accompanied by a threehalfpenny stamp for reply.

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"An Appeal to Trade Unionists" leaflet will be supplied on application, also small posters advertising the Magazine. Funds do not permit these to be sent out indiscriminately.

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Don't forget the Organizing Fund. Small donations (and large ones) to J. H. PRATT, 13 Havelock Road, Shrewsbury.

The Plebs Bookshelf

THE *New Age* has recently had a good deal to say about "Neo-Marxism." Two or three months ago Mr. (or is it Major-General?) W. Stephen Sanders had an article under that heading, dealing with the Socialist-Imperialist movement headed in Germany by Dr. Paul Lensch and in Austria by Dr. Karl Renner. This article has since been published as a pamphlet, with the title "Pan-German Socialism," and distributed gratis by the official Propaganda Department (or whatever its name is) along with the same author's celebrated works, "If the Kaiser Governed Britain," "Is it a Capitalist War?," "The Tragedy of Russia," etc., etc. But it is not to Neo-Marxism according to Sanders, Neo-Marxism of the Pan-German Imperialist sort, that I wish to draw the attention of Plebeians. More recently, three articles in the *New Age*, by Mr. A. J. Penty, have dealt with "Neo-Marxism" in this country; and this Neo-Marxism, though (like Mr. Penty's views on it) it is somewhat wonderful and incomprehensible, is certainly not Imperialist, but rather what Lord Northcliffe and the *Morning Post* nowadays call "Bolshevist" in its tendencies.

Mr. Penty, one of the earlier apostles, you will remember, of the "Guild Idea," opened his attack in the *New Age* of Sept. 19th, in an article headed "On the Class War Again." He is nervous as to what may happen if, in the "coming great struggle between Capital and Labour," Labour wins. "There is a danger that in such an event we may pass through all the phases common to social revolutions ere sanity will prevail." "In our anticipated revolution, as in the Russian, the moderate party will come first. . . . Then the great crisis will arrive. . . . The Neo-Marxians (our Bolsheviks) will get their chance. They will conspire to seize power and inaugurate the Class War." *Inaugurate*, observe. Mr. Penty's notion of the idea of the class-struggle is distinctly melodramatic. . . . And "the mass of the people will become so weary of the anarchy which must follow the inauguration of the Class War, that they will welcome a return of the old régime merely for the sake of peace and quietness." So the revolution will be spoilt. And the Neo-Marxians, curse them, will have been and gone and done it. A dismal prospect. . . . And the remedy? Guildsmen must do some inaugurating. "They should inaugurate a vigorous propaganda against the impossibility of the Neo-Marxians . . . and should seek to discredit them by carrying Neo-Marxian ideas to their logical conclusion, showing how their excess of zeal must defeat their own ends by provoking reaction," etc., etc. Mr. Penty proceeds to "inaugurate the vigorous propaganda" himself. The N.-M.'s, says he, are "without any social theory, in the sense that they have never applied themselves to the task of elaborating the principles upon which a democratic and communal society must rest." Worse still, "they appear to be unaware that such a theory is necessary." All they have thought about is how to substitute "ill-will for goodwill," and how to "carry their Class War Policy into execution." Besotted fools! And when they are up against the psychological problems which their crazy policy will raise, "they will be the most surprised people in the world" (for materialists never understand psychology").

On, therefore, with the "discrediting." This is how Mr. Penty does it:—

Guildsmen must show the Neo-Marxians that their ideas are not only subversive of others, but of themselves. Neo-Marxians are very fond of insisting "that the method prevailing in any society of producing the material livelihood determines the social, political and intellectual life of men in general," but it never apparently occurs to them to make the deduction that in that case they and their gospel also become a part of the disease of society—a deduction which is not only evidenced by the fact that the Neo-Marxian gospel finds its warmest support in those dis-

tricts where industrialism is most highly developed, but that Neo-Marxians are so much a part of the system as to be incapable of imagining any other. They do not propose to change the system, but only its ownership.

Could you desire a more perfect example of the "carrying of Neo-Marxian ideas to their logical conclusion"? Mr. Penty elaborates his point (if you can discover any point) in an article (October 17th) on "The Neo-Marxians and the Materialist Conception of History." Therein he makes it clear that he has grasped the Materialist Conception of History as fully and firmly as the idea of the Class Struggle.

Will it not follow, if all ideas are but the reflection of the material environment that, as the materialist conception of history was not formulated until modern times, it itself cannot be an explanation of the whole range of history, but only of the present age? . . . We are willing to grant the Neo-Marxians that material considerations preponderate so overwhelmingly at the present day that any interpretation of the development of modern society must be governed primarily by material considerations.

But *autres temps, autres moeurs*! In other days they recked less of "material considerations," and (according to Mr. Penty) laid more store by psychological impulses. So that "for practical purposes, Marx and his materialist conception of history are anything but an infallible guide." Q.E.D. Nevertheless, alas! "that beautiful faith in human nature and its possibilities, that strong sense of justice which redeemed the extravagances of the early Socialists, seem slowly but surely, to be drying up; and all as a consequence of the materialist conception of history which daily increases its hold on the mind of the workers."

In the third article (October 10th) on "Syndicalism and the Neo-Marxians," Mr. Penty shows that "the Neo-Marxians themselves have found Marx out without knowing it."

For they threw over Marx when they abandoned political activity in favour of Syndicalism. . . . The principles underlying Syndicalism are fundamentally opposed to those of Marx; and the truth of this assertion may be tested by an appeal to history. Syndicalism, as is well known, is a development of the Anarchist Communism which followed the growth of Trade Union activity in France. And as it was the ideas of Anarchist Communism which Marx sought to destroy, it follows that the revival of Anarchist Communism involves the repudiation of Marx.

Q.E.D. once more!

But in spite of all his appeals to history, logic, psychology, and the rest, I am afraid that the real reason for Mr. Penty's dislike of the Neo-Marxians

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is to be traced back to his suspicion that they are governed by an "instinctive antipathy" for the Middle-Class Socialist. That, indeed, is the note which is audible through all his tears and groans—and logic. "That such a feeling of estrangement should have grown up between the workers and the intellectuals in the Socialist movement is deplorable, and augurs ill for the future. For, in such circumstances, Socialists have as much chance of success as an army which demanded that *its general staff* should come into the fighting line." You observe the calm assumption—that the Middle-Class Socialists should form "the general staff" of the Labour-army. God help the Labour movement if its general staff ever consists of Penty's ! . . . I am conscious that I have not done justice to the vigour, the irrepressibleness, the irresistibleness, of Mr. Penty's "propaganda." But he must be read to be believed.

* * * * *

After Mr. Penty, the following quotations from a letter by Mr. Havelock Wilson in the *Morning Post* (October 1st) will perhaps be appropriate. They are worthy of preservation :—

I believe that Karl Marx's teaching is *quite unsuited to England* and to the British character as revived and revealed by the war. *The British working man has no need to kneel at the feet of a German Jew to learn political evolution.*

I have spent my life and sacrificed my health in fighting for the under-dog, and I am not likely to desert him now. And I am going to use all my influence to wean the masses from class war, conscription of wealth, and other forms of *crude and impracticable materialism.*

Labour has ample power to secure a full reward for its industry. It also has the power to injure itself and retard progress by pursuing *ideals imported from Germany.*

The Lord preserve us, also, from a general staff composed of Havelock Wilsons.

* * * * *

E. & C. .P. send a brief comment on my paragraph last month on the subject of translations from the German. The German language, they remark, is not *necessarily* obscure, but——. They quote an extract which they describe as "a fair sample of much that is published by quite modern writers"; and they go on to declare that "If we go back a few decades, the style is infinitely more complicated. It is obvious, then, that when a translation seems "ponderous and opaque," we must not always blame it on the translator!" All of which seems to point to the conclusion that though the German language may not necessarily be obscure, most of the people who write it are.

J.F.H.

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