

Vol. XIV. No. 2

February, 1922

THE PLEBS

AGITATE EDUCATE ORGANISE

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present a little bill
for Reparations to
their former masters.
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THE PLEBS

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

Vol. XIV

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
OUR POINT OF VIEW	33
N.C.L.C. CONFERENCE AND PLEBS MEET	37
THE WORKERS' CULTURE. By A. Rothstein <i>G. y. B.</i>	38
A TWO-MINUTE TALK WITH A NEW STUDENT. By R. W. Postgate ..	41
AMERICAN TEACHERS ON THE BEST TEACHING METHODS. By J. P. M. Millar	42
THE DOUGLAS "THEORIES" AND THEIR PEDIGREE. By W. H. Mainwaring ..	45
PHYSICAL ECONOMICS. By J. J.	48
SOME FURTHER OPINIONS ON THE NEW TEXTBOOK	49
A USEFUL CHART FOR STUDENTS	51
IS THE PLEBS ON THE WRONG TRACK? By John Lewis	52
STUDENTS' NOTES AND QUERIES. By M. S.	53
TRA LA MONDO: Esperanto Notes	54
NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT. By W. H.	55
N. C. L. C. NOTES	56
LETTERS FROM PLEBS:—Physical Economics (Long Jim); A National Industrial Loan (R. Shaw and W. H. Mainwaring); The Problem of Control (E. Faulkner and L. J. B.); That Scheme (T. E. Holt); The Rights of Animals (P.L.E.B.); The Greatest Proletarian Poet (A. P. L.)	58-60
REVIEWS. By T. D. S., R. H., J. G. C., T. A., and W. J. L.	60-62
THE PLEBS' BOOKSHELF. By J. F. H.	63

OUR POINT of VIEW

A "NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION" on Education and the Workers was held at Birmingham, under the auspices of the W.E.A., a few weeks ago. One of the demonstrators was Lord Robert Cecil. And he demonstrated—pretty effectively—that the W.E.A. notion about "Education" being all that was needed to ensure an improved world was simply silly. After cordially agreeing with his friend, Mr. *What KIND of Education?* Tillet (another of the demonstrators), that the present state of affairs was anything but admirable, his lordship confessed to some surprise at his (Mr. Tillet's) praise of education

A blue X in this square means that your subscription has lapsed. Please renew without delay, as we can't afford either to lose you or to send you THE PLEBS gratis.



since, "broadly speaking, *things had been managed by educated people.*" We have seen no report of Mr. Tillett's retort, if any.

Indeed, any retort—from the W.E.A. point of view—would have been difficult. If Mr. Tillett and his W.E.A. friends professed no desire to amend the present state of affairs, then they would be free to go on admiring Education for Education's sake, leaving the actual world to go to perdition or not as it pleased. But at this very demonstration Mr. Tillett waxed eloquent about the contrast between the lot of the children of the slums and the "children born in purple." And, moreover, his audience cheered him! He, that is to say, condemned, and his hearers applauded his condemnation of, the class divisions in present-day society.

THE FACTORY SCHOOL.



(after "The Liberator")

This is the kind of non-partisan, undogmatic education the Boss favours. Are you content with it?

But if you suggest that "Education" should touch on those same class divisions, should teach how and why they arose, and how they might be done away with, then you are "narrow," "doctrinaire," "a mere propagandist," and all the rest of it. No! Shut your eyes, and open your mouth, and see what "Education" will send you! It has sent you, as my Lord Robert pointed out, a pretty rotten world to date. But go on swallowing it, uncritically and respectfully, and doubtless a miracle will happen somehow, someday.

* * *

With yet another of Lord Robert's remarks we find ourselves in hearty agreement. "Education," he said, "*was only valuable if it taught people*

to think." Quite so. And suppose they begin thinking about Education itself. What then? Suppose that they even go so far as to make up their minds (presumptuous worms!) as to the *kind* of Education they think most likely to assist in cleaning up the dirty mess the world has got into. What then? Why then, of course, it is obvious that they cannot be "educated."

It is all beautifully logical. As thus:—1. Education has nothing to do with inculcating a particular set of ideas. 2. It aims only at teaching people to think. Therefore, if Education should lead anybody, after duly thinking, to believe in any particular set of ideas, or to oppose any other set, it can't have been Education. Q.E.D.

* * *

Miss Margaret Bondfield, we note, is also quite sure that it should be the chief aim of Education to cultivate "the power to think." At the Conference on Education for Working Women held at Toynbee Hall, under the auspices of Ruskin College, on January 14th, she, after suitable references to the desirability of the *More Heroics* New Jerusalem, deplored, as a "narrowing interpretation" of Education, the Plebs contention that the purpose of working-class education should be the ending of wage-slavery. Such a trivial, insignificant, "narrowing" aim to concentrate upon, eh, Miss Bondfield? Workers' education must have a nobler purpose than that. It must teach us "how to evolve the power to think, conceive, plan and put our thoughts into tangible form." Well, well. This sounds more heroic; but surely it is a trifle vague? For suppose, having "evolved the power to think," our thoughts take the tangible form of a conviction that wage-slavery ought to be ended and *can* be ended; further, that Education must be a means to some end, and that Workers' Education should accordingly aim, primarily, at the emancipation of the working-class. Where are we, then, Miss Bondfield? Have we ceased to be Educationists? We admit that we are "narrowing" our aim—that is, we are giving it, in your own phrase, "tangible form." But its "narrowness" is forced upon us by social conditions; the social conditions which we (and you, we understand) are out to alter. As a servant of the organised Labour movement your chief aim in life is, or should be, this very ending of wage-slavery. Why, then, should you describe as a "narrowing interpretation" of Education an aim which is big enough for you to devote your life to? Has the purpose of your life become mere "shop" to you and accordingly "narrowing"? . . . Or were you, as we are more inclined to believe, only (unconsciously) making it clear that your own education had not, as yet, enabled you to "evolve the power to think"?

* * *

Our new Textbook (which we commend to Miss Bondfield's notice) has been a bigger success than we had dared to hope for. *The first edition—of 3,000 copies—was SOLD OUT in less than five weeks from the date of publication.* Our office staff, *plus* gallant voluntary *Sold Out!* helpers (see diagram overleaf), staggered daily under the weight of outgoing parcels. They are doing so no longer, although orders are still coming in. We are not a private company, so

our readers are entitled to a precise statement of our plans :—We were only able to produce the book by foregoing any long credit. We have to meet our printer's bill immediately. We cannot, therefore, put in hand any



second edition until we have collected the money for the first. *And a successful second edition will give us a margin to use for the launching of another text book.* That is the position in a nutshell. It is surely unnecessary to labour the obvious moral.

In addition to a regular stream of "home" orders, we are negotiating arrangements with Messrs. C. H. Kerr & Co. for the sale of the book in America. Kerr's write us that they "are just crazy about the book"—and Kerr's should be judges of proletarian literature.

* * *

Every comrade who takes a parcel of PLEBS will have received this month (or should have received) a copy of a strikingly-designed poster advertising the magazine. We are indebted to the generosity of two

PLEBS
Posters

friends for the design, and the blocks, for this poster. Now it is up to our readers to make the utmost use of it. Don't just show it once—and then take the fish and chips home in it. Keep it; use it again and again, until it falls to pieces; and *see that people see it*. We shall be glad to let any reader have further copies; but we are compelled to ask, since the printing of them costs money, that the best and most effective use should be made of every copy. All classes should show one; and you can help by getting one displayed at any literature stall or bookshop, and at all special meetings, demonstrations, etc., in your district. We've wanted to issue a poster for some time, and have received a good many requests for one. Now that we've achieved one let's make a success of it, and our circulation will feel the benefit.



* * *

There is a great Wind Up in New Zealand. A paternal Government is all out to protect the minds of the populace from noxious ideas. So they have instituted a great Book Ban, and published an Index of works "prohibited from importation." Two PLEBS publications are on the list already—Eden and Cedar Paul's *Creative Revolution* and Ablett's *Easy Outlines of Economics*. Also *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*; *Wage-Labour and Capital* and *The State and Revolution*. So E. & C. P. and Ablett are in

Canterbury
Lamb

excellent company! But the most touching evidence of New Zealand's state of nerves is the statement (*Daily Herald*), that "a W.E.A. lecturer was recently dismissed on the ground of alleged Bolshevik views." We should much like, though, to know who dismissed him—the Government or the New Zealand W.E.A.!

<p>IMPORTANT NOTICE</p>

N. C. L. C. CONFERENCE *and* PLEBS MEET

“**D**O your dern'dest to be there!” was our appeal last month. But alas! the 'flu did its dern'dest, and at the last moment all arrangements had to be cancelled and the Conference and Meet postponed. It has now been fixed for

SATURDAY and SUNDAY, MARCH 4TH AND 5TH,

and will be held at the place originally fixed—Clarion Club House, Outwood Road, HANDFORTH (near Manchester).

Delegates must notify N.C.L.C. Sec. of their requirements—bed and meals—at least a week before the date of the Conference.

Agenda, and details of how to reach Handforth, will be published in March PLEBS (but see also, for safety's sake, January No., p. 4).

Affiliated bodies are urged to send along proposals and suggestions for the guidance of the Exec. Committee, N.C.L.C.

Delegates should be provided with credentials, so that only affiliated bodies can record their votes on vital questions of policy, etc. But it is hoped that as many districts, classes, etc., as possible will be represented, even if unable at present to affiliate.

In accordance with the decision taken at the Birmingham Conference last October, the railway fares of *one delegate* from each *affiliated district* will be pooled and shared equally.

Names and addresses of delegates and others desirous of attending the Conference should be forwarded as soon as possible to:—

The Secretary, N.C.L.C., 11, Penywern Road, London, S.W.5.

PLEBS PLEASE NOTE

The PLEBS ANNUAL MEET will be held on the Saturday evening. *Will all Plebs Leaguers intending to be present (unless they have already "registered" as N.C.L.C. delegates) send names, and accommodation required, to Sec., PLEBS, 11a, Penywern Road, S.W.5, as early as possible? See "News of the Movement," re resolutions from Plebs branches for the Plebs agenda.*

The WORKERS' CULTURE.

Eden and Cedar Paul will excuse me for using their book, PROLET CULT, as a text for a few thoughts on proletarian culture, some of which are expressed in their work, some of which have been prompted by meditations on the Russian experience, and some of which spring from a combination of the two sources. They will probably regard this latter as the best tribute to their book, which broke entirely new ground, and therefore must act as a stimulus rather than a guide. I will say right here that it is a powerful stimulus, one of the best—a careful, methodical, Marxist treatment of the subject, devoting itself largely to a historical outline of the movement towards a working-class culture, consciously developed, the world over, and drawing the moral in a guarded fashion.—A. R.

AS soon as the working class becomes conscious of itself as a class—speaking more concretely, as soon as it has crystallised out a vanguard, however small, which tries to take a specifically proletarian outlook on everything in life—it begins to realise that justice, morality, religion, the State, and all the other superstructure of capitalist society are predetermined in character and scope by the foundations—the system of economic exploitation. In education under bourgeois rule, it finds the source of all the slave-ideas and slave outlook on the world which are such a heart-breaking barrier to the onward movement of the workers towards emancipation. The realisation that not only education in the school and university sense, but the whole of culture, intellectual and aesthetic, is coloured and fashioned in order to provide a world of slaves with just what is needed to keep it quiet, comes as a logical consequence. With it comes the knowledge that, with the change of masters which the community must undergo when capitalist economy breaks down—with the proletarian revolution—there must, as on every similar occasion in history hitherto, come into existence the beginning of a new culture, reflecting the material conditions and material requirements of the new form of society.

Before the Russian revolution (the Soviet revolution, of course) this was the general theoretical understanding on which all revolutionary Marxists were agreed, without committing themselves to any activity in consequence. Their approach to the problem of education came from what was apparently quite a different angle. They found empirically, in practice, that the worker became more clear-sighted, more class-conscious, harder and more resolute in the class struggle, when he acquired, first a knowledge of, and then a distinct *bias, prejudice, "dogmatic outlook,"* in certain subjects of study—economics, industrial history, and political science first and foremost. From the illegal, secret "circles" into which the revolutionary Marxian students of Russia for twenty years drew the workers in the factories and the villages, to the magnificent organisation—we speak in terms of working class, not bourgeois, achievements—of the British Plebs League, crowned by the Labour College, the same idea runs throughout. Equipment of the working class for *battle*, arming it with the weapons that experience proves to be *useful*, welding it into a single, metallic battering-ram by intellectual as well as by economic tempering—these were the objects of "independent working-class education"

wherever the teachings of Marx were adopted as the workers' chief guide to liberation.

The attainment of political supremacy by the proletariat in one country, however, was sufficient radically to change the nature of the object aimed at. For the first time the workers of a whole country—even in incredibly ruined and exhausted Russia—found themselves masters of all the resources of a State organisation, of all the wealth (material and intellectual) of a great nation. Inevitably it became the hour of the trying of gigantic experiments, of putting to the test vast and exhilarating ideas, which could not even be thought of in the days when the resources of the movement came in the main from the bitterly-earned and hardly-spared coppers of the exploited proletarian. One of the first and most enthusiastically accepted ideas was that of "proletcult." The workers must create their own culture—that was a Marxian axiom: let them do it consciously, then, and lighten their own task thereby. The historical "must" became identified with the "must" of practical politics.

It is of this period—the period roughly of the first 18 months or two years of the Russian revolution—that our comrades Paul write: the period when all over the country artistic circles, dramatic studios, literary groups were formed in factories, in workshops, in villages, just as political nuclei and social clubs were being organised. The working-class, feeling an unprecedented impulse towards creative work in every field of human activity, was promised that, in this field too, it would find its impulse rewarded by rich and boundless results.

The result was not quite what was expected. The Russian working class was not old enough to have produced a powerful intelligentsia of its own, as in the West; and the intelligentsia which had thrown in its lot with the workers, before and since the revolution came for the most part from entirely different classes—the aristocracy, the industrial or commercial bourgeoisie, the small middle class of the towns, the peasants—from any and every source but the factory workers. It shared the characteristic dislike of its class sources for "serious" subjects like economics, history, historico-political philosophy; its mind was quickened by what in Russia are called the "elegant" studies—art, literature, music—the studies in which the *individual* mood, the *individual* effort, find their vivid expression, in contrast to the more abstract and sober work involved by the *collective* nature of the "serious" subjects.

This is the explanation of the fact that, during the first two years of the revolution, the colossal appetite of the workers for a new creative cultural effort on *collectivist* lines was met by the most violent and unrestrained development of what was almost entirely an *individualist* culture—the culture of the futurists, the imagists, the other "rebels" of latter day bourgeois culture, for whom the revolution had meant first and foremost the liberation of the individual, the removing of absolutely every restraint to self-expression. The deliberate creation of a proletarian culture was taken in hand by largely non-proletarian elements.

History has its Nemesis, however; and in this case it came in the shape of disillusionment and repulsion amongst the masses (refer to Arthur Ransome's pages on the mural "decorations" of Moscow in *Six Weeks in Russia*); which became so acute that the Commissariat for Education was obliged to disavow all connection with the proletcult movement, and for two years "proletcult" became at best an idea rather than a reality,

and—sad fact!—amongst most communists, “upper” and “lower,” a subject for yawns or ribald comment. This is not to say, of course, that there were not serious communists at the responsible posts of the movement (Poliansky, Kerzhentsev), or that nothing truly proletarian was produced (Gastev, the proletarian poets of “Tvorchestvo,” etc.): but the fact remains that, as a national *movement*, the proletcult a year ago was as far removed in reality from the position it occupied in the eyes of its Western admirers as was—let me be audacious—the “shop stewards’ movement” at the same date from the dimensions which it had assumed in the eyes of certain comrades in Moscow.

History’s Nemesis, however, as our great historical philosopher and revolutionary educator taught us, usually is its own corrective; it clears the way for a newer and higher form than that which it destroyed. The “new economic policy,” as we have come to call it—although in reality it is the “old economic policy,” the policy of 1917-1918, chastened and matured by experience—is doing its work in the sphere of culture also. Russia is at the present moment undergoing a period of intense “seriousness,” so concentrated and puritanical that it may almost be compared with the materialism of the Early Victorian period, when young, serious, and enthusiastically practical capitalism found its most characteristic expression in Samuel Smiles. And this very seriousness, arrestingly enough, is reviving proletcult! For once again the Russian proletariat has become a *battling* class in its own home—battling against the new bourgeoisie that has already grown up thanks to free trading, and preparing itself for battle against the future bourgeoisie that must grow up out of the present beginnings. Once again, the proletarian party has become a party of leadership in *combat* (although it has at the same time to function as the party of *constructive* leadership): and this has had its effect upon its attitude towards proletcult.

For the first time for two years an all-Russian Congress of Proletcult Workers assembled a few weeks ago; and in his address to the Congress, Lunacharsky declared that the national educational authorities once more looked to the proletcult as their main auxiliary—*but not for literary and dramatic education, not for artistic studies*. No. “The workers must be taught the rudiments, the foundations,” is now the slogan. As in the school they learn reading, writing and arithmetic, so in their adult classes they must learn economics and history—the subjects that are vitally important to them in the coming period, when the burning problem will be to retain their cohesion as a class against the insidious influence of the bourgeoisie, and to become the efficient and capable administrators of State production in competition with the production organised by the bourgeoisie. In other words, independent working-class education in Russia is on the way to become, on the whole (of course, the “elegant” side will not disappear entirely), a utility-seeking education: an education, that is in “first things first”—in economics, history, politics and science. Nothing showed better the way things were moving than the proposal made last month by the Committee for Reducing Departmental Staffs (the “Geddes Committee” of Soviet Russia), and *endorsed publicly by Lunacharsky*, to close the Grand Theatre of Moscow (the State home of opera and the ballet) on the ground that its upkeep costs two milliardrs (paper—£4,000 at the present rate of exchange) per month: “*a sum which will maintain 4,000 elementary school teachers.*” After a perfect storm in the Press, the theatre has remained open. But the moral is obvious.

What is the lesson for us in Britain? Surely that we must not dissipate our energies; that working-class resources are not large enough to enable us successfully to deal *before the revolution* with culture in all its branches, irrespective of their relative importance; that our task is to provide a fighting culture for a fighting class, knowing that in any case it must remain the core of proletarian culture for a considerable period after the revolution.

Let us see what Plebs have to say on this subject. I have, it will be noticed, entirely left aside for the moment the question of how far, and in what way, we can *consciously* and *deliberately* create proletarian art, proletarian literature, proletarian poetry, and so on.

ANDREW ROTHSTEIN

A TWO-MINUTE TALK *with a* NEW STUDENT

IF you ever read novels you may perhaps have read the best Socialist propaganda novel written—H. G. Wells' *The Sleeper Awakes*. You remember when Graham, the man from our time, is being taught aeronautics by the aeronaut of the future:

Over Paris he perceived, though he did not understand it at the time, a slanting drift of smoke. The aeronaut said something about "trouble in the underways."

That *trouble in the underways* was the revolt of the exploited, in which Graham was to lose his life. But the aeronaut hurried him past.

The orthodox historians behave exactly like the aeronaut. Take for example the story of the Paris Commune: the first appearance of the proletariat as an armed revolutionary State in the whole of history: the precursor and sure signal of the Soviet revolution. You would think that the historians would give ample space to it—abuse it and curse it, maybe, but certainly consider it at length. Do they? Not a bit.

Look into Dr. A. H. Dyer's standard *History of Modern Europe*. This history, in six volumes, stands on the reference shelves of the British Museum Library. Here is the *complete* account of the Commune in this large work:—

In May, 1871, the Government of Versailles was obliged to capture Paris and to overthrow the domination of such men as Cluseret, Delescluze and Paschal Grousset.

And then he swiftly passes on to consider at length the Foreign Policy of Disraeli.

Mere trouble in the underways!

But don't look at it! No, no. Come along quickly, and look at something else. Look at this inspiring Foreign Policy of this Important Man!

That is history as it is taught you to-day. The PLEBS is out to teach you exactly the reverse of that. It is not out to pass by and hide up things. It wants you to study that "trouble in the underways"—what it was, and what it is now. Like as not, as things are going now, you will yourself be caught up and die in just some such "trouble." Die knowing nothing of why or what is happening, unable to defend yourself or even to see on which side you should be. It would be better surely, a hundred times better, to have knowledge.

What *was* that trouble in the underways?

R. W. POSTGATE

AMERICAN TEACHERS *on the* BEST TEACHING METHODS

AT a recent lecture a Labour College speaker contended that the W.E.A. was as partial to capitalist error as the Labour Colleges were to labour truth. A member of the audience, claiming to be a Socialist, objected to the contention. Was not the W.E.A., he argued, supported by a considerable number of labour bodies? Had it not a number of well-known labour men on its committees? He artlessly admitted, however, that the majority of the tutors were decided anti-Socialists! Apparently, in the eyes of the objector, the teachers in the workers' educational movement do not count: what does count is the names of the labour men sprinkled over its stationery—labour camouflage for anti-labourism.

Tutors the Keystone

Tutors, however, do count—decidedly. They form the keystone of the educational bridge. On them depends very largely whether a class of workers is going to hold together and on them depends the mental atmosphere which the worker-students will take away with them to act as leaven in workshop, mill and mine.

The Task of the Tutor

The tutor must have the right attitude. He must not be lost in the mists of education for education's sake. He must recognise that "we want the workers first to have the feeling that they must be emancipated, the feeling of discontent with their present situation" *; he must realise that the chief aim is "not to make up for deficiencies in schooling"; that his "guiding purpose is to help the worker to become more efficient in the service of his class; that workers' education is a means to develop the workers' power to emancipate themselves, and every question as to what should be taught and how the teaching should be done must be answered with reference to this fundamental aim."

That, in working-class circles, goes without saying, when once it is recognised that the purpose of I.W.-C.E. is to dissolve the old habits of thought and to give the workers a new outlook. "The average trade unionist," says Instructor C. J. Hendley, "is thoroughly imbued with the good old American individualistic philosophy. He is in the union for what he can get out of it for himself, or, if he has any social consciousness, it is often limited to his particular craft. He is keenly alive to the tactics of the petty business man and is forever playing for advantage over his competitors, whether they be his employers or unskilled and unorganised workmen." Our work is to supplant this business psychology—this individualistic thinking by social thinking.

Stumbling Blocks

Teaching labour college classes "is hard work, work that calls for more active intelligence and intense effort than any other teaching from primary

* *Report on Workers' Education in the United States* (cf. Jan. PLEBS, p. 14).

school to university," says one American tutor. The worker is not attending a class to get for himself a superior job with a villa and a month's holiday attached. He hasn't the egotistic urge to spur him on. Often his vocabulary is poor; he comes to classes tired after a day's work; he may not have the reading habit and is not usually accustomed to abstract thinking any more than a university student is accustomed to seeking out the weak spots in a coal seam with a pick. Moreover, he finds difficulty in taking notes in class, unaccustomed as he is to rapid summarising and to handling a pen quickly and unconsciously. On the top of that he may have no facilities at home for quiet study, for in this country tens of thousands of workers in big cities still live in one-roomed houses.

The Right Kind of Tutor

The tutor must, therefore, know the lives of his students. He must be acquainted with their difficulties: he must be "familiar with their past experiences, with their plans for the future, with their social ideals." In other words, he must know the material in his class and adapt his methods to suit it, and he must also bear in mind that even partially developed class-consciousness among his students is a "wonderful stimulus, a powerful driving force working his way that will stimulate their activities beyond expectations."

Simple and Self-Contained Lectures

The American tutors emphasise the need for simple instruction; war must be waged on heavy stuff as a powerful narcotic; lectures should be self-contained—should be complete in themselves so that the worker who can't attend regularly is able to take something away with him each time he does attend. In addition, lectures should have popular titles. For example, in Rochester a course on women's problems, instead of being called lectures on Feminism, was given under the titles: Should a woman obey her husband? Women and clothes: Should a woman marry on \$30 a week? Should a woman earn her own living? and so forth. We, on this side, may maintain that the above carries popularisation rather far; but we are bound to agree that there should be some attractive point of contact between the lecture title and the workers' own ideas, in order that it may at once arouse interest. A worker may come to an economics lecture if you tell him the subject is: "Where do profits come from?" but he'll probably stay away if he's told the title is: "Surplus Value."

Mental Laziness

It must be recognised that most adults shun mental effort as the fatted pig shuns physical activity. Well-intentioned students are apt to think that listening to a lecture is all that is required—they successfully avoid the mental exertion that must take place in their own minds if they are to derive any serious benefit. A student may contrive to look intelligently in the direction of the tutor though his mind be sound asleep.

The Danger of Lecturing

"One thing we have to guard against," says Algernon Lee, "is the tendency to lecture—just to stand up and pour forth information, in the pious hope that it will find its way into the students' minds." The students like that method; it saves them trouble. They can allow their minds to

wander to the adventures of Fatty Arbuckle or to the fascinations of "Put and Take" and have no fear of an after-reckoning. It is here that questioning comes in as the tutor's finest weapon against unconscious mental laziness and inattention, and every tutor knows the advantage of putting a series of prepared questions to his class at the close of the lecture.

The Students' Unlimited Liability

Dr. A. Fichandler in his very fine paper believes in carrying this method a step further. He wants the students to recognise that they have an unlimited liability to answer questions, that they must be prepared not merely to answer questions at the end of the address, but during its course. His motto is "Never give any information that some one else can give, and never draw a conclusion that anyone in the class can draw." He believes in helping to keep the students' mind always on the alert, and he does so by firing off questions every now and then. He maintains that the human mind cannot follow unbroken talks for an hour—it falls asleep, and that the occasional question not only compels more mental activity among the students, but breaks up the "monotony of the hour." [Neither he nor any other tutor says a word about the tremendous help that lowering of pitch, variations in rapidity of utterance, etc., are in holding attention.] He says his method has the further advantage of establishing a closer response between teacher and students. "When I feel that the class is not responsive, there is a heaviness which drags my spirit. A gloom surrounds me, a sort of intellectual darkness." What tutor has not had that feeling, without perhaps knowing its cause!

A Pedagogic Crime

Dr. Fichandler admits that his method is a difficult one for the tutor, but its advantages are more than worth the effort, for the student is made a direct participator in the work of the classroom, feels the thrill of creation. "The student who answers a question or draws a conclusion before the teacher is filled with the electric joy which makes that work really worth while. . . . The teacher who answers the questions for the class without giving them a chance commits a crime!"

Diplomas

As at our last national conference the question of diplomas was raised it is interesting to find that the consensus of opinion in the workers' educational movement in America is unfavourable. "Too often the student comes to feel, even more clearly than he is naturally inclined to, that intellectual work is very unpleasant and is a thing to be undertaken only for some external reward—for the grade or the diploma." Says another teacher, "Instead of coming to possess information and intellectual integrity, the student may be content with the privilege of writing some letters after his name." It is agreed, however, that the student should have some test of his work, and the essay, written at home, is in general favour, but, of course, this essential development assumes a much larger number of full-time tutors to cope with the labours of correction.

J. P. M. MILLAR

EVERY CLASS SHOULD SHOW A PLEBS POSTER

The DOUGLAS "THEORIES"

A Short Analysis of their Pedigree

IT is one thing to play one's part in economic relations involving all sorts of complicated associations with other individuals and with society. It is quite a different proposition to *understand* those relations and associations, and to give clear, theoretical expression to that understanding.

Everyone, from infancy upwards, is accustomed to handling money; though the vast majority of mankind may never have the opportunity of handling as much as they desire or need. But not one man or woman in a thousand ever pauses to think of the significance of this constant passing round and round of metal coins or paper substitutes, or of the relation of these things to the whole social system under which they live.

To understand Money and its function it is necessary to consider not only its most obvious uses, such as the circulation or exchange of goods, but also its relation to the rest of the economic framework of society. In other words the nature of Money can only be fully understood when the nature of society is understood. To consider the one apart from the other is as futile as to discuss the possibility of human society outside of the natural world.

But Money was used a long time before anyone theorised about it. "In the beginning was the deed," as the great German poet has said. To-day, however, when the contradictions involved in the capitalist mode of production are making themselves definitely felt, men more and more tend to blame the effects of the system of production on to the medium of exchange—Money. This mere "tool" of man's has become a terrible monster, threatening the very existence of society! So long as commodity production is limited to independent producers, each plying his own craft, each the owner of his means of production, it matters little whether the full significance and functions of the medium of *exchange* are understood. But when the capitalist mode of commodity production has made its appearance, and with it the disturbances inseparable from an anarchic form of production, it matters a great deal.

To understand the "golden calf" it is essential, as we have said, that the nature of commodity production must itself be studied, and understood. One fruitful source of error in the theories of the "Money Doctors," from the 17th century down to our own day, is the separation of Money from the conditions of commodity production from which arose its extended use. This is understandable and pardonable in the early stages of capitalist development. But the same allowances cannot be made for the theorists of to-day. These people have complexes developed by their associations and their position in capitalist society, which give them a bias in favour of that society and a disinclination to analyse too closely its underlying economic laws. They are anxious to remove the more obvious ills of society (obvious, that is, to them and their class) without interfering with the system itself. And these latter-day prophets—of whom Major Douglas is, at the moment, the most talked about—merely repeat the oft-exploded ideas of their predecessors in error, adding by way of illustration a few modern symptoms of the illness of society as proof of the presumed scientific diagnosis they have brought to bear on the case.

The confusion of two distinct functions, measure of value and standard of price, has made no end of muddle and given rise to the most absurd ideas concerning Money. "The fact that commodities are only ideally converted into gold, as prices, and gold is likewise only ideally converted into money, gave rise to the theory of the *ideal unit of measure of money*." (Marx *Critique*, p. 91.)

The producer or merchant offers commodities for sale. What for? A given sum of money which up to then exists only in his mind. What does this ideal money represent? Value. Yes, but is not this value also imaginary, something ideal, and that being so it could be represented just as well by something other than gold? Surely gold in this nebulous, imaginary form is not necessary at all, and although it costs nothing in that form it has very costly results for society.

That is how some people thought (and think) about the matter. Their real difficulty is to understand *commodity production* and *value* itself. Money has no meaning apart from these; while on the other hand commodity production gives rise to the value relations, and the need for a measure of value, which must again transform itself into a standard of price. *Hamlet* without the prince is not more absurd than *Hamlet* with all the other characters left out.

Those who have advocated the abolition of gold as measure of value and medium of exchange can be divided into two camps: (i.) those who hold value to be purely ideal, as having no material content, and (as they put it nowadays) having nothing more substantial than a psychological basis; and (ii.) those who regard labour as the substance, and labour-time as the measure, of value.

The utopians were of the latter school, and the theory of labour-time as the direct measure of money was according to Marx (*Critique*, p. 102) first formulated by John Gray (1799—1850).*

The idea of the Ideal Unit of Measure had, however, been put forward long before Gray's time. It had been advocated in the 17th century, particularly during the currency troubles at the time of the accession of William III. A century and a half later, after the Napoleonic wars, the English currency was pretty much in the same condition as it is at the present time, and the old controversy was revived, this time by the utopians. The Ricardian theory of value formed a basis for them. In their schemes commodity production was retained but money abolished. Their other assumption, that all labour was directly social in character, shows how little they understood capitalist society.

Gray's plan was that a National Bank should be established which would issue certificates to every producer contributing anything to national wealth, thus securing and guaranteeing an equitable system of exchange, while retaining, it must be remembered, commodity production. This plan also, by providing a plentiful supply of money, was to make impossible the charging and receipt of interest—an ideal "already elaborated by the spokesmen of the small shopkeeping class of England in the 17th century." (Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 201.) Gray communicated his views on exchange to the French provisional government of 1848, claiming that this question rather than that of production required attention.

*Gray, *The Social System*, and *Lectures on the Nature and Use of Money*. See Beer's *History of Socialism* (Vol. I., Chap. 7) for a summary of his theories.

A few years later these ideas see the light of day again, this time as the theories of Proudhon. At the same time, too, as the utopians were propagating their views, the old "ideal unit" theory of the opposing school was revived by Thomas Attwood, a Birmingham banker. Students of the Chartist movement will recall with interest the reactionary part played by this school of currency reformers at that period. Attwood revived the old question of the coinage of silver, and this won for himself and his supporters the name of "Little Shilling" men.

With every crisis these or some such ideas were revived.

Since the middle of the 19th century such discussions have not materially affected the currency laws of this country, but have been mainly confined to the lecture rooms or the textbooks of economic authorities, whose pronouncements, of course, vary in accordance with their "theories" of value.

During this latter period America has suffered a great deal over this controversy. There the laws of currency and banking remained in a very unsatisfactory state almost up to the outbreak of the World War, and provided a fruitful soil for the ideas of credit and currency reformers.

Prof. F. A. Walker, in his work on *Money*, dealing with the measure of value says:—

It is noticeable that in almost all the illustrations given of primitive exchange, one person of a trade is assumed to be dealing with a single member of another trade. . . . It is *the hatter, the baker, the tailor*. But does not this render a correct analysis impossible, by the very conditions of the case? Is not competition of the essence of trade, at least in that state of industrial society in which money appears? I deal indeed with but one tailor, or hatter, or baker, in any single transaction; but it is because there are two tailors, two hatters, two bakers, or three, or five, or more that I am able to answer Prof. Jevons' question—how much of any one commodity for a given quantity of another? Mr. Mill asks, how much bread *ought* the tailor to obtain for a coat; how many coats *should* he give for a horse? The answer is, he ought to get as much bread as any one baker, having, at the one time and in his place, more need for a coat than any other baker of the town or the neighbouring towns, will give him for the coat he has to sell; he *should* give as many coats for a horse as he finds he has to do, after numerous owners of horses, having severally visited numerous tailors, have come, each for himself, to the decision how many coats, at the lowest, such a horse as the tailor wants to buy is worth. . . .

Now is any *common measure of value* needed for the purpose of the above-contemplated exchanges?

What a perfectly beautiful picture! Processions of horse-dealers and tailors visiting each other's establishments to find out the value of their respective commodities. And this is capitalism! This same authority emphasises the need for ridding ourselves "decisively of all remnants of the notion that things exchange on a basis of equality because they have cost equal amounts of labour." Having rejected the only possible basis for a theory of value the need for a measure goes by the board also.

To-day, yet once again, the Money Doctors and Credit Specialists suggest that the gold standard is played out, has passed its usefulness, and that its abolition is all that is needed to cure our social ills. How many of them realise that this little obsession of theirs is at least two hundred years old? They—Douglas as much as any of them—commit the self-same error as their predecessors. Instead of regarding the circulation of capital as involving the two spheres of production and distribution, they separate the one from the other, and attempt to prescribe laws and conditions for the one without regard to the other.

"To imagine that one could make of a particular application of credit—the pretended abolition of the rate of interest—the basis of a social transformation, that was indeed a petty chandler's fantasy."—(Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*.)

We have dealt at this length with some of the earlier advocates of what to-day is known as "Douglasism" because its high priests and its disciples alike appear to imagine that their gospel is fire-new. It is, on the other hand, nothing more than a rehash, with modern trimmings, of the ancient fallacies which, as we have seen, crop up at varying intervals in the history of economic thought. A study of the historical descent of particular theories or schools of thought is always interesting, and not seldom illuminating. In this instance it is still more—it is devastating! Clear away Major Douglas's superficially effective "modern" trimmings, and what remains is seen to be no more than "the petty chandler's fantasy" derided by Marx three-quarters of a century ago.

W. H. MAINWARING

PHYSICAL ECONOMICS

We have received this further communication on the subject of Prof. Soddy's recent joy-ride over the preserves of the Economists, and publish it as a lucid, concise statement of the Professor's case. It is now up to one or other of our own specialists to reply. (A short letter on the same subject will also be found in our correspondence columns.)

THERE are things in Nature which contain *available energy*: these are, *at present*, coal, oil, wood, sunlight, falling water, winds. There are other things which contain *bound energy*: these are (for instance) all igneous rocks. Sources of available energy may or may not be accessible to man. In general they are not accessible until labour-power has been expended upon them. Coal, in itself and in the earth, has no value. Neither has basalt. A natural thing is useful if it can be made to undergo *energy-transformations*: these convert it into a "good" or a commodity. Whether a natural thing can be made to undergo an energy-transformation depends entirely upon the application of human labour-power to it. "Labour-power" here means all bodily activities, whether "manual" or "mental"—there is no real distinction.

The distinction between "available" and "bound" energy is purely a matter of labour-power. Coal can be made to undergo energy-transformation, by modern man, but it was bound energy to primitive man. Basalt contains an enormous quantity of energy which is bound but if science discovers how to initiate radio-active disintegration in basalt this energy will become available. If there is coal underneath the Dogger Bank it is, as yet, inaccessible, but it may become accessible to further engineering enterprise. Most of the South Wales coal was certainly inaccessible to the early Britons but it is accessible now. Whether or not natural energy-sources can be useful to man depends, therefore, upon labour-power (including in that category all thought, invention and discovery, as well as all purely "manual" activity). *The environment of man is whatever he can act upon.* His activities are never really speculative: they are always practical. This is so even in the most abstract scientific work.

Clearly, then, the value of a thing is a function of (or it depends upon) the quantity of labour-power that has been expended in order that the thing may become useful—that its energy may be made to undergo the required transformations; that it may become accessible; that its energy,

if bound, may become available or "free." This quantity of labour-power must include all the mental work done upon developing the processes whereby the thing becomes accessible and its energy available. It must include the work done in making the tools and mechanisms that operate upon the natural thing. *These tools and mechanisms are the means whereby energy-transformations are effected and their monopoly constitutes capital.* These definitions will withstand the closest possible scrutiny. They are implicit in the theory of Marxianism.

How to measure this generalised labour-power? The quantity of materials—food, clothing, the means of shelter and warmth, the materials for growth and reproduction—these are the antecedents of labour-power. We "commute" them by estimating the mean quantities of food-stuffs required to enable workers to exercise their labour power, "recreate," breed, experiment (perhaps unsuccessfully), train others and educate their offspring. We measure these materials in calories and so get absolute, or rather physical, labour-power units.

I did not hear Prof. Soddy's lectures, but believe I am reproducing his line of thought in the above observations.

J. J.

Some FURTHER OPINIONS on the NEW TEXTBOOK

"*The Morning Post*" (in a column review) says:—

This attempt to exploit science in the interest of class-war and revolution provides the opponents of Socialism with a weapon that can be used with deadly effect upon the disciples of Karl Marx.

[So recommend the book to your friends in the "Economic Study Clubs."—ED., PLEBS.]

Lord Pembroke and Montgomery, Chancellor of the Primrose League, in a letter to the "Pall Mall Gazette":—

The Marxist Society, the Plebs League, in a textbook on Psychology just issued, state that "Society could be radically transformed in a generation by changing the influences brought to bear upon the young." . . . The only way to counteract the poisonous doctrines of these Bolshevick schools is by forming schools for the inculcation of patriotism. This is what the Primrose League is doing.

The "West Sussex Gazette" (which must have purchased the book, because we didn't send it a review copy, having never heard of it before):—

The Plebs League makes a new contribution to the ignorance of its supporters in *An Outline of Psychology*, which claims to be "a contribution to proletarian science (!) formulated, understood and expounded by revolutionary workers for revolutionary workers." How juvenile! Imagine Science, which means accurate knowledge pursued for its own sake, being treated as though it were a creed, an "ism," a selfish propagandist "interest," a new weapon to be used by a silly "class" against other silly "classes"! . . . How mediæval!

[Well, West Sussex ought to know all about the Middle Ages.—ED., PLEBS.]

Jack Carney ("Voice of Labour," Chicago):—

The best book yet published. It enables the student to approach a subject which seemed unapproachable.

Arthur Gleason (New York), author of "Workers' Education":—

The *Outline of Psychology* is admirable. It is the first time the new stuff has been put in elementary and interesting terms. Your Glossary is most valuable.

A Midlands class-tutor (T. D. S.) writes:—

This book is our challenge to the professors in a field which has been their special province, and it is characteristic of a class striving for power that it produces thinkers who take up the mental tools of the decadent class and use them in the struggle. Even a small knowledge of the subject will be of immense value to students. We are not out to manufacture "high brows," and the many happy illustrations show how practical the study is.

One word of criticism. Beware of the analysis on p. 97. Realise that the mental tests were made by bourgeois authorities. Obviously the worker is a specialist. Put him through an examination similar to a bank clerk and he fails miserably. Workers are often classed as ignorant because the standard of measurement is that of their value as wealth-producing animals. Do not, therefore, let us worry over-much about the Goddards. If they claim to examine us, we are justified in challenging not only their claim but also their measure of intelligence.

Finally, as interesting collateral reading, let me suggest *The House with the Green Shutters*, by G. Douglas, and particularly *Martin Eden* and *Sea Wolf* by Jack London.

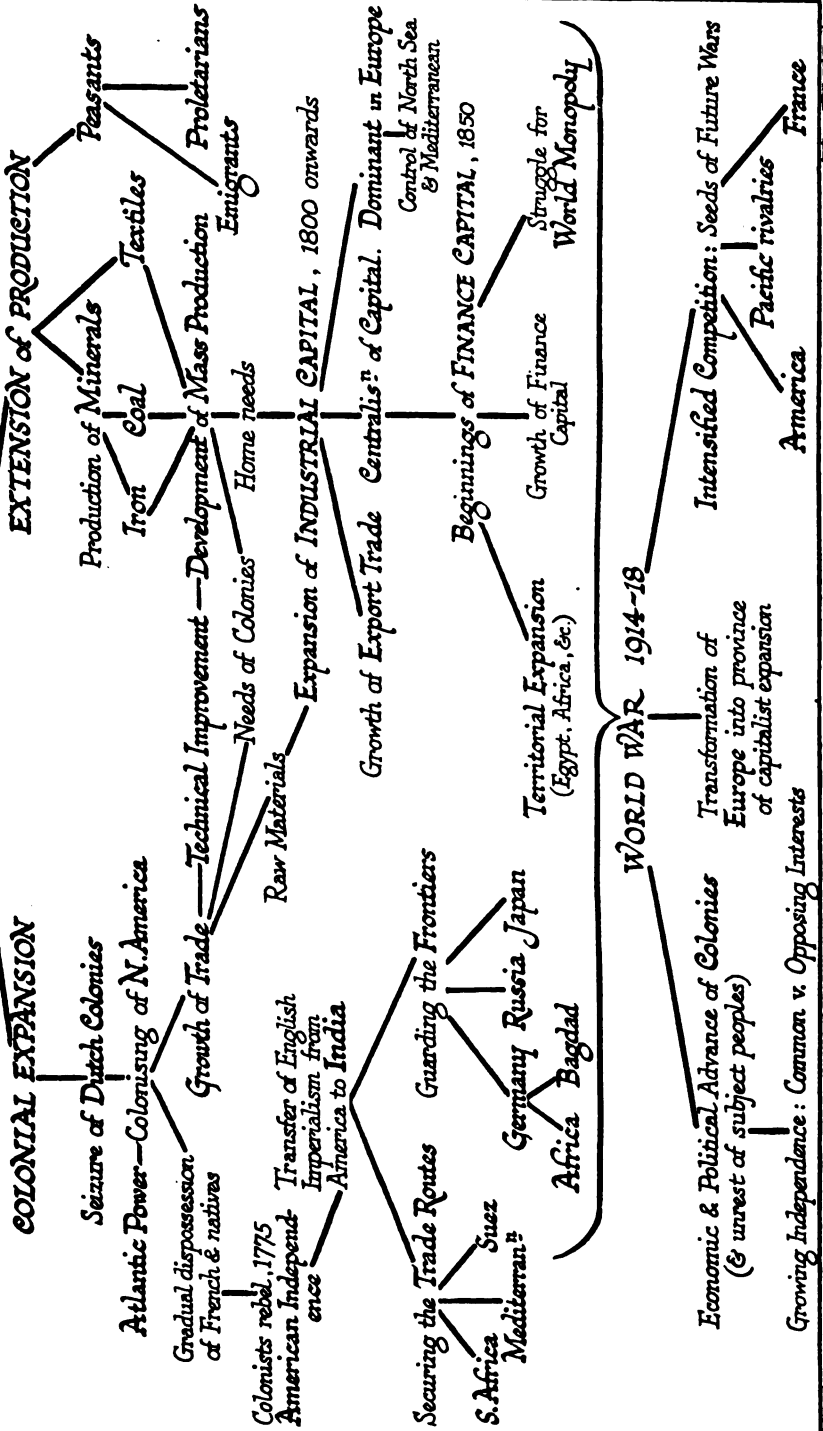
HELP US TO GET OUT A SECOND EDITION BY
SETTLING YOUR A C FOR NO. 1 PROMPTLY.

A Useful CHART for STUDENTS

THE chart on the opposite page has been freely adapted from one of a German series illustrating "The Economic and Political Development of Capitalism," by Georg Engelbert Graf, published by the Co-operative Press, Elberfeld (translated by W. H. Mainwaring). The aim of the chart, it should be noted, is to show, not so much the succeeding stages of English industrial history, as the steady growth and development of English capitalism in relation to world affairs generally. It might well form a syllabus for an interesting series of lectures.

The question of the preparation of wall-charts for classes has frequently been raised in our pages, and it is included in the N.C.L.C.'s agenda. We should be glad to have the views of class-tutors on the value of this and similar charts, along with some definite suggestions as to the subject-matter, size, treatment, etc., which in their opinion would prove generally useful. Charts based on such suggestions might be worked out and, if possible, published in the PLEBS for the benefit of other classes, even though reproduction on a larger scale were not immediately practicable.

The EVOLUTION of ENGLISH CAPITALISM (since 1600)



The PLEBS

J.F.H.

Is THE PLEBS on the WRONG TRACK ?

We print the following letter as it stands—though it exceeds the "legal limit"—because it raises points of vital importance to ourselves ; and we trust that our readers will take a hand in the discussion, not merely to send us either compliments or curses, but to let us know what subjects, and what treatment, they themselves find most useful and helpful.

DEAR COMRADE EDITOR,—Unless you are really serving a useful function you're better dead. If the PLEBS was really all out for helping those who are trying to educate the worker to do their job more efficiently I'd not dream of criticising. I know that's your aim, but it *isn't* the aim of many of your recent contributors.

I don't think I'm altogether up the pole when I suggest that the PLEBS has been much too full of—

1. The intellectual squabbles of very clever cranks.
2. The cynicisms and hard-shelled cantankerousness of fanatics.
3. The irrelevancies of brainy specialists who are *not* doing the spade work and *are* doing too much thinking.

Most of the squabbling between E. & C. P., "P. L. E. B.," "Nordicus," Postgate, and their critics has been of a useless character.

Most of the complicated arguments on finance are completely over the heads of 90 per cent. of your readers—unless you want the PLEBS to be a sort of tilting ground for intellectuals rather than an armoury for teachers. I think you're trying to be both. Don't!

I'm not in love with these intellectuals! As a matter of fact they are not a bit plebeian in spirit and would be regarded by an average crowd of workers as a lot of conceited asses, I'm afraid.

The highly speculative stuff—cf. that on "The Philosophy of the Tool" (in Jan. number)—is so open to question that it isn't worth much—any clever chap could trot you out another version completely contradicting Arthur Riley's and just as plausible. A lot of PLEBS stuff is open to this objection.

Then take the silly review of *How We Came Out of the War*, by "D. J. W." Curiously enough, a leading Communist writer and editor was strongly recommending this author's three books on the war as the best exposure of sentimental reformist Liberalism he had struck. But I've no doubt that your brilliant reviewer would scorn the opinion of so reactionary a die-hard as Palme Dutt! Then silly stuff like the letter on Nietzsche and other similar letters reveals an attitude so hyper-intellectual as to be completely beyond the range of working-class psychology. If the PLEBS is out to cater for those for whom "good and evil" have ceased to have

any meaning, it had better shut up shop as an organ of proletarian ideology.

It's awfully difficult, when you move in a rather small advanced intellectual circle, to realise how tiny your world is and how little it influences the world of workers.

Now I don't want to be merely negative. May I, if you haven't already flung my letter into the w.p.b., make a few practical suggestions?

1. Aim at helping those who help the very ordinary and stupid worker. Those of us who *lecture* to unemployed and to dockers and to boilermakers.

2. As far as Socialist, historical and economic theory are concerned banish everything but clear, positive and more or less assured results of study put in so straightforward a form that *they are capable of being handed on* to the ordinary man in a lecture.

3. Drop specialist and personal controversies.

4. Drop highly controversial philosophical stunts which many quite able and successful I.W.-C.E. enthusiasts won't accept for a moment and are not really *essential* to our position (however much the fanatic thinks they are).

5. Have your eye always on that "handing on" of simple results; give us *material, material, and yet more material.*

Your best numbers are December, 1920, and thereabouts. Compare these with the end of 1921—you've run to seed!

I'm trying to express what I feel to be the real need of hundreds of proletarian educators, and I believe the original aim of the PLEBS. Please come back to it.

Yours frat.,

JOHN LEWIS

Gravesend.

A REPLY

DEAR COMRADE LEWIS,—So far as your onslaught is a plea for Simplification, we of the Plebs Editorial Committee are inclined to agree. But you appear to forget (i.) that the PLEBS is a journal for worker-*students*; (ii.) that students do sometimes get past the elementary stage; (iii.) that the PLEBS' aim is to hammer out a *working-class point of view* which gets down to the roots, and to do this it must make some demands on the critical intelligence of its readers; and (iv.) that your own personal likes and dislikes are not necessarily those of the "average Pleb," about whose mental make-up, indeed, you

seem to suggest that you have some special and exclusive information.

It appears that you don't like Finance, or Psychology, or discussions as to Human and Social Origins; and you suggest that people who do like such things, and discuss them, are "cranks," "fanatics," "hyper-intellectuals," and so forth. Well, it will be best to await the verdict of PLEBS readers on the point. You may get one Pleb here, and another there, to agree with your views as to one or other of these subjects; but we think you will find (judging by ourselves) that you'll find few, if any, who will agree with you entirely. Some "Financiers" may assert, with you, that Nietzsche doesn't matter; some "Philosophers" may echo your remarks about the study of Finance. But it isn't fair to let one's personal lack of interest in any subject persuade one to try and prevent others studying it. The rapid sale of our Textbook shows that working-class students *want* Psychology; and as for Finance, well, difficult or not, some of us must try to understand it, or it will kill us all. Arthur Riley, to whose article you refer, will doubtless have something to say for himself on the charge of being a "hyper-intellectual." (By the way, isn't your own phrase about the "very ordinary and stupid worker" just a little patronisingly intellectual?) And perhaps Palme Dutt will tell

us something more about his opinion of *How We Came Out of the War*.

Lastly, we deny that the discussions between E. & C. P., "P. L. E. B.," "Nordicus," Postgate, and their critics have been *squabbles*. In every instance, they have raised points of definite importance and interest to intelligent students—though probably not on your own pet subjects. We don't want this present argument to be a *squabble*. We want it to assist us in the difficult and responsible job of finding out *what worker-students want*, and doing our best to provide them with it. So we suggest that you and we now stand aside, and let us hear what some of our comrades have got to say.

Yours frat.,

THE PLEBS EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

P.S.—We may be allowed to quote, just by way of counterblast to Comrade Lewis's, this other letter received during January:—"I want to express my admiration for the high standard the PLEBS maintains. In remote places like this, where municipal libraries are things unknown, you fill a great need; for access to *meaty* literature is otherwise almost impossible to impoverished owners of enquiring minds."—J. E. C. (Carmarthen).

STUDENTS' NOTES *and* QUERIES

With a few slight alterations and a new cover design—an engineer at his bench instead of the navy with folded arms—the S.L. Press have published an English edition of Mary Marcy's *Shop Talks on Economics*. There is no better pamphlet for beginners.

We are indebted to H. Sara for the following information—Lancashire comrades, please amplify if necessary! Our own vague "thousands" (in the sentence quoted from *A Worker Looks at History*) was decided on after the discovery that authorities differed considerably in the figures they gave:—

"Mark Starr (*Worker Looks at History*, p. 110) says:—In modern production . . . thousands of spindles are often simultaneously worked by one spinner.' H. De B. Gibbins (*Industrial History of England*, p. 159) says:—'Nowadays 12,000 spindles are often worked . . . by one spinner.' Charles Beard (*Industrial Revolution*, p. 40) says:—'A man and two piecers can work two thousand spindles.'

"In view of these conflicting statements teachers and others will find the following interesting—and correct!

"In most modern mills there are four pairs of mules in each spinning room; on each pair of mules will be found somewhere about 3,200 spindles; making a total of 12,800 spindles per room. The staff would

be made up of four head spinners or minders; 4 second spinners or minders; 6 big piecers; 8 little piecers; 1 bobbin carrier, and 1 oiler, making a total of 24 men (not counting the overlooker in charge) to work 12,800 spindles; which gives us the figure of 530 spindles per man. It is possible for men to run up to 600 spindles, but the average throughout the cotton trade is 500."

Do the workers pay rates? asks W. A. Archer (Bow), who says there is much discussion whether high or low rates benefit the worker. What is said here will apply to taxation in general, whether levied locally or nationally. And the point is important because of: (1) The huge amount of taxation necessary to pay interest on the National Debt (now £8,000 millions) not to mention the upkeep of the armed forces and other Government services. (2) The problem raised at Poplar and elsewhere by Labour Poor Law Guardians faced with huge masses of starving "out of works."

The theoretical reply is No. (Students can see "Taxation," by Goerke (sold by S.L.P.) and a useful leaflet issued by S.P.G.B.) This answer is, however, based on certain conditions:

(a) That the worker's standard of life has been forced down to an irreducible minimum, i.e., to the point at which workers would prefer to rebel rather than accept.

(b) That working-class organisation is sufficiently strong to prevent any reduction in the standard of life being made.

Under these circumstances taxation must be a deduction from Surplus Value. If the rare conditions of a perfect monopoly exist, then a section of the capitalist class can transfer its burden—by a higher price of the commodity—to the capitalists outside the Trust. In fact many struggles about which the workers have become heated have been merely quarrels between warring sections of capitalists.

To understand how temporarily or even permanently the workers may suffer from taxation one has to remember the elasticity of the standard of life—something which never is but *becoming*—and also how slowly organised Labour can make wages follow prices. The struggle is partly carried on by the political activity of Labour, which should be always fighting for direct rather than indirect taxation.

Take the Poplar position. If the rates had been levied, *provided there were houses to spare*, the landlords could not have recouped themselves by increased rents. *If the unions were strong enough*, the tenant, whether he bought the commodity shelter in the lump, or by the week, piecemeal, could have passed the charge into the cost of his labour-power. These factors were noticeably absent; so the Poplar Councillors showed what happens to Labour men who refuse to administer capitalist law.

Should capitalism get over its present troubles the fight to make the maintenance of the poor a national rather than a local charge should be pushed. (Incidentally it applies to education and other things as well.) After all it is only the miners' Pool proposal applied in another direction—the levelling up of district inequalities and a national fight instead of local struggles.

Such pool proposals are not Communism but they are its beginnings. M. S.

TRA LA MONDO : *Esperanto Notes*

A Course for Revolutionaries

The *Fédération Espérantiste Révolutionnaire*, Rue Morère 23 bis, Paris 14 e, has published an Esperanto course in French under the title *Cours rationnel et complet de Esperanto* (with a preface by Henri Barbusse). Anyone who would like to learn Esperanto through the medium of French has in this volume probably the best Esperanto textbook extant. Even the reviewer in the Geneva *Esperanto*, while deploring its revolutionary tendencies, praises it up to the skies. The price is 5.50 fr., post free.

Finland

On the 2nd of December the Finnish Parliament voted for the year 1922 the sum of 25,000 marks to the Esperanto Society of Finland. The voting was 119 for, 55 against, a much larger majority than last year, if my memory is right.

The International Labour Office

This department of the League of Nations recently issued three leaflets in Esperanto. According to the Geneva *Esperanto*, 250 newspapers and magazines in 20 different countries published particulars obtained through the medium of these leaflets. Subsequently the office of the Universal Esperanto Association in Geneva lent one of its assistants to deal with correspondence received in Esperanto. This assistance is no longer required, as several of the staff are now able to deal with the correspondence which the office receives in Esperanto. Of course, even Esperantist Plebs will still hold their own opinion as to the value of the Labour Office!

Rusio

Rusaj post-telegraf-telefon kaj radiotelegrafistoj, unuigitaj en ligo deziras interrilati kun ĉiuj kolegoj el la tuta mondo. Korespondadojn oni adresu: Ruslando, Moskvo, Ĉudovskoj 6, Esperantista Oficejo ĉe Centra komitato de Ligilo.

Deh ordonoj de kapitalistoj

Trad. M. Hermann, Altona a. d. Elbe

1. Ne havu iun ajn alian sinjoron krom mi.
2. Ne organizu partion aŭ sindikaton; ne fondu iun ajn organizacion por helpi vin mem, ne mem agitu aŭ revu pri pli bona stato, ĉar mi, via sinjoro, donos al vi, kio al vi decas, kaj mi ne toleras enmiksadon. Ĉu vi komprenas?
3. Ne parolu maŝate pri via sinjoro, ĉar mi ĉiujn maldungos kaj en nigran liston registros, kiuj tion ĉi faros.
4. Memoru la tagon kiun mi fiksas por fosadi kaj laboregadi kaj mi instruos vin kie kaj kiam vi devas elspezi vian monon; ne kontraŭparolu min, nek vi, nek via edzino, nek via filo aŭ filino au iu ajn alia kiu scias kie li apartenas.
5. Satu vian sinjoron kaj batalu por li kiam li tion ordonas, ĉar kiu iel kontraŭstaras mian volon estas barbaro kaj meritas la morton.
6. Ne pensu.
7. Ne legu, krom tio kion mi permesas al vi.
8. Ne plendu.
9. Ne aŭdu la agitantojn, sed englutu ĉian sensencaĵon kiun mi donas al vi.
10. Ne postulu mian profiton, nek mian bonvivadon, nek mian palacon aŭ aŭtomobilon, nek mian ripozadon aŭ iun ajn alian kiola mia estas, ĉar tiajn aĵojn vi ne meritas.

NEWS of the MOVEMENT

The Meet

GREAT regret was felt by all concerned at the last-minute postponement of the N.C.L.C. Conference, and accordingly of the Plebs Meet, but as well as the two comrades mentioned in the circular letter sent to delegates, the Plebs Hon. Sec., the Office Secretary, and two or three members of the Plebs E.C. were stricken down with 'flu at the same time. So that postponement was inevitable, since not only would these comrades have been unable to attend, but the preparatory work of various kinds for which they were responsible could not have been put through in time. Letters from other parts of the country show that amongst intending delegates two or three others would have been unable to attend for the same reason. The date is now fixed for March 4th and 5th, and all members and delegates are requested to take great care of themselves in readiness for the event. As patent medicine vendors do not advertise in the PLEBS, see the daily press for what to take to feel better!

Election of E.C.

According to the League Constitution, the ballot for the Executive Committee (of seven) should be taken *after* the Meet; but as the present E.C. has now been in office for eighteen months, and the Meet has had to be postponed, it was felt that the vote should be taken without further delay. Ballot-papers will, therefore, be sent out to all League members during this month. The following have been nominated:—

T. Ashcroft,*	C. T. Pendrey,
J. Burns,*	M. Starr,*
M. H. Dobb,*	G. Sims,
A. H. Okey,	C. Terry,
R. W. Postgate,	A. Vandome.

Those nominees whose names are marked with an asterisk are not resident in London at the present time, and would therefore be unable to attend committee meetings regularly. As we pointed out last month an *effective* Executive must for the most part consist of members living in London, until such time as the League is financially strong enough to pay expenses for provincial representatives. The E.C. meets monthly, acting as a consultative Editorial Committee for the magazine, as well as dealing with publications, organisation and the other details of League work.

Changes in Constitution

The E.C. have also decided to include on the ballot paper two resolutions:—

(1) That the membership subscription payable to the central fund of the League be reduced to 1s. per annum.

(2) That the last sentence in the paragraph headed "Methods" in the League Constitution

(see p. iii. of cover) be altered to read—
"The assistance in every way of the development of all working-class educational institutions affiliated to the National Council of Labour Colleges."

The reason for taking a vote without further delay on these two resolutions is obvious. Resolutions from branches will of course be submitted to the Meet as before, and a further postal ballot taken on these if necessary. *Resolutions should be sent in to the office not later than one week before the date of the Meet.*

Join Up!

Although the total membership of the League has been smaller this last year its various activities in the districts have flourished as never before. The formation of the N.C.L.C. is alone sufficient proof of this.

The same reasons still hold good for the existence of the League as existed in the first year of its life, and the work that an active minority can do in any district is now greater than ever. We **MUST** increase our circulation this year, and we look to League members to help in this object. Get busy with those posters. Don't forget that there are several more or less friendly (monthly) rivals in the field now, and that we need all your help. One member got us over 30 individual subscribers last year and another district increased its parcel from 5 doz. to 25 doz. We don't expect this from everybody; but it shows what can be done.

If you are doubtful as to whether you can afford half-a-crown, wait till the ballot comes in and the shilling reigns once more! But in any case join up again, and let us have *all* active I.W.-C.Ers linked together in the League!

Boosting the "Plebs"

We have to thank the Bethnal Green, Shoreditch and Hackney I.W.-C.E. Committee for the excellent "boost" they give the PLEBS in their recently issued syllabus. "If you care for a game of Put and Take," says a prominently displayed note, "Put a reserve on 6d. a month and TAKE the PLEBS regularly." . . . Best thanks also to Mansfield Labour College for the advt. included in their lecture list.

Personal

Jock Millar, secretary of the Edinburgh Dist., Scottish Lab. Coll., has just been presented with a handsome oak bureau by the Committee, tutors and students of the district.

His many friends will be glad to hear that Frank Jackson, of Rochdale—one of the Old Plebs guard!—is rather better after his recent severe operation.

W. H.

N. C. L. C. NOTES

THE NORTH-EASTERN Labour College which is now responsible for 21 classes has issued a notable Handbook and Class Directory. It is divided up as follows:—"A Short History of the N.E.L.C.—Suggestions for Local Organisation—Hints to Students—Hints to Tutors—Hints to Speakers—The Need for I.W.C.E." The Handbook is published at 3d. We should strongly advise all class secretaries to write for a copy to W. Coxon, 5, Byron Street, Newcastle, enclosing 4d. to cover postage. It is full of useful hints. Only we would suggest that future editions change the description of Psychology; it is rather confusing to describe it as "the science of thinking or understanding"—is it not rather the science of human *behaviour*? Also we would add that a list of affiliated organisations would add to its propaganda value.

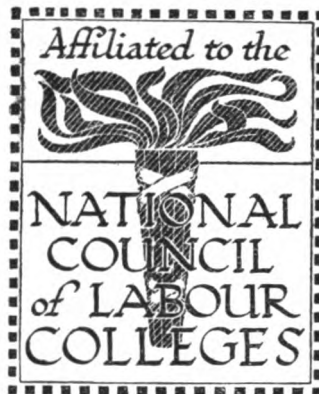
The Mid and East Lothian Miners—21 Branches—have decided to reaffiliate to the EDINBURGH District, Scottish Labour College. We congratulate the Miners! but trust a Scotsman to know a good thing when he sees it. . . . The AYRSHIRE District is also going strong, and the Sec. writes assuring us of their whole-hearted support for the N.C.L.C. movement. During the Session October-December, 1921, there was an average weekly attendance, for 10 Classes (Saltcoats, Kilbirnie, Irvine, Darvel, Galston, Hurlfold, Kilmarnock, Troon, Ayr and Crosshouse), of 225 students. Fresh subjects of study this year include Psychology and Economic Geography. Up Ayrshire! . . . LANARKSHIRE District is also busy and hopes to have a conference shortly to co-ordinate activities in the Upper Clyde area and make systematic arrangements for next season. A good start has been made at Motherwell, where Walton Newbold has been busy lately. The Scots are not going to get left in the educational sprint!

We hear from BLACKWOOD, Mon., that a strong movement is on foot to get a representative District formed to join up with the N.C.L.C., and a conference of T.U. lodges and branches, Trades and Labour Councils, etc., is being arranged at an early date. To Blackwood and others calling conferences we may say that supplies of the Building Workers' pamphlet, *Our Next Step—Education*, can be obtained from N.C.L.C. Secretary, for cost of postage, and should be very useful in securing support for proposed classes. (When writing, state number of pamphlets required to allow for each organisation circularised having a copy.)

In reply to several correspondents who complain that their Colleges, Districts and Classes cannot affiliate to the N.C.L.C. because a guinea in a lump sum is beyond

their means, may we say that the Affiliation Fee may be sent in by instalments, say half-yearly or quarterly. No more excuses!

We have got out the design reproduced herewith for the use of affiliated Colleges—on notepaper, syllabuses, etc.—and can supply



stereos of same (from which, of course, printing can be done in any colour) for 3s. 6d. each, post free. This leaves each district free to decide for itself on the style, etc., of its notepaper, but provides for one uniform feature on all. And the use of the design on all literature, syllabuses, etc., will help to boost the N.C.L.C. Book your orders—we can supply promptly.

An important matter for Districts, etc., to consider is the question of a uniform Affiliation Fee from Labour organisations. Edinburgh District, S.L.C., suggests 2s. 6d., and a 2d. levy based on membership of the organisation. Will Secretaries bring the suggestion before their Committees and Communicate result to us?

"L. B." writes:—"Now that the Building Trade Workers are coming our way with both feet as well as heads—as a glance at their pamphlet, *Our Next Step—Education*, shows—one wonders how long the Amal. Union of Woodworkers intend to remain outside? They are at least thinking about it. At the London District Delegate Meeting last year a resolution was put by one branch calling on the E.C. to support the London Labour College by sending students. It was carried by a large majority, only 5 voting against and 212 in favour. On being submitted to London branches for confirmation, the voting was 4,380 in favour, 852 against. The E.C. replied to this that according to rule the resolution must be sent by the branches to the General Council. The wording of the original resolution was: "That we appeal to the E.C. to consider the support of the London Labour College and take a ballot of the members in order to send students to the

College as other Building Trades Unions are doing." All Plebs Woodworkers should concentrate on this or a similar resolution, and see that their branch acts upon it between now and the G.C. meeting, next APRIL. We ought by a bit of push to have a number of A.S.W. students at the College as well as more support from the local branches for the classes. Wake up, Carpenters! or you'll be too late for the funeral of the Masters!"

DIRECTORY

The following *alterations and additions* to the Directory published in January PLEBS are notified:—

- DERBY and District Labour College.*—Secretary, W. Noland, 23, Oxford Street, Derby.
 LEIGH and District Council I.W.-C.E.*—Secretary, J. Brett, 47, Lord Street, Leigh, Lancs.
 GLOUCESTERSHIRE Labour College.—Secretary, F. L. J. Davies, 241, High Street, Cheltenham.
 GLOUCESTER Branch.—Secretary, G. B. Luker, 30, Granville Street, Gloucester.
 CHELTENHAM Branch.—Secretary, T. D. Jones, 6, Mossleigh Terrace, Cheltenham.
 NORTH-EASTERN Labour College.*—Secretary, W. Coxon, 5, Byron Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.
 ROCSDALE Labour College.*—O. Secretary, 31, Rowland Street, Rochdale.
 SHEFFIELD Labour College.*—Secretary, W. G. Bartholomew, 32, Carwood Crescent, Pitsmoor, Sheffield.
 MANSFIELD and District Labour College.*—Secretary, G. Abbott, 37, Carter Lane, Mansfield, Notts.
 SUTTON Branch.—Secretary, C. Carnell, 13, High Pavement, Sutton, Notts.
 KIRKBY Branch.—Secretary, A. Beecroft, Oxford Street, East Kirkby, Notts.
 SHIREBROOK Branch.—Secretary, F. Buttery, 32, Lindon Street, Shirebrook, Notts.
 SOUTH NORMANTON Branch.—Secretary, F. Walker, 17, Downing Street, South Normanton, Notts.
 PINXTON Branch.—Secretary, J. Barnes, Kirkstead, Pinxton, Notts.
 LONG EATON Branch.—Secretary, — Panter, Olive Avenue, Long Eaton, Notts.
 CRESWELL Branch.—Secretary, G. White, 79, Elmton Road, Creswell, Notts.
 HUCKNALL Branch.—Secretary, C. Best, 18, Wash Dyke Lane, Hucknall, Notts.
 HEANOR Branch.—Secretary, W. Manchester, 50, Lacey Field Road, Langley, near Heanor, Notts.
 NOTTINGHAM Branch.—Secretary, R. Mee, c/o Morris Institute, Heathcote Street, Nottingham.
 NORTH KENT District, Plebs League.*—Secretary, L. Barnard, 84, Granby Road, Well Hall, S.E.9.
 OLDHAM Labour College.*—Secretary, J. Hill, 217, Horsedje Street, Oldham.
 SCOTTISH Labour College—GLASGOW District.*—Secretary, J. Queen, 196, St. Vincent Street, Glasgow.
 AYRSHIRE District.—Secretary, R. Climie, 3, Fairyhill Road, Kilmarnock.
 EDINBURGH District.*—Secretary, J. Millar, 30, Newhaven Road, Leith.
 ABERDEEN District.—Secretary, W. Morrison, 323, Holborn Street, Aberdeen.
 DUNDEE District.—Secretary, E. G. Carr, 34, Lawson Place, Dundee.
 STIRLINGSHIRE District.—Secretary, T. I. Clark, 17, Crichton Park, Falkirk.
 BRAINTREE Labour College Class.—Secretary, J. H. King, Ardreshaig, Courtould Road.
 CHELMSFORD Labour College Class.—Secretary, — Joblin, 44, Lower Anchor Street, Chelmsford.
 SOUTHEND-ON-SEA Labour College Class.—Secretary, W. J. Clark, 197, Stornaway Road, Southchurch.
 MARGATE Labour College Class.—Secretary, A. E. Lawton, 6, Buenos Ayres, Margate.

¶ EVERY CLASS SHOULD SHOW A PLEBS POSTER

¶ EVERY KEEN N.C.L.Cer SPORTS A PLEBS BADGE

¶ EVERY LIVE DISTRICT SECRETARY SHOULD HAVE A STOCK OF THE PLEBS PAMPHLET (*What is Independent Working-Class Education?*), THE LIVERPOOL PAMPHLET (*Education and the Working Class*) & THE BUILDING TRADE WORKERS' PAMPHLET (*Our Next Step—Education*) FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES

LETTERS from PLEBS

We invite contributions from readers on all subjects of interest to working-class students. The only condition is that they must not exceed 400 words—and preference will be given to those shorter than that.

PHYSICAL ECONOMICS

DEAR EDITOR,—“A. S.,” in the January PLEBS, has not fully emphasised the importance of the point at issue between Marxists and Prof. Soddy. Surely the essential point is that the latter has not yet realised the necessity of distinguishing between use-value and exchange-value. Prof. Soddy is concerned with the question, “What is the ultimate substance of wealth.” while Marxians are chiefly concerned with the question, “What is the factor which determines the exchange-values of the individual units of wealth in capitalist society?” In a society where exchange-value, and not use-value, is the motive for production, the question of the ultimate substance of wealth is not only of secondary importance, but is liable to act as a red herring, drawing revolutionaries away from the pursuit of their main object.

Yours frat., LONG JIM

A NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL LOAN

DEAR EDITOR,—T. W. Wyatt raises two fundamentally important issues—(1) The exit of the Gold Standard, and (2) the feasibility of a National Industrial Loan to utilise the earning capacity of the unemployed.

First point :—The whole capitalistic system is based on myths, of which the gold standard has been one of the most useful—to the capitalists. In Bacon's phrase it is an “Idol of the market-place.” So that, instead of saying, as Mr. Wyatt does, that “we are evolving past the gold standard,” it would be nearer the mark to say that the evolution of our economic vision is enabling us to begin to see that the gold standard is an Idol, an impious fraud.

Second point :—Mr. Wyatt is quite right in asserting that an industrial loan would radically differ from a war loan in its effect on the general economic situation—in that it would result in the creation of its equivalent or more than its equivalent, of wealth ; that the wealth thus produced would off-set or redeem the debt. The people who received the loan as wages, would pay for these wages by their productive labour. In short, the nation would get substantial wealth in exchange for the debt it would have to pay off in money to the banks. And that is sound finance—to say nothing of the infinitely more important fact, that it is also sound sociology and humanitarianism.

I agree with Mr. Wyatt in his desire for a “more extended use of the uses” of money. But I should like to know on what grounds he thinks it would be necessary for the

Government to borrow his proposed loan from “the banks by means of bank credits.” If this were done £50,000,000 a year would have to be deducted from the wages of the workers to pay the interest on the £1,000,000,000 bank credit loan.

Not to make this letter too long, I will end with this question : Cannot Mr. Wyatt, or some other reader, propose some scheme, which he can prove to be financially sound, which would give the desired extension of the use of money to the absorbing of the unemployed army into the ranks of productive workers, and at the same time save to them the interest toll on their wages ?

Yours, etc.,

R. SHAW

Hurst Lane, Thorpe, Surrey.

DEAR EDITOR,—It would be unkind, perhaps, to invite T. W. Wyatt to explain his statement that “the acceptance of a gold standard is due to ignorance.” But if Marxians are ignorant of the real nature and functions of money, they are quite ready to learn from those who do know all about it. Wyatt's little tilt at the gold standard, however, is only by the way ; the real question he puts is—Could the Government by the creation of credits abolish unemployment ? In other words, can capitalism maintain itself and a vast army of unproductive labourers ?

Obviously the ability of capitalism to maintain such a class will depend upon the amount of surplus value obtained from the productive class. To the capitalist, it must be remembered, unemployment is not a problem until the unemployed make themselves a nuisance. The capitalist requires unemployment. Wyatt cannot “see that an increase of a thousand millions in the present floating debt would be anything like so serious a matter as the present unemployment problem.” Quite so, but will he pardon my asking on whose behalf he is speaking ? If he replies that he is speaking on behalf of the “community,” I answer that there is no “community” to-day. There are sharply defined social classes, with divergent interests. And the proposal to create credits on the lines he suggests would be, *for the capitalist*, a worse evil than the problem of unemployment. That being so, will he tell us how he proposes to get his scheme adopted ?

I carefully avoid entering into a discussion of the basis of credit, the effect of creation of credits, the quantity theory of money, inflation, etc., all of which are really implied in the questions addressed to me. I merely reply to the practical implication and

emphasise the different manner in which social problems present themselves to different classes in society.

Yours frat.,
W. H. MAINWARING

THE PROBLEM OF CONTROL

DEAR COMRADE,—The problem raised by Alice Pratt is worthy of serious consideration.

During the occupation of the factories by the workers in Italy, September, 1920, we saw the need for technicians. When the employers withdrew the technical staffs the workers had great difficulty in avoiding anarchy in the workshop, let alone maintaining productive efficiency. Likewise in Russia the great need is the technical knowledge of the West.

As yet, this technical knowledge is not in the hands of the working class. Very few workers know much about the technical side of their respective industries, and fewer still can claim to have a technical and practical training. We are only taught a portion of our trade to-day. Engineers, for instance, are able to assemble all kinds of intricate mechanisms, but are dependent upon the technicians for their working designs, etc.—the real foundation of their work.

How can we train our own technicians? I suggest that we might make some arrangement with the Co-operative Society to pass selected men through their various works, and so form the nucleus of a body of proletarian technicians.

Yours frat., E. FAULKNER

DEAR SIR,—I read Alice Pratt's article just after taking part in a discussion on the very question she raises—the necessity of preparatory training for the higher branches of communist industry.

A still more vital question, however, is that of food production and distribution during the "period of transition" we foresee; especially in its first stage, which will naturally be pretty chaotic. The training of experts for definite agricultural organisation is important: still more important is the problem of the creation of the will to produce on the part of the mass of the land proletarians.

We are fond of talking about realism. Let us admit, then, that few agricultural workers are likely to have the grace to serve the community in the hour of trial from any conscious principle of communist belief. Have not our prophets assured us that "in those days" the masses will be led by a conscious five per cent. only? In the absence, then, of a will to produce flowing from the communistic impulse, what other source can we tap? Can we gather any hints from our friends the Russians on this point? Must we perhaps adopt at once what they accepted later through sheer necessity—certain semi-capitalistic methods of inducement to tide the nation over the initial difficulties?

Further, in the first days of the transition period we shall need a slogan with which to capture psychologically the masses—rural or

urban. And if we have made a true psychological forecast, and have taught those things we ought to have taught, any such "word" will suggest itself naturally from some side of our educational activities.

Yours faithfully,
L. J. B.

Nottingham.

THAT SCHEME

DEAR EDITOR,—About your comments on my £10,000 Gold Watch Competition Scheme.

Do you really contend that there aren't 43,200 people in each Labour College district? Are you prepared to bet me £400 (the cash you're cruising for) that I can't fill 43,200 lines in any district within three months from now? If not, then eat your criticisms!

Meanwhile, the man with the "thousand dozen eggs" will cheerfully hang himself when you can demonstrate that his eggs are bad!
Yours, T. E. HOLT
Southport.

[Our point was not that Comrade Holt's eggs were bad, but that he was counting his chickens—scores of thousands of them—a long time before they were hatched. We still think the odds are against their getting hatched, but we're not in a position to make £400 bets about it!—ED., PLEBS.]

THE RIGHTS OF ANIMALS

DEAR EDITOR,—To the critics of my comment on "Slave Ethics," I can only reply from a Plebs point of view—partially and candidly.

Florence Baldwin, after a flagrant misquotation of my article in the August issue, asks whether animals have no "rights"; and hopes that when the Socialist Republic arrives we shall discover that they have. I suggest that as the demand for industrial autonomy is a prominent feature of the proletarian movement, the Socialist Republic which employs physiologists for the further development of agricultural and medical science may be forced by its own constitution to leave them to exercise producers' morality in determining their own mode of production.

Despite F. B.'s misquotation, I sedulously refrain from employing a term so eloquent of bourgeois idealism as "rights." I neither know what is meant by the "rights" of the proletariat nor the "rights" of parakeets. I know what is meant by the aspirations or demands of the class-conscious section of the proletariat, and I have reason to believe that the machinery is being created by which these demands may be brought to effective realisation. In real politics a demand is a right when it has sufficient, and a rebellion when it has insufficient, force behind it.

If there are any other Plebs who think that the proletarian movement is strengthened by metaphysical quibbles about "rights," they may reflect that the men with whom they are dealing do not find it necessary to apologise for denying that Ireland had a "right" to be

a "free state" at Easter, 1916, and magniloquently affirming it at Christmas, 1921.

I think that a scientific outlook is not assisted by moral preoccupations; but if Plebs want an ethic they will find in Nietzsche—along with a mass of exaggerations and inconsequent reasoning—more real horse sense than is contained in all the works of Tolstoi, Carpenter, Thoreau and other bourgeois idealists put together. I entirely agree with H. S. on this point.

Yours frat., P. L. E. B.

THE GREATEST PROLETARIAN POET ?

DEAR EDITOR—Although the controversy in your columns about Shelley seems to have finished may I be allowed to suggest that

probably the greatest proletarian poet of this or any other age is still alive in the person of Arthur Giovannitti, the Italo-American Syndicalist, who, an emigrant from Italy at the age of 17, has lived in the U.S.A. since the beginning of the century? During these last two decades he has more than once been in prison for his activities on behalf of the workers—the last time in 1918 during the period of America's "fight for Democracy"!

His poems in prose and verse—among others such as "The Walker," "Utopia," "The Republic," "The Sermon on the Common"—are splendid in their own literary merits and magnificent in their call to the proletariat.

Yours, etc.,

A. P. L.

REVIEWS

FAIRY TALES FOR THE YOUNG

PLEBS tutors would do well to get hold occasionally of an ordinary school history or geography primer—just to familiarise themselves with the sort of "impartial" teaching which it is their job to counteract. I have recently been looking into a little work entitled *Lands Beyond the Channel*, by Sir H. J. Mackinder, which, I happen to know, is used as a textbook at K. Edward's Grammar School, Birmingham. To any intelligent working-class student of history such a book provides much innocent amusement.

Take, for instance, this eulogy of our gallant allies:—

"The French are very rich, not only because they work hard but because they are thrifty and save money. They love

beautiful things. Their towns are beautiful, they have beautiful statues and pictures and are fond of well-acted plays and good music. Even in the poorest homes the food is well cooked and the women dress in well-cut clothes which are elegant even though made of plain material. We have much to be proud of in Britain, yet we must admit that in some respects the French are the most civilised people on earth." (p. 93.)

One wonders whether this little rhapsody will be reprinted in future editions if, as appears likely, our "gallant allies" shortly resume their more familiar rôle of hated rivals! And one longs to hear the comments of Zola or Anatole France on this pretty little picture of the "poorest homes" in France.

IF

You had a parcel of our Psychology Textbook
 You thought it a good half-crown's-worth
 You want us to print a further supply
 You want us to issue other Textbooks as speedily as possible
 In short, you are out to help, not to hinder, our work:

THEN

You will settle your account for the Textbook THIS MONTH,
 and so do your bit towards making its publication a financial,
 as well as an educational, success.

Cross your cheques or p.o.'s, and make them payable to "Sec., Plebs League."

THE LORD LOVETH A CHEERFUL PAYER!

Here is a little sample of the way in which the workings of modern Imperialism are served up for youthful palates:—

“In 1830 the French Government conquered Algeria. A generation ago the French took possession of Tunis. They have established order in these lands by means of the army. But Morocco still remained independent until lately—a poor and barbaric land. France has now occupied Morocco and in a few years we may hope to see Morocco as prosperous as Algeria and Tunis.” (p. 122.)

Quite a nice-sounding phrase, isn't it?—“established order by means of the army”! One figures (as H. G. Wells would say) the poor barbarians stammering out their gratitude to their white saviours.

Again (p. 161):—

“In Egypt, as in Morocco, the civilisation of the Mohammedans fell back into barbarism. Their buildings decayed and their government weakened so that there was disorder and wrongdoing among the people. But the Mohammedan rule remained in Egypt for many centuries until the Suez Canal was made. Then it became impossible to allow disorder to continue and the country was occupied by a British Army. The prosperity of the Egyptian people has advanced rapidly under the British Protectorate. Order has been established so that the money raised by taxation is used for the good of the country and no longer squandered on the private pleasures of the rulers.”

I need hardly quote this historian's references to Germany or Russia. Their quality can be guessed from the above extracts, and from such a gem as “The word Bolshevik means ‘extremist.’” But after all it would be too much to expect an author knighted by a Lloyd George Government to risk his reputation by telling the truth. That is *our* job. Let us get on with those other Plebs textbooks.

T. D. S.

A GOOD PAMPHLET

Consolidation and Control. (National Workers' Committee, 31, North Frederick Street, Glasgow. 4d.)

This pamphlet, issued by the Engineering and Shipbuilders' section of the N.W.C. movement, is a closely reasoned and well thought out statement of the present defects in Trade Union structure. One is glad to see that the members of this Committee are getting away from the futile methods of merely attacking officials, and devoting themselves to a scientific constructive policy based on an objective examination of the present social system. Indeed, they admit that the agitation carried on by industrial rebels has been nullified by the lack of a common policy and methods of working.

After a reference to the grave defeat of sectionalism in the T.U. movement, they go on to show that the complaint about the official machinery not being responsive to the will of the members is an indication that the machinery itself is defective.

The reasons for this provide food for serious thought. It is argued that one barrier is the permanent retention of old officials and that the cause of an industrial rebel becoming conservative when appointed to an official position is not so much due to a sense of responsibility as to being paid a salary which solves his immediate economic problem and brings a change of social environment that removes him from contact with the workers whom he leads. What do our psychologists say to this?*

They go on to advocate that the permanent official should be made the paid employee of an executive council of members employed at the trade, and be engaged and subject to dismissal like any other employee. The administrative official should not have equal status with the E.C. They bring out the close analogy that exists between the permanent officials of a Trade Union and the permanent officials of our Government departments. Nominally both are supposed to be under the control of a popularly elected body, but in actual practice this body is dominated by the permanent official.

All this may be quite right, but we doubt whether the problem of domination by the official is to be solved by simply placing him under the control of a body of men engaged at the trade, *unless these men are equipped with the scientific knowledge necessary to exercise control.* Leadership and domination by paid officials implies the existence of a rank and file who require to be led, and can therefore be dominated. Hence an educational policy is also necessary if “the problem of power” and control is to be solved. The N.W.C. seems to have overlooked this point in their new policy and we recommend it to their earnest consideration.

R. H.

* They discuss this very point in the Psychology Textbook.—ED., PLEBS.

*Don't overlook the fact that the
PLEBS propaganda pamphlet*

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(see p. ii. of cover)

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GREAT THOUGHTS FOR LITTLE PEOPLE

The Teaching of English in England. H.M. Stationery Office. 1s. 6d.)

Here is a mouthful for Henry Dubb. A Committee of Literary Doctors have examined him and found his "English" very bad. He doesn't realise, as the Committee do, that the social disorders of our time are a product of "the difference between educated and uneducated speech." Unify the spoken word and all will be pie! It is proposed that a "fraternity of itinerant preachers on English Literature" be enrolled, who will wander from place to place, furnishing us with great thoughts and a cultivated manner, so that we shall realise that "many of the differences between the lot of one class and another are of little importance," and thus counteract "the influences which tend to bitterness and disintegration." "The ambassadors of poetry . . . must learn to call nothing common or unclean—not even the local dialect, the clatter of the factory, or the smoky pall of our industrial centres." Nobody will be surprised to hear that the W.E.A. are to co-operate in these jazz sophistications.

The Committee consider that "the three main motives which actuate the human spirit are the love of goodness, the love of truth and the love of beauty." Presumably this principle compels them to oppose influential persons who "regard a humane education of the lower classes as subversive of public order." However, they say that technical education is "essential to a very large number of young people" because the "fundamental desires, the desire for bread and for success in life" make it necessary. What's all that about beauty and goodness?

The opinions of forty Undershafts were acquired on the type of English training desirable for Henry. They all plumped for wide reading and general culture. They want men of ideas—to boss the proletariat. Improve the educational system and then pick out the brightest lads from all classes to adorn the capitalist citadel.

There are nearly 400 pages for 1s. 6d., and quite a lot of useful information for class tutors on technical points. J. G. C.

A "LEADER"

Agriculture and the Community. J. A. Duncan. (International Bookshops, Ltd. 2s.)

What will Happen to Wages in Agriculture? (N.U. of Agricultural Workers. 1d.)

In the former of these publications, Mr. Duncan complains that "almost all the changes advocated in agriculture assume that these [the existing] conditions will remain practically unchanged. . . . They do not propose any fundamental change in the system."

Curiously enough, this is precisely the charge we should have been inclined to make about Mr. Duncan's own recommendations!

True, he does favour nationalisation and workers' control; but although desirable somewhere, somewhen, they would at present be "merely farcical," so like the practical man he very evidently is, he completely ignores them in his proposals, which have no relation to those wider purposes of Trade Unionism.

Like not a few other T.U. leaders, Mr. Duncan has little faith in Trade Unionism; and as the title of his book suggests, he is far more concerned with "the community" than with the members of his own union. His book is disappointing, and all the more so because literature dealing with this particular industry from a Trade Union standpoint is lamentably lacking.

It is a relief to turn to the N.U.A.W.'s penny pamphlet. Instead of appealing to the "great British public," it calls on the agricultural workers themselves to take up the challenge of the present situation. At the same time it places their fight in its proper perspective against the background of the general working-class position.

A foolish "practicability" is the hobgoblin of reformist minds like Mr. Duncan's. This pamphlet, on the other hand, seeks to harmonise present practice with future needs. The reason for this difference is easy to be seen. The latter recognises the necessity and the possibility that the workers should think and act for themselves.

T. A.

THE SALARIAT

Towards a Postal Guild. By W. Milne-Bailey. (National Guilds League: Labour Publishing Co., 6d.)

This pamphlet is one of a series on Workers' Control dealing with the application of Guild principles to particular industries. It rightly emphasises that State ownership of the Postal Services does not remove the antagonism between workers and controllers of the Service; that even [even!] Civil Servants, the "salarial," are fundamentally in the same position as mere wage-earners; and that organisation for common defence is imperative.

Whatever the ultimate social implications of Guildism may be, if, by a rather flattering psychological approach, Guild propaganda succeeds in convincing the still rather "superior" Civil Service that its salvation socially lies along the same path of organisation as does that of Trades Unions in general, it will have done a service.

The Union of Post Office Workers (70,000 members) has declared for the Guild idea in its constitution. The organisation's the thing, and Industrial Unionists (who do not make obeisance to a semi-mystical "community of consumers") may well allow the preparatory work of organisation and unification of Postal workers to be done by Guild-inspired enthusiasts.

W. J. L.

The PLEBS BOOKSHELF

Oil: Its Influence on Politics. By F. Delaisi. Trans. by C. L. Leese. (Labour Publishing Co. Paper, 2s. 6d.)

North England: An Economic Geography. By L. Rodwell Jones. (Routledge, 6s. net.)

Economic Causes of War. By Peter T. Leckie. (Socialist Party of Canada, Vancouver, B.C.)

HERE are three books of interest and importance to the proletarian student of world affairs; that is to say, of interest to every intelligent proletarian student. For it becomes clearer every day that the student who does not go on to apply his grounding in Economics, History or Geography to the actual world problems of 1922 is failing in his duty to his fellows and belying the whole aim of Independent Working-Class Education. We believe in Education as a means to an end—not as a more or less intellectual hobby for individuals. "The practical need of the hour," as the writer of "Notes of the Month" in the January *Labour Monthly* observes, "is to learn to think, not in terms of this or that industry, but in terms of world Capitalism and the working class."

So urgent a need is it that I would urge upon every class-tutor the desirability of working into every lecture, by way of illustration or otherwise, some reference to world affairs calculated to stimulate the interest and curiosity of alert students; and, further, that every I.W.-C.E. syllabus ought to include some such short course as that now being given at Liverpool by C. C. Stevenson on "International and Diplomatic History," the six lecture-titles of which are:—

- 1.—The Fate of China.
- 2.—The Future of Japan.
- 3.—The Struggle for the Pacific Ocean.
- 4.—France's Development and Expansion, 1789-1900.
- 5.—Economic Factors in Russia's Future.
- 6.—Causes and Consequences of Labour's neglect of Foreign Affairs.

Or the same subject-matter may be approached in a slightly different way, as, e.g., in the following syllabus:—

- 1.—*Geographical Factors in History.*
- 2.—*Economic Imperialism: 1880-1914.*
- 3.—*Coal: Saar, Silesia, S. Wales, U.S.A., etc.*
- 4.—*Iron: Lorraine, U.S.A., China, etc.*
- 5.—*Oil: America, Baku, Mesopotamia, Persia, etc.*
- 6.—*Routes. Mediterranean—Suez, Pacific—Panama, etc.*

The Plebs Textbook of Economic Geography is on the way (and if editing a monthly

journal took less time it would have been completed ere now). But a single textbook cannot and will not cover the whole field. However much *multum* one contrives to squeeze into *parvo*, students will need to go to other works for details of the various divisions of the subject. Delaisi's little book on *Oil** should be on every Plebs' bookshelf, alongside of Boudin's *Socialism and War*, Woolf's *Economic Imperialism*, and Brailsford's and Newbold's books and pamphlets. It is an invaluable little summary of the essential facts about one of the primarily important Raw Materials in the world of to-day; and, further, it traces the influence of that economic factor on international policy during the last two years. "Take the simplest of the necessities of life," says the author in his Foreword, "and follow it in its transformations and movements, from the original mine or field to the consumer, and you see in operation not only the technical machinery of industry, transport and banking, but also the delicate mechanism of all our political and social institutions."

He proceeds to show how a single advance in technique (the utilisation of oil as fuel) results in a *commercial* revolution, and in *financial*, *military*, and *political* problems of the first importance. A simple study of oil thus affords "a kind of cross-section of the organs of society." And he claims that from the study of each of "the essential elements of our social life—coal, steel, electricity, transport, markets, credit—there would emerge a practical education in harmony with present necessities." It matters little, after this, that he feels impelled to mention his opinion that Marx, if alive to-day,

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" would profoundly modify his two conceptions, now contradictory, of the class struggle and the democratic revolution " ! We can, following the example of Krassin in the case of Mr. Leslie Urquhart, let him call Marx anything he likes, so long as he is prepared to " talk business."

And " talk business " M. Delaisi does—forcefully, almost dramatically. Possibly, like other men with a hobby, he exaggerates the importance of his own pet subject ; and, being obviously a capable journalist, he may very likely here and there heighten an effect, or touch up a detail or two, in order to round off his " story." Nevertheless, his book is not only more readable, but ten times more effective, because he writes as a " partisan," with a point of view, and a case to prove.

The second book on our list is a work of a different sort altogether. It might well have been a textbook for our own North of England classes ; but, since its writer's aim has apparently been to produce something as nearly as possible like a Blue Book, it cannot be commended except as a work of reference. Tyneside, Yorkshire and Lancashire tutors will, by patient digging, find in it " local " material of value and interest. But the general reader (unless, as the Scotsman said of Boswell, he has " an eye in him like a corbie's for details ") will get little out of it ; and that because of its lack of the very qualities which make Delaisi's *Oil* such an effective book. There are no main, guiding ideas ; and the writer is so conscientiously anxious to give precisely equal importance to every separate fact he has collected that—except for one or two timid efforts in the final chapter—he cannot bring himself to risk any generalisations. If he had selected—and rejected—his facts in order to prove, or to illustrate, any sort of general theory, his book—whether one agreed or not with the theory—would have been both more readable and more useful.

Economic Causes of War is a reprint of a series of articles which appeared in the *Western Clarion* of Vancouver. They were very capable articles, although in book form they are a little too discursive to serve as a textbook. The author has evidently read his Boudin, Brailsford, Morel, etc., to good purpose, and he also makes effective use of quotations from such Imperialist writers as Usher, Holland Rose and Arnold White, and from the capitalist press. This is a booklet which we should be glad to distribute

through our own Book Dept. ; but no price is quoted, so that we cannot at present book orders.

We have received from Comrade L. B. Boudin the following reply to H. Craddock's letter (Dec. PLEBS) suggesting various additions to the new edition of *Socialism and War* :—

" I cannot, at present, write a new book. Hence it would be impossible for me to cover all the new matters suggested, even if I were qualified to do so—a subject on which I am expressing no opinion just now, as I don't want to prejudice my case if I should ever be able to write such a book (and I admit the temptation is great).

" I intend the PLEBS edition of *Socialism and War* to be a new edition of the same old book, with some additions and possible subtractions (e.g., Craddock's point about the first chapter is good). But the additions must be strictly within the scope of the original work. To tackle the problems mentioned by Craddock would require an entirely new work, which might be a companion book to the old, but still a separate and distinct one. So I hope my PLEBS friends will be satisfied with this, and not expect too much."

We can assure Comrade Boudin that we shall certainly not be *satisfied* until we get the second volume he speaks of ; but that meantime we shall be exceedingly glad to become possessed of the new edition of *Socialism and War*.

I must find space for brief mention of one or two recent news-cuttings. One is the *Labour Leader* review of *Proletcult* a sentence in which deserves quotation :—" There are also [in the book] the dogmas of the park, some of which are quite obviously untrue, such as ' The working class and the employing class have nothing in common.' " Bright lad, that reviewer !

Another cutting is from the *Worker* (Dec. 17th), and is headed " Clarke's ' Littery ' Style." Now we've quite enough controversies of our own on hand without butting into other folks'. But I should feel as if I'd shirked an unpleasant job if I didn't say out loud that this little outburst was the most grossly unfair piece of writing I've ever struck in a proletarian paper, and that I hope, since I've a respect for him, that its author, having doubtless cooled down, has since regretted it.

J. F. H.

The PLEBS invites contributions on Labour problems in general and on subjects of interest to Working-Class Educationists in particular. No contribution should exceed 2,000 words. (This is a maximum—not a minimum.) Articles or letters intended for following month's issue should be sent in not later than the 15th. Will correspondents also remember to write on one side of the paper only, and to enclose full name and address, whether for publication or not?

ARE YOU A PLEB ?

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To further the interests of independent working-class education as a partisan effort to improve the position of Labour in the present and to aid in the abolition of wage-slavery.

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Assisting in the formation of classes in social science, such classes to be maintained and controlled, wherever possible, by Trade Unions, Trade Councils, or other working-class organisations. The issuing of a monthly magazine. The assistance in every way of the development of the Labour College or any other working-class educational institution with the same educational policy.

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

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

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

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