

Vol. XII. No. 5

May, 1920

# THE PLEBS

AGITATE - EDUCATE - ORGANISE

~~~~~

THE "TEXT BOOK" CONFERENCE

MARX ON RUSSIA

"UNBIASSED" HISTORY

MORE PROLETARIAN POETS

STUDENTS' PAGE

*Reviews*

*Correspondence*

~~~~~

Printed at the Pelican Press and Published  
by the Plebs League at 11a Penywern Road,  
Earl's Court, London, S.W.5

Monthly

Threepence

ORDER NOW FOR YOUR CLASSES NEXT AUTUMN.

The books may be out of print if you delay.

---

**CRAIK**

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE  
MODERN BRITISH WORKING-  
CLASS MOVEMENT (*New Edition*)

1s. 6d., net. Post Paid, 1s. 8d. Per 12, 16s. Per 25,  
£1 10s. Per 50, £3. (Carriage Paid). Limited number  
of cloth-bound copies, 3s. net. (3s. 3d. Post Paid)

**STARR**

A WORKER LOOKS AT  
HISTORY (*New and Revised Edition*)

2s., net. Post Paid, 2s. 3d. Per 12, 21s. Per 25, £2.  
Per 50, £4. (Carriage Paid)  
Limited number of cloth-bound copies, 3s. 6d. net.  
(3s. 9d. Post Paid)

**ABLETT**

EASY OUTLINES OF  
ECONOMICS

1s. 3d. net. Post Paid, 1s. 5d. Per 12, 13s. Per  
25, £1 5s. Per 50, £2 10s. (Carriage Paid)

---

*MARXISM: Fundamentals of Social Evolution*

A SYLLABUS & BOOK LIST BY FRED SHAW

Price 6d., post paid

Not an Outline for beginners, but a valuable mine of reference for the advanced  
student.

---

HAVE YOU ORDERED YOUR BADGE ?



1s. each. 10s. per dozen. Brooches or Studs (say which).

PLEBS LEAGUE, 11a PENYWERN ROAD, EARL'S COURT

LONDON, S.W.5

---

☐ A Red X in this square means that your Magazine subscription  
has lapsed. We need the money and we rely on you.



# THE PLEBS

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

Vol. XII.

May, 1920

No. 5

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE "TEXTBOOK" CONFERENCE .. .. .	67
THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIA. By Karl Marx .. .. .	70
"UNBIASSED" HISTORY: AN EXPOSURE. By R. W. Postgate .. .. .	72
MORE PROLETARIAN POETS. By L. A. Motler.. .. .	74
STUDENTS' PAGE. By Mark Starr .. .. .	76
CORRESPONDENCE .. .. .	77
SHAW AT THE LABOUR COLLEGE. By John Thomas .. .. .	78
NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT .. .. .	79
SYMPOSIUM ON "THE HIGH COST OF LIVING" (Announcement) .. .. .	80
REVIEWS. By R. W. P., J. P. M. Millar, T. Ashcroft, M. S., W. H. M., and J. F. H.	80

## THE "TEXTBOOK" CONFERENCE

**I**F the Conference held at Bradford, April 17-18, was not quite so breathlessly busy as the Manchester Conference in January, it none the less settled the matters it set out to settle, and marked another stage in the task of organising and co-ordinating the movement for Independent Working-Class Education in this country. True, many of the speakers who we had hoped would be able to introduce the subjects to be discussed were—for various reasons—unable to attend. That was a pity, if only because "the more, the merrier"! But if not present in person, their views were before the Conference in the pages of the current Magazine, and were duly taken into consideration. And the important job of planning and putting in hand the new series of Plebs Textbooks (on Economics, Industrial History, Economic Geography, The Science of Understanding, and Biology) will be immensely simplified by the fact that the scope and contents of each has been fully discussed by a gathering of class tutors, organisers, and students.

In the unavoidable absence of Tom Bell, the chair was taken by George Sims. Representatives attended from the Labour College (London), the Scottish Labour College, the N. Eastern (Newcastle), Notts, Manchester, and West Riding Labour College Districts, the classes at Liverpool, Leigh, Bury, Sheffield, Bradford, Halifax, Middlesboro', Ashton-under-Lyne, Chesterfield, Doncaster, Leeds, Elland, Mansfield, Wakefield, Shipley, Bingley, Fleetwood; and the Labour College Students' Plebs branch. Dr. Dessin (Bradford) and W. Pickles (Ashton-under-Lyne) were appointed as a Credentials Committee.

It is, of course, impossible in the space at our disposal to give more than the main points of a discussion which altogether lasted some nine or ten hours. On the general need for *simplification* of technical terms and phraseology, and for concentration on *essentials* and omission of details throughout all the textbooks, there was complete agreement.

The two subjects dealt with on Saturday afternoon and evening were Economic Geography and Industrial History.

In the case of the former, discussion centred mainly upon the relative

emphasis to be laid on (and the space to be devoted to) the historical side of the subject as compared to the outstanding economic-geographical factors and problems of the world of to-day. While it was argued that the historical side afforded more scope for giving the student a general knowledge of geography, as well as providing him with a necessary background for his historical (industrial or political) studies, it was strongly urged that the *practical* side of the subject—*i.e.*, geography as it affects present-day international problems—should receive most attention. On the former side it was further argued that the historical treatment of the subject gave magnificent opportunities for illustrating the Materialist Conception of History, and would, therefore, form an invaluable introductory course to Industrial History and Economics. The conflict between “ancients” and “moderns” ended in a compromise, and the textbook is to be divided into three main sections: (i) dealing with general geographical conditions and their influence; (ii) with the influence of the geographical factor in history; (iii) with the main economic-geographic problems of modern world society.

The Industrial History debate also centred around two broadly-defined schemes. The one was put forward by W. W. Craik in last month's PLEBS, for an elementary textbook on similar lines to Bang's *Crisis in European History*, analysing three great revolutionary epochs (*e.g.*, the Break-Up of Classical Society; the end of Feudalism—the Reformation; and the French Revolution), tracing out their contributory causes, their development, and their effects, with a view to familiarising the student with the broad lines upon which historical study should be pursued, and thus developing a scientific understanding of the principles involved in historical evolution. The other, embodied in W. McLaine's *Outline Course*, also published in our pages last month, was a complete, consecutive study of British industrial development. Here again “ancients” and “moderns” had a good deal to say of and to one another; but matters were complicated by the consideration of the relative merits of a consecutive and more detailed study of one national history, and the study in broader outline of “specimen pages,” so to speak, from world history in general. There emerged from the discussion at length (was it the tea interval which made for clarity?) a clear agreement that the *aim* of an elementary textbook in this subject must be to illustrate, in the most vivid way possible, the fact of Class-Struggle in history—to explain the Materialist Conception of History, in short; and that the two schemes under consideration should be judged solely from this point of view—that is, by their capacity to fulfil this aim most effectively. Craik's scheme was definitely agreed upon; with the suggestion that an appendix to the book contain syllabuses for courses on British History, treated in the same “epochal” method.

While the Bradford church-bells called the godly to worship on Sunday morning, we settled down to what, it was expected, would prove the thorniest subject of all—Economics. There were hardened veterans present—men who (or so it would seem!) had learned to read out of *Capital*, and who had been discussing, arguing, teaching economics every spare moment of their lives since. We wondered, when planning the agenda, whether we had allowed sufficient time for this particular item—whether, indeed, we ought not to have devoted one of the two days to it alone. It was as well we did not. For there was practically unanimous agreement that the outline syllabus published in the PLEBS last month (p. 54) filled the bill to perfection, and that it could neither be bettered nor altered. There were little controversies as to the precise degree of simpli-

fication necessary in Marx's phraseology; the desirability of emphasising the historical background and avoiding too theoretical a method of presentation; the possibility of an introductory-elementary course, designed to whet the student's appetite; and so on. But the only amendment to the printed outline which was agreed upon was that the textbook should contain a glossary of economic terms likely to be useful to students of *Capital*, and should also include such diagrams or other illustrations as might be helpful from the point of view of simplification.

We passed on to the Science of Understanding, and discussed Alice Pratt's outline chapter-headings (p. 61, April PLEBS). These were agreed upon, with the strong recommendation that (2) and (3)—the brief surveys of Ancient and Modern Philosophy—should be placed at the end, instead of at the beginning, of the book; with a view to giving the student a clear grasp of the right method of understanding before introducing him to the various philosophical systems characteristic of their respective ages. The directly opposite view—that the textbook should be wholly devoted to the history of philosophy, ancient and modern, with Dietzgen simply taking his place in the series—was obviously not attractive to the majority. It was urged, also, that, so far as was possible, the book should be kept "live" by the use of topical allusions and by references to current fallacies in thinking; and also that a glossary of philosophical terminology be appended.

The last of the textbooks to be discussed was that on Biology—or "Evolution," as some delegates preferred to call the subject. Here, again, there was pretty general agreement that such a book as that outlined by "A Biologist" in last month's Magazine would be entirely satisfactory. It was pointed out (on behalf of the Plebs E.C.) that our aim must be a book in line with the most recent developments and discoveries in biological science, and that we had been exceedingly fortunate in securing the co-operation of two men whose qualifications in that respect were of the highest, and who were also keenly sympathetic to our own educational point of view. The result should be—one may safely say *will be*—a textbook which will admirably fulfil the purpose of a science textbook for working-class students:—accurate (and up-to-date) information and a clear and concise outline of the processes of Natural Evolution up to the point at which Social Evolution becomes for man the more important factor.

The question of a simple introductory pamphlet, touching on all the subjects covered in our textbooks and classes, and indicating their place and importance in the general scheme of proletarian education, was briefly discussed, and plans suggested for its early materialisation. Such a pamphlet, it was pointed out, would serve as an admirable "prospectus"—and advertisement—for the series of textbooks now in course of preparation.

The all-important question of finance must be briefly referred to. Various suggestions were put forward by delegates, including a Special Publications Appeal Fund; an appeal to the Governors of the College for a subsidy, or to the N.U.R. and S.W.M.F. through their Executives; general appeals to T.U.'s and Co-operative Societies, etc., etc. Without prejudice to these suggestions, the Plebs E.C. put forward and strongly urged the following scheme:—that, as soon as any textbook was ready to go to the printers, an announcement to that effect should appear in the Magazine; and that Plebs branches and classes everywhere should then, at once, send in *cash orders* for the book. It was pointed out that if only half the total edition was subscribed for *in advance*,\* the financial

\* Not more than a few weeks in advance, please note.

risk would be reduced to a minimum; and that in this way each textbook, as it was completed, could be published without delay. Will branches, classes, and committees everywhere discuss this question of financing the publication of the textbook series in the early future, and let us know their views? It is impossible, of course, as yet to state definitely the precise price at which the book will be issued; that will depend, to some extent, on the orders received, and the number we can accordingly have printed. But it is generally agreed that the price must be as low as possible, and that it would be far better to sell 10,000 copies at, say, two shillings, than 1000 at 5s. or 6s.

It only remains to express the thanks of everyone attending the Conference to the Bradford comrades for their hospitality. They lived up to Yorkshire traditions.

J. F. H.

## THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIA

The subjoined letter has not, so far as we know, been published before in English. We translate it from the French, in which language it was originally penned, towards the year 1880. Found in Marx's posthumous papers, it was first published in a Russian periodical during 1888, was reprinted by Nikolai-on as an appendix to his work upon the economic development of Russia, and was reproduced in *Le Mouvement Socialiste* for May 24, 1902. In the aforesaid appendix Nikolai-on explained that during the latter half of the decade 1870-80 there was a lively controversy in Russia anent the ideas put forward by Marx in the first volume of *Capital*. In 1877, Mihailovskii, taking part in the controversy in answer to a critic of Marx named Zhukovskii, pointed out that in the concluding section of his book Marx was not merely concerned with giving a historical sketch of the opening phases of capitalist production, but had done much more than this, for he had expounded a complete theory of the philosophy of history.

This theory, continued Mihailovskii, is of universal interest; but for Russians the interest is supreme. If we fully accept the philosophic system of Marx, according to which every nation, in the course of historical development, must inevitably pass through the capitalistic phase, then every Russian disciple of Marx, if he desire to be consistent, must play an active part in the process which divorces labour from the means of production, which expropriates the peasants, which mutilates the organism of human society, and threatens the future of the human race. On the other hand, this same Russian disciple of Marx must regard as his ideal, that ownership and labour should coincide, that the actual producers should own the land and the other means of production.

We had not had the advantage of reading Marx's letter when we wrote the article "Short Cuts in Social Evolution," which appeared in the PLEBS for February and March, 1918. We now subjoin the full translation of Marx's reply to Mihailovskii.—E. and C. P.

### I.

THE author of the article "Karl Marx before the Tribunal of I. Zhukovskii" is evidently a talented man, and had he been able, in my account of primitive accumulation, to discover a single passage in support of his conclusions, he would have quoted it. In default of such a passage, he is compelled to avail himself of a controversial excursus against a Russian belletristic writer printed in the appendix to the first German edition of *Capital* [suppressed in subsequent editions]. In that appendix, what is the charge I make against the Russian writer? I declare that he discovered "Russian communism," not in Russia, but in the book of Haxt-hausen, a Prussian privy councillor. I show that in his hands the Russian commune is used merely as an argument to prove that Europe, aged and corrupt, must be rejuvenated by the victory of panslavism. The opinion I pass on the aforesaid Russian writer may be sound or unsound; but it certainly cannot be regarded as furnishing a key to my views concerning the efforts "which the Russians are making to discover for their country a developmental path different from that which western Europe has followed and is following."

In the postscript to the second German edition of *Capital*, I speak of an "eminent Russian critic and man of science" with the deference which is his due. This

writer, in a series of remarkable articles, discusses the question whether, as the liberal economists wish, Russia should begin by destroying the rural commune in order to pass to the capitalist regime, or whether, without having to endure the tortures of that regime, Russia can enjoy all its fruits by developing her own historic possibilities. This writer favours the latter solution. Now my excellent critic would have just as much right to infer from my appreciation for this "eminent Russian" that I share his views, as to conclude from my polemic against the panslavist and belletristic Russian writer that I reject the views held by the latter.

But since I have no wish to leave my readers to guess at my meaning, I shall speak without circumlocution. To enable myself to acquire a first-hand knowledge of the economic development of contemporary Russia, I learned the Russian tongue, and I then devoted myself for many years to the study of official and other publications upon this subject.

I arrived at the following conclusion: If Russia continue to advance along the road entered in 1861, she will lose the finest opportunity history has ever offered any nation, and will expose herself to all the vicissitudes of the capitalist regime.

## II.

In the chapter on "The Secret of Primitive Accumulation" I have merely attempted to trace the steps by which, in western Europe, the capitalist economic order emerged from the womb of the feudal economic order. This chapter describes the movement whereby the producer was divorced from the means of production; the movement whereby he became a wage-earner (a proletarian in the modern sense of the term), and the means of production became capital. In this history, "all revolutions are epoch-making that act as levers for the capitalist class in course of formation. . . . The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil is the basis of the whole process." A little later, in the chapter entitled "The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation," I affirm that the last word of that tendency is the transformation of capitalist private property into socialised property. I offer no proof of the assertion, for the excellent reason that it is no more than a summary restatement of the arguments given at length in the chapters on capitalist production.

Now, what application to Russia was my critic entitled to deduce from the aforesaid historical sketch? Nothing beyond this; that if Russia attempt to become a capitalist nation, following the example of the nations of western Europe (*and of late years Russia has taken a great deal of trouble to achieve this end*), she will not succeed without the preliminary transformation of a large proportion of her peasants into proletarians. Thenceforward, having entered the capitalist fold, Russia, like the rest of the capitalist flock, will be subject to the inexorable laws of capitalistic development. That is all. But it is too much for my critic. He finds it absolutely essential to transform my sketch of the genesis of capitalism in western Europe into a historico-philosophical theory of general social evolution. According to this theory, such an evolution is inevitably imposed on all nations, whatever the historical conditions of their environment. According to this theory, they must all in the end achieve an economic structure which will ensure, concurrently with the highest development of productive power for social labour, the fullest integral development for man. But I ask my critic's pardon. He is at one and the same time too kind and too unkind. Let me take an example. In various places in *Capital*, I refer to the fate of the plebeians in classical Rome.

Originally these plebeians were free cultivators; they were peasants, each tilling a plot of land on his own account. In the course of Roman history they were expropriated. The same movement which divorced them from the means of production and subsistence, implied, not merely the formation of great landed estates, but likewise the formation of large aggregations of money capital. Thus it came to pass one fine day, that there existed, on one side, free men dispossessed of everything except their labour power; and, on the other side, as potential exploiters of this labour power, the holders of all accumulated wealth. What happened? The Roman proletariat did not become a class of wage workers but a mob of idlers more abject than the sometime "poor whites" in the southern states of the American union. Side by side with this development, there came into existence a method of production based not on capitalism, but on slave-holding. Thus events striking in their analogy, but occurring in different historic media, led to totally diverse results.

Those who study these evolutions separately, and who subsequently compare them, will readily discover the key to the phenomena in question. But no one will ever unlock these doors with the master-key of a historico-philosophical theory whose supreme virtue it is to be supra-historical. KARL MARX

### "UNBIASSED" HISTORY: AN EXPOSURE

**W**E are accustomed to state that "capitalist history is misleading." It is misleading in various different ways, particularly by means of suppression. But there are other means: one, that of actual distortion of ascertainable facts; and another, the remarkable ignorance permitted to "learned persons" of the right opinions. These hollow reputations do not outlive their owners, nor do their mistakes affect the really important and studied books of history. But they do mould and affect the teaching of history to the vulgar (which is us, dear brethren), and are therefore of importance. So I intend to take an actual vivid example of an Oxford historian and examine him.

Mr. J. A. R. Marriott, M.P., Fellow—I believe—of Worcester College, Oxford, has published a work in two volumes called *The French Revolution of 1848 in its Economic Aspect*. It is a reprint of two works of great value—Blanc's *Organisation of Labour* and Thomas' *History of the National Workshops*—with, as Mr. Marriott says in his curious stilted style, "an Introduction critical and historical." This introduction occupies about 100 pages, and Mr. Marriott is so pleased with it that he has republished it as a pamphlet and called it *The Right to Work*.

We will first remark on Mr. Marriott's general knowledge. In his account of Socialism before 1848 he confuses Morelly with Morellet—indeed, as he uses both spellings indifferently (pp. xix to xxi) when referring obviously to one person, he does not know they are different persons. Morelly—about whom nothing else is really known—was a sort of socialist writer. Morellet is a comparatively famous writer, of "physiocratic" tendencies, who had nothing whatever to do with Socialism and who most certainly did not inspire Babeuf, as Mr. Marriott imagines (p. xxi). This stupid slip is succeeded by a more astonishing mistake. "During the pandemonium of the terror these sound principles [of the sacredness of property, that is] were for a moment forgotten," he writes, and goes on to describe Babeuf's conspiracy. Now, in the first place, Babeuf's conspiracy did not occur during the Terror, but two years later.



Still, since this may be merely bad writing on Mr. Marriott's part, I will not press the point. But it is quite well known that "these sound principles" were not forgotten during the Terror. There is no sign whatever of a Socialist or semi-Socialist movement of strength during the Terror, much less of any Socialist legislation. André Lichtenberger in his careful work *Le Socialisme et la Révolution*, has investigated what little traces there are. He has, with difficulty, collected a handful of obscure pamphlets, and some casual Girondin theories. So well known, so axiomatic is it that there was no Socialist movement during the Terror that one feels it is not unreasonable to suggest that as Mr. Marriott is a History Don he should buy some nice cheap history of the French Revolution, in large print, and some day read it.

We go on to the actual account of the Revolution of '48, noticing by the way that Mr. Marriott believes that the Lyons troubles of 1830-34 were due to the "introduction of machinery and the evolution of the factory system" (p. xxviii)—in spite of the fact that at this time there was no factory system in Lyons, and hardly any power machines either. The account of the Revolution is partly made up from an old article on "The Right to Work," contributed to *The Nineteenth Century and After*. This is worth mentioning as it indicates the quality of the impartiality of our historian.

To revive our memory of '48 first. In February of that year accidental causes—the forbidding of a political banquet—caused the Paris workers to rise against Louis Philippe. After three days of fighting the King was in flight, and a Republican Provisional Government had taken his place. But the Republicans had to deal with something that Marat and Robespierre had never known—the proletariat in arms for the first time demanding Socialism. Vague though its demands were and uncertain though its force was, the Paris proletariat in February, '48, began a new chapter of history. Within the Government were two socialists—Louis Blanc and Albert—who had a plan for organising the workers and bringing about the co-operative Commonwealth by State-encouraged co-operative associations of production. They were instructed to produce a plan, in concert with the workers' representatives, meeting at the Luxembourg. (Incidentally, the Luxembourg Assembly was the first form of the Soviet, but, of course, Mr. Marriott has not perceived this.) While the Luxembourg debated, the "moderate Republicans," in whom fear had succeeded generosity, had organised a vast "yellow" organisation of unemployed, called "the National Workshops," to oppose the Luxembourg. The National Assembly met on May 5; it was reactionary. A foolish attempt to storm it on May 15 led to many Socialists being imprisoned. The Luxembourg met rarely and in secret. Then, their job being over, the men in the National Workshops were, virtually, kicked out in June; they and the Luxembourgers united at last and war broke out—the first class-war between Capital and Labour. It lasted three days, and Labour was beaten after a terrible struggle.

Now, at the beginning, on February 23, in the afternoon, during the revolutionary struggle, Louis Philippe dismissed the old Ministry and substituted another of "moderate" tendencies, containing among others Thiers. The news was received with joy in the well-to-do quarters of Paris, with sullen acquiescence in the working-class districts. Everywhere the struggle was being abandoned, and the monarchy becoming safe, when at night a regiment fired upon a crowd in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Instantly all Paris was ablaze again: no more was heard of Thiers' ministry: at one o'clock next day Louis Philippe abdicated. But for the soldiers' volley there would never

have been a Second Republic: without the Second Republic there would not have been the Commune of '71—or at least not in anything like so advanced a form—not to speak of the modifications in European history made by "48" as a whole. This volley altered the whole form of the advance of the proletariat in Western Europe. Let us see Mr. Marriott's account of it (p. liii).

A crowd collected in front of Guizot's hotel [he means the Ministry of Foreign Affairs]; a pistol shot killed the officer in command of the troops guarding the Foreign Office; the troops fired; some eighty people were killed or wounded, and, in a trice, the bleeding corpses were placed on tumbrils and paraded through the streets of Paris. The tumbrils could not have been extemporised; the pistol shot was obviously pre-arranged to provoke reprisals from the troops and to generate the excitement hitherto lacking among the mob.

Read this carefully. Notice how every word tells against the revolutionaries, and tends to prove them to be stage villains, who provoke wholesale murder for their own ends. Read it carefully again, and then—reflect that the whole incident has been so distorted by Mr. Marriott that, to use a common phrase, there is not a word of truth in the whole lot.

R. W. POSTGATE

*(To be continued next month.)*

### MORE PROLETARIAN POETS

**S**PRING is the time when the "gaffer," walking down the benches, finds that the Monday-morning feeling has not departed from the breast of Henry Dubb by Wednesday afternoon. It is the time of spring onions, spring offensives and spring poetry. Wherefore I make no apology for making this a continuation of Harold Edward's article in the January PLEBS.

The proletarian poet has a harder job to make good than a man trying to commit suicide with a safety razor. If he writes of my lady's eyebrow and the effulgent violet, he is being offensively bourgeois. If he makes music to the old clarion call, upwards and onwards towards the light, he is firmly impressed with the fact that other and better men have done the same. Besides, haven't we the good old "Red Flag"?

Sometimes, of course, he reads in a frank review of his efforts that, whilst his subjects are good, his rhymes are pure doggerel. But the proletarian poet is not easily disheartened. He knows that all these criticisms are intended merely to urge him to write better. The critics are jealous of the prestige of the proletariat, and, indeed, write with half an eye on what is humorously termed the capitalist Press.

Anything I write in this article must not be understood in this sense, however. I am far from criticising anybody; I am writing this for the benefit of the movement; and if any proletarian poets disagree, let them do their worst.

If there is a better man than Charles Bradlaugh Warwick, that is a deep and cherished secret I shall not drag from the breast of anyone; but as a proletarian poet he is much to my liking. Here are a few lines from his "The House of Mystery," which appeared in the *Freethinker* some time ago:—

Without—  
Truth locked out;  
Within—  
Lies and hidden sin;  
Rigid timbered forms

Seating  
 Crouching human forms—  
 Bleating;  
 Dismally praying to the unknown.

Peradventure that may be doggerel, too; but if there are any grades in doggerel, it is at least a higher grade. Even in poets thought does not come in tripping metre which can be measured by a rhyming dictionary.

One thing must be said, however; in some of his other poems Warwick's scansion would not be any the worse for a little polishing up. Indeed, he seems to be able to get the better effect by writing in a free metre. I have read many of his poems in manuscript, and this is my conclusion. Several of his efforts have appeared in the *Spur*, *Satire*, and other papers of the movement, as well as in those of free-thought.

A. B. Elsbury is a very voluminous writer; but, if I mistake not, most of his verses have remained in manuscript. His *forte* appears to be like that of Joe Hill and Ralph Chaplin, the putting of new words to old tunes; and this is not the easy thing it seems. But he has indeed set forth many subjects of originality with a deft touch.

Tom Anderson, Editor of the defunct *Revolution*, is not only a poet, but he puts his own efforts to music. Several of them, words and music, appeared in the *Young Rebel* before the Editor, Jamie Stewart, was haled by dear lady Dora for trying to anti-Prussianise the minds of the young in a more effective fashion than the militarists cared for. I have no room here to give quotations, but no doubt many readers will know of them in connection with the Proletarian School movement.

I do not know Anderson personally, but both Warwick and Elsbury, as well as Bert Young, are known to me. Elsbury is a tailor's presser, but like many another, he has had to take the first job handy. Warwick is now working with a "Back to the Land" group, who are experimenting with mangold-wurzels and other insects in Norfolk. He has with him two comrades, one of whom is Bert Platin, a fellow-poet. One of Platin's best efforts is probably "Crusoe, Ltd.," the concluding verse of which is:—

Capitalists all, take timely warning,  
 And pack your traps; for the Day is dawning;  
 From Petrograd and London, too,  
 From Timbuctoo and Woolloomooroo  
 We've had just about enough of you;  
 Vamoose, skidaddle, and don't look blue;  
 You've had your day, so Hitchy-koo!

It is, of course, difficult to measure the above by, say, Tom Hood, but then we cannot all be great. For those who accept the bourgeois standard of culture, the upward turn of the nose.

But enough. There are heaps more proletarian poets I could mention here; but I have not room to give each of them a quotation. My experiences in editorship, however, assure me that there is a spate of good poetry going begging; all it needs is garnering.

Proletarian poets, as a rule, are unable to publish their rhymes and unrhymes in book form; and, not being able to devote a whole day to the delicate turning of a phrase, their verses are of uncertain quality; like lightning, their flashes are brilliant, but intermittent. Remains, then, for someone who knows how—and who knows the poets—to gather their best efforts into an anthology. This should not be difficult, and it would give the movement joy.

Barrabas, it is said, was a publisher. If anyone will forward me his address, I will produce the victims.

L. A. MOTLER

ECONOMICS

(1) Q.—*Is the worker exploited in the sphere of production or in the sphere of circulation? Can the worker be exploited as a producer and also as a consumer? (W. F.)*

A.—The chief exploitation of the worker is in production not in circulation; it is fundamentally as a producer and not as a consumer that he suffers. It is unnecessary to repeat here how that exploitation is made by the fact that the worker, forced to sell his labour-power, has no right to the surplus value of the commodity resulting from the expenditure of his energy under the master's control. Surplus and necessary value are realised not created in circulation. [In that realisation the surplus labour of the clerk and other such workers is appropriated by the commercial capitalist, but that is not the point worrying our comrade.] Monopoly prices, adulteration, petty cheating by retailers and the success of workers organised as consumers' associations usually strengthen the belief that the worker is really exploited as a consumer instead of in the above way.

Take monopoly prices first: What the monopolist does is to skin his capitalist competitors by taking more than his share of the total surplus value. If the monopolised article is a necessity for the workers they must either reduce their standard of life or demand higher wages. Either process creates antagonism. Even if the standard is lowered and the social needs of a certain people in a particular climate and historic condition are removed, general wages must at least be equal to physical subsistence. The awakening and the organised strength of the workers is treading too closely on the heels of the trust to make a world-wide attack on the workers' standard of life a permanent success.

In the case of adulteration, another boomerang effect is obtained when capitalism as a whole is viewed. If the food does not contain the former sustenance, then more of it must be procured or the old quality restored. Here again all this constant nibbling at the workers' standard of life increases the irritation against capitalism, which feeling, when widened and more conscious, will end a shoddy state of affairs. Note here that adulteration as well as monopoly prices exist only because the capitalist controls production.

Marx (p. 716, Vol. iii) is dealing with the confusion of old and new forms of money-capital and the attempt to make houses loaned for individual consumption into capital when he makes this reference to cheating. "That the working-class is swindled to an enormous extent in this way [in the hiring of a house] as well as in others is an evident fact; but this is done also by the retail dealer who sells them the means of subsistence. It is a secondary exploitation, which runs parallel with the primary one taking place in the process of production itself." In the consumers' co-operatives the workers have escaped from the rogueries of individual retailers, but that has not settled the problem of wage-slavery either for themselves or for their co-operative employees. Indirectly, if the workers

organise to avoid the secondary exploitation they will make greater the results of the chief and primary one. There is not space here to show how necessary and valuable to organised Labour is this clear insight into the real nature of our trouble or of how, in this connection Industry Unionism and the Labour Theory of Value oppose Collectivism and the Marginal Utility explanation.

(2) Q.—*In your rejection of the "directive ability" exercised by the capitalist as the cause of profits, do you deny that more efficient supervision, the utilisation of improved machinery, superior discrimination and ability in purchasing raw materials and in the sale of the finished commodities, better use of space, of mechanical and human power and of waste products, etc., etc., do not increase the profits of a concern, while their absence severely hampers or ruins a rival?*

A.—No, such effects are undeniable, and Marx in his elaborate analysis was the least likely of all men to ignore them. How often has his illustration of the need of an orchestra for a conductor been quoted. If any industry is run without the "socially necessary" intensity and skill it either yields less profits or is driven into bankruptcy. But this does not explain how surplus-value itself (i.e., profits, rent and interest) is produced for the whole capitalist class apart from individual variations. As capital becomes more and more impersonal, so does this particular defence of profit become obsolete. With the development of general and technical education, the skilled labour-power now responsible for the directive functions in all their grades becomes cheaper. The supposed directive ability of modern captains of industry, who "direct" industries ranging from coal-mines to picture palaces and quack medicines, these, too, Marx noticed, and refers to them (p. 458, Vol. iii) as making superintendence and management serve only as a pretext for plundering stockholders and amassing wealth. Railway company directors do not submit themselves to eyesight or any form of tests, and a mining engineering degree or manager's certificate does not make a colliery director.

Far from neglecting the factors mentioned in the question as causing deviations in the rates of profit of individual capitalists, Marx shows (163-4, *ibid.*) how such economies in the use of constant capital increase the rate of profit and, especially if the capitalist still remains active in industry, "lead to the conviction that his profits are due not to the exploitation of labour, but at least, in part, to other circumstances independent of that exploitation, particularly to his individual activity." Such economies often have been made at the labourers' expense, and this experience provides the groundwork for the natural suspicion of the many current plans of improved workshop organisation. Workers' control alone will give full scope to real directive ability and creative genius.

Apropos of the desire expressed at the Manchester Conference for "jokes in economics," lecturers and students can find in O. Henry's

story "Shoes and Ships" a charming example of the artificial creation of use values. This tale is in the collection *Cabbages and Kings*, and tells how a very unimportant American Consul indulged in a solemn "leg-pull" in response to an inquiry about the prospects of a local boot store in his consulate. The father of "the lady in the case" becomes the victim of the joke and brings to this remote part of S. America a large cargo of boots and shoes. The "unrivalled openings for the shoe trade" are based upon the fact that the inhabitants go barefooted. In order to retain the good opinion of the lady's father, the Consul and his friend, besides organising the purchases of the few civilised boot wearers, get from America a quantity of cackle-bars and scatter them in the highways and by-ways of Coralio. Thus, boots to the natives are made to have a use value—and consequently an exchange value—and the shoe merchant gaily turns his C. into M. before the usual happy ending.

### INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

(1) Q.—*Can you throw any light upon the position of the womenfolk of the serf?*

A.—Information is by no means plentiful. As far as the women of the ruling class were concerned, feudal chivalry placed them upon a doubtful pedestal, which has been probably exaggerated by romantic writers of that time. Someone has cleverly defined it as "to rescue a fair lady from one castle and carry her off to

yours." Just as the serf was compelled to perform unpaid service, so were his wife and daughters forced to perform the spinning, weaving, sewing, baking and brewing of the manor house. The author of *Piers Plowman* pictures the peasant's wife sharing to the full the field work and all the wretchedness of the times: "His wife walked by him with a long goad . . ." Sue's *Iron Trevet* centres round even more odious services and unspeakable indignities forced by the lords upon the women of the jacquerie, which are also mentioned by Will Paul (p. 121, *The State*), and more fully by Bebel (p. 56-9, *Woman under Socialism*). Though a little higher in status than the female chattel slaves, the female, perhaps more than the male, serfs under Christianity in the Dark Ages suffered to the full the pains of a ruled class. In some parts of Russia, in the serfdom of fifty years ago, there was a peculiar blend of rural and town serfdom. The women, left in charge of the holding while the men in the winter were working in the towns, enjoyed a comparatively high status. Woman's right to engage in industry outside the confines of the home was, however, recognised in certain localities in the best days of the guild. In dressmaking, silk and gold-thread work and in other feminine crafts, there were guilds of women and they shared also in the guilds of the mixed crafts. But this equality was not lasting and was the first of the good points to disappear. MARK STARR

## CORRESPONDENCE

### STUDENTS' NEEDS: SOME SUGGESTIONS

DEAR COMRADE,—Some very important items were touched upon in your report of the recent Conference held at Manchester. From the point of view of the student, the two most important were the need of suitable textbooks, and the possibility of a Summer School.

In his foreword to *Marxian Economics*, Untermann mentions a popular epitome of *Capital*, Vol. i., by Gabriel Deville—*The People's Marx*. This, I understand, was written at the wish of Marx himself. I have scoured the book-shops of this country—personally and by post—for a copy; but so far without success. A new edition of this book would probably go a long way to solve the problem of textbooks. Perhaps THE PLEBS may see its way to issue such an edition; for surely some Plebeian possesses a copy which he would be willing to lend for such a purpose. Another book mentioned by Untermann, which he calls the best popularisation in all Socialist literature, is *Karl Marx's Oekonomische Lehren*, by Kautsky. This, however, has not yet been translated into English. Perhaps some comrade will step forward?

Another phase of Working-Class Education that needs developing is the Summer School. Many institutions already realise its value as a means of "enlightening" the working-class. This year the Glamorgan Education Committee is offering a certain number of scholarships in economics and industrial history, the majority

of which are to be given to W.E.A. students. No such opportunity is open to Marxian students. Is it possible that the governors of the College will grant a few scholarships tenable there during the summer vacation? If we are to have more converts to the idea of Independent Working-Class Education, more and better facilities of studying must be given both to the elementary and advanced students.

Yours fraternally,

A SOUTH WALES STUDENT

[Gabriel Deville's book is now out of print. It is an abridgement (of *Capital*) only—not a commentary, nor an interpretation. Its re-issue would not therefore solve the textbook problem; since what is needed is a fresh presentation, in non-technical language, of Marxian fundamentals.—Ed. PLEBS.]

### LORIA, MARX AND ENGELS

DEAR COMRADE,—We are not proposing to enter the lists against G. S. on behalf of Loria's *Karl Marx*. Not because we have nothing to say! But for the nonce, other claims are more pressing. Nevertheless, in clearing away the papers connected with this booklet, we came across a Postscript we had written for our Foreword to the translation, and had then suppressed, not desiring to go out to meet controversy. It now seems pertinent to the issue, so, perhaps, you will be able to find room for it. It dates from the Marx centenary:—

"Engels' preface to the third volume of *Capital* (1894) contains several pages of polemic against Loria, pages to which reference is apt to be made by Marxists whenever the Italian economist's name is mentioned. In rougher days it is said to have been a maxim in the law courts, 'If you have no case, abuse the plaintiff's attorney.' We will not say that Engels had no case, but his manners in this dispute certainly recall those of Sergeant Buzfuz. Controversy is the very soul of intellectual progress, but bad manners are the bane of controversy. We would beg our fellow Marxists not to allow Engels to prejudice them against Loria, but to study Loria for themselves and form their own conclusions. He, at least, is an urbane controversialist, and is big enough to ignore personal invectives, as his genial references to Engels in the accompanying monograph amply show."

Yours fraternally,

EDEN and CEDAR PAUL

LIEBKNECHT

DEAR COMRADE,—Those to whom the memory of Karl Liebknecht is dear will, no doubt, be pleased to learn that an attempt is being made to commemorate him. In *Jugend Internationale* for February, it is stated that, arising out of a resolution passed at the Conference of the League of Communist Youth held in Berlin in November, 1919, a fund has been started and all money collected will be devoted to the editing and wide circulation of Liebknecht's writings. We note that contributions are pouring in from America, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Italy, etc., and we are sure that comrades in all sections of the British Socialist movement will be desirous of adding their quota to the International tribute that is being made to the memory of Karl Liebknecht. We shall, therefore, be glad to receive their contributions in as liberal measure and as early as they can remit them so that we may show the great honour in which Karl Liebknecht was held by the Socialists and Antimilitarists of this country.

Contributions to be sent to Marjory Newbold, 6 Grange Road, Buxton, Derbyshire, by whom they will be acknowledged.

Yours fraternally,

(Signed)

W. W. CRAIK

W. H. MAINWARING

W. PAUL

J. MCLEAN

J. T. W. NEWBOLD

MILTON JAGGER

(Sec. Nat. Young Labour League)

MARJORY NEWBOLD

(Chair. Nat. Young Labour League)

## SHAW AT THE LABOUR COLLEGE

THE agonising prolongation of the Special M.F.G.B. Conference last month gave that inveterate owd rebel, George Barker, and a few other delegates from S. Wales, including myself, an opportunity of witnessing (on Saturday, March 27) two rattling performances at the Labour College by students and Plebs members. In giving my impressions

GREEK

DEAR COMRADE,—I have read the discussion that has centred around the use of Greek terms, and I am in full agreement with Comrade Jackson.

Herbert Spencer, in his work on Education, remarks:—

Throughout his after-career a boy, in nine cases out of ten, applies his Latin or Greek to no practical purposes . . . and if he occasionally vents a Latin quotation, or alludes to some Greek myth, it is less to throw light on the topic in hand than for the sake of effect.

Maybe, Spencer was right. Whether he was or not, I am for the stand taken by Comrade Jackson. The beauty of the PLEBS has been its simplicity of language. It has spoken in the language of the shop, without descending to the cheap demagoguery of the politician and labour-misleader, and has at the same time educated the working-classes. If we mean working-class rule, let it go at that. The worker knows what working-class means and he knows what it means to rule. So me for the language of the shop as expressed in PLEBS.

Cordially yours,

JACK CARNEY

Duluth, Minn., U.S.A.

(Ed. Truth)

### A RECOMMENDATION

DEAR COMRADE,—I do not want to waste valuable space, but I shall have it on my conscience unless I unburden my mind of two new books by Upton Sinclair to the fraternity:—*The Profits of Religion* and *The Brass Check*.

The former is a powerful exposure of the material interests working hand in glove with organised religion, showing how the churches chloroform the workers, what time they are robbed and plundered on their way to Heaven or Hell.

The latter—*The Brass Check*—is a long catalogue of instances, as absorbing as a novel, of how the American capitalist press works hand in glove with the Meat, Steel, Coal and Oil Trusts to prevent exposure of evils for the betterment of the workers. Every Socialist should pawn something to get them! Reformers Bookshop (Bradford or Manchester) supplies them, 7s. each.

Yours truly,

JOE WALKER

[J. W. has not been reading his PLEBS closely, or he would have observed a review by W. W. Craik of *The Profits of Religion* in our issue for June of last year. *The Brass Check* we hope to review shortly.—Ed.]

of the two plays *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*, and *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. I am tempted to launch out on encomiums of "Shaw the Dramatist," but lest I should draw a hornets' nest about my head from those Plebeians who can't stand (or is it understand?) Shaw, I shall confine myself to my impressions of the two plays as performed on that evening.

First, let me congratulate Sims, J. F. H. and Winifred H. on the stage-setting, scenery, and curtains. But as soon as one glanced at one's programme, one knew that things were going to be done handsomely. J. F. H.'s thumbnail sketches—giving the "pith" of both plays—were worth more than the bob charged (or rather, meekly asked) for the programme.

In *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*, Shaw has written a religious tract in dramatic form. The unconventional unorthodoxy of the play can be judged from the fact that public performances of it are prohibited in Great Britain by the Lord Chamberlain! But this, glory be! was *not* a public performance, and the Lord Chamberlain could not spoil the sport!

J. F. H. made a magnificent Blanco. His black-guardism was perfect. And his delivery of Blanco's "sermon" at the end of the play roused the real, as well as the stage, audience to enthusiasm.

No one envied W. H. Mainwaring his rôle of Elder Daniels, Blanco's boozy brother. It was a difficult character to tackle, and I shall not be far wrong in attributing Mainwaring's success to his Celtic fervour rather than to his religious frame of mind. George Ward made a capital Sheriff, and controlled the court with stern resolution. Jack Jones as Strapper, Jim Griffiths as the Foreman, and, indeed, the whole crowd of jurymen and onlookers were magnificent. Every single part, however small, was well done. Everybody was "alive." So, too, with the women—particularly Winifred Horrabin as Feemy, and Myfanwy Westrope as "The Woman."

After a much appreciated cup of coffee, the audience reassembled for a short musical interval, with items contributed by Messrs. W. J. and W. H. Davies and Mrs. Durham Jones. Not in the programme, but very success-

ful, nevertheless, were some Welsh choral items by students and guests, ending with the now famous Labour College yell with its throat-splitting "*Y Bolshies yw y Gorra, y GO-RR-AH!*" When the curtain rose on *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, there was stillness again. The cast of this play was perfection, and so were stage-setting and costumes. Fanny Lord was magnificent as Queen Elizabeth; Horrabin as Shakespeare got "right there"; Winifred Horrabin's "Dark Lady" carried off with dignity the humiliation she has to suffer in the play; and T. Ashcroft as the Beefeater rounded off the picture.

The moral of the play—"that a commercialised theatre is fatal to good drama as commercialism generally is to decent living," as a note in the programme phrased it—gives me a cue for my own peroration. The two performances we witnessed at the Labour College that evening were a sheer joy to audience and (I am sure) to actors. Why? Because, it was a labour of love, not because it provided surplus value. Because it gave joy to Producers and a message to Consumers (the audience)! Let us have more of this non-commercialised drama-production (I avoid the word "amateur," for there was nothing amateurish about the performance of these two plays) in our clubs and branches. To get things started, why cannot we arrange for the members of the cast that appeared in these two performances to come on tour during the vacation? As I looked at Principal W. T. Goode, who was a member of the audience, my mind leapt to some of the stirring pages of his *Bolshevism at Work*, where he describes "Art in Russia after the Revolution." Let us have our Red Train taking round a C.L.C. Company in a Shaw repertoire! Why not?

JOHN THOMAS

Ystradgynlais

## NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT

The circulation of the PLEBS has been going up for the last few months, but now that the classes are closing for the summer it begins to slow down again. We used to be able to afford this, but we can't now. We *must* increase our circulation in order to pay our way, and we urgently appeal to all Plebs Leaguers to sell the Magazine at meetings and trade union branches. If you have had twelve magazines and got customers for them, don't let them go because the class is closing. We cannot afford to lose the sale of ONE Magazine. *Get your customers in the class to send us a yearly subscription before they leave.* We are trying for a 10,000 circulation. *Don't let us down by reducing your order.*

Space being so limited, "News of the Movement" has been crowded out many times lately. But we are going to make a special effort to ensure its being once more a feature of the Magazine. Reports should be brief.

Branches of the Plebs are in full swing at Norwich and at Workington. Comrades should get into touch with A. A. Segon, 41 Stafford Street, Norwich, and A. Lamony, 104 Victoria Road, Workington.

Comrade T. A. Jackson, organiser for the North of England Labour College, has a few

open dates for the summer months. Sensible folks will secure his services. Write W. Coxon, 5 Byrom Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Now that Esperanto has been officially adopted as an international language by the Soviet Republic, Plebeian interest in that much-discussed subject should be quickened. A request inserted in the *Internacia Socia Revuo* by the Labour College Esperanto class for socialist correspondents in other countries brought over 20 instant replies from Germany, Austria, France and South America. Will any Pleb-Esperantist, who can "take on" a correspondent,

write Mark Starr, c/o PLEBS, and an address will be sent to him.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Bradford Conference (reported fully elsewhere) was a great success. Not the least of the things which contributed thereto were the teas and luncheons provided by a committee of ladies led by Mrs. Annie Coates, the Bradford Plebs League secretary.

The only mishap was when one lady lost her husband. Involved in an Economic discussion, he had gone on to the station, and when recaptured—in the Booking Office—he remarked, "I was just trying to remember what I'd left behind." A "raight" Yorkshire welcome for everybody was forthcoming, and all the delegates expressed their thanks again and again.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bradford and the surrounding towns have just formed a West Riding Council of the Labour College. The object is to link up all classes in

the West Riding with a view to pooling funds, lecturers, etc. It has been found that Halifax has a wealth of lecturers but few funds, that in Bradford the case is *vice versa*, so that the immediate usefulness of this new committee is demonstrated. All classes, students or teachers, in the vicinity are asked to write to Will Revitt, 83 Southampton Street, Bradford.

\* \* \* \* \*

Comrade D. W. Thomas writes:—"We have now got an Upper Rhondra Plebs League branch, and although our membership is small at present there are enough of us to assist G.H.Q. in its important work. We shall therefore be ready any time to be useful." Congratulations! We're planning schemes of work for branches to get busy in the near future. At present, our chief request is—Get us new subscribers (for the Magazine) and keep us all the old ones!

W. H.

### SYMPOSIUM ON "THE HIGH COST OF LIVING"

*To what main causes would you attribute the rise in the Cost of Living during the past thirty years, and especially during the past five years?*

*What in your opinion is the relative importance in this connection of:—*

- 1 *Variation in the value of gold;*
- 2 *Increase in use of credit instruments;*
- 3 *Inflation of currency;*
- 4 *Excess of demand over supply resulting from abnormal war conditions.*

The above Questionnaire was recently sent out from the Labour College to well-known writers on Economic and Social questions and, so far, replies have been received from the undermentioned. It is proposed, for the benefit of Labour College and Plebs League Classes, and readers generally, to publish their contributions in forthcoming numbers of the PLEBS.

Philip Snowden, Alfred Marshall, G. B. Shaw, J. M. Keynes, C. A. Pigou, John Maclean, J. S. Nicholson, T. D. Benson, Hartley Withers, L. G. Chiozza Money, Chas. Gide, Edwin Cannan, John Barr, Herman Cahn, A. E. Cook, R. B. Suthers, "K. Horner" (Holland), Mary Marcy, Karl Kautsky.

### REVIEWS

#### A VOICE FROM OXFORD

*The Revolt of Labour against Civilisation.* By W. H. V. READE. (Blackwell, Oxford, 3s.)

**I**N the more pretentious kind of provincial inn that calls itself an hotel there is always to be found a certain type of elderly, well-to-do man—thin, rather bald, a yellowish face with loose, leathery skin. He talks steadily in a harsh rasping voice whose lowest tones penetrate to the farthest corners of the room. Before the war his only topic of conversation was the need for strong disciplining of the working-class: more recently he added to it the need for violent behaviour towards the Germans and particularly German prisoners. Every word he utters is virulently malicious, but at the same time is amazingly ignorant: he cannot distinguish between the views of Sir John Simon and John Maclean. His rasping incessant voice drowns all other conversation and makes life intolerable.

Such, too, is the effect of this book. The author is ignorant, he is also spiteful and angry. He has discovered that there is a class-war on, but he does not know why. He desires to prove the wickedness of "Labour" by the following argument: All the important things, which are not good, but Art and things like that, are produced by people who are not working-men; therefore, to upset the present system is wicked, because the money taken from the workers is used to support artists and so on. He believes this, and he has heard of Marx ("who is intellectually forgotten") and thinks he is a man who advocated that industrial workers should have all they produced. He thinks that—but why should one continue to listen to the harsh jabber of the man in the corner, when one can shut the book?

Unfortunately, he is not sufficiently alert to serve us even as an index to the capitalist mind. It is not really the common capitalist belief that "lower work" is only performed by those in-



capable of higher work (p. 67)—many employers clamorously announce that they do not regard their workers "as mere hands." This book comes from a University. We may apply to its writer and others like him the phrase used by a member of Trinity College, Cambridge, about the members of all other colleges:—"After all, they are God's creatures." There must be some reason for their existence and their writing, but for me it is still, like Babylon the Great, a mystery.

R. W. P.

#### MR. WELLS, ECLECTIC

Parts 8 and 9 of H. G. Wells' *Outline of History* contain chapters on the "Career of Alexander the Great," "Science and Religion at Alexandria," "The Rise and Spread of Buddhism," and "The Rise of the Roman Empire." It is not my purpose to summarise these very interesting chapters, but to endeavour to indicate the light they throw on Mr. Wells' conception of history. In reading them, one cannot fail to observe the cloven hoof of eclecticism. Mr. Wells cannot be accused of consistently using the torch of the Materialist Conception in his travels through the caves of history; nor can he be said to be a whole-hearted idealist.

Mr. Wells' eclecticism is sometimes well concealed. In Parts 8 and 9, however, it is possible to find several excellent examples. As a case in point, take the concluding sentence of his chapter on Alexander the Great:—"The rest of the history of mankind is very largely the history of those three *ideas* of science, of a universal righteousness and of a human commonweal, spreading out from the minds of the rare and exceptional persons and peoples in which they first originated, into the general consciousness of the race, and giving first a new colour, then a new spirit, and then a new direction to human affairs." Notice! There is no question of material conditions; all that is required is a few rare "mental conditions." Here the author's philosophic idealism swaggers unashamed across the page.

His chapter on Buddhism is unsatisfactory for the same reason. It is not sufficient to tell us that Gautama's teaching was accepted; we want to know *why*, and that can only be explained on the basis of the material conditions of the time and country. On this side of the question Mr. Wells doesn't offer much help.

But he is by no means an idealist pure and undefiled. Turn again to this same chapter on Buddhism. In discussing that religious conception of immortality, he points out that to-day we have no need to suppose that any particular life resumes again and, in explanation, he adds:—"The Indian mind was full of the idea of cyclic recurrence; everything was supposed to come round again. . . . Modern science has made clear to us that there is no such exact recurrence, as we are apt to suppose; every day is by an infinitesimal quantity a little longer than the day before; no generation repeats the previous generation precisely; history never repeats itself."

There Mr. Wells, in effect, notes the reflection of the stagnant conditions of Indian society in the minds of men, when history appeared to be a

mere unending repetition, while to-day the obviously rapid changes in society set up quite different sensations in the grey matter of the human brain.

By the way, Mr. Wells protests against the use of the word "proletariat" to describe the propertyless wage-workers of to-day. Whatever be the rights and wrongs of this dispute, that use of the term has come to stay.\* One would have thought, however, that such a stickler for terms would not be guilty, on the following page, of stretching the meaning of the word "strike" beyond all reason. He tells us that the strike was invented by the Plebeians of Rome in 494 B.C., when, dissatisfied with their conditions, particularly the fact that they were denied citizenship, they marched out from Rome threatening to found a city for themselves; but with all due deference to Mr. Wells, that can no more be called a strike than can the departure of the Pilgrim Fathers or the emigration of a band of Irishmen dissatisfied with economic conditions or English rule in Ireland. A good lady told a court the other day that she had seven children, all of different sexes. She was evidently unable to see likenesses for the differences; Mr. Wells, in this instance, can't see the difference for the likeness!

J. P. M. MILLAR

\* And in Part 12 (p. 373) he gives a footnote by Professor Gilbert Murray in which the word is apparently used in its modern sense (not, of course, as referring to wage workers, but to the propertyless classes of the towns.

#### IMPERIALISM

*The Black Man's Burden.* By E. D. MOREL.  
(National Labour Press, 2s. 6d. net.)

"The coloured races know us only by our crimes." Mr. Morel might have taken that mordant saying of Anatole France as the text for his latest work—and a factful, forceful sermon he preaches. In *The Black Man's Burden* he gives the story of the relations between the rulers and ruling classes of Europe, and the native peoples of Africa. It is a subject on which he speaks as one having authority. Here he summarises much previous work, but brings it up to date, and at the same time adds much new matter; and by his masterly marshalling of the facts he makes the most of what must always be a crushing indictment of European imperialism and capitalism.

The book is divided into three parts, the first of which epitomises the dark tragedy of the Slave Trade.

The second section, dealing with "Invasion, Political Control and Capitalistic Exploitation," forms the bulk of the book. The part played by each of the nations in "opening up" and "civilising" Africa is subjected to a searching scrutiny and criticism. In his usual courageous fashion, Mr. Morel hits out without fear or favour, and not a single European country "scapes whipping." On the other hand, honour is paid where honour is due.

The work of research which is here so well summarised and arranged, should be a boon both to the student and to the propagandist. But the object of the book is by no means merely historical—it is to call attention to, and to offer some sort of a solution of, a situation which increasingly involves both danger and difficulty.

The past policy of Europe in relation to Africa, while it has laid upon the back of the Black a great and terrible burden of suffering and degradation, has also created a difficulty and a duty for the present generation of Whites. The past is fruitful in lessons "how not to do it." It has certainly brought Africa into economic relationship with Europe, but under conditions which must be drastically changed. As would be expected, the policy of the past, dictated by the will of those who saw in Africa merely a new and happy hunting ground for more and quicker profits, has resulted in the enslavement, degradation, and in some cases, the destruction of the native races; and all this has been characterised by the familiar "Après moi la deluge"—policy of competitive commercialism. It has sought to exploit the resources and the labour of Africa as rapidly as possible, regardless of the people's interests, liberties or assent; and taking into account the economic chaos into which the War and the "Peace" has plunged Europe, there is every probability and, indeed, every present indication, that the same policy will still be pursued in relation to Africa, that "vast reservoir of labour and preserve of natural riches."

Militarism, too, plays an ever greater and more direct part in African affairs. The French, who have made such large use of African troops during and since the War, have now definitely conscripted for military service the manhood of their African possessions. The term of service is to be three years, of which two years are to be spent in France itself. What that action portends requires little enough imagination to foresee. The militarists of the other European countries will certainly demand a similar policy on the part of their own Governments in their own possessions. Moreover, in Europe itself, this conscription of the Africans and their introduction into Europe is fraught with dangers for the working-class movement; and the present experience of Germany is a sufficient indication of the unscrupulous uses to which French militarism is prepared to put its black troops.

These are the prospects—or rather, the actualities—of the present situation. What is to be done? Mr. Morel has no hope in the present African covenants of the League of Nations. Neither from the standpoint of political control nor from that of actual administrative policy does it provide the requisite machinery for protecting the peoples of Africa from the evils and dangers which threaten them—and Europe. The mandatory system, as Mr. Morel says, is but—

A thinly disguised device to camouflage the acquisition by the European Entente powers of the African territories conquered by them from Germany.

Yet it is to a League of Nations that Mr. Morel looks for a solution; not, indeed, the existing League, but that which was, and still is, talked of by the politicians who were going to make the world safe for democracy. It is in the third part of his book that he considers this question of the future of Africa. He pins his faith to a League of Nations which shall be inspired, as he himself is, by the ideals of early

Victorian Liberalism. It is here that we must part company from Mr. Morel—regretfully enough that so sincere and so fearless a thinker should thus "find his future in the past."

We, too, feel the debt of duty which has been inherited from the past—a responsibility which falls certainly not least upon the Trade Unions whose members handle and manufacture the raw materials produced by the enslaved labour of Africa. The African is helpless and hopeless against the existing treaty in unity arrayed against his freedom and happiness—capitalistic exploitation, imperialism and militarism. These forces, with their attendant manifold evils, must continue to animate and dominate the relations between the two continents unless some new and still greater force comes in to transform these relations, to discover some more excellent way based upon their mutual and equal benefit. The only possible power to do that lies in the Labour Movement, which, in proportion as it attains self-consciousness, will become increasingly capable of appreciating the African problem, and also of formulating a policy which will at once secure their mutual benefit and forward their final emancipation, sparing the natives the further bitter experience of capitalist control, but rather giving them the advantage of its own fuller experience.

"What a League of Nations could do to protect Tropical Africa from the evils of capitalistic exploitation and militarism" is the subject of the final chapter of the book. To us those evils are inseparable from the system itself. With our wider experience of all that capitalism connotes, our ideal for Africa is not that of a mere modification of the present system based, as Mr. Morel's is, upon the free production and exchange of commodities while restoring or protecting native ownership of the land. Our ideal for Africa as elsewhere, is that of co-operative production for use; and Europe, animated by this ideal and accepting its debt of duty to Africa, might smooth in a thousand ways her path to her rightful place in the community of nations, and so wash out from the memory of humanity the stains which mar the story of the relations between Christian Europe and heathen Africa.

T. ASHCROFT

#### A GOODE BOOK

Unavoidably our praise of *Bolshevism At Work*, W. T. Goode, M.A. (B.S.P., 2s. 6d.), is belated. Already many Plebeians must have placed it on their shelves as a permanent supplement to the oral descriptions of Soviet Russia they have enjoyed from the author. He is the latest of those intellectuals who, free from sectarian party trammels, and with nothing to fetter in party tactics or dogmas, have come back from Russia, enthusiastic about the new life they have seen. We owe them much. They have played a great part in changing opinion about the Bolsheviks and in combating the damnable lies of the "kept" Press.

In the first few chapters one notices the absence of Ransome's vivid touches. The scientist is here analysing men and institutions—not the artist graphically portraying them.

The calumnies of reaction have forced him into an account of the magnificent men and the means by which the immense problem of reorganising society, in the face of ceaseless attack, is being solved successfully. New creative energy is being liberated by worker's control. Temporary deviations from communistic practice are frankly made to suit the particular conditions of the peasants and other undeveloped industries. There is hardly a lie which is not nailed to the counter by this clear examination of Russian institutions. As an educationist, Professor Goode fails to restrain his admiration when he describes the schools and their methods. The dreams of true educationists elsewhere are being actually realised in Russia. In the school for Soviet workers he "caught the thrill" of the contact between the lecturer and the eager students—1300 in all—being trained for administrative and propaganda work in the new social order. There is hardly a line in the book which is not worthy of the close attention of us who want to see Socialism in its working clothes in England also. It informs and stimulates. Can a book do more?

M. S.

## NATIONALISATION

*The Case for Nationalisation.* By A. EMIL DAVIES. (George Allen & Unwin, 2s. 6d. and 4s. 6d.)

*Nationalisation of the Mines.* By FRANK HODGES. (Leonard Parsons, 4s. 6d.)

Nationalisation can be considered from two points of view: one, the national or collectivist point of view, in which the public and the community figure very largely, and which, in effect, is an attempt to prove to the capitalist class that the proposals made are in their interest; the other, the economic-historical standpoint, with which is bound up the interests of the workers.

It is when viewing it from this latter standpoint that we see and realise nationalisation by itself to be meaningless. Indeed, it is generally admitted nowadays that some measure of control must be granted to the workers.

In this, as in every other problem confronting the working-class movement, there is a tendency amongst its leaders to endeavour to conciliate the forces opposed to them. Thus we hear a great deal said about the "public" and the "commonweal." But it is otherwise with the average thinking member of the rank and file. Their demand is not made because and on account of the effect it will have upon the tool-makers of Sheffield or upon any other section of the working-class or the so-called community; they face it as a problem confronting the industry they work in and the condition of employment therein.

Each of the books under review has been written from the former standpoint. In the main, therefore, they constitute a criticism of the present method of administration, which is

wasteful to a very high degree. In so far as they made this their purpose both books contain much valuable information. Mr. Emil Davies discusses the principle in a general sense as applicable to several industries, and may be said to have exhausted the subject from that point of view. Communal undertakings are reviewed and private enterprise criticised. Credit is due to him for having so boldly put forward his views. His position in the commercial world has enabled him to gather together a mass of exceedingly useful material.

Mr. Hodges' *Nationalisation of the Mines*, while an exceedingly interesting book, is in some respects disappointing. To Labour College students it must be a matter of surprise that so little use is made of the Marxian theories. Too much is attempted to be made of the waste at present going on. After all, capitalism itself could overcome this—so where is the workers' case?

The fault is the same as that which characterised the publicity campaign of the Miners' Federation—too much appealing to the "public." It would have been far better to devote all that energy towards rousing the Federation itself than to the vain hope of proving to the capitalist public that the abolition of capitalism was in its interest.

Mr. Hodges' book will appeal more to non-miners than to miners, and that for the reasons already hinted at. It contains no sound reason for the miners themselves to take action. When Nationalisation or control of industry is made as concrete a proposal as an increase in wages, there will be no doubt as to the attitude of Labour.

W. H. M.

## A TIMELY VOLUME

*The Two Internationals.* By R. PALME DUTT. (Labour Research Dept. Paper, 1s. 6d.; cloth, 2s. 6d.)

THIS is an exceedingly useful little compilation (by a Pleb) of statistics, documents, etc., relating to the Second (or Berne) and the Third (or Moscow) Internationals. More than that, it is a very able summary of the two divergent tendencies in the world Socialist movement which were manifesting themselves more and more clearly long before they found expression in two separate organisations. It should be on the bookshelf, or in the pocket, of every keen Left Winger, for even the most assiduous press-cutter will find some manifesto, statement of policy, or report of a convention, which he has overlooked. It is a strictly fair statement of the case for both sides, but (Plebs will be interested to note) it is by no means difficult to perceive the author's "bias." But as that bias is in the right—or I should say Left—direction, that is all to the good.

J. F. H.

# ALL PLEBS PUBLICATIONS

and other literature in which Plebs are interested can be obtained from  
**THE REFORMERS' BOOKSHOPS** 103 Kirkgate, BRADFORD  
& 24-26 New Brown St., MANCHESTER

## NEW B.S.P. PUBLICATIONS.

**THE COMING WAR WITH AMERICA.** By John Maclean. 3d.; post free, 3½d.

**THE COMING OF SOCIALISM.** By L. Deslinières. 9d.; post free, 9½d.

**THE GERMAN SPARTACISTS.** 2d.; post free 2½d.

**THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL.** By Boris Souvarine. 3d.; post free, 3½d.

**THE NATIONALISATION OF WOMEN: THE NATURAL HISTORY OF A LIE.** By G. M. Roebuck. 3d.; post free, 3½d.

B.S.P. LITERATURE DEPT., 21a Maiden Lane, Strand, London, W.C.2

## EVERY INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST SHOULD READ THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT.

Foreign News, especially Russian, a Special Feature.  
On Sale at all Newsagents, or from 152 Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.

FOR

TEXT-BOOKS for CLASSES,  
SOCIALIST CLASSICS,  
BOOKS and PAMPHLETS,

WRITE

S. L. PRESS,  
50 RENFREW ST.,  
GLASGOW,

and read **THE SOCIALIST** TWOPENCE WEEKLY

## THE PLEBS

3d. Monthly.

20 pages.

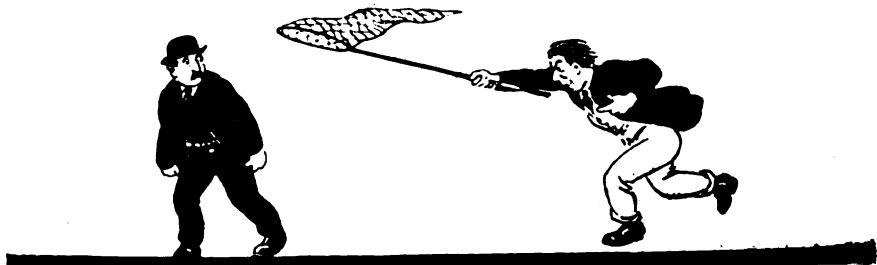
† Postal subscription (until further notice) 2s. for six months.

† Please let us have your parcel orders not later than 18th inst.

† Cheques and postal orders should be crossed and made payable to "Secretary, Plebs League."

11a PENYWERN ROAD, EARL'S COURT, LONDON, S.W.5

Wholesale or Retail Agents:—B.S.P. Literature Department, 21a Maiden Lane. W.C.2;  
S.L.Press, 50 Renfrew Street, Glasgow; Reformers' Bookstall, Glasgow; Reformers' Bookshop,  
Bradford and Manchester; Henderson's, 66 Charing Cross Road, W.C.2.



DON'T LET HIM LEAVE THE CLASS WITHOUT LEAVING A  
SUB. FOR THE MAGAZINE

Printed at the Pelican Press, 2 Carmelite Street, E.C.