

Vol. XI. No. 9

October 1919

THE PLEBS

AGITATE · EDUCATE · ORGANISE

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MACDONALD & OURSELVES

By Mark Starr

REVOLUTION & REFORM

By J. T. Murphy

& SUNDRY OTHER ARTICLES,
REVIEWS, &C., OF INTEREST TO
WORKING-CLASS STUDENTS

Printed at the Pelican Press and published
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THE PLEBS

"I can promise to be candid but not impartial"

Vol. XI.

October, 1919.

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MACDONALD AND OURSELVES

HAS Ramsay Macdonald ever understood, will he ever understand, what the Plebs League stands for? In 1912, in his *Syndicalism*, he spoke about "an intellectual Eurasianism" which was—

... the inevitable product of an attempt to send to breathe the atmosphere of Oxford a body of young workmen, able and ambitious, but not sufficiently prepared for the work given them to do.

These young men, who expressed themselves in

a little journal called the PLEBS... finding no hospitable welcome either in the world of culture or in that of democracy, must brood over revolution and be attracted to superficial and grandiloquent theorising. Some of them were strong enough to keep their heads, but Syndicalism became for others a pleasant path to fame and notoriety. They were not happy in themselves and in their prospects. They would declare war upon the world.

I feel sure Mr. Macdonald would not write that paragraph now. Indeed, especially as regards its references to Parliament and industrial action and organisation, the whole book could be interestingly compared with *Socialism after the War*, despite the regrettable brevity and vagueness of the latter. Those "young men" have grown up. Their influence is felt in the organised labour movement in the industrial, and the political, field. The independent teaching of the social science classes is everywhere breaking new ground, and the need for independent working-class education is now winning increasing recognition. What it is going to mean in the future time only can tell.

It seems strange that a man, who has spent a large portion of his life in urging the

workers to be *independent* in politics, should be deaf to the arguments for *independence* in social science education. If the industrial and political arms must be independently used, surely the directing mind must be developed in the same fashion? But my hopes that along with Mr. Macdonald's change of ideas concerning industrial action, the future of trade unionism, guildism, etc., had come a truer estimate of our educational activity, received a set-back from the July—September *Socialist Review*. Instead of any appreciation of our work, grave misunderstanding again appeared both in the Editorial "Outlook," and in a short condemnatory note on Ablett's primer.

I want to challenge, on behalf of my fellow Plebeians, some of the points raised. While not having the years of political experience, the depth of reading and the many-sided mind of the man whom even Lenin thought could "be trusted to do his best to understand what is happening," my qualifications for this are:—a close and renewed acquaintance with nearly every book Mr. Macdonald has written; the advantage of getting into actual everyday contact with the rank and file, especially the live elements, not only of the trade unions, but also of the propagandist body to which Mr. Macdonald and myself belong. And because, with other Plebeians, I sympathise with him in the ceaseless attacks of recent years (which we have also, to a smaller extent, shared) I hope to win him to our side, or at least to make a re-valuation of what we Plebs are doing. Other Revisionists as capable as Mr. Macdonald have seen their mistake and come our way, and why should not he? Or is he, as he himself puts it, hopelessly "too much under the spell of its (the I.L.P.) traditions"? Moreover, this we know, that in many I.L.P. branches, as well as in trade union classes, comrades are finding mental enlightenment and satisfaction and a clear and definite insight into the Socialist position by the very kind of education which Mr. Macdonald deprecates. They find an armoury in the theories he denounces as discredited and antiquated.

On p. 206 of the *Review*, Mr. Macdonald tells his propagandist party "to understand itself and be itself." So far, so good. But then comes a passage distinctly metaphysical—dealing in "things in themselves," lamentably forgetful of relations, full of strange references to "pure" Socialist theory, and unjustified claims and accusations; expressing a view, moreover, which, if carried into action, can only mean rival classes to the Plebs and the antagonising and expulsion of the most valuable Left Wing section of the I.L.P. itself. Let me quote in full:—

It (the I.L.P.) has a distinctive personality of its own; a distinctive philosophy of life, a distinctive conception of Socialism. We are not the old S.D.F., we are not the new S.L.P. We took up the pure Socialist theory stripped of special and sectional interpretations and unalloyed by ephemeral dogmas of philosophy and science, we related it to history and psychology, we set it in the streams of our national history, we gave it a method both on its political and industrial side. The proper study of the I.L.P. is first and foremost the I.L.P.—what is its belief, what is its spirit, what is its way? Perhaps too many of us have been absorbed in the pressing events of each day to pay attention to the education of the Party [what a poor estimate of the value of education is here implied], and we have left the field far too open to the superficial attractiveness of the simple dogmas of class economics and class history based upon a philosophy now discredited and a science now antiquated, and which makes barren the minds that come under its influence. The Party has a tremendous leeway to make up in this respect if it is to protect its members and itself from waste effort and wilderness journeys.

Now the "distinctive philosophy of life" and "the distinctive conception of Socialism" referred to above cannot be other than that of *Socialism and Society*, the unaltered new edition of which warrants the retention by Ablett of his chapter of effective characteristic railery. Right throughout Macdonald's work runs the vitiating "organic conception of society." The biological "key idea" furnishes "stutteringly" the amazing "distinctive conception" that "the class war" is "nothing but a grandiloquent and aggressive figure of speech." The majority of those who almost worship the persecuted Macdonald do so for his recent stand against Jin-

goism and not for his writings, with which very few of them are familiar. And even in that stand of his can be traced the damaging and hindering lack of clear ideas. It appears that while Macdonald has been otherwise engaged, their experience in the workshop (and mine) has caused many Socialists to adopt "the ephemeral dogmas" and "the discredited philosophy," and to forget the "pure" Socialist theory based upon Darwin and biology. Hence this deplorable neglect has to be made good. But what a task! For has not this "pure Socialist theory . . . stripped . . . and unalloyed . . . related to history and psychology . . . and set in the stream of our own national history . . ." been recognised as Statism—the making of munitions in State factories and such like experiments (*solvitur ambulando* as Mr. Macdonald's motto puts it) in Socialism. It is extremely difficult to see what useful method, both on its political and industrial side, could be given to even a "pure" Socialist theory which ignores the class division between the producers and the parasites. This "pure" theory even now cannot welcome the Soviets. All success to our comrade in his effort to show to his fellow intellectuals and others—who usually re-act in the support of the system in which is bound up their *immediate* interests—that social change would be beneficial to them also. However, in practice he himself sees where the real dynamic comes from; for we read (p. 129)—"I reject what seems to me to be the crude notion of a class war, because class-consciousness leads nowhere, and a class struggle may, or may not, be intelligent. But still, *we turn our hopes first of all to the wage-earners.*"

Dogmas seem to offend our critic, especially "the simple dogmas of class economics and class history . . . which make barren the minds that come under their influence." Naturally, the class struggle being rejected, only *impure* Socialist theory could make class interests interfere with *pure* truth in History and Economics. For my part, I think the barrenness of mind is his who imagines there is some virtue in a non-class-biased and impossible impartiality about these matters. The comments of the *Saturday Review* on the appointment of Mr. R. H. Tawney to an Economics Lectureship at Balliol College are the latest proofs that our opponents are not so befuddled as some of our friends in this matter.

Anyway, what is there wrong about dogmas? Is the word of ill-repute because in this changing uncertain age old beliefs are wearing thin and men tend to make the vices of indecision and mental cowardice into virtues by an over-denunciation of dogma. Surely there are beliefs about which one cannot be unduly confident. We are all—and rightly—dogmatists in some things, though, of course, the best teacher dogmatists are those who when imparting their beliefs do not *openly* force them upon the learner's mind, but appeal constantly to experience and the objective world for verification. In simple matters this is easy to see—*e.g.*, Water is wet. Stones are hard. Here there cannot be two opinions. To come to more complex matters, one is forced to make positive replies, yes or no, never yes *and* no, to such problems as:—Are the workers exploited? Is Socialism worthy of support? Would nationalisation of the mines be beneficial? No, even dogmas are not "evils in themselves." It is amusing to think that the W.E.A. itself is partial, biassed and dogmatic regarding the danger (f) of being partial, biassed and dogmatic. It is authoritative about the value of being unauthoritative. Let us not rashly make our theories or refuse to change them if truth demands, but our judgements cannot always be suspended in a subtle weighing of *pros* and *cons*. The person who is always in the Hamlet cramp of indecision is an insufferable nuisance. Because I know that truth is relative and changing, I am not relieved from the duty of making judgements and theories as best I can and of acting upon them now. Generally, the enemy will dub your education "propaganda," and dogmas are the beliefs which your opponent always has; and if a belief in the Labour Theory of Value and of Surplus-Value and in the wonderful results obtained in history by the guiding thread of the M.C.H. makes us dogmatists "barren in mind" in the estimate of Mr. Macdonald, well, I am content to be a dogmatist. Better at any rate to risk being so called than to be in all things "neither hot nor cold." It must be seriously recognised that without some very definite beliefs—which will certainly be called dogmas by its foes—the Labour Movement is inevitably going to be seriously hindered in its progress—even if it can progress at all

without them. The State instinctively bristles opposition to the demands of the organised workers; instinctively it uses the geographical constituency and political democracy against the new industrial groupings of the community. They, the capitalists, help Koltchak and Co. in every possible way because they feel the threat to themselves in the new spirit of the Third International which argues not about who is to blame for past wars, or how secret diplomacy brings war, but how surely and finally to end all capitalist wars. Their dictatorship is at stake. If Mr. Macdonald does not want to be "barren" in action, he should come out more decidedly in sundry matters. There is a very close relation between woolly thinking and uncertain acting.

But to return to the *Socialist Review*, this time to the criticism of Ablett's book. A wide theoretical divergence of opinion is again very apparent. Macdonald again separates the inseparable and divides the indivisible, but necessarily only, subjectively in his metaphysical mind. It would have been better had he silently left this book to "the imperturbable eternal laws of moral justice," in which he believes, than to have given us such a weakly-argued condemnation. It is a very fair question to ask our comrade if he can give us even one item of knowledge which must be put *outside* the three epochs—Inorganic, Biologic, and Economic. If he cannot, his criticism falls through. Perhaps he thought Ablett's "whole of knowledge" was a fixed whole and not a growing one.

His charge of inaccuracy of thought is followed by a series of strange suppositions which, while telling us a great deal about Macdonald's way of thinking, entirely fail to refute Ablett's contention that *Society is not biologic*. Very briefly Ablett is trying to show that in biology the organism slowly becomes changed in adaptation to new environments, but that in society men themselves no longer change physiologically to meet new circumstances, but change their tools. The interposed tools are modified and alterations in man's physiology now practically cease. All this seems so evident that it hardly needs illustration. But to prove it wrong Macdonald absurdly remarks: "I suppose if man had no tools Society would be biologic!" Why, even to think of man without tools, or Society apart from the tool-making men who form it, is as foolish as to talk about dry water or hot ice! Such fantastic conceptions are hardly worthy of a serious controversy, and are best left unexpressed. Here again might well be asked, What marks man out from the animal? Can our critic produce one instance out of all history of man without tools, or Society apart from such men? Only persons "barren in mind," one supposes, argue that toolmaking is an integral part of the idea of man and Society, and that tool *making* and *using* must precede tool *owning*, out of which later comes the clash of class struggle. As a matter of fact, Marxians take for granted the development of social relations and the biological knowledge which are later discovered as new truths by "biological" sociology. The "biological" sociologist can be typified by a farmer who refuses to use proved methods and agricultural science until he has studied and mastered the science of astronomy and the origin of the universe.

Mr. Macdonald is again at sea in a following question: "If tools modified man would the physiological laws of man's change therefore become economic?" An effective paraphrase of this would be: "If jam ate man would the physiological laws of man's subsequent changes therefore become connected with the rules of jam-making?" One wonders what the purpose of such a question is . . .

Our class-students will welcome Mr. Macdonald's insistence on the need for an understanding of Socialist theory. "The pressing events of each day" should not have been allowed to obscure the foundations of our movement. Given a fair investigation, or even a careful reading of its own literature, the members of the I.L.P. will be wholeheartedly with us. Confidently I assert that they will not confirm the vague charges and condemnations made by their leader. Compare, for example, what has been quoted above (and the many similar passages in *Socialism and Society*) with what Ferri says in *Socialism and Positive Science*—in the same I.L.P. Library. In chapter viii he is outlining the later portions of his work:—

I will have occasion to speak more at length—in studying the relations between sociology and Socialism—of this grand conception (*i.e.*, the class struggle) which is the imperishable glory of Marx and which assures him in

sociology the place which Darwin occupies in biology and Spencer in philosophy.

Vandervelde, in his latest book, refers to "the preponderant influence" of Marx and Engels—these men whom Macdonald relegates to "the threshold of scientific Socialism."

Lack of knowledge concerning the real nature of the State, of Imperialism and its economic need for markets, of the future of our Labour organisations, and many similar matters, has damned us in the past. We have to anticipate events, not to let them take us unawares and drag us with them. A drifting to Statism, to middle-class Socialism (not unconnected with the "marginal utility" theory of value based upon the psychic condition of the *consumer's* mind) must be replaced by a truer, more conscious progress. No real Socialist can for long oppose the Plebs League and its independent educational work. Is it vain to ask for Macdonald's understanding and help?

MARK STARR.*

REVOLUTION AND REFORM

THERE still appears to be a great deal of confusion in the ranks of revolutionaries and reformers alike, as to what is meant by revolution and whether there is a quick route or a long route, a cataclysmic event or a period of ameliorative legislation, to get to El Dorado.

Daniel De Leon's definition of Revolution held the field for many years. He said of revolution in relation to society—"Whenever the internal mechanism is changed, we have revolution." This is good in its way, but does not fill the bill as completely as one would like. Lenin has come to the rescue. He says, in answer to the question as to whether the Soviet Government has a reformist or a revolutionary programme,

Reforms mean concessions got from a dominating class, while the latter's domination continues. Consequently, reformist programmes consist generally of many points of detail. Our revolutionary programme consisted, properly speaking, of one general point; overthrow of the landowners' and capitalists' yoke, wresting the power from them, liberating the working masses from their exploiters.

The Revolution, therefore, consists in the liberative act—"the overthrow of the landowners' and capitalists yoke, wresting the power from them, liberating the working masses from their exploiters."

A social revolution is the overthrow of a dominant class by one below it, which, in turn, becomes the dominant body. The social revolution, which alone can free the working class from the domination of another class, is the one to which Lenin refers, and involves, as a consequence, the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such a revolution does not mean, therefore, that we jump from capitalism to Utopia, as many appear to think if the criticisms levelled at the Russians are anything to go by. But it does mean that society can then be free to develop at its fastest. It does mean that the shackles fall off the workers at a rate impossible under the old régime. Again, I do not mean to say that every worker becomes by the wave of a magic wand a philosophical student or a master of science. Humanity has never yet discovered a way upward other than by hard work and persistent effort. But certainly the revolution would transfer to the working class *the power to develop itself*, which capitalism can never provide. Witness the history of any class which has come to power.

It may be asserted that this is class rule. True, with one mighty difference. This class rule gives an opportunity to the members of all other classes which they can never offer to the working class. All people can become, are invited to become members of the working class. The "middle class" cannot say to the workers—"W, invite you all to become members of the middle class." The capitalist class cannot invite us all to become exploiters "to reap where we do not sow." Their philosophy is, that "there must always be Capital and Labour, masters and men, employers and employees." And now, having cleared the ground a little with regard to what we

* See also paragraph on same subject in "Bookshelf."

mean by revolution and what it leads to, let us examine the attitude of revolutionists and reformers in relation thereto.

The revolutionist regards the revolution as of paramount importance, the one goal to which all efforts must be directed. Every factor of working-class experience, every movement which grows in their ranks, educational, political, industrial, their hunger or distress, their affluence or their poverty, he regards as of value in so far as they contribute to the growth of power and its convergence upon the citadel of the enemy. Not for one moment must the revolutionist think that a small minority can effect a *coup* and maintain a revolution. He must agitate and educate and organise until a large enough majority has been secured effectively to carry the revolution to a successful issue. Whether this shall be done by the ballot-box or by other means matters not for the moment. A majority must be secured.

The Reformists view the situation differently. They have a peculiar theory about the "natural growth of society," always with the implication that "natural" and "slow" are synonymous terms. They endeavour to think about society as a whole, deplore the hopeless ignorance of the working class, and hope by participating in political activity (or parliamentary activity) to support every measure which may ameliorate the conditions of the workers, in the hope that by their aid the workers will some day be sufficiently enlightened to vote a Parliamentary Socialist majority. Violent revolution they deplore and believe that in countries where constitutional democratic institutions exist the workers can get all they want. Revolutions may be alright for such countries as Russia, but here are undesirable and unnecessary. Hence they make up their programmes of detailed ameliorative measures. They will cheer to the echo a peroration about the "days that will be better than well," work laboriously for some small measure, and pathetically doubt the possibility of socialism "coming in their time."

However much the revolutionist and the reformer may cheer the same peroration, it is obvious that there is a fundamental difference involving great responsibilities. Both reformers and revolutionists have to deal with situations which arise independently of their will. From time to time mass movements are generated by the economic antagonisms, etc., in society. These movements do not wait for election times, but come independently of them. They have either to be led forward from strength to strength or driven into a variety of channels until strength is dissipated.

The reformer with his static conceptions under such circumstances is either swept forward in spite of himself or becomes part of the machinery of the governing class to crush the workers back into slumdom and the industrial hells of modern times. It is a terrific responsibility which the "reformers" will do well to ponder over. For the minorities of to-day have got to recognise the swiftly moving forces which can give to minorities majority power. Under the pressure of these forces modern institutions will be tested and their limitations discovered with a ruthlessness which many will deplore. The "reformists" may choose if they wish to be part of the reaction under the cloak of "democracy," but the revolutionist must waste no time in deploring the ignorance of the working class. Theirs is the responsibility of merging every element of social unrest among the workers, explaining and educating under the stress of actual circumstances, combining instinctive movement with intelligent direction, until the revolutionary minority becomes the revolutionary majority, capable not simply of moving up to the barriers of the existing institutions, but also of sweeping them away, and improvising and creating institutions responsive to revolutionary aspirations.

It is not a question of length of time. It is not a question of imposing socialism from above. It is rather a question as to which class we are prepared to support—the capitalist class or the working class. If the latter, then it is my contention that our activities must extend beyond ordinary propaganda, educational classes, etc., to the harnessing of every possible movement, educating the workers by the experience of conscious movements persistently explained and directed in terms of class. It is not for us to suppress and sidetrack movements, but to aim at developing the conscious majority by every means in our power. The difficulties are stupendous. The risks are great. These, however, do not shift the responsibility.

J. T. MURPHY.

GIVE THEM 'EL (DORADO)

THE "children's comics" have been reinforced this month by a sheet entitled *The Future*, presented to the public free of cost. It would have been cheap at sixpence, for it is full of excellent fooling, and if the real future turns out to be half as amusing and instructive we are in for a good time. It is of peculiar interest to Plebeians, since its contributors include several of the signatories to the recent Appeal for Funds for Ruskin College, and its contents indicate sufficiently the sort of "education" they consider good for the working classes.

The front page is adorned by a large portrait of the Little Wizard (if-you-buy-enlargement-three-cabinet-photographs-given-with-it style), and alongside this is the motto now almost as famous as the celebrated hill-top peroration. The title under the photograph is "The Pilot of Peace." One can only hope that the usual practice with pilots will be followed in his case. Inside, rare and refreshing fruit is provided by the Pilot Chief himself and his famous team of back-chat comedians—with Barnes and Roberts among the "also rans." The funniest item is an essay entitled "The Gospel of Work and Wages" by G. W. G. (can this be another Geddes?) It is addressed to the half-witted of the working class. In fact, it would be safe to say that most of the paper is written by the half-witted for the half-witted!

Listen to the words of wisdom:—"Most people think in tangles; I want you to think in straight lines." Get that, because it follows that when the workers think along *their* line and the bosses along *theirs*, by a simple geometrical axiom the two will never meet. But G. W. G. doesn't say that. Oh, dear no. He goes on to talk economics—mixed with ethics (which will be popular at Ruskin):—"If you believe in a lie you are the slave of a lie. For example, you are pretty sure to believe that your wages are the 'Bradburys' and coins which you get in your envelope on pay day. Again, you are pretty sure to think that if you do less work yourself there will be more work for someone else, so that shorter hours and spinning the job out are real cures for unemployment. Here are two beliefs . . . held by untold thousands of workers . . . Both are sheer nonsense." "Mind you," he goes on paternally, "I want you to think about yourselves. *Economics, like charity, begins at home.*" Dangerous doctrine, this! Why, if the workers start thinking over ideas of that kind, they'll be seeing the need for "home-grown" working-class education. After a warning to workers to avoid catch-words (he might have added—"and catch-penny economists") he gives to Labour a Gospel—thus:—"The day of the workers is at hand. It will dawn at once, improvement will come in a flood, when every worker in the land learns the true gospel of work and wages. Here it is [then, in black type so big that workers who are nearly blind as well as daft can read it]—GET EVERY PENNY YOU EARN; EARN EVERY PENNY YOU GET." He says it is so simple that the wayfaring man, though a fool, can see it, and we suggest to him that quite a lot of wayfaring men, though fools, can see *through* it.

But he's "impartial"—Ho, yus!—for he proceeds to slang the boss. "You must test your earnings and then you must see that your wages are not too low because you have a poor master who does not know how to run his business. . . . I should know there was a good time coming for the workers if I could learn of men striking because their boss was a poor hand at bossing." And then a pearl of simply colossal price—"Workers simply cannot afford to have inefficient employers." One pictures the earnest workers who, after solemnly warning their boss that he was inefficient, gave themselves the sack and stood in the gutter with cards round their necks giving particulars of their patriotic line of action.

One more quotation. "Never forget that the boss takes one very hard job off your shoulders. When work is done the products which result from it have to be sold to customers, and *he finds the customers.*"

After this star turn, Lloyd George is quite feeble. It seems that we (the Ship of State) have suddenly become involved in some sort of a tempest. It is all very confusing. Peroration somewhat as follows:—"Waves rolling from all directions. . . . Navigation is difficult and dangerous. . . . Some seek help. . . . Some lie prostrate and weary. Some try to upset the boat, either because they dislike the steersman

or want to steer themselves, or because they prefer some crazy craft of their own' With a clear eye, a steady hand and a willing heart, [and a few other things off Christmas cards] we will row into calmer seas and bluer waters. Let all who will man the boats and save the nation." What one wants to inquire is—who scuttled the ship? You can take your choice of shouldering your rifle and fighting in the last stand, manning the boats, damming the flood, saving the burning house, or stopping the rot. And then you can toss up for a sunset on the Cambrian Hills, or a spell in bluer waters, or an apartment in the new world, "where labour shall have its just reward and indolence alone shall suffer want." (At which point the compositor burst into tears.)

The Pilot's second great thought is that "we are not paying our way. We shall be driven either to increase production or to reduce lower than ever the standard of living. I can see no other alternative except quitting the country." In the words of the very vulgar, what hopes!

The other humorists—economists, I mean—cannot compete with L.-G. or G. W. G., but Auckland Geddes does his best. He discourses on "The Hunting of Rainbow Gold." As thus:—"Many coal miners listened to the talkers and went to hunt for the gold that lies at the end of the rainbow. . . . The result will be empty hearths . . . in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and also in France and Italy. Empty hearths and factories not running are the common result of seeking rainbow fairy gold, and when these threaten there is only one way to safety. Give up the vain hunt and GET BACK TO WORK." With these words Auckland shouldered his pick and stepped into the cage, we do *not* think. No, he just goes on talking:—"Coal production is now out of gear because some miners are hunting fairy gold, that 'something for nothing' which has mocked humanity in dreams of El Dorado since history began."

It is to be hoped that Ruskin College will engage Auckland to go down and talk on economics. His theory that commercial crises are due to wage-slaves seeking fairy gold is the sort of thing they'll like there. There is a delightful impartiality about it which would commend it to Mr. Balfour and the Lord Bishop of Thingamibob and the rest of Ruskin's backers. But he ought to be careful. A few people have been well out after "something for nothing" and have found a way to get it. They've got to El Dorado all right—and they're *not* wage-slaves. But the economics taught at Ruskin College doesn't mention them. To do so would be "partisan"!

WINIFRED HORRABIN.

SOME ANTI-BOLSHEVIKS

IT is amusing to observe how the anti-Bolsheviks in the Labour Movement (and outside it) sooner or later confound themselves. I have noted down quite a number of examples, and below give a few instances:—

(i.) In *l'Humanité* of August 18, 1919, Ramsay Macdonald gives his impressions of the Lucerne International Conference. Four days later, in the same paper, Pierre Renaudel "goes for" Ramsay Macdonald to the extent of a column and a-half. Renaudel, of course, was formerly Editor of *l'Humanité* and is a member of the Right Wing, which dominated the French Socialist Party during the greater part of the war. Listen to him (he considers himself attacked by Macdonald):—"It used not to be customary among militant internationalists, writing outside their own country, to formulate judgements with the brutality that Ramsay Macdonald manifests in his impressions of Lucerne. . . . In general one is careful to refrain from taking sides in the quarrels of a national section" [of the International]. Then why does not Renaudel practise what he preaches? Has anyone in the French movement, except Albert Thomas, been more bitter in denunciation of Lenin and the Bolsheviks!!!

(ii.) At Lucerne, Hilferding, of the German Independent Socialists, spoke heatedly of the repressive activities of the German "Majority" Socialists towards the working classes, and asked the meeting to take cognisance of the fact. Mr. Arthur Henderson, as Chairman, refused to do so on the ground that the Inter-

national was not concerned with the disputes of Socialists in any given country. But has not Mr. Henderson himself been very prominent in interfering in the "quarrels" of the Russian Socialists? It is only a twelve-month ago that he was actually engaged in promoting *intervention* in *Russia* against the Bolsheviks—and if this is not Direct Action, what is?

(iii.) Speaking at Browning Hall, Walworth, on September 4, on Direct Action, Mr. Henderson said (according to the *Daily News*), as a "warning" to the "extremists":—"When Labour has conquered political power and has taken over the machinery of Government, are we prepared to allow a minority to oppose a Labour programme of social and economic reform? Are we going to allow them to dictate that programme by unconstitutional methods? If I know anything of organised Labour, a Labour Government would fight to the very last ditch against any policy of Direct Action by any minority, whatever it may like to call itself."

Very good! In Russia "political" power and *economic power* (which Mr. Henderson and his friends always overlook, although a fundamental principle) were in November, 1917, taken over almost bloodlessly by the labouring masses, which, under the guidance of the Bolsheviks, have put forward on a grand scale a scheme of social reconstruction such as the world has never seen. Minorities, egged on by the Entente agents, have, by every conceivable means, endeavoured to upset this scheme. The Bolsheviks and their supporters are fighting, if not yet to the last ditch, at least desperately to maintain their hard-earned gains, against these attempts at sabotage. Why, therefore, has Mr. Henderson for two years been heaping abuse on them? What is the meaning of it? Is it because he imagines himself standing in the penumbra of the premiership?

(iv.) Violently anti-Bolshevik also are the Guild Socialists of the Right Wing. Most prominent of these with his pen has been, and is, Mr. C. E. Bechhofer. A year ago this writer was championing the "cause" of the egregious and utterly discredited Kerensky, later that of the "delightful democrat" Koltchak, and is now, judging by an article in the *Daily Chronicle* of September 15, hobnobbing with Mr. Gregor Alexinsky as representing the "real Russia." Kerensky and Koltchak we know; Alexinsky is not so well known here. In a recent issue of the *Railway Review* (and still more recently in the *Herald*) he claimed to be a member of the "Edinstvo" group—a quite insignificant pro-war group that consisted of Plehanov (now dead) and his handful of followers. Even during the period of the Russian Provisional Governments the influence of this group was quite negligible. And can one wonder at it, seeing that in the spring of 1917 its leader, Plehanov, was dined and wined at the Ritz by our Government officials prior to travelling to Norway in a British warship en route for Petrograd! But there is something more.

When the Tsar arrested the elected radical deputies of the 2nd Duma in 1907, Alexinsky showed very well his revolutionary devotion. The radical factions of the Duma decided then not to fly. They wanted to use their arrest as a last means of propaganda in order to raise the Russian people to a revolutionary protest against violation. When one of the members of the Duma learned of the decision of the Tsar and Stolypin he called up the famous Socialist Tseretelli, proposing to help him to run away. Tseretelli answered over the telephone: "The real representatives of the people are never cowards, they remain in their place." They were arrested two hours later; some of them died in Siberia. Those who remained alive returned to Petrograd ill and exhausted ten years later at the beginning of the Revolution. Mr. Alexinsky was the single man who feared to suffer. He ran away from Petrograd, having left all his comrades. It now seems a safe thing to speak again abroad, and he speaks.

The above paragraph is a verbatim extract from an article by Gregory Zilboorg in the American weekly, *The New Republic*, of August 13, 1919—an article in which he combats the idea that the American pro-Koltchak periodical, *Struggling Russia*, represents the Russian people. Zilboorg acted as Secretary to the Ministry of Labour at Petrograd under the Russian Provisional Government and arrived in New York in the spring of this year.

The dazzling nature of Mr. Bechhofer's many and varied talents must not blind one to the fact that he is quite "out of court" in pretending to speak for the Russian working masses. He appears entirely to have forgotten that early in the war, after a short sojourn in Russia, he wrote a book—*Russia at the Cross-roads*. On page 189 he said:—

Moreover, unless we are to assume without warrant that a great nation can be imprisoned for ever, sooner or later, if the Dardanelles are not made Russian by this war, the war will have to be fought again.

Here, indeed, is "dirty work at the cross-roads"! To imagine that the peasant labourer in the black-earth belt of Ukraine or in the corn lands of the Volga Provinces, the worker in the factories of Moscow and Yekaterinoslav or in the mines of the Urals, should be slaughtered in the interests of such imperialistic conquests, constitutes an outlook such as can have, and has, no relation to the aspirations of the toiling masses of Russia, as, indeed, they endeavoured to make clear to the world immediately after the first revolution of 1917. And at that we will leave it.

A. P. L.

THUS SPAKE GEORGE N. BARNES

"The Materialist Conception of History must cease to be a mere phrase for point-gaining discussionaires."—ARTHUR McMANUS.

AT the Browning Settlement in Walworth a number of "willing-to-do-weel" kind of bodies have been conferring upon "Labour and Religion," and much hot air and gospel have been dumped upon an unresisting world. Among the star performers was no less a personage than Geo. N. Barnes (who once wrote a pamphlet life of Marx!). And he, ably supported by sundry Governmentalists, National Democrats and Patriotic Socialists, spake of the pernicious influence of middle-class men in the Labour Movement. When such as these begin to mouth the phrases of class-consciousness it is time to consider our ways and be wise.

This is, of course, not an example of the thing at which McManus aimed his criticism. At least, not so at first sight. On a second view it will be found to be a beautiful example of an inverse variety of that thing—a metaphysical abstraction substituted for a concrete reality.

Because history can only be understood as a series of class struggles, and because these struggling classes are impelled by the opposition of their material interest, and because the present stage of history presents us with the struggle of Capitalist versus Working Classes whose interests are opposite, therefore—what?

Barnes and Co., you see, are not above the old Parliamentary trick of "catching the Whigs bathing and stealing their clothes." But do not some of us rather play into their hands? It is just as big a fault to imagine that any given proletarian has all the abstract qualities of his class as it is to endow the abstract conception of Class with all the qualities of a particular concrete individual or group. It is notoriously absurd to suppose for instance that all proletarians are conscious of their real relation to their fellows and society. It is equally absurd to suppose that all middle-class men are in purposeful solidarity with their class. Precisely because the concepts of class and class-struggle are so indispensable they must be used with dialectic discrimination.

The essential point of our educational endeavour is, I take it, to transform a number of mentally-isolated individuals into consciously related parts of a whole—to take individuals who, so far as they are aware, "just happen" to work for wages into understanding members of the wage-working class; work that would be impossible had we not to aid us their class-instinct produced by their material conditions. To transform class-instinct into class-consciousness is the work in front of us, and to effect the change we have but to break the spell of the bourgeois ideology with which normally all proletarian brains are saturated. It must be remembered (and this is the

use of the Materialist Conception of History) that, until the forces of Revolution are so large and well-organised that the Revolution is in progress, the normal proletarian is *mentally* a bourgeois from birth. Hence it is inevitable that even among those willing to recite the phrases of revolution and honestly to play their part in the struggle, some bourgeois ideas, modes of reasoning and judgements will remain as mental lumber to the end.

Barnes presents the entertaining spectacle of Satan reproving sin! A member of a bourgeois Cabinet reproves the middle-class individuals in the Labour movement, because they are, he thinks, weaning the workers from their allegiance to the bourgeois State and its institutions! It does not in any way excuse Barnes to point out that the individuals at whom his criticism was aimed are propagating an ideology which is anything but proletarian—at best a petty-bourgeois utopian humanitarianism and radicalism. This latter is objectionable because it is inadequate to our social needs. (That it is petty-bourgeois is an explanation; not, in itself, a condemnation. Petty-bourgeois ideas are quite right—for the petty-bourgeoisie.) And when Barnes, personally assisting, as he is and has been, in the subjection of the workers' brains and imaginations to the illusions, sophistries and cant of the Great Bourgeoisie, poses as critic of the intellectuals of the Little Bourgeoisie and does so (aided by his camouflage of "Labour" member) "in the interests of Labour" the result would be hideously grotesque were it not so grotesquely hideous.

What requires to be pressed upon all students is the usefulness of the Materialist Concept as a means of distinguishing between the apparent and the real aims of men and movements—and that, too, without recourse to the bourgeois yelp of dishonesty.

Just as in real life we distinguish between what a man is and what he thinks he is, so we cannot judge a revolutionary period by its opinion of itself.—**MARX.**

To themselves the Parliamentary leaders seemed defenders of the existing constitution in Church and State against the revolutionary changes of the King. In reality the greatest innovation of all lay in the claim of the Commons that Church and State should be controlled by the representatives of the people, not by the will of the King.—**FIRTH, Oliver Cromwell.**

Is there no similar illusion obsessing the workers' struggle to-day? If the class-struggle be viewed from a loop-hole in the watch-tower of some bold and theoretically perfect section, will it not present a far different perspective than if viewed from an observatory whose purview takes in the whole class—those struggling instinctively as well as those struggling consciously? It will be found that many "movements" which are ideologically advanced are in practice clogs and hindrances upon the workers' *class* struggle. And, contrariwise, many movements which are ideologically backward are none the less in practice of great revolutionary potentiality.

If as the poet has it—

"It's war we're in—not Politics;
It's systems wrestling now—not Parties,"

then the maxims of some who made war a trade may serve our turn. On the eve of battle Nelson signalled his fleet:—"If through smoke or other cause admiral's signals cannot be distinguished, no captain will do wrong who lays his ship alongside that of an enemy." I derive much comfort from that saying. I interpret it to mean that wherever a fight starts between the worker and his boss it is our business to join in—even though the workers involved may have illusions about the origin and end of the struggle. And, by the same token, our education should supply an understanding that will bring agreement—not weapons to enable us to score off each other. I say Amen to McManus and Tom Bell. **THOS. A. JACKSON.**

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

E. and C. P., 2s.; M. Senberg, 9s.; T. Wall, 2s.; P. Thomas, 1s.; E. Wright, 1s. 6d.; C. Butterworth, 2s. 6d.; W. G. Davies, £1; E. Schofield, 3s. 6d.; J. D. W., 4s.; G. Wright, 1s.; Two Jones's, 3s.; T. Jones, 8s.; C. Fletcher, 3s. 6d. Total, £3 1s.

ERGATOCRACY AND THE SHOP STEWARDS' MOVEMENT

III

THE slave-holding system, the feudal system, the city patriciates of the days of guild production, and finally the capitalist system in its various phases down to the latter-day developments of financial capital and experiments in state capitalism—all have been different varieties of ownership rule, and all have found their political expression in different varieties of class state. The revolutions whereby a later phase of proprietorship has been substituted for an earlier have been far less vital than the revolution now actually in progress, wherein ownership rule will yield place to ergatocracy. This is the revolution in which the working class, rising at length to power, will permanently abolish class; this is the revolution in which the proletariat will fulfil its historic mission by realising communist ergatocracy, just as the bourgeoisie fulfilled its historic mission by realising capitalist democracy. Since the days when, with the growth of what for three-quarters of a century has been known as the Socialist movement, the function of the modern working class as a revolutionary force began to be understood, three main methods of advance have been simultaneously or successively essayed: trade unionism (old style); co-operation; and labourism, or the attempt to organise the battalions of labour upon the parliamentary battlefield, the attempt to secure the triumph of the proletariat by wresting from the bourgeoisie its own finished instrument of parliamentary democracy. We need not waste time and space in the PLEBS by discussing the reasons for the failure of craft unionism, which, as the years roll by, is ever more effectively "nobbled" in the interest of the master class. Productive co-operation is a proved impracticability under the capitalist harrow; and distributive co-operation, though not without its advantages in certain respects, is as little likely to bring about a revolution as a brigade of pea-shooters would be to capture a maxim-gun position. Parliamentary democracy may be left to the Socialists whose robust faith in its efficacy still survives, and to their Labourist associates (titled and untitled, decorated and undecorated, in office or discharged from office); no Plebeian will wish to stake his money on a dead horse. For new times, new methods. The fundamental teaching we desire to convey in these articles may be summed up in a single sentence. The shop stewards' movement is the means by which the proletariat will fulfil its historic mission; viewed in the perspective of the future, the shop stewards' movement will be recognised as the instrument of the twentieth century revolution, the revolution that inaugurated ergatocracy.

It is not suggested that the shop stewards and their supporters, all or most, are to-day consciously inspired by such an aim. Were they so inspired, there would be no occasion for the present articles, and communist ergatocracy in Great Britain would be a year or two nearer than it is. The immediate goal of the shop stewards' movement is to secure the control of industry by the workers through organisation in the workshop. The point on which we have to insist, in summarising the philosophy of the new development, is that the economic revolution thus to be effected inevitably entails the social revolution in its entirety. Unless the workers' committees, grasping the control of industry, are fully prepared, not merely to maintain and more than maintain production, but further to assume and to discharge with enhanced efficiency and in the workers' interest the social, educative, and political functions now discharged (however inefficiently from the workers' point of view) by the various organs of the capitalist state—unless they are desirous of doing these things and competent to do these things, chaos will ensue; or the capitalist state will remain in being, and even the control of industry by the workers' committees will prove to have been nothing more than a breath upon the face of the waters. The workers cannot fulfil their historic mission until the time is ripe, and whether the time is or is not ripe we shall learn, as far as this country is concerned, by the way in which, during the next few months, the more active protagonists in the shop stewards' movement comport themselves in view of the peculiar needs of the hour.

"The petty bourgeois revolutionist who wavers at every turn, hesitating between confidence and fits of despair, is" (writes Lenin, *The Soviets at Work*, p. 41) "no sure foundation for a Socialist state. We need the regular march of the iron battalions of the proletariat." Agreed, *tavarish*, agreed; but these same iron battalions must know whither they are marching, and how best to advance along the road. We have no Lenin here, nor need of one. Russian conditions are peculiar, and perchance an ex-aristocratic "intellectual" such as yourself, an ex-bourgeois "intellectual" such as Trotsky, may have been indispensable factors in the Bolshevik revolution. Here, at any rate, the working-class movement is fashioning its own intellectuals in the Labour colleges and the Marxist classes; is turning them out by hundreds at a time. Such men and women have no parliamentary ambitions, no taste for the honeyed sweets of trade union officialdom. Except for those who become teachers in the colleges or join the staffs of the new revolutionary papers, they remain workers in the industrial field, and there they can best carry on the campaign which is their labour of love. There, in the workshop, at the bench, they can diffuse the revolutionary virus, deadly to our enemies, but the breath of life to ourselves. True, indeed, is what Lenin said to Ransome: "England may seem to you untouched, but the microbe is already there."

In the workshop the present writers, who are not industrial workers, can play no direct part. Their place is in the PLEBS laboratory, that laboratory where the virus of revolution may be subjected to the process known to bacteriologists as "intensification." As far as the strain of germs now under consideration is concerned, one or at most two more instalments of this series of papers should serve to complete the forcing process.

EDEN and CEDAR PAUL.

THE LABOUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

IN the growth of working-class organisations within the structure of capitalist civilisation there comes a stage when special organs must be developed to aid the workers in their struggle. Just as the employers are tightening up their organisations, establishing press bureaux, publicity sections, statistical departments and funds, and bodies for one or other of their purposes, so in like manner the workers must build up their own instruments for particular purposes. This has been recognised on the Continent, where special "Commissions" and "Bureaux" have long been in existence.

It is to meet this need in Britain that the Labour Research Department has been built up, for the purpose of collecting statistics and materials from which information can be supplied to working-class organisations. Before the war the workers in this country had to rely in many things upon information which came from capitalist sources. That information might be accurate, but on the other hand it might not. And they were in somewhat the same position as the old Tsardom, which had depended on the Prussian manufacturers for its supply of munitions of war. Of course here and there workers possessed all the information they desired. But this was not true of the majority who possessed instead the educational as well as the economic heritage of the wage-slave. Even where it was known exactly what information would be of use, it was not known where to find it. Every reader of the PLEBS knows how often the question is asked—"Where can I get a book on such and such a subject?" Of the existence of a need for an information bureau there can be no doubt.

On the other hand, if a research department is to be of use to Labour, it must be prepared to answer all questions that are of interest to Labour, whether these have a temporary use or even where the questioner is on a wrong tack. There must be no attempt to give anything more than information. The value of an information bureau is destroyed once there is the slightest suspicion that an attempt is being made to guide the inquirer instead of simply satisfying his thirst for facts. And men would avoid it as they avoid a barber who attempts to sell you marvellous lotions instead of cutting your hair. It may seem difficult, particularly under the historic conditions of Britain, to make an organisation for the supply of facts acceptable

to more than one section of the organised workers. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the Research pudding has been eagerly eaten by almost every section of the Labour movement. Both left wing and right wing, Marxians and Fabians, class-conscious and unclass-conscious, have recognised the value of an organisation which has passed a self-denying ordinance to furnish facts and only facts to inquirers, and, like the character in Shaw's *Major Barbara* (Bernard Shaw, it may be noted, is the Chairman of the Labour Research Department), keeps the true faith of an Armourer, supplying munitions to all sections of the working class, without distinction of view, policy, or outlook.

Accordingly, trade unions, trades councils and co-operative societies, as well as Socialist bodies, find the Labour Research Department of use, and aid it in turn by their affiliations. To them, as well as to the individual members—amongst whom are numbered not a few members of the Plebs League—is sent out the Monthly Circular, which summarises all events, facts, and happenings of importance to the workers.

Among the activities of the Department is an inquiry into the Organisation of Capital. In the last few years there have only been one or two writers who have kept the workers informed of the development of employers' associations and their organisation. They have done yeoman work, but the subject is now become so vast that even if Marx were to rise from the dead he would find it difficult to keep touch with the host of new facts to which his generalisations apply. The Labour Research Department has accumulated as much material as it can bearing upon the organisation of capital; what is now required is that those who are keenly interested shall co-operate in the work. For this Research work is very largely carried on by voluntary helpers. Again, the Research Department is engaged in the acquisition of documents, historical and current, that explain the position of the workers' organisations in other countries. An international section has been set up, and it is hoped to be able shortly to compile a store of information about the European proletariat.

It has been necessary to cite instances of what has actually been done in order to reduce the idea of working-class research to concrete form. But the main thing is not this or that organisation, but the necessity for a body devoted to this one purpose. The contention that it is only machinery does not detract from its importance. For machinery of which this is but one kind, may, if rightly used, make all the difference between a temporary upheaval and a permanent success.

The crisis of the capitalist method of production is very near, and the workers must be thoroughly equipped to take full advantage of the hour. The Russian people, after the short-lived triumph of 1905, had to pass through the long agony of Stolypin's White Terror before they finally succeeded in 1917. No one would wish a repetition of that experience to be suffered by any other section of the proletariat. But if the proletariat are to wait on the bitter lessons of experience, if they are not to be equipped beforehand with their special organs for this purpose and that, the first triumph of the uprising working class will be short-lived and the parent of despair.

PAGE ARNOT.

THE MEET

At an E.C. meeting held on Sunday, September 14th, it was decided that, subject to the permission of the Governors, the Plebs Meet be held at the College, on Saturday, November 8th, at 2 o'clock.

There will be a Social in the evening.

Branches and individuals are requested to send in any resolutions for the Agenda not later than the 18th of October. All resolutions and full particulars of the Agenda will be published in the November PLEBS.

"PLEBS" NOTES AND NEWS

AT LAST! The PLEBS has an Office! The work has grown so much lately that a home of our own became imperative. The difficulty was to find anything suitable—within our means. Finally we decided to ask the Governors of the College to rent us an unused basement room in the College, and this they consented to do. Please note that our new address is—

11A Penywern Road,
Earl's Court, S.W.5.

The room is large, with a good cupboard and shelves, and is well suited in every way for our purpose. More of this later; suffice it to say (just as a hint to be going on with) *we cannot do without furniture or a gas stove!* And there'll be the rent to pay regularly!

THE preparations for the winter classes are going on with such vigour that the secretaries are too busy to write long accounts of same. We hope to publish a full Directory of Classes soon and all secretaries desirous of their class being included in the list are asked to forward particulars at once. Great service would be done for the movement if secretaries would get to know about *all* classes held—those connected with other organisations, as well as Plebs and C.L.C. classes. Though our directory would only include the latter, yet particulars of other classes would be most useful. Now that the College is reopened, we hope it will be possible to organise a Conference and unify the whole movement.

By the time this magazine is in the hands of our readers the formal reopening of the Labour College will have taken place, and work will once more be in full swing. Reports of the opening will doubtless have appeared in the daily and weekly press, so that PLEBS space being limited, we shall, unless any superfine flowers of rhetoric demand comment later, ask Plebeians to be content with this brief reference here. Twenty-nine students are in residence. Besides the N.U.R. and S.W.M.F. scholarships the following organisations are sending students:—Northumberland Miners, Forest of Dean Miners, Dyers' and Bleachers' Federation, and the following districts of the S.W.M.F.:—Tredegar, Rhondda, Aberdare, Garw, Monmouth Western Valleys, Mon. Eastern Valleys, and Pontypridd. Quite a number of applications have had to be refused because of lack of accommodation, but extension of the premises is, we understand, under consideration, and in addition to increased accommodation for men, it is hoped to make provision for a hostel for women resident students.

WE are exceedingly glad to report that through the enthusiastic efforts of keen Plebeians within the organisation the following resolution, moved by the Bradford branch of the Postmen's Federation, was carried at the Amalgamation Conference of the Postal Unions:—"That the E.C. of the Amalgamated Society take the necessary steps to become part owners and controllers with the N.U.R. and the S.W.M.F. of the Labour College, and establish Scholarships to enable members of the Union of Postal Workers to attend that institution." We heartily congratulate our friends on the success of their efforts, and would urge them to continue their good work by seeing that the resolution is carried into effect; resolutions having a bad habit of remaining mere pious expressions of opinion unless those responsible for them see to it that they are translated into action.

A LABOUR COLLEGE meeting was held at Berkeley Hall, Glasgow, on the Monday of Congress week. C. T. Cramp was in the chair, and Noah Ablett, after reviewing the history of the College, spoke on the necessity of independence in working-class education. J. H. Thomas, during a speech on the value of education, said that "The railwaymen and miners were so convinced of the necessity of giving to young workmen the educational opportunities denied to those before them, that they had

organised and now controlled the Labour College. Pioneers there must be in every phase of development, and it was a good thing that they had the courage and means to pioneer this educational work. But it must not stop there. It was bad to leave to a section what ought to be done by the whole." He asked them to come in and take a hand in shaping the policy of this educational work. W. Brace said that they were not satisfied to confine the control and direction of the College within parochial limits. The Labour College should become the University of the working class and the organised expression educationally of the Labour Movement, just as the Trade Unions and the Labour Party were its industrial and political expressions.

OWING to the illness of Nun Nicholas, Robert Holder has taken over the economics lectureship for the Liverpool and District Labour College. We in London regret his going very much, as well as the reason for it, but we can only congratulate Liverpool on obtaining the services of so keen and able a worker. W. H.

A BADGE FOR THE PLEBS LEAGUE



As mentioned before, we have received several inquiries and suggestions recently about a PLEBS Badge. We give herewith a rough sketch of the design which, after due consideration, we ourselves favour. It represents, it may be as well to point out, a torch and an open book, both symbolic of the PLEBS' historic mission. Before proceeding further, we thought it desirable to submit this sketch to our friends, and invite criticisms or further suggestions; not only as to the design itself, but as to its making up—whether in bronze, or enamel, or a bit of each? The Hon. Sec. will be glad to hear from all interested.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

A new and ingeniously contrived method of Home Study.

Exercises for HEALTH, NERVES, SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, CLOUDY THINKING and MIND-WANDERING.

Plans and Suggestions for COLLECTING, ARRANGING, CLASSIFYING and DEVELOPING IDEAS.

Lessons for SPEECH COMPOSITION, PREPARATION OF REPORTS, ESSAYS and ARTICLES. Studies in MEMORISING, MEMORIC ALPHABET, SUBSTITUTION.

Miss A. MAUDE ROYDEN (City Temple Preacher) writes:—"I think your course of Home Study for Public Speaking is quite excellent. If some one had taught me all that before I started, it would have saved me a lot of trouble. I should like to add that I believe *everybody* can be taught to speak in public unless they have some actual physical defect. I do not mean that you can teach people to be orators—few of us can be that—but everyone, I believe, can be an acceptable public speaker if they will take the trouble."

WILL LAWTHOR (Durham Miners' Executive) writes:—"Of all the text-books and courses for individual study in the art of conveying the message of hope by the spoken word, the "Herald" course is IT. To those who cannot at the moment convey the message with confidence in themselves—and to the others who have done so for years—there is nothing to equal the "Herald" course. It is the Alpha and the Omega of all that is required to help one to gain that necessary understanding of their case in order to present it, to inspire their listeners, to play their part in the cause of freedom from all barriers—economic and social."

WILLET BALL, Editor "Railway Review," writes:—"The Herald League, through its secretary, Mr. George Belt, has recently published a course on speaking, designed to give help to both experts and novices in the art. It has been our pleasure to have been of some slight assistance, and to try the methods laid down in the course—on others before they were written. It is the cheapest course of its type that has been published. Others charge many pounds sterling for the same scope of study, and we are not ashamed to recommend the course to our readers."

The charge for the full Course (12 parts) is 3s. 6d. in advance (which may be sent altogether if desired) from GEORGE BELT, Herald Office, 2 Carmelite Street, E.C.4.

THE BALANCE-SHEET

IT is safe to say that the year we have just passed through has been the most critical for us for various reasons. The price of paper crippled us quite early in the year, and the Military Service Acts deprived us of helpers and editor before six months had gone by. We faced the year with more work and less folk to help us than ever before. However, we have not only survived, but find ourselves with a better-looking balance-sheet than ever before.

It will be noted that the expenditure does not include the salary paid to the Secretary during the months when the editor was in France, but this was paid out of a separate fund administered by H. Pratt, who will present the account to the Meet.

We have not paid our way this year on the sales of the Magazine, but, owing to the generous help of friends who sent donations, it will be seen that the deficit has been more than made up. The policy of the E.C. in asking for donations rather than in raising the price while paper was still dear, and no increase in size was possible, has been fully justified. We are now once more paying our way each month, and we hope to continue doing so. Anything that our friends like to send along will still be welcome. We pay for *none* of the work that is done for us, we need office furniture and a fund to run the office, we could expand and go out after a circulation if it were possible for us to employ a clerk, in fact, if we only had a little more income we could soon double it!*

The Secretary wishes to thank all friends who helped so much during the trying time last year. It was not only the actual cash donations, but the cheering letters and enthusiastic support that helped the very depleted garrison to keep the flag flying. And if we could keep going last year, then we can keep going *any* year!

W. H.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
August 1st, 1918, to July 31st, 1919.

		RECEIPTS.	£	s.	d.
Cash in hand.	PLEBS account, July 31st, 1918	.. .. .	20	6	9½
Cash in hand.	Publications account, July 31st, 1918	.. .. .	27	8	4
Sales of Magazines	.. .. .	.. .. .	357	19	8
Sales of Publications	.. .. .	.. .. .	348	15	5
League Subscriptions	.. .. .	.. .. .	15	19	6
Donations	.. .. .	.. .. .	142	11	2
Advertisements	.. .. .	.. .. .	5	19	6
Affiliation Fees	.. .. .	.. .. .	1	18	6
Loans	.. .. .	.. .. .	81	17	0
			£1,002 15 10½		
		EXPENDITURE.	£	s.	d.
Printing (Magazine, £423 17s. 7d.; Publications, £359 4s. 9d.)	.. .. .	.. .. .	783	2	4
Despatch of Magazines (and books)	.. .. .	.. .. .	65	3	0
Advertisements	.. .. .	.. .. .	6	8	6
Office Material	.. .. .	.. .. .	9	9	5½
Miscellaneous (Last Meet, Duplicat., Travelling Expenses, etc.)	.. .. .	.. .. .	10	13	7
Repaid Loan and Grant to Organ. Fund	.. .. .	.. .. .	95	13	4
			£970 10 2½		
Cash in hand	.. .. .	.. .. .	32	5	8
			£1,002 15 10½		
<i>Audited and found correct, August, 1919.</i>					
ARTHUR MACMANUS. W. REECE.					

* Double what—Income or Circulation—ED. Both.—SEC.

THE PLEBS

BALANCE-SHEET

								LIABILITIES		
								£	s.	d.
To late Treasurer (Loans 1913 and 1914)	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	42	9	1
								ASSETS		
								£	s.	d.
Cupboard, Typewriter, Office Material	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	25	0	0
Outstanding accounts	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	60	0	0
Books in stock (approx.)	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	110	0	0
Cash in hand	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	32	5	8
								<hr/>		
Liabilities	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	£227	5	8
								<hr/>		
Surplus	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	£184	16	7
								<hr/>		

CORRESPONDENCE

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

DEAR COMRADE,—It is, perhaps, unlikely that the writers of "Ergatocracy and the Shop Stewards' Movement" will pause in their somewhat stately stride to answer comments, favourable or unfavourable. By the time the article sequence is finished, the coming of the British revolution may in large part have refuted Rothstein's criticism. As for Comrade Jackson, beer is a good drink on occasions, but he might remember that the PLEBS does not attempt to appeal pre-eminently to those who habitually drink beer and think beer. A famous philosopher once wrote a definition of Evolution as follows:—"Evolution is a change from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity, through continuous differentiations and integrations." A distinguished mathematician thought he could ridicule the definition and its writer by "translating the formula into plain English," thus:—"Evolution is a change from a nohowish, un-talkaboutable, all-alikeness, to a somehowish and in-general talkaboutable not-all-alikeness, by continuous somethingelseifications and sticktogetherations." I commend to Jackson and others interested the philosopher's reply, which will be found on pp. 519 to 524 of the standard edition of Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*.

But it would be a pity to let a month pass without a rejoinder to Fred Casey, who welcomes the word "ergatocracy," and suggests shortening it to "ergocracy." I may venture to point out that, while usage is the final arbiter as to the form of a word, a new term has a much better chance of acceptance if it is (1) euphonious and (2) etymologically correct. In point of euphony, I think "ergatocracy" and its derivatives greatly preferable, whilst there can be no doubt that the longer form is more scholarly. Without prejudice to the question whether the Greeks are as dead as Jackson asserts (Greek is unique among extant European languages in having undergone minimal changes during the last 2,500 years), it is to classical Greek that western Europe turns when a new name has to be found, whether for a concrete object like the telephone or for an abstract idea like ergatocracy. Now *ergon* is "work," and "ergocracy" would mean "the rule of work," whereas *ergates* is "a worker," and "ergatocracy" means "the rule of the workers"—which is precisely what we are out to secure. It is as ERGATOCRACY that the word will be acclimatised internationally, in the Slav, the Teutonic, and the Latin tongues. As soon as the newness is worn off it will pass unchallenged as current coin, and we shall wonder how we ever carried on our mental exchanges without it. At least, that is the opinion of

Yours fraternally,

AN ERGATOCRAT.

P.S.—If our wireless installation were in proper working order, Comrade Lenin would have had the contents of the April PLEBS before he made his speech on the Third International at Moscow on April 15th (reproduced in the *Socialist* of

September 11th). Then he would have been able to use the new terminology, instead of continuing to talk of the distinction between "proletarian democracy" and "bourgeois democracy."

JOHN S. CLARKE'S POEMS

DEAR COMRADE,—In his review of J. S. Clarke's *Satires, Lyrics and Poems*, in last month's PLEBS, J. F. H. somewhat vehemently denies that there is music in Clarke's poetry. He attributes to me the assertion that Clarke combines the humour of Hood with the music of Burns. If he had read the Preface more carefully he would have seen that the statement was not made by me (though I agree with it) but by one of our greatest living men of letters. In case anyone who has read my remarks may be led by J. F. H. to think that I place myself in that select category, I beg leave to say here that I do not. If your reviewer insists on considering me one of the literary great ones of the earth—well, there is no accounting for taste, as the milkman is alleged to have said when the housemaid kissed his pony. It is a pity he does not give an example of music as he "understands the term in relation to poetry." As I understand it, there is a great deal of it in, say, "A Ballad of Commonwealth" (page 54). If J. F. H. could not find it there the explanation may be that he was too much excited by his own particular discovery—guts in relation to poetry.

By the way, when Clarke says that a man has got no guts, he is not referring to a physical peculiarity, but indicating the absence of a certain moral quality. It really seems necessary to point this out to a man who can ask in all seriousness if Clarke pleads poetic license for making Palæolithic man and the Mammoth contemporaries of the pterodactyl, the brontosaur and triceratops. I do not know how Clarke will answer the question. My own opinion is that "'Twas Ever Thus" is a bit of pure fun and is not meant to be "scientific" (much-abused word!) We have comic artists of the bourgeois variety like Lawson Wood and E. T. Reed who depict Primitive man indulging in chariot races and similar sports with brontosaurs and other fearsome wild fowl for steeds. Is this to be accounted cleverness in a middle-class artist and lack of it in a working-class poet? But there are other glaring anachronisms in the book. In "Paradise Postponed" Satan quotes the *Communist Manifesto*. Poetic license, J. F. H. In the Dedication there is a reference to "the kid-gloved troglodyte." Poetic li—no, J. F. H., you were only joking, after all.

A word about "Three of Them," to whose "staggering list of epithets and adjectives" your contributor objects. This piece was written during the 40-hours' strike. At such a time, when men's blood is up, invective is your only wear. Hand-picked adjectival embellishments may be suited to the moods of superior people, but Clarke's vigorous workshop language more readily "fetches" Henry, whose maiding name is Dubb.

I quite agree that J. S. C. does not need comparisons with other writers. He can stand on his own guts, so to speak. But what on earth has he in common with Sassoon?

May I, in conclusion, be allowed to express regret that J. F. H. should have selected for criticism two or three comparatively unimportant little pieces. We have it on the authority of Sassoon's bishop that the ways of God are strange. So also are those of some reviewers.

Yours fraternally,

P. LAVIN.

[J. F. H. writes:—A good old row with a fellow book-lover is a joy too good to be missed, so I shall not apologise for replying as fully as space permits to Lavin's counter-attack. First blood goes to him; I ought to have read, or to have quoted, rather, his Preface more carefully, and to have credited "one of our greatest living men of letters," and not Lavin himself, with the remark with which I still cordially disagree. (By the way, being possessed of—or by—a passion for literary gossip, I can't help wondering about the identity of that great unnamed, and whether he's of "the bourgeois variety" or a real proletarian?)

I find it difficult to define, or to give brief specimens of, "music as I understand the term in relation to poetry." I suppose it's a matter partly of conscious technique, partly of an intuitive and more or less un-analysable "magic" in the use of words—

quite apart from the value of the sentiments expressed. Every great poet has his own individual "magic," peculiar to himself. I can find no music (as I understand the term, etc., etc.) in "A Ballad of Commonwealth." I find a simple, dumpity-dump kind of rhythm, and a number of terribly time-worn phrases "a beauteous land and fair," "soft maternal glow," "bells of Freedom ring," and so on). If Lavin is not conscious of the difference between a poem like this, and, say, Morris's "Death Song" and "The Day is Coming," or Chesterton's "Call upon the Wheels, Master," or Ewer's "1814-1914" and "The Sinn Fein Dead," or Francis Adams' "Anarchism," then I'm afraid nothing I can say will help him. And I think a lot of J. S. Clarke's poetry would be all the simpler and stronger if many of his "hand-picked adjectival embellishments" were deleted.

Despite the density Lavin imputes to me, I really did understand that Clarke used the term "guts" to indicate "a certain moral quality." I used the term in the same sense myself, and it is that particular moral quality which, as I said before, seems to me Clarke's strongest point. It's just that quality—a faculty of expressing certain emotions *raw*, so to speak, and undiluted—that he struck me as having in common with Sassoon.

No, I don't account as cleverness in a middle-class artist what I condemn in a working-class poet. I think Lawson Wood's and E. T. Reed's "pre-historic" humour is pretty cheap, anyhow, and has done considerable harm in encouraging muddled ideas about early history—worse, in encouraging average people to regard it as merely a funny and unimportant matter, fit subject only for comic pictures. Which is why I was rather sorry Clarke did the same thing—when he might have set a good example to the "bourgeois variety." The instance of Satan quoting the *Communist Manifesto* is not analogous; Satan being notoriously capable of quoting Scripture (any Scripture) for his purpose.

As for Lavin's complaint that I singled out "two or three comparatively unimportant little pieces" for criticism—well, that's begging the whole question. He and I, I'm afraid, would totally disagree as to which were the important or unimportant ones. I mentioned last month some of those I particularly liked; a further reading of Clarke's volume hasn't altered my taste.]

"THE PLEBS" BOOKSHELF

NO one can charge Mark Starr with any lack of sweet reasonableness in his attempt, on another page of this issue, to deal faithfully with Ramsay Macdonald. But his accusation of "in all things neither hot nor cold" has been pretty well justified by one of Macdonald's articles in *Forward*, which has appeared since M.S. sent in his MS. "I hail with unfeigned pleasure," says Macdonald, "the economic studies of our younger men." That makes you sit bolt upright, doesn't it? But without a pause he goes on—"I disagree with those friends of mine who think that such studies by themselves will put not only the weapon of emancipation into the hands of the workers, but also the skill and knowledge to use it." "Studies by themselves"! Thing in itself! But who ever claimed that such studies by themselves would put not only, etc., etc.? Still—it's a sign of grace, at any rate, that Macdonald is hailing with unfeigned pleasure the economic studies of his juniors. I regret to report that he proceeds to urge that "attached to every Labour College and class should be something like a Military Staff College, the studies in which should be historical, and should include *impartially scientific* inquiries into why Labour has failed, why revolutions have split," etc., etc. Why this morbid craving for "impartiality"? Hasn't Macdonald yet realised that the wretched word is suspect? . . . And in view of his own "neither hot nor cold" attitude towards Russia, it smacks of the ironical to hear him wondering "why revolutions have split, and why so many bright mornings have ended in days of cloud and cold and darkness."

* * * * *

I am not going to review Hilferding's *Boehm-Bawerk's Criticism of Marx* (S.L. Press). For one thing, it's a little outside my beat. But I would like to say one thing

about it—which I trust won't be taken unkindly. Is it the type of book we most need at the present time? I'm in hearty agreement with what Arthur MacManus and Tom Bell have written recently in the PLEBS about the need for "popularising" our teaching; simplifying it to essentials, and stating those (as the Russians have done) in such a way that he who runs may read—and understand. Hilferding's is *not* a book of that kind. If ever a writer was in imminent peril of being submerged beneath a stodgy mass of commentators, pedants and verbalists—*pro* and *anti*—that writer is Marx. And if ever a writer *needed* simplification, and not amplification, it is he. (It's not heresy to say that, is it?) . . . Hilferding's book is the work of a German commentator, as distinct, let us say, from a Russian—or a Merthyr—pamphleteer. And it seems to me that we've far too many commentaries already, and that our need is for re-statements, designed for plain workers, not scholars. . . . One other point—wouldn't the book have been made more interesting by a brief note on its author, and his standing in the German movement? He is by all means the best-known figure among Continental Socialists; and even a discussion on economic theory is illuminated (for ordinary mortals—I can't speak for Scotsmen) by some idea of the personality behind the propositions.

* * * * *

The *Sunday Chronicle* recently had a surprisingly complimentary paragraph about G.B.S. in its gossip-about-the-great column. Which surprised me, because the Manchester oracle didn't talk that way at the time *Commonsense about the War* appeared. Then I remembered that a week or two previously G.B.S. had written an article for the *S.C.* on Direct Action, the gist of which was that direct action was "a mug's game"—and evidently this later rôle of his has atoned for his regrettable past in the eyes of Hulton's, Ltd. . . . I'm hoping that Ablett will find time before we go to press with next month's magazine, to compose a few comments on Shaw's article.

* * * * *

I must give a bare list of the pile of pamphlets lying in front of me, and let it go at that—though one would like to talk about several of them. Two new ones from Newbold—the man's a pamphlet-factory! I wish he'd have them all published in a uniform size, so that one could bind them. *Bankers, Bondholders and Bolsheviks* (I.L.P., 2d.), was mentioned last month; his two latest are *Capitalism and the Counter-Revolution* (W.S.F., 3d.) and *The Menace of American Capitalism* (B.S.P., 2d.). All of 'em very well worth binding! Other publications about Russia—*The Land Decrees of the Soviets* (I.L.P., 3d.), very useful; *Life in Russia To-day*, by W. R. Humphries (W.S.F., 1d.), reprinted from the "One Big Union Monthly"; *L'Internationale des Soviets*, by R. Lefebvre (*La Vie Ouvriere*, 60 Quai de Jemmapes, Paris, 25 centimes). And I ought to include in this list the very useful Chart published in the *Dreadnought*, Sept. 13, showing the construction of the Soviet Government. About Hungary—*Facts About Communist Hungary*, by Alice R. Hunt (W.S.F., 4d.). About Austria—*The Death of a People: The Story of the Austrian Famine* (Fight the Famine Council, 329 High Holborn, W.C.1., 2d.). About Germany—*Family Life in Germany under the Blockade*, by Lina Richter. Preface by Bernard Shaw (Nat. Labour Press, 6d.). About Churchill—*The Political Gambler*, by Joseph King (Reformers' Bookstall, Glasgow, 1d.). About our own parish—*Borough Councils: Their Constitution, How they Work, and Their Powers* (I.L.P., 2d.). About workers' control—*A Plan for the Democratic Control of the Mining Industry*: Published by the Industrial Committee of the S. Wales Socialist Society (From D. A. Davies, 38 Cemetery Road, Porth, S. Wales, 4½d. post paid.) About Our Own Subject—*The Need for Independence in Working-Class Education*, by E. Archbold (Accrington and District Labour College, 107 Blackburn Road, Accrington. 2½d. post paid)—an able re-statement, just a bit on the "heavy" side. . . . I've also received from the Nat. Labour Press, a one-act play, *The Recruit*, by Fenner Brockway. I've only glanced at it as yet, but I notice that the verisimilitude of the Army dialogue makes G.B.S.'s little outburst in *Pygmalion* look very tame.

J. F. H.

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