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Cont
January, 1921

THE PLEBS

AGITATE EDUCATE ORGANISE

“We want neither your crumbs
nor your condescension, your
guidance nor your glamour, your
tuition nor your tradition.”

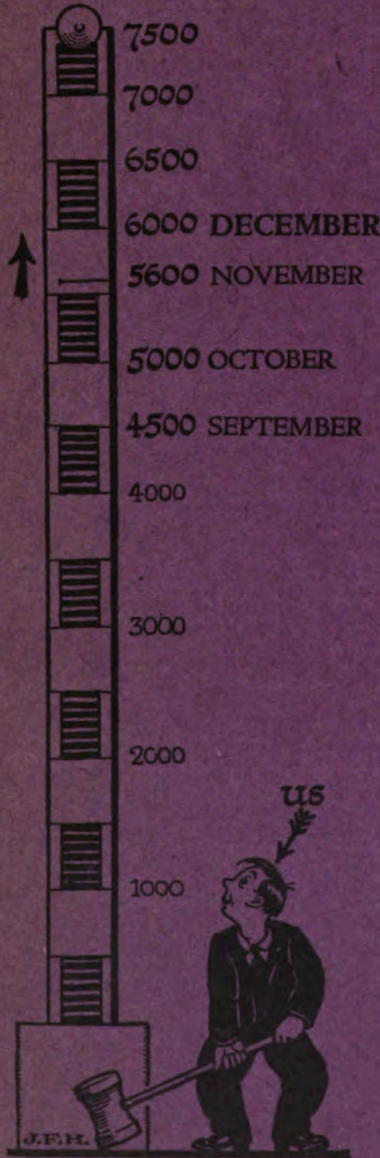
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THE PLEBS

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

Vol. XIII.

January, 1921

No. 1

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OUR POINT OF VIEW

(Which is Prejudiced, Partial and Partisan)

WITH this number of the PLEBS we begin a new yearly volume. We enter upon 1921 with brighter prospects than ever before. Our circulation is greater; the movement we stand for is gaining ground every day. That is because we are working *with*, and not against, the tide of social development. But let us remind Plebeians, as Marx himself reminded proletarians, that effort on their part is necessary if conditions are to be used to their full advantage. We are determinists, not fatalists. And the ultimate success of our movement depends on the personal energy and enthusiasm of every individual member of it. Our New Year greeting to every Pleb is—Are you doing your share? Or is undue modesty, self-distrust, or lethargy hindering you from being as useful as you could be? You and we have the honour to be co-workers in a big movement. Think about it.

If you are an old worker in that movement, and feel the need of some fresh inspiration; get hold of Wm. Mellor's new book, *Direct Action* (Parsons, 4s. 6d.), and read the chapter on "Education and the Class Struggle." It will help to reassure you both as to the vital importance of our Wm. Mellor's work and the measure of success already achieved. Since on the C.L.C. the once famous Coleanmellor "duo" broke up, the partners—always a somewhat strangely assorted pair—have moved farther and farther apart. Cole grows more and more adroit in maintaining his balance in the Centre of the fence, and more and more prolific in detailed schemes for future social arrangements. Mellor has come down with both feet—as his manner is—on the Left; and he is primarily preoccupied with the needs of to-day. His book beats about no bushes. It is plain and direct. At the outset, in his brief Introduction, we find him declaring that "this fundamental economic inequality . . . eventuates in a world whose people are sharply divided in morality, in methods of life, in outlook and in speech." And we are not surprised, therefore—though we are encouraged—when we discover that the conclusion of his afore-mentioned chapter on Education, in which the various real and so-called working-class educational organisations and institutions are discussed, is—"There can, I believe, be no question that the future is with the C.L.C."

* * *

With refreshing directness he goes straight to the root of the matter: "All that need concern us here is the question, 'On what assumptions do these educational movements work, and how do these assumptions square with the fact of the Class Struggle?'" Ruskin College, regarded from this point of view, is "neither fowl, fish nor good red herring. It lacks independence, and so long as it remains at Oxford it will be stifled by the Oxford atmosphere. What that atmosphere is only those who have suffered it can say." The W.E.A., in its origin "a humanitarian effort," accepts the viewpoint that "education is 'above the battle.'" Its oft-pleaded defence—that as a matter of actual fact its tutors are at liberty to see to it "that the type of education given is more revolutionary than would meet with the approval of the Board of Education or the Universities"—is shown to involve the throwing overboard of the "non-political and non-partisan" character of the organisation, and "the giving up of the pretence that education takes no sides." The C.L.C. Plebs movement, on the other hand,

is marching with the times and not against them; it is in line with events as they unfold themselves in capitalist countries, and it has seen that the only education that can be of service to the workers is an education that gives to them a grasp of their own position in society and an understanding of their mission.

* * *

Mellor's chapter is sufficient answer to Mr. Arthur Greenwood's recent assertion, in *Cambridge Essays on Adult Education*, that "in spite of the divergence of policy and method between these different agencies (the W.E.A. and the Plebs League) they possess a fundamental unity of aim and purpose." Such a statement could only be made by one who either deliberately shuts his eyes to the fact of the Class Struggle, or has never begun to grasp its significance. We are not cheered by Mr. Greenwood's—or any other W.E.A.-er's—flattering approaches. "Beware of the Greeks when they bring gifts!" We prefer the old

accustomed charge of "narrowness and bigotry." Then we can retort, with Mellor—

Rightly viewed such a charge is the greatest praise that can be given. Analyse it and it will be found to mean that the C.L.C. refuses to turn aside from the business of making the workers realise that "the rich will do everything for the poor except get off their backs."

* * *

Mellor's praise, however, is worth the more for being accompanied with one serious, and obviously sincere, criticism. It is a criticism

*Does the
Cap Fit?* which we have already done something to meet by our insistence on the need for Simplification, and for constantly trying our educational policy and methods by the test of

Practical Application. The C.L.C., says Mellor,

by its very insistence on the need for a biased education tends to give to its lecturers, and through them to its students, a curiously academic view of life. . . . *The secret of education surely lies in the power to relate what is learnt in the class-rooms to what happens in the streets.* To know Marx backwards and forwards may lead to a man's becoming an active and intelligent force for revolution; equally it may produce a prig of the worst possible type, who, faced with a problem of actual life, seeks its solution by an appeal to *Das Kapital*, and having quoted the necessary phrase, sentence or chapter, haughtily leaves the actual problem unsolved and retires in good order.

Can any one of us deny that there is ground for that criticism, or need to guard against this particular weakness? The besetting vice of the educationist—of any school—is that he becomes academic, that he tends to regard education as an end in itself instead of a means to an end. It ought to be unnecessary to warn Plebs, who stand for an education which is a very definite means to a very definite end, against this weakness. But it is not. And we can afford to thank Mellor for his criticism as much as for his praise.

THE BANNER OF THE "PROLET-CULT"

An article which introduces British workers to the great efforts being made by their Russian comrades to achieve a real proletarian culture. It is Independent Working-Class Education—not primarily in Marxian economics and history, for these are the weapons of the working-class in battle; and the Russians have won their battle and are about to enjoy the fruits of victory. Comrade Pokrovsky, a professor of history, a Marxist, and now Director of Higher Education in Russia, remarked on this difference in a conversation with a Pleb recently in Russia, and expressed his admiration for the work being done in Britain by the PLEBS and the Labour College.

TOWARDS the final victory of world Communism the working-class movement is marching by various paths. Born as a Trade Union and Co-operative movement, it has developed into a great political struggle. But the old world oppresses the proletariat not only politically and economically; it also holds the masses in spiritual slavery, subjecting them to the influence of a culture built up on the principle of "sacred" property and exploitation. Consequently, the international proletariat faces the problem, not only of taking political power into its own hands, not only of organising the anarcho-individualist economy of bourgeois society on a new Communist foundation, but also of overcoming this spiritual bondage to bourgeois culture.

Revolutionary Marxists always understood that Marxism was not limited to the political and economic struggle, but was a world-wide revolutionary cultural movement embracing politics and economics as its integral parts. But the political parties paid little attention to cultural work in the ranks of the workers, did not take it seriously, and examined its problems neither from a theoretical nor from an administrative point of view. The educational work attempted by political parties, Trade Unions, and other organisations ambitious to develop educational work, confined itself for the most part to the encouragement of "spiritual" culture. And to the extent that this was done uncritically, without adaptation to the specific tasks of the proletariat, the life of the proletariat was being bound by the forms of the past, reflecting the social characteristics of the bourgeoisie, its forms of thought, its emotions, its traditions.

In Soviet Russia this educational work has become a definite side of the Labour movement; a definite struggle for proletarian culture. Before the October Revolution, in consequence of the inevitable conditions of the Tsarist regime, the question was discussed only theoretically; to-day a living active organisation has been created—the "Prolet-Cult." It numbers over 300,000 workers, and this figure is increasing every day. Everywhere local organisations are springing up. But the "Prolet-Cult," like every other form of the Labour movement, will have effectiveness and meaning only to the extent that it develops into an international organisation; that is why the revolutionary proletariat of all countries must begin to create a "Prolet-Cult" for itself. The proletariat must create its own class culture, which, in the future, when Communist society has been built up and classes have disappeared, will become the culture of humanity at large.

The new movement, therefore, puts before itself as its aim, to introduce organisation—*i.e.*, consciousness and plan—into the fashioning of proletarian culture, the elements of which are arising spontaneously wherever ideas and feelings are developing on the basis of collective labour. The "Prolet-Cult" arranges its programme of activity in such a way that the proletariat can equip itself with new knowledge, express its emotions through a new art, and transform its social relations in a real proletarian spirit—*i.e.*, in the spirit of collective collaboration in labour.

The task of the revolutionary-cultural movement is twofold. First, it must enable the proletariat to become acquainted with the cultural heritage of the old world. Hitherto, political and economic conditions denied the workers access to that precious inheritance. The proletariat must accept the cultural attainments of previous generations, not like an obedient schoolboy, but critically, refashioning them in the forge of its own class-consciousness.

Secondly, the problem is one of cultural creative work, *i.e.*, of the re-organisation of science and art—poetry, painting, sculpture, music, drama, etc.—on the new proletarian Communist foundations. The proletariat must continue the work that was begun by Marx, extending it to all realms of knowledge and art.

In keeping with these general tasks, the "Prolet-Cult" puts forward definite principles in the respective domains of science and art.

Science is the tool by which social labour is organised. In the hands of the exploiting classes it was the weapon of domination and exploitation. In the hands of the proletariat it must become the mighty weapon of its social struggle, and of its struggle with nature; the weapon of victory and the tool of recon-

struction. All the data of science must be not only revised for the sake of practical completeness and exactness, but, first and foremost, correlated by one single method of utilisation, in order that men may attain a harmonious world-outlook. Scientific experience must be revised from the collective-labour point of view, and systematically explained and illuminated with reference to the conditions and requirements of proletarian struggle and constructive work. Through the Proletarian Universities, Scientific Academies, and the Labour Encyclopædia, in which the methods and achievements of science, re-organised from a proletarian point of view, must be particularly, systematically, fully, and simply explained, all branches of knowledge will receive the widest possible extension amongst the workers.

If science organises the experience of society by means of the syllogism—by logical deduction—art organises that same experience in the sphere of emotions and aspirations by means of living images—verbal, musical, in painting, in sculpture, and so on—in a form most accessible for the wide masses of the workers. Art, like science, must also become the property, not only of the upper strata of society, but of the whole people. It becomes, not merely a method of relaxation and amusement, but, equally with science, one of the most potent weapons for the organisation of collective forces. Consequently, it is natural that it must be saturated with the proletarian spirit.

In contrast to the art of the dying bourgeoisie, proletarian art puts in the foreground *content*, not form.

The "Prolet-Cult" is the cultural class-organisation of the proletariat, as the Communist Party is its political organisation, and the Trade Unions its economic organisation. Just as the party includes in itself, especially in the first stages of its development, only the political vanguard of the working class—those of its elements politically most intelligent—so the "Prolet-Cult" can at present include only the cultural vanguard of the proletariat. If the achievement of political tasks depended directly upon the majority of the proletariat, little class-conscious as it is, political policy would be determined by the level of that majority, and would not be a consistent expression of class interests and aspirations. Similarly the "Prolet-Cult" has to provide the masses with leadership in the cultural sphere.

The part played by sympathising but non-proletarian elements must be more than anywhere else *purely technical and auxiliary*. For the class-spirit and character of that work can be founded only upon a profound comprehension of the conditions of life and thought of the working class, which are difficult of access for those who come from without.

In its internal structure the "Prolet-Cult" organisation must be the consistent embodiment of the root proletarian cultural principle—the principle of collectivism—*i.e.*, of comradely collaboration. The actual forms of organisation in various countries will, of course, vary with social conditions. In Russia the "Prolet-Cult" exists upon the resources of the State, while in Western Europe it may be persecuted. One thing remains common to all. The "Prolet-Cult" is built upon the industrial proletariat, and the fundamental unit of the "Prolet-Cult" is the factory or workshop group. Out of such units are built the district, town, regional, and central organisations.

The sphere of activity of the Western "Prolet-Cults" will inevitably be wider than that of Russia. In Russia vast cultural work is carried on by the People's Commissariat for Education. Consequently, the "Prolet-Cult" carries on

creative work exclusively in academies—scientific, literary, musical, dramatic, and pictorial arts—and also in the “Proletarian Culture” clubs. In Western Europe the work undertaken by the Russian Commissariat for Education will fall within the sphere of the “Prolet-Cult.” Work will be more difficult and more complicated than in Russia, but the comrades must not hesitate in face of difficulties. We must create an international “Prolet-Cult” in order to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat, not only in the political and economic spheres, but also in the sphere of culture.

Let the clarion call, “Workers unite under the red banner of the ‘Prolet-Cult!’” resound through factories and towns—wherever the siren daily calls together the workers in their hundreds and thousands, and where, therefore, dwell the builders of the Communist Kingdom—the working class.

VALERIAN POLIANSKY

(Chairman, Central Committee of the All-Russian Council of Proletarian Culture)

WHEN J. H. THOMAS RULES

IN the world of labour the figure of the Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas looms large; and the Right Honourable gentleman, it must be said, feels his position keenly. Whatever may be the world’s interest in Mr. Thomas, there can be no doubt about the interest which Mr. Thomas takes in himself. Nor can he be accused of concealing the light of his self-interestedness behind a bushel. His outlook upon the world is inseparable from his inlook upon himself. It would, indeed, be a fearful thing, far worse than one of those “crises” from which Mr. Thomas saves the empire every now and then, if at the time of going to press with Mr. Thomas’ speeches or writings it was found that the type for the first person singular was not present in sufficient quantity to meet the abnormal demand. Happily such a disaster was averted when the time came to set up *When Labour Rules*. (Collins, 10s. 6d. net.)

The outside cover bears, it is true, quite an impersonal title and the emblem of something much bigger than any single man. But there are some men—of the calibre of Mr. Thomas—who make a practice of using big things for small ends. If he has intended in this book to make a big thing look small and a very small thing look big, he has at least succeeded in the first part of his aim.

It is a book which will in no way help Labour to rule. It is not written for Labour at all, but for those who live to-day on the proceeds of the unpaid labour of the wage-workers; for “that great and useful community, comprised of business men as apart from wage earners” (p. 155). And the author’s object appears to be the one of allaying “the instinctive antagonism of the average business man to the notion of Labour being in power” (p. 155). But one does not need to turn over many pages before it becomes clear that “the instinctive antagonism of the average business man” is better grounded than Mr. Thomas’ conception of what the rule of Labour involves.

In fact, there is no question of Labour ruling at all, in Mr. Thomas’ book. The title is a misnomer. “When Mr. Thomas Rules” would have been a much apter title. But this is hardly the same thing as “when Labour rules.” The “business community” need have no trepidation in the first event. For such a “rule” involves no economic revolution, and, therefore, no radical difference in

government. Mr. Thomas' rule differs at best only quantitatively from Mr. Lloyd George's Coalition Rule. There will be a little more leisure and wages, a little lower prices, a little more security of employment, a more "reasonable share in the decencies and comforts," but—"not luxuries, note—of life"! (p. 203). "Not luxuries, note!" Mr. Thomas is not a Daniel come to judgement; he is obviously better adapted for the rôle of Uriah Heep. Only, Uriah Heep spoke for himself, while Mr. Thomas' exalted egotism is acquired through the humiliation of other people.

Mr. Thomas is throughout at great pains to convince the employers that "our demands are reasonable," that "our objects are fair play all round" (pp. 203-4). Inevitably, he is compelled to assume the existence of the existing economic system "when Labour rules" in order to reason with the employers, whose standard of reason is based not on fine sounding abstractions about equity and justice, but on the concrete economy from which they derive their wealth. For them the "reasonable" is a taking for granted of the constancy of the existing order. All that threatens this is to them, in the nature of things, unreasonable.

Mr. Thomas, therefore, sets himself the impossible task of trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. He embarks on the fatuous adventure of harmonising the rule of Labour with the exploitation of Labour. And so he remains a prisoner—a willing prisoner—within the four walls of capitalist society. Of a theoretical conception of the most elementary principles of Socialist criticism, he has not the slightest inkling. The workers' troubles, the unrest, strikes and so forth are not necessary consequences of capitalist production, but they appear to him as the results of abuses of the system. We find him, as for example in his chapter on Finance, endeavouring to justify his standpoint by means of the most illusory distinctions. There is the good capitalist and the bad capitalist. There is the fleecing financier and the genuine financier, a distinction again purely quantitative and based on the rate per cent. From what Mr. Thomas has to say in this chapter on Finance alone, it is evident that he is thoroughly saturated with capitalist thought, and that what he sets forth as the rule of Labour is, in reality, the *rule of money*, two rules that are incompatible.

"Money must come from somewhere to make work possible." What a remarkable discovery! And if anyone should dare to ask where does money come from, or what makes money possible, let him be damned as an "extremist" with "a warped enthusiasm" (p. 156). If Mr. Thomas will take the trouble to ask any member of his organisation where he got his money from, he will soon find out the "somewhere," and thereby add to his all too meagre store of economic knowledge. There is this difference between the railwayman and the financier. The former works for his money, while the latter gets his money from other people's work. Mr. Thomas is not an "extremist" except in ignorance and in arrogance.

Having made this wonderful discovery that money comes from somewhere, he hastens to assert that it is only "this man with warped enthusiasm and narrow inspiration who wants to seize the nation's works and money and valuables and distribute them among his own kind. That is not a Labour programme. It is anarchy. And we will have nothing to do with anarchy."

It has never occurred to Mr. Thomas that he is really describing what *is*, and not what some "extremists" propose; that for a very long time now we have had this anarchy which consists in the seizure of "the nation's works"; that this

anarchy has to-day reached its highest pitch, and that it is Mr. Thomas who proposes to provide the conditions for its continued existence.

We have already mentioned the circles for whose consumption this book is intended. But in case it should fall into the hands of one of those who are to do the ruling, Mr. Thomas has found it necessary to interpolate here and there paragraphs or sentences which sound a little less capitalist in Labour's ear. That is the explanation of the numerous passages in the book which begin with a *pro* and end with a *con*. For example, on p. 157:—"The revolution we aim at is . . . the control of affairs. We want to control them—we mean to control them—because for too long Labour has been exploited for the good of the few."

Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Is Mr. Thomas also among the warped enthusiasts and narrowly inspired? But hearken:—"That does not mean that Labour wishes to exploit capital." And then we go on to read about the brave capitalists who risk their £100 in the South Seas, and in grocery stores and the like, who are entitled "when Labour rules," to a "reasonable return for capital."

Labour does not wish "to exploit capital." We hope "capital" is truly grateful for the assurance, whatever that assurance may mean. Does Mr. Thomas mean that Labour will not exploit the rolling-stock of a railway or the looms of a factory or the lathes of an engineering shop? Or does he mean that Labour will not exploit the capitalist? If the latter, Mr. Thomas will, perhaps, tell us how we can rob an empty nest. If Labour could exploit the capitalist, if the worker could do to the capitalist as the capitalist does to the worker, then the capitalist would have ceased to be a capitalist and have become a worker. If Mr. Thomas would stop to ask himself the question, why it is that he is the General Secretary of a Trade Union of railwaymen and not of a Trade Union of railway shareholders, he might soon begin to understand something of the problem of which he has not the slightest conception, and for the solution of which he can only offer, for the most part, meaningless phrases. It is the old story:—

When the concept is absent
There comes, at the right time, the word.

And in Mr. Thomas' case we may fittingly add the applicable aphorism of Thos. Hobbes:—"Words are the counters of wise men but the money of fools."

HARRY MARTYN

WELLS, WHISKERS AND WISDOM

We need not apologise for returning again to the subject of H. G. Wells' recent excursion into Marxian criticism. T. A. Jackson here answers Wells' query—"What is the Proletariat?" and suggests that Wells, of all men, should by this time know on which side of the struggle he is fighting.

IT is written that when a British naval officer of years and rank paid a duty call upon the Dey of Algiers, that potentate, angered at the occasion of the visit and observant of his visitor's professionally clean-shaven condition, wondered at His Britannic Majesty's rashness in sending upon such an errand a "beardless boy." "Had he known," retorted the officer (who was some bean' on his own quarter-deck, and not used to being called 'boy'), "that your highness estimated wisdom by whiskers he would have sent you a he-goat!"

Life is full of surprises; but who would have imagined that H. G. Wells, of

all people, would have troubled to earn for himself a niche beside that of the Dey of Algiers? He objects to Marx's beard! And because he doesn't like his beard, he is unable to read his writings—and knows he won't agree with them anyway! Some day he is going to demolish Marx, his words and works, in a book to be called *The Shaving of Karl Marx*.

And *this* from one of the few Englishmen fit to be called an intellectual!

That H. G. W. is capable of fun we knew from *Mr. Polly*. That his humour is sometimes apt to "short circuit," we have also noted. But we were not prepared for this heartbreaking descent "from the sublime to the Gor' Blimey!"

What a game we shall have if we adopt this Hirsute Interpretation of the Universe! Patriarch and prophet, Moses and Malachi, poet, pirate, and president of the Royal Academy—all will be erased from the Book of Fame by the iconoclastic razor. Peter the Apostle and Peter the Hermit; the Emperor Barbarossa and the emphatic Browning; Sir Thomas More (whose beard had "done no treason"), and Sir Hudibras (whose beard was "orange tawney"); George Russell (whose beard is as ample as his sympathy); and George Meredith (whose beard was as pointed as his wit)—all must go—along with Whitman and Ruskin, Kossuth and Mazzini, Garibaldi and Parnell, with Darwin, Hæckel, Marx, Engels, Bakunin, Kropotkin and Shaw—into the limbo of the Woefully Whiskered.

A fascinating subject this, of beards and the bearded. But—if only in return for H. G. W.'s handsome testimonial to the PLEBS—we must go on to see what we can do to help him in another matter. He declares that your Marxist can always be silenced by the query—"What is the Proletariat?" Let us endeavour to rid him of this delusion.

The term "proletariat" is, first of all, one of quantitative comparison. In the Roman Republic which gave birth to it the citizens were classified in accordance with their worth to the State, and military duties were imposed upon them accordingly. Those with sufficient taxable means to serve the State by putting at its disposal a fully-equipped mounted soldier formed the highest class; those only able to supply and maintain a heavily-armed foot soldier the next; and so on until a class was reached whose worth to the State was limited to the bare fact that they bred children capable of acting as servants to the richer members of the community. The word "proles," meaning literally "the begetters," gives the starting point for an inquiry into its significance.

But it means more than poor, needy and propertyless—although these things are all implied by it. The Roman Census was not intended to be the basis of philanthropic schemes; it was the basis of a political constitution which frankly gave all power in the State to the wealthy, and as these wealthy ones increasingly enlarged their possessions by the labour of slaves, so in proportion the propertyless freemen grew unnecessary, redundant, and (clamorous as they were from want) more and more of a barely-tolerable evil in the eyes of the official and superior class. In addition to propertyless, "proletarian" signified *subject* and *inferior*: a *qualitative* difference was added to the quantitative distinction.

Wanting a suitable term to signify the propertyless "lower orders" in modern society, Marx adopted the word as alike suitable and historically significant, because of this implication of natural social antagonism towards the ruling powers.

But Marx (and with him Engels) did not use the term merely in this general,

analogical and allusive sense. They gave it a categoric and technical significance.

As Marx uses the term "proletariat" it signifies a relation, an entity and a potentiality. His *Capital* (which has for its sub-title *A Critique of Political Economy*, and which, therefore, not only presupposes a general knowledge of that subject, but contains, perforce, those critical appraisements of the work of previous economists which Wells mistakes for irrelevancies) is priceless, because it lifts economics from the mists of metaphysics into the light of positive understanding. Economics to him was not a search for mystical absolutes which should decide who shall have riches and to whom they shall be denied. It was a sub-department of historical inquiry in which was investigated the specific mechanism of bourgeois society. He invented neither the term bourgeois nor the term proletariat—he gave to both a new significance.

He came to the study as a result of his study of history, to which he had been led by his professional study of Law. He found that "neither legal relations nor forms of state could be understood in and by themselves, nor explained by the so-called general progress of the human mind. They are rooted in those material conditions of life which are comprehended by Hegel (18th century fashion) under the name 'Civic Society'—and the anatomy of this society is to be sought in Political Economy" (Marx, *Critique*, Intro., p. 11). Surely nobody should be better able to appreciate this conception of economics as the "Anatomy of Civic Society" than the author of the *Outline of History*. Pursuing his inquiry into the science of the forms of wealth and the conditions of its production he was able to find a solution for a double problem—for, to speak the once fashionable jargon of the schools, the "Problem of a New Moral World," and the "Problem of the Labouring Classes." These which had been two things he made one—the Labouring Classes (in its full significance, the Proletariat) were, from their social position, their nature, and their composition, destined simultaneously to revolutionise the condition of the Labourer and usher in the New Moral World.

The term "proletariat" denotes a *relation*.

In making their livelihood together men enter into certain necessary and definite relations—relations which do not arise from their wills or whims, but which grow out of and correspond to the stage reached in the development of the material forces of production.—(Marx, *Critique*.)

In the existing form of society, when everything in its passage from production to consumption passes through the form of a thing for sale—a commodity exchanged for its monetary equivalent—the propertyless class, to gain the indispensables of existence, must first of all gain the money by giving in exchange the only saleable thing they possess—the work-power of their bodies. They will be able to do this only so far as there exist purchasers for this thing they have for sale. These in turn only buy (and by buying acquire the possessors' right of consuming) when they see or think they see a chance of profit on the purchase.

The proletariat, the class of modern workers who live only so long as they find work and who find work only so long as their work increases capital. . . . These workers, forced to sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition and all the fluctuations of the market.—*Communist Manifesto*.

The proletariat, therefore, is not only a class of persons who habitually work and by working produce, but a class whose relation to the production process is the subordinate one of commodities included in the general category of means of production.

But the term denotes more than a number of individuals who, each taken

separately, partake more or less of this relation of exploited sellers of labour-power. It denotes these in their inter-relation—as a whole, as an entity. "In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions which separate their mode of life, their interest and their culture from those of the other classes and which place them in an attitude hostile towards the latter, they constitute a class." (Marx, 18th Brumaire.) Their common interest as sellers gives them a bond of union for mutual defence and offence against the whole class of buyers of labour-power who confront them. And the more complicated and ramified the production process grows, the more the class of sellers-of-labour-power find themselves drawn into combinations and alliances despite local, immediate, and temporary differences of craft or competition; and more and more they develop a common culture and a common aspiration—in a word, a "class-consciousness." The proletariat is that section of society which increasingly develops as the polar opposite of the bourgeoisie (the buyers of labour-power) with its characteristic culture and its social standards.

I have said "increasingly develops." It will be clear to even the most elementary student that the wage-workers have as a class their own history. Capitalist production, growing as it has done from small beginnings in which personally supervised workshops develop their technique and expand into joint-stock enterprises, and finally into giant branch establishments of Big Business Combines, demanded, as the concomitant of its growth, a steady advance, absolute and relative, in the number of the wage-workers available. This was supplied (correlative to the rise of the big-bourgeoisie) by the defeat and proletarianisation of ever-increasing numbers of the little-bourgeoisie—the peasant and handicraftsman class—out of whom both big bourgeoisie and proletariat are differentiated. The technical characteristic of this class is that it produces personally with its own means of production and depends for its standard of living upon its ability to dispose of its products at prices sufficient to command a reasonable measure of comfort. Speaking generally, the small-bourgeoisie neither buys nor sells labour-power. It buys raw-materials as commodities, it sells the product of its own toil, and exploits only the forces of nature.

Over and above the proletariat proper are a number of sections whose position becomes more and more analogous to theirs. The semi-proletariat—the peasants and craftsmen who work part of their time for wages and part in small production for the market; the "black-coated" proletariat—wage-workers of a higher-grade whose greater technical skill and ability has been gained by a highly expensive education which, magnifying the relative cost of their production, enables them to command an enhanced price in the labour-market; the shop-keeper, the artist, the functionary—all these to the extent that they are exploited by the Big Bourgeoisie are antagonised by them. The general proletarian point of view becomes the point of departure for a transformed world-concept, and (irony of ironies!) among the most powerful allies of the proletariat in this work are the philosopher-artists who bombard the stronghold of the bourgeoisie from the pinnacles of its own culture.

The nature of modern society is such that the old orthodoxies must collapse on every side. Who is so completely a proof of it as H. G. Wells? Who better than the author of *The Time Machine* can tell us of the polar extremes of life and culture which bourgeois society begets? Who better than the author of *Tono-Bungay* has described the power of Big Business to snatch the substance of independence and security from the trade rivals to whom it leaves the form

only. Who better than H. G. Wells knows the empty futility of orthodox religion and orthodox anti-religion alike? We invite him to share our faith in the Undying Fire of revolutionary impulse directed by clear-eyed critical discernment—and he propounds us funny little puzzles about artisans going to look at houses that co-operative societies are building for them. Is a brick house a quarry because one of the “bricks” happens to be a stone? Is a man a vegetable because he happens to have a strawberry mark? Does a wage-worker cease to be, in general, a wage-worker because a particular combination of favourable circumstances have enabled him to buy his house accommodation in the lump instead of piecemeal?

We look to H. G. Wells for something more helpful than this.

THOS. A. JACKSON

REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS

By FRIEDRICH ENGELS

(Translated from the German by Eden and Cedar Paul)

FOREWORD

Early in 1895 there was published in Germany a reprint of Marx's *Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich* [*Class Struggles in France from 1848 to 1850*]. For this reprint Engels wrote a preface to show how the views held by Marx and himself 45 years earlier required revision in the light of subsequent history. His preface is here translated.

The title alone will suffice to indicate the topical interest of Engels' essay. The question of the hour is the question of Revolutionary Tactics. What such a man had to say upon such a subject can never lack interest. But not merely is the interest redoubled by the fact that we are now once again, for the first time since 1848, face to face with a world-wide revolutionary situation. It is increased yet further inasmuch as we who read in 1920 what Engels wrote in 1895, cannot fail to see that in certain respects his views of that year are now as obsolete as he himself then found his earlier views of 1848-50. The writing of 1895 is extraordinarily fresh, vigorous, and up-to-date. It bears no trace of senility, though Engels was hard on 75 when he wrote, and died the same year. But if “Time trieth Troth,” it is no less true that time trieth Socialist theory. If the Socialists of 1895 found it impossible to agree wholly with the Communists of 1848, still less is it possible for the Communists of 1920 to agree wholly with the Socialists of 1895. Once more, to quote Engels' own phrase, time has wrought her revenges.

It is impossible to discuss in detail all the points in which Engels' opinions of 1895 may require supplement or revision. Readers will form their own conclusions, in accordance with their own general outlook, about what he writes, for example, on Socialist participation in parliamentary electoral campaigns and in parliamentary life. To many of them it will seem that all this has been invalidated by the experience of the last quarter of a century. Most readers, again, will smile at Engels' jubilation over the steady growth of the Socialist vote in the elections to the German Reichstag; and will smile (a little wryly, perhaps) at the hopes he based upon the Socialist parliamentarians. The French were on the wrong road, such is Engels' teaching. The German method, the upbuilding of a great parliamentary party, is the one to follow. In 1920 we look farther east, and draw example and encouragement from Russia. Perhaps we, too, are mistaken. Upon us too, perchance, time will wreak her revenges. But we shall fight no less strenuously for our recognition of the inevitable limitations of human foresight. To each generation its own struggle.

E. and C. P.

WHEN the February revolution occurred, we were one and all, as far as concerned our ideas upon the causes and the course of revolutionary movements, under the spell of previous historical experience, and in especial that of France. For France had dominated the whole of European history since 1789, and it was in France that the signal for universal revolution was now sounded once more. Inevitably, therefore, our ideas concerning the nature and the course of the “social” revolution, the revolution of the proletariat, proclaimed in Paris in the month of February, 1848, were strongly coloured by memories of the

prototypes of 1789 and 1830. For this reason, when the Paris rising found its echo in the victorious revolts of Vienna, Milan, and Berlin, when the whole of Europe up to the Russian frontier became involved in the movement, when subsequently during June the first great battle for power between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was fought in Paris, when even the victory of their own class caused such profound consternation to the bourgeoisies of all lands that they turned for refuge to the arms of the monarchist and feudal reaction which they had themselves just overthrown—in these circumstances it was impossible for us to doubt that the decisive struggle had really begun, that it would have to be fought to a finish during a prolonged revolutionary epoch, but that it could end in one way only, in the definitive victory of the proletariat.

After the defeats of 1849 we were far from sharing the illusions of the ordinary democrats who rallied round the provisional governments of the future established *in partibus*. These counted upon the speedy coming of victory of "the people" over the "oppressors," a victory which was to be effective once for all; we, for our part, looked forward, when the "oppressors" had been overthrown, to a prolonged struggle between the conflicting elements now concealed in the bosom of what was termed "the people." The ordinary democrats expected from day to day a renewed outbreak of the revolution; we, as early as the autumn of 1850, declared that the first chapter of the revolutionary epoch had been closed, and that nothing more was to be expected prior to the occurrence of a new economic world crisis. . . .

Yet upon us, too, time wrought her revenges, proving illusory the views we then entertained. Nay, history went farther than this, for the march of events served not merely to trample down our errors, but served further to bring about a complete transformation of the conditions in which the proletariat has to fight. The campaigning methods of 1848 are utterly obsolete to-day, and this is a matter deserving closer study.

All previous revolutions have amounted merely to the replacing of one form of class-rule by another, and hitherto no dominant class has ever been more than a small minority in relation to the ruled masses. One dominant minority was pushed from its place; another minority seized the helm of the ship of State, and remodelled State institutions to suit its own interests. Invariably the minority that attained to power was enabled to do so in virtue of the extant conditions of economic development and in virtue of its own peculiar fitness to rule under those conditions. For these reasons, and for these reasons alone, the ruled majority had always either voluntarily participated in the revolutionary movement, or had at least adapted itself willingly enough to the changed circumstances. Abstracting the peculiarities of each particular revolution, the common form of them all had been that they were revolutions brought about by minorities. Even when the majority had co-operated, it had done so wittingly or unwittingly in the service of the minority; thereby enabling the minority to pose as representative of the entire people.

After securing its first great success, the victorious minority usually split up into two factions—one content with what had been already gained, the other anxious to advance farther, and formulating new demands really or ostensibly calculated to promote the interests of the masses. Occasionally, these more radical demands were satisfied. In many instances, however, the success was but momentary, for the more moderate party regained the upper hand, so that what had been won was lost wholly or in part. The gains of the first victory were

not made fully secure until there had been a second victory on the part of the more radical faction; thereupon, the immediately requisite advance having been made, the radicals and their followers disappeared from the stage.

All the revolutions of modern times, beginning with the great English revolution of the 17th century, displayed these characteristics. Like considerations appeared to apply to proletarian struggles for emancipation. All the more did this seem likely, seeing that in 1848 there were so very few with even an elementary understanding of the way in which the emancipation of the proletariat was to be secured. Even in Paris, after the victory, the proletarian masses were quite without definite ideas as to the proper line of advance. Yet there was a real movement, instinctive, spontaneous, irresistible. Was not this the very situation in which a revolution *must* be successful, a revolution led, indeed, by a minority, yet not this time in the interest of the minority, but in the real interest of the majority? Seeing that in all revolutionary epochs the masses of the people had lent so ready an ear to the plausible representations of progressive minorities, was it likely that they would be less accessible to ideas which were the reflex of their own economic position, which were nothing other than the clear and comprehensible expression of their own needs? Doubtless this revolutionary mood on the part of the masses had almost invariably been followed, and followed very soon, by a phase of depression, or perhaps even by a positive reaction, as soon as disillusionment had supervened. Here there was no question of illusions. The question was one of securing the real interests of the majority, interests not as yet fully understood by that majority, but speedily to be made clear to them, to be unfolded before their very eyes, in the course of practical achievement.

As Marx showed in the third of his articles on *Class Struggles in France*, during the spring of 1850 the development of the bourgeois republic, which had originated out of the "social" revolution of 1848, had led to a concentration of the real power in the hands of the upper middle class—a class inspired with monarchical sentiments. On the other hand, all other social classes, the peasants no less than the lower middle class, had joined forces with the proletariat, grouping themselves in such a way that not they but the proletariat enlightened by experience must prove the decisive factor in the situation. Was there not, then, every prospect that the revolution of the minority would be transformed into the revolution of the majority?

History has convicted us of error. It has shown that at that day the state of economic development on the continent was still far from ripe for the abolition of capitalist production. History has proved this by the economic revolution which has involved the entire continent since 1848, a revolution whereby large-scale industry has for the first time become firmly established in France, Austria, Hungary, Poland, and recently also in Russia, whilst transforming Germany into an industrial State of the very first order. All these changes have taken place upon a capitalistic basis, a basis which in the year 1848 was still susceptible of vast extension. Now it is this industrial revolution which has for the first time thrown a clear light upon class relationships; it is this revolution which has swept away a number of transitional phases deriving from an earlier period of manufacture, and in eastern Europe even from the old guild system; it is this revolution which has created a genuine bourgeoisie, facing a genuine proletariat living by large-scale industry, and has thrust these two classes into the foreground of social evolution. Thereby the struggle between these two

great classes, which in the year 1848 was carried on only in England, Paris, and a few great industrial centres, has been diffused all over Europe, and attained an intensity inconceivable in 1848.

[*Class Struggles in France* was a series of articles published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in 1850, and was reprinted in book form by *Vorwärts* in 1895. *The 18th Brumaire* was a brief recapitulation of the events dealt with in *Class Struggles*, written for publication in an American-German monthly.—E. and C. P.]

(To be continued.)

THE PLEBS ANNUAL MEET

Please read this carefully

WE print below the preliminary draft Agenda for the Annual Meet, to be held at Bradford on Saturday and Sunday, February 12 and 13. Branches and individual members are urged to forward amendments or additional resolutions to the Hon. Sec., Plebs League, not later than January 15, for inclusion in a full Agenda in the February magazine. (Amendments or resolutions must be moved by not less than two individual members.)

AGENDA

SATURDAY, 2.30 p.m. to 7 p.m. (with half-hour tea interval):—

- 1 Chairman's Address
- 2 Secretary's Report and Balance Sheet
[If possible this will be printed and circulated among League members before date of Meet.]
- 3 Editor's Report:—(a) Magazine
(b) Textbooks
(c) Pamphlet, Reprints, etc.

- 4 Resolution, to be moved on behalf of Executive Committee:—"That the following clauses be substituted for those at present under the heading 'Methods and Management' in the Constitution of the League:—

SUBSCRIPTION: Each member shall pay 2s. 6d. to the Central Fund of the League; subscriptions to date from January to December.

BRANCHES: Individual members shall, wherever possible, form branches. Every such branch to be responsible for its own expenses, and to have a voting strength at the Annual Meet according to its membership. The work of a branch shall be to promote the establishment of classes in social science, and, when and where such classes are established, to assist in the maintenance of a genuine working-class educational policy; to arrange for propaganda on the aims and objects of the League, by public meetings, visits to T.U. branches or other working-class organisations, press controversy, or any other method; to push the sales of the Magazine and other Plebs publications; and to report to the E.C. on the activities of our own or other educational organisations.

ANNUAL MEET: An Annual Meet of members shall be held, at a convenient centre, in the early part of each year. Any alteration of the constitution shall be raised by resolution at the Meet, and decided by postal ballot of all members taken afterwards.

ADMINISTRATION: The administration of the League shall be in the hands of an E.C. of seven members, meeting monthly, with, in addition, the Hon. Secretary and Editor of the Magazine. These all to be nominated [by not less than two individual members] a clear week before the date of the Annual Meet, and elected by postal ballot of individual members, to be taken immediately after the Meet.* The E.C. are empowered to decide on the practical application of the aims and policy of the League, and to enforce same where necessary."

* Please note that this alteration of the time of election of the E.C. (from August to February) involves the carrying on of the present E.C., elected last August, until February, 1922.

5 Resolution, moved on behalf of the E.C.:—

"That the E.C. be empowered to grant permission to educational organisations in other countries, with similar aims, to affiliate to the League on payment of 20s. per hundred members (or part thereof). Such affiliated bodies to have the rights of agency for Plebs publications, use of League badge, etc., if so desired."

SUNDAY, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. (with half-hour interval).

6 Report on Provincial Classes, and resolution on Class Organisation, etc.: Discussion.

7 Any other business.

Will all members who intend to be present at the Meet please write to

Mrs. A. COATES,

141 Girlington Road,

Bradford,

before February 5, to say exactly what they require as regards accommodation? Bradford comrades have offered hospitality, but this is limited. Tea on Saturday, and light refreshments on Sunday, will only be provided for those who have previously notified Mrs. Coates.

Let's have a gathering of the clans!

TEN-MINUTES' TALKS WITH NEW STUDENTS

III.—SCIENCE, THE LADDER TO LIBERTY

DURING the Middle Ages the people of Europe were continually visited by virulent plagues. Sometimes scarcely a home escaped. On one occasion as much as a quarter of the population was swept away. Generation after generation suffered as previous generations had done before, and no one seemed able to find any remedy. At last it was discovered that filthy bodies, filthy houses and filthy streets served as a breeding ground for the diseases which played such havoc with human life, and once men got that knowledge, it was an easy matter to prevent the recurrence of plagues. The problem of plagues was solved by the science of sanitation.

To-day the workers suffer from another kind of plague—the plague of poverty. They suffer from bad houses, shoddy clothes, ugly and uncomfortable furniture and monotonous lives. The problem they have to solve is the problem of poverty.

What science will solve that problem? "Science?" say some workers sceptically, "all that's wanted is common-sense." But common-sense is a poor staff to lean on. Common-sense told mediæval men that plagues were caused by the wrath of God. Common-sense told mediæval men that the sun and moon were of the same size—one could see that they were, therefore, common-sense said they were! Later still common-sense told men that iron ships could not float. Common-sense was wrong. Common-sense, like the seaside donkey, won't carry us far. Common-sense alone would not enable a man to produce a single steam-engine though he were given a locomotive works packed with tools and raw material. What he'd require would be science—engineering science.

But what is science? The dictionary says it is "systematised knowledge." Science tells man (1) what has happened, (2) why it has happened, and (3) what, therefore, can happen. The business of science is to explain the world to man and so enable him to make the best of what the world offers. It tells him to build dams and use the force of rivers to drive his mills or generate electricity. It shows him how to construct glass houses that will enable him to grow tropical fruits in cold climates. Thanks to science, he can have ice-cream on a warm summer day and a hot-water bottle on a cold winter night.

The Boss takes a great interest in science. His problem is how to increase his profits, and he finds science an indispensable ally. He uses science to improve his machines and tools. He presses or compels his workers to attend technical classes. He establishes research departments manned by scientists so that they may make short work of the difficulties that crop up in his business. The Boss who doesn't take science into partnership soon disappears as a Boss.

If science helps the Boss to produce more, surely science can help the workers to get more of what they produce? It is true that *industrial* science, so useful to the Boss, won't help the workers to solve their particular problem. What they require is another kind of science. Theirs is not an industrial but a social problem; and the science they need is *social* science. The business of industrial science is to explain to the capitalist how he can get his workers to produce more. The business of social science is to show the workers how they can get more of what they produce. It has to explain why there are capitalists and wage-workers; whether there will always be capitalists and wage-workers; whether "the idleness of the capitalist is the source of all wealth"; what is the cause of unemployment; of high prices; why the British Government is squandering men and money in Mesopotamia, and why the workers vote the Bosses into the offices of the State.

All roads may lead to Rome, but only one road leads to leisure and comfort for the workers, and that road is the road of social science. If the worker's knowledge of economics, for instance, were half as well developed as his muscles, he would never need to hang about a Labour Exchange, nor wear patches on his trousers. The victory is not to the strong but to the intelligent.

J. P. M. MILLAR

ECONOMICS WITHOUT HEADACHES

W. McLaine, late tutor of the Scottish Labour College, here commences a series of chats on economics for beginners. Pressure on our space compels us to give only one section this month, but in future issues we hope to print two sections monthly, completing the series in this year's volume of the PLEBS.

I

ECONOMICS, or, to give the subject its Sunday name, Political Economy, has been well defined as "the science which investigates the nature of wealth, and the laws which govern its production, exchange, or distribution,"* and this will serve us as a good enough definition to work with. It should be noted that it is a *science*, and, before any department of knowledge can be so regarded, it must have behind it a mass of *certain knowledge* (as distinct from speculation) and must be based upon truths ascertained by observation and experiment. Many of our present-

* Mrs. Fawcett, *Political Economy for Beginners*.

day politicians have forgotten—if they ever knew—that Political Economy has its laws just as mathematics has, and so they are, and have been, guilty of some of the most amazing blunders possible to imagine.

If Political Economy investigates the nature of wealth, its production, distribution, etc., it is obviously a subject of first importance to the workers—the wealth-producers—and yet it so happens that they are just the people for whom no provision for the study of the subject is made. The only places where the subject forms part of the curriculum are the Universities, and the workers do not go there, for obvious reasons. The Political Economy taught at the Universities is that kind which is favourable to a continuance of the present social order; that is to say, profit and capital are spoken of, analysed and discussed always after the premise that they are just and necessary has been accepted.

So we come to this: that the workers who produce the wealth of the world have no opportunities of considering the question of wealth production as a whole, except in so far as they have provided those opportunities for themselves in their independent working-class educational institutions.

In considering the business of wealth production, care should be taken to pay attention only to the ordinary things of life, such as boots, hats, bread, chairs, trousers, etc. Many a young student has been led off the track by those old dodges of the finnicked economist who always wants to know what determines the value of a painting, upon which an artist has worked for a year, but cannot sell for more than a few shillings, or how is the value of an invention determined, worked out in half an hour and subsequently worth a million. Do not discuss these special cases, they are the "fat ladies" of the economist's freak show; keep to ordinary goods in all your arguments and keep the other fellow to them also.

In present day society the processes of wealth production are usually carried on by companies. There is not much place to-day for the individual enterpriser, and in the future there will be still less.

Let us suppose that a company is about to be started for the extraction of shale oil from a Scottish area. The first thing the company will require is money. Labour may be the source of all wealth in a theoretical sense, but in capitalist society you don't get much of a move on unless you have some cash. In order to get the money the promoters of the company make an appeal to the general public by issuing a prospectus. What is a prospectus? It is a statement of what the new company proposes to do, what goods will be produced, where the factory or business will be situated, how much capital will be required, *what profits are anticipated*, etc. It is also a statement that applications for shares in the new concern are invited. If a number of highly respectable people are willing to place their names on the prospectus so much the better for the prospects of the business, and quite a number of good folk earn a living by lending their names for this purpose. I know harder ways of making ends meet!

I have emphasised the words "what profits are anticipated," because this point must be thoroughly understood. No company could start business if it merely said that its object was to produce goods of a certain kind. It must hold out reasonable prospects of some *profits*, or no money would be forthcoming. That in itself demolishes the idea that the capitalist, as such, is concerned with the production of goods as such; he must first feel sure that he is to have some profit.

Well, if the prospectus looks like a "good thing," if the people behind it appear to be sound (and not bucket shop or bogus company promoters), if the experts who have examined the property to be acquired, or the site to be worked, have reported favourably, the money will come in and shares will be allocated to first comers as long as they last.

Let us now consider these shares. We will assume that our company has a capital of £100,000, and this is divided into 50,000 £1 Preference shares and 50,000 Ordinary shares. Preference shares are usually guaranteed a fixed dividend. They are bought by the more cautious people—those who prefer a regular 6 per cent. or so, to a possible 25 per cent. or a possible nothing. The Preference shareholders have first claim on the profits. If in any one year there is only enough money made to pay the Preference people 3 per cent. instead of, say, 6 per cent., then they have 3 per cent. owing to them to be paid when profits are good. The ordinary shareholders are on quite a different basis. After the Preference shareholders have been paid, they get what is left. They may get a lot, or they may get nothing. They are the more speculative kind of shareholders.

There are all kinds of fancy shares, such as Cumulative Preference, Founders shares, and so on, but we will just stick to our two kinds.

I want every student to cut out a prospectus or two from one of the morning papers. There are plenty being issued just now—in fact, they are as plentiful almost as fallen leaves in autumn. Cut one out, *read it*, and keep it by you.

Next month we will follow our company a little further.

W. McLAINÉ

(To be continued.)

SOCIALIST CLASSICS

II.—"THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO"

ONE approaches the task of writing about *The Communist Manifesto* with some trepidation. For the *Manifesto*, small in bulk though it be, stands in a class by itself in Socialist literature. Not an idea of value is fermenting in the revolutionary movement to-day but can be traced in its few pages, if only in the germ. No indictment of a social order ever penned can rival it. The largeness of its conception, its profound philosophy and its sure grasp of history, its aphorisms and its satire, all these make it a classic of literature; while the note of passionate revolt which pulses through it, no less than its critical appraisal of the forces of revolt, make it for all rebels an inspiration and a weapon. Well might even a hostile critic* say of it—"Though a man devote many years to the study of social theory, he will continue to find new, unexpected and striking truths in *The Communist Manifesto*."

To attempt in a few paragraphs to summarise its contents would be foolish. It can be obtained so easily, and is so eminently readable, that to do so would in truth be "carrying coals to Newcastle." What we may profitably do is to consider the *Manifesto* in the light of events which have transpired since it was written, and so form an estimate of its present worth.

* Werner Sombart, *Socialism and the Socialist Movement*, p. 53.

Written in the year 1847, by Marx and Engels, at the request of the International Communist League, many parts of it are of necessity antiquated, as, indeed, the authors point out in the preface to a later edition. In particular, sections iii and iv, dealing with contemporary Socialist literature and the relation of the Communists to opposition parties, are now only of historical interest. The march of time has also rendered obsolete the tactical proposals at the end of section ii.

But the first portion, treating of the development of the modern capitalist class and its counterpart the proletariat, is still the best and most convincing exposition of the Marxian point of view, and well repays the time spent on reading and re-reading it. Here for the first time the world learned of that conception of history by which the study of social development matured into a definite science. The Materialist Conception of History runs through the historical part of the *Manifesto* like a golden thread. The transient nature of capitalist society is emphasised, and in contradistinction to Utopian Socialism—the *rights* of the workers are shown to be in accord with their social *responsibilities*.

To those who suffer under any social system is allotted the task of changing it, for they, and they alone, are stung to revolt by its injustices. But want and misery alone do not make for revolution. There must also be present either actual means of amelioration, or potentialities of such sufficiently developed to be recognised. The will to revolution is abortive without the means to give that will effect. Marx points out that the means to end capitalism have been supplied by modern industrial development, and that this development has been the historic purpose of the capitalist epoch.

Previous revolutions in human history were essentially "minority" revolutions, because the revolting elements were not welded together by any permanent identity of interests, but were allied solely by a common hostility to a dominant class; and as soon as the latter was overthrown the class distinctions within the revolting elements came to the surface, thrusting the lowlier classes into what was revealed to be simply another form of economic servitude.

It could not be otherwise. Property was so widely and diversely distributed that a simple alignment of society into two opposing groups was impossible. A successful revolution directed against private property is only possible where property is so centralised that the subject class is able to see in the ruling class simply a personification of private property. The mechanism of capitalist production has accomplished this by destroying private property already for "nine-tenths of the population." Consequently, the next revolution, the Social Revolution, will have for its main object the destruction of "all private property relations," and with this, the "division of society into classes will come to an end."

The *Manifesto* affords the best example in political literature of the combination of theoretical principles with tactical needs; and because tactics must always be sought in the conditions immediately at hand, the *Manifesto* is to-day tactically valueless, except in so far as persistent stress on first principles is of tactical importance. Like all historic documents, it is at the mercy of the march of time. It did not attempt to take its stand upon any "eternal" principles, but based itself on the shifting scenes and fleeting forms of the society in which it had its birth. The extent to which the theories outlined in the *Manifesto* are still true of society to-day is the proper measure of the long-sighted penetration of its authors. If the value of a theory depends upon the time it endures,

then one can say that the *Manifesto* is a permanent contribution to the science of society.

Nevertheless, we should be misunderstanding the spirit of its authors if we attempted for one moment to give its findings the rigidity of a dogma or to make it anything like a touchstone for all time. Its limitations, though they be the ones to which all science is subject, are very real ones. It was circumscribed not so much in what it said as in what it was unable to say. We shall be paying its authors the highest tribute possible if we recognise this fact, and take up the task where they perforce laid it down. And how better can we gain inspiration than by turning to the *Manifesto* they penned three-quarters of a century ago, and catching some of the fire which still glows in its pages?

ANEURIN BEVAN

GEOGRAPHICAL FOOTNOTES TO CURRENT HISTORY

III.—TRANSCAUCASIA



ACCORDING to a Moscow wireless message received Dec. 6, a Revolutionary Committee has established itself as the Soviet Government of Armenia; or, in the words of the headlines, Armenia has "gone Red." A few weeks earlier the attention of British workers was directed to the same part of the world by the "official" visit to Georgia of a number of prominent Second Internationalists, among them Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mrs. Snowden, and by the glowing accounts they published on their return of the entirely ideal, non-Bolshevik, Socialism existing in that state. (It was on the occasion of this visit that a *Daily Herald* leader-writer made good his claim to immortality by observing "Everything is speeches down in Georgia.") A few geographico-historical notes on these South-Eastern Russian border states will, therefore, be timely.

Our map shows the Russian Caucasian frontier previous to 1914. The

Empire of the Tsars, in the course of its long struggle with the Turk, had pushed its boundaries south of the Caucasus mountain barrier during the 19th century. The economic importance of this region depended mainly on the oil wells of the Baku district. Oil was shipped to the interior of Russia by way of the Caspian Sea and thence up the great Volga river. It was also exported to Central and Western Europe; and to facilitate this—the Caspian being an inland lake—a great pipe-line was constructed across the Caucasian Peninsula to the port of Batum, on the Black Sea, whence it could be shipped either via Danube or Mediterranean to its destination.

Russia went Red. And the rest of the world was eagerly looking for oil. Small wonder, then, that the claims to independence of these small trans-Caucasian states received favourable consideration from the Western Powers. We were invited to sympathise with "gallant little Azerbaijan." A British force, operating from Persia, saw to it that Baku was made safe for democracy. Armenia and Georgia, too, were ungrudgingly allowed full self-determination and so the pipe-line was made safe for democracy, too!

But Azerbaijan went Red. And—Denikin, having been pushed back hundreds of miles from his temporary grip on the Volga—Baku oil once more went to Russia. The Turkish nationalists meantime refused to sit down quietly in the station of life to which it had pleased the Allies to call them. They attacked Armenia. And now Armenia has gone Red also, and concluded peace with the Turks, who are already allies of the Soviet Government. Georgia remains (at the time of writing) a little island of Democracy—a chaste pink amidst the advancing tide of Red.

A sentence or two from a recent article by Radek will bear quotation:—

The journey of the delegation of the Second International to Georgia coincided with the beginning of negotiations between the British Government and the Government of Georgia as to a loan to the latter. Georgia has very little to offer as a security for such a loan. Its manganese deposits are, in the opinion of British financiers, an insufficient security, and the British Government asks as an equivalent that Batum be given it on a lease.

The British require Batum as a base against the Turks, and as a post for the conquest of the Caucasus, and, above all, of Baku. With Baku once more in their hands they hope to get rid of the centre of Bolshevik agitation in the Near East, and at the same time to cut off Soviet Russia from the sources of oil. It goes without saying that such an elaborate operation cannot be undertaken without political spadework, and it is this spadework that the delegation of the Second International was doing.

At Mr. Lloyd George's direction the statesmen of the Second International

go out and prepare the ground for the attacks of British imperialism. Their trip to Tiflis was only the first step on this road.

Truly, a belief in "Wilsonism" leads one on strange errands!

J. F. H.

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ENGELS

DEAR COMRADE,—With reference to the character sketch of Engels by R. W. Postgate in December PLEBS, I should like to ask him to supply us with the sources from which his estimate of Engels' character was derived. I am not particularly anxious to defend the current view, but must confess that, so far as the material that has come under my notice goes, there seems to be abundant evidence against the Postgate Engels. MYCHEL

R. W. POSTGATE writes: The Archangel Mychel is rather esoteric in his references, both to the "Postgate Engels" and to the "abundant evidence," which, he says, he has up his sleeve. If he is objecting to my statement that Marx was the master-mind and Engels the assistant, I would ask him if he calls himself a Marxist or an Engelian?

Probably he disagrees with me for saying that Engels was an exacting friend and a bitter enemy. If he can give me evidence against this rather bitter twist to Engels' mind I will be very glad indeed; meanwhile, here are a few indications which I have gathered hastily when unable to reach reference libraries:—

Hermann Jung's statement to the British section of the International, January, 1873, supported by Eccarius, Weston and Hales. He describes how Engels induced Marx to form a cabal within the General Council and the appalling quarrels that this led to. (I have no room for the full text).—The whole brochure, *L'Alliance de la democratie Socialiste*, written by Engels and Lafargue. There are numerous inaccuracies there, but the tone is the main thing. If Mychel looks it up, I think he will agree that it could only be written by a man who had totally lost control of his temper—I pick out one or two expressions about the Swiss revolutionaries quoted in Guillaume's *L'Internationale*, vol. 3: Dirt; filthy; police spies; corrupt elements (die faulen Elemente) grafters (fripouille). These all on two pages—Marx's *Confidentielle Mittheilung* to Kugelmann (March 28, '70) is an obvious example of Engels' influence. I refuse to believe that this cold and virulent slander of Bakunin is Marx's—Hyndman's *Record*, etc., ch. xvi. He gives instances of Engels' jealousy and influence over Marx which are so definite that there is either (in spite of his dislike of Engels) a foundation for them or else he is deliberately and circumstantially lying, which is an accusation I hesitate to make—Guillaume's *Internationale*, vol. 3, is full of incidents in which Engels is alleged to have shown a violent animus against his opponents on the General Council—*Memoire de la Federation jurassienne*, p. 236, explains their opposition to Marx on the ground that Engels and he were seeking to dominate the English Council and the General Council.—Liebknecht's comments on Engels' interference in the German Unity negotiations, quoted, I think, in Bebel's life.

As I write this I hear on the authority of a friend—a Labour College man—a story said to come from the Marx-Engels correspondence.

Engels wrote that his wife was dead. Marx replied with a few words of sympathy and went on to ask for money, as he and his family were actually starving. Engels, thinking Marx not sympathetic enough, replied that apparently his friends thought him only a sponge and sent nothing. A fortnight later he recovered his temper and sent money. Only a very touchy man would let his best friend starve for a fortnight for a fancied slight.

The essential point for me is this: That we must not deny the whole of Marx's teaching and become the vulgar sort of romanticists, making gods of our leaders. It is Marx's and Engels' *thought* that is great; we must insist on that and not try to make them tin-pot heroes.

EVOLUTION

DEAR COMRADE,—I return to London from a lecturing tour to find that in your December issue some anonymous youth has been fleshing his pen very resolutely in my literary flank. I pass over his weird catalogue of my "errors," and even in regard to my "blindness" will be content to say that, since the only specific instance of it given is that I do not see that "the human race has seen no appreciable increase in intelligence since the close of the Old Stone Age," I trust I shall remain blind to the end of the chapter.

I think that is the gem of the amateur criticisms which relieve my heavy days, though it is, perhaps, invidious to discriminate between your reviewer's scintillating and original aphorisms. However, what I ask your permission to state is that the very small work in question is not only of the most elementary description, but one of its chief aims is to show evolution as a basis of the most advanced social idealism. My many friends amongst your readers may be relieved to know that I have not, as the reviewer rather suggests, fallen from economic grace in my old age.

JOSEPH McCABE

[We are not at liberty to quote the name of the "anonymous youth" who reviewed Mr. McCabe's book for the PLEBS. But as Mr. McCabe himself makes the invidious distinction between "amateur" and "professional," we feel justified in mentioning that the reviewer happens to be a "professional" biologist of some reputation. In this case the epithet "amateur" happens to apply to the author of the book reviewed rather than to the reviewer.—Ed., PLEBS.]

PROPAGANDA: WHOSE?

DEAR COMRADE,—"Sentinel's" letter in your December issue reminded me of a leaflet, headed "Reminders. Direct Action. What do Labour Leaders Say?"

It consists of extracts from speeches by Henderson, Clynes, Appleton, Thomas, Brace, Sexton and Tillet, expressing opinions against the use of the strike weapon for so-called "political ends." The copy I obtained was enclosed in a *Daily Mail* delivered by W. H. Smith and Son at a house in Ealing, about the time, if I remember right, of the "Direct Action" Controversy in 1919. It claims to be "Issued by 50 Parliament Street," "Printed by Harrison and

Sons, 45-47 St. Martin's Lane, W.C.2," and "Distributed by W. H. Smith and Son."

Yours fraternally,

LONG JIM

DEAR COMRADE,—I believe that *The Red Plot*, the pamphlet mentioned in your footnote to "Sentinel's" letter, emanates from The People's League, Adam Street, for information about whom see the recent I.L.P. Information Committee's pamphlet, *Who Pays for the Attacks on Labour?*

Yours fraternally,

D.

OUR LONDON CIRCULATION

DEAR COMRADE,—With twenty-three educational committees working in London there is

ample scope for developing the sales of the PLEBS.

We ought to have at least one group in each area. But the really important thing is to have a recognised PLEBS shop in the principal districts, where parcels could be sent and sales organised.

In North London this has already been done. The bookshop at Liberty Club is being used as headquarters, and since the PLEBS went up to 6d. sales have been increased from six copies to ten dozen this month (January). If other districts worked on similar lines the London circulation alone would more than suffice to send the total PLEBS figure up to 7,500.

Yours fraternally, SENTINEL

STUDENTS' PAGE

Q. (1)—*Does the buying and selling of a commodity add to its value? Is the employee engaged in such work exploited?*

A.—The value of a commodity is created in production, and only realised in circulation. "Commercial capital . . . creates neither value or surplus value, but promotes only their realisation and thereby the actual exchange of commodities, their transfer from one hand to another, the social circulation of matter." Thus Marx (Vol. III, p. 331) on the merchant. Concerning the banker, he says (p. 372 *ibid.*): "This purely technical labour of paying money and receiving money constitutes an employment by itself, which necessitates the making of balances, the balancing of accounts, so far as money serves as a means of payment. This labour belongs to the expenses of circulation; it does not create any values."

The point will be quite clear if we imagine a house changing hands five or six times. Whatever happens to the price, no value is added to the house by such transactions. It is not a case of the "middleman" exploiting the consumer as is often alleged. The surplus value is already embodied in the commodity when the circulating capitalist takes it from the industrialist, and the merchant in realising that part of s.v., which the industrialist foregoes to obtain a speedy turnover, only gets the average rate of profit on his capital.

But shop assistants, clerks, salesmen and similar employees are exploited. Again, Marx's own words (Vol. iii, p. 353) cannot be improved upon: "The commercial labourer does not produce any surplus value directly. But the value of his labour is determined by the value of his labour-power, that is, of its cost of production, while the application of this labour-power, its exertion, expression, and consumption, just as in the case of every other wage-labourer, is by no means limited by the value of his labour-power. His wages are, therefore, not necessarily in proportion to the mass of profits which he helps the capitalist to realise. What he costs the capitalist and what he yields for him are two different things. He adds to the income of the capitalist, not by creating any direct surplus-value, but by helping him to reduce the costs of the realisation of surplus-value."

Imagine an individual producer who has carried his goods into the market. He certainly would not think he was creating value if he had to stand hour after hour vainly awaiting a customer. (Fairs were an attempt to mix pleasure with this unproductive labour.) Again, if that producer went to the trouble of keeping accounts he would not count the time spent with his note-books as value creating. This typifies the modern work of the merchant and banker, which does not change in its nature when they employ wage-earners as their agents in this unproductive work.

Q. (2)—*A Lancashire reader sends along a cutting in which over-capitalisation of the cotton industry is suggested as a part cause of the present slump, and he asks whether it is actually one of the main contributing factors.*

A.—We do not think so. What may appear as over-capitalisation is capital values expressed in present prices. For example, a machine costing £50 six years ago may now be worth, say, £100, despite wear and tear. Those who benefit would be the sellers of the old capital values. Supposing that in future prices fall, then those who bought the concern at present prices would suffer the loss. The price of shares in such a company would go down. The natural wish of the new owners to get the average rate of profit on the enlarged unit would be of no avail.

The Economist (November 13, 1920) reports that at a meeting of the International Cotton Federation, attended by representatives of eight different nations, it was realised that depression was universal. America was not represented there, but *Daily Herald* (November 18, 1920) says that many American mills are making for stock and others running at only 10 to 80 per cent. of their capacity. Some more general factor must be found. It is not shortage of cotton, because American growers, while wanting to hold back for higher prices, are forced by tightness of money (potential capital) to sell at a price which in some cases it is reckoned will not give them their price of production. Not shortage of raw material, but warehouses crammed with finished commodities, must be the cause. The dropping out of certain markets, and disturbed state of others, are the factors. As ever, the capitalist will hold back as long as he can until the crash comes,

and the price of the commodity will not be determined by consideration for the over-capitalised concern.

Q. (3)—*Again from Lancashire:—Would the withdrawal of the E.P. Duty have resulted in a decrease of price, say, of the yarn and cloth in the cotton trades?*

A.—Not necessarily. The only indirect way in which its withdrawal might lower prices would be that the go-ahead firm anxious to use larger scale methods would no longer be deterred by fear of E.P.D., and the competition set up by

that firm may lower prices. The outcry against E.P.D. and the present attempts to evade it by claims for refunding are not for the sake of the consumer. The producing-capitalist cannot transfer the tax in an arbitrary way over to the price of the commodities. That is determined by competition, and, if that is absent, "by what the traffic will bear."

We have to acknowledge receipt from various correspondents of several questions which will be answered in due course. M.S.

NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT

[Branch Directory unavoidably held over.]

The Secretary's apologies are due to all who noticed last month that the county town of Somerset had removed to Devon. The Sec. has now ascertained—assisted by several kind friends—that Taunton is still in Somerset; and the need for Geography, like Charity, to begin at home having been demonstrated, this correspondence is now closed.

Kindly note the definite announcement about That New Plebs Pamphlet on back page of cover. Let us have your orders in good time. And remember that he pays twice (so to speak) who pays up quickly.

The latest Plebs branch is LLANSAMLET, near Swansea. All Plebeians are urged to get into touch with Ben Thomas, who reports already a membership of eighteen. Congratulations and good wishes. The PLEBS circulation in S. Wales is to be tackled presently, and the formation of Plebs groups is essential for the success of a "circulation" campaign.

An interesting lecture list comes from BARRY Labour College Class, where A. E. Cook, reversing the usual procedure, commences with three lectures on Philosophic Logic, followed by four on Industrial History, and then nine on Economics.

WALSALL has a Plebs Class held every Sunday morning in the Labour Club. A series of miscellaneous lectures bearing on Working-Class Education have been given by Birmingham comrades, and it is hoped that a syllabus of further lectures will be ready for the New Year. Write Chas. Hindle, 3 Victoria Terrace, Rye-croft.

BURY branch secretary writes:—"We have just finished a course of nine lectures on Elementary Marxism, with Fred Casey as teacher. The success of the lectures may be judged from the fact that the average attendance was thirty-five. We have also been successful in starting a class in a neighbouring village with Com. C. Jackson, a young student who has attended Casey's classes previously, as tutor." Comrade Casey is concentrating on training promising students as lecturers, a practical aim which we hope class-tutors everywhere will think over.

The League branch at HALIFAX sends all its subscriptions (others please note!), and reports good progress with six classes in Halifax and district.

That MIDDLESBRO' comrade mentioned last month has got out another circular, reprinting J. P. M. Millar's second "Ten-Minutes' Talk," this time (bless him!) with full acknowledgements to the PLEBS. Just note—Millar's articles make admirable leaflets (typed or printed) for distribution at T.U. branches.

Mention of Millar—whose native heath is Edinboro'—reminds us that we have heard lately that Edinburgh and Glasgow are not the only places on the map of SCOTLAND; and that the Aberdeen, Dundee and Falkirk districts of the Scottish Labour College have now all got full-time lecturers. So may we take this opportunity of asking dwellers in those districts if they have never heard of the PLEBS, the one Independent Working-Class Educational monthly, and of mentioning that the PLEBS would be very glad to hear from them?

The Liverpool District Council has issued a new pamphlet, *Education and the Working Class*, by W. F. Hay (3d.; per dozen, 2s. 3d.; cash with order, from J. Hamilton, 99 Botanic Road, Liverpool). It should be in every propagandist's hands—and its forceful arguments in his head! We like Hay's story headed "Pithed." It's not a pretty story, but as a parable with a decided point it gets right there.

A new weekly feature at the Labour College this term is worthy of note by any class desiring a change in the ordinary programme—especially something to "bring out" likely students. This is a series of Book Talks. A different student, in turn, has been allotted a book, a summary of which he has had to prepare and present to his fellow-students. This is followed by questions and discussion. The feature has proved remarkably successful, and some lively discussions are expected on some of the books down for treatment in the near future. Try it! W.H.

GOOD FRIENDS

We have to thank the following comrades for recent donations to our General Fund:—

W. S. Bowden, £20; F. Maltby, 2s.; D. D., 1s. 3d.; F. Jones, 7s. 7d.; D. J. Thomas, 10s.;

F. R., 1s.; H. G., 2s.; F. Donaghy, 8s.; J. T. L., 2s.; F. E., 2s.; H. F., 5s.; E. Collins, 2s.; J. D. W., 4s.; Nell Casey, 5s.; L. C., 1s.; T. Pocock, 2s.; J. Johnston, 10s. 6d.; W. Dawson, 5s.; R. H. Purser, 10s.; J. L., £50; J. D. W., 4s.; J. Robertson, 10s.; W. J. Williams, 6s.; B. J., 1s.; G.

Bailey, 10s.; J. S. W., 3s.; W. G. Riding, 5s. 7d.; G. James, £1; W. Crawford, 5s.; C. W., £1 10s.; J. G. W., 10s.; J. A. S., 11s. 6d.; A. E. Cook, 10s.; W. J. Rowlands, 3s. 6d.; J. D. W., 5s.; E. B., 1s. 3d.; M. P., 1s. 9d.; F. O'D., 6s. 6d.; J. G., 6s. 3d., H. Tattersall, 6s. 4d.; J. C., 6d.

TRA LA MONDO

Esperanto Notes by Popolano

Teachers' International

AN Esperantist correspondent, writing to me from France, asks whether there is a Socialist Teachers' Union in this country. With regret I had to inform him that, so far as I knew, there was not, as teachers in this country are a little too "class conscious."

The same correspondent sends the programme of a Teachers' International recently started in France. The programme is printed below in Esperanto. Any "Plebs" school-teacher who is interested should communicate with the secretary:—E. Vittecoq, Instituteur, Sassetot-Bacquille, Seine-Inférieure, France. Probably the example of the International ex-Service Men's Union, led by H. Barbusse, has given the teachers a lead in the use of an international language.

* * *

Portugal

From *Laboro*, the organ of the Portugala Laborista Esperanto-Federacio, I learn of the arrest of the whole of the members of an Esperanto class in Lisbon held under the auspices of the Metallurgical Syndicate. The charge was that they were a secret society, as they were alleged to meet with closed doors. After three days in prison, their release was effected by the united efforts of the Metallurgical Syndicate and the Portugal Esperanto Society.

* * *

Russia

From documents handed to a member of the Labour Delegation as they passed through Saratov, it appears that an Esperantist Section of the Communist International has been formed. Its abbreviated title is ESKI. This very vigorous infant seems to be flourishing, having apparently succeeded in transforming a number of "neutral" Esperantist societies into ESKI groups.

The Esperanto societies in Moscow are installed in a large mansion formerly the private property of a wealthy man named Laputin. The head of this "Esperanto-Domo" is Sro. Evstifieff, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in the Cambridge Esperanto Congress in 1907. He was at that time a scientist living as a political exile in Geneva.

* * *

Nikolao Maslov (Kronstadt, 14/7/20) raportis:—"La Esp-a movado en nia lando disvastigas per la helpo de la Regno; sed tamen ankoraŭ ni ne havas E. gazetojn. En Siberio estas esperantista rugarmea regimento. Unu urbo havas straton nomata Esperanto. Ci tie ni havas centon da lernantoj."

Verkorekomendata

La Verda Kakatuo (The Green Cockatoo), unuakta groteskajo, de Arturo Schnitzler, havebla ce la eldoninto: Joh. Schröder, Kaiserstr. 10, Wien, VII. Prezo, 3 respondkuponoj. Tiu ci teatraĵo traktas pri sceno en la Franca Revolucio. Plebsanoj ankau satos *la Vivo'nde Zamenhof de D'toro Privat* (3s. B.E.A., 17 Hart Street, W.C.)

* * *

Edukista Internacio:—Programo.—"Celoj.—Cefa celo: prepari sistemon de racia edukado post internacia enketo.—Tujaj celoj: 1° pacifismo per publikigado de originalaj dokumentoj; 2° praktiko de l'internacismo.

"Projoj: (a) internacia revuo, *ekskluzive esperante* eldonata; (b) teknika dokumentaro; (c) eldono de naciaj porinfanaj literaturoj; (d) arango de interkorespondado, de internaciaj vojagoj, de internaciaj kongresoj de geinstruistoj, intersango de infanoj dum la libertempoj.

* * *

Ameriko:—La ciutaga gazeto *The New York Call* intencas publikigi serion de lecionoj pri Esperanto.

Rumanio:—La Transsilvaniakaj Banatasocialdemokrata partio en generala kongreso oficiale alprenis Esperanton.

REVIEWS

GRAVEDIGGERS—AND MASTER-BUILDERS
Bolshevik Russia. By G. E. RAINE and E. LUBOFF. (Nisbet, 1s. net.) *Terrorism and Communism*. By KARL KAUTSKY, trans. by W. H. KERRIDGE. (Nat. Labour Press, 6s. net.) *Die Wirtschaftsorganisation Sowjet-Russlands* [*The Economic Organisation of Soviet Russia*]. By Dr. A. GOLDSCHMIDT. (Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, Berlin.)

In the beginning of November, *Punch* published a cartoon inspired by the report that at the Proletarian School in Glasgow children were being taught a song with the

refrain "Digging the grave of the bourgeoisie." In a desolate landscape we see the mouth of a deep pit or shaft; peering into which, somewhat anxiously, is a Left-Wing British Labour leader, who speaks into the depths: "Comrade, what are you doing down there?" Voice of Russian from below: "Digging the grave of the bourgeoisie!"—British Red, with mingled pleasure and alarm: "Very nice, but how do you get out when you have finished digging?"—Voice from below: "You don't!"

The three volumes under review might all have been inspired by this text. Raine and

Luboff, like Mr. Punch, are frankly gleeful at this new exemplification of the old proverb, "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein." Kautsky is genuinely distressed at the impending fate of those who, for the first time in history, and against a world in arms, have maintained a proletarian government in a great State; if they will but be good children, if they will but abandon the attempt to maintain themselves by force, if they will but trust to peaceful persuasion, if they will but return to "democratic sanity," there is still time (he says in effect) for the bolsheviks to get the better of the chaos they have created, to climb out of the grave ere the earth is shovelled in to entomb them. But Goldschmidt, newly returned from Russia and writing more than a year later than Kautsky, sounds a triumphant note. He assures us that these Russian revolutionists are, indeed, grave-diggers, but are likewise master-builders; for, while digging the grave of the bourgeoisie, they are laying firm and wide and deep the foundations of the new order. Soviet Russia has, in his opinion, already been stabilised beyond the possibility of overthrow. It has been stabilised because it is based on a *new method of production*, a method free from the contradictions inherent in capitalist enterprise.

We need not spend much time over *Bolshevik Russia*. It is a good shillingsworth, brightly written, and admirably printed. For a space it may work a good deal of harm among the "tender-minded." But we "tough-minded" ones, we "wrinkled students of the complex works of Marx" (p. 24), are thoroughly immunised against the "cadet liberalism" which finds expression in Raine and Luboff's book. Not merely can we enjoy the coupling of the names of Lenin and Lansbury (p. 24); not merely can we delight in the confusionism which tells us (p. 25) that "the embryo state-wreckers of Ruskin College (!) are throwing up their caps with joy"; not merely can we take an artistic pleasure in such picturesque exaggerations as that "his [Marx's] life work, rejected with scorn by 999 out of every 1,000 who read it, has been jobbed off on to a horde of poor illiterate peasants" (p. 25)—but we can find intellectual pleasure in reducing to its elements this artful web of truth, fiction, and falsehood. In our prolet-cult classes, it would be a valuable exercise for students to detect, analyse, and refute the fallacies with which every page teems. And the book is all the more interesting because it is perfectly sincere. In every country, when the grave is digged, these bourgeois will, throughout their burial, be less busied in voicing protests against the "Tartar inhumanity" of entombing them alive, than with vehement reassertions of the great truth that the only alternative to capitalism is chaos.

So essential is it that we should devote most of our remaining space to Goldschmidt, that we cannot spare more than a few lines for Kautsky. *Bolshevik Russia* is well worth a shilling, but *Terrorism and Communism* is very far from being worth six times that amount. Probably an obscure and ill-penned work in the German original, it is almost unreadable in the English translation. We have protested elsewhere against stigmatising as "renegades" socialists like Kautsky and J. R. MacDonald. They are not renegades, but the movement has outstripped them, leaving them marooned on desolate beaches; whence they issue plaintive appeals to their erstwhile comrades—reminding the observer of nothing so much as of an elderly hen clucking on the edge of the pond while her duckling brood ventures boldly forth on the untried and terrible waters.

But the great fault of Kautsky's book is that it is out of date. It was finished in June, 1919, and we doubt if even Kautsky, gazing eastward from Berlin a year and a-half later, will continue to have his blind eye glued to the telescope. Two instances may be given. On p. 38, discussing the rise and fall of the Jacobins in revolutionary France, he writes: "It is significant of the rise of a revolution that it proceeds on its way unhindered by any piece of folly that may have been enacted. In a state of decline, on the contrary, a revolution may feel the dire effects of the slightest error." The implication is that the Reign of Terror, in the Paris of 1794, led to the fall of the Jacobins, because it was a false policy, and because their revolution was already in a decadent phase. A further implication is that the Reign of Terror will, in like manner, involve the Soviet Republic in ruin. Accepting without criticism Kautsky's premises of midsummer, 1919, it is necessary to point out at the winter solstice of 1920 that the Terror in Russia (if and in so far as Terror was a deliberate policy, and if and in so far as Terror was a mistaken policy) did not lead to the fall of the bolsheviks, and was no more than a temporary expedient, now abandoned. Therefore, on Kautsky's own showing, the Russian revolution was in an ascending phase during the prevalence of the Terror, and has already been stabilised!

The other instance concerns the actual details of the transition from capitalism to communism (pp. 162—165). "The substitution of socialism for capitalism embraces two questions—one of *property*, and the other of *organisation*. . . . It is not so easy to organise as it is to expropriate. A capitalist concern is a complex organisation, which finds its intelligence in the capitalist himself, or in his representative. If it is desired to abolish capitalism, some form of organisation must be created, which should be possible of functioning as well, if not better, without the

MAKE A NOTE: All educational books reviewed, discussed or advertised in the PLEBS can be obtained through the "Plebs" office. Cash must accompany orders. Add allowance for postage.

REVOLUTION

from 1789 to 1906

Documents selected and edited, with notes and introductions, by

R. W. POSTGATE

*Author of *The Bolshevik Theory**

THIS BOOK is a history of the European Revolution and the rise of the working-class. It consists of documents—the originals translated where necessary—connected together by notes and introductions. It covers, among other periods, the great French Revolution, the Commune of Paris, the Chartists and the Russian Revolution of 1905. The documents include speeches, placards, posters, decrees, newspaper articles; also letters, poems, conversations, oaths, sermons, committee lists, minutes, proclamations, resolutions, pamphlets, songs, lectures, petitions, incitements to murder, and imitations of the Bible.

Mr. Postgate's aim has been rather to select speeches, posters, and articles which show what the revolution "was all about": what were the problems confronting the revolutionaries: what were their principles, the thoughts in their minds, and the phrases they used: and particularly which of their acts became the seeds of the future revolution.

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capitalist head." But the bolsheviks, says Kautsky, rushed headlong into schemes of expropriation, and had absolutely no conception of reorganisation. His summary of the history of the Soviet Republic is simple—a Reign of Terror plus innumerable Scraps of Paper, plus countless unworkable decrees, plus cuckoo cloudland. Despite the difficulties of communication, many of us knew better in June, 1919. Does Kautsky still believe in his own picture? Let him study *The Economic Organisation of Soviet Russia*.

Goldschmidt's preface, dated end of July, 1920, is at once a record of personal experience and the confession of a new faith. He was one of the pioneers among Germans to demand "control from beneath." He had, in fact, grasped the elements of the Soviet idea, and was, therefore, ready to welcome the revolution of November, 1917, as the initiation of a new era in world progress. He insists that extreme centralisation both in respect of methods of production and in respect of political control, must be temporary. Enforced by the necessities of the transition stage and by the peculiarities of the world situation, centralist absolutism in Russia will yield, nay, is already yielding, to control from beneath. For some sociologists, the distinction between socialism and communism lies in the difference between the fields of production and distribution—a Socialist Commonwealth is one in which production is socialised, whereas a communist commonwealth is one in which distribution is communalised; for others,

the distinction lies in political forms—socialism is democratic, whereas communism is ergatocratic; for Goldschmidt, socialism is the inevitable stage of highly centralised organisation, whilst communism is the decentralised world-order in which socialism will culminate. Naturally, therefore, he brushes aside all criticism of Soviet Russia based on the contention that communism has not yet been realised. But he shows how much has already been achieved in preparing for the transition to communism as he understands it. By the acknowledgement of the Russians themselves, his book is the first in Western Europe "to give a faithful echo and to display a profound systematic understanding of the economic revolution and of the fundamental reorganisation that have been effected in Russia."

The entire study is a detailed confirmation from the practical side of that which, as a theoretical demonstration, Marxists have been proclaiming for more than two generations; the view that "the revolution is at once an administrative and a technical necessity." The revolution, as Nordicus phrased it in last month's PLEBS, is the only thing that will save civilisation from foundering in the shipwreck of capitalism.

The volume consists of two parts. The second part contains the decisions of the All-Russian Economic Congresses during the years 1918 to 1920. The rest of the book is Goldschmidt's study of the actual working of the Russian economic machine before and after the revolu-

tion. The complete collapse of the Russian capitalist economy during and even prior to the war is lucidly analysed; the revolution is presented as fundamentally an economic process. Individuals have played their parts in this development, but in essentials the new types of organisation are spontaneous growths. The inherent contradiction of capitalism has been solved because production for use has replaced production for profit, and because the whole basis of the monetary economy has been undermined. The sudden and complete nationalisation of banking (which so outrages Kautsky, the sometime revolutionist) was absolutely essential as the first step on the new path, the crucial stage in the Russian economic revolution which has overcome the great Russian economic crisis.

Who is going to undertake the publication of an English version of this book? We are not altogether hopeful of inducing any capitalist firm, however enterprising, to handle such a volume. Too staggering are the blows it delivers upon the conventional conception—a conception voiced by a Kautsky no less than by a Churchill—that the whilom "Land of the Tsars" has been ruined by the premature burial of the bourgeoisie. It behoves us of the Left Wing to make known in English a book which displays the bolsheviks as Grave-diggers indeed, but displays them no less clearly as Master-builders. EDEN & CEDAR PAUL

A NOTABLE BOOK

Revolution: 1789 to 1906. By R. W. POSTGATE. (Grant Richards. 18s. net.)

The Workers' International. By R. W. POSTGATE. (Swarthmore Press. 2s. 6d. net.)

Russian educationists have realised that, as one of the first steps towards a proletarian culture, works of original research in the national history of peoples, particularly detailed studies of revolutionary periods, are urgently needed. Only recently have we Russians become acquainted with the work the Plebs League and the Labour College in England are doing in this direction. In particular, I must specify the little book by W. W. Craik on the recent history of the British working-class movement; but each of the books published by the Plebs League, written, as I understand, by proletarians, is a guarantee of the future of prolet-culture.

Further evidence of my own ignorance of the development of this educational research work in England is now afforded me by three admirable volumes—Mellor's *Direct Action*, a clear-cut and informative propagandist book; and two books by R. W. Postgate, *Revolution* and *The Workers' International*. From the outspokenness of these writers and their clear expression of our point of view I assume they are connected with the Labour College, either as tutors or students.

Postgate's books, in particular, very much interested me, as they follow the lines of inquiry I have referred to. *Revolution* is a study of European revolutionary epochs, beginning with the French Revolution; then covering the intermediate period before 1832; the English Chartist Movement; from that to the general 1848 upheavals, and so on to the Paris Commune and our own Revolution in Russia in 1906.

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The book shows a mastery of the vast mass of material available, and proceeds to its use and arrangement in a manner entirely admirable. What have you, outside of Russia, to set before yourselves, as the immediate problem of prolet-culture? You have to indicate in broad outline the essential conditions under which revolutions arise; and, further, for the use of tutors and of students interested in particular periods, supply detailed reference works. If I say that this book covers both aims, and yet keeps within a reasonable compass of pages, I can give it no greater praise.

Each period dealt with opens with a short statement of the salient features of its historical development and its ultimate expression in action. Then follows a series of documents conveying, in the actual language of the participants, their various conceptions of the aims and purposes of their movement. And fascinating, heartening and tragic are these voices from the past. Fascinating, because one reads oneself into the atmosphere and outlook of periods which, in view of the rapidity of the growth of our movement in recent years, appear very remote. Heartening, because the vigour and determination behind the glorious defeat of the Left Wing in each epoch is an incentive to further effort towards success in our own time. Tragic, since here we have fully brought home to us the fatal appeal of compromise to our class, and the fearful cost of temporising with the enemy. If these documents had been specially chosen to illustrate the futility of the Kerenskys, Hendersons, and MacDonalds of every revolutionary epoch, their moral could not have been clearer.

Postgate's little book on the *Workers' International* shows the same command of material as the larger work. It deals with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Internationals. It will cause some heart-searching among the elect, because the history of the 1st International is bound up with the personal struggle of Marx and Bakunin, and Postgate is not always flattering to the former. An altogether uncritical, and, therefore, unhealthy atmosphere has arisen about our master, Marx. The legendary bids fair to eclipse the vital historical personality. Marx was the founder of our movement to the extent that his theoretical system is a key to social evolution and places us on the rock of historical determinism. But Marx was also a passionate human being, and as such likely to err in personal relations; and err he did in the Bakunin controversy, according to our author. Our author may be wrong. I believe he is! But one cannot but admire his attitude and admit there are grounds for his opinion. It is not necessary in order to establish Marx's claim to the leadership of our movement, to prove that everything he said or did was beyond criticism.



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English comrades, especially those working in the educational field, have every reason to congratulate themselves on the accessibility of books like these.

Y. KAZHETSYASKY

THE "REVIVAL" OF MARXISM.

The Revival of Marxism. By J. SHIELD NICHOLSON, Prof. of Political Economy in the University of Edinburgh. (Murray. 6s.)

Whatever might be said as to the suggestion contained in the title of this latest book by Professor Shield Nicholson, there can be no question about the recent reappearance of all the soap bubbles hurled at the Marxian theories long ago. It is surprising how the workers will persist in reading, and even studying, these theories—so often and so completely refuted. A thing well done is difficult to improve upon; that is why, presumably, we have in this book a repetition of the old "irrefutable" arguments. The exactness of economic science is thus clearly shown—by the sameness of the volumes issued under the names of different distinguished professors.

Professor Nicholson commenced his reading of economic science about fifty years ago, and apparently is none the worse for it. He has even

THE 1920 VOLUME

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read *Capital* twice, since he informs us that he read it recently. He did so hoping that Marx, like other Labour champions, would offer some good, plain advice upon the best method of assisting capitalism out of its present difficulties. He was disappointed. *Capital* engendered nothing but blank despair! Possibly that is why he calls Marx the "Mad Mullah" of the Socialists. Who but a madman would gloat over the destruction of this "eternal" order of society and torment its would-be rescuers by pouring scorn upon their efforts?

Prof. Nicholson becomes furious, desperately so, because not only has Marx given them no assistance, but he has pictured them so realistically. He gets so angry as to become truthful. That is, he blurts out too much. In his rage he turns upon the capitalists and asks:—"What's the good of myself and others endeavouring to prove the falsity of these Marxian theories when by your actions they are verified day by day?" He pleads with the capitalists to give him a chance. In their own interest they should agree to cover up the evidence of exploitation. High Prices, Excess Profits, war fortunes, etc.—one cannot refute Marx with these things staring one in the face day by day! "It is in vain for the economist to show that analytically and historically Marxism is fallacious as a system, if conditions are allowed to arise and continue which seem to confirm the system." Too much light is shed upon the method and results of exploitation. Let us therefore shroud it once more in darkness and then we can theorise!

He shows us how this darkening process is to be achieved. First of all take two "Marxists" and show how utterly they are opposed to each other. For this interesting demonstration Kautsky, the deposed high priest, is confronted with the usurper, Lenin.

This dialogue is carried on spiritedly; in fact, almost are we convinced that Prof. Nicholson belongs to Kautsky's school—there is such an obvious desire to show that this is the true and undiluted gospel of Marx. Readers of the PLEBS will be interested to learn that Leninism runs counter to the dominant ideas of the working classes of this country, who are also opposed to the policy of Direct Action by way of strikes or force of arms.

Having shown the working class that there are true and false prophets, let us to the gospel itself. The *Critique* "is not original and still less revolutionary." The first volume of *Capital* treats of the theory of value, etc., with "far less vigour and clearness." These books are difficult to read, and none but experts can understand them. The workers are not experts—*ergo!*

We proceed to read for them. "Capital buys labour-power cheap and sells the product of it dear." "Labour is a commodity like other commodities, with this difference, that it is always bought below its real value." In this Theory of Value, Marx instead of advancing is reactionary. In fact, we can quote at least one authority who claims that he "had not got so far as Aquinas" (13th century.)

Marx was original in no sense whatever. He is blinded by an obsession—organised robbery. He refuses to see any good in capitalism. Despite his great natural gifts he therefore fails as an economist, and equally so in history and philosophy.

Marx omits altogether the historical contributions of capitalism to human progress. In his account of the Accumulation of Capital he is "led away by his fixed ideas on revolution." Given principles can only be "true under certain conditions," and this Marx did not realise.

By now, my friends, you will at least have begun to suspect the method I employ to refute Marxism. It is not new. It consists simply of systematically charging Marx with having uttered other people's absurdities, and of claiming credit to ourselves for the things he actually said. Exchange is no robbery, and Marx is dead!

This is easily accomplished, since "most people are obliged to take their science of all kinds on trust. They are always specially ready to accept scientific theories that seem to confirm their own unscientific beliefs." All we have to do, then, is to get the working class to believe certain things and to supply them with a suitable "science." Instead of Marx's historical outlook we must emphasise the influence of moral ideas. We must show how Christian charity secured the manumission of slaves and was one of the main sources of mediæval law; that the abolition of slavery in America and the establishing of factory laws in this country were the result of religious and moral influences; that the "barbarities of the Bolsheviks and the brutal suppression of their opponents have shocked the civilised world far more than their seizure of the instruments of production." The workers should model their lives upon the moral and Christian principles of a millionaire brewer or textile manufacturer. British capital is democratic. Any man of ability could obtain command over it "if he had the necessary credits."

This is a great book. It is a pity it cannot be filmed. It would amuse the beginners.

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THE PLEBS THE PLEBS BOOKSHELF

THREE books lie in front of me as I write—each small in bulk but more than ordinarily full of good matter. Side by side the three of them will occupy exactly one inch and a quarter of bookshelf space. There are a lot of volumes on my shelves fatter than these three put together, but with much less stuff in them than any one of these. The three are—*Aftermath: A Geographical Study of the Peace Terms*, by Dr. M. I. Newbigin (Johnston: Edinburgh; Macmillan: London, 3s. 6d. net); *Economic Imperialism*, by L. S. Woolf (Swarthmore International Handbooks, 2s. 6d. net); and *The Appreciation of Poetry*, by Eden and Cedar Paul (C. W. Daniel, 2s. 6d. net). I should have liked to devote all the space allotted to me to each one of them. But this is a crowded number of the PLEBS, and I want strongly to recommend all three; so that what I lack in space I must make up in emphasis.

Dr. Newbigin's little book should be studied, marked, and kept for constant reference by every student of Economic Geography. It is a masterly guide to that bewildering maze of geographico-economic questions raised by the War and dealt with, in more or less muddled fashion, in the various Peace Treaties. In other words, it is an application of geographical knowledge to those international problems which most concern us as 20th century proletarians. A series of short chapters gives us the salient historical and geographical facts about Prussia, about Poland, about Austria and Hungary, the Balkans, the Russian border states, and so on; and then summarises the changes effected—or sought to be effected—by the War and the Peace. The opening chapter, on "The Underlying Principles of the Peace Treaty," condenses into ten pages critical matter enough for a whole volume—is, in fact, a Keynes' *Economic Consequences of the Peace* stated from a different angle and boiled down to the barest statement of facts. Its conclusion is all I can quote:—

In other words, the Treaty, whatever the intentions of its framers, does not establish a new world. On the contrary, it is itself but an expression of the conflicting forces at work in the old one. It is those forces, and not the actions of the Allied and Associated Powers, which will in the long run determine the political destiny of the various parts of Europe and of the world.

Excellently put—and significantly, coming from a Doctor of Science of London University!

Mr. L. S. Woolf's *Economic Imperialism* is one of the same series which includes Postgate's *The Workers' International*, reviewed on another page; and these two, of the half-dozen volumes I have seen, are undoubtedly most worth while from the PLEBS' point of view. Woolf's book on *Empire and Commerce in Africa* was reviewed at length in the PLEBS a few months ago, and his general attitude and outlook described and commented upon. "Man's history in the last 2,500 years has been mainly determined by his beliefs

and desires," he repeats in the introductory chapter of *Economic Imperialism*. But, after discussing various beliefs and desires affecting the policy of Imperialism, he proceeds—

But these are not fundamental. . . . If we turn now to economic beliefs, desires and causes, we find an entirely different state of affairs. At every step in imperialist expansion the impulse of economic causes is evident. . . . The motive power, therefore, behind modern imperialism is economic. . . . Economic imperialism is only the logical application of capitalism and its principles to internationalism.

The body of the book consists of two chapters on Economic Imperialism in Africa and in Asia. The first summarises the wealth of material contained in the big book on *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (which was published at 20s. net); and the second is an equally masterly survey. I need hardly emphasise the fact, therefore, that this book is dirt cheap at half-a-crown. It and Newbigin's read together—with an atlas at one's elbow—provide a magnificent grounding in the economic geography of the world to-day.

And now for my third book, which you can read in between chapters of economic geography, to prevent yourself getting stale. It is just about a year since Lavin and I, apropos of John S. Clarke's poems, defied one another to define Poetry. Eden and Cedar Paul wisely decline to venture on "terse definitions," but discuss instead certain "essential elements," and proceed to illustrate these by numerous quotations from poets, living and dead. So lavish, indeed, are they with these extracts, that quite apart from their own critical matter *The Appreciation of Poetry* is well worth while as an anthology of verse. And they are catholic in their appreciations. There is no sameness in these verses from Keats and R.L.S., Masfield and Omar, Kipling and Shelley, Whitman and Francis Thompson, Swinburne and Hardy. If you want something that will help you to appreciate good poetry—and you're a fool if you cut yourself off from so fine (and so cheap) a pleasure; or if your taste for poetry has been dulled by incessant labour at class-teaching or T.U. administration; get this little book, pull it out of your pocket every now and then, and do yourself good by enjoying yourself.

The motto on our front cover this month is quoted from the Editorial in one of the earliest numbers of the PLEBS, and tersely expresses the proletarian attitude towards the kindly condescension of the Older Universities.


The reappearance of the 7d. novel is a not altogether uninteresting event to Plebs. True, the new sevenpennies—issued by Newnes—haven't got cloth covers, and in some cases the type is a bit small. But they're handy little pocket volumes, and the first batch issued includes Arnold Bennett's *Gates of Wrath* and Jack London's *Smoke Bellew*. J. F. H.

REVISED PRICES

Did you make a note of the revised price-list of Plebs books announced last month—and again printed below? We didn't expect, and we haven't received, any accusations of

PROFITEERING

We're pretty sure that, even at these higher prices, these books will stand comparison with any others on the market. And the growth and development of our work during the past year has necessitated an office organisation which we didn't bargain for when we fixed our original selling prices at little above bare cost of printing.

 We hope to be able to announce additions to this list in the very near future. Please see announcement of new pamphlet on back page.

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