

March, 1923.

Vol. XV. No. 3.

THE PLEBS

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knowledge. There is nothing
less powerful than know-
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Samuel Butler.

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THE PLEBS

I can promise to be candid but not impartial.

Vol. XV

March, 1923

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OUR POINT of VIEW

SO long as the policy of the National Council of Labour Colleges and The PLEBS remains what it has always been—*education from the working-class point of view, controlled by working-class organisations*; so long as we make our appeal, not to a single section—Right or Left—but to the whole of the organised Labour movement, aiming especially at getting the Trade Unions to recognise that the education of their members in class-consciousness should be an important part of their activities; so long may we expect criticism, and even opposition, from two different quarters.

From the Right we shall be assailed as "dangerous revolutionaries" by leaders and rank-and-filers who cannot see that the

principle of working-class independence on which we take our stand is implicit in all genuine organisations of the workers ; and that until the workers control their own educational machinery, as well as their own press, the effectiveness of their industrial and political organisations will be sorely weakened. From the Left we shall be denounced as “ compromisers ” and “ half-hearted reformists ” by those who are convinced that only in alliance with their own party or section of the working-class movement, and only by teaching based upon their sectional point of view, can educational work be satisfactorily carried on. We go too far, and too fiercely, for one section ; and neither far enough nor fiercely enough for the other.

* * *

We can derive some comfort from the fact that these criticisms to a certain extent cancel each other out. In any case, we shall, if we have thought out our position and our policy, *Keep Straight* “ pursue our path and let the people talk ” !
On. Most of us, having ourselves been members of a minority movement for a good many years, would admit to feeling some sympathy with the attitude of our Left Wing critics. But Infantilism, as an eminent Left Winger has pointed out, is a chronic disease of Leftism ; and a good deal of the criticism levelled at the Plebs-N.C.L.C. movement from the Left proves it. Some of it, in fact, is precisely the sort of criticism one would expect from arm-chair revolutionaries, who are far too preoccupied with pet theories and rosy visions to take into account the practical needs of actual difficulties of carrying on an educational movement. It is one thing to construct (on paper) elaborate schemes embodying all the ideals one finds theoretically desirable. It is quite another, and much more difficult thing to carry a scheme into practice.

* * *

We don't need telling that all this sounds suspiciously like the customary excuses of “ compromisers ” replying to candid criticism. But we are not at all alarmed at that word *What are We* “ compromise.” Only fools, and the very young,
Out For ? are afraid of compromising. What we have got to ask ourselves, in face of this sort of criticism, is—Just what is our aim as an educational organisation ? If it is to recruit members for any particular working-class party, then we shall of course put first the teaching of that party's policy, point of view, and programme. If, on the other hand, we aim at doing something to assist in deepening and strengthening the class-consciousness of as many men and women in the ranks of Labour as possible ; if we believe that a *conscious*, educated rank-and-file is the only ultimate safeguard against reaction ; then we shall quite

deliberately aim at reaching the largest possible audience of our fellow-workers, and as carefully refrain from ruining our own opportunities by any display of sectarianism. It is, indeed, not so much a matter of principle as of commonsense tactics. But of course commonsense considerations are just what some of our critics are too inexperienced, or too emotional, to take into account.

Not only because we want to reach as wide an audience of workers as possible, but also for perfectly obvious practical reasons, we make our main appeal to the Trade Unions; and in *What Has Been Achieved.* "N.C.L.C. Notes" this month will be found some encouraging facts about our progress in this direction. Other Unions are on the point of following the example of the Railwaymen, the S. Wales Miners, and the Builders. An increasing number of Trades Councils are affiliating to our local Colleges (note especially the circular letter sent out by the Secretary of the Edinburgh Trades Council, reproduced in "N.C.L.C. Notes"). All this is evidence of the steady growth and development of our work—the result of patient, cheerful spade-work. *And this progress has been made without any compromise of principle.* The support we have won has been won for education based on a definite *class* point of view; education aiming at increasing the fighting effectiveness of the workers. Left-wing zealots may insist that their own interpretation of what constitutes a "class point of view" is the one and only sufficient one, and that anything short of this is worse than useless. They may charge us with "vagueness" because we do not round off every lesson by pointing out to our students how right one particular working-class party is, and how wrong all the others are. The cold fact remains that if we were to do anything of the sort we should at once undo three-fourths of the work we have already achieved.

Our aim is to reach the "masses" of our fellow-workers; not to confine our appeal to a select few, whom circumstances or environment have already made more class-conscious than the majority of their fellows. Our job, therefore, *Teaching Methods.* is to teach certain fundamental, *elementary* principles, and to "get those across." To the extent that any of our critics, Left or Right, can prove the charge of "academicism" against us, we have lamentably failed in our primary duty, which is to make fighters—not to prove or disprove theories. And we have to rid ourselves of academicism in *method* as well as of academicism in subject-matter.

Various articles in this number discuss this question of teaching methods, and suggest schemes for making our methods more

effective. We believe that these will have as much interest for the students in our classes as for tutors, and we hope that students will take a part in discussing them.

* * *

Meantime, there are cannon to the Right as well as to the Left of us ! The people who were alarmed when the Trade Unions entered politics are getting even more excited now that *'Tis Primrose Time !* the Unions are beginning to interest themselves in schemes for the education of their members. They are beginning to clamour for the amendment of the Trade Union Act, in order that it should be made illegal for a Union to undertake any such activities. The *Patriot* and the Primrose League have "awakened to the dangers involved by the corruption of the youth of the nation." Lord Pembroke and Montgomery ("an intimate friend of Royalty," *vide* the *Star*, Feb. 14th) is busily engaged in bringing to the notice of the Great and Good—and Thoroughly Comfortable—the dangerous doctrines taught to Trade Unionists in N.C.L.C. and Plebs classes. A Primrose League report on "the progress of the League's campaign against Socialism and Communism" states proudly that "special attention has been given to the Marxian classes of the Plebs League and the National Council of Labour Colleges," and urges the necessity of taking steps to make it impossible for Union funds to be "diverted from the legitimate objects of Trade Unionism" for such shocking purposes.

We trust that Plebs everywhere will bring to the notice of their fellow Trade Unionists the benevolent concern of their lords and masters lest the workers should do any thinking for themselves. It will form excellent material for I.W.C.E. propagandists.

* * *

A paragraph in "N.C.L.C. Notes" this month gives particulars of the Whit-week School for Class Tutors to be held at the Labour College, Kew. We do earnestly hope that full advantage will be taken of the facilities thus offered to the movement by the College Governors ; and especially that N.C.L.C.ers who have hitherto had no personal contact with the London College will seize this opportunity of becoming acquainted with its working—and its staff.

We are equally anxious that an N.C.L.C.-Plebs Summer School for tutors and students both should be held this year. The arrangement most likely to be successful, we think, is that one of our Districts should undertake the preliminary arrangements for such a School, to be held in its own locality ; and that then, through the

THE PLEBS

pages of *The Plebs* and by appeals to the students of other Districts, the widest possible support for the venture should be aimed at. The West Riding Labour College Council has been asked to take the initiative, and fix the date and place of the School ; and we hope that an early announcement of these particulars will be possible. Meantime, will Plebs make a note of the fact that a Summer School is to be held—and do their best, when the time comes, to ensure its success ?

We have lost a lot in the past by our failure to organise such gatherings. Let us turn over a new leaf this year.

THE JOINT CONFERENCES of N.C.L.C., Labour College Governors, and Plebs League

Feb. 5th and 6th

THE Joint Conferences of N.C.L.C. and Plebs League Executives, and the London Labour College Governors, which were held on Monday and Tuesday, Feb. 5th and 6th, will, there is every reason to hope, mark the beginning of a new forward move in our educational work. Meetings of one or other section were almost continuously in progress from Monday noon until late on Tuesday night ; and if the provincial delegates did not sleep well during the journey home in the small hours of Wednesday, it was certainly not because they hadn't earned a rest !

There is no need here to give any detailed report of the discussions and decisions. Minutes of the conferences will be (or have already been) sent out to N.C.L.C. affiliated bodies ; and a ballot to confirm, or reject, the agreement come to between the N.C.L.C. and Plebs Executives will of course be taken of all Plebs League members. All that need be said under this latter head is that the agreement was arrived at after a long, full and careful discussion in which the point of view of each wing of our movement was put and considered ; and the arrangement finally decided upon was agreed to unanimously. The whole tone of the meeting augured well for the success of our work in the near future.

The same can undoubtedly be said of the joint meeting with the College Governors on Tuesday afternoon. This was the first time that representatives of all three sections of our movement—the local classes, the residential college, and the Plebs League—had had

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the opportunity of meeting to discuss a common policy and programme of propaganda ; and it is to be hoped that it will prove to be the first of many such meetings. It was apparent to everyone present that only by a policy of co-operation between all three could any section hope for any considerable extension in its particular work.

The Governors' ready acquiescence in the N.C.L.C.'s proposal for a joint Annual Report, which should—for the first time—give some idea of the tremendous development of I.W.C.E. work during recent years, indicated that they, like the rest of us, feel that a primary need of our movement at the present time is for more *publicity*. Their promise, also, to play their part in schemes for arousing greater interest in I.W.C.E. among the members of the two Unions they represent (N.U.R. and S.W.M.F.) is a matter for congratulation. We need make no apology, in these pages, for expressing the hope that they will find themselves able, after further consideration, to render some practical assistance as regards the publication side of our work.

Altogether, a good two days' work, which we trust will very quickly result in added effectiveness in every branch of I.W.C.E. activities.

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BLESSING

HOW can we MAKE OUR CLASS WORK MORE EFFECTIVE ?

The following article summarises various proposals and suggestions put forward recently by certain provincial Labour Colleges, including Manchester, Sheffield, and S.E. Lancashire ; and other articles in this number deal with the same subject. We shall welcome discussion on the subject, as affording an opportunity for teachers in separate areas to exchange ideas, and so reduce the danger of staleness.

WE are not only in urgent need of more teachers ; we want also, in many cases, teachers of a different sort. Some kinds of teaching hinder rather than help a student's learning. The "As-it-was-in-the-beginning-is-now-and-ever-shall-be" type of tutor has to be got rid of.

Every *live* teacher ought to be ready to make experiments, to try new methods. The cut-and-dried-lecture—delivered from notes used a dozen times before—often sounds as though the lecturer were talking in his sleep ; and it often succeeds in inducing sleep in the audience. Our N.C.L.C. tutors need to vary their methods constantly, if for no other reason than that our students largely consist of tired people—tired after a long day's work (or looking for work) and needing to be spurred into a keen interest in their studies by lively presentation and unconventional illustration. This does not mean that a lecturer should be always "playing for a laugh" ; but it does mean that if he doesn't play for one every now and then he doesn't know his business. Seriousness is all very well in its way ; but dulness is not seriousness anyhow.

But a successful class does not so much depend on what the teacher does ; *it depends on what the students do*. This, indeed, is the essence of the whole problem—making the student play an active part in the class instead of being a mere looker-on at the tutor's oratorical fireworks.

The Manchester Labour College puts forward the following scheme for class procedure :—

1.—*Short introduction* by the tutor, not longer than half-an-hour, and with as liberal use of blackboard, maps, charts, etc., as possible.

2.—*Questions by students*. These should not always be answered by the tutor ; other students should be given the opportunity of replying to them.

3.—*Reading from textbook*. This can very well be apportioned

to students as yet too shy to take part in questions and discussion. They thus grow accustomed to the sound of their own voice.

4.—*Questions by tutor.* Invaluable as a means of discovering whether the main points of the introduction and the reading have been fully grasped. Students need help in this matter. They may use good mental energy in learning by heart certain minor details, and miss the really important points altogether. Where a student is shy at answering questions in class, get him to write a letter to you, telling you what he thinks of you and the class and the subject-matter. *You must get him to do something.* Now such a procedure as the above demands more from the teacher than the old methods did. But there is little doubt that, intelligently used, it would produce better results. And it could—and should—be varied in countless ways. No method, however good, should be allowed to become stereotyped.

As well as the single lecture or class, there is the question of the course. Should it be long or short? There can, of course, be no general rule. Courses of 24 lectures by some people are less tedious than courses of 6 by others. But there is a growing tendency in our various Districts to favour the shorter course of 6 or 8 lectures. This permits of three or four courses being got through in the course of an autumn-winter session (one class per week). And the obvious advantage of this is that it makes it possible for the beginner to get a *grounding* in three or four subjects during his first year.

But, equally obviously, it is important that these short courses should be planned *in relation to one another*. Jumping haphazard from one subject to another does not make for good results. Each course should lead on to the next; and if different tutors take each different course they should jointly discuss plans for ensuring continuity and emphasising the inter-relation of all the studies in our curriculum.

Class activities ought not to end in the class-room. Wherever possible, visits to museums, factories, etc., should be arranged, with capable guides to take the lead. Certain towns of course have a big advantage over others so far as possibilities in this respect are concerned. Further, and this applies to every town, large or small alike—students should be urged to do some home reading for themselves. To encourage this, it is suggested that a list of historical novels should be compiled, with a note concerning the scope of each book. [We hope to publish such a list in *The PLEBS* shortly.]

The Sheffield College has been tackling the job of training its

more advanced students for the work of teaching. Special summer courses were arranged for advanced students, and the following was the method followed :—

At the inaugural lecture the tutor supplied each student with a skeleton outline of the next lecture. This contained the main divisions and sub-divisions together with reading instructions and a few notes. The students were expected to read up the subject, prepare notes under the different headings, and then draft into lecture form. So much time was provisionally allotted to each section, and the students were given different sections, which they had to lecture on, on the next occasion. The tutor and students offered comments and criticism on each others' efforts, but the tutor did very little lecturing. In addition the tutor set questions and subjects for essays, and the students were encouraged to discover and report on useful books in the local libraries. The blackboard was used rather extensively.

At the conclusion of the course the tutor had to report on each student, those considered capable were pressed to take classes or to act on deputation work and single lectures, the others were urged to take the course again at a later date.

The Sheffield College has developed eight or nine tutors in this manner ; the method appears satisfactory and may be capable of wider application. Care must be taken, however, that it does not develop tutors who are only able to follow the routine laid down by their particular tutor. The method must not be master but a servant.

There remains the question of definite credentials of some kind to be given to qualified tutors. It is obvious that as we succeed in winning wider recognition we shall have a good many offers of help from people not previously identified with our movement. Some of these we may welcome ; others we may not. We need a "panel" of capable teachers ; and there should be certain tests before any person is added to that panel.

The following conditions have been suggested as ensuring a body of "fit and proper" class-tutors :—

1.—*Recommendation by the local Labour College or Class Committee.* This should not be given without actual evidence of the candidate's ability to catch and hold the interest of an ordinary class of students.

2.—*Confirmation by an Examining Board of the N.C.L.C.* This would have to be given usually after a written test ; though wherever an actual interview could be arranged this would be desirable.

These are all but sketchy suggestions, put forward not as final

solutions by any means, but as bases for discussion—and experiment. They have all of them grown out of actual experience in one or other area ; and doubtless other districts will have many things to add to them. The pages of *The PLEBS* are open to students as well as to tutors, and we want not only criticisms of any of the points outlined above, or in the following articles, but alternative suggestions for making our class work more effective.

PLEB.

GETTING IT ACROSS

Some Notes by a Teacher

IT has probably happened to most of us that we have heard a good joke and enjoyed it immensely, yet on attempting to retail it the joke has fallen flat. The man from whom we heard the joke “got it across.” We failed to do so.

Do we, who are teachers, pause to consider whether we always “get across” the impression we want to the tired brains we are trying to reach? I am thinking in particular of a teacher with a beginners’ class ; a class containing a number of men and women who left school early, who have indulged in little intellectual activity since leaving school (and possibly very little when at school) and who have had a life of hard toil on inadequate food ; people, moreover, who come to the class with only that amount of energy which the day’s work has not managed to use up. Such a teacher has indeed a hard task even if he himself is fresh and not brain weary. I am not trying to paint a black picture from pure pessimism, but to point out the nature of the task which N.C.L.C. teachers undertake and in very many cases carry through, to success. The suggestions which follow are put down with the idea of helping a beginner to tackle this difficult task—a task no less than “lightening the darkness” which makes the task itself necessary, for in a sane state of society there would be no need to instruct tired adults in the elements of Industrial History, Geography or Economics.

The first point is *be bright*. The subject and the occasion are serious, but to be serious is not to be dull, and the value of a timely flash of wit or an apt illustration cannot be over-estimated. After you have drawn up your notes, think out these little embellishments and put them in at the appropriate places so that they are ready. You may not need them all, but you cannot rely on the inspiration of the moment to supply them—especially at first, and in many cases it is the first lecture which makes or mars the course. I can-

not give examples here, such tags away from their context and read in cold blood simply sound silly ; think of any successful lecturer or teacher you know and you will understand what I mean.

Again, do not seem upset by a small audience, by the lack of a blackboard or other desirable aid, nor is it wise to dwell on the immensity or difficulty of your subject or on your own experience. Remember that in many cases it requires a considerable effort to attend a class such as we arrange and it is your business to justify that effort.

Secondly, *be simple*. Young lecturers are a little afraid they do not know enough and, perhaps to convince themselves, they affect a learned style and make use of much jargon. There is no point in using a long word where a short one will serve ; if a technical term is necessary explain it as you introduce it. Even a non-technical word may be explained without giving offence by repeating the sentence in which you have used it in a slightly different form with a phrase instead of the word you fear may be new. This will avoid any appearance of talking down or patronising and yet help you to get clear the idea you want and to enlarge the vocabulary of your class, which is in itself of value.

Thirdly, *watch your audience*. See that you have the attention of as many as possible, and see that you hold it. If attention flags, you must give it a fillip. Cut short your long explanation, insert a joke or a livener and pass on to the next part of your subject. Perhaps you object that you cannot explain the second point till the first is clear, but if you have lost the attention of your audience you are not getting that point across, and you might just as well go on and trust to clearing up any difficulty at question time. Watching your class will also help you to stop in time ; more harm than most of us realise is done by trying to lecture too long. My own belief and practice is that half an hour is long enough to begin with. That leaves plenty of time for questions and for the further elaboration of points which were not clear at first.

The fourth point is to do all you can to encourage note taking by students, if only noting the questions to be asked later. Have pieces of paper ready in case class members have none. Make it clear at the outset that you will welcome questions and endeavour to answer them. The attempt to make notes keeps the attention on the subjects in hand and the ability to take notes is in itself a useful accomplishment. Good notes enable the student to revise the lesson at home, though beginners will not do as well as that at first. You will find it useful to give a short summary of each lecture at the beginning of the next so as to preserve continuity.

Do what you can to encourage reading. Have a supply of the appropriate Plebs' textbooks ; refer to books which may be bor-

rowed from the local library. If there is a chance of a chat with individual members of the class, try to find out what they read and how they enjoy it. I do not think that with a first class it is wise to even suggest written work, but as you go on you can ask the class or individual members to do some specific piece of work, such as verifying a fact which has been questioned in discussion or searching out some piece of local history. Towards the end of the course, the best students can probably be persuaded to write a short essay on some point in which they are specially interested.

Be topical and local wherever you can. To proceed from the known to the unknown is an old teaching maxim and it is as sound as it is ancient. Explain your matter with allusions to the happenings of the day and to local conditions wherever possible. If your class is composed mainly of workers in one trade, use that trade to illustrate your points.

Lastly, *be patient*. This is especially necessary at question time. To begin with you may find it difficult to get any questions, adults are shy of exposing their ignorance. Perseverance and a quiet pleasant manner will get over this difficulty. When you do get the questions do not answer them too curtly or at too great length. Never mind how silly the question seems to you, answer clearly and with courtesy. If the question seems of the type calculated to "lead you up the garden" say it would take the class too far from the matter in hand. Do not give a second lecture in answer to a question, your audience will be getting tired. Make sure that each member of the class goes away wanting more and not so weary as to decide that the first class shall also be the last.

In our educational work we are doing much more than dispensing information on certain subjects. We are encouraging our comrades to use their brains, to think out problems for themselves, to read something better than the Sunday newspaper, and to put their thoughts into clear language. All this we do to make them better propagandists in the greatest Cause there is. Surely no trouble is too great to achieve such ends.

R. C. M.

MODERN IMPERIALISM ECONOMICS

These are *subjects that matter* to workers.
They are the subjects of our two latest textbooks.

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TEACHING METHODS in AMERICA

THE movement in the States for Workers' Education is a relatively new one, and its aims are still very confused. The Workers' Educational Bureau is the national body that links up the various educational efforts connected with the Labour movement, no matter whether the education provided is capitalist or working-class in character. The delegates present at the second annual conference held last year were in some cases typical W. E. A.ers, who had not the foggiest notion of working-class needs in education, while others were genuine I.W.C.E.ers whose speeches betrayed their uneasiness at the motley crew of educationists present. "This Workers' Educational Bureau has not much of a future before it, unless it drops this liberal tone," was one pointed remark.

So far as one can gather from the report of the conference which has just been sent on to the N.C.L.C., the educational activities connected with the W.E.B. are not yet so extensive as our own, but they are undoubtedly growing, though hampered by the industrial depression.

One of the great problems facing our educational movement is that of teaching methods, of finding the most suitable ways of "getting ideas across." To this problem—one to which our movement here must speedily give more consideration—the W.E.B. conference devoted a good deal of its time.

It stands to reason that to get workers to attend a class and to grasp the subject under discussion, they must have their interest aroused. The lecturer should, therefore, begin with some matter of direct interest to the students. New students are not likely to be interested in making a sudden plunge into the history of pre-historic man or that of economics: they are interested in themselves and their fellows, and in that circle of interests the lecturer must find his starting point. It is essential, then, first of all, to connect the subject of the lecture with the workers' lives and interests.

Moreover, simplicity should be a supreme aim. "Most of our Labour literature," said an American delegate, "is written in too dry and highbrow a manner. We are afraid to be simple, or perhaps we don't know how to be simple." Thus, we could add, the Labour College lecturer must very frequently review his teaching vocabulary, and place to reserve the long and unwieldy words that have worked their way in from professional tomes and similar literature.

Above all, every effort must be made to get the class *to participate in the work done*. It has long been recognised that it is not by any means sufficient to get a class to listen patiently to a lecture. Following the lecture with questions or discussion has been the usual method. Often, however, it is impossible to get either the one or the other, the self-consciousness of the students in many cases barring the way. Important as it is to call for questions at the end of the lecture, it is far more important to get the students to participate actively in the lecture itself. As far as can be, the lecturer should aim merely at guiding and encouraging the attempt of the class to lecture to itself, getting the students, wherever possible, to supply the facts and the conclusions. As a rule, however, the lecturer will have to supply most of the facts himself, but, if he does so with a certain amount of skill, he can usually get the class to draw the conclusions. In other words, the lecture should not be one continuous out-pouring on the part of the lecturer; it should be broken up by questions put to the class by the lecturer and should thus not be the individual product of the lecturer but the *co-operative product* of the lecturer and the class.

This method certainly involves more work and previous consideration on the part of the lecturer, but as a method of teaching it is three times as successful as the other. It arouses greater interest among the students, compels the class not merely to listen and record, but to think, and moreover, as the conclusions are thought out by the class itself, they are much more likely to "stick" than if they had simply been presented by the lecturer. Besides, this method plays not merely on the instinct of curiosity, but also on the instincts of creation and emulation—a very important point. To these advantages must be added the fact that, because this method arouses much more interest, it enables the lecturer to deliver with success a lecture that, of necessity, is heavy with figures and technical details—a lecture that would otherwise send the class into an open-eyed sleep. Altogether it is the most satisfactory method known to the writer by which a class of self-contained units can be revolutionised into a solid group of interested co-operative thinkers.

Some of the American tutors urge the merits of using a short, pithily-written outline of each lecture. This, it is suggested, should be issued to the students before the lecture begins. No doubt this method has its uses, but it seems to the writer that it would be better to get the class to compile its own outline at the close of the lecture, by asking the students to state the key ideas of the lecture in logical order. Such a class-produced outline would be much more effective in its results than one supplied by the lecturer without any effort on the part of the class.

J. P. M. MILLAR.

PROLETARIAN CULTURE in AMERICA

Plebs will read with much interest this brief account by Dr. Scott Nearing of the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces operating in the field of Labour Education in America. It seems clear that, as Millar points out in his preceding article, a definite break between the real proletarian educationists and the "W.E.A.ers" of America cannot be long delayed.

THE title "Proletarian Culture in America" is not sheer audacity, though it would doubtless appear so to the casual observer of American life. With twenty-two millions of American children in schools and colleges controlled and directed by the same men who control and direct the American banks and factories, with a labour movement, barely class-conscious, with an unparalleled economic power in the hands of the American ruling class, and with many of the most active advocates of proletarian culture serving terms of from five to twenty years in gaol for the expression of unorthodox economic opinions, the outlook for a new culture might seem dark enough. The forces are at work, though, and their results already are apparent to discerning eyes.

There are three main channels of labour education in the United States. The first is a movement, fostered by the colleges, to have workers' education under college control; the second is a movement by the workers to have college education under workers' control; and the third is a movement for a real proletarian culture. A few words will give an idea of the relative standing of each of the three lines of activity.

Colleges like Bryn Mawr and Amherst have opened labour schools. The work at Bryn Mawr was done during the summer, in the college buildings, and by a faculty picked in part from inside and in part from outside the college. Since Bryn Mawr is a woman's college, the classes were confined to working girls. The funds for the support of this work were raised in part by the ex-President of the College, Miss Thomas, a keen-minded, far-sighted liberal. In part they were contributed by the unions whose members were taking the classes. The faculty was made up of liberals with a sprinkling of radicals. It was not proletarian in any sense of the word. The Amherst classes are held in labour union halls, and the instruction staff is provided by the college. The students

pay a nominal fee for the class work. The classes in both cases were small, and the instruction carried forward in the main by the tutorial method.

Many other American colleges have undertaken work of a similar nature. Always it is financed in part or in whole by the colleges.

The second series of experiments consists of a number of classes organised by labour unions, for which teachers are drawn from the neighbouring schools and colleges. Sometimes these teachers are furnished free by the schools. Usually, however, the classes make some private arrangement with the teachers. Thus a professor at Columbia University, New York, will give a series of lectures for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union. These lectures will be held in a union hall or in a public school building provided at a nominal rate by the Board of Education. The lecture method is the one usually followed here, because it is the method common in American colleges. No effort is made to limit the size of the classes. On the contrary, large classes are encouraged. The funds are derived from the union treasuries or from student fees, or from both.

There are a few institutions in America devoted to labour education, which are financed by the workers, and which are avowedly teaching those subjects, and emphasising those aspects of history, economics and the like, which will be of particular service to those workers who are actively engaged in the struggle for the establishment of a new social order. There were more of these institutions before the war. The prosecutions and police raids of the past five years have broken up such schools in Chicago, San Francisco and other cities.

The experience of the United States with these three forms of labour education is not as great as the experience of Great Britain, but it has already led to certain pretty definite conclusions, which might be summarised about as follows:—

1. The move of such colleges as Amherst and Bryn Mawr to conduct labour schools is an effort to "get in on the ground floor" of a new movement, to capture it and to direct its course. They are economically and socially attached to the present culture, and by the same forces are opposed to any new culture. They therefore represent *counter-revolution in labour education*.
2. The schools that are conducted by labour bodies with instructors borrowed or hired from high schools and colleges are getting capitalist education in labour quarters. If the teachers were really class conscious, or if they said anything in the labour schools that lined them up definitely with the new culture, they would lose their jobs in about nine

- cases out of ten. The teachers merely give the same courses for the workers that they are giving to their regular classes.
3. It is therefore obvious that if the workers of the United States are to develop ideas looking toward a new economic and social organisation, *they must do this in their own schools, supported by their own funds, manned by their own teachers, and using their own outlines, textbooks and so on.*

There is a good deal of leeway in the application of these principles, but American experience seems to show that, in general, and in the main, they are sound.

As to what should constitute the subject matter of an education looking toward a proletarian culture, there is as yet no consensus of opinion. There is merely the recognition of the necessity that it should be different from and independent of that presented in the American schools and colleges. No greater opportunity is offered to the American workers at the present time than the opportunity to develop an educational machine that will seek, not to duplicate or to compete with the established schools and colleges, but to cover a field that they cannot touch—the field of intellectual activity that has as its objective a revolutionary change in existing economic and social institutions.

SCOTT NEARING.

GETTING RID of 'BIAS'

W. T. Colyer's book, Americanism (Labour Publishing Co., 6s.) has already been reviewed in our pages. But the following few facts gleaned from its pages about the persecution of suspected radicals among college professors and tutors by American Big Business will be of interest—and use—to Plebs propagandists.

THE first noticeable case was that of Professor Scott Nearing, suddenly discharged from the University of Pennsylvania in 1915. Those Plebeians who have read his *American Empire* will readily believe that "Scott Nearing is a born teacher. . . . master of the art of marshalling and interpreting facts and figures." But his abilities were outweighed in the eyes of his employers by his radical convictions, and despite eight years' successful work as an economics instructor he had to go. Says Colyer: "A speedy exit from the University of Colorado was provided in 1915 for the professor of law, James H. Brewster, who had appeared before the Industrial Relations Commission on behalf of the Colorado miners. . . . Maryville College, Tennessee,

in 1915 got rid of Arthur W. Calhoun, its professor of economics, for no apparent reason other than the gentleman's avowed economic radicalism."

It seems that no one who doubts the innate superiority of the "honest to God, 100 per cent. American" over all "ignorant foreigners" can be trusted even to lecture on Literature, for Professor Harry Dana was dismissed from Columbia University, New York, "on account of his radical opinions." Professor C. A. Beard in 1917 withdrew from the teaching staff of the same University.

In the western University of Montana Professor Levine was removed in 1919 because he had published a study of the taxation which reflected unfavourably upon the great mining company which dominates that State. Professor Arthur Fisher in 1922 was turned out of the same University because the American Legion did not like his opinions about world war. He should be able to compare notes with Bertrand Russell!

For protesting in an open letter against peonage and the torture of negroes by law officers in Arkansas, Robt. T. Kerlin, a professor of engineering, was dismissed by the Virginia Military Institute at Lexington.

If this state of affairs is maintained in the Universities, the control exercised over the teachers in lower colleges and schools can be imagined. It goes so far that in many States, of which New York is one, teachers are compelled to take an oath of loyalty.* History books are censored. Our British "Empire Day" stunts are improved on, and racial pride and hate assiduously planted and watered.

The American workers, as Scott Nearing points out in his article above, will have to tackle the job which the workers everywhere have to tackle—the provision of their own education, as well as their own press, their own political party, and their own industrial organisations.

**Daily Herald* (14/12/22), reports Lady Askwith, at a meeting of the Grand Council of the National Citizens' Union in London, appealing for this to be applied in Britain.

“THEIR OWN EDUCATION”

It's our job to persuade the workers that they must take this in hand. *And we need funds to get on with it.* The gentlemen with the money-bags won't help us. : : We look to YOU.

GEOGRAPHICAL FOOTNOTES to CURRENT HISTORY

SAKHALIN

SAKHALIN (also spelt Saghalin or Saghalien), is one of those out-of-the-way corners of the earth which modern Imperialism has dragged into the limelight. It was—and is, judging from accounts of its climate—a nice place to get away from. But it was an exceedingly difficult place to get away



from, which is one reason why it was chosen as a Russian convict settlement.

It lies off the coast of Siberia, opposite what was (1920-22) the Far Eastern Republic, but is now "incorporated" in the

Russian Federal Soviet Republic. It lies immediately to the north of the bright little, tight little islands of Japan.

"The whole island is much colder than might be anticipated from its latitude, and the climate is severe The rainfall is heavy Snow falls on 99 days in the year Frost begins in September and lasts till June Frequent thick fogs are the worst feature of the climate" (*Sakhalin*, Foreign Office Handbooks.)

So very bracing a climate did not attract visitors. The Japanese worked the fisheries off the southern coasts of the island; but Sakhalin had neither social nor economic significance until the latter half of the 19th century, when the Russian Government were attracted by reports of rich coal mines within its borders. From 1875 to 1905 Sakhalin was a Russian possession; and the coal-mines were worked by convict labour. In 1905, after the Russo-Japanese War, the southern half of the island was ceded to Japan; and quite naturally, after the "profound political upheaval" in Russia in 1917, Japanese troops—and traders—strayed into the northern half of the island.

For in the intervening years a bait even more attractive than coal had been located in this northern half—*petroleum*. By 1922, three Japanese companies were occupied in the exploitation of oil-fields which it is estimated can eventually supply several million tons of petroleum per annum. "Quite a complete system of transport and pipe lines has been laid down; there is also a refinery at work" (*Petroleum Times*, July 29th, 1922).

When Japan, after the Washington Conference, evacuated Vladivostok and the territory of the Far Eastern Republic, she did not leave the northern part of Sakhalin; it was held as a "guarantee for compensation" for some reported damage done to Japanese persons or property at some time or other. (As the street-boys sing—"Same old b——y story, same old b——y way!")

Now Moscow has granted oil concessions to the Sinclair Oil Co., U.S.A., in this particular area. And if the Sinclair Co. finds Japanese gentlemen already in possession, then the Sinclair Co. will presumably have to invoke the aid of the American Government in persuading those gentlemen to retire. Another little "bone of contention" between Washington and Tokio! And one, moreover, which you may be sure Moscow, if it can help it, will not let be overlooked.

Also, the concession is to be forfeited unless within five years the American Government recognises the Soviet Government.

So that it seems safe to predict that henceforth Sakhalin is going to be "in the picture!"

J. F. HORRABIN.

TEN-MINUTES' TALK WITH A W.E.A. STUDENT

Why not Marshall ?

YES, I see your point. You have taken the W.E.A. course on economics, and, as far as you can see, there is nothing wrong with it. We tell you that it is inadequate and misleading, and recommend the economics of Marx. Naturally, before you mortgage your time and energy to our lectures, you want us to justify our statements, and to convince you that you will be breaking fresh ground and not ploughing the same old furrow. Do I get you ?

Well, the question of Marx or Marshall is, at bottom, nothing but the old controversy of partiality in social science. I shall prove to you that every system of economics must correspond with the point of view of some class in society. Orthodox economics approaches its problems with the ideas of the capitalist class, and hence we label its analysis "capitalist economics." Marxian or "working-class" economics, on the other hand, looks at the economic world through proletarian spectacles, and therefore gives a different picture from that presented by Marshall, much as the Thames at Wapping is far less soothing and beautiful than the Thames at Richmond.

One of the fundamental facts of economics is that the total wealth of a community is divided into various categories, wages, rent, profit, etc. A "class" is the body of people who receive their income in one of these forms ; for example, we have the wage-earning class or proletariat, the rent-receiving or landlord class, and so on. Each class is interested in its own sort of income, and judges all political and economic measures primarily by their effect on its economic position. Thus we get different class points of view.

Now when we examine different systems of economics we find that, although all the categories of income appear in the analysis, they are not all equally stressed. The economist always starts by splitting the national income into two divisions, being (a) the income of a certain class, and (b) all other wealth. He then analyses (b) into its constituents, and examines their inter-relations with (a) in different conditions. But his primary division always corresponds to that of some class in society, which distinguishes only between "what we get" and "what we don't get."

Let us put ourselves in the place of an orthodox economist. He looks at the complexity around him and seeks for some simplification. "Obviously," he says, "the most important classes of income are profit and not-profit. The object of production is profit. Therefore, let us divide the price of everything into profit and cost of production. Then we can analyse the latter into wages, rent, and cost of raw materials, which in turn consists of profit and cost of production. Thus we can analyse all income into its various categories. Then we will see how profit is effected by various factors, and thus we will get a complete, impartial description of what takes place."

The Marxist looks at the matter in a different light. "All economic wealth," he says, "is produced by labour. Therefore, let us divide all wealth into what the producer gets and what he does not get, that is, wages and surplus value. We will then analyse surplus value into profit, interest, rent, etc., and see how each of these affects wages in different circumstances. Thus we get a partial picture of the actual world, as viewed by the working class."

Of course, orthodox economics is really as partial as Marxian, and is merely the reflections of the capitalist turned philosopher. It tells the capitalist how his profit depends on the factors he can and those he cannot control. But for a working man anxious to understand his class interests it is as useless as French to an Englishman travelling in Germany. For instance, the orthodox economist refers to unemployment quite often, but he always treats it as an incidental effect of some trade movement, and passes on at once to what really interests him, the effect on profits. But Marx thinks unemployment worth special consideration, and devotes considerable space to it, because Marx writes from the point of view of the working class.

There is another way in which Marxism is superior to Marshall. Every science must start from certain assumptions, and its results are no more valid than the assumptions on which they are based. I have already given you the fundamental axioms of Marshall and of Marx. They are, respectively, "the object of production is profit" and "all economic wealth is produced by labour." Now, taking the orthodox axiom, history shows that it is only true at a certain period—the capitalist era. But by taking capitalism for granted, orthodox economics is entirely incompetent to explain its origin and ultimate fate, for it cannot contemplate anything but capitalism. But the assumption that all wealth is produced by labour is justified by history, and, so far as we can see, it will always be true. All Marxist economics assumes is that men work for their subsistence. It is able, therefore, to examine the evolution of different systems of production, and, in particular, of capitalism,

as phases in the eternal struggle of man with nature for his food and shelter. It is only by the Marxian method that we can estimate the forces that are tending to supersede capitalism, and so work in harmony with them.

That is why we tell you that Marshall is not good enough. As a worker, you must look at things from the working-class point of view. The danger of orthodox economics to the workers is that they will accept the assumptions underlying it, that capitalism is just and eternal, and that "prosperity" is synonymous with a high rate of profit. You know, as well as I, the type of "educated" working man who is prepared to see his wages cut below the poverty line "for the good of the community," and who cannot understand any economic system but capitalism. It is because I think you are too good for such a fate that I invite you to attend our classes on working-class economics. Marshall may be very useful if you have to conduct a business, but you must have Marx if you want to assist in a revolution.

B. WOOLF.

P.S.—If you feel like looking into this matter further, get The PLEBS "Outline of Economics"—written by workers for workers.

The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

is composed of Educational Organisations (such as the Labour College, London, the Scottish Labour College and the Plebs League) providing *independent working-class education* by means of

Residential Tuition
Evening Class Tuition
Summer Schools
Week-end Schools
Correspondence Tuition
Lectures by Post
Publications, etc.

Every working-class organisation should provide its members with independent working-class education. Get your organisation to arrange an educational scheme in conjunction with the N.C.L.C.

WRITE SEC., 11 PENYWERN ROAD, LONDON, S.W.5.

An ARISTOCRAT for PLEBEIANS

THERE is a story extant that Goëthe, the German poet, wrote to his French translator, "I have never understood myself so rightly as when reading you." This witticism would appear to apply to a proletarian who cared to dip into Friedrich Nietzsche, the "aristocratically-minded Slavonic German thinker," as he has been called. Anyway, I was glad to see references to this writer in recent issues of *The PLEBS*, for I believe he is one of the so-called philosophers who will repay proletarians for a study of him. The very fact that he has been so severely execrated by all the petty publicists, university pedants, and theological charlatans, would seem to point to the fact that he often hit the nail on the head. Much of his reputation has been gained because, like most artists, he was fond of standing on his head and turning somersaults ; but this should not prevent the recognition of the truth that when he stood firmly on his feet like a modern bomber his sure aim unerringly landed his deadly ammunition on the camouflaged citadel of bourgeois culture, blowing it to smithereens.

On page 84 of *The PLEBS Outline of Psychology* we read : "The general decadence of bourgeois culture is probably associated with the failure of the reality principle in the intellectual field. Bourgeois prophets must 'prophesy smooth things' if they would not be hounded out of bourgeois society or killed by ridicule." Now, if this is the distinguishing mark of bourgeois culture, Nietzsche was assuredly not one of the "chaplains to the pirate ship," for his philosophy is based on a capacity for facing unpleasant truths, which again the writers of the *Outline of Psychology* feature as one of the proletarians' best weapons in the class struggle. This brings us, however, to the unreality of much of his work, for to prophesy, as he did, hard, terrible and violent things, merely because they intensified the ego-urge, even to self-destruction, as also to an anarchical separation of the classes in a community, would show a want of the reality principle in an opposite direction to that of bourgeois culture.

Nevertheless, from his first work of any importance, *The Birth of Tragedy*, to his last achievement, *Ecce Homo*, we see a mind peculiarly aware of the flaws hidden in the walls of the painted sepulchre of bourgeois culture, but the economic foundations of this "culture," which are the real cause of the flaws, were by reason of his unacquaintance with the subject of political economy, beyond him.

The scientific faculty—the reality principle—that at one period of his life seemed to be leading him to a basic working truth ultimately faded before the unbridled ego-urge which carried him to the extreme of an anti-social, visionary philosophy.

In his rationalistic period he could write :—

It is the mark of a higher culture to value the little unpretentious truths, which have been found by means of strict method, more highly than the joy-diffusing and dazzling errors which spring from metaphysical and artistic times and people. First of all one has scorn on the lips for the former, as if here nothing could have equal privileges with anything else, so unassuming, simple, bashful, apparently discouraging are they, so beautiful, stately, intoxicating, perhaps even animating, are the others. But the hardly attained, the certain, the lasting, and therefore of great consequence for all wider knowledge, is still the higher ; to keep oneself to that is manly and shows bravery, simplicity, and forbearance. Gradually not only single individuals but the whole of mankind will be raised to this manliness, when it has at last accustomed itself to the higher appreciation of durable lasting knowledge, and has lost all belief in inspiration and the miraculous communication of truth.

This is very different from some of the "joy-diffusing and dazzling errors" that his later period produced, when, as he himself wrote, "I can no longer keep on terms with any sort of reality." Had the second period in the evolution of his philosophy, when the reality principle was uppermost, led him to a study of political economy, as it had done to biology and evolution, our movement might have been richer to-day by the addition of a great mind.

Lunacharsky wrote in *The PLEBS*, November, 1920 :—"The new class-culture is a new orientation. It is an organic metamorphosis of the culture common to humanity. The proletariat must use all the nutriment of the soil tilled by a long line of ancestors." Nietzsche has not perhaps nourished the soil to any large extent ; but he has ruthlessly torn up the bourgeois weeds and thus made way for the sowing of the vigorous seedlings of the new proletarian culture. The Transvaluation of all Values—a task which Nietzsche thought could only be achieved by that hierarchy of Superman that he visioned, and which despite his wonderful artistic power he could never make real—will be brought about by that classless society which will have built its culture on the firm foundations of the Materialistic Conception of History.

Right through his works a terrible scorn of the State rages. Yet again owing to his ignorance of political economy and his lack of sound sociological knowledge he would have reared his new order of society on the very basis that the modern state is built upon. Criticising very effectively that modern state, as the following excerpt shows, he never got beyond it.

A "highly civilised state" generally implies at the present time, the task of setting free the spiritual forces of a generation just so far as they may be of use to the existing institutions—as a mountain stream is split up by embankments and channels, and its diminished power made to drive mill-

wheels, its full strength being more dangerous than useful to the mills. And thus "setting free" comes to mean rather "chaining up." To Nietzsche, one of the most earnest explorers in the realms of culture, the proletarians of the future, who will have more time, very much more time, than we to devote to this subject, will, I think, often turn, as to a worthy friend—or enemy. We ourselves can, however, learn much from him in our endeavour to agitate and awaken our class to its historical mission. We can learn how, having an end in view, every fact of science, every phase of everyday activity must be shown to be working towards that goal, until by suggestion on suggestion, the emotions are aroused to seek their realisation in action. In other words, we must not be afraid to use the methods of the artist to create a new belief—the belief in our case of the ardent, heroic Communard, uneducated and poor, who wounded to death at the barricade, when asked for what he was dying said, "for the solidarity of the human race."

HENRY D. CLARK.

The quotations from Nietzsche's works are taken from Messrs. Foulis' edition; and it may be of interest to state that Dr. Mugge, in his book *Nietzsche: His Life and Work*, mentions a pamphlet by M. Falkenfeld published in Leipsic in 1899, entitled, *Marx and Nietzsche*.

CLASS ROOM NOTES for Students and Tutors

THE Labour College movement claims that it has something better to contribute to working-class organisation than melodramatic flagwagging and a stock of abusive epithets for official bodies and leaders. Now is especially the time to show the practical use of our classwork to Labour. The following points may be useful:—

(1) Link the present amalgamation movement on to a survey of past development and changes in Labour organisation. Show that resolutions and General Council efforts lead nowhere if there is no educated rank-and-file; and that even successful amalgamation may lead to top heaviness without this latter.

(2) The present struggle over wages and hours is an economic question upon which satisfactory enlightenment can only be obtained in our classes. There we can learn to treat the repeated prophecies of ruin by the employers with the attention they deserve.

The following is a summary of a criticism, sent by Douglas S. Browett, of John Lewis's "Doubting Thomas" attitude in his article, "Is Revolution Inevitable?" in the Jan. PLEBS:—

1—*Historical Inaccuracies.* Browett points out that :—

(a) The Chartist agitation of 1848 was the last despairing gesture of a once powerful movement ; it was provoked by the rumblings of continental revolts, and did not arise from English conditions. The English bourgeoisie had already achieved their chief aims in 1832 and 1846 and hence had no use for the Chartists in 1848.

(b) Marx could not, as Lewis contends, have used the lessons of 1848 in the *Manifesto*—written in 1847.

(c) It is wrong to consider the working-class of 1848 as “ unspoilt ” by the factory system when investigations into its abuses began in 1784 and three Factory Acts were passed in 1802, 1819 and 1825.

2—*General Charges.* Browett holds that Lewis was much too vague on the important point of the relation between ideas and changing industrial development. He declares that instead of making “ hopeless slaves,” the factory system and big business provide the conditions of emancipation ; they alone make men struggle as a *class*, as wage-workers nationally and internationally. In proof of which he cites the Russian peasant as an obstacle in the path of the more intelligent town workers, and the peasants of Germany and Hungary as the supporters of reaction.

A good deal of attention has been given recently to the Economic Barometers which the orthodox economists have constructed in order to foretell trade booms and depressions. Apparently the universities have got to prove their utility to the business interests. But it is difficult to allow for all contingencies ! The glass at the end of the year read “ Set Fair ” ; but the French move on the Ruhr has prevented the expected improvement. Which indicates that quite a lot of things affect economic estimates, and that it is wise not to put the study of economics into a “ water-tight compartment.”

“ Two years ago it took nearly 2,000 people to turn out 40,000 bicycles a year. This year rather more than 2,000 people will turn out 70,000 machines.” Thus Sir H. Bowden—who ought to know (*Standard*, 24-1-23). An increase in productivity of at least 50 per cent. in two years is a point worthy of notice to teachers looking for comparative estimates of productivity. Of course the speaker talked as though the results were reduced prices to the consumer, and no discharge of workpeople. He did not mention that this could only be so if the market were sufficiently elastic, monopoly completely absent, and competition keen enough to keep down any increase in profits.

Frank Rock (Rotherham) is puzzled because while the amount of money in circulation has increased fourfold in the years 1914-23, prices have only gone from 100 to 150 in the same period.

The factors to be considered are : (a) the mass of commodities ; (b) the "velocity" of the currency, or number of moves that each £1 note makes. We suggest the trade slump as a factor in reducing this velocity, and thus a greater quantity is required to circulate the same amount of commodities. It is only *after* circulation has taken place that the number of moves can be discovered by dividing the mass of commodities by the mass of circulating money effecting the exchange. (See pp. 57-8 *Outline of Economics*.)

January is always an interesting month for economics students. Then the chairmen of the Big Five make their speeches and the papers give illuminating reviews of the past year. Mr. McKenna has recently been pleading for the stopping of deflation so that the slump can be overcome. Mr. Goodenough (of Barclay's) says that the development of Empire is the way out. The *M. G. Commercial Annual Review* teemed with useful points, and the chart showing prices, production, etc., gave at a glance the developments of 1922 ; altogether a good three-pennyworth.

L. B. Stedman has forwarded us a criticism of the Psychology Textbook. He confesses he has not read the book, but feels that after a perusal of the Bibliography and Glossary he can call it "a hodge-podge of bourgeois verbosity of nothingness." His remarks will be filed for the Textbook Committee, but we fear they tell us more about our comrade's prejudices than anything else.

From one of the District Colleges we have received copies of some syllabuses of courses in Economic Geography, drawn up by different tutors ; together with a request for a *standard* syllabus in the subject.

We don't think a standard syllabus in this subject is desirable. There are three or four aspects of geography each of which is of interest and value to our students—*e.g.*, purely *economic* geography, historical geography, and present-day politico-economic geography ; the latter in reality a study of international problems and of Modern Imperialism in actual working. And while we consider this last as the most important from our point of view, we would point out that the other methods of approach are exceedingly valuable as introductions thereto. Our own experience is that even the briefest possible outline of historical geography—*i.e.*, of the geographical factors which have played their part in history—is the most effective way of gaining the interest of students, and of making quite clear the

inter-relation of geographical facts and economic development. But we do certainly feel that this historical outline should lead up to a fuller study of present-day problems ; if a short course of six lectures is being planned, say *two* introductory historical lectures and *four* on current international questions.

Obviously, one cannot fix a standard syllabus for these latter four, since the relative importance and interest of such questions varies from month to month and year to year. Such lectures could take as their basis the fundamental importance of certain raw materials—coal, iron, oil, cotton, wheat ; and of certain great land and sea routes. But they would aim at taking as illustrations, and treating in detail, whatever international problem was uppermost at the moment—Mosul or the Ruhr, the Pacific or Palestine.

“BRITAIN PLANS U.S. RUIN ON SEA.” This great headline in the *New York American* (26-11-22) reminded one of similar yells quoted in *The PLEBS*, July, 1922, from the *Liverpool Courier*. Below it were remarkable charges against the British Embassy and British shipping lines, who had stopped at nothing, either during or after the war, to discriminate against American shipping and to block the Ship Subsidy bill. They were followed up in December by allegations that in the British Far Eastern ports oil fuel is refused American shipping. Edward Denby, Secretary of the U.S. Navy, trumpeted forth in January that U.S. must MAINTAIN NAVY SECOND TO NONE and incidentally mentioned that if all warships were scrapped “the merchant fleets of the nations would become overnight the nations’ battle fleets.” Meanwhile the U.S. is waiting for the other Powers to carry out the Washington limitations ; and Ex-Secretary Daniels confessed that Washington had begun, rather than ended the nightmare of naval competition in all weapons other than the relatively useless capital ships.

Again and again in latter issues (e.g., *New York American*, 28-1-23) appeals are made for “wise legislation and renewed interest” so that the American flag can regain the proud position on the seven seas which it held seventy years ago.

American opinion on the debt is also worth noting. On this side of the Atlantic it is felt that Britain is doing a very splendid thing in honouring her wartime obligations, and that America has been mean to ignore the Balfour Note and forget the conditions under which the money was borrowed. Britain posed as being willing to forego the £3,400,000,000 due to her from Europe, if the U.S. would forego from her £850,000,000. In truth, as the American papers have hastened to point out, the former sum included the bad debt of German reparations and that if America forgave all her debts she would forego \$5,000,000,000 more than

Britain. And so despite the vigorous propaganda for cancellation by Americans who believed Mr. McKenna's gloomy prophecies about the ruin in America which would attend its payment, and those like the Vanderlip people who are directly interested in a European revival, the U.S. demands her pound of flesh, lessened only by a smaller rate of interest. Stabilisation has taken place—but it is a stabilisation of Britain's debtor position. The U.S. to the extent that any goods can get over the Fordney tariff will now be able to increase its luxury trades, develop a favoured section of the working class, devote more attention to the production of capital goods, and take even bigger strides along the Imperialist trail.

The Daily Herald (29-1-23) combined a very useful explanation of the funding process with a good cry which we regret to say it has not followed up. It was to treat the internal National Debt as the American Debt had been treated, and reduce the rate of interest from 5, 6, and 7 per cent. to a level $2\frac{1}{2}$ or $3\frac{1}{2}$. An additional argument might also be used. Just as Mr. Baldwin pleaded that as the £ was now worth more \$. Britain would really pay back more than she has borrowed, so, as prices have fallen, British War Loan holders have been automatically enriched.

This would have been a better line than falling back (16-2-23) into the Angell argument that this annual £30,000,000 will hurt America and especially the workers there. Is England being ruined by the fact that she still owns, according to Mr. McKenna, sufficient foreign securities to cover the debt to the U.S. two or three times over? Now that Big Business (Mr. Rockefeller) and Big Finance (J. P. Morgan) have coalesced (see the *Liberator*, Jan., 1923) they will know how to use that lien on British production to keep down British ambition in China, Mesopotamia and Siberia. Great Britain dared not have set the bad example of disowning debts or her own foreign securities would have been in peril.

PLEBS Executive Committee, 1923

THE election of the Executive Committee of the Plebs League for the current year was carried out by postal ballot during the last two weeks of January, with the following result:—

Mark Starr ..	268 votes.	C. T. Pendrey	196 votes.
J. T. W. Newbold ..	239 ..	F. Ayres	165 ..
R. W. Postgate ..	237 ..	A. Vandome	162 ..
M. H. Dobb	232 ..	A. J. H. Okey	91 ..
Geo. Sims	221 ..	C. Terry	84 ..

The first seven are accordingly elected.

Winifred Horrabin is Hon. Secretary, and J. F. Horrabin, Editor of Magazine, no other nominations having been received for these two offices.

A REJECTED REPLY

DEAR COMRADE EDITOR,—The enclosed article was sent to the *Labour Monthly* by myself, as a fellow Communist, in reply to Dutt's attack on *The Plebs*. In accordance with the principles of the new Marxism, it was refused publication. As it may be of interest to readers who are both Plebs and Communists, you might care to print it.

Yours fraternally,
R. W. POSTGATE.

THE PLEBS: A REPLY.

The attack upon the Plebs League by the Editor of the *Labour Monthly*, R. Palme Dutt, in the February issue of his magazine, requires an answer. Anybody is entitled, of course, to say that any book, including the Plebs' Imperialism Textbook, is bad: when it comes to misrepresentation of the aims and personalities of a whole movement, a reply is necessary.

In the first place, Dutt suggests that the faults he finds in the book are due to "Plebs authors," subservience to reformist Trade Union officials—"perhaps the fear of ill will of Trade Union officials" (p. 129), "there is nothing in this book to disturb the equanimity of the most offensive and treacherous member of the General Council" (p. 127). "The Plebs had really better merge itself in the Labour Magazine" (p. 125).

Not to exacerbate an unnecessary quarrel, I will say no more of the suggestion than that it is a lie: but it is really essential to point out to Dutt that some at least of the Plebs' members whom he is attacking are members of a Party on whose Executive he sits. Does that Party provide no other means of discussing policy differences between members than public slander? Or are Executive members privileged to attack without warning, in the press, other members who are doing work recognised by the Party as valuable? If an editor who is also a Communist believes that certain of his fellows dare not

say anything that the U.D.C. and the Labour Party have not approved (this is not a joke—he actually says this on p. 127) is it not an abuse of his position to rush into print at once about it? Whether it is or not, it is unfortunate for the victims that while they may be attacked, party discipline forbids the only effective retort.

Dutt denounces the book in question on the ground that it is not Marxist. His objections to Plebs education are really, as we have found before, based on absolute ignorance of the Plebs movement—he imagines that the London Labour College is typical of the movement, also—after "careful attention"—that South Wales is a typical district. Without experience of the actual needs of a workers' class, he reasons theoretically, like any other academician, and produces what he would like best without regard to what is really needed. So he vastly prefers an economic treatise, upon "Finance Capital and Oligarchy," "Export of Capital," "Parasitism and Stagnation of Capitalism," and so forth, to a "collection of information." That is to say he prefers (naturally, from his point of view) an interpretation of and deduction from a whole series of facts known to him, to a recountal of those facts. If he had even a little Plebs experience he would realise that he has gone much too far ahead. The facts (which he assumes) are not generally known; the "banal" chapters of the Plebs textbook, are the first necessity for workers who do not know the everyday facts of the last ten years. A synthetic economic theory based on them, however good, is merely unintelligible. What can it mean to people who do believe that British Foreign policy has been based in the main upon abstract justice?

Once, of course, he has claimed that this Plebs book is a failure because it is history and not theoretical economics, Dutt goes merrily along. Awful is our crime because we have quoted from Brailsford, Hobson and

Newbold ("in his I.L.P. period"—aha! Had us there, what?), and not from Marx, Kautsky, and Trotsky and old uncle Varga and all. Our plea that in an historical work you quote the authorities for the period, not later pamphlets on theory, is of course worthless. I look forward to a scathing attack by our gifted comrade on Edward Gibbon, who quoted in his work authorities hopelessly out of date and utterly ignored the writing of John Wilkes.*

So, too, because a history of capitalist imperialism is not a history of the Labour movement, he assumes that the absence of remarks on the "violation of pledges in 1914 by the workers' leaders" (he has a simple theory of history) is due to a desire on our part to pretend such a thing is "of no concern to the workers." This sort of stuff is called comradeship in the book of words—but in any case, what tripe!

On the same page (p. 127) he sneers at the authors for their "moral censure" in saying the Treaty of Versailles "grossly violated" the Armistice terms. Again—inexperience. Most of us pass through a period of Marxism when a realisation of the fact that ethics are dependent on social conditions expresses itself in a childish amorality. Since there is no right nor wrong, then "let us be wicked." With a thrill like a curate in Leicester Square the young learner prepares to be "bad" and have no scruples. Another man may call something "a dirty trick," but our young professor has outgrown all that. It appears that R. P. D. has not yet passed through that simple stage of inverted

* We are rebuked for quoting Hobson four times. In the book he praises so, Lenin quotes Hobson fourteen times! "It is really superfluous to add anything to this."

sentimentalism. But even if our "moral" phrase about Versailles offends him, is it not a statement of fact? Is it not further a statement of fact that two out of every four workers would query? When one talks only to Communists and sympathisers, one may have an utterly false idea of working class mentality outside. But somebody has to do the donkey work outside the sacred circle.

Finally in his general war-whoop and concluding exhortation to attack the Plebs (in accordance with C.P. resolution and the no-splitting policy of the International, no doubt) he writes:—

"It is not the case that there can be a vacuum of no politics, as they hope and imagine (!); if they exclude the revolutionary politics of Marxism they inevitably come at the mercy of Liberal politics."

On this the justest and severest comment is to transcribe Dutt's own words on the reason for the existence of his own organ:—

"The need for an independent journal of *Labour thought*, untied to any party or organisation, is all the greater to-day...."

and again:—

"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 the work of dwelling upon the larger issues...."

A pretty professor!

R. W. POSTGATE.

[R.P.D.'s criticism is also discussed in this month's "Bookshelf." — ED., PLEBS].

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FOYLES, 121, Charing Cross Road, LONDON, W.C.2.

Disproportion or Surplus Product

DEAR EDITOR,—The discussion on Unemployment in the February issue raised an even more important question, namely, the reproduction of the total social capital and the conditions within which this is accomplished.

That question is whether capitalism, in the absence of any exchange relations with other economies, can create a market capable of absorbing the whole of its product. Not only did this seem to be taken for granted by M. H. Dobb, but a number of other conclusions were deduced on the basis of the assumption. J. A. Hobson, whose views on crises were referred to, certainly accepts that position; and also assumes that capitalism must consume the product. At least, he makes no effort to distinguish capitalist and non-capitalist consumption of the product of the former. It is because of this view that, for him, the cause of unemployment is abundantly clear in the fact that the working-class produce a surplus of such magnitude that it cannot, with the present distribution of income, be consumed as rapidly as it is created. The proportion of the total annual product entering into the individual consumption of the working-class is limited to variable capital, otherwise wages. The surplus product is so vast that the capitalists themselves altogether fail to consume it, and are therefore compelled to accumulate or capitalise large sums. The forces of production are thus rapidly extended, leaving an ever-widening gap between them and consumption. Hence, periodically, production must come to a standstill while the glut of goods is being cleared off.

Proceeding from the theory referred to it is difficult to see what other conclusion can be arrived at than to describe unemployment as the effect of under-consumption, judged from one angle, or over-production, on the other. Hobson's remedy, too, is equally clear—a better and more equitable distribution of the national income. This would serve to reduce the amount of the surplus and increase consumption.

But it is difficult to see how he can expect to abolish the cause by a mere limitation of profits—more particularly because the working class will now be expected to save a little of its augmented income which, with the savings of the capitalist class, is to be capitalised and thus once more expand the productive forces. He does, however, believe that by a periodical assessment and redistribution, all will be well.

Dobb objects to this theory, outlined by Hobson, and proceeds to outline what he conceives to be the Marxian position. This he describes as disproportional development of industries. Like Hobson, however, he accepts the proposition that capitalism can create its own market. He further suggests that, within given conditions, capitalism could then pursue an unbroken course of development. An attempt is made to demonstrate this by some very faulty examples which, if anything, prove the opposite of his contention.

The difference between Hobson and Dobb amounts to this—Hobson sees production expanding more rapidly than consumption and this compels the former process to slow down periodically. Dobb, on the other hand, agreeing that the surplus is growing, thinks that, if care is taken to have the surplus produced in the form of *means of production*, these could be utilised in addition to the mass replaced each year, and the whole system expanded, the new additional means of production being divided among the various industries in the same proportions as the old capitals. Thus Hobson sees unemployment rising out of what he calls under-consumption, while Dobb sees it in a failure to observe the correct proportions between industries producing means of production and means of consumption.

Can Dobb's contention be upheld? Is it possible, within any circumstances, for the capitalist system to carry on an independent existence and market its own surplus product? Can the capitalist class realise the value of the surplus product and then capitalise it in the expansion of the productive forces,

when it and its own working class alone consume? Can the textile industry absorb the surplus of the engineering industry, the engineering that of mining, mining that of some other, and so on until we have the whole range of capitalist industries, like so many individual capitalists, becoming rich by absorbing each other's surplus—or, in other words, taking in each other's washing?

It is obvious that the capitalists cannot accumulate what they themselves consume. To accumulate, the surplus must be sold and consumed by other people. Neither can they accumulate by giving it to their own working-class to consume. Yet, that is Dobb's suggestion. In some mysterious way a process of exchange is to be effected among the several branches of capitalist industry, until finally the social unconsumable surplus is left in the form of means of production. All that need be done is to take care and avoid placing too much in any one industry, and then capitalism can go on for ever piling up its wealth in the form of means of production—on the face of it an utterly senseless proceeding, lacking almost everything that characterises the capitalist system.

What is this idea based upon, and where is the justification for it within the Marxian analysis of capitalist production? It is the analysis of the conditions of simple and expanded reproduction contained in Vol. II. of *Capital*. Here Marx discusses the conditions which must obtain, and the proportion which must be observed, in a process involving not only the production of articles of consumption but also the replacement of the social means of production, and, finally, of the expansion of the whole scale of production. Is this, however, capitalist production and accumulation? True, Marx develops the argument as if that alone were in his mind, but it is quite another matter to demonstrate that the results obtained are possible within capitalism.

The elucidation of this question requires consideration of three points:—

(1) What are the actual conditions of capitalist accumulation and expansion?

(2) What constitutes the limit to which this expansion can go?

(3) Why cannot the process of expansion go on uninterruptedly?

We thus see that the conditions and extent of the expansion are separated from periodical disturbances taking place within and during the process itself.

A still more remarkable reference to capitalism creating its own market is provided by H. D. Dickinson in his article on "The History of Unemployment." If age indicates a claim to one's respect, then this suggestion is indeed venerable. It is the old idea that men displaced by machinery are absorbed for the production of this machinery, and that the working class benefit further by the cheapening of the articles produced, etc. In a recent publication the idea is developed so far as to suggest that the loss of a whole manufacturing industry may be compensated (by the absorption of labour) by continuing to produce part of its constant capital! This is what is called giving employment to the same number of men.*

That an absolute increase takes place in the amount of variable capital and consequently in the number of the wage-labouring class does not negate the fact or the possibility of there being a relative decrease compared with constant capital. The implied contradiction is explained by the expansion of the capitalist system proceeding more rapidly than the tendency to economise in the use of living labour-power. Let the process of expansion be delayed, or, worse still, imagine it stopped, what effect then will technical improvement and relative growth of constant capital have upon the labouring population?

From where, indeed, would have come the additional labour-power required for the expanding process of production, unless it was being set free by the technical revolution taking place at the same time? It might be replied that, prior to and during the great industrial revolution, huge masses of actual and potential wage-labour were being displaced by other forces.

* We presume this is a reference to The PLEBS Economics Textbook. If so, we should be glad if the criticism were made more definite. In our view, the Textbook itself (pp. 99-100) answers the point of the effects of machinery.—E.

That, however, is by no means a general capitalist phenomenon and was merely incidental to English conditions. Assuming Dickinson is disposed to accept, with Dobb, the idea of an independent and exclusively capitalist economy, where under those conditions would he find the necessary additional labouring population? One of the factors he would be compelled to consider would be the displacement caused by better technique and the application of

machinery to processes where previously it was unknown.

Yours frat.

W. H. MAINWARING.

[We have also received a lengthy letter from A. M. Robertson discussing certain points raised in our Unemployment No. We are compelled to hold this over until next month, when we hope to print along with it replies from M. H. Dobb and H. D. Dickinson.—ED., PLEBS.]

LETTERS from PLEBS

APPRECIATIONS.

DEAR COMRADE,—I have been in the habit of giving my PLEBS away in order to catch new subscribers. But when we get such articles as those which have appeared recently by Dobb, Newbold, J. F. H., Mark Starr, and many others, somehow you don't feel like parting with any copies at all.

Yours fraternally,

C. A. PUGH.

KIMBERLEY, NOTTS.

DEAR COMRADE,—I have read the Economics Textbook with intense interest. It fills a long-felt want in our class work. There was always a big gap between the beginner and *Capital*—some of the "go-betweens" were too incomplete and others too "potted."

But the *Outline of Economics* is really the Goods!

Yours,

LLANELLY.

JIM GRIFFITHS.

DEAR COMRADE,—I congratulate you and your associates in keeping The PLEBS going in these difficult times. It is indeed an achievement.

I hope whatever happens you won't lower the quality of the stuff you publish.... If I may suggest something that would be very acceptable to many of us, it is this—put someone like Postgate on to some articles explaining the contribution to contemporary thought made by such people as Meredith, Galsworthy, Hardy, etc. You made a start by that splendid article on Housman a month or two back,

and more of that sort of stuff would help tremendously. Forgive the suggestion—it's made as a sign of appreciation.

Yours fraternally,

J. E. CLAXTON.

CARMARTHEN NO. 1 BRANCH,
N.U.R.

A QUERY FROM AUSTRALIA.

DEAR COMRADE,—Will you kindly explain in The PLEBS what's the idea of the "α" and "σ" business? Is it typographical snobbery?

Yours fraternally,

BRISBANE.

H. W.

[Not at all. Those particular letters, joined together in that particular way, form part of the old face "fount" of type which was chosen for use in The PLEBS on account (1) of its general readableness, and (2) its pleasing appearance. Modern capitalist printers, who care more for profits than for "pleasing appearance," have accustomed us to ugly types. All the more reason, then, for Labour publications to take a reasonable pride in their appearance. You are free to call "α" and "σ" "typographical snobbery" if you consider the wearing of a collar and neck-tie "sartorial snobbery"; since neither little habit can be justified on strictly utilitarian grounds.—ED., PLEBS.]

"A CO-OPERATIVE FRANKENSTEIN."

DEAR COMRADE,—Your review of the *History of the Co-operative Printing Society*, by F. M. in the February PLEBS, should not be allowed to pass without a word of comment. To

begin with, there is what is almost a characteristic want of friendliness too frequently shown in PLEBS pages towards other sections of the workers' movement—an attitude calculated to alienate many who might be our friends.

If it was felt that the book was not sufficiently important to call for a review (which is my personal opinion from the point of view of general interest) why not leave it alone, and refrain from filling a whole column with nonsensical abuse and gratuitously discourteous remarks on the design and get-up of the book? Let us remember that, if, in fifty years' time, we should publish a history of the Plebs League, illustrated by photographs of the pioneers of the period, we should, no doubt, have our juvenile critics of the appearance of the ancients—beavers or no beavers.

If reviews of this sort cannot be friendly, let the reviewer be commonly courteous. Courtesy would be accorded to those who differ from us; let us extend it to our friends. At the worst, any of your readers who may see the book will agree that the work is carefully, cleanly and readably printed; and the illustrations, if they do nothing else, do tell a story of working-class devotion, sacrifice and success through fifty trying years, in the face of difficulties which might easily have been considered insurmountable; and the men whose features are reproduced bear honoured names, and have proved their worth by service.

Further, what justice is there in filling valuable space in a reputedly high-class magazine with unsophisticated criticism of little things that do not matter, and which after all are matters of judgment and taste, or even fashion? Your reviewer's space would have been used to better purpose if he had given your readers some of the facts disclosed by the narrative, namely that the Co-operative Printing Society is one valuable experiment at solving a very difficult problem—the problem of self-employment. It may not have proved an absolute success from all points of view; but, while many are talking, the Co-operative Movement—through the Printing Society as well as many another channel—is solving the problem. Dennis

Hird once said that "the Co-operative Movement would solve more problems than all theories," and the Printing Society's History shows that the statement has yet to be disproved.

Yours fraternally,

GEO. E. GRIFFITHS.

[We reviewed the book in question simply because the Co-operative Printing Society does a good deal of work for the Labour Movement, and we felt it high time that some Labour journal should point out that much of that work was bad. We admit that standards of craftsmanship are not matters of primary importance to the workers so long as capitalism endures; but we think it a pity to ignore them altogether. Least of all should a Co-operative Society, which claims to have other ideals than profit-seeking, ignore them. When he calls our reviewer's criticisms "unsophisticated," our correspondent shows either that he does not know the meaning of the word, or knows nothing of the particular subject under discussion.—ED., PLEBS.]

DOWN WITH ECONOMICS!

DEAR COMRADE,—I expect there's been a lot of indignant excitement among Plebs about the vehement review by R. P. D. in the February *Labour Monthly* of our Imperialism Textbook: for myself I quite admit the first reading of the review made me furiously annoyed. But, on reflection, I feel very strongly that, instead of merely losing our tempers with Dutt, we should accept the challenge he has laid down—a challenge which, it must be admitted, goes to the fundamentals of our movement as it is at present.

My own feeling is that Dutt is perfectly right: and that a lot of stuff that we have long been looking on as the very marrow of Marxism is nothing but half-baked Kautskian academicism masquerading as Marxism. We bother about a peculiar form of academics called Marxian economics—which as likely as not produce types like the Fleb who was once pointed out to me as "a wizard in Marxian economics," who talked about Russia in the tones of the *Morning Post*, and suffered from a pathetic delusion that the Second

International was the Workers' International—which these wicked Communists were trying to split!

Surely our aim in the I.W.C.E. movement, is to prepare the workers to fight their class battles: and surely the class battle of the workers is the overthrow of the Capitalist State, and the seizure of the power of the State by the working class, to inaugurate the transition from Capitalism to Socialism. This is Marxism—at any rate it is what Marx lived and fought for. And the sooner our movement realises that what we want is to study *politics*, from the revolutionary working class standpoint, always with the slogan "All Power to the Workers" in our minds, the sooner, in my view, will we come within measurable distance of the goal we have ever set before ourselves—the ending of wage-slavery. What is quite irrelevant to our movement is that odd abstraction "Economics"—whether hard-shell (miscalled Marxian) or any other kind.

Yours fraternally,

G. ALLEN HUTT.

[Does Hutt suggest that the Imperialism Textbook is characterised by "half-baked Kautskian academicism"? One of Dutt's grievances against it was that it contained no quotations from Kautsky . . . The important point is whether the Imperialism Textbook "talks about Russia in the tones of the *Morning Post*"; and not whether an odd Pleb here or there, or an odd Communist here or there, talks nonsense.—E.D., PLEBS.]

IRON IN LAPLAND.

DEAR EDITOR,—From my "geographical footnote" in the February PLEBS it might be inferred that the railway from the Lapland iron mines to the ice-free ports of Narvik in Norway was only constructed during the war; this is not so. As a steam railway it was completed in 1902, Narvik being founded at the same time as a new port for the Atlantic terminus. The southern section of the railway, Gellivare to Lulea on the Baltic, was completed some fifteen years earlier, its construction having been started by a British company which inaugurated the exploitation of the iron of that region.

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The electrification of the line was in progress when I was in those parts. This was an eminently attractive proposition in view of the vast store of available water power running to waste, from upland lakes and mountain torrents issuing from vast high plateau snow fields. [N.B.—I have never seen it stated, but I have an idea that one of the reasons for Italy's demand of the Brenner frontier was to obtain control of additional sources of water-power owing to her lack of coal.]

One of the electric-power stations I saw was being erected at Abisko on the southern shore of the Torne Traesk lake (in Sweden). The Abisko power-station was to be fed by the Abiskoajok (jok, pronounced yok=Lapp for river) which drains, along with its tributary the Karsovaggejok, the mountain lakes, glaciers and snow fields that extend westwards towards the Norwegian frontier some eighteen miles away.

So far only very few of the Lapland mountains are being worked for this iron-ore, which however already ten years ago reached an annual shipment figure of 1½ million tons from Narvik alone; probably many other mountains still unworked are metalliferous. In view of the accessibility of water-power their more intensive exploitation seems only a matter of time; if France manages to hang on to the Ruhr district that time cannot be far distant.

Yours faithfully,

A. P. I.

HOLIDAYS ABROAD.

DEAR SIR,—Some of your readers may perhaps like to know that the "Friendship Travel" Association makes it possible for them to enjoy a Continental Holiday.

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Yours, etc.,

Cecil ROGERSON

(Secretary).

REVIEWS

THE LAND.

A Short History of British Agriculture.

By John Orr. (Oxford University Press, 2s. 6d.)

THE importance of British agriculture has been and will be further increased by the decline of British tribute from abroad; the less foodstuff is received in return for manufactured goods, and as payment of interest on foreign investments, the more Britain will have to develop her own supplies.

Hence, in the future, agrarian problems will be of greater intensity and occupy more attention than hitherto. This manual begins with Great Britain in the hunting and pastoral stages and ends with the destruction of the Wages Boards in 1921. Its story is of the continually increasing knowledge of soils, seeds, and breeds of cattle and horses. Mr. Orr agrees that the social problems—the human side of agriculture—have not been so satisfactorily handled. The most he can do is to rejoice that the labourer has not been forced on the Poor Law (as he was a hundred years ago). This is cold comfort for a landworker trying to exist on 18s. to 25s. per week.

The chief value of the book is in the comparative photographs, e.g., a plough team of oxen is placed beside a modern motor-plough; the sickle and the flail

beside the modern reaper-binder and threshing machine; the sheep of 1794 beside the 1921 specimen.

The author ascribes the landlord-tenant system to a "peculiar element in the English character," instead of showing how England's insular position gave her a unique chance of early development, and helped the king and the traders to break the baronial power. His reference to the Russian Revolution as "the last illustration of the fatal break between owners and cultivators of the soil" is puzzling. He can be sure of this: The early development of England is the only explanation of the compromise and the continuity of landlordship in Britain. And the end is not yet.

Along with the *Introduction to Rural History*, and the life stories of Joseph Arch and George Edwards, this manual would help our rural teachers to satisfy and interest classes of the National Agricultural Workers' Union when it decides to take up the necessary educational work. There are now technical schools of agriculture at Oxford and Cambridge; the average yield of wheat per acre has been increased from 23 bushels in 1770 to 30 in 1921. But it is our education which will wake the land worker up to the best way to benefit from such advances.

K.

BIOGRAPHICAL TERRORS.

Danton. By Louis Madelin. (Heinemann, 15s.)

A life of Danton in English naturally challenges comparison with the only other English life, the book with which Hilaire Belloc first made his reputation; that book used to be published by Nelson's at a shilling, and a cheap edition may possibly still be available. So compared, this pretentious book is a failure. We must allow something, of course, for national differences. The semi-hysterical style of writing, which Madelin frequently indulges in, will often "come off" and get its effect in French; in English hardly ever. Moreover, the translation in this case is mediocre.

But the faults lie deeper than foolish chatter meant to be impressive, or impertinent platitudes, or even Madelin's unpardonable intrusion of himself—the "I think this"—"I cannot understand his action"—"I"—"I"—"I" which continually recur and annoy. Madelin's book is a perversion of the "great man" theory of history. Belloc begins his life by saying that to understand Danton's life one must have an understanding of the whole revolutionary movement, and comprehend the form that it took in France. No such suspicion enters Madelin's mind. No account however bad, no suggestion however vague is given of the nature and cause of the Revolution, or even of the character of the society in which Danton lived. Instead, we find a careful amassing of personal detail and information, meant to be vivid, but in fact merely irritating. From this painstaking collection of trifles, scenes, and phrases no living figure appears; Madelin has not even at the end of it all an opinion as to whether his hero was bribed or not.

From Belloc's life we not only get a picture of a man, but of a society in revolution; through Danton's eyes we see and in Danton's person we act the Revolution. It is something added to this, and the fruit of Belloc's genius, that from reading his life we gain the same deeply moved, purifying feeling that we get from a great tragedy well acted.

R. W. P.

THE GREAT ILLUSIONS OF NORMAN ANGELL.

If Britain is to Live. By Norman Angell. (Nisbet, 2s. 6d.)

The Winding-up of The Versailles Treaty. By Karl Radek. (Carl Hoym Nachf.)

Radek in the above booklet—a Report to the 4th Congress of the III. International is at his best in showing how the internal contradictions (produced by the contrary interests of Great Britain and France) of the Versailles Treaty (1919) have already burst its crazy patchwork, and why and how the Turkish guns have blown away the Sèvres Treaty of 1920. In turn he analyses the factors working for and against an Anglo-American alliance in view of the growing French hegemony in Europe. He explains the attitude of Soviet Russia towards Turkey and the rebellious nationalisms of the Middle East and how in the inevitable conflict between Japan and U.S.A.—in which Great Britain may or may not participate—Russia holding the hinterland of Asia will be in a powerful position to affect the final struggle for the Pacific.

The whole purpose of his treatment of the new groupings of the Powers is to explain, in the light of present political events, the contradictions and insoluble problems of capitalism so that the will to world revolution can be developed by the workers.

No more vivid contrast to this point of view could be found than in Norman Angell's last book. Its question is—*Is Britain*—not civilisation, or Europe, —to live? But maybe that is merely a journalistic localisation of the world problem. Mr. Angell is no prophet of world revolution appealing to the workers, no revealer of the social forces destroying capitalist society. He is an apostle of reason calling back rival Nationalists and Imperialists to the blessings of Free Trade.

His unstated premise seems to be that a capitalist Empire like Britain *can* live. Probably he thought it not wise to emphasise that if Britain lives India and Egypt will die—or any rate live dwarfed and stunted lives; or that if his international code and his Community of Power replaces the old Preponderance (mis-called Balance)

of Power, then Empire in the present meaning of the term is no more.

Another premise which leads on to the underlying fallacy of the book is that trade is carried on for the mutual benefit of the peoples concerned, *i.e.*, to satisfy their wants most economically. In truth nothing of the sort occurs. Capitalist trade is first and foremost the result of the attempt on the part of capitalists to realise surplus value. The former idea is an illusion.

The valuable parts of the book are its lucid summary of the post-war position of Great Britain and its attack upon the view of a self-sufficient British Empire as the way out. People as influential as the chairman of Barclay's Bank have hailed the trading opportunities of the far-flung British Empire as the salvation of the present deadlock of British capitalism. Angell's reasons against this are: (a) Canada, Australia, India and Africa have already begun to develop their own industries and would not stop them in favour of ours.

(b) Only $\frac{1}{3}$ of British trade is done inside the British Empire, and to effect the transference of the $\frac{2}{3}$ would produce further dislocation of world trade and a bitter tariff war. That is even if (a) were overcome and Canada for example stopped making ploughs and sent Britain wheat in return for ploughs and coal.

(c) A tariff war would present the problem of keeping Canada, Australia and Asia protected militarily; again entangling alliances would be necessary to secure Preponderance of Power.

All this being so, Angell outlines a United States of the World in order to settle the problems created by "the human stomach and the human womb." If capitalists were wise they would listen to Angell's message and make a World Trust; but as they are not, Radek's forecast seems the likelier of fulfilment.

British capitalists must have Free Trade because of lack of self-sufficiency that will be their undoing and the cause of the weak part they will play in relation to U.S.A. in the next 25 years. But the Balkanisation of Europe which Angell deplores is just as necessary to France at the present juncture.

Did not the sinking of potential British Dreadnoughts at Washington give to U.S.A. chances of economic enrichment, strengthen her control on Panama and improve her chances in China by isolating Japan? What hope would the Royal Dutch Shell have in Mosul if it were not in British Dreadnoughts and armies? Navies and armies are to capitalist countries a necessity both to get raw materials and markets.

Make no mistake. *War does pay for certain sections.* Because Angell will regard nations as "communities" he goes astray.

M. S.

"*Piers' Plowman*" *Social and Economic Histories.* (Geo. Phillip & Son, 3s. and 3s. 6d. each.)

This is a new series of seven books, supplementary to the Junior Books in the same series which we have recommended already to teachers in juvenile classes. Book I. begins with *Primeval Times to 1066*, and Book VII. will cover *1830 to Present Day*. Their illustrations, book lists and maps are exceedingly well chosen and they have the distinctive feature of concentrating upon the lives of "ordinary" people. "They trace, very simply, through the centuries, the development of England on its social side; they deal with the ways in which people lived, earned their daily bread, traded, worshipped God, travelled, amused themselves, or endured the ups and downs of life."

As might be expected in books designed for school use, the rise and fall of social systems and the part played by the class struggle are not emphasised; but there is much material to which Marxists could easily give the necessary "edge." Plebeians will enjoy the *simplicity* of the following quotation from the Preface:—"Social history is important, not merely because it gives the background for the great events of the past, but also because it helps us to understand, in some measure, the motives which have swayed or led great masses of plain men. Political movements, in fact, often arise out of social conditions, while great political changes are important because of their influence on everyday human life. The two

aspects of history, therefore, the social and the political, ought not to be studied entirely apart. They explain each other." We had suspected as much—more—for some time!

Nevertheless, school teachers and Labour members of Education Committees on the look out for new books, would be well advised to get the help of the Piers' Plowman Series and make one step in the direction of preventing the commoner sort of school history book from having it all its own way!

M. S.

The People's Year Book 1923. (5s. C.W.S.). Valuable for its statistics concerning the Co-operative Movement; the other articles are scrappy and incomplete. The compilers have yet to discover the Labour College movement.

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS.

Principles of Public Finance. By Hugh Dalton. (Routledge, 5s. net.)

A knowledge of Public Finance is important in ordinary political propaganda; it is important in estimating the effects on capitalism and on the class struggle of different systems of public finance; it will be important in deciding on the financial policy of the Workers' State during the transition period. Working-class students, therefore, should include this in their general economic studies, if they have time; and for us to be able to do this there is need for us to have some other sources of information than the rather superficial treatment of the subject in some of the De Leonist pamphlets.

Dalton's book on the subject is the best yet produced—best both in a scientific sense and from the point of view of the worker. He devotes special attention to the effects of different systems of taxation on the distribution of wealth, to inheritance taxes, and to such burning problems of the present day as Public Debts, Inflation, Capital Levy, etc. He also devotes a special section of the book to Public Expenditure (almost entirely neglected hitherto on the principle that the less the State spends the better), pointing out that it is quite unreasonable to judge a tax system by looking at the burden of taxation without estimating the

benefits conferred by the expenditure of that revenue. Thus, Mr. McKenna makes a mistake in estimating the "taxable capacity" of capitalist Britain, because he looks only at the "credit" side of the balance sheet, and neglects the possible appreciation of national assets resulting from public expenditure.

The writer is refreshingly iconoclastic. He has little use for the old orthodox distinctions between "direct" and "indirect" taxes; and he has not much to say for Adam Smith's canon of Equity as a basis for a tax system. If the existing class system is wrong, then any system of taxation which helps to lessen inequality is equitable; and therefore he thinks that the only real test is whether a tax system is economically expedient.

Questions as to where the incidence or money burden of a tax falls; how far heavy taxation will check production, etc., Dalton seeks to solve by using the conception of "elasticity" of demand and supply. The demand for tea is "elastic," if for a given fall in price, the demand for tea "stretches" in greater proportion. Hence, if an important tariff is imposed on tea, the foreigner will bear most of the tax, if the demand for that tea is elastic; and the home consumer of tea will bear most of the tax if the demand is inelastic (*i.e.*, if tea is a necessity to people and they cannot do without it).

The book is written clearly and forcibly, and the use of technical economic terms is reduced to a minimum.

M. H. D.

AN INDUSTRIAL UTOPIA.

Engineering, a treatise on Workers' Control and Management of Industry, published by the Industrial University, Chicago, 50 cents., gives an outline of industrial organisation which will function when capitalism breaks down.

The organisation of the workers in Industrial Departments—with charts to illustrate the same—is of the type familiar to those conversant with I.W.W. and Industrial Unionist propaganda. Whether such a rigid regimentation of the workers, which the

authors are pleased to call "Scientific Communism," will ever be stomached is an interesting speculation.

The review of present day mismanagement of industry is very able, but we think some consideration should be devoted to the question of how the industrial reorganisation of the future is to be built up.

J. H.

LABOUR PROBLEMS.

An Introduction to the Study of Labour Problems. By Gordon S. Watkins, Ph.D. (Harrap, 10s. 6d.)

The Making of Rural Europe. By Helen Douglas Irvine, M.A. (Allen and Unwin, 7s. 6d.)

Professor Watkins is a bore. I am afraid this is the main conclusion to be drawn from this very painstaking, most American book. It deals, at length but superficially, with every possible facet of industry—the Problem of Unemployment, Problem of Women, Problem of Wages, Problem of Associations, and so on. It is not inaccurate. Such (lamentably little) descriptive matter as it contains is careful and exact, if uninspired. But it is indescribably tedious for three-fourths of the time, because the Professor insists on uplifting the reader by humane, typically Yankee platitudes which are not so much untrue as pointless. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter (on page 590). "In all probability the wage earning classes will continue to receive greater benefits from an improved and controlled capitalism than would accrue to them from socialism."

Miss Irvine's book, on the other hand, has faults and merits of entirely opposite kinds. Dr. Watkins' is an enormous volume, tightly printed; Miss Irvine's

is scandalously bad value for the money—224 pages (against 664) loosely printed on thick blotting paper to look more. He is accurate, she is careless; he bores, she provokes. Her book is part of a growing literature in discussion of the peasant. She is far too favourable to peasant proprietorship—her bias actually leads her to praise pre-revolutionary France and use the indefensible phrase "the legend of an oppressed French peasantry." She also knows little of trade unionism, which she calls "syndicalism."

But on the whole her book is good; it is certainly stimulating. It (together with a painfully silly introduction by Chesterton) is a sign of a decaying bourgeoisie, which tends to look more and more to the peasant to choke a Communist revolution. Ever since the Commune the peasant has been available to murder the worker; he is strangling the towns of Central Europe to-day, and would strangle Russia to-morrow if he were let. The government which he deserves he gets—Horthy's—and his idea of a political movement is a pogrom. Ever since the dawn of history there have been peasant communities; which have stood still and nothing good has come from them, nor life nor progress at all. A society which has been reduced again to a peasant state has returned to its primary elements—like a body that has decomposed.

It would be wrong to suggest that Miss Irvine advocates this. She knows too much history to follow Mr. Chesterton's foolishness, and in a reluctant opening passage she points out that "civilisation is of urban manufacture." A queer book, worth reading, but not buying at the price.

R. W. P.

ESPERANTO NOTES

UNEMPLOYED workers in this country may be interested in the administration of the "dole" in Germany, as described in a letter from Hans Mancke (4 Briete Strasse, Schmargendorf, Berlin). The allowance, 360 marks per day, is only paid when there is no income whatever, and nothing saleable in the home.

Inspectors visit the house at all hours in order to investigate means, even examining the food as it is being cooked. Possession of two suits of clothes is sufficient to disqualify from benefit. Small wonder, then, that only 10 per cent. of Berlin unemployed receive anything at all, and even these elect are cast adrift after twenty weeks.

Some idea of the general position of the unemployed may be gained from the demands made by a mass meeting in "Sophein-Sale." (1) Increase in benefit by at least 100 per cent. (2) Abolition of all restrictions on receipt of benefit, so that every unemployed worker shall be maintained. (3) Sale of food and clothing at cost price by the municipality. (4) Free meals for all children up to the age of fourteen. (5) Opening of centres where cooked food may be obtained at least once daily. (6) Institution of public works at union rates.

The unemployed worker's standard of life has been further depressed by the sudden fall in the mark. After the Ruhr occupation prices doubled in a week. It is very difficult to visualise the effect of such changes from the usual statistical table. A. Spröck, writing in *Sennacieca Revuo*, gives a comparative table of the commodity-equivalents of wages in 1914 and November, 1922. A month's wages bought in 1914 a suit of clothes, a great-coat, and hat; in 1922, one suit of poor quality. Four days' work provided in 1914 a week's food for three persons; in 1922, only sufficient for one. A more orthodox comparison of wages and cost of living in various countries of Europe is being prepared for the S.A.T. Year Book by Léon Bergiers (11, rue Lauwiers, La Hulpe, Brabant, Belgium).

Edlona Kooperativo. A co-operative publishing agency has been formed under the control of S.A.T., with headquarters in Düsseldorf. The unit share is 2,000 marks, but smaller sums may be placed on deposit until one share has been accumulated. The first publication, "Faüsto," by Goethe, will be ready in March.

International People's College in Denmark. In the course of the second year's work of the College, which is aiming at bringing together industrial workers of various countries, for a year's study and common life, a special three months course is to be held, beginning April 1st, next.

Sociology, economic history, the study of modern institutions and working class movements in the leading European countries, ethical and philosophical problems treated from an international point of view, will be the main part of the curriculum, in addition to languages including Esperanto. Lectures will be conducted in the main in English.

The cost of this three months' course, including board, lodging, and tuition, is fixed at £20. Each student will be expected to work three hours daily on the College lands in order that these low fees can be made possible. Scholarships are available for British students to take part in the course. Applications from students, and especially perhaps unemployed students, should be made at once to the Secretary of the British Committee, Rennie Smith, Horsley House, Stocksbridge, near Sheffield.

During the first year a course in Esperanto was conducted by a Danish Samideanino, S-ino Blicher from Copenhagen, with such success that the students were able, in the middle of last term, to take part in an Esperanto Congress held at Copenhagen.—*British Esperantist.*

Proposed classes in West Ham. Evening classes under the Local Education Authority may begin in September if sufficient demand is shown. Speakers and organisers are asked to communicate with C. Veness, 15, Bective Road, E. 7.

N.C.L.C. ITEMS and NOTES

Whitsun School at Kew.—The School will be held from Saturday, May 19th, to Saturday, May 26th. This period can be extended to a fortnight if sufficient applicants desire. The latest date for receiving applications will be April 20th. Accommodation is limited, so that final choice will have to be made after all applications are to hand.

The inclusive charge will be 6s. per day, all fees to be paid in advance. (Students will be expected to make their own beds and to assist a little with the serving and clearing up of meals.) The School will be devoted to the needs of *prospective class tutors*—how to teach Economics, History, and our other main subjects—and

special syllabuses will be prepared. As full a day's work as possible at lectures, preparation of material, discussions, etc., will be expected of all students. If weather permits the classes will be held in the garden of the College. Our thanks are due to the Governors for the use of the College and to the staff for their proffered lecture services.

Preston Labour College.—The two classes on Economics and Imperialism have enrolled 100 students. In addition to the Trades and Labour Council and the A.U.B.T.W., there are thirteen other affiliated organisations. Some hustle for a first winter's work! A lively correspondence has been printed in the *Preston Herald* between Lord Pembroke (of the Primrose League) and the energetic College Secretary, Mrs. Taylor. The honours of the debate decidedly go to the lady.

Liverpool and District Labour College.—New affiliations include Wallasey Industrial Council and Garston Co-operative Society. New classes commenced in Owestry, Widnes, Wallasey, Shotton, and Chester.

N.C.L.C. National Lantern Slide Scheme.—The following sets are available for hiring purposes. "History I.W.C.E. Movement"; "The Paris Commune"; "The Co-operative Movement"; "Primitive Man"; "The Industrial Revolution"; and "The Cotton Industry." Terms to N.C.L.C. Movement only: 5s. per set, or 1s. 6d. each dozen slides, plus postage. For syllabuses, etc., apply to J. Hamilton, 99, Botanic Road, Liverpool. Comrade McLaine, 26, Bedford Row, London, W.C. 1., has kindly offered to loan a set on "The Worker and the Machine"; borrowers to pay postage and replace broken slides at 3s. each. Colleges wanting this set will apply direct to W. McLaine.

Manchester and District Labour College.—The Annual General Meeting was held in January. Officers and committee for 1923 were elected. The balance sheet made it apparent that work is hampered by want of cash. The trade unions have responded

generously, but if work is to be extended in the district affiliations must be increased. Some of our comrades are carrying on an increasing propaganda campaign within their trade unions. There is plenty of work in this connection for local Plebs and N.C.L.C.ers. A few energetic Plebs working on the Manchester and Salford Trades and Labour Council got a resolution carried which promises "greater financial and moral support to the Manchester and District Labour Colleges." This decision is important. The Trades Council embraces *all* organised workers in the district, and this resolution is an indication of the progress made with I.W.C.E. work in Manchester. One of our old stalwarts is now vice-president of the Trades Council. The classes in Economics, Industrial History, Esperanto, Science of Understanding and Sociology held in the College are all going fine, with record attendances. The Sociology class, a new thing in Manchester, has already made good use of some of the matter raised in the "Biology and Evolution" syllabus in last month's PLEBS.

The National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers is also being canvassed in this district by Plebs. Will comrades who are members of this union in other districts note this. There is a good chance here of soon obtaining a national educational scheme like the A.U.B.T.W.

Reports on Unions.—Among the matters considered by the N.C.L.C. Executive at their Meeting in London in February, was the question of propaganda amongst the Unions. It was reported that the Boilermakers' Society; Sheet Metal Workers' Union; "Altogether" Builders Labourers' Union; N.A.U. Life Assurance Workers; Tailors' and Garment Workers' Union; N.A. Painters' and Decorators' Union; Federation of Building Trade Operatives; Amalgamated Society of Wood Workers; and A.U. of Upholsterers, were being or had been communicated with for the purpose of securing their support for a national scheme similar to that of the A.U.B.T.W. The scheme submitted for their consideration was prepared by the Labour College

and deals both with residential and local class work. Our Executive decided to recommend all N.C.L.C. groups and Plebeians to concentrate on securing the local support of these organisations, along the lines mentioned. For this purpose the following resolution was drafted:—"This Branch (District Council) requests the E.C. to put the following resolution on the Agenda of the Conference:— That the E.C. be instructed to arrange an Educational Scheme for our members through the medium of (a) residential scholarships at the Labour College, London; (b) the classes of the National Council of Labour Colleges and the Scottish Labour College, the scheme to be on the lines of that adopted by the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers." Get busy with this now.

A.E.U.—From an A.E.U. member in possession of the report of National Committee for Rules Revision we hear that the result of efforts to bring the A.E.U. in line with the A.U.B.T.W. is as follows:—There were four amendments to "Objects of Society." The first was defeated; it contained the words "education and the class struggle." The second one was carried by 28 votes to 15; neutral, 6. It ran "after the word 'objects' insert— 'Independent Working Class Education'." The third was lost; it read "and to act in conjunction with the Miners and N.U.R. in the control and policy of the Labour College." The fourth was carried; it read "That provision be inserted for Scottish Labour College in Scotland." The only further information yet culled is that in their Report the E.C. are very favourable to the W.E.T.U.C. What are A.E.U. members going to do about it?

Weavers' Amalgamation.—A correspondent reports:—The Weavers' Amalgamation appointed a sub-committee to report on the question of education. It has not reported yet, but is expected to do so any time now. An official of the Rochdale Weavers has stated that, in his opinion, the Ruskin scholarships would be discontinued, and their place taken by an educational scheme giving opportunities to all members, *i.e.* by local classes.

It remains to be seen whether co-operation with the N.C.L.C. will be recommended. Rochdale has secured the Weavers' affiliation to the local Labour College; and there is a growing realisation that ours is the movement with a future before it. It rests with rank-and-filers to see that it is a *near* future.

Many local Labour Colleges have Trades Councils affiliated to them, but Trades Councils can do much more than affiliate. They can materially assist in getting new affiliations for the Colleges and in enlisting new students. The following circular letter just issued by the Edinburgh and District Trades Council to all its affiliated bodies indicates what might be done elsewhere:—

"IMPORTANT.

Workers' Education and Organisation.
DEAR SIR OR MADAM,

I am instructed by the Edinburgh and District Trades and Labour Council and the Special Organising Committee, to request your organisation to take all possible steps to encourage your members to attend the Classes (List enclosed) of the Scottish Labour College, Edinburgh District. The College is entirely controlled by the Trade Union and Labour Movement, on whose behalf it is carrying on its very necessary educational work.

I am also instructed to ask you to consider very favourably the question of affiliating to the College, if your organisation is not already affiliated. The Affiliation Fee is a single payment of 2s. 6d., plus 2d. per member per annum, in return for which you will have a representative on the College Committee, and your members will be entitled to attend the Winter Classes *free*. In the four years of its existence in Edinburgh, the College has increased its local affiliations from four to over 115, while the Classes this year number twenty-seven.

The Edinburgh District of the College is at present the leading district in Scotland, but it urgently requires more extensive financial support. In view of this and of the further fact that the College provides just the education that is of most use to our movement, and the one which is not provided by the Education Authority or any other

body, this Council would therefore urge your organisation, if it is not yet affiliated, to affiliate *now*, and so let it be seen that Edinburgh District workers are prepared to back their own College to the fullest possible extent. Independent working-class education strengthens organisation: it teaches *Why*.

Yours fraternally,

ALEXANDER SMITH,
Secretary.

P.S.—The College is recognised, not only by your Council, but by the Scottish

Trade Union Congress and the British Trade Union Congress."

Comrade J. D. Walmsley informs us that, on the motion of the Earlestown branch of the National Union of General Workers, a resolution in support of the N.C.L.C. is to come up at the Lancs. District Council meeting of that Union in July. Will Lancashire Plebs please note—and do whatever they can to secure support from other N.U.G.W. branches.

The PLEBS Bookshelf

WHATEVER else they do our Textbooks certainly contrive to annoy some folks. The Psychology book sent Gerald Gould into a fit; and now the *Outline of Imperialism* has roused R. Pontifical Dutt to declare a holy war on "the British-American substitute for Marxism." Dutt, of course, has "got" Marxism as some people "get" religion. I believe the much-despised PLEBS played its part in converting him from Guild Socialism and other primitive cults. But he has now outgrown the British-American-novitiate stage and become a High Priest or Cardinal or something of that class; and he is young yet! Who knows?—he may yet found a new religion—a Newer Marxism—the devotees of which will be few but fit, and their morning and evening ritual an Excommunication Service directed at the rest of the world.

The Imperialism Textbook has angered him because it isn't what it never set out to be. Dutt has his own ideas about what constitutes a "thesis" (I believe that is the correct term) on Modern Imperialism. And it would appear that our textbook is not such a thesis. It is extremely probable, in my opinion, that if it had been it would have been entirely useless for the purpose for which it was intended—as a text-book for elementary classes. That of course would not have worried Dutt in the least; since it is a distinguishing characteristic of the religious zealot to insist on handing out to common

mortals what they *ought* to like, and not what they, in their ignorance, may think they want. The perfervid idealist of this type will stoop to no such "compromise" as is involved in studying his audience and adapting himself to its needs. A sense of humour, let alone a grain or two of sympathetic imagination, would sometimes save him from making a Solemn Ass of himself. But then a sense of humour is just what he invariably lacks.

Dutt wanted a Thesis—some sounding generalisations about the coming revolution, well sprinkled with hearty abuse of Trade Union leaders and the treacherous stool-pigeons of the Second International. That is, as we all know, THE stuff to give them!! Accordingly, a book which gives a simple outline of certain historical events, and omits the time-honoured denunciations, is, to the Thesisists, simply a collection of "banal news-cuttings." (Gee!—but some of their denunciations are getting a bit banal!) And the book's weakness in the denunciation department must obviously spring from the moral cowardice of its authors. They are not of the lion-hearted band who, pen in hand and seat in arm-chair, utterly annihilate the "offensive and treacherous members of the General Council" several times a week; so giving reality to the class-struggle, instead of leaving it an "unreal abstraction." "Marxism is politics or nothing." And politics,

of course, is "Watching those Leaders." So a book which doesn't watch 'em can't be Marxist. Q. E. D.

The bit I liked best in Dutt's Diatribe was the "score-sheet" idea at the end. (I presume this passion for statistics is the result of long confinement in the Labour Research Dept.) You make a little list of the authors quoted in a book; tot up the number of quotations from each; and serve in a table! This is a handy recipe for hard-worked book reviewers. Slightly modified, it could be made to serve as an infallible test of the Real Revolutionary Stuff. As thus:—

THESIS "A."

Denunciations of R*ms*y Mc-		
	D*n*ld ..	99
Ditto of A. H*nd*r-	s*n ..	23
Ditto of S. W*bb ..		123
Ditto of Yellow In-	ternational	1,301
Quotations from hitherto unpub-	lished works by Marx ..	401
<i>Awarded full marks, and the special "United Front" medal.</i>		

PAMPHLET "B."

Denunciations	2
Quotations from R. P. Dutt (in his Guild Socialist period)	32
Ditto from Russian authors	0
Ditto from British-American authors ..	77
<i>Banned by King-Street Censor.</i>	

Meantime the *Outline of Imperialism* goes on selling steadily. Such is life—in the "Marxistically ludicrous" British working-class movement!

One word more, and this a quite serious one. Comrade Dutt refers graciously to the "budding snobs" turned out by the Labour College; and, in another paragraph, to Plebs "hobbies." Thomas Ashcroft, the author of the first draft of the *Imperialism* book, is one of these "snobs." His work on the book was done for no financial reward, and for very little in the way of publicity. In both respects he, and many another Plebs worker, compares favourably with some of his critics.

I will now proceed to copy out a quotation which, if it had been published in time, I should have urged the Textbook Committee to include in the *Imperialism* book—and then Dutt would have had another name for his score-sheet. It is a passage from the Webbs' latest book, *The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation* (paper boards, 2s. 6d. net, Allen & Unwin); which is a good book, and one which Plebs will do well to buy and enjoy. This paragraph is from the chapter on "The Capitalist System as a Cause of War":—

We may now summarise the relation between the dictatorship of the capitalist and the nearly continuous warfare that followed the inauguration of world peace by the London Exhibition of 1851, and culminated in the monstrous catastrophe of 1914-18. It was the British capitalist who, fortified in his faith by the early political economists, first made of the pursuit of pecuniary gain what we may not unfairly call a national religion. It was British publicists who provided a rational basis for the callousness of the big manufacturer in his slaughter of children and his maiming of young people of his own race through the early factory system. It was a priest of the Established Church of England, the Rev. Thomas Malthus, who declared that death by starvation for those who were thrown out of work and deprived of wages by the ups and downs of foreign trade was not only a "natural law" but also "God's law" for adjusting the population to the means of subsistence. It was, in fact, British commercialism that prepared the moral conscience of mankind for the German theory of world power . . .

The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation is a striking book. Not the least striking thing about it, of course, is that the Webbs should have written it. One need not agree with all its phrases, or even with all its conclusions, in order to recognise its propaganda power. And I like much the sentence about Marx—that his great significance "is not that he revolutionised economics

and political science, but that he called the moral bluff of capitalism."

Mrs. Mary Agnes Hamilton's article on "What to Read: Books that Make Socialists," in the *New Leader* (Feb. 2nd), was a notable example of the "sloppy-socialist" way of thinking. One may admit her plea that "the road to Socialist conviction varies with the individual," and yet remark that her list of books resembled a handful of cotton-wool more than the "sort of guiding thread" she claimed it to be. I don't mean that the list did not include several good books. But it lumped together good, bad, and indifferent, in a way which suggested that its compiler possessed neither point of view nor critical judgment; and the beginner who ploughed his way through the books composing it would certainly have a pretty muddled notion of what Socialism was all about. Norman Angell bracketed with Brailsford; Carlyle with Wells; *Capital* with *Socialism, Critical and Constructive* (MacDonald).

It was an interesting document in its way, because it was so perfect a revelation of a type of mind which regards itself as "catholic" and cultured, and which has about as much edge on it as a feather-bed.

The *Times Literary Supplement* a week or two ago quoted a negro parson's prayer which may bring a smile even to the stern-set faces of Plebeians:—

O Lawd, give Thy servant de eye of de eagle and de wisdom of de owl; connect his soul with de gospel telephone in de central skies; 'luminate his brow with de sun of heaben; pizen his mind with love for de people; turpentine his imagination; grease his lips with possum oil: loosen his tongue with de sledge-hammer of Thy Power; 'lectrify his brain with de lightnin' of de Word; put 'petual motion in his arms;

fill him plum full of de dynamite of Thy Glory; 'noint him all over with de kerosene oil of Thy Salvation, and sot him on fire. Amen!

There are times when one feels that our leftest Left-wingers must pray prayers like that—and get 'em answered!

We have received from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America a copy of the "Amalgamated Wall Calendar" for 1923. It is a really well-edited and well-produced piece of work, and its educational and propaganda value will doubtless be considerable. There is a page for each month, with a reproduction of some good painting, etching, or piece of sculpture; a motto—more than once quoted from PLEBS covers; and on the back of each month's page a short chapter of World History from the workers' point of view (or, should we say, from the "British-American Marxist" point of view?). . . . What do Plebs think about the idea of a PLEBS Calendar next year—for use in classrooms, club-rooms, and other public places, as well as in Pleb parlours? If the idea seems good, send in any suggestions you think worth while, and we can discuss practical possibilities in good time. You can't rush a thing like this out during the last week or two of the year.

Philips' *New Graphic Atlas* (paper 1s. 6d., cloth 2s.), with 32 maps and a 16 pp. Index, only confirms me in my liking for the *Elementary Atlas* recommended in the *Imperialism Text-book*. The maps in the new atlas have scores more names in them—are, in fact, so crowded with names that it is occasionally difficult to see the map for the words. As a directory of place-names this atlas is useful; but in usefulness to students of geography it cannot be compared with the other.
J. F. H.

The Book Dept. closed down on February 28th. We can now only supply our own publications and special editions.

¶ If you want the Boss to smile upon you, and his lady friends to shake hands with you (once a year or so); if you believe that God has called you to that station of life—and that standard of life—which is at present yours; if, in short, you've decided that a *backbone* is a luxury you can't afford—

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¶ If on the other hand you've come to the conclusion that it's high time you and your class did your own thinking, instead of letting the Boss and his class do it for you; if you've realised that this is a necessary first step towards you and your class *acting together* to end a system of society which exploits the many for the benefit of the few; join the Plebs League, which bands together the students, tutors and supporters of the Labour College Movement.

Annual sub.—One Bob

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