

Vol. XII. No. 8

August, 1920

THE PLEBS

AGITATE - EDUCATE - ORGANISE

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LET US  
DOWN  
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THE PLEBS

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

Vol. XII.

August, 1920

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[The third instalment of J. T. Walton Newbold's series, "Production and Politics," and the "Students' Page" are held over until our next issue.]

THE SAME OLD SLOGAN

THERE are stages in the history of every movement when the discussion of new ideas, of fresh applications or modifications of accepted principles is necessary. There are other times when simple reiteration of first principles with insistent emphasis becomes of vital importance. Such a time we have assuredly now reached in our own movement. Our plain duty to-day is to reassert, uncompromisingly and unflinchingly, with greater emphasis than ever before, the principle which for us is fundamental—*Independence* in Working-Class Education.

The Northumberland resolution carried at the M.F.G.B. Conference (proposing that the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. should take over and run the Labour College and Ruskin College) may be the first step towards a full realisation by the Labour Movement of the importance of Education. It may, on the other hand, be a first step backwards—a step which may lead (whether so intended or not) to the undoing of all the work the Central Labour College and the Plebs League has accomplished during the past ten years. Which it proves to be depends upon ourselves. Let us get busy in time.

The discussion at the Conference, on the resolution and on the defeated S. Wales amendment, very quickly centred on the vital point at issue—the question of Labour's complete *control* of both Colleges and of the curriculum of both. It is quite true, as Frank Hodges pointed out, that the time has come to make provision for an ever-increasing number of colleges. *But they must be colleges of the right kind.* Ruskin College buildings, and the accommodation they afford, may be well worth taking over. But if taking them over means taking over also the educational policy for which Ruskin College has hitherto stood, then their acquisition would be a bad bargain for labour. *We want to know whether it does mean this or not.*

For rest assured that this vital question as to the *kind* of education Labour requires would, supposing the M.F.G.B. resolution were carried through and both Colleges acquired by the T.U. movement, very quickly dominate all else. It would be impossible for one body to run two institutions with divergent aims. Either the educational policy of Ruskin College—*Co-Partnership*—or the educational policy of the Labour College—*Independence*—would set the keynote for both institutions. Their taking over would mean, therefore, a fundamental change—a revolution, in fact—in one or other of the two Colleges. It is hardly necessary to remark that, from our point of view, everything depends on which of the two it is suggested should be so changed.

Some few months ago the Labour correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* described a scheme, initiated by the W.E.A., for the formation of a new body called the "Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee," which it was anticipated would tend to "lessen the differences" between the "non-party-political W.E.A." and the "candid but not impartial Marxian Labour College," secure a "delimitation of functions between them," and "reconcile their claims to trade union support." To what extent the movers of the Northumberland resolution are animated by similar ideas we have no means of knowing. But to them (if they are so animated) and to the Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee (if it still exists) we would point out that any such "delimitation" or "reconciliation" is flatly impossible without a sacrifice of principles and policy on one side or the other. And, again, we should be profoundly interested to learn which side they suggest should make the sacrifice; the side which can ask for and enlist the support of Coalition Government leaders on its behalf, or the side which has stood, and which stands, for Labour *Independence*?

We end where we began, with an urgent appeal to the supporters of Independent Working-Class Education everywhere to concentrate on the plain and obvious issue. Independence or Co-Partnership—which? One or the other it is bound to be. Whether the Co-Partnership is the deliberate policy of those who would emasculate the Labour movement by an infusion of "safe" ideas; or whether it is merely the result of a lack of any definite policy on the part of those who have never realised the issues involved, matters not at all. In either case, Co-Partnership is fatal. Ten years ago the Labour College was founded on the realisation of that fact. Have events during that time pointed—do events to-day point—to the desirability of any modification of its principles?

It is a straight issue, and it has got to be fought out; the sooner the better. We are in the fight—all in!—with the same old slogan. Having won through so far, we are not now to be taken in by poppycock about "delimitation" or "reconciliation." *Independence* means independence, or nothing. It is a plain word, and it can be plainly defined. It is our job to go on defining it—until all the wobblers and the woolly-witted ones have either had their eyes opened and come over to us, or funk'd the issue and gone over to the enemy. As we write, the first number of the *Ruskin Review* (to be published quarterly by the Ruskin College Fellowship) lies before us. "No person, no institution," we read on p. 1, "can live a full life entirely on partisan principles." On another page an essay entitled "False Dilemmas" concludes by quoting approvingly this snatch of dialogue from E. M. Forster's novel, *Howard's End*:—" 'Did you, or did you not, do this thing? Plain question, plain answer.' 'Charles, dear Charles, one doesn't ask plain questions; there aren't such things.' " At the risk of contradicting Mr. Forster and of writing ourselves down as hopelessly crude in the

eyes of *Ruskin Reviewers*, we shall persist in putting this plain question whenever and wherever we can—and demanding a plain answer:—Do you, or do you not, believe that the Labour Movement needs not only educational *institutions* of its own, but an *education* of its own? Do you, in short, stand for *Independent Working-Class Education*? “Plain question, plain answer.”

J. F. H.

IN MEMORIAM
DENNIS HIRD
Died July 13, 1920

We can pay no more fitting tribute to Dennis Hird's memory than to report briefly the speeches delivered by his co-workers and pupils at a meeting held at the Labour College on Friday morning, July 16. In a letter to Mr. Louth (Secretary to the Governors), Mr. R. B. Hird wrote:—“My father's remains will be cremated on Friday morning at 12 o'clock. There will be no service and no ceremony. If you wish to honour his memory, I would suggest you gather together at the College at that time. That, I feel sure, would be what he would have liked.”

W. W. CRAIK, Principal of the College, speaking on behalf of the Governors and staff, said:—*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. The old maxim is still fashionable. It is still the custom to wait until a man is dead before speaking well of him. It is easy to praise the dead; and not so easy to appreciate the living. The myrtle tree of fame usually grows green only when it is planted on a grave.

Our old friend and colleague was an outspoken opponent of all cant and humbug, especially of the fashion of funeral ceremonials. He used to be fond of quoting the lines—

The roses life denied thee
Are on thy coffin laid.

And true to his convictions, he determined that his exit from the world should be attended with no such conventional ritual. Faithful to his wishes, without pomp or show, his family, at this hour, wait to receive from the fires of the crematorium at Golder's Green all that physically remains of a great spirit who, while he lived, passed through the fires of life, and, glowing with a burning passion for the kingdom of man, warmed many men with his courage and his convictions for the task of making that kingdom a living fact. He had great courage and great confidence, and these he drew from his scientific consciousness of the history of the human struggle, especially of the oneness of the struggle. In the light of that human revelation he found the remedy—human unity. “The hope of man is men,” said he. “. . . Man is the educable animal.”

Dennis Hird devoted his life to the conscious moulding of “the educable animal.” What he did can never be measured by conventional standards. He was too dignified to sacrifice his convictions for the plaudits of those who judge by such standards. He might have been a bishop if he had cared to remain in the church. He might have been a popular orator had he been content to take only popular themes. He might have been rich had he concerned himself only about riches.

But he chose the full rather than the merely successful life. He chose the rocks and the storms rather than the sleepy valleys of ease and contentment. And we who knew him owe him what we do just because he so chose.

In the most comprehensive and simplest phrase, he lived like a Man. And in his death he went—

Not like the quarry slave at night
Scourged to his dungeon;
But as one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him
And lies down to pleasant dreams.

A. J. HACKING said:—I knew Mr. Hird for many years and at the time of his death, he was my oldest surviving friend. This friendship had begun in Oxford when, as an undergraduate of the University, I had the good fortune to be for some time his pupil. It is difficult to think of a man more ably fitted to be the teacher of men. I used, in after years, on becoming his colleague at Ruskin College, and, later, at the Central Labour College, to speak to the students of this, and to feel pride that I, in common with them, had been Mr. Hird's pupil. . . . I had the sad privilege of seeing him on his death-bed. . . . The world is poorer and his friends the sadder for his loss.

On behalf of the students, GEO. PHIPPEN said that while scarcely any of those at present in residence had come into personal contact with Mr. Hird, yet they had learnt so much about him from the men who had served under him that their respect for him had become as great as if they had known him. C. L. C. students held widely-varying opinions on sundry subjects; but it was noteworthy that they were unanimous in their reverence and admiration for Dennis Hird. Those of them now at the College treasured a letter they had received from him during the last term, in which he had pointed out the greatness of the task in front of them and urged them to make the utmost of their all-too-short period of two years to fit themselves for that task. The finest tribute they could pay to his memory would be to take that message of his to heart.

EDWARD GILL, as an old student, after referring to the advantages enjoyed by present-day students in comparison with those of the early days, said that Dennis Hird, by his friendly understanding and encouragement, by his patience with their limitations, and by his inspiring personality, was responsible for a great deal of whatever his old-time students had been able later to do in the world outside. Those who had been denied personal contact with him had, indeed, lost much. He was a great teacher, and his name would always be honoured by the workers.

Letters from several old students, including Frank Hodges, Meredith Titterington, Jack Williams and others, were also read.

SHALL YOU LET US DOWN?

THE Plebs League has pioneered that education which is the present and permanent revolutionary ferment in the Labour Movement. In season and out of season it has successfully propaganded until it now inspires, through colleges and classes, an immense educational force. Within the last three years the sales of its own publications have reached a total of 27,000 text-books, 30,000 pamphlets, and 20,000 leaflets (Study Outlines, etc.), and the people who are *studying* our primers on History and Economics are the people who are going to count a great deal in the future.

With two Labour Colleges secured, with others promised, and with classes more widely spread than ever before, the Plebs Executive, instead of resting on its oars, is planning a big forward movement. The first step is an enlarged 6d. Magazine in October. If we fail in this—perish the thought!—our efforts will be damned at the start.

It is fairly obvious why we want a bigger Magazine. It is essential to the success of the new text-books in hand that they shall, in the main, appear first in the Magazine to receive the helpful criticism that only actual teachers and students can give. We want more room for the publication of class syllabuses, for the discussion of new topics, for the provision of antidotes to the slosh purveyed elsewhere as Economics and History, and for the publication of Class Movement news to act as a connecting link between present and future students, classes and Labour Colleges. We have a growing school of Neo-Marxians, of men and women who have something to say and know how to say it, and who can do much to clarify our ideas about many matters as yet scarcely touched upon. It rests with you whether or no this needed work is to be done.

Now it is less than likely that Messrs. Lloyd George, Balfour, Cecil and Co. will issue any appeal for us—as they did for Ruskin College. That is why we ask you to get your hand down. The League's secretarial, editorial and writing work is entirely unpaid. Book publication and distribution leave no balance in our hands. We need your help.

What can you do? First, join the League. The sub. is microscopic—in these days. We believe that the class movement is so important that it needs a propagandist body to keep an eye on the direction and development of its activities. Our movement is now big enough to attract well-meaning fogies who, by their indiscriminate appreciation of *all* education, may side-track the real movement. The best safeguard is active Plebeians in every Labour organisation and active Plebs branches in every neighbourhood.

Secondly, you are no true Pleb if you do not push the Mag. As student or teacher you are not "playing the game" if you don't sell the PLEBS. It is a disgrace that our Editor and Secretary—giving freely of their time and talents—have to fill our space with appeals. If you have new ideas which you think would improve the Mag., send them along.

If we are going to put the 6d. Mag. on a sound footing, we must have a circulation of 7,000, which means that *three* PLEBS must be sold for every *two* sold now. If you cannot increase your monthly order, but are with us for a bigger PLEBS, express your faith in the Mag. and the movement in £ s. d. We are open to receive gifts to a Publication Fund, which will be used first to ensure the success of the new PLEBS, and after for the issuing of text-books, two of which are nearly ready. If circumstances won't allow you to do this, will you express your confidence in us by *guaranteeing a sum to meet any possible loss on our new venture*. Probably you will never be called upon to "fork out," but you will be giving us proof that you are behind us. Our prospects are bright. So far as we have been able to ascertain their feelings, our friends everywhere are enthusiastically in favour of our new venture. Has our Secretary heard from you?

No. You are not going to let us down. We know you better than to think it for a moment. But your personal assurances on the point, though they only confirm us in our present faith, will encourage us to go ahead with renewed energy. The word lies with you!

For the Executive, Yours sincerely,

MARK STARR.

WAKE UP, RAILWAYMEN!

THE recent "settlement" which included terms "satisfactory to everybody" in the N.U.R., so far from settling anything, has resulted in general discontent and has, in fact, created a condition of affairs within the Union which may well become critical, if it is not already so.

It is becoming obvious to everyone that a new policy is needed. That new policy must, however, not be a purely industrial one. It must be educational as well. We do, indeed, need a new industrial policy—or at any rate a more militant advocacy and practice of our present Industrial Unionism with a reconstructed representation which shall give to every section and grade the opportunity of solving the special problems which face it.

The problem of the shopmen is especially acute just now. On the plea that the Craft Unions stand in the way, the N.U.R. is failing to realise the demands of this important section. Such an excuse can, however, carry no weight so long as the N.U.R. has no definite policy in relation to the Craft Unions; and the N.U.R. is, as an inevitable and altogether deserved result, losing members, and at the same time undermining the Trade Union *morale* of the remaining shopmen. It is high time something was done to stop the rot. If the N.U.R. is to be saved as an Industrial Union, immediate action is urgently needed on the industrial field.

This will not be carried without opposition; the whole policy of Industrial Unionism is repugnant to those officials and other influential members who still cling to the old ideas and policy. But while recognising the value of their services in the past, we must not let them retard our forward march now. Our need for a bold policy is becoming ever more urgent, not only because of the lowering of the standard of life, but also because we are facing a far stronger enemy to-day than ever before. It is common knowledge that all the forces of the State are being marshalled in readiness for the national or general strikes of the future: hence our own organisation must be as perfect as it is possible to make it.

This demands something more than mere numerical strength, important as that is: it demands something more than a flexible and efficient form of organisation, important as that is. It demands *an intelligent and informed*, as well as numerous and strongly-organised, *rank and file*. Troublesome as the Craft Unions are, strong as the State is, our chiefest enemy is the apathy of our own members.

We need an educational policy. The Union is half-owner and controller of the Labour College and yet has no educational policy; the best weapon ever forged by the Working-Class Movement is, so far as the Union as a whole goes, left to rust.

It would be superfluous in the PLEBS to speak of the long and bitter struggle to win the Union over to accepting this joint ownership and control. Those who had needed compulsion to adopt—at least on paper—the policy of Industrial Unionism very naturally opposed also the taking over of the College and the educational movement, which stood for the "new model" in organisation. But if the College is to be a centre where a fortunate half-dozen men a year enjoy educational advantages, and to be nothing more than that, then it is doubtful whether the battle was worth fighting. The College should be the

headquarters of our educational movement. We want a general and widespread educational movement planned and organised with all the care and forethought that such a policy demands and deserves.

Here is new work for the District Councils. A special grant should be made to them from the central funds directly for this purpose, and with this classes should be set up in every possible centre. As far as possible and as soon as possible, once they are actually started, these classes should be placed upon a self-supporting basis, thus leaving the District Council's funds free for the purpose of spreading the movement into new areas.

We are well aware that from certain quarters the old cry of economy will be raised. It would, however, be far more economical to make some definite educational scheme part and parcel of our whole policy than to have to spend tens of thousands of pounds answering the false and vicious statements of our enemies during strikes, etc.

Further, it is a duty of every Union to give every member the chance of learning his true position in society. The College itself cannot perform this work. It has its own special function to perform. We should see that it does that work as effectively as possible by sending along our best men. At present the chance of competing for scholarships is denied to the vast majority of married men because of family responsibilities. It is a short-sighted policy and an expensive economy. By providing for the dependants of successful married candidates, we shall take another important step towards getting the best men to the College.

The local classes, too, will play a great part in raising the general standard both of those students who compete for scholarships and of other members who will do powerful propaganda in the workshop, on the platform, in the Branch meeting, etc. It is there, indeed, that the most fruitful work can be done; the actual place and time of work provide the finest opportunity of pointing the moral.

In the Railway shops, especially, there is a great, if not at present a very fertile, field for the work of the educationalist. We are badly in need of a clear, simple pamphlet setting forth the case for Industrial Unionism as against Craft Unionism, applied more especially to the problem of the Railway shops. Better still, perhaps, for propaganda purposes, would be a good lantern lecture showing the development from handicraft to manufacture and thus demonstrating "the logic of the machine," once more applied especially to the problem of Railway Workers' Organisation.

W. P.

IMPERIALISM UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

II.

(Review of *Empire and Commerce in Africa*, by L. WOOLF, concluded.)

AT home the position of statesmen and officials is different. Sometimes deliberately and consciously, sometimes confusedly or unconsciously, they adopt the principles and policy of Economic Imperialism. They are subjected to the constant pressure of profit-seeking groups. In England, though this influence is not so direct or so obvious as in certain other countries, it is none the less operative, as is well illustrated by the illuminating example of the British East Africa Company. Sir W. McKinnon and his co-directors undoubtedly shaped British policy. They could exert pressure from so many sides. The

Times—doubtless expressing public opinion!—was behind it. Wires, albeit invisible even to some of the chief persons concerned—but that only added to their effectiveness—ran between the Board Room of the Company and the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church of Scotland. At crucial moments, Sir W. McKinnon could walk round to the Foreign Office or the Treasury with the son-in-law of Queen Victoria as a certificate of his Company's character. Thus, with the *Times*, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Marquis of Lorne uniting to support the policy, it is hardly necessary to look further to see why the policy of prominent capitalists is translated into the policy of British Governments. In asserting this, we need not impute evil to these men: it is a mistake to exaggerate the personal responsibility or iniquity of individuals.

Men rarely pursue consciously ends which they know to be evil. They desire something, and then automatically find reasons for believing it to be good.

The conclusion of the whole matter so far as the States in Europe are concerned is that the policy has been disastrous. It has poisoned international relations for 40 years, has more than once brought Europe to the verge of war, and was a material cause in pushing it over the brink into the maelstrom of 1914-1918; and so long as the policy is pursued, so long can there be neither stability nor security—wars and rumours of wars are its inevitable accompaniment. On the other hand, the value of the export trade done with African possessions is almost negligible, as is also the capacity of this trade "to keep the wolf of unemployment from the door of the European workman."

And what of "Africa" itself. How have the people of Africa fared? Mr. Woolf gives at length and in full detail the story of the British in East Africa. It is an admirably-selected example. The British are considered to have been "born to Empire," and their rule is said to be an example of all that is best in modern Imperialism. This instance, therefore, gives the most favourable view possible of Imperialism as a civilising agent. Even so, the story is one of ruthless expropriation and exploitation; and this example enables us to judge in some measure the position of the natives under the rule of other European nations, the defects of which are, says Mr. Woolf, "ten and a hundred times greater."

The African has, of course, been merely a passive instrument hitherto in the opening-up of his native continent, the general effects of which have been almost wholly evil. It is usually claimed that we have substituted law and order for lawless barbarism; and it is certainly true that life in Africa during the first half of the 19th century was ugly, cruel and bloody. But the chief difference between that and the subsequent "law and order" consists in the fact that its misery, unlike that of civilisation, was not organised or continual—hardly a sufficient reason for boasting ourselves of what we have done for the Black! But in any case we are assuredly not justified in pursuing the policy of conquest, partition and economic exploitation of which we have been guilty.

The past and present of Africa, then, are dark pages in the world's history. What of the future?—for it must clearly be understood that control must continue for the time. Economic Imperialism has itself created the conditions which make that inevitable; as things stand, to withdraw would be merely to hand over the native to the more cruel exploitation of irresponsible white men.

Can we, then, instead of the bad old way with its evil consequences—evil to the masses of Africa and of Europe alike—institute a new order by which the State shall become an instrument of progress and good government?

The common answers given by those who look for a happier relationship between the two continents fall into two classes: they may be characterised as political and economic respectively. The solution suggested by those who look to politics is the replacement of the present imperial government of Africa in the interests of small groups within the European nations, by an international government in the interests of the Africans themselves. These thinkers would seek through a League of Nations to base the relationship upon a new foundation of co-operation, instead of upon the old one of hostility, among the European States: because they consider the disease to be one of international relations in politics—the use of the State's power against other States for economic ends—they naturally recommend political remedies.

On the other hand, the second class of thinkers point out that Economic Imperialism is not only imperial but also economic, and that it is the latter which is foundational, while the imperialist policies and rivalries are merely symptoms of this underlying cause. The real trouble has been that Europeans have regarded Africa only as being a potentially profitable estate. Hence this second group of thinkers hold that the former solution is a mere—and necessarily futile—playing with effects; that the real change needed is in the economic relations between Europeans and Africans: the natives must no longer be regarded as live stock or cheap labour or as the profitable market for our shoddy manufactures and cheap gin, but as human beings with a right to their own land and life—with a right even to be educated to determine their own destiny.

Of course all this is hopelessly unpractical and against human nature; and the "fond fools" who advocate such changes are the merest and maddest visionaries and cranks—as all practical people will agree. But what will the practical persons say of Mr. Woolf, who, not satisfied to belong to either one or other of these classes (Utopian as that would be), but evidently anxious to leave no possible shadow of doubt lingering in the minds of the "wise and prudent" as to his qualifications for Bedlam, actually declares himself to have sympathies with both—though it is clear that he regards the economic change as being the real solution. The European State must needs continue relationship with Africa, but henceforth it must regard itself as a trustee for the natives, its duty being to promote their interests, economic, social and political.

For this purpose, however, some practical programme must be formulated, and Mr. Woolf enumerates certain measures and principles which must form the basis of a better relationship. Stated briefly, these are:—

- (a) The reservation of the land for the natives.
- (b) Education of the natives definitely for the purpose of fitting them for self-determination, economic and political.
- (c) The gradual expropriation of all Europeans and their capitalist enterprises. Communism in land is the natural and native system; and the only hope for Africa lies in a return to, and a complete organisation and development of, that communal system. The adoption or non-adoption of that measure will be the acid test of future policy.
- (d) The application of all revenue raised in Africa to the development of the people and their resources.
- (e) Absolute prohibition of alcohol.
- (f) The complete neutralisation of Africa.

These proposals will doubtless be branded as Utopian; yet they contain nothing more than is contained in the claim which is always asserted by even the

most practical of imperialists—that we are only in Africa for the real benefit of the Africans.

On the other hand it must be admitted that the policy here proposed for Africa will not be adopted by a Europe which, within its own borders, is still given over to the doctrines and policy of Machiavelli and Bismarck and to the ideals and practice of the Stock Exchange: and in that fact lie at once the weakness of the "pure politician" who looks to a mere change in the political or administrative system as the salvation of Africa, and the vindication of that class of thinkers who look to economic change as the only hope of Africa as it is of the world at large.

We have ventured upon this lengthy review of Woolf's book because we think it one of the finest contributions yet made to the literature of International relations. We do not agree with his view of history. We consider that his reference to the smallness of European trade with Africa is rather superficial—it suggests to us that after all he himself has not penetrated to the "true inwardness" of modern Imperialism. But in spite of these and other differences with him, we can still be grateful for this very brilliant work. Those who are happy enough to be able to afford this book will find it to be a most valuable pendant to the works of Boudin and Brailsford.

T. ASHCROFT

CORRESPONDENCE

A CORRECTION

SIR,—From my short review of Upton Sinclair's *The Brass Check*, a portion of my quotation from the book was unfortunately omitted, thus making one of my comments devoid of point.

After Sinclair's phrase about Imperialisms the quotation should have proceeded:—

But my support of the war did not mean that I had given myself into the hands of the war-profiteers. I saw that the old-time plunderers of America were among the war's most ardent supporters. . . . The Beef Trust, the Steel Trust, the Oil Trust, etc., multiplied many times over the profits they were taking from the people's necessities; also they dictated legislation which spared their profits

and saddled the cost of the war upon future generations. A war has to be won with the materials then existing in the world; it manifestly cannot be won with materials produced a generation later. The only question is, shall the necessary materials be taken from the owners by means of taxes, or shall the labour of future generations be pledged in exchange? It was to these words that I drew the attention not only of our protagonists of the Capital Levy, but also of its opponents. Soviet Russia has been carrying on a war for over two years, without resorting to financial operations pledging the labour of future generations—a pleasing contrast to the invariable method of Capitalist Governments.

Yours, etc.,

A. P. L.

NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT

BRANCH DIRECTORY

ANY Plebs League member willing to form a branch in his or her locality should write to the Secretary at once, and get his address added to this list. It is more than ever necessary to have a Plebs Centre in every district.

LONDON.—HACKNEY—G. Vandome (*protem.*), 32 Queensdown Road, E.5. STRATFORD—A. E. Dennington, 518 Romford Road, Forest Gate, E.7. HAMPSTEAD—Miss Ivy Collins, 6 Brooklands Road, Golders Green, N. WALTHAMSTOW—G. W. Brain, 51 Cleveland Park Avenue, E.17. WOOLWICH—L. Barnard, 84 Granby Road, Eltham. **BARKING.**—R. F. Martin, 47 Clarkson Road, Barking.

LIVERPOOL.—D. O'Hagan, 74B Limekiln Lane.

CHESTERFIELD.—F. Rogers, Rock Side, Brimington Road, Tapton.

HALIFAX.—Miss A. Crabtree, 1 Tyson Street, Parkinson Lane.

WORTHING.—H. H. Hellier, Claremont, Browning Road.

BURY.—J. Ainsworth, 24 Openshaw Street.

TREDEGAR.—F. W. Francis, 132 Charles Street, Tredegar.

LEIGH.—T. Macwalter, 86 Firs Lane.

BRADFORD.—Secretary, Mrs. A. Coates, 141 Girlington Road.

MANSFIELD.—Secretary, G. J. Williams, 48 St. Andrews Terrace, Littleworth.

MANCHESTER.—Secretary, J. McGee, Woodlands Lodge, Crescent Road, Crumpsall.
 NORWICH.—Secretary, A. Segon, 41 Stafford Street.
 WORKINGTON.—Secretary, M. Campbell, Rose Cottage, Stainburn.
 SHEFFIELD.—Secretary, Mrs. L. Madin, 109 Devonshire Street.
 UPPER RHONDDA.—D. W. Thomas, 29 Clark Street, Treorchy.
 PONTNEWNYDD.—W. G. Davies, Myrtle House, Pontrepiod.
 GARNANT.—D. R. Owen, Stepney Villas.

* * *

MANCHESTER and District Labour College has been proving that there are students keen enough to go on with their education during the summer months. Early in June they started courses of 16 lectures in Economics (H. Stephenson), Mathematics and Grammar (J. H. Berman), Industrial History (J. Leach), and Elementary Arithmetic (H. Fallows). And when you come to think about it, why should we always "mark time" between May and September? Why should we assume that workers only want to educate themselves when the weather's too bad to do anything else? Why not keep our lecturers busy all the year round? We should welcome correspondence on the subject.

* * *

Class secretaries should note that back numbers of the *Merthyr Pioneer*, containing Mark Starr's admirable elementary talks on "Economics and You, Mr. Worker" (series of 18), are obtainable from *Pioneer* Office, Merthyr Tydvil; reduced price for quantities. T. Ashcroft's series of articles in the *Railway Review* should also prove of great value to classes on the look-out for fresh material.

* * *

Comrade H. Sharpe writes:—"Be it known to all Plebeians that a branch of the Plebs League

has been established at Chesterfield with 40 members with Frank Rogers as secretary. The smile on Rogers' face had to be seen to be appreciated. . . . Chesterfield has a crooked church spire and its educational facilities have been crooked, too, but great things are expected now we can get real working-class education. We are affiliated to the Sheffield Labour College. . . . Our class of 34 students is greatly indebted to the Derbyshire Miners for the use of their council hall, and look forward to a series of lectures on the science of understanding by Comrade Horsfield, of Sheffield. Plebs or Labour College speakers are asked to write F. Rogers when they are in this neighbourhood so that meetings can be arranged." Congratulations to Chesterfield and to Frank Rogers who has nursed the district for years and ploughed a lonely furrow. No wonder he smiled!

* * *

Short racy reports from branch secretaries are welcomed. Long dry ones will be ruthlessly cut down. In either case we shall be glad to hear from our friends and to keep in touch with them.

* * *

We need, to complete sets of yearly volumes, a copy each of PLEBS for September, 1909, February, April and October, 1910, June and September, 1911. We shall be very glad to hear from any comrade who can let us have these.

* * *

DON'T FORGET THAT WHEREVER WE HAVE A GOOD BRANCH WE CAN MAKE OUR INFLUENCE FELT. WE DON'T WANT TO FIGHT, BUT—, ETC., ETC. WE'RE OUT FOR REAL EDUCATION, AND WE'VE GOT TO KEEP OUR EYES ON THE HALF-AND-HALFERS! GET TOGETHER!

W. H.

NEW BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Comments and Criticisms by PLEBS Reviewers

THE SOVIETS

The Bolshevik Theory. By R. W. POSTGATE. (Grant Richards. 7s. 6d. net.)

THE indictment of parliamentary democracy may be based (1) on its ineffectiveness as an instrument for achieving the abolition of the class structure, and (2) on the ground that it is not a desirable means of conducting the affairs of a community in which class antagonisms no longer prevail.

The Bolshevik theory on its destructive side is summarised tersely and with ability in R. W. Postgate's book, which deals accordingly rather with the former criticism than with the latter. Those who through Farman's account are familiar with economic conditions in Russia immediately prior to the collapse of 1917, will

best appreciate the nature of the necessity which replaced the Constituent Assembly by the Central Soviet in October of that year. But the same lesson will be impressed upon the proletariat of every country when bankruptcy or the conscious will to power place them face to face with the same problem.

"Real democracy," the author rightly comments, "cannot exist under capitalism. For real democracy presupposes the independent voter—a man who has access to truthful information and is unsubjected to pressure. . . . The Socialist who sets out to convert the majority of his fellow-countrymen in the orthodox parliamentary manner, has to work in a system which ignores class distinctions. But the class distinctions are there. . . . The middle class is that to which the parliamentarian must appeal. . . . And the demands of the middle class are fatal to

Socialism in normal times. Small businesses are to be artificially favoured against big ones. The 'Labour' party is forced into continual and sterile agitation against trusts, and a futile attempt to arrest the concentration of capital. . . . The support of the middle classes can only be secured at the price of disavowing all revolutionary tendencies, since social disturbance brings the small man first to bankruptcy. . . ."

Turning to the constructive issue, it will be generally admitted that the most desirable form—and in the long run most stable—of Government must be that which secures the maximum of executive ability with the maximum of popular consent. In other words, the business of representative government, if it is to be efficient, must be to develop and secure the exercise of the individual's co-operation and responsibility through those channels in which he can most competently express it. Now, in a society of producers, one in which equality of opportunity would tend to define productive activity as far as possible in accordance with individual ability, it is fairly clear that the average person will possess more valid standards of effective judgement within the sphere of his vocation than when exercising his share of collective responsibility through the heterogeneous medium of a parliamentary constituency. Socialists of the Right and Centre parties, permeated with the bourgeois philosophy of the American Declaration ("all men are born free and equal," etc.) are too soaked in mysticism to appreciate the force of such considerations: though it hardly needs a knowledge of biology or modern psychology to demonstrate that the increasing complexity of modern civilisation makes impossible demands on the intelligence of an electorate. Thinking persons who adopt a realistic attitude to political problems are often repelled by Socialist theories for this reason. And it is to be regretted that Postgate has not discussed more fully the value of the Soviet as a permanent constitution to the theory of social organisation.

Postgate rightly insists that the reorganisation of the central authority of the community on the basis of productive organisation is only one aspect of the problem of industrial freedom, to be supplemented by a large measure of autonomy within the limits of an industry, as Daniel De Leon, the Syndicalists, and the Guildsmen have urged. Unfortunately, there is at present little material available on which to base any conclusions as to how far this is in operation in Russia at present.

Just as the modern biologist adheres to Darwin's main thesis—the Evolution theory—while rejecting many of his minor doctrines, so the author of *The Bolshevik Theory* sympathises with Marx's principal thesis—the method of production and the class antagonisms relating thereto as the dynamic factor in the differentiation of social organisation. We agree with him that the unique contribution of Marx was the interpretation of historical phenomena in terms of production; but cannot sympathise with his fears that the present commercial system might find

its stable equilibrium in a Servile State. Perhaps some Marxians may exceed the legitimate limits of inference when they confuse the inevitable collapse of capitalism with the inevitable victory of the proletariat, since capitalism may conceivably, in digging its own grave, be digging that of the race. It is for the proletariat themselves to decide that.

The book would be greatly improved if, in subsequent editions, the chapter headings were altered to suggest a more coherent treatment, and it is greatly to be hoped that the various addenda and footnotes will be incorporated in the text.

PLEB.

AN INTELLECTUAL AT SEA

A Guildsman's Interpretation of History. By A. J. PENTY. (Allen and Unwin. 12s. 6d. net.)

This book is as amazing a combination of misconceptions mixed with truths as one is likely to come across, and it is written with a freshness of which one cannot be too appreciative. Every chapter is a battlefield. If the author is not grilling the lawyers or flaying the "lying historians," he is dropping brickbats on the "pernicious" theories of the Marxians.

Mr. Penty begins his historical tour in Greece and Rome, and doesn't halt until he's safely on "the Path to the Guilds," from which he shakes an admonishing fist at Bolshevism. The book sets out to do two things—(1) disprove the Materialist Conception of History, and (2) advocate National Guilds, by showing that the Medieval period was mankind's Garden of Eden, where man remained in happiness until the serpent of Roman Law persuaded him unto demanding the right to buy and sell without restrictions.

That the historians of the capitalist period have painted feudal times in muddy tints in order to display, by contrast, the purer beauty of capitalism may be true; that Rationalists and Protestants have united in distorting and concealing the good work the Church of Rome then did, may also be true, but few readers are likely to agree with Mr. Penty when he says, as he does, that the serf was not exploited and that generally speaking, "understanding and good fellowship" prevailed between the feudal lord and the servile cultivators on his estate.

At the outset, in his introduction, the author trumpets a challenge to the "one-sided and distorted" Marxian conception of history. "It is true," he says, "that by the light of the materialist conception considerable patches of history, including the history of the present day, may be explained. It is true of the later history of Greece and Rome, as of Europe after the Reformation. . . . But as an explanation of the Medieval period in particular, it is most demonstrably false. . . ." That a "one-sided and distorted" theory should explain not only present-day history, but that of later Greece and Rome and of Europe after the Reformation, is worth noting; but let us continue.

The fatal flaw in the materialist conception, it appears, is that Marx could not understand the moral factor and did not take it into consideration. "He ignores the fact that along with all

material changes there go psychological changes." Mr. Penty appears to have read the *Communist Manifesto*, but apparently he has overlooked the following passage: "Does it require deep insight to understand that, with changes in man's material conditions of life, social relations and social system, his ideas, views, conceptions, in one word his consciousness, also changes."

According to Mr. Penty's view, where the Marxists go wrong is that they have "fallen into the error of making economics rather than law and morals the starting point of their inquiries." In another place he complains that current theories of social evolution ignore the legal origin of economic phenomena. Elsewhere he says that "every social system rests finally upon the common acceptance of certain common beliefs." It is exceedingly difficult to lay hands on this guildsman's interpretation of history, for he concedes so much to the Marxist theory, but, assuming for the moment that these concessions are lapses from virtue on his part, it appears that in his eyes the power which develops society is some moral ideas which, expressing themselves through the medium of law, mould economic conditions into their own image. But where do those moral principles hail from? Those moral principles to which "religion gives sanction" are "fundamentally commandments and incapable of rationalist explanation." Thus does the author, before he has got to the middle of his book, become guilty of the offence of evolving a social theory from his inner consciousness—an offence which he rightly condemns on the opening page of his preface.

Apparently, then, as it has already been admitted that the M. C. H. does explain a great stretch of history, social development is fought for by the God of Moral Principles and the Devil of Material Conditions, just as Hercules wrestled with Death for the body of Alcestitis. In later Greek and Roman times the Devil was in power, as he is to-day, while the good Spirit has had to be content with an innings in the Middle Ages.

If the change in the material conditions of the time does not explain how feudalism was overcome and succeeded by capitalism, what does? Mr. Penty unhesitatingly throws the responsibility on the introduction of Roman law which recognised the right of private property in land, in contradiction of old communal customs. Except for this, we should now have agricultural guilds, and should never have tasted the bitter waters of capitalism.

Assuming for a moment that Roman law was the almighty power that swallowed up Feudalism, can any light be thrown upon its origin? Did it spring from the supernatural moral law? Mr. Penty, himself, supplies the explanation when he says that "an unregulated currency gave rise (in Rome) to Roman Law." Evidently, then, it was the prosaic child of material conditions!

Let us look at Medieval times for a moment. The Roman Empire had collapsed as a result of the ruin of the peasant farmers—its backbone—by the interaction of war and usury, the latter presupposing the growth of production for exchange. At one end of the scale was extreme

wealth; at the other extreme poverty, both accompanied by the inevitable demoralisation, along with falling production due to slave labour. Rome, a mere skeleton of herself and without power of resistance, had simply crumbled to dust at the touch of the barbarian hordes.

In the unsettled conditions that followed, in which fighting was an every day occurrence, it became necessary to introduce a division of labour. The tribe would be divided into sections, one being responsible for defence and the other responsible for providing food. "The fighting men would tend to become a class apart, and would claim rights and privileges over the non-combatant sections of the community. The chieftain of the fighting men would become the lord, and the fighting men his retainers."

What Marxist is responsible for that passage? No Marxist at all. It is from Mr. Penty's own pen—the material condition of war was the impelling force to feudalism! Surely our author was mistaken when he said that the M. C. H. failed as an explanation of the Medieval period. But let us go further. On page 214 Mr. Penty admits that, apart from Roman law, the feudal system would have been transformed, for the spread of currency into rural areas had gradually undermined its old stability by substituting money payments for payments in kind.

On the other hand he admits that in the circumstances existing after the fall of Rome, the material condition of war gave rise to a ruling class and a form, even although not the present form, of private property—the feudal estate; and, on the other hand, he points out that the growth of trade in due course undermined feudalism. To give the final blow to his own case, he quotes Vinogradoff (with approval) who states that in this period "Roman law satisfied in many respects the requirements of economic development." Thus does he show that the introduction of Roman law was not a cause but an effect; thus does he substantiate the M. C. H., and thus does he bring his own theory smashing to the ground.

J. P. M. M.

PIONEERS

The Life of Robert Owen (1 vol.). With an introduction by M. BEER (author of *A History of British Socialism*). *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett* (2 vols.). With introduction by R. H. TAWNEY. (G. Bell and Sons, 2s. 4d. per vol.)

No period in the history of the British Labour movement is better worth careful study than the time of the Chartist and allied movements during the first half of the 19th century. It has many times been remarked that the movement of to-day, with its growing enthusiasm for "direct action" and "extremist" policies, is repeating the experience and ideas of those years; though one can scarcely escape the conclusion, after sitting through a Trades Union Congress called to deal with the Irish situation, that in past days the Labour movement and its leaders had a clearer conception of working-class solidarity, and a keener sense of their obligations to international ideals than their successors of to-day.

By issuing these volumes Messrs. Bell and Sons have done a service to all working-class students of history. The autobiographies of these two men give us their personal views on their fellows, and on the movements and conditions of their time. Their outlook may appear to-day somewhat narrow and dogmatic on some points, utopian on others; while their whole conception of the movements in which they participated lacks the clarity which comes only from historical prospective. Nevertheless, both men played a great part in their respective spheres; and both books, accordingly, are extraordinarily interesting.

The main outlines of Owen's life are well known, but here, in his own words, is an account of what he felt to be the chief influences brought to bear upon him. While it is difficult to take a man at his own estimation, as Marx said, it is still true that a man can say of himself what no other man is in a position to say. Owen's great ideal was a free humanity, and the idea of a struggle between classes was abhorrent to him. He looked to a harmonious working together of all classes for the realisation of his ideas.

Lovett was a man of a different type, placed in entirely different circumstances. His life was largely a struggle to win the wherewithal to maintain his family, to educate himself, and to impart his knowledge to others. The idea of education and of an enlightened working-class opinion determined for him the whole policy of the movement.

In this story of his life, rather more than in Owen's, do we glimpse the divisions and jealousies which, then as now, all too frequently prevented the movement achieving the solidarity so essential for success in its aims. Lovett's judgements on his fellows are probably coloured accordingly, and need the modification and correction which can be obtained by reading other accounts of the same people.

His great strength lay in the drafting and writing of the many manifestoes issued by the various organisations to which he acted as secretary. Many of these manifestoes here reprinted are worthy of the students' attention. Representing the point of view of the craftsman rather than the modern proletarian, he failed to understand the full significance of the movement in which he took part; yet he did great work.

The humanity and unflinching courage of these men, as well as their gift of clear and simple expression, cannot but win our admiration.

W. H. M.

THE COLE OUTPUT

Social Theory (5s.); *Chaos and Order in Industry* (7s. 6d.) By G. D. H. COLE. (Methuen.)

One can hardly find time to read as fast as Cole writes. The remark that springs first to the proletarian's lips as he looks at this rapidly-increasing array of well got-up volumes is that they are obviously not designed to appeal primarily to that particular section of society

which we believe holds the future in its hands. For it is after all the men in the workshop who are actually working out the structure of control—without the aid of publishers' limelight. And it is a pity, perhaps, that all social theorists are not compelled to share their experiences for a season.

On the other hand, the demand for books such as these does indicate that the middle and professional classes—what Guildsmen, I believe, call "the salariat"—are being drawn away from their old moorings. And one may be ready to admit that Cole is better adapted to convince these people than De Leon.

In *Social Theory* there is a good deal which, as he anticipates, will be found "beside the point, or at best a harmless form of theoretical diversion." Take for example the long analysis of the shop-window functions of the State, finally to strip it of "sovereignty" and leave it only its "co-ordinating" and "coercive" functions. And Cole is very decidedly "beside the point" when, in discussing Marxian theory (p. 156), he sorrows over "its persistent identification of the economic structure with society as a whole," or (p. 199) regrets its "deadening determinism." Having exposed this mechanistic bogey, he puts forward a middle way between the "mechanism" and "organism" views of society as his own contribution to social theory; and despite many suggestive sentences throughout the book his theorising does not bring us much forrader. His "functional democracy" is workshop control in fashionable clothes; and his emasculated "permanent" State is a relic from the Fabian lumber-room.

He is at his best when, as in *Chaos and Order in Industry*, he is discussing the bankruptcy of the older social theories, or describing the new incentives which are moving men to-day. Very ably in this volume he reviews the present position of the movement for control in the mining, railway, engineering, cotton and building industries. He explains the Plumb plan of the American railwaymen, discusses the M.F.G.B.'s scheme (but has nothing to say of the alternative proposals of *Industrial Democracy for the Mining Industry*) and deals fully with the Shop Stewards' movement, the failure of Whitley Councils, the immediate impracticability of One Big Union, the future of the Co-operative Movement, and so forth. Description and comment are well combined.

But still, when he turns from immediate steps to ultimate aims, he shivers at the possible tyranny of organised producers, and urges the equipoise of Consumers' Councils (which are to fix wages) and ownership of tools by a reconstructed State. It is a queer obsession, this incapacity to envisage men and women, grouped as producers, as capable of performing the functions which, re-grouped as "the State," they can apparently manage with ease. And Cole, here as elsewhere, is at enormous pains and uses all his ingenuity to defeat beforehand a situation which ordinary good sense—let alone the "honour" he talks of so often—would never allow to arise.

M S.

MODERN TRADE BEGINS TO TALK

The Outline of History. By H. G. WELLS.
(Newnes. Parts 15 to 17 inclusive, 1s. 3d. each.)

Interesting as Mr. Wells' *Outline* has been, it becomes more interesting still now that it begins to approach our own times.

Part 15, after showing the important part played in European history by the Northmen, turns to the Crusades. Over the Crusades Mr. Wells bursts into enthusiasm:—"Here, for the first time, we discover Europe with an idea and a soul! Here is a universal response of indignation at the story of a remote wrong, a swift understanding of a common cause of rich and poor alike." But, alas! we are soon dropped back to earth, for, on the following page, we are told there were "baser elements" mixed with the flaming enthusiasm. There was the "cold and calculated scheme" of the Latin Church to subdue and replace the Byzantine Church; there were the freebooting instincts of the Normans clamouring for plunder; there were the trading interests of Venice and Genoa, and there was the rabble of tramps, fugitive monks, escaped villeins and bankrupts. Mr. Wells washes his hands of these, waves them aside and urges us to observe that the important fact is that the *will to crusade* (italics his) was suddenly revealed as a new mass possibility in human affairs.

Further on we learn how Europe's new-found "soul" expressed itself. The Crusaders quarrelled and fought among themselves, indulged in a pogrom of the Jews, and committed such excesses in Hungary that the Hungarians had to destroy them. Altogether one finds it difficult to be impressed by the "will to crusade," which seems almost indistinguishable from the will to fight, loot and grab. One would be more inclined to sum up the Crusades by saying that the appeal to free the Holy Sepulchre played much the same part as our recent war-cry about saving poor little Belgium; that the Crusades were intended, by those who counted, to protect the lands and trade of Christendom against the Turk, and to make possible additions thereto. (Though a comparison of results will show that defending the Holy Sepulchre did not return anything like the same high rate of dividend in the form of new territories as did our recent crusade on little Belgium's behalf.)

After a useful section on the rise of the Ottoman Empire, we are introduced to a chapter on the "Renaissance of Western Civilisation." We don't get very far, however, before we fall over this:—"Essentially the modern State . . . is a tentative combination of two apparently contradictory ideas, the idea of a *community of faith and obedience*, such as the early civilisations undoubtedly were, and the idea of a *community of will*, such as were the premature groupings of the Nordic and Hunnish peoples." That is a definition of the State to which I respectfully direct the attention of William Paul. The Biblical gentleman who built his house upon sand is now surpassed by Mr. Wells, who builds a State upon words!

It would be a great injustice to the *Outline* to suggest that it is a shadow-show of "wills to crusade" and States built on "community of faith and obedience." It is only when Mr. Wells stops to look round that he treats us to these ideological incantations. The chapter on the Renaissance teems with interesting facts and vivid pictures, and will be useful to any student, while the section and maps dealing with the discovery of America are invaluable. At the same time, the author does not do justice to the great part played by trade and industry in the intellectual development of Europe; and his description of More's *Utopia* as advocating a kind of *autocratic communism* is difficult to understand.

J. P. M. M.

The Class-Room Republic. By E. A. CRADDOCK.
(A. & C. Black, 2s. 6d.)

This is a stimulating little book. It records the methods and the results of two most interesting and valuable experiments in self-government in the school; and all who are interested in the new movement in child-education will rejoice with the author in the immediate and extraordinary success which attended his experiments and which so well justified his faith.

The school has the twofold purpose of developing both intelligence and character. The latter, however, can be formed only by the exercise of self-control or the self-formed habits of will: hence the teacher's work should confine itself to the former of the school functions—the imparting of knowledge and the development of the child's intelligence.

The author, taking his courage in both hands, put these theories into uncompromising practice, delegating all disciplinary powers, and surrendering all those functions whose object is the formation of character, to the boys themselves. The result surpassed all hopes and expectations; the time during which the experiments have been on trial has, Mr. Craddock assures us, been the happiest and the most fruitful of all his teaching experience. One hopes that this book may encourage other teachers who are seeking a more excellent way in school life and work to go and do likewise.

T. A.

An Outline Sketch of the Practical History of Europe in the 19th Century. By F. J. C. HEARNSHAW, M.A., LL.D. (Macmillan, 3s. 6d. net.)

The truth of the saying that the wider the period of history treated, the greater the safety of broad generalisations, is here clearly emphasised. The introduction, a vivid résumé of the course of European events from the fall of the Roman Empire to the eve of the French Revolution, can be accepted with few reservations, because of its very brevity and comprehensiveness. But as the book slowly climbs up to a more detailed treatment of Europe at the close of the recent war, a very definite point of view begins to be made manifest. Prof. Hearnshaw does not

hide his partiality for the "enlightened and increasing middle-class excluded from all direct political power," which fought the feudal aristocracy in 1789, with the aid of the "immense silent force of a slowly advancing proletariat."

The treatment of the various middle-class revolutions of the 19th century is adequate, and much valuable information may be gleaned from the detailed discussion of the innumerable nationalist wars of the period, when the capitalist nations were settling their boundaries to suit the economic requirements of the industrial era. The reader is told how the "erroneous and dangerous dogmas of St. Simon, Proudhon, Marx, Bakunin and Sorel conducted the eager pioneers of the 19th century proletariat into wildernesses of economic folly, and into wasteful battlefields of suicidal class war," and he is bidden to be content to-day, since "we are surrounded not by emblems of failing powers and falling capacities, but by innumerable evidences of the dawn of a new and greater Renaissance." (In which, of course, a working-class revolution is not included.)

F. P.

A TRACT FOR THE TIMES

Creative Revolution: A Study in Communist Ergatocracy. By EDEN and CEDAR PAUL. (Allen & Unwin, 8s. 6d. net.)

It is a pleasure to read this latest work of our friends the Pauls. We may agree or disagree with many of the views expressed, but the evidence on every page of wide reading, and the fact that the authors have no fancy for sitting on the fence, make it a real joy to follow their exposition. The propaganda value of the book is enhanced by the literary standing of the Pauls, which will ensure for it the notice of the literary periodicals of the capitalist Press. It may not reach the circulation enjoyed by Mr. Keynes' book on the "Peace," which appeals on account of the obviously immediate issues discussed, but it deals with even more important and far-reaching problems.

What is creative revolution? The ability to utilise a revolutionary situation by the application of new machinery of social control. The situation presented itself in Russia in 1917, and the energy of the proletariat plus the creative power of Lenin and his group utilised it to the full, with such success that the Left Wingers of other countries are apt to theorise blindly on the basis of Russian institutions. It is well to appreciate the lessons of the Russian Revolution and to profit in our propaganda from its experience, but (and that is the value of the Pauls' book) we must translate it into the terms of our own country's stage of development. It needs to be emphasised that not every word that proceeds out of the mouth of Lenin is hall-marked wisdom. One can appreciate his prophetic insight in general and yet maintain a critical attitude regarding details.

Such a chapter (x.) as that in this book on "Parliament or Soviet" is well worth the thoughtful study of every Left Winger. A certain glibness characterises our own side of the movement

as well as that of the Right Wingers. We, too, have a goodly proportion of followers who are only too apt to let the "phrase surpass the substance." The authors deal with the specious (and spurious) "argument" in favour of "any weapon" as a justification for wasting time on Parliamentary representation, their reply being that divided effort cancels itself out. It seems pretty obvious, for example, that a criticism of the State as a class instrument of oppression and repression is nullified for the average worker when the critic seeks to join or help another to join the Parliamentarians. The nature of Parliament is not altered by a change of *personnel*, and even if the aim of that *personnel* is the abolition of Parliamentary Government, its efforts would surely be more effective if directed to the forging of the new machinery of social control. The Pauls put forward a strong plea for concentration of effort on the creative side of our propaganda work.

Equally valuable is their discussion of "political" as opposed to "Parliamentary" action, and the reference to the Shop Stewards' movement in this connection is apposite. The latter is singularly ineffective within the organisation representative of its most active elements, the Engineers—an organisation which seems to grow in numbers in the degree that its industrial effectiveness decreases. Concerted "political" action by the enthusiasts of the Shop Stewards' movement might surely result in the A.E.U. becoming again a part of the advanced section of the Trade Union movement. Could not the intelligence which made our friend Tom Mann its General Secretary also secure this result?

The Pauls have a gift for simple, concise definition, and this is well shown in their discussion of the Soviet theory as opposed to Parliamentary or even Trade Union organisation. Plebeians are familiar with Ablett's definition of Sovietism as Industrial Unionism "with its working clothes on." One might say of this book that it is a discussion of Marxism with its working clothes on. It certainly is one which can be recommended to theorist and propagandist alike.

G.S.

DEMOCRATIC SOLDIERING

Military Discipline and Democracy. By E. THURLE. (Daniels, 2s.)

This book gives vivid expression to the recoil of a sensitive nature from the brutalities of war. Its contempt for armchair fighters is as marked as its sympathy for the individual soldier caught up in the Machine (the writer, by the way, is an ex-officer). But its appeal is chiefly to the emotions. Its suggested remedies for the evils it describes are pathetically inadequate.

The author considers war out of relation to its causes and imagines that by altering the terms of the soldier's service war itself would be abolished. He fails to see that as long as a number of capitalist governments exist, which represent the wills of different competing groups of exploiters, so long do we find the possibility of war, and so long will armies be kept disciplined and efficient

for the settling of rival claims. To talk of the soldier being a slave is hardly original, but the slavery of the soldier is bound up with the wage-slavery of the rest of his class, and exists side by side with it. His slavery, the horrors of war, and the degradation of the workers, can only disappear with the abolition of capitalism.

N. E.

A SIDE-LINE OF INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

The Working Life of Women in the 17th Century.
By ALICE CLARK. (Routledge, 10s. 6d. net.)

PLEBS readers are not likely to make the mistake of supposing the "Woman Question" to be a thing quite separate and apart from the class struggle. The questions of woman's economic independence and her relations with the other sex cannot be satisfactorily soived apart from the question of capitalism.

For those who wish to arrive at a better understanding of the basic causes of the problems confronting us to-day, there can be no more useful study than that of the period leading up to modern capitalist society. The 17th century saw the break-up of mediæval society, and the gradual extinction of domestic and family industry under pressure of the rising capitalist industrialism. This book is a valuable contribution to the study of that period. By means of an extensive collection of extracts from all kinds of public and private documents of the time a comprehensive picture is given of women's life and work in all grades of society, and the disastrous consequences to women of the rise of capitalist industry clearly portrayed.

When one compares the aimless parasitic lives of women of the upper classes to-day with the active, well-filled lives of "ladies" of the early 17th century, who ran businesses, managed estates and even took part in industry—often quite independently of their husbands—one ceases to wonder at the vague discontent emanating from women of that class, which so often finds expression in the divorce court, or in some form of hysterical fanaticism. And one is not at all surprised that working women should at last begin to revolt against their servitude, for upon them the heaviest burdens of capitalism have descended.

Centreing, as did industry in the past, around the home, the woman's functions—spinning and making clothes, growing the food, and baking and brewing for the whole household—gave her an economic importance comparable to that of the man. The married woman's position has now degenerated to that of domestic drudge. And the unmarried woman, forced to leave the home and its activities and to become a wage-earner, finds herself in a hopelessly inferior position to wage-earners of the other sex.

This book is a piece of careful research work, and sets forth the facts in a clear and lucid manner. The only fault we have to find with it is the price, which is anything but popular!

W. G.

Communism and Religion. By GUY A. ALDRED.
(Bakunin Press, 3d.)

Not the least of the achievements of Scientific Socialism is its historical interpretation of religion: an interpretation free alike from the prejudices of the supernaturalists and the equally unscientific Freethought school. This pamphlet is an interesting contribution to the subject. Here Jesus is placed in a natural setting, the son of a poor worker, bred in an ordinary working-class home of the place and period. He is treated neither as god nor myth; but as a high type of man with a generous impulse for the cause of social revolt. Although racially non-Jewish, his habits of thought were distinctly Jewish. He saw through the shams of political success, but his was the spirit of rebellion against the Roman Despotism. His followers sought to promote his message "not merely because of the heroism with which Jesus expounded it, but also because it defined their interest, and the nature of their opposition to the ruling class." The Christians claimed for Jesus that he was "a man, the Son of Man, the equal of the Emperor"; as much God as was the Emperor for whom the Pagan philosophers claimed divinity.

Only later did a Pagan-Christianity appear, clothed in ritualism, and slowly developing into "Christianity." The seditionist of Nazareth was denied, and the church found it necessary to assert his godhead. "The epic story of the life of Jesus became merged in the Christ legend." The phases this legend underwent are traced with a wealth of useful and painstaking detail.

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