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THE PLEBS

AGITATE EDUCATE ORGANISE

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THE PLEBS

“I can promise to be candid but not impartial.”

Vol. XIII

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¶ *The circulation of the PLEBS last month was just under 6,500. We want a circulation of 7,000 at least. Are you helping us to get it—or only hoping that we shall do it? Naturally, we prefer helpers to hoppers! Also, though we do our best to love all our friends, we love those best who pay up promptly. An increased circulation means increased printer's bills. Don't let us have to write and ask you—postage is expensive these days. We shall like your compliments heaps better if they're accompanied by a postal order.*

OUR POINT OF VIEW

THE most important matter discussed at the Plebs Meet—apart from the business details of our various activities, which are necessarily of considerable importance to ourselves—was the relationship of the established Labour Colleges to the provincial classes. The subject was raised by a resolution moved by a representative of one of the oldest and most active class-centres—Halifax; and it was very clearly apparent from the discussion which followed that it expressed pretty accurately the general feeling of class organisers and

workers in the provinces—the feeling, that is, of the men and women who are doing the work of the Independent Working-Class Educational Movement to-day, and whose efforts in past days were mainly responsible for bringing the London College into existence. We have used the word *feeling* deliberately, because some considerable feeling was manifested. It is therefore fitting that the discussion initiated at Bradford should be continued in the PLEBS, and we propose to deal with it here, not only because of its interest and importance to all our readers, but in order to provide an opportunity for those of them unable to be present at the Meet to express their opinions on the subject in our pages.

* * *

What, then, should be the relation of a central (resident) college to the working-class educational movement as a whole? Does the London Labour College, so far as its activities extend at present, fulfil the requirements of that movement? The resolution passed unanimously at the Plebs Meet answered this latter question *Found* very definitely in the negative. It asserted, bluntly, that *Wanting!* in doing nothing to assist *the development and extension of the provincial classes* the Governors of the College had failed in one of the most vitally important aspects of their work; and it pressed upon them the urgent necessity—"not next century, but *now*" as the mover phrased it—of not only formulating a scheme for "co-ordinating the work of the College and the Classes," but of themselves, as representing the College, undertaking some definite share of the responsibility for the maintenance of those classes. How far was this criticism, or censure, justified?

* * *

A very early number of the PLEBS (March, 1909) contained an article on "The Function of a Labour College," from which we should like to quote one of the concluding sentences:—"To sum up, the function of a Labour College must be *the diffusion of ideas* most likely to assist the Labour Movement generally." Note—*the Function of a Labour diffusion of ideas*. Now obviously it is going to take a *College.* good many years to spread any ideas amongst the great army of organised Labour, if their present "diffusion" is confined to twenty or thirty—or even fifty or sixty—men in residence at a College in London. The "diffusion," if it is to be of any practical value at all, must have a much wider field; it must reach those—the vast majority—who cannot retire temporarily from the creation of surplus values and withdraw to the sheltered seclusion of a resident College. Far and away the most important part of the work of the working-class educational movement, in short, is the establishment and maintenance of a network of classes covering every industrial district, and catering for the great mass of the workers. A Central College, for a greater or lesser number of resident students, is only needed—is only worth while!—in so far as it serves the needs of these classes.

* * *

We take it that there will be pretty general agreement so far, and that neither the Governors of the Labour College nor anyone who may take up the cudgels on their behalf are likely to assert that the College is

**Our Own
View.**

an end in itself or that it should concern itself solely with the educational work carried on within its own walls. If the work of the classes is of such paramount importance, then the College Authorities *must* concern themselves with the success or failure of the various classes, and with the conditions, financial or other, which are making for that success or failure; *must*, at all events, if they are interested in Independent Working-Class Education, and not merely in the management of a particular institution which happens to be run as a sideline by two Trade Unions. The Governors' defence, we assume, would rather take the line of pointing out that their aim, hitherto, had been the extension of the College, its staff and its premises, as a preliminary to its fulfilling adequately the requirements of the class movement. The PLEBS, at any rate, cannot be accused of underestimating the importance of this work of extension, since only last month we appealed to our readers to do all in their power to win the support of their own industrial organisations for the Building Scheme put forward by the Governors of the Labour College. In closer touch with the College, perhaps, than some of the Governors themselves, we are only too well aware of many remediable deficiencies. The constitution of the Plebs League, moreover, contains a clause, as the Governors will doubtless be aware, pledging the League to "assist in every way the development of the Labour College," as of every other working-class educational institution with the same educational policy; and this clause was emphasised and amplified at Bradford by a resolution pledging it to support to the utmost of its power the appeal of the Governors on behalf of their Building Scheme. Nevertheless, we confess ourselves in sympathy with the feeling of the classes that they are left out of account in the present administration of the College.

* * *

We would further point out that the Governors' appeal to other unions for support of the College would be very greatly strengthened if they could point to a system of flourishing classes all over the country and say, "This is what we are doing—for *your* members

Not Next Century— among others, please observe." We are sure, also, that *But Now!* by doing something for the classes they would be gaining for themselves the active support of scores—hundreds—of propagandists *within* those very Unions to whom they are appealing. It is now more than twelve months since the Manchester Conference of class teachers, organisers and workers, convened by the Plebs League and attended by a representative of the Governors, recommended the drafting of a scheme by the Governors such as is again asked for in the resolution carried at Bradford. The Scottish Labour College, which is the centre of a large and rapidly developing class system, has long since shown them the way—despite its lack of the funds at the disposal of the London College. The Labour Party is rightly emphatic in its denunciation of the present Government's typically capitalist "economy" in saving expenditure on juvenile education. One expects, therefore, from great Labour organisations controlling an educational institution of their own, a policy inspired by other motives than petty bourgeois parsimoniousness.

Query One:—

HAVE YOU GOT A SUPPLY OF OUR NEW PAMPHLET?

A LEADER OF THE COMMUNE: THEOPHILE FERRE

1871—1921. *It is fifty years ago this month since the Paris Commune was drowned in blood. This sketch of one of its outstanding figures is therefore as timely as it is moving.*

Th. Ferré



“I AM a socialist, a communist, an atheist! When I am the stronger, look out for yourselves!” A little dark man, with a long nose, piercing black eyes under glasses, a huge black beard, and black hair, so addressed the President of the Court trying him, on July 19th, 1870, on a charge of conspiracy to murder Napoleon III. The scandalized President ordered him to be removed to the cells, but as there was no proof that he was connected with the plot in question he was in the end released.

It was not the first time that Charles Theophile Ferré, then aged 25, and barely a year from his death, had come into conflict with the police. He had been sentenced before, and, along with his fellow-Blanquist, Raoul Rigault, had led a prisoners' revolt in Sainte-Pelagie.* A follower of Blanqui, he was regarded only as an effective orator, not as a leader. His appearance, which was described as that of an excited cock sparrow, was against him.

During the war of 1870, after the proclamation of the Republic, Ferré fought in the ranks of the National Guard. He had no striking share in the events of the 18th of March next year, although he was on the Montmartre Vigilance Committee, and first comes into notice when elected to the Commune by the XVIIIth *arrondissement*. He took little part in debates, but, with his fellow-Blanquists, Cournet and Rigault, organised the police—one of the very few services competently carried on during the Commune.† The streets were orderly and decent—violent crime was practically unknown. The spies who swarmed into Paris from Versailles very quickly, if they were at all active, found their way into the hands of the “terrible Procureur,” Rigault, and Ferré, who on May 14th took Cournet's place as delegate for Public Security. The very dangerous “plot of the three-coloured armlets,” which might have led to an insurrection of bourgeois National Guards within Paris, was scotched by them.

Into their hands also fell the records of Napoleon III.'s Prefecture of Police, spy section. From these they were able to identify the traitors within their own ranks. The strangest, most heartrending discoveries sometimes resulted. Mazzini's own secretary, Major Wolff, was actually on Bonaparte's pay-roll—the same Wolff who had helped to found the International. It was as though we were to find to-day that Angelica Balabanova, secretary of the Third International, was in the pay of Sir Basil Thompson. And these spies were even in the Communal Assembly itself.‡ Ferré, before leaving, burnt the whole foul accumulation of documents to ashes.

* Details are lacking of his early life: if any PLEBS reader can put me on to any account which is more detailed, I will be grateful.

† I wish to withdraw a remark made on p. 66 of my *Workers' International*, which suggests that this service was incompetent. I was misled by Lissagaray (p. 224), a most prejudiced writer.

‡ As Emile Clément, Pindy (?), Blanchet-Pourille.

Finally, they were able to collect a large number of valuable hostages, including the Archbishop of Paris, Bonjean, President of the Haut Cour, and Jecker, instigator of Napoleon's Mexican invasion. The Commune succeeded for a while in checking the Versailles murder of prisoners by threatening reprisals on these men.

When the Versaillese entered Paris, Rigault and Ferré fought bravely. Rigault was killed in a vain attempt to collect sufficient National Guards to fortify the Island of La Cité. And as the other members of the Commune hid their red sashes and crept away to hide from the responsibility they had assumed, Ferré was soon the sole representative of revolutionary authority.

The Communards were pushed back day by day by the closing iron ring of troops. Behind this advancing wall the officers of the French Army were supervising the killing of prisoners. The organised, merciless and loathsome massacre of all Communards and suspected Communards was in full swing. The last defenders of the Commune, maddened by this brutality and by despair, demanded the execution of the hostages, as decreed by the Commune. Ferré, having the courage to assume the necessary responsibility and not hide his fears, Girondin-like, behind the "uncontrollable fury of the mob," decided to carry out the decree. He saw to the shooting of the spy Veysset. He authorized the shooting of the Archbishop and others—the executions of La Roquette.

No one can but pity these murdered men. Many, no doubt, were guilty, but most were untried and many innocent. The Archbishop especially was an upright and saintly man. But hard and terrible though this last act was, it is difficult to condemn either Ferré or the maddened soldiers of the Commune. There has never been a Government which, under similar circumstances, would not have carried out its solemn threat. The Commune's last blow was as justified as any it had struck before.

* * * *

Ferré, along with other members of the Commune, appeared before the Third Court Martial, presided over by Merlin, with Gaveau as prosecutor, both brutal officers, the last of whom went mad later, and at this date had only just come out of an asylum.

The Commune was a "scratch" assembly and reflected all the faults and virtues of the Paris workers. Collect haphazard a number of workers to-day, and what should we find? Probably one or two thorough bad lots, a number of chatterers, a mass of honest and mediocre men, and a very few first-rate fighters. Such was the Commune. There was Blanchet, a forger; Pindy, an alleged spy; Pyat, a coward and boaster; there were innumerable talkers and many silent undistinguished men; and a few—very few—who were fit for the task they had undertaken.

They say that shepherds put a few goats among their flock, and that the presence of these prevents the imbecile sheep scattering at a night alarm. The Commune, when it came to judgment, behaved little better than a flock of sheep. But the goats—the few brave men who could have rallied the second-rate men—were dead. Delescluze and Rigault had been killed in the street fighting. Flourens and Duval had been murdered as prisoners outside the walls of Paris months before. Varlin's battered and unrecognizable corpse was in some hastily dug trench near Paris. Ferré alone, aided by Trinquet, a shoemaker, had to rally this frightened mass.

But at the trial the weak men broke and ran. Urbain, proposer of the decree on the hostages, said : " I can only express my great regret for the proposal I made to the Commune, and the indignation I felt over the burnings and the final crimes."

Regère, member of the Committee of Public Safety : " I only came to meetings of the Commune about four in the afternoon and I left before the end. The Commune wasted time in useless discussions and rushed through a lot of decrees at the end of meetings, when I was never there. And I affirm I never knew anything about the decree on hostages."

Rastoul : " M. le président . . . I protest with all my powers against the murders and crimes committed or planned during the bloody agony of the Commune. Neither closely nor distantly, directly nor indirectly, will I accept any solidarity with the men who burnt Paris and shot the hostages."

Courbet, the great artist, said that he had only voted for pulling down the Vendôme column on æsthetic grounds, and fawningly repudiated any responsibility for the Commune's acts.

All the time Ferré was trying by example to inspire these men to behave at least decently as the workers' representatives facing a victorious enemy. At the outset he refused to plead. Throughout the trial, however, he intervened with any question or comment which enabled him to expose any meanness or dishonesty of the Government, or to emphasize again his opposition to the society which was condemning him. Merlin and Gaveau, president and prosecutor, had long ago abandoned any attempt at impartiality and interrupted his final statement persistently. His counsel secured for him permission to read the last sentences.

Ferré : " I am a member of the Commune and in the hands of its conquerors. They want my life. Let them take it. I will not save it by cowardice. I have lived free, and I will die free. I wish to add one thing. Fortune is capricious, and I leave to the future my memory and my revenge."

Merlin : " The memory of a murderer."

A lawyer, his professional sense of honour outraged, protested that Merlin, a presumed impartial judge, had called Ferré a murderer. The fashionable audience howled at him, and when silence was restored Merlin answered smiling : " I agree that I made use of the term you mention. I take note of your remarks."

Ferré was sentenced to death. His father, guiltless of any crime, was also in prison ; his mother, driven mad by ill-treatment, had died insane ; his brother, equally innocent, was very ill in prison from Versailles brutality. Only his young sister was left to give him any help in his last hours. Before his death the colonel in command of the prison, Gaillard, thought of a hellish device to break his spirit. He took his young brother, now completely insane, and thrust him into Ferré's cell. For days Ferré, awaiting death, had to bear the ghastly sight of this raving lunatic, who had once been his brother.

Sentence had been passed on September 2nd, but it was not till November 28th that he was told to get ready to die. He stopped to write to his sister.*

* I translate almost literally. Paraphrase should not be allowed to obscure the exact phrases of this last document.

Tuesday, 28th November, 1871.

9.30 in the morning.

MY VERY DEAR SISTER.—In a few instants I am going to die ; at the last moment your memory will be with me ; I beg you to ask for my body and reunite it to our unfortunate mother's. If you are able, insert in the papers the time of my burial so that friends can accompany ; of course, no religious ceremony, I die a materialist as I have lived.

Put a wreath of immortelles on our mother's grave.

Try to cure our brother and console our father ; tell them how much I loved them.

I embrace you a thousand times and thank you for all the kindness and care you lavished on me ; overcome your grief, and as you have so often promised me, rise to the circumstances. As for me, I am happy. I am going to end my sufferings, there is no reason to be sorry for me.

All to you,

Your devoted brother,

TH. FERRÉ.

He added a postscript to the effect that she should claim his clothes and papers, but that he had given his money to prisoners more unfortunate than he. His neat writing was perfectly steady and regular.

He was taken out to be shot with Bourgeois, a soldier found in the Communard ranks, and Rossel, who for a while had served as its general. None of them showed any fear, but Rossel was melodramatic and delayed matters. They were taken out into the great plain of Satory, France's Salisbury Plain, and tied to three posts some distance apart. It was a bright November morning. Ferré refused to have his eyes bound. Merlin himself commanded the fire. Ferré, scarcely wounded by the volley, was killed by a shot through the ear from a soldier's rifle. At a signal from Merlin, the band began to play and the regiments drawn up to watch the execution defiled past the corpses to the sound of a cheerful march tune.

R. W. POSTGATE

REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS

By FRIEDRICH ENGELS

(Translated from the German by Eden & Cedar Paul—continued.)

UNIVERSAL suffrage had long existed in France, but had fallen into disrepute owing to the misuse made of it under the Bonapartist régime. After the fall of the Commune there no longer existed a working-class party to turn it to account. In Spain, likewise, there had been universal suffrage since the days of the Republic, but there it had always been the rule that serious opposition parties should abstain from voting. Even in Switzerland, experience with universal suffrage did not offer encouraging prospects to a working-class party. The revolutionary workers of the Romance countries had become accustomed to regard the suffrage as a trap, as an instrument of governmental humbug. It was otherwise in Germany. The *Communist Manifesto* had already proclaimed that the conquest of universal suffrage, of democracy, was one of the first and most important tasks of the fighting proletariat, and Lassalle had raised the issue again. When Bismarck now found it necessary to introduce universal suffrage as the only means of interesting the masses of the people in his designs, our workers were not slow to make a serious use of the new opportunity, and they sent August Bebel to the first constituent Reichstag. From that day to this* they have utilised the suffrage in a manner which has rewarded them a

* 1895.

thousandfold, and been an example to the workers of all other lands. To quote the words employed concerning the suffrage in the French Marxist program, *ils l'ont transformé, de moyen de duperie qu'il a été jusqu' ici, en instrument d'émancipation*—they have changed it from a means of deceit, such as it has been hitherto, into a means of emancipation. Even if universal suffrage had offered us no other advantage than that of enabling us to reckon up our numbers every three years; even if it did no more than enable us at regular intervals to register the unexpectedly rapid increase of the Socialist vote, augmenting alike the confidence of the workers and the fear of their adversaries, and thus serving as the best possible means of propaganda; even if it did no more than enable us to gauge our own strength and that of our opponents, thus preserving us alike from undue faintheartedness and from overweening rashness—if that were all universal suffrage had done for us, it would have been amply worth while.

But it has done far more than this. Electoral agitation supplied us with a method of unsurpassed value for getting into contact with those strata of the populace which still held aloof from us, and for compelling the other parties to defend themselves publicly against the attacks we delivered upon their opinions and their actions. Moreover, in the Reichstag it provided our representatives with a platform from which to their opponents in Parliament and to the masses outside they could speak alike with far more authority and with greater freedom than had been possible in the Press and in public meetings. Of what use to the Government and to the bourgeoisie was their Socialist Law when electoral agitation and the speeches of Socialist deputies in the Reichstag were continually rendering its restrictions nugatory?

With the successful employment of universal suffrage an entirely new proletarian tactic had come into being, and this tactic speedily underwent further development. It was found that the governmental institutions in which the dominion of the bourgeoisie had secured organic expression provided a leverage whereby the proletariat could work for the overthrow of these very institutions. The workers participated in the elections to the diets; they voted in the municipal elections; they took their places in the arbitration courts; in their conflict with the bourgeoisie they disputed the possession of every post. The result of all this was that the bourgeoisie and the Government grew far more afraid of the constitutional than of the unconstitutional activities of the working-class party, and came to dread the results of an election far more than they dreaded the results of a rebellion.

For here also the conditions of the struggle had been notably modified. Rebellion in the old style, street fighting and barricades, the methods that had proved universally decisive, down to the year 1848, had in effect become obsolete.

A real victory of revolt over troops in street fighting, a victory like that obtained by one army over another, is among the greatest of rarities. Seldom, indeed, have insurgents aimed at anything of the kind. Their hope has always been that they might undermine the morale of the soldiers, whereas in a fight between the armies of two ordinary belligerents this can seldom or never happen. If the insurgents are successful in their design, the soldiers can no longer be depended upon; or their officers lose their heads, and the revolt proves successful. But where the morale of the

troops holds good, the result is that even when they are in a very small minority compared with the insurgents, the former, being better disciplined, better armed, under a unified command, and employed in accordance with a definite plan, will maintain the upper hand. . . . Passive defence remains, therefore, the leading form of struggle. . . . Moreover, regular troops have artillery, and part of their force consists of fully equipped and highly trained engineers, whereas the insurgents will hardly ever have either the one or the other at their disposal. It is not surprising, therefore, that barricade fights conducted with the greatest possible heroism, as at Paris in June, 1848, at Vienna in October, 1848, and at Dresden in May, 1849, ended in the defeat of the insurgents as soon as those who led the attack were able to repose full confidence in their men, and could be guided in their actions entirely by the principles of ordinary warfare, regardless of political considerations.

The numerous successes gained by insurgents prior to the year 1848 were due to manifold causes. At Paris in July, 1830, and in February, 1848, as in most of the street fights in Spain, there was a militia interposed between the rebels and the regulars, a civic force which in some cases openly sided with the insurgents, and in others wavered to such an extent that the morale of the regular troops was sympathetically disturbed. Moreover, the militia supplied the insurgents with weapons. But where militia levies took definite action against the insurgents, as happened in Paris during June, 1848, the insurrection was suppressed. At Berlin in the year 1848 the victory of the populace was partly due to the securing of notable reinforcements during the night and on the morning of the nineteenth, partly to the fact that the regular soldiers were worn out and badly placed, and partly to the indecision of the military command. In all these cases the insurgents were successful, either because the troops refused duty, or because the officers were irresolute, or, finally, because the officers' hands were tied.

Thus even during the classical epoch of street fighting, the influence of barricades was moral rather than material. They were a means of undermining the constancy of the troops. If the barricades could be held until the soldiers' morale had given way, victory was with the insurgents, but in default of this the rebels were defeated.

In 1849 the chances were in any case unfavourable to revolt. The bourgeoisies were everywhere on the side of the governments; "culture and property" was their motto; they fêted the soldiers who were called out to suppress the revolt. To the soldiers, the defenders of the barricades no longer represented "the people"; they were rebels, demagogues, looters, the scum of society. The officers had gained experience in the tactics of street fighting. No longer did the unprotected troops make a direct onslaught upon the improvised fortifications; these were attacked in the flank or in the rear, through gardens, courtyards and houses. In nine cases out of ten, when conducted with reasonable skill, such attacks were successful.

Since those days there have been many further changes, all in favour of the regular troops. Whilst the large cities have become much larger, armies have grown even more rapidly. Owing to railway developments, garrisons could be more than doubled within twenty-four hours, and within forty-eight hours gigantic armies could be assembled in the capitals. Not

only are the soldiers far more numerous, but they are incomparably better armed. In 1848 the infantry soldier's weapon was a small-bore muzzle-loader, fired with a percussion cap; to-day the range of his weapon is four times that of the old, and the precision and rapidity of fire ten times as great. At that time, artillery projectiles were either round-shot or case-shot; now we have explosive shells, a single one of which can knock the best barricade to smithereens. . . .

The day of surprise attacks has passed, the day when small but resolute minorities could achieve revolutions by leading the unwitting masses to the onslaught. Where the question is one of a complete transformation in the social organism, the masses must wittingly participate, must fully understand what they are about. We have learned this from the history of the last fifty years. But if we are to enlighten the masses concerning the issue, prolonged and arduous toil will be requisite. This is the task on which we are now engaged, and with so much success that our adversaries are becoming desperately alarmed.

(To be continued.)

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF BEING IMPARTIAL

(Illustrated by a W.E.A. review of E. & C. Paul's "*Creative Revolution*," a special PLEBS edition of which will be published next month.)

THERE is a familiar story that the ostrich, when an enemy appears, buries its head in the sand; imagining that, if it cannot see the enemy, the enemy cannot see it. Needless to say, the story is not true. A bird which behaved in this foolish way would soon become extinct, through the eliminating process of natural selection. Only man, and he only on his intellectual side, can afford to indulge in such antics. We all indulge in them; modern psychology teems with instances of the working of man's "ostrich-instinct" when faced with ideas unpleasant to him.

Certain minds behave like the ostrich in the fable whenever the word "revolution" is mentioned. Eden and Cedar Paul's *Creative Revolution* seems to have produced this reaction in "J.M.M." who reviews that book in the *Highway*, the W.E.A. organ, for December, 1920. The result is a complete failure to perceive the significance of the book.

The central idea of *Creative Revolution* is that a great economic crisis such as the world is now passing through, involving drastic changes, the breakdown of institutions, the thwarting of desires and ambitions, and great sufferings among the masses of the proletariat, drives men's thoughts and actions into channels that lead to hate, pugnacity and active striving against the supposed causes of the crisis; and that this mass-psychology—class-consciousness—is ineffective, and the action it leads to wasteful or futile, unless it is directed into profitable channels by scientific knowledge of the forces underlying the changes, and of the direction in which they are working.

Now, ignoring this central theory, as the ostrich is said to ignore its enemy, the reviewer, unconsciously, forms and gives to his readers a number

of quite misleading impressions. For example, to him the book appears as "inciting mass pugnacity and red revolution." It does not do so. It shows how this *inevitable* mass pugnacity, man's instinctive reaction to the upsetting of his established habits and the thwarting of his desires, can be informed with the knowledge that will make it effective, whether the revolution be "red," "pink" or "yellow."

Here is another instance. The reviewer states that the authors "and the majority of those who support the socialist left" assume "that Lenin and Trotsky created the Russian Revolution." On the contrary, their view is that it is economic causes that create revolutions (and the other events which make up history), and that the "great men" are only those individuals whose knowledge, power of leadership, and capacity for giving rational expression to the unconscious drive which is urging on the masses bring them to the surface of the stream.

Again, "J. M. M." calls the authors "militarists." They are not. A militarist (*e.g.*, Bernhardt) believes in war as an end in itself. The attitude of the authors is rather that of Trotsky, the passionate anti-militarist. They recognise that, while society consists of classes whose different economic interests are liable to excite in each anger and pugnacity against the other, it is well to be prepared for the normal consequences of anger and pugnacity, rather than to adopt the ostrich posture. This was the attitude of many of the men who voluntarily fought in the late war: they were not militarists, even if they were exploited by militarists.

Finally, there is a point where, I think, the reviewer's wishes have misled him on a *fact* of psychology. He says—"Class-consciousness is just as susceptible to all the finer human appeals which evoke the emotions that serve social purposes, as to those which evoke the anti-social emotions which serve anti-social purposes." Only by virtue of man's incorrigible partiality of mind could anyone blind himself to all the recent evidences of the immensely greater suggestibility of mankind, in the mass, to hate and pugnacity, than to love and kindness. The war and the "peace" both offer abundant evidence that hate and pugnacity can be engendered in any mass of people against almost any other mass of people, but no evidence that love, or even active pity or practical sympathy, can be so excited in a society constituted as at present, except in a minority of moral supermen. And this is what we should expect from the facts of biology; the anti-social individualistic instincts being inherited from remote ancestors, the social instinct being but a comparatively recent, and consequently unstable, acquisition. So deep-seated is the instinct of pugnacity that its manifestation can be aroused even in the dog or cat deprived of its cerebral hemispheres; the removal of which reduces the animal to an entirely mindless machine, on a mental level lower than that of the frog, incapable not only of love or the higher emotions, but of the simplest act of memory or conscious discrimination.

Now this review would hardly be worth notice in the columns of the PLEBS were it not for the illustration it affords of the innate partiality of the human mind; the impossibility of impartiality, even in those quarters where it is most loudly professed. Given a point of view, a habit of mind, a complex, call it what you will, which dreads the idea of revolution and the suffering and discomfort which it involves, and which desires a continuation of the existing order, with generous but not too drastic reform:

impartial consideration of the revolutionary tendencies now at work would be disturbing to its equilibrium, would lead to uncomfortable thoughts. But the mind automatically tries to shut out uncomfortable thoughts, by the ostrich-reaction. A reader with such a point of view would, on reading *Creative Revolution*, tend to overlook the authors' scholarly study of the revolutionary state of mind, and to see in the book all sorts of imaginary features. This seems to be what has happened here.

We must not blame the reviewer. We are all like that when our deep-seated emotional complexes are touched. Our minds are essentially *partial*. They can only pay attention to one thing at a time, and to do this efficiently must exclude all others. And the side of a question we are interested in, and which tends to monopolise our minds, is that side which makes for action, and generally for action in the direction in which our unconscious complexes are driving us. Interest is *subjective*, its purpose is to enable the individual to *do something*, "to obtain some particular conclusion, or to gratify some special curiosity" (William Jones, *Psychology: Shorter Course*, p. 358). As Bergson says (*Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 35): "We do not aim generally at knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but in order to take sides, to draw profit—in short, to satisfy an interest."

We can all satisfy ourselves of the partiality of our own reason, our own associative mechanisms, by introspection. On reading a book those ideas alone make an impression on our memory which link on to our complexes and sentiments. Thus the novels of Henri Barbusse, or Tressall's *Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*, appeal to the revolutionary as propaganda, while individuals with no revolutionary complex often find in them nothing unusual. And the readers of a newspaper which engages in a particular line of propaganda may even be incapable of reading a paper of opposite views; or, if they do happen to peruse it, be inclined to wonder that anyone can be fool enough to read such rubbish.

The use of our intellects in the pursuit of abstract truth without relation to the needs of everyday life, so far as such a use occurs at all, must be one only developed quite late in man's history; one probably only possible in rare minds, which have the economic environment and the inclinations that render possible a detachment from everyday affairs. Bertrand Russell suggests that genuine or "impartial" thought can only occur when the impulse behind it is the pure instinct of curiosity, uninfluenced by mundane desires. The man who could adopt an impartial attitude in the study of economics, or of the history of the environment in which he gets his living, would be as abnormal a phenomenon as the man who could vivisect his own child in the interests of abstract physiological science.

The fact that man's mind is biologically an organ of partiality, and that it cannot be impartial in matters involving his deep-seated emotional complexes, is the scientific warrant of the Plebs system of deliberately partial education; of presenting first those aspects of knowledge which will best equip the workers for action in the economic crisis that is upon them, and of excluding, for the time being at least, those which would divert their attention from the business they have taken in hand. And the same fact shows how absurd is the theory that education can be made impartial in subjects where the personal interests of teacher or student loom in the sub-conscious background of the mind.

SOCIALIST CLASSICS

III.—CAHN'S "CAPITAL TO-DAY"

MANY and varied are the financial problems confronting the capitalist world to-day and calling for immediate solution. Chief among them are :—the unstable condition of the exchanges, unprecedented currency inflation, and a shortage of gold, which reflects itself in a scanty supply for internal circulation and accumulation, and for the settlement of international indebtedness, resulting in stringent restrictions of its free exportation.

It is evident that such difficulties hamper the smooth working of the profit-making machine. So much so, indeed, that some financiers and many socialists see in their continued existence and aggravation the rock upon which the capitalist ship will be stranded. Every serious student, therefore, will endeavour to acquire a clear understanding of the facts concerning the present monetary system.

When Marx wrote, the present form of the financial system was in its infancy, while the banking system, based on book-keeping credit, appeared little more than a "technical convenience." To-day, the mass of elastic fictitious wealth is stupendous, and, what is equally notable, it is a *necessity* without which capitalism could not go on for a day. Marx, therefore, could not discuss the peculiar problems of to-day. But he supplied the key to their solution, and in the hands of Herman Cahn it is used with striking effectiveness.

In the early days of capitalism the unconsumed portion of surplus value was held in the form of gold at a bank or in the owner's house. Being real wealth, it could either be immediately converted into the means for expanding industry, or retained to be finally handed down as a legacy. But with the development of capitalism, as a result of the advancing productiveness of labour, the yearly aggregate product increases with giant strides, and so also does the mass of surplus value. But the total quantity of gold has not increased in anything like the same proportion. The vast unconsumed part of surplus value does not exist in the form of gold. At the banks it consists of mere book entries, having no intrinsic value. Even before the war when gold circulated freely, the proportion of metal at the banks to the total deposits was very small. But to-day, the proportion is much smaller. And by the practise of creating money out of nothing but ink and paper and loaning it out, the banks increase still more this fictitious wealth. Obviously, this bank money is not real wealth, nor does its increase represent an addition of a single use-value to the wealth of society.

Capital To-day gives a large number of statistics, presented in a clear and convincing way, to show how this process works. It attempts to prove that the contradictions inherent in the monetary system are themselves tending to undermine the stability of capitalism.

Fictitious wealth does not stop with the creation of bank money. Take, for instance, the "watering" of stocks and shares. A firm with £10,000 of capital decides to increase it and give its shareholders double the shares, without, remember, one iota of value being added. To the uninitiated it appears that the national wealth has increased. But has it? (For the capitalist, this "watering" trick serves a useful purpose in deceiving the workers as to the rate of profit gained. On the original capital of £10,000

the profit may be £5,000, *i.e.*, 50 per cent.—a dangerous weapon to present to propagandists. But when the shares are doubled to £20,000 the *rate* of profit has fallen to 25 per cent. Yet the same total profit is made, and the workers are exploited as much as before. The more a capital is watered, the lower appears the profit rate, and a prosperous firm may appear to be only just making ends meet!) These new shares circulate on the market and become objects of sale and purchase; but like bank money, they can feed, house, and clothe nobody.

Cahn traces the historical development of this fictitious, unreal form of wealth, and puts the question whether such a colossal pyramid standing upon so fine an apex of real wealth will not result in the whole capitalist edifice crashing to the ground. While the statistics his book contains are derived principally from American sources, yet the tendencies referred to are discernible in every country where capitalism reigns. The great value of such a book is that it enables us to see through the financial fetish, and grasp the fact that the real basis of any economy must be sought in real, consumable use-values.

FRANK PHIPPEN

Cahn's "Capital To-Day" can be obtained from The Plebs Book Dept. Post paid 11s.

TEN-MINUTES' TALKS WITH NEW STUDENTS

V.—PAYING THE PIPER

CLASSES cannot be run without money. Formerly, those who joined met all the expenses. But that method is inadequate if the work is to be done properly, and in addition it's out of date. It is from Trade Union branches and other Labour organisations that the money must come.

An educational fund is as much a necessity to a Trade Union as a strike fund. A Union that spends nothing on education is behind the times. Solidarity is the watchword of labour, but solidarity cannot be achieved merely by giving every worker the same union ticket. That will not prevent some workers *thinking for capitalism*. This is the value of independent working-class education—it will teach the workers to think along the same lines instead of at cross-purposes. Unity of aim, unity of thought, must precede unity of action. The Union that doesn't spend money on educating its members is encouraging the existence of the faint-hearted trade unionist and the potential blackleg.

The Unions must educate; the Unions must pay; and they will do both if they are asked in the proper way. The best method is to get them to form a committee to run the classes in the district, and to supply the sinews of war by means of an affiliation scheme and an annual payment of a copper or two per member, entitling their members to so many scholarships at the classes.

Here is work for students, actual or to be. Don't look on, hoping that the other fellow will shove. Get your own shoulder to the wheel. *The success of the educational movement depends on the students, and the student's duty does not stop at listening, no matter how attentively, to lectures.*

Do not revolve sleepily around the local or district secretary. Remember that the earth exercises a "pull" on the sun as well as the sun on the

earth. Don't say that your branch is the most reactionary in Britain. You'll find many rival claimants, and an argument won't pay the classroom rent. Besides it's a reflection on *you*, unless you can prove that every member is stone deaf. Even if that were true, the student with pluck would learn the deaf and dumb alphabet, and not even such a curiosity of history as a Conservative Workingmen's Association could withstand activity like that!

Remember that an affiliation motion moved and lost is better than no resolution moved at all. The branch at least will have heard that there is such a thing as independent working-class education. A resolution lost even three times means that you are three places nearer to victory.

Although the PLEBS is first and foremost a magazine for class students, don't keep its existence a secret from your mate at the bench. It may make a student of him. Anyhow it will hardly do less than win his vote for your affiliation motion.

And if your classes in the meantime have to run socials and dances in order to make ends meet, don't assume that the other fellow is selling so many tickets that, in the interests of the movement, you should keep yours well out of sight in an inside pocket. When you do go to sell a chap a ticket, don't be convinced he doesn't want one, for he'll see it in your eye and won't buy.

In short, remember that independent working-class education is a practical business, with practical aims. And one of its very first aims must be to get itself established on a sound basis. Do your bit towards that!

J. P. M. MILLAR

THE MINERS' NEXT STEP

THE Editor has asked me to tackle the difficult job of summarising the replies received to the Questionnaire, under the above heading, in the December PLEBS. If only we had more space many of them would have been printed in full; but as this was impracticable it seemed better to summarise them than to print a mixed collection of extracts. Thanks and apologies to those of our readers who contributed are therefore combined

Nationalisation

All the replies sent in agree that the Nationalisation demand did not "catch on" with the average miner. Some blame the lack of understanding on the part of the rank and file; others the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the leaders. Some think nationalisation under the present Government would be dangerous, while others regard it as a step backward in any case. "Scorpion" mentions the possibility of the profits made from a nationalised industry being used to support the armies and navies needed by Imperialism.

The majority of the replies are against compensation; some because it is not practical, and others on the ground that receivers of stolen goods should not be compensated. No account is taken of the fact that under certain conditions compensation of the present owners might lessen their

opposition and give the workers earlier experience in control. Still the tides are now sweeping so fast that probably these considerations of expediency will be left far behind.

All favour intensive propaganda among other unions. Several, however, want all wage demands replaced by action to get nothing less than complete control. One or two railway workers, on the other hand, insist that wage demands cannot be neglected.

The Recent Crisis

The dropping of the 14s. 2d. is generally condemned, and the tactic of reducing prices under similar circumstances favoured. Criticism of the way in which it was shelved is also general. Some correspondents charge certain individuals with conscious treachery—but such charges are much easier to make than to prove.

According to one writer, the Transport Workers, split up into different unions, were the weak link in the Triple Alliance chain. All agree that much has yet to be done to make the T.A. anything more than a name. Reduction of leaders' wages with power of dismissal at a week's notice is one drastic suggestion. This is hardly likely to produce loyal servants. More helpful is the idea that greater *local* T.A. activity should be encouraged, and that in any future crisis, if agreements cannot be made to finish together, each section shall at any rate be kept fully informed of what is happening in the other part of the "spear head."

Difference of opinion exists as to the usefulness of the Joint Committees for Output. The view most favourable to them suggests that they will supply useful information, and often trace decreased production to the lack of clearance, inefficient machinery and management, or to the desire of the owners to avoid E.P.D. and increase the constant capital ready for decontrol. Much will depend upon the personnel of the Committees—it the men are to avoid strengthening "payment by results" and so making a rod for their own back. Perhaps by the time this appears in print an overstocked market will have made the cry for increased output sound foolish in the extreme.

The Future

General assent is given to the proposals for future action given in the Questionnaire. Strong arguments are put forward for "boring from within." One comrade would not only utilise Trades Councils and Councils of Action but also Local Government bodies, which can be made to serve some of our purposes, *e.g.*, feeding of children of strikers and unemployed, use of halls, provision of relief work and prevention of local interference by police.

Nearly all repeat the need for support and extension of the Labour Press to combat the glaring misrepresentations of our opponents. Study classes and communal kitchens—for mind and body—during the strike are the very practical suggestions of the one woman comrade who contributed. Something more will be said in a future issue concerning the National Wages Board and the proposals of the active spirits in the different parts of the coalfield.

MARK STARR

OUR POUND FUND

POUND of what? Pound of *textbooks*, dear reader. Not 1 lb. Pavordupois, but 20s. worth—to be supplied to you, if you back the scheme, as they are issued. We invite you to give over being a mere base proletarian, and become one of the noble army of investors. But you'll get no dividend—in cash, at any rate, though we are prepared to guarantee that you get more than your money's worth back in material for your thinking-apparatus to work on.

We want to publish some textbooks. We've got no capital. We ask you to provide it.

Got the idea? If not, you'll find more about it on p. ii of our cover, and in the Report of the Plebs Meet on another page. In brief, it's a "Keen-a-Kwid" Fund—to be set apart specifically for launching the Textbooks Series. You'd buy all these textbooks sooner or later—we're asking you to do it *sooner*, and so make their publication a practicable proposition.

These are hard times, we know. We shan't think any the worse of you if you drop us a card to say that you've thought it over, but that honestly you can't take a hand at present. But if you can possibly manage it, we know you'll send along. Mark your subscription as for "Pound Fund."

The scheme was set going at the Meet. £34—in cash and I.O.U.s—was collected on the Saturday, and a further £1 handed in on Sunday. A list of the subscribers here follows. (*Will any of these who have not had a receipt from "Plebs" office, since the Meet, kindly send on their addresses; in some cases addresses were not appended to the names on the list.*)

Paid £1 each:—

S. Sykes.	M. Collins.	B. Pickles.	S. Ainsworth.
G. W. Jones.	A. Waight.	J. Armstrong.	E. Pearce.
J. Thomas.	W. Plant.	G. Parker.	G. B. Bailey.
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Geo. Sims.	Dr. Dessin.	A. Bancroft.	H. Brown.
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H. Brownjohn (unemployed).	E. Gledhill.	K. Horrabin.
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How many more next month?

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GEOGRAPHICAL FOOTNOTES TO CURRENT HISTORY

V.—ASIA MINOR, PERSIA AND AFGHANISTAN

AT the time of writing (February 18th) the Russian Trade Agreement is still a disagreement. The Soviet Government proposes certain amendments to the final British draft taken to Moscow by Krassin. The British draft proposed to add to the clause referring to the mutual obligation to refrain from "hostile action and propaganda" a specific reference to "British interests or the British Empire especially in Asia Minor, Persia, Afghanistan and India."



A circular issued by the National "Hands Off Russia" Committee remarks:—

Great Britain virtually asks that Russia should regard Asia Minor, Persia and Afghanistan as British spheres of influence. The Soviet Delegates say that Russia is even more interested than Great Britain in the cessation of hostile propaganda in these countries, because they are adjacent to her, and might be incited to attack her; but Russia contends that this is a political question and should be left to a political conference.

The Soviet Government has now put in a clause binding both parties to respect the independence and integrity of Persia, Afghanistan and Turkish Asia Minor.

A glance at the map should make clear just why the British Government is so anxious to get these countries recognised as British "spheres." Oil is one consideration. India is another. In this latter respect, indeed, we have returned to the old pre-Russian Alliance days, when Russia, not Germany, was "the" enemy, and Russian designs in Asia were the subject of periodical war scares. (See Kipling's early stories.) A different Russia is the enemy to-day; and the new Russia possesses, and knows how to use, a deadlier weapon than any in the Tsar's armoury in other days—the weapon of propaganda.

Hence the "wind up" in Whitehall.

J. F. H.

ECONOMICS WITHOUT HEADACHES

III.

WHEN goods are produced in the factory, they are made to be sold. Such goods we call commodities, and because these things are the basis of our industrial life, we have to see that we understand as much as we can about them.

If a man makes a chair for himself in his spare time, or makes one for a friend, or if I make something in the factory when the foreman is away on his holidays—such things would not be called commodities. Only goods made for sale come within our definition.

No capitalist would risk his money in a business turning out goods that would not sell, and no goods would sell unless they were useful in some way or other. Every commodity then must be useful; in other words, have some "use value." We know that commodities are bought and sold, and that indicates that their values can be compared, so that people may know what they are worth. Some economists tell us that "usefulness" is the standard by which things become comparable, but we cannot measure utility. A loaf of bread is much more useful than a diamond necklace, but bread is cheap compared to diamonds. Again, "usefulness" is largely a matter of taste; many a man has a collection of things he considers very valuable, whereas his wife thinks they are dust-collecting lumber.

The fountain pen I am using is useful, or I would not have bought it. It has also another attribute—something expressed in the term "exchange value," or its value upon the market—10s. 6d. in this case. This feature of a commodity is something understandable. All commerce is carried on by means of comparisons between the exchange values of goods in this way. We shall have a lot to say about this later.

In addition to my pen possessing "Use Value" and "Exchange Value," it possesses something rather more difficult to understand. This we call its "value." I know that it is useful, and I know what I gave in exchange for it, but if it was never to be used again, and if it was the only commodity in the world, and could not be compared with any other, it would still have "value." Lying idle on the desk, it would represent some tangible wealth.

"Value" is something metaphysical. It is not quite so obvious as the other things we have discussed. And so it is better to discuss Exchange Value because, in exchange, values are expressed in terms of things we can readily grasp.

Now, we know that bread, cheese, shoes, hats and such like things are bought and sold every day. Before they can be so dealt with, there must be something common about

all of them that will allow of their being measured for the purpose of computing their values. We used to be taught in school that "you can't add apples to pears" or, in other words, that calculations could only be made when a "Common Measure" had been found. With a £1 note we can purchase, say, 6 neckties, 7 cwt. of coal, a pair of boots, or pay the rent. But we cannot compare neckties and coal. True, they are both useful, but we have already seen that utility cannot be measured.

Search how we may, we can only find one thing common to every commodity under the sun—common to oil, motor cars, cheese, diamond tiaras, and so on, and that one thing is that they are all products of labour. Because this is so, we Marxians declare that all our observations with regard to commodities must begin with an acknowledgment of it.

The only way to compare commodity values, then, is to compare them by the "common measure"—as products of labour; and the only way we can do this is by comparing the amounts of *time* labour has taken to produce them. This brings us to the Marxian definition that "The value of a commodity is determined by the amount of labour time embodied in its production."

This, however, is not complete as it stands.

If a man produced an article in his home, working with hand tools, and took 40 hours to do it, the value of it by our definition would be that of everything else that took 40 hours, but such a man would find that his little product would have to compete with similar ones made in up-to-date factories, and taking perhaps only 20 hours to make. There are some people who have money enough to be able to insist upon having only hand-made goods in their homes, and they might pay the 40 hours' price, but they are a special kind of people.

Any manufacturer about to place a new article on the market will experiment and test until he has found out exactly what is required. In the engineering industry a new machine is often "tested to destruction," in order to find its weak places, but the selling price of the machines is not determined by the cost of producing the first one, but by the cost of producing them in a general way when the work is organised.

That brings us to the elaboration of our Marxian definition, and we say now that "the value of a commodity is determined by the amount of *socially necessary* labour time embodied in its production." By "socially necessary" we mean the average amount of labour time in normal circumstances, and using up-to-date tools.

Just as we have to find a "common

measure" in order that we may compare commodities, so must we do in the case of Labour. We have seen that every commodity had a two-fold character in that it possessed "Use Value" and "Exchange Value," and in quite the same way we find that Labour also has a two-fold character. The energies of a man may be expended upon making chairs, baking bread, grinding valve spindles, or what not, but we cannot compare the special work of baking with the special work of grinding. There is no "common measure."

But we can compare work in a general sense. A baker, a blacksmith and a bus driver all use up certain energies in the course

of their work. They all labour, though the results are not the same. Our common measure for labour, then, is this expenditure of energy that is common to all forms of industrial activity.

We say that the labour of the turner, the miner, or the joiner, as a special form of work, produces useful articles or "Use Values," but the general labour effort common to all is the value-creating labour which can be measured—and is measured by the employer—by the hour, the day or the week.

We shall see more clearly what this means later on.

W. McLAINE

Query Two:—

DO YOU SETTLE YOUR A/C WITH US PROMPTLY ?

NATIONAL DEBTS AND WEALTH

The following table, forwarded by an American correspondent, appeared recently in *Commerce and Finance* (U.S.A.). It

should provide students of economics and of international affairs with material for discussion:—

	Estimated National Wealth.	Present National Debt.	Per cent.
British Empire	\$230,000,000,000	\$47,000,000,000	20.4
France	100,000,000,000	44,000,000,000	44.6
Russia	60,000,000,000	25,400,000,000	42.3
Italy	40,000,000,000	15,000,000,000	37.5
Japan	40,000,000,000	1,300,000,000	3.3
Germany	20,000,000,000	62,500,000,000	312.5
Austria-Hungary	1,000,000,000	26,000,000,000	2600.0
United States	500,000,000,000	24,000,000,000	4.8

The wealth of the United States is expressed in dollars at their purchasing power in 1920, and that of other nations is expressed in dollars at their pre-war purchasing power. As the estimate for the British Empire includes the wealth of all the British dependencies, Canada, Australia, India, etc., their debts are also included. The present debt of Great Britain is estimated at \$39,000,000,000, and that of her various dependencies at about \$8,000,000,000, distributed as follows: India, \$2,225,000,000; Canada, \$2,000,000,000; Australia,

\$1,500,000,000; and New Zealand, South Africa, Newfoundland, Egypt, etc., an aggregate of about \$2,225,000,000. By "Austria-Hungary" is meant the surviving remnants of the empire formerly so-called, much of which has been given to Czecho-Slovakia, Jugo-Slavia and Italy. The national debts are stated at their face value, converted into dollars at the par or gold equivalent of the currencies in which they are payable. At current rates of exchange the debts would of course be much reduced.

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STUDENTS' PAGE

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Comrade J. L. MAHON sends along a criticism of Dr. G. W. Scott's attempt to prove the Labour theory incorrect; which criticism, however, was largely forestalled by Ablett's review of Scott's book. The only thing that has been more repeatedly "destroyed" than the Labour Theory of Value is the Russian Republic. The professors never seem quite sure that they have finished the job. One gets tired of giving space to their "exposures."

"MANSFIELD."—(1) Land has no economic value. After it is appropriated it can have a price—like the conscience of the politician, and other things into the making of which no labour enters. See Boudin's *Theoretical System*, pp. 111-112. The landlord makes the industrial capitalist give up part of his S.V. by the rent he has to pay. This capitalised rent forms the "price" of land. (2) Will a new form of social organisation develop from the existing Trade Unions, or must one be created outside them? The answer to that question depends on the stage of development reached by a particular country. Also, a new social form might evolve from certain types of Union, while it would need to be created "outside" other (obsolete) types. From a group of industry unions it would be easy to build up the administrative framework of a new society. In the case of a tangle of craft unions it would be easier to work outside. We in Britain have to get the eight millions of organised workers to see that it is their job to make the new society; and that in order to do that they must first get real control of their own unions.

D. MURRAY is puzzled to reconcile Marx's statement, that by selling his labour-power the worker has renounced all his claim to the product thereof, with the growing demand of the workers for control of industry. There is not, or should not be, any puzzle here. Marx is stating the capitalist's point of view. But he does not assert that the workers, as they become *conscious* of their position, will not revolt against it. A man might—in other days—have sold himself into slavery and so renounced all claim to his own body. That would not prevent him repenting of the bargain later, and doing his best to run away.

"TREDEGAR" asks for definitions of certain words used by Dietzgen: "Epistemology" and "cognition" are used in their ordinary general sense—see a dictionary. "Dialectic," however, is used with more than the ordinary "dictionary" meaning in socialist philosophy. It implies a view of the universe and all it contains as being in constant motion. Cf. Engels, *Landmarks*, p. 173, "The dialectic is . . . nothing but the science

of the universal laws of motion and evolution in nature, human society and thought."

From Bury comes a question which merits more extended treatment than can be given here:—*What are the effects of the Credit System on the Capitalist System?*

It has made possible an expansion of production which was impossible by the use of gold. The modern banker gathers all the available and potential capital of society and places it at the disposal of the industrial and commercial capitalists. He not only collects Money, but creates a vast amount of paper titles to value. The immense saving effected and the unlimited expansion given to production increase the power of the banks. However, this credit machinery has its dangers—it does not help capitalism to overcome its contradictions. We would strongly advise a study of Cahn's *Capital To-day* on this point.

What are the causes and the remedy of the present unemployment? (Owen, Blaina.)

The tendency of capitalism to make labour more productive and so need less labourers. This is brought about in many ways—by improvement of old and introduction of new machinery, by increasing the intensity of labour, by the economies of large-scale production both in the making and selling of commodities. Unemployment is no new thing under capitalism; a surplus on the labour market always favours the buyer of labour power. The war has aggravated a pre-existent sore. There are many immediate factors at work: restriction of markets by the Allied blockade of Russia and Central Europe, slump in trade following the cessation of Government buying for destructive purposes, the uncertainty of the future of production in various parts of the world, deadweight of taxation to pay the interest on the fictitious capital of the National War Debts, reluctance of the capitalists to receive less than their war-time profits—these are some of the most noticeable immediate causes.

The remedy? Certainly not increased production, as Garvin in the *Observer* (January 9th, 1921) would still have us believe. Stabilise the exchanges, put old customers on their feet again, open up the markets of the world—and still the problem will remain. The worker must fight for the taxation of profits to provide maintenance for those without work; and prepare for the taking over of mines and factories by his own organisations. (Incidentally, the cry of the Bosses for decreased wages *because* of lower prices shows that—as has been previously pointed out on this page—they do not believe their own tosh about the "vicious circle." According to that argument, a fall in wages ought to have preceded a fall in prices, and not *vice versa*.) M.S.

TRA LA MONDO

ESPERANTO NOTES BY POPOLANO

THE Socialist Party of Transylvania and the Banat (formerly parts of Hungary, now ceded to Rumania) has officially adopted Esperanto and appointed a travelling teacher to teach the language. The text of the resolution passed at the national congress of the party runs as follows: "The congress declares the acceptance of Esperanto as an already existing international language, and expresses the wish that it be officially used in the international Labour movement. To that end, it calls upon all organisations to make a similar decision. . . . The congress recognises that Esperanto is one of the chief means for bringing about the unity of the proletariat of the world and for realising world peace, and as such it welcomes the language with enthusiasm."

Danio

Dudek germanaj infanoj el Dresden, kiuj parolas Esperanton, estis gastoj en la hejmoj de bonvoluloj en Danio. Sajne ili tie vivis kiel reg'idoj, post longa malsatado en sia hejmlando.

Polio

Lau la "Internacia Esperanto-Servo," oni nun konsideras la unuformigon de la tri partoj en kiuj nuntempe Polio estas dividita. La vivkondic'oj en la tri partoj montras grandegan diversecon. Ekzemple, en Grand-Polio oni pagas por trifunta pano 15 markojn; dum en Kongres-Polio oni pagas por la sama kvanto 60 g'is 80 markojn.

La Pola parlamento nun celas forigi tiun neegalecon.

Moravio

Oni raportas, ke tie c'eh'aj, polaj kaj germanaj komunistoj decidis fondi propran komunistan partion, kun alig'o al la Tria Internacio kaj sen konsidero de la nacieco.— (el *Esperanto Triumfonta*, Köln.)

I.L.P. kaj Esperanto

Sur la tagordo de la Nacia I.L.P. Konferenco estis la jena rezolucio, akceptita de la Londona Distrikta Konferenco:— "Ci tiu konferenco, konstante la grandan gravecon por la socialista movado de la disvastig'o de internacia lingvo inter la laboristoj de la mondo, rekomendas, ke la help-lingvo Esperanto estu alprenata por uzado c'e c'iu'j internaciaj Laboristaj kaj Socialistaj kunvenoj; ke la studado de la lingvo estu subtenataj inter meti-unianoj kaj membroj de Laboristaj kaj Socialistaj korporacioj; kaj ke tiuj korporacioj klopodu ke g'i estu enkondukita en la elementajn lernejojn."

C'iu'j I.L.P.—anoj Esperantistaj helpu!

"Socio, kiu allasas la mizeron, homaro, kiu ebligas la militon, estas lau mia opinio senvalora socio kaj senvalora homaro. Mi celas al pli alta socio, pli alta homaro: unu socio sen premantoj, unu homaro sen limoj!"—*Victor Hugo*.

(Citita el "La Esperantisto," Vieno.)

DON'T FORGET

our Circulation Competition. We are offering a prize of £5 worth of books to the class-secretary, organiser or League member, who sends us, before April 15th, the greatest number of *new postal subscriptions* to the PLEBS. Subscriptions may be for six months (3s. 9d.) or twelve months (7s. 6d.). Cash must, of course, accompany the names and addresses you send. Mark your lists, 'Competition.'

OUR MOTTO COMPETITION

We offer a monthly prize of 10s. worth of books (to be chosen by the winner and supplied through the Plebs Book Dept.) for the best motto, of not more than 24 words, suitable for use on our front cover, received before the 16th of the month. The motto may be original, or a quotation, but should be appropriate to Plebs propaganda. Send in your entries on postcards, marked "Motto," and bearing your name and address. This month's prize has been awarded to—

PAUL AMSDEN,
9, Baldry Gardens, Streatham, S.W.

(for the motto used on the cover of this issue.)

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CORRESPONDENCE

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

DEAR COMRADE,—I do not know what "orthodox" Marxians think about Comrade Johns' outburst in a recent PLEBS; but I for one am certainly not impressed by his warning against that "nasty" subject, Psycho-Analysis. There is a decided tendency amongst Marxists to confine their studies to Economics and History. This is all right as far as "elementary" education is concerned; but when we attempt to limit the Marxian method to these two subjects I believe it is time to protest.

Numerous fields of science and sociology have so far been dominated by the orthodox methods. Should not we apply the Marxian method to those studies? I believe we should. And I may mention that one class in South Wales is studying the subject of sex and society from a Marxian point of view. In other words they are extending the range of Marxism.

The working class must supply itself with a knowledge not only of economics and history, but of every aspect of social life.

Yours fraternally,

D. J. W.

ENGELS

Comrade J. B. Askew writes admitting that he made certain misstatements of facts in his letter criticising Postgate's estimate of Engels' personal character, but urges that the particular incident cited by Postgate was not characteristic of the general relations of the two men. He also again insists on Hyndman's unreliability as a historian. We do not give his letter in full because we do not think the importance of the question at issue justifies a lengthy discussion. We prefer our contributors to be "candid," and therefore printed Postgate's individual opinion on Engels as a man. Now that "Mychel" and Askew have stated the opposite point of view, we think the demands of "candour" have been satisfied. And space is precious.—ED. PLEBS.

THE "PLEBS" ON WELLS

DEAR EDITOR,—What a black suspicious soul is this of J. G. Crowther's!

When I got to Moscow I went at once to the Foreign Office and talked to Tchicherin; when I got to London I went to the Foreign Office and talked to Curzon. On each occasion I talked sense to an infatuated man, about the Baku business and the impossibility of stopping the propaganda of ideas. Why, because I don't use the silly Marxist jargon of "proletarian" v. "bourgeoisie," the

vaguest, silliest words in contemporary thought, must J. G. C. assume I am dishonest, sold, and all the rest of it?

He should look up the torrential outpourings of Henry Arthur Jones in the *Evening Standard*, or J. Pollock in the *Nineteenth Century* (January and February). There he will find his own blood brothers. Only there it is Lenin who has bought me!

I guess when there is real revolutionary work to do or real order to be established we shall find the Crowthers, Pollocks and Joneses all together in the last, most distant ditch, still disapproving highly of everyone and calling us all bought men.

Yours, etc.,

H. G. WELLS

DEAR COMRADE,—J. G. Crowther asks what he calls an "unpleasant" question:—"Is it the policy of the PLEBS to flatter a famous writer because he happens to mention the PLEBS in his latest pot-boiler?"

The answer to this question is as follows:—

(1) It is not the policy of PLEBS to flatter anyone.

(2) The PLEBS is so rarely mentioned in the general Press that any mention of it is worthy of note. When that mention is by a "famous" writer, who, moreover, brackets us with *Pravda* and the *Liberator*, we should be inhuman if we did not acknowledge the compliment. (Possibly J. G. C. doesn't know the *Liberator* well enough to appreciate the compliment?)

(3) The writers (if the Editor will allow me to speak for both of us) were not in any way guilty of "flattery"—any more than J. G. C. is in applying to Wells the term "famous."

J. G. C. "feels sure" that others beside himself must have been made "uneasy" by the two articles. What is there to be uneasy about? J. G. C. admits that Wells "might have made a grand proletarian"—which, if it means anything, means that he possesses abilities which would be a great gain to us if used on our side. If the French Communists are to be congratulated on the adhesion of Anatole France why may we not indulge a wish to win H. G. Wells? It may intensify J. G. C.'s "uneasiness" if I assure him that I, for one, believe not only that H. G. Wells would be a big asset to our Proletcult, but also that he has qualities which make it not only possible, but *probable*, that his adhesion could be secured.

I cannot help wondering whether J. G. C. is "uneasy" because we replied to Wells in a good temper instead of a bad one. The Editor will, of course, please himself, but this is a crime in which I propose to persevere.

Being candid need not necessarily involve being cantankerous!

We did not review Wells' book in preference to Bertrand Russell's. We did not review a *book* at all. Each of us, independently and simultaneously, saw in certain widely-advertised newspaper articles by a "famous" author, matter of interest and import for Plebeians. Each of us adopted an attitude of friendly remonstrance rather than one of angry disparagement, partly because we happened to feel that way about Wells and his work, and partly because that was the best way in which to reply to that sort of argument.

J. G. C. is quite at sea in his facts. Wells is not "lost to us," for the good reason that up till now we have never gained him. Lenin did not ask "Why are you not fighting the class-war?" because Lenin is not in the habit of asking meaningless questions. He probably asked which side Wells was going to take in the class-war, which is a very different question, and one that Wells has not yet answered, except by querying the inevitability of this war and therefore the need for choosing a side. On this point Wells requires the education we can give. We tried to give it.

One further point. It is well known to Plebeians that our Editor and H. G. Wells are personally acquainted—having worked together on a big job. This makes me wonder whether J. G. C. thinks that personal considerations had something to do with the tone of our criticisms. In the case of the Editor personal feelings may have counted—and rightly so. He is surely as much entitled to a personal judgment as I am to an opinion of the potentiality of any of my workmates? But in my case (and I fancy my contribution was the more "flattering") this factor could not operate. I have never met Wells and am never likely to; and only twice have I met our Editor in the flesh. My contribution was written, delivered as a lecture, and posted, before the Editor's notes appeared. My "attitude" was therefore my own. J. G. C. has not persuaded me that it was a wrong one.

Yours fraternally,
THOS. A. JACKSON

ACQUIRED CHARACTERS

DEAR COMRADE,—I would like to make a few comments on Comrade Wertheim's letter in the December PLEBS on the transmission of acquired characters.

The controversy goes back to the early days of the evolution theory, when Weismann crossed swords with Haeckel and Spencer over it; and since then the immense accumulation of facts and the steady advance

of biological thought has come down decisively against the theory of transmission.

"Acquired" character is a term used in opposition to innate or inherited character, and in all cases it indicates something stamped on the individual during his life by the special circumstances of its environment. Superficially it would appear, as it did to Lamarck, that this direct adaptation might be the final evolutionary mechanism; but in reality this explanation errs on the side of extreme simplicity. Descent is not from parents to offspring, but from germ cell to germ cell. The germ cells in fact form a continuous chain reaching back into the immeasurable past: the "body" developed in each generation being but the envelope in which the germ cells are nourished and protected. The specific form of the body is determined by the germ cell from which it grows, and those variations which form new characters arise as the result of changes the origin of which is at present obscure, occurring in the germ plasm. Evolutionary progress is made by the natural selection of those variations which occur in the germ plasm and which manifest themselves in the organs and functions of the body, whenever these tend to the life advantage of the individual.

It is not clear what Comrade Wertheim means by "evolving a higher type of mentality." To-day there exist many types of mentality, some of them certainly very "high" in whatever sense the term is used, whether to indicate artistic creative power, or breadth of philosophic outlook. From the view point of social development, it is of far greater importance to raise the general level than to seek to produce any higher type. This can be done only by securing for the great mass of men the leisure for intellectual pursuits which modern production, scientifically organised and communally controlled, would amply allow.

"Is it not possible," asks Comrade Wertheim, "that any . . . striking experience of the individual . . . could leave its register on the mind plate of a descendant?" No such instance of direct transmission has ever been recorded, and in the light of the known facts of heredity—incomplete though these still are—it can be regarded as so improbable as to warrant our leaving it out of account. The race is, fortunately, protected against such extremes of development as this process would involve, for it is just these "pre-eminently striking" individual experiences, of mind or body, which are of least service for racial progress.

In conclusion I would like to congratulate the PLEBS and your contributor "Nordicus" on having introduced a subject of such practical importance to all students of sociology.

Yours frat.,
ARTHUR RILEY

"THE GREAT CONTRADICTION"

DEAR COMRADE,—Maurice H. Dobb's "grievous heresy" is as old as Marxism, and exceedingly orthodox.

He gets in a "grievous" mess in his third paragraph, the last sentence of which contradicts all that precedes it! He considers a part (the engineer's labour) as outside of and separate from the whole (average human labour). In fact, what is new in his letter is wrong, and what is right is superfluous.

Comrade Dobb, instead of troubling to present dubious "solutions" to problems already explained, should set himself to investigate how far modern capitalism is erecting other obstacles to an average rate of profit than those foreshadowed and analysed by Marx in Vol. 3, Chap. 14.

Yours frat.,

M. S.

PLEB SCHOOL TEACHERS: AN APPEAL

DEAR COMRADE,—Among PLEBS' readers are doubtless a good many school teachers. The advantages of an interchange of views among such are obvious. Nothing is gained by ploughing lonely furrows! Is there no one among us who has the time and "organising ability" to co-ordinate our efforts? Until someone speaks up, I am prepared to take the initiative. Those interested please forward suggestions to the address given below.

I do not advocate the formation of a sort of N.U.T. "Left Wing Party," or "Unofficial Reform Committee." Rather should we consider ways and means of equipping ourselves for the real work. We have the experiences of our Russian comrades to draw upon. Therefore, I suggest that we should get to know exactly what is being done under the Soviets, and after due consideration, elaborate our programme and policy accordingly.

Furthermore, the great majority of teachers, as we know, are hopelessly ignorant of their economic relationship to Capitalist society, and I suggest the drawing up of a manifesto showing clearly the anomalous position of "non-industrial" wage-workers. Are we clear in our own minds on the subject? The PLEBS can help us here. Many are my regrets that the last chapter in Vol. 3 *Capital* remains uncompleted.

Yours frat.,

PHILIP G. HUGHES

63, Deri Terrace,
Tylorstown, Rhondda.

LOUIS BLANC—A CORRECTION

DEAR COMRADE,—According to Postgate (February PLEBS) Louis Blanc was not born until 1811, though his father had been executed during the Terror (i.e., in 1794). A posthumous child, with a vengeance! Seventeen years—beats elephants!

Yours frat.,

E. & C. P.

R. W. POSTGATE writes:—Many thanks to E. & C. P. for pointing out the slip. It was Blanc's grandfather who was executed.

THE LABOUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

Page Arnot writes asking The PLEBS to bring before its readers the serious financial position of the Labour Research Department (34, Eccleston Square, S.W.1).

We urge all our T.U. readers to do what they can to secure their Union's affiliation to the Department. The total sum from T.U. affiliation fees last year amounted to £681 12s. *Less than £700 from over 7,000,000 Trade Unionists! £1 per 10,000!*

This is a pretty shameful state of affairs. And since the work of a Research Department is—or could be, if adequately financed—a very important wing of the working-class educational movement, it is fitting that Plebeians should take a hand in remedying it.

Don't waste time in criticising the L.R.D.'s shortcomings—real or imaginary. Help to get it on its feet, and then criticise it all you like. The point is that it can render us vital assistance in our work, and that it is (as yet) in existence. If it goes down, solely because of Labour apathy, you can bet your bottom dollar that the Bosses will rub their hands with glee.

The sympathy of all Plebeians will go out to C. T. PENDREY (Plebs E.C.) and MABEL PENDREY in their grief at the death of their only son, ERIC, aged 5. ERIC was already a quite well-known figure at Plebs and College functions in London. He died in hospital on February 3rd.

It is proposed to hold a Lancashire and Cheshire Conference of Plebs members at Ribble Valley Club House, Saturday, May 21st. Will those wishing to attend write Jack Hamilton, 99, Botanic Road, Liverpool, stating whether they intend to stay over night not later than March 31st.

Wanted.—Plebeians willing to sell PLEBS at London public meetings.—Write, London Organiser, c/o Plebs League, 11a, Penywern Road, S.W.5.

Query Three:—

HAVE YOU MADE A NOTE OF THE SPECIAL PLEBS EDITION OF "CREATIVE REVOLUTION"? (see p. iii. of cover).

REVIEWS

A GERMAN UTOPIAN

The New Society. By Walther Rathenau. (Williams and Norgate. 6s.)

Walther Rathenau is perhaps more interesting as a man than as a writer. He is at once philosopher and man of action; shrewd critic of what he terms "official socialism," prophet of a Utopia which is to realise all that is best in the socialist vision, and multi-millionaire director of the largest electrical concern in Germany. He it was who organised the Service for the Husbanding of Raw Materials for War Purposes which added considerably to the staying-power of blockaded Germany.

The best-known of his many books, *Von Kommenden Dingen*, is shortly to be issued in an English translation (under the title *In Days to Come*). But the first work by Rathenau to appear in English is a smaller study, *The New Society*, written after the armistice and the German November revolution—when, therefore, it was no longer necessary for a respectable author to keep one eye anxiously cocked on the censor.

As a critic, Rathenau writes forcibly at times. His strictures upon capitalist society and upon "official socialism"—late Victorian social democracy—often hit the bull's-eye. But his constructive efforts are amazingly feeble. The first requisite, and indeed the whole secret, of a permanent betterment of man's lot is to be found, he asserts, not in any change of "institutions," but in a change of "heart." We scarcely need to summon a prophet from the far side of the North Sea to expound this gospel to us. The same piping may be heard any day in Tudor Street.

We are to change our hearts; we are to have "a suitable policy in regard to property and education"; above all there must be "a limitation of the right of inheritance." Like R. H. Tawney, Rathenau believes in going neither too far, nor too fast.

His literary style is abominable. He is diffuse, repetitive, and obscure. His translator has added some useful footnotes, one of which, however, should be revised in a new edition: "By surplus-value the author means all that is produced above and beyond the bare necessities of life" (p. 34)! Rathenau, of course, means nothing of the kind. He is criticising Marxism, and he means by "surplus value" exactly what Marxists mean.

E. & C. P.

"SOCIAL" HISTORY FOR SCHOOLS

England in Her Days of Peace. By Eleanor Doorly. (Philips, New Era Series. 2s. 6d. net.)

This is a series of rather loosely connected chapters on English social history which may, however, serve a useful purpose by providing appetising "tastes" of the subject rather than a heavy meal. What strikes one most about a book such as this is the lack of any guiding thread to social changes. For the most part, apparently, things "just happened."

Nevertheless, it is an interesting example of the new type of school-book, and the later chapters—on Wool, Roads, Ships, etc.—are a big improvement on the old-fashioned strings of dates, battles and kings. It is, too, significant that the author uses as the basis of her chapter on Enclosures such a book as the *Hammonds' Village Labourer*. If to her wide reading and easy style of expression there were added an understanding of the origin and development of social change, Miss Doorly might give us a text-book which would be really worth while.

M. S.

A NEW LIFE OF MARX

The Life and Teaching of Karl Marx. By Max Beer. (Nat. Labour Press. 3s. 6d. Post paid from PLEBS, 3s. 10d.)

The N.L. Press is to be congratulated on breaking fresh ground—for it—in certain of its more recent publications. Books such as this volume and the same author's *History of British Socialism* (two vols., from PLEBS, 5s. 6d. each, post paid) are better worth while than the "Beauty, Bathos and Brotherhood" sort of thing which too often figured in its lists in the past.

Any book on Marx by an intelligent critic is bound to be interesting, and Beer is certainly intelligent—though guilty of some curious lapses. His book was written for the centenary celebrations in Germany. His general attitude towards Marxism is that, though its theories are obsolete, it yet retains its appeal to proletarians because it voices the needs and aspirations of a subject class and is therefore a powerful incentive to action. But, irritating though its revisionist outlook often is, the book—being by a continental author—is not characterised by that complacent ignorance of Marx and his work usually displayed by British writers educated in the Fabian nursery.

Query Four:

ARE YOU BUYING YOUR BOOKS FROM THE PLEBS
BOOK DEPARTMENT?

An admirable introduction deals with the development and outcome of Marxian dialectics. This is followed by three biographical chapters, in which mention is made, by the way, of the interesting fact that Marx, during his student days, wrote three volumes of poetry (it is to be hoped that the N.L. Press will not feel it its duty to publish these!). Chapter IV. deals with the Materialist Conception of History: Classes, Class-Struggles, and Class-Consciousness: the Rôle of the Labour Movement and the Proletarian Dictatorship; and Outlines of Marx's Economic Doctrines. The latter is the most disappointing section of the book—though it may well prove to be the most provocative. Fancy anyone writing of Marx—

He looked at the capitalist economic system as being essentially free from external hindrances and disturbances, free from invasion both by the State and the proletariat.

And where in any volume of *Capital* is there any justification for such a statement as (p. 97)—“The superfluous commodities have no exchange value”; or this (p. 98)—“Value is only created by the [wage] worker in production and in distribution connected therewith”? On p. 94, line 25—to make sense of the reference—should read “as the [key to the] real inner being, etc.” On p. 100 the attempt to transform economic terms into an ethical judgment is distinctly poor criticism; as it is likewise very slovenly work to dissolve “constant capital” into its elements and then use only one part of those elements in the apportionment of profits (pp. 105-7).

There are, in fact, quite a number of similar instances of misstatement or misunderstanding of Marxian economic theory which will provide excellent exercise for critical students. And the book is well worthy of critical study despite its faults.

G. S.

A USEFUL HANDBOOK

Modern Finance. By Emile Burns. (Oxford Univ. Press, “World of To-day” Series, No. 3, 2s. 6d. Post paid from PLEBS, 2s. 8d.)

One of the chief difficulties confronting the economic student in considering the operations of the Credit System is the need of a simple, straightforward statement of the meaning of the various terms used in describing money market transactions. What is meant by “cumulative preference shares,” “ordinary shares,” “bills of exchange,” “preference shares,” “preferred ordinary shares,” “underwriting” of share issues, &c.? What is the origin of bank surpluses, the causes of high and low bank rates, the relationship and dependence between the Bank of England and the other large banking concerns? How are the relationships of international exchange managed and regulated?

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All these commonplaces of newspaper discussion of financial and international affairs are treated of on the assumption that they are well understood by the general public. As a matter of fact, very few people could pass an ordinary examination in the meaning of the terms employed in the world of finance, and fewer still intelligently state the basis upon which all these activities rest. To say that Emile Burns has here presented us with a simple and intelligent description of the *machinery* of the money market, in a form suitable for the general reader and invaluable for the student of economics, is therefore to accord him high praise. In simplicity and conciseness of presentation his book should serve as a model for our own forthcoming text-books. It is indeed an achievement to put the whole of his material into 58 pages, and yet leave out nothing essential for an intelligent understanding of the elements of the subject. Moreover, this result has been achieved without the aid of diagrams, or the confusion of rows of figures. One may need to use other books if one wants to qualify as an expert on details of the mechanism of finance, but a previous reading of this book will do much to make the more elaborate works understandable.

The chapter headings include Money in Banks, Investments, The Functions of Banks in Starting and Running Industries, The Tendency of Industries to Finance Themselves, International Finance, Public Finance, The Central Bank and the Credit System, Money of Account and of No Account. A minor defect is the lack of a glossary of terms and an index.

As a source of concise information on the actual mechanism—not the theory—of the Credit System, this book should find a ready sale in our classes, and would prove an admirable introduction to such works as Cahn's.

G. S.

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THE PLEBS TWELFTH ANNUAL MEET

THE twelfth Annual Meet of the Plebs League was held at Bradford on Saturday and Sunday, February 12th and 13th. There was a good gathering on both days, though the high cost of travelling, as we expected, prevented several old friends from being present. Bradford, Halifax and neighbouring centres were, of course, well represented. Bury, Manchester, Fleetwood, Sheffield, Cardiff, Newcastle, Mansfield (Notts.), Leeds and Birmingham also sent delegates; and a small, but gallant, band braved—and survived—the journey from King's Cross to the Far North.

Mark Starr took the chair in the Co-operative Café on Saturday, and read messages regretting inability to be present from P. Lavin (Secretary, Scottish Labour College), M. Titterington, J. T. Walton Newbold, B. S. McKay (Plebs E.C.), J. Hamilton (Liverpool), J. P. M. Millar (Edinburgh) J. Millar (Leith) and Arthur McManus (Communist Party). M. S. wasted no time in rhetoric, but referred to a recent *Yorks. Observer* article in which the Plebs League was described as "the most revolutionary body in this country," and hoped we should endeavour to be business-like as well as Red.

The Secretary (Mrs. W. Horrabin) then presented her report for the eighteen months, August 1st, 1919 to December 31st, 1920. Details as to classes, conferences, etc., having already appeared in the PLEBS, she confined the report to a general summary: (1) of the League's progress; and (2) of its financial position. Under the first head she reported close on 800 paid up members and 30 branches of the League. In four centres—Liverpool, the North-East (Northumberland and Durham), London and Manchester—our members had been to the fore in the formation of District Councils, which had taken in hand the management and maintenance of classes in their respective areas. In addition, the work and the aims of the Plebs League were gaining increasing recognition, not only in this country, but abroad ("even in the darker places of the earth, such as America"). She urged that our aim should be, not a large numerical total of members, "consisting of anyone who feels mildly friendly to us and our work," but rather "small groups of fanatical partisans, who are prepared to make the propaganda of independent working-class education their main interest in life, and to make themselves, if need be, nuisances—to others—in that cause."

As regards finance, the Secretary emphasised the fact that the largely increased work of the League now necessitated the payment of *rent and wages*; that the PLEBS needed a still bigger circulation to pay its way; that—equally important—we needed, now more than ever, *prompt payment* by all our supporters, since our monthly printer's

bills are too large to be allowed to pile up (even if our printers could afford to allow us to get behind-hand in paying them). The figures in the Financial Statement and Balance Sheet were very considerably larger than in any previous year. That meant additional responsibility, and not a little occasional anxiety, to those elected to official positions in the League.

Mrs. Horrabin then presented the following Financial Statement, which she explained was in two parts, owing to the decision of the last Meet to make the financial year run from January to December instead of from August to July, as formerly.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

July 31st, 1919 to December 31st, 1919.

RECEIPTS

	£	s.	d.
Cash in hand, July 31st, 1919	32	5	8
Sales of PLEBS	155	15	5½
" " Publications	102	10	2
League Subscriptions	6	19	11
Donations	29	18	9
Advertisements, etc.	6	5	0

£333 14 11½

EXPENDITURE

	£	s.	d.
Printing	135	9	10
Postage	38	2	6½
Advertisements	8	8	3
Office expenses	29	1	9
Sundries	20	0	5

£231 2 9½

Balance at bank, Jan. 1st, 1920	74	10	8
Cash in hand, Jan. 1st, 1920 ..	28	1	6

£333 14 11½

Audited and found correct, January, 1920.

G. H. MELHUISH.

J. P. M. MILLAR.

BALANCE SHEET

(For above period)

LIABILITIES

	£	s.	d.
Due to late Secretary	32	9	1
To Printers for December PLEBS	48	0	2
Balance	192	18	11

£273 8 2

ASSETS

	£	s.	d.
Typewriter, etc.	25	0	0
Outstanding accounts	50	0	0
Books in stock	95	16	0
Cash at bank	74	10	8
Cash in hand	28	1	6

£273 8 2

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

January 1st, 1920 to December 31st, 1920.

RECEIPTS

	£	s.	d.
Balance at bank	74	10	8
Cash in hand	28	1	6
Sales of PLEBS	864	18	10
" Publications	501	0	8
League subscriptions, badges	54	9	9½
Donations	116	2	0½
Advertisements, sundries, etc.	20	11	5½
	<u>£1,659</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>11½</u>

EXPENDITURE

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Printing—Books	527	10	1			
PLEBS	818	2	2			
				<u>1,345</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>3</u>
Postage				128	12	2½
Advertisements				29	6	0
Office expenses—						
Salary	22	10	0			
Sundries	34	5	9			
				<u>56</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>9</u>
Badges, Sundries, etc.				54	16	5
				<u>£1,615</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>7½</u>
Balance at bank, Dec. 31st				24	8	4
Cash in hand, Dec. 31st				20	4	0
				<u>£1,659</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>11½</u>

Audited and found correct, Feb. 11th, 1921.

G. H. MELHUISE.
R. HOLDER.

BALANCE SHEET

(For above period)

LIABILITIES

	£	s.	d.
Due to late Secretary (Loans, 1913-14)	32	9	1
Balance for printing, "Worker Looks at History"	200	0	0
Balance	492	3	3
	<u>£724</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>4</u>

ASSETS

	£	s.	d.
Office furniture, etc.	30	0	0
Outstanding accounts	150	0	0
Books in stock	500	0	0
Balance at bank	24	8	4
Cash in hand	20	4	0
	<u>£724</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>4</u>

T. A. Jackson moved, and Dr. Dessin seconded, the adoption of the Report and Balance Sheet, which was carried unanimously.

Geo. Sims then moved, and T. D. Smith (Birmingham) seconded, a resolution that "the Conference endorses the appointment by the E.C. of a paid office secretary." Sims explained that Miss K. Horrabin was asked to accept the post (1) because she was already in touch with the work of the PLEBS office, having on many occasions rendered voluntary assistance; and (2) because, having had considerable experience in a London publisher's office, the E.C. felt that she would be well-fitted to undertake the development of the Plebs Book Department.

It was decided that the appointment of auditors for the current year should be left to the E.C.

The Editor (J. F. Horrabin) then reported on (a) the Magazine, and (b) other publications. The PLEBS had increased in bulk, in price, and in circulation. Since the inauguration of the 6d. 32 pp. series last October the circulation had risen from 4,500 to 6,000 (December) and 6,350 (January). This was cheering—but not yet quite satisfactory, as 7,000 monthly was necessary if the PLEBS was to pay its own way—including a proportion of the office-secretary's wages. He urged that the PLEBS was now well worth its price; it had got together a group of writers whose work would compare very favourably with that of the highly-paid staffs of much more widely-known journals, and he appealed to all Plebeians to do their utmost—unapologetically and untiringly—to win new subscribers and win them quickly.

To critics who declared that the PLEBS was now "too elementary," "over simplified," he replied, that when it confined its appeal more exclusively to advanced students its circulation was about 1,200, and that now it is five times that number. Moreover, he was inclined to think that some of these critics were apt to get no further than the labels of the goods offered. If an article were described as a "Ten Minutes' Talk"—and written in easy English—they assumed at once that it was beneath their lofty intelligence; whereas a translation from the Russian or the German—though it might express the same ideas, but in rather more ponderous phraseology—gave them instantaneous benefit.

The discussion which followed made it clear that the general feeling is decidedly in favour of more, rather than less, simplification. McLaine's "Economics without Headaches" series was mentioned by one or two speakers as being the right kind of thing. (And the Esperanto Notes, it was stated, had already gained fresh readers.)

The very useful suggestion was put forward by Comrade Waight (Halifax) that, in order to advertise the PLEBS, the utmost use should be made of the correspondence columns of T.U. journals. "Take part in whatever controversies are going on—and work in a mention of the PLEBS." Comrade

Waight's own assistance in this respect, as Editor of the *Assurance Agents' Chronicle*, lent additional point to his appeal.

The second part of the Editor's report dealt with publications other than the Magazine. Of Craik's *Short History*, 10,000 had been printed, and 8,650 sold (up to December 31st); of Starr's *Worker Looks at History*, 10,000 printed and 6,560 sold. He pointed out that a balance of £200 was still owing to the printers for the latter, and that this was a really urgent item in the balance-sheet; and also that nothing had been paid to either author. 15,000 had been printed of the new propaganda pamphlet, plus 2,000 each (special editions) ordered by the London and North-Eastern Councils. If branches and classes would order (and pay for) now a supply of the pamphlet sufficient for propaganda use during the coming summer and autumn, they would help the League very materially, as the printer's bill for these has to be met immediately.

It was hoped to arrange in future for special cheap PLEBS editions of useful books. A start was being made with Eden & Cedar Paul's *Creative Revolution*, published last year at 8s. 6d.; the PLEBS had arranged for a paper-covered edition, unabridged, which would be ready early in April, price 2s. 6d. They had only been enabled to do this by a loan of £140 from the Plebeians, that being the portion of the total cost which had to be paid to the publisher, with the order. If this edition could be sold right out, quickly, it would result in a useful margin of profit being transferred to the Textbook Publication Fund. *All Plebs please note.*

Last, and most important, were the new textbooks. At least two of these should be ready for publication by next autumn. How were they to be financed? Each of them would cost from £300 to £400, as it would be bad economy not to print editions large enough to meet one or two years' demand. Printers could not be expected to wait as long as that for their cash; and the PLEBS had no surplus capital to sink in textbooks—or anything else!

The discussion touched upon one or two minor matters before the big question of finance was tackled. Eden Paul advocated the translation of certain recent textbooks issued by Left Wing educationists in Berlin; Postgate urged, in opposition, that we needed books dealing directly with our own conditions and designed especially for our own type of student. Then Ratcliffe (Bradford) moved that a special Textbook Publication Fund be opened at once; and from a number of speeches in favour there rapidly emerged the idea of a

POUND FUND

subscribers to which would advance £1, and receive PLEBS publications, as issued, up to the value of their subscription; thus

providing the necessary capital outlay for launching the series. It was Collins (Halifax) who hit just when the iron was hot! "Open the Fund now, Mr. Chairman," he said, "and waste no more time talking about it! Here's my pound—how many others?"

A few minutes later it was announced that £34—£27 in cash and seven I.O.U.'s—had been collected. Another £1 was added on Sunday, making a total of

£35

as the Meet's "send-off" to the scheme. (See list of subscribers on another page.)

The final items on Saturday's agenda were the resolutions, moved by Geo. Sims on behalf of the E.C., amending and amplifying the clauses under the heading, "Methods and Management" in the constitution of the League (as printed in Preliminary Agenda in January PLEBS). Discussion was confined to the proposal to raise the League membership subscription from 1s. to 2s. 6d. This proposal, Sims explained, was made by the E.C. solely in order to bring the annual subscription up to "pre-war purchasing power." An amendment was put forward by the Bradford branch to make 2s. 6d. the subscription for individual members, and 2s. for branch members; this with a view to encouraging the formation of branches. Voting on the amendment was very close, and on a recount being taken the previous decision was reversed, but again only by a majority of one. It was, therefore, agreed that the postal ballot of members, to be taken as soon as convenient after the Meet, should decide whether the E.C.'s recommendation of a 2s. 6d. flat rate for all members, or Bradford's suggestion of a reduction of 6d. for members subscribing through a branch, should be adopted.

The remaining clauses were carried unanimously. The full constitution of the League will be published in the PLEBS after the postal ballot of members has been taken.

After the conclusion of the day's business, Dr. Dessin presided at a Social Evening arranged by the Bradford comrades. Members of the Bradford Playgoers' Society gave a much appreciated reading of Shaw's *Press-Cuttings*, and songs were rendered by other friends.

THE SABBATH PROGRAMME

Sunday's agenda consisted of open discussions on class organisation, League activity, methods of tuition, etc. Mark Starr was again chairman, the meeting being held in the Textile Workers' Rooms.

Various suggestions were put forward, during the discussion on the work of the League and of League branches, for extending our propaganda and increasing the PLEBS' circulation; and we hope to make use of some of these in future appeals.

The discussion on class-organisation proved to be one of the liveliest of the week-end.

and the representative of the Labour College Governors, who was present, will certainly have some interesting material for his report to the next Board meeting.

M. Collins, of Halifax, in a decidedly fighting speech, moved the following resolution, which was seconded—with equal vigour—by Scarfe, of Bradford.₂

"That this Conference regrets that, up to the present, the Governors of the Labour College have not taken into account the needs of the provincial classes, and have so far offered them no practical advantages in return for affiliation. We, therefore, press upon the Governors the urgent necessity of formulating, at an early date, a scheme whereby the work of the College and the classes shall be more closely co-ordinated, and some proportion of the responsibility for the provincial classes undertaken by the College."

Collins emphasised the importance of the classes, and the futility of a College which was not part of an organisation of classes extending over the whole country. He reminded the Governors that, though at present controlled by only two Unions, the Labour College stood for the interests of the working-class, and not merely for a section, or sections, of it. He spoke of the feeling of "isolation" common to class-workers and organisers in the various districts, and in reply to the Governors' appeal to classes to affiliate to the College asked, "What do you offer us in return for affiliation? We need *your* support—not *you*rs."

Ratcliffe (Bradford) supported. If the Governors, he declared, had concentrated on the single aim of gaining increased Union support for the College, and had carried that through successfully, he would have been prepared to forgive them for overlooking, temporarily, the existence of the classes. But they had bungled the business of getting Union support. He himself had been largely responsible for getting the A.G.M. of his own Union—the Postal Workers—to pass a resolution establishing scholarships at the Labour College. That was two years ago; and still there were no Postal Worker students at the College, the Governors having themselves put obstacle after obstacle in the way—instead of going half-way to meet them.

More than one speaker dwelt on the special urgency of the need for College assistance, in view of the increasing tendency on the part of employers to regard men who gave their leisure to class teaching as "dangerous," and to make it impossible for them to obtain employment in their respective localities.

Regret was also expressed that no representative from Scotland had been able to attend, and outline what appeared to be the

admirable system of class-organisation of which the Scottish Labour College—with nothing like the funds of the London College at its disposal—was the centre.

Geo. Mason, representing the Governors, said that he should certainly report to the Board on the recommendations made that afternoon. He urged class-secretaries to send reports of their activities, their membership, and their needs to the Secretary of the College, in order to assist the Governors in the formulation of a scheme for linking the classes to the College.

The resolution was carried *nem. con.**

T. A. Jackson moved the following additional resolution:—

"That this Conference reaffirms the pledge of the Plebs League to do everything possible to secure the attention of the organised workers in their respective localities to the existence and aims of the Labour College, in order to assist the Governors in securing increased Trade Union co-operation in the ownership and control of the Labour College."

He thought it desirable that the Governors should be reminded of the fact that by far the greater part of the propaganda on behalf of the College was carried on by the Plebs League—at no expense to the Governors. Plebs Leaguers were the active workers in the classes everywhere, and were therefore entitled to ask the Governors for a *quid* (or quids) *pro quo*.

This resolution also was carried unanimously.

The Chairman read a telegram from the E.C. of the Communist Party wishing success to the Meet and to the work of the League, and hoping for close co-operation in educational propaganda. (Applause.)

The final item for discussion was "Methods of Tuition," and though the time left was short, owing to the length of the debate on the previous question, many admirable suggestions were put forward—by Smith (Birmingham), F. Casey (Bury), H. Ingle (Manchester), T. A. Jackson and Cedar Paul among others. It was unanimously agreed that the E.C. be recommended to arrange a special Conference, to be held at a convenient provincial centre in August or September, on Teaching Methods; and it was further suggested that, besides papers and discussions, "specimen" lessons be given by selected tutors, and an exhibition of lantern-slides, diagrams, etc., be arranged. More about this later.

Business concluded with a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Coates and all the Bradford Plebs for their hospitality, and admirable arrangements for the Meet.

* See "Our Point of View" for further comment.

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