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# THE PLEBS

AGITATE EDUCATE ORGANISE

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# THE PLEBS

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

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July, 1922

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## OUR POINT of VIEW

**A** LITTLE over a year ago the PLEBS was the only six-penny monthly Labour magazine. To-day there are half-a-dozen. Well, there ought to be room for the lot! But the PLEBS is not going to rest content with merely maintaining the position it had won before its "rivals" came into the field. It has a circulation now which has, at last,

*A blue X in this square means that your subscription has lapsed. Please renew without delay, and if you can send on a subscription for a friend as well, we shall love you all the more!*



enabled us to increase its size and get more "elbow room" for the work it is out to do. And it is going to increase that circulation. The movement for which it stands, and of which it is the only mouth-piece, is growing, in numbers and in influence, by leaps and bounds. "The future is with the Labour Colleges," as a prominent opponent of them recently observed. And there are pretty clear signs that the "Future" is very rapidly becoming the "Present"!

*Educational work is the one field of activity just now from which, if they concentrate upon it, the workers can win golden results, and win them quickly. The PLEBS is the organ of that educational work. Boost it!*

Mr. W. H. Marwick opened his "Case against the Labour Colleges" in our pages last month by protesting against "the oft-refuted falsehood that the W.E.A. is run by *Employers and capitalists in their own interest.*" We remarked *the W.E.A.* in reply that although such a statement about the W.E.A. might need certain qualifications, yet it would be more accurate to describe it as an "exaggeration" than as a "falsehood." We have just received a little piece of documentary evidence bearing on this point. It is a copy of a circular letter *sent to employers of labour in the Liverpool district*, dated 29th March, 1922. We print it in full, italicising certain sentences, since it will be useful to Labour College propagandists:—

DEAR SIR,—The W.E.A., started twenty years ago, has succeeded to a remarkable degree in developing and educating the social and national interests of many thousands of working men and women. *It is the only means available to most men and women of obtaining any clear understanding of the economic and social significance of their daily work, and of the interaction of the various forces at work in the industrial life of the nations.*

The local association organises classes from among the factories and workshops of the large industrial area of which Liverpool is the centre. At the present time 38 such classes are being held under the auspices of this association, each with a member of the staff of the University of Liverpool as its teacher.

The cost of these classes is shared by the Board of Education, the Local Education Authorities and the University of Liverpool; the cost of organising them, stimulating interest in the work, and *maintaining that spirit of fellowship between different classes which is no small part of the result aimed at* by this effort to provide some experience of university life for working people, falls to the local branch of the W.E.A.

This Liverpool District Branch is in great financial straits and the time has now arrived when, if its work is to continue, funds must be raised. *We, who sign this letter, have had intimate experience of the great educational and social value of the work.* We recognise the importance, both to industry and to public life, of helping and encouraging every effort towards securing that the working people of this country have the opportunity to gain fresh knowledge and are encouraged to take it; on them rests so much of the responsibility for the future well-being of the industrial life of this country that we have no hesitation in begging others to join us in enabling this organisation to have the funds that are necessary for its continuance. Additional subscriptions or donations of £300 per annum are required, and we beg

that you will consider the possibility of assisting us in raising this amount.

Yours faithfully, (Signed)

J. GEORGE ADAMI.  
 JAMES BLACKLEDGE.  
 H. FLEMING.  
 C. SYDNEY JONES.  
 W. MABANE.

F. J. MARQUIS.  
 HUGH R. RATHBONE.  
 W. RUSHWORTH.  
 J. J. SHUTE.  
 W. C. STAPLEDON.

We are informed that most of the signatories are big employers of labour. (Col. Shute, for instance, is an ex-chairman of the Liverpool Cotton Exchange, and Mr. Blackledge is the head of a large multiple firm of bakers, grocers, etc.) On the three sentences we have italicised we want only to make these brief comments:—The first is, to use Mr. Marwick's word, a *falsehood*. The W.E.A. is *not* "the only means available, etc., etc.," in the Liverpool district (though from the point of view of the signatories to this letter it may be the only *safe* or *desirable* means); and it is largely because Liverpool workers are favouring an alternative means for providing "a clear understanding, etc., etc.," that the Liverpool W.E.A. is in "great financial straits." The second sentence ("maintaining a spirit of fellowship between different classes, etc.") proves that the education provided by the W.E.A. is just as propagandist, and has quite as definite a social purpose, as that provided by the N.C.L.C. The only point to argue about is which of the two kinds of propaganda is of most value to the working-class. The third sentence is the employers' testimonial to the value of W.E.A. propaganda *to them*.

We think our readers will agree that this is quite a useful document.

At the Whitsuntide Co-Operative Congress the question of an educational policy for the Co-Operative Societies was once more discussed; and it was made pretty clear that *Co-Operators & Education.* the great mass of Co-Operators have not as yet found time for a little quiet thinking aiming at relating the aims of their own movement to this question of education. This is not, of course, true of the whole Co-Operative movement; for an increasing number of Co-Operative districts and branches, by making grants to N.C.L.C. classes, are showing that they have passed the stage of mere vague aspirations, and have realised the need for Education With a Purpose. It is somewhat surprising that Co-Operators in general should be so slow to realise this. Mere "divi." hunters we can leave out of our reckoning, since naturally they are not interested in education of any kind whatsoever—unless the cheapest. But that *conscious* Co-Operators should have any difficulty in grasping what appears so glaringly plain—that the struggle against capitalism must be waged in the educational field as well as in the economic—is a

little puzzling. The Co-Operative movement, declared Miss Llewelyn Davies in her Presidential Address to the Congress, was far more than a reformist movement. It aimed at no patchwork modification, no mere "reconciliation between Capital and Labour," but at laying the foundation stones of a new industrial civilisation. Then what, one wonders, hinders so many Co-Operators from perceiving that Education must play a definite part in all this?

We repeat, a *definite* part. Because already many of them are aware, in a vague sort of way, that Education ought to come in somewhere. The *Co-Operative Educator* for June says: "There must be a new social ideal before there can be a new social order. . . . Education must be the instrument employed." And then: "Education as now generally understood is not sufficient." Precisely. It is "education as now generally understood" which we, too, are up against. "Education as now generally understood" is designed to safeguard the existing social order. And the Co-Operative movement, like ourselves, aims at doing away with that order altogether. "Education," the *Co-Operative Educator* goes on to say, "must therefore have a new purpose." We agree again. And we appeal for Co-Operative support for the educational movement organised in the National Council of Labour Colleges because this movement stands for "education with a new purpose." A purpose, remember, cannot be too clear-cut. And the N.C.L.C. is *the only educational organisation, fellow Co-Operators, which is up against "Education as now generally understood."*

In last month's *Labour Monthly* the learned editor went out for our blood. He attacked not merely the Psychology text book (not so much as a faulty text book but as having no business to exist as a PLEBS text book), but Plebs education as a whole. He says it is "academic," has no contact with actual problems, and consequently Pleb-educated people are no better than ordinary trade union leaders. It is just a little amusing to hear R. Palme Dutt, B.A., reproaching the Plebs League for being academic and isolated, but we don't want to dodge the question by a mere *tu quoque*, however tempting and in this case justified it may be.

Let us take his first criticism: "The Marxism that the Plebs teaches is a *non-party* Marxism. Could there be a simpler contradiction of Marxism?"

Compare with that his own words about his own magazine in the same issue, on the first page:—

"It is peculiarly the function of a journal which, as being a *non-party journal*, is able to choose its writers from every side, to undertake this work of dwelling upon *the larger issues*. . . ."

So much for "non-party Marxism"! We can let Dutt on the front page fight it out with Dutt on the back page. Meanwhile we shall continue to be non-party in this sense: that we believe that there are numbers of class-conscious workers in everyone of the working-class parties, and we are sure that socialist education—the making of Socialists and improving of Socialists already made—goes on better if unhampered by passing political controversies about the "United Front" and all.

Dutt goes on to attack the issuing of the Psychology text book, firstly because (as we understand him) it should not have been the *first* PLEBS text book, secondly because

*Is Psychology  
Academic?*

"They repeat all the vicious nonsense about the psychology of the crowd and the herd instinct, without for a moment taking into consideration the character of a machine-civilisation and mass-production; they speak of the power of the Press as based on human "suggestibility," without considering the economic compulsion which is the basis of the power of the Press."

The last objection is really too silly. The text book does not deal with the "economic compulsion" precisely because it is a text book of *Psychology*. For that reason it deals with the *psychological* effect of the Press. That is why it is called an *Outline of Psychology*—not Economics.

For the first, we are ready to admit that, ideally, Psychology would not be our *first* subject. But since none of our writers are paid for anything they write, and therefore have to spend most of their time getting bread-and-butter in other ways, and since we have to take what is finished first, we printed the Psychology text book, just because it was ready. Dutt will have observed that we have on the way a text book on Modern Imperialism, and he will at least agree that this is as near to reality as the *Labour Monthly* studies of Roman dictatorship. We did not issue it first because it wasn't written.

If Dutt means that psychology is to be forbidden as a Plebs subject, we disagree. Every subject which can be handled in such a way as to help to make Socialists deserves a place in the Plebs curriculum. The methods by which class conceptions impose themselves on men's minds, the reaction of men's minds to the various stimuli around them, the mechanism of the mind itself—all these in these days of "mass psychology tactics," are singularly important and worth study. If we have dealt with these satisfactorily then we have produced a useful text book. If we have fallen into the imbecilities and obscenities of the minor Freudians, we have not. But as Dutt admits himself incompetent to judge the technical quality of the work....

# From CROMWELL to HARDING

## 1651 and 1922

*In the following article Mark Starr gives us a study of current history which is not only exceedingly valuable as a summary of important events, but which shows how an intelligent study of the history of the past helps us to view the happenings of our own day in proper perspective. Read in conjunction with our "Geographical Footnote" it will enable students to get a grip on a fundamentally important aspect of the International situation of to-day—i.e., the emergence of America as the greatest of the Capitalist-Imperialist Powers.*

**E**VENTS have moved in a full and fatal circle! In the ominous attempts which America is making at the present time to deal a fatal blow at British commercial supremacy, the student of history will see a replica of the English blow against the Dutch nearly three centuries ago. Probably before this article is in print an Act will have been hustled through the American House of Representatives and the Senate which will as definitely mark the beginning of a new epoch as did Cromwell's Navigation Act in 1651. As far back as 1381 regulations and royal proclamations had been made for English trade, but they were as defensive in their character as the American tariffs of recent years. The Navigation Act of the 17th century meant war; so does the present United States Merchant Marine Bill.

America from 1913 to 1918 increased her output in ship tonnage more than *elevenfold*; 276,000 tons and 3,033,000 tons being the output for those two years respectively. Now this meant the throwing down of a deadly challenge sooner or later to the Power which in pre-war days owned nearly half (12.4 out of 26 million tons) of the world's tonnage—and the most efficient and modern half, for the older ships were sold to foreigners, and in 1913 45 per cent. of British tonnage had been built since 1905. Germany was then Britain's most formidable rival, and her mercantile fleet was not one quarter of the size. In those pre-war days in 1913 Britain made more ships than all her rivals put together. She was Mistress of the Seas—and of the shipyards too.

An elevenfold increase in the U.S.A. output meant the end of that supremacy. We could afford to laugh at "tin lizzie" motor cars, at American films and typewriters, but here was a blow aimed at our very vitals. It is even more important than the struggle over oil.



Since the War there have been repeated rumours of shipping-rate wars. Mr. Tasker, Chairman of the U.S. Shipping Board, angered by the cut of a British firm, is reported to have said (*Financier*, 27th April, 1922): "...the rate cuts of the Lamport and Holt Line in the S. American trade... constitute the first step of an effort on the part of British shipping interests to drive the American merchant marine from the seas. But," Mr. Tasker went on, "the Shipping Board's hat is in the ring." Offensive is to be met by counter-offensive, and rates will be cut down to any point in order to win. The *Financier* remarks: "Considerable alarm is felt in foreign shipping circles at the now declared policy of the U.S. Shipping Board." Next day (28th April, 1922) it quotes Mr. Winthrop Marvin, general manager of the American Steamship Owners' Association, as saying: "There should be no shadow of an excuse for any foreign line between New York, Brazil and Argentina. Let the British maintain their own service from Great Britain to South America, and let our service to the southern hemisphere be absolutely American." Senator Watson showed that American ambition is not limited to the South American trade, for he said (*Observer*, 11th April, 1922), "Our mighty American nation ought to have the carrying trade of the earth."

Coupled with such declarations of war, there has been a strong campaign in America for a general Government subsidy for the whole of the shipping industry. The reasons given by the officials of the Shipping Board and shipowners are that operating costs are higher on American ships than on those of their competitors. The figures given were—30 per cent. higher wages, 25 per cent. higher food costs, 20 per cent. higher construction charges. (The Secretary of the International Seamen's Union, before the Joint Committee examining the proposals, denied the correctness of the first item, which will be lowered, subsidy or no subsidy.) Naturally much use has been made of the necessity of a mercantile fleet for industrial supremacy and in war. Indeed, President Harding suggested in a speech a few weeks ago that there would have been no war in 1914 had America been fully equipped for naval action. Americans argue—like our own British Navy League—that merchant ships can easily be converted into war vessels, and they by no means regard Washington as having prevented all possibility of trouble with Japan.

Additional arguments for a subsidy are made from the fact that only two million tons of the 13,600,000 State-owned tonnage has been sold, and the maintenance of the remainder is costing £12,500,000 a year for upkeep, while it actually is for the most part idle and depreciating. Subsidise American shipping, and then the shipping firms and the banks will purchase this worse than idle

mass of tonnage, decontrol shipping, sell ships at scrap price to shipping lines, and then State-subsidise them! With such a combination of immediate and future interests to back it, there is no wonder that Mr. Tasker reckons the chances of the rapid adoption of the U.S. Merchant Marine Bill as 50 to 1, while the most cautious opinion gives it a 3 to 1 chance (*Saturday Review*, 3rd June, 1922), article, "Grave Danger to British Shipping.")



### NON-INTERVENTION—MORE OR LESS!

*SHIPPING BOSS (of Boston, U.S.A.)* :—“Step lively with that 'ere shell, Cyrus. We sure can't save their souls, but at least we can sink their ships!”

[Cartoon by Will Dyson in "John Bull." June 10th.]

Here are the “insidious” proposals of the Bill as summarised by the *Liverpool Courier* :—

- (1) Differential railway rates adjusted to favour cargoes on the way to American ships.
- Some tax rebates on the freight paid by American shippers to British owners.
- Abolition of all tonnage dues on all ships, whatever their flag, and the application of that resulting revenue increase for the benefit of British shipping.
- Granting of at least 50 per cent. of all emigrants to the U.S.A. free passages.

According to Mr. Harmsworth, in the House of Commons, the proposals mean that the U.S. shipowner will receive each year aid amounting to more than 12½ per cent. of the capital value of the vessel.

These proposals are the reality. Here, in the rhetoric of President Harding, is the "camouflage" under which they are presented to the masses of the American people. There is the same mixture of "profit and piety" with which we are familiar in the orations of our own Prime Minister. Speaking on May 18th at the Annual Convention of U.S. Chambers of Commerce, Harding expatiated on Commerce and its importance. "Undoubtedly it had much to do with bringing about the World War [What about the next?] . . . it was never forgotten in the negotiation of peace." He gave expression to the economic needs of his master Rockefeller thus: "We in America—I am sure it is not unseemly to say it—are commercially a great people, and we ought to be. God blessed us most bountifully in resources. In the citizenship of this Republic is the blend of every people in the world almost, and I like to say I believe we are unexcelled in genius, we are incomparable in our industry, and we have the talent and the determination—the righteous determination—to be commercially one of the foremost nations of the world."

Then between some eyewash passages about "commerce with a conscience" and "honour with honesty," the President mentions the effect of the war: "There never will be a time when you can go back completely to the old order of American industries and exchanges in trade. . . . there is no one constructive thought in the mind of the administration which takes rank above that of a desire firmly and successfully to establish an American merchant marine. . . . *I do not know of a nation in the world that ever maintained eminence in trade without being eminent as a carrier of trade.*"

After this the British press got "a gale up." (The *Manchester Guardian* had little to say. Maybe it was glad to see the freight rates cut down by the destruction of the monopoly of the British lines; or else it suspected the yell as a propaganda stunt by British Protectionists.) The *Liverpool Courier* (25th May, 1922), as the centre of commercial interests with America, shouts the alarm in big type, "LOOK TO YOUR SHIPPING," and sub-heads, "British 'Boobs' and Yankee Grab" and "Wangling World Trade." Liverpool will perish if the U.S. is allowed to carry out the proposals of this Bill! The future is black with menace and threat. The *Courier* demands a "united front" between capital and labour to produce cheaply and expeditiously, and endeavours altruistically to prove to the U.S. how suicidically she is acting!

The only result of the British protests was to provoke greater

propaganda efforts on the part of the U.S. shipping firms. The Oceanic Steamship Co. made a timely report to the Shipping Board that owing to the competition of British lines, subsidised by mail contracts, it would not be able to renew its contract, and American mails would accordingly have to be carried under the British flag.

On the British side the demand for "retaliatory legislation" grows. Sir Owen Phillips (controller of two million tons of British tonnage and chairman for twenty years of the oldest steamship concern in the world) speaking at the annual meeting of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co., appealed to the "spirit of our forefathers" and referred to the fact that by Act of Parliament of 1853 the Government had power to do anything necessary. The *Saturday Review* (3rd June, 1922) illustrated the working of shipping subsidies by showing that a first class liner like the *Mauretania* would receive £10,500 for the double trip to Europe and back. It also spoke of a huge Government construction fund from which shipbuilders could borrow at 2 per cent., and concluded by saying that it is a question of life and death for the British Empire. *John Bull's* pictorial comment is reproduced on page 200. Britannia is not going to hand over her trident without a struggle!

That is the course of happenings to date. In a further article next month the historical parallels and the general position of British shipping will be more fully considered.

MARK STARR.

## GEOGRAPHICAL FOOTNOTES to CURRENT HISTORY

### America and the Caribbean

**E**CONOMIC development has a way of running ahead of current ideology. Twenty years after the Spanish-American War the voice of Woodrow Wilson was still believed to be the voice of America; and American Radicals, whose eyes have been fixed in horror on far-off Korea, and Ireland, and India, and the Valley of the Saar, have recently discovered that queer things have been happening a few hundred miles away from their own southern coastline—in the Caribbean.

It has been ascertained that, in Haiti, the Government of the United States—the Government with the constitution based on

the "Rights of Man"—has been very deliberately using military pressure to force a new constitution—mainly concerned with the Rights of Property—on a weak people; dissolving their Parliament,\* appointing a puppet President, and silencing hostile criticism by that very efficient means—martial law. All this has been done, moreover, at the instigation of Wall Street banks with money to lend for the "development" of a "backward" country. American Radicals, who, like Radicals elsewhere, live and move in a mental atmosphere dating from pre-Imperialist days, have accordingly become virtuously indignant at such departures from "American traditions."

The truth is, of course, that the United States of America, the greatest of all the Capitalist Powers, can no more help developing into an Imperialist Power than she can help having Labour troubles of increasing seriousness. "Ever since the Spanish-American War she has moved steadily along the traditional lines of financial imperialism" (*Manchester Guardian*, May 26th).

Study the map accompanying this article, and the table quoted below from Bowman's *The New World: Problems in Political Geography*.† The map shows how—and to some extent *why*—the Caribbean Sea is becoming an American lake. (But note that American Imperialism is by no means confined to this area; it extends from the Philippines, in the Western Pacific, to Liberia, the nominally "independent" negro republic on the west coast of Africa, of which the U.S. is now "chief financial adviser"—and creditor).

"The following table," writes Bowman (an American author), "reveals the surprising fact that the U.S. has extended its influence and control more rapidly since its acquisition of Hawaii (in mid-Pacific) than any other great power" :—

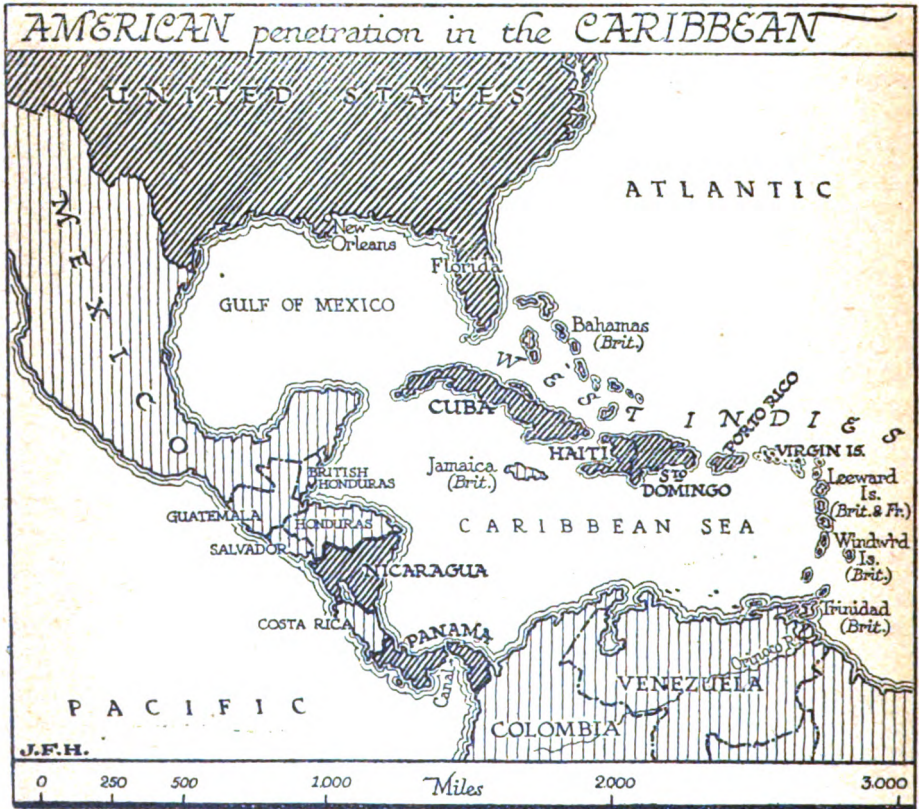
Hawaii (Pacific)	..	..	1898	..	Annexed.
Cuba ( <i>see map</i> )	..	..	1898	..	Virtual protectorate.
Porto Rico ( <i>see map</i> )	..	..	1898	..	Annexed after war with Spain;
Philippines (Pacific)	..	..	1898	..	" " " " "
Guam (Pacific)	..	..	1898	..	" " " " "
Tutuila (Samoa)	..	..	1899	..	Annexed by treaty with Great Britain and Germany.
Panama ( <i>see map</i> )	..	..	1903	..	" General supervision."
Santo Domingo ( <i>see map</i> )	..	..	1907	..	" Supervision of finances."
			1916	..	Military administration.
Haiti ( <i>see map</i> )	..	..	1915	..	" Supervision of finances."
Nicaragua ( <i>see map</i> )	..	..	1913	..	Virtual protectorate.
			1916	..	" Grant " of canal rights and naval bases to U.S.
Virgin Is. ( <i>see map</i> )	..	..	1917	..	Purchased from Denmark.

\* The Haitian Congress has not been allowed to meet since its dissolution by U.S. Marines in 1917.

† Briefly reviewed in "The Plebs Bookshelf," April. A book which every class-library should do its best to afford. Post-paid from Plebs Book Dept., 22s. (600 pp. and nearly 300 maps and illustrations.)

Let us quote, further, Mr. Bowman's paragraph following this table :—

"The United States is classified as a democracy, and it has in recent years disavowed imperialist designs and even protested against such designs on the part of European powers; yet the fact is that the tendency to expansion has been shown in an emphatic manner from the beginnings of settlement in colonial days, through the period of the Louisiana Purchase and the annexation of Florida, during the period immediately before and after the Mexican War, down to the present. The protectorate over Haiti assumed in 1915, the treaty with Nicaragua in 1916, whereby the U.S. obtained for 99 years the right to build a canal through Nicaraguan territory, and the purchase of the Virgin Islands in 1917, are merely the latest in a long series of advances."\*



Based on a map from Bowman's *The New World*. The dark shading shows territories under U.S. control.

The geographical reasons for this "penetration" of Central America and the Caribbean are sufficiently clear after a glance at the map. In the first place, the chain of the West Indian Islands, which makes the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean virtually inland seas, commands the sea-way to America's southern ports and the mouth of her great central waterway, the Mississippi. Further

\* During this same period, also, the U.S. has landed, and maintained marines in Honduras; and interfered in high-handed fashion with the affairs of Costa Rica.

(and this is a point to be noted as illustrating the interaction of technical development and geographical factors), though the occupation of these islands by foreign powers was not, *in the days of sailing ships*, a very serious matter, it became, with swifter means of communication, a real danger.

But not only do the West Indies command the routes to the southern ports of the U.S. What is of even greater importance, they command the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal. And Panama is as vital to the U.S. as Suez is to Britain. The Republic of Panama owes its "independence" (it was originally, of course, a province of the Republic of Colombia—see map) entirely to U.S. money and arms; in precisely the same way—reversed!—as Egypt owes its lack of independence to British interest in Suez. Panama is of the first importance strategically, as the "short cut" between Atlantic and Pacific; and commercially, as bringing all western South America thousands of miles nearer to New York and the industrial centres of the United States.

The Caribbean is being "penetrated" as an essential first step towards the penetration of South America. "In a realm so vast as that stretching from the Rio Grande (Mexico) to Tierra del Fuego," writes Bowman, "the home of 20,000,000 people of white blood, of nearly 20,000,000 Indians and negroes, and of 35,000,000 more of mixed blood, it should not surprise us to find problems of practical interest to the whole world *and of paramount interest to the United States.*" How true! And how little, also, it surprises us to learn further that the business interests of the United States should have discovered that though it is commonly believed "that the world is improving. . . as a matter of fact, portions of it have actually lost ground"; and that "this is particularly true in *Haiti and Santo Domingo, in parts of Central America, in Venezuela, and in Mexico*" (see map once more). In such countries, Mr. Bowman tells us, "democratic principles have been left far behind," and in some cases "military dictators are in absolute control, instead of truly representative governments." Obviously, then, it is the duty of the "progressive" United States manfully to take up the White Man's Burden, and to intervene in the affairs of countries "too weak and backward to manage themselves." And if the intervention take the form of such a manifestation of "democratic principles" as the forcible dissolution of a freely elected Parliament, and the appointment of a Yankee military dictator in place of the native one, these incidents are of course only stepping-stones to higher things; the cause of progress being immediately advanced by forcing a loan of millions of dollars on the unwilling "backward" natives, to pay for all kinds of public works—generously and unhesitatingly undertaken by the American Steel Trust!

There is one other, supremely important reason for American penetration of the Caribbean—*Oil*. The oil reserves of the U.S. are within measurable distance of running dry. But according to E. C. Eckel (*Coal, Iron and War*) the oil-field likely to prove of the greatest potentiality in the near future is *the oil-field of the Caribbean area*—Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela. Small wonder that Venezuela and Mexico are included among the places where, according to the practical idealists of the U.S., “civilisation is going backward.” With Colombia the case is slightly different. She was naturally a little hurt at the way in which the Panama Canal zone was acquired by the U.S.; and the U.S., in its turn, realised that the presence of a bitterly resentful country in close proximity to the Canal did not make for increased security. Accordingly, the U.S. discovered last year certain twinges of conscience about the way she had behaved towards Colombia in 1903; and decided to pay a little sum of \$25,000,000 to that State by way of compensation—and not, of course, with any eye to future concessions!

The ways of the Imperialist are many. But his ultimate aims are much the same the world over.

J. F. HORRABIN.

## DOES the LABOUR COLLEGE DELIVER the GOODS?

*The Labour College, London, has just issued a new, revised edition of its Curriculum. By reason of its history as well as of its organisation and standing, the College is regarded in a special sense as the centre of our movement; and this fact lends to its Synopsis of Lecture Courses particular importance, as a model likely to be followed, or at any rate considered, by other Colleges and Classes. This is why, after a full discussion in the Plebs E.C., we publish the following comments and criticisms.*

**I**N the PLEBS for September last year we published an article on “The Curriculum of the Labour College,” in the course of which the writer briefly outlined certain changes decided upon “in the light of the experience gained during the past few years” of actual College work. A draft scheme had been drawn up by the staff and presented to the Governors, who, so it was stated, “had promptly adopted it,” and the scheme was to be put into actual operation immediately.

This statement, it appears, was somewhat premature. Financial difficulties have caused delay; and the new Curriculum now issued is, in the main, the old curriculum which the scheme above referred



to aimed at improving and extending. Its appearance in printed form, we think, emphasises the pressing need for such improvements and extensions. It is partly, indeed, with a view to forestalling criticism of the College from other (and hostile) quarters that we feel it desirable to discuss this Curriculum frankly in the pages of the PLEBS. "We can promise to be candid...."

And, frankly, this Curriculum is not a *curriculum* at all. A curriculum is "a course of study." The Labour College Curriculum consists of a series of isolated lecture courses, many of them interesting and valuable, some of them (in our opinion) neither the one nor the other. But our first criticism here is simply one of entire lack of *unity* in the Curriculum considered as a whole. The chief aim of the draft scheme discussed last year was "the *correlation* of all lecture courses, new and old, with a view to providing a *coherent, connected programme of studies* covering the whole period of scholarship (two years)." Subjects, we were informed, were to be taught and studied "not in watertight compartments, but *as parts* of the curriculum as a whole."

Now it is precisely this lack of any sort of *correlation*, of any *sequence* of studies, which the published Curriculum makes clear. There is no indication as to the actual sequence in which these various lecture courses are actually taken at the College. But in whatever order you place them, and assuming that this whole series of nineteen principal lecture courses and ten "supplementary" courses is got through in the course of a two years' scholarship, this lack of any planned sequence and development in a student's work remains equally striking. Instead of being an ordered pattern, the Curriculum is a chance patchwork—of good, bad and indifferent pieces. Even if every piece were equally good, it would remain a patchwork—a miscellaneous assortment of specialised studies whose scope and trend has obviously been decided by the particular capabilities and partialities of this or that individual lecturer, and not by any sense of their *relative* importance in the Curriculum as a whole.

This is understandable—and excusable—enough, so long as the Labour College was struggling to keep in existence, with a minimum of staff and of funds. But it is scarcely excusable in present circumstances. And as a matter of fact this defect could, we feel, be remedied without any additional financial expenditure whatever. It is simply a matter of applying the same thought and care which has been spent on the separate lecture courses, *to the Curriculum as a whole*.

There is not only a lack of correlation and sequence; there is a very obvious lack of *balance*. The student who worked right through this course, unless he supplemented it by a good deal of

independent reading, would have a very scrappy and lopsided mental outfit at the end of it. He would know, for example, quite a lot about the England of the Tudors, relatively little about the Chartist movement, and nothing at all about general European history during the 19th century. He would, or should, be an authority on the History of the Family; but he would barely have heard of the French Revolution, or of 1848 (*i.e.*, of the historic background of the *Communist Manifesto*), or of the United States of America. He would have some knowledge (how much would depend on his capacity to absorb such material) of the History of Philosophy; but he would know nothing of Biology or of any Physical Science, and very little about Literature. He would probably be all the better for the 29 lectures he had heard on The Decline of Slavery in Antiquity; but it seems to us that 29 lectures devoted to this subject as compared with 10 to the Rise and Development of Trade Unionism constitute an example of Specialised Academicism which the older Universities would find it hard to beat. Surely the *relative* values of different subjects should be an important factor in the planning of a Labour College curriculum. But it is only too apparent that this Curriculum has not been planned; it has, like Topsy, "just growed." And there has been no periodical stock-taking—scrapping of this or that part and modification of others. Let us repeat that we are well aware of the difficulties and obstacles the College has had to encounter in the past; difficulties and obstacles which inevitably led to the shortcomings we are pointing out. But this consideration does not alter the fact that it is high time now that these defects were remedied. They have stayed too long.

We have another important criticism to make; and we make it after long and full consideration, and emphasise it because, to an even greater extent than those already stated, it is applicable to our educational work everywhere, and not to the work of the London Labour College alone. There is far too great a concentration in this Curriculum on ancient history, while not nearly enough attention is paid to present-day problems.

Now let us hasten to insist that we are not belittling the value of historical study. On the contrary, we regard it as the *basis* of Independent Working-Class Education; and the lack of any general course in World History—from Palæolithic times down to Modern Imperialism—is one of the most glaring defects in the Curriculum. But historical studies must be *related* to, and must *lead up* to, modern events and modern problems, if they are to be of value. A Labour College, to a far greater extent than any other kind of educational institution, must concern itself with the practical applicability of what it teaches. And this necessity for "utilitarian "

studies means that a much greater *relative* amount of time must be devoted to recent and contemporary problems, tendencies and events. There are parts of this Curriculum which make one wonder whether the Labour College is intent on imitating those school history books which always stopped at the Battle of Waterloo; or whether it is too timid to touch on any sort of "live" controversial subject matter. Why, for instance, should a course on The History of Socialism in England stop short at the first quarter of the 19th century, with Thompson and Gray? Why should a course on The Industrial History of England include three lectures on Pre-historic Britain, seven on Feudal England, three on Mercantilism—and only two (concluding) lectures on "Modern Industry and Monopoly" and "The 20th Century and Financial Development"? It is precisely the 20th Century and Financial Development which Labour College students most need to understand. Whether they know little or much about the Manor or the Open Field System or the Late Kinship Phase of the Family is (relatively) unimportant. (We are not overlooking the fact that the course on Advanced Economics—46 lectures—deals with Modern Capitalism, Banking, International Exchanges, etc. Our point is simply that these same subjects should be handled from the historical side at least as fully as from the theoretical economic side.)

Let us mention one other point—which follows inevitably from the previous criticisms we have made. As a direct result of lack of correlation, of balance, and of undue preoccupation with highly specialised studies of isolated periods of history, the Curriculum is far too "advanced" for the average worker-student, equipped only with the scrappy "elementary education" provided by the State. If every student taking up a scholarship at the Labour College had (i.) attended N.C.L.C. classes for some two or three years previously, and (ii.) had had the time and opportunity of supplementing his elementary school education by a wide course of reading, then a Curriculum such as this one would have at any rate far fewer shortcomings from his point of view than it actually has.

Again and again in the PLEBS we have urged the need for constant discussion and, where necessary, revision of our Teaching Methods, Subject-Matter, Modes of Presentation, etc., etc. We should not be Marxians if we were not prepared at any time to test our (educational) theories in the light of actual needs and results. And it is in the hope of stimulating discussion along these lines about the whole scope and trend of our educational work, and not in the least with the object of fault-finding in the case of a particular institution, that we raise these points here.\*

THE PLEBS E.C.

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\* See Special Footnote to this article on p. 230.

## ANOTHER PAGE from TRADE UNION HISTORY

FROM the second instalment of the records of the "Old Mechanics"—Huddersfield—that I am giving this month there arises a very interesting question. Before the student attempts to work out any solution, I must say on behalf of the Editor there is no prize for a correct answer. Here is what I am asking: Will PLEBS' readers in Huddersfield get access to other Friendly Society or Trade Union records, such as the Ironfounders (who have a member's card hung up for 1817 in the club); or will our Leeds comrades look up the files of the *Leeds Mercury* for July—August, 1839, to see if there is any record of a local conference of Labour bodies called together to discuss some Owenite production scheme or the formation of a stores? The *Mercury* of those days was Radical, and had a large share in exposing the career of Oliver the Spy in Dewsbury and Wakefield.

The items that I am giving this month have been brought together from five years' records of ordinary Trade Union items. For example, "prospectus" (18.9.41) is in because it never happens again, whilst "reports," "magazines," "adress's," are common.

The ledger itself is not complete. It never balances up correctly at the yearly summaries. There are many examples of moneys raised voluntarily for all manner of purposes which freely intermingle with the legitimate items. There are collections in aid of accidents, for those out of work during the Plug Riots, to provide a little benefit when donation is exhausted, and so on.

The money originally loaned is not shown at all. The interest shown in 1841 must not go in the book, so it is crossed out and the comments on the income side are really great. If local branch committees could operate the funds now as they apparently did then, there would be a boom in the Workers' Committee movement.

The minute book and other books that might explain were sent up to head office (A.S.E.) in 1892, and are now, I suppose, destroyed.

The loan itself may either have been for a co-operative scheme or for the purpose of developing a home for the Socialists, Radicals, Trades Unions and Friendly Societies.

Note item 8.1.42. I wonder what Radical Horatio was responsible for a fourpenny book of law in those days? We can appreciate a Cobbett expounding the *sines* and *cosines* of the English language in diatribes against the corruptions of the powers that be, but who was he who could write a compendium of law for four-

pence and get the essence of the *Breviarium* and of English jurisprudence as to-day one gets a 47 hours wage-reckoner?

There is "Committee Liquor" for 22.1.42. They pore over their acquisition, then armed, proceed to the headquarters of the Red Flag, and three sovereigns are extracted. A wonderful fourpenn'th.

The items show that £8 was repaid, and as no half-yearly interest was forthcoming in April, 1844, the position is discussed and a deputation interviewed the Socialists. They consumed more beer (remember that tea and coffee were out of bounds then, and beer had a real food value, and was as commonly used as tea is to-day), then they interviewed the bank and finally a solicitor (note charge 4s. 6d. 1844, 6s. 8d. 1914). He advises them as follows:—

"You are not recognised by law as a coperate entity with powers to treat or enter into commitants neither is the contracting party to the debt recoqnisable by law we therefore sujest you revert back to force."

On the committee's report the item "Lost by Socilists" appears. I should say it was the beaver-hatted mechanic who had lost. Of course the student is quite at liberty to assume that the £1 7s. 6d.'s were for interest only, and that the rate may have been as high as 18 per cent., because if it was a productive scheme and the promoters optimistic followers of the English school of the "right to the whole produce," then their concept of the value of managerial functions would be only a little lower than Sir Allan Smith's during his lock-out!

FRED SHAW.

*This is a typical page taken at random. There is no balancing up correctly over periods. Items were forgotten. Note the periodic lock and key business of the branch box, the style of auditing, and the two out-of-works visiting the secretary and receiving the day's donation, 1s. 8d., 4d. for bed, and 1s. travelling and provisions.—F. S.*

1833			1833						
March	2	Officers Liquor. . . . .	1	8	March	2	Contrabutions ..	15	0
March	10	Books made up				1	propersition ..	2	6
		and when sataled				1	Making ..	7	6
		we have on hand	27	6	6	1	rule ..		4
								<hr/>	
							Brought forward	26	2 4
								<hr/>	
								27	7 8
							take of ..		1 8
								<hr/>	
							on hand ..	27	6 6
								<hr/>	
March	16	Officers Beer ..	1	8	March	16	Contrabutions ..	1	12 ,,
		Committy Do. . . . .	3	3			1	Making ..	7 6

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	1 letter from Glasgow ..	1 1 1/2			1 19 6
	Donations ..	1 1 "		take of ..	1 7 1/2
		<u>1 7 1/2</u>			<u>12 5 1/2</u>
				1 rule ..	27 6 6
				on hand ..	<u>27 19 4 1/2</u>
March 30	Officers Liquor ..	1 8	March 30	Contrabutions ..	1 0
	1 letter from Leedes	7		2 Makings ..	10 0
	1 do from Blackburn	9		2 rules ..	15 0 8
	1 new kea & locks repairing ..	1 4 1/2			<u>1 6 8</u>
	Donations ..	10 6		take of ..	14 10 1/2
		<u>14 10 1/2</u>			<u>11 9 1/2</u>
			April 7	Agread on by at special Comitty	27 19 4 1/2
				on hand ..	<u>28 11 2</u>
April 14	Donations ..	1 1 0	April 14	Contrabutions ..	18 0
	Officers Liquor .	1 8			28 11 2
	2 tramps ..	6 0			<u>29 9 2</u>
	1 parsil . ..	1 2		take of ..	1 10 4
	1 letter from Halifax	6		on hand ..	<u>27 18 10</u>
		<u>1 10 4</u>			
April 27th	Officers Liquor .	1 8	April 27th	Contrabutions ..	1 0 0
					27 18 10
					<u>28 18 10</u>
				take of ..	1 8
					<u>28 17 2</u>
				rong reckoning. .	1 10 1/2
				on hand ..	<u>28 15 3 1/2</u>
<hr/>			<hr/>		
1840	Oct. 11	Interest on 10£ . " 6 "	1839	Aug. 17	Attending the Social Committee .. 1 2
					General Meeting .. 12 6
1841	Oct. 2	Received from the Socialists Interest Money 1 15 "	1840	Feb. 15	Banking Expences .. 1 4
		The 20 10 9 drown from the Bank should not have been put in this book Thearfore I will deduct it of or ad it to which you have a mind			
			1841	Sept. 18	Prospectus Dis-tributing .. " 3 6
				Nov. 13	Attending Socilists .. " 2 8
			1842	Jan. 8	Law Book .. " " 4

to call it .. 98 19 1  
 20 10 9  


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 119 9 10

1842  
 Feb. 19 Social Interest  
 Feb. 8th. 1842 .. 15 ..  
 Received from the  
 Socialists Feb. 14 3 .. ..  
 The three sovereigns  
 from the Socialists  
 will want de- 93 10 3½  
 ducting of .. 3 .. ..

90 10 3½

Owing to mistake  
 in the carrying  
 over in the last  
 quarter .. 90 3 3½

Sep. 17 Received from the  
 Socialists Interest  
 Money.. .. 1 7 6

1843  
 Jan. 21 Social Interest .. 1 7 ..  
 Socialists. .. .. 6  
 Nov. 25 Socialists Half  
 years Interest 1 7 6

1844  
 Aug. 19 Social Interest.. 1 7 6

Feb. 19 Attending Socielists  
 twice .. .. 1 8  
 Jan. 22 Committee Liquor .. 2 0  
 Ap. 2 Attending Bank  
 & Socialists .. .. 1 0  
 Sep. 2 Law Book .. .. 1 7

1843

1844  
 Aug. 5 David Kirk, John  
 Atkinson, Wm.  
 Waddington, dele-  
 gation allowance  
 on Socialist  
 Buessnefs .. .. 9 ..  
 Committee Beer. .. 3 ..  
 Aug. 19 Committee Liquor .. .. 5  
 Committee .. .. 10  
 Banking .. .. 1 ..  
 Attorney Expences .. 4 6  
 Lost by Socilists 15 .. ..

## “ GOD’S PROMPTERS ”

**A**N irate American once called his Marxist comrades “God’s prompters!” It was not so much that they knew what was going to happen as that they knew still better what *ought* to have happened. And they could also always explain just what forces had caused any happening, and where same had been circumvented. If things *didn’t* happen just their way, then obviously someone had blundered! They supplied the writing on the wall; it was for others to make sense of it.

It’s an irritating habit, and unfortunately it is not confined to American Marxists. If you’ve ever had a numb feeling in the head after reading an article in the PLEBS, it’s probably been written by a sufferer from this habit. Don’t mistake it (the numb feeling) for thinking. The brain may be the organ of understanding, but it’s also the seat of headaches; and it’s a safe bet that what can’t be simply explained isn’t sense.

Now what is this Marxism? What is this thing that earns us the undying hatred of other sections of the movement, that sours university dons and blights the lives of Labour leaders? Just a line of thought, that's all: a theory. And it was *meant* to throw a flood of light onto things. It's no good, therefore, using it to clump heads with. That may make the other fellow see stars, but that sort of light doesn't help him.

What is the matter with us? Our theory fits the facts better than any other theory, but—alas!—it is always easier to use a theory as a missile rather than a guide. Our theory needs constant application to facts. Unlike some others, application to facts only strengthens it; but that is the difficulty. It was never intended that it should be the answer to all riddles, though its very truth makes it easy to use as an answer. We should use it to help us to understand the moving procession of everyday life which looks so chaotic and so complicated at first glance. Only this is just where quite a number of us prefer to look wise, and talk till the other fellow reels—or to whisper the formulæ of our theory into his ear as if we were giving him the name of a winner!

It won't do! This theory of ours was never intended to be used to tell the other fellow where he went wrong *after* the event, or to provide us with a cheap sneer at other folks' denseness. What was it intended for? Let us put it down again in plain words (because if, as we believe, no better explanation is forthcoming, it must be easy to understand, or it could not be a good explanation).

Our explanation puts forward the idea that our laws, our religions, our rules of life and conduct (of any group or society, that is) even our efforts to express what we want to say in the form of art, music or writing, are based on, conditioned by, the way our group earns its living—or gets its living provided for it. It does not say that nothing else affects the laws, religions, music, etc. It merely puts forward this beautiful, simple, clear idea. Well! you'd think such a sensible, eminently practical view would be received with open arms by the workers—who know that this getting of a living is really and truly a fundamentally important business. But is it? It is not. And one of the causes is the fact that instead of being used as a torch it is too often used as a club to knock the other fellow senseless.

If we come to the worker with a clear explanation, and thoroughly well disguise it as a knotty problem, a knotty and unending problem; if we batter him with hard chunks of economic theory and chase him with flying mists of thought, is it any wonder he flies?

Surely with our clear, true explanation we could afford to be the lightest-hearted, straightest, gayest of fighters for the working-class, because our theory should throw light about and give us



reasons for being cheerful. Folk may be bored and disgruntled who see no order in things, who have no hope in events. Folk who believe in fixed things can stick in the mud—where they belong. Our application of our theory should be like a moving searchlight over life and history. Our plans alter with the changing circumstances and fit the times, because we've thought about and studied the past in the light of our theory and can apply that knowledge to the present as a guide and help.

Shaw once wrote the following eulogy of Marx (a great and deserved tribute): "Marx never condescends to cast a glance of useless longing at the past; his cry to the present is always, 'Pass by; we are waiting for the future.' Nor is the future at all mysterious, uncertain, or dreadful to him. There is not a word of hope or fear, nor appeal to chance or providence, nor vain remonstrance with Nature, nor optimism, nor enthusiasm, nor pessimism, nor cynicism, nor any other familiar sign of the 'giddiness' which seizes men when they climb to heights which command a view of the past, present and future of human society. Marx keeps his head like a god. He has discovered the law of social development, and knows what must come. The thread of history is in his hand."

Don't let us tie ourselves up in the thread of history!

WINIFRED HORRABIN.

## A W.E.Aer's CASE against the LABOUR COLLEGES

*Mr. W. H. Marwick, a W.E.A. tutor, here concludes his criticism of the Labour Colleges, the first portion of which we printed last month. Our own replies are appended to his paragraphs.*

I HAVE explained what I meant by saying that "the principles and policy of the Labour Colleges are, *in my view*, antagonistic to those of Trade Unionism." Let me proceed to elaborate my statement that they are also antagonistic to those of Labour.

It is sometimes argued by its spokesmen that, as Trade Unionism stands for the worker in the industrial sphere, and the Labour Party in the political, so does the Labour College in the educational! What seems to me more in accordance with the facts is the variation given by the Pauls, when they quote approvingly the statement of the Belgian Henry de Man, that "there are three main lines of advance; the political action of the Communist party; the direct action of organised labour; and independent working class

education" ; and add " we need not dispute as to which is the most important, since all are indispensable. The essential thing is, that there should be collaboration along all three lines" (*Proletcult*, pp. 135—6). That the affinities of the Labour College are with Syndicalism and Industrial Unionism rather than with Trade Unionism in this country I have already suggested ; that its political associations are with the Communist party rather than with the Labour Party or I.L.P. there are many indications. That there is a logical contradiction between the constitutionalist reformism of the Labour Party or the political evolutionism of the I.L.P., and the "materialistic conception of history" as expounded by the Labour College seems obvious. I might develop the point thus : The Labour Party believes in using the existing parliamentary machinery to bring about a gradual social reconstruction ; the I.L.P. seeks by its propaganda to convince the majority that the present industrial system is irrational and immoral, and to induce them therefore to take conscious co-operative action to substitute a better. You hold that material conditions are the determining cause of social evolution, that man's ideas and behaviour are dominated thereby ; that the most we can attain is consciousness of these forces, so that we may align ourselves with them, instead of vainly seeking to overcome them ; that when material conditions are ripe we must have a minority prepared to effect a revolutionary change. These two standpoints seem to me fundamentally opposed ; and I therefore repeat that your principles and those of the Labour movement in this country are antagonistic.

That the leading members of the Labour College are honest and consistent enough to see that contradiction and act accordingly is illustrated by the pronounced Communist and anti-Labour activities of John McLean, Walton Newbold, Mellor, T. A. Jackson, the Pauls, and others ; the Woolwich and Caerphilly elections afford the most dramatic commentary. Did the Labour College adhere to the W. E. A. principle of "absolute impartiality within the class-room, absolute freedom outside," all this would be irrelevant ; but the Labour College assumption is, that in the class-room you are merely giving the reasoned interpretation and justification of the policy which you personally pursue outside. Your view of education is, that it is only intensified propaganda ; mine is, that they are two separate things.

What Mr. Marwick means by "antagonistic to Labour," it appears, is "antagonistic to the Labour Party." We would recommend him to be a little more precise in his terms, more especially when engaged in controversy ; because "Labour" and "the Labour Party" are not necessarily synonymous.

But are the Labour Colleges antagonistic to the Labour Party ? Mr. Marwick "proves" his charge by quoting the names of half-a-dozen Plebs of openly avowed Communist sympathies ; and tries to suggest that their

"outside activities" represent the practical policy of the Labour College movement. Let us make him a present of another name or two—the first that occur to us—and ask him to fit them into his argument:—George Barker, Labour M.P.; Will Lawther, Labour Parliamentary candidate; George Hicks, Gen. Sec., A.U. Building Trade Workers; Thos. Lowth, Sec. of the Labour College Governors, and Labour Parliamentary candidate. These men have all figured prominently in the work of the Labour College movement. We could go on adding to the list almost indefinitely—if it were worth while. But it isn't.

Because at the very same time that Mr. Marwick is accusing us of identifying our educational work with the political activities of one particular party, the Editor of the *Labour Monthly*, a Communist, is declaring that our "non-party Marxism" is a source of weakness!

Let us state clearly and emphatically that the Labour College movement has no "political associations" except with the *political activities of the working class as a whole*, including Labour Party, I.L.P., Communists, and anti-politicals.\* In so far as its teaching is based on Marxism, and on the Materialist Conception of History (it would be cruel, by the way, to dwell on Mr. Marwick's pathetic ignorance on this subject) the Labour College movement tends to attract, as active workers, a good proportion of the members of those parties which *consciously* accept Marxism as the basis of their activities. But their political affiliations are no concern of ours. Our main point is *working-class independence*. Our bias is *working-class bias*. And so long as there are divisions of opinion on programmes of action and points of policy within the working-class movement, so long will there be Labour College workers of widely varying opinions on these points. But these same men and women will all be united on one matter—the *need for a definite, conscious, working-class point of view, based on a working-class interpretation of history and current problems*. And this is why they are all agreed in opposing the W.E.A.—ED.

Finally, "the principles and policy of the Labour College, are, in my view, antagonistic to those of Socialism."

Under this head, I can only in the main repeat what I said in my first letter to the *Herald*. To me, the main purpose of Socialism is to secure the fullest and freest self-development of personality; the main condemnation of capitalism is, that it renders this impossible for the great majority. In order to achieve this object, it is not sufficient merely to destroy capitalism; we must develop positive agencies. The most important of these is an educational system, democratically controlled, standing for absolute freedom of thought, for co-operation between teachers and taught, and making available for all not merely the material resources but the cultural heritage of the community. That, as I understand it, is the W. E. A. idea of education. It can be accomplished only very imperfectly under existing social conditions, and then largely by the voluntary effort of Trade Unions (as in the W. E. T. U. C. scheme) and other Labour organisations, supplemented (as in the case of insurance and other such matters) by grants from public funds. The ideal is that the community should directly provide for the educational needs of all its citizens—primary, secondary, and higher,—leaving a functional autonomy in administration

\* Cf. the short review of Fred Henderson's new Labour Party pamphlet on p. 190 of last month's PLEBS.

to the educational bodies ; and thus avoiding a rigid and uniform machinery for enforcing the doctrines of a governing class. Here my faith in Socialism and in W. E. A. ideals coincide.

Now the declared principles and policy of the Labour College seem to me hostile to this, and therefore to Socialism as I understand it. That some of its exponents are better than their creed (as I confess to being worse than mine), and teach much that is of real educative and cultural value, I am from personal knowledge of them ready to admit. But the theory is, that the main purpose of education is to inculcate, under capitalism, the outlook which shall most effectively conduce to its overthrow, and under a new social order that which shall most effectively conduce to its maintenance. It thus means the deliberate cultivation of a narrow, one-sided, dogmatic and bigoted outlook, which in its combination of metaphysical abstraction with fanatical zeal is comparable only with Calvinism. Such a mentality must, if generally prevalent, be fatal to all prospect of a harmoniously organised society. In psychological terms, it means the exaltation of the "inferiority-complex" to a permanent place in the focus of consciousness. In other words, because many workers are at present (very naturally and justifiably) obsessed by a mental revulsion against the circumstances under which they are compelled to live, we are therefore to make that morbid sentiment the spirit that informs our revolutionised society, instead of eliminating it by the removal of all that tends to produce it.

The overthrow of capitalism is a *comparatively* easy and unimportant matter ; what I am concerned about is the constructive policy of establishing and maintaining a better system. For that purpose, the development of the right psychology seems to me even more important than it does to you ; for I hold that mind and not matter is the ultimate reality. I do not think we can afford to dogmatise. I am convinced that we have one and all something to contribute to the solution. And so any school of thought which claims to possess all necessary knowledge is to my mind the **worst** enemy of Socialism. Socialism differs from all other social systems in this, that it must be achieved by conscious effort of will, the reasoned use of means to effect a deliberately accepted end, and must be maintained by the active and informed co-operation of the community. If these conditions cannot be satisfied, Socialism is an idle dream ; the only hope of ever obtaining them seems to me to be by a progressive development of education on W. E. A. lines ; Labour College methods seem to me calculated to render them for ever unattainable.

Yours faithfully,

Edinburgh, 9th April, 1922.

W. H. MARWICK.

Mr. Marwick, in short, is not a "Labour" man at all; and the emancipation of the working-class is not his main concern. Working-class revulsion against economic tyranny is to him just a "morbid sentiment"; and the overthrow of capitalism, as compared with the realisation of his ideals, is "a comparatively easy and unimportant matter!" What he wants is Absolute Freedom of Thought, and the Cultural Heritage of the Ages made available for every Citizen.

Very well. This is a (relatively) free country, and if Mr. Marwick wants to dither, who are we that we should try to stop him?

But why in the name of this pretty "Socialism" of his should he demand *working-class support* for his Society for the Propagation of Dithering? The working-class movement is out, first and foremost, for the overthrow of capitalism and the ending of an intolerable social system. If Mr. Marwick finds their spirit "morbid," he should keep away from them. They'll rub along without him.

We of the Labour College movement have ideals, too. We, too, are out for a fuller and freer life for all men, based on universal social service. We do not regard the overthrow of capitalism as "a comparatively easy and unimportant matter," but as our primary aim; the essential first step towards the realisation of any ideals at all. We believe that it is the historic mission of the working-class, organised as a class, to take this step. And we demand of education that it shall help the workers in the achievement of their mission.

In short, we look at things from a *working-class point of view*. And Mr. Marwick is evidently very proud that he does nothing of the kind. Why he should regard this as entitling him to appeal for the support of the working-class is altogether beyond us.—ED.

## The MIDDLE CLASS in LITERATURE

**A**LTHOUGH every great writer is of course an individual, whose individual "human" qualities form a vital part of his work, he is also by the very terms of his existence a social creature subject to his environment—the social structure of which he forms a part, and which gives a special direction to his passions and his aspirations. Worker-students will find an added pleasure in literature if they relate it to the social conditions of its period; and in doing this they need not lessen their pleasure in the "purely" literary qualities of the works they study. This short article consists of a few notes on some eighteenth century writers, studied in relation to the social background of their age.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, commercial developments were urging forward the need for extended production. The political dominance of the landed aristocracy had been heavily counter-balanced by that of the rising middle class of small master-manufacturers, shopkeepers and merchants. The French wars—wars for commercial supremacy—stimulated demand, and division

of labour within the workshop cheapened production. Britain was becoming the land of commodity production; and the small proprietor, like the would-be gentleman he was, went into the respectable business of trade. The increase in the wealth of the trading-class was enormous. These people now had leisure and required something humanly interesting and not too exacting to read. A new class of readers had arrived, and their rise to power is reflected in the writers of the period. The aristocrat, the powerful prince and the knightly adventurer give place to the practical man.

Take, for first example, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Defoe had been merchant and manufacturer, had led an adventurous life and for many years had been lying like truth. *Robinson Crusoe* was manufactured from material for which Defoe had ascertained there was a market. The merchant class were bent upon the accumulation of capital and all its morality sprang from and bore upon this aim. Defoe knew his readers, and wrote to please and serve them—for some honest profit to himself. Crusoe is of "the middle station of life"—"the most suitable to human happiness." "Temperance, moderation, quietness, health are the blessings attending the middle station of life." His moral reflections which are made to arise out of the incidents of his life are all calculated to further the general class business of accumulation.

Let us turn to another writer of the same period. Addison's *Spectator* expressed the ideals of the better-educated man of affairs. A prominent figure in these essays and sketches is that of Sir Andrew Freeport, the merchant. Traders had hitherto been regarded as dishonest and avaricious, but commerce was now a great power in society and politics; and merchants were "ambassadors of civilisation." Addison, too, like Defoe, was a moralist. The duty of human beings was to be reconciled to their lot, to forget the humiliation of this life in the expectation of eternity, and to seek a sober happiness in a sense of doing right. Which teaching was so much to the taste of the master-class that Addison was able to enjoy the "sober happiness" of some comfortable jobs and a handsome pension.

Let us glance at a poet of the period. Pope, whose father was a successful tradesman, perfectly expresses the point of view of a class which has satisfactorily "arrived." To him, the existing order is the "natural order."

Look round our world, behold the chain of Love  
Combining all below and all above.

All are but parts of one stupendous whole  
Whose body nature is and God the soul.

And who but makes to invert the laws  
Of order, sins against the Eternal cause.

Order is Heaven's first law, and this confest  
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest.

All men are equally happy who recognise the order which assigns to them their place. Happiness is therefore within our power. Self-interest, well understood, will evolve order. *The Essay on Man* belonged to the intellectual movement of the possessing class to put religion on a common-sense basis, a basis which served their economic interests and showed Labour its place in the social scheme. What is, is right and divinely appointed !

As the social power of the merchant class grew, a fairly cultivated and comfortable reading public was ready to contemplate and criticise pictures drawn from contemporary manners. The drama, to a great extent because of its long and close connection with the Court, had declined; but the writer who could see his characters from within, who could tell a dramatic story dealing with domestic life in town and country, and could point a moral, was sure of an audience. And it is interesting to observe that, with this access of worldly prosperity and stability of position, the bourgeois no longer insisted so puritanically on "the moral." The sons and grandsons of the men who had shuddered with horror at the licentiousness of the Restoration Court playwrights, laughed heartily at Fielding and at Sterne. In both these writers we get the natural reaction from an excess of thrift, industriousness, attention to business, and all the other Puritan virtues. And both of them, accordingly, are a good deal more human and a good deal more lovable than some of their predecessors.

Towards the end of the century a slight reaction towards propriety set in. Hunting parsons, boozing squires, and the other typical figures of the mid-eighteenth century were beginning to be overshadowed by the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. Times were changing once more. Wesley was discouraging the lower orders from too closely imitating the vices and follies of their "betters." And in Goldsmith's writings we get evidence that at least a section of the bourgeois was taking again a rather more serious view of its "duties." The atmosphere of *The Vicar of Wakefield* is very different to that of *Tom Jones* or *Tristram Shandy*. And once again we get some moralising ! "Heaven thus levels all human enjoyments to nearly the same standard." "The poor will have the endless satisfaction of knowing what it was once to be miserable." All the arts, wisdom and virtues of society are generally found in the middle order of mankind, and this order alone is known to be the true preserver of freedom and may be called the people." The middle class, indeed, are THE PEOPLE !

J. J. FRENCH.

# A Synopsis of Twelve Lectures on THE STATE

*The following syllabus, by J. Hamilton (President, N.C.L.C., and Sec., Liverpool Labour College), will be all the more interesting to many readers since it summarises the main points of Wm. Paul's "The State," now out of print, and therefore unobtainable. It should be of considerable assistance to tutors planning short summer or autumn courses.*

Textbook—*The State: Its Origin and Function.* By W. Paul.

NOTE.—At present out of print. It is to be hoped that a new and revised edition will soon be available.

**I.—INTRODUCTORY.**—The function of History. Mankind learns by making mistakes. Popular fallacies as to role of the State, e.g., "The State is the People." Examination of origin of an institution necessary to obtain clear concept of its function—historical method therefore essential. Social Institutions; men compelled by nature to use mutual effort and social organisation to secure means of existence. Impulses or instincts impelling towards this process:—*Primary*: (a) Self-preservation, (b) Nutrition, (c) Reproduction. *Secondary*: (a) Gregarious instinct, (b) Property instinct.

*Gregariousness* traced back to elementary impulse of reproduction: *Property* to impulse of nutrition. Social organisations paralleled in brute creation; but man employs *inventive* faculty. Creation and use of tools, by use of which nature is subordinated to social forces. Social laws arise as distinct from natural laws. The theory of Historical Materialism.

**II.—Earlier Stages.**—The evolution of society—Savagery, Barbarism, Civilisation. Each stage characterised by improvement in means of subsistence, consequent social development. Man's first attempt at social organisation. The *Gens* (kinship); fundamental basis of gentile society. Communal ownership and distribution of means of life; administration in hands of members of family groups; chiefs not heaven-sent leaders, but elected. No sex inequality. Next stage, *Patriarchal Society*—made inevitable by domestication of animals. Results—(1) kinship through males, (2) pastoral pursuits, (3) permanent marriage, (4) slavery. Slavery arises as value of labour is appreciated. Agriculture later in development; why? Because it is more laborious than pastoral



pursuits. Increase of population, however, necessitated increased food supplies. Land first held in common; gradual development of private property in land, consequently of rich and poor families. Antagonisms of classes arise. Political State comes into existence to prevent opposing economic interests from devouring one another and society itself.

III.—*The Glory that was Greece.*—Early civilisation in Greece marks transition from *gentile* form of society (primitive communism) to the Political State. State arises as product of irreconcilable class antagonisms. Civilisation marks a certain stage in economic development, not the inauguration of moral or noble impulses. Introduction of money as medium of exchange brought about enslavement of Greek peasantry. Merchant class as intermediaries between peasant and market; bad harvests and usury; disruption of society threatened by fierce antagonisms between propertied and propertyless.

Solon (Archon 594—3 B.C.), the “wise man.” His constitution did not end class struggles, but softened their effects; cancellation of mortgages, enslavement for debt forbidden—hence first political revolution meant an infringement of private property relations. Protection of one kind of private property means violation of another kind. Division of Greek society, based on degrees of property owning. Economic power of wealthy gave them political control, also control of armed forces. Later, Greek states organised on a territorial basis. Athens developed into an imperial power; policy of conquest for definite economic ends. Domination of slaves by free citizens. Economic collapse. Not democracy caused downfall of Athens, but slavery, which took the place of the labour of free citizens.

IV.—*Rome the Eternal.*—Early history of Rome a record of social crises. Social divisions:—*Patricians* (landed nobility); *Plebeians*: Rich—merchants; Poor—free workers; *Slaves*.

Political power in hands of patricians. Servius Tullius (579—535 B.C.) Roman prototype of Solon; his constitution likewise based on property and territorial division. Public power of coercion—the State consisted of citizens liable to military duty. Its use directed against slaves and proletarians excluded from military service. Political mechanism—the Consuls; the Senate; the Centuries; the Colleges of Priests. Sinister use of Colleges of Priests in favour of oligarchy by trading on superstitious fears of proletariat.

Imperial Rome's mission to “establish peace everywhere”; in practice meant merciless exploitation of conquered. Increase

of wealth to State cause of bitter conflicts between patricians and plebs. Aggression by external foes results in few concessions to plebs (Licinian laws—389—360 B.C.). Laws ignored when immediate danger over. Official dictatorship. Militarism destroyed ancient agricultural relations. Tribute exacted from conquered in two fatal forms—indemnities and slaves. Fate of reformers (Gracchi brothers). Cities filled with dispossessed freemen. "Bread and circuses." Rise of Christianity; a religion for the proletariat. "Conversion" of Constantine. Result, adhesion of influential priesthood to State. Christian teachings henceforth adjusted to suit ruling class in society. Stagnation of productive forces a result of prevailing property relations. Economic paralysis—general degeneration. Fall of "Eternal City" before onrush of virile barbarians.

V.—*The Mediæval State.*—The Dark Ages. Rise of Feudalism; a system of social organisation primarily devised for purpose of safety—weaker folk placing themselves under protection of overlord. Their lands surrendered to him and sub-held on feudal tenure.

Origin in two sources: (a) splitting up the large estates within former Roman Empire; (b) the village communities of the Northern tribes. The *Mark*. Organisations of households organised and governed on communal basis. Evolution to *Manor*. Tenants acknowledge superior authority of overlord. Autocratic organisation. Agriculture predominant occupation. Agricultural operations require peace; warriors appointed to protect community; subdivision of labour in society (farmers and fighters). Military caste becomes permanent; chief's power increases. Labour services demanded; chief and followers, from protectors, become owners of community. Tribal lands transformed into kingdoms. Kinship bond supplanted by territorial unit. Internal politics of Middle Ages a struggle between Clan and State. Unlike slavery, no man positively owned by another; but no man free of service to another. Rights of serf; right of livelihood not withheld from him.

VI.—*The Evolution of Law.*—Laws determined by the interests of the prevailing ruling classes. State defines laws, and crushes any revolt against them. All subjects not members of State, although laws apply to all. Laws and tribal customs operate in different ways. Tribal customs had roots in kinship—presupposed equality; Law has roots in private property, presupposes class inequality, and therefore requires *force* (the State) to enforce decrees.

Earliest codes of law deal almost exclusively with personal rela-

tions. Few references to private property. Transition from custom to law keeps pace with transition from communal ownership to private property. Remnants of tribal customs stamped out by the State. Rapid growth of common law during feudalism. Administration in hands of Crown ; Basis of wealth then being land, method of land ownership formulated the common law. Lords of the manor interpreted the code. "Law the social and historic illustration of the truth regarding the need for honour among thieves."

VII.—*Passing of the Feudal State.*—During feudalism successive clashes of interest between Crown, Barons, Church, and latterly Burgers, evolved Capitalist State. Property interests promptly sunk differences whenever serfs revolted. Commutation of labour services ; serfdom gradually becoming obsolete. Black Death and its economic effects. Rise in wages—discontent of landowners. Statute of Labourers—a 14th Century Munitions Act ; its failure ; attempt to re-impose villeinage. Peasants' Revolt (1381) crushed ; but labour-power still urgently needed, hence economic situation unchanged. Peasants gained freedom from serfdom and, as wage-workers, higher wages.

Later, many landowners turned from arable to sheep farming. General depopulation of countryside and gradual disappearance of serfs as a class. Growth of Merchant class ; fertile source of taxation to barons. Rise of Guilds to oppose exactions, etc. As production for exchange developed the quantity, not quality, of Guild work became important point.

Growth of *Parliament* ; not glorious beginning of democracy, but result of Crown's desire to strengthen itself against turbulent baronage by securing monetary assistance of merchant class. Financial embarrassment of Edward I. brought about extended franchise. House of Commons gained powers over taxation. This power speedily lost as bourgeoisie did not possess necessary organisation and cohesion to conserve, much less extend, their political gains. Labouring population no share in advancement of House of Commons. Early political struggles of bourgeoisie directed to aid Crown to crush Barons ; Aided Tudors in establishing their strong central and absolute monarchy.

JACK HAMILTON.

(To be completed next month.)

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ARE YOU USING THE "PLEBS" POSTERS?

## STUDENTS' NOTES and QUERIES

MARY S— evidently thinks that living near the Bank of England is sufficient to give one an opinion on currency. She denies inflation because she can change Bradburys into sovereigns, and she blames trusts for high prices. If our comrade would like a summer holiday as the guest of His Majesty she has only to change her £1 currency notes into gold sovereigns, melt them or sell them by weight for export. (Incidentally, she would probably be asked for her reasons and address at the Bank.) If she did succeed in doing this secretly she would find that a gold £1 outside of England bought more than a paper £1. Even inside England she would find people who would give her more than 20s. for it.

A. FISHER (West Vale) suggests that there is a growing opinion that Dietzgen is "an impostor, a quack of the Yankee type." This comes at the end of a letter which questions certain statements made by Dietzgen and also by W. W. Craik. The latter can be best allowed to answer for himself; Comrade Fisher's letter has been sent to him. But one may remark meantime that Dietzgen's denunciations are never aimed at those who frame scientific hypotheses (*i.e.*, "theories in the making") upon a limited number of facts. The deductive method attacked is when the original deduction has not been made in that way, and when it is still held to in defiance of the facts. Deduction used as secondary to induction is as legitimate as necessary.

TEACHER tells us that a student of his inquired if his aunt was a "social relation." Maybe he was doubtful about this, because she determined the general outlook of uncle! Anyway, other Plebs might take the hint, and beware of taking too much for understood in their hearers. Everybody isn't clear about the difference between a "relation" based on blood or marriage and one based upon the respective positions of men in society, *i.e.*, their "relation" to the means of getting food, clothing and shelter.

QUERIST quotes from an article by Philips Price, and wants to know why there should be a struggle between industrial and finance capital—the first in Germany favouring inflation, the second fighting it. Obviously the industrialist, in so far as he has not to buy raw materials abroad, favours a state of affairs which enables

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him to sell advantageously abroad. And when the £1 and the \$1 buy well over a thousand marks, then purchasers will spend with German exporters. The financier, on the other hand, sees in the rising prices of inflation an automatic impoverishment just as the financier and investor in England are being automatically enriched by the falling prices.

M. Gabriel Hanotaux, in the second *Manchester Guardian Commercial Supplement*, says very cleverly what the PLEBS has been saying for fourteen years: Economic facts cannot be handled like the subject matter of other sciences, because vested interests come into play. He sees that all the piles of statistics are disregarded and rival “truths” face each other.

J. J. wants to know why the £1 (6th June, 1922) has gone up so that it will buy  $4.50\frac{5}{8}$  dollars (18s.  $6\frac{1}{2}$ d.).

Here are the main factors: (1) Expectation of American loan to Europe which would benefit Britain. (2) Export of coal from Britain owing to the American strike. (3) Huge summer influx of Americans into Britain.

M. S.  
C 2

## REVIEWS

*Towards a New Social Order.* By A. Schoan. (Allen and Unwin, 3s. 6d. net.)

**O**UR author very kindly sets out to show "how the political machine may be destroyed...and the whole species...set free!" (Exclamation mark ours.) Might is to be replaced by Right, politics is to merge into ethics, and everybody is to obtain and keep the full fruits of his labour. The abolition of taxation is to effect this, assisted by "absolute freedom of exchange," and a new theory of the state—which proves to be individualism run mad.

The earth is to be ruled by a World Court, consisting of umpteen judges. In this New World Labour must, in fairness to Capital, renounce its privileges. Mr. Schoan might reform the world, but it won't let him.

The book well illustrates the important truth that the diagnosis upon which rests the denunciation of Capitalism, is as significant as the denunciation itself. Good intentions and a pretty binding are not worth 3s. 6d. to a Pleb.

W. J. L.

## SOCIALISM IN WORKADAY CLOTHES.

*The Restoration of Agriculture in the Famine Area of Russia.* Trans. by E. & C. Paul. (Labour Publishing Co., 5s.)

An exhaustive report of the findings of the State Economic Planning Commission set up by the Soviet Government, describing in detail the many aspects of the agricultural situation in the famine area, pointing out the causes of the famine and submitting suggestions for its prevention in the future. Each separate department of the restoration problem is dealt with by a specialist.

As is indicated by the title, little is said of the industrial situation except in so far as it is relevant to the question of agriculture. In this respect fisheries, irrigation, and the manufacture of farming implements come in for consideration, and attention is given to the possibilities of using bituminous shale for industrial fueling. One short chapter is devoted to a sketch of the industries in the south-east, concerned with the elaboration of agricultural products. But the area comprising the eleven stricken provinces is mainly agricultural. From the detailed figures given the extent of the diminution in output can be plainly seen, and the baneful effects of the Allied Blockade are vividly portrayed by the tables showing the fall in the manufacture and importation of agricultural imple-

ments. Placing the average lifetime of a plough at ten years, Prof. V. G. Can demonstrates that in the famine area alone there is a shortage of 715,000. All other supplies of implements are dealt with in the same manner and in every case the same extreme dearth is shown.

Most of the proposals for agricultural restoration are conditioned by the proposals for the electrification of the whole South-eastern district. Owing to the unfriable nature of the soil and the partiality of the peasants for extensive rather than intensive husbandry, a plentiful supply of power is necessary. In an effort to induce the peasants to abandon their antique methods, the State Colonisation Schemes are to be extended. The success attendant upon the experimental institutions already established—a list of which is given—augurs well for the future.

The installation of mechanical power plants, while serving mainly for the development of agriculture, will not be limited thereto, for some parts of the area have more than a local industrial importance. In some parts, in addition to timber regions and shale beds, there are metal deposits which, should the experiments now being tried with shale prove successful, will make possible a more adequate supply of home manufactured machinery.

Perhaps the most striking feature about the whole report is the conscious and consistent manner in which the Commission has set out to link up industrial and agricultural possibilities. If the scheme materialises the result will stand in glaring contrast to the general development of all other capitalist countries in their transition from feudalism and petty handicraft to elaborate agriculture and large scale industry. For it must be remembered that in the regions under review the "three-field system" largely prevails, and what little industry there is is generally confined to the home. And in this respect the lack and deterioration of implements has probably one consoling aspect: there is little to scrap, and the peasant by reason of his impecuniosity will be hampered in his undoubted desire to revert to small-scale production.

To the general reader who has a passing interest in the transformation going on in Russia the book is well worth reading. To the student of social affairs it is invaluable.

R. J. E.

#### WATERY BEER.

*Social Struggles in Antiquity.* By M. Beer. (Parsons, 6s.)

Anything that Beer writes is looked forward to with interest. The excellence of his *History of British Socialism* has made its mark on our memory. Unfortunately this book makes one fear that the enterprising Mr. Parsons has been trading upon this well-

deserved reputation to resurrect some of the inferior stuff which every author, now and then, has produced. Anyway, one feels that some 30,000 words, ill-translated, is short measure for six bob in these days.

The book is supposed to be the first part of a "General History of Social Struggles." This is an excellent project, which we all would support. We would all, too, agree that Beer, if he chooses, has the ability to do it excellently. But the book, as it stands, is either a rather scrappy introduction to the rest, or else it is a sign that he is doing the whole work in a slapdash manner. As an introduction it may be pertinent and useful. We cannot tell till we have read what it introduces. The casual references, the irrelevancies and disconnected incidents, the vast omissions, may all prove to have their point. Some day we shall know. Meanwhile, it is in the air, neither one thing nor the other. It is, as the late Marquis of Salisbury remarked on a famous occasion, neither my wrist nor my elbow.

The sections dealing with Palestine and Greece (the book is confined to Jews, Greek and Romans : other nations are ignored, perhaps inevitably) are particularly scrappy. In the Palestinian part he gives no explanation, no history. He simply slings in quotations attacking the rich from the prophets, and leaves them there after some general reflections. Any of us could do that. What we wanted was a connected account of social struggles in Palestine, wherein these quotations would slip into their proper places. Similarly in Greece, there is a casual collection of Communist aspirations from Plato and lampoons from Aristophanes—all leading us nowhere, and clearing our heads not at all. Worse than that, Beer seems to confuse with Communism the most un-Communist desire of the Athenian freemen to live off their subject allies, which was a mere anticipation of the parasitic existence actually achieved by Rome.

In the Roman period Beer is more connected and more enlightening. He is much more like himself. Even here, however, he is scrappy and often assumes too much knowledge in his reader.

As a short general essay, or as an introduction, it is quite stimulating and interesting. As a six-bob history—no, sir!

A LOVER OF BEER.

**DOES the LABOUR COLLEGE DELIVER the GOODS ?**

A proof of the article which appears on pp. 206-209 having been shown to members of the Labour College staff, we are asked to state on their behalf (and very gladly do so) that they are in agreement with our criticism, and are at the present time discussing changes in the curriculum designed to meet such shortcomings as we point out.



## LETTERS from PLEBS

POETRY AND THE M.C.H.

DEAR COMRADE,—An interesting object lesson for PLEBS poetry students may be found in that beautiful poem by Mrs. Meynell, *The Lady Poverty*. Take these few lines as sufficient to illustrate our point:—

The Lady Poverty was fair :  
But she has lost her looks of late,  
With change of times and change of air,  
Ah, slattern ! she neglects her hair,  
Her gown, her shoes....

She scolds in parlours, dusts and trims,  
Watches and counts. Oh, is this she  
Whom Francis met, whose step was free,  
Who with Obedience carolled hymns,  
In Umbria walked with Chastity ?

Where is her ladyhood ? Not here,  
Not among modern kinds of men....

Now, what is this but a very beautiful "idealisation" of the historical fact that the agricultural labourer is more contented and more submissive than the factory worker ? The economic basis of the poem is clear and unmistakable. It could never have been written, but for the development of industrialism.

Our appreciation of this should not affect our admiration for the poem as a work of art, any more than our understanding of the sort of soil, manure, etc., required to bring a particular species of rose to perfection would spoil that rose for us as a thing of beauty. Our quotation does not do Mrs. Meynell's work justice from this aspect, and Plebs are strongly recommended to read the complete poem in *Poems of To-day*, a wonderful anthology published by the English Association at the absurdly low price of 2s. (Plebs Book Department, please note !).

Yours frat.,

ERNEST JOHNS

FUNDAMENTALS

DEAR COMRADE,—Maurice H. Dobb's article in the April PLEBS is a useful reminder. It is futile merely to scoff

at the orthodox economist : our task is to "place" him, and to use him.

The uses to which we can put orthodox theories are, I think, two. One belongs to the present, the other to the future. The former has merely academic interest, as ending with bourgeois society ; the latter belongs to the future socialist society.

Of the two theories handled mainly by Dobb—Supply and Demand and Marginal Utility—the former will have its value, it seems to me, in the statistics of the future socialist society ; the interest of the latter will disappear with the present bourgeois society. Both theories, however, have this in common : they are unessential to a *fundamental* theoretic treatment of the Law of Value.

If we say, for instance, that Value is determined by Supply and Demand, we have assumed, in Supply, an already existent value. The Supply and Demand theory is extra-economic. Being extra-economic, it explains nothing in the problem of Value.

If, again, we say that the Marginal Utility of the commodity determines its value, we are faced with the very obvious fact that the buyer's need of the commodity is partially determined by his present stock of it. We are back at Supply again ! With the same necessity for re-statement of the problem. The theory of Marginal Utility, in assuming Supply, destroys the problem. It is, I suppose, one of the *conditions* of value, but not a *cause*. Surely it, too, like Supply and Demand, is extra-economic ?

The doctrine of Marginal Utility would appear to be even more useless to present-day economic life (as apart from theory) than even the Supply and Demand theory. All it says is that S. and D. balance at the Marginal commodity price. Just as I might say that Dobb's two books balance at a certain point  $x$ . It leaves unanswered the real question : Why is this particular price-point the point at which S. & D. balance ?

If it is answered, "Costs of Production," we are still no further towards a solution of the problem. For these

Costs of Production contain economic goods already provided with a price—the very thing we're after! Any Costs of Production theory would thus appear to turn in a circle.

I think Dobb's article really offers us the prospect of a new weapon in tackling the orthodox man.

Yours faithfully,

D. J. BELL

#### YOUNG TEACHERS' MOVEMENT

COMRADE,—May I call the attention of your readers to the above Movement, organisation of which has been started recently in London?

This movement hopes to rally and organise all socially conscious teachers. It works *within* existing organisations to press for control of teaching by teachers with a full share in the administration of the Education Service. This not necessarily because it believes an ideal form of self-government is possible under Capitalism, but because it holds that only by educating teachers to the necessity of tackling real problems will they become realists. A big job? Well—nothing venture, nothing done.

Self-government implies one big federated union able to speak and act for the whole profession. The Y.T.M., organising on these lines, has set out to abolish sectional differences so far as to focus the will of all those teachers awake to the social possibilities of a scientifically controlled and administered service of Education—a free, independent service.

Being aware of those tendencies making for a new social order, the Y.T.M. seeks to support and be supported by organised Labour. It believes the only effective unity of the profession lies in the unified efforts of those young-minded teachers who realise their essential unity with ALL workers. And the measure of this co-operation with the working-class will be the measure of self-government enjoyed by the profession.

On the London Central Group of the Movement are live members of the N.U.T., I.A.A.M., N.U.W.T. and L.S.A. Every "Pleb" teacher should be active in this movement, since its constitution and organisation are such that it will be what its members wish to make it.

I shall be pleased to forward a copy of its "Policy and Aims" to, and answer inquiries of, teachers who are readers of PLEBS.

H. W. HAWKINS, Hon. Sec.  
The Pines, Upper Warlingham,  
Surrey.

FREE WILLIAM.

DEAR COMRADE,—*Re* Free Will, J. B. says: "But in the sense that the free-will hypothesis is put forward as a working theory we can dispense with it entirely."

That is rich. He does not now deny the existence of free will, but being unable to explain it, he "dispenses with it entirely." In other words, to him ignorance is sufficient reason.

Yours,

WM. WALKER

[Without prejudice to a further reply from J. B., may we remark that W. W. does not seem able to read very intelligently. We suggest that, after clearing his mind of preconceptions, he re-reads J. B.'s letter of last month, and tries to grasp its point a little more clearly.—Ed., PLEBS.]

#### A CHANCE FOR THE BOOK DEPT.

DEAR EDITOR,—May I suggest that there is a very important publication in a cheap edition of which the Plebs Book Department might with advantage to hundreds of workers interest itself. I refer to the volume (150 pages) containing the full report (with appendices) of the Labour Delegation to Russia in 1920, published by Labour headquarters in Eccleston Square at the price of 2s. 6d. Why not arrange with Eccleston Square to issue a reprint at sixpence?

Most valuable information, especially in the appendices, is contained in this volume; yet the number of people in the Labour movement who have read the book, let alone seen it, must be quite inconsiderable. And surely few members of the I.L.P. can have read it! Or how else could Ramsay MacDonald display in print and at Berlin conferences such a child-like innocence regarding the nefarious anti-Russian activities of the Social Revolutionary Party when speaking of the Moscow "trial of the 47" and such-like matters? Brailsford, in a recent

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article in the *Daily Herald*, is likewise not exactly helpful when speaking of this same trial, for he apparently actually tries to make out that it is all revenge for the shots at and attempted murder of Lenin!

Appendix XIII. In the above-mentioned volume consists of notes by Margaret Bondfield, a leading member of the I.L.P. In her interview with Julianinsky (a Social-Revolutionary and a member of the Executive of the Co-operative Union) the latter makes it quite clear that many Social-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and Co-operators had favoured intervention and that "some had actively assisted in the counter-revolution." In an April issue of the *Glasgow Forward*, I proved from his own writings that Colonel Lebedev—a prominent Social-Revolutionary and a former Minister under Kerensky—had conspired with Entente military Missions in organising in 1918 the Volga uprising of the Tcheko-Slovaks, etc., and I also showed from Col. John Ward's book on Siberia that this same Lebedev was for several months *Koltchak's Chief of Staff at Omsk!!!*

MacDonald and also Vandervelde remain "peculiarly" and blissfully "ignorant" of all this!!

Re Brailsford. In the recent April issue of the *Free Oxford* Brailsford and I have a slight "argument" re my statement there that his article on the Soviet Revolution in the *Herald* (then a weekly) of 1st December, 1917, was scandalous. As the *Free Oxford* may never appear again, will you allow me space to say that for the first time for over four years I have just re-read Brailsford's article just mentioned. It confirms my memories of it—only more so; *almost every line* of it is a scandal from a real Socialist point of view. Brailsford's outlook can be gauged from the fact that in his reply to me he says: "Even Philips Price was hostile (to the Soviet Revolution)"—for Price was at that time a bourgeois Liberal and had never been in or worked for the working-class movement. Whereas Brailsford was writing *as a Socialist*, and in a Labour paper.

Yours, etc.,

A. P. L.

## N.C.L.C. NOTES

**B**UILDING Trade Workers.—The scheme in connection with the Education Fund of this Union is now complete, and will appear in the form of a separate pamphlet supplement to the June number of their Trade Circular. Points to be noted are:—

(1) The general scheme will be organised and classes, etc., held under the auspices of the N.C.L.C. *If the N.C.L.C. groups fail to meet the needs of the Building Trade Workers, then some other agency's help will be accepted.*

(2) Local N.C.L.C. organisations must supply all the working plans for the carrying out of the educational work—in this connection the London Council of I.W.C.E. has prepared a scheme for No. 1 Division of the A.U.B.T.W. This scheme groups their branches into ten centres, where lecture classes have already started. A few branches on the outskirts of the Divisional area are having special classes arranged.

(3) The Education Fund is not sufficient to finance all the arrangements that must be made to cater for the entire membership of the A.U.B.T.W. It is necessary to "rope in" all other available sources of support for the classes arranged for the Building Trades, e.g., Trades and Labour Councils, Trade Union, Socialist, Labour Party and Co-operative branches, also individual students from these Labour bodies.

(4) Organisation of classes must be extended to all parts of the Divisional areas of the A.U.B.T.W. In the case of isolated branches and individual members, unable to attend classes, study circles and postal courses must be arranged. (In this connection the West Riding Labour College and the Edinburgh District, S.L.C., are already organising a Postal Courses Section of their own.)

(5) In the case of outlying and scattered parts of the Divisional areas, the local branch of the N.C.L.C. should at once draw up a scheme for an organising tour of these places for the purpose of setting up centres for classes, study circles and the enrolling of members for postal courses. Schemes

have been prepared for such organising tours in the Nos. 2—3—5 Divisions, A.U.B.T.W. These have been accepted by the Union Executive Council, and a start is to be made in No. 3 Division on the 1st July, with Mark Starr as organiser.

(6) Local N.C.L.C. bodies should send in to the Divisional Council, A.U.B.T.W., complete schemes for the Union's educational work at the earliest possible moment. *Two copies of the scheme should be forwarded to Head Office, N.C.L.C., 11, Penywern Road, London, S.W. 5, by the same post.*

(7) Let us again emphasise the importance of immediate action for getting this work in hand. Other National Unions are coming in. Get busy!

The A.U.B.T.W. will finance the organising tours if run on the most economical lines. The organiser must make complete arrangements for future work, viz.:—(a) Arranging class centres and secretaries; study circles and secretaries; keep roll of students entering for postal courses. (b) The local N.C.L.C. headquarters should undertake to deal with the whole of the postal work and for future visits to class centres arranged. (c) It must be remembered that the scheme has to cover educational facilities all the year round. This does not necessarily mean that classes will be run continuously throughout the year, but simply that activities will cover summer as well as winter courses. (d) Aim at getting fixed centres established everywhere. This plan will be invaluable for meeting the requirements of any other Trade Unions coming in on similar lines to the A.U.B.T.W. In this way our centres will become as familiar locally as those of Trades Councils and Labour Parties, and this will simplify the work of securing the support of T.U. branches.

*Manchester L.C.* report that progress is being made in the provision of charts, etc. The Secretary (O. Stapleton, 5, Sunby Avenue, Gorton, Manchester), will be pleased to receive copies of charts, etc., in use or projected, for the consideration of the Committee which has the scheme in hand.

# Class Secretaries Note:—

You'll be running courses in Modern Imperialism and Economic Geography this autumn—if not before.

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The list of *Manchester's* officers is so good I must list 'em in case any other college list is not so complete, *viz.*, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Organiser, Secretary, Literature Secretary, Lecture Secretary, Press Correspondent and N.C.L.C. Delegate. The Literature Secretary takes his work seriously and has long since issued a form for the regular supply of PLEBS to students and Plebs, and to catch the support of people who know a good thing and read it.

*Ayrshire District* are going some in the way of week-end schools—one on 3rd and 4th June, and another for 15th and 16th July, to be held in Ayr. Those desirous of attending should get in touch with the Secretary, R. Climie, jun., 15, Barbadoes Road, Kilmarnock—our heart warms to him because he emphasises the pushing of the sales of PLEBS and literature.

*North-Eastern Labour College* write in glowing terms of T. Ashcroft's visit to a most successful Whitsun School at Ashington. A class for prospective

tutors and A.U.B.T.W. activities are in full swing.

*Bradford and District L.C.* is foraging around for new recruits to our movement with some considerable success. Shipley and district present a problem in the matter of arousing interest in our work, and Plebeians there should get into touch with Bradford L.C. Secretary, W. Brooke, 76, Laisterdyke, Bradford, and offer to give a hand. Other Plebeians in the Bradford area should come in and help in the way of addressing T.U. branches, etc. Bradford—what about the A.U.B.T.W. scheme?

*West Riding L.C.* are holding a Summer School from 5th to 19th August. Inclusive cost per week will be £2 7s. The school will be housed at the Co-operative Holiday Home, Otley. An ideal spot with plenty of recreational facilities, including tennis, bowls, croquet, billiards and library. Write for particulars to J. W. Thomas, 4, Saxon Street, Halifax. An ideal holiday opportunity!

An opportunity for N.C.L.C.'ers and

Plebeians is presented by the resolution now circulating in the branches of the National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association, viz. :—

“Recognising that the most effective weapon to assure victory in any struggle is a *Clear Understanding* of the problems with which we become faced, then we are compelled to admit the need for an education which will enable the workers to understand the forces, operating in Industry and Society, which cause the periodical conflicts between the workers and the employers.

“And as this education is at present provided by the Labour College, which is at present owned and controlled by the National Union of Railwaymen and the South Wales Miners' Federation, who invite other Unions to co-operate in the work of spreading this education, we request the Executive Committee immediately to commence negotiations with the Board of Governors of the Labour College, with a view to linking the N.A.F.T.A. with that Institution and so enable us to send members to the college.”

What about the N.C.L.C. ?

We should like to receive a short report of the result of the Education Resolutions at the Conferences of the Boot and Shoe Operatives and the Union of Postal Workers. Will a member of each Union oblige? The *Lanarkshire District S.L.C.* is now in being. This resulted from a conference at Hamilton on 1st July, with Robert Smillie in the chair. The Lanarkshire Mineworkers' Union and the Cowdenbeath Co-operative Society have recently made grants to the S.L.C. The latter's conference of District Councils was a great success. The Districts represented were Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Fife, Stirling and Ayrshire. Local District conferences are being arranged.

The first S.L.C. Summer School will be held by the *Edinburgh District* Committee at Castle Cynicus, Leuchars, Fife, from 22nd to 29th July, 1922. Castle Cynicus is beautifully situated on the slope of a spur of the Ochils, and commands a magnificent view of St. Andrews and a wide sweep of the Tay coast. The station, Leuchars, is

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Scotland for ever!

*Sheffield Labour College* are trying to arrange for the formation of Area Council to deal with the A.U.B.T.W. educational needs where N.C.L.C. areas overlap the Union's Divisional areas. Will all N.C.L.C. bodies or members in the Hull, Nottingham, Leeds and Lincoln districts please give a hand by writing and offering help to the Secretary, S. H. Cree, 21, Brathay Road, Sheffield. *Reports for August N.C.L.C. Notes should reach H.O. not later than the 15th July.*

# TRA LA MONDO :

## Esperanto Notes

### *British League of Esperantist Socialists.*

During Whit Week, on the occasion of the 13th British Esperanto Congress, a meeting of the British League of Esperantist Socialists was held. About thirty people, representing all sections of the Labour movement—Co-operators, members of the Labour Party, I.L.P.'ers and Communists—were present. By acclamation it was decided to re-form the B.L.E.S., and a new committee and secretary were appointed. It is hoped that all who realise the utility of an international language to the Labour movement will hasten to join. Minimum subscription 1s. per annum. Secretary: C. W. Spiller, 25, Richmond Avenue, Willesden Green, N.W. 10.

### *British Esperanto Congress*

The British Esperanto Congress was certainly a huge success. Dr. Edmond Privat, in a fine address at Queen's Hall, declared that it would be better to die for the cause of an international language, which meant the cause of fraternity between the peoples of the world, than to die for one's country. After which, the audience sang "God Save the King" in Esperanto!

Incidentally, Dr. Privat stated that, from evidence collected for the League of Nations office, it appeared that Esperanto is now being taught in schools in 302 places in 17 States.

### *A Model International*

The *Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda* (S.A.T.)—a member of which is entitled to call himself a *Satano*—has, I gather, now upwards of 900 members in various countries. Its second Congress, under the honorary presidency of Romain Rolland, is to be held at Frankfurt-on-Main from the 12th to the 16th August. Anyone intending to attend the Congress should send his subscription (3s.) to Kdo. Rudolf Mayer, Rodelheimer Landstr. 24—II. Frankfurt a. Main, Germany.

### *Educational International*

If there are any teachers among PLEBS readers interested in an educational International, they should

write to Marcel Boubou, 96, rue St. Marceau, Orléans (Loiret), France. The *Edukistara Internacio* is a going concern, and its aims are stated to be the establishment of a rational system of education and the spread of internationalism in the masses by attacking nationalistic teaching in schools.

### GERMANIO

#### *Iva Kongreso de Germana Laborista Esperanto Asocio*

G'i okazis en Düsseldorf de la 14a g'is la 17a de aprilo. En sia malferma parolado K<sup>do</sup> *Schneider* raportis pri la malfacilaj'oj renkontitaj kau'ze de la militistara okupado franca. Post multaj klopodoj li tamen ricevis permeson, kondic'e ke dum la Kongreso ne estu pritraktataj politikaj temoj. Du kriminalpolicistoj c'eestis la kunsidojn. Pli agrable por la kongresanoj estis ekscii, ke la urbo Düsseldorf donacis al la Kongreso 10.000 markojn.

C'eestis 55 delegitoj kun 112 mandatoj. Lau' raporto de K<sup>do</sup> *Hegewald* videblig'is, ke antau' la milito la Asocio havis 62 grupojn kun 1180 gemembroj; dum la milito 440; g'is la Kongreso en Hannover (1a postmilita) 565 kaj nun 85 grupojn kun 2000 gemembroj. Konsiderante ke nun regas en Germanio malbona valuto kaj mizera situacio por la laborista klaso, tia rezultato estas tre kontentiga.

### BELGIO

*Bruxelles*: Okaze de la Kongreso de la *Federacio* de la *Artoj*, *Beletristiko* kaj *Sciencoj*, la c'i-tiea S.A.T. grupo arang'is en la kongresejo ekspozicion de esperantaj'oj, kiu tre interesis la kongresanojn. Cetere la Kongreso alprenis rezolucion favoran al esp-o. Ni dankas al S<sup>o</sup> *Banville d'Hostel*, la Sekretario de la Federacio, pro lia afabla permeso pri arang'o de nia ekspozicio. C'iu interesato estu sciigata ke oni povas ekinterrilatig'i kun la c'i-supre nomita organizaj'o pere de esp-o. La adreso estas: 38 bis rue Fontaine Paris (9.)

(El *Sennacieca Revuo*).

# The PLEBS Page

**W**ELL! What do you think about us? (Don't all speak at once.) We've talked about the time when the PLEBS would get up to 48 pages, and pessimistic brethren have said that, of course, we couldn't hope to compare in size or style with some of the other monthlies. What about us now? Just get down one of our old volumes and compare—not the contents (we know that we can never hope that these will be as good as they were "in the old days"!), but the make-up, printing and the general look of the thing! We feel proud in the Office (we have time for that) to be connected with such a Posh Periodical!

The next move is with You. It's your job to put your back into the distribution problem. The Hon. Sec. and the Office Sec. can sit up all night practising Coué methods, but it's you chaps in the country that count here. No magazine *ever* yet sold simply because it was good; big circulations come only to the goods which are well advertised, and on sale everywhere. People take what's pushed under their noses. Men have been known to drink water because there was a tap in the room, and it meant putting on their boots and going outdoors to get anything else—say, a lemonade. Well, the PLEBS has got to be on the spot, and only You can do that for us. Are you using our posters? And if not, why not?

Some of our group secretaries are busy organising meetings, rambles, etc., for the summer months. ILFORD is organising an outing to Hainault Forest on Saturday, July 22nd. Comrades meet at the "Maypole," Chigwell Row, 3.30 p.m., or afterwards to tea at Slater's Tea Room, Chigwell Row, 5.30. The day's pleasure finishes with a dance from 6.30 to 9.30. All comrades in the London district—Plebs or not—are invited to attend, total cost of tea, concert and dance, 1s. 4d. (no wonder wages are coming down!) Trains run frequently from Liverpool Street (G.E.R.) to Grange Hill Sta.,

15 minutes' walk from the "Maypole." Those people who despise such gatherings are advised to sit down and think about the Clarion Clubs and the wonderful circulation worked up through their agency.'

FERSDALE group have just finished a series of lectures on Philosophy by Comrade C. Gibbins, and the secretary writes optimistically about the future. S. Wales is in the trough of a wave of reaction, and anything that can be done to keep alive the interest of the Plebs groups will make future activities easier. The terrible condition of the mining population, and the "English famine," as Frank Hodges called it, make organising work doubly hard. But Ferndale is obviously not going to figure in the casualty list.

And that's the right spirit. It's the spirit we've all got to take a nip of. A Big Boom's coming for our work. The move being made by the Building Workers is going to stir everything and everybody up. Well—*don't wait to be stirred; take a hand in the stirring.* And wherever two or three are gathered together, shove a PLEBS into the midst of them. UP the PLEBS!

W. H.

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## The PLEBS Bookshelf

**T**HAT was a particularly interesting review which Max Beer contributed to the April—May *Labour Monthly* headed "The Testament of Engels." It got right to the point in fine style:—

"The years 1891—94 mark the beginning of the revolutionary spirit and the rise of reformism among the rank and file of German Social Democracy. The personal forces which largely contributed to those developments were Friedrich Engels and Eduard Bernstein."

*Engels*, please note—an apostle of Reformism! And Beer leaves no doubt about it:—

"Unlike Marx, who to the very end of his life remained as ardent a revolutionary as he had been when he wrote the Communist Manifesto, Engels considerably mellowed in the last years of his life, and used his great authority with the Germans to lead them back to Legality and Parliamentary tactics. In 1894, at the age of 74, he wrote his last will in the form of an introductory chapter, instinct with reformism, to Marx's most revolutionary piece of political writing—*Klassen-Kämpfe in Frankreich*...."

And all this is especially interesting to Plebs, since this "revisionist" introduction of Engels' was translated by Eden & Cedar Paul and printed in the PLEBS, Jan., Feb., March and April, 1921, under the title of "Revolutionary Tactics." (Copies obtainable from Book Dept., price 2s. 2d., post-paid, the four.)

The fifty copies of Leckie's *Economic Causes of War* which we ordered from Vancouver (see May "Bookshelf") have all been snapped up. That is why the book does not appear in the list given on p. ii. of the cover this month. But we have ordered more. So if you want to secure a good thing, send along 1s. 2d. and put your name down in good time.

Definite arrangements for the publication of Ashcroft's *Modern Imperialism*

are not yet settled. We're awaiting the decision of the Labour College Governors, who have been invited to assist—financially—in its production. But you can take it for granted that the book will be available for class use this autumn.

We receive constant inquiries about Craik's long-promised book on *The Science of Understanding*. We are not in a position to give a definite reply, (i.) because it was never intended to publish it through the PLEBS, since it is to be a bigger, and therefore costlier, book than our Textbook Series; and (ii.) because Craik himself can say no more than that the job of revising, amending and extending the manuscript of a book, even when that manuscript is fairly complete, is a bigger job than most people imagine. We want as keenly as anyone to see the book published. And we're hoping that its publication will not be much longer delayed.

We have to bow towards "Hussein" who, writing on "Literary Pages" in the June *Guild Socialist*, backs up some of the recent comments in the PLEBS on the *Herald's* book reviews, and pays us a handsome compliment. A *group of writers*, says "Hussein," is essential, "if a Labour literary paper, or even a literary page of any value is ever to be produced—a group of really keen and able writers, who share a common, but not too narrow viewpoint, and collaborate in its expression....The nearest approach to such a group is to be found in the contributors to the PLEBS...." It is really nice to encounter so discerning, so judicious a critic. "A Daniel come to judgment!...O wise young judge—O excellent young man!"

A correspondent, writing in appreciation of Mark Starr's note on "Two Worth-While Novels" in the May PLEBS, sends us the following:—

"John Galt's *Ayrshire Legatees* and *Annals of a Parish*, easily available as they are (Everyman Series, 1 vol.),

are books that Plebeians should notice. The former is the description of the visit of a Scotch clergyman and his family to London early in the 19th century. Consisting of letters sent back to the parishioners by the respective members of the family, the book lends itself beautifully to chance reading in odd moments. It has a never-failing fund of droll humour. And Galt cleverly turns from the mis-spellings of homely Mrs. Pringle, aghast at the waste and cost of London life, to the bombast and pretensions of "Andrew Pringle, my son," and from the Doctor's naive piety to the sentimental soliloquies of Rachel the daughter. Quite as good as the letters are the comments they arouse at their public reading in the parish—Mrs. Becky Glibbons is imperishable.

"*Annals of the Parish* is the record of the Rev. Micah Balwhidder during the eventful years 1760—1810. Those who read it will not soon forget the 18th century humour of the rebuke to Nichol Srape, and the minister's joke about the 'two legs in a nest.' The chronicler had no sympathy with the discontented weavers who had been contaminated by 'the seditious infection,' and whose minds had been fevered because of their indoor sedentary occupation. The French democrats and Boney their champion must come to ill! But the new spirit is to be seen at work even in the flock of the Rev. Micah, and there are constant references to the smuggling, the beginnings of tea drinking, the rotation of crops, and the building of factories.

"Both books give interesting sidelights on a particularly interesting period."

They do! And quite apart from the "sidelights" they are well worth reading for their humour and humanity alone. I remember reading somewhere a tribute by Neil Lyons to *Annals of a Parish* which the book richly deserved.

Another Pleb—an Aberdonian—remarks that there is a whole lot of interesting material in the novels of Disraeli, particularly *Sybil*, *Tancred*, and *Coningsby*. "Disraeli," he writes,

"appears to me to be a man who, notwithstanding the position he attained in British politics, had a perfect contempt for them...The M.C.H. could with much better effect be applied to him than to Keats' nightingale!" And he sends along a few extracts from Disraeli's writings which go to prove his case.

I think he is right. It's a long time since I read *Vivian Grey*, and I haven't time just now to settle down to a reading of that and the other Disraeli novels, and the T.P. "Life" of him. But I do think that, especially in view of the Primrose League's flattering interest in the PLEBS, we might do worse than publish a little study of Disraeli from the Marxian point of view. Any Pleb who feels inclined to tackle the job is herewith invited to send along the fruits of his labours.

John S. Clarke, in the *Worker* (June 10th) made good play with some recent attempts at Marxmanship by Mr. A. J. Penty in the *Crusader*. A lot of people, J. S. C. remarked, "have killed and buried the Materialist Conception of History; but none of them was quite so idiotic at the funeral as Mr. Penty." And after giving us a few pearls from Penty, Clark concludes:—

If you ask Mr. Penty the explanation of the great abolitionist movement and of the Civil War, he will doubtless reply: "It was the result of a change of heart in the Rev. William Wilberforce, the writing of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Stowe, and the gentle disposition of the atheistic Abraham Lincoln." Mr. Penty ought to be in the W.E.A.

He did. And he probably is.

Overheard in the London Library—the haunt of the intellectuals. Earnest lady, to librarian: "Oh, and there's another book I want—now what is its title?—'A Thousand Years of Work for Wages,' I think!"

She got Thorold Rogers.

J. F. H.

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