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THE PLEBS MAGAZINE

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

Vol. XI.

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Franz Mehring

DIED JANUARY 30TH, 1919.

Fate has been cruel to us. But a few weeks ago a foul murder, crying to heaven, but still unavenged, put a violent end to the lives of two of our noblest and greatest—Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg. And now death has carried off Franz Mehring, than whom no one, except Klara Zetkin, stood closer to them politically and personally. For Mehring was the third in the original Spartacus group of four, formed in 1916, and only Klara Zetkin remains, ill and heartbroken, to hold the torch for the younger men and women who will yet one day triumph in the German Republic.

Mehring was an old man of 73—but how young in heart and mind! None could ever surpass him in intellectual alertness, in quickness of temperament, in enthusiasm for the great ideals of Socialism, in glow and lucidity of revolutionary thought. A scholar of rare attainments, even in scholarly Germany, he yet was a *fighter* to the tips of his fingers; and though he was a historian of whom his bourgeois countrymen were proud, he was also a publicist whose masterly analyses of current events in the daily and weekly Party Press constituted for many years the intellectual food of countless readers all the world over. For he was essentially a man of flesh and blood, for whom the past was always subordinate to the present, and it was just his treatment of

historical subjects from the viewpoint of a daily publicist, and his treatment of current events with the magisterial hand of an historian, which was the secret of his great power and influence. To these qualities must be added his vast erudition—he was one of the greatest authorities on Prussian history in Germany—and his matchless style, brilliant and compact. One can well understand why even the German bourgeois press, at his death, devoted to his memory long and admiring obituary notices.

Yet it had reason to hate him with all the hatred of its class. For Mehring in his younger days, was a bourgeois Democrat, and it was in the bourgeois press, by his stinging attacks on the Socialists, that he first won his laurels. But then came the Bismarckian, anti-Socialist legislation, and in face of the monstrous persecution of the young Socialist movement, Saul was turned into Paul. Mehring began to study Socialism, and gradually took up its defence in the very papers in which but recently he had vilified it. When in 1819 the anti-Socialist laws fell through, he publicly joined the party and became a frequent contributor to its press. Kautsky invited him to provide the *Neue Zeit* with a weekly leading article, and soon those articles—marked by an arrow in lieu of signature—were the most diligently studied pages in the review. Later he became leader-writer (from Berlin) on the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, and that paper, too (edited as it was for a time by Rosa Luxembourgl) soon acquired an international reputation.

But simultaneously he was carrying on historical work. His book, *The Lessing Legend*, demonstrated for the first time on a large scale—and with wonderful effect—the Marxist method of historical research in the analysis and description of a whole epoch. Then came the still more remarkable *History of German Social Democracy*, in four volumes, which will for ever remain a classic, not only in the Socialist, but in the general literature of Germany. His next work was the editing of the hitherto unpublished "literary legacy" of Marx and Engels, elucidated by historical and political disquisitions in the form of prefaces which may be said to form the most important contribution to the understanding of the teachings of Marx and Engels hitherto published. His last great work Mehring published only the other day, as it were, on the occasion of the Marx centenary—a biography of Marx which must remain the standard work for a long time. It would be impossible to enumerate his minor works (such, e.g., as the studies of Prussian history between 1800 and 1812) all models alike of research and of style. Mehring was not only a materialist historian, but also a past master in wielding the materialist method, and from that point of view alone his works will live as long as there are Marxist students in the world.

Politically, Mehring stood always on the Extreme Left, together with Rosa Luxembourgl and Klara Zetkin. With those two incomparable women he was united by the closest ties of respect and friendship. With them he fought out the great fight against Revisionism twenty years ago, at a time when Kautsky was still deliberating whether Revisionism was dangerous or not; and with them and the much younger Karl Liebknecht he founded in 1916 the Spartacus group. To Klara Zetkin he dedicated his biography of Marx, in which the economic chapters had been written by Rosa Luxembourgl. In 1918 he edited the first and only number of the *Internationale*, which was to be for the new revolutionary International what the *Neue Zeit* had been for the second opportunist International.

Mehring was highly disliked by the Revisionists of all countries, and was not loved by the "centre," who fretted under his ever watchful and critical "schoolmastership." But the proletariat of Germany will honour his memory as that of one whose transcendent talents contributed so much to its intellectual and moral equipment.

W.A.M.M.

Ernest Jones, Chartist



WHEN I was asked to write a "centenary" article on Ernest Jones, my immediate difficulty was the lack of information at hand regarding his life generally, and his personal association with and contribution to the Chartist Movement. Now, however, having through the kindness of a friend had an opportunity of looking through some material providing that information in abundance, my difficulty is to condense into my allotted space something that at best can give but an inadequate idea of the personality of this man, his wonderful energy, and the sacrifices he made on behalf of the movement to which he devoted himself.

The various articles published during the centenary week have made known the fact that he was the son of an English army officer (of Welsh descent) attached to the Duke of Cumberland, afterwards King Ernest of Hanover. He was born on January 25th, 1819, at Berlin. He spent his childhood and youth upon his father's estate near the Black Forest, and he was educated first by private tutors, and later at a very exclusive college. In 1838 the family returned to England, and Ernest Jones was introduced into the "best" society, appeared at Court, and for some years lived the life of a man of rank and fashion—a waste of life which later he regretted much. But this did not keep him altogether away from literature.

From a very early age he had shown literary ability. At 9 years of age he had written a prize tale; at 10 translated part of a work by Voltaire. But now at 22 his real work began. The first of his notable works was the *Wood Spirit* (in two vols.), which at once gained for him a place amongst writers. Thence onwards he wrote almost continuously—apart from his political writings—novels and poetry, etc. In 1844 he was called to the bar, but did little in this direction at this period of his life. He must also have undergone financial embarrassments as we are told that he went through the Bankruptcy Court in the following year.*

It was in 1846 that he definitely allied himself with the Chartist Movement. Entering it when it was at a very low ebb, his tremendous enthusiasm and remarkable oratorical powers become a valuable asset and assisted greatly in reviving the movement. But, as explained in previous articles in the *Plebs*, the movement broke up, first, through the treachery of the middle-class sections, and, later, through economic forces against which all the energy and sacrifices even the Chartists were capable of could not succeed. In 1848, Jones was convicted, with several others, on a charge of spreading seditious, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. The prison conditions were terrible; two of the group died, and when Ernest Jones was set free, he was practically a physical wreck. His enthusiasm, however, was not abated, although his views had undergone some modification, since we are told that he was "now in favour of uniting with the middle classes." During this imprisonment he composed a number of poems.

* See article in *Manchester Guardian*.

Shortly after his release he commenced his *Notes to the People*, later *The People's Paper*.^{*} The carrying on of the work, together with his lecturing, etc., meant a tremendous strain, as the whole paper was written by himself, and that without profit (neither did he receive any payment for lectures). Throughout the whole of his public life he rigidly abstained from taking payment, frequently suffering the severest poverty in order to avoid the possible taunt of being "a gentleman who lived upon the movement." Day and night his energies were spent in vain endeavours to revive the movement; meeting one disappointment after another he yet persisted in his efforts. Towards the later years of his life he became more and more identified with the middle-class elements, but this was undoubtedly due to the failure of the working-class section to respond to his appeal.

Ernest Jones was at once one of the noblest and most unselfish men who have fought for the working-class movement, and whatever his shortcomings, judged from the standpoint of to-day, they cannot be written down against him, but must be explained by the conditions of his time.

He himself, it is true, contributed little to the Movement in the shape of constructive ideas or theory. His genius lay rather in presenting the ideas of the movement in a popular way. One modification of his views, which his experience forced upon him, was concerned with "physical force"; after his term in prison he put peaceful measures first.

His position in the Chartist Movement was a curious one. Belonging in reality to no particular section, he at once agreed and disagreed with all. The handicraft workers with their narrow outlook, later the co-operative sections with their simple notions of the nature of capitalism and their ability to put the capitalist out of business, the purely Trade Union section with its policy of strikes, etc.—all were criticised by him. The middle-class element, too, in fact, every section that seemed likely to use the movement for purely sectional ends, received his opposition.

The views he held can be deduced from the following:—

"The centralization of wealth in the hands of a few engenders luxury; then a class is created for the mere purpose of pandering to the luxuries of the rich. This class becomes dependent upon the rich, and, therefore, identified with their interest. This class, again, employs another section of the people as its dependants—takes them away from productive labour to artificial callings; unfits them for hardy toil, demoralises them, thus forms an aristocracy of labour, out of the higher paid trades, the 'better class' mechanics; and thus the interest of one portion of the people are severed from those of the remainder. The 'better paid' looks down on the less fortunate. Class is thus established within class, each having a separate interest, jealousies and objects; and an oligarchy is empowered to divide and rule.

"Revolutions sometimes cut the gordian knot, but this is scarcely ever practical except in the early stages of a nation's decay, and sometimes in the latest; it may succeed in the infancy and old age of states, but rarely in their manhood. For in the latter period, though the middle-class look upon the aristocracy with a hostile eye, they dare not subvert it. All, then, in that stage of society depends upon the working class. But when overtoil, disease and famine have destroyed their bodily strength, and when centralization has enabled government to wield its force with the rapidity and precision of a machine, Revolution, as dependent upon the working-class, is an almost vain endeavour. 'Isolated riot may be frequent, revolution is impossible.

"In the old age of states revolution again becomes possible from the fact that a new element of discontent becomes active—the hitherto pros-

^{*} A striking article from which was reprinted in the *Plebs*, 1914

perous middle-class begin to suffer ; they are still strong in mind and body and, having less to lose, grow revolutionary."

Jones' own actions in later life seem to have been based upon some such ideas.

In the *Plebs*, mention should be made of his association with Marx, Engels, and the political refugees of the continent, and the International. He translated a number of Freiligrath's poems, amongst others the "Farewell Word of the *Rhannish Gazette*." Marx and himself appeared on the same platform more than once, and corresponded frequently about matters affecting the movement. It must be remembered in this connection that the period in which Jones came into the Chartist Movement was that which culminated on the Continent in the revolutions of '48, and the root causes of their break down and failure were the same.

Whatever his theoretical shortcomings, Ernest Jones was a great fighter, one who, like many another, sprang from the middle-class, but by reason of his life's work, now belongs to the working-class, and by them alone is honoured.

W. .H MAINWARING.

The Labour College

In view of the constant inquiries we receive concerning the re-opening, etc., of the College, it is not, perhaps, superfluous to mention that the Plebs League is an *unofficial* propagandist body connected with the College, and not the governing body of that institution. We are not, therefore, in a position to give particulars as to its reopening, which will doubtless be announced by the Governors in due course. We understand that preparations are now in hand and plans under discussion—indeed the advertisement appearing on another page of this issue makes that obvious. It is an open secret, also, that W. W. Craik is back in this country—for reasons connected with the (C.)L.C. But there must necessarily be a good deal of renovating and re-furnishing to be done at the College itself before it is possible to re-open the doors. May we suggest to the Governors that May Day would be a fitting date for that ceremony ?

We should also like to call the attention of "all whom it may concern" to "W.L.'s" letter in our issue of last month, urging miners everywhere to agitate for miners' scholarships at the College, and, further (if that be practicable) for the M.F.G.B. to share in its ownership and control ; and to Frank Jackson's letter elsewhere in this issue, urging the Engineers to take a similar course. There is *only one real working-class College*, remember.

One other point. We note that Ruskin College, when it re-opens this year, is to have a hostel for women students. We sincerely hope the Governors will see to it that the Labour College does not lag behind in that respect.

IMPORTANT NEW PUBLICATIONS ON RUSSIA.

Red Russia.—An Account of the Bolshevik Revolution, by JOHN REED, an eye-witness. Illustrated, price 6d. (postage extra).

Questions and Answers about Russia.—By ALBERT RHYS WILLIAMS, an American War Correspondent, who joined the Russian Red Guard, worked with Lenin and Trotsky, and returned to America in autumn, 1918, as an authorised messenger of the Soviet Government. Price 4d. (postage extra).

Self-Education of the Workers.—With some account of the Educational work of the Russian Soviets, by A. LUNACHARSKI, Minister of Education. Price 2d. (postage extra).

The Red Funeral in Vladivostok.—How British and Japanese seized the Vladivostok Soviet. Price 2d. (postage extra).

From the Workers' Socialist Federation, 400, Old Ford Road, London, E. 3

Scotland in Revolution

I.

This article has no reference to happenings either of the present or of the recent past, and it has nothing to do with anything that certain dissatisfied and truculent agitators may desire to see in the future, immediate or ultimate. Hence the censor, should he ever scan the pages of our little monthly, has no cause to feel alarm. We have nothing to do with events that have occurred within the memory of living man, nothing that even our grandparents can recall. We are chronicling incidents antecedent to Workers' Committees, Shop Stewards, or even Trade Unions.

They have to do with the Parliament House, upon the High Street of Old Edinburgh, with High Courts, and with noble lords and worthy judges. They concern such troublous vagabonds as Fife miners, but they treat of these persons long before the ancestors of McLean or M'Manus were so far uprooted from the age-long homelands of their clans and septs as to have afflicted the masters of Forth and Clyde with their rebellious progeny. We write not of arms and agitators, but of quillpens and lawyers, of parchments and legislators who set us many a precedent in the processes of revising social systems and subverting the forms of property.

Having been dubbed a revolutionary and denounced as a "Bolshie," it occurred to the writer of this article to pry into the records of the Realm of Scotland and to discover for himself whether such characters were without parallel in the history of the northern kingdom. With that intent he betook himself to the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, and surrounding his desk and pad with barricades of vellum and leather-clad tomes, dived into the Manuscripts' Commission's reprint of the Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland.

And these were some of the things that he retrieved. Here beginneth the First Lesson!

There seem to have been men of substance and of weight in 15th Century Scotland who were concerned that all able-bodied persons should work, for we find in 1425: "Inquisition to be made of ydil men that has nocht of thare awin to leif apon," and that such men must get a master or a craft within 40 days or be punished. In 1427,-29,-57,-78 and 1503 further legislation of this kind was passed. For the land of Scotland was by this time beginning to be appropriated to private uses, and the poor were forced to take to a vagabond existence, as in contemporary England.

Craftsmen such as smiths, baxters (bakers), brewers and sellers of salt and victuals appear about the middle of the following century to have been charging "exorbitant prices"—not for their labour-power, but for those things wherein that power was embodied; and this called for drastic parliamentary action on the part of the Estates, who were interested in the well-being of a limited community of mere consumers.

But all this was but as the brewing of the great storm that now broke over the old order in Scotland when the Roman Church, with its abbeys and priories, cathedrals and colleges, was swept into ruin or plundered without ruth or respect. An Act of 1551, providing for "the making of an universall wecht and ane universall mesoure" gives the clue to what was happening to make the feudal state and the Catholic Church unsuitable to the requirements of a changing economy. Commodity production was making its appearance and required uniformity of standards throughout the areas wherein exchange values were in constant and continuous process of circulation.

The number of laws for dealing with beggars bears abundant testimony to the change that must have been coming over the nobles and lairds who, discharging their retinues, were settling down to cultivate their holdings and to increase their revenues. Once set upon this, they made swift and drastic riddance of the idle monks who stood between them and enjoyment of the

comparatively rich lands of Arbroath, Abercorne, Cambuskenneth, Glasgow, Paisley, and many another church estate. In 1567, we find these gross materialists laying sacrilegious hands upon holy rood and holy kirk so "that ordoure may be taken for all abbacyis as weil for the present as for tymes to come As also for benefices and kirkis anneexat and dissolution to be maid thairof and ane act to be maid thapoun."

Quite summary in its language and its operation was this method of annexing to the Crown lands, benefices and buildings hallowed by centuries of piety and donated according to immemorial custom. Next we find that "the teinds" or tithes were to pertain to the Church, but that "the temporal lands" were to be "disposit be avysis of the parliamet." So, after a while, they were "disposit be avysis of the parliamet"—the parliament of the propertied estates—to landlords! From Church to Crown, and from Crown to Crown favourites and creditors who happened to control the king, to have lordships entitling them to a seat in the Lords, or to have influence with the Lower House.

Thus, in 1593: "Act in favour of the Duck of Lennox anent the superioritie of the bischoprics of Sanctandrois and Glasgow." And in 1606: "Erectioun of the abbacie of Balnuirrenoch with the landis and baronies of Kirknewtoun and Ballerno unite thairto in ane temporall lordschip in favouris of the lord Balnuirrenoch." So, in this same session, Dryburgh and Cambuskenneth were made temporal lordships "in favouris of the erle of Mar," Jedburgh and Coldingham Abbeys were given ("for services rendered") to the Earl of Home and a long list of other Crown forfeitures was transformed into private property. It was this very year, 1606, when the nobles and lairds were helping themselves to lands, rich in soil and forest, heath and minerals, that they legislated the coal miners and workers at the salt pans into a condition of permanent serfdom, binding on themselves, their wives and their descendants. The following is a literal translation of the somewhat difficult old Scots in which a part of this Act "anent coilzearies (colliers) and saltaris" is phrased:

And the said colliers, coalbearers and saltworkers to be esteemed reputed and holden as thieves and punished in their bodies, viz. :—so many of them as shall hold themselves back for wages and fees. And the said Estates of this present parliament gives power and commission to all masters and owners of coal-haughis and (salt) pans to apprehend all vagabonds and sturdy beggars to be put to labour.

Under this Act, unrepealed until 1775 and not completely out of operation until 1799, the Dukes of Buccleuch and Hamilton, the Earls of Rosebery (or that family) and Wemyss, and many another Scottish lord and laird forced their workers to labour as virtual slaves, as serfs transmissible with the estate, what time in unblushing and shameless defiance of the law of 1592 they worked Crown minerals without paying their legal "teinds" or tenth-part to the State.

J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD.

(To be continued.)

The GOVERNORS of the LABOUR COLLEGE, LONDON, invite applications for the post of Assistant Lecturer. Salary £200 per annum, with Board and Residence. A thorough knowledge of Marxian Theory essential. Particulars of age, service with the Labour Movement and educational qualifications, to be submitted by applicants.

Applications must be made before March 8th next, and should be addressed to the Secretary, MR. THOMAS LOWTH, Unity House, Euston Road, London, N.W.

The W.E.A. at the Cross Roads

A writer in the February *Highway*, the organ of the W.E.A., has some significant, if occasionally incoherent, things to say about the work of the Association. After some references to "the limitations of our economic system" and to "Bolshevik" criticisms of that same (and of the W.E.A.) he breaks forth:—

Ha! ha! jeers the materialist revolutionist [which must mean us]. The burked issue, the child of moral and intellectual cowardice. Can this be true, brother disciples of the W.E.A.? I fear me, yes! The movement, to my thinking, does not face the issue.

He proceeds to speak somewhat scornfully of the "intellectual flower raised in an untainted atmosphere of unbiassed, non-political, non-sectarian detachment." He scoffs at "study of the humanities unconscious of the throb of the economic battle", and alludes without becoming reverence to "the cool haunts of Oxford or Cambridge, the comfortably padded chair of the theologian's study, or the high altitude of the successful one beaming on his fellows." All of which leads him to the eminently sensible conclusion that "a 'Workers' educational society should be sure that the ideals basing its activities are the ideals of the workers for whom it stands. The working class is developing a consciousness, an unanimity, an aim. An Association which proclaims itself the educational champion of that class must take count of that consciousness, realise that aim, and evolve side by side with those it represents towards the common ideal."

"Now you're talking:" the Pleb might well exclaim to this rebellious member. But we much fear that if he seriously expects the W.E.A. to conform to his ideals of what a *working-class* educational society should be, he is doomed to disappointment. For he, along with the rest of us, will have duly pondered upon the announcement, in the daily papers of February 15th, that Sir Ernest Cassel, the eminent international financier (for biographical details apply to Walton Newbold) has given

\$500,000,

"for educational purposes." The money has been placed in the hands of the following trustees—Mr. Asquith, Mr. Balfour, Miss Philippa Fawcett, Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, Lord Haldane, Sir Geo. Murray, and Mr. Sidney Webb. Sir Ernest Cassel's ideals are, briefly: *The promotion of adult education in connection with the Workers' Educational Assn.*, or any other body approved by the trustees. (We fear the Plebs League will see none of it.) Establishment of scholarships for workmen or their sons and daughters. Promotion of higher education of women. Promotion of study of foreign languages. And "to further the establishment of commerce in such terms as may be approved by the trustees." £500,000!!

We are not sure what precisely "the establishment of commerce" means in such a connection. But of one thing we are sure, and that is that it does NOT mean "taking count of the consciousness, and realising the aim" of the working-class movement. Is a Workers' educational society, financed from such sources and "approved" by such trustees, likely to "base its ideals" on the ideals of the workers for whom it professes to stand? We wish there were time, and we had space, for our cartoonist to do us a drawing of "The W.E.A. at the Cross Roads"—invited by Labour to travel one path, and by a gentleman with a large money-bag to take the other. It would admirably summarise the situation.

But we are afraid, if he means what he says, that the writer of the *Highway* article will have to join the Plebs League, and consort with "materialist revolutionists."

News of the Movement

Com. J. McGee (Sec.) sends us a model report, terse but full of interest, of the work of the MANCHESTER District Plebs League for the six months ending December, 1918. Thirty-three new members were enrolled, and during the summer a tutorial class of 40 students was held. In September a conference of T.U. delegates was held, and 25 lecturers were sent out to speak on "The Need for Independent Working-Class Education"; the result was the formation of 15 classes. Income, £14 0s. 1d.; expenditure, £13 4s. 6d. A fine record!

Following on the grant by the DURHAM Miners of £50 to the C.L.C. Classes, an increase of activity is reported from that ever active district. E. Dodds, Sec. of the Annfield Plain Class, tells us of a class of 25—soon to be doubled—hard at work under Will Lawther.

C. Smith, Sec. of the HULL N.U.R. class, reports 47 students on his register. Their text-book at present is W. Paul's *The State*.

Our old friend, Wynn-Cuthbert, sends a record of hard work and good results on the Sleepy South Coast. WORTHING Trades Council runs an Economics Class; and BRIGHTON N.U.R. a class on Industrial History. At the latter place the Women's Guild members are arranging either to join the existing class, or to start one on their own.

The MANSFIELD class is going ahead. Foiled in their attempt to start with *A Worker Looks at History*, they have ordered 100 copies of Ablett's book, and intend getting their teeth into it as soon as it is available. They intend to stir the W.E.A. up locally, says E. Drew (Sec., 3 Belmont Terrace, Clumber Street). H. Alcock is class-leader.

An "impressionist" series of five lectures on Economics, by Com. F. Casey, is the BURY class's latest venture—the idea being to concentrate on the salient points in Economics in as broad and simple a manner as possible. Here, too, a Women's Class—largely composed of day-school teachers—is reported.

Miss Sutton reports 95 names on the DERBY class roll (Sec., Miss Wright, Clarion Club, Wardwick, Derby). The teachers are J. G. Drabble (Indus. History), and Geo. Green (Economics). Fred Shaw recently paid a visit and lectured on "Feudalism."

We have to thank the FLEETWOOD class for a generous—and very welcome—donation to our General Fund. They recently opened a subscription list to pay a £21 fine incurred by Com. Bailey (under D.O.R.A., we believe) and collected £7 in excess of that sum. They accordingly decided to allot the balance equally between the *Plebs*, the *Herald*, imprisoned Glasgow comrades, and propaganda work in Fleetwood. We accordingly gratefully acknowledge the sum of £1 15s. forwarded to us by Albert Aspden.

READ THE SOCIALIST Monthly 2d.

And Support the S.L. Press (50 Renfrew St., Glasgow)

J. E. Oxley has had to resign the secretaryship of the SHEFFIELD Plebs Branch, having been instructed by the N.U.R. Executive "to hold himself in readiness to take up residence at the Labour College." Congratulations—though we are sorry to lose so good a Plebs worker in sheffield. His successor in the Secretaryship is H. R. Goldstone (183 West Street), to whom we offer our best wishes, and our hopes that he'll beat even Oxley's record.

At this time of year, when winter classes are closing down, we always suffer from a reduction of parcel orders. This year, owing to the sweeping changes in so many industrial centres and the consequent breaking-up of various groups of workers, that tendency is still more marked. We appeal to local organisers and secretaries to do their best to help us over a trying time, and to readers who have got out of touch with Plebs groups to become postal subscribers. We have pulled through till now—you won't see us beaten right on the post?

W.H.

Correspondence

A.S.E. SCHOLARSHIPS AT THE LABOUR COLLEGE.

SIR,—Having been approached by more than one young Engineer recently on the question of entering the Labour College as a resident student, my thoughts have been diverted to another question connected with this subject, viz. : Are the members of the A.S.E. going to continue to allow the scholarships given by that society to remain, as at present, tenable at Ruskin College? It is a serious question, and I am firmly of the opinion that prompt and united action on the part of those members who have lent their support to the cause of Independent Working Class Education in the past, along with the numerous converts that we have gained during these last four strenuous years in the provincial classes of the Plebs League, would result in those scholarships being transferred from Ruskin College to the Labour College.

A Delegate Meeting of the A.S.E. is to be held during Whitsun, and the opportunity there presents itself of testing feeling on the matter. Every Plebeian and class student ought immediately to set to work to see that pressure is brought to bear through their Branches and District Committees, on the members of this Delegate Meeting.

It is not necessary for me here to go into detail as to the different aims and objects of the two institutions. But it may be worth while to point out that the transference of these scholarships would help to make the position of the Labour College more secure, and, seeing that the cost of a scholarship is determined, to a great extent, by the number of scholarships promoted (the more students there are over a given number, the lower would be the cost) this would give better facilities to those anxious to enter the college as private residential students (*i.e.*, without scholarships).

In our efforts on the industrial field to strengthen our organization by amalgamating the various sectional Unions catering for men and women in the Engineering Industry into one Union for that industry, we have found a big obstacle in the diverse rules, donations, benefits, etc., of the different Unions. No such obstacle exists as regards the Educational side of the movement. The Labour College offers facilities for the miner, railwayman and engineer thoroughly to understand each other's position, and to achieve that unity of thought which will result in unity of action.

A.S.E. members, it is up to you!

Yours fraternally, FRANK JACKSON.

OURSELVES.

SIR,—When shall we have the *Plebs* increased in size and scope and PRICE? I may be wrong as regards this last, but the need for a really adequate Working-Class Magazine is plainly evident.

WIGAN.

Yours fraternally, ALEX EVANS.

SIR,—When is the Plebs League going to set up a bookshop for Marxian literature, so that we students can get what we want direct from the "fountain head"? I noticed a remark on that subject in the Magazine some time ago, and trust the proposal will be carried into effect.

Yours fraternally,

A. W. LOVEY.

EXETER.

(All in good time! But we must be safely out of the wood as regards the Magazine before we take on new ventures.—ED. *Plebs*.)

WILL THE BELOW-MENTIONED TAKE THE HINT?

SIR,—The *Plebs* has not had much matter lately dealing with the actual re-organization of Trade Unionism, and the means of winning the "average man" to take a hand in that urgent task. I should much like to read of that from the revolutionary side, for the "Workers' Committee" expedient, valuable as a spur ("because the workers need a spur"!) doesn't seem to have developed much as an industrial unit. Its energies are becoming more and more political, and—*pace* the Bolshevik—I cannot believe that distinction is "unreal." There has been a lot of rhapsodising over the Soviet, but not very much practical examination of the application of the Soviet system to industry.

The Soviet, besides involving what seems to me a hopeless confusion of civic with industrial functions, appears to lead to a progressive domination or at least a "breeding-out"—of minorities, and the Soviet system, as a whole, to lead inevitably (quite apart from Bolshevik "atrocities") to a dictatorship *over* very large sections of any proletariat.

I think important issues are involved in all this, apart from the confusion which Russia introduces into the argument. I should much like to see a *Plebs* symposium on the subject, including, say, Ablett, Craik, Murphy, McManus, Newbold, and the Pauls. Is it quite impracticable?

Yours, etc.

M. B. RECKITT.

(Whether or not a symposium materialises we hope that some at least of the above-named contributors will write for the *Plebs* on the subject. We agree with Mr. Reckitt that "practical examination of the application of the Soviet system to industry" is eminently desirable. It is interesting to note in this connection that the *Manchester Guardian* recently published an interview with E. Ericks, a Berlin journalist just returned from Russia, in the course of which Ericks said: "In my presence Lenin remarked that Bolshevism was the only suitable form of Socialism for Russia, but was unsuited for Germany and other European countries. . . . He says Russia must let the proletariat of other countries solve their problems in their own way." How far, of course, Lenin was here using the term Bolshevism as synonymous with the Soviet system we are unable to say.—ED. *Plebs*.)

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The Plebs Bookshelf

A good many Plebeians, I believe, buy *Bibby's Annual* more or less regularly, for the sake of its always admirable illustrations. I hope none of them will miss the 1918 issue. I am almost tempted, in fact, to recommend classes on the look-out for a new text-book to obtain a copy, and discuss it article by article. For it is a great and glorious number, combining instruction with amusement. It is mainly devoted, the Editor tells us, to "a discussion of industrial problems, and to an investigation of the causes underlying the social and economic difficulties now confronting practically every country in the world." The four cover-cartoons are alone worth the money, and I suggest that, framed, they would form eminently fitting decorations for the Labour College. No. 1 is entitled "Knowledge reveals the Truth," and beneath the design appears the following "legend":—

Ignorance is the greatest foe to Progress, but Love is its handmaid. Here we have depicted Representatives of Capital and Labour making the somewhat tardy discovery that they have no true interest apart from each other. Knowledge, born of Love, is removing the curtain which has hidden the Truth. The far-reaching results upon human welfare no man can compute.

The artist (S. E. Scott) shows Labour as being much more impressed by the "discovery" than Capital appears to be. The latter individual, at all events, is restraining his emotion; or perhaps he is purposely holding back so that Labour may not catch sight of his expression of relief? No. 2 is "Love Lamenting," by Garth Jones. The god of Love (typifying the 'consumer'?) balanced somewhat precariously on a schoolroom globe, is weeping, while Capital and Labour each pull the globe in opposite directions. Capital is not depicted as Will Dyson has accustomed us to see him, but is here figured as a young and godlike person, in purple robes and fine linen frills (and a healthy-looking purse at his belt). Labour would appear to have just been demobilized; he is obviously wearing his Army breeches, boots, and water (?) bottle, though where he "won" his vivid green stockings I can't guess. Thus Bibby:—

The two great forces are each trying to pull the world his own way. On one side, foolish and persistent agitation for unreasonable demands; on the other, unsympathetic hostility. What folly it all is, when "a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together" would bring to both that which they desire.

No. 3 is comparatively uninspired. A group of seamen (pirates, profiteers, or what?) are fiercely arguing over a map. The moral is that:—

Every ship must have a controlling head, upon whom responsibility and authority rest. If everyone were to claim a voice in its management and direction, much valuable time would be wasted, for good results . . . cannot be achieved by the methods of a debating society. . . . This is no less true of administrative management in other directions, etc., etc. (concluding with a reference to Bolshevism).

So much for Control of Industry! . . . No. 4 is again by Garth Jones—"Labour Plucking the Fruits." Comment would only spoil the touching simplicity of the inscription:—

The aim of our Cartoon is to express the ideal of the Well-being of all. Here is the fine Tree of Prosperity upon which we all depend. Capital, the "Well-head of Wealth," tends and waters it, while Labour plucks the fruits. . . .

All this is on the cover ! And there are all manner of interesting things inside. There is an article on "Labour and the Product," illustrated in all seriousness by a drawing of "The Ox that treadeth out the Corn"; that animal being unmuzzled and evidently having a high old time with about three straws to chew. An article by J. A. Seddon is headed "The Industrial Situation: from the point of view of an Enlightened Labour Leader"; and this is adorned by a portrait of the author, in which he certainly looks prosperous, whether enlightened or not. Mr. Cecil Walton, General Manager of the National Projectile Factories, Glasgow, and the well-known "Welfare" expert, discourses on "Ideals and Production"—or, more briefly, "Output." ("There can be only one true industrial aim, the production of cheap goods.") Lord Leverhulme writes on "Socialism, or Equality and Equity," and his portrait (on p. 24) is contrasted by the Editor with Mr. David Jagger's Academy "sensation"—"The Bolshevik" (on p. 13). There is a Legend from the Arabic (illustrated) which tells of a Caliph who, to cure his "blues," was advised to procure and wear the shirt of a happy man; only to find that the only happy man in his domains was a poor fisherman—and he possessed no shirt (a real proletarian !). "Thus we see," as Mr. Bibby would say, that we should very likely not be nearly so happy if we were better off. (He actually solemnly adds: "There is not the least need to go shirtless.") . . . But there are priceless things on every page. By the way, I beg disrespectfully to remark that the list of contributors contains one eminently appropriate, almost symbolic, name—Clara M. Codd. . . . The publisher announces (p. 39) that special terms will be quoted to "employers of labour who may wish to distribute copies to managers, foremen, or workpeople." Why not persuade your boss to hand a few round ?

* * * * *

A recent number of *Solidarity* (now published from 115, The Grove, Hammersmith, W. 6) contained an article under some such heading as "What Can We DO ?" (I have mislaid my copy) in the course of which the importance of the DEED was emphasised, and the old, old false antithesis made between Doing and "mere education," "theory," "doctrinaires," etc., etc. May I respectfully urge the writer to ponder upon Liebknecht—Luxembourg—Mehring; three *scholars* and *educationalists*, who were yet foremost among the Doers when a crisis supervened? . . . And, by the way, why the undue depreciation of educationalists outside the ranks of the S.L.P. in the *Socialist's* leading article of January 2nd? The S.L.P.'s educational work has been magnificent—admitted. But what of the Plebs? A good many Plebeians are, I know, S.L.P.'ers; but not all. And the article certainly suggested either that we were merely a branch of the S.L.P., which is not quite accurate; or that our educational activities were not worthy of mention. (Hearty congratulations to the *Socialist* on at last becoming a weekly.) It has published several interesting items recently—*e.g.*, the translation (by E. & C.P.) of Klara Zetkin's reply to Kautsky on Bolshevism, "Through Dictatorship to Democracy." . . . Two new proletarian publications have recently come my way—*The Masses*, edited by W. F. Watson (2d. monthly from 7 Featherstone Buildings, London, W.C. 1.) and *The Consolidator*, organ of the R. Thames Shop Stewards, edited by Geo. Gilchrist (50 Agnes Road, Acton Vale, W. 3.) Good luck to both !

The early death of Stephen Reynolds—at the age of 38, from pneumonia—is a very considerable loss to "independent working-class literature." True,

Have YOU read EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL's pamphlet—

Independent Working-Class Education

Price 6d. Usual Terms to Branches. From The Workers' Socialist Federation, 400 Old Ford Road, Bow, E. (3).

Reynolds, like Ernest Jones, was by birth a middle-class man—he was originally a schoolmaster, I believe; but he threw in his lot, if not precisely with proletarians—for he and his two partners owned their boat—with workers, Sidmouth fishermen. With them he lived and laboured, and the best of his books, *A Poor Man's House* (Macmillan, 2/-) ranks with *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* or *Children of the Dead End* as a genuine expression of the outlook upon life of the "under dog." His must have been a fine personality.

In the National Guilds League (as in sundry other organisations) a split between Right and Left appears to be imminent. One of the proposals of the latter, headed by G. D. H. Cole, is to change the name to "Guild Socialist League," a suggestion strenuously opposed by S. G. Hobson and others of the Right. In a letter headed "Name and Substance" in the *New Age* (February 13th) Cole made, among others of interest, the following candid remarks:—"Whatever the mediaeval guilds were, they were certainly not Socialist. . . . The conception of economic power as preceding doctrine power is an essentially Marxist doctrine. . . . National Guildsmen did not invent the doctrine of wage-abolition. It is an essentially Marxist Socialist doctrine, though many political Socialists have forgotten it. . . . Surely Socialism and Trade Unionism are both a cut above their present leaders. Apparently, when S. G. H. thinks of Socialism, he thinks only of the I.L.P., the Fabians, and the rest of the "pure politicians." When I think of Socialism, I think of a great tradition of revolutionary action and agitation—of Robert Owen, of Karl Marx, of William Morris. . . ." But the Right—S. G. Hobson, C. E. Bechhofer, M. B. Reckitt, and others—seem to fear that the "salariat" would shy at the word "Socialist."

Johnston, of *Forward*, has an eagle eye for press-cuttings, and a pretty wit in commenting thereon. His remark on Macpherson and the *maison tolérée*—"making the *under-world* safe for democracy"—deserves to be a classic. Other memorable sentences I have come across recently are—" . . . That kind of capitalistic collectivism which would anticipate in this world the better Bournville from which no traveller returns" (E. T. Raymond on "Mr. A. G. Gardiner," *Everyman*, Feb. 1st); and the *Daily Graphic's* unintentionally humorous reference to "the hotheaded young Socialists who have sat at the feet of Mr. Sidney Webb and imbibed the fallacies of Karl Marx." So far as I have noticed Mr. Webb has not written to protest.

J.F.H.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

The Spiritual Foundation of Reconstruction. By F. H. HAYWARD and ARNOLD FREEMAN. (P. S. King. 10/6 net.)

A Baker's Dozen (Verse). By G. E. FUSSELL. (J. Bellows, Eastgate, Gloucester. 1/3 post paid.)

PAPERS FOR THE PRESENT. No. 9.—*The Drift to Revolution.* (Headley Bros. 1/-).

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