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THE PLEBS

“I can promise to be candid but not impartial”

Vol. XI.

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CONTENTS

WANTED: PARTISAN EDUCATION. By TOM BELL	113
CINDERELLA. By WINIFRED HERRABIN	115
THE SCOTTISH LABOUR COLLEGE. By W. LEONARD	116
ERGATOCRACY & THE SHOP STEWARDS' MOVEMENT. II. By EDEN and CEDAR PAUL	117
ERGATOCRACY: TWO COMMENTS. By A. F. ROTHSTEIN AND T. A. JACKSON	118
SOME DEFINITIONS AND A BOOK. By MARK STARR	121
THE CLASS-STRUGGLE IN POLAND. By A. P. L.	124
CORRESPONDENCE. From ALEX. EVANS and F. CASEY	126
REVIEWS: RECENT PAMPHLETS. By M. S. and J. F. H.	127
PLEBS NOTES AND NEWS	129
THE PLEBS BOOKSHELF. By J. F. H.	130

WANTED: PARTISAN EDUCATION

ONE of the characteristic weaknesses of our working-class movement is the unquestioning acceptance of things as they are—a belief, if we may say so, in the eternal structural arrangement of present-day institutions. It matters not whether it is a question of morals or ethics, social decorum, politics, or industrialism, we are up against the indolent unwillingness of the average worker to break, or countenance the breaking, of fresh ground. Hence the conservatism, apathy and indifference which are the bane of the pioneers' life. It is just here, perhaps, that the work of the educationalist will prove of most service to the labour movement, since, in the measure that he administers jolts to the accepted opinions of the laity—even where he does not actually convince—he renders the minds of the workers more receptive to new ideas, and thus paves the way for an awakened consciousness.

The artificial and perverted character of our present-day scholastic education is not understood by the mass of the workers. They do not appreciate the fact that, in the schools, the ideas they are taught are coloured by standards set by the ruling class. Being unconsciously assimilated, what appears to be more in keeping with common sense than that these ideas are “natural”?

Nevertheless this unconscious acceptance of current ideas does not prevent the contradictions between beliefs and practice that manifest themselves periodically in our movement. Witness, for instance, the systematic strikes that took place during the war, at a time when patriotic feeling was running high. Here, indeed, was a study for the psychologist to dwell on, viz., the reconciliation of opinions with

practice. This problem was a puzzle to capitalist politicians as well as to many socialists in our own ranks. From the blind, aimless efforts, too often made at that time, the prime need then, as now, was for a *consciousness in outlook* freed from the fetters of inertia.

But this "consciousness in outlook" must be no mere abstract formula. It must be conditioned by an understanding of the workers' status in society, the dominant fact of which is the struggle to live. To attain to such an understanding, it is apparent that a prime essential is knowledge. Hence the need for education.

The term "education," however, is a very vague one, and unless it is qualified somewhat, is meaningless. We may talk of a doctor being an educated man—or a lawyer, a parson, a statesman as being educated. All of these may rightly be classed as educated men in their own sphere. But it does not follow that the doctor is acquainted with theology, or the lawyer with surgery. Neither does it follow that the parson has been schooled in economics or history. From which it would seem that most of our so-called educated people are but specialists. It is, certainly, no strange occurrence to find an ordinary miner, who has specialised in political economy, teaching a qualified doctor or lawyer the elements of economics.

The problem, however, which most often puzzles young men and women of the working-class in whom the spirit of inquiry has been awakened, is whether it is most important to know something of everything, or everything of something; to try to encompass *all* knowledge or to specialise on a given subject. The difficulty of choosing in this matter will, in the last analysis, be largely determined by the character, temperament, environment or early training of the individual. But as to the subjects most useful to the labour movement—assuming that is the impulse to know—there are not two opinions. These subjects are the social sciences from which a knowledge of industrial, political and social life is to be obtained.

In the study of all science, however, as in most things in life, there is a wrong and a right way of approach—in other words, we must have regard to method. Especially is this the case in economics or history, where a disregard for proper method will undoubtedly land the student in a morass of traditional and false beliefs.

The study of the social sciences may be approached from two standpoints; from the metaphysical point of view, or from that of dialectics. Broadly speaking, the first method (metaphysical) is an adaptation of opinions or movements to something given or assumed. From this standpoint in economics we get the wages fund theory which teaches that the amount of wages is a fixed quantity, and that it is useless to ask for more wages since it only means higher prices. In politics the territorial form of government based on property is held to be a fixture, while in the realm of sociology class divisions are regarded as persistent.

Dialectics, on the other hand, is the very antithesis of metaphysics, and represents the contemplation of things in process of change. Thus, in sociology, all institutions and ideas are proven to be the product of changes in the material world, the principal impulse being changes in the technical arts. In politics governments are the outgrowth of property and represent the interests of the ruling class for the moment. While in economics the theory of wages explains the sources of profit, and, therefore, exploitation, shattering in the process any notions of fixity connected with "wages fund" theories.

But the method of dialectics does not reduce man to an automaton. While our life is largely determined by social forces, yet our very wants, desires, etc., react back upon and influence our environment, thus demonstrating that progress is the outcome of the reciprocal influences or interplay of social forces and psychology.

It is here that our independent working-class education meets with resistance from the defenders of capitalism. Once the mass of the workers are made aware that their *static* beliefs regarding present-day society are false, they will not hesitate to make for change. It is because the time has arrived for a change, that a partisan education is more than ever wanted—partisan in the sense of showing the workers the way out of the capitalist wilderness.

T. BELL.

CINDERELLA

[The Labour College, renovated, extended, and generally made "as good as new," will reopen shortly.]

IT was a great shock, I own. I had expected the usual sight to greet me as I rounded the corner by the leather-goods store—the usual shabby-looking edifice whose windows had for so long put to shame the suburban respectability of Penywern Road. The poor relation whom the neighbours do not regard as at all deserving. But, lo and behold! a change had taken place and Cinderella was arrayed if not exactly in a ball dress, at least in something that made her respectable sisters look quite drab by comparison. White gleaming portals, clean windows, new blinds, and a general air of having inherited something. . . . It was a shock!

Perhaps it is necessary to explain to those who have never visited the Labour College that in the old days one had to dwell on the great merit of its theories rather than on the splendour of the actual building. Cinderella was not only the poor relation, but she *looked it*. She was dilapidated, she was dirty; it took her friends all their time to keep on thinking about her virtues and so to forget her personal appearance. One remembered those awful days when admiring friends from the country asked to be taken to be shown the building; how one wished wildly that one could lead them, say, to the Natural History Museum at South Kensington, which is at least imposing, and kid them that that was the C.L.C. One remembered the time when, going in at the front door with some visitors, one was confronted by large and hefty-looking icicles hanging from the banisters. How was it possible to link *them* up with the movement? The only thing to be done in face of the dirt and desolation was to say loudly, with a sinking at the heart, that spartan simplicity and a proletarian distrust of vulgar ostentation made simple living essential. One tried to ignore the icicles, murmured something about a burst pipe, and passed on. Then there was a time when a group of delegates wanted to look round and a select party of women friends scrubbed the place and hustled round to make it look something less like a home of lost causes. . . . but they were good days, too. One has the same sort of feeling about the College that the American Col. House had about the Bolsheviks. He had seen the early struggles of the Soviet Government, and, after his return to America, although not a Bolshevik himself, he said:—"I could no more go against it than I could go against a baby I'd sat up with!" We had to "sit up with" the College most of the time.

But it wasn't all disappointments and reverses, and a sense of humour carried the day many times when enthusiasm was ebbing away. There was no economic foundation, but we flourished in spite of that and in sharp contradiction to all our theories. By all the known laws we should have died long ago! Even if we were not (as one of our critics said) a "bally abstraction," at any rate our bank balance was, and with all our attacks on the credit system, it was only that which enabled us to get along. We must set up a little tablet to the credit system, one of the chief supporters of the College in the early days.

But now Cinderella has been found by her fairy godmother all will be different.

Still, one cannot help remembering the past. The future will bring us many new friends, that is certain, for success always attracts. It will also bring back friends who knew us at first but cooled off gradually, because what looks like a losing game is rather a bore, especially when one has to make one's way in the world (and how *could* one bother about an obscure struggling institution which was not only poor but was also rent by internal differences?). We shall welcome back *all* our friends. This is not "writ sarcastic"; let us begin the new era by forgiving even though we cannot forget. There is still lots to do and a place for everyone, though we hereby confess to a presentiment that the coming days cannot be quite as inspiring or quite as really exciting as the days that are gone. Cinderella will have a much more liberal allowance of cash now she has married the prince, but can she ever regain that excited feeling she had when she ran downstairs as the clock struck twelve?

WINIFRED HORRABIN.

THE SCOTTISH LABOUR COLLEGE

"Not living like fools and fine gentlemen, and not beaten by the muddle, but like good fellows trying by some dim candle light to put our workshop ready against to-morrow's daylight."—WM. MORRIS.

A GOOD many people nowadays, though happy in a sure and certain faith that the present social system, or lack of system, is of such beauty and perfection that even to think of examining its foundations would be sheer waste of time, are nevertheless disposed to play with a word which sounds to them very generous, namely—"Reconstruction." They are prepared, that is, to do a little renovating, of course only where necessary. They have either been incapable of feeling, or are indifferent to the tremors which have come from the foundation of the building. In their view all that is necessary is a little putty and paint, some wall-paper of catchy design, and, most important, windows which will only be capable of admitting light in such quantity as is calculated not to hurt the eyes of the "dear people."

Fortunately, however, other opinions find support, much to the discomfort of such well-meaning persons. Safety first—and put blinds up to all the windows—has become the order of the day; and a Centre Party to guarantee that safety is deemed advisable. Winsome Winnie, war worker, places himself in the van of the attack against Bolshevism, and deploring the apparent strife and lack of unity amongst exploiters, sounds the Rally. "It would be a crazy game," quoth he, "and what a time to play such a game in, now that our country has arrived at the pinnacle of splendour and power."

Just so. We are, indeed, at the "supreme pinnacle" of Capitalist development, and upward cannot move another step. If still higher we would go, if we conceive a greater life for all, we must build on a new and broader foundation. The night of Capitalism must make way for To-morrow. That night may be long and dark—as long and as dark as the forces of reaction can make it. But there are candles burning—burning steadfastly, and they will continue to burn, aye, and in greater numbers.

Those candles are small groups of Workers, gathered together in classes and study circles. Industrial history and economics are their chief study, and its fruits will have effect all over the country, in warehouses, offices, factories and workshops—even in Coal Commissions. The Provisional Committee of the Scottish Labour College have laboured in this work for years. Content at first to gauge the demand for instruction, their activities were confined to helping and running evening and Sunday classes in various parts of Scotland, for the study of Marxian economics, and industrial history. Study circles had to suffice where we could send no tutor, and the postal authorities were pressed into our service to give the aid which a teacher would have performed more efficiently.

We have held three splendid conferences, each indicating the interest taken in the Movement, and urging us to go ahead to our objective, a Labour College in Scotland. At the last, on May 24th, 365 organisations (or branches thereof) were represented by 571 delegates, who expressed their intention to support their Executive Committees in every assistance they may feel disposed to give in this educational work, and to aid in every way possible the S. L. C. when it approached those E. C.s with schemes for the supply of students from their organisations.

We have drawn up a plan of campaign, including all types of classes in its scope, with a fully-equipped College as a centre. We hope Trade Unions, Co-Op. Societies and political bodies will create bursaries for maintaining a student for a four months' course at the College. £35 would cover everything—including the College fee of £5. Day-time classes will be held (9 a.m. till 4 p.m.), and the curriculum includes Economics; General and Industrial History; History, Structure and Problems of Trade Unionism; *ditto* of Co-operation, Laws affecting Labour; Political Science; Arithmetic, Algebra, and Statistics; English Literature, Composition, and Public Speaking; Business Methods applied to Labour Organisations (Book-keeping, Typewriting, etc.); and Esperanto. Evening classes, for those unable to

take a daytime course, will also be held at the College. Any further particulars are obtainable from the present writer, at 18 Aberfoyle Street, Dennistoun, Glasgow.

The College will be located in Glasgow, but we are endeavouring to organise districts in various parts of Scotland capable of supporting a full-time instructor, who could attend a different locality in any given district one day per week. By this method all will come into direct touch with the College, and we hope to have the help of all comrades in attaining this network of classes. The many small classes held in former winters, under the auspices of the Plebs League and S. L. C., will this winter receive the support of the Scottish Economics Classes Committee, a joint body of the P. L. and S. L. C., which will endeavour to allocate the available tutors as widely as possible, prevent overlapping, and in any way possible render help.

The chief difficulty, however, is the scarcity of qualified tutors, and to cope with this need will be the work of the College itself. We look forward to seeing, in the near future, an army of well-equipped men and women going forth to let their light so shine among their fellows that the Night of Capitalism will be short indeed.

W. LEONARD.

ERGATOCRACY AND THE SHOP STEWARDS' MOVEMENT

II

THE idea of communist ergatocracy is no mere theory imposed upon the working-class movement from above by a group of bourgeois intellectuals.

The ergatocratic trend is the spontaneous outcome of the economic, social and political movements going on under our very eyes. We see analogous developments along these lines in every land in which the economic conditions are ripe. The quickened pulse of war has but accelerated a change which was already in progress before the war, and of which the Syndicalist movement was an early and inchoate expression. As a sequel of the war we see ergatocracy triumphant in Russia and in Hungary, fitfully triumphant in Bavaria and other continental countries, and struggling towards fruition in our own land—for the Shop Stewards' movement and the establishment of Workers' Committees are the British counterpart of the Russian Soviet organisation; the British attempt to enable the workers to secure effective control of the conditions under which they work, and, incidentally, to bring about a revolution which Socialists have for 30 years been vainly trying to secure by the effete instrument of parliamentary democracy.

It would take too long to enumerate all the data justifying our assertion that the ergatocratic movement is spontaneous and world-wide. Let it suffice to point out that almost simultaneously with the inauguration of the Clyde Workers' Committee as the local expression, under Marxist auspices, of the idea of control of industry by workers with an ulterior revolutionary aim, was held the Zimmerwald Congress as an international expression, once more under Marxist auspices, of the counterpart of the same idea, and as a formulation of the new political synthesis which was to translate from the realm of phrase-making into the world of fact the famous slogan of the Communist Manifesto, "Workers of the World Unite!" This war, said the Zimmerwaldians, is not *our* war. Our war, the only war that matters, is the class war, which we shall wage relentlessly, and quite independently of the wishes of the capitalist oligarchs organised in rival groups of allied "nationalities." Note, finally, that the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, though ostensibly led by prominent Zimmerwaldian intellectuals, was in truth the logical outcome of a movement which had been in progress among the revolutionary workers of Russia for nearly ten years before the war, and was based upon the Soviet method of organisation. Now, the Soviet is a synthesis of the two aspects of the latter-day revolutionary working-class movement. It is a Workers' Committee assuming control of the political machine and ignoring the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal of parliamentary democracy.

The Shop Stewards' movement is international. France has its *délégués de l'atelier*; Germany has its *Werkstättenvertrauensmänner*. Communication with French or German comrades is still difficult, so we will not dogmatise about continental

developments, though we know that a good comrade of ours, Bagot by name, was imprisoned in Paris and suffered other inconvenience during the war on account of his activities as *délegué de l'atelier*. We may doubtless assume that on the Continent similar economic and political conditions are producing revolutionary changes of like nature. In Britain, we know, the Shop Stewards' movement aims primarily at perfecting the machinery of industrial unionism, and at securing the control of industry by the workers through workshop control. But the Marxists, who are the leading spirits among the shop stewards, know, further, that that movement is before all revolutionary; that in Britain, as in Russia, it will once for all abolish the rule of those who live by ownership, and will substitute for that dominion the rule, or rather the administration, of those who live by labour; that it will replace bourgeois democracy by communist ergatocracy. And though, by a confusion of terms which till a year ago was perhaps pardonable, many of those in the van of the new movement continue to talk of their method as "anti-political" when they merely mean "anti-parliamentarian," the more clear-sighted apostles of the Shop Stewards' movement recognise that that movement, besides being economic, social, and educative, is likewise and pre-eminently political. They know that as certainly as economic power precedes political power no less certainly is the Shop Stewards' movement the germ of the means by which the growing economic power of the workers will secure political expression.

EDEN and CEDAR PAUL.

(To be continued.)

ERGATOCRACY: TWO COMMENTS

I

AFTER reading the article by Eden and Cedar Paul in the August PLEBS, and comparing it with their manifesto in a previous number, I put down the magazine and rubbed my eyes to make sure I was awake. Honestly, I thought I was dreaming, and reading a number of *Pravda* or *Izvestia*, by some miraculous means translated into English. They may take this as a compliment, but it is not intended, at any rate, as a tribute to their grasp of the situation here in England. They appear to have understood excellently well the problems facing Socialists elsewhere—in countries where a revolutionary situation exists; but, after that, we are left in the clouds. They dismiss with a wave of the hand, with a stroke of the pen, the little circumstance that such is not yet the case in England.

What! the Russian Soviet Republic has now been in existence nearly two years; yet England is the only European country where there is no unified Communist Left, with one paper, one executive committee, one programme! Is not this essential before "we" can agitate amongst and organise the masses? At present we don't even know who "we" are. We all see how Workers' Committees, embryo Soviets, are springing up independently of "our" agitation, as a spontaneous development, under the pressure of the semi-revolutionary situation created when several large Trade Unions in any particular locality come out on strike. We can foresee the possibility of an enormous increase in their number, of a tremendous accession to their power, in the event of a real nation-wide General Strike, such as that occasionally promised us by the leaders of the Triple Alliance. But is that all we ask for? Do we not intend—we Communists—to seek representation, as members of the working-class, on the new mass organisations, so as to be able to agitate amongst our more passive comrades, to make them realise the necessity of continuing to function even after strikes for economic amelioration have been settled: of assuming political functions permanently: of organising *all* the masses—whom we cannot touch—for the purpose of attacking and breaking up the Capitalist State? Shall we not, in a word, require to be represented as a *Party* on the Soviets—just as the Russians and Hungarians did? We may even, by means of our present agitation, help the leaders of the masses—the shop stewards—to set up Workers' Committees in a few places before a General Strike; but it is not the Workers' Committee itself, it is the class-conscious Communists amongst its members that will determine the pace and the resolution of its movement towards proletarian dictatorship and, ultimately, Communism.

With all this work before us, are we to abandon the organisation of a Party, of a class-conscious *vanguard* of the proletariat, just at this moment? Just at this moment, at the end of the world-war, when the British working-class is only beginning to feel its economic and political effects? Thanks to its previous relative prosperity, thanks to the strength and firm foundations of the Capitalist regime in England, the British working-class during the war knew nothing of the unprecedented misery that shook the capitalist system throughout the European continent to its foundations. It is only now that it is beginning to feel them—now that Capital, feeling it has overreached itself during the war, is endeavouring to “demobilise,” and is making a mess of it. But the British working-class, as a whole, is still moved by Parliamentary elections, still follows trade-union secretaries with blind, uncritical faith, is still loyal to the nineteenth-century traditions in which its last three generations have grown up. Consequently, we must drive our propaganda upon the working-class not as we should like, but where we find it—by putting up candidates at Parliamentary and local government elections for the sake of the opportunities they give of reaching the masses; by selling our literature at political and trade-union meetings; by working at the trade-union branches. None of us will dispute the judgement Eden and Cedar Paul pass, with such implacable sternness, upon Parliament as a means of achieving the Socialist Republic; but the election to Parliament, demonstrations in Parliament, *as a means of propaganda*, as a weapon helping to create that revolutionary atmosphere without which true Soviets cannot grow out of temporary Strike Committees—all this is a very different matter. All this is not compromise, it is not opportunism: it is simply recognition of the Marxian doctrine that history is a process, and that we must build up the Revolution not out of an ideal proletariat, but out of the proletariat as we find it: that, before we can destroy the capitalist State in favour of the proletarian State—which is not, to serious people, a necessary “evil”—we must take all the opportunities the first offers us.

This is what the Russian Bolsheviks recognised when, under Kerensky, in September, 1917, they took part in the “Democratic Conference,” and put forward lists of candidates for the Constituent Assembly, despite their denunciations of both as mere bourgeois thimble rigging, and their withdrawal from both—after the elections. This is what Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg recognised by urging their Party to take part in the German Constituent elections. This is what the Bulgarian Communist Party (formerly the “narrow” Social Democrats) and the Italian Party are doing, in face of a situation that is *really* revolutionary. This is what all who see concrete facts, not “intellectual” phrases, must recognise. To refuse to recognise it in England alone, of all places—England, where the Socialist and revolutionary movement has been and is the weakest in Europe—is deliberately to throw away our arms, and to betray the same jerky reasoning, the same confusion of thought, the same lack of perception of the historical process, as the Anarchists, who want to destroy the State immediately, out of hand, without waiting first to replace the capitalist State by a proletarian State for the purpose of securing the ultimate “death” of any form of the State whatsoever. The difference between such a refusal and the anarchist standpoint is nothing more than a question of degree.

The British movement, it seems to me, is one which least of all can afford at this moment to admit confusionist tendencies—there are so many in it already. I submit that our tactics for the Social Revolution must be, in principle:—

- 1 The formation of a strong and united Communist Party out of the three or four revolutionary parties at present in existence; and the formulation of a single Communist programme.
- 2 The weakening of the Capitalist State by attacks at every point where it is vulnerable, though this should be by “sabotaging” its everyday political machinery.

These things are essential if we wish to work seriously, by deeds and not by words. If we retain the essential things, it will not matter whether we call our aim “proletarian dictatorship,” or whether we use the same words translated into Greek.

ANDREW F. ROTHSTEIN.

II

"THIS (that or the other) must be the work of the working-class itself!" How often, and with what magnificent sonority, have we all recited that time-honoured battle-cry! What bursts of challenging cheers have we not evoked by weaving it dexterously into our perorations? What visions does it not call forth?—of Marx's face, with contempt for the "mud-hearted bourgeois" in his eyes; of the Bolsheviki storming the Kremlin! What a phrase it is! "The emancipation of the working-class must be the work of the working-class ITSELF!"

But do we mean it?—*really?*

In moments of inspiration we live in a new heaven and a new earth. And there is war in heaven! As resistless as the tide, as inevitable as death, as inescapable as gravitation, with flame-red banners throwing into yet stronger contrast the invincible blackness of its working mass, the battle army of the proletariat sweeps before it, into an abyss deeper than the pit of Lucifer and more baleful than the abode of Beelzebub, the panic-stricken mob of the bourgeoisie and their shrieking sycophants!

At which point we resume our normal perceptive functions; and in the cold light of reality see once again the unregenerate proletarian—"just as he is, without one plea"—finding winners, seeking beer, Bible-besotted, doped by the *Mail*, and bedevilled by the O.B.E. Do we mean that *he* must be the initiator of his own emancipation—whose very need he denies? Or do we mean him after a change of heart—him "made perfect"? Not *this* working-class, but one it may become. A class which will prove its "regeneration" by doing with appropriate zeal and nicely modulated ferocity just exactly what is set down for it to do in the text-books we will put into its purified hands. Do we mean this working-class-that-is, as a concrete fact, or an abstract "ideal" working-class generalised from the concrete of our own superlative selves?

All this is, of course, a preliminary. Nobody would squander so much gorgeousness without an ulterior motive. What I am driving at is this. Now, if ever, is the time to close our ranks; and now is just the time at which breaks out one of those miserable, nerve-shattering squabbles about *words*, which "got the goat" of the immortal comrade who invented the yarn about the Tower of Babel. This latest is "Direct Action *versus* Constitutional Procedure." Ancillary thereto, as the lawyers have it, dragging behind this, clanking like a tin can tied to a dog's tail, is that blessed word "Democracy." And bobbing in and out, "here and there, like a dog in a fair" or a general-utility comedian in a third-rate pantomime, is that old friend of our childhood, "Bloody Revolution"!

And (just as if this was not trouble enough) into the hurly-burly burst Eden and Cedar Paul, as solemn and clear-cut as my grandmother's tombstone, brandishing the most frightful engine of controversy yet invented—"ergatocracy"! And mine own familiar friend Cook runs to help them!

"God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

What is "Constitutional" anyway? Does it mean anything? When the Long Parliament, in the name of the King and Constitution, made war upon the King, took the King prisoner, tried him and convicted him (entirely to their own satisfaction) of unconstitutional practices, and then peacefully and constitutionally cut off his head—were they establishing a Constitutional Precedent? And if not, why not? And if they were—what are we bargaining about? And was their action "Direct"?

The term "direct action" again. A group of proletarians, finding some Government action objectionable, decide to manifest their objection by concrete deeds rather than words. They propose to take a holiday, and by so doing to make clear to the government, and all whom it may concern, the sincerity and earnestness of their objection. As individuals the government will be affected in their direct personal convenience little more by a general strike than by a petition. It will be considered by them only because of its effect upon the profits and incomes of the taxable classes, and its possible effect upon the next election. In this Indirect way Direct action produces its results.

And, moreover, since the strikers, as voters, have a constitutional duty to watch with a jealous scrutiny all acts of every government, and to give them timely warning of the "Sense of the community," a general withholding of labour is as "Constitutional" as a general withholding of votes—or a general voting against a government nominee at a by-election.

Are we not fools to get ourselves entangled in the slang of the professional "organisers of idolatry"? "Direct Action or Parliamentary" is a false issue. Consider, for instance, "Bloody Revolution." Nobody nowadays needs—or should need—to be told that the bloodiness will depend, not upon the revolutionaries, but upon the Counter-revolutionaries. And nobody nowadays should need to be told that the bourgeoisie, being what they are, will drown a workers' revolution in blood if they have the slightest chance and the physical power to do so. The bloodiness or otherwise depends not upon side issues like the question of the method of approach (Parliament *pro* and *con*), but upon the efficiency and solidarity of the workers' class organisation.

And the only means within our control to ensure these is education. That education must not be of imaginary abstract typical proletarians, but of the actual living flesh and blood propertyless one we rub shoulders with in the workshop, the mill, the yard or the pit. It is him in bulk whom we must put on his fighting mettle. We must go to him, not lofty-pinnacled upon our towering sense of superiority—as do the Pharisees of the W.E.A.—thanking God we are not like unto him, Henry Dubb; but with respectful humility, as becomes us. We need him. The emancipation of the working-class must be the work of the working-class itself.

And how can we expect to get him if we go to him with strange tongues, talking of Abstract Concepts he can neither touch, taste nor handle? We can, by those means, persuade him that we are very wise and wonderfully learned; and in so doing we may secure his vote should we be a candidate for anything. But to affect his conduct permanently, we must radically affect his thinking, and as there is no thinking without words, our words become matter of prime concern.

Why should we speak Greek? The Greeks are dead and won't bother. Why any sort of "ocracy"? Some proletarians were disputing; said one—"We want the workers on top and b— how they get there"! Would he be a better "ergatocrat" if he could call himself by that name? If it be not profane to say so, I will affirm that Communism—or Communist propaganda—needs only one thing to make it triumph, viz., translating into English, the English of the workshop.

I am not afraid of the man who drinks beer; I drink it myself when members of the Glasgow branch are not watching.* I am not afraid of the man who backs winners; I would back them myself if I could only find them. I am not even afraid of the Bible drunkard, hard nut though he may be! So far as he is a proletarian he is because of his experiences within the reach of conviction of sin.

Let us have faith in ourselves, our cause, above all in our class; and let us speak the tongue our class uses. "Ergatocracy" is a beautiful word—for university debating societies. I shall use it on the next parson I fall foul of. THOS. A. JACKSON.

SOME DEFINITIONS AND A BOOK

IN the last PLEBS M. W., in a parable, rebuked Marxians for their use of the word "State." To my mind the rebuke was somewhat beside the mark. Definiteness and clearness are as necessary to the social scientist as to the chemist. Every branch of knowledge develops new terms or uses the old with distinct definitions. Probably M. W. wished to criticise those who become "the slaves of the phrase" of the lecture room and use it without understanding and without explanation on the soap-box and in general conversation. Certainly failure to adapt one's terminology to varying audiences, and neglect of the current meanings and accustomed popular usage of particular terms deserves condemnation. Hazy definitions and the

* We do not pretend to grasp the significance of this nasty innuendo at the expense of our Glasgow comrades. If it rankles, therefore, we must ask them to blame the writer and not ourselves.—Ed. PLEBS.

slipshod use of words represent—and are responsible for—muddled thinking, which results in muddled and uncertain action.

Should the word "State" be used to mean "coercive government," or does it denote "the community" or "the people"? The dictionary gives both meanings, but our opponents make skilful use of the latter, naturally passing off their own class interest, their powers of government, as the interests and powers of the supposedly organic social whole. Under some circumstances, for reasons of expediency, we might take them at their word, while remaining aware that in actual experience the present, as well as the past, functions of the State would make it correspond with the Marxian "executive committee" definition.

Thanks to Kerr & Co., Plebeians can read a new book which has some bearing upon this question, *Socialism versus the State*, by Emile Vandervelde. In the matter of defining the latter, he has a foot in both camps. This is the thesis with which he deals:—

... We should guard against confusing Socialism with Statism; that the creation of government monopolies and State industries may often be due to causes of a technical or fiscal order which have nothing to do with Labour and Socialist demands; that the formidable growth of war and naval budgets is, perhaps, the principal factor in this development of Statism; that this growing statisation would be of a nature to involve the gravest disadvantages, if it were not accompanied by corresponding changes in the political organisation of the State and in the social organisation of industries.

Especially in England, where, thanks to Fabian propaganda, Statism is often welcomed or opposed as Socialism, and where nationalisation and workers' control is being discussed, this book should be read. It was mostly written in 1914, and in many respects Vandervelde is farther to the Left than one would expect to find a "member of the Belgian Government." If to this translation he would now add a chapter on Soviet organisation, the value of the book would be enhanced and his own position made clearer. The times move apace, and our comrade's tactics are built upon the slow capture and transformation of the capitalist State. We wonder if he has been too blind to see his own forecasts realised—the idea of "the administration of things," as opposed to Statism, authoritative government of men—taking flesh in the Russian Soviets.

In a rather lengthy introductory chapter, Vandervelde examines and compares Reformist Socialism, Revolutionary Syndicalism and Social Democracy and how they regard the State. Owing to the accelerated development of the last five years, this comparison is already out of date. Even the Statist Reformers have by now seen the need for democratic management by the organised workers. And it is questionable whether one might now truthfully describe Social Democracy as the latest adaptation of Marxian thought to the modifications of the intervening years. The quotations from Sorel and Lagardelle make the section on Syndicalism good reading.

The hindrances to the workers' conquest of political power—a necessary step—are investigated in the first part of the book proper. "The real power belongs to the kings of finance." Direct action upon the voters by the Press, by education, by religious and philanthropic institutions, corruption, and coercion in many forms all help to make democracy an empty form to which capitalist interests soon adapt themselves. The reader can himself amplify the section on the Press and Government education and religion. Verily, the money of "big business" talks! Perhaps now **THE PLEBS** is enlarged, space can be found for these closing words of the chapter headed "The Bankruptcy of Parliamentarism":—

So no one should be surprised that the working-class, more and more understanding that it cannot emancipate itself through representatives, counts before all else upon itself, resorts to direct action to stimulate, or to replace, the reformist activity of parliaments and especially in the countries where parliamentarism has attained the maximum of discredit, attaches more importance to syndicalist and co-operative action than to political action.

Vandervelde has been to the books and is certainly to be credited with a clearer theoretical insight into the future, and with a more intelligent reading of the signs

of the times even in 1914, than many of our own prominent Labour parliamentarians, who take industrial action, not as a sign of working-class maturity, but as a disastrous prelude to anarchy. He recalls the success of the Miners' Minimum Wage Strike of 1912 to illustrate how poltroon governments can be intimidated. The State—the organ of class domination—will be replaced by the Labour organisations—"the industrial union activity . . . will create the organs of future society"—and if the word is retained it will have lost its old sense for a new: it will be an organ for administration.

The more advanced the workers are the easier is the task of getting control in the hands of the workers in the public services. But, our author shows that, almost everywhere, the State employee suffers from more restrictions in freedom of association and so forth than his fellow who is the wageslave of an individual capitalist, or a section of capitalists, instead of being a wageslave to the entire capitalist class. He himself seems to retain a leaning towards collectivism here and there, and needlessly fears that a section of the workers will hold the other sections to ransom in a tyrannical fashion. On p. 111 he tells us:—

Finally it is in the labour organisation itself that a new society is forming, that a new system of law is being elaborated, and that the proletariat is acquiring the preparation indispensable for substituting some day its auto-direction for the rule of the captains of industry and the magnates of capitalist society.

And in other parts of the book he goes as far as Sorel, who said:—" . . . The whole future of Socialism is contained in the free development of the industrial unions."

But on p. 199 he adds more to his meaning of "Labour organisation." He evidently does not credit associated *producers* with sufficient common sense—not to speak of the new *social sense* then surely developed—to see they could not afford to play a mutual game of "beggar-my-neighbour." He gives the last word, "the directing power," to the consumer thus:—

In short the type toward which in our view the organisation of the socialised industries should evolve, is not the "co-operative of production" whose members, being associated only with each other, are associated against every one else [two manifest impossibilities] but the co-operative of consumption in which the final decision belongs not to the employees, but to the general section of co-operators.

To those who argue: The Revolution and political power first and socialisation after, Vandervelde opposes the view that the State is changing, the "organ of management" is dwarfing "the organ of authority"; in most countries at the present time nationalisation need not be feared or opposed because of the growing influence of the organised workers. Strong labour unions make impossible the Imperialist Servile State.

There are many other good things in this book which one might quote, but enough has been said to give readers an idea of the author's position; further examination we hope they will make for themselves. MARK STARR.

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THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN POLAND

FOR nearly three years of the war British Liberalism and British Labour—"official" Liberalism and Labour at least—stood solidly for a united Poland under the dominion of Tsardom. This being so, it is not surprising that the public generally swallowed wholesale the intense propaganda of press, pulpit and pamphleteers to the effect that Polish aspirations were for a "united Poland under Tsarist Russia." When the shade of Kosciuszko arrives in the valley of Jehosaphat, who is it that can look him straight in his ethereal countenance? Is it the editorial staffs of "liberal" papers such as the *Daily News* and *Daily Chronicle*, who, for the greater part of the war, boomed Mr. Dmowski, that henchman of Tsardom, and his assistants of the Polish Relief Fund? Is it that so-called Socialist body, the Fabian Society, which, in its official organ, the *New Statesman* (27th November, 1915), declared for "the establishment of a United Poland within the Russian Empire," and approved of this as one of the Allied aims? Is it the British Labour Party, which, under the leadership of Mr. Arthur Henderson and Mr. Sidney Webb, stood for this self-same iniquitous policy? Is it Mr. Arnold Bennett, who, in the *Herald* (8th May, 1915), advocated "the cession of German Poland to Russia?" Is it the numberless host of professors and intellectuals who, with the honourable exception of Bernard Shaw, prostituted their talents to the propagation of this infamous legend that the aims of Tsardom were beneficent and that the Poles desired to share in these Tsarist "benefits" (*sic*)? Is it our Government mandarins, who, for the greater part of the war, refused to consider the independence of Poland and only comparatively recently revised this attitude on the plea of setting up a barrier against what they are pleased to call "Bolshevism." As late as last summer the general and official view was that the Germans, since their 1915 advance, were in possession of Russian territory (*cf.*, the official propaganda pamphlet, *The Tragedy of Russia* (published July, 1918), by Mr. Stephen Sanders of the Fabian Society, one of the most contemptible pamphlets ever written). . . .

During the past four years we have heard little to the credit of the Prussian junkers, but Europe has no reason to be fonder of the Polish variety, who as a class are at the present moment endeavouring to gain an increasing control of Polish affairs. What was it enabled Caprivi in 1893 to pass his new and increased Military Bill? The votes of the Polish junkers from German Poland, their leader Kescielski receiving the thanks of the Kaiser for their loyalty! Several of these same Polish junkers voted for the German Navy Bill of the next year. German Poland—*i.e.*, Posnania—will in the resurrected Poland more than contribute its share of reaction by means of these junkers and semi-junkers. Was it not another Polish junker, Count Potocki, a renegade Ukrainian Pole and in Tsarist days the owner of one of the largest estates in Europe—his estate in Ukraine was larger than Ireland—who, 13 years ago was chiefly instrumental in convincing the Tsar that he should ruthlessly crush the Russian Revolution of that time? Was it not Count Wielopolski who, a few months ago, officially received the Entente Mission to Poland—the same Wielopolski who was Chamberlain to, and a great favourite of the Tsar? In a word, it is the whole pro-Tsarist clique, the Wielopolskis, the Dmowskis and their henchmen, the "Provincialists"—as the Sinn Feiners would call them, for so long as they maintained their several positions they were quite ready and willing to see United Poland a province of Imperial Russia—who are now endeavouring to take advantage of the present "nationalist" feeling in Poland to urge on anti-Semitism and annexations, and to exploit General Pilsudski's undoubted popularity among large sections of the people, and also the jingo speeches of "democrats" like Mr. Witos, the Populist leader, who claims as Polish territories both Lithuania and Eastern Galicia (where are oil-wells).

One's sympathy with the struggle of a people against a foreign autocracy may justify one in supporting leaders who, when that foreign autocracy is overthrown and internal class divisions become apparent, one sees from another angle. I have in the past defended General Pilsudski, now head of the Polish State, against Entente

charges of pro-Germanism. But Pilsudski, the champion of militarism and reaction, has forfeited all claim to the respect of lovers of freedom. Who was it released Pilsudski from his German prison at Magdeburg? The "masses," the "common people." It was not the "common people" of Germany that oppressed the Poles. Why was it that the German miners approved of the large number of Polish miners in Germany having their own separate organisation? Because these "common people"—mere miners—objected to the Government oppression of the Poles. (I had this direct from Mr. Robert Smillie.) Romantically-minded people may still look upon Pilsudski as a hero, but I withdraw my admiration when I find this self-same hero bloodily repressing the so-called revolt of the Dombrowa miners—merely common people—and filling the prisons with Socialists in the best Ebert-Scheidemann manner; or entering Warsaw at the head of a glittering body of troops ready for the First of May Labour Demonstration, which, however, wiser counsels prevailing, was eventually allowed. . . . It was ever thus with Poland—though "orthodox" historians do not dwell on the economic interpretation of the Partitions of Poland in the 18th century, when the possessing classes, fearing the awakening and threatening attitude of the common people, called in foreign Powers to their aid—precisely as is happening in Russia to-day.

PLEBS readers will hardly need to be reminded that the vast bulk of French colonial possessions (over 4,000,000 square miles) has been acquired since France became a "democratic" republic in 1871. How is it that this great republic has been able to tread the path of Imperialism on so vast a scale? Because it had a large land-owning peasantry, comprising more than half the population, which, while enjoying the semblance of political freedom, has been kept socially ignorant and economically backward, thus making possible the easy exploitation of its "conservatism." It is this danger, arising largely from the very nature of the hard and isolated work of the peasant—who is thereby constrained to concern himself solely with his own small property to the exclusion of other matters—that Lenin and Maria Spiridonova understand so clearly, and why they both favoured the old communal system of the Mir, which Stolypin and other Russian bureaucrats tried so hard to destroy. Spiridonova was more uncompromising in this respect than Lenin, who, being a statesman—undoubtedly the greatest in Europe—had to deal in a practical manner with a *de facto* situation, where great numbers of formerly landless peasants were in actual possession of land "forcibly" acquired in 1917, after the failure of the Kerensky Governments to deal with the land question. The Soviet Government had therefore to deal with this great task in a threefold manner—(1) by confirming the peasants in virtual proprietorship, where this had been acquired since the Revolution, and trusting to education to instil the advantages of a communal system; (2) by reviving wherever possible the old communal system of the Mir; (3) by working many of the former large estates as State Properties on a co-operative basis, and where this is as yet not possible under direct State control. It is the difficulties arising from the existence of these three collateral systems of land tenure, enhanced by the state of war and the consequent difficulties of food distribution to the towns and of merchandise distribution to the countryside, that have been exploited by our Press in the endeavour to show that the peasants are hostile to the Soviet régime. Doubtless there are many such among the dissatisfied, especially among the rich peasant owners of considerable property, who, however, as Stepniak has shown, frequently acquired their holdings by very dubious methods. These "Mir-eaters," as he called them, have objected, of course, very strongly to seeing their lands, which they had acquired by so much chicanery, again distributed among the peasant workers, and their voices have been raised against the Bolshevik "tyranny," having, of course, all the respectable Kadets at present refugees in this country to voice and exploit their "grievances." Another danger which Lenin undoubtedly clearly sees in direct peasant ownership is the inherent risk under a non-Socialist régime of the less capable or more unfortunate peasant proprietors getting into the clutches of money-lenders, with the consequence that small holdings merge into larger holdings, and eventually back into the old large estates again, with the peasants working merely as landless labourers.

What has all this to do with Poland? A great deal; for Poland is as yet largely a country of peasants, mostly still landless labourers, although there is a talk of the break-up of the large estates. Meanwhile the Polish "democratic" classes (assisted of course, by the feudal aristocracy) relying on the ignorance and "Catholic conservatism" of the peasantry are endeavouring to show by an intense propaganda that Socialism (*i.e.*, Bolshevism) is something inimical to the latter's interests. As a safeguard the Polish "democratic" classes can, therefore, in their own interests, be trusted to concede a certain amount of peasant proprietorship during these times of "nationalist" upheaval in Poland, for the tyranny of the peasant-proprietor class in Russia towards the millions of landless peasant workers was one of the salient factors leading to the rapid fruition of the Russian Revolution. . . .

With the ultimate outcome of that greatest event in human history, the results of the class struggle in Poland, as elsewhere in Europe, are inextricably bound up. It may be that with the assistance of the British Fleet and the collaboration of General Maynard (and perhaps of Pilsudski) the Russian Soviet régime is destined to be overthrown by Denikin and Koltchak. But whatever its fate (and your readers must not suppose I am pessimistic) a little man in Moscow, Vladimir Ulianov Lenin—has LIT A TORCH IN THE WORLD that will NEVER BE PUT OUT, despite the military onslaughts of capitalist governments and the base calumnies of so-called Socialists.

A. P. L.

CORRESPONDENCE

WHAT DID McMANUS MEAN?

DEAR COMRADE,—I expected some abler writer than myself to take A. McManus to task for his article on "Education" in July PLEBS. The trained teachers sent out by the C. L. C. are directly charged with not knowing their business; at any rate, that is the impression I received. In an obviously pessimistic mood, A. M. makes an entirely unqualified attack on PLEBS, C. L. C. and other Marxian educational institutions.

The Socialist's inability to create or develop a revolutionary atmosphere is attributed partly or wholly to these institutions. They must, therefore, be put in order, and drastic alterations are to be made—*e.g.*, he states:—

"We have therefore to prepare for the easy cultivation of new standards (of ethics, morality), etc., by extensive and thorough going education while we have the opportunity. Our philosophy should be made accessible to every worker, and should be presented in such a way as will allow of no dubiety when it is in process of materialisation."

Agreed! these are the sentiments of all sensible Marxians, but because this has not been accomplished to his satisfaction, A. M. appeases his disappointment by attempting to administer a sound drubbing to those responsible. He states further: "They (the classes) must be utilised to acquaint the worker of the true character of capitalism"—which is an implication that up to now this has not been done. Again, "The Materialist Conception of History must cease to be a mere phrase for point-gaining discussionaires. . . . Pedanticism, as manifested in ponderous and semi-obscure syllabuses, must be treated as a relic of a bygone moral value."

What are classes for? To enable students, who are workers, to understand and solve the problems confronting them in everyday life as workers, thus making them more active and intelligent members of their organisations, and consequently able to take much more responsible positions in the Working-Class Movement. This work the Plebs have done and are doing. In this work Oratory and Rhetoric are not essential. *Shouting never yet made a revolution.* A teacher need not be an orator. A vast difference exists between teaching and oratory. Most good teachers are not orators.

The teaching and understanding of Social Science implies on the part of teacher and student detailed analysis, systematic examination, etc. This presupposes the use of a syllabus. A syllabus is an outline of the work to be done by the student, and is absolutely necessary to the correct understanding of the subject under considera-

tion. It is, moreover, a labour-saving device. The syllabus of any course of lectures dealing with any branch of Science can be rejected on the ground of being pedantic, ponderous, or semi-obscure, that is, if it is looked upon as a "thing in itself" instead of being a connecting link between Teacher—Subject—Student. The teacher, assisted by what appears to be a ponderous and semi-obscure syllabus, simplifies his subject, makes it easily accessible, interesting and absorbing.

Any worker of average intelligence can grasp, retain and apply the valuable knowledge acquired at Plebs, C. L. C. and similar classes. Maybe the workers in the mass are indifferent, apathetic, but the trend of events is killing the apathy and wearing down the indifference. Proof? The growing demand for classes and teachers throughout the country. Marxian Education is fermenting revolution, and those who are observant know this.

The charge of being point-gaining discussionaires is frivolous, and may be limited to a few who do not count. A. M. can hardly seriously maintain this charge as being generally applicable. But when A. M. speaks of "*truth being dressed in the repellent garb of Abstract Terms*," I am with him. I give here a choice sample from the August PLEBS: "In one of its manifold aspects the great war, ostensibly initiated to rid Germany of anachronistic vestiges of theocratic aristocracy . . ." This is hardly "Education and along more popular lines." A spade can be an "agricultural implement" or a "bloody shovel." I prefer to call it a spade.

Wigan.

Yours fraternally,

ALEX. EVANS.

[We confess that it had never struck us that A. McManus was "getting at" the Plebs or C. L. C. classes; and even now, having carefully read his article again, we must own ourselves unable to discern the grounds for Comrade Evans' protest. On the contrary, we find A. M. emphasising "the value of Plebs and C. L. C. classes," and declaring that "the antidote to dangerous possibilities is educational work, such as they carry on." Which scarcely sounds like a "sound drubbing." All the same, we presume Comrade Evans would not assert that the classes—any more than the Magazine—are above criticism? And we have seen syllabuses a good deal more ponderous and obscure than the sentence he quotes from our August number.—Ed. PLEBS.]

"ERGOCRAT" OR "ERGATOCRAT."

DEAR COMRADE,—I quite agree with E. and C. Paul as to the desirability of using a word that will more accurately describe workers in contradistinction to non-workers, and therefore welcome their suggestion of "ergatocracy" as being suitable; or, in view of the suggestion contained herein, shall I say almost suitable?

Since it seems likely that the word will pass into general use, I would like to ask them whilst there is yet time, would it not be more euphonious, particularly in the derivatives, if they dropped the "at"—e.g., "ergocracy" as compared "ergatocracy," derivatives, if they dropped the "at"—e.g., "ergocracy" as compared with "ergatocracy," "ergocrat" with "ergatocrat," "ergocratic" with "ergatocratic," "ergology," and so on? Of course, E. and C. Paul will understand that I have no desire to prejudice their position, as pioneers. I merely submit my suggestion for their consideration.

Bury.

Yours fraternally,

FRED. CASEY.

REVIEWS

RECENT PAMPHLETS

THE I.L.P. has been busy lately issuing some very useful pamphlets.* Totally free from sectional appeal, they summarise movements and information in a form easily accessible to Plebeians with little spare cash and mental leisure. For which, our thanks. Joseph King's *Bolshevism and The Bolsheviks* (3d.) and *Soviets* (2d.) are worth reading, though in the latter one sees the

* Newbold's *Bankers, Bondholders and Bolsheviks* would have had first place in our list, had the I.L.P. Publication Dept. thought it worth while to send it us. But either they regard Newbold as standing in no need of pushing, or THE PLEBS as too unimportant to be entitled to the courtesy of a review copy. The I.L.P. publications here reviewed by M. S. were presumably paid for by himself.—Ed. PLEBS.

work of a well-intentioned writer who, lacking the daily experience of the organised worker, is unaware of the doings and tendencies of the embryo Soviets already here.

The Mineowners in the Dock (2d.) gives some good points concerning profits of coalowners, royalties, etc., miners casualty list, and the M.F.G.B. proposals for nationalisation. Since the Coal Commission, the miners' advanced sector of the working-class battle line has been frenziedly attacked, and many of these present pamphlets have been written so that the firing shall not be one-sided. Indeed, it needs an industrious reader to keep abreast of the rapid and never-ending issue of pamphlets in these days. *The Economics of Coal* (3d.) is from the pen of John Thomas, B.A. (a one-time prominent W. E. A.-er, who has left school teaching to throw in his lot with the miners as a checkweigher). In the first part is an attractively simple description of the process of the coal from the seam to the cellar. This is followed by a good analysis of the costs of production, with some emphasis upon the need for the removal of the unessential factors of royalties, wayleaves and profits. Then come the figures on which the demand for increased wages was based and other well marshalled facts bearing on the housing, accidents and hours of the miner. A short reference pays tribute to the growing knowledge of Marxian Theories as being effective in converting a "vague feeling" of exploitation into an "intellectual conviction." In praise of this rightly *partial* and *dogmatic* I.L.P. pamphlet we heartily echo the closing paragraph of the model foreword written by Frank Hodges: "When the producers have sufficient confidence in their ability to run the mining industry in the interests of the community instead of, as now, it being run for the obvious purpose of providing dividends for holders of money capital, the non-essential factors will disappear. This little pamphlet will certainly help in the accomplishment of such a task." Since the soon-to-be-issued Coal Commission Report running to 1,300 pages is not likely to be waded through by the average worker, we are glad to hear that this pamphlet is being well-circulated by the miners' lodges in the author's district.

The Guildsmen are also endeavouring to get the Unions interested in their case as stated by G. D. H. Cole at the Commission. This useful summary of their position is *National Guilds and The Coal Commission* (3d.).

An anonymous body, with surprising generosity—probably due to "Bossheviſt" gold—is also presenting to T.U. officials a speech of Lord Inchcape, *The Menace of Nationalisation*. This ringing of the Inchcape bell, this appeal for capitalist solidarity "to fight the syndicalism which threatens the nation" has, in its printed form, the advantage of being useful to make pipe lighters.

Though the author of *50 Points about Capitalism* (6d.) is a Statist, he has gathered together useful information for Plebeian use. Naturally, the waste of competition, the obstructions and hindrances of capitalism, are the points most stressed.

M. S.

Liberty Through Anarchist Communism, by H. OAKLEY (1d.) (Propaganda Group, 47 Crowndale Road, N.W.1), is a general statement—stooping to the particular at times, for it even discusses the Anarchist attitude to "the dust and drainage question"—of the "philosophy" of Anarchism. A somewhat artless little publication. . . . *The Catholic Crusade* (6d., from the Rev. H. O. Mason, Elland Rectory, Yorks) is a vigorous and outspoken call to Christians "to break up the present world and make a new, in the power of the Outlaw of Galilee." Mr. Mason's religion is decidedly not the kind described by Joseph Conrad in *Lord Jim* as "such certain knowledge of the Unknowable as made for the righteousness of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions." On the contrary, he eagerly desires to see "the mighty dragged from their seat, the hungry filled, and the rich sent empty away," and, however little you may be attracted by his theological phraseology, you cannot but be moved by the warmth and directness of his brotherly love for all but the oppressor and the self-seeker. . . . *Allied Agents in Soviet Russia* is the latest pamphlet issued by the Russian Information Bureau (1d.) (9d. per dozen, or 5s. 6d. per 100, post free). It is a reprint of the

letter written by M. Marchand, Petrograd correspondent of the *Figaro* (and the *Figaro* is not precisely a pro-Bolshevik organ), giving interesting particulars of the activities of British and French agents in Russia, in such little matters as bridge-destroying, fomenting trouble amongst workmen, etc. Our rulers and governors ought certainly to know something about "unrest" being artificially stimulated from without—having played the game themselves.

J. F. H.

"PLEBS" NOTES AND NEWS

THERE is at the present time a big revival of interest in working-class education all over England and Wales, not to mention Scotland (and Ireland, where a scheme for a James Connolly Memorial Labour College is developing), and the classes will be bigger than ever during this next winter. We herewith ask all friends to send us in SHORT reports of activities in their neighbourhood and also to push the sale of the PLEBS. We ought to have double our circulation among class-students alone. And we can make ourselves just whatever YOU want us to be. We also look with confidence to our friends everywhere to help us in our publishing ventures. A big edition of Craik's much-wanted text-book has been put in hand, and will be on sale as soon as it is possible to complete it. A new edition of Mark Starr's *A Worker Looks at History* will follow. **GET BUSY.**

At the time of going to press we are unable to report the precise date of the re-opening of the College, and cannot therefore make any definite announcement about the Meet. It will probably be held during October, but full particulars cannot be given before next month.

The annual conference of the NORTH of ENGLAND Labour College League will be held in the Socialist Club, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, on Sept. 13th. Mark Starr will present prizes to successful students and comment on essays sent in. Conference at Sunderland on Saturday, Sept. 20th, to be addressed by Mark Starr and Will Lawther. Meetings will also be addressed by them at Chopwell, Annfield Plain, Ferry Hill, Washington Crook, and other places. Will all friends get into touch with W. Lawther, 6 Wear Street, Chopwell, in order to arrange classes now that it is possible to supply teachers. We look to Durham Miners to support independent working-class education when the alteration of Association rules takes place. Get into the movement that counts.

NOTTINGHAM has just had a most successful conference. James Stewart reports "Things are moving very fast. The first conference saw 78 delegates and all were highly pleased with Craik's address. Requests for speakers and affiliations are coming in well. We are having good sales of literature and shall do our best to push the PLEBS. Everything points to a most successful winter."

BRADFORD Plebs Branch is looking forward, too, to an active winter session. They are lucky enough to have the services of Comrades Hadfield and Jackson (whom we are glad to welcome as a contributor to this issue) and Dr. Dessin as lecturers, and commence work in October. Meanwhile the members keep the candles burning by having rambles over the moors (or would it be more appropriate to say that their discussions nearly set the heather alight?) LEEDS and SHEFFIELD cannot be far behind Bradford, but we await their reports.

HALIFAX has a speakers' class to keep students together, and a program for this next session which includes Elland and Sowerby Bridge. More of this later.

Don't forget to send us word of your doings. Keep them brief, and let us have them *not later than the 15th of the month.*

LOST, STOLEN, OR STRAYED?

The Secretary would be very much indebted to any comrade who could send on the present address of H. Davenport, Colne, who sent on seven League subs. but no address.

Would A. Burrows, 31 Dronfield Street, Leicester, write to us about the bound volumes of PLEBS which he borrowed in 1918?

Does C. H. Smith still live at "Llanberis," Harrison Road, Leicester, and if so will he say if he wants any more PLEBS?

Geo. Hindle's and H. Goldstone's parcels were returned last month; the Secretary would be glad to hear from them.

The respective consciences of Comrades Austin, Brookes, Corrigan, Campbell, Cove, Davies of Porth, Deakin, Edwards, Eyles, Fisher, Hitchcock, Hughes, Holliday, Hern, Howard, Hartman, Jones, another Jones (Ogmore Vale), Kastner, Morton, Macintyre, Pickersgill, Rees (not Tom), Pickles, Smith, Styles, Watkins (not Charles) should all have something to say to them. If you know any of 'em just ask 'em if they've written to PLEBS lately.

We hope nobody will be offended at this—it saves postage.

W. H.

DONATIONS TO OUR "KEEN-A-BOB" FUND.

A. Segon, 2s.; A. W. Lovey, 2s. 6d.; Nell Casey, 7s.; J. Oxley, 2s.; A. Whitaker, 2s. 6d.; Miss Bunn, 2s. 6d.; A. E. Booth, 1s.; S. Umpleby, 2s. 6d.; T. A. Jackson, 1s.; F. Stubbs, 1s.; A. E. Seabury, 4s.; Leeds Clarion Cycling Club, £4; J. Ball, 2s. 6d.; F. S. Simmonds, 1s.; Geo. Brown, £1; H. G. W., £5; H. Brownjohn, 1s.; G. B. Bailey, 7s. 6d.; E. J. Howell, 5s.; E. Hewitt, 2s. 6d.; J. W. W., 6s.; Cavendish Moxon, 10s.; T. Bell, 2s. 6d.; J. Starr, 3s.; W. H. Joad, 2s. 6d.; W. Harmson, 1s.; E. Collins, 2s. 6d.; J. Cameron, 5s. Total, £14.

Previously acknowledged: July, £7 10s.; August, £18 7s. 9d., making a total of £39 17s. 9d. We have got the £40 for which we asked, therefore, but we are taking risks in increasing our size, and shall need all the help our friends can give us for the next few months. The "Keen-a-Bob" Fund will not be wasted, so we make no apology for keeping on asking you to send us your small change. May we point out that every bit of work in connection with the PLEBS (printing and postage only excepted) is done voluntarily? You can't run any organisation on cheaper lines than that.

"THE PLEBS" BOOKSHELF

I MAY be forgiven for commencing these notes with a few remarks on ourselves and our plans. With this number we get back again to 24 pages—though you will please note that, owing to the use of a different type, there is considerably more matter in this issue than there used to be in the old 24-page days. If this month's PLEBS is dear at 3d., then—"stay me with flagons," as the youth in *The Title* so frequently remarked. And I am glad to report that for the most part our friends are standing by us, and we have received only a few instructions to reduce parcel-orders. Opinions on our scheme for a sixpenny 48 pp. monthly are almost as unanimously in favour. "My hands are both up for a 6d. monthly," writes Geo. Barker. "Your plan for a monthly review—a 'heavy' review, as I heard a chap put it—is on absolutely the right lines," is the comment of Tom Bell, the Editor of the *Socialist*, and Arthur McManus, Wm. Paul, and A. E. Cook are equally encouraging, and promise their support. From the Dowlais Plebs Branch comes the cheery message:—"The boys say it's a pity you don't raise it to a bob, and give us something to chew." We should be glad of further expressions of opinion from our agents and readers, since the more we know as to the effect of the change on circulation, etc., the better can we make our plans. We shall remain as we are for a month or two, until the classes get going, and have discussed what support they are able to give us; but we hope, as we announced last month, to go up to 48 pp. at 6d. before the year is out.

No doubt about it—"the wind is well up in the camp of the bosses" (to borrow an effective opening of Craik's). They are sitting upright and taking quite a lot of notice of Independent Working-Class Education and all it bodes. "Scarcely a meeting of S. Wales company directors," writes W. J. Edwards in the *Socialist*, "but reference is made to economics in general and Marx in particular." Comment has already been made in these pages on the Association for the Advancement of Education in Industry and Commerce, presided over by Lord Leverhulme. More

recently the *Times* has generously offered to inaugurate a scheme for the supply and distribution of leaflets on economic questions among the working-classes. And that interesting survival of the Dark Ages—W. H. Mallock (he still lives!)—had a lengthy letter in its columns (August 2) on "Education in Social Politics: Facts and Sound Theory." "The necessity for undertaking systematically the education of what are called 'the working classes' has long been apparent" to Mr. Mallock; and he quotes at length from his recent (and, perhaps, unjustly neglected) *magnum opus*, *The Limits of Pure Democracy*, to prove that he had foreseen the problem. I have only room for a single paragraph; but this one is well worth while:—

If we assume a system of wages to be established . . . which, regard being had to the total national product, represents for the wage-earners the amplest material conditions which are for them possible, these material conditions must, if they are to produce content, be accompanied by two others which are non-material or subjective. One of these is a knowledge on the part of the wage-earners of the facts and forces which the industrial system embodies, and on which the extent and limits of its productive power depend. The other is a moral adjustment by the wage-earners of their several desires or expectations to the best lot possible in each particular case. How are these two conditions, essentially subjective, to be secured? *They are to be secured by two processes of education. One process will be that of imparting knowledge—very largely statistical. The other may be described as a training of the imagination.*

Could the case for Independent Working Class Education be better put? We hereby invite Mr. Mallock to join the Plebs League (we'll institute a special Superannuated Veterans' section for him), since we are out for (a) the education of "what are called the working-classes" in a knowledge of "the facts and forces which the industrial system embodies" and (b) the training of their imaginations so that they may adjust their several desires and expectations to the best lot possible for them. . . . But perhaps he'll prefer, on investigation, to send his shilling to the W.E.A., deciding that it fulfils his requirements better—particularly his "If we assume . . ." opening.

* * * * *

But the wind got up still higher in certain quarters when Mr. R. H. Tawney was appointed Lecturer in Economics at Balliol College, Oxford. The *Saturday Review* blew a gale. But priceless (to Plebians) as were its comments, I must condense as much as possible. "We learn with surprise, bordering on dismay, of the appointment," it stormed. And then—as people in a temper will—it blurted out some home-truths. "The politics of a professor of Poetry, of Greek, of Latin, of Law, or of Chemistry, matter to no one but himself. BUT HISTORY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY LIE AT THE ROOT OF SOCIETY." Ha, ha! One more convert to the Gospel the PLEBS has been preaching for years! "The Master and Fellows of Balliol may be communists to a man, if they choose; BUT THEY HAVE NO BUSINESS TO TEACH SOCIALISM TO THE SONS OF THE PROPRIETARY CLASSES." Certainly not. Agreed. *And by what damned right do the proprietary classes teach Capitalism to the sons of the working-classes?* The *Saturday* emphasises the class-distinction, and the consequent antagonism of ideas. Good! Is it necessary to labour the obvious moral? . . . A week later one signing himself "Dervorgillæ Filius" wrote to the *Saturday* "suggesting two allaying topics for your well-founded alarm."

I read amongst the list of Balliol distinctions for the past year, that Lord Somerleyton (known to you and me as Sir Savile Crossley) has been appointed a Lord in Waiting! Surely College authorities, who cherish this proud record, cannot be hopelessly corrupted by communistic Socialism. Some leaven of the old Master must be left.

The other mitigating fact is that Mr. R. H. Tawney, like his coadjutors, Messrs. Sidney Webb and G. D. H. Cole, is so confoundedly dull that I cannot picture him as dangerous. His lecture room is more likely to be a bed of slumber than of sedition.

Seriously, you are right in saying that it is a wrong against the parents to teach their sons the doctrines of State confiscation. But the matter will right

itself. When the new rich discover that a man who signed the Smillie report is going to lecture young Midas, they will send their sons to Christ Church, where undergraduates still learn that shooting, riding, and speaking the truth are the only education fit for a gentleman.

I can't quite decide how much of that is serious and how much is "Oxford irony." But "Dervorgillæ" is a bit of a sport, anyhow.

Count your blessings! The *Liberator* (late the *Masses*) is once more obtainable in this country—write Reformers' Bookshop, Kirkgate, Bradford. It is better than ever. I wish I'd space to quote the short leader on Spargo's book on Bolshevism. Thank the Lord for good haters!

The S.L. Press has at last issued a collection of John S. Clarke's poems in book form (*Satires, Lyrics and Poems*, 3s. 6d. net). No Pleb's bookshelf will henceforth be considered complete without it. Keep it where you can easily reach it down when you feel tired and pessimistic, and try the effect of the Clarke tonic. I've been dipping into the volume off and on for the past two or three days, and trying to decide just what I feel about Clarke's verses. The last verse of his soul-satisfying parody of Kipling's "If" gave me the clue:—

There is but one thing left for you to do;
For Mankind's sake go out and buy a gun,
And blow your rotten brains to bits, for you
Have got no guts, my son.

John S. Clarke has got *guts* (or, to avoid any possible misunderstanding, shall I say his verses have). That appears to me to be their outstanding and far and away their most valuable characteristic. One smiles to recall Arnold's definition of poetry—"emotion remembered in tranquillity." There's no lack of emotion in Clarke, but damall tranquillity! A good many of his poems strike one as having been written in a white-hot mood when he felt he'd either to go out and kill somebody—or write a poem; so he wrote a poem. There's *guts* enough in lots of these to satisfy even Siegfried Sassoon, of whom, utterly different though they be in most respects, he yet reminds one. The defect of this quality is that now and again he writes "at the top of his voice"—ultra-melodramatically, shockingly unconvincingly, sentimentally. There's a short poem on p. 18, for example ("Three of Them") containing well under 200 words. Yet in its short compass Clarke gets in the following pretty staggering list of epithets and adjectives—"dastard doubly-damned," "venomous falsehood crass," "spineless back to coward's wall," "scab," "odious thing," "vermin," "slimiest hole in the deeps of hell," "traitor brains," "foulest guile," and "vilest worm." In my opinion that's overdoing it. A little more "tranquillity" is really needed there. "Venomous falsehood" is alright; "venomous falsehood crass" becomes a trifle ridiculous; and "venomous falsehood crass shrieked" by somebody conjures up visions wholly funny. "The Skull," too, (p. 177) is labelled A Tragedy; it ought to be labelled a melodrama. "Cabby Joe's Oration"—especially the last two lines of it—or "The Rough Rider," or "His Bit," are worth ten of it—either as poetry or as propaganda. Guts, and humour; those are what I find in John S. Clarke. I disagree absolutely and entirely with P. Lavin's assertion, in his Introduction, that Clarke "combines the humour of Hood . . . with the music of Burns." No. Of music, as I understand the term in relation to poetry, Clarke has little or none. He has a strong, if not particularly subtle, sense of rhythm, and a gift for rhyme. But not music. I think music requires a little more tranquillity than Clarke has time for. And, anyhow, he can stand on his own feet, without needing these comparisons with other and diversely-gifted writers. . . . I rather want to ask him one thing. Does he plead "poetic licence" for making (p. 11) Palæolithic man and the Mammoth contemporaries of the pterodactyl, the brontosaur, and the triceratops?

There has been a touching poster on the hoardings recently inscribed "The Open Door to Factory Life," and depicting, through an open doorway, a very

model workshop, all clean and garnished and with Lord knows how many cubic feet of air to each worker. That's not exactly the impression of factory life one gleans from *Factory Echoes*, by R. M. Fox (C. W. Daniel, 1s. 6d. net). There's not nearly so much sun or air; in fact, I feel that there's more than the normal allowance of gloom. What I've already said about John S. Clarke I can only repeat of this book—sincerely and carefully written though it strikes one as being. Melodrama is neither true to life nor (in my opinion) good propaganda. There was no melodrama in *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*. Far and away the best sketch in *Factory Echoes* is one called (I think) "The Bridge"—I have not the book by me as I write—and that sketch is the only one in which an ironic humour is the key-note.

* * * * *

Congratulations to the S.L. Press on the "turn-out" of *Boehm-Bawerk's Criticism of Marx* by Hilferding (2s. net, post paid 2s. 2d.). We hope to rival it in our series of Plebs Text-books—commencing with Craik's shortly. The Pelican Press knows how to print. Review of Hilferding (I hope) next month.

* * * * *

This is not exactly the place—nor am I the person—to comment on the W. F. Watson case. But anyhow there are one or two things I'm going to say, if only to relieve my own feelings. One is that it would take a good deal more than the word of a front-bench politician—a Coalition politician, too!—to outweigh in my mind Watson's work for the Labour movement. And another is this: that while one is not at all surprised at a Coalition politician's notions of "gentlemanliness" permitting him to attack a working-man when that man is in gaol, and, therefore, unable to defend himself, one may be permitted a certain amount of disgusted astonishment at Labour men so far forgetting common decency—not to mention comradeship—as to be guilty of the same thing. If Mr. Robert Young and Mr. J. H. Thomas ever stoop to notice so insignificant an organ as this, I hope they will accept the assurance of my whole-hearted contempt; the contempt, that is, of a quite ordinary person, with quite ordinary notions of decency—and caddishness. Having got which off my chest, I'll add one thing more. According to the *Star* report of Mr. Thomas' speech on the subject of Watson, he went on to say "this was the kind of thing which was causing trouble at present." If he meant to imply by that (I don't know whether he did, it was a characteristically vague remark, but if he did—) that "rank-and-file agitators" and "unofficial movements" were as a general thing in receipt of Government money, then he has a good deal—beside what "playing the game" means—to learn. And he can rest assured that mere rank-and-filers wouldn't be nearly so "troublesome" if their healthy suspicions were not aroused by columns of effusively complimentary matter in capitalist newspapers about the "statesmanlike" qualities of Labour leaders. What the capitalist press calls "statesmanlike," ordinary working-men call by another and much less polite name.

* * * * *

But the spinelessness of some of our leaders, Parliamentary and otherwise (I am referring here to no individual in particular), makes an ordinary person feel sick. "The Triple Alliance waives the question of Direct Action for the present, having received sufficient assurances that its demands (including that concerning the evacuation of Russia) will be met." And the next day comes an official report of a 12-mile advance on the Archangel front. And a week or two later news of a "big British naval battle in the Baltic"—not to mention the bombing of Kronstadt. . . . One wonders, if a Minister of the Crown were publicly to spew on some of our "leaders," whether they would take off their hats to him and thank him humbly for his condescension. . . . And, of course, the British Government's action against the Hungarian Soviet Republic was not "Direct." (No, it wasn't, when you come to think about it; it was just about as indirect, as dirty and as tortuous as action could well be; and that's saying a good deal when you think over the capabilities of capitalist diplomacy.)

J. F. H.

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